Beckett Transforming Sade / Sade Transforming Beckett: Violence, Isolation, and Sovereignty

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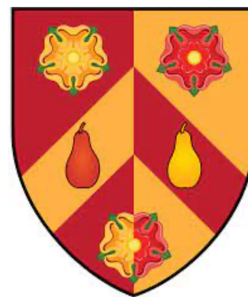

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For Emrys, Sian, and Andrew.

‘All we have to decide is what to do with

the time that is given us.’

Contents

Abstract 4

Acknowledgements 5

Abbreviations 6

Introduction 8

1. Beckett's Early Image of Sade 24

  1.1. The Impact of Mario Praz's *La carne, la morte, e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* 32

  1.2. The Impact of Guillaume Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre du marquis de Sade* 44

2. Beckett's Pessimistic, Satirical Pastiche of Sade's Literary Aesthetics and Techniques 54

  2.1. The 'Rat Episode' 60

  2.2. The Aesthetics of Incompletion: *Watt*'s 'Addenda' 67

  2.3. *Watt*'s Narrative Strategy of Exhaustive Enumeration 73

  2.4. *Watt*'s Aesthetics of Disgust 80

  2.5. *Watt*'s Critique of Reason 84

3. Beckett's 'Frenzy of Writing' 91

  3.1. Eroticism in the 'Frenzy of Writing'

    i. Heterosexual Eroticism 92

    ii. Nonheteronormative Eroticism 103

  3.2. Violence in the 'Frenzy of Writing'

    i. Aggression Within the Family 106

    ii. Beckett's Pedagogical Violence 113

    iii. Retributive Violence 119

    iv. Violence and the Integrity of Incoherence 126

v. Beckettian Sadism 129

4. The 1950s' 'Sade Boom' 135

4.1. Dating Beckett's Reading of Material for the Unpublished Seventh Issue of *Transition* 137

i. 'Sade and the Sovereign Man' 141

ii. 'Concluding Paragraph of the Marquis of Sade's Last Will and Testament' 147

iii. 'Some Recently Discovered Letters of Sade' 149

iv. 'Introduction to the *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*' 153

v. 'The Marquis of Sade and the Novel of Gloom' 156

vi. 'Sade and the Problem of Evil' 162

vii. 'Vice is Perhaps the Heart of Man' 164

4.2. *Texts for Nothing* 169

4.3. *Endgame* 182

5. Humanity in Ruins 207

5.1. *How It Is* 211

5.2. The 'Closed Space' Texts 232

5.3. The 'Torture Plays' 260

5.4. The Later Minimalist Plays of Entrapment 272

Conclusion 290

Bibliography

Works cited 302

Further reading 315

Appendix of Translations 332

Abstract

This thesis explores how Samuel Beckett's career-long engagement with the Marquis de Sade impacted his works. It adopts a chronological approach to studying Beckett's texts and their repeated engagements with Sade in order to expose the complexity of his continual literary conversation with this author, thereby demonstrating how Sade is figured as an amorphous dialogue breathing throughout Beckett's *œuvre* rather than as a figure with a predetermined value and meaning. I draw particular attention to the ways in which Sade's caustic vision of humanity at its most barbaric plays an integral role in shaping Beckett's emotionally resonant portrayals of powerless, isolated, and non-sovereign figures emblematic of 'humanity in ruins' (Beckett 1995a, 278), as well as his textual configurations of violence and eroticism. My approach combines close textual analysis with consideration of Beckett's correspondence, genetic material informing his texts (where appropriate), and performance details. I also accurately date, and study in detail, how the newly discovered translations of Sadean criticism which Beckett prepared for inclusion in the unpublished seventh issue of Georges Duthuit's *Transition* in the early 1950s furnish the Irish author with new theoretical approaches to the issues of solitude, sovereignty, cognition, and the intrinsic violence of mankind which are then incorporated into his creative works. Furthermore, this period of intense critical work engaging with Sade has a profound effect upon his later textual concerns and aesthetics. Ultimately, I argue that Beckett is primarily interested in three connected aspects of Sade's texts: violence, the essential humanity of violence, and the sheer isolation of man. Beckett defamiliarises Sade's approaches to these topics in order to examine what remains in the wake of extreme violence. Beckett thus shifts Sade's literary concerns away from the event of violence, instead focusing on the embodied and psychological impacts of violence.

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Abbreviations

ASA	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *All Strange Away*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 71-84.
ATSWT	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *As the Story Was Told*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 157-60.
Breath	Samuel Beckett (2009f), *Breath*, in *'Krapp's Last Tape' and Other Shorter Plays*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 77-79.
Catastrophe	Samuel Beckett (2009f), *Catastrophe*, in *'Krapp's Last Tape' and Other Shorter Plays*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 141-47.
Company	Samuel Beckett (2009h), *Company*, in *'Company', 'Ill Seen Ill Said', 'Worstward Ho', 'Stirrings Still'*, ed. by Dirk Van Hulle, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 2-42.
Dream	Samuel Beckett (1992), *Dream of Fair to middling Women*, ed. by Eoin O'Brien and Edith Fournier, Dublin: Black Cat.
Endgame	Samuel Beckett (2009e), *Endgame*, ed. by Rónán McDonald, London: Faber and Faber.
Fd	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *Faux départs*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 67-70.
Fdp FM2	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript 2 of *Fin de partie*, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Ohio State University [OSU RARE MS SB 29/1].
Fdp FM3	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript 3 of *Fin de partie*, Manuscripts and Archive Library, Trinity College Dublin [TCD MS SB 4663].
Fdp FT3	Samuel Beckett, Typescript 3 of *Fin de partie*, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Ohio State University [OSU RARE MS SB 29/3].
HII	Samuel Beckett (2009g), *How It Is*, ed. by Édouard Magessa O'Reilly, London: Faber and Faber.
IDI	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *Imagination Dead Imagine*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 85-89.
L'In. FN1	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript of *L'Innommable*, first notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 3/20].
L'In. FN2	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript of *L'Innommable*, second notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 4/1].
LSB I	Samuel Beckett (2009a), *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929-1940*, ed. by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck, George Craig, and Daniel Gunn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
LSB II	Samuel Beckett (2011), *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume II: 1941-1956*, ed. by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck, George Craig, and Daniel Gunn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
LSB III	Samuel Beckett (2014), *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume III: 1957-1965*, ed. by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck, George Craig, and Daniel Gunn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LSB IV	Samuel Beckett (2016a), *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume IV: 1966-1989*, ed. by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Lois More Overbeck, George Craig, and Daniel Gunn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
M&C	Samuel Beckett (2010b), *Mercier and Camier*, ed. by Séan Kennedy, London: Faber and Faber.
MD	Samuel Beckett (2010c), *Malone Dies*, ed. by Peter Boxall, London: Faber and Faber.
Mm FN2	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript of *Malone meurt*, second notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 7/4].
Molloy	Samuel Beckett (2009d), *Molloy*, ed. by Shane Weller, London: Faber and Faber.
Molloy FN4	Samuel Beckett, French Manuscript of *Molloy*, fourth notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 5/1].
MPTK	Samuel Beckett (2010a), *More Pricks Than Kicks*, ed. by Cassandra Nelson, London: Faber and Faber.
Murphy	Samuel Beckett (2009b), *Murphy*, ed. by J. C. C. Mays, London: Faber and Faber.
NI	Samuel Beckett (2009f), *Not I*, in *'Krapp's Last Tape' and Other Shorter Plays*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 81-93.
Ping	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *Ping*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 121-25.
Quad	Samuel Beckett (2006), *Quad*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 449-54.
RfRII	Samuel Beckett (2006), *Rough for Radio II*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 273-84.
TfN	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *Texts for Nothing*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 1-53.
TLO	Samuel Beckett (2010f), *The Lost Ones*, in *'Texts for Nothing' and Other Short Prose: 1950-1976*, ed. by Mark Nixon, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 99-120.
Tpr FN1	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript of *Textes pour rien*, first notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 5/7].
TU	Samuel Beckett (2010e), *The Unnamable*, ed. by Steven Connor, London: Faber and Faber.
Watt	Samuel Beckett (2009c), *Watt*, ed. by Chris Ackerley, London: Faber and Faber.
Watt NB1	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript of *Watt*, first notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 6/5].
Watt NB2	Samuel Beckett, Manuscript of *Watt*, second notebook, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 6/7].
Watt TS	Samuel Beckett, Partial Typescript of *Watt*, Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas at Austin [HRC MS SB 7/5, & HRC MS SB 7/6].
WfG	Samuel Beckett (2010d), *Waiting for Godot*, ed. by Mary Bryden, London: Faber and Faber.
WW	Samuel Beckett (2009f), *What Where*, in *'Krapp's Last Tape' and Other Shorter Plays*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski, London: Faber and Faber, pp. 149-60.

Introduction

'To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now' (Beckett qtd in Driver 1961, 23)

In the introductory essay to his 1909 anthology, *L'Œuvre du marquis de Sade* (henceforth *L'Œuvre de Sade*), Guillaume Apollinaire remarks: 'Il semble que l'heure soit venue pour [l]es idées [du marquis de Sade] […], [de] dominer le vingtième [siècle]' [It seems that the time has come for the ideas (of the Marquis de Sade) (…), (to) dominate the twentieth (century)] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 17). In hindsight, Apollinaire's statement seems eerily proleptic of the cataclysmic violence unleashed throughout the 20th century – a period punctuated by two World Wars, mass genocide, and, in its latter half, the omnipresent threat of nuclear annihilation. Indeed, it was in the wake of the First World War that the first 'Sade Boom' – the 1920s Surrealist re-assessment of Sade – took place. As Annie Le Brun (1982, 41) comments, the Surrealists' positing of Sade as a 'Surrealist in sadism' (Breton 1969, 26), and their championing of his work as 'giv[ing] back to civilised man the force of his primitive instincts' (Éluard qtd in Matheson 2018, 212), is a direct result of the pain, destitution, and malaise dominating the cultural consciousness of 1920s Europe. In returning to the savagery of Sade, the Surrealists sought to find artistic forms and subjects which could admit 'all the many misfortunes to which [they were] heir' (Breton 1969, 4) through a complete rejection of the 'realistic attitude […] made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit' (Breton 1969, 6). Consequently, in the Surrealists' view, Sade's unflinching portrayal of man at its most barbaric represented a disavowal of the realist principles which failed to address the actuality of man's potential for destruction. His caustic works of

literature spoke to the very real agony, anger, and confusion suffusing postwar Europe that the Surrealists sought to express artistically.

Similarly, the 'Sade boom' of the 1950s occurred as Europe was trying to process the revelations of the unimaginable atrocities committed during the Second World War and the Holocaust. In the words of Primo Levi, the violence enacted under the Nazi regime during the 1930s and 1940s formed, and still forms, a 'black hole' (Levi 2005, 139) within our comprehension of history and humanity. It constitutes a trauma which we cannot effectively communicate, as language unravels when trying to give voice to it, and which can never be fully understood by any other than those who directly experienced it. In a literary-philosophical context, this aporetic trauma is most succinctly summarised by Theodor Adorno's statement that, in the wake of the Holocaust,

> Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation (Adorno 1983, 34)

And yet, as Samuel Beckett makes clear, there is an ethical and artistic need to try to give voice to the disorder remaining in the wake of these horrors:

> The only chance of renovation is to open our eyes and see the mess. It is not a mess you can make sense of. […] One can only speak of what is in front of him, and that now is simply the mess (Beckett qtd in Driver 1961, 22-24)

It is precisely within this context of trying to express and understand abject horror that Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, and Simone de Beauvoir, openly posited the importance of Sade's works. Thus, it is clear that resurgences of interest in the work of the Divine Marquis are intrinsically connected with moments of crisis, with

occurrences of traumatic violence which overwhelm the expressive powers of language in its traditional forms.

As the 2020 publication of Jean-Michel Rabaté's monograph, *Beckett and Sade*, the 2023 exhibition at the Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona, *Sade: Freedom or Evil*, and the forthcoming publication of *Understanding Sade, Understanding Modernism* (expected January 2025) demonstrate, we are currently in the midst of a third 'Sade Boom'. Given the widespread instability, uncertainty, and fear permeating the contemporary world, this is perhaps unsurprising. As Bill Burns, director of the USA's Central Intelligence Agency, and Richard Moore, chief of the UK's Secret Intelligence Service, chillingly admitted in a recent article in *The Financial Times*, 'international world order […] is [currently] under threat' in an unprecedented manner (Burns and Moore 2024, n.p.). The spectre of war has returned to Europe through the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, and has also reared its horrifying visage in the Middle-East through the Israel-Palestine and Arab-Israeli conflicts. The threat of nuclear warfare is, as the United Nations (henceforth UN) states, 'higher today than at any time since the end of the Cold War' (UN 2023, n.p.) and the rising tide of populism plaguing the world, accompanied by increasingly polarising discourse, indicates that fascism is once more on the march. It is difficult not to see parallels between the state of the world today and that in which Beckett had his first direct encounter with Sade's works, reading parts of *Les 120 journées de Sodome, ou, l'école du libertinage* (written 1785, pub. posthumously 1904; henceforth *120 journées*) in 1938 as an increasingly bellicose Nazi Germany was seeking to extend its awful power across Europe.

Equally, as the release of James Marsh and Neill Forsyth's 2023 cinematic biopic of Beckett, *Dance First*, and the return of *Waiting for Godot* (written 1948, pub. 1952/1954; henceforth *Godot*) to the West-End's Theatre Royal Haymarket (2024) – in a production

directed by James Macdonald which 'speak[s] to our precarious times' (Hemming 2024, n.p.) – illustrates, there is currently a revival of interest in Beckett's *œuvre*. Comparably to how Sade's texts gain relevance during times of crisis because of their unflinching portrayal of the brutality of man, Beckett's works become increasingly resonant when the world is collapsing around us because of their powerful ability to breathe forth seemingly incomprehensible horror and unspeakable agony. Pierre-Aimé Touchard recalls how, after viewing a 1953 production of *Godot*, he felt a 'shock of recognition' (Simpson 2022, 60):

> [*Godot*] exprimait avec une vigueur inouïe ce que nous pensions que jamais une voix humaine contemporaine n'aurait été capable de crier. Par la bouche des misérables héros mis en scène par Samuel Beckett, s'exhalait le soupir d'horreur muette que l'humanité retenait depuis des années. (Touchard 1961, n.p.; cf. Simpson 2022, 61-62)[1]

As the production history of *Godot* suggests, there is something intrinsically powerful about Beckett's practice of textual 'subtraction' (Adorno 2010, 178) which enables his works to be 'recontextualise[d] vividly in different moments, without sliding into allegory' (McDonald 2015, 59). This play has been successfully performed in contexts such as: Apartheid South Africa, with Donald Howarth's 1980 Cape Town production 'activat[ing] the play's concern with power relations in the immediate context of the racial conditions in South Africa' (McDonald 2015, 57) by casting two black actors, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, as Estragon and Vladimir whilst two white actors – Bill Flynn and Peter Piccolo – played Pozzo and Lucky; the Israel-Palestine conflict, with Ilan Ronen's 1984 Haifa production 'mobilis[ing] the play's surrounding politics, signalling difference and social stratification through language and dialect' (McDonald 2015, 57) by having 'Estragon and Vladimir sp[eak] colloquial Arabic to each other, but Hebrew to Pozzo' (57), whilst 'Pozzo spoke Hebrew to Estragon and Vladimir, but bad Arabic to Lucky' (57), and Lucky exclusively 'spoke academic

[1] See p. 332 in the appendix for a translation.

Arabic' (57); and the Bosnian war, with Susan Sontag's 1993 Sarajevo production of the play's first act utilising 'multiple pairings of Vladimir and Estragon (as well as the original male/male pair, she also placed male/female and female/female ones onstage)' (McDonald 2015, 57) to give voice to the 'harrowing' atmosphere of 'anguish, of immense sadness, and […] [of] violence' (Sontag 1993, n.p.) saturating the daily lives of the city's inhabitants. As is acknowledged in the citation of his Nobel Prize in literature, Beckett's works recurrently speak to the 'destitution of modern man' (Nobel Prize 1969, n.p.) by portraying 'humanity in ruins' (Beckett 1995a, 278).[2] There could therefore not be a more appropriate, and pressing, moment than the present to analyse how Beckett's career-long engagement with Sade shaped his *œuvre*.

As this thesis discusses the ways in which Beckett's increasing familiarity with the works of the Divine Marquis shaped his methods of fictional expression as well as his literary concerns, it is necessary to provide a summary of how the concept of literary 'influence' has been previously interpreted and to outline the theoretical basis of how I understand this idea as it relates to Beckett's reading of this most polarising, disturbing, and intrinsically violent of authors. One of the most impactful readings of literary 'influence' to date is undoubtedly that posited by Harold Bloom in his groundbreaking *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and his deliberately incendiary, but still important, study of 'literary value' and canon formation, *The Western Canon* (1995). In the former monograph, Bloom argues that 'major figures' within literary traditions – such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Leo Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and

[2] Despite Simone de Beauvoir highlighting the fact that 'man' is a gendered term in her seminal work, *The Second Sex* (1949), 'man' was still commonly used as a synonym for 'people' or 'humanity' until the 1990s. Consequently, the term 'man' in Beckett's citation for the Nobel Prize functions in a non-gendered manner and is not intended to be exclusionary in nature. For more on gendered language, see de Beauvoir 1976a, 13-408; de Beauvoir 1976b, 13-652; Butler 2011, 27-165; and, Butler 2024, 3-264.

Samuel Beckett (to name but a few) – 'wrestle with their strong precursors' both consciously and unconsciously and, in so doing, 'appropriate' elements of texts by earlier writers into their own literary utterances (Bloom 1997, 5). Essentially, Bloom interprets the idea of 'influence' as a bellicose clashing of aspirational brilliance with established excellence – as the warring between Zeus and Kronos, or, a 'Battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads' (Bloom 1997, 11).[3] In *The Western Canon*, Bloom develops these ideas by proposing:

> Literature is not merely language; it is also the will to figuration, the motive for metaphor that Nietzsche once defined as the desire to be different, to be elsewhere. This partly means to be different from oneself, but primarily, I think, to be different from the metaphors and images of the contingent works that are one's heritage: the desire to write is the desire to be elsewhere, in a time and place of one's own, in an originality that must compound with inheritance, with the anxiety of influence. (Bloom 1995, 12)

He also expands upon his theory of influence by clarifying that the mark of true originality within literature is 'a strangeness that we either never altogether assimilate', because it is so arrestingly different to any work which one has previously encountered – as is the case with Dante, Beckett, and Sade – or 'that becomes such a given that we are blinded to its idiosyncrasies', as is the case with Shakespeare or Tolstoy (Bloom 1995, 4). Thus, it becomes clear that for Bloom the relationship of 'influence' between an author and their literary forebearers is one of struggle and combat – an antagonistic relationship which serves as an agon from which an author, 'however crippled and blinded' (Bloom 1997, 14) they become due to the strenuous effort of overcoming the unimaginably weighty burden of 'influence', may emerge into true artistic originality.

In 1982, Gérard Genette offered an alternative, more nuanced, and less combative reading of the issue of literary 'influence' to that posited by Bloom through the publication

[3] Despite Bloom's use of gendered language, his reading of literary influence is not specifically gendered.

of *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. In this text, Genette addresses the question of influence by initially outlining the five differing forms of transtextual relationships prevalent within literature: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality (Genette 1997, 1-7). He defines intertextuality as 'a relationship of copresence between two or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as *the actual presence* of one text within another' (Genette 1997, 1-2; emphasis added). Genette therefore differentiates his conceptualisation of intertextuality from that first suggested by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s – who argues that 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (Kristeva 1980, 66) – by defining it in a more 'restrictive sense' (Genette 1997, 1) and by situating the origin of intertextuality with the author of a text.

This emphasis upon the role of the author in establishing intertextual and transtextual links within a work also distinguishes Genette's reading of influence from the theories of intertextuality posited by Roland Barthes in 'Theory of the Text' (1973), and Michael Riffaterre in 'La Trace de l'intertexte' (1980). According to Barthes, 'any text is an intertext [as] other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognisable forms' (Barthes 1981, 39). When one considers this remark, and the statement that 'the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae' (Barthes 1981, 39), in tandem with Barthes' theorisation of the 'Death of the Author', it becomes apparent that Barthes places the onus of intertextuality upon the reader, rather than the writer, of a text.[4] Similarly, Riffaterre explicitly states that intertextuality is 'la perception, par le lecteur, de rapports entre une œuvre et d'autres, qui l'ont précédée ou suivie' [the perception, by the reader, of

[4] For more on the 'Death of the Author', see Barthes 2010, 1322-26.

relations between a work and others that precede, or follow, it] (Riffaterre 1980, 4). Consequently, according to Barthes and Riffaterre, intertextuality may legitimately be read into a text by a reader, whereas Genette argues that any intertextual or transtextual aspect of a work must have originated, either consciously or unconsciously, from the mind of the writer so as to be a 'legitimate' aspect of the text. Throughout this thesis my analysis draws upon Genette's framework as an analytical scaffold, rather than the reader-oriented model of intertextuality proposed by the Kristeva, Barthes, and Riffaterre.

Genette elucidates three differing types of intertextual relations, the most straight-forward and uncontroversial of which is the practice of quotation (Genette 1997, 2). The second least controversial form of intertextual relation identified by Genette is 'the practice of *allusion*: that is, an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible' (Genette 1997, 2, emphasis in original). The intertextual practice of allusion is thus more implicit and covert than the aforementioned practice of direct quotation, instead relying upon and presupposing a reader's knowledge of the text to which the intertextual allusion makes reference in order to generate meaning. Consequently, intertextual allusions may appear strange and potentially elude, or confuse, readers not in possession of the required knowledge to unravel them, creating a gap within one's comprehension of a work. The final, and most controversial, form of intertextual relation identified by Genette is that of plagiarism, which he defines as 'an undeclared but still literal borrowing' (Genette 1997, 2). More recently, the question of plagiarism as a form of literary intertextual relation between texts has been raised by Emmanuel Pierrat, who points out that the argument that plagiarism is an intertextual tool not entirely dissimilar to

– or even potentially in the same vein as – homage 'est un argument littéraire et non juridique' [is a literary argument and not a legal one] (Pierrat 2020, 48).

Following this, Genette outlines how a paratext is any aspect of a literary work's totality which 'provide[s] the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not, which […] cannot always [be] disregard[ed]' (Genette 1997, 3), before then asserting that paratextuality is 'a treasure trove of questions without answers' (Genette 1997, 4). After turning away from the complex issues of, and challenges to, literary interpretation which paratextual elements, such as titles, may provoke, Genette defines metatextuality as a relationship which 'unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it' (Genette 1997, 4). Whilst this definition of metatextuality does somewhat overlap with the above-provided explanation of how intertextual allusion functions, Genette does go on to differentiate these two forms of transtextuality by underscoring how metatextuality is primarily a relationship of 'commentary' (Genette 1997, 4) – it is a 'critical relationship' (Genette 1997, 4) which 'never pertains, in principle at least, to narrative or dramatic fiction' and 'is by essence nonfictional' (Genette 1997, 397).

The fourth form of transtextuality elucidated by Genette is, by far, the most abstract and all-encompassing: the architextuality of a text. Genette defines this aspect of a work as 'the entire set of general or transcendent categories – types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres – from which emerges each singular text' (Genette 1997, 1) and states that this element of transtextuality is 'purely taxonomic' (Genette 1997, 4) in nature, often remaining 'completely silent, articulated at most only by a paratextual mention' (Genette 1997, 4). Thus, whilst the architextuality of a text pervades the entirety of a work, it is simultaneously a covert, and nebulous, element shaping a given text's reception.

Furthermore, as Genette illumines, the architextuality of a text is in a state of continual flux due not only to the fact that a text 'may well choose to reject the status claimed for the text by the paratext' (Genette 1997, 4), but also because architextuality is concomitantly defined through, and shapes, the ways in which a reader reads and understands a text. Consequently, when one encounters works of literature which actively deconstruct, disrupt, or otherwise transcend genres – such as Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) or Beckett's *How It Is* (written 1958, pub. 1961/1964) – the very notion of architextuality begins to unravel and is forcibly reformulated by the arresting strangeness of the textual utterance, resulting in a metamorphosis of one's comprehension of the bounds of the literary. Hence, whilst the notion of architextuality is omnipresent when dealing with works of literature, it is also a field which is so 'abstract and […] implicit' (Genette 1997, 4) that one could easily dedicate an entire life-time to examining it, and which, subsequently, largely lies beyond the bounds of discussion within this specifically focused thesis.

The final form of transtextuality identified by Genette is hypertextuality – 'any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary' (Genette 1997, 5, emphasis in original). In order to differentiate hypertextuality from intertextuality, Genette clarifies:

> Concerning the opposition […] between hypertextuality and intertextuality, I wish to stress only the limited but decisive point that contrary to the case of intertextuality […] a simple understanding of the hypertext never necessitates resorting to the hypotext. Every hypertext, even a pastiche, can be read for itself without becoming perceptibly 'agrammatical' (Genette 1997, 397)

Hypertextuality is thus distinguished from intertextuality by the autonomy of the hypertext in relation to the hypotext and by the former's ability to generate meaning independently of its hypertextual status. In other words, even if one remains unaware of the presence of

hypertextuality within a text, an insurmountable gap within one's comprehension of the work in question does not form. Hypertextuality is thus supplementary to a work's ability to generate meaning – 'The hypertext […] always stands to *gain* by having its hypertextual status perceived' (Genette 1997, 398, emphasis in original) – whereas with intertextuality, the generation of meaning is entirely reliant upon the reader's knowledge of the alluded-to text.

Moreover, Genette supplements the above-stated definition of hypertextuality by stating: 'What I call hypertext […] is any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation, which I shall simply call […] *transformation*, or through indirect transformation, which I shall label *imitation*' (Genette 1997, 7). He then goes on to further differentiate the category of hypertextuality by arguing that hypertextual practices, whether imitative or transformative, fall under one of three possible 'moods': 'playful', 'satirical', or 'serious' (Genette 1997, 28). Subsequently, Genette divides transformative hypertextual practices as follows: playful transformation of a hypotext within a hypertext becomes manifest as parody; satirical transformation of a hypotext in a hypertext takes the form of travesty; and, serious transformation of a hypotext in a hypertext is known as transposition. Meanwhile, he divides imitative hypertextual practices into: pastiche, which he identifies as playful imitation of a hypotext by a hypertext; caricature, which is satirical imitation of a hypotext by a hypertext; and, finally, forgery, which is serious imitation of a hypotext by a hypertext. Thus, it is apparent that Genette's analysis of the idea of literary 'influence' focuses upon the specific mechanics through which literary 'influence' becomes textually manifest within a work, whereas Bloom's reading of 'influence' adopts a theoretical approach which seeks to unravel how writers wrestle with their literary ancestors so as to establish themselves as 'canonical' through the strange originality of their *œuvre*.

Additionally, Genette reads 'influence' as something which is not necessarily confrontational, whilst Bloom conceives of 'influence' as a battle which must be undertaken by a writer if they wish to become immortalised within the pantheon of literary history.[5]

As will be demonstrated, Beckett's creative processing of Sade's viscerally disturbing works does not perfectly accord with either Bloom's or Genette's reading of 'influence'. Instead, it blends aspects from both of their readings. Whilst Beckett's early, dismissive response to Sade may imply a combative relation between these two authors, as Beckett's career progresses, and as he has more direct encounters with the Divine Marquis' literary works, the confrontational aspect of how Beckett reads Sade diminishes. Furthermore, Beckett's texts repurpose elements of Sade's works in a predominantly hypertextual manner; the Irish author's works retain autonomous meaning independently of their connections to Sade's *œuvre*. Thus, whilst Beckett draws upon the literary techniques and imagery of this most horrifying of writers, he does not seek to produce definitively Sadean texts perfectly imitative of those written by the Divine Marquis.[6] Rather, Beckett continually defamiliarises Sade's methods of literary expression and his literary concerns by integrating them within his moving exploration of what remains in the wake of extreme violence.[7]

[5] More recently, intertextual critics such as Scarlett Baron have sought to thread the needle between Bloom's notion of influence, Genette's theory of transtextuality, and Barthes', Riffaterre's, and Kristeva's definitions of intertextuality as both an author-led and reader-facilitated phenomenon. For more on this, see Baron 2012, 1-19, 276-81. At the same time, Dirk Van Hulle has been at the forefront of intertextual and influence studies, pioneering the use of genetic criticism to 'open[] up the notion of intertextuality and mak[e] readers aware of the intertextual condition of texts' (Van Hulle 2022b, 127) by exposing precise authorial reading traces and illustrating exactly how these traces become incorporated into the fabric of literary works. For more on this, see Van Hulle 2022a, 12-281; and Van Hulle 2022b, 122-34.

[6] Throughout this thesis I use the term Sadean to denote elements evocative of Sade's texts which may or may not have a direct reference within Sade's *œuvre*. Where there is a direct transtextual connection to a specific moment in Sade's texts, I provide specific page references to the moment in question.

[7] My use of the term 'defamiliarises' throughout this thesis combines Viktor Shklovsky's understanding of the term as a 'creat[ing] [of] a special perception' of something through the 'destroying of the automatism of perception' via 'the notion of "roughened form"'(Eichenbaum 2010, 933) with a Poundian emphasis upon the idea of making something new (Pound 1934, 9) and a Genettian idea of transformation. It is thus to be understood as a rendering strange, and making new, of something through intense recontextualisation.

Consequently, even though Sade's *œuvre* is shocking in its brutality, coloured by intense misogyny, and barbaric in its unflinching depictions of concerningly imaginative violence, it is still necessary to investigate how Beckett grasps and utilises the distressing actuality at the centre of Sade's literary utterances: the violence enacted by Sade's characters is primally disturbing because it is unapologetically human.

My first chapter examines how Beckett's earliest, indirect encounters with Sade impacted his fictionalising techniques as expressed in *Dream of Fair to middling Women* (written 1931-32, pub. posthumously 1992; henceforth *Dream*), *More Pricks Than Kicks* (written 1931-33, pub. 1934; henceforth *More Pricks*), and *Murphy* (written 1935, pub. 1938/1947). It begins by discussing the evidence indicating that Beckett read Mario Praz's *La Carne, la morte, e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (1930; trans. as *The Romantic Agony* [1970]; henceforth *La carne*) and Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* in the early 1930s, before analysing how Beckett utilises Praz's theorisation of sadism within his early prosaic work. The latter part of the chapter explores how Beckett's reading of Apollinaire's Sade anthology is manifest in some potentially surprising ways in *More Pricks* and *Murphy*.

The second chapter opens by assessing the impact of Beckett's 1938 reading of the '1st & 3rd' volumes (Beckett, letter of 21 February 1938 to Thomas McGreevy, *LSB I*, 607) of Maurice Heine's 1931-35 edition of *120 journées*, before analysing how this reading is processed in *Watt* (written 1941-45, pub. 1953/1968). After a discussion of the eminently Sadean 'rat episode' (*Watt*, 132-33), the chapter illustrates how *Watt*'s aesthetics of incompletion are modelled after the unfinished state of Sade's *chef d'œuvre*, and reveals how Beckett's novel's narrative strategy of exhaustive enumeration defamiliarises Sade's narrative practice of systematically outlining every conceivable variation of sexual acts within *120 journées*. The penultimate section explores how Beckett re-envisages Sade's

aesthetics of disgust within *Watt*. The chapter closes by revealing how *Watt*'s satirising of 'the human being's pride in their rational capabilities' (Van Hulle 2022a, 164) pastiches and transposes *120 journées*' critique of the Enlightenment's valuing of Reason.

Chapter three demonstrates how there is a dual-movement both away from Sade's literary techniques and towards his primary literary concerns, sex and violence, throughout Beckett's texts written during his 'frenzy of writing' (Beckett qtd in Knowlson 1996, 318). After establishing that Beckett did not encounter any new Sadean texts or criticism between 1945 and January 1950, the chapter reveals how Beckett utilises Sade's understanding of heterosexual and nonheteronormative eroticism, as well as his portrayal of atypical sexual practices, to suffuse *Mercier and Camier* (written 1946, pub. 1970/1976), *Molloy* (written 1947, pub. 1951/1955), and *Malone Dies* (written 1948, pub. 1951/1956) with instability and uncertainty. The latter part of this chapter analyses the multiple ways in which Beckett adapts Sadean conceptions of violence within the aforementioned prosaic works, *Godot*, and *The Unnamable* (written 1949-50, pub, 1953/1958). It firstly focuses upon how Beckett defamiliarises Sade's 'animus against families' (Rabaté 2020, 39) within *The Unnamable*, *Mercier and Camier*, and *Malone Dies*, before studying Beckett's critiquing of Sade's textual belief in the pedagogical potential of violence in *Molloy* and *The Unnamable*. Afterwards, I illustrate how Beckett's deployment of retributive violence in *Mercier and Camier*, *Molloy*, and *Godot* is shaped by Sade's unbalancing of lex talionis in *120 journées*. The penultimate section reveals how Beckett transfigures Sadean ataraxy in the face of violence into a textual expression of the 'integrity of incoherence' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 37) in *Malone Dies*, whilst the final section examines how Beckett develops the concept of reflexive sadism in this text.

The penultimate chapter explores how Beckett indirectly participated in the 1950s' 'Sade Boom' by including ideas gleaned from his preparing of seven translations concerning Sade for inclusion in the unreleased seventh issue of *Transition* in his creative works. I begin by dating Beckett's reading of these works about Sade, as well as his reading of Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795; henceforth *Philosophie*) and re-reading of *120 journées*. I analyse each of these translations to reveal which aspects of them Beckett found creatively engaging. Interestingly, these translations are the only metatextual works which Beckett prepared for publication about Sade, and serve to complicate a Genettian reading of transtextuality due to the fact that they are, for Beckett, indirectly metatextual – despite some of Beckett's thoughts on Sade bleeding into his specific lexical decisions throughout these translations, the source-texts are (obviously) not written by him. Following this, I demonstrate how these ideas are integrated into *Texts for Nothing* (written 1951, pub. 1955/1967) and *Endgame* (written 1955, pub. 1957/1958). I particularly focus upon the impact of: Blanchot's reading of Sadean sovereignty, master-slave dynamics, and isolation as voiced in 'La Raison de Sade' (1949); Heine's analysis of Sade's 'Gothic' inflections in 'Sade et le roman noir' (1933); and Bataille's analysis of Sade's treatment of violence as a 'sovereign and irreducible part of man' (Bataille 2022, 51) in his 'Préface à *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu*' (1950). I also examine how Beckett continues to draw upon Sade's opposition to the Enlightenment's valuing of Reason within *Endgame* as a way of exposing how the Enlightenment endowed Reason with 'a responsibility it […] can't bear' (Beckett qtd in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 231). This chapter addresses *Texts for Nothing* first and *Endgame* second.

My final chapter analyses the role played by Beckett's close engagement with Sade during the early 1950s in shaping his later textual aesthetics and concerns. The first section

unveils how throughout *How It Is* Beckett defamiliarises numerous forms of Sadean violence and reasoning, before investigating his rewriting of the Blanchotian-Sadean understanding of violence's and sovereignty's relations. The second section explores how Beckett subtly utilises Gilbert Lely's description of Sade's cell in Vincennes, found in *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…* (1949, xxxiii), to create the torturous, carceral locales of the 'Closed Space' works. It also analyses Beckett's reinterpreting of Sade's detached, ataraxic narrative style as well as his incorporating of images of Sadean violence, and Bataille's theorisation of violence as a paradoxically silent language of power, within these texts. The third section studies how Beckett re-envisions Sadean master-slave dynamics, and Blanchotian-Sadean sovereignty, in his 'Torture Plays'. The chapter closes by discussing Beckett's complicating of Blanchotian-Sadean sovereignty and his de-physicalisation of carcerality in his later plays of entrapment.

Adopting this chronological approach to Beckett's texts and his repeated engagements with Sade enables the complexity of Beckett's multifaceted reading of this most challenging of authors to come to the fore. In so doing, I unveil how the Irish author's continual literary conversation with this writer plays a substantial role in shaping not only his textual formulations of violence, isolation, and sovereignty, but also his literary techniques and later textual aesthetics. Whilst Beckett is not a Sadean writer nor a sadist by any stretch of the imagination, the work of the Divine Marquis is an undeniable companion, and even counterbalance, to his deeply moving artistic contemplation of what remains in the wake of catastrophe.

1. Beckett's Early Image of Sade: *Dream of Fair to middling Women, More Pricks Than Kicks,* and *Murphy*

The only reference to Sade in Beckett's pre-1938 correspondence suggests that Beckett felt Sade to be deserving of mockery: 'Could there be […] any irritation more mièvre than that of Sade at the impossibilité d'outrager la nature' (letter of 8 September 1934 to McGreevy, *LSB I*, 223). As Rabaté points out, in this letter Beckett echoes Praz in reducing Sade's 'destructive fury' to 'an insane rage at nature, a frustrated wish to be one with elemental destructivity' (Rabaté 2020, 3). In *La carne*, the idea of wishing to outrage nature is 'taken out of its context' (Rabaté 2020, 2), with Praz claiming that in the following assertion 'there is a *reduction ad absurdum* of Sade's "philosophy"' (1970, 107):

> C'est elle [la nature] que je voudrais pouvoir outrager. Je voudrais déranger ses plans, contrecarrer sa marche, arrêter le cours désastres, bouleverser les globes qui flottent dans l'espace, détruire ce qui la sert, protéger ce qui lui nuit, édifier ce qui l'irrite, l'insulter en un mot (Sade qtd in Praz 1970, 107)[8]

before remarking that 'even Sade recognises that "l'impossibilité d'outrager la nature est selon moi le plus grand supplice de l'homme"' [the impossibility of outraging nature is, in my opinion, the greatest torment exacted upon man] (Sade qtd in Praz 1970, 107). The former of these quotations is taken from Madame d'Esterval's musings upon the pleasures of vice during the 16th chapter of *La Nouvelle Justine* (1797; henceforth *Nouvelle Justine*; Sade 2011b, 945), whilst the latter is spoken by Jérome in the eighth chapter of *Nouvelle Justine* (Sade 2011b, 625). Both Madame d'Esterval and Jérome are 'Sadean anti-heroes who […] express a demiurgic urge to commit crimes so extravagant that they will have no equivalent in the annals of human debauchery; they are ready to destroy the whole human

[8] See p. 332 in the appendix for a translation.

race, if not the world' (Rabaté 2020, 2). By arguing that it is Sade who lusts after the unobtainable goal of outraging nature, Beckett, like Praz before him, paints Sade as a figure whose every act is taken in vain. Thus, Beckett's epistolary dismissal of Sade originates from his reading of *La carne*, rather than from a direct encounter with Sade's texts and, as will be shown, masks the true extent of his interest in the Divine Marquis.

Beckett's *'Dream' Notebook* (written circa 1930-31, pub. posthumously 1999) is replete with references to Praz's monograph. Entry 258 reads:

> A.G. Brignole-Sale;
> 17th century author of Erotica & Mystica, Jesuit mortagli la moglie: champion flagellator: 2 portraits by Van Dyck in the Palazzo Rosso at Genoa. At one time ambassador at Madrid, when his son died of epilepsy. Cp. pp. 205-50 G. Portigliotti's Penombre Claustrali. (Beckett 1999, entry 258, 36)

This is a direct summary of the 30th note appended to the first chapter of Praz's monograph:

> Brignole-Sale was typical of the seventeenth century. After alternating lascivious with pious writings, when his wife died he gave himself up entirely to religion, entered the Order of the Jesuits, and practiced such severe flagellations that he often had to be rebuked by his fellow-priests for his over-harsh governance of the flesh. He offers a ready subject for a *biographie romancée*, especially as Van Dyck immortalised his beautiful, melancholy features and those of his voluptuous wife in two magnificent pictures, which are now in the Palazzo Rosso at Genoa. Such a character-portrait was attempted by G. Portigliotti in *Penombre Claustrali* (Milan, Treves, 1930), pp. 205-50. What a pity [Maurice] Barrès did not come across the subject! All the more so, since Brignole-Sale was ambassador at Madrid, where a son of his died of an epileptic fit. (1970, 50n.30)

Furthermore, when one considers entry 271, 'Justine or Juliette' (Beckett 1999, 38), in dialogue with entries 272-78, it becomes apparent that this is yet another reference to *La carne*. Entry 272 states 'Je désirerais que vous me guillotinassez [sic]' [I would like you to guillotine me] (Beckett 1999, 38), quoting the dying wish of the eponymous protagonist of Petrus Borel's 'Passerau l'écolier' (Borel 2016, 255), whilst entry 273 simply reads 'lycantropy [sic], lycantrope [sic]' (Beckett 1999, 38). Both of these entries are lifted directly from the 17th section of the third chapter of *La carne* (see Praz 1970, 136, 133-38). Here, Praz provides his reader with summaries of the stories comprising Borel's *Champavert*

contes immoraux (1833), detailing how these tales exhibit a 'serious concern' with horror, the macabre, suicide, rape, torture, violence, and sadism (Praz 1970, 133-38), and comments that the frontispiece designed by Adrien Aubry 'shows quite clearly the sort of spectacle that may be looked for […] once one enters the peepshow of horrors that the book contains' (Praz 1970, 133).

Entries 274, 'Hamlet a Gefühlsmens[c]h (Meister)' [Hamlet is a feeling man (Meister)] (Beckett 1999, 38), and 275, 'Das Beste des Menschen liegt im Schaudern' [The best part of humanity lies in the shudder] (Beckett 1999, 38), are both references to Goethe mediated through the lens of Praz's study. Entry 274 alludes to Praz's remark that William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*'s (written circa 1600)

> original colour has been entirely changed by the corrosive patina spread over it by the critics, ever since Goethe's Wilhelm Meister interpreted the character according to his own image, changing into a *Gefühlsmensch* an Elizabethan whose strangeness appears to be due mainly to structural imperfections in the tragedy (Praz 1970, 2)

whilst entry 275 cites Praz's misquotation of Goethe's 'Das Schaudern ist der Menschheit bestes Theil' [Shuddering is the best part of humanity] (Goethe 1832, 76), located in the second section of the first chapter of *La carne* during which Praz discusses Goethe's approval of developing 18th century aesthetic theories of the horrible and terrible (Praz 1970, 27). Entries 276, 'Debauchery & Death, Schroud [sic] and Alcove' (Beckett 1999, 38), 277, 'Lethal Beauty' (Beckett 1999, 38), and 278, 'Ta carcasse a des agréments' [Your carcass has amenities] (Beckett 1999, 38) continue to illustrate Beckett's interest in the relations between the horrible, terrible, disgusting, deadly, and beautiful, as these entries quote or adapt ideas from Praz's commentary on Charles Baudelaire and the ways in which his poetry blurs the boundaries between these categories (see Praz 1970, 31-45). Specifically, entry 276 alludes to the opening line of Baudelaire's 'Les deux bonnes sœurs' (1857): 'La

Débauche et la Mort sont deux aimables filles' [Debauchery and Death are two sweet girls] (qtd in Praz 1970, 31; cf. Baudelaire 2016, 234-35). Entry 277 is a covert allusion to Praz's interpretation (Praz 1970, 31-32) of the first stanza of Victor Hugo's, 'Ave, Dea, moriturus te salutat' (1871):

> La Mort et la Beauté sont deux choses profondes
> Qui contiennent tant d'ombre et d'azur qu'on dirait
> Deux sœurs également terribles et fécondes
> Ayant la même énigme et le même secret (qtd in Praz 1970, 31)[9]

Entry 278, meanwhile, quotes Baudelaire's 'Le monstre, ou le paranymphe d'une nymphe macabre' (1857; see Praz 1970, 42-43). These entries therefore affirm not only that Beckett read Praz's *La carne* whilst working on *Dream*, but also that he was contemplating the supplementary relations between love and repulsion, between monstrosity and desire, from a very early point in the compositional process of this novel. Ergo, entry 271 of the *'Dream' Notebook* represents an early instance of Beckett reflecting upon *La carne*'s presentation of Sade's *Nouvelle Justine* and *L'Histoire de Juliette* (1801; henceforth *Juliette*), both of which are briefly glossed by Praz with the comments:

> It is not necessary to mention here the picaresque adventures related in *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu* [by which Praz means *Nouvelle Justine*] and its sequel *Juliette, ou les prospérités du vice*. The Marquis de Sade empties his world of all psychological content except the pleasures of destruction and transgression, and moves in an opaque atmosphere of mere matter, in which his characters are degraded to the status of instruments for provoking the so-called divine ecstasy destruction (Praz 1970, 106)

before being used to demonstrate Sade's supposed obsession with nature and the (im)possibility of angering it (see Praz 1970, 108-09).[10]

[9] See p. 332 in the appendix for a translation.

