Ill Seen Ill Said:

Interpreting the World

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The question of obscurity is raised immediately in the title of Beckett's text, *Ill Seen Ill Said*. One of the more intriguing instances of one of those slippages between Beckett in French and Beckett in English precisely raises the questionable status of what is ill seen ill said. The French version reads "Si seulement elle pouvait n'être qu'ombre."[1] In the English, the sentence occupying the analogous position in the text reads: "If only she could be pure figment."[2] Here we note the appearance of two sentences holding the seemingly equivalent positions within the versions of the text yet which nevertheless refuse simple assimilation to one another. What immediately stands out is this strange leap from "ombre," in the French, to "pure figment," in the English. "Ombre*"* tends to mean shadow, darkness, shade or ghost, whereas "pure figment" means a product of fictitious invention, a fashioned image. What is at issue here in this substitution?

Firstly, and most obviously, the question is raised as to how and why "*ombre"* can be translated as "figment"? What allows this passage? What do they hold in common that allows this to happen? What intimate relation exists between a "figment" and the "ombre*,"* the image and its shadow. To put it another way, what essential relation exists between obscurity and literature, and how and why does Beckett effect this passage from the realm

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of light to that of the word? And, more importantly, what is at stake in this movement?

The movement from "ombre" to "figment" repeats the movement of the title of the piece, *Ill Seen Ill Said.* The "ombre" is the mode in which things are ill seen, closed to vision through an original obscurity that hinders perception, not to the point of rendering them invisible or removing them from sight, but situating them at this neutral point between visibility and invisibility. The figment is what is ill said – ill said because it is a moulding or a fashioning of some thing that is external to the perceiving and speaking subject into a plaything of the mind, ill said because it is inadequate to what it represents, or expresses, in part due to the fact that what it seeks to represent is always already ill seen.

The link then between the "ombre" and the "figment" would be this word "ill." Things are already ill seen and ill said. There is a desire evident in both sentences to push them to their relative extremes, to render the "ombre" purely invisible, outside of all perception, and to make the external world into a "pure figment," caught up exclusively in the machinations of a solitary mind, pure interiority. The desire concurrently pursues the complete exclusion of external stimuli and the complete inclusion of their representations. These two moments of complete exclusion and inclusion are inextricably linked as part of a single movement, in the desire to rid oneself of the "ill," of the ambiguity of being, to replace it with a "nothing to be seen," and an "everything can be said." This is the simultaneous desire for everything and nothing, being and nothingness.

In *Ill Seen Ill Said* we read of a roving eye which has "no need of light to see."[3] What kind of eye is this? How does it function in the absence of light? What is at stake in this separation between the organ of vision and its medium, light? The answer that most easily comes to mind would be to say that the eye is closed, and everything seen is only imagined, in the mind's eye, to use an appropriate phrase. And indeed this is what the voice tells us it wants:

> What remains for the eye exposed to such conditions? To such vicissitude of hardly there and wholly gone. Why none but to open no more. Till all done. She done. Or left undone. Tenement and unreason. No more unless to rest. In the outward and so-called visible. That daub. Quick again to the brim the old nausea and shut again. On her. Till she be whole. Or abort. Question answered.[4]

But this is only what it wants. The outside refuses to be reducible to a "pure figment." The eye desires its complete incorporation, to close itself to the world of uncertainty and obscurity and control what it sees through closed

eyes, whether the old woman is "done. Or left undone." An attempted denial of the outside is met by the refusal of the outside to be refused. The nausea returns. The desire for the end of the old woman is the same as the desire to have her whole, complete – in either case she can be left behind, she can be done with, fixed permanently as an unchanging image, memory. The desire to abort also desires to have done with. But these goals are never achieved, even achievable. The outside remains in its obscurity and changeability.

In *How It Is* we read of a voice, a voice describing the situation, and of another voice ventriloquising the voice we hear; "I say it as I hear it" is what we read, the voice telling us that it is simply relaying the words of the voice that he hears. Here, in *Ill Seen Ill Said*, we have a different dynamic with similar traits; we are told of that which is seen rather than what is said: "Seen no matter how and said as seen,"[5] (following the logic of which could lead us to rename *How It Is* as *Ill Said Ill Said).* The question of what is seen as ambiguous and uncertain holds itself in a strange relation with the question of the voice. How do these two modes of perception, hearing and seeing, relate? What do they hold in common and what holds them apart in their uniqueness? What is at issue in the alternation between a receptivity to language and a perceptivity of vision.

