

# The Self without the Other in Derrida's Khora and Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*

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**Abstract:** The present research investigates the parallelism between Derrida's reading of Plato's Khora and Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*. Out of the rationality of logos, both resist being named and defined. Indeed, the complexity in their comprehension is due to their rejecting the rules and principles of language. As language constructs mentality, whatever is out of its boundaries, remains unnamable. In deconstructing Khora and *The Unnamable*, based on logos/mythos binary opposition, their mise en abyme structures resemble mythos to some extent, while the criteria are not met thoroughly. All the philosophical efforts in defining their essence fail and both remain inexplicable at the end. While deconstructing them based on different binary oppositions, we reach this point that they can be both and, at the same time, neither this nor that. The fact is that the Unnamable and Khora are situated somewhere between participation and exclusion. Oscillating at the threshold of presence/absence binary opposition, both can be comparable to subjectile, where the act of becoming is possible and the appropriate context for artistic representation happens to be. Khora acts as a vessel of creation of beings and forms, and *The Unnamable* creates a space for forming a narration out of the words. In the end, due to the lack of essence, none of them retains anything and both remains intact and neutral. In the end, all the efforts in attributing right characteristics to pin them down would lead into a pile of interpretations and metaphors, which are not referable and reliable and cannot be accounted more than a couple of subjective projections. Their existence and any determination toward their reality remain questionable.

**Keywords:** Plato, Derrida, Beckett, Khora, Unnamable, Self, Other, Identity, Reality, Existence

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## 1. Introduction

Proceeding *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable* is the third novel of Samuel Beckett's Trilogy. In the absence of the standard narratological features, such as a definite and fixed plot, the structure is constructed through what the protagonist says in the form of a long monologue. The reader is trapped in a labyrinth of the protagonist's slow stream of consciousness. The main character is full of words and nothing but words. He survives in his words as he is dissolved in them paradoxically, at the same time.

However, escaping the universal principles of a traditional novel, *The Unnamable*, enjoys a kind of organic unity, or, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge puts it, a complete fusion of form and content. This harmony between form and content creates a sort of strange intimacy that attaches us to *The Unnamable*'s protagonist's core of consciousness, where he tries to speak.

The narration is disjoint and discontinuous. Consisting of reciprocal recollections and reflections, it moves back and forth between the past and the present with brief references to the future. The tone is pessimistic, gloomy, and full of despair. It is a story of a wretched guy, who cannot go on anymore but, he must.

The amorphous protagonist, degraded to an immobilized fetus-like position, has sunken back to the cellular level. Having stripped out of human dignity, he weeps and whines and has no positive perspective ahead. As a resistance strategy against decay and death, which have surrounded him, the language is the only weapon he has. He lives until this agonized and tortured voice is being heard. When this disembodied voice fades out, nothing else remains.

The Others, these passive silent recipients of his story (except Mahood, who is active), whom he calls through different names, come and go in his narration. They sometimes disappear, disguise, or be renamed but, in the end,

their very existence is a matter of doubt. Do they exist independently and authentically? Or are they just the products of his mind and imagination? Do they live, or does he create them as a mirror to look at himself through them?

The significance of the title is that it is a literary work which belongs to the realm of writing the unwritable. It usually refuses to name things and people. Even the few existing names melt into each other and turn into something obscure and confusing. There is no fixed self, integrated, and unified identity. Through this confused narration, the self is scattered by the force of time and space.

To put it in a nutshell, *The Unnamable*, is the story of defining one self's identity based on language. To speak or not to speak, and how we create ourselves by and through words, is the matter. Can language, as a social and communicational tool, fulfill its job in the absence of the Other? In absolute solitude, how is "self" created?

## 2. Literature Review

In *Impotence and Making in Samuel Beckett's Trilogy Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable* as well as *How It Is*, Joanne Shaw investigates how selves, bodies as well as the texts are made in Samuel Beckett's four works, including *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable* and *How It Is*. She explores the role of language in what we create and what we don't. She emphasizes on how Beckett uses the language not only in the abstraction of the subject but in the concretization of it in a bodily form. On the other hand, how the characters use the language to create aesthetically and make up their sterility and impotence in the real world.

Szafraniec, J. D. in her Ph.D. dissertation, *Beckett, Derrida, and the event of Literature*, studies Derrida's perspective on literature and Beckett and the reasons why Derrida feels unable to answer Beckett and write a comment on his works. She argues the ideas of Gilles Deleuze, Stanley Cavell, and Alain Badiou on Beckett in detail, as well.

"Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*: The Story of that Impossible Place Named Silence" by Amir Ali Nojournian focuses on the role of language in Beckett's *The Unnamable*, and the signification of silence in and beyond the language and being. He clarifies how silence motivates speaking and is regarded as an internal aspect of the language.

In the light of the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer and Otto Rank on the notion of suffering and its association with aesthetic reproduction, Paul Stewart reads Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*, in his article "Suffering Fiction in The Unnamable."

## 3. Theoretical Framework

In *On the Name*, Jacques Derrida deconstructs the very concept of Khora in Plato's *Timaeus*. Considered as one of the famous Plato's dialogues, its structure is formed around a quite long monologue by Timaeus of Locri among a group of philosophers, including Socrates, followed by Critias's discussion on the essence of the universe and the story of

creation. Plato did not epitomize the term Khora, however, in ancient Greece, it was used as the realm, the territory, the suburbs of metropolises, and in short, as the place. Plato gives Khora a philosophical perspective and defines it as the vessel of creation, where all the forms are being formed and come to the being. It is described as an inclusive, receiving, nursing, and mothering place, which makes becoming possible.

Different contemporary philosophers, such as Julia Kristeva, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida, benefit Plato's legacy to state their philosophical doctrines. The focus of this research is how Derrida reads and interprets Plato's Khora and to read Beckett's *The Unnamable* from this perspective.

Derrida compares Khora to the subjectile, an artistic term mainly in the field of painting, coined by the French artist, Antoine Artaud. It should not be confused with a piece of canvas or paper, on which painting happens. It is an abstract term, defined as a ground to hold and support the subject of painting. It is not separated or alienated from the painting. It extends behind, through and beyond it and makes the existence of the painting possible. Derrida believes that despite the apparent similarity, Khora is neither the subject nor the subjectile. It is more like a vessel than the container, since it makes a passage and does not hold anything. Therefore, the best example is the mirror, which reflects the exact image of the objects, while it retains nothing. As soon as the object goes out of its canon, the mirror is crystal clear.

Khora stands somewhere unknowable. It can be neither intelligible nor sensible. At the same time, it can be both. It swings between the pole of exclusion and the pole of participation. It belongs to the third genus.

There is a famous quote by Shams-e-Tabrizi, 13<sup>th</sup> C. Persian sage, Sufi mystic, and poet, via which, Khora's position is more understandable:

The writing came through him

In three kinds of scripts:

One that he could read and only he

One that he and others could read

And one that neither he nor anyone else could read.

I am that third script. [4]

While Khora is supposed as a place after all, it has not any geographical coordinates. It does not follow the universal spatial principles. It is more locating rather than being located. It locates all the forms, creatures, beings but, its situation still remains indescribable. No exact place in the universe can be pinned down as its location.

Moreover, it escapes temporality, as well. Khora is atemporal. It stands beyond time. It has been and will always be there. It is older than all the creatures, who have come to existence through her.

Derrida wonders whether he can attribute "She" or "her" to Khora. Timaeus refers to the nursing and mothering characteristics of the Khora, which have a feminine connotation. Therefore, in the beginning, he decides to presuppose Khora as a "She," however, it would be deconstructed as well, at the end.

Based on this presupposition, if she is assumed to be a mother, she is definitely a strange mother, who makes her children come to the world but is not affected by them, at all. There is no sense of belonging between the mother and her offspring. The beings are regarded as schemata, like cut-out figures, as Derrida puts it, imprinted in Khora. It receives the creatures, but its essence, if there is any at all, remains virgin and intact. "The hermeneutic type cannot inform. They cannot give form to Khora except to the extent that inaccessible, impassive, "amorphous" and still a virgin, with the virginity that is radically rebelling against anthropomorphism. it sums to receive these types and give place to them." [7]

We can give her any characteristics or traits, such as mothering or nursing. Khora is elusive. At last, we end up having a pile of attributions and interpretations. No metaphor matches completely without either falling short or going beyond it. Even the name drives us nowhere. Khora is unreducible. Therefore, Derrida comes to this point that the best binary opposition among "all types of existent thing (sensible/intelligible, visible/invisible, form/formless, icon/paradigm)," [7] to deconstruct it, would be mythos/logos.

In the binary opposition of mythos/logos, we have come so far to this point that Khora does not obey the rules of logos. It rejects the familiar rationality of logos. If it has any rationality at all, it should be a twisted, corrupted, and strange self-reflexive one. It should be a hybrid or different reasoning, which is not explicable through the language.