[10] Praz does not seem to be aware of the differences between *Nouvelle Justine* and *Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la Vertu* (1791). This latter novel serves as the base-text upon which *Nouvelle Justine* is modelled. It is far shorter than the later work and does not describe in as extensive detail the tortures to which its eponymous protagonist is subjected. See Sade 2011b, 123-390 for *Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la Vertu*; and, Sade 2011b, 381-1110 for *Nouvelle Justine*.

Entries 288-91 (Beckett 1999, 40), entries 322-30 (Beckett 1999, 46), entry 411 (Beckett 1999, 57), and the penultimate entry in the *'Dream' Notebook* further confirm the fact that Beckett read Praz's monograph with great care and attention. As tracing all of these references is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will only elucidate those especially relevant to this current chapter. Whilst entry 323, 'The leopardess – I should like her to ruin me' (Beckett 1999, 46), is interesting as its allusion to John Keats' description of a 'young Anglo-Indian girl' in a letter of 14 or 15 October 1818 to Georgiana Keats (qtd in Praz 1970, 285n.1; cf. Keats 2017, 866) which further bespeaks Beckett's fascination with the confluence of the sexual and the monstrous, it is entry 1180 which provides the most concrete piece of evidence illustrating Beckett's interest in 'Sadistic literature' as presented by Praz. This entry reads:

> Volupté:
> Levanna & our Ladies of Sorrow.
> Laus Veneris
> Belle Dame Sans Merci
> Mademoiselle de Maupin
> Une Nuit de Cléopatre
> Le Roi Candaule
> Anactoria
> Lesbia Brandon. (Beckett 1999, entry 1180, 172)

It provides a list of titles of works by Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (*Volupté* [1834]), Thomas de Quincey ('Levana and our Ladies of Sorrow' [1845]), Algernon Charles Swinburne ('Laus Veneris' [1866], 'Anactoria' [1866], and 'Lesbia Brandon' [1952, written 1859-68]), Keats ('La Belle Dame Sans Merci' [1819]), and Théophile Gautier (*Mademoiselle de Maupin* [1835], 'Une nuit de Cléopâtre' [1838], and 'Le roi Candaule' [1844]). As John Pilling points out (in Beckett 1999, 172), all of these texts are mentioned in *La carne* (see Praz 1970, 201, 282 [Sainte-Beuve], 165, 193 [de Quincey], 223-52 [Swinburne], 197, 210-13 [Keats], and 125, 213-19 [Gautier]), where they are presented as pillars within a sadistic tradition of

literature which can be directly traced to Sade's *œuvre*. Therefore, it is readily apparent that Beckett consulted Praz's study extensively whilst working on *Dream*.

Evidence of Beckett having read Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* is, unfortunately, less readily available; however, clues enabling us to assert that Beckett was at least somewhat familiar with this anthology in the early 1930s can be found in the *'Dream' Notebook*, *Dream*, *More Pricks*, and Grace McKinley's notes on Beckett's 1931 'Racine lectures' at Trinity College Dublin (henceforth TCD). Beginning with the *'Dream' Notebook*, we return to entry 271, 'Justine or Juliette?'. Given the dismissive treatment to which Praz subjects *Nouvelle Justine* and *Juliette* in his monograph, it is curious that Beckett should have felt the need to write down the names of these two Sadean protagonists. Perhaps Beckett copied out these names as he had a greater, although still only partial, awareness of the role these women play in Sade's canon than can be gleaned from Praz's work. In *L'Œuvre de Sade* the plots of *Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la vertu* (1791; henceforth *Justine*; see also p. 19n.4 of this thesis) and *Juliette* are elaborated in detail over the course of seven pages in Apollinaire's introductory essay (see Sade 1909, 17-23). Apollinaire later excerpts sections from *Justine* and *Juliette* to provide his readers with samples of Sade's writing (see Sade 1909, 77-150), although he takes rather sanitised passages from both these works to circumvent the censorship laws in place at the time of his producing this anthology. It makes far more sense for Beckett to have noted down 'Justine or Juliette?' as an *aide-memoire* if we assume that he had some awareness of the actual content of *Justine* and *Juliette*, as he would have gained by reading Apollinaire's text.[11]

[11] Apollinaire does not mention *Nouvelle Justine* in *L'Œuvre de Sade*. Thus, we can surmise that Beckett was not aware of the differences between *Justine* and *Nouvelle Justine* either.

Moreover, the mentioning of Sade's '*Hundred Days*' in *Dream* (179) and *More Pricks* (46) is surprising not only because 'there existed no English translation of [*120 journées*]' in the 1930s (Rabaté 2020, 18), but also – and more importantly – because Sade's *chef-d'œuvre* is not mentioned in any edition of Praz's text. Thus, even with Beckett imperfectly remembering the title of Sade's most 'sulphurous' work (Rabaté 2020, 11), we are presented with two possibilities: either Beckett learnt about the existence of *120 journées* by word-of-mouth or, as Rabaté proposes (2020, 11-12), he had read Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade*, which dedicates eight pages of its introductory essay to discussing *120 journées* (see Sade 1909, 23-31), before writing *Dream*. Beckett's misnaming of Sade's principal work is most likely simply a human error resulting from a lapse in his memory rather than a clear indication that Beckett's only encounter with Sade at this time had been through Praz's monograph, as Elsa Baroghel posits (DPhil thesis, 39).

Whilst we have no way of knowing precisely when Beckett read *L'Œuvre de Sade*, we do know that 'the first time [he] could […] have come across [this text] […] was during the two years he spent […] at the École Normale Supérieure (1928 to 1930)' (Pilling 2014, 117). It is significant that Beckett's time at the École Normale Supérieure coincided with the tail-end of the Surrealist re-assessment of Sade's works, as it means that Beckett's earliest encounters with the controversial French figure are likely to have been situated within this context of viewing him as a writer who could offer insight into humanity's darkest impulses, as a 'Surrealist in Sadism' (Breton 1969, 26), rather than as a blemish upon history. The Surrealists believed that Sade's texts must have some artistic use and thus sought to rehabilitate the Divine Marquis' image so as to render him an accepted cultural reference point – a goal shared by Apollinaire. The 'explicit connection[s] between [Jean] Racine and

Sade' (Weller 2008, 210) which Beckett makes during his lectures at TCD suggest that Beckett held the same view.

As McKinley's 1931 lecture notes reveal, Beckett considered Racine's *Andromaque* (1667) to be 'an explicit statement of Sadism' because it unflinchingly states 'the cruelty of sexuality' (McKinley's lecture notes qtd in Knowlson and Knowlson 2006, 307) and explores 'the madness of desire: with one [character] using the other as a lever' (McKinley's lecture notes qtd in Knowlson and Knowlson 2006, 308). By claiming that the characters in Racine's play are cruel to one another through their regarding each other as 'lever[s]', Beckett exhibits a more nuanced comprehension of Sadism than is portrayed in Praz's *La carne*; he acknowledges that cruelty and sadism do not necessarily have to be of physical form. Rather, he is asserting that *Andromaque*'s sadism originates in its portrayal of interpersonal relations and desire. Therefore, Beckett's point of view is aligned with the understanding of sadism as a potentially non-physical phenomenon posited in Apollinaire's introduction to *L'Œuvre de Sade*. For Apollinaire, 'Tout investigateur qui voudra déterminer l'importance sociologique de l'amour devra lire les ouvrages principaux du marquis de Sade' [Any investigator who wishes to determine the sociological importance of love will have to read the Marquis de Sade's principal works] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 17), as

> ils nous montrent tout ce qui dans la vie se trouve en étroite connexité avec l'instinct sexuel qui, comme l'a reconnu le marquis de Sade avec une perspicacité indéniable, influe sur la presque totalité des rapport humains d'une manière quelconque. (Iwan Bloch qtd by Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 16-17)[12]

Hence, the comments which Beckett makes in his lectures on Racine, and his willingness to invoke the concept of sadism in a public setting, demonstrate that he felt that Sade's ideas could be useful literary tools even at this early point in his career. Thus, whilst we cannot

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[12] See p. 333 in the appendix for a translation.

definitively prove that Beckett read Apollinaire's anthology of Sade in the early 1930s, the confluence of his time in Paris with the Surrealist 'Sadean Revival', the comprehension of Sade's ideas exhibited during his lectures at TCD, and his ownership of a copy of *L'Œuvre de Sade* (see Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 56-57) make it likely that he had, at the very least, an awareness of this work.

1.1. The Impact of Mario Praz's *La carne, la morte, e il diavolo nella lettratura romantica*

Re-uniting entry 272 from the *'Dream' Notebook* with the surrounding matrix provided in Praz's monograph sheds light upon how Beckett must have been familiar with an important sadistic principle theorised by Praz. As previously mentioned, the quotation comprising entry 272 – 'Je désirerais que vous me guillotinassez [sic]' – is lifted from the seventeenth section of *La carne*'s third chapter. Here, Praz details the numerous 'macabre and grotesque' horrors exacted against lovers in Borel's works before asserting that 'Borel took a genuine pleasure in spectacles of cruelty' (Praz 1970, 137). Following this comment, Praz highlights examples of sadists abusing lovers, innocent people, and sexual beings within Gautier's, Sainte-Beuve's, Jules Janin's, and Baudelaire's works (Praz 1970, 139-52), before stating: 'Th[e] necessity of believing the lover to be a monstrous creature is a characteristic of sadism' (Praz 1970, 152). It is precisely this sadistic tenet that underpins Beckett's textual treatment of the Smeraldina, Syra-Cusa, and Frica in *Dream*.

At the beginning of 'TWO' Belacqua is said to be 'in love from the girdle up with a slob of a girl called Smeraldina-Rima' (*Dream*, 3), who is in possession of a body that is 'all wrong' (*Dream*, 15):

> Poppata, big breech, Botticelli thighs, knock-knees, ankles all fat nodules, wobbly, mammose, slobbery-blubbery, bubbubbubbub, a real button-bursting Weib ripe. Then, perched aloft on top of this porpoise prism, the loveliest little pale firm cameo of a birdface he ever clasped his blazing blue eyes on. (*Dream,* 15)

The comment that Belacqua is 'in love' with the Smeraldina 'from the girdle up' grants the narrator and Belacqua authority over her as it reveals how his positive feelings for her are defined according to his preferred terms from the very outset of their relationship. Moreover, the 'love' Belacqua feels for the Smeraldina is entangled with disgust and disdain, as unveiled by the narrator's/Belacqua's characterisation of her as a 'slob'.[13] This adjectival noun suggests that the Smeraldina is lazy, unclean, and a glutton: a 'fact' that is 'confirmed' by her repeatedly asking if words are signifiers for 'something to eat' (*Dream*, 24-25, 75). Belacqua's and the narrator's portrayal of the Smeraldina as inspiring revulsion is augmented by their use of onomatopoeic, adjectival signifiers, such as 'slobbery-blubbery bubbubbubbub', intended to be mimetic of her body 'wobbl[ing]' as she moves. These signifiers convey a breaking down of the 'integrity' of the Smeraldina's skin, making it seem as if that 'fragile barrier' is incapable of containing the 'horror' of her body's internal elements, therefore inspiring abjection within the reader (Kristeva 1982, 53-54). Abjection is then extended to the text's presentation of her as a 'real button-bursting' woman; it seems that the Smeraldina's body cannot be contained by the barrier of her own skin or by the artificial barriers of clothing, filling the reader with disgust at the suggestion of her sheer physicality. Even the narrator's/ Belacqua's complimenting of the Smeraldina's 'lovel[y] little pale' face is vouched in grotesque and unnatural terms, as she is said to possess a 'birdface'

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[13] I use the 'the narrator/Belacqua' construction as it impossible to disentangle the narrator's and Belacqua's voices from one another at certain points in *Dream* due to the prevalence of free indirect discourse within the novel.

which blends the human and the non-human in its aspect (Edwards and Graulund 2013, 49) whilst concomitantly appearing too small for the body upon which it is 'perched'.

Fascinatingly though, the insults which the narrator/Belacqua employs to describe the Smeraldina are combined with undeniable sexual interest in her. The downward movement of the text's surveying of the Smeraldina's physical features is 'reminiscent of Venus' emergence from the sea in Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (1485-86)' (Thursfield 2022, 69) – a painting that 'Beckett would have seen in the Uffizi gallery in Florence during his visit of late summer 1927' (Pilling 2003, 43) and which is invoked by the narrator's/Belacqua's claim that the Smeraldina has 'Botticelli thighs' – suggesting an exaltation of the Smeraldina's beauty despite Belacqua's/the narrator's caustic descriptions of her appearance, as well as an acknowledgement of her vulnerability which causes the narrator/Belacqua to take on a light akin to that exhibited by sadists pursuing the objects of their desires. The celebration of the Smeraldina's physicality intonated by Belacqua's/the narrator's comparison of her with Botticelli's painting is then seemingly augmented by the comment, 'By God he often thought she was the living spit of Madonna Lucrezia del Fede' (*Dream*, 15). Lucrezia del Fede was the wife and muse of Andrea del Sarto, who painted her as a Madonna figure in his most famous piece, *The Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist* (circa 1520-30). The comparison of the Smeraldina with this lady initially appears to engender further elevation of her beauty; however, it is possible that Belacqua's reported thoughts are tinged by darker sentiments. As Pilling notes, del Fede was 'given something of a bad press by [Giorgio] Vasari and later Robert Browning' (Pilling 2003, 43), with the former asserting that she 'delighted in trapping the hearts of men and among others snared the unlucky Andrea' (Vasari qtd in Whiting 1925, 312) and the latter echoing these assertions of infidelity in his famous poem, 'Andrea del Sarto' (1855) (see Browning

2009, 245-46, ll. 220-44). Subsequently, the reader realises that even the narrator's/Belacqua's ostensibly complimentary descriptions of the Smeraldina are coloured by insults, thereby illustrating how Belacqua's 'love' for her has always been amalgamated with his need to denigrate her. She is, in Belacqua's/the narrator's eyes, a 'monstrous creature' due to her 'deplorable' physicality.

The Syra-Cusa, meanwhile, is presented as possessing a different type of 'monstrosity':

> The Syra-Cusa: her body more perfect than dream creek, amaranth lagoon. She flowed along in a nervous swagger, swinging a thin arm amply. The sinewy fetlock sprang, Brancusi bird, from the shod foot, blue arch of veins and small bones, rose like a Lied to the firm wrist of the reins, the Bilitis breasts. Her neck was scraggy and her head was null. Faciem, Phœbe, cacantis habes. She was prone, when brought to dine out, to puke, but into her serviette, with decorum, because, supposedly, the craving of her viscera was not for food and drink. (*Dream*, 33)

The narrator's remark that the Syra-Cusa's body was 'more perfect than dream creek' is in direct contrast with his/Belacqua's comment that the Smeraldina's body was 'all wrong', leading the reader to believe that they are about to be presented with an exultation of the Syra-Cusa's physicality. The comparison of the Syra-Cusa with an 'amaranth lagoon' augments this belief; but, any hopes of a non-judgemental portrait of the Syra-Cusa are swiftly obliterated by the narrator's subsequent descriptions of her. By describing the Syra-Cusa as having 'sinewy fetlock[s]', 'shod f[ee]t', and alluding to 'reins' whilst discussing her, the narrator causes her to take on a grotesque, erotically charged appearance which abrasively combines the human and equine. Pilling even goes as far as stating that there are suggestions of the Syra-Cusa as dominatrix in the narrator's sexually charged descriptions of her (Pilling 2003, 73) – an assertion which is bolstered by her being compared to 'Brancusi['s] bird' statues and by the noting of her 'Bilitis breasts'.

'Brancusi bird' is an allusion to the bronze, wooden, and stone sculptures of Constantin Brâncusi. In his analysis of the role played by Brâncusi in the revolutionization of sculpture, Sidney Geist underscores how works such as *Bird in Space* (1923) and *Princess X* (1915-16) connect 'the self' with the idea of 'the sexual being' (Geist 1984, 30), thereby unveiling the erotic intonations evoked by the smooth curvature and amorphous shapes of the Romanian artist's works. The phrase 'Bilitis breasts', meanwhile, situates the Syra-Cusa within the sadistic tradition of the 'Fatal Woman', discussed extensively in Praz's fourth chapter (see Praz 1970, 199-300), by invoking the 'imaginary Greek *femme fatale* created by Pierre Louÿs' (Pilling 2003, 73) for his collection of erotic, lesbian poetry, *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1894). This direct intertextual allusion also suggests that the Syra-Cusa may possess homosexual as well as heterosexual desires. Consequently, the Syra-Cusa is portrayed as a dangerous – she is later described as possessing 'laskivious […] Basilisk eyes' [*Dream*, 50]) – and 'sexually rampant' (Pilling 2003, 73) being through the action of the narrator's atomising gaze. As a result of this, she is transformed into a caricature of a woman intended to be voyeuristically enjoyed by the narrator, Belacqua, and most disturbingly, by the reader, before she is dismissed with the caustic imperative, 'Be off, puttanina' (*Dream*, 51).

This voyeuristic enjoyment of the Syra-Cusa becomes truly sinister when the narrator connects the disgusting aspects of her being – the grotesque elements of her appearance and her abject 'puk[ing] […] into her serviette' – with her sexuality. By asserting that the Syra-Cusa's vomiting is inspired by the fact that 'the craving of her viscera was not for food or drink', the narrator suggests her need for sexual gratification is so prevalent that her body rejects non-sexual 'sustenance'. Whether this need for carnal pleasure is homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual in nature remains unclarified throughout the text, as *Dream* does not definitively expand upon the Syra-Cusa's sexual preferences beyond the

narrator's later, highly demeaning remark that 'she was never even lassata, let alone satiata' (*Dream*, 50). In fact, the narrator of this text may have intended for his earlier suggestion of the Syra-Cusa's potential homosexual desires to function as an insult; he employs a similar strategy when describing the Frica by remarking that she 'itch[es] manifestly to work that which is not seemly' (*Dream*, 179). As Pilling comments, this phrase is adapted from *Romans* 1:27, 'where it refers to homosexual activity, which might or might not extend to the [Frica]' (Pilling 2003, 295). Thus, by depersonalising the Syra-Cusa through the misogynistic action of presenting her as a promiscuous, 'Fatal Woman' who is both desirable and repulsive because of her sexuality, *Dream* further unveils its intertextual connections to the sadistic tradition of literature as envisaged in *La carne*.

Shockingly, *Dream*'s depiction of the Frica is even more 'vicious' (Ackerley 2002, 66) than its presentation of the Smeraldina and the Syra-Cusa. As the Frica enters the 'soirée Dada' (Bouchard 1997, 145) which she has organised in Dublin, the narrator comments:

> Into the quiet pages of our cadenza bursts a nightmare harpy, Miss Dublin, a hell-cat. In she lands singing Havelock Ellis in a deep voice, itching manifestly to work that which is not seemly. If only she could be bound and beaten and burnt, but not quick. Or, failing that, brayed gently in a mortar. Open upon her concave breast as on a lectern lies Portigliotti's *Penumbre* [sic] *Claustrali* bound in tawed caul. In her talons earnestly she clutches Sade's *Hundred Days* and the *Anterotica* of Aliosha [sic] G. Brignole-Sale, unopened, bound in shagreened caul. A septic pudding hoodwinks her, a stodgy turban of pain it laps her horse-face. The eye-hole is clogged with the bulbus and the round pale globe goggles exposed. Solitary meditation has furnished her with nostrils of generous bore. The mouth champs an invisible bit, foam gathers at the bitter commissures. The crateriform brisket, lipped with sills of paunch, cowers ironically behind a maternity tunic. Keyholes have wrung the unfriendly withers, the osseous rump screams beneath the hobble-skirt. Wastes of woad worsted are gartered to the pasterns. Aie! (*Dream*, 179-80)

Before examining the grotesque and abject aspects of the narrator's description of the Frica, it is necessary to address the physically sadistic wishes of the narrator – 'If only she could be bound and beaten and burnt, but not quick. Or, failing that, brayed gently in a mortar'. Pilling's commentary on the *'Dream' Notebook* reveals that the former of these brutal actions – the desire to see the Frica bound and whipped – is derived from William M.

Cooper's *Flagellation and the Flagellants* (1869) (Pilling in Beckett 1999, entry 391, 55; cf. Cooper 1869, 38), whereas the latter – the proposal to 'bray[]' the Frica in a 'mortar' – is adapted from *Proverbs* 27:22 (Pilling in Beckett 1999, entry 242, 35). The essential differences between the occurrence of these phrases in their source texts and the use to which Beckett puts them is that in their source texts both of these actions are punitive – they are seeking retribution. In *Dream*, the Frica has committed no crime other than 'burst[ing]' 'into the quiet pages of our cadenza'. Thus, the narrator's calls for violence against this person are unprovoked, causing them to take on a sadistic tinge. Subsequently, it seems like the narrator takes 'genuine pleasure' in contemplating fantasies of physically harming the Frica, hypertextually aligning his desires with one of the primary characteristics of sadism identified by Praz in *La carne* (Praz 1970, 133-41).

This sadistic colouring of the text's portrayal of the Frica is augmented by its presentation of her as a grotesque, abject, sub-human being. By describing her as a 'nightmare harpy', the narrator implies that the Frica, like the Smeraldina and the Syra-Cusa before her, is a monstrous being which amalgamates the human and non-human. Additionally, the detailing of her 'concave breast' unnerves the reader as it seemingly inverts the Frica's body, invoking a sense of abjection connected to the desecration of the inside/outside border (Kristeva 1982, 53) whilst simultaneously implying that she is an unnatural being capable of inspiring horror within the reader due to her innately uncanny nature. A sense of body horror is then generated by the narrator's comments that the Frica's eyes are 'bulbus […] pale globes' which 'clog[]' her 'eye-hole[s]'. The voiced bilabial plosives in the adjective 'bulbus' work in conjunction with how this term forces us to confront the fragility of the flesh-and-blood body to provoke fearful revulsion within the reader. Furthermore, the narrator's endowing of the Frica with a 'horse-face' is not only

redolent of *Dream*'s description of the Syra-Cusa, but also evokes a sense of readerly repulsion predicated upon the text's emphasising of her animalistic qualities and the abject image of spittle, in the form of 'foam', 'gather[ing]' at the edges of her mouth.

However the true vehemence of this portrait arises from the narrator's malicious connecting of the Frica's dehumanising and disgusting attributes with her sexuality. The phrases 'itching manifestly to work that which is not seemly' and 'Solitary meditation has furnished her with nostrils of great bore' are onanistic in their inflections and nauseating in their imagery, suggesting that the Frica's body exhibits overt signs of her masturbatory practices whilst concomitantly 'connecting the erotic and the emetic upon a syntactical and imagistic level' (Thursfield 2022, 71). Moreover, each text the Frica possesses is concerned with paraphilic practices and atypical conceptions of sexuality. Giuseppe Portigliotti's *Penombre Claustrali* (1930) presents a character-portrait of Anton Giulio Brignole-Sale (whose '*Anterotica*' the Frica also holds) and explores his elevated interest in sexual flagellation (see Praz 1970, 50n.30). 'Sade's *Hundred Days*', meanwhile, refers to *120 journées* – a text which has been repeatedly accused of being pornographic and in which Sade 'condensait toutes ses théories Nouvelles et y créait aussi, cent ans avant le docteur Krafft-Ebing, la psychopathie sexuelle' [condensed all of his new theories about sexuality and also created, one hundred years before Dr. Krafft-Ebing, the *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886)] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 24) through the detailing of 600 increasingly brutal 'passions'. Even the Frica's entrance into the text is coloured by her 'singing Havelock Ellis' – an author whose most notable work is *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897-1910).

Not only does the Frica seem obsessed with sex, but her obsession is connected with her predatory nature – implied by her grotesque characterisation as a 'nightmare harpy' with sharp 'talons' – suggesting that she has been metamorphosed into a sub-human 'thing'

by her sexuality. Subsequently, *Dream* actively 'desublimates the sublime woman by provoking readerly disgust at the material female body' (Anspaugh 1995, 27) whilst also blending the abject and grotesque with the sexual, resulting in an eroticisation of the disgusting comparable to that described by Praz in *La carne* (1970, 1-52). In doing so, and in using *120 journées* to imply that the Frica has sexually deviant tendencies, *Dream* demonstrates a greater awareness of the content of Sade's works than can be gleaned from Praz's *La carne*, and than is implied by *Dream*'s early utilisation of the hyphenated signifier 'Masoch-Sade' (*Dream*, 27), as well as its summoning of 'Justine and Juliette' (*Dream*, 27), as empty signifiers representative of 'any pair of large contrary human factors' (Beckett 1984, 33). Therefore, just as *Dream* may be said to belong to a 'tradition of misogynistic literature' (Ackerley 2002, 56) due to its use of tropes such as the *femme fatale* and its denigration of the female form, so too may it be said to belong to a 'Sadistic canon' of literature running from Sade to de Quincey, Sainte-Beuve, Borel, Gautier, Janin, Baudelaire, and Swinburne due to its portrayal of sexual beings as innately monstrous.

Compared to *Dream*, the stories comprising *More Pricks* are characterised by a noticeable decrease in sadistic venom when concerning their treatment of women in whom Belacqua is sexually and/or romantically interested. For example, let us compare the treatment of the Frica in *Dream* with its almost identical counterpart in 'A Wet Night':

> Behold the Frica, she visits talent in the Service Flats. In she lands, singing Havelock Ellis in a deep voice, frankly itching to work that which is not seemly. Open upon her concave breast as on a lectern lies Portigliotti's *Penombre Claustrali*, bound in tawed caul. In her talons earnestly she grasps Sade's *Hundred Days* and the *Anterotica* of Aliosha G. Brignole-Sale, unopened, bound in shagreened caul. A septic pudding hoodwinks her, a stodgy turban of pain it laps her horse face. The eyehole is clogged with the bulbus, the round pale globe goggles exposed. Solitary meditation has furnished her with nostrils of generous bore. The mouth champs an invisible bit, foam gathers at the bitter commissures. The crateriform brisket, lipped with sills of paunch, cowers ironically behind a maternity tunic. Keyholes have wrung the unfriendly withers, the osseous rump screams behind the hobble-skirt. Wastes of woad worsted advertise the pasterns. Aie! (*MPTK*, 46)

Despite this description still bearing the hallmarks of *Dream*'s narrator's attacks upon the Frica, this revised version lacks the ferocity expressed in Beckett's earlier novel. This is largely due to the omission of the paragraph beginning 'What shall we call it? Give it a name quick' (*Dream*, 180) – with the singular, third-person pronoun 'it' further dehumanising the Frica – and a reduction in the scope of the narrator's criticism from the societal to the personal. In *Dream* the narrator categorises the Frica as 'Miss Dublin', implying that she is a stereotypical 'Dublin doyenne' (Ackerley 2002, 67). Such a comment is notably absent in 'A Wet Night', meaning that there is no expansion of indignation to the wider scale of 'Swiftian caricature' (Ackerley 2002, 66). This difference reveals a subtle shift in Beckett's relations with Sade: whilst the Divine Marquis is still used as a tool to insult the Frica in *More Pricks*, he is no longer associated with a definitive cultural critique. Thus, it appears that Beckett realised he would have to reduce the sadistic power of his literary output to gain publication.

Another illustration of this reduction of sadistic force can be found in the text's portrait of Thelma bboggs, Belacqua's final partner in 'What a Misfortune':

> She was not beautiful in the sense that Lucy ['Walking Out' (*MPTK*, 93-105)] was; not could she be said to transcend beauty, as the Alba ['A Wet Night' (*MPTK*, 41-75)] seemed to do; nor yet to have slammed her life and person in its face, as Ruby ['Love and Lethe' (*MPTK*, 77-92)] perhaps had. She brought neither the old men running nor the young men to a standstill. To be quite plain she was and always had been so definitely not beautiful that once she was seen she was with difficulty forgotten, which is more than can be said for, say, the Venus Callipyge. (*MPTK*, 111)

Whilst the reader is allowed to learn a lot about how Thelma is 'not beautiful' through the above-quoted juxtaposing of her and Belacqua's other romantic interests from throughout *More Pricks*, they are granted no actual image of her. Subsequently, Thelma comes to resemble a negative space within this collection's pantheon of women. She is defined solely through the act of non-description. In fact, Thelma is presented as the very antithesis of a

beautiful woman through the text's assertion that she is so plain that she resembles a negativised 'Venus Callipyge'. The *Venus Callipyge* is a first or second century BC sculpture of the goddess Aphrodite which is widely regarded as the archetype of classical beauty. By comparing Thelma with this statue, *More Pricks* redefines the terms of the binary opposition between beauty and ugliness, positing them as aspects closely allied to one another and which are actually opposed to 'plainness'. Thelma's lack of description, and the presentation of plainness as the true null-point of the beautiful and the disgusting, actually affirms the sadistic connectivity of the sexual, the beautiful, and the disgusting posited in *La carne* through a *via negativa*. Thelma is so plain that she could never be accurately described in monstrous terms. Consequently, one notices that in *More Pricks* there is an eroticisation of the disgusting predicated upon the argument that all that prompts sexual desire through its traditional routes is, in a way, repugnant. It is only through the ablation of traditional sexual desire that Belacqua experiences, paradoxically, what he terms 'intense' sexual attraction towards an individual. In Pilling's words, 'the "intense appeal" of Thelma [for Belacqua] "from the strictly sexual standpoint" ([*MPTK*], 111) is precisely that she has no sexual appeal at all' (Pilling 2011, 81). Through her sheer negativity and her denial of traditionally sexually interesting characteristics, Thelma therefore affirms that *More Pricks* conforms to Praz's central sadistic tenet of sexual beings being both monstrous and desirable.

In *Murphy* one also detects a deep connection between the erotic and emetic; however, in this work the sexual individual is no longer grotesque. Rather, the text's understanding of what is grotesque has definitively shifted:

> Miss Counihan sat on Wylie's knees […] and oyster kisses passed between them. Wylie did not often kiss, but when he did it was a serious matter. […] A kiss from Wylie was like a breve tied, in a long slow amorous phrase, over bars' times in equivalent demi-semiquavers. Miss Counihan had never enjoyed anything quite so much as this slowmotion osmosis of love's spittle.
> […]
> Enter Cooper. Like a mollusc torn from its rock Wylie came away. (*Murphy*, 75)

Neither Miss Counihan's mouth, which oozes sexuality due the text's comparing it to a 'rosebud' (*Murphy*, 75), nor Wylie's mouth is described in disgusting terms when considered in isolation. Instead, it is the act of kissing itself that is portrayed as repulsive. The phrase 'oyster kisses' – with its simultaneously slimy and amorous connotations – is derived from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, where this phrase is used to describe kisses which are 'too lascivious [and] […] violent' (Burton 1886, 536; cf. Beckett 1999, entry 351, 49). The temporal elongation enacted by the adjectival portmanteau, 'slowmotion', and the unrelenting implications of the noun 'osmosis', which suggests a continual transference of 'spittle' between Miss Counihan and Wylie, complement the abject implications of the phrase 'oyster kisses' and, in so doing, render the text's portrayal of the act of kissing repulsive. The readerly disgust evoked by this action is then accented by the image of Wylie being latched on to Miss Counihan as if he were a 'mollusc' clinging to a rock. This comparison of Wylie to a 'mollusc' is both grotesque and abject, as it suggests that there is something undesirably animalistic about the way in which he kisses Miss Counihan whilst concomitantly re-emphasising the mucilaginous qualities of his and Miss Counihan's kisses. Thus, due to the visual and tactile imagery of the text, the reader finds themselves, much like Cooper, suitably 'turned off' (*Murphy* 75) by the only sexual act described within the novel. This reconfiguring of the sexual act, rather than the sexual being, as disgusting is indicative of a definitive shift in Beckett's literary conceptualisation of the relations between the repulsive and the erotic as theorised by Praz.

1.2. The Impact of Guillaume Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre du marquis de Sade*

The reduction of sadistic force in *More Pricks* renders visible a potentially unexpected similarity between Apollinaire's depiction of Sade and the condemnation of vulgarised sadism encountered in 'Dante and the Lobster'. In the introduction to *L'Œuvre de Sade*, Apollinaire asserts that Sade 'était moins coupable qu'on ne le prétendit' [was less guilty than was claimed] (Sade 1909, 3) when concerning the Rose Keller affair.[14] He then goes further in his attempts to rehabilitate Sade's image by seeking to destabilise the proposal that Sade was insane, arguing (by way of Marc Antoine Baudot's *Notes historiques* [written circa 1828, pub. posthumously in 1893]) that there are 'des germes de dépravation, mais pas de folie' [germs of depravity, but not of madness] (Baudot qtd in Sade 1909, 14) throughout Sade's writings. Hence, it is apparent that Apollinaire's 1909 anthology of Sade seeks to re-shape the public's perception of the Divine Marquis, metamorphosing him from a dangerous, deranged individual into a figure that could 'dominer le vingtième [siècle]' [dominate the 20th (century)] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 17).

Nowhere is this active rewriting of Sade's reputation more visible than in the text's account of his conduct as a member of the Convention Nationale during the Terror:

> Sade était un vrai républicain, admirateur de Marat, mais ennemi de la peine de mort […]. Dans son *Idée sur le mode de la sanction des lois*, il indique comment il entend que la loi, propose par les députés, soit votée par le people, parce qu'il faut admettre 'à la sanction des lois cette partie du peuple la plus maltraitée du sort, et puisque c'est elle que la loi *frappe* le plus souvent, c'est donc à elle à choisir la loi dont elle consent à être frappe'. Sa conduite sous la Terreur fut humaine et bienfaisante; suspect, sans doute à cause de ses déclamations contre la peine de mort, il fut arrêté le 6 décembre 1793, mais remis en liberté, grâce au député Rovère, en octobre 1794. (Sade 1909, 6)[15]

[14] The Rose Keller affair was the first public scandal involving Sade. It centred around his kidnapping of a young French beggar named Rose Keller, whom he sexually abused, and culminated in his incarceration at Château de Pierre-Encise in 1768. See Sade 1909, 2-5.
[15] See p. 333 in the appendix for a translation.

Here Apollinaire presents Sade as a champion of liberty, a man who suffered unjustly at the hands of those in power, and as a true egalitarian who epitomised the values of the French Revolution. The unveiling of Sade's impassioned opposition to the death penalty may shock readers as this stance appears to be at odds with the overarching tenets of sadism. But, as de Beauvoir would later comment, in order for the Sadist to derive pleasure from their actions, 'one must valorise [the flesh]' (de Beauvoir 2012, 68). The French state's sustained usage of the guillotine during the Terror 'constituted the most radical negation of Sade's demonic world' (de Beauvoir 2012, 68) because it depersonalised violence, desecrating the interpersonal relations essential to the theoretical viability of sadism and thereby undermining the sadist's ability to derive pleasure from their actions. Ergo, we can deduce that state-sanctioned execution represents a corruption of sadism. Whilst Apollinaire's work does not go into as great detail as de Beauvoir's later essay, 'Faut-il brûler Sade?' (1951-52), it is significant that Apollinaire highlights this aspect of Sade's personal beliefs as it facilitates recognition of a hypertextual parallel between the new mythology of Sade initiated by Apollinaire and the opposition to the inhumanity of execution in 'Dante and the Lobster'.

At the conclusion of 'Dante and the Lobster', Belacqua wrestles with shock, despair, and eventually resignation when forced to confront an act of vulgarised sadism: the boiling of the titular lobster. Phyllis Carey identifies this incident as the 'epiphanic moment' of the text (Carey 1992, 111-12), causing the reader to question: what is being realised? It is readily apparent that Belacqua is appalled by the knowledge that he has unwittingly participated in the killing of the lobster. Not only does Belacqua feel 'sick' (*MPTK*, 13) and protest, '"But it's not dead" […] "you can't boil it like that"' (*MPTK*, 14), as his aunt is about to cook the crustacean, but the text also personifies the lobster by endowing it with a

consciousness 'capable of intonating a melancholy acceptance of its fate' (Thursfield 2022, 75) through the adoption of a phrase from Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale' (1819): 'Take into the air my quiet breath' (*MPTK*, 14; cf. Keats 2008, 187, l. 54). This emphasises how the narrator – and by extension, Belacqua – humanises the lobster, highlighting the guilt that the protagonist feels for taking part in its execution whilst also lacing 'Dante and the Lobster' with a crushing sense of irony.

Throughout this story the narrator repeatedly underlines Belacqua's interest in the fate of the 'Malahide murderer', Henry McCabe:

> [Belacqua's] food had been further spiced by the intelligence […] that the Malahide murderer's petition for mercy, signed by half the land, having been rejected, the man must swing at dawn in Mountjoy and nothing could save him. Ellis the hangman was even now on his way (*MPTK*, 10)

and:

> Where we were, thought Belacqua, as we were […] Why not piety and pity both, even down below? […] A little mercy in the stress of sacrifice, a little mercy to rejoice against judgement. He thought of […] poor McCabe. (*MPTK*, 13)

But, when Belacqua is confronted with an act of execution at the conclusion of 'Dante and the Lobster', McCabe is notably absent from his mind. Belacqua is unaware of the symbolic parallels between the lobster and McCabe and between himself and 'Ellis the hangman', and is also ignorant of how his pity appears self-conciliatory given the fact that it is ostensibly misdirected. Thus, it is clear that Belacqua is forever doomed to ineptitude when trying the 'resolve the paradox' (Pilling 2011, 50) contained in Dante's 'superb pun […]: "*qui vive la pietà quando è ben morta*"' (*MPTK*, 11; cf. Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XX.128.28), as he is incapable of reconciling justice and pity in this world.

The reader, contrastingly, is afforded such a realisation as they have greater access to the parallels between McCabe and the lobster through the narrator's shaping of the text. Consequently, the narrator's 'unexpected' (Cohn 2005, 45) closing remark, 'It is not' (*MPTK*,

14), represents a perfect example of Beckett's early hostility to the Proustian epiphany engendered in the complex interplay of epiphanic realisation by the reader *vis-à-vis* the protagonist's failure of epiphany, whilst also enabling 'Dante and the Lobster' to unite vulgarised sadism in the form of execution with a sobering illustration of 'the horror of the realisation of the complete and utter absence of allegory' in our world and 'the world below' (Slote 2010, 26). The revelation that neither hanging nor boiling alive is necessarily 'a quick death' (*MPTK*, 14) demonstrates how 'Dante and the Lobster' uses cruelty in a pedagogical manner – the story elevates the reader's understanding of *pathos* and sorrow by forcing them to confront the brutality and, given McCabe's potential innocence (Kroll 1977, 54-55), injustice of execution – whilst also hypertextually aligning the text's condemnation of state-issued death sentences with Sade's detestation of the death penalty. In 'Dante and the Lobster' vulgarised sadism is therefore used to expose the inextinguishable pain lingering in the wake of injustice.

There is still a vague interest in the dynamics and implications of state-sanctioned murder in *Murphy* (see *Murphy*, 90); however, this aspect of the text is so minor that it is not worth delving into in any detail. Rather, Beckett seems to have incorporated a different aspect of Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* into this novel. In his introduction to the 1909 anthology, Apollinaire claims that 'Sade pensait qu'il y a "une extrême connexité entre le moral et le physique"' [Sade thought that there is an extreme connectivity between the moral and the physical] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 18). Through this comment Apollinaire identifies a distinctively anti-Cartesian leaning within Sade's canon, which he later emphasises by excerpting a section from *Justine* in which Sade argues that vices opposing the tyranny of mental virtue are 'les seuls manières d'être qui s'arrangeront le mieux à leur physique ou à leurs organes' [the only manners of living which are best suit people's

physiques and their organs] (Sade 1909, 87). Here Sade prioritises the body over the mind by proposing that one's mind can only be content if their body is as well – an argument diametrically opposed to the philosophical schema of mind-body dualism proposed by Descartes. Ergo, in *L'Œuvre de Sade*, Apollinaire takes care to highlight the fact that the Sadean conception of the world is innately anti-Cartesian.[16]

It is precisely this anti-Cartesian conjoining of mind and body, and even prioritising of the body over the mind, which fascinates Beckett throughout *Murphy*. At the very beginning of the novel, the reader is confronted with the bizarre image of the text's eponymous protagonist

> sat naked in his rocking chair […]. Seven scarves held him in position. Two fastened his shins to the rockers, one his thighs to the seat, two his breast and belly to the back, one his wrists to the strut behind. Only the most local movement were possible. Sweat poured off him, tightened the thongs. The breath was not perceptible. […] Somewhere a cuckoo-clock, having struck between twenty and thirty, became the echo of a street-cry, which now entering the mew gave *Quid pro quo! Quid pro quo!* directly.
>
> These were sights and sounds that he did not like. They detained him in the world to which they belonged […]
>
> He sat in his chair in this way because it gave him pleasure! First it gave his body pleasure […]. Then it set him free in his mind. For it was not until his body was appeased that he could come alive in his mind. (*Murphy*, 3-4)

What is remarkable about this passage – beyond its arresting strangeness – is its clear delineation of the fact that the 'big world' of the physical constantly 'impinges upon Murphy' (Cohn 1964, 34), troubling his attempts to inhabit the microcosm, whilst concomitantly being the only route through which he may come to find himself in the 'little world' of his mind. As the text highlights here, before Murphy can enter into the microcosm he must first 'appease[]' his body by providing it with 'pleasure'. Thus, Murphy's actual experience of the world is dominated by an intense connectivity between the physical and

[16] Similar arguments against Cartesianism are also posited via Apollinaire's excerpting of Sade's *Philosophie*. See Sade 1909, 161-96.

the mental. This exposes how ‘belief in a radical mind-body dichotomy’ (Henning 1985, 8) is erroneous. As Sade states in *L’Œuvre de Sade*, the body must be ‘appeased’ before the mind.

