Memory and Time: “The plausibility of a pattern” in the multiple evocations of Samuel Beckett’s essays on Joyce, Proust, the novel Dream of Fair to Middling Women and the play Krapp’s Last Tape.

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MA Literature in Society Europe and Beyond

June 2023

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Contents

Abbreviations

The following table is a list of abbreviations that have been used throughout this thesis. These have been used only after a citation. This is to make it easier to read and to avoid confusion as many of these texts have a similar publication date. All other citations follow the normal regulations.

Samuel Beckett

D *– Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*

TCDW *– The Complete Dramatic Works*

P *– Proust and Three Dialogues*

MPTK *– More Pricks Than Kicks*

Dream *- Dream of Fair to Middling Women*

Letters *– The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Vol. I: 1929 – 1940*

Poems *- The Collected Poems of Samuel Beckett*

Trilogy *– The Beckett Trilogy*

Prose *– The Complete Short Prose*

James Joyce

Portrait *- Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

U *- Ulysses*

FW *– Finnegans Wake*

All spellings follow what is printed in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, except I have spelt McGreevy as MacGreevy, as this is the spelling which he later published his complete poems under and changed his name to in the late 1930's.

Introduction.

"The danger is in the neatness of identifications."

Samuel Beckett began his literary career writing an essay on James Joyce using the above quoted line as his opening statement about judging a literary text (*D*, 19). Both the sentence and the essay can be read as a direct challenge and a warning to readers about judging Beckett's essay as much as the literary work he is writing on. The essay was written under James Joyce's supervision, and it was to be included in a title conceived and overseen by Joyce given the precise title *Dante… Bruno. Vico.. Joyce* (*Norris*, 160). Each full stop between these literary figures representing a century, thereby suggesting a continuous link of five hundred years in European thought until the arrival of Joyce. It was written just a few months after Beckett's first arrival in Paris in November 1928, and it was later published under the title: *Finnegans Wake Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress.*[1] Sections of *Work in Progress*, what later became known as *Finnegans Wake*, had already been published and received widespread condemnation. According to one critic, Joyce had committed "linguistic sodomy," or as Ezra Pound, a defender and supporter of his work, famously wrote: "Nothing short of divine vision or a new cure for the clap can possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherization" (Qtd. in O'Brien, vii). Beckett and the other eleven writers included in the published book, were the new *avant-garde*, who answered the call to defend and exonerate a text, which Joyce did not actually publish in its entirety until ten years later.

This thesis follows Samuel Beckett from when he wrote this essay at the start of his career in literary criticism while also situating him within an autobiographical context. The distinction between reading biographically and autobiographically is made by Porter Abbott, when he writes

[1] The essay was originally published in *transition* No. 16-17, June 1929. Later that year in was published in book form by Shakespeare and Company (Birkett, 66. ftn.6).

that: "To read biographically is to be orientated towards history, towards a sequence of events now past, but to read autobiographically is to be orientated not towards the past but towards a continual revelation of authorial consciousness at the moment of writing" (3). In this sense, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that Beckett's early academic writing engages in a critical exegesis which informs readers about the texts he is writing about while this in turn informed Beckett 's creative process when he wrote his first full length novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women.* Consequently, I will read two literary essays Beckett wrote at the start of his career: the first on James Joyce's *Work in Progress* in Chapter One and then in Chapter Two on Marcel Proust's À *la recherché du temps perdu* and explore these texts to see how they helped Beckett formulate his own literary aesthetic. Before writing the essay on Proust, Beckett worked on translating a section of *Work in Progress* with Alfred Péron, which I argue, is important to understanding his essay on Proust. This means, I have will briefly explore the significance of this translation before the reading *Proust*.

Chapter Three will then investigate the influence that both Joyce and Proust had on Beckett's fictional narrative *Dream of Fair to Middling Women,* (hereafter just called *Dream).* This is Beckett's *Kűstlerroman,* and once it was completed in 1932, he submitted it for publication, but it remained unpublished in his lifetime. It was only made available to academics and scholars, until 1993.[2] Beckett then plundered whole sections of it to write up his first collection of short stories called *More Pricks than Kicks* which was published in 1934. This means that chapters 1 to 3 will focus on Beckett's early work from 1928 to 1932 and then in the final chapter, I will move more than two decades in Beckett's lifetime to *Krapp's Last Tape,* a short play first performed and published in 1958. I read this play as a turning point in Beckett's oeuvre; in it, the narrator, Krapp returns to memories which have been evoked in the

[2] There are two published versions of *Dream*. The reason for this is a dispute between the Irish publisher Black Cat Press run by Eoin O'Brien and the American publishers. The two manuscripts offer slightly different endings, but Calder, kept most of Beckett's misspellings and unusual typographic details (Ackerley and Gontarski, 150).

fictional narrative *Dream* and this text will be explored in the final chapter.

Unlike any of Beckett's other work either for the stage or prose published up to *Krapp's Last Tape*, his characters have no memory or at best, struggle to remember anything. A typical exchange in *Waiting for Godot* (1953*)* is:

Vladimir: What was it you wanted to know?

Estragon: I've forgotten. [...] That's what annoys me (*CDW*, 20).

Vladmir is also unable to recall whether they lived in Mâcon country or the Cackon country. Likewise, in *Endgame* (1957):

Hamm: Go and get the two bicycle-wheels.

Clov: There are no more bicycle-wheels.

Hamm: What have you done with your bicycle?

Clov: I never had a bicycle (*CDW*, 96).

In all Beckett's prose, there is a similar absence on the surface, or thematically below the surface, a pattern of inscription and erasure of memory. This absence, but at the same time presence of memory is evident from the start of the trilogy with *Molloy,* which Beckett began to write in French in 1947. This is also when Beckett abandoned third person narration in favour of using a first-person narrator, which is usually common to autobiographical narratives, where self and memory and remembering are central motifs from the start: "I am in my mother's room. It's I who live there now. I don't know how I got there. Perhaps in an ambulance, certainly in a vehicle of some kind" (*Trilogy,* 9). In part two, *Malone Dies*, also published in 1951, fragments of Malone's earlier life, in multiple existences, filter through the narrators' disassociated thoughts or memories. In the final volume of the trilogy, *The Unnameable*, written two years later in 1953, Beckett, writes McHale: "foregrounds the fundamental ontological discontinuity between the fictional and the real, and does so in such a way as to

model the discontinuity between our mode of being and that of whatever divinity we may wish there were" (13). This is as much a continuous quest, as a process in remembering all his previous character iterations:

> First I'll say what I am not, that's how they taught me to proceed, then what I am, it's already under way, I have only to resume at the point where I let myself be cowed. I am neither, I needn't say, Murphy, nor Watt, nor Mercier, nor – no, I can't even bring myself to name them, nor any of the others whose names I forget, who told me I was they, who I must have tried to be, under duress, or through fear, or to avoid acknowledging me, not the slightest connection (*Trilogy*, 299).

The self-reflexive, autobiographical turn that is evident in the trilogy and in all Beckett's work around this time pushes realism beyond any point that had been pursued prior to this, where the boundary between what is being narrated and the erasure of that narrative is itself called into question, in a continuous process of absence and presence of that image which is itself indeterminate. Paul Davis writes that along with the four *nouvelles*, Beckett's trilogy: "expressed the unspoken consciousness of their age. [Which also] speaks to ours. They all describe a borderline between the salvation of an epoch and its destruction" (45). These ideas are also evident in *Krapp's Last Tape,* and this text also echoes many similarities with Joyce's *Ulysses* and Proust's *À la recherché du temps perdu* where the boundaries between fiction and memory, the narrative past, and the fictional present have been blurred. In *Ulysses,* Bloom's journey through Dublin on June 16th, 1904, is completed with the shared memory he has with Molly of the day they consummated their affair on Howth Head. The text also explores time through imaginative use of historical memory and parallelism with Homer's *Odyssey*. For Proust's *Du cóté de chez Swann,* the first volume of *À la recherché*, Swann's love for Odette is later imagined as a version of a paradise lost, a memory of a past that is neither more real or true than another when over time, a new version of that past is overwritten, erased and rewritten

or reinscribed in memory. Similarly, Marcel's sensations and memories return to him after eating a madeleine cake as something that is different to what he previously experienced; it becomes a fictionalised version of the past adding meaning to the present. Both these narratives make elaborate use of time and memory, and Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* offers itself to a similar reading. The narrator, *Krapp*, mediates between the past and present through his own recorded voice from a tape recorder, in a constant movement of erasure and deferral, as has been said, through spools of memory, but this text also acts as a bridge in Beckett's work and what followed it.

There are many ways to approach the various trajectories of Beckett's oeuvre and one of those is to look at these early essays to explore the genesis of Beckett's early creative practice. Other readers have explored this area in Beckett studies before, but it has mostly been to research for a genesis to his later work. This is especially the case in relation with Beckett's essay on Proust, as this text is seen as an important key into unlocking Beckett's later post World War Two work. Beckett's post-war writing is usually "acknowledged as the ultimate achievement," whereas his early fictional work has received far less attention (Weisberg, 11). At the same time, many readers who look at Beckett's early creative process often take the approach which is "analogous to the museum retrospective of an artistic genius: every scrap of writing is a unified and significant object and deserves extended admiration. The first approach distorts the early work by imposing upon it the necessity of leading up in a linear fashion to an inevitable telos; the second suspends critical judgement" (Weisberg, 11). This thesis then, is a mixture of both methods; while it will also include biographical and autobiographical comments from Beckett's letters which add further details to the published texts.

Beckett's correspondence should be considered in any discussion on his work. There are over 15,000 letters that Beckett wrote to a variety of correspondents that have been collected; of these only 2,500 have been published in the four volumes of his letters (*Letters*,

xi). These letters can be described in what Abbott terms “self” writing, meaning an immediate action is taking place as it is written, which he calls “autographical action” (1996. iv). The distinction between autography and autobiography Abbott suggests is important in how we read all of Beckett’s work, including his letters. In autography, we should include the larger field comprehending all self-writing, whereas autobiography is a “subset of autography comprehending narrative self-writing and more specifically that most common narrative, the story of one’s life” (1996. 2). Although Abbott is primarily concerned with Beckett’s later post-war work, it is equally relevant to all his oeuvre as “he has built up a web of connections between the works and the life” (1996. x). Beckett was aware of this himself as he acknowledges in a letter to Marta Dow Fehsenfeld in 1985 about the publication of these letters which he stipulated must only include “passages” that “have bearing on [his] work” (*Letters,* 2009. xiv). In this sense, writes Abbott, throughout all Beckett’s work, he is “consciously involved in autography” (1996. 19). When these letters are juxtaposed with the prose or dramatic work, it creates a dialogue between the various texts, and this adds to our understanding of Beckett’s creative process.

1

Samuel Beckett and James Joyce

In November 1928, Samuel Beckett arrived in Paris to take up an academic position as a *lecteur d'anglais* at École Normale Supérieure through an exchange programme with Trinity College Dublin. Beckett had on him a letter of introduction to meet James Joyce from his cousin, Harry Sinclair. This was not needed as Thomas Mac Greevy, a mutual friend who also taught at the École Normale, introduced them to each other (Knowlson, 1996. 97-98). After the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922, Joyce had become a celebrity throughout Europe and Beckett was very keen to meet him. Both men formed an artistic and collaborative friendship which provides rich material for literary biographers. In all the portraits written about them, and later, with the publication of the first volume of Beckett's letters in 2009, more information about this close relationship between the two artists has become available.

Beckett's biographers have viewed the Joyce - Beckett relationship through different lenses, placing their emphasis according to their own prejudice or reading of what documentation was accessible at the time of writing. (Knowlson, 1996). What is clear from these portraits is that both artists had much in common as Irish writers living in Paris. Both had studied the same Romance languages in university and shared a love of Dante, music, philosophy, family conversations and it is around these topics their relationship was based.[3]

Within a month after they met, Joyce suggested that he write on his current project: *Work in Progress* (*Letters*, 5). Beckett acknowledges that Joyce may have asked him to write the essay because of their shared knowledge of Italian and love for Dante.[4] As Ruby Cohn observers in her

[3] Beckett relates to James Knowlson, his official biographer, the first time he met with Joyce: "I was introduced to him by Tom [MacGreevy]. He was very friendly immediately. I remember coming back very exhausted to the Ecole Normale and as usual […] I remember that. Coming back from my first meeting with Joyce. I remember walking back. And from then on we saw each other quite often" (1996. 98).

[4] The title was suggested by Joyce, as Federman and Fletcher write when they asked Beckett about the strange punctuation: "From Dante to Bruno is a jump of about three centuries, from Bruno to Vico about one, and from Vico to Joyce about two" (*D*, 169). As Cohn explains: "Beckett dispensed with the proportions – almost half the essay expounding Vico, a bare nod offered to Bruno, and a parallel admiration offered to Dante and Joyce" (*D*, 169).

introduction to *Disjecta*, a collection of Beckett's various critical writings, *Dante* .. is Beckett's first "non-juvenile publication," and for this reason alone, it has been examined in relation to Beckett's other work (*D*, 169). At the same time, it has received far less attention compared to his monograph on Proust, except within Joycean criticism.

II

It was though Joyce's recommendation that Beckett first read Giambattista Vico and it is his ideas on the contraries of time and history which helped Joyce to organise the writing of *Finnegans Wake*. Joseph Campbell, an early authority on the *Wake*, agrees that: "the fourfold cycles to Four Ages of the Viconian *Corso-Recorsoto,*" is fundamental to understanding Joyce's text (Campbell, 20). The cyclical nature of history is evoked in *Finnegans Wake*, through his protagonist "Shem." He is an "alchemist wrote over every square inch of the only foolscap available, his own body, till by corrosive sublimation one continuous present tense integument slowly unfolded all marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history" (*FW*, 185-186. 34-2). What attracted Joyce to Vico is the ideas he contributed into the historical investigation and importance of myth, epic simile, and ritual and how these are memorialised by rival social groups and between cultures (Rabaté, 2016. 67). For Vico, "Providence" is because of "Necessity" and "Liberty" rather than 'Fate' or 'Chance,' which means they are not something transcendent (22). Beckett writes:

> It follows that History is neither to be considered as a formless structure, due exclusively to the achievements of individual agents, nor as possessing reality apart from and independent of them, accomplished behind their backs in spite of them, the work of some superior force, variously known as Fate, Chance, Fortune, God. Both these views, the materialistic and the transcendental, Vico rejects in favour of the

rational (*D*, 21-22).

