

## With Beckett, The Perilous Journey

The archetype of the perilous journey is as old as mythology itself<sup>1</sup>. From the Hellenic tradition, we are familiar with the epic wanderings of Odysseus and Vergil. The medieval play *Everyman* follows the same theme. The trials of Shakespeare's *King Lear* fit the archetype. The *Pilgrim's Progress* continues the tradition. In the twentieth century, the archetype remains a recurrent one. Examples include the Yeatsian Byzantium quest, the Joycean use of the Homeric myth in *Ulysses* and Beckett's usage in a range of works, most notably, perhaps, *Waiting for Godot*, where he takes the idea of the wanderer hero and reduces it almost nothing, no real quest but merely a pseudo - saviour of dubious name and one bereft of purpose<sup>2</sup>.

The idea is alive and well in contemporary literature. Paul Durcan in a recent assessment of his work states –

‘Looking back on my life as a practising artist I see it as a journey, or a series of journeys. My work as poet has always been searching for the *other place*.... It is no accident that most of my books have the names of places in them’<sup>3</sup>.

I use the archetype widely - it is most evident in ‘Letter to Connla’<sup>4</sup> and *Near St. Mullins*. It informs *The Burren Days* and ‘Decisions’<sup>5</sup>. It occurs specifically, in shorter poems such as ‘A Drifting Whitethorn’<sup>6</sup> and ‘Passover Night’<sup>7</sup>. ‘A Drifting Whitethorn’, with its ghostly

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<sup>1</sup> E. Alexander, *The Universal Myths*. See Section: ‘Distant Quests and Mortal Tests’, pp. 231-261.

<sup>2</sup> K.H. Burkman Ed. et al., *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett*, Essay by S.D. Brienza, ‘Perilous Journeys on Beckett’s Stages’, p.31.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kearney Ed. et al., *Across the Frontiers, Ireland in the 1990's*, P. Durcan, ‘Passage to Utopia’ p.192.

<sup>4</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, pp. 8-44.

<sup>5</sup> Ennis, *In a Green Shade*, pp. 7-25. ‘Decisions’ presents a portrayal of the Irish male military psyche over a thousand years.

<sup>6</sup> Ennis, *A Drink of Spring*, p.14.

<sup>7</sup> Ennis, *In a Green Shade*, pp. 105-107.

title, has for speaker my terrified father recalling a journey made at the dead of night across lonely fields to summon the priest for his dying friend, Tom Coyne<sup>8</sup>, who had grown delirious. In 'Passover Night', where the title recalls the Jewish Passover, the aged Magdalen tells how, out of love, she brazened her way across a hostile Jerusalem in the darkness to the Tomb of Shame when it was neither politic nor expedient to do so. A perusal of the *Contents* of my *Selected Poems* indicates a widespread usage of the journey motif from *Night on Hibernia* (published in 1976) to *Telling the Bees* (published in 1995).

Specific comparisons can be made with the works of Samuel Beckett in my usage of the recurring 'Perilous Journey' motif. Typical of Beckett's characters is the non-route<sup>9</sup>. It may seem ludicrous to apply the wandering - hero motif to characters that can scarcely move, yet this is what Beckett does. He appropriates journey motifs and then subverts them or inverts them ironically, thus heightening both the tragedy and comedy of the drama.

In their quest for meaning at the end of *Waiting for Godot*, Pozzo and Lucky enjoin a 'Let's go', but they do not move. *Endgame* concludes in tableau with Clov all dressed up in hiking boots, complete with hat, jacket and suitcase with no place to go. Conversely, *Krapp*, psychologically frozen on his tape recorder, traverses great distances to the past. Using a similar technique, 'This other Umbria'<sup>10</sup> has the speechless, stroke - bound, Bianconi traversing the many miles from Ireland to Umbria and back again around Ireland.