Furthermore, the ‘pleasure’ with which Murphy ‘appease[s]’ his body is noticeably erotic. Without going as far as J. D. O’Hara does and claiming that perhaps the missing scarf in Murphy’s elaborate scheme of self-bondage is tied around his penis (O’Hara 1997, 69), it is worth noting that whilst Murphy is bound he ‘sweats’ profusely. The sexual suggestions generated by this sweating are augmented by how, following Celia’s phone call,

> The rock got faster and faster, shorter and shorter, the iridescence was gone, the cry in the mew was gone, soon his body would be quiet. Most things under the moon got slower and then stopped, a rock got faster and faster then stopped. Soon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free. (*Murphy*, 8)

The text’s description of Murphy’s rocking as becoming ‘faster and faster, shorter and shorter’ is evocative of how one’s actions speed up whilst approaching orgasm. Furthermore, the fact that Murphy’s rocking becomes ‘faster and faster’ before then suddenly ‘stopp[ing]’ causes the textual presentation of his movement to bear notable analogies to the male orgasm: the abrupt conclusion of his rocking indicates that once his body has been ‘appease[d]’, the ‘journey’ is complete. As Anthony Jones remarks, due to the sheer physicality of Murphy’s movement, it appears that ‘Celia’s untimely telephone call occasions a surge of sexual desire which promptly takes control of his being’ (Jones 1980, 38). It is only after submitting to this sexual impulse that Murphy is capable of ‘com[ing] alive in his mind’. Thus, the inseparable interrelations of the physical and mental are exposed, illustrating how Murphy’s understanding of the world is flawed due to ‘One of the terms of his dualistic equation [being] inadequately formulated: his neat conceptualisation of a detestable physical self fails to take account of the intrusive [and undeniable] appetites

of the body' (Jones 1980, 38). Subsequently, it is clear that Murphy must attain physical *jouissance* to find mental pleasure.

Celia's experiences whilst sitting in Murphy's rocking chair further affirm the inextricable connectivity of the physical and mental whilst concomitantly suggesting that the 'pleasure' which one feels in this chair is purely physical and, hence, has been misidentified by the 'would-be Geulincxian' (Cohn 1964, 34), Murphy:

> She tried to think of Mr. Kelly or the irrevocable days or the unattainable days, but always the moment came when no effort of thought could prevail against the sensation of being imbedded in a jelly of light, or calm the trembling of her body to be made fast. (*Murphy*, 44)

Comparably to the description of Murphy's time in the rocking chair, Celia's sitting also ends in an orgasmic climax indicated by how she could not prevent herself from 'trembling', as if she were in the throes of intense sexual ecstasy, through any 'effort of thought'. Her mind has been completely overwhelmed by carnal pleasure. When this aspect of the narrator's description of the effects of the 'pleasure' which the chair generates within individuals of either sex is combined with the fact that Celia 'could not sit for long in the chair without the impulse stirring, tremulously, as for an exquisite depravity, to be naked and bound' (*Murphy*, 44), it becomes clear that Murphy's rocking chair is endowed with some bizarre, 'erotic appeal' (Jones 1980, 42). Consequently, *Murphy* posits the supremacy of the body over the mind in unquestionably sexual terms. In so doing, this text subverts the Cartesian belief in mind-body dualism through the hypertextual transposition of Sade's erotic opposition to this idea as outlined in Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade*.

The final way in which *Murphy* may be said to be connected to Beckett's knowledge of sadism and Sade's works is through its presentation of the love-circuits prevalent throughout its narrative. The earliest instance of an absurd love-cycle within *Murphy* is located on the fifth page of the novel, where Neary states that '"To gain the affections of

Miss Dwyer […] even for one short hour, would benefit [him] to no end"' (*Murphy*, 5), before the narrator clarifies: 'Of such was Neary's love for Miss Dwyer, who loved a Flight-Lieutenant Elliman, who loved a Miss Farren of Ringsakiddy, who loved a Father Fitt of Ballinclashet, who in all sincerity was bound to acknowledge a certain vocation for a Mrs West of Passage, who loved Neary' (*Murphy*, 5). Hence, the absurdity of love is introduced into the novel as a primary theme at a very early point through the narrative practice of enumeration – a technique which becomes extremely prevalent in *Watt*.

Later in the text, the reader is presented with yet another cycle of unrequited love. Throughout the novel, Neary and Wylie both pursue Miss Counihan whose affections they cannot truly win so long as Murphy is alive ('"I greatly fear," said Wylie, "that so long as Murphy is even a remote possibility Miss Counihan will not parley.' [*Murphy*, 41]). Murphy is already seriously intimately entangled with Celia – following his death it is noted by Neary that '"Miss Kelly [Celia] would have been Mrs Murphy," said Neary, "if Mr. Murphy had been spared a little longer"' (*Murphy*, 167) – adding yet another layer of unrequited desire to the text. As Ruby Cohn and Chris Ackerley both point out, whilst the 'plot [of the novel] spins around Murphy, […] its shape is derived from Racine's *Andromaque*, since "the gentle passion" [of desire] is ignited but not requited' (Cohn 2005, 75; cf. Ackerley 1998, xvii). As such, it would stand to reason that the one-way relationships in *Murphy* are modelled after those 'sadistic' relationships found throughout *Andromaque*; however, it is here that we encounter a complication.

In his TCD lectures, Beckett comments that Racine's *Andromaque* is 'sadistic' because of the ways in which it portrays the 'cruelty of sexuality' with characters using one another as 'lever[s]' through which they may attain their goals. Furthermore, *Andromaque* is, importantly, a classically tragic play. Whilst Neary and Wylie undeniably use Murphy as a

type of 'lever' – Neary, Wylie, Cooper, and Miss Counihan only travel to London in the hopes of finding Murphy to either affirm the rumours that he is already amorously involved with another woman (as Neary and Wylie want to show) or, as Miss Counihan hopes, to discover that he is establishing a lucrative life for himself and Miss Counihan – it is extremely difficult to argue that their treatment of Murphy, or even Miss Counihan's treatment of Neary and Wylie, is cruel. In fact, it is even stated that Miss Counihan does not desire to 'inflict needless pain on Neary by enlarging on the nature of her feeling for Mr. Murphy' (*Murphy*, 34), implying that the unrequited relations in *Murphy* are dominated by an overarching note of sympathy despite the frustrations which they cause – frustrations which are themselves presented as being predominantly 'comic' in nature (Mays in *Murphy*, x). Consequently, we can state that *Murphy*'s portrayal of unrequited relationships demonstrates a shift in Beckett's understanding of sadism, with this novel implying that he now recognises the potentially comic characteristics of the sadistic.

Despite Beckett possessing only limited knowledge of Sade's works in the early- to mid-1930s, the *'Dream' Notebook*, McKinley's notes on Beckett's TCD lectures, *Dream*, *More Pricks*, and *Murphy* expose his receptiveness to, and interest in, the literary potential of sadism. Beckett's early reading of Praz's *La carne* and Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* had a definitive impact upon the Irish author's early fictionalising techniques as well as his artistic concerns. Belacqua's/the narrator of *Deam*'s treatment of the Smelderina, Syra-Cusa, and Frica in Beckett's first novel unerringly conform to Praz's central sadistic tenet of presenting lovers as 'monstrous creatures' which are simultaneously denigrated and desired.

Whilst a comparable attacking of sexual beings is still prevalent in *More Pricks*, there is a notable decrease in sadistic venom throughout the stories comprising this collection.

This enables a surprising point of confluence between this text and Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* to emerge. 'Dante and the Lobster''s exploration of the cruel, unjust nature of vulgarised sadism hypertextually chimes with the voicing of Sade's unexpected personal opposition to state-sanctioned murder in Apollinaire's anthology of Sade. Furthermore, Beckett reconceives the ways in which the emetic and the erotic are related to one another between his writing of *Dream* and *Murphy*. Rather than presenting sexual individuals as repulsive because of the fact of their sexuality, in *Murphy* Beckett utilises the aesthetics of disgust to render the sexual act itself unerotic. Additionally, in this aforementioned text Beckett draws upon Apollinaire's outlining of Sade's anti-Cartesianism to reveal the flaws in Descartes positing of mind-body dualism through the employment of intensely erotically charged imagery. In *Murphy*, as in *L'Œuvre de Sade*, the body takes precedence over the mind. Further, Beckett's fashioning of the numerous unrequited love-circuits prevalent throughout *Murphy*'s narrative reveals how he is responsive to the comic potential, and darker traces, of Sade's work as espoused in Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* and Praz's *La carne*.

There subsequently appears to be a disjunction between the ways in which Beckett deploys Sadean notes in his published and unpublished works written between 1930 and 1935. On the one hand, in Beckett's unpublished works Sade is conceived as a weapon through which women and sexual beings may be denigrated by being presented as 'monstrous'. On the other hand, in his published works Sade takes on the appearance of a complex author who informs Beckett's multifaceted textual treatment of the death-penalty, eroticism, Cartesianism, and desire. As a result of this dissonance, Sade emerges not as a figure with a pre-determined meaning, but rather as an unstable, amorphous discourse continually recurring throughout Beckett's earliest fictional texts.

2. Beckett's Pessimistic, Satirical Pastiche of Sade's Literary Aesthetics and Techniques: *Watt*

As James Knowlson notes, 'early in February 1938 Jack Kahane […] rang Beckett with the proposal that he should translate […] Sade's *Les 120 journées de Sodome*' (Knowlson 1996, 286). This proposal clearly intrigued Beckett as on 20 February 1938 he wrote a letter to George Reavey concerning Kahane's request:

> I wish very much you were here to advise me about a translation (of Sades [sic] 120 Days for Jack Kahane). I should like very much to do it, & the terms are moderately satisfactory, but don't know what effect it wd. have on my lit. situation in England or how it might prejudice future publications of my own there. The surface is of an unheard of obscenity & not 1 in 100 will find literature in the pornography, or beneath the pornography, let alone one of the capital works of the 18th century, which it is for me. I don't mind the obloquy, on the contrary it will get more of me into a certain room. But I don't want to be spiked as a writer, I mean as a publicist in the airiest sense. […] I wouldn't do it without putting my name to it. (*LSB I*, 604)

By remarking that he 'should very much like to do it', Beckett unveils his personal interest in Sade's works; but, this private enthusiasm is rapidly mediated by his awareness of the Divine Marquis' sulphurous reputation. Despite his fears, Beckett declares that *120 journées* is 'one of the capital works of the 18th century'. Even in private correspondence such a positive valuation of Sade's work, let alone his twisted *chef d'œuvre*, was risky. Acceptance of Sade as a literary radical was rather rare in the early 20th century beyond avant-garde artistic and literary circles. Beckett was undoubtedly aware of this fact, with his anxiety about his theoretical translation of *120 journées* reaching the USA and the UK, in spite of the fact that 'no official attempt' (*LSB I*, 604) would be made to circulate it in these countries, being marked. Ultimately though, the above-cited letter concludes with Beckett stuck in a state of indecision.

A day later, on 21 February 1938, Beckett wrote a second letter about Kahane's offer, this time addressed to McGreevy:

> I saw Jack Kahane this morning. He agreed to the following conditions: 1. That I should write the preface. 2. That I should be paid 150 fr per 1,000 words irrespective of state of £. 3. That I should receive half on signing of contrac [sic] & half on delivery of MS. 4. That there should be no time limit. I then said I would give him a definite answer this day week. He intends to publish in 3 Vols. (not simultaneously) of approx. 50,000 words each. I should be paid per vol. […] I have read 1st & 3rd vols. of French edition. The obscenity of surface is indescribable. Nothing could be less pornographical. It fills me with a kind of metaphysical ecstasy. The composition is extraordinary, as rigorous as Dante's. If the dispassionate statement of 600 passions is Puritan and a complete absence of satire juvanelesque, then it is, as you say, puritanical & juvanelesque. You would loathe it whether or no. I don't know I shall do it. I think probably I shall. (*LSB I*, 607)

It appears that Beckett's meeting with Kahane on the morning of 21 February 1938 was rather productive, as the terms of Beckett potentially accepting the translation and the generous concessions which the publisher was willing to make for him are laid out far more clearly in this letter than in the previous letter to Reavey. In fact, the terms now seem so favourable that even though Beckett is still unsure of whether he will accept Kahane's offer, he writes in this letter that he 'think[s] [he] probably shall'. However, it is worth noting that Beckett's final comment in this letter may not be entirely sincere; by 1938 McGreevy had become rather fervently Catholic, causing something of a rift to form between him and Beckett due to the latter's notable 'distaste for Christianity and [its relations with] Ireland' (Bloom 1995, 500). Consequently, Beckett's assertion that he 'think[s] [he] probably shall' undertake the translation of *120 journées* could be purely inflammatory in nature, intended to incense an increasingly 'pious' friend. It is therefore impossible to definitively assert if Beckett was resolute in his decision to undertake a translation of *120 journées* at this specific point in time. But, it is not in these remarks about whether Beckett will undertake the translation, nor is it in the financial and contractual terms of the agreement, that this letter's true importance is unveiled. Rather, this letter is interesting because it openly presents Beckett's 'thoughts on this controversial work' (Knowlson 1996, 287) and because

it allows us to deduce precisely how much, and which edition, of *120 journées* Beckett had read at this point in time.

By 1938 there was only one French edition of Sade's novel in circulation – the three volume critical edition edited by Maurice Heine and published by Stendahl et Compagnie between 1931 and 1935.[17] Despite being marketed as a critical edition, the only commentary by Heine within these books is found at the beginning of the first volume, where Heine wrote a seven page introductory essay (see Sade 1931-35, ix-xvi). In this essay, Heine comments that *120 journées* is '[l'ouvrage] le mieux frappé de sa triple empreinte littéraire, scientifique & philosophique' [the most striking work of Sade's literary, scientific, and philosophic canon] (Heine in Sade 1931-35, ix) before going on to argue that it is the first 'roman noir' [Gothic novel] (Heine in Sade 1931-35, ix-x) ever written. Following this, Heine praises *120 journées* as 'la première *Psychopathia sexualis*' [the first *Psychopathia Sexualis*] (Heine in Sade 1931-35, x) and 'une prodigieuse mœchialogue' [a prodigious mœchialogue] (Heine in Sade 1931-35, x), thereby mirroring and expanding Bloch's earlier comments on Sade's importance to the fields of science and philosophy (see Sade 1909, 24).

Following the above, Heine states that Sade's

> constant refus de pitié unit dans son œuvre l'humain à l'inhumain & fait la principale force de son singulier génie. Nul n'a jamais sans doute affirmé consciemment un plus radical mépris de l'homme & en conséquence du dieu dont il se prétend l'image. (Heine in Sade 1931-35, xi)[18]

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[17] The actual text of the 1931-35 edition of Sade's *120 journées* is identical to that found in the 2011 Gallimard edition of this work (Sade 2011a, 13-383). The only difference between these editions is the inclusion of Heine's introductory essay in the earlier book. In accordance with the guidance in the University of Oxford's English Faculty handbook, all page references to the actual text of *120 journées* will be to Will McMorran and Thomas Wynn's 2016 translation of Sade's work published by Penguin in 2016 (Sade 2016). Due to the ready availability of the aforementioned Gallimard edition, page references to this edition are also included should readers wish to consult the original French.

[18] See p. 333 in the appendix for a translation.

Through this comment Heine highlights the transgressive power of Sade's literary utterances, arguing that the unflinching violence, and lack of pity, expressed in the Divine Marquis' work unites man's humanity with its negative whilst concomitantly hinting at Sade's own, and his libertines', disdain for religion. Following this insightful comment, Heine returns to providing his reader with a more straight-forward account of the textual history of *120 journées*, offering a brief overview of the circumstances in which Sade's original scroll was written and noting that Sade lost the manuscript of this novel during the storming of the Bastille (Heine in Sade 1931-35, xii-xv). Heine then concludes his preface with an appeal to the reader to judge *120 journées* upon its own merits and to read it in an unprejudiced manner (Heine in Sade 1931-35, xvi).

Beckett's epistolary admission that he only read the '1st & 3rd vols.' of this version of *120 journées* presents the possibility that his conception of Sade's masterpiece was coloured by gaps. The first volume of Heine's edition of Sade's *120 journées* contains: Heine's introductory essay, Sade's introduction to the novel (Sade 1931-35, 3-82; cf. Sade 2016, 3-66; Sade 2011a, 15-75), and the first 11 days of the first part of the novel (Sade 1931-35, 85-218; cf. Sade 2016, 67-171; Sade 2011a, 77-175). These 11 days contain 55 'simple' passions narrated by Madame Duclos. All of the passions described by Duclos are all written out in full, with the introduction and first part of the novel being the only sections which Sade managed to complete before losing the manuscript. The third volume of Heine's edition, meanwhile, comprises the final three sections of *120 journées* (Sade 1931-35, 403-96; cf. Sade 2016, 317-97; Sade 2011a, 311-83). These sections are written in note-form and deal with tortures of a more 'colourful' nature than those witnessed in the first part of the text. As Beckett comments, the content of these sections is 'indescribabl[y]' 'obscene' and

even difficult to read at points because of the sheer magnitude of the horror elicited by the uncompromising violence portrayed in the text.

This brings me to the second sphere of interest upon which Beckett's letter of 21 February 1938 to McGreevy sheds light: Beckett's judgement of *120 journées*' literary value. By drawing a comparison between the composition of *120 journées* and Dante's *Divina Commedia* (circa 1321), Beckett reveals his reverie for the systematic, ataraxic nature of 'Sade's darkest and most haunting novel' (Rabaté 2020, 4) and reiterates a comparison made by Apollinaire in *L'Œuvre de Sade*:

> Tout investigateur qui voudra déterminer l'importance sociologique de l'amour devra lire les ouvrages principaux du marquis de Sade. Non pas même au niveau de la faim, mais au-dessus, l'amour préside au mouvement de l'univers. 'L'amor, che muove'l Sole e l'altre stelle', s'écriait Dante à la fin de la *Divine Comédie*. (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 17)[19]

Whilst Apollinaire finds analogies between Dante's system of universal love and Sade's exploration of the intrapersonal relations, Beckett focuses upon how the passions described in *120 journées* are, similarly to the function of Justice in Dante's *Inferno*, 'portrayed as a matter of precise, almost mechanical calculation' (Rabaté 2016, 87). As Rabaté notes, just as the 'mechanisation of pain' in the *Inferno* 'shows that God's justice is impersonal and utterly without pity; it is meted out according to a codified, if opaque, system of allegorical equivalence' (Rabaté 2016, 87), so too are violence and sexuality governed by an extremely twisted system of Reason in *120 journées*. This comparison also underscores the importance of Sade's *120 journées* within Beckett's mind as it elevates the controversial French author to a similar position to that occupied by the Italian poet at this specific moment in Beckett's life.

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[19] See p. 334 in the appendix for a translation.

Moreover, Beckett's noting that *120 journées* can be read as a 'satire juvanelesque' illustrates how he paid particular attention to the fact that each of the libertine protagonists in Sade's work holds an office which places them in a position of extreme privilege. Sade's four protagonists are: the Duc de Blangis, the 'Bishop of ***', the President de Curval, and Durcet, a 'financier' (Sade 2016, 60-61; Sade 2011a, 70-71). Each of these individuals holds a position that enables them to wield great financial, political, or social power. Consequently, it becomes apparent how one could read *120 journées* as a Juvenalian satire commenting upon the corrupting effects of power and the shocking, barbarous 'inhumanity' of human desire. Thus, as Pilling states, Beckett's commentary upon *120 journées* in his 1938 correspondence implies that the Irish author read Sade 'as perhaps very few of us can do even today, without prejudice but also without seeking to endorse the more extreme elements of Sade's "vision"' (Pilling 2014, 117), whilst concomitantly appreciating how the Divine Marquis' confronting of his readers with the darkest manifestations of human desire functions in a manner comparable to Swift's exposing of the intense cruelty central to 18th century society.

The above-discussed letters therefore establish that Beckett had read two volumes of Heine's 1931-35 edition of Sade's novel and considered it, at this point in time, to be one of the finest works of literature ever created. It is hence unsurprising that certain aspects of *120 journées*, and certain stylistic techniques developed by Sade in his highly experimental and controversial text, were incorporated into Beckett's own writing.

2.1. The 'Rat Episode'

The so-called 'rat episode' in *Watt*'s third chapter is eminently Sadean:

> Birds of every kind abounded, and these it was our delight to pursue, with stones and clods of earth. Robins, in particular, thanks to their confidingness, we destroyed in great numbers. And larks' nests, laden with eggs still warm from the mother's breast, we ground into fragments, under our feet, with peculiar satisfaction, at the appropriate season, of the year.
>
> But our particular friends were the rats, that dwelt by the stream. They were long and black. We brought them such titbits from our ordinary as rinds of cheese, and morcels of gristle, and we brought them also bird's eggs, and frogs, and fledgelings. Sensible of these attentions, they would come flocking round us at our approach, with every sign of confidence and affection, and glide up our trouserlegs, and hang upon our breasts. And then we would sit down in the midst of them, and give them to eat, out of our hands, of a nice fat frog, or a baby thrush. Or seizing suddenly a plump young rat, resting in our bosom after its repast, we would feed it to its mother, or its father, or its brother, or its sister, or to some less fortunate relative.
>
> It was on these occasions, we agreed, after an exchange of views, that we came nearest to God. (*Watt*, 132-33)

Almost every aspect of Sam and Watt's 'little game' (Rabaté 2020, 24) involving the killing and torturing of animals has an analogue in *120 journées*. In Sade's novel, there are 29 passions which directly involve animals. The majority of the passions involving animals can be found in the third part of Sade's text, with 15 of these passions occurring on days seven, eight, and nine of Madame Martaine's narration (Sade 2016, 341-42; Sade 2011a, 331-32). By assaulting animals, or utilising animals to sexually assault another person, Sade's libertines actively invert the ideas underpinning 'pastoral Rousseauism' (Rabaté 2020, 24), transforming the natural world into a site of intense violence presided over by undeniably cruel overlords. Similarly, Beckett's *Watt* shows Watt and Sam exerting authority over animals helpless to resist them. Moreover, Sam's and Watt's favoured victims, rats, are suggested in a slant manner during one of the supplementary tortures which Sade appends to *120 journées*: 'By means of a pipe, they introduce a mouse into her cunt; the pipe is withdrawn, they sew up the cunt, and the animal, unable to escape, devours her intestines' (Sade 2016, 397; Sade 2011a, 383). This penultimate passion 'stages a sort of [abject]

reversed birth whereby the woman's powers of procreation are paradoxically negated, her body becoming infertile, but the alien creature trapped in her womb, feeding off her like a cannibalistic baby, condemning her in death to eternal pregnancy' (Baroghel DPhil Thesis, 67). There is therefore a dual action of horrifying transgression present within this penultimate torture. At first glance, it appears that this torture is purely concerned with inflicting pain upon the female victim and causing her to die an agonising death; however, upon further inspection, the reader notices that this torture takes procreation – the ability to create a *family* – as its second target.

Indeed, this hostility to the notion of the family is one of the primary aspects of Sade's *œuvre*. In *120 journées* alone there are 77 passions relating to the desecration of familial bonds. 41 of these 77 'familial passions' are directed at undermining the non-sexual relations between a mother and her offspring. Initially, Sade's text articulates its opposition to traditional mother-child relations by forcing mothers and their children to engage in incestuous, coprophilic sexual acts together. During the second section of the novel, Madame Champville tells the four protagonist-libertines about a man whose passion involves forcing

> a girl to shit in her mother's mouth and to wipe her arse with her mother's breasts; next he eats the turd from the mother's mouth, and afterwards makes the mother shit in her daughter's mouth – and will once again eat the turd from it. (Sade 2016, 322-23; Sade 2011a, 316)

By making the daughter 'shit' in her mother's mouth and then violate her mother's body by using it to clean herself, before then inverting the order of this event and making the mother 'shit' in her daughter's mouth, the libertine described here enacts a double transgression; not only is the daughter's platonic love for her mother desecrated by this action, but the mother's maternal care for her daughter is also mocked. As Rabaté comments, this dual-action of transgression 'subvert[s] the foundational notion of the

family as an older site of morality' (Rabaté 2005, 74) by forcibly inverting the governing laws of familial love. Instead of platonic and maternal love within these mother-daughter relations, one finds sexual lust, and rather than respect, one encounters filth, degradation, abjection, and violation.

Similarly, father-child relations are also repeatedly violated in *120 journées*. Before the narrating of passions specifically targeting the usually paternal, asexual love which present in normal father-child dynamics even begins, one encounters – at the very beginning of Sade's text – a conscious, incestuous violation of these relations. Sade's work opens with the four protagonist-libertines coming to an arrangement whereby they marry each other's daughters whilst still being able to 'enjoy' their own children sexually (Sade 2016, 4-5; Sade 2011a, 16-17). Rather than the family being a site of safety and asexual companionship, it is established from the outset as a sphere dominated by incestuous desire and twisted morality. Thus, as Adorno and Horkheimer comment, 'Sade's work discloses the mythological character of the principles which religion says are the foundations of civilisation: the Decalogue, paternal authority, property' (1997, 115) from the outset.

Transgressions of father-child relations then become increasingly elaborate as the novel progresses, thereby reinforcing the fact that Sade's outrage in *120 journées* is directed at the family unit as a whole, rather than only at certain elements of its constituent parts. In the second part of Sade's novel, Champville relates the tale of a libertine who

> has four legitimate daughters, now married; he wants to fuck all four of them – he gets all four pregnant so that one day he can have the pleasure of deflowering the children he has had with each of them and whom the husbands think to be their own. (Sade 2016, 319; Sade 2011a, 313)

Once again, the reader here encounters a layering of transgressions designed to desecrate the traditional bonds between a father and his offspring. The first act of incest serves as a

base from which even greater 'pleasures' may be sought. The second act of incest is then 'spiced' by the deceit which accompanies it and which expands the libertines' crimes to insult even more of the family. Given the fact that the husbands are unaware of the transgression, it is clear that the pleasure inspired by these incestual actions is located solely in the subversion of father-child and grandfather-grandchild relations. Whether the husbands learn of the transgression that has occurred is immaterial. Similarly, in the fourth part of the novel, we see a father whose pleasure lies in the complete destruction of familial ties irrespective of who is aware of the crimes he has committed. On the 26th day of her narration, Desgranges tells the libertines of

> A devotee of incest and a great connoisseur of sodomy [who], in order to combine the latter with the crimes of incest, murder, rape, sacrilege, and adultery, has himself buggered by his sons with the host up his arse, rapes his married daughter. (Sade 2016, 386; Sade 2011a, 272)

By specifying that this libertine forces his sons to sodomise him before he then rapes his daughter, the text emphasises the project of indiscriminate familial desecration in which it is engaged. *120 journées*' contempt for humanity is not specifically gendered. It is targeted at those elements which constitute the basis of the family: motherhood, fatherhood, and as will be shown below, brother-sister relations.

The 16th passion described by Champville involves a libertine who 'forces a brother to fuck his sister in front of him' (Sade 2011a, 312; Sade 2016, 318). In the fourth section of the text, narrated by Desgranges, this aforementioned passion is 'refined' into the following practice:

> A bugger of both sexes has a brother and sister brought before him: he tells the brother he will die in dreadful torment, and shows him what lies in store, but adds that he will save his life if he is willing to fuck his sister then strangle her in front of him; the young man accepts, and while he fucks his sister the libertine buggers both the boy and the girl. Then the brother, out of fear for the death revealed to him, strangles his sister, and the very moment he dispatches her a trapdoor opens and the two of them, in full view of the lecher, fall into a burning brazier. (Sade 2011a, 364-65; Sade 2016, 376-77)

In both of the above-quoted passions, the site of violation is a brother-sister relationship. However, in the second of these passions incest is combined with psychological torture and subversive physical violence. By presenting the brother in this second scenario with an ultimatum – which, of course, turns out to be a faux-ultimatum as his and his sister's fates are sealed from the very moment they are brought before the libertine – the libertine enacting this passion is explicitly testing just how far a person will go in order to survive. Sade's text therefore combines the concepts of *Eros* and *Thanatos*, juxtaposing one's desire for survival with their willingness to give in to their destructive impulses. Consequently, *120 journées* here enacts an ultimate transgression of the familial unit by illustrating how the beliefs enabling its existence are transitory. In Rabaté's words, the brother's willingness to rape and kill his sister in order to survive 'show[s] that the fundamental law[s] of Nature' in Sade's texts are 'aggression and murder' (Rabaté 2020, 25), and that these 'laws' are overwhelmingly powerful when compared to the illusory laws enabling the peaceful existence of the family unit.

Consequently, one can state with confidence that the violence against families in Sade's *120 journées* 'anticipates the […] violence that characterises' (Weller 2009, 74) the 'rat episode' of *Watt*. Whilst animals may be Sam's and Watt's superficial target, the true object of their transgressive gestures is evidently the nexus of the family in its entirety, not merely its constituent parts of 'motherhood and fatherhood' as Rabaté proposes (2005, 73-74; 2016, 173; and 2020, 25). Beckett's text moves through the different layers of transgression encapsulated in the violating of familial relationships by beginning with the mother figure – 'we would feed it [the rat which Sam and Watt have seized] to its mother' – and then clarifying that should the mother be unavailable at that moment, Sam and Watt would seek out the rat's 'father, or its brother, or its sister, or […] some less fortunate

relative' to fulfil their twisted needs. Hence, it becomes clear that just as Sade's torturers are not content to solely abuse mothers, but must instead make a mockery of all possible intra-familial relations, so too must Sam and Watt spread their cruelty across the entirety of the rat's family to fulfil their desires of becoming perverse gods.

Furthermore, even the violent action performed by the rats in *Watt*, namely cannibalism, is prefigured in the complex web of tortures presented in *120 journées*. Despite playing a less significant role in Sade's *chef d'œuvre* than other passions such as coprophagia, and being relegated to only the third and fourth sections of the novel, cannibalism is an essential element of nine passions. In fact, members of the same family are forced to engage in cannibalism in two of these nine tortures. On the 24th day of Desgranges' narration, the doyenne recounts the passion of a man 'who has a taste for inducing abortions' (Sade 2016, 383; Sade 2011a, 370) and has developed his mania to include an exercise in which he

> places three pregnant women in three cruel poses to form three pleasing compositions; he watches them give birth in these circumstances, then he ties their babies around their necks until they die or are eaten, for he leaves the mothers in this pose without feeding them. (Sade 2016, 383; Sade 2011a, 370)

Additionally, on the 20th day of her narration, Desgranges recalls how

> Another devotee of incest requires a mother and four children: he locks them in a room where he can observe them; he gives them no food so that he may see the effects of hunger upon the woman and see which of her children she will eat first. (Sade 2011a, 366; Sade 2016, 378)

In both of these cases, the family members engaging in the act of cannibalism are only doing so because they are being forced to by the libertines. Equally, in *Watt*, the rats which Sam and Watt torment only engage in cannibalism because the eponymous protagonist of the novel and his co-conspirator deprive them of the sustenance with which they previously provided them. Consequently, it becomes apparent that Sam and Watt not only select

undeniably Sadean victims and targets in the 'rat episode', but also that their torturing technique is directly adapted from the cannibalistic passions detailed in *120 journées*.

The parallels between the 'rat episode' and the events described in *120 journées* do not end here. Comparably to how Sade's 'talkative torturers' (Rabaté 2020, 25) discuss the merits and faults of each of the passions described to them by the narrators of *120 journées* (see Sade 2016, 202-03; Sade 2011a, 203-05), so too do Sam and Watt engage in an 'exchange of views' which culminates in them 'elaborating a whole discourse leading to the heights of anti-theology' (Rabaté 2020, 25). And, whilst Sam's and Watt's conclusion that it is through acts of supreme cruelty that they come 'nearest to god' does not have a direct parallel in *120 journées*, it is worth noting that Beckett's 'vision of a sadistic god in *Watt* […] corresponds to', or rather, is proleptic of 'the view put forward by [Pierre] Klossowski' in *Sade mon prochain* (1947) (Rabaté 2020, 30; cf. Klossowski 1992, 11-122).

One of the places in which Beckett could have encountered an example of a Sadean libertine developing a complex antitheology is in Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade*'s excerpting of *Philosophie*. In a section from the third dialogue of this text which Apollinaire titles 'La Religion, la charité, l'Adultère' (Sade 1909, 161-81; cf. Sade 2006, 23-40), Dolomancé deconstructs the idea of God as an omniscient, omnipresent, and benevolent entity. He does this by exposing the logical inconsistencies that must be entertained if one wishes to hold this point of view, stating:

> qu'à supposer qu'il existât comme les religions nous le peignent, ce serait assurément le plus détestable des êtres, puisqu'il permettrait le mal sur la terre, tandis que sa toute-puissance pourrait l'empêcher […] Que vois-je dans […] Dieu […] si ce n'est un être inconséquent et barbare, créant aujourd'hui un monde de la construction duquel il se repent demain? […] c'est […] à plaisir qu'il perd la créature que lui-même a formée. Quel horrible Dieu que ce Dieu-là! quel monstre! (Sade 1909, 162-64; cf. Sade 2006, 24-26)[20]

[20] See p. 334 in the appendix for a translation.

Hence, it is clear that Beckett's shaping of the 'rat episode' in *Watt* is deeply indebted to his reading of *120 journées* and his recollection of details from *L'Œuvre de Sade*. In stating that Watt and Sam are 'nearest to God' whilst torturing rats and forcibly subverting the safety traditionally associated with the familial unit by reconceiving it as a site of intense violence, *Watt* adapts the Sade's characters' understanding of God as a supremely evil being by combining it with a conceptualisation of violence derived directly from *120 journées*. Thus, at this point in his text Beckett condenses Sade's textual impulses against the family, animals, and religion into a single, caustic point. However, Beckett goes one step further than Sade in portraying the awfulness of these actions. In Sade's text violence has the specific goal of facilitating the libertines' *jouissance* and, hence, is underpinned by a twisted form of Reason. In Beckett's work, contrastingly, Sam and Watt engage in these actions for no discernible reason other than to pass the time. Consequently, *Watt* defamiliarises multiple textual portrayals of violence within *120 journées* by transposing the above-discussed scenes of barbarity into a context in which they are utilised to expose the banality of evil.

2.2. The Aesthetics of Incompletion: *Watt*'s 'Addenda'

As S. E. Gontarski states (in Ackerley 2004/05, 5), 'Incompletion' is 'the principal […] trope of' *Watt*. The text is punctuated by numerous interruptions such as the '(Hiatus in MS)' and '(MS illegible)' markers found in the fourth section of the work (*Watt*, 207, 209), and the question marks indicating gaps where Sam is incapable of discerning Watt's narrating of his tale (*Watt*, 23, 25, 71, 86, 145, 197, 202, 205), as well as a multitude of interjections signalled by the inclusion of 'footnotes of no obvious utility' (Pilling 1997, 183) throughout

the narrative (see *Watt*, 4, 26, 86, 87, 183, 215). However, by far the most puzzling of these intimations of incompletion are the 'Addenda' included at the end of the novel. As Ackerley states, the 'Addenda' 'testify to a textual pre-history that makes the narrative assume a different shape when its evolution is considered' (2004/05, 22) and which 'can neither be taken seriously nor yet be quite denied' (2004/05, 201).

Over the years critics have looked to a multitude of sources, attempting to find an analogous work which would help in illuminating the mysteries of this textual enigma. In the gargantuan and elucidating 'Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated *Watt*', Ackerley draws a comparison between *Watt*'s 'Addenda' and the 'notes to [T. S.] Eliot's *The Waste Land* [1922]' (2004/05, 201). Ann Beer, meanwhile, posits that the 'Addenda' to *Watt* resemble the notes and appendices of an academic thesis (1985, 50). Frederik N. Smith, on the other hand, directs his readers towards Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1696-98), arguing that 'Beckett, groping for a fictional form that might reflect his frustrating attempts to know and to write, recalled most vividly Swift's own youthful, troubled, [and] seemingly formless satire' (Smith 1974, 650).

More recently, however, Rabaté and Baroghel have turned readers' attention towards *120 journées*, with the former arguing that *Watt*'s 'Addenda' 'look very much like the Addenda that Sade added at the end of *The 120 Days of Sodom*' (2020, 27) and the latter noting that 'The "textual unfinishedness" of *Watt* […] resonates with Sade' (DPhil Thesis, 87). Building upon Baroghel's and Rabaté's analysis, I propose that the similarities between *Watt*'s 'Addenda' and the multiple 'Addenda' included by Sade in *120 journées* are far more significant than has been previously posited.

Before we can demonstrate how *Watt*'s 'Addenda' (*Watt*, 215-223) are shaped by Beckett's recollection of the 'Addenda' sections found throughout *120 journées*, it is first

necessary to outline the differing types of material encountered in Sade's 'Addenda'. The first of the 'Addenda' sections in *120 journées* is located at the end of the novel's introductory chapter (Sade 2016, 66; Sade 2011a, 75). It is comprised of authorial notes and *aide-memoires* intended to help Sade during the editing process; however, unlike in later sections of his work, these *aide-memoires* refer exclusively to unwritten material which Sade hoped to insert at a later date. Sade's second 'Addenda' is found at the end of the first part of *120 journées* (Sade 2016, 316; Sade 2011a, 309-10). This section is primarily made up of corrective glosses and editorial directions intended to point Sade towards specific parts of the text which require re-writing, such as: 'I have revealed too much about the privy episodes at the beginning – these must only be developed after the tales that refer to them' (Sade 2016, 316; Sade 2011a, 309). However, due to Beckett potentially only having read the '1st & 3rd' volumes of Heine's 1931-35 edition of *120 journées* in 1938, it is unclear whether he would have encountered this second 'Addenda' section before fleeing Paris in August 1942 due to the French Resistance cell, 'Gloria SMH', of which he and his lifelong partner, Suzanne Déchevaux-Dumesnil, were members, being infiltrated and betrayed to the Abwehr by Abbé Alesch (Knowlson 1996, 275-84). The final 'Addenda' sections in *120 journées* are found at the end of the novel, and are divided by Sade into editorial 'Notes' (Sade 2016, 396-97; Sade 2011a, 383-83) to be followed when copying out the final text from his manuscripts – something which did not occur due to the storming of the Bastille – and 'Supplementary Tortures' (Sade 2016, 397; Sade 2011a, 383). The 'Addenda' appended by Sade to the introductory, first, and final, parts of *120 journées* are therefore a fascinating blend of editorial notes, allusions to unwritten – and thus inaccessible – parts of the 'final' text (which itself does not exist), and additional material to be included in this unwritten 'final' version of the text.

Similarly, *Watt*'s 'Addenda' comprises: Beckett's editorial comments; numerous fragments cryptically alluding to material excluded from the final text; and more extended 'supplementary' material comprised of longer deleted passages originally found in the manuscript or typescript drafts of the novel. A brief survey of *Watt*'s 'Addenda' unveils that Beckett included four entries which, at first glance, seem purely editorial in nature. The first of these items is the comment: 'limits to part's equality with whole' (*Watt*, 215). Initially, a reader may interpret this entry simply as Beckett noting that the complexity of the novel's *gestalt* is not reflected in its isolated parts. Whilst this is an undeniably valid comment, with the presence of the 'Addenda' challenging the reader's comprehension of the novel form by presenting them with a section of text that openly 'exposes the hermeneutical processes that in other works remain buried' (Ackerley 2004a, 159-60), there is a second layer of allusion at work within this phrase. As Ackerley (2004/05, 203-04) reveals, the phrase in question is actually extracted from a conversation between Arsene and the then-unnamed narrator, 'we', found in the second notebook of *Watt*'s chaotic manuscript (NB2, 72-73). Therefore, this seemingly purely editorial comment in the 'Addenda' to *Watt* actually combines the editorial impulse with a veiled inter-, or intra-, textual allusion to (usually) inaccessible material. Consequently, it may be said that Beckett's 'Addenda' to *Watt* conflate the two differing revisional processes found within Sade's text, thereby rendering *Watt* a terminally unstable work which exists solely in a carefully curated state of incomplete becoming. This textual indeterminacy demonstrates how Beckett was actively adapting, rather than only pastiching, the incidental instability of Sade's text within his own work, creating an essentially purgatorial novel which, like *120 journées*, cannot truly be said to truly 'finish'.

The rest of Beckett's editorial comments in the 'Addenda' to *Watt* are more straight-forward in nature. The ninth, tenth, and 33rd entries in *Watt*'s 'Addenda' – 'Watt learned to accept etc. Use to explain poverty of Part III. Watt cannot speak of what happened on the first floor, because for the greater part of the time nothing happened, without his protesting' (*Watt*, 216); 'Note that Arsene's declaration gradually came back to Watt' (*Watt*, 216); and 'change all the names' (*Watt*, 222) – are simply *aide-memoires* which Beckett wrote during the compositional process to remind himself to make specific changes to the text, just as most of Sade's comments, such as 'Review with care the name and rank of all the characters described by your storytellers, to avoid repetitions' (Sade 2016, 397; Sade 2011a, 383), instruct the Divine Marquis to alter certain aspects of his text. Beckett's decision to include these in the final text of *Watt*, however, is rather curious due to the fact that the novel in its published form is, for all intents and purposes, complete. Thus, Beckett is actively introducing a manuscript effect into his text and, in so doing, presenting a finished work as unstable and unfinished. In *Watt* Beckett actively defamiliarises the stability of the novel form by drawing upon and mimicking the unfinished form of Sade's *120 journées* so as to metamorphose a completed text into a terminally indeterminable one.

Furthermore, the 'supplementary tortures' which Sade includes in the 'Addenda' to *120 journées* are, arguably, as 'complete' as the extended 'supplementary content' which Beckett appends to the end of his text (*Watt*, 220-22). In Sade's final 'Addenda', the two additional tortures proposed are directly comparable in form to the 450 passions constituting the second, third, and fourth parts of the novel. Whilst not every nuance of emotion inspired within the libertines by the minutiae of these passions is explained – as is done in the first section of Sade's work – the reader understands that, like the unelaborated passions of the second, third, and fourth sections of the text, these supplementary tortures

would bring intense *jouissance* to the libertines enacting them as well as unimaginable pain, and eventually death, to the victims subjected to them. These 'supplementary tortures' are thus as complete as the tortures depicted throughout the third volume of Heine's edition of Sade's novel. The extended passages contained in *Watt*'s 'Addenda' (*Watt*, 220-22) are also complete, as they are written out in full. Thus, Beckett's decision to include fully formed supplementary material in *Watt* enables the text to mirror Sade's inclusion of additional tortures in *120 journées*.

Despite the above-discussed similarities between these two texts' 'Addenda', there is one essential difference between them. The 'Addenda' which Sade appends to the introductory, first, and final sections of his work exist as a by-product of an unforeseen historical event – the storming of the Bastille – which rendered him incapable of completing his work. *Watt*'s 'Addenda', contrastingly, have been carefully curated by Beckett to give the appearance of an unfinished text. I propose there is a similarity between the circumstances under which Sade's *120 journées* and Beckett's wartime novel were composed which may explain why Beckett includes an 'Addenda' section in *Watt* that is not dissimilar to those found throughout *120 journées*.

As Heine's preface to the 1931-35 edition of *120 journées* makes clear, Sade wrote this novel whilst confined in a state of complete physical and 'moral' isolation (Heine in Sade 1931-35, xii). Cut off from the outside world due to the machinations of the French justice system, the Divine Marquis was forcibly 'exiled' from society by circumstances beyond his control and made to witness the horrors leading up to the events of the French Revolution from the confines of a cell. Comparably, *Watt* was begun in Nazi-occupied Paris on the 11th February 1941 (*Watt* NB1, 1) – at the height of the Axis' power in Europe and at a time when Beckett, like so many people who remained in Paris, would have felt trapped by the

vicious, horrifying reality of total war and occupation by an evil foreign force – and was concluded in 1945 (as dated by Ackerley in *Watt*, viii; and Cohn 2005, 108) in a 'grim Paris' (Beckett qtd in Knowlson 1996, 330) emblematic of 'humanity in ruins' (Beckett 1995a, 278). Additionally, most of *Watt* was written, as Beckett would tell Reavey, 'first on the run [from the Gestapo], then of an evening after […] clod-hopping' (qtd by Ackerley in *Watt*, viii) in Roussillon. Given the similarities of the traumatic circumstances in which these works were written, it seems likely that Beckett may have turned his mind towards his memories of reading Sade's *120 journées* as a source of creative inspiration during his isolation in Roussillon. As Pilling comments, 'what interested Beckett in Sade was Sade the pessimist, the imprisoned man' (2014, 121) writing simply as 'a means of staying sane' (Beckett qtd by Ackerley in *Watt*, viii). Was Beckett not engaged in a similar enterprise during the war? – writing *Watt* 'to counter the long hours of ennui as he waited for nothing to happen' (Ackerley in *Watt*, viii).