These empirical explorations about history and human events are combined with Bruno's doctrine of "coincidence of contraries" which act to fuse and reconcile forces of repetition and continuous change.[5] In *Work in Progress*, these are used as a structural device to create a narrative which is forever unstable as each position is answerable to a multiplicity of other antagonistic systems. As Joyce has said himself, these ideas are used just as a "trellis" over which the writing could begin, but he did not take "Vico's speculations literally; I use his cycles as a trellis" (Qtd. in Heath, 1984. 48). This cyclical nature of the history is rooted in Bruno's "considerations" of historical decay and constant renewal which helped Vico "evolve a Science and Philosophy" that privileges neither event nor a particular character and this also suited Joyce's project in *Work in Progress* [6] (*D*, 21). Just before Beckett died in 1989, he recalled to Knowlson his memories about the preparatory reading to write the essay and Joyce's response to it after it was completed. Beckett recalls that Joyce would have preferred if he had included more on Giordano Bruno:

> We must have had some talk about the 'Eternal Return', that sort of thing. He liked the essay. But the only comment was that there wasn't enough about Bruno; he found Bruno rather neglected. They were new figures to me at the time. I hadn't read them. I'd worked on Dante, of course. I knew very little of them. I knew more or less what they were about. I remember reading a biography of one of them [7](Knowlson and Knowlson, 100).

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5 Beckett summaries Bruno's philosophy as follows: "The principle (minimum) of one contrary takes its movement from the principle (maximum) of another. Therefore not only do the minima coincide with the minima, the maxima with the maxima, but the minima with the maxima in the succession of transmutations. Maximal speed is a state of rest. The maximum of corruption and the minimum of generation are identical: in principle, corruption is generation" (*D*, 21).

[6] In a letter Joyce wrote to Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1925, he explains Bruno's philosophy as "a kind of dualism – every power in nature must evolve an opposite in order to realise itself and opposition brings relief" (Joyce, 1975. 307).

[7] This was possibly the same biography that Joyce reviewed in 1903 for the Dublin *Daily Express*. In it, Joyce writes: "More than Bacon or Descartes must be considered the father of what is called modern philosophy." Later in the same review, he writes that Bruno's "mysticism is little allied to that of […] John of the Cross" (Joyce, 2000. 93-94). In *Dream*, Beckett's writes a pastiche of a John of the Cross poem for Smeraldina: see Chapter 3.

Beckett's brief reference to Bruno's influence on *Work in Progress* validates Joyce's surprise as more time and space is devoted on Vico's treatment of language and how this applies to Joyce's work. Beckett interests lie in Joyce's use of language when he writes that: "Poetry was the first operation of the human mind, and without it human thought could not exist" (24). In the past: "When language consisted of gesture, the spoken and written were identical," there was no distinction between a "gestural" expression and the "spoken" (25). There was a time when hieroglyphics, medals, and flags achieved direct expression and these combined created an external form with an internal content. It was the "feebleness of alphabetic writing," which has been inextricably removed from its signified and this began in the Middle Ages and ever since there has been a long process of historical decline (25). Joyce succeeds in overcoming the division between writing and direct gestural expression as the text demonstrates that:

> form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*" [8] (*D*, 27; Beckett's italics).

Here Beckett is foreshadowing many similar motifs and ideas that he would later highlights with Proust as will be shown in the following chapter. Beckett suggests that Joyce's language has the power to shape itself as fiction and there is also similarity here with Krapp, the main protagonist in *Krapp's Last Tape,* as his voice mitigates between memory and the images he conjures from the past is 'that something itself.'

In the essay, Beckett urges readers to read the end of *Anna Livia* to illustrate where a unity between sound and sense is achieved because: "When the sense is dancing, the words dance" (27). The significance of Beckett highlighting a moment from this section of *Work in Progress,* rather

[8] This view is also expressed by Stuart Gilbert which was published in the same volume as Beckett's essay: "the exploitation of every potentiality of the language to create a complete harmony between form and content." Gilbert also writes that "Mr Joyce is not performing a mere conjuring trick with the immense vocabulary he has at his command but is going back to the original and natural methods of human speech" (Gilbert, 56).

than another may have been because he was aware it was Joyce's favourite and it was also Nora's, Joyce's wife when Joyce read it aloud to her. There is also a recording of Joyce reading this section and it is the only surviving sound we have of Joyce (Maddox, 334). In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver in 1924, Joyce described the episode as a "chattering dialogue across a river [Liffey] by two washerwomen who as night falls become a tree and a stone. The river is named Anna Liffey" (Qtd in Maddox, 334). While writing the essay, Beckett may already have been considering translating *Anna Livia,* which he started soon after he completed *Dante,* as will be discussed in the next chapter.

To read Joyce, Beckett claims a new form of reading is required: "a general esthetic vigilance without which we cannot hope to snare the sense which is for ever rising to the surface of the form and becoming the form itself" (*D,* 27). Joyce has "desophisticated language" through the *revolution of the word,* which echos a phrase used by other member of the *transition* group that had assembled around Joyce, as they believed the English language had been "abstracted to death" so a new method to read and write is required.[9] Beckett illustrates how this is achieved in Joyce, by using the word "doubt" as an example (28). This word:

> gives us hardly any sensuous suggestion of hesitancy, of the necessity for choice, of static irresolution. Whereas the German 'Zweifel' does, and, in lesser degree, the Italian 'dubitare'. Mr Joyce recognizes how inadequate 'doubt' is to express a state of extreme uncertainty, and replaces it by 'in twosome twiminds' (28).

The language of Shakespeare is used as an analogy to Joyce's. Shakespeare because he uses "flat, greasy words to express corruption," and likewise with Dickens where you "hear the ooze squelching through," in his descriptions of the Thames (28). Although, we may find Joyce "obscure" and difficult, he uses:

[9] Beckett's sentiments here mirror the views expressed by the Jolases' manifesto in *transition,* as what they "demanded was cultural transformation through the *Revolution of the Word* and rebellion against 'all rationalist dogmas that stand in the way of a metaphysical universe'" (Gordon, 40).

> quintessential extraction of language, painting, and gesture, with all the inevitable clarity of the old inarticulation. Here is the savage economy of hieroglyphics. Here words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer's ink. They are alive. They elbow their way on to the page, and glow and blaze and fade and disappear (28).

Joyce circular structure and style is achieved through his "endless verbal germination, maturation, putrefaction, the cyclic dynamism of the indeterminate" (29). This feat of style evokes a "primitive economic directness, and the fusion of these primal essences into an assimilated medium for the exteriorization of thought, is pure Vico, and Vico, applied to the problem of style" (29). Beckett celebration of Joyce's language overflows with enthusiasm, which is absent from Proust, but can be seen again in *Dream* as there are repeated allusions, parodies and pastiches to *Work in Progress* throughout his text.

In the final section of the essay, the analogy Beckett makes between Dante and Joyce is used to emphasise a few key important points about Joyce's work. The title of the essay has already made explicit the connection between Dante and Joyce and as stated earlier, both Joyce and Beckett shared a passion for Dante. In Joyce's earlier work, themes and motifs from Dante are intertextually woven through his oeuvre as they would do later with Beckett (See, Gleason, 104-42; Ackerley and Gontarski, 118-128). Beckett had also just completed his matriculation exam on Dante and had studied him in Florence (Knowlson, 1996. 52). Pascale Casanova suggests another parallel political implication with Dante's exile from Florence and refusal to write in Latin, but chose instead to use other Italian dialects, without privileging any one of them. This he argues, undoubtfully endeared him to the two exiled Dubliners (Casanova, 49). Similar to Dante, Joyce, created a "storm of ecclesiastical abuse," which greeted him on the publications of *Ulysses*, and the extracts from *Work in Progress,* so this is yet another reason to celebrate his work (*D,* 32). Both Dante and Joyce fused different dialects by extracting the "vulgar elements" to assemble a "purer synthetic language" (30). For Dante, there is a gradual progress upwards from the *Inferno*

to *Paradiso,* whereas for Joyce, it is in multiplicity in a purgatorial world which is in a constant state of flux; one is finite whereas Joyce is not. For Rabaté this: "difference would lie in geometrics that they deployed, hence in the symbolic geographies that they created" (2016. 30). Dante's medieval cosmology is contrasted with Joyce's: Dante's *Purgatories* is: "conical and consequently implies culmination:" Whereas Joyce's: "is spherical and excludes culmination" (*D*, 33). Beckett concludes by asking his readers a final question: "In what sense, then, is Mr Joyce's work purgatorial?" And he answers with the certitude that: "In the absolute absence of the Absolute. [...] There is a continuous purgatorial process at work, in the sense that the vicious circle of humanity is being achieved, and this achievement depends on the recurrent predomination of one of two broad qualities" (33). What Beckett outlines here is the "inherent paradox of circularity and reversal" that is continuously involved in any reading or understanding of Joyce's "linguistic utopia" that is *Work in Progress* (Hill, 5; Rabaté, 2016. 33). This imaginary cosmology which Dante and then Joyce created is also evident throughout Beckett's work.

In Beckett's early fiction, especially in the stories that evolved out of *Dream*, after it was deemed unpublishable, his central character is called Belacqua, a character derived from Dante *Divina Commedia*. Belecqua either remains "stuck" in Dante and the Lobster, an early short story or at the start of *Dream*, he is in a state of "peddling faster," but does not get anywhere and in this way, Beckett is attempting to negotiate both a philosophical and narratological problems in his early fiction (*MPTK*, 9; *Dream*, 1). Equally, the structure of Dante's text which comprises of three sections, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio,* and *Paradiso*, are mirrored in the three ages of Krapp and the repetition of events, motifs that we hear in *Krapp's Last Tape.*

The critical responses to Beckett's essay on Joyce have been merger, given the huge critical library that is attached to the rest of his work. Most of what has been written is cursory or dismissive. John Pilling is typical, for example when he writes in *Beckett Before Godot*, that as "literary criticism, if it can be called that," it is "work in progress," and that it is "not especially

well adapted to the occasion which it was designed for" (Pilling, 1997. 24). Or that it is a "fussy, pedantic and pompous, reminiscent of a paper prepared by a beginning academic, with a penchant for verbal virtuosity. [...] references which seem to be there more for the sake of displaying erudition than advancing argument," are not unusual readings of Beckett's essay on Joyce (*Bair*, 80) Other academics, such as Jean-Michel Rabaté, acknowledge that Beckett was very much ahead of his time as he had: "understood *Finnegans Wake* more than ten years before its publication in 1939" (2016. 23-24). Scholars on Joyce, such as Margot Norris, are similar in recognising Beckett's achievement. She writes that Beckett's essay succeeds in providing a:

> philosophical and philological antecedents for *Work in Progress* [...] in forms that announce them as inapplicable and inimitable. [..] he proceeds to show how each of these figures modified or destroyed the nature of the 'pigeonholes,' the traditional categories, conceptual frames, divisions and oppositions, that are conventionally required to make sense of history, theology, and language (Norris, 160).

The argument Beckett makes about Joyce is also made by Susan Sontag in her aptly named *Against Interpretation* concerning critical commentary and the work of art: "The function of criticism should be to show *how it is what it is*, even *that it is what it is*, rather than to show *what it means*" (Sontag, 14). Beckett's text suggests that he has successfully shown the erasure of the binary opposition between form and content in Joyce's *Work in Progress,* and his defence of the autonomy of the artist in the face of opposition is a marker he repeats with Proust. More significantly, in terms of this thesis he borrowed and included ideas taken from Joyce for his own first novel which he began soon after completing *Dante… Bruno. Vico.. Joyce.*

2

Beckett, *Anna Livia Plurabelle* and *Proust*

Introduction

Beckett's essay on Marcel Proust's *À la recherché du temps perdu* is his only extended piece of literary criticism and for this reason alone, it is seen by many researchers and academics as providing valuable insight into Beckett's creative process. One reason for the importance attached to *Proust* is his exploration of memory and how this paradigm can be traced throughout *À la recherché* and then later in Beckett's fictional oeuvre. Prior to the completion of this essay, Beckett and Alfred Péron, had worked on their translation of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* for James Joyce. On the surface, these two literary enterprises appear to have little in common, except Beckett worked on them almost simultaneously, but equally important is his friendship with Joyce which had temporarily broken down throughout this period in Beckett's life.

This chapter begins with a brief exploration of the context and the significance of this translation to Beckett's reading of Proust. I argue that that the importance of the translation is more significant than it first appears, and the ghost or shadow of *Anna Livia* can be detected in the *Proust* essay itself. This goes some way to explain its unevenness or what Zurbrugg calls an "imperfect" and "superficial" work. (Zurbrug, 2/22). In the conclusion to this chapter, Beckett's correspondence provides evidence that he was well aware of this himself. In a letter to MacGreevy, Beckett writes that his symbolic identification is with Stephen Dedalus, from Joyce's *Portrait*, which points to a personal crisis throughout this period of his life, and this offers further insight into has writing of *Dream*; a text he was beginning to draft at this point in his writing career.