In this journey, in my work as in Beckett's, characters also lack a central reference point. In Beckett's *Malone*, the protagonist writing in his own bed attempts to centre himself within

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<sup>8</sup> Ennis, *A Drink of Spring*, reference to Tom Coyne: 'Coyne's' p.13, *Night on Hibernia*, also 'Galaxy in White', p.38, 'Run, Hare Run' p.41.

<sup>9</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, p.29.

<sup>10</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, pp 46-60.

stories drawn from the circumference of the external world but since he then searches inward, rather than outward, for company and material, he is constantly shifting and decentralising and at the end imagines he is within another's head. He loses all hope for a centered 'identity'<sup>11</sup>. In *The Unnamable*, the unnamable is in the same predicament: he begins and ends by seeking a place in which to exist.

The unnamed twin in 'Letter to Connla'<sup>12</sup> takes the same non-route. The end of the poem flows back into its beginning (in water): fleeing across the midlands with his brother's illustrated manuscript, the lay monk has only the thoughts in his head for company and a few scribbles on vellum. He can stay nowhere more than fleetingly. In the Suibne tradition, he has no place any more he can call home: antagonist to clergy and withdrawn from kin, hunted by cleric, filidh and the law enforcers, he approaches non-entity both physically and metaphorically. He doesn't even allude to his name as if this very concept had ceased to be.

Like Beckett, for literary technique, I make extensive use of monologue (personal storytelling) incorporating dramatic and cinematic usages<sup>13</sup>. In this way it is possible to achieve a certain lyricism of language and prose rhythms akin to poetry. (In an unrecorded exchange while preparing for an RTE interview<sup>14</sup> and about to read a passage from 'Orpheus' I referred to 'the first paragraph' in 'Maenads' and was queried as to why I hadn't used the term 'stanza'). An espousal of this essential lyricism is enjoined on poets by Colin Falck as a necessary prerequisite of future style<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, p.30.

<sup>12</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, pp. 8-44.

<sup>13</sup> R. Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, Part 2, 'The Techniques' pp. 23-61; p.49. Time and Space Montage, Flashbacks etc.

<sup>14</sup> *Poetry Now*, RTE Interview with Theo Dorgan, 4 February 1997.

<sup>15</sup> C. Falck, *Myth, Truth and Literature*, pp.152-156.

Beckett's use of the monologue is taken to the extreme in *Imagination Dead Imagine* where place of narration is superimposed on narration of place, both meeting in a rotunda within a white dome, i.e. skull or personal Golgotha. The perspective of Van Gogh in 'Warming the Revolver Butt'<sup>16</sup> is also from this 'vantage' point as he surveys the cruciform paths through the cornfield. This particular sonnet opens with 'It is finished'. 'Finished, it's finished', says Hamm<sup>17</sup> also. Beckett's fascination with the head, or animated skull, demonstrates a deeply felt Celtic influence<sup>18</sup>, which also affects the author:

'Keltoi, Keltoi, prizing the loveliness of flagon and torc:  
Heads are nailed to the door posts of our acerbic houses.'

'Letter to Connla'<sup>19</sup>

In Beckett's works, as in my poems under discussion, 'stage space' moves, almost invariably, from outdoors to indoors to mental landscape<sup>20</sup>. Winnie's bleak and blazing landscape is a hell of the mind. In *Play* the locale shifts to the purgatory of three post-mortem souls with heads stuck in urns centered on stage. *Embers* plays solely inside Henry's head. *Eh, Joe* uses the camera to peer into the brain as a female overvoice transcribes the protagonist's thoughts. In *That Time* we see against a totally dark backdrop only an ancient man's head on a pillow, facing us portrait-like ten feet above stage level, as three voices (representing fate) coming from beyond the stage recall disjointed eras of the man's life. This perspective is repeated in 'This Other Umbria',<sup>21</sup> where Bianconi, stroke bound, immobile and speechless on his death bed plays out his life story in gasps, the eleven-line Italianate curial sonnet structuring the

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<sup>16</sup> Ennis, *Down in the Deeper Helicon*, p.51.

<sup>17</sup> Beckett, *Endgame*, p.12. 'Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished'.

<sup>18</sup> N. Chadwick, *The Celts*, - Heads, as Basis of Cult, pp. 157-159.

<sup>19</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza p.32.

<sup>21</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, pp.46-60.

various episodes of his lifestory. At the end, centered within a vision of horses, and defying all the odds, he raises his head from the pillow -

‘After you!

After....’<sup>22</sup>

The verisimilitude of the medical condition is preserved, the space between the initial and final vision of horses and the last seizure being but a few seconds, enough to tell a life story, or have it rush before our eyes before Bianconi dies. The emphasis is on the head of Bianconi -

‘My swart curls shone once for you tinged with Titian’.<sup>23</sup>

This ‘unspeaking’ voice tumbles out as he remembers his horses, ‘Vanna and the Umbria of his childhood.

Beckett’s stage shrinks to a platform for interior journeys and then expands to subsume or to suggest a huge skull where the world journey continues<sup>24</sup>. Actor and stage are reduced to words alone - both word and gesture are restored to primal expressive function - a baseline anthropos. There is a recreation of past selves and the projection of future ones.

Consciousness, while it lasts, tries desperately to reach the goal of an identity or at least the certainty of existence. My ‘Telling the Bees’<sup>25</sup> is a similar platform for interior journeys.

The speaker’s persona drifts in and out of multiple personae on a private road from Genesis to Nirvana<sup>26</sup>. The various sections of the work underline this process, – ‘The Day of The Swarms’, ‘Ultimata’, ‘Torching the Hives’, ‘Esparto Man’ and ‘Nirvana’, – the first two

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p.60.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p.58.

<sup>24</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, pp. 62-100.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, back-cover page, summary description, ‘blurb’ of the book.

suggesting Beginning and End, the other three sections the ‘en-route’ particulars. The speaker is ‘mute anthropos’<sup>27</sup>. The ‘mute anthropos’ is a continuation of the ‘speechless’ Bianconi and ‘Unnamed’ theme of ‘Letter to Connla’. The ‘mute anthropos’ state, or stance, is connected to the ‘feebleness of one’s identity’ and ‘the casual role of the self’ terms used by the Italian post-modern philosopher, Gianni Vattimo’s as quoted by Paul Durcan<sup>28</sup>. Durcan cites Vattimo’s injunction as motto for ‘the new post-modern era, [his] Vattimo’s hope for an end to ideological war and violence’<sup>29</sup>. Durcan cites Kavanagh’s desire not to have an identity - for Kavanagh ‘the incompleteness of the self’ was a virtue. The persona in ‘Telling the Bees’ in his incompleteness identifies, among others, with kindred spirits - Lorca<sup>30</sup>, Vergil<sup>31</sup>, various key Grecian figures of myth<sup>32</sup>, Solomon<sup>33</sup>, Democritus<sup>34</sup>, Shiva<sup>35</sup>, River Phoenix<sup>36</sup>, the Shaman<sup>37</sup>, Kama<sup>38</sup>, Fergus<sup>39</sup>, Patroclus<sup>40</sup>, Palaeolithic Man<sup>41</sup>, Odysseus<sup>42</sup>, Eliot<sup>43</sup>, Primal Mother<sup>44</sup> and Children<sup>45</sup>.

There is, then, a common human universality apparent in the journey archetype. We must be moving ahead even if we are sloth-bound.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p.195.

<sup>28</sup> Kearney *op. cit.*, P. Durcan, p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.195.

<sup>30</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, p.64.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.67.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.70.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.73.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, pp 75,83.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp 76,89,97.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.79.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.80.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.80.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.81.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.86.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.91.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, pp.94-96.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p.98.

In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* the focus is on inaction as if the drama itself is god-less wanderer or vehicle moving too slowly. Mrs. Rooney exclaims, 'Start her up, I beseech you, and let us be off - this is awful.'<sup>46</sup> The words are loaded and in antithesis - the creation/creator 'start', the primal 'her', the Christian 'beseech' - 'awful' in the original sense of 'awe-inspiring' and of the Lowellian 'Terminal Days', 'I feel awful': in *All That Fall* the universality of the road is shown in its historical progression of vehicles from primitive cart and dung to modern train. In contrast, *The Burren Days* exists in anti-type to this barren story of lovers. The Yamaha 850 speeds the lovers around Ireland, although as Rory Brennan states in his essay, 'Contemporary Irish Poetry: An Overview'<sup>47</sup>, the 'Contemporary "road movie" stories [in my work] capture the pointlessness and lack of alternative in provincial settings'. The road motif occurs again in *Arboretum* and in the 'Esparto Man' Section of 'Telling the Bees', in the latter case as in the American road - movie tradition; the final sentences of 'Voices' echo the concluding lines of Mike on the road in *My Own Private Idaho*<sup>48</sup>. In Beckett, as in 'Orpheus', 'Suibne' and the 'Unnamed' the characters are on a quest for salvation and transcendence, a journey that in this world is, as often as not, apparently futile and leads to the interior of the Abandonment in the Skull of Golgotha.

A related image to the journey archetype is that of the ladder. In *Endgame* Clov's ascensions of the ladder are ritualistically significant: in several cultures, and as depicted in many different art forms, a ladder serves as the road from earth to heaven (i.e. Jacob's Ladder): but Clov's examination of the outside elicits merely a sour laugh<sup>49</sup>. Attempting, initially, a more positive profile, the ladder metaphor appears as a positive symbol for political regeneration both in the trouble-engulfed contemporary Russia and Northern Ireland in 'The Lost Honey' -

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<sup>46</sup> Beckett, *All That Fall*, p.18.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Kenneally, Ed. *Poetry in Contemporary Irish Literature*, *Irish Literary Studies* 43, p.23.

<sup>48</sup> Film by Gus Van Sant, starring River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves, CBS Fox.

<sup>49</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, p.37.

‘I go up and down the blessed ladder. The day’s climbing is endless’<sup>50</sup>.

The Beckett reference connects to the philosophy of Chardin<sup>51</sup> and the mood of the film, *El Espíritu de la Colmena*<sup>52</sup>. At the end of the sonnet just quoted all that can be stated, and stated with ambiguity, is that ‘There’s promise in the oil seed rape’. ‘Stocks are divided’. The coda casts a cool Cartesian eye over the poem.

The idea of the centre is a further related image to that of the journey. It occurs throughout in Beckett. Hamm’s striving for the centre is linked to his preoccupation with order and power. In psychological terms, to be ‘centered’ means to be in control of oneself and thus have the power of stability - a security that the fragmented Unnamable utterly lacks and that all Beckett’s characters vainly seek. The theme of dubious centre, sacrificial centre, or total lack of centredness finds clear parallels, also, in my work. Everything revolves around Mr. Joyce in the new Bord Baine land in *The Burren Days*. He is a type of ‘Lady Macbeth’, and directs all tests carried out on the Milk Product. The couple in *Arboretum* are the empty centre through which the family axle turns.<sup>53</sup> There is no still centre for the vagrant unnamed youth of ‘Letter to Connla’. Uisnech, the Irish Omphalos, is deserted<sup>54</sup>. Ray and Grainne traverse the circumference of Ireland and move across it finally without finding a place to settle - ‘but where to finally, the cold steppes of Aran?’<sup>55</sup> Everywhere the idea and concept of Centre, Land, Home, Country, Work and Family exist though their absence. In his

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<sup>50</sup> Ennis, *Down in the Deeper Helicon*, p.85.

<sup>51</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, especially Chardin’s analogy of the hive to a ‘spiritual’ community.

<sup>52</sup> Film by Victor Erice. Trans. ‘The Spirit of the Beehive’, starring Ana Torrent, Isabel Telleria et al, VRPC.

<sup>53</sup> Ennis, *Arboretum*, p.20.

<sup>54</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, p.11.

<sup>55</sup> Ennis, *The Burren Days*, p.31.



direction of *Endgame* in Berlin in 1967 Beckett sought geometric ‘Pythagorean’ precision and patterning. Hamm’s chair was to be at the absolute centre: his position at the end was to be identical to that at the start<sup>56</sup>. In ‘Telling the Bees’ the persona also would

‘Breakfast on bread and honey  
like the long-lived Pythagoreans’<sup>57</sup>.

The question of words needed to fill the journey needs to be considered. A great fear in the Beckett character, as for any poet, or writer, is that one day words will fail, utterly. Like the wanderer or quester who is required to utter precisely the correct words in precisely the correct order as an effective formula, Winnie seems to fear disaster if she fails in her exact performance of linguistic ritual:

‘the bell goes, and little or nothing said, little or nothing done (raising parasol).  
That is the danger. (Turning Front). To be guarded against’... maximum  
pause.<sup>58</sup>

Any pause of great length signals anxiety of maximum intensity for Beckett’s Winnie. The same despairing hope in words and the act of writing fills the mind of the Unnamed in ‘Letter to Connla’ as he drowns; his end may be read as a meiosis for life:

‘Connla, these verses which you will never read  
Connla, these lines which I will never write from within  
my head for my hands are too busy parting,  
closing branchlets - and the waves - accept them.’<sup>59</sup>

Even the ‘mon frère’, that Eliot could presume, does not exist<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, p.38.

<sup>57</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, p.73.

<sup>58</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, pp 40-41, quoting Beckett, *Happy Days*, p. 35.

<sup>59</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, p.36.

<sup>60</sup> Eliot, *The Wasteland*, l. 76.

One may compare Noh Drama where the highest emotional level calls forth the least physical movement, a near stillness of performers i.e. ‘the soul is dancing’: in my work as in Beckett’s ironic use of this dramatic effect, the moment of suspension signals terror, certainly not transcendence.<sup>61</sup>

At two points Winnie takes the gun from her purse and transforms it into a character. In the same vein, in the sonnet, ‘Warming the Revolver Butt’<sup>62</sup>, Van Gogh’s only tangible link with mankind in his final few hours is the gun which he turns on himself as the creative impulse (of the latest cornfield) wanes in conclusion and exhaustion. Words (or brush strokes) are supremely important - they become the only company on the road, the only helpers, the only indicators of the traveller’s existence.

An utter loneliness subsumes the persona, character and artist in ‘Letter to Connla’. The Unnamed must face what he would rather not face-

‘Populus Meus, I know the words by heart; the worst is  
I have no people. Have you either, really, Connla?’<sup>63</sup>

There is little ‘communitas’, either, ultimately, in the world of Beckett’s characters, although in *Godot* the tramps do feel the ‘communitas’ of mutual dependence and in *All That Fall* the travellers share the ‘communitas’ that arises from hard times on the road. *Company* denies all human company - a lone man’s last word is ‘alone’ as he devises other voices to keep himself company. The ‘flashbacks’ of Connla’s twin in ‘Letter to Connla’ serve the same purpose, where the Unnamed, too, is bereft of all companionship -

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<sup>61</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, p.41.

<sup>62</sup> Ennis, *Down in the Deeper Helicon*, p.51.

<sup>63</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, p.41.

'I sink with none to adore  
none to show a tenderness  
briar-torn in loneliness....'<sup>64</sup>

In Beckett's *How It Is* the character proceeds

'then left right angle and beeline four yards then right right angle so on till  
Pim'<sup>65</sup>.

The zig-zag wandering visually recalls Jung's labyrinthine paths of the subconscious.<sup>66</sup> This image contrasts with the actual purposeful zig-zag bee dance suggestive of nectar in Part 1, the 'Day of the Swarms' in 'Telling the Bees'<sup>67</sup>.

One may proffer analogies between the modern questor, or wanderer, and the primitive guru or mystic - both attempt to situate a stable point or centre in a turning world through special use of language: it is not merely a physical place that is sought. Anywhere can be the 'centre of the world' as in the wisdom of Black Elk recorded by Thomas Campbell<sup>68</sup>. There is the Eliot of 'Little Gidding', for instance<sup>69</sup>. It is the search for the core of one's being, for what the Hindus call the 'indwelling self'<sup>70</sup>. Unsure of anything, especially of being, the figure in *Company* is granted no proper name - only the generic 'Figure' and 'Hearer' an entity subject to space and to time respectively. Like the Unnamable he seeks to attain some indisputable defiant self. The Unnamed in 'Letter to Connla' deconstructs the structural supports of the prevailing 'mythos' around him even as he faces certain death<sup>71</sup>. He, too, is utterly

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p.9.

<sup>65</sup> Beckett, *How It Is*, p.52.

<sup>66</sup> Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of CG.Jung*, plate 13, Mandala composition, pp.96-97.

<sup>67</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, pp.62-68.

<sup>68</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p.280.

<sup>69</sup> T.S. Eliot, *The Penguin Book of English Verse*, p.437, 'Here, the intersection of the timeless moment/Is England and nowhere. Never and always'.

<sup>70</sup> Campbell, *op. cit.*, p.278.

<sup>71</sup> Ennis, *Telling the Bees*, 'Mythos' section, pp 37-39.

contingent on locale and on events as he is pursued. The historical contingency of his time serves as a metaphor for modernity.

Beckett's characters, as in *Quad I* and *II*, neither literally nor metaphorically, neither in word nor in gesture, neither for themselves nor for their artistic creations, can achieve the centering that brings order and peace. In the totality of his loss, with Uisnech deserted, the unnamed in 'Letter to Connla' attempts 'flight', however ridiculous in his circumstances <sup>72</sup>.

Yet all these wanderers, both old and new, attest to an ancient heroism<sup>73</sup>. Bloom, for instance is clever, wise, generous, admirable, hospitable and, in contrast to the 'smelly orthodoxies' of his time, even great; one might consider the perservering storytelling of Hamm and Hearer as heroic; similarly although Mouth's attempt to begin a story fails repeatedly, 'that struggle testifies to her heroism'<sup>74</sup>. Winnie's compulsive language invests her with a muted form of brave heroism; the actions of the Unnamed in demolishing the Christian House of Mythos around himself at death's door is eternally foolhardy but brave.

So on they go. As we do. And the journey and the tradition go on. In the cases of Gogo/Didi, Hamm/Clov and the Unnamed/Connla we have people needing each other as opposites to be complete. For the modern audience, attention shifts from end point to voyaging, from achievement to process, from climax to dialogue <sup>75</sup>. This is also the 'message' of Mr. Joyce to Ray Daly in *The Burren Days*:

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.44.

<sup>73</sup> Burkman, *op. cit.*, Brienza, pp.28,29 and 47.

<sup>74</sup> Elin Diamond, 'The fictionalizers in Beckett's Plays', in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Criticism*, pp. 116, 119. Quoted by E. Brienza, *op. cit.*, p.49.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Campbell, Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* - Campbell quoting Karlfried Graf Dürckheim: 'When you're on a journey, and the end keeps getting further, and further away, then you realise the real end is the journey', p.230.

'It's in the going, Ray, that we are born;  
To arrive is to despair.  
Surely all your gallivanting tells you that'<sup>76</sup>.

The most heroic task one can perform is to spend the arduous journey searching for words.

*Molloy*, himself, becomes Beckett's particular prototype, the traveller as writer, the 'walk-talker', the Gobán Saor of Irish mythology. He occupies a mythological present searching for stories.

In the end, if the search is assiduous and determined enough it may even turn up a *Book of Kells*, or a *Book of Dairbrech*, or catch sight of a few jottings on pages dumped in a boghole by an anonymous Camus-like outsider, or finger thoughts on the wind like Shelleyan leaves about all there is.

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<sup>76</sup> Ennis, *The Burren Days*, p.38.