2.3. *Watt*'s Narrative Strategy of Exhaustive Enumeration

Just as incompletion is one of the primary aesthetic traits of *Watt*, 'repetition seems to be the central principle of its language' (Connor 2007, 30). Throughout Beckett's novel the reader's attention is continually drawn to the presence of 'insistent repetitive sequences' (Connor 2007, 30) in which seemingly every single possible term is stated by the narrator. The elaboration of these paradigms renders the text 'very painful' to read (Cohn 2005, 123) as it is, for lack of a better term, unbelievably boring at times. As Steven Connor asserts, 'There can be few readers who can claim to have attended to every word of [*Watt*] in one reading, following through every permutative sequence without gliding to the end of the

page or over a number of pages to the end of the sequence' (2007, 36) in which they find themselves ensnared. But, as much as one may wish to, one cannot dismiss this aspect of Beckett's text; 'these endless verbal permutations' not only 'make *Watt* recognisable' (Rabaté 2016, 175), but also constitute an essential part of this work's immanent nature as well as its 'satiris[ing] [of] human being's pride in their rational capabilities' (Van Hulle 2022a, 164). Beckett's narrative technique of exhaustive enumeration in this novel is shaped by multiple sources such as Pierre Gustave Brunet's *Curiosités théologiques* (1861), Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and *Genesis*. However, it is Sade's *120 journées* which unveiled to Beckett the potential of exhaustive enumeration as a purgatorial and satirical literary technique.

One of the earliest examples of an extended permutation in *Watt* is Mr Spiro's question:

> What do you know of the adjuration, excommunication, malediction and fulminating anathematisation of the eels of Como, the hurebers of Beaune, the rats of Lyon, the slugs of Mâcon, the worms of Como, the leeches of Lausanne and the caterpillars of Valence? (*Watt*, 21)

This question functions as a satirical example of the types of questions asked in prize competitions and examinations. The sheer multitude of terms contained within this question, and the absurd areas of investigation which it demands its answerer address, render it innately academic: it ostensibly has no function beyond the testing and expansion of knowledge. On the partial typescript of *Watt* Beckett notes 'the egregious jurisconsult Barthélemy de Chassanée in the fifth part of his first consultation, Lyon, in-folie, 1531' (TS, 105). This comment directs the reader to 'the book *Curiosités théologiques*' held in Beckett's personal library, in which can be found 'all the details about the[] adjurations and excommunications' about which Mr Spiro inquires (Van Hulle 2022a, 164). Beckett marked the opening paragraph of the section of this work summarising 'the content of a curious work by Barthélémy de Chassanée, called *De excommunication animalium insectorum*' with

'a pencil line' (Van Hulle 2022a, 164). But, it is the unmarked paragraphs following this piece of marginalia, as Dirk Van Hulle asserts (2022, 164-65; cf. Brunet 1861, 91-92, 95), which provided Beckett with the specific content of Mr Spiro's ridiculous question. Due to the apparent purposelessness of Mr Spiro's question, and the obscurity of the terms contained within it which, to a casual reader, appear absolutely nonsensical, rational inquiry is made to take on the appearance of insanity.

Meanwhile, Arsene's extended paradigm about his ancestors –

> the poor old lousy old earth, my earth and my father's and my mother's and my father's father's and my mother's mother's and my father's mother's and my mother's father's and my father's mother's father's and my mother's father's mother's and my father's mother's mother's and my mother's father's father's and my father's father's mother's and my mother's mother's father's and my father's father's father's and my mother's mother's mother's and other people's fathers' and mothers' and fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' and mothers' fathers' and fathers' mothers' fathers' and mothers' fathers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' mothers' and mothers' fathers' fathers' and fathers' fathers' mothers' and mothers' mothers' fathers' and fathers' fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' mothers' (*Watt*, 38)

– is partially inspired by a passage in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and functions as an inversion of the tedious genealogies detailed in *Genesis* (see *Genesis* 10:20-32). As Pat McCarthy remarks (in Ackerley 2004/05, 66), one finds 'A like paradigm' detailing a series of women's 'garters' in 'Shem the Penman' (Joyce 2012, 169-95): 'schoolgirl's, young ladies', milkmaids', washerwomen's, shopkeepers' wives, merry widows', ex nuns', vice abbess's pro virgins', super whores', silent sisters', Charleys' aunts', grand-mothers', mothers'-in-laws', fostermothers', godmothers' garters' (Joyce 2012, 183.25-28). Given Beckett's intimate involvement with Joyce's penning of his *Work in Progress*/*Finnegans Wake* (see *LSB I*, 766; cf. Ellman 1959, 551, 649; and Van Mierlo 2007, 373-88) and his knowledge of the *Bible* (see Ackerley 1999, 117-22), it is highly likely that Beckett was capable of recalling specific structural constructions found in both these works with ease. There is, however, a major difference between Joyce's practice of enumeration within *Finnegans Wake* and Beckett's

use of the technique in *Watt*. The varied, 'agglutinative' (Landuyt 2007, 142), language of Joyce's 'chaosmos' (Joyce 2012, 118.21) ensures that even when readers of *Finnegans Wake* are subjected to the extensive lists such as the text's detailing of inventory, and squalor, of Shem the penman's 'house […] O'Shame' (Joyce 2012, 182.30, 182.30-184.10), they are buoyed along by the fascinatingly strange-yet-familiar Wakean language of the text as well as by the variation of terms contained within the list. *Finnegans Wake*'s paradigms are thus auto-deconstructive, continually unravelling into an explosion of potential meaning.

Contrastingly, readers of *Watt* find themselves bogged in painful indolence by the lack of variation dominating the 'father-mother' paradigm. The incessant repetition of 'mothers' and 'fathers' within this paradigm results in a quasi-Mauthnerian dulling of language to the status of 'inert noise[]' (Connor 2007, 37).[21] Additionally, as Connor comments, the sheer 'effort of getting through [this paradigm], either reading silently, or […] reading aloud, imparts an agonising strain on the eye, cramps the tongue and paralyses the lips' (2007, 37). The reader continually loses their place whilst trying to navigate the sea of 'fathers' fathers' and 'mothers' mothers' with which they are presented, and the nearly identical nature of the terms constituting the series renders any attempt to try to re-locate oneself almost completely futile. Further, the repetition of terms with a minimal degree of difference within this series makes it extremely boring to read. The text itself is governed by 'a desire to meet every […] eventuality' (Connor 2007, 32) which could occur within the limits of the series whilst simultaneously forestalling narrative progression, meaning that the reader, like Watt, is trapped within the purgatorial immanence of Arsene's 'short statement' (*Watt*, 31). It is this combination of the boredom inspired by the elaboration and

[21] For more on Beckett and Mauthner, see Van Hulle 2005, 35-48; Ben-Zvi 1980, 183-200; Ben-Zvi 1984, 65-88; and Skerl 1974, 474-87.

repetition of extremely similar serial terms with the text's desire to state every possible variant that reveals the impact of Beckett's reading of Sade's *120 journées* upon *Watt*'s narrative strategy of enumeration.

Sade's *120 journées* attempts to present its reader with a complete enumeration of 'toutes les passions dans leurs rapports avec l'instinct sexuel' [every passion and their relations to sexual instincts] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 24) and is therefore necessarily governed by a principle of repetition. Each repetition of a specific sexual act within the novel is accompanied by an absolute minimum of difference until all conceivable iterations of the specific sexual action in question have been recounted. Take, for example, the seemingly endless elaboration of coprophilic or scatological passions within Sade's work. Throughout the novel, the reader encounters 119 sexual acts involving human excrement. Often these coprophilic passages are grouped into collections of five or more similar passions:

> 42. He receives thirty women in a day and has them all shit in his mouth: he eats the turds of three or four of the prettiest ones; he repeats this episode five times a week, which means that he sees seven thousand eight hundred girls each year. […]
> 43. He sees twelve of them each day and swallows the twelve turds; he sees them all together.
> 44. He gets into a bath and thirty women will the tub by pissing and shitting into it; he comes as it covers him and as he bathes in it all.
> 45. He shits in front of four women, insists that they watch him and help him do a turd; next he wants them to share and eat it, and then they each do one of their own – he mixes them together and eats all four, but the woman have to be at least sixty years old.
> […]
> 46. He has a girl A and another girl B shit. He then forces B to eat A's turd and A to eat B's turd. Next they both shit and he eats their two turds.
> 47. He wants a mother and three daughters, and he eats the girls' shot on their mother's arse, and the mother's shit on one of her daughters' arses.
> 48. He forces a girl to shit in her mother's mouth and to wipe her arse with her mother's breasts; next he eats the turd from the mother's mouth, and afterwards makes the mother shit in her daughter's mouth – and will once again eat the turd from it. (It would be better to put a son and his mother to distinguish it from the previous one.)
> 49. He wants a father to eat his son's turd and he eats the father's turd.
> 50. He wants the brother to shit in his sister's cunt, and he eats the turd; then the sister has to shit in her brother's mouth, and he eats the turd. (Sade 2016, 322-23; Sade 2011a, 315-16)

Through this brief extract one can clearly see how repetition and difference function throughout Sade's text. The repeated element in each of these passions is consistently the oral consumption of human waste. The notion of difference between these passions, meanwhile, is found in the varying volumes of waste consumed and the altering of the 'receptacle' receiving the excrement. However, as the text itself acknowledges through the comment, 'It would be better to put a son and his mother to distinguish it from the previous one', this degree of difference is, at best, minimal. Even the lexis which Sade employs during these sections of his text is lacking in variety: of the nine passions quoted above, six employ the verb 'chier' [to shit] (Sade 2011a, 315-16) and seven use of the noun 'l'étron' [the turd] (Sade 2011a, 315-16) in the original French. As one can readily imagine, after the elaboration of 119 passions involving only minute variations in lexis and imagery even the most dedicated readers are bound to have found their attention wandering from the text. It is this boredom which Beckett emulates in the extensively enumerated paradigms of *Watt*.

The apathy generated by the practice of exhaustive enumeration results in an inevitable desecration of meaning and disempowering of language. The reader of *120 journées* is initially shocked by Sade's text; but, as they progress through the increasingly horrifying spectacles found within the work, they gradually become desensitised to the violent, transgressive, and often-times viscerally repulsive nature of the material which they are reading. Sade's *120 journées* therefore provides an almost perfect example of the anaesthetic powers of Habit identified by Beckett in *Proust* (1931):

> The fundamental duty of Habit […] consists in a perpetual adjustment and readjustment of our organic sensibility to the conditions of its worlds. Suffering represents the omission of that duty, whether through negligence or inefficiency, and boredom its adequate performance. The pendulum oscillates between these two terms: Suffering […] and Boredom (Beckett 1965, 28-29)

Watt's enumerated series operate through an almost identical principle, thereby affirming the fact that Beckett's reading of Sade underlies the specific form of writing deployed in *Watt*. But rather than dealing with violence and horror as Sade does, Beckett's target is language itself.

Additionally, as stated above, both *Watt* and *120 journées* were written whilst their respective authors were in situations of extreme isolation. In Roussillon, there was little for Beckett to do besides farm, write in the evenings, and converse with Déchevaux-Dumesnil. It is thus rather easy to imagine that he may have turned the 'combinations' found in *Watt* 'into a sort of puzzle, a chartered mathematical exercise' (Mood 1971, 259) to stave off the creeping tides of ennui and fear. Indeed, Beckett himself would later describe *Watt* as 'a means of staying sane' (qtd in Ackerley in *Watt*, viii) during the Nazi occupation of France, thereby revealing one of the concealed functions of this novel's practice of exhaustive enumeration: *Watt*'s permutations are markers of Beckett's attempts to shore the fragments of himself against the ruin surrounding him.

120 journées seems to have served Sade in a comparable manner. As noted above, the entirety of this novel was written by Sade whilst he was imprisoned in the Bastille, held in a state of isolation that inspired him to extremes of 'misanthropie' [misanthropy] (Heine in Sade 1931-35, xiii). Moreover, whilst interned in Vincennes and the Bastille, Sade was faced with the 'absolute absence of any "normal" [or, as would perhaps be better, physical] outlet for his [intensely sadistic sexual] desires' (Pilling 2014, 121). Consequently, it becomes apparent that *120 journées* was, for its author, both a method of occupying himself whilst watching the world pass him by from the isolated towers of the Bastille and a channel through which he could, in a very limited manner, satiate his erotic desires. This text's practice of exhaustive enumeration is hence a manifestation of the Divine Marquis'

battle against melancholia. Given Beckett's reading of Heine's introduction to the 1931-35 edition of Sade's *chef d'œuvre*, it is likely that the Irish author recognised of the similarities between his and the Divine Marquis' situations, thereby enabling the latter's work to gain greater resonance within his mind. Hence, it seems almost certain that Beckett's practice of exhaustive enumeration in *Watt* represents a playful imitation of Sade's use of the technique in *120 journées*. The difference between these two author's utilisation of the narrative technique of exhaustive enumeration lies in the fact that Beckett's enumerative 'games' deliberately rob language of both meaning and power, whereas Sade's paradigms achieve this unintentionally.

2.4. *Watt*'s Aesthetics of Disgust

The first marked intonation that *Watt*'s conception of the disgusting is shaped by Beckett's knowledge of Sade's *120 journées* is found as Arsene discusses the issues of desire and happiness arising from the innate subjugation of man to his Will (conceived in a Schopenhauerian sense):

> it is useless not to seek, not to want, for when you cease to seek you start to find, and when you cease to want, then life begins to ram her fish and chips down your gullet until you puke, then the puke down your gullet until you puke the puke, and then the puked puke until you start to like it. (*Watt*, 36)

The text's use of the aesthetics of disgust to convey the idea of humanity being, even if they are unwilling, inevitable participants in 'life on the ladder' is readily apparent within this metaphor; the reader is repulsed initially by the grotesque image of a person being force-fed to the point of their vomiting, and then disgusted to an even greater degree by the nauseating combination of abjection and impurity carried in the image of one being made to consume their own filth 'until [they] start to like it'. Furthermore, the qualifying phrase 'until

you start to like it' introduces a sadistic torturer-victim element into this metaphor, with 'Life' clearly being the sadistic party whilst humanity is presented as the victim. Thus, one could posit that the text invokes Sade at this point in time through a general utilisation of the aesthetics of disgust alongside the invocation of sadist-victim power dynamics.

However, stopping at this point fails to expose the true extent to which Beckett's conceiving of this metaphor is beholden to his reading of Sade's *120 journées*. On the sixth day of the novel's first part, Duclos describes a sexual act which begins with her eating a copious amount of food before then swallowing three emetic granules and 'launch[ing] point-blank into [an unnamed libertine's] mouth the half-digested lunch' (Sade 2016, 130; Sade 2011a, 136). Following this, Duclos outlines a comparable passion favoured by the Président de Saclanges:

> The Président arrives, supper is served, they [the Président and 'a tall and fat 36-year-old girl'] both get drunk, they both lose all sense of reason, they both vomit in each other's mouths, they both swallow and repay to the other what they have borrowed. (Sade 2016, 131-32; Sade 2011a, 138)

The similarities between the events described in these passions and the imagery employed in Beckett's above-mentioned metaphor are evident: both clearly revolve around emetic practices and the transferal of one's own internal filth into another being. However, it is in the subtle differences between Sade's passions and Beckett's adaptation of their elements that one can truly see the uses to which Beckett put *120 journées* aesthetics of disgust. Sade's libertines' predilection for the emetic and the consuming of regurgitated filth is clearly motivated by their unusual sexual desires. Consequently, there is a blending of the sexual and the disgusting in *120 journées* which leads to an intense eroticisation of the foul encapsulated perfectly by the narrator of *120 journées*' assertion that 'it is horror, foulness – something ghastly – that we want when we are hard […] it is filth that gives pleasure in the lubricious act' (Sade 2016, 41; Sade 2011a, 51). *Watt*, contrastingly, deploys the emetic

imagery gleaned from Sade's text in an asexual manner. Hence, in *Watt*, Beckett reconfigures Sade's conception of the erotic's and the repulsive's relations to one another through the deliberate transposition of Sade's imagery, and through the metamorphic utilisation of this imagery as a way of rendering the philosophical inevitability of the Will's intrusion into a being's experience of the world viscerally tangible whilst concomitantly demonstrating how Habit may lead to a gradual acclimatisation to, and even enjoyment of, life's hardships.

Watt's short paradigm outlining differing eating habits further demonstrates the text's debt to Sade's *120 journées*: 'a small eater, a moderate eater, a heavy eater, a vegetarian, a naturist, a cannibal, a coprophage' (*Watt*, 43). The hypertextual allusion to Sade here is contained in the noun 'coprophage'.[22] As Ackerley points out, the Olympia and Grove Press editions of *Watt* both have 'coprophile' – 'one who loves dung' (Ackerley 2004/05, 73) – in place of 'coprophage'; but, on the incomplete typescript of *Watt* Beckett indicates his preference for 'coprophage' (*Watt* TS, 232) and in the French translation of the novel he adopts this change (Beckett 1968, 53). Ackerley, in creating the modern Faber and Faber edition of this text, follows Beckett's typescript directions. This enables the novel's aesthetics of disgust to resonate with Sadean inflections, as Beckett intended. Furthermore, in employing the noun 'coprophage' within a paradigm supposedly enumerating the eating habits of 'ordinary people' (*Watt*, 43), the text normalises the scatological. Hence, *Watt* is de-fetishises Sade's vision of the aesthetics of disgust to present a world in which the repulsive and violent are the norm.

[22] The noun 'cannibal' may also be an allusion to the cannibalistic passions portrayed in *120 journées* (Sade 2016, 355, 374-75, 378-79, 383; Sade 2011a, 344, 363, 366, 370). But, as these passions are far less common than the scatological ones, this link cannot be stated definitively.

The final indication of *Watt* being shaped by Sade's vision of the aesthetics of disgust is, fittingly, contained in the 'Addenda'. The 29th entry in this section offers the reader a wry parody of Goethe's 'die Erde hat mich wieder' (Goethe 2007, lV.784) by metamorphosing this phrase into 'die Merde hat mich wieder' (*Watt*, 219). As with Goethe's original, Beckett's parody contains within it two subtly different traces. Directly translated, *Watt*'s 'die Merde hat mich wieder' means 'the shit has me again'. Reading the text in this manner enables Dantean airs to breathe through it; the 'hat mich' construction, when interpreted literally, suggests that one is imprisoned, whilst the transformation of 'Erde' – earth – into the French 'Merde' ['Shit'] renders the imagery of this phrase redolent of the second Bolgia of the Malebolge in Dante's *Inferno*:

> down in the ditch,
> I saw people plunged in excrement
> Which seemed as if it had flowed out of a cesspit.
> (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XVIII.122.112-14)

'[D]ie Erde hat mich wieder' may also be translated figuratively as 'I love the earth once more' (Goethe 2008, IV.784). Beckett's adaption of this phrase may thus also be understood as 'I love the shit once more'. The Sadean implications of such a declaration – and the associated exaltation of the aesthetics of disgust – are evident. Consequently, this phrase combines the inescapable brutality of the 'justice' meted out in Dante's hell and the coprophilic tendencies, as well as cold violence, of Sade's libertines into a Juvenalian, satirically pessimistic characterisation of life on earth as an awful affair devoid of beauty. *Watt*'s 'Addenda' therefore anticipates how 'Dante and Sade [will] be[] joined for all eternity' (Rabaté 2020, 49) in the cruel, excremental world of *How It Is* whilst simultaneously demonstrating that the repulsive vision of the Divine Marquis suffuses Beckett's wartime novel's understanding, and employment, of the aesthetics of disgust.

2.5. *Watt*'s Critique of Reason

The simplest, but most effective, demonstration of the logic underlying Sade's twisted utilisation of mathematics in *120 journées* is found in the 137th passion of the text's second section. This torment reads: 'He flogs a whore nine days in a row – a hundred lashes the first day, then doubling the number of lashes each day up to and including the ninth day' (Sade 2016, 333; Sade 2011a, 325). At first glance this passion may seem rather tame. However, as soon as one begins to follow the 'geometrical progression' (Cryle 1991, 93) of the mathematics intrinsic to this passion, the brutality and absurdity of it is exposed: the victim receives an astonishing 51,600 lashes in total. No one could survive this degree of corporal punishment, especially given how these whippings are administered on consecutive days meaning that the victim's body would not have sufficient time to heal between lashings. Hence, as Barthes comments: 'dans l'arithmétique Sadienne, la somme devient à son tour une unité qui s'ajoute à ses composants' [in Sadean arithmetic, the sum becomes a unit which is, in turn, added to its components] (Barthes 1971, 161).

And yet this passion is located in the second part of Sade's novel – a section in which Champville is forbidden from describing any torment culminating in the death of a victim. Thus, we can deduce that Sade's libertines believe this exorbitant degree of physical punishment to be survivable. It is at this point that the twisted rational of Sadean mathematics becomes visible. As Blanchot notes (2004, 10-11), whilst Sade's and his characters' abilities to follow the functions of logical enquiry are sound, the conclusions they draw from the application of Reason are distinctly atypical. Acknowledgement of this illustrates how 'psychotic reason cannot be equated with irrationality or incoherence' (Love DPhil thesis, 37) as it strictly adheres to innately 'reasonable' principles and techniques.

Rather, Sade's characters' twisted Reason 'reflect[s] the fact that [their] reasoning is no longer grounded in the implicit framework of practical orientations and shared cognitive skills developed and maintained by social existence' (Love DPhil thesis, 73). Sadean reasoning, whilst undeniably neurologically atypical, is logical, exposing how the relations between Reason and mental typicality are arbitrary. It is precisely this nuance which Beckett notices whilst reading Sade's *120 journées*, and upon which he models his eponymous character's own reasoning through mathematics.

The sixth entry in the 'Addenda' to *Watt* covertly alludes to a conversation contained in the drafts of the novel in which the proto-Watt, 'we', explains to Arsene that experience adds nothing to life – a conclusion which appals both of these figures. On the versos of the loose leaf sheets upon which this conversation is recorded, Beckett writes out mathematical formulae 'demonstrating' the validity of we's assertions. In these multiple, exhaustive formulae, which go on for pages and of which I quote but a part, the term 'X' represents 'the lamentable tale of error, folly, waste, and ruin' (*Watt* NB2, 72), whilst 'L' represents 'life' and 'E' experience: '$X=L=L+E=L+2E=L+3E=L+99E=nL-E=((nL-0)*(2L+nL-E))/2$ [and] $X=L=L-(L-E)=L*E^2=L*E^3=L^{nL-1}$' (*Watt* NB2, 72-73). As Ackerley points out (1993, 179), these formulae are mathematically valid. There is a common solution to them: X=0, L=0, E=0, n=any number. Hence, the reasoning behind 'we''s maths is, technically, perfectly sound. But, comparably to how the ludicrousness of Sadean logic is exposed by the libertines' atypical conclusions, so too is the absurdity central to 'Wattean' logic unveiled through the deductions 'we' makes from his mathematics.

'We''s assertion that he has mathematically proven the innate pointlessness of life is indicative of a severe disjunction between his ability to reason and his sanity. Yet, just as one cannot say that Sade's characters' logic implies a sense of disorder within their thought

processes, so too would it be false to argue that ‘we’ is essentially unreasonable; the reader can easily see how ‘we’’s thinking is still governed by a form of logic – it is just not the logic with which neurologically typical people are familiar. Ergo, it becomes apparent that Beckett, in the drafts of *Watt*, is drawing upon his memory of the unique ways in which Sadean logic progresses to formulate the bizarreness of Wattean logic. In engaging in this pastiche of Sadean logic and reformulating it to create a Wattean logic governed by a deliberately curated sense of absurdity, dislocation, and stasis, Beckett not only increases the purgatorial nature of *Watt*, but he also reimagines Sade as a prism through which the realm of neurological typicality and its relation, or rather lack thereof, to one’s ability to reason may be explored. Thus, Sade becomes a weapon through which Beckett can: interrogate the intense absurdity of the Enlightenment’s valuation of ‘Reason’ as the ultimate sign of one’s sanity; underline the flaws in Russell and Whitehead’s belief, espoused in the *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13) – a work with which Beckett was familiar (Ackerley 2016, 111-12) – that mathematical formulae could ‘constitute a body of objective knowledge’ (Ackerley 2016, 111) about a person’s unique relationship with the world; and explore the incomprehensible strangeness of the human mind.

A similar scepticism concerning the validity of Reason is seen in the ‘saga’ of the famished dog(s) and its(/their) carers, the Lynch family (*Watt*, 76-101). As Ackerley comments, ‘the saga of the famished dog’ is initiated by a ‘hypothetical imperative’ (Ackerley 2004/05, 104): ‘it was necessary that a dog from outside should call at the house at least once every day, on the off chance of its being given part, or all, of Mr Knott’s lunch, or dinner, or both, to eat’ (*Watt*, 76). Bearing in mind Beckett’s claim that he ‘read nothing and wr[o]te nothing, unless it [was] Kant’ whilst considering authoring an article on the ‘divine marquise [sic] in Hermathena’ (letter of 12 May 1938 to Arland Ussher, *LSB I*, 622),

and given the fact that the famished dog-Lynch family saga can be read as an 'outrageous parody of scholasticism' (Ackerley 2004/05, 104) which satirises the ridiculousness of academic reasoning, it seems apt to describe the machinations of the text in Kantian terms.

According to the Kantian progression of the 'modality of judgement', the assertion initiating the saga of the famished dog and Lynch family is an innately 'problematic' one as it contains within it the possibility of both assertion and negation (Kant 2019, 209); whilst it is possible that a dog came to Mr Knott's house each evening, it is equally possible that such an event did not occur. However, from this problematic proposal *Watt* elaborates an entire dialogue which eventually leads to the definitive assertion that 'The name of this dog was Kate' (*Watt*, 95). At this point, the dog and the Lynch family shift from being 'problematic' elements within Watt's theory of how Mr Knott's bowl is emptied every evening and instead become 'assertoric' elements of the world (Kant 2019, 209). This is the moment in which 'the conditional has become the indicative' (Ackerley 2004/05, 104). But, this transference of the subjective into the objective does not stop here. Following the above, there is one final step which moves the dog (Kate), and the Lynch family, from the status of 'assertoric' proposals into an 'apodictic', or 'necessary', element (Kant 2019, 104) enabling the continuation of the Lynch family paradigm: the deceased Kate is immediately 'replaced by a[nother] dog called Cis' (*Watt*, 95) who is cared for by Art and Con. This is the final nail in the coffin of scholastic dialogue, as Watt's imminent ideas have now taken on a transcendental form that has been affirmed and 'verified' by Reason. Hence, *Watt* is here illustrating how Reason is self-sustaining; it enables the eternal continuation of dialogue so long as it accords with the internal principles of an individual's conception of Reason. Thus, one can say that *Watt* turns Kant's own logic against him, exposing the flaws concealed beneath the seemingly omnipotent surface of pure Reason.

Numerous episodes in Sade's *120 journées* progress through exactly the same method: the four protagonist-libertines will theorise ways in which they can potentially improve a passion and then, almost miraculously, the very next torment described flawlessly accords with the imagined actions which the libertines have just discussed. Take, for example, the discussion engaged in by the libertine-protagonists on the sixth day of Duclos' narration, where they propose that the second passion of that day – the first of the emetophilic passions in which a libertine made Duclos vomit into his mouth – could be 'improved' by having a girl receive the libertine's puke, swallow it, and then vomit the same ejecta back into the mouth of the libertine (Sade 2016, 130-31; Sade 2011a, 137). Following this suggestion, Curval rushes into his 'closet' with Fanchon, Augustine, and Zélamir to carry out the libertines' proposed passion (Sade 2016, 131; Sade 2011a, 137). Then, upon his return, Duclos narrates how the Président de Saclanges enjoyed precisely the passion which the libertines proposed and in which Curval just indulged (Sade 2016, 131-32; Sade 2011a, 138; cf. pp. 81-82 of this thesis). Hence, a hypothetical suggestion moves into the realm of the actual, before then becoming a 'necessary' element of *120 journées*' dénouement. Ergo, one can see how Sade's text also accords with a Kantian depiction of how Reason may eventually bring about objectivity, and hence can deduce that Beckett is transposing Sade's critique of Kantian reason into his own hypertextual work as a way of exposing the insanity of Reason.

Watt stands as a testament to the important role which Beckett's reading of *120 journées* played in his development as a writer. Beckett's appreciation of the Divine Marquis' most controversial novel does not stem from a reverie for the sadistic acts depicted within the text, but rather from an appreciation of the formal brilliance and strangeness of *120*

journées. Sade's lost novel is an innately liminal work – there is no 'final' or finished form of this novel due to the intervention of historical events. Subsequently, Sade's masterpiece presents its reader with a text perpetually ensnared within the process of becoming whilst concomitantly exposing the bones of the novel's construction upon its very pages. Beckett was deeply receptive to this and sought to incorporate the more peculiar, and often unwittingly present, elements of Sade's text into his own literary work. Hence, whilst the so-called 'rat episode' is undeniably the most Sadean episode in terms of content in *Watt*, as the mechanisms of torture employed by Watt and Sam and the targets of their cruelty are prefigured in *120 journées*, it is also the least interesting example of Beckett's engagement with Sade's writing in this work.

The truly fascinating Sadean material in *Watt* is located in: this novel's development of an ataraxic form of writing engendered in its narrative strategy of exhaustive enumeration; its deliberate and conscious adoption of an aesthetics of unfinishedness which can be read as mimicking how *120 journées* exists only as an incomplete work, and which augments the purgatoriality of the text by implying that *Watt* is itself as unstable as Sade's novel; its de-eroticisation and defamiliarisation of Sade's aesthetics of disgust; and, finally, its deliberate utilisation of Wattean logic, modelled upon Sadean Reason, to expose the fallibility, and even folly, of endowing the faculty of 'reason' with 'a responsibility it […] can't bear' (Beckett qtd in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 231) by tasking it with elucidating meaning within one's subjective experience of the often absurd world in which they are located. Comparably to how *How It Is* can be read as Beckett's 'Sadean fantasy' (Rabaté 2020, 41), *Watt* may be understood as Beckett's reflection upon Sade's literary techniques. Unlike Sade though, Beckett does not confront his readers with a shocking catalogue of

humanity’s propensity for violence, but rather produces a satirical, pessimistic world which bespeaks the static awfulness of ‘humanity in ruins’ (Beckett 1995a, 278).

Watt therefore demonstrates how Beckett read Sade in a way which many people find extremely challenging even to this day – as a literary author who exposes the dark sides of the Enlightenment’s valuing of Reason, and the subjectivity of morality, through his uncompromising depicting of humanity at its most barbaric – and reveals the fact that Beckett recognised the affinities between Sade and Dante as early as the 1940s. By creating an essentially purgatorial, decaying world through a pastiche of literary techniques developed from *120 journées*, Beckett covertly illustrates his awareness of the complementary nature of *120 journées* and *La divina commedia*. He unites the horrors of Sade’s world with tragic depiction of entrapped humanity in Dante’s *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* to produce a haunting portrait of the remnants of broken humanity.

3. Beckett's 'Frenzy of Writing': The Impact of Beckett's Reading of Sade within *Mercier and Camier*, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Unnamable*

The first mention of Sade in Beckett's post-war correspondence is in a letter sent to Georges Duthuit on a Friday towards the end of December 1950. Within this letter Beckett remarks that he has read 'Blanchot's Sade', mentions Pierre Klossowski's *Sade mon prochain* as well as Heine's foreword to *Dialogue entre un prête et un moribond* (1930), and comments that he previously 'knocked up' a quotation 'from the *120 Days*' for Duthuit's perusal (*LSB II*, 210-11). The allusion to a quotation that Beckett copied out for Duthuit at a prior, unspecified date illustrates that Beckett and Duthuit must have begun discussing Sade before the sending of this letter. Presumably, this undated earlier meeting between Beckett and Duthuit sowed the seeds of the aborted seventh issue of his *Transition*, therefore providing the impetus for the seven translations which Beckett prepared for this lost publication. However, the absence of a specific date for this meeting poses a problem: one cannot accurately discuss the impact of Sade within the 'frenzy of writing' (1946-1950) unless one is able to roughly date this meeting and situate it either before, or after, the completion of *L'Innommable* in January 1950 (*L'In.* FN2, back flyleaf verso; cf. Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 32-33).

Thankfully, Beckett's letters to Duthuit and Reavey allow us to roughly date the meeting in question. On either 30 March 1950 or 6 April 1950, Beckett sent a letter to Duthuit in which he comments: 'I often think of you, and would like to see you more often and be a little more help with *Transition*' (*LSB II*, 194). He then sends a letter to Reavey on 9 May 1950, stating:

> I received a letter, provoked apparently by my ravings in Transition from one Elga Lippmann, in which she quotes you. I have not yet had, and fear, shall never, the courtesy to reply. (*LSB II*, 202)

The 'ravings' to which Beckett refers are the *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (1949), originally published in *Transition 49*. Beckett then sends another letter to Duthuit (before 30 June 1950) in which he reminds his friend: 'Be sure to tell me when you will be in Paris putting the latest issue together' (*LSB II*, 204). This is the final letter which Beckett sends to Duthuit before the letter in which he mentions the Sade for the first time since before the Second World War. Ergo, we can confidently assert that Beckett and Duthuit met in Paris and discussed Sade, as well as a potential seventh edition of *Transition* focusing upon this author, following Duthuit's return to the French capital in September 1950 but prior to the end of the year. Hence, the meeting in question between Beckett and Duthuit occurred at least seven, but probably closer to ten or eleven, months after the Irish author completed *L'Innommable*. It therefore seems that *120 journées* remained the only text by Sade which Beckett had directly encountered between 1945 and late-1950.

3.1.i. Eroticism in the 'Frenzy of Writing': Heterosexual Eroticism

Throughout the 'frenzy of writing' there is a conscious re-engagement with the theme of heterosexual desire. The conception of heterosexual sexuality displayed in *Mercier and Camier* is markedly different from, but indeed indebted to, that encountered in *120 journées*. In *Beckett and Sade*, Rabaté asserts that *Mercier and Camier*'s depiction of the eponymous protagonists threesome with Helen is 'the only time Beckett comes close to Sade's descriptions of orgies' (Rabaté 2020, 37):

> All next day they spent within doors. Time tending to drag, they manstuprated mildly, without fatigue. Before the blazing fire, in the twofold light of lamp and leaden day, they squirmed gently on

> the carpet, their naked bodies mingled, fingering and fondling with languorous tract of hands arranging flowers, while the rain beat on the panes. (*M&C*, 57-58)

Whilst I agree that this passage accords with Adorno's and Horkenheimer's, as well as Barthes', contentions that the 'Sadean [sexual] machine' (Barthes 1976, 152) is governed by a principle of subsuming inclusivity in which 'no one's being solitary' is 'tolerate[d]' (Barthes 1976, 153; cf. Adorno and Horkenheimer 2002, 69; Rabaté 2020, 28-29), the actual sex act itself in this work is dominated by slowness and sensitivity. The aorist 'squirmed' does not connote violent intensity in the way that the vulgar verb 'foutre' [to fuck] favoured by Sade (2011a, 330-31) does, and the text's use of the adverbial modifier 'mildly' to describe the pace and manner of Mercier, Camier, and Helen's 'manstuprat[ing]' suggests a gentleness to their actions which is notably absent from Sade's novel. Moreover, the imagery of the three 'lovers' engaging in 'fingering and fondling with languorous tract of hands arranging flowers' endows their actions with a delicacy which starkly contrasts the bellicose ferocity of Sade's 'fuckers'. Thus, whilst Beckett adopts a Sadean organisation of the participants of the threesome in *Mercier and Camier*, the ways in which the act of coitus is expressed in this novel runs counter to Sade's depicting of the violence of eroticism. Whilst sexual desire abounds in *Mercier and Camier*, fulfilment of that desire comes in slow, softened movements which unite the participants – 'their bodies mingled' – rather than through the violent exertion of one's power over another being.

Another difference between Sade's and Beckett's conceptions of heterosexual eroticism in *Mercier and Camier* is revealed during the altercation between Mercier and Camier and the policeman who seizes Camier for asking him whether there is 'a bawdy or brothelhouse' (*M&C*, 75) near their location. During their brief conversation with the lawman, Mercier attempts to convince the police constable to help them by reasoning that

'to renounce venery because of a simple falling off in erotogenesis would be puerile' (*M&C*, 75). With this sentence, Mercier disconnects the desire to experience sex from the erotic drive. Mercier then continues his appeal by pleading: 'You would not have us live without love, Inspector[?]' (*M&C*, 75). Mercier's invocation of the concept of 'love' implies that he suffers from an intense sense of loneliness generated by his feelings of emotional isolation from other beings. As Alain Badiou incisively observes, 'love' in Beckett's works 'originates [in] the encounter' between two figures (Badiou 2003, 64) and engenders an exchange of 'knowledge' between them (Badiou 2003, 67) that results in the establishment of a sense of connection between the two parties involved, a 'double link' (Badiou 2003, 64) of disparate unity in which two individuals become 'mingled' with one another whilst simultaneously retaining their own individuality. Hence, by invoking the concept of 'love', the text of *Mercier and Camier* reveals just how different Beckett's understanding of eroticism and sexual desire is to Sade's. For Sade, as de Beauvoir underscores, the sexual event leads to a reaffirmation of the libertine's power and a conformation of their isolation due to the fact that a sense of community with the other through 'emotional intoxication' is perpetually denied by the sheer physicality of sensual pleasure (de Beauvoir 2012, 72). Mercier and Camier, contrastingly, do not primarily experience sexual desire in a physical manner, but rather as a yearning for intimate emotional connection which may alleviate, even if only temporarily, their terrible loneliness.

A similar desire for 'love' underpins the titular character's consenting to engaging in sexual intercourse with a lady who went by the name of 'Ruth […] [or] Perhaps […] Edith' (*Molloy*, 55) in *Molloy*. As Molloy recounts, he 'lent [him]self to it [sexual activity with Ruth/Edith] with a good enough grace' because he 'k[new] it was love, for she had told [him] so' (*Molloy*, 56). Later, Molloy comments that he 'would have made love with a goat,

to know what love was' (*Molloy*, 56). The desires underlying Molloy's sexual drives thus appear somewhat similar to those exhibited by Mercier; however, there is an essential difference between Molloy's search for 'love' – or rather, his yearning for knowledge of 'love' – and Mercier's and Camier's longing for love. Mercier and Camier have clearly known 'love' at some point. Molloy, on the other hand, is unsure whether he has ever known 'love', and is clearly dogged by feelings of emotional deprivation; he is so desperate to know 'what love [is]' that he would have even sought to discover the answer to his question with an animal for his companion. As Paul Davies notes, Molloy's isolation – his emotional disconnection from others emblematised by his lack of certainty about whether he has had any experience of 'love' – is '<u>inscribed</u>' into his very essence and '<u>envoiced</u>' through his own utterances (Davies 1994, 47).

In addition to these prevalent sensations of loneliness and desperation which underpin Molloy's craving for 'love' and his questioning of the validity of his experiences of so-called 'love' with Ruth/Edith, two atypical expressions of *Eros* colour this encounter. Firstly, the spectre of incest hovers at the frays of Molloy's encounter with Ruth/Edith. As established in the previous chapter of this thesis (pp. 60-67), one of Sade's preferred targets for his transgressive sexual and physical violence is the family. By having his libertines commit incest, or by having them force their victims to engage in incestual relations with their parents, offspring, and/or siblings, Sade textually desecrates 'the notion of the family as the site of mutual respect and morality' (Rabaté 2020, 25), resulting in a 'subversion of the foundation of human kinship' (Rabaté 2020, 39). Given the fact that Beckett's text entertains the idea of incest, it could be argued that *Molloy* engages in a similar eroding of the bases of human community.

But, there is a significant difference between Sade's valorisation of incest within *120 journées* and Beckett's presentation of this trope within *Molloy*. Whilst in Sade's work there is no ambiguity about the actuality of incest occurring, in *Molloy* the eponymous protagonist of the first half of the novel recalls the women with whom he has engaged in sexual intercourse in the following terms:

> women? Oh well, I may as well confess it now, yes, I once rubbed up against one. I don't mean my mother, I did more than rub up against her. But another who might have been my mother, and even I think my grandmother, if chance had not willed otherwise. […] It was she made me acquainted with love. She went by the peaceful name of Ruth I think, but I can't say for certain. Perhaps the name was Edith. (*Molloy*, 55)

Incest's shadow is invoked twice within this passage: firstly, when Molloy comments that he 'did more than rub up against' his mother; and secondly, when he posits that Ruth/Edith 'might have been [his] mother, and even […] [his] grandmother, if chance had not willed otherwise'. Addressing the former of these phrases first, the suggestion that Molloy 'did more than rub up against' his mother functions as an eternally open 'multi-path sentence' as theorised by H Porter Abbott (2013, 84-103). In *Real Mysteries: Narrative and the Unknowable* (2013), Porter Abbott outlines how the multi-path sentence is essentially a variant of the 'garden-path' sentence structure in which 'both (and sometimes more) paths [possible meanings generated by the sentence in question] work' (2013, 84). As a reader makes their way through Molloy's recollections about Ruth/Edith, they come to learn precisely what he means by the innuendo laden phrase 'rubbed up against'. As Molloy clarifies, when 'rubb[ing] up against' Ruth/Edith, '[he] put, or rather she put, [his] so-called virile member' (*Molloy*, 55) into her 'hole […] and […] toiled and moiled until [he] discharged or gave up trying or was begged by her to stop' (*Molloy*, 55). Thus, the immediate implication of Molloy stating that he 'did more than rub up against' his mother is that he engaged in activities exceeding those he participated in with Ruth/Edith. But, this presents

the reader with a dilemma: it is impossible to say precisely what Molloy means by this assertion. One could hence interpret the phrase in question as meaning that Molloy engaged in far more debauched sexual actions with his mother than he did with Ruth/Edith; but, if this were the case would Molloy not remember, in detail, those actions in which he participated with his mother because they would have allowed him to come closer to his goal of knowing 'love'? Perhaps, or perhaps not given the innate unreliability of his narration and his perpetually failing memory.

The second possibility is, of course, that Molloy engaged in a wider range of actions – and by this I mean non-sexual actions – with his mother than with Ruth/Edith. Yet again we are here presented with uncertainty: given Molloy's valuing of 'love', why would he diminish the act of 'rubbing against' someone by locating it within a position of lesser importance than other activities? Subsequently, the reader is forced into a position whereby neither of the possible outcomes of this sentence are satisfactory, and yet both are undeniably valid due to the primordial instability of Molloy's narration. The possibility of Molloy having committed incest is therefore courted by the text whilst simultaneously being held at a distance. It is this nuance which unveils the exact difference between Sade's textual employment of the practice of incest, and Beckett's literary engagement with the idea of incest. Sade's *120 journées* is definitive in its portrayal of the event of incest. Beckett's *Molloy*, contrastingly, is coloured by a perpetual sense of uncertainty and instability about the possibility of incest's occurrence.