The act of seeing, the perception of the surrounds, functions in this text by means of ambiguity and uncertainty. At one time it is an immediate shift in circumstance: "But she can be gone at any time. From one moment of the year to the next suddenly no longer there. No longer anywhere to be seen. Nor by the eye of flesh nor by the other. Then as suddenly there again. Long after."[6] Changes happen without cause, immediately, suddenly. Vision has no means to understand the effect of forces, which are invisible, and which effect change. Vision can only register the change, and the suddenness of the event startles it. The old woman incessantly disappears, and reappears, lost to the gaze and then grasped by it again, lost to the 'other' eye, and then retrieved. Has the eye lost patience with looking? Does it always pay attention? "Without the curtains being opened. Suddenly open. A flash. The suddenness of all!"[7] Is this a discontinuous sight that is being proposed, a vision that breaks up through time and allows for temporal lacunae and lapses? Or is it the outside world which is not playing along to the rules that govern vision? "She still without stopping. On her way without starting. Gone without going. Back without returning. Suddenly it is evening. Or dawn."[8]

There is another relation between vision and time that appears, that of the slowly arising or fading image, a folding or unfolding of that which is seen. "Next to emerge from the shadows an inner wall. Only slowly to dis-

solve in favour of a single space."[9] The eye pierces the darkness, and a wall appears, then disappears slowly. Then: "For slowly it emerges again. Rises from the floor and slowly up to lose itself in the gloom. The semigloom."[10] Images are given and then taken away, then regained, as the old woman is, but this time slowly, the process of change is gradual and perceptible. And in this instance the wall hinders vision of what is behind it when it is present, sight has to contend with external conditions that affect its operation. And between the appearance and disappearance of things there occurs the state of seeing what is not visible, through the gloom, the semigloom, the arrival of darkness, or other factors that impinge upon the operation of vision: "Long this image till suddenly it blurs."[11] The operation of sight here undergoes the trials of these factors: immediate change of state; gradual appearance and disappearance; the interruption through blurring or darkness. None of these are explained, indeed they are constitutive of the gaze as the conditions of its operation. But what causes these changes? How does something belong to the realm of vision and then remove itself from sight?

Vision is typically presented as the model for understanding and immediate knowledge. Clarity of thinking is prized, knowledge seeks enlightenment. The action of vision, in its capacity as a model for thought, assumes an immediacy, a complete grasp of what is given to sight, a fixing of things in their place, an operation of capture; and what is outside of vision can be brought into vision's realm through the application of light. In opposition to this would be the operation of language which is ambiguous and imprecise, where clarity and obscurity do not relate to each other in the manner ascribed to vision. But vision in *Ill Seen Ill Said* has been deprived of the certainty that is assumed in the use of the gaze. The eye does not fix things in their place, they appear and disappear, blur, move suddenly or slowly. There is no clarity provided in this vision. There is no possibility of shedding light on the subject, of illumination, because what the eye here sees is outside the law of light, the domain of vision. "For an eye having no need of light to see," the laws of illumination do not apply, and cannot be used as a guarantee of certainty. The perceptions of the eye are ambiguous, and this serves to undermine the stabilising and orienting function of light. The fixity of things as they are seen is one of our strongest anchors to the world; the constancy of vision is a solid reference, enabling a measure by which the world can be judged, and a true form that can be thus mastered and controlled. But this is precisely what is withdrawn through the vagaries of the gaze in *Ill Seen Ill Said*.

But what is at stake in this withdrawal, what is at issue in the disavowal of the primacy of the visual? What demands this questioning of

light, light which appears as self-evident to us, which gives us the world of stable forms around us? To answer these questions, Blanchot approaches them through Nietzsche and the latter's critique of visibility, asking: "But then why, among all possible metaphors, does the optical metaphor predominate? Why this light that as metaphor has become the source and resource of all knowing, and thus subordinated all knowledge to the exercise of (a primary) metaphor? Why this imperialism of light?" (*IC* 162). The answer proffered is that light has an inordinate and treacherous influence on the thought, in that within thought vision has become the model and metaphor for being, and sight has become the model and metaphor for thought:

> Nietzsche recognised – this is the meaning of his untiring critique of Plato – that being is light, and he submitted the light of being to the labour of the most severe suspicion. A decisive moment in the destruction of metaphysics and, even more, of ontology. Light gives pure visibility to thought as its measure. To think is henceforth to see clearly, to stand in the light of evidency, to submit to the day that makes all things appear in the unity of a form; it is to make the world arise under a sky of light as the form of forms, always illuminated and judged by this sun that does not set. The sun is the overabundance of clear light that gives life, the fashioner that holds life only in the particularity of a form. The sun is the sovereign unity of light – it is good, the Good, the superior One that makes us respect as the sole true site of being all that is "above." (*IC* 160)

What is raised here is the issue of the dominance of the metaphysical thinking of being, of ontology, as it is thought through the metaphor of light. "Light gives pure visibility to thought as its measure." Light aspires to be more than a metaphor, it becomes the measure of thought, the clarity to which it aspires. The sun, as the source of light, provides the image of the single point, the sole origin of thought, the thinking of the one and of the whole, the point at which thought can become adequate to being through this illumination the sun provides. Philosophy will be complete once thought can cover the things of the world in the same manner as they are bathed in the light of the sun. Things hidden in the shadows can be brought to light, nothing shall be left in the dark, what is not yet visible will become visible, it is only a matter of time and application. Everything will be given a coherent form and that form will fit itself into the form of forms which is the world, and it will do this in the manner of the light which provides things their form through the access given to their visibility. But this visibility is the object of the Nietzschean critique of ontology and metaphysics, a critique which is followed by a an attempt to think otherwise than through the paths of light:

> Nietzsche little by little [sought] to free thought by referring it back to what does not allow itself to be understood either as clarity or as form. Such is finally the role of the Will to Power. It is not as a power [*pouvoir*] that the will to power [*puissance*] imposes itself in principle, and it is not as a dominating violence that this force becomes what must be thought. But force escapes light: it is not something that would simply be deprived of light, an obscurity still aspiring to the light of day. Scandal of scandals, it escapes every optical reference; and thus, while it may only act under the determination and within the limits of a form, form – an arrangement of structure – nevertheless always allows it to escape. Neither visible nor invisible. (*IC* 160)

Nietzsche's response to the dominance of the thinking of light as a model for the thinking of being is to rather think force and becoming. Force and becoming, as both are neither visible nor invisible, operate outside the realm of light, and are not subject to the clarity of understanding and the stability of form. They do not open themselves to sight. This is what happens in *Ill Seen Ill Said*, where events occur, suddenly or slowly, that the eye has no way of accounting for, because the causes, the forces that are acting there, do not proffer themselves to the gaze. To the gaze they do not exist, because they do not play on the field of the visible. The ideal of light that is the metaphor for being and the ideal vision that is the metaphor for thought both point to an active role for the gaze, the gaze which seeks out and grasps, comprehends; an active illumination. However, the eye in this text is purely passive in its registration of what happens, its only actions being opening and closing (alongside the shedding of tears, which perhaps have their own relation to the obscuring of vision). Closing the eye would be an active refusal of sight and an attempted negation of the world, whereas the eye we have here is passive as regards the world, unable to close for good, open to all stimuli. This occurs in much the same manner as Blanchot describes the passive hand that writes being interrupted by the active hand of mastery and control (*SL* 25).

There may be some confusion in the mention of the modes of activity and passivity in the above paragraph concerned with force, because there is no passive force, all forces are active, or positive, as Blanchot states following Deleuze. To be passive as regards a force is to let the force act out all of its possibilities, "whoever says force says it always as multiple" (*IC* 160-1); the active seeks to control forces for certain ends, the desire for a single force, therefore limiting their effect. "Force says difference. To think force is to think it by way of difference" (*IC* 160). Passivity bears a regard for this difference; activity would seek to annul the differences and subsume them under a posited unity. Force as a multiple and differential ca-

pacity is essentially a relation.

But *Ill Seen Ill Said* is not primarily concerned with forces. Their nature is uninterrogated. They remain, they act, but they are never explained and rarely alluded to. The other means of escaping this tyranny of the gaze, the one more explicitly put forward here, is through language, what is ill said. Language functions in a different register to that of light, again neither visible nor invisible, although its action is intimately tied in with the operation of sight, ill said always being tied to ill seen. Language perverts vision, and here moves toward a neutrality that in some senses would be the ground on which forces act, their condition, neither positive nor negative, yet always both. Blanchot ties this force, which Nietzsche describes as a "*pathos of distance*,"[12] to language when he concludes that "difference, the play of time and of space, is the silent play of relations, '*the multiple disengagement'* that governs writing – which amounts to saying that difference, essentially, writes" (*IC* 162).

