

Tracing the Creative Influence of Samuel Beckett's 'Psychology Notes': The 'Three Novels' and *Krapp's Last Tape*

Reza Habibi

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
2023

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



**Tracing the Creative Influence of Samuel
Beckett's 'Psychology Notes':
The 'Three Novels' and *Krapp's Last Tape***

Reza Habibi



Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

Date of defense: 26.05.2023

© Copyright Reza Habibi

The material in this publication is covered by the provisions of the Copyright Act.

Year: 2023

Title: Tracing the Creative Influence of Samuel Beckett's 'Psychology Notes':
The 'Three Novels' and *Krapp's Last Tape*

Name: Reza Habibi

Print: Skipnes Kommunikasjon / University of Bergen

For 'Lilly'
the one and only

Abstract

This study argues that the corpus of notes on psychological and especially psychoanalytic topics composed by Samuel Beckett in 1934-1935 during his therapy with Wilfred Bion represents a crucial and continuous creative influence on his literary work. While the immediate use of the 'Psychology Notes' in the writing of *Murphy* is well established, it is revisited here to suggest that this initial creative deployment is characterized by a parodic over-indulgence in the 'textbook' language of the sources Beckett was drawing on. This indicates a critical distancing from the discipline of psychoanalysis that also manifested itself in a sudden disruption of his therapy with Wilfred Bion in 1935. Drawing on the original context of the composition of the Notes, and developing a taxonomy of creatively important themes for Beckett, the first two chapters of the thesis trace a formative attraction-repulsion ambivalence in Beckett's approach to the use of psychoanalytic textbook language in his writing. On the one hand, there is a shared obsession with 'abjection' between Beckett's texts and the discipline of psychoanalysis, whereas on the other, the commitment to cure, control and meaning in psychoanalysis is being resisted in Beckett's texts. Beckett's later texts stage the rejection and failure of the psychoanalytic language as medium of writing the 'self' by ironically subverting its cognitive, authoritative and therapeutic purposes. This argument is developed through detailed close readings of the 'Three Novels' (*Molloy*, *Malone meurt/Malone Dies* and *L'Innommable/The Unnamable*) and the short play *Krapp's Last Tape*, treating the 'Psychology Notes' as genetic source material that continued to be actively deployed long after its initial composition and creative impact. While the thesis is based on an empirical, genetic approach, making extensive use of the *Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* and other archival sources, its approach is also pragmatic in its approach to influence, recognizing that conclusive evidence of intertextual relationships is not always possible to establish. Nonetheless, re-reading these Beckett works with the Notes to hand can both expand upon and correct the emphases of previous scholarship on these texts. Ultimately, the critical focus and training provided by this thesis is therefore intended to provide a scholarly tool for re-engaging all of Beckett's post-Notes work.

Sammendrag

Avhandlingens hovedargument er at notatkorpuset om psykologiske og spesielt psykoanalytiske emner som Samuel Beckett utarbeidet i 1934-1935 mens han var i terapi hos Wilfred Bion representerer en sentral og vedvarende innflytelse på hans litterære verk. Den umiddelbare anvendelsen av disse psykologinotatene i arbeidet med romanen *Murphy* er velkjent, men avhandlingen gjennomgår denne opprinnelige kreative bruken på nytt for å vise hvordan Beckett etablerer en form for parodisk overdrevet bruk av det lærebokaktige språket i mange av kildene som han hentet sine notater fra. Dette indikerer en kritisk avstandtagen fra psykoanalysen som disiplin, som også førte til en plutselig avslutning av det terapeutiske forholdet til Bion in 1935. De to første kapitlene i avhandlingen diskuterer konteksten for komposisjonen av psykologinotatene og diskuterer en rekke kreativt sentrale tematikker for Beckett. En ledetråd for diskusjonen er at Becketts tilnærming til det psykoanalytiske lærebokspråket fungerte både tiltrekkende og motstandsgivende for ham som forfatter. På den ene siden finner vi både i Becketts tekster og i psykoanalysen en fascinasjon for det avskyvekkende, mens på den annen side kan vi spore hos Beckett en bevisst motstand mot psykoanalysens forpliktelse til å søke mot helbredelse, kontroll og meningsfullhet. Becketts tekster iscenesetter en avvisning av det psykoanalytiske språket som et feilslått medium for å skrive om selvet, gjennom sin ironiske undergraving av psykoanalysens kognitive, autoritetsbaserte og terapeutiske utgangspunkt. Implikasjonene av dette utvikles i avhandlingen gjennom en nærlesing av romanene *Molloy*, *Malone meurt/Malone Dies* and *L'Innommable/The Unnamable*, og det korte teaterstykket *Krapp's Last Tape*. I denne lesningen behandles Becketts psykologinotater som genetisk kildemateriale som fortsatt ble anvendt kreativt lenge etter de opprinnelig ble komponert. Avhandlingen tar utgangspunkt i en mest mulig empirisk etterprøvable og manuskriptgenetisk tilnærming til kildene, med utstrakt bruk av *Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* og andre arkivressurser som støtte for sin argumentasjon. Men et pragmatisk forhold til behandlingen av tekstlig innflytelse som går utover det som kan føres sikre bevis for er også nødvendig, for en viss grad av usikkerhet er umulig å unngå. Likevel fastslår avhandlingen at en nylesning av disse verkene av Beckett med utgangspunkt i hans egne psykologinotater kan både utvide og korrigere fokuset i den eksisterende faglitteraturen. Videre har det kritiske fokuset og opptreningen som denne avhandlingen presenterer også et potensiale til å kunne generere en ny litteraturkritisk tilnærming til alle verkene i Becketts karriere som ble skrevet etter psykologinotatene.

‘But all he had to offer in the way of dumb companions was a pink and grey parrot. He used to try and teach it to say, Nihil in intellectu, etc. These first three words the bird managed well enough, but the celebrated restriction was too much for it, all you heard was a series of squawks.’ *Malone Dies*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	8
Introduction	9
CHAPTER I: The origins of Beckett's 'Psychology Notes'	15
Genesis of the 'Psychology Notes'	15
The 'Psychology Notes' and their creative use	21
The attraction-repulsion ambivalence	26
The 'Psychology Notes' and <i>Murphy</i>	30
The 'Psychology Notes' beyond <i>Murphy</i>	36
CHAPTER II: Beckett's thematic interests in the 'Psychology Notes'	42
The split/fragmented self and the schizoid voice	43
The Unconscious	45
Infantile psychology and primitive impulses	47
Anxiety neurosis	52
Character-formation	54
Symbolism	58
Birth and death: womb-tomb	61
Scatology: Excretory creation	65
Impotence & inferiority/insecurity	67
CHAPTER III: <i>Molloy</i> and the 'Psychology Notes': Failing to master the maternal Imago	75
PART I: Varieties of introjection	78
<i>Molloy</i> and the maternal introjection	78
The hated mother	81
Introjections, continued: 'Woman' and the death wish	86
Parent imagos in the two parts of <i>Molloy</i>	89
Introjection externalised: Pebbles, petrification and coprophilia	95
PART II: The language of psychoanalysis and Beckett's <i>Molloy</i> : Rationalism,	101

abjection, creativity	
‘Reclamation work’: the rationalist intent of psychoanalytic language	101
Christian and psychoanalytic rationalisms versus the abject	103
Molloy’s parodic indulgence of the abject	109
<i>Molloy</i> and the anal erotic: material, lexical, creative and spiritual holes	115
CHAPTER IV: <i>Malone Dies</i> : Death wish, death drive, and the ‘Psychology Notes’	124
PART I: Psychoanalysis, abjection, and the condemnation of life	
Condemning life as abject	126
The abject caul	130
Blasphemy as a parallel form of abjection	132
Malone and the ‘Hole’: Burial and creativity	133
PART II: Death as second mother: death wish and returning to the womb-tomb	137
Textual birth and death: production versus annihilation	137
Malone’s intrauterine memories	139
Part III: From death wish to death drive	141
Repetition-compulsion and the death drive	141
Malone’s ‘fort-da’ games: reiterating loss and absence	144
Return to inescapable traumas	149
Return to the inorganic: organic inertia, putrefaction, decay and death	152
Conclusion	156
Chapter V: Samuel Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’ and <i>The Unnamable</i>	157
The ‘Psychology Notes’ and textbook psychoanalysis	158
A Failed ‘Talking Cure’	159
Prison Psychosis and ‘Dungeons in Spain’: Distorting the Textbook Creatively	161
Petrifaction and Coprosymbolism	163
Menstruation & Spermatozoon	164
Conclusion	167
CHAPTER VI: Scatology, Repression and Sublimation: Staging	
the ‘Psychology Notes’ in <i>Krapp’s Last Tape</i>	168
PART I: Repression, dreams, and memory	170
The dream position	170

Repressing last fancies	172
PART II: Sexuality, regression, and anality	176
Renunciation of love, narcissistic regression, and the anal ego-ideal	176
Krapp's anal retentiveness: spooling the scatological past	180
Self-willedness and obstinacy: Krapp's regressive infantile behaviour	182
Krapp's buccal/oral fixation	184
'Mustness' as an obsessional neurotic symptom	188
Krapp's coprophilia: copro-products as an extension of the anal ego	190
PART III: Creativity, scatology, and sublimation	196
Beckett's fascination with the creative use of scatology	196
Sublimation versus the abject in <i>Krapp's Last Tape</i>	197
Conclusion	201
Works Cited	204

Acknowledgements

This work began as a genetic study of Samuel Beckett's creative use of his 'Psychology Notes' in *The Unnamable* for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the University of Bergen in 2014. Words cannot express my gratitude to Professor Erik Tønning for his excellent supervision, invaluable expertise, patience, and feedback all along, especially throughout my doctoral journey. This endeavor would not have been possible without his support. I am also extremely grateful to my second supervisor, Professor Chris Ackerley, who read my work meticulously and critically and pointed me to the latest scholarship in the field.

I would like to thank Matthew Feldman for allowing me to refer to his transcription of the 'Psychology Notes' in his doctoral thesis, Dirk Van Hulle for making a pre-publication copy of his book available to me, and the copyeditor at Academic Consulting Services, Karim Mamdani, for his valuable help with the final stage of this thesis. Thanks also to James Knowlson for our conversations in Reading, and his generous help with numerous questions and references.

I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Randi Koppen for inspiring me with her sophisticated knowledge of English literature, which made me more determined to pursue a PhD in English at the University of Bergen, and for her support along the way.

Lastly, I would be remiss in not mentioning my parents who after 22 years of absence, keep inspiring me and my family with their exemplary determination and resilience in life. Their early belief in me has kept my spirits and motivation high during difficult times, not least during this process. I would also like to thank my partner, Ida, and our lovely little dog, Lilly, for all the entertainment and emotional support.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the continuing creative influence of Samuel Beckett's 1930s readings in psychology and psychoanalysis upon his later writing, focusing upon the 'Three Novels' (*Molloy*, *Malone meurt/Malone Dies*, and *L'Innommable/The Unnamable*), and the short play *Krapp's Last Tape*. A key set of documents utilised to chart this influence will be Beckett's 54 pages of 'Psychology Notes', composed during an approximately ten-month period between spring 1934 and February 1935 (Feldman 2006: 79). Matthew Feldman's pioneering work of transcription and analysis made clear for the first time the extent to which Beckett draws on these Notes not just in the early novel *Murphy* where they are initially and most heavily used, but in fact well into the post-war period too.¹ However, Feldman's main focus is very much on *Murphy*, and, in line with his explicitly empirical, document-based methodology, all of his examples focus on a strictly limited range of specific, fully demonstrable verbal allusions or echoes. There is therefore considerable scope for a wider, more systematic study of the creative influence of Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' upon the later texts that I have selected.

This study is fundamentally committed to a documentary approach to Beckett studies as advocated by Feldman and practiced by such scholars as James Knowlson, John Pilling, C. J. Ackerley, Dirk Van Hulle, Mark Nixon, and others.² However, it also must be acknowledged that narrowing down the influence of the 'Psychology Notes' on Beckett's writing to the strictly demonstrable would risk artificially limiting the scope of this study. In what follows, I draw extensively on the Notes themselves as well as other relevant Beckett notebooks; I make use of letters and biographical information to corroborate my analysis; and I draw on the unprecedented scholarly tool of the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (SBDMP)³, which includes scans of Beckett's library at his death, and full genetic editions of all my selected

¹ I will be using Feldman's transcription of the 'Psychology Notes' in his doctoral thesis, *Sourcing Aporetics: An Empirical Study on Philosophical Influences in the Development of Samuel Beckett's Writing* (2004: 309-353) throughout my thesis. Feldman has discussed the contents of the 'Psychology Notes' in *Beckett's Books* (2006: 78-115).

² This selection of names could include several others: in this context, my list is only meant to broadly indicate the methodological tradition within Beckett Studies that I follow. Works by all these authors are cited in my Bibliography.

³ SBDMP is an online resource developed by the Centre for Manuscript Genetics at the University of Antwerp in collaboration with the Beckett International Foundation at the University of Reading, the Beckett Estate, and several research libraries with Beckett holdings. The ambitious aim of this project is to gather all of Beckett's unpublished manuscripts towards his literary works together in one digital 'place', in editions that include complete transcriptions of all materials and html-tagging of individual words and phrases that allow for detailed comparisons of the development of segments of writing across numerous versions.

texts. Yet despite the indispensability and helpfulness of these resources, the methods of genetic manuscript research, which focus only on extant written evidence, cannot fully account for the pervasive and continuing influence of Beckett's 1930s psychology reading. Sometimes, it is indeed possible to treat the Notes as part of the 'exogenesis'⁴ or pre-compositional phase of a particular work, by demonstrating that Beckett must have either consulted the Notes or recalled them to write a specific passage; there may even be 'endogenetic' (or draft manuscript) evidence that ties the Notes material in question directly to the compositional process. This study certainly embraces such an approach where possible, and it also embraces the 'genetic' method of searching within the full range of unpublished pre-compositional and draft materials (including drafts of translations) as well as the published text(s) for specific evidence of influence.⁵ Nonetheless, this approach is also in need of some supplementation.

On the simplest level, it is of course both possible and likely that Beckett read more widely in psychology and psychoanalysis than his Notes or other evidence can fully confirm. We do know of gaps in the extant record of his reading and self-analysis: in conversation with James Knowlson, Beckett mentioned that he 'used to go back to my digs and write notes on what had happened, on what I'd come up with' (Knowlson 1996: 177) after his sessions with his analyst Wilfred Bion, but this notebook has not been found. In some cases, such as his reading of Sigmund Freud's essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' analyzed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, some evidence does exist, but it is more anecdotal, less detailed, and less datable than the evidence from the Notes. Furthermore, it is well established within Beckett scholarship that references in his later works, though still present, become more difficult to pin down, more abstracted from their original intellectual context, and often reshaped into imagery and formal structures, or resonant phrases, or very well-hidden allusions.⁶ In some cases these images,

⁴ Van Hulle believes that 'Exogenetic research is especially useful for studies on intertextuality, notably in the case of challenging literary works' (2014: 25). The critic also 'studies the endogenetic process of writing, paying special attention to moments of doubt and decision making as manifested in traces of creative undoing (cancellations, omissions, cuts, revisions). The awareness of manuscripts' intellectual value, which gradually increased in the course of the nineteenth century, culminates in the work of twentieth-century authors such as Paul Valéry or Samuel Beckett, who presented a new image of writers who fumble for words and therefore keep looking for them. This notion of continuous incompleteness becomes even more striking if the genesis continues after publication [epigenesis]' (2014: 28). However, on drawing on the limits of the *avant-texte*, he concludes that 'The limits of the *avant-texte* are notoriously difficult to determine. The zone between exogenesis and endogenesis is often characterized by gradual transitions and in many cases the genesis continues in the editorial phase (which in Pierre-Marc de Biasi's typology corresponds to the stage of the "text", no longer to the stage of the "*avant-texte*"; de Biasi 1996a: 34-5; see Introduction)' (qtd. in Van Hulle 2014: 279).

⁵ For a helpful overview of the genetic approach, see Van Hulle (2014: 25-279).

⁶ Beckett's conscious practice of 'vaguening' – gradually removing realist contexts and identifiable references while still leaving some traces of these within the final text – has been explored in compelling detail by Rosemary

structures and resonances also amalgamate several kinds of influence into one, so that the psychological material is there, but not to the exclusion of other complementary possibilities. The connections we can make to a body of ‘exogenetic’ writing like the Notes accordingly become more tenuous, and in some cases a degree of speculation becomes inevitable. How, then, to approach this ambiguous grey area, where claims to influence become less secure?

My chosen pragmatic approach here has been to first set the scene thoroughly, going back to the context of Beckett’s initial composition of the Notes during his mid-1930s psychoanalysis, and his initial creative use of them in *Murphy*, in order to trace the ongoing ambivalence that is a key driver in his continuing creative use of the Notes: his simultaneous attraction to and rejection of the modes of psychological ‘knowledge’ they convey. I will argue that this constitutes an ongoing, creative, generative ambivalence, for Beckett continues to work through and within this tension whenever psychological material is being deployed.

Secondly, I have highlighted a range of themes from within the Notes that Beckett tended to return to again and again. This is intended to serve as a ‘reading tool’ for further scholarship and interpretation in this area: a zoom lens that scholars and readers can use to search through Beckett’s works for echoes and resonances. In order to spot the continuing creative influence of the Notes, we need to train our readerly attention to pick up these themes. While clearly some of my own interpretations of the influence of Beckett’s 1930s psychological reading on his literary work may be improved or even dismissed by some readers, establishing a common thematic framework still grounds my analysis in a more sustained account of the composition and influence of the Notes and so will not be a merely arbitrary linkage. And of course, both the thematic framework and the specific readings are intended to be open to further refinement and new evidence.

But a study like this also faces a problem of delimitation and selection: if the influence of Beckett’s reading and the Notes in particular is so pervasive and long-lasting, is there not ultimately a need to deal with Beckett’s entire post-Notes work? On the other hand, such an ultra-comprehensive approach would necessarily need to compromise on detailed close reading of individual texts, and so would risk being less convincing in showing the in-depth effectiveness of the ‘reading tools’ established.

Again, my approach has been pragmatic, a necessary trade-off between comprehensiveness and depth. My main close-reading focus will be on the ‘Three Novels’, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, for five main reasons. Firstly, these texts are

Pountney’s *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett’s Drama* (1988) and S. E. Gontarski’s *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett’s Dramatic Texts* (1985), and later in Erik Tønning’s *Samuel Beckett’s Abstract Drama* (2007).

generally regarded as pivotal in Beckett's creative development, a kind of centre that the previous work leads into, and subsequent work follows in the wake of and often draws on. Beckett himself acknowledged this, especially in relation to *L'Innommable*: 'I am absurdly and stupidly the creature of my books and *L'Innommable is more responsible for my present plight than all the other good reasons put together*' [emphasis added].⁷ Secondly, the 'Three Novels', composed 1947-1950, are far enough away in time from the initial composition of the Notes to prove that the influence of Beckett's 1930s reading remained remarkably continuous. Thirdly, there are in fact sufficient demonstrable and indisputable connections to the Notes to justify treating them as part of the 'exogenesis' of these works, even if this approach does not exhaust my reading strategy here. Fourthly, while Beckett has begun to conceal more and more his direct intellectual influences in these works, this process is not so far advanced as it will later become. With the thematic frameworks established in this thesis to hand, several aspects of these works can be clarified with a reasonable degree of confidence, even when moving into the 'grey area' where interpretation is less secure. As such, a detailed close reading of these works becomes an important test of the usefulness of my framework, also for potential future work in this area. Finally, while several studies have emphasized the influence of psychoanalytic ideas on these works, none have done so with the Notes to hand. Reading the 'Three Novels' from a Notes-informed framework can therefore both expand upon and correct the emphasis of previous scholarly work on these texts. That brings out the distinctiveness of an approach through the Notes, as opposed to less empirically informed approaches.

To complement this focus, I have also selected a later play, *Krapp's Last Tape*, for detailed analysis. Here, we can see how the thematic framework from the Notes is transposed into another genre, giving rise to a detailed choreography of stage imagery, symbolism, gestures, movements, and even acting choices. Furthermore, the process of 'vaguening' specific references is much more advanced than in the 'Three Novels', so that we need the framework from the Notes to fully appreciate how much this influence still functions as a scaffolding for this play on every level. The level of detail here is fascinating in itself, and well worth bringing out more explicitly, even at the possible risk of occasional over-interpretation. Lastly, *Krapp's Last Tape* itself harks back to the creative 'vision' in the mother's room that according to Beckett sparked his writing of the 'Three Novels'.⁸ Hence, the connection with the pivotal

⁷ Letter to Pamela Mitchell, 27 December 1954, Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading.

⁸ See Paul Lawley's "'The Rapture of Vertigo'". Beckett's Turning-Point', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), pp. 28-40.

trilogy remains – as will be clear from much of the thematic detail adduced in my readings. As we shall see, this is itself a play about creativity, and sublimation in particular.

Chapter I opens by examining some of the differences between Beckett's earlier notetaking methods and his new approach towards the practice in the 'Psychology Notes'. Here, I will argue that the 'Psychology Notes' are distinctive in their manner of transcription by Beckett as well as in his method of reading, which signals a sceptical scrutiny of textbook psychology and informs an ambiguous standpoint: a simultaneous attraction-repulsion ambivalence towards claims to an available, masterable 'knowledge' within the discipline itself, and towards the very possibility of a 'cure' for psychological symptoms.

Chapter II investigates certain key thematic interests as recorded in and developed from the 'Psychology Notes' that Beckett used to shape his treatment of the irrational and the abject, chaos and breakdown, in the mental life of his characters. This should prepare the reader to recognise the thematic strains that fascinated Beckett and influenced his creative process.

Chapter III reexamines Beckett's *Molloy* (1951), a text previously subjected to multiple psychoanalytic interpretations. However, I will demonstrate that some of the symptoms and obsessions suffered by Molloy are traceable to the 'Psychology Notes', combining genetic criticism with the more thematic approach established in my second chapter. At the same time, the psychoanalytic commitment to laying open the depths of the unconscious and reclaiming its dissociated contents is resisted and parodied in the novel. By developing a parallel between the novel and 'textbook' psychoanalysis in terms of a shared preoccupation with control and mastery, the chapter will show how Beckett's text ultimately stages an ambiguity between 'control' and 'chaos'.

Chapter IV studies *Malone Dies* (1956) in terms of a conflict between his own explicit death wish and an underlying (Freudian) death drive, starting from Malone's preoccupation with abjection and condemnation of life as reflected in the psychoanalytic language Beckett inherits from the 'Psychology Notes'. Malone's creative project is to ultimately *achieve* death and stage his own demise as textual creature, i.e., to write his own death. However, Malone's desire to embrace death as 'second mother' is merely the enactment of a fantasy that itself remains within the domain of libido.

Chapter V explores *The Unnamable* (1958) as a text obsessed with abjection and degradation, a preoccupation that it shares with the discipline of psychoanalysis itself. At the same time, psychoanalysis is not abject *enough* for Beckett: it remains a rational system of

explanation for psychic disorder, committed to some form of cure or cathartic relief, whereby the ego regains control over the id. Yet, in Beckett's early reading of psychoanalytical textbooks and in his parallel experience of therapy, a growing resistance to the emphasis on cure, control and explanation is evident. This chapter will document the widespread use of psychoanalytical textbook language deriving from Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' to argue that this text stages a simultaneous fascination with psychoanalytic abjection, on the one hand, and a virulent rejection of psychoanalysis as a system of rational explanation, on the other.

Chapter VI examines the staging of the 'Psychology Notes' in *Krapp's Last Tape* (1959) in terms of scatology, repression and sublimation. Part I reflects on the notions of repression, dreams, and memory, and how the Notes might have influenced Beckett's staging of the play as evidenced by the 1969 Schiller Notebooks for the Berlin production. Part II depicts sexuality, regression, and anality in the play and how these ideas may have been adapted from the 'Psychology Notes' to shape Krapp's character formation. This chapter is thus an exploration of the creative adoption of the 'Psychology Notes' in specifically dramatic form.

CHAPTER I

The origins of Beckett's 'Psychology Notes'

This chapter will examine some of the differences between Samuel Beckett's early notetaking and the approach he adopted in the 'Psychology Notes', the body of notes on psychological and psychoanalytic sources he composed in the 1930s. The 'Psychology Notes' prove distinctive both in their manner of transcription and in terms of Beckett's method of reading. Beckett was engaged in the study of textbooks and broad-brush summaries of psychology in general, and psychoanalysis in particular, while in psychoanalytic therapy with Dr Wilfred R. Bion at the celebrated Tavistock Clinic in London. During this period, Beckett appears to have adopted a somewhat sceptical attitude to textbook psychology, one which eventuated in an ambivalence, a simultaneous attraction-repulsion to the idea of mastering the discipline, and even to the very possibility of a cure for psychological afflictions. The chaotic, the irrational and the abject fascinated Beckett, both within himself and in others. His study of the intimate mechanics of psychic breakdown was therefore urgently relevant both to his personal crisis and to his literary efforts in the 1930s and beyond. At the same time, however, the ideals of mastery, verifiable knowledge and the restoration of a safe and straightforward 'sanity' came to seem both impossible and offensive to Beckett. That is to say, the 'Psychology Notes' reveal Beckett's close attention to the idea of abjection contained in psychoanalytic textbooks, yet also betray a distrust of and resistance to its ideals of understanding and mastery.

Genesis of the 'Psychology Notes'

Beckett's practice of notetaking for largely creative purposes, distinct in this respect from his Trinity College Dublin [TCD] student notes, began while at the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris in the summer of 1930. Six months later, in a letter of 25 January 1931, Beckett informed his close friend, Thomas MacGreevy, that he was 'phrase-hunting in St Augustine' (Beckett 2009: 62). In another letter to MacGreevy, undated but probably from August 1931, he referred to this as the return of the 'old demon of notesnatching', indicating his fraught feelings towards the activity (Pilling 1999: xiii). This led Beckett to a creative impasse: what was supposed to

serve as material for writing in the erudite Joycean mould⁹ threatened to strangle his creative voice. John Pilling elaborates on the quandary:

The close proximity of ‘notesnatching’ and the creative impulse is reflected in a letter from Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy of early November 1931: ‘I can’t write anything at all, *nor take notes*’. In the very next sentence, however, Beckett begins to glimpse a possible cause of, or reason for, his being unable to make progress: ‘I have enough “butin verbal” [verbal booty] to strangle anything I’m likely to want to say’. (Pilling 1999: xiii-xiv; emphasis in original)

After Beckett’s return to Ireland from Paris, the extensive holdings of the TCD library offered him ample opportunity to continue his notetaking. However, Beckett’s frustrations with teaching at TCD and with Dublin itself would soon prove overwhelming. Indeed, he revealed his misgivings to MacGreevy as early as 15 January 1931: ‘The thought of teaching again paralyses me’ (Beckett 2009: 62). In a letter to Charles Prentice of 15 August 1931, Beckett expressed his frustration with and scorn for his birthplace: ‘Dublin is bloody’ (Beckett 2009: 82).¹⁰ On 20 January 1932, he finally resigned from TCD. It was during this period of uncertainty that Beckett produced his initial notes. The notebook in which they appeared, composed primarily during his stay in Dublin from 1 October 1930 to the end of 1931, was published by John Pilling as *Beckett’s ‘Dream’ Notebook*. While the material included relates ‘directly or indirectly’ to *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932), several key themes and authors, such as pessimism and the works of St Augustine, would continue to interest Beckett long after.

However, Beckett’s notetaking practice changed, as most of the extant notebooks¹¹ were devoted to sources intended either for artistic use or for ‘self-instruction’. Still, Beckett maintained his habit of ‘notesnatching’ in the 1930s, taking notes on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Arnold Geulincx, Fritz Mauthner, and nominalism, as well as the history of philosophy in the ‘Philosophy Notes’, and, later, on Samuel Johnson. However, both the method and the content of their composition reveal substantial discrepancies. According to Pilling, structural

⁹ As indicated by the *Dream* notebook, the initial impetus of Beckett’s notetaking was an extension of Joyce’s practice.

¹⁰ Beckett does not explain what he means, ending his letter cryptically: ‘But it’s almost a pleasure to be paralysed after the French daymare and the rain is lovely’ (Beckett 2009: 82).

¹¹ Other notebooks produced in the 1930s include German workbooks, notes from Wilenski on Hampton Court art, notes from Robertson on German literature, ‘Trueborn Jackeen’, ‘University Wits’, the ‘Philosophy Notes’, and notes on the ‘Cow’ (See ‘Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd’hui’, vol. 16 [2006]).

differences are apparent even between the early 1930s *Dream*¹² and mid-1930s *Whoroscope* notebooks.¹³ Yet both notebooks show Beckett struggling to establish his own genuine voice, and as such they ‘bear witness to a mind casting about widely, haphazardly and sometimes desperately, for nuggets of knowledge, memorable turns of phrase or any raw material that might prove useful’. Yet, whereas the *Dream* notebook served as a kind of ‘source book’¹⁴ in which the material was presented in a “‘block” fashion’ of serial entries from the same author or text, the *Whoroscope* notebook ‘ranges farther afield (and over larger areas)’ Pilling 1999: xv).

The following years witnessed Beckett’s groping literary development. In a letter to MacGreevy of 13 May 1933, for instance, he revealed: ‘I find it more and more difficult to write and I think I write worse and worse in consequence. But I have still hopes of its all coming in a gush like a bloody flux’ (Beckett 2009: 159). Beckett’s hopes for a ‘gush’ of prose would be realised with the initiation of *Murphy* on 20 August 1935.

Yet these years saw a ‘bloody flux’ of psychosomatic symptoms, especially after the devastating death of Beckett’s father on 26 June 1933.¹⁵ Matthew Feldman enumerates the significant events of the 1930s that created ‘highly distressing’ mental problems for Beckett, and which led to the two years of psychotherapy (Feldman 2004: 122). Besides psychoneurotic concerns, Beckett suffered from ‘psychosomatic’ ones as well:

A veritable scholarly consensus holds that much of what Beckett was doing and feeling stemmed from psychosomatic concerns, resulting in a number of physical symptoms. Bair, Cronin and Knowlson spare no details on the variety and consequent discomfort these episodes caused Beckett: boils on the groin and an anal abscess, constipation and diarrhoea, eczema around his face, anaemically thinned blood, severe colds, and two bouts of pleurisy. (Feldman 2004: 122)

His psychological maladies were so acute that Beckett moved to London and, on 27 January 1934, began psychotherapy with W. R. Bion, then a young trainee, a Great War veteran himself undergoing therapy with the famous analyst, Melanie Klein. Beckett’s thrice weekly therapeutic sessions provoked him to read the relevant psychological texts, especially those about

¹² *Dream* was unpublished during Beckett’s lifetime; however, bits of the novel were ‘scavenged’ for *More Pricks than Kicks*.

¹³ Most likely dating from between mid-1935 to about later 1938 or even 1939.

¹⁴ The subjects range from St Augustine and Jules Renard to William Cowper and Pierre Garnier to the Bible, Thomas à Kempis, W. R. Inge, Max Nordau, Victor Bérard, and, prominently, Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (cf. Pilling 1999: xvi-xviii).

¹⁵ See Beckett’s quatrain, ‘Da Tagte Es’, a bleak response to his father’s death (Beckett 2012: 22).

psychoanalysis. The ‘Psychology Notes’ were born of the nearly two years of extensive reading, recorded in typed notes, that Beckett conducted while undergoing therapy.

The therapeutic method of ‘reductive analysis’ which Bion pursued with Beckett, as James Knowlson observes, ‘must have focused on the intensity of his mother’s attachment to him and his powerful love-hate bond with her’ (Knowlson 1997: 178). One aim of the therapy would have been ‘to help him to understand his feelings about her, and then find ways of combating their adverse effects on him by resolving the negative feelings and encouraging more positive, less extreme ones’ (Knowlson 1997: 179). As Mark Nixon notes, Beckett was aware ‘that his problems were somehow related to the “savage loving” of his mother (SB to TM, 6 October 1937), whose intense demands on him had reached unbearable levels following his father’s death in February 1933’ (Nixon 2011: 38). Feldman describes the ‘notoriously complex emotions felt for his mother’ as ‘the most vexed female interactions’ Beckett had to suffer (Feldman 2004: 122). Beckett’s different experiences of his parents

determined the father as a figure representing the imperative of maturation and society. This is Freudian territory: transition from natural to civilized existence is echoed by the child’s maturation for both depend on an alliance with the paternal figure. The primitive mother-son dyad threatens to engulf the child in an irrational emotional world; alliance with the father permits passage into a rational world where pleasures and dangers are moderated. The paternal figure reinforces society’s demands on behavior, as does the policeman in *Molloy*, or Moran with his son. (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 192)

Beckett explained his reasons for ‘going to Bion’ in a revealing letter to MacGreevy of 10 March 1935, replying to the latter’s exhortation to lead a life of ‘goodness and disinterestedness’. This letter vividly portrays his movement from egoistic isolation to a more mature and altruistic personality, and deserves to be quoted at length:

I cannot see how “goodness” is to be made a foundation or a beginning of anything. [...] For me the position is really a simple & straightforward one, or was until complicated by the analysis, obviously necessarily. For years, I was unhappy, consciously & deliberately ever since I left school & went into T.C.D., so that I isolated myself more & more, undertook less & less & lent myself to a crescendo of disparagement of others & myself. But in all that there was nothing that struck me as morbid. The misery & solitude & apathy & the sneers were the elements of an index of superiority & guaranteed the feeling of arrogant “otherness”, which seemed as right & natural & as little morbid as the ways in which it was not so much expressed

as implied & reserved & kept available for a possible utterance in the future. It was not until that way of living, or rather negation of living, developed such terrifying physical symptoms that it could no longer be pursued, that I became aware of anything morbid in myself. [...] It was with a specific fear & a specific complaint that I went to Geoffrey [Thomson, his friend and a medical doctor], then to Bion, to learn that the “specific fear & complaint” was the least important symptom of a diseased condition that began in a time which I could not remember, in my “pre-history”, a bubble on the puddle; and that the fatuous torments which I had treasured as denoting the superior man were all part of the same pathology. (Beckett 2009: 258-259)

Near the beginning of this letter, Beckett uses of the key word ‘pleroma’¹⁶ to describe the internalized complex of feelings:

I replaced the plenitude that [Thomas à Kempis] calls “God”, not by “goodness”, but by a pleroma only to be sought among my own feathers or entrails, a principle of self the possession of which was to provide a rationale & the communion with which a sense of Grace. (Beckett 2009: 257)

Beckett refers to this ‘self-referring quietism’ as ‘abject’ (Beckett 2009: 257), a piece of ‘self-analysis’ that evokes the ‘Psychology Notes’.

In *Psychoanalysis and Medicine: The Wish to Fall Ill* (1933), Karin Stephen posits that ‘[a]ll neurotics are more or less “narcissistic”, that is self-lovers, and many are auto-erotic’ (Stephen 1960: 154). Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’, first fully transcribed in Matthew Feldman’s unpublished PhD thesis,¹⁷ comprise entries taken sequentially from Stephen’s book, Sigmund Freud’s *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933), R. S. Woodworth’s *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* (1931), Ernest Jones’s *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (1912) and *Treatment of the Neuroses* (1920), Wilhelm Stekel’s *Psychoanalysis and Suggestion Therapy* (1923), Alfred Adler’s *Individual Psychology* (1924) and *The Neurotic Constitution: Outlines of a Comparative Individualistic Psychology and Psychotherapy* (1917), and Otto Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth* (1924). As Feldman points out in *Beckett’s Books*, Beckett read some of the books from cover to cover, while others (such as those by Freud) seemed only partly read, and others still, as in the case of Jones, were consulted only for particular chapters.

¹⁶ For an explanation of this word, see Chris Ackerley, *Demented Particulars* (Ackerley 2004: 17, 113).

¹⁷ *Sourcing Aporetics: An Empirical Study on Philosophical Influences in the Development of Samuel Beckett’s Writing* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2004).

Speaking about his therapeutic experience, Beckett admitted some weeks before his death in December 1989 that he ‘used to lie down on the couch and try to go back in my past. I think it probably did help. I think it helped me perhaps to control the panic’ (Knowlson 1997a: 177). Yet at the time he was far less certain, writing on 1 January 1935: ‘the analysis is going to turn out a failure’. In the same letter he informed MacGreevy about his heart condition leading to a ‘paralyzing attack at Cissie’s, the worst ever. Bion is now a dream habitué’ (Beckett 2009: 240). During this period, nearly ten months before quitting the therapeutic sessions in the winter of 1935, Bion encouraged Beckett to note down his dreams, which the analyst could further use for therapeutic purposes. There is no extant record of these dream notes; however, Beckett would later occasionally add descriptions of his dreams to his German diaries (1936-1937), composed during his six-month trip to Germany. Although the German diaries are not my focus, they shed light on two different aspects of Beckett’s writing. One is the fact that the diaries ‘can ... be seen as a progression from the “talking cure”, aided by an analyst, to a self-therapy exercised through a form of “writing cure”’ (Nixon 2011: 38). Indeed, Nixon argues that the ‘introspective quality’ and ‘self-exploratory nature of the diary’ (Nixon 2011: 38) is related ‘to the psychoanalytic sessions Beckett undertook with Wilfred Bion in London’ (Nixon 2011: 38), something that only emphasises the significance of Beckett’s psychology notes and their role in bringing his writing to maturity. The dream notes ‘attest to Beckett’s dedication to a form of writing that could accommodate a self-therapeutic, or at least a self-analytical, impulse’ (Nixon 2011: 47). Secondly, the turn to the diary form influences Beckett’s later writing through the adoption of the ‘I’, whose epitome is the voice in and from the void in *The Unnamable*.

Increasingly disillusioned by his therapy with Bion, Beckett complained to MacGreevy in a letter of 16 January 1936: ‘Indeed I do not see what difference the analysis has made. Relations with M. [Mother] as thorny as ever and the nights no better. A heart attack last night that would have done credit to three years ago. *The only plane on which I feel my defeat not proven is the literary*’ (Beckett 2009: 300; my emphasis). As in his letter of 10 March 1935, Beckett saw the only possible salvation in, and through, the work of literature. Indeed, later in that 1936 letter, his frustration with what, in *Murphy*, is called ‘therapeutic voodoo’ (Beckett 2009b: 148) is evident: ‘As I write, think, move, speak, praise & blame, I see myself living up to the specimen that these 2 years have taught me I am. The word is not out before I am blushing for my automatism’ (Beckett 2009: 300). ‘Automatism’ is a telling choice, having both a psychoanalytic and an artistic sense. It describes the process of free association, the ‘talking cure’ itself; but also recalls the ‘method’ that surrealists such as André Breton used to compose

their texts.¹⁸ Beckett's struggles with the artistic process had become more important to him than achieving any 'total cure'.¹⁹ For him, the artistic process 'must go on' (Beckett 1958: 142), even if the 'on' is through a 'no', that is, through the systematic denial of any language that could be set up to describe the unnamable voice in the 'self'.

The final stage of Beckett's frustration with therapy almost coincided with the final phase of his psychology notes, occurring just after he read the last text included in his typed entries, Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* (1924). In this case, Beckett's notes were much more concise than those from Freud, Stephen and Ernest Jones, their material more precise and focused. In keeping with this less Joycean method of notetaking, Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' look less like sources accumulated in the manner of the *Dream* notebook: the notebooks (with the exception of the *Whoroscope* Notebook) are no longer conglomerations of pithy entries jotted down by a phrase-hunter for creative use. That said, towards the end of the roughly 20,000 words of Beckett's typed corpus of psychology notes, there is an atavistic resurgence of the old habit, and the texts are increasingly interspersed with interventions and quotable phrases and succinct notes. Yet the true, indeed paramount, importance of Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' was their endeavour at a 'self-diagnosis', a means to understand his own 'mental reality'²⁰ and 'neurotic disturbances' (Feldman 2006: 110-111). Beckett's notes served him as an intermediate stage between a 'talking cure' and yet another phase of 'self-therapy', one initiated, according to Mark Nixon, with the German diaries.

The 'Psychology Notes' and their creative use

The 'Psychology Notes' display a new dynamic of *attraction-repulsion* in relation to the textbook language they incorporate. The notes admit a new ambiguity. On the one hand, they attempt to grasp or master a body of knowledge dealing with the irrational, the uncanny, and the abject, with psychic breakdown and mental chaos; but, on the other, they evince a resistance to the very idea of mastery and knowledge in this area. This ambiguity grew so acute that it eventuated in Beckett's rejection of a 'total cure', opting instead to preserve a resource that would enable him to write as an artist. Prior to this, however, evidence of Beckett's deepening ambivalence can be found in his interaction with the passages copied into his notes:

¹⁸ Beckett's signing of the 1929 'Poetry is Vertical' manifesto is evidence that he was aware of these ideas. Another possible (but implausible) association might be the 'Yeatsian pursuits and theorizations of automatic writing' (Fordham 2010: 11), though in this case automatism is connected with the writings of mediums taking dictation from the spirit world.

¹⁹ According to Mark Nixon's account in *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries*, Beckett found Bion's 'insistence that more work was needed to free him from his neuroses' and achieve a 'total cure' distasteful (Nixon 2011: 45).

²⁰ A term Beckett took from Wilhelm Windelband's survey of Leibniz (cf. Feldman 2006: 108).

interventions, annotations, commentary, parentheses, summaries, emphases, all of which point to Beckett's mature, critical, and occasionally sceptical attitude towards the material.

Different texts seem to provoke different modes of interaction. For instance, passages alluding to his own psychological problems prompt the parenthetical phrase '(Mine own)' (TCD MS 10971/8/21) twice, indicating an authorial voice. The first occurrence involves a textual distortion or intervention that sets up a contrastive insight to the original text, while the second instance of the phrase refers to an affirmative insight added to the text. In the chapter on hysteria his *Treatment of the Neuroses* (1920), Ernest Jones delineates the role of phantasy in the mental life of the neurotic and views it as a hysterical disposition:

It is commonly recognised that phantasy plays an especially prominent part in the mental life of hysterics, as is illustrated, for instance, by their pronounced tendency toward day-dreaming. Hysteria is indeed, perhaps the best example of a malady of the imagination. The imagination of hysterics possesses a much greater influence over both their mental and physical functions than is the case with the normal, and this excessive development of phantasy at the expense of adjustment to the needs of reality must be regarded as an important characteristic of the disorder. It is quite common with such patients for an imagined experience to have an equal significance to a real significance. An imagined trauma, for instance, may have precisely the same harmful effect as a real one, and for this reason, it becomes practically irrelevant whether a given traumatic memory, resuscitated from the unconscious by special investigation, actually corresponds with the truth or not; the effect of it on the patient is the same in the two cases.

[...] the essential content of any phantasy is a desire, or rather the fulfilment of a desire. This applies to the fanciful "Castles in Spain" with which we are all familiar, as well as to the more practical ambitions that play a prominent part in so many people's day-dreams; in the imagination all the heart's desires may be gratified. Freud describes the mental processes effective in the production of hysterical symptoms as wishes. (Jones 1963: 108-110)

Beckett's succinct account of this hysterical tendency in the 'Psychology Notes', however, replaces Jones's clichéd 'castle' with a more dour 'dungeon' in seemingly explicit reference to Beckett's own condition:

An important characteristic of the hysterical disorder is the excessive development of fantasy at the expense of adjustment to reality. Thus it becomes practically irrelevant whether a given traumatic memory recovered from the unconscious corresponds with a fact or not, the effect on the patient is the same.

Dungeons in Spain. (Mine own.) (TCD MS 10971/8/21)

Both Knowlson (1997a: 178) and Feldman (2004: 141) have pointed out that the original Ernest Jones text has ‘Castles in Spain’. Jones’s contention that prison is apt for the so-called ‘*flight from reality*’ to occur in ‘hysterical deliria’ (Jones 1963: 109) is illuminating. He maintains that

[i]ndulgence in the imaginary gratification of [fantasies] is evidently pleasurable, and it is a common experience of the ardently-minded people that the tearing oneself away from such fantasies, and replacing them by the possibly sordid reality of the moment, is by no means always easy. (Jones 1963:110)

In *Murphy*, Beckett makes this textual distortion ‘his own’ through creative transformation. In other words, Beckett seems to be ‘tearing himself away’ from neurotic fantasies by relating his own kind of ‘extensive development of fantasy at the expense of adjustment to reality’ – not least in his writing – not to romantic ‘castles’, but to an obsession with ‘dungeons’ instead. This may involve a passing reference to Miguel de Molinos,²¹ the pioneer of quietism, discussed in William Ralph Inge’s *Christian Mysticism* (1899), which Beckett read and noted in his *Dream* notebook (1999: 88, 97-102).²² At one point in *Murphy*, believing that he has attained a kindred with the patients, Murphy concludes that he is able to construct his own ‘glorious time’ and refuge in the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat hospital: ‘With these and even less weighty constructions he saved his facts against the pressure of those current in the Mercyseat. Stimulated by all those lives immured in mind, as he insisted on supposing, he laboured more diligently than ever before at his *own little dungeon in Spain*’ (Beckett 2009b 113; my emphasis). For all its irony, this passage strongly suggests that ‘dungeons’ was not simply a neutral word for Beckett, but one associated with something central to his creative process. If Beckett dismissed his fantasies as mere ‘Castles in Spain’, then, surely, he would not continue to write from within his creative ‘dungeons’, where his characters reside.

Beckett’s incorporation of the ‘Psychology Notes’ into *Murphy* and subsequent texts may be regarded as an extension of his notetaking process. His entry on Ernest Jones continues:

²¹ I owe this reference to Matthew Feldman. Miguel de Molinos was prosecuted by the Jesuits for heresy; his doctrine of quietism was condemned by the Church; his book, *Il Guida Spirituale* (1675), was prohibited; and Molinos himself was finally imprisoned in a dungeon.

²² John Pilling observes that ‘Inge is mentioned in *Dream*, 62’ (Pilling 1999: 97).

By “over-determination” is meant the disproportion between a single hysterical symptom & the elaborate plexus of repressions that motivate it.

To check the analysis before the fundamental aberration is elucidated is like presuming to cure a riddling abscess by tapping superficial pockets of pus instead of thoroughly laying open & draining entire system of connected cavities (free discharge from necrotic areas).

Peter Panitis (mine own). (TCD MS 10971/8/21)

Knowlson regards Beckett’s self-diagnosis of a Peter Pan syndrome as ‘one likely facet of his dependence on [his mother]’ (Knowlson 1997: 178). The term is significant because it indicates Beckett’s distancing from the force of the mother and his understanding of the role of the father figure in the individual’s ‘growing up’. As Damian Love explains, this is

a figure constituted by memories of SB’s father and Freud’s father imago. SB’s relationship with his father was affectionate and nonthreatening, not the inimical triangle of the oedipal drama. [...] His death grieved SB, at a time when he had nothing to justify himself to his father; *should he not grow up, acknowledge the demands of society and become the model citizen his father exemplified?* (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 191-192; my emphasis)

‘Peter Panitis’ is Beckett’s neologism for Jones’s description of the individual’s failure to ‘grow up’:

The hysteric may be said to have retained many of the normal infantile characteristics to an unusual extent, though of course the external manifestation of them is considerably modified owing to educational influences; like a well-known hero of the juvenile drama, he has “never grown up.” (Jones 1963: 116)

Beckett’s ‘free discharge from necrotic areas’ is yet another intervention into the original Jones text:

Freud gives the name “over-determination” to this process of a symptom being determined by several contributing factors. Sometimes the different factors are convergent, being of different origin, but more typically they represent merely different phases of the same continuous tendency, which are united together by a chain of associations. (Jones 1963: 113)

Jones emphasises the need for a far-reaching examination of the individual's unconscious to lay bare the dissociated content:

the success of the treatment depends on the thoroughness with which this exploration is carried out, for the more fundamental the aberrant tendency dealt with, the more satisfactory the result as compared with that obtained by dealing only with the late products of the tendency; there is all the difference that accrues between tapping the superficial pockets of pus in the case of a riddling abscess and thoroughly laying open and draining the whole series of connected cavities. (Jones 1963: 114-115).

Neither the 'disproportion' between the 'elaborate plexus of repressions' and the 'single hysterical symptom' it motivates nor the 'free discharge from necrotic areas' appear anywhere in the original text. These interventions show Beckett *adding* personal insight.

In his important letter to MacGreevy of 10 March 1935, Beckett referred to his own poor heart condition using very similar psychological terminology:

If the heart still bubbles, it is because the puddle has not been drained, and the fact of its bubbling more fiercely than ever is perhaps open to receive consolation from the waste that splutters most when the bath is nearly empty. (Beckett 2009: 259)

Jones's metaphor of draining pus highlighted Freud's notion of the ego taking control of the id. Beckett noted the same idea in Freud's lecture 'The Dissection of the Psychic Personality':

The object of psychoanalysis is to strengthen the ego, make it more independent of the super-ego, widen its field of vision & so extend its organisation that it can take over new portions of the id. Where id was, there shall ego be. It is reclamation work, like the draining of the Zuyder Zee.²³ (TCD MS 10971/7/6)

Much later, this is clearly echoed in *Molloy*:

²³ The original passage can be found in *New Introductory Lectures of Psycho-Analysis* (Freud 1933: 46-87). Freud's famous conclusion, in James Strachey's translation, is more specific in its stress: 'Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture – not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee.' Freud's invocation of 'culture' recalled the recently completed Zuider Zee sea defences, one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World: a bulwark against the forces of nature. More distantly, it alluded to the spiritual labour of reclamation in *Goethe's Faust II*.

Between my town and the sea there was a kind of swamp which, as far back as I can remember, and some of my memories have their roots deep in the immediate past, there was always talk of draining, by means of canals I suppose, or of transforming into a vast port and docks, or into a city on piles for the workers, in a word of redeeming somehow or other. (Beckett 1955: 75-76)²⁴

This ironic reference to redemption may recall Beckett's rejection of the attempt by Bion to resume therapy, but it certainly anticipates the resistance to all pressure towards normalisation in *The Unnamable*:

They hope that things will change one day, it's natural. That one day on my windpipe, or some other section of the channel, a nice little abscess will form, with an idea inside, point of departure for a general infection. This would enable me to jubilate like a normal person, knowing why. And I'd soon be a network of fistulae, bubbling with the blessed pus of reason. (Beckett 1958: 92)

The ironic 'nice little abscess' and the fistulae 'bubbling with the blessed pus of reason' point to a revulsion at ultimate rational control. Instead, there is a continued fascination with the abject, with 'infection' and 'pus', which becomes the real condition for creative production and can also be glossed as the persistent refusal to 'recuperate' failure.

The attraction-repulsion ambivalence

The attraction-repulsion ambivalence in the creative process is evident in Beckett's first published novel, *Murphy*. This was a time when Beckett was steeped in psychological terminology from the 'Psychology Notes' and liberally borrowed material that fed into his writing. But the 'Notes' were not the only source. Knowlson traces one source of Murphy's tripartite mind to a diagram presented by Carl Jung in a series of five lectures at the Tavistock Clinic. Beckett and Bion attended the third lecture where

²⁴ This is a very significant phrase since Beckett would later call 'redeeming' – with critical reference to Giacometti: see Anne Atik's *How It Was: A Memoir of Samuel Beckett* (2001: 83) – 'recuperated failure'. Although 'redemption' also has potentially religious overtones, the project here is civic: note that Mussolini's draining of the swamps in Italy was always touted as a great victory for fascism (not least by Ezra Pound), so there may be a tacit link between fascism, religious 'redemption', and psychoanalytic 'redemption' here. For Baker's discussion of this creative transformation, though without access to the 'Psychology Notes', see *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (Baker 1997: 7).

Jung showed a diagram he had used earlier, which became for SB a virtual archetype of the mind. It is strikingly simple: a series of concentric spheres representing gradations of the mind from the outer light of ego consciousness to the dark center of the collective unconscious. SB records Jung's commentary: "The closer you approach that centre, the more you experience what Janet calls an *abaissement du niveau mental*: your conscious autonomy begins to disappear, and you get more and more under the fascination of unconscious contents" ... This reaches its extreme in cases of sanity. Jung's diagram structured Murphy's mind with its "three zones, light, half light, dark"... SB shows little interest in Jung's archetypes; instead, he responds to the *fascination* of the inner dark. In Murphy's case, a willful retreat into the inner sanctum, the disturbing aspects of this process are alleviated by Cartesian farce, and any weakening "conscious autonomy" is overcome by Murphy's regrettably fundamental sanity. (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 290)

Beckett's early fascination with the language of psychology textbooks and his indulging of psychoanalytic terminology gradually diminished as his trust in the discipline waned. In sharp contrast to his later, more obscure and minimalistic texts, the explicit reliance on a psychology textbook in *Murphy* occasionally produces a comically rhetorical effect:

Neary could not blend the opposites in Murphy's heart.

Their farewell was memorable. Neary came out of one of his dead sleeps and said:

'Murphy, all life is figure and ground.'

'But a wandering to find home,' said Murphy.

'The face' said Neary, 'or system of faces, against the big blooming buzzing confusion.

I think of Miss Dwyer.' (Beckett 2009b: 4-5)²⁵

In Beckett's typewritten notes on 'Figure & Ground in Gestalt Psychology', he included the following: 'figure stands out naturally from the ground in virtue of the fundamental distinction between them. A baby does not open its eyes on James's "big blooming buzzing confusion", but singles out a face or other compact visual unit' (TCD MS 10971/7/12).²⁶ Chris Ackerley located the source in Robert Woodworth's *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* (1931) before the 'Psychology Notes' were available and discussed it in depth in his *Demented*

²⁵ For a full discussion of the Gestalt theory of figure and ground in *Murphy* and *Watt*, see Feldman 2004: 102-104.

²⁶ Woodworth here indicates the Gestaltists' rejection of William James's theory of the infantile pattern of seeing, captured in his famous phrase. For James, the philosophical and psychological were blended (at Harvard, where he taught, psychology had until very recently been a branch of philosophy – as to some extent it still was for Beckett).

Particulars, originally published in 2004. Although in later editions of his book, Woodworth omitted the distinction of figure and ground ‘regarded by the Gestalt psychology as absolutely fundamental in the process of seeing’, for Beckett, as Ackerley observes, ‘the distinctions remained fundamental, as is evidenced by the number of citations in *Murphy*, but also by Watt’s puzzlement over point and circle in Erskine’s room [...], and by Winnie’s experience of “formication” in *Happy Days*’ (Ackerley 2010: 35). As Beckett abandoned simple borrowing for a more complex analysis, the process of ‘showing’ in the later works superseded the predominance of ‘telling’. In other words, as the equation of ‘form’ and ‘content’ became more pronounced in Beckett’s later work, a tendency towards the formal features of ‘artistic expression’ (Beckett 1965: 95-126) emerged in his mature texts, to such an extent that as much is expressed through form as through content. This maturation of Beckett’s creative process partly arises, I think, from his attraction-repulsion to the language of the psychology textbooks. Indulgence provokes resistance. Beckett would not have been able to present the neurotic voice in the terms of psychoanalysis had he not distanced and defamiliarized it. He had to gain a distance from that language in order to ‘accommodate’ it in a new ‘form’ (see Driver 1997: 218-219), laying it bare in his own artistic expression rather than merely stewing its terms across his texts.