This instability is only further demonstrated by Molloy's claims that Ruth/Edith may have been related to him had 'chance' not decreed otherwise. The text's employment of the modal verb 'might' causes this sentence to take on the form of a 'garden-path' sentence (Porter Abbott 2013, 65-83) through which the reader is initially misled into believing that

Ruth/Edith is either Molloy's mother or his grandmother. However, as the reader progresses to the end of the sentence they realise that Ruth/Edith is completely unrelated to Molloy. The closing clause, 'if chance had not willed otherwise', clarifies the sentence's true meaning by highlighting that Ruth/Edith could have been related to Molloy were the reality of the situation not different. Consequently, the ghost of incest passes through Beckett's text a second time without becoming definitively realised. As Angela Moorjani eloquently comments, Beckett's *Molloy* 'rescripts the intertwined Oedipus myth and complex […] in two contrapuntal, dreamlike transformations […] only to erase them' (1982, 108, 118), or rather potentially erase them, through their very spectrality within the narrative.

Equally, the possibility of incest raises its head in *Malone Dies*, but it is once again rebuffed. As Malone describes the evening routine of the Lambert family, the text states:

> When the meal was over Edmund went up to bed, so as to masturbate in peace and comfort before his sister joined him, for they shared the same room. Not that he was restrained by modesty when his sister was there. Nor was she, when her brother was there. […] Edmund then went up to bed, for no particular reason. He would have gladly slept with his sister, the father too, I mean the father would have gladly slept with his daughter, the time was long past and gone when he would have gladly slept with his sister. But something held them back. And she did not seem eager. But she was still young. Incest was in the air. (*MD*, 42)

The statement that neither Edmund nor his sister, 'Elise' (*Mm* FN2, 18r) as she is called in the French manuscripts of this novel, are 'restrained by modesty' when masturbating in-front of one another implies that these siblings have previously engaged in mutual, or at least communal, masturbation. This action obviously violates the terms of a 'normal' sibling relationship and gestures towards the act of incest. It is therefore somewhat unsurprising that Edmund 'would have gladly slept with his sister'. Through this comment, *Malone Dies* injects the act of mutual or communal masturbation between Edmund and 'Elise' with a further level of incestual desire, but, this desire is unilateral; as the text says, Elise 'did not seem eager' to engage in sexual intercourse with either with Edmund or Big Lambert.

Additionally, the text notes that Big Lambert 'would have gladly slept with his daughter' and, previously, 'would have gladly slept with his sister'. These remarks inscribe an incestual impulse into the very fabric of the male-half of the Lambert family. But, unlike in Sade's texts where the incestual impulse becomes manifest through his textual descriptions of numerous passions involving this act, here the possibility of incest is once again denied by Beckett's writing. Rather than having Big Lambert or Edmund force themselves upon Elise, as would likely happen in one of Sade's texts, Beckett quells the flames of incest and, in the French manuscript of *Malone meurt*, even categorises incest as a harmful action: 'L'inceste était donc à craindre, un double inceste peut-être' (*Mm* FN2, 19r) ['Incest then was to be feared, a double incest perhaps' (translation from Van Hulle and Verhulst 2017, 202)]. The 'à craindre' construction within this omitted sentence formulates incest as an undeniably negative practice rather than as a desirable one, as it is presented in *120 journées*.

The second sexual practice invoked during Molloy's encounters with Ruth/Edith is another favourite of Sade's: sodomy. Immediately after describing how Molloy and Ruth/Edith went about engaging in sex, the eponymous narrator-protagonist admits:

> Perhaps after all she put me in her rectum. A matter of complete indifference to me, I needn't tell you. But is it true love, in the rectum? That is what bothers me sometimes. Have I ever known true love, after all? (*Molloy*, 56)

In addition to this passage further reiterating Molloy's desperation for 'love', the text here calls into question whether Molloy engaged in vaginal, or anal, sex. Thus, the possibility of sodomistic relations enters into Beckett's text, but it cannot be verified or disregarded in its entirety. Even when Molloy turns to discussing, in rather emetic terms, the exact nature of the 'bunghole' (*Molloy*, 57) into which he put his penis, he can only comment that he 'would have preferred […] an orifice less arid and roomy' (*Molloy*, 57) than the one which

Ruth/Edith inserted him into. Again, neither the reader nor Molloy himself is capable of shedding light upon whether this 'hole' was Ruth's/Edith's vagina or anus, meaning that the uncertainty introduced in the above-quoted excerpt is sustained throughout the entirety of his wondering about which type of sex he had had experience.

Furthermore, Molloy's comment immediately following his pondering whether he had been inserted into Ruth's/Edith's anus, 'A matter of complete indifference to me', signals another point of divergence between Beckett's and Sade's textual consideration of sodomy. As Rabaté points out, 'sodomy was preferred by Sade as a contraceptive way of having sex' (2020, 38) because it ensures that 'one will not contribute to the propagation of the species' (2020, 38). Whilst this celebration of the fact that anal sex prevents conception would undoubtedly have resonated with Beckett, Molloy's indication that he does not have a preference for either vaginal or anal sex denies the very possibility of Beckett's text engaging in a fetishization of sodomy comparable to that found in *120 journées*. Moreover, Molloy's subsequent comment in which he expresses concern about whether sex could be seen as an expression of 'true love' if it was done 'in the rectum', and his lamentation, 'Have I ever known true love, after all?', augment this denial of fetishism within Beckett's text by suggesting that sodomy is perhaps motivated by something other than 'love'. Hence, one can clearly see that whilst *Molloy* calls to mind two of Sade's greatest passions, sodomy and incest, it does so by rendering them ephemeral and uncertain.

One also finds a powerful reconnecting of the erotic and the repulsive in *Molloy*'s treatment of heterosexual relations:

> She [Ruth/Edith] had a hole between her legs […] and in this I put, or rather she put, my so-called virile member, not without difficulty, and I toiled and moiled until I discharged or gave up trying or was begged by her to stop. A mug's game in my opinion and tiring on top of that, in the long run. But I lent myself to it with a good enough grace, knowing it was love, for she had told me so. She bent over the couch, because of her rheumatism, and in I went from behind. It was the only position she could bear, because of her lumbago (*Molloy*, 55-56)

There is an uncomfortable awkwardness to Molloy's movement during the act of copulation – undoubtedly because he is extremely physically handicapped – intonated through the text's use of the aorists 'toiled' and 'moiled'. This awkwardness is complemented by the revelation that Ruth/Edith suffers from both arthritis ('rheumatism') and back-pain ('lumbago') which have severely diminished her mobility. When these facts are considered alongside Molloy's description of Ruth's/Edith's vagina or anus as an 'arid' and 'roomy' 'orifice' (*Molloy*, 57), it becomes self-evident that Beckett's novel does not seek to eroticise the disgusting as Sade does, but rather to render the erotic act innately disgusting.

A comparable treatment of the confluence between the erotic and the emetic can be seen in *Malone Dies*' depictions of Macmann's and Moll's relationship. Again, the disgusting aspects of Beckett's textual descriptions of sexual actions between these two figures arise primarily from the vivid description of their diminished states:

> There sprang up gradually between them a kind of intimacy which, at a given moment, led them to lie together and copulate as best they could. For given their age and scant experience of carnal love, it was only natural they should not succeed at the first shot, in giving each other the impression they were made for each other. The spectacle was then offered of Macmann trying to bundle his sex into his partner's like a pillow into a pillow-slip, folding it in two and stuffing it in with his fingers. But far from losing heart they warmed to their work. And though both were completely impotent, they finally succeeded, summoning to their aid all the resources of the skin, the mucus and the imagination, in striking from their dry and feeble clips a kind of sombre gratification. (*MD*, 89)

The nauseating imagery of Macmann, now an elderly, bed-ridden man suffering from erectile disfunction, trying to forcibly 'bundle' his flaccid penis into Moll, an 'ugly and […] misshapen' (*MD*, 90-91) woman, is intonated to the reader not only by the viscerality of the description of Malone having to 'fold[]' his penis in two in order to push it into Moll, but also by the text's employment of the simile, 'like a pillow into a pillow slip'. Consequently, Macmann's and Moll's copulating takes on an exhausting, forceful awkwardness. When this is considered in tandem with the hideousness of these elderly bodies rubbing against one

another, as conveyed by the text's employment of the abject noun 'mucus' and the horrifying friction present at the beginning of their copulation as intoned by the adjective 'dry', the truly repulsive nature of the erotic act is realised. Therefore, through Macmann's and Moll's relationship Beckett transposes, and modifies, Sade's textual interest in the confluence of the erotic and emetic by utilising the aesthetics of the disgusting to render the sexual act innately nauseating. Beckett thus inverts Sade's textual formulation of the disgusting as intensely erotic by making the erotic deeply repulsive.

The final way in which Macmann's and Moll's relationship demonstrates the impact of Beckett's reading of *120 journées* can be identified in the blending of the sacrilegious, the sexual, and the disgusting during another of Moll's and Macmann's carnal encounters:

> One day, just as Macmann was getting used to being loved, though without as yet responding as he was subsequently to do, he thrust Moll's face away from his on the pretext of examining her ear-rings. But as she made to return to the charge he checked her again with the first words that came into his head, namely: Why two Christs?, implying that in his opinion one was more than sufficient. To which she made the absurd reply, Why two ears? But she obtained his forgiveness a moment later, saying, with a smile (she smiled at the least thing), Besides they are the thieves, Christ is in my mouth. Then parting her jaws and pulling down her blobber-lip she discovered, breaking with its solitary fang the monotony of the gums, a long yellow canine bared to the roots and carved, with the drill probably, to represent the celebrated sacrifice. With the forefinger of her free hand she fingered it. […] This incident made a strong impression on Macmann and Moll rose with a bound in his affections. And in the pleasure he was later to enjoy, when he put his tongue in her mouth and let it wander over her gums, this rotten crucifix assuredly had its part. (*MD*, 93)

The admittance that the 'rotten crucifix' of Moll's singular tooth 'assuredly' played a 'part' in the sexual pleasure that Macmann experiences when he 'put[s] his tongue in her mouth and let[s] it wander over her gums' is redolent of the passions described on the 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th days of the second part of *120 journées* (Sade 2016, 323-25; Sade 2011a, 316-17). Across these four days Sade's text outlines 20 passions in which the libertines' pleasure is either enhanced by, or hinges entirely upon, sacrilegious actions. But, again, there is a difference between Sade's conceptions of his blasphemous passions and Beckett's noting that sacrilegious thoughts may augment Macmann's pleasure. Often in the aforementioned

passions described by Sade, the libertine's primary focus is upon committing sacrilege, with the sex-act or violent-act enabling the religious transgression taking place being of secondary importance to the transgression itself. This is most clearly demonstrated in the first passion outlined on the 14th day of the second part of *120 journées*, in which no explicitly sexual act occurs: 'He smashes up crucifixes, images of the Virgin and of the Eternal Father, shits on the debris and burns it all' (Sade 2016, 324; Sade 2011a, 317). Contrastingly, it is made evident through the syntactical construction of Beckett's prose that blasphemy amplifies the innate sexual pleasure Macmann experiences in exploring Moll's mouth. Hence, in Beckett's text blasphemy is supplementary to sexual pleasure, whereas during the sacrilegious passions detailed in Sade's *120 journées*, sex is complementary to blasphemy. Beckett can therefore be seen to be both transposing Sade's interest in the confluence of the blasphemous and sexual, and inverting its emphasis. Subsequently, it becomes apparent that Beckett's conceptions of the nuances of heterosexual desire, sexual practices, and eroticism in the 'frenzy of writing' are indicative of a dual-movement: Beckett is distancing himself from Sade's techniques of literary expression whilst simultaneously exploring the complicated realm of heterosexual erotics which so fascinated the Divine Marquis.

3.1.ii. Nonheteronormative Eroticism

In *Mercier and Camier*, the protagonists' nonheteronormative tendencies are explicitly stated when the text lists the topics discussed by Mercier and Camier during their evening in a bar: 'What would one do without women? Explore other channels' (*M&C*, 59). This question and answer recalls Sade's misogynistic denials of women's sexual power and their

value as people. In the 'Introduction' to *120 journées*, the narrator takes care to outline how the text's four libertine-protagonists share a particular passion for sodomy and a powerful disdain of women's genitals:

> For now all that can be said in broad terms is that they shared a taste for sodomy […] The Duc, however, due to the immensity of his build and no doubt out of cruelty rather than taste, still fucked cunts with the greatest pleasure, as did the Président on occasion albeit more rarely. As for the Bishop, he despised them so intensely that the very sight of them would have made him droop for six months. […] As regards Durcet, he idolised the arse with at least as much ardour as the Bishop, but enjoyed it rather more incidentally: his favoured assaults were aimed at a third temple. (Sade 2016, 21; Sade 2011a, 32)

It is certain that Beckett was aware of the libertines' preferences for men even within sexual contexts. Consequently, it is possible to read Mercier's and Camier's assertion that they would 'Explore other channels' if presented with an absence of women as an oblique, yet knowing, inversion of one of Sade's central literary tenets. By stating that they would only 'Explore other channels' if presented with a situation 'without women', Mercier and Camier express their sexual preference for women whilst simultaneously illustrating their bisexual tendencies. Consequently, Beckett's text inverts Sade's valuing of men above women whilst still endowing its protagonists with nonheteronormative desires that chime with those expressed in the Divine Marquis' text.

Readers find a comparable, but differently inflected, suggestion of nonheteronormative sexual practices in *Molloy*. As Molloy is describing Lousse, he begins to contemplate her curiously masculine features (*Molloy*, 55). This eventually leads him to recall that he 'ha[s] rubbed against a few men in [his] time' (*Molloy*, 55). Through this admission one learns of Molloy's bisexuality. Indeed, such nonheteronormative inclinations again float to the textual foreground as Molloy reflects upon his engaging in sexual intercourse with Ruth/Edith. Here, the narrator-protagonist ponders, 'Perhaps she too was a man, yet another of them' (*Molloy*, 56), before stating 'But in that case surely our testicles

would have collided, while we writhed' (*Molloy*, 57). Through the use of the adverb 'surely', the text casts doubt upon Ruth/Edith's biological sex. This uncertainty as to whether the encounter taking place between these two characters is homosexual in nature is then amplified by the remark that 'Perhaps [Ruth/Edith] held [her testicles] tight in her hand, on purpose to avoid [Molloy's and her testicles colliding]' (*Molloy*, 57). Consequently, the potential of a homosexual act having taken place between Molloy and Ruth/Edith is neither confirmed nor denied. It thus appears that Molloy is further asserting his indifference as to whether he copulated with a man or woman, thereby undermining the misogynistic traces contained in Sade's valuing of the homosexual over the heterosexual erotic encounter.

However, this assertion is complicated by Molloy's query: 'is it true love, in the rectum?' (*Molloy*, 56). Beckett's text does not offer an answer to this question, meaning that sodomitic love is neither denied nor affirmed as a definitive expression of 'love'. Nonheteronormative sexual practices are thus neither demeaned in *Molloy*, nor are they celebrated as in Sade's texts. Rather, the very concept of romantic love is presented as an unknowable unknown in the eyes of its first narrator-protagonist, and is, importantly, never definitively connected to, nor divorced from, the sexual practices with which it is associated. Unlike in Sade's work, where the valuation of the homoerotic is predicated upon a devaluation of the feminine, *Molloy* entertains both heterosexual and nonheteronormative sexual practices in an unprejudiced manner whilst concomitantly shrouding the possibility of their occurrence in mystery. Subsequently, Beckett's text lessens the importance of sex within the narrative framework whilst concomitantly heightening the prevalence of the most essential Beckettian textual facet: uncertainty.

3.2.i. Violence in the 'Frenzy of Writing': Aggression Within the Family

As Rabaté comments, the explicit demonstration of Mahood's hatred for his family provided during the 'first story of Mahood' in *The Unnamable* (*TU*, 27-39) is clearly 'underpin[ned]' by 'Sade's animus against families' (Rabaté 2020, 39). However, far from being a simple hypertextual transposition of Sade's hatred towards familial relations, 'the first story of Mahood' is also essential in demonstrating Beckett's unique conceptions of the relations between tormentor and tormented. To fully comprehend these relations, it is first necessary to understand the narrating 'I''s attitude towards the 'masks' which he 'adopt[s] and then [...] abandon[s]' (Connor in *TU*, xx) during his mono/polylogue.[23] In the 'preamble' of *The Unnamable* (*TU*, 2-14), the text's speaker openly asserts his disdain for these 'masks'. When considering whether he should pay 'a little attention to himself' (*TU*, 10), the narrator remarks: 'Me, utter me, in the same foul breath as my creatures?' (*TU*, 10). The repetition of the first-person singular personal pronoun, 'me', underscores how appalled the narrator is by the idea of debasing himself by inhabiting the same syntactical space as his masks. Additionally, the phrase, 'foul breath', works in tandem with the dehumanising noun, 'creatures' and the possessive first-person personal pronoun, 'my', to imply that the narrator considers his masks not only as inferior to himself, but also as possessions of his which may be discarded at his whim.

This disdain is continually expressed throughout the novel, with the speaker later stating that his creations are forcing him to 'flounder[] through a ponderous chronicle of moribunds in their courses' (*TU*, 19) before denouncing them as a 'college of tyrants' (*TU*,

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[23] I use the term mono/polylogue as the narrator of *The Unnamable*'s conception of the 'I' is 'split' into 'a quantum world of non-Newtonian motion, a micro-universe in which the very attempt to "id-entify" is of necessity doomed to frustration' (Ackerley 2004b, 46). See Ackerley 2004b, 39-51 and Adorno 2010, 178.

21) or a collection of 'maniacs let loose [up]on' him (*TU*, 39). But, one of the most potent examples of the narrator's hatred for the beings through which he has cycled, and through which he must cycle, is found in his negation of the preamble's space:

> All these Murphys, Molloys and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing, speak of them when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and of me alone. But I just said I have spoken of me, am speaking of me. I don't care a curse what I just said. It is now I shall speak of me, for the first time. I thought I was right in enlisting these sufferers of my pains. I was wrong. They never suffered my pains, their pains are nothing, compared to mine, a mere little of mine, the little I thought I could put from me, in order to witness it. Let them be gone now, them and all the others, those I have used and those I have not used, give me back the pains I lent them and vanish, from my life, my memory, my terrors and shames. There, now there is no one here but me, no one wheels about me, no one comes towards me, no one has ever met anyone before my eyes, these creatures have never been, only I […]. And Basil and his gang? Inexistant, invented to explain I forget what. Ah yes, all lies. (*TU*, 14)

The claim that 'All these Murphys, Molloys and Malones do not fool' the narrator suggests that these figures are attempting to mislead the speaker into believing that he is, or has been, one of them – they are seemingly trying to 'usurp[]' (*TU*, 8) his name. The animosity contained within this accusation is then amplified by the narrator's charge that they have made him 'waste [his] time', distracting him from the business of bringing himself to an end. Following this, the speaker once again emphasises his self-perceived superiority by maintaining his use of the derogatory term 'creatures', and by claiming that these other beings have 'never suffered [his] pain'. This statement is particularly potent when one considers the fact that Beckett's characters had, at the time of *L'Innommable*'s composition, already been described as having been reduced to the very 'basis of being' through the extremity of their suffering (Bataille 2012, 103). Thus, by remarking that he has suffered far more than any Murphy, Malone, or Molloy, the narrator of *The Unnamable* implies that he has already experienced, and will have still to endure, unimaginable pain; the speaker is demeaning his masks by proposing that they are not worthy of feeling the agony he feels. This acrimony crescendos into the narrator's negation of his previous masks, and the masks

which are yet to come, as ‘inexistant’ and mere ‘lies’. Therefore, the contempt which the narrator harbours towards his masks, and the supercilious demeanour with which he regards them, is plain to see.

Mahood is the mask that the narrator loathes the most. Even before Basil becomes ‘important’ enough to be renamed Mahood (*TU*, 20), the speaker comments: ‘Basil […], filled me with hatred’ (*TU*, 8). The venomous traces in the noun ‘hatred’ are later augmented by the narrator’s claims that Mahood ‘plague[d]’ him (*TU*, 20) by continually ‘testify[ing] for [him], as though woven into [his voice], preventing [him] from saying who [he] was, what [he] was, so as to have done with saying, done with listening’ (*TU*, 20). The text unveils the innate dissonance within the narrator’s identity by highlighting how Basil’s/Mahood’s voice is so intrinsically connected with the narrator’s that it ‘sometimes drowned [the latter’s voice] completely’ (*TU*, 20). The narrator clearly differentiates himself from Mahood by saying that they ‘are twain’ (*TU*, 27) and by underlining the fact that Mahood’s voice is not his own voice; but, the speaker is cursed to inhabit the same ‘I’ as Mahood throughout his stories – ‘my mind (Mahood dixit) was assailed by insuperable doubts’ (*TU*, 33). Therefore the text establishes a supplementary, yet antagonistic, relationship between Mahood and the narrator which sheds light upon Mahood’s duplicitous nature. Notably, the narrator states, ‘Mahood himself nearly codded me more than once’ (*TU*, 27), before later asking: ‘why should he have lied to me […]. Why?’ (*TU*, 34). The phrase ‘more than once’ outlines how Mahood continually sought to mislead the speaker, making him seem far from truthful. This facet of his character is also subtly shown by how quickly he changes the details of the story which he allegedly whispers to the narrator. For example, Mahood ‘casually let fall that I [the narrator as Mahood] was lacking not only a leg, but an arm also’ (*TU*, 33). The complete absence of a limb seems like a rather

strange thing to have overlooked, and thus, the omission of this detail leads the reader to further regard Mahood as mendacious.

Contrary to one's expectations given the above, the narrator of *The Unnamable* expresses a note of sympathy for Mahood by stating that perhaps Mahood only lied to him 'For fear of paining [him]' (*TU*, 34). The idea that Mahood was denying the narrator essential information about how he 'Finally found [him]self […] within the building [the central rotunda] […] stamping under foot the unrecognisable remains of [his] family' (*TU*, 35) in order to protect him illuminates how the speaker has begun to feel tenderness towards his tormentor. Consequently, one cannot characterise the relations between the speaker and this 'human scrap' (Blanchot 2012, 112) as purely confrontational; the dynamics between these two figures continually fluctuate prior to the narrator's negating of Mahood (*TU*, 51-52, 96-100). Through this evolution in the tormentor-tormented relations of Mahood and the narrator, Beckett's reconceptualisation of Sade's work becomes visible. In the 'first story of Mahood', Beckett shifts the attention of his readers away from the relish of the tormentor in inflicting pain and forces them to consider the impacts of torment upon those subjected to it. Thus, in *The Unnamable* Beckett uses 'Sade's animus against families' as a hypertextual gateway enabling him to engage in a complex examination of the impacts of torture upon the victim.

This situating of the reader within the mind of the victim in *The Unnamable* is a unique occurrence within Beckett's works produced during the 'frenzy of writing'. More often in these texts, readers or viewers are located either as witnesses to an act of cruelty, or, are placed within the mind of the torturer. The earliest example of readers being deliberately located as witnesses to an act of cruelty committed against the family in these works is found in *Mercier and Camier*. In the second chapter of this novel, Mercier raises his

eyes from the floor to find ‘two children, a little boy and a little girl, standing gazing at him’ (*M&C*, 23). These children address Mercier as ‘Papa!’ (*M&C*, 23) before ‘advanc[ing] towards him’ (*M&C*, 23) and ‘stretch[ing] out [their] little arms towards him, as if to invite a kiss, or at least a caress’ (*M&C*, 23). This causes Mercier to erupt into a tirade of physical and verbal violence:

> Mercier raised his foot and dashed it against the pavement. Be off with you! he cried. He bore down on them, wildly gesturing and his face contorted. […] Fuck off out of here! screamed Mercier. He flew at them in a fury and they took to their heels. (*M&C*, 23)

At no point in the above-quoted passage is the reader granted access to the children’s or Mercier’s thoughts. Rather, the reader’s impression of this scene is generated by their observations of the children and Mercier. Taking this episode from its beginning, the image of a child advancing towards a man with outstretched arms crying ‘Papa!’ causes the reader to anticipate a scene of gentleness. The reader has no idea whether Mercier actually is the father of these children and has no knowledge of what has prompted them to act as they do. Subsequently, the motivations of these behind the children’s actions are configured as gaps in the narrative which the reader immediately seeks to fill with knowledge and experiences from their own lives. Mercier’s reaction, however, does not accord with the reader’s pre-conceived mental image of how this scene will unfold. The violence of this scene is then intonated through the text’s subsequent detailing of Mercier’s bodily and spoken language. The act of Mercier ‘rais[ing] his foot and dash[ing] it against the pavement’ endows his actions with animalistic bellicosity – he seems like a bull stamping before a charge. These animalistic undertones are then augmented by the text’s use of the adverb ‘wildly’ and by the image of Mercier’s ‘face contort[ing]’ as he flies at the children ‘in a fury’. Additionally, Mercier’s ‘scream[ing]’ at the children to ‘fuck off out of here!’

complements his physical violence by layering it with verbal violence bespeaking his outrage at these children taking him for their father, as well as his desire to be left alone.

In order to fully understand one's shock at the above-discussed scene, it is necessary to acknowledge that just as the children's motivations cannot be comprehended, so too can the source of Mercier's indignation not be definitively accessed. Of course, we know that its immediate inspiration is the actions of these two children, but we do not know why Mercier acts in this manner. Following the conclusion of this episode, the text's narrator simply informs the reader that Mercier 'resumed his reflections' (*M&C*, 23) and that these reflections 'were perhaps not so much reflections as a dark torrent of brooding' (*M&C*, 23). Even though this latter comment elucidates the character of Mercier's reflections and clarifies that they were disturbing or depressing in character, the reader is still denied access to what precisely Mercier is 'brooding' over. Subsequently Mercier's thoughts take on the shape of an 'egregious gap' (Porter Abbott 2013, 112). Consequently, the reader is placed without both Mercier and the children – they are located as a witness to the events taking place. Any questions which we may ask to seek further clarification regarding the impulses inspiring either party's actions are, in essence, unanswerable. The motivations laying behind Mercier's and the children's actions in this text are unknowable unknowns.

Through this formulating of these characters' inner thoughts as completely inaccessible to the reader, *Mercier and Camier* foregrounds its defamiliarisation of Sade's 'animus against families'. In *120 journées* the reader is always granted access to the libertines' thoughts through their practice of 'reasoning' upon the merits and flaws of the passions narrated to, and practiced by, them. Moreover, readers are also pre-eminently aware of precisely what motivates Sade's libertine-protagonists: Sade's libertine characters are essentially slaves to their own unceasing search for jouissance (de Beauvoir 2012, 86).

Thus, through the shrouding of his characters' motivations in 'shadow' (to borrow the Gidean-Dostoevskian term favoured by Beckett [see Bolin 2013, 17-22]) via the careful locating of the reader as irredeemably without these figure's minds, Beckett metamorphoses the Sadean practice of tormenting one's family into a Beckettian marring of the reader in insurmountable instability.

A comparable, yet subtly different, locating of the reader as a witness to an act of violence within the familial context occurs in *Malone Dies*, when Malone recounts how Big Lambert would 'beat' his 'young wife […] until she came round to a better way of thinking' if she ever refused to have sex with him (*MD*, 26). Obviously the violence occurring at this point in the text is openly Sadean; Big Lambert is clearly motivated by his sexual desires and sees no problem inflicting pain upon his wife until she submits to his 'needs', resulting in a definitive conjoining of male sexuality and violence within Beckett's text. However, unlike in Sade's works, there is here a double distancing of the reader from the act of sexual violence. In *Malone Dies*, the Lamberts are fictional creations stemming from the mind of the text's eponymous writer-protagonist, Malone. Subsequently, even though Big Lambert's actions accord with the violence seen throughout Sade's *120 journées*, there is an essential difference between the ways in which Sade's *chef d'œuvre* and Beckett's novel conceptualise violence. In Sade's *120 journées*, the reader is located as a voyeur to 'realised', rather than 'fictional', violence. Meanwhile, in *Malone Dies*, the reader is consciously positioned as a witness to an imagined act of violence. This additional distancing of the reader from the act of violence results in a far greater degree of reflexivity suffusing Beckett's text than can be detected in Sade's work. Consequently, the description of Big Lambert's sexual violence and his abuses of physical power become reflective not of Big Lambert's 'actual' personality but rather of Malone's interests as a writer. This not only

augments John Bolin's theorisation of Malone as a character modelled upon Beckett's knowledge of the Divine Marquis (Bolin 2013, 153-67), but also illumines how Beckett transforms the Sadean fascination with intra-familial violence into a device through which he may vocalise his titular character's unspoken fascination with barbarity and the power begetting and begot by violence.

3.2.ii. Beckett's Pedagogical Violence

Molloy's telling of his time with his mother near the beginning of the novel of which he is the eponymous protagonist (*Molloy*, 13-15) enables one to glimpse how Beckett was receptive not only to Sade's 'animus against families', but also to Sade's textual belief – as is suggested by the subtitle to *120 journées*, *l'école du libertinage* [*the School of Libertinage*] – in the pedagogical potential of violence. On the second day of the first part of *120 journées* the libertines arrange for Duclos to deliver daily 'lessons' in 'the art of masturbation' (Sade 2016, 85; Sade 2011a, 94) to their victims. Any victim who does not meet the libertines' required standard of being able to 'frig[] like the most skilled Parisian whores' (Sade 2016, 160; Sade 2011a, 164) following these lessons is punished through the application of intense violence (Sade 2016, 85-86; Sade 2011a, 94-95). The act of teaching thus becomes innately bound to the infliction of violence within Sade's text, and is even defined as a subset of violence due to the fact that the libertines have only arranged these so-called 'lessons' so as to facilitate an amplification of their *jouissance* which, as has been shown, is almost always predicated upon the infliction of intense violence. Thus, Sade's text posits the pedagogical potential of violence through its illustrating of how instruction and violence are inextricably conjoined within his cruel world.

In *Molloy* the titular character's mother is both deaf and blind. Molloy consequently has to devise a tactile communicative technique in order to 'speak' with her. After a moment's contemplation, Molloy formulates a system of 'knocking on [Mag's] skull[:] [o]ne knock meant yes, two no, three I don't know, four money, five goodbye' (*Molloy*, 14). The violence intrinsic to this system is clearly intended to enable Molloy to convey his desires to his mother by engaging in an extremely limited form of conversation with her. But, after developing this system Molloy encounters a problem: he has no way of communicating his system to Mag other than by directly applying it without explaining its principles to her. Consequently, the function of the violence central to Molloy's system becomes necessarily altered. Instead of immediately engaging in conversation with his mother, Molloy has to 'ram this code into her ruined and frantic understanding' (*Molloy*, 14) by 'training' her (*Molloy*, 15) through the pedagogical application of violence. Subsequently, it ostensibly appears that Beckett is transposing Sade's pedagogical approach to violence into a context of enabling interpersonal communication.

However, Molloy's disregard for the pedagogical process renders this reading untenable. As Molloy is 'training' Mag he admits: 'That she should confuse yes, no, I don't know, goodbye, was all the same to me, I confused them myself' (*Molloy*, 14-15). Through this statement Molloy trivialises the educational intentions of his repeated 'knocking on [Mag's] skull' whilst concomitantly revealing his own fallibility when concerning the specific meanings which he has attached to his blows. Molloy's hitting Mag is therefore transformed from a pedagogical tool into a random infliction of violence. This metamorphosing of violence's function within the text is then augmented by Molloy's observation that Mag 'seemed to have lost, if not absolutely all notion of mensuration, at least the faculty of counting beyond two' (*Molloy*, 15). The revelation of Mag's severely impaired mental

faculties reveals that even if Molloy had been successful in bringing his mother to a comprehension of his words through his exercising of violence upon her, all she would have been able to understand from his blows would have been a series of repeated noes. His violence is thus arbitrary even according to the rules of his own system.

Upon realising this, Molloy seeks to reinvigorate his failing system:

> Enlightened by these considerations I looked for and finally found a more effective means of putting the idea of money into her head. This consisted in replacing the four knocks of my index-knuckle by one or more (according to my needs) thumps of the fist, on her skull. That she understood. (*Molloy*, 15)

According to the UN, 'the term "torture" means any act by which pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind' (UN 1984, 1). It is, as Foucault says, a 'technique' predicated upon the infliction of pain on a victim's body and mind and designed to enable one to achieve one's desires (Foucault 2020, 33). Given this framework, we can definitively state that Molloy's actions following his 'refining' of his system fulfil the definition of torture. Not only have his hits become considerably more forceful, but they have also gained a singular purpose: to coerce Mag to give him money. Thus, in *Molloy*, Beckett engages in a parodic critique of Sade's textual positing of the pedagogical potential of violence by posing the implicit question: how is pedagogical violence any different from torture?

A comparable conflating of the torturous and the pedagogical uses of violence is witnessed in *The Unnamable*'s treatment of the 'impossible' (*TU*, 61) Worm.[24] The pit in which Worm is contained is explicitly torturous; Worm is surrounded by mysterious figures referred to by the third-person plural pronoun, 'they', who 'enjoy talking [as] they know there is no worse torment, for one not in the conversation' (*TU*, 71) and who utilise a 'peephole' (*TU*, 71) to observe the impacts of their speech upon this (non-)being. The pleasure these unnumbered figures derive from inflicting pain upon Worm – they give out 'a great cackle of laughter, at the sight of his terror and distress' (*TU*, 70) – endows the pit in which he is located with a sadistic, penal atmosphere. The layout of this location, as sketched by Beckett in the manuscript of *L'Innommable* (*L'In.* FN1, 70r), complements this 'dungeon['s]' (*TU*, 85) cruel nature by situating Worm at its base whilst locating his tormentors above him. Placing Worm in this position of vulnerability, servitude, and powerlessness, reveals how the pit's vertical dimensions are designed to symbolically diminish him and, in so doing, enables this pit's architectural design to mirror Dante's conical envisioning of Hell in the *Inferno* (Dante 2008, 46). These Dantean parallels are then furthered by the text's description of this place as a 'genuine hell' (*TU*, 76).

The above-noted attributes of the pit function in conjunction with the calculating nature of Worm's tormentors to ensure his – and thus, the narrator's – unceasing suffering:

> No matter where he goes he will go towards them, towards their song of triumph, when they know he has moved, or towards their sudden silence, when they know he has moved, to make him think he did well to move, or towards the voice growing softer, as if receding, to make him think he is drawing away from them, but not yet far enough, whereas he is drawing nearer, nearer and nearer. […] the kind of flesh he has is good enough, will try and go where peace seems to be, drop and lie when it suffers no more, or less, or can go no further. Then the voice will begin again […] coming from the quarter they want him to retreat from, to make him think he is pursued and struggle on, towards them. In this way they'll bring him to the wall, and even to the precise point where they have made other holes through which to pass their arms and seize him. (*TU*, 72)

[24] There is not scope to engage in an extensive discussion of Worm's negativized (non-)being in this thesis. See Connor 2007, 85-86 and Bernini 2014, 162-65.

The fact that the torturers surrounding Worm intentionally trick him into coming closer to themselves by falling silent or alternating the volume of their singing demonstrates these figures' awareness of how the pedagogical elements of cruelty can be manipulated in order to generate increased levels of mental distress within their victim. Worm's torturers are therefore deliberately taking advantage of the fact that Worm is still learning about his environment in order to amplify the spectacle of Worm's pain – revealed to them an embodied manner through his repeated attempts to 'fle[e]' (*TU*, 80) from these figures – and, subsequently, their own pleasure. As the text states, 'they' find Worm's display of pain 'irresistibly funny' (*TU*, 71). When this is combined with the bellicose revelation that these torturers wish to 'seize' Worm should he stray too close to them, and the implications of malicious intent contained within the text's repetition of the adverbial locater, 'nearer', it becomes apparent that Beckett is here modelling the interrelations of torture and pedagogical violence in a Sadean manner. Thus, Beckett can be said to be engaging in a serious transposition of Sade's keen attenuation to the harmful potential of pedagogical bellicosity, recontextualising Sade's textual understanding of the ways in which violence may supposedly be used to bring one to a greater understanding of a desired topic by applying the Divine Marquis' ideas to the vertigo-inducing exploration of the 'abyss of the [decentralised] self' (Bloom 1995, 497).

Additionally, a direct comparison of Worm's pit in *The Unnamable* with the textual description of the final passion outlined in *120 journées* illustrates how Beckett's shaping of this locale is derived from his knowledge of Sade's novel. When introducing the final passion depicted in *120 journées*, Desgranges remarks that the brutality of this passion is so severe that it is afforded its own specific name: 'Hell' (Sade 2016, 390; Sade 2011a, 376). The

Dantean resonances of this name are immediately evident, and are amplified by Desgranges noting that the tortures comprising this passion take place primarily in a subterranean ‘dungeon’ overlooked by room with a single window (Sade 2016, 390; Sade 2011a, 377). As a prelude to the passion-proper, 15 women are brought to a ‘room adjoining’ (Sade 2016, 390; Sade 2011a, 377) the one overlooking the aforementioned dungeon. Upon their arrival, the libertine-orchestrator of this final passion ‘brands’ each of these women, burning a number into their shoulders ‘with a red-hot iron according to the order in which he wants them to be sent’ into the room with the window (Sade 2016, 390; Sade 2011a, 377). He then returns to his room and proceeds to rape, sodomise, and brutalise these women one by one. Following this, the libertine kicks them through the window into the dungeon below, where the passion-proper can commence. After landing in this room the 15 women are set upon by ‘executioners bearing the mask and symbol of a demon’ (Sade 2016, 391; Sade 2011a, 377). They are then each subjected to a separate, horrifyingly savage torture, with all the tortures occurring concurrently (Sade 2016, 391-92; Sade 2011a, 378-79). The libertine descends into the pit in which his victims are tormented and ‘examines each torture for a quarter of an hour’ (Sade 2016, 393; Sade 2011a, 379). Upon completing his observations and orgasming with screams loud enough to ‘drown out those of the fifteen victims’ (Sade 2016, 393; Sade 2011a, 379), the libertine departs from the pit. Any surviving victims are then summarily executed (Sade 2016, 393; Sade 2011a, 379).

The similarities between the pit in which the final passion of *120 journées* takes place and that in which Worm is located are numerous and plain to see. In Beckett’s text a solitary figure is subjected to continual torture by an unstated number of torturers whilst entrapped within a pit. Comparably, in Sade’s text 15 victims are subjected to brutal torture by an equal number of torturers in a purpose-built dungeon. Just as the pit in which Worm

is situated has a ‘peephole’ enabling his torturers to glean sadistic pleasure through their observing of the embodied impacts of their torturous actions, so too is the ‘dungeon’ in *120 journées*’ final passion overlooked by a window which allows the libertine-orchestrator of this passion to observe the acts of violence being carried out at his behest. Furthermore, both the pit depicted in *The Unnamable* and that described in *120 journées* are coloured by Dantean inflections endowing them with a sense of infernality. Consequently, it is clear that in *The Unnamable*’s treatment of Worm, Beckett actively transposes Sade’s formulation of the final pit portrayed in *120 journées* to ethically interrogate the confluence of pedagogy and torture, to investigate how pedagogical techniques may be manipulated so as to allow one to inflict a greater degree of pain during the event of torture, and to explore the role played by violence in the processes of self-formation.

3.2.iii. Retributive Violence

In order to reveal how Sade’s conceptions of retributive violence, as displayed in *120 journées*, impact Beckett’s utilisation of this form of violence within the texts written during the ‘frenzy of writing’, it is first necessary to outline precisely how Sade uses the idea of *lex talionis* in his aforementioned novel. The clearest example of Sade’s textual understanding of this concept is encountered during the evening of the twelfth day of the work’s fourth section, when Fanchon discovers an unsolicited affair between one of the ‘subaltern fuckers’ and Augustine (Sade 2016, 369-70; Sade 2011a, 358-59). Fanchon reports this affair to the libertine-protagonists, leading them to execute the subaltern fucker whilst raping him in front of Augustine (Sade 2016, 370; Sade 2011a, 358). However, this is not the end of the matter:

> having punished Augustine for taking part in the conspiracy […] Fanchon is brought out, made to shit, each friend gives her a hundred lashes of the whip and the Duc slices her left breast clean off. She rails bitterly against the injustice of these proceedings. 'If it were just,' says the Duc, 'it would not make us hard!' (Sade 2016, 369-70; Sade 2011a, 358)

As Rabaté comments, 'the cynicism of the Duke' enables Sade's novel to 'poke[] fun at the idea of [traditional] justice' (Rabaté 2020, 47-48) through the revelation of a central characteristic of Sadean justice. Unlike in Dantean *contrapasso*, where every sin has an analogous punishment in hell and God's justice is 'meted out according to a codified, if opaque, system of allegor[y]' (Rabaté 2020, 47), or enlightened conceptions of justice in which the force of a punishment is directly related to the magnitude of the crime committed (Foucault 2020, 73-131), in Sadean justice the retributive action – which always takes the form of retributive violence – is disproportionate in its brutality to the severity violation committed. It is precisely this unbalancing of offending action and punishment that Beckett adapts from Sade.

One of the earliest examples of Beckett deploying imbalanced retributive violence within the texts written during the 'frenzy of writing' is found in *Mercier and Camier*, when a police constable moves to arrest Mercier and Camier after they ask him to point them towards the nearest brothel. The offending actions in this encounter are undertaken by the constable who, after being asked to 'Unhand' Camier by Mercier (*M&C*, 75), twists Camier's arm so that he 'gives a scream of pain' (*M&C*, 75) before 'deal[ing] him a violent smack' (*M&C*, 76) and then 'unsheath[ing] his truncheon' (*M&C*, 76). These actions represent not only a considerable abuse of power but also a notable escalation of violence, prompting Mercier to react with a comparable degree of violence as he 'raise[s] his right foot […] and launch[s] it clumsily but with force among the testicles […] of the adversary' (*M&C*, 76). Mercier's kick, which technically accords with traditional principles of *lex talionis*,

momentarily disables the police officer, causing him to fall 'howling with pain and nausea to the ground' (*M&C*, 76).

However, Camier's subsequent actions violate the above-established balance between crime and punishment:

> Camier, beside himself with indignation, caught up the truncheon, sent the helmet flying with his boot and clubbed the defenceless skull with all his might, again and again, holding the truncheon with both hands. The howls ceased. Mercier rose to his feet. Help me! roared Camier. He tugged furiously at the cape, caught between the head and the cobbles. What do you want with that? said Mercier. Cover his face. Then Camier resumed his blows. (*M&C*, 76)

Whilst this passage undoubtedly chimes with how, in Sade's *120 journées*, transgressions of the rules implemented in castle Silling are punished with disproportionate violence, there is an essential difference between Camier's and the libertine-protagonists actions whilst administering their own unique forms of 'justice'. In Sade's *120 journées*, the libertine-protagonists only come to their decision to punish Fanchon after engaging in 'discussion amongst themselves' (Sade 2016, 369; Sade 2011a, 358). Consequently, their actions are suffused with a sense of ataraxy and detachment – the idea of punishing Fanchon has presented them with a conundrum to be reasoned through. Camier's actions, contrastingly, are motivated purely by emotion. As James Little points out, it is due to the 'furious reaction' (Little 2020, 75) of Beckett's protagonist that the scales of justice are tipped to favour a brutal form, rather than fair expression, of retributive violence. Thus, in *Mercier and Camier* Beckett reintroduces the element of human emotion into the idea of justice, transforming Sade's cool conception of retributive justice as an essentially detached process into a form of retaliatory concession governed by passion.