Blanchot then inquires as to what is this fatal attraction of light, what is it about light that demands that it be taken as a metaphor for being and sight as a model for understanding. What do we have to mistrust about this gift of light that makes things evident? Does it not guarantee the forms of the outside world, ensure their constancy, fixity and therefore their meaning, laying this meaning bare for the mind to grasp, proffering it for our use and pleasure? But Blanchot perceives in light a duplicitous treachery, that what it promises is very different to what it gives, that what it gives is only the promise of a solidity of form, the promise of the immediate comprehension of the object. But this promise is one that it can only keep by deceiving the eye. Light acts as a guarantor of meaning in Nietzsche and Blanchot (along with light's avatar, God), through the apparent immediacy of what it presents, but it is this presentation itself that Blanchot calls into question:

> for it is perhaps in light itself that meaning is dissimulated. Light illuminates – this means that light hides itself: this is its malicious trait. Light illuminates: what is illuminated by light presents itself in an immediate presence that discloses itself without disclosing what makes it manifest. Light effaces its traces: invisible, it renders visible; it guarantees direct knowledge and ensures full presence, all the while holding itself back in that which is indirect and suppressing itself as presence. Light's deception, then, would be in the fact that it slips away in a radiating absence, infinitely more obscure that any obscurity, since the absence proper to light is the very act of its light, its clarity, and since the work of light is accomplished only when light makes us forget that something like light is at work (thus making us forget, in the evidency in which it holds itself, all that it supposes –

> the relation to unity to which light returns and that is its true sun). Clarity – the non-light of light, the non-seeing of seeing. Light is thus (at least) doubly deceptive: because it deceives us as to itself, and deceives us in giving as immediate what is not immediate, as simple what is not simple. The light of day is a false day, not because there would be a truer day, but because the truth of the day, the truth about it, is dissimulated by it; we see clearly only because light is clear and does not offer itself in the clarity it provides. But the most serious problem – in any case, the one with the gravest consequences – remains the duplicity by which light causes us to have confidence in the simplicity of the act of seeing, proposing immediation to us as the model of knowledge whereas light itself, out of sight and in a hidden manner, acts only as mediator, playing with us through the dialectic of illusion. (*IC* 162-3)

Blanchot here charges light with withholding and concealing its true nature, with pretending to be what it is not. Light pretends to offer the vision of things in their immediacy, but to do so it must make itself invisible, and thus hide the means, the medium, by which it acts. Light blinds us as to its true mode of operation. “The very act of its light” is predicated upon its own absence, its own withdrawal; what it renders visible is achieved through making itself invisible, as if it completely disappeared in the service of vision and entirely exhausted itself, without remainder, simply as a means for sight. But light is still always a medium, and in the service of vision, it can never completely disappear, there is always a remainder, but these facts are hidden, and this is light’s “gravest” duplicity: light is a medium that makes us forget the medium and assume what it presents as immediate. This has serious consequences in that it proposes for us a model for thought and for knowledge which would be immediate, that thinking and its object, the world, would be joined, united, and a perfect adequacy could be achieved between them. Immediacy also assumes that perfect presence is possible, indeed evident, that the world can be present, wholly and completely, to the viewer, there for him to analyse and grasp, without any parts being hidden from the light. Immediacy and presence assume the world being brought to an ideal truth, a visual truth. But the fact that light’s apparent immediacy is based on its functioning as a medium, that the presence it seems to offer is founded its own absence, throws serious doubts on the conceptions of knowledge, thought and presence as they manifest themselves in relation to the metaphor of light. And just as importantly this questions the foundations of the thinking of being as presence.

Nietzsche, however, and at least according to Blanchot, does not simply oppose a mediated form of knowledge to the immediate proposed

through analogy with light. Rather his work effects a "refusal of the immediate, refusal of mediation" (*IC* 163), a thought and a writing as non-mediation, outside of the binary opposition between mediation and the immediate. Being is always thought through the twin frames of either an immediate experience that the subject has of being, or through mediated knowledge, being as expressed through its attributes. But Nietzsche "thinks the world in order to free thought as much from the idea of being as from the idea of the whole, as much as from the exigency of meaning as from the exigency of the good: in order to free thought from thought, obliging it not to abdicate but to think more than it can, to think something other than what for it is possible" (*IC* 163). To think otherwise than the thought of being requires a thinking not subject to the demands of light, a thinking not governed by the laws of illumination. Writing, as occurs in *Ill Seen Ill Said,* accedes to such an exigency, as in Nietzsche the fragment is the mode of writing that permits other forms of thinking to arise.