Beckett drew heavily on the ‘Psychology Notes’ to create Murphy’s world, both big and little. So it is unsurprising to find another explicit reference to the passage on Gestalt psychology in the dialogue between Murphy and Neary early in the novel: ‘And then?’ said Murphy. ‘Back to Teneriffe and the apes?’ (Beckett 2009b: 5; see Ackerley 2010, 37). Beckett’s take on the material from Woodworth is not only sceptical, but parodic:

Köhler’s studies on apes at German anthropoid station of Teneriffe [sic] during the war. Did the apes possess insight? Was their learning more than a mere matter of trial & terror [sic], as concluded by Thorndike? Köhler was able to show that the apes did possess insight, provided they were allowed to see all the elements in the situation (its pattern), instead of being placed in such a blind situation as a box, maze, etc., that they could close gaps. [...] Therefore, Insight essential in learning (TCD MS 10971/7/12-3)

As Feldman points out: ‘Insofar as the “Psychology Notes” were fodder for the writing process, nothing beats R. S. Woodworth’s *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*, comprising a quarter of Beckett’s total psychological notes’ (Feldman 2004: 102). Beckett’s notes on each of the psychological schools presented by Woodworth are brief but detailed, and indicate his

knowledge of the various systems of thought within psychology. For instance, Beckett's recording of the experiment conducted by Kurt Koffka, who, like Wolfgang Köhler, rooted affective learning in 'insight & not trial & error' (TCD MS 10971/7/12-3) is especially significant: 'Experiment of 2 boxes placed side by side, box A grey, empty, box B darker grey containing food. The animal learns to go to B. Then box C darker grey than B substituted for box A. Animal goes to C. I.e., he has responded to the situation as a whole, as a light configuration, & not a single stimulus' (TCD MS 10971/7/12). Feldman observes:

Twenty years later, Köhler's study acts as the setting and the events in *Act Without Words I*, "A mime for one player": "He takes up small cube, puts it on big one, tests their stability, gets up on them and is about to reach carafe [marked "WATER"] when it is pulled up a little way and comes to rest beyond his reach". Revealing the intertextual reference affords a lovely contrast between Köhler's apes as "can-ers" in terms of conceptual learning, and Beckett's mime as a "non-can-er", with relief ever beyond reach. Beckett's source for *Act Without Words I* is thus not Köhler in any direct sense, but Köhler via Woodworth. (Beckett 2006: 106)

This suggests two key points regarding Beckett's creative process. First, he creatively transformed his sources years, even decades, later in his works. Yet it is likely that Beckett consulted his notes only at certain points during the creative process, relying for the most part on his excellent memory during composition. A reading of Beckett's textual corpus (including the manuscripts) with the notes to hand can alert us to a dense thicket of themes and possible verbal echoes that we might otherwise not notice – even if some connections remain more tentative and arguable than others. Such an approach trains the reader's mind to notice fresh connections between the notes and Beckett's text and (where relevant) his *avant-textes*. Furthermore, the 'distance' from psychoanalysis that emerges in the 'Psychology Notes' prepares the reader for its creative transformation into the modes of textual 'resistance' encountered in the works themselves. The genetic examples in the next chapter will address this crucial matter.²⁷ The second key point concerns the notion of artistic expression through 'showing' rather than 'telling' alluded to above: there is a drastic difference between *Murphy*'s superficial talk of 'apes' and the non-can-er's acting out the ape's predicament in *Act Without*

²⁷ I will refer to the Grove Press editions (as cited in the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project) when the Grove Press texts and the drafts show no significant variation. That is, my consistent practice throughout will be to refer to variants with long MS numbers only if there is a substantial variation between these and the published texts. Moreover, I need to point out that since I am searching for any evidence at all of links between the psychology notes and any aspect of the genesis or published variants of a text, I have decided not to differentiate examples that appear in the draft manuscripts from those that appear in the published text.

Words I, with its subtle evolutionary and existential implications. Although both are instances of Beckett's borrowing from the same passage in the 'Psychology Notes', the former merely flaunts psychological jargon; the latter dramatises the existential condition of an ape-like human.

The 'Psychology Notes' and *Murphy*

Beckett's use of the 'Psychology Notes' in *Murphy* served a double function. First, it was a way out of the creative impasses or textual deadlocks that appeared in the course of composition. Secondly, it afforded Beckett his first opportunity to get inside the mind of the neurotic, the notes being the basis of a systematic exploration. Murphy's refuge in the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (MMM) recalls Beckett's visit to the Bethlem Royal Hospital, where Geoffrey Thompson worked between February and October 1935. The MMM in *Murphy* was in fact modelled upon the latter. Indeed, Beckett refers to visiting 'Bedlam' in the letter of 22 September 1935 to MacGreevy: 'I was down at Bedlam this day week & went round the wards for the first time, with scarcely any sense of horror, though I saw everything, from mild depression to profound dementia' (Beckett 2009: 277). Beckett transforms this experience into Murphy's tour through the MMM wards, guided by Bom, with tragicomic effect: 'Some [patients] were at matins, some in the gardens, some could not get up, some would not, some simply had not. But those that he did see were not at all the terrifying monsters that might have been imagined from Ticklepenny's account' (Beckett 2009b: 105-106). Murphy's affinity for the patients enables him to spot a subtle difference between the patients who were unable to move and those who *would not* get up – the latter manifesting inertia, ennui, or alienation. Although no psychological terminology occurs in this case, Beckett's special knowledge of medical jargon can be detected throughout *Murphy*. The narrator's account continues:

Melancholics, motionless and brooding, holding their heads or bellies according to type. Paranoids, feverishly covering sheets of paper with complaints against their treatment or verbatim reports of their inner voices. A *hebephrenic* playing the piano intently. A *hypomanic* teaching slosh to a *Korsakow's syndrome*. An *emaciated schizoid*, petrified in a toppling attitude as though condemned to an eternal *tableau vivant*, his left hand rhetorically extended holding a cigarette half smoked and out, his right, quivering and rigid, pointing upward.²⁸

They caused Murphy no horror. The most easily identifiable of his immediate feelings were respect and unworthiness. (Beckett 2009b: 106; my emphasis)

²⁸ See Ackerley's *Demented Particulars* for a thorough discussion of the schizoid conditions (2010: 151-152).

A little later in the novel, Beckett's turn away from psychoanalysis, his distrust of its promises, and his fascination with the mental life of asylum patients are elided into Murphy's revelations at the MMM: 'In the presence of this issue (psychiatric-psychotic) between the life from which he had turned away and the life of which he had no experience, except as he hoped inchoately in himself, he could not fail to side with the latter' (Beckett 1955: 111). Murphy expects his 'esteem for the patients' to increase with every hour, alongside his 'loathing of the text-book attitude towards them' – which he dubs the 'complacent scientific conceptualisation that made contact with outer reality the index of mental well-being' (Beckett 2009b: 111). Murphy's scorn for the 'text-book attitude', as well as the 'adjustment to reality' – rather than the 'development of fantasy' (an attribute of the unconscious) (TCD 10971/8/21) – echoes the contempt for the 'reality principle' traceable to Beckett's 'Psychology Notes', especially the entries on Jones. Beckett's initial notes on Jones's *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* open by describing two principal systems of the mental life:

The 2 Systems.

2 principles of mental life, the pleasure-pain (Lust-Unlust) principle (primary system) & the reality principle (secondary system). Inadequate transformation of former into latter produces neuroses. Even when approximation to level of reality principle has been attained, there is a constant tendency to revert to the simpler level. Sleep is a reversion to the Lust-Unlust principle. (TCD 10971/8/1)

This passage throws new light on Murphy's fondness for 'sleep, Sleep son of Erebus and Night, Sleep half-brother to the Furies' (Beckett 2009b: 110).²⁹ This is a state in which Murphy can be 'impervious to reality', one which provides him with the opportunity to revert to the primary system, that is, the pleasure-pain principle. In addition to the six clinical qualities of the unconscious, Beckett's notes on Jones also list eight psychological attributes of the unconscious. The first two of the latter are the 'Lust-Unlust principle, exclusive of reality principle', and 'timelessness', marked by an 'imperviousness to reality' (TCD MS 10971/8/9-10).

²⁹ For a note on Beckett's own sleeping habits and the nickname of Oblomov given to him by Peggy Guggenheim, see Everett & Maxwell 2006: 158.

A complete overview of Beckett's fascination with the qualities of the unconscious will be essayed below. For the moment, Murphy's doubts concerning the desirability of adjustment to 'outer reality' and his diatribes against neat scientific definitions is instructive:

The nature of outer reality remained obscure. The men, women and children of science would seem to have as many ways of kneeling to their facts as any other body of illuminati. The definition of outer reality, or of reality short and simple, varied according to the sensibility of the definer. But all seemed agreed that contact with it, even the layman's fuzzy contact, was a rare privilege. (Beckett 2009b: 111)

Beckett's stress upon the gap between the demands of reality and the fantasy life of the neurotic, the 'big' and the 'little' worlds of *Murphy*, runs throughout both the 'Psychology Notes' and the novel's narrative. Especially revealing in this respect are the MMM episodes in which Beckett ostentatiously shows off his knowledge of psychology while simultaneously disparaging its 'complacent' theorisation and objectives. According to the 'Psychology Notes', the function of '[p]sychoanalytical treatment of the neuroses (& in part also of the psychoses) consists in *breaking down barrier between conscious & unconscious* & establishing a free flow of feeling from deeper to more superficial layers of the mind' (TCD MS 10971/8/10; my emphasis). For Murphy, however, this treatment has a false aim: to 'bridge the gulf, translate the sufferer from his own pernicious little private dunghheap to the glorious world of discrete particles' (Beckett 2009b: 111).

Beckett and Murphy seem to be of the same mind in broader terms. In response to MacGreevy's advice that he prolong Murphy's death scene at the mortuary, Beckett expressed concern, in a letter of 7 July 1936, about deliberately keeping it as detached and concise as possible. Beckett maintained this way would be faithful to the attitude to Murphy found in the whole of the novel, echoing the realisation of his earlier distance and isolation from others:

The point you raise is one that I have given a good deal of thought to. Very early on, when the mortuary and Round Pond scenes were in my mind as the necessary end, I saw the difficulty and danger of so much following Murphy's own "end". There seemed 2 ways out. One was to let the death have its head in a frank climax and the rest be definitely epilogue (by some such means as you suggest. I thought for example of putting the game of chess there in a section by itself.) And the other, which I chose and tried to act on, was to keep the death subdued and go on as coolly and finish as briefly as possible. I chose this because it seemed to me to consist better with the treatment of Murphy throughout, with the mixture of compassion, patience,

mockery and “tat twam asi”³⁰ that I seemed to have directed on him throughout, with the sympathy going so far and no further (then losing patience) as in the short statement of his mind’s fantasy of itself. There seemed to me always the risk of taking him too seriously and separating him too sharply from the others. As it is I do not think the mistake (Aliosha mistake) has been altogether avoided. A rapturous recapitulation of his experience following its “end” would seem to me exactly the sort of promotion that I want to avoid; and an ironical one is I hope superfluous. (Beckett 2009: 350)

Knowlson infers from this that Beckett may have felt ‘too close to Murphy and that Murphy is certainly too close to him’ (Knowlson 1997: 216). Indeed, Beckett’s emphasis on authorial ‘avoidance’ is a mark of his conscious textual resistance to structural drawbacks in the books he was reading – in this instance Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* – in terms of their plot, characterisation, or thematic development. The point made in the letter was that Dostoevsky used Aliosha as an authorial mouthpiece, allowing him far too much space, more than the plot warranted. This is the mistake Beckett sought to avoid by adopting a more distanced, ironic authorial treatment of Murphy. Similarly, Beckett’s indulging in learned namedropping psychological detail in *Murphy*, though critical and ironic, was superseded by a deeper exploration of the ‘abject’ as the use and critique of psychology and psychoanalytic sources became more and more structural, mature and modulated in the later works. It is my contention that this later fascination with the idea of abjection, ironically deployed by Beckett to resist and undermine the language of the psychology textbook, evinces the attraction-repulsion mechanism, and became a part of his lifelong efforts to find a new form to express the ineffable in his art.

Beckett’s effort better to understand his own psychological mechanics, and the mind of the neurotic, extended beyond therapy and notetaking on relevant material from the domains of psychology and psychoanalysis. As mentioned above, he not only visited mental patients in person, but also attended a lecture by Jung in the company of Bion (Beckett 2009: 282). Beckett’s letter to MacGreevy of 8 October 1935 letter mingles praise and scepticism of Jung:

He [Jung] struck me as a kind of super AE, the mind infinitely ample, provocative & penetrating, but the same cuttle-fish’s discharge & escapes from the issue in the end. He let fall some

³⁰ “Tat twam asi” (Sanskrit, that thou art) is a phrase drawn from the *Chandogya Upanishad* (c. 600 BC) and taken up by Arthur Schopenhauer in the essay ‘Character’. Schopenhauer differentiates between two ways of ‘regarding the world’: the first looks on all others with indifference as ‘not ourselves’; the second, which he calls the ‘tat-twam-asi – this-is-thyself principle’, views all others as ‘identical with ourselves’ (Schopenhauer 1926: 95).

remarkable things nevertheless. [...] The mind is I suppose the best Swiss, Lavater & Rousseau, mixture of enthusiasm & Euclid, a methodical rhapsode. [...] but I should think in the end less than the dirt under Freud's nails. (Beckett 2009: 282)

'Dementia' exerted a fascination for Beckett, evident both in the entries in his 'Psychology Notes' – especially those on Karin Stephen's chapters on 'The Mouth Stage' and 'The Excretory Stage', and Ernest Jones's chapters on 'Narcissism' and 'Sublimation' – and in its application in *Murphy*. Murphy's identification with Mr. Endon, a schizophrenic (dubbed a 'paranoid paraphrenic') at the MMM, advances this idea rather explicitly:

Mr. Endon was a schizophrenic of the most amiable variety, at least for the purposes of such humble and envious outsider as Murphy. [...] His inner voice did not harangue him, it was unobtrusive and melodious, a gentle continuo in the whole consort of his hallucinations. The bizarrerie of his attitudes never exceeded a stress laid on their grace. In short, a psychosis so limpid and imperturbable that *Murphy felt drawn to it as Narcissus to his fountain*. (Beckett 2009b: 116; my emphasis)

The famous epigraph to Chapter 6 of the novel, '*Amor intellectualis quo murphy se ipsum amat*' (Beckett 2009b: 69) – Beckett's adaptation of a phrase in Spinoza's *Ethics* via Windelband (see Feldman 2004: 71-73; Windelband 1893: 410) – pinpoints Murphy's narcissistic tendencies (see Knowlson 1997: 216-219). These recall his paraphrenic leanings³¹ and his withdrawal from Celia's love in favour of love of himself, evident especially in his ambiguous affinity for Mr. Endon, his mirror image. In his 'Psychology Notes', Beckett equates 'paraphrenia' with 'dementia praecox' as one of the five varieties of narcissism, an insight gleaned from Jones's work: 'Essence of paraphrenia (dementia praecox) is withdrawal of libido from object & its restoration to subject, with concomitant megalomania and egocentricity' (TCD MS 10971/8/4).

Murphy feels nearest to Mr. Endon when he tucks him in bed and looks into the fountain of his eyes only to see his own image: 'Murphy had often inspected Mr. Endon's eyes, but never with such close and prolonged attention as now. [...] They were all set, Murphy and Mr. Endon, for a butterfly kiss, if that is still the correct expression' (Beckett 2009b: 155-156). The fascination with the 'gaze' and Murphy's wordplay on the 'seen-unseen' continue:

³¹ Paraphrenia is paranoid schizophrenia, a mental disorder characterised by an organised system of flights from reality or paranoid delusions but without loss or deterioration of intellect.

Kneeling at the bedside, the hair starting in thick black ridges between his fingers, his lips, nose and forehead almost touching Mr. Endon's, seeing himself stigmatised in those eyes that did not see him, Murphy heard words demanding so strongly to be spoken that he spoke them, right into Mr. Endon's face, Murphy who did not speak at all in the ordinary way until spoken to, and not always even then.

‘the last at last seen of him
himself unseen by him
and of himself’

A rest.

‘The last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Endon was Mr. Murphy unseen by Mr. Endon. This was also the last Murphy saw of Murphy.’ (Beckett 2009b: 156)

Beckett may well have built Murphy's character out of conditions such as ‘paraphrenia’, itself a variety of schizophrenia, with its symptoms of anxiety, aloofness and doubts about identity, as well as those of ‘homosexuality’ and ‘(intellectual) love’.³² Put another way, what Beckett in the ‘Psychology Notes’ dubbed the ‘[d]epts of dementia accompanied by preoccupation with the dejecta’ (TCD MS 10971/8/17), another insight concerning schizophrenia/paraphrenia drawn from Jones, finds structural expression in the body of the novel. Murphy's fugitive and inchoate flights from bodily ‘being’ to mental ‘non-being’ – bound in his rocking-chair, or taking refuge in the asylum – eventually culminate in the annihilation of ‘body, mind, and soul’ in his garret thanks to ‘excellent gas, superfine chaos’ (Beckett 2009b: 158). In turn, reduced to inorganic nonexistence,³³ Murphy's remains are paradoxically sublimated as ‘dejecta’ on the pub floor in the novel's conclusion:

By closing time the body, mind and soul of Murphy were freely distributed over the floor of the saloon; and before another dayspring greyned the earth had been swept away with the sand, the beer, the butts, the glass, the matches, the spits, the vomit. (Beckett 2009b: 171)

³² According to the ‘Psychology Notes’, narcissism is related to five conditions, namely ‘(1) Homosexuality (2) Primitivism (3) The Paraphrenias (4) Organic disease (5) Love’ (TCD MS 10971/8/4). Beckett summarised Jones's explanations of these conditions in his notes, devoting a separate entry to each. See the ‘Psychology Notes’ (TCD MS 10971/8/4-5).

³³ For a discussion of Beckett's Atomist joke, Beckett is here drawing on Democritus's idea that both body and soul perish in death, see Ackerley 2010: 211-212.

The 'Psychology Notes' beyond *Murphy*

Following Beckett's artistic evolution from *Murphy* to the Three Novels (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*)³⁴ and beyond necessitates a gradual training of the critical attention. Although some of the early references to the 'Psychology Notes' reappear in the later texts, Beckett's creative use of the notes changes over time, though the sceptical attitude of the early texts remains constant. It may be possible to document some of these changes and references to the 'Psychology Notes'. Some will necessarily remain speculative, but this is a risk that we must take if we are to propose significant connections to explore. The notion of 'gerontophilia', for example, appears in both *Murphy* and the later novels. Beckett turns to this insight from his 'Psychology Notes', as well as from real-life experience of his time in London, in order to set up the last chapter depicting Mr. Kelly's flying his kite. One of the entries in the glossary at the end of Beckett's notes on Jones's *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* is '[g]erontophilia: special fondness for old people' (TCD MS 10971/8/18), a trait evoked by the portrait of Mr. Kelly in this scene. As Feldman observes, Beckett links Jones's reading of this character trait to 'artistic utility', but also to 'personal experience', as in his letter to MacGreevy of 8 September 1935, three weeks after he started writing *Murphy* (2006: 80): 'I begin to think I have gerontophilia on top of the rest. The little shabby respectable old men you see on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, pottering about doing odd jobs in the garden, or flying kites immense distances at the Round Pond, Kensington.' (Beckett 2009: 274). Previously unnoticed, however, is the implicit use of 'gerontophilia' in *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*. Malone notes: 'When young the old filled me with wonder and awe. Bawling babies are what dumbfound me now' (Beckett 1956: 44). Whereas the young Beckett's report about his feelings for old men is sincere and even a little romantic, the later mature writer equivocates about the proclivity in *Molloy*, using parodic language that kicks against the pricks of psychoanalytic language. *Molloy*'s encounter with a charcoal-burner in the forest reminds him of his 'tender' feelings for old men: 'I might have loved him, I think, if I had been seventy years younger', a reflection that is immediately countered: 'But that's not certain. For then he too would have been younger by as much, oh not quite as much, but much younger' (Beckett 1955: 112). As his account of this encounter continues, *Molloy*'s thoughts and feelings of 'love' reveal themselves as linked to his mother, the entire scene ending in a painful farce:

³⁴ Originally published in French as *Molloy* (1951), *Malone meurt* (1951), *L'Innommable* (1953). Later rendered by Beckett into English as *Molloy* (1955; with Patrick Bowles), *Malone Dies* (1956), *The Unnamable* (1958). I shall refer to these texts as the 'Three Novels' when referring to them collectively.

I never really had much love to spare, but all the same I had my little quota, when I was small, and it went to the old men, when it could. And I even think I had time to love one or two, oh not with true love, no, nothing like the old woman [...] Ah I was a precocious child, and then I was a precocious man [...] I say charcoal-burner, but I really don't know. I see smoke somewhere. That's something that never escapes me, smoke. [...] I asked him to show me the nearest way out of the forest. I grew eloquent. His reply was exceedingly confused. Either I didn't understand a word he said, or he didn't understand a word I said, or he knew nothing, or he wanted to keep me near him. It was towards this fourth hypothesis that in all modesty I leaned, for when I made to go, he held me back by the sleeve. So I smartly freed a crutch and dealt him a good dint on the skull. That calmed him. The dirty old brute. (Beckett 1955: 112-113)

Psychoanalytic language is the creative source for both Malone's and Molloy's reflections; however, the abandonment of the early self-conscious use of psychological terminology for a new distortion and ambiguity, or 'vaguening' as it were, of psychological *ideas* signals Beckett's creative maturity towards a more complex and ambivalent mode of writing. The fondness for old men in *Murphy* lies behind Molloy's similar feeling; however, that feeling receives a different treatment in a passage that starts with the idea of love for an old man, and then for his own mother, yet ends in a violent scene of hatred and aggression against 'the dirty old man' (MS-WU-MSS008-3-49: 99), or, in the published version, the 'dirty old brute'. Perhaps Molloy's aggression is a form of transference, a redirection of the violence that Molloy sometimes directs against his mother.

More obscurely, Beckett seems to be drawing a parallel between the charcoal-burner and the psychoanalyst as both deal with 'smoke'. The term 'chimney sweeping' appears in Beckett's notes on Rank: 'Psychoanalysis invented by the first patient whom Breuer treated in 1881 & whose case (*Anna O---*) was published 1895 in the *Studien über Hysterie*. Called by patient herself the talking cure or chimney sweeping' (TCD MS 10971/8/34). Molloy is 'really' uncertain that the man is a charcoal-burner. He encounters the old man and, after a 'long dialogue ... interspersed with groans', asks for directions: 'He did not know. He was born in the forest probably and had spent his whole life there' (Beckett 1955: 113). The charcoal-burner, who may be a figure of the psychoanalyst, was born in the dark, spent a lifetime there, and will remain in the dark. His words are confused and make no sense to Molloy. Not knowing and unable to know, he cannot help Molloy to 'know'. Eventually, 'used to not knowing where I was going' (Beckett 1955: 59), and with no help from the old man, he remains in a ditch in the dark forest. It is the very obscurity of the figure that is important: he ends up as part of a confused psychic mass of figures that cannot be differentiated, which means that the chimney

sweeping cannot be completed. These are mere hints in the text and could easily be missed by one not alerted to them by the ‘Psychology Notes’. Yet the value of the ‘Psychology Notes’ lies beyond this kind of detection. Beckett’s notes operate as a kind of undercurrent running below the language and the textual conflicts. They constitute a barely recognisable flow of parody that only enhances their significance as a kind of guide to reconstructing the creative process.

Some of the points discussed above draw specifically on Beckett’s reading of Ernest Jones, who takes up a conspicuous part of the notes. Ernest Jones mattered to Beckett for several reasons. First, he was not only a psychoanalyst but also a neurologist. This might have fascinated Beckett, who was interested in medicine and the medical aspects of mental operations, perhaps hoping that a neurological perspective could more scientifically account for complications of the mind. In *Samuel Beckett and Experimental Psychology: Perception, Attention, Imagery* (2020), Joshua Powell seeks to

specify a way in which Samuel Beckett might be thought of as a scientifically experimental writer, rather than solely as a writer of the avant-garde, or one who is simply innovative. I have suggested that Beckett produced aesthetic experiments that combine with a great deal of psychological experimentation in working towards an understanding of what it is to experience and perform in the world. (Powell 2020: 179)

This suggestion does not seem far-fetched in light of Beckett’s first typescripts devoted to a series of eight lectures addressed to Cambridge medical students by Karin Stephen and compiled in her *The Wish to Fall Ill, A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine*, with a preface by Ernest Jones. Secondly, Jones was an infatuated follower of Freud: his friend, colleague, and biographer. Although there is no direct evidence in the ‘Psychology Notes’ that Beckett read Freud, his confident pronouncement that Jung’s theories are ‘in the end less than the dirt under Freud’s nails’ (Beckett 2009: 282) is a clear sign of familiarity. Beckett’s main mediator of Freud may indeed have been his disciple Jones. Finally, as the first English-speaking practitioner of psychoanalysis, Jones gained prominence as the key exponent of the school in the English-speaking community. It was more convenient for Beckett to consult psychoanalytic textbooks in English than in German. In *Freud’s Wizard: The Enigma of Ernest Jones* (2006), Brenda Maddox highlights Jones’s importance: ‘As President of both the *International Psychoanalytical Association* and the *British Psycho-Analytical Society* in the 1920s and 1930s, Jones exercised a formative influence in the establishment of their organisations,

institutions and publications' (Maddox 2006: 1). It is not surprising that Jones's books make up the longest chapter in the 'Psychology Notes'.

However, Beckett's hope that he would find scientific explanations for neurotic phenomena in Jones, and others, appears to have diminished, and the notes contain critical comments on Jones's books. It is likely that his curiosity about what the neurology of the time had to say about these phenomena encouraged him to proceed, perhaps thinking that it would offer valid explanations for the complex mechanisms of the neurotic mind. Yet as he pressed on with Jones, he must have felt disappointed and disillusioned to find another 'one-track-mind' (as he described Alfred Adler), parroting or regurgitating Sigmund Freud. Hence his pejorative references to 'Erogenous Jones' and 'Freudchen' (TCD MS 10971/8/1; TCD MS 10971/8/12).

Murphy can again help illustrate Beckett's creative use of the 'Psychology Notes' and allows us to trace some of the ways in which this use changes over time, admitting more ambiguous attitudes towards the material. Mr. Cooper's pathological condition is introduced simply: 'He never sat down and never took off his hat' (Beckett 2009b: 36). Mr. Cooper suffers from 'acathisia'. 'Acathisia i.e., inability to sit down' (TCD MS 10971/8/24) is Beckett's first entry from his brief notes on Wilhelm Stekel's *Psychoanalysis and Suggestion Therapy*. Beckett's knowledge of this condition appears to come directly from Alfred Adler's *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*:

In toto, we get the picture of a man who does not want to play the game, a dog in the manger.

Non me rebus, sed mihi res (Horace to Maecenas), expressing itself as an acathisia. (TCD MS 10971/8/24)

Cooper's other psychopathological condition also relates to the 'caul'; that is, his 'inability to master the birth trauma' (Feldman 2004: 155). Feldman highlights Beckett's 'longstanding interest in the caul, from Wylie's pleadings with the CG in *Murphy* and Jung's "never properly been born" in the Appendix to *Watt* (1953), to Mrs. Rooney's comments in *All That Fall* or Belacqua's earlier pleasantly purgatorial 'wombtomb' dreams and "The Expelled's" later expulsions' (148). Yet, while these references to the pathological inability to sit down or take off one's hat receive explicit statement, it is the music-hall routine of the hats in *Godot* that implies the embryonic caul and the existential allegory of the human condition caught in a futile loop.

Fundamentally, while both Beckett's indulging in and resistance to the language of the psychology textbook are evident in *Murphy*, this dual effect is achieved chiefly through parodic coinages based on easily recognised textbook terminology. For example, 'panpygoptosis' ('all

bottom visible disease' [Knowlson 1997: 212]) is bestowed upon Miss Rosie Dew. She suffers from 'Duck's Disease', a 'distressing pathological condition in which the thighs are suppressed and the buttocks spring directly from behind the knees' (Beckett 2009b: 62). Beckett completes the picture of the dog-loving Miss Dew with a few final strokes from Adler's palette: 'Its aetiology remains obscure to all but the psychopathological wholehogs, who have shown it to be simply another embodiment of the neurotic *Non me rebus sed mihi res*' (Beckett 2009b: 62).³⁵ The nomenclature is witty, but largely a matter of brilliant surface. In contrast, the complexity and ambiguity of the attraction-repulsion procedure in the later texts highlight the importance of a critical training of the mind, in order to recognise images that are abstract, convoluted, and at times elusive and ineffable. Thus, Molloy's love for the old charcoal-burner defies the diagnosis of 'gerontophilia' when it abruptly turns into lethal aggression against him, exemplifying the absence of relation in Beckett's later writing. This scene complicates interpretation by invoking the idea of infantile psychology: the child's ambivalent love-hate relationship towards his parents, or even the formation of the split psyche, here the maternal versus the paternal, on which the structure of *Molloy*'s plot is modelled.

Both the early and the later texts demonstrate an ambivalence towards textbook psychoanalysis, in different ways and at different levels, and undermine a highly subjective practice that bases its explanations on a rationalistic system of thought: a practice that would rid the individual of his mental complications, but fails to keep its promise of liberation. I think *Murphy* is Beckett's first systematic attempt at a textual resistance against textbook psychology, ironically indulging in its language, which it turns on its head with little to no restraint. Beckett seems to treat his characters with all the coldness of an analyst treating his patients, measuring out their entire mental existence with a teaspoon or applying pathological labels to their bodies or states of mind. Such indulging in the language of the psychology textbook runs through Beckett's entire corpus; however, where it verges on Joycean know-how and parodic pedantry in *Murphy*, in the later works it begins to approximate the no-how of knowledge itself, the Beckettian search for the expression of the unknowable and ineffable (see Van Hulle 2008).

Murphy ended by 'closing time'. In a letter of 9 June 1936 to MacGreevy, Beckett wrote: 'I have finished Murphy, meaning I have put down last words of first version. Now I

³⁵ '*Non me rebus, sed mihi res* (Horace to Maecenas), expressing itself as an acathisia' appears in the 'Psychology Notes' (TCD MS 10971/8/30). For a discussion of this phrase ('Not me to things but things to me'), see Ackerley 2010: 109. As Matthew Feldman explains in *Beckett's Books*, 'The "wholehog" in this case is Alfred Adler' (Feldman 2006: 114).

have to go through it again. It reads something horrid. One should have a continuity-girl, like régisseurs' (Beckett 2009: 340). Beckett's critical attitude to his own writing indicates that he had some image of the creative perfection he sought. This self-critical outlook is also evident from another letter to MacGreevey of 27 June 1936, which reveals the amount of material cut from the first draft:

Murphy is finished & I shall send off three copies on Monday. One to you, one to Parsons & one to Charles. I could do more work on it but do not intend to. All the more grievous losses have been cut. It has been hard work the past month & I am very tired, of it & words generally. (Beckett 2009: 345)

This chapter has endeavoured to hone our perception of the Beckett's integration of the 'Psychology Notes' into his writing, in light of the distinctive features of my critical approach, which relies on the ambivalent attraction-repulsion argument: Beckett's simultaneous compulsion to adopt and reject the language of the psychoanalytic textbook that he was trying to understand and master in the 1930s. The 'Psychology Notes' help us perceive the evolution of Beckett's fascination with the abject and the irrational that inhere in textbook psychoanalysis, while at the same time revealing a sceptical resistance to its mastery. This resistance operates on two distinct levels: the direct and at times ostentatious use of psychological jargon in *Murphy*, and the more mature and complex transformation of psychological ideas for imagistic and allegorical use. Yet both trends serve the same purpose of undermining the language of the textbook. There is a propensity on Beckett's part to endow his characters with a language that they obsessively use but which never sufficiently defines them. This dramatic division implies an ambivalent attitude, one related to the distance Beckett sought from the siren call of a 'total cure' – and from turning becoming an analytic 'specimen' – in order to pursue his writing career and become an artist. This attraction-repulsion in relation to textbook psychology is vividly reflected in Beckett's letter to MacGreevey of 8 February 1935: 'I have finished with Adler. Another one track mind. Only the dogmatist seems able to put it across' (Beckett 2009: 245-246). This ambivalence reveals both his self-imposed task to grasp a body of knowledge obsessed with rational explanations of the human psyche, and also his intellectual alertness, a wish to evade its pitfalls and to distance himself from its subjective and rationalistic conceptualisations.

CHAPTER II

Beckett's thematic interests in the 'Psychology Notes'

This chapter examines certain key thematic interests recorded in the 'Psychology Notes' that Beckett developed and used to shape his treatment of the irrational and the abject, of chaos and breakdown, in the mental life of the neurotic. Some ideas he had encountered while undergoing analysis, or from friends like Geoffrey Thompson, later resident doctor at the Bethlehem Royal Hospital. However, in the mid-1930s, Beckett considerably deepened his knowledge of psychology and psychoanalysis through his notetaking. While there are clear and unambiguous examples of the 'Psychology Notes' in later texts, there is a considerable ambiguous grey area of cases where there may be some kind of recall or reference to their themes, but which would remain undetectable to a reader who had not encountered these notes. One aim of this study is therefore to prepare the reader to recognise such thematic strains. With close reference to the terms and concepts in the 'Psychology Notes', this chapter will discuss some of their themes in relation to Beckett's writing, all the time remaining aware of his ambiguous attitude towards the material and the 'scientific' claims of the writers that are the subject of his notes. These themes – selfhood, the unconscious, anxiety neurosis, primitive impulses, characterology, birth trauma and symbolism – revolve around the categories of birth, the role of trauma on character formation, and the mental life of the individual.

My focus will be upon the methodical record of Beckett's 'Psychology Notes', and his occasional use of parody, textual reversal, sceptical or parodic commentary and authorial intervention. Since the same psychological terms occasionally appear under different headings, and are approached from different perspectives by different writers, some caution is required. That is, schools of psychology differ among each other, and, within psychoanalysis itself, there are differences between the theories of Freud, Jung, Jones, Adler, Stekel, Stephen and Rank, making each individual position controversial. They are not equivalent just because Beckett made notes about them. But overall Beckett, in drawing either on the notes or his memories of them, does not seem to be preoccupied with such distinctions. Fifteen years later, when writing the 'Three Novels', for instance, he does not consistently apply any one theory, but instead deploys a wide array of symptoms and symbols from the 'Psychology Notes', amalgamated in the creative process. This chapter focuses on the role of Beckett's synoptic knowledge of the

psychology of his time – and his attention to specific themes, concepts, psychic patterns, and mental conditions as depicted especially within psychoanalytic textbooks – in maturing his creative process.

The split/fragmented self and the schizoid voice

Beckett's knowledge of the split self, that is, of the subject as an internally conflicted formation, something unstable and potentially multiple, probably initially came from Arthur Schopenhauer, whose influence is traceable in Beckett's monograph *Proust*. Yet Freud's *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* – especially lecture XXXI, 'The Dissection of the Psychological Personality' (also entitled 'The Anatomy of the Mental Personality', and in turn derived from chapters I to IV of *The Ego and the Id* [1923]) – offered a formal psychological model for the phenomenon. And that model served as a creative impetus for Beckett: one to play with and parody (as in *Molloy*), but also as something capable of channelling or focusing ideas that had already been part of his thinking. In his notes, Beckett devoted a page to the schematisation of the Super-ego, the Ego and the Id:

Super-ego: heir to Oedipus complex. A special function within the ego representing demand for restriction & rejection. Acute case of over-severity of super-ego towards ego appears in the melancholic attack. Cp. delusions of observation of certain psychotics, whose observing function (super-ego) has become sharply separated from the ego & projected into external reality.

The Ego, (including super-ego), not coextensive with the conscious (since patient is frequently unconscious of his resistances), just as the repressed is not coextensive with the unconscious.

Id: Instinctual cathexes seeking discharge - that in our view is all that the id contains.

The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by contact with the external world. It borrows its energy from the id. The means by which it has separated itself off from one part of the id were repressions & resistances. Repressed material merges into the id. The poor ego has to serve three harsh masters & do its best to reconcile claims of all three. The three tyrants are: The external world, the super-ego & the id. Goaded on by the id, hemmed in by the super-ego, rebuffed by reality, the ego struggles with its economic task of reducing forces & influences working in it & upon it to some kind of unity. When it fails it breaks out into anxiety. Reality

anxiety in face of the outer world, moral anxiety in face of the super-ego, neurotic anxiety in the face of the id. (TCD MS 10971/7/6)³⁶

This schema appears immediately after his opening notes on Karin Stephen and is followed by Freud's diagram of the tripartite psyche. Freud's text includes a diagram of the structural relations of the mental personality which Beckett drew by hand. Freud's schematisation leads to a split self: the ego being a site of perpetual conflict between the id and the superego. Importantly, this entails an inherent tension or conflict in the 'I that is not an I', neither whole nor coherent. Indeed, as Damian Love has shown in his doctoral thesis, *Samuel Beckett and the Art of Madness*, Beckett was drawn to a much broader tradition of schizophrenia and the schizoid personality, from Samuel Johnson's mental collapse to Hölderlin's madness (Love 2004c). In *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama* (2007), Erik Tønning links this to Beckett's interest in Freud's precursor, Schopenhauer, and his 'doctrine of the Will at war with itself' (Tønning 2007: 136):

Therefore the parts of the body must correspond completely to the chief demands and desires by which the will manifests itself; they must be the visible expression of these desires. Teeth, gullet, and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse; grasping hands and nimble feet correspond to the more indirect strivings of the will which they represent. Just as the general human form corresponds to the general human will, so to the individually modified will, namely the character of the individual, there corresponds the individual bodily structure, which is therefore as a whole and in all its parts characteristic and full of expression. (Schopenhauer 1966a: 108, qtd. in Tønning 2007: 136)

Schopenhauer's 'determined reductivism' accounts for 'the sense of displacement – a distinctly pathological detachment from, or avoidance of, the "I"' (Tønning 2007: 133) – an 'I' that is in constant denial of itself, especially in the 'Three Novels'.³⁷ In *The Unnamable*, the voice's declaration, '[a]s if it were I' (Beckett 1958: 118), points to the paradoxical character of denarration.³⁸ In this light, the notion of the self can be viewed as a textual process, one in which, as Finn Fordham indicates, it is made, unmade, and remade (see Fordham 2010: 7-16). More precisely, this matter recalls Fordham's idea that '*the self* is not a presupposition, but a

³⁶ This schema seemed sufficiently important to Beckett that he duplicated it in his notes on R. S. Woodworth's *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*, under 'Psychoanalysis & Related Schools' (TCD MS 10971/7/14).

³⁷ This is addressed in Beckett's notes on melancholia and the split ego in Ernest Jones (TCD MS 10971/8/6).

³⁸ See Brian Richardson's 'Denarration in Fiction: Erasing the Story in Beckett and Others', where he defines denarration as 'a kind of narrative negation in which a narrator denies significant aspects of her narrative that had earlier been presented as given' (Richardson 2001: 168).

consequence, an effect, a product of *textual construction, of writing processes*' (Fordham 2010: 15). From this perspective, the self becomes just one more linguistic form to be played with, manipulated, renounced and redone: 'The renunciation of the self in this process is a renunciation of conscious intention and also a surrender of any clear concept of the product: the goal of writing is instead the process itself, a particular *way* of producing' (Fordham 2010: 11). Beckett achieves a 'particular way of producing' partly by creating a tension between the text and the psychoanalytic language that it simultaneously employs and defies simultaneously. This attraction-repulsion ambivalence towards textbook psychoanalysis, not least towards its attitude to the ideas of rationality and abjection, makes Beckett's writing, not least *L'Innommable*, notoriously hard to unravel. In other words, Beckett's texts press the 'rational drive' characteristic of psychoanalytic textbook language to the point of a 'reductio ad absurdum', revealing its inner irrationality. The 'Psychology Notes' provide the starting-point.

The Unconscious

The different views of various psychological schools regarding the unconscious may have helped Beckett to relativise the notion, not fully committing him to any one definition, but allowing him to draw freely on several images and ideas. Further, its philosophical heritage allowed a similar treatment, the unconscious appearing in a long line of intellectual discussion, as a nexus of linked ideas. Beckett was able to think flexibly about this history and the different definitions of the unconscious, without following any one psychoanalytic school – his preference for Freud notwithstanding. As Matthew Feldman points out, 'in demonstrating that consciousness may not be the totality of "mental reality" Leibniz, who in Jung's words first "postulated unconscious psychic activity", may well be the link between Beckett's philosophical and psychological readings' (Feldman 2004: 135). Beckett's knowledge of the Leibnizian 'unconscious mental states' (see Feldman 2004: 149-150) drew on Windelband's *petites perceptions*, yet according to Feldman, Beckett took Windelband's understanding that 'in Leibniz all threads of the old and the new metaphysics run together' one step further, 'using Leibniz as the methodological fulcrum for the "Interwar Notes" occupying Beckett's attention in the years before the start of *Murphy*' (Feldman 2004: 136). Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' are strewn with views on the unconscious, whose 'apotheosis' appears in the School of Psychoanalysis (TCD MS 10971/7/7).

Woodworth's *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* provides some insight into the unconscious, sometimes by analogy with the conscious mind. For instance, on Adler's *Individual Psychology*, Beckett noted (from Woodworth) that '[t]here are no warring entities,

conscious & unconscious constitute a dynamic whole. The conscious striving for superiority & the unconscious sense of inferiority' (TCD MS 10971/7/15). Alternatively, under 'C.G. Jung (b.1875). Analytic Psychology', he noted: 'The unconscious has a compensating function in respect of consciousness' (ibid). Woodworth advances a specifically Jungian definition of the unconscious:

The Unconscious: Jung distinguishes between racial & individual unconscious, the former the more fundamental & the source of individual conscious & unconscious both, rarely manifest in dreams & neuroses, but sometimes in the fantasies of the insane. The racial unconscious is hereditary & made up of instincts (primitive ways of acting) & archetypes or primordial ideas (primitive ways of thinking). Cp. Freud's Id. (TCD MS 10971/7/15-6)

The 'Psychology Notes' reveal that Beckett's encounter with the Freudian analysis of the unconscious and its mechanisms came via Stephen, although she disagrees with some of Freud's theories on mental functioning. According to Feldman, Stephen's 'assumption that consciousness [is] not the whole of mental life' (Stephen 1960: 6) recalls Leibniz (Feldman 2004: 163). This connection between the Leibnizian and Freudian views of the unconscious, obtained by Beckett mainly from secondary sources, could be regarded as the link that joins philosophy and psychology for him.

Beckett's attention to these disciplines, and especially their points of contact is further implied in his note on Ernest Jones's *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*: 'The key to problem of philosophical determinism is furnished by relation between conscious & unconscious' (TCD MS 10971/8/7). This is attested by a comprehensive, nearly page-long definition of the unconscious, along with an exhaustive synopsis comprising its six clinical and eight psychological attributes (TCD MS 10971/8/9-10), which Feldman considers 'in light of the concepts advanced by (especially Windelband's) Leibniz' (Feldman 2004: 136-137). Indeed, Beckett's notes indicate the philosophical underpinnings of different psychological conceptions of the unconscious:

The "Limbo" conception of the unconscious (Hartmann, Myer & Jung), as an obscure dumping-ground of the mind for the processes devoid of inherent initiative or any primary dynamic faculty, processes utterly inert & passive, as well as for another group of nascent processes for which the conscious personality is not yet ripe. Freud's conception of the unconscious is inductive & scientific as opposed to the a priori philosophic view of the Limboists. The

unconscious is essentially a function of repressing & consisting of mental material incompatible with the conscious personality. (TCD MS 10971/8/9)

Another instance of Beckett's 'recurring attention to unconscious drives, memories, and symbolism throughout his recorded psychoanalytic readings' (Feldman, 2004a: 150) appears later in the 'Psychology Notes' (TCD MS 10971/8/7-10, 22), which Feldman sees as a likely source for Molloy's 'well-known mechanism of association' (Beckett 1955: 64).

Infantile psychology and primitive impulses

Beckett's interest in infantile psychology and the continuing impact of primitive impulses upon the individual is also evident from his notes, especially those on Stephen and Jones. Beckett took six pages of notes on the eight chapters of Stephen's *The Wish to Fall Ill: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine*. Each chapter was originally a lecture addressed to medical students at the University of Cambridge.³⁹ This book was a rich source for Beckett's understanding of the psychology and mental processes of the child, especially as regards sexual development. Stephen emphasises how and to what extent the infantile mind can experience sexual repression and the way in which early repressed sexuality later impacts upon the life of the individual. Most of her book is concerned with the psychology of the child: particularly the development of the pleasure instincts and pleasure zones in early childhood. Beckett recorded an interest in infantile love objects, autoerotic activities, craving and disappointment, feelings of fear, shame, anxiety, guilt, retaliation, the castration complex, the Oedipus situation, and ensuing neurotic processes (TCD MS 10971/7/1-5). Indeed, evident at the very outset of the 'Psychology Notes' is an interest in primitive impulses, their repression, the ensuing rage and fear, and the formation of later neurotic disturbances: 'All psychogenic illness proceeds from [sic] deadlock between infantile sexuality & fear, aggression & rage' (TCD MS 10971/7/1). Some of these ideas seem to have been staged in *Krapp's Last Tape*. Krapp's regression to infantile behaviour, his craving for love objects such as his tape-recorder and the spools that he has accumulated and lived with over the years, the auto-erotic nature of the opening banana-sucking gag, the account of his desires and disappointments that the tapes reveal to the audience,

³⁹ These comprise: I. Origin of the Unconscious in Disappointment, Conflict and Repression. The Solution of Conflict by Illness; II. Obstacles in the way of investigating the Unconscious. Use of the Psychoanalytic Association Technique; III. Primitive Sexual Nature of the Unconscious; IV. Infantile Pleasure-seeking by the Mouth; V. Excretory Pleasure-seeking and Creation; VI. Phallic Pleasure-seeking. The Oedipus Complex and Castration Fears; VII. Anxiety and Guilt; and VIII. Defence Mechanisms. Primitive Mental Mechanisms. The Use of the Transference in Treatment.

the rage and aggression he directs against his love objects by sweeping the spoils off the table, and the repression he has suffered: 'Keep 'em under' (Beckett 1959: 17).

Beckett's notes on Stephen's book reveal his attention to the infantile stages of sexual development, namely, the oral, the excretory and the genital (these derive from Chapters IV, V and VI of Stephen's book). Covered here are '[i]nfantile love-objects' that are the most accessible means of pleasure-seeking for children: 'nipple & milk, urine over the mucous membrane, faeces' (TCD MS 10971/7/1). These infantile cravings comprise both external and internal organs according to Stephen, involving the mouth, throat, anus, urethra, lungs and genitals. Children's desires centring upon these areas lead to a 'discharge in some appropriate activity of the tension produced by craving', which, preceding a phase of rest, is 'frequently disappointed' (ibid). As a result, frustrated pleasure zones become a child's first enemies, engendering despair, rage or, later, repression. This is significant since Beckett in his work developed notions of fragmentation and the dismembered body, with each body part obstinately indulging its individual craving and each limb corresponding to a certain pain that afflicts the mind. Beckett's creatures never realise their desire for relief from craving or pain. Rather they are constantly appalled by the disappointment arising from some early internal tension or conflict, which, like children, they seem unable to outgrow. Consequently, they either repress this overpowering craving (as Mouth does in *Not I*) at the oral stage, or regress to an even earlier developmental stage, as Molloy does in the search for his mother, or fail in their attempts at sublimation like Krapp, whose intense repression of early disappointments provokes regression to early oral and anal developmental stages.

Beckett's first notes on Stephen are drawn from Chapters III and IV ('Primitive Sexual Nature of the Unconscious' and 'Infantile Pleasure-seeking by the Mouth'), but a second page is devoted to Chapter V ('Excretory Pleasure-seeking and Creation') on infantile excretory processes and the child's relation to its excretion. In *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work*, Paul Stewart argues that the 'anus/vagina conflation within Beckett's work might lead one to question the desirability of a new form of relation based on a shared experience of being born as excrement into an excremental world' (Stewart 2011: 13). The 'Psychology Notes' reveal Beckett's attention to the 'infantile cloacal theory of birth' explained by Jones (TCD MS 10971/8/17 & 19). More importantly, Jones's idea of the 'common ducts' enters Beckett's writing with Molloy's primitive ruminations about his confusion of the slit and the bung-hole in a woman with whom he had sexual intercourse. In like manner, the Unnamable's obsession with the womb-tomb and forms of 'waste' recall cognate 'cloacal' themes (see Rank 1929: 68, 163-164).

Along the same lines, Beckett summarises the oral and the excretory stages delineated by Stephen:

1st stage of pleasure instinct: oral.

2nd: excretory.

Erogenic anus & urethra.

Sympathy between semen & faeces.

Transpositions: mouth-anus-vagina, nipple-faeces-penis. (TCD MS 10971/7/2)

The main point here is that the child exerts power via excretion, a tool accessible for self-assertion, which, if thwarted, can lead to a loss of confidence on the part of the child, and consequently to psychosexual impotence later in life: ‘Hence adult depression at bad, rejoicing at good, stools’ (TCD MS 10971/7/2). This resonates with Krapp rejoicing at the infantile enunciation of ‘spool’ (oral pleasure) while suffering from hard stools (excretory pain). However, while Beckett draws on psychoanalytic textbook language to create Krapp’s oral and anal conditions, he simultaneously parodies these ideas: by giving his character the psychosomatic condition of ‘constipation’, Beckett deprives him of the psychological means of self-assertion, that is, good stools. Instead, he grants him reams of spools for self-expression, a creative source that seems to have superseded sterile creation for him. Hence the wordplay on the rhyming stool-spool and the ensuing pain-pleasure. Such complex confluences and distortions rooted in the psychoanalytic language of the irrational and the abject thus serve as a creative driver, significantly informing Beckett’s later texts.

In Beckett’s remaining notes on Stephen, two additional themes dominate: anxiety and the nature of psychogenic illness:

Three classes of anxiety: Primary, resulting directly from a state of tension; Secondary, lest such a state should recur; Tertiary, “mutilation” anxiety, lest the barriers should cave in & the repressed fantasies of sexualised cruelty be carried out in fact.

Vicious cycle of psychogenic illness: disappointment of desire, aggression, fear of results, object of desire turn into something terrifying, repudiation, disappointment, etc. (TCD MS 10971/7/4)

Thus, Molloy’s regressive journey towards maternal identification can be interpreted as the enactment of an early wish-fulfilment that is disappointed and gradually dissociated from the

conscious mind, finally being repressed by the unconscious. Molloy's relentless feelings of aggression and hatred towards his mother, the object of love and desire for the child, are an expression of the terror and repudiation that he experiences on his journey to being united, bonded and at one with the mother, a journey that leads instead to disappointment, separation, loss and dismissal.

In positing that the neurotic outlook is 'essentially primitive & ambivalent', Stephen identifies five 'characteristics of primitive (neurotic) processes':

- (1) Tolerance of inconsistency (ambivalence).
- (2) Belief in omnipotence of thoughts & wishes.
- (3) Confusion of fantasy with fact, wish with deed.
- (4) Unimportance of knowing, all-importance of wishing.
- (5) Failure to distinguish things emotionally identified. (TCD MS 10971/7/4)

Molloy's fantasy of resembling his mother and Moran's fantasy of usurping his son may point to a single neurotic mind's confusion of fantasy with reality and of wishful thinking with accomplishment. Moreover, Molloy's confusion of the anal-genital ducts may indicate that his failure to distinguish the two originates in an early emotional identification of the pleasure deriving from both, a parodic conflation that distorts the psychoanalytic obsession with the object into confusion and chaos. And if for Malone, 'knowing' is associated with 'helplessness and will-lessness' (Beckett 1956: 108), for the Unnamable it surpasses the idea of 'wishing' itself and approximates a kind of 'non-wish' as he refutes the possibility of any cognition. Instead, he favours and stresses 'non-knowing' – 'it will never be known' (Beckett 1958: 109) – while sceptically questioning: 'Recriminations easily rebutted, if they chose to take the trouble, and had the leisure, to reflect on their inanity' (Beckett 1958: 121). In her book, Stephen elaborates on the significance of wishes in the infantile mind, which, after being repressed in the unconscious, can resurface later in life, an idea she links to the psychogenic 'danger' of 'not growing up' in the individual (Stephen 1960: 7).

Several phrases and insights concerning the subject of 'repressed infantile sexuality' repeatedly appear in Woodworth, providing further evidence of Beckett's attention to infantile mental processes: 'Corner stone of psychoanalysis: repressed infantile sexuality' (TCD MS 10971/7/13). Elsewhere, Beckett records the following:

- (1) Basis of Freudian repression. (Repressed

- (2)infantilism. infantile
 (3).....sexuality. sexuality) (TCD MS 10971/7/14)⁴⁰

Stress upon ‘infantile mental processes’ is evident later in Beckett’s typescript, this time from Jones. Relatedly, the sixth of Jones’s ‘7 main principles’ detailed under ‘Freud’s Psychology’ reads: ‘(6) Extreme importance of infantile mental processes. Main character traits determined by end of 5th year. Amnesia in respect of earliest mental processes due to suppression & sublimation of primitive wishes incompatible with adult standards & of others associated therewith’ (TCD MS 10971/8/2). Beckett also records a brief explanation of each attribute; for instance, in light of the first characteristic, the content of ‘the unconscious is essentially a function of repressing & consisting of mental material incompatible with the conscious personality’ (ibid). Likewise, the third attribute points to ‘its close relation to crude & primitive instincts’ while the fourth signifies ‘its infantile nature & origin’:

The splitting up of mentality takes place in 1st year of life, as a result of the conflict between congenital amoral & primordial endowments on the one hand & on the other the inhibiting social forces (some inborn but mostly acquired). The primordial impulses are repressed & their energy diverted to social aims, but they continue to exist underground & to manifest themselves circuitously & symbolically. (ibid)

Jones’s last characteristic marks the ‘predominantly sexual character’ of the content of the unconscious: ‘the sexual impulse being subjected to greater intensity of repression than any of the other primary instincts’ (ibid). This insight can arguably be linked to the absolute annihilation of procreative sex in Beckett’s work. For instance, Paul Stewart – albeit without recourse to the ‘Psychology Notes’ – investigates this kind of repression or rejection by Beckett’s characters in favour of sterile sex, and more importantly, as an alternative outlet leading to artistic creation.⁴¹

⁴⁰ A third instance covering ‘infantile sexuality’ in Woodworth also derives from this page in Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’:

Freudian superstructure: repressed infantile sexuality.
 Foundation: polarised wishful entities. (TCD MS 10971/7/14)

⁴¹ Two further traces in the ‘Psychology Notes’ of the infantile mind also derive from Jones. The first, relating to the idea of the primitive-infantile nature of the unconscious in psychoanalysis, appears under the heading ‘Sublimation’. Beckett notes: ‘The infantile mind is the core of the adult unconscious’. Later on the same page, he writes: ‘Barrier between infantile & adult mind, not only as between adult & child, but in the same individual’ (TCD MS 10971/8/18). For more material on ‘infantile mental processes’, see Jones 1912: 9. For further

The point is not that Beckett necessarily drew on a specific concept or theory from a specific source (though this may at times be true, as with his creative use and distortion of Freudian and Jungian theories), but, rather, that the amalgamation of certain themes and ideas gathered from different sources partly served as creative fodder in his writing. This distinction is significant for two reasons. First, as his notes attest, Beckett developed a broad knowledge of the ideas expressed in the psychoanalytic texts of his time. Secondly, his notes reveal his areas of special interest and attention by the recurrence of certain psychological themes as well as by his highlighting and underlining words and passages. However, Beckett's interest in and attention to such themes retain a certain degree of uncertainty and scepticism. My argument throughout this study stresses such ambivalence in the 'Psychology Notes', one reflected in Beckett's own writing. This is what I call the 'attraction-repulsion ambivalence' in his creative process.

Anxiety neurosis

Beckett's curiosity regarding anxiety neurosis is discernible everywhere in his notes. Some two years after their composition Beckett would diagnose himself as an 'obsessional neurotic':

I am utterly alone (no group even of my own kind) and without purpose alone and pathologically indolent and limp and opinionless and consternated. The little trouble I give myself, this absurd diary with its lists of pictures, serves no purpose, is only the act of an *obsessional neurotic*. Counting pennies would do just as well. (German Diaries [2/2/37])

In his notes, Beckett underlined the main argument advanced by Karin Stephen, for whom 'psychogenic' was synonymous with 'neurotic': 'Thesis: Psychogenic symptoms are defences designed to prevent anxiety from developing when repression threatens to give way' (TCD MS 10971/7/1). Stephen's original passage stressed the notion of the early 'dissociation' of the unconscious, arguing that 'psychogenic symptoms are produced by impulses which have been dissociated from the rest of the self' and that 'dissociation is produced to avoid the intolerable pain of privation and frustration' (1960: 7-8). Beckett's notes on Jones further define neurotic symptoms:

implications regarding infantile characteristics in individuals, their relation to other conditions such as hysteria, and the idea of 'never grow[ing] up', see Jones 1923: 116.

Neurotic symptoms are compromise-formations & brought about as follows: when sublimation (renunciation of crude impulses & their replacement by social aims of a more refined kind) begins to flag, there is regression of mental interest towards the initial primitive modes of functioning, a regression that is checked by the repressing forces controlling sublimation. Neither regressive nor repressive forces are entirely successful, there is neither complete return to primitive modes of gratification nor yet adequate transformation of their energies by means of sublimation, & so a compromise is reached by means of which both sets of forces are expressed. (TCD MS 10971/8/10)

Beckett noted down several neurotic symptoms denoting cognate psychosomatic conditions under ‘anxiety neurosis’:

Anxiety neurosis: paroxysmal & inter-paroxysmal. Air-hunger, larval attacks, palpitation, vertigo, sudden hunger, sweating, imperative desire to micturate & defaecate, feelings of suffocation. Hyperaesthesia for auditory sensations, various paraesthesias. (TCD MS 10971/8/22)

Beckett’s made creative use of the neurotic conditions noted above, especially obsessional neurosis. In *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*, Phil Baker advances notions of ‘deathly repetition’ (Baker 1997: xii) in Beckett’s texts, though without access to the ‘Psychology Notes’.

Ernest Jones describes ‘obsessional neurosis’ as ‘compulsion-neurosis’ (Jones 1963: 191). The term first appears in Beckett’s notes on *Treatment of the Neuroses*:

Neuroses represent a conflict between the individual & society, other diseases a conflict between man & nature.

[...]

Three simple or “actual” neuroses: neurasthenia, anxiety neurosis & hypocondria [sic]; & four psychoneuroses: conversion-hysteria, anxiety-hysteria, fixation-hysteria & the obsessional neurosis. (TCD MS 10971/8/21)

Later on, on the same text, Beckett typed the following:

Obsessional neurosis (Zwangsneurose): feeling of mustness. Symptoms: (1) Motor: Zwangshandlungen (avoiding cracks in pavement, etc) (2) Sensory: [sic] (3) Ideational:

Zwangsvorstellungen. (4) Affective (obsessive emotions). Also tics (habit spasms). The Zwang may appear as paralysis of the will, e.g. paralysis at the most trifling dilemma. (TCD MS 10971/8/23)

Jones further explicates the features of this disorder in his book, speculating, for instance, that obsession appears more often in men than in women, and ‘unusually in intelligent persons’ (Jones 1963: 193). He argues that the ‘typical feature of most obsessions’ is the ‘dissociation of them from the main conscious personality’ (Jones 1963: 194). This points to the split self and a dissociated mind, as well as to the personality traits involved. Moreover, Jones holds that ‘obsessive processes’ may ‘represent self-reproaches’ (Jones 1963: 195). He stresses that ‘in the obsessive character, the symptoms symbolise the conflicting forces; one set of manifestations symbolises the repressed forces, another the repressing’ (195).

In these sections of the ‘Psychology Notes’, Beckett appears to be broadening the scope of his insights into the human psyche, the unconscious personality, dissociation, obsession and other mental mechanisms close to his own personal struggles and which had a lasting impact on his creative process.

Character-formation

Beckett’s interest in character-formation (see Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 91-93) appears to be overwhelmingly mediated by Jones’s *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*. Indeed, the first note in this section refers to ‘Characterology: Regression of libido because of deprivation [sic] (1) to points of fixation, determined partly by inherited disposition (2), partly by infantile experiences & fantasies (3)’ (TCD MS 10971/8/3). The ‘Psychology Notes’ record that a condition that varies according to the intensity of the individual’s libidinal regression:

If nothing more than regression takes place, sexual perversion ensues. But when pregenital libido at point of fixation (anal, oral, etc) is incompatible with ideal of later ego & therefore suppressed, a 2nd or ‘internal’ deprivation takes place & the libido in question becomes subject to the usual mechanisms of the unconscious - displacement, condensation, etc. - & a neurosis ensues. (TCD MS 10971/8/3-4)

Stephen offers a considerable amount of material on the repressive and regressive agents in the neurotic, these being two of the topics central to her discussion of psychogenic symptoms. The first page of Beckett’s notes on Stephen offers the oft-quoted phrase: ‘Normal life a matter of

more or less efficient repression' (TCD MS 10971/7/1). Notions of 'repression' and 'regression' are key to Stephen's thesis, underlined in Beckett's hand (TCD MS 10971/7/1). Another entry on anxiety and guilt and their relation to repression (and regression) is illuminating. Beckett notes that, according to Stephen, anxiety and guilt 'represent the subconscious fear lest the repressed impulses should force their way back into consciousness & demand satisfaction, aliter [sic], lest the repression should break down & lead to helplessness in the face of the demands of primitive instincts' (TCD MS 10971/7/3). The notes about characterological categorisation from Jones continue:

Three character types:

- (1) Those that demand to be treated as exceptions, (Richard 3), going through life claiming compensation for an injustice (or fantasy of such) suffered in childhood. Thus women claim privilege because of infantile castration fantasy & hate their mothers because they did not bear them boys.
- (2) Those that are broken by success (Macbeth, Rosmersholm), in the case of whom an internal deprivation alone, not preceded by usual external deprivation, but the result of the realisation of a fantasy harmless as such, precipitates a severe psychoneurosis. (Julien Sorel).
- (3) Those that turn criminal because of a guilty conscience. These commit some forbidden act because they have a floating sense of guilt & thereby obtain relief (acte gratuit & crime immotivé). Sense of guilt usually arises ultimately in Oedipus situation. (TCD MS 10971/8/4)

Beckett's interjections in his own voice, often in parentheses, are significant since they serve as insightful illustrations of the source text. In this case, by evoking characters from Shakespeare, Ibsen, Stendhal and Gide, Beckett places them in a new perspective and connects them to the psychological characterology outlined by Jones. He appears to be engaged in developing Jones's insights, for instance, when interpolating '(or fantasy of such)' immediately after the statement about 'claiming compensation for an injustice', both contributing to the text and demonstrating his knowledge of cognate themes. The final interpolation in the above passage is drawn from André Gide, on whom Beckett lectured at TCD.⁴² This seems by far the most important of the literary allusions, revealing Beckett's rediscovery of his interest in Gide's conception of character in the 'Psychology Notes'. This idea also recalls Beckett's insights from Karin Stephen on the sense of guilt and crime: 'The conception of crime as the effect, not the

⁴² See Nixon 2011: 39. See also Brigitte Le Juez's *Beckett before Beckett* (2008) and John Bolin's discussion of Gide in *Beckett and the Modern Novel* (2013).

cause, of a sense of guilt (crime immotivé), a specific act on which to fasten & so relieve the floating sense of dread. Thus suffering may be sought to make the burden lighter' (TCD MS 10971/7/4). Such rare interpolations highlight the importance of Beckett's *asides*: by such intra-textual cross references he actively exercises his knowledge and awareness of newly acquired psychological concepts.

Beckett makes a number of subtle references to the notion of 'crime immotivé' in his 'Three Novels', which signal the importance of the works of Stephen and Jones, as part of the genetic dossier for the texts. Malone relays his mental confusion over the notions of 'guilt and punishment' in terms of 'cause and effect': 'And truth to tell the ideas of guilt and punishment were confused together in [Macmann's] mind, as those of cause and effect so often are in the minds of those who continue to think' (Beckett 1956: 67). Later, he states this more clearly:

would it not have been preferable to make this known, quite plainly and frankly, to all concerned, so that the sense of guilt, instead of merely following on the guilty act, might precede and accompany it as well? Problem. But nicely posed, I think, very nicely indeed. (Beckett 1956: 106-107)

For the Unnamable, this dual causality concerning 'crime immotivé' fades altogether, to be superseded by an aesthetic conflation where crime and punishment converge in his mind: 'But this is my punishment, my crime is my punishment, that's what they judge me for, I expiate vilely, like a pig, dumb, uncomprehending, possessed of no utterance but theirs' (Beckett 1958: 114). I see the voice's rejection of any relationship of precedence between crime and punishment as a leap beyond the causal controversy within 'crime immotivé'; another instance of questioning the textbook language in that the only expiation possible is through the crime and punishment of *existence* itself. More to the point, these ideas recall and resonate with Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1884), a psychological novel that, like Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1830), Beckett read early in his career. A copy of *Le Crime et le châtement*, containing his notes, is extant in his library, and Beckett marked Proust's references to the idea of crime in Dostoevsky in his copy of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1927: 239, 240, 242).

Beckett's interest in another psychoanalytic trait, that of the anal character, can be seen across his oeuvre. Using one of Beckett's notes on Jones, the so-called '[c]ardinal triad of anal-erotic character traits: orderliness, parsimony & obstinacy (Eigensinn)' (TCD MS 10971/8/18), Shane Weller sheds light on Beckett's possible modelling of Hamm and Clov upon these

character traits. Weller shows that ‘when composing *Endgame* in the mid-1950s, Beckett proceeded in a strikingly systematic manner to include the principal traits of the anal-sadistic personality as outlined in Ernest Jones’s chapter on the Freudian “Anal-Erotic Character Traits” in his *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (1912), a work read by Beckett in early 1934’ (Weller 2010: 135). He deems such intertextual, source-based study crucial, since, once psychoanalysis is admitted into consideration, a number of the latent concepts, topoi, and images in the play can be understood. Weller predicates his argument on an ‘intertextual relation’ that powerfully links the play with what Beckett knew about Freud’s theory of the anal-sadistic phase. His aim is to ‘move beyond the interpretative speculation of the kind so frequent – and so understandable – in Beckett studies in its early years ... to somewhat firmer interpretive ground’ (Weller 2010: 146). He achieves this by identifying ‘not simply the general theory but, more importantly, the specific text in which Beckett encountered it’ (Weller 2010: 146).

According to Weller, Clov’s declaration – ‘I love order. It’s my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust’ (Beckett 1990: 120) – demonstrates a ‘passion for order’ linked to ‘Jones’s identification of “orderliness” as the first of the “cardinal triad of anal-erotic character traits”’ (Weller 2010: 139). Weller goes on to note that ‘Clov’s passion for “the last dust” is also significant here, since Jones observes – and Beckett notes – that dust is one of the “unconscious symbols for excretory projects”’ (Weller 2010: 140). Further, he sources Hamm’s ‘drive to dominate’ in “self-willedness or obstinacy” [...] as one of the three fundamental traits of the anal-erotic type’ (Weller 2010: 140). Stage directions that describe Hamm and Clov’s reactions to each other – ‘violently’, ‘impatiently’, ‘angrily’, ‘irritably’ – are telling, especially as ‘irritability’ is a ‘trait explicitly identified by Jones as typical of the anal erotic, and as particularly prevalent in the old’ (ibid). Weller provides textual evidence for anal traits, such as Hamm’s ‘revengefulness’, ‘parsimoniousness’ and the ‘miserliness’ of his treatment of Mother Pegg’, drawing attention to his ‘hypochondria’ as signalled by ‘repeatedly asking for his “pain-killer”’ (Weller 2010: 141).

The play itself is ‘characterized by a conflict between the desire to end and the postponement of any end’ evidenced by Hamm and Clov’s words and actions at the outset. In fact, procrastination is another key trait of the anal erotic, whose victims, according to Jones, ‘delay and postpone what they may have to do until the eleventh hour or even the twelfth hour’ (qtd. in Weller 2010: 141), then bursting into action. As Weller observes, the ‘anal-erotic tendency to switch suddenly from procrastination to action – a tendency that Beckett notes (see TCD MS 10971/8/19) – is reproduced in the very structure and rhythm of the play’ (Weller

2010: 141). Weller finds another significant trait linked to Jones's chapter, the feeling of compulsion or 'mustness' that, as Weller notes, was recorded by Beckett (see TCD MS 10971/8/23) during his reading of *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (Weller 2010: 142). As mentioned above, Beckett 'diagnosed' himself with obsessional neurosis in his German Diaries. According to Jones, in obsessional neurosis, there is a 'high development' of 'the combination of sadism and anal eroticism' (qtd. in Weller 2010d: 143).⁴³ Weller takes Hamm as 'being the most extreme incarnation of this desire [sadism]. That in Hamm's case this sadism should be combined with an extreme aversion to reproduction of any kind only strengthens the anal-sadistic inflection' (Weller 2010: 143).⁴⁴

Symbolism

Beckett's interest in symbolism and the limits of language was a legacy of his reading of the French symbolists. As Ackerley and Gontarski have pointed out, with reference to 'Recent Irish Poetry', Beckett turned to these ideas 'with the sense ... of a new crisis, a "rupture in the lines of communication"' (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 551). They continue:

Rimbaud is a resonant figure in [Beckett's] imagination, and aspects of SB's work may be amplified by reading them in the wider context of symbolist aesthetics. [...] [I]n Rimbaud there arises the sense of the divided mind, most famously in his comment, "JE est un autre" (...), the conscious "I" bearing witness to the dissociated process of thought. Rimbaud fell silent because an aesthetics of failure was beyond his reach; SB, however, inherited the legacy of failure and made it his own. (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 551)

Beckett's interest in the theory of symbolism in psychoanalysis ought to be viewed as an integral part of his notes. There are five pages of detailed, categorised and subcategorised notes, on symbolism and the psyche as presented by Ernest Jones. The main four headings are: 'Theory of Symbolism'; True Symbolism; Genesis of Symbolism; and Functional Symbolism (TCD MS 10971/8/10-15), corresponding to 'last three chapters of Ernest Jones' "General

⁴³ Weller recognises this as being partly rooted in Beckett's interest in Sade, particularly his *Les 120 journées de Sodome* which he was invited to translate into English in the late 1930s, and in Mario Praz's *La came, la morte e il diavolo* which he read in 1931 (Weller 2010: 143). Weller notes Beckett's letter of 20 February 1938 to his literary agent George Reavey (Beckett 2009: 604) – written after reading volumes I and III of Sade's work – that 'it was "one of the capital works of the 18th century"' (Weller 2010: 143). In addition, in a letter to MacGreevy dated the following day, 'Beckett wrote that Sade's work filled him with "a kind of metaphysical ecstasy. The composition is extraordinary, as rigorous as Dante's"' (Weller 2010: 143).

⁴⁴ Weller's intertextual, source-based approach is one of the inspirations for my search for similar links to the 'Psychology Notes' in *Krapp's Last Tape* (see Chapter VI).

Papers” section in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*’ (Feldman 2004: 165). As Feldman has observed, of the eight chapters that make up Jones’s book,

Beckett was notably drawn toward the final three papers, ‘The Repression Theory in its Relation to Memory’, ‘The Unconscious and its Significance for Psychopathology’ and ‘The Theory of Symbolism’. . . . And, as befitting an artist, Beckett’s most important borrowing from *Papers on Psychoanalysis* specifically emphasises “indirect figurative representation, such as metaphorical use of words” – that is, the symbolism of “dreams, myths, etc.” – in over 2,000 words covering yet another aspect of the subconscious. (Feldman 2004:165)

Beckett’s first approach to symbolism captures the psychoanalytic perspective of the ‘Theory of Symbolism: The most impersonal element in psychoanalysis is the significance of symbols, a body of knowledge characteristic of other sciences – anthropology, folk-lore, philology, etc.’ (TCD MS 10971/8/10). He then lists the ‘[s]ix characteristic attributes of the symbol’ in order:

- (1) Its significance not inherent in itself, but derived from the anterior idea which it stands for. The more essential symbolised by the less essential.
- (2) Represents primary element through having something common with it.
- (3) Characteristically sensorial & concrete, whereas idea represented may be abstract & general. Symbol thus tends to be more condensed than the idea represented (bowing symbol of prostration) [sic]
- (4) Symbolic modes of thought more primitive & represent reversion to an earlier stage of development. Thus they are more frequent in conditions favourable to such reversion (fatigue, neurosis, etc. Cp. tired man preferring illustrated paper to book. Film.).
- (5) The manifest expression of a secret idea, typically inaccessible to person using symbol.
- (6) Like wit of automatic unconscious fabrication. The stricter the sense in which symbolism occurs the truer this is & the more inaccessible its principle. The individual rejects the true interpretation with annoyance. (TCD MS 10971/8/10-11)

Subsequently, Beckett noted the *ambiguity* of the symbol ‘(as room for womb or for woman)’ (TCD MS 10971/8/11-12) – with all three words underlined. In *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*, Baker comprehensively demonstrates the pervasiveness of the imagery of room and the womb-tomb in Beckett’s texts. Building upon this insight, Ackerley and Gontarski observe:

Molloy opens in the mother's room with the familiar rhythms of polymorphous perversity, the child's uninhibited pleasure in the womb. It records such intimate details as May Beckett's donkey cart and Pomeranian and the imperatives of angelus and gong. Molloy enacts the Jungian drama of the Great Mother in the idyll chez Lousse, followed by the expulsion from an embryonic Eden, a paradise lost that can never be regained. His section concludes with a complex allegory of birth (the rhyme of womb, room, and tomb). (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 383)

It is probable that the notes, underlined in Beckett's hand, anticipated the 'rhyme of womb, room, and tomb' in *Molloy*.

In the manuscript of *The Unnamable*, one appearance of 'womb' is briefly replaced by 'woman', only to be crossed out and 'womb' adopted again (MS-HRC-SB-5-10, f. 105). This part-for-whole synecdoche recurs with Mouth in *Not I* and informs Beckett's attention to one of the specific functions of the symbol – the 'most primary type', according to his transcriptions of Ernest Jones, which recalls the Freudian theory of symbolic 'displacement':

Symbols, like neurotic symptoms, are compromise-formations & often play a part in such symptoms. E.g. expression of castration complex as phobia of blindness, the eye being common somatic phallic symbol. Symbolism arises as result of conflict between repressing & repressed tendencies. Most primary type of symbol is that in which one part of the body is equated with, then replaced by, another - the upper part of the body tending to be emphasised to exclusion of lower (Freud's "displacement from below upwards"). Only that which is repressed is symbolised, because only it need be. (TCD MS 10971/7/13-14)

Moreover, as reflected in Beckett's notes on the 'Genesis of Symbolism', Jones argues that symbolism is generated when two ideas are identified by the unconscious mind, yet are 'alien to the conscious mind, whereby secondary idea may represent primary, but never vice versa. Symbolism implies identification, just as metaphor does simile' (TCD MS 10971/8/12). In his view, 'there are 3 factors operative in tendency toward identification: (1) Mental incapacity (least important) (2) Economy in terms of Lust-Unlust principle (3) In terms of reality principle' (ibid). The notes continue:

- (1) Primitive mind capable of discrimination, but disinclined to.
- (2) Primitive mind controlled by Pain-Pleasure principle seizes in every fresh experience on what resembles the stimuli of similar emotions in past experiences. [...]
3. [sic] Appreciation of resemblances facilitates the assimilation of new experiences. (TCD MS 10971/8/12-3)

Even as he makes creative use of symbolic identifications and displacements, Beckett tends to parody the idea of conflation or equation of body parts. One such example has already been mentioned, Molloy's confusion of bodily orifices (the anal with the vaginal) (Beckett 1955: 76). At another point, with his finger in his 'arse-hole', he apologises for reverting to 'this lewd orifice', explaining: 'Perhaps it is less to be thought of as the eyesore here called by its name than as the symbol of those passed over in silence, a distinction due perhaps to its centrality and its air of being a link between me and the other excrement' (Beckett 1955: 107). Molloy's 'primitive mind' is disinclined, if not incapable, of making such distinctions or discriminations: 'I can hardly believe it is the same hole' (107).

Birth and death: womb-tomb

Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* fascinated Beckett, not least because of his claim to have vivid memories of the intrauterine state, memories which surfaced during his sessions with Bion (see Knowlson 1997: 1-29; Baker 1997: 71-105). Beckett's writing had been preoccupied with the 'womb-tomb' since at least *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. Rank's book is significant since it examines themes that Beckett had been revolving for a long time, and which would recur, as evidenced by 'Birth was the death of him' that opens *A Piece of Monologue* (1979) (Beckett 2006: 425). The Unnamable gives this notion a special character: 'I was given a pensum, at birth perhaps, as a punishment for having been born perhaps' (Beckett 1958: 30). Glossing the unusual term, Ackerley and Gontarski define 'pensum' as 'the "task" of living, as defined by Schopenhauer's Doctrine of Suffering (*Parerga und Parapomena* II.xii # 157): "Das Leben ist ein Pensum zum Arbeiten: in diesem Sinne ist defunctus ein schöner Ausdruck" ("life is a task to be worked off: in this sense defunctus is a fine expression"' (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 431). Rank's account of the post-natal state as a constant repetition of the birth trauma became a particularly resonant version of Schopenhauer's 'pensum' for Beckett.

Rank speculates on the relationship between anxiety in adults and the experience of birth: 'Just as all anxiety goes back to anxiety at birth (dyspnoea), so every pleasure has as its final aim the reestablishment of the primal intrauterine pleasure' (TCD MS 10971/8/34). Psychotherapeutic analysis – and Beckett was of course undertaking therapy at this time – was intended to provide the 'belated accomplishment of incomplete mastery of birth trauma', the analytic situation is 'identified with intrauterine one, patient back in position of unborn' (TCD MS 10971/8/34). Rank's stress on disturbances looks forward to the 'epileptic attack as an actual recapitulation of the birth trauma' (Tonning, 2007: 140) experienced by the 'tiny little

thing’/ ‘tiny little girl’ (Beckett 2006: 376) in *Not I*, a play that explores the trauma of premature birth:

All neurotic disturbances in breathing (e.g. asthma), repeating feeling of suffocation, refer directly to physical reproductions of the birth trauma. The extensive use of the neurotic headache (migraine) goes back to specifically painful part allotted to the head in parturition; & ultimately all attacks of convulsions noticeable in quite small children, even in the new-born, can be regarded as a directly continued attempt to get rid of the primal birth trauma. Finally the great hysterical attack shows a complete defence mechanism in the well known arc de cercle position, diametrically opposed to doubled-up embryonal position. (TCD MS 10971/8/35)

This passage hints at Molloy’s psychosomatic asthma. Similarly, Malone’s traumatic experience of a painful blow to the head could be explained in terms of the recapitulation of the trauma of parturition.

Yet the joint appearance of womb and tomb in Beckett’s text does not mean that Rank was necessarily his primary, or only, reference. Nevertheless, as Phil Baker has shown (Baker 1997: 71-105), he *was* fascinated by Otto Rank, Salvador Dalí⁴⁵ and others who professed memories of the womb and the trauma of birth. These ideas would later become themes that Beckett explored in the harrowing field scenes in *Not I* (see Tønning 2007: 143-144).

For Beckett, the womb is inextricably connected with the tomb, as the vagina is with the grave. As Deirdre Bair observes, Beckett’s own ‘womb fixation’ was reflected in the ‘simple inclination to stay in bed’ and his ‘deep-seated need to pay frequent visits to his mother’ (qtd. in Baker 1997: 68). Beckett’s fixation is explicitly expressed by Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot*: [*Suddenly furious.*] ... one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? [*Calmer.*] They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more’ (Beckett 1965: 89). The ‘Psychology Notes’ record:

Common characteristics of all infantile theories, also illustrated in myths & fairy tales, is the denial of the female sex organs, due to repression of birth trauma experienced there. Painful fixation on this function of the female genital as organ of birth lies at the bottom of all neurotic disturbances of adult sex life, psychical impotence as well as feminine frigidity. (TCD MS 10971/8/35)

⁴⁵ See his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, whose second chapter is devoted to ‘intra-uterine memories’ (Dalí 1942: 26-32).

And:

Primal anxiety-effect at birth, which remains operative through life, right up to the final separation from the outer world (gradually become a second mother) at death. (TCD MS 10971/8/36)

Beckett took roughly three pages of notes on Rank's book. These include several sceptical interpolations and sarcastic remarks about Rank's extreme views concerning the infantile theory of birth. Rank's theoretical extremism indeed distinguishes him from other specialists in this area. One example will shed light on Beckett's scepticism: 'Inestimable advantage of man over woman, consisting in his being able partially to back into the mother by means of the penis which stands – ha ! ha ! – for the child' (TCD MS 10971/8/35). Beckett's frustration with his therapy was perhaps deepened by his review of simplistic psychoanalytic schematisations, including those in *The Trauma of Birth*. Despite the book's insights, as Mark Nixon has observed, Beckett became impatient with Rank's over-interpretation of certain notions, 'so that the previously committed note-taking is now interspersed with ... humorous asides' (Nixon 2011: 45): 'Shape of lips at the breast lead to formation of universal human syllable ma. [Macché! handwritten after 'ma']' (TCD MS 10971/8/35). According to Nixon, although Beckett had an 'overriding' belief in the 'impregnable' unconscious and 'may have turned away from psychoanalysis as a system – what *Murphy* calls "complacent scientific conceptualism"', he did not necessarily depart from 'some of its methods' (Nixon 2011: 45).

The word 'womb' appears on two successive pages, 8r and 9r, of the first translation of *L'Innommable*. The first passage reads thus:

For here comes along another, to see what happened to his pal, and get him out, and back to his senses, and back to his kin, with a flow of threats, and promises, and tales like this of wombs and cradles, diapers bepossed and the first long trousers, wombs and cradles cradle love's young dream and life's old lech, blood and tears and skin and bones and the tossing in the grave (MS-HRC-SB-5-9-3, f. 08r).

These three additions appear on the facing leaf, and are a variant of the line 'and tales like this of wombs and cradles, ... love's young dream and life's old lech' (8r). The significance of the line is implied through the variants, additions and omissions. In later versions (MS-HRC-SB-

5-10, f. 104r) and (Beckett 1958: 102), ‘cradle’ becomes ‘crib’, both associated with birth. In this line, life is drastically portrayed as a journey from the womb to the cradle/crib (birth) to the grave (death). Later, in Beckett’s mime *Act without Words I* (1958), the solitary character carries out his penum from the moment that he is thrown on earth, the moment he is born. For the narrator of *The Unnamable*, birth becomes a sin which he must expiate: ‘I was given a penum, at birth perhaps, for the punishment of having been born perhaps’ (Beckett 1958: 24). Here the penum is the crib, the ‘bepissed diapers’, getting ready for the first long trousers, dreaming, lechery, coping with blood and tears and awaiting the grave.

The ‘return to the mother (earth)’, ‘womb-symbolism’ and the ‘intra-uterine life’ constitute a recurring theme in Beckett’s oeuvre, evident even before the ‘Psychology Notes’. There are many natal images in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. Murphy’s bloodied face after he falls from his rocking chair to the floor could be regarded evocative of the act of birth. Birth and death are also encountered in reference to the Lynch family in *Watt*; and Mr MacStern comments of his mother, ‘She died in giving me birth’ (Beckett 2009c: 165).

Beckett’s invocations of the ‘womb-tomb’ may have gained in clarity through Rank, as they appear mature and consistent following this encounter. Rank maintains that ‘with the thought of death is connected from the beginning a strong unconscious sense of pleasure associated with the return to the mother’s womb’ (Rank: 1924: 24). Beckett’s ‘cradle’, ‘crib’, and ‘cot’ (Beckett 1958: 128) all symbolise the womb as presented in *The Trauma of Birth*: ‘from the nursery, which is only an extension of the kangaroo’s pouch and the bird’s nest beyond the swaddling clothes and cradle, to the house, instinctively formed to imitate the womb’ (Rank 1929: 88). This is reminiscent of the Unnamable’s view of the guilt of ‘having been born’: ‘come back to earth again, by way of the vagina like a real live baby, and reach a ripe age, and even senility, without the least assistance from them and thanks solely to the hints they had given me’ (Beckett 1958: 47). The narrative voice in *The Unnamable* imagines taking revenge for his procreation: ‘upset at having been delivered so economically of a pack of blood relations, not to mention the two cunts into the bargain, the one for ever accursed that ejected me into this world and the other, infundibuliform,⁴⁶ in which, pumping my likes, I tried to take my revenge’ (Beckett 1958: 39).

The ‘I’ functions as a psychoanalytic entity; the Unnamable is burdened with ‘the “Strange task” which consists in speaking of oneself – the obligation to express’ (Ackerley &

⁴⁶ Beckett found this word (having the shape of a cone or funnel) in Pierre Garnier’s curious study, *Onanisme, seul et à deux* (1890).

Gontarski 2004b: 431). In *Contributions to Psychoanalysis* (1916), Sándor Ferenczi describes the ‘omnipotence of thought’ as a means whereby the obsessional neurotic attempts to return to the intrauterine state (Ferenczi 1916: 181, qtd. in Rank 1929: 60). This fulfils the yearning, Rank argues, circuitously: ‘by plunging into philosophic speculations about death and immortality as well as the “beyond” and its eternal punishment. In this way [the obsessional neurotic] repeats the seemingly unavoidable projection of life before birth into the future after death’ (Rank 1929: 60-61). This account bears some similarity to Beckett’s literary expression regarding the ‘projection of life’ from the ‘womb’ to the ‘crib’, to ‘blood and tears’ and ‘bones’, finally to ‘the tossing in the grave’. Furthermore, Beckett borrowed cognate themes such as ‘menstruation’ and ‘spermatozoon’ from his notes on Rank’s book and incorporated them in the compositional process of both *L’Innommable* and *The Unnamable* (see Habibi 2018: 211-227). What the Unnamable calls ‘tossing in the grave’ is, according to Rank, merely a manifestation of ‘the Unconscious concept of death itself as an everlasting return to the womb’ (Rank 1929: 114). Like Jung, Rank views birth as ‘burdened from the beginning with the curse of death (reincarnation)’ and ‘the tendency to return to death’ as ‘a wish-reaction to the birth trauma’ (ibid). As Beckett records in the ‘Psychology Notes’, the ‘[w]hole circle of human creation equals an attempt to materialize primal situation, i.e., to undo primal trauma’, and ‘[a]uthentic reminiscences of the two primal traumata (birth & weaning) are at the bottom of all myths & neuroses’ (TCD MS 10971/8/35). Beckett’s final entries on the birth trauma, followed by two handwritten exclamation marks (!!), hint once again at his scepticism, in particular at the depiction of psychoanalysis as a kind of intellectual heroism:

Socrates, although [sic] he undoubtedly made use of various partially neurotic compensatory gratifications & had to pay the price by drinking hemlock, was the first who succeeded in intellectually overcoming the birth trauma, & thereby establishes his claim to be the forerunner of Psychoanalysis. (TCD MS 10971/8/35)

!!

This incredulity surely extends to the suggestion that Socrates was the forerunner of psychoanalysis.

Scatology: Excretory creation

The ‘Psychology Notes’ reveal Beckett’s interest in scatological themes and infantile excretory functions, first in Stephen and then in Jones. The fifth chapter of Stephen’s *The Wish to Fall Ill*

concerns excretion, its significance in childhood, and its subsequent psychological influence. The second page of Beckett's typed notes is devoted almost exclusively to this theme. The second stage of the pleasure principle is the 'excretory' stage (TCD MS 10971/7/2). The child's 'power' and 'self-assertion', as well as its 'infantile megalomania', are expressed 'in excretory terms, recurring if dissociated [or] fixated as pathological delusions of grandeur' (ibid). The scatological note continues:

Character may be damaged by premature curbing of infantile megalomania through over-insistence on personal cleanliness.

Parting with urine & faeces is thought of as making gifts to loved person. When such person is out of favour, excretions are withheld or fired off as an offensive.

Excretory & genital potency: injury to confidence over early excretory power may lead to psychosexual impotence.

Preoccupations with setting things on fire may be connected with erotic fantasies of powerful urination. (TCD MS 10971/7/2)

Edouard Magessa O'Reilly discusses several pages that Beckett cut from the novel *Molloy* (see Magessa 2006). These concern the economy of 'Ballyba', one entirely based upon 'shit'. Beckett finally excised the entire section in the French manuscript, and only a hint of its existence remains in the published text. As Shane Weller's article on the anal-sadistic phase in *Endgame* suggests, an underlying 'economy' of this kind creates a dense network of psychoanalytic associations (see Weller 2010d: 135-147).

Beckett emphasised the curbing of infantile creativity. According to his notes on Stephen, the child's self-esteem, creative powers and sexual life 'may be permanently damaged by excessive demands of the parents for self-control in the matter of cleanliness' as ideas such as '[r]ight & wrong, praise & blame, pride & guilt, are first apprehended by the baby in excretory terms. Learning to be clean is the first alien standard of conduct' (TCD MS 10971/7/2). Beckett's close attention to bodily functions, especially in the child, regards the role of external disturbances in influencing the individual's mental capacities later in life. Moreover, Beckett noted the relation between excessive control of bodily functions and both aggression and melancholia: 'Excessive self-control, resulting from excessive parental control of excretory functions, tends to inhibit aggression & produce loss of initiation & power to stand up to circumstances, as well as to turn the aggression in upon the subject & produce melancholia' (TCD MS 10971/7/2). Again, the consequences of early life on the adult

individual are clear. More specifically, these notes stress that depression in later life can be caused by internalised rage, itself a consequence of excessive early inhibitions. Jones takes an extreme position on the sexual attributes of the unconscious, which are ‘closely associated with excretory functions’ (TCD MS 10971/8/9). For him, the ‘alteration of hate & love towards adult love-object [is] based on such early alternations towards the mother who interferes with excretory act’ (TCD MS 10971/8/16). The significance of ‘excretory organs’, ‘anal-erotic character traits’, and ‘symbols for excretory products’ (TCD MS 10971/8/18) will be developed in Chapter VI, Part II of this thesis.

Impotence & inferiority/insecurity

Another recurring theme in Beckett’s art is ‘impotence’, including the ‘psychosexual’ variety – a notion that looms large in his ‘Psychology Notes’. Stephen identifies an ‘[e]xcretory & genital potency’ that, when maladjusted, may cause ‘injury to confidence over early excretory power [and] may lead to psychosexual impotence’ (TCD MS 10971/7/2). A second independent entry is taken from Ernest Jones:

Psychosexual Impotence:

Ejaculatio praecox.

Tumescence (concrectation) & detumescence.

Three main factors controlling psychological impotence:

- (1) Incest fixations (2) Fears referring to early sexual activities (3) Influences colouring boys’ attitude towards female genitals.
- (1) Two trends, tenderness & sensuality, that should have fused harmoniously together, fail to do so. Both these were originally attached to the mother. Where they have not been successfully transferred a man may be impotent with women for whom he feels tenderness & potent with whores, etc. Cp. frequent marriages of men with women in a class inferior to their own.
- (2) Castration complex, on logical principle of the talion, arising in connection with manualisation, urination or castration wishes directed towards sexual rival - the father.
- (3) Female genitalia & organs of excretion conceived of as a common cloaca. (TCD MS 10971/8/16-17)

Under a separate heading, Beckett later makes a distinction between anxiety-hysteria and conversion-hysteria. The former ‘[m]ay lead to psychic impotence & sexual anaesthesia’ (TCD MS 10971/8/22). Rank is the source for the final entries on the theme of impotence:

All forms of masculine impotence (penis scared aware from going in) as of feminine anaesthesia (vaginismus) rest on the same primal fixation on the mother (her dangerous vagina dentata), causing the one function of the organ (pleasure, individual) to be renounced in favour of the other (propagation, species). (TCD MS 10971/8/34)

And finally:

Common characteristic of all infantile birth theories, also illustrated in myths & fairy tales, is the denial of the female sex organs, due to repression of birth trauma experienced there. Painful fixation on this function of the female genital as organ of birth lies at the bottom of all neurotic disturbances of adult sex life, psychical impotence as well as feminine frigidity. (TCD MS 10971/8/35)

Beckett's attention to impotence, especially of a psychosexual nature, anticipates the sterile worlds he would create in his art. Paul Stewart's contrast between aesthetic production and sexual reproduction is again relevant. Stewart studies the 'reactions against certain forms of sexual activity' in Beckett's early prose, and faults the Cartesian focus of early Beckett criticism for ignoring the sociopolitical aspect of his works. He points out that:

Beckett's attitudes toward sexual expression arose within a distinct milieu in the Irish Free State, in particular, and Europe, more generally. Beckett ... allied himself to certain aspects of contemporary social and political thinking regarding sex and rigorously defended himself and his art against others. This suggests that, even from the early stages, sex and aesthetic creation were closely connected and that from the fear of reproduction and voyeuristic masturbation of Belacqua through to interventions in the censorship debate in the Irish Free State, sex was at the center of Beckett's art of the 1920s and 1930s. (Stewart 2011: 29)

Belacqua's 'fear of reproduction' resonates with Beckett's notes and their attention to the mother's 'dangerous vagina dentata'. Although the notes were not transcribed until a few years after the composition of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, the autobiographical character of this novel and Beckett's complicated love-hate relationship with his mother anticipate the many notes on a body of cognate themes that previously obsessed him in life, which he had used creatively in his writing, and was now trying to understand from a new perspective. Such themes persist into later works such as *Not I*, where Mouth clearly evokes the vagina dentata.

Psychosexual and physical impotence and fear of reproduction haunt the ‘Three Novels’. As Moran says, he is quickly able to ‘gild’ his impotence (Beckett 1955: 144). Molloy’s belated discovery that there is not a ‘bunghole’ but a ‘slit’ between Lousse’s legs (Beckett 1955: 76) may be a joke on Beckett’s part, yet it also points to Molloy’s fear of the female reproductive organ, verging on its dismissal or denial as a repressed agent, as though he were expecting her to have male sex organs. Impotence is more pronounced in *Malone Dies*: ‘I gave rein to my pains, my impotence’ (Beckett 1956: 35). For Malone, the thought of impotence encourages him to imagine the unlikely or the impossible: ‘If I had the use of my body I would throw it out of the window. But perhaps it is the knowledge of my impotence that emboldens me to that thought. All hangs together, I am in chains’ (Beckett 1956: 44). Although Malone refers to his physical impotence, his ‘knowledge’ of this inability or disability connects it to the mental faculty, to such an extent that his statement, ‘I am in chains’, indicates both physical and psychical confinement. The juxtaposition of ‘impotence’ and ‘will’ was not neutral for Beckett, and therefore cannot be a coincidence in the present text. Elsewhere, Malone says of the Saposcats: ‘It was as though the Saposcats drew the strength to live from the prospect of their impotence’ (Beckett 1956: 11). In the following passage, he comments poetically on his condition, in which notions of ‘form and formlessness’ coalesce:

My situation is truly delicate. What fine things, what momentous things, I am going to miss through fear, fear of falling back into the old error, fear of not finishing in time, fear of revelling, for the last time, in a last outpouring of misery, impotence and hate. The forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief from its formlessness. (Beckett 1956: 21)

Malone’s ‘fear of not finishing in time’ echoes Beckett’s notes on Ernest Jones regarding the neurotic’s rage ‘at having one’s time wasted’ (TCD MS 10971/8/19) and on Otto Rank regarding dreams of travelling, such as ‘missing the train, packing & not being ready’ (TCD MS 10971/8/35).⁴⁷ Yet his recurrent references to ‘impotence’ also reinforce Beckett’s interweaving of themes from the ‘Psychology Notes’ with traces of his own personal experience of grappling with impotence, not least in the labour of writing itself.

⁴⁷ The Unnamable’s remark about the ‘nature of trains, and the meaning of your back to the engine’ (Beckett 1958: 168) is an expression that Beckett borrowed from Otto Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth* (see Feldman 2006: 31). Compare Malone’s likely reference to the same source: ‘But when the shafts tilt up, announcing that a fare has been taken on board, or when on the contrary the back-hand begins to gall its spine, according as the passenger is seated facing the way he is going or, what is perhaps even more restful, with his back to it, then it rears its head, stiffens its houghs and looks almost content’ (Beckett 1956: 57).

Another theme in the ‘Psychology Notes’ is the ‘feeling of inferiority’, as identified by Alfred Adler: the ‘fundamental fact in neurosis. The fantasies of the neurotic individual represent imaginary means of escape from a sense of inferiority. Adler terms this the “fictive goal”’ (TCD MS 10971/7/14). Beckett’s attention to neurosis recurs in his notes on Adler’s *Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*:

Function of compulsion-neurosis: to unburden and free the patient by means of diseased compulsion from the compulsion due to the necessary demands made by society: to construct a subsidiary field of action in order to be able to flee from the main battle-field of life & fritter away time that might otherwise compel him to fulfil his individual tasks. [...]

Compulsion, doubt & fear will always be found to represent those safeguards in the neurosis that are to enable the patient to appear on top, masculine & superior. (TCD MS 10971/8/32)

The drive to superiority, however, originates in the experience of inferiority: ‘An individual goal of superiority is the determining factor in every neurosis, but the goal itself always originates in ... the actual experiences of inferiority’ (TCD MS 10971/7/14). As his letter of 10 March 1935 to MacGreevy makes clear, Beckett was aware of his own feelings of superiority, which he was trying to overcome. It is worth quoting in full this important passage from Beckett’s letter:

For years, I was unhappy, consciously & deliberately ever since I left school & went into T.C.D., so that I isolated myself more & more, undertook less & less & lent myself to a crescendo of disparagement of others & myself. But in all that there was nothing that struck me as morbid. The misery & solitude & apathy & the sneers were the elements of an index of superiority & guaranteed the feeling of arrogant “otherness”, which seemed as right & natural & as little morbid as the ways in which it was not so much expressed as implied & reserved & kept available for a possible utterance in the future. It was not until that way of living, or rather negation of living, developed such terrifying physical symptoms that it could no longer be pursued, that I became aware of anything morbid in myself. [...] It was with a specific fear & a specific complaint that I went to Geoffrey [Thomson, his friend and medical doctor], then to Bion, to learn that the “specific fear & complaint” was the least important symptom of a diseased condition that began in a time which I could not remember, in my “pre-history”, a bubble on the puddle; and that the fatuous torments which I had treasured as denoting the superior man were all part of the same pathology. (Beckett 2009: 258-259)

Beckett regarded his feelings of anxiety, fear and aggression as stemming from the same pathology, which he calls ‘morbid’ and a ‘diseased condition’, as his feelings of arrogance and superiority. The reference here is to an inferiority upon which Adler laid so much emphasis, although there seems to be no ‘duel’ such as that described by him: ‘Compulsory laughter often possessed this patient when he was in the presence of a superior person, this compulsion (expressing domination) being erected over weak point of feeling of inferiority’ (TCD MS 10971/8/29). In terms of Beckett’s contemporaneous work, Murphy’s ‘sneer’ and ‘scoff’ (Beckett 2009b: 5) in his novel’s opening exchange with Neary echo Adler’s case study, perhaps unwittingly. This suggests that Murphy’s intellectual narcissism may, in line with the ‘Psychology Notes’, arise from his feelings of inferiority. Chapter 5 of the novel contrasts Ticklepenny and Neary in terms of their inferior-superior trajectories, another possible take on Adler’s text:

Ticklepenny was immeasurably inferior to Neary in every way, but they had certain points of contrast with Murphy in common. One was this pretentious fear of going mad. Another was the inability to look on, no matter what the spectacle. These were connected, in the sense that the painful situation could always be reduced to onlooking of one kind or another. But even here Neary was superior to Ticklepenny, at least according to the tradition that ranks the competitor’s spirit higher than the huckster’s and *the man regretting what he cannot have higher than the man sneering at what he cannot understand* (Beckett 2009b: 58; my emphasis).

This paragraph perhaps draws from Beckett’s notes on Adler on somatic inferiority and the psychic reactions to it: ‘The most widely distributed method adopted by the feeling of inferiority, appearing during childhood, to prevent its being unmasked, is the creation of a compensatory psychic superstructure, the neurotic modus vivendi’ (TCD MS 10971/8/30); and the ‘[f]undamental psychological law: indirect reversal of organ-inferiority into psychic compensatory & hypercompensatory strivings through the subjective sensation of inferiority [sic]’ (TCD MS 10971/8/31).

Much of what Beckett records about individual feelings of insecurity comes from Adler. While Adler repeatedly emphasises the idea of ‘security’, the term ‘insecurity’, taken from Adler’s *The Neurotic Constitution* (TCD MS 10971/8/27-28), appears only twice in the entirety of the ‘Psychology Notes’. Beckett’s interest here is in feelings of inferiority: ‘The fictive guiding-lines tautly stretched between the insecurity of the constitutionally or subjectively

inferior individual and his unattainable ego-ideal' (TCD MS 10971/8/27). This relation illuminates Beckett's characters' desperate condition of psychosomatic inferiority and deep feelings of insecurity. We see the Unnamable's expression of inferiority in his intermittent 'self-denial', leaving him bereft of any name, pronoun or any other type of identity: 'there is no name for me, no pronoun for me' (Beckett 1958: 130). His constant masochistic lacerations of the self and 'the labouring mind' (Beckett 1958: 69), if not the body, are the acute expression of 'self-denial' or 'suicide', which Adler believes to be 'the last expression of the masculine protest' (TCD MS 10971/8/25) and which 'represents a security from humiliation by withdrawal' (TCD MS 10971/8/28). The Unnamable confesses that 'it's I who do this thing and I who suffer it, it's not possible otherwise' (Beckett 1958: 128).

Significantly, the first line of Beckett's notes from Adler reads: 'Feeling of inferiority resulting from inferior organ'. They continue:

From constitutional inferiority there arises a feeling of inferiority which demands compensation in the sense of a maximation of the ego-consciousness. From this circumstance the fiction which serves as a final purpose acquires an astonishing influence and draws all the psychic forces in its direction. Itself an outgrowth of the striving for security, it organizes psychic preparatory measures for the purpose of guaranteeing security. (TCD MS 10971/8/25)

The maximation Beckett describes is the 'fictitious final goal of the neurotic' (TCD MS 10971/8/26), which, as we observed, is pursued by the narrator of *The Unnamable*, severing his libido from any external object and turning it inwards, that is, a regression to his 'self'. Beckett's persistent attention to the neurotic's goal in his notes is striking: 'The neurotic psyche, in order to be able to attempt the attainment of its over-strained goal, must have recourse to stratagems. One of these stratagems is to transfer the goal, or substituted goal, incompatible with the communal realities, into the realms of the unconscious' (TCD MS 10971/8/33). All this is a 'striving for security', escaping from the external world in fear and panic, taking refuge in words in an 'inward turn'. According to Adler, '[a] strong anticipatory craving for security is revealed by ... hypersensitiveness to pain' (TCD MS 10971/8/28). In fact, the text of *The Unnamable* is rife with references to pain: 'They never suffered my pains, their pains are nothing, compared to mine, a mere tittle of mine, the tittle I thought I could put from me, in order to witness it' (Beckett 1958: 16). He muses on being 'only moderately, or perhaps I should say finitely pained' (Beckett 1958: 38). And he is ultimately there 'to be pained' (ibid). Bearing in mind Adler's theory that '[f]eeling of inferiority result[s] from inferior organ', we find that, as the

bearer of his own fiction, the Unnamable suffers from feelings of insecurity, which explain his hyper-sensitivity to pain, *and* inferior organs that are the signs of somatic illness:

Look, here's the medical report, spasmodic tabs, painless ulcers, I repeat, painless, all is painless, multiple softenings, numerous hardenings, insensitive to blows, sight failing, chronic gripes, light diet, shit well tolerated, hearing failing, heart irregular, sweet-tempered, smell failing, heavy sleeper, no erections, would you like some more, commission in the territorials, inoperable, untransportable, look, here's the face, no no, the other end, I assure you, it's a bargain, I beg your pardon, does he drink, good God yes, passionately, I beg your pardon, father and mother, both dead, at seven months interval, he at the conception, she at the nativity, I assure you, you won't do better, at your age, no human shape, the pity of it, look, here's the photograph, you'll see, you'll be all right, what does it amount to ... (Beckett 1958: 100)

As addressed below in Part I, Beckett had experienced psychosomatic illnesses in the 1930s, some of which he attributes to his narrator. Some of these disturbances never left him. In a parodic tone, the narrator of *The Unnamable* says: 'But the days of sticks are over, here I can count on my body alone, my body incapable of the smallest movement and whose very eyes can no longer close as they once could' (Beckett 1958: 12). Painkillers were necessary to lessen the pains: 'Well supplied with pain-killers I drew upon them freely, without however permitting myself the lethal dose that would have cut short my functions, whatever they may have been' (Beckett 1958: 36). The repeated emphasis on 'painless' evokes its opposite, only to produce an even more 'painful' effect on the reader. This is the narrator's reward: 'muted lamentation, panting and exhaling of impossible sorrow, like distant laughter, and brief spells of hush, as of one buried before his time. Long or short, the same silence. Then I resurrect and begin again. That's what I'll have got for all my pains' (Beckett 1958: 118). As noted earlier, his pains vacillate between masochism and sadism in the exchange with others ('let them give me back the pains I lent them' [Beckett 1958: 16]): 'What they all wanted, each one according to his particular notion of what is bearable, was that I should exist and at the same only be moderately, or perhaps I should say finitely pained' (Beckett 1958: 38). He even *compares* his pains to others' in order to declare superiority: 'They never suffered my pains, their pains are nothing, compared to mine, a mere tittle of mine' (Beckett 1958: 16). The narrator's tendency to treat the pain he experiences as the sign of his superiority is a common symptom of the neurotic character, which, in Adler's reading, originates in complexes related to feelings of (psycho-)somatic inferiority.

In this chapter, I have tried to contextualise laying stress on Beckett's interests in psychology and psychoanalysis by focusing on key creative themes that connect with and develop out of the 'Psychology Notes'. This is intended to provide an analytical basis for recognising traces and remnants of Beckett's attention to certain ideas, images and phrases and to the way that they shape his creative evolution and maturity. The repetition of these themes across Beckett's oeuvre is significant, but so is the evolution of this body of thematic interests from being highly explicit and easily detectable in the early texts to something semi-concealed and much more ambiguous in his later writing. Underlying this ambiguity, we can discern a persistent creative dualism: a fascination with and indulging in the 'textbook' language of psychoanalysis and a simultaneous rejection of its rational drive to explain and understand.

CHAPTER III

***Molloy* and the ‘Psychology Notes’: Failing to master the maternal Imago**

‘Yes, let me cry out, this time, then another time perhaps, then perhaps a last time.’

Molloy

This chapter re-examines Beckett’s *Molloy* (1951) by treating his ‘Psychology Notes’ as part of the genetic dossier for that text. I will demonstrate that some of the symptoms and obsessions suffered by Molloy (such as severe ‘introjection of the maternal imago’,⁴⁸ ‘regression towards dissociated love objects’,⁴⁹ and ‘coprosymbolism’⁵⁰) are traceable to the ‘Psychology Notes’. At the same time, the psychoanalytic commitment to laying bare the depths of the unconscious and reclaiming its dissociated contents is resisted and parodied in the novel. As noted earlier, this notion appears repeatedly in Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’: ‘The object of psychoanalysis is to strengthen the ego, make it more independent of the super-ego, widen its field of vision & so extend its organisation that it can take over new portions of the id. Where id was, there shall ego be. It is reclamation work, like the draining of the Zuyder Zee’ (TCD MS 10971/7/6). By developing a parallel between the novel and psychoanalytic texts in terms of a shared preoccupation with control and mastery,⁵¹ I will show how Beckett’s text ultimately stages an ambiguity between control and chaos on two levels. In the first place, there is Molloy’s desperate need and relentless search for his mother (a need obliquely echoed by Moran in relation to his son) in order to take over and usurp the maternal aspect of the unconscious in its various forms and disguises, a project that collapses again and again. In the second place, the therapeutic effort of psychoanalysis to explain and reclaim these same unconscious urges does not provide a way out of the psychic miasma; instead, the text grotesquely exaggerates and

⁴⁸ See Stephen 1960: 183-184; and Beckett’s transcriptions on this topic (TCD MS 10971/7/4).

⁴⁹ See Stephen 1960: 7-8, 156-157; and Beckett’s transcriptions on this topic (TCD MS 10971/7/2-3).

⁵⁰ See Jones 1967: 415, 424-425, 427-430; 1961: 195; and Beckett’s transcriptions on this topic (TCD MS 10971/8/19).

⁵¹ Stephen returns to the problem of treatment in her final chapter.

parodies psychoanalytic language itself, leaving it in complete disarray. Ultimately, the two psychoanalytic obsessions of ‘reclamation’ and ‘control’ end in desperation, confusion, and failure. The object of the search becomes unfathomable, ineffable, and unattainable, thus revealing an overall process of decay in Beckett’s text.

The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (BDMP) facilitates the genetic sourcing of these intertextual connections. With the aid of that scholarly tool, this chapter examines some of the variations between the English and the French versions of the text that shed more light on the relation between the ‘Psychology Notes’ and the manuscript corpus of *Molloy*. Scholars have studied *Molloy* extensively from a psychoanalytic perspective, but without access to the ‘Psychology Notes’ or the BDMP. Making excellent use of Knowlson’s *Damned to Fame* and Beckett’s ‘Whoroscope Notebook’, among other available sources, Phil Baker and J. D. O’Hara have explored the influence of psychoanalysis to disclose the ways in which Beckett succeeded in connecting psychoanalytic concepts to the structures he was creating. While Baker focuses on Jung and Freud, O’Hara deals mostly with Freud and Rank, but both show the extent to which Beckett’s texts reflect the influence of these writers.

Baker’s *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* foregrounds ‘the relation between Beckett’s work and psychoanalytic ideas such as mourning and melancholia, internalized parent figures and a gendered identification with them, displacement, anality, the womb, deathly repetition, and idealised regression’ (Baker 1997: xii). He describes his approach as ‘intertextual, considering psychoanalysis as a historically specific family of recognisable discourses which can be seen refracted through Beckett’s writing’ (ibid). He bases his structural study of *Molloy* around S. E. Gontarski’s observation that both halves of the novel ‘develop aspects of the Oedipal paradigm, the Molloy section with maternal, the Moran section with paternal, emphasis’ (qtd. in ibid). *Molloy* uses such expressions as the ‘fatal pleasure principle’ and ‘Obidil’, the latter being ‘a lower-case mirror reflection of libido’ (ibid). Baker further argues that ‘personal mythologies of parents and childhood persist in Beckett’s work long after the impasse of *The Unnamable*, and they overlap extensively with the ambient mythology of psychoanalysis’ (Baker 1997: xiv). With no knowledge of Beckett’s notes on Otto Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth*, Baker nevertheless presciently emphasises his influence on Beckett’s writing.

J. D. O’Hara’s seminal work on the structural uses of depth psychology in Beckett is ‘concerned with those incredible and inescapable systems, the basic structures of thought that uphold Beckett’s literary works’ (O’Hara 1997: 1). O’Hara devotes around two hundred pages exclusively to *Molloy*. Like Baker, he analyses the structural duality of *Molloy*, delineating the

two parts in greater detail than Baker does, and with reference to Freud and Jung. As both Baker and O'Hara invoke these theorists, their studies overlap at some points; however, they differ in their areas of emphasis. O'Hara is less restrained in deploying explanatory paradigms from depth psychology, saying of *Molloy*, for instance, that it 'is not a paradigm of Jungian myths. *It is the dreamwork itself*, unexplicated' (O'Hara 1997: 195). O'Hara is ultimately more speculative in his (over-)readings than Baker, and draws on a wide range of psychoanalytic texts, some of which Beckett may not have read. His work is suggestive, but hardly definitive.

These studies confirm that psychoanalytic concepts and imagery are fundamental to Beckett's novel. Building on their work, this chapter aims to fill an important gap in the existing literature on Beckett and psychoanalysis: first, by making full use of Beckett's documented reading and notes on this topic to re-examine his texts; and, second, by examining highly specific creative transformations of his psychoanalytic sources in one major manuscript corpus. Since the trilogy is central in Beckett's creative development, my study aims to reveal, *with* access to his notes and manuscripts, just how crucial Beckett's engagement with psychoanalysis was to that development. The degree of precision that a genetic approach makes possible offers the additional advantage, over the abstract and speculative methods adopted by Baker and O'Hara, of providing a precise enumeration of the psychological texts Beckett actually read and transformed creatively in his writing.

Yet a purely psychological approach cannot entirely account for such a complex text as Beckett's trilogy. Feldman warns against this kind of simplification:

[T]here is rarely scholarly fire without Beckettian smoke (and 'a great mirror'). As regards psychology, Phil Baker placed readers on guard for psychoanalytic language and ideas at the outset of his important text, and twenty years earlier Pilling's revolutionary study *Samuel Beckett* first found 'the anagrammatic playfulness in Molloy (Freud's libido becomes the "character" Obidil)' and, almost as an afterthought, noted Freud's dictum in the 'Three Dialogues' 'when seeking a stick with which to beat Kant'. Unsurprisingly, Pilling already anticipated some of these arguments in his 1976 study: 'no Freudian, or Jungian key, will unlock *Molloy*'. By way of extending this insight, it will be suggested here that there is no single key capable of unlocking *Molloy*, or any other of Beckett's texts, using psychological (or any other) approaches. (Feldman 2006: 83)

More specifically, there is the issue of Beckett's scepticism and distrust of psychoanalysis. Beckett did not simply accept psychoanalytic concepts and theories, nor did he use them blindly in his writing. The 'Psychology Notes' in general, and its sceptical asides in particular, make clear that treating psychoanalytic literature as a 'key' to his texts is problematic. However, this rather enhances the importance of the 'Psychology Notes' as part of the genetic dossier of Beckett's novel. What is needed is an account that fully documents Beckett's ambiguous attitude, above all to the psychoanalytic vocabulary. Previous studies have missed the 'textbook' quality of much of the psychoanalysis Beckett read, and its relevance to the ambiguity of psychoanalysis as a creative source for Beckett.⁵² In what follows, I will show how Beckett's knowledge of textbook psychoanalysis influenced the creative process of writing *Molloy*. Molloy's journey to his mother is a 'textbook' allegory of infantile regression to the maternal aspect of the psyche (as Moran's is to the paternal), but Beckett chops up, parodies and undermines the very language that he adopts as a creative source.

PART I

Varieties of introjection

***Molloy* and the maternal introjection**

'deep down is my dwelling'

Molloy

There is a great amount of material on the infantile introjection of parental figures in the psychoanalytic manuals of the 1930s. Based on his reading of these texts, Beckett's knowledge of the infantile stages of development informs much of his later treatment of the fictional parent-child relationship, not least in the 'Molloy' section of *Molloy*. Baker and O'Hara shed light on the Mag (mother)-Dan/Molloy (son) relationship on the psychological level, and thoroughly address relevant topics such as the womb-tomb, melancholia, and the death wish. However, without the 'Psychology Notes' their studies had no access to the insights that Karin Stephen

⁵² Cf. the notion of 'reclamation' and Bion's 'total cure' as a kind of threat against the fascination with abjection as creative source.

and Ernest Jones provided Beckett, notably on matters informing the dramatic tension between the mother-son pairing. Melanie Klein is another important psychoanalytic presence, whose theories about child development Beckett may have encountered in Jones. In *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, Jones summarises the process of ‘introjection and projection in infancy’, the ‘genesis of the super-ego’, and the role of ‘internal objects’ as described by Klein ([1912] 1967: 147, 308-309, 387). A term coined by Sándor Ferenczi, ‘introjection’ is defined as the proclivity in the psychoneurotic individual ‘to incorporate his environment into his own personality’ (Jones 2013: 250). Ferenczi explains that ‘[d]er Psychoneurotiker leidet an Erweiterung, der Paranoische an Schrumpfung des Ichs’ [‘the psychoneurotic suffers from a widening, the paranoid from a shrinking of his ego.’]’ (qtd. in Jones 2013: 250-251). As Jones elaborates, ‘[t]he most interesting manifestations of introjection are those relating to the persons in the patient’s environment. He transfers on to them various affects, love, hate, and so on, that arose, perhaps years previously, in connection with quite other people’ (Jones 2013: 251). As we shall see, the other women Molloy encounters on the way to his mother can be seen as stimuli that expand the ego, allowing it to take in or condense variations of the maternal imago.

In his notes, Beckett links the idea of psychoneurotic introjection to Jones’s explanation of ‘melancholia’:

Melancholia: After some deprivation connected with loved object the subject has withdrawn his love from that object, but instead of transferring it to some new one, as the normal person would do, or introverting it on to unconscious fantasies, as the neurotic does, or on to the ego, as the paraphrenic does, he replaces it by narcissistic [sic][love] of himself with former object, thereby no doubt regressing to original narcissism of his love-making. Thus the ego becomes split, the conscious part criticizing, abusing & hating the unconscious part formed by fusion with idea of object. It is this ability to treat oneself as object that leads to suicide.⁵³ (TCD MS 10971/8/6)

⁵³ Topping explains that Beckett’s knowledge of Freud’s theory of melancholia (and the related concept of narcissism) stayed with him. During the Berlin production of *That Time*, Beckett remarked to Walter Asmus that speech number seven by voice C was ‘a story of depersonalization – seeing oneself as an object’ (Asmus 1977: 93). This compares interestingly with Beckett’s notes on Ernest Jones’s summary of Freud’s paper ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1917). See (Freud 1914-1916: 237-258) (Topping 2007: 151).

Stephen's views on 'introjection, madness, melancholia and suicide' are closely aligned to the plight of the individual in the Beckettian landscape:

At the earlier immature stages of emotional development love is not a true object-relation to the other person, which leaves that person free, but rather an attempt to deny him any separate existence. At a deep level this attempt seems actually to be fantasied in terms of devouring or incorporating the loved object, thus keeping *control* of the person or part of the person needed for satisfaction, and escaping the pain of separation.

In psychoanalytic terminology the child, in so doing, is described as having "introjected" its parents. Henceforth it regards itself as it regards them. So long as these introjected parents are loved this is satisfactory. But when the child's own attitude is very full of hate, identification with either parent, whether of the same or the opposite sex, at once becomes fraught with dangers and difficulties. (Stephen 1960: 183-184; my emphasis)

The passage is especially illuminating in light of the control-chaos thematic I mentioned earlier, as well as Molloy's search for his mother and his vain efforts to introject her and capture the maternal imago. The word 'mother' is repeated a total of one hundred and thirty times across the *Molloy* manuscripts, each stage revealing more and more adult ramifications of a hated introjection. The idea of introjection as a means to control the maternal imago, or a part of it, is extremely significant. It is precisely this infantile urge to usurp the mother that prompts Molloy to seek her: 'if ever I'm reduced to looking for a meaning to my life, you never can tell, it's in that old mess I'll stick my nose to begin with' (Beckett 1955: 24). Molloy associates his obsession to be reconciled with his mother with the craving of a child:

... talking of the craving for a fellow [...] I resolved to go and see my mother. I needed, before I could resolve to go and see that woman, reasons of an urgent nature, and with such reasons, since I did not know what to do, or where to go, it was child's play for me, the play of an only child, to fill my mind until it was rid of all other preoccupation and I seized with a trembling at the mere idea of being hindered from going there, I mean to my mother, there and then. (19)

Stephen, like Jones, considers 'melancholia' a possible effect of this kind of introjection:

This introjection of the hated parents appears to explain some kinds of madness—I am thinking of melancholia, in which the unhappy patient hates himself and pursues himself with the most relentless enmity and continually inflicts upon himself humiliations and punishments: it is often the deep motive of suicide. This introjection of the parent lays the foundation of the child's conscience or moral standards or ideals, [...] and the attitude to the introjected parent-figures is of the greatest importance in all subsequent emotional character development.

For the parent it is enough to lay it down broadly, that *in so far as the parent is loved, identification as a step in the process of growing up will tend towards health, and in so far as the parent is hated, it will tend towards psychogenic illness.* (Stephen 1960: 184; emphasis in original)

Essentially, Molloy's journey is one of capturing the maternal imago, of 'keeping *control*', as it were, of the love object which has turned into an object of hate for him. In what follows, I will examine the way in which this emerges in Molloy's narrative and its thematic connections to the 'Psychology Notes'.

The hated mother

The hatred of the maternal imago, a variation of self-hate, informs much of Molloy's narrative. He communicates with his mother by knocking on her skull: 'One knock meant yes, two no, three I don't know, four money, five goodbye' (18). In the course of teaching her this code, he treats her degradingly and with condescension: 'as I administered the four knocks on her skull, I stuck a bank-note under her nose or in her mouth' (19). He refers to her as 'that poor old uniparous whore' and to himself as 'the last of my foul brood' (20). She appears to him as a monstrous head 'veiled with hair, wrinkles, filth, slobber. A head that darkened the air' (24). The 'Psychology Notes' reveal cognate ideas about the love-hate relationship between the child and its parent.⁵⁴ Beckett's notes on the 'development of sexual instinct' (TCD MS 10971/8/5), from Jones's *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, are extremely illuminating for their focus on the way in which sexual development can find expression in the individual. Jones outlines four possible directions, explicating each thoroughly. Beckett notes both the outlines and the explanations

⁵⁴ See Beckett's notes on the mother-child relationship and the excretory function (TCD MS 10971/8/16), which I include in my chapter on *Krapp's Last Tape*.

almost in their entirety. The first of these directions is '(1) Reversal into opposite' (TCD MS 10971/8/5). His notes continue:

(1) may appear as a change in instinct from active to passive (sadism into masochism, scopophilia into exhibitionism, loving into being loved), or as a reversal of content (love into hate). *Love into hate represents regression to pregenital sadistic level, on which hate & self-preservation rather than love constitute the attitude to the world, while erotic attachment to object is retained.* (TCD MS 10971/8/5-6; my emphasis)

Molloy's attitude towards his mother is one of both love and hate, but manifests the latter to an extreme. Even when he thinks of her tenderly, he quickly turns harsh, ambivalent, ironic, and veers into disparagement. Such ironic ambivalence is best displayed in the following account:

My mother. I don't think too harshly of her. I know she did all she could not to have me, *except of course the one thing*, and if she never succeeded in getting me unstuck, it was that fate had earmarked me for less compassionate sewers. [...] I give her credit, *though she is my mother*, for what she tried to do for me. (23; my emphasis)

Motherhood is, for Molloy, a condition for which the mother must seek forgiveness, as if it were a crime, for 'the one thing' – conceiving and giving birth to him. Moreover, the term 'woman' is as significant as 'mother'; for, in addition to the derogatory adjectives Molloy lavishes on his mother, he refers to her, with hatred, as 'woman':

I should add, before I get down to the facts, you'd swear they were facts, of that distant summer afternoon, that with this deaf blind impotent mad old woman, who called me Dan and whom I called Mag, and with her alone, I – no, I can't say it. That is to say I could say it but I won't say it, yes, I could say it easily, because it wouldn't be true. (23-24)

Towards the end of his narrative, when Molloy realises that his progress is marked by more frequent halts, his extreme hatred for his mother converges with feelings of disappointment at a prospective, undesired escape to the light, articulated in terms of love and hate:

... need I say, if I shall ever see again the hated light, at least unloved, stretched palely between the last boles, and my mother, to settle with her, and if I would not do better, at least just as well, to hang myself from a bough, with a liane. (105)

His alternative to finding his mother is self-annihilation, which, ‘however tempting’, has ‘little hold’ on him (106). Rather, his solution, ‘faute de mieux’ (1971: 101), lies in the pathetic consolation that ‘frankly light meant nothing to me now, and my mother could scarcely be waiting for me still, after so long’ (106). This overshadows his final decision to abandon the search for his mother and lie in the ditch instead. The ditch, of course, is an emblem of the vagina, the point of exit from the matrix of the dark wood, and the point of entry to the womb, in an effort to ‘reintegrate the matrix’.⁵⁵

Ironically, however, Molloy’s feelings of aggression and hatred towards his mother partly inform the continuous disavowal of knowledge and the rejection of unconscious material in the text. This aggression stems from his desperation to satisfy early disappointed and hence dissociated infantile-maternal needs, and is best expressed in Molloy’s verbal retaliation against the word ‘Ma’, the need to have a ‘Ma’, to ‘proclaim it’, but also to ‘abolish’ it:

I called her Mag, when I had to call her something. And I called her Mag because for me, without my knowing why, the letter g abolished the syllable Ma, and as it were spat upon it, better than any other letter would have done. And at the same time I satisfied a deep and doubtless unacknowledged need, the need to have a Ma, that is a mother, and to proclaim it, audibly. (21)

⁵⁵ See the *Dream Notebook*: ‘[556] a **whore is a deep ditch** *Proverbs*, 23:27. Cf. *Dream*, 77 (with ‘boys’ added)’ (Pilling 1999: 80).

In “Genetic Manuscript Studies and the Archival Reader”, Erik Tønning discusses this ‘curmudgeonly outburst from the narrator about his mother’ (Tønning 2017: 174) and finds the source of its exogenetic traces in ‘Beckett’s four pages of very selective notes on Otto Rank’s book *The Trauma of Birth*’: ‘Shape of lips at the breast lead to formation of universal human syllable ma’ (TCD MS 10971/8/35). He continues:

The reason why the glottal plosive letter g is said to “spit on” the syllable “ma” is that to articulate it would stop the flow of milk: saying “Mag” instead of Ma thus indicates a violent, physical rejection of the maternal breast. To be sure, even without this information one can certainly read the text in terms of a classical psychoanalytic ambiguity, a longing for the mother combined with symbolic aggression. Yet within the text itself, the whole point of the *joke* revealed by Beckett’s notes on Rank remains unstated. Indeed, this joke is actively excluded from the text, given the narrator’s insistent profession of ignorance about why exactly the letter “g” should have such power to “abolish” the syllable Ma. At the same time, this very act of exclusion is characteristic of Beckett’s aesthetics of failure: lack of knowledge, or epistemological poverty, is of course a fundamental theme not only in *Molloy* but throughout his literary work. (Tønning 2017: 174)

Tønning complicates this bizarre mother-son relationship by invoking Beckett’s parodic marginal comment on Rank’s observation, the already mentioned “Macché!”:

This Italian idiom means something like “absolutely not”, or “in no way” – and we note that the word itself contains the syllable ma. Thus in looking more closely at the source, what seemed at first like a clear “solution” for the little riddle of Ma versus Mag in Beckett’s novel, becomes potentially more ironic in its implications. (Tønning 2017: 174-175)

Another display of rancour and aggression appears in a passage where Molloy recalls his desperate fate and recounts the conditions stemming from his bad genes and which have pained him ever since childhood:

Look at Mammy. What rid me of her, in the end? I sometimes wonder. Perhaps they buried her alive, it wouldn't surprise me. Ah the old bitch, a nice dose she gave me, she and her lousy unconquerable genes. Bristling with boils ever since I was a brat, a fat lot of good that ever did me. (109)

This condensed passage links together Molloy's thoughts about motherhood, the genetic inheritance of his birth and his childhood. This, in itself, is a psychogenic regression to infantile memories despite the 'harrowing' pains.

Molloy's propensity to regress to an infantilised relationship with his mother, along with his obsession with the maternal imago, echo Beckett's notes on pregenital pleasure, the possible disappointment of that pleasure, the internalisation of an external love-object, and consequent auto-eroticism. The following notes on Stephen's views on the topic are illuminating:

Pregenital stages of mouth & bowel pleasure.

The act of suckling is the baby's first great physical pleasure, the breast his first love-object. This pleasure craving, if disappointed, becomes transferred from the outer world to the self, resulting in auto-eroticism. Similar conflicts may also occur in respect of respiration & excretion. (TCD MS 10971/7/1)

In light of Baker's 'distinction between regression into the other/mother (oceanic fusion) or into narcissistic self-containment (Beckett's "wombtomb" in the head)' (Baker 1997: 118), it is possible to regard the analogical character of Molloy's journey as valid in mythical terms. Whether Molloy's journey occurs in the outer or inner world (or both), it is cyclical in nature. Although it starts in the belly of the mother (her room) as oceanic fusion, it ends with ever-increasing aggression against the maternal imago in the half-light of the mind (the gloom of the forest). Traversing the light of day and the dark of night and the forest, Molloy journeys to the unknowable light/dark, grappling with vagueness, ambiguity and uncertainty on his way to mother. This is significant. Beckett seems to take aesthetic advantage of Molloy's obsession with his mother, using it as a creative tool to resist, distort, and undermine the language of psychoanalysis. Such subversive textual resistance, even disbelief, often tends to parody the

pretensions of the discipline to possess 'knowledge' of unconscious material, and its attempts to tame and control the unconscious mind by reclaiming its irreparably dissociated contents.

As we shall see, Molloy's encounters with his mother and other maternal substitutes reveal the impossibility of capturing such material, leading him to matricidal as well as self-destructive fantasies and leaving him in stasis as his journey concludes in the womb-tomb ditch.

Introjections, continued: 'Woman' and the death wish

The 'Psychology Notes' make various references to images of 'woman' as viewed by the individual, both in infancy and adulthood. One connects the notions of love and woman, and derives from Alfred Adler's *Practice & Theory of Individual Psychology*: 'Whatever it is we understand by love, in this particular case it is simply a means to an end and that end is *the final securing of triumph over some suitable woman*' (TCD MS 10971/8/29; my emphasis). In the course of his journey to find what he calls 'the' woman, Molloy either encounters or fancies that he has encountered other women, and he indicates the choice he has had to make between them and his mother, *the* woman. One such encounter occurs after he comes across the androgynous Lousse⁵⁶ for the first time:

I cannot help asking myself the following question. Could a woman have stopped me as I swept towards mother? Probably. Better still, was such an encounter possible, I mean between me and a woman? Now men, I have rubbed up against a few men in my time, but women? Oh well, I may as well confess it now, yes, I once rubbed up against one. I don't mean my mother, I did more than rub up against her. And if you don't mind we'll leave my mother out of all this. (75)

He refers ironically to his mother as he nears the end of his narrative: 'And I even think I had time to love one or two, oh not with true love, no, nothing like the old woman, I've lost her name again, Rose, no, anyway you see who I mean' (113). Molloy cannot achieve a relationship with a woman because his infantile identification with his mother seems to have exceeded any healthy balance. He is as much the victim of an over-identification with the maternal imago and

⁵⁶ 'Lousse: or Loy, Christian name Sophie; a mother figure who takes in Molloy after he kills her dog, Teddy (Moran's son has a teddy bear). A figure of the *ewige Weib*, in Jung's schema she represents the anima' (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 327).

its stifling demands as Jacques, Moran's son, is with regard to the paternal. That is, their identifications with the parental figures are incomplete not because of their identification is insufficient, but rather because it is excessive. This excess may be partly responsible for Molloy's hateful attitude towards his mother, since, according to Stephen, as long as the parent of either sex is hated by the child, the process of identification tends towards psychogenic illness.

Molloy's turning from one woman to another in the hope of establishing a relationship with his mother on 'a less precarious footing' (118) is a key pattern in the novel. Beckett's transcription of Stephen's *The Wish to Fall Ill* regarding the significance of the neurotic's transference mechanisms in relation to the parent imagos is crucial here:

Parent Imagos continuously transferred: the neurotic mistrust of human contacts is based on repressed fantasies of mutilation, causing him to make stereotyped transference reactions of aggression or fear. Successful analysis consists in releasing the patient from the need to make transference reactions & in enabling him to react appropriately to the actual reality. (TCD MS 10971/7/4-5)

Molloy constantly engages in neurotic displays of mistrust in relation to other people whom he meets on the way to his mother, such as with the police and a servant in Lousse's house. He fears losing his bicycle or the items in his pockets. He loses a pebble from his pocket and the lace connecting his hat to his buttonhole. Like Malone, who experiences existential panic at the loss of his exercise-book, Molloy dreads to think that he has lost his bicycle, which he eventually does lose, as though it were an extension of himself. Indeed, certain objects, such as the 'umbilical' hat lace, seem emblematic of a kind of existential assurance for Molloy (16). More significantly, he displays neurotic fantasies of self-mutilation: 'I had so to speak only one leg at my disposal, I was virtually onelegged, and I would have been happier, livelier, amputated at the groin' (47); '[a]h yes, my asthma, how often I was tempted to put an end to it, by cutting my throat' (106). Beckett's notes on Otto Rank identify asthma as one of the 'neurotic disturbances in breathing' that trigger 'repeating feeling of suffocation, refer[ring] directly to physical reproductions of the birth trauma' ((TCD MS 10971/8/35). Moran attributes such neurotic fantasies of mutilation or aggression to his son: 'He would doubtless at that moment

with pleasure have cut my throat, with that selfsame knife I was putting so placidly in my pocket' (179). Molloy accuses one of the maternal substitutes of having poisoned him, but perhaps the most drastic example of the annihilation of the old woman/bitch is his fantasised wish for her death, one in which not even her being buried alive would surprise him: 'Look at Mammy. What rid me of her, in the end. I sometimes wonder. Perhaps they buried her alive, it wouldn't surprise me' (109). Retaliatory psychogenic signs of such a wish for his mother's death first appear at the outset of his narrative:

The truth is I don't know much. For example my mother's death. Was she already dead when I came? Or did she only die later? I mean enough to bury. I don't know. Perhaps they haven't buried her yet. In any case I have her room. (7-8)

Even Molloy's fantasies of self-mutilation could be latent representations of mutilating the Mother, as passive fantastical retaliation. What haunts Molloy is the image of 'woman' that he manipulates but can never conquer. By annihilating the mother in his mind, he tries to end the pains of his search for her. That is, by satisfying his desire to reach his mother, prompted by a neurotic craving, he would at least achieve a degree of cathartic relief, albeit incomplete, and enjoy a temporary rest in the ditch. Thus, the maternal imago as the object of craving, once exhausted or nearly so, becomes the agent of stasis. The wish, however persistent, is never fulfilled. Molloy's journey towards the maternal imago is thus not achieved; it entails annihilation and destruction. Molloy's craving for reconciliation with his mother appears to occur in and through death, the state of will-less stasis: 'The truth is I haven't much will left' (7). This raises the paradox of Molloy's compulsive and excessive craving for his mother, a craving that is the agent of his agitation, and his stasis, a subject that will be discussed under the heading of the 'fatal pleasure principle' below.

However relentless Molloy's introjection proves to be, freedom from transference, which psychoanalysis claims, is never realised for Molloy. Rather, he remains for his whole life 'bent on settling the matter between my mother and me, but had never succeeded' (87), and this quest persists through his entire journey, its failure manifest in the end as he gives up the search for her. The text stages an *unsuccessful* and *incomplete* release from an obsession with internalising the maternal imago and Molloy's attempt to a transference from without.

Parent imagos in the two parts of *Molloy*

The two parts of *Molloy* reflect complementary aspects of the warped introjection of parent imagos. Molloy's maternal introjection in the first part mirrors Moran's paternal projection or exertion of power over his son – alternatively, Jacques's introjection of the father imago – in the second part. Moran records: 'My son imitated me instinctively' (128), and describes his son as 'unfortunate' with the 'rage which distorted his features' (179). Beckett's notes reveal what Stephen means by parent imagos and how the infantile mind of the neurotic creates destructive fantasies:

Parent Imagos, fantastic creations reflecting the child's own intentions. Thus the Imagos of an aggressive self-assertive child are terrifyingly primitive, no matter how mild the real parents. Danger & dread of parent Imagos, & of the archaic conscience derived from them & modelled on the child's own omnipotent destructive fantasies, can only diminish when once renunciation of omnipotence has been accepted. The neurotic situation turns on acceptance of the reality of disappointment. The neurotic has never outgrown pain of realising his own limitations, he is intolerant of frustration, incapable of risking failure & putting up with what he can get. Fearing disappointment excessively, he reacts with excessive violence to the least hint of frustration, then fears his own violent reaction & represses both desire & rage. (TCD MS 10971/7/4)

Molloy's internalisation of the mother figure is clear at the outset of his story: 'I am in my mother's room. [...] I sleep in her bed. I piss and shit in her pot. I have taken her place' (7-8). Like the infant subconsciously regarding his mother's body and his own as a unified whole, Molloy's helplessness to come to terms with the separation from the maternal body and his compulsive fantasy of the mother is in effect pregenital. His identification with his mother, or better still his introjection of his mother, is so strong that he not only fancies himself taking on her features, but bearing a son as well: 'I must resemble her more and more. All I need now is a son' (8). There seems to be a thematic pull between Molloy's need to possess his mother and the consequent monstrosity of the mother figure, especially when that need is thwarted or fails to be satisfied. This generates an ambiguous situation between control and chaos: the urge to usurp the mother can only end in chaos and failure. The more Molloy tries to grasp the maternal imago, the more remote, elusive, and absent it becomes. Indeed, Molloy's fantasy of resembling his mother is necessitated by her absence: 'If on the other hand I was in the wrong town, from

which my mother would necessarily be absent, then I had lost ground' (51). This contrasts interestingly with the father-son relationship in the Moran country and the absence of the mother in its fictional town. It seems that Molloy's fantasy of becoming one with the mother, taking her place, is realised in the second half of the novel where the fantasy of forcibly usurping the maternal imago is implied structurally, through Moran's exclusive paternity and its overpowering presence. Molloy's psychopathological search for his mother (Mag) in Ballyba has its contrasting counterpart in Moran's obsession with his son (Jacques) in Hole, and especially in his paranoiac fear of losing him, or of his son 'abandoning' him (221).

Indeed, Moran's idea of 'abandonment' or being 'coldly abandoned' (by his son) grows to be one of the chief obsessive concerns of his narrative (26, 221, 224). This paranoia results in sadistic fantasies of 'chaining' his son to himself:

And yet I did dream of it (a chain), for an instant I amused myself dreaming of it, imagining myself in a world less ill contrived and wondering how, having nothing more than a simple chain, without collar or band or gyves or fetters of any kind, I could chain my son to me in such a way as to prevent him from ever shaking me off again. (177)

Moran refers to the chain he keeps in his pocket, as Molloy keeps stones in his. This chain takes the place of a rope that, in Moran's fantasies, could be used this way:

I toyed briefly with the idea of attaching him to me by means of a long rope, its two ends tied about our waists. There are various ways of attracting attention and I was not sure that this was one of the good ones. And he might have undone his knots in silence and escaped, leaving me to go on my way alone, followed by a long rope trailing in the dust, like a burgess of Calais. [...] We should have needed, not the soft and silent rope, but a chain, which was not to be dreamt of. (176-177)

The rope and the chain may operate as a psychic umbilical cord, which Moran, having usurped the mother, makes his own by means of his paternal authority in order to bind his son as well:

No, I wanted him to walk like his father, with little rapid steps, his head up, his breathing even and economical, his arms swinging, looking neither to left nor right, apparently oblivious to everything and in reality missing nothing. (175)

Moran's efforts lie in making his son a version of himself, a stamp of the father. In his brilliant article, 'The Stamp of the Father', Phil Baker identifies the postage stamp that Jacques Jr has removed from his album. 'Show me your new Timor, the five reis orange, I said. He hesitated. Show it to me! I cried' (149). According to Baker, 'the Timor 5 Reis Orange is a real stamp, issued by the Portuguese colony of Timor in 1895. Its primary significance lies in the word 'Timor', Latin for 'Fear', which is appropriate to the way that Moran the tyrant father terrorizes his son' (Baker 1995: 143). Moran gives his son his own name – Jacques. And Jacques Jr has a teddy-bear named 'Baby Jack'. Moran says of Molloy: 'After all perhaps I knew nothing of mother Molloy, or Mollose, save in so far as such a son might bear, like a scurf of placenta, her stamp' (153). Molloy evokes this intense mother-child inseparability early on in his narrative. He describes a long lace connecting his hat to his buttonhole, which, as in the case of the chain Moran imagines attaching him to his son, recalls the umbilical cord, intimating his inability to detach from his mother: 'I took off my hat and looked at it. It is fastened, it has always been fastened, to my buttonhole, always the same buttonhole, at all seasons, by a long lace'; he concludes, 'I am still alive then' (16), a reflection that strongly supports the idea of the lace as umbilical (cf. Beckett 1956: 49).

Moran is no more extricable from his son, physically and mentally, than Molloy is from his mother. Both the perception and reception of the paternal imago by Jacques the son is essentially hateful. Moran says: 'I cursed him' (214), which, in an earlier version reads, 'My son is vile, I said' (MS-WU-MSS008-3-50-2, 77), closer to the original French, 'Tu es un misérable, dis-je' (1951: 242). The instances of Moran's dominance are many and varied. Distrustful and dishonest: 'I caught a glimpse of my son spying on us from behind a bush' (128). Reproachful: 'For I was sometimes inclined to go too far when I reprimanded my son, who was consequently a little afraid of me' (130). Punishing and vengeful: 'I hoped to spare my son this misfortune, by giving him a good clout from time to time, together with my reasons for doing so' (130); 'I would forbid him to call me papa, or show me any sign of affection, in public, if he did not want to get one of those clouts he so dreaded' (171); '[a]nd at the sight of

the blue flesh, between the knickerbockers and the tops of my boots, I sometimes thought of my son and the blow I had fetched him, so avid is the mind of the flimsiest analogy' (234). Suspicious: 'There were times I suspected my son of deceit' (135). Superior: 'If I had been my son I would have left me long ago. He was not worthy of me, not in the same class at all. I could not escape this conclusion. Cold comfort that is, to feel superior to one's son, and hardly sufficient to calm the remorse of having begotten him' (142). Paranoid: 'that little hypocrite' (164). Pathetic and indifferent: 'I reflected with bitter satisfaction that if my son lay down and died by the wayside, it would be none of my doing' (167). Shaming: 'My son could only embarrass me' (170). Authoritarian: 'I did not want my son to be seen capering in the streets like the little hooligans he frequented on the sly' (175). Belittling: 'my idiot of a son' (182); '[a]ll this time my son was puffing like a grampus' (191). Violence: 'That night I had a violent scene with my son. [...] I have had so many scenes with my son' (219).

Compare Molloy's paranoiac fantasies of being watched by Lousse, like Moran by Jacques, from 'behind the bushes', as well as of her poisoning or drugging him:

I think she spied on me a great deal, hiding behind the bushes, or the curtains, or skulking in the shadows of a first-floor room, with a spy-glass perhaps. [...] And to get a good view you need the keyhole, the little chink among the leaves, and so on, whatever prevents you from being seen and from seeing more than a little at a time. No? I don't know. Yes, she inspected me, little by little, and even in my very going to bed, my sleeping and my getting up, the mornings that I went to bed. [...] So I will only add that this woman went on giving me slow poison, slipping I know not what poisons into the drink she gave me, or into the food she gave me, or both, or one day one, the next the other. That is a grave charge to bring and I do not bring it lightly. And I bring it without ill-feeling, yes, I accuse her without ill-feeling of having drugged my food and drink with noxious and insipid powders and potions. (70-71)

Both Molloy and Moran need external love objects, not only to define them, but occasionally to direct their hatred and aggression against them. Being the stamp of his father, Jacques Jr, too, displays aggressive traits: 'my son, his anger spent' (221), or 'my unfortunate son [...] the rage which distorted his features and made him tremble would never leave him till the day he could vent it as it deserved', though he is still a little too young 'for the great deeds of vengeance' (179).

The idea of control and mastery works differently in the Moran country. Obsessed with right and wrong, hygiene, and proper conduct, the pedantic Moran detests anything in his son that would violate the law of the father, and like Molloy in relation to his mother, he seems not only to display a hateful and contemptuous attitude towards his son but also to share a preoccupation with the object, albeit in a different manner:

Jacques went away grumbling with his finger in his mouth, a detestable and unhygienic habit, but preferable all things considered to that of the finger in the nose, in my opinion. If putting his finger in his mouth prevented my son from putting it in his nose, or elsewhere, he was right to do it, in a sense. (128)

Jacques's habit of putting (sucking?) his finger in his mouth recalls Molloy's habit of pebble-sucking, both variations of a possible psychogenic disorder from the infantile oral stage. Beckett was aware of such a condition, especially from reading *The Trauma of Birth*, where Rank writes that analysis recognises such neurotic tendencies as 'libidinal', that is, directed towards 'libido-gratification', whose aim is to 'continue as long as possible the unlimited freedom of the pre-natal state' (Rank 1929: 18). He explains:

The temporary (or, after weaning, the complete) substitution of a finger for the mother's breast shows [...] the child's first attempt to replace the mother's body by its own ("identification"), or by a part of its own. And the enigmatic preference for the toes clearly betrays the tendency to re-establish the intrauterine position of the body. (Rank 1929: 18-19)

Jacques's habit of putting his finger in his mouth as an unconscious effort at maternal identification is foiled by the absence of any maternal figure, thus resulting in a lack of identification with the mother and an over-identification with the father. Rank's account also gives a new colouration to Molloy's pebble sucking, which is reinforced by the loss of his toes. If we consider the latter as an external substitute for the love object, their absence intimates an aborted attempt to re-establish the intrauterine condition, that is, an incomplete maternal identification. In addition, it is precisely when speaking about his toes that Molloy notes 'no

more new symptoms appeared, of a pathological nature [...] nothing at all comparable to the sudden loss of half my toes' (74). Their absence thwarts Rank's infantile 'enigmatic preference for the toes'. Whereas the child's attempt to re-establish the intrauterine position is a desire to be embraced, Molloy's infantilism has a vengeful tendency, one which renounces any embrace by the mother, and instead aims to reclaim and usurp her imago by embracing and devouring it.

Moran's pathological disorders are chiefly directed towards his son, the first love-hate object for the parent. His obsession with cleanliness is as obstinate as Molloy's psychopathological character traits: 'I forgot that my son would be at my side, restless, plaintive, whinging for food, whinging for sleep, dirtying his drawers' (172). Rank draws attention to a different kind of 'pollution': 'From sucking as well as from the pleasurable discharge of the urine (enuresis), the way discovered by Psychoanalysis leads to the "childish fault" *par excellence*, masturbation of the genitals (*cf.* also the later replacing of enuresis by pollution)' (Rank 1929: 19). Moran practises masturbation and is sure that his son does too: 'I took advantage of being alone at last, with no other witness than God, to masturbate. My son must have had the same idea, he must have stopped on the way to masturbate' (198-199). The tensions between the father and the son strongly resonate with Beckett's attention to topics elaborated by Stephen and cited in the 'Psychology Notes':

The child's self-esteem, creative powers & sexual life may be permanently damaged by excessive demands of the parents for self-control in the matter of cleanliness.

Enuresis & diarrhoea are psychogenic symptoms when child rebels unconsciously against such strictness, while overtly submitting.

Analysis substitutes a reality attitude for blind repudiation & insistence.

Right & wrong, praise & blame, pride & guilt, are first apprehended by the baby in excretory terms. Learning to be clean is the first alien standard of conduct.

The idea of the genitals isolated & charged with danger makes the child dissociate & repress this aspect of the parents & causes the idea of them to be split, into the familiar easy person & the terrifying sexual monster. (TCD MS 10971/7/2-3)

Molloy's helpless desire to reach his tender yet terrifying mother, and Moran's insane demands of his son, are empty efforts at control and mastery over a (once) loved object, no longer with love, but with aggression. Yet, in neither case, can the mother or the son be usurped, possessed or taken over entirely. That is, once dissociated, the unconscious material containing early love

objects, whether maternal or paternal, can never be completely reached or grasped. It remains elusive. The desire to reclaim that material can only end in chaos, confusion, and obscurity, leaving the individual alone in his desperate search for the unreachable and the unknowable.

Introjection externalised: Pebbles, petrification and coprophilia

In light of Molloy's 'narcissistic self-containment', as it were, his obsessive sucking of his pebbles/stones is perhaps the highest expression of his unconscious drive to devour the environment and contain the dissociated love object. He handles them with extreme care, and his emphasis on sucking may signal a passive or unconscious auto-erotic activity:

Taking a stone from the right pocket of my greatcoat, and putting it in my mouth, I replaced it in the right pocket of my greatcoat by a stone from the right pocket of my trousers, which I replaced by a stone from the left pocket of my trousers, which I replaced by a stone from the left pocket of my greatcoat, which I replaced by the stone which was in my mouth, as soon as I had finished sucking it. (93)

And later:

And the first thing I hit upon was that I might do better to transfer the stones four by four, instead of one by one, that is to say, during the sucking, to take the three stones remaining in the right pocket of my greatcoat and replace them by the four in the right pocket of my trousers, and these by the four in the left pocket of my trousers, and these by the four in the left pocket of my greatcoat, and finally these by the three from the right pocket of my greatcoat, plus the one, as soon as I had finished sucking it, which was in my mouth. (94)

As the psychoanalytic texts of the 1930s suggest, such a fixated erogenous activity does not merely aim at sensual pleasure, but can also be a way to express repressed emotions, such as anger against towards and hatred of disappointed love objects. According to Stephen, such

emotions, however residual, are extant in the unconscious and can emerge when the repressing agents weaken. Beckett's notes on Stephen continue:

Auto-erotic activities are not merely an attempt to obtain sense-pleasure, but are partly acts of revenge, the hostility towards the earliest unsatisfactory love-objects being transferred to the self.

Violent interruption of auto-erotic pleasure (thumb-sucking etc.), with sudden fright, has a traumatic effect on the personality with fixation on such pleasure. (TCD MS 10971/7/1)

Molloy's 'Mag' and his mathematical calculations regarding the 'maternal' sucking-stones assume their forms and disguises in an obsessive-compulsive way, as if Molloy could not help devising novel ways to manipulate them. 'For in order for each cycle to be identical, as to the succession of stones in my mouth, and God knows I had set my heart on it, the only means were numbered stones or sixteen pockets' (98). In fine, the parody partly lies in the contrast between the trifling matter of counting his stones, like his farts (39), and the earnest method that Molloy adopts, as though he were engaged in solving a quantum physics equation. That is not all, however. Further on, he concludes that numbering his stones would not be a solution and he may be obliged to keep a register to avoid any kind of mistake in counting and manipulating them as he desires:

For it was not enough to number the stones, but I would have had to remember, every time I put a stone in my mouth, the number I needed and look for it in my pocket. Which would have put me off stone for ever, in a very short time. For I would never have been sure of not making a mistake, unless of course I had kept a kind of register, in which to tick off the stones one by one, as I sucked them. (99)

Molloy's hatred of his mother, as a projection of self-hate, perhaps reflects a concern with melancholia and death, the stones and pebbles operating as object variants – indicating his inability to find a proper alternative love object. Hence, he projects onto this love object unconscious fantasies, 'as the neurotic does' (see TCD MS 10971/8/6), such as those associated with his mother. Baker believes that Molloy's pebbles indicate 'indifference' and 'stillness'

(Baker 1997: 137-138), that is, lifelessness and the death wish. Although Beckett's psychology notes do not discuss this specifically, the matter is traceable to Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). Baker relates Beckett's childhood experiences of playing with stones and recounts the story he told his friend Gottfried Büttner in 1967, that 'he would pick up stones from the beach and carry them home, where he would build nests for them and put them in trees to protect them from the sea' (Büttner 1984: 67). Beckett described this relationship as 'almost a love relationship' (Baker 1997: 139). According to Baker, Beckett associated this impulse with death, quoting Freud to the effect that 'man carried with him a kind of congenital yearning for the mineral kingdom' (in Büttner's paraphrase, 1984: 67) (Baker 1997: 139). Knowlson also points out this early fascination of Beckett 'with the mineral, with things dying and decaying, with petrification' (Knowlson 1997: 29). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as Baker observes, Freud 'expounds a nostalgia for the inorganic at the end of life's circular form' – the 'most universal endeavour of all living substance—namely to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world' – which 'Beckett's narrators display correspondingly' (Baker 1997: 139). Tønning summarizes Freud's speculation:

He argues that the wish to return to 'an initial state from which the living entity has at one time departed' (...) is so powerful that it can *set aside* the pleasure principle. The inertia of inanimate matter before the advent of organisms is in Freud's view even more fundamental. Hence, there is embedded in all organic life what Beckett in 1967, with reference to this essay, called a 'congenital yearning for the mineral kingdom' (Tønning 2007: 136).

Molloy's outrageous displays of OCD in fact find expression chiefly through two outlets: petrification and coprophilia. In light of Beckett's 'congenital yearning for the mineral kingdom', this yearning essentially tends towards the womb(-tomb) – a return to the woman, the mother. Molloy's encounter with his mother at the outset of his narrative is alarmingly faecal:

I think she was quite incontinent, both of faeces and water, but a kind of prudishness made us avoid the subject when we met, and I could never be certain of it. In any case it can't have amounted to much, a few niggardly wetted goat-droppings every two or three days. (22)

This visual imagery abruptly switches to the olfactory, the maternal recognition of the son taking place through the sense of smell: 'The room smelt of ammonia, oh not merely of ammonia, but of ammonia, ammonia. Her shrunken hairy old face lit up, she was happy to smell me' (22). The smell of ammonia readily evokes that of urinary and faecal discharge, yet, given role of the mother's room as a womb in which Molloy initially finds himself, it also evokes the consciously 'incontinent' infantile behaviour that imitates the intrauterine condition. This links thematically with Beckett's notes on infantile incontinence, the urinary and defecatory functions, and the mother-child relationship: 'In the consciously uncontrollable & apparently automatic ejection of urine & discharge of faeces ("as proof of love" for the mother) the child behaves as if it were still in the womb, inter faeces et urinas' (TCD MS 10971/8/34). Paradoxically, although Molloy's mother has taken the role of the child in this passage and the 'proof of love' issues from the mother, Molloy's comment that 'she was happy to smell me' may point to his self-abasing view as faecal matter - 'babies made of faeces' (TCD MS 10971/8/19).

On another level, scatological references to earth, sand and pebbles as coprosymbols are traceable to Beckett's final notes on Ernest Jones's *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*:

Instinct of the infant to keep & play with faeces, the pleasure it takes in smearing, which it does with excreta as a token of affection. Cp. Idiosyncrasies relating to food (sausages, rissoles, spinach, etc). Chief coprosymbol – money (Dukatenscheisser, goose with golden eggs, golden Ader (piles), filthy lucre, wallowing in, stinking with, money, currency, liquid money). *Interest gradually transferred from excreta to money via mudpies (odourless), sand (dehydrated), pebbles (steinreich), marbles, buttons.* (TCD MS 10971/8/19; my emphasis)

Here, the connection of earth, rock, stones to muck, dirt and excrement takes Beckett from petrification and death towards coprosymbolism. The novel offers numerous instances of Molloy musing about pebbles, but also about sucking them:

I thought of the food I had refused. I took a pebble from my pocket and sucked it. It was smooth, from having been sucked so long, by me, and beaten by the storm. A little pebble in your mouth, round and smooth, appeases, soothes, makes you forget your hunger, forget your thirst. (33)

The association Molloy makes between the soothing effects of pebble-sucking and the appeasement of thirst and hunger may have been premised on 'The Mouth Stage', Stephen's fourth lecture/chapter in *The Wish to Fall III*, concerning the baby's refusal (due to disappointment) of the mother's breast at the suckling stage of development, and its ensuing hunger. Molloy's remembrance of 'the food [he] had refused' would be assume a specific character in light of this. Stephen discusses this psychic mechanism in terms of the transition from the child's refusal to the manner in which the individual may later view or even re-experience it in adult life. This notion appears very early in the 'Psychology Notes': 'Disappointment at suckling stage, resulting in the baby's refusing breast, may appear to the adult as death by starvation' (TCD MS 10971/7/1). Molloy's persistent desire to suck pebbles might thus be seen as an adult-stage overcompensation for early thirst and hunger for suckling, emerging out of disappointment at the oral stage and leading to a kind of maternal starvation.

The text on which Beckett draws for Molloy's neurotic bent casts more light on the consequences of this early dissociation, as well as on the later compensatory regression to a pregenital desire which he has not yet outgrown, and which therefore remains immature in him. Stephen further speculates:

The pain of what we call disappointment which is produced by failure to find satisfaction for an urgent craving seems to consist in the resulting state of pent-up emotional tension. The organism does not easily tolerate this tension, and tends to fall ill if it cannot find a way of discharging it. In the case of hunger for nourishment, lack of satisfaction soon leads to death; but in the case of that other hunger for pleasurable sense-stimulation, which later develops into sexual desire, the organism continues to live, but suffers until it can find some way of discharging the pent-up emotion which constitutes its disappointment. One way of obtaining relief, employed in infancy, and even much later in life, is to give this emotional tension a bodily discharge in a burst of tears or rage. Another way is to look for some object which will do to satisfy the craving if what was originally wanted cannot be had. A starving man who could find no food might chew up his boot leather. Similarly, the baby who wants the mouth pleasure of sucking and cannot get the

breast, casts about for a substitute, and sooner or later discovers some part of its own body – thumb, tongue or toes – and sucks that instead, getting a certain amount of satisfaction. (Stephen 1960: 94-95)

For Molloy, pebbles may have become a love object that he carries around in his pockets, substituting for the first love object, the mother's breast, now out of reach, lost, inaccessible. In *The Unnamable*, however, it is not the loss of substitution but rather the original love object that generates an extreme aggression against the mother: 'Quick, give me a mother and let me suck her white, pinching my tits' (Beckett 1958: 56).

That said, the soothing effect of Molloy's sucking the pebbles is subtly entwined with *forgetting* hunger and thirst: sucking does not in itself satisfy these needs, but rather acts as a repressing agent that helps Molloy forget them or hold them back. That is, the repression can be seen as Molloy's re-enactment of an early longing for gratifying similar basic needs, needs that have been dissociated and thus kept at bay in the unconscious. In this regard, Stephen's insight regarding repression in her second lecture/chapter is noteworthy:

... when any experience or instinct gets dissociated and so becomes unconscious, this means that it loses touch with real life. When this happens it stops developing, it can no longer continue to be modified by experience: and so, whatever has been dissociated does not grow up along with the rest of the personality which has maintained better contact with the outside world. It sets up what might be described as a delusional system inside the rest of the personality, cut off from the experiences which would normally modify it and dispel the delusion. (Stephen 1960: 40)

The pleasure principle is an indispensable aspect of *appeasement* (a psychological term employed by Stephen). Any appeasement of a bodily need is inseparable from *sense-pleasure*, be it at the bowel/anal, or genital level. Molloy's neurotic preoccupations with all these stages, especially the first two, indicate the operation of psychic appeasement. If the pervert's gratification of sexual desires in abnormal ways is *conscious*, it is an *unconscious* mechanism for the neurotic. If we conclude that Molloy's auto-erotic relationship with his pebbles and stones falls into the latter category, there are two possibilities: either his obsessive abnormalities

are the product of ungratified early sensual drives – thus basic needs that have been dissociated in the unconscious, not developing into maturity – or they developed during maturity, but regressed to a cruder, pregenital form. The ramifications of both options are the same. As an old man, Molloy still feels ‘the need to have a Ma, that is a mother, and to proclaim it, audibly’ (21). He is entangled in the phase of oral and anal pleasure, still on his ‘way to [his] mother’ (28), still in ‘need’ of his mother (45). As he confesses, ‘all my life, I think I had been going to my mother, with the purpose of establishing our relations on a less precarious footing’ (118). This journey is an allegorical regression to the infantile phases of development. ‘She seemed far away, my mother, far away from me, and yet I was a little closer to her than the night before, if my reckoning was accurate’ (51). Although Molloy still finds himself far from his mother, the little progress he makes each day brings him closer to her in the outer world (second mother), but also on the inside (an impossible reunion with the maternal imago).

PART II

The language of psychoanalysis and Beckett’s *Molloy*:

Rationalism, abjection, creativity

‘Reclamation work’: the rationalist intent of psychoanalytic language

Although Phil Baker did not have access to Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’ in 1997, he recognised the traces of Beckett’s knowledge of the psychoanalytic literature (Baker 1997: 7), that is, of the claim made by Freud in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* to ‘take over portions of the id’, which he referred to as ‘reclamation work’ (Freud 1933: 46-87). The allusion to this in Molloy’s reference to ‘talk of draining’ (102) has already been mentioned. Molloy goes on to inform us of the status quo with regard to ‘the scandal’ happening ‘at the gates of their metropolis, of a stinking steaming swamp in which an incalculable number of human lives were yearly engulfed’ (102). Molloy’s seeming empathy overlaps with his disappointment at the efforts undertaken and the work done by the unspecified ‘they’, eventually sliding into amusingly parodic indifference and apathy:

... the statistics escape me for the moment and doubtless always will, so complete is my indifference to this aspect of the question. It is true they actually began to work and that work is still going on in certain areas in the teeth of adversity, setbacks, epidemics and the apathy of the Public Works Department, far from me to deny it. (102)

Molloy goes on to claim that he knows ‘this swamp a little, having risked my life in it, cautiously, on several occasions, at a period of my life richer in illusions than the one I am trying to patch together here’ (103). There is a hint of past optimism in the final pronouncement, yet also caution around the work at the site, implying a degree of disbelief in the project.

Beckett’s scepticism towards the claims of psychoanalysis to chart the depths of the unconscious entails that Molloy’s narrative is not merely a re-enactment of psychoanalytic ideas – such as the infantilised regression to the maternal imago or the Freudian-Jungian structures that Baker and O’Hara have proposed. More significantly, the text exceeds such re-enactments, even as Beckett engages in a parodic undermining of the psychoanalytic discipline, its efforts to control the unconscious and help the ego contain it. He achieves this by staging an ambivalent obsession-rejection by both Molloy and Moran towards ‘spurious depth’ (154), a term indicating disbelief and distrust: a concern with understanding and taking over the contents of the unconscious accompanied by a rejection of such supposed mastery, knowledge or understanding. Through this tension or resistance, the text perennially undermines the claims of psychoanalysis to knowledge and discovery. The depths of the unconscious are ‘hidden’ for Molloy, like the depths of the sea, which makes him wonder sometimes, ‘if I ever came back, from that voyage’ (92) – a sentiment implying loss, chaos, and failure. For Moran, depths are equated with the unknown: ‘the missing instructions concerning Molloy, when I felt them stirring in the depths of my memory, I turned from them in haste towards other unknowns’ (204). Compare here Beckett’s final note on Rank in his ‘Psychology Notes’, signalling that the unconscious material cannot be controlled: ‘[t]he depths of the unconscious can no more be changed than any other organ necessary to life. The only result we can attain in Psychoanalysis is a changed attitude of the Ego to the Unconscious’ (TCD MS 10971/8/36).

The opposition between control/mastery and chaos/ambiguity exists not only in the maternal imago of *Molloy* but also in its psychoanalytic dimension. In striving to account for the depths of the unconscious, psychoanalysis was as doomed to failure as Molloy’s endeavour to situate and claim the maternal imago in those ‘infernal depths’ (106). Perhaps the most vivid

and direct expression of the resistance to ‘reclamation’ is Molloy’s rumination about ‘canals’ being ‘drained’ and ‘redeemed’, while human lives are engulfed in ‘stinking steaming swamp[s]’, as well as the more parodic note of his emphasis on the ongoing work being done by the Public Works Department despite ‘setbacks’.

Christian and psychoanalytic rationalisms versus the abject

One reason for Beckett’s scepticism towards the control and mastery claimed by psychoanalysis is the connection of psychoanalytic language to Christian versions of confession and redemption.⁵⁷ Damian Love has rightly observed that what should matter for us in Beckett is ‘the functioning of psychoanalysis as a mythology, a function Freud readily admitted [in ‘Why War’] it could serve: “does not every science come in the end to a mythology like this?”’ (Love 2004c: 85-86). Further, Love points out a number of obsessions shared by the mythologies of Christianity and psychoanalysis, observing that ‘it is when psychoanalysis is used as a mythology that structural parallels with Christian tradition may be exploited by authors like Beckett’:

Dynamic process is at least as important in this respect as theoretical structure. The Christian response to bestial drives is to suppress them, or channel them into authorized courses, but only after wrenching them into the open, employing scatological discourses to make the subject intensely *conscious* of the elements in his own nature that he must reject. The confessional is the counterpart to the analyst’s couch, where the darker side of the psyche is exposed and, through recognition and acknowledgement, tamed. Or rather, given the analytic technique of free association, requiring the patient to lay bare his consciousness itself, the relationship is a more Protestant than Catholic one: “the very penitential relationship which is idealised by the Protestant conscience – a direct, unmediated relationship between the believer and a remote, inscrutable, invisible, and often silent God.”⁵⁸ (Love 2004c: 86)

If ‘it is this process as the embodiment of a rationalist drive that fascinated Beckett in its intersection with Cartesian and Christian traditions’ (Love 2004c: 87), then Beckett’s texts

⁵⁷ See Erik Tonning, *Modernism and Christianity*, chapter 4, for an account of what he calls ‘Beckett’s lifelong *agon* with Christianity’ (Tonning 2014: 104).

⁵⁸ Richard Webster, *Why Freud was Wrong*, p. 350.

invariably display obsession as the *reductio ad absurdum* of that drive. Beckett found the Christian rationale as well as the psychoanalytic language problematic and could not accept either on its own terms.

In *Modernism and Christianity*, Erik Tønning draws attention to what he dubs ‘Beckett’s *reductio ad Christianum* across four areas’, namely, ‘the problem of theodicy, the influence of Dante, the attractions of mysticism and the rhetoric of Apocalypse’ (Tønning 2014: 105). Drawing on a wide array of textual evidence from Beckett’s oeuvre, he demonstrates Beckett’s persistent resistance to the redemptive aspects of Christianity, which he sees as ‘Beckett’s fundamental antagonist’ (Tønning 2014: 104). He traces this agon with Christianity in the recurrent Christ and crucifixion imagery, stating that the ‘emphasis is on a *universal* crucifixion, which “the” crucifixion cannot redeem’,⁵⁹ and in the more extensive ‘resistance to Christian redemption – as paradigmatic of all forms of redemption’⁶⁰ (Tønning 2014: 107). It is on this plane that Beckett’s art parodies and rejects the very idea of a deity. In *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God* (1998), Mary Bryden studies Beckett’s view of religion in his early essays and reviews, differentiating between ‘what Beckett is rejecting in art and literature on the one hand, and, on the other, what he is rejecting in organised religion’ (Bryden 1998: 2). She examines how this impacts his drama and fiction, focusing on structural ‘[u]ses of the Bible; Priests, Prayers, and Popular Piety; Theology and Spirituality’ and how Beckett’s texts stage ‘invasive forces of pain and cruelty’ in religious terms, and finally ‘what mitigating elements are available to Beckett’s people, including solitude and silence’ (Bryden 1998: 3). Both Tønning and Bryden demonstrate that Beckett’s art persistently tends to satirise, destabilise and dismiss the Christian version of redemption and the claim to faith-based knowledge that accompanies it.

Beckett’s texts do not directly reject the rationalist drive they problematise and destabilise. Rather, his texts display an indulgence of extreme modes of parody as a way of achieving a more subtle rejection of that drive. That is to say, his characters, while intensely *conscious*, or made so, of the ‘base’ elements in their own natures, do not reject or achieve control over them as directed by the Christian/psychoanalytic traditions; rather, they embrace and immerse themselves in them.

A significant overlap in the languages of Christianity and psychoanalysis can be traced to the ‘Psychology Notes’, in the terms of redemption and salvation arising from crucifixion as

⁵⁹ For more on crucifixion imagery in Beckett, see Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 114-115.

⁶⁰ Including the psychoanalytic, as present in Beckett’s oeuvre as its Christian counterpart.

punishment. For Otto Rank, this entails indulging in pain and cruelty, seen as a figure of the expulsion from the paradisaical state inside the womb, and connected with the neurotic attempt to overcome the primal trauma of birth. Beckett's succinct notes on Rank highlight the psychological aspects of crucifixion: 'Punishments representing primal situation, with stress on painful aspect: Ixion on his 4-spoked wheel; Tantalos on wheel, threatened with stone, eternally tortured by hunger & thirst; Sysyphos, for ever [sic] rolling back the stone; Christ, the spokes of the wheel becoming the cross' (TCD MS 10971/8/36). However, Rank's more detailed observations on suffering are enlightening:

Crucifixion, which as punishment for rebellion against God the Father stands at the centre of the Christ myth, corresponds to the same conversion and assimilation of the intrauterine situation as the confining of Ixion in the wheel, with the abolition of which the spokes become the cross. Consequently crucifixion likewise corresponds to a painfully emphasized return to the womb, after which follows quite consistently the resurrection, namely, birth and not rebirth. For here it is also a question of nothing but a repetition and reproduction of the process of birth, ethically and religiously sublimated in the sense of a neurotic overcoming of the primal trauma. Hence the great part which the Christian mystery of redemption plays in the phantasy life of neurotics and also of the insane is explained as identification with the passive hero who succeeds in returning to the womb by means of pleasurable suffering. This identification is a sublime attempt at recovery, which has saved mankind from the destruction of the ancient world and as such is clearly recognizable in the traditional miracles of Christ. He makes the blind and the lame healthy through his example. That is, he provokes them to identify themselves with him, because they could see in him one who had overcome the birth trauma. (Rank 1929: 136-37).

In the Beckettian landscape, the subject becomes the self-abasing, self-smearing author/victim of his own mind and body as a rebellion against the coercive forces exerted by religious or psychoanalytic authority. He is constantly in the grip of and tortured by a relentless and overpowering voice he cannot escape, yet which he sometimes denies as his own, like the Unnamable does. The latter's 'I am Matthew and I am the angel, I who came before the cross, before the sinning, came into the world, came here' (Beckett 1958: 18) thus suggests the painful character of birth as punishment, a sort of crucifixion in itself.

Indeed, the ‘Three Novels’ frequently resist the idea of Christian confession and its psychoanalytic counterpart, in the guise of the ‘talking cure’,⁶¹ and the relief and redemption they supposedly provide the individual. At one point, in speaking of suffering and existential anxiety, Moran dismisses the idea of confessional purification:

For in describing this day I am once more he who suffered it, who crammed it full of futile anxious life, with no other purpose than his own stultification and the means of not doing what he had to do. And as then my thoughts would have none of Molloy, so tonight my pen. This confession has been preying on my mind for some time past. To have made it gives me no relief.
(167)

When Moran ‘pens’ his more personal thoughts in relation to the dictates of religion, he draws up a list of questions, among which we read: ‘15. How long had I gone now without either confession or communion?’ (230). The final question dwells paradoxically on the ideas of death and sinning: ‘17. What would I do until my death? Was there no means of hastening this, without falling into a state of sin?’ (231). The implication is that the only possible relief from suffering is death.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the subversion of Christian language in *Molloy* occurs when Moran recalls several theological questions which he paradoxically dubs his ‘rare thoughts’:

Certain questions of a theological nature preoccupied me strangely. As for example.

1. What value is to be attached to the theory that Eve sprang, not from Adam’s rib, but from a tumour in the fat of his leg (arse?)?
2. Did the serpent crawl or, as Comestor affirms, walk upright?
3. Did Mary conceive through the ear, as Augustine and Adobard assert?
4. How much longer are we to hang about waiting for the antichrist?
5. Does it really matter which hand is employed to absterge the podex?

⁶¹ See my discussion of the unnamable voice as a ‘failed talking cure’ in chapter V.

6. What is one to think of the Irish oath sworn by the natives with the right hand on the relics of the saints and the left on the virile member?
7. Does nature observe the sabbath?
8. Is it true that the devils do not feel the pains of hell?
9. The algebraic theology of Craig. What is one to think of this?
10. Is it true that the infant Saint-Roch refused suck on Wednesdays and Fridays?
11. What is one to think of the excommunication of vermin in the sixteenth century?
12. Is one to approve of the Italian cobbler Lovat who, having cut off his testicles, crucified himself?
13. What was God doing with himself before the creation?
14. Might not the beatific vision become a source of boredom, in the long run?
15. Is it true that Judas' torments are suspended on Saturdays?
16. What if the mass for the dead were read over the living? (228-9)

These questions parody several basic theological foundations, which they reduce to utter absurdity and unintelligibility in Moran's seemingly naïve way of enumerating them. In essence, they attempt to explain and chart what cannot be charted. With sarcastic mock pedantry, Beckett invokes the 'arse' in a passage that alludes to anal (cloacal) birth. In doing so, Beckett simultaneously questions the creationist myth of the origin of humanity and reduces the sublimity of creation to the merely abject.

Beckett's preoccupation with the languages of Christianity and psychoanalysis, and his simultaneous tendency to undermine them, generates a great amount of textual tension. A broad spectrum of burlesqued rationality running from the sublime to the abject in various forms and disguises emerges in Beckett's writing. There is a constant tension between a fascination for the 'abject' to which Beckett was introduced by psychoanalysis, where he discovered endlessly suggestive, inventive, and imaginatively useful details, and the repulsion of its rationalist language, which imagined itself as adequate to account for this abjection, and which Beckett rendered unstable, parodying and undermining it. This ambivalence implies a certain degree of scepticism towards the idea of knowledge itself, as represented by both the Christian and psychoanalytic traditions, which are suspected as being bogus and helpless to explain the human (psychic) condition.

Another significant overlap between the language of Christianity and that of psychoanalysis lies in their preoccupation with the abject: the Augustinian ‘Inter faeces et urinas’, italicised in Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth* and underlined in Beckett’s hand in the ‘Psychology Notes’ (TCD MS 10971/8/34). This is Rank’s citation of St Augustine’s *Confessions*, evoking the individual’s abject birth and the humiliating necessity of passing through faecal matter in order to be born. On this point, there are substantial revisions in the English version of *Molloy* around the idea of anality across different genetic editions, indicating Beckett’s lexical meticulousness about Molloy’s anal traits in the creative process:

And I would have been hard set to affirm, fingering my anus for example, gracious goodness, it’s much worse than yesterday, you wouldn’t think it was the same hole. (Version 1: MS-OSU-RARE-115)

So that I would have hesitated to assert, with my fingers in my arse-hole for example, Jesus, it’s much worse than yesterday, it’s hard to believe it’s the same hole. (Version 2: MS-WU-MSS008-3-49)

So that I would have hesitated to ~~assert~~^{exclaim}, with my fingers ~~in~~ up my arse-hole for example, Jesus^{Christ}, it’s much worse than yesterday, ~~it’s hard to~~ I can hardly believe ~~it’s~~ it is the same hole. (Version 3: MS-WU-MSS008-3-50-1)

So that I would have hesitated to exclaim, with my finger-up my arse-hole for example, Jesus Christ, it’s much worse than yesterday, I can hardly believe it is the same hole. (Version 4: MS-1955-O)

The final revision is maintained in Version 5: MS-1955-GP and Version 6: MS-1959. The idea of blasphemy as a parallel type of abjection is evident across all these versions: Molloy invokes the name of Christ as he describes the condition of his anus disclosed by his finger. Despite his initial hesitation to exclaim ‘Jesus Christ’, nothing can prevent its utterance or block the textual flow between the abject and the divine. This kind of juxtaposition recurs frequently in *Molloy*. Speaking of the nuances in the pain between what he calls his ‘bad leg’ and his ‘less good’ leg, Molloy says, ‘What a story, God send I don’t make a balls of it’ (103). Such derisive blasphemy reappears when Molloy refers to his physical condition by juxtaposing the abject with the divine: ‘The heart beats, and what a beat. That my ureters – no, not a word on that subject. And

the capsules. And the bladder. And the urethra. And the glans. Santa Maria. I give you my word, I cannot piss, my word of honour, as a gentleman' (109). In the revisions quoted above, Beckett's clear preference for 'arse-hole' over 'anus' emphasises the abject, whose worsening condition, whether abscess, fissure or rectal bleeding, recalls one of the psychosomatic conditions from which Beckett himself notoriously suffered. Later on, we will see the way in which Beckett's preference for 'holes' connects with Molloy's creative holes and the aesthetic process of writing.

Molloy's parodic indulgence of the abject

In *A Theory of Parody* (2000), Linda Hutcheon defines parody in Bakhtinian terms as 'a form of authorized transgression' and, in her own terms, 'as a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity' (Hutcheon 2000: xii). The difference, she believes, lies 'between parodic foreground and parodied background' (Hutcheon 2000: 31). Coupled together, these definitions help us understand how Beckett's texts distance themselves from and at the same time transgress their Christian as well as the psychoanalytic backgrounds, and their shared preoccupation with the abject. Parody is for the writer what caricature is for the illustrator, operating through hyperbole and exaggeration, a language setting itself against other languages. Characteristically, for Beckett, parody plays a significant role as a creative tool: one which indulges the abject, like both Christianity and psychoanalysis, but in order to undermine and mark an ironic distance from their languages.

Whereas the intention of psychoanalytic textbooks is to classify, systematise and control, in order to drain the so-called 'pus' of the wounded mind in order to heal it, Beckett devotes a kind of hyper-attention to the abject. He exaggerates and embraces it as a creative resource, deflecting the psychoanalytic intention to control and heal, and destabilising the type of attention that the analyst trains on the matter. His textual distortions, interpolations, and creative coinages in the 'Psychology Notes' testify to his scepticism. Beckett introduces these creative distortions and exaggerations into his own writing.

As an example of how this parodic impulse works, consider Molloy and Edith's first meeting in a 'rubbish dump' (76). Molloy is 'bent double over a heap of muck, in the hope of finding something to disgust me for ever with eating', when 'she laid her hand upon my fly', 'thrust her stick between my legs and began to titillate my privates' (77). Both 'mud' and 'excrement' manifest the obsession with filth, dirt and muck found throughout Beckett's

writing. Here, Beckett seems to be engaged in the creative process of muddying the very words that he treats as abject matter. In the following passage, it is precisely the thought of words, of saying and mentioning and failing to mention them, that prompts Molloy to contemplate the idea of 'muck':

But it's a change of muck. And if all muck is the same muck that doesn't matter, it's good to have a change of muck, to move from one heap to another a little further on, from time to time, fluttering you might say, like a butterfly, as if you were ephemeral. (55)

Such impulses are employed by Beckett for the larger portrayal of Molloy's maternal aggression and its internalisation as self-hatred. Baker's discovery of 'a distinctively infantilised and regressive inflection' (Baker 1997: 107) in Beckett's work allows us to see, in the passage above, a subtle indication of Molloy's reunion with his mother as an allegory of regression to the maternal unconscious and its eventual disappointment. Molloy's relentless search to find and usurp his mother ('I have taken her place'), symbolising the reclamation of the dissociated maternal needs in the infantile unconscious mind, ends in the excretory phase of development ('I piss and shit in her pot'). In other words, like birth itself, it starts and ends 'inter faeces et urinas'. Ironically, therefore, Molloy's obsession with the maternal imago and his efforts to capture it prove counterproductive in the sense that what remains of that imago in relation to his psychic existence is a chaotic state of befuddlement and vagueness.

An example of abjection as the *reductio ad absurdum* of psychoanalytic rationality appears earlier in the novel, when Molloy ruminates about a 'slit' which he has found in a woman with whom he was copulating. The moment is striking. Molloy's mind appears as that of a child wondering about female anatomy with naive curiosity, arriving at a revelation which shatters his misconception of the anal and the urethral ducts as a 'common cloaca' (TCD MS 10971/8/17). In the child's imagination, cloaca is first associated with the mother. At this point, Molloy says:

She had a hole between her legs, oh not the bunghole I had always imagined, but a slit, and in this I put, or rather she put, my so-called virile member, not without difficulty, and I toiled and moiled until I discharged or gave up trying or was begged by her to stop. (76)

A number of familiar psychological concepts coincide in this passage: the proximity of the two holes in the female body, the wound-like slit, and last but not least, the sexual as well as scatological overtones of the word ‘discharge’ (replacing the earlier ‘let fly’ [MS-WU-MSS008-3-50-1, p. 66r] and ‘come’ [MS-WU-MSS008-3-49, p. 66r]). The ‘Psychology Notes’ are replete with the term ‘discharge’, chiefly employed in the context of the drives, in references to ‘organic pleasure’ (TCD MS 10971/7/1) and the ‘Id: Instinctual cathexes seeking discharge - that in our view is all that the id contains’ (TCD MS 10971/7/6). As noted earlier, the scatological sense appears in Rank.⁶² Regarding the neurotic attitude towards the male and female reproductive organs, Karin Stephen speculates that:

In the castration complex, common in psychogenic illness, the vagina appears as a wound, the penis as a murderous weapon. Ambivalence in respect of penis, both the fear & the wish to lose it. Cp. hiding it between the legs, imagining development of female breasts, preoccupation with women’s clothes & breast (penes) [sic; final phrase has handwritten line down left margin]. *Horrified early discovery that women are without penes* [sic], & so would want to steal the man’s. Horror of intercourse, fear of penetration lest the woman should not let penis go. Fantasies of being trapped, together with dread of the injury he would have to cause, vagina being unconsciously thought of as a wound. Thus impotency through feelings of self-preservation & compassion. (TCD MS 10971/7/3; my emphasis)

Although Molloy’s observation, ‘oh not the bunghole I had always imagined’, implies an infantile anatomical confusion, it also points to a subtle cloacal jest revealed in the ‘Psychology Notes’. The coexistence in Molloy’s infantile mind of the female genitalia as he had ‘always’ imagined them and his adult discovery of women’s sexual organs raises the question of why such a discovery came so late. Given Beckett’s knowledge of Adler’s theory of the ‘[m]ystery

⁶² ‘In the consciously uncontrollable & apparently automatic ejection of urine & discharge of faeces (“as proof of love” for the mother) the child behaves as if it were still in the womb, inter faeces et urinas’ (TCD MS 10971/8/34).

of female genitalia to reinforce fear of women' (TCD MS 10971/8/27), discussed in *The Neurotic Constitution*, it is likely that Molloy's conception of the mystery and his belated realisation of it derives from a subconscious dread of women, which has led to tardy and sluggish contact with them.

Molloy's mental reality is illuminated by a statement in the 'Psychology Notes', taken from Jones, about the analogy between the infantile and the adult mind: the '[c]hild's mind persists & coexists alongside of adult mind into which it has developed. The infantile mind is the core of the adult unconscious' (TCD MS 10971/8/18). While Molloy's infantile mind may be said to operate at a much more primal level and on a far less conscious plane than that of the normal individual, his extreme mental obsessions compose something of a pastiche, undermining the agency of psychoanalytic language. Molloy's disbelief in his 'prompters' and his psychological imperatives ('I was not purely physical, I lacked something' [116]), which always bear on the question of his relations with his mother, lends support to the notion of the inadequacy of psychoanalytic claims and promises to guide the individual to a satisfactory destination. The prompters are incapable of accounting for inadequacy, and leave him as helpless as ever by suddenly going 'silent':

For I have greatly sinned, at all times, greatly sinned against my prompters. And if I cannot decently be proud of this I see no reason either to be sorry. But imperatives are a little different, and I have always been inclined to submit to them, I don't know why. For they never led me anywhere, but tore me from places where, if all was not well, all was no worse than anywhere else, and then went silent, leaving me stranded. (116-117)

The term 'prompter' refers to one seated out of sight, who whispers to the actor on stage forgotten words or lines. This image evokes the psychoanalytic situation where the analyst intervenes in the thought processes of his subject, the actor; the idea of sinning implies distrust of and rebellion against authority. In distinctive symbolic ways, Beckett consistently suggests that psychoanalysis, a pretentious or pseudo-scientific discipline that tries to account for the abnormalities of the psyche and to give sense to the extremes of irrationality, fails in its attempts to fathom the unfathomable unconscious.

Molloy's obsession with anality persists through the entire text. Early on, it is the mother who, once again, figures in the preoccupation with the anal and birth: 'Unfortunately it is not of [bicycles and horns] I have to speak, but of her who brought me into the world, through the hole in her arse if my memory is correct. First taste of the shit' (20). A *special* type of birth becomes known, which, on the evidence of the 'Psychology Notes', Beckett learned about through Jones: 'Infantile cloacal theory of birth (vagina & anus one passage in premammalian animals), babies made of faeces (cp. Flowers from dung) (TCD MS 10971/8/19). Rank regards 'cloacal theory' as signifying an 'abode in the womb' (Rank 1929: 68), which resonates with Molloy's desperate maternal introjection. His utterance – 'if my memory is correct' – is a sarcastic understatement about a biological claim recorded in the notes. Without access to them, the evolutionary, psychological, and biological connotations of Molloy's irony might have passed unnoticed or simply been taken as a light joke, its genetic connections obscure.

In this respect, as explained above, parody allows simultaneously for a textual proposal and a textual refusal, linking up with a certain ambivalent attraction-repulsion towards the language of the psychoanalytic textbook, here concerning anality as abject material. Beckett's characters tend to take this obsession to such a parodic extreme that it is rendered absurd and ridiculous, with the textbook language left helpless in its attempts to account for unconscious complications. Molloy's attempt to reclaim the maternal imago in old age, which prompts his journey, persisting to the end of his narrative, and his failure to reach that goal is an allegorical portrayal of the individual's pathological denial of natal separation. At the outset of his journey, Molloy 'is seized with a trembling at the mere idea of being hindered from going there, I mean to my mother, there and then' (19). As his desperate search for a reunion with his mother continues, no female substitute can replace her, and ultimately, he fails to come to terms with the reality of his existence without her. At the same time, however, this sought-after psychic reunion is parodied through reversals of psychoanalytic language along with notions of infantile and maternal scatology, the sexual, and the abject, to show 'the folly of it' (118). The painful ramification is that a natal 'pus' leaks uncontrollably, due to 'reasons of an urgent nature' (19), left unhealed and in a worse condition than ever: 'it did no more than stress, the better to mock if you like, an innate velleity' (118).

Molloy's neurotic obsession fixates as much on his stones as it does on holes, the rectum, and faecal matter. The latter appear mostly in terms of the bodily parts which he regards as wounds, 'little by little a face, with holes for the eyes and mouth and other wounds' (204), the rectum not the least of these. He even fancies his 'prick' entering it, 'all shame drunk' (24)

as a fantasised moment of affliction/appeasement, not least given his reference to bodily orifices as wounds. Of Edith or Ruth, he says, 'Perhaps after all she put me in her rectum' (76), asking rhetorically, 'But is it true love, in the rectum?' (76), mocking the cloacal theory of birth. The twisted use of synecdoche in this line – whole (Molloy/'me') for part (Molloy's 'prick') – recalls Beckett's parody of Otto Rank's view of human intercourse in the 'Psychology Notes': 'consisting in his being able partially to back into the mother by means of the penis which stands [...] for the child' (TCD MS 10971/8/35).⁶³ Even more significantly, the sadistic/aggressive state of being taken in or 'devoured' by the maternal Edith/Ruth through her rectum strongly resonates with Stephen's views about the idea of control and the nature of love in the immature stages of emotional development, as previously discussed. Nonetheless, this time, such overpowering demands for control, care and love – the 'devouring or incorporating the loved object' in Stephen's terms – issue from both the Ruth/Edith pair and the garrulous Sophie/Lousse. Molloy refers to them as 'the Lousses of this world' (59), who would hardly let him free, or, if they do, keep an attentive eye on him. Beckett complicates the distinction between Edith/Ruth and Sophie/Lousse by having Molloy confuse the pairs not only with each other but also with his mother, thus explicitly strengthening the early implication that they are all substitutes or representations of the maternal imago:

And I am quite willing to go on thinking of her as an old woman, widowed and withered, and of Ruth as another, for she too used to speak of her defunct husband and of his inability to satisfy her legitimate cravings. And there are days, like this evening, when my memory confuses them and I am tempted to think of them as one and the same old hag, flattened and crazed by life. And God forgive me, to tell you the horrible truth, my mother's image sometimes mingles with theirs, which is literally unendurable, like being crucified, I don't know why and I don't want to. (79)

The 'horrible truth' has clear sexual overtones, which is not far-fetched in Molloy's pathological condition, provoking the excruciating pain and agony of crucifixion for him. Rank believes that the 'final and sublimest substitution for the reunion with the mother [is] ... the

⁶³ This example, among others, clearly bears out my argument that Beckett undermined the authoritative voice of the textbook psychoanalysis of the time chiefly in two ways: through his critical notes on these textbooks and through the subversive use of the psychoanalytic literature in his own texts.

sexual act' (Rank 1929: 19). Molloy seeks a mother as much as his women seek a son. He ruminates about the idea of love with Ruth/Edith a few more times, though ironically: 'She gave me money after each session, to me who would have consented to know love, and probe it to the bottom, without charge' (77); or, '[b]ut there is one thing that torments me, when I delve into all this, and that is to know whether all my life has been devoid of love or whether I really met with it, in Ruth' (78). Molloy's women give him shelter, food, drink, and even money while he stays with them. He is satisfied yet complains about the conditions and about them occasionally. His warped intercourse with the maternal substitute (Ruth/Edith) parodies the idea of 'back[ing] into the mother'. Perhaps more significantly, the early introduction of the nature of Molloy's relation to his mother both evokes and stereotypes notorious ideas in the psychoanalytic literature, above all the 'Oedipus complex'.⁶⁴

Molloy and the anal erotic: material, lexical, creative and spiritual holes

Against the impulse of psychoanalytic language to know, understand and define the self and the unconscious, Beckett's texts ultimately stage the absence of definition, explanation, and knowledge when it comes to understanding the individual and the darker aspects of the psyche – parodying the rationalist obsession to codify the depths of irrationality and madness as being itself irrational. In light of Beckett's notorious interest in bodily functions, and particularly in scatology, an important trace of this ambivalent attraction-repulsion towards the abject of textbook psychoanalysis can be seen in a crucial passage: 'better ... to obliterate texts than to blacken margins, to fill in the holes of words till all is blank and flat and the whole ghastly business looks like what it is, senseless, speechless, issueless misery' (16). Here, the transition from the 'holes' of physical/symbolic abjection to the textual 'holes of words' appears clearly. The implication is that the text is obliterated rather than produced by filling in the holes of words, which could be related to the abject, perhaps through 'utter confusion'. Yet, ironically, this occurs through the obsessive filling of abject symbolic holes within the narrative, the anal perhaps most significantly. That is, the recurrent image of filling the hole in the arse is connected with filling in the holes of words, recalling that the abject functions in Beckett as a creative resource. The text becomes the plane on which aesthetic creation is achieved through sterile intrusion, that is, words ejaculated as 'dejecta' for textual production (see Stewart 2011: 133-193). Beckett wants to dig his creative finger into the hole and keep poking about in there,

⁶⁴ 'She never called me son, fortunately, I couldn't have borne it, but Dan, I don't know why, my name is not Dan. Dan was my father's name perhaps, yes, perhaps she took me for my father. I took her for my mother and she took me for my father' (21).

even if there is a painful abscess, ‘issueless misery’. The abortive term ‘issueless’ subtly underpins the notion of sterile intrusion and the ejaculation of words as the discharge of spermatozoa on the page.

Textual creation and obliteration in *Molloy*, a major instance of Beckett’s creative ‘making-unmaking’ procedure, recalls the fascination with and rejection of abjection. The passage below concerns the Molloy country, Ballyba, and its excremental economy. Although this episode did not make it into the final text, it appears in Version 1: MS-HRC-SB-4-7 and Version 2: MS-HRC-SB-17-6, in French only. The considerable amount of deleted scatological material in Beckett’s original notes raises the question of how this material helped to shape the final narrative.

The first passage that strongly resonates with the psychologically abject appears in the fifth paragraph, where Beckett cuts out the Ballyba episode:

Il y avait là de quoi faire passer le goût des voyages aux habitants de Ballyba. Et, en effet, à part quelques *ano-érotiques*, séduits par les tranquilles garde-robes de l’exil, et certaines familles vivant dans l’aisance, les habitants de Ballyba restaient chez eux. (MS-HRC-SB-4-7; my emphasis)

Despite some modifications in a later version, the term *ano-érotiques* remained intact (‘Il y avait là de quoi faire passer le goût des voyages aux habitants de Ballyba, et, en effet à part quelques ano-érotiques séduits par les tranquilles garde-robes de l’exil, et certaines familles très aisées les habitants de Ballyba restaient chez eux’ [MS-HRC-SB-17-6]). Although the term was elided along with the entire Ballyba episode, the ‘anal-erotic’, as the ‘Psychology Notes’ indicate, was not neutral for Beckett. In *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, Beckett’s detailed knowledge of anality and its condition derived from Jones’s chapter in *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* on the triad of the anal-erotic character traits originally expounded by Freud. There are no other relevant documented readings on the topic available in Beckett’s library, a fact which reaffirms the significance of the ‘Psychology Notes’ as a genetic dossier.

Another significant theme in this connection is the intrinsically flawed nature of language itself, not least as an artistic medium. Beckett was aware, especially through Fritz Mauthner,⁶⁵ that linguistic flaws could never be mended, and the more that words are heaped upon one another, the less necessary they become, shorn of meaning and desire. Hence the gradual tendency of his art towards minimalism, quietism, murmurs, and silence. More specifically, Beckett seems to be problematising psychoanalytic language itself through its lexical holes. These are excavated by his characters, who must then confront, grapple and fill them with their obsessive compulsions. Indeed, Molloy begins his psychic search for his mother when the compulsion to find her seizes him, turning this quest into the deepest narrative hole that he must fill. Afraid of losing this ‘must’ or compulsive momentum, which he displays as a neurotic anxiety, he immediately adjusts his crutches and goes ‘down to the road’: ‘I seized with a trembling at the mere idea of being hindered from going there, I mean to my mother, there and then’ (19).

A further connection with the ‘holes of words’ appears when Molloy introduces his muse, who inspires him with thoughts of abjection. The muses in Greek and Roman mythology are the nine goddesses presiding over the arts and sciences and traditionally a source of inspiration for the artist, but Beckett makes the muse into a parodic tool, one which inspires Molloy to speak about the bunghole. This is significant as an explicit indication of the transition between material abjection and creativity/words. Molloy’s elaborate account subtly points to the idea of words as excrement, which he ‘links’ to himself through the ‘air’ (of abject inspiration) issuing from the hole. The following passage is produced from the notion of filling the ‘holes of words’ with abject matter:

I apologise for having to revert to this lewd orifice, ’tis my muse will have it so. Perhaps it is less to be thought of as the eyesore here called by its name than as the symbol of those passed over in silence, a distinction due perhaps to its centrality and its air of being a link between me and the other excrement. We underestimate this little hole, it seems to me, we call it the arse-hole and affect to despise it. But is it not rather the true portal of our being and the celebrated mouth no more than the kitchen-door. Nothing goes in, or so little, that is not rejected on the spot, or very nearly. Almost everything revolts it that comes from without and what comes from

⁶⁵ See Beckett’s notes on Mauthner in the ‘Philosophy Notes’ (TCD MSS 10971/5/1-4).

within does not seem to receive a very warm welcome either. Are not these significant facts?
Time will tell. (107-108)

An earlier version offers a more affectionate take on the hole: 'Poor little misjudged hole, which we call the arse's, and affect to despise.' (MS-OSU-RARE-115, p. 81v). Whether 'lewd', or originally 'shameless' in the early versions (MS-OSU-RARE-115, p. 81v & MS-WU-MSS008-3-49, p. 93r), both expressions carry homo- and auto-erotic sexual connotations of the anal-erotic, as the renunciation of procreative sex in favour of aesthetic creation. Ironically, Molloy's warning against underestimating the 'little hole' may allude to the 'overestimation' by psychoanalysis of the significance of anality and its effort to partially understand the unconscious material that produces that condition, as well as its tendency to impose rationality on it. Beckett found this optimistic and positivist attitude irrational in itself; hence his revolt against the rationalist tradition of psychoanalysis represented in associated patterns in the language he adopted from the discipline. As Feldman points out, Beckett was familiar with the 'hallucinogenic nature of rationalism' (Feldman 2004: 30) from his extensive readings of different philosophical sources, on which he kept notes.⁶⁶ Whereas the 'Philosophy Notes' reveal Beckett's attention to the patterns of rationality and irrationality from ancient philosophy to the Enlightenment and beyond, the 'Psychology Notes' testify more specifically to the rationalist drive inherent in psychoanalytic language.

In addition to the obsession with abjection, scatology, anality and orifices shared by the psychoanalytic literature and *Molloy*, another common fascination appears in the ideas of birth and the death wish, figured in the holes and burial scenes explored by Beckett as the 'womb-tomb'. Beckett had been preoccupied by these ideas in his early works, especially in *Dream*; however, the 'Psychology Notes' as well as the 'Philosophy Notes' develop this concern with notes on views of birth, life, suffering and death, and the impact of the trauma of birth on the life of the individual. The following notes are among Beckett's final transcriptions from Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* on the physiological as well as the psychical consequences of the act of birth:

⁶⁶ See Beckett's *Whoroscope* and his 'use of humour and denunciations of rationality' (Feldman 2004a: 63).

Primal anxiety-effect at birth, which remains operative through life, right up to the final separation from the outer world (gradually become a second mother) at death, is from the very beginning not merely an expression of the new-born child's physiological injuries (dyspnoea - constriction - anxiety), but in consequence of the change from a highly pleasurable situation to an extremely painful one, acquires a psychical quality of feeling. (TCD MS 10971/8/36)

As stated earlier, Rank believes that 'with the thought of death is connected from the beginning a strong unconscious sense of pleasure associated with the return to the mother's womb' (Rank 1929: 24). Indeed, the Molloy affair, as Moran affirms, entails 'the fatal pleasure principle' (135). Baker discusses this with reference to Freud, but for both Freud and Rank the underlying idea is pleasure as stasis, being at rest, and the desire or wish for appeasement from pain is ultimately fatal, that is, it leads back to stasis. Therefore, the pleasure principle maintains the organism's equilibrium. The Rankian link is to womb/death (=Nirvana). This subject is neatly summed up in the 'Philosophy Notes', in Beckett's entries on Arthur Schopenhauer:

Deliverance from misery only possible through repudiation of the will. But how shall the will, the [...] one and all, only Real, T I I, by its very nature self-affirmative, repudiate itself? Yet it is present in asceticism [also], peace of soul by absence of wishes. Here Sch. found confirmation in the Indian philosophy, called the world of idea the veil of Maia and repudiation of will entrance to Nirvana.

There is relative deliverance in the activity of pure will for subject by knowing (contemplation - disinterested thought), were [Sic] objects are not phenomena but eternal Forms of objectivation of will - Ideas. (narcissism!) (TCD MS 10967/253)

Molloy's regressive journey to introject the maternal imago as an act of pleasure is ultimately 'fatal' or 'funeste' (164) since it harries and disturbs the stasis of the intrauterine condition objectified in the ditch where he ends his painful quest. He describes his distress: 'unfortunately there are other needs than that of rotting in peace, it's not the word, I mean of course my mother whose image, blunted for some time past, was beginning now to harrow me again' (102). 'The will becomes free from itself when it can represent to itself in thought its objectivation without ulterior purpose' (TCD MS 10967/253), according to Beckett's notes. On this basis, Baker's contention that Molloy's being content to lie in the ditch imitates his having found his mother is plausible (Baker 1997: 119). More significantly, such an ending parodies the fallacy of the quest for the mother on which the text is predicated. The idea that a ditch can replace the

mother's womb in Molloy's old age reveals his dissociated needs and abject misery. Yet, as noted earlier, this final 'death' in the ditch is also a new birth, whence the ambiguous sense of the ditch. Although Molloy's story enacts certain ideas from psychoanalytic texts, Beckett never relinquishes the ambiguous and parodic language that undermines them by creative distortion.

Beckett further stages ideas of organic equilibrium, its painful absence, bodily needs, and mental pleasure in the parodic portrayal of Molloy's infantile pebble sucking and obsessive stone calculations, which significantly end first in paradox and then in a sweeping repudiation. Molloy wonders how he should go handle his stones 'when I felt like a suck', and speaks of 'principles':

This would have freed me from all anxiety, not only within each cycle taken separately, but also for the sum of all cycles, though they went on forever. But however imperfect my own solution was, I was pleased at having found it all alone, yes, quite pleased. And if it was perhaps less sound than I had thought in the first flush of discovery, its inelegance never diminished. And it was above all inelegant in this, to my mind, that the uneven distribution was painful to me, bodily. It is true that a kind of equilibrium was reached, at a given moment, in the early stages of each cycle, namely after the third suck and before the fourth, but it did not last long, and the rest of the time I felt the weight of the stones dragging me now to one side, now to the other. So it was something more than a principle I abandoned, when I abandoned the equal distribution, it was a bodily need. But to suck the stones in the way I have described, not haphazard, but with method, was also I think a bodily need. Here then were two incompatible bodily needs, at loggerheads. Such things happen. But deep down I didn't give a tinker's curse about being off my balance (99-100)

There are traces of Beckett's knowledge of the coexistence of the 'pleasure-pain (Lust-Unlust) principle (primary system)' and 'the reality principle (secondary system)' in his notes (TCD MS 10971/8/1). The notes also record Rank's association of the neurotic's state of angst with the birth trauma and of pleasure-seeking with the primal situation: 'Just as all anxiety goes back to anxiety at birth (dyspnoea), so every pleasure has as its final aim the reestablishment of the primal intrauterine pleasure' (TCD MS 10971/8/34). These ideas can be linked to pleasure and desire as stasis and irritation/disturbance of stasis staged in Molloy's feelings of pain and pleasure with regard to the distribution of stones and their equilibrium or disequilibrium.

This fascination with the convergence of such binaries as pain-pleasure, birth-death or womb-tomb is, again, mediated in *Molloy* by an obsession with the ‘hole’. Indeed, ‘Hole’ becomes a proper name, a geographical entity, in *Molloy*.⁶⁷ Moran instructs his son to buy a ‘second-hand bicycle’, for which he must go to ‘Hole’ (193). Moran records their dialogue: ‘to Hole, he said, fifteen miles away—. Don’t worry about the miles, I said. You’re in Hole’ (196). Indeed, though ‘ostensibly at home in Turdy’ (196), they are all in ‘Hole’.

Earlier in the novel, Lousse (Loy) digs a hole to bury the dog that Molloy ran over with his bicycle: ‘It was she dug the hole, under a tree. You always bury your dog under a tree, I don’t know why’ (46). Disabled Molloy mulls over his inability to assist: ‘It was she dug the hole because I couldn’t, though I was the gentleman, because of my leg. That is to say I could have dug with a trowel, but not with a spade’ (46). The Christian allusions⁶⁸ draw attention to the subtext in which Lousse (Christian name Sophie) and Molloy (the gentleman) represent Eve and Adam in the garden of Eden, linking the idea of Creation and the ejection from Paradise with life and death, the womb-tomb, as it were. Molloy’s suspicions persist and spill over into morbid reflections:

But what was my contribution to this burial? It was she dug the hole, put in the dog, filled up the hole. On the whole I was a mere spectator, I contributed my presence. As if it had been my own burial. And it was. (48)

Molloy identifies with the dog and sees its burial as his own. Beckett’s pun on ‘(w)hole’ recalls the ‘holes of words’ and links the hole of the burial scene he is witnessing, and into which the dog and dust are being deposited, to the lexical holes being filled. Molloy is seen not only imagining but also watching his own burial. The degree of this identification may reflect his detached presence as a ‘mere spectator’, a distant position that allows such ruminations. However, it also extends to the tree under which the dog is buried: ‘It was a larch. It is the only tree I can identify, with certainty. Funny she should have chosen, to bury her dog beneath, the only tree I can identify, with certainty’ (48). Indeed, the digging of holes appears as a recurrent image in the first two texts of the ‘Three Novels’. Both Molloy and Malone are obsessed with

⁶⁷ ‘Hole’ as proper noun also appears in all the French versions of the text.

⁶⁸ Ackerley and Gontarski point out the allusion to ‘the Luddite ditty (1381): “When Adam delved, and Eve span / Who then was the gentleman.” A “Loy” is a spade for cutting turf. Her garden creates an **allegory** of Paradise; but once Molloy leaves by the wicket gate (compare *Pilgrim’s Progress*) he cannot return. She combines *wisdom* and *law* with *lice*, the “**eudemonic** slop” (...) of an ethical system based on happiness and rectitude, the “miserable **molys**” (...) that Molloy must reject’ (Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 327).

this activity to a conspicuous degree as they observe and report on other characters, here even a dog:

In any case it wasn't their fault I couldn't dig, but my leg's. It was Lousse dug the hole while I held the dog in my arms. He was heavy already and cold, but he had not yet begun to stink. He smelt bad, if you like, but bad like an old dog, not like a dead dog. He too had dug holes, perhaps at this very spot. (47-48)

The dog is buried like a 'Carthusian monk'⁶⁹ and Molloy emphasises that 'she [Lousse] put him in the hole' (48). This burial with leads him to imagine the eventual interment of Lousse's parrot making him think of his own burial chez Lousse: 'Him too one day she would bury. In his cage probably. Me too, if I had stayed, she would have buried. If I had her address I'd write to her, to come and bury me' (50). Ultimately, Molloy himself ends up in a ditch, physically enveloped in a hole that recalls his obsession with the lost object and evokes a compensatory, yet inadequate, reunion with a fantasy of that object. His obsession with holes and burial scenes indicates his desire to introject the maternal imago as he searches for an alternative internal haven or mental refuge in the womb-tomb. Baker has rightly observed that

the indifferent renunciation of the object involves a narcissistic withdrawal of interest from the outside world which amounts to a phantastic reunion with the (internalized) object. So when Molloy, for example, is content to lie in his ditch instead of pressing on to find his mother, in this sense he *has* found her. (Baker 1997: 119)

Yet this intense preoccupation with the mother (womb-tomb) is partly but unmistakably relevant to his infantilised regression to the excremental phase of development. For Molloy, there seems to be a subconscious identification of the mother with faeces further linked to the idea of home, refuge, and the womb. His internal reunion with his mother vividly coincides with abject matter, but it also eventually brings him to his desperate womb-tomb: the ditch.

So far, I have argued that Molloy's frequent references to holes, both anal and vaginal, as well as burial holes, and his final contentment to lie in the ditch rather than continue his search for his mother, are variations of an obsession with the maternal imago and part of the

⁶⁹ A monk of an austere contemplative order founded by St. Bruno in 1084. Carthusian monks and nuns were buried without a coffin, which explains Beckett's analogy.

long pursuit of a psychic reunion with the mother, one which is, however, arrested and never achieved. What is left, therefore, is an interrupted regression to the intrauterine situation, an incomplete psychic birth, with the ditch imitating the womb, a failed attempt at ‘materializ[ing] primal situation, i.e., to undo primal trauma’ or ‘intellectually overcoming the birth trauma’ (TCD MS 10971/8/36). These are but two of the claims and promises of psychic treatment heralded by psychoanalysis recorded in Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’.

To conclude, therefore, the ambiguity between control/mastery and chaos lies not only in the maternal imago of *Molloy* but also in its psychoanalytic dimension. In seeking to give an account of the depths of the unconscious, psychoanalysis was as doomed to failure as Molloy’s endeavour to situate and claim the maternal imago in those ‘infernal depths’ (106). Beckett’s text persistently stages subversions and reversals of the languages of both Christianity and psychoanalysis, especially in their shared obsession with the abject and their rationalist drive, indulging these preoccupations while constantly ironising, destabilising and dismissing their promises of redemption.

CHAPTER IV

Malone Dies:

Death wish, death drive, and the ‘Psychology Notes’

In *Malone Dies*, the hapless Macmann takes sides in a debate between Freud and Jung recorded in Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’:

he was more reptile than bird and could suffer extensive mutilation and survive, happier sitting than standing and lying down than sitting, so that he sat and lay down at the least pretext and only rose again when the *élan vital* or struggle for life began to prod him in the arse again. (70)

Beckett’s notes (summarising Woodworth) explain how Jung’s Analytic Psychology differs from the Freudian perspective:

Freud objected to the moral terms of reference in Jung, who regarded the libido as Schopenhauer’s will to live or Bergson’s *élan vital*, embracing both Freud’s sex impulse & Adler’s will to power. He desexualised the libido, conceiving it as psychical energy that manifests itself in diverse ways - sex, self-assertion, etc. (TCD MS 10971/7/15)

On Malone’s reading, there is nothing positive, morally or otherwise, about the arse-prodding *élan vital*. Later on, in *Act Without Words II*, Beckett would literalise this impetus as the goad, and in *Play* as a tyrannical spotlight. Macmann (like everyone else) would be better off being able to lie down permanently and expire. While Jung understood the will as goal-driven, striving towards some form of meaningful psychic integration, Beckett’s (and Freud’s) understanding of Schopenhauer is truer to the original: the will is blind, purposeless, and perpetually at war with itself in the phenomenal world. Beckett could be particularly scathing about any kind of

‘determined optimism’ or forward-striving ‘on and up’ teleology,⁷⁰ and it seems clear that this element in Jung is what underlies the judgement that his work is ‘in the end less than the dirt under Freud’s nails’ (Beckett 2009: 282).

No character in Beckett is more lucidly aware than Malone of the ‘wisdom of Silenus’: that never having been born is the unattainable best, but the second best is to die quickly.⁷¹ He desires ‘a world unsullied by my presence’ (189), ‘the relapse to darkness, to nothingness’ (195), ‘the blessedness of absence’ (223). Malone’s consistent depiction of life in terms of abjection, living death, torture and crucifixion, endless atonement, and perpetually unfulfilled desire, amounts to a thoroughgoing condemnation of the ‘*élan vital*’, of ‘libido’, of ‘Eros’: a revulsion from life on broadly Schopenhauerian lines. The first section of this chapter will examine the ways in which the ‘Psychology Notes’ underlie, support and elaborate this depiction. The second section focuses on Malone’s strategies for actually achieving extinction, darkness, nothingness and absence. These are figured as a kind of redemption, ‘a great calm, and a great indifference, never really to be troubled by anything again’ (198). This is a womb-like mystical state, and I will argue that Malone is attempting, in a Rankian way, to recreate death as a ‘second mother’ (TCD MS 10971/8/36). His stories are meant to enable him to focus and control the processes of depletion and extinction, in order to obtain an ultimate release into death. However, there is a problem with this approach: the very desire to *achieve* death – Malone’s death wish – is itself libido-driven. It remains firmly within the precincts of what Freud called the pleasure principle. The third section of this chapter will argue that, at certain points in Malone’s text, we find evidence of a repetition-compulsion, or tendency to return again and again to certain traumatic scenes of breakdown, indicating the relentless onward force of the Freudian death drive. From Freud’s essay ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ – one of the few psychoanalytic sources beyond the ‘Psychology Notes’ that can be confidently documented as an influence on his work (see Büttner 1984: 67 n. 200; Baker 1997: 139) – Beckett absorbed the idea that all organisms are driven to return to the inorganic and to an original inertia, but that external circumstances have forced them to make ever more complicated detours on the way to death. Paradoxically, therefore, the death drive acts to ‘maintain its own existence in the face of every obstacle’, despite the lack of any possible libidinal reward: ‘What we are left with

⁷⁰ See Erik Tonning’s article, “‘I am not reading philosophy’: Beckett and Schopenhauer” (Tonning 2015: 68).

⁷¹ See the Nietzsche epigraph on Silenus in Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth* where he recalls ‘the completely changed attitude to death as expressed by the wisdom of Silenus in eulogizing the fortune of being unborn’ (Rank 1929: 142).

is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion' (Freud 1991: 312). I will argue in the final section of this chapter that this paradox is worked out in Beckett's text by the death *drive* continuing to push Malone onwards in ceaseless traumatic repetition, thereby undoing and undermining his conscious death *wish* for a salvific, womb-like death-as-second-mother.

PART I

Psychoanalysis, abjection, and the condemnation of life

Condemning life as abject

Beckett was attracted to psychoanalysis's concern with the abject, and also to connecting the psychoanalytic subject's (or analysand's) various experiences of the abject – including its manifestation as symptoms – to an underlying darkness or psychic knot, grounded in an ultimately-inaccessible unconscious. However, he was also sceptical of a textbook-style psychoanalysis that took its tentative charting of this region of the unconscious as a true, accurate, adequate, scientific map, or believed that the 'reclamation work' that would establish rational control was actually possible. Instead, the psychoanalytic focus became a means for elaborating a depiction of life in terms of abjection, perpetual atonement and unfulfilled desire.

Abjection in *Malone Dies* is frequently associated with the organism's process of decay, death and decomposition, but also with aesthetic creation. Malone implies the idea of life or of the organism itself as abject when he places his chamber-pot next to the dish-pot on the table: 'When my chamber-pot is full I put it on the table, beside the dish. Then I go twenty-four hours without a pot. No, I have two pots. They have thought of everything' (7). Malone articulates his existential position in relation to the objects in his room, which he calls an 'obsession' for 'chattels personal' (20). From this perspective, the reduction to the bodily functions of eating and excreting is linked via the chamber-pot and the dish to the polarities of existence: 'What matters is to eat and excrete. Dish and pot, dish and pot, these are the poles' (7). Malone starts where Molloy left off: the mother's room/womb which he tries to turn into his tomb. His tendency to lie in bed evokes infantile regression, yet it also hints at parental aggression and

punishment, as well as infantile incontinence and oblivion: 'I shall doubtless be obliged to forget myself in the bed, as when I was a baby. At least I shall not be skelped' (83) (see Frost & Maxwell 2006: 158). In a way that recalls Molloy's abject confrontation with his mother, and his cramming instructions into her head by knocking on her skull, Malone mentions a maternal figure entering his room precisely when he begins to talk about the wants and needs that he tries to cram into her head: 'The woman came right into the room, bustled about, enquired about my needs, my wants. I succeeded in the end in getting them into her head, my needs and my wants. It was not easy. She did not understand. Until the day I found the terms, the accents, that fitted her' (7-8). By recalling Rank's association of the nest/room and the 'discharge of faeces' with the womb,⁷² and his observation that the child behaves as though it were still in the womb, the picture provided here evokes a child being taken care of by his mother. The female character as a mother figure taking care of Malone's bodily needs and wants further suggests the intrauterine situation. Rank lists a series of unconscious associations such as 'the hands of the midwife, or the warm water, or later the swaddling clothes, the bed', the room, etc.' as external 'substitute[s] for the mother' (Rank 1929: 103). In this case, as in *Molloy*, there seems to be a subconscious identification of the mother with both the oral and anal phases of infantile development reflected in the obsession with food and faecal matter linked to the nest, home and the womb figured as a return to the mother.

In the Saposcats' story, the convergence of existence and abjection is expressed in terms of the cost of manure:

Think of the price of manure, said [Sapo's] mother. And in the silence which followed Mr. Sapocat applied his mind, with the earnestness he brought to everything he did, to the high price of manure which prevented him from supporting his family in greater comfort, while his wife made ready to accuse herself, in her turn, of not doing all she might. (10)

Eventually, the twisted thoughts of the Saposcats interweave the significance of faecal matter in their lives with the idea of the mother's contingent death and severance from their abject

⁷² Note also Beckett's allusion to St Augustine's depiction of the spiritual condition of man, born between faeces and urine (TCD MS 10971/8/34).

existence: 'But she was easily persuaded that she could not do more without exposing herself to the risk of dying before her time' (10).

On a few occasions, Macmann tried employment as a street cleaner. Yet his efforts did not contribute to greater cleanliness; rather, they dirtied the streets even more. The reason for this, we are informed, is the lack of control over his movements:

With the result that at the end of the day, throughout the sector consigned to him, one could see the peels of oranges and bananas, cigarette-butts, unspeakable scraps of paper, dogs' and horses' excrement and other muck, carefully concentrated all along the sidewalk or distributed on the crown of the street, as though in order to inspire the greatest possible disgust in the passers-by or provoke the greatest possible number of accidents, some fatal, by means of the slip. (72)

This account intimates Macmann's incontinence, anticipating *Not I*, where the little girl's entire body is overrun by the Mouth's logorrhea.⁷³ Macmann's bodily movements have turned to certain habits in his mundane life, which Malone associates with the former's obsessive character, in handling buttons and pegs, for example. Ironically, Macmann's lack of bodily control has led to over-compensation, an obsession with the idea of *control* as such: 'And indeed he had devoted to these little tasks a great part of his existence, that it is to say of the half or quarter of his existence associated with more or less coordinated movements of the body' (72). The idea that the individual's lack of control over bodily functions, not necessarily those related to urination and defecation, can contribute abject matter to his surroundings is aligned with Malone's view of the body itself as base and abject. Malone's frequent recourse to the ideas of abjection, infertility, sterility and death constantly intertwine with textual production and aesthetic creation:

But to pass on now to considerations of another order, it is perhaps not inappropriate to wish Macmann, since wishing costs nothing, sooner or later a general paralysis sparing at a pinch the arms if that is conceivable, in a place impermeable as far as possible to wind, rain, sound, cold,

⁷³ See Erik Tonning's *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama* (Tonning 2007: 143-144) for a discussion of this idea and its connection to Beckett's notes on Karin Stephen.

great heat (as in the seventh century) and daylight, with one or two eiderdowns just in case and a charitable soul say once a week bearing eating-apples and sardines in oil for the purpose of postponing as long as possible the fatal hour, it would be wonderful. (73)

Speaking of himself, Malone uses rectal imagery to trace the process of decay and death:

To think I shall perhaps die of hunger, after all, of starvation rather, after having struggled successfully all my life against that menace. I can't believe it. There is a providence for impotent old men, to the end. And when they cannot swallow any more someone rams a tube down their gullet, or up their rectum, and fills them full of vitaminized pap, so as not to be accused of murder. I shall therefore die of old age pure and simple, glutted with days as in the days before the flood, on a full stomach. Perhaps they think I am dead. Or perhaps they are dead themselves. (81)

The notes that Beckett took from Karin Stephen on the idea of infantile disappointment at the suckling stage, which 'may appear to the adult as death by starvation' (TCD MS 10971/7/1), enlighten the bedridden Malone's fantasy of death by hunger, corroborating the anorexic view of the body as dirt, hence the revolt against it through starvation. For Malone, this existential process of abject decay is closely associated with the body as a potential source of corruption and contamination, something clearly indicated by the proliferation of somatic conditions as manifestations of abjection. These conditions are constantly associated with the organism's suffering, decomposition, and demise. Malone hears 'a kind of burning croak deep down in the windpipe, as when one has heartburn' (81). He hopes that this croak may stop one day and, with practice, he says, 'I might produce a groan, before I die' (81). His writing may itself be interpreted as this 'practice' before his end, even as his repeated 'what tedium' highlights its fictional materiality. Indeed, it is 'the physical effort' (of setting forth in the light) that may, he says, 'polish me off, by means of heart failure' (82). There seems to be a convergence of Malone's physical demise – 'through the door, and even down the stairs, if there is a stairs that goes down. To be off and away' (82) – and the act of writing as his final 'groan' to make sense of the light in the darkness. Activities of this kind, lying in bed or 'rolling and dragging himself about the floor or on the stairs', would have 'introduced a little variety into my decomposition' (83). Even his possessions ('phial, unlabelled, containing pills. Laxatives? Sedatives? I forget'

[84]) reveal the putrefaction and deterioration of the body, subject to all sorts of festering factors. Despite his somatic symptoms, Malone interrupts his narrative to affirm his perfect health: 'I pause to record that I feel in extraordinary form. Delirium perhaps' (86). Yet, as if suddenly reminded of corporeal demise, he immediately abjures the idea. Malone's obsession with the body as abject matter focuses persistently on manifestations of decomposition and decay, with health always slipping away and deteriorating.

Finally, Malone's gibe at Macmann shows that an external agent can be the cause of a somatic condition, promote the process of decay, and expedite death:

But he fancied that the nape of the neck and the back right down to the loins were more vulnerable than the chest and belly, not realizing, any more than if he had been a crate of tomatoes, that all these parts are intimately and even indissolubly bound up together, at least until death do them part, and to many another too of which he had no conception, and that a drop of water out of season on the coccyx for example may lead to spasms of the risorius lasting for years as when, having waded through a bog, you merely die of pneumonia and your legs none the worse for the wetting, but if anything better, thanks perhaps to the action of the bog-water. (65)

This account further reinforces the idea of the organism trapped in a constant state of abjection, suffering from infections and putridity.

Given the '[v]icious cycle of psychogenic illness: disappointment of desire, aggression, fear of results, object of desire turn into something terrifying, repudiation, disappointment, etc.' (TCD MS 10971/7/4), Malone's contemptuous view of life as abject, something to be despised and detested, underlines his repudiation of it in favour of death and silence and an impossible return to and reclamation of the mother's womb.

The abject caul

The hat as an emblem of the caul, the crown, birth and existence is associated with the abject in *Malone Dies*. After Macmann loses his hat, Moll, his fellow inmate, recovers it, covered with faecal matter, 'retrieved perhaps from the rubbish-heap at the end of the vegetable-garden, for to know everything takes too long, for it was fringed with manure and seemed to be rotting away' (87). This scene is significant as it underscores the birth subtext: the natal event viewed

as an abject event. Macmann lies in his infantile bed while Moll, the maternal figure, tries to crown him, 'inter faeces': 'she suffered him to put it on, and even helped him to do so, helping him to sit up in the bed and arranging his pillows in such a way that he might remain propped up without fatigue' (87). This *humiliating* portrayal is in stark contrast to the *noble* psychoanalytic crown, which Beckett noted in Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*: 'The crown, the noblest of all head coverings, goes back to embryonal caul, as also our modern hat, the loss of which in a dream signifies separation from part of one's Ego. "I'm back in the caul when I don my hat"' (TCD MS 10971/8/35).

Macmann's parodic ceremonial crowning provokes a desperate sensual connection between the two, which goes awry when Moll obscenely smiling lips suddenly remind Macmann of labia, and the scene ends in aversion and disgust: 'at last a long look passed between them and Moll's lips puffed and parted in a dreadful smile, which made Macmann's eyes waver like those of an animal glared on by its master and compelled then finally to look away' (88). Further, Malone accentuates the mother-child relationship between the two by letting Macmann behave childishly, beating 'with his fists his chest, his head and even the mattress, writhing and crying out, in the hope perhaps she would take pity on him and come and comfort him and dry his tears' (95). The last time Macmann's hat is mentioned is when he 'had notably refused to stir a step without his hat', displaying infantile behaviour and growing 'peevisish and agitated' (115). While his faecal hat may imitate the caul, its loss indicates his severance from the mother through birth and the inception of existence and suffering unto death.

When Macmann and Moll finally engage in the sexual act, Malone's stark description of the scene in terms of pathetic sterility and impotence culminates in a parody of lovemaking. He calls this part of Macmann's story the 'phase of the bed', intimating the oral and anal phases of infantile development (see TCD MS 10971/7/2):

This first phase, that of the bed, was characterized by the evolution of the relationship between Macmann and his keeper. There sprang up gradually between them a kind of intimacy which, at a given moment, led them to lie together and copulate as best they could. For given their age and scant experience of carnal love, it was only natural they should not succeed, at the first shot, in giving each other the impression they were made for each other. The spectacle was then offered of Macmann trying to bundle his sex into his partner's like a pillow into a pillow-slip, folding it in two and stuffing it in with his fingers. But far from losing heart they warmed to

their work. And though both were completely impotent they finally succeeded, summoning to their aid all the resources of the skin, the mucus and the imagination, in striking from their dry and feeble clips a kind of sombre gratification. [...] He then made unquestionable progress in the use of the spoken word and learnt in a short time to let fall, at the right time, the yesses, noes, mores and enoughts that keep love alive. (88-89)

This episode seems to mark the inception of Moll's love letters and links the idea of sterile intrusion to aesthetic creation: 'It was also the occasion of his penetrating into the enchanted world of reading, thanks to the inflammatory letters which Moll brought and put into his hands' (89). Macmann's desperate need for Moll's love grows so great that when Moll informs him that she finally lost her tooth, he pathetically sees this confession as a testament of her love and affection, finding solace in the narcissistic and infantile need to be loved (95). The hat/caul imagery, the phase of the bed, the infantile Macmann, the maternal Moll and her grotesque labial lips, all coalesce and form an abject state of being from birth unto death.

Blasphemy as a parallel form of abjection

The association of blasphemy and abjection first appears in the distorted image of Christ when Moll informs Macmann that 'Christ is in my mouth' – 'a long yellow canine bared to the roots and carved', representing 'the celebrated sacrifice':

With the forefinger of her free hand she fingered it. It's loose, she said, one of these fine mornings I'll wake up and find I've swallowed it, perhaps I should have it out. She let go her lip, which sprang back into place with a smack. [...] And in the pleasure he was later to enjoy, when he put his tongue in her mouth and let it wander over her gums, this rotten crucifix had assuredly its part. (93)

Divine providence is constantly associated with this state of pervasive senescence and rotteness, which seems to expand and spread to other parts of the body like a malignant virus, encroaching and wreaking havoc on the organism and bringing about its demise.

Another example of the admixture of abject profanity and the divine appears in Malone's contemplation of the 'extremities' of his body receding, imagining his body capable of indefinite extension, passing faecal matter all over the world:

But that is not all and my extremities are not the only parts to recede, in their respective directions, far from it. For my arse for example, which can hardly be accused of being the end of anything, if my arse suddenly started to shit at the present moment, which God forbid, I firmly believe the lumps would fall out in Australia. And if I were to stand up again, from which God preserve me, I fancy I would fill a considerable part of the universe, oh not more than lying down, but more noticeably. (61-62)

Whereas Malone detects mortality in the body's whitening due to the receding of blood (49), his fantastic faecal omnipresence in the world corroborates the idea of decomposition and abjection at the opposite end of a sublime divinity. Whether as corporeal reduction to inanimate matter or extension to abject matter, the organism is born in abjection, through which it lives and passes, and to which it will eventually return and die.

Malone and the 'Hole': Burial and creativity

"I want to be a grave-digger" said a four year old boy to me, "I want to be the person who digs graves for others."

From Alfred Adler's *Practice & Theory of Individual Psychology*, the 'Psychology Notes' (TCD MS 10971/8/29)

Malone tends to 'bury' the objects surrounding him (76). He himself is 'buried in the world, [...] the old world cloisters me, victorious' (23). For him, the 'still nights' are 'still as the grave' with which 'I amused myself identifying, as I lay there. Yes, I got great amusement, when young, from their so-called silence' (31). Perhaps Malone's most graphic evocation of the godforsaken hole of the womb-tomb is not his mound (hole) habitat, but rather his attempt to push through the recalcitrant labia of the world so that he may finish his existence:

My eyes, I shall open my eyes, look at the little heap of my possessions, give my body the old orders I know it cannot obey, turn to my spirit gone to rack and ruin, spoil my agony the better to live it out, far already from the world that parts at last its labia and lets me go. (12)

Near the end of his narrative, Malone recreates this tension with another death wish, figured as an existential redemption from the world: 'I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth to into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already, of the great cunt of existence. Favourable presentation I trust. My head will be the last to die' (114). The parodic portrayal of the feet being clear offers a breech birth that resonates with Beckett's notes on Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*, where 'sortir les pieds en devant' (TCD MS 10971/8/35) appears in a paragraph concerning the return to the intrauterine situation. The notes continue with another paragraph re-emphasising this theme: 'In contrast to the "protected" head, which first leaves the womb, the feet, which come out last, are the weak part. Cp. swollen feet of Oedipus & Achilles' heel' (ibid).

Malone's obsession with 'holes' echoes Molloy's own, this time articulated in terms of the earth, boot buttons and 'button-holes': 'I never saw a boot with so many eyeholes, useless for the most part, having ceased to be holes, and become slits' (77) (cf. Molloy's 'oh not the bunghole I had always imagined, but a slit' [Beckett 1955: 76]). Malone's most graphic rectal imagery appears when he imagines a girl entering his barrow:

A little girl would be into my barrow, she would undress before me, sleep beside me, have nobody but me, I would jam the bed against the door to prevent her running away, but then she would throw herself out of the window, when they got to know she was with me they would bring soup for two, I would teach her love and loathing, she would never forget me, I would die delighted, she would close my eyes and put a plug in my arse-hole, as per instructions. [...] Easy, Malone, take it easy, you old whore. (103)

In his fantasy, Malone inhabits a 'barrow', an ancient burial mound. Of course, the mound will become the dominant image in *Happy Days* where, in the first act, Winnie is buried to her waist, her pubic mound being covered above the vagina.

The preoccupation with burial holes persists from *Molloy*. In *Malone Dies*, Lambert and Edmund, another father-son pair, are digging a hole for their mule, which had died the night before: ‘Lambert then climbed out of the hole and the son went down into it’ (36). Unlike the burial scene in *Molloy* where Molloy clearly identifies with the dog, little is said about Lambert’s thoughts, except that ‘he knew how the dead and buried tend, contrary to what one might expect, to rise to the surface, in which they resembled the drowned. And he had made allowance for this when digging the hole’ (38). They are seen actively engaged in the ‘digging. Where Molloy’s status as an onlooker induces empathy for the dog, Lambert and Edmund’s close engagement in the burial allows no such empathy – not even sympathy – for the animal. It seems that their being in the ‘hole’ has made them as impervious to feeling as the mule itself – numb and dead. Beckett treats the mule’s burial with the coldness he wished for Murphy’s death (see Beckett 2009: 350); the only disturbing graphic portrayal of the dead mule is Sapo’s:

Drawing closer Sapo saw the mule’s black corpse. Then all became clear to him. The mule was lying on its side, as was to be expected. The forelegs were stretched out straight and rigid, the hind drawn up under the belly. The yawning jaws, the wreathed lips, the enormous teeth, the bulging eyes, composed a striking death’s-head. Edmund handed up to his father the pick, the shovel and the spade and climbed out of the hole. Together they dragged the mule by the legs to the edge of the hole and heaved it in, on its back. The forelegs, pointing towards heaven, projected above the level of the ground. Old Lambert banged them down with his spade. He handed the spade to his son and went towards the house. (37)

While Edmund leans panting and smiling on the spade and Old Lambert smokes by the window, drinking and watching, Sapo’s perspective gives the scene a more subtle air: ‘Edmund began to fill up the hole. Sapo stood watching him. A great calm stole over him. Great calm is an exaggeration. He felt better. The end of a life is always vivifying’ (37). Like Molloy, Sapo is an onlooker only able to reflect when he is detached. His identification with the end of life, the endgame, even of an animal, is vivifying. The tomb and death imagery finally reveals itself in the hole, as in Malone’s barrow. This obsession with burial intertwines with textual production. For Molloy, this preoccupation is explicitly linked to filling the holes of words and the process of writing; however, in Malone’s case, the obsession with burial holes intimates storytelling so that he seems, creatively speaking, to be taking up the role of four-year-old boy in Adler who wanted to be a grave-digger, ‘the person who digs graves for others’ (TCD MS 10971/8/29). In other words, the writing of his journal owes much to the abundant material on the process of

decay as well as on accounts of death, burials, and filling up burial holes. Here, Beckett seems to be engaged in the creative process of filling the holes of words by filling the holes of life and death with abject matter such as soil, muck, and dirt.

Given the convergence of textual production and fictional annihilation, the textual flow runs into a sterile terminus as it passes from aesthetic creation to lewd abjection:

But my fingers too write in other latitudes and the air that breathes through my pages and turns them without my knowing, when I doze off, so that the subject falls far from the verb and the object lands somewhere in the void, is not the air of this second-last abode, and a mercy it is. And perhaps on my hands it is the shimmer of the shadows of leaves and flowers and the brightness of a forgotten sun. Now my sex, I mean the tube itself, and in particular the nozzle, from which when I was yet a virgin clouts and gouts of sperm came streaming and splashing up into my face, a continuous flow, while it lasted, and which must still drip a little piss from time to time, otherwise I would be dead of uraemia, I do not expect to see my sex again, with my naked eye, not that I wish to, we've stared at each other long enough, in the eye, but it gives you some idea. (61)

This procreative sterility appears later in the text, where ancestral perpetuation is contrasted with a yearning for existential finality. Malone compares Macmann to his progenitors in terms as abject as his spermarium:

... he was no more than human, than the son and grandson and greatgrandson of humans. But between him and those grave and sober men, first bearded, then moustached, there was this difference, that his semen had never done any harm to anyone. So his link with his species was through his ascendants only, who were all dead, in the fond hope they had perpetuated themselves. But the better late than never thanks to which true men, true links, can acknowledge the error of their ways and hasten on to the next, was beyond the power of Macmann, to whom it sometimes seemed that he could grovel and wallow in his mortality until the end of time and not have done. And without going so far as that, he who has waited long enough will wait for ever. And there comes the hour when nothing more can happen and nobody more can come and all is ended but the waiting that knows itself in vain. Perhaps he had come to that. And when (for example) you die, it is too late, you have been waiting too long, you are no longer

sufficiently alive to be able to stop. Perhaps he had come to that. But apparently not, though acts don't matter, I know, I know, nor thoughts. (68)

This existential reduction to abjection echoes Beckett's notes about the 'regression to spermarium' (TCD MS 10971/8/35) in Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*. Procreative birth is strongly resisted since it is not only an error but does harm. The text offers a celebration of death, and the space between birth and death lapses into the futility of waiting, suffering, inventing, of lying in the rain, for example, as Macmann does 'with his monstrous error of appreciation' (68), and of life itself until inevitable death. While the error of procreation cannot be undone, Malone repeatedly revels in his creative affirmations and negations, trying to fill creative holes, in vain.

PART II

Death as second mother: death wish and returning to the womb-tomb

Textual birth and death: production versus annihilation

Malone's creative project is ultimately to achieve death, to 'make an end', to stage his own demise as a textual creature, to write his own death. This is a salvific project, one that achieves a Nirvana-like peace or tranquillity beyond desire. Hence, writing will be deployed to undo itself, to get to a great mystical *Silence*. However, the project fails since this death wish is itself driven by the 'élan vital or struggle for life' (70). As indicated earlier, Malone's desire is for death as a 'second mother', a return to the peace of the womb. But the womb-existence (and the fantasy of the 'womb-tomb') is itself entirely within the domain of the libido. Death cannot be achieved, in a controlled and conscious fashion, through the pursuit of this fantasy.

As its title suggests, *Malone Dies* is located in the *process* of dying. Yet it explores the experience of 'living' that process – that is, of decaying, decomposing and dying: 'It's vague, life and death' (51). For Malone, this ambiguous conflation crystallises through another experiment, that of writing. He is essentially engaged in the obsessive activity of keeping a journal, an 'exercise-book'.

Although Malone finds it a ‘mistake’ or a ‘weakness’ to speak about his present state, he says ‘I shall indulge in it’, and adds: ‘Aesthetics are therefore on my side, at least a certain kind of aesthetics’ (4). He is obviously aware of the idea of indulging certain aspects and proclivities of his abject being, which he intends to incorporate into his story by creative means. Malone extends this to his entire narrative by leaving a ‘safe remove’ between ‘this incomprehensible indulgence’ in fictionality and the rational control he tries to exert over his fictional world by accepting to ‘leave this question [regarding reasons] open’ (13). This opens a space between creative intention and textual uncertainty:

I shall make [Sapo] live as though he had been punished according to his deserts. We shall turn our backs on this little cloud, but we shall not let it out of our sight. It will not cover the sky without our knowing, we shall not suddenly raise our eyes, far from help, far from shelter, to a sky as black as ink. That is what I have decided. I see no other solution. It is the best I can do.
(13)

Besides its soothing or therapeutic effects, the metafictional project of journal writing is a means for Malone’s self-invention and an attempt to assert control over writing; and, at the same time, a means to write himself out of existence: ‘When I have completed my inventory, if my death is not ready for me then, I shall write my memoirs’ (6). Textually speaking, the inception of any piece of writing presupposes an end. If death is not ready for him, he will write it out, the experience of dying within living, in order to eject himself out of existence, at least textually. ‘The truth is, if I did not feel myself dying, I could well believe myself dead, expiating my sins, or in one of heaven’s mansions’ (6). Therefore, if life in Beckett’s aesthetic is both crime and punishment,⁷⁴ Malone’s process of living-as-dying becomes the expiation of the original sin of his existence.

Ultimately, for Malone, the only true prayer, if any, is the prayer for ‘nothing’, for *nothing*, and perhaps, for a state of nonbeing or nonexistence:

⁷⁴ ‘[M]y crime is my punishment, that’s what they judge me for, I expiate vilely, like a pig, dumb, uncomprehending, possessed of no utterance but theirs’ (Beckett 1958: 114).

All is pretext, Sapó and the birds, Moll, the peasants, those who in the towns seek one another out and fly from one another, my doubts which do not interest me, my situation, my possessions, pretext for not coming to the point, the abandoning, the raising of the arms and going down, without further splash, even though it may annoy the bathers. Yes, there is no good pretending, it is hard to leave everything. The horror-worn eyes linger abject on all they have beseeched so long, in a last prayer, the true prayer at last, the one that asks for nothing. (107)

This passage recalls Beckett's view of art as 'non-relational', one which accepts its failure of representation triumphantly.⁷⁵ It emphasises the themes of unknowability and uncertainty explored in the text. Finally, it elucidates Malone's efforts for contending with the dark light, the grey, and his doubts. The only alternative for him is to doubt his doubts and uncertainties. As a result, what he seeks becomes elusive, ineffable and unattainable, as Molloy's journey indicated. Once the eyes rise from an abject world, what is beseeched always remains abject, base, worldly and mundane, even in the disguise of a prayer to the divine. Yet, at the same time, it indicates Malone's 'project' of pushing against a kind of *ending*, the last prayer – perhaps. Here and through the entire text, Malone's writing tends to unmake, and, as he terms it, to 'annihilate' itself, to come to the last peace,⁷⁶ tranquillity and silence, an impossible salvific project beyond Eros and any form of desire; impossible, not least since any movement by the living organism is itself generated by desire.

Malone's intrauterine memories

Malone's existential angst resonates with Beckett's notes on the interconnections between natal anxiety, life and death: 'Primal anxiety-effect at birth, which remains operative through life, right up to the final separation from the outer world (gradually become a second mother) at death' (TCD MS 10971/8/36). If for the neurotic, 'the outer world' turns into a 'second mother' in the course of life, Malone's death wish could well be a regression into an oceanic fusion of

⁷⁵ Beckett's attention to the idea of 'ineffability' and the limits of human reason and understanding is traceable to his 'Philosophy Notes': Ineffable... is that which cannot understand and grasp (which is nothing; in fact, nothing and not thinkable are the same thing); but is that modality that we either cannot think of or cannot completely grasp through our reason. [...] I suffer and I act... I do not understand, and I cannot even understand myself in the act of understanding [...] the main attribute of the object itself, which is surely ineffability... (TCD MS 10971/6/23)

⁷⁶ Cf. Beckett's discussion of 'poetry as prayer' in his 1934 review of McGreevy, 'Humanistic Quietism' (Beckett 1934: 68-9).

the other/mother or self-containment in the womb-tomb of the head, as it is for Molloy. Malone's project consists of making his room-womb into a womb-tomb, a birth-into-death.

Writing a few lines to remind him that he too subsists (114), Malone immediately refers to existential suffering, as that which provokes intrauterine memories:

And I? Indubitably going, that's all that matters. Whence this assurance? Try and think. I can't. Grandiose suffering. I am swelling. What if I should burst? The ceiling rises and falls, rises and falls, rhythmically, as when I was a foetus. Also to be mentioned a noise of rushing water, phenomenon *mutatis mutandis* perhaps analogous to that of the mirage, in the desert. The window. I shall not see it again. (114)

A conspicuous amount of the material that Malone uses to concoct his stories stems from his relation to the objects surrounding him, such as his exercise book, pencil, stick, hat and overcoat, to name these few. Combined with his room/womb/barrow, the window and the sound of flowing water, some of the objects that surround him serve to represent the intrauterine state. Malone sees the window as his 'umbilicus' (49), and his overcoat seems to underscore his yearning for self-burial:

But perhaps I am wrong to call this coat a greatcoat and perhaps I should rather call it an overcoat or even cover-me-down, for that is indeed the impression it gives, that it covers the whole body all over, with the exception obviously of the head which emerges, lofty and impassive, clear of its embrace. (54)

This account intimates Malone's resistance to being born – 'into death' as he phrases it – and becoming an 'I', a complete organic whole/being. Although he is physically born, Malone's resistance to leaving the intrauterine state or its mature imitation of organic inertia (his sedentary state) is articulated in terms of a wish for the world to part its labia and let him go.

Beckett paid close attention to the death wish in psychoanalysis, a form of narcissism specifically concerning the '[e]ssence of the state of sleep' as 'the restoration of the most complete form of narcissism', where narcissism itself is equated with 'the wish to return into the mother's womb' (TCD MS 10971/8/6). According to psychoanalysis, 'Narcissism upsets the duality of Ego & Libido' (TCD MS 10971/7/14). As a consequence, the ego regresses to

and ‘merge[s] [with] the Id’ in its unconscious state (ibid). Hence, it fails to ‘make the Id comply with the world’s demands’, something that happens when the ego is in conscious contact with environment (ibid). Malone is detached from the outer world, and compensates with an attachment to the world within, a kind of obsession with the ‘self’ as love object. Beckett’s separate entry on ‘Narcissism’, which is followed by a one-page detailed description of its various aspects, from the Freudian perspective especially, corroborates this idea: ‘Regarded by Freud as intermediate between early auto-eroticism and later object-love. Hence important distinction between libidinal & egoistic aspects of the self’ (TCD MS 10971/8/4). The notes later define narcissism as the ‘egocentric attitude towards the world & belief in omnipotence of thought’ (ibid). Given that death is an irrevocable state, Malone’s death wish is ironically a libidinal or Eros-generated inward turn, a regressive tendency to the ego and a futile attempt to restore the intrauterine state: reclaiming the womb-tomb and becoming one with the mother.

PART III

From death wish to death drive

Repetition-compulsion and the death drive

Distinct from the death wish as a conscious desire for extinction, the death drive pushes the organism to return to an inorganic state of equilibrium – whose inertia life itself disturbed – but by a very circuitous route. Beckett was captivated by Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,⁷⁷ a self-confessed speculative and tentative text, openly admitting that it is groping in the darkness, looking for symptoms of something utterly unknown and not directly knowable. These qualities made Freud’s approach more congenial to Beckett than that of his follower ‘Erogenous’ Jones, who explicitly preferred to confine his own researches to the realm of the pleasure principle. Arguably, *Malone Dies* is Beckett’s exploration of the tension between the pleasure principle (figured as death wish/second mother) and the death drive, which could also imply a critique of the rigidities and ‘textbook’ approach he found in some of Freud’s followers.

Freud’s main argument in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is centred on the ideas of repetition-compulsion and the death drive. The former is a manifestation of the drive, a characterisation that Freud bases on the observation that the organism tends to repeat, re-

⁷⁷ Beckett refers to ‘the fatal pleasure principle’ in *Molloy* (Beckett 1955: 135).

establish, and re-experience certain states of displeasure to achieve the desirable end state of complete inertia. Arguing that the ‘pleasure principle follows from the principle of constancy’⁷⁸ (Freud 1961: 3), he continues:

... there exists in the mind a strong *tendency* toward the pleasure principle, but that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances, so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency toward pleasure.

We may compare what Fechner remarks on a similar point: “Because tendency towards an aim does not imply that the aim is attained, and because, in general, the aim is attainable only by approximations. ...” (3-4; emphasis in original)

Freud investigates the circumstances which may disrupt the pleasure principle and ‘prevent [it] from being carried into effect’ (4). He offers the organism’s instinct of ‘self-preservation’ as the first example of such inhibiting forces, which occur ‘with regularity’:

We know that the pleasure principle is proper to a *primary* method of working on the part of the mental apparatus, but that, from the point of view of the self-preservation of the organism among the difficulties of the external world, it is from the very outset inefficient and even highly dangerous. Under the influence of the ego’s instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the *reality principle*. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of displeasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (4)

This self-preserving force, the postponement of pleasure at the expense of the temporary toleration of displeasure, is relevant to the Freudian theory of ‘neurotic or psychical inertia’ that secures the organism in its existing state against new changes, keeping that state constant and maintaining its equilibrium.

⁷⁸ The ‘principle of constancy’ dates back to the very beginning of Freud’s psychological studies. The first published discussion of it of any length was by Breuer (in semi-physiological terms) towards the end of Section 2(A) of his theoretical part of the *Studies on Hysteria* (Breuer and Freud 1895). There he defines it as ‘the tendency to keep intracerebral excitation constant’. In the same passage he attributes this principle to Freud and there are one or two earlier brief references to it by Freud himself, though these were not published until after his death (see Freud 1941a [1892] and Breuer and Freud 1940 [1892]). The subject is discussed at length at the beginning of Freud’s ‘Project’, under the name of ‘neurotic inertia’ (Freud 1961: 3).

Malone's narrative is, on the one hand, obsessed with textual death, inertia and tranquillity; on the other, it is marked by frequent interruptions and disruptions that make it impossible for him to achieve that end. In other words, his 'pensum', 'project' or programme is continuously threatened, disturbed or disrupted on its way towards completion: the text suddenly drifts away, turns violent, starts to break up, repeats and returns, breaking up the textual flow. Malone articulates this tension thus:

Here is the programme anyhow, the end of the programme. They think they can confuse me and make me lose sight of my programmes. Proper cunts whoever they are. Here it is. Visit, various remarks, Macmann continued, agony recalled, Macmann continued, then mixture of Macmann and agony as long as possible. It does not depend on me, my lead is not inexhaustible, nor my exercise-book, nor Macmann, nor myself in spite of appearances. (98-99)

In his efforts at self-invention in writing, living and dying, Malone seems caught in the interstices of textual beginnings and endings where the ideas of 'silence' and 'the sense of absence' (110) reappear again and again. A Nirvana-like state reminiscent of the rocking-chair and Endon sequences in *Murphy* appears when Malone describes one of the five inmates of Saint John of God's: 'a young man, dead young, seated in an old rocking-chair, his shirt rolled up and his hands on his thighs, would have seemed asleep had not his eyes been wide open' (112). These scenes and descriptions, manifestations of the death wish and the return to the womb, laden with the pleasures of oceanic fusion, are transient and fleeting. Indeed, Malone's effort not to be 'confused' and 'lose sight' of his programmes, and to maintain his writing-as-living agenda to achieve finality, fail because they are in line with the pleasure principle, yielding to a force that continuously delays that aim by initiating a more roundabout, circuitous path to death, thus pushing the text ever forward.

This tendency emerges even more clearly when Malone points out that his inability to articulate, his 'aphony', as it were, will be followed by the death of the rest of his faculties: 'My voice has gone dead, the rest will follow' (100). Other instances of the death wish appear in various guises in the text. Like Molloy's psychogenic self-destructive fantasy of cutting his throat to get rid of his asthma, Malone's journey towards silence and death indulges similar neurotic tendencies to mutilate himself and others, his 'creatures'. He ponders 'what truth is there in all this babble?' before he wonders 'if I should not rather have cut my tongue out' (62). The latter implies halting the textual flow and putting an end to his stories and becoming silenced (to death), yet he diverts his narrative by continuing, 'or said something else. Yes, no

reflection is needed, before or after, I have only to open my mouth for it to testify to the old story, my old story, and to the long silence that has silenced me, so that all is silent' (62). Nonetheless, this wish for tranquillity grows more and more agitated, especially towards the end of the text where violent scenes of homicide take over. In other words, the tendency of Malone's narrative is one of constant agitation through circuitous detours and entropy, despite his obvious wish for textual silence and death.

In 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', Freud provides three examples of the repetition compulsion: 1) the fort-da game (and others in which children compulsively repeat traumatic events involving unpleasure); 2) war victims with post-traumatic shock reliving traumas in their dreams (these are supposed to be about wish fulfilment and narcissistic regression for Freud, so this is another return to unpleasure which he finds difficult to explain without recourse to the death drive); and 3) the re-enactment of trauma in transference, in a direct continuation of the unpleasure of the past. These ideas provide a useful key for re-examining *Malone Dies*.

Malone's 'fort-da' games: reiterating loss and absence

In 'Playing with Death in "Malone Dies"', Julie Campbell studies the text in terms of 'D. W. Winnicott's theories of childhood play and his contention that play continues as creative activity in adult life', which she then relates to 'Wolfgang Iser's theories on reader response' (Campbell 2008: 431). She sees 'Malone at play, in the roles of narrator, creator and protagonist [...], and the ways in which playing involves the reader, not only in the creative activity he describes, but also in the experience of his dying' (ibid). Lois Oppenheim, in 'The Uncanny in Beckett', studies Beckett's work 'within the psychoanalytic context of Freud's notion of the uncanny' in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. She outlines a 'three-stage process through which the author achieves his objective. The representation of absence (with its uncanny effect), the negation of the representation of absence, and the overcoming of both are shown to result in the concrete expression of the psychic drive' (Oppenheim 2005: 125). She argues that 'creative function' is revealed through the 'simultaneous display of uncanniness and its undoing' (ibid).

With reference to Freud's discussion of the 'fort-da' game in children's play (throwing away objects and toys so as to experience the joy of finding them), I will argue that Malone's writing entails the idea of playing as a recapitulation of the unpleasurable experience of loss and the instinctual pleasure of rediscovery and reclamation. Freud regards the 'compulsion to repeat and the instinctual satisfaction which is immediately pleasurable' as an 'intimate partnership' (17), deriving from the 'German words *'fort'* ['gone'] and *'da'* ['there']',

signifying 'disappearance and return' (Freud 1961: 8-9). The object of the play is to attach external objects to the body of the child who 'was greatly attached to his mother' (Freud 1961: 8):

A further observation subsequently confirmed this interpretation fully. One day the child's mother had been away for several hours and on her return was met with the words 'Baby o-o-o-o!' which was at first incomprehensible. It soon turned out, however, that during this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making *himself* disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image 'gone'. (Freud 1961: 9)

Freud relates this to the 'child's great cultural achievement – the instinctual renunciation (that is, the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction) which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting' (ibid). He views this as behaviour that helps the child reiterate the experience of loss and return: 'He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach' (ibid). Given the fact that the 'child cannot possibly have felt his mother's departure as something agreeable or even indifferent', Freud poses the following question and then provides a possible answer:

How then does his repetition of this distressing experience as a game fit in with the pleasure principle? It may perhaps be said in reply that her departure had to be enacted as a necessary preliminary to her joyful return, and that it was in the latter that lay the true purpose of the game. But against this must be counted the observed fact that the first act, that of departure, was staged as a game in itself and far more frequently than the episode in its entirety, with its pleasurable ending' (Freud 1961: 9-10)

As Malone admits, he is engaged in a 'game' and will 'play' until his 'death' comes, which he enacts in the process of writing and storytelling:

Now it is a game, I am going to play. I never knew how to play, till now. I longed to, but I knew it was impossible. And yet I often tried. I turned on all the lights, I took a good look round, I began to play with what I saw. People and things ask nothing better than to play, certain animals, too [...]. I shall never do anything any more from now on but play. No, I must not begin with an exaggeration. But I shall play a great part of the time, from now on, the greater part, if I can. But perhaps I shall not succeed any better now than hitherto. Perhaps as hitherto I shall find

myself abandoned, in the dark, without anything to play with. Then I shall play with myself.
(Beckett 1956: 2-3)

The text should be understood in terms of experiencing and re-experiencing unpleasurable loss and absence, and the pleasure of reclaiming and mastering the lost object, including the mother and the womb-tomb. Implicit in children's play are the ideas of mastery and control: children to control in their game what they cannot control in real life, such as the mother's presence and absence. According to Freud, 'children repeat unpleasurable experiences for the additional reason that they can master a powerful impression, far more thoroughly, by being active than they could by merely experiencing it passively. Each fresh repetition seems to strengthen the mastery they are in search of' (Freud 1961: 29). For Malone, the body itself is a lost and abandoned object to be rediscovered and played with in a futile search for reunion with the mother's body.

Yet the idea of a game is itself parodied when Malone describes his playing a clown, rejoicing in the part yet failing in it, covering possible playthings, even a child, and hiding *himself* only to be re-found, beaten up, and drawn back into an endless 'fort-da' game:

And all alone, well hidden, [I have] played the clown, all alone, hour after hour, motionless, often standing, spellbound, groaning. That's right, groan. I couldn't play. I turned till I was dizzy, clapped my hands, ran, shouted, saw myself winning, saw myself losing, rejoicing, lamenting. Then suddenly I threw myself on the playthings, if there were any, or on a child, to change his joy to howling, or I fled, to hiding. The grown-ups pursued me, the just, caught me, beat me, hounded me back into the round, the game, the jollity. (Beckett 1956: 18)

Meanwhile, Malone keeps losing and finding certain objects, a trend that blocks the textual flow and impedes mastery of the textual finality that is his quest. Writing for Malone is, on the one hand, a manifestation of his death wish through textual silence and finality, and on the other, a means of continuance, a way of delaying the end, thus securing a more desirable experience of dying in peace and tranquillity *in his own fashion* (see Freud 1961: 33). The instinct motivating such activity goes *beyond* the pleasure principle; it is something more primitive and more elementary in the depths of the unconscious, something that cannot be mastered and reclaimed. The failure of Malone's death wish occurs against the background of the more primitive death drive embodied in his compulsion to repeat and revisit scenes and moments of angst and trauma.

Writing for Malone becomes the plane on which he plays out the tension between birth and death, trying to bring the two together. Writing is the means for him to re-experience birth, existence, and death; better yet, it *is* his existence. His voice dead, his pencil(s) and exercise-book play a major role in Malone's life as they do in their textual existence. His 'Venus' pencil confirms that existence, as its loss jeopardises it, threatening to bring about the kind of finality that he does not wish or desire.

In "Textual Existence and Death in Beckett", Mark Nixon studies the 'convergence of text and existence' and how it is 'established through the material of writing' (Nixon 2009: 23), starting with *Malone Dies*. Thus, Malone's frequent references to his pencil and exercise-book enhance this materiality, while he faces existential angst at their loss (ibid).⁷⁹ This is foreshadowed by Malone's existential fear that he 'may suddenly expire, at any moment', which prompts him to think about recounting his possessions 'without further delay' (Beckett 1956: 3). Even the 'dwindling' of his pencil, at both ends, is expressed in terms of the passage of time coming to an end and approaching near-nothingness: 'So little by little my little pencil dwindles, inevitably, and the day is fast approaching when nothing will remain but a fragment too tiny to hold' (48). What saves him from anxiety is the realisation that he has 'another pencil, made in France, a long cylinder hardly broached, in the bed with me somewhere I think. So I have nothing to worry about, on this score. And yet I do worry' (49). For he is uncertain about the existence of his French pencil ('assuming it really exists' [83]).

Malone attempts to maintain his 'indifference' ('avec indifference'), to imagine death as peace/a second mother (MS-TCD-4662, p. 27r). His wish is to 'be neither hot nor cold any more', but 'tepid', to 'die tepid, without enthusiasm' (1). With this biblical echo, Malone gives preliminary account of his project, comprising five stories, 'neither beautiful nor ugly, they will be calm, there will be no ugliness or beauty or fever in them any more, they will be almost lifeless, like the teller' (2): 'Present state, three stories, inventory, there' (4). The three stories will be about 'the man and woman', 'the animal', and 'a stone', the reason for his storytelling being so that the figures 'may plague me no more' (4), implying that storytelling is a self-therapy. Like Molloy's pebbles, which indicate 'indifference' and 'stillness' (Baker 1997: 137-138), Malone's obsession with tepidness, calm, indifference and his account of a 'stone' intimate lifelessness and the death wish. He associates his yearning for nothingness and silence, and his obsession for calm and quietude beyond this world, with his textual production and the ultimate serenity that beyond the text or any other creation: 'Words and images run riot in my

⁷⁹ See also H. Porter Abbott's 'The Harpooned Notebook: *Malone Dies* and the Conventions of Intercalated Narrative'.

head, pursuing, flying, clashing, merging, endlessly. But beyond this tumult there is a great calm, and a great indifference, never really to be troubled by anything again' (22).

If, according to Nixon, writing for Beckett is a parallel form of existence, Malone's intermittent ejaculations of 'what tedium' link the notion of textual lethargy to existential inertia. Malone refers to the jumbled noises in the 'unbridled gibberish' as 'disordered sense', attributing part of his 'misfortunes' to this but simultaneously calling it a 'blessing': 'Misfortunes, blessings, I have no time to pick my words, I am in a hurry to be done' – a statement which is, however, immediately undone: 'And yet no, I am in no hurry' (32). His desire for the end of existence materialises and at the same time is *resisted* on the aesthetic plane in terms of coming to a textual end:

My little finger glides before my pencil across the page and gives warning, falling over the edge, that the end of the line is near. But in the other direction, I mean of course vertically, I have nothing to guide me. I did not want to write, but I had to resign myself to it in the end. It is in order to know where I have got to, where he has got to. At first I did not write, I just said the thing. Then I forgot what I had said. A minimum of memory is indispensable, if one is to live really. (32)

The two dimensions of the page underscore the materiality of writing, one dimension signalling the end of the line/existence, while the other continues despite the lack of resources to write/go on. Later, during the hunt for his pencil, Malone makes a 'curious discovery' about the confines of his room, calling 'the horizontal as well as the perpendicular' the 'superficies, or I should say infraficies' (49), highlighting once again the dimensions of the text and existence.

The connection between angst and existence is traceable to the 'Psychology Notes'. Beckett's succinct note on 'anxiety neurosis' reads: 'birth the first Angst attack' (TCD MS 10971/8/16). Further, Beckett's interpolation of 'dyspnoea' appears in his notes on Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*: 'all anxiety goes back to anxiety at birth (dyspnoea)' (TCD MS 10971/8/34).⁸⁰ Erik Tønning sees Beckett's *Not I* as a re-enactment of the birth trauma, posing the question, 'What is it, then, that "gives" the pensum; what is it that initiates these exact, and extremely unpleasant, recapitulations of the birth trauma?' (Tønning 2007: 141). He provides a possible answer with recourse to Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

⁸⁰ See also Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes', the ultimate goal of mankind according to the obligations of birth, life and death is 'to be and to have' (TCD MS 10967/6/32).

Freud speculated that, at the origin of life on earth, organisms were easily able to die; however, eventually ‘decisive external influences’ would have forced it ‘to make ever more complicated *détours* before reaching its aim of death’ (...). This explains ‘the organism’s puzzling determination [...] to maintain its own existence in the face of every obstacle. What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die *only in its own fashion*’ (...). *Not I* should be understood in terms of an extreme conflict between the ‘pleasure principle’ (here connected to the wish not to leave the womb, which, although physical birth of course has taken place, still holds tremendous sway, and leads to minimal adaptation to stimuli from the external world, and an absorption in fantasy) and the Freudian ‘death drive’ (which is constantly prompting repetitions of the birth trauma itself, in order to force the organism to complete a certain intrinsically programmed course of life). (ibid; emphasis in original)

For Malone, the idea of loss or absence concerns not only the means of writing as the recapitulation of traumatic experiences, but the very process of writing/living as the re-enactment of his pensums and programmes, of getting confused and losing ground, and of rediscovering the confines of his condition, even his body as an object that can be pummelled and chopped up, mutilated and played with, thus creating and recreating the unpleasant sights and scenes of existential trauma.

Return to inescapable traumas

Malone manifests the death drive, which overrides the pleasure principle, by regressing again and again to sites of trauma. That is, his death wish falters and succumbs to the death drive: by revisiting and re-experiencing the angst or trauma of parturition, confinement, and existence itself, he has in effect died many times along the way.

Exploring the dream mechanisms of ‘traumatic neurosis’ and considering ‘the wish-fulfilling tenor of dreams’, Freud poses the possibility that the ‘function of dreaming, like so much else, is upset in this condition and diverted from its purposes’ suggesting that ‘we may be driven to reflect on the mysterious masochistic trends of the ego’, leaving the ‘dark and dismal subject of the traumatic neurosis’ (Freud 1961: 8). However, in ‘transference neurosis’, Freud finds more solid ground for accounting for the ‘compulsion to repeat’ past traumatic experiences (Freud 1961:12-13). According to Freud, ‘transference’ happens when the neurotic patient ‘abandon[s] his resistances’ after being ‘obliged’ to ‘confirm the analyst’s construction from his own memory’ (Freud 1961: 12), whereas in ‘transference neurosis’, he is ‘obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past’ (ibid). In other words, a fresh

'transference neurosis' replaces the 'earlier neurosis' at a stage where such 'reproductions [...] are invariably acted out in the sphere of the transference, of the patient's relation to the physician' (ibid). This may explain Malone's tendency to repeat, revisit or recreate traumatic experiences in his writing. Viewing the text as the plane of transference, Malone's narrative is indeed a self-therapeutic process of writing or telling wherein the repetition of repressed material and unpleasant experiences is deemed cathartic ('that they may plague me no more' [4]), suggesting a search for peace through the reproduction of repressed traumatic material.

Textual disruptions in *Malone Dies* are marked by the frequent returns of and regressions to traumatic scenes of brutality and ruthlessness, in which Malone, after masochistic considerations of self-mutilation, visits brute force and coldblooded violence on his characters. As his narrative culminates, this textual cruelty heightens in several bizarre killings that may serve as an over-compensatory reaction to the failed attempts at his own existential finality, a kind of aborted fictional denouement. 'Moll. I'm going to kill her' (94). Later he does so: 'One morning early a man whom he had never seen came and told him that Moll was dead. There's one out of the way at least' (95). There is a sense of *going on* aesthetically whenever one of Malone's creatures is out of the way. Not only does he write out his own death-in-life, but he also brings his creatures into existence, lets them live and suffer, and wishes for and authorises their death: 'My creatures, what of them? Nothing. They are there, each as best he can, as best he can be somewhere' (117). The textual end is significantly marked by simultaneous aesthetic creation, creative entropy and death, wherein Malone has Lemuel kill two more of his creatures for unknown reasons:

Lemuel released Macmann, went up behind Maurice who was sitting on a stone filling his pipe and killed him with the hatchet. We're getting on, getting on. [...] The Saxon cried, bending forward and slapping his thighs, Nice work, sir, nice work! A little later Ernest came back to fetch them. Going to meet him Lemuel killed him in his turn, in the same way as the other. It merely took a little longer. Two decent, quiet, harmless men, brothers-in-law into the bargain, there are billions of such brutes. (118)

The idea of creative intervention through violent textual disruption is parodied in the text when Macmann goes to his cell one evening 'with a branch torn from a dead bramble, for use as a stick to support him as he walked':

Then Lemuel took it from him and struck him with it over and over again, no, that won't work, then Lemuel called a keeper by the name of Pat, a thorough brute though puny in appearance, and said to him, Pat, will you look at that. (106)

Lemuel takes great pleasure in physical pain: 'And one day rolling up the leg of his trousers, he showed Macmann his shin covered with bruises, scars and abrasions':

Then producing smartly a hammer from an inner pocket he dealt himself, right in the middle of his ancient wounds, so violent a blow that he fell down backwards, or perhaps I should say forwards. But the part he struck most readily, with his hammer, was the head, and that is understandable, for it too is a bony part, and sensitive, and difficult to miss, and the seat of all the shit and misery, so you rain blows upon it, with more pleasure than on the leg for example, which never did you any harm, it's only human. (97)

Indeed, there are numerous references to severe blows to the head in the text, indicating Malone's yearning for an end of thinking, of the psychic as well as the textual flow. Of Sapo, he says, 'he was sorry that he had not let himself be taught the art of thinking, [...] and that he could make no sense, or next to none, of the babel of doubts, desires, imaginings and fears that raged within his head' (MS-TCD-4662, p. 18r). After all, for Malone, 'what matters is the head' (26). Reporting an unknown visit, Malone feels a 'blow on the head', the possible cause of his concussion (99). As he suggests, these are *pleasurable* repetitions of masochistic and sadistic traumas experienced by him and other characters, which clearly reveal an urge or tendency, beyond the pleasure principle, to revisit and re-experience inescapable traumas.

'Gurgles of outflow' (119), Malone says as the remaining six individuals set out towards the asylum from the shore. These endgame gurgles of outflow merge with the night and the light, and get lost in a forsaken world:

The night is strewn with absurd

absurd lights, the stars, the beacons, the buoys, the lights of earth and in the hills the faint fires of the blazing gorse. (119)

As do Malone's textual gurgles as they break down at the end:

or light light I mean

[...]
never anything

there (120)

However, the end of the textual 'I' in *Malone Dies* heralds the birth of a new 'I' in *The Unnamable*:

I write about myself with the same pencil and in the same exercise-book as about him. It is because it is no longer I, I must have said so long ago, but another whose life is just beginning. It is right that he too should have his little chronicle, his memories, his reason, and be able to recognize the good in the bad, the bad in the worst, and so grow gently old all down the unchanging days and die one day like any other day, only shorter. (32)

This textual annihilation of the 'I' aligns with Malone's recurrent confluences of textual and existential finality, another expression of his yearning for the mineral kingdom and a return to the inorganic world.

Return to the inorganic: organic inertia, putrefaction, decay and death

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud speculates that '*an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external forces*' (Freud 1961: 30; emphasis in original). He terms this 'a kind of organic elasticity' or 'the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life' (ibid). Beckett clearly links Malone's obsession with stones and other objects to the congenital and primordial yearning for the mineral state, the return to peace, stillness and death. Malone's description of his obsessive relationship with the objects that he keeps in his pockets is illuminating:

... that foul feeling of pity I have so often felt in the presence of things, especially little portable things in wood and stone, and which made me wish to have them about me and keep them always, so that I stooped and picked them up and put them in my pocket, often with tears, for I wept up to a great age, never having really evolved in the fields of affection and passion, in spite of my experiences. And but for the company of these little objects which I picked up here and

there, when out walking, and which sometimes gave me the impression that they too needed me, [...] And I loved, I remember, as I walked along, with my hands deep in my pockets, for I am trying to speak of the time when I could still walk without a stick and a fortiori without crutches, I loved to finger and caress the hard shapely objects that were there in my deep pockets, it was my way of talking to them and reassuring them. And I loved to fall asleep holding in my hand a stone, a horse chestnut or a cone, and I would be still holding it when I woke, my fingers closed over it, in spite of sleep which makes a rag of the body, so that it may rest. And those of which I wearied, or which were ousted by new loves, I threw away, that is to say I cast round for a place to lay them where they would be at peace forever. (75-76)

If for Molloy sucking pebbles is the appeasement of a kind of psychic hunger, Malone reserves such an oral fixation for his pencil as a tool for pleasure or the means to direct retaliatory displeasure against his existence: 'I use the two points turn and turn about, sucking them frequently, I love to suck' (48). Alternatively, his pitifully sucking the pillow becomes a way for him to alleviate his pains: 'I part my lips, now I have the pillow in my mouth. I have, I have. I suck. The search for myself is ended. I am buried in the world, I knew I would find my place there one day, the old world cloisters me, victorious. I am happy' (23). Malone's infantile cravings to 'have' and 'suck' recall – and may imitate – the similar tendencies of a child in the early stages of development, especially the 'oral' or 'suckling' phase, which, when recounting Macmann's story, he terms the 'phase of the bed'. Here, the mother's breast, which functions as the child's first love object, is replaced by the pillow, implying maternal loss and absence, and later disappointment due to loss of the object as a means of appeasement. This painful severance and transference from a living nurturer to inanimate matter implies later substitutions for the primary source of love and craving by external objects to obtain soothing and appeasement. The first page of Beckett's notes on Karin Stephen indicates his engagement with these ideas:

The act of suckling is the baby's first great physical pleasure, the breast his first love-object. This pleasure craving, if disappointed, becomes transferred from the outer world to the self, resulting in auto-eroticism. Similar conflicts may also occur in respect of respiration & excretion. (TCD MS 10971/7/1).

Beckett returns to Stephen's point: 'Disappointment at suckling stage, resulting in the baby's refusing breast, may appear to the adult as death by starvation' (ibid). Later, from Ernest Jones,

Beckett noted this painful experience as having 'educational' ramifications in the individual's social and individual life:

The weaning of the child to external & social interests & considerations (the essence of sublimation) is the most important single process in the whole of education. It is a specific transference from one field of interest to another, each special later interest corresponding with a special primary component of the sexual instinct. (TCD MS 10971/8/17)

More to the point, Malone's conflation of his bedridden state, his 'parting lips', the pillow as the object of his craving, and his open mouth recall Beckett's parodic comment on Rank's view on the child's lips at the suckling stage of development, leading to the enunciation of 'ma' at the oral stage: 'Shape of lips at the breast lead to formation of universal human syllable ma' (TCD MS 10971/8/35).⁸¹ Given Rank's association of the bed, the room, and swaddling clothes with the intrauterine state and regression to the mother's womb (Rank 1929: 103), Malone's infantile craving ironically takes place on his deathbed where he imagines himself buried and cloistered and happy. The irony is not simply that even if he were to find peace in a final resting place in the inorganic world, reunion with the mother's body would never be achieved. Rather, the text stages the irony in terms of a craving for the former, that is, for death and a return to inorganic matter, through the impossibility of a reunion with the mother and reclaiming the intrauterine state. In other words, it is precisely by 'repeating' the trauma of birth and the fusion with natal/maternal memories that Malone's death drive finds expression against his death wish.

Malone fantasises a severe regression to the inorganic world, one in which his presence would no longer contaminate and defile it: 'After that mud-bath I shall be better able to endure a world unsullied by my presence' (12). Indeed, one of Malone's central preoccupations concerns the idea of 'mud': 'speak for example of the times when I go liquid and become like mud, what good would that do?' (51), to cite but one reference. In psychoanalysis, 'mud' is a variant of faecal (inorganic) matter. As Beckett noted from Jones, both 'mud' and 'excrement' signify filth, dirt and muck (TCD MS 10971/8/19), a synonymy Beckett adopted across his writing. The ultimate psychogenic regression for Malone, that of conceiving the self in purely bodily terms and its essence as liquid like mud, reappears in *Krapp's Last Tape*, in which Krapp

⁸¹ Macché! handwritten after 'ma'.

is reduced to viewing the 'self' as purely faecal. This kind of creative distortion of the abject found in psychoanalytic language ironically highlights Beckett's creative process of muddying words as abject matter for *sublime* textual production. In other words, the text is produced as the result of smearing psychoanalytic language, adopting its obsession with abjection as an extreme artistic utility, turning it into the *reductio ad absurdum* of its rationalist drive.

Malone's narrative is interspersed with references to organic decay, ironically deflecting the latter into the return to the inorganic. 'But our business at the moment is less with these futilities than with my ears from which there spring two impetuous tufts of no doubt yellow hair, yellowed by wax and lack of care, and so long that the lobes are hidden' (31). His nails, which he uses to sharpen the points of his pencil, 'are long, yellow, sharp and brittle for want of chalk or is it phosphate' (48). Experiencing a process of existential senescence and decomposition, all he hears is 'one vast continuous buzzing', having 'lost the faculty of decomposing' the various 'noises of the world', 'of nature, of mankind and even my own, [...] all jumbled together in one and the same unbridled gibberish' (31-32).

Malone's olfactory account of Moll's state of putrefaction, putridity and decay is linked with procreative birth:

She was beginning to smell. She had never smelt sweet, but between not smelling sweet and giving off the smell she was giving off now there is a gulf. She was also subject to fits of vomiting. Turning away, so that her lover should only see her convulsive back, she vomited at length on the floor. And these dejections remained sometimes for hours where they fell, until such time as she had the strength to go and fetch what was needed to clean up the mess. Half a century younger she might have been taken for pregnant. (94)

Add to this her falling hair, her yellow complexion turning to saffron, and her emaciation, all implying abject matter, which, however, does not affect Macmann's feelings for her: 'The sight of her so diminished did not damp Macmann's desire to take her, all stinking, yellow, bald and vomiting, in his arms' (94). Indeed, Malone's 'great chaotic conflux of ooziings and torrents, and the trapped huddled things changed and died each one according to its solitude' (109) signifies the inherent urge or inertia in organic life 'to restore an earlier state of things': the

singular journey of every living organism, even of inanimate matter, each in its solitude, from its inception through entropy, decay, unto final silence and death.

Conclusion

Malone's depiction of life as abjection reveals that, for him, living as such is a continuous process of deterioration and decay, of abject misery, perennial suffering and punishment, and unfulfilled desire, all of which lead Malone to a renunciation of the so-called life force: the 'élan vital', 'Libido', or 'Eros'. Yet the the death wish, manifested in the text as a return to the womb-tomb, is itself driven by the Libido or Eros, against the death drive. The 'Psychology Notes' reveal Beckett's attention to these ideas: 'Eros' and 'Thanatos' appear alongside the dichotomy of the conscious and the unconscious, viewed as coexisting yet contrasting agencies:

The familiar dichotomy of conscious & unconscious. Narcissism upsets the duality of Ego & Libido. Libido must be rechristened Eros. "... We no longer call the contrasting tendencies egoistic & sexual instincts, but life-instincts for self-preservation & for preservation of the species under the concepts of Eros & have contrasted it with an instinct of death & destruction which works in silence." (TCD MS 10971/7/14)

I have argued that the tension between the death wish and the death drive in *Malone Dies* accounts for the paradox of the death drive pushing the organism *on*, because it demands a more circuitous route to death, while repetition compulsion reveals the project of Malone's death wish – a controlled, composed, designed demise – to be a fantasy grounded in the pleasure principle and narcissism.

Chapter V

Samuel Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' and *The Unnamable*⁸²

The Unnamable is a text obsessed with abjection and degradation: with things cast away, excluded, or rejected as inferior, unworthy and repugnant – things too vile to name.⁸³ This is a preoccupation that it shares with the discipline of psychoanalysis, and that shared interest was of course a key aspect of Samuel Beckett's persistent attraction to psychoanalysis as a creative source, from the 1930s to the end of his career. Yet, in another sense, psychoanalysis is not abject *enough* for Beckett: it remains a rational system of explanation of psychic disorder; it developed an authoritative and potentially authoritarian language that could be codified in textbooks; and it is committed to some form of cure or cathartic relief, whereby the ego regains control over the id. In Beckett's early reading of psychoanalytical textbooks and in his parallel experience of therapy, a growing resistance to the emphasis on cure, control and explanation is evident. Availing itself of the online genetic edition of the novel in the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (BDMP), this chapter will document the widespread use of textbook psychoanalytical language deriving from Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' in *L'Innommable/The Unnamable*, in order to argue that this text stages a simultaneous fascination with psychoanalytic abjection and a virulent rejection of psychoanalysis as a system of rational explanation. As we shall see, *The Unnamable* does not present us with a consistent case study according to any one psychological theory, but instead amalgamates symptoms and symbols from the 'Psychology Notes' in the creative process. Indeed, the unnamable voice seems to suffer from a veritable encyclopaedia of psychic illnesses, and while it attempts to calm and restore itself through an interminable 'talking cure', it repeatedly *fails* to do so, and can only go on. 'The unnamable' is finally too abject to be namable even by the terms of psychoanalysis itself.

⁸² This chapter reproduces my article from the *Journal of Beckett Studies* 27.2 (2018): 211–227, which builds on and repurposes research from my MA thesis, 'A Genetic Study of Samuel Beckett's Creative Use of His 'Psychology Notes' in *The Unnamable*' (2015), completed at the University of Bergen (<https://hdl.handle.net/1956/10012>). It is included here because it completes my argument about the 'Three Novels'. My apologies to the reader for a certain amount of repetition of points made previously in this thesis.

⁸³ Compare the entries for 'abject' and 'abjection' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

The 'Psychology Notes' and textbook psychoanalysis

Samuel Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' were first discussed in depth in Matthew Feldman's pioneering study *Beckett's Books*, yet the implications of Feldman's discoveries have still not been fully developed.⁸⁴ Feldman demonstrates that this corpus of notes remained a creative source for Beckett far beyond the immediate task of completing *Murphy* in 1935. Some scholars have used this insight to develop detailed analyses of Beckett's later works.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the recent edition of *L'Innommable/The Unnamable* in the BDMP provides a fresh testing ground for the hypothesis that these notes remain an indispensable part of the genetic dossier and illuminate the creative influence of psychoanalytic ideas in the novel.⁸⁶ As we shall see, there are simply too many thematic and verbal connections between the notes and Beckett's discordant prose monologue for the link to be trivial, despite the fifteen-year gap separating their composition.

One of Feldman's key discoveries was that in both his philosophy and psychology notetaking, Beckett made extensive use of secondary textbooks, anthologies, introductions, and summaries.⁸⁷ This takes on a special significance in relation to psychoanalysis. It is of course no coincidence that Beckett initiated his synoptic, textbook-based study of prominent psychoanalytic trends alongside his therapy with Wilfred Bion. Yet during his therapy,⁸⁸ Beckett grew more and more sceptical of the promise of a 'total cure' by Bion, and more generally by psychoanalysis, and treated Bion's insistence on continuing their sessions with disdain (see Nixon 2011:45). This points to an ambiguity around the term 'specimen': psychoanalytic language is supposed to describe an individual's psychic condition with maximum objectivity, but an individual can become conscious of that condition as a means of

⁸⁴ In addition to *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of the Interwar Notes*, my transcriptions in this study are taken from Matthew Feldman's unpublished PhD thesis, *Sourcing Aporetics: An Empirical Study on Philosophical Influences in the Development of Samuel Beckett's Writing*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University (2004).

⁸⁵ See, for instance, Édouard Magessa O'Reilly, Dirk Van Hulle and Pim Verhulst, *The Making of Samuel Beckett's 'Molloy'* (2017), and Anthony Cordingley, *Samuel Beckett's 'How It Is': Philosophy in Translation* (2018).

⁸⁶ Adopting the terminology of Dirk Van Hulle's *Modern Manuscripts* (2013), the 'Psychology Notes' should be considered part of the *exogenesis* of this text, meaning the preparatory materials (notes, annotations, marked-up readings, and so on) that directly impact the actual drafting process, or *endogenesis*, of the text. The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project edition of *L'Innommable/The Unnamable* will be cited in this essay as BDMP followed by the manuscript reference.

⁸⁷ For specific discussions of this point regarding both the philosophy and the psychology notes, see Feldman 2004: 69, 73, 105, 137; Feldman 2006: 39–115.

⁸⁸ See especially Beckett's letter to MacGreevy of 16 January 1936 (Beckett 2009: 298–300), and the German diary entry of 8 December 1936.

resisting therapy. Some patients become well-acquainted with psychoanalytic jargon – so much so that they counter the therapeutic effect desired by the psychoanalyst. That is, these patients seek to avoid becoming psychoanalytic ‘specimens’.⁸⁹

This background gives thickness to the introduction of the ‘textbook’ language of psychoanalysis into *The Unnamable*. Whereas textbook psychoanalysis assumes an understanding of the subject as a ‘specimen’ suffering different types of psychosomatic disturbances, the analysand’s signalling knowledge of the conceptual framework can imply a resistance or ambivalence towards this language. This contextualises the central idea in *The Unnamable*, that there are no words for the speaking voice: ‘Having nothing to say, no words but the words of others, I have to speak’ (Beckett 1958: 28). In fact, the voice seems to resist the notion that its words are even the attributes of *its* mind. This struggle against definition becomes a form of resistance against the omnipresent pressure to reduce the voice to just another specimen: ‘come now, make an effort, at your age, to have no identity, it’s a scandal’ (100). In this sense, *The Unnamable* is Beckett’s most sustained response to the ambivalence towards definition and diagnosis that he experienced first-hand in psychoanalytic therapy.

A Failed ‘Talking Cure’

In *The Unnamable*, the voice appears to be engaged in a self-therapeutic procedure, that is to say, in a perennially ongoing but failing ‘talking cure’. Such a situation creates a close connection with the discourse of psychoanalysis recorded by Beckett in the ‘Psychology Notes’. The talking cure appears twice in Beckett’s notes: once as the ‘talking-out’ method (‘mental catharsis’, ‘abreaction’ [TCD MS 10971/7/14]), and the second time as ‘chimney sweeping’ (TCD MS 10971/8/34). The Unnamable wishes for and pictures a quasi-psychoanalytic room where it can ‘close my eyes’ and ‘talk’ (Beckett 1958: 126). At the same time, the idea of the ‘talking cure’ as psychoanalytic confession evokes Christian confession as it figures in the text, where notions of a quasi-psychoanalytic ‘place’, the ‘head’, ‘memory’, and the ‘voice’ converge with those of ‘sinning’, ‘accusation’, ‘repentance’ and ‘punishment’:

The place, I’ll make it all the same, I’ll make it in my head, I’ll draw it out of my memory, I’ll gather it all about me, I’ll make myself a head, I’ll make myself a memory, I have only to listen, the voice will tell me everything, tell it to me again, everything I need, in dribs and drabs, breathless, it’s like a confession, a last confession, you think it’s finished, then it starts off again,

⁸⁹ See Wilhelm Stekel’s *Psychoanalysis and Suggestion Therapy*, a book Beckett read in the mid-1930s.

there were so many sins, the memory is so bad, the words don't come, the words fail, the breath fails, no, it's something else, it's an indictment, a dying voice accusing, accusing me, you must accuse someone, a culprit is indispensable, it speaks of my sins, it speaks of my head, it says it's mine, it says that I repent, that I want to be punished. (174)

Both dimensions imply redemptive and cathartic purgation, while the voice's failing memory and breath and the blockage of the flow of words intimate disbelief and dismissal of those promises.

However, considering the great variety of psychoanalytic ideas, conditions and symbolism associated with the unnamable voice, it is not surprising that it cannot cure itself of all the psychosomatic symptoms that make up its troubled existence. For Freud, as Beckett noted, the ego's taking control of the id is 'reclamation work, like the draining of the Zuyder Zee'. Jones explicated this further: 'To check the analysis before the fundamental aberration is elucidated is like presuming to cure a riddling abscess by tapping superficial pockets of pus instead of thoroughly laying open & draining entire system of connected cavities (free discharge from necrotic [sic] areas)' (TCD MS 10971/8/21; see also Feldman 2004a: 44; Feldman 2006: 31). Yet, ultimately, like Beckett himself rejecting Wilfred Bion's attempt to return him to therapy, the Unnamable ironises and resists the pressure towards normalisation exerted by its imagined interlocutors:

They hope that things will change one day, it's natural. That one day on my windpipe, or some other section of the channel, a nice little abscess will form, with an idea inside, point of departure for a general infection. This would enable me to jubilate like a normal person, knowing why. And I'd soon be a network of fistulae, bubbling with the blessed pus of reason. (Beckett 1958: 92)

The ironic 'nice little abscess' and the fistulae 'bubbling with the blessed pus of reason' point to an unwillingness to participate in any draining operation for ultimate rational control. Instead, there is a persistent fascination with the abject ('infection' and 'pus'), which becomes the real condition for creative production. It was necessary for Beckett to adopt a language that would fail for the textual generation of *L'Innommable* to be possible. In what follows, I will examine three areas where a fascination with the abject and the simultaneous refusal of a cure become thematic: prison psychosis, coprosymbolism, and genital discharge (masturbation and menstruation).

Prison Psychosis and ‘Dungeons in Spain’: Distorting the Textbook Creatively

Significantly, *The Unnamable* is set in a ‘dungeon’: ‘They’ll clap me in a dungeon, I’m in a dungeon, I’ve always been in a dungeon, I hear everything, every word they say, it’s the only sound, as if I were speaking, to myself, out loud, in the end you don’t know any more, a voice that never stops, where it’s coming from’ (91). In *The Trauma of Birth*, Otto Rank speculates on ‘the pleasurable character of certain neurotic symptoms, so called “Prison Psychosis” in which the patient makes himself prisoner by withdrawing into a room which he locks, or by pessimistically phantasing the whole world as a dungeon and thereby unconsciously feeling comfortable in it’ (Rank 1929: 136). Rank links this to ‘the habits of masochists’ who intend to escape, through ‘phantasies of self-punishment’, ‘the real punishment’ which is ‘originally the expulsion from the womb’, the womb being ‘that primal paradise, which is sought for again and again, with unquenchable longing and in every possible form’ (ibid). The word ‘dungeon’ is repeated only once in the novel (Beckett 1958: 42); however, ‘prison’ appears many times in the narrative, not only abundantly evoking prison psychosis, but also self-punishment: ‘no need of walls, yes, we must have walls, I need walls, good and thick, I need a prison, I was right, for me alone, I’ll go there now, I’ll put me in it, I’m there already, I’ll start looking for me now, I’m there somewhere, it won’t be I, no matter, I’ll say it’s I, perhaps it will be I’ (137). In another passage, ‘vault’⁹⁰ and ‘abyss’ are juxtaposed with ‘prison’, pointing to the universality of the dungeon, underlined by the revision from indefinite to definite article in the drafts:

go through the motions, what motions, you can't stir, you ~~an~~ launch your voice, it dies away in the vault, it calls that a vault, perhaps it's ~~an~~^{the} ~~abyss~~—abyss, those are words, it speaks of a prison, I've no objection, vast enough for a whole people, for me alone, or waiting for me, I'll go there now, I'll try and go there now, I can't stir, I'm there already. (BDMP2, ET2, 136)

On the face of it, then, this presents a seemingly clear basis for a textbook (Rankian) ‘diagnosis’ of one aspect of the Unnamable’s condition. Yet this conclusion falters when we consider the background of the word ‘dungeon’ more closely. As addressed early in the thesis, the word appears in a very rare reference to Beckett’s own condition and therapeutic process in the ‘Psychology Notes’ (TCD MS 10971/8/21). In his account, Jones passes over these ‘castles’

⁹⁰ Compare Malone’s phantasy of being chained and trapped in a vault: ‘All hangs together, I am in chains. [...] Perhaps after all I am in a kind of vault and this space which I take to be the street in reality no more than a wide trench or ditch with other vaults opening upon it’ (Beckett 1956: 44).

rather breezily as merely fanciful inventions. In his notes, however, Beckett relates his own ‘extensive development of fantasy at the expense of adjustment to reality’ – most obviously in his writing – not to romantic ‘castles’, but to an obsession with ‘dungeons’. As Feldman points out (2004a: 141), the phrase ‘dungeons in Spain’ also appears in *Murphy* (see Beckett 2009: 239). Later, in *Malone Dies*, Beckett returns to the original Jones phrase ‘castles in Spain’ to describe Macmann’s much more fanciful dream of inhabiting a flat land where he could roll and ‘survive after the fashion of a great cylinder endowed with the faculties of cognition and volition. And without exactly building castles in Spain, for that’ (Beckett 1956: 74).⁹¹ This gives clear evidence that invoking ‘dungeons’ remained a marked and conscious choice for Beckett, one that he had used creatively before and indeed associated with something central to his own creative process as a textual mode of resistance against psychoanalytic language. It is crucial to note here that ‘adjustment to reality’ would entail the successful outcome of the talking cure, yet it would also perhaps undermine the creative process. As Finn Fordham argues,

the goal of self-projection may moreover obstruct the aim of textual production – too great a sense of self-consciousness prevents composition; what is finally produced will turn out to be inauthentic, taking the producer further away from the goal of self-knowledge and self-expression. (Fordham 2010c: 11)

If Beckett were to dismiss his fantasies as mere ‘Castles in Spain’, he could not continue to write from within his own ‘dungeons’.

In *The Unnamable*, the word ‘dungeon’ is attributed to someone else’s language imposed on the voice, having words put into one’s mouth, being ‘possessed of no utterance but theirs’ or uttering that ‘they’ are trying to ‘clap me in a dungeon’ (Beckett 1958: 91); but it is precisely by writing *about* ‘dungeons’ that the voice contrives to avoid ‘their’ language, which insists on casting his fantasies as mere ‘Castles in Spain’. In this particular passage, through a significant reversal of the language from ‘castle’ to ‘dungeon’, the voice distances itself from and resists the textbook language.

⁹¹ I owe this reference to the anonymous reviewer of the article on which this chapter is based Habibi 2018: 211-227), who also pointed out that the phrase did not appear in the original French. There are other cases where Beckett makes explicit verbal use of the ‘Psychology Notes’ in translation, which is unsurprising as they were composed in English and were therefore more readily available as a source of allusion in that language.

The state of the unnamable voice, clapped in a dungeon by ‘them’, indicates an action taken against its will. Not unexpectedly, it then immediately finds itself in a dungeon, and concludes that it has ‘always’ been in one, where it is ‘given to talking, or condemned ‘to talk, [. . .], out loud, without ceasing’ (91). Then it parodies the way it is treated by its manipulators: ‘They shut me up here, now they’re trying to get me out, to shut me up somewhere else, or to let me go, they are capable of putting me out just to see what I’d do’ (91). There follows one of the most explicit moments of the voice contemplating its ‘observers’, who may be associated with the analyst observing the analysand in a therapeutic session: ‘Standing with their backs to the door, their arms folded, their legs crossed, they would observe me’ (92). The imagined presence of these ‘others’ becomes a constant source of creative resistance throughout the text.

Petrification and Coprosymbolism

Rocks, stones and pebbles are often associated with stillness and death in Beckett (see Baker 1997, 137–139). A striking evocation of death appears in *The Unnamable*: ‘your mouth full of sand’ (Beckett 1958: 113). As stated earlier, references to earth, sand and pebbles as coprosymbols are traceable to Beckett’s concluding notes on Ernest Jones’s *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (TCD MS 10971/8/19). In the light of this passage, the connection between earth, rock, stones and muck, dirt and excrement certainly indicates petrification and death, but also coprosymbolism. As the Unnamable remarks at one point: ‘First dirty, then make clean’ (Beckett 1958: 11). At one point, the Unnamable finds itself with ‘dirt and ashes’: ‘I found myself in a kind of vast yard or campus, surrounded by high walls, its surface an amalgam of dirt and ashes, and this seemed sweet to me after the vast and heaving wastes I had traversed, if my information was correct’ (32). In an earlier version, Beckett had used the words ‘earth/dirt and cinders’: ‘its surface a mixture of ~~earth~~ dirt and cinders’ (BDMP2, EN1, 32r), which became the ‘dirt and ashes’ of the final version. The seeming equivalence that allowed replacement of ‘earth’ with ‘dirt’ hints at the former’s status as coprosymbol. Moreover, the pleasure taken in smearing and dirt is implied by the word ‘sweet’. At another stage, the voice ‘flounders in muck’ (Beckett 1958: 40). Some materials that Jones names ‘excretory products’ appear in Beckett’s notes: ‘unconscious symbols for excretory products (dirt, paper, waste products, money)’ (TCD MS 10971/8/18). In the passage above, we see ‘heaving wastes’ juxtaposed with both ‘dirt’ and ‘sweetness’. The Unnamable’s obsession with forms of ‘waste’ thus suggests another strong point of contact with the ‘Psychology Notes’, one which also indicates a link with the ‘anal-erotic’ character traits theorized by Jones (see Weller: 2010d, 135–47).

Finally, it is especially interesting that in the following passage, storytelling itself appears as a form of ‘cloacal’ birth:

I’ll let down my trousers and shit stories on them, stories, photographs, records, sites, lights, gods and fellow-creatures, the daily round and common task, observing the while, Be born, dear friends, be born, enter my arse, you’ll just love my colic pains, it won’t take long, I’ve the bloody flux. (Beckett 1958: 103)

By letting down his trousers and shitting stories, the Unnamable gets involved in a creative process of doing and undoing, that is to say, of muddying with words, making or telling stories, and finally shitting on and smearing them all. There is a clear relation to the notes where the ‘[i]nstinct of the infant to keep & play with faeces, the pleasure it takes in smearing, which it does with excreta as a token of affection’ (TCD MS 10971/8/19) becomes a creative act, a form of cloacal birth and re-creation. There is, then, a kind of indulgence in the abject in *The Unnamable*, and a refusal to overcome or abandon that indulgence, which is key to creative production.

Menstruation & Spermatozoon

The fascination with coprosymbols is connected with another type of abject matter: genital discharge. At one point, the Unnamable asserts that ‘the slut has yet to menstruate capable of whelping me, that should singularly narrow the field of research, a sperm dying, of cold, in the sheets, feebly wagging its little tail, perhaps I’m a drying sperm, in the sheets of an innocent boy, even that takes time, no stone must be left unturned’ (Beckett 1958: 102). As it turns out, the ‘slut’, having replaced ‘the bitch’ of an earlier version (BDMP2, EN3, 08r), refers to the vagina that has to menstruate before it can ‘whelp’ the voice. The birth and death (womb-tomb) subtext is illuminating in this passage, and, as we shall see, the ‘sperm’ terminology adds to this. These menstruation and birth images can be traced back to Rank’s *The Trauma of Birth*, Beckett noting: ‘Birth actually only a menstruation en masse’ (TCD MS 10971/8/34). However, a degree of caution is in order, as there is no French antecedent for ‘the slut has yet to menstruate capable of whelping me’:

la ~~mère~~^{garce} qui me déconnera, voilà qui devrait singulièrement restreindre le champs des recherches, un sperme qui meurt, de froid, dans les draps, en agitant faiblement sa petite queue, je suis peut-être un sperme qui ~~meurt~~^{sèche}, dans les draps d’un gamin, j’c’est long, il faut tout envisager. (BDMP2, FN2, 33v)

This passage appears in the first Minuit edition as:

la garce qui me déconnera, voilà qui devrait singulièrement restreindre le champ des recherches, un sperme qui meurt, de froid, dans les draps, en agitant faiblement sa petite queue, je suis peut-être un sperme qui sèche, dans les draps d'un gamin, c'est long, il faut tout envisager. (Beckett 1953: 188)

In the second French edition (Beckett 1971: 153), it again appears without the inclusion of the line related to Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' inserted in the English versions of the text. It is possible that either a greater recall of or a more conscious stress on the 'Psychology Notes' may have occurred during the translation.

Similarly, the term 'spermatozoa' appears once in the 'Psychology Notes' ('Spermatozoa dream (Silberer), regression to spermarium' [TCD MS 10971/8/35]) and once in *The Unnamable*, with a minor modification from the plural to the singular. The fact that Beckett uses the term 'spermatozoon' both in *L'Innommable* and in *The Unnamable* strengthens the connection with the 'Psychology Notes': it seems likely that he consulted or recalled his notes directly, not only in the translation of *L'Innommable* into English, but also during composition of the original French text. The term appears in all versions in both languages: 'Oyez, oyez, I was like them, before being like me, oh the swine, that's one I won't get over in a hurry, no matter, no matter, the charge is sounded, present arms, corpse, to your guns, spermatozoon' (Beckett 1958: 102). With some lexical modifications from the first version, the French runs as follows: 'Oyez, oyez, j'étais comme eux, avant d'être comme moi, merde alors, voilà une vacherie dont je ne reviendrai pas de sitôt, c'est bon, c'est bon, l'assaut est donné, debout le mort, aux fourches, spermatozoïde' (Beckett 1953: 188).

Going back to Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*, from which Beckett noted the above line, we can find further insights in the presentation of Silberer's dream symbolism, what Rank believes is 'illustrated by Silberer in excellent examples of "spermatozoa dreams", to go back into the father's body' (Rank, 1929: 83). Rank believes that these are 'phantasies which are partly connected with explanations about sex heard or read of at a later date' (ibid), meaning at a later stage of the individual's development. He adds that

if one continued the analysis of these ‘spermatozoa dreams’ from the point of view here set forth, they would finally prove to be ‘back to the womb’ dreams which have been remodeled by means of a later acquired conscious knowledge. Often enough, indeed, the so-called ‘spermatozoa dreams’ prove to be directly disguised ‘womb dreams,’ since the only way to come again to the mother’s body is by way of the father’s spermatozoa. (Rank 1929: 84)

The references to ‘whelping’ and ‘menstruation’, which follow the cited passage in *The Unnamable*, fit well with the birth subtext and its possible reference to the ‘Psychology Notes’, where the phrases ‘[b]irth actually only a menstruation en masse’ (TCD MS 10971/8/34) and ‘[s]permatozoa dream (Silberer), regression to spermarium’ (TCD MS 10971/8/35) subsequently appear on facing pages. Added to all this, the ‘spermatozoon’ reference becomes an additional piece of evidence that Beckett is drawing on the ‘Psychology Notes’.

‘Sperm’ appears for a second time immediately after mention of ‘whelping’ and ‘menstruation’ (Beckett 1958: 102). The bleak pathos of the Unnamable as a ‘drying [and dying] sperm, in the sheets of an innocent boy’ relates to a previous short passage that also includes birth-death subtexts, where the voice piles up accusations against ‘all ye living bastards, you’ll be all right, you’ll see, you’ll never be born again, what am I saying, you’ll never have been born’ (102).⁹² This stance recurs in a subsequent passage, one page after the words ‘menstruation’ and ‘spermatozoon’ first appear: ‘Be born, dear friends, be born, enter my arse, you’ll just love my colic pains, it won’t take long, I’ve the bloody flux (103–104). In between, the voice evokes the drying/dying sperm by yearning for ‘death’ soon after ‘birth’ from a ‘wet dream’: ‘some people are lucky, born of a wet dream and dead before morning, I must say I’m tempted’ (103).

The voice’s resistance to the ‘textbook’ language is implied by its intermittent sardonic denials and acrimonious derision, especially of ‘them’, while scorning its own ‘life’, which it is ‘tempted’ to end: ‘they want to bore me to sleep, at long range, for fear I might defend myself, they want to catch me alive, so as to be able to kill me, thus I shall have lived, they think I’m alive, what a business’ (103). The idea that this implies a reference to ‘spermatozoon’ dreams gains more credibility when the voice mentions the ‘boy’, thus linking the idea of being ‘born of a wet dream and dead before morning’ back to a drying/dying sperm ‘in the sheets of an innocent boy’ (103). Further on, the voice speaks of ‘stories’: ‘there’s nothing to be got, there

⁹² Beckett had attended one of Carl Jung’s 1935 Tavistock lectures with Bion (Beckett 2009a; 282) and ‘was much moved by hearing Jung remark, about a neurotic girl, that “she had never been born completely”’ (O’Hara 1997: 108).

was never anything to be got from those stories, I have mine, somewhere, let them tell it to me, they'll see there's nothing to be got from it either, nothing to be got from me, it will be the end, of this hell of stories, you'd think I was cursing them' (103). Then it openly 'curses' them and 'imputes words to them you wouldn't throw to a dog':

always the same old trick, you'd be sorry for them, perhaps I'll curse them yet, they'll know what it is to be a subject of conversation, I'll impute words to them you wouldn't throw to a dog, an ear, a mouth and in the middle a few rags of mind, I'll get my own back, a few flitters of mind, they'll see what it's like. (103)

The voice abhors and refutes the idea of being a 'subject of conversation', a notion that links its stance back to the psychoanalytic subject, imputing words to 'them' who are watching it suffer with its 'few rags of mind'. Finally, it decides to pay tribute to them by 'shitting on them' (103). The passage links up with the Unnamable's fictional 'friends', which the voice imagines are being born through its rectum. In this densely psychoanalytic context, this diatribe, among others, is only one more fraught denunciation of the 'textbook' language by the voice, which wishes that 'they' would 'keep their nose out of my business' (104). As the unnamable voice lets itself 'drop among the contumacious' (103), its rebellion persists perennially in the text.

Conclusion

The Unnamable evolved as a creative text in the interstices of two kinds of 'unnamability': a psychoanalytically inspired fascination with the abject and a recursive refusal of the 'textbook' language of psychoanalysis itself. By staging a *failed* 'talking cure', Beckett is able to revisit a remarkable range of psychoanalytic symptoms and symbols in this text, both attributing them *to* the unnamable voice, and provoking various forms of denial and avoidance *by* the voice. This ongoing textual drama must be recognised as a key creative impetus within and behind Beckett's most uncompromisingly resistant, incurable literary work.

CHAPTER VI

Scatology, Repression and Sublimation: Staging the ‘Psychology Notes’ in *Krapp’s Last Tape*

An obsessive hoarder, Beckett’s Krapp has collected his life fragments for the past forty-five years.⁹³ On stage he occupies himself with the tape-recorder, microphone, boxes, spools, watch, worn ledger, heavy dictionary, and other props. The big, black ‘old ledger’ (Beckett 1959: 10) and the ‘enormous dictionary’⁹⁴ (13), which he carries from the backstage cubby-hole to the table, are as old as his ‘[c]racked voice’, and his ‘[l]aborious walk’ (9), as though they were extensions of his feeble aged body. Most prominent among the stage-props is the tape-recorder, with which Krapp has formed an intense, sensual relationship. Beckett’s notebook of his direction of the 1969 Schiller Theater production in Berlin records the following note on the ‘Relationship with tape-recorder’, tellingly headed ‘Psychological’:

Tape-recorder companion of his solitude. Masturbatory agent. Tendency to become what is on the tape and the object of a corresponding negative-positive animation. Anger and tenderness of Krapp towards the object which through language <becomes> has become the ‘albernen Idioten’ [‘stupid bastard’] or [erasure] the girl on the lake.

Krapp – tape-recorder relationship both fundamental and almost impossible to convey through the acting without descending to the level of the sentimental. Just a few looks and some movement of the hands, his left hand for tenderness (auf ihr [on her]) as he switches on for example, and both hands to express irritation (way of switching off or drumming with his fingers). (181)

It will come as no surprise to the reader of this study that Beckett’s 1969 note on Krapp’s ‘Psychology’ is rooted in his 1930s ‘Psychology Notes’. Beckett’s notions of solitude and

⁹³ Beckett explains about ‘Il 45 years. 9 boxes’ in the Schiller notebooks (*The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp’s Last Tape* (1992)): ‘Since there is a reference in the text to box 9 (Mein Gott!) [good God!] and to 5 reels of tape in each box, on the table there must be at least 9 * 5 = 45 recordings = birthdays = years. So, when he began making the recordings, he must have been at most 69 – 45 = 24 years of age (Box 1, spool 1) [Page 3]’ (53).

⁹⁴ See Beckett’s Schiller notebooks for a detailed description of Krapp’s costume and some of the props [Page 71] (189).

masturbation and their cause-and-effect relationship can be traced to the notes on Karin Stephen and Ernest Jones especially. His attention to Stephen's speculation regarding 'auto-eroticism' is noteworthy: 'Auto-erotic activities are not merely an attempt to obtain sense-pleasure, but are partly acts of revenge, the hostility towards the earliest unsatisfactory love-objects being transferred to the self' (TCD 10971/7/1). One related note, from Jones on *Angst*, is succinct: 'Masturbation sublimating on the pianoforte' (TCD MS 10971/8/16). This is not unlike Krapp's alternately tender and aggressive handling of the tape-recorder.

In *Treatment of the Neuroses*, Jones classifies the 'auto-erotic functioning known as onanism' (Jones 1963: 186) among the varieties of narcissism. He assumes it to be an 'unsatisfactory substitute for the normal [sexual act]' due to its 'inadequate discharge of accumulated tension' which is sometimes supervened by neurasthenia. Owing to a 'deep underlying mental conflict', it can easily lead to 'internal disharmony' (ibid). Beckett condensed Jones's discussion of masturbation into four lines in his 'Psychology Notes', emphasising 'the excessive psychic energy' accompanying the act:

Lassitude & depression following masturbation are due to the moral scruples that have to be overcome & to the excessive expenditure of psychic energy, in the sense that the subject has to provide from within excitations that normally come from without & thus bears the whole expense of that energy that is normally shared between two partners. (TCD MS 10971/8/23)

In *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, and importantly for a reading of *Krapp's Last Tape*, Jones relates the individual's onanistic habits to the 'anal region' (Jones 1967: 415). He also holds that 'all collectors are anal erotics, and the objects collected are nearly always topical copro-symbols' (Jones 1967: 430). The anal-erotic complex is characterised by 'two of the most fundamental and far-reaching instincts, the instincts to possess and to create or produce respectively' (Jones 1967: 428), where the one is an 'impulse to keep, the other an impulse to give out' (ibid). Accordingly, the "'retaining' attitude of the first phase may extend over on to the product itself after it has been brought forth, so that a hoarding tendency ensues' (Jones 1967: 428-429). Beckett's Schiller-production note on Krapp's tendency 'to become what is on the tape and the object of a corresponding negative-positive animation' (Knowlson 1992: 181) may be understood in this light. Krapp has not only collected objects with which he has formed a relationship over time. His 'hoarding tendency' is manifested in his accumulation of 'dirt', especially 'bodily dirt' with which he seems to find it hard to part. He appears on stage in a

‘[s]urprising pair of dirty white boots’ (Beckett 1959: 9). One could say that dirt is the extension of his body, or rather, that his body has become an extension of the dirt. But, as we shall also see, the instinct to create or produce is equally central to this play.

Opening this chapter with an example from Beckett’s directing notes is meant to draw attention to the way in which material from the ‘Psychology Notes’ here gets transformed into a fully theatrical language of props, gestures, stage movement, precise physical attitudes, and styles of acting. The psychological themes examined in *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable* have, by the time of *Krapp’s Last Tape*, become fully absorbed into a repertoire of familiar images and ideas. A major creative focus is the technical challenge of how this repertoire is to be translated into specifically theatrical form. This chapter will argue that Krapp’s stage behaviour and environment are shaped and underpinned by Beckett’s ‘Psychology Notes’ in three broad connected areas: repression, infantile (especially anal-excretory) sexuality, and creativity.

PART I

Repression, dreams, and memory

The dream position

As the Schiller-production notebooks reveal, Beckett underscored the ‘dream’ position in Krapp – one example being ‘Schauder u. [und] Traum’ [Shudder and dream] [*Page 54*] (156) – whenever Krapp ‘drowns’ in the thoughts of his past love objects. Beckett recorded: ‘How often seized by dream?’ [*Page 95*] (237). This is followed by a detailed list of scenes where Krapp is supposed to sustain the dream attitude for ‘long’, a word that is repeated eight times across two pages of stage directions for the production. An example of this scene is ‘13 Wir lagen da 2’ [We lay there], with Krapp’s ‘Head down, drowning, very long’ [*Page 95*] (237). Krapp’s seizure by the dream appears shortly afterwards: ‘Roused by das Weibliche [the (eternal) feminine] Dream seizes hold of him, that he can’t move, releases him more or less later. Hold once broken by Hain’ [*Page 97*] (241). The references here are to Goethe’s ‘Das Ewige-Weibliche’, from *Faust* and Schubert’s ‘Hain’, from ‘Death and the Maiden’, as in *All That Fall* (cf. also *Words and Music*, *Nacht und Traüme*). These are both intricately associated with the pervasive sense of dream:

Aliter Opens and engulfs him.
Cf. in Träumen ertrunken [drowned in dreams].

[*erasure*]
 Inhaltloser Traum [Empty dream]
 ein vom Traum (Nichts) gefressenes
 Leben [A life consumed by dream (nothing)].
 beim Sinnliche sich ins geistliche
 wegträumen, beim geistliche ins
 Sinnliche [From the sensual dreams himself away into the
 Spiritual, from the spiritual away into the sensual]
 Traumgefressener Mensch [Dream-consumed man]. (ibid)

The entire play is permeated by Krapp's impulse towards retrospection. At one point, he broods: 'These old P.M.s are gruesome, but I often find them - (KRAPP *switches off, broods, switches on*) - a help before embarking on a new... (*hesitates*)... retrospect' (Beckett 1959: 12). His existence is suffused by dreams and the recollection or resuscitation of memories, however distorted and vague, through his tapes – that is, through (non-textual) sound recordings and textual ledger entries. Krapp's ambivalence towards the painful moments of his past life, and his obsessive impulse to listen to them again and again, signal a 'repetition compulsion'. This entails an unsuccessful imitation of the psychoanalytic 'talking cure', to recover and rationally order the dissociated contents of the unconscious mind.

The juxtaposition of Krapp's dream seizure and Hain, the image of death, is thus not arbitrary. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud stresses the significance of dreams, which he associates with the individual's repetition compulsion, signifying death and revisiting scenes of trauma even in his dreams. He speculates that the traumatic neurotic is 'fixated to his trauma', citing Breuer and himself to affirm that 'hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences' (Freud 1961: 7). Despite his efforts, Krapp signally fails to confront the past productively and move on. Even if the means of Krapp's memory evocation is an audio diary, a variation of Malone's written diary, the depth of the unconscious or the dark zone of the psyche cannot be easily perceived, and its dissociated materials cannot be reclaimed.

Freud maintains that the 'patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part' (1961: 12). He links this to the 'repetition compulsion':

He is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past. These reproductions, which emerge with such unwished-for exactitude, always have as their subject some portion of infantile sexual life – of the Oedipus complex, that is, and its derivatives. (1961: 12; emphasis in original)

Krapp seems compelled to repeat the same routine of recollection while failing to remember, or remembering only vaguely, the contents which belong to the past. Freud believes that the ‘resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid the discomfort (Unlust) which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed’ (Freud 1961: 14). If the efforts made by the analyst, as Freud puts it, ‘are directed towards procuring the toleration of that unpleasure by an appeal to the reality principle’ (ibid), for Krapp, the dream-consumed man, the interplay between dream and reality – that is, between the toleration of unpleasure and the demands of reality – is mediated by a machine rather than the analyst. The ‘therapeutic problem’ of the failure of psychoanalytic interpretation is superseded by another aim, namely, ‘to oblige the patient to confirm the analyst’s construction from his own memory’, a process where the patient abandons his resistances, which Freud dubbed ‘transference’ (Freud 1961: 12). Once this stage is mastered, ‘it may be said that the earlier neurosis has been replaced by a fresh, “transference neurosis”’ (ibid). The interaction between Krapp and the tape-recorder imitates the therapeutic process of a talking cure, one in which the machine ironically obliges him to confirm its construction of memory. Yet this transference fails since the tape-recorder cannot master Krapp’s resistances against certain memories of the past, possibly due to the intensity of the repressing forces. As Freud points out, ‘[r]esistance during treatment arises from the same higher strata and systems of the mind which originally carried out repression’ (Freud 1961: 13). Furthermore, ‘the compulsion to repeat also recalls from the past experiences which include *no possibility of pleasure*, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to instinctual impulses which have since been repressed’ (Freud 1961: 14; my emphasis). Krapp’s driest diatribe against the notion of ‘being’ and a lived existence may be his final words, ‘Be again, be again. (*Pause.*) All that old misery. (*Pause.*) Once wasn’t enough for you’ (Beckett 1959: 18), intimating again and again the same experience of existential angst and the trauma of birth.

Repressing last fancies

Beckett’s notes from Jones reveal his engagement with the idea of memory and its mechanisms, including repression and forgetting:

Forgetting material not in itself unpleasant: The affect investing [sic] painful complexes is in a state of high potential & so tends to radiate on to whatever ideas become associated with it (displacement of affect). Thus secondary complexes are formed, involved in affective

constellation of the primary & subject to the same action of repression. When “de-emotionalisation” (dislocation) takes place, the personality becomes coldly intellectual & its conscious affective life reduced to a minimum. A patient of this type may have immediate access to ideational content of repressed constellations while remaining unable to recover their affective charge. Such merely intellective recovery is of little therapeutic value, the aim of psychoanalytical treatment being, not to make buried ideas conscious, but to create a pathway into consciousness for emotion attached to buried complexes. Dislocation commoner in case of primary than of secondary material. Hence indirect association often more efficacious in releasing emotion than direct, just as a chance indirect allusion to a painful event may be more distressing than a direct reference.

All forgetting due to repression: Assimilative faculty of primary complexes is so strong that the associated material is almost unlimited. Likelihood of primarily hedonic mechanism of repression being appropriated for further purpose of excluding material that is merely irrelevant, without necessarily being disturbing. “Hedonic repression” & “utilitarian repression” - latter derived from former, just as reality from pain-pleasure principle. (TCD MS 10971/8/8)

Following Freud, Jones designates the individual’s descent into dreams as being hysterical in nature. According to him, the ‘hysteric is *to an abnormal extent* influenced by his past, and may be said to be still living largely in his past’ or, in other words, ‘imperfectly adapted to the reality of the present’ (Jones 1963: 35). However, Beckett parodies the psychoanalytic treatment attempt to ‘resuscitat[e] the forgotten memories, in fusing the dissociated mental processes with conscious ones’ (ibid) by dramatic means, including a tape-recorder that is neutral, like the analyst, but only by being inanimate.

By staging the idea of the ‘recollection of previous existence’ through an interplay of repression and infantile regression, Beckett may reflect Karin Stephen’s discussion concerning the extent of repression, which includes the ensuing regression that the neurotic undergoes to make his life more bearable. Stephen’s main argument is formulated early in her book, underlined by Beckett in the ‘Psychology Notes’: ‘Thesis: Psychogenic symptoms are defences designed to prevent anxiety from developing when repression threatens to give way’ (TCD MS 10971/7/1) (see Stephen 1960:7-8). In other words, these symptoms are ‘produced by impulses which have been dissociated from the rest of the self’. Dissociation itself is ‘produced to avoid the intolerable pain of privation and frustration’ (Stephen 1960: 7-8). It is precisely this notion of repression that opens Beckett’s transcriptions from Stephen in the ‘Psychology Notes’: ‘Psychogenic symptoms characteristic (representative) of most tolerable modus vivendi open

to the subject. Hence he is reluctant to abandon them' (TCD MS 10971/7/1). Krapp's 'last fancies' may be interpreted in these terms:

Last fancies. [*Vehemently.*] Keep 'em under! [*Pause.*] Scalded the eyes out of me reading Effie again, a page a day, with tears again. Effie... [*Pause.*] Could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes. [*Pause*] Could I? [*Pause*] And she? [*Pause.*] Pah! [*Pause.*] Fanny came in a couple of times. Bony old ghost of a whore. Couldn't do much, but I suppose better than a kick in the crutch. (Beckett 1959: 17)

Sue Wilson's summary (alluding to the ironic desire to 'eff the ineffable' in *Watt*) is helpful here:

The complete cycle of Krapp's habitual struggle with such empty dreaming reappears in the "Effie" passage on his last tape. Empty ideas, dreams and fancies, are firstly denied by Krapp, then admitted in rationed portions, suddenly threaten to overwhelm him, become open to doubt and are finally degraded to their only available physical manifestation. [...] As a substitute for his desire to "eff" the ineffable "Effie", Krapp must be content with the only available empirical object, a "Bony old ghost of a whore", who, unsurprisingly, fails to substantiate the romantic exultation of Effie's conceptualization (Wilson 2002: 139-40)

Krapp appears to turn towards substitute gratifications precisely at the moment when repression threatens to give way and has to be violently reasserted.

Stephen's elaboration of the notions of repression and regression in the so-called excretory stage sheds more light on Krapp confronting his 'last fancies', and the means he has learned or been driven to adopt to 'keep them under'. Stephen argues:

[The child] may merely have dissociated the forbidden wishes, while still clinging to them unconsciously. This repressed conflict then forms a dissociated nucleus to which regression may occur later on, and by and by it may reassert itself by giving rise to symptoms.

[... Such people] are in fact immature, never having developed beyond their early harsh sphincter morality.

[...] the infantile defiance and infantile pleasure-seeking flourishes somewhere out of sight, in an obstinate subterranean way, too much dissociated and repressed to be modified by everyday experiences.

This is the danger of repression – *there is no growing up*. People who have dealt with frustration in this way are at once too yielding or too self-sacrificing on the surface, and too obstinate and self-seeking beneath it, for satisfactory adaptation to life, and, owing to the excessive renunciations they have been struggling to make, they are profoundly destructive and revengeful, though this too may be quite out of consciousness. (Stephen 1960: 156-7)

In the genetic variations of ‘Last fancies [*Vehemently*.] Keep ’em under!’ in the various French and English versions, recording the creative evolutionary process, Beckett appears to be conflating ‘insanity’ (itself signalling a variety of psychopathological symptoms) and ‘repression’. While ‘last fancies’ remains the same throughout, there is considerable revision in what precedes and follows. In the first English version, Beckett uses the word ‘resist’, but that is modified to ‘fight off’: ‘Swore to ~~resist them~~ ^{fight them off.}’ (MS-UoR-1227-7-7-1, p. 18v). This is followed by ~~Resolutions.~~ ‘Aspirations. Resolutions’ (ibid), though this is omitted in version 6 of the 14 drafts. *Repression* can itself be ambivalent, referring both to the ‘Keep ’em under!’ and what precedes and follows, thereby making one or the other redundant. In the second version, Beckett changes ‘fight off’ to ‘keep at bay’: ‘Swore to ~~fight~~ ^{keep} them ~~off~~ ^{at bay.} Aspirations. Resolutions.’ (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-1, f. 3r). Struggling with his intentions, Beckett undoes ‘keep at bay’ in the third version and revises it to ‘fight off’ once again: ‘Swore to fight them off. Aspirations. Resolutions’ (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-2, f. 5r). He then introduces ‘madness’ for the first time in the fourth version and adds two pauses to Krapp’s utterance of ‘aspirations’ and ‘resolutions’, one before each: ‘Swore to ~~fight them off.~~ ^{Keep them under.} Go mad altogether if I don’t keep them under. (Pause.) Resolutions. (Pause.) Aspirations.’ (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-3, f. 5r). However, this is undone in the next version: ‘Go mad altogether if I don’t ~~keep them under.~~ ^{Go mad altogether if I don’t.} Keep ’em under! (Pause.) Resolutions. (Pause.) Aspirations.’ (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-4, f. 6r). He eventually arrives at the ‘final’ terms: ‘Keep ’em under!’ (MS-UoR-1659, f. 7r; MS-HRC-SB-4-2-5, f. 7r; MS-HRC-SB-4-2-7, f. 8r; MS-SYR-GP-95, f. 25r; Beckett 1959: 17). By undoing ‘resolutions’ and ‘aspirations’ Beckett not only shifts the emphasis to Krapp’s ‘last fancies’, and hence to the repressing agent, but also cuts textual redundancy and achieves a condensed style more suitable to the stage.

The French translation of the text did not undergo much revision. Although Beckett appears to aim for a concrete counterpart for ‘Keep ’em under!’, he employs the expression, ‘A refouler!’ (MS-HRC-B-4-2-6, f. 7r), (*Les Lettres Nouvelles*, p. 12, and Beckett 1959a: 29), the precise equivalent of ‘to repress’, excluding ‘resolutions’ and ‘aspirations’ altogether. The terms ‘keep them under’ and ‘refouler’ reappear in the two versions of the play when Krapp

reveals his 'vision', starting and ending his monologue with a reference to 'fire' (or desire). By leaving his speech unfinished, Krapp not only articulates his intense proclivity to repress but simultaneously enacts repression through textual breakdown and concrete theatrical business:

[...] suddenly I saw the whole thing. The vision at last. This I fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory, warm or cold, for the miracle that ... [*hesitates*] ... for the fire that set it alight. What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely – [*KRAPP switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*] – great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most – [*KRAPP curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*] – unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire – [*KRAPP curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*] – my face in her breasts and my hand on her. (Beckett 1959: 15)

'Clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under' in the English versions becomes 'clair pour moi enfin que l'obscurité que je m'étais toujours acharné à refouler' (Beckett 1959a: 23) in the French. This conflation reveals that Beckett is equating Krapp's fancies and desires with the dark inside him that he has always struggled to 'refoule', but in vain. Hence his irremediable regression to those primitive dark desires, the id or Eros, and his compulsion to resuscitate his last fancies. This is significant in terms of the unknowability of the depths of the unconscious and its 'ineffable' contents. In other words, by staging Krapp's repressive-regressive tendencies, Beckett resists and destabilises the psychoanalytic tendency to reclaim such dissociated material from the unconscious mind, and help the conscious ego take over new regions of the id.

PART II

Sexuality, regression, and anality

Renunciation of love, narcissistic regression, and the anal ego-ideal

Krapp's renunciation of love and his ascetic mode of living have been characterised by James Knowlson and John Pilling as part of a 'Gnostic, even a specifically Manichean tradition, with

its abstention from sexual intercourse and marriage (so as not to play the Creator's game)' (Knowlson & Pilling 1980: 86-87). This indicates a subtle duality that haunts the entire structure of the play, one that separates the forces of light and dark,⁹⁵ love and hate, and man and woman, to name a few of the contraries. Krapp must come to terms with this 'fundamental dualism, either by attempted separation or by reconciliation' (Knowlson & Pilling 1980: 88). The name 'Mani' appears in Beckett's production notebooks for *Das letzte Band* at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt in 1969 (Knowlson 1992: 131-141).⁹⁶

The word 'sexual' occurs only once in *Krapp's Last Tape* but appears in two reading traces in Samuel Beckett's library.⁹⁷ The source of the first is the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under 'Manichaeism' on the forbidding of sexual desire. This passage is marked by Beckett with a vertical line in the margin, and reads, 'Finally, by the signaculum sinus every gratification of sexual desire, and hence also marriage, are forbidden' (1910: Vol. 17, 574). This reappears in Beckett's Schiller notebooks: 'Ascetic ethics, particularly abstinence from sensual enjoyment. Sexual desire, marriage, forbidden (signaculum sinus)' [Page 45] (Knowlson 1992: 137). The juxtaposition of Krapp's 'engrossing' sexual life with his fantasied simulacrum of enthusiastic intercourse may well correlate with the development of his sexual introversion, as typically evident in infantile behaviour and alcoholism.

Another marked passage concerns the Manichaeism's '[a]scetic ethics, particularly abstinence from sensual enjoyment':

On the basis of such a cosmical philosophy, ethics can only have a dualistic ascetic character. [...] and yet the ethics of Manichaeism appears in point of fact as thoroughly ascetic. The Manichaeism had, above all, to refrain from sensual enjoyment, shutting himself up against it by three seals-the signaculum oris, manus and sinus. (ibid)

⁹⁵ Angela Moorjani relates the appearance-disappearance in Beckett of light and shadow (darkness), blindness and sight, among others, to Freud's *fort-da* as a means of 'obscuring pain with pleasure and pleasure with pain' (Moorjani 2004: 34).

⁹⁶ Knowlson and Pilling's critical analysis was carried out before the publication of these notebooks.

⁹⁷ For my references to Beckett's library, I make use of Beckett Digital Library module © 2016 Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, edited by Dirk Van Hulle, Mark Nixon and Vincent Neyt. Student Library edited by Veronica Bălă.

Dougald McMillan and Martha Fehsenfeld discuss the triad of the Manichaeian seals in relation to the punt scene and Krapp's vain 'resolutions' and 'aspirations' throughout his ascetic life (McMillan & Fehsenfeld 1988: 246). Whereas the Manichaeian had to seal himself against the enjoyments of the 'mouth', the 'hand', and the 'bosom' (i.e. all sexual activities), Krapp embarks on his hebephrenic performance by peeling two bananas, one at a time, allowing them to protrude from his mouth. Beckett's parody of the sealed-off mouth does not end here. Krapp goes '*with all the speed he can muster backstage into darkness. Ten seconds. Loud pop of cork. Fifteen seconds. He comes back into light ...*' (Beckett 1959: 10), with the end of the banana sticking out of his waistcoat pocket. S. E. Gontarski sees the opening scene, and especially the 'auto-erotic' bananas, not only as offering a 'comic tone to offset the early pathos', but also as a 'thematic thread as Krapp tries locking away one of the objects of his desire' (Gontarski 1977: 65). He notes that 'Beckett twice added "caresses banana", [MS-HRC-SB-4-2-3, f. 1r], altered to Ts-IV to "strokes banana." [MS-UoR-1659, p. 1r], which 'makes it acquire its 'obvious sexual significance' (ibid). Krapp's exclamation – 'And the aspirations! [*Brief laugh in which Krapp joins.*] And the resolutions! [*Brief laugh in which Krapp joins.*] To drink less, in particular. [*Brief laugh of Krapp alone.*]' (Beckett 1959: 12) – is in sharp contrast with his present state and his irresistible impulse to imbibe, the popping of a cork heard backstage three times every ten seconds, followed by a brief '*burst of quavering song*' (13) before he comes back into the light and abstention.

Closely related to narcissism, Jones argues, are alcoholism and the drug habit, which he links to 'repressed homosexuality' (Jones 1963: 221). Excepting perhaps the 'phallic' bananas, there is no textual evidence in the play for this link, but alcohol is clearly a major factor in Krapp's life. Beckett's notes summarise Jones's theory: 'Morbid agent in alcoholism is almost invariably repressed homosexuality – in both sexes. This is also true for the drug habit' (TCD MS 10971/8/23). At the very least, we may surmise, Krapp's self-love through alcoholism becomes an auto-erotic refuge for him 'as secondarily resorted to as a defense against repressed allo-erotism' (Jones 1967: 292). His 'repressed allo-erotism' began with his withdrawal from passionate, romantic love, a sort of self-induced conflict between 'narcissistic [libido] and object-libido' (Jones 1967: 160). More naturally, these love-hate attitudes towards the love object may occur at an early age, leading to the individual's anal character formation. Beckett's notes on the mother-child relationship and the excretory functioning read: 'The alteration of hate & love towards adult love-object based on such early alternations towards the mother who interferes with excretory act' (TCD MS 10971/8/16). However, the nature of such a conflict is

not simply moral or ethical, as traditionally believed. Such attitudes were discovered to contain a 'libidinal component', revealed by Freud to be 'naturally a narcissistic one' (Jones 1967: 160). As Jones explains, 'in tracing the evolution of narcissistic libido', Freud found that there was still another form of love 'attached to the ego, but nevertheless very different from simple self-love' (ibid). This 'primitive' self-love could be directed either to a love object or to what Freud called the 'ego-ideal, not the self as it is, but the self as the person would like it to be' (ibid). Since the ego-ideal operates in moral and ethical terms, Krapp's forceful but ambivalent stance between the two extremes of light and dark, and his obstinacy in maintaining that stance, eventuates in neither a healthy transference to object-love nor a resolute self-love; rather, it leads to an anal ego-ideal, a self as he would like it to be. That is, the end product of Krapp's anal character-formation through the mechanisms of his ego-ideal is reduced to nothing but 'me. [*Pause.*] Krapp' (Beckett 1959: 11).

Krapp's asceticism and his obstinate search for (self-)control and the true vision of himself and his life could thus be related to his anal complexes. In other words, while his effort to grasp ineffable psychic life and chart its essence fail, the only reality for him becomes the self as abject substance: the self as 'Krapp'.

Krapp's preoccupation with himself indicates his retention of the anal self implied by his name. Paul Stewart links this idea to the 'retaining' tendency:

Krapp then retains crap and is retained as crap in a suffering that he fails to assuage by aesthetic creation and human relations as the only true end to suffering would be ceasing to be Krapp at all. Instead, he must "be again, be again ... All that old misery." (Stewart 2011: 149)

Beckett's attention to the anal character appears in his notes on Jones's '[c]ardinal triad of anal-erotic character traits: orderliness, parsimony & obstinacy (Eigensinn)' (TCD MS 10971/8/18). Jones discusses each anal-erotic character trait in full, instancing numerous sub-varieties and other related character types, some of which appear in Beckett's notes. Krapp demonstrates a variety of anal character traits, but especially the triad and its pseudo-conditions. Jones describes the individual's neurotic impulses in terms of anality:

Yet another character trait that is often strengthened by anal-erotic complexes is the desire for *self-control*, especially when this becomes a veritable passion. There are people who are never satisfied with their capacity for self-control, and who ceaselessly experiment with themselves with the aim of increasing it. This may take either a physical or *moral* direction. To the former category belong the people who are always [...] indulging in all sorts of *ascetic* performances in order to reassure themselves of their power of self-control and to ‘show themselves that they can do it’. (Jones 1967: 423; my emphasis)

He further deems one of the important ‘sources of these ascetic and self-martyring impulses’ to be the ‘lasting influence of the infant’s ambition to achieve *control* of his sphincters, his first great lesson of the kind’ (ibid). This observation is paraphrased by Beckett as ‘[m]ania for proving capacity for self-control (sphincters)’ (TCD MS 10971/8/18). Krapp’s own mania for proving capacity for (self-)control is especially evident in his epiphany. His adamant but failing struggle against the forces of the night (dark) ends in neither separation nor reconciliation nor of dark and light, but rather in a dissolution of both – the grey – and in regression to his abject self: ‘Good to be back in my den, in my old rags. ... The new light above my table is a great improvement. With all this darkness round me I feel less alone. [*Pause.*] In a way. [*Pause.*] I love to get up and move about in it, then back here to ... [*hesitates*] ... me. [*Pause.*] Krapp’ (Beckett 1959: 11).

Krapp’s anal retentiveness: spooling the scatological past

Krapp’s obsession with retrieving the past may be linked to a pronounced anal retentiveness. Ernest Jones regards the cardinal triad of anal-erotic character traits as either sublimations or reaction-formations ‘erected as barriers against repressed tendencies’ (Jones 1967: 414). He categorises three major classes of action effected by anality (Jones 1967: 417-418) that appear in Beckett’s notes:

Large number of acts unconscious symbols for defaecation: tasks connected with oughtness (moral tasks) [pathologically intolerant insistence on doing sth [something] in the ‘right’ way, tasks intrinsically disagreeable (“chores”, boring routine, writing up diary, etc.), tasks involving objects that are unconscious symbols for excretory products (dirt, paper, waste products, money). (TCD MS 10971/8/18)

Writing up diaries is a chore Beckett practised himself and used as a creative tool in the composition of *Malone Dies* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, though in the latter recording supersedes writing.

Jones analyses two typical features of the infant's reaction to the act of defecation, the first being the 'endeavor to get as much pleasure as possible out of the performance', and the second the 'effort to retain his individual control of it in opposition to the educative aims forced on him by the environment' (Jones 1967: 415). Both reactions imply a degree of retentiveness, but Jones discusses the former in detail for several pages. Consciously or not, this potentially pathogenic reaction occurs in the child for the good reason that the pleasurable sensation peaks prior to discharge. Sadger believes this morbid attitude to be reflected in later more adult character tendencies (see Jones 1967: 415). On the other hand, Ferenczi speaks of the other reaction, so-called sphincter control, as the 'sphincter morality' (see Jones 1967: 150-151). There are at least three 'sphincter' traces in Beckett's notes, one under 'Angst', and two under the 'Cardinal triad of anal-erotic character traits'.⁹⁸ The first deals also with the notion of the educative aims of the sphincter: 'The intensest period of conflict with outer world & of repressions flowing therefrom coincides with infantile education of the sphincters' (TCD MS 10971/8/16). Jones introduces two categories associated with the character trait of 'keeping back' or 'possessing instinct'. The first 'parsimony', the 'most typical sublimation product of the "retaining" tendency', two aspects of which comprise 'the refusal to give and the desire to gather' (Jones 1967: 429). A probable connection to Krapp's anal-retentiveness can be traced in Beckett's notes on retaining the stool: 'Postponement of act: child squatting down supporting anal orifice with heel so as to keep back stool until the last moment & then voiding with intense concentration during which he resents any disturbing influence from without' (TCD MS 10971/8/18). The several tasks that Krapp performs before playing his tape, as though postponing the main business of sitting at the table and switching on the tape-recorder, are a parallel kind of activity. In anticipation of a long-awaited pleasurable moment, he '*rubs his hands*' (Beckett 1959: 10) before it all starts off, which however, it does not immediately, indicating a subtle procrastination of main tasks. The second category is 'orderliness', the 'chief reaction-formation shown in conjunction with the "retaining" tendency. An evident "extension of cleanliness", it can lead to "undue pedantry"' (Jones 1967: 431), as discussed later in this chapter.

⁹⁸ I quoted one from the triad category when discussing Krapp's efforts at abstention and self-control.

Given Beckett's habit of revisiting his notes and readings on psychology over the years, as well as having recourse to his memory, it is likely that he drew on the above welter of traits and their varieties in order to develop Krapp's anal character. There are simply too many thematic and verbal connections between the notes, especially those from Jones, and the text of the play for the link to be accidental. The following character traits are some of the manifestations of the anal retentiveness that Krapp displays through the play, and intimated in Beckett's stage directions and modifications in the Schiller notebooks.

Self-willedness and obstinacy: Krapp's regressive infantile behaviour

Obstinacy is a variant of anal sadism according to psychoanalytic textbooks, and Beckett's awareness of the idea is traceable to his 'Psychology Notes'. Krapp's obstinate mulishness, even compared to Hamm's in *Endgame*, is unrivalled in Beckett's oeuvre. From time to time, Krapp bursts into rage, cursing, swearing, and abusing his love objects and even his earlier selves. A first indication of his childish self-willedness is when '*settling himself more comfortably he knocks one of the boxes off the table, curses, switches off, sweeps boxes and ledger violently to the ground*' (Beckett 1959: 11). As if robbed of precious time, he grows vindictive towards the surrounding objects before he is able to proceed with his routine. One of Beckett's notes on the anal character signals a similar behavioural reaction by the neurotic individual: 'Rage at being done out of the smallest amount of money, at having one's time wasted' (TCD MS 10971/8/19). The individual is easily 'put out', in Jones's terms (Jones 1967: 422). If, Jones writes, adolescence recapitulates infancy and its development is to a great extent determined by infantile development (Jones 1967: 339), old age reiterates it at a much later stage, which is why he calls it third childhood. Krapp's irritability and fractiousness can be explained in terms of a pathognomonic regression to childish behaviour, whether infantile or adolescent.

In preparation for the Schiller performance Beckett reinforced Krapp's irascibility and impatience by introducing a few important additions in the stage directions, one of which reads: '*[Impatient reaction from KRAPP.]*' (Knowlson 1992: 7). This appears in a passage – 'Spiritually a year of profound gloom and indigence until that memorable night in March, at the end of the jetty' (Beckett 1959: 15) – where Krapp's 'vision' is introduced. Other stage directions are added: '*[Violent reaction from KRAPP.]*', '*[KRAPP thumps on table.]*', '*[mechanical with gabble, 2 seconds,]*', '*[mechanical with gabble, 3 seconds,]*', and '*[mechanical with gabble, 4 seconds,]*' (Knowlson 1992: 7). The latter replaced '*[mechanical winding – 2 secs. gabble]*', '*[mechanical winding – 3 secs. gabble]*', and '*[mechanical winding – 4 secs. gabble]*' (MS-HRC-

SB-5-4, f. 18r). The word ‘gabble’, however, does not appear in earlier versions, including the Faber (1959). Nonetheless, Beckett refers to it as ‘corresponding to this crescendo of ejaculation’ [*Page 91*] (Knowlson 1992: 229). James Knowlson’s observation on this passage is noteworthy:

Throughout this passage, Beckett built up a crescendo of impatience and irritation by having Krapp look sharply and angrily at the recorder, shake his head dismissively, drum on the table with his right hand in annoyance, and make cursing noises at various points in the text. [...] The feverishness of Krapp’s reactions contrasts markedly, of course, with his silent, still, mesmerized attentiveness to the lyrical passage concerning the girl in the punt that immediately follows. (Knowlson 1992: 261-262)

At another point, Beckett introduces a hint of agitation to the listening Krapp in a short, underlined phrase in French: ‘XI AGITATION ECOUTE’ followed by two numbered points: ‘1. Rires (p. 61)’ and ‘2. Impatience (pp. 64-65)’ [*Page 35*] (115), translated as ‘XI AGITATION LISTENING’ – ‘1. Laughs (p. 61)’ – ‘2. Impatience (pp. 64-65)’ (117). Finally, Beckett’s change of ‘cardboard boxes’ in the English text to ‘tin boxes’ in the Schiller notebooks⁹⁹ and ‘boîtes en carton’ (Beckett 1959a: 8) to ‘boîtes en fer’ in the French, can be explained not only in terms of the greater visual contrast of light and dark, but also by the metallic sounds produced when the boxes¹⁰⁰ are scattered across the floor, adjusted in proportion to Krapp’s outburst of aggression. These additions may not directly reflect similar character traits in the ‘Psychology Notes’ but they are indicative of Beckett’s knowledge of the neurotic traits an obsessive-compulsive individual might display.

In *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, Jones proposes five consecutive stages of sexual development during infancy and adolescence: 1) diffuse auto-erotism; 2) a pregenital stage (such as the anal-sadistic phase); 3) anal erotism; 4) a homosexual phase; and 5) a heterosexual phase. He believes these stages to be ‘essentially similar in both cases’ (Jones 1967: 398-399). He warns the reader against treating these stages as a simple formula, as they cannot be sharply distinguished, and overlap or even coexist all at once. Jones proceeds to discuss an extensive array of ‘prominent features during adolescence’: the auto-erotic phase (especially in its early stages); introversion; richer secret fantasy; preoccupation with the self; shyness and self-

⁹⁹ ‘Boxes 9, varied, silver-coloured tin with lids, held together with dark-coloured ribbon (or loose)’ [*Page 71*] (189).

¹⁰⁰ As Beckett recorded, ‘As much noise [*erasure*] as poss. [possible] with objects throughout’ [*Page 85*] (1992: 217).

consciousness; prominent anal-sadism; extravagance; procrastination; obstinacy; a passion for collecting; positive/negative narcissism; bumptiousness; conceit; coxsureness; and its opposite, self-deprecation, uncertainty, and lack of confidence (Jones 1967: 399). Krapp displays many of these character traits, which are symptomatic of his oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic impulses: his dyadic, paradoxical indulgence in and abstention from sexuality – a form of extravagance and procrastination in itself; his obstinacy or persistence, for instance, even in following this bigeminal path;¹⁰¹ his passion for (re)collecting moments of an obscure past life and keeping them in a ledger and on tapes; his narcissism, though negative, as well as his introversion and preoccupation with the self (as explained above); his bumptiousness in maligning his love objects; his deprecation of his earlier selves; his uncertainty when faced with a whimsical existence – all these, among others, testify to his infantile behaviour. Even his clownish pouting and heavy but stubborn tread to look up the words ‘equinox’ (Beckett 1959: 11) and ‘viduity’ (13) are absurdly infantile.

Krapp’s buccal/oral fixation

In ‘Beckett and Bion’, Steven Connor states that, ‘[l]ater in his life, Bion came to believe that the process of thinking was indeed a modification of the oral-alimentary process’ (Connor 2008: 24). He finds an example of this in Bion’s 1953 ‘Notes on the Theory of Schizophrenia’, which records ‘a patient who seems to be experiencing a sense of physical dissolution comparable to that experienced by the speaker in *The Unnamable*’ (ibid). Krapp’s own process of thinking or ruminating begins with the alimentary activity of chewing a banana. Further examples of oral activity follow and combine with his ruminations and the memories evoked by the tape-recorder.¹⁰² The brain-mouth-anus nexus is evident everywhere in the play: Krapp’s process of thinking (mind) moves to eating, breathing and speaking (mouth), then to constipation (anus).

Krapp’s oral activity arises from his hysteric oral-anal fixation. That impulse is evident in his character trait of irritability, and in the ‘dirty words’ and curses he constantly uses, especially when his past life unsettles his present. When he hears himself at thirty-nine describing the vision he experienced at the end of the jetty, at the very moment that his earlier self seems about to announce his revelation, Krapp impatiently ‘*switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*’ (Beckett 1959: 15). As the section he reaches continues to elaborate

¹⁰¹ Jones observes that ‘[t]he trait of persistence is often related to pedantry and obstinacy, being halfway between the two’ (Jones 1967: 416).

¹⁰² Michiko Tsushima provides a comprehensive study of Krapp’s ‘chewing the cud’ and Beckett’s incorporation of Augustinian memory in the play (Tsushima 2008: 123-132).

the vision, he ‘*curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*’ (ibid). His present self accords with his past self as long as the reality of the latter does not encroach upon the pleasure of the former. Only by escaping present reality, by evoking the secret rich fantasy of his past loves can Krapp temporarily find peace from the oral-sadistic phase. Yet this sadistic phase is not confined to external human love objects, but applies also to the inanimate objects around him, which he treats as animate. In a ‘GENERAL’ note, Beckett writes: ‘Tendency of a solitary person to enjoy affective relationships with objects, in particular here with the tape-recorder. Smiles, looks, reproaches, caresses, taps, exclamations (Du...! [You...!] etc. [*erasure*]). A little throughout. Never forced’ ([*page 79*] (1992: 205). Hence, Krapp tends to call the spool a ‘little rascal!’ and ‘little scoundrel!’ (Beckett 1959: 10), in the same way that he calls his young self a ‘whelp’ (12). In the Schiller notebooks, Beckett recorded ‘Das kleine Luder!’ [The little minx!] as a possible reference to the microphone which Krapp, on his return from the cubby-hole, connects while ‘[l]ooking pleased’ [*Page 31*] (109). This sexual allusion never appeared in any of the texts, published or unpublished. In his old age, Krapp’s gratification largely comes from intensely sensual oral activities. Beckett’s concise note – ‘The satisfying rhythm [sic] of buccal activities’ (TCD MS 10971/8/23) – draws specifically on Jones’s notion of blocking ‘precocious sexual excitation and undue repression’ in his *Treatment of the Neuroses* (1963: 212):

... pleasurable sensations definitely charged with sexual feeling [...] often pave the way for later unconscious fixations of feeling and moral conflicts of central importance for the development of a neurosis. Such sensations may be excited [...] allowing the infant to develop the habit of stilling all his ungratified desires and deadening all his discomforts in the satisfying rhythm of buccal activities. (213)

This accords with Krapp’s ‘enthusiastic’ sexual desires and the subsequent repression, which have apparently made him unconsciously reliant on the satisfying rhythms of buccal activity: a pseudo-anal fixation at a compensatory neurotic phase.

The sexual implications of the notorious banana scene do not derive merely from its evident phallic shape, but also from its association to the ‘mucous membrane’ of both the anal and the alimentary canals. From the very outset, Krapp is unconsciously engaged in both oral and anal eroticism. In an earlier chapter of his study, Jones writes about the possibility of oral-sadistic impulses being displaced onto the anal-sadistic level (Jones 1967: 197). He devotes about two pages to the mucous membrane and the cloaca before delineating various anal

character traits. Beckett seems fascinated by these ideas since his notes about the cloaca and the mucous membrane appear at least four times, twice on this chapter in Jones. A connection between these notes and Krapp's anal character does not seem far-fetched when Beckett's cognizance of these theories is taken into consideration:

Sexual processes & organs derived from excretory organs: common ducts used for both in lower animals & partly in human beings.

The mucous membrane lining anus & anal canal possess the capacity of giving rise, on excitation, to sexual sensations, just as does that lining entrance to alimentary tract.¹⁰³ (TCD MS 10971/8/18)

Biologically, according to Jones, sexual processes derive not only from sexual organs but also from some excretory organs. As a consequence of this notion, and the equation of the anal-alimentary mucous membranes that arouse sexual sensations, Jones maintains that an erotic impulse is a constant in sadism (Jones 1967: 169). As he notes explicitly: 'That the primordial function of excretion, and the fundamental association between it and sexuality, should result in far-reaching effects on mental development should not, therefore, be altogether surprising' (Jones 1967: 413). Krapp's shift from oral to anal sadism is a displacement from the aggression he displays by cursing objects to the swift and sudden destructive impulse he demonstrates by sweeping them off the table. This lends itself readily to Freud's notion of 'Eigensinn' (obstinacy) that Beckett noted (TCD MS 10971/8/18). Besides serving physical needs and facilitating 'important components of the sexual instinct', the infant's excretory activities are 'vehicles of aggressive and destructive impulses' (Jones 1967: 151). Jones relates the individual's destructiveness to the defiling impulse known as pygmalianism, an essential phase in 'Freud's pregenital sadistic-anal-erotic stage of development' (Jones 1967: 432). Krapp overtly takes pleasure in such defilement at the oral phase, in his obscenities and when calling his previous loves whores.

In *Treatment of the Neuroses*, Jones speculates that 'fixation-hysteria concerns more external parts of the body' (1963: 199). If we take the mouth as an external part of the body, the most striking example of Krapp's hysteric oral eroticism is the pleasure he draws from pronouncing 'spool', echoing 'stool'. As Wilson observes,

¹⁰³ The original statement by Jones reads: 'many of the sexual processes and organs' (Jones 1967: 413).

Krapp's joy in the word "Spooooo!" (216) is drawn from the pleasure in producing and perceiving the sound; its semantic content is not relevant to the sensuous reward gained by making the utterance. Only the materiality of the word is emphasized. (Wilson 2002: 141)

Responding to the pure materiality of the word, Krapp gains a sensuous reward by '[a]ppreciatively' prolonging the monosyllabic 'spooooo!', as the child augments his pleasurable excitement by postponing excreting his 'stooooo!' (MS-UoR-1227-7-7-1, p. 11r). In all later versions, however, '[a]ppreciatively' is replaced by '[w]ith relish' (Beckett 1959: 10), possibly to stress its sensuousness. The oral-anal conflation may be Beckett's way of parodying the explosive sound of 'poo', the joy it induces in Krapp a compensation for the displeasure and petulance of his constipation: 'the iron stool'. Jones regards the latter condition as a byproduct of the pleasurable postponement of the act of defecation, so-called anal-retentiveness, and relates it to irritability. According to him, infants 'at times *obstinately* postpone the act of defecation so as to heighten the pleasurable sensation when it occurs, thus forming a habit which may lead to chronic constipation in later life' (Jones 1967: 414; my emphasis). This explanation immediately follows the passage on the mucous membrane quoted above. Nothing in the play explains how Krapp developed the condition: perhaps it is the residue of a childhood fixation on the anus or a consequence of eating too many bananas – 'Have just eaten I regret to say three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth. Fatal things for a man with my condition' (Beckett 1959: 11). This parody of the relentless pleasure principle in two erotogenic zones and its subsequent deflation connects to what Moorjani calls 'obscuring pain with pleasure and pleasure with pain' (Moorjani 2004: 34). The pathos of Krapp's associating the alimentary and anal function is subtly reflected in Krapp's rumination and 'auditory' thinking that help structure the play.

Finally, Krapp's irritability and infantile short temper could be a consequence of his constipation, itself a consequence of the retaining tendency. Jones invokes Andrea-Salomé, who has 'dealt at length with the importance for later sadism of the conflict between the infant and his environment over the matter of defecatory functioning' (Jones: 1967: 420-21):

Where this has been very pronounced it may lead to a permanent character trait of irritability, which will manifest itself either as a tendency to angry outbursts or to sullen fractiousness, according to the degree of repression and other factors (cowardice, etc.). It is interesting that

Berkeley-Hill should in this connection refer to a Tamil saying which runs, 'A man who has a short temper suffers from piles.' [...] Infantile anal erotism that has been inadequately dealt with may be suspected in anyone who is the victim of chronic irritability and bad temper, and perhaps the reason why this trait is so often seen in elderly persons of either sex is that in later life, when sexual vigor is waning, there is a tendency to regress towards a more infantile and less developed plane of sexuality. (Jones 1967: 421)

Krapp's psychogenic regression to early life seems to extend as far back as the oral and anal stages of development, where eating and excreting intersect and interfere with each other's functioning. This conflation recalls Malone's polarities of existence: 'to eat and excrete' (Beckett 1956: 7). Krapp's life comprises precisely this regressive extent between past and present, staged in terms of a parodically constipated existence uttered by him and accumulated and spooled/stooled on tapes. The annual feast he celebrates is an allegory of a neurotic obsession with his anal character begun at the infantile excretory phase of development and culminating in a 'scatological end'. In other words, Krapp's efforts to understand rationally the moments of a past existence by means of an audio diary is an effort to reclaim the early dissociated contents of his unconscious. This fails, however, as he cannot make sense of a past existence or, despite the assistance of the tapes, remember the past. In terms of the 'Psychology Notes', the analogy is between the psychoanalytic obsession with abjection, rationalised and explained in textbooks, and the spools/stools of Krapp's past life recorded and preserved on tapes; both evince scatological contents. Beckett indulges the psychoanalytic abject; the resistance to it appears in his staging of the psychoanalytic preoccupation with abjection, especially in the early life of the individual, and in his sense that efforts to rationalise it are themselves irrational. Beckett seems to connect abject beginning and abject end in the play, the entirety of the 'self' and 'existence' itself as abject: a *reductio ad absurdum* of the rationalising psychoanalytic drive to understand irrational mental processes.

'Mustness' as an obsessional neurotic symptom

Krapp's affective *mustness*, an obsessive emotional impulse for love objects, including women, is akin to the individual's 'obsessional neurosis', a condition that appears in the 'Psychology Notes' on the topic of 'Zwangspanrose':

Feeling of mustness. Symptoms: (1) Motor: Zwangshandlungen (avoiding cracks in pavement, etc) (2) Sensory: [sic] (3) Ideational: Zwangsvorstellungen. (4) Affective (obsessive emotions).

individual's early anal character formation, a speculation that appears in Beckett's notes (TCD MS 10971/8/16). While Jones associates the instinct to possess with the disposition to keep back and to postpone action, he in fact relates creative/productive impulses to feverish activities, both signifying anal character traits in obsessional neurosis (Jones 1967: 428).

Repetition in *Krapp's Last Tape* intimates Krapp's orderliness and his displays of compulsion or *mustness* in performing his routines, lending the play a systematic order and structural symmetry. Repetition proves a useful tool to develop Krapp's characterisation, a considerable portion of his obsessive-compulsiveness being displayed through his spasms of repetitive habit. Knowlson observes that '[r]epetition, contrast and balance are, indeed, among Beckett's principal concerns as a director', and he lists, specifically, a number of Krapp's actions that were 'repeated so often that they became identifiable mannerisms or physical habits', helping to create the effect of 'balanced opposites'. These devices are employed not simply for the sake of structural unity.¹⁰⁴ As Knowlson argues, '[t]hey are as closely related to the fundamental themes of the play as the repeated phrases and gestures of the tramps are to those of *En attendant Godot*. Repetition lies at the thematic centre of *Krapp's Last Tape*', a technique Knowlson likens to 'musical composition' (Knowlson 1992: xx). His insight that this 'repetition with variation', which echoes a 'musical score' (Knowlson 1992: xxiii, 255), is comparable to Beckett's 'value of repetition' [page 12] (72). Krapp may be suffering from 'repetition compulsion', but, for the obsessional neurotic, reiteration becomes a pleasurable activity that implies a regression to the ego ideal, and thence to narcissism, driven by the thought of death and the return to the mother's womb. Beckett stages the condition of 'compulsive repetition' by having Krapp obsessively *repeat* the feast to mark his birth in solitude for forty-five years: 'Celebrated the awful occasion, as in recent years, quietly at the Winehouse. Not a soul' (Beckett 1959: 11).

Krapp's coprophilia: copro-products as an extension of the anal ego

It is not far-fetched to consider the stage props as excrement or copro-products. Beckett originally chose the more explicit title *Crapp's Last Tape* (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-2, f. 1r), placed top centre in a marginal addition to Typescript II of the play, only to revise it to *Krapp's Last Tape* in version (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-3, f. 1r). However, 'Crapp' appears only once in the former

¹⁰⁴ See Dirk Van Hulle's *Manuscript Genetics: Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow* (2008) for a discussion of the way that the cyclic nature of many modernist and postmodernist texts indicates that repetition and reproduction are indispensable to their construction.

version, the letter 'A' being employed throughout instead.¹⁰⁵ As the Schiller notebooks indicate, Beckett's creative process continued long after the play's initial composition.¹⁰⁶ For instance, in 'Typescript IV' of the play (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-4, f. 1r), the word 'Reel' follows the title in parentheses, implying another endogenous addition in the creative process, one which is, however, omitted in version (MS-UoR-1659, p. 1r). 'Last' is the only word that Beckett used consistently in the title. This suggests that the tape Krapp is recording at the age of sixty-nine is to be his 'last'; if so, this would resonate with his scatological end. If he is now at the final anal phase of life, the last tape can be interpreted as itself nothing other than a copro-product. It may both imply the encroaching shadow of death, Hain,¹⁰⁷ the eventual dissipation of his existence, and suggest a recorded will or testament.

In a concluding remark following a broad spectrum of unconscious copro-symbols, specifically with regard to the 'value attached to them by adults', Jones speculates on a 'curious copro-symbol in this connection – namely one's last will and testament; the association is doubtless the sense of value and the prominence of the idea of something being left behind' (Jones 1967: 427), a view he further identifies with the individual's 'anal complex':

The importance that in the anal complex gets attached to the idea of 'parting with something left behind' may largely contribute to the sentimental attitude any people display on the occasion of parting with various personal objects which they have possessed for a long time, especially if the parting is a final one; the other source of this attitude is the death complex, where, of course, the idea of finally parting is equally prominent. (ibid)

Beckett's brief note on Jones's explanation reads: 'Last will & testament a coprosymbol' (TCD MS 10971/8/19). This intimates not only Krapp's highly valued investment in his carefully classified spools that he has kept in perfect order for the past forty-five years, but also the considerable degree of importance he assigns to the last tape. Krapp's strong attachment to the tapes and other excretory products on stage can be viewed as the accumulated moments of his life that he can hardly abandon. Of Krapp's treading on the ledger and scattering the tin boxes,

¹⁰⁵ For a helpful overview of the first drafts of the play, see Gontarski 1977: 60-68. For a more comprehensive, detailed analysis of the play's structure and creative process, see Van Hulle 2015.

¹⁰⁶ The text of the play was not finalised after its earlier productions in London (1958), Berlin (1959), New York (1960), and Paris (1961).

¹⁰⁷ In the Schiller notebooks, Beckett writes: 'Movement to switch on arrested by 'Hain I', turn slowly left and long look behind into dark absolutely still' [Page 86] (220). As Knowlson explains, Beckett borrows the word 'Hain' as a symbolic death figure from the German writer Matthias Claudius and, during the Berlin rehearsals, explained to Martin Held that 'Old Nick's there. Death is standing beside [behind] him and unconsciously he's looking for it' (Knowlson 1992: xvi). For a full discussion of 'Hain' as an important change in the stage directions of the play, see Knowlson 1992: xvi, xxviii, 20-21, 275-6 and Van Hulle & Nixon 2013: 10.

Beckett said: 'He is treading on his life' (Knowlson 1992: xvii). Krapp's fear of Hain lurking somewhere behind him, as indicated by the long anxious look over his left shoulder, indicates the presence of a 'death complex'. His words, 'Here I end -' (Beckett 1959: 15), followed by his motionless posture,¹⁰⁸ imply Krapp's preoccupation with finally parting, a prospect that he finds as formidable as parting with his accumulated personal objects. This connection to the 'Psychology Notes' is corroborated by the appearance of the same phrase which Beckett used for Murphy's 'last will and testament' (Beckett 2009b: 168; see Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 546-547). Given that the composition of *Murphy* was more or less contemporaneous with the the 'Psychology Notes', Beckett employed insights from his notes more actively in that novel.

One of Krapp's striking idiosyncrasies is his banana 'gag'. Given its blatant, sexual overtones and its alimentary function, the banana can be seen as a major copro-product, one readily associated with the 'sour cud and the iron stool' (Beckett 1959: 17) – in Knowlson's terms, '[i]ndigestion and constipation respectively' (Knowlson 1992: 35). Speculating on Augustinian memory in *Krapp's Last Tape* and its relation to 'chewing the cud', Michiko Tsushima observes that, after eating the banana and preparing to listen to the tapes of his past, Krapp sits at the table, pokes at the boxes, peers at the spools, and rubs his hands 'as if he were about to taste some food' (Tsushima 2008: 127). He takes infantile pleasure in holding the tape in his hands, closing his eyes, and uttering the word 'spool' with the greatest relish and a puerile smile. Beckett brings 'spool' and 'stool' into such close propinquity, auditory and lexical, that it almost becomes an unconscious, instinctive means for Krapp to keep and play with his 'stool'. Add to this the dirt in which he is covered: the dirty boots and rags he has on, the banana skin and things he flings about his squalid den, his '[d]isordered grey hair' and foul '[u]nshaven' face (Beckett 1959: 9), and he is revealed as the most prominent copro-product on stage, bearing a name that exposes scatological regression to faecal matter and abject existence.

Of the copro-objects that Krapp has collected over the years and kept as his lifelong companions, the ledger is as significant as the boxes and spools. If, for Krapp, the tape-recorder figures as a masturbatory agent, and the microphone, the minx, as phallic – 'Back with old fashioned phallic microphone' [Page 91] (229), as Beckett writes in the Schiller notebooks – then the boxes, the spools, and especially the ledger are stage props potentially emblematic of his orderliness. The ledger is full of well-organised entries that correspond precisely to what

¹⁰⁸ Knowlson states that '*Hier beende ich*' ('Here I end') was 'one of the moments of frozen immobility in the play. In the Schiller performance, Krapp retained the pose after 'Here I end' for a good 15 seconds' (Knowlson 1992: 262).

each box contains and where each spool begins: '[He bends over ledger, turns the pages, finds the entry he wants, reads.] Box ... three ... spool ... five (Beckett 1959: 10):

[He peers at ledger, reads entry at foot of page.] Mother at rest at last ... Hm ... The black ball ... [He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.] Black ball? ... [He peers again at ledger, reads.] The dark nurse ... [He raises his head, broods, peers again at ledger, reads.] Slight improvement in bowel condition ... Hm ... Memorable ... what? [He peers close.] Equinox, memorable equinox. [He raises his head, stares blankly front. Puzzled.] Memorable equinox? ... [Pause. He shrugs his shoulders, peers again at ledger, reads.] Farewell to – [he turns the page] –love. (10)

These life/ledger entries also record the narratives on which the play is built. The meticulous organisation Beckett adopted for the composition of the play not only points to Krapp's obsessive mind and its persistent attempts to identify the present and past objects of desire (see Beckett 1965), it implies the author's systematic way of achieving a dramatic structure out of the rough image of an old man sitting at a table and listening to his past life on a tape-recorder. This is done by means of an intra-textual list of entries that Beckett assigns to Krapp, but which he himself uses to weave the threads of his intricate narrative.

Krapp's orderliness is manifest in the way he carries out his actions. Jones speculates that this character trait can pass into 'pedantic persistence in the performance of duties', which he relates to the 'act itself of defaecation' rather than the 'product of this act' (Jones 1967: 415). He regards orderliness as a 'reaction-formation shown in conjunction with the "retaining" tendency', and as an 'extension of cleanliness' (Jones 1967: 431). This gives rise to a useful 'development that occurs in some members of the type', namely, a 'high capacity for organising and systematising' (ibid). Beckett may have perceived such a 'high capacity for organising and systematising' in psychoanalysis itself, ironically, for a discipline devoted to understanding and explaining irrational mental processes, by piling up textbooks with classified entries. Beckett's writing, through its ambivalent attraction-repulsion towards its textbook language, constantly parodies and undermines the psychoanalytic obsession with rationally charting the most private, even abject, aspects of the individual's life. Beckett uses this very language to lay bare and dismantle the irrational obsession with rationalism, parodied as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the positivistic drive within psychoanalysis.

In one of these textbooks, Jones elaborates the trait of orderliness and its relationship to ‘thinking’:

In the field of thought this tendency commonly leads to undue pedantry, with a fondness for definitions and exactitude, often merely verbal. An interesting and valuable variety occasionally met with is a great dislike for muddled thinking, and a passion for lucidity of thought; such a person delights in getting a matter quite clear, has a fondness for classifying, and so on. (Jones 1967: 431)

Krapp’s desire to classify his life (much of which he does not remember) displays a mania for lucidity, as evidenced by resorting to his enormous dictionary for the definition of ‘viduity’ (Beckett 1959: 13). On hearing the puzzling word, Krapp switches off, not because of irritation or impatience, but to satisfy an obsessive craving, a feeling of obligation or ‘mustness’, which obliges him to walk painfully and laboriously backstage, into the darkness, and return with the dictionary, an analogue of his ledger, to continue his pensum. He seems unable to proceed with the routine of listening unless his obstinate search for clarity is fulfilled, his perplexity diminished, and his curiosity gratified:

[*Reading from dictionary*]. State – or condition of being – or remaining – a widow – or widower. [*Looks up. Puzzled.*] Being – or remaining? ... [*Pause. He peers again at dictionary. Reading.*] “Deep weeds of viduity” ... Also of an animal, especially a bird ... the vidua or weaver-bird ... Black plumage of male ... [*He looks up. With relish.*] The vidua-bird! (ibid)

Beckett allows Krapp to hesitate between ‘state’ and ‘condition’, ‘widow’ and ‘widower’, and especially ‘being’ and ‘remaining’, with fastidious care, as if unravelling the riddle of life. The epistemological overtones in these lines evoke a poignancy, achieved through the quick succession of verbal pathos and comic gesture, as Krapp, looking up, displays puzzlement at the strange word. His search for semantic exactitude is assisted by returning to his main object-companion, the tape-recorder, which will clarify the reference of ‘Black ball’ and ‘Memorable equinox’. This indulgence in verbal or lexical exactitude and the feeling of ‘mustness’ that compels clarity may be a parodic portrayal of the pedantry displayed by psychoanalytic language itself, as well as its fondness for clear explanations and the classification of ideas.

Although ‘muckball’ is a variant of ‘earthball’, which Beckett uses elsewhere in the Cartesian sense of the earth moving through space (see Ackerley & Gontarski 2004b: 645), his

use of ‘old muckball’ may be a copro-symbol that recalls the ‘mound’ in *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days*. The sixty-nine-year-old Krapp starts his recording with the following words: ‘Everything there, everything on this old muckball, all the light and dark and famine and feasting of ... [*hesitates*] ... the ages!’ (17). Wilson sums up previous responses:

The “old muckball” may perhaps be, as McMillan and Fehsenfeld put it, a “Manichean image of the physical world as a ‘bolus’ of dark excrement left after spirit and light are liberated from it” (...), and “famine and feasting” may even symbolize, as Knowlson has it, “all the contrarities of a divided cosmos” (Wilson 2002: 140)

The overt allusion to ‘light’ and ‘dark’, representing the spirit and the senses respectively, draws a subtle parallel between the microcosm of Krapp’s den and the macrocosm of the physical world at large. The stage as den, like an elevated piece of earth (mound), can be viewed as a ‘muckball’ where everything stands for a ‘bolus of dark excrement’, and where ‘famine and feasting’ are as universal as they are personal – note Krapp’s ‘profound gloom and indigence’ in contrast to the ‘memorable night’, and his moments of celebrating the ‘awful occasion’, his tragicomic birthday feasts over the years (Beckett 1959: 11, 13). If ‘famine and feasting’ pertain to ‘all the contrarities of a divided cosmos’, they also epitomise Krapp’s divided world and his mind split between past and present. Of Krapp’s failure to reconcile light and dark, Beckett writes: ‘Note that Krapp [*erasure*] decrees physical (ethical) incompatibility of light (spiritual) and dark (sensual) only when he intuits possibility of their reconciliation intellectually as rational-irrational. He turns from fact of anti-mind alien to mind to thought of anti-mind constituent of mind’ [*Page 47*] (Knowlson 1992: 141). This allows us to read ‘everything on this old muckball, all the light and dark and famine and feasting’ as an extreme instance of Krapp’s explicit rage against the phenomenal universe, but it also intimates a less aggressive, though not unconscious, curse of his own existential condition.

One implicit excremental element, however significant, cannot be depicted on stage. Beckett famously deployed ‘words as excrement’ in several of his major works, including the ‘Three Novels’. From the Unnamable’s floundering in muck and dirt and his muddying words to Lucky’s notorious monologue, to Hamm, to Mouth in *Not I*, all point to the obsessive need to secrete and pour out what Beckett elsewhere calls ‘wordshit’ (Beckett 1995: 137). Beckett not only has Krapp speak words on stage but lets him muddy them through the ledger and the tape-recorder, both containing words, to be read or heard. With the tape-recorder, Krapp can record his words, producing more words when he decides to play back his past life, move

through different times, or listen to vanished turning points. There is a reciprocity between spoken words, the recorded voice, and words spoken again – and Krapp has been playing with this for most of his life, like a child keeping and playing with faeces (TCD MS 10971/8/19). Nor is the interplay between spoken words and recorded voice the end. Krapp brings the ledger into this game, from the very outset, to help him shift between different tapes according to the entries provided. This intimates that both the ledger, as a copro-object, and the tape-recorder, as a masturbatory agent, have been muddled with scatological words, words which have filled their bellies in an orderly fashion.

PART III

Creativity, scatology, and sublimation

Beckett's fascination with the creative use of scatology

'Depths of dementia accompanied by preoccupation with the dejecta'

(TCD MS 10971/8/18)

As early as 1931, in an undated letter (between 15 August and 7 September) to Samuel Putnam, Beckett referred to his 'Proust turd' (Beckett 2009: 86). In another to MacGreevy, dated 4 August 1932, he explained the need to find a 'pretext for writing': 'I get frightened sometimes at the idea that the itch to write is cured. I suppose its [*sic*] the fornicating place & its fornicating weather. Lethal thunder and torrents of rain' (112). Nearly two months before his father's death, in another letter to MacGreevy, written from his birthplace (Cooldrinagh, Foxrock, 23 April 1933), Beckett mused on the sense of place and his frustration with the inability to leave home for Paris: 'I am sure you were right to go to Paris. I wish I had the courage to go as you did, with only your fare and vague copulation à l'arrivée. [...] The sensation of taking root, like a polypus, in a place, is horrible, living on a kind of mucous of conformity' (153). A week after William Beckett's death, he told MacGreevy that his father swore that 'when he got better he would never do a stroke of work. He would drive to the top of Howth and lie in the bracken and fart' (165). The next letter to MacGreevy (9 October 1933) offers yet another scatological jibe: 'I met Michael Farrell and he destroyed me with an endless disparaging hyperbole on his own bland suspension between the vulgarities of great talent and the roots in the anus of genius now & then' (166). In fine, in the early 1930s, Beckett began to associate artistic creation with scatology and to express the one in terms of the other. One stark example of this early association appears in a letter to Reavey (8 October 1932): 'I'll excavate for a poem for you

one of these dies diarrhoeae. I suppose it's the usual case of honour and glory. So much piss' (124). Ten days later (18 October 1932) he wrote again to MacGreevy:

I suppose I'm a dirty low-church P. even in poetry, concerned with integrity in a surplice. I'm in mourning for the integrity of a pendu's emission of semen, what I find in Homer & Dante & Racine & sometimes Rimbaud, the integrity of the eyelids coming down before the brain knows of grit in the wind. (134-135)

Matthew Feldman has discussed Beckett's early preoccupation with scatology and excretion (Feldman 2006: 99-100), arguing that Beckett's creative use of abject material pertains to the notion of 'anality' or 'anal fixation' in (obsessional) neurosis, in the terms of textbook psychoanalysis. Traces of this neurosis permeate the 'Psychology Notes', informing such major thematic interests as neurotic characterisation. As we have seen, Krapp is an exemplary anal character type, whose obsession with matter as coprosymbol is as intense as that of the Unnamable and his pseudo-companions, Molloy, Moran and Malone. Paul Stewart traces the deviant notions of sex and sexuality across Beckett's oeuvre, starting with imagery of defecating horses, among other 'remnants of sexuality' found 'often in non-normative, distorted, or oblique forms' (Stewart 2011: 17). He recalls Freud's convergence of the evacuation of the baby, as imagined by the child's mind, through the anus, with 'excrement' or 'stool' (22), as described in "On Sexual Theories of Children" (197), and recorded in the 'Psychology Notes', thus contributing to the genetic dossier of Beckett's dramatic piece. More specifically, the link between scatology and creativity in *Krapp's Last Tape* occurs via the concept of sublimation.

Sublimation versus the abject in *Krapp's Last Tape*

Sublimation inadequate as repressive agent. (TCD MS 10971/8/2)

Krapp's inclination to desexualise, repress and 'keep under' old fancies, dreams and desires runs in parallel to his aspiration for a *sublime* 'opus magnum', which has come to almost nothing: 'Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries beyond the seas. Getting known. [*Pause.*] One pound six and something, eight I have little doubt' (Beckett 1959: 17). Jones observes that Freud sees 'desexualised energy in connection

with sublimation' (Jones 1967: 212).¹⁰⁹ He believes that 'the anal-erotic complex plays a part in relation to each of the five arts, architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry', relating this to the role of the 'flatus complex' and the part it has played in 'art and religion' (Jones 1967: 435). Krapp's desexualised energy and his efforts to produce an opus magnum have rather ended in a 'crap magnum', a severe condition: 'Reverie and ~~constipation~~ obstipation. The old trouble. The odd hard stool' (MS-UoR-1227-7-7-1); 'Reverie and ~~obstipation~~ galloping constipation' (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-1); 'Reverie and ~~galloping—constipation—irreversible~~ constipation' (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-2); 'Chewed cuds and hard stools. ~~irreversible constipation~~' (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-3); '~~Chewed sour cuds and hard long adamantine hard stools~~' (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-4); 'The sour cud and the hard stool' (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-4); and, finally, 'The sour cud and the iron stool' (Beckett 1959: 17). Beckett's French translation of the sentence introduces similarly rich scatological terminology, but also offers further insight to Krapp's psychosomatic symptom: 'merde' supersedes 'cud' while 'remâchée' is retained from a previous English version (MS-HRC-SB-4-2-3), and 'cul' emphasises his anality, giving 'Merde remâchée et bouchon au cul' (Beckett 1959a: 28).

The close affinity between Beckett's own somatic complications, especially his constipation, and Krapp's 'bowel condition' (Beckett 1959: 11) emerges. In addition to the creative use of his real-life experiences in his writing, Beckett's habit of referring to his own works in scatological terms is evident in his letters. On 25 August 1930, he informed MacGreevy that 'three turds from my central lavatory' (Beckett 2009: 42-43) were sent to Bronowski for publication after he had asked for more poems. In the same letter, he writes about his *Proust*: 'I can't do the fucking thing. I don't know whether to start at the end or the beginning – in a word should the Proustian arse-hole be considered as entrée or sortie – libre in either case' (43). In a short letter dated 9 September (?) 1930 to Putnam, he concluded by writing: 'How are things? Must try & arrange a proper booze before I return – like a constipated Eurydice to the shades of shit' (47). Such abject themes permeate the letters. In his notorious letter to Mary Manning Howe, sent from Hamburg on 14 November 1936, he used condensed copro-flatus imagery to intensify his invective against a publisher's demand for both heavy cuts to *Murphy* and a change of title as well:

¹⁰⁹ See also Beckett's notes on Freud's theory of the deflection of sexual excitations from their natural aim: 'Freud's postulate: Under certain circumstances sexual excitations arise that cannot follow their natural course of leading to either physical gratification or even conscious desire for such; being deflected from their aim they manifest themselves mentally a morbid anxiety, physically as the bodily accompaniments of this' (TCD MS 10971/8/22).

The length of each chapter will be carefully calculated to suit with the average free motion. And with every copy a free sample of some laxative to promote sales. The Beckett Bowel Books. Jesus in farto. Issued in imperishable tissue. Thistledown end papers. All edges disinfected. 1000 wipes of clean fun. Also in Braille for anal pruritics. All Sturm and no Drang. (382-383)

In his notes on Ernest Jones, Beckett devotes a whole section to the topic of sublimation before moving onto anal-erotic character traits, starting with an overview of the topic as defined by Freud:

“die Fähigkeit, das ursprünglich sexuelle Ziel gegen ein anderes, nicht mehr sexuelle, Aber psychisch mit ihm Verwandtes, zu vertauschen.” [“the ability to exchange the originally sexual goal for another, no longer sexual but psychically related goal.”] And again: “...Prozess der Sublimierung, bei welchem den uberstarken Erregungen aus einzelnen Sexualitätsquellen Abfluss und Verwendung auf andere Gebiete, eröffnet wird.” [“... the process of sublimation, in which the excessive excitement from individual sources of sexuality is released and used in other areas.”] (TCD MS 10971/8/17)

The individual's prevention and blocking of sexual gratification in search of higher goals in life can bring about what Jones calls 'damming up'; consequently, “regression” takes place towards the more infantile modes of functioning’ (Jones 1963: 176). Because of the “fixations” that retard progress beyond the corresponding periods of childhood life ... sublimation can take place only to an imperfect extent’ (ibid). Krapp's ‘anal fixation’ can thus be viewed as the cause of his retarded progress in life as well as an imperfect sublimation epitomised in his failure to produce an ‘opus magnum’. Jones relates the formation of sublimations and reaction-formations specifically to the anal region, contending that ‘[t]he psychical energy accompanying the wishes and sensations relating to the [anal] region is almost altogether deflected into other directions, leading to ... sublimations and reaction-formations’ (Jones 1967: 414). Krapp's anti-cathexis accords with his leaning towards sublimation, essentially a deflection of his original erotic aims. Its lack of success is explained by the ‘[n]eurotic victims of miscarried sublimations’ (TCD MS 10971/8/17). One of Beckett's notes reads: ‘Sublimation is not a replacement of normal sexuality but refers to the individual components of sexual instinct [...]. It is an unconscious, not a conscious, process’ (TCD MS 10971/8/17). Beckett also noted the links that Jones believed to lie between childhood and adult sublimations, and between the weaning of the child (as perhaps the earliest occurrence of sublimation formation) and education:

Any sublimation that occurs in adult life is no more than a feeble copy of the enormous extent to which it goes on during childhood. The weaning of the child to external & social interests & considerations (the essence of sublimation) is the most important single process in the whole of education. It is a specific transference from one field of interest to another, each special later interest corresponding with a special primary component of the sexual instinct. (ibid)

Krapp's self-imposed inhibition against the 'breast-face (mouth)-hand' triad of sexual pleasure seems to be an unconscious reiteration, or better still, a 'copy' of weaning in the infantile phase: 'I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on and she agreed, without opening her eyes' (Beckett 1959: 18). But this inhibition fails in that as soon as he utters these words, to bid farewell to love, he implores the girl in the punt: 'Let me in. [*Pause.*] We drifted in among the flags and stuck. I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side' (18). His present life has lost that lyricism, his sexual needs are gratified by occasional interludes with Fanny. 'Bony old ghost of a whore', he says: 'The last time wasn't so bad. How do you manage it, she said, at your age? I told her I'd been saving up for her all my life' (17). His failure of reconciliation – and hence his constant oscillation between the momentum of his sexual desires and his subsequent, irresistible renunciation of them – corresponds to his apparently strict, dualistic existence and its fickle stance between extremes: the absolutes, as it were. Moreover, his transference from one plane of activity or interest to another – women, alcohol, the lofty goal of producing a masterpiece, as well as his twisted relationship with them over time – can be viewed in the light of Jones's contention that such transfereces correspond to a 'special primary component of the sexual instinct', in this case, strictly speaking, the 'anal'. Gontarski observes that 'relations with the whore Fanny finally seem comic and grotesque, with at least the suggestion of anal relations, a parallel to Krapp's name and constipation. At sixty-nine (the age is suggestive) Krapp's sexuality is not a vaginal beginning, a birth, but the scatological end' (Gontarski 1977: 65). In this sense, Beckett has staged Krapp's failed aesthetic creation against procreation.

CONCLUSION

Beckett's texts display an obsession with the abject, the irrational and the chaotic in the neurotic mind as the language of psychoanalysis does, but rather than trying to comprehend irrational mental states and find positivistic explanations for abject human conditions, these texts resist and reject any such explanations and stage a failed recovery from the dark chaos and complexities of the unconscious mental processes. This textual resistance undergoes considerable creative development in the course of Beckett's career: from the explicit and overtly parodic use of psychological terminology in *Murphy*, to the more complex and integrated transformations of psychological ideas for imagistic, allegorical and structural use in the 'Three Novels' and *Krapp's Last Tape*.

This study has sought to explore new ways in which Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' and his texts may link together regarding such shared obsessions and compositional strategies. Hence, the study fills significant gaps in current Samuel Beckett studies in terms of tracing the creative influence of the 'Psychology Notes' in some of Beckett's most pivotal works. From the mapping of Murphy's mind, neuroses and identity crisis, to Molloy's maternal quest and inability to reconcile with the natal separation juxtaposed with Moran's imago of the sadistic unforgiving father, to Malone's struggles between death wish and death drive, to the staging of a failed 'talking-cure' by the relentless Unnamable voice, to Krapp's anal-erotic, obsessive revisiting of the trauma of birth, the 'Psychology Notes' offer significant clues to the thematics and structure of these texts.

With access to the 'Psychology Notes' and the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project as scholarly tools, the study has demonstrated how Beckett's 'Notes' can be employed to enhance our perception of hitherto unnoticed psychoanalytic traces in his creative process and identify them more accurately based on the primary and secondary sources Beckett read in the 1930s. This has facilitated a much fuller account of how his lifelong engagement and interaction with the 'Psychology Notes' might have shaped his writing towards maturity from *Murphy* onward.

My critical approach here has been focused around the notion of Beckett's 'attraction-repulsion' ambivalence: his persistent creative dualism structured around a simultaneous fascination with and rejection of the psychoanalytic textbook language that he was trying to master in the 1930s. While there is wide-ranging scholarly consensus that Beckett was familiar with psychological ideas and used them for creative purposes in his writing, there has been little

argument around exactly what happens to the source language in this encounter. In view of this, the study has investigated the psychoanalytic language as being mediated by Beckett in the creative process to transform a language that is obsessed with rationalistic conceptualisations into subversive literature.

The 'Psychology Notes' have significantly helped trace the evolution of this fascination with and repulsion of the psychoanalytic language, from its relatively simplistic and straightforward use in *Murphy* to its more mature and subtle adoption and creative transformation in the later texts. The thesis argues that Beckett revisits certain themes and ideas already employed in *Murphy* at the time of notetaking from psychoanalytic textbooks. Yet the fashion of creative transformation in the later texts is completely different in that the material deployed leans less towards pedantry and reiteration and more towards creative distortion and complex resistance to the material at hand. The issue raised and examined here is not just what psychological or psychoanalytic ideas Beckett uses as fodder for his texts, but as importantly, how he has his characters chew and regurgitate them satirically or parodically. Beckett thus creates through de-creating the source language, in order to recreate from within psychological chaos and irrationality. Yet both the earlier and the later creative trends serve the same purpose of probing and questioning the language of psychoanalytic textbooks of the time.

From this perspective, the thesis has discussed how parody plays a conspicuous role in the attraction-repulsion ambivalence in Beckett's creative process. One of the key tools employed by Beckett to disrupt and undermine the psychoanalytic obsession with rational explanations of the psyche is a parodic indulgence in these ideas as *reductio as absurdum* of that drive. In other words, Beckett's texts tend to parody and dismantle the rationalising practice undertaken by psychoanalysis of the irrational mental processes – displaying this practice as itself no less irrational. This argument links in the thesis with Beckett's evolution of notetaking practices from concise entries in his notebooks such as the *Dream Notebook* to more thorough delineations of certain thematic ideas that seem to have interested him in later notes, including the 'Psychology Notes'. The study has depicted how the attraction-repulsion ambivalence in Beckett's creative process is a discernible trend in his 'Psychology Notes' evinced from several interpolations, parodic interjections, remarks denoting incredulity and scepticism, insightful additions, cross-references, allusions and so on, wherein Beckett repeatedly inserts his authorial voice into to the texts that he was taking notes from. This critical outlook bespeaks a kind of desire to master a novel body of knowledge and at the same time reveals a sceptical attitude or even disbelief in some of the arguments raised in psychoanalytic textbooks of the time. The thesis has discussed how Beckett extends this practice of simultaneous engagement and

disengagement, attraction and repulsion, and advancement and withdrawal, to his own texts, and like his insertions of 'Mine own' in the 'Psychology Notes', he makes the psychoanalytic language 'his own' in the authorial literature through subtle parodic reversals.

The study has also embarked on an unprecedented study of the 'Psychology Notes' by adopting a systematic approach to some of Beckett's prominent thematic interests across these notes. Based on the degree of engagement and attentiveness, authorial commentary, reiteration, biographical overtones in relation to certain psychosomatic complications, and the number of creative uses of an idea, identifying such themes and interests has facilitated the process of tracing, finding, and unravelling certain thematic linkages between the Notes and Beckett's texts. This theme-based categorisation comprises the split/fragmented self and the schizoid voice, the unconscious, infantile psychology and primitive impulses, anxiety neurosis, character-formation, symbolism, the birth trauma and the womb-tomb, scatology and excretory creation, and impotence and inferiority/insecurity. This has been conducive to understanding how the Notes may have influenced Beckett's writing in ways hitherto undiscovered. This approach thus paves the way for further genetic and thematic scholarship across Beckett's entire post-'Psychology Notes' *oeuvre*.

WORKS CITED

Beckett Archives

Beckett International Foundation, Reading
Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas
Trinity College, Dublin

These archives are generally cited via the following sources:

Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (SBDMP: see www.beckettarchive.org).
'Psychology Notes': TCD MS10971/7 and TCD MS10971/8, as transcribed in Feldman (2004).

Other Sources

- Ackerley, C. J. *Demented Particulars: The Annotated 'Murphy'*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- . *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated 'Watt'*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010a.
- Ackerley, C. J. & S. E. Gontarski. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove Press, 2004b.
- Adler, Alfred. *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, trans. P. Radan. London: Routledge, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1924.
- . *The Neurotic Constitution: Outlines of a Comparative Individualistic Psychology and Psychotherapy*, trans. Bernard Glueck and John E. Lind. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1921.
- Andreas-Salomé, Lou. "Anal" und "Sexual", *Imago*, 4 (1916): 249-273.
- Atik, Anne. *How It Was: A Memoir of Samuel Beckett*. London: Faber & Faber: 2001.
- Baker, Phil. *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997.
- . 'The Stamp of the Father', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 & 2 (Autumn 1995), pp. 142-155.
- Barfield, Steve, and Mathew Feldman, and Philip Tew, eds. *Beckett and Death*. London: Continuum, 2009.
- Beckett, Samuel. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929-1940*, ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld & Lois More Overbeck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- . *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber & Faber, 2006.

- . *The Collected Poems of Samuel Beckett*, ed. Seán Lawlor and John Pilling. London: Faber & Faber, 2012.
- . *First Love and Other Shorts*. New York: Grove Press, 2007.
- . *Happy Days*. New York: Grove Press, 2013.
- . *Murphy*. London: Faber & Faber, 2009b.
- . *Watt*. London: Faber & Faber, 2009c.
- . *Molloy*. New York: Grove Press, 1955.
- . *Molloy*. Paris: Minuit, 1971.
- . *Malone Dies*. New York: Grove Press, 1956.
- . *The Unnamable*. New York: Grove Press, 1958.
- . *Krapp's Last Tape*. London: Faber and Faber, 1959.
- . *Endgame*. London: Faber & Faber, 2009e.
- . *All That Fall*. London: Faber & Faber, 2009f.
- . *Not I*. London: Faber & Faber, 1973.
- . *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. London: John Calder, 1965.
- . *Waiting for Godot*. London: Faber & Faber, 1965.
- . *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. Dublin: Black Cat Press, 1992.
- . *Endspiel / Fin de partie / Endgame*, trans. Elmar Tophoven. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996.
- . *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn. New York: Grove Press, 1983.
- . *Schiller Notebooks: The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape*, ed. James Knowlson. London: Faber & Faber, 1992.
- . *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989*, ed. S. E. Gontarski. New York: Grove Press, 1995.
- Berkeley-Hill, Owen. 'The Psychology of the Anus', *Indian Medical Gazette*, 48 (1913): 301-303.
- Blackburn, Simon. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Breuer, Josef, & Sigmund Freud. *Studies on Hysteria*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.
- Brown, Llewelyn. 'Voice and Pronouns in Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*'. *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 20 (2) (2011): 172-196.
- Bryden, Mary. *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*. London: Macmillan Press, 1998.
- Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3 vols., ed. A. R. Shilleto. London: George Bell and Sons, 1893.
- Büttner, Gottfried. *Samuel Beckett's Novel 'Watt'*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.
- Campbell, Julie. 'Playing with Death in "Malone Dies"', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 19 (2008): 431-439.
- Chabert, Pierre. 'Samuel Beckett as Director', trans. M. A. Bonney and James Knowlson, in *Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape Theatre Workbook*, ed. James Knowlson (London: Brutus Books), 1980.

- Coe, Richard. *Beckett*. London: Oliver Boyd, 1964.
- Connor, Steven. *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory, and Text*. Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, 2007.
- . *Theory and Cultural Value*. London: Blackwell, 1992.
- . 'Beckett and Bion', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 17 (1-2) (2008): 9-34.
- Cordingley, Anthony. *Samuel Beckett's 'How It Is': Philosophy in Translation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.
- Dalí, Salvador. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Dial Press, 1942.
- Darwin, Charles. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: Grant Richards, 1902.
- de Biasi, Pierre-Marc. *La génétique des textes*. Paris: Nathan, 2000.
- Driver, Tom. 'Interview with Samuel Beckett' in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman. London: Routledge 1997.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 17*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910.
- Engelberts, Matthijs, & Everett C. Frost, & Jane Maxwell, eds. 'Notes Diverse Holo[graph]', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 16 (2006).
- Feldman, Matthew & Karim Mamdani, eds. *Beckett/Philosophy*. Stuttgart: ibidem Press, 2015.
- Feldman, Matthew. *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of the Interwar Notes*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- . *Sourcing Aporetics: An Empirical Study on Philosophical Influences in the Development of Samuel Beckett's Writing*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University, 2004.
- Ferenczi, Sándor. *Contributions to Psychoanalysis*, trans. Ernest Jones. Boston: R.G. Badger, 1916.
- Fordham, Finn. *I Do I Undo I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Flatt, Michael, 'Too Red a Herring: The Unattainable Self in "The Unnamable"', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 23 (2011): 353-367.
- Freud, Sigmund. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. W. J. H. Sprott. Eastford, CT: Martino Publishing, 2013.
- . *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. & ed. James Strachey, New York: Liveright Pub. Corp., 1961.
- . *Case Histories I: 'Dora' and 'Little Hans'*, The Penguin Freud Library, Vol. 8, trans.

- Alix and James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards. London: Penguin, 1983.
- . 'The Sexual Theories of Children', in *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, The Penguin Freud Library Vol. 7. trans. James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards. London: Penguin, 1991.
- . *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (1914-1916)*, 24 vols., gen. ed. and trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-74.
- Gontarski, S. E. *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- . 'Crapp's First Tapes: Beckett's Manuscript Revisions of "Krapp's Last Tape"', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 6 (1) (1977): 61-68.
- Gontarski, S. E., ed. *The Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
- Habibi, Reza. 'Samuel Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' and *The Unnamable*', *Journal of Beckett Studies* 27 (2) (2018): 211-227.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet. London: Penguin UK, 2004.
- Held, Martin. 'Martin Held talks to Ronald Hayman', *The Times Saturday Review*, 25 April 1970: 1.
- Hesla, David. *The Shape of Chaos*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.
- Holy Bible: The Comprehensive Teacher's Bible*. London: S. Bagster and Sons, n.d.
- Hopper, Stanley Romaine. 'The Anti-Manichean Writings', in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, edited by Roy W. Battenhouse. (New York: Oxford University Press), 1955.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Inge, William Ralph. *Christian Mysticism*. London: Methuen & Co., 1899.
- Jones, Ernest. *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- . *Papers On Psycho-Analysis*. Worcestershire: Read Books Ltd, 2013.
- . *Treatment of the Neuroses*. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1963.
- Juliet, Charles. *Conversations with Samuel Beckett and Bram van Velde*, trans. Janey Tucker. Leiden: Academic Press, 1995.
- Jung, C. G. *Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice (The Tavistock Lectures)*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.
- Kim, Rina. *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

- Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury, 1997.
- Knowlson, James, ed. *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape*. London: Faber & Faber, 1992.
- Knowlson, James, & John Pilling. *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove Press, 1980.
- Love, Damian. *Samuel Beckett and the Art of Madness*. D.Phil, Michaelmas. St Anne's College: University of Oxford, 2004c.
- Maddox, Brenda. *Freud's Wizard: The Enigma of Ernest Jones*. London: John Murray, 2006.
- Mauthner, Fritz. *Beiträge zu Einer Kritik der Sprache*, 3 vols. Verlag von Felix Meiner: Leipzig: 1923.
- McMillan, Dougald and Martha Fehsenfeld. *Beckett in the Theatre: The Author as Practical Playwright and Director*, vol. 1. London: John Calder, 1988.
- Moorjani, Angela. "'Peau de chagrin': Beckett and Bion on Looking Not to See', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 14 (2004): 24-38.
- Murphy, P. J. *Reconstructing Beckett: Language for Being in Samuel Beckett's Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- Nixon, Mark. *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936-1937*. London: Continuum, 2011.
- . "'Scraps of German': Samuel Beckett reading German Literature', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 16 (2006): 259-282.
- . "'Writing Myself into the Ground': Textual Existence and Death in Beckett', *Beckett and Death*. London: Continuum, 2009.
- O'Hara, J. D. *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: Structural Uses of Depth Psychology*. Tallahassee, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997.
- Oppenheim, Lois. 'A Preoccupation with Object-Presentation: The Beckett-Bion Case Revisited', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82 (2001): 767-784.
- . 'The Uncanny in Beckett', *European Joyce Studies*, 16 (2005): 125-140.
- O'Reilly, Edouard Magessa, Dirk Van Hulle, and Pim Verhulst. *The Making of Samuel Beckett's 'Molloy'*. London and Amsterdam: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- O'Reilly, Edouard Magessa. 'Molloy, Part II, Where the Shit Hits the Fan: Ballyba's Economy and the Worth of the World', *Genetic Joyce Studies*, 6 (2006): no pagination.
- Parkin-Gounelas, Ruth. *Literature and Psychoanalysis: Intertextual Readings*. London: Macmillan, 2001.
- Pilling, John. *Beckett's 'Dream' Notebook*. Reading: Beckett International Foundation, 1999.
- Plümacher, O. *Der Pessimismus in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Geschichtliches und*

- Kritisches*, 2nd ed. Heidelberg: Georg Weiss Verlag, 1888.
- Powell, Joshua. *Samuel Beckett and Experimental Psychology: Perception, Attention, Imagery*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.
- Proust, Marcel. *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Paris: Éditions Grasset, 1913-1927.
- Rank, Otto. *The Trauma of Birth*. London: Routledge, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1929.
- Richardson, Brian. 'Denarration in Fiction: Erasing the Story in Beckett and Others', *Narrative*, 2 (2001): 168-175.
- Riva, Raymond T. 'Beckett and Freud', *Criticism*, 12 (2) (1970): 120-132.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover, 1969.
- . *On Human Nature: Essays (Partly Posthumous) in Ethics and Politics*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders. London: Allen & Unwin, 1926.
- Stekel, Wilhelm. *Psychoanalysis and Suggestion Therapy: Their Technique, Applications, Results, Limits, Dangers, and Excesses*. London: Routledge, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1923.
- Stephen, Karin. *Psychoanalysis and Medicine: The Wish to Fall Ill*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- Stewart, Paul. *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- . 'Suffering Fiction in "The Unnamable"', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 26 (2014): 165-177.
- Taylor, Jeremy. *Holy Living and Holy Dying, Volume II: Holy Dying*, ed. P. G. Stanwood. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Tonning, Erik. *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama: Works for Stage and Screen 1962-1985*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007.
- . *Modernism and Christianity*. London: Palgrave, 2014.
- . 'Genetic Manuscript Studies and the Archival Reader', in *The Future of Literary Studies*, ed. Jakob Lothe. Oslo: Novus Press: 2017.
- Tsushima, Michiko. 'Memory is the Belly of the Mind: Augustine's Concept of Memory in Beckett', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 19 (2008): 123-132.
- Van Hulle, Dirk, & Mark Nixon. *Samuel Beckett's Library*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Van Hulle, Dirk. *Manuscript Genetics: Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow*. Tallahassee, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.

---. *Modern Manuscripts: The Extended Mind and Creative Undoing from Darwin to Beckett and Beyond*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

---. *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape/La dernière bande*. London and Amsterdam: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Webster, Richard. *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis*. London: HarperCollins, 1996.

Weller, Shane. 'Staging Psychoanalysis: "Endgame" and the Freudian Theory of the Anal-Sadistic Phase', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 22 (2010): 135-147.

Wilson, Sue. "'Krapp's Last Tape" and the Mania in Manichaeism', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*, 12 (2002): 131-144.

Windelband, Wilhelm. *A History of Philosophy*. Macmillan, 1979.

Woodworth, R. S. *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*. New York: Roland, 1931.

Wyatt, A. J., & W. H. Low. *Intermediate Text-Book of English Literature*. London: W. B. Clive – University Tutorial Press, 1920.



Graphic design: Communication Division, UIB / Print: Skjipes Kommunikasjon AS



uib.no

ISBN: 9788230844236 (print)
9788230858929 (PDF)