Molloy further reimagines Sade's conception of retaliatory violence by combining the excesses of this concept's brutality with a Gidean-Dostoevskian insistence upon presenting the 'integrity of incoherence' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 37). But what does Beckett

mean by this phrase? During his 1930s lectures on the 'Modern Novel' at TCD, Beckett highlighted '[André] Gide's commitment to accepting the unexplained, his refusal of logic to adequately account for human nature, and his cultivation of a poetics that admits "failure" and contradiction' into the very fabric of his works (Bolin 2013, 9). As preparation for these lectures, Beckett not only read Gide's novels but also his critical study, *Dostoïevsky* (1926). This work enabled Beckett to develop his ideas about the 'Dostoevskian novel' as

> an inherently 'lawless' and ramified form, rejecting linearity and admitting the contradiction and chaos of the real [into the text]. It forgoes a transcription of a social and civic word to focus on the obscure inner reality of its characters. It is thus an inherently 'psychological form', and depicts consciousness as *dis*-unified and divided. Finally, the Dostoevskian novel presents a narrative model of 'abnegation' that follows the protagonist's journey to his 'utter ruin'. (Bolin 2013, 13-14)

Thus, the 'Dostoevskian novel' willingly represents 'the ultimate incomprehensibility of the actions and personalities of […] characters' (Bolin 2013, 20) through the 'Reject[ing] of motive' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 70) and the admittance of gaps into the narrative.

Towards the end of *Molloy* readers encounter precisely such an emphasis upon the 'integrity of incoherence' within an episode coloured by a distinctly Sadean unbalancing of retributive violence. As Moran is tending to the fire in his and his son's makeshift 'shelter' in Ballyba, he is approached by an unnamed man who repeatedly accosts him:

> Do you hear me? he said. […] Hey you! he said. I turned back to my fire. It was doing nicely, I threw more wood on it. Do you hear me talking to you? he said. I went towards the shelter, he barred my way, emboldened by my hip. Have you a tongue in your head? he said. (*Molloy*, 157-58)

Complementing the rising violence of his spoken language, the stranger's body language grows increasingly bellicose as he approaches Moran, culminating in the directly confrontational manoeuvre of preventing Moran from returning to the safety of his 'shelter'. Due to Moran's corporeal disabilities at this point in the novel, this action illustrates that the stranger believes he can physically intimidate, and potentially even incapacitate, the text's second protagonist.

After Moran's way has been blocked by this man, he answers the stranger's insult, 'Have you a tongue in your head?', by replying that he 'do[esn't] know [him]' (*Molloy*, 158), indicating that he has no wish to engage with this stranger. However, this reply emboldens the stranger:

> Would you care to see my card? he said. It would mean nothing to me, I said. He came closer to me. Get out of my way, I said. It was his turn to laugh. You refuse to answer? he said. (*Molloy*, 158)

Again, the stranger's use of the threat of physical confrontation engendered in his moving closer to Moran causes this part of the text to scintillate with unspoken violence. This sense of conflict, and the tension associated with it, reaches fever pitch in their final verbal exchange: 'What is your business here? he said. Are you on night patrol? I said. He thrust his hand at me' (*Molloy*, 158).[25] Following this clear indication of the stranger's willingness to actually engage in physical violence, the text states:

> I can still see the hand coming towards me, pallid, opening and closing. As if self-propelled. I do not know what happened then. But a little later, perhaps a long time later, I found him stretched on the ground, his head a pulp. I am sorry I cannot indicate more clearly how this result was obtained. (*Molloy*, 158)

It is at this moment that *Molloy* defamiliarises the Sadean conception of retributive violence by combining it with a representation of the 'integrity of incoherence'. In refusing to detail the precise actions undertaken by Moran, and instead only intonating the brutality of the protagonist's violence by noting that the stranger's head was beaten to a 'pulp', *Molloy* represents textually the gap that may occur within one's memory either during, or in the wake of, extreme violence. Subsequently, *Molloy* combines the Sadean unbalancing of *lex talionis* with a Gidean-Dostoeveskian depicting of how our experiences of life are coloured

[25] In the original French manuscripts of *Molloy*, this stranger's 'thrust[ing]' of 'his hand at' Moran is accompanied by a phrase loaded with memories of the physical violence experienced by inhabitants of countries under Nazi occupation during the Second World War: 'Montrez-moi vos papiers' [Give me your papers] (*Molloy* FN4, 23r).

by insurmountable gaps to create a mimetic textual portrait of the impacts of violence upon one's mind.

Yet it is not in the novel form that Beckett most affectingly represents the horror intrinsic to his conceptualisation of retributive violence. Rather, in *Godot* Beckett fully displays the challenging violence of his Beckettian-Sadean conception *lex talionis* in embodied form. In the first act of the play, following an exchange between Vladimir and Pozzo concerning the latter's desire to 'get rid' of Lucky (*WfG*, 28), Estragon approaches Lucky with a handkerchief in order to wipe the tears from his eyes (*WfG*, 29). As Estragon moves to comfort Lucky, Lucky '*kicks*' his would-be helper '*violently in the shins*' (*WfG*, 29), causing Estragon to '*recoil*[]' and '*stagger*[] *about the stage howling with pain*' (*WfG*, 29) as he clutches his bleeding leg. This action constitutes the offending act within the framework of *lex talionis*. Later, during the play's second act, Vladimir and Estragon help Pozzo to his feet following his and Lucky's falling down (*WfG*, 73-83). Vladimir and Pozzo then tell Estragon to approach Lucky to ensure that he is alive, with Vladimir urging the apprehensive Estragon on by telling him that he now has 'an opportunity to revenge [him]self' (*WfG*, 84). Following this remark, Estragon '*goes towards* LUCKY' (*WfG*, 85), checks that he is breathing, and '*With sudden fury* […] *starts kicking* LUCKY, *hurling abuse at him as he does so*' (*WfG*, 85). This attack upon the defenceless Lucky is clearly motivated by Estragon's desire for vengeance, with the now 'fester[ing]' (*WfG*, 62) wound on his leg acting as a disturbing corporeal reminder of how Lucky had harmed him in the previous act of the play. Consequently, Beckett once again reconnects the idea of redemptive violence with an innately human susceptibility to emotions whilst simultaneously desecrating the analogical balance between offense and response governing traditional conceptions of *lex talionis*.

Beckett thus transposes and adapts Sade's understanding of retributive violence by rendering it intensely passionate.

Moreover, as Hannah Simpson points out, our brains are not necessarily able to distinguish comprehensively between simulated and experienced pain, meaning that 'even pain-related behaviour, such as wincing or grimacing, by subjects simulating physical suffering is "sufficient on its own, to activate pain-related neural structures" in observers' (Simpson 2022, 57; cf. Botvinick et al. 2005, 318). Consequently, when viewers are presented with a theatrical representation of simulated violence and pain, such as that seen in Estragon's savage beating of Lucky, their brains may not be able to definitively discern whether they are witnessing an actual occurrence of, or a mimesis, of violence. This inability to distinguish between these forms of violence and suffering causes the viewer watching *Godot* to respond viscerally to the spectacle of violence within the theatre, as is testified by how Jackson Pollock broke into tears whilst watching the 1956 New York production of the play: 'He started to cry, really cry, and then the crying turned into sobs and then it went into heart-breaking moans' (Kligman 1974, 68-69). Beckett's true development when concerning Sade's conception of retributive violence within *Godot* is therefore not simply his reacquainting of *lex talionis* with human emotion, but rather his willingness to confront his viewers with a physicalised presentation of pain in which the spectacles usually associated with theatrical pain are notably absent. As Simpson states 'Rather than being neutralised, pain in *Godot* remains disturbing' (Simpson 2022, 70), meaning Estragon's blows land with horrifying force. By incarnating pain upon the stage in this manner, Beckett compels his viewer respond to what they are seeing in a much more immediate manner than is demanded by the textual violence in Sade's *120 journées* or within Beckett's own novels. Thus, Beckett's transformation of Sade's notion of redemptive violence in *Godot* is founded

upon two poles: firstly upon the Beckettian-Sadean reconnecting of *lex talionis* and human emotion; and secondly, by presenting this redemptive violence through a physical medium.

3.2.iv. Violence and the Integrity of Incoherence

In *Beckett and the Modern Novel* (2013), Bolin asserts that the ‘ending of *Malone Dies* has been troublesome for Beckett’s readers in its combination of violence and detachment’ (Bolin 2013, 166), before proposing that Beckett is ‘here […] follow[ing] in Sade’s tradition’ (2013, 166) of the ataraxic encounter with violence. Whilst the sense of detachment within the novel’s narration is undeniable, with the text itself describing Lemuel’s murders in a very matter-of-fact manner –

> Lemuel […] went up behind Maurice […] and killed him with the hatchet. […] A little later Ernest came back to fetch them. Going to meet him Lemuel killed him in his turn, in the same way as the other (*MD*, 118)

– the ‘troublesome’ character of this ending does not solely stem from Sade. Rather the text’s presentation of these aforementioned acts of violence, and Lemuel’s raising of his hatchet ‘on which the blood will never dry’ (*MD*, 119), blends an ataraxic narrational approach to violence with the Gidean-Dostoevskian concept of the ‘integrity of incoherence’.

As noted earlier in this chapter, one of the key principles championed by Beckett when concerning the ‘preserv[ation] of the integrity of incoherence’ within the novel form is the idea that authors must respect, and be willing to represent, 'the ultimate incomprehensibility of the actions and personalities of […] characters’ (Bolin 2013, 20) within the text. One of the primary ways in which this can be achieved is through the denial of rational explanations seeking to illuminate the reasoning underpinning characters’

actions, and hence, the inclusion of 'Action[s] gratuite[s]' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 35) within the narrative. As Burrows' lecture notes reveal, Beckett defines an 'action gratuite' as an act 'devoid of outer motive' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 35; cf. Bolin 2013, 25) – an act that has 'no social motive' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 23) as well as no discernible, logical reason for having taken place. Thus, in order to understand how Beckett is utilising the idea of the 'action gratuite' at the close of *Malone Dies*, and to illumine the ways in which the 'incoherence' generated by such 'action[s] gratuite[s]' gives rise to an inevitable sense of detachment within the narrative, we must first establish whether Lemuel's actions at the conclusion of this novel accord with the concepts of the 'action gratuite' and the uniquely Beckettian adaptation of this idea, the 'crime immotivé' (Burrows TCD MIC 60, 23).

In *Beckett and Poststructuralism* (1999), Anthony Uhlmann proposes that Lemuel's murdering of Maurice and Ernest may be understood as an 'act […] of violent resistance [or] rebellion' (Uhlmann 1999, 135) against the machinations of an innately carceral and oppressive social order emblematised by the charitable exploits of Lady Pedal (Uhlmann 1999, 134-35). To support his argument, Uhlmann draws upon Foucault's account of charitable organisations as integral to the establishment of a network of social discipline (Foucault 2020, 212), stating that 'charity plays a prominent role in the imposition of discipline' (Uhlmann 1999, 134). However, as Little points out, if Lemuel's actions were born out of a supposed desire to exact retribution against the machinations of an oppressive institutional system, 'why would Lemuel spare the injured Lady Pedal after murdering her two assistants?' (Little 2020, 81). Thus, it becomes clear that Lemuel's acts of violence, ostensibly, are not motivated by a drive for social protest.

Equally though, Little's assertion that Lemuel's 'murderous rampage […] seem[s] […] to stem from the psychological pressure [he] is under' (Little 2020, 81) is itself somewhat

speculative. From the very moment of Lemuel's introduction, the reader is granted only a single glimpse into Lemuel's mind: the narrator asserts that Lemuel was 'Flayed alive by memory, his mind crawling with cobras' (*MD*, 97). Whilst these comments certainly imply that Lemuel is in extreme pain, with the aorist 'Flayed' connoting a sense of viscerality to his suffering which emphasises its torturous nature, they do not serve as a firm grounding to explain why he commits murder. Other than this glance into Lemuel's mind, the 'inner-life' of this character, and indeed the precise nature of the memories tormenting him, remain shrouded in 'shadow'. Consequently, it follows to reason that the actions undertaken by Lemuel at the conclusion of *Malone Dies* must be understood as 'action[s] gratuite[s]' and 'crime[s] immotivé[s]'.

This concealing of the psychological drives motivating Lemuel's violence against others within this novel characterises him as a figure represented in a Gidean-Dostoevskian, rather than Sadean, fashion. As the Duc de Blangis' comment to Fanchon following his and the other libertines' decision to punish her unjustly in the fourth part of the novel – 'If it were just […] it would not make us hard!' (Sade 2016, 369-70; Sade 2011a, 358) – reveals, and as the libertines' practice of reasoning upon their tortures in order to 'improve' them demonstrates, Sade's libertines are essentially rational beings who are motivated by *jouissance*. In *Malone Dies*, contrastingly, the reader cannot identify why Lemuel commits murder, nor can they even begin to understand his internal character because he is presented as an entirely unknowable unknown. This unknowability is generated by the fact that the reader of Beckett's text is placed irredeemably without Lemuel. In order to sustain this characterisation of Lemuel as an entirely inaccessible 'other', and hence to respect the 'integrity of incoherence' within this work, the text necessarily adopts a 'troublesome' air of detachment even when describing Lemuel's most violent actions. Consequently, at the close

of *Malone Dies* Beckett transfigures Sadean ataraxy in the face of violence into an insurmountable representation of the 'incoherence' of violence as experienced by the witness to violence.

3.2.v. Beckettian Sadism: The Desire to Inflict Pain Upon Oneself

Finally, in *Malone Dies* one finds a uniquely Beckettian formulation of sadism: harming oneself in search of relief from pain. However, before discussing this form of sadism and the violence associated with it, it is first necessary to outline how this idea differs from masochism. In *Coldness and Cruelty* (1989) [1967] Gilles Deleuze posits that masochism, as expressed in its purest form through the writings of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, is predicated upon the presence, and interaction, of five 'basic characteristics' (Deleuze 1989, 74):

> 1. The 'special significance of fantasy', that is the form of the fantasy (the fantasy experienced for its own sake, or the scene which is dreamed, dramatised, ritualised and which is an indispensable element of masochism).
> 2. The 'suspense factor' (the waiting, the delay, expressing the way in which anxiety affects sexual tension and inhibits its discharge).
> 3. The 'demonstrative', or more accurately, the persuasive feature (the particular way in which the masochist exhibits his suffering, embarrassment, and humiliation).
> 4. The 'provocative fear' (the masochist aggressively demands punishment since it resolves anxiety and allows him to enjoy the forbidden pleasure).
>
> […] a fifth factor […] is very important: the form of the contract in the masochistic relationship. (Deleuze 1989, 74-75)

Following this, Deleuze elaborates the differences between sadism targeting the self and masochism by arguing that 'the formula "sadism turned around upon the self" as a definition of masochism [is inadequate]. It needs to be supplemented by three other considerations: the sadism must be (1) resexualised, (2) the resexualisation must be grounded in a new erogenicity and (3) the sadism must be projected' (Deleuze 1989, 106). As is made evident through Deleuze's comments, the masochistic drive is essentially

externalising in its proposing of the instigator of violence. It is almost entirely reliant upon the ability of the masochist to establish a sense of 'fantasy' in which they have convinced an other to inflict pain upon them.

Furthermore, according to Deleuze's formulation, the masochist finds pleasure in the condition of waiting and suspense:

> Formally speaking, masochism is a state of waiting; the masochist experiences waiting in its pure form. Pure waiting divides naturally into two simultaneous currents, the first representing what is awaited, something essentially tardy, always late and postponed, the second representing something that is expected and on which depends the speeding up of the awaited object. It is inevitable that such a form, such a rhythmic division of time into two streams, should be 'filled' by the particular condition of pleasure and pain. For at the same time as pain fulfils what is expected, it becomes possible for pleasure to fulfil what is awaited. The masochist waits for pleasure as something that is bound to be late, and expects pain as the condition that will finally ensure [...] the advent of pleasure. He therefore postpones pleasure in expectation of the pain which will make gratification possible. (Deleuze 1989, 71)

Thus, the masochistic condition is dominated by the mingling of contentment and anxiety generated by the willing submersion of the individual in a state of static-anticipation of a future event. Ergo, we have established that masochism is dominated by stasis and is undeniably externalising in its anticipation of pain and pleasure. An individual cannot inflict masochistic pleasure upon themselves without first externalising their very self as a theoretical 'other'. As Deleuze insistently reiterates, 'Masochism is above all formal and dramatic' (Deleuze 1989, 109; cf. 32-33, 55, 65-66, 72, 73-75, 94, 107, 127, 134) – it uses fantasy to 'neutralis[e] the real and contain[] the ideal within the fantasy' (Deleuze 1989, 73).

Turning to Lemuel, one need only examine the specific manner in which this figure inflicts pain upon himself to realise that his actions and reactions to self-flagellating behaviour are diametrically opposed to the central tenets of masochism. After the narrator of *Malone Dies* highlights Lemuel's perpetual mental anguish by commenting that he was 'Flayed alive by memory, his mind crawling with cobras', he goes on to comment:

> Physical pain, on the contrary, seemed to help him greatly. And one day rolling up the leg of his trousers, he showed Macmann his shin covered with bruises, scars and abrasions. Then producing smartly a hammer from an inner pocket he dealt himself, right in the middle of his ancient wounds, so violent a blow that he fell down backwards, or perhaps I should say forwards. (*MD*, 97)

The first way in which these actions are differentiated from those of the masochist is intonated by the immediacy with which Lemuel inflicts violence upon himself. As Deleuze comments, sadism as expressed in Sade's works is dominated by a sense of 'movement' and the 'immediacy of […] action' (Deleuze 1989, 70) – there is no space for suspension or delay within the sadistic world as permitting these concepts to enter into the process of inflicting violence upon a victim would necessarily constitute a temporary suspension of the tormentor's fulfilment. When seized by the desire to inflict pain upon himself Lemuel fulfils this need instantaneously, just as the libertine seeking release immediately inflicts violence upon a victim. Additionally, note how in Lemuel's actions there is no need to defer to an external party for affirmation or for the infliction of the blow. Whilst Macmann is present to witness Lemuel's self-brutalisation, he is entirely external, and completely irrelevant, to the undertaking of this procedure; Macmann is only acknowledged by Lemuel after interrupting this figure's practice of striking himself by repeatedly shouting: 'Up! […] Let me up!' (*MD*, 97). Consequently, the irrelevance of the physical or psychological other to Lemuel's self-targeting sadism is revealed in tandem with a textual demonstration of the denial of temporal suspension between the arising and the fulfilling of the need to inflict violence upon the self.

However, it is in the revelation that Lemuel's sadistic beating of himself with a hammer has a definitive target, as well as a specific intended purpose, that the truly unique nature of this Beckettian formulation of self-flagellating violence becomes apparent. After detailing how Lemuel hit himself in the leg after showing Macmann the 'bruises, scars and

abrasions' upon his shin, the text states that 'the part he struck most readily, with his hammer, was the head' (*MD*, 97) before elaborating that this was 'understandable, for it too is a bony part, and sensitive, and difficult to miss, and the seat of all the shit and misery' (*MD*, 97). It is the very last clause of this sentence which is the most revealing when concerning the precise nature of Beckettian reflexive-sadism. By identifying the head – and hence, by extension, the mind – as 'the seat of all the shit and misery' experienced by an individual throughout their life, Malone implies that Lemuel's self-targeting violence is provoked by a desire to find relief from the perpetual mental agony that he experiences. Additionally, Malone here suggests that Beckettian reflexive-sadism is essentially connected to the notions of control and power: it seems that Lemuel hits himself in the head with his hammer in order to regain control of his own thoughts and hence silence the venomous 'memories' which ceaselessly torture him. Furthermore, by remarking that the 'head' was 'the part [Lemuel] struck most readily', the text implies that Lemuel engages in this action regardless of whether he is observed by a physical other. Again, this reasserts the fact that Lemuel's reflexive violence is not dependent upon an other – it is satisfying in isolation and can be carried out by Lemuel alone as he is both the subject administering and the object receiving this violence. Ergo, in its most Beckettian formulation, sadistic violence is administered and experienced by a figure who is an instigator/receiver seeking relief – a torturer/victim capable of acting entirely independent of others, and who administers their violence with an immediacy that denies any possibility of masochistic pleasure, in a desperate attempt to escape the agony of their very existence. There is thus no sense of joy in Lemuel's life, only the clear demonstration of subjectively-experienced pain and the desire to relieve this pain.

The drafts of *Malone meurt* contain within them a phrase which, through its deletion and omission from the published text of both *Malone meurt* and *Malone Dies*, becomes emblematic of the ways in which Beckett's relationship with Sade evolved throughout his 'frenzy of writing'. In a ten line passage, crossed out in blue and grey pencil, Malone reveals 'his preference for a watery grave, a bag or basket that is firmly weighted down with heavy balls or lead and thrown into the ocean: "~~Mais, si j'ai une préférence, ce~~ serait d'être ~~mis dans un cabas lesté de boulets confortablement lest~~ lesté avec du plomb, mais solidement, et jeté dans l'océan"' [~~But, if I have a preference, it~~ would be to be ~~put in a bag weighted with balls comfortably weigh~~ weighted down with lead, firmly, and thrown into the ocean] (Van Hulle and Verhulst 2017, 241; cf. *Mm* FN2, 87r, my translation). The most significant characteristic of Malone's desire to be buried in the sea is his desire for anonymity – the desire to literally sink into inexistence, leaving no trace of having ever walked the earth. It is in this wish for anonymity that a hitherto unexamined hypertextual transposition of Sade's personal desire for posthumous anonymity – as espoused in the concluding paragraph of his last will and testament, which is reproduced in *L'Œuvre de Sade* – is hidden:

> [M]a fosse une fois recouverte, il sera semé dessus des glands, afin que, par la suite, le terrain de ladite fosse se trouvant regarni et le taillis se trouvant fourré comme il était auparavant, les traces de ma tombe disparaissent de dessus la surface de la terre, comme je me flatte que ma mémoire s'effacera de l'esprit des hommes.
>
> Fait à Charenton-Saint-Maurice, en état de raison et de santé, le 30 janvier 1806.
>
> Signé, D. A. F. Sade. (Sade 1909, 15; cf. Sade 2022b, 63)[26]

Malone's deleted wish for his body to be lost to the waves following his death clearly accords with Sade's own desire to be buried in an unmarked grave, with any memory of him eventually fading from the minds of men.

[26] See p. 334 in the appendix for a translation.

The revelation of the above-noted exclusion of this cancelled phrase from the published versions *Malone meurt* and *Malone Dies* naturally inspires the question: why did Beckett remove this part of the text after having evidently struggled to find the precise phrasing which suited it? I propose that the answer to this question is two-fold. Of course, Beckett's removal of this hypertextual transposition can clearly be understood as according with his wider practice of 'vaguening' (Pountney 1988, 149) his texts whilst editing. But, upon a more precise level *vis-à-vis* Beckett's career long engagement with Sade's works and ideas, this deletion is demonstrative of the specific nuances of Beckett's changing relationship with the Divine Marquis. By omitting this meticulously formulated transposition, Beckett veils the presence of Sade within *Malone meurt*. This action is reflective of the wider movement away from Sade's techniques of literary expression seen throughout the works comprising Beckett's 'frenzy of writing'. Beckett's distancing of his fictionalising techniques from those which dominate not only Sade's *120 journées* but also large swathes of his own earlier novel, *Watt*, is accompanied by a concomitant countermovement towards the subjects comprising the French author's primary spheres of concern: sex and violence. As we have shown, throughout the 'frenzy of writing' Beckett continually adopts, adapts, and defamiliarises Sadean conceptions of these two topics. In so doing, Beckett reduces the overt presence of Sade within his *œuvre* whilst simultaneously enabling the creation of uniquely Beckettian formulations of eroticism, violence, and reflexive-sadism within his texts. Consequently Sade becomes, like Dante, an absent presence breathing throughout the Irish author's works.

4. The 1950s' 'Sade Boom': Beckett's Contribution to the Unpublished Seventh Issue of *Transition*, *Texts for Nothing*, and *Endgame*

The first indication that Beckett was working with Duthuit to create an issue of *Transition* centring around Sade is contained in a letter which Beckett wrote to the French author towards the end of December 1950 (*LSB II*, 210).[27] The stark contrast between Beckett's previous anxiety about being associated with the Divine Marquis and his now evident willingness for his work to be considered alongside that of Sade invites curiosity. What motivated such a seemingly momentous shift in Beckett's opinions? As demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis (see pp. 54-60), Beckett was never personally opposed to Sade's works. Instead, Beckett's anxiety was born out of his fear that the publishing world would ostracise him. Thus, it is necessary to modify our original question: what had changed within the wider context of the Anglophone and European literary worlds which led to Beckett's willingness to publicly champion Sade's contribution to literature?

Firstly, in the 1940s and 50s Europe was reeling from the Second World War and the revelations of the unimaginable horrors of the Holocaust. The trauma of these events is most clearly registered, in a literary-philosophical context, through Adorno's declaration: 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (Adorno 1983, 34). Indeed, it is Adorno who, in the third chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), provides us with one of the most convincing arguments accounting for the seemingly sudden relevance of Sade's *œuvre* to the 20th century. According to Adorno, Sade's texts reveal how blind adherence to Reason can lead to the justification of totalitarianism, fascism, genocide, and 'ethnic cleansing' due

[27] I discuss the contents of this letter in the next section of this chapter.

to the fact that it exposes Reason as being at the mercy of subjectivity (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 81-119). Consequently, it becomes apparent that Sade's work gained popularity amongst European writers of the postwar era due to the intersecting of its critique of Reason, and its depicting of humanity at its most barbarous, with the previously unseen horrors of recent history. Sade's work exposes humanity's potential for evil in unflinching terms and, in so doing, speaks to the actuality of the human capacity to inflict harm so terribly displayed in the build up to, and during, the Second World War.

Secondly, as Adam Guy comments, 'Following the experience of occupation and the work of restoration and reflection that began with the liberation of Paris in 1944, the defining demand in French literary culture was for an *engagé* (committed) literature. This demand was articulated most stridently in the pages of […] *Les Temps modernes* and in the writings of two of its editors, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre' (Guy 2019, 2), who came to dominate the Parisian literary scene in the late 1940s. In 1946, Beckett submitted the short story, 'Suite' (pub. 1955 as *La Fin*), to *Les Temps modernes* for inclusion in the journal's autumn issue. Unfortunately, Beckett submitted this story in an unfinished state. As Knowlson comments, 'Simone de Beauvoir seems genuinely to have believed that Beckett […] had deliberately sought to mislead [herself and Sartre] into thinking that the first part of his story was the entire work […] to ensure publication in two consecutive issues instead of one' (Knowlson 1996, 319). Consequently, de Beauvoir rejected the second half of the story, causing Beckett to 'send[] her an injured letter in which he argued […] she had severed the life of his character' (Knowlson 1996, 319). Due to this existent history between Beckett, de Beauvoir, and Sartre, Beckett's decision to work with Duthuit's journal, *Transition*, when producing an issue on Sade may have been influenced by his wounded personal feelings, as well as by the fact that his own literary works and aesthetics more

closely align with the works of Blanchot, Bataille, and the nouveaux romanciers (see Guy 2019, 2-8, 54-57) than with those of Sartre and de Beauvoir.

Furthermore, despite this ostensible willingness for his name to become associated with that of Sade, it is important to note that the translations which Beckett prepared for the seventh issue of *Transition* never appeared in a public capacity due to Duthuit and Beckett abandoning the project for unknown reasons. Therefore, whilst the translations discussed in this chapter are undeniably central to discerning the role played by Beckett in the 1950s' 'Sade boom', the Irish author occupies a markedly different position to that held by Blanchot, Bataille, and de Beauvoir in this literary revolution. Rather than making a critical contribution to this movement, Beckett makes a purely creative contribution by incorporating ideas gleaned from his reading of texts for the unpublished issue of *Transition* into his own literary works. Thus, in order to identify how Beckett's reading of Sade impacted his creative processing of Sade in the 1950s, it is necessary to consider his translations alongside his creative works from this period.[28]

4.1. Dating Beckett's Reading of Material for the Unpublished Seventh Issue of *Transition*

In the aforementioned letter to Duthuit written towards the end of December 1950, Beckett states:

> I have read Blanchot's *Sade*. There are some very good things in it. A few tremendous quotations that I did not know, in the style of the one I knocked up for you from the *120 Days*. Hard to single out one passage to translate, but I managed to and started on it. (*LSB II*, 210-11)

[28] As I focus upon Beckett's published works within this thesis, there is unfortunately not the scope to discuss how Beckett's translating of metatextual works about Sade, re-reading of Sade's *120 journées*, and reading of *Philosophie* in the early 1950s impacted his writing of the unpublished text, 'On le tortura bien' (written February 1952). For more on this work, see Nixon 2014, 288-89; and, Cohn 2005, 204-06.

Thanks to the recent appearance of Beckett's translations for the seventh issue of *Transition*, we can confidently state that Beckett is referring here to Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' in *Lautréamont et Sade* (1949). Moreover, Beckett's remark that he 'knocked up' a quotation from *120 journées* for Duthuit at an unspecified prior date indicates not only that Beckett re-read *120 journées* in 1950, but also that he and Duthuit had already agreed to produce an issue of *Transition* focusing upon Sade before the writing of this letter. Additionally, in the same letter Beckett writes: 'We could (…) spice things up by putting in a few extracts from Klossowski (*Sade mon prochain*) and Maurice Heine (foreword to the *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*)' (*LSB II*, 210-11). Despite Beckett proposing these two texts for inclusion in the then-forthcoming issue of *Transition* about the Divine Marquis, it does not appear that he had read either of these works at this point. Beckett concludes this first letter to Duthuit about their Sade project by asserting that 'The passage already translated from *Philosophie dans le Boudoir* is not too bad, but there are better ones to be found' (*LSB II*, 210-11). This statement suggests that Beckett had also read Sade's *Philosophie* by this date, but it is unfortunately not known to which passage Beckett is alluding. Ergo, by the end of December 1950 Beckett had certainly read Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' as well as Sade's *120 journées* and *Philosophie*.

The next letter Beckett writes to Duthuit concerning Sade is dated 3 January 1951 (*LSB II*, 219). In this letter Beckett states that he has 'finished the Blanchot' (*LSB II*, 219). He then proposes: 'We could put in too the end of the text that I read you, about the disappearance of his body' (*LSB II*, 219). The text to which Beckett refers here is the 'Concluding Paragraph of the Marquis of Sade's Last Will and Testament' (Sade 2022b, 62-63). But, as 'no reference of the original French manuscript is given for this document'

(Krimper in Sade 2022b, 63n1) there remains something of a mystery about where Beckett excerpted this text from. The answer to this mystery is found in Beckett's library, which contains an extant copy of Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade* (Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 56-57). In the introductory essay to this anthology, Apollinaire asserts: 'Le dernier paragraphe de son testament […] montre assez l'orgueil légitime, la dignité, le bon sens […] de Sade' [The last paragraph of his will (…) clearly reveals Sade's pride, dignity, and reasonableness] (Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 14). He then quotes the final paragraph of Sade's will. Given Beckett's almost life-long ownership of this book, we can state with almost complete certainty that during a meeting with Duthuit in either late December 1950 or early January 1951, Beckett read this section of Apollinaire's text to him. Therefore, by early January 1951, Beckett's reading of works about or by Sade encompassed: Blanchot's *Lautréamont et Sade*, Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade*, *120 journées,* and *Philosophie*.

Around 8 January 1951, Beckett writes again to Duthuit informing him that he has 'translated 4 letters by Sade […], cutting down as far as possible the rubbish Lely writes as linking material' (*LSB II*, 222). With the revelation of Beckett's translations for the seventh issue of *Transition*, we now know that Beckett is here alluding to Gilbert Lely's 1949 edition of Sade's letters, *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle*. Additionally, in this same letter, Beckett notes: 'For [information about Sade's opposition to the death penalty] you would have to go to Sade himself, probably *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*' (*LSB II*, 222). Whilst no translations of this text by Beckett or Duthuit have emerged, it is significant that Beckett mentions it in connection to Sade's opposition to the death penalty, especially as Apollinaire excerpts Dolomancé's calling for the abolition of state-sanctioned corporeal punishment as an example of Sade's writing in *L'Œuvre de Sade* (Sade 1909, 210-14). Thus, we can reaffirm

that Beckett was consulting Apollinaire's anthology in January 1950 and can append *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle* to our growing list of Beckett's reading about Sade in the early 1950s.

About two days later Beckett wrote again to Duthuit, thanking him for giving him two books before continuing:

> I am reading the Heine at the moment. It is obviously very bright, but with something disagreeable somehow. Good pages on 18th-century atheism, how Sade goes beyond it, etc. And on the *120 journées*. And an essay on Sade and the Roman Noir that will really upset ze Engleesh. (*LSB II*, 223-24)

From Beckett's comments we can ascertain that, on either 8 or 9 January 1951, Duthuit lent Beckett a copy of Heine's *Le Marquis de Sade* (1950). The three essays Beckett mentions in this letter are: Heine's 'Avant-propos au *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*', which Beckett would translate for inclusion in the seventh edition of *Transition* (Heine 2022a, 6-16; cf. Heine 1950, 27-37); Heine's 'Avant-propos aux *120 journées de Sodome*' (Heine 1950, 70-74), which Beckett originally read in 1938; and 'Sade et le roman noir', which Beckett translates as 'Sade and the Novel of Gloom', (Heine 1950, 2211-31; cf. Heine 2022b, 17-36).

Once Beckett finished reading *Le Marquis de Sade* by Heine, he wrote another letter to Duthuit remarking:

> I have […] started translating the foreword to the *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*, a text by Sade, published incidentally in America, translation by poor old Samuel Putnam. A stirring profession of atheistic faith by Sade, brilliant things on the atheism of the Académie philosophers, a quotation from Sylvain Maréchal. I hesitated between this text and the one on Sade and the Roman Noir, equally interesting. Had a quick look at the Klossowski. Reads to me like incomparably woolly rubbish, doubt if we could find a single half-decent text in it. As for Lely, who adores Heine, who adores Sade, we must not expect much from him. Of all of them, Blanchot is by far the most intelligent. (letter of Friday [circa 12 January 1951] to Duthuit, *LSB II*, 224-25)

Beckett's mentioning of 'pauvre Samuel Putnam' demonstrates that he was aware of Putnam's 1927 translation of Heine's introduction to, and the text of, Sade's *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*. Whether Beckett consulted a copy of Putnam's translation, or

whether he merely knew of its existence, however, is impossible to ascertain.[29] Moreover, this letter provides the reader with the most clearly formulated expression of Beckett's hierarchical valuation of Blanchot's, Heine's, Lely's, and Klossowski's writing about Sade.

There remains, of course, one final text comprising Beckett's contribution to the seventh edition of *Transition* which is, as of yet, unaccounted for: Beckett's translation of an excerpt from Bataille's 'Préface à *Justine*'. Whilst there is no mention of Bataille's work in Beckett's correspondence, it is known that Beckett met with Bataille in Paris in May 1951. Furthermore, at the end of the first manuscript notebook of *Textes pour rien*, dated '10.7.51' (*Tpr* FN1, 50r), Beckett copied out the following from Bataille's 'Préface à *Justine*': 'Et Blanchot…a raison de montrer le solitaire, de degré en degré, allant à une négation totale, à une négation achevée de ce tout qu'il n'est pas, et mené finalement à la négation de lui-même…mais cette négation est contraire au fait du langage' ['And Blanchot…rightly presents the solitary man as proceeding, step by step, towards a total negation, a final negation of this all that he is not, and as being led finally to the negation of himself...but this negation is contrary to the fact of language'] (*Tpr* FN1, 50v; cf. Bataille in Sade 1950, xvii; and, Bataille 2022, 54). Thus, we can definitively situate Beckett's reading and translating of Bataille's introduction to Sade's *Justine* between May and July 1951.

4.1.i. 'Sade and the Sovereign Man'[30]

As Beckett's title indicates, Beckett valued Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' primarily for its analysis of 'sovereignty' within Sade's works. But what is meant by this term? At the

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[29] In 1927 the Bibliothèque nationale de France acquired a copy of Putnam's translation. This book is extant in the library's collection.

[30] Beckett's excerpt corresponds to Blanchot 1963, 27-35.

beginning of the excerpt comprising ‘Sade and the Sovereign Man’, Blanchot asserts that reading *Nouvelle Justine* as the tale of a ‘virtuous girl perpetually violated, beaten, [and] tortured’ by ‘a destiny implacably bent on her destruction’ (Blanchot 2022, 42) whilst believing that its companion piece, *Juliette*, portrays ‘a vicious girl revelling in pleasures’ (Blanchot 2022, 42) born from entirely different circumstances, represents a failure to grasp the ‘idea at the heart of [Sade’s] system’ (Blanchot 2022, 42). As Blanchot points out, the events comprising the narratives of *Nouvelle Justine* and *Juliette* are ‘fundamentally identical[:] everything that happen[s] to Justine also happen[s] to Juliette’ (Blanchot 2022, 42). Hence, there must be some essential difference between Justine and Juliette which causes the former to regard the events befalling her as detestable whilst the latter understands them as leading to ‘infinite delights’ (Blanchot 2022, 42). Blanchot then comments that the differences between Justine’s and Juliette’s perceptions of their experiences originate from the former’s predilection for virtue and the latter’s courting of vice (Blanchot 2022, 42); however, such an explanation stops somewhat short of fully uncovering the source of Justine’s pain and Juliette’s pleasure.

To truly comprehend the differences between these two heroines we have to ask: why should one favour virtue whilst the other leans towards vice? The answer lies in the fact that Justine’s and Juliette’s minds process information differently. Justine feels tormented by the abuse to which she is subjected because she perceives it as traumatic, whereas Justine revels in the abuse she both faces and inflicts because she appraises such experiences as being rewarding. As Blanchot indicates, these differences between Justine’s and Juliette’s minds are clearly exhibited when these two heroines share the stage:

> In a scene that takes place in the castle of a wicked judge we see the unfortunate Justine delivered over to truly execrable tortures; her sufferings are unspeakable; we are confounded by such injustice. And what happens? An utterly vicious girl [Juliette], present at the scene, inflamed by what she sees,

> demands to be subjected there and then to the same excruciations and thence derives infinite delights. (Blanchot 2022, 42-43)

The differing reactions of Justine and Juliette to experiencing the same forms of torture thus illustrate the reversibility of the pain/pleasure dichotomy within Sade's works whilst also foregrounding the centrality of subjectivity within Sade's texts. According to Sade, pain and pleasure are distinguished from one another solely by the phenomenon of perception.

Immediately following this revelation of the essentiality of subjectivity to Sadean perception, Blanchot remarks: 'For Sade the sovereign man is inaccessible to ill, because none can do him ill. His are all the passions and to his passions all is fuel' (Blanchot 2022, 43) and clarifies that, according to Sade, 'The perfect egoist is the man who can transform every disgust into relish, all repugnance into allurement' (Blanchot 2022, 43). Thus, the libertine's consciousness endows them with a sense of invulnerability stemming from the fact that their mind perpetually intercedes in the processing of information from the without. Consequently, the idea of subjectivity in Sade's texts becomes inextricably bound to the concept of control:

> for the integral man […] there is no possible ill. If he does ill to others, what voluptuousness! If others do ill to him, what pleasure! Virtue pleases him, because it is weak and he crushes it, and evil, because he derives satisfaction from the disorder it provokes, were it to his cost. If he lives there is no single event in his existence which he may not experience as a happy one. If he dies, he finds in death a still greater happiness and, in the consciousness of his destruction, the crowning of a life justified solely by the need to destroy. […] Even though he becomes apparently, in his turn, a victim and a slave, the violence of the passions that he knows how to gratify in no matter what circumstances assures him of his sovereignty, makes him feel that at all times and in all places, in life and death, he remains all-powerful. (Blanchot 2022, 44)

Such is the insurmountable might of the libertine's – the sovereign man's – subjectivity. Even when faced with the painful experience of torture or the usually all-negating experience of death, the sovereign man's consciousness intervenes, granting him control of the situation by rendering the displacing of his position at the centre of his universe absolutely impossible. Ergo, the idea of Sadean sovereignty, as delineated by Blanchot,

arises from the interacting of an unassailable subjectivity with an innate desire for control. The sovereign man is always in control of themselves and, hence, dominates all that is without them through the power of their subjectivity.

The desire for absolute domination exhibited by the libertine mind becomes manifest in Sade's texts as an absolute negation of those things which are without. But, that is not to say that Sade's formulation of this negation is without subtlety. In order to demonstrate the complexity and prevalence of the negative within Sade's work, Blanchot walks his reader through the evolution of Sadean negation. He begins by highlighting the transient nature of the pleasure elicited by the negation of life within Sade's works, commenting that this joy 'destroys itself by annihilating that which occasions it' (Blanchot 2022, 42). Following this, Blanchot outlines how, in an attempt to surmount the brevity of pleasure elicited by negation, Saint-Fond 'imagine[s] how, by an unquestionably ingenious system, he may make himself master of Hell' by inflicting 'a kind of infinite death' upon his victims (Blanchot 2022, 46). However, this desire for an impossible, aporetic negation where 'executioner and victim, set face to face eternally, find themselves invested with the same power, the same divine attribute of eternity' (Blanchot 2022, 46), is unachievable within the confines of human existence. Consequently, Sade's libertines are forced to find other methods of supplementing death. Most often, they seek recourse in quantity which, as Blanchot says, 'is in fact a much more satisfactory solution' (2022, 47); 'consider[ing] beings from the point of view of quantity kills them more completely than the physical violence by which they are annihilated' (47) as they are reduced to mere 'unit[s] in an infinite enumeration' (47). This metamorphosing of victims into terms in a series enables the negative to infiltrate life itself in a manner which does not necessarily lead to the stasis of aporia.

To further demonstrate Sade's conflating of life and death, Blanchot then draws his reader's attention to the introductory section of *120 journées*, where

> the Duc de Blangis addresses as follows the women assembled for the pleasure of the four libertines: 'Consider your situation, what you are, what we are, and let these reflections make you shudder. You are here, outside of France, in the depths of an uninhabitable forest, beyond precipitous mountains whose passes are sundered as soon as we crossed them, shut up in an impenetrable forest. No living soul knows that you are here, you are beyond the reach of your friends, to the world you are already dead.' This is to be understood literally […] their life serves only to render sensible this being 'already dead' with which it is one. (Blanchot 2022, 47-48)

This idea of the libertines' victims being already dead suggests that these figures have already been *a priori* negated within the sadistic consciousness whilst also implying that their eventual demise is inevitable. Subsequently, life and death become brutally joined into the singular, negativised concept of living-death. Therefore, as Blanchot posits, 'the world through which the Unique One moves is a wilderness; the beings he encounters are less than things, less than shadows and when he tortures them it is not their life that he seizes on, it is their nothingness that he verifies' (Blanchot 2022, 47).

This absolute negation of all that is external to the libertine by the force of their subjectivity has yet another curious consequence to which Blanchot repeatedly draws attention. As a result of the libertine's 'sovereignty asserting itself by means of an intense negation' (Blanchot 2022, 48), these figures lead solitary existences. As Blanchot puts it: 'the integral man […] is inaccessible to others. None can do him injury, nothing can alienate his power to be himself and to have pleasure of himself. Such is the prime significance of his solitude' (Blanchot 2022, 44). In Sade's writing, the dual currents of sovereignty and negativity ensure that Sade's protagonists are wrapped in solitude; they do not regard those around them as having a true claim to an individualistic existence due to the fact that they view them as mere objects through which they may affirm their own dominance, and they remain immune to the influence of others' actions because of the ways in which their

consciousness transforms any ill committed against them into a sensation of intense pleasure. Thus, the Sadean protagonist 'set[s] himself on a plane where he has no longer any common measure with [those around him]' (Blanchot 2022, 48) through the strength of his subjectivity. Hence, an air of seclusion breathes permanently throughout Sade's work.

Yet this concept of Sade's characters being completely cut off from their fellow man due to their essential sovereignty is not without its challenges in Sade's texts. As Blanchot notes, any reader of Sade's works can immediately discern a seemingly unsolvable paradox within his thought:

> the Unique One, with regard to those others of whom he is independent and who can never injure him, immediately asserts a relationship of absolute domination; and it is not because others are powerless with regard to him that danger, torture and the artifices of abasement leave him unscathed, but it is because he is all-powerful with regard to others that even the pain they cause him gives him the joy of potency and helps him to exert his sovereignty. This reveals itself to be a very embarrassing situation. So long as 'being master of myself' means 'being master of others', so long as my independence proceeds, not from my autonomy, but from the dependence of others on me, it is obvious that I remain bound to others and in need of others, were it only in order to destroy them. (Blanchot 2022, 45)

Does this seeming flaw in Sade's imaginative conception of interpersonal relationships not undermine all that has been said above? In 'Sade and the Sovereign Man' Blanchot proposes that this internal challenge to Sade's logic does not destabilise his system and instead constitutes 'one of the originalities of this "exceptional" body of thought' (Blanchot 2022, 46):

> for him who is not Sade there is a decisive problem involved by these relationships of reciprocal solidarity reestablished between master and slave; but for Sade there is no problem, not even the possibility of discerning one. (Blanchot 2022, 46)

As Michael Krimper underscores, Sade's positioning of the sovereign libertine as an unassailable master due to the sheer force of his subjectivity 'disrupts the terms of Hegel's master-slave dialectic according to which the work of the slave is supposed to eventually triumph over the master' (Krimper 2022, 104). Thus, through their sovereign power the

Sadean libertine comes to dominate all that is external to themselves, and in so doing affirms their ultimate control over themselves. It is precisely this conception of sovereignty which ensnares Beckett's literary imagination in the 1950s.

4.1.ii. 'Concluding Paragraph of the Marquis of Sade's Last Will and Testament'[31]

The penultimate line of Sade's last will and testament reveals his marked personal interest in negation:

> On the grave, once it has been filled, acorns will be sown, so that in due time, the site of the aforesaid grave being garnished anew and the thicket close as before, the traces of my tomb may vanish from the face of the earth as I flatter myself that my memory will be effaced from the minds of men. (Sade 2022b, 63)

Whilst there is still a spatial and temporal element contained within Sade's non-literary conception of negativity, the actual force and movement of his wish to 'be effaced from the minds of men' is emblematic of an inversion of the desires expressed by his libertines. Consequently, Sade's last will and testament poses a considerable challenge to the myth of the Divine Marquis' characters being perfectly reflective of his person. Therefore, two images of Sade seem to have been prevalent within Beckett's mind during the 1950s: on the one hand there is Sade the man – an individual who desired anonymity and who championed humanity during the reign of terror through his opposition to the death penalty – and, on the other hand, there is Sade the author – a writer capable of imagining violence upon a scale, and of a magnitude, arguably unmatched in modern times until the horrific events of the Holocaust.

[31] Beckett's translation corresponds to Sade 1909, 14-15.

To better understand the impulse behind Beckett's desire to include this document in *Transition*, it is necessary to return to the source from which it is excerpted, Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade*. Immediately prior to Apollinaire's proposal that Sade's last will and testament is demonstrative of his 'dignité' and 'bon sens', Apollinaire quotes Baudot's assessment of Sade's sanity as voiced in his *Notes historiques*:

> Celui-ci [Sade] est l'auteur de plusieurs ouvrages d'une monstrueuse obscénité et d'une morale diabolique. C'était, sans contredit, un homme pervers en théorie. Mais enfin il n'était pas fou, il fallait le juger sur ses œuvres.
>
> Il y avait là des germes de dépravation, mais pas de folie; un pareil travail supposait une cervelle bien ordonnée, mais la composition même de ses ouvrages exigeait beaucoup de recherches dans la littérature ancienne et moderne et avait pour but de démontrer que les grandes dépravations avaient été autorisées par les Grecs et les Romains. Ce genre d'investigations n'était pas moral, sans doute, mais il fallait une raison et du raisonnement pour l'exécuter; il fallait une raison droite pour faire ces recherches qu'il met en action sous forme de romans, et qui établit sur des faits une sorte de doctrine et de système. (Baudot qtd by Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 14; cf. Baudot 1893, 64)[32]

Subsequently, it is clear that Beckett encountered the final paragraph of Sade's last will and testament in a context dedicated to rehabilitating Sade's image within the cultural consciousness through a destabilisation of the myth of Sade's insanity. Beckett is seemingly attempting to achieve a similar goal by differentiating between Sade the writer and Sade the man through the inclusion of this document in the unpublished seventh issue of *Transition*. Hence, in addition to this document bearing witness to the fact that Beckett exhibited a marked interest in the Divine Marquis' differing formulations of negativity, Beckett's translating of Sade's last will and testament also evinces the Irish author's desire to legitimate the French author as a genuine contributor to literature.

[32] See p. 335 in the appendix for a translation.

4.1.iii. ‘Some Recently Discovered Letters of Sade’[33]

The first thing that leaps out at a reader when consulting this text is the stress it places upon the deathly atmosphere of the cells in Vincennes:

> I have been to the dungeons of Vincennes, a gigantic tomb with four flanking towers. I have climbed the winding stairs which led to execution. The cells opened to my anguish and compassion: narrow, hugely high, condemned to the eternal twilight shed by a loophole with double row of bars. It was in one of these icy cylinders, plunged in this funereal horror, that the Marquis of Sade penned his letters… (Lely in Sade 2022a, 56)

What is particularly striking about this passage is not only the air of fear and fatality espoused within it, but also the specifically literary inflexions with which Beckett infuses Lely’s text. In the original French text, Lely describes these cells as ‘cylindres glacials’ (Lely in Sade 1949, xxxiii). Beckett, however, deliberately uses the adjective ‘icy’, which is redolent of Dante’s depiction of Cocytus:

> And so I turned round, and saw before me
> And below my feet, a lake, which was frozen
> Till it had more the look of glass than water.
> […]
> So were the shadows tortured in the ice.
> (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XXXIII.182.22-24, 35)

This hypertextual Dantean allusion augments the desolate, macabre notes suffusing Lely’s description by implying that Sade was damned whilst still alive. In so doing Beckett subtly, and implicitly, posits Sade and Dante as supplementary authors interested in violence and suffering.

Additionally, this emphasis upon the horrors faced by Sade gives additional weight to this text’s characterisation of Sade as an almost heroic figure. Again, this is foregrounded in Lely’s commentary, with the French critic stating: ‘What strikes us with admiration at the

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[33] This translation corresponds to Sade 1949, xxxiii-xlvii.

first reading of this correspondence is the noble lesson of steadfastness which it offers' (Lely in Sade 2022a, 56). Whilst Lely's enthusiasm concerning the image of the Divine Marquis as a martyr who 'never consent[ed] to renegue the integrity of his personality, […] ethics and metaphysics' (Lely in Sade 2022a, 57) is still prevalent within Beckett's translation, it is likely that Beckett did not personally adopt quite as reverential an opinion as Lely when concerning Sade's suffering. However, that is not to say that Beckett was completely unreceptive to this idea of Sade as a martyr championing freedom of speech. In the first letter written by Sade that Beckett translates, the Divine Marquis declares:

> You say that my way of thinking cannot be approved? What do I care? Crazed indeed is he who adopts a way of thinking to please others! My way of thinking is the fruit of my reflections; it is part of my existence, of my organism. I am not at liberty to change it; and if I were I should not do so. This way of thinking that you deplore forms the sole consolation of my life; it alleviates all my woes in prison, it composes all my pleasures in the world of men and it is dearer to me than life. (Sade 2022a, 57)

Despite Sade's defiant declaration that it would be 'Crazed' to adopt 'a way of thinking' in which he did not believe 'to please others', one cannot help but feel that there is a certain desperation lurking behind his assertion that his 'way of thinking […] alleviates all [his] woes' and 'composes all [his] pleasures in the world of men'. These phrases imply that Sade clings to his way of thinking with such ferocity because it is all he has left. His forced endurance of incarceration has decimated the possibility of his finding satisfaction in anything outside of his mind and, as a result, he grasps onto the idiosyncrasies of his thought. Moreover, Sade's admission that he is 'not at liberty to change' his way of thinking due to the fact that it is an intrinsic part of his 'existence, of [his] organism' reveals his opposition to the Cartesian notion of mind-body dualism whilst also suggesting that he is a slave to his mind. Given Beckett's marked literary interest in individuals at the mercy of their own psyches, it is

certain that the Irish author was responsive to this image of Sade as a champion of, and servant to, his mind.

Following the above, Lely draws attention to Sade's mocking sense of humour as voiced in his *Evening Prayer*:

> Oh my God, I have but one favour to ask of you and you will not grant it, for all the instancy of my prayer; this favour, this signal grace, is, oh my God, that you should not choose as my chastisers men still more wicked than myself, not deliver one guilty of but very ordinary and very mild transgressions into the hands of rogues hardened in crime, who mock your laws and make a play of breaking them at every moment of the day. Put my destiny, oh my God, in the hands of virtue which is your image on earth, and those alone who revere it may presume to reform vice. Oh best of beings, do not choose as my governors a *monopolist*, a *robber* of the poor, a *bankrupt*, a *sodomite*, a *filibuster*, an *alguaril* [sic] of the Madrid inquisition, an unfrocked *Jesuit* and a *bawd*. Since it is necessary that I be sacrificed, oh my God, since it is written in your great book that you gave me life in order that I might be the sustenance of trollops and the food of hogs, and since you know better than any that I can have no other benefit thereof than to grow worse than I was, because of the increment of hatred I must harbour for my brethren; let at least my example, by your holy power, profit my compatriots […] Amen. (Sade 2022a, 58)

Sade's repeated, melodramatic utterance of the phrase 'oh my God' imbues his 'prayer' with a sense of irony, highlighting how he 'affects to address the creator whose utility and […] existence he has always denied […] to reduce his persecutors […] by means of their own weapons' (Lely in Sade 2022a, 57-58). Moreover, Sade's claiming that this God has decreed that he has no greater purpose than to be reduced to 'sustenance' for those wishing to abuse him characterises this supposed supreme being as undeniably callous. This increases the sharpness of Sade's satirical cries by suggesting that his calling out for mercy in this 'prayer' is pointless. Additionally, in this 'Prayer' Sade attacks the moral character of his persecutors and of his potential jurors by suggesting that if he were brought before a jury he could be 'deliver[ed] […] into the hands of rogues hardened in crime'. Sade then augments this assertion by highlighting that under French law, he may have his fate decided by 'a *monopolist*, a *robber* of the poor, a *bankrupt*, a *sodomite*, a *filibuster*, an *alguaril* of the Madrid inquisition, an unfrocked *Jesuit* and a *bawd*'. By juxtaposing these villains Sade

implies that they are cut from the same cloth, that they all abuse their positions of power for their own selfish gains without facing legal backlash. Sade's imaginary jury savagely exposes the hypocrisy of religion and those in positions of power, whilst also bespeaking the fact that many of these villainous individuals wear 'chimerical' 'mask[s]' enabling them to veil their crimes. Hence, even 13 years after first commenting upon it, Beckett is still receptive to Sade's 'juvenalesque' (*LSB I*, 607) satirical abilities.

But, it is not the figures mentioned above, nor God, who is subjected to the most prevalent display of Sade's satirical capabilities in this text. Rather, that dubious honour is granted to his mother-in-law, Madame de Montreuil, and the logic behind the French government's imprisoning individuals to reform them:

> Ask my Lady President of Montreuil, ask her if earth can boast a better means to virtue than bolts and bars. I know well that animals there are – such as you, Monsieur Quiros (I beg your pardon) – who say and maintain that prison may well be tried once and, if unsuccessful, is not to be repeated without great danger. But this, Monsieur Quiros, is the opinion of a dolt. You must reason thus: prison is, in France, the only known remedy; ergo prison cannot but be a good thing; and since prison is a good thing it must be employed in all cases. – But it was not successful, neither the first time, nor the second, nor the third… Answer: all the more reason to employ it a fourth; the fault is not with the prison, since it is a good thing, but consequently with the subject, who must therefore be restored thither. […] Beside[s] […] I, Sartine, have interest in seeing you put in prison; I am paid *so much* for every prisoner; *ergo* you must be incarcerated. (Sade 2022a, 59-60)

By asserting that Antoine de Sartrine had financial motives for favouring incarceration, Sade reveals that the fatal flaw of Enlightenment Reason is how it is governed by the subjective nature of the mind employing it. This position resonates with Beckett's statement: 'The 18th century has been called the century of reason, *le siècle de la Raison*. I've never understood that; they're all mad, *ils sont tous fous, ils déraisonnent*! They give reason a responsibility which it simply can't bear, it's too weak' (Beckett qtd in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 231). For Beckett, as for Sade, the so-called 'madness' of the Enlightenment's valuing of Reason is that this valuation is predicated upon a consideration of Reason without reflection upon the impulses animating it.

4.1.iv. 'Introduction to the *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*'[34]

As Beckett's correspondence and this text reveal, Beckett was particularly interested in Sade's conception of atheism. But, in order to understand what specifically appealed to Beckett when concerning this topic, it is necessary to outline what the term 'atheism' means within the context of the 18th century. Quoting Johann Heinrich Samuel Formey, Heine clarifies that for one 'To be liable to the odious charge of *atheism*' during the 18th century, 'it [was] necessary to possess the notion of God and to reject it' (Heine 2022a, 8). He continues:

> the state of doubt [does not] constitute formal *atheism*…Only those therefore may be justifiably called atheists who openly declare that they have taken their stand with regard to the dogma of the existence of God and that they maintain the negative…*Atheism* does not confine itself to disfiguring the idea of God, but destroys it completely. (Formey qtd in Heine 2022a, 8-9)

Formey's definition of atheism exposes the centrality of the negative to this concept. As Formey highlights, in order for one to be considered an atheist one cannot 'deform' and metamorphose the idea of a Godhead. Rather, one has to completely decimate the very possibility of there being any 'ultrasovereign forces' (Krimper 2022, 98) within one's comprehension of the world. Thus, in a manner comparable to that seen in Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade', Heine foregrounds the centrality of the sadistic individual within the Sadean view of the world whilst also underlining the importance of negation in the Divine Marquis' work. Indeed, it is this emphasis upon the presence of the negative manifest as an extreme form of atheism that is 'not only […] incommensurable with astronomic magnitudes, but [is accompanied by a] conception of man that […] would shatter the vault of every temple' (Heine 2022a, 11) which Heine asserts is 'The fundamental taint of Sade's

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[34] Beckett's translation corresponds to Heine 1950, 27-37.

writings' (Heine 2022a, 11). Heine's claim is substantial as it draws attention away from the graphic physical and sexual violence in Sade's *œuvre*; rather than Sade's criminality being based in his depictions of violence and atypical sexuality, Heine argues that it centres around his blasphemy. Thus, Heine emphasises the literary value of Sade's creating a form of literature dominated by negativity whilst concomitantly rendering Sade's *œuvre* 'acceptable' to 20th century readers.

Complementing the above, Heine also makes a concerted effort to subvert the myth of Sade's insanity. Heine's text opens with a quotation by 'the illustrious astronomer Joseph-Jérome Le Français de La Lande, [taken from] the end of his *Second supplément au dictionnaire des athées* [1805]' (Heine 2022a, 6):

> I should like to be able to quote M. de Sade, he has ample sufficiency of wit, reason and of erudition; but his infamous novels *Justine* and *Juliette* exclude him from a sect whose only conversation is of virtue. (La Lande qtd in Heine 2022a, 6; cf. La Lande 1805, 119)

As Heine notes, when La Lande made this statement 'Napoleon was on the throne and […] Sade at Charenton' (Heine 2022a, 7), meaning that 'there was therefore no want of courage in […] crediting [Sade] with that reason….which the *raison d'état* denied him' (Heine 2022a, 7). Thus, the danger in which La Lande was putting himself by claiming that Sade was not only sane, but also erudite and intelligent, is clear. This, in turn, gives additional validity to the view that Sade was of sound mind, unveiling Heine's anxiety to recontextualise Sade's works as something more than the ravings of a madman.

This desire to establish Sade's intellectual abilities, and thus the value of his literary works, is also visible in Heine's summarising of how Sade passed his time whilst incarcerated prior to the French Revolution:

> Twelve successive years of arbitrary detention are employed by him in devouring the works of philosophers, historians and novelists; a vast labour of documentation and composition is the result of the leisure that he owes to the 'king's bounty', to what purpose will be seen when, freed by the

> Revolution, he launches against the ruins of the society that oppressed him the explosive pages of *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, *La Nouvelle Justine* and *Juliette*. (Heine 2022a, 9-10)

This account of Sade's activity during his years of imprisonment by the French state before the Revolution is intended to substantiate the validity of the philosophical system generated by Sade in his *œuvre* as one which, in spite of its caustic nature, is nonetheless founded upon an application of Reason, whilst simultaneously exposing the injustice central to the French justice system during the Enlightenment. In making this claim Heine destabilises the myth of the Divine Marquis' insanity. Subsequently, Heine demonstrates Sade's learnedness and his ability to use Reason so as to facilitate his entry into the Western canon as a 'serious' author. In translating this essay, Beckett seeks to achieve the same goal.

The final attempt to sanitise Sade's image visible in this text is found at the very end of the piece, where Heine states that 'Sade himself, so different in character [to Sylvain Maréchal], was to display in the face of death, a no less tranquil fortitude' (Heine 2022a, 15). The assertion that Sade came to the end of his life with a 'tranquil fortitude' both further complements the earlier attempts within the essay to demonstrate Sade's mental stability and serves to unify the texts translated by Beckett for inclusion in *Transition,* as it naturally directs readers to the 'Concluding Paragraph of the Marquis of Sade's Last Will and Testament'. Such attention to the overarching unity of the texts included in the seventh issue of *Transition* is indicative of the care that Beckett and Duthuit employed whilst creating this issue of the journal, underlining how one of their principal aims was the rehabilitation of the Divine Marquis' image within the cultural consciousnesses of 1950s' France and Europe.

4.1.v. 'The Marquis of Sade and the Novel of Gloom'[35]

Similarly to how Heine emphasises Sade's knowledge of philosophy in the previously-discussed essay, in this text he takes great care to establish Sade's reading of English literature and knowledge of contemporary 18th-century European history. Initially, Heine achieves this by quoting Sade's *Idée sur les romans* (written circa 1800, pub. posthumously 1878):

> Finally the English novels, the vigorous works of [Samuel] Richardson and [Henry] Fielding, come to teach the French that success in this form is not to be obtained by painting the tedious languors of love, but by the delineation of virile characters who, playthings and victims of this effervescence of the heart known as love, show us both its dangers and its woes; only thus can be obtained those developments and those passions so well depicted in the English novel. It is Richardson and Fielding who taught us that the deep study of the human heart, that veritable labyrinth of nature, can alone inspire the novelist, whose work must show us man, not only as he is, or as he reveals himself, that being the task of the historian, but as he is capable of being, as he must be made by the modifications of vice and all the upheavals of the passions; all these must be familiar to us, we must employ them all, if we undertake this form. […]
>
> We should perhaps analyse here those new novels whose principal if not unique merit consists in magic and phantasmagoria, with special reference to *The Monk* [1796], superior in every respect to the bizarre transports of the brilliant imagination of Radgliffe [sic]; but this dissertation would take too long; it is sufficient to admit that this style, all things notwithstanding, is assuredly not without merit; it appeared as the inevitable result of the revolutionary shocks affecting the whole of Europe (Sade qtd in Heine 2022b, 18; cf. Sade 1878, 101)

Heine then comments that 'This so judicious criticism shows that Sade was particularly well informed on the subject of English letters' (Heine 2022b, 19) and points out that Sade 'borrows the epigraphs of […] of *Les Crimes de l'amour*' from '[Edward] Young's *Night Thoughts* [1742]' (Heine 2022b, 19). Heine continues by remarking that 'Though we do not possess express proof of his having read Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* [1764] […] and Clara Reeve's *Old English Baron* [1778] […] nothing could better explain the "Gothic" influence so manifest in his short stories' (Heine 2022b, 19) before closing his summary of

[35] Beckett's translation corresponds to Heine 1950, 211-31.

Sade's reading with the assertion that 'There can be little doubt that Sade was familiar with the English masters of [Ann] Radcliffe and [Matthew] Lewis' (Heine 2022b, 19).

What emerges from the above is an image of Sade as a capable, and learned, reader. Whilst Sade's commentary upon Richardson's and Fielding's contributions to English literature, and his evident valorisation of the emphasis which they place upon the 'inner workings' of the 'human heart', does reveal that his reading of these two authors contributed to his locating of humanity at the absolute centre of his literary universe, it is Sade's passing comment upon the connections between the 'revolutionary shocks' occurring across Europe at the end of the 18th-century and the development of Gothic literature which reveals his true acumen as a literary critic. Whilst it is now commonly accepted that the development of the Gothic novel is intimately linked to the rising tides of revolutionary violence across Europe (see Groom 2012, 82-86; Crawford 2013, 22-178; Paulson 1981, 532-53), Sade's comments in his *Idée sur les romans* place him in the company of those writers and critics, such as William Blake (2008, 48-143) and Edmund Burke (1790, 1-519), observant enough to realise the significance of these revolutions to literary and European history. By quoting Sade's own opinions on the development of 18th century literature, and by illuminating the depth and breadth of his reading, Heine dispels the myth of Sade's madness; in Heine's essays Sade appears as a writer whose literary concerns are horror and violence, rather than a crazed individual writing 'compensatory' (Pilling 2014, 121) tales of violent sexuality to fulfil his thwarted desires.

Furthermore, Heine's presentation of Sade within this essay paints him as an innovator in fields extending beyond literature. In particular, Heine emphasises the 'scientific' approach which Sade adopts in *120 journées*, commenting that 'the romanticism

of terror finds in Sade one of its scientific organisers' (Heine 2022b, 23). He clarifies this remark by elucidating how in Sade's *chef d'œuvre*,

> With the exception of the four protagonists, all the actors even though their moral and physical characteristics are examined and defined in masterly fashion, are confined in the roles of laboratory assistants or animals. (Heine 2022b, 23)

This claim of Sade's 'scientific' nature has a marked importance within two differing contexts relating to Beckett: firstly, the assertion that Sade is 'scientific' in his approach and that he contributed to the fields of 'psychology and introspection' (Heine 2022b, 34) by 'discover[ing] […] elements of terror compatible with natural laws' (Heine 2022b, 34) bolsters the legitimacy of the Divine Marquis' contribution to of human knowledge. This, in turn, further unveils Beckett's and Duthuit's desire to draw Sade into the literary canon. Secondly, as Nixon notes, after 1960 Beckett's prose works become increasingly minimalist in nature, with the narrators of the 'Closed Space' texts adopting a 'detached […] mathematical, even scientific tone of observation' when 'scrutinis[ing] […] the space[s] [described in these texts], as well as the rules and behaviour governing [the] inhabitants' of these spaces (Nixon in Beckett 2010f, xv). Similarly, the viewer of Beckett's later dramatic works is located at a distance from the events of the drama; they are configured as external, detached beings forced to watch the puzzling and oftentimes troubling events upon which they gaze. Thus, the fact that Beckett was creatively receptive to Sade's narrators' cold, scientific tones is self-evident.

But, it is only because of the specific subject matter which Sade addresses within his works that this technique of intensely ataraxic narration gains a deeply unnerving shade. As Sade himself makes clear in *Idée sur les romans*, and as Heine emphasises in his concluding statements within this essay, the Divine Marquis' primary concern within his literary *œuvre* is the exploration of the intrinsic violence, and horror, of humanity:

> What need has he [Sade] in order to terrify, to artificial, far-fetched or puerile circumstances? It is enough for him to invite his reader to contemplate truth in its nakedness and, stripped of its last veil, in its hideousness. When he opposes and prefers nature to fable, when he criticises the use of magic and phantasmagoria, when he puts at the novelist's disposal 'all imaginable forms of vice and all possible crimes', he knows full well that human monsters will come flocking to his call, far more fearful than the phantoms of Radcliffe or the prodigies of Lewis (Heine 2022b, 33)

To enable his literary exploration of these topics, Sade exposes his readers to absolute extremes of brutality. This confrontation between the reader and the unflinching violence of Sade's work not only demonstrates that 'Sade's is an "absolute" mind […] that drives straight on to the end of his thought, to the extreme limits of its logical consequences, heedless of the havoc they may play with prejudices, received ideas, social conventions, and moral laws' (Heine 2022b, 10), but also forces the reader to meditate upon the essential humanity of both the perpetrator and the victim of violence. As Heine says, the natural world and the spectral realm are but 'minor devices for the novelist who commands the inexhaustible arsenal of torture and murder' (Heine 2022b, 27). Hence, Heine emphasises how Sade is obsessed with depicting the depths of an essentially human depravity in his fictional works. Sade's characters are not monsters. They are insistently human, and their violence must be understood as such.

Interestingly, the lexical subtleties of Beckett's translation of Heine's commentary about the humanity of Sade's characters affords readers a rare glimpse into Beckett's specific emotional and physical responses to the violence depicted in the Divine Marquis' work. When discussing Sade's *chef d'œuvre*, Heine writes in the original French: 'Il suffit d'entreprendre la lecteur [sic] des *120 journées* pour se convaincre […] que ce microcosme infernal exclut tout élément impropre à la synthèse de l'effroi' (Heine 1950, 215). Translated directly, this phrase reads: 'It is sufficient to open *120 journées* to be convinced […] that this infernal microcosm excludes every element foreign to the synthesis of dread'. Beckett, meanwhile, writes: 'It is sufficient to open *Les 120 journées* to be convinced from the very

introduction, that this infernal microcosm excluded every element foreign to the synthesis of horror' (Heine 2022b, 20). It is Beckett's translating of the noun 'effroi' as 'horror' rather than dread which is especially revealing.

The concepts of 'dread' and 'horror', whilst related, have marked differences. 'Dread' is primarily of a psychological and emotional order; it is an extreme form of anxiety that functions predominantly through prolepsis. In other words, 'dread' is the fear of that which is yet to occur or of something which one is yet to definitively identify and, as such, may lead one to action in an attempt to avoid the thing that they fear. 'Horror', contrastingly, is reactionary in nature and is fear manifest as a form of stasis – a being frozen in place by the appalling character of the event witnessed, or by the aftermath of an event now displayed in its full brutality. Moreover, horror is both psychological and intensely visceral, afflicting one's body as well as one's mind; there is an intermingling of revulsion, aversion, and even awe in this complex emotional-physical reaction. Additionally, horror has a greater sense of permanence than dread due to the fact that the event, sight, or action evoking horror cannot be undone. Hence, whilst 'dread' may be tamed by the exertions of one's mind, horror is often insurmountable and even unassailable. Therefore, as Radcliffe suggests in her definition of horror as a fear so great that it 'contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates' those who experience it (Radcliffe qtd in McKillop 1932, 357; cf. Varma 1957, 103), horror strips away the defences of those experiencing it and overwhelms the communicative powers of language, leaving those exposed to it fundamentally changed.

By translating the term 'effroi' as 'horror' rather than 'dread', Beckett reveals that Sade's *chef d'œuvre* inspires within him a form of fear which is: reactionary, rather than anticipatory, in nature; deeply connected to the bodily expression of this fear as a revulsion; and, is of such a severe degree that its depths elude expression within spoken language.

Furthermore, as is indicated by Beckett's earlier statements on the majesty of Sade's work and by his comparing it to that of Dante (*LSB I*, 607), there is undeniably a sense of awe contained within Beckett's use of the noun 'horror' within this translation. Beckett thus seems to be aware of the fact that through Sade's works, one encounters a limit-case when concerning not only the literary expression of human violence, but also the horror this violence inspires and the resultant flooding of language with intense negativity.

This leaves but one final aspect of Heine's text which seems to have particularly impacted Beckett's own literary practices in the 1950s: Heine's acknowledgement and elucidating of the Divine Marquis' mastery of the elements constituting 'the entire setting of English "Gothic"' (Heine 2022b, 22). Heine's analysis is enabled by his extensive quoting of the introduction to Sade's *120 journées*, including his excerpting of a section of the text a little over a page in length which outlines the precise location of Castle Silling and the character of its environs (Heine 2022b, 20-21). Following this, Heine reproduces an additional page-long section of Sade's text which details Castle Silling's interior (Heine 2022b, 22-23), before then quoting a passage from *120 journées* in which Sade emphasises the purpose of his text's setting:

> How secure he must have felt, the miscreant whom with his victim crime led hither! He was within his own walls, outside of France, in a safe country, in the depths of an uninhabitable forest, in a stronghold which, thanks to the measures taken, only the birds of the air could reach, and there deep in the bowels of the earth. (Heine 2022b, 23)

Unlike in the English and Anglo-Irish Gothic literary traditions where dark pastoralism and claustrophobia are used to generate terror through an invocation of nature's sublimity which complements the twisted mirrors of man's unconscious, violent desires emblematised by the spectral world of the supernatural, Sade here reveals that the setting of *120 journées* is supplementary to the horror of the situations in which his libertines place

their victims. This cutting off of these victims from the world further negativises them; their entrapment in spaces of complete solitude affirms the fact that even before their deaths, these figures have been *a priori* negated. They are, as Blanchot's says, 'already dead', resulting in a suffusion of life with its negative – an idea which undeniably resonates with Beckett's own literary interest in negation.

4.1.vi. 'Sade and the Problem of Evil'[36]

As his correspondence attests, Beckett disagreed with Klossowski's psychoanalytic, theologically-inflected reading of Sade and only included an excerpt from *Sade mon prochain* in the unpublished seventh issue of *Transition* due to the scarcity of available criticism about the Divine Marquis' *œuvre* in the early 1950s. That does not mean, however, that this text is without its uses. Rather, Beckett's translating of an excerpt from Klossowski's monograph as 'Sade and the Problem of Evil' enables us to state that Beckett had most likely not read *Justine*, *Nouvelle Justine*, or *Juliette* at this point in time. In fact, Beckett still does not seem to be aware of the differences between *Justine* and *Nouvelle Justine*.[37] On the third page of his translation of Klossowski's work, Beckett mixes up Justine and Juliette. Klossowski's original text reads:

> les malheurs de Justine, loin d'être jugés comme 'des choses nécessaires sans sagesse', sont encore considérés par Juliette – celle qui plus tard sera l'héroïne des *Prospérités du vice* – comme autant d'énigmes de la Providence (Klossowski 1967, 98)

whereas Beckett writes:

> the misfortunes of Juliette, far from being deemed 'necessary things without wisdom', are still regarded by Juliette – later to be the heroine of *Les Prospérités du vice* – as so many enigmas of Providence. (Klossowski 2022, 39)

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[36] Beckett's excerpt corresponds with Klossowski 1967, 95-100.
[37] See p. 27n.10 and p. 29n.11 of this thesis.

Were this misnaming of Justine as Juliette a singular occurrence, it could easily be attributed to a lapse in Beckett's concentration. But, a page later, Beckett writes: 'The first version of *Juliette* is an important stage in the evolution of the Sadist consciousness' (Klossowski 2022, 40) before stating that *Juliette* 'develop[s]' the 'metaphysics' and 'theory of perversions' established in *120 journées*. Klossowski's original text, contrastingly, asserts that 'La première version de *Justine* marque une étape dans l'évolution de la conscience sadiste' [The first version of *Justine* is an important stage in the evolution of the Sadist consciousness] (Klossowski 1967, 99) before clarifying that the later-written *Juliette* develops 'la métaphysique' [the metaphysics] and 'théorie des perversions' [theory of perversions] posited in *120 journées* (Klossowski 1967, 100). This second error reveals Beckett's lack of familiarity with both *Justine* and *Juliette*. *Justine* is a relatively brief novel of about 260 pages. In this text, Sade tells the tale of a virtuous but 'wretched girl stumbling from misfortune to misfortune […] prey to the most barbarous and monstrous proclivities' (Sade qtd in Heine 2022a, 24). *Juliette*, contrastingly, is a gargantuan text of around 720 pages which depicts its eponymous protagonist 'revelling in pleasure[]' (Blanchot 2022, 42) as she indulges in libertine acts. Hence, even at a cursorial glance one can see that *Justine* and *Juliette* are markedly different texts. Thus, it stands to reason that Beckett had probably still not read *Justine*, *Nouvelle Justine*, or *Juliette* in early 1951, with his only knowledge of these novels coming from the secondary sources.

4.1.vii. 'Vice is Perhaps the Heart of Man'[38]

In this text, Bataille radically proposes:

> Sadism may well be part of us, an excrescence within us, one which may once have served a purpose, but does so no longer, which may be obliterated at will, in ourselves by renunciation, in others by penalties: so the surgeon treats the appendix, the people kings. Or is it on the contrary a sovereign and irreducible part of man, but which remains beyond the grasp of his consciousness? Is it, in a word, his heart, I do not mean the bodily organ, but the rush of feeling, the inner principle of which it is the sign?
>
> In the first case, the man of reason would be justified forthwith; all would be clear, man would produce effectively, reduce the world to his laws, avoid war and violence, without being in the least concerned with a propensity which, till then, had held him bound fast to misfortune. This propensity would be no more than a deplorable habit and its necessary amendment a simple matter.
>
> In the second case, on the contrary, it is clear that the suppression of this habit would strike to the most vital centre of human existence. (Bataille 2022, 51)

These brief paragraphs situate sadism and Reason as opposing forces, but they do so in a way which subverts the reader's expectations of how these concepts are related to the notion of power. Instead of connecting sadism with man's need to exert their will upon the without in order to dominate it, Bataille claims that it is 'the man of reason' who seeks to 'reduce the world to his laws' to further facilitate man's ability 'to produce effectively'. In so doing, Bataille characterises sadism as a disruptive force diametrically opposed to Reason's desire to subjugate the world and, by extension, others. Ergo, Bataille's proposing of sadism as a 'sovereign' drive favouring chaos is comparable to Adorno's interpretation of Sade's work as a critique of the Enlightenment's valuing of Reason and the ways in which this 'cult of Reason' enables the justification of horrifying violence (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 81-119).

Following this initial contrasting of sadism and Reason, Bataille elaborates the assumptions facilitating, and the potential implications of, the assertion that sadism is an intrinsic, irreducible part of humanity:

[38] Beckett's excerpt corresponds to Bataille in Sade 1950, x-xi, xiii-xvii.

> The proposition naturally requires to be stated more precisely: it is too weighty to be maintained, even for an instant, in an indeterminate void.
>
> It assumes, firstly, the existence in man of an irresistible propensity to destroy and a fundamental agreement with the incessant and inevitable destruction of all that is born, grows and wills to endure.
>
> Secondly, it ascribes to this propensity and to this agreement a significance as it were *divine* in kind, or more exactly *sacred*: meaning the desire deep within us to consume and bring to ruin, to make a fire of our resources, and more generally the satisfaction we derive from this consuming, this fire and this ruin conceived as divine, as sacred, and the sole determinants of our *sovereign* attitudes, that is to say those which are gratuitous, without utility, ministering to themselves alone and never subordinate to ulterior results.
>
> Thirdly, the proposition signifies that a humanity regarding itself as alien to these attitudes, rejected by an immediate act of reason, would waste away and be reduced, generally speaking, to a kind of old-maidism (a tendency discernible, to a certain extent, in our time), if it did not occasionally behave in a way diametrically opposed to its principles.
>
> Fourthly, the proposition is bound up with the need felt by contemporary man – meaning normal man – to achieve *self-consciousness*, to grasp clearly, in order to limit their possibly ruinous effects, the nature of this self's *sovereign* aspirations: to command, if desirable, these effects, but to curb them henceforward in accordance with its wishes and to oppose them resolutely in such measure as it is unable to support them. (Bataille 2022, 52)

The first point within these clarifying comments is the most straight-forward. By proposing that sadism is an essential element of being human, this text situates one's propensity for violence as the marker of one's humanity. Bataille then goes on to assert that this innately human drive to destroy is reflective of a wider universal entropy. As Krimper points out, in *La Part Maudite* (1949) Bataille calls this synchronicity of the human predisposition to violence with the wider 'inevitable decomposition of everything […] in the universe' 'The Accursed Share' of humanity (Krimper 2022, 103).

The first half of Bataille's second proposition, that man's inclination to indulge in violence is 'sacred', not only further integrates his theory of sadism with his philosophical system of 'The Accursed Share', but also emphatically underlines the centrality of sadism to humanity. In *Theory of Religion* (1973), Bataille defines 'the sacred' as the 'prodigious effervescence of life that, for the sake of duration, the order of things holds in check, and that this holding changes into a breaking loose, that is, into violence' (Bataille 1989, 52). As Jeremy Biles observes, according to Bataille 'the sacred' can only be accessed through the confluence of 'divine ecstasy and extreme horror' (Biles 2007, 8) inspired by graphic

violence. Bataille's notion of 'the sacred' is therefore particularly applicable to the distressing mingling of eroticism with intense violence and disgust in Sade's *œuvre,* and echoes Beckett's own subtle recording of the visceral effects produced by Sade's work. Consequently, we can confidently deduce that Beckett was sensitive to the melding together of excitement and repulsion generated by Sade's literary formulation of violence.

Compared with Bataille's two previous explanatory comments, the third clarification which the French writer offers is, by far, the most radical. This statement not only reinforces the opposition between sadism and Reason previously established in this text, but also posits that sadism, and hence the overthrowing of Reason, is essential to humanity's survival. Whilst it is not clear whether Beckett himself held as extreme a view as that espoused by Bataille, we do know that Beckett had a marked interest in the dangers of Enlightened Reason. Consequently, we can state that Beckett was certainly receptive to this aspect of Bataille's text. And, as Beckett's literary works attest, he was certainly attuned to the primacy of humanity's potential for violence. Thus, Beckett's translating of Bataille's work emphasises his concerns with the potential harm brought about by Reason, thereby reinforcing his reading of Sade's work as a form of 'satire juvanelesque' comparable in force to Swift's 'Savage indignation' (Yeats 2008, 129).

Bataille's final elaboration would have also been of particular interest to Beckett, as here Bataille explicitly connects humanity's sadistic drive with our desire to understand consciousness. As Van Hulle and Shane Weller illustrate, one of the ways in which *The Unnamable* may be understood is as a literary presentation of 'a mind's attempt to picture itself' (Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 119) – as a fictionalisation of the processes of consciousness and self-consciousness. Marco Bernini furthers this argument through his analysis of this novel as 'a fictional cognitive model that uses a homuncular spatialisation of

the self as a centre of narrative gravity or "seed of motion", placed within the mind as the illusory source of the narration', to facilitate Beckett's textual exploration of the issues of 'circularity and infinite regress, transformed […] into readerly experiences of these paradoxical problems' (Bernini 2021, 38). Bearing this critical framework in mind, it subsequently becomes possible to state that the narrator of *The Unnamable*'s cruel treatment of the masks through which he has to cycle (see pp. 106-09 and pp. 116-19 of this thesis) is indicative of Beckett's awareness of the centrality of violence to one's cognitive processes. And, as will be seen in the next section of this chapter, in *Texts for Nothing* Beckett too implicitly proposes that sadism is 'bound up with the need felt by contemporary man […] to achieve' – or rather, to try to achieve – 'self-consciousness' (Bataille 2022, 57).

Following the above, Bataille progresses to an analysis of how language functions within Sade's *œuvre*. Bataille draws attention to two inextricably connected aspects of Sade's language: its suffusing with negativity, and, its dedication to absolute isolation. To establish the former, Bataille asserts that 'Normal language rejects the expression of violence' by 'divesting it of all rational ground and of all justification' (Bataille 2022, 52), thereby rendering violence incomprehensible to the rational mind and nonsensical in its occurrence. 'Normal language' banishes violence from the realm of enlightened discussion, shrouding its occurrence in impenetrable silence. But, as Bataille continues, 'the rational negation of violence – as useless or dangerous – can no more abolish its object than the unreasonable negation of death' (Bataille 2022, 53). Subsequently, Sade's language 'encounters […] the double opposition of reason, which denies [violence], and of violence itself, better served by contemptuous silence' (Bataille 2022, 53). In Bataille's opinion, it is precisely this banishing of violence from linguistic expression which Sade overcomes within his works.

According to Bataille, the Divine Marquis achieves this twisting of language upon itself in order to enable the literary expression of extreme violence by forcing it to represent how 'the solitary man […] proceed[s] […] towards a total negation, a final negation of […] all that he is not, and […] finally to the negation of himself' (Bataille 2022, 54). As Krimper comments, Sade's language's ability to elicit horror within its readers is derived from its juxtaposing of two linguistic 'poles: the utilitarian enterprise of meaning-making […] and the current of unproductive expenditure leading towards destruction' (Krimper 2022, 106). In his caustic literary works, Sade turns the sense-making impulse of Enlightened language into its negative by forcing language to render palpable the incomprehensible destruction of sense encapsulated in the silence of violence, before then trying to make this very same language 'make sense' of this violence through the libertines discussion of how they can inflict elicit even greater agony within their victims. The consequence of this extreme tension between sense-making and the desecration of understanding is a collapsing of language upon itself. As Beckett realises so powerfully in *Texts for Nothing*, in the pursuit of absolute negation even the vehicle through which the negative is facilitated must be torn asunder.

Furthering this idea of Sade's language being a form of literary anti-language, Bataille explicitly asserts that 'Sade's language must be defined as one repudiating the relationship between him who speaks and those to whom he speaks, repudiating, that is, language itself' (Bataille 2022, 55). This assertion is interesting as it details the complementary nature of the two functions of negativity at work in Sade's language. Sade's twisted use of language forces the primarily sense-making vehicle of language to undertake the task of experientially representing that which it can neither represent nor encapsulate in an entirely satisfactory manner. This warping of language into a form of anti-language

dedicated to depicting that which escapes the bounds of language both supplements, and is supplemented by, the fracturing of language's communicative abilities. As Bataille notes, the violence and negativity contained within Sade's language desecrate the emotional relations usually established between a speaker and reader. Rather than readers feeling a sense of community with he who speaks, in Sade's works the cold language with which the narrators and libertine-protagonists describe the crimes of this latter group forces the reader to experience a nauseating alienation from those inflicting pain. The sheer brutality of the violence represented in Sade's works leads to an overwhelming of the reader's empathetic and sympathetic abilities, resulting in their turning away from the unbearable agony that the libertines' actions produce. This, in turn, decimates the essentially communicative and unifying aspects of language, transforming it into a vehicle through which further torment may be inflicted. In Sade's hands, as in Beckett's, language becomes a negativized anti-language driving towards an unknowable, un-witnessable 'something or nothing' (Beckett, letter of 9 July 1937 to Axel Kaun, *LSB I*, 518).

