

In Principle,  
Beckett  
is Joyce

Edited by Friedhelm Rathjen

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## Preliminary Notes

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*“Then, for the first time, the two halves of the world would fit together, into one, great, universal Celtic civilisation.” He raised his arms high, then let them fall slowly again. “All I need is a proof.”*

John Montague, *Death of a Chieftain*

This volume’s internationality directly reflects the internationality of the biennial Joyce Symposia. At the suggestion of Morris Beja, Executive Secretary of the International James Joyce Foundation, I invited a handful of Joyce and Beckett specialists to join a dual panel at the Dublin Joyce Symposium, June 1992; these two sessions were entitled “In Principle, Beckett is Joyce” and “By extension, Joyce is Beckett.” Out of the total of ten contributions to the present collection, four essays (Carey, Feshbach, Lernout, Rathjen) are based on papers delivered during those sessions; three more (Buning, Schreibman, Watt) are based on papers from the Joyce/Beckett panels chaired by Lois Overbeck and Toby Zinman at the same Symposium; two authors of additional essays (Connor and Mitchell) had been invited to join my panel sessions, too, but were unable to do so. The joint authors of the remaining contribution (Rasch and O’Donnell) were enlisted during the Symposium week, and this means that the whole of this collection is connected to the XIIIth International James Joyce Symposium, Dublin 1992, and I hope that this collection of essays will add further proof (if any more proof is needed at all) of the strong and stimulating impact of conferences like this one.

— \* —

In his introduction to the panel “Joyce and Beckett: Last Plays” at the Venice Joyce Symposium, June 1988, Morris Beja summarized the perception of Beckett’s short *Ohio Impromptu* (1981) as a dramatic transformation of the author’s friendship with James Joyce, a perception suggested by Samuel Beckett himself and reported by Richard Ellmann in his *Four Dubliners*: Beckett’s characters, “Listener” and “Reader,” wear long black coats and black wide-brimmed hats, thus reminding us of the famous photograph of Joyce in long black coat and Latin Quarter hat that he sent to J. F. Byrne in 1902; Beckett’s “Reader” is commanded by the “Listener” by way of knocking on the table, thus reminding readers of Ellmann’s Joyce biography of the knock Beckett (according to his own

account) didn't hear when taking Joyce's dictation of a *Finnegans Wake* passage, with the result that Joyce's "Come in" appeared in the text that Beckett read back afterwards.

Surprisingly enough, the "Come in" Beckett told Ellmann about has never been located in *Finnegans Wake*, although some scholars tried out variants like "Knock knock" (Nathan Halper in *A Wake Newslitter*, June 1966) or "what's that" (Hugh B. Staples in the *James Joyce Quarterly*, Summer 1971). Moreover, Geert Lernout in his contribution to the present volume not only informs us that there is absolutely no evidence at all in the *Wake* notebooks of Joyce's having ever dictated bits of *Finnegans Wake* to Samuel Beckett, but also that the whole story of Beckett's contribution to work on the *Wake* which Ellmann allegedly received from Beckett himself and which Beckett borrowed back for his *Ohio Impromptu* is, to say the least, inaccurate. What does this mean? That Ellmann misrepresented Beckett's tale? Or that Beckett the shape-changer made up his own Joyce, a Beckettean Joyce by Joycean Beckett? Make sense who may.

— \* —

The title of this volume declares that in principle, Beckett is Joyce – but the question remains as to what this principle may be. The range of fields for investigation that the contributors are exploring in search of an answer spans from biography to duography, from convergencies in single works to certain features of comparability underlying both writers' oeuvres as a whole, from minute details of textual genetics to more general aspects of Joyce's and Beckett's ([pre]post)modernity. Some of the contributors find Beckett's Joyceanity being absent where everyone believed it to be present; others find Beckett being most Joycean where it had been suspected the least. Some contributors' findings strongly suggest that Beckett is decidedly *not* Joyce (some people therefore even questioned my title for this volume); maybe the only way out is the one shown in my own contribution: taking Beckett's non-Joyceanity as a proof of Beckett's Joyceanity.

— \* —

In a way, the presence of Joyce embraces the whole of Beckett's oeuvre: Beckett's first publication was his essay on *Finnegans Wake*, "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce" (1929), and his reportedly last work, the poem "what is the word" of 1989, ends with what seems to be a reminiscence of the last line of Joyce's last work, as Phyllis Carey shows in her

contribution to the present volume: Joyce's "A way a lone a last a loved a long the" (FW 628.15-16) finds an echo in Beckett's "afaint afar away over there what." We may add that one of the two nouns to be found in Beckett's poem is "word," thus referring us back to what Beckett saw in *Finnegans Wake*: an "apotheosis of the word;" and the other one of Beckett's last nouns is "folly," a key word in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*. David Cohen in his contribution to the *Re: Joyce'n Beckett* volume edited recently by Phyllis Carey and Ed Jewinski suggested that Joyce's "Folly. Persist" (*Ulysses* 9.42) is not only Stephen's operating principle in "Scylla and Charybdis" (continued in equally silent remarks like "On" [9.982] and "Steady on" [9.372] and "Bear with me" [9.372]) but also that of Beckett who persists in the face of inevitable failure – like, for example, in *Worstward Ho*, which starts: "On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on." It seems that this must be more than mere accidental coincidence – the word "folly" occurs only three times in *Ulysses*, and one of the two remaining instances reads thus: "On. Know what I mean. [...] Folly am I writing? [...] Useless pain" (*Ulysses* 11.865-76). These are the words of Leopold Bloom – are they?

On.

— \* —

A note on citation principles: all Joyce and Beckett citations throughout this volume are keyed to well-accessible British editions. Conversion figures for the pagination of American standard editions of most works, especially the longer ones, are given in the bibliography of works cited at the end of this volume.

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FRIEDHELM RATHJEN

*Scheeßel*

*March 13, 1993*

# 1 Susan Schreibman

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## The Penman and his Bleaters

On 19 March 1927 the French Consul in Dublin asked the Board of Trustees of Trinity College, Dublin if they had a candidate they wished to propose for the prestigious exchange post of English Lecturer at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris for the academic year 1928-29.<sup>1</sup> And indeed, Trinity College had a candidate in mind, hand-picked by Rudmose-Brown, the then Professor of French, who was grooming his star pupil for an academic post in his department. The young man was expected to graduate in the Autumn of 1927 (as fate would have it, he graduated first in his class in modern languages and received a gold medal for outstanding scholarship), and the year in Paris, Rudmose-Brown reckoned, at the renowned Ecole Normale, would round off the education of his star pupil who was expected to bring back a piece of publishable research to fulfil the requirement for a Master of Arts. After that, it would be a short step to the PhD and a secure position in academe.

But Rudmose-Brown's plans were foiled twice by the same man who unwittingly changed the course of the younger man's life, while remaining one of his closest – if not his closest – male friend. It won't be too hard to guess that the first man is none other than Samuel Barclay Beckett. The second is a lesser known Irish man of letters, Thomas MacGreevy, a Kerryman, 10 years Beckett's senior. MacGreevy, who had taken up the position of English Lecturer soon after New Year 1927, had been a replacement for the appointed reader, William McCausland Stewart. Stewart had received an offer of a lectureship at Sheffield six months before the end of his appointment which he did not want to refuse. He recommended that MacGreevy take his place to the director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Gustave Lanson, and shortly after New Year 1927 MacGreevy was installed in his rooms in the French Quarter.

MacGreevy should have given up his post in October 1927 to make way for the new candidate from Trinity, but officials at the Ecole were so pleased with his work that they, in a most unusual step, allowed MacGreevy to retain his appointment for another year, and recommended to Trinity's Board of Trustees that they might send their new candidate to a provincial University instead.<sup>2</sup> An enraged Professor Rudmose-Brown (who was never very fond of MacGreevy from MacGreevy's own days at Trinity College) would not hear of sending his star pupil to a provincial institution, and instead found him an appointment at Belfast's Campbell College. And although Beckett must have been grateful to Brown for securing him

full-time employment, he was not comfortable teaching and was profoundly unhappy there. When term ended he could not get out of Ireland fast enough.

During the following spring, the matter was brought up again by Trinity College, and this time Beckett's appointment was approved. Beckett most probably arrived in Paris in August 1928 with the intention of simply moving into the rooms reserved for the English Reader and settling into a quiet life of scholarship. That, however, was not to be his fate. When Beckett arrived he found MacGreevy still in the rooms reserved for the English Reader. MacGreevy assured him he would be moving his few possessions upstairs to his new rooms right away. Much to Beckett's credit he did not hold a grudge against MacGreevy for delaying his appointment at the Ecole for a year, and it was from this most inauspicious beginning that Beckett began one of the most important friendships of his life. For Beckett, this outgoing Irishman served as a front for his shyness. And MacGreevy, although extremely sociable, felt an acute absence in Paris. He was in need of someone from his own background and intellectual temper, and although at the time Beckett was a novice in many ways, MacGreevy found in him someone worth cultivating. His investment paid off. MacGreevy's influence on Beckett's artistic development can clearly be seen in Beckett's early letters to MacGreevy which are filled with his observations on art, music and literature in several languages.

The normally reserved Beckett probably didn't know what to make of this outgoing Kerryman whose friends and acquaintances included Richard Aldington, Harry Clarke, Salvador Dali, James Joyce, Lennox Robinson, and the Yeats brothers: Jack and W.B. But MacGreevy wasn't a mere name dropper, and within weeks, MacGreevy's life in the Quarter became Beckett's. Through some fault of MacGreevy's, Beckett got diverted from his academic work. Rudmose-Brown was foiled a second time. Beckett never finished that thesis, and the rest is history.

MacGreevy's introductions included his publisher, Charles Prentice at Chatto & Windus, who published Beckett's monograph on Proust in the Dolphin series in March 1931, and Eugene Jolas, the editor of *transition* (who published *Work in Progress* in serial form over a ten year period beginning 1927), which resulted in the publication of several of Beckett's early poems. Both Beckett and MacGreevy were signatories to the Poetry is Vertical manifesto which appeared in issue 21 of *transition*. One cannot help thinking of Beckett's later drama and prose when reading articles seven and eight of the manifesto which state that the "I" cannot be acknowledged – and arises out of "the entire history of mankind, past and present," nor is the 'I' bound by time or space. It proclaimed (surely with

Joyce and Stein in mind, but also, prophetically, anticipating Beckett's writing after the Second World War) that "[t]he final disintegration of the "I" in the creative act is [...] a revolutionary attitude toward word and syntax, going even so far as to invent a hermetic language, if necessary."<sup>3</sup>

MacGreevy had some years on Beckett to ponder out this newfangled conception called modernism. His personal and professional relations with both T.S. Eliot and James Joyce put him in a unique position to evaluate the work of both writers within the still shifting boundaries of the new movement. As early as February 1928 MacGreevy gave a lecture to the Society for Propagation of the English Language in France (which Sylvia Beach attended<sup>4</sup>) in which he sketched out theories of modernism that would become current decades later. MacGreevy, because of his interest in the visual arts, viewed Eliot's and Joyce's technique in painterly terms, seeing their similarities of form rather than their dissimilarities of content: "They were both," he claimed, "extraordinarily capable of establishing equilibrium between their material and their treatment of it." Both knew how to impose a "perfect artistic form" on their subject matter, although MacGreevy reckoned that Eliot's treatment was the more intellectual, while Joyce's the more lyrical: a lyricism that MacGreevy heard probably earlier than most, being attuned to the Dublin cadences in Joyce.<sup>5</sup>

MacGreevy had first met Joyce in Paris in 1924. It was his first trip to France since he had left it on a stretcher in 1919 after being wounded during the closing months of the Great War in which he served as a Second Lieutenant in the B.E.F. Before leaving Dublin, MacGreevy had been promised an introduction by his friend the Irish painter Patrick Tuohy who had arrived in Paris a few weeks before MacGreevy. When MacGreevy arrived during the last week in May, Tuohy, a small bespectacled man of thirty, was wearing Joyce down with his requests to paint his portrait. Several years earlier Tuohy had painted John Stanislaus Joyce. It is the portrait of a severe looking man, with a touch of roguery about him. And although Joyce had commissioned the painting of his father, he had never met the young artist. He chose Tuohy (in typical Joycean fashion) not so much for his reputation as a painter, but because he knew the young man's father.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, when Tuohy arrived, Joyce put up a great deal of resistance to having his portrait done. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce's diction becomes Irishier and Irishier when explaining his reservations:

Tuohy wants to come here to paint me. I want him to go there and paint you. You want him to stay where he is and paint himself. He certainly wants me to pose myself and he certainly wants himself to pose me for himself and certainly

he does not be wanting to paint me posed by himself, himself  
for myself.

Joyce ends the digression with “apologies to Miss Gertrude Stein.”<sup>7</sup> Tuohy and Joyce grated on each other’s nerves. Arthur Power recalled that each time he called on Joyce during those months he found Tuohy installed on the floor with a mirror in his hand touching up the portrait.<sup>8</sup> But when Tuohy began to philosophise about how important it was for the artist to capture the subject of his soul, Joyce had had enough and replied “Never mind my soul. Just be sure you have my tie right.”<sup>9</sup>

Tuohy, in spite of his problems with Joyce, assured MacGreevy that if he came to Paris he would arrange a meeting with “the great man.” Tuohy kept his promise, and soon after MacGreevy arrived he arranged for them to take coffee with the Joyce family after their evening meal at the Trianon Restaurant. MacGreevy was a bit apprehensive about meeting the author of *Ulysses* and Joyce did not disappoint him. After some preliminary small talk, Joyce stared MacGreevy down and said, “rather coldly,” “I believe it was you told Tuohy my father’s Christian name was Simon.” MacGreevy, unprepared for the attack, admitted he had said as much. MacGreevy didn’t know Joyce’s father, but his friend, the Irish painter Harry Clarke, knew the father by sight. “Soon after Joyce’s books came out Clarke would refer to him as ‘Old Simon,’” and MacGreevy assumed this was the father’s Christian name.<sup>10</sup> The portrait was, in fact, exhibited as “Simon Joyce, Esquire” in the Royal Hibernian Academy exhibition of 1924. Joyce, needless to say, was delighted. Fiction had become fact.<sup>11</sup>

However ill-fated the first meeting, in January 1927 MacGreevy decided to send a note round to Joyce (who was then living on the Square Robiac) a few days after he was installed in his rooms in the French Quarter. Joyce was on the phone at 9.30 the next morning. Could MacGreevy perhaps call around that afternoon – there were a few things that he wanted to discuss with him. Joyce, who had already undergone nine eye operations, was in need of assistants, and he wondered if MacGreevy would be interested in acting as one. MacGreevy was.<sup>12</sup>

In the years between their two meetings, MacGreevy had been giving a great deal of thought to what it meant to be a writer in the newly-emerging Free State. His ambiguous position of being an Irish Catholic who had fought with the English in the First World War rather than against them in the Irish struggle for independence was coming back to haunt him. This, combined with MacGreevy’s lack of Irish, put him in the position, he felt, of being an outsider in his own culture – a position Joyce had so eloquently explored several years earlier in “The Dead.” And although MacGreevy

was a welcome guest in W.B. Yeats's household, a close friend of Lennox Robinson and Jack Yeats, he realised that the Revival was basically an Anglo-Irish construct which was not really in touch with, as the postcards nowadays say, "Real Ireland." The closed door policy of the literary milieu of the 1920s is hinted at in the titles of two of MacGreevy's poems – "The Other Dublin" and "Anglo-Irish" – the latter of which contains the lines "Why are you here / You are not supposed to know / You little – insider!" Since the meeting with Joyce, he had begun thinking about what Joyce stood for, and although MacGreevy (in an unpublished reminiscence) dismissed Stephen's trinity of "silence, exile, and cunning" as an inappropriate formula to govern his own life, MacGreevy, like Joyce twenty years earlier, chose exile and silence rather than staying and fighting.

Thus, not long after re-establishing his acquaintance with Joyce, MacGreevy became as close as one could to being a member of the Joyce family. He was one of the few visitors to the Joyce home who did not need an invitation. He was a raconteur and appealed to Nora, for he, like Nora, came from the West of Ireland. He was a proficient piano player and would often join the family in sing-alongs. Joyce would often complain that MacGreevy and Nora knew more about Ireland than he did. "Thirty miles outside Dublin and I am lost." He was not a heavy drinker, and thus was one of the few men that Nora felt safe in leaving Joyce with. No matter how late Joyce would be up the previous night, he would be on the phone at 9.30 the next morning. Since MacGreevy (and later Beckett when he joined the staff of the Ecole) didn't have a phone in his room, the concierge Jean would be rung. Jean would call up to MacGreevy's room on the second floor opposite the lodge and relay Joyce's message. MacGreevy would shout down his answer, or if need be, run down two flights of stairs to answer the phone himself. If it happened that MacGreevy needed to call by the flat first thing in the morning, Nora would try to talk Joyce out of inconveniencing the younger man by saying "Don't mind him Tom. If God Himself came down from Heaven that fellow would find something for him to do."<sup>13</sup>

Yet, Joyce's dependency was real, and a letter sent to Sylvia Beach (dictated to Stuart Gilbert on a train) dated 3 September 1928 is indicative of Joyce's correspondence at that time:

My eye got better in Munich. I had no iritis but a conjunctivitis and a slight episcleritis, which I got from an infection. I hope it is well on the mend, but I shall not be able to do any reading or writing [for] several weeks, as the atropine I have to take reduces my vision to about a fourth and I cannot see any print at all [...].<sup>14</sup>

One is struck after reading letter after letter like this in which Joyce describes his various eye illnesses in meticulous detail of later Beckett's protagonists whose ailments are described with a precision of language that would live up even to the Penman's standards.

As Joyce became more dependent, he seemingly became more relentless in his single-mindedness: nothing must inhibit his last and perhaps greatest masterpiece, then known only as *Work in Progress*. Thus Joyce gathered around him a few close friends, mostly young men, who were to become devoted to him, doing everything from taking dictation, to reading to him, to defending him against his critics. This new circle included Beckett, MacGreevy, Eugene Jolas, his wife Maria, and Joyce's daughter-in-law Helen Fleischman. By the late 1920s, the modernist movement, which may have had some semblance of cohesiveness before the war, had divided into factions. By 1928 most of Joyce's early champions, like Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot, had deserted him. Indeed, as Joyce progressed deeper and deeper into *Work in Progress*, several of these champions, particularly Pound and Lewis, became literary enemies – culminating in Lewis's vehement attacks on Joyce in 1927. The first attack came in the form of an article entitled "The Revolutionary Simpleton" in the January 1927 issue of *The Enemy* (which Lewis himself edited), and several months later in book form in *Time and Western Man*. In short, Lewis, after taking a particularly vicious swipe at the whole of the Irish Literary Revival, proclaimed Joyce as "the poet of the shabby-genteel, impoverished intellectualism of Dublin."<sup>15</sup> Lewis dismissed *Ulysses* as an exercise in Naturalism in which the "bric-à-brac" of 1904 is collected into "an immense *nature-morte*."<sup>16</sup> Other attacks, which particularly disturbed Joyce, followed in 1928 from Rebecca West and Sean O'Faolain.

O'Faolain launched his first major attack on *Work in Progress* in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* in April 1928. When the article was reprinted in the *Criterion* in September of that same year, it served to attack Joyce on two fronts: it was criticism from home and it was published in the journal of an old ally, T.S. Eliot. Joyce felt the betrayal keenly. Two months later, on the 29th December, A.E. reviewed the American edition of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* in *The Irish Statesman* which contained a preface by Padraic Colum. A.E. praised the book highly stating that this "technical feat, this strange slithery slipping, dreamy nightmarish prose is more astonishing than anything Joyce had yet written, and whatever else he may be, he is a virtuoso in the use of words."<sup>17</sup>

The following month O'Faolain responded to A.E.'s praise in a Letter to the Editor by stating that *Work in Progress* strikes "at the inevitable basis of language, [and] universal intelligibility [...]. Yet no genuine student of

literature can dare be unfamiliar with it: it is one of the most interesting and pathetic literary adventures I know, pathetic chiefly because of its partial success [...].”<sup>18</sup> Joyce was troubled enough to have two of his henchmen write responses. Eugene Jolas, in probably the only letter to *The Irish Statesman* he ever wrote, replied by the end of the month. MacGreevy responded soon after with an uneven letter published on the 16th of February, 1929 in which he responds to O’Faolain’s charges while getting in a plug for Beckett’s soon-to-be published essay defending Joyce in *transition*.

Probably spurred by Lewis’s attacks in 1927, Joyce decided to respond to his critics in a more organised way by supervising the writing of a number of articles defending his position. These first appeared in *transition*, and later were collected, and published on the 27th of May, 1929 by Sylvia Beach, with some changes and additions, under the mock portentous title of *Our Exagmination round His Factification For Incamination of Work in Progress*, or, in Joycean shorthand, O.<sup>19</sup> The etymological roots of the spelling of Exagmination was derived from “*ex agmine*, a hint that his goats had been separated from the sheep.” And as Joyce explained to Valery Larbaud, “I am now hopelessly with the goats and can only think and write capriciously. Depart from me ye bleaters, into everlasting sleep which was prepared for Academicians and their agues!”<sup>20</sup> There were twelve bleaters,<sup>21</sup> like the twelve apostles or the twelve customers of Earwicker’s public house.<sup>22</sup> All of the essays were written under the direction of Joyce, except William Carlos Williams’s, which was unsolicited.<sup>23</sup> There were also two letters of (comic) protest by G.V.L. Slingsby and Vladimir Dixon, long assumed to be written by Beach and Joyce, respectively,<sup>24</sup> but in fact written by other hands. G.V.L. Slingsby was a journalist who was commissioned by Beach, and paid on May 27th.<sup>25</sup> The other protest, by Vladimir Dixon, was unsolicited and unpaid, and until recently, assumed to be without doubt by Joyce himself.<sup>26</sup>

Joyce did not simply originate the idea for *Our Exagmination*, but took on the roles of editor, proofreader, and general taskmaster, yet, catching all the errors was even beyond Joyce, as he relates to Weaver: “Up till the last day I had to supervise it and check the references etc made by the 12 yet on opening it this morning I light on the world ‘whoreson’ classified by Jolas among the neologisms coined by W.S. in *Cymbeline*!”<sup>27</sup> After the volume was published Joyce was not discreet about his own part in it. In a letter of 30 July 1929 to Valery Larbaud he wrote:

What you say about the Exag is right enough. I did stand behind those twelve Marshals more or less directing them what lines of research to follow. But up to the present though

at least a hundred copies have been freely circulated to the press and press men not a single criticism has appeared. My impression is that the paper cover, the grandfather's clock on the title page and the word Examination itself for instance incline reviewers to regard it as a joke, though these were all my doing, but some fine morning not a hundred years from now some enterprising fellow will discover the etymological history of the orthodox word examination and begin to change his wavering mind of the subject of the book, whereupon one by one others will faintly echo in the wailful choir, "Siccome i gru van cantando lor lai."<sup>28</sup>

Yet, Joyce was not displeased with the majority of the articles, and certainly not with MacGreevy's and Beckett's (who each received a 30 franc fee for their services). Reading *Our Exag* (as it was referred to at Shakespeare & Co) is like walking into the middle of an argument. And it is, since Joyce's apostles were responding to very specific charges. Beckett's article, which first appeared in issue 16/17 of *transition*, entitled, "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce," was Beckett's first published piece of criticism. Joyce persuaded Jolas to include it in an edition of *transition* in which none of his own work was appearing,<sup>29</sup> and later endeavoured to arrange for it to be translated into Italian.<sup>30</sup> In Beckett's essay, as in his review of MacGreevy's volume *Jack B Yeats* many years later, one can see Beckett working out ideas that would come to fruition so perfectly in *Waiting for Godot*, and even more clearly in the later dramas:

Here [in *Work in Progress*] form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself.<sup>31</sup>

Some of Beckett's early working out of aesthetics might have come, perhaps not so surprisingly, from Lewis's attacks on Joyce. Lewis attacked *Ulysses* for being a "time-book," for laying emphasis on "a self-conscious time-sense," and for erecting this "time-sense [...] into a universal philosophy."<sup>32</sup> Needless to say, much later, in 1950, Lewis recanted his earlier criticism of *Ulysses*. It did, however, get Beckett thinking, and in doing so may have paved the way for the timelessness, the space-rootedness of his later works.

MacGreevy's essay, which was entitled "A Note on *Work in Progress*," was at the last moment retitled by Joyce "The Catholic Element in *Work*

*in Progress*,<sup>33</sup> and was published in issue 14 of *transition*. It was important to Joyce that his audience understand that *Work in Progress* has its roots in the Catholic tradition, and in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver of October 1928, he singled out MacGreevy's essay as one which played an important role in explaining a significant element of *Work in Progress*.<sup>34</sup> In his essay, MacGreevy implicitly responded to charges levelled by Irish critics of Joyce's work. The hysterics of the reviewer of *Ulysses* in the *Dublin Review* in 1922 is a representative example of the type of criticism coming from Joyce's country of birth. On the one hand it was denounced as "the screed of one possessed," on the other hand, the reviewer did not worry unduly about the book's impact on the general reader who, he was sure, was in no particular danger of understanding the tome, and thus being corrupted.<sup>35</sup> The premise of MacGreevy's essay was that there was no inconsistency between Joyce's work and the keeping of the Catholic faith. Moreover, he saw Joyce's work as being essential to his time, an epic in the great tradition of epics, and thus necessitating a journey through some of the more "unsavoury" elements of the modern world:

Catholicism in literature has never been merely lady-like and that when a really great Catholic writer sets out to create an inferno it will be an inferno. For *Ulysses* is an inferno. As Homer sent his Ulysses wandering through an inferno of Greek mythology and Virgil his Aeneas through one of Roman mythology so Dante himself voyaged through the inferno of the mediaeval Christian imagination and so Mr Joyce sent his hero through the inferno of modern subjectivity.<sup>36</sup>

A month to the day after *Our Exagmination* was published, Adrienne Monnier hosted the now infamous *Déjeuner Ulysse*, a luncheon held to commemorate the publication of the French edition of *Ulysses* (which had been published in February 1929) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bloomsday on June 16th. Coming up to the celebration Joyce feigned indifference, such as in a letter to Weaver:

A.M. wants to get up a country picnic to celebrate Bloomsday and the French *Ulysse*. Two char-à-bancs full of people! I am afraid of the heatwave and storm and would much prefer a glass of milk and a bath bun like the Private Secretary who every day in every way seems to be a better and better Imitation of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, according to Nino Frank, one of the guests, along with such notables as Paul Valéry, Léon-Paul Fargue and Jules Romains, Joyce revelled in the attention.

Frank recalls that he, along with MacGreevy, Beckett, and Philippe Soupault (the younger members of the group), were subdued as the bus that Monnier had chartered for the occasion to take the guests to Vaux-de-Cernay departed Paris, with the older guests, including Joyce, singing rounds. At the luncheon itself, there was food aplenty, and Joyce had to restrain Valéry and Fargue from making speeches.<sup>38</sup> Frank, along with MacGreevy and Beckett, spurred no doubt by the copious amounts of drink they consumed, began to get louder, engaging in all sorts of “antics.” “And Joyce, who was called back to the table, if not back to order, obstinately joined in with his awkward gait.”<sup>39</sup>

Before the party had a chance to deteriorate into a drunken revelry, Monnier ushered them all into the bus. On the journey home the youngest members of the party, along with Joyce himself, were singing. Someone asked to stop at a pub, ostensibly to answer the call of nature. No sooner had one of them gotten off the bus than the five – Beckett, Frank, Joyce, MacGreevy and Soupault – were standing at the bar drinking white wines. The ruse worked several times, but the last time Beckett genuinely did have to answer the call. As Joyce relates the story to Larbaud, he, in typical Joycean fashion, stands aloof and blameless, on the sidelines:

But there were two riotous young Irishmen and one of them Beckett, whose essay you will find in the Exag fell deeply under the influence of beer, wine spirits, liqueurs, fresh air, movement and feminine society and was ingloriously abandoned by the Wagonette in one of those temporary places which are inseparably associated with the memory of the Emperor Vespasian [...].<sup>40</sup>

Beckett was indeed abandoned, and Frank remembers seeing the last of him getting off the bus “with great dignity. We watched him stride off, stiff as a poker, until he was lost in the crowd.”<sup>41</sup> The month after the luncheon the Joyce family left for Torquay. Joyce spent most afternoons on the beach, “fingering the pebbles and for texture and weight”<sup>42</sup> as nearly twenty years later Molloy fingered his precious sucking stones on Dalkey beach. Joyce seemed to have been genuinely upset with Beckett after the *Déjeuner*, yet, his anger must have dissipated, not enough, however, to write Beckett directly. When the family returned to London after their holiday Joyce had Nora write to MacGreevy in Paris to convey the message

that Joyce would like Beckett to call on him at the Euston Hotel on his way to Ireland where he was going for part of the summer holidays.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the early months of 1930 Beckett and MacGreevy continued assisting Joyce whenever possible. In a letter dated 1 March 1930 Beckett wrote to MacGreevy that he had “Worked with the penman last night. He recited Verlaine and said that poetry ought to be rhymed and that he couldn’t imagine anyone writing a poem ‘sinon a une petite femme’. He talked a lot about petites femmes. His own did not appear.”<sup>44</sup> The last major project Beckett was to work on for Joyce before leaving Paris to return to Trinity in September 1930, was the French translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle*. Beckett collaborated with Alfred Péron, the Ecole Normale’s French Reader at Trinity during the academic years 1927/28 and 1928/29. Towards the end of the summer Beckett and Péron were “galloping”<sup>45</sup> through the translation and Beckett was despairing of ever finishing it. By late summer it became clear to Beckett that the divide between Joyce’s prose and his and Péron’s rendering of it into French was becoming wider and wider. Beckett felt they could not go on with the translation alone.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, eight people, including Paul Léon, Eugene Jolas, Ivan Goll, Philippe Soupault with the assistance of Adrienne Monnier, were recruited to assist with the translation, of course, under the ever-watchful eye of Joyce who was present at at least one translation “seance.”<sup>47</sup> By February 1931, the eight were still at it, but Joyce, ever optimistic of its quality and timely termination, instructed Paul Léon to write on his behalf to T.S. Eliot (who as editor at Faber & Faber was instrumental in seeing *Anna Livia* published in June 1930) that the translation was “progressing wonderfully.”<sup>48</sup>

That summer in addition to working on *Anna Livia*, Beckett wrote his monograph on Proust for Chatto & Windus. The latter had given Beckett the go-ahead for the essay during the third week in July, and although they would not commission it, Beckett did not want to miss the opportunity and wrote it on speculation.<sup>49</sup> Needless to say, when he had delivered the monograph to Prentice in London on 17 September, Prentice was delighted with it and published it the following March. And so by late September Beckett was, rather unhappily, back in Dublin to take up the lectureship that Rudmose-Brown had been grooming him for.

Several months after Beckett’s departure, on the 10 December, Giorgio Joyce married Helen Fleischman, with MacGreevy acting as best man. Only weeks after the wedding, on 29 December, Joyce’s father died in Dublin, and MacGreevy was again turned to for support. MacGreevy had, as was his custom, called round to the Joyce flat after his day’s work was over. At the time the Joyces were living in the Hotel Bassano in Passy,

where they had been staying since the move from the Square Robiac. When MacGreevy arrived he found the household subdued—a telegram announcing the death of Joyce’s father had arrived. Joyce had previously arranged to meet an Italian composer who was setting some of his poems to music and refused to cancel the appointment. He asked MacGreevy to accompany him part of the way. They hailed a taxi: Joyce was unusually quiet as they drove. When it came time for Joyce to let MacGreevy out near the Trocadero underground, Joyce asked him stay with him a few minutes more. He began to talk, and then suddenly broke down. MacGreevy remained with him, and after some minutes, Joyce begged MacGreevy’s forgiveness. He talked himself back into his usual self, let MacGreevy go, and went on to his appointment. MacGreevy was sure he entered the café looking collected and calm. Nothing more was said of the incident.<sup>50</sup>

MacGreevy resided in Paris until late 1933, albeit with long interruptions in Tarbert, the South of France and London. After Beckett’s departure, and during MacGreevy’s long residences out of Paris, Joyce felt the absence of the two men keenly. Joyce became desperate enough to offer his unemployed brother’s son George £1 a week to help him from 2 till 5 daily, “but his stepmother (he is 21) took from him the *Exagmination* I had lent him and we were given to understand that our influence etc etc.”<sup>51</sup> It is not hard to supply the missing details. Yet, an ever resourceful Joyce was not without aid for long. Early in 1930 he found a new recruit, Paul Léon, a Russian emigré, distinguished both in law and literature, who was to assist Joyce for nearly a decade with almost every phase of his work. Yet, in the early days of their friendship Joyce was sceptical as to Léon’s usefulness as Léon had not “read a word I have written except the piece he revised for Babou, [and] has no idea what my book is about or what I want.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1934 Beckett’s *More Pricks than Kicks* was published by Chatto & Windus. He sent Joyce a copy who commented after glancing at the book, “He has talent, I think.”<sup>53</sup> What most concerned Joyce, however, was that the female protagonist in “Walking Out” was named Lucy – although Joyce dismissed there being any resemblance between the character of Lucy, who Joyce described as a “cripple or something,” and his own daughter.<sup>54</sup> Until Beckett returned to Paris late in 1937, he had little contact with Joyce, but as soon as he returned there were small tasks to be done – if Beckett was interested. Beckett was. The end of *Work in Progress* was finally drawing near and Joyce was not only torturing Harriet Shaw Weaver into guessing the title of his magnum opus (only to give up the game when she was getting too close), but torturing all around him as well. Beckett surely could have used the one thousand francs prize which was to go to the successful guesser, but it was his pride more than his pocket

which was hurt upon finding out the title of the book which seemed so patently evident in retrospect.<sup>55</sup>

Much has been made of Joyce's banishment of Beckett in May 1931 because of Lucia's claim that he first seduced her and then cruelly dropped her. Yet, by the time Lucia accused MacGreevy of the same thing (which even Joyce had difficulty in believing, although he duly banished MacGreevy as well), Joyce was coming around to admitting that his daughter, who had shown such earlier artistic promise, was mentally unstable. Yet, despite Joyce's earlier banishment of Beckett, Beckett was to remain one of Lucia's most stalwart friends. In 1935, while Beckett was living in London, Lucia, under Harriet Shaw Weaver's tutorage, and Joyce's sister Eileen's watchful eye, chose to settle for a time in London. She and Beckett met, not infrequently, for dinner. And several years later, during those early months of 1939, while Hitler was annexing Central Europe and Léon was supervising the dismantling of the Joyce flat at 7 rue Edmond Valentin, Lucia required hospitalisation. By mid-April she had to be removed from the flat and put under the care of Dr Achille Delmas at the *maison de santé* where Joyce spent every Sunday. Her only other visitor was Beckett.<sup>56</sup>

And although 4 May 1939, the publication date of *Finnegans Wake* in both London and the United States, should have been a day of great celebration, the ominous rumblings of Hitler, and Lucia's worsening condition, disallowed the kinds of celebrations that attended *Ulysses*. Nevertheless, throughout the month of July Léon, acting on behalf of Joyce, was one of four parties conducting a very spirited and confused correspondence with the B.B.C. about a projected reading of *Finnegans Wake* for their Northern Ireland station (the other parties were Joyce's literary agent and his solicitors). It seemed that Joyce felt he might be in London in July to do the reading personally, but Lucia's ever worsening condition prevented him from travelling abroad. The B.B.C., desirous of a reading by someone familiar with the work, suggested a Mr Harold Nicholson or a Mr Sean Beckett of Dublin in Joyce's stead.<sup>57</sup> Several days later another letter arrived. Apparently there was a mistake in the first dispatch, and the name should have read "Fan Beckett" instead of "Sean Beckett." An ever resourceful Paul Léon was able to write back to the solicitors 10 days later that the individual in question was neither Fan or Sean, but none other than Samuel Beckett, who was in Dublin visiting his mother. Léon had approached Beckett, and in principle, he was willing to do the reading.<sup>58</sup> Eventually, the B.B.C. abandoned the project, and neither Joyce nor Beckett was called upon to read. Yet, Beckett's agreeing to the broadcast is quite striking in light of his later well-known prohibition against being recorded.

Yet, loyalty in the Joyce/Beckett relationship was not a one-way street. When Beckett was stabbed by that now infamous Parisian pimp in January 1938, Joyce was one of the first to find out. Joyce had tried contacting Beckett at his hotel the previous night and became alarmed when he had heard that Beckett had not spent the night there. Joyce made inquiries, found Beckett was in hospital, and immediately went to visit him. In the days after the stabbing, Joyce's flat seemed more like a "stock exchange" than a private residence with telephone calls hailing from all parts.<sup>59</sup>

Brian Coffey, the Irish poet and long-time friend of Beckett, who was living in Paris at the time, also found out the next day. He rushed to the hospital, as it happened, at the same time as Joyce, and was introduced to the great master over Beckett's "horizontal body." Coffey spent several hours in the company of the two men, and seemed undecided about who was in worse condition: Beckett or Joyce. Certainly the Joyce that sat before him was not the legendary Joyce of literary lore. The man who sat before him had a large swelling, like a goitre, at the base of his neck. His voice was rather querulous ("like that of a Dublin tradesman discussing an order") rather than the melodious tenor he expected. Joyce's eyes "were only deep dark holes behind very thick lenses" and the large overcoat he wore did little to disguise a shrinking frame.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, ill as Joyce was, he insisted that Beckett be moved to a private room (at his expense) and saw to it that his personal doctors took charge of the case.<sup>61</sup> He even brought Beckett his favourite reading lamp. Joyce visited Beckett regularly, and a few days after Coffey's first meeting with Joyce, he found himself sitting across from the Penman again. When he arrived at the hospital Joyce and Beckett were in the middle of an argument about Dostoevsky and the author of *The Informer*, Liam O'Flaherty. In the middle of this heated debate, Joyce desired some information of great import, or so the young student of philosophy thought. In solemn tones he turned to Coffey and asked, "Mr Coffey, how would you choose a perfect blackthorn walking stick?" Coffey, ever anxious to please, replied "I don't know, Mr Joyce," to which Joyce promptly provided him with the correct answer. Following on the heels of the first question, Joyce continued the examination, "'And, Mr Coffey, where in France are the best pralinés to be found?' Same reaction, same result."<sup>62</sup> Thus having failed the examination twice, Coffey was, fifteen minutes later, on one side of Joyce, with Léon on the other, helping him down the hospital steps to the street.

By August 1940 all had "changed utterly." Joyce, who had fled in December with Nora to Saint-Gérand-le-Puy (where Stephen, Giorgio's son, was in boarding school), was desperately looking for a way out of France to Zurich. Léon, after a falling out with Joyce in 1939, arrived in

Saint-Gérard on a cart drawn by a small donkey and made his peace with Joyce. Léon insisted on returning to Paris to see his son graduate, although Joyce begged him not to go. While in Paris in September he rescued some of Joyce's books and papers from the flat and delivered them to Count O'Kelly, the Irish ambassador to occupied France. When Beckett saw him in Paris he became alarmed and told him "You must leave at once."<sup>63</sup> He stayed on one day too late. The very day his son was scheduled to graduate he was arrested by the Germans and interned near Paris. In December, with the help of Joyce's long-time friend, Paul Ruggiero, the family (with the exception of Lucia, who was in a clinic in occupied France) was able to leave. Beckett, horrified at what was happening around him, joined the Resistance. Léon was killed by the Nazis in 1942.