II

Translating *Anna Livia Plurabelle*

There is little doubt that Joyce was immensely proud of *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, and ever since it was published in *transitions* on October 27th, 1927, he was keen to see a proper French translation. It was a text he was deeply attached to and was personally willing "to stake everything" on, as it had: "cost him 1200 hours of work" (Qtd. in Ellmann, 598). Throughout the late summer of 1930, Beckett was simultaneously reading Proust and preparing, with Alfred Péron, a translation of *Anna Livia* for *Bifur*, a French literary paper which he wanted to complete and according to Ellmann, he was "the principal translator" (Ellmann, 632). By August 1930, it was finished but as Beckett was "*persona non grata*" in the Joyce household at the time, he did not deliver his copy of the translation personally to Joyce, as he informs MacGreevy: "One copy was for Joyce [and if] Joyce is not too disgusted by the chasm of feeling and technique between his hieroglyphics and our bastard French. But I will go it alone. *It can't be done*, and I am tired enough and have enough to do without that [10] (*Letters,* 43, my italics). To Soupault, Beckett writes that he: "would not want to publish [..] even a fragment, without permission from Mr Joyce himself, who might very well find it all really *too badly done and too far from his original*. The more I think of it, the more I find it very poor stuff" (*Letters,* 39, my italics). In contrast to Beckett's essay on *Work in Progress*, where Joyce's language is seen as a total success, these letters are polite, they also acknowledge it has limits.

Beckett's translation of *Anna Livia* was initially accepted by Joyce as he wrote to Harriet Shaw Weaver, telling her that it was "one of the masterpieces of translation," but he later rejected it (Qtd. in Knowlson, 1996. 127). In Adrienne Monnier's memoir of 1976, *The Very Rich Hours*

[10] McGreevey was still in contact with Joyce so he could deliver the translation personally. (See, for example: Ellman, 649; Bair, 100-101; Knowlson, 1996. 104-105)

of Adrienne Monnier, she corroborates this view: "while Joyce was very satisfied when he was consulted, he got it into his head to team seven persons together under his guidance [...] it did not appear to me either useful or just to add to those who had done all the work – and magnificently, I assure you"[11] (Qtd. in Gontarski, 2017. 3). Indeed, as Walter Benjamin writes in 'The Task of the Translator,' in all translation, there is an inherent erosion of its potential, while at the same time it looks forward continuously to a moment when it can be reconciled unto itself, as he writes:

> translation, unlike art, cannot claim permanence for its products, its goal is undeniably a final, conclusive, decisive stage of all linguistic creation. In translation the original rises into a purer linguistic air, as it were. It cannot live there permanently, to be sure, and it certainly does not reach its entirety. Yet, in a singularly impressive manner, at least it points the way to this region: the predestined, hitherto inaccessible realm of reconciliation and fulfilment of language (Benjamin, 1968, 75).

Translation, as Benjamin suggests, is not dissimilar to the point proposed in Beckett's letters as he recognises this difficulty in the translation he was doing on *Anna Livia,* and this makes his *Proust* appear in a state of tension between the extant writing and the 'intrusion' of the possibility of another 'writing'. In *Proust*, Beckett writes: "The artist has acquired his text: the artisan translates it. 'The duty and the task of the writer (not an artist, a writer) are those of a translator'" (*P*, 84). Beckett's emphasis that it is the task of the artisan who translates a work of art, points to not only his later work where he often did his own translations but the equal status which should be given to a work in translation as the original writer who wrote it. This tension between an 'original work' and a translated new version, as an 'original' work is at the heart of what Beckett

[11] Beckett's and Péron's translation of *Anna Lyvia Pluratself* was eventually published in *Cahier Joyce*, ed. Jacques Aubert, in 1985 and again in *Anna Livia Plurabelle di James Joyce*, ed. Rosa Maria Bosinelli Bosinelli, in 1996. See, Quigley, 484; Gontarski, 2017. 15 and Knowlson, 1996. 728, ftn. 44.

is engaging with when he writes of his translation that it is: ‘too badly done and too far from his original’ or it ‘can’t be done,’ (ibid.) and at the same time, it had just been completed. In a sense, a ‘reading’ is called upon to activate the 'unwritten,' and this is always marked by “authoritative ellipses;” which is an “ellipsis of authority” (Royle, 161). In this way Beckett’s translation of *Anna Livia* shadows Beckett’s *Proust* as it later shadows sections of *Dream,* as will be shown in the next chapter.

Beckett Reading Proust

Beckett first read Proust’s *Du Côté de chez Swann* in the early summer of 1929 while on holiday in Kassel, Germany. His first impression is significant as some of the same phrases are repeated in the monograph, a year before he was recommended to write it while similarly, some of the same words are in Proust’s own narrative. There are fifteen-copies that have survived of Proust’s *À la recherché* in Beckett’s library; many of these are covered in marginalia and these notes find their way into his monograph, as Van Hulle and Nixon have shown by examining Beckett’s personal copies (69). From this marginalia and Beckett’s letters, it is possible to trace the progress of Beckett’s complex relationship to Proust. In an undated letter, believed to be from the early summer of that year, Beckett writes to MacGreevy, and informs him about his initial impressions of Proust while the letter also suggests he is not looking forward to what remains to be read:

> I have read the *Du Côté de chez Swann*, and find it strangely uneven. There are incomparable things – Bloch, Françoise, Tante Legrandin, and then passages that are offensively fastidious, artificial and almost dishonest. It is hard to know what to make of him. He is so absolutely the master of his form that he becomes its slave as often as not. Some of his metaphors light up the whole page like a *bright explosion*, and

> others ground out in the dullest desperation. He has every kind of *subtle equilibrium, charming trembling equilibrium,* then suddenly stasis, the arms of the balance wedged in a perfect horizontal line [..] And to think that I have to contemplate him at stool for 16 volumes! (*Letters,* 11-12; my italics).

This letter is interesting because some of the same words and phrases are taken directly from Beckett's reading of *Du Côté de chez Swann* as can be seen in Lydia Davis translation below. The passage is from early in the first volume *Combray*, when the young narrator Marcel is reading Racine:

> Each time he talked about something whose beauty had until then been hidden from me, about pine forests, about hail, about Notre-Dame Cathedral, about *Athalie* or *Phèdre*, with *one image* he would make that beauty *explode* into me. And so, realising how many parts of the universe there were that my feeble perception would not be able to distinguish if he did not bring them close to me, I wanted to possess an opinion of his, *a metaphor* of his, for everything in the world, especially those things that I would have an opportunity of seeing for myself (Proust, 2003. 97 my italics).

The passage refers to Marcel, the young narrator, who experience a transformative moment when reading Racine. The 'beauty' conjured up by the text 'explode(s) into' him and in the marginalia of Beckett's copy, he has marked and underline: "une image exploser" and "métaphore," at this exact point in the text. These notes are later transcribed into his *Proust* essay (Van Hulle and Nixon, 71). In the letter, Proust's use of metaphor is also a cause for Beckett to comment to MacGreevey when he writes, the: 'subtle equilibrium, charming trembling equilibrium' which later becomes "a miracle of terrified equilibrium," when he writes on *Le Temps Retrouvé* later in the monograph (*P,* 75). This passage is one of many where the young Marcel is absorbed in reading and for Beckett these moments "served as a transition zone between reading and writing" as his annotations in the margins of the text are later transcribed into his own creative work (Van

Hull. and Nixon, 72). Beckett repeats phrases found in his reading then "absorbs and assimilates" them into his own work (Van Hulle and Nixon, 73). We can also see this in another passage from *Comray*, when Marcel is again reading but this time, Beckett acknowledges in *Dream* that he "stole" a phrase from the passage below and then inserted it into his own novel (Van Hull and Nixon, 72). This moment occurs after the narrator is urged by his grandmother to take his book with him out into the garden:

> When I saw an exterior object, my awareness that I was seeing it would remain between me and it, edging it with *a thin spiritual border* that prevented me from ever directly touching its substance; it would dissipate somehow before I could make contact with it, just as incandescent body brought near a damp object never touches its wetness because it is always preceded by *a zone of evaporation*. In the sort of screen dappled with *different states of mind* which *my consciousness would unfold at the same time that I was reading*, and which ranged from aspirations hidden most deeply in myself to the completely exterior vision of the horizon that I had, at the bottom of the garden, before my eyes, what was first in me, innermost, the constantly moving handle that controlled the rest, was my belief in the philosophical richness and the beauty of the book I was reading, and my desire to appropriate them for myself, whatever that book might be [12] (Proust, 2003. 86, my italics).

These wonderful passages in Proust succeed in transforming the reading experience from the banal into the extraordinary in similar ways that Joyce managed to achieve in his writings. In the passage above, Marcel's epiphany occurs like a 'thin spiritual border' which dissolve into 'a zone of evaporation' to create 'different states of mind' and then his 'consciousness would unfold' while reading. Moments like these in the novel, are reflected throughout Proust's text. The whole of the

[12] The phrase Beckett uses in *Dream* is 'zone of evaporation,' and then Beckett adds: "I stole that" (Van Hulle and Nixon, 71).

novel starts in *medias res* where the first-person narrator is in a kind of hypnagogic state or what could be described as taking place in an in-between space; as Marcel begins: "it seemed to me that I myself was what the book was talking about" (Proust, 2003. 7). Proust's text calls into question philosophical ideas about subjectivity through the experience of reading as David Ellison writes:

> rhetorical glissements [slippages] which ground the poetry of remembrance in nonreading. We "live" and relive our former existence only because the actual act of reading as enjoyed by the child has been forgotten and is now replaced by the pleasurable fabric of a unified fictional world (Ellison, 90).

This 'unified fictional world' is created through 'the act of reading' and this opens a space which Beckett, of course realised. The interrelationship between the text and the reader, what is being narrated and: "The singular property of reading," is what generates Proust's text as a narrative that "lets the work" affirm itself "and nothing more" (Blanchot, 194). Beckett' marginalia indicates "a dialogue with the other person who wrote the book," while also acknowledging the significance of this as a desire to read what has not yet been written. (Blanchot, 194/195). This 'dialogue' is activated or instigated at the start of *Combray* through Marcel's reading and Beckett's *Proust* affirms this by annotating these specific passages.

In the monograph, he makes an important distinction in Proust between 'involuntary memory' and 'voluntary memory,' which "is of no value as an instrument of evocation, and provides an image as far removed from the real as the myth of our imagination or the caricature of our direct perception" (*P,* 14). Later, he adds that it is: "The memory that is not memory, but the application of a concordance of the Old Testament of the individual. [...] it is the past in monochrome" (32). This is similar to Proust's own definition which is collected in a short 'interview' before *Du Côté de chez Swann* was published in 1913, where he explained what he meant by voluntary memory, it is:

> above all a memory of the intellect and the eyes, [which] gives us only facets of the

> past that have no truth; but should a smell or a taste, met with again in quite different circumstances, reawaken the past in us, in spite of ourselves, we sense how different that past was from what we thought we had remembered, our voluntary memory having painted it, like a bad painter, in false colours [13] (Proust, 1971, 235).

Beckett contrasts this with involuntary memory which: "is an unruly magician and it will not be importuned. It chooses its own time and place for the performance of its miracle" (*P*, 33-34). In quoting Proust, Beckett adds that it is a "'sacred action"' and by "some immediate and fortuitous act of perception," it becomes "almost intellectualised animism," as he provides an "incomplete list" when this "fetish" occurs (36-37). These he numbers and marked in ink as "revelations" in his copy of Proust [14] (Van Hulle and Nixon, 72). Involuntary memory is the negation of memory, habit, and desire and these are attributes of the "Time cancer," which Beckett suggests desensitises the subject, as:

> The laws of memory are subject to the more general laws of habit. Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his own environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning-conductor of his existence. Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit. Breathing is habit. Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is succession of individuals; the world being a projection of the individual's consciousness (*P*, 18-19).

In the same article in *Le Temps* quoted earlier, Proust elaborates what this can reveal: "it is really only to involuntary memories that the artist should go for the raw material of his work. [as] they alone bear the hallmark of authenticity [and this enables a] release from all contingency [which] give us its extratemporal essences" (Proust, 1971. 236). In *Combray*, the first time such an

[13] This was published in *Le Temps*; the English title is: *Swann Explained by Proust*. (Proust, 1971. 234)
[14] Beckett uses the same term as Proust: "Proustian memory and Proustian *revelation*" (*P*, 24; my italics).

experience occurs is when Marcel eats a *petits madeleine* infused with tea, and this interaction inaugurates a sensory experience which transcends time:

> But at the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake-crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening to me, isolated me, without me. A delicious pleasure had invaded me, isolated me, without my having any notion as to its cause. It had immediately made the vicissitudes of life unimportant to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory, acting in the same way love acts, by filling me with a precious essence: or rather this essence was not in me, it was me (*Proust*, 2003. 47).

Involuntary memory cannot be activated at will, its powers of invocation are conditional, as Marcel questions his own subjectivity: "How could I discover it? I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third that gives me little less than the second" (Proust, 48). For Proust, in Beckett's words, this 'miracle' of 'involuntary memory' does not occur outside Time but is a subject of its laws; whereas for Proust's narrator, this 'extratemporal essences' is realised as something transformative:

> when nothing subsists of an old past, after the death of people, after the destruction of things, alone, frailer but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, smell and taste still remain for a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, on the ruin of all the rest, bearing without giving way, on their almost impalpable droplet, the immense edifice of memory (Proust, 49-50).

It is only after Beckett reads *Le Temps Retrouvé* that he appear to accept this Proustian paradigm as a valid mode of literary exegesis because: "Time is not recovered, it is obliterated," when Marcel is fixed both in the past and in the present. This "mystical experience communicates" an "extratemporal essence, it follows that the communicant is for the moment an extratemporal being" (*P,* 75). For Beckett, "the Proustian equation," is shown as a reconciliation between these

temporal divisions and these are concluded in a transcendental moment, similar to a Joycean epiphany.

Beckett found his 'idea' to conclude *Proust,* through his reading of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and by drawing a parallel between his philosophical ideas and those he found in the "mystical" motif of involuntary memory in *À la recherché*. Before Beckett started writing his essay on Proust, he writes to MacGreevy telling him that: "Schopenhauer [is] an intellectual justification for unhappiness – the greatest that has ever been attempted (*Letters,* 32-33). At the end of *Proust,* Beckett argues that the "influence of Schopenhauer", is "unquestionable" on *À la recherché* (*P,* 91). Beckett uses Schopenhauer's idea on: "music [because this is] the Idea itself, unaware of the world of phenomena" (92). It is through the sound of music, argues Beckett, which creates "a testimony to the intimate and ineffable nature of an art that is perfectly intelligible and perfectly inexplicable. Music is the catalyst in the work of Proust" (92). To support his reading, he suggests that Proust's "recurrent mystical experience" of involuntary memory is the result of "a purely musical experience" (93). This is evident when "the narrator – unlike Swann [..] who identifies" with the "little phrase" from Vinteuil's music" (93). Involuntary memory as something that is "spatialised what is extraspatial" as it gives access to "the total past sensation, not its echo nor its copy, but the sensation itself;" which annihilates "every spatial and temporal restriction" (*P,* 93/72).

In the Foreword to *Proust* Beckett had written that: "There is no allusion in this book to the legendary life and death off Marcel Proust." He adds on the first page that: "The Proustian equation is never simple," and there is "dualism in multiplicity," while "the magic of literature," indicates Beckett's hostility to any form of a biographical reading (*P,* 11 and 63). In writing about Proust, it is difficult to imagine that Beckett is not writing about himself, when he writes:

> art is the apotheosis of solitude. [..] The only fertile research is excavatory, immersive,
>
> a contraction of the spirit, a descent. The artist is active, but negatively speaking,

> shrinking from the nullity of extra circumferential phenomena, drawn to the core of the eddy (*P*, 64 and 65-66).

Beckett expressed a similar aesthetic idea as the basis for creative exploration earlier in the essay when he writes that a 'poetical excavation' (ibid.) was necessary and similarly in the above quotation where 'fertile research is excavatory, immersive, and a contraction of the spirit, a descent.' It is difficult to read these comments and not imagine the implications for Beckett's own work. In reading Proust, Beckett discovered important narrative possibilities which helped him discover his own creative approach to writing, but these are not apparent immediately. One of these must surely be the use of a first-person narrator as this helps to "triggers literary creation, but its rich potential remained unexploited without the technique of double internal focalization – that is, the splitting of the first person into a narrated and a narrating self" (*Azérad and Schmid,* 68). Proust explains his narrative decision in the following terms in *Le Temps*:

> In the first volume [...] the character who tells the story and who says "I" (who is not me) suddenly recovering years, gardens, people he has forgotten, in the taste of a mouthful of tea in which he has soaked a bit of madeleine; he could have remembered them no doubt, but without their colour or their charm (Proust, 1971. 235).

Proust's use of his first name as a narrator and how this blurs the boundary between fiction and autobiography in a *À la recherché* is significant for much of Beckett's later work, as highlighted in the introduction, Beckett also switched to first-person narration in the early 1950's. Abbott writes in quoting Gérard Genette on Proust that in using Marcel as a narrator, it is "a symbolic representation of 'the difficult experience of relating to oneself'" (Qtd. in Abbott, 161). In *Dream,* Beckett explores the various interplay between personal pronouns, including a 'Mr Beckett,' this creates a paradoxical tension between the narrator, protagonist and reader.

Beckett's initial scepticism about Proust's of marrying form and content, as expressed in his letter when he wrote to McGreevy that, 'he is so absolutely the master of his form that he

becomes its slave,' (ibid.) and this idea he returns to in the later part of *Proust*. In a similar way to his essay on Joyce, when he defended *Work in Progress* where 'form *is* content, content *is* form,' (ibid.) likewise Proust:

> makes no attempt to dissociate form from content, the revelation of the word. The one is a concretion of the other, the revelation of the world. The Proustian world is expressed metaphorically by the artisan because it is apprehended metaphorically by the artist: the indirect and comparative expression of indirect and comparative perception. The rhetorical equivalent of the Proustian real is the chain-figure of metaphor (*P*, 88).

Here again, Beckett returns to his initial reading of Proust, a year before he was commissioned to write the monograph. In the letter, quoted at the start to this chapter, Beckett wrote that 'some of metaphors light up the whole page like bright explosions' (ibid.) and by the end of the essay, he accepts that 'The Proustian world" is "expressed metaphorically" as the artisan "apprehended [it] metaphorically.' It is Proust's use of language, where Beckett sees a similarity with Joyce and this is how he defended *Work in Progress,* as language is: "more important than any system of ethics or aesthetics" (*P,* 88). "The complaint," writes Beckett that Proust writes in: "an involved style, full of periphrasis, obscure and impossible to follow, has no foundation whatsoever" (88). Beckett essay on Proust shares many similarities with these closely aligned to the journal *transition* and the manifesto Poetry is Vertical, which he signed in March 1932.

III

Conclusion

Both the marginalia and the letters illustrate the intricate connections between Beckett's literary scholarship and interpretative process that he undertakes with *À la recherché* and this shows how he is actively involved in looking for comparisons, and painterly allusions which are

then juxtaposed in the essay and used for rhetorical support. This not only highlights his working method, which is similar to *Dante… Bruno. Vico.. Joyce* in the deliberate intertextual referencing and layering of other texts to illustrate his ideas but also, as both John Pilling's and Leslie Hill's highlight, huge sections of the essay are paraphrased and summarised (Pilling, 1976. 9-28; Hill, 1-10). In *Proust*, this was for editorial reasons, but equally significant, it indicates a working method which Beckett used while writing his earlier essay on Joyce as shown in his summary of Bruno's philosophy.

A couple of years after *Proust* was written, Beckett wrote a short review of Feuillerat's comment on Proust for the *Spectator* magazine in 1934. Beckett reduces his appreciation for Proust to the: "sweet reasonableness of plane psychology" (*D,* 65). In this sense both Dirk Van Hulle and Mark Nixon are correct in saying that within two years after completing *Proust*: "Beckett was critical of Proustian involuntary memories, Joycean epiphanies and Woolfian 'moments of being'" (Van Hulle and Nixon, 40). Nevertheless, Zurbrugg is also correct in writing that: "Over and over again, Beckett's writings compulsively investigate, appropriate, elaborate, distillate, denigrate, negate and generally illuminate the implications of Proust's most provocative images, themes and motifs" (*Zurbrug,* 5-6). Beckett's ambivalent and sometimes contradictory reading of Proust is not surprising as he was preoccupied with translating *Anna Livia*. The extract below suggests that Beckett realised this himself. Beckett wrote this letter just after *Proust* was completed and then sent it to MacGreevy; in it, the analogy Beckett uses about his perceived failure in writing the essay is taken from Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*:

> It seems like pale grey sandpaper, stab stab without any enchantment. It's too abstract because my head comes breaking every now & then through the epidermis for a breath of merely verbal enthusiasm. It has the *plausibility of a pattern,* a kind of flat, syllogistic drift, like the fan of the long division sum in 'Portrait of the Artist': at its best a distorted steam-rolled equivalent of some aspect or confusion of aspect of

myself (*Letters,* 72: The italics above are used in the title to this thesis).

Beckett believed that his writing was 'like grey sandpaper 'and 'without any enchantment' as it was 'flat' with its 'syllogistic drift.' Then Beckett uses an unusual analogy from Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, when Stephen in Chapter 3 is faced with an "equation on the page of his scribbler" (*Portrait,* 102). This 'equation' is a crucial moment as Stephen has just had sex with a prostitute for the first time and now he wants to visit one again. The equation Stephen is contemplating on the page becomes bigger and bigger as if:

> It were his own soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning stars and folding back on itself, fading slowly, quenching its own lights and fires. They were quenched: and the cold darkness filled chaos (*Portrait,* 103)

For Stephen, the trajectory, through the rhythm and psychological pattering of his desire are symbolically unfolded within the structure of the equation. Joyce's language, in this section, is dreamlike as it is combined with other references rather than mathematics; it is sexual and phallic as it expresses his sexual desire which then open up or unfolds to reach a climax when his soul and the external world meet in an epiphany. Beckett's choice of analogy to this critical moment in *Portrait,* suggests a symbolic, if not a symbiotic relationship with Stephen's crisis in *Portrait* and this is because he faced a crisis in his own life. As stated earlier, Beckett's relationship with Joyce had deteriorated since May the previous year when Lucia, Joyce's daughter, had a breakdown after Beckett informed her he was only interested in visiting her father and not her; this resulted in him becoming *persona non grata* in the Joyce household. (Knowlson, 1996. 105). These events resulted in psychological crisis for Lucia; a domestic one for Joyce and a personal crisis for Beckett.

The letter above, as stated earlier, was written just after Beckett had completed his translation of *Anna Livia* and he had just finished writing *Proust,* while at the same time he

was taking notes for his novel *Dream*, where Lucia is depicted as a prostitute. The purpose of a letter is to communicate, to bridge a gap between the writer and reader, the letter quoted above suggests a textual overspill, an aporia. For Beckett, as the editors to Beckett's first volume of letters write: "are a channel to selves, selves of which he is as yet only dimly aware, even to selves he would deny. Letters make possible a writing, a voice perhaps, which his public work does not yet dare to deploy" (Letters, Ixxvii). Unlike many of Beckett's later private correspondence, many of his early letters illuminate peculiar aspects to his work or facets that are difficult to comprehend; this is why his *Proust* offers more than just valuable insights into *À la recherché* but also into Beckett's own work and his translation of *Anna Livia*.

3

Dream of Fair to Middling Women

When Beckett arrived in Paris in November 1928, he was at the centre of European modernism and experimental art. Through his friends and contacts, Beckett was immediately accepted and became involved in the artistic life of Paris and the circle of artists that had accumulated around Joyce, including Maria and Eugene Jolas who published the literary magazine, *transition,* (see chapter one). This influential literary magazine and others is where Beckett published his first poetry and translations and also his fictional texts, such as, *Sedendo and Quiescendo,* which was later included in *Dream*. This ends with: "Beschissenes Dasein beschissenes Dasein Augenblick bitte beschissenes Dasein Augenblickchen bitte beschissenes" (*Dream,* 73).[15] Jolas categorised this as an example of "anamyth" or "psychograph," and Van Hulle calls it "in the long tradition of writing as a form of defecation" (Qtd. in Morin. 115 and Van Hulle, 2013. 247). After it was initially refused publication, Beckett's reply to Charles Prentice in 1931 was: "You're right [...] of course it stinks of Joyce in spite of the most earnest endeavours to endow it with my own odours. Unfortunately for myself that's the only way I'm interested in writing (*Letters,* 81). The 'odour of Joyce' permeates *Dream* from the opening to the final paragraph as this section of the thesis will demonstrate, despite the influences of Proust, the surrealists and others who are also evident in the novel.

Beckett's scatological writing were both revolutionary and subversive as was *Poetry is Vertical*, the only artistic and political paper he ever signed in his life which was also published in the same issue of *transition* as *Sedendo and Quiescendo*. Although, the views expressed in the manifesto are those more closely associated with Jolas and Joyce as they envisaged a new spiritual

[15] This was misprinted when printed in *transition* on 21 March 1932 as *Sedendo et Quiesceindo*; it is on pp.64-73 of *Dream*. The main difference between the two versions, is the change in the narrative voice, from "I" to "we" (Qtd. in Ackerley and Gontarski, 518). This can also be found in Gontarski edt. (1995) *Prose*, (8-15).

and collective synthesis of language which Beckett later distanced himself from (See, Morin. 2017. 115). We can see the influence of the manifesto in *Dream*, when we read that the narrator dislikes: "The uniform, horizontal writing, flowing without accidence," and there are also clear echoes in the manifesto with what Beckett expressed in *Proust* (*Dream*, 48). In the monograph, Beckett wrote about the "mystical" and the "fetished animism" (ibid.) of Proust's involuntary memory and this is echoed in the manifesto which aimed to "invent a hermetic language," that would sinks to "telluric depts upward towards [..] illumination" (Qtd. in Buttigieg, 267). The November 1932 issue of *transition* proclaimed: "The Novel is dead / Long live the novel" (Qtd in Rabaté, 2001. 141). In *Dream*, Beckett engages with many of these new artistic ideas because reality is "incoherent," so the narrator frequently interrupts the narrative to comment on the book that he is writing and to help guide him (*Dream*, 102). This creates an unresolved tension because the: "reality of the individual [..] is an incoherent reality and [therefore] it must be expressed incoherently" (*Dream*, 101). Beckett's aimed to create a new type of literary fiction; it was to be the novel of the future, as the narrator informs us: "The only true unity in this story is, please God, an involuntary unity" (133). Although Beckett pays homage to both Joyce and Proust throughout the narrative of *Dream*, it is also evident that he is trying to break free of their influence.

Dream of Fair to Middling Women is a cryptic and enigmatic novel which could be read as Beckett's *Work in Progress*. At times, it appears to expose its own sense of a textual materiality, to dissolve into an "aesthetic of inaudibilities" (*Dream*, 142). At other times, the tensions within *Dream* are mirrored in Beckett's own life which makes it one of the most unique texts in all Beckett's writing.

II

In my introduction, the distinction between reading Beckett biographically or autobiographically was suggested by using Porter Abbott's ideas. Abbott also writes that perhaps from as early as the

1920's Beckett was thinking of "writing as a life project," and "he would have been encouraged to think this way by the examples of the two modernist writers, Marcel Proust and James Joyce within whose shadows he first began to write seriously" (Abbott, 1996. x). As stated earlier, both these writers drew on and use autobiographical material to create their fictional works (ibid.). Similar to Joyce and Proust, Beckett continuously revised, re-visited and edited *Dream*, as Mary Lynch has shown, he persisted with this text by adding details and changing others. She shows this through Beckett's use of Gaelic words used in *Dream* as some of the ones that are there could simply not have been written in the 1930's (Lynch, 1999a. 62). Even after all Beckett's efforts to find a publisher came to nothing, he continued to believe in the possibility *Dream* would eventually find one, right up until his father's death in June 1933, after which he finally abandoned it (*Letters*, 148).