4.2. *Texts for Nothing*

In 'Text V' Beckett exhibits his mastery of the 'methods of the English school' (Heine 2022b, 25) of gothic literature. When describing the movement of the scribe's hand noting of proceedings of the strange court comprising this text's setting, the narrator states: 'I see the hand, it comes creeping out of shadow, the shadow of my head, then scurries back' (*TfN*, 22). What is immediately noticeable within these staccato phrases is the incorporeality of 'the hand' to which the narrator alludes. The text's employment of the definitive article, 'the', functions in tandem with the image of the hand 'creeping out of shadow' to create the

impression of this hand being disconnected from a body. This impression is then augmented by the admission that it is out of 'the shadow of [the narrator's] head' that this hand manifests itself. By hinting that this hand is phantasmagorical, the narrator of 'Text V' causes his utterance to become tinged with a quasi-gothic atmosphere of menace which belittles the speaker's autonomy by suggesting that he is haunted by things beyond his control.

This ur-image of the gothic – the disembodied hand emerging from the darkness – has its roots in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, a book mentioned in Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir' (Heine 2022b, 19; cf. Heine 1950, 213). Towards the end of Walpole's novel, Bianca, in a fit of terror, rushes into the apartment in which Manfred is conversing with Frederic. After interrupting Manfred and Frederic's conversation, she cries out that she 'heard the rattling of armour' as she was climbing the castle's stairs (Walpole 2014, 95) before seeing 'upon the utmost banister […] a hand in armour' (Walpole 2014, 95) lacking attachment to any extended corporeal form. Given the similarities between Beckett's description of the 'hand […] creeping out of shadow' in 'Text V' and the spectral hand in *The Castle of Otranto*, as well as the fact that Beckett also alludes to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-45) – another text mentioned in Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir' (Heine 2022b, 19; cf. Heine 1950, 213) – throughout *Texts for Nothing* (Porter Abbott 1994, 107-09; cf. Porter Abbott 1996, 91-92, and, Van Hulle 2007, 16-19), it becomes apparent that Beckett's employment of gothic elements within *Texts for Nothing* is deeply indebted to Heine's essay. Not only did Beckett translate Heine's essay, but he also consulted works by other authors mentioned in this text to find material that he could incorporate into his own works. Beckett's reconceptualising of Walpole's image of the disembodied hand in 'Text V', and his defamiliarisation of the twilight imagery adapted from Young's *Night Thoughts* across *Texts*

for Nothing, therefore affirms that Beckett's is a creatively imagistic, as well as a critical, mind.[39] In a manner redolent of his early practice of 'notesnatching' (Beckett qtd by Pilling in Beckett 1999, xiii), Beckett is here latching on to interesting images encountered through his expansive reading and processing them by defamiliarising them within his texts.

Yet, as a close reading of 'Text V' and 'Text VI' reveals, Beckett's utilisation of the gothic in these texts differs from both the 'English' employment of the supernatural in Gothic literature and Sade's textual invocations of Gothic tropes to create an atmosphere of entrapment. After introducing the disembodied hand into 'Text V' and noting that 'it ventures out in an instant, then goes back in again' (*TfN*, 22), the narrator realises that this hand is actually 'the clerk's hand' (*TfN*, 22). Thus, the narrator and the reader simultaneously realise that the hand which the narrator has been so perturbed by is, in actuality, his own hand as he is both the 'clerk' and 'scribe' within this text (*TfN*, 22). In spite of this epiphany, the narrator is still incapable of asserting ownership over the hand; he states that it has 'no connexion with me' (*TfN*, 22). This deeply complicates the questions of embodiment and 'sovereignty' expressed in *Texts for Nothing* by 'lesioning' the connectivity between mind and body in a post-Cartesian manner.[40] By lesioning the self's ability to recognise itself, Beckett's text reveals the essential instability underlying the 'centre of narrative gravity' (Dennett 1991, 418; cf. Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 119, and, Bernini 2021, 33-44) and, in so doing, casts doubt upon the very question of selfhood. Hence, Beckett reconceives the imagery of the gothic within 'Text V' by integrating it into a wider fictional strategy of unstable introspective exploration.

[39] For more on Beckett's mind being imagistic in nature, see Uhlmann 2006, 1-149.
[40] I use the present-participle 'lesioning' here in the cognitive comprehension of the term. See Bernini 2021, vii-xi, 122-59.

Later in 'Text V', Beckett combines this introspective utilisation of the gothic with a negative formulation of sovereignty by having the narrator state:

> It's a game, it's getting to be a game, I'm going to rise and go, if it's not me it will be someone, a phantom, long live all our phantoms, those of the dead, those of the living and those of those who are not born. I'll follow him, with my sealed eyes, he needs no door, needs no thought, to issue from this imaginary head, mingle with air and earth and dissolve, little by little, in exile. Now I'm haunted, let them go, one by one, let the last desert me and leave me empty, empty and silent. (*TfN*, 23)

Here the notion of the 'English' gothic is invoked through the speaker's use of the noun 'phantoms' (see Heine 2022b, 22, 33). But, rather than this noun illustrating the narrator's mind's alienation from its body, the term 'phantoms' is used to give hazy shape to those other beings which the speaker perceives as inhabiting the court within the 'imaginary head' where he finds himself. As Bernini points out, this figuring of the speaker's externalised inner life as plagued by mysterious figures who come and go as they please ('the phantoms come back […] they go abroad […] they come back and slip into the coffin' [*TfN*, 24]) resembles the clinical features of Audio-Visual Hallucinations (AVHs):

> In Beckett's works as in AVHs […] mental agency is progressively disrupted, but not the sense of owning the experience, so that characters perceive themselves as the experiential site of foreign or alien intentionality. As Dan Zahavi specifies, "rather than involving a lack of a sense of ownership, passivity phenomena […] involve a lack of a sense of authorship, or self-agency, and a misattribution of agency to someone or *something* else". (Bernini 2021, 51; cf. Zahavi 2005, 6)

This feeling the self to be inhabited by a foreign force bespeaks a negative interest in the notion of sovereignty within 'Text V'; the narrator is presented as lacking control over the machinations of his own mind and, even, as externalising its functioning to a spectrally personified other. Moreover, the speaker's extending of the category of the spectral to encapsulate both the 'dead' and living via the concept of 'living' phantoms imbues life itself with its negative. This conflating of the concepts of life and death into a singular living-death mirrors the Sadean conception of the libertines' victims existing in a state of absolute negation prior to their executions (Blanchot 2022, 48). Ergo, in 'Text V' Beckett combines his

interest in the gothic as re-ignited by his reading of Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir' with the conception of negativity espoused in Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' to create a new introspective technique that realises the innate instability of the narrator's self in textual form. This, in turn, reveals how Beckett's interest in the concept of Sadean sovereignty manifests itself in a negative manner within *Texts for Nothing*; the speakers of these texts are non-sovereign beings at the mercy of their own turbulent minds.

A similar utilisation of gothic imagery as a vehicle through which the revelation of the non-sovereign nature of the *Texts for Nothing*'s speakers may be espoused is encountered in 'Text VI', when the narrator states that he sometimes envisages his 'keepers' (*TfN*, 25) – figures redolent of those who torture Worm (*TU*, 63-87)[41] – as 'ghouls' (*TfN*, 25) and, at other times, like 'great clusters of bones, dangling and knocking with a clatter of castanets' (*TfN*, 25). This latter formulation presents us with another example of Beckett's mind latching on to imagery encountered via his reading of Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir' – 'Imagine, Madame, a circular vault, twenty-five feet in diameter, whose walls, draped in black, were exclusively adorned with the most lugubrious objects, skeletons of every shape and size, crossbones, death's-heads' (Sade qtd in Heine 2022b, 28) and 'We arrived at last in a low chamber all lined with skeletons; its seats were entirely made of human bones and there was no choice but to sit on skulls; dreadful cries seemed to issue from underground' (Sade qtd in Heine 2022b, 32) – and processing it by combining this imagery with a negativized manifestation of his interest in the Blanchotian-Sadean idea of sovereignty.

[41] This resonance is further affirmed when the narrator states: 'I was, they say in Purgatory, in Hell too' (*TfN*, 27). The mentioning of 'Hell' not only infuses the text with Dantean intonations, but also evokes the locale in which the final torments of Sade's *120 journées* take place. See pp. 116-19 of this thesis.

Furthermore, the speaker's being surrounded by these 'keepers' creates an atmosphere of carcerality that is augmented by how these figures inflict pain on the speaker by reminding him that he is 'a prisoner […] rearing to get out' (*TfN*, 25). Consequently, in 'Text VI' Beckett reconceptualises the mechanisms through which violence acts by placing emphasis upon the verbal infliction of violence, rather than the brutality of physical violence as is largely favoured by Sade. As the speaker himself states, his situation is just as, if not more, agonising than that of the damned 'Plunged in ice up to the nostrils, the eyelids caked with frozen tears' (*TfN*, 27), in the wasteland of Cocytus (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XXXII.182.22-48). Like them, he too is in a 'Hell' (*TfN*, 27) that 'has no end' (*TfN*, 27). Therefore, by underlining how the narrator of 'Text VI' is entrapped in a space in which he is continually psychologically tormented by his knowledge of the unending, and inescapable, nature of his situation, Beckett's work gives the lie to Albert Camus' assertion that one must imagine Sisyphus happy (Camus 2020, 168) by defamiliarising imagery recorded in Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir'. Beckett transforms both Sadean and 'English' gothic imagery into a textual representation of his narrator's non-sovereign powerlessness.

In 'Text II' and 'Text VIII' Beckett fully realises the non-sovereign character of his speakers. Towards the end of 'Text II' the narrator begins to question all that has occurred thus far, asking: 'What exactly is going on' (*TfN*, 8). Instead of this querying clause being followed by a moment of silence, the narrator continues: 'What exactly is going on, exactly, ah old xanthic laugh, no, farewell mirth, good riddance, it was never droll' (*TfN*, 8). The lack of a real pause, indicated by the text's employment of concussive commas, endows the narrator's speech with a conversational quality; it seems as a 'second speaker' is immediately answering the speaker's question, 'What exactly is going on[?]', with the maieutic response, 'exactly'. This reply then elicits a further response from the 'initial

speaker' which reveals the 'consternation' (Beckett qtd in Shenker 2007, 148) experienced by the narrator of 'Text II' when concerning both the unknowability and interminability of his situation. As Rabaté notes (2016, 206), the narrator's invocation of the 'old xanthic laugh' is underlaid by 'horror' – it is the 'strained laughter', the '*rire jaune*', of one confronted by the realisation of the hopelessness and awfulness of the situation in which they find themselves. Once again, this provokes a response from the 'second speaker', who dismisses the utility of this 'xanthic laughter' through the staccato interjection, 'no'. Doing so completely negates the potentially calmative effects of the *rire jaune*, leading the 'initial speaker' to the weighted admission that his situation has never been 'droll'.

This establishing of conversational dynamics in the narrator's utterance is illusory. There is no second speaker. Consequently, the narrator's utterance becomes suffused with a 'bewildering multiplicity' (Porter Abbott 1994, 112) which, in turn, 'foreground[s] [the] disintegration [of] the monologue' (Nixon in Beckett 2010f, xi) form into an unstable, troubled polylogue. As Bernini (2021, 65) puts it, in 'Text II' the 'fundamental sound of inner speech' has been 'detuned' to such a degree that the inner monologue of the narrator's 'functioning brain' seems alien to him. This results in the strange phenomenon whereby the narrator perceives himself to be inhabited by another being and speaking with a voice simultaneously his own and not his own. The narrator's brain is tormented by its own unrecognised parts and bewildered by the continual intrusions of its own alienated inner monologue into its experiential perception of the world, as is demonstrated by the narrator's later perturbed question, 'What happened?' (*TfN*, 9). This, in turn, reveals his lack of agency with regard to the movements of his mind, and hence his inability to create a stable, 'single, diachronically integer and persisting self' (Bernini 2021, 10). Thus, Beckett's interest in the Blanchotian-Sadean concept of sovereignty is transmuted in *Texts for Nothing*

into the textual rendering of the externalised inner monologue of a speaker incapable of recognising the constitutive elements of their own subjectivity as belonging to themselves and isolated from the without.

'Text VIII' carries this lack of sovereignty to its absolute limit, with the narrator claiming:

> I'm a mere ventriloquist's dummy, I feel nothing, say nothing, he holds me in his arms and moves my lips with a string, with a fish-hook, no, no need of lips, all is dark, there is no one […]. But that other who is me, blind and deaf and mute, because of whom I'm here, in this black silence, helpless to move or accept this voice as mine, it's as him I must disguise myself till I die, for him in the meantime do my best not to live, in this pseudo-sepulture claiming to be his. (*TfN*, 34-35)

The first three clauses of this passage indicate that the narrator feels an absolute lack of control over – and even a disconnection from – his body. By describing himself as a 'mere ventriloquist's dummy' who both 'feel[s]' and 'say[s] nothing' the speaker suggests that he is absent from his own body, which he perceives as being nothing more than a conduit through which an unseen other being may speak. However, this idea of the narrator 'feeling nothing' is immediately complicated by his remarking that he feels a shadowy other, who is his master, 'hold[ing] [him] in his arms and mov[ing] [his] lips with a string, with a fish hook'. These statements create a paradox which casts further doubt upon the narrator's control over his own narrative and the very status of the narrator's existence: how can the speaker know that he is being held by this unnerving 'he' figure if he is completely incapable of feeling?

Additionally, by positing that it is through 'a fish hook', fixed in his upper lip, that the master 'he' figure forces the speaker's lips to contort, the text reveals that the narrator is both in a state of physical distress and subject to the denigration of even the potential of controlling his own marionette-esque body due the overwhelming power of this shadowy puppet-master. The introduction of this notion of physical violence into 'Text VIII' is,

undoubtedly, due to Beckett's reading of Bataille's 'Préface à *Justine*' immediately prior to his penning of this text. Within this essay, Bataille draws particular attention to the essentiality of sadism to humanity, arguing that it is, in fact, 'a sovereign and irreducible part of man […] which remains beyond the grasp of consciousness' – it is, 'in a word, his heart' (Bataille 2022, 51). This statement of the centrality of violence to humanity has a profound impact upon Beckett's conceptualisation of the non-sovereign speaker of 'Text VIII'. This figure's perceived lack of sovereignty, expressed via his literal inability to control himself, is here mingled with a visceral invocation of physical torment as well as the direct evocation of a master-slave dynamic characterised by non-reciprocity. As 'a mere ventriloquist's dummy', the speaker completely lacks the ability, identified by Hegel, of the slave to assail the master. Consequently, the master-slave relations depicted in 'Text VIII' accord with a violently Sadean conception of this dynamic (Blanchot 2022, 45-46).

But even these aspects of the text are cancelled by the narrator's assertions that he has 'no need of lips' and that 'all is dark, there is no one'. This latter comment is particularly fascinating as through it the speaker not only negates the notion of a master by denying the existence of the 'he' figure, but also destroys the idea of the narrator himself as a physical being. If there is 'no one', then, logically, there must be no narrator either. This presents a further challenge to the notion of sovereignty, as in order for a being to be sovereign in a Blanchotian-Sadean sense, that being must be capable of exerting themselves upon the without whilst concomitantly controlling their own emotional and physical reactions to external events acting upon them. The juxtaposing of this denial of the possibility of sovereign existence with the textual actuality of this impossible narrator continuing to speak even as he dismantles the mediums through which speech can exist situates *Texts for Nothing*'s narrator 'at the extreme limits of what is unlivable' (Langlois 2015, 99) whilst also

revealing how this text metamorphoses language into a self-negating vehicle that functions 'contrary to the fact' (Bataille 2022, 54; cf. *Tpr* FN1, 50v) of its own existence. This forces the reader to wrestle with the impossible paradox of a speaker suffused with non-sovereign characteristics who is, nonetheless, sustaining themselves through the creation of a still-moving, static world.

However, assigning a warped sense of sovereign authority to this speaker would be a mistake, as the very next sentence of the passage under discussion illustrates. Rather than maintaining that there is 'no one', the speaker asserts that there is an 'other who is me, blind and deaf and mute', who is the cause of the speaker's entrapment in the swirling 'black silence' brought into (in)existence by his own narration. The speaker's assertion that he is, in fact, the victim of this 'other […] me' reinstates a sense of hierarchical power dynamics within the narrator's speech. In 'Text VIII' the speaker appears simultaneously subservient to this disempowered 'other' self and envious of it. The narrator of 'Text VIII' longs for silence, for the embrace of true inexistence, to such an extent that he feels he will have to 'disguise' himself as this unspeaking self whose existence cannot be affirmed due to the inability of this 'other' self to posit itself. Yet in spite of these desires, the speaker of 'Text VIII' is completely incapable of falling silent. He is cursed to continue speaking with a voice that he cannot 'accept' as his own, thereby sustaining his perpetual entrapment at the precipice of silence and speech, the precipice of being and non-being. Consequently, it may be said that he is powerless to control his own utterance and doomed to continue oscillating in the static position of hopeless non-being in which he finds himself *ad infinitum*. Subsequently, it becomes apparent that Beckett's interest in Blanchotian-Sadean sovereignty is metamorphosed into the expression of the absolute opposite of this idea in

Texts for Nothing.[42] The speakers of 'Text II' and 'Text VIII' are the ultimate victims of their psyches.

In 'Text IV' Beckett radically modifies the above-discussed envisaging of the non-sovereign self by writing a text 'spoken' by the non-being for which an unnamed individual searches:

> I'm not in his head, nowhere in his old body, and yet I'm there, for him I'm there, with him, hence all the confusion. That should have been enough for him, to have found me absent, but it's not, he wants me there, with a form and a world, like him, in spite of him, me who am everything, like him who is nothing. And when he feels me void of existence it's of his he would have me void, and vice versa, mad, mad, he's mad. The truth is he's looking for me to kill me (*TfN*, 17)

This inversion of perspective sheds light upon the specific characteristics of the 'inner-mediating' voices (Bernini 2021, 70) alluded to throughout *Texts for Nothing*, thus enabling readers to gain insight into the torturous relations defining the ontomediating cascade plaguing the searcher's experience of his reality.[43] The above-quoted passage begins with the speaker attempting to clarify the position which he occupies within the searcher's subjective perception of his reality; but, this elucidation leads only to further ontological confusion. In a manner redolent of the narrator of *The Unnamable*'s formulation as an impossible being that is simultaneously 'in words, made of words, others' words' (*TU*, 104) and 'a wordless thing' (*TU*, 104), the narrator of 'Text IV' here situates himself as being concomitantly present and absent when considered from the experiential perspective of the searcher in whose subjectivity he is interred. The fact of this speaker being definitely 'there' for the searcher, but being de-physicalised to such a degree that the searcher cannot affirm his existence through any objective means, presents the searcher with a challenge which he

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[42] That is not to say that Beckett's interest in the fictional depiction of non-sovereign beings is inspired solely by Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade'. Rather, I propose that Beckett's reading of Blanchot's essay resulted in the integration of Blanchot's conception of Sadean sovereignty into his pre-existing interest in powerlessness.
[43] For more on ontomediacy in Beckett's works see Bernini 2021, 70-121.

is, and arguably we all are, ill-suited to address. Without the supports of the yearned-for homuncular modelling scaffold that is so prevalent within *The Unnamable* (see Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 117-19, 153-56), the searcher of 'Text IV' finds himself confronted with an impossible dilemma. He has searched his self and, from an experiential perspective, found himself to be empty; yet, he is still tormented by the voice of this text's narrator.

As the third sentence of the above-quoted passage reveals, the searcher finds it impossible to accept that there is no physical source for the words assailing him from within. The speaker's statement that the searcher 'wants [him] there, with a form and a world, like him' implies that the speaker of 'Text IV' is aware that he is a detuned, and non-physical, element of the searcher's own cognition whilst also unveiling how the searcher is incapable of integrating the seemingly non-existent-existent speaker into a coherent comprehension of his own cognitive processes. The searcher is thus a victim of the viciously circular paradox of self-consciousness. Moreover, the speaker's comment that he 'is everything' whilst the searcher is 'nothing' is suggestive of the antagonistic relationship that exists between the searcher and this de-physicalised speaker. However, it is not until the final two sentences of the above-quoted passage that the true extent of the searcher's disdain for the speaker, and the speaker's tormenting influence upon this searcher, become fully revealed. The speaker's claims that the searcher is 'mad' reveals to the reader just how torturous the searcher finds the experience of being inhabited by a seemingly completely 'other' consciousness which he is perpetually incapable of either assimilating as an element of his own cognitive functioning, or extinguishing so as to be free from its unceasing speech, and which continually abuses him by taunting him 'like a vulgar Molloy [or] a common Malone' (*TfN*, 18). The use of the adjective, 'mad', implies that the searcher has been driven insane by the sustained presence of this inconceivable and, for the searcher,

incomprehensible speaker within his subjective perception of reality – a state which is seemingly confirmed by the speaker's final admission that the searcher is 'looking for [him] to kill [him]'. The searcher is thus turned into a helpless slave doomed to continually hunt for a cruel master who cannot be harmed due to his status as something caught between being and non-being, between reality and the auto-constructive fictive tendencies of the mind.

Ergo, by inverting the narrative perspective in 'Text IV', Beckett reveals how the experienced lack of sovereignty which the 'searchers' depicted throughout *Texts for Nothing* feel is predicated upon a sense of cruelty; the searchers of these texts are subjected to continual verbal abuse by shadowy non-figures whom they cannot ever hope to silence. Consequently, 'Text IV' is perhaps the most fascinating of the *Texts for Nothing* in that it reveals precisely how Beckett was able to synthesise the ideas about sovereignty and master-slave dynamics contained in Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' (Blanchot 2022, 45-46) with Bataille's assertion that sadism is inextricably bound to self-consciousness (Bataille 2022, 52) to form into a completely new lesioning technique through which he could investigate the detuned elements of cognition. Rather than portraying an absolutely sovereign figure who finds *jouissance* in inflicting pain upon other beings, in 'Text IV' Beckett confronts readers with a textual rendering of the verbal and lexical violence plaguing the searchers of his texts. 'Text IV' is therefore intrinsically concerned with the pathos-inspiring reactions of the victim as well as the violence of consciousness and self-consciousness.

4.3. *Endgame*

As Van Hulle and Weller acknowledge, there is a definitive 'shift' throughout the complex genetic dossier of *Fin de* partie/*Endgame* 'from physical to verbal violence' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 235-36);[44] however, that is not to say that the published version of this play is devoid of physical violence. Towards the end of *Endgame* there is a notable occurrence of physical violence provoked by Hamm's continual, exhausting exertion of his power over Clov through his use of verbal violence manifest as a flurry of incessant questions, imperatives, and mocking comments. After commanding Clov to gaze out the window and 'Look at the earth' (*Endgame*, 43) Hamm then queries, 'Have you the glass?' (*Endgame*, 45), to which Clov replies: 'No, it's clear enough as it is' (*Endgame*, 45). Clov's reply prompts Hamm to utilise 'cruel logic' (Cohn 2005, 229) by demanding that his servant 'Go and get' (*Endgame*, 45) the telescope simply because it is an entirely unnecessary action. This demand causes Clov to '*brandish[] his fists*' (*Endgame*, 45) at Hamm, expressing the former's frustration at being ordered about by his master unceasingly through a gesture replete with the threat of physical violence. Thus, it becomes apparent that Hamm's abusing of Clov by requiring him to complete purposeless tasks leads to a rising anger within the slave. Verbal violence enables a creeping tide of physical violence to seep into the play's visual language. Interestingly though, within the context of the play Hamm is unaware of Clov's threat of physical violence because he is blind. This creates a curious dynamic whereby the master is ignorant to the apparent possibility of his becoming a victim at the hands of the slave whom he commands.

[44] Unfortunately, there is not the scope in this thesis to discuss the Sadean inflexions found throughout *Fin de partie*/*Endgame*'s genetic dossier.

Following Clov's '*brandish*[ing] *his fists*' at Hamm, he descends the ladder and begins searching for the telescope. Upon finding it and mounting the ladder once, Hamm '*Angrily*' (*Endgame*, 45) yells: 'Give me the dog!' (*Endgame*, 45). The timing of this demand leads to an increase in verbal violence and resistance from Clov, who sharply barks: 'Quiet!' (*Endgame*, 45). Naturally, this show of verbal defiance angers Hamm, causing him to repeat 'Give me the dog!' (*Endgame*, 45). This command is the tipping point at which verbal violence transforms into an overt expression of physical violence, with Clov '*drop[ping] the telescope* [and] *clasp[ing] his hands to his head*' (*Endgame*, 45) before '*hasten[ing] towards* HAMM *and strik[ing] him on the head violently with the dog*' (*Endgame*, 45). Clov's physical gestures before engaging in the act of violence directed at his master bespeak the degree of suffering he has had to endure within this master-slave dynamic. By '*clasp[ing]*' his hands to his head, Clov suggests that the stress provoked by his continually being abused by Hamm is so severe that it is now manifest physically – he has been 'drive[n] […] mad' (*Endgame*, 45) by Hamm's exercising of power over him. Within this context, the act of physical violence to which Clov is driven may be understood as reactionary, thus revealing Beckett's awareness of the self-generative and escalatory nature of violence.

However, as Cohn observes, Clov's choice of 'weapon mitigates [the] cruelty' of his actions (Cohn 1980, 183). Clov's act of resistance is thus rendered futile within the context of the master-slave dynamic, thereby definitively characterising the master-slave relations between Hamm and Clov as Sadean. Just as Sade's libertines are unassailable due to the dominating strength of their subjectivities, so too is Hamm incapable of being dethroned as master due to the fact that the slave cannot exact definitive physical harm upon him. Indeed, Hamm revels in the knowledge that Clov is unable of doing him harm, remarking: 'If you must hit me, hit me with the axe. [*Pause.*] Or with the gaff, hit me with the gaff. Not

with the dog. With the gaff. Or with the axe' (*Endgame*, 46). Thus, the viewer of this play is presented with a situation in which the master perpetually abuses the slave without fear of retaliatory violence, as he knows that his slave cannot muster the necessary degree of violence to escape subjugation. Rather than Hamm being immune from threats and harm due to the insurmountable, Sadean ability of his mind to transform any pain experienced into pleasure, Hamm is omnipotent within the context of his relations with Clov because Clov is 'powerless with regard to him' (Blanchot 2022, 45). Beckett thus inverts Sade's understanding of why the master is all powerful within master-slave dynamics whilst still maintaining a Sadean conception of the incontestable position of the master.

Whilst this overt example of physical violence within Hamm and Clov's relationship may be seen as 'an exception proving the rule' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 248) of physical violence being of a seemingly lesser magnitude within the published text, it is by no means the 'only […] occurrence of physical violence' within the published text as Baroghel claims (2010, 130). In fact, the most significant act of violence in *Endgame* results in a death which is treated as a 'triviality […] a non-event' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 239). Following Nagg's telling of the 'tailor joke', Hamm, overtaken '*with sudden fury*' (*Endgame*, 17) calls for Clov to 'Clear away th[e] muck' (*Endgame*, 17) – by which he means his parents – surrounding him. Clov then walks over to the bins in which Nagg and Nell are contained, halts in order to listen to Nell, '*stoops, takes* [her] *hand, feels her pulse* […] *lets go her hand, pushes her back in the bin,* [and] *closes the lid*' (*Endgame*, 17). After, Clov returns to his master's side and reports that Nell 'has no pulse' (*Endgame*, 17). Here Hamm is, like his predecessor 'A' (*Fdp* FM3, 26v-29v), inflicting harm upon a member of his family through the actions of a proxy. The verb '*pushes*' carries within it a sense of physicality which illumines the casual violence employed by Clov at his master's behest; Clov is literally using his body to force Nell back

into the wastebin in which she is interned. Furthermore, Clov's checking Nell's pulse while undertaking these actions, as well as his letting her hand limply fall after he completes his operation, augments the cold brutality of his actions. Clov seemingly regards Nell as nothing more than a body upon which the desires of his master may be carried out, thereby reducing her life to less than zero. Nell's life has already been ended within the wider context of *Endgame* even prior to her death. She is 'shut up in [an] absolute void […] where [her] life serves only to render sensible this being "already dead" with which it is one' (Blanchot 2022, 48).

The brutality with which Nell is treated by Hamm and Clov is further evinced by Hamm's questioning whether Clov 'bottled her' (*Endgame*, 17) and his calling for his servant to 'Screw down the lids' (*Endgame*, 17). Clov's one-word reply of 'Yes' to Hamm's questioning whether he ensured that Nagg and Nell were trapped beneath their bin lids (*Endgame*, 17) supplements the physical violence of his actions. By being very matter-of-fact about his completing the task asked of him, Clov implies that he has become accustomed to committing acts of violence. Drawing once again upon Bataille's understanding of how Sade's language is violent because it is capable of conferring the stark, cold, and unquestionable reality of violence having occurred without recourse to elaborative devices that may detract from the horror of the actions undertaken, Beckett is here employing a distanced form of minimalist narration which allows the actuality of violence to resonate within the viewer's mind. Beckett's language, like Sade's, thus becomes the vehicle through which the essential ineloquence of violence makes itself felt. Moreover, Hamm's demand that Clov 'Screw down the lids' unveils the sheer extent to which violence dominates his desires. Not content with knowing that Nell has been casually brutalised by his servant, Hamm wishes to ensure not only that his parents have no way of disturbing him with their

conversation in the future, but also that they are forced to endure isolation from one another *ad infinitum*. This final demand would, undoubtedly, contribute to an overarching atmosphere of vindictive sadism were it carried out; however, as soon as Hamm issues this final command he retracts it, stating that his 'anger [has] subside[d]' (*Endgame*, 17) and casually remarking that he would 'like to pee' (*Endgame*, 17). The juxtaposition of this intense, yet casually deployed, verbal and physical violence with immediately quotidian concerns highlights how violence is a routine part of his existence. For Hamm Nell's death, which has almost certainly been caused by his utilising Clov as a proxy through which he may enact violence upon her, is mundane – it is a 'non-event' hidden in a world dominated by violent non-events.

This treatment of Nell's death as a non-event, and the horror to which this aspect of the text gives rise, becomes fully realised when Hamm asks Clov to check if his mother is actually 'extinguished' (*Endgame*, 27):

> Hamm Go and see is she dead.
> [CLOV *goes to bins, raises the lid of* NELL*'s, stoops, looks into it. Pause.*]
> Clov Looks like it.
> [*He closes the lid, straightens up.* HAMM *raises his toque. Pause.*
> *He puts it on again.*]
> Hamm [*With his hand to his toque.*] And Nagg?
> [CLOV *raises lid of* NAGG's *bin, stoops, looks into it. Pause.*]
> Clov Doesn't look like it.
> [*He closes the lid, straightens up*.]
> Hamm [*Letting go his toque.*] What's he doing?
> [CLOV *raises lid of* NAGG*'s bin, stoops, looks into it. Pause,*]
> Clov He's crying.
> [*He closes the lid, straightens up.*]
> Hamm Then he's living. (*Endgame*, 38)

That Hamm and Clov are unmoved by Nell's death is clear from the fact that about twenty pages have passed since Nell's death. Additionally, Clov's detached reporting that Nell has died supplements the cruelty present within the text by further emphasising that violence is such a normal part of his and Hamm's lives that it does not warrant more than a passing

moment's attention. For Nagg, contrastingly, the passing of his wife is deeply affecting, prompting him to cry and to knock upon her bin in the vain hope that she will answer him (*Endgame*, 35). The juxtaposition of these two reactions highlights Hamm's sadistic cruelty, with this aspect of his character coming to the fore in his brutal, ataraxic, and pessimistic comment: 'Then he's living'. By presenting the impact of Nell's death through the simultaneous depiction of Nagg's desperate grief and Hamm's impassivity, *Endgame* illustrates how Beckett's treatment of death within this text is even more unremittingly cruel than that adopted by Sade within his caustic works. In *120 journées*, the libertines express *jouissance* at having committed murder. Consequently, as de Beauvoir remarks, there is a valorisation of the flesh within Sade's work (de Beauvoir 2012, 68); the libertines, in their own twisted ways, value life as it presents them with an opportunity to exert their power upon the without. In *Endgame*, contrastingly, the (non-)event of death occasioned by physical violence is of such little significance to Hamm and Clov that it warrants barely a modicum of attention. Beckett's text thus places no value upon life.

Despite the above, there is no denying that verbal violence is far more prevalent than its physical counterpart within this text, and is present from the outset:

> Hamm Get me ready. [CLOV *does not move*.] Go and get the sheet. [CLOV *does not move*.] Clov!
> Clov Yes.
> Hamm I'll give you nothing more to eat.
> Clov Then we'll die.
> Hamm I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying. You'll be hungry all the time.
> Clov Then we shan't die. [*Pause*.] I'll go and get the sheet.
> [*He goes towards the door*.]
> Hamm No! [CLOV *halts.*] I'll give you one biscuit per day. [*Pause*.] One and a half.
> (*Endgame*, 8)

According to Baroghel, this scene 'evokes [Arthur] Schopenhauer's conclusions regarding the moral value of sadism, according to which "the serene contemplation of another's death

from starvation […] is certainly cruel and diabolical, but it is not wrong" – for it cannot alter the world in the least' (Baroghel 2010, 129). This Schopenhauerian resonance is interesting even though we do not know to what extent Beckett was familiar with this specific assertion as voiced in the fourth book of *The World as Will and Representation* (1818; Schopenhauer 1995, 215). There is no mention of Schopenhauer in Beckett's correspondence between 1937, when Beckett partially read Schopenhauer's *Sämtliche Werke* (letter of 21 September 1937 to McGreevy, *LSB I*, 548-51; cf. Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 144-51), and 1977, when Beckett began reading the fifth volume of *Der handschriftlliche Nachlass* (letter of 23 May 1977 to Barbara Bray, *LSB IV*, 462; cf. Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 148). Furthermore, only the first volume of Schopenhauer's *Sämmtliche Werke* in Beckett's library contains extensive reading traces, with Beckett's interest seemingly dropping off upon his reaching the second volume, in which reading traces can only be found 'in the prefaces to the first and the second edition' of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 150). Additionally, this passage is also not mentioned in the other annotated, extant book in Beckett's library concerning Schopenhauer's treatment of morality and ethics, Olga Plümacher's *Der Pessimus in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (1884) (Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 152; cf. Plümacher 1884, 124-33). Consequently, the Schopenhauerian resonance within this scene seems to be coincidental.

Instead, I propose that Beckett's re-reading of Sade's *120 journées*, and his reading of Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade', inspired the specific mechanism of torture with which Hamm threatens Clov. Repeatedly throughout the fourth section of *120 journées*, Sade's libertines use starvation as a form of torture through which they may 'prolong' their victims' deaths. Indeed, the first passion described by Desgranges states that a libertine who 'used to enjoy having his way with a pauperess who had not eaten for three days' now enjoys

'leav[ing] a woman to die of hunger down in a dungeon' whilst 'observing her' (Sade 2016, 359; Sade 2011a, 348-49). Additionally, the third passion elaborated by Desgranges concerns a man who 'immures a woman in a dungeon, with food for only a fortnight' (Sade 2016, 359; Sade 2011a, 349), and the sixth passion she outlines depicts a man who 'feeds [his victim] only breadcrumbs and wine [so that] she croaks after a month' (Sade 2016, 359; Sade 2011a, 349). Thus, there is clearly a precedent for the utilisation of starvation as a means of enacting violence in *120 journées*.

However, Beckett does not simply adopt starvation as a means through which the power of the torturer-master may be exerted over the victim-slave. Rather, Beckett adapts this Sadean methodology in two distinct ways: he 'perfects' its formula by allowing Hamm to come up with a solution that means that Clov will be 'hungry all the time' and hence held in a state of living-death; and, most interestingly, he transfers the violence of starvation from the realm of the realised into that of the possible and verbal. Addressing the former of these aspects first, Hamm initially states that he will give Clov 'nothing more to eat' if he continues to refuse to conform to his actions; however, as Clov points out, this course of action would cause not only his death, but Hamm's as well. By forcing Hamm to come to this realisation, Clov exposes him to the necessitated reciprocity of their relationship. Thus, Beckett subverts the Sadean maxim of the unassailable disconnection of the master-torturer from the his slave-victims in *Endgame*.

Upon realising this mutual dependence and the potential reflexivity of his extreme violence, Hamm modifies his cruel formula by stating that he'll give his servant 'just enough to keep [him] from dying' so that he'll be 'hungry all the time'. In a manner anticipated by A's calculating approach to inflicting incrementally increasing physical pain upon his father (*Fdp* FM3, 26v-29v), and redolent of how the fourth section of *120 journées* is intensely

concerned with depicting ways in which libertines 'improve' upon their previous passions by elevating the violence within them, Hamm here utilises Reason to enhance his threat of methodical violence. In so doing, he undermines the possibility of reciprocal violence within the master-slave relationship; if Hamm were to feed Clov 'just enough' for him to survive, the former could actually extend his control over his slave by diminishing the latter's already impaired ability to function. Ergo, it becomes clear to the viewer that Hamm is here engaging in the Sadean practice of master-torturers theorising more effective and brutal ways of deploying violence in order to extend their power over their victims. Moreover, Hamm's proposed refining of his intended torturous technique would achieve something for which Sade's libertines long: the creation of an unceasing negation that is perpetually valid and without conclusion.

Beckett's development of this theoretically unceasing negation in which Hamm and Clov are bound to one another eternally – a state in which they, arguably, already exist due to the implied cyclicity of *Endgame*'s beginning and ending tableaus (*Endgame*, 5-7, 47-49) – can be directly traced to his translating of Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade'. In Beckett's rendering of Blanchot's words, 'Man as conceived by Sade derives his existence from the death he inflicts and sometimes, desiring an eternity of life, dreams of a death within his power to inflict eternally, with the result that executioner and victim, set face to face eternally, find themselves invested with the same power, the same divine attribute of eternity' (Blanchot 2022, 46). Blanchot's clear delineation of how Sade's heroes 'dream[] of' being able to inflict a constant, interminable negation that is 'valid not merely for them, but for all others' (Blanchot 2022, 47) subtly acknowledges that, for the Sadean protagonist, this ur-negation is unattainable. Hamm's unwillingness to allow Clov the mercy of death, contrastingly, would enable him to fulfil the Sadean ideal of collapsing life and death into a

singular, horrifying point where torturer and victim become 'invested with the […] divine attribute of eternity'. Hence, whilst Hamm's 'cruel and diabolical' proposal may incidentally evoke Schopenhauer's assessment of the ethics involved in refusing to aid someone who is starving, Beckett's formulation of Hamm's proposed method of torture is likely devised from his early 1950s reading of Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' and Sade's *120 journées*. Furthermore, Hamm's formulation of this torture-technique serves to situate cruelty at the very centre of his psyche; violence for Hamm is a means of expressing his power over the without, and his theorisation of violence bespeaks the savagery of his logical Reasoning. Just as Sade's heroes contemplate appalling techniques of expressing their dominance of all around them, so too does Hamm calculate methods of inflicting the maximum of pain upon those whom he desires to control.

But, unlike the actions of Sade's libertines which realise the violence that they theorise, Hamm's formulation of this torture-method remains theoretical – it is never fulfilled within the text. This difference between Beckett's hypothesising of torture techniques in *Endgame* and Sade's actualisation of torture in *120 journées* represents one of Beckett's most significant re-conceptualisations of the ways in which violence functions and is expressed. By refusing to physicalise the violence of which Hamm speaks, Beckett affords his viewer no relief from the perpetual threat of violence. Subsequently, the notion of violence becomes both spectral and omnipresent within *Endgame* – the viewer is forced to contend with the deeply unsettling feeling of violence surrounding them, engulfing them even, yet not being easily definable. Similarly to how Simpson observes that (non-)expressions of pain within *Endgame* are characterised by the text adopting an 'anaesthetic approach' to suffering (Simpson 2022, 94), the overwhelmingly violent atmosphere of this play is generated by its refusal to grant its most horrifying formulations of violence concrete

manifestation. Consequently, Beckett innovates upon the Sadean formula of overexposing readers to a disturbing excess of realised violence by metamorphosing physicalised violence into a verbal violence engendering the omnipresence of the threat of violence.

Hamm's threatening to withhold Clov's food is not the only example of this figure using starvation as a tool through which he can enforce his will upon others. During the telling of his 'story' (*Endgame*, 30) – an episode which, as Van Hulle and Weller point out, is 'encircled and marked as the focal point of the entire play' (2018, 236) in Beckett's 16-part division of the play jotted in his director's notebook for the 1967 Schiller-Theater Werkstaat production (see Beckett 2019, 77; cf. McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 187) – Hamm recalls an encounter with a wretched man who begs him for some food with which he may feed himself and his son:

> The man came crawling towards me, on his belly. Pale, wonderfully pale and thin, he seemed on the point of – […] I calmly filled my pipe – the meerschaum, lit it with…let us say a vesta, drew a few puffs. Aah! [*Pause*.] Well, what is it *you* want? […] Well, what ill wind blows you my way? He raised his face to me, black with mingled dirt and tears. […] No, no, don't look at me, don't look at me. He dropped his eyes and mumbled something, apologies I presume. [*Pause*.] I'm a busy man, you know, the final touches, before the festivities, you know what it is. [*Pause. Forcibly.*] Come on now, what is the object of this invasion? […] Come on now, come on, present your petition and let me resume my labours. […] It was then he took the plunge. It's my little one, he said. Tsstss, a little one, that's bad. My little boy, he said, as if the sex mattered. Where did he come from? He named the hole. A good half-day, on horse. What are you insinuating? That the place is still inhabited? No no, not a soul, except himself and the child – assuming he existed. Good. I inquired about the situation at Kov, beyond the gulf. Not a sinner. Good. And you expect me to believe you have left your little one back there, all alone, and alive into the bargain? Come now! […] Come on, man, speak up, what is it you want from me, I have to put up my holly. [*Pause.*] Well to make it short it finally transpired that what he wanted from me was…bread for his brat. Bread? But I have no bread, it doesn't agree with me. Good. Then perhaps a little corn? […] Corn, yes, I have corn, it's true, in my granaries. But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound, a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him – if he's still alive – a nice pot of porridge [*NAGG reacts*], a nice pot and a half of porridge, full of nourishment. Good. The colour comes back into his little cheeks – perhaps. And then? [*Pause.*] I lost patience. [*Violently.*] Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that! […] [*Pause. Violently.*] But what in God's name do you imagine? That the earth will awake in spring? That the rivers and seas will run with fish again? That there's manna in heaven still for imbeciles like you? [*Pause.*] Gradually I cooled down, sufficiently at least to ask him how long he had taken on the way. Three whole days. Good. In what condition he had left the child. Deep in sleep. [*Forcibly.*] But deep in what sleep, deep in what sleep already? [*Pause.*] Well to make it short I finally offered to take him into my service. He had touched a chord. And then I imagined already that I wasn't much longer for this world. […] In the end he asked me would I consent to take in the child…[*Pause.*] I can see him still, down on his knees, his hands flat on the ground, glaring at me with his mad eyes, in defiance of my wishes (*Endgame*, 31-33)

It is through the combination of Hamm utilising starvation as a tool through which he can exert his power over this man, his incandescent rage at the man's mentioning of his son, and his joy at continually taunting his victim that the impacts of Beckett's reading concerning Sade is visible. Beginning with the last of these aspects of the text, as Simpson points out, Hamm's 'gloss[ing] [of] the man's physical state as "wonderfully" abject […] indicat[es] a perverse delight in the description of physical distress' (Simpson 2022, 94). This 'perverse delight' is further communicated to the viewer through Hamm's hassling of the man who approached him with his repeated coercive imperatives, 'Come on now' and 'Come on', as well as through his mentioning that he is a 'busy man'. By pointing out that there are tasks which he could be undertaking instead of listening to the wretched man, Hamm belