SAMUEL BECKETT AND COMMUNICATIONAL AESTHETICS:

BETWEEN RESONANT WORLDS AND MATERIAL REGIMES

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Selvin Yaltır, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;

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ABSTRACT

Samuel Beckett and Communicational Aesthetics:

Between Resonant Worlds and Material Regimes

While Samuel Beckett's oeuvre manifests a wide array of communicational gestures, from voices and dialogues to more intricate webs of interrelation among bodies, affects, gestures, technological tools and voiceovers, communication has been a suspect term to define his work. This thesis examines Samuel Beckett's work around an emergent idea of communication and works towards a definition of Beckettian aesthetics as "communicational." It takes off from a nonstandard concept of communication that describes artistic creation, mainly derived from Deleuzean aesthetics, and proposes to analyze the various shifting conditions and material that make up Beckett's worlds of affection, perception, sensation and reflection. To that end, the chapters of this study discuss certain key texts and look at the ways in which diverse conditions, principles and topoi continually affect and resonate with each other across the oeuvre. By exploring the instances of a communicational gesture in the oeuvre, I seek to show that Beckett's language offers points of contact with affective, bodily, cognitive, social and political forms of expression. I suggest that considering the forms of sensibility and comprehensibility that Beckett's different levels of expression produce is significant to understanding his oeuvre-making. A novel understanding of communication in Beckett's work contributes to the exploration of new forms of comprehensibility produced through implicit and provisional forms of knowledge across the oeuvre.

ÖZET

Samuel Beckett ve İletişimsel Estetik:

Yankılanan Dünyalar ve Maddi Rejimler Arasında

Samuel Beckett'in yapıtı, basitçe sesler ve diyaloglardan bedenler, etkiler, jestler, teknolojik araçlar, dış sesler, sinyaller ve göstergeler arası çok daha karmaşık etkileşim ağlarına kadar çeşitli iletişimsel durumları sürekli konu edinse de iletişim Beckett'in yapıtını tanımlamak için sık başvurulan bir terim olmamıştır. Bu tez Samuel Beckett'in yapıtını yeni bir iletişim fikri üzerinden inceleyecek ve Beckettçi estetiği "iletişimsel" olarak tanımlamanın zeminini araştıracaktır. Sanatsal yaratımı betimlemek için, standart yaklaşımların ötesinde yer alan ve ağırlıklı olarak Deleuzecü estetiğe dayalı bir iletişim kavramlaştırmasından yola çıkarak Beckett'in etkilenim, algı, duyumsama ve düşünce dünyalarını oluşturan değişken içerik ve koşulları araştırmayı hedefleyecektir. Bu amaçla, bu çalışmanın bölümleri, belirli metinleri tartışarak farklı koşul ve öğeler ile imgenin yerleştiği alanların Beckett'in yapıtını kat etme, birbilerini etkileme ve birbirleriyle yankılanma biçimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu tür bir iletişimsel bakışın örneklerini araştıran bu çalışma, Beckett'in dilinin, etkilenimsel, bedensel, bilişsel, sosyal ve politik ifade biçimleriyle temas noktaları oluşturduğunu göstermeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu açıdan, Beckett'teki çeşitli ifade seviyelerinin ürettiği duyarlık ve anlaşılabilirlik biçimlerini değerlendirmenin, Beckett'in yapıtının yaratımını anlamak açısından önemine dikkat çeker. Beckett'in yapıtında iletişime ilişkin yeni bir anlayışın, yapıttaki örtük ve koşullu bilgi biçimlerinin ürettiği yeni anlaşılabilirlik tarzlarının araştırılmasına katkı sağlayacağını savunur.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Beckett and communication

In any standard sense, communication is a highly suspicious term to use when speaking about Samuel Beckett's work. His comments about the issue provide critical ground for supposing the impossibility rather than the possibility of communication. That being said, Beckett's critical and creative preoccupation with diverse senses of communication is evident, and, on close scrutiny his fictional and critical uses of the term promote an imprecise rather than a strictly pejorative sense. Given the ways in which it brings into play communicational situations at different moments from voices and inner speech to gestural communication and recording technology, Beckett's oeuvre invests in a question of communication that serves to both reappraise assumptions and lay out new theoretical and creative perimeters. In this regard, it is surprising that a book-length study on this aspect of the work has not been done.[1]

Beckett's intellectual and artistic engagement with communication is interesting for the purposes of this study, although the scope of this engagement, as will be shown, remains more abstract than clearly mapped out. However, this ambiguity proves fruitful, and Beckett's artistic and theoretical commitment to the question opens up vistas for a novel apprehension of the notion in his oeuvre. While

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[1] Although several studies have been done on certain aspects of what could be broadly referred to as communication, a comprehensive study on communication in Beckett's work is not available. For the analysis of the voice in Beckett, see Brater, 1994 and West 2010. On narrative communication see Iser (1978). More recently, Addyman, Feldman and Tonning (2017) published an edited volume on Beckett's relationship to BBC Radio. Bruck (1982), Ziarek (1996), Salisbury (2010), Murphy (2015), Dukes (2017) published articles in relation to a wide array of connected topics ranging from sociality to information theory and surrealist images of communication.

communication does not simply signify a subject matter or narrative purpose in the texts of this most "avant-garde" writer of the twentieth century, it remains an aesthetic concern that determines a program throughout the corpus, and incites Beckett's life-long search for new forms, expressions, genres and styles.

One of the earliest references to the impossibility of communication takes place in Beckett's monograph on Proust from 1930. Speaking about Proustian art as "the apotheosis of solitude," Beckett disdains the idea that subjective experience can be transmitted unproblematically to another: "There is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication" (1978, p. 47). In the critical essay "Recent Irish Poetry," written in 1934 he makes his earlier claim more specific when he describes the modern phenomenon of the "rupture of the lines of communication" between the subject and the object (2001, p. 70). He reprises these earlier comments in his interview with Tom Driver from 1961: "We cannot listen to a conversation for five minutes without being acutely aware of the confusion" (in Graver & Federman, 2005, p. 242).

A failure of communication is thus not only about the general shortcomings of language in transcribing reality, but also about the impossibility of conveying an experience without altering the fundamental nature of its content. Beckett's creative and intellectual life was engaged directly or indirectly with this broad question of artistic communication, what and how to express that which is lost and impossible to express. Mark Nixon observes that this issue "remained pertinent, and unresolved" in Beckett's German diaries, and, I argue, it continues during the course of the development of his oeuvre (2011, p. 164).

Beckett integrates his skepticism of the idea of communication primarily into his reviews of art work. In the critical writings, many of his commendations of modern art are by virtue of their expressions of the rupture he identifies in "Recent Irish Poetry." These most interesting references to communication appear in the critical commentary about painters in particular. In one of his many letters to Thomas MacGreevy from 1936, which are invaluable sources of Beckett's art criticism, (and which were gathered through his visits to museums during his stay in Germany), Beckett lauds Swiss painter Karl Ballmer's work: "Object not exploited to illustrate an idea . . . The communication exhausted by the optical experience that is its motive and content" (in Fehsenfeld & Overbeck, 2009, p. 392).[2] Here Beckett displaces the primacy of artistic communication as a form of correspondence between an abstract idea and an object that illustrates that idea, and focuses on the "optical experience" as that which forms and motivates the composition of the work. From early on, Beckett's prioritization of this kind of composition, where the work manifests the process of the aesthetic experience itself, that is, the process of seeing, is telling. The artist's gaze does not exploit the object to demonstrate his vision, but its movements become the movements of shape and color.[3] His admiration for Ruisdael's painting *Entrance to the Forest* spells out this vision once again: "There is no entrance any more nor any commerce with the forest, its dimensions are its secret and it has no communications to make" (as cited in Knowlson, 2014, p. 197). Similarly, he speaks of an "absence of rapport" in Cézanne, and suggests that the painter "had the sense of his incommensurability" both with outer and inner life (as cited in Knowlson, p. 197).

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[2] Carville writes: "Ballmer's art is not mediated by the concept, but rather establishes something of immediate experience" (2018, p. 99).
[3] One is reminded of Merleau-Ponty's idea of the "feel of perceptual experience itself" (2004, p. 54). For more on this connection, see Maude, 2009.

Curiously, this absence of relation between the artist and the work is articulated in reference to communication in other instances. In *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* Belacqua speaks of the communication of silence: "The experience of my reader shall be between the phrases, in the silence, communicated by the intervals, not the terms of the statement" (Beckett, 2012, p. 138). In most other contexts, the uses become vaguer. The Unnamable imagines "tanks communicating," his solipsist universe is paradoxically invaded by transmission channels. (Beckett, 1958a, p. 397). Similarly, in "The End" the narrator obsesses with an idea of vessels communicating (Beckett, 1995, p. 97).[4] In "Enough" the narrator describes a style of walking punctuated by immediate continuous and discontinuous communication with his partner (Beckett, 1995, p. 189). Beckett's couples are often condemned to forms of communication like this when the means seem to be lost. Molloy's playful communication with his mother by knocking on her skull effects a ludicrous image of communication that leads to futility, and no understanding is acquired (Beckett, 1958a, p. 18).

Perhaps such confusing images of communication would fall into place if later depictions were considered. In many places, Beckett's images of communication are formed at the expense of comprehension between the parts that communicate. In "Come and Go," three women reminisce about their old days and how change might have affected them. The women sit side by side on stage with their faces turned towards the audience and they whisper to each other's ears a truth about the third to which the readers do not have access. Although no real event takes place except for this three-minute exchange of whispers, the play is dominated by images of transmission. In the short play "Play" a similar strategy is implemented,

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[4] For more on the image of communicating vessels in Beckett's work, see Dukes, 2017.

where a man and two women give their accounts of the love triangle among them. The characters are emplaced within big urns, with only their heads visible. Each story picks up from where the other pauses, and although they are not communicating to each other, these characters' stories are overlaid on top of one another, which gives the impression of a transmission channel without any clear-cut message that can be acquired from it. These cryptic forms suggest an attempt to promote images of communication that are ultimately ineffective in terms of bringing out common sense. However they do expose the readers to a certain measure of confusion or enigma presented through patterns and routines that engender new forms of perception.

Like in those instances communication appears in his fiction and drama, in other critical occasions he uses the term, it emerges as ambivalent, if not antithetical to his slighting remarks. The verb "to communicate" appears in reference to the possibility of qualifying a sense of inexpressibility. Behind Beckett's defense of Proust's incoherent, disorderly style against academic uniformity and cohesion in the essay "Proust in Pieces" from 1934, there lurks the idea of a fragmented form of expression: "His material, pulverized by time, obliterated by habit, mutilated in the clockwork of memory, he communicates as he can, in dribs and drabs" (2001, p. 65). A similar idea of the communication of disintegration can be found in his essay on Sean O'Casey from 1934. For Beckett, O'Casey's "Juno and the Paycock" "communicates most fully this dramatic dehiscence, mind and world come asunder in irreparable dissociation" (p. 82). In these instances, Beckett describes artistic expressions of disintegration and incoherence by alluding to these writers' communication of them. If the communication of disintegration, as it were, was particularly appealing to Beckett, simplicity defines the new aspect of the idea for

him in 1937: "I boost the possibility of stylelessness in French, the pure communication" (as cited in Knowlson, p. 257). This purity presupposes lacking in style for Beckett, and the emergence of a language unsupported by any subjective use, therefore, one without ideas, personal preferences, beliefs or intentions.

Taking off from Beckett's persistent challenge to speculate about communication, this thesis will attempt to reflect on communication as an emergent aesthetic program in Beckett's work. Accordingly it will offer a framework in which Beckett's aesthetics can be described as communicational, and seek to recontextualize his engagement with the notion as an aesthetic principle. What I mean by communicational is both in the spirit and material of Beckett's writing: hearing, speaking to oneself, feeling oneself, being critical of oneself, relentless dialogues, forms of sociality, and cryptic forms of exchange, but also the continual variation, resonance and evolution of forms that his texts invent. I will seek to define communication as a program that can be extricated from such procedures.

It should be noted from the outset that this thesis does not analyze communication as a stable object of study or categorical notion. It will identify instances where a communicational program is at work across certain key texts, and show the ways in which this program displaces self-reflective constraints created by Beckett's work, by pointing towards its creative potentials. To explore this communicational program in a more specific sense, this thesis will look at the instances of Beckett's writing that present and problematize communicational events characterized by the broad spectrum of human and non-human interactions that involve voices, affects, bodies, as well as sources of perception and sensation on the one hand, and orders, signs and signals on the other. I do not claim that Beckett celebrates or parodies such forms. In fact, one of the central arguments of this thesis

is that this communicational program contributes to the development of the oeuvre in

such ways that it continually generates potential forms of knowledge and

comprehensibility. To that end, I will make extensive use of critical thought that

deals with a nonstandard notion of communication, derived from the thoughts of

Gilles Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari to explore the ways in which the concepts

proposed by them can be useful in exploring this communicational program as

Beckett's aesthetics.

As it appears occasionally in the corpus, Beckett's discussion of

communication yields a peculiar artistic stance that both renounces and employs the

idea in specific ways. A significant aspect of that stance is articulated by Richard

Coe in 1977 in *Times Literary Supplement*. Coe's discussion of Beckett's language

of poetry provides an opening towards an exploration of his transgeneric language. It

is worth quoting at length so as to identify a notable attribute of Beckett's version of

the problem:

> In one sense, what he [Beckett] claims is absolutely true: he has no
> 'ideas' as such. On the other hand, the basic principle of communication
> itself—how to translate the facts, the immediate sensations and material three
> dimensionalities, of existence or experience, into an alternative structure of
> language, is among the major problems of contemporary philosophy.
>
> By and large (and always with a disconcerting ingredient of humour
> added) this has been Beckett's dilemma between alternatives: either to let the
> words take over entirely and invite the reader by intuition to apprehend the
> reality underneath; or to neutralize language as completely as possible (hence
> the transition into an alien language, French), so as to permit experience to
> incarnate itself in a structure of basic communication with the least intrusion
> of 'ideas' or emotional intuitive overtones. (in Graver & Federman, 2005, p.
> 403-4)

In line with what Coe suggests, the well-established literary problem of how to

transcribe experience is suggested in terms of a question of communication in

Beckett's criticism of art. Coe's view demonstrates why the persistent problem of

communication is as much aesthetic as philosophical, and how it allows a rethinking

of literary work in terms of such passages from intuitive to neutral language, from

affects to facts. The standard apprehension of communication, articulated in Coe's

formulation as translation, appears in Beckett's work in terms of the two poles of an

unresolved duality. Beckett's dilemma here is described on the one hand, as an

aspiration towards excess, and on the other as neutralization. It refers on an initial

level to the labor of expressing dehiscence "between the phrases," communicating in

"dribs and drabs." On a further level, it describes a problem of incarnation,

revelation, or manifestation, what Coe refers to as "basic communication," or the

"pure communication" of Beckett's French. This is an enduring concern of Beckett's

language, which I will name indifference, and it corresponds to his gradually

disintegrating language.

This double paradigm is one of the basic characteristics guiding my reading

of communication in Beckett's work. It situates the problem in dilemma rather than

identity. Einarsson points towards this aspect of the problem, demonstrated by

Beckett's phrase "rupture of the lines of communication": "The problem of

expression is here reformulated to concern not the problem of *mimesis*, not the

identity of phenomena or meaning, but the meaning-making process itself" (2015, p.

326). In this particular sense, if a problem of mimesis is revised as a problem of

expression in Beckett's formulation "rupture of the lines of communication," that

problem of expression renders visible in Beckett's writing the duality Coe speaks of.

This rupture signals new forms of expression, as Beckett's words on Proust and

O'Casey suggest, whereas Beckett's "pure communication" may imply just the

opposite, the absence of expression, something that will be elaborated in Beckett's

dialogues with French art critic Georges Duthuit.[5] It is crucial that both the absence and the purity of communication for Beckett are conceptual tools with which he probes further the possibilities of expression. This double paradigm blurs the boundary between the intuitive and the neutral capacities of Beckett's language, its sensible and the factual levels, and the relays between them.

Despite its founding significance for the comprehension of communication however, such a view is not sufficient in itself to identify the various ways in which a program of communication pervades Beckett's texts. A discussion of artistic communication in Beckett inescapably extends over the aforementioned problem of expression, as it is laid out by Beckett in his dialogues with Duthuit.[6] However, considering the tension offered by Coe and implied by Beckett in certain critical moments, I suggest that Beckett's work renders possible a more subtle but effective way of looking into the question of communication, not in terms of transcribing reality but in terms of generating relays among the forms of sensibility it invents across different periods. This study identifies a program of communication in Beckett's work where several forms of temporality, reality, and continually shifting sources of perception and sensation – in short, distinct domains that stimulate sensibility – confront one another. This is not only a problem of communication between different degrees of reality (i.e. between experiential and linguistic) but between the shifting conditions that Beckett's writing points towards. At this juncture, my particularization of communication as the confrontation between layers of sensibility in writing benefits extensively from Deleuze's aesthetic theory.

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[5] Beckett's much quoted remark from the dialogues proves this point: "The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" (Beckett, 2001, p. 139).
[6] Beckett's aesthetics of failure has thus been an important object of study. See Ben-Zvi, 1980; Dutoit and Bersani, 1992; Ziarek, 1996.

For Deleuze, aesthetics is directly related to the problem of creation. He points towards an idea of the "sensible" to explore the genetic conditions of experience, and new forms of sensibility through the artwork. To what extent does Beckett's writing render possible such an exploration? I contend that Beckett's work is concerned with the ways in which language, in seeking out new forms of expression, new communicational situations, and through its relays between surface and sub-surface realities, also extracts from them new forms of sensibility and apprehension. In this sense, Beckett's abstract worlds, indefinite with respect to space and time, simultaneously bring into being the composite ways of their conditioning, from psychical mechanisms, to psychological procedures or philosophical reflection. This study will look at the ways in which these forms communicate with, and more specifically, affect, inform, interact and resonate with, one another. Thus, in this study communication refers less to exchange or unification than to encounter.

I will attempt a non-chronological reading in order to consolidate my idea of communication as a program that renders discernible overlaps across the oeuvre. I will look into forms of communication between those domains of apprehension that can be broadly named as the critical and the sensible in the first two chapters. In the last two chapters I will turn to Beckett's presentation of actual communicational events, marked by speech regimes, orders and signs in order to diagnose their underlying dynamisms. Considering the abundance of communicational events presented in the oeuvre, the significance of the concept to this study is threefold. Firstly, it acts as a far-reaching concept which is inclusive of the specifications I will make use of, some of them less common: passage, channel, relay, resonance, co-existence, interaction, interface. Secondly it permits of a wide array of radical

reformulations made by such thinkers as Blanchot, Bataille, Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, whose thoughts this introduction will make use of. Thirdly, despite work done on narrative, artistic, and informational ideas of communication in Beckett's work, it is not a comprehensively studied subject. My particularization of the subject in Beckett as it informs the aesthetic principle of the oeuvre seeks to contribute to the discussions on Beckettian aesthetics from a novel point of view.

The principal question instigating this thesis is framed as follows: What kinds of means does Beckett's art offer us to conceive of a new idea of communication, given its persistent presence in the oeuvre? What are the ways in which the emergent idea of the communicational comes to illuminate an aesthetic program? It is my contention that this communicational gesture (insofar as it involves the interaction of forms of sensibility and extracts from them recurrent images across the oeuvre), continually unearths in language points of contact with other forms of expression: physical, bodily, sensual, gestural, cognitive, social and political. In light of this, I situate my argument within discussions epitomized in Beckett criticism by Uhlmann, Dowd, Barry, Maude and Gontarski, who argue beyond so-called post-structuralist readings and identify in Beckett's work the points of contact that I refer to.[7] More specifically, I pursue a wave of criticism that thinks through Beckett's work the philosophical ideas put forward by Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, pioneered by Uhlmann, Bryden, Dowd, Gontarski, Murphy and Addyman. In what follows, I will first contextualize Beckett's preoccupation with communication in regard to its literary and philosophical connections, and then provide an overview of specific conceptualizations of communication that contemplate it not solely as a problem of

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[7] The most well-known examples of what is referred to as "poststructuralist" criticism include Leslie Hill's *Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words* (1990), Steven Connor's *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (1988) and Thomas Trezise's *Into the Breach: Samuel Beckett and the Ends of Literature* (1990). For more on the post-structuralist reception of Beckett, see the introduction to Gendron's *Repetition Difference and Knowledge* (2008).

language but as a problem of existence and life, as these questions traverse Beckett's work, before embarking on an extensive discussion of communication as an aesthetic program in Beckett.

1.2 Communication: The foreign and the habitual

If communication expresses a basic human value as early social theorists like Dewey suggested, the approach to communication as a peculiarly human phenomenon attributes to it a very specific task in the history of humanization, whose reverberating effects in a techno-scientific world continue to unfold. The social theory of communication recognizes the communicative act as the touchstone for social behavior and the possibility for equality. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson suggest that it is specifically a "*conditio sine qua non* of human life and social order" (1967, p. 13). As Lotman puts it, human language "awakes in us an image of the historical reach of existence" (2009, p. 4). Communication with ourselves and with the outer world in terms not only of language but those other cognitive processes of feeling, thinking, emotions, memory, habit and so forth defines a general framework which establishes the ground for interpersonal communication. In this way communication signposts a domain that not only mediates preconceived ideas among individuals but allows an opening towards various practical consequences that organize and reorganize social and psychological life.[8]

In his work *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, Peters (1999) traces the uses and implications of connected notions of communication in theory and art to show how the problem is in fact always a relevant one. Accordingly, no single theory of communication can acquire the full

[8] See Dewey, James, Ayer, Habermas.

account of what its value, function and meaning are. As Peters aptly concludes: "Habermas' sobriety misses what Charles Sanders Peirce called the play of musement; Derrida's revelry misses the ordinariness of talk" (p. 21). However, despite this universal relevance, Peters claims that communication implicates crisis. His assertion that it "has surpassed the human shape" (p. 229) has its basis on the idea that the term itself is a symptom of a historical crisis in humanity, peculiar to modernity. Communication as crisis marks a historically specific moment in modernity, when the gap between the human and the inhuman was articulated as such, when forms of thought that address those inexpressible areas beyond the human; such as the unconscious, the machinic, and the various forms of mass communications that created ghost-like portions of reality, became visible in social and theoretical life. In fact, communication is the symptom for the unfulfillable promise it immediately signifies; the fact that it itself continually aspires to solve the problem of incommunicability. This very paradox defines our understanding of it in the modern world to a large extent. Accordingly communication bears the potential to always embody the "horizons of incommunicability" (p. 2). If communication as the common experience of humanity is no longer relevant in modern philosophical and artistic thought, it is in the sense that the very phenomenon invites questions of impossibility and incommunicability for many artists, including Beckett.

As it is clear from his remarks on communication, an idea of the incommunicable is in fact not foreign to Beckett's famous refusal to express ideas through art.[9] This refusal arises from the engagement with the crisis of communication with all its modernist reverberations. As Peters rightly states, "the sense of impossibility was at the heart of literary and aesthetic modernism" (p. 14).

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[9] See Beckett 2001.

Proust, Woolf, and Joyce had extensively written about the dissolution of the subject in an era of rapid change. Literary modernism is characterized by, in Miller's words, "increasingly rarefied artistic communication" (2006, p. 33). If for the high modernists, artistic communication involved new esoteric forms of thought, for the avant-gardists, it meant to experiment with contradictions to generate shocking results in a ceaseless process of distorting given notions. The Surrealists' obsession with the image of communication, as the merging of opposite elements in subversive ways is one example of this (Caws, 2006, p. 191-2).[10] At times the image of communication in Beckett gravitates towards such surrealist kinds of merging, where opposites communicate to create new forms of being. Still this acute awareness of what is incommunicable constitutes a predominantly ambivalent artistic position that addresses this incommunicability while aspiring to communicate it. As Weller argues, the communication of the interval, "develops into the full-blown theory of an art that would both respect and articulate" the rupture Beckett speaks of in "Recent Irish Poetry" (2008, p. 322).

Without doubt, Beckett's artistic ideas flourished in relation to a cultural atmosphere replete with manifestations of the new.[11] But still, Beckett's early distrust in communication perhaps has a more philosophical than a literary basis. His distrust in communication was already fed by his contemplations on art that continually forced him to seek new epistemological as well as artistic limits in his own writing, derived from his dialogues with philosophers, from the Pre-Socratics to Descartes. His ideas on confusion, for instance, as cited above, implicate, at least to some extent, Bergsonian problems. Chapter three will discuss this in detail. Similarly,

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[10] "Breton emphasized how important it was not to separate the looker from the look-at; between them, he said, there was a magic thread, a communicating wire . . . " (p. 191).
[11] For the influence of avant-garde movements on Beckett's art, see Brater 2008.

Watt's much discussed linguistic skepticism is derived from Beckett's readings of Mauthner, as has been discussed by Beckett critics.[12] Beckett's idea of rupture was in fact both coeval with the modernist historical moment and diverged from it.[13]

In more oblique ways, the early distrust in communication is expressed within a schema of impossibility, articulated by Beckett in his dialogues with French art critic Georges Duthuit in the 1940s, and it has links to post-war French thought. Rabaté argues that Beckett's "late-modernism" is indeed moored towards ideas propagated by post-war French thought (2018, p. 20). This is particularly seen in the writing of *The Three Novels*, where Beckett's dismissal of intellectualism for the favor of artistic feeling suggests an influence of anti-intellectualist trends of thought that were popular in France during the 1940s and 1950s, primarily promoted by French literary critics Maurice Blanchot and Georges Bataille. If a certain vein of French thought – or at least the intellectual climate of the period – was directly or indirectly reflected in Beckett's writing, one could perhaps speak of a reciprocal influence.[14]

The problem of communication appears occasionally in the work of Blanchot, who wrote a significant part of his work between 1940 and 1970. Blanchot's particularization of communication as an unveiling of alterity in speech is without doubt distinct from communicating meanings and values through language. It is related to a radical linguistic structure, which features in Blanchot's strange style of writing in dissymmetrical dialogues, what he calls "infinite speech" (1993). The

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[12] See Ben-Zvi 1980; Feldman 2006.
[13] As Uhlmann aptly suggests, Beckett "emerged from the modernist moment, bringing key aesthetic assumptions from modernism with him, but he also developed his own practice beyond that moment" (2006, p.147).
[14] On at least two occasions, Beckett's positive response to Maurice Blanchot's work is telling. He consented to Blanchot's study of his work in the fifties (in Craig, et al, 2014, p. 332). Hill cites Beckett's contentment about Blanchot's support of his work in the 1951 Prix des Critique for the novel (2004, p.69). For more on Beckett and Blanchot, see Gibson 2014 and Langlois 2017.

reason why Blanchot nonetheless holds on to such a term is given in *The Infinite Conversation*. He argues that we can only refer to communication as long as the very word escapes its immediate meanings, particularly associated with humanist values, and ceaselessly deconstructs itself: "'communication' . . . exists only when it escapes power, and when impossibility, our ultimate dimension, announces itself in it" (1993, p. 47-8). This view is not completely disparate from Beckett's uses of the term, as cited before.

Blanchot's thought lays bare the fundamentally foreign essence of this most common form of communication, namely, speech. For him, there is a condition for radical communication to appear: the disappearance of a sovereign, self-conscious subjective field, "turning away from the signified that 'I' am led to attribute to it" (p. 64). This type of withdrawal has interesting links to Beckett's subscription to failure, which asserts not only a refusal of the capacity to express, but, in the most hyperbolical sense, a complete abandonment of "the domain of the feasible" (Beckett, 2001, p. 142). How can one write in this overturning of the possibility of human agency? Insofar as this question cuts across Beckett's artistic imagination, a problem of communication in the sense of how to express that which "has surpassed the human shape" remains a relevant one. According to Blanchot, this complete abandonment occurs in Beckett only when he foregoes narratives and names in his writing. It is only by the time of *The Unnamable* that what Blanchot calls Beckett's "experiment without results" reaches a profound moment vis-à-vis "the real torment of a real existence" (in Graver & Federman, 2005, p. 131). The novel testifies to what Blanchot calls a relation of infinity, irreducible to dialectical limitations or predetermined forms of speaking, where "real existence" appears but cannot be signified to speakers. I think that Beckett's early pronouncement of the absence of

communication finds its rigor in Blanchot's conceptualization of the radical ontology

of the term.

For Blanchot, then, radical communication surrounds existence in a

thoroughgoing manner. It is inseparable from a double relation that human beings

live by:

> We live it [each event in our life] one time as something we comprehend,
> grasp, bear, and master (even if we do so painfully and with difficulty) by
> relating it to some good or to some value, that is to say, finally, by relating it
> to Unity; we live it another time as something that escapes all employ and all
> end, and more, as that which escapes our very capacity to undergo it, but
> whose trial we cannot escape. (p. 207)

This emphasis is particularly important to my reading of Beckett's work, in the ways

in which life is portrayed in such double relations. On the one hand, there is a firm

attachment to habits, orders, measures, meanings, unities. The possibility of

communication is everywhere. In fact in Beckett there are instances of its excess,

such as in *Murphy*. On the other, life is on the verge of escaping all organization and

all end; behind all we live, think and say, there lurks the impossibility of relation

Blanchot speaks of (p. 207). In this sense, Beckett's articulation of the disappearance

of subjective capacities that allow us to undergo an experience may testify to this.

His late short prose work such as "Ceiling" comes close to this by communicating a

process of consciousness that seems to rely on dissolving images emerging out of

that disappearance. This emphasis on communication as indicating a double relation

whereby the experience of unity and dissolution can both be possible, is observed in

Beckett's writing of voices. They are always on the verge of dissolution even when

speaking of most mundane things. If Beckett's forms of expression incarnate

existence and experience in this sense, by divesting them of agents, this occurs when

his language passes through common models of communication, clichés and repetitions. The second chapter will deal with this issue extensively.

Tellingly, in Blanchot's idea of communication, there is an emphasis on the coincidence between what he calls "real existence" and transitory forms of comprehension produced through noise. Blanchot's example in "Everyday Speech" is thought-provoking: "How many people turn on the radio and leave the room, satisfied with this distant and sufficient noise" (p. 240). The common forms of communication, including mass communication liberate "the absolutely foreign passing for the habitual" (Blanchot, 1989, p. 39). In fact too much communication allows for the loss of mediating potential and we are left with an insistent prolixity to say and show (Blanchot, 1993, p. 240). Signifying nothing in particular, such forms also affirm that "something essential would be allowed to go on" – that there should be communication (p. 240-1). At this moment, one is reminded by White's striking question about Beckett's oeuvre: "What if Beckett *was* trying to write himself out of language, but not out of communication?" (2015, p. 354). Writing oneself out of language but not out of communication may be said to describe Beckett's writing project par excellence, which gradually retreats back to so-called essential writing situations where consciousness and perceptual processes are expressed vis-à-vis newly formed lines of communication through recurrent images, residual motifs and fragmented syntax.

Where Blanchot sees a double-relation in life, Bataille envisages fusion.[15] Life in this sense comprises the communication of several elements that constitute organized being:

> What you are stems from the activity which links the innumerable elements which constitute you to the intense communication of these elements among themselves . . . Life is never situated at a particular point: it passes rapidly from one point to another . . . (Bataille, 1998, p. 94)

There is perhaps little doubt that Bataille is in dialogue with French philosopher Henri Bergson here. Bergson speaks of continual leaps from unity to multiplicity when speaking about vital impetus (élan vital) in *Creative Evolution*: "Life, in proportion to its progress, is scattered in manifestations which undoubtedly owe to their common origin the fact that they are complementary to each other in certain aspects, but which are none the less mutually incompatible and antagonistic" (1944, p. 115). One streak of the Beckettian principle of communication underscores the voice as this site of continuity and complementarity Bergson notes, across which forms of intelligibility and sensibility meet. I suggest that Beckett's writing discloses an idea of its life as a composite being with incompatible dimensions in communication, in the sense that Bataille and Bergson describe it. In many interesting ways Beckett's texts epitomize a more unusual communication between the human body and consciousness, for instance, so that feeling takes place *in* thinking and vice-versa. This form of sensibility generates a provisional idea of sociality, where several selves emerge simultaneously, as in the case of *The Unnamable*.

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[15] Libertson identifies in the thoughts of these thinkers the "anti-intellectualism of modern thought," and claims this to be "the experience of alterity's excess as a communicational moment which affects or changes thought" (1982, p. 2).

As Hill points out, Blanchot's treatment of questions related to Beckett's writing shows "the extent of his contribution to an understanding of Beckett's significance" (2004, p. 68). Although Hill does not cite communication as one of those questions, this question, as it pervades both oeuvres, contributes to the elaboration of my understanding of the notion as directly connected to questions of existence, life processes and how to interface them in a language with a diminishing syntactical but increasing affective power.

Whereas Blanchot's specification of communication is significant to the arguments that will be made in this thesis, the connected questions of relation, (un)readability, alterity and subjectivity will not be addressed.[16] The discussed considerations of life as communication among incompatible elements evoke, to a certain extent, Deleuze's views on communication in his aesthetic theory, which I will discuss extensively in this introduction. These more unusual conceptualizations of communication in French thought are in constant conversation and they invent a paradigm in which to rethink those less concrete dimensions of life and existence in terms of how they can be expressed in works of literature. With such connections this thesis subscribes to an understanding of communication as an attribute of existence and life. The emphasis on life processes is everywhere to be found in Beckett from perceptual procedures to forms of being affected.

1.3 Communication as a generative process

Sebeok defines communication as the principal attribute of life. In contrast to an anthropocentric history of communication, Sebeok suggests a larger understanding of

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[16] Beckett criticism has dealt with such questions extensively. See Bersani and Dutoit, 1992; Ziarek, 1996; Weller, 2006; Smith, 2008.

it, as the interaction between living systems in nature. His definition in *A Sign Is Just a Sign* is interesting in regard to its more inclusive conceptualization:

> All living things, whole organisms as well as their parts are interlinked in a highly orderly fashion. Such order, or organization, is maintained by *communication*. Therefore communication is that criterial attribute of life which retards the disorganizing effects of the Second Law of Thermodynamics; that is, communication tends to decrease entropy locally. In the broadest way, communication can be regarded as the transmission of any influence from one part of a living system to another part, thus producing change. It is *messages* that are being transmitted. (1991, p. 22)

Sebeok's argument that communication is the bearer of change and productivity in the universe, carries the notion beyond any strictly anthropocentric use. This resonates with an idea of communication that continually reorganizes forms of sensibility in artwork. Although his emphasis on organization contrasts with ideas of incompatibility, rapid change and double relations, for my purposes this definition of communication vouches for the term's link to creative processes. For Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the change Sebeok refers to is not only connected to universal productivity, but creativity, both aesthetic and natural. As it is, anticipated forms lead to unanticipated ones, different *sign regimes* continually merge and collapse to form *lines of flight*. The attempt to define communication in Beckett in regard to biosemiotic terms like the above may seem unusual, but it can be suggested that Beckett's body of work evinces across time a generative system, which comes to disorient its self-reflexive circumstances. In this regard, I speak of the work's communicational capacity as liberated from these authorial self-reflexive twists, a capacity for the "transmission of influence" from one series to another, as is the case in Beckett's speaking voices and murmuring or ordering voices. These series not only resonate with each other across the oeuvre but also generate new forms of

knowledge about Beckett's voices. The influence is such that the voice in Beckett, as I argue in the second chapter, can hardly be defined as a textual category.

As the chapters of this thesis will argue, Beckett's expression of life and life forms unearths communicational processes between different sensations (mental, physical or psychological). Thinking in feeling is one instance of this, which this study will turn to. In such ways Beckett makes it clear that his writing is not wholly separated from a sensibility for life. Although it does make use of distinctions between the external and the internal, these distinctions remain provisional, as Beckett characters cannot decide whether they are narrating from a distant point of view or are actually living at the instant in which they are speaking. The question of life is addressed occasionally by the narrators, and described as the confusion between the decision to live and the decision to write. From Neary to Malone and the Unnamable, Beckett's many voices do speak of confusions and durations, and most importantly, whether to live them or state them. This is an attempt in Beckett's work to create a form of expression that invests in two types of experience simultaneously, to have confusion and order communicate to one another is a trope Beckett subscribes to every now and then.

Beckett's writing is concerned with life processes in many other ways. As it produces different levels of expression, these lay bare shifting sources of perception, affection, sensation and reflection. The aural and visual senses of perception communicate to produce provisional forms of knowledge that define certain aspects of Beckett's realities, their shapes, topoi, colors, and spatial forms, for instance. Rather than revealing ideas, these forms of knowledge determine the shifting circumstances that communicate with and affect one another, and enable an active resonance between different texts across the oeuvre. This is most clearly observed in

Beckett's recurrent images and motifs, informed by different content and different forms of sensibility across the corpus. For instance, an idea produced by an attention to hearing in a certain work repeatedly appears in relation to different forms of sense in other works. Accordingly, in looking at a communicational program, this thesis particularly offers an analysis of the ways in which various modes of perception, affection, sensation, reflection and sociality continually interact to produce famous Beckettian images from a discordant sense of communication, thereby challenging the limits of comprehensibility. Beckett's work does offer several instances where this sort of communication between different conditions that are produced at once with(in) writing can be explored.

To recapitulate, this introduction has so far considered two perspectives on communication that digress from the ideas discussed in the first section, as promoted by Beckett's thought and its historical, literary and philosophical implications: Blanchot's views on communication as the manifestation of existence as a double relation through/within language, and communication as a crucial attribute of life, or life manifesting itself as a system of communication. If Beckett's work is to a certain extent a resonant system that works through changing determinants, those determinants' influences upon one another show the extent to which new versions of the same situation can be generated. Sebeok's definition provides a tantalizing link both to Deleuze's thought and to the way in which these "transmissions of influence" occur in Beckett. This wider connection between communication and life constitutes a framework in which to think of communication in Beckett as a generative aesthetic principle. In what ways could this generative process of communication inform aesthetic practices? I will address this question in regard to Beckett's art.

1.4 Beckett, Deleuze and communicational aesthetics

Despite the fact that Deleuze is positively unsympathetic towards the phenomenon of communication in the modern world, he occasionally refers to it in his work before Guattari.[17] His aesthetic theory – defined as the exploration of the conditions of real as opposed to possible experience and the genesis of the new – makes extensive radical uses of the term.[18] In this respect, Deleuze's theory can be said to depend on a differentiation between the standard phenomenon of communication as information exchange between an addresser and an addressee, and the idea of communication as the confrontation between domains of sensibility in the artistic expression of experience. The affinity between Beckett and Deleuze's thought is taken up with regard to distinct concerns by Beckett scholars. Uhlmann focuses on the image while Addyman has written on space. Murphy deals with sociality in Beckett, and Dowd's work offers insights on Beckett's disjunctive series. Gontarski has written about becoming and Bergsonian time, and movement in relation to Beckett's work. The editors of *Beckett and Deleuze* write: "Both authors demonstrate distrust in transparent language as a means of communication and representation and prefer experimentation instead of interpretation" (2015, p. 4). Even though experimentation is connected to Deleuze's theory of communication in the modern artwork, as I will attempt to show in this introduction, it is not only a matter of preference. The work's

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[17] In *What is Philosophy* Deleuze and Guattari write: "We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it" (1994, p. 108).

[18] Deleuze's aesthetic theory is regarded as the rethinking of Kantian aesthetics by Deleuze scholars. Smith writes: "Deleuze argues that these two aspects of the theory of sensation (aesthetics) [the objective, i.e. space and time, and the subjective elements of sensation] can be reunited only at the price of a radical recasting of the transcendental project as formulated by Kant, pushing it in the direction of what Schelling once called a "superior empiricism"; it is only when the conditions of experience in general become the genetic conditions of real experience that they can be reunited with the structures of works of art. In this case, the principles of sensation would at the same time constitute the principles of composition of the work of art, and conversely it would be the structure of the work of art that reveals these conditions" (2012, p. 89).

experimentational dimension comes from its potential to redetermine its underpinnings.

Stimulating reformulations of communication are made by Deleuze in several places, a significant amount of which is influenced by and based upon French philosopher Gilbert Simondon's concept of individuation. In *Desert Islands*, for instance, Deleuze refers to Simondon's idea of "internal resonance" between realities of different orders (2004, p. 88).[19] The first moment of being in individuation, accordingly is the pre-individual world of disparities. It is only when these disparate singularities interactively communicate that the being begins to form itself into individuation. Deleuze defines individuation as "the organization of a solution, the organization of a 'resolution' for a system that is objectively problematic" (p. 88). This means that any creative activity must necessarily unfold from within a problem. This involves the process of becoming of disparate orders and singularities, their continuous propensity to self-organize. As such, difference communicates to difference in this organization (p. 97).

As challenging an idea as this is in philosophical terms, it is integral to Deleuze's understanding of art, especially modern literature. Literature's creative act consists in the extent to which its problematic field is discernible. Artaud's theater is one example of this "material system beneath all possible representation" (p. 98). Deleuze does not mean to say that art work is replete with visible disparities or that it is essentially represented as chaos. On the contrary, the process of individuation is at work in the artwork for Deleuze, where there exists within and beneath forms of representation, "abstract lines," "dynamisms," "unextended and formless depth[s]"

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[19] Deleuze makes use of Simondon's *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (1964) in *Difference and Repetition.*

(98). For Deleuze, this sort of communication of disparate elements beneath the readily recognizable representations in the work – indicative of his thoughts on chaos – constitute the transcendental field of creation, its very condition. These disparate elements that communicate are not forms of articulation. Rather they condition the art work, although they do not hold any relationship of conformity or resemblance to what the work appears to be, or what it immediately signifies, represents and means.

Uhlmann refers to an affinity between Beckett and Deleuze in their mutual preoccupation with "the reality of chaos" (1996, p. 113). Elsewhere he undertakes a discussion on Deleuze's idea of simulacrum and its significance in art in regard to the idea of "resemblance through difference" (2015, p. 28). It is through a condition of difference that the effect of resemblance is produced. This ultimately groundbreaking subversion of mimesis and Platonic ideas is occasioned by Deleuze's preoccupation with "the ultimate disorder which characterizes real experience" according to Uhlmann (p. 29). That disorder is essential to communication of disparate elements in creative experience. In this respect, for instance, the expressive conditions of Beckett's work – or any other writer's for that matter – are distinct from the self-reflective, self-enclosed meanings put forward by them. For Deleuze, the processes of communication and internal resonance constitute a uniform principle informing aesthetics as well as science: "A physical experiment, no less than psychic experiments of the Proustian variety, imply the communication of disparate series" (Deleuze, 2004, p. 98).[20]

Deleuze's aesthetics depends on a thinking together of creative processes of different natures, either in psychology, science, social life or art. My primary

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[20] As Smith argues, "Deleuze's aesthetic theory is not a theory of reception, an analytic of the spectator's judgments of a work of art, but a theory of aesthetics written from the point of view of creation" (2012, p. 104).

understanding of communication as indexing the creative process in Beckett is this Deleuzean sort. In regard to this, illustrating the different ways in which Beckett's problematic fields dramatize the communication of disparate series/conditions will be a significant concern of this study. One of the prime objectives of such a procedure is to look into Beckett's work in line with Deleuze's aesthetics, by integrating his concepts into Beckett's work for a reciprocal test, rather than applying them to define Beckett's worlds. These subtler notions of communication explained in various other places in Deleuze's oeuvre as the condition of the genesis of art subtend the standard idea of communication as an infinite regress that refers us back to either explicit meanings, doxas, or their repeated deferral.

The reference to communication finds its peak moment in Deleuze's magnum opus, *Difference and Repetition*. In this work Deleuze asserts that the modern literary work manifests "permutating series" and "repetitive structures" that communicate (2013, p. 82). For him, modern literary work contains divergent series, and these can reorganize in multiple ways that threaten the identity of both the object read and the reading subject (p. 82). To illustrate how the modern literary work of art – Deleuze's examples are those by Mallarmé and Joyce – ceaselessly self-organizes through circles and series in a "formless *ungrounded* chaos" Deleuze argues that literature creates not perspectivism or polysemy by offering multiple points of view but engenders autonomous, self-sufficient senses corresponding to each different perspective (2013, p. 82). Here, Deleuze refers to the ways in which the literary work presents together those aspects of reality that are otherwise impossible to be simultaneously experienced. If each sense of the work is another experiment, then each experiment depends on a unique way of communication between the series. It is in this context that Deleuze calls aesthetics "the science of the sensible" (p. 68).

Smith sums up an important aspect of Deleuze's notion of communication in this regard, which always implicates an involuntary rather than a recognizable act, by contrasting it with Kantian harmony: "*something is communicated violently from one faculty to another, but does not form a common sense*" (2012, p. 93).[21] Addyman recognizes in Beckett an uncommon idea of space with respect to Deleuzean aesthetics (2015, p. 143). He argues via Deleuze of "a concept of space not as the *a priori* condition of experience as in Kant, but as an intensive *spatium* in which thought and perception are immanent" (p. 143).[22] Once again, it is to this given that representation responds (p. 143).

Deleuze's examples in *Difference and Repetition* are thus exclusively literary; Gombrowicz, Artaud, Joyce, Beckett and Carroll. He sees in the modern work of literature an epitome of the communication of differences. These works present *real* problems: "The identity of the object read really dissolves into divergent series defined by esoteric words, just as the identity of the reading subject is dissolved into the decentred circles of possible multiple readings" (p. 82). As Dowd points out, Beckett's series such as Malone's "dual project of inventory and fabulation" "remain in disjunctive relationship across a "smooth" and deterritorialized space" (2007, p. 148). Not only does Dowd see in Beckett's worlds "the meeting point of a range of intersecting series" but they are also devoid of teleological concerns (2007, p. 149). As such, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, for instance, enact a chaos where the

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[21] The connection of Deleuze's aesthetic project to Kantian sublime is acknowledged by theorists. Smith (2012) speaks extensively on this issue. Sauvagnargues, too, alludes to the connection between the sublime and the "intense experience of the limits": "The intolerable overcomes the conditions of ordinary subjectivity, but is no longer overcome through dialectical inversion" (2013, p. 169). Similarly, Murphy defines Deleuzean 'intensity' as "the anti-Kantian differential theory of the faculties that forms the core of Deleuze's 'transcendental empiricism' in *Difference and Repetition*" (2000, p. 229). For more on this, see Boundas 2006 and Smith 2006.

[22] Addyman applies the Deleuzean understanding of spatium to Beckettian space here. Sentiendum refers to the "being of the sensible," that is, the limit at which something can only be sensed; in Deleuze's words, "that which can be sensed" (Deleuze, 2013, p. 76). Similarly, spatium refers not to the a priori concept of space as extension, but an intensive one with which thought occurs simultaneously.

actual and the virtual perpetually collapse into one another (p. 148-9). Dowd's

emphasis on the unfolding of elements, such as the Unnamable's "[tracing of]

possible series of which he/it may or may not be part" points towards the character's

vain attempt to nevertheless determine whether the worlds he seems to perceive are

for himself or not (Dowd, 2007, p. 149). This project of determination in the midst of

chaos, I contend, is a unique character of Beckett's worlds of disjunctive series.

However, not only do the characters, voices and narrators mostly fail in any kind of

determination about themselves or their worlds, but they present ongoing problems

whose resolutions are not easily determined despite the general temperament of

Beckett's characters to designate them. Beckett's narrative and textual

determinations subsist alongside their divergences.

Thus, life processes and art coalesce not as reflections or translations of one

another but in a new, emergent site in which multiple senses confront. If one could

speak of a sense of sociality in Beckett, it could be said that it occurs through

divergent series, resonances and the transversals that make the work establish new

limits of understanding based on these divergences and confrontations.[23] As this

thesis will persistently show, such resonance takes place across the oeuvre in the

form of tentative ideas, images, recursive refrains, habitual movements, postures and

bodily signs producing implicit pieces of knowledge that qualify Beckett's literature,

and delimit and modify its territories. I argue that Beckett's work in such ways

creates not only new limits of sensibility but also provisional forms of knowledge

that determine the topological contours of an oeuvre. In this respect, this

communicational program brings to light knowledge about the whole of Beckett's

work, what its limits, images, content are. It also puts this knowledge to test by

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[23] For more on Beckett's work's relation to limits of the sensible in a Deleuzean context, see Murphy 2000 and 2015.

continually rearranging its components so that they produce changing paradigms for comprehension.

Considering these critical questionings of the place of communication in the oeuvre, I recognize an overlapping of two paradigms at work in Beckett. In the first instance I identify a communicational process between distinct forms of life and reality that create writing. This first instance constitutes the central argument of the first half of the thesis, which asserts that the sensual overlaps with the conceptual, intellectual deliberation can create bodily transformations, or a language of indifference can coincide with ideas spoken by voices. Beckett's work interfaces subjective experience with objects of nature, bodies with minds, the sensible with the intelligible in such ways that it serves to create forms of life – rather than formal contradictions – characterized by a precarious language. Communication in this sense refers to actual and virtual points of contact that bring together disparate forms of experience in writing. Beckett's oeuvre entertains this sort of variety as the after-effects of the preoccupation with communication as a problem that appears in various guises in the work. In this respect, I will look into communication as a question of experience that renders possible cognitive and emotional worlds in Beckett. I suggest that Beckett's work creates its own concepts, images, signs of thought, esoteric words, and forms of being through these communications between different conditions.

In the second sense, I refer to communicational aesthetics to draw attention to Beckett's use of material forms of communication on page or on stage, especially in the aftermath of his initial contact with theater. These include the much emphasized forms of dialogues, use of recorded voices and televisual frames, but also, and perhaps more importantly, Beckett's implementations of signs within language, such

as the gestural realities of many of the short plays, or the deployment of movement and posture as signs and orders both in the late prose and late plays. These signs insistently enact the tasks of arranging, interfacing and displacing communicatory points. I contend that there is a more emphatic engagement with communication as a material regime that arranges the worlds on stage, which brings to the fore the significance of orders of speech, signs and effects for the oeuvre. Beckett's representation of the common forms of communication and his technological sidestepping might be better understood when this framework of communication is considered. This glossed over aspect of communication establishes one of the basic principles of my particularization of the question, which scrutinizes the inner dynamics at work in Beckett's writing and points out the link between textual and non-textual realities.