According to Jacques Lacan, we spend most of our life in the Symbolic Order, therefore, as language constructs our unconscious, our mind is language-bound and comprehending something, which stands beyond the boundaries of the language, is quite improbable.

Thus, the unnamable is cast at the fading crossfire of life and death, a grey melancholic territory where the Word is not yet my Being...the unnamable lies between the Real and the Symbolic, the mother and the father, the inside and outside, reduced to a minimal state which belongs to neither [1]

Khora escapes any determination or persistence. There is no principled stand to support any philosophical discussion on the subject of Khora, and all of our subjective interpretations will be peripheral as Khora lacks any essence to talk on, ontologically.

So, what to do? The only solution remains in the analogies whose parallelism helps us to get closer a little. The first analogy belongs to mentioning the guardians of the city at the opening of Plato's *Timaeus*. They protect the city without getting any salary. All their needs are gratified by the citizens directly. They guard the city and make a human wall around it, but they are free of any possessions and assets. They do not keep anything for themselves. In this way, they look like Khora.

Another analogy is Socrates, who does not belong either to the poets and sophists category or philosophers and politicians group and introduces himself as the third genus. His mother was a midwife, and as his mother used to help the

mothers to give birth to babies, he pulls the truth out of their minds. His method is dialectical, and through a chain of specific questions, he shows the contradiction of the answers to the person and helps him/her to figure out the truth. He does not add anything to their solutions or try to impose his ideas. It acts as a vessel, through which the ideas are born, and their becoming come true. Just like Khora!

Back to the binary opposition of Mythos/Logos, so far, Khora's nonbelonging to the realm of logos has been discussed. Now, the question is whether it is a mythos. Derrida mentions the structure of Plato's *Timaeus*. The dialogue was written based on a conversation between a poet named Solon and an Egyptian priest in Egypt years ago. The priest had surprised to hear about the Greek's oral tradition and how they did not keep everything in written form in a reservoir, as the Egyptians used to do. He had believed that this orality and the tradition of passing experiences from a generation to the next through oral narratives and tales kept the Greeks in perpetual childhood. Solon had retold the conversation to the old Critias, and the Old Critias told that story to his great-grandson, the young Critias, in his childhood, over and over.

Now, the young Critias, who has told the story last night, is retelling it for the second time. The labyrinthine structure of the tale, with its several hypodiegetic levels, creates a *mise en abyme*. Solon was a poet and at that time, most of the poets were not supposed as distinguished and trustworthy. Furthermore, the network of multiple narrators in this tale implies a sense of unreliability, (like the opening of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*). These two points make the whole story shaky and questionable, just like the mythos.

The nature of the mythos implies the lack of any definite source and origin. It is like a bastard child without a legitimate father. Not being the father in the picture resembles it to Khora. She does not pair with any father, that is any philosophical framework. She is not explainable or definable through any theoretical schemes and paradigms. She is a strange mother who unlike any ordinary mother, refuses to have any mate. She is a thing *per se* with a self-reflexive and dissymmetrical relationship with herself, if after all we can name it "She" or "her." It does not belong to the world of women. At the end of this strange circular journey, we have reached back the beginning. Khora resists the anthropomorphism. It does not surrender. It remains closed, enigmatic, and unnamable. The only thing that we can claim for sure is that it is a self without the Other.

## 4. Discussion

*The Unnamable* is the clash between the two worlds, inner and outer. It is about how our consciousness gets in relation to the outside, the external context, and how this strange interaction between the two realms, which are ontologically and substantially different, produces meaning and significance.

What we have is the protagonist's narrating voice. It is moving back and forth between the realms of

unconsciousness and consciousness. The more the voice talks, the less is revealed. Talking about himself constantly and obsessively, he cannot or would not drive us anywhere. His identity remains unconquered, intact, and enigmatic. All the detailed information he tries to give us does not lead to a coherent and integrated image of reality.

How old is he? He seems to be an adult, an old one. At least, in his imagination (if not in the memory), he fantasizes (if not remembers) having had wife and children. Despite brief references to his appearance as an adult, his position reminds us more or less of a fetus, covered by the amniotic membrane in the womb.

In which era, does he live? No idea. Nothing of chronological time or at least of any synchronism with the significant historical events is said. He stands out of the time. "I say 'years', though here there are no years. What matters how long? Years is one of Basil's ideas. A short time, a long time? It's all the same. I kept silence, that's all that counts (if that counts - I have forgotten if that is supposed to count). And now it is taken from me again." [5]

His existence, as he refers to it as "I," is self-reflexive. It has no determinate referent. It is not like any other real "I" in the world; even it is not like any other fictional characters of Beckett's literary works, such as Murphy, Molloy or Malone. He refuses to be named and remains unnamable. He claims that he exists but resists against submitting to the logic of the sign system. His existence stands undefinable, covered, mysterious, slippery, and elusive.

Naming, or in other words, symbolizing something by pinning it down to a specific signifier, gives it a kind of universally-accepted factuality. It is bound to the rationality of logos. It becomes a familiar object in the realm of language. Jacques Lacan has already clarified the association of language and reality in the Symbolic Order. Therefore, when something is unnamable, it loses contact with reality.

In the novel, there are other characters, as well. They come and go, appear and disappear. They dissolve in each other and substitute one another. Their existence is sometimes neutral and observing and sometimes active and intervening.

Decidedly Basil is becoming more important: I'll call him Mahood instead (I prefer that, I'm queer). It was he told me stories about me, lived in my stead, issued forth from me, came back to me, entered back into me, heaped stories on my head. I don't know how it was done. I always liked not knowing, but Mahood said it wasn't right. He didn't know either, but it worried him. It is his voice which has often, always, mingled with mine, and sometimes drowned it completely. Until he left me for good (or refused to leave me any more - I don't know). Yes, I don't know if he's here now or far away, but I don't think I am far wrong in saying that he has ceased to plague me. [5]

Mainly, Mahood's relationship is more complicated comparing to Others. His influence on the protagonist, makes doubts whether Mahood is his master. "And what if Mahood were my master?" [5]. The protagonist's tendency to get close to him and yearning for unifying with the Other makes him even have sexual tendencies or fantasies, to some extent.

And that's the kind of jokes in which I sometimes dreamt I dwelt, and even let down my trousers. (Mahood himself nearly coddled me, more than once.) I've been he an instant, hobbling through a nature which (it is only fair to say) was on the barren side and (what is more, it is only just to add) tolerably deserted to begin with. [5]

The point is that this unification (metaphorically expressed in terms of sexual intercourse) never consummated entirely, and it does not exceed from being nearly coddled. There is always a distance between the Self and the Other. The gap may be minimized as the protagonist mentions his voice's mingling with and even drowning in Mahood's, but they are not united and become one, after all. His relationship with the Others and making the distinctive boundaries for each of them are complicated and confusing. He says: "For if I am Mahood, I am Worm too (plop). Or if I am not yet Worm, I shall be when I cease to be Mahood (plop)." [5]

The Other objectifies us and his existence is necessary to guarantee our reality, although, there is a kind of fear and hostility, as well. *The Unnamable's* protagonist loses his mind's clarity and orientation, from time to time. If I exist and the Other exists as well, where is the borderline? Can I have my own words, thoughts, voice, after all? What if the Other colonizes me? Is it any probability of overcoming me and making me subordinated and subjugated to the level that I lose myself?

Is there a single word of mine in all I say? No, I have no voice (in this matter, I have none). That's one of the reasons why I confused myself with Worm. But I have no reasons either, no reason. I'm like Worm, without voice or reason: I'm Worm. No, if I were Worm I wouldn't know it. But I don't say anything, I don't know anything. These voices are not mine, nor these thoughts, but the voices and thoughts of the devils who beset me. Who make me say that I can't be Worm, the inexpugnable. Who make me say that I am he perhaps (as they are). Who make me say that since I can't be he I must be he. That since I couldn't be Mahood (as I might have been), I must be Worm (as I cannot be). But is it still they who say that when I have failed to be Worm I'll be Mahood? [5]

He is folded and isolated in his small world. No one is there. He tries to create the Other(s) to be able to see himself from outside. To observe himself, he has to have another one by his side. Under his gaze, he would be able to objectify himself, as Sartre puts it. This moving from subject to object position makes his reality. He tries to prove himself real. And all the concerns about is to prove himself real. Basil, Mahood, Billy in the bowl, and Worm are just his alter-egos and avatars.

I therefore baptize him Worm. It was high time. "Worm." I don't like it, but I haven't much choice. It will be my name too, when the time comes, when I needn't be called Mahood any more (if that happy time ever comes). Before Mahood there were Others like him, of the same breed and creed, armed with the same prong. But Worm is the first of his kind. (That's soon said: I must not forget I don't know him.) Perhaps he too will weary, renounce the task of forming me and make way for another, having laid the foundations. [5]

In the end, he becomes disillusioned and confesses that there is no other one, and he is a Self without the Other. All that he had already fantasized about his foils and vice-existents does not decrease his loneliness. Seeing fire through a window in a cold winter night does not make us warm, so this self-fooling game to create Others and name them and try to connect with them would not help him to prove his existence and make him be a citizen of the real world. The whole novel becomes a long internal monologue in search of identity and finding a name to prove himself (or better itself) real.

Now there is no one here but me. No one wheels about me, no one comes towards me, no one has ever met anyone before my eyes. These creatures have never been: only I and this black void have ever been. And the sounds? No, all is silent. And the lights, on which I had set such store - must they too go out? Yes, out with them: there is no light here. No grey either: black is what I should have said... That then is what (since I have to speak) I shall speak of, until I need speak no more. And Basil and his gang? Inexistent. Invented to explain I forget what...all invented, basely, by me alone (with the help of no one, since there is no one), to put off the hour when I must speak of me. There will be no more about them. [5]

He understands that there is no one but him. In this absolute loneliness and isolation, he has to speak. Since he is made of words if he stops talking, his silence would be his death. In reality, he has been degraded and reduced to a voice, and if it is not heard, simply, his existence would cease to be. "I am free: abandoned. All for nothing again. Even Mahood has left me, I'm alone...I have to speak (whatever that means). Having nothing to say, no words but the words of Others, I have to speak. No one compels me to (there is no one): it's an accident, a fact." [5]

He has just words, but they are not his. The language, which is the most essential expressive and communicational tool, which we have, is not ours. It is given to us, and we have to adapt ourselves with this inefficient device. He talks and talks and tries to be clear as much as possible, but he ends up in a circle of contradictions and paradoxes. In the end, we are not closer to him. He remains undefinable and unnamable. The inherent Derridean undecidability of the text defers the protagonist's primary purpose and in the end, we are left with a pile of interpretations, which may not be even close to the picture. Who is this unnamable protagonist? What is his essence? Is he real? These and more other questions remain unanswered. Then, after all, what is it?

In the Cartesian thought, 'thinking' and 'being' are in the relation of cause and effect. Yet, Beckett's *The Unnamable* neither thinks nor is in this world. I believe Beckett's point of departure from Cartesian logic is the way the 'self' finally situates himself: "in the middle" of this duality. *The Unnamable*'s protagonist 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. [12]

He is neither real or unreal. He is neither present nor

absent. He is neither subject nor object, and at the same time, he is both. In this way, he is similar to Derridean Khora or other metaphysical entities, which enjoy a kind of ambiguity in the matter of presence and absence. Beckett's works always have strong biblical allusions. So does *The Unnamable*. Just

The title phrase, 'the unnamable', as the first point, can be attributed to both God and différance. Yet, it is not simply an allusion; it deals with the same mystical themes of negation, the limits of language and self, the beyond and the impossible. [12]

His essence, if he has any at all, is nothing by words. This is the reason why in the end, the shortage and inefficiency of the language directly affect his being. His being is constructed and reconstructed by and through language. Hence, he has a centerless, loose, shaky, unstable, and uncertain self, which is changed easily using the words. The unfixity results in the unnamability of the character, no mot juste, no exact right word pins down his identity. Not just name, in the end, he denies any pronoun, as well. "There is no name for me, no pronoun for me: all the trouble comes from that. "That?" It's a kind of pronoun too. It isn't that either, I'm not that either." [5] Not only *The Unnamable*'s protagonist cannot call "He" but also the neural pronoun of "It" or as he puts it "That" are not attributable. *The Unnamable*'s protagonist's being is so instable that silence would wipe it out, immediately. If his voice stops, he will lose his mysterious connection with reality, all together.

The impotent and inept nature of language as a tool of self-expression and naming pushes the protagonist toward silence, the realm of the unknown still, it is temporary, and the obligation to speak zips him back into the boundaries of reality. He is in the chain of words, better to say, the signifiers that defer the ultimate meaning and do not lead him toward any fixed signified. He is immersed in the language, and as he comes to more in-depth insight, he sees that he has been made of words, and nothing is imaginable for him out of the language.

He is obliged to speak, as his very being shakes at the very edge of the abyss of silence and death. Just like Khora, his (its) very being does not obey the rationality of the logos and remains undefinable and unnamable.

Though it seems paradoxical, he takes his identity through words. He creates a world where he lives in with the Others. All of them are introduced to the reader by name. He expresses how he has been the victim of the Others. Being vulnerable and unprotected, he can do nothing but weeping, and the flow of never-ending tears is supposed as a boon. Now, a critical question is whether this constant crying is out of pain and grief. The answer is significant because suffering is a door to reality, and life and for a being, it is a sign to prove his/her existence. Suffering is the very essence of life and reality. We are born with the original sin, and as a punishment, we are condemned to pain and death. Hence, as long as we are alive, we suffer. Does the protagonist suffer? Does he feel any pain?

His pathetic condition with dismemberment (lacking an arm and a leg), a stiff dysfunctional neck, no ear, no hair, no

erection, the strange softening and hardening in different parts of the body, the perceptual issues due to the eyesight, the hearing and smell failings and as he puts it a pitiful lack of human shape are among the abnormalities and irregularities, which he bears. Moreover, he is unable to gratify any of his needs, and he needs the Others desperately to help him in any move. Despite all these facts, included in his medical report, he mentions having painless ulcers, and through repetition, he emphasizes that. Furthermore, he refers to his insensitivity toward the blows. Therefore, at least at the level of physicality, there is no sign of pain and suffering, and as it is written in the medical report, he is sweet-tempered, which would be strange if he had any pain.

What about the emotional suffering? He explains that he had a wife and children, who were born when he was absent. His grandparents lived there with them in an extended familial colony of ten or eleven members. The whole family died because of some food poisoning, catastrophically. He heard their shrieks, and when they died, he saw how their bodies began to decompose, but all his reaction was turning away his head.

However, in some parts of the book, he claims that he suffers, and his suffering is not comparable with Molloy's, Malone's, and Murphy's. But in some other parts, he clearly states that he does not feel anything and denies any suffering, therefore, even from this point of view, his contradictory and chaotic information about whether she suffers, puts him on the threshold of beings. This neither/nor along with both/and situation, which put him in the "in-between", resembles him to Khora, once again.

Nonetheless, he gives details about his body and physicality frequently. Is it the same body that we have? Just like Khora, this ambiguity comes to our mind whether *The Unnamable's* protagonist has any physical body at all, or in other words, does he have any substance or, in general, essence? Or as reference [12] puts it: Through Beckett's schizophrenic textuality, constituting the Unnamable's spurious project to find his voice, the flesh has been degenerated and disintegrated, not to pure nonexistence, to the slippery plane of inexistence, language: "it cannot be a simple negation of body or of life; if there were no body, there would simply be a ghost – if there were no life, there would be a corpse. What the author needs is an asymptotic reduction of the being broken down into its raw nature, a pure matrix of speech".

As all these questions do not have any definite answer, another strategy should be chosen to prove him real: Sexuality. Auto Rank discusses the trauma of the birth and how pain and suffering start from experiencing birth. He believes that undoing this process and going back into the womb is one of our instinctual and natural longings. According to Rank, the sexual intercourse from a man's perspective could fulfill this need, partially.

Rank argued that the trauma of birth can be overcome through analysis - in which the analyzed "biologically" repeats the period of pregnancy and so achieves "a belated accomplishment of the incomplete mastery of the birth trauma" - or, in the case of heterosexual relations and from

the male perspective, through sex "the gratification of partially returning to the mother" is encompassed in the act. Rank further claims cultural production can also be a successful compensation for the initial horror of having been born. In this consolation, the male "has to create for himself a substitute for this [female sexual] reproduction, by identifying himself with the 'mother' and the creation resulting from it of cultural and artistic product. [14]

*The Unnamable's* protagonist is impotent. While the impotence does not necessarily make anyone unreal but having sexual activities is assumed as one of the characteristics of real living creatures. He talks about it explicitly. He explains how all his efforts and challenges fail, even at the level of arousal.

"The tumefaction of the penis! The penis! Well now, that's a nice surprise - I'd forgotten I had one. What a pity I have no arms: there might still be something to be wrung from it. No, 'tis better thus. At my age, to start masturbating again, it would be indecent. And fruitless. And yet one can never tell. With a yo heave ho, concentrating with all my might on a horse's rump, at the moment when the tail rises: who knows, I might not go altogether empty-handed away. Heaven, I almost felt a flutter! Does that mean they did not geld me? I could have sworn they had gelded me. But perhaps I am getting mixed up with other scrota. Not another stir our of it in any case. I'll concentrate again. (A Clydesdale! A Suffolk stallion!) Come, come, a little co-operation please: finish dying." [5]

When he cannot regress to his safe pre-natal stage through sexuality, he simulates the mother's womb metaphorically. In the second part of the story, the protagonist narrates his fetus-like position in a jar, which is a metaphor for the womb. Besides *The Unnamable's* protagonist's similarity to Derridean Khora, as explained before, from another perspective, the jar itself turns to be a kind of Khora, as well. It makes the act of becoming possible. The protagonist regresses to be reborn. In the jar, he posits at the threshold of being. No one but her caretaker notices him. His condition reminds us of the pregnancy period. Although he does not belong to the world of livings, his existence is concerned by a woman, like the fetus, who is present to his/her mom-to-be and not yet to the Others. The protagonist is both absent and present, and at the same time, neither present nor absent.

