



Antiphonal, Mnemonic, and Recursive in Samuel Beckett's Molloy: A Narratological Study

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Abstract: The aim of the present article is to study the first novel of Samuel Beckett's First Trilogy, *Molloy*, in the light of its narrative styles. Beckett wrote novels like *First Trilogy*, consisting of *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *the Unnamable*, which altered the face of postmodernist novel and in which he presents the man as a non-knower. The article tries to answer the question of 'how and to what extent the antiphonal, mnemonic, and recursive narrative styles have been employed in Beckett's First Trilogy?' To answer this question, the novel is studied from a narratological point of view in terms of its narrative styles including antiphonal, mnemonic, and recursive. The article first presents a plot summary of the novel, then it finds the indications of the mentioned narrative styles in the novel. This article shows that the characters are confined to the memory of their past, so that even their past, present and future does not seem to exist as such. Their lives are chaotic in which nothing changes and there is no end although the characters struggle to find an end. Then, they fail in finding their true identities.

Keywords: Antiphonal, Mnemonic, Recursive, Beckett, Molloy

1. INTRODUCTION

Samuel Barclay Beckett is widely recognized as one of the major European writers of the century. He is a postmodern, Avant-guard author, critic, playwright, theater director and avant-guard novelist. He became one of the first absurdist writers to win international fame and glory in what Martin Esslin called the *Theatre of the Absurd* (1980).

He was always preoccupied with the essential aspect of human existence and the true nature of our self. He believed that there is chaos in the world of mankind and he was the last modernist who tried to find a form suitable for expressing this chaos. "It only means that there will be a new form; and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else" (Samuel Beckett) (cited in Sabatini 2014: 7). Moreover, talking about the changes in modern works, Bloom mentions that like all of the Beckett's dramatic characters, the four "pawns" of *Endgame* have indeed cried for "night," for an end to the suffering and wretchedness of their existence. When night finally falls, however, the bitter irony is that nothing has really changed: the longed-for arrival of the end signifies only that there is no "end" (2011: 49). Regarding the present thesis Beckett's *First Trilogy* is not an exception.

In this regard, that is why he made a decision to write such extraordinary novels, completed in 1951, called *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and which together with *The Unnamable* formed *The First Trilogy* and they brought him to the pinnacle of his writing career. However, he is widely recognized for his plays among which we can name *Waiting for Godot* that is the most prominent and influential play of the twentieth century. Some scholars even call Beckett now not as a last modernist but as a postmodernist writer.

The present essay aims to study the first novel of Beckett's *First Trilogy*, *Molloy*, mainly in terms of its narrative styles including antiphonal, mnemonic and recursive. In the present essay the researcher's specific concern is to read *First Trilogy* exactly in the same way that Beckett reads this novel, as he avoids clear-cut definitions and to show that he avoids unequivocal classification.

No wonder that “Samuel Beckett was undoubtedly one of the ‘stars’ of twentieth-century literature and theatre” (Haynes and Knowlson 2003: 1). As it is indicated by Peter Boxall, who was concerned with the task of writing after Beckett, that Beckett “is in some sense the last writer” (Boxall 2009: 7). According to Van Hull, “Beckett’s status as a challenging writer has stimulated critics and philosophers such as Deleuze and Badiou to write key interpretations that have in their turn become objects of further critical investigation within Beckett studies and literary theory, leading to intellectually vibrant field of study” (2015: xvii). And his *First Trilogy*, on which his high reputation as a novelist rests. *First Trilogy* is among the most important non-dramatic and innovative novels of the twentieth century.

Beckett’s *First Trilogy* is an innovative novel to which he has given a wholly new direction. “The trilogy has become famous in the history of fiction because of what is left out: the usual novelistic apparatus of plot, scenes, and characters” (Kunkel 2006: 2).

