The subterranean parallel with Racine—of the kind alluded to earlier—is striking. Like Racine, Iris Murdoch achieves what one critic has described as "the paradox of combining uncertainty and predetermination."[2] Just as, in spite of the numerous peripeteia in *Andromaque*, Pyrrhus unwittingly moves closer to his rendezvous with death, so Martin Lynch-Gibbon moves closer to *his* rendezvous with a too-long-deferred and therefore deeply painful and unsettling realization of his emotional immaturity. The moment in which he grasps the fact that he is "desperately, irrevocably, agonizingly in love with Honor Klein" (p. 124), is akin to the moment when a Racinian hero or heroine realizes that he or she is trapped and cannot escape the tragic net. But, as in *Andromaque* and other major tragedies by Racine, the "serried determinism of the action only becomes apparent at the dénouement."[3] Like Oreste, who cries out against his own helplessness in face of his destiny, Martin perceives that he "was chosen, and relentlessly, not choosing" (p. 124). The suspense in *Andromaque*, the rabbit-out-of-hat surprises in *A Severed Head*, exist merely to distract the reader temporarily from the inexorable workings of fate and the outcome of what Martin calls his "monstrous love, a love out of such depths of self as monsters live in" (p. 125); the love of a Hermione or of a Phèdre.

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[2]Peter H. Nurse, "Racine and His Gods," *Modern Language Review*, 72, No. 1 (January 1977), 45.

[3]Peter H. Nurse, p. 45.

FERNANDE SAINT-MARTIN
Samuel Beckett et l'univers de la fiction
Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1976. Pp. 271.

BRIAN T. FITCH
Dimensions, structures, et textualité dans la trilogie romanesque de Beckett
Paris: Minard, 1977. Pp. 205.

The necessity to find order and significance in the works of Samuel Beckett has obsessed readers, spectators, and critics since *Waiting for Godot* brought Beckett to the attention of the world. Our culture and heritage are fundamentally Cartesian, and we therefore demand and often impose method and structure. We wanted Godot to be God; we wanted Pozzo and Lucky to represent the dominance of corporeal reality over the enslaved spirit; and later we wanted the room of *Endgame* to be the inside of a skull.

Gradually, the reader, spectator, and critic has learned to moderate his speculation about the falsely alluring allegorical structures which appear in Beckett's works. The narrators of the novel trilogy and *How It Is* warned us indirectly of the illusive nature of structure, filling their pages with postulations and hypotheses which cancel each other out and leave us face to face with disquieting insignificance.

In 1973, H.-J. Schulz published what probably should have been the final word on logical structure in the prose works of Beckett, *This Hell of Stories: A Hegelian Approach to the Novels of Samuel Beckett,* whose thesis, simplified, maintains that Beckett's narrators react against the early Cartesian influence on their creator by presenting structures and hypotheses of structure whose ultimate disintegration demonstrates the insufficiency of rational analysis.

And yet more recently, and armed with new critical approaches, Fernande Saint-Martin (1976) and Brian Fitch (1977) have set out again on the perilous search for structure and meaning in Beckett's fiction, establishing hypothetical appearances of order which in reality are as tenuous and as illusory as previous allegorical interpretations.

Saint-Martin's book is heavy-handed and diffuse. It seems to embrace all contemporary critical approaches, using and occasionally abusing the language of linguistic criticism, structuralist criticism, existential criticism, archetypal criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism. The book attempts in each chapter to reduce one of Beckett's works to a single formula conveniently capsulized in the chapter title: "*Murphy* ou le cercle et la monade"; "*Watt* ou l'approche du père"; "*Malone Meurt* ou la fiction de la mort imminente." In a further attempt to order and structure Beckett's fiction, Saint-Martin identifies the attempt to "se rapprocher et d'approfondir l'image du Père, un symbole primordial dans toute l'oeuvre de Beckett" (p. 45) as a dominant motif in *Murphy, Watt,* and *Malloy* (in which the search for the mother replaces the search for the father). In support of this thesis, Saint-Martin does not hesitate to identify almost any male as a father figure and any female as a mother figure. The result is an annoying distortion of Beckett's texts by an attempt to impose upon it an alien structure.

The book's major thesis, identified in the introduction and conclusion, is more convincing: the narrator's consciousness in each text of the conflict between the limits of language and the expression of self (pp. 9-10). Saint-Martin's application of this thesis to Beckett's fiction produces valid, occasionally original discussions.

Fitch's book is divided into two parts; the first called "Dimensions et Structures" analyzes what Fitch perceives to be a fundamental dialectic of Beckett's Trilogy opposing a "structuration" of the text, a spatial and temporal "découpage" to a tendency towards homogeneity. Fitch then relates this structural dialectic to the ontological dimensions of the novel. The second part of the book is called "Textualité" and is intended to be a strictly formalistic approach for which Fitch recognizes his indebtedness to the critical theories of Jean Ricardou.

The initial discussion of the structuration of Beckett's text is convincing and promising. The *point de départ* is the recognition of the importance of the recurring phrases "de temps en temps" and "de loin en loin" which characterize a partitioning of the novelistic universe by expressing discontinuity of time and space. The discontinuity of syntax and verb tenses reinforces

the impression of "structuration" which is also expressed by various evocations of distances, by the relationship of internal "mental" space to the outside world and by the effects of light and shadow.

But Fitch tries to prove too much. The process of structuration he describes certainly exists, but his thesis that the structuration/homogeneity dialectic pervades the Trilogy leads Fitch into some unconvincing critical inventions; despite his laudable claim in the introduction that "le texte ne doit pas se trouver relégué au statut de prétexte" (page 8), one occasionally senses that the "besoin de structuration" (page 72) is experienced more by Fitch than by the text.

For example, following his discussion of the multiplicity of characters of dubious reality who intrude into the text, Fitch concludes that this process is an example of structuration: "Mais, en dernière analyse, on peut considérer que la création ou l'évocation même de ces différents personnages, le fait de peupler l'espace de ces formes vaguement humaines, constitue déjà une première tentative pour structurer le vide de l'espace, tentative qui est la condition première pour réaliser d'autres variations sur le même thème" (p. 44). The conclusion generalizes the process of structuration almost beyond existence, equating it with the most elementary effort of creative imagination, the invention of characters. Fitch finds also in the interchangeability of characters and names a further example of structuration (p. 72).

More disturbing is Fitch's attempt to relate a tendency towards circularity which he skillfully finds within the Trilogy to the process of structuration. The discovery of this tendency leads to a theoretic hypothesis that circles could lend themselves to structuration if we imagine a circle (or sphere) within a circle within another circle, etc. The resulting structure, an onion, represents an ideal model of structuration within an apparently homogeneous exterior. To find the onion in Beckett's Trilogy, Fitch allows himself to transform the clear suggestion within the text that the narrator is within a skull into a very tenuous hypothesis of concentric spheres (p. 50). Beckett's text becomes a pretext for Fitch's onion and other critical fantasies.

The certain presence in Beckett's text of a voice which dictates to the narrator becomes another pretext for the invention of an onion. The phrase beginning "Et qui saurait dire" on page 67 represents a blatant attempt by the critic to add to the text he is analyzing an element which simply is not there. Fitch himself seems conscious that his affirmations are not entirely convincing: "Devant ce jeu des personnages nés des rapports déjà peu clairs entre les deux voix, celle qui nous parle et celle qui lui dicte ce dont elle parle, nous avons plutôt l'impression d'une confusion complète que d'un effet de structuration" (p. 71).

The second part of the study begins with a generally convincing but too long catalog of word plays, some obvious, some cleverly unearthed, and some "tirés par les cheveux." Fitch then introduces the first of three essential generators of the Trilogy, the word "inventaire" which in itself is important to the text, but which is composed of the elements *inven* [*ter*] and *taire* which reflect the essential dialectic of the text and whose permutations (word plays) engender much of the text. The exposition is clever, occasionally brilliantly so, but the critic once again gets carried away: "Nous avons pu voir que toutes les différentes sortes de jeu auxquelles se livre le langage et que nous avons répertoriées dans le chapitre précédent se trouvent, à un moment ou à un autre, déclenchées par le générateur *inventaire* . D'où la

possibilité de soutenir que même là où ces diverses activités du texte ne figurent pas un terme directement tributaire d'*inventaire*, l'influence de ce générateur y était toujours pour quelque chose" (p. 163). To test the arbitrariness of Fitch's claim, I decided to seek an alternate "essential" generator. I chose the first word that came to mind: it was "merde." I examined the passage quoted by Fitch as "le passage le plus intéressant et le plus dense du point de vue du travail de la signifiance que nous ayons pu trouver dans la Trilogie" (pp. 161-62). In this passage, Fitch finds eleven permutations of "inventaire." I found seventeen permutations of "merde." As a further test, I examined the permutations of the next word that came spontaneously into my mind: "éther." I found fifteen permutations of it.

The importance of the two other textual generators which Fitch discusses is certain; in fact it's obvious. They are the word "rien" and the following passage which recurs with many variations throughout the text: "Ne pas vouloir dire, ne pas savoir ce qu'on veut dire, ne pas pouvoir ce qu'on croit qu'on veut dire, et toujours dire ou presque, voilà ce qu'il importe de ne pas perdre de vue, dans la chaleur de la rédaction" (from *Molloy*, quoted on p. 165).

While the two main theses of Fitch's book appear to this reviewer to be distortions of Beckett's text, it does contain two very illuminating pages which justify the book's existence. The second to last chapter of the first part, entitled "Des Structures aux Dimensions," sets out to relate the structuration/homogeneity dialectic to the ontological dimensions of the novel. The success of this enterprise is indirect, but the final two pages of the chapter (114-15) describe the role of language in the Trilogy and reinforce the textual importance of the notions of *inventer* and *taire*. They also suggest the basic error of the first part of Fitch's study which tries to identify structuration and homogeneity as the basic dialectic of the Trilogy. It seems to me that Fitch himself proves that if the Trilogy is built upon one fundamental dialectic, it is that created by the tension between the need to speak and the desire for silence (for the exhaustion of language).

Fitch's and Saint-Martin's books converge on this major thesis, that Beckett's narrators find it impossible to discover and express their real existence through language, because the language we are forced to employ is exterior and alien, created by others whose experiences are not ours. Language betrays the self, acts as an obstacle to expression. Beckett's narrators seek to exhaust, to purge the imposed language and at the same time to create new modes of expression.

Beckett's universe rejects every vestige of traditional communication. This rejection takes the form of the cathartic expulsion which Fitch describes in terms of the use of language. But, just as they purge themselves of their false language, Beckett's narrators also vomit out the alien structures we call logic, human psychology, rational behavior, symbol, consistency, purpose, effect and significance. The appearance of those structures is merely the waste product of a remarkably courageous process, a self-mutilation, a stripping away of the externally imposed barriers to self-knowledge and self-expression, barriers which are the norms of traditional experience but which threaten the existence of the real self.

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