MacGreevy was never to achieve the intimacy with the Joyces that he had had during the time he lived in Paris, but when he heard of Joyce's death on the wireless on 13 January, 1941, he was moved to write (in what seems an unpublished and unbroadcast tribute):

It seems to me that it marks the end of nineteenth century individualism in literature [...]. He was like Yeats in one thing only. He had worked out an attitude of mind that seemed to him to be valid and he concentrated his whole life, both in his art and in his way of living to maintaining it.

Beckett made no public statement when he heard the news of Joyce's death, but many years later, when asked by the editors of a centenary volume of essays celebrating Joyce's achievement, wrote:

I welcome this occasion to bow once again, before I go, deep down, before his heroic work, heroic being.<sup>64</sup>

### Notes

1. Trinity College Dublin (TCD) Board of Trustees Minutes, 19 March 1927. The author would like to graciously thank the National Library of Ireland for permission to quote from the Paul Léon Papers; and the Samuel Beckett Estate, the Board of Trinity College Dublin, and the Estate of Thomas MacGreevy for permission to quote from the Thomas MacGreevy Papers. Grateful acknowledgement is also made to Princeton University Library for allowing me access to the

- Sylvia Beach Papers; and Reading University Library for allowing me to consult the Chatto & Windus Archives.
2. TCD Board of Trustees Minutes, 1 October 1927.
  3. "Poetry is Vertical," manifesto signed by Hans Arp, Samuel Beckett, et al., in *transition*, 21 (March 1932), pp. 148-49.
  4. Noel Riley Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 269-70.
  5. Thomas MacGreevy Papers at Trinity College Dublin, TCD MS 8067/61.
  6. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 565.
  7. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1975), p. 307.
  8. Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (London: Millington, 1974), p. 104.
  9. Ellmann, p. 566.
  10. Thomas MacGreevy, undated TL to Mr O'Connor [Ulick O'Connor]. Privately owned.
  11. Less than five years after Tuohy completed Joyce's portrait he committed suicide in his New York flat. He was 36 years of age. When Joyce heard the news he "showed no emotion" and replied, "I'm not surprised [...]. He nearly made me commit suicide too" (Power, p. 105).
  12. Thomas MacGreevy, unpublished letter to Mr O'Connor.
  13. Thomas MacGreevy, unpublished letter to Mr O'Connor.
  14. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. I, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking, 1957), p. 265.
  15. Wyndham Lewis, "An Analysis of the Mind of James Joyce," in *The Essential Wyndham Lewis*, ed. Julian Symons (London: André Deutsch, 1989), p. 190-206, p. 192.
  16. "Wyndham Lewis on time in Joyce" (extracts from Lewis's "The Revolutionary Simpleton," *Time and Western Man*, and *Rude Assignment*), in *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, Vol. I, ed. Robert H. Deming (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 359. See also Lewis's "An Analysis of the Mind of James Joyce" from *Time and Western Man*, and SueEllen Campbell, "Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson, and Their Philosophies of Space and Time," in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 29 (Fall 1983), pp. 351-69..
  17. Y.O. [George Russell], "Anna Livia Plurabelle," in *The Irish Statesman*, 29 December 1929, p. 339.

18. Sean O’Faolain, “Anna Livia Plurabelle,” in *The Irish Statesman*, 5 January 1929, p. 355.
19. Joyce’s letters to Weaver during this time read in passages like a mathematical equation. He devised signs and symbols for all sorts of projects: the companion volume to *Our Exagmination* (which never materialised) was represented by X, and his plans and projects for the year 1930 were reduced to sending out “another fragment, this time about  $\pi$ , with another preface,  $\Delta$  and  $\mathcal{L}$  having by that time passed into currency” (*Selected Letters of James Joyce*, p. 342). One is again reminded of Beckett’s own fascination with numbers.
20. Ellmann, p. 613.
21. Samuel Beckett, Marcel Brion, Frank Budgen, Stuart Gilbert, Eugene Jolas, Victor Lloná, Robert McAlmon, Thomas MacGreevy, Elliot Paul, John Rodker, Robert Sage, William Carlos Williams.
22. Ellmann, p. 613.
23. Fitch, p. 283.
24. See Fitch, p. 283; Ellmann, p. 613; *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. III, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1966), pp. 187-88.
25. Sylvia Beach Papers at Princeton University Library, and Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (London: Faber, 1960), p. 183.
26. For a thorough examination of Slingsby and Dixon, see *James Joyce Quarterly*, 29.3 (Spring 1992), particularly pp. 511-31: “The Voice Behind the Echo: Vladimir Dixon’s Letters to James Joyce and Sylvia Beach” by John Whittier-Ferguson.
27. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, p. 340.
28. “As the cranes go chanting their lays.” *Inferno*, Canto V, i.46; *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. I, p. 283.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
31. Samuel Beckett, “Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce,” in his *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 19-33, p. 27; originally in *Our Exagmination round His Factification For Incamination of Work in Progress* (Paris: Shakespeare & Co., 1929; rpt. London: Faber, 1936, and New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. 3-22, p. 14.
32. Lewis, “An Analysis of the Mind of James Joyce,” p. 195.
33. Sylvia Beach Papers at Princeton University Library.
34. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. I, p. 271.
35. Anonymous review of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, in *Dublin Review*, 171 (July-September 1922), pp. 112-119.

36. Thomas MacGreevy, "The Catholic Element in Work in Progress," in *Our Exagmination round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, pp. 117-27, p. 123.
37. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. I, p. 281.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
39. Nino Frank, "The Shadow That Had Lost Its Man," trans. Jane Carson, in *Portraits of the Artist in Exile: Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*, ed. Willard Potts (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1979), pp. 73-105, p. 85.
40. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, p. 344. In the three volume edition of Joyce's letters Samuel Beckett is not specifically named.
41. Frank, p. 86.
42. Ellmann, p. 616.
43. ACS from Nora Joyce to Thomas MacGreevy, dated 8[?] August 1929. Private collection.
44. ALS from Samuel Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, 1 March 1930. Thomas MacGreevy Papers at Trinity College Dublin.
45. ALS from Samuel Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, undated. Trinity College Dublin.
46. TLS from Samuel Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, dated 7 July 1930. Trinity College Dublin.
47. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. III, p. 209.
48. TL from Paul Léon to T.S. Eliot, 4 February 1931. Paul Léon Papers, National Library of Ireland.
49. TLS from Charles Prentice to Richard Aldington, 20 July 1930. Chatto & Windus Outgoing Correspondance Book 129, Reading University.
50. Thomas MacGreevy, unpublished letter to Mr O'Connor.
51. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. III, p. 222.
52. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 302.
53. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 316.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
55. Brian Coffey, "Joyce! 'What Now?,'" in *Irish University Review*, 12 (Spring 1982), pp. 28-31, p. 30.
56. TL from Paul Léon to Harriet Shaw Weaver, 2 April 1939. Paul Léon Papers, National Library of Ireland.
57. TL from J.R. Pinker to Messrs Monro, Saw & Co., 6 July 1939. Paul Léon Papers, National Library of Ireland.
58. TLS from Paul Léon to Monro, Saw & Co., 22 July 1939. Paul Léon Papers, National Library of Ireland.
59. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. III, p. 411.

60. Coffey, p. 28.
61. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. III, p. 411.
62. Coffey, p. 29.
63. Ellmann, p. 734.
64. Samuel Beckett, signed note dated 29 September 1980, in *James Joyce: An International Perspective*, eds. Suheil Badi Bushrui and Bernard Benstock (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1982), p. vii.

## 2 Geert Lernout

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### James Joyce and Fritz Mauthner and Samuel Beckett

One of the most important and most often quoted cases of literary cooperation is that between James Joyce and Samuel Beckett: Joyce dictated bits of *Finnegans Wake* to Beckett and told him to read Fritz Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* so that he could then use it in the *Wake*. The two stories occur in both biographies: that of Joyce by Richard Ellmann and that of Beckett by Deirdre Bair: their sources are Beckett and Ellmann, respectively. In the last version of his biography, Ellmann writes:

Beckett's mind had a subtlety and strangeness that attracted Joyce as it attracted, in another way, his daughter. So he would ask the young man to read and report to him about Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, in which the nominalistic view of language seemed something Joyce was looking for. Once or twice he dictated a bit of *Finnegans Wake* to Beckett though dictation did not work very well for him; in the middle of one such session there was a knock at the door which Beckett didn't hear. Joyce said, 'Come in,' and Beckett wrote it down. Afterwards he read back what he had written and Joyce said, 'What's that "Come in"?' 'Yes, you said that,' said Beckett. Joyce thought for a moment, then said, 'Let it stand.' He was quite willing to accept coincidence as his collaborator. Beckett was fascinated and thwarted by Joyce's singular method.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas this passage belongs to a general statement about the relationship between the two writers which makes the two stories difficult to date, Deirdre Bair has a new date: she sees Beckett reading Mauthner aloud to Joyce in 1929, his second year at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*.<sup>2</sup> Three pages later she repeats the 'Come in' story and in a footnote identifies the source of this information as Ellmann.

Let's take the second story first: the dating of Beckett's reading of Mauthner is contested. Ellmann does not explicitly date Joyce's request to Beckett to read *Kritik der Sprache* and report back to him though the context of the biography seems to suggest 1932. The vagueness may explain why Deirdre Bair in her biography of Beckett moved the incident to 1929-1930. Later Beckett told James Knowlson that Ellmann had

misrepresented the event: he had simply borrowed Joyce's copy and read it at the suggestion of Joyce. And in a letter to Linda Ben-Zvi Beckett wrote that he "had not read Mauthner to Joyce but had, on Joyce's request, taken the volumes and read them himself."<sup>3</sup> Knowlson in the Afterword to the bilingual edition of *Happy Days* and John Pilling in *Samuel Beckett* date the reading in the late thirties, but Knowlson gives no reasons for his claim and Pilling refers to Ellmann.<sup>4</sup> In her very influential article on Beckett and Mauthner in *PMLA*, Linda Ben-Zvi suggests 1932: after *Proust*, while he was working on *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and before he started *Murphy*, although Beckett himself wrote to her that: "I skimmed through Mauthner for Joyce in 1929 or 30. I do not remember what passages I imagined as likely fodder for *FW*."<sup>5</sup> In any case, Ellmann did not change the passage when he revised his biography in 1982.

Vincent Deane has found Mauthner notes in one of the *Wake* Notebooks that enable us to offer the fall of 1938 as a *terminus a quo*. This Notebook dates from the last half of 1938: it contains a reference to Oliver St John Gogarty's *I Follow Saint Patrick*, ninety pages before the Mauthner notes. Gogarty's book was published in June 1938 (with a Greek dictionary it was one of two books on Joyce's desk when he died). Joyce must have talked about Mauthner and lent the three volumes, after he had finished with them, in the second half of 1938, when Beckett was indeed close again to Joyce.<sup>6</sup>

The association with Joyce and Beckett has played a crucial role in the renewed interest in Mauthner's work in the seventies: both authors are mentioned in a crucial chapter in Joachim Kühn's *Gescheiterte Sprachkritik: Fritz Mauthners Leben und Werk* (1975).<sup>7</sup> Mauthner's importance to Beckett's work has been shown conclusively by Linda Ben-Zvi in two essays, although the new date of Beckett's exposure to the *Beiträge* suggested here reinforces the idea that we should seriously question the direct influence of Mauthner. The fact that Ben-Zvi, on purely internal evidence, is able to place Beckett's reading in 1932, after *Proust*, shows how much the two philosophies are similar. If the dating proposed here is correct, the reading of Mauthner's *Kritik* at the most confirmed an attitude to language and literature in Beckett that was already firmly entrenched: there does not seem to be a fundamental break in Beckett's poetics in 1938.

Given the late date, the impact of Mauthner on Joyce's writing can only be extremely limited: almost all of *Finnegans Wake* had been written at that time. Yet the notes Joyce took, probably in the summer of 1938, did make it into the *Wake*, and even in a very significant passage. What may well be the first page of *Finnegans Wake* that Joyce wrote in March 1923, the

Roderick O'Connor sketch, was left aside for fifteen years after Harriet Weaver had made a typescript. Joyce picked it up again sometime in 1938, and added a long holograph section. Then he started to revise that section, as was his custom at this point in time, with numbered passages on the backs of the preceding pages. A long addition contains all of the words and phrases taken from Mauthner in the notebook: it is now in the *Wake* on page 378. The circumstances of the final form of this part of chapter 3 of Book II enable us to confirm the dates offered above: the typescript in which the Mauthner additions are included date from probably September 1938, but the date of the first galley-proofs are certain: the printer himself dated them on 23 November 1938.

What interested Joyce in Mauthner's work? Was it, as Ellmann claims, the nominalist thesis of the *Kritik*? Since we have no other evidence, this question can only be answered by looking at the notes he made. As usual these are very disappointing from the perspective of a possible intellectual influence: Joyce seems much more interested in remarkable words or expressions than in what the words refer to. He notes e.g. "my sugar is sweet" or "Wurst," two examples given by Mauthner to explain certain properties of language. The first is Joyce's translation of the sentence "der Zucker ist süß," of which Mauthner says that it is

ein Teil unserer Welterkenntnis, wenn auch ein kleiner. Doch diese kleine Erkenntnis läßt sich selbst wieder verschieden betrachten, je nachdem ich mit diesem Satze die subjektive Tatsache gemeint habe, daß dieses Stückchen Zucker eben die Empfindung süß in mir ausgelöst hat, oder daß nach meiner Erfahrung und der Erfahrung der Menschheit der Stoff Zucker allgemein oder objektiv süße Empfindungen verursacht.<sup>8</sup>

(it is a part of our knowledge of the world, albeit a small one. But this small piece of knowledge can be perceived in different ways, according to whether I mean by this sentence the subjective fact that this piece of sugar has caused me to sense sweetness or whether I mean that according to my experience and the experience of mankind the substance sugar generally and objectively causes impressions of sweetness.)<sup>9</sup>

The second word, "Wurst," is an example of the deictic quality of language:

Und heute noch ist die menschliche Sprache auf ihrer tiefsten Stufe deiktisch. ‘Geben Sie mir Leberwurst!’ Der Stumme zeigt mit den Fingern auf die Leberwurst mit dem gleichen Erfolg. Der Hund schnappt nach der Leberwurst mit noch schnellerem Erfolg.<sup>10</sup>

(Human language is today still fundamentally deictic. ‘Give me a liver sausage!’ A mute person points with his fingers to the sausage and gets the same result. A dog snaps the sausage and achieves an even quicker result.)

In both cases it is difficult to see in how far, and even whether, these words are supposed to suggest the linguistic phenomena which they illustrate in *Kritik der Sprache*. The first sentence was not struck out and seems not to have been used, whereas the other is crossed through in blue pencil. Almost imperceptibly, it surfaces in the phrase “edelweissed idol worts,”<sup>11</sup> which combines “Wurst” with two other glosses from Mauthner and which seems to hide the sausage effectively and completely under the English plural of German “Wort” (i.e., “word”).

What happens to this part of *Finnegans Wake* II,3 with the inclusion of the Mauthner notes? The customers have been kicked out of the pub and try to get readmitted. Originally they just said they did not understand what HCE meant by thirty to eleven, “Kindly repeat,”<sup>12</sup> which was followed with “Mommerly twelfth noebroed!”<sup>13</sup> Everything between these two sentences was added at a later stage. Let’s look at just one sentence: “You talker dunsker’s brogue men we our souls speech obstruct hostery.”<sup>14</sup> The Mauthner note that has gone into this sentence is “speech = abb. hist,” which is based on Mauthner’s rather more complicated idea that we do not learn the culture, history, and value-system of a society when we learn its language:

Die Sprache eines Volkes ist kein vollkommener Bau; sie enthält durchaus keinen übersichtlichen und geordneten Weltkatalog [...]. Nur die Geistesarbeit einer unendlich langen Zeit kann dem Kinde dadurch abgekürzt werden, daß es in frühester Jugend bereits gewissermaßen das Netz der Sprache mitgeteilt erhält. Mag es nachher sehen, was es damit einfängt. Eine Abkürzung der unendlich langen Sprachentwicklung findet statt, mehr nicht. Das Kind lernt sprechen, aber es lernt nicht die Sprache. Wenn man hier unter Sprache die Summe der menschlichen Erfahrungen verstehen will.<sup>15</sup>

(The language of a people is not a completed building; it does not contain a completely surveyable and ordered catalogue of the world [...]. The intellectual labour of an infinitely long period can only be abbreviated for a child, by the fact that it has been given in earliest childhood in a way the net of language. What it does with it afterwards is the child's own affair. An abbreviation of an infinitely long linguistic development takes place, nothing more. A child learns to speak, it does not learn the language. If one understands here by language the sum total of all human experiences.)

It is paradoxical and at the same time typical of Joyce's manner of note-taking that his abbreviation of Mauthner's rather intricate debunking of the "Aberglaube an die geheime Macht der Sprache" ("the superstitious belief in language's power") of Lullus, Wilkins and Leibniz, would end up meaning the opposite of what Mauthner himself intended. The thought written down by Joyce (and which was certainly based on Mauthner's own marginal note in the *Kritik*: "Abkürzung der Entwicklung" ["Abbreviation of the development"]) is one that he must have recognised: his own work was the living proof of the radicalisation of this idea (which Joyce had arrived at independently of Mauthner): that a text which contains all languages represents a history of the world.

Yet when Joyce uses this note in *Finnegans Wake*, he turns it into something else again: whatever else the sentence may mean, speech *obstructs* history and one should not forget that note-taking and actual draft-usage cannot have been separate by more than one or two months. On the most obvious level, the sentence can be translated, partly from the Danish "de taler danskernes sprog, men vi," as: "You speak the language of the Danes, while we ourselves speak abstract history." In a way this sentence seems to come close to wanting to refute Mauthner's critique of an idealist metaphysics of language: the addressee of the sentence (the publican) speaks the language of men, but we, the speakers or customers of the pub, are souls and our language represents a Hegelian absolute history of the world. But, as elsewhere in the *Wake*, most notably in HCE's speeches, language itself betrays the language user: not only does speak become "speech," abstract "obstruct" and history "hostery," the grammar of the language that is called "obstruct hostery" deconstructs when too many nominal forms (men, we, our souls, speech, hostery) occur with only one verb that has the wrong grammatical form to make sense of the sentence: if we choose "obstruct" as verb

and read “our souls speech” as our souls’ speech, the verb should have an -s ending.

Although Mauthner’s influence on Beckett and on Joyce’s work may well have been much more limited than has until now been assumed, it is interesting to compare the different ways in which Beckett and Joyce have read *Kritik der Sprache*. Joyce read the book, or at least the first two hundred pages of the first volume, in much the same way as he read so many other source-books once he had decided to use them: he was looking for quotable items, interesting words or thoughts with little or no regard for the coherence or integrity of the original. Beckett wrote to Linda Ben-Zvi that he had read the *Kritik* for Joyce, but those notes, if there ever were any, have not survived. The quotations from Mauthner in Beckett’s hand in the so-called “Murphy notebook” that were described by John Pilling<sup>16</sup> show that Beckett was interested in the coherence and integrity of Mauthner’s work. And it seems to me now that there can be no doubt that the *Murphy* notebook is the same as the one described by Beckett as “an ancient common place book in which I had copied verbatim the paragraph from the last section of the work (*Wissen und Worte*) beginning ‘*Der zeine [sic] und konsequente Nominalismus.*’”<sup>17</sup> If Joyce first read and annotated half of the first volume of Mauthner’s *Kritik*, and then passed the book for annotation on to Beckett, who seems not to have known the work before Joyce told him about it, it must be clear that the entries from Mauthner in the commonplace book date from after the summer of 1938.

The second story about Joyce and Beckett concerns the dictation scene. Here I can be a lot shorter: not only has the sentence “Come in” which Joyce was supposed to want to retain never been located in the final text of the *Wake*, there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever, neither in the drafts and manuscripts, nor in the notebooks, of Beckett’s handwriting. Until new evidence is produced, the story of Beckett-the-secretary is apocryphal and should be laid to rest.

We may well ask what difference this all makes. The correction of the Mauthner myth should allow students of Beckett’s work, on the one hand, to reevaluate Mauthner’s supposed influence on the writer in the light of the new date. The correction of the second myth is much more important to Joyceans: starting with Ellmann’s comment in his biography (“[Joyce] was quite willing to accept coincidence as his collaborator”<sup>18</sup>) and especially in the discussions about the Gabler edition, the “Come in” story is always referred to when critics want to question Joyce’s command (or Joyce’s wish to command) over his text, and the possibility of literary collaboration. If examples of this type of flippancy on Joyce’s part have to be adduced, they will henceforth have to be found elsewhere.

## Notes

1. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 648-49.
2. Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Pan/Picador, 1980), p. 84.
3. Linda Ben-Zvi, "Fritz Mauthner for Company," in *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 9 (1984), pp. 65-88, p. 65.
4. Linda Ben-Zvi, "Samuel Beckett, Fritz Mauthner, and the Limits of Language," in *PMLA*, 95 (March 1980), pp. 183-200, p. 198.
5. Samuel Beckett, quoted in Ben-Zvi, "Fritz Mauthner for Company," p. 66.
6. See Bair, pp. 253-53, and Ellmann, p. 713.
7. See Joachim Kühn, *Gescheiterte Sprachkritik: Fritz Mauthners Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), second chapter.
8. Fritz Mauthner, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1923; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), vol. I, p. 35.
9. My translation; all subsequent translations of passages from Mauthner are mine.
10. Mauthner, vol. I, p. 48.
11. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber, 1975), 378.24.
12. *Ibid.*, 378.23.
13. *Ibid.*, 378.33-34.
14. *Ibid.*, 378.31-32.
15. Mauthner, vol. I, pp. 72-73.
16. See John Pilling, "From a (W)horoscope to *Murphy*," in *The Ideal Core of the Onion: Reading Beckett Archives*, eds. John Pilling and Mary Bryden (Reading: Beckett International Foundation, 1992), pp. 1-20.
17. Samuel Beckett, quoted in Ben-Zvi, "Fritz Mauthner for Company," p. 66.
18. Ellmann, p. 649.

### 3 Steven Connor

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#### “Beware of Imitations”: Joyce, Beckett and the Logical Machine of Mimesis

The distinction between mimesis and diegesis is first systematically proposed in the work of Plato. In *The Republic* this distinction concerns the narration in particular of acts of speech. Where the utterance of a character is given directly in the character's own words, where, in other words, the narration attempts not only to give the substance, but also to imitate the form of a character's utterance, then we have *mimesis*. *Diegesis* occurs in the mode of indirect speech, which merely paraphrases the substance of a character's utterance without attempting to imitate its form. The example Plato gives is a speech by Agamemnon in Homer's *Iliad*, which he gives first of all in mimetic direct speech and then translates into diegetic indirect speech. It is significant that Plato focuses upon the narration of speech, since, as Gérard Genette, among others, has observed, it is only here, where there is an identity of substance between what is being represented and what is being used to represent it, that there can be anything like true mimesis.<sup>1</sup> (In a similar way, we could say that painting or sculpture could only ever “imitate,” as opposed to representing, what were already visual or plastic forms.)

The preference for showing or mimesis, in the tradition inaugurated by James and elevated into a doxa by Percy Lubbock and others in the early part of the century, is anti-Platonic, since Plato has a deep distrust of mimesis. For modernist writers, the preference for the mimetic representation, not only of speech, but of experience in general, is part of a deep and vigorous nostalgia for the sacramental unity of words and things, and a desire to bring (back) into being through narrative a world which would speak itself. It is a commonplace of modernist narrative aesthetics that the business of the novelist is to give us the events of the narrative with the absolute minimum of narrative intervention; curtailing the “mere muffled majesty” of the speaking author allows the possibility of narratives that would tell themselves, speak in their own language, without distortion, translation, reordering or authorial interpretation; an enaction rather than a narration.

This distinction between mimesis and diegesis may also seem to be conjugated in the narrative of the move from modernism to postmodernism in narrative form, with the shift from such enactive narrative to a narrative that self-consciously flaunts its own devices, obliquities and unreliabilities. If the stress on mimesis results in a suspicion of the temporal orderings of narrative in modernism, and the consequent domination of structures that

suggest spatiality and simultaneity, then postmodernism has been said to be characterised by a return of temporality. Narrative theory, with its stress on the constructed nature of all narratives and therefore its implicit endorsement of Genette's claim that no true mimesis can exist in narrative, joins with this current of antimimeticism. Nevertheless, it may be said that the implicit distinction between the mimetic and the diegetic exercises unabated force in such narrative theory.

It is in the work of Jacques Derrida and especially in his *Dissemination* that the Platonic tradition with regard to mimesis has been most searchingly interrogated. I want to focus however on one short passage from Derrida's "The Double Session" and try to draw out its implications for a theory of narrative mimesis by using it to read two uncharacteristically nonmimetic texts, the "Ithaca" section from Joyce's *Ulysses* and Beckett's *Watt*. The point of this will be to suggest that, in the case of certain 'limit-texts' such as these, the relations between mimesis and diegesis, and the relations which they generate between enaction and narration, truth and falsity, and so on, are pushed towards an instructive kind of dysfunction.

The passage from Derrida that I want to examine in fact forms part of a footnote, which is itself a disclaimer, in which Derrida says that it is not possible for him to examine in full the complexities of Plato's concept of mimesis. But the footnote does give what is called an outline of the logic of Plato's argument about mimesis. Here it is:

1. *Mimesis* produces a thing's double. If the double is faithful and perfectly like, no qualitative difference separates it from the model. Three consequences of this: (a) The double – the imitator – is nothing, is worth nothing in itself. (b) Since the imitator's value comes only from its model, the imitator is good when the model is good, and bad when the model is bad. In itself it is neutral and transparent. (c) If *mimesis* is nothing and is worth nothing in itself, then it is nothing in value and being – it is in itself negative. Therefore it is an evil: to imitate is bad in itself and not just when what is imitated is bad. 2. Whether like or unlike, the imitator is something, since *mimesis* and likenesses do exist. Therefore this nonbeing does "exist" in some way (*The Sophist*). Hence: (a) in adding to the model, the imitator comes as a supplement and ceases to be a nothing or a nonvalue. (b) In adding to the "existing" model, the imitator is not the same thing, and even if the resemblance were absolute, the resemblance is never absolute (*Cratylus*). And hence never

absolutely true. (c) As a supplement that can take the model's place but never be its equal, the imitator is in essence inferior even at the moment it replaces the model and is thus "promoted." This schema (two propositions and six possible consequences) forms a kind of logical machine; it programmes the prototypes of all the propositions inscribed in Plato's discourse as well as those of the whole tradition. According to a complex but implacable law, this machine deals out all the clichés of criticism to come.<sup>2</sup>

I want to isolate two factors in particular from this account: firstly the stress on the ethical value of truth as correspondence and the corresponding abhorrence of the idea of variation or superfluity, and secondly the importance of economic notions, and of quantitative metaphors of equivalence measured in terms of less and more, surplus, shortfall, profit and loss. In terms of the logical machine identified here, both kinds of *mimesis*, in which imitation is less than (adds nothing to) its original, and is more than (supplements) its original, are good and bad, encompass at once fidelity and treason, truth and error. Plato's preference for diegesis over *mimesis* comes from a desire to consolidate the conditions specified under 1 a) and 1 b). But it is hard to be sure that diegetic reported speech is in fact more reliably transparent than mimetic or direct speech; viewed from the Jamesian perspective, for example, it is diegesis that is wasteful, distant and abstract, and *mimesis* that is more direct and immediate. In fact, since the opposition between diegesis and *mimesis* seems to be a secondary effect of the *combinatoire* of ethico-economic outcomes spelled out by Derrida, we should not be surprised if both diegesis and *mimesis* are caught up in the agitated play of the logical machine. By pressing to one extreme of the *mimesis*/diegesis distinction, both Joyce's "Ithaca" and Beckett's *Watt* seem to begin to put at risk all of the values that this distinction maintains, in modernism and beyond.

It would be possible to read the "Ithaca" chapter as a recoil from the intensifying mimeticism, or enactive narrative of the immediately preceding chapters of *Ulysses*. Just as Bloom/Odysseus returns safely home, so there is a corresponding return to a kind of diegetic "telling," rather than mimetic "showing." Where earlier chapters of *Ulysses* have adopted and developed the styles of individual characters or the styles which seemed appropriate to or dictated by context, here that kind of imitative correspondence is dropped. The language of "Ithaca" seems to have – or to parody, which is to say, to imitate – the ambition of rendering the facts about Bloom's and Stephen's nocturnal conversation entirely from the

outside, without any of their thoughts, experiences or attitudes contaminating the medium. The narrative seems therefore to make a claim for absolute authority and authoritativeness – the same claim as it makes for Bloom’s narrative of the events of his day to Molly, after account has been taken of one or two omissions:

Was the narration otherwise unaltered by modifications?

Absolutely.<sup>3</sup>

Such a claim seems to have to do with a certain economy of representation, in the sense here of frugality. This is in stark contrast to the inflationary stylistic economies of the earlier chapters, in which there is always more stylistic currency than there are referential goods. This chapter aims to add nothing to its referential objects, in a return to a strict form of housekeeping after the spending spree of “Circe.” Certainly, Joyce himself saw the style of the chapter as sparse, selective, and reductive. In his remarks about the chapter he emphasised the violent shrinkage or abbreviation of its characters and events. “All events are resolved into their cosmic physical, psychical etc. equivalents,” he writes to Frank Budgen in 1921, while in other letters to Robert McAlmon and Claud Sykes he speaks of the “tranquillising spectrality” of the chapter, its “acidities” and the “sublimation” of Bloom and Stephen that it is to effect.<sup>4</sup> These terms all suggest purification by a narrowing or rendering down, seen alternatively as a thinning out and a concentration, an augmenting and lessening of substance. When Joyce contrasts this chapter with the one that is to follow it, he again adopts terms that suggest economic relations, when he says that it is to prepare us for the “final amplitudinally linear episode *Penelope*” and he runs together thriftiness and the promise of narrative abundance when he says that “the reader will know everything and know it in the baldest coldest way.”<sup>5</sup>

At its beginning, the episode might indeed suggest this emaciation of showing into the most abstract kind of telling, the anorexic reduction of bodily mimesis to spectral diegesis. It is realism on a crash diet:

Of what did the duumvirate deliberate during their itinerary?

Music, literature, Ireland, Dublin, Paris, friendship, woman, prostitution, diet, the influence of gaslight or the light of arc and glowlamps on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees, exposed corporation emergency dustbuckets, the

Roman catholic church, ecclesiastical celibacy, the Irish nation, jesuit education, careers, the study of medicine, the past day, the maleficent influence of the presabbath, Stephen's collapse.<sup>6</sup>

And yet as the chapter progresses, more and more is made of this reductiveness, as Joyce begins to amplify and elaborate his narrative indigence, giving us, for example, the extravagant account of the flow of water to Bloom's kitchen tap and the famous evocation of the qualities of water admired by Bloom. Sometimes the opposition between reduction and amplitude is enacted between question and answer, as the attempt to diminish something to its simplest form actually produces excess or redundancy:

What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom's thoughts about Stephen?

He thought that he thought that he was a jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not.<sup>7</sup>

Such an alternation between less and more is to be seen especially in the practice of listing in the chapter. A list, it can be argued, is among the most obediently diegetic of all forms of writing. A list does not attempt to order its materials, or to mimic their form linguistically, but simply presents those materials, in their inert and irreducible self-evidence. The list is the conventionalized form of formlessness; refusing to order its objects syntactically or grammatically, it reproduces the innocent formlessness of the insentient world. In this sense it represents the absolute effacement of the signifier, the stripping back or chastening of the mimetic enchantments of language. But at this diegetic extreme, at which the representation "is nothing, is worth nothing in itself," in Derrida's formula, the list might actually be thought to mimic the essential quality of the objects listed, namely their miscellaneity. It is hard to know how to decide whether listing represents a (diegetic) minimum of linguistic intervention, in which the list's constituents are made purely present by the innocence of ostension, which inflicts nothing of language upon its objects, or whether it is a kind of mimetic maximum, in which the very structurelessness of the language is a dramatisation of the uncontaminated sundriness of what lies beyond or beneath the powers of language to imitate.

Among the lists in "Ithaca" which have this effect are the list of objects

on Bloom's shelves, the list of Molly's clothes and the list of objects in the bedroom. The best example, however, is probably the list of objects contained in Bloom's drawer.<sup>8</sup> Among the items specified in that list is "an old sandglass which rolled containing sand which rolled."<sup>9</sup> The close fidelity of object and representation is suggested by the scrupulous repetition of the words "which rolled;" the language, we are made to feel, is nothing in itself, for it simply and obediently records each individual feature of the object without attempting to imitate it. But, at the same time, the repetition is precisely the feature which brings to light the superfluity and gratuity of the language, which therefore comes to act as a mimetic supplementation of its object, impersonating rather than merely gesturing towards it. Something similar is to be found a moment later in the account of Milly's childish letter to Bloom:

an infantile epistle, dated, small em monday, reading:  
capital pee Papli comma capital aitch How are you note of  
interrogation capital eye I am very well full stop new  
paragraph signature with flourishes capital em Milly no stop<sup>10</sup>

Here again, the sense of exact fidelity, the sense that nothing in the letter has been left out, and the corresponding sense of the exact fit between original and copy actually depends upon a sense of the exactions enacted by the language upon its object with the resulting perverse redundancies. There is here no need to specify "small em" when the text is perfectly capable of reproducing it, or indeed to spell out the sounds of the letters "em," "pee" and "eye." The writing here is both visible and invisible, nothing and something, shadow and impostor, thrift and profligacy.

Here, the turbulent relations between the diegetic less and the mimetic more (relations which Derrida takes to be compacted within the very notion of the mimetic) come about partly because of glimpsing of the only true mimesis possible in language, namely, the imitation in language of the material forms *of* language. But it is precisely in this chink of mimetic possibility that the mimetic-diegetic distinction is restlessly compromised in "Ithaca." One might instance the account of the advertisement for the Wonderworker which nestles in Bloom's drawer:

Quote the textual terms in which the prospectus claimed advantages for this thaumaturgic remedy.

It heals and soothes while you sleep, in case of trouble in breaking wind, assists nature in the most formidable way,

insuring instant relief in discharge of gases, keeping parts clean and free natural action, an initial outlay of 7/6 making a new man of you and life worth living. Ladies find Wonderworker especially useful, a pleasant surprise when they note delightful result like a cool drink of fresh spring water on a sultry summer's day. Recommend it to your lady and gentlemen friends, lasts a lifetime. Insert long round end. Wonderworker.<sup>11</sup>

Here, in a sense, the text *becomes* the text of the advertisement, even as it quite clearly quotes or refers to it. The advertisement is cited or recited deadpan, the enunciation enclosing its object like an invisible membrane separating us from the "original." And yet, we know that this is not quite an exact facsimile of the words of the advertisement, a verbal equivalent of the kind of incorporation of objects that one finds in the practice of painterly collage for example, since there are certain suppressions, irregularities or misreadings. If the text faithfully transmits the hapless zeugma of "making a new man of you and life worth living," it also presumably corrupts the actual grammar in the condensation of "keeping parts clean and free natural action" and "a pleasant surprise when they note delightful result." Does this indicate an impatient hurrying of mimesis into diegetic summary by the text, or is it perhaps rather to be thought of as the imitation of the movements of the rapidly scanning eye of a casual reader, which is to say, one mimesis interfering with another?

Another such example is the catalogue of books to be found on Bloom's shelves, with its exact repetition of the book-titles, along with, in one case, the quotation of a title page and accompanying inscription:

*Short but yet Plain Elements of Geometry* written in French by F. Ignat. Pardies and rendered into English by John Harris D. D. London, printed for R. Knaplock at the Bishop's Head, MDCCXI, with dedicatory epistle to his worthy friend Charles Cox, esquire, Member of Parliament for the burgh of Southwark and having ink calligraphed statement on the flyleaf certifying that the book was the property of Michael Gallagher, dated this 10<sup>th</sup> day of May 1822 and requesting the person who should find it, if the book should be lost or go astray, to restore it to Michael Gallagher, carpenter, Dufery Gate, Enniscorthy, county Wicklow, the finest place in the world.<sup>12</sup>

The effect ought to be the cancelling out of difference between the original

and copy, though it is once again hard to tell whether this is due to an extreme of mimetic showing or an extreme of diegetic telling, whether we are meant to see this as a photographic facsimile or a transcription. The effect of exact transcription is gained either by the sense that there is nothing in the way of the reader and the passage of text here designated, or that the printed text in front of us has so much simulacral solidity that it effectively becomes the designated object. In terms of the logical machine suggested by Derrida, the representation is both “neutral and transparent [...] is nothing and is worth nothing in itself” and yet also “in adding to the model [...] comes to be a supplement and ceases to be a nothing or a nonvalue.” Of course, if the text of *Ulysses* is here enabled to imitate the text that it designates it, this mimesis is always apparent as such, for the sense of iconic immediacy of the passage is actually dependent on a number of contrasts which define it for us as iconic. We recognise, for example, that this entry is different from the other bibliographical entries in the list, in which inscriptions and marginal annotations are summarised without any attempt to imitate their typographical form, as in “Lockhart’s *Life of Napoleon* (cover wanting, marginal annotations, minimising victories, aggrandising defeats of the protagonist)” and “Hozier’s *History of the Russo-Turkish War* (brown cloth, 2 volumes, with gummed label, Garrison Library, Governor’s Parade, Gibraltar, on verso of cover).”<sup>13</sup> Mimetic immediacy is brought about by the mediation of structured difference. Once this immediacy is signalled and accepted, we are prepared to ignore inconsistencies, such as the fact that there are actually two different inscriptions quoted in the entry. Michael Gallagher’s handwritten address clearly itself mimics the typography of the title page but, because it is discernible as an imitation, it is just as clearly distinct from it, the difference being emphasised by the shift of register at the end of the inscription with the cute little boast about Dufery gate being “the fine<sup>st</sup> place in the world.” And, far from giving itself over to direct quotation of the title page, the passage complicates the relationship of direct and indirect speech. The series of additional remarks on the title page, “written in French [...] rendered into English [...] printed for R. Knaplock [...] with dedicatory epistle [...]” runs straight into the bibliographical specification “and having ink calligraphed statement on the flyleaf,” with no indication of a change of author or citational level. It is clear that the information about what is printed on the title page cannot form part of the title page itself, though the absence of quotation marks makes the mistake possible.

This kind of mimetic citation seems progressively to go haywire in the “Ithaca” chapter, and thus jams together the permuted alternatives of Derrida’s logical machine, as, for example in the quotation of the label on

the jar of Plumtree's Potted Meat: "The name on the label is Plumtree. A plumtree in a meatpot, registered trade mark. Beware of imitations. Peatmot. Trumplee. Moutpat. Plamtrou."<sup>14</sup> It is appropriate indeed that we should be enjoined by the label here to "beware of imitations," for the lure and risk of imitation seems to be lurking at every moment within the seemingly nonmimetic abstraction of the language of "Ithaca." Here, the language begins almost instantly to assert its perverse, recombinative autonomy, asserting itself as the mimesis which is gratuitous and untrustworthy excess rather than obediently self-effacing nothingness, as the "something" which is always at work within the "nothing" of representation, whether it be mimetic or diegetic.

This concern with the relations and reversals of lessness and moreness suggests an obvious set of entries into the work of Samuel Beckett. His is a body of work that advertises its concern with the calculus of representation from the very beginning, and it has become a commonplace to relate his work to that of Joyce in terms of such an economic differentiation. Plainly, Beckett himself came to think of his work as the less to Joyce's more, the subtraction to his addition, as Charles Juliet's account of a conversation with Beckett suggests:

Il me parle de Joyce, de Proust, qui visaient tous deux à créer une totalité, à la rendre dans son infinie richesse. Il suffit, remarque-t-il, d'examiner leurs manuscrits ou les épreuves qu'ils ont corrigées. Ils n'en finissaient pas d'ajouter et de surajouter. Lui, il va dans l'autre sens, vers le rien, en comprimant son texte toujours davantage.<sup>15</sup>

In the light of this, one must begin to suspect that the "dream of an art unresentful of its insuperable indigence" of which Beckett has himself speak in the *Three Dialogues With Georges Duthuit* might already have been suggested in reaction to the imperial expansiveness of Joyce's art, the endless enlargement of which might have provoked in Beckett the sense of claustrophobia attaching in the *Dialogues* to the idea of increase, or "the common anxiety to express as much as possible, or as truly as possible, or as finely as possible, to the best of one's ability."<sup>16</sup> And yet the truth here, as in other aspects of the relation between the two members of the Joyce-Beckett "pseudo-couple," may be that contraries merge; that it may be a matter not so much of the difference between Beckett and Joyce, as of an uncanny repetition in Beckett of an internal difference within Joyce himself. To focus on the economies of the mimetic in Beckett's *Watt* may serve to indicate how this could be so.

There seems, indeed, to be nowhere in Beckett's work in which one can find so close a match to the determination apparent in "Ithaca" that the reader will "know everything and know it in the baldest coldest way." The novel elaborates and exists in the condition of "ferocious plethora" that Mr. Louit's bull-terrier is said to enjoy in the book; endlessly, marvellously, nightmarishly enlarging the domain of its mimetic (in)capacity.<sup>17</sup> There is, it seems, nothing in the book that is not susceptible of patient refinement, generously alert qualification or modification. The book founders and prospers in the ethical extremity of its attention not only to what is actual but also to the entire range of what is plausible, possible or hypothetical. Like the "Ithaca" chapter, which sees no reason to suppress any of the details of the purification, pumping and drainage systems necessary to provide Bloom with a glass of water, Beckett's *Watt* declines to inflict the violence of selection or suppression involved in all practices of narration or literary representation. The result, as with "Ithaca," is a kind of writing that is at once passive and imperious, allowing itself humbly to register and record everything that has happened or that might conceivably have happened in Watt's stay in Mr. Knott's house and yet also imposing an almost unbearably austere discipline upon those events. It is a weightless, colourless writing that appears and aspires to add nothing to its object, attempting to interpose no particle of corrupting substance between the reader and the meaning, and yet comes to constitute an unignorable inertia, which the reader constrains and detains the reader by the impenetrable density of the words and verbal sequences. It is a writing that is simultaneously nothing and something, lagging meekly behind its objects, while also exceeding them in grotesque gratuity.

Mr. Knott's meals gave very little trouble.

On Saturday night a sufficient quantity of food was prepared and cooked to carry Mr. Knott through the week.

This dish contained food of various kinds, such as soup of various kinds, fish, eggs, game, poultry, meat, cheese, fruit, all of various kinds, and of course bread and butter, and it contained also the more usual beverages, such as absinthe, mineral water, tea, coffee, milk, stout, beer, whiskey, brandy, wine and water, and it contained also many things to take for the good of the health, such as insulin, digitalin, calomel, iodine, laudanum, mercury, coal, iron, camomile and worm-powder, and of course salt and mustard, pepper and sugar, and of course a little salicylic acid, to delay fermentation.<sup>18</sup>

The listing here seems to function in something of the same way that it does in “Ithaca,” in that it gives the impression of an absolute passivity with regard to the items which it enumerates, while actually imposing a rhythm and sequential form which exerts the greatest control over those items. The list here is simultaneously an opening on to the givenness and arbitrariness of the ingredients and a violence at their expense – here, the phrase “such as,” which recurs in *Watt* alongside the phrase “and others too numerous to mention,” both concedes the impossibility of encompassing all potential members of a series but attempts nevertheless to retain calculative dominance over the unnameable excess. What I suggested in an earlier discussion of the functions of repetition in *Watt* may be true in more general terms of the economies of mimesis, namely that in this writing, language can never be made to coincide with what it represents, since the attempt to establish mimetic equivalence always leads to a kind of disproportion; the listing, the permutations, the repetitions of *Watt* are out in front of and comically in the wake of their meanings.<sup>19</sup>

Nowhere is this more the case than in the hilarious account given by Arthur to Mr. Graves of the examination of Ernest Louit and his mathematical genius Mr. Nackybal by the College committee. Like the “Ithaca” chapter, the episode affects the absolute inclusiveness and neutrality of an official report. Here, as in “Ithaca,” the desire not to obtrude the alien bulk of the signifier into the narration manifests itself, not in self-effacing transparency, but in gargantuan excrescence. As in “Ithaca,” this is partly because the passivity of the narration seems to forbid the mode of summary: in both Joyce’s and Beckett’s writing, the attention to the actual keeps getting drawn into consideration of the circumstantial or potential conditions which define it as actual, such that, increasingly the criteria of relevance or redundancy vanish. Thus, it is not enough for “Ithaca” to specify Bloom’s “equanimity” with regard to Molly’s infidelity during the afternoon, it must list the various things than which adultery must be regarded as less reprehensible (“theft, highway robbery, cruelty to children and animals, obtaining money under false pretences, forgery, embezzlement, misappropriation of public money, [...] criminal libel, blackmail, contempt of court, arson, treason, felony, mutiny on the high seas, trespass, burglary, jailbreaking, practice of unnatural vice, desertion from armed forces in the field, perjury, poaching, usury, intelligence with the king’s enemies, impersonation, criminal assault, manslaughter, wilful and premeditated murder”<sup>20</sup>). In a similar way, Arthur’s narration is not content with a general indication of the unpredictability of ocular communication between members of a committee, but must first of all demonstrate exhaustively the manner in which looks can go astray and secondly

produce a rational formula whereby the looks might be exchanged with minimum waste. As in "Ithaca," much of the huge comedy depends upon the strange cooperation of insane efficiency and monstrous extravagance of language.

For example, Mr. Fitzwein looks at Mr. Magershon, on his right. But Mr. Magershon is not looking at Mr. Fitzwein, on his left, but at Mr. O'Meldon, on his right. But Mr. O'Meldon is not looking at Mr. Magershon, on his left, but, craning forward, at Mr. MacStern, on his left but three at the far end of the table. But Mr. MacStern is not craning forward looking at Mr. O'Meldon, on his right but three at the far end of the table, but is sitting bolt upright looking at Mr. de Baker, on his right. But Mr. de Baker is not looking at Mr. MacStern, on his left, but at Mr. Fitzwein, on his right. Then Mr. Fitzwein, tired of looking at the back of Mr. Magershon's head, cranes forward and looks at Mr. O'Meldon, on his right but one at the end of the table.<sup>21</sup>

In a sense, not a word is wasted here; there seems to be an exact equivalence between the amount of energy expended in the telling and the amount of work achieved. But this equivalence is an equivalence of superfluties, since what is being evoked with such seeming efficiency is precisely misapplied or wasted effort. The correspondence between word and action binds into precise form a series of manoeuvres whose nature is precisely to be patternless and unpredictable. The very efficiency of the narration is therefore a mark of its failure; the cleaner the exposition of the chaotic and the arbitrary, the more it will suggest the power of the arbitrary to escape the grasp of representation. This leaves us uncertain whether the narration here is intended to be a perverse betrayal of its subject, or whether, in so gratuitously exceeding it, it does not efficiently mime the very excessiveness of that subject. No better demonstration of this can be imagined than the account of the exchanges between the members of the examining committee and Ernest Louit, and particularly those that concern Mr. Nackybal's miraculous, unassisted derivation of the cube root (73) of 389,017. The problem is that the Records Secretary, Mr. de Baker keeps mistranscribing the cube figure:

Would you be good enough to read out what you have got, Mr. de Baker, said Louit. What I have got? said Mr. de Baker. What you have got down in your book, to make sure

it is correct, said Louit. Yours is not a trusting nature, Mr. Louit, said Mr. de Baker. So much depends on the accuracy of the record, said Louit. [...] The rest doesn't interest you, said Mr. de Baker. No, said Louit. Mr. de Baker said, Looking back over my notes, I find what follows: Mr. Louit: Tom, can you hear me? Mr. Nackybal: Yes, sir. Mr. Louit: Three hundred and eighty-nine thousand and seventy. Mr. Nack-. And *seventeen*, said Louit. Really, Mr. de Baker, said Mr. Fitzwein. How often have you to be told? said Mr. O'Meldon. Think of sweet seventeen, said Mr. Magershon. Ha ha, very good, said Mr. de Baker. Mr. Magershon said, Would it not perhaps be preferable, with such exceptionally large and involved figures – er – at stake, if our Treasurer would consent to take over the record, just for today? I do not intend any disparagement of our Record Secretary, who as we all know is a superb Record Secretary, but perhaps with such unprecedentedly high and complicated figures involved, just for one afternoon –.<sup>22</sup>

Here, Arthur's account reads like an official stenographer's record of an exchange regarding the official record of the meeting, obtained, we know not quite how. The exchange not only concerns mathematics, it is, like so much in Beckett's writing, itself a mathematicomimetic matter. In an affair in which, indeed, "so much depends upon the accuracy of the record," it may be appropriate that the recording of the proceedings pass from the Secretary to the Treasurer. While this exchange is going on, Mr. Nackybal has already produced the cube root of the figure under dispute, a fact that only suddenly dawns on Mr. O'Meldon. But the precision of the mathematical proportions of cube to root is entirely travestied by the excessiveness of the narration, whose mimetic exactitude (these are the actual words of the participants, rather than any diegetic redaction of them) spirals into hazard and arbitrariness:

Wonderful most wonderful, exclaimed Mr. O'Meldon. What is wonderful most wonderful? said Mr. MacStern. The two figures are related, said Mr. O'Meldon, as the cute to its roob. The cute to its what? said Mr. Fitzwein. He means the cube to its root, said Mr. MacStern. What did I say? said Mr. O'Meldon. The cute to its roob, ha ha, said Mr. de Baker. What does that mean, the cube to its root? said Mr. Fitzwein. It means nothing, said Mr. MacStern. What do you mean,

it means nothing? said Mr. O'Meldon. Mr. MacStern replied, To its which root? A cube may have any number of roots. Like the long Turkey cucumber, said Mr. Fitzwein. Not all cubes, said Mr. O'Meldon. Who spoke of all cubes? said Mr. MacStern. Not this cube, said Mr. O'Meldon. I know nothing of that, said Mr. MacStern. I am completely in the dark, said Mr. Fitzwein. I too, said Mr. Magershon.<sup>23</sup>

What could possibly count as the efficient rendering of such inefficiency, a negentropic ordering of such entropic process? It is perhaps with justice that Beckett in his 1937 letter to Axel Kaun anticipated a time "wo die Sprache da am besten gebraucht wird, wo sie am tüchtigsten missbraucht wird."<sup>24</sup> The Carrollian nonsense song into which the bewildered secretary, Mr. de Baker, lapses ("*Said the column of cubes to the column of roots, / Oh what will you have to drink? / Why, thank you, sir, said the column of roots, / I'll have a bottle of ink*"<sup>25</sup>) may be as measured or appropriate a rendering of this situation as can be hoped for.

In both "Ithaca" and *Watt*, there is an initial attempt to substitute the poor but honest reliability of diegetic telling for the unreliability of mimetic showing, an attempt which takes seriously – or pretends to take seriously – the Platonic suspicion of mimesis. In both cases, the attempt to escape mimesis ends up back in its toils, reproducing all of the churning permutations of the logical machine necessary to the thinking of mimesis. Conventional accounts of Joyce and Beckett might suggest that, where Joyce generates a generous maximum of realistic possibility, even out of his scepticism regarding realism, Beckett works from the outset with an assumption of the impossibility of realistic representation. The truth seems to be that, for both writers at certain moments, the contraries of mimetic possibility and impossibility cross and collapse together, such that it is never for either a matter of a choice of one or the other. Beckett seems to have anticipated this catastrophic logic in his explication of Bruno's doctrine of the coincidence of contraries in his essay on *Work in Progress*:

The maxima and minima of particular contraries are one and indifferent. Minimal heat equals minimal cold. Consequently transmutations are circular. The principle (minimum) of one contrary takes its movement from the principle (maximum) of one [sic] another. Therefore not only do the minima coincide with the minima, the maxima with the maxima, but the minima with the maxima in the succession of transmutations.<sup>26</sup>

Both Joyce and Beckett induce a sense of the misproportions of representation, because their work so concentrates attention on the economics of mimesis. The proportioning distance between the ('Joycean') work that aspires to a maximum of inclusiveness, and therefore a strict minimum of loss or unaccounted residue, and the ('Beckettian') work that shrivels into a "savage economy"<sup>27</sup> of naming that nevertheless proliferates voluptuously the closer it draws to its "last unlesseable least"<sup>28</sup> of representational equivalence, measures a disproportion within the economies of mimesis that organises and disorganises the work of each.

### Notes

1. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 163-64. Derek Attridge has also pointed to the fact that, when the term is interpreted strictly in the terms provided by Plato's Republic, literary mimesis can only exist when language imitates the physical form of language: see his "Language as Imitation: Jakobson, Joyce and the Art of Onomatopoeia," in *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 127-57. Though he acknowledges the difficulty attaching to the idea of a literary or linguistic mimesis when the term is used in a Platonic sense, and writes that "a great deal of the history of the idea [of mimesis] has been taken up by a confrontation with, or avoidance of, this very difficulty," Christopher Prendergast is inclined to view the problem as having attracted disproportionate attention; *The Order of Mimesis: Balzac, Stendhal, Nerval, Flaubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 57-59. My own view, as will become clear, is that Joyce and Beckett focus attention on the particular economic problems, or precisely problems of proportion, attaching to literary mimesis to which literary modernism has been disproportionately inattentive.
2. Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session," in his *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p. 187.
3. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 [Student's Edition]), 17.2267-68.
4. Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 501.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 17.11-17.

7. Ibid., 17.527-31.
8. Ibid., 17.1775-1823.
9. Ibid., 17.1787.
10. Ibid., 17.1791-94.
11. Ibid., 17.1824-32.
12. Ibid., 17.1398-1407.
13. Ibid., 17.1381-82, 1385-87.
14. Ibid., 17.603-5.
15. Charles Juliet, *Rencontre avec Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Editions Fata Morgana, 1986), p. 39.
16. Samuel Beckett *Three Dialogues*, in his *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 138-45, pp. 141 and 142-43.
17. Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: John Calder, 1976), p. 170.
18. Ibid., p. 84.
19. See my discussion of what I described as the “economies of repetition” in *Watt*, in my *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 26-39.
20. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 17.2182-90.
21. Beckett, *Watt*, pp. 173-74.
22. Ibid., p. 185.
23. Ibid., p. 186.
24. Samuel Beckett, “German Letter of 1937,” in his *Disjecta*, pp. 51-54, p. 52.
25. Beckett, *Watt*, p. 192.
26. Samuel Beckett, “Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce,” in his *Disjecta*, pp. 19-33, p. 21.
27. Ibid., p. 28.
28. Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 33.

## 4 Marius Buning

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### The Chiasmus: Joyce and Beckett's Master Trope

Although the chiasmus as a rhetorical term dates back to classical rhetoric, it has undergone a remarkable revival in modern critical parlance. In a narrow, historical sense the chiasmus (from Greek 'cross-wide') is a figure of speech in which words are repeated in reverse order within a sentence (*abba*); in a wider, more modern sense it involves any balancing pattern in verse or prose which crosses parallel phrases or elements on all levels of the text, both within and beyond the sentence, thus including narrative and thematic aspects like plot, character, diegesis, symbols and motifs, etc. The chiasmus, then, is both a micro- and a macro-structural device.<sup>1</sup>

Its chief functions are mnemonic (i.e. as an aid in oral literature, e.g. in Homer) and ornamental/decorative, that is, as a means of stylistic embellishment, especially in poetic texts of all periods, thereby adding to the "pleasure of the text" (as Roland Barthes would have it). It also occurs, of course, as a playful form in spoken, non-literary language, for instance, in the so-called one-liner, as in the filmstar Mae West's famous retort: "It is not the men in my life that matter but the life in my men," or in President Kennedy's highly rhetorical exhortation: "Ask not what the country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

Whereas in the above examples the chiasmus affects the form only, things are different in, for instance, the famous witches' line from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (Act I, i, 11), where the chiasmus affects both form and content. Generally speaking, the chiasmus as a temporal and/or spatial form of patterning may have several emblematic, mimetic, or iconic functions; depending on the semantic context or semiotic frame, it may symbolise (notions of) reversal or inversion, circularity, non-progression, stasis, deadlock, symmetry, framing or enclosure.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Macbeth* quotation the chiasmus fulfils several of these functions at the same time: it enacts a reversal (the main theme of the play being the reversal of values), it reflects the conflict between seeming and being, and it mirrors an equivalent order in the plot: from fair to foul and back to fair. In other words, the chiastic patterning that we find here serves as an icon or a *mise en abyme* of the text. *Macbeth*'s "nothing is but what is not" (I, iii, 142-43) would be another powerful example of what may be called "chiastic mirroring."<sup>3</sup>

In a recent Dutch dissertation it has been cogently argued that the chiasmus (and its close relations: paradox, antithesis, and oxymoron)

served both the Elizabethan taste for rhetorical ornamentation and the keen Elizabethan alertness to the pervasive doubleness and contrariness of experience. As a structural principle, operative at all levels, it came to express and symbolise in Shakespearean drama, notably in *Macbeth* and (to a lesser degree) in *Hamlet*, spiritual sterility, stasis amidst a whirl of self-cancelling actions, and paralysis in the face of binary oppositions that insist on choice while preventing it at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

It can hardly be called accidental that chiasmic patterning is also one of T.S. Eliot's major rhetorical strategies, for instance, in "East Coker," which opens with: "In my beginning is my end," and closes on its reversal: "In my end is my beginning," and in "Little Gidding": "What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning;" other striking examples are to be found in the closing lines of "The Journey of the Magi," dealing with the concepts of birth and death, in "Animula" ("Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth"), in "Ash Wednesday" ("Word is unspoken, unheard; / Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard"), and in the first stanza of "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" symbolising circularity of action and thought:

[...] The endless cycle of idea and action,  
 Endless invention, endless experiment,  
 Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
 Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
 Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
 All our knowledge brings us nearer to ignorance,  
 All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
 But nearness to death no nearer to GOD [...]  
 The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
 Bring us farther from GOD and nearer to Dust.<sup>5</sup>

More generally, we may say that chiasmicism has become a privileged mode of expression in much twentieth-century literature, produced in an era of considerable post-Nietzschean epistemological doubt and existential anxiety. Placed within the broader categories of parallelism and repetition, chiasmic patterning has certainly become a much debated topic in contemporary critical theory.

Thus, Paul de Man has argued in an essay on the poet Rilke not only that the chiasmus is the determining rhetorical figure in his poetry, but also that this pattern of figuration "*can only come into being as a result of a void, of a lack that allows for the rotating motion of the polarities.*"<sup>6</sup> De Man sees Rilke as looking for semantic material to put into his form, rather than

seeking a form that will correspond to his subject (i.e. inversion of the subject/object relation), and as driven by his inherent chiasmaticism towards subjects containing a void, lack, or loss – in short, towards a thematics of negative experience. The Dutch critic Wim Bronzwaer, taking his clue from de Man's seminal essay, considers the chiasmus as a variant form of antithetical parallelism, whose mimetic or iconic function it is to symbolise the circularity of thought and language; additionally, he points out that repetition and antithesis are also the fundamental mechanisms of the structures of language itself. Thus the chiasmus can be seen as symbolic or iconic of philosophical and/or existential impasse or aporia – a “state of suspended ignorance,” according to de Man.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, a cyclical, indeterminate, and basically a pessimistic interpretation would seem called for in imaginative works dominated by chiasmatic patterning.<sup>8</sup> I will examine these assumptions by looking more closely, though briefly, at the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett.



Given Joyce's absorbing interest in matters stylistic and his expert knowledge of the handbooks of rhetoric, it comes as no surprise to see him employ the trope of chiasmus throughout his work, starting already in *Dubliners*. Its finest example is to be found in the closing paragraph of “The Dead,” which describes and enacts Gabriel Conroy's slow swooning into unconsciousness:

[...] snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, *falling softly* upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, *softly falling* into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. [...] His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow *falling faintly* through the universe and *faintly falling*, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.<sup>9</sup>

The chiasmi in this story, itself replete with “rotating” binary oppositions (warm/cold, east/west, male/female, life/death, etc.), not only enact the “melancholy unity between the living and the dead,” but they also point back to the themes of death and paralysis of the volume's opening story, “The Sisters.”

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, we find several examples of chiasmi, both on the level of sense and sound, particularly in the

climactic fourth chapter, where the drifting clouds in the sky are mirrored by the drifting seatangle in the rivulet by means of a double, interlocking chiasmus, whose symmetry is reinforced by parallelism and antonyms (“above/below”): “The water of the rivulet was dark with endless drift and mirrored the *highdrifting clouds*. The clouds were *drifting* above him *silently* and *silently* the seatangle was *drifting* below him;” similarly, Stephen’s epiphanic vision of the bird-girl is described chiasmically: “Her bosom was as a bird’s *soft* and *slight, slight* and *soft* as the breast of some darkplumaged dove.” In these examples the chiasitic structure is an emblem of perfect symmetry.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond these cases of local, micro-structural chiasmi *A Portrait* also uses an overall, macro-structural framing device: the three episodes and the diary of the last chapter chiasmically reverse the overture and the three episodes of chapter I. As Hans Walter Gabler has demonstrated, the two hell sermons of the religious retreat mark the novel’s literal, structural and narrative centre:

[...] the chiasitic disposition of the novel’s beginning and end alters the functional relationships in the sections of the work they encompass. Chapters II and IV take on a centripetal and a centrifugal direction, and the religious retreat becomes, literally and structurally, the dead centre of the novel [...] the two hell sermons [...] emphasise the chapter’s midpoint position in the chiasitic structure of the book. Within chapter III, divided by Joyce’s familiar asterisks into three parts, the beginning in Nighttown and the close in Church Street chapel stand in obvious symmetrical contrast. From the close of chapter II, the nighttown opening leads naturally into the hell sermon centre.<sup>11</sup>

In the introduction to the latest Penguin edition of *A Portrait* Hugh Kenner comes to similar conclusions;<sup>12</sup> he suggests that the following chiasitic symmetry pervades the book, centring on “*mirror*”:

Background	Painter	Mirror	Painter’s image	Background image
Dublin	Joyce		Stephen	“Dublin”

The first chiasitic clue occurs already on the second page, when a mocking chorus pounds through Stephen’s brain:

Apologise,  
 Pull out his eyes,  
 Pull out his eyes,  
 Apologise.<sup>13</sup>

According to Kenner the exact chiasmic centre of the book lies indeed in chapter three in between sermons two and three, with “*silent*” as the key word, where we read:

The preacher took a chainless watch from a pocket within his soutane and, having considered its dial for a moment in silence, placed it silently before him on the table.<sup>14</sup>

Concluding, we may say that the painterly metaphor of the title suggests a static repose, while the novel's overall framing technique mirrors the stasis, the deadlock, and the circularity of Dublin's spiritual life from which Stephen so desperately wishes to escape.

Chiasmus and circularity are of the essence in *Ulysses*, both on the macro-structural, narrative level and on the micro-structural, stylistic level. Its architectural plot is entirely built on circularity: from departure from home (chapters 1-3), through wanderings about town (chapters 4-15), to homecoming (chapters 16-18); its actions are encapsulated by the limits of a day, which in turn is encircled by other days, weeks, months, seasons, years, centuries. What happened on June 16 is likely to be repeated on June 17. In short, *Ulysses* is a network of circles within circles, symbolising endless repetition and eternal recurrence.

Both Stephen's and Bloom's thoughts are caught in the rhetoric of the chiasmus, that is, within the circularity of thought and language. Thus Stephen's Shakespeare/Hamlet theory, intended to illustrate the prominent father/son theme, is formulated in the Library chapter chiasmically by way of a rhetorical question: “Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Stephen's reflections on the “ineluctable modality of the visible” in the Proteus chapter are couched in chiasmi, for instance, when pondering over the problem of perception of colour in objects: “Then he [Aristotle] was aware of them [coloured signs as] bodies before of them [as] coloured.”<sup>16</sup> Or when listening to his own footsteps, he meditates on the relations between time (“*nacheinander*”) and space (“*nebeneinander*”) by means of a chiasmic formulation: “A very short space of time through a very short time of space.”<sup>17</sup>

Chapters later Leopold Bloom also reflects in his own amateur fashion on the problems of perception of colours by a blind man<sup>18</sup> and on how to

read time: “Can’t see it [the clock on the roof of the bank]. If you imagine it’s there you can almost see it. Can’t see it.”<sup>19</sup> His domestic “philosophy” is described in the Ithaca chapter as “The necessity of order, a place for everything and everything in its place.”<sup>20</sup> After having flirted for a while with the idea of leaving Molly, he rejects this in the end because it would preclude return; he is described as realising that there exists “An unsatisfactory equation between an exodus and a return in time through *reversible space* and an exodus and return in space through *irreversible time*.”<sup>21</sup> Clearly, he prefers “reversible space,” as becomes evident from his spoon-fashion position vis-a-vis Molly in the conjugal bed – a chiasmic position if ever there was one!

Bloom’s hope for racial equality is expressed chiasmically in the Circe chapter by compounding the Jew (symbol of oppression) with the Greek (symbol of the free, enlightened man) in: “Jewgreek is greekjew”<sup>22</sup> – an ingenious neologism, but within the context of the whole novel an expression of ambivalent, unfulfilled repetition of desire.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in the Cyclops episode, Bloom’s view of love as the opposite of hatred (which critics like Richard Ellmann and Marilyn French have taken to be the novel’s gospel<sup>24</sup>) fails to define love other than by saying in a circular way that it is not-hatred, or not-hatred is love:

—But it’s no use, says he. Force, hatred, history, all that.  
That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And  
everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that that is  
really life.

—What? says Alf.

—Love, says Bloom. I mean the opposite of hatred.<sup>25</sup>

Anyway, the narrator’s chiasmic parody a little later deflates any potential optimism: “Love loves to love love [...] You love a certain Person. And this person loves that other person because everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody.”<sup>26</sup>

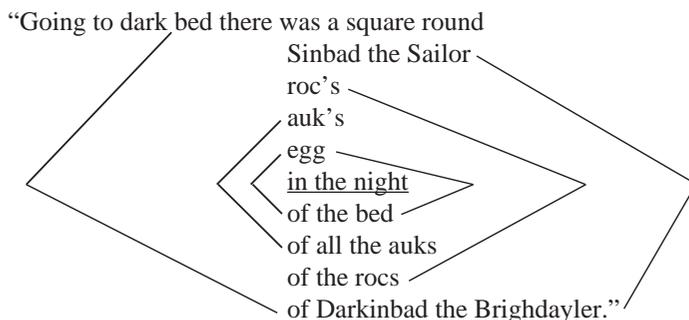
I shall leave undiscussed the many antithetical chiasmi in *Ulysses* that approach the aphorism, such as “in the midst of death we are alive,” or “an Irishman’s house is his coffin” as well as the host of chiasmi used purely for stylistic, decorative purposes, especially in the Sirens episode, for instance, when describing the waiter: “Pat is a waiter who waits while you wait. [...] While you wait if you wait he will wait while you wait.”<sup>27</sup>

I conclude this section with a superb example of a chiasmus that combines form and content, style and theme, substance and vision. It occurs at the very end of the penultimate chapter (itself teeming with

chiasticity and circularity!) and describes Bloom's fading-out consciousness with great linguistic virtuosity:

Going to dark bed there was a square round Sinbad the Sailor  
 roc's auk's egg in the night of the bed of all the auks of the  
 rocs of Darkinbad the Brightdayler.<sup>28</sup>

Its circular, multi-layered structure is best brought out by vertical notation:



(Commentary: in the centre of the chiasmus is the night; at both extreme ends we find Bloom, the voyager, as sailor, setting out in the morning and returning at night; references to mythical birds (rocks and auks), laying gigantic eggs (cyclical in shape!) and suggestive of eros and fertility, surround the sleeping Bloom, forever caught in the centre of the chiasmus that is his experience).

There is, unfortunately, no room to deal at all with *Finnegans Wake* which, as Samuel Beckett's authorised essay on *Work in Progress* (1929) tells us, is largely structured on Giambattista Vico's "cyclical" philosophy of history as a circular process of recurrences ("corso" and "ricorso").<sup>29</sup> We may add that also stylistically speaking Joyce's "Book of the Dark" is a veritable blueprint for chiastic patterning.

Enough has been said, I hope, to have made out a strong case for Joyce's persistent employment of chiastic rhetoric, which thematises underlying patterns of circularity and repetition, both in language and thought. If the chiasmus points to absence and a void, as Paul de Man and others have suggested (see above), we must, nevertheless, conclude that Joycean repetition and circularity – and our interpretation of these patterns – are toned down or tempered, up to a point, by the essentially comic, integrative mode he chose to write in. But at the same time it should be clear that there

is no support for an unqualified optimistic reading of Joyce's work, nor for interpreting Molly's final yes as a form of ecstatic acceptance of life.



In the case of Samuel Beckett's writings we find ourselves arriving at almost opposite conclusions: for one thing, Beckett opted for the tragicomic mode, which in his late works, both drama and fiction, became increasingly despondent and minimally comic; for another, his writings are steeped in the great tradition of philosophical pessimism, which sees life as reiterated futility. They are, moreover, grounded in a radical linguistic scepticism that obsessively expresses itself in and through a discourse of negativity, bordering on the zero degree of language.<sup>30</sup>

It hardly needs further demonstration just how important the rhetoric of repetition is in Beckett's work. I simply refer the reader to the excellent studies on this topic by Rubin Rabinovitz and by Steven Connor, who remarks that repetition more than any other trope draws the reader's attention to the medium of language itself.<sup>31</sup> Repetition both constitutes and threatens language; it emphasises sameness as well as difference, stability and instability, unification and fragmentation; above all, it brings to the fore questions of being, identity, and representation.

Within the larger categories of repetition and parallelism, the chiasmus occupies a central place; it enacts the circularity of both thought and expression and constantly undermines the very binary oppositions it brings into focus: original/copy, self/other, being/non-being, strength/weakness, sound/silence, presence/absence. So it is both an enabling and a disabling structure, although in Beckett more the latter than the former. What the chiasmus foregrounds in particular by repeating words or ideas in reversed order is that the writing has no centre, since every centre turns out to be part of some other circumference; in other words there is no ideal core of the onion, no antithesis resolved in a higher form of synthesis (in the Hegelian sense), but rather a void, an abyss, a "bottomlessness of infinite redoubling," as Derrida would have it; or in the words of *The Unnamable*: "all words, there's nothing else."

Let me produce some examples out of many. Already in Beckett's early short stories, *More Pricks Than Kicks*, we find a rich use of the chiasmus, coupled with oxymoron (from Greek 'sharp/blunt'), in order to describe a mankind or a humankind, whose fate is always to be "Where we were [...], as we were."<sup>32</sup> The stories rotate with polarities such as Inferno/Paradise, fusion/flight, mercy/suffering, love/death, the laughter at dying against the dying of laughter, that remain forever unresolved. In his recent study

*Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words* Leslie Hill speaks of a "purgatorial structure which knows no other end than its own infinite circularity and sluggishness," a "logic of circularity and reversal" with no unity or stability at the centre.<sup>33</sup>

Rhetorical inversions are even more apparent in *Murphy*, whose solipsistic hero is confronted with "The freedom of indifference, the indifference of freedom, the will dust in the dust of its object."<sup>34</sup> Or take the following dispute between Murphy and his prostitute *amour*:

"I am what I do," said Celia.

"No," said Murphy. "You do what you are, you do a fraction of what you are, you suffer a dreary ooze of your being into doing."<sup>35</sup>

After playing chess with Mr Endon (in which the basic moves are chiasmus, oxymoron, parallelism and reversal),

[he] began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare postnatal treat, being the absence (to abuse a nice distinction) not of *percipere* but of *percipi*. His other senses also found themselves at peace, an unexpected pleasure. Not the numb peace of his own suspension, but the positive peace that comes when the somethings give way, or perhaps simply add up, to the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real.<sup>36</sup>

In *Watt* long, circular passages abound, for instance, when Watt attempts to describe the painting in Mr Erskine's room, consisting of a circle in the middle foreground and a point or dot in the eastern background, by way of a series of endless permutations, fraught with repetitions and reversals:

a circle and its centre in search of each other, or a circle and its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and its centre in search of its centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and its centre in search of a centre and its circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of its centre and its circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of a centre and a circle respectively, or a circle and a centre not its centre in search of a centre and its circle respectively, in boundless space, in endless time.<sup>37</sup>

Arsene speaks of Watt in quasi-Heraclitean terms and asks himself the unanswerable, highly self-conscious, rhetorical question:

For what is this shadow of the going in which we come, this shadow of the coming in which we go, this shadow of the coming and the going in which we wait, if not the shadow of purpose, of the purpose that budding withers, that withering buds, whose blossoming is a budding withering [...]. And what is this coming that was not our coming and this being that is not our being and this going that will not be our going but the coming and being and going in purposelessness? And though in purposelessness I may seem now to go, yet I do not, any more than in purposelessness then I came, for I go now with my purpose as with it then I came [...].<sup>38</sup>

Or take the famous, hilariously funny description of Mr Knott's pot, a veritable chiastic conundrum.<sup>39</sup> A special case of reversal and circularity within the linguistic system itself is found in the cryptic, palindrome-shaped, backwards language used by Watt towards the end of the novel; it runs as follows and has to be read from right to left, though spoken from left to right (the key word is "skin" – in Dutch "niks" – meaning "nothing," or "void"):

*Dis yb dis, nem owt. Yad la, tin fo trap. Skin, skin, skin. Od su did ned taw? On. Taw ot klat tonk? On. Tonk ot klat taw? On. Tonk ta kool taw? On. Taw ta kool tonk? Nilb, mun, mud. Tin fo trap, yad la. Nem owt, dis yb dis.*<sup>40</sup>

The Trilogy proves to be another rich hunting-ground for chiastic formulations of Beckett's life-long preoccupation with the nothing and with the unsayable, formulated in *Molloy* by means of a chiastic string:

Not to want to say, not to know what you want to say, not to be able to say what you think you want to say, and never to stop saying, or hardly ever, that is the thing to keep in mind, even in the heat of composition.<sup>41</sup>

Molloy is aware that "when already all was fading, waves and particles, there could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names."<sup>42</sup> The novel itself is thoroughly chiastic in its inverted way of story-telling: the narration of Moran's tale doubles or reiterates the story of the earlier narrator, Molloy, as does their characterisation; in fact the

beginning of the novel is already the end of the story, and the apparent beginning is a false one, already a repetition of a past viewed in retrospect. Its famous last words, "It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining,"<sup>43</sup> not only recall in part the opening lines of the second half of the novel, thus pointing up its circularity, but they express at the same time an inherent insoluble contradiction that is exposed by the chiasmus of grammatical tense.

Rhetorical impasse or aporia – itself a figure of circularity – is of the essence in *The Unnamable*, whose protagonist feels he cannot speak and think "in relation only to me who am here, to here where I am;"<sup>44</sup> he does not want to die "a stranger in the midst of strangers, a stranger in my own midst,"<sup>45</sup> while realising that "there is nothing to be done, nothing special to be done, nothing doable to be done;"<sup>46</sup> a voice tells him:

that's not the real silence, it says that's not the real silence,  
what can be said of the real silence, I don't know, that I don't  
know what it is, that there is no such thing, that perhaps there  
is such a thing, yes, that perhaps there is, somewhere, I'll  
never know.<sup>47</sup>

The novel's famous last words are embedded in antithetical parallelism:

if it [the door] opens , it will be I, it will be the silence, where  
I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't  
know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.<sup>48</sup>

As critics have noticed, these words are carried over into Beckett's next fiction, *Texts for Nothing*, opening with:

Suddenly, no, at last, long last, I couldn't any more. I  
couldn't go on. Someone said, You can't stay here. I  
couldn't stay there and I couldn't go on. I'll describe the  
place, that's unimportant.<sup>49</sup>

This form of *internal (chiastic) intertextuality* becomes Beckett's stock-in-trade device in the later fiction, as we can see, for instance, in *Company*, full of reminiscences of his earlier work, and of chiastic patterning:

A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine [...]. That then is  
the proposition. To one on his back in the dark a voice tells  
of a past [...]. If the voice is not speaking to him it must be

speaking to another. So with what reason remains he reasons. To another of that other. Or of him. Or of another still. To another of that other or of him or of another still. To one on his back in the dark in any case. Of one on his back in the dark whether the same or another. So with what reason remains he reasons and reasons ill.<sup>50</sup>

*Texts for Nothing*, in which the initial and final sentences of the various texts are structured in a circular manner, speaks of “this farrago of silence and words, of silence that is not silence and barely murmured words.”<sup>51</sup> Its narrator realises: “I’m alone, I alone am,”<sup>52</sup> and he wonders: “Whose voice, no one’s, there is no one, there’s a voice without a mouth.”<sup>53</sup> Text XIII concludes: “It’s not true, yes, it’s true, it’s true and it’s not true, there is silence and there is not silence, there is no one and there is someone, nothing prevents anything.”<sup>54</sup>

Finally: Beckett’s “fidelity to failure,” his obsessive struggle with the circularity of thought and language, and his unremitting confrontation with the void and the unsayable culminated in his late prose text *Worstward Ho*, in which the chiasmus, together with oxymoron, reached a record height, as the following quotations will show:

All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better [...].

Whose words? Ask in vain. Or not in vain if say no knowing. No saying. No words for him whose words. Him? One. No words for one whose words. One? It. No words for it whose words. Better worse so [...].

Enough still not to know. Not to know what they say. Not to know what it is the word it says say. Says? Secretes. Say better worse secretes. What it is the words it secretes say. What the so-said void. The so-said dim. The so-said shades. The so-said seat and germ of all. Enough to know no knowing. No knowing what it is the words it secretes say. No saying. No saying what it all is they somehow say.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, in his final literary utterance, a prose poem called, “what is the word,” written shortly before his death, Beckett resorts to sustained chiasmic patterning, thus foregrounding the impossibility of escaping the prison-house of language, self, and reality:

what —  
 what is the word —  
 seeing all this —  
 all this this —  
 all this this here —  
 folly for to see what —  
 glimpse —  
 seem to glimpse —  
 need to seem to glimpse —  
 afaint afar away over there what —  
 folly for to need to seem to glimpse  
     afaint afar away over there what —  
 what —  
 what is the word —  
  
 what is the word<sup>56</sup>

### Notes

1. The following articles on the chiasmus have been consulted for this paper: Wim Bronszwaer, "Het Chiasme in James Joyce's *Ulysses*," in *De Revisor*, 18 (1991), pp. 68-76; Thomas Mermall, "The Chiasmus: Unamuno's Master Trope," in *PMLA*, 105 (1990), pp. 245-55; Max Nännny, "Chiastic Structures in Literature: Some Forms and Functions," in *Spell: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 3 (1987), pp. 75-96.
2. See Max Nännny's article for representative examples.
3. For *mise en abyme*, see Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. Jeremy Whitely with Emma Hughes (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
4. Anthony Paul, *The Torture of the Mind: Macbeth, tragedy and chiasmus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), pp. 171-72.
5. *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969), pp. 177, 183; 104, 108, 96 and 147.
6. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 49; italics added.
7. See especially Wim Bronszwaer's article to which I am much indebted.
8. According to Ralph Norman, *Samuel Butler and the Meaning of Chiasmus* (London, 1986), p. 20: "The world of the chiasticists tend to be one of death, sterility, negation, unhappiness and destruction."

9. James Joyce, "The Dead," in his *Dubliners: The Corrected Text with an Explanatory Note*, ed. Robert Scholes (London: Granada, 1977), pp. 160-201, p. 200-01; italics added.
10. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Granada, 1977), p. 155-56; italics added.
11. Hans Walter Gabler, "The Seven Lost Years of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," in *Approaches to Joyce's Portrait: Ten Essays*, eds. Thomas F. Staley and Bernard Benstock (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), pp. 25-60.
12. Hugh Kenner, intro., *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, by James Joyce (New York: Signet Classic, 1991).
13. Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 8; corrupted to "Apologise" in this edition only.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
15. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 [Student's Edition]), 9.844-45.
16. *Ibid.*, 3.4-5.
17. *Ibid.*, 3.11-12.
18. *Ibid.*, 8.1129-42.
19. *Ibid.*, 8.562-63.
20. *Ibid.*, 17.1410.
21. *Ibid.*, 17.2025-27; italics added.
22. *Ibid.*, 15.2097-98.
23. See Brian Cheyette, "'Jewgreek is greekjew': The Disturbing Ambivalence of Joyce's Semitic Discourse in *Ulysses*," in *Joyce Studies Annual 1992* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), pp. 32-56.
24. See, however, Richard Ellmann's later recantation of his earlier viewpoint in his "A Crux in the New Edition of *Ulysses*," in *Assessing the 1984 Ulysses*, eds. C. George Sandulescu and Clive Hart (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1986), pp. 28-34.
25. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 12.1481-85.
26. *Ibid.*, 12.1493-1501.
27. *Ibid.*, 11.915-18.
28. *Ibid.*, 17.2328-30. I owe this example (like many others for *Ulysses*) to Wim Bronszwaer's original article, although I do not fully endorse its negative conclusion.
29. Samuel Beckett, "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce," in his *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 19-35; for a penetrating analysis of Vico's philosophy, see John Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark: "Finnegans Wake"* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), chapter 7.

30. See my forthcoming "The Play of Negativity in the Beckettian Text," in *Beckett and Beyond*, ed. C. George Sandulescu (Monaco: Princess Grace Irish Library, 1993).
31. Rubin Rabinovitz, "Murphy and the Uses of Repetition," in his *The Development of Samuel Beckett's Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), pp. 71-104, and "Repetition and Underlying Meanings in Samuel Beckett's Trilogy," in *Rethinking Beckett*, eds. Lance St. John Butler and Robin J. Davis (Gerrards Cross: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 31-68; Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory, and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 15.
32. Samuel Beckett, "Dante and the Lobster," in his *More Pricks than Kicks* (London: Calder Publications, 1993), pp. 9-21, p. 20.
33. Leslie Hill, *Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 6-7.
34. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1963), p. 61.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 138. The reference is to Democritus, nicknamed "the laughing philosopher."
37. Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: John Calder, 1976), p. 127.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
41. Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*, in *The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Pan/Picador, 1979), pp. 7-162, p. 27.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
44. Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, in *The Beckett Trilogy*, pp. 265-382, p. 276.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 382.
49. Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing*, in his *Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1980* (London: John Calder, 1984), pp. 71-115, p. 71.
50. Samuel Beckett, *Company* (London: John Calder, 1986), pp. 7-8, 13-14.
51. Beckett, *Texts for Nothing*, p. 91.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
55. Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 7, 19, 29-30.

56. Samuel Beckett, "what is the word," in his *As the Story Was Told: Uncollected and Late Prose* (London: John Calder, 1990 and New York: Riverrun Press, 1990), pp. 131-34, pp. 133-34; for a penetrating analysis, see Adriaan van der Weel and Ruud Hisgen, "Intellection in the Work of Samuel Beckett," in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 1 (1992), pp. 86-93.

## 5 Sidney Feshbach

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### On Names in James Aloysius Augustine Joyce and Samuel Barclay Beckett

(all for oriole)

#### I

In this analysis of how James Joyce and Samuel Beckett represent substance in their uses of the main names, as proper-nouns, I seek to go beneath the truism in the criticism, that “Joyce puts in and Beckett takes out.”<sup>1</sup> I survey most of Joyce’s writings, but only Beckett’s earlier work. Joyce’s *Work in Progress*, previsions of *Finnegans Wake*, overlap with Beckett’s first and earlier works, from “Dante ... Bruno. Vico... Joyce” (1929) through *More Pricks Than Kicks* (1934) to *Murphy* (1936). A glance at *Watt* (finished 1945, published 1953) and later works is taken to confirm some statements about the direction in his development.

Comparisons of their uses of naming lead quickly to noting a few similarities and many differences in the ways they relate language to substance, such that, clearly, Joyce seeks names that participate in a maximally substantial universe and Beckett seeks names that are merely words and participate in as little as possible. Joyce’s poetics was begun before *Dubliners* and expanded consistently, starting with Aristotle and continuing with Aquinas, over thirty-five years to include more substance than ever before, for which he had invented that “hundredlettered name again, last word of perfect language,”<sup>2</sup> the ten thunderwords for the *Wake*. His influence on Beckett’s poetics was entirely superficial; and, from the beginning, Beckett worked to make his own poetics out of the idea of the *cogito* and *ego* in Descartes and the implications for style in David Hume’s skepticism; he reduced his substance as close to a still point without eliminating it, or being able to eliminate the desire to eliminate that point entirely with the absolute silences of not writing, not speaking, suicide.

In Joyce, proper-nouns for people and brand-labels are everywhere, rather trivially in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, but so prominently in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* that critics have tried to sort out the ratio of humanity and materials in the later works and to argue philosophically that Joyce was solving literary problems of symbolism, naturalism, and epistemology, or, more recently, to argue politically about problems of identity and consumerism. Early Beckett, 1929–45, also has proper-nouns, mostly for people and places, but so few brand-labels that reconstruction of any of the material-culture of Dublin from his work is not as easy as from Joyce’s: indeed, in Beckett’s work there evolves such a peculiar reduction in the

naming of characters that the philosophical questions seem to be about the disappearance of the details of appearance and about ontology itself and the political about the provocation of the audience's anxieties in a balancing of an alienated *ego*, dead matter, and the style of propositions about meaningless experience.

The substance that is named for a character indicates that character's identity and the scene or ground ("stance") under ("sub") that identity; hence, broadly, the substance named indicates that character's motives.<sup>3</sup> Many literary problems can be attached to this inquiry, and to expand from their works into a larger frame of time-and-place and then to narrow to their practices, I would suggest that there are consistencies in the worries about these issues that recur over the centuries in European and Euro-American philosophy, beginning with, say, Plato and the problem of naming, universals and knowledge, to pass through Boethius and tens of medieval reasoners, to take on some new issues or perspectives in the long period of the Modern, going from Descartes and Locke to the contemporaries of Joyce and Beckett, especially Russell, Wittgenstein, and Kenneth Burke. Altogether, these philosophical worries form a tradition of studying the attachments and relationships of words and things, society and nature.<sup>4</sup> Relating to proper-nouns, Beckett gives us a marvelously simple puzzle to think about. In the French of *Waiting for Godot* (*En attendant Godot*), he refers to Voltaire; in the British version, he replaces Voltaire with Samuel Johnson; and in the American, he uses George Berkeley. Are these proper-nouns merely such or do they carry meanings associated with the three eighteenth-century historical persons named? are they chosen as contemporaries? are these merely replacements, substitutions in sum undercutting each other? or merely translations? Related questions are posed by Jacques Derrida in his *The Ear of the Other*, as what is a proper name? is it in an international language that can cross language-borders without alteration? can names be translated? What I seek to show in this discussion of Joyce's and Beckett's uses of names is that Joyce was concerned with adding to the substance in the names he uses, increasing the substantial complexity or density of each name with more and more related information: translating the names of the *Wake* is impossible, but trying is fun; whereas Beckett began with a seemingly similar motive to use names of great density, as in the poem referring to Descartes, *Whoroscope*, but soon started to subtract from the names so as to reduce them to grammatical proper-nouns, and yet by referring repeatedly to the same "person" throughout a narrative, he implied that each person does have a basic substantial identity, albeit as a rigid tubular- or stick-figure: translating Beckett's names, as Beckett did, lends itself to arbitrary or obscure substitutions.

Substance-analysis is the more general category. Referring to representation in common nouns and proper-nouns, it is a way of keeping the text and the text's world in view and of emphasising the representation of motivation as expressions of characters. This effort is, I'd like to believe, in the tradition of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, with its subtitle, *The Representation of (Everyday) Reality in Western Literature*; I should add that though these comments are based on recent re-readings of Joyce and Beckett and not the criticism and scholarship related to their work, they contain unexpressed debts accrued recently and over the decades.<sup>5</sup>

## II: Joyce

Joyce's everyday attitudes toward names in the company of parents and children, adults and youths, males and females appear quite formal, preferring polite address and regretting his friends' familiarity, described in *A Portrait*, as "the house where young men are called by their christian names a little too soon."<sup>6</sup> Such politeness sustains the distance in "A Painful Case" between "Mr James Duffy" and "Mrs Sinico;"<sup>7</sup> at the start of the second, the longest, section of *Ulysses*, perhaps to indicate a new beginning, is "Mr Leopold Bloom," followed by most intimate details of Bloom's private life and phantasies; perhaps the entire opening phrase, "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan," is used to indicate a mock-ceremonial place between formality and Molly's intimate pronoun, "he never did a thing like that before."<sup>8</sup> Joyce himself played with an alternative name as a collegian's Nietzschean joke, "James Overman;"<sup>9</sup> this became a pen-name, "Stephen Daedalus," which he used for correspondence and three publications<sup>10</sup>; but then, after objecting to pseudonyms, as an act of irresponsibility in not signing his own name, he felt compelled to retain this problematic name for the character, "Stephen Daedalus" in *Stephen Hero* and "Dedalus" in *A Portrait*: Young Stephen is asked in *A Portrait*, "What is your name? [...] What kind of a name is that?"<sup>11</sup> and he is unable to answer. And Mulligan, in *Ulysses*, says, "— The mockery of it! [...] Your absurd name, an ancient Greek!"<sup>12</sup> For this strange name, each book gives a multitude of responses.

We may describe simply Joyce's attitude as that he thought about names a great deal and found occasions to be formal, playful, or artistic, and used names to indicate gender and status of a person in Dublin society. In this sense, his names of individuals begin by locating the characters in relation to their society, and the names indicate their social substance. Joyce chose the names for most of the stories in *Dubliners* for the simple reason of having names that can be found in Dublin and among the clerical,

priestly and secular classes: James Flynn, O'Rourke, Joe Dillon, Mahony,<sup>13</sup> to mention a few. Some critics may want to make a lot more of the names, e.g., seductive lying and sincerity in "Frank" and "Ernest" in "Eveline," potential autobiography in "James" in "The Sisters" and "A Painful Case,"<sup>14</sup> and sometimes their analyses lead to interesting associations. However, when there are some allegorical intentions in these names, the text makes those possibilities more obvious: e.g., "Maria" as mediatrix in "Clay;"<sup>15</sup> on the other hand, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" has several names and very little allegory has been made of them by critics because the main narrative does not obviously encourage such interpretations while the allegory of Parnell in the poem is blatant and does not require additional interpretation.<sup>16</sup> When the possible allegorical uses of names in most of the stories of *Dubliners* are placed next to such use in "The Dead," it is clear that with his last short story Joyce has had a serious and radical change of mind about the use of names.<sup>17</sup> The import of "Michael" and "Gabriel," ordinary Irish and yet allegorical and emblematic names, is integrated into the story in almost every paragraph, infusing it with heavier loads of cultural allusion, for example, to the Angel Gabriel's blowing the trumpet for the resurrection of "the dead" and Gabriel Conroy's imagining himself, as he falls asleep, as though soaring with wings, above Ireland. The last passage in the story shows still another aspect of Joyce's idea of names, that during dozing and sleep names become thicker with allusion; obviously, this hypnogogic thickening of language leads later to the dream-prose of the *Wake*, in which names are highly complex and extremely dense. In 1904, when he planned going from the short story "A Portrait of the Artist" to *Stephen Hero*, he made up a list of names for the characters, e.g., [May Joyce=]Mary Daedalus, [John Stanislaus Joyce=]Simon Daedalus, et al.<sup>18</sup> I believe "Simon" was not yet chosen for its full echo of "simony," even though Simon Magus's materialist's sin is discussed in the manuscript; and Joyce had not yet thought about "Stephen" as Greek for "crown." He gives these names their due in *A Portrait*, throughout the second, the "financial" or "simoniac" chapter, and in the fourth, the "crowning" or "baptismal" chapter. The equivalences given for names for *Stephen Hero* are interesting because they recall Dublin and Christian and Classical uses and carry Joyce's moral values rather than his mythological associations. After he had written all of the *Stephen Hero* manuscript that is extant and was about to write "The Dead," with its special use of names, Joyce seems to have rethought the designs of the stories he had been telling in order to exploit extensively the names of the characters. The narrative and structural lessons he learned when writing "The Dead" are applied now in *A Portrait*: "Stephen" provides details of the first of the Christian martyrs, the first

deacon, and the Greek “crown” and “Dedalus” the first of the Classical human artificers, maze-builder, prisoner on island, flyer, as well as his unnamed son, Icarus! More than the names in “The Dead,” these are much denser in themselves and integrated more complexly in the formation of the whole work, its means in images, structures, and relationships, and its ends in presenting complex messages to readers. The substance indicated by the denser names, thickened by each name’s connotations, suggests humans as participants, consciously or not, in society and society’s broader culture. After Stephen’s alienation from his father’s society, he succumbs to the emptying of his name, “— I am Stephen Dedalus [...] Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names. / The memory of his childhood suddenly grew dim.”<sup>19</sup> The secular, quasi-religious “unsubstantial image” of Mercedes he can realise in the social, moneyed, and physical substance of the prostitute, who is nameless: namelessness of himself and herself, indicates, in this chapter, a polarity caused by the failures of Stephen’s society of family, church, and nation to unify flesh and spirit. Hence, names indicate the possibility, perhaps necessity, for a unity of mental and corporeal substance. At the same time that he conceived of “The Dead” and the reconstruction of *A Portrait*, Joyce thought of a story called “Ulysses”: all three narratives express his taking on at the time a new attitude and approach to names. From now on, names would manifest all ranges of density, from the recall of the less dense names in *Dubliners*, the denser ones of “The Dead,” to the still denser names of *A Portrait*.

For *Ulysses*, density is accomplished by another route: “Bloom” (the name; a flower; garden and Edenic association); “Virag” (Hungarian for “bloom”; also used with “virago”); “Flower” (Bloom’s pen-pal name); “L. Boom” (“El” or “god”; “boom,” a “shout in the street”); “Bloomusalem” (Bloom as a city, utopian, religious; bloom of peace); “Stoom” (combines with the “St” of “Stephen”); and more (“Bloo,” “Bloohimwhom,” “Bloohoom,” “bloom,” “Bloombella,” “bloomers,” “Bloomfield”).<sup>20</sup> Then there is the thematic, not nominal, homologisation of Bloom with the fathers “God,” “Ulysses,” and “Hamlet.” Soon, we realise that the name “Bloom” contains in itself and in relations allusions and analogues for a multitude of names, with each name perhaps an important identity for him, depending on each chapter’s modal style. Joyce noted that “Molly Bloom” carries an echo of the “moly root,” which protects Odysseus from Circe’s power. The Hungarian “Virag” adds to “Stephen” an allusion to King Stephen of Hungary. Joyce’s context for substance is tribal, and Bloom, in “Circe” chapter of *Ulysses*, under the pressure of hallucinogenic sado-masochism, multiplies into a bisexuality and “bears eight male yellow and white children,” “octuplets.” With each examination, substances indicated

by names increase in density and have as their meaning the individual's social nature, or "consubstantiality."

In the poetic epic of *Finnegans Wake*, written in the "languo of flows,"<sup>21</sup> every name overflows. Consider just the number of plausible interpretations of the title-name alone, *Finnegans Wake*. Or the name in "Of the first was he to bare arms and a name: Wassaily Booslaeugh of Riesengeborg"<sup>22</sup>: a name that at first sight looks, at least, Russian, Gaelic, German, and Scandinavian is also about "wassail" "booze" "laughable" "city." Or the naming of HCE: "Now [...], concerning the genesis of Harold or Humphrey Chimpenden's occupational agnomen [...]," followed by a longish anecdote, then "Comes the question are these the facts of his nominigentilisation [...]." Out of this emerges "the sigla H.C.E.":

as sense of those normative letters the nickname Here Comes Everybody. An imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation [...].<sup>23</sup>

I want to emphasise both the "nominigentilisation" and "universalisation" processes in my comments here about the *Wake*'s names. HCE's "nominigentilisation" is a name (nominal) and act of being part of a tribe (*gens*, gentile; -ation); his "universalisation" identifies him as an individual and an act of universalising. The substance of the name expresses the individual's participation in the tribal substance and Joyce's revisions of the text show the process of each character's becoming a group-name and the name of a process, of a person-becoming. Each name recalls Duns Scotus's proposal that the individual is a genus and Vico's view of god-names, heroic-names, and demotic-names, or type-names, as namings for entire cultural eras and cultural changes. The direction for Joyce, who repeatedly overworked the notion of his self-exile, hopefully to be overcome by the poet's faithful acts of "transubstantiation," was toward verbal incorporation, or an essentially charitable "consubstantiation."

In sum: over the forty years of writing-names, Joyce increased steadily their densities so that they evolve from mainly univocal into plurivocal words. As they change, so changes the substance of each; they become increasingly complex, containing a Whitmanly multitude, "Here Comes Everybody." The names become estranged from traditional uses so that the narrative flow must depend increasingly on familiar syntactical rhythms, especially (in my reading) the prepositional phrase, and morphemic tags for helping decide what part of the sentence is being presented and what

may be the message. Consider “Helviticus committed deuteronomy”<sup>24</sup> “Helviticus” from “Leviticus” and “Helvetia,” or Switzerland, and “deuteronomy” from “Deuteronomy” and “second naming.” The syntax makes the sentence appear an assertion. As the density of the words increases, there is a sense in which the words become less and less perfect, shifting from clear identity toward process, or person-becoming. The substances indicated by the names are so complex that they are social, reaching out to include more literary culture and working toward a *mimesis* of linguistic *prima materia*, past Eve and Adam’s, to the “etym”<sup>25</sup> (word, Adam, atom), where every moment of chaos and cosmos is one as “chaosmos.”<sup>26</sup> Now living-and-naming after the Fall of Adam is where we are, reaching back through social types and stereotypes to a time before the creation of the archetypes. As to the idea of “substance,” Joyce’s lapsed Adam has an eye in *A Portrait* for “transubstantiation” and for the Logos of Jesus, the Word; in *Ulysses* for Trinity-like “consubstantiation” of characters; and in the *Wake* for Shem (Hebrew for the “Name”) for the acculturation that comes with the thundering “hundredlettered name again.” The substances indicated by and of the names have increased in both density and fluidity, like heavy water, so that the names on the page contain a vaster complexity of motives – as do Joyce’s humans.

### III. Beckett

*Watt*, Beckett’s Humean novel, has: “When Watt spoke, he spoke in a low and rapid voice [...]. Watt spoke also with scant regard for grammar, for syntax [...]. Proper names, however, both of places and of persons, such as Knott, Christ, Gomorrha, Cork, he articulated with great deliberation [...]”<sup>27</sup> Beckett’s earlier writings, mainly in prose, in the years from 1929 to 1936, form a transition from his using names superficially closer to Joyce’s practices, then his modulating to his own long-term practices, initiated some time within *Murphy* (1936), and catching speed with *Watt* (1945). In Paris, Beckett became part of the Joyce crowd. His first publication was about *Work in Progress*, “Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce” (1929), and, a few years later, he wrote an obscure birthday poem, “Home Olga” (1932), containing an acrostic on the name of “James Joyce.” In several of his earlier pieces he uses *Finnegane* devices. His *More Pricks Than Kicks* (1934), which contains a passage playing on the ending of “The Dead,” may be seen as Belacqua Shuah’s *Ulysses*an travels, or crawls, around Dublin. And so on.

But, seemingly, Beckett had powerful autobiographical reasons for working against the Joycean poetic. During the years of 1929 to 1935, he

may have suffered intense chronic illnesses, physical and emotional, with boils and attacks of hysteria at night. Even if Deirdre Bair's biography were only half accurate about this suffering,<sup>28</sup> it would still imply at least one overwhelming reason for his seeking a practical philosophy that separated mind and body, such as in Descartes's Dualism. He found further refinements of Cartesian philosophy in the work of Arnold Geulincx, who is quoted in *Murphy*.<sup>29</sup> My guess is that he found important not only Geulincx's Cartesian expansion but that he wavered between Protestant Calvinism and Roman Catholic Jansenism (which itself might called a Calvinistic Catholicism): Geulincx's Cartesianism and ambivalent Calvinism/Jansenism had special meaning because, with or without boils to prod him, Beckett was descended from Huguenots, *i.e.*, French Calvinists, and his difficult mother appears a Fierce Mary, a mother proper to a Jansenistic severely-Selective Christ. Belacqua, in *More Pricks Than Kicks*, is about to undergo an operation and thinks of honouring "The grand old family Huguenot guts."<sup>30</sup> Altogether, Beckett's biographical predicaments, emotional, physical, familial, and religious, and his chosen philosophical (and therefore poetic) approach and solutions to his tortured existence were enough to set him on a track seriously different from Joyce's disorderly family, blasphemous Roman Catholicism, Jesuit schooling, and carousing *joie de vivre*.

The two writers became associated in Paris when Beckett was brought into the fairly large Joyce circle by Thomas McGreevy.<sup>31</sup> While several interests in common supported a relationship (a term deliberately used here for its vagueness) between the two, such as some feelings of closeness (Joyce's wanting loyalty and assistance from his friends and Beckett's awe of Joyce and his own special emotional needs), there were grounds to guarantee conflict (illusions and delusions surrounding Lucia's mental illness), distance (Joyce's distrust of disciples), and anger (fulfillment of predictable disappointment and failures). During these few years Beckett seemed fairly near to the man he called with McGreevy "Shem." Joyce assigned an essay to Beckett for *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. Probably, he directed him in the connections he wanted made, mainly to indicate a lineage from Dante to his *Work in Progress*, and told him the books to read.

Relevant to naming, we could begin with the names in the essay's title. The Beckett essay goes in reverse chronology, from Joyce, to Vico, to Bruno, to Dante, recircling back to Joyce; thus, the issue is, from the first, the question of "what's in a name?" or, here, "in a sequence of names"? As was said, these names form the history, lineage, and roots of Joyce's *Work in Progress*: such was clearly Joyce's view, and using four names illustrates his own practice of overloading this text with names; but for

Beckett's views one must turn to the essay's first sentence, "The danger is in the neatness of identifications" and, later, his condemning the "analogymongers."<sup>32</sup> I'm sorry to say that Beckett is wrong, for if Joyce's consciously-chosen techniques of analogies and identifications were eliminated, the keystones to separate curves of his works would be removed and their carefully constructed overarching unity would collapse. Appropriate to Joyce, Beckett notes, in the first section, that Vico saw the type-names as correlatives for entire cultural periods, bearing everything from cognitive to cosmographic data. In the Dante section, he notes that the first human speech in *Genesis* was not Eve's but Adam's, namely, his act of naming. Beckett's warning about identities and analogymongering expresses his own impulse to empty texts of identities and, later, of names themselves and the substances they convey.<sup>33</sup> Beckett begins in his first collection of novelistic stories, *More Pricks Than Kicks*, with more than six hundred proper-nouns; but, later, when he wanted to represent in his own writing the human condition in its primal state, as is figured in that first human act of speaking and naming, he tells stories without any or with very few meaningful proper names. Beckett suggests that the *Wake* is to be compared with Dante's *Purgatory*, not *Hell* or *Heaven*. While there is, I believe, a profound accuracy in this his own "analogymongering," once again it also reflects a Beckett concern: in stories for "Dream of Fair to Middling Women" and *More Pricks Than Kicks* he chose to call his literary self "Belacqua," who is the indolent man of Dante's Antepurgatorio, *Canto* 4; in *Murphy*, he writes, "At this moment Murphy would willingly have waived his expectation of Antepurgatory for five minutes in his chair, renounced the lee of Belacqua's rock and his embryonal repose [...];"<sup>34</sup> Watt suffers fatigue and sits down in the position of Belacqua's embryonal repose;<sup>35</sup> and in one of his later prose works, *The Lost Ones* (1970), a bleak narrative of fifty pages, Beckett offers no names except one, Dante, and that only to make a reference to his smiling when he comes upon Belacqua in Antepurgatory!<sup>36</sup> Beckett was interested mainly in the attitude figured in Belacqua (that of indolence and indolence as a sin) who is positioned between eternal punishment and change, between Hell and Purgatory. Beckett's Belacqua desires *apatheia* to be achieved passively by decreasing his sensitivity in general and reducing pain (*in-dolens*). Murphy, "immune from expiation," meditates in "his Belacqua fantasy" on the path "from the spermarium to the crematorium."<sup>37</sup>

The attitude of indolence or laziness subverts action by equating act with inactivity; and laziness absorbs plot. Beckett's Belacqua Shuah is therefore opposed to and by plot, scenes, and other characters and, in order to end pain, the attitude of laziness or indolence seeks the deadening of all

that the senses relay regarding action and other people and thoughts and itself. As though to underscore attitude, Beckett adds “Shuah,” which is Hebrew for “depression.” In *Murphy*, Beckett mentions “Bildad the Shuhite”<sup>38</sup> (a variant of “Shuah”) as an attitude, an aspect of the suffering Job, with a pun on his getting a job: “But what is Bildad but a fragment of Job, as Zophar and the others are fragments of Job.”<sup>39</sup> With “Stephen” and “Dedalus,” Joyce sought eventually to use all the mythological associations of these two names, chosen and glued together for the increased substantial density they could bring to the works. From the first, he chose names to re-present the spirit and spiritual development (or its paralysis) in actions that are the objective correlative of the anagogical spirit, while Beckett, from the first, sought to represent the desire for inactivity, physical and mental, and the reduction of suffering, cosmic or self-caused, using everything external and internal, body (*in re*) and mind (*in intellectu*), or, at some point within the mind (*cogito, ego*) as though the narrator regards everyone and everything as contra-subjective katagogical correlatives.

Beckett’s next published work was a poem *Whoroscope*, the title and some of its words suggesting that he is directly influenced by *Finnegane* punnings and portmanteaux, *e.g.*, combined words, as in the title (“whore,” “horos” or time, and “horoscope” or astrological reading), or in “prostisciutto” (again, whore or “prostitute” and, in Italian, “prosciutto” or “ham”).<sup>40</sup> Hence, substance is heavy. The poem refers to his obsession, the life and philosophy of René Descartes: most of it is made up of sentences and phrases found in a biography of the philosopher and, altogether, it is closer in the use of *personae*, voice, and obscurity to Robert Browning and, except for a few words, resembles little in the work of Joyce. Constructed for the Hours Press, with the appropriate theme of time, it is also typical Beckett in its naming, its disgust, its reference to astrology, and its worry about time, birth, and death: in it, Descartes seems to fear his nativity (*i.e.*, astrological prediction of date of death from birth date) and prefers eating and thinking of disgusting things: ah, Descartes an *alter-ego* for the anti-romantic romantic agony of Beckett! Because of its many names (Descartes, Boot, Gilot, Galileo, Copernicus, and others) and the particularity of information regarding Descartes, the poem’s substance appears extremely dense, yet once glossed it is merely obscure. Substance is undermined by easy de-coding. By being so disgusting, the poem suggests Beckett’s incipient participation in the tradition of contempt-of-the-world (*contemptus mundi*). The poem’s many names operate to reduce horror and deaden the impact of sensation so that they can become consoling, like names on tombstones.

Beckett’s third published work was a long essay, *Proust*, with moments that continue attitudes in the poem. In typical Beckett negatives, he writes,

“Consequently the Proustian solution consists [...] in the negation of Time and Death, the negative of Death because the negation of Time. Death is dead because Time is dead.” He eliminates identities, names, and sentences:

We say farewell to M. de Charlus, the Baron Palamède de Charlus, Duke of Brabant, Squire of Montargis, Prince of Oléron, Carency, Viareggio and the Dunes, the unspeakably insolent Charlus [...]. Hannibal de Bréauté – dead! Antoine de Mouchy – dead! Charles Swann – dead! Adalbert de Montmorency – dead! Baron de Talleyrand – dead! Sosthène de Doudeauville – dead!<sup>41</sup>

When we arrive at his references to puppets, astrology, and anal jokes, we know we are on Beckett’s wilted turf: “one sniggering and abject puppet [...], carrying the burden of Saturn towards the light that will rise, towards Uranus, the Sabbath star.”<sup>41</sup> Similar emptying of names of people making them into shells and puppets and undercutting of his own storytelling occur in another way in his second book, *Murphy*, as when Murphy stretches out on the ground, naked, and he

tried to get a picture of Celia. In vain. Of his mother. In vain. Of his father (for he was not illegitimate). In vain. It was usual for him to fail with his mother; and usual, though less usual, for him to fail with a woman. But never had he failed with his father. [...] He tried again with his father, his mother, Celia, Wylie, Neary, Cooper, Miss Dew, Miss Carridge, Nelly, the sheep, the chandlers, even Bom and Co, even Bim, even Ticklepenny and Miss Counihan, even Mr Quigly. He tried with the men, women, children and animals that belong to even worse stories than this. In vain in all cases.

This leads to his later trying the names when he has tied himself up in his rocking chair – he recalls his astrological chart, and “Soon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free.”<sup>42</sup> That parenthetical remark “(for he was not illegitimate)” occurs again in *Watt*<sup>43</sup> and is the tying down of the body in the world of generation, while his implicit definition of “free” is a transcendence downward, through exhaustion of the energies and needs of matter (body) that generate images and needs in thoughts (mind), and, then, through purgation of the mind to become in total an astrological object to be, in Wordsworth’s language, “Rolled round in earth’s diurnal

course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees.” Names of dead people and of unpicturable people, children, and animals form a census of creatures that once had movement and substance.

Beckett’s context is *in re* and *in medias res* – dead or soon dead, to be measured, quantified; murdering to dissect the process, he is writing in a tradition that includes the Marquis de Sade in which the body is a puppet with quantification of positions, relationships, timings, stimuli. With its biblical and Sadean title, the novel *More Pricks Than Kicks* mentions Sade’s *120 Days in Sodom*<sup>44</sup> and the “dead Sadomasochist.” Murphy is not an Abraham or Lot, but a Job in Sodom and Gomorrah, Dublin or London. In a chair, self-tied up, he seeks through faster and faster oscillations a discharge of his body’s energy. Beckett seems to have combined Descartes and Freud in a notion that energy in the body disturbs the mind, creates needs, and increases desire and paralyzing hysterias. In whatever city, his characters retreat into inhospitable hospitals for physical and mental illnesses. Thus, Beckett, long before his mother’s death and his reputed vision by the sea, sought an art by subtraction: “Abstract the asylum and there was little left of Poltrane but ruins”<sup>45</sup> (Poltrane was also Beckett’s high school). Removing the substance from the world named, hollowing the worldly density of names themselves, he intensifies their wordly qualities. As Jean Genet wrote later, in *The Thief’s Journal*, when the Nazis occupied France, there was no hypocrisy, for then the state was overtly tyrannical; so, too, for Beckett, the hospitals for physical and mental illnesses expressed more clearly than the marketplace the “true” nature of the relation of the universe and the individual. The cosmography of his understanding of self and experience demands further retreat inward into the microcosm, the body and mind, and the escape here is into rigidity. The institution helps to subdue the body, and the mind, the imprisoned inhabitant of the mental institution and even more profoundly imprisoned in the body, can come to rest. In the hospital for physical disease, Belacqua Shuah is anaesthetised and dies and in the garret of the hospital for mental disease, Murphy ties himself to his rocking chair, is gassed and incinerated (or cremated, fulfilling his Belacqua fantasy). (Remember the “MMM” used for the hospital, “Magdalen Mental Mercyseat,”<sup>46</sup> and note very well how apt “Mental Mercyseat” would be as a name for Murphy’s rocking chair.) In *How It Is*, Beckett joins a most depressed Herman Melville in thinking everywhere is Egypt. The centre of Egypt is the Cheops pyramid, with its king’s room where, Melville said, God was born and which he found was empty. It is, in a sense, to this cosmically-central empty room, not some promised land, that Murphy goes to expire. The pharaoh of this imaginary Egypt-Shuah, is Mr. Endon, with whom Murphy plays ding-dong

dead-end chess: “Endon” is Greek for “within”<sup>47</sup> and, perhaps, English, for the novel’s “ending-on” images of one man switching the lights on and off and another man rocking back and forth till he dies.

In *More Pricks Than Kicks*, six or seven hundred proper-nouns include Biblical (Hebrew, Christian) and Classical (Greek, Roman) references, national attributions (Italian, French, Greek), place-names (Dublin, Cork, London, streets and hills in and around these cities), cultural names (writers, painters, composers), publications (books, newspapers), and more categories, including personifications. Several of the women’s names suggest small groupings: e.g., numbering (Una – or one, Clegg twins, Purefoy triplets), Dante (Beatrice, Alma Beatrix, Lucy), whores? (the Alba, Alba-Morgen, Alba Perdue, Olga, Alga, the Frica), jewels (Smeraldina, Ruby Tough), literary beloveds (God’s Shekinah, Rousseau’s Mme de Warens, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, Swift’s Stella). Such groupings indicate possibilities for increasing density. “The Alba” is denser than most: it is the name of a poetic form for loving between couples, their having met, their separating, and their departing, and conveys as well its morbid appropriateness to the early deaths of Belacqua’s wives and, finally, his own death. This inevitable sequence – wooing and dying, or “Love and Lethe” in *More Pricks Than Kicks* – may be structurally analogous to the ding-dong thickening and thinning of individual identities. Names are weighted with feeling and thinned into extraneous patterns, so as to make, for example, loving into merely sexual acts performed in order to exhaust.

While Beckett is writing about actual people he knew in Dublin and London, he finds something distancing and abstracting in doubling consonants in names. He does this throughout his works: consider the small double tees in “Beckett” (who is mentioned), in “Watt,” “Hackett,” “Knott,” “Tetty”; and then there are the double consonants in “Larry,” “Goff,” “Nelly,” “McCann,” two “Galls.” The single syllable name is also an alienating of the familiar human: e.g., “Bim” and “Bom” in *More Pricks Than Kicks* reappear in *Murphy* and point to the future “Pim” in *Watt* and *How It Is*; this recalls “Sam” (also in *Watt*). This naming is epitomised in “Otto Olaf bbhoggs.”

Thickening and thinning of the name and the substance named can occur in another way. In the procession from the Joyce essay to *Watt*, Beckett develops several techniques to simultaneously increase the density of names and empty them or, as he said for this double action, “ding-dong.”<sup>48</sup> One is by toying with the number 13,<sup>49</sup> for, of course, its connotation of unluckiness, the thirteen of the Last Supper. He said (self-consciously inaccurate) that he was born on Good Friday April Thirteenth

(for Beckett, his imagined birth was his crucifixion and death!; April 13th is also the anniversary of the first performance, which took place in Dublin, of Handel's "Messiah"); his name "Samuel Beckett" (minus his middle name "Barclay") has thirteen letters; his early collection, *Echo's Bones*, has thirteen poems. He entitled several books using the letter M: *More Pricks Than Kicks*, *Murphy*, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and, in the third volume of the trilogy having a title without an initial M and therefore called *The Unnamable*, he wrote, "all these Murphys, Molloy's and Malones [...]." *Murphy* has thirteen sections and a hospital is abbreviated as, remember, "MMM." One reason for M is that it is the thirteenth letter in the English alphabet. To have chosen a letter for its thirteenthness may appear to increase the density of the names; but to have made the choice repeatedly because of its arithmetic place in the alphabet is, in a negative *gematria*, to fill it with meaning and to empty it of immediate human relevance: these names have no more value than their being impersonally Irish-sounding and thirteens. Its purpose, like Beckett's use of astrology, is to unify substance with meaning (Irish and unlucky) and subvert that unity with its meaninglessness (impersonal numbering and neutral astrology).

Substantiation in naming is much simpler in *Watt* than in the previous works, because naming is subordinated to a *mimesis* of Humean thought in Watt's obsessive ruminations seemingly carried out in order to master painful experiences. By means of excessive ideational activity Watt seeks to bind anxiety and obtain some kind of peace in a Belacqua embryonal repose. His speech patterns of Shoenbergian complexity, like his peculiar walking, seem whimsical at first, then funny, only to end, for me, as a renewal of most painful reading. His over-enunciations of the proper nouns of person and place are related not to his knowing something of that to which the names refer, but more to his quieting the mental agitation at not knowing what is going on. The complexities of motives and causes to which the names refer are dissolved into merely cerebral activities, into attitudes and the absence of attitudes. *Watt*, written when Beckett was hiding from the Nazis in Vichy, during the period described earlier by Genet, has:

And Watt preferred on the whole having to do with things of which he did not know the name, though this too was painful to Watt, to having to do with things of which the known name, the proven name, was not the name, any more, for him. For he could always hope, of a thing of which he had never known the name, that he would learn the name, some day, and so be tranquillized.<sup>50</sup>

A unity of names, names-emptied, and fatal anaesthesia crosses through the works.

Another reason for Beckett's use of M is found in *Purgatorio* 23, where Dante has that "he who reads *OMO* in the face of man would there surely have recognized the *M*." This is, as the Dante scholar and translator Charles Singleton explains fully, a reference to the human face as shaped like an M in uncial script.<sup>51</sup> The similarity and contrast to Joyce's use of the sigla HCE and ALP is obvious: as Joyce is jocosserious about the "nickname Here Comes Everybody" and uses the shape E (rotated to  $\omega$ ,  $\exists$ ,  $\mathfrak{m}$ ) and a delta  $\Delta$  for the ALP, so Beckett makes of all these Ms his alphabetic image of "man" and in *Murphy*, he describes the bodice of a woman as not a W, but a V, her legs more an X than an O.<sup>52</sup>

In sum: Joyce enlarges a name, like an expandable file, inserting more and more cultural allusions, changing it into a Viconian type-name so as to represent in the substance named a vaster complexity of human motives, stretching from stereotype to archetype, from transsubstantiality to consubstantiality. Beckett works with names that seem increasingly to be collapsing into merely repeatable alphabetic and grammatical identities that take their meanings from their place in the alphabetic syntax and the surrounding text, each name seeking ways to self-destruct. His naming is based on rupturing naming from conventions and from substance by emphasising phonemic imitation, morphological placement, and symbolic systems. Names become simpler, mere indices of "humanity," rather than individuals, species-types (male, female, *et al.*) that are interchangeable with others in or of the same type: as names are made duller, the substances they indicate become problematic; and the motives indicated by names are reduced to the single desire for inanition.

### Conclusion

O.K., "Joyce puts in and Beckett takes out." Let us look at this truism with regard to substances named.

Social Substances: A tentative place to end on is that Joyce and Beckett wrote within a general social mode in Ireland, perhaps existing mainly in the pubs of Dublin, that had highly conventional nostalgic ways of talking about failures, uncrowned kings, missed opportunities, Pyrrhic victories, etc.; sometimes it is called the "cult of failure."<sup>53</sup> We can think here of Simon Dedalus, among many such instances. In that cult of failure, surely Beckett is its primary failed priest. Each writer has represented that cult of failure in confrontation with the everyday expressions of those perennial philosophical problems in understanding the human capacity for self-movement

and the capacity for different kinds of cognition. To construct a poetic for these problems of motion and cognition understood within the cult of failure, Joyce and Beckett made use of two different philosophical traditions, respectively, that of Aristotle-Aquinas and Descartes-Hume. Their representations of the cult of failure clearly show that Joyce describes failure from the outside, one determined to describe the historic (moral, poetic) paralysis of other people, sleepy hosts to vast moving cultural data, and Beckett from the inside, one determined to record the desire, indeed, the necessity, for ultimate paralysis. Both approached these questions by shaping the traditional operations, functions, and strengths of schooled and literary written English: Joyce expands these strengths with multiplications of forms of style, alternative syntactical and modal operations, and increase of the substantial density of names, and Beckett intensifies these strengths by division of narrative forms as though seeking the smallest units of expression, repeating propositions in “arithmomaniacs”<sup>54</sup> e.g., in *Watt*, as though the conjugations and declensions of a foreign language describe the probabilistic reasoning process of Humean inductive minds. Joyce increased nominal density, by expanding every item in the memories, thoughts, dreams and subconsciouses of the characters, so that all Irish, Euro-Mediterranean, and some of the rest of the world’s literary culture become present in the language in their minds. The *Wake* is a holographic approach to the thickness, density, and radiance of the Fallen (European) world: every name is an ambiguous plenitude, filled with analogies to possibilities in and of the Fallen world. Unity of or in the name *per se* and yet open to revealing the multiplicity in the motives of the individual: that is the substance of human reference and language Joyce wanted to present. I repeat, this was done from exile, from outside the isle, whereas Beckett continually burrows to the empty centre of the cult of failure, the preference for the smaller living (dying) space, the dessicating heart, the brain rumbling sentences like moving decaying food through the stomach and intestines, and, like the masochist, the more he fails, the more he succeeds. Beckett is everywhere inside failing.

Body Substances: Both Joyce and Beckett express in the names variants, as discussed by Kenneth Burke, of “cloacal” motives. Early in his career, Joyce wrote, “Myself unto myself will give / This name, Katharsis-Purgative. [...] Thus I relieve their timid arses / Perform my office of Katharsis.”<sup>55</sup> Beckett has Descartes say of his eggs, “my slim pale double-breasted turd,” describes Belacqua’s “Emerging happy body from the hot bowels of McLoughlin’s,”<sup>56</sup> plays in *Watt* with calling urinating and defecating “number one” and “number two,” to which a character with a speech mannerism adds for “third” and “fourth” “turd” and “fart.” Of

course, both are working in a European scatological tradition from Aristophanes and Rabelais to Swift, but why do they choose to do this? Joyce, to gather enough excrement to create art from himself.<sup>57</sup> Beckett, who wrote of the “haemorrhoidal isle,” to reduce what is there, to defecate himself first from his body, then the voices and *ego* from his mind. The rocking chair action is masturbatory, but it could also be a toilet for getting rid of his “body,” as in Murphy’s last will instructing that his ashes be flushed down the Abbey Theatre toilet. Then, there is Krapp.<sup>58</sup> Life’s “body” substances are for creation (Joyce) or de-creation (Beckett).

With regard to names, the 600 proper-names of *More Pricks Than Kicks* becomes the 300 of *Murphy*, less than 200 in *Watt*, one in *The Lost Ones*, solitary letters elsewhere, and all indicate a composite of mind and body at war with each other and with themselves. These reductions accompanied by the reductions in geographic space and to the world-view mean that along the way the names themselves are also being emptied, written “in vain”: from the crowded world of *More Pricks Than Kicks* to the confined world of *Watt*, the names retain the function of identifications but the syntax shifts from the confused and confusing details of the world to listing syntactical permutations in order to erode further the sense that there is a mind that is hardly more than an analogue computer and an identity that has a label, Watt (a human Humean what). After *Watt*, *Waiting for Godot* has its title’s proper-name “Godot” emptied of any reference (male, but not god or man, not any other), an empty proper-noun, without more than nominal substance and yet awaited, nothing more than the object of hopeless hopeful, ding-dong, waiting-for. In the play where a Godot is only a “he,” we find not unexpectedly Beckett shifts to emptying the pronoun “they”: “Certainly they beat me.” “The same lot [...]?” “The same? I don’t know.”<sup>59</sup> When Joyce shifts to the pronoun, as in the “he” of Molly’s soliloquy, it is overfilled so that “he” may mean one, two, several, and many men in her life.

Joyce’s names are heading toward “nominigentilisation,” or tribal-names, and Beckett’s to puppetry, labels for stick-figures. For Joyce, the human substance he represents is Fallen and he increases both substantial and linguistic density through multilingual punning, neologisms, and portmanteaux in “Freudian” verbal techniques playing with a “Jungian” range of references. The result in the *Wake* is names overflowing with cultural ambiguities. Joyce’s names increased in substance, from being merely indicative of *Thom’s Directory* names, to national and cultural complexes. For Beckett, the human substance he represents is a dual package (a compound of mind and body); and, using techniques to attack the cohesiveness of language and experience, as used normally and

pragmatically, he opens a gap between mind and body, between language and the world language describes. If Joyce's names are "incorporations," so a footnote to the "Appendix" to *Watt* captures Beckett's view: "the following precious and illuminating material should be carefully studied. Only fatigue and disgust prevented its incorporation."<sup>60</sup> As Joyce is increasing the fullness of the name, its plenitude in "nominigentilisation," tribalism, or incorporation, Beckett decreases it toward a precarious limit in denying any community, even with, or especially with, other names and identities in the same work. A result is his representations of dual substances, *e.g.*, cosmos and humans, language and world, mind and body, pain and death, are antinomies. In this, substance diminishes to a repeatable identity, but, like his "voices," it does not disappear entirely. Beckett's naming appears to be tending toward radical nominalism, in which the name is only a convenience of language. He "decays" this radical nominalism so that it denies social grounding and, ultimately, *i.e.*, within its own constructions, denies any consubstantiality of mind and body and language except with dolorous pain, loss, decay, death, failure, and isolation.

Joyce risked expanding the names and therefore the substance of fictional identity until they passed beyond a magnitude that readers could comprehend. It appeared that in super-saturating the names with cultural allusions, he had dissolved fictional identity. His goal, though, was to point out that the first occasions of human misapprehensions and malapropisms may be tragic, the second time they were perfectly fallible and marvellously comic, and perhaps we would let our laughter's low give us means to perceive how funny we are as a species. Beckett risked reducing the names and therefore the substance of fictional identity until they contracted to a magnitude that readers could not apprehend. It appeared that in trying to drain the vitality out of names he had reduced fictional identity. His goal though was to point out that though every occasion of human perception and speech was a disaster, helped but not redeemed by our melancholy laugh, we would experience and perhaps we would note that in our Cartesian project, time and again, we had reached a *cogito* where fragile identity was indeed found. Like Dr. Frankenstein, we found in the icy wastes our creature (in *Murphy*, the stringless puppet "Frankenstein's daemon") and ourselves.

## Notes

1. As a truism, this or a variant can be found in most comparisons of the works of the two authors.
2. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber, 1975), 424.23.
3. My discussion depends on several brilliant works of Kenneth Burke, especially *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), and especially section II, "Antinomies of Definition," pp. 21-58.
4. The nominalist tradition, which, from, say, William of Ockham to Ferdinand de Saussure, proposes cutting the knot of problems by severing words from things, signifiers from signified, literary products from human producers, and producers from receivers, I find interesting, but when applied in the study of literature, intellectually limiting and too often downright silly. The idealist tradition from Plato through Dionysius the Areopagite and Isidore of Seville, which absorbs all matters into names, I find puzzling, for like pure mathematics and brain's neurons, it has an unusual relationship with the actual world. A pragmatic line that includes Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, and Paul Goodman, which finds language and the world peculiarly attached to each other, is deeply flawed, is intellectually much messier than the nominalist and the idealist approaches, and, for me, far more interesting, mainly because truer to the complexity of experience.
5. For books on names in Joyce see: James S. Atherton, *Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in James Joyce's 'Finnegans Wake'* (London: Faber, 1959); Shari Benstock and Bernard Benstock, *Who's He When He's At Home: A James Joyce Directory* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Adaline Glasheen, *Third Census of Finnegans Wake: An Index of the Characters and Their Roles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Louis O. Mink, *A Finnegans Wake Gazetteer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for Dubliners and Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Don Gifford with Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in Ulysses: An Annotated List* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Andreas Palme, *Die Personennamen im Ulysses: Eine Studie zur literarischen Onomastik bei James Joyce* (Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1990). Articles are Marie-Danielle Vors, "Les noms propres dans *Ulysses*," in *L'Herne: James*

- Joyce*, eds. Jacques Aubert et Fritz Senn (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1985), pp. 270-96, Fritz Senn, "Naming in Dubliners (a first methermeneutic fumbling)," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 24.4 (Summer 1987), pp. 465-68, and Claire A. Culleton, "Naming and Gender in James Joyce's Fiction," in *Names*, 39.4 (December 1991), pp. 303-18. At this date, there is no book like these for Beckett's names: is there a need for one?
6. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Granada, 1977), p. 198.
  7. James Joyce, "A Painful Case," in his *Dubliners: The Corrected Text with an Explanatory Note*, ed. Robert Scholes (London: Granada, 1977), pp. 98-107.
  8. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 [Student's Edition]), 4.1, 1.1, 18.1.
  9. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. 1, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking Press, 1957), p. 56.
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5: "The Sisters," "Eveline," and "After the Race," later in *Dubliners*.
  11. Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 8.
  12. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1.34.
  13. James Joyce, "The Sisters" and "An Encounter," in his *Dubliners*, pp. 7-15 and 16-24 respectively, pp. 9, 15, 16, 17.
  14. James Joyce, "Eveline," in his *Dubliners*, pp. 32-37, pp. 33-34; "The Sisters," p. 9; "A Painful Case," *ibid.*, pp. 98-107, p. 98.
  15. James Joyce, "Clay," in his *Dubliners*, pp. 90-97, pp. 90-92.
  16. James Joyce, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," in his *Dubliners*, pp. 108-124, pp. 108 and 122-23.
  17. James Joyce, "The Dead," in his *Dubliners*, pp. 160-201, p. 160.
  18. *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,"* eds. Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 73.
  19. Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 85.
  20. For all the examples, see in Benstock and Benstock, under each name.
  21. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 621.22.
  22. *Ibid.*, 5.5-6.
  23. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.
  24. *Ibid.*, 4.21.
  25. *Ibid.*, 353.22.
  26. *Ibid.*, 118.21.
  27. Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: John Calder, 1976), pp. 153-54.

28. Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Pan / Picador, 1980). Even though I have used Bair's biography of Beckett, which, according to Beckett specialists, has many troublesome errors, little in my argument depends entirely on it.
29. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1963), p. 101.
30. Samuel Beckett, "Yellow," in his *More Pricks than Kicks* (London: Calder Publications, 1993), pp. 171-86, p. 172.
31. See Bair, pp. 61-64, and Susan Schreibman's essay "The Penman and his Bleaters" in the present volume, pp. 1-19.
32. Samuel Beckett, "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce," in his *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 19-33, p. 19.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
34. Beckett, *Murphy*, pp. 47-48.
35. Beckett, *Watt*, p. 31.
36. Samuel Beckett, *The Lost Ones*, in his *Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1980* (London: John Calder, 1984), pp. 159-78, p. 161.
37. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 48.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Samuel Beckett, *Whoroscope*, in his *Collected Poems in English and French* (London: John Calder, 1977), pp. 1-6.
41. Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, in his *Proust and Three Dialogues* (London: John Calder, 1965), pp. 9-93, p. 77-8.
42. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 141-2.
43. Beckett, *Watt*, p. 56.
44. Samuel Beckett, "A Wet Night," in his *More Pricks than Kicks*, pp. 53-88, p. 56.
45. Samuel Beckett, "Fingal," in his *More Pricks than Kicks*, pp. 25-36, p. 31.
46. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 53.
47. Hugh Kenner, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1973), p. 68.
48. Short story title in Beckett's *More Pricks than Kicks*, pp. 41-49, describing departure and return, acting and subtracting.
49. Ruby Cohn mentions "thirteen" in her *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962), p. 45.
50. Beckett, *Watt*, p. 78; also, p. 74.
51. Charles S. Singleton, *Purgatorio: A Commentary, The Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).
52. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 81.

53. A term transmitted to me by Mary O'Toole, who has spoken and written about Flann O'Brien and the cult.
54. Beckett, "A Wet Night," p. 62.
55. James Joyce, "The Holy Office," in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, eds. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 149-52, p.149.
56. Beckett, "A Wet Night," p. 53.
57. Some of this is discussed by Susan Brienza, "Kraping Out: Images of Flow and Elimination as Creation in Joyce and Beckett," in *Re: Joyce'n Beckett*, eds. Phyllis Carey and Ed Jewinski (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), pp. 117-46, an essay I received after this essay was completed.
58. See for a motive remarkably similar in Keats in Kenneth Burke, "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats," in his *A Grammar of Motives*, pp. 447-63.
59. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 1986), pp. 7-88, p. 11.
60. Beckett, *Watt*, p. 247.

## 6 Phyllis Carey

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### Ireland, Island of Saints and Searchers

At the 1987 Joyce in Milwaukee Symposium, Fritz Senn quoted Maria Jolas as saying, “Joyce was a Catholic saint; Beckett is a Protestant saint.” The statement intrigued me by its strange resonance with elements of my own reading of Joyce and Beckett. When Senn responded to my request for more information about Jolas’s words, he indicated that Maria had expressed the idea to him in the summer of 1980, that he supposed “she must have said the same thing to many people” and that “the quote by itself deserves to be perpetuated from such a witness as Maria Jolas.”<sup>1</sup>

Granted, both Joyce and Beckett rejected institutional religion, and both satirise it in their writings. It is not my purpose to “canonise [their] dead feet down on the river airy.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in their respective approaches to artistic creation and in their uses of images and language, Joyce and Beckett reveal divergencies that derive at least in part from the religious world views in which they were raised and from their respective responses to religious ideas. Borrowing from Jolas’s “contraries,” I want to explore here in part how I see – among a great many other things – some elements of Catholicism in Joyce and some elements of Protestantism in Beckett and where, perhaps, the “coincidences” in these “contraries” may be found.

Joyce and Beckett derive their originality partially at least in their respective responses to religious orthodoxy, which has engendered a long history of artistic reactions in Western culture. As Richard Kearney points out in his comparison of the Hebrew and Greek notions of imagination, “while [imagination] empowers man to imitate God, it does so by means of an unlawful act.”<sup>3</sup> Prometheus steals divine fire to ennoble humans; Adam and Eve eat of the fruit because they want to “be like gods” (Gen. 3.5). Creative subversion does not simply undermine the powers-that-be; indeed, it paradoxically affirms the powers by challenging them. But more importantly, for my purposes, creative transgression affirms the exercise of human imagination in the search for authentic reality.<sup>4</sup>

In appropriating elements of Catholicism into his own aesthetics, Joyce imaginatively recaptures their power for his readers. At least one major thrust in the development of Joyce’s aesthetics is his attempt to replicate the incarnation through language. The taking on of human flesh by the Son of God for the redemption of humans increasingly seems to have become for Joyce a paradigm for his own aesthetics. Although he initially cast himself in the role of the Holy Spirit, transforming the trivial into aesthetic

revelation, and as God the Father, shaping language into epiphanic moments, Joyce increasingly enters into the play of language itself, where the “chaosmos” of words becomes the meaning it would convey. Correspondingly, Joyce’s relentless portrayals of a dichotomy between spirit and flesh and a lack of authentic community dramatise the seeming inefficacy of the traditional Catholic emphasis on the incarnation and the sacrament that celebrates the Incarnation and Redemption – the eucharist.<sup>5</sup> Joyce’s depiction of a lack of Christian community and yet his affirmation of its significance in human existence can be seen first of all in the metaphors he chose to depict his own artistic processes, analogies which he apparently took very seriously.<sup>6</sup>

The artistic project in *Dubliners* was to transmute the trivial, the insignificant, into moments of aesthetic revelation, analogously to the *epiclei*<sup>7</sup> of the Eastern Catholic rite of the eucharist. Although the transformation in *Dubliners* works in a number of ways, what is striking, for the purposes of my discussion, is the deadening of the living – from Father Flynn to Gabriel Conroy – as though, in an inversion of the eucharistic analogy, the body and blood of potentially vibrant characters were transmuted into lifeless corpses or – in Gabriel’s case – “A fat brown goose.”<sup>8</sup> What is at stake in Joyce’s metaphor is not the “salvation” of his characters but rather the transformation of his readers. His ostensible purpose was to “give people a kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment [...] for their mental, moral, and spiritual uplift.”<sup>9</sup>

*Dubliners* was envisioned, partially at least, as intellectual, spiritual, and imaginative nourishment for its readers. But like Dante in the *Inferno*, Joyce works negatively, by enabling the reader to experience the deadening effects of stereotypes, clichés, and provincialism, and the mental, moral and spiritual distortions that he saw as characterising the Irish Catholicism of his time.

Both in purpose and content, *Dubliners* suggests, albeit often ironically and by absence, its communal nature. The predatory attitudes of e.g., Mrs. Kearney and Mrs. Mooney, the isolation of e.g., Fr. Flynn, Maria, James Duffy, and Eveline, the commercialised values of e.g., Fr. Purdon, of Corley and Lenehan – despite the veneer of social interaction and conviviality – underscore a lack of inner communion of body and soul and a corresponding absence of community with others. Experiencing the loneliness of the characters and the aesthetic shaping of human vanity, complacency, isolation, and degradation, the reader is invited to envision other possibilities. The image of the snow at the end of “The Dead,” which culminates the collection, perhaps most clearly beckons readers to a recognition of human communion. As Richard Ellmann aptly expresses it: “The snow that falls

upon Gabriel, Gretta, and Michael Furey, upon the Misses Morkan, upon the dead singers and the living, is mutuality, a sense of their connection with each other, a sense that none has his being alone."<sup>10</sup> It is a "sense" that Gabriel may or may not experience but certainly one that is designed to nourish the reader. Joyce shapes his images, even those of a sordid nature, to reveal through their distinctive materiality the invisible interconnections that would make them, like the bread and wine of the eucharist, more in reality than they appear to be.

From the context of the metaphorical role of the eucharist as artistic analogy in *Dubliners*, it is fascinating to ponder Stephen Dedalus's refusal to receive holy communion in *Portrait*. Although his refusal effectively conveys his rejection of institutional Catholicism and his unwillingness to submit to his mother,<sup>11</sup> it also, ironically, emphasises the isolation from others that Stephen increasingly experiences in *Portrait*. Rejecting what are for him the dead communities of home, fatherland, and church, Stephen seeks communion in "the white arms of roads" and the "black arms of tall ships."<sup>12</sup>

The conscious artistic metaphor operating in *Portrait* – "the gestation of a soul"<sup>13</sup> – suggests an evolving-incarnation motif and enframes Stephen's gestation of his own aesthetic as "priest of eternal imagination," echoing Joyce's attempts in *Dubliners* to "convert the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own."<sup>14</sup> The project of *Portrait*, however, consists mainly in separating Stephen from the distorted forms of community that would stifle him. Although the evolution of Stephen in the text involves the attempt to reconcile and integrate the flesh and the spirit – particularly in chapters 3 and 4 – this task cannot be accomplished within institutional Catholicism, depicted as denying the flesh and spiritually ensnared by mechanical rituals of piety. Stephen's aesthetic, furthermore, while replicating the Catholic notion of the incarnation analogically – "In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh"<sup>15</sup> – underscores an artistic isolation.<sup>16</sup> Paradoxically, Stephen views art in incarnational terms while he increasingly distances himself from his own history. Joseph Buttigieg sums up well his dilemma: "Stephen's movement is from flesh to *logos* – he moves away from the Incarnation, away from the sentient (both the physical senses and the longings of the heart) towards the abstract, the ethereal. Stephen's ideal is his own dehumanisation."<sup>17</sup>

Although Stephen's individualisation is accomplished to an extent in *Portrait*, his internal communion of spirit and flesh as well as his experience of human community is not achieved. Indeed, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* suggest – and traditional Catholicism emphasises – that incarnation

and community are reciprocal realities: One cannot be fully human in isolation, a theme that *Exiles* also explores in its relationship to freedom. Stephen, like James Duffy, seems “outcast from life’s feast.”<sup>18</sup> His soul may have gestated, but he has yet to experience his own incarnation in the human community, a task that continues into *Ulysses*.<sup>19</sup>

Although the trinity of Stephen, Leopold Bloom, and Molly and its resonance with the Catholic dogma of the Divine Trinity have received a variety of treatments, as Seamus Deane observes, Joyce’s works use two kinds of Catholicism: the European and the Irish. While the European form stresses the doctrine of the Divine Trinity, Irish Catholicism is “based on the idea of the Holy Family, the vulgar version of the Trinity.”<sup>20</sup> Joyce’s appropriation of the “vulgar” and the divine versions of the Trinity into his own human trinity emphasises his perennial attempt to reveal the potential power of the human spirit through the mundane. The fragmentation of modern existence finds a fragile but potent connectedness in the invisible bonds linking the “family” of Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly. The “eucharistic occasion”<sup>21</sup> of Molly’s monologue nourishes readers’ imaginations by its integration of human flesh, blood, and spirit and by its evoking possibilities of reconciliation within the human family.<sup>22</sup>

While Joyce achieves in *Ulysses* the almost palpable presence of Molly, Bloom, and Stephen, *Finnegans Wake* becomes Joyce’s quintessential attempt to replicate the incarnation aesthetically. “Here Comes Everybody” embodies the cyclic rising and falling of generations and, as Henry Morton Robinson playfully points out, echoes in its initials the Latin formula for the consecration of the bread and wine in the Mass.<sup>23</sup> Shem the Penman taking his resources from his own body and forming words on that body that “will not pass away” becomes the artistic paradigm of the work as a whole. As Robert Boyle notes, “in that ink, like Christ in the Eucharist, the artist continues in a dynamic present to unfold the cycles of his and all human history;”<sup>24</sup> Michael Patrick Gillespie, in analyzing the inquisition of the artist in chapter 7, further emphasises the implicit communal nature of Joyce’s aesthetics: “the artist’s power to reconcile society to the ‘dividual chaos, perilous, potent, common to allflesh.’”<sup>25</sup>

The communal nature of the *Wake* derives not only from its themes and structures but also from the language itself, where Joyce again crosses traditional boundaries in the search for ways to incarnate aesthetically more and more lived reality. As Richard Kearney argues, Joyce dissolves the boundary between “language as signifier and world as signified” and closes “the traditional rupture between the subjective language of the creative author and the objective language of the ‘fullblooded’ world.”<sup>26</sup> Joyce makes the words themselves both potent and communal, achieving

what Samuel Beckett characterised as the “apotheosis of the word.”<sup>27</sup> But it is a concretised apotheosis with a communal purpose, which the words themselves suggest by their portmanteau nature and their interconnecting with one another in a variety of contextual and intertextual possibilities. As a result, *Finnegans Wake*, analogous to the bread of the eucharist, lends itself to being “broken” and shared by a community of readers who, nonetheless, can never hope to unlock all of its mysteries, as the number of *Wake* reading groups and the variety of reading strategies that have emerged over the years would seem to attest to, at least implicitly.<sup>28</sup> Instead of the confused scattering of Babel, *Finnegans Wake* aesthetically replicates the glossolalia of Pentecost, beckoning the reader beyond linguistic habits and systems of thought to a fuller experience of being.<sup>29</sup>

While Joyce’s texts implicitly and explicitly suggest their relationship to Catholic tradition by celebrating creation, language, and the possibilities of reconciliation, Beckett’s texts disclose a Protestant heritage in their emphasis on the misery of creation, the distrust of images and languages, and the absolute isolation of the individual.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to Joyce’s celebration of the fall – “O foenix culprit!”<sup>31</sup> – for Beckett “the original [...] sin of having been born”<sup>32</sup> defines the primal curse for each human, which manifests itself in a dichotomy between body and spirit and a dislocation from nature – as Jean Onimus puts it, “le refus de l’incarnation.”<sup>33</sup> From early protagonists – lying in ditches, encased in urns, half-buried in the earth, crawling through shit – to later disembodied voices, all search for who they are, what they are, where they are, why they are.

If the individual in Beckett’s texts is plagued by continual self-scrutiny, commonality can be found in universal damnation. The womb-tomb image, stated explicitly in *Godot* – “They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more”<sup>34</sup> – forms the parenthesis of human existence in Beckett’s texts, with the agony of being, between birth and death, utterly cut off from ever knowing its own meaning if it has any.<sup>35</sup> As Didi rephrases Hamlet’s dilemma: “What are we doing here, *that* is the question.”<sup>36</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere, Beckett’s recurrent use of the crucifixion with the thieves on either side – an image that duplicates the womb-tomb chiasmus – not only echoes a Protestant theology of the cross but also, primarily, draws attention to the ongoing human suffering of existence between the two thieves of birth and death.<sup>37</sup> If God exists, he is totally other. In an early work, Camier asserts that God is the “all-unfuckable.”<sup>38</sup> Lucky deconstructs human conceptions of an arbitrary deity who predestines an elect “for reasons unknown.”<sup>39</sup> Hamm blasphemes God for his absence – “The bastard! He doesn’t exist!”<sup>40</sup> *Company* asserts “God is Love. Yes

or No? No.”<sup>41</sup> Human attempts to conceptualise God are confused, self-serving, and contradictory to human experience.

Given the “issueless predicament of existence”<sup>42</sup> and the unknowability of God, which echo Calvinistic and Lutheran emphases on the fallenness of human nature and God’s absolute transcendence,<sup>43</sup> the repeated question of *Godot* – “What do we do now?”<sup>44</sup> – becomes a major issue. Declan Kiberd, using *Murphy* and the trilogy, has argued that Beckett is a “puritan testifier” satirising the Protestant work ethic and its “mercantile gehenna”<sup>45</sup> and deconstructing in *The Unnamable* the Protestant notion of a penum, “the labour imposed as a punishment for having been born with original sin.”<sup>46</sup> Beckett certainly undercuts human illusions of achievement and the myth of progress, whether it be scientific or cultural. Despite “the strides of alimentation and defecation” and enormous progress in sports of all kinds, the human still “wastes and pines.”<sup>47</sup> As *Endgame* suggests, humans have used up the earth, exhausted their physical, cultural, and metaphysical resources, and there are no assurances that any human traces will remain.

But while Beckett may undermine the Protestant work ethic, his texts increasingly explore an important corollary of that ethic: the human inability to do or to know anything in regard to God, which echoes the Protestant emphasis on absolute dependence on grace.<sup>48</sup> Since we can do nothing to know why we are here, to save ourselves, or to know God, – who if he exists is totally other – it remains to explore the nothingness of which “Naught is more real.”<sup>49</sup> The first words of *Godot* capture this dual thrust of Beckett’s oeuvre – “Nothing to be done.”<sup>50</sup> From a classical Protestant perspective, literally nothing can be done to secure salvation; one is utterly dependent on God’s grace. On the other hand, Beckett would have us confront nothingness as the only ultimate alternative.<sup>51</sup>

Unlike Joyce, who attempts to make language encompass more and more of reality, Beckett attempts “to use words to go beyond words”<sup>52</sup> in a supreme effort to reach the “final music or that silence that underlies All.”<sup>53</sup> Like Milton’s Satan, who would be at his worst, Beckett journeys “worst-word” in his texts, trying to reach the “Best worse,”<sup>54</sup> echoing *Hamlet* negatively: “All gnawing to be naught. Never to be naught.”<sup>55</sup> For nothingness, like the fullness of being that the incarnation implies, is unattainable for human consciousness. The human thirst – “not being able not to want to know”<sup>56</sup> – can never find its rest in the certainty of nothingness: “Haze sole certitude.”<sup>57</sup> Hence the prayer at the end of *Ill Seen Ill Said*: “One moment more. One last. Grace to breathe that void. Know happiness.”<sup>58</sup> Like God, nothingness is beyond human grasp; it seems to demand its own kind of faith.<sup>59</sup>

Undercutting the illusions – the idols – that keep humans from confronting both their absolute impotence and facing the possibility of nothingness becomes the major “work” in much of Beckett’s art, a task that in its distrust of images resonates with Protestant reformers since Luther.<sup>60</sup> Beckett painstakingly undoes his texts to make transparent their fictivity. Like a parody of Molly’s affirming monologue, for example, the narrator of *How It Is* denies his narrative, affirming only the impossibility of affirming:

and all this business of above yes light yes skies yes a little  
blue yes and a little white yes the earth turning yes bright and  
less bright yes little scenes yes all balls yes the women yes  
the dog yes the prayers yes the homes yes all balls yes<sup>61</sup>

While Beckett renders his fiction-making transparent, he makes his images self-reflexive by reversing or juxtaposing figure and ground. The prioritising of aesthetic images comes into question when the ground is revealed as itself illusory. “Murphy’s mind,” for example, is described from “what it felt and pictured itself to be.”<sup>62</sup> The images and language are shaped to foreground their own fictivity or the nothing or silence from which they emerge and which gives them shape. Increasingly, Beckett incorporates silence into his texts as a form of significant nothingness. His non-verbal *Quad* plays, as I argue elsewhere,<sup>63</sup> both in their outer and inner framing, among many other things, draw attention to the spaces between words – the quadrats of raised printer’s type – which as forms of “nothing” actually designate the shapes that words have.

In his attempts to get beyond language, Beckett increasingly constructs his texts to bring the reader/audience to silent contemplation. His texts are pervaded by images of eyes, by staring, and by the sense of being watched: e.g., Murphy staring into the eyes of Endon; the eyes of the girl in the punt and Krapp’s eyes staring at the audience at the end of *Krapp’s Last Tape*; the “drowned eyes” of *Embers*; the “spiritlight eyes” of “the green one” and Joe’s eyes in *Eh Joe*; the eye of the camera in *Film*; the “all eyes moving to and fro” of *Rockaby*; the “clenched eyes” of *Worstward Ho*; “the eye of prey” of *Imagination Dead Imagine*. While Beckett’s art explores the unknown and the unseen beneath, behind and beyond the surface materiality of language and the human, it increasingly invites the reader into quiet reflection: “how better in the end labour lost and silence.”<sup>64</sup>

The most radical – and courageous – activity Beckett’s texts propose is the individual act of opening one’s eyes. Confronting one’s own finitude, impotence, isolation, and insatiable desire to know what it all is and continuing the search, knowing that it is futile – in this

world at least – seem to be all that can be managed and more than most of us can.

Exploring the “contraries” of Catholicism and Protestantism, Yves Congar implicitly finds their coincidence in the image of the cross:

Catholic theology will always be a theology of the incarnation [...] Continental Protestantism, on the contrary, [...] considers the heavenly Christ and the vertical relationship of the believer to him, more than the Christ who has come in the flesh and our horizontal relationship to him, the continuity of the Church with his incarnation.<sup>65</sup>

Analogously, Joyce’s and Beckett’s texts, though widely-divergent, nevertheless find fascinating cruxes. In the context of this discussion, both Beckett and Joyce are trespassers and searchers, going beyond conventional boundaries and habits of thinking, seeing, and saying. Both undo and redo language itself in vastly different ways. Both befuddle our logical agendas; both beckon readers beyond their customary habits of knowing “if an ear aye sieze what no eye ere grieved for”<sup>66</sup> or if we “open our eyes and see the mess.”<sup>67</sup> Both suggest that if neither art nor science can reveal to us the “Great Sommboddy within the Omniboss,” the artist can at least enable us to ponder the “Little Newbuddies that ring his panch”<sup>68</sup> or, as Pozzo puts it, “how it is on this bitch of an earth.”<sup>69</sup>

While Joyce celebrates a human imagination that can transform the bread of everyday life into “marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history,”<sup>70</sup> Beckett retells the “the sad tale,” with “Imagination at wit’s end spread[ing] its sad wings”<sup>71</sup> of “impenetrable self to impenetrable unself by way of neither.”<sup>72</sup> While Joyce seems to work more and more toward immanence and his texts seem to concern themselves increasingly with the flesh, the human spirit emerges through that flesh ever more strongly, particularly in the epiphanic annunciations that lead out of each text. While Beckett’s work, on the other hand, decries the absence of God, a sense of immanence becomes stronger, particularly through the shades and voices of the later texts. While their artistic searches probe and question central mysteries of Catholicism and Protestantism – among a great many other things – they capture for readers the pre-condition of all belief – whether it be in progress, technology, humanism, atheism, secularism, art, God or nothingness – the fundamental joy and terror of human existence.

In a postmodern, post-Christian era, the transgressions of Joyce and Beckett as artistic searchers suggest that “when saint and sage have said their say,”<sup>73</sup> the human spirit is still and perhaps always at the beginning of

its journey. Joyce's Anna Livia rushing out to the arms of her father "A way a lone a last a loved a long the"<sup>74</sup> brings us "by a commodius vicus of recirculation"<sup>75</sup> to a soft echo in Beckett's reportedly last poem. Beckett's long shaping of the human need to know ends in a chiasmus that echoes a Johannine beginning and, from the perspective of this paper, brings us full circle to Joyce:

folly for to need to seem to glimpse  
 afaint afar away over there what —  
 what —  
 what is the word —  
  
 what is the word<sup>76</sup>

### Notes

1. Fritz Senn, Letter to Phyllis Carey, 19 February, 1992. In the sixties, Maria Jolas in her "A Bloomlein for Sam," in *Beckett at Sixty: A Festschrift*, ed. John Calder (London: Calder & Boyars, 1967), pp. 14-16, p. 16, also linked both writers in a religious context: "Like Joyce [Beckett] is also a Christ-haunted man, not yet of the new barbarism. But there is a fundamental difference. Joyce could still say yes, whereas Sam's answer is definitely no."
2. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber, 1975), 467.21-22.
3. Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 80.
4. As Keith M. Booker, *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature, Transgression, Abjection and the Carnavalesque* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), p. 4, notes, "Transgressive literature works [...] subtly, by gradually chipping away at certain modes of thinking that contribute to the perpetuation of oppressive political structures." Joyce and Beckett "chip away" relentlessly, but in both cases, I would suggest, the writers are concerned primarily with discovering the fundamental realities that may have been politicised or distorted by religious institutions.
5. In Catholic theology, the incarnation refers primarily to the Son of God taking on human flesh – that the historical Jesus is both God and man. The eucharist is seen as the supreme expression of Christ's continuing presence. Catholicism has traditionally emphasised the incarnation and has identified with it by referring to the Church-as-community as

- the “body of Christ.” “Especially in the Sacrament of the Altar, the fundamental idea of the Church is most plainly represented, the idea, that is, of the incorporation of the faithful in Christ” (Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. Justin McCann, O.S.B., rev. ed. [Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954], p. 19; see also pp. 1-29). Joyce, I suggest, uses and extends the eucharistic and incarnational metaphors for all of their aesthetic potential: the transformation of experience into dynamic life, the union of matter and spirit, the com-union of humans in and through the artwork.
6. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 296. — The diverse ways Joyce used a variety of identifiably Catholic elements in his approach to artistic creation have been explored by a number of noted Joyce scholars, e.g., Robert Boyle, S.J., *James Joyce’s Pauline Vision: A Catholic Exposition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978); William Noon, S.J., *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, trans. Ellen Esrock (Tulsa: The University of Tulsa Press, 1982); J. Mitchell Morse, *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism* (New York: New York University Press, 1959), to mention but a few of the more well known. For a more comprehensive listing and review, see Thomas Staley’s “Religious Elements and Thomistic Encounters: Noon on Joyce and Aquinas,” in *Re-Viewing Classics of Joyce Criticism*, ed. Janet E. Dunleavy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 155-68.
  7. Ellmann, p. 163, indicates that the correct term is *epicleses* (Latin) or *epicleseis* (Greek).
  8. James Joyce, “The Dead,” in his *Dubliners: The Corrected Text with an Explanatory Note*, ed. Robert Scholes (London: Granada, 1977), pp. 160-201, p. 177.
  9. Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1982), p. 116.
  10. Ellmann, p. 251.
  11. Stephen’s refusal to receive communion can also be seen as an assertion of his own “aesthetic piety.” See my “Stephen Dedalus, Belacqua Shuah and Dante’s *Pietà*,” in *Re: Joyce’n Beckett*, eds. Phyllis Carey and Ed Jewinski (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), pp. 104-16.
  12. Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Granada, 1977), p. 228.
  13. Ellmann, p. 297.

14. James Joyce, Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, quoted in the editorial apparatus of James Joyce, *Dubliners: Text, Criticism and Notes*, eds. Robert Scholes and A. Walton Litz (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 256.
15. Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 196.
16. If Joyce uses the Holy Spirit as an analogy of the artist in *Dubliners*, the analogy of God the Father seems more evident in Stephen's aesthetic by its emphasis on the creative act itself. Stephen's description of the artist as "like the God of the creation" (*Portrait*, p. 194) also suggests this emphasis.
17. Joseph A. Buttigieg, *A Portrait of the Artist in Different Perspective* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), p. 147.
18. James Joyce, "A Painful Case," in his *Dubliners*, pp. 98-107, p. 107.
19. See Michael Patrick Gillespie's persuasive discussion of Stephen's evolution in his "Redrawing the Artist as a Young Man," in *Joyce's Ulysses: The Larger Perspective*, eds. Robert D. Newman and Weldon Thornton (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987), pp. 123-40.
20. Seamus Deane, "Joyce the Irishman," in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 31-53, p. 46. – Jean-Louis Houdebine in a critical response to Robert Boyle's analysis of the Trinity in *Ulysses* combines both versions of the Trinity to argue that the major project of *Ulysses* is the artistic incarnation of Joyce himself, which Houdebine reads in Molly's assenting monologue – "Joyce devenant Verbe dans l'écriture même d'une énonciation féminine" (Houdebine, "De Nouveau sur Joyce: 'littérature' et 'religion,'" in *Tel Quel*, 89 (1981), pp. 41-73, p. 64). According to Houdebine, Joyce thus "fathers" himself as the "post-human" "word that would not pass away" of the *Wake*.
21. Ellmann, p. 379.
22. Ellmann, p. 379, asserts that the "spirit is liberated from its bonds through a eucharistic occasion," but I think that the effect of "Penelope" for the reader may consist primarily in the experience of spirit-made-flesh.
23. Henry Morton Robinson, "Hardest Crux Ever," in *A James Joyce Miscellany*, Second Series, ed. Marvin Magalaner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959), pp. 195-207.
24. Boyle, p. 46.
25. Michael Patrick Gillespie, "An Inquisition of Chapter Seven of *Finnegans Wake*," in *Renascence*, XXXV (Winter 1983), pp. 138-53, p. 139, quoting from Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 186.4-5.
26. Richard Kearney, "A Crisis of Imagination," in *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies (1977-1981)* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), pp. 390-402, p. 393.

27. Samuel Beckett, "German Letter of 1937," trans. Martin Esslin, in Beckett's *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 170-73, p. 172.
28. In his *Reading the Book of Himself: Narrative Strategies in the Works of James Joyce* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), p. 2, Michael Patrick Gillespie argues that all of Joyce's works "invite and sustain a range of valid but provisional readings, yet no work gives itself over completely and forever to a single interpretation." Gillespie in his own study helps elucidate various reading strategies that the texts themselves suggest. In reference to *Finnegans Wake*, he cites the example of Paddock, which "provides the encouragement necessary to make the leap toward the unknowable. His example makes clear that we must give ourselves over to the mysteries of the work, experiences evoking aesthetic satisfaction while resisting intellectual comprehension" (p. 211).
29. In the glossolalia of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enables community by uniting through tongues. Unlike Babel, where sin presumably destroyed the unity of the human community, the people in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) gather when they hear the sound of the apostles (speaking in tongues) and share their wonder and joy at being able to understand the words of their own language and still not comprehend "what it all meant" (Acts 2:12).
30. For a survey of the critical works on religious elements in Beckett's writings see Laura Barge, *God, The Quest, the Hero: Thematic Structure in Beckett's Fiction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 15-59. Works not cited by Barge include Hélène Baldwin, *Samuel Beckett's Real Silence* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981); Richard Kearney, "Beckett: The Demythologising Intellect," in *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), pp. 267-93; Declan Kiberd, "Samuel Beckett and the Protestant Ethic," in *The Genius of Irish Prose*, ed. Augustine Martin (Dublin: Mercier, 1985), pp. 121-31. – Protestantism is, of course, multivalent. For purposes of my discussion, I am using ideas from classical Protestantism and, at points, from Calvinism, the particular strain of Protestantism with which Beckett's texts occasionally show affinities.
31. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 23.16.
32. Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, in his *Proust and Three Dialogues* (London: John Calder, 1965), pp. 9-93, p. 67. – The Catholic belief in the essential goodness of creation and the human body contrasts the traditional Calvinist emphasis on the "total depravity of man."

33. Jean Onimus, *Samuel Beckett* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968), p. 21.
34. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 1986), pp. 7-88, p. 83.
35. The womb–tomb image is replicated in several texts, e.g., “Dante and the Lobster” where “sea” and “pot” form the poles of existence for the lobster; Malone’s sense of being “given birth into death” (*Malone Dies*, in *The Beckett Trilogy* [London: Pan/Picador, 1979], pp. 163-264, p. 260); the two figures lying in the rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine*; *Rockaby* with its conflation of lullaby and threnody; the “westerling sun” and the “easterling earth” of *Ill Seen Ill Said* (London: John Calder, 1982), p. 48.
36. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 74.
37. See my “Joyce’s Shem and Beckett’s Pim,” in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 26.1 (Fall 1989), pp. 435-39.
38. Samuel Beckett, *Mercier and Camier* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974), p. 26. – Some fifty years later, Beckett would use that obscenity effectively and shockingly in another chiasmic context to underscore the nature of human existence itself; see his *Rockaby*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, pp. 431-42, p. 442: “rock her off/ stop her eyes/fuck life/stop her eyes/rock her off.”
39. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 42.
40. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, pp. 89-134, p. 119.
41. Samuel Beckett, *Company* (London: John Calder, 1980), p. 73.
42. Samuel Beckett, “McGreevy on Yeats,” in his *Disjecta*, pp. 95-97, p. 97.
43. See Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), especially pp. 53-66 and 81-93.
44. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, pp. 46, 56, 61, 71, 77.
45. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1963), p. 26.
46. Kiberd, p. 129.
47. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 42.
48. Max Weber has argued that Calvinist Protestantism in particular, because of its emphasis on grace as a free gift of God and its disdain for the salvific nature of works, has emphasised an autonomous work ethic, a “worldly asceticism” that enables the believer to secure at least the self-confidence of his own election through industrious labor in the world. See Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), p. 114 ff.
49. Beckett, “On Murphy,” in his *Disjecta*, p. 113 (the words of

- Democritus that Beckett suggested to Sighle Kennedy as a “starting point” for understanding his works).
50. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 11.
  51. At the beginning of Act II of *Godot* when Gogo says he was beaten and Didi asks him what he was doing, Gogo responds that he was not doing anything. Didi comments, “Perhaps you weren’t. But it’s the way of doing it that counts” (p. 55). In an early French poem, “être là,” Beckett describes a man on his back in the dark, awaiting death, with the lines “on attend/adverbe.” How one does nothing seems to be a major issue in Beckett’s texts.
  52. J.C.C. Mays, “Samuel Beckett (1907[sic]–1989),” in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing III*, eds. Seamus Deane, Andrew Carpenter, Jonathan Williams (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), pp. 233–38, p. 237.
  53. Beckett, “German Letter of 1937,” p. 172.
  54. Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 47.
  55. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
  56. Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 37.
  57. *Ibid.*, p. 48. – As Didi says in *Waiting for Godot*, “Nothing is certain,” which both affirms and denies the certainty of nothing.
  58. Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 59.
  59. “Grace” is not a frequently-used word in Beckett’s canon. Another striking use of it occurs near the end of *Company* where the voice that comes to “the one on his back in the dark” says, “From time to time with unexpected grace you lie” (p. 87); the richly ambiguous use of the word here echoes, among other things, what Robert McAfee Brown cites as a Protestant emphasis on “the surprises of Grace” (pp. 58–9).
  60. Richard Kearney explores Beckett’s dismantling of primarily Protestant conceptions of God: God’s total transcendence and separation from the human because of sin, the human inability to explain God’s existence by metaphysical arguments, human dependence on “perplexing parables of scripture” for knowledge of God, and a solitary act of faith as the only way humans can approach God. See Kearney’s “Samuel Beckett: The Demythologising Intellect.”
  61. Samuel Beckett, *How It Is* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1964), p. 159.
  62. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 63.
  63. See my “The *Quad* Pieces: A Screen for the Unseeable,” in *Make Sense Who May*, eds. Robin J. Davis and Lance St. John Butler (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1988), p. 145–49, p. 165.
  64. Beckett, *Company*, p. 89.

65. Yves Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism*, trans. Philip Loretz, S.J. (Westminster, Maryland, 1966), p. 426.
66. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 482.35-36.
67. Tom F. Driver, "Beckett by the Madeleine," in *Columbia University Forum*, 14 (Summer 1961), pp. 21-25, p. 22.
68. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 415.18-19.
69. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 37.
70. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 186.1-2.
71. Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 17.
72. Samuel Beckett, "neither," in his *As the Story Was Told: Uncollected and Late Prose* (London: John Calder, 1990 and New York: Riverrun Press, 1990), pp. 108-9, p. 108.
73. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 613.15-16.
74. *Ibid.*, 628.15-16.
75. *Ibid.*, 3.2.
76. Samuel Beckett, "what is the word," in his *As the Story Was Told*, pp. 131-34, p. 134.

## 7 Friedhelm Rathjen

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### Maximal Joyce is a State of Beckett: Joyce, Beckett, and Bruno's *Coincidentia Oppositorum*

*The fundamental aesthetics drives me mad anyway: the first one, Choyce or what he's called, Choycel then writes with literary perfection "about everything in general." The next one, that Bakert, writes with equal literary perfection "about nothing, perhaps even less." What positions are left over to the posthumous at all? You have to drown yourself in the Liffie in Döbling.*

*Jürg Laederach*

#### I: In Principle, Beckett is Joyce

Many scholars have compared the works of Samuel Beckett with those of James Joyce, but the first one to do so seems to have been Beckett himself. His comparison nevertheless did not focus on similarities but on differences (if not opposites). In his famous German letter of 1937 Beckett informs the addressee Axel Kaun of his artistic dream to "eliminate language"<sup>1</sup> and of his artistic aim to achieve what he calls a "literature of the unword."<sup>2</sup> This apotheosis of the unword, of wordlessness is opposed to what Beckett sees in Joyce:

With such a program, in my intention, the latest work of Joyce has nothing whatever to do. There it seems rather to be a matter of an apotheosis of the word. Unless perhaps Ascension to Heaven and Descent to Hell are somehow one and the same. How nice it would be to be able to believe that that indeed was the case.<sup>3</sup>

How nice it would be indeed – and I am tempted to contradict Beckett: in a way heaven and hell *are* one and the same, or, at least, reverse sides of one and the same medal.

One and the same: this is a phrase that occurs elsewhere in Beckett's work, and in that case the conception that lies behind the phrase is not rejected. In "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce" Beckett sums up Bruno: "There is no difference, says Bruno, between the smallest possible chord and the smallest possible arc, no difference between the infinite circle and the straight line. The maxima and minima of particular contraries are one and indifferent." And Beckett continues:

Minimal heat equals minimal cold. Consequently transmutations are circular. The principle (minimum) of one contrary takes its movement from the principle (maximum) of one another. Therefore not only do the minima coincide with the minima, the maxima with the maxima, but the minima with the maxima in the succession of transmutations. Maximal speed is a state of rest. The maximum of corruption and the minimum of generation are identical: in principle, corruption is generation.<sup>4</sup>

The principle in question here is Bruno's identity of opposites principle, of course, and at least metaphorically this principle fits the Joyce/Beckett relationship. Isn't it tempting to adapt Beckett's wording for our purpose? 'Minimal Joyce equals minimal Beckett. Consequently transmutations are circular. The principle (minimum) of Beckett takes its movement from the principle (maximum) of Joyce. Maximal Joyce is a state of Beckett. The maximum of Beckett and the minimum of Joyce are identical: in principle, Beckett is Joyce.'

I believe that we don't have to limit such an identification to the metaphorical level. Beckett's work looks extremely different from Joyce's work, but this very dissimilarity itself is the result of Beckett's being connected with Joyce. The Joycean influence does not manifest itself in direct Joycean traces that can be found in Beckett's work but rather in the absence of any superficial traces: Joyce was Beckett's starting point not in the sense of Joyce's showing Beckett where to go but in the sense of Beckett's realising what to avoid: he had to avoid the Joycean "apotheosis of the word" in order to create something of his own. Beckett's work therefore is reciprocally connected with Joyce's: the greater the impact of Joyce, the more it is left blank in Beckett's work, and this is why there are relatively few allusions to Joyce in Beckett's allusion-packed texts.

Avoidance is an active and conscious method of dealing with the starting point Joyce, and indeed it is widely agreed upon in Beckett scholarship that in the early 1930s Beckett in spite of his admiration for Joyce deliberately seized every opportunity to counterbalance Joyce's influence. Beckett parodied the last lines of Joyce's "The Dead" in his own Dubliners' story "A Wet Night," for example, and, much more important, he wrote a book on Joyce's rival Marcel Proust. Proust himself became a strong influence on Beckett's work afterwards, but the difficulties to deal with Proust and yet achieve artistic independence were much smaller than the difficulties in independently dealing with Joyce. Proust could be kept at bay by simply radicalising and reversing his achievement: Proust taught

Beckett that repetition and ritualisation obliterate and destroy life's vividness; Beckett concluded that repetition and ritualisation are the only means to free oneself from the pains of living.

As far as Joyce was concerned, there was no simple way out by radicalising or reversing anything: Joyce himself had been his own utmost radicalisation and offered nothing for reversement. If Beckett did not want simply to become a second-hand replica of Joyce he had, firstly, to admit that Joyce had already reached the end of his own course and, secondly, to pursue a course directly opposite to the Joycean one.

Beckett's course, then, was the outcome of Beckett's anxiety to pursue the Joycean course; the radicalism of Joyce's stepping in the one direction caused the radicalism of Beckett's stepping in the opposing direction. Thus we may have to agree with David Hayman: "The question of Beckett in relation to Joyce could be a fine test case for Harold Bloom's theory about the anxiety of influence and creative misreading."<sup>5</sup> It might be necessary, however, to distinguish between the terms involved here: 'anxiety of influence' and 'creative misreading' both come from Harold Bloom's influential study on poetical influence, of course, but the term 'misreading' clearly means an incapability of continuation, while the 'anxiety of influence' may also designate an unwillingness to continue. I believe that in the Joyce/Beckett relationship only the latter is the case.

In order to illustrate my argument I would like to compare Beckett's reactions to Joyce to that of the German novelist Arno Schmidt. Schmidt, born in 1914, did not read Joyce before the end of 1956, e.g., when Schmidt was nearly 43 years of age. Both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* had considerable effects on Schmidt's prose as well as his artistic theory (Schmidt wrote several essays on Joyce, and his own works of the 60s are studded with Joycean quotations, allusions and puns) but it seems that Schmidt was never in danger to lose control and independence. He was anxious to do so, though, and some aspects of his utilisation of Joyce bear witness of his more or less unconscious efforts to keep Joyce at a distance by various techniques of deliberate distortion; these distortions nevertheless reveal at the same time a remarkable incapability to understand what Joyce had been doing in *Finnegans Wake*. Arno Schmidt in relation to Joyce is one of the best possible examples for Bloom's 'creative misreading' process.

Beckett did not misread Joyce: Stephen James Joyce, although surely nothing less than a Joyce scholar, may well be right in thinking that on his grandfather's writing Beckett "knows more than any person living or dead,"<sup>6</sup> if we restrict the term 'knowledge on writing' to knowledge concerning technical, compositional, and intentional aspects of the creative writing process. There is one question evolving from these observations:

why does Beckett, understanding and admiring Joyce's aims and instruments so well, turn away from Joyce's work while Arno Schmidt, misreading fundamental principles of Joyce's work and disliking some of its vital features, turns more and more towards Joyce and as a result improves several features of his own writing?

At least in part the answer is contained in Schmidt's statement in an interview after completion of his monster novel *Zettels Traum* in 1970: "I only got to know Joyce when I was in my early forties. That is, I was practically Arno Schmidt already."<sup>7</sup> Arno Schmidt was old enough to be equipped with consistent and full-fledged artistic conceptions of his own; he was the author of a series of genuinely and unmistakably independent short stories and novels; his style and technique had grown so steadfast that portions from all of world literature could be incorporated without altering the course of his prose. Contrary to this, Beckett had not been Samuel Beckett already when he got to know Joyce in Paris: Beckett was unable to incorporate facets of Joyce into his own work simply because there was no own work at all.<sup>8</sup> Beckett had no alternative but either to substitute Joyce's work for his own or to strive after a work of his own by avoiding that of Joyce. Moreover, as one of Joyce's most understanding helpers (and the only one that was born to be a poet himself) he had not the least chance to misread anything. From some of Beckett's earliest texts (namely "Sedendo et Quiesciendo" and "Text") we may judge that Beckett might have been capable to imitate *Finnegans Wake* more or less accurately; Beckett nevertheless preferred genius to congeniality.

Beckett's relationship to Joyce is therefore marked by strategies of avoidance, denial, revocation, falsification, negativity. Beckett's works in a way negate the existence of Joyce's work; Beckett falsifies the Joycean omnipotence of the word; he revokes the accumulative Joycean strategies and thus denies being a follower of Joyce. And, oddly enough, these very modes of dealing with his predominant forefather – negativity, falsification, revocation, denial – subsequently become fundamental features of Beckett's creativeness in general. The whole of Beckett's works from *Watt* up to "what is the word" – e.g., from Joyce's death to Beckett's death – spring from an impulse to go on by denying any possibility to go on, an impulse to define reality by falsifying given portions of reality. From this we may well conclude that the modes of reaction Beckett had to develop in order to overcome Joyce's influence are the origin of all of Beckett's work.

Examples for negativity, falsification and revocation in Beckett's works are uncountable indeed and it seems unnecessary to give a long list here, particularly since several Beckett studies deal with these modes under various aspects. One of the scholars dealing with negativity is

Wolfgang Iser who nevertheless does not link up Beckett's negativity with the Joyce connection: he discusses Beckett's techniques of negation in terms of reader response. All the more remarkable it may be that Iser's starting point seems to fit my argument surprisingly well. Iser finds his essay "Die Figur der Negativität in Becketts Prosa" on Jean-Paul Sartre's remark that negativity in literature is "a concrete negativity, which keeps to itself what it denies and is coloured by it entirely."<sup>9</sup> Isn't the seeming absence of Joycean influence from Beckett's work a concrete negativity in this sense – Joyce's influence as Beckett's starting point remaining completely undercover, being denied by the surface of Beckett's work which nevertheless is coloured in its entirety by the traces of the disengagement process? Elsewhere Iser quotes another of Sartre's remarks on negativity: "the object as conception is a *defined deficiency*; it emerges as a concave mould."<sup>10</sup> In this sense Joyce's work is to Beckett's like a mould is to the filling.

Beckett's work is a succession of revocations, of revocations of revocations and of revocations of revocations of revocations; let us quote *The Unnamable* as an example:

he [Worm] often desires to, if when speaking of him one may speak of desire, and one may not, one should not, but there it is, that is the way to speak of him, that is the way to speak to him, as if he were alive, as if he could understand, as if he could desire, even if it serves no purpose, and it serves none.<sup>11</sup>

The first and initial of Beckett's revocations was his revocation of Joyce, thus turning Beckett's revocativeness, which cut off the Joycean influence, into an indirect Joycean influence itself. Beckett pushed his work ahead by systematically reducing his possibilities to go on: "you must go on, I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on;"<sup>12</sup> the first and initial instance of cutting off possibilities was the necessity to cut off all Joycean possibilities; thus Beckett's method to cut off all possibilities to express and nevertheless face "the obligation to express"<sup>13</sup> is a direct offspring from his artistic obligation to face and at the same time reject the Joycean influence.

In facing and evading the maximiser Joyce, Beckett had to become the great minimiser: "the principle (minimum) of one contrary takes its movement from the principle (maximum) of one another." Beckett is the contrary of Joyce, exactly; but Giordano Bruno's identity of opposites principle tells us what this means: in principle, Beckett is Joyce.

## II: But what is the Principle?

So far I have discussed Beckett's conception of the identity of opposites principle in "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce" as a metaphor for the Joyce/Beckett connection only, but Bruno's principle is a key to analogies in substance in Joyce's as well as Beckett's works, too. Strictly speaking, we even have to regard "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce" as an instance of both writers' works overlapping each other: the essay is part of Beckett's creative work, of course, but in a way it is also part of Joyce's in so far as it not only deals with *Finnegans Wake* but also has been written at Joyce's suggestion and under Joycean supervision. This nevertheless does not mean that Beckett himself did not believe in the principle propagated in his essay: in a letter on Joyce written in 1955 Beckett insists on the fact that the way "the form of judgement" in Joyce "more and more devoured its gist and the saying of all the saying of anything" must be regarded as being "consistent with Bruno's identification of contraries."<sup>14</sup> As for Joyce's own conception of Bruno's principle, we may quote a letter, too: in a letter written on January 27, 1925, Joyce informs Harriet Shaw Weaver of "Bruno Nolano (of Nola) another great southern Italian": "His philosophy is a kind of dualism – every power in nature must evolve an opposite in order to realise itself and opposition brings reunion etc. etc."<sup>15</sup>

In *Finnegans Wake*, Bruno's principle is present everywhere: in the constellation of Shem and Shaun the unequal brothers' always interchanging aspects of their respective personalities and being united in HCE the father; in connecting funeral and reawakening; and explicitly in passages like the following:

The hilariohoot of Pegger's Windup cumjstled as neatly with the tristitone of the Wet Pinter's as were they *isce et ille* equals of opposites, evolved by a onesame power of nature or of spirit, *iste*, as the sole condition and means of its himundher manifestation and polarised for reunion by the symphysis of their antipathies.<sup>16</sup>

Or:

When himupon Nola Bruno monopolises his egobruno most unwillingly seses by the mortal powers alionola equal and opposite brunoipto, *id est*, eternally provoking alio opposite equally as provoked as Bruno at being eternally opposed by Nola.<sup>17</sup>

Even more important are the consequences of Bruno's principle concerning Joyce's ambiguous and multivalent use of language in the *Wake*: the sentences here always tend to contradict themselves and often contain their own countersentences. To state just one example I'd like to quote the description of the Ondt as "a weltall fellow" being "bynear saw altitudinous wee a schelling in kopfers"<sup>18</sup>: here the Ondt's height, loftiness and spaciousness are expressed in terms like 'altitude' and "weltall" (German for the universe), but at the same time the sentence says that this fellow 'fell low' and that he is but a wee bit of a man that can only be seen when being near at hand.

Traces of the identity of opposites principle in Beckett have been hinted at by David Hayman, who made a brief effort to connect Joyce and Beckett in his "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*":

By discovering this principle in Joyce, perhaps at Joyce's prompting, Beckett unwittingly disclosed one of the central and recurring themes of his own gestating work. The theme of the identity of opposites is almost everywhere. Murphy, for example, is in search of the ultimate or cosmic chaos which for him is order. He finds sanity among the insane, virtue in a whore named Celia (heavenly).<sup>19</sup>

More examples can be easily found everywhere in Beckett's works from the 30s through to the 80s, and I would like to quote just a few. An untitled poem written in 1937 reads this:

they come  
different and the same  
with each it is different and the same  
with each the absence of love is different  
with each the absence of love is the same<sup>20</sup>

In *A Piece of Monologue* we find this paradoxical contradiction: "None now. No. No such thing as none."<sup>21</sup> *Worstward Ho*, written in 1981, includes numberless passages like this one: "The say? The said? Same thing. Same nothing. Same all but nothing."<sup>22</sup> And one more example, this time from *The Unnamable* again: "one could multiply the examples, it would even be an excellent idea, but there it is, one can't."<sup>23</sup>

The reader may have noticed that contrary to Joyce Beckett uses the identity of opposites principle in terms of negativity: love is absent, things are nothing, possibilities are impossible. A negative relationship between

all identical opposites is indeed the crucial point in Beckett's application of Bruno's principle; in "The Calmative" he notes that "All I say cancels out, I'll have said nothing."<sup>24</sup> The question arises as to what may be the differences between Joyce's and Beckett's respective application of Bruno.

David Hayman argues:

Like Joyce, Beckett reproduces the universal in the trivial, though with important differences. Where Joyce finds glimmers of hope in small things, discloses a microcosm for universal order, and nourishes us on a revivifying humor, Beckett seems unremittingly faced with comic-cosmic despair which he sees mirrored both in the human condition and in the systems we have created to mask that condition, to paper over the flaws. Where Joyce chooses the little man, the norm, as his paradigm of grandeur [...] Beckett chooses the outcast, the clown, [...] turning him [...] into a quester after meaningless goals, magnifying squalor.<sup>25</sup>

Quite right so – but this doesn't explain where the differences come from and how they are connected with the identity of opposites principle itself. I think we have to go one step further by examining the conclusions that are possible from Bruno's principle.

If differences are identical, on the one hand this means that by taking up any single part of reality we also gain its opposite and by uniting both opposites and heaping pairs of opposites onto pairs of opposites we are able to accumulate a whole world; this of course is what Joyce is doing in *Finnegans Wake*. On the other hand if differences are identical, this also means that if we want to get rid of a certain part of reality we can never succeed by simply turning to its opposite: we are trapped, and the only way out is to oscillate between two given opposites and search for a gateway to what is behind or beyond; this is Beckett's situation while he is seeking to "bore one hole after another in the veil of language, until what lurks behind it – be it something or nothing – begins to seep through,"<sup>26</sup> as he put it in his German letter of 1937. Having to face a given set of opposites, Joyce includes both into his art in order to include the whole range of possibilities that lie in between (just like Shakespeare did by putting diametrically different characters on one and the same stage), while Beckett in the same situation tries to exclude both opposites from his writing and approach to some unseizable portion of reality that can only be expressed in terms of denial. Thus the same principle – that of Bruno – lies behind the opposition worked out by Ruby Cohn, for example: that of "Joyce attempting to

embrace all knowledge, all experience, all language” and of Beckett doubting all knowledge, all experience, all language and “even the cartesian tradition of doubt.”<sup>27</sup>

Joyce's embracing strategy in using the identity of opposites principle could be labelled a strategy of 'not only but also': including one thing as well as the other. Beckett's strategy is that of saying 'neither': including neither one thing nor the other. Interestingly enough, the short poem Beckett wrote in 1976 to be set to music by Morton Feldman bears the title "neither," and this poem is one of Beckett's most explicit comments on his conclusion from Bruno's principle:

to and fro in shadow from inner to outer shadow

from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself  
by way of neither

as between two lit refuges whose doors once neared  
gently close, once turned away from  
gently part again

beckoned back and forth and turned away

heedless of the way, intent on the one gleam  
or the other

unheard footfalls only sound

till at last halt for good, absent for good  
from self and other

then gently light fading on that unheeded  
neither

unspeakable home<sup>28</sup>

Here we have Beckett's striving in a nutshell: his striving for a state of betweenness, for a kind of no man's land between the identical opposites of light and darkness, self and unself, starting and stopping, life and death, language and silence. The unspeakable, unnamable state of 'neither' is Beckett's way to put the identity of opposites principle into his work: as a kind of gap or omission or deficiency. This gap can never be directly

expressed in words, since it is a completely blank space the only definition of which is that it is neither something nor something's opposite. The only way to explore the gap – and this is the way tracked by the whole of Beckett's work – is to mark its unspeakable residua by constantly oscillating between given opposites, by defining an opposite's opposite's opposite and so on without end. The movement of Beckett's texts is a continuous to and fro movement like the one found in *Worstward Ho*:

First the body. No. First the place. No. First both. Now either. Now the other. Sick of the either try the other. Sick of it back sick of the either. So on. Somehow on. Till sick of both. Throw up and go. Where neither. Till sick of there. Throw up and back. The body again. Where none. The place again. Where none. Try again. Fail again. Better again. Or better worse. Fail worse again. Still worse again. Till sick for good. Throw up for good. Go for good. Where neither for good. Good and all.<sup>29</sup>

This to and fro movement can be found even in some of Beckett's more or less critical writings such as his intense lyrical homage "For Avigdor Arikha":

Siege laid again to the impregnable without. Eye and hand fevering after the unself. By the hand it unceasingly changes the eye unceasingly changed. Back and forth the gaze beating against unseeable and unmakeable. Truce for a space and the marks of what it is to be and be in face of. Those deep marks to show.<sup>30</sup>

That this to and fro movement is in fact connected with the identity of opposites principle is indicated by one of the *Wake* passages I quoted above: in "the sole condition and means of its himundher manifestation and polarised for reunion by the symphysis of their antipathies"<sup>31</sup> the word "himundher" contains not only an equalisation of 'him' and 'her' (e.g., of the opposed male and female principles) but also the German 'hin und her' meaning 'to and fro.' Joyce nevertheless uses the to and fro movement positively to collect fragments of reality which are to be added up to establish a complete world, whereas Beckett uses this movement negatively to make room for the unspeakable between fragments of language that lose their correlation to any worldly reality.

This process of clearing space is possible because in Beckett speaking

is no means to establish anything as it is in Joyce but a means to clear away and get rid of everything: Beckett has understood Proust's conception of habit and ritualisation as murderers of immediacy and passion well enough to know that ritualisation and repetition can be perfect means to hold the horrors of reality in check, that reality can be neutralised and overcome by being expressed in language. Malone recognises that "my notes have a curious tendency, as I realise at last, to annihilate all they purport to record."<sup>32</sup> In order to annihilate the dictatorial presence of inner and outer reality, of self and unself, Beckett exploits strategies of weariness, of satiety: through repetitive expression of a thing and this thing's opposite he removes and can hope to go beyond both. The voice of the *Text for Nothing* no. 8 declares: "to have said so convinces me of the contrary;"<sup>33</sup> this statement in the original French version is followed by one that was cut out by Beckett in his English translation: "precisely this is the whole negative beauty of language, the negations of which unfortunately suffer the same fate, and precisely this is its ugliness."<sup>34</sup>

Beckett's negative, reductionist use of the to and fro movement, his willingness to accept neither the beauty of language nor its ugliness, is diametrically different from Joyce's willingness to accept both by positively, cumulatively using the to and fro movement, but both concepts arise from one and the same principle. We may well conclude by paradoxically arguing that both Joyce's and Beckett's applying Giordano Bruno's identity of opposites principle in opposite ways while at the same time staying faithfully to one and the same origin in themselves prove this principle to be true.

### Notes

The motto of this essay is taken from a letter to Friedhelm Rathjen of November 26, 1990; my translation. Laederach, born 1945, is perhaps one of the strongest of those writers of today that face the overwhelming influence of both Joyce and Beckett and nevertheless manage to avoid epigonism. In a way his problems in dealing with Joyce and Beckett resemble Beckett's problems in dealing with Joyce that are discussed in the first part of this essay.

1. Samuel Beckett, "German Letter of 1937," trans. Martin Esslin, in Beckett's *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 170-73, p. 172.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

3. Ibid., p. 172; I have altered Esslin's mistranslation of "Absicht" as "opinion" and of "schön" as "beautiful" to "intention" and "nice" respectively. In spite of these mistakes, Esslin's translation on the whole is fairly accurate – in contrast to the translation and discussion of portions of the letter offered by Ed Jewinski, "James Joyce and Samuel Beckett: From Epiphany to Anti-Epiphany," in *Re: Joyce'n Beckett*, eds. Phyllis Carey and Ed Jewinski (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), pp. 160-74, pp. 166-67.
4. Samuel Beckett, "Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce," in his *Disjecta*, pp. 19-33, p. 21.
5. David Hayman, "Joyce → Beckett/Joyce," in *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 7 (Spring 1982), pp. 101-7, p. 101; also printed in *The Seventh of Joyce*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 37-43, p. 37.
6. Stephen J. Joyce, Letter to the Editor, in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 26.3 (Spring 1989), pp. 461-64, p. 462.
7. Arno Schmidt as quoted by Gunar Ortlepp, "APROPOS: AH!; PRO=POE," in *Der Spiegel*, April 20, 1970, pp. 225-35, p. 228; my translation.
8. Space is too restricted here for full discussion of the Beckett/Joyce/Schmidt triangle; the reader is referred to my essays "Vom Umgang mit Joyce: Ein Rundumblick," in *Schreibheft*, 39 (May 1992), pp. 157-65, esp. pp. 159-62, "Joycesche Umgangsformen," in my *Bargfeld → Dublin: Mit Arno Schmidt zurück zu James Joyce: Dialoge — Rezensionen — Komparatistisches* (Frankfurt: Bangert & Metzler, 1992), pp. 200-18, esp. pp. 208-16, and ".schmidt←JOYCE → beckett.: Abstrakta und Konkreta einer Dreierbeziehung," in *Arno Schmidt am Pazifik: Deutsch-amerikanische Blicke auf sein Werk*, ed. Timm Menke (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1992), pp. 84-109. A comparison of Beckett and Schmidt can be found in my book *Reziproke Radien: Arno Schmidt und Samuel Beckett* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1990). The most concise exposés of my conception of the Joyce/Schmidt relationship are: "Arno Schmidt's Utilisation of James Joyce: Some Basic Conditions," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 30.1 (Fall 1992), pp. 85-90, "Leidenschaft mit Widerhaken: Aus der Beziehungskiste Joyce/Schmidt," in my *Bargfeld → Dublin*, pp. 131-54, and "Zur Chronologie von Schmidts Joyce-Rezeption," in my "... schlechte Augen": *James Joyce bei Arno Schmidt vor "Zettels Traum": Ein annotierender Kommentar* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1988), pp. 183-98.
9. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Was ist Literatur?*, trans. Hans Georg Brenner

- (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958), p. 45, quoted by Wolfgang Iser, "Die Figur der Negativität in Becketts Prosa," in *Das Werk von Samuel Beckett: Berliner Colloquium*, ed. Hans Mayer and Uwe Johnson (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 54-68, p. 54; my translation.
10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Das Imaginäre: Phänomenologische Psychologie der Einbildungskraft*, trans. Hans Schöneberg (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1971), p. 207, quoted by Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung* (Munich: Fink, 1976), p. 329; my translation.
  11. Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, in *The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Pan/Picador, 1979), pp. 265-382, p. 329.
  12. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
  13. Samuel Beckett, "Three Dialogues", in his *Disjecta*, pp. 138-45, p. 139.
  14. Samuel Beckett, Letter of 1955, quoted by David Hayman, "A Prefatory Note," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 8.4 (Summer 1971), pp. 275-77, p. 276.
  15. *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. I, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking Press, 1957), p. 224.
  16. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber, 1975), 92.6-11.
  17. *Ibid.*, 488.7-11.
  18. *Ibid.*, 416.3-4.
  19. David Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," in *In the Wake of the Wake*, ed. David Hayman and Elliott Anderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 3-38, p. 15.
  20. Samuel Beckett, "they come," in his *Collected Poems 1930-78* (London: John Calder, 1984), p. 41.
  21. Samuel Beckett, *A Piece of Monologue*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 1986), pp. 423-29, p. 426.
  22. Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 37.
  23. Beckett, *The Unnamable*, p. 343.
  24. Samuel Beckett, "The Calmative," in his *Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1980* (London: John Calder, 1984), pp. 35-49, p. 36.
  25. Hayman, "Some Writers in the Wake of the *Wake*," p. 15.
  26. Beckett, "German Letter of 1937," p. 172.
  27. Ruby Cohn, "Joyce and Beckett, Irish Cosmopolitans," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 8.4 (Summer 1971), pp. 385-91, p. 391.
  28. Samuel Beckett, "neither," in *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 4 (Spring 1979), p. vii, completed with the word "neared" in line 4 (see editor's note in *JOBS* 5 [Autumn 1980], p. 6). The version printed in *As the Story was Told: Uncollected and Late Prose* (London: John Calder, 1990 and New York: Riverrun Press, 1990), pp. 108-9, is corrupt (as are other texts in that collection).

29. Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, p. 8.
30. Samuel Beckett, "For Avigdor Arikha," in his *Disjecta*, p. 152.
31. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 92.9-11.
32. Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies*, in *The Beckett Trilogy*, pp. 163–264, p. 238.
33. Samuel Beckett, *Texts for Nothing*, in his *Collected Shorter Prose 1945–1980*, pp. 71-115, p. 98.
34. Samuel Beckett, *Erzählungen und Texte um Nichts*, trans. [from the French] Elmar Tophoven (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1962), p. 142; my translation.

## 8 Breon Mitchell

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### Joyce, Beckett, and the Postmodern Controversy

#### I

I am not at all sure that controversy is the right word in my title. Postmodernist critics offer up their ideas so modestly, so tentatively, so playfully, that they cannot be caught in a controversy, simply because their convictions are, like Postmodernism itself, often self-subversive and indeterminate. Ihab Hassan lists five characteristics of Postmodernism, or ten, or twice that number, depending upon the space and time available to him, and always with the warning that they all are given to “provide a start – but only a start.” We are warned that “the list can prove deceptive. For differences shift, defer, collapse.”<sup>1</sup> He seems perfectly open to altering his list and including in it any suggestions of our own if it would make us feel better.

Douwe Fokkema is less playful, but equally circumspect in advancing his notion of linguistic codes: “Lotman distinguished at least two codes. I, however, would suggest that there are at least five codes that are operative in virtually all literary texts (my five codes are quite different from the five codes distinguished by Roland Barthes).” Not only does Fokkema decline to defend his own set of codes against any other previous set, he doesn’t even claim a special status for them: “It is due largely to the habitual interests of the student of literature and the state of our discipline that I do not mention more than five codes, but the number is far from sacred.”<sup>2</sup> Presumably the state of our discipline and the quality of our students is such that neither can cope with more than five items at a time. At any rate, in such an atmosphere polemics in the old sense disappears, and controversy no longer seems the appropriate word. As Umberto Eco put it just a decade ago, “I realize, as I say this, that perhaps I use ‘modern’ and ‘postmodern’ in a different sense from that in which you and others use it. Well, this seems to me a very postmodern attitude – don’t you agree?”<sup>3</sup> And indeed it is.

But even if controversy is muted, the resulting critical plurality leads to a general confusion which is surely widespread and at least some cause for concern. To take one very minor but symptomatic example: a review in the *German Quarterly* of a book entitled *Peter Handke and the Postmodern Transformation* includes this passage:

And then there is the problem raised by the authors’ assumption about literary history. For them, there “was” [sic] a

movement called “Modernism” to which “Postmodernism” in theory and practice stands in opposition [...] [The authors’] authority for this sort of poetics is Ihab Hassan; I am not sure they have Hassan quite right since I understand Hassan to regard “Postmodernism” as a change or development in “Modernism” rather than a decisive break with it. The synthesis of the two movements is for the authors the so-called New Sensibility, which they describe and define by quoting six criteria established by the West-German germanist Hans-Gerhard Winter—figural perspective, merger of inner and outer world, self-referentiality, theme of identity, open form demanding that the reader “think out the story.” There is, I think, nothing “sensibly new” in these strategies and themes since they represent the conventions of modernist art in general.<sup>4</sup>

I’ve quoted this passage at some length because it seems to me typical of what happens more often than not in the ongoing attempt to distinguish Postmodernism from Modernism – the book is confused, the reviewer is confused, and I am confused. And I don’t think that things go off track in this book, or in this review, just because Winter exceeds the five categories that our discipline and students can handle. There is something instead in our very way of going about discussing Postmodernism that contributes directly to the problem. The postmodernism dialogue is attractive in many ways – open, entertaining, and free from cant. On the other hand it is too often difficult to distinguish critical plurality from mass confusion.

The problem is not made any easier by the terms we have to work with. Suppose we could start all over. Surely no one would argue seriously for retaining the words Modernism and Postmodernism if we could think of anything better. And what does it say about us that we can’t? As terms, Modernism and Postmodernism are something we have to live with. Thus the urge to define, redefine, stretch the limits, all in an effort to make the terms, in themselves so pitifully limited in expressive power, cover developments in the arts which seem of crucial importance. Some of the more recent efforts, including “Paramodernism” for the period between Modernism and Postmodernism (assuming we know what those are) simply continue a tendency with which we are all too familiar.

But it seems to me that little hope lies in the direction of new prefixes. In a *New Yorker* essay entitled “Modernist, Postmodernist, What Will They Think of Next?”, John Updike calls such literary labelling “innocent fun, which helps not only us but, more to the point, college English majors

to get a grip on things.” He himself doubts that postmodernist will acquire the canonical permanence of “Post-Impressionist or post-Kantian, for the reason that Impressionism and Immanuel Kant were phenomena more distinct and limited than Modernism was. We still live in modern (from the Latin *modo* ‘just now’) times, and so will our descendants, until the dictionary falls to dust.”<sup>5</sup> Of course Updike has reason to take special interest in such matters, since his own novels are persistently excluded from the postmodernist camp in critical discussions.

The various attempts which have been made to differentiate Modernism from Postmodernism by Barth, Hassan, Lyotard, Fokkema, Eco and others are familiar to the narrow audience they address. Even among these critics, however, there is little specific agreement as to the nature, scope or historical boundaries of the terms, and little likelihood there ever will be. Of course there is just as much disagreement about such concepts as Expressionism, Surrealism, and Romanticism. But whereas earlier literary historians often believed they were arguing about something real, critics in the postmodern era are perfectly willing to call into question their own enterprise, to deny essentialist concepts, to suggest even more inventive prefixes and suffixes for Modernism, all with the modest intention of entertaining themselves and others, raising questions of serious intellectual interest while simultaneously demonstrating the postmodernist aesthetic in their own work. Almost every critic who seeks to define Postmodernism is willing to agree that the definition he or she offers is of merely heuristic value.

In the meantime the terms have taken on a life of their own, and, not surprisingly, they bear little resemblance to the ideas proposed by literary critics. Postmodernism has already escaped us, and is widely used by any number of people who are demonstrably innocent of any knowledge of the specifics or world view which supposedly underlie the concept. Matei Calinescu has pointed out that the word modern has long since ceased to be synonymous with “contemporary” in the arts.<sup>6</sup> But by an ironic compensation of the public mind, Postmodernism has taken on this very function. As generally used today, postmodern simply means what’s happening now, and it is likely that we all may be forced to accept this broader application whether we like it or not.

But if there is little specific agreement as to exactly what has happened, and even less as to how and why it occurred, it is generally recognized that a major shift has taken place, that the modernist enterprise has come to an end, and that a new postmodernist era has arrived. It is this general sense which has permeated the public mind as well. And now it is our task to try to understand that shift more clearly.

## II

It is at this point that models of one sort or another are often helpful. One such suggestive, tentative model was advanced some fifteen years ago by Ihab Hassan. It links the general movement from Modernism to Postmodernism with two major literary figures of our age – James Joyce and Samuel Beckett:

Joyce and Beckett represent two ways of the imagination in our century. Joyce and Beckett, two Irishmen. They divide the world between them, divide the Logos, the world's body. One, in high arrogance, invents language anew, and makes over the universe in parts of speech. The other, in deep humility, restores to words their primal emptiness, and mimes his solitary way into the dark. Between them they stretch the mind's tether until it begins to snap.<sup>7</sup>

In Hassan's view, Beckett's Bloomian anxiety in the face of Joyce's accomplishment pushes the younger Irishman inexorably toward silence:

Beckett redefines originality as a flight from originality, imagination as an escape from amplitude, language as silence. In the anxiety of genius, Beckett does not attempt to surpass Joyce; he 'negates' him by his own example. Negates? Yes. Beckett redirects the endeavor of literature and turns Joyce into a 'classic.'<sup>8</sup>

But by *Finnegans Wake*, in Hassan's view, Joyce himself has developed into a postmodernist: "The quest for a total verbal consciousness in Joyce, the quest for a minimal verbal consciousness in Beckett – both express a postmodern will to dematerialize the world, to turn it into a gnostic reality, a fantasy."<sup>9</sup> And finally, we face the postmodern condition:

The contrasts between Joyce and Beckett also hold every new writer in an invisible grip; the literary predicament is continual. For the difficulties that Beckett encountered in relation to Joyce are compounded in the case of the young writer who must cope with *both* Beckett and Joyce. There they stand at the antipodes of language, defining the outer limits of contemporary literature. How, then, can a postmodern genius exceed these limits?<sup>10</sup>

Hassan's model is thus essentially linear. First Joyce the Modernist, then Joyce and Beckett the postmodernists, then Postmodernism itself. Such a model seems to have a good deal of explanatory power. Literary history is made concrete through major figures, the progression from Modernism to Postmodernism seems visible, the motivating force which underlies the shift appears psychologically probable (Beckett's anxious swerve away from Joyce). Nevertheless there are a few problems with the progression which may be worth discussing for the light they shed on our topic. In the remainder of this paper, then, I would like to reexamine the Joyce-Beckett-Postmodernism model.

Let us begin with *Finnegans Wake*. Hassan suggests that "The monstrous effort of *Finnegans Wake* strains, beyond its puns and infinite sounds, beyond its noise, toward a region of articulate silence; that, of course, is the region which the works of Beckett occupy, and around which much of postmodern literature circles."<sup>11</sup> The rhetoric of this sentence leads a little too easily to its conclusion: *Finnegans Wake* strains toward silence (how?), Beckett's work centers around silence, so does much postmodern literature, (thus) *Finnegans Wake* is postmodern. Taken on purely logical grounds, that argument doesn't go very far. Moreover, even if we grant the late Joyce and *Finnegans Wake* postmodernist status, what now explains the shift? We know, or think we can understand, a shift in Beckett's attitude toward art and language, but what caused that same shift in Joyce? We are left with an assertion that dangles before us without convincing. And when what dangles before us is Joyce and *Finnegans Wake* that's no small matter.

The assertion of any major shift in Joyce's own creative drive also runs counter to anything we know from Joyce's letters and essays, and counter to the evidence of the texts themselves. Joyce's constant enterprise from *Dubliners* on remained one which could reasonably be called Modernist: to stretch the limits of his art as far as he could, to recreate the world in language, to fulfill Flaubert's dream of a book spinning like a world in the emptiness of space. *Finnegans Wake* is the logical continuation of the Joycean aesthetic, an expanding universe of language. Certainly no shift or reversal was ever implied by Joyce. He called *Ulysses* his day book, *Finnegans Wake* his night book. One led logically, in terms of the Joycean aesthetic, into the other, the seeds of the *Wake* clearly present in *Ulysses*. Joyce's enterprise was, from first to last, surprisingly constant and unified. And it seems only reasonable to call that enterprise Modernist, at least until we find some better word.

After Beckett's early experiments with the prose style of *Work in Progress*, his aesthetic too remained strikingly constant, from the late

1930's until his death. Like Joyce, that aesthetic was given form in works which changed and developed, without, however, offering evidence of any fundamental shift in the way Beckett felt about his art.

Beckett is, of course, a particularly interesting case for postmodernist critics. Because his work continued to push further and more relentlessly to the edge of the sayable than any other writer of his time, he made any discussion of Postmodernism that omitted him seem pallid. And indeed, he was generally enlisted in the ranks of the postmodernists without further ado. Lyotard's definition of the postmodern sounds like a paraphrase of Beckett's aesthetics:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.<sup>12</sup>

While Julia Kristeva notes: "As far as writing is concerned, it has since set out to blaze a trail amidst the unnamable; Beckett is the best example with his derisory and infernal testimony."<sup>13</sup>

And yet there is something in the deep seriousness of Beckett's attitude toward art which looks suspiciously modernist. The least that can be said is that he did not fit in comfortably with the playful self-reflexivity of many of his contemporary colleagues. The controversy over the 1984 American Repertory Theatre's production of *Endgame* in Cambridge, Massachusetts (and here the word controversy is indeed in order) was really not all that surprising. Robert Brustein, wanting to bring what he described as "new values to an extraordinary play," had set *Endgame* underground in a subway tunnel, with a bombed-out, vandalized subway car extending halfway across the stage. What resulted was summarized in the pages of the *New York Law Journal*:

In the rear, a wall rises the full height of the stage, with long, narrow iron ladders climbing to the top in the places where the "windows" are supposed to be. Instead of two plain "ashbins," the ART production substitutes seven beat up oil drums.

Where Mr. Beckett's *Endgame* demands silence, the ART production gives us an overture composed by Phillip

Glass to precede the play, open the play and accentuate lines of the dialogue. [...] Advised of the changes, Mr. Beckett insisted that the production be halted. [...] A complaint, with an order to show cause seeking a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction halting the ART production, had been prepared for filing. [...] Under the terms of an extraordinary settlement agreement, the ART production opened, as planned. But in exchange for mutual releases, ART agreed to insert in all playbills for its production of *Endgame* a written statement by Beckett and Rosset together with a page of the text of *Endgame*. [...] Mr. Beckett's statement reads: "Any production of *Endgame* which ignores my stage directions is completely unacceptable to me. My play requires an empty room and two small windows. The American Repertory Theatre production, which dismisses my directions, is a complete parody of the play as conceived by me. Anybody who cares for the work couldn't fail to be disgusted by this." [...] On behalf of ART, Mr. Brustein wrote "[...] to insist on strict adherence to each parenthesis of the published text — not only robs collaborative artists of their respective freedom, but threatens to turn the theatre into waxworks."<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to conceive of Beckett's reaction as the expression of a postmodernist aesthetic, or of a postmodernist mind. In fact it sounds quite conservative – the sort of anger one might expect from an old-fashioned modernist. And this was no mere aberration. It was well known that one reason Beckett took so many of his works to what was then West Germany for their first performances was that there he was accorded total control of the production, down to each step and breath.

Is it possible that rather than an early postmodernist, Beckett was the last of the great modernists? Was the anxious swerve that took him away from Joyce's aesthetics a truly new departure, a shift from the modernist enterprise? Or was it rather the other side of the modernist drive toward total art, toward the exploration of the exact limits of what can and cannot be said?

There is no question that Beckett stood in awe of Joyce, and that he soon needed to clear imaginative space for himself. But even in taking a diametrically opposed path, he still seems to have thought of himself as engaged in a fundamentally similar enterprise. Beckett's letter of 1937, in German, to Axel Kaun, is unusually revealing:

Es wird mir tatsächlich immer schwieriger, ja sinnloser, ein offizielles Englisch zu schreiben. Und immer mehr wie ein Schleier kommt mir meine Sprache vor, den man zerreißen muss, um an die dahinterliegenden Dinge (oder das dahinterliegende Nichts) zu kommen. Grammatik und Stil. Mir scheinen sie ebenso hilflos geworden zu sein wie ein Biedermeier Badeanzug oder die Unerschütterlichkeit eines Gentlemans. Eine Larve. Hoffentlich kommt die Zeit, sie ist ja Gott sei Dank in gewissen Kreisen schon da, wo die Sprache da am besten gebraucht wird, wo sie am tüchtigsten missbraucht wird. Da wir sie so mit einem Male nicht ausschalten können, wollen wir wenigstens nichts versäumen, was zu ihrem Verruf beitragen mag. Ein Loch nach dem andern in ihr zu bohren, bis das Dahinterkauernde, sei es etwas oder nichts, durchzusickern anfängt – ich kann mir für den heutigen Schriftsteller kein höheres Ziel vorstellen.

Oder soll die Literatur auf jenem alten faulen von Musik und Malerei längst verlassenen Wege allein hinterbleiben? [...]

Selbstverständlich muss man sich vorläufig mit Wenigem begnügen. Zuerst kann es nur darauf ankommen, irgendwie eine Methode zu erfinden, um diese höhnische Haltung dem Worte gegenüber wörtlich darzustellen. In dieser Dissonanz von Mitteln und Gebrauch wird man schon vielleicht ein Geflüster der Endmusik oder des Allem zu Grunde liegenden Schweigens spüren können.

Mit einem solchen Programm hat meiner Absicht nach die allerletzte Arbeit von Joyce gar nichts zu tun. Dort scheint es sich vielmehr um eine Apotheose des Wortes zu handeln. Es sei denn, Himmelfahrt und Höllensturz sind eins und dasselbe. Wie schon wäre es, glauben zu können, es sei in der Tat so.<sup>15</sup>

(It is indeed becoming more and more difficult, even senseless, for me to write an official English. And more and more my own language appears to me like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it. Grammar and Style. To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Victorian bathing suit or the imperturbability of a true gentleman. A mask. Let us hope the time will come, thank God that in certain circles it has already come, when

language is most efficiently used where it is being most efficiently misused. As we cannot eliminate language all at once, we should at least leave nothing undone that might contribute to its falling into disrepute. To bore one hole after another in it, until what lurks behind it – be it something or nothing – begins to seep through; I cannot imagine a higher goal for a writer today. Or is literature alone to remain behind in the old lazy ways that have been so long ago abandoned by music and painting? [...]

Of course, for the time being we must be satisfied with little. At first it can only be a matter of somehow finding a method by which we can represent this mocking attitude towards the word, through words. In this dissonance between the means and their use it will perhaps become possible to feel a whisper of that final music or that silence that underlies All.

With such a program, in my opinion, the latest work of Joyce has nothing whatever to do. There it seems to be a matter of an apotheosis of the word. Unless perhaps *Ascension to Heaven and Descent to Hell* are somehow one and the same. How beautiful it would be to be able to believe that that indeed was the case.<sup>16)</sup>

An astounding letter, about which one or two points should immediately be made. First, behind Beckett's rejection of the Joycean method is a clear longing to believe that in a deep sense he and Joyce are approaching the same goal by different paths. Secondly, the phrases with which he describes this goal remain astonishingly apt for Beckett's work even toward the very end of his life. Thirdly, he is not alone. The remark about circles in which "the time has already come" for discarding the masks of grammar and style almost certainly refers to the group Eugene Jolas gathered around the avant-garde periodical *transition* – Beckett had already signed a literary manifesto in its pages which included some of the same points. But perhaps most interestingly, Beckett sees his goal as already achieved in music and the visual arts, a remark which points back toward early Modernism much more clearly than it points forwards to Postmodernism. Beckett's interest in the relationship between language and reality reflects a broader cultural crisis which had already been evident in the work of the young Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose Lord Chandos letter of 1902 outlined his own despair at expressing anything significant at all about life through language. One has only to think of Rilke and Kafka

on the one hand, or Mauthner and Wittgenstein on the other, to recall the extent to which this question permeated early twentieth-century thought.

Joyce and Beckett thus represent two major parallel tendencies in literature during the first half of this century: one which stresses the creative and infinite power of the word, and another which sees language as impotent in the face of reality, incapable of expressing anything of fundamental importance. The drive to push language to its limits, and to identify those limits, is essentially a modernist drive. Once those limits have been charted by writers of great power, however, the postmodern era sets in. Joyce did indeed engage in a quest for total verbal consciousness, as Hassan suggests, and Beckett in a quest for a minimal verbal consciousness, but rather than a postmodern will which has grown mysteriously out of Modernism, this represents the culmination of Modernism itself.

The postmodern condition, then, consists in the recognition of the modernist achievements of Joyce and Beckett, who, in Hassan's words, have divided the world between them. They represent two poles on the surface of the literary globe which every writer will inevitably encounter if he or she goes far enough. The anxiety of influence lives on, and nowhere it is more clearly in evidence than in John Barth's claim that "The postmodernist has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back."<sup>17</sup> Barth has both Joyce and Beckett looking over his shoulder, and that's not nearly as comfortable a feeling as he would have us believe. The postmodernist dilemma involves the recognition that the boundaries of literary expression have already been charted by artists of genius and true integrity. Such a recognition also entails a burden of freedom – for within this finite universe all paths are now equally open.

### III

I am painfully aware that the end result of this brief re-examination of the Joyce-Beckett-postmodernist model may appear to be little more than switching nametags on the parties involved. I view both Joyce and Beckett as modernists, I characterize Postmodernism as a recognition of being situated *between* the limit cases of Joyce and Beckett. So what? Well, such an analysis does have certain implications. Because it describes a condition only, rather than a set of particular stylistic features or a certain period code, it maps out a truly open field for postmodernist writing. The only prerequisite for inclusion among the postmodernists is an author's consciousness of the postmodernist situation, and his or her willingness to produce texts under that sign. In this sense, such novels as Norman Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, William Gaddis' *Carpenter Gothic*, and Umberto Eco's *The*

*Name of the Rose* are all equally postmodern, in spite of the enormous differences among them in style and structure.

This is something quite different from reducing the notion of Postmodernism to a simple matter of dates. Hundreds of novels still appear each year which show little sign of the struggle out of which our best writers create their texts. But it is equally worth stressing that such signs may be effectively submerged. Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, for example, does not carry its present critical credentials as a postmodern work by virtue of its stylistic features, its narrative strategies, or the way in which it plays upon received generic forms, all of which are relatively traditional and might pass more or less unheralded under another author's name. Instead, we grant the novel postmodern status because we know that Eco is spinning his tale in full consciousness of his predicament. As Eco puts it in "Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*," "The writer [...] always knows what he is doing and how much it costs him. He knows he has to solve a problem," one which begins with the opening sentence of the novel: "Is it possible to say 'It was a beautiful morning at the end of November' without feeling like Snoopy?"<sup>18</sup> Eco finds the answer to this question in the creation of ironic distance by "quoting" both plot and genre, but it is worth noting again how closely such ironic quotation may end up resembling an old-fashioned novel. It is, in fact, only the metatext of Eco's "reflections" that clearly reveals the postmodern sensibility behind the novel. Thus Eco concludes, "I believe that post-modernism is not a trend to be chronologically defined, but, rather, an ideal category – or better still, a *Kunstwollen*, a way of operating."<sup>19</sup> Does this not raise authorial intention, or at least consciousness, to the status of a criterion for postmodernist writing? Indeed it does. Yet what strength remains in the intentional fallacy argument for the contemporary theorist in a world of interlocking texts including the letters, memoirs, prefaces and published reflections of the author?

The broader view of literary Postmodernism I have outlined also mitigates against importing hidden value judgements under the guise of analyzing style and structure. The present party game of dividing contemporary authors into modernists and postmodernists is fun to play, but raises serious issues. If we call Barth, Barthelme and Pynchon hardcore postmodernists (to use Fokkema's term) while calling Updike and Styron modernists, what exactly are we claiming? Isn't what we want to say simply that the latter seem to us old-fashioned in a pejorative sense? That they have not kept up with the times, and that we can thus take them less seriously? Have we not surreptitiously reintroduced value judgements based on style alone? – implying that there are certain things writers *ought*

to be doing, certain ways they *should* be writing, and that if they don't they will have to content themselves with a smaller share of our time and attention? In short, are we not simply calling those texts postmodern which we like most, because they appeal most strongly to our own preconceptions about the sorts of playful, self-reflexive moves an author ought to make to keep us entertained?

But the fact of the matter is that some of the most interesting writing today shows few of the stylistic features we have come to call postmodern, while the work of many postmodernists seems to offer little but the formal trappings which allow us to apply the label with a minimum of effort. Opening up the postmodernist canon to writers who do not easily fit the mold allows us to concentrate instead upon the broad family of resemblances which link all serious attempts in contemporary prose. In such a world, *The Witches of Eastwick* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* appear as postmodern as *The Twofold Vibration*. And the author who opts for a path more closely tied to earlier traditions of the novel will bear as little resemblance to Dickens or Kafka as Pierre Menard does to Cervantes.

### Notes

This essay is a revised version of an essay that originally appeared in *Exploring Postmodernism*, eds. Matei Calinescu and Douwe Fokkema (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1987) and is reprinted here with permission.

1. Ihab Hassan, "The Question of Postmodernism," in *Bucknell Review: Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism*, ed. Harry R. Garvin (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1980), pp. 117-26, pp. 123-24.
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4. Renate Voris, Review of Jerome Klinkowitz and James Knowlton, *Peter Handke and the Postmodern Transformation*, in *The German Quarterly*, 58 (1985), pp. 483-86, p. 485.
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6. Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 86.
7. Ihab Hassan, "Joyce, Beckett and the Postmodern Imagination," in *TriQuarterly*, 34 (Fall 1975), pp. 179-200, p. 183.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
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12. Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" in *Innovation / Renovation: New Perspectives on the Humanities*, eds. Ihab Hassan and Sally Hassan (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp 329-41, p. 340.
13. Julia Kristeva, "Postmodernism?" in *Bucknell Review*, ed. Garvin, pp. 136-41, p. 141.
14. Martin Garbus and Gerald E. Singleton, "Boston Production of Endgame Raises Controversy," in *The Beckett Circle: Newsletter of the Samuel Beckett Society*, 6 (1985), pp. 1-2. Originally printed under the title "Playwright-Director Conflict: Whose Play Is It Anyway?" in *New York Law Journal*, 192 (1984), pp. 1-2.
15. Samuel Beckett, "German Letter of 1937," in his *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), pp. 51-54, pp. 52-53.
16. Trans. Martin Esslin, *ibid.*, pp. 170-73, pp. 171-72.
17. John Barth, quoted by Updike, p. 142.
18. Umberto Eco, "Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*," in *Encounter*, 64 (1985), pp. 7-19, pp. 8, 9.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

## 9 Stephen Watt

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### A Peristalsis of Dim Light: Joyce, Beckett, and Postmodernism

*Dim light source unknown. Know minimum. Know nothing no. Too much to hope. At most mere minimum. Meremost minimum.*

Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*<sup>1</sup>

In Samuel Beckett's novel *Murphy*, Celia is fond of sitting in Murphy's rocking-chair in their room at Miss Carridge's house with her face pointed toward the light. Precious little light penetrates the room, Beckett's narrator informs us, only a "peristalsis of light, worming its way into the dark."<sup>2</sup> Still, Celia remains in the chair, "steeping herself in these faint eddies till they made an amnion about her own disquiet [...]."<sup>3</sup> Not long ago, in a moment of my own disquietude contemplating Beckett's relationship with James Joyce, I encountered only dark shadows similar to those on Murphy's ceiling – dim light, source known all too well, to alter the phrasing of *Worstward Ho*. In some respects, the very project of articulating such a relationship betrays a predisposition toward a set of critical premises disparaged in some intellectual quarters as constituting a "modernist" paradigm: a paradigm too narrowly literary (as opposed to cultural), too "work"-oriented (as opposed to "text"-oriented), too fixated on an "Author-God" (as opposed to a broader conception of textual production).<sup>4</sup> Several previous accounts of the Joyce-Beckett relationship, S.E. Gontarski's for instance, reveal the discursive "moves" this paradigm seems to sanction. Gontarski begins with two of these:

[...] Joyce was for Beckett a *messiah* who finally had to be denied if the younger Dubliner was to develop as an independent prophet. In fact, it may not have been until Beckett abandoned, albeit temporarily, his native tongue, that he could shed the Joycean influence enough to develop his most distinct, personal, *original* voice.<sup>5</sup>

Here one supposition common to influence study – namely, its narrative of the initially difficult, then gradually more direct course a younger writer travels toward an ultimate destination of originality – is very much in evidence. In addition, such commentators almost always adumbrate formal analogues in Beckett's and Joyce's art: their complex narrational

voices, the self-generating/auto-destructive qualities of their works, their use of language (variously described as “arbitrary” or “intrusive”), and so on.<sup>6</sup> Several years ago I implicitly critiqued this paradigm’s blindness to the political dimensions of Beckett’s *oeuvre* (a charge applicable to many Marxist dismissals of Beckett as well);<sup>7</sup> in addition, “modernist” knowledge of Joyce and Beckett, although considerably more than the “merest minimum,” is for the most part limited to the formal matters mentioned above.

On balance, however, theorizing about postmodernism and postmodernity has not generated any greater insight, as asseverations of Joyce’s and Beckett’s postmodernist inclinations have cast only a faint glimmer on their relationship. This complaint, I trust, will *not* cast me as an anti-postmodernist, and for several reasons I do not intend to supplement Christopher Norris’s catalogue of all the things “wrong” with post-modernism: first, there isn’t sufficient time to make such a litany; second, and more to the point, Fredric Jameson, Jean Francois Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard (whom Norris advises us to forget just as Baudrillard once recommended that we oublier Michel Foucault) have energized critical dialogue on contemporary cultural practices and motivated provocative rereadings of such writers as Joyce.<sup>8</sup> I am still sanguine about the potential of postmodern rereading to illuminate our understanding of Joyce and Beckett, even if only provisionally. In particular, borrowing three themes from many theoretical ruminations on postmodernism – that concerning the so-called post-humanist subject, the effect of the commodity form on the consumer’s everyday life, and the sharp questioning of the “truth content of visual representation”<sup>9</sup> – and applying them to the Joyce-Beckett relationship might help create a fresh perspective of it. The act of recounting construed simply as “to count or inventory again” is relevant here, for the identities (and subjugations) of many of Beckett and Joyce’s characters are not buried in the depths of the Freudian family romance, but rather are located on the surface of their existential dilemmas, in their narrations of the past, and in their inventories of their possessions, however minute or seemingly unimportant. Underlying this desire to recount or re-inventory in, say, *Mercier and Camier*, *Malone Dies*, Joyce’s “Eveline,” and the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses* exist hypotheses about consumption, about the relationship of internal and external realities and the difficulty of sustaining these as binary opposites, and about human subjectivity inflected by the material world. Stated alternatively, Joyce may indeed have furnished Beckett with a “precedent for the sort of intercraneal discourse that characterizes the later prose,” as David Hayman observes, but this discourse is shaped by a world of objects and matter.<sup>10</sup> And in his early novels Beckett may indeed be “parodying” inventories in *Ulysses*, intimating that

in his “world [...] mind is set free from decaying matter” to turn “endlessly upon itself,” as Ihab Hassan maintains.<sup>11</sup> I want to suggest, however, that just the opposite is the case: in the “madhouse of the skull,” as the narrator of *Ill Seen Ill Said* phrases it, “Already all confusion. Things and imaginings. As of always.”<sup>12</sup> Beckett’s protagonists and narrators are never “set free” from the material world: from objects, their possession, and the need to take inventories.

Productive of dim light or not, what exactly *have* theoretical unpackings of postmodernism revealed about Joyce and Beckett? Can or should the entire enterprise of influence study be reconceived within postmodernity? If “modernist” readings are premised on idealistic or romantic conceptions of authorship and tend to foreground issues of language, narrative voice, and the deconstructive qualities of Beckett’s fiction, how are both writers linked in critical exegeses of postmodernist literature? For sometime now, following Hassan’s lead and that of Herbert Blau, a predominantly younger generation of academics has assumed that postmodern drama begins with *Waiting for Godot*. In a recent essay attempting to draw Eugene O’Neill’s late play *Hughie* (1941) into the ambit of postmodernist theatrics, for example, Susan Harris Smith labels *Godot* the first “significant” postmodern drama.<sup>13</sup> There is nothing especially new about her position or the construction of a theatre history that underlies it; over twenty years ago in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1971), Hassan heralded Beckett as “a supreme example of the postmodern artist, turning the malice of language against itself.”<sup>14</sup> The assertion of Beckett’s postmodernism is so widely accepted, it would seem, that everyone knows not only what it means, but why it matters. As it turns out, though, several of the critical observations braided into this claim virtually replicate the points of commonality Hayman adduces between Joyce and Beckett in his comparison of the two: their creation of texts that “destroy referentiality,” often with language that parodically subverts action or previous narrative information, and their frequent use of a complex narrative voice, the “voice as medley,” as Hayman terms it.<sup>15</sup> Hassan, who also recognizes the autodestructive quality of Beckett’s language, hears in Beckett and postmodern fiction more generally a de-realizing silence. The identifying signature of this tradition of “anti-literature” is “the force of silence that drives through literature from its modern to postmodern phase;” symptoms of this force, words “appear on the page only to declare themselves invalid.”<sup>16</sup> How, we might ask, does Hassan’s postmodern Beckett theorized along these deconstructive lines differ from Hayman’s understanding of Joyce and Beckett? At least insofar as language is concerned, there appears to be very little difference between the two.

More recently, moving past silence to the imagination that resides behind it, Richard Kearney elevates Thomas Pynchon's *V* and Beckett's *Imagination Dead Imagine* to the status of "representative samples of postmodern culture." As such, Beckett's short prose piece represents the "global deconstruction of the imagination" and the erosion of the "modernist conviction that avant-garde art is the expression of unique and innovative personalities." *Imagination Dead Imagine*, from which Hassan also derives inferences about the end of imagination in postmodern culture, suggests to Kearney that imagination no longer "serve[s] man and [has] become instead a power which incarcerates man within himself;" for our purposes perhaps more important, imagination has "ceased to function as a human agency of expression, will and creativity and become instead a mechanical drift toward sameness."<sup>17</sup> This latter issue parallels a widely-shared concern about postmodernism rooted in, among other notions, Barthes' proclamation of the death of the author and a charge commonly levelled against Baudrillard: namely, that if postmodernism is conveying us inexorably toward sameness – and if the individual imagination is powerless to resist this movement – from what source might strategies of resistance be formulated?<sup>18</sup> Is postmodernism, then, synonymous with some advanced stage of nihilism or deeper level of hopelessness? Kearney's reading of Beckett, it seems to me, contextualizes him within the stifling postmodernism of Baudrillard's *Simulations* (1983) and *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1987): that is to say, although absent the cybernetics, virus-like proliferation of images, and Baudrillard's near obsession with American mass culture, this version of postmodernism positions Beckett squarely within the kind of homogenizing effects of the electronic media in which Baudrillard both sees impending catastrophe and takes such giddy delight. By contrast, it is this same Beckett – and this same Barthes-Beckett connection – that Blau seems to celebrate, noting that Beckett emerged at a time when modernism fell into disillusionment, "releasing into the postmodern the flow-producing *aporias* of unfinishable forms."<sup>19</sup>

If Kearney and Hassan are right about Beckett's postmodernity and the function of imagination in his texts, particularly the later prose pieces, then Jameson's recommendation about developing new strategies of reading such writers as Beckett and Franz Kafka seems even more imperative. For Jameson, theological and conventional psychoanalytic readings of both modernist writing and contemporary literature amount to totally exhausted interpretive gestures; similarly depleted of fresh insight are existential interpretations and their privileging of an anxious and alienated human condition. This mode of reading can scarcely be accommodated within the variety of post-structuralist postmodernism invoked here, for it posits the

alienation of a subject who no longer exists from a reality that no longer exists.<sup>20</sup> Joyce might be credited for being among the first to recognize the increasingly frenetic pace of social life and the fragmentation of the human subject that seems an inevitable result. It is, after all, Leopold Bloom who dreams of devising “one sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonder [...] not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life.”<sup>21</sup> But modern “velocity” cannot compare with the postmodern speed of electronic billboards and computer-generated images, and this “relentless acceleration of social processes appears as the reverse side of a culture that is exhausted and has passed into a crystalline state.”<sup>22</sup> The velocity of life in modern Dublin is to postmodern acceleration as the repetitive patterns of a crystal’s solid structure is to the routines and lexical repetitions of Beckett’s *Footfalls*, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, and many others. Surely subjectivity is related to these endless rehearsals. Why else would May pace in *Footfalls* or characters like Krapp struggle so intently to assemble some sense of a coherent or centered self?

None of these issues, rather surprisingly, subtends Jameson’s huge claim that “Joyce leaps over the stage of the modern into full postmodernity.”<sup>23</sup> Chapters in *Ulysses* like “The Oxen of the Sun” allow Jameson to continue his explication of pastiche as a dominant feature of postmodernist aesthetics – he has made this same point several times in discussing contemporary art and architecture – but his hypothesis about Joyce’s postmodernist leanings is communicated within a larger argument about Irish literature constituting a special case in the histories of both modernism and British imperialism. As he explains near the end of *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), modernist “classics” can be “postmodernized or transformed into ‘texts’ [as opposed to ‘works’].”<sup>24</sup> His method of achieving this transformation is to turn Joyce into a colonized writer struggling to subvert the accepted literary styles of the conqueror – a literary forebear of Salman Rushdie and various Third World magical realists. But how do we similarly transform or postmodernize the Joyce–Beckett relationship after enumerating the more obvious points about language games and both writers’ subversion of canonical forms? If one *were* to attempt such a revised reading of Joyce and Beckett – and here I shall only be able to sketch some of the contours of such a project – it surely would include such issues as the posthumanist subject, material culture, and representation and the limits of human knowledge.

All of these topics are, quite obviously, problematic and at times paradoxical. So, while Beckett and Joyce’s characters often anticipate postmodernist representations of subjectivity, this anticipation is not

equally discernible in all of their characters. In any case, if these characters cannot be “postmodernized” by conventional psychoanalysis, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer a “materialist psychiatry” as an alternative in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972). And Daniel Miller outlines a more Hegelian (and modern) understanding of the subject-object duality in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987). For Miller, in contrast to Deleuze and Guattari, the subject-object relation marks a lack; the “externalized object” is “always one stage beyond the subject,” hence the subject is “defined in such a way that it is never complete.” The relationship between subject and object is, first, “always a process” and, second, “always progressive.”<sup>25</sup> This holds true both for the repetitive actions and sentiment of nostalgia so prevalent in Beckett’s fiction and drama. Miller explains (though not speaking directly of Beckett):

More striking are the very active, fluid, and diverse strategies by means of which people transform resources [...] into expressive environments, daily routines and often cosmological ideals [...]. Even images of stability, such as nostalgia, are continually restructured and reinvented according to individual domestic situations and expectations.<sup>26</sup>

While Beckett’s characters frequently deploy the humblest of objects to help transform their environments – Hamm’s pitiful dog, Winnie’s mirror – and are exceptionally adept at devising daily routines, few of them evolve progressively toward self-awareness or, more an aim of modernity, toward unique individuality. Very little progress, restructuring, or reinvention occurs in *Happy Days*, *Krapp’s Last Tape*, or *Rockaby*. Instead, objects and other characters are either negated to form a contrasting background against which characters locate themselves, or, as Winnie in *Happy Days* or Joyce’s Eveline Hill in *Dubliners* exhibit, are incorporated without any sublation or attendant increase in self-awareness. In summary, not every Joycean epiphany is liberatory or progressive; some simply lead to an instauration of a former identity – to a Beckettian sameness.

Winnie exemplifies the absence of idealist conceptions of evolving self-awareness in the Beckettian world. Far from being dissatisfied with the “stage” she has reached, which is rather surprising given her predicament, Winnie bubbles, “no, one can do nothing. (*Pause*) That is what I find so wonderful, the way things [...] ... things ... so wonderful.”<sup>27</sup> Moments later she adds, “things have their life, that is what I always say, *things* have a life.”<sup>28</sup> There is her story, her recitation “when all else fails” as she tells Willie; but this is a last resort – all else, all things, do not fail. Her brush with

bristles of “pure” hog setae, her lipstick and mirror, and the rest of the contents of her bag are for Winnie what Eveline’s “familiar surroundings” are for Joyce’s terrified young Dubliner: material artifacts from which she had “never dreamed of being divided.” Winnie’s relationship to the bag and her few possessions confirms that, regardless of the abstract qualities of the scorched mound in which she is confined, she is not beyond society; her consciousness has been and still is determined by a larger network of values not so dissimilar from the values that shape Gerty MacDowell’s consciousness in the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses*. Equally important, the excessive, overdetermined significance of the bag is expanded in the second act of *Happy Days* by the very fact that Winnie cannot actually use it. Beyond its former utility in Act One, for example, the bag signifies constancy and enduring presence, for after Willie is gone, Winnie speculates, “there will always be the bag.”<sup>29</sup> She recalls fondly that Willie gave it to her to go to the market and regards it as a sign of his affection; in fact, Winnie internalizes the entire object-world (including Willie’s scarcely audible “Win” near the end of the play) as evidence of his enduring love for her (a more cynical reading of his “gift” might emphasize its relation to a clearly gendered division of labor: it is Winnie’s job to purchase goods at the market and haul them home).

The central difference between Miller’s Hegelian understanding of objectification and Deleuze and Guattari’s “materialist psychiatry” is in their identification of the source of need: in the *Anti-Oedipus* need is produced by “desiring-machines” situated all around the subject; for Miller, it originates in the subject’s inherent incompleteness, in the lack that Deleuze and Guattari deny. For them, “*There is only desire and the social, and nothing else;*” lack is “created, planned, and organized in and through social production.”<sup>30</sup> Beckett understands this. In *Endgame*, Hamm speaks for the *socius* when he promises to give Clov just enough food to keep him from starving, but not enough to prevent him from being hungry “all the time.” Hamm is therefore complicitous with biology in producing desire in Clov, vowing to maintain it at a constant pitch. The etiology of desire in Beckett and Joyce, even in the austere circumstances to which many of their characters have become inured, cannot necessarily be traced to their lack; rather, it is created for them. Fascinated with the mechanisms through which society produces need – advertising, popular cultural forms, and soon – Joyce represents consciousness as a historical construction strongly contingent upon the commodities marketed to Irish consumers. Gerty MacDowell provides perhaps the clearest example of this constructedness. She is instrumental in revealing “part of Joyce’s recognition” that modern readers have so “acclimated themselves to the

world of goods” that they have “become generalized and impoverished;” more so than any other character in *Ulysses*, she reveals the effects of the “collective pressure of the customs and ideology of a burgeoning commodity culture.”<sup>31</sup> Winnie’s incongruous strand of pearls in *Happy Days*, W’s evening gown in *Rockaby*, and the tarnished gentility of numerous Beckett characters are traces – sometimes faint, at other times more conspicuous – of the “collective pressure” exerted by both social customs and ideology.<sup>32</sup> Holding in abeyance issues of advertising or commodification and focusing only on the impact of objects on identity in Joyce, we can recognize how crucial they are to characters like Eveline. As she considers leaving Dublin with Frank, she begins “reviewing” all the “familiar objects” in her home, objects from which she had “never dreamed of being divided.”<sup>33</sup> Without this inventory and this secure domain, she would be drawn down into “All the seas of the world;” thus, in the last desperate moments of “Eveline,” she reaches a painful decision: Frank “would drown her,” effacing her identity.<sup>34</sup> She cannot leave Ireland.

Seldom evincing much interest in commercial discourses, Beckett nevertheless represents the urgency of the subject’s need for objects and the determinative effects they (and their consequent consumption) exert on identity. One such effect might be formulated as a question in overtly Deleuzian terms: what accounts for the perversion of individual desires and for characters’ pronounced inability to escape the oppressive environments in which Beckett locates them? Social production, especially of needs. And often the very act of recounting possessions – re-inventorying, as it were – reveals desire-production in Joyce and Beckett.

Consider Beckett’s *Mercier and Camier*, much of which involves the title characters’ abortive attempts to leave the town of the irresidence. The novel begins with the narrator’s emphasis of the comparatively minor obstacles to Mercier and Camier’s journey: physically “it was fairly easy going;” the weather “never exceeded the limits of the temperate;” and although they had to “struggle,” their struggle was “less perhaps than most of those who venture forth, driven by a need now clear and now obscure.”<sup>35</sup> Near the end of the novel, however, the narrator seems resigned to the fact of Mercier’s and Camier’s inevitable failure:

For needless to say it is townward they are bound, as always  
when they leave it, as after long vain reckonings the head  
falls back among the data.<sup>36</sup>

Why are their efforts always in vain? To what in town are they so “bound” (a double entendre in this passage) that they cannot effect a permanent

escape? A nondescript sack and their belongings which, by their own admission, are superfluous. Mercier and Camier are deeply puzzled by their excessive emotional investment in their belongings and search for an explanation:

It would seem to have seemed to us [...] that the sack is the crux of the whole matter in that it contains, or did contain, certain objects we cannot dispense with.

But we have reviewed its entire contents, said Mercier, and deemed them superfluous without exception.

True, said Camier [...]. Whence then our disquiet?

Well, whence? said Mercier.<sup>37</sup>

Later in the novel while pondering their dilemma, a “great light bathed their understandings,” leading Mercier and Camier to derive several crucial concepts, one of which stipulates, “There are two needs: the need you have and the need to have it.”<sup>38</sup> But are there? And can the “great light” of this putative epiphany be trusted? By the end of the novel, Camier looks back on their past and notes, “we heard ourselves speaking of everything but ourselves.”<sup>39</sup> Yet there is no separating the two in Beckett or Joyce; the “need to have it” always speaks the self. Speaking of everything else, these characters *are* speaking of themselves; Beckett knows this even if Mercier and Camier – or Malone and Molloy, for that matter, both of whom regard the making of inventories with a certain reverence – do not.

But if inventorying one’s possessions or reciting familiar stories in Beckett is related to a character’s sense of self identity, what is the precise nature of this relationship? For the most part, one of fixing identity, of halting movement or flux, of denying the reality of what Deleuze and Guattari call the “nomadic subject.” Nomadic subjects “pass from one field to another by crossing thresholds: we never stop migrating, we become other individuals [...] and departing becomes as easy as being born or dying.”<sup>40</sup> But departing, passing thresholds is never an especially simple task for Beckett’s Clov, Krapp, Mercier and Camier, Didi and Gogo, Winnie, W, and so on; nor is movement toward a new identity a simple matter in Joyce, although Stephen Dedalus pledges to do so in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In *Happy Days*, many of Winnie’s possessions either trigger some sort of memorial association or re-situate her in a past that no longer exists; in this way, the material world is assimilated into a historical narrative that stabilizes identity and performs a function precisely opposite to that Miller theorizes. In short, the “absorption” of objects is seldom progressive in Beckett, but nearly always regressive; it

does not lead to the further evolution of the subject, but rather to its concretization. Even so, and even though Beckett's texts generally lack Joyce's attentiveness to commodity culture and commercial discourse, Beckett follows Joyce's lead by representing the determinative effect of objects on the human subject and, more broadly, the social construction of a character's consciousness.

This pervasive effect, especially in Beckett's early novels and plays, is invariably accompanied by a rich, often parodic reading of the object world that is often missing from his later prose pieces. Early in *Mercier and Camier*, for example, Mercier exhibits his wit when discussing the medals proudly worn by a humorless and surly ranger: "Will you look at that clatter of decorations, said Mercier. Do you realize the gallons of diarrhoea that represents?"<sup>41</sup> Winnie, similarly, draws inferences easily from the external world, even if many of them seem overly romantic. Her concluding song ends with such a sentiment:

Every touch of fingers  
Tells me what I know,  
Says for you,  
It's true, it's true,  
You love me so!<sup>42</sup>

The disparity between Winnie's happiness, even bliss, at this "reading" of Willie's response to her and the starkness of her predicament call into question exactly what she "knows." A similar effect is realized early in *Endgame* when Hamm bombastically announces the loftiness of his suffering and fullness of his knowledge. All is "absolute." There can be "no doubt" whatsoever that formerly people suffered as much as he (and no longer do), and there can be "no doubt" about the accuracy of his observations. All of these characters offer such analyses easily – and with confidence that the material world can be known by the senses – even though in Winnie's and Hamm's cases audiences might find these characters' presumptions ironic or pathetic. And, although Hamm loves the "old questions, the old answers,"<sup>43</sup> he can interpret new data and project ramifications: the unwelcome flea *could* breed in Clov's crotch, and this coupling will have consequences, although perhaps not so grand as the narrative Hamm invents about humanity starting over again from this small act.

Saving Hamm's improbable inferences, which because of his blindness are obviously not predicated on vision, characters in Beckett's early works are not chary of forming narratives around and basing knowledge on visual data. "Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more,

thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read [...] coloured signs,”<sup>44</sup> Stephen thinks at the beginning of the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*. This vision, however, must be bound or framed (possess a closed form, in effect) as Stephen later contemplates when examining his own shadow: “I throw this ended shadow from me [...]. Endless, would it be mine, form of my form?”<sup>45</sup> “Thought through my eyes” requires an “ended” other or object-world; unframed or endless, the representation cannot be recognized and knowledge based on representation cannot be posited without some reservation. The same point is reiterated in Beckett’s *Lessness*, which underscores the absence of such requisite framing – all is “endlessness,” “changelessness,” “issueless[ness]”: “Blank planes sheer white calm eye light of reason all gone from mind.”<sup>46</sup> Without clearly demarcated boundaries, the closed and knowable become what Blau refers to as the “flow-producing aporias of unfinishable forms” – they become postmodernized, finally unknowable in their entirety, excessive and uncontainable in any master narrative. Reason “all gone from mind.”

Beckett’s later prose pieces constantly reiterate the difficulty of the subject’s acquisition of solid and exact ground from which to base visual knowledge, *Ill Seen Ill Said* perhaps more dramatically than others. Here nothing is “absolute,” as Hamm proclaims of “all” in *Endgame*, for all knowledge is contingent and susceptible to revision. One must be “careful” of leaping too quickly to judgment:

The cabin. Its situation. Careful. On. At the inexistent centre of a formless place. Rather more circular than otherwise finally [...]. How come a cabin in such a place? How came? Careful.<sup>47</sup>

If “place” is “formless,” how can “situation” be defined with any authority or irrefutable precision? How can narratives, especially those which purport to trace origins (“How come a cabin in such a place?”), be constructed from such tentative observation? The narrator is “careful” in estimating distance,<sup>48</sup> “careful” in elaborating a history of the old woman in the piece,<sup>49</sup> “careful” about extrapolating from visual evidence,<sup>50</sup> “careful” about asserting causality (“Close it for good this filthy eye of flesh. What forbids? Careful”<sup>51</sup>), “careful” about distinguishing between a bed and a pallet,<sup>52</sup> and so on. “Such is the confusion now,” the narrator informs us, “between real and – how say its contrary? [...] That old tandem.”<sup>53</sup> For what word does the narrator struggle to recall? “Imagined” or, perhaps, “representation”? “Simulation”? If there is no discerning the real from its simulation in these later and, I might say, incredibly intriguing later texts,

then Beckett has entered Baudrillard's version of the postmodern scene. The real has been usurped by the image in its empty perfection.

The differences between this position and Stephen's in "Proteus" reside, therefore, in both the "I" and the "signs" he is on Sandymount strand to read. Stephen's reflective but seemingly confident reference to "thought through my eyes" is, of course, called into question by the "I" in Beckett. That is, the "vile jelly" excoriated by the narrator near the conclusion of *Ill Seen Ill Said* recalls Cornwall's epithet in Shakespeare's *King Lear* before plucking out one of Gloucester's eyes: "Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly." But the vision alluded to in Shakespeare's text is the exact opposite of that in Beckett's. Moments before this act of atrocity in Act Three of *King Lear*, Gloucester confronts Cornwall and Regan with his knowledge of Goneril and Regan's cruelty to their father. The old man cannot stand to "see" Regan's "cruel nails" or her "fierce" sister's "boarish fangs" rip Lear to pieces; because he has seen so much and so well – seen so accurately into the sisters' cruel ambition – his eyes are "vile" jellies to Regan and their "lustre" must be dimmed. Stephen's eyes have the capacity to see this well, to "read" this perceptively. Not so with Beckett's narrator. It should be added that at nearly the same moment in *Ill Seen Ill Said*, Beckett's narrator is equally careful (or skeptical) about what language to use in describing a chair:

With what one word convey its change? Careful. Less. Ah  
the sweet one word. Less. It is less. The same but less [...].  
See now how words too. A few drops mishaphazard.<sup>54</sup>

Words are "mishaps" and are invariably used in "haphazard" fashion: thus, "mishaphazard," "Ill Seen" and "Ill Said" – Beckett's text delineates both halves of its title.

The Joycean quality of Beckett's portmanteau word, the "Ill Said" aspect of this text, is yet one more instance of the Joyce-Beckett attack on language's inadequacy and accompanying penchant for puns and other language games so brilliantly woven into the fabric of *Finnegans Wake*. But there is nothing new in this revelation. On the contrary, critical accounts of Joyce and Beckett nearly always focus on these linguistic and formal matters, often to the exclusion of several of the topics taken up here. The interpretive light I have attempted to generate about Beckett and Joyce can be phrased in what I hope are not too dim or "Know nothing no" questions. What similarities or differences obtain in their representations of need and of human subjectivity? What role do material goods play in these representations? And, as my brief discussion of *Ill Seen Ill Said* is

intended to suggest, do Beckett's critique of vision and delineation of a highly contingent, even local, knowledge in his later prose pieces add to the discussion of such matters in theorizations of postmodern knowledge? Finally, insofar as the answers to these questions are concerned, "In Principle, Is Beckett Joyce"? To conclude with a declarative statement – final, definitive, unimpeachable – and not a question would be to strike a very unpostmodern pose. And on the very fecund topic of Joyce's relationship to Beckett, would be mishapazard at best. Careful.

### Notes

1. Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 9.
2. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1963), p. 42.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The term "Author-God" comes from Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in his *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 142-48. Several issues Barthes raises in this essay are apposite to the "modernist" paradigm. For Barthes, the author is "a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism, and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual [...]" (pp. 142-43). Barthes conceives of the text not as a "line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (p. 146). See also Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), pp. 121-37. Foster cites the latter passage from Barthes to describe textuality and the "passage" from modernist "work" to postmodernist "text": "work" suggests an "aesthetic, symbolic whole sealed by an origin (i.e., the author) and an end [...]" (p. 127).
5. S.E. Gontarski, "Samuel Beckett, James Joyce's 'Illstarred Punster,'" in *The Seventh of Joyce*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 29-36, p. 29 (my emphasis).
6. Two such discussions that focus on issues of Joyce's and Beckett's shared traits are David Hayman, "Joyce → Beckett/Joyce," and Richard Pearce, "From Joyce to Beckett: The Tale that Wags the Telling," both in Benstock's *The Seventh of Joyce*, pp. 37-43 and 44-49 respectively (both essays were also published in slightly different form in the *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 7 [Spring 1982]).

7. I refer here to my essay, "Beckett by Way of Baudrillard: Toward a Political Reading of Samuel Beckett's Drama," in *Myth and Ritual in the Plays of Samuel Beckett*, ed. Katherine H. Burkman (Rutherford, N.J. / London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press / Associated University Presses, 1987), pp. 103-23.
8. Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 164.
9. Foster, p. 129. For a lively discussion of postmodernism's interpretive potential, particularly as a "way of thinking about history and representation that claims there can be no final understanding" (p. 10), see Diane Elam, *Romancing the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-25. For a thoughtful critique of postmodernist thought, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), esp. pp. 39-65.
10. Hayman, p. 37.
11. Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 210, 216.
12. Samuel Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said* (London: John Calder, 1982), p. 20.
13. Susan Harris Smith, "Actors Constructing an Audience: Hughie's Post-Modern Aura," in *Eugene O'Neill and the Emergence of American Drama*, ed. Marc Maufort (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), pp. 169-80. In his essay "O'Neill's Endgame" in this same volume, C.W.E. Bigsby remarks that the later plays reveal an O'Neill "who seemed natural kin to Samuel Beckett" (p. 160).
14. Hassan, p. 210.
15. Hayman, p. 38.
16. Hassan, pp. 22-23.
17. Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 299, 308-09.
18. Kearney's concern about the formulation of strategies of resistance parallels that of several critics who have attacked Baudrillard for denying the possibility of resistance within the postmodern culture he describes. In his chapter on Baudrillard in *What's Wrong with Postmodernism*, Norris raises this issue, as does Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 117-21. For a view countering Kearney's, see Jacques Delaruelle and John McDonald, "Resistance and Submission," in *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene*, ed. André Frankovits (Glebe, Australia / New York: Stonemoss / Semiotext(e), 1984), pp. 17-27.

19. Herbert Blau, *The Eye of Prey: Subversions of the Postmodern* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. xix.
20. Foster differentiates “neoconservative” postmodernism from something he calls (and I have called) “poststructuralist” postmodernism. In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Harvey makes the point that we “can no longer conceive of the individual as alienated in the classical Marxist sense, because to be alienated presupposes a coherent rather than a fragmented sense of self from which to be alienated” (p. 53).
21. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 [Student’s Edition]), 17.1770-73.
22. Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity’s Consciousness of Time and Its Need for Self-Reassurance,” in his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987), p. 3.
23. Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism,” in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 62.
24. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 302.
25. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 27, 29.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
27. Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 1986), pp. 135-168, p. 154.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
30. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), pp. 29, 28.
31. Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 211-12. Richards regards *Ulysses* as the “first text in literary or cultural history to register in great detail the impact of advertising on consciousness” (p. 210).
32. Vivian Mercier makes similar observations about the former “upper middle class” status of Beckett’s “shabby-genteel” characters in his *Beckett/Beckett* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 56, 47.
33. James Joyce, “Eveline,” in his *Dubliners: The Corrected Text with an Explanatory Note*, ed. Robert Scholes (London: Granada, 1977), pp. 32-37, p. 32.

34. Ibid., p. 35-37.
35. Samuel Beckett, *Mercier and Camier* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974), p. 7.
36. Ibid., p. 105.
37. Ibid., p. 59.
38. Ibid., p. 72.
39. Ibid., p. 119.
40. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 85.
41. Beckett, *Mercier and Camier*, p. 16.
42. Beckett, *Happy Days*, p. 168.
43. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, pp. 89-134, p. 110.
44. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 3.1-4.
45. Ibid., 3.412-14.
46. Samuel Beckett, *Lessness*, in his *Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1980* (London: John Calder, 1984), pp. 153-57, p. 154.
47. Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, p. 8.
48. Ibid., p. 9.
49. Ibid., p. 18.
50. Ibid., p. 23.
51. Ibid., p. 30.
52. Ibid., p. 39.
53. Ibid., p. 40.
54. Ibid., p. 52.

## 10 Friederike Rasch and Peadar O'Donnell

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Sam + James = Same, or, 13 – 12 = 1:  
An Interconnective ALPhabet

### A

(13)

**ALP.** Obviously Beckett's most straightforward attempt to write like Joyce: his translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, undertaken in cooperation with his friend AIP, or Alfred Péron, in 1929. This French version was excessively revised afterwards by Ivan Goll, Eugene Jolas, Paul Léon, Adrienne Monnier, and Philippe Soupault (the sum total of translators thus fulfilling Joyce's wish "that the Septante or Septuagint is now as seven as possible"<sup>1</sup>), in collaboration with Joyce himself. The final version of the translation was published in May 1931 in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, but Beckett's and Péron's early version remained unprinted before its inclusion in *L'Herne: James Joyce* in 1986.

### B

(12)

**Beckett, Samuel.** See under **Joyce, James.**

### C

(11)

**Cunard, Nancy.** Born in Leicestershire in 1896, died in Paris in 1965. In the years 1928-31 she ran the Hours Press at Réanville, Normandy, sixty miles from Paris. Among the Hours Press publications were books by Richard Aldington, George Moore, Louis Aragon, Ezra Pound, Havelock Ellis, and also by Beckett, but not by Joyce. In the Beckett chapter of her *These Were the Hours* Nancy Cunard reports Joyce's unexpected visit to the press in the summer of 1930:

"I am James Joyce," he announced, "and I have come to talk to you about something it seems to me it is your duty to accomplish." [...] The "duty" was immediately forthcoming. Now, said he, my mother, Lady Cunard, then in Paris, was a very great friend of Sir Thomas Beecham, the conductor, who was also in Paris at that time. Now, in Paris likewise was the great Irish singer, Sullivan, who should be heard at once by Sir Thomas and engaged to sing in grand opera in Britain.<sup>2</sup>

The visit was repeated a few days later, and this time Joyce “dropped more than a hint that if Sullivan were engaged, well some piece of work suitable to the Hours might come my way.”<sup>3</sup> Sullivan nevertheless was not engaged, and never did the Hours Press publish anything by Joyce.

Joyce continued his campaign on Sullivan’s behalf, and one of the highlights of this campaign surely was the publication of his “From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer” in the *New Statesman and Nation* in 1932. This text consists of twelve paragraphs in Wakean language, and the eighth of these reads thus:

Saving is believed but can thus be? Is this our model vicar of Saint Wartburgh’s, the reverend Mr Townhouser, Mus.Bac., discovered flagrant in a *montagne de passe*? She is obvious and is on her threelegged sofa in a half yard of casheselks, Madame de la Pierreuse. How duetonicly she hands him his harp that once, biting him, whom caught is willing: do please to, fickar! She’s as only roman as any *puttana maddonna* but the trouble is that the reverend T is reformed. She, *simplicissima*, wants her little present from the reverend since she was wirk worklike never so nice with him. But he harps along about Salve Regina Terrace and Liza, mine Liza, and sweet Marie. Till she cries: bilk! And he calls: blak! O.u.t. spells out!<sup>4</sup>

Joyce has not been the only writer seeking to promote a man of music. A year before “From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer,” in December 1930, a tribute to the black jazz musician and composer Henry Crowder was published: *Henry-Music*, a volume of verse by different writers set to music by Crowder. One of the contributions does not only bear a title reminiscent of Joyce’s article on Sullivan’s behalf, but also the phrase “Puttanina mia!” which seems to anticipate the “*puttana maddonna*” from Joyce’s text. The poem in question is called “From the only Poet to a Shining Whore: For Henry Crowder to Sing,” and the author is Samuel Beckett.

Rahab of the Holy Battlements,  
bright dripping shaft  
in the bright bright patient  
pearl-brow dawn-dusk lover of the sun.<sup>5</sup>

*Henry-Music* was published by Nancy Cunard’s Hours Press, the same

press that a few months before had already printed Samuel Beckett's first separately published work: the poem *Whoroscope*.

## D

(10)

**Dublin.** Both Joyce and Beckett originated from Dublin – or so they say. Strictly speaking, neither of the two did: James Joyce was born in Rathgar, a suburb to the south-east of Dublin, Samuel Beckett in Foxrock, another suburb still three more miles south-east. When Beckett was born on Good Friday, 13 April 1906, Joyce had already left Ireland: he and Nora Barnacle had taken the Kingstown mail-boat on 8 October 1904, exactly 552 days before Beckett's birthday. The total of the digits of 552 is 12; later on Beckett as a contributor to *Our Exagmination* was to become one of the Twelve. Joyce returned thrice while Beckett lived in Ireland and stayed there for 183 days in all; the total of the digits of 183 again is 12.

## E

(9)

**Eleven thirty two.** 1132: this number is one of the most important recurrent elements in *Finnegans Wake*, manifesting itself, e.g., as year-date and time of day. Strictly speaking, 1132 is 12 embracing 13, and the latter number was as dear to Beckett (who was born on 13 April) as the former one was to Joyce (who was afraid of the ominous number 13 and, alas, died on 13 January). When Joyce was going to publish his second collection of verse, *Pomes Penyeach*, which consisted of exactly thirteen poems, he called the first one "Tilly" and thus reduced the collection to a (baker's) dozen. Beckett's first collection of verse, *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935), comprised thirteen poems; his second one, "Poèmes 38-39" (published in *Les Temps modernes*, 14 [November 1946]), contained only twelve poems which, however, were numbered I–XIII, skipping number XI.

## F

(8)

**Film.** Beckett wrote one, and Joyce did not – he even disapproved of Warner Brothers' idea to turn *Ulysses* into a film. Later on, however, he talked with Sergei Eisenstein about the project. In Joyce's lifetime it never materialised, but Eisenstein was greatly impressed by Joyce: "A great man! This fellow really *does* what all of you *wanted* to do, because you feel it but he knows it."<sup>6</sup>

In the summer of 1936, Samuel Beckett not only *wanted* to go to

Moscow to study with Eisenstein and work as a cameraman, but also *did* write to the Russian film-maker “and suggested that he come to Moscow at his own expense and live there for a year as the master’s unpaid apprentice, doing whatever Eisenstein wanted him to do.”<sup>7</sup> Eisenstein, however, was not impressed: he did not reply, and Beckett did not get a chance to be the unpaid apprentice of anyone but Joyce.

## G

(7)

**Gogarty, Oliver St. John.** Temporary friend of James Joyce, who later turned him into Buck Mulligan. One of the two books found on Joyce’s desk after his death was Gogarty’s *I Follow Saint Patrick*.<sup>8</sup> Another book of Gogarty’s, *As I Was Walking Down Sackville Street*, caused a libel case in late 1937, and Samuel Beckett agreed to testify for a friend against Gogarty. Gogarty’s barrister, however, cross-examined Beckett by asking him if he was the author of “a blasphemous and obscene book” on Marcel Proust and of another book entitled *Whoroscope*. The following day the *Irish Times* concluded that Beckett

might well have stayed in Paris, because they would like to know why, of all the respectable people he knew, Mr Sinclair should select that “bawd and blasphemer” from Paris to make an affidavit in the case to lead to the belief that any ordinary reasonable man reading the book would have identified Mr Sinclair. Could they imagine “that wretched creature” making representations to the High Court as an ordinary reasonable man?<sup>9</sup>

Anyway, the jury found Gogarty guilty of libel.<sup>10</sup> He never forgave Beckett’s testimony, and when Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* was broadcast by the B.B.C. in 1956, he wrote to Ulick O’Connor: “I am sorry you praised Beckett’s play. It is nothing but a long wail.”<sup>11</sup>

## H

(6)

**Higgins, Aidan.** Writer from Co. Kildare, Ireland, living in Germany for several years. In his “Tired Lines, or Tales My Mother told Me,” he nominates Beckett’s *Murphy* and Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds* followers of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in so far as “both works had, in different ways, something of the grubbiness that Joyce had sought.”<sup>12</sup> And Higgins tries to place Beckett in the evolution of Irish writers originating from Joyce:

Beckett's novels are not read in Ireland. He was one of the twelve who contributed to *Our Exagmination*. His fate – an appropriate one for a first disciple – is to be crucified upside down.

Who follows Beckett, himself following so closely on Joyce? *Cadenza? Inish? Death of a Chieftain?* [...] The Vico Road goes round and round to meet where terms begin. A good clap, a fore wedding, a bad wake; hume sweet hume.<sup>13</sup>

## I

(5)

**Inverted Commas.** Joyce didn't like these and preferred to speak of "perverted commas." His way of identifying direct speech in his fiction was to use a dash for its beginning, thus leaving its end undefined. Beckett in this respect followed Joyce the obscurer of contours, but not without delay. Beckett's fiction written in Joyce's lifetime uses inverted commas: *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, *More Pricks than Kicks*, *Murphy*. Beginning with *Watt*, the first novel he wrote after Joyce's death, Beckett does without: in *Watt* and *Mercier and Camier*, he identifies direct speech by way of paragraphing only (employing stereotyped phrases like "said Mr. Hackett" and "said Mercier," as Joyce did in the "Cyclops" episode of *Ulysses*); in the trilogy and afterwards, he not even deemed it necessary to begin a new paragraph in order to indicate direct speech.

## J

(4)

**Joyce, James.** See under **Beckett, Samuel**.

## K

(3)

**Knock.** The knock at the door that Beckett did not hear when taking Joyce's dictate of a bit of *Finnegans Wake* (legendary anecdote that Beckett told Ellmann in 1954). Also the knock on the table by way of which Listener directs Reader in *Ohio Impromptu* (play that Beckett when talking to Ellmann again in the 80s labelled an image of his friendship with Joyce). The *Wake*'s categorical imperative is Anna Livia's "O tell me all;" Beckett's *Ohio Impromptu* as a reply states that "Little is left to tell. In a last – / [L knocks with left hand on table.] Little is left to tell."<sup>14</sup> In the end "little" changes to "nothing," and the knock fails to break the silence.

## L

(2)

**Lennon, John.** Musician and song-poet from Liverpool; one quarter of the Beatles. Lennon is the anglicised form of the Irish surnames ó Leannáin, ó Linnáin, ó Lonáin and ó Luinin. Lennon adopted wording techniques from *Finnegans Wake* in his books *In His Own Write* and *A Spaniard in the Works*, and, as Ruth von Phul indicated, fashioned a lapidary memento of *Ulysses* in his song “I am the Walrus” of 1967.<sup>15</sup> Later on, Lennon became co-author of Samuel Beckett: in 1969, Kenneth Tynan staged an erotic review in New York consisting of original contributions from Beckett, Lennon, and others. Tynan had promised to list all the contributions anonymously on the programme, but contrary to this promise, Beckett was identified as being the author of *Breath*, and his script even had been changed by adding a reference to “naked people.”<sup>16</sup> Beckett was not amused. On his 1972 record *Some Time in New York City*, Lennon sings (without intending a reference, though): “we’re breathing together.”

## M

(1)

**Monologue intérieur.** Valéry Larbaud’s term (subsequently taken over by Joyce himself) for what seems to be the most famous of Joyce’s techniques of presentation in *Ulysses*.

Belacqua, semi-autobiographical hero of Samuel Beckett’s first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, once muses:

And the fuss that went on about the monologue and dialogue and polylogue and catalogue, all exclusively intérieur. Oh the belle blague! That did make him tired.<sup>17</sup>

One tiresome night in the late 1960s, however, Beckett told John Montague: “Ah, Montague, what you need is monologue — *monologue!* [...] That’s the thing!”<sup>18</sup>

## N

(0)

**Notes for this Alphabet.**

1. *James Joyce’s Letters to Sylvia Beach: 1921-1940*, eds. Melissa Banta and Oscar A. Silverman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 167 (letter of 23 April 1931).
2. Nancy Cunard, *These Were the Hours: Memoirs of My Hours Press Réanville and Paris 1928-31*, ed. Hugh Ford (Carbondale: Southern

- Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 115-16.
3. Ibid., p. 117.
  4. James Joyce, "From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer," in *The New Statesman and Nation*, 27 February 1932, pp. 260-61; rpt. in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, eds. Elsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1959), pp. 258-68, pp. 263-64.
  5. Samuel Beckett, "From the only Poet to a Shining Whore: For Henry Crowder to Sing," in Henry Crowder, *Henry-Music* (Paris: The Hours Press, 1930), p. 6, quoted in Cunard, p. 155. For details on the Hours Press editions of *Henry-Music* and *Whoroscope*, see also Carlton Lake, *No Symbols Where None Intended: A Catalogue of Books, Manuscripts, and Other Material Relating to Samuel Beckett in the Collections of the Humanities Research Center* (Austin: Humanities Research Center, 1984), pp. 11-15.
  6. Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 654.
  7. Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Pan/Picador, 1980), p. 177.
  8. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 742.
  9. Anonymous article, *Irish Times*, 24 November 1937.
  10. Bair, pp. 222-23 and 227-30. See also Ulick O'Connor, *Oliver St. John Gogarty: A Poet and His Times* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), p. 278.
  11. Bair, p. 568.
  12. Aidan Higgins, "Tired Lines, or Tales My Mother Told Me," in *A Bash In The Tunnel: James Joyce by the Irish*, ed. John Ryan (Brighton: Clifton Books, 1970), pp. 55-60, p. 59.
  13. Ibid., p. 60.
  14. Samuel Beckett, *Ohio Impromptu*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 1986), pp. 443-48, p. 445.
  15. See Ruth von Phul, "'Not A Leettle Beetle' (FW 417.3-4)," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 6.3 (Spring 1969), pp. 265-66.
  16. Bair, p. 508.
  17. Samuel Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, eds. Eoin O'Brien and Edith Fournier (Dublin: The Black Cat Press, 1992), p. 45.
  18. Bair, p. 298.
  19. See Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* (London: Grafton Books, 1989), passim; most of the pages listed in the index under Joyce's name give proof of O'Brien's disgust.
  20. Anne Clissman, *Flann O'Brien: A Critical Introduction to His Writings* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1975), p. 310.

21. Myles na gCopaleen, "Cruiskeen Lawn," in *Irish Times*, 7 July 1950.
22. Edward Quinn, *James Joyce's Dublin: With Selected Writings from Joyce's Works* (Nice: EDQ, 1973), p. 7.
23. Beckett, *Ohio Impromptu*, p. 446.
24. James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986 [Student's Edition]), 9.510-11.
25. James Joyce, "Programme Notes for the English Players," in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, pp. 249-52, p. 250.
26. James Knowlson, "Beckett and John Millington Synge," in *Gambit: International Theatre Review*, 28 (1976), pp. 65-81, p. 65.
27. Dylan Thomas, "Documents: Recent Novels," in *New English Weekly*, 12 (17 March 1938), pp. 454-55, p. 454; rpt. in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 8.4 (Summer 1971), pp. 290-92, p. 290.
28. Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*, in *The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Pan/Picador, 1979), pp. 7-162, p. 48.
29. John Cage, "'They Come': A Fifty Percent Mesostic," in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 7.2 (Summer 1987), ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg, pp. 85-91, p. 91.
30. John Cage, *Writing through Finnegans Wake* (Tulsa: University of Tulsa, 1978), n. pag.
31. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 18.623.
32. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 101.
33. Richard Ellmann, *Four Dubliners* (New York: George Braziller, 1988), pp. 109-10.
34. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber, 1975), 293.1-11. See William Butler Yeats, *A Vision* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 231 and 197.
35. William Butler Yeats, "The Tower," in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 225-31, pp. 230-31.
36. Arno Schmidt, *Zettels Traum* (Stuttgart: Goverts Krüger Stahlberg, 1970), p. 221.

## O

(1)

**O'Brien, Flann.** Nom de plume of Brian O'Nolan (1910-66), famous civil servant, novelist, columnist, and pseudonymist. After Samuel Beckett had recommended O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* most warmly to James Joyce, Joyce himself read the book and subsequently told Niall Sheridan: "That's a real writer, with the true comic spirit. A really funny book." Most reviewers and readers, however, considered O'Brien's novel a really Joycean book to such an extent that O'Brien in the end reacted with utmost

disgust as soon as someone linked his name with that of Joyce.<sup>19</sup> When Beckett met O'Brien soon after his novel had been published and told him of Joyce's having been delighted about it, O'Brien responded in a way that according to Beckett should better be forgotten.<sup>20</sup> In *The Dalkey Archive* (1964) O'Brien discloses his discovery that Joyce is not dead but living in disguise as a waiter in Skerries.

Another discovery related to Joyce is disclosed by O'Brien's alter ego Myles na gCopaleen in July 1950 in his *Irish Times* column "Cruiskeen Lawn": Samuel Beckett, Oliver Gogarty, Joyce, and Myles himself years ago had been members of a syndicate that wrote jointly under the name of Joyce. Myles adds: "Some hypocrites [...] profess not to enjoy *Finnegans Wake*. No matter. There the thing is ... (I nearly said 'for all to read!')." <sup>21</sup>

## P

(2)

**Paris.** Place where both Joyce and Beckett lived for a longer period than anywhere else. Joyce came to Paris for the first time on 3 December 1902, aged twenty. Beckett's first journey to France occurred in June 1926, when Beckett, too, was twenty years old. The day that Joyce left Paris forever, put onto the train by Beckett, most likely was 23 December 1939, exactly fifty years before Beckett's death, in Paris, on 22 December 1989.

## Q

(3)

**Quinn, Edward.** Not to be confused with John Quinn, the New York lawyer and patron of the arts. When Edward D. Quinn, a photographer and film maker born in Dublin but living in the south of France, published his book *James Joyce's Dublin* in 1973, he included an introductory note signed "Samuel Beckett":

It is my opinion that this absorbing book by Edward Quinn really captures the atmosphere, humour and essence of Joyce's Dublin. The pictures are fascinating and will certainly aid readers in getting a clearer insight and a fuller understanding of James Joyce's work. I thoroughly enjoyed studying these wonderful photographs and looking through this book brought me back many memories of my own life in Dublin.<sup>22</sup>

Some years later, Suhrkamp Verlag showed an interest in publishing a German edition of Quinn's book. Being the German publisher not only of Joyce's but also of Beckett's works, Suhrkamp made inquiries in Paris – and was told that Samuel Beckett denied having ever written the introductory note. The project of bringing out Quinn's book in Germany never materialised; in the edition distributed in the British Isles Beckett's (or rather Quinn's) note is missing.

## R

(4)

**Retrace.** Another passage from Beckett's *Ohio Impromptu*:

Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather and old world Latin Quarter hat. At the tip he would always pause to dwell on the receding stream. How in joyous eddies its two arms conflowed and flowed united on. Then turn and his slow steps retrace.<sup>23</sup>

Same joyous stream.

## S

(5)

**Synge, John Millington.** Dublin playwright who used to listen to people through a knothole in the floor in order to catch the Aran Islands flavour of speech for his plays. In *Ulysses*, Shakespeare is "The chap that writes like Synge."<sup>24</sup> In his early Paris years, Joyce criticised Synge's *Riders to the Sea* by pointing at what seemed to him the play's Aristotelian defects, but in Zurich in 1918 Joyce and the English Players staged the play, and Joyce wrote the following programme note:

Synge's first play, written in Paris in 1902 out of his memories of Aran. The play shows a mother and her dead son, her last, the *anagke* being the inexorable sea which claims all her sons, Seumas and Patch and Stephen and Shaun. Whether a brief tragedy be possible or not (a point on which Aristotle had some doubts) the ear and the heart mislead one gravely if this brief scene from 'poor Aran' be not the work of a tragic poet.<sup>25</sup>

Samuel Beckett's ear and heart were misled even less: Beckett greatly admired Synge's plays since he saw the Synge revivals at the Abbey

Theatre in Dublin in the 1920s.<sup>26</sup> James Knowlson in his essay on Beckett and Synge lists several correspondences between both authors, spanning from their common social backgrounds to thematic, tonal, and atmospheric patterns recurring in their works, but the kinship seems to go far beyond obvious similarities in the use of crippled tramps and characters' names beginning with the letter M. *Riders to the Sea* in particular unfolds a rhythmical structure of repetition and of action generated by speech that in a way anticipates even Beckett's later and more refined works like *Quad* or *Worstward Ho*. Synge like Beckett ritualises the sorrows of having been born, the tragic (and often tragicomical) situation of "nothing to be done."

## T

(6)

**Thomas, Dylan.** When Dylan Thomas reviewed Beckett's novel *Murphy* in 1938, he started by stating that Beckett had "not yet thrown off the influence of those writers who have made 'Transition' their permanent resting-place" – a phrase that despite the plural of "those writers" doubtlessly referred to James Joyce. Thomas found *Murphy* to be "difficult, serious, and wrong," and he freely admitted that he had remembered Beckett's previous book, *More Pricks than Kicks*, "more by Joyce than chance."<sup>27</sup>

In 1940, Dylan Thomas published his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, a collection of short stories that could also be remembered by choice, although the title's reference to Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is slightly misleading in so far as the stories remind the reader more of *Dubliners*. After his *Portrait* stories had been printed, Thomas began to work on a new collection which for various reasons was never finished; the fragmentary collection was published posthumously in 1955, entitled *Adventures in the Skin Trade and Other Stories*. The adventures that Thomas narrates focus on a young man coming to London and getting caught in one slapstick situation after the other, at least remotely reminiscent of Beckett's *Murphy* novel that Thomas had disapproved of so heartily. Fittingly, the young hero in Thomas's book is called Samuel Bennet.

## U

(7)

**Ulysses.** Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*:

I who had loved the image of old Geulincx, dead young, who left me free, on the black boat of Ulysses, to crawl towards the East, along the deck. That is a great measure of freedom, for him who has not the pioneering spirit. And from the

poop, poring upon the wave, a sadly rejoicing slave, I follow  
with my eyes the proud and futile wake. Which, as it bears  
me from no fatherland away, bears me onward to no shipwreck.<sup>28</sup>

## V

(8)

**Vladimir Dixon.** One of Beckett's co-contributors to *Our Exag*; brother of Estragon Dixon?

## W

(9)

**With Each It Is Different And The Same.** Third of five lines of an untitled poem Beckett wrote in 1937 (the one called "Oblomov" by Peggy Guggenheim in her memoirs). John Cage turned the poem into a "fifty percent mesostic," limiting the words he used to the words upon which the poem is written (which resulted in Cage's having to skip some lines because of missing letters). Cage's mesostic for the poem's last word, "same," in which the M (of all letters) is missing, concludes with the same definite article with which Joyce's last book concludes:

love iS different  
with eAch

is thE<sup>29</sup>

In his mesostic *Writing through Finnegans Wake*, Cage used the name of James Joyce and crossed it with phrases from the *Wake*. Cage's last mesostic for Joyce's first name (which includes all letters of "same") reads:

i'm sure he squirted Juice in his eyes  
to mAKE  
theM flash  
for flightEning me  
Still and all he was awful fond to me<sup>30</sup>

## X

(10)

**xxxxx.** Quotation from Molly Bloom's soliloquy in Joyce's *Ulysses*.<sup>31</sup> Molly's soliloquy is echoed significantly by Winnie's soliloquy in Beckett's *Happy Days*, as has been shown by Antonia Rodríguez-Gago on the 1992 Dublin Joyce Symposium.

## Y

(11)

**Yeats, William Butler.** Rumour has it that Joyce when meeting Yeats for the first time in 1902 told him, “You are too old for me to help you.”<sup>32</sup> Beckett met Yeats only once and was extremely flattered to hear that Yeats had memorised and admired a few lines from Beckett’s poem *Whoroscope*.<sup>33</sup>

In 1925, Yeats finished his book *A Vision* which Joyce quotes repeatedly in *Finnegans Wake* – e.g., in the following passage:

You, you make what name? (and in truth, as a poor soul is between shift and shift ere the death he has lived through becomes the life he is to die into, he or he had albut – he was rickets as to reasons but the balance of his minds was stables – lost himself or himself some somnion sciuptiones, soswhitchoverswetch had he or he gazet, murphy come, murphy go, murphy plant, murphy grow, a maryamyria-meliampurphies [...])<sup>34</sup>

On 7 October 1925, after having finished *A Vision*, Yeats wrote his long poem “The Tower,” and although this tower had not very much to do with Joyce’s *Babylonian Wake* tower, the “make what name [...] as a poor soul” of the above *Wake* quotation may well lead us into the final section of Yeats’s poem:

Now shall I make my soul,  
Compelling it to study  
In a learned school  
Till the wreck of body,  
Slow decay of blood,  
Testy delirium  
Or dull decrepitude,  
Or what worse evil come –  
The death of friends, or death  
Of every brilliant eye  
That made a catch in the breath –  
Seem but the clouds of the sky  
When the horizon fades;  
Or a bird’s sleepy cry  
Among the deepening shades.<sup>35</sup>

Beckett in his later years greatly admired these lines, and the TV play he wrote in October and November 1976 is entitled ... *but the clouds ...*, quoting the last but three lines from Yeats's poem.

## Z

(12)

**Zettels Traum.** Shakespearean title of an oversized novel (1970) by Arno Schmidt (1914-79). On the bottom of page 221 Schmidt compares Beckett to Joyce: "JOYCE ist die Fülle. BECKETT ne Krampfhenne"<sup>36</sup> ("JOYCE is plentitude. BECKETT a spastic hen"). Elsewhere in *Zettels Traum* the term "Krampfhenne" is applied to John Lennon's group, the Beatles, as well.

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## In Principle, Beckett is Joyce

The title of this book declares that in principle, Beckett is Joyce – but the question remains as to what this principle may be. The range of fields for investigation that the contributors are exploring in search of an answer spans from biography to duography, from convergencies in single works to certain features of comparability underlying both writers' *œuvres* as a whole, from minute details of textual genetics to more general aspects of Joyce's and Beckett's ([pre]post) modernity. Some of the contributors find Beckett's Joyceanity being absent where everyone believed it to be present; others find Beckett being most Joycean where it had been suspected the least. Some contributors' findings strongly suggest that Beckett is decidedly not Joyce (and therefore even questioned the title for the volume); maybe the only way out is the one shown in Rathjen's own contribution: taking Beckett's non-Joyceanity as a proof of Beckett's Joyceanity.