The historical and publication details that *Dream* exists in a variety of different editions and that Beckett worked on the text for a long time indicates that not only is there no such thing as a definitive edition of this text, equally it could be pointed out that, any published edition is always a flawed or an imperfect version of the text it carries. Beckett himself described *Dream* as: "the chest into which I threw my wild thoughts" (Qtd in *Dream*, xi). The 'chest' writes Eoin O'Brien in the forward to his edition is filled with: "some semi-autobiographical elements" (*Dream*, xii). Beckett has admitted that his writing is underpinned by a connection to his biography as he expressed to Lawrence Harvey, when asked about the connection between the Irish place names in *Echo's Bones* and his life-experience, he replied: "I say my life has nothing to do with my work, but of course it does. Work doesn't depend on experience - it is not a record of experience. But of course you use it" (Qtd. in Knowlson and Knowlson, 2006. 137). Elsewhere, we can see Beckett aims to distance his work from any perceived influence of Joyce or Proust as can be seen in a letter he wrote to Sigle Kennedy: "I don't have thoughts about my work. [...] I simply do not feel the presence in my writings as a whole of the Joyce & Proust situations you

evoke" (*D*, 113). Although the letter was written in reply to her query about *Murphy* more than thirty years after *Dream* was written, what makes it relevant here is "how they are paired," – "Joyce & Proust." – ampersand included [16](Murphy, 2009. 59). This suggests Beckett wanted to distance his own work from his literary predecessors, while at the same time, he joins Joyce and Proust together as if they are one.

Beckett's comments on his own work are often elliptical while at the same time, the comments above are relevant when we come to read *Dream*. This is because there are specific allusions, traces or pastiches to both Joyce and Proust within the text and right from the opening chapter. Beckett's self-reflexive comments points to a resistance towards identification to any influence, while also acknowledging the interrelationship between his own life-experience ('of course you use it') in his own work and this is closely mirrored to that which we see in Joyce and Proust. It is without question that *Dream* remained a constant presence in Beckett's creative imagination for a very long time as there are clear residues inscribed within its narrative of his later work. The thinly disguised caricatures of real-life friends, relationships and academic colleagues are the main reason why Beckett stipulated that *Dream* should not be published until after he died.

III

From the opening first few chapters of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, readers are immediately aware that they are in a different fictional world than one they may have encountered before. As John Pilling points out: "all the familiar and conventional paraphernalia of narrative – plot, character, causality, salience of detail and stability of locale and indeed everything that could

[16] Beckett indicated in 1954 that he regarded *Murphy* "as a point of departure" to his work if "one takes for granted the impossibility of going on." In the same letter, he praises Maurice Blanchot essay *on L'Innommable*, and expresses his admiration for a special issue devoted of *Weg zu Proust*, which was on his essay *Proust*. This suggests, despite his letter to Sigle Kennedy on the contrary, that he continued to show an interest in the reception of his own work long after its publication, while also disregarding anything written before *Murphy*, which of course includes *Dream* (*Letters*, 2: 2011. 442).

conceivably contribute to authorial responsibility [..] are conspicuous by their absence." (Pilling, 2005.171). The text suggests that through the absence of these conventional narrative discourse markers, a sense of disorganisation and indeterminacy is one that is deliberately sought and used in *Dream*. This is foregrounded when the narrator announces at the start: "The fact of the matter is we do not quite now where we are in this story" (*Dream,* 9). Beckett kept a *Dream Notebook* of his reading while writing the novel, and this text is used as a literary sources book which has helped John Pilling compile *A Companion to Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (2002); this runs to almost twice the length of the published text. In the Preface, Pilling suggests that:

> *Dream* is perhaps Beckett at his most difficult, and even the most experienced reader will have to admit defeat, [as he sometimes does] in trying to grasp the meaning or point of a particular word, phrase or incident. Some passages are so impenetrable that it is difficult to believe Beckett had any reader but himself in mind (Pilling, 2002. 2).

For this reason, biographical and autobiographical material that has been written about Beckett helps to illuminate aspects of the novel which are otherwise incomprehensible or impenetrable. The experimental style and the mock-epic adventure of Belacqua share an obvious parallel with Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, a novel Beckett claims he didn't read until 1938 (*Letters,* 2009. 637). In *Dream*, Beckett creates an inversion in the mock-epic style of *Tristram Shandy,* as readers follow a vagabond-like Belacqua on his journey towards or around the various female characters he meets: their femininity and sexuality appears to fall into two strict binary divisions; they are either prostitutes, or portrayed as its apotheosis.

IV

To write *Dream*, Beckett "steals," from all the works he reads then scatters them throughout his narrative with what appears to be a "delight in demented detail," as his "scholarship [is used] to

create a *cento*"[17] (Ackerley, 2002. 59). All these works, and these lines are then copied out in Beckett's *Dream Notebook* and afterwards ticked off when he uses them. Both Ackerley and Pilling have identified many of these specific quotations and where they are from and which specific passages have been derived from various texts, nevertheless, many of Beckett's references have yet to be identified (Pilling, 1998; 2002; Ackerley, 1998). Beckett was not the only writer to try and write like this at this time: T.S. Eliot, in *The Waste Land* and *The Four Quartets* is probably the most famous example, and like *Dream*, these poems also pay homage to Mallarmé, Baudelaire and Dante as some of the writers whose works provided inspirational sources.

An example used by Mary Lynch to illustrate how Beckett uses this method is by "stealing *'noili me tangere'* from the unwelcoming notice *Noli me tangere* on Gabriel D'Annunzio's door-bell, which was sold in May 1911" (Lynch, 1999a. 62/63; 1999b. 295; *Dream.* 85). She then shows how Beckett uses obscure literary references, all of which are connected to "May", and these range from dates of publications of books to poets' birthdays to "Julian of Norwich, who was granted a vision of the Crucifixion on 8 May 1373" (Lynch, 1999a. 62). The phrase is also used in the bible; it is from John: 207 and it is the "subject of Jesus meeting Mary Magdalen in the garden," and it means: 'touch me not'" (Pilling, 2002 178). In *Dream*, the first time this phrase is used, it is set amidst pages of where Belacqua's list of ailments reads more like a Dada poetry event:

> Muttering Delirium and Summer Diarrhoea and confluent *noili me tangere* rodent ulcers lancinating his venter, incubating the nits what nits bloody well you in the scarf of his cuticle, the black spot encrimsioned on his sacrum, his mouth a clot of sordes, his clubbed digits plucking the counterpane, his ronchi […] crepitous mucous

[17] Many of Beckett's poems written during this period are composed using the same method and derive their titles in direct recognition of various poetic forms used by Provençal and troubadour poets. For example, enueg; serena; alba and sanaies (Caws. 620). Notes on each individual poem is in *Poems*, pp. 267-293.

> sonorous sibilant crackling whistling wheezing crowing and would you believe it stridulous, strangled with a waterboard (*Dream.* 85; my italics).

The second time this is used is when Belacqua and Alba are on Silver Strand: "But: it would not do. It could not go on. She was beyond the puerile graciousness of such a relation. She had got over the salt-marsh phrase, the pretty-pretty *noili-me-tangere* love wound phase" (*Dream,* 193; my italics). The reason for Belacqua's ailments, suggests Lynch is because he is "suffering from syphilis," and this comes after a page long *homage* to Joyce's Molly Bloom's, whereas the second time, he is recoiling from "Alba's body" (Lynch. 1999b. *Dream*. 295). Beckett's obscure references adds to the difficulty in reading *Dream* in the normal, conventional sense of reading a modernist novel, while it also points towards an attempt at remaking something that has already been written.

The difficulty, Pilling wites, is that: "Only rarely is an allusion allowed to stand alone, its resonance growing with the space around it" (1998. 16). This is because many of the quotations and allusions become a tapestry and they often have a double function, as shown above. Beckett's intertextual layers, when they are used, both obscures and subverts a reading and this ambiguity is a deliberate narrative strategy as it attempts to both conceal and reveal where they are from, while also hiding the reality behind the fiction. This enables Beckett, to paraphrase Calvino in the context of art thefts, "to express himself while sheltering behind a kind of alibi, with limited responsibility" (Calvino, 83). Readers can see this through the various interplay between personal pronouns, such as the self-referential: "No *no* I *won't* say everything, I *won't* tell you everything" (*Dream,* 72; Beckett's italics). A few pages later, it is the personal plural: "We would not wish our young hero to be misjudged, by the reader, for the want of a few facts. We strive to give the capital facts of his case. Facts, we cannot repeat too often, let us have facts" (*Dream,* 74). To mediate between these two, is "Mr Beckett," who is called upon three times, on page 69, 141 and 186, to suggest to the narrator what might be the right word, such as: 'Kleinmeister's

Leidenschaftsucherei (thanks Mr Beckett), or crossed the Seine or the Pegnitz or the Tolka or the Fulda" (*Dream,* 69). This paradoxical tension between personal pronouns "removes the differentiation" which had "previously distinguished narrator (and by extension author) and protagonist" (Nixon, 2009 99). Through these narrative strategies, it is evident from the start to the end of the novel that Beckett is engaging in the influences of Joyce and Proust, while at the same time, the interjection of acerbic comments from a narrator are what distinguishes his post war writing.

V

The novel is split into five sections, but there are three distinct chapters marked out: chapter one is less than a page; chapter two is 140 pages, and further separated into sections: the first being the chapter proper and the second being an addition UND and then chapter three is 99 pages long, further separated into two sections, the first being the main chapter and the second is a short or additional one called AND, which is just three pages (Pilling, 2002. 19; King, 148.ftn. 11). Both Pilling (2002) and Murphy (2009) suggest that the narrative structure of *Dream* is perhaps in recognition to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and in chapter two, there is a deliberate parody of the baby tuckoo opening of *Portrait.* To explore this further, I will focus on the opening first few sentences of *Dream* and show how Beckett uses intertextual allusions which are relevant to the text as a whole. The narrative begins as follows:

> Behold Belacqua an overfed child pedalling, faster and faster, his mouth ajar and his nostrils dilated, down a freize of hawthorn after Findlater's van, faster and faster till he cruise alongside the hoss, the black fat wet rump of the hoss. Whip him up,

> vanman, flickem, flapem, collopwallop fat Sambo. Stiff, like a perturbation of feathers, the tail arches for a gush of mard. Ah …! (*Dream*, 1).

Through Beckett's "flagrant concealment," in these four opening sentences of *Dream*, we see an example of a deliberate conflation of both Joyce and Proust texts (*Dream*, 148). The opening suggests Murphy, is an amalgamation of two allusions to Joyce's texts: the first is *Ecce Puer,* (Behold the Child) a poem which Joyce wrote to "celebrate the birth of his grandson but acknowledges the remorse that he felt at having 'forsaken' his father" (Murphy 2009. 64; Qtd. Knowlson, 1996. 157) Beckett could also recite "the poem off by heart" when he was in his "eighty-third year"; in *Dream*, the implication is that Beckett is 'beholden' to Joyce - the literary son of Joyce (Qtd. in Knowlson, 1996. 158). The second allusion is from *Exiles*, Joyce's only play. The line from the play is spoken by Archie, an eight-year-old child, and through the stage directions, we learn that: "He makes the gesture of cracking a whip and shouts at the top of his voice: Avanti!" (Murphy, 2009. 64; Joyce, 1992. 234).

Pilling's *Companion* points out the allusion to Proust's 'hawthorn,' which Beckett wrote about in the same letter to McGreevey, quoted earlier, when he spoke about Proust's 'floral obsession' (Pilling, 2002.17). In *Swann's Way,* when Marcel first sees a hawthorn in a church, this gains in significance, through its associations with religion and later through a whole series of patterns, images and layering of the text, to Swann's daughter, Gilberte, then back to his first solitary sexual experience. Pilling also highlights that 'flickem, flapem, collopwallop' is from William M Cooper's *Flagellation and the Flagellants,* a text that Beckett uses to describe aspects of his female portraits in *Dream,* (see below). He also suggests that Beckett style of language here is what he emphasised in *Dante,* when praising Joyce (2002. 17). The suggestion from the passage is that Belacqua gets covered in horse shit with the 'gush of mard' and the one empathetic word: 'Ah…!' opens up the text to several other possible intertextual allusions, which Beckett may have had in mind.

Paul Stewart in *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work*, suggests that the opening of *Dream* closely parallels Freud's text of little Hans from his 1908 essay *On Sexual Theories of Children*. For Stewart, unlike little Hans, Belacqua possess a dual image:

> The defecating horse is at once an erotic image of penetration and, […] an image of evacuation, or a shitting birth. In the first case, the feces of the horse acts as a representation of the penis entering into the vagina. In its appearance, the anus of a horse is reminiscent of the vagina, allowing for both the images of penetration and evacuation to work (22).

To reinforce his observation Stewart highlights many of the references to equine terms throughout the novel, some of which are included in this essay, and they sustain a critique of Beckett's portrayal of female characters in *Dream* as misogynistic. These character portrayals will be looked at later.

There are other possible allusions that Beckett could have had in mind with the opening of *Dream,* which allude to horses, scatology and writing. The first is to Joyce's *The Dead* and the anecdote narrated within the story by Gabriel Conroy about his grandfather: "the late lamented Patrick Morkan: "who owned a horse called Johnny" (*Dubliners*, 208). Gabriel tells the story of a work horse which circled King Billy's statue "round and round it went," until a gentleman said "Johnny! Johnny! Most extraordinary conduct! Can't understand the horse!" (*Dubliners*, 2000. 208). The anecdote does not appear to have anything to do with the main thrust of the narrative and its significance can only be seen in retrospect as Cox has shown: the story unfolds to reveals the analogy between Gabriel, Gretta his wife and mistress and the dead Michael Furey, who was her former lover (Cox, 36-41). After Gretta falls asleep crying over his memory, Gabriel discovers that he has lacked any empathy and understanding as he has been "idealising his own clownish lusts," and the anecdote helped him to realise he treated people just like Morkan treated the horse

(*Dubliners*, 221). Beckett's homage to Joyce's *The Dead* is foregrounded through the framing of *Dream* around this text; whereas Belacqua ends the narrative in the rain, Gabriel looks out at Dublin covered in snow.