This essay examines, addresses and answers the following questions: how and to what extent the antiphonal, mnemonic, and recursive narrative styles have been employed in Beckett’s *First Trilogy*? In order to answer this question, Samuel Beckett’s *First Trilogy* is studied from a narratological point of view. Therefore, the study is mainly concerned with the very potential of Beckett’s text and writing as far as it is suggestive for the narrative styles in the *First Trilogy*. The researcher explores Beckett’s the first novel of his *First Trilogy*, *Molloy*, in terms of its narrative styles including antiphonal, mnemonic, and recursive. Therefore, the pivotal key words are antiphonal, mnemonic, and recursive. In fact, Beckett has been viewed differently; for instance, he is mainly considered as an absurdist writer. His novels, which mark the end of modernism, and herald the period of postmodernism in literature, are studied psychoanalytically like the research done by Moorjani (2004) or from a feminist point of view like “feminist Readings of Beckett” by Diamond (2004). Whereas the present research uses narratology as its scope and attempts to study *Molloy* based on the mnemonic, antiphonal, and recursive narrative styles.

The present essay, in the first section, presents definitions of the narrative styles which are going to be applied in the novel, then a brief plot summary of *Molloy*. Then, it introduces the signs of these narrative styles found throughout the first novel. The identified signs are then categorized and each is discussed in detail. Then, the categories are made according to the aims the writer follows in the novels. Then, the three major categories are “Mnemonic Narrative Style,” “Antiphonal Narrative Style,” and “Recursive Narrative Style.” The first section entitled “Mnemonic Narrative Style” is categorized into ‘A Search for Identity,’ ‘A Troubled Relationship,’ ‘Stream of Consciousness.’ The second section entitled “Antiphonal Narrative Style” is categorized into ‘Purpose of the Journey,’ ‘Impossibility of Expressing Emotions,’ ‘Rationality of the Journey,’ ‘Theological Questions and Personal Questions.’ Finally, the third section, “Recursive Narrative Style”, is categorized into ‘Recursion with Variation: Nothingness,’ ‘Recursion with Variation: Contradiction,’ and ‘Recursion without Variation.’

2. DISCUSSION

Before studying *Molloy*, based on its narrative styles, it is helpful to review the definition of these narrative styles. One of the narrative styles Beckett employed in this novel, is the mnemonic style. Which shows the hypothetical and meaningless world inhabited by the character. It indicates that the character lives in the past. His future is a recollection of his past and retrospection; that is even his life is a kind of ‘inexistent.’ It refers to the art of using the characters’ memories and reflections. The characters, through remembering some memories travel to other characters’ selves and also find their true identity by seeing themselves in the image of other characters.

Another narrative style which Beckett used in his *Molloy* is the antiphonal style. It plays a significant role in the narrative. It is the use of so many questions which are either followed by transient answers or no answers. These questions show the inability of the character to answer his questions.

Finally, the third narrative style Beckett applied in this work is the recursive style. There are some structures, words, or even images within the text which are repeated. By means of repetition the narrative becomes an infinite process. Moreover, this style together with the other narrative styles follows some aims which are going to be discussed in the following sections.

2.1. Plot Summary

Before discussing the indications of the aforementioned narrative styles, found throughout *Molloy*, it is helpful to review its plot summary.

The first of these masterpieces, Beckett's *First Trilogy*, *Molloy*, resists summary; since, the narrative seems to be like a labyrinth. The novel has so much uncertainty. Moreover, it tells us the characters' reflections and half remembered memories. It is consisted of two narratives or two quests, that of Molloy and Moran who are the central figures of the novel. The first part of the novel introduces us to the character title named Molloy who is incarcerated and tells us the accounts of his turning towards and away from his mother. He determines to discover the whereabouts of his mother. The story begins in his mother's room. The novel begins by uncertainty in presenting sentences as 'I don't know how I got here' (Beckett 1955: 1). We are told that every Sunday a stranger comes in order to collect Molloy's reports, to bring back the previous ones and in return to give him money. One day, looking out of the window, he saw two men coming towards each other, A and C, on the country road. After this encounter he decides to go on a quest to find his mother. On his journey, he suffers from one of his stiffening legs. On the road, he is now arrested by the policemen and then after release he decides to come back to his town. On his return, he runs over a dog with his bicycle and sees its owner, Louise, whom she asks to stay with her. This woman and the other women, whom he encounters, remind him of his mother. After sometimes staying with Louise, he decides to continue his journey. Therefore, he leaves his bicycle there and on the way he finds that now both of his legs are stiffened and he becomes weaker and weaker and he cannot walk. Finally, he becomes trapped in a ditch where he remembers the two travelers with the other instances of his life now coming back to his memory.

The second narrative is basically about Jacques Moran; whose narrative is similar to that of Molloy. He is a detective, who is asked by his mysterious boss, Youdi, to search for the aforementioned Molloy. He goes on the quest together with his son Jacques. On their journey they face some problems. For instance, just like Molloy, one of his legs becomes stiffened. Therefore, he orders his son to buy a second hand bicycle. On his way he saw two men, one who asked to give him some bread and another one whom he killed. His son is now returned with the bicycle. But, when they reach Molloy's city, his son leaves him. Like Molloy, now both of his legs are stiffened. His son leaves him and now he is going back to his home. On the way towards his home, he asks himself some questions to most of which he cannot answer. He is alone and he does not know what he is doing here and whose land it is. Now he is going to make an end to his journey. Now he returns to Martha's room. But the house is empty. Again there is a letter from Youdi to write a report. Like Molloy, he has crutches now. He is now thinking of a voice telling him to do things, the voice which previously told him to write the report. Now he writes: "It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining" (Beckett 1955: 39).

2.2. Mnemonic Narrative Style: A Search for Identity

At the beginning of the novel, Molloy is searching for his mother and sitting in his mother's room. "I am in my mother's room. It's who live there now. I don't know how I got there. Perhaps in an ambulance, certainly a vehicle of some kind. I was helped. I'd never got there alone" (Beckett 1955: 1). That's how the story begins in doubt and that's all he can remember now.

The narrator feels a need to speak of his mother, as he says, "What a rest to speak of bicycles and horns. Unfortunately, it is not of them I have to speak, but I have to speak of her who brought me into the world" (ibid.: 3). He lives in the memory of his mother. For instance, after seeing two men, A and C, on the road, he recalls his decision to see his mother. "...I resolved to go and see my mother" (ibid.: 3). He is spending time in a region where in his opinion, his mother "had waited so long and perhaps was waiting still" (ibid.: 13). Toward the end of his report, he points out that, "my mother could scarcely be waiting for me still, after so long" (ibid.:16). But unfortunately, he does not know how and where he can seek his mother, "...that I was on my way to my mother. ... As to her address, I was in the dark" (ibid.:4).

Moreover, he believes that his mother is the source of his origin and if he can find her he can find his true identity. That's why, after he was released from the police station, he says, "Had they succeeded in finding my mother and obtaining from her, or from the neighbors, partial confirmation of my statements?" (Beckett 1955: 4). But unfortunately, even in searching his mother, he cannot find his

true identity. Therefore, he says, "And even my sense of identity was wrapped in a namelessness often hard to penetrate, as we have just seen I think" (ibid.: 6). Finally, when his journey is at the end he says, "I was on my way to mother. And from time to time I said, Mother, to encourage me I suppose. ...and to hope that I was going forward in a straight line, in spite of everything, day and night, towards my mother" (ibid.: 18). All in all, mother, in this part of the novel, becomes the character's perception of his identity. Furthermore, the character, in his endeavor to find his true identity fails unfortunately. "A being, a creature, a consciousness wakes (call it that) into a situation which is ineluctable and inexplicable. He (she? It?) tries his (her? Its?) best to understand his situation (call it that) but never succeeds. In fact, the very notion of understanding a situation becomes more and more opaque" (Houppermans et al, 2006: 24).

2.2.1. Mnemonic Narrative Style: A Troubled Relationship

The novel is said to be a working out of the relationship between a mother and a son. There seems to exist some troubled relationship between the narrator and his mother as he says "... I gradually lost interest in knowing, among other things, what town I was in and if I should soon find my mother and settle the matter between us" (ibid.: 13). Later he adds,

And of myself, all my life, I think I had been going to my mother, with the purpose of establishing our relations on a less precarious footing. And when I was with her, and I often succeeded, I left her without having done anything. And when I was no longer with her I was again on my ways to her, hoping to do better the next time. And when I appeared to give up and to busy myself with something else, or with nothing at all anymore, in reality I was hatching my plans and seeking the way to her house. (ibid.: 17)

It is to be noted that, he later calls his mother 'that woman'. "I needed before I could resolve to go and see that woman" (ibid.: 3). And at the end of her report, it seems that he is tired of searching his mother when he says, "Look at Mammy. What rid me of her, in the end?" (ibid.: 16). Following this undeniable search for his mother, is Molloy's disgust and distrust of her. To him, she is a "poor uniparous whore" and their relationship an "old mess" (Beckett 2003: 19). Moran echoes this disgust toward women when he writes his only joke: Question, Have women a soul? Answer, Yes. Question, Why? Answer, Answer, in order that they may be damned" (Beckett 2003: 137). So, there is a troubled relationship between Moran and his mother.

2.2.2. Mnemonic Narrative Style: Stream of Consciousness

There are moments in the novel in which Molloy is thinking of and remembering his mother but he cannot differentiate his mother from the other people in his life. For instance, after meeting Louise he mentions,

And there are days, like this evening, when my memory confuses them and I am tempted to think of them as one and the same old hag, flattened and crazed by life. And God forgive me, to tell you the horrible truth, my mother's image sometimes mingles with theirs ... (ibid.: 12)

Then, sometimes, "he confuses the woman Lousse (or Sophie or Mrs. Loy) with the only woman he has ever "rubbed up against" (Ruth, or Edith, or Rose), and both of them with his own (whose name he cannot remember) (Waster 2011: 247). Through this interior monologue, the narrator is merging two distinct characters into a single one, that of the mother. He sees old and young women coming to gather wood, "I am merging two times in one, and two women, one coming towards me, shyly, urged on by the cries and laughter of her companions, and the other going away from me" (Beckett 1955: 15). This is the flow of thoughts which happens through his mind and the narrator is expressing his inner thoughts and impressions to the readers through the character's interior monologues. This is described in literary terms as stream of consciousness and It is the representation of a character's thought, sensations and even memories. All in all, the Beckettian self is represented as an absent human being who is living in memory.

2.3. Antiphonal Narrative Style: Purpose of the Journey

At the beginning of his journey to find Molloy, Moran asks himself some questions. For instance, he asks, "Had I not something better to do, after what I had just heard?" (ibid.: 20). He states that the purpose to do so is perhaps "to win a few more moments of peace that I instinctively avoided giving my mind to it?" (ibid.: 20). But apparently he does not have any answer to this question; since, he

observes, "For how can you decide on the way of setting out if you do not first know where you are going, or at least with what purpose you are going there?" (ibid.: 20). Moreover, he states that although he 'devoted' himself to this problem, "Even in this posture I could throw no light on the matter. What was I looking for exactly?" (ibid.: 29). Or later he says, "I still did not know what I was to do with Molloy, when I found him" (ibid.: 34).

Moran and Molloy are going to write reports, but they cannot bring clarity to their situation, even Moran does not know what to do with Molloy if he can find him, since he remembers that,

I told myself I had better give it no more thought, that the first thing to do was to find Molloy, that then I would devise something, that there was no hurry, that the thing would come back to me when I least expected it and that if, having found Molloy, I still did not know what to do with him, I could always manage to get in touch with Gaber without Youdi's knowing. I had his address just as he had mine. I would send him a telegram, how deal with M? (Beckett 1955: 30)

In addition, Moran feels that he should find answers to these questions. According to Strombeck,

Moran's job as an agent means that he must understand and find answers: through the evidence he empirically collects, he must accomplish his missions for Youdi and write comprehensive reports on those missions. In order to be successful, he internalizes the judgment he fears he will receive from the shadowy figure of Youdi if he should fail in his missions. Indeed, Youdi does not even need to exist for Moran to carry out his tasks.... (2012: 16)

All that Molloy and Moran know is that they write and that is the purpose of their journey. "Molloy desperately attempts to wish for nothing, but cannot still the voices within his head" (Ackerley 2004: 39). Moran does not need an outside voice in order to fulfill his task. Indeed, Moran states that, "[The voice of judgment] is within me and exhorts me to continue to the end, the faithful servant I have always been" (Beckett 2003: 132). "In the end, nothing is certain but that the voice will go on trying to put a life together and make sense of it until death calls time on the tale" (Parks 2014: 1).

2.3.1. Antiphonal Narrative Style: Emotions

There are some instances in Moran's interior monologues in which he is asking some questions out of which the reader can infer that the character is not able to express his inner feelings freely. Therefore, the questions are also posed without any expected answers. He is not able to show his feelings towards his son, even he cannot ask his son how much he loves his father. "Did he love me then as much as I loved him?" (Beckett 1955: 25). When his son is away from him, he just wonders whether "was he capable of keeping behind me? Would not the time be bound to come when he would raise his head and find himself alone, in a strange place, and when I, waking from my reverie, would turn and find him gone?" (ibid.: 27-28). He wishes that he could have a long rope or chain in order to attach his son's body to him as in his opinion this is one way of attracting attention. He cannot simply express his inner feelings to his son and keep him from leaving him. Moreover, during his journey, he thinks about all those things he is now lacking, "Does this mean I shall one day be banished from my house, from my garden, lose my trees ... and all those things at hand without which I could not bear being a man, where my enemies cannot reach me, which it was my life's work to build, to adorn, to perfect, to keep?" (ibid.: 28). Therefore, he becomes sad. But he comforts himself by saying, "Quiet, Moran, quiet. No emotion, please" (ibid.: 28). If we return to Molloy's accounts of memories, we can observe that he believes in the "convention that demands you either lie or hold your peace" (ibid.: 17).

2.3.2. Antiphonal Narrative Style: Rationality of the Journey

When Moran's son is returned with a bicycle, Moran begins to pose several questions. For instance, he asks himself why he did not want his son to know that he was sick. And he does not know the answer. Then he begins to ask his son some questions such as, "And why do you think I have given you all that money? ... What did I tell you exactly? ... Who is that bicycle for, I said, Goering? ... Are you not pleased, I said, to have a nice brand-new bicycle, all your own?" (ibid.: 31). In Moran's opinion these questions only add to the confusion between him and his son, as he argues that, "... it could only add to his confusion. But perhaps this family chat has lasted long enough" (ibid.: 31). He even states that, "Really there were times I could not understand my son" (ibid.: 31). He goes on to ask himself some other questions such as, "Why had I not told my son to bring me back something for my leg? Why had I hidden my condition from him?" (ibid.: 31).

Therefore, besides that these questions imply the impossibility of any verbal communication with his son, Moran tries to bring forth clarity to his circumstances and find a rationality for his journey. But,

“His relationship with his son underscores this need for clarity and rational thinking. In naming him Jacques Moran after his own name, Moran behaves toward his son as a draconian teacher to student... effectively training the boy to value mind over body, rationality over nature. There is a great irony, however, in Moran setting out on his Cartesian mission to find Molloy in the most irrational, unsystematic of ways.” (Strombeck 2012: 17-18)

Even his struggle to find Molloy is unsystematic and irrational:

It was then the unheard of sight was to be seen of Moran making ready to go without knowing where he was going, having consulted neither map nor time-table, considered neither itinerary nor halt, heedless of the weather outlook, with only the vaguest notion of the outfit he would need ... (Beckett 2003: 124)

In addition, Strombeck believes that “Moran is rebelling against the systematic approach he has forced on himself all his life and now forces on himself all his life and now forces on his son” (ibid.: 18). Moran’s search for Molloy, as Nussbaum asserts, ‘is a journey of disintegration and of ending. The Molloy who was seen as a quarry outside of him proves to be the disorder and unseemliness within.’ (301)” (ibid.: 18).

2.3.3. Antiphonal Narrative Style: Theological and Personal Questions

On the third day of his journey, Moran saw a dog and poses several odd theological questions only in order to ‘kill the time’ (ibid.: 33):

Question: What had happened to the blue felt hat?

Answer.

Question: Would they not suspect the old man with the stick?

Answer: Very probably.

Question: What were his chances of exonerating himself?

Answer: Slight.

Question: Should I tell my son what had happened?

Answer: No, for then it would be his duty to denounce me.... (ibid.: 33-34)

Immediately after these questions, he mentions that, “... But while looking for the answer ... I found the answer, or the answers, to a question I had already asked myself in vain, in the sense that I had not been able to answer it, or I found another question, or other questions, demanding in their turn an immediate answer” (ibid.: 34).

In returning to his home, as he says, “for my own edification and to prepare my soul to make an end” (ibid.: 36), he was preoccupied with some questions ‘of a theological nature’:

- What value is to be attached to the theory that Eve sprang, not from Adam’s rib, but from a tumor in the fat of his leg (arse?)?
- Did the serpent crawl or, as Comestor affirms, walk upright?
- Did Mary conceive through the ear, as Augustine and Adobard assert?

But I asked myself other questions concerning me perhaps more closely. As for example.

- Why had I not borrowed a few shillings from Gabor?
- Why had I obeyed the order to go home?
- What had become of Molloy? ... (ibid.: 36-37)

He asks himself five other questions. Therefore, while the first sixteen questions are theological questions the seventeen other questions which followed are personal questions. These questions can imply that the narrator, Moran, is going to be mad. Somewhere in the text, he mentions that,

... you have to be careful, ask yourself questions, as for example whether you still are, and if no when it stopped, and if yes how long it will still go on, anything at all to keep you from losing the thread of the dream. For my part I willingly asked myself questions, one after the other, just for the sake of looking at them. No, not willingly, wisely, so that I might believe I was still there. (ibid.: 10)

2.4. Recursion with Variation: Nothingness

In the second part of *Molloy*, there are some sentences which are repeated with variation. For instance, the narrator repeats the words 'fatigue', 'dumb', 'tired', 'weakened', even the word 'stiff and its verb 'stiffen' which are many times repeated throughout the first and second novels; moreover, the words 'numbed heart', 'wither', even the words 'a pale and dying sky' in those moments he is describing his surrounding environment, 'starvation', 'defection', 'weak points', 'gallop', together with some other words. Besides, Molloy states, "when your legs are stiff, is no easy matter" (ibid.: 16).

The reader senses that after so much moments of struggle and the feeling of weakness and fatigue, the end is at hand. That end is nothing. In other words, the character goes on but, he goes on towards nothing, as Molloy observes, this journey is "committing me to nothing" (ibid.: 16). The repetition of these words and the images they bring in the mind of the reader shows the end of the novel which is nothingness.

2.4.1. Recursion with Variation: Contradiction

At the end of his fruitless search for Molloy, Moran is now back to Martha's room. It is midnight perhaps. But the house is empty. He is going to finish his report but, "There is nothing more to tell" (Beckett 1955: 39). There he finds a letter from Youdi asking to write a report. Then, talking about his birds, he says that:

I tried to understand their language better. Without having recourse to mine. ... I have spoken of a voice telling me things. I was getting to know it better now, to understand what it wanted ... So at first I did not know what it wanted. But in the end I understood this language. I understood it; I understand it, all wrong perhaps. This is not what matters. It told me to write the report. ... Then I went back into the house and wrote, it is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows it was not midnight. It was not raining" (ibid.: 39).

Therefore, the narrator goes back to the very beginning of his narrative, "it is midnight. The rain on the windows" (ibid.: 19). In order to finish his reports, he repeats what he said at the beginning of his speech and continues by their denial. In fact, immediately after these sentences, he represents their negation by saying, "it was not midnight. It was not raining" (ibid.: 39). It can be concluded that Moran cannot trust words. "Molloy's successor Moran proves flatly that words are lies, that reports are fictions" (Cohn 2001: 167). In Cohn's view, "Fiction is a lie because the writer cannot still the passing moment" (ibid.: 167). This ending mirrors "Molloy's way of contradicting and doubting the events he relates, making the form of the story fit the content" (Myskja 2001: 16). Kennedy, when talking about Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, argues that "the play ends with a kind of everlasting beginning" (Kennedy 1989: 34). The same argument can be made for his *First Trilogy*. Put in another way, these sentences "suggest a larger instability in the subject, an instability, ultimately, in the narrative as a whole. This instability is more than simply what results when we cannot be sure if one thing is true or not; it is an instability that arises when we realize that *both things could be true*" (Boulter 2008: 113).

2.4.2. Recursion without Variation

When Molloy is talking about the pebbles which he calls as stones, he repeats the contribution of the stones between his pockets now and then. For instance, he mentions,

I distributed them equally between my four pockets, and suck them turn and turn about. This raised a problem which I first solved in the following way. I had say sixteen stones, four in each of my four pockets these being the two pockets of my trousers and the two pockets of my greatcoat.... (Beckett 1955: 14)

This repeating the number of the stones is a kind of parody used in the text in that the narrator makes a parody of the rationality and the use of the rationalistic way in trivial matters. Mentioning the "toilet humor" as another example for this use of parody, Strombeck argues that, "this "toilet humor" is not

incidental: Molloy is using Cartesian reasoning, as found in the *Discourse on Method*, to understand his bowel movements in a way that makes rationality good for nothing ...” (2012: 19-20). This claim can be made for the reason lying behind the repetition of the cycle of the stones. He goes on to mention that, “Molloy, for all his disintegration, deftness and confusion, understands the impossibility of a narrative of rationality (a narrative that assumes a “competent knowledge of man” [Descartes 50]), something that Moran takes far longer to comprehend.” (ibid.: 20)

3. CONCLUSION

This article studied the first novel of Beckett's *First Trilogy*, *Molloy*, in the light of its narrative styles. It investigated the existence and non-existence of mnemonic, antiphonal, and recursive narrative styles in this novel. Therefore, such keywords as mnemonic, antiphonal, and recursive were pivotal to the above discussions.

The narrators, in *Molloy*, are living a life remembering their past. Some of their memories are blurred while the others are catchy for them to recall as Molloy says “...some of my memories have their roots deep in the immediate past” (Beckett 1955: 15). As the story moves, they recall these memories through their interior monologues. Some of these memories are represented to the mind of the characters in order to find their true selves, while some others show the relationship among the characters.

In the first novel of the *First Trilogy*, there are some questions posed by the characters. Regarding these questions, the text provides us with unreliable answers and facts. It does not attempt to satisfy the reader by answering whatever questions the text story provokes. Thus, the narrator becomes a non-knower in the process of finding his identity which leads to becoming aware of his absence. Some of the questions are posed in order to find a purpose to the characters' actions, some are presented in order to imply the character's inability to express his/her feelings. Moreover, there are some theological and personal questions which somehow proves that the character is going to be mad.

The recursive technique in *Molloy*, is of two kinds; those recursions with variation and those recursions without variation. Each of them are applied in the text following some goals. Since there are some recursions in the text, the novel can be read from any point. For instance, somewhere in the text Molloy observes, “in no matter what direction, it was always the same sky, always the same earth, precisely, day after day and night after night... wheresoever you wander, within its distant limits, things will always be the same, precisely. Nothing is changed. ... the cycle continues” (ibid.: 13). Consequently, the text become something like a labyrinth.

These narrative styles are applied in order to present the self through a voice. And the study confirms that this voice, which exist throughout the novel, indicates the fact that past, present, and future coalesce in the memory of an uncertain past. Therefore, the life of the self is limited to the past and its future becomes meaningless. Thus, their lives become indeterminate and chaotic. The present chapter tried to show how the writer presents the chaos and abyss within the self and that is by applying the narrative styles of antiphonal, mnemonic, and recursive.

The novel presents a life that is filled with memories of a past, a present filled with so many questions to which the narrator is not able to answer, and a future filled with abyss and chaos. All in all, the characters cannot identify their true selves.

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