1.5 The outline of the thesis

This thesis will make use of a distinction in Beckett's communicational writing. That distinction is not a periodic one per se, but depends upon a divergence I observe with Beckett's playwriting, and branches out towards further bifurcations with further writing. Beckett's fiction addresses a problem of communication in terms of experience, while his texts after the sixties and the plays in particular pay attention to questions of sociality in terms of the display of material regimes that utilize speech patterns, orders, bodily signs and routines. The first two chapters will deal with questions of immediate, existential, experiential, cognitive communication, whereas the last two ones will focus more on the material, physical, social and political aspects of Beckett's communicational sites. Thus, I refer to the resonant aspect of

Beckett's work in the first two chapters as it traverses voices, affective topographies, bodies and recurrent ideas, and in the last two chapters, focus on the material images of communication. This being said, I argue that there are more crossovers in terms of genre, style, images and topoi than a linear development in the oeuvre. Although the arguments will be made in regard to the entire oeuvre, I will use specific key texts to emphasize those arguments. Therefore this study will start roughly with Beckett's short stories written around 1946 and extend towards 1983, to "What Where." I will make use of other pieces besides the main ones in order to reinforce the vigor of the central arguments.

The first chapter will mainly discuss *Texts for Nothing*, *Molloy* and *Stories* to scrutinize the types of voices in these works and juxtapose Beckett's obsessive forms of communication against potential and virtual forms of existence articulated. I argue that Beckett's writing in these pieces contributes to an understanding of its provisional program for recurrent ideas that come to be known as Beckettian. The second chapter will then investigate how Beckett's writing creates several divergent series specifically, so as to articulate experience. Discussing Beckett's articulation of a peculiar field of feeling, primarily in *The Unnamable*, and his writing of percepts in "Ceiling" and "Fizzles" the chapter will study the ways in which a certain kind of communication determines the basis of Beckett's perceptual writing through the interaction of bodies to the intellect, subjective experience to impersonal confusion. This form of interaction will be discussed in relation to the philosophy of Fichte as an attempt to reflect upon the conceptualization of life with regard to the problem of communication in Beckett. In this regard, this study also seeks to identify new points of connection between his work and philosophy. In the third chapter, I will shift focus to Beckett's plays, *Waiting for Godot*, "Catastrophe" and "What Where," and

look into the implications of forms of communication that are depicted in Beckett's work. Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of 'order-words' is significant to the study of Beckett's language of theater in terms of its depiction of social models and forms of representation since it serves to shed light on the overall relationship between language and structure/order/regime in Beckett's work. The final chapter will study Beckett's short texts from the sixties. These pieces introduce a strictly descriptive visible-linguistic field of sensibility, generated by coded, gestural, geometric, postural signs. In this chapter I will identify in Beckett's informational, communicational and coded environments, an engagement with 'asignifying signs,' drawing on Deleuze, Guattari, Deleuze and Guattari, and Peirce. This chapter will address the question of the image and argue that it reveals more functional relationships in the sixties texts. I will make use of the English texts throughout and will refer to their French counterparts only where there is considerable difference between the English and the French versions.

CHAPTER 2

EXPRESSING INDIFFERENCE: VOICES AND POTENTIALS

Most first-person narrators in Beckett's work pay extreme attention to a voice. The
narrators of the *Three Novels* hear them, those of *Texts for Nothing* are intrigued by a
voice, be it their own, or someone else's. The technological plays further disembody
the voice through recorded voices that directly speak to the figures on stage, or
enable a virtual type of communication. *Company* is a work devoted to the
exploration of the voice with its iconic opening line: "A voice comes to one in the
dark. Imagine" (Beckett, 2009a, p. 3). In such instances, the narratives dramatize
some secret form of communication to which the readers have no access.[24] This
process of communication occurs in the context of audible, imaginable and recorded
voices across the oeuvre, through which the voice itself emerges as an unstable
category.

Brater argues for the dramatization of the human voice in Beckett's late
fiction, which could equally be observed in his early work such as *Molloy*: "*Stories
were spoken before anyone ever thought of writing them down*" (1994, p. 13).
Following up on Brater's analysis of the *performative voice* in Beckett, West claims
that it is a "force which is responsible for creating and sustaining drama in the plays"
(2010, p. 12). Reading Beckett's fiction in the first-person, we are constantly
reminded that a voice is speaking in the very moment of writing, and that this act of
speaking is also always ascribed to other senses: hearing oneself speaking, feeling

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[24] Wilma Siccama, in "Beckett's Many Voices: Authorial Control and the Play of Repetition" quotes
Martin Esslin's dialogue with Beckett, which directly alludes to the dual model of the speaker and the
listener in his work: "I once asked Beckett how he went about his work. He replied that he sat down in
front of a blank piece of paper and then waited till he heard the voice within him. He faithfully took
down what the voice said – and then, he added, of course, he applied his sense of form to the product"
(as cited in Siccama, 1999, p. 186).

oneself hearing. If the voice is a form of dramatization in this sense, such dramatization serves to unify thinking with speaking, words with sound, meaning with resonances, pauses with flows. At its initial instance, then, the voice is not far removed from a sense of unity between sense and sound, an aesthetic standpoint that the early Beckett favored.[25]

From these initial observations, many problems related to Beckett's aesthetics can be drawn. A question of narrative reliability is a notorious one; but more subtle problems also arise. The problem of the voice is also a problem of attention. However, even this poses a difficulty for readers, which is that, "they do not actually *hear* the voices that are described; they only have the narrator's hearsay to go on" (West, 2010, p. 36). The voices are thus always heard in a void, from the reader's perspective.

Attention brings into focus another characteristic of the voice, its absence of locus.[26] Particularly the narrators of *Texts for Nothing* deal with this issue in their effort to inscribe what the unknown voices dictate. The narrator in text 5 creates a literary event in which an author copies words he hears from elsewhere without always being able to appropriate their significance: "I'm the clerk, I'm the scribe, at the hearings of what cause I know not" (Beckett, 1995, p. 117). This is the condition of writing as established by the narrators of these texts, semi-fictional, semi-authorial. What kind of a fictional, narrative and communicational event do Beckett's instances of hearsay register then?

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[25] In his early criticism of Joyce's then *Work in Progress* Beckett claims that Joyce's text 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 (…) Here words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer's inks. They are alive" (Beckett, 2001, p. 27-8).

[26] Blanchot's much quoted examination of the voice depends on the premise of an impersonality he detects in Beckett's writing. See Blanchot in Graver and Federman 2005. For a reinterpretation of Blanchot's essay, see Clément 2008.

In a "word for word" account, the voice of *Texts for Nothing* refers to this

event of hearing as "the same murmur, flowing unbroken" (Beckett, 1995, p. 118-

131). The narrator both emphasizes and undermines narrative discourse by

dramatizing a writing situation which does not depend on the narration of a story.

The voice marks a narrative and dramatic dilemma in this respect.[27] However,

beyond this type of performativity, as some critics argue, voices implicate further

questions regarding ontological and epistemological dilemmas.[28] This is also a

situation in which, as the narrator of the fifth text states, the so-called scribe is

"conversant with the sea, too" (p. 119). There are such perceptive images throughout

the texts, depicting cognitive processes abundant in shifting sensory conditions and

images. Memories, images, incoherent but expressive ideas abound in the texts. The

narrators not only give an account of the act of narration which they can somehow

control, but they also serve as the transmitters of a field of consciousness that

produces various disconnected, anachronistic images and memories. This difference

is significant in my reading as I make a distinction between quasi-authorial voices

and free-floating images of indifference in this chapter.

      Considering the various instances and characteristics of Beckett's voices, in

my reading I detect at least two aspects to the problem of the voice. As I will argue,

in many occasions the voices appear as the creators of a condition of intelligibility.

They register a problem of speaking, of the immediate overflow of chaotic thought.

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[27] It is crucial to point out here that Beckett's work such as *Texts for Nothing* overtly deals with such dilemmas within a type of narration Genette calls "simultaneous narrating" (1980, p. 218). According to Genette in the work of Beckett, the simultaneousness of narration "operates in favor of the discourse" (p. 219). This type of narration works with two shifting emphases in writing that tip it either to the side of story or discourse (p. 219). Although Genette's focus on these two shifting circumstances is significant to Beckett's wiriting, for my purposes in this chapter, I will argue that there are more than two shifting instances occuring in Beckett's writing, and these are ultimately more inconclusive than categorical.

[28] Ackerley observes: "The origin of voice would remain unresolved, part of the enigma and paradox of being, of the mystery of creativity, yet its very insolubility provided the impetus for articulating the epistemological quandary from *Murphy* to *How It Is*" (2004, p. 40).

However, this unbroken flow leads the narrating voices to simultaneously respond to it, and create an account of the narrative situation. In other words the sensible flow and the critical response emerge as two distinct aspects of Beckett's voices which become intertwined in the course of writing. This serves to create fugitive forms of authority and indifference in the texts.

The pieces in which the narrators assume they hear voices serve to embed in Beckett's language provisional points of authority that come to produce the expressive limits of the texts. These points are provisional because they are based on hearsay, while they succeed in creating a thematic framework. This makes the communication to and of voices significant to *Texts for Nothing*. Such communication occurs in more subtle ways in Beckett's voices from his fiction from the 40s and 50s, to which this chapter will refer as indifferent. In Beckett's writing that incorporates voices, there are also intuitive pieces of knowledge produced through an expressive language rather than voiced themes. Accordingly, indifference occurs in a second sense in my reading as the suspension of recognizable differences in Beckett's voiced realities, which leads to new senses of reality that come into play in the work. These two instances of voices, by their subscription to communication and indifference, produce the expressive limits of the texts.

This chapter looks at Beckett's voice, not as an ethical/subjective or narrative quandary, but simply as an aesthetic function that enables a link between quasi-authorial ideas and a language of indifference produced through abstract content and sites of potentiality.[29] It is my contention that this type of reading will allow a better

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[29] In *The Imperative to Write* Jeff Fort writes: " . . . Beckett's fictions arrive at these essential determinations [the fundamental and irreducible categories of the human] first of all through the functional category of the voice, which dominates all others (including those of "self" and other"), and the problem of the fictive voice that must arbitrarily posit a world which it is entirely responsible for bringing into being – the problem of the solitary "creator" – is one that persists throughout Beckett's

understanding of the paradoxes embedded in Beckett's language, especially in relation to a problem of communication. Seen from this perspective, the voice, rather than signifying narrative contradictions, emerges as a determiner that lays bare the connection of Beckett's writing to its perceptual, affective, ontological indeterminations. I aim to show that Beckett's expression of voices has far more implications that serve to produce potential forms of knowledge.

The first section will focus on the ways in which Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* makes use of a voice-function to dramatize a hypothetical communicational event between voices, and extracts from it the thematic coordinates that come to illuminate Beckett's writing. It explores this hypothetical communication as the condition for the texts' mechanical production of critical responses.

The second section will then focus on the narrating voices from Beckett's fiction from 1940s and 1950s to look into the ways in which these voices serve to incorporate an idea of indifference by appearing to be indifferent to their situation. Both the frantically critical voices of *Texts for Nothing* and the stoically indifferent ones of *Molloy* and the short stories put into play an instance of a quasi-authority, where they internalize and insinuate ideas and positions which form the general vision of the texts, and which are deemed Beckettian in the long term. I will discuss Agamben's notion of potentiality, and explore a language of indifference as the alternative to the narrative indifference produced by the quasi-authority of voices.

The third section will explore the philosophical implications of indifference by referring to abstract differences in Beckett's worlds. To do so, it will draw on Deleuze's concept of difference in its specific relation to artistic creation and explore

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work" (2014, p. 330). This textual function in my reading is linked to the problem of creation insofar as it straddles the sensible and the critical dimensions of the texts.

the relationship between the determinations of Beckett's writing and an idea of indeterminacy. In doing so, it will seek in Beckett's language the possibilities of an expression independent of a voiced reality, one that aspires to record logical impossibilities, indistinguishable terms and unrecognizable but sensed entities.

The final section will study specific examples of what are named *expressive potentials* within systematic images and ideas such as mud and impotence, promoted in Beckett's work across periods. I turn to the relationship between recurrent motifs created by the communicative voices and the kind of topoi they signify, and investigate whether the relationship is as predetermined as it might seem. Taking off from Deleuze and Guattari's study of *forms of expression* and *forms of content*, I argue that content in the form of a recursive topos articulated by the voices comes to delineate the expressive limits of writing. However, there is a more provisional relationship between the recursive determinants of Beckett's writing via voices and forms of expression. Although Beckett's writing is dominated by famous expressions of reality and existence, marked out by the voices, these, in different occasions, connect to different potentials rather than signifying an unchanging territory, theme or idea. Overall, this reading traces the connections of the voice as an aesthetic function to the determinate and indeterminate qualities of Beckett's writing by way of a conceptualization of indifference in his fiction from the forties, fifties and sixties.

2.1 The voice-function and communication in *Texts for Nothing*

The relation between the "voice" and its attention to itself is one of the explicit determiners of Beckett's writing. Abbott, in *Beckett Writing Beckett: Author in the*

Autograph, calls Beckett's autographic writing "a mode of action taken in the moment of writing" (1996, p. x). This mode of action involves personal, impersonal, subjective procedures as well as narrative irrelevancies. In this respect, that which speaks in Beckett's writing is not clearly dissociable from the amalgamation of these active moments. Accordingly, Beckett's voice is one that speaks in full vitality rather than being an echo of some abstract being presumed to be shackled to an obligation to speak. Abbott's reading draws upon "accidental intrusions" in which irrelevancies point to spontaneous acts inherent to the writing process (p. 9).

Texts for Nothing [*Textes Pour Rien*] is a key work which features this kind of fragmented writing, and explores the veiled communication between different voices, real and/or fictive. It consists of thirteen short texts written in the first person in French between the years 1950 and 1952. They are a series of reflections on writing, the writer's situation, with an appeal to what all the narrators name voices. Communication is a central act in the texts. This act, as I will argue, promotes a difficulty in distinguishing spontaneous acts from automatic ones.

The first text begins where *The Unnamable* ends: "Suddenly, no, at last, long last, I couldn't any more, I couldn't go on. Someone said, You can't stay here. I couldn't stay there and I couldn't go on" (p. 100). Writing starts in such a change of mind, and the phrases "suddenly" and "at last" refer to two distinct forms of response to the voice's injunction, described as "someone" here. The phrases indicate one after the other, a sense of unexpectedness and anticipation. These frantic changes, even within a single sentence do indicate the kinds of irrelevancy and spontaneity Abbott speaks of. As such, what matters in this speech is the formal continuation of words, which are always disturbed by irrelevancies, changes of mind, abrupt pauses. The decisions change so frequently in the texts that they interfere with reading:

"How can I go on, I shouldn't have begun, no, I had to begin" (p. 100). This emerges as a strategy in the texts that serves to situate the reading experience in repetitive echoes and aborted lines of thought as the readers are forced to find ways of attuning themselves to the fragmented, scattered, critical responses within an otherwise "unbroken flow" of words. As Abbott points out, the texts activate a "willful shredding of narrative linearity," and "from page to page we find shards of scene and place, little suggestions of voyages that never go anywhere" (p. 90). As the narrating voices set the scenes, they create a world of communications that pick up from previous ones. These rapid changes are visible in the interchange between pronouns, too:

> Ah yes, *we* seem to be more than one, all deaf, not even, gathered together for life. Another said, or the same, or the first, *they* all have the same voice, the same ideas, All *you* [emphases added] had to do was stay at home. (p. 101)

The narrator's difficulty in distinguishing between the voices does not interfere with their message: "stay at home." But what is home, if this quest through voices initiates that idea in the first place? Such categories are not only obscure in the texts but they are produced in and through the challenging nature of authority deriving itself from the interchange between exterior and interior voices. All in one sentence, the narrator suggests an idea of "the same," "another" and "the first," creating in our minds a conflation of differences. The narrator cannot quite distinguish between voices as he records their so-called utterances. If there is a transmission of flow from the voices to the narrating voice, it is represented from the beginning as futile, without end, without meaning, without ultimate distinctions, but nonetheless creating expressive limits between "home" and other than home.

Thus, the voices spontaneously pass through provisional identities and qualities. They create provisional lives. Each sentence creates a whole other world of references and beings. In the midst of his questionings, the narrating voice remembers images of life:

> Sometimes it's the sea, other times the mountains, often it was the forest, the city, the plain, too, I've given myself up dead all over the place, of hunger, of old age, murdered, drowned, and then for no reason, of tedium, nothing like breathing your last to put new life in you, and then the rooms, natural death, tucked up in bed, smothered in household gods, and always muttering, the same old mutterings, the same old stories, the same old questions and answers…(p. 103)[30]

All the possibilities of death remain possibilities of a strangely abundant life, coming to the narrator in bits and pieces. These variations of forms of life and/or death are always present for the narrator, and new life picks up from death just as new voices from old ones. All such spontaneous life-giving abundance of the narrator's activity of speaking, however, is attenuated through what seem to be insignificant reminders of tedium. As images of lifecycles are articulated, they are also recorded as "the same old stories." All deaths are the same deaths, all the last breaths resuscitate the narrator. Even new life forms and new voices then travel towards their diminishing points, where they do not go absent but simply remain further stimulants for further tediums. In such ways, the texts determine a sense of life, situated paradoxically between a possibility for regeneration and repetition. If the voices allow for several lines of spontaneity and action, if they evoke fragments of life and forms of death, then, this creative act opens up passages between a motivation for form and a motivation for dispersion. Writing is thus forever shredded, critically responsive to a

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[30] The French version reads: "Tantôt c'est la mer, tantôt la montagne, souvent ça a été la forêt, la ville, la plaine aussi, j'ai tâté de la plaine aussi, je me suis laissé pour mort dans tous les coins, de faim, de vieillesse, tué, noyé, et puis sans raison, souvent sans raison, d'ennui, ça ravigote, un dernier soupir, et les chambres alors, de ma belle mort, au lit, croulant, sous mes pénates, et toujours marmonnant, les mêmes propos, les mêmes histoires, les mêmes questions et réponses, . . ." (Beckett, 1958b, p. 121).

putative voice, and locates itself in some project of prospective meaning or end, "home." This prospective limit or meaning is foreshadowed through various expressions and metaphors throughout the texts that remain more inelaborate than definitive.

In *Beckett and Authority*, Elizabeth Barry (2006) problematizes the vicissitudes of this act of spontaneity. What Barry refers to in *Mercier and Camier* as "the site of feeling and authenticity [that] translates into something learnt mechanically" may well be equally true for *Texts for Nothing* (p. 74). The idea of learned automatism, of naming the unnamable, to refer to the narrator of the sixth text, unsettles the spontaneity of the voices as they produce the texts (Beckett, 1995, p. 125). If the site of the sensible merits such a definition precisely because it is described as a sonorous "flow" and with "no end," it could also be "life still, a form of life, ordained to end" (p. 125). Within this form of indecision, the narrator sets forth his project of naming the unnamable. In fact, the texts introduce an economy between these forms and ends, and endless flows. Such a contradiction also sets in place the kinds of expressive tools the narrator works with. He attempts to identify his challenging situation by recourse to describing it through several names and images. The sixth text is abundant with images of inventory Beckett likes to evoke elsewhere in his oeuvre: "keepers," "scraps," "ragbag," "farrago." As these images traverse the texts, they serve to institute transitional coordinates that allow the reader to attune herself to the shreds of non-linear narrative. Beckett's narrative of irelevancy and spontaneity in this way benefits from a verbal memory that frantically repeats the same ideas to pin down the messages of an otherwise unintelligible voice.

Barry claims that cliché's status is "double-edged" in that it is "prefabricated," exterior, heard, and yet revelatory, indicative of an interiority (p.

68). Beckett's voice's doubleness serves a similar tension, and revisits its own sense as cliché, as the institution that requires being returned to in order to produce new language. The voices are lies that need to be revisited ceaselessly in the texts: "Yes, no more denials, all is false, there is no one, it's understood, there is nothing, no more phrases, let us be dupes, dupes of every time and tense . . . it's only voices, only lies" (p. 109). As the narrator grapples with whether the voices are his or not in his account of this "inextricable place," curiously, he keeps depending on what he calls lies (p. 109). Even as he assures himself that "there is no one" and "there is nothing," his struggle to escape the domain invaded by voices is visible. One form of escape is indicated through "willing a body" and by movement, "coming and going" (p.109). It is implied that the voice may depart once it is embodied, however, it is ironic that the narrating voice can have a body and begin to "live again" only by imperatives through a voice that orders him to "start by stirring" (p. 109). What the text names lies are relentlessly revisited in order for any genuine sense of life to be formed through writing. Even when they express a desire for a life without voices, as it is implied, the texts produce a series of automatic imperatives, adopted from the voices. Any sense of escape from voices is articulated through these repetitive imperatives: "Start by stirring, there must be a body … no more denials, I'll say I'm a body, stirring back and forth, up and down, as required" (p.109). The imperative becomes a behavioral program exercised to such extents that it becomes a function. What appears as spontaneous flow is not easily distinguished from such modes of repetition. This kind of conflation between automatism and spontaneity not only equivocates the links between authority and product, autography and writing, but it also problematizes the critical eminence of the voices. If the voices mark subjects and events simultaneously, if they both produce critical responses to their situation

44

and spontaneously create images of life that fail to coherently form a narrative account, then, etymologically speaking, their "crisis" serves to separate decisive moments, namely, spontaneous flow and automatic tremors. However, although the texts introduce divergent voices that on the one hand express personal judgments, and on the other, impersonal images, eventually they fail to create a narrative clarity where the distinction between them is observable.

Barthes argues that writing is a form of "anti-communication" because it bears a foreign circumstance beyond language (1970, p. 19-20). When he makes a distinction between speech and writing, he writes that "speech is epitomized in [the] expendability of words, in [the] froth ceaselessly swept onwards" whereas writing contains the "ambiguity of an object which is both language and coercion" (p. 19-20). I suggest that the coercion induced by the voices in the texts provides the very ambiguity of the foreign element, but its overemphasized presence creates an assumption of deliberation. This element of foreignness is so emphatic and material in the vigilance of the narrating voices that it becomes rather memorized. Throughout the texts, the abundance of the phrase "other" is telling: "other voices," "other sounds," "other others," "other figments," "other images," "other gentlemen," "other spaces," "other times," "some other reason," "some other evening," "other heads," "the true others." In a certain sense, the texts repeat an idea of ambiguity in their anticipation of "others," and the very self-questioning of writing becomes its self-construction. What "others" signify remains unresolved, and even though the mention of "others" indicates some form of longing to be in other spaces and other times, it also implicates a functional repeatability that renders possible easy transitions in between times, images and domains in Beckett's writing without

45

attributing to the image of others any specific content. This idea of otherness is repeatedly fed into the so-called self-evident speech.

These automatic responses via connected images of otherness serve to articulate some idea of the narrator's life that remains ambiguous, to say the least. Is it dream or reality, memory or memorized act, how many voices are there and can they ever be distinguishable? It is at once presented as immediate communication between the narrating and other voices, that is, a ceaseless event of hearing voices, and the very metaphor of this event: "That's where the court sits this evening, in the depths of that vaulty night, that's where I'm clerk and scribe, not understanding what I hear, not knowing what I write" (p. 120). If Beckett's literary event is anti-communicational because it bears a foreign element, an aspect inexplicable by the components of language, it also shows the ways in which this sense of foreignness is crystallized and memorized through certain expressive limits it determines, home, others, voices, keepers. The readers are thus accustomed to some abstract idea of otherness even when referents are undetermined. While no ultimate expression of the event can be arrived at, and no self-evident form of the voice is present, the almost mechanistic returns to "others" serve to delineate the map of the situation. An idea of otherness that is overtly communicated as the confusing experience of the subject marks the recurrent expressive possibility in the texts. It is internalized into the system of the narrative through a strategy of repetition that acts as spontaneous.

Another interesting reference to automatism occurs in *The Infinite Conversation*, where Blanchot speaks of surrealist automatic writing as assuring the "immediate communication of what is" (1993, p. 8). This immediation, for Blanchot, is associated with the postulate that corresponds to "absolute continuity" (p. 8). He takes up the issue of communication in relation to questions of continuity and

discontinuity. He argues that it should be questioned that both in literature and in philosophy, thinking characterized by continuity remains the prevailing form. Instead, he proposes discontinuity in the language of both research and literary art as the remedy for dialectical form. He asks: "How can one write in such a way that the continuity of the movement of writing might let interruption as meaning, and rupture as form, intervene fundamentally?" (p. 8). This question allows Blanchot to differentiate between the "surrealist ambition" and a writing of discontinuities, distractions and questionings. For Blanchot, if immediate communication assumes unity, it corresponds to a postulate that reality itself should be continuous (p. 9). However, for Blanchot, the demand for discontinuity is as constitutive as the demand for unity. He sees in this demand a possibility of a new form of relation, an interruption of a different kind of meaning. Such meaning is created by questioning, and opens in the distractions made by questioning. Through the demand of discontinuity, one considers "man as a non-unitary possibility," and this is something that challenges "the notion of being as continuity" (p. 9-10). For Blanchot, the discontinuity of writing might then open to new sense: "… any language where it is a matter of questioning rather than responding is a language already interrupted – even more, a language wherein everything begins with the decision (or the distraction) of an initial void" (p. 8). Once again, writing deals in a sense of ambiguity, something other than what it signifies, something other than a flow of signs. In these two instances of theorizing writing, both Barthes and Blanchot disregard communication in the sense of mediating ideas and significations.

Texts for Nothing articulates the event of hearing at the threshold between what Blanchot calls continuity and discontinuity. Not unlike the immediate communication of automatic writing, Beckett's sense of being (or confusion of

47

being) bears the impression that it is created in one single breath. But it should also

be noted that Beckett designs this ceaselessness as imprisonment. The event of

hearing is given in its interrupted form, marked by crises to which the narrator feels

bound to respond. When *Texts for Nothing* presents a problem of communication, it

establishes it as the condition of writing all the while articulating the impossibility of

communication since there is no meaning produced: "… it's for ever the same

murmur, flowing unbroken, like a single endless word and therefore meaningless, for

it's the end gives meaning to words" (p. 131). If this is a type of writing that bears a

certain resemblance to surrealist automatism, the so-called purity of its psychic

nature should be questioned.[31] Without doubt, the narrators of the texts depend as

much on reflections as impulses, and speaking amidst a clutter of voices, they are

already distracted. The "other voices" remain obscure renderings of other presences

while they are simultaneously defined as "lies" to cling to and metaphors of

imprisonment. I argue that the texts mark out an expressive territory that remains

ambiguous, but this ambiguity itself also emerges as a formal, automatic response. In

other words, the voice proceeds in the redundancy of an event of communication,

within a commotion that is described as somewhat predictable rather than in what

Blanchot calls the void. Blanchot's theorization as I read it, is an attempt to divorce

writing from a unity between thinking and image, and to bring out instead an

inexpressible element that conditions it. This specification of inexpressibility is

exemplified in the unidentifiable voices, "others," through the insistent repetition of

metaphors and other transformations. Thus, *Texts for Nothing* seems more circular

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[31] For André Breton, automatic writing creates subconscious images that "appear like the only guideposts of the mind" (1969, 37). This kind of anti-rationalist image making may be one part of Beckett's writing both in *Texts for Nothing* and elsewhere; however, if automatic writing "represents" psychic activity that resists understanding and intelligibility (162), Beckett's writing diligently builds and shifts its own boundaries of intelligibility by establishing the expressive limits that thematize his writing. For more on surrealism and Beckett, see Friedman 2018.

than discontinuous; the questionings of the voice at times become repetitive, and more importantly, anticipated rather than causing discontinuity in thought. Hence, the texts' vigor stems from its being overtly communicational of its limits rather than anti-communicational.

Thus, the voice produces its own hackneyed images and phrases. "I'm a mere ventriloquist's dummy" states the narrator of the eighth text (p. 133), an image that abounds in its various forms throughout the texts. The eleventh text elaborates on this process: "it's from them I spoke to myself" (p. 146). In their commitment to continuous speech, the narrators adduce the discernible lines of a writerly anxiety determined by a thematic insistence on voices and others, ends and homes, life and endlessness. In the questionings of the eleventh text, an identity crisis arises:

> Where am I, to mention only space, and in what semblance, to mention also time, and till when, and who is this clot who doesn't know where to go, who can't stop, who takes himself for me and for whom I take myself…" (p. 146)

Reading over and over again, the reader is faced with an impossible form of communication, the parties of which remain indefinite. It is disrupted by crises, but those crises are also internalized, anticipated, that become something of her own. The reader becomes rather fluent in a vocabulary of crisis that repeats itself in certain respects. The very form of the crises also becomes almost habitual, propped, and evocative of both foreignness and monotony.

Beckett plays with such expressions of self-avowal that point to the repetitiveness of a rather tempered crisis. Curiously, that crisis yields to a sense of determination in its acknowledgement of "here," "now," "home" and so forth. Beckett's writing is thus instituted by such statements in their well-phrased and formulated discontinuities that come to divide consecutive moments from one

another. If for Blanchot, discontinuity is a certain relation of being, beginning in interruption, Beckett makes a habit out of the discontinuities that intimate crises of being, and are expressed as the mechanical articulations and paraphrases of an endless cycle of sessions. In this sense, Beckett's discontinuities may be occasions for the rupture of the form of a unity; but they also serve to bring about a hollow form of communication.

The voice, in all these senses, marks out expressive limits in this communicational flow, particularly in terms of repeated images and associations, and reformulable questions. In this respect, it is not so much a fixed narrative element as a function, in the sense that it communicates recurrent motifs to itself and delineates a writing field characterized as much by habit as spontaneity. I argue that this type of depiction of a flow of communication determines the limits of Beckettian expression, marked by so many recurrent images and ideas.

2.2 "All I say cancels out": Quasi-authority, indifference and the potentiality of forms in *Molloy* and *The Stories*

In many of the first-person narratives written before *Texts for Nothing* the automatically responsive narrating voice appears stoically indifferent. This voice seems more absorbed in the outside. It is indifferent to its situation, but it is also located within a narrative indifference that foregoes temporal and spatial differences. It fails to distinguish between personal and impersonal voices, fuses, to a certain extent, external and psychical procedures. These voices narrate stories rather than record hearings. *Molloy* and the short prose from the 1940s recount stories of tramps; those that are on their way to no particular destination, those that are expelled, those

that live a post-mortem life. The heroes of the stories and Molloy share something of this indifference in their encounters with others. The narrators are storytellers, the limits of whose narrative capacities are determined in and through a personal indifferentism fused with temporal and existential uncertainty. Molloy's testimony to his life is pronounced with respect to an uncertainty between something continuous and over:

> My life, my life, now I speak of it as of something over, now as of a joke which still goes on, and it is neither, for at the same time it is over and it goes on, and is there any tense for that?" (Beckett, 1958a, p. 36)

The state of simultaneity, "at the same time," is a key state copiously expressed by the narrating voice, and it establishes the narrating voice's potential not only to exist in two modes but to articulate such existence. As Boxall points out, "When Molloy attempts to describe his 'world', for example, he suggests that it is conjured in some sense from this confusion [between beginning and ending] from this intimate co-mingling of antinomial oppositions" (2009, p. 2). This confusion also marks the difficulty of finding the correct tense or voice for such a temporal indifferentiation, as it will continue to arouse disturbance throughout *The Three Novels*.[32]

In the three short stories, first published under the title *Nouvelles et Textes Pour Rien* in French in 1955 and in English in 1967, Beckett portrays a specific type of indifference. The stories commence in an expression of unaffectedness and the heroes, adrift in an unknown city, ramble through the streets. The narratives imply a sense of sameness that hinders the realization of differences. These voiced texts sustain a certain fragility of expression which maintains a potential to tentatively

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[32] Peter Boxall argues that "the peculiar temporality that Beckett fashions in his writing" is a "temporality in which before achieves a kind of conjunction with after, in which chronological sequence gives way to a kind of simultaneity, a kind of temporality for which, as Molloy recognizes, there is not, or not yet, a tense" (2009, p. 174).

articulate, or in Beckett's words, "insinuate,"[33] contradictory positions at the same time. Hill recognizes that in such "moments of intellectual crisis … key distinctions are both maintained and efface themselves" (2009, p. 62). This type of logic where distinctions are both redundant and necessary may be said to define Beckett's voice of indifference.

In both *Molloy* and the stories, the thematic and expressive limits are formed by the ways in which the voices describe their situations. Molloy does not question his situation half as frantically as the narrators of *Texts for Nothing*. In the opening pages of the book, he finds himself in his mother's room with a man coming regularly to take away the pages he supposedly writes. In return the man gives Molloy money. Despite this information, not much is known about Molloy's work, his whereabouts and his motives: "When I've done nothing he gives me nothing, he scolds me. Yet I don't work for money. For what then? I don't know. The truth is I don't know much" (Beckett, 1958a, p. 7). The book opens in this type of an effect of indifference. It strongly posits and ignores problems at the same time.

This type of narrative indifference, however, is promulgated by an implicit voice that somehow seems to have a first-hand access to dilemmas. The narrator of the short story "The Calmative" points this out in advance: "All I say cancels out, I'll have said nothing" (Beckett, 1995, p. 62). One of the many paradoxes of Beckett's work comes in with this absence of difference between different temporal modes. I suggest that the absence of this difference is a quasi-authorial indifferentism, which serves to emphasize the role of indistinguishability in these worlds. The many forms of indistinguishability that the characters refer to are expressed as repeated, habitual

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[33] This word is borrowed from Brater's quote from Beckett. When referring to Bram Van Velde's art, he speaks about an art "which insinuates more than it asserts" (as cited in Brater, 1994, p. 7) .

responses to a confusing set of circumstances. When the narrating voice of "The Calmative" speaks, his experience is a testimony to the indifference between intelligibility and unintelligibility: "So I marshalled the words and opened my mouth, thinking I would hear them. But all I heard was a kind of rattle, unintelligible even to me who knew what was intended" (p. 66). This unintelligible rattle is yet another common theme among Beckett heroes, who claim to hear buzzing and confusion rather than words with meaning. In the case of "The Calmative," although it is written in a somewhat casual, storytelling format, what makes the narrators tell any story is the story's potential for the resistance to be told. The narrator creates a sense of anticipation by articulating a limit of intelligibility transgressed by his own words. Such inexpressible ideas are insinuated by their limits of intelligibility, but the difference between intelligibility and unintelligibility remains inarticulate. If this is not merely owing to the narrator's madness and if there is indeed a narrative indifference between intelligibility and unintelligibility, it is always insinuated through a surreptitiously communicative voice. The narrator of "The Calmative" identifies with the idea of thinking in distinctions while his bodily experience is completely indifferent to this idea. He is intellectually attuned to distinctions but cannot perform them.

There is nonetheless a resoluteness on the part of the narrating voice to reflect upon, think about, and speak of the very uncertain limits and distinctions he is faced with. Beckett's stories of so-called schizophrenics like Watt, Molloy and the narrators of these stories resort habitually to descriptions of such indistinguishable states. These states become mundanely familiar to the narrators. They emerge as experts of ignorance. They articulate a certain position of indifference by asserting an absence of certainty, authority, lack of faith, lack of knowledge. Epistemological

challenge and continual transference of authority characterize these assertions of indifference, but only through a narrative indifferentism, however ambiguous it might be.

Moran's obsession with self-explanation is mostly cut short by a similar unaffectedness:

> That night I had a violent scene with my son. I do not remember about what. Wait, it may be important. No, I don't know. I have had so many scenes with my son. At the time it might have seemed a scene like any other, that's all I know. (p. 160)

The hesitant pauses of Moran reveal a comic ingenuity we often find in Beckett's novels. However, the ending to this hesitance, which equates all scenes – "a scene like any other" – unravels another significant aspect of the narrative. That specific violent scene and all other scenes are indistinguishable from the point of view of the narrator. If memories can be distinguished from one another by ascribing qualities to them after the fact, Moran's implication is that there is no way of differentiating their content even as they take place. Differences are difficult to articulate. Being indifferent to an event that can be recountable, Beckett's writing, in such occasions gives rise to expressions with hollow content. We are merely left with an empty signification such as "violent scene." A specific scene from the past is then like any other scene, and Moran fails to articulate the difference although he has a sense of the violence. Once again, there is a term of difference that distinguishes a specific scene for the narrator from all other scenes, but it ultimately fails to maintain that difference.

Thus, the narrators openly express an absence of difference between two things by subscribing to distinctions without content. They also fail to distinguish the stories they tell from the ones they do not. The narrator of "The Expelled" remarks:

54

"I don't know why I told this story. I could just as well have told another" (p. 60). The narrators consolidate an idea of indifferentism, by habitually returning to expressions of uncertainty and indistinguishability. Interference of noise, for Salisbury, compromises meanings in Beckett, and this type of indistinguishability can be considered a specific occurrence of this: "Beckett's novels, most commonly intoned in the quiet of a whispered interior voice, evoke an interference that disarticulates the idea of language as a clear reflection of a pristine world of ideas where meaning noiselessly resides" (2010, p. 356). There is a source of "noise" in Beckett's language that disorients directions and origins as well as the self-evident meanings of ideas. This makes the narrators sources of a quasi-authority in the sense that they reprise such expressions of indifference where verbal distinctions are given but the perceptive limits that create them remain unclear. Beckett's narrators are notoriously unreliable in this sense. But dispossession is all the more interesting because while it presents contradictions that do not resolve or make sense in a conventionally meaningful way, it does this in a casual, conversational mode, in the form of common opinions. The narrators' continual references to anecdotes, scenes, stories mark their power to create, but it is a creation of seeming distinctions that cannot be distinguished from one another. Such articulations of an otherwise hollow content provide Beckett's voices with an authority that seems to be fabricated as the very principle of creation.

The voices thus equivocate their own authority, which is a challenge to thinking and reading. They immediately abstract the realities they envision by evoking forms of indistinguishability between different things. They are capable of telling different stories but they also imply that all stories are somehow the same. In this sense the narrating voices also do something more than conforming to a narrative

55

indifferentism in a quasi-authorial sense. This is the second sense in which indifference is evoked in the narratives, not merely as a surreptitiously communicable indifferentism, but as a challenge against comprehension.

The indifferent voices also bypass the expressive limits insinuated by them by dividing language against its potential habitats. Despite the many quasi-authorial voices, Beckett's language comes close to articulating reality as an indifferent object, an empty perspective which turns communicating voices into silent ones. It is perhaps also in this sense that language attempts several leaps to the outside of the voices so as to disorient the distinct positions of the represented and the determined, of the reader, writer, speaker and listener, leaving them in an abstract yet sensible frame of violence. The narrating voices occasionally leap out of their self-communicative, internalized systems. If the voice is divided against itself, this division is not always occasioned by two possibilities agitating a thinking mind, or a conflation of self and other, and resulting in an energy of frustration, but also by an inescapable mode of being that seems to work without consistent reasoning, literally offering simultaneously livable situations, parallel temporalities, numerous selves. What seems to be dispositional indifference at first glance may have far more philosophical, textual and political implications.[34]

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[34] Peter Boxall (2002) argues that Beckett works within a conflicting textual ground, which is a core point to be taken into account before jumping hastily to conclusions that his literature is a specifically indifferent one, politically. Boxall's call for a political reading emerges out of the need for emphasis on Beckett's thought-provoking and conflictual textual environment (p. 159-60). For Weller (2006), on the other hand, if there is indecision, it is owing to a problem of the "anethical." Weller's "anethical" claims to avoid impositions of meta-discourses on Beckett's uncertainty; it is rather "a failure either to establish or negate the difference between the ethical and the unethical, nihilism and anti-nihilism, philosophy and literature, thought and action, the terminable and the interminable" (p. 194-5). For Hill (2009), Beckett's indifference is "the infinity of difference, the erasure of identity and the still turbulence at the centre of language and the body" (p. 162). In light of all such comments, even though Beckett's language does suspend meanings, as I argue, there are possibilities for potential forms of action.

In his comprehensive study on the significance of the notion of indifference across Western thought, William Watkin (2014) traverses the thoughts of Hegel, Heidegger, Agamben and Deleuze in an effort to connect a most frequently conceptualized notion to questions of suspension, neutrality and imperceptibility. In the second key stage of the development of the concept, Watkin detects a lineage which goes down to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Blanchot and Deleuze. Accordingly, what he calls "second-order indifference" is defined by Hegel as "pure difference as such" (p. 51). For Watkin, according to Hegel, "the choice of A or B is defined as indifferent when the identities of A and B are not fixed, but mere abstractions. Second-order indifference then defines difference without identity" (p. 51). Agamben, according to Watkin, combines Stoic and Skeptic indifferentism, and second-order indifference to define his version: "the suspension of difference between identity and difference" (p. 51). These two definitions – second-order indifference and suspension – are operative in understanding the use of indifference in Beckett, and they entwine in Beckett's indifferent moods in such ways that the suspension of difference effects a process of provisionality in the work.

Agamben observes this idea of suspension in Bartleby's "mode of Being of potentiality that is purified of all reason" (1999, p. 259). In *Potentialities* Agamben argues that in Bartleby's formula, "there is only a 'rather' fully freed of all *ratio*, a preference and a potentiality that no longer function to assure the supremacy of Being over Nothing but exist, without reason, in the indifference between Being and Nothing" (p. 258-9). The indifference of Being and Nothing is not, however, an equivalence between two opposite principles; rather, it is the "mode of Being of potentiality that is purified of all reason" (p. 259). Once no quality is attributed to this mode of being, it exists in a form of unlimited potentiality rather than an

existence restricted by what it does and how it represents itself. This bare form of existence is temporally before being an individual, and is involved in every process of individuation. If, according to Watkin, Agamben's indifference is the "precondition for all particularization, yet resists the metaphysics of identity" (p. 54), this principle can best be described by the "no more than" of Agamben's definition. Between being and non-being, according to Agamben, there is a mode of being "no more than" (p. 259). For Agamben, this does not confer a lack of difference, but rather a "rather" which is a third term (p. 259).

A form of pure potentiality, this ontological site is indicated in Beckett's beings, particularly in the stories.[35] The future perfect serves this mode of indifference in its precise attention to a retrospective future that fuses two modalities within a single determination; "I forget how old I can have been" (Beckett, 1995, p. 48).[36] This statement is uttered by the narrator of "The Expelled" as he gets up and continues walking after falling on the ground on a street full of people. As he peregrinates in an unknown city completely unaware of his destination, the narrator continues: "In what had just happened to me there was nothing in the least memorable" (p. 48). No external event that befalls the narrator actually characterizes or transforms him. An individual characteristic such as age does not have a role to play in the narrator's understanding of his life, and what specifically happens to him. The narrator is several years young and several years old without the support of sufficient reasoning that can distinguish between the two. This serves to eschew all submissive relations associated with the demands of a particular identity. In another epitome of the future perfect, the narrator of "The Calmative" tries to retrieve an

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[35] For commentators that read Beckett with Agamben, see Smith 2007 and Jones 2008.
[36] Katz observes a "linguistic dismantling of deictic and subjective temporality" in Beckett's search for a new tense (2003, p. 247).

image that might explain his current state as he makes an effort to recognize his environment. His expression conforms to the articulation of a form of life that is indicated by neither preferences nor decisions:

> I have changed refuge so often, in the course of my rout, that now I can't tell between dens and ruins. But there was never any city but the one. It is true you often move along in a dream, houses and factories darken the air, trams go by and under your feet wet from the grass there are suddenly cobbles. I only know the city of my childhood, I must have seen the other but unbelieving. All I say cancels out. I'll have said nothing. (p. 62)

Silence relates to speech here by way of a suspension of difference rather than by way of opposition. This suspension is prefigured in the seeming distinction between dream and the specific things that are encountered on the way. It is true that many Beckett characters cannot always distinguish dreams from reality, but here, the interchangeability between grass and cobbles, or dens and ruins seems to point to more than a personal inability. The narrator speaks of the only city he knows of and reserves what he calls "the other" in silence. He makes such a distinction, only to cancel out the difference between what he can and cannot say of the city he knows and the other he has seen. Through such paradoxes, the inarticulate remains part of Beckett's stories. The stories become their own revisions. This possibility of re-seeing a world through the forgetfulness and indifference of a narrative that has the potential to substitute images for others defines the reading experience.

For the narrator, recounting a story is necessary even though that story cannot be quite retrieved, or might not have been experienced at all. It cannot be mediated as a memory; it rather oozes in the present through such divergences and meanders. Although these are narrative accounts of picaresque anti-heroes, it is as if the past as such continually creates itself within the present rather than being remembered. The present overlooks all temporalities affecting the narrator's story/life: "I speak as

though it all happened yesterday. Yesterday is indeed recent, but not enough. For what I tell this evening is passing this evening, at this passing hour" (p. 62). Shortly after this, the narrator refers to his current situation as the symptom of a distant time and place, and his possibility of existence remains within a future impossibility: "I am no longer with these assassins, in this bed of terror, but in my distant refuge, my hands twined together, my head bowed, weak, breathless, calm, free, and older than I'll have ever been, if my calculations are correct" (p. 62). The story overlays several spaces and times that allow the narrator to envisage himself beyond the possible limits of his existence, older than he will have ever been. He is at once referring to things in the demonstrative mode, "these assassins," "this bed," and claims to be somewhere else.

The most immediate effect of Beckett's expression of indifference is that it allows him to get rid of or make redundant the binaries thought to be inherent to writing: past and present, thought and action, speaking and silence, dream and reality, nothing and everything. As the past is fused with the future in the present, this generates the formlessness of the so-called memory/dream, and the voice serves to confront the limitless throng of images with the limits of a capacity to articulate. If Beckett's writing is a writing of contradictions, this consists in creating a territory, indicated equally by what it does not articulate, creating narratives in a site of potentiality which precludes closures, distinctions, anticipations while casually voicing them at a crossroads with several divergences:[37] "I don't know why I told this story. I could just as well have told another" (Beckett, 1995, p. 60). It is implied here that there is no real difference between one story and the next. However, the

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[37] For Furlani, Beckett's principle of contradiction enables "a form of life" (2015, p. 466). Reading it as examples of neither deferral, nor semantic ambiguity and illogic, Furlani makes it clear that contradiciton can enable coherence between form and disorder (p. 455).

narrator is equally keen to tell stories, his ability to do so lies in his indifference to his own story. In fact, such direct admission of the redundancy of stories expands Beckett's textual space towards its others which are not necessarily imagined, metaphorized, or symbolized but which are material actively affecting writing. The narrator suggests that his story is always potentially another at the moment of its creation. The voices are also creators of aleatory worlds rather than communicators of determined distinctions. These spaces of otherness that are inscribed within the representative reality of the texts.

Another divergence is in the form of narrative creatures. These potential creatures and habitats of Beckett's writing lead to an openness to violence in writing. One of the most powerful signs of Beckett's diversely populated realities is the narrative creatures of *Malone Dies*. As Malone recounts his story, he is simultaneously distracted by his inventions, little fragments of stories that strangely become continuous as they delve into most unexpected worlds. The ending passages of the novel particularly address this when the narrator, recounting Lemuel's (a figment that the voice gives voice and reality to) act of physical violence on one of the inmates of what is assumed to be a mental institution, leaves Malone's thought experiment, in gaps – the text literally finishes off with double-spaced gaps in between repetitions:

> Lemuel is in charge, he raises his hatchet on which the blood will never dry, but not to hit anyone, he will not hit anyone, he will not hit anyone any more, he will not touch anyone any more, either with it or with it or with it or with or
>
> or with it or with his hammer or with his stick or with his fist or in thought in dream I mean never he will never
>
> or with his pencil or with his stick or
>
> or light light I mean
>
> never there he will never

never anything

there

any more (p. 288)

This specific indistinguishability of expression and content, thought/dream and reality, possible worlds and real worlds, hatchet and pencil in short, pertains to Beckett's literary experiment on the abstract, which will be discussed. This is perhaps a significant example of the way in which the relationships between the determinate and the indeterminate elements of writing, between authority and chance, actuality and potentiality are disoriented.[38]

2.3 Beckett's abstract

If Beckett's modes of being express an unlimited potentiality in their suspension of differences, they seem to create a physical world that is also always enmeshed in psychic procedures, dreams, memory, visions, perhaps even hallucinations. As such, the narrators are hardly portrayed as individuals with distinct qualities, they lack information concerning almost all aspects of their identity. They are actual bodies with thinking minds, but, their lives are completely indeterminate, created offhandedly, as if composed of the coming together of a set of random elements. Their mental as well as bodily identity is traversed by many forms of indeterminacies that appear and disappear. This indefinite principle traverses the existence of Beckett's heroes, and although they are subjects, humans, males, voices, their being is constantly also determined by this indefinite principle, which does not indicate a subjective quality or an individual life.

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[38] Dowd sees in this the merging of the virtual with the actual (2007, p. 147).

For Molloy, as for many other Beckett characters, this indefinite quality is audible without any external resonance, and it always connects times, places, bodies together. After Lousse, the woman he meets on his way, offers Molloy her place and asks him to live with her because of his obvious physical and mental deformities, all Molloy cares about is which town he is in. Oblivious as he is, he attempts to contemplate whether staying with her or leaving is better, but he is carried away with other thoughts:

> And that night there was no question of moon, nor any other light, but it was a night of listening, a night given to the faint soughing and sighing stirring at night in little pleasure gardens, the shy sabbath of leaves and petals and the air that eddies there as it does not in other places, where there is less constraint, and as it does not during the day, when there is more vigilance, and then *something else that is not clear, being neither the air nor what it moves, perhaps the far unchanging noise the earth makes and which other noises cover, but not for long* [emphasis added] (p. 48-9).

From the distinction between audible and inaudible noises, Molloy traces "something else that is not clear" that leads to a forgetting of being: "Yes, there were times when I forgot not only who I was, but that I was, forgot to be" (p. 49). This form of living while *forgetting to be* defines in the novel one of the passages that link Beckett's apprehension of the indefinite quality, to the individual experience of the character. A brief suspension of thought is discernible here, but he seems to recover from, and even avoid such existential palpitation: "But that did not happen to me often…" (p. 49). This unchanging noise does not appear as a threat. Molloy himself gives voice to the unchanging noise, an indefinite quality that is expressed as "forgetting to be." As readers, we are caught between these voices. Even though Molloy is forgetful, indifferent and aimless, his attention to himself comes through the detour of his attention to, or absorption in, what he calls the "unchanging noise." He has stories, memories, confusions, questions. His calculations and questions prove most fruitful

expressively, even if they are not logically fruitful, when he loses track or releases his force to attend to "something else that is not clear."