Dream of Fair to Middling Women	*The Dead*
..and the rain fell in a uniform untroubled manner. It fell upon the bay, the champaign-land and mountains, and notably upon the central bog it fell with a rather desolate uniformity. What would Ireland be, though, without this rain of hers. Rain is part of her charm. The impression one enjoys before landscape in Ireland, even on the clearest of days, of seeing it through a veil of tears, the mitigation of contour, [..] in the compresses of our national visibility, to what source can this benefit be ascribed if not to our incontinent skies? (*Dream,* 239-240)	It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill. […] It lay thickly drifted on the crocked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns (*Dubliners,* 225).

For Joyce, the snow symbolises both the inevitability of death and also, paradoxically its presence as Gabriel by the end of the story 'hears' the "snow falling faintly," whereas earlier, he was staring out at it. (225/177) The distinction between the two is the symbolic transformation in Gabriel as he "lay down beside his wife" at the end of the story, he realises that: "His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" (224). Just as Michael Furey has died, Gabriel

realises all life is transitory, including his own as: "the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived" (225) Readers are also under the sentence of death and on the 'journey westwards,' towards 'the lonely churchyard on the hill' that is covered in snow. Joyce's rhythmic prose through the repetition of 'falling,' and what has been rightly called his liquid l's in this last section, combined with the juxtaposition of 'snow' with 'waves,' and 'sleep' with 'death' work together to create an ambiguous sense of moral atrophy or paralysis. Beckett's pastiche of Joyce replaces the transcendent symbolism of snow with rain: this appears to be totally against everything that the text attempts to do, by including, for example, realistic detail as Ireland is synonymously linked to rain: 'What would Ireland be, though, without this rain of hers,' and then 'concealed' is a phrase from Paslm 84:6, 'through a veil of tears,' which in Christian theology refers to a period of trial in preparation for the afterlife and Belacqua's existence. This is followed by 'the mitigation of contour,' as Beckett ends with a return to the 'incontinent' Irish sky, which continues to rain - shit down on Belacqua.

The motif of 'incontinent skies' in Beckett's last pages is also foregrounded with another related Joycean motif which is used in *Finnegans Wake,* but at the time of writing *Dream,* it was still called *Work in Progress*. In Joyce's text, he uses nine one hundred letter words and a final one with a hundred and one letters, and these are spread through the whole of the *Wake*. These "ten thunderclaps" writes Susan Brienza: "fits the fecal motif, for these represent the noise of HCE's defecation" (1992. 125). Beckett parodies this motif in Joyce, but it is spoken by a "Leipzig prostitute [who] exclaimed" the "rainfall for the month of December," in Ireland is: "Himmisa-crakrűzidirkenjesusmariaundjosefundblűtigeskreuz" (*Dream,* 239). Although, Beckett does not exactly imitate Joyce, as his word does not contain one hundred letters, nevertheless, his nonsense word is made up of several recognisable German words, which reinforce an identifiable reality as the skies open thundering down shit on Belacqua. In relation to this, Joyce's lifelong fear of thunderstorms Beckett refers to in a letter to MacGreevy:

> Could there be any more ludicrous rationalisation of the itch to animise than the état d'âme balls, banquets & parties. Or – after Xerxes beating the sea, the Lexicographer kicking the stone & the Penman under the bed during the thunder – any irritation more mièvre than that of Sade at the impossibilité d'outrager la nature (*Letters*, 2009. 223).

Beckett suggests here that Joyce's fear of thunderstorm is 'mièvre,' "soft or effeminate" in Rabaté's translation. This is "coupled with a quotation taken out of context from Mario Praz statement: "L'impossibilité d'outrager la nature est, est selon moi, le plus grand supplice de l'homme [The impossibility of outraging Nature is, according to me, man's greatest torment]," which implies that Joyce's fear is something offensive (Rabaté, 2020. 18). Beckett's homage to *Work in Progress* is evident in the many sexual puns, allusions, and portmanteau words such as when Smeraldina tells Belacqua: "I met Arscholochwea and I had to get him to finger me a bit in my Brahms" (*Dream*, 18). Whereas Joyce's text often subverts readers expectations, Beckett's text in *Dream*, sometime reads more like derivative prose while at the same time, it clearly indicates the text is in a continuous dialogic conversation with Joyce's texts.

Another connection between a whipped horse's ass and the opening to *Dream* can be seen if we first look at a poem that Beckett included in a letter he wrote to Nuala Costello in 1934 and this is reprinted in his *Letters*, but not in the *Completed Poems*. This is strange poem which also links Belacqua to Bloom through an identification with Bloom's fetish for paraphilia in *Ulysse*s, but there is a difference between the two. In his letter to Nula, Beckett writes: "that it is a poem and not a verse, that it is a prayer and not a collect, I have not the slightest doubt" (*Letters*, 2009. 188). Beckett equates this poem with 'a prayer,' which is not unusual as we will see later; in the poem below, there are some unusual juxtapositions: the poem is divided equally into two four lines, creating a precise octave stanza. This can be imagined as almost a poem folding over on itself in its simplicity and unusual images as the period divides the two sets of quatrains ending

on ‘My mother’s breast.’ The persona imagines himself being whipped like a small horse, ‘a cob,’ as a form of caressing and this is linked to a mother’s breast:

> Mammon’s Bottoms,
> La Goulue’s, mine, a cob’s
> Whipt, caressed,
> My mother’s breast.
> But God’s
> A goat’s, an ass’s,
> Alien beauty,
> The Divine Comedy.
> (*Letters,* 187-188)

There is a similarity with Beckett’s poem and in Bloom mental representation about the moment on Hill of Howth, where he consummates his relationship with Molly, when suddenly in the midst of passion: “High on Ben Howth […] a nannygoat walking surefooted, dropping currants” (*U,* 224.17-18).[18] Beckett ‘goat’s ass’s’ is combined with an ‘alien beauty;’ to suggests that the persona desires to be whipped and the pun at the end with ‘Comedy’ and ‘Divine,’ indicates that this will be as gratifying as reading Dante. Just as Joyce succeeds in undermining readers’ expectations through bathetic metaphors such as Bloom’s where Molly has the same memory, (*U,* 881.24-26) Beckett’s empathetic exclamation with Belacqua, ‘Ah…!’ at the start of *Dream* is in response to his reading of this motif in *Ulysses.*

[18] There are numerous allusions to *Ulysses* throughout *Dream.* Some of these are obscure, such as to rivers, or placenames. In all of Beckett’s letters from Volume One from 1929 -1940, there is only one reference to *Ulysses,* and this is in the same letter Beckett writes to MacGreevey about Proust, quoted in Chapter 2. In Beckett’s library as Van Hulle and Nixon write, there is: “only a copy of a 1960 edition” (39).

VI

Dream of Fair to Middling Women and Smeraldina Rima

The portrait of Smeraldina Rima is based on Beckett's first cousin and first love, Peggy Sinclair, who he met when she was seventeen while on holidays in Ireland with her parents from Germany. Her name, like others in the text, is printed in a variety of ways: sometimes it is hyphenated; abbreviated; in capitalised letters or written using a reverse slash between first name and surname or as Smeraldinalgia. Their relationship is mapped through pages 3-33/55-109 of *Dream* and the image of Smeraldina is synonymous with the colour green.[19] Like all the names in *Dream*, Smeraldina is derived from two different literary allusions and sources:

> little emerald" derives from Dante's *Purgatorio* (XXXI. 116-17): "li smeraldi /ond' Amor giá ti tasse le sue armi" ("the emeralds from which Love once shot his darts at you"). Her surname is derived from W. H. Hudson's Rima, the wild Brazilian girl of *Green Mansions* (Ackerley, 2002. 58-59).

At the start of TWO, Belacquo is waving goodbye to Smeraldina from Carlyle Pier in Dublin as she is leaving for Vienna to study the piano, dance and music. Belacqua, is "in love from the girdle up with a slob of a girl called Smeraldina-Rima" [20](*Dream*. 3). They met one:

> evening on the green isle when first she heaved his soul from its hinges; *quiet as a tree, column of quiet. Pinus puella quondam fuit.* Alas fuit! So he would always have kept her be, rapt, like the spirit of a troubadour, casting no shade, herself shade. Instead of which of course it was only a question of seconds before *she would surge*

[19] Most writers on Beckett suggest it is Peggy who is the model who Krapp evokes in his memories of: "A girl in the shabby green coat" (*CDW*, 218). See, for example: Bair, pp. 91-94. They first met, according to the chronology in Beckett's biography and *Letters* in July 1928, p. 4. For autobiographical details in this section: Knowlson, pp. 81-85, 1996; Knowlson and Knowlson, pp. 35-39: 2006; Cronin, pp.103-123: 1997; Gordon, pp. 32-82: 1996.
[20] Beckett has stitched together, for want of a better phrase, phrases from Keats, Burton and Thomas á Kempis, when he writes about Smeraldina. These phrases I have put in italics. (See, Pilling, 2002; 2005 and Ackerley, 2002).

> *up at him, blithe and buxom and young and lusty, a lascivious petulant virgin, a generous mare neighing after a great horse, caterwauling after a great stallion, and amorously lay open the double-jug dugs* (*Dream,* 23-24).

Smeraldina writes love letters to Belacqua when he is in Paris, and these are printed in *Dream* between pages 53-61. These letters are written using erratic English, including spelling mistakes, occasional German phrases and terms of endearment as she expresses her love for him:

> Oh! Bel I love you terrible, I want you terrible, I want your body soft white body naked! naked!" (53); "Strum űber Asien, if it comes to Paris you must go and see it, the same Regie as Der Lebende Leichnam" (56); "sudenly"; "onely;" "he said Grűβ Gott but I dident hear him (*Dream,* 53-58).

There is a conflict between Belacqua's sexual desires and emotional longing for Smeraldina, as she lives far away: "loving the Smeraldina-Rima, and half the continent removed from the smell and sound of her breathing" (*Dream,* 39). In another letter 'written' by Smeraldina, the narrator parodies the letters Belacqua received from her earlier while this is also a parody of 'Penelope' from Joyce's *Ulysses.* Whereas Molly's eight sentence verbal flow is a representation of her consciousness as a kind of prosopopoeia, Beckett's Smeraldina page long monologue is a: "veritable barrage of double entendres, euphemisms and tonal slips […] foregrounding sexual matters"[21] (Pilling, 2011. 94). The monologue begins:

> Oh and I dreamed he would come and come come come and cull my thin Wicklow twingle-twangler comfort my days of roses days of beauty weeks of redness with mad

[21] This was published separately "with variants" in *The New Review II,* in April 1932, and later inserted into *Dream*. (Ackerley and Gontarski, 559) It is also published in Gontarski, edt. *Prose,* 1995: p.17 and *Poems,* p.36.

> shame to my lips of shame to my shamehill for the newest of news the shemost of shenews is I'm lust-belepered and unwell (*Dream,* 82-83).

To write this, Beckett source material from John Ford and Alexander Pope while it also mimics Joyce's 'Penelope' episode in miniature form as a 'reply' to Molly's soliloquy (See, Pilling, 2002, 172-173; 2005.175). The prose poem or monologue: "describes, insofar as describes anything, Smerry's lust for Belacqua during her menstrual period" (Pilling, 2002. 173). This is suggested through the euphemisms of 'weeks of redness;' if the letters are a true representation of the ones Beckett actually received from Peggy, is not known, however, the monologue suggests a deeply rooted misogynist attitude to female sexuality and agency, a repeated motif throughout *Dream.*

Belacqua refuses to visit a brothel to satisfy his sexual desire as: "Beatrice lurked in every brothel" (*Dream,* 41). In the narrative, Belacqua attempts to explain why or why he should not visit a brothel, or if he visits one, why he should bother to go in the first place as he reasons repeatedly: "Love demands narcissism" (*Dream,* 39). If he visits a brothel, he risks giving up his ideal image of Smeraldina, so he can't enter one as he risks harming this image as "one and indivisible," so he sees it as a test of his love for her (*Dream,* 41). These pages, suggests John King, involves:

> metaphysical gymnastics [about] his going and "simultaneously" – but semantically not go[ing] to a brothel in order to ensure that he is not merely a sex-starved victim to "this demented hydraulic that was beyond his control (King, 2005. 142; *Dream,* 41).

The text, suggests King, is "like a feedback loop," without any finality or logical coherence (142). In *Dream*, Beckett includes a copy of one of "the three poems he wrote for the German girl" which were inspired by his love for Peggy Sinclair (Qtd. in *Poems,* 342). It is called *Night of May* and begins: "At last I find in my soul confused," and ends with the couplet: "Like syzygetic stars, supernly bright, / Cojoined in the One and in the Infinite!" (*Dream,* 70; *Poems,* 51). The poem is

based on source material derived from another poem written by John of the Cross called *The Dark Night of the Soul* (Lynch, 1999a. 65/66). In the poem, a kind of mystical allusion or impulse is suggested with: 'Cojoined in the One and in the Infinite' while under the stars; this is a trope "favoured by the troubadour [poets] in the twelfth century" (Caws, 62). There is a long and rich European literary tradition "of satires, fabliaux, catalogues and centi," which is what Beckett's text seeks to align itself with (Ackerley, 2002. 56). In *Dream*, the narrator refers to the narrative as a "virgin chronicle," which as Mark Nixon indicates can be read in two ways (*Dream*, 69). Firstly, it draws readers to the etymology of the word:

> 'chronika,' meaning 'annals' (plural of 'chronikos', of time). Second, it also brings to mind the medieval French 'chronique' a register of events in order of time, but which commonly amalgamates fact with legendary fiction (Nixon, 2009. 98).

This is also evident in the epigraph, which is taken from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, but with the omission of the third line (Pilling, 2002. 13). What Beckett leaves out, according to Pilling is 'purgatory,' and this is where his *Dante* essay ended and where *Work in Progress* took place (ibid). In *Dream*, the reader is invited to situate events in the future:

> A thousand sythes have I herd men telle,
> That ther is joye in heven, and peyne in helle;
> But –
> Geoffrey Chaucer (epigraph printed for *Dream*).

The coordinating conjunction "But –," is a kind of incomplete statement which the reader will fill in as they read the text (Pilling. 2002. 13). In the lines quoted from *Night of May*, Belacqua seeks the admiration for his poetic genius with his admiring muse and his models for this are the Provençal and troubadour poets, such as Chaucer, which Beckett studied while at university. Belacqua's believes that "Words shall put forth for [him] the organs that [he] choose(s)" and this is echoed in Joyce's Shem, who is also a writer like Belacqua: "wrote over every square inch

of the only foolscap available, his own body" (*Dream,* 171; *FW,* 185. 36-37) All Belacqua's mental effort are focused in trying to establish the difference between the different women he meets.

> There is only one category, yours, that furnished by your states. As all mystics, independent of creed or colour and sex, are transelemented into the creedless, colourless, sexless Christ, so all categories of beauty must be transelemented into yours [..] with a centre everywhere and a circumference nowhere (*Dream,* 35).

Belacqua visits Smeraldina in Vienna, where her fictional persona is portrayed as more interested in a physical, sexual relationship, rather than a platonic one. Then their relationship changed after "she raped him" when Smeraldina "violated him after tea," which started a "ghenna of sweats and fiascos and tears" (*Dream,* 18/19). Beckett switches narrative pronouns to inform readers that: "We confess we are so attached to our principal boy that we cannot hope that she has since had caused to regret that first assault on his privities" (*Dream,* 19). The end of the relationship is expressed in similar, metaphysical terms as those expressed earlier in the poem but this time, it is a gesture towards something that is both physically desired while at the same time it is transformative:

> certain aspects of her *abode in his heart,* like wind in *a dyspeptic's stomach,* and made themselves felt from time to time in the *form of sentimental eructation* that was far from agreeable. She continued to bother him as an infrequent jolt of sentimental heartburn, nothing to write home about. Better, he thought, the odd belch than the permanent gripe (*Dream,* 109).

Earlier, a similar iteration to the 'infrequent jolt(s) of sentimental heartburn,' is evident when Belacqua felt that "a good few *prods of compunction*," is what he will experience when this relationship ends (*Dream,* 107). This is also an example of how *Dream,* to adopt a phrase used by

Abbott, "gravitate(s) towards autography" (Abbott, 1996. 2-3). This gravitational movement is both metaphorical and physical as Smeraldina: '*abode[s] in his heart, like wind in a dyspeptic's stomach*,' and this is in the ether: "consider *how best his quiet breath*, or, better still, his and hers mingled, *might be taken into the air*," but while it is there, the possibility remains that like 'the odd belch,' it will return (*Dream,* 107). A romantic strain can be traced throughout Beckett's work, often as parody, or as a homage to Keats poetry, such as here. (See, *Letters,* 21 and *Proust,* 90-91) From Belacqua's initial adoration for Smeraldina, her sexual desire is turned into an explicit objectification of her physicality and femininity, as her:

> body was all wrong, the peacock's claws. Yes, even at that early stage, definitely all wrong. Poppata, big breech, Botticelli thighs, knock-knees, ankles all fat nodules, wobbly, mammose, slobbery-blubbery, bubbub-bubbub, a real button bursting Weib, ripe. Then perched aloft on top of this porpoise prism, the loveliest little pale firm cameo of a bird face he had ever clasped his blazing blue eyes on (*Dream,* 15).

The love affair ends or fizzles out after Smeraldina seduces him; their breakup is "like a fairy-tale," as it came to an "insanitary" end [22] (*Dream,* 109) Later we learn at the start of THREE, when Beckett alludes to a sexually transmitted disease, which he may have contracted while visiting a brothel, as he writes: "Ginette Mac Something, the hem of the hem of the hem of the hem of whose virginity (vidual) toga he would never, jamais au grand jamais presume and was not worthy to lift the littlest notch let alone hoist aloft thigh-high" (*Dream,* 143). As Pilling writes 'toga virilis,' is a reference to syphilis, which Beckett took from Pierre Garnier's *Onanisme: seul et á deux,* and this prefigures 'Vidua-bird' in *Krapp's Last Tape* (Pilling, 2002. 250). Garnier's text is one that Beckett uses as source material when he writes about Lucia Joyce.

[22] Beckett's affair with Peggy Sinclair ended in December 1930. She died in 1932 of tuberculous as Beckett writes: "Peggy died in Wildungen near Kassel, quiet and peacefully after a fit of coughing in a sleeping-draught sleep" (*Letters,* 158).

VII

Dream of Fair to Middling Women and Syra-Cusa

The portrait of Syra-Cusa's is based on Lucia Joyce, James and Nora Joyce's daughter. Beckett first met Lucia Joyce in 1928 when he visited Joyce in November 1928. At the time, Lucia looked as if she had a promising career ahead of her and was already quite a famous dancer. Initially, there is no suggestion, either in any of the various biographies or scholarly papers that anything other than a platonic relationship developed between Lucia and Beckett as he was involved with Peggy, which the letter from Kassel earlier informs us (ibid). [23] In *Dream*, this is not so clear as Bellacqua is both struck by Syra-Cusa's beauty as the narrator wonders, citing Robert Burton: "Would she sink or swim in Diana's well? That depends what we mean by maiden" (Ackerley, 2002. 62; *Dream*, 34).[24] The implication here suggests a contradictory, or an ambivalent attitude when compared to later textual details as shown below. In the text we read of their connection or friendship mainly through pages 33-55, but again, this is not exclusively the case as there are scattered references to her character and their relationship later in the text.

When Belacqua leaves Smeraldina, he moves to Paris, where he meets the Syra-Cusa. In Beckett's portrait of Syra-Cusa, water imagery is used to describe her. Both Shloss and Vincenti. argue for a reading of *Dream* which aligns Belacqua with Shem and Lucia with *Anna Livia* from Joyce's *Work in Progress*. (Shloss, 190; Vincenti, 124) Vincenti suggests that Beckett's knowledge of *Anna Livia* gives Beckett particular insight into Lucia's psychological condition, just as it did Joyce and that her presence can be traced within the text of *Dream*. Vincenti writes that there is: "some sort of idealisation of a pathological condition which, to a certain extent, recalls Joyce's

[23] Knowlson; Bair; Ellman; Gordon and Maddox all suggest that Beckett behaved honourably in his relations with Lucia Joyce. Carol Loeb Shloss offers a different reading in her biography of Lucia; she suggests that the narrative of *Dream* could be "a self-censoring" portrait of Beckett in his relationship with Lucia. (90).

[24] The reason for various fonts, either in italics, bold or underlined in Beckett's quotations when he writes about Syra-Cusa, if not expanded upon immediately, these will be explained at the end.

own reaction to Lucia's problems" (Vincenti, 125). What is apparent, is that Belacqua is immediately overcome by Lucia's presence and in the passage below, the underlined words and phrases are highlighted by both Shloss and Vincenti to suggest that Beckett portrait of her mirrors that of *Anna Livia*, the river woman in Chapter VIII of *Finnegans Wake*:

> To take her arm, to flow together, [….] was a foundering in music, the slow ineffable flight of a dream-dive, a launching and terrible foundering in a rich rape of water. [he] trembled on a springboard, jutting out doomed, high over dreamed water (34).

Syra-Cusa's beauty is used by Beckett to engage with another text of Joyce. This can be seen in Stephen Dedalus discussion with Lynch about proper art "which excites" the imagination in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (*Portrait,* 179). For Stephen, the subject of mind and art are fundamental to his characterisation and Joyce's aesthetics as expressed at that time. Stephen, as Murphy points out, does not want to get "arrested," by the simplicity of binary thinking, but seeks a transcendent state of reflection: "The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotions (I use that term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing" (*Portrait,* 179; Murphy, 2009. 68). For Beckett, this is a metaphysical ideal, and it is parodied in Belacqua's conception of beauty when he looks at the Syra-Cusa as: "the quintessential kernel and pure embodiment of the occult force that holds me up, makes me wax pagan and static, the kernel of beauty if beauty it be, at least in this category (skirts)" (*Dream,* 34). The narrator's ideas about feminine beauty here, as some kind of aesthetic ideal, is a parody of Joyce's. Beckett's portrait of Syra-Cusa is a caricatured version of someone who is artificial: 'the kernal of beauty if beauty it be' is in 'this category (skirts);' she is someone who is real, but without depth; vacant: "her head was null" (*Dream,* 33).

The Syra-Cusa's: "*eyes were wanton, they rolled* and *stravagued*, they were *laskivious and lickerish*, the *brokers of her zeal, basilisk eyes, the fowlers and hooks of Amourrr, burning glasses.*

Strong piercing black eyes" (*Dream*, 50). In similar language that was used earlier when writing about Smeraldina, she is objectified as the poet persona compares the two women as sexual objects, but the Syra-Cusa is:

> from the throat to toe **she was lethal**, pyrogenous, **Scylla and the Sphinx**. *The fine round firm pap she had, the little mamelons, gave her an excellent grace*. And the hips, the *bony basin*, coming after the Smeraldina-Rima's **Primavera buttocks** ascream for a **fusillade of spanners, fessades, ciappate and verberations**, the hips *were a song and a very powerful battery"* (*Dream*, 50).

In the above quotations, Beckett has sourced material from Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*: these are in Calibri Light (Heading) *font in italics*; the text in **bold Times New Roman** is from William Cooper's *Flagellation and Flagellants*; **the text in Calibri (body) bold** is from Mario Praz's *The Romantic Agony*; the text in **Aharoni is from Pierre Garnier's *Onanisme: seul et á deux*** (Pilling, 2002. 96-97; Ackerley, 2002. 58-64). After the Syra-Cusa deliberately forgets a book that Belacqua gives her as a present in a bar, he insists that they return to retrieve it, adding: "She was a cursed nuisance. Be off, puttanina, and joy be with you and a bottle of moss" (*Dream*, 50). The vitriolic language used to portray Syra-Cusa is more sustained than that used to characterise any other female character in *Dream*.

Whereas Beckett's portrait of Smeraldina, is misogynistic, it borders on the puerile and it could also be read as an exercise of an arrogant, but very intelligent young writers attempt to get over an early love affair gone wrong; the portrait of Syra-Cusa is different. This desire to inflict pain but also punishment, as the title suggests from which Beckett took one of his reference material, Cooper's *Flagellation*, indicates she deserves to be punished for her physical beauty. Beckett has not sourced material from Keats about some mystical eternal beauty, for example, in his portrayal of Syra-Cusa; this clearly indicates a very different symbolic relationship between the two

characters. There is a sadomasochistic textual trace, in his characterisation of Syra-Cusa, which is also evident in the poem about being whipped that was quoted earlier. We can see this through the vocabulary used to describe Syra-Cusa; she is characterised as a 'lethal' and dangerous nymphomaniac; a reincarnation of 'Scylla and the Sphnix,' monster who, because she is free or emancipated: 'ciappate(d),' deserves to be beaten as she is nothing but a 'puttanina,' or in modern Italian, 'puttana' – a whore. Beckett's portrayal of both Smeraldina and Syra-Cusa is also peculiar in his depiction of female sexuality; on the one hand, the narrative suggests that Belacqua sexually desires them, while on the other, he fears their sexuality; leaving his sexual desire to be satisfied only through using prostitutes. The text suggests that when female characters do express their desire, such as Syra-Cusa, then the narrator takes delight in punishing them; just as they received a similar punishment themselves in the earlier poem; an identification that is aporetic.

VIII

Dream of Fair to Middling Women and Alba

When Belacqua returns to Ireland, he meets the last of his of his 'fair to middling women': the unobtainable Alba. This is a portrait of Ethna MacCarthy, a university colleague and friend of Beckett's.[25] In contrast to the other female portraits, she is not objectified as he is beholden to her: "Behold her gliding ahead of schedule – [as to] keep him waiting is not her genre, no, that is too easy" (*Dream,* 151). The Alba is a "frail Princess-ship", and her "great eyes went as black as sloes, they went as big and black as El Greco painted. [..] It was a remarkable thing to see. Pupils white swamped in the dark iris gone black as night" [26](*Dream,* 152/174).

When Belacqua is lying on the beach on Silver Strand with Alba, if we read Belacqua's illness as a symptom of syphilis, which is what Mary Lynch suggests may be wrong with him, then the

[25] Beckett has acknowledged this in an interview with Knowlson, 1996. 443. See also, Blair, 160–161.
[26] In *Krapp Last Tape*, memories of their love affair are evoked with the girl in the punt, where her eyes become an important motif in the text. See, Knowlson. 1996. pp.442-443; Brater, p. 91-95.

sexual consummation of this relationship is not possible. In the narrative, an omniscient narrator tells us that: "He had not lain with her. Nor she with him" (*Dream,* 177). Or it can be read in poetic terms, where the physicality of Smeraldina's sexuality is "counterbalanced against the Alba's ethereal presence," where "any temptation to unite them" is only in poetic form (Qtd. in Ackerley and Gontarski, 2006. 8). While on the beach with Alba, Belacqua's 'odd belch,' or memory trace of Smeraldina returns as he muses:

> a year ago now that he had been inland in another land with another girl, a bigger, less bountiful one, in fact not in the same class at all, the Smeraldina (whom now of course, too late in the day, we wish we had called, say, Hesper) to be sure that lady dog for ever proud (*Dream,* 187-188).

Hesper is the evening star and is used as a symbol for poetic inspiration and in context to this, it is worth recalling what Beckett said about poetry: "All poetry, as discriminated from the various paradigms of prosody, is prayer" (*D,* 68). A prayer is an earnest desire, or an invocation as expressed by the supplicant or speaker and in *Dream*, it is a series of: "impressive statement of itself drawn across the strata and symbols, lamina of peace" (*Dream,* 182). The first line from his poem 'Alba', which together with 'Yoke of Liberty', Beckett wrote for Ethna MacCarthy and which he wrote that they: "came together one on top of the other, a double yoked orgasm in months of dispermatic nights and days" (Qtd. in Knowlson. 1996. 135). The line from 'Alba' in *Dream* is: "Before morning you shall be here…." (*Dream,* 148). This line is set amidst pages full of fragments from a variety of other texts, some of which are recognisably from Beckett's favourite authors; including Dante, Baudelaire, Goethe and Mallarmé. In two further lines from 'Alba,' not included in *Dream,* this poetic invocation is expressed as:

> whose beauty shall be a sheet before me
> a statement of itself drawn across a tempest of emblems.
> (*Poems,* 10)

The poetic line that is used in *Dream* is also framed within a repeated leitmotif of Beckett's in *Dream*, where Belacqua is "trying to verbalise a wombtombing" (*Dream,* 148). There are several iterations of this portmanteau word: 'womb' and 'tomb,' for example, "the limbo and the wombtomb alive with the unaxious spirits;" it is cited again on pages 45, 123, 141 and 181 (*Dream,* 121). The phrase, when first used was from Jonathan Swift and Beckett also used a similar combination of these words earlier in the novel in: "entombed and entombed" (*Dream,* 6; Pilling, 2002. 28). Beckett borrowed the phrase and transmogrified it from Joyce's *Ulysses,* who in turn had borrowed it from Swift; with Joyce, it suggested a homecoming, a return to the womb a unification of Bloom with Molly as the narrator informs us, when Bloom arrives home, he is:

Womb? Weary?

He rests. He has travelled. (*U,* 870.27-28)

Beckett poetic fragment from 'Alba', and his comments where he has written twice that poetry is a form of prayer indicates a preference for the poetic as opposed to the prosaic, while also gravitating towards a "descent" to a "re-entombing," as the poem, 'Calvary By Night,' printed on pages 213-214 suggests.[27] This 're-entombing,' denies the ability of language to simplify the layers of signification, whereas the suggestion with Joyce, is to unify them. Beckett aims to erase signification as language become a catalyst for further or alternative meanings as the narrator in *Dream* is seeking, at this point in the narrative, an identification with the 'tempest of emblems' or the 'lamina of peace,' an imagined depth of language.

IX

Conclusion

Dream of Fair to Middling Women is the most unusual text in all Beckett's oeuvre. Through Beckett's letters and the various autobiographical and biographical material available, it is

[27] This poem is also printed in Beckett's *Poems,* p. 52.

possible to piece together a deeply conflicted artist who, at the same time, is in a "constant formal [state of] experimentation" (Abbott. 1996. 28). We can see this experimentation throughout *Dream*, to quote Abbott again, as there is a: "deliberate metamorphosis, a kind of remembering by misremembering," within the text (Abbott, 1996. 28-29). To 'remembering by misremembering' is on the textual surface of *Dream* more than any other prose text Beckett has written; while simultaneously, real human emotions and events are used which then get transformed into the material feature that makes this novel such a challenge to read.

In a letter that Yeats wrote to the young James Joyce, he tells him that: "One always learns one's business from one's fellow-workers" (Qtd. in Gordon, 57; also in Ellmann, 104). Beckett also learned from his 'fellow-writers' and transformed his work into something new. "After all," as Calvino writes in a recently translated essay from 1980: "one of the canonical processes of the avant-garde is to work on something already written" (Calvino, 81). Beckett's *Dream* offers an abundance of references to 'something already written' and this situates him amongst his modernist contemporaries, such as Joyce and Proust, in their creative engagement with textual memory and intertextual allusions. This can be seen in a final example from 'The Lestrygonians,' an episode from Joyce's *Ulysses*. In this episode nothing much happens, but it corresponds to internal body movements and regurgitation. In the episode, Joyce's omniscient narrator tells us that we can never truly know someone else as: "We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves" (273.30.33). For Beckett, when this is regurgitated it becomes: "We go through the world" [...] like sunbeams through cracks" (*Dream,* 224) Beckett uses other writers work and ideas to create his own.

4

Krapp's Last Tape

In the early 1950's, Beckett turned his attention to writing for the stage in order, to: "relieve" himself from "the awful depression the prose led" him into (Qtd. in Bair, 383 and Brater). By 1958 Beckett writes to his former lover Ethna McCarthy, who is suffering from terminal cancer, telling her that he has just completed "a stage monologue" adding "I think you will like if no one else" (Qtd. in Knowlson, 1996. 443). What Beckett had written and hoped Ethna would like was *Krapp's Last Tape*, and this text is a dramatised return to many of the themes and ideas that he explored in his essays on Proust and Joyce. Many scholars and academics have noted, as suggested briefly in the previous chapter, the links between Beckett's life and the characters evoked in *Krapp's Last Tape*; such as the girl in the punt where some have suggested it is Smeraldina and others suggest it is Alba. We can see also that *Krapp's Last Tape* explores a trinity of motifs which Beckett encountered in his essay on Proust, namely: time, habit and memory. Beckett returns to these motifs which he discovered in Proust, and these are mirrored in the three different ages of Krapp that we hear from on stage.

Krapp's Last Tape takes place "in the future" where a "wearish old man" of 69 is sitting in his "den" (*CDW*, 215). With the aid of an old ledger, a dictionary and tape recorder, Krapp is a man: "imprisoned by Time, frightened and attracted to the possibility of release through voluntary memory (Oberg, 335). Krapp is an audio-diarist who listens to himself from 30 years earlier doing the same thing on his birthday where he reminds himself that he had been "listening to an old year" at "random" from "at least ten or twelve years" previously to this; which would have made him 29 or 27 (*CDW*, 217) In contemplative stops and starts of the recordings, Krapp begins a new recording as he comments on the transience of time:

> Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! 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.*] Satistics. Seventeen hundred hours, out of the proceeding eight thousand odd, consumed on licensed premises alone. More than 20 per cent, say 40 per cent of his waking life. (218)

Phrases, words and images are repeated and juxtaposed as memory and imagination blur in the tape, which records not necessarily a life, but an imagining of that life:

> The grain, now what I wonder do I mean by that, I mean …[*hesitates*] … I suppose I mean those things worth having when all the dust has–when all *my* dust has settled. I close my eyes and try and imagine them (217).

It is the 'imagination' here which Beckett has foregrounded to suggest that Krapp has shaped his own fate, and this is achieved through language, memory and time. This is shown when Krapp hears about the moment his "mother lay a–dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity" (219). He then stops the tape, goes immediately to look up the meaning of the word 'viduity' in his dictionary and reads out his definition: "State–or condition of being–or remaining–a widow–or widower […] Also of an animal, especially a bird … the vidua or weaver bird …Black plumage of male" (219). Here Beckett has added "or widower," to his definition as Kinzele has pointed out (211). Beckett is not Krapp and Krapp is not Beckett and at self-reflexive moments such as these, where the text as a *mise-en-abyme* indicates Krapp's own status as a man, who as an artist, has chosen his own fate.

On one level, Beckett's text echoes similar ideas to those expressed by Benjamin when he writes that: "Language has unmistakably made plain […] memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium" (Benjamin, 1999. 576) Just as Joyce and Proust did

before him, Beckett uses everything in his world as the raw material for his work and then through his imagination, he transformed them. Beckett suggests that memory is itself a type of fictional construct by drawing attention to Krapp's artistic calling who, like Belacqua thirty years earlier aimed to "write a book," and now he hears that he succeeded in getting it published (*Dream,* 138). The voice of the younger Krapp reminds him that he has dedicated himself to his "Opus…magnum" and had: "Seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade prices to free circulating libraries beyond the seas. Getting known," which suggests a self-parody of his artistic calling that is to blame for his present condition (218/222). When Krapp's hears his: "Farewell to– [*he turns the page*]–love," it could also be read as a romantic parody of the artist who, with the metaphor of 'turning the page' back to a time when he rejected love in favour of pursuing his artistic ambitions. We hear Krapp replay these moments three times as the girl in the punt whose: "eyes were closed" at first until Krapp asked her to open them (222). This motif is also in Joyce's *Portrai*t where a similar moment occurs in Stephen's imagination with the bird-girl epiphany at the end of Chapter 4: "Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. *Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call*. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! (*Portrait,* 172, my italics) For Beckett, when Krapp asks the girl to open her eyes the final time:

> to look at [him] and after a few moments–[*Pause.*]–after a few moments she did, but the eyes just slits, because of the glare. I bend over to get them in the shadow and they opened. [*Pause. Low.*] Let me in. [*Pause*.] We drifted in among the flags and stuck. The way they went down, sighing, before the stem! [*Pause.*] 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. (223)

In contrast to the Joycean epiphany, Beckett's reply is dramatic, it is repetitive as it involves listening to recorded messages on a mechanical tape which we hear three times. The girl in the punt is both present and absent as Beckett's correspondence to Alan Schneider tells us: "Krapp has nothing to talk to but his dying self and nothing to talk to him but his dead one" (59). We can also see this echoed in how Beckett has "borrowed" a motif from Heine's poem 'Der Doppelgänger,' which "allows Krapp to be present in both of his selves at the same time and in the same place" (Fletcher and Spurling, 91). Similarly, Beckett borrowed a word from *Othello,* which Krapp alludes to on the tape; this comes at a significant moment after Othello has killed Desdemona, the woman he loved, as he confesses his reason to Emilia:

> Nay, had she been true,
>
> If heaven would make me such another world
>
> Of one entire and perfect *chrysolite*,
>
> I'd not have sold her for it. (5.2.142–45, my italics)

Krapp hears his younger self repeat Othello's word 'chrysolite' as he sat on a "bench by the weir" looking at the room where his mother "lay a-dying" and he sees a "dark young beauty […] all white and starch […] The face she had! The eyes! Like . . . [*hesitates*] . . . chrysolite!" (*CDW,* 219/220). Beckett draws our attention to moments such as this: the time of Krapp's mothers' death or his farewell to love, and these are made real in his own voice listening to them in the present, which is replayed to him from the past; this enables him to experience them anew each time. Krapp rejected love as did Othello and his recorded memory enables him to re-experience these "Moments. Her moments, my moments" repeatedly (220). The eyes, as a window into the soul is a familiar romantic cliché, which Beckett used throughout *Dream* in his depiction of his female characters, and for Krapp, it ventriloquises a memory of self-parody.

Beckett's attention to detail with this play is legendary as *The Theatrical Notebooks* and the recent work in the Beckett archive project attest. There are five recognisably different versions of the play available, and in these different versions, it is evident how Beckett wrestled with the Manichean elements of the play: these are listed as "Mani" in his notebook for Schiller-Theater Wekstatt performance in Berlin that he directed (*Beckett's Notebook*, 1992. 133).[28] In the notes from the 1969 production in Berlin, Beckett attempted to reconcile the interrelationship between 'light' and 'dark,' 'sound' and 'silence,' where motion and movement on stage is equally balanced, (see, Beckett's *Notebook*, 1992: pp.133-157). Beckett returned to direct *Krapp* more times than all his others plays and in each of these productions, he made discoveries during the rehearsal process which is consistent with his "constant formal experimentation" throughout all his writing (Abbott, 1996). Even as the play closes, where we hear from the 39-year-old Krapp, reliving his sense of pathos, denial and nostalgia, with: "Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now," Beckett, as Van Hulle and Nixon note, is drawing on other texts, such as Fontane's *Unwiederbringlich* (99; *CDW*, 223). Despite the brevity of *Krapp's Last Tape*, it marks a pivotal moment for Beckett and all his work to follow. It is evident that it contains embedded allusions to other texts, while simultaneously, this impression presupposes Beckett's critical engagement with the fragility of memory and time, which continued long after the play was finished.

[28] In Beckett's letters to Schneider, he suggest to him ways Krapp should circulate the table and how many steps he should take. This is accompanied with a diagram. (58-59). See also:
BDMP :: Krapp's Last Tape / La Dernière Bande (beckettarchive.org)

Conclusion

This study, in spite of its limitations, has shown that Beckett's early work is essential in understanding the development to his later writings where, either consciously or subconsciously, the notion of memory and time is critical to understanding his work. This is reflected in Beckett's own words, when he writes that: "Avec les mots on ne fait que se raconter" [With words one can only tell the story of oneself] (*D*, 119; Qtd. in Juliet, 22). This is followed a sentence later by: "Et jusque dans le confessionnal on se trahit" [Even in the confessional we betray ourselves] (119). As suggested at the start of this thesis, Beckett's exploration of first-person narration and memory began in the late 1940's with his prose works and *Krapp's Last Tape* is a continuation of this experimentation in dramatic form. Ten years after this play was written, Beckett writes in *Text for Nothing 6*:

> Did I ever believe I was there, somewhere in that ragbag, that's more the line, of inquiry, perhaps I'm still there, as large as life, merely convinced I'm not. The eyes yes, if those memories are mine, I must have believed in them an instant, believed it was me I saw there dimly in the depth of their glades (*Prose,* 124).

The presence, while at the same time absence, of memory continued in a forward movement mitigated between the fictional and the real, until the end of his writing.

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Digital Resources

BDMP :: Krapp's Last Tape / La Dernière Bande (beckettarchive.org)

Annia Livia Plurabelle (riverrun.org.uk)