In *Ill Seen Ill Said* vision is doubly perverted, firstly through its own inability to function adequately, and secondly through its perversion by language, perverted though the affirmation of vision as much as through its negation:

> Reexamined rid of light the mouth changes. Unexplainably. Lips as before. Same closure. Same hint of extruding pulp. At the corners same imperceptible laxness. In a word the smile still there if smile is what it is. Neither more nor less. Less! And yet no longer the same. True that light distorts. Particularly sunset. That mockery. True too that the eyes then agaze for the viewless planet are now closed. On other viewlessness. Of which more if ever anon. There explanation at last. This same smile established with eyes open is with them closed no longer the same. Though between the two inspections the mouth unchanged. Utterly. Good. But in what way no longer the same? What there now that was not there? What there no more that was? Enough. Away.[13]

Here, light is affirmed through the fact that what is seen with the eyes open has an excess over what is seen with the eyes closed. The old woman's smile is identical to both eyes, yet somehow it is less to the closed eye, the "other" eye opposed to "the eye of flesh."[14] This lessness is the remains of the world inaccessible to vision, or the inadequacy of thought as regards the thinking of being through light, thought's inability to imitate the functioning of light. This suggests an ill seen and a worse seen, a worse seen which is also identical to the ill seen. The closing of the eyes, to shut out the world and make it present to the mind for contemplation, is somehow

worse than vision through open eyes. Yet the voice still strives for the closing of the eyes:

> Not possible any longer except as figment. Not endurable. Nothing for it but to close the eye for good and see her. Her and the rest. Close it for good and all and see her unto death. Unremittent. In the shack. Over the stones. In the pastures. The haze. At the tomb. And back. And the rest. For good and all. To death. Be shut of it all. On to the next. Next figment. Close it for good this filthy eye of flesh. What forbids? Careful.[15]

The question is asked as to "What forbids?" the closing of the eye of flesh for good, closing it for good and seeing her. Perhaps she is only seen by this other eye, and not by the eye of flesh, but still the eye of flesh is prevented from closing. But what prevents this having done with it? An answer is proffered to the question of what prevents the divining of the old lady, what forbids her being grasped by sight: "What but life ending."[16] Dying is what prevents the eye from closing, indeed the closed eye is precisely death – dying is what forbids death.

There is a relation here between light and death, in some manner similar to the relation above between light and being that occurs in Nietzsche and Blanchot. Both complete visibility and complete lack of visibility define an attempt at achieving death, through complete comprehension or complete denial. Ill seen defines the impossibility of such an achievement; it maintains sight within the time of dying, between pure visibility and invisibility. So rather than an obsession with, or an interrogation of, either death or being, ill seen designates the movement of sight within the sphere of dying, the neutral time of the infinite movement toward death. This is a deflation of ontology, of the metaphysics of presence, alongside a simultaneous refusal of ideal absence. This refusal of ontology in no way implies an ethics, for as Levinas states, "ethics is an optics."[17] Light is the medium for the originary relation with the face of the other, but here we cannot assume light as the guarantor of this relation: as we have noted, light is treacherous, and in this case the relation with the face of the other is corrupted through the dissimulation of light in and by itself. Ethics as the founding relation with the other fails to take into account that which ethics itself is founded on, light.

The inverse of this ethical relation to the other is the impossibility of a stable subjectivity, and it is this lack of subjectivity that is dramatised in *Ill Seen Ill Said*. The eye that sees, the voice that speaks, both lack a sufficient constancy to qualify themselves as "a subject," and even if we posit their conjunction we still do not arrive at subjectivity. They function as the point of articulation between the ill seen and the ill said, they operate as the

questioning of what happens at this point, what relates the ill seen to the ill said, and how the passage is effected from one to the other. We are given within this simple articulation something that perhaps precedes the subject, a point governed by neutrality rather than the laws of subjectivity, a point that assumes the roles of both passivity and activity regarding the world. Neither can we call this point "being," for this would still be subject to the law of visibility, subject to a metaphysic that promises immediacy and completion.

Blanchot describes this point as neutral, but the neutral cannot justify either itself nor what occurs at this point. The neutral is the condition for both the ill seen and the ill said, but escapes the jurisdiction of both, being outside of the realm of the visible-invisible as much as that of speech-silence. But we have seen how Beckett here brings together the ill seen and the ill said through the act of writing. The event of literature forces perception to approach expression, it brings reading and writing toward each other, bringing the ill seen and the ill said into some form of contiguity, and the point of their impossible contact would be the point of absolute neutrality, a relation that would be completely neutral. Writing lies outside the sphere of the visible-invisible. Perhaps it also lies outside of speech and silence.

To elucidate writing's articulation of the relation between the ill seen and the ill said, we return to Blanchot's reading of Nietzsche. In Nietzsche we find the attempt to think the world, and not being, "in order to free thought, obliging it not to abdicate but to think more than it can, to think something other than what for it is possible" (*IC* 162), an exigency that we hear through his fragmentary writing. Here arises the question as to how to think this world. Blanchot responds: "In thinking the world, Nietzsche thinks it as a text" (*IC* 165), or, more specifically, "*Mundus est fabula*" (*IC* 166). Nietzsche arrives at this point, again, through the destruction of oppositions, in this case between "the real world" and its contrary ("Real and – how ill say its contrary? The counter-poison.")[18] Named in this case as "the apparent world." In the chapter *How the Real World at last Became a Myth,* the idea of the real world is first of all destroyed, but, "We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? ... But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*"[19] The opposition between the real and its contrary had again been shown not to hold up under the rigours of Nietzsche's thought. Which leads Klossowski, in a like manner to Blanchot, to state that "le monde devient fable, le monde tel quel n'est que fable: fable signifie quelque chose qui se raconte et qui n'existe que dans le récit; le monde est quelque chose qui se raconte, un événement raconté et donc une interprétation."[20] Blanchot also

reads Nietzsche this way, quoting him as writing "*The world: the infinite of interpretation (the unfolding of a designation, infinitely)*"(*IC* 164). At the end of *How the Real World at last Became a Myth,* we read the incantation, "Incipit Zarathustra," and what is important to note here is that the question Zarathustra raises is one of interpretation, it is always a question of how did Zarathustra speak, the answer being "thus spake Zarathustra." Zarathustra's relation to the world is through the "how" of his speech, in what mode, in what manner, in other words through his interpretation. And one of Zarathustra's lessons is that this world that is an interpretation has no subject that interprets: "*One may not ask: 'who then interprets?' for interpretation itself is a form of the will to power, it exists (not as a 'being' but as a 'process,' a 'becoming') as affect"* (*IC* 164*).* But Blanchot warns us:

> Interpreting, the movement of interpretation in its neutrality – this is what must not be taken as a means of knowing, an instrument thought would have at its disposal in order to think the world. The world is not an object of interpretation, any more than it is proper for interpretation to give itself an object, even an unlimited object, from which it would distinguish itself. The world: the infinite of interpreting; or again, to interpret: the infinite: the world. These three terms can only be given in a juxtaposition that does not confound them, does not distinguish them, does not put them in relation, and that thus responds to the exigency of fragmentary writing. (*IC* 164)

This neutral movement of interpretation is the articulation of the ill seen ill said, the point where they come into contact is the point of interpretation. Interpretation lies between what is ill seen and what is ill said, and this is why this point is tied to writing. It is the point of combination of the perceived passivity of perception and the perceived activity of speech. That it is always ill seen and ill said is its form of response to the demand of writing, the demand not to see or write in terms of light or unity. But this point of interpretation also corrupts both the ill seen and the ill said, as neither are self-sufficient, and does not allow them the possibility of anchoring themselves in any fixed position, in any fixed relation to the world, because the world itself is this interpretation, this fable. "The mind betrays the treacherous eyes and the treacherous words their treacheries."[21] This is the neutrality of interpretation, the impossibility of having done with interpretation, the necessity to ill-interpret again.

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NOTES

[1] Samuel Beckett, *Mal vu mal dit* (Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1981), p. 24.

[2] Samuel Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said* (London: Calder, 1982), p. 20.

[3] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 8.

[4] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, pp. 37-8.

[5] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 31.

[6] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 17.

[7] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 19.

[8] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 19.

[9] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 21.

[10] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 21.

[11] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 19.

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 26.

[13] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, pp. 49-50.

[14] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 17.

[15] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 30.

[16] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 16.

[17] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 23.

[18] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said,* p. 40.

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), p. 41.

[20] Pierre Klossowski, *Un si funeste désir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1963), p. 181: "The world becomes a fable, the world as such is nothing other than a fable: a fable signifies something that narrates itself and which does not exist except in the narration; the world is something which narrates itself, a narrated event and thus an interpretation" (my translation).

[21] Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 48.