Like the narrator of "The Calmative," Molloy, too, hears himself without making sense: "And the words I uttered myself, and which must nearly always have gone with an effort of the intelligence, were often to me as the buzzing of an insect" (p. 50). How does the speaking voice capture a sense of this indefinite quality in writing? If, as Molloy declares, understanding not only others but also his own self is almost impossible, what can be known of Molloy, or any other Beckett character for that matter, marked by this indifference? Molloy not only hears other voices but hears his voice as another voice. In such moments, I suggest that Beckett's language expresses the co-existence of intelligibility and unintelligibility, voice and buzzing as a new limit of comprehensibility. This is a form of life that Beckett's narrators experience in the overturning of their capacities for understanding. It is in this sense of a paradox that language is the language of an abstract sense of life that cannot be quite lived or recognized but sensed nonetheless. If indifference is taken as the difference before the terms take on identity, then we may speak of an abstract difference in Beckett. The narrators are never quite able to snare the senses of movement and change they articulate, yet they articulate them as distinctions.

The paradox is that these unintelligible senses of experience are relentlessly determined within distinctions and they pass as Molloy's comments on his life. Beckett's narratives sometimes foreground the authority of the narrating voice, and sometimes completely dissolve it in their painting of sites of potentiality, contradictory states of being, the feeling of a buzzing or a sense of indefiniteness. The hero of "The Calmative" is marked by both life and death. The narrator announces, "I don't know when I died," another determination of an indefinite

quality of being dead-alive (p. 61). This is not to suggest that Beckett's expression refers to an actual representation of a life of death or dying. Rather, it makes use of the abstraction of such a difference. Indifference is thus conceivable with regard to both the suspension of difference and, the relationship of an indefinite quality to specific determinations. In Bartleby's "disinclination to choose" and Beckett's heroes' indifferent mood or their life of death, there underlies a form of life, which is both too abstract to be recognizable and representable in a causal chain of events and clearly determined in its inscription. In such ways Beckett inscribes forms of abstraction.[39]

Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* speaks of two aspects of indifference. On the one hand, indifference is the "undifferenciated abyss," the "indeterminate animal," and, on the other hand, it is the "once more calm surface upon which float unconnected determinations" (2013, p. 36). This challenging definition of two types of indifference contributes to the understanding of difference in itself for Deleuze. Indifference as absence of difference, some kind of indeterminate nothingness – chaos – is the ground of indeterminacy from which a brief moment of determination – difference – comes out. Deleuze writes that "instead of something distinguished from something else [empirically], imagine something which distinguishes itself – and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it" (p.

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[39] In *Samuel Beckett: Anatomy of a Literary Revolution*, Pascale Casanova explores the notion of 'abstractification' that she defines as "both the process of enactment and implementation of a formal abstraction (which does not exclude the presence of images, but does challenge realist principles of representation), but also a methodical, systematic operation of renunciation, of 'purification'" (2006, p. 102). Casanova's investigation of aesthetic abstraction includes an emphasis on Beckett's images, which, she considers, accede to abstract stories which are about nothing without being inarticulatory: "[The] more or less 'figurative' images [those of *How It Is*, "The Image" and *Worstward Ho* may well be applied to this definition] structure what are virtually abstract stories, in which decreasingly but indelibly, at least the head that fashions the image survives: 'it's done I've had the image'" (p. 89). The idea that there are remnants of some form of an enduring element of which Casanova speaks here, in the form of a head, mind, voice and so on may help illuminate the aforementioned relations of determination and indeterminacy.

36). What is striking in Deleuze's concept of difference is that it has a connection to

indifference in the form of "unilateral distinction" (p. 36). Difference is in this sense

made or it makes, determines itself. In Deleuze's difficult terminology, difference is

a "rising ground" which acquires autonomous existence at the same time as it stays

(part of the) indeterminate (p. 37). In Deleuzean difference, "the determined

maintains its essential relation with the undetermined" (p. 37). Deleuze's example

from art is indicative of the way he conceives of difference necessarily without and

before identity, resemblance and representation. He refers to Odilon Redon's use of

chiaroscuro and abstract line, and concludes:

> The abstract line acquires all its force from giving up the model – that is to
> say, the plastic symbol of the form – and participates in the ground all the
> more violently in that it distinguishes itself from it without the ground
> distinguishing itself from the line. (p. 37)

The line, that which is represented, participates in/as the unrepresentable; Redon's

painting makes its contours extremely fragile with respect to their background so that

the formless forces itself into the attempted model done by the line. In this way,

difference, for Deleuze, reoccurs as simulacrum, "the mirror in which both

determinations and the indeterminate combine in a single determination which makes

the difference" (p. 37). Neither the attempted model nor chaos. This is one way in

which (in)distinguishability characterizes Deleuzean thought through the relationship

between difference and indifference. Difference is made within indifference. The

abstract is an indeterminacy constantly being redetermined, either in Redon's

abstract line, or Beckett's abstract selves, times, places and others, and it is expressed

with respect to this principle of (in)distinguishability: something that determines

itself only by maintaining a relation of indeterminacy, or the relationship with the

undetermined. So that some things change, as Beckett's narrators declare, in

whatever form it takes, but the change is not detectable through cognition. In this sense, Beckett's narrators determine abstract, incalculable qualities through language even when they cannot materially identify them.

For Deleuze, this idea of difference is relevant to artistic creation. Each aesthetic creation determines itself as difference while being created. The object is divorced from the eye that sees it, which in turn becomes one with a point of view that is without a subject. Ultimately this enables the emergence of art work in complete independence from a correlation between object and its point of view in a subject. On the contrary, their indistinguishability makes the difference. For Deleuze, in this operation difference "must be shown differing" (p. 68). Deleuze's conception intimates an idea of the abstract in the way it emphasizes the overturning of model/center/representation so that even when representations seem to abound, a movement of relay between what Deleuze calls divergences and series gives rise to an indeterminate plane in which several determinations move about without relationships of causality. It is in this sense that abstract worlds attest to what Bryden calls "space[s] of potentiality" (as cited in Dowd, 2007, p. 60).

The idea of the abstract we find in Beckett's configuration of indifference is produced with respect to this kind of correlation between determination and indeterminacy. Things are continuously represented by a subject but they fail to live up to this representation. There are images and ideas of improbable, unfathomable, invisible and inaudible qualities, they are constantly voiced by the narrators, but they intimate a dimension that remains inarticulate. Communication refers in *Molloy* to this continual passage from subjective remarks to an empty perspective where language names abstract content, life is only potential – it is dream, memory, reality, timelessness, life in death. Beckett's language comprises a locomotion too quick and

too paradoxical in its taking place to be represented, which the narrator intuits in the contiguity of events, but cannot unequivocally put them together in words, or capture them in a reality that is consciously lived. After Molloy contemplates upon how far he might be to his mother, the narrative implies a time lapse and he suddenly finds out it is night:

> I must have fallen asleep, for all of a sudden there was the moon, a huge moon framed in the window. Two bars divided it in three segments, of which the middle remained constant, while little by little the right gained what the left lost. For the moon was moving from left to right, or the room was moving from right to left, or both together perhaps, or both were moving from left to right, but the room not so fast as the moon, or from right to left, but the moon not so fast as the room. But can one speak of right and left in such circumstances? That movements of an extreme complexity were taking place seemed certain, and yet what a simple thing it seemed… (p. 39).

By such means, Beckett's language receives both the complexity and the simplicity, both processes and things, both intensities and spectacles. The difference from day to night seems obvious, and it is a great difference that can be observed only in its aftermath, not while it is happening. This sudden change forces Molloy to monitor the phases that can occur in the motion of the earth, or the moon. But Molloy's conclusion that what seems simple involves extreme complexity elucidates the relationship of determined things to indeterminacy. Molloy may well be dreaming here, but regardless of this, the difference that occurs cannot be completely distinguished from a movement of indeterminacy: either the room or the moon was moving towards a certain direction. A difference is detected by Molloy in the midst of an indeterminacy in which directions become indistinguishable. Language expresses this intersection of difference and indifference; where things and events happen and cease simultaneously, the moons and rooms move in two directions at the same time. Defined by geometrical divisions, the described frame is simultaneously one that is dividable in strict evenness, and undividable in equal

terms, because it is perceived as rotating both from right to left and from left to right. Such conflation of beginnings and endings, provenances and destinations, locates language in relation to not only the unsayable or the unnamable but to multiple possibilities of expression in an instance of indifference.

Deleuze's emphasis on the "abstract line" is essential to Beckett's conception of voices and their expressive potentials as they are discussed in this reading. Beckett's oeuvre, even when it engages in an interrogation of its motives and the communication of its expressive limits, exercises its power for potentials. Garin Dowd (2007) in *Abstract Machines* creates an account of Beckett's "abstract machine," drawing upon Deleuzean and Guattarian notions, through the ways in which Beckett's thought experiments are articulated. He provides an overall sense of the abstract literary machine by which artists, and in this case Beckett achieves a singularity of sense: "The machines are *abstract* because the universes to which they give rise, and the novelty of thinking anew which they demand, cannot be represented as such" (p. 14). Beckett's abstract machine should then be distinguished from a procedure of sophistication and abstraction in art, something that Beckett harshly criticizes in his "Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce" in favor of Joyce's sensuous, desophisticated language (2001, p. 28).

For Deleuze, then, difference is a determination insofar as it is made from within an indeterminacy that blurs the differentiating lines. Pure difference is not livable, but it makes up the conditions of real experience before any representational form arises. Beckett's expression of indifference as the unlivable sense of an abstract quality contributes to the formation of these characters. Either in the bizarre unintelligibility of words, complete oblivion of being or the buzzing sound of a human voice, this indefinite quality is continually addressed by the narrators. Apart

69

from expressing quasi-authorial ideas, Beckett's language lays bare a form of communication between distinct modes of reality. The unlivable and representable, the virtual and the actual converge to create an expression of indifference. It is in these two senses that Beckett's narrating voices relate to and differentiate from themselves. The voices make judgments about what appears to be sameness, while they are affected by a difference they cannot pin down, which passes through them and determines their mode of being.

2.4 Revisions and expressive potentials

If Beckett's expressive act, as has been suggested, consists in the renunciation of any immediately intelligible distinction between opposites, this is also demonstrated in an impression of indistinguishability, where, as the narrators remark, all expression is one expression, "one and the same weariness" (Beckett, 1958a, p. 14). This is precisely Beckett's effect of tedium in every sense of the word. It is materialized in his contentious textual environments, where the mood shifts from subjective, perceptual paradigms to indifferent ones, but always emphasizing a sense of tedium. How does this principle of indifference nonetheless traverse, modify and materialize novel expressive acts?

In his dialogues with French critic Georges Duthuit, Beckett famously remarked that "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express" (Beckett, 2001, p. 139). The need to express is the Beckettian

problem par excellence, informing the literary event.[40] Content, on the other hand, as Beckett claims, is always generated with respect to its co-existence with form. He asserts in "Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce": "form *is* content, content *is* form" (Beckett, 2001, p. 27). Notwithstanding Beckett's reading of content and form, in the rest of this chapter, I will argue that Beckett's recurrent expressions of indifference reconfigure the relationship between form and content, by way of their abstract nature. His work engenders a framework in which the expressive limits indicated by the voices that make up territories of indifference in *Molloy* and the stories or those of otherness in *Texts for Nothing* also always entail a potential to pass over those limits. Beckett's repeated forms of expression serve to redetermine the content of what happens, and they are in continuous relationship of difference from what the voices ascribe to them.

Brian Massumi argues that Deleuze and Guattari, in their critique of the referential function of language, associated with what he calls the communicational model, do not immediately opt for the other alternative, namely the constructivist strategy, which maintains that structures, discourses, and literary forms of expression come to construct contents, subjects, meanings, even if those meanings are always liable to change (2005, p. xiii). Massumi states that for Deleuze and Guattari, both models act under the presupposition of a "concept of determination predicated … despite any protestations to the contrary, on conformity and correspondence" (p. xiv). Indeed for Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* content and expression indicate the two poles of language, but expression does not have the simple function of representing a content (2005, p. 86). In fact, they come into contact, and through

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[40] This is so emphatic in the oeuvre that Le Juez writes via Beckett's lecture notes from Trinity College, that he argued "one doesn't reveal oneself in quality of one's thought but of one's expression" (2008, p. 35).

this there is a mutual "intervention" of expression into content and vice-versa (p. 87).

This means that there are no predetermined forms of correspondence between the

two. But it is significant to note that for Deleuze and Guattari, each time they

intervene in one another, there is a new possibility of an *assemblage* that defies any

notion of correspondence or conformity. Indeed for Deleuze and Guattari, there are

"points of intervention and insertion in the framework of the reciprocal

presupposition of the two forms" (p. 87). This determines the difference of their

concept from the communicational model that presents expressions as referring to

predetermined contents. Rather, content and expression, as two heterogeneous series,

enter into communication, to use an earlier Deleuzean term, but a fundamentally

different type of communication, which creates new speech acts, new enunciative

possibilities, new assemblages each time. It is this strictly anti-structuralist and

socially-oriented concept of language that their thought promotes.

Addressing the question of expression as an event, Massumi takes off from

Deleuze and Guattari's position that there are forms of content and forms of

expression, each in their own materiality, rather than one single form that connects

them and bridges the gap. So, the idea of sense is not caused by a causal or medial

operation between two terms, but immanently, experimentally:

> Between a form of content and a form of expression, there is only the process
> of *their passing into each other*: in other words, an immanence. In the gap
> between content and expression is the immanence of their mutual
> 'deterritorialization'. This blurring of the boundaries is *in addition to* their
> formal distinction. (p. xvii)

Accordingly sense is made from within this event which neither conforms to a

previous reality, which it comes to signify, nor corresponds to a futuristic/promised

meaning, as yet constructed. For Massumi, as well as for Deleuze and Guattari, there

is no essential connection (or a lack of connection for that matter) between the two.

72

Seen from this angle, there is no real subject that expresses objects and contents of reality. On the contrary, there is only a "performative relation" by which "content is actively modified by expression" (p. xix). When content and expression partake in a "mutual deterritorialization" they no longer correspond merely to their own specificity and materiality, but in a relation of non-resemblance, perform an act that engenders a new site, a territory. That act is not the outcome of a subjective agency or arbitrariness, but is made immanently, like the phenomenon of conception, by which all potentials alternate with each other within the instant that makes difference. An expression is eventually made collectively through a performative relation.

Deleuze and Guattari's model of expression could inform the ways in which expression and content "pass into each other" in Beckett's work, particularly from the period between 1940 and 1960. This is also instrumental in detecting the points of divergence and tension between Beckett's "obligation to express" via voices, and his "empty scenes," and "unchanging noises," as I will discuss them. As I have argued, Beckett's texts express forms of authority and indifference, in the voiced remarks of the narrators, which indicate abstract yet familiar content, in the form of commentary and mechanical responses, imparting some sense of unresolved tedium. However, the relationship between Beckett's expression and content is more provisional than what might seem at first.

In *Molloy* the narrating voice points to the futility of speaking:

> … when already all was fading, waves and particles, there could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names. I say that now, but after all what do I know now about then, now when the icy words hail down upon me, the icy meanings, and the world dies too, foully named. All I know is what the words know … (p. 31)[41]

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[41] The English version does not quite conform to the original: "Oui, même à cette époque, où tout s'estompait déjà, ondes et particules, la condition de l'objet était d'être sans nom, et inversement. Je

73

It is noteworthy to state that the narrating voice thinks that language eliminates a sense of vitality, crystallizing whatever has motion in a certain freezing point. This deadening power of language is also what provides an escape from the perspective of a voice in Beckett's repeatable worlds. If there are nameless things and thingless names in their own materiality (forms of content and forms of expression), this opens up a possibility for the deposition of a subject that uses language, and hence a field of consciousness manifesting a net of significations. As has been suggested, this dethronement is not a yet-to-come event in a realm different from writing (such as the longed-for silence) but exists simultaneously with the reign of a voice, at the time of speech, within the time of writing. The narrator is aware of the possibility of a reality untouched by words, and not frozen in meanings, he is equally aware of the possibility of a pure language without things. However, he feels bound by a presumed relationship between the two, where meanings capture these forms of content in forms of expression. This is a very stimulating problem for the narrator, shedding light on his attention to unchanging noises and how to articulate them. This very problem is continually revisited in the novel when the narrating voice cannot quite capture aspects of his life in "icy meanings," but articulates this experience nonetheless. If all the narrator knows is what the words know, the words point him to images like this before providing him with a meaningful basis for those images. This is an unintelligible but expressive world, whose expressive capacities, the narrator suggests, seem threatened by a language of meanings.

One of Massumi's main questions in his re-examination of 'expression's conditions of emergence' is the question, "How can expression rejoin a continuum of

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dis ça maintenant, mais au fond qu'en sais-je maintenant, de cette époque, maintenant que grêlent sur moi les mots glacés de sens et que le monde meurt aussi, lâchement, lourdement nommé? J'en sais ce que savent les mots et les choses mortes" (Beckett, 1959, p. 54).

potential?" (p. xxvi). For Massumi, as well as for Deleuze and Guattari, expression emerges immanently from within a collective body throughout a specific period, in which they neither simply reflect nor construct the subjects that produce them. In a field of enunciation, be it artistic or social, there are potentials for an emergence of expression that is nonetheless new even when it is naturally replete with clichés, formulas, repetitions. For Massumi, the problem of expression involves a "pragmatic question of how one *performatively* contributes to the stretch of expression in the world – or conversely prolongs its capture" (p. xxii).

As Beckett's work traverses this creative problem, it passes through territories articulated by the same kind of expressions. In *Watt* when two blind piano tuners, a father and a son, visit Mr. Knott's establishment to examine the piano, this visit not only baffles Watt but it disturbs reality, or the linguistic representation of such reality. The coming of the piano tuners, which the narrator refers to as "the incident of the Galls" create an effect in the novel that is irreducible to articulation according to the narrator. As is mostly the case throughout the novel, Watt is once again unable to decipher the meaning of this event. What characterizes the scene is an abstract setting that cannot be mediated via linguistic support. The novel introduces two dimensions of this event: "Nothing had happened" and "a thing that was nothing had happened" (Beckett, 2009c, p. 62). There seems to be no identifiable content, and yet it happens, or rather "unfolds" on an expressive level irreducible to Watt's or the narrating voice's abilities to express. In *The Unnamable*, this incident from *Watt* is revisited by the narrator. The image of the blind piano tuners is evoked when the narrator utters a wish to be blind. The object is familiar; Beckett once again re-uses a previous idea. While the object is familiar, its significance becomes more and more vague. The Unnamable's 'personal' wish is instantaneously dissolved by the

75

commentary on general knowledge, associated with the image. In such passages, Beckett registers several expressive tenors, and these travel through the corpus to connect and transfigure problems:

> Perhaps it would be better to be blind, the blind hear better, full of general knowledge we are this evening, we have even piano-tuners up our sleeve, they strike A and hear G, two minutes later, there's nothing to be seen in any case, this eye is an oversight. (p. 373)

In this passage the inexplicable event in *Watt* is explained as a disorientation of sense, a modification occurring between playing and hearing, striking A and hearing G. It is implied that Watt cannot fathom the divergence of tones within the same note. These sorts of disorientation occur frequently in Beckett's characters, where subjective perception distorts empirical reality. A problem of language in *Watt* connects to a problem of perception in *The Unnamable*, creating a comparison between two insufficient means of sense in Beckett, seeing and listening, associated with the overarching theme of failure. *Watt*'s indiscernible difference is explained by the gap between the notes A and G, and perhaps Watt's failure was being unable to distinguish between them. From another perspective, this failure is indeed an ability, for the blind tuners and for Watt, since their acute sense of hearing allows them not only to hear the exact timbre of the notes but also their after-effects and continuations (even if downwards), from A to G; an encounter with a sound universe. In Watt's world this acute sensitivity to flowing sounds and images precludes a representational picture. Failure is a failure to master from both sides, allowing a line of liberation from a relationship conditioned by mastery and impotence.

In Massumi's words: "It is important not to think of creativity of expression as if it brought something into being from nothing. There is no *tabula rasa* of expression. It always takes place in a cluttered world" (p. xxix). Such an idea of

expression in necessary relation to an environment of clutter further elucidates the relation of indeterminacy to determinations; the traversal of familiar images put forward by the voices across the oeuvre. It goes without saying that Beckett frequently re-uses and reproduces his fictional entities. The characters even make appearances in other novels, as when Watt suddenly appears to Mercier and Camier. Apart from this playful relocation of names and beings, though, the narratives are cluttered with expressions which continue to be reused when they are used up: They "rejoin a continuum." This is visible when Beckett works with the condensed and the extended versions of the same expression such as "The Image" and *How It Is*, "All Strange Away" and "Imagination Dead Imagine." Beckett's indifference, or his indiscernible differences are created in between two or more identical territorial motifs, and in expressive environments from which clutters and clusters of voices rearticulate these motifs. And it is this environment that ties everything in a sociality with itself whose elements are not predetermined, but determinable in relation to their re-usage.

Beckett's "obligation to express," then, indicates not only "impersonal imperatives" but obsessional textual motifs that dominate the texts across the oeuvre. From Beckett's own critical/creative concepts such as obligation, expression, voice to his fiction's preeminent motifs such as indifference, impotence, ignorance, weakness, dimness and so on, Beckett's worlds are expressed in certain ways of conformity with the voice's determinations about itself – including the voice of the author.[42] It would not be wrong to suggest that all such Beckettian expressions not only designate the way states of things are named in his textual world, but they also

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[42] Beckett's remarks about his writing in an interview with Israel Shenker reveal something of this: "At the end of my work there's nothing but dust—the namable. In the last book—'L'Innommable'— there's complete disintegration. No 'I,' no 'have,' no 'being.' No nominative, no accusative, no verb. There's no way to go on" (in Graver & Federman, 2005, p. 162).

name the overall quality of privation, epitomized both in his criticism and fiction. Expressions of self-awareness, or other forms of awareness such as impotence create the textual and linguistic conditions for both yielding to and deviating from a certain regime of sovereignty of a voiced meaning. In what follows I will look into two of those expressions repeatedly encountered in Beckett's oeuvre.

In *How It Is* [*Comment c'est*] first published in 1961 in French, the fragments of a voice introduce thematic coordinates that resonate with the same ones across the oeuvre. The novel begins by the narrator acknowledging that the narration depends upon his attention to a voice, a voice which seems to be less organized than those of the earlier ones. Written in fragments with no punctuation, capitalization and no grammatical coherence, *How It Is* nonetheless achieves some sort of consistency through the development of its images in a strictly structured language. The novel presents us with the image of a man, lying prostrate in the mud, trying to speak, remembering his life. If there is a story, it is fragmented, and once again at the discretion of another voice. The narrating voice remarks: "I say it as I hear it" (Beckett, 2009b, p. 3). Once again, this is not a simple exercise of hearing and repeating, unlike what the narrator makes us believe.

The novel economizes all the different aspects of the voice discussed above, within a narrative that oddly creates a systematic structure. It conveys a certain style of grammatical fragmentation rather than inconsistency, so that once again, the reader is invited to attune herself to the rhythm of this new grammar. Like the voice of *Texts for Nothing*, it seems to record a flow, it speaks from a universe of temporal indifference.[43] It is in three parts, with respect to the attention to the voice, to what the narrator calls Pim: before Pim, with Pim, after Pim, to crudely sum up the three

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[43] For a study on communication and violence in *How It Is* see Ziarek, 1996.

phases of the narrator's life. Pim remains abstract throughout, an empty referent. The voices are flowing with images, images lead to fragments of memories/stories, and those in turn produce recursive patterns of reality. What the I says – the series of images, the fragments of stories, the reprised expressions of mud and the tinned food or the sack – is the expression of life in its full form. There is no longer an audible quasi-authority questioning how to describe: "I'll describe it it will be described" (p. 21). This life is not a challenge to discourse, misremembered or unrepresentable but rather a flow of life "recorded none the less" (p. 3).

The image of the mud in the novel was designed and expressed in the earlier short text "The Image" written in 1956. Beckett is trying to "make an image" in this short text by once again, a form that resists punctuations, orders, conventional narration, by a rapid pace of speech that intimates without capturing its representational details, an image. The short text gives the implication that the image is not preconceived. Rather, the narrator finds "little devices" to work with spontaneously. The text begins with the image of a tongue getting clogged in mud (Beckett, 1995, p. 165). This expression then opens up a whole area of remembering and/or imagining. Certain scenes are invoked in which the protagonist suddenly sees himself at the age of sixteen in open nature with a "girl." Moving from the image of the mud to an image of being in nature, the text returns to the image of the mud eventually.

Possibly taking off from this initial haphazard image, the novel obsessively repeats its narrative leads: voice, mud, dark, tinned food, sack. These leads are, in their interrelation, adequate to form some picture. The narrator lies prostrate in the mud contemplating his life. The communication between the two texts in terms of these motifs gives us the situation. While the image is there, however, it is an empty

frame: "in the mud it's over it's done I've had the image the scene is empty" (p. 25). As making the image becomes especially crucial in such a narrative environment, the question of what it may signify becomes less and less so. If there are originating ideas in Beckett, they are necessarily empty; images are given but the scenes must be empty for writing to effect such a continuation.

The mud is figured in other places, too. In *Molloy*'s opening pages, the narrating voice refers to his dwelling place as "somewhere between the mud and the scum" (p. 14). Similarly, Moran refers to "muddy solitudes" (p. 168). It is mostly associated with an imaginary dwelling place for the characters, and if we take into account the fact that the characters in *Molloy* and *Malone Dies* spend some time outdoors, in the forest and the like, their solitary existence is characterized by a dwelling in the mud, abandoned yet strangely content. In this sense, Beckett's oeuvre is a continuation of ideas in several expressive acts. Abbott argues that Beckett works with what he calls an "ooze of recyclement" in such occasions (1996, p. 103). Through the mud Beckett "recycled the biblical metaphysics of origin" "by fusing the creativity of the word with that of matter" (p. 103). However, if the mud appears to be Beckett's site of creativity, its life-forming capacity might be affectively powerful but significationally empty. The reproduction of the image/motif/idea of the mud functions as the stimulant for the narrator's capacity to remember. However, although it does bring back memories, dreams and images, such dwelling is risky overall for the narrator, such creativity is self-eradicating, its frames are always "empty." As the narrator leaves "for the moment life in the light" (p. 5), he is literally bogged down in a mud, which is not quite an object or an image for us readers, but something that stimulates physical sensation and instigates mental labor. In Uhlmann's words:

> The Beckettian image, then, appears, vanishes, yet lingers. It is also extracted from surrounding contexts; it is 'an autonomous mental image' like that Deleuze identifies in Bacon. It is offered to us as something which must be interpreted but which will resist easy interpretation and lacks an intended interpretation: that is, we reach out but fail to grasp it. (2006, p. 62)

The mud is the initial and the ultimate image, irrespective of the content it signifies or symbolizes. The echoes of its broader idea across the two texts potentially redetermine what the mud might express. The image of the boy and the girl in "The Image" is revisited in *How It Is*: "a little girl friend's under the sky of April or of May we are gone I stay there" (p. 25). What is expressed through the image of the mud is something like dream-content, easily forgettable, and potentially changeable by what it can be affected by at the moment of its re-creation. In the short text it bears sexual associations that overall come to hint at a general erotic sensation. The tongue lolls, a girl is remembered. In the recollected scene, the boy and the girl bite and swallow their sandwiches respectively, consummating each other's shy, distracted movements. From this initial set of events, Beckett further abstracts the scene, and it serves to create the new image which is basically deprived of its scene: "the scene is shut of us" (p. 24). In Uhlmann's words, "at a certain degree of abstraction [Beckett] is offering us the 'real'" (p. 140). I argue that Beckett's "real" is composed of as a site of potentiality where the previous image with its associated content and described scene is suspended.

The mud is the only material reality the narrator seems to have. He concludes that he is alone: "in the dark in the mud long wrangle all lost and finally conclusion no me sole elect" (p. 9). But this could as well be a dream, or rather this very life in the mud may have the status of a dream, something the narrator cannot quite reach but is there, or can only bear in the mud: "and yet a dream I'm given a dream like someone having tasted of love of a little woman" (p. 9). He suggests that the mud is a

physical facilitator, a habitat, a specific location: "when you shit it's the mud that wipes" (p. 30). It is also suggested that the mud represents a perceptual receptacle where imagination and remembrance take place, and it comprises what the narrator calls "vast tracts of time" (p. 3): "I have all the suffering of all the ages" (p. 31). Evoking *Molloy*'s confusing temporality, the novel offers no specific time and place, the present moment is lived in all the ages. As Beckett depicts a situation of indifference, he also provides and develops the conceptual coordinates which are tied to the situation. An impersonal, timeless situation like this, replete with images of indeterminate things, comes into being through the affects, feelings, ideas that accompany it. Several expressive potentials are connectable to the idea of the mud. It indicates eternal time, serves as a perceptive stimulant, and it is conceived both as a catalyst for memory and a site of real suffering.

In another instance of the image of the mud in the oeuvre, Malone speaks about the "so many strange things, so many baseless things" he has felt, and one of them is "going liquid and becoming like mud" (p. 225). He describes a physical experience where his identity merges with an object, in an inconceivable physical state he becomes one with it. Although Malone thinks that these strange things should be left unsaid, he articulates them nonetheless. We encounter what appears to be Malone's own sense of error in his idea about himself as mud. However, when the image is deprived not only of a scene but also of an opinionated voice, it becomes all the more violent. In all these new senses, this abstract image with the actual materiality of the mud disconnects itself from a scene. It cancels out the previous scene populated by the girl and the boy. If the image is thus made in the short text, it is stated in the novel that this image can only be provisional. *How It Is* uses the abstract power of the mud to inflict violence on the physicality of another text and

what it has to say, its scene, its characters, its associations. As ideas travel though these images, they cannot be captured by the voices, even though the narrating voices obsessively return to them, articulate them, even dwell in them.

Such predominant expressions, by way of their "empty scenes" reconfigure what the images like the mud might entail. It is this indeterminacy that seems to instigate Beckett's writing in many occasions while preserving a certain link between such images, and the voices that create those images. Exploring a relationship of indeterminacy to images, the various expressions of ideas constantly change the limits of intelligibility. The voice does communicate recurrent, obsessional motifs but these remain "empty scenes." Rather they stretch in a "continuum of potential" within a single text. It is also in this sense that the self-forming function fails to give definitive sense to its material, while it apparently masters and gives order to its own movements, as in the case of *Worstward Ho*: "Say a body. Where none" (Beckett, 2009a, p. 81). As Beckett's expressions recursively offer seemingly similar situations, the means to distinguish one from the other becomes harder. Despite the persistence of established expressions such as these, Beckett's conceptual world and his image cannot be formed.

Another emphatically voiced theme is that of impotence mostly appearing in *The Three Novels.* The narrator of *Malone Dies* contemplates on the condition of his body: "If I had the use of my body I would throw it out of the window. But perhaps it is the *knowledge of impotence* [emphasis added] that emboldens me to that thought" (p. 218). This expression of impotence maintains the basis for perhaps the only kind of knowledge which the narrator has access to. Bunions, ingrowing nails, blows, spits, stiff legs, cramps inform Beckett's worlds, but such a world of physical weakness contains a paradoxical claim to the dexterity of the mind, so much so that

the narrative always falls back on the authority of a vigilant consciousness, aware of and communicating its situation as weakness. However, even though the voices mark out their psychological topos in terms of an idea of impotence, this expression of impotence gives way to many forms of revision.

Although Beckett's sardonic humor provides adequate input for us to claim a paradox, such paradox does not merely partake in a discrepancy between the content of what is being said and its tone. More often than not, the paradoxes in Beckett call for a revision of limits and physical constraints that continually re-sketch the boundaries of a capacity for life. It is, for instance, at the limits of a capacity for power that disabilities are defined: "Where did I get this access of vigour? From my weakness perhaps" (p. 84). Molloy makes this remark soon after he knocks a stranger that he meets in the forest unconscious. A cripple in crutches, Molloy nonetheless manages to overwhelm the man for his provocation. This triumph comically motivates Molloy, who starts swinging backwards and forwards with his feet pressed between his crutches. This is all to prove his strength to himself, and although he comically fails at certain points, the idea is that these impotent narrating voices can use their knowledge of impotence to arrive at an idea of strength. This sense of strength is mostly something they convince themselves of when they are alone. Molloy conveys a certain idea of strength to himself: "I was no ordinary cripple, far from it, and there were days when my legs were the best part of me, with the exception of the brain capable of forming such a judgment" (p. 82). It is interesting to note that Molloy makes this remark just two pages before he beats the stranger, with his crutches rather than his legs. But the passage also suggests something that Beckett characters are always aware of. Their brains can make judgments about their bodies. Even though there is a possibility that Molloy is delusional about his

intellectual powers, such personal verdicts articulated as facts affect the limits of the impotent body. These paradoxical claims serve to revise the capacities of the characters. Molloy's opinion of himself is tested in his encounter with the stranger, where his self-judgment in fact digresses from reality. Even when, as it is clear, the brain is able form judgments about the body parts, what determines the bodily triumph of Molloy is the physical limits that the crutches impose on him. Seen from this perspective, it is the power of false or paradoxical opinions that push physical capacities to their farthest limits. Articulation becomes an outside force that has impacts on the body, either negative or positive. One can speak of an impersonal verbal force that generates expressions at the expense of their convincingness.[44] Generally these narrators' idea of comfort is a constant revision on what they can and cannot do. All such paradoxes involve a stretch of expression that opens them up to a "continuum of potential" and precludes their capture by a single subject or idea.

There is always a fine line between some frame of intelligibility within which the narrating voices locate the texts (be it deprivation, impotence, failure and so on) and the various potentials of other forms of intelligibility that bypass the insinuations of the narrating voices. Thus, the Unnamable is waiting for "something intelligible to take place" (p. 341). As Beckett's abstract content adheres to a certain form of life and a setting, and even arguably anchored itself to a certain type (from Watt, Molloy and Mercier and Camier to Estragon and Vladimir) the voices produce expressions

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[44] Michel Foucault, in *Language Madness and Desire* speaks of a verbal matrix that he associates with the Freudian analysis of hysteria. He gives an example regarding the correlation between body and language, affectivity and verbal cogency. Accordingly, the woman with hysterical paralysis lets herself fall when she stands upright because "she feels she was destined to collapse" (26). In this example, the body becomes the index of a strong verbal conviction. This mad language, or in Foucault's words, "supercharged language" pervades all fields of life where we "entrust to signs" (27). Modern literature has been associated many times with this mad langauge, and Foucault's point seems to be similar here. However, in Beckett, verbal convictions provide states of things and bodies with new configurations. Beckett's mad language affects the destiny of the self and body in such ways that it sometimes gives rise to new conceptual worlds that the voices strive further to conform to. It may create an unrealistic body image, but inconceivability yields a new form of thought which serves to further consolidate an expression of impotence in its farthest experimental limits.

that define similar situations across different texts. These persistent situations which develop around certain incoherent images of the mud, dark, vastness, and ideas of ignorance, failure and impotence remain abstractions that connect to further potentials. It is rather difficult to speak of one single expression or a whole that dominates the texts despite the fact that the voices themselves rearticulate predominant expressions that come to define an overall mood. Rather, Beckett's themes are more like musical or grammatical ones, which, in their repeatability allow for further variations. In this sense Beckett's worlds gravitate towards a more frail texture of effects produced through contingent facts within the textual universe.

Beckett's language is traversed by certain determiners which reestablish long-standing themes: the speaking voices, the other voices, the communications between them, and the persistence of familiar expressions that articulate these across the texts. As these establish tendencies which solicit ways of looking, ways of seeing and reading, they define a certain topos for Beckett's writing. In other words, Beckett's more or less familiar worlds are put forward by voices, and their voiced expressions. But language also functions as the carrier of an "empty scene," a site of potentiality, creating abstract differences. Beckett's strictly measured topographies, his eloquently articulated images assume the shape of a silhouette, delineated but empty, namable but potential. This chapter has looked at the conditions for a language of indifference induced by Beckett's abstract worlds and sites of potentiality, which are paradoxically communicated by narrating voices in a series of recurrent ideas marking out typically Beckettian situations. By such means, they expand the gamut of an expression that relentlessly reconceives its combinatorial elements vis-à-vis new topoi.

In what sense should we embrace this language of indifference? In its testimony to a critical voice, expressive potentials, or an effect of indifference? Perhaps in all these three senses. If the voices are communicative, it is in the sense that they hear, speak to themselves and reiterate obsessional points of view. However, the indefinite characteristics of Beckett's language often appear through the obsessional motifs which illuminate the conditions of writing. This chapter has analyzed the expressive potentials of a form of life indicated by contradictions and impossibilities. Even when the ideas are the same, their expressive scope both points to identifiable and provisional terrains. Expressions and images, voices and potentials are in continual communication across texts, and this serves to connect familiar themes to new configurations. The elaborately thought-out communicational performance of Beckett's images, ideas and voices enables new configurations of narrative problems such as reliability, automatism, authority; and a revision of the content-expression problem. It is in this sense that in Beckett voices both capture and release forms of expression for themselves, they are both critically positioned and liberally let loose.

CHAPTER 3

LIFE AND THE LANGUAGE OF RESONANCE

The second chapter argued that the problem of the voice provides a framework in

which to describe Beckett's first-person narratives in terms of their promotion of

ideas of indifferentism on the one hand, and expression of indifference on the other.

The distinction between these two states, as I discussed, results from two diverse

situations that Beckett's writing invokes this period, namely subjective ideas

propagated by the voices, and the ultimately abstract quality of these ideas. In this

regard, I use communication in a rather specific sense to refer to the possibility of

passages between authorial ideas and their potential content. Beckett's language

resonates with certain ideas which the narrating voices tend to insinuate while those

ideas lead to new potentials of meaning, action and function through the recurrence

of such ideas. Therefore what appear to be limited forms of communication have far

more expressive potentials. Beckett's expression of being finds itself in a language

that produces potentials within self-afflicted boundaries.[45]

The very problem or paradox of communication, which can be applied to

Beckett's language, given that his voices do in fact find themselves in the midst of

communications, is elaborated by Bourassa in his essay "Literature, Language, and

the Non-human." I quote Bourassa's problematization in full-length in order to

elucidate the problem of communication with respect to language in Beckett:

> We open our mouths to speak and what issues forth? Signs?
> Information? Names that are grounded in our privilege as humans, our
> hegemony over a nature that communicates itself to us in order to be named?
> When we write, where do we locate ourselves? In the position of masters who

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[45] Colombat refers to this idea of expression, found in Deleuze's thought, which is divorced from a
model of correspondence: "'[E]xpression' is inseparable from the differentiating process that unfolds
it. It never resembles what it expresses, the power that it 'explains'" (2000, p. 14).

control a circus of unruly signs, or as bodies through which something is written or writes itself?

This is the paradox of language. It is what we control – and there is no doubt that skill does tame the flux of language, makes it into an instrument – but it is the very same language that can suddenly show itself to us as a relentless revelation, a lighting that withdraws from understanding as it founds the very possibility of understanding. (2005, p. 62)

The problem, according to Bourassa, is whether language is itself a force or taken up by forces (p. 62). If it is taken up by forces, then, in Bourassa's words, "it will be material haunted by the mystery of its own life, its own animation" (p. 63). On the other hand, if it is a force, if it "opens a space of being, or language in which all of nature rests, then it is far more than instrument, but carries with it, in mediating immediately the communication of mental being" (p. 63). I think it is through this prevailing question which traverses Beckett's work that the concept of communication appears in different and contradictory ways.

This problem emerges in certain texts in the expression of what the narrators call life. Beckett's first person narratives implicate this paradox in terms of their writing of sense experience, cognitive procedures and perceptual processes. The idea of life in different texts involves such a multifold character. Life is a possibility, a physical process, a uniquely subjective experience, a revelation of being, a questioning of perception. *The Unnamable*, *Malone Dies* and *Texts for Nothing* deal with a possibility of life/living, either in the form of an exploration of physical life processes including decay, diminution, posthuman evolution, or prenatal being or as part of the problem of the justification of existence by way of mental fabrications. The idea of life is articulated as a problem of this communicational paradox of bodies that write versus bodies that are written. Particularly *The Unnamable* is a powerful epitome of this paradox.

In the novel the voice becomes the expression of a unitary sociality: the several different forms of life expressed by an apparently stable linguistic sign. Molloy is the receiver of different kinds of voices that come to him and Malone the inventor of his own fictional bodies but the Unnamable's sense of self is ceaselessly re-invented by feelings that agglutinate the voices to bodies. The novel explores a type of language that articulates a resonance between thinking and feeling. In this regard, Beckett's writing will be discussed in relation to an extended field of the sensible that Beckett called *feeling*.[46]

In light of this, Beckett's text traverses Bergsonian problems: How does life as *continuum* co-exist along with its intellectualization?[47] How does Beckett's self-expression simultaneously posit what seems to be an eternally enduring yet formless being in an exasperating I-pronoun? What appears to be a solitary dying life unceasingly resonates with the feeling of its own tensions, stretchings and metamorphoses, making the being of this perpetual transformation alive to its procedures. In Beckett, resonance between not only voices and potentials, rests and flows, but reflection and feeling, language and affectivity generates a life.

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[46] Russell Smith's views on Beckett's affective turn might be relevant to the understanding of this crucial moment in the oeuvre. Smith opposes the reception of most Beckettian quietism as the quelling of passions, and as a "rationalist mastery of feeling" and instead argues that "the *Trilogy* involves a steady and remorseless intensification of it" (2016, p. 138). Accordingly, Beckett's subscription to feeling evinces an "alliance with the unthinking body" (p. 138). The unthinking body and its affects are significant to the arguments made in this chapter; however, it will also be argued that the field of feeling always abuts that of thinking, knowledge and intelligence in ways that bring closer language, experience and affect.

[47] For Bergson in *Time and Free Will*, the virtual multiplicity of duration, ascribed to the "first self" and associated with "life in continuum" consists in the "deep-seated conscious states" and their intermingling prevents us from examining them "from this point of view without at once altering their nature" (2001, p. 76). According to Bergson, for the sake of social life, human consciousness necessarily opts for such alteration. Milz writes about this undeniable link between Bergson and Beckett. He sees in Beckett's language an "immediate vision of reality" particularly in terms of its "non-conscious fusion between the self and nature," a "dynamic identity between subject and object, between the artist and his art" 2008, p. 150-1). At this point, a question arises as to the ways in which such "dynamic identity" can be unproblematically expressed. In Beckett, even when such continuum is intuited through language, the distinction between these "deep-seated conscious states" is unrepresentable. Hence the need for a certain determiner like the voice. *The Unnamable*'s dramatizes this indispensable social instinct of "altering the nature" of its states of consciousness as it perpetually imposes further cognitive folds upon what is supposed to be an originary state of consciousness.

If an idea of life seems significant to Beckett, it is perhaps in the sense that life is simultaneously perceived, felt, sensed and communicated. This problem pervades *The Unnamable* but is also found in other texts that deal with subjective sensations which become persistent limit-concepts illuminating the experiential paradox across the oeuvre. This link between the general field of sensation and its relentless expression in verbal signs renders visible in Beckett's language a passage between bodily and linguistic signs, affective and representational fields. These two fields come to affect and generate rather than correspond to each other. These limit-ideas, as I will discuss them, are conceptually overwhelming, corresponding to neither objective qualities nor subjective experience. Beckett creates a language that explores the communication between the mind and the body as fields of resonance that interact to create new linguistic capacities.

This chapter will look into the ways in which Beckett's language in different key texts across the oeuvre expresses certain implications of the problem of communication between these different fields. I will analyze Beckett's language as expressing contiguity from feeling to thinking and vice-versa in order to explore a leitmotiv derived from the cognitive, bodily, perceptive and intellectual premises that orchestrate Beckett's writing of life. I argue that the salient challenge in situating Beckett's work in a non-paradoxical form stems from its investment in several spheres at once: feeling and reflection, self-awareness and formlessness, perceived life and aestheticized, conceptualized and deformed life. In this respect, my reading aims to bring out the significance of concepts of the self as well as percepts in Beckett's writing of consciousness.[48] Although a phenomenological perspective

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[48] The idea of the conceptual as I attribute it to Beckett's writing differs from its definition as a general representation in Kantian terms. This chapter will discuss the relation of concept to affect, sense to logos and existence to logic in the section on Fichte.

emphasized by such critics as Oppenheim (2000) and Maude (2009) is pivotal for the understanding of Beckett's writing of life, it is pertinent to state that my reading attempts to think beyond the "precognitive experience of language" arrested only by the perceptible in the word (Oppenheim, 2000, p. 98). I will refer to continuous relays from a writing affected by bodies and the feeling of extrinsic beings to a writing which is self-enclosed in its own concept and logos, and propose to problematize this in terms of an idea of resonance. The idea of resonance is helpful in situating in Beckett a problem of communication occurring between bodily and mental sensations as well as language and affects. This allows an understanding of "aesthetic" not only within the perceptible but also in the insertion of automatic percepts in Beckett's writing.

The first section begins by looking at Beckett's idea of *feeling* as the convergence of bodily and mental sensations, and briefly reviews critical response to seek its links to diverse questions such as bodily disintegration, evolution, lived experience. The second section will then look into life as a frequent motif in the oeuvre in order to identify the different ways in which it is envisaged, with an emphasis on *Texts for Nothing*, *Malone Dies*, "From an Abandoned Work." In this regard, I will look into Beckett's critical views on subjective/artistic experience to discuss the relation of ideas of confusion to configurations of life in these texts. The study of recurrent motifs from his fiction and criticism will allow us to locate a predominant notion of life developed from paradoxical states.

The third section will study specific passages from *The Unnamable* to analyze the ways in which the expression of feeling determines the conceptual limits of Beckett's writing. In so doing, the fourth section will discuss Fichte's philosophy of "I-hood" in an attempt to grasp Beckett's expression of a self-bound existence

conditioned paradoxically by striving towards its outside. Beckett's I reproduces towards a replica of selves, changing in form, shape and being. In the novel there is an idea of life occasioned both by a presumed contact with the outside and a self-willed introversion. In this respect, an idea of life is not as distant to Beckett's I as one might think at first glance. The I is aware of its life, that is, its evolving, involving and ever-changing forms and shapes, states and concepts, and its self-expression takes place at the precise juncture between the feeling and the statement of this relentless change. Fichte's "absolute I" will be discussed in order to probe the extent to which this contiguity between feeling and thinking can be reimagined in terms of a specific form of absolutism, and whether this contiguity may define Beckett's I as life which is sealed in its own concept. Although Beckett's affinity with Bergsonian creative life and continuum is undeniable as some critics argue, the analysis of Beckett's I with Fichte's thought may enable a reconsideration of Beckett's writing. His unintended indebtedness to Fichte can be found in the idea of sense as logos and vice-versa. It is such a communication of sense to logos in Beckett, and hence the sensible existing in its own concept, that makes Fichte a significant figure in this reading. The Unnamable's life is expressed in the immeasurable contact between these two contrastive instances.

The fifth section will situate this paradox of communication in Beckett in a specific problem of resonance. The novel epitomizes a program of resonance between language and a general sensible field, characterized by an attention to voices, bodies, compulsions, feelings, the feel of shapes and entities. I will turn to a second dimension of resonance in Beckett's work in reference to Deleuze's use of the term in *The Logic of Sensation* and argue that the problems of confusion, movement and indivisibility – all problems related to the issue of life – become

rather irrelevant in terms of their philosophical significance in Beckett's late short pieces. Texts like "Ceiling" and "Fizzles" show the ways in which forms of sensation are created in terms of residual motifs rather than a field of resonation between bodily sensations and mental reflection. This section analyzes how the recurrent phrases that refer to immediate sensations engender residual imprints that travel through texts. Beckett creates aesthetic sensations of life such as stillness in a patterned language with recurrent motifs in his late writing by divorcing them from their subjective sources of experience and earlier problems related to the manifestation of life. Reading Beckett's language through this quality of resonance, I hope to not only identify its relationship to the affective dimension, but demonstrate how this very affectivity engenders abstract concepts that produce the insignia of Beckett's writing of the self, sensation, body and mind.

3.1 *Feeling* and perceptivity

When asked whether contemporary philosophers had had any influence on his work Beckett most famously responded: "I'm no intellectual. All I am is feeling. 'Molloy' and the others came to me the day I became aware of my own folly. Only then did I begin to write the things I feel" (in Graver & Federman, 2005, p. 239-40).[49] This rather hasty and romantic self-view may be questionable but it is important to note that Beckett's writing does take an inward turn with *The Three Novels*, as the beginning of a series of narratives in the first person. While Beckett's reference to *feeling* should be taken with a grain of salt, as his writing gains impetus via the many sensory, perceptive and emotive fields it traverses, they put Beckett's writing in a

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[49] According to Gontarski, Beckett's "direct denial" of philosophical influences "is belied by textual evidence" (2014, p. 4).

more direct relationship with what Gontarski named the "feel of life" (2015, p. 87).[50]

The idea of a "feel of life" in many places is manifested through an aesthetic contemplation of perceptions and sensations, and an interrogation of existence in light of certain philosophical problems with which Beckett is engaged.

Beckett's turn to feeling, as some critics argue, may be a form of revision, and even reaction to his previous work engaging in philosophical questions. One of those questions appears as the mind-body duality, in *Murphy* (1938), where the eponymous character desires a purely mental experience, self-sufficient, divorced from movement and bodily change.[51] Murphy's deliberate act of living in a purely mental space is given as a thought experiment, tongue-in-cheek at times. Uhlmann argues that "Beckett's novel *Murphy* might at times be said to relate to problems philosophically rather than in terms of sensations, and this explains the comments Beckett makes in self-criticism of his early works" (2006, p. 86). For Uhlmann, what took place with *The Three Novels* is that Beckett worked with images of "conceptual power," but those images "functioned largely through feeling" (p. 88). In Beckett's criticism of his early work we catch a sense of his readjustment to feeling as a strategy that allowed him to eradicate distance for the sake of "an expression in the absence of relations" (in Gontarski & Uhlmann, 2006, p. 18).[52] *Murphy*'s

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[50] Gontarski writes: "Beckett would be less preoccupied with recovering lost time and would probe memory for reasons different from those of Proust; recovered memory is often unrecognisable in Beckett's world, and is always tainted, at least by imagination. Beckett would, however, spend his creative life exploring the intricacies and intersections, the permeability of memory, consciousness, imagination and their impact, their affect on being and becoming, on the lived experience of existence" (p. 10). Gontarski's emphasis on the permeability of cognitive faculties in Beckett's writing proves to be a significant gesture in much of his work, particularly the ones engaging in life as the net of sensible, affective and reflective relations of a body that thinks through perception and vice-versa.

[51] "Any solution would do that did not clash with the feeling, growing stronger as Murphy grew older, that his mind was a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body" (Beckett, 1957, p. 66).

[52] This statement is from Beckett's letter to Duthuit from 1949, translated by Walter Redfern (in Gontarski & Uhlmann, 2006, p. 18). To elucidate what he means by relation, Beckett writes: "between the I and the not-I" (p. 18).

engagement with the body-mind duality may have offered Beckett a way to resituate a well-known philosophical problem, but the novel also serves as the condition of Beckett's reactionary turn to feeling in *The Three Novels*.

But part of Beckett's shift of focus may also owe itself to an early influence of his, Max Nordau, as Ackerley shows in detail in his essay discussing the links between the two (2006, p. 167-176). Ackerley argues that Beckett makes extensive use of Nordau's text *Degeneration* although he distanced himself from Nordau's general image with proto-Nazi sentiments (p. 167-9). A particularly influential keyword throughout the oeuvre is *coenaesthesis*, which Ackerley shows Beckett borrowed from Nordau's text. Interested in processes of decay, it is no wonder Beckett is keen to read such a book. However, this keyword sheds light upon the way Beckett conceives of the phenomenon of feeling in his own writing. Ackerley explains coenaesthesis as "the general sense or feeling of existence arising from the sum of bodily feelings" (p. 171). He shows that Beckett used the idea in many instances in his early work. Beckett describes the term in a letter to Mary Manning Howe from 1937: "a fullness of mental self-aesthesia that is entirely useless" (as cited in Ackerley, p. 172). He seems to associate the term with a consciousness that is "dim," without the harmony of the cognitive faculties, that is, without understanding. As Ackerley writes, this is Kant's "purposiveness without purpose," and for Beckett it is "chaos" (p. 172).

Another reference to feeling is in Beckett's letter to Duthuit from 1949 as part of a long debate on the notion of relation in artistic endeavor. Beckett makes a strange case of "feeling [oneself] to be plural (at the least) while all the time remaining (of course) one single being" (in Gontarski & Uhlmann, 2006, p. 18). He discards an idea of relation here through feeling, and his definition of one's relation

96

to oneself is explained as the simultaneous feeling of plurality and singularity. The kind of feeling Beckett evokes is already intimated in the different reconfigurations of the problem of general sensibility, and even though it serves to construct the Beckettian mindscape in a novel like *Murphy*, it also already intimates the form of life encountered in *The Unnamable* as the feeling of a constantly degenerating life, disintegrating but whole, solipsist but social.

The intersections between these senses of feeling and what in many places in the oeuvre are called "signs of life" broach further questions about the body as the locus of physical, psychological and existential pressure. The body in Beckett is discussed in terms of synaesthesia (Tajiri 2001), and questions around perception and consciousness (Maude & Feldman, 2009). Commentators have examined Beckettian embodiment with regard to new perspectives on the relationship between the subject and the world, therefore as something necessarily informing Beckett's mode of writing (Maude, 2009), and through the question of the existence of the body in relation to the experience of writing (Connor, 2009). Following Deleuze's commentary on Beckett's "imperceptible" as a vital affect rather than a mere indicator of the intermediary between perceiver and perceived, critics like Wilmer and Žukauskaitė (2015), Gontarski (2015), Dowd (2007) and Gendron (2008) investigated Beckettian questions of self in their link to Deleuzean philosophy of difference and multiplicities. This chapter aims to draw upon such Deleuzean readings while investigating Beckettian life.

Life is both in the sense of lived and embodied experience of self, and virtual life forms that are entwined with the creation of fiction. According to Tajiri, the expanding body in Beckett serves to conflate the inside and the outside (2007, 75). Rachel Murray, in her thought-provoking essay "The Creative Evolution of Worm"

examines *The Unnamable*'s Worm as an epitome of larval life forms (2016).

Gontarski re-examines Bergsonian vitalism and suggests a Deleuzean idea of

"involution" to elucidate Beckett's diminished and diminishing lives (2015). This,

for Gontarski, is "at once, a new or renewed vitalism and a deterioration or

degeneration" (p. 56). Effinger, in her compelling examination of *The Unnamable* as

a being of "posthuman ontopology," refers to the shape-shifting reality of the

narrator, and emphasizes that "subjectivity is inextricably enmeshed within its

exteriority" so that situation, topos, territory engrave present-being (2011, p. 370).

All such questions implicitly reassess bodily and existential disintegration as a

consequence of self-affectivity. Beckett's decrepit bodies are not detached from a

procedure of life, and their evolutions or involutions enable a sense of aliveness in

writing through which a supposedly single entity such as the voice, self, body

socializes with, and is networked within voices/selves/bodies. This multiplicity is

expressed through various entities, corporeal and incorporeal, nominal and

pronominal.

3.2 Images of life: Confusion, "buzzing," indivisibility

Beckett's writing is traversed by ideas of life pronounced, investigated and more

importantly, felt by subjects. One can fairly consistently state that Beckett's *Three*

Novels and its aftermath *Texts for Nothing* are dominated by many and variable

forms of an idea of life. Molloy's ambivalent "This is life," expressed right after

"poking about in the garbage" and meeting his first sexual partner, who he

remembers to be either his mother or grandmother, is telling of some concern for life

although what that life entails is never quite clear (Beckett, 1958a, p. 57). In *Malone*

Dies an alter-ego replaces Molloy or Moran as he recounts his dying days. Malone is particularly haunted by an idea of living, and the living masses, the exploration of which may shed light upon his own life. He is in a room, hoping to create what he calls an "inventory" of his life, by inventing stories and figments to entertain himself (p. 182). In his last moments of solitude, he survives through these stories, in which "thought struggles on" (p. 186). Every failure of inventing stories is another cause for trying and living; a lasting motif for struggle throughout the novel: "After the fiasco, the solace, the repose, I began again, to try and live, cause to live, be another, in myself, in another" (p. 195). In *Texts for Nothing*, the fourth text, the narrator re-examines an unpractical writing habit: ". . . once there is speech, no need of a story, a story is not compulsory, just a life, that's the mistake I made, one of the mistakes, to have wanted a story for myself, whereas life alone is enough" (Beckett, 1995, p. 116). Although that notion of life is based on an obscuration typical of Beckett, he probes an intuitive idea of life, bearing upon an unresolved tension between living and existing, dying and surviving.

Is life actually enough for a writer who took such pains to devise and invent, design fictional entities, and even measure out relations of distance between his objects? In many instances Beckett's vocabulary hints at the idea of an unformed reality with which writing is necessarily engaged. Reminiscent of the notion of "mess" which Beckett used to refer to a modern circumstance of experience as unintelligible, formless chaos, Malone opposes an "excess of circumstance" to "true lives" (p. 197).[53] An excess of circumstance that cannot be contained within

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[53] In his interview with Tom Driver in 1961 Beckett speaks of what he calls the "mess." Driver's account of this conversation is as follows: "His talk turns to what he calls 'the mess,' or sometimes 'this buzzing confusion.' I reconstruct his sentences from notes made immediately after our conversation. What appears here is shorter than what he actually said but very close to his own words. 'The confusion is not my invention. We cannot listen to a conversation for five minutes without being acutely aware of the confusion. It is all around us and our only chance now is to let it in. The only

intelligibility is what drives Malone's motivation to invent. So the hazy idea of life

transforms into the truth of the concretely social lives of Saposcat, The Lamberts,

and other fictional entities in the intervening stories of the novel, since, as the

narrator acknowledges, "[t]he forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief

from its formlessness" (p. 197). It is such formlessness as "life alone" that the

Beckett of *Texts for Nothing* eventually claims to turn to, whereas the Beckett of

Malone Dies attempts to give form to a life that has long exceeded the subjective

limits of experience, that has remained a process of impersonal, intuitive

regeneration. As Malone is unable to tell created selves and true selves apart, an

actual life is overlaid by creative lives: ". . . it is no longer I, I must have said so long

ago, but another whose life is just beginning" (p. 207-8).

Is this life then, ultimately the artist's, which borders on the threshold

between that which inhabits and that which invades? Malone's sense of life is

submerged in a "vast continuous buzzing" (p. 207) while it passes in segments, and

in a series of determinations. As the narrator claims, "[a] minimum of memory is

indispensable, if one is to live really" (p. 207). However, memory is not easily

retrieved, and Malone's project emerges as the memorization of a sensible

experience in which he merely hears, or, is exposed to "one vast continuous buzzing"

(p. 207). His description of this buzzing further elicits a dilemma reminiscent of

states of indifference. All the noises that were distinguishable before merge into a

single noise in Malone's experience, and he is simply unable to "decompose" the

buzzing (p. 207). Beckett's – at least early – interest in Bergson is an established

fact, and the various emphases on the "continuous buzzing" heard by the characters

impart a theorization of time along similar lines to those of Bergson's: as an intuitive

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chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess. It is not a mess you can make sense of'" (in
Graver & Federman, 2005, p. 242).

conception of life, a heterogeneity of qualitative differences.[54] In light of this, Beckett's fictional and critical inventions of such notions as mess, confusion, buzzing may be said to owe much of their substance to Bergsonian thought.[55] They not only resonate with the broader idea of duration but with specific dimensions of Bergsonian change such as indivisible becoming, which is essentially creative.

Gontarski points towards Bergson's idea of movement in *Creative Involution* (2015). Accordingly, "movement is not coeval with kinesis" and "'there is change, but there are no things which change'" (as cited in Gontarski, 2015, p. 117). As Bergson speaks about "indivisible mobility" in *Creative Evolution* (1944, p. 335) he refers to the impossibility of conceiving change in terms of "successive states" which are only imagined by the human mind (p. 334). For Bergson, then, the distinction between an externally imposed law of succession – since it is the only way for intelligence to imitate natural change – and the indivisible progress of movement, which cannot be reconstituted from without, is a very significant distinction (p. 334). It is becoming's non-coincidence with linear intelligence that Bergson underlines here. This is to think the progress of creation in itself. For this reason, for Bergson, the reality of vital evolution can be grasped by "mere views of the mind" such as the states of youth, adolescence and old age, but it is important to note that these are "*possible stops* imagined by us, from without, along the continuity of a progress," not within it (p. 339). Seen from the principle of change, in life nothing is

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[54] Beckett's interest in Bergson's philosophy started with his reading of Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* around 1930, according to Ulrika Maude, and he had exposure to Bergson's ideas as he was teaching at the École normale supérieure in Paris (Maude 2016, p. 193-4). His lecture notes from the time he gave lectures on literature at Trinity College also reveal an interest in the Bergsonian conception of time. According to Rachel Burrows' notes published in *Beckett Before Beckett* "Beckett was interested in Bergson's theory that 'language can't express confusion'" (Le Juez, 2008, p. 35).
[55] David Addyman argues that "There are a number of explicit references to Bergson in Beckett's writings – particularly in the so-called 'grey canon'" and that "Bergson was one of the few that the author appears to have read first hand, rather than read *about* in synopses . . . " (2015, p. 103).

anticipated, rather life creates itself anew from within its indivisible essence as both past and present. This is duration; something that can only be intuited, lived. In *Creative Evolution* Bergson draws attention to this unthinkable movement of time, because it "lives with us" (p. 324). How, then, is one supposed to approach duration? Bergson claims: "We must install ourselves within it straight away. This is what the intellect generally refuses to do, accustomed as it is to think the moving by means of the unmovable" (p. 325).

Malone's mention of "buzzing" exhibits a rigorous opposition against any possibility of intelligibility that we also see in Beckett's writing elsewhere. Neary defines life as a "big buzzing confusion" in *Murphy* in an evident dialogue with William James (Beckett, 1957, p. 3).[56] More interestingly, Beckett rephrases a similar idea in some of his writing on other artists, particularly painters. His elevation of Jack Yeats' art in "Homage to Jack Yeats" bears upon a connection between Beckett's interest in the intuitive apprehension of becoming and its reflections on the artistic plane:

> In images of such *breathless immediacy* as these, there is no occasion, no time given, no room left, for the lenitive of comment. None in this impetus of need that scatters them loose to the *beyonds of vision*. None in this *great inner real* where phantoms quick and dead, nature and void, *all that ever and that never will be* [emphases added], join in a single evidence for a single testimony… (2001, p. 149)

Beckett's exuberant vocabulary here intimates something of the reality which is intuited as "excess of circumstance" in *Malone Dies*. In his letter to Duthuit from 1949, speaking about another one of his favorite painters, Bram Van Velde, Beckett writes:

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[56] See William James, 1931, p. 488. Retrieved from https://archive.org

It is not the relation with such and such an order vis-à-vis that he refuses, but the state of just being in relation and, purely and simply, the state of being in front of. . . . He is within, is this the same thing? He is them, rather, and they are him, in a full way, and can there be relations within the indivisible? Full? Indivisible? Obviously not. (as cited in Maude, 2009, p. 81)

Maude observes a questioning of representation here that also involves a critique of relation (2009, p. 82). Beckett also evokes a question of aesthetic experience which is no longer a problem of subjective experience but a problem of immediacy, the expression of something other than the subject's perspective, a point he also makes in "Homage to Jack Yeats." In such experience of non-relation Beckett nonetheless seeks a "single evidence," "single testimony" and expects all outer reality (nature) to be divorced from the subject's perspective in it. This possibility of the merging of nature and void signposts Beckett's sense of the indivisible.

In these two instances, Beckett's hint at being within as opposed to being in front of advocates a perspective that can be associated with the Bergsonian idea of being installed within duration.[57] For Bergson, intelligence is necessary in life but never enough in understanding duration; in fact duration entails that dimension of life that relentlessly escapes intelligence. It seems for Malone life is felt within and seen without, while it is heard as buzzing, the buzzing becomes intelligible as buzzing to a mind. To be in front of also suggests the involvement of a subjective viewpoint, and it anticipates conceiving an image from without. Neither an inner relation with self nor that with the outer world is favored by Beckett. Maude argues that in his letter to Duthuit "Beckett is protesting precisely against the falsifying view of 'landscape', depicted as if it existed *in relation* to the viewing subject" (p. 82).

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[57] Beckett's subscription to writing from "within" is something that reveals itself in his correspondence to the Irish writer, Aidan Higgins from 1958. In this letter, Beckett corrects and criticizes Higgins' work, which Higgins had sent to him. Beckett writes: "I suppose it is too sweeping to say that expression of the within can only be from the within. There is in any case nothing more difficult and delicate than this discursive Auseinandersetzen of a world which is not to be revealed as object of speech, but as source of speech" (in Craig, et al, 2014, p. 142-3).

Barker makes a similar observation regarding ruin in Beckett's work, claiming that "in Beckett the ruin is never directly *before us … except* in the sublimity of linguistic excess" (2006, p. 110). Interestingly, in their critique of representation, these two points indicate the two opposing aspects of Beckett's writing. It communicates immediacies and merges "nature and void" in contradictory ways; both in an excess of language, and in the absence of relation. This dilemma characterizes feeling, too. As Beckett's words on Yeats' art suggest, the artist is situated within the indivisible that paradoxically requires him to record that indivisible. Beckett's discussion in his letter to Duthuit touches upon this paradox between facing matter (an intellectual position) and being within it (an aesthetic experience).

In *Malone Dies* this type of confusion further attests to the narrator's plight. As the narrator is trying to understand where he might be, he is animated by the possibility that "the living are there, above me and beneath me" (p. 219). Being able to neither prove the reality of his situation nor conclude that he is suffering from hallucination, he says:

> And I honestly believe that in this house there are people coming and going and even conversing, and multitudes of fine babies, particularly of late, which the parents keep moving about from one place to another, to prevent their forming the habit of motionlessness, in anticipation of the day when they will have to move about unaided. But all things considered I would be hard set to say for certain where exactly they are, in relation to where exactly I am. (p. 219)

Even though the narrator is drawn to the next possibility following these words, namely, the possibility that he is dead, were it true, he declares, "it would be a great disappointment" (p. 219). There is not so much the emphasis on a clear-cut distinction between life and death here, as a swaying between modes of living and dying, particularly in relation to the passage's emphasis on motion. Malone's keen interest in the mobile, and his acute sense of awareness of a form of mobilization

around him, however, affirms another point for indivisibility. His sense of situation in this life of moving about is imprecise. Even though he is supposed to be physically present in a place, this sense of being in a place is almost always coupled with an absence of precise locality. An indeterminate locale somehow relates him to determinations of figures, numbers, spaces and spacings. There is a two-way indeterminacy in Malone's sense of place. Feeling the presence of multitudes that he cannot locate, Malone also cannot be located in relation to this initial pseudo-locality. In other words, the point of view that he occupies, locates figures of movement, through which this point of view is then immediately aborted. This is a compelling sense of confusion, of being amidst some sense of indivisibility while at the same time preserving a sense of disconnection from it, something that is radically developed in *The Unnamable*.

If *Malone Dies* depicts movement as both sequential and indivisible, in "From an Abandoned Work," the event takes place in terms of a precise economy between distance and proximity, dynamism and immutability. This prose work was written between 1954 and 1955 in English and, with its autobiographical elements, it constitutes a unique place in the corpus. In it, the narrator gives the account of his departure from home, which is enriched by a narrative traversing several unconnected ideas, landscapes, memories and images. As the narrator investigates nature, he says:

> Great love in my heart too for all things still and rooted, bushes, boulders and the like, too numerous to mention, even the flowers of the field … Whereas a bird now, or a butterfly, fluttering about and getting in my way, all moving things, getting in my path, a slug now, getting under my feet, no, no mercy. Not that I'd go out of my way to get at them, no, at a distance often they seemed still, then a moment later they were upon me. Birds with my piercing sight I have seen flying so high, so far, that they seemed at rest, then the next minute they were all about me, crows have done this. (Beckett, 1995, p. 155)

The narrator directly refers to a subjective preference. This preference is stillness as opposed to movement. It becomes clearer that the narrative makes a point more of distance and tension than of stillness and movement. As long as the multitudes of creatures remain at a distance, it does not speak of a problem of movement. In this sense, if Beckett's conception of life depends on stillness, it is in terms of a parallel relationship to a distance, a distance whose measurement is indeterminate. It is only when something is far enough that it is perhaps less threatening.[58] The point of view that explains things in relation to a distance, from without, then, seems to produce a false percept. Yet such distant stillness characterizes the observation of life in many Beckett texts.

When speaking of his mother's dwindling image at the window as he walks away from the house, the narrator expresses an appreciation of distance once again:

> …my mother white and so thin I could see past her (piercing sight I had then) into the dark of the room, and on all that dull the not long risen sun, and all small because of the distance, very pretty really the whole thing (p. 156).

The narrator's field of vision creates a capacity of sight that does not distinguish between stillness and motion as given categories. On the contrary, it constructs a field filled with images of stillness determined through an indeterminate sense of distance and closeness. This also characterizes Beckett's later engagement with confusion that explores relations between movement and stillness. Indeterminacies are engendered through impressions of confusion as suggested by the narrators, and through being situated within several shifting perceptual points.[59] We do not know

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[58] Daniel Katz argues that measure and pleasure are two modalities of the preoccupation with boundaries in Beckett: " . . . if measuring serves to establish and preserve distances, to keep things in their place, to maintain a certain order – that is, if measuring often serves the traditional ends of moderation – equally often in Beckett the pleasure *is* the distance, the separation, the boundary" (2003, p. 249).
[59] The idea of being continuously resituated with respect to confusion is relevant to Beckett's presentation of what he calls "still." In his study on space, Addyman observes, via Deleuze, a concept

how far away the narrator is to the image at the window, but regardless of this, his

pleasure in framing and limiting actual, living and moving things is obvious. He is

averted by the memory of the mother as he remembers it in relation to the person, but

once it becomes an image, this distant image re-creates the figure as a translucent

body, a shadow, a silhouette to be enjoyed. Distance becomes a means of creating

percepts that depend on a possibility of stillness, in which moving bodies become

fixed objects. If the feeling of duration is something the characters strive for, they are

equally drawn to such lifeless frames.

Conversely, what is at stake in *Malone Dies* is an impossibility of stillness.

However, this time, the imminence of others' lives prevents Malone from accessing

this sense of stillness. In other words, an approaching life as opposed to a life in

distance, imperils determinability, as both the outside life and Malone's own become

unrecognizable. The tension is not only between the living and non-living, distant

and imminent, still and moving. Motion does not oppose stillness because locations

and frames of perception are undetectable. Malone's is a demand for a life that can

render possible "fine babies" and people coming and going at the same time so long

as the direction of this coming and going remains undetermined. To be more precise,

the sense of life is always imminent, and can be felt precisely because its buzzing is

too close, but also its self-eradication. However, in "From an Abandoned Work" life

can be appreciated precisely because it is too distant. In both cases, life can appear

only in an obfuscation of the so-called natural continuity. In this sense life or lived

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of space not as the *a priori* condition of experience as in Kant, but an intensive *'spatium'* in which thought and perception are immanent (2015, p. 143). Depth as intensity is indistinguishable from space and is the given to which representation responds" (p. 143). This is more obvious in *The Unnamable* where feeling is no longer the feeling of an exteriority but an investigation of such intensities. Addyman's argument is also appealing in terms of the discussion of stillness, or points of stillness in Beckett that converge with movement and vice versa, not because space and time are fixed determinations that coalesce to generate the transcendental condition of experience via Kant, but in order to create a virtuality detached from the subject's perception.

experience is not portrayed in relation to personal perception, but goes through processes of deformation as it moves about intensively through indeterminate distances and immanent limits.

For Malone, words are also part of his feeling of life, articulatory, material but as unqualifiable as a buzzing. He implies this problem when he says: "Words and images run riot in my head, pursuing, flying, clashing, merging endlessly" (p. 198). Beckett's double emphases on the experiences of buzzing and stillness, words and images as they pertain to an aural-visual sensory field, problematize the expression of subjective experience. In other words, the fact that the subject's field of sensibility is too immersed in various confusing relations and points of views to correspond to a single subjective experience, betrays a series of complexities from which Beckett's "singular-plural" is born.

3.3 Bodily compulsions and articulation: Life as the perception of limits in *The Unnamable*

One of these complexities occurs in *The Unnamable* where a ceaselessly enfolding sense of self/life is described. Beckett's interrogation of life as it feels to an ever-altering sense of slefhood forms the difficulty of reading the novel. *The Unnamable* [*L'Innommable*] was first published in French in 1953. The novel starts with a questioning of time and place, and the narrating voice creates a narrative that recounts the gradual diminution as well as the shape-shifting capacities of a body. It gives the account of a bodily and intellectual disintegration during the course of the narrator's writing of his life. He is surrounded by voices, other beings he cannot quite name, earlier fabrications of his mind, reminding him of the creative acts and

the fictional creatures in the first two books. The narrating voice is characterized by a relentless speech that attempts and fails to give sense to the very event of speech, which once again relies on hearsay. The first-person narrator appears as an uncertain entity rather than an agent in the novel; its speech is driven by instances of self-interrogation and self-affectivity. As Stewart aptly observes, "the protagonist is not the agent of creation but rather its object" (2009, p. 178).

In the novel, Beckett's creation, imagination and the so-called memory of life seem to belie an actually lived life. Once again, life is lived on the threshold between the physical and the psychic, the virtual and the actual. However, this life cannot be detached from some bodily form, or formlessness as a bodily experience in all its paradoxicality. Connor argues that the voice "is never permitted, nor can ever procure for itself, a fully out-of-body experience" (2009, p. 59). Beckett's writing invests as much in bodily projections, feelings and bodily impacts as verbal injunctions. This section will look into verbal injunctions as felt objects in the novel that make the paradox of communication once again visible in Beckett. That paradox composes a form of writing via the use of signs by bodies and the immersion of bodies in signs.

In the novel, the insistence on what can be named the anonymous first-person prevails throughout. Life is necessarily a life reflected upon, or rather, living is a simultaneous form of thinking and feeling. This is an I that is both determinable and undetermined. It is perpetually, even in its negations, or negative impressions, positing a self: "I, say I. Unbelieving" (Beckett, 1958a, p. 291). That this I is not the representation of any identity goes without saying. It is a complex entity. For the French linguist Benveniste, as a unique but "mobile sign," the I can refer to no existing reality or referent, but each time it is articulated, it refers to the "present

instance of the discourse containing the I" (1971, p. 218). It is for this reason that the pronominal form is the solution to the problem of communication for Benveniste, since as an "empty sign" which is non-referential with respect to reality, the I produces its own self-reflexivity and can be understood fully in the precise discourse in which it is used. Since it refers to no actual existent, it has no condition of truth or denial. For Benveniste intersubjective communication is possible precisely because of this. To claim that Beckett's I is such an empty sign, however, is rather questionable since it is imputed to several entities, bodies, voices and discourses simultaneously. Katz refers to Beckett's I's as "the middle-space between the nominative 'I' and the standard accusative 'me,'" and argues: "The accusative 'I' is the particularly Beckettian articulation of the subject as posited, and posited by itself, but without an agent that could possibly have a moment or place" (1996, p. 60). It is this agentless self-positing I and its feeling of itself both as articulated I and sensed "them" that this section will investigate further.

If the account of Malone begins with the discussed forms of ambivalence, it intimates an erroneous zone from the beginning and hence, "I feel I am making a great mistake" (p. 182). In *The Unnamable* in a similar sense, the I feels the life of some other time and place both as a pressure against its present situation and irrevocably distant from it. In the early stages of its degeneration, the narrator announces a sense of provisionality: "Past happiness in any case has clean gone from my memory, assuming it was never there. If I accomplish other natural functions it is unawares. Nothing ever troubles me. And yet I am troubled" (p. 293). Beckett's I defines itself already out of the range of a lived and consciously remembered life. Its memory is marked by certain urges and impulsions that come to the I and enable it to

fashion its apprehension of some life assumed to be lived by it.[60] Such interventions

of so-called memory (even in its absence) in the form of sudden forces of

compulsion and feelings of disturbance ("I am troubled") almost always lack an

external source. Beckett's I relates to what it calls its lives in such sudden social

forces of anonymity; names, pronouns and life forms disperse in the course of the

novel. Through this articulation of a sense of compulsion from the outside (which is

paradoxically unlocatable outside the I) a discourse of life permeates and constantly

corrupts the self's so-called relation to itself.

In the opening pages, the narrator feels he is encircled by figures that he calls

Molloy and Malone, but, once again, cannot quite locate them in unbounded space:

> Perhaps Molloy is not here at all. Could he be, without my knowledge? The
> place is no doubt vast. Dim intermittent lights suggest a kind of distance…
> Are there other pits, deeper down? To which one accedes by mine? Stupid
> obsession with depth. Are there other places set aside for us and this one
> where I am, with Malone, merely their narthex? (p. 293)

The narrator's attention to what appears to be a mental vision becomes all the more

complicated when he alludes to unutterable distances in yet another abstraction of

measures. The idea of a place "no doubt vast" becomes the object of the narrator's

mental exercise of distance. In yet another conjuration of confusion, his interrogation

of himself and his sense of place in relation to other selves and places define the

situation. It is interesting how the Unnamable is drawn to a strong sense of

emplacement; he is emplaced within a pit, and he is also situated in a passage

towards "other pits." Such confusing, and even hallucinatory senses of place are

articulated through an economy between physical stimulants like light and pits, and

mental compulsions. The speaking voice creates immediate forces of feeling as its

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[60] The idea of impelling forces informs Beckett's later writing, too. As Bryden argues, in "Not I"
"Mouth describes the experience of being a receptor for impulsions, while also being aware of faulty
transmission, of noise in the system, as reflected in a stop-start bodily system" (2004, p. 181).

disturbances or metamorphoses, which then it envelops as part of its body before they can become attributes of an outside life.

But what are these figures of metamorphosis, or forces of feeling upon the Unnamable? The Unnamable is driven by seeing, hearing, speaking and feeling. Its process of degeneration commences with an old body feeling itself, seeing what he calls "moribunds," hearing voices and speaking at once. The Unnamable maintains: "I like to think I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain" (p. 295). Following up on the assumption about the vastness of space, the Unnamable cannot locate exactly whether it is at the center or the circumference. Its idea of uncertainty is replete with images of circular motion, where the Unnamable claims Malone is wheeling in front of it (p. 295). Not being able to specify any position, the Unnamable is gradually surrounded by creatures such as Malone and Mercier and Camier. What seems to be Beckett's solipsist I is marked by this kind of heterogeneity, the necessity of speaking is warranted by this overwhelming sense of feeling of others, other bodies, voices, lives that eventually are not distinguishable from the Unnamable's sense of self. Effinger relates the narrator's self-obligated act of speaking to the tension between embodiment and bodilessness in the novel: "This obligatory speaking without being able to finds a metaphor, a *metamorphosis*, in the materiality of the body, which in *The Unnamable* manifests itself as obligatory embodiment without a stable body" (2011, p. 377). The overflow of speech becomes the index of a feeling of self and a body, an awareness of an I, whose epistemological and ontological certainty depends on a narrative mood driven by words more than anything else. But, as Stewart claims, the materiality of words (as the driving force of the I's movements, jerks, deformations and regenerations) also points to the fact that "no matter how much the Unnamable might wish to exist in words alone at least some

112

form of embodiment is always entailed" (p. 175). For Hill Beckett's sentences "take on the dynamism of a body" even though that body "cannot be represented as a whole" (2009, p. 120). These connections between bodily transformations, obligated acts of speech and feeling of external forces characterize the novel. They are significant in my reading as elements that offer ways of looking into the I as a body that inscribes its feeling of exterior forces to make sense of itself.

If there is any determinability to this I it consists in the compulsion to go on. Such impetus belongs at once to an active self and the discourse that produces it, which the voice claims belongs to a certain them: "… the discourse must go on" (p. 294). This continuation occurs in a paradoxical state in which 'a voice' desires an end, and is afraid to go on. But literally speaking, the only activity of the I is a movement towards infinity:

> I can't stop it, I can't prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me. It is not mine, I have none, I have no voice and must speak, that is all I know, its round that I must revolve, of that I must speak, with this voice that is not mine, but can only be mine, since there is no one but me… (p. 307).

It is such paradox that defines the novel. In this ontologically, epistemologically obscure environment, the I's deduction of self ("since there is no one but me") is occasioned by its active motion. The I revolves around itself as something that cannot go beyond itself not because it is unable, but because the outside to this I is in fact a limit-force that the self perpetually presents for itself. As the Unnamable states most aptly, "It's this hunt that is tiring, this unending being at bay" (p. 346). As the Unnamable's sense of self is continually modified by the visitations of visions, of Malone and others, it articulates further forces of sensation as obligations it must fulfill.

The force that enables speech is thus both destructive for the I as it precludes a certain self-assuredness of being, and is formative because it renders possible the activity that instigates the I to continue to operate. An operation of preclusion and striving, where the conventional speaking subject is transformed into a function, and its hunt is goaded by a corrupted form of speed: "I had no wish to arrive, but I had to do my utmost, in order to arrive" (p. 320). Another instance of impetus and interruption, this statement suggests that the only limits, pauses and measures of the I are revealed as the disguises of its movement. In other words, it is only by performing a desire for arrival that the I could operate in this pure activity of continuance.

The feeling of some form of externality then emerges as the catalyst of the I's performance. Timothy Murphy (2015) calls Beckett's limit-objects "sociendum" with respect to questions of sociality, in reference to Deleuze's notion of "sentiendum" in *Difference and Repetition*. Murphy writes that sociendum "[evades] the convergence of the subject's faculties" so that its encounters with 'signs' cannot terminate in the "recognition of self and others" (2015, p. 116). I suggest that this sense of sociality informs *The Unnamable*, too. The narrator tells us that there is an I, completely obscure in its determination, and there are several others (Mahood, Macmann, Basil, Worm), as voices, bodies and organs:

> And how they enjoy talking, they know there is no worse torment, for one not in the conversation. They are numerous, all round, holding hands perhaps, an endless chain, taking turns to talk. They wheel, in jerks, so that the voice always comes from the same quarter. But often they all speak at once, they all say simultaneously the same thing exactly, but so perfectly together that one would take it for a single voice, a single mouth… (p. 356).

It is important to note that the narrator always speaks from a perspective that cannot distinguish itself from the rest of the voices/bodies. Apart from the appearance of

names and pronouns, the tension of "them" comes through a certain mixture of sensations and sensory means such as hearing, seeing, and a sense of roundness invoked throughout the I's activity. Wheeling in endless chains such as it is expressed in the passage is not an uncommon image. Such description of roundness is significant as a sensory receptacle in many instances in the novel, in which the I is supposed to be moving. The I declares it has to "revolve its round" (p. 307), and this revolution serves as the I's ceaseless simulation of its action without being able to assign to it any object. In this roundness, overlapping one another, mouths and voices are indistinguishable. One of the prominent aspects of the I is developed through the articulation of this round-effect. This feeling of roundness is a limit-force which is not posed to the mind only. It is not merely a contradiction within the mind. On the contrary, it is suggested, roundness is not quite presented to the mind as an idea but is felt as a physical compulsion that resists ideation. What is striking about this event of revolving is precisely its resistance to sublimation, metaphor or thinking. Even if the roundness refers to a circular temporality, it comes to the narrator as a force that leaves this discourse on roundness fragmented and incomplete. Thus, the readers do not get to understand it as an image or an idea. The Unnamable does not distinguish an event of revolving from some form of roundness that is felt. They almost always come as bodily urges that require articulation. The moment of the felt urge instantaneously requires being voiced: "its round that I must revolve, of that I must speak" (p. 307). What does that quality of roundness belong to? At such moments Beckett's articulation of the I produces an expedient that illuminates the overall action: dynamic forces felt as articulation, or an articulation that becomes a dynamic force, a feeling.

Is the Unnamable's activity feeling or articulation then? The book deals with an inconclusive problem of knowledge derived from this paradox. It is debatable whether the Unnamable's situation is conducive to any kind of knowledge about itself. Without doubt, the I's conclusions are tentative. But the concurrence of an existence in a scattered syntax and one in shifting, expanding, diminishing bodies pinpoints a logic based on the communication between bodily compulsions and articulation. Stuart Pethick in his study on affectivity in the philosophies of Spinoza and Nietzsche speaks of language's capacity to "evoke a particular affective genesis" (2015, p. 160). He argues that "the affect that is felt from the experience of any given sentence cannot be said to be 'false' in comparison to some other kind of 'true' affect" (p. 183). Pethick's study of the relationship of words to affects is significant to the Unnamable's inner logic that continually produces provisional forms of knowledge by traveling across different affects, affects that do not correspond to determinate sources. As such, roundness does not refer to a thing out there but "a broad set of affective relations which incorporate a host of bodily experiences" (p. 182). The I's affective relationship with an environment that is round, or the perception of a round object might be implicated via the utterance of the many phrases related to this relationship, and these evoke a new affective field of descriptions. A dubious sense of roundness describes a topos that pinpoints an affect with no specific source. The Unnamable's descriptions of itself as "revolving a round," a "thinking flesh," "a big talking ball" all refer themselves to an affective field that stimulates the movements of the body, and such descriptions articulate this process of stimulation rather than a specific feeling. For Pethick according to Nietzsche, there is no "non-affective object" or idea that language refers to, but rather "affective transition that is carried-over into the descriptive word" (p. 182).

116

It is suggested that the I is indeed composed of transmissions between body parts and words. The organs receive the discourse of the others, and the I is indicated as the precise interfacing point:

> I shall transmit the words as received, by the ear, or roared through a trumpet into the arsehole, in all their purity, and in the same order, as far as possible. The infinitesimal lag, between arrival and departure, this trifling delay in evacuation, is all I have to worry about (p. 349)

The words are transported through the body, they are in fact carried by body parts. There is thus an impact of words as sensations on specific parts of the body. The I emerges in the midst of such transmission as the communicator or the conductor. However, as soon as there is transmission, there is also a possibility of lag, and the I is situated in a moment of anxiety. This possibility of delay is also a possibility of distance; that is, being suddenly in front of something that one was within. Interestingly these transitory word-affects also effectuate transitions in the very forms of being described such as Worm, the ultimate phase of the Unnamable's physical degeneration, without any determinate body or shape. The verbs that are attributed to Worm and other beings reveal something of this relationship to which language conforms. Even when there is "no wood, nor any stone" but only Worm, the verbs attributed to this bare fact abound: Sticking to, clinging to facts, waiting, knowing, thinking I know and above all seeing "my place" (p. 363). Language, particularly through such verbs that are associated with fields of sensibility, articulates a process of getting to know a life by traversing a tentative syntax.

Thus, the I's activity of observing what affects it, or what it feels affords it the intuitive knowledge that it exists regardless of how: Something speaks and feels itself in speaking. Even though the I cannot "establish with any degree of accuracy what I am" (p. 388) it feels that there is an I by no other means than this

117

simultaneous recourse to noises, voices, others in an amorphousness that marks out abstract boundaries: ". . . there is I, yes, I feel it, I confess, I give in, there is I, it's essential, it's preferable, I wouldn't have said so . . ." (p. 388). It exists insofar as it exerts such forces upon itself. This activity is constituted then, at the juncture between persistence through affective transitions that impact the body and a capacity of language that such transitions are contained in. Its dramatization forms the novel's event. Such an activity has further philosophical reverberations for Beckett's desolate subjects, voices, posthumans, or evolutionary creatures, whatever one may like to call them, since their persistence of activity in agentless nascent and evanescent states makes the I a stimulus inciting domains of feeling and reflection, affectivity and speech, the immanent and the absolute.

The self is in this sense always active, it is active in its reflection of itself and feels its own living forces, its senses, and products of imagination. This expression of a feeling of self, however, is conducive neither to a coherently self-knowing being nor to the expression of a primordial selfless consciousness. The Unnamable's speech conceives of passages between intellectual life and feeling, life and death, discourse and sense, reality and possibility.

3.4 Beckett and Fichte

In *The Science of Knowledge*, Fichte summarizes his philosophical project in two complementary instances. His aim is to point to the "ground of all existence – existence for itself" (1982, p. 33). In order to do this, the philosopher has to show "how the self is and may be for itself; then, that this existence of itself for itself would be impossible, unless there also at once arose for it an existence outside itself"

(p. 33). From the field of the "I am" that is "prior to all postulation, the self itself is posited" (p. 96). This "I am" for Fichte is absolute, in other words, absolutely posited and founded on itself (p. 96). In this original state of self without any self-consciousness, the I is founded upon the pure activity of the self "in abstraction from its specific empirical conditions" (p. 97).

For Fichte, to be able to determine this pure activity of the I, the philosopher has to first rely on a principle of life, which he contemplates rather than "fashioning an artefact" out of it (p. 30). In this respect, the philosopher has to observe "a living and active thing which engenders insights from and through itself" (p. 33). His task is to "translate this living force," and in order to do it, he needs to "put the object of inquiry in a position where *precisely those observations that were intended* [emphasis added] can be made" (p. 33). Fichte's self-explanation is worth quoting for the many parallels it might have with Beckett's project of the self. I will argue in this section that Fichte's project of creating a concept of the I by a first hand examination of its inner life as an infinite self-activity, evokes *The Unnamable*'s operation of the I as an observer of passages of feelings. Even though Fichte's philosophical project only makes use of the Absolute I as a means to infer the truth of the self as a finite, limited conscious self, my focus is on the creative possibilities of thinking together Fichte's concepts of I-hood (*ich-heit*), check (*Antoss*) and feeling (*Gefühl*), and Beckett's expressions of the multiform I. The first part of his investigation focusing on the abstract I – although only an initial step in the philosopher's thought – proves to be fruitful in analyzing Beckett's I as a divergence and an identity at once, communicating to its life in such diverse modes as thinking, living, feeling, sensing.

Fichte's initial instance of the self then, even though it is impossible without an actual outside, is relevant to Beckett's I because Beckett's I presents an expression of this self-determining activity as something that creates a life rather than the life of a subject that is merely perceived. It is in this sense that Beckett experiments with the idea of life itself. The Unnamable's world is always approaching the moment of death, it is too imminent to the living and yet not quite part of it, and this tension creates its self-perception. Beckett's I is both self-conscious and pre-conscious because it posits itself in the abstract, and in its spiraling act of speech, knows of its activity and intuits knowledge: the knowledge that it speaks. There is this type of an affinity between Fichte's thought and Beckett's experiment, in which both the philosopher and the artist engage in translating a living force. While the philosopher's instinct of self-sufficiency enables him to take the most appropriate distance he can to the object of his study, the artist's sense of distance is so altered that his experiment becomes an experiment on life that is creative and disintegrating.

For Fichte, life is/can be sealed in its own concept. Accordingly, the philosopher "undertakes an experiment" when he sets out to observe the living force of existence/consciousness first as pure activity on its own, then as the necessary elimination of it in a self-conscious, finite being (p. 33). However Fichte, as Deleuze points out, "presents the transcendental field as *a life*, no longer dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act – it is an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life" (2001, p. 27). Deleuze makes such an inference based on the second introduction to *The Science of Knowledge*, where Fichte asks, "How do we come to attribute objective validity to what in fact is only subjective?" (p. 31). This question invites the problem of how

120

immediate consciousness is given along with the absolute idea of itself. Deleuze's intervention rearticulates the question in terms of an "absolute immediate consciousness" and it is this rereading which might be useful in understanding Beckett's intersections of life, self and consciousness.

In the first part of *The Science of Knowledge*, Fichte develops the idea of the "Absolute-I" by its self-identity. Accordingly this is the "self's own positing of itself" and thus "its own pure activity" (p. 97). It is by virtue of this activity that the self exists. When Fichte claims that "I am" expresses an Act, he means that the self is "at once the agent and the product of action" (p. 97). This first principle is significant to the Unnamable's expression of itself. The narrator refers to its own pure activity in relation to a certain outside of others, by virtue of which life exists only in relation to itself. This subverted form of pure activity is articulated under the influence of others:

> Do they consider me so plastered with their rubbish that I can never extricate myself, never make a gesture but their cast must come to life? But within, motionless, I can live, and utter me, for no ears but my own. (p. 325)

Even though the text is replete with self-confusion, there are instances like this that can pave the way for an understanding of life as a self-sufficient activity, nonetheless refractory to the confusion emerging from impelled divisions.

Such resistance against the outside is arguably, a mode of this self-positing I, whose immediate attention to the inner living forces takes changing forms in *U*. The interchange between that which feels and that which is felt is evidenced in several occasions in such an activity. In the opening pages of the book, before the narrator's bodily degeneration begins, there is the implication that all of the I's activities consist in a movement of convolution, both towards the inside and the outside. The

121

narrator has "that feeling" that, despite the pressure of obstacles, there is no

possibility of obstacles in his world:

> I could quite easily at any moment . . . run foul of a wall . . . or similar
> obstacle . . . and thereby have an end put to my gyration . . . it seems to me
> that once beyond the equator you would start turning inwards again, out of
> sheer necessity, I somehow have that feeling. (p. 317)

Such turning inwards makes this self-sufficient activity simultaneously infinite with

regard to itself. Perhaps it is also in this sense that the I conceives himself to be

round: "All that matters is that I am round and hard" (p. 306). The sense of finitude

that the contact with the outside provides for the Unnamable is lost in its activity of

turning inwards. While the I makes itself utterly self-sufficient with regard to this

infinite capacity of turning inwards, it also seems to make for itself virtual obstacles.

I suggest that this characteristic of turning inwards coincides with Fichte's postulate

"*I am absolutely what I am*" (p. 99) in which he emphasizes the self-sufficient

quality of the Act.[61] However, the Unnamable's sense of being is confusedly

determined by feeling. If feeling is the compulsion from the outside even when

nothing outside really exists, the Unnamable's self-sufficiency does not seem to

operate without these so-called external pressures that become part of the I.

After the first identification of the I with the I, Fichte goes on to say that there

is also a "counter-positing" of the I by itself. He concludes: "Whatsoever attaches to

the self, the mere fact of opposition necessitates that its opposite attaches to the not-

self" (p. 105). This has reality insofar as, by its counter-positing, the self becomes

passive, in other words, "is affected": "*the not-self has reality for the self to the*

extent that the self is affected" (130). This distinction is further conducive to Fichte's

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[61] Accordingly, for Fichte, the cogito should be more accurately expressed as "sum ergo sum" rather
than "cogito ergo sum" (p. 100). This draws an immediate attention to a self-fulfilling self rather than
one which is the modification of self, a principle which forms the distinction of Fichte's thought from
Spinoza's as he explains in *The Science of Knowledge* (p. 101).

elucidations of the relation of feeling to the I. In order to claim the union of consciousness and the identity of the self and the not-self, Fichte follows a rather far-out path. He claims that the activity and the passivity of the self and the not-self are all one and the same. Fichte takes this turn in order to dismiss the Kantian idea of the "thing in itself" and to claim that to be affected (passivity of the self) is an act of not-positing that the self makes upon itself. Rather than asserting that the two instances of the self and the not-self cause each other's activity and passivity, he refers to an "interplay without ground" (p. 164).

Paul Redding reads this in terms of the tension between the Absolute I and its limits: "…qua consciousness of an object, I am 'determined' by that object, despite the fact that the object as posited is a product of my activity" (1999, p. 96). The relationship between the activity and the passivity of the self can be further explored in this tension. Like the limit-forces the Unnamable presents for itself, the self's activity is implicated in its passivity, that is, the determinations of it by means of its consciousness of an object. For Fichte, it seems, the I is nonetheless active even when it is passive, or affected. When the I's activity is directed to an object, what is limited then is only the positing of the self, not its activity (p. 164). It is in relation to the groundless interplay between activity and passivity that Fichte refers to feeling. Even when being affected, that is, when being passive, the I carries out an activity. The process of this determination of self for the Unnamable takes an indeterminate path. This activity is in the form of a feeling of passage, of transition:

> That's his strength, his only strength, that he understands nothing, can't take thought, doesn't know what they want, doesn't know they are there, feels nothing, ah but just a moment, he feels, he suffers, the noise makes him suffer, and he knows, he knows it's a voice… (p. 360)

This sudden change from being completely unaffected to being affected refers not only to an interplay but a constant contiguity from activity and passivity, and vice-versa.

What is relevant, then, in Fichte's understanding of the basis of knowledge to Beckett is his focus on the principle of feeling that conditions the determinability of the I. The relationship between what Fichte calls striving (drive) and compulsion in the self constitutes the beginning of the discussion on feeling. For Fichte, "The self strives to fill out the infinite; at the same time, its law and tendency is to reflect upon itself" (p. 254). Striving is also directed towards the self. This, Fichte calls an "inner driving force" (p. 260). Fichte writes that there is "present for [a thing] an inner driving force, though since there can be no consciousness of the self, or of any relation thereto, this force is merely *felt*" (p. 260). For him this is "[a] situation that cannot, indeed, be described, but can certainly be felt" (p. 260). The interplay between the limit and the limitless, passivity and activity, according to Fichte, manifests a compulsion or an inability. Inability proves the existence of "the thing I cannot do" (p. 254). Such "inability, as manifested in the self" is called in *The Science of Knowledge*, feeling (p. 254).

Taking off from this, the attribute Fichte assigns to the sense of inability/compulsion, namely feeling, is the attribute of the outside. The limiting factor should be outside the self, for the self to feel this inability. For Fichte, in a feeling "we have, first of all, *activity* – I feel, and am that which feels, and this activity is one of reflection. Secondly, it is a restriction – I feel, am passive and not active; there is a compulsion present" (p. 255). The Unnamable first alludes to this activity, and concludes that I must be identical to I, it is always present because

whatever must be forcing it to speak must also necessarily have always accompanied it (p. 302). The I's drive to speak has already been fulfilled, or always satisfied because it still and always exists in the present with the same kind of force impelling it to speak: "What I say, what I may say, on this subject, the subject of me and my abode, has already been said since, having always been here, I am here still" (p. 302). With this reflection, however, the I is not satisfied. There is always further anxiety. The I concludes after its reasoning: "So I have no cause for anxiety. Yet I am anxious" (p. 302). When Fichte claims that through feeling, the striving of the I is both satisfied and dissatisfied at once, he seems to locate feeling as the limit between these two oppositions, and yet facing neither.

As Paul Redding points out, feeling in Fichte is always "the unsayable self-feeling body" (p. 88). This is the paradoxical form of self-awareness in which the feelings are "the index of a constraint or check to the spontaneous activity of the I . . . but they are *not representations of the I's posited 'objects'* [emphasis added]" (p. 99). This detail is particularly important to the expression of self-awareness in the novel. The unnamable only aspires to know what it is speaking about, namely the object/non-self that affects it, however, in the instance it finds itself under the influence of an outside force, it is unable to utter it: "If only I knew what I have been saying" (p. 335). This takes place as "two falsehoods, two trappings" in the book, "to be borne to the end, before I can be let loose, alone, in the unthinkable unspeakable, where I have not ceased to be…" (p. 335).What for Fichte is only subjective – since each self feels separately the pressure of this inner driving force whose extent differs from person to person – for the Unnamable becomes powerful only by anonymity. Such a force as both compulsion and inability provides an active field for Beckett's self to coerce itself into creating, living and inventing through others, who/which

become the index of an unrepresentable feeling of a self: "How many of us are there altogether, finally? And who is holding forth at the moment? And to whom? And about what? These are futile teasers" (p. 368).

For Fichte the limit-object presented to the striving of the Absolute I is the end-product of the I's activity. Thus, in a certain sense, the I is affected by its own activity of itself. For Fichte, every time the striving is limited, reflection is satisfied but activity is restricted: "The self then limits itself, and is thrown into interaction with itself: the drive urges it onward, while it is arrested by the reflection, and reins itself in" (p. 254). There seems to be a similar tension in *U*, however in the book neither reflection nor activity can be satisfied:

> The only problem for me was how to continue, since I could not do otherwise, to the best of my declining powers, in the motion which had been imparted to me. This obligation, and the quasi-impossibility of fulfilling it, engrossed me in a purely mechanical way, excluding notably the free play of the intelligence and the sensibility, so that my situation rather resembled that of an old broken-down cart or bat-horse unable to receive the least information either from its instinct or from its observation as to whether it is moving towards the stable or away from it, and not greatly caring either way. (p. 320)

The tension between obligation and fulfillment echoes that between striving and compulsion. If this interplay is the activity of the Unnamable however, it is not a creative one. Rather, it is mechanical. The passage is particularly interesting for its surreptitious reference to Kant's freeplay (*freispiel*). The narrator seems to suggest that the artist's drive to continue is realized in a process of diminution – which is exactly the case in the novel. Unlike the philosopher's movement towards progress, the artist's is "in a purely mechanical way" to imitate, or rather "translate the living forces" of life, but only by repeating its initial gesture. The I's activity is in this sense revolving, hence its shape is round. The oscillation, or freeplay between

126

understanding and intuition is absent in Beckett's notion of the self, making the self in fact impervious to progress, synthesis, resolution or finitude, as well as understanding itself or the necessity of understanding (or taking pleasure from) an object. It is in this sense that the Unnamable's spiraling in a void records only its own activity in order only to juxtapose this activity against itself in time. Beckett's recording of self-information does not result in general self-knowledge. Rather, when the Unnamable knows, its knowledge is immanent to each different moment.

Thus, the Unnamable is situated in reflection, as self-check. This is something that conditions the narrative, and this enables the continuation of the speaking activity. Reversely, this self-check (the hearing of voices, feeling sudden impulsions, constant observation of situation and so on) also becomes activity in Beckett insofar as it activates further striving towards avatars which it feels are there but which it cannot capture by knowledge. This characterizes the gyration the narrator speaks of. When the narrator claims he sees Malone wheeling about, he also claims to feel him: "he wheels, I feel it" (p. 295). Such passivity resulting from feeling things becomes activity in Fichte's terms, and it is within this paradox that the self also strives to go on. Situated in a passage between the center and the circumference (p. 295), the self's striving toward infinity (the drive to speak of things, and of oneself) allows it to move from reflection to reflection in what can only be a desire to access the concept of a self: "I hope this preamble will soon come to an end and the statement begin that will dispose of me" (p. 302). The disposal of "me" as an infinite activity of myself will allow the necessary distance from it to develop a statement of the self. The philosopher's project of reconciling concept and life would be fully realized only if Beckett's Unnamable could dispose of this activity of itself. But it is this

living force that it cannot seem to get around. On the contrary it lives in an after-life

within life, as a striving beyond infinity.

Between the striving of the absolute self and its check by the feeling, there is

a "reciprocal determination" (Redding, 1999, p. 105). The challenge is that this

relation cannot be represented (p. 105). In a passage in the *Science of Knowledge*,

Fichte refers to the only manner in which self-consciousness can be indicated: "I am

simply active. Beyond that I can be driven no further…" (p. 41). It is thanks to the

check of the feeling, whose origin and essence remain a mystery that this simple

activity of the self for itself becomes possible. There are several instances where the

narrator feels a force, feels nothing, feels its organs, or longs to feel. In all such

instances the idea is of a similar kind of force upon the self that compels an activity.

Yet the sense of feeling is only relatable as a feeling of the self, of a force upon the

self by the self. The self refers to this force by way of itself: "Against my palms the

pressure is of my knees, against my knees of my palms, but what is it that presses

against my rump, against the soles of my feet? I don't know" (p. 304). This

interrogation occurs when the narrator still perceives itself to be a body. This specific

instance suggests that here, the self feels itself in relation to the pressures it makes

upon itself. However, even if there is an outside force that it feels and makes itself be

felt, to the narrator, this is unaccountable.

The reflective world of the I and its sense of place are thus indicated by a

cognitive-physical site in which it is identified with everything it feels, experiences,

says. It is different to itself through a process of being affected by virtue of these

activities. Therefore this site is intangible, yet, it is there and it is "mine" (p. 364):

> I see me, I see my place, there is nothing to show it, nothing to distinguish it,
> from all the other places, they are mine, all mine, if I wish, I wish none but

> mine, there is nothing to mark it, I am there so little, I see it, I feel it round me, it enfolds me, it covers me, … (p. 363-4)

The I does not disappear in this indistinguishability, but it feels something enfolding and encircling it. Yet the limit between the feeling and what is felt can never be clenched as an object. If this limit-force was indicated by an outside object, then perhaps the I would be able to say it feels something rather than "I feel nothing" (p. 364). This precise unrepresentability of what is felt creates Beckett's sign of compulsion, the product of the I's activity. If nothing is a sign of the I, the I is a sign of an unrepresentable but felt outside. The I as such even when it feels nothing, in the narrator's words, "endures" (p. 364).

This process becomes all the more replete with anxiety as the I feels nothing except the sense of a self which expands by pushing itself forward. This expansion occurs in order for the self to determine itself in relation to the source of its feeling, but it fails:

> … you don't feel your mouth anymore, no need of a mouth, the words are everywhere, inside me, outside me, … I'm in words, made of words, others' words, what others, the place too, the air, the walls, the floor, the ceiling, all words, the whole world is here with me, I'm the air, the walls, the walled-in one, everything yields, opens, ebbs, flows, like flakes, I'm all these flakes, meeting, mingling, falling asunder, wherever I go I find me, leave me, go towards me, come from me, nothing ever but me… (p. 386)

Words become the world and this is the space that the I occupies without distinctions and causes. In fact this inner force that leads the self further, leads it to strive towards an outside, but the self ends up once again feeling itself only. The self is both "the walls" and the "walled-in." The forces of striving and reflection play upon each other according to Fichte, and this interplay produces feeling. Feeling cannot be conceived of in relation to a self or an other (a non-self, an object, an outside), but is an active-passive limit-field.

There is much more to the Unnamable's interplay between striving and reflection. "I feel" is in the broader sense of reflecting in feeling. This is not so much contemplation as thinking through feeling and vice-versa. If the Unnamable is a certain transmitter between body parts and words, its activity takes place at the limit where it feels others, voices, and where it speaks through them. It seems to procure thinking only in terms of feeling a limit-force. Speaking and thinking occur under the influence of unplaced compulsions for the narrator. The utterances resonate with their sounds rather than their function or meaning.

But in the above passage the connection between thinking and feeling occurs differently. There are implications of impacts on the body as well as the feeling of flows and cracks. There is a limitlessness to the topology here. The Unnamable's sense of place is created in and through the transmission of words, both as physical and mental compulsions. The perception of the interplay between bodies and words, I and its limit-forces is expressed by an immediacy that exceeds rational thinking. This is related to what Massumi calls "thinking-feeling," "thinking of perception in perception" (2011, p. 44). The indefinite qualities such as the vague feeling of roundness find their meaning in what Massumi calls "feeling thought" and it marks the possibility of expressing something unthinkable through feeling: "The mutual envelopment of thought and sensation, as they arrive together, pre-what they will have become, just beginning to unfold from the unfelt and unthinkable outside" (p. 134). However it is important to note that in the novel, this "thinking-feeling" is articulated in such a way that it simultaneously embodies a discourse about itself. Is life at once lived and thought? In other words, is the sensible immediately that which is thought? And the image that is pressing upon the body at the same time a distant

image? At once memory and life being lived? These questions permeate *The Unnamable.*

Fichte's idea of I-hood as the preconscious existence of a self is also relevant to Beckett's I in regard to its indistinguishability between thinking and living, feeling and reflection, sense and discourse.[62] This is not to suggest that the Unnamable is able to immediately express the verisimilitude of what it thinks. Rather, the feeling of self is posited as forever affected by thought and speech, its feeling of self is in this sense distant and imminent. Beckett's project of self-perception, if one may call it that, rests on a series of reviews of the notion of self as it is being created in writing. As a constantly self-evolving (or involving) and self-fulfilling activity of the I, consciousness is presented to the mind as pure activity. The I's self-consciousness is born out of the tension between its drive and reflection according to Fichte. In *The Unnamable*, such self-reflection amounts to further equivocation in the I without being able to reach any determination or self-consciousness of being. In Fichte

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[62] This is pointed out in Deleuze's essay on Hyppolite in *Desert Islands* (2004). Hyppolite's reading of Hegel in *Logic and Existence* underscores the idea of absolute knowledge as "the identification of thought and the thing thought" (1997, p. 3). This is Hegel's way of dismissing the *thing-in-itself*. Accordingly all intelligibility is in relation to the movement and the development of the thing as opposed to a separate intelligibility which comes to determine and define it (p. 4). In this respect, for Hyppolite, "empiricism and rationalism are not opposed to one another," logic and existence are not incompatible but lived experience is at once a reflection which creates its own logos in affinity with its actual movement, from its birth (p. 4). The abstract, then is not an external philosophical category but exists in the thing, or things exist in their own concepts (p. 5). Hyppolite writes: "…being says itself, expresses itself, stating the thing of which one speaks as well as the "I" who speaks" (p. 5). Thus, Hyppolite's reading insists that "[a]bsolute knowledge is not different from [the] immediate knowledge…" (p. 4). The reflective activity of the I brings together, or unites being and expression, posited as absolute knowledge, derived from the reality of existence and the reality of the logic of this existence. Deleuze in *Desert Islands* reads Hyppolite's text in necessary relationship with a principle of difference: "… the ontology of sense is total Thought that knows itself only in its determinations, which are moments of form. In the empirical and in the absolute, it is the same being and the same thought; but the empirical, external difference of thought and being has given way to the difference which is identical to Being, to the internal difference of Being that thinks itself" (p. 17). This is the problem of sense: being exists as the expression of itself, and for Deleuze this gesture belongs not to the "Absolute of humanity" but to the "Absolute in humanity" (p. 17). Deleuze's text ends with the question of whether such an expression of self is indeed difference. The type of connection that can be formed between Fichte's philosophy and Beckett's art, I argue, takes the detour of this thought, articulated by Hyppolite and Deleuze. Thus, it is always a challenge to claim whether Beckett's writing seeks a sense of univocity or multiplicity, whether it speaks of a subject or forms of sociality; in other words, whether it is communicable or communicating.

existence is first thought in itself, infinitely, as a living force and only from there can the philosopher vest it with a concept. In his study on the preconscious activity of the Absolute I, Fichte empowers the self by assigning to it activity even, or rather especially when it is affected by a non-self. In *The Unnamable* continuous interrogation becomes the sign of life which the I looks for, so much so that "flight from self" in fact can never terminate (p. 367). Does the novel express the futility of its experiment since the activity of the I fails to terminate in a statement of the self? Given the observation that the Unnamable creates its discourse of self by feeling things, the last section will address the ways in which feeling can be incorporated in a language that is resonant rather than conclusive.

3.5 The unqualifiable: Resonant language and the residual motifs of Beckett's late prose

Towards the end, the narrator speaks of silence in a similar sense in which Malone speaks of buzzing, by recourse to a discussion similar to that of being within/without:

> The silence, speak of the silence before going into it, was I there already, I don't know, at every instance I'm there, listen to me speaking of it, I knew it would come, I emerge from it to speak of it, I stay in it to speak of it, if it's I who speak, and it's not, I act as if it were, sometimes I act as if it were, but at length, was I ever there at length, a long stay, I understand nothing about duration, I can't speak of it, oh I know I speak of it… (p. 407)

Invoking yet another confusion about location, these series of affective transitions bring to the fore silence as a site of feeling for the I. It speaks of being within it and emerging from it. Whether in it or outside it, the Unnamable is thrown back and forth in an experience it calls silence. But such experience recurs intermittently, and the Unnamable understands "nothing about duration." Like the buzzing, silence is heard, but is eventually articulated equivocally, the I is not able to stay in it "at length." The

narrator's mention of duration here in relation to silence perhaps says something about the way in which Beckett conceives of language. It contrasts silence, but it is also a means of empowering silence by being resonant with it. In Bergsonian terms, the Unnamable addresses the "trick of our perception . . . like that of our language" which "consists in extracting from these profoundly different becomings the single representation of becoming *in general*" (Bergson, 1944, p. 330).

But for the Unnamable, language is more than being a source of lamentation; it is also the stimulant for the relationship between words and life. The senses on which the Unnamable depends to conjure the image of a man as an object of the mind remain ultimately insufficient to develop a concept of man. The sensible field both exceeds and signposts the field of language:

> … this word man which is perhaps not the right one for the thing I see when I hear it, but an instant, an hour, and so on, how can they be represented, a life, how could that be made clear to me… (407)

The novel registers a specific moment here, where the I must represent its living forces in thought in order to be a subject but is only ever restricted by a feeling of something not only unrepresentable but also unqualifiable. That restriction proves very fruitful since language, in its incapacity to represent duration as the Unnamable refers to it, embodies a certain tension of this incapacity. It emits the resonance of a speech which is in an ever-prolonged process of representing life. In another sense, this is the I's inconclusive efforts to prolong its situation within while remaining in articulation.

This tension resonates, first of all, in the body. The narrator says: "Hearing nothing I am nonetheless a prey to communications" (p. 336). It occurs as the problem of an ever-expanding body that feels the resonation of all that is spoken.

This degenerating body serves to echo the timeless experience of the I "generation after generation" (p. 383). Sound and silence emerge as compulsions that transform the language to the degree that it is no longer a means of identification: "How can I recognise myself who never made my acquaintance" (p. 398). Jean-Luc Nancy calls such interplay between feeling and recognition "mutual referral between perceptible individuation and intelligible identity" (2007, p. 8).[63] It is perhaps in this sense that flesh and skin are overemphasized in the novel as elements of a sensible field that are born out of intelligible identity, but inescapably exceed it. The narrators announce every once in a while that they have no flesh, or that they do not feel any organ, place or an outside force on them: "…if only I could feel a mouth on me, if only I could feel something on me…" (p. 404). Rather, they feel an entire resonant field, and struggle to be resituated back in an intelligible identity. The memory of that identity seems imminent, yet it is not constructive.

The so-called predicament of the I is that it cannot subtract the perception of itself from its perception of an outer world: "… I feel no place, no place round me, there's no end to me, I don't know what it is, it isn't flesh…" (p. 399). Houppermans' observation of Beckett's unconscious is crucial here. Houppermans critically approaches the discourse of psychoanalysis to interpret Beckett's work while adopting Didier Anzieu's reading of Beckett's unconscious as "marks on the skin rather than views on an abyss" (2004, p. 53). He associates Beckett's

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[63] Jean-Luc Nancy in *Listening* explores the self's aural-resonant relation to itself. He traces a line of resonance between "perceived meaning" and "perceiving sense" in the French word *entendre* which means both to hear and to understand (p. 5). He claims that "hearing" and "hearing say" – as opposed to "hearing sound" are intertwined in such a way that "in all discourse, in the whole chain of meaning there is hearing" – hearing in this sense can be linked to Beckett's silence and/or buzzing (p. 6). Sound and meaning resonate, or refer back to one another in an endless circle precisely at this boundary. In his exploration of the "shared space of meaning and sound" (p. 7), Nancy foregrounds resonance as sound that is always "on the edge of meaning" (p. 6) within the space of a self. He conceives of a "mutual referral between a perceptible individuation and an intelligible identity" that makes a self in terms of a continuous referral of sounds and resonances on the one hand and their process of intelligibility on the other. The Unnamable's question of how to "represent a life" may be said to implicate such an apprehension of self.

unconscious with the "question of constant movement" as opposed to a static reservoir. What Beckett's fiction accomplishes for Houppermans, as well as for Anzieu is a certain bringing and thinking together of "the thinking I and the feeling I" by exposing the very gap between these two instances as the field of this "constant movement," of this "working-through" (p. 55). The skin plays a particularly important role here, because it is this "surface where the I lives its/his ever-changing encounter with otherness that cannot be grasped or fixed" (p. 55). For Houppermans "While the I suffers intensely from the impossibility of deciding upon its frontiers, the skin will be seen, in a phantasm . . ." both as a protection and a shroud (p. 55). It is in this sense that Beckett "establishes the most extreme bridge between the very abstract and the very concrete" (p. 55). In the skin's status as protection and shroud, its felt intensity ceaselessly transforms the so-called abstract I's processes of thinking the feeling of itself, and the I expresses its feeling in new articulatory instances.

As I have stated earlier, the paradox defining the Unnamable's unrecognizability consists in its process of being affected by an absence. Obsessed with itself, the I nonetheless has no means of relating to itself as a determinate being. It signposts a certain aesthetic field through which sensations, feelings, vibrations as well as words, silences, resonances, transmissions come to pass. Thus, the I expresses a broad sensible, affective and intellectual field of life which resists belonging to an individual state, psychology, person or subject. The difficulty of this broadness lies, without doubt, in questions of meaning: What kind of a sense would a co-existence of feeling and thinking amount to?

In "Autonomy of Affect" Massumi (1995) focuses on the influence of semiotic orders on the reception of unmeasurable intensities, or affects; in other words, the reception of an unqualifiable content and its qualification either in words

or images. He situates intensity outside the "line of narrative continuity" and "disconnected from meaningful sequencing" as he makes a distinction between the "strength or duration of the image's effect" (intensity) and its "indexing to conventional meanings (qualification)" (p. 84-5). Intensity refers to a "non-conscious, never-to-conscious autonomic remainder," "an autonomic reaction [to a content] most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things" (85). One is immediately reminded of the Unnamable's feeling of the skin as "two surfaces and no thickness." The whole passage is worth quoting at length:

> I'll have said it inside me, then in the same breath outside me, perhaps that's
> what I feel, an outside and an inside and me in the middle, perhaps that's
> what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside,
> on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I'm neither one side nor the
> other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness,
> perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one
> hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either, it's not to me
> they're talking, it's not of me they're talking, no, that's not it, I feel nothing
> of all that… (p. 383).

The emphasis on tympanum as the middle imparts a sense of both compression and stretch. If the manifestation of the I belongs to neither side, this suggests that the surface of its body – or, rather the middle between two surfaces – is also a function of transmission, an idea not completely foreign to Beckett's writing.[64] McTighe refers to the exploration of the relationship between the body and the voice in this passage in terms of the subject that resonates, "vibrating in response to what is heard" (2013, p. 36).[65] The I is "not [to be] able to open [its] mouth without proclaiming them" (Beckett, 1958a, p. 324). The Unnamable separates itself from them as two surfaces of this middle. All utterances belong to a certain them, which

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[64] Dukes takes off from André Breton's image of the "communicating vessels" as it is revised in the novel, and analyzes similar images of containers and vessels as "emergent sites of subjectivity that blur the borderline between the human and the non-human" (2017, p. 75).
[65] For more on the analysis of resonance in Beckett, see McTighe 2013.

are then transmitted by the I. However, as the book suggests, this is not a smooth

transition; in fact it can hardly be so. There is a certain resistance to the so-called

orders of them – or what the I feels as them – because the I's being affected results

only in "incomprehension": "My inability to absorb, my genius for forgetting, are

more than they reckoned with. Dear incomprehension, it's thanks to you I'll be

myself, in the end" (p. 325). The I in transmitting the orders of one side to the other,

in simulating a so-called linguistic order coming from them, deviates from this order,

and merely feels itself incomprehensible. The body, or rather the skin, occupies a site

where translation or communication is flowing, but meanings are stuck. It is rather a

resonant area at times partaking in the language of orders, at others, feeling

vibrations, hearing its own activity as a buzzing – the tympanum. So a reversal takes

place whereby through the I's simulation of others, the others become more and

more like the I.

While the disconnection between intensity and content is obvious, language,

for Massumi, "is not simply in opposition to intensity" (p. 86). Rather, a linguistic

qualification either resonates or interferes with intensity. It either interrupts the

autonomy of intensity by providing it with a scheme of understandability or it

resonates with it.[66] It serves to momentarily register states within intensities, or rather

"re-register an already felt state" (p. 86). By so doing, language enhances the impact

of an image, it can transform contents. When language thus resonates with an

intensity (which can only be felt), it does so at the expense of its own functionality:

"Linguistic expression can resonate with and amplify intensity at the price of making

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[66] Taking off from the findings of a study done on children to observe their reaction to three different versions of an image, one non-verbal, one verbal with a voiceover factually expressing what is happening and one verbal with intermittent breaks expressing the emotional tenor of the scene, Massumi contends that linguistic qualifications of different kinds superimposed on a feeling of intensity, apart from reducing intensities to representations, may also serve to "enhance the images' effect" (p. 86).

itself functionally redundant" (p. 86). Here, language is no longer evaluated in terms of its readability or as a means of communication but along with an intensity, in its capacity of resonance. In the Unnamable's being "prey to communications" then, communication in the plural imparts a sense of speech that necessarily resonates with silence, buzzing and feeling in Beckett. This type of interface between language and intensity is the site of resonation. Beckett's body parts float as separate entities denoting fields of intensity even when all they can feel is an absence of the capacity to feel anything, in other words, the feeling of their own presence.

In its perception of unrecognizability, Beckett's language resonates with the feeling of a life which is never someone's, but is divided between various selves. It expresses variable conscious states, rises and falls, syntactical disturbances, pace, punctuated and unpunctuated lines. It passes through several voices and creates several bodies. It is also in this sense that Beckett's writing has no qualified content. What is significant to Beckett's writing of life is that between an unqualifiable feeling and its expression in paradoxical, redundant, recursive patterns, there is always an act of folding and unfolding. The different bodies and voices are confronted in this folding so much so that all possibilities of allocating origins, models, causes and effects are eliminated. Beckett's body –both the unthinking and the thinking body – is thus operative in an enfolding of itself: feels itself feeling, hears itself speaking, feels its body expand and contract within unqualifiable limits through repetition, vibration, resonation; the tympanum that receives and gives back. The Unnamable's language moves along all such affective transitions, fields of intensity. While the Unnamable is full of anxiety that it understands "nothing about duration," such incomprehension is required in order for language to resonate with intensity.

The self becomes unrecognizable not because it has access to a natural continuum, but because it spirals around itself, overlapping different orders in resonance, body and mind, thinking and feeling, words and affects, the feeling and the felt. Thus, there is no immediate evocation of a flow of continuum or consciousness but different communicatory points fold upon one another, words and feelings simultaneously affect each other to produce a resonant level of language. Although Beckett's life expresses an unrecognizable being or an unqualifiable life, that abstract indistinguishability ultimately becomes resonant with language, with a logos that it invents.

The confusion of locales and the resonance between thinking and feeling determine the problem of being within and without in terms of perception and consciousness, namely, the living forces under examination. In other words, questions of thinking and feeling, language and intensity pertain to the problem of life in Beckett. As I tried to show, the texts discussed deal with expressions of confusion in terms of living forces as the limit-forces determining their own lives. In this regard, buzzing, continuum, duration or silence, whatever Beckett's narrators may call it, is expressed in resonance with language.

Thus, the dilemma of being within and without, singular and plural can be observed in Beckett's writing of perception. However, Beckett's writing re-examines the discussed situation of confusion in late prose in terms of a mechanically repetitive language rather than an affectively communicational one. The sense of resonance is manifested in terms of specific syntactical novelties. The possibility of expressing some form of indivisibility divorced from the subjective perspective, is particularly daunting in the non-visual arts, and Beckett subscribes to a whole new syntax for this. In his later writing, he complicates subjective sensations further by

ascribing to them specific forms of expressions which appear to offer gapped and fragmented views of phenomena in an impersonal language. This is particularly the case in texts where outer reality is articulated in its testimony to observable facts and qualities, creating another aspect of resonance found in Beckett.

In "Fizzle 7:Still," one of the eight pieces written between 1973 and 1975, the narrator depicts a situation in which someone observes the motion and changes that occur in his/her environment. A sequence of movements such as sitting, standing and moving around is described in detailed. There are implications of night, day and the movements of the sun. The so-called narrator is supposedly in a room examining new forces of life – the change that occurs outside – as s/he also observes the way s/he moves in this environment. Although the image conceived here suggests one that involves a human being contemplating his/her movements in relation to the movement of day and night perceived through a window, the text's use of the impersonal imperative generates a perspective that demonstrates a radical idea of stillness. It is as if two series of movements, perceived from distinct perspectives join to engender "this movement impossible to follow let alone describe" (Beckett, 1995, p. 241).

The scene is "quite still," but the text also makes it clear every now and then that "actually close inspection not still at all but trembling all over" (p. 240). These two possibilities are superimposed on one another to describe an idea of stillness as a textual fact. The interweaving of motion and stillness is most obvious in the description of the arm's movement. The text alludes to the movement of the arm that rises from top of an armrest, but rising occurs as if in divisible points whereby the arm also hangs in the air (p. 241). The arm therefore "hesitates and hangs half open trembling in mid air" (p. 241). It is difficult to know whether this hesitation belongs

to the natural movement of any object; that is, whether the narrator is pointing out the empirical impossibility of motion in stillness or whether such hesitation belongs to a mind. Once again, Beckett's narrator creates these two confusing sensations without really imparting a single sense of motion or stillness that is perceived by a body or a mind. On the contrary, most of the time, all is "quite still." The phrase "quite still" gets so repeated that it becomes a residual motif in a text that expresses paradoxical states of movement and stillness at once. On such occasions, Beckett's writing engenders motifs that are not descriptive but are extracted residually from the actual labor of defining impossible physical situations or states of mind.[67]

In these kinds of texts, the challenge to read stems from the texts' persistence to visually present all the facts as they appear within the extremely minimal conditions that engender language. According to Boxall, Beckett's later prose from *Texts for Nothing* to *Stirrings Still* "is produced in part by [the] sense that the invisible has been brought out of hiding" (2015, p. 41). However, the experience of reading could be defined by a "rapid switching between revelation and concealment" (p. 42). This switching is required because Beckett's late texts make use of minimal forms and difficult grammar where subjects and objects are undetermined and/or absent. Beckett describes an experience that is composed through qualities that are persistent as images, conceptually challenging and incompatible with lived perception. Thus, certain forms appear and disappear such as stillness and change within the verbal composition of an imperceptible state. These persistent and recurrent forms come to define realities in terms of the sensible limits they engender. While everything is starkly visible in Beckett's late prose, that kind of visibility is given to generate reality in its patterns of formal repetition.

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[67] It is interesting to note that "Imagination Morte Imaginez," "Assez," "Bing," and "Sans" are titled "Residua" by Beckett in *No's Knife*. (Hill, 2009, p. 142).

Ruby Cohn refers to Beckett's "still lives in movement" (as cited in Bryden, 2004, p. 182). For Bryden, such phrasing manifests two tendencies that are "part of an uncomfortable continuum in Beckett's scenic world" (p. 182). Beckett's interest in scenes simultaneously immersed in stillness and movement does not then serve to impugn one or the other. It is precisely the "uncomfortable continuum" that Beckett's expression seizes on such occasions. As soon as continuum is felt, it is felt as a discomfort. However, the phrase "quite still" does more than express a subjective confusion. Rather, it comes as an injunction to someone or anyone, who should, at the end of the text "leave it all so quite still or try listening to the sounds quite still head in hand listening for a sound" (p. 242). One could argue that the subjective confusion of buzzing is replaced by the neutrality of the "sounds quite still" here. Not only the quality of the experience, but its mode of revelation changes. It is as if stillness and motion are not directly felt but, they appear and disappear as signs of imagination in degrees of distance and proximity. I argue that it is from this rhythmic pattern of appearance and disappearance that Beckett's late writing generates its vestiges of language in recurrent phrases. This deficient testimony to stillness creates the limits of a frame in which change is expressed in a specifically defined form.

In *The Logic of Sensation* Deleuze speaks of the coupling of two sensations that exist separately, such as on the mind and on the body, which produces what he names resonance (2003, p. 67). In his example from Proust, this takes place as the present and the past sensation merge in the immediacy of their confrontation "in order to make something appear that was irreducible to either of them, irreducible to the past as well as to the present" (p. 67). Deleuze writes: "What mattered was the resonance of the two sensations when they seized each other" (p. 67-8). The outcome of this operation is "an epiphany erected within the closed world" (p. 68). In

142

Beckett's text, stillness and movement emerge neither as two distinct degrees of reality, nor as two aspects of subjective perception, but two distinct levels of mental stimulation, caused to some degree by the outside world. In Beckett, the resonance that occurs between two sensations not only engenders a new sensation like Proust's present-past but rather creates residual motifs that come to determine the expressive tone of the texts. The repeatable phrases appear intermittently, elucidate nothing and yet press upon the readers' mind.[68] If the sensation cannot be pinned down, it is rearticulated in an expressive pattern. Percepts of stillness and motion overlay and simulate one another in cycles of tireless labor in Beckett's aesthetic space rather than contradicting each other.

These residual motifs populate later texts. Beckett constructs passages from feelings to recurrent limit-expressions that challenge the boundaries of understanding. Another instance of this kind of residual motif occurs in the short text "Ceiling" written in 1981. Narrating the gradual process of coming to after a coma-like state of consciousness, "Ceiling" shows that the perception of the outside world occurs through the intermingling of several units, the eye, the object, the mind and the body in writing: "On coming to the first sight is of white. Some time after coming to the first sight is of dull white. For some time after coming to the eyes continue to" (Beckett, 2009a, p. 129). It is a two-page late text with gradually dwindling paragraphs. The last paragraph consists of two lines: "Dull with breath. Endless breath. Endless ending breath. Dread darling sight" (p. 130). Breath and sight

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[68] Carville traces an influence of Duchamp's technical vision in Beckett's writing with an emphasis on a passage from *Watt*. This influence is crucial to the ideas put forward in this section since it pinpoints "how technical vision enters the conventional artistic gaze and 'profanes' it" (as cited in Carville, 2018, p. 64). According to Carville, in Beckett's subscription to linguistic repetitions and permutations "what seems to be an appeal to the procedures of the Kantian aesthetic is couched in terms of an automatic, bluntly permutational structure" (p. 66). It could be suggested that this earlier preference of linguistic expression of permutations transforms into automatic percepts in Beckett's late work that appear obsessionally in the same forms of language.

become irreducible to each other although they somehow meet at the end. There is the force of the dull white that impacts first what the narrator calls "dim consciousness," then the body. As consciousness is gained back, the problem of breath comes into the scene. Voicing this event then is inescapable. Breath brings an end to the intermingling of the sense of sight with the object.

Yet, before breath captures the scene, the sense of sight meets its concomitant physical force in the consciousness of color; something whose perceptive impact is such that the whole body is invaded by the impression of a "dull white" (p. 129), a feeling of dull whiteness that is recurrent and attributed to neither a shape nor a thing.[69] What is being looked at gradually erects a sensation of dullness in the pure quality of matter, the white ceiling and its automatic reverberations in writing. This after-effect establishes the resonant program of writing. It is more out of a residual effect than a direct gaze of contemplation and perception that this matter emerges as "dull white." The dullness of white becomes divorced from its qualifying status and begins to program writing. This residual effect of perception destroys the object and the perceiver, and establishes a formal regularity that continually re-registers experience. Through such a procedure language delivers a sensation of color without it being the color of something. The sensation of white emerges as an automatic percept that determines the reality in the text by eradicating its connections to the real life object, ceiling.[70]

The piece's gradually diminishing structure preserves the sensation of a "dull white" as neither an image, nor a quality, nor quite a topos. Van Hulle argues that in

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[69] The idea of whiteness as a recurrent image will be investigated in the fourth chapter.

[70] At this point, it is crucial to restate that Beckett's expression of such sensations in their resonant rather than lived quality indicates in my reading a divergence from the phenomenological perspective. This kind of resonant image production is not divorced from an aesthetics of indifference that literally erects "empty scenes" rather than peeping through a perceptual whole, by corporealizing the visual effects remaining in sensory and perceptive experience.

these later texts "Beckett often started from concrete objects or situations and subsequently subtracted them" (2011, p. 82). Like the "quite still," "dull white" is composed through a sense of resonance that occurs between two immediate signs that are encountered, the white ceiling and the state of semi-consciousness. If in Beckett, the articulation of life is connected to the general sensibility of being alive (even when dying or coming to), such articulation is not the touchstone for either a consistent expression of life or for lived experience. It embodies a process of life as the intersection of various perceptual points that eventually preserve an amalgam of those points without synthesizing them in relation to a single, accessible source of perception. In this regard, these later texts deal with material signs that affect cognitive processes and build patterns of formal repetition. If Beckett's late art does not convey states of emotion or affection, it intimates a percept which is expressed by repeating itself to the degree that it ceases to refer to a subject, but is only interested in preserving a power to endure.[71]

This chapter has shown how a broad idea of feeling affects Beckett's writing in different periods by looking into its relationship to the expression of life in key texts such as *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, where life is expressed in terms of feelings of duration and confusion. I looked into how Beckett explores the possibilities of articulating a way of being in relation to what I called resonance between bodies and language, feeling and thinking, words and affects. The chapter then analyzed *The Unnamable*'s use of the first-person singular to draw attention to

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[71] For Deleuze and Guattari, sensation entertains an autonomous "power to exist and be preserved in itself" within the time and the materiality of the art object (1994, p. 166). To explicate the liberation of art from its creator in terms of enduring sensations, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the power to endure in material. Writing's material is syntax, and Deleuze and Guattari's example of writing memory best explains this: "We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present" (p. 168). It is in this sense that Proust's writing of Combray is "Combray like it never was, is or will be lived" (p. 168). This idea bears a resemblance to Deleuze's definition of resonance in *The Logic of Sensation*. I think the two notions of resonance and enduring sensation are complementary rather than contradictory.

its links to problems of infinity, immediate consciousness and feeling in Fichte's philosophy. Thus, Fichte provides a conceptual framework in this reading that enables a link between language and resonance in Beckett. In the last section I turned to two key texts from Beckett's late prose to address the change in the ways in which the experience of bodily and mental sensations is examined through language. In his late prose, Beckett's writing creates resonances not between bodies and words, or intensities and language, but by virtue of repetitive linguistic material that engenders new expressive gestures.

If Beckett's writing belongs to a field of feeling then, I suggest that this field is not merely reducible to the representation of lived experience in which the conditions of self-expression can be subordinated to the consciousness of a subject. It is also not solely indicative of an unproblematic disappearance of subject-object dichotomy through which language returns to a state of duration, or at least imitates it. Rather, it explores conditions of resonance between language and feeling, in which language is neither representational nor revelatory. Even though the I either as indexical or self-coincidental loses ground in Beckett's later work, the problem of holding together the different sensations of the mind and/or body in a form of resonance prevails. Beckett's implied advocacy of a dualism between feeling and intellect in his remarks is not as clear-cut as it may have seemed to Beckett. In seeking to escape this dualism that it itself invents, Beckett's writing conceives of an affect, the middle ("tympanum," "I," "skin") that serves as interface, and explores a philosophical language that is also always resonant and intensive.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATIONAL LANGUAGE:

REGIMES, ORDERS, TERRITORIALITIES

The chapters of this study so far have explored the underpinnings of Beckett's

writing in terms of the philosophical and aesthetic problems it traverses. I located

two perspectives that may define Beckett's writing program within a specific

question of communication. The exploration of this question via voices and

indifference, and feeling and resonance, plays a significant role in Beckett's leading

work of fiction. Beckett's language determines its subjective and objective

dimensions by attributing agency to voices and feelings on the one hand, and

confusion, duration and indifference on the other. These determinants create their

own expressive limits, produce distinct frames of intelligibility, and through the

problems of paradox and simultaneity, reintroduce the question of communication in

different phases in the oeuvre.

There is thus a net of communications among different layers of Beckett's

writing, between formal and topical relations, between different levels of thinking

and processes of articulation, between different degrees of awareness that engender

instantaneous reflective and articulatory modes. The reflective, aesthetic and formal

units of Beckett's writing are dynamically communicating, so much so that a

personal expression of feeling may instantaneously affect formal relations, which

then come to identify sensible qualities and recurrent motifs; those qualities can then

dissolve into sites of potentiality.

The contradictory conditions of expression one can find in Beckett's writing

allow us to trace a development of repetitive questions, such as indivisibility and

indifference. As unresolved issues, such questions permeate the oeuvre. However, Beckett's writing is also oriented towards so-called messages within unqualifiable events, even if ironically: "But what was this pursuit of meaning, in this indifference to meaning?" (Beckett, 2009c, p. 62).[72] There is an emphasis on instances of social interaction, communication and interface between different points in time and space both in his prose and drama, especially with his turn to theater. Perhaps a pertinent question at this point is, in what ways does this turn establish new frameworks for the analysis of communication in Beckett's work?

Beckett's staging of communicational events is most emphatically highlighted in his writing of dialogues. His early use of conversations in the novels, which anticipates the quick-fire dialogues of the long plays evolves into one of the most productive means of his writing. A certain speech regime that is introduced in *Mercier and Camier* informs the form and the verbal energy of his theater work, and this determines two disparate dimensions of Beckett's conversational language. Whereas acts of speech in a novel like *Mercier and Camier* are determined, produced and reproduced in and through the existential, affective and social encounters, in the plays, language serves to promulgate a grid of relations produced more by orders

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[72] At the outset, Beckett's language, particularly in *The Three Novels*, *The Short Stories Texts for Nothing* and *How It Is* enables a self-communication between two different languages that operate alternately throughout the flow of the narratives. I argued that Beckett's writing between identity and becoming serves as a determining point for such a possibility. Declan Sheerin, in his stimulating work which thinks together the disparate philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Paul Ricoeur, refers to Deleuze's earlier construction of depth/surface as images on the "brink of metaphor," and argues that this serves us to "situate [a] narrative self [such as Beckett's voices] in a determining virtual" (2009, p. 137). The idea of self-communication in Beckett arises from a similar situation in a virtual, which both allows for an identification of self with several configurations of temporality, and subjects that self to an absent, inexpressible determining point. Beckett's language constructs meanings, selves, but these are prone to fleeing towards the virtual, becoming less than, opposite to or exceeding themselves. For Sheerin, a "priorness" has to come between the hermeneutics of Ricoeur and the virtual of Deleuze, which is not a tool of interpretation, bridge and so on, but an "intuiter" between representation and that which is unrepresentable, "that guesses the axis of the narrative" (p. 138). Particularly in his prose prior to 1960 Beckett's language may be said to dwell in such intuiters such as voices and feelings. However, the possibility for identification and orientation is always an imminent one, and especially in later writing, his language in repetitive series complicates the principle of the intuiter, and moves it towards a net of systems, signs, actuals.

than encounters. This chapter will attempt to identify the kinds of orders that language produces particularly through the writing of dialogues. Apart from direct verbal orders that compose part of Beckett's language in the theater, order also refers to the arrangement of speech in patterns of rapid altercations, which overall contributes to the production of rigid forms of dominance and submission. In *Waiting for Godot* speech production is bound by this kind of artistry that enables the portrayal of sociability in the play. A significant question is the extent to which Beckett's writing of dialogues implicates ways of responding that determine the dominant social and linguistic regime of the plays.

The first section of this chapter will look into different dimensions of Beckett's dialogues as manifested in his early fiction such as *Murphy* and the long plays. With the introduction of the dramatic dialogue, Beckett's language takes the specific form of the quick-fire and expresses the paradox of communication in environments of futile speech, populated by couples. I will identify a dissimilarity between the types of dialogues in Beckett's early fiction and the long plays, and suggest that Beckett employs different dialogic modes in these different instances. Although it would be stating the obvious to say that change in genre requires a change in tone and form, I am particularly interested in this transition in terms of its influence on the expressive limits of the plays.

The second section will analyze *Waiting for Godot* as the epitome of Beckett's changing relation to language through the theater. This change occurs via a specific quality of Beckett's language that brings into focus orders both embedded in language and directly determining action. The section will study the implementation of verbal orders, and more implicit forms of orders promoted by Beckett's play, drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the *order-word*. I will look into how

the play creates its modes of action and affection via their articulation in orders. What I mean by order in this context is both a directly commanding style adopted in language and a manner of organization of reality with regard to the verbal rearrangement of implicit desires and struggles for escape.

In the third section, I will turn to the representation of subordination and domination in *Waiting for Godot* and the short play "Catastrophe" to explore the plays' flirtation with an aggressive regime of display and secrecy. The section will argue that Beckett's theater presents overtly representational and significational worlds not only to challenge, parody or critique them by turning them into obvious absurdities, but to extract from them a program for the devitalization of language that gradually becomes more radical in the oeuvre. This sort of devitalization depends on anticipations, repetitions, cycles and formal divisions promoted by the dialogues. It serves to divorce writing from a sensible field that can resonate with language such as voices and feelings. Curiously, the overtly explicit forms and orders serve to disable the signifying capacity of language by attempting to equate it to visual forms, repetitive, rhythmic patterns, strictly grammatical modes that challenge signification.

The fourth section will turn to Beckett's conversational worlds of couples as the archetypes of a long-term preoccupation with idle verbal exchange as a sense-making quest, with particular emphasis on *Mercier and Camier*. I will argue that Beckett's use of dialogues in the novel is substantially different from his program in the long plays. The novel presents verbal and social interaction as a sense-making quest which is affected by changing territory. A similar type of interaction is visible in the short text "Enough." In these texts Beckett presents verbal communication as a site of confrontation, affected by what Guattari calls "complex territorialities" rather than representational forms (Guattari, 1996, 166).

150

The final section will look into the short play "What Where" as a prime example of verbal interaction in a specifically grammatical and interrogative mode. Arguably, its formal and thematic complexities draw upon earlier experiments with the dialogue form. It is traversed by themes of self-confession, power, secrecy, torture, themes that inform the other plays studied in this chapter. I suggest that the play demonstrates a culmination point in Beckett's investment in hollow forms of communication through its self-obsessed protocols, timings and repetitions. The dialogue form implements modes of speech to determine a repetitive quality that characterizes the writing of self-interrogation and memory.

I suggest that in all these instances, Beckett's language appears less as a source that the subjects depend upon even to express failure, than a source of measure that serves to define, code and recode social and psychological spaces. The persistent forms of communicational transmission in what appears to be suffocating atmospheres also delineate complex social, political and psychological spaces.

4.1 Beckett's dialogues: Images of communication

Beckett's conversations in early fiction reconstitute a sense of idleness as journey, as a means to break with ideals and ideas, where speech can be attributable to a variety of sources and discourses, from impulses, to conscious and unconscious lines of thinking informed by psycho-cultural drives and social motifs. Particularly in *Murphy*, *More Pricks Than Kicks* and *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* the dialogues implement several forms of discourse, from the philosophical to the everyday. They are characterized by veiled references, ridiculous bickering, clash of opinions. Disjunction is a central element in the conversations, where interlocutors

create new ideas from old ones and the dialogues are driven by a clash of opinions or unorthodox allusions that can be less analogical than confusing. They act more like superfluous content on most occasions. Particularly in contextually looser instances, dialogues consist of and activate these unconscious affects, memory motifs, obsessional forms. They serve to expose ideas, but only in contracted forms, speedy transitions and as the purport of social and personal identity. Such eclecticism in early forms of conversation contributes to an interpretative tension by which the boundaries between philosophy and idle talk, thought and speech are eluded.[73]

This brings Beckett's early form of dialogues in affinity with a rarely referenced influence of his. Beckett's justification of Dostoyevsky's dialogic irrationality in his letter to Thomas MacGreevy from 1931 reveals something of his penchant for this kind of style the dialogue form takes, and implicitly serves to attack literary acceptability in favor of the vanguards of insanity:

> I'm reading the 'Possédés' in a foul translation. Even so it must be very carelessly & badly written in the Russian, full of clichés & journalese: but the movement, the transitions! No one moves about like Dostoievski. No one ever caught the insanity of dialogue like he did" (in Fehsenfeld & Overbeck, 2009, p. 79).

Beckett's admiration of an impression of movement emitted through the surreal pace of transitions perhaps says something of the development of movements, patterns and gestures in his own work. His protest against publishers' demands that the

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[73] A key point in the oeuvre, Beckett's work of criticism *Three Dialogues* evokes a similar kind of tension. It dramatizes an actual conversation between Beckett and the art critic Georges Duthuit that possibly spread across a period of time. Containing the by now notorious Beckettian pronouncement that "there is nothing to express," the dialogues have lured critics also because of their digressive implementation of the dialogue form. According to Hatch, the dialogues have a "self-effacing language" that subverts the form of the philosophical dialogue and helps Beckett's text to diverge from the dialectic foundations of Socratic dialogue (2004, p. 454). According to Wood, "playfulness and seriousness continuously infect one another," a trait that ultimately makes it difficult for critics to categorize the dialogues as either solely creative or critical (as cited in Hatch, p. 456). Similarly Winstanley argues that "the playful comedy of the dialogues serves … to … unwork the authority inherent within the critical voice" (2013, p. 154). Stewart makes a claim around same lines, which underscores Beckett's "translation from conversation to textual dialogue (with the inevitable Socratic resonance)" (2006, p. 184).

exhausting dialogues in *Murphy* be removed exposes a similar stance which considers dialogues as a means of mobilization of thought: "The wild and unreal dialogues, it seems to me, cannot be removed without darkening and dulling the whole thing" (2001, p. 103). Beckett's statements seem to side with – and perhaps champion – the idea that a quality of speed serves to challenge predetermined forms of interaction and unification. According to Bakhtin, the dialogic mode is necessarily opposed to the "rhetorically *performed* or *conventionally* literary" dialogue (p. 93). He particularly opposes Dostoyevsky's unfinished, vital dialogues to the "finalized *image of a dialogue*" (p. 93). This type of vitalized dialogic mode, rather than dialogue as a finished object, enables the "seeking and *birthing* of ideas" (Zappen, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, it is also distinct from an idea of dialogue that reinforces dialectics.

However, this is less the case in the long plays. Beckett's writing presents interlocution as an object of tension between a couple in his long plays. A hyperbolical type of communion is always appealing in Beckettian relationships as a condition of possibility, with indicators of a primitive, representative form of socialization. The master and the slave, the tortured and the despot, and the married couple interact through an apparently barren cultural atmosphere replete with everyday objects. The long plays incorporate such a model that plays with self-explanatory motives. Themes of diminution, residuality, desolation vary, and the substance of the relation remains obscure most of the time.

The shift from conversational realities in early fiction such as *Murphy* and *Mercier and Camier* to dramatic dialogue induces certain adjustments in Beckett's language. If the rapid transition of dialogues in early fiction prompts a multivocal atmosphere, a vibrant dialogic one composed of discourses, rapid shifts of style,

153

plurality of forms and witty banter in a Joycean kind of way, Beckett's theater work introduces a form of dialogue engendered by an economy between insanity and logic, meaning and meaninglessness, image and words, brought about by the rhythmic quick-fire dialogue, cut across by philosophical contemplation and dead-pan humor. The dialogues are mainly fast-paced, their content remains rhetorical, and socially dysfunctional. They create and dissipate frames of intelligibility by displaying gloomy tableaus through dead-pan humor. Particularly in *Godot* and *Endgame* Beckett's landscapes are enshrouded by a murky language that disperses its tones within a program of speech. This program determines language to be pre-emptively or confusingly definitional of realities. In *Godot* an idea of "unhappiness" is asserted thus:

> ESTRAGON: I'm unhappy.
> VLADIMIR: Not really! Since when?
> ESTRAGON: I'd forgotten.
> VLADIMIR: Extraordinary the tricks that memory plays! (Beckett, 1971, p. 50)

These motto-like maxims alternate between commentary, repeatable cliché and products of contingency which determine an overall dialogic image rather than a vital atmosphere of sociality. Such dialogues, quick-fire, rhetorical, elusive, replete with clichés and routines, tend to undermine speakers' motivations, exchange of ideas and the vitality of speech. Beckett creates images of dialogues, in fact, they contribute to mise-en-scènes that are based on rhythms, patterns, structures and orders that are more lifeless than vital.

If dialogue "as a setting for rhetorical activity" is mainly "occasion for persuasion" (Zappen, 2004, p. 8), are Beckett's dialogues in the plays, which on many occasions prove to be rhetorical activity, generative, persuasive, or neither?

154

This question will be important in my reading as I point towards transitions between affective conversations and repetitive dialogues. The dialogue as a form displays an image of communication in the obviously representational regimes of the plays that will be discussed, rather than modes of interaction. Beckett's forms of dialogues create images of certain acts of power, domination and subordination by assimilating language not merely to a rhetorical tool but more importantly to a devitalized function. I will investigate whether such a function enables forms of escape from the kinds of speech regimes it promotes.

4.2 Explicit and implicit orders in *Waiting for Godot*

Waiting for Godot [*En attendant Godot*] earned Beckett huge success when it was staged for the first time in Paris in 1953. In the play, the couple Vladimir and Estragon wait for a man named Godot, who does not appear throughout the play. Vladimir and Estragon converse merely to pass the time while waiting and entertain themselves with all sorts of things, from carrots to jokes and physical routines. Meanwhile, they encounter Pozzo and his "slave" Lucky. An obvious despot, Pozzo is both threatening and ridiculous, exhibiting behavior that reinforces his hegemony over the other. All that happens happens meanwhile in the play, and waiting emerges as the precursor of a physically and politically barren reality.

Knowlson, in his biography of Beckett refers to the mixed reviews the play received during an intellectual climate very much influenced by post-war angst: "G. S. Fraser (anonymously) described it as 'a modern morality play on permanent Christian themes'; no, wrote Katharine Wilson, on the contrary, it is a perfect example of an Existentialist play; it is neither, wrote John Walsh" (as cited in

Knowlson, 2014, p. 416). Despite the mixed reviews, however, the play enduringly

presented new aesthetic and theoretical insights for the intellectuals of the period.

Miller writes that it was *Godot* that led to an epiphany in Michel Foucault's thought

that allowed him an escape from the "terrorism" of Sartrean existentialism (1993, p.

65) during the time the movement was popular. Indeed for Sartre, Beckett's play was

ideologically bourgeois with its insistence on incommunicability.[74] Alain Robbe-

Grillet famously referred to Beckett's existentialism in the play as the being-there of

man in the purest sense possible (1965, p. 111). The play's open dialogue with

philosophy is undeniable, and perhaps it allowed the intellectuals a way to ethically

and aesthetically confront and break with long-standing philosophical questions of

existence.

Knowlson draws further attention to Beckett's worn-out reaction to such

reviews: "Why people have to complicate a thing so simple I can't make out" (as

cited in Knowlson, p. 416). The play did incite a long history of criticism that

arguably developed out of not only the many forms of critical intervention but also

perhaps Beckett's own reactionary insistence on simplicity. As Conti aptly puts it:

"*Godot* became known as a play about anything and everything, meaning whatever

you wanted it to mean because its symbols were pliable enough to meet the needs of

theoretical or religious consolation" (2004, p. 278). In Hill's words, Beckett's work

"has come to exemplify a host of assumptions, conventions, judgements, or

adjudications which now follow Beckett's name wherever it appears, providing

readers with a series of ready-made evaluative frames or interpretative strategies

from which they can select at will" (2010, p. 6). Hill's comments indicate the

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[74] Hill writes: " . . . although [Sartre] admired the play, he deemed its pessimism, as he called it, essentially apolitical and reactionary. "All Godot's themes," he explained, "are bourgeois themes: solitude, despair, clichés, incommunicability, they are all the product of the inner solitude of the bourgeoisie"" (as cited in Hill, 2010, p. 83).

challenges in reading a critically acclaimed play written approximately seventy years

ago, whose literary statements have become clichés circulating in the cultural

domain. Any critical approach to the play thus begins in such dilemmas. In what

follows I will attempt to deflect such critical dilemmas however, by suggesting to

focus on the play's transmission of verbal orders that create both affective and

apathetic communicational regimes.

The play begins with the statement "Nothing to be done" perhaps in an

attempt to allude to a specific moment of history, only to lacerate its effects later on

(p. 9).[75] The implications of political desolation are given in the two men who are

bound by an invisible figure and literally remain stuck in the situation. Beckett's

apparently transparent, problematically explicit world in the play is constructed via a

series of verbal orders that the characters create and conform to. Hence every now

and then, the question "What do we do now?" is inevitable. And the reply is most

expected: "Wait" (p. 17). At the beginning of the play, Vladimir and Estragon

contemplate hanging themselves from a bough. After an exchange of opinions as to

who should go first, Vladimir is perplexed with the logic Estragon provides. At this

point, Estragon orders Vladimir to "use [his] intelligence" and the stage directions

read: "Vladimir uses his intelligence" (p. 17). In such ironic ways, the play attempts

to bridge the gap between images and words, figurative and literal forms. Such open

orders are received with conformity and they guide the course of action. Despite the

passage's ironic overtones, the idea is that verbal orders directly influence the

behaviors and actions on stage. This dispersal of orders, rather than expressions or

insinuations makes signification itself a problematic domain.

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[75] According to Conti, among others, the play invoked memories of war: "*Godot*'s empty stage
reawakened traumatic wartime memories, and many audiences felt they had glimsed in the play the
catastrophic outcome of western civilisation" (2004, p. 278).

Orders impose predetermined distinctions, motivations and anticipations that modify relations in the play:

> ESTRAGON: Let's go.
> VLADIMIR: We can't.
> ESTRAGON: Why not?
> VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.
> ESTRAGON: Ah! (*Despairing.*) What'll we do, what'll we do! (p. 84)

In fact Estragon and Vladimir always know what to do: they speak. They always find something to say, which, in the eyes of the readers, comes to define their reality. They have this dialogue towards the end of the second act, when Pozzo, a blind Pozzo, shouts for help because he has fallen off. Hearing the urgent call, Vladimir and Estragon remain stuck because they are "waiting for Godot." They are pressured by several compulsions at this point, to help, to wait, to go. But they only help Pozzo after articulating the very order pronounced by Pozzo and contemplating it. Vladimir's suggestion to help is countered by Estragon:

> ESTRAGON: What does he want?
> VLADIMIR: He wants to get up.
> ESTRAGON: Then why doesn't he?
> VLADIMIR: He wants us to help him to get up.
> ESTRAGON: Then why don't we? What are we waiting for? (p. 84).

If there is any sense of desire for action it is first presented linguistically as an order that demands that someone act. The anticipated action to help here is tested by way of its verbal image, and Vladimir and Estragon could reach a so-called consensus to help after they reflect on the call in a sequence of questions and answers that report the situation. The humorous twist at the end indicates waiting to be both a symptom for action and passivity. In the minds of the readers who find themselves attuned to

158

the types of anticipated responses in this atmosphere, the obvious answer is, "We are

waiting for Godot." Vladimir and Estragon are not ready to help except after they

"evaluate" the issue in a chain of questions and answers in their own particular

reasoning.

Thus, waiting enables the transmission of an order to produce idle talk in

which the couple divest themselves of any sense of freedom: "You'd make me laugh

if it wasn't prohibited" (p. 19). Such absence of freedom is conveyed once again

through the verbal order. There is no other context through which an absence of

freedom could be inferred. It is when the characters speak of laws and prohibitions

that their world is immediately characterized by them.[76] They transmit grammatical

acts such as reporting and paraphrasing and produce the idea of Godot as it is

signified in such ways. As Estragon asks Vladimir what Godot has said, both report

the so-called original words in paraphrases: "That he'd see," "That he couldn't

promise anything," "That he'd have to think it over" (p. 18). This very act of

transmission, or false hearsay, introduces language as a problem of influence rather

than expression. Even as the play suggests that Godot may not have said these, what

matters is that this transmission somehow continues.

The origin of the order to wait is elusive in the play, and Vladimir and

Estragon continually rearticulate an order that is not present in the first place. Apart

from its direct manifestations of an order to be fulfilled, the verbal order points

towards an inherent code of conformity between language and action, where

compliance is taken for granted. In a certain sense, linguistic performance determines

what can and cannot take place. There is a conclusive aspect to the characters'

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[76] For a reading of *Godot*'s disqualification of aesthetic forms and its favor for the performative on
stage see Begam, "How to do Nothing with Words" 2007.

portrayals of reality: "Nothing to be done," "one is what one is," "The essential doesn't change" (p. 21).

Such self-evident and transparent remarks often serve to construct stage reality within the strict limits of a verbal image notwithstanding their ironic aspects. They also serve to produce the idiomatic truths of the play, with which the interlocutors point to, call for, seek and articulate what can be named hermeneutic and physical dead-ends. In the first act, as Pozzo prepares to leave, he expresses hesitation in seeking to find an action he is unable to accomplish:

> POZZO: I don't seem to be able … (*long hesitation*) … to depart.
> ESTRAGON: Such is life. (p. 47)

Either as reflection or subversion, these forms of contemplation emerge as the pseudo-ideological purport of Beckett's pseudo-couples, which makes any critical approach to the text itself abstruse. However, regardless of the inherent forms of absurdity, critique and the ready-made, dialogues continue in terms of prohibitions and markings that locate orders, displace desires and dictate acts. Pozzo's remark is preceded by a verbal routine. In this routine, Pozzo, Vladimir and Estragon take turns to say "Adieu" to each other, each twice. This is followed by thanking and affirming one another in what seems to be an absurd exchange of courtesy. In this kind of verbal routine where action is deferred, the repetitive dialogue appears as the disguise of inarticulate desires or symptoms of other ideas that remain unarticulated. While Pozzo apparently wishes to leave, he cannot. He, too, is implicitly captured by an inability to leave. The verbal routine charts muted desires, articulates impossible obligations. Beckett uses the repetitive dialogue to produce this physical sense of impassivity that delineates physical, psychological and expressive boundaries. In this respect, the orders embedded in language, either in the forms of self-evident truths or

verbal orders determine a linguistic/political power that arranges the limits of what takes place, what one is affected by, how one responds, reacts and proceeds.

Language is never only descriptive or communicative, but it also betrays a set of "implicit presuppositions," as Deleuze and Guattari call them in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2005, p. 78). For them, language enforces a regime of inherent orders and commands. It is barely a system of communication, but it enacts power formations and activates the subtle implications embedded within verbal exchange. Rather than merely commanding, or referring to an external order that needs to be obeyed, order-words impose certain semiotic coordinates, "implicit presuppositions" inherent in languages that then come to regulate all sorts of social and power relations as well as subjectification procedures (p. 75). One significant consequence of this is that subjective enunciations are continually traversed by an indirect discourse that comes to incorporate these implicit orders into language and appropriates them within established rules of conformity (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 77). In Deleuze and Guattari's initial theorization, there seems to be no escape from this world of orders. It is in this sense that for Deleuze and Guattari, verbal communication, rather than promoting a dichotomy between common sense and noise, consists in "emitting, receiving and transmitting order-words" (p. 76). Uhlmann draws attention to the aspect of redundancy the order-word generates:

> … you can only say something within preestablished rules of what can be said; therefore, what you can say will merely affirm what is implicitly there in the kind of statement you make (which will be predetermined by the kind of language it belongs to). The statement, then, is redundant; it reaffirms what has already been affirmed. (2015, p. 33)

One of the things that can be inferred from this impasse is then a problem of redundancy that allows language to order and reorder its surface according to the whims of a transcendent power. Through the legible symbolic order of Godot the

161

play lays bare a problem of orders both built in to the language and referring to external ones, making this whole world inoperative with respect to what it can express.

If there is "nothing to be done" apart from waiting in *Godot*, this is promoted first explicitly in the words of the characters. The implicit presuppositions of such statements, however, are not only their symbolic or ironic nature, but an unpronounced obligation to fill the gaps and to follow verbal orders, marked by repetitive dialogues and verbal routines. Waiting may directly indicate passivity, but in *Godot* such passivity is also indicated more subtly in the unending dialogues, the continuity of similar structures of relationship, the transmission and imitation of dominant models, in short, the elimination of a possibility of escape from a regime of orders. In fact, if rhetorical activity is a setting for persuasion, in *Godot* it is not the characters that persuade one another, but a speech regime that seems to determine in advance what one can do.

4.3 Regimes of theatricality, forms of escape: *Waiting for Godot* and "Catastrophe"

There are other directly visible orders in the play exposed through overt representations of power and authority, submission and subordination. Pozzo's authoritarian behavior, his commands and open evasion of responsibility are central to his relationship to the rest. Vladimir and Estragon run into Pozzo, who they initially mistake for Godot. Pozzo performs an act, enters the stage with a creature named Lucky, who is apparently his "slave," and who walks on all fours, with a leash tied around his neck. He openly gives orders to Lucky, most of them ridiculous: "Think pig!" (p. 42). Pozzo's orders are not interesting for the kind of

messages they convey or what they obviously represent/parody, but for the specific

regime they activate throughout the play. Pozzo is an obvious despot and he

challenges a culture of secrecy. He demands attention: "Is everybody ready? Is

everybody looking at me? (*He looks at Lucky, jerks the rope. Lucky raises his head.*)

Will you look at me, pig!" (p. 30). He makes Lucky obey him with simple, one-word

orders. Upon meeting Pozzo, Estragon and Vladimir's initial, perhaps learned

response is to react against the tyrant: "It's a scandal! . . . A disgrace" (p. 27). But

gradually, Pozzo's commanding style and his professional mode of evasion become

the norm. What Estragon and Vladimir deem as scandalous is gradually normativized

in an atmosphere in which the master-slave model is ceaselessly repeated.

In the second act Estragon and Vladimir repeat the social model introduced

by Lucky and Pozzo, as a game. They reproduce the exact phrases used by Pozzo

about Lucky to address their own situation. Whereas Pozzo says of 'creatures' like

Lucky, "The best thing would be to kill them," Vladimir, referring to their tedious

situation, says, "The best thing would be to kill me, like the other . . . like billions of

others" (p. 32-62). Reproducing Pozzo's phrase to refer to virtual "billions of others"

that presumably suffer, Vladimir re-enacts that order of apathy, conjuring dying

billions in a universe populated by five. In such instances, whatever passes as social

language, be it small talk, an actual story or a joke, can have a certain use value later

on in the text. It is tested, played with, and appropriated. Dialogue is generated

through this capacity to place and address oneself in a series of statements of hearsay

by reproducing them. Pozzo's model of dominance provides the play with the limits

of social interaction as it promotes a speech regime of orders. With Pozzo, the play

explores the power of language in terms of not only implicating things but also

pointing at them. It is with respect to Pozzo and Lucky's overtly symbolic type of

relationship that Estragon and Vladimir "play at Pozzo and Lucky" while waiting for

Godot (p. 72). This obvious form of order is juxtaposed against the invisible form of

order represented by Godot.

If Pozzo is an obvious despot who also influences the way language is

produced in the play, it is because the play's world is a world of display. He is an

open despot who insults not only Lucky but also Vladimir and Estragon. He enjoys

little soliloquys that deliberately address controversial questions: "I am perhaps not

particularly human, but who cares?" (p. 29). This discourse of humanism and its

implications abound in Pozzo's talk. Even when he sounds benevolent or is

genuinely aware of his injustice and addresses it, his extreme openness only serves to

legitimate the situation: "Remark that I might just as well have been in his shoes and

he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise" (p. 31).

For Deleuze and Guattari one of the basic characteristics of any signifying

regime is this idea of display. They write: "With the despot, everything is public, and

everything that is public is so by virtue of the face. Lies and deception may be a

fundamental part of the signifying regime, but secrecy is not" (2005, p. 115). They

argue that in a signifying regime such as imperial bureaucracy the law that is internal

to the system gets rearticulated by a series of signifiers that refer to others endlessly,

and this serves to create an "overcoding by the signifier," an "unlocalized

omnipresence" (p. 115). This inherent law of signifying the "despot-god" in a chain

of signifiers comes into effect via what Deleuze and Guattari call "faciality" because

the face is "what fuels interpretation" (p. 115).[77] They connect this open surface with

the possibility of legibility, of arrangement, forming and reforming. The face

emerges as the icon of the signifying regime; that which re-enhances the system's

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[77] For an analysis of this concept in relation to Beckett's *Murphy*, see Dowd, 2007.

rules by constantly opening expression (facial or otherwise) onto the possibility of interpretation through a chain of signifiers (p. 115).

One of the ways in which display becomes relevant is through this idea of faciality in the play. Not only is Pozzo an obvious despot, but forms and relations are reproduced with respect to this idea of constant re-interpretation or reinscription in specifically quick-fire dialogues with repetitions and paraphrases. Vladimir and Estragon's statements are incited by the implicit disquiet promoted by gaps and voids, and even when they have nothing to say, their minds form associations. These associations, even if they are easily forgettable, remain inherently reproductive. When Vladimir orders Estragon to "say something" that will suppress silence, Estragon comes up with the famous question "What do we do now?" whose answer is obvious (p. 63). Forgetting is the central gesture through which orders are rearticulated. The question restores the established order; puts it once again under so-called scrutiny. However, that form of scrutiny is mostly reproduction of previous frames of interpretation or famous self-evident truths.

However, there is a disruption that occurs in the representation of Pozzo's obvious tyranny – so obvious that comical – and it is indicated through Lucky's sidelined energy. For the first time in the play, Lucky, as "the body of the tortured" acts outside the limits of the orders he is given (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 115). Prompted by Pozzo's order to "think," he "struggles and shouts his text" (p. 43). This act becomes an act of struggle as he resists against the protests of the other characters even if it is apparently mechanical. He begins by reference to the existence of a "personal god" and continues speaking in religious discourse about divine love. He then begins a rather long section where he repeats what sounds like an

anthropological study on the essence of man by reference to a certain academy of anthropometry:

> Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattman of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown … considering what is more that as a result of the labours left unfinished crowned by the Acacacacademy of Anthropopopometry of Essy-in-Possy of Testew and cunard it is established beyond all doubt all other doubt than that which clings to the labours of men that as a result of the labours unfinished … that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation is seen to waste and pine waste and pine …" (p. 43).

Lucky's speech eludes the arranged patterns, not because it really expresses an individuality in an otherwise indifferent environment, or completely dismantles the way things work, but it inserts a blockage to the system of repetition, it modifies it, adds a new flow to the dominant accepted models of communication. He poses a certain threat to Pozzo's flagrancy because of his unexpectedly violent reactions and his flamboyant tirade, which is a response to Pozzo's open order, "think." His uninterrupted monologue seems to be the only potential for a break with the question and answer form or the quick-fire in the play. Incoherent and nonsensical, it activates a particular desire of flow, which is something missing in the others' staccato talk. Lucky introduces a rhythm that becomes deafening to the rest of the characters: stuttering and instability, but also an uncontrolled passion for a different kind of reproduction and recording. Although his discourse is borrowed, too, it embodies a passion rather than reaction, and this singular passivity becomes disturbing for the other three, and they try to censor his speech. A mimicry that becomes so passionate that it disrupts the verbal order on which it is based. In the play, monologue appears as a way of thinking that is so unoriginal and redundant that it can become horrifying.

Lucky's is a memorized memory, but also something that defies timing and strategy, and gradually embraces a power of its own to express in a flow of energy what can only be memorized and mimicked. Such rapturous flow, despite its ever-incomplete structure and failure to get to the point indicates the discursive element of language butchered in the hands of the tortured. An external discourse is not only borrowed but is torn to pieces. Lucky's vivacious flow is ordered on cue, he speaks not only what he can remember but what he cannot quite remember. He seems to passionately repeat what he cannot be affected by within a rhythm of gaps that connects articulation to moments of struggle and sensuality. According to Goodall, "Lucky's energy" is portrayed as a declining vitality, although it is one of the very few instances across Beckett's writing that provides extreme potential for a life force (Goodall, 2006, p. 187-196). Accordingly, it is this precise force of paradox that is embodied in Lucky's speech as measure and flow, life and lifelessness that introduces Beckettian inhumanity as a form of energy.

Similarly Guattari refers to diverse levels of power that are implicated in one's body and language. Accordingly, the stability of any enunciation depends on the specific equilibrium these levels of power generate (Guattari, 1996, p. 141). For Guattari, a power formation implicates "an entire complex of "extra-human" semiotic machines" (p. 142). In order to illustrate the point that there are not only relations of conformity between language and actions, he claims: "[Power] is also the power of the ego and the power of the super-ego, that which makes one stammer from fear, that which generates somatic reactions, neuroses, suicides, etc" (p. 142). He claims that the human being as a unity cannot be characterized by a quality of power or vice-versa. There might be less visible kinds of connection between such forms of power that give way to manic reproductions of behavioral traits and

emotions that are represented as socially negative. As such, power formations are not easily representable; they indicate subtle forms of power in the body and consciousness that come to influence a specific formation of language at a specific time. For him "all the degrees of fluidity" are present in a semiotic performance; there can be traces of delirium or unrepressed flows in every semiotic performance of every body until they are stabilized in "forms of language, dialectics" (p. 142). Lucky's passionate mimicry is implicated in the conceivability of these degrees of fluidity in him, which are instantaneously stabilized in a broken grammar. What is coded as obedience may inform an intensive flow, a form of vitality. Lucky's babbling stems from these destructive, uncontrollable forms of power, perhaps a power of the ego that cannot be captured by stable linguistic forms. Arguably Lucky is the only figure whose "extra-human semiotic machines" inform a paradoxical form of life, not quite repressed through linguistic stability or completely overflowing in hysteria (p. 141). It is thus difficult to refer to Lucky as powerful or powerless because in him we see desire in its intensive rather than representable forms.

If Pozzo embodies the signified as the despot-god-face, and Godot the transcendent order that dictates constant production of communication and interpretation via the impassive form of waiting, Lucky affords, by way of this flowing energy, a brief way out, at least from the delineated speech patterns. Vladimir and Estragon may outwit Pozzo, but are unable to disrupt his order. Lucky, on the other hand, although he embodies a consent to be oppressed, is also marked by an excess of that very consent. With Lucky, even for a brief period, and perhaps for nothing, there is flight from forms of domination. When Pozzo attempts at stopping him and pulls his rope, he responds by pulling back on the rope and resists being

pulled down. It is interesting to note that the very sign of dominance, the rope, by way of mimicry, can also be a sign of resistance.

However, Lucky eventually weakens, and his capacity to speak is attributed back to a symbol – the hat. Since "[h]e can't think without his hat" (p. 41), the characters take his hat off in order to silence him. Although it leaves Lucky utterly disintegrated, for a while, he is able to realize an unacceptable deviation from dialogue, from the structure of order and submission, presenting a break with a system in which everything seems to be known beforehand. An open-ended and incoherent reference to "anthropometry," this direct intervention is not in conformity with the humorously evasive communication strategies of the characters which only enhance the regime's intent to repeat its order of inaction. It is in this sense that there is no question whose answer may implicate a turn away from the transparency of the situation, the codes of the faces. Without a real face, Lucky moves away from this coding of blatancy. However, Lucky's re-domestication is an eventual consolidation of the system, a final seal-off. He voluntarily takes up the end of the rope that Pozzo has lost and gives it to him so that Pozzo can master him again. This obvious and obviously ridiculous master-slave structure is situated within a framework, in which all that happens is attributed to signifiers and orders that arrange layers of experience.

Another direct representation of the tortured, this time introduced by a fictional stage director and his assistant, can be found in "Catastrophe," Beckett's perhaps only openly political play.[78] It was written in French in 1982 for the Czech playwright Václav Havel when he was in prison. In the play, there is a less obvious,

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[78] Morin traces the history of Beckett's connections with political theater in *Beckett's Political Imagination* with focuses on the recurrent images of torture and interrogation. For more on the political background that prepared for Beckett's engagement with a political imagination, see Morin 2017.

more secretive distribution of power relations, once again ordered through language. The tortured is on display on stage, and is being streamlined, so to speak; he is continually designed to please the eye. He is called Protagonist ("P"), and his face is hidden. In the play there is no actual despot, although Beckett does play with a similar schema. There is rather, an almost invisible director that arranges the mise-en-scène from the shadows. We hardly ever see P's face, hidden by a hat, but we also hardly see the director's face, who exits stage halfway through the play, "not to appear again" (Beckett, 2006, p. 299). Lucky's passivity not only invokes obedience but it creates out of this obedience an obsessional energy to produce a form of non-obedience; his speech becomes deafening to the others. This physically hog-tied and tethered creature, as long as he is a slave also produces a potential escape. When Beckett plays with a similar idea in "Catastrophe," the play can be said to withstand any such expression of potentials because the so-called tortured is no longer placed within a sociality, even if hierarchical as in *Godot*. Rather, he is an object of display.

Like Lucky P wears a hat. But in this short play, the hat is not an instrument for the symbolization of verbal energy which is ordered by a visible despot. On the contrary, this is a cryptic system whose regulations are determined and embraced collectively through various efficient procedures. This is observable in the exchange between the director and his assistant:

> D: Why the hat?
> A: To help hide the face. (p. 297)

While the presence of the hat is being questioned, the demand for furtiveness is not. In the end, this is an intervention that ultimately puts forward a regime of furtiveness. The idea is not so much to display the tortured fully to an audience, or to make him subject to theatricality, but to find the most convenient form in which to observe the

so-called inhumanity of the man on stage. This form of display in fact serves to conceal rather than show. When the assistant timidly suggests that P be gagged, the director's reaction is a reaction against transparency and display: "For God's sake! This craze for explicitation!" (p. 299). The idea of representation is easily dismissed by the director, his concerns are with the ways in which P can be displayed from certain perspectives in a very specific form, which intimates rather than exhibits his situation to an audience. The director makes sure there is no display of the face:

> D: There's a trace of face.
>
> A: I make a note.
>
> [*She takes out pad, takes pencil, makes to note.*]
>
> D: Down the head. [A *at a loss. Irritably.*] Get going. Down his head. [A *puts back pad and pencil, goes to P, bows his head further, steps back.*] A shade more. [A *advances, bows the head further.*] Stop! [A *steps back.*] Fine. It's coming. [*Pause.*] Could do with more nudity.
>
> A: I make a note. (p. 299-300)

So there is always another type of relation which the director needs to account for, the relation to an audience. Beckett makes audience – imaginary or real – an actual power marker in this late play interfering with the procedures of aesthetic invention. This aesthetic production is at once a form of subjectification, resistance and domination because for Beckett it is enmeshed in linguistic orders, submissive acts, defying activity all at once.

The order-word enunciated repeatedly by the assistant, "I make a note" implicates a universe in which orders are not directly given but recorded, meticulously scrutinized and supposedly practical. If language deals with orders, it does so by attributing to bodies certain aesthetic forms ordered through a collaborative process. Language determines what cannot be rather than what can be done by way of a collective social order arranging rules and regulations. A perfectly

stable form is created through the cooperation of several degrees of authority and the departmentalization of labor. This process of aestheticization emerges as a subtle form of domination, gathered by the efficacious interventions of different departments. In fact, the director is not a despot here in the sense that Pozzo may be. Although he gives orders, and denotes the tortured one, he is hardly at the signifying center. He is rather one of the functions of a grander regime of secrecy that instructs and rules in the form of the director, inscribes and legitimates in the form of the assistant, actualizes in the form of "Luke, in charge of the lighting, offstage" (p. 297), and dominates in the form of an audience. Audience is implicated in the character of the director, and it signposts the ultimate form of Beckett's writing machine, which serves as an absent yet powerful form of self-evaluation. Beckett confronts a more secretive process of signification in the play through co-operational strategies between different functions.

The represented body's stare at the audience at the end of the play betrays Beckett's ambiguously political act. It demonstrates P's resistance against being represented, but such confrontation also serves to refuse an overcoming of representation. Protagonist's raise of the head is Beckett's final statement. The end-result in this game of aesthetic re-creation of the tortured body exceeds the limits and rules that give birth to it. P actualizes the suggestion made by the assistant and ridiculed by the director, allowing us to assume an act of defiance. Addressing the complex ways in which Beckett incorporates and invalidates representational forms, Hill argues that in "Catastrophe" "it is apparent that discourse in itself . . . is staged by Beckett's text primarily as a form of oppression" (1997, p. 910). The play stages the defiance against this oppression imposed by the director and the audience, through the timid resistance of P. However, it suggests that resistance is yet another

form of representation. It is staged as silence, as the antithesis to speech and only through the self-representation of the tortured. Beckett's form of resistance, too, conforms to the representational regime promoted by the play. This form of apparent readability is a characteristic of language in this play.

The dialogue forms in such ways incite connections between questions and orders, secrecy and display, forms and politics of writing in these plays. The structure of the dialogue allows for an erasure of gaps and voids in a language dictated by orders and anticipated forms. All these transmissible orders of language expose a theatricality in Beckett's work, which both serves to put paradoxes on display and create an aesthetic strategy to work with. Abbott (1988) analyzes theatricality as a mode of tyranny in Beckett, particularly in reference to Pozzo and "Catastrophe"'s director. For Abbott, nothingness, taken as the impoverishment of being, is necessarily accounted for through a desire to make the other impoverished, but only by a theatricality that "[appropriates] the attention of others" (p. 80). Hélène Cixous reminds us that theatricality promotes a culture of analysis, of psychoanalysis, which in Beckett's work, surfaces an indelible mark, a cove from which Beckett's art is born: "One comes out of a Theatre to find oneself in another Theatre, . . . one is made to do theatre to be and to make stage. *To make stage not sense*" (2010, p. 64). In this peculiar sense, theatricality in Beckett arises out of a reconciliation between self-perception and self-appropriation through the eyes of invented and internal audiences. Koczy looks into how the image of the theatrical can both preclude a standard sense of communication and fail to realize the commands it communicates (2015, p. 207). The language of the theater presents forms of meaning while it is completely unfit to communicate any meaning.

Guattari ascribes an ultimately literary function to Beckett's theatricality. He claims that Beckett "creates theater, in the sense of a *mise-en-scène,* a *mise en acte,* of giving something to be seen" (1996, p. 210). In this regard, "he gathers up representations, but he articulates them to create literature. … He plays with these representations, or rather, he makes them play" (p. 210). *Godot* succeeds in creating such paradox of articulating representations, as Guattari suggests, but this serves to neither merely critique nor aggrandize such a regime of representations.

In the theater, coupled with the central goal of engendering a mise-en-scène, dialogues lead to a writing program that is spectacle-oriented in such ways that it infects Beckett's writing with legibly programmed events. This being said, Beckett's preoccupation with linguistic and textual orders is not straightforwardly simplistic. Just as Deleuze and Guattari point to the other dimension of order-words that renders possible a "line of flight" (p. 86-7), the lines of readability in Beckett prompt an experiment with codes and significations in such ways that they give birth to the possibility of replacing discursivity with visuality in language.[79] In fact, this sort of attempt to make rigid codes and images (such as those of the slave and the master, the tortured and the torturer) via verbal orders is a later concern in Beckett's work, which uses and abuses language for visual rather than discursive and narrative purposes. Laura Peja, while referring to Beckett's "obvious metaphors" also draws attention to the conditions of acting which require actual and literal forms of suffering in the actor (2014, p. 386). This type of literality is central to Beckett's

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[79] As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, the first aspect of the order-word is death; it is the "expressed of the statement" (p. 107). However, it is also the "variable of enunciation" (p. 107) and can either effectuate codes, commands, or "passages," 'lines of flight' from the socially implicated orders. In Grisham's words, "content and expression are variables that pass into each other continually, arranging each other" (1991, p. 50). Therefore, the order-word can be expansive and limitative (p. 46). Deleuze and Guattari explain thus: "There are pass-words beneath order-words. Words that pass, words that are components of passage, whereas order-words mark stoppages or organised, stratified compositions. A single thing or word undoubtedly has this twofold nature: it is necessary to extract one from the other – to transform the compositions of order into components of passage" (p. 110).

distortion of the representational program. Through the emphasis on the singularity of the image, Beckett reduces representation's powers to reflect, mimic and generalize, and enhances its powers of intrusion. The representational program in plays like *Godot* is so obvious that its powers of display equally instigate a possibility of its own impoverishment. Language also always emerges as the site of images; it creates a challenge to see beyond representational forms. Beckett will make this problem more obvious in his short prose from the sixties. Therefore a traversal in representational forms creates a possibility of building forms of visuality in language.

4.4 Idle talk and territorialities in *Mercier and Camier* and "Enough"

If Vladimir and Estragon's dialogues implicate a speech regime that promotes blatant forms, the earlier couples are connected by a tension created by physical and psychological tedium. The archetypes to Beckett's couples, Mercier and Camier both anticipate and contrast with those of the plays. Written in French in 1946, only to be published in 1970, *Mercier and Camier* [*Mercier et Camier*] narrates a couple's journey around an unknown city.[80] The novel's expression of narrative and physical journey engenders a link between walking and conversing, and this delineates physical and narrative limits in the novel. The novel's theme of quest is one that is mocked throughout the course of the couple's journey, however, the so-called search runs parallel with an ongoing process of sense making via the various encounters of the couple. This mode of aimlessness gives way in later writing to a reconfiguration

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[80] The English and the French versions of the novel are substantially different. Beckett cut significant parts of the original in his English translation. Chapter contents and the order of the plot differ, too. In this reading I refer only to the English version.

of coupling, affected by the territory in which the couples find themselves.[81] Beckett constructs the conversational universe in the novel both as territorial search and linguistic program.

The novel's eponymous heroes could be treated as the prototypes of Beckett's future couples such as Estragon and Vladimir, and Clov and Hamm. Their dialogues anticipate the kind of mannerist conversations of futility, emblematic of many other Beckettian dialogues, most famously of *Godot*. In *Mercier and Camier*'s mock-up of idle talk and pseudo-couple, which are to be enriched in *Godot*, *Endgame* and *Molloy*, Beckett introduces some of his most fierce comedy, dwelling upon the hollow body, the inane voice – "vox inanis" (Beckett, 2010, p. 69) – of speech captured through the semblance of interlocution.

It could be said that conversations emerge as a form of collective rambling in *Mercier and Camier*, like *Murphy*, composed of a series of dialogues. There is an undertone of pedantic omniscience in the book, which, as the narrator's authority undulates, becomes victim to a series of summaries every two chapters. These summaries gradually become exhaustive, rephrasing the gist of the dialogues in the preceding chapters. They emulate the characteristic dialogues that either stretch to no particular end or are cut off abruptly. Quirky links, disconnections and deviations are constantly reprised in Beckett's texts such as *Molloy* and *Watt*, originally written in English; however the particular accomplishment of such characteristics for Beckett's most unaccomplished book lies in the re-formation of narrative space as the surface of an everyday/banal reality, imminent yet intractable, intimated through uncalled for

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[81] Particularly in "Enough" rambling across unknown territories makes possible an attachment directly mediated through space, as will be discussed.

dialogues between the characters.[82] Things and words float idly in this universe, and Mercier and Camier, although physically together, continually miss each other's motives in conversation. I argue that the text's promotion of a specific textual regime that can be summed up as whim and tedium forms the politics of the text.

Unlike *Godot*, the novel's dialogues consist in a verbal communication that is founded on gaps and disjunctions, rather than evasions, repetitions and recuperations. In this respect, the text is based on an interaction between loose contexts and orders. It addresses how orders may affect and transform a world in which context and territories of meaning are constantly shifted, halted or displaced. It is perhaps in this respect that order-words are expansive rather than limitative. In one of the most iconic instances of this, Mercier and Camier exchange words of courtesy for interrupting one another:

> Pardon, said Camier, what was that you said?
> No, no, said Mercier, you.
> No no, said Camier, nothing of interest.
> No matter, said Mercier, let's have it.
> I assure you, said Camier.
> I beg of you, said Mercier.
> After you, said Camier.
> I interrupted you, said Mercier.
> *I* interrupted *you*, said Camier.
> Silence fell again. Mercier broke it, or rather Camier.
> Have you caught a chill, said Mercier. (p. 82)

Anticipating a very similar exchange between Vladimir and Estragon, Mercier and Camier's verbal exchange takes place when they encounter the burial ground of a

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[82] Deirdre Bair writes that Beckett was dissatisfied with the novel, claiming "there was still too much 'Englishness' about the plot" (2002, p. 376). Beckett's words about the book reveal such dissatisfaction. In his attempt to translate the novel into English, Beckett was "bogged down through loathing of the original" (as cited in Bair, p. 675).

"nationalist," to which they tepidly respond with "How aggravating" (p. 82) – a function phrase detached from any affective affinity with what it refers to. [83] After they decide to go towards it to investigate, they attempt to speak at the same time, hence the words of courtesy. Consequently, each forgets what they are going to say after this detour; in fact the whole scene is dominated by forgetting. According to Seán Kennedy the scene hints at Mercier and Camier's "cultural amnesia" (2005, p. 124), and their obscuration of historical events is a process of unburdening from (Irish) history (p. 123-4). The dysfunctional function-phrases are what they remember of a social discourse that from time to time help dodge an otherwise burdensome responsibility to speak about things. Instead, Mercier and Camier's repartee shifts focus from the nationalist's grave, about which they do not know much, towards an insistent exchange of petty words, something they seem to have mastered. To be more precise, they use a usage of language as a means of disjunction rather than language itself as a means of communication. This sort of disjunction anticipates Lucky's recitation, replete with linguistic dysfunctionality but affectively offering a way to deal with some form of oppression or disturbance. This is one aspect of cultural blunder in the novel that Mercier and Camier keep returning to, through which symbols are isolated from the reference networks they are placed in.

In this specific instance, the reference to the nationalist is trivialized by empty talk. Amidst an atmosphere that fails to replace referents with further ones, suspensions take over: "There are times when the simplest words are slow to signify" (Beckett, 2010, p. 85). In fact, the episodic line of the narrative specifies the disjunctive politics of the text, enabling disconnected parts to attach to one another in variation. In this regard, Mercier and Camier's response is implicated in their social

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[83] "VLADIMIR: Oh pardon! ESTRAGON: Carry on. VLADIMIR: No no, after you. ESTRAGON: No no, you first. VLADIMIR: I interrupted you. ESTRAGON: On the contrary" (p. 75)

awkwardness that serves as a disjunction, a break from what the grave actually signifies. Replete with idioms which dispel the air of tension that reminds them of a symbol they once knew – although, as the narrator declares, even this is not certain – the dialogue goes on to recontextualize the depressing scene.

In the following sequence, they turn their attention towards their physical environment: "What a beautiful day, said Camier. Is it not? said Mercier. How beautiful the bog, said Camier. Most beautiful, said Mercier" (p. 83). It is interesting to note that these shifts bring about transferences from meanings to matter, from the incorporeal to the corporeal. Mannerist conversation serves such shifts. There are implicit or explicit symbols such as in this instance but Mercier and Camier insist on not only forgetting but also disconnecting themselves from its referent. In this case, the nationalist's grave is hardly a point for discussion, although it stands as an intact symbol of one thing or another, something Mercier and Camier just cannot remember. As Kennedy suggests, it is typical of Beckett to evoke and dismiss simultaneously such reference points (p. 127). But in the novel such tension is created by a language which evokes a field of sociality that combines memory, figment, landscape, and affect. It is confrontations with that field that form much of Mercier and Camier's dialogues. The symbolic coinciding the idiomatic, the idiomatic meeting with the real. What seems to matter is how Mercier and Camier respond to and/or disconnect from a world signified with martyrs, nationalists, and authority figures, a world marked in a familiar yet unnerving landscape, which Mercier and Camier circumvolve throughout the novel.

In the novel the relationship to landscape is significant to the couple's manners of speech. It is a landscape in the making between forgotten symbols and corporeal entities, not yet abstracted, or tyrannized by a significational order as in

Godot. As Kennedy suggests, this landscape is, if not real, at least a reminiscent Ireland, "a politically inflected, material context" for Beckett (p. 127). This material context at the same time points towards a continual possibility of metamorphosis, it is a territory intersecting affect, memory, enunciation in complex ways that lead to the materialization of speech.

The nationalist's grave is one such stimulant that paves the way for what Guattari calls "complex territoriality" (1996, p. 166). For Guattari, territoriality marks an immanent relationship of enunciation to affects: "Affect is thus essentially a pre-personal category, installed 'before' the circumscription of identities, and manifested by unlocatable transferences, unlocatable with regard to their origin, as well as with regard to their destination" (p. 158). Following Bakhtin, Guattari finds a specific correlation between affect and enunciation. This is not to suggest that enunciations represent or refer to hidden affects that they embody. Rather, there are "components of proto-enunciation" that serve as the creative plane, or the canvas of affects, in which sensory signals, for instance, enter into an "existential constellation" with physical, social, sentimental, historical and personal references, constantly evoking a complex field of feelings (p. 160). Once these "territorializing dispositions" proclaim themselves and "begin to protrude beyond my immediate environment and to engage memory and cognitive procedures, I find myself tributary to a multi-headed enunciative lay-out [agencement]" (160). The first-person speaker is only an intersection, one of the contingent ways in which this existential constellation is materialized. What is significant for Guattari in such a formula is that it reserves a potential for the production of the new, even when we find ourselves in similar situations every day in familiar environments. The bog, the turf, worms, a third party, coughing all create a complex network, apparently melancholic, and

180

networks like these lead to manners of relation and response that make up the statements of Mercier and Camier. Ireland may be a distant nightmare for Beckett himself, but it is this recurrent nightmarish effect that creates points of contact between Beckett's forms of enunciation, empty, disjunctive, insignificant, and cognitive procedures, something we see frequently in *Mercier and Camier* and its affective-enunciative territories.

Mercier and Camier's encounter with the grave betrays at least two aspects of their so-called communication. Firstly, small talk marks the literary event as the simultaneous questioning of and detachment from the signs it invokes or inscribes. Secondly, this futile speech produces instances of intersection among several levels of stimulation: general knowledge intersecting small talk, misremembered or forgotten history prompting idiomatization and blunder, social symbols merging with physical environment. Mercier and Camier's responses address a world which seems to be recovering from symbolized and signified entities. But unlike Estragon and Vladimir they are not completely seized by that world. On the contrary, they mark out that world's "complex territoriality" with their insignificant verbal production as they travel in it. Mercier and Camier's interaction with the world around them and with each other, even though it takes place in this supposedly vain mode, leads to enunciative capacities that manifest further affects which transfigure the characters. Their speech in this sense is not programmed or programmable in codes, even though they do make use of several reiterative sequences.

According to Barry, Beckett's construction of a new self, and perhaps also, a new form of speech, arises from a resonant theme of cultivation of memory, which consists of things "learned mechanically," of places, sounds, smells repeatedly revisited until they are inseminated into the self, but essentially having lost their

181

unique characteristics (2006, p. 74). This cultivation of memory by making what was once authentic automatic, also presents discordant frames of remembering through immediately complex affects. There are sometimes ruptures in such "mechanically learned" situations, in which no idioms or clichés can restore the banality of situation.

One such instance is when Mercier encounters his children, a boy and a girl, holding hands in front of him and calling him "Papa!" (p. 23). Mercier's response is brief and absurd: "Good evening my children . . . get along with you now" (p. 23). The scene's painting of a complex net of feelings prepares for one of the most violent pronouncements in the novel. As the children insist on staying there, Mercier's verbal violence gradually increases. "Be off with you" he cries, and when the children retreat only to turn back to him with begging eyes, Mercier loses his temper: "Fuck off out of here" (p. 23). This sudden and intensive response triggers subsequent ones in terms of the complex territoriality it evokes: children, fatherhood, rage, pathos, the threat of danger. In the next instance Mercier cries, and squashes the cake Camier has brought to him after scrutinizing it. The cake is no longer an object of desire once a danger is faced. The whole scene is a hysterical parade of emotions leading to Mercier's transformation: "There are days, said Mercier, one is born every minute. Then the world is full of shitty little Merciers" (p. 24). The encounter bears a potential danger for Mercier, and the children's desires are particularly difficult to economize as part of their casual conversation; they only prompt orders. As they leave, Mercier returns to his reflections: "They were perhaps not so much reflections as a dark torrent of brooding where past and future merged in a single flood and closed over a present for ever absent. Ah well" (p. 23). In the rest of the scene Mercier is indeed "transfigured" as he witnesses a car crashing a woman and

possibly killing her on the spot: "Ah, said Mercier, that's what I needed, I feel a new man already. He was in fact transfigured" (p. 25).

Encounters such as these open affective territorialities that cannot quite conform to the general order of small talk in the novel. When the complexity of the affect territory is this high, Mercier and Camier's extempore language is broken apart, it simply cannot reorganize itself around the limits it sets for itself. Within a network of disconnections, a language is formed that is able to exceed the limits of hearsay Mercier and Camier use. In other words, this ever-lasting tension between their somewhat tolerable circumstances replete with everyday objects and concerns and the "maleficent beings" they have to encounter every now and then allows language to reorganize itself around new existential territories, which the subjects themselves cannot fathom. There are thus certain times like this that something goes wrong in the flow of enunciations, and violence breaks out. The novel's language continually gives way to cuts, gaps, interruptions, and broodings such as these that result in a complete reference loss, a void. If habit of speech is a certain order that most Beckett characters perfect, the couple's direct encounters and intersections with affective fields violently interrupt the potential humor of the dialogues, and from them pour out inarticulate and unlocatable desires.

However, Mercier and Camier's encounters drive them forward. Even if they do not like argument, when necessary, these two will make their points clear to the degree that they may commit cold-blooded murders. Their murder of the constable who attempts to arrest them as they ask him the whereabouts of a brothel may indicate another gap in this economy. After Camier "clubbed the defenseless skull with all his might" (p. 76), they leave the scene of the incident towards empty narrow streets strewn with visual residues of the incident:

> On the edge of the square they were brought to a stand by the violence of the blast. Then slowly, head down, unsteadily, they pressed on through a tumult of shadow and clamour, stumbling on the cobbles strewn already with black boughs trailing grating before the wind or by little leaps and bounds as though on springs. On the far side debouched a narrow street the image of it they had just left. (p. 76-7)

A whole associative process is at work, endocranial in its image, triggering behavior, connecting resemblances, and conjoining the reverberations of this incident with the next episode where they encounter the grave in a boggy landscape.

If verbal interaction has no significance in terms of an ontological and epistemological security against chaos, madness and noise, the very gaps caused by it are arrested by complex territorialities that are carried on towards their limit in the novel. Thus, nothing is guaranteed in their communication except for these violent attacks to Mercier and Camier's seemingly ordinary language, intimating a territorial violence as well as verbal, physical, social and psychological.

Rather than remembering so-called truths and facts that can be expressed, Mercier and Camier socialize by remembering bits and pieces of certain uses, functions, implicit orders of language in which they come to reestablish their situation, reset their register or start over. The couple's angst-ridden idle talk equivocates desires in a way that transmits the after-effects of affective passages as mere blubbering; a jamming of affects. A transmission of communication that only orders a pseudo-consensus, this sort of idle talk is not pragmatic in the immediate sense, and while it records redundancy, it also passes over it. It is this sort of ambiguity that throws them into a completely different encounter with language, in which their concern with linguistic politeness and social codes is overused when they unknowingly infuriate the constable, which leads to the constable's murder. The novel's transmission of idle talk, or rather hearsay ultimately congeals ambiguous

184

impulses, those whims in the novel. Mercier and Camier's journey is thus "driven by a need now clear now obscure" (p. 3). This is a traversal of geography that reminds them, albeit vaguely, of things past, and invokes new tones, new ways of adapting to circumstances that test their endurance. Interacting with one another, as well as others, from paraphernalia to landscape, from moody men to constables becomes a constant labor in this idle universe.

Such territorial tracking of affects and moods is observed in the mode of relationship between another couple in Beckett's short prose work "Enough" [Assez]. This short piece brings into existence an eerie form of liaison. Written in 1965 in French, it recounts the odd relationship of a couple, their physical accompaniment of one another through the years. The genders are not strictly specified so they are either an old man and a woman, or an old and a young man. They are attached to one another in terms of yet another compulsion that dictates that they plod hand in hand in obvious physical anomalies across a vast unidentified geography. This heavy walk becomes a means of territorial measurement, and the history of their affair is determinable via geographical rather than temporal calculations: "His talk was seldom of geodesy. But we must have covered several times the equivalent of the terrestrial equator. At an average speed of roughly three miles per day and night" (Beckett, 1995, p. 188). This sort of arithmetic-bound relationship evokes Beckett's later preoccupation with calculation and numbers. It serves to extract from his prose a specific narrative temperament straddling melancholy and detachment. This short piece is one of the first evocations of spatiality as a determining condition for the weaving together of affects with calculations, tactility with geodesy in the oeuvre. As the couple's gloved hands that hold each other determine their sensual and physical proximity, their anatomical

situation requires a specifically difficult posture: "Bent double heads touching silent hand in hand" (p. 189). In this laborious position, the relationship grows.

"Enough" focuses on another Beckettian "pseudo-couple" having to abide by an obligation to be together. But what distinguishes this minutely calculated and carefully trodden quest is that it is driven by a subversive desire:

> I did all he desired. I desired it too. For him. Whenever he desired something so did I. He only had to say what thing. When he didn't desire anything neither did I. In this way I didn't live with desires. If he had desired something for me I would have desired it too. Happiness for example or fame. I only had the desires he manifested. But he must have manifested them all. All his desires and needs. When he was silent he must have been like me. When he told me to lick his penis I hastened to do so. I drew satisfaction from it. We must have had the same satisfactions. The same needs and the same satisfactions. (p. 186)

A regime of desires and internalized orders characterize this later relationship. However, unlike the relationship of Lucky to Pozzo, this is not a relationship of open submission. Here orders are neither questioned nor ambiguous. They are not blindly obeyed either. Rather, they are internalized, simulated within a sphere where desire becomes ubiquitous, belonging neither to the one nor to the other. This regime of desires is a regime of immanent manifestations which waiting can no longer mar. Beckett's turn from unknown obligation to manifested desires makes this couple's union particularly divorced from readable external signs that have come to serve as the over-pronounced laws of the couples' situation. On the contrary, their relationship is more like the matter-of-fact consequence of their merging desires. Desire does not require the inherent transcendent order that infects the statements of Hamm and Clov and Vladimir and Estragon. The oeuvre's transition from an order such as "Think, pig" towards "the same needs and same satisfactions" also attests to the futility of articulated orders in later Beckett.

The narrator speaks of his partner's, hence his, love of climbing. As he recounts the memory of their relationship it comes in geographical images of hills, mounds and flowers that have become part of the narartive's desire proliferation. What is appealing to one becomes appealing to the other, and the couple is united via a notion of calmness: "We were on the whole calm. More and more. All was. This notion of calm comes from him. Without him I would not have had it" (p. 192). The narrative temperament reconciles desires and imperatives to such an extent that they stem from the same source. The narrator explains that his partner's bowed posture with his trunk parallel to the ground is due to his desire for the earth. His taste for the flowers is explained via an anatomical imperative of not being able to stand straight. However, causes and effects are not clear: "To what this taste was due I cannot say. To love of the earth and the flowers' thousand scents and hues. Or to cruder imperatives of an anatomical order. He never raised the question" (p. 190). In either case, the question is redundant because external imperatives are potentially inscribed as internal desires in the subjects.

If there is a hierarchical relationship between the couple, its orders are uncomplicated. They become rather practical; they are in fact the couple's means of of survival. It is thus effortless to break away from this coupling by following through with the orders:

> One day he told me to leave him. It's the verb he used. He must have been on his last legs. I don't know if by that he meant to leave him for good or only to step aside a moment. I never asked myself the question. I never asked myself any questions but his. Whatever it was he meant I made off without looking back. Gone from reach of his voice I was gone from his life. (p. 186-7)

If the worlds of *Mercier and Camier* and *Godot* consist in asking questions about what cannot be fathomed or what is too obvious, in "Enough" questions no longer serve the couple any understanding of their relation. The violence that the partner's

presence creates is visible at times, but even the subtle suggestion of domination is overshadowed by a sense of convenience that the narrator seems to wield to his own benefit. "His" questions are also always "my" questions, and this implicates a possibility of overturning domination in this relationship. Beckett makes the idea of mimicking someone else's orders and desires so central to the relationship that although the couple share a life, that shared life can be arrived at via a necessary reinscription of orders in desires. It is the narrator that makes, or rather fabricates, the desires of his partner, since the readers cannot but rely on him. Even as the narrator complies with the orders of his partner, by repeating his orders he creates his own orders that transform the so-called power relations in this relationship. It is as if life is understood in two modes, so in fact there is no real desire but an unremitting appropriation of an impersonal desire to loiter together.

"Enough" and *Mercier and Camier* demonstrate two attitudes to couples and their interaction in Beckett's oeuvre that are connected through curious links. The portrayal of a social, emotional, psychological relationship in "Enough" advances upon the parameters laid out in the early forms of interaction. Orders and desires merge in a language that merely recounts events in a rather detached manner. Not only do the questions disappear, but a specific kind of questioning that regulated the rhythms of the early texts is altogether discarded. "Enough" shows the void of desires, shows that the bog no longer triggers empty talk and marks an affective topology. But it also discredits the narrative order of theatricality, network of representations, and the idleness of dialogues. There is once again the sense of territory as a real, material element that produces the vicissitudes of a relationship. The physical act of walking in a rough landscape correlates to a physically and mentally laborious activity of being with another. However, from the couple's

traversal of geography, a whole new territory is conjured, calculated in terms of footprints. This is the only type of memory and history that a relationship can have; precise, estimated but repeatable and tedious. Their circling journey leads to habits that are unquestioned. Separation is not a source of anxiety. Sociability is associated with habit and labor rather than obligation. For the narrator of "Enough" submitting to a regime of simulated desires and internalized orders in social relations is enough. The title itself is an order that is pronounced by the narrator, indicated by his resolute act as well as a state of social and sexual satisfaction. Even if it is tinged with nostalgia, the general situation seems too imprecise to be properly recounted. Thus, attention is turned to material details. This apathetic regime of calculable desires leads to several pathways in Beckettian interaction that invests in a desire for calculation in later prose. In Beckett's later social sites, territory is no longer an amalgam of verbal, physical, psychological impressions of a landscape slowly and laboriously trodden, but it becomes an emergent geometric space obsessed with measuring itself.

4.5 "What Where" and the transmission of communication

Thus, Beckett's affective territorialities also become consistent with a quality of measurement that can easily eschew memory, complex temporalizations, and feelings, and instead promote memorizations, timings and repetitions. Salisbury argues that throughout Beckett's work, the "exploration of the passage of affects that are shaped by cognition and molded by the demands of the material body is marked by a repeated, compulsive quality" (2012, p. 27). Such mark of repetition makes Beckett's exploration of life necessarily subject to a reinscription that comes to

189

calibrate the intensity of the situations that are faced with. But this is not only in terms of rituals, recursive language patterns, habitual speech and rhythmic dialogue, shortly, methods for evading terrorizing feelings. More importantly Beckett's characters learn to live in repetitive series enmeshed into the workings of their memory, and the later dialogues are formed and modified by these repetitive compulsions to which they subject themselves.

Mercier and Camier's futile dialogues prolong the effects of the encounters and re-invent time as a circular repeatability, but they fail to corporealize this new time. Futile dialogues and redundant speech allow the characters to circumnavigate their complex feelings; half memory, half dream, both absurd and horrifying, with gaps and disjunctions. In Beckett's later writing, transmission of speech delineates the limits of time and space. It is explored less as a series of orders pointing to a transcendent determiner or a whimsical mask for dubious thoughts than as a field of repetition that serves to report a supposed reality. In Beckett's late drama, the evocation of memory is a means to materialize time and space in repetitive sequences like residual motifs, and idle dialogues no longer serve such materialization. Beckett's program of repetitive dialogue, gesture and movement can be seen in some of his work for television and stage, and in such pieces like "Come and Go," "Ohio Impromptu," "What Where" this program is juxtaposed against instructions, self-explanations and orders. In fact it is replete with what can be named material forms of communication, from gestures and postures, movement and bodily signs to repetitive verbal structures.[84] Even when Beckett draws upon the quick-fire form in later drama, he treats language as a specific apparatus for limitations, repetitions and timings. This turn from repeatability to material repetition yields aesthetically fruitful

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[84] For more on the analysis of gestural forms, see Borriello, 2001, Woycicki, 2012, Jones 2013, Brits, 2017.

results while pointing towards a simultaneous politicization and de-politicization of writing in "What Where."

In the short play "What Where" published in 1984, a speaker gives instructions to the faces that appear and disappear, asking them to share their reports of an interrogation. Beckett's disbelief of a notion of communication aside, the play communicates a redundant amount of words while repeatedly presenting the same scenarios. In the play a voice (V) opens and closes the scenes, where he respectively interrogates the figures Bom, Bim and Bem. The voice itself is the fourth figure, Bam, who is carrying out the interrogations. The figures are interrogated by Bam's voice (V) about whether they have been successful in forcing an unknown victim to talk. The play introduces a circle of interrogators that come to interrogate the next in line, with each becoming an interrogator and an interrogatee respectively. The interrogators demand reports of torture on an absent victim from the interrogatees until they confess. Bam demands certain key questions such as whether someone said something, what and where they said it. The demanded piece of information is slightly different each time the interrogation is cut short by Bam. Bam reconstructs the question and answer form each time he is not pleased with the structure of the question. For instance, "And he didn't say anything?" becomes "He didn't say it?" (Beckett, 2006, p. 312). The repetitiousness of the play is quite similar to many other series in the oeuvre. As the figures report their interrogations of victims, which include procedures of torture in order to make the victim "confess," the voice is never convinced that the interrogators are speaking the truth. He demands that the interrogators confess what they have been confessed to.[85]

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[85] James Olney (1998) finds a specific link between Beckett's late prose, which is as much about the act of narration as about the retrieval of memory and Augustine's *Confessions*. In both works, narration is a "single activity of dual dynamic," in which to record is to confess, to recall is to narrate:

McTighe sees a "tension between recalcitrant bodies and dominant textual prescriptions" in the play (2013, p. 114). Herren associates the play with "Rough for Radio II" and argues that "both the interrogators and the suspects remain equally oblivious to the hidden motives that bind them together" (2007, p. 185). Like the earlier forms of obligation, the tension of the unknown defines the interrogation sequences:

> BAM: He wept.
> BOM: Yes.
> BAM: Begged for mercy?
> BOM: Yes.
> BAM: But didn't say it?
> BOM: No.
> BAM: Then why stop?
> BOM: He passed out.
> BAM: And you didn't revive him.
> BOM: I tried.
> BAM: Well?
> BOM: I couldn't.
> [*Pause.*]
> BAM: It's a lie. [*Pause.*] He said it to you. [*Pause.*] Confess he said it to you. [*Pause.*] You'll be given the works until you confess. (p. 313)

Beckett's play inscribes orders, but this time requires them to be in the format of reports. These new orders of writing specifically involve the event of confession. This event engrafts into the mindscape of the play a desire for continual transmission of information, of what and where. The situation is somewhat definite: "We are the last five. In the present as were we still. It is spring. Time passes" (p. 310). However, this does not suffice to answer these two basic questions. Time is not characterized

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"Augustine, like Beckett, tells the story of himself telling the story of himself telling the story of his life" (p. 5,8).

by change, and yet it passes in terms of an idea of travel. Although not physical, this passing of time is given through V's indication of seasons at the beginning of each interrogation. Despite the passing of time, the situation remains stuck, and the change of seasons occurs as a recurrent rewinding of the same situation. The implication is that the narrator keeps returning back to the same point in time although seasons change. As the voice begins with these four shadow beings and ends alone, in winter "without journey," he seems to stage the anxiety of separation, which for Mercier and Camier, is always an ambiguous territory.[86] Being without journey indicates physical and mental stagnation. Although time passes, the voice's fixation with the diagram of torture and confession, works and information, labor and transmission of knowledge, delimits an idea of time dependent upon movement within a strictly limited space. The value of time is dependent upon the pace of information, the efficacy of the interrogation.

If this is the memory of a psychological/physical torture that the self makes an effort to remember in terms of the fabricated figures of Bim, Bem and Bom, this effort lies within the framework of a certain form of communication. The voice forces upon itself a process of confession which serves to compress cognitive processes to mere echoes and repetitions. This is common to some stage pieces such as *The Ghost Trio* where dramatic structure is established in order to ascribe different roles to a process of remembering. The romantic idea of journey, and more specifically "reverie," echoes in this late piece as a failed form of physical and

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[86] Beckett's reference to journey here is evoked through his interest in Schubert, particularly the song cycle *Die Winterreise* according to Herren (2007, p. 183). Being without journey, both physically and psychologically, makes this circulatory event of communication meaningless and non-transformational. It creates a strictly non-Romantic sense of time. In Schubert's song cycle the forlorn lover reimagines his sorrows, making for himself a memory book with which to reconstruct his past via the present images he encounters in new landscapes, and in the end finds some form of a company in the image of "Der Leiermann." In "What Where" if the voice aspires to bring back an old memory of torture, or self-torture, this bringing back always precludes an access to the so-called original confession, it ends up being the repetition of repetition rather than the memory of the authentic.

psychological quest. According to Gumpert "the *reverie* is at once a mode of cognition and a form of discourse: one in which the self is reflecting upon itself" (2012, p. 219). It takes place in the promenade of someone like Rousseau, which, Gumpert claims, "offers a structure, a pattern of repetition and regularity that offers Rousseau some measure of solace…" (p. 219). The piece plays with that idea of solace through confession by traversing a time and a place "without journey" (Beckett, 2006, p. 316). Beckett's self-interrogation subverts the romantic idea of peregrination. That very romantic solace is absent in Beckett's work, although the piece does offer a pattern through which a form of cognition emerges as a form of discourse. The repeated obligation to remember and the punishment that comes afterwards make Beckett's self-interrogation aimless, and if this is a form of memory, it creates obsessional forms rather than a discharge of feelings.

If there is in Beckett's late prose and drama a strong confrontation between artistic and psychological processes, it is also a power trial, probing writing's capacity of self-interrogation for creativity. But this is a subversive self-interrogation, whose results are as if known in advance, and Beckett's language experiments with the in-advance aspect. As it becomes clear in the text, interrogation does not serve a purpose, external or internal, but it rearranges the limits of an obsessional ritualization. It is in this sense that forms of communication serve as passages to punctilious realms from cognitive ones that evoke psychological torture. Time passes insofar as the confessional cycle operates. This very operation makes time and narrative inoperative. In the end, the passing of time is presented as a form of disintegration because no sense of truth is reached at in the end: "Make sense who may" (p. 316).

What makes Beckett's engagement with confession interesting is that the paranoid voice implies that all the hypothetical confessions are, or have to be, the confession of a confession, that is, the confession of an act of communication, the transmission of what is heard rather than the revelation of a secret or truth. The paranoid voice's corrections to his demands make the confessions referentially complex without an actual referent:

> BAM: Take him away and give him the works until he confesses.
>
> BIM: What must he confess?
>
> BAM: That he said it to him.
>
> BIM: Is that all?
>
> BAM: Yes.
>
> V: Not good.
>
> I start again.
>
> BAM: Take him away and give him the works until he confesses.
>
> BIM: What must he confess?
>
> BAM: That he said it to him.
>
> BIM: Is that all?
>
> BAM: And what.
>
> V: Good. (p. 313)

Unsatisfied with the interrogators, the voice appoints each new interrogator with a further task. In this circular plane Beckett's language evokes an order of commands and submissions that seem to distribute positions of power. Rather than V representing power, however, an elusive force of power circulates their language and dictates a specifically grammatical mode of communication: reported speech. This is a universe where reports overwhelm the real. What requires to be reported is always secondary to the event of reporting. It is purely transmitted as a mode of grammar. Uhlmann finds a link between Deleuze and Guattari's idea of language as "the

transmission of what has been said" and the play's "logic of torture" (2015, p. 33): "The group, in *What Where*, is united by the logic that compels torture. So too, this occurs not through having witnessed, but having found out from the other, what the other has seen" (p. 33). If language itself is an implicit order carrying power markers in the modes of grammaticality it exerts according to Deleuze and Guattari, the play's grammatical mode of reporting demonstrates its power by coupling itself with an act of confession. But in Beckett, this pseudo-power fails to instill a sense of submission in the bodies that it deals with. Although it can be said to continually recharge its power by pressuring the interrogatees, it is an elusive power which fanatically inscribes without really expecting consequences. In Uhlmann's words, in the play "order fails on its own terms" (p. 34).

Memory plays a particularly central role in this operation, offering itself as the experimentational site that determines the changing thresholds between orders and slips, language and affects, the voluntary and the involuntary, and most importantly, the disciplines and the "indisciplines." The repetitive marks that run over Beckett's memories of deep truths, the external yet vain orders of forcing one to confess, in other words, what seem to be the very disciplines within and attached to language end up becoming useless. The very notion of discipline as is used by Foucault in most of his work, particularly in relation to writing applies to Beckett's event of self-writing in ambiguous ways. The emphasis on confessions, subversively evoking Rousseauesque sentiments, is not unrelated to a politically self-engrained desire to confess, which according to Foucault, is a specifically modern phenomenon (1978, p. 60). But the play's confessional mode brings about an event of non-confession, and this is the determining point of the play. It is then not only a matter of what is being confessed where, but the infinitesimal number of times the operation

could go on in a timeless universe, without story, "without journey." On occasions like these, Beckett's writing evokes contemporary philosophical questions, but shows thought's potential to revisit itself as a cliché by repeatedly overemphasizing that thought in distilled forms. It not only investigates itself, invites interrogation and inscribes a life through orders, but systematically denies itself such investigation, making out of itself an error. Foucault calls the "internal ruse of confession" the effect engrained within ourselves rather than coming from outside (p. 60). Beckett plays with this ruse systematically in "What Where" as a repetitive series that renders possible an interaction not only between limit and transgression but between discipline and indiscipline. The demand for confession is so over-articulated that it ends up breaking away from its subjects, causes and results. This demand is not only a form of self-discipline, but it is simultaneously an indiscipline because the over-articulation of this precise demand makes possible an event of non-confession. The stage event becomes a form of perversion dominated by an almost neurotic force: "Confess."

This ritualized form of self-discipline becomes the only sense of company. It is perhaps in this sense that Beckett's forms of self-discipline and self-interrogation remain accompanying song-cycles, which, while leaving the voice without journey, simultaneously produce background motifs for its expressivity. There is a stimulating relationship between the disciplining aspects of Beckett's language and their potentials for repetition. The very means that put Beckett's writing under scrutiny so as to retrieve textual traces of memory, truth and comprehension emerge as repeatable disciplining acts that come to disembody the very disciplines they establish.

If the kinds of limits, commands and enforcements determine the models of relationship in *Godot*, in "What Where" the loss of original reference and loss of time instigate verbal interaction that seeks to retrieve back a memory of torture and secrets, but simply as the transmission of communication. These communicational sites are not clamored or multivocal like the so-called voices, but rather program writing vis-à-vis protocols. If interaction is physical labor and habit in "Enough," in "What Where" it is the spatialization and materialization of verbal labor in a time irreversibly lost. There are timings and repetitions rather than journeys. The confessional moment is always passed over in the report, either not remembered or held back. This movement of questioning and reporting so-called confessions becomes so obsessively ritualistic that it fails to authenticate writing as a site of efficacy in terms of its own capacity to report and transmit. If the task of reporting is to bring back scenes, the possibility of accessing *a* truth, assuming this is indeed what the voice is seeking, is forever blocked as the voice merely obsesses about a protocol of confession.

This reading has analyzed Beckett's expression of social and verbal interaction in order to explore the communicational quality of his language in terms of orders, routines and rituals. I have suggested that his staging of communications fashions a peculiarly theatrical language that serves to review problems of indivisibility, indifference and confusion, and broach questions of regimes, orders and programs. If Beckett's language of fiction is occasioned by a narrative condition which reveals passages between confusion and authority, meaning and abstraction, affective and self-interrogative fields, meaningless repetition and resonance, his language in the theater further explores extra-textual questions by creating blatant images of domination and subordination, passivity and resistance. Beckett's

contrastive examples within and across texts resist the codable programs promoted by his work, and point towards a more complicated picture than it seems at first. The different manifestations and modes of verbal interaction across the oeuvre demonstrate that Beckett continually reworks his theatrical language to explore its links not only to representation but also to visuality, rhythm, timing and repetition as is the case in his late work for stage.

While Beckett's writing propagates reticent voices, uncommunicative, futile relationships, and challenges any standard notion of communication, it displays an array of communicational events through voices, dialogues, linguistic orders that intersect with affects, desires, modes of relationship, modes of speech, and grammaticality. There are parallels between the types of verbal interaction encountered in prose and drama, and these types, regimes, forms and frameworks create points of contact across the oeuvre. Beckett's conversational forms engender sites of confrontation among narrative, linguistic, textual regimes and involve political, disciplinary, critical implications as his work across different genres communicates around a problem of social interaction.

CHAPTER 5

BECKETT'S VERBAL-VISUAL WORLD: SIGNS AND IMAGES

As I have argued so far, Beckett's writing demonstrates several ways of conformity to and divergence from the textual norms and orders created and voiced by the narrators. It both convolutes and imbricates conceptual divisions as they are incorporated into the work. In the long plays, it invests in speech regimes that modify the kinds of social, political and aesthetic orders embedded within that language. My reading focuses on these shifting circumstances that instigate Beckett's writing of fiction and drama and serve to lay bare certain functional relations between different genres and time periods. Accordingly, narrative injunctions are reconfigured in terms of bodily feelings that resonate with articulation in *The Unnamable* and literal and implicit orders that define realities in *Godot.* A particularly significant revision of the imperative mode takes place in the short prose written in the sixties. Notwithstanding Beckett's minimalist language in these works, my reading of them will focus on their capacity for the production of sign networks via the form of the imperative. Beckett's unconventional narration reaches its apogee with his program for imagination, signs and bodies in the short prose from the sixties.

Beckett's short prose from the sixties describes situations of interaction which are created in terms of more immediate sensible and physical stimuli, and these are conveyed through a strictly descriptive and/or prescriptive language. What bodies do to each other, what they activate in one another, how a closed universe works, how physical elements of heat, temperature and light interact in systems of transition determine these radical narrative spaces. There is in the short prose an investment in such systems and orders, which serves to describe in detail imaginary social sites. In

these types of social sites there are interactions between figures/points/bodies as opposed to those between the subjects that act them out. Overall, how these physical traits, codes and signs can be narratable determines these later worlds. This difficulty in itself puts Beckett's much discussed minimalism in question. One could speak of a link between the televisual sign environment of later plays like *The Ghost Trio* and the sixties texts in regard to their continuous concern for materializing the abstract space of imagination by inscribing networks of signs both on page and on stage. Particularly when he resorts to the use of technological mediation, Beckett abandons the contentious textual site of the writing-speaking voice, and works with effects like the voiceover. This later feature of the descriptive effect remains part and parcel of Beckett's narrative and stage events and it arranges Beckett's webs of relations in signs and codes. It could thus be argued that the concern for the material continued to stimulate Beckett's thought.[87]

The depiction of gestures, mimics and movement in the closed spaces of Beckett's short prose from the sixties indicates a broader engagement with semiotic and communicational environments in the oeuvre. In this chapter I draw attention to this type of an abstract semiotic environment that is produced strangely by materializing cognitive processes through repetition, movement, gesture and posture, despite the ongoing effects of instructions and orders that enable the writing of these works. As Connor argues, Beckett's is "an imagination that performs the traditional duty of taking us beyond the merely given or present at hand but does so in ways that seem designed to keep us on terms with its materiality, even as that materiality is

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[87] I think that Beckett's televisual plays like *The Ghost Trio* and *Nacht und Träume*, and the sixties texts are connected in terms of the ways in which they implement networks of signs to create spaces that overlay mental and physical procedures, memory, imagination and ritual in most interesting ways although they are unrelated in most respects. Technological sidestepping is another aspect of Beckett's communicational program; however, the texts of the teleplays can be considered written forms of instruction for performance purposes rather than stable narratives, and thus digress from the purposes of this chapter.

itself something still to be imagined" (2014, p. 8). In order to refer to the more

intricate layers of a minimal aesthetic environment in Beckett's work, this chapter

will make use of an idea of *asignifying signs* put forth by Deleuze and Guattari, and

Peirce's divisions of signs.

In *Lines of Flight*, Guattari claims that a signifying regime is a regime of

forms in conformity with orders, which overpowers what are in fact semiotic chains

that are not naturally connected to a master signifier, but produce further chains in

contradistinction to one another. For Guattari, what this means is that the production

of any semiotic plane simply demonstrates infinitesimal possibilities of conjunction

rather than refer to a constant. He writes:

> In effect we consider that every kind of assemblage brings about the
> concatenation of semiotic chains *that are fundamentally different from one
> another* and which at the outset function not as a signifying discourse but as
> so many machines of a-signifying signs. What one is dealing with at the heart
> of productive processes and social groups are always semiotic procedures,
> regimes of signs for which it is absurd to want to propose master keys. One
> never encounters the 'signifier' in general: 'on the ground' one is always
> confronted with semiotic compositions mixing genres, mixtures,
> constellations, that are open to a possibility that cannot be calculated in terms
> of structure, what we call a machinic creativity. (2011, p. 7)[88]

This very procedure implicates most of the semiotic operations in Beckett that at the

outset produce and activate chains that overlap and concatenate. In fact Beckett

materializes such procedures on stage by displaying chains of gesture and discourse.

Such instances include discursive procedures connecting to gestural ones such as the

social behavior of rumor and hand holding in "Come and Go," signs of the body

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[88] For Guattari, escape from predominantly signifying regimes is not a matter of individual choice or
solely the product of deliberate artistic decisions. The signifying regime is sustained by way of the
self-verifying forms, the self-evident turn-ups of what were once new. Signification occurs when
forms capture unformed content. Guattari asserts that "the signifier is [not] just an error made by
linguists and structuralist psychoanalysts, it is also something that lives in everyday existence, that
subjects us to the conviction that somewhere there exists a universal referent, that the world, society,
the individual and the laws that rule over them [not to mention works of art] are structured according
to a necessary order, that they have a profound meaning" (p. 7).

overlapping lighting arrangements in "Imagination Dead Imagine," physical codes like the knock overlapping processes of remembering and narrating in "Ohio Impromptu." In this regard, in my reading, I focus on the particular ways in which the varying functional relations between imaginary or actual elements are articulated so that they create several semiotic chains from which it is difficult to extract master keys. There is an order of imagination that inscribes textual and performative codes among the more free-floating images and signs that build these environments. These two modes of the imperative and the liberated appear in my reading as the two series that enable the coming into being of semiotic chains that overlap.

While it is true that Beckett's language becomes more and more minimalistic towards the later pieces, it also becomes more and more immersed in this kind of semiosis with rigid programs for sign interaction rather than for meaning. Beckett's later communicational situations exploit initially or potentially asignifying signs within tentative paradigms for imagination, creation and communication. This chapter will problematize the potentially asignifying capacity of signs, an idea put forward by Guattari and Deleuze and Guattari, in the formation of realities ordered by descriptors, voiceovers or dominant thematic cues. While these situations involve a series of signs which lack immediate content and context for interpretation, they are also connected to textual orders in the forms of coordinates, codes, and imperatives that formulate artistic requirements which are different from earlier ones. In Beckett's attempt to eliminate language in the texts written after 1960, it is such requirements that strengthen the work's ties with the idea of writing. Such tension becomes more and more obvious as Beckett's work deals in semiotic processes with signifying or a-signifying end-results, since in his work, where this type of

confrontation is made possible, there also persist overt or covert orders of deciphering.

The first section of this chapter will give a brief account of Deleuze's idea of the image in order to rethink it in connection to the principle of imagination Beckett makes extensive use of in the short texts "All Strange Away" and "Imagination Dead Imagine." As I will suggest, Beckett's images from this period, digress from Deleuze's understanding of the image in Beckett in that they invest less in potential energies dissipating through the image than in formal, functional, serial, permutational relations between elements that act like signs. These images are made up of a series of signs of different function and origin, situated at the threshold between modes of sensibility and intelligibility, which activate more operational than meaningful and/or potential relations.

In the second section I will argue that Beckett's conception of images from this period presupposes specific conditions related to the mode of writing and thinking. They are based on an imperative to imagine. The imperative to imagine allows Beckett's texts to provide prescriptive and descriptive accounts of reality and to bring into existence conceptually challenging images. While Beckett creates tentative forms of sociality in undetermined spaces, he creates diagrammatic sketches of the activities and relations that appear in these worlds. However, Beckett's writing fails to be solely diagrammatic in a Peircean sense, it fails to openly demonstrate logical relations and how they function in a given system. It is also not solely image-oriented in the sense that Deleuze speaks of Beckett's language. Rather Beckett works with the limit between the visual and the verbal, and articulates apparently representable forms of relation in their complexity.

In the last section, I will turn to Beckett's sign environments in his sixties short prose, with particular attention to "All Strange Away" and "Imagination Dead Imagine" to look into the kinds of relations constructed through signs to make an image. The section will focus on Beckett's articulation of possible qualities in these texts and analyze them in terms of Peirce's idea of *Firstness*. As enduring signs that potentially qualify these undetermined universes, Beckett's recurrent use of "whiteness" appears as a *qualisign* although it does digress from the kind of meaning Peirce attaches to the term. As I will argue, this site of Firstness also conditions acts of imagining, prescribing and writing; therefore motivating a series of marks and signs that appear from it. These signs, as I will maintain, are related to the quality of Beckett's visual spaces as instances of Peircean Firstness, that is, impressions and sensations that express nothing more than a non-actualized, non-human possibility. However, Beckett's language also turns them into repetitious expressions that come to identify these worlds in abstract forms. I will further argue that Beckett's implementation of color qualities such as whiteness generates a sense of indifference, not completely different from the one discussed in the second chapter. Mental space is expressed through this not-yet-named, always possible sensation.

As I will also argue, these environments are not completely divorced from the verbal order. They create a program for action that depends on the repetition of familiar signs and codes. However, this program of signs also serves to liberate the texts from a meaning that could be representable by denying the readers possibilities for synthesis. The reading of Beckett's material mindscapes in terms of the repetitive, material, gestural signs they emit may shed light upon a process of semiosis we find in the creative act in Beckett's work. The prescriptive quality of language is significant to Beckett's narrative environment in the sixties, particularly

in regard to discussions on the connection between the visual and the verbal in Beckett.[89] In my reading, I point towards a discussion of Beckett's language in terms of its capacity to compose complex and changing relations. Language attempts to materialize the movements of thought in strictly measured configurations of shape and posture that stimulate the mind's capacities to visualize. I will thus argue that the verbal and the visual forms of thought continually affect each other within the dynamic between the cognitive and the physical.

5.1 Images, spaces, sociality: Beckett's short prose from the sixties

Beckett's short prose from the sixties perhaps has far more defining characteristics than his other work. An initial quality that this reading will focus on is an idea of arrangement. In "Farewell to Incompetence" Abbott addresses what he calls a "significant change" in Beckett's oeuvre, represented by *How It Is* and "Imagination Dead Imagine." He writes:

> Since the impasse of the 1950s Beckett has bound himself to competence – to the mind's ordering –without giving up his original goal of trying to capture how it is. The search is for that arrangement of matter which is both ordered and representative of how it is. (1970, p. 45)

While a principle of incompetence may find its substance in Beckett's famously tottering worlds, his subscription to something like competence can be found in the strict geometrization of the undetermined worlds of his short prose after the sixties. These worlds are as much matter-oriented as they are mathematically configured and bound to virtual points.

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[89] A recent example of criticism problematizes this connection in relation to the reconsideration of limits in "Imagination Dead Imagine" by focusing on Beckett, Wittgenstein, Blanchot and Bataille: " . . . the limits of the thinkable are unthinkable just as the limits of the visual field are invisible" (Lawrence, 2018, p. 191).

Indeed in the sixties, Beckett's worlds are gradually reduced to geometric spaces like circles and rotundas occupied by bodies with inhuman types of behavior.[90] A short passage from "Imagination Dead Imagine" will be able to hint at the kinds of worlds described:

> Islands, waters, azure, verdure, one glimpse and vanished, endlessly, omit. Till all white in the whiteness the rotunda. No way in, go in, measure. Diameter three feet, three feet from ground to summit of the vault. Two diameters at right angles AB CD divide the white ground into two semicircles ACB BDA. Lying on the ground two white bodies each in its semicircle. White too the vault and the round wall eighteen inches high from which it springs. (Beckett, 1995, p. 182)

Language is concerned with the construction of spaces by attributing to them changing shapes and forms through descriptive or prescriptive modes. In texts like "All Strange Away," "Imagination Dead Imagination" and "Ping" the qualities of Beckett's writing matter are cited as white, black, hot and cold, and although they do determine these worlds, the question of what kind of symbolic, representational or definitional significance they have nonetheless remains unresolved. The main narrative gesture appears to be purely observational: "The light that makes all so white no visible source, all shines with the same white shine, ground, wall, vault, bodies, no shadow" (p. 182). Descriptions of physical phenomena abound in these texts, and "freezing points," "mud and lava" always require an instantaneous encapsulation in walls, shapes and coordinates, suggesting psychological imprisonment, and literally defining a form of existence stripped down to the interchange between opposite physical states. [91]

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[90] For more on Beckett's scrupulous attention to arithmetic and geometry, see Ackerley 2013.

[91] It is interesting to note that Beckett's turn to geometric spaces populated by beings who are described with the utmost sense of precision, and whose lives are reduced to the most basic forms demonstrates a materialistic approach to the metaphysical questions with which he is preoccupied during his lifetime. As some critics agree, his fiction in the aftermath of *How It Is* introduces a new version of imagination that addresses what could be summarized by a latent metaphysical concern with the void. Paul Davies directly takes issue with such critical enterprises: "Modernist orthodoxy

But could this type of arrangement yield an image which represents "how it is"? The verbal representation of matter, or creating an imaginary space through the verbal for the mind's eye enables one to refer to these texts as instances of ekphrasis. However, even that is debatable because there seems to be no relation of resemblance or referentiality between Beckett's so-called figurative spaces and the mind that imagines. If this type of topological surveying becomes a concern in these texts, it seems rather antithetical to the early/simultaneous senses of the real as buzzing that relentlessly create cluttered environments. Despite this apparent opposition though, the strict arrangement of matter in these worlds fails to conduce ideas that represent and elucidate what such worlds may stand for. In such ways Beckett's expression strives to fold and stratify, tighten and compress what is otherwise unregimented. This type of disjunction between the description of observable qualities of matter and space, and their ultimately unrepresentable idea will be the main point of focus in this reading.

Just as the arrangement of physical conditions determines these worlds, so does that of social groups and human bodies. Beckett implements rather radical literary formulas for the expression of sociality in the strange spaces he constructs. For Žukauskaitė and Wilmer, Beckett deals with a "virtual sociality" in texts like "The Lost Ones" (2015, p. 11). Ackerley and Gontarski refer to Beckett's "vignettes of stillness or barely perceptible movement, the breathing of a body or the trembling of a hand" and they describe them as "exercises in human origami" (2004, p. 92). Such exercise informs the ways in which questions of contact, non-relation,

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notwithstanding, it is by no means a gain for a work of art that it should trace the difficulty involved in making it. Insofar as that tracing is visible in Beckett's sixties texts, it is a failure rather than the success which many critics are determined to account it. Moreover, *how* it "becomes" synonymous with expressing being in the void is not made clear, and what the void is does not receive any explanation either. It is a doomed enterprise to try to make the lack expressed in these texts into a virtue" (1994, p. 132).

population and communication can be conceivable in closed spaces. Murphy's take on the problem of sociality focuses on the later staging of "collective relations," which he argues is distinct from his "intersubjective relations" (2015, p. 111). As I will try to show in this chapter, how such collectivities operate is as much an issue as the ways in which they can be formed.

A final and perhaps most important characteristic of these pieces is their dependence on the image. One problem that this idea of the image brings forth is its link to the verbal in Beckett. At this point, it should be stated that the rhetorical trope of *enargeia* provides an initial framework within which these works can be read.[92] Even then, however, "to vividly describe an object with words" one must assume in the verbal arts a relation of referentiality between arbitrary/conventional signs of language and reality (Krieger, 1992, p. 68). When Krieger cites the Platonic argument in *The Republic* that the mimetic arts possess a dangerous power, he makes a pivotal claim. While the Platonic argument is against imitation both in dramatic and verbal representation, verbal representation in narrative or poetry poses a greater challenge. Since between the visual and the verbal, there is a difference of sensory regime, vivid description in the verbal arts depends less on a direct relation between matter and symbol, the "original" and the "illusionary." Rather, "imitation" relies "not on a natural-sign relation between an illusionary visual equivalent and its original, but on the one-to-one-ness of the referential relation between a thing and its representation" (p. 68).

As I will attempt to make it clear, that relation seems quite problematic, to say the least, in Beckett's utterly foreign worlds where signs appear to have natural

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[92] Krieger defines enargeia as "[t]he capacity of words to describe with a vividness that, in effect, reproduces an object before our very eyes (i.e., before the eyes of the mind)" (1992, 68).

rather than arbitrary functions. This is partly because in these texts the object appears through a verbal representation which makes conventional signs isolated from a referential context so as to submerse them in more immediate stimulus relations. First of all, there is no syntax that is based on proper grammar. Although a scene is more or less described, the images are more free-standing than formative. The prescriber in "Ping" observes a space: "All known all white bare white body fixed one yard legs joined like sewn. Light heat white floor one square yard never seen. White walls one yard by two white ceiling one square yard never seen" (Beckett, 1995, p. 193). Rather than qualifying the scene as the example of an idea, these pieces of information create an accumulation of figures and visions. The image of the space is given in fragmental, serial perspectives that involve several relations and qualities simultaneously rather than referring to a whole. If "image" can be applied to poetry as "an unacknowledged metaphor or empty analogy," the "image" in the verbal arts requires a transformation that turns it into a convention (Krieger, 1992, p. 71). As Krieger points out, "[w]ith signs in the verbal arts, there is no *im*mediacy of movement from physical stimulus to mental image such as a natural-sign art like painting permits" (p. 72).

In the quoted lines from "Ping" nothing is visible. In fact if we rely on the broken grammar of the prescriber, they are "never seen." Although the text vividly describes an image, the so-called "original" of the image remains utterly undetermined, it resembles no particular thing. This makes these texts' project of the elimination of imagination much more conspicuous. The impossible imperative is to create an image of the thing that is "never seen" in the mind's eye. What creates the image then? If painting allows a direct link between stimulus and response, through the natural, self-evident sign, these less than definite traits in "Ping" serve neither as

natural nor arbitrary. They are not natural in the sense that they do not physically put before our eyes the image of a real thing, nor are they arbitrary since their verbal representation starts from the paradoxical claim that there is nothing to be seen in the first place that may allow the artist to imitate. While the text deals with what it describes in terms of the more "immediate" signs that stimulate an image of a bare white body in a whiteness, those signs are created in the context of compulsive reproduction rather than through a process of imagining. What I mean by this is that the inscription of signs of different fields of sensibility such as sensations, cognitive stimulants, physical symptoms and qualities without objects becomes possible by a consciousness that exercises a technical capacity to reorganize them. The posture of the white body in the whiteness is continually repeated in the text. I think in these senses, Beckett's texts from this period lose their connection to any idea of organicity or organism. In fact Beckett invents a mindscape that appears both as material and abstract, a space with figures but with no form of the figurative. It is this type of contradiction that makes Beckett's literary act non-literary according to some critics.[93]

If verbal representation does not suffice to illuminate Beckett's texts in terms of their natural or arbitrary signs, how could one approach the overwhelming power of visualization in these texts? Beckett's late work is analyzed by way of a critical theme which has become all the more important with Deleuze's study on Beckett's types of language corresponding to the three phases of his writing. In Deleuze's theorization, Beckett's language III is the language of "images," and it "can bring together words and voices in images, but in accordance with a special combination"

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[93] Cixous, in *Zero's Neighbour* speaks of Beckett's literary practice in terms of the formulas, "No literature!" and "less and less literature" (2007, p. 61). For Casanova, Beckett "fought against literary academicism by producing an anti-literary literature" (2006, p. 105). In a similar sense, for Addyman Beckett "enacts" the impossibility he refers to in *Three Dialogues* and creates "an 'undisguisedly useless art'" (2015, p. 149).

(1997, p. 159). That combination for Deleuze, situates Language III at the

intersection between images, and voices/names. Image is not the representation of

the object per se, but it is also not an object for Deleuze. Rather it is a "process,"

always in the making, inserting what Deleuze calls an "internal tension" within

words, voices and names, and which serves to displace the limits between what is

heard or seen and what is said (p. 159).[94] Dowd writes: "The pure image in Deleuze's

neo-Bergsonian formulation, is not to be confused with the object of an idealism;

rather what is being proposed is a materialist conception of the image" (2007, p. 59).

Furthermore, when Deleuze speaks of Beckettian images, he refers to

something called the "dissipation of their condensed energy" (p. 161). This process is

not unrelated to what Deleuze calls "[loosening] the grip of words," which serves to

exonerate the word from its significational load. But such loosening is a matter of

timing for Deleuze (p. 159). The image shows itself only briefly, "as long as the

furtive moment of our pleasure," and in such brief moments it captures all of the

possible so as to abruptly explode and dissipate (p. 161). Deleuze implicitly suggests

that "Imagination Dead Imagination" manages with difficulty to unload the image,

although he mentions the piece in passing, without further explanation: "It is

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[94] Deleuze's use of spatial metaphors to define the image makes the concept much more challenging than it already is: "The image is not defined by the sublimity of its content but by its form, that is, by its 'internal tension', or by the force it mobilizes to create a void or to bore holes, to loosen the grip of words, to dry up the oozing of voices, so as to free itself from memory and reason" (p. 159). The word as image then is dissociated from any cognitive dimension that enables it to express a state of mind or something like a personal sensation. Bearing in mind this difficulty, however, it is important to establish the term's conceptual links to other Deleuzean terms in order to better grasp the scope of its function. Deleuze sometimes refers to the image as an "aural or visual refrain," or "ritornello," a term developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* (see Plateau 11). Accordingly for Deleuze, the image has two dimensions; it is simple, "appearing from the point of view of the object," and it is complex, because it resounds across other territories, a complex territoriality. At the outset then, for Deleuze, the image is simple, it does not signify any content, it is not "burdened with claculations, memories and stories" (p. 159). However, this simplicity is misleading. If the form of simplicity renders the image possible, it also enables passages to the "outside of language" so that this image is never really understood in terms of what it may signify, but it is constantly connectable to "immanent limits that are ceaselessly displaced" (p. 158). It is perhaps in this sense that "images themselves are understood to appear and then dissipate in Beckett" (Uhlmann, 2006, p. 32). For an extensive study of the image in relation to Deleuzean thought, see Uhlmann 2006.

extremely difficult to tear all these adhesions away from the image so as to reach the point of 'Imagination Dead Imagine'" (p. 158). The pure image can be acquired in Beckett's case according to Deleuze, by subtracting from the image all relations to time, space, individuality, consciousness and so on. According to Murphy, dissipation relates to "producing an indefinite image that escapes the dialectic of general and specific or real and imaginary" (2000, p. 230). So for Deleuze, the image is bound up with the logic of exhaustion because in that brief time it lays bare a "fantastic potential energy," which suspends the signification of all content, it dissipates all possible relations and connections, accedes to an indefinite status all the while remaining singular (p. 160).[95] Without ever actualizing those potentials, the image dies away (p. 160). In Deleuze's words: "No sooner is the space made than it contracts into a "pinhole," just as the image contracts into a microfraction of time" (p. 161). It is in all these senses that for Deleuze the image is always in the process of being formed.

For Gontarski and Uhlmann, the image is a rigorous conceptual tool for understanding Beckett's language, and "it threatens to become more than a metaphor" (2006, p. 4).[96] This sort of orientation towards the image as well as the space, since for Deleuze space is another configuration of Language III, becomes more emphatic from the period between the sixties and the eighties. However, if it liberates the work from a significational load, it also arranges functional, gestural, diagrammatic relations by providing a series of signs for the visualization of these

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[95] Gardner sees Language III as the very terrain of complete "lines of flight," and sees in this Beckett's utter detachment from signifying semiotics: "Language III no longer has a need to relate to a referent that can be enumerated or combined, or harnessed to specific voices of enunciation (that is, the signifying chains of others/the Other), but taking the non-form of hiatuses, holes and tears, it instead looks outside itself as an endless line of flight on a limitless plane of immanence, as an aggregate of images/sounds from which all signifying language acts as a mere subset" (2012, p. 4).
[96] "A metaphor offers a point of relation: it sets out to relate two ideas. Beckett spoke on a number of occasions about seeking to develop a nonrelational art form, and one of the ways we can understand this is by talking about images rather than metaphors." (2006, p. 4).

worlds. If the process of the formation of an image is the central concern in Beckett's

Language III, which can be found in the more experimental short prose as well as the

short plays, that process is divided against several other processes of interaction that

occur between what I will generally refer to as signs in these pieces.

This being said, Beckett's language of images is also undetached from an act

of imagination in the short prose. Written in the imperative form, these prescriptive

pieces reflect the process of imagination that comes through subtle signs for action,

emotion and cognition. While Beckett's language is preoccupied with intersections

of images, spaces and socialities in this period, in what follows I will try to show

how Beckett creates a semiotics that handles sociality firstly in terms of an

imperative to imagine, and secondly as part of a sign environment that qualifies

Beckett's writing from this period.

5.2 Imperative and imagination

Notwithstanding the critical tendency to locate Beckett's later language in an outside,

via either the image or space, Beckett's language in the sixties also appears to realize

itself with regard to an internal principle the narrators name imagination. Beckett's

writing in this period aspires to do away with a language that a narrator, or an I

speaks, and focuses on a series of orders in the imperative, the most prominent of

which is the imperative to imagine. The other frequently used imperatives include

"fancy," "cease," "omit," "measure."[97] Rather than indicating implicit and explicit

orders, these directly shape, form and materialize the creative process, closing the

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[97] Beckett may have had in mind Coleridge's famous distinction between imagination as "the living
Power and prime Agent of all human Perception" and fancy as "a mode of Memory" modified by the
will (Coleridge, 1949, p. 202). Despite the Romantic tendency to differentiate between "fancy" and
"imagination," I contend that Beckett's imperative to imagine involves both the arrangement and
constant rearrangement of the cognitive and sensory signs.

gap between surface forms and underlying regimes. As verbal imperatives directly demonstrate visual coordinates, it becomes difficult to distinguish Beckett's language of forms from the ideas that it is supposed to evoke.

The imperative to imagine makes the sixties texts self-reflexive with respect to what they do. The beginning sentence of "Imagination Dead Imagine" [Imagination Morte Imaginez] written in French in 1965, points to the paradox of imagining the elimination of imagination: "No trace anywhere of life, you say, pah, no difficulty there, imagination not dead yet, yes, dead, good, imagination dead imagine" (p. 182). It describes the geometric space of a rotunda with two bodies in it. The female and male bodies interact without speech through strange bodily behaviors. Written shortly before it in English, "All Strange Away" adumbrates this new space of imagination: "Imagination dead imagine. A place, that again. Never another question" (p. 169).[98] In both works Beckett deploys a program that seems to depend on an idealism which strives to bridge the gap between the interior and the exterior by presenting the unimaginable to a mind, and continually obliterate that ideal by concretizing ideas, even unthinkable ones into specific forms. The inside and the outside are indeed the two series in communication in Beckett's texts from the sixties. Imagination and image emerge as two elements which are revised in Beckett's new conceptual framework as both "All Strange Away" and "Imagination Dead Imagine" deal directly with an act of imagination as an endless process of trial and rehearsal.

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[98] "All Strange Away" was written initially as part of four short pieces named "Faux Départs." Ruby Cohn writes: "After his [Beckett's] return from New York, he aborted four short pieces as *Faux Départs* [Wrong starts] and, in spite of the title, he published them the following year – in a German periodical. However, he withheld the longer piece for nearly a decade, finally permitting its publication as *All Strange Away*" (2005, p. 284).

The narrator in "All Strange Away" describes certain elements and qualities that make up its closed space: the male figure, the female figure, their changing abode first as cube then as rotunda, their strange postures within the enclosed space, the specific angles at which their bodies bend and install themselves in this space, the points of interface between the images of sexual body parts projected onto walls and the male or the female body which receives them at the center. This strange interface constitutes the (simulator of the) sexual interaction between two humans. The piece begins by imagining the male figure, Emmo, in a five-foot square murmuring to himself. The imperative to imagine gradually constructs and leaves unfinished the image of him in a place with precise coordinates: "Five foot square six high, no way in, none out, try for him there" (p. 169). The idea is that this male figure is confronted in this cube-like box with images of a woman's face and body parts, each projected on a different plane of the cube. Any effort to imagine or remember the woman comes with the labor of emplacing oneself appropriately in this small cube, so as to face each body part separately. Rather than coming in a full-blown scene, the image of the woman appears with respect to certain conditions and coordinates.

The prescriber devises a sense of correspondence between the light and the appearance of the body parts. When the light comes on, first the face, then the body parts of the woman, Emma, appear on the walls, and when it goes off, he is on his own. As it becomes clear in this interplay of light and dark, image and blackness, the very act of (the elimination of) imagination occurs with regard to certain material cues that start to appear in repetitive patterns. The same holds true for "Imagination Dead Imagine," where there seems to appear feedback loops. The situation is described in terms of two sets of states that interact: "At the same time the temperature goes down, to reach its minimum, say freezing-point, at the same instant

that the black is reached, which may seem strange" (p. 182-3). A series of conditions, then determine certain consequences which function in relation to each other. In both texts such questions as, what the bodies do, to whom they belong, what their connection to the places described is, remain sidelined. Instead, the narrative is preoccupied with a network of conditions and consequences, certain random cause-effect relations that slant towards easily eradicable hypothetical universes. Sometimes the prescribers decide to omit them altogether. The subject suddenly changes from the male to the female a few pages after "All Strange Away" begins, for instance. The perceiver of the body parts on the walls appears to be a virtual center for whom the lights continue to flash in order to simulate imagination while no real image is created: "No, no image, no fly here, no life or dying here but his, a speck of dirt. Or hers since sex not seen so far . . ." (p. 172).

The prescriber's preoccupation, then, is with how the bodies are emplaced within the specific coordinates of space:

> Call floor angles deasil a, b, c and d and ceiling likewise e, f, g and h, say Jolly at b, and Draeger at d, lean him for rest with feet at a and head at g, in dark and light . . . (p. 171)

Leaning diagonally like this in a five foot square and six high, Beckett's male figure, Emmo, showcases several ways of fitting into it. He can be imagined in all sorts of ways, "sitting, standing, walking, kneeling, crawling, lying, creeping . . ." (p. 169), and all this occurs in "years of time on earth" (p. 170). The vastness of time is squeezed into this very space. The place tightens around him and he is continually reimagined in terms of a tighter situation, where, what the narrative calls "the tattered syntaxes of Jolly and Draeger Praeger Draeger," the bodyguards of the text's fading syntactical coherence, are each situated in a corner, encroaching upon "him."

It is as if this order of imagination is immediately self-eliminating and self-constructing; it imagines new aspects of space and new ways of installing the bodies on each occasion. Even though the coordinates are always given with precision, their variation is very confusing. As elements are reimagined, all the previous ones become wrong: "Ceiling wrong now, down two foot, perfect cube now, three foot every way, always was, light as before, all bonelight when at full as before, floor like bleached dirt, something there, leave it for the moment" (p. 173). With each added element to the space then, the space itself is reconfigured; it is always like it was and has never been before. For each new connection, not only new postures but new reasons are to be found: "Waste height, sixteen inches, strange, say some reason unimaginable now, imagine later, imagination dead imagine all strange away" (p. 173). Curiously, then, this is not merely an act of imagination but one preoccupied with reasoning as well. Even when reasoning fails, even if the imagined world cannot be justified, it is conceptually available to the imaginer. The narrator wastes all heights here, so to speak, and sculpts material worlds mathematically envisionable even when unreasonable.

While the so-called prescriber acts as an external authority creating the event in the rotunda, as it becomes clear with each order, the imperatives only appear as the immanent signs that characterize the ceaseless change in the whole process. In fact, no image is obtained through imagination, and the narrator's self-negations serve to unsettle the possibility of external control. The image is constructed at the same instance as it is nullified: "… Emma lying on her left side, arse to knees along diagonal db with arse towards d and knees towards b though neither at either because too short and waste space here too some reason yet to be imagined" (p. 173). But this is by no means a purely negative act. In fact Beckett makes the narrator so devoid of

authority that he becomes one of the virtual points which is subject to the unanticipated movements of the space. The sudden changes from Emmo to Emma, cube to rotunda, db to bc emerge as all the possibilities that an inaccessible ultimate form contains. If Deleuze argues that Beckett's image exhausts all possibles in the brief moment it appears, "All Strange Away" attempts to fulfill the impossible task of visualizing all of the possibles in a specifically enfolding space so that it is both a cube and a rotunda. Beckett gives us all the potential coordinates of a space which appears in its most primitive and enhanced forms in an act of imagination. But there are only a number of possibilities visualized, although others are yet to be imagined. However, this act of visualization marks a process of articulatory labor that brings the components of the scene into existence. Language freezes words in their strictly verbal-visual status, and aspires to represent relations diagrammatically rather than "loosening their grip."

For instance, the prescriber cites all imaginable possibilities of relations between the body parts:

> Arse to knees, say bd, feet say at c, head on right cheek at a. Then arse to knees say again at ac, but feet at b and head on left cheek at d. Then arse to knees say again bd, but feet at a and head on right cheek at c. So on other four possibilities when begin again. (p. 172)

This kind of continuous shifting stems from the complete lack of mastery Beckett ascribes to his narrators after the sixties. The narrative depends on intrinsic conventions which get made in the course of writing through communication between several perceptual points. The subjects that perceive the images are interchangeable. Those images are perceived under certain conditions such as the light. This kind of conditioned perception then gives way to the entropic characteristics of this psycho-physical space. The figures are entrapped in it and are

219

subject to appeasement by way of the sexual images projected onto the walls. In this kind of confinement they try out a series of gestures, postures and movements that appear to be more repetitious than spontaneous. Everything is subject to seeming rules and conventions that are made simultaneously with the movements described.

In the hands of Beckett, imagination is not a tool for mastery allowing the narrator to create specific scenes, but rather, a method enabling him to develop a site of possibilities and permutations from repeated acts of stimulation. In Beckett's seemingly systematic spaces where everything is calculated, it is the imaginer's indeterminate point with respect to time and space, as well as the rotunda he observes that creates in the text so many possibilities at once. There are rapidly changing lines, a hysterical disorientation between erasure and drawing, where postures and coordinates intertwine and clash in most disorganized ways. Although this is a mental image, it is not completely liberated from chaos. If there is an idea of creativity, it occurs more on cues and in network of signs of different order rather than a model of tabula rasa.[99] Beckett's narrator does not separate the virtual, cognitive event from its material realization as he presents us with diverse possibilities of a single action of having to stay in a cube. In McDonald's words, "the subject is always immanent with the object" (2017, p. 119). In fact the articulated possibilities all overlay one another, making the image untimely and the space beyond any strict configuration.

What does this say about the imperatives of a so-called incapacitated mind? What is articulated about the space shows nothing other than a flat surface with

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[99] In a certain sense, Beckett's act of creation can be comparable to the kind of expression made by children's drawing. In her article on Beckett and Klee, Moorjani discusses children's drawings in regard to the way in which they anticipate artistic expressions. They create traces that turn pains and pleasures of the mind into signs in themselves: "These first stirrings of art go beyond bodily gesturing by the traces made on paper that turn the scribbler's pleasures and pains into signs for others to look at without seeing more than that" (2008, p. 192).

potentials for extension and enfolding, encompassing all other possibilities of dimension. Beckett gives the readers access to two divergent series that construct a world: the point of view of a so-called external authority and the point of view of internal possibilities such as those of various postures that change the coordinates and reconstruct the world as it gets articulated. Rather than producing intelligible thought, the signs of the mind remain less than concepts but more than images. They give out the infinitely connectable lines of relations, but their reasoning seems to be retrospectively imagined. For instance, it is not even certain whether the postures redetermine the coordinates or vice-versa. In this respect imperative and image become inseparable. It is not as if something is first imagined and then articulated so as to create in the readers' minds a certain picture. Rather, this world is so peculiarly its own image, and stays in its own image that it seems resistant to appropriation by an external prescriber, even though, ironically, it cannot be realized without one. The mind, if it is indeed the impetus for the imagination, is so convoluted within its restricted image, the image of the cube, the box, the rotunda that its act is also immediately an act of enfolding rather than extending. Thus, Beckett's imperative to imagine can be said to form only a provisional, conceptually abstract image notwithstanding its ridiculously detailed description; it fails to be conducive to an ultimate knowledge of an object or space.

The interrelation between the material and the imaginative, the sketchy and the complex, the concrete and the abstract betrays a peculiar characteristic of Beckett's imagination. One problem it leads to is the status of the image as something both easily describable but difficult to visualize. This act of imagination emerges as a form of thinking, an act of communication between virtual points, the process of which serves to elude a finalized image. If the narrator marks an

imperative to imagine, this imperative serves to create a textual space which is efficacious with respect to what it realizes, stripped down to the diagrammatic summary of a life – if indeed one could call it that. In fact Cohn refers to the text's capacity to be diagrammed by the crisscross of the verbal and the visual (2005, p. 177).[100] Beckett's geometry is a means of assurance to the reader; however, even drawing a diagram does not completely suffice to capture the ever-changing coordinates of this universe.

In fact the text is divided into two sections by the word "Diagram" that appears abruptly towards the end of the text. In a certain sense, the inscription of the word "Diagram" addresses the challenge of diagramming this world in conformity with the precise coordinates that are given, coordinates whose precision does not preclude the endless transformation of the space. In a rather disingenuous tone, then, the text refers to the inevitably diagrammatic apprehension of its space while making it clear that it is not sufficient in itself to grasp this universe in its continually changing essence. It addresses the tension between what can be infinitely imagined, (the space of vastness) and what is materially observable in detail, what can perhaps diagrammatically and summarily seize such vastness. Thus, this extremely visual piece is at the same time very difficult to visualize. The reader is faced with the challenging task of imagining a situation which essentially lacks an image. In Cohn's words, the text is "at once weary of seeking minimal being and imagining it tentatively anew; at once denying images and compelling the reader to imagine them…" (2005, p. 289).

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[100] "The several descriptions of the geometric deployment of parts of the human body make for difficult and tedious reading, which is, however, clarified if the reader actually draws a diagram" (Cohn, 2005, p. 177).

Guattari's revision of Peirce's concept of the diagram is perhaps useful in understanding this tension and the problematic connection between image and imagination. If, in Peirce's sign theory, the diagram is a type of icon which is a "simplified image of things, naturally analogous to the thing represented," Guattari sees in it a significant difference from the image: "a diagram captures better than an image functional articulations" (as cited in Genosko, 1996, p. 17).[101] For Guattari, the diagram produces signs that function in relation to other signs independently of what they individually signify, "independently of the effects of significations which may exist laterally" (p. 17-8). What kind of symbolic universes they refer to is determined by the functional relationships between parts in a diagram, such as algebraic equations and graphic representations. What Peirce refers to as "Existential graphs" are also of such nature. They are useful in establishing conventions with oneself, "which enable one to express the essence of what [one] has to communicate free from signs that are *not essential* [emphasis added]" (1994, CP 7.103). This activity, for Peirce, enables one to "abridge the labor and increase the exactitude of my thought by putting intricate logical relations in the forms that display to me precisely what they involve" (CP 7.103).

Indeed Peirce's graphic abstractions such as the Existential Graph enable the person to broach virtual communication with herself. Accordingly a mathematician would be able to indicate to himself precisely the type of formal relation he wishes to demonstrate in an equation by merely using the essential logic of mathematics, without the need to subscribe to narrative language. This connection is specifically significant in Beckett's short prose. In "All Strange Away" the reader does form a

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[101] Deleuze and Guattari refer to the diagram in *A Thousand Plateaus* to describe the abstract machine as "diagrammatic and superlinear" (p. 91). There are not fixed constants in language that correlate contents and expressions, but a diagram comprising potential and possible relations waiting to emerge. For more on this, see Deleuze and Guattari, 2005.

diagram or a sketch of some kind in her mind. Therefore, Beckett's diagrams create their own essential signs, such as the floor angles, coordinates, the recurrent conditions of light and darkness and the same consequences these lead to almost every time. But among such established conventions, there remains an indefinite principle in the piece, which puts into question the very conventions it establishes. In fact it is the prescriber who simultaneously resorts to diagrams and acknowledges their uselessness. The representations of different possibilities of posture show nothing more than conditional and tentative relations: "Place then most clear so far but of him nothing and perhaps never save jointed segments variously disposed white when light at full" (p. 172). Each new piece of information becomes "wrong" with newer instances. Beckett's diagram ultimately fails to explicate relations and establish the essential tools for the understanding of those relations simply because they continually change. The natural analogy between diagram and what it represents is gradually jeopardized in Beckett's writing as it lays bare functional relations, i.e. between light and dark, body parts and perceivers, without these creating ultimately symbolic universes. There is always a possibility of eradication, and no matter how much the prescriber complies with a strictly visual, diagrammatic, descriptive type of language, it also creates ambivalences.

Beckett's diagram appears in regard to two sets of paradigms, which ultimately interfere with reading, one is recognition, the other understanding.[102] For

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[102] The strange cases of stimulus-response chains such as the appearance of the faces and the body parts when light is on, indicate a rigidly identifiable universe consisting in conventions, signals and codes. For Benveniste, "[a] signal is a physical fact bound to another physical fact by a natural or conventional relationship" (1971, p. 24). Accordingly, it is only in non-human beings that a reaction to signals takes place rather than an understanding of symbols. It is only when there is human understanding that a symbolic universe is born. Similarly when Bakhtin refers to the "understander," he claims that she "is attuned to the linguistic form not as a fixed, self-identical signal, but as a changeable and adaptable sign" (2003, p. 33). Hence, understanding should not be confused with recognition (p. 33). Beckett's narrators here deal with conditioned events recalling such distinction. These are described as hypothetical physical conditions that trigger one another to operate. If they are designed as signals, who is to recognize them? Curiously, this type of recognition does not provide an

instance, it is debatable whether it is crucial for the narrator to recognize what the text refers to as "murmurs" or to understand them. These "murmurs" without audible sound remain significant elements of this diagram of perception. Even when inaudible they somehow form part of the cube/rotunda. These inaudible murmurs appear mainly when the light is out, whereas an audible sound is perceived in the light: "In dark and light, no, dark alone, say murmurs now in dark alone as though in light all ears all six planes all ears when shining whereas in dark unheard…" (p. 174). As can be seen, Beckett's narrators work with hypothetical conventions which change momentarily and which can easily lead the reader to utter confusion. Diagrammatic self-communication is bound to blunder when such confusions modify writing and reading. Beckett's narrator makes it unclear whether ears are visualized on each plane when he says "all six planes all ears." Is this a literal projection representing the act of hearing, and explicating a specific form of correspondence between a sense of perception and a perceptive organ, or is this only a common metaphor? In such instances, the text is stuck between its diagrammatic and narrative capacities.

This kind of diagrammatic thinking is nonetheless dependent on language, and it is this type of conflation of the visual and the verbal that causes blunders. This verbal-visual field represents certain shapes, bodies, postures and gestural events. It articulates functional relations between them to create an esoteric information flow. It serves to eliminate the depth of bodies (their affects, memories, cognition) and instead directly superimposes matter on matter, body on body, shape on shape, joints on coordinates, organs on points, the "white on white invisible" of "Ping" (Beckett,

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ultimate knowledge of the operation and/or meaning of these universes. Even when recognition occurs, it is implicated in the description of signals created by writing. The reader is thus torn between two diverse paradigms that incite the capacity of recognition and the capacity of understanding. On the one hand, there is what seems to be an observable plane which lays bare functional relations, on the other an implicit appeal to the explication of possible symbolic relations emerging from these.

1995, p. 193). However, this easily representable, diagrammatic form of relations is complicated by the text's simultaneous investment in sensible, audible, potential, metaphorical as well as representable relations. This blunder is peculiar to the text despite the strict conformity to prescriptive language. In such ways in the text, ultimately the diagram does and does not make things easier to understand.

The murmurs that are heard constitute an existential terrain that is linked with distinct sensory impressions; they seem to be critical signs that interfere with perception in the cube/rotunda. However, if the confrontation between Emma and Emmo through certain signs like faces and body parts projected onto the walls is indicative of a past relationship, the murmurs suggest more indefinite relations that remain out of place in this experiment. They are not only representable via diagrams but suggestive of various images, memories, sensations:

> Imagine other murmurs, Mother mother, Mother in heaven, Mother of God, God in heaven, combinations with Christ and Jesus, other proper names in great numbers say of loved ones for the most part and cherished haunts, imagine as needed, unsupported interjections, ancient Greek philosophers ejaculated with place of origin when possible suggesting pursuit of knowledge at some period… (p. 175).

In such instances Beckett puts great emphasis on an idea of imagination that is not limited to visualizing shapes but includes all kinds of sensations that can be heard, visualized, remembered and murmured in the closed space of writing. In other words, in this act of imagination signs of thought coalesce. If writing is appropriated in terms of an imperative to imagine, this imperative signposts a complex plane of functionality offering too many relations. This is what Sauvagnargues addresses when she describes a non-discursive semiotics that stimulates thought through forces of art (2013, p. 10). I suggest that the text subscribes to this non-discursive semiotics that renders possible the communication between domains of thought and sensibility.

226

The kind of shift between non-discursive and discursive elements is arguably present in the text as the overlapping of so many regimes, the abstract and the diagrammatic, the material and the cognitive, the iconic and the metaphorical, recognition and understanding.

This sort of coalescence between a writing field suggesting several perceptive signs and a visual field which intends to establish conventions to represent functional relations is peculiar to the complex strata of "All Strange Away." It is not an uncommon position among Beckett scholars to claim that as Beckett dismisses language "there is a retreat from [a] symbolism or semiosis" (Brits, 2017, p. 127). Beckett's juxtaposition of syntax and performance, matter and form in the sixties depends on such retreat from symbolism all the while, as I argue, being submersed in a different kind of semiosis. This process of semiosis foregrounds a diagrammatic form of thinking which collapses into its own dysfunctional ruins. As it attempts to make everything clear, that clarity, it is suggested, is a mere illusion, very questionable as to whether it ultimately lays bare any essential relation. This is indicated in the sudden unaffected narrative responses to the points and signs that constitute the ever-changing series of operations in these universes:

> … suddenly when least expected all this prying pointless and enough for the moment and perhaps for ever this place so clear now when light at full and this body hinged and crooked as only the human man or woman living or not when light at full without all this poking and prying about for cracks holes and appendages. (p. 178)

Indeed as it is revealed, the intervention of the mind becomes irrelevant to make these signs of thought ultimately clear. This strange confrontation between the exactitude of a diagrammatic thinking which provides a well-informed sketch and the questionings of its usefulness and realness by a wavering language is characteristic of Beckett's verbal-visual field.

Although the piece makes use of Romantic categories such as imagination and fancy to dramatize an act of creation, its expression of a potential space of variable relations between cognitive, perceptive, representational and diagrammatic signs also makes it a process of semiosis. Notwithstanding the critical responses to the text's affiliations with Romantic thought, imagination appears as an amalgamated space presenting various sources of sensation.[103] In Uhlmann's analysis, imagination appears as a cognitive-sensual force that interweaves various sources of sensation. This makes for an interesting use of the term as the intersection between sense and reasoning, cognition and creation. As Uhlmann claims, the related concept of image, too, is "first sensed and secondly related to sense or made sense of":

> Rather than creating or structuring thought, it induces thought. It also precedes thought and exceeds thought. It can be understood to be a sign but is not always or only a sign (that is, one can fail to understand an image, one can find multiple and shifting sense in an image, and the meaning of an image can exceed the meanings assigned to it by signifying systems)" (2006, p. 3).

It is along the lines of Uhlmann's interpretation that I would like to argue that Beckett's complex practice of imagination is not only related to creative and mechanical processes of making an image, but it also has links to a capacity to create connections between several signs that constitute thresholds between the visual and the verbal, the sensual and the mechanical, the audible and the visible that make up this image. The death of imagination could be sought in this sense of thought.

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[103] Davies affiliates Beckettian imagination, distinct from fancy, with Coleridge's "primary imagination," that is, a productive faculty. Accordingly, the difference between fancy and imagination, two terms Beckett uses in "All Strange Away" is that while fancy is the organizer of images, imagination is the vital source (1994, p. 143). Rodriguez makes a similar claim when he argues that the dynamism of imagination is contrasted with mechanical Fancy in both texts, and "Beckett's polar logic, like Coleridge's, ensures a dynamic text that actualizes the active and passive nature of Beckett's own creative process" (2007, p. 141). According to McDonald, on the other hand, the text's resistance to Romantic tradition is telling; "[I]t deploys cultural and literary traces of aesthetic tradition, but only to parody and deface them, leaving for instance the imagination/fancy distinction blurred and suggestive…" (2017, p. 119).

5.3 Signs, qualities and the shifting limits of sensibility

The difficulty of the aforementioned visualization via representation defines a new paradigm for Beckett's writing in terms of a diagrammatic thinking which is at once simple and complex, which addresses the tension between the parts and the whole, and clearly demonstrates the asignifying potentials of a narrative space immersed more in material and perceptive signs than stories. Brater refers to Beckett's "clumsy semiotician" in the text, who has to "resort, finally, to a lifeless diagram: a, b, c, d later amended to "new a," "new c." As it sketches signs rather than things signified, "No real image" emerges" (1994, p. 82). In this universe, the elements become empty signs that seem to function without immediate or conventional meaning; they are interactive and always becoming: faces as signs of perception and memory, light and dark as physical signs, murmurs as inaudible signs of thought, angles and letters as mathematical signs that function differently with regard to the ways in which they interact with one another. Even when they do not readily refer to a signifier, are these signs communicating? In other words, what makes Beckett's sign environment peculiar if the diagrams are lifeless and not conducive to a logic of reasoning? In this section I will look into the different instances of the concatenation of semiotic regimes in the key work "Imagination Dead Imagine" by focusing on how it creates a sign environment through the communication between signs and perceptive qualities.

Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* refer to the "asignifying particles" when speaking about the "Body without Organs" to detach their thinking of corporeality and life from the determination of an idea of organism (2005, p. 4). For them corporeality could not be reduced to a signifying totality. Such a body without organs could be attained in language through "nonsignifying and asubjective expression" (Sauvagnargues, 2013, p. 65). Indeed, despite language's signifying

229

capacities, it also produces signs that skirt a semiological program, and expresses through corporeality potential signs for new sensations. It is interesting to note that for Deleuze and Guattari, the asignifiying capacities of a sign regime become more discernible when the face as an interpretational field is destroyed (2005, p. 171). This idea has been discussed in relation to Beckett's ambivalent reconfigurations of resistance and domination in chapter four. For Deleuze and Guattari, the destruction of the face as a field for interpretation is directly related to the emergence of asignifying capacities. Thus, the asignifying sign expresses that which is indiscernible according to Deleuze and Guattari (p. 279). In literature, this could be a non-represented body of language that depends more on corporeal signs than symbols. According to Sauvagnargues, it takes place by replacing subjective phenomenon with "complexes of forces and materials" (2013, p. 92). Consequently the literary body, before being an object of interpretation, is an asignifying corporeality that works with linguistic material as signs of thought and sensation. Beckett's literal turn to corporeality, to bodies, without attributing to them any sense of depth is interesting in this regard. However, as Beckett makes use of material signs that compose his narrative environment, that very environment reserves the propensity to fall back on itself precisely because it also maintains the status of the so-called imaginary. This paradox is interesting when reading Beckett with Deleuze and Guattari since Beckett's texts from the sixties both radically affirm and differ from this Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of the "asignifying."

"Imagination Dead Imagine" is another diagrammatic depiction of an interaction between two human bodies in an enclosed space. It takes off from the imperative to imagine in order to establish a certain system of life in a rotunda. The text says interesting things about oblivion, memory and indifference. This is once

again a closed system, consisting of physical and artificial procedures, of rises and falls, of doubles interacting. There are once again, strict correlations between physical procedures where the system engenders chains of action that act and react upon one another. More interestingly, however, the piece investigates a non-tactile form of interaction that occurs between two bodies. The type of corporeality depicted is precisely asignifying because it is based on the overlapping of different organ movements on a body that hardly merits the name organism, as will be analyzed in the final part of this section.

In "Imagination Dead Imagine" as sublime images of "islands, waters, azure" and so on are eliminated, we are left with the pure quality of "whiteness": "Till all white in the whiteness the rotunda" (p. 182). This whiteness is somehow observable despite the fact that there is "no way in" to the rotunda (p. 182). But more importantly, it emits other effects such as heat, silence and emptiness, all related to whiteness. The glaring light of "All Strange Away," the whiteness of "Imagination Dead Imagine" and the "white on white" quality of "Ping" remain enduring signs for indefinite sensations.

Whiteness initially signifies the possibility of eliminating the power of imagination. Insofar as the narrator omits all power to imagine, he is presented with a whiteness. This is once again a form of corporeality that remains when the field of the imaginary is abandoned. Like *Worstward Ho*'s "blanks for when words gone" (Beckett 2009a, p. 99), the mind's blankness expresses a sense of immediacy that emits it in a certain power of whiteness. However, the whiteness articulated throughout the sixties texts sustains a more powerful presence that generates worlds rather than an impression of blankness. This sensation expresses itself on various grounds; the light, wall, vault, bodies are all part of this direct expression of

231

whiteness with "no visible source" (p. 182). Objects are not distinguished from this general sensation of whiteness – everything else partakes in it. In other words, whiteness diffuses this space, it presses its force upon it, whether this space is the mind and its processes of thinking, or an actual place like the rotunda.

In regard to Peirce's division of reality, such whiteness bears a certain resemblance to what he calls a *qualisign*. In most simple terms for Peirce, a qualisign is "a quality which is a Sign" (CP 2.244).[104] It cannot actually act as a sign until it is embodied, but regardless of its embodiment, it has the character of a sign (CP 2.244). It is directly related to *Firstness* in Peirce's terminology. Peirce writes: "Firstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else" (CP 8.328). His main examples are of colors: "The quality of red is not thought of as belonging to you, or as attached to liveries. It is simply a peculiar positive possibility regardless of anything else" (CP 8.329). Colors in themselves express a possibility present everywhere in life, they are potential sensations which may or may not belong to an object or recognized by a subject. On another occasion, he writes: "The unanalyzed total impression made by any manifold not thought of as actual fact, but simply as a quality, as simple positive possibility of appearance, is an idea of Firstness" (CP 8.329). In all these instances Peirce conceives of Firstness as a term of indefiniteness. It does not express sensations from the point of view of the perceiver, it is also not a universal category. It is perhaps from this specific connection to Peirce that Deleuze and Guattari's apprehension of images involves an

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[104] For Peirce, as it is defined in several places in his oeuvre, a sign is "an object which stands for another to some mind" (1986, p. 66). For him, a sign's relationship to its object (which is not only an actual existence, but a thought, idea, concept or another sign) is not only in the manner of likeness. There must also be a "physical connection" between the sign and its object (p. 66). Different from signal, that physical connection indeed says something about the object it is a sign of. What is interesting in Peirce's theory of signs is that, as Deleuze emphasizes it, it is not limited to linguistic signs. But more importantly, in Peirce's sign system, signs mark how thinking operates. Peirce uses his sign theory to explicate how thinking is indeed dependent on signs: "As thought is itself a sign we may express this by saying that the sign must be interpreted as another sign" (p. 76).

asignifying potential.[105] It is significant to note that for Peirce, firstness is not an actual fact but as a possibility it permeates life, waiting to be sensed by a mind. Therefore, the possibility of redness can be everywhere, regardless of whether it is interpreted as a sign in an object for something else. In this sense, qualisigns are peculiar in Peirce's understanding, as those initial impressions of life in general before they are signified and interpreted through secondness and thirdness.[106] They are transient yet self-sufficient.

Deleuze, in his solo work on cinema, reads Peirce's Firstness as a potential quality or power "independent of any question of their actualization" (1986, p. 98). As such, it cannot be signified but only *expressed* (p. 98). This emphasis on expression indicates the term's links to the idea of asignifying signs for Deleuze. Beckett's articulation of whiteness can be sought in this sort of asignifying potential of pure expression that does not refer to a single characteristic of an object. What to do with this simple possibility of appearance, which is everywhere? In both texts whiteness expresses an initial possibility from whose indifference other bodily, physical, cognitive marks appear. As Beckett dramatizes the act of thinking spatially, he assigns to it an initial impression that contains all possibilities and works rather like an indifferent background in which nothing can be differentiated. As the prescriber meticulously observes the operations in the rotunda, the idea of whiteness remains the unchanging possibility imbuing all its surroundings with the same sensation: "its [rotunda's] whiteness merging in the surrounding whiteness" (p. 184).

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[105] In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari write of asignifying signs that they "[crush] the signifiers as well as the signifieds, treating words as things, fabricating new unities, creating from nonfigurative figures configurations of images that form and then disintegrate" (2000, p. 244).
[106] Peirce defines the category of Secondness as "a mode of being of one thing which consists in how a second object is" (1994, CP 1.24) and Thirdness as "the mode of being which consists in the fact that future facts of Secondness will take on a determinate general character" (1994, CP 1.26).

Thus, whiteness is described initially as the background to all other signs and their interactions in the rotunda. Only through this firstness, differences, and appeals to Secondness appear. The white body of a woman "finally" appears "merging in the white ground were it not for the long hair of strangely imperfect whiteness…" (p. 184). Similarly in "Ping" whiteness bears the impression of this kind of firstness, from which relations emerge. The narrator of "Ping" refers to signs and traces as stains that mark the elements differentiating themselves from the whiteness: "Traces blurs signs no meaning light grey almost white" (p. 193). However, even though differences are marked in the white ground, they are not distinguished as forms signifying specific content. In fact they are articulated as having "no meaning." If the narratives obsessively and repeatedly articulate an impression of whiteness, and the kind of gestures, events, postures, bodily signs and marks that develop out of this impression, these material and physical signs hardly undergo transformations that relate them to other signs on a strictly symbolic level.

However, Beckett's qualities, as opposed to what Peirce and Deleuze may say of the quality as a possibility, are also persistent, invasive, repeated and repeatable as verbal signs in these texts. Although it is "a white speck lost in whiteness" at the end of "Imagination Dead Imagine," or "white on white invisible" in "Ping," on the whiteness, bodies and signs are marked as articulations. Like the "dull white" of "Ceiling" they function as residual motifs. But the difference here is that these universes are comprised of several series of activities that co-exist on a background of whiteness, continually triggering others in a chain.

What kinds of marks appear out of this whiteness? Beckett uses examples of physical connection to create traces, smudges so to speak, that form divergent paths in an environment of indifference. While Emmo does this by lighting and blowing

234

out candles repeatedly until the prescriber declares "No candle, no matches, no need, never were" (p. 170), Emma behaves in this strange atmosphere by clenching and loosening a small rubber ball: "Loose clench any length then crush down most womanly straining knuckles five seconds then back lax any length, all right, now down while fingers loose and in between tips and palm that tiny chink, full glare all this time" (p. 178). The prescriber acts more like a director here, as if giving instructions to himself through the image of the woman clenching the ball. The woman's gesture is composed of a series of acts, prescribed by the narrator, and they are measured by time. The scene is given serially, frame by frame, in a net of movements that relate to one another to create the image. Although language blurs the boundaries between external and internal, it binds the image within a sense of enclosure implied by the relentlessly instructive mode. Similarly, the image is one of physical enclosure, clenching of the ball between the fingertips and the palm. Concentrating on the faint hiss and pop of the ball in its repeated patterns, Beckett emphasizes the strange form of communication they generate in signals. When speaking about the ball that Emma clenches every now and then, the prescriber cannot assign to it a single color: "No real image but say like red no grey say like something grey" (p. 178). What allows us to understand the whole act of the woman squeezing and loosening the ball is not the straightforward narration of the imagined scene but certain catchwords that give away the signs of a specific physical activity: "faint hiss," and the "faint pop" of the ball that is clenched, for instance (p. 178). The image of this rubber ball is likened to similar objects "on earth" which remain utterly abstract (p. 178). Once the signals are separated from a field of interpretation that gives them symbolic value, they remain as marks on an otherwise indifferent, white environment.

In such ways gestures are taken out of their connection to a context of organic movement. The narrator focuses on single gestures such as ball clenching or candle blowing as functions in a pattern. Yet through detailed observation of a simple action such as ball clenching, Beckett also presents these as self-sufficient signs. They are singled out as irruptions of eerie images. It is as if we see the close-up image of a mundane activity in all its insignificance whereas the effect of this minutely detailed gesture is utterly absent, or rather, this mundane activity becomes an effect itself. These behave as signs in a chain of other signs that form some sort of overall action.[107] While the signs have the character of signs because they are presented as part of a pattern, by no means do they substitute for each other. Rather they merely appear. But so many appear simultaneously.The ultimate gesture of the imagination is to arrange them as the functions of a completely unknown system. One of the most challenging aspects of Beckett's signs can be found in this dilemma. A space is rendered imaginable, but it is also violently visible, in the sense that the precise details of the image are given through separate signs. Nothing dissipates, everything is given. The readers sense the possibility of this system's extinction, its collapse and its impossible diagrammatization.

According to Colombat, for Deleuze, signs "are to be considered as intensive and immanent signals expressing, marking and unfolding the powers of a given milieu or heterogeneous arrangement" (2000, p. 18). In fact, Beckett gives us many immanent signals of an actual operation. However, if for Deleuze, a sign of art is "Vinteuil's little phrase" in Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* because it expresses those powers by simply denying us an ultimate image, Beckett's so-called

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[107] Williams refers to Beckett's gestural works and writes: ". . . the direction of Beckett's subtracted grammar is oriented towards linguistic mediations that express an undefined, perhaps undefinable, action rather than towards the clarification or development of referential elements or representational props that normally constitute an action" (2004, p. 612).

characters in these texts compose a field of signs although their signifying potential is taken away by their excessively detailed appearance. Boxall refers to the extreme forms of visibility in such texts: "These spaces flicker on the very edge of perceptibility, precisely because there is nothing here that is not exposed to view" (2015, p. 41). It is as if they are indicative of something, yet are completely strange because that something is always imminent yet indefinite.

Another sense in which signs create marks in this possible quality of whiteness is to be seen in the bodily signs of "Imagination Dead Imagine." The bodies seem to be in extreme agitation caused by extreme conditions, yet they also display signs of vitality in rather odd ways. They hardly move, lying on their right sides back to back, entertaining only a long wink of the eye. Their response to heat and cold is a change in body temperature. They are either icy or sweating at a time. Freezing points lead to icy bodies, heat to sweat. The bodies thus seem exempt from pain, they endure the severest conditions.

In this universe non-tactile contact takes place between the bodies through signs. The two bodies described behave in certain patterns along the coordinates of a rotunda. Their postures are easily observable: "On their right sides therefore both and back to back head to arse" (p. 184). Once the prescriber affirms this posture, he goes on to describe in detail the situation of the hands and the arms on the body, and he singles out one specific activity; the sudden opening of the left eye in order to gaze for indefinite intervals only to close again. This strange behavior of a single organ creates a curious sense of climax or significance, but nothing really comes out of it. In fact no sooner is it described than the prescriber trivializes it: "Leave them there sweating and icy, there is better elsewhere" (p. 185). This strange expression of bodily interaction remains one of the signs Beckett devises from this period to

articulate the possibilities of inhuman communication occurring between body parts, different signs of memories, impossible physical conditions that may serve to defy the vision of physical and psychological confinement. These texts abound in descriptions of such predetermined movements, gestures and mimics and the behavior of bodies, whose narrative significance is either deferred or completely undermined in a universe that struggles in between dysfunctional and symbolic realms. This is a form of social interaction with potentially communicating bodies in a space that is mathematically delineated and virtually trodden, one that subtends a peculiarly descriptive language.

Beckett's transparent bodies are an ultimate attempt at exteriorization. They seem to have no interior, no resonance, no voice, no feeling. The interventions by a mind are relatively absent in "Imagination Dead Imagine." When the left eyes "open wide and gaze in unblinking exposure long beyond what is humanly possible," their effect is another quality: "Piercing pale blue the effect is striking, in the beginning" (184). The blue effect diversifies the colorless environment only briefly. If there is any excess in this so-called relationship, it is neither emotion nor an affective communication, but a communicational performance that is able to obliterate all effects of meaning and totality, and instead produces effects of matter and quality – the intensive signs; whiteness, stillness, blue, vibration, greyness; that is, the isolated, the overbearing, the inconspicuous and muted. This contact occurs in the sense of an interface, where two bodies meet only at the surface. Like the Unnamable's "tympanum," it is the visible surfaces of the bodies, as the narrator tells us, that produce the action and receive the atmospheric effects of this universe.

Thus, the bodies are purely operational. The external conditions affect the bodies insofar as they remain intact, and they perform what seems like a pre-

conditioned response to a pattern of light and dark. The series of activities seem to trigger and respond to one another, light, heat, sweat and open eyes forming one series, dark, cold, closed eyes forming the opposite one. Human bodies broach a non-human type of communication between heterogeneous series, bodies and light, blinking and touching, greyness and vibrations, and so on.[108] Despite this type of communications, however, not only does the prescriber make sure that the events that take place in this universe are incommunicable, but he makes it clear that they are incommunicable precisely to him, waiting only to disappear into oblivion. At the end of the piece, he says: "Leave them there, sweating and icy, there is better elsewhere. No, life ends and no, there is nothing elsewhere, and no question now of ever finding again that white speck lost in whiteness . . ." (p. 185). Unlike the earlier short stories, where all and nothing become equal in a temporal indifference, here, all is lost, or rather the whole image remains a point in oblivion.

In all these senses, these texts epitomize a sign environment that is neither reducible to narrative conventions nor completely liberated from acts dominated by imperatives and orders. In Beckett's literary worlds populated by a wide range of semiotic cues from voices, orders, imperatives to functions, coordinates and signs, there is always a possibility of a signifying content, it goes without saying. However, the more challenging aspect of Beckett's turn towards signs is that those signs predominantly serve to activate informative, pre-verbal, non-human relations,

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[108] The idea of the "non-human" is emphatic in Guattari's conceptualization of "asignifying semiotics." In *Chaosmosis* he makes a distinction between semiologies and a-signifying semiotics: "What we need here is a distinction between on the one hand semiologies that produce significations, the common currency of social groups – like the "human" enunciation of people who work with machines – and on the other, asignifying semiotics which, regardless of the quantity of significations they convey, handle figures of expression that might be qualified as "non-human" (such as equations and plans which enunciate the machine and make it act in a diagrammatic capacity on technical and experimental apparatuses)" (1995, p. 36). This type of non-human expression that conduces "no real image" or conveys no message is indicative of the asignifying semiotics. Beckett creates through a peculiar form of narrative the possibilities of this sort of machinic expression at the level of bodies, which evokes the idea of ordered social interaction as a possibility for escape.

simulations, imitations and repetitions rather than engagements with life in the sense

that Beckett's fiction does. If these modern bodies are imprisoned in such ways

through the strictly arranged forces of an imagination that is other than theirs, and

that imposes itself upon those very bodies, the types of behaviors that the bodies

demonstrate in response create a machinic energy that is antithetical to the realm of

the imaginary. The bodies generate a non-human form of interaction between parts,

and this precludes a totalizing image of the body as the sphere of a unified thinking,

speaking and moving being. The bodily events taking place escape the systems from

which they are born. The challenge in attributing to Beckett's bodies any symbolic

power stems from their direct materialization of systematic imprisonment in which it

is difficult to distinguish system from chance, automation from perception.[109]

Beckett's novel forms of corporeality and quality incite a world of endless

possibilities and esoteric communication. Despite its parodic attempts, for instance,

Beckett's "voice without meaning" in "All Strange Away" merely simulates a code

of sexual satisfaction as if it is a machine reprising an original act: "Then further

quite expressionless, ohs and ahs copulate cold and no more feeling…" (p. 175). In

"Ping" the prescriber simulates a "meaningless" world by repeatedly articulating a

sentence with minor variations: "Traces blurs signs no meaning light grey almost

white" (p. 193).[110] The repetitions of absence of meaning, feeling and expression

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[109] Looking at Beckett's texts from the sixties in terms of their expression of this kind of tension between bodies and systems, one could find an affinity between his repetitive forms of expression and contemporary art. Reginio draws attention to this link and argues that for contemporary conceptual artists like Robert Smithson, "the frenzied repetitions of a Beckett piece like *Quad* or the permutational exertions of *Watt* open up a vertiginous space where system gives way to perception which gives way to object which reveals an essentially unstable embodiedness for the viewer or reader" (Reginio, Jones & Weiss, 2017, p. 14). I have attempted to argue, throughout this study that the "unstable embodiedness," the abstract image, the unqualifiable content of Beckett's work take their rigor from this program of interchange among system, perception and object, which is revealed in and through Beckett's repetitive forms.

[110] David Lodge, in his review of "Ping" which appeared in "Encounter" in 1968 refers to the subversive power of repetition: "It is this kind of repetition with variation that makes 'Ping' so difficult to read, and the label 'anti-literature' a plausible one. Repetition is often a key to meaning in

show how these closed spaces fold upon their own codes by articulating them. In this respect, these worlds are not only their own images but their own codes. When signs distantly connote familiar affects but fail to refer to them in a signifying chain, or fail to connect to new territories, they emerge as part of "an informative expression which tends to elude all understanding (there is nothing to 'understand' in the equations of theoretical physics)" (Guattari, 1984, p. 94-5). In a similar sense, if there is, at least immediately, nothing to understand in Beckett's mathematical and geometric worlds replete with chains of movements and gestures, this can be explained via immanent functions that work on the basis of informational, imitational sign regimes.

The futility of the search for a way out in confinements of interaction is asserted at the beginning of "The Lost Ones" [Le Dépeupleur], written between 1966 and 1970:

> Abode where lost bodies roam each searching for its lost one. Vast enough for search to be in vain. Narrow enough for flight to be in vain. Inside a flattened cylinder fifty metres round and sixteen high for the sake of harmony. (Beckett, 1995, p. 202)

The final emphasis on harmony here sheds light upon the so-called project of the narrator of this text, if not those of the other texts. Bearing in mind the thematic connection between these texts, the inscription of bodies in "Imagination Dead Imagine" can be analyzed in regard to an imposed form of "harmony" with potentials of emancipation. In the prescriber's words, "[i]n this agitated light, its great white calm now so rare and brief, *inspection is not easy* [emphasis added]" (p. 184). Also, the bodies' rather comical sexual interaction allows them to rejuvenate from time to time; otherwise "they might well pass for inanimate" (184). This otherwise

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literary discourse, but repetition on this scale tends to defeat the pursuit of meaning" (in Graver & Federman, 2005, p. 326).

indifferent and empty space of whiteness is marked by the strange choreography of the bodies and the single organs. It serves to elide the sense of organization attributed to the body as a whole and rather focuses on the single instances of sign exchange between and/or within bodies. Disunited like this, bodies represent separate surfaces that interface rather than two organisms that interact upon orders. If there is a sense of harmony achieved even when the space is "vast enough for search to be in vain" in "The Lost Ones," in "Imagination Dead Imagine," this sense of harmony is unsettled by the communicational performance of the bodies.

There is an emergent mode of corporeality in the text that allows a rethinking of Beckett's subjects in terms of the divergent series within the body that act like inhuman signs of automatons. The cluttered worlds of voices give way to these un-voiced forms of communication that act upon the signs emitted through bodies. Beckett's early rejection of a kind of expressionism might be said to find its apex in such instances of communicational performance essentially lacking a "significational load." There is an externally ordered choreography that is ultimately downplayed because the space and the bodies open onto their own erasure, engender their own trails of connection. The gestures and bodily signs are strictly ordered but they also escape traditional forms of representation by hyperbolizing signal-code articulations. If there is an internal force of imagination that allows the coming into being of these coordinated movements and gestures, it brings into play a form of thought that is able to create its movements as bodies and their communicative capacities in a material space. In this regard, imagination arguably appears in a significantly revised form, as that which imposes forms but only in their shifting coordinates. It occurs in the

movements of the bodies as the material signs of thought, in a field of consciousness that creates patterns and habits of its movements.[111]

In fact, what is referred to as Beckett's minimalistic language abounds in such signs that appear on page and on stage. As his late prose expresses repetitive and/or gradually diminishing narrative spaces by way of residual motifs, repetitive series and a quality of narrative rehearsal, this further contributes to the idea of Beckett's texts as forms of virtual communication.[112] Beckett's turn from affective to semiotic worlds also illuminates the significance of his sidestepping in technology in the teleplays he wrote in the 70s and 80s.[113] Like the non-resemblance between the mind and the rotunda, in Beckett's teleplays like *Ghost Trio* and *Nacht und Träume* invocations of dreams and memories are described in terms of signs, signals and codes that take place in patterns on stage. While an estrangement from language is most obvious, with the multi-layered forms of the late plays, Beckett revamps his relationship to language through the assistance of technology.[114] With the pre-recorded sound, image and the camera, he generates within minimal visual and narrative frames a net of communications triggering each other in diverse ways. If a

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[111] In "The Dancer's Body" Gil speaks of "osmosis" in modern dance artist Merce Cunningham's choreographies. The idea of consciousness making itself a form of corporeality that orders and directs "from within danced movement" bears a certain resemblance to how Beckett's bodies create their forms of consciousness from the networks of signs emitted through and across them (2005, p. 122). Accordingly "the actions of the body can no longer be distinguished from the movements of thought" (p. 122). I think this connection is interesting for Beckett's bodies that interact. The body is presented as a space for semiosis. All communication, thought and imagination occur only through this type of dispersal of signs on the body.
[112] I am thinking here of texts such as *Worstward Ho* and *Company* in which a narrator once again orders and arranges the narrative space by describing the creative act in its immediate materializations.
[113] Beckett's short plays may be considered in terms of a continuation of the visual and diagrammatic forms of thinking which construed the logic of his short prose from the sixties. According to Reginio, "[the] method of reducing and recirculating parched syntactical units (e.g. in *Lessness*) is carried over into his late works for television" (2013, p. 26).
[114] According to Maude, Beckett's teleplays in particular stage the way in which perceptual technologies "liberate human perception from its association with rationality and objectivity, freeing it for sensuous, subjective, and aestheticized perceptual experience" (2007, p. 135). This kind of aestheticized experience, I argue, is not wholly liberated from a semiotic ordering that pervades Beckett's writing particularly after the sixties.

notion of imagination lurks behind the articulation of a transmission of signs and codes in the sixties, in the teleplays Beckett's writing juxtaposes the disparate elements used on stage against more or less predictable themes, existential motifs, programmed schemas and statements, making these works vacillate between personal pathos and technological indifference. They tend to arrange the elements of their environment by creating an aural-visual correlation between music, and objects and movements on stage through other imaginary forces like Beethoven's piano sonata and Schubert's lied.

Thus, Beckett's imaginary is replete with signs and signals that are strictly arranged and formed through imperatives and injunction. Even then, however, the powers of imagination and memory are less authoritative than probationary as they serve to generate informational, machinic, non-human relations. According to Guattari, within the fields of signification there are "deterritorialized chains" that "do not signify as such (in the case of the syntagmatic chains of language, the machines of scientific, technological, economic, etc. signs for example, we will even call them 'a-signifying')" (2011, p. 6). The tensions that occur in Beckett's texts from the sixties, as well as his short and long plays, depend on this kind of overlap between signification chains and asignifying chains that depend on repetitions, gestural, ritual, habitual forms, but also informational, diagrammatic and signal chains that tend to overemphasize their own dysfunctionality.

Beckett's radical transition from characters as voices, consciousness, fictional creatures and avatars of self in fiction to transparent bodies emitting signs in his short prose indicates something of this. The bodies serve to dissolve the thinking, self-reflexive subjects of Beckett's works. They also open the subject to the functional parts that exceed and compose her, and lay bare the network of communication

across several parts; in other words they serve to engender a disjunctive series of signs and functions in the organic body of the human. Beckett creates a novel idea of the body both as a self-enclosed system and a surplus field of dysfunctional signs. The series of blinking eyes that seem to operate on response, the instantaneous reactions of sweat and ice, and the repetition of gestures and mimics at irregular intervals make the bodies invest in a general code and response environment that sometimes makes sign at the level of language pointless.

I have argued that Beckett's language in the sixties creates a visual language that strives to materialize and locate within the verbal the conditions for divergent forms of intelligibility. Different from what Deleuze named image however, this visual regime corresponds not only to the outside of language, but to a mode of envisioning, seeing, imagining through the conception of new signs for thought that becomes possible with the prescriptive style language acquires. The gestural and postural signs in the texts analyzed have an asignifying/pre-signifying dimension; they are ritualistic, gestural, but nonetheless fail to create a world of fixed symbolic meanings. Writing relies on networks of functions that interweave with qualities to create the changing spaces. In such ways Beckett's language composes images of sociality, solitude, confinement and memory.

This chapter first set out to determine the relationship between image and imagination, and the ways in which such a relationship modifies Beckett's language simultaneously as prescriptive and precarious. In the last section I identified Beckett's sign environments by analyzing the articulations of qualities, signals, patterns and bodily communication. I contend that this turn to the asignifying sign in reading Beckett permits of an understanding of his recurrent motifs and strategies of patterning, arranging and communication. It also introduces Beckett's writing of

245

corporeality as an attempt to interact forms of thought and consciousness with material signs and bodily functions. By doing this, Beckett, to a great extent, alters the approach to subjectivity encountered in his novels, as the idea of subjectivity becomes literally inhuman and supra-rational, rather than resonating somewhere between rationality and irrationality.

I suggest that the communicational performance of bodies, signs, functions in these texts contributes to the formation of abstract limits, where invisibility becomes the condition for the visible. If Beckett attempts to reduce bodies to functions, human features to indefinite qualities, this attempt is also the reduction of story and narrative to a cognitive, semiotic and choreographic field of verbal activity. This is the way in which Beckett materializes mental activity in order to especially divest it from a meaning produced by a personal memory. This meaning is obscure to the reader as well as to the so-called imagining mind. Beckett's repetitive words, imagined objects and bodies, and their networked relations play a significant role in the development of his writing, particularly from the sixties onwards, towards a specific form of image making bolstered by the verbal.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that Beckett's writing across genres and periods offers a framework in which it can be described as communicational. I have identified two specifications of a communicational framework with which to explore Beckett's writing. The second and third chapters concentrated on questions of self-communication and self-perception in order to show the ways in which Beckett's forms of self and forms of life are produced as a result of the relentless resonance between the sensible and critical, reflective, intellectual modes of his writing. I have suggested that these diverse forms of sensibility affect, persist in and transform one another. The fourth and fifth chapters broadly addressed what I have referred to as material forms of communication that consist in verbal orders, image-making and sign use to build different regimes of sociality.

Beckett's language covers a wide array of topographies, crystallizes its images in recursive forms, and generates from the interaction of these, possibilities for addressing lines of resonance between images and their shifting, potential, abstract content. If the voices play a pivotal role in Beckett's understanding of narration, they also appear to be more than an innovative element of his work. I have suggested that they dramatize a specific means of communication that persists throughout Beckett's corpus, and serve to produce implicit and explicit modes of knowledge about self, life and the experience of writing. I have attempted to read Beckett's self-communication as the substantiation of both the expressive limits and the expressive potentials of his texts. One could argue that this makes Beckett's writing strictly introspective. However, the limits of comprehensibility are variable,

and new forms of expression are seized perpetually beyond those meanings supposedly intended by voices, recurrent ideas and images. This allows the readers to make shifts in their sense-making process, and tune and program themselves to changing syntax and topos. The persistent images of Beckett's language are formed both systematically and abstractly.

Beckett's language thus produces provisional forms of knowledge about selfhood, perception and affection. As this thesis has repeatedly argued, these recurrent forms of knowledge set in place a communicational diagram across the oeuvre, to which the readers attune themselves, however, they also consistently contrast, superimpose and integrate new, potential, subsistent programs for apprehending emergent forms of thought. Although Beckett's texts do tell us about the ways in which a sense of self emerges or how perception takes place, the ultimate object of such examinations is less an expressible figure of reality than textual markings and re-markings intimating the substance of a reality in forms of reprisal, resonance and ghostly echoes. This is not because Beckett turns away from the real; on the contrary, his writing overlays distinct perceptive and sensory modes to grasp it. Rather than a general sense of reality in which writing deals, there are extremely nuanced realities with their own specific expressive limits and forms of comprehension, i.e. of stillness, of whiteness, of roundness, of rotundas, produced through Beckett's language. These repeatedly articulated forms act like abstract figures that enforce various reorientations of imagination and thinking. In this respect Beckett's work continuously refines its visions, generates sharper imagery and form that serve to weaken the very ideas they embody. Dialogues, voices, bodies, movements appear more and more like tools for arranging forms of reality than means of expression. In the imaginative powers of the texts, forms of expression that

248

depend on the visual, sonorous and gestural insight variate, but they are produced as systems of arrangement, regimes of orders. While communicational material abound, their power of reference, signification and representation is reduced.

Thus, this thesis recognizes instances of communication among modes of reality, in which it is difficult to distinguish the perceiver from the perceived, the seer from the ceiling. The absence of this distinction becomes secondary when considering work from the perspective of the coexistence between the dominant forces stimulating it. If Beckett creates forms of knowledge, where the readers, at least briefly, have a sense of what the experience of examining a ceiling would be, how one can articulate their bodily convulsions as the index to psychic compulsions, or how an affective territoriality resonates within one's hearings, it does this by relentlessly re-forming linguistic material that seems to have been exhausted, via new points of contact between it and its subtensions. Rather than referring to Beckett's work as a domain of polysemy however, I have pointed out in the chapters of this thesis that this communicational dimension enables the formation of distilled images that challenge visual, aural, perceptual and intellectual limits.

Thus, the pieces and forms of knowledge I refer to fail to inform a general sense of situation, reality, or coherent whole. Beckett downplays the whole idea of communication by creating its forms and images excessively while producing hollow forms of expression. At the juncture where Beckett's repeated, hackneyed, exhausted language, imagery, themes and gestures meet their concomitant meaning, they can also unearth subtle divergences from their own clichéd senses. This is to such degrees that one cannot confidently speak of Beckett's forms of knowledge except with respect to the changing effects created by the recurrent motifs that embody them. In this sense, Beckett arguably radicalized the whole idea of knowledge by

producing provisional forms of it that depend upon actual disciplines, from philosophy to psychology, but only in contracted forms or residual motifs. Order and liberation, imagination and restriction communicate not to create a sense of balance, but a form of comprehensibility, a new limit that the readers grasp more in motifs and images than in ideas.

Already described by too many nomenclatures, it may be argued that Beckett's body of work does not hanker for further designations. However what this study has sought to achieve is the problematization of a much less referenced notion in studying Beckett's work. This notion of communication determines the textual data of Beckett's work that ranges from physical and affective topoi to forms of being and life, as well as cognitive processes and sociality. The constant production of this data transforms the expressive limits it sets for itself, continually integrating itself into forms of expression that shed light upon broader, non-literary forms of knowledge, modes of cognition, perception, affection, corporeality and sociality, power and domination.

Therefore, in this study I have attempted to point towards instances across Beckett's writing where disparate conditions overlay one another and create communicational lines between different modes of creativity. In this specific sense, communication refers less to exchange than to a certain mode of interchange among diverse elements that make up Beckett's writing. The nuances and particularizations of an idea of communication discussed in this study do not just precipitate out of nowhere. They take their rigor from critical and philosophical undertakings to explain aesthetic phenomena. Deleuze's apprehension of aesthetics has been crucial to my central understanding of the notion. This study thus seeks to contribute to discussions that aim to explore Beckettian aesthetics. Beckett's communicational

writing merits such a name since, as this thesis has argued in several places, the

forms of knowledge produced in the texts are made resonant across the oeuvre.

However, they are obscure, if not abstract even though they persistently seek to

corporealize how things are in Beckett's artistic universe.

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