He begins to confess with more insight. He states that he has always lived in that jar and has never left there. All of his knowledge is given to him from the outside, from those unknown Others. He speaks in their language, but it leads him toward madness, that he is obliged to speak but cannot say anything except those things that matter, the fundamental questions, which quintessentially define his identity. That part stands beyond his words, inaccessible, inexplicable, and unnamable.

He lives in a jar. No one notices him, but Marguerite or Madeleine (he changes the name) who acts as a mother figure. She feeds him, cleans his receptacle once a while, covers him tight with a piece of cloth. This sheltering makes him cry each time, and he emphasizes that he does not weep out of

emotions, but does it as thinks that he is indebted to it, as a kind of little private ritual.

He cares for her feelings and appreciates that she never complains when she does the cleaning. He tries to see himself from her point of view and objectify himself under her gaze. This process of objectification from the Other's perspective relates him to the reality and all his existential anxiety and restlessness, all his efforts, are due to his identity crisis: to find a name and prove himself real.

Yes, I represent for her a tidy little capital and, if I should ever happen to die, I am convinced she would be genuinely annoyed. (This should help me to live.) I like to fancy that when the fatal hour of reckoning comes (if it ever does), and my debt to nature is paid at last, she will do her best to prevent the removal. [5]

His whole life turns into a constant waiting for her to come. He is afraid to lose her and pray to protect her. His feeling toward her is quite like a child to his mother. He is attached to her kindness and care. She makes a nest out of the rags to make him warm during the snowy days. She does extra things to make him happy, to comfort him, like powdering his head. He looks eagerly forward to discovering her next little surprise for relieving him. He uses her care as a proof to his real presence, that he exists.

The next thing is somehow to connect this with the unhappy Madeleine and her great goodness. Attentions such as hers, the pertinacity with which she continues to acknowledge me: do not these sufficiently attest my real presence here, in the Rue Brancion, never heard of in my island home? [5]

He likes to be there, in his fetus-like position in the jar. There, he is at peace and safety. No danger, no harm threatens him. Doesn't this ultimate position resemble death? Is that jar, actually a womb or a tomb? Whatever it is, the protagonist asserts that he has always been there, and his beginning coincides with that of the place. Just like Khora, the protagonist seems to enjoy his state of preexistence before the Others.

It would help me, since to me too I must attribute a beginning, if I could relate it to that of my abode. Did I wait somewhere for this place to be ready to receive me? Or did it wait for me to come and people it? By far the better of these hypotheses (from the point of view of usefulness) is the former, and I shall often have occasion to fall back on it. But both are distasteful. I shall say therefore, that our beginnings coincide: that this place was made for me, and I for it, at the same instant. [5]

*The Unnamable* is the symbol of negation. It negates and withdraws from the evil world that lacks the order and rationality. The absurdity of the life makes him feel detached and lonely. It revolts against something that is impossible to revolt. In the end, it is locked in itself and trapped in a kind of metaphysical solipsism.

Beckett tries to find the origin to this compulsion to the abstract by fighting abstractions, stripping them away one by one until there is nothing left of experience, and yet here to, right on the brink of silence, the narrator still speaks, at the

bottom of abstraction is more abstraction. While completely broken, the signifier, stripped of its meaning, mutters in the strange voice of the disaster which befell it. It neither could really have experienced this disaster nor does it contain its meaning. But its crippled signification nonetheless captures its mystery in the net of empty abstraction. [6]

Another similarity between *The Unnamable* and Khora is the structure. *The Unnamable* benefits a labyrinth of tales in a mise en abyme structure. In which, the self looks to the Other as an observer. This splitting happens strangely. He creates some alter-egos and mirrors them. Just like two facing mirrors, which make endless reflections, he creates a mise en abyme. He looks through himself via his relationship with Mahood, Worm, Billy in the bowl, and the Others. They sometimes turn into passive recipients, who listen to his endless stories and sometimes turn into active agents, who shape his life.

As the notion of Khora is deconstructed by Derrida, *The Unnamable* can also be read "in the relation to the deconstruction of selfhood's claims to self-presence as found in the thought of Derrida and Deleuze. [9]

The novel is narrated from the first person's point of view. "I" oscillates between Mahood and Worm. What is the significance of these names? Mahood may consist of man+hood or mein+hood. "(The suffix 'hood,' added after the substantive indicates the essence of the former functional: the motherhood as the essence of the mother, manhood as the essence of man.)" [15]. Basil, which has turned into Mahood, reminds us of the words such as base or basis. "which underlies, supports, like substance or subject. In other words, it is the cognitive subject, and possibly more potent than just the Cartesian ego cogito: through the association with the Hegelian 'Meinung,' Mahood's 'minehood' and his 'time abolishing joys of impersonal and disinterested speculation' point the way to the absolute, totalizing speculation of the Phenomenology of Spirit." [15]. Unlike Mahood as an influential entity, Worm is silent and passive. "it sounds like the (incorrect) 'where'm' in 'where'm I?' fashioned after the correct proposition 'where's he?' [15]

Worm can be assumed as a place where our identity is. It holds the subjectivity. His position between Mahood and Worm, makes him in-between, once again.

The in-between position of *The Unnamable*'s protagonist, existing somewhere between exclusion (neither/nor) and participation (both/and), between subject and object, between the present and absent, makes it similar to Khora, in Derrida's terminology.

This "autobiographic" but also "proteiform" nature of *The Unnamable*'s protagonist allows it to question subjectivity from a position different from that of the subject. The Unnamable, as I have already said, is the "between," in other words precisely that which precludes naming and thereby subjectifying (hence its being called the Unnamable). As the "between," the Unnamable, rather than a subject in the traditional sense is what Antonin Artaud, and Derrida after him, called a "subjectile." [15]

In Artaud's terminology, subjectile is not a concrete term,

just like a sheet of paper or canvas; it is a supportive abstract environment to make the representation possible. Just like subjectile, as *The Unnamable*'s protagonist is neural, and out of essence, it makes the narration possible. It has no identity, no signature, no track. It resists being labeled. It is like Khora, and through which words are born and appear.

## 5. Conclusion

The self needs to be under the Other's gaze to be objectified. The Other's presence gives us the stand to represent our existence in the world of reality. In the absence of the Other, what happens to the Self?

Is there any chance for Self without the Other to prove his existence? Derrida's Khora and Beckett's *The Unnamable*'s protagonist are two examples of the Self without the Other. Both cannot be defined through the rationality of the logos. Both resist being named and defined through language. As our mind is constructed through language, understanding something without any name, or even pronoun would be impossible. No matter, that Khora is silent, and *The Unnamable*'s protagonist is full of disjoint narratives or only words. None of them drives us anywhere. The reserved, dark, and hollow silence of Khora locks us out of the nature of such a strange thing. On the other hand, *The Unnamable*'s protagonist's words make no difference as they defer the meaning, and this ever undecidability makes us lose the orientation. Their elusive essence resist against the factuality of the language and stands outside the borders of reality.

Therefore, no matter the subject speaks or not, in the absence of the Other, it remains unnamable and unreal. The Other may be intrusive, hostile, brutal, or even colonizing, but it turns our monologue into a dialogue. Under his/her gaze, we become describable, definable, namable, and real. It is the magic of the Other.

In the absence of the Other, the mirror to look at ourselves would shatter. There would be no image of us in the world. As the great Persian poet, Rumi, in yearning for a mentor and soulmate, complains how desperately he is in need of an "Other" to make him like a mirror to look at, and that mirror was Shams-e-Tabrizi. Rumi could not recognize himself and did not find his true self until he was objectified by a more significant subject as Shams, then his very reality was born.

I wanted someone of my type to make into my qibla [the direction one faces in prayer] and turn to, for I had grown tired of myself. Do you understand what I mean by having grown tired of myself? Then, having turned into a qibla, he would understand and comprehend what I am saying. [15]

Without the Other, at most, we would remain in a fetus-like position, which is assumed as unreal or at least belonging to another ontological level of reality.

*The Unnamable*'s protagonist's life is nothing but a subjective imagination. Derrida's belief that there is nothing outside the text, proves the oddness of *The Unnamable*'s existence which is completely textual and abstract. It is made of words and even the words belong to the Others. There is no extension or reference to any extra-textual notion in the

novel. This depersonalized lonely existence resists any rational or logic paradigms we know. It is a life without life. It proves the point that how language is not referral. Having no substance resembles *The Unnamable* to Khora.

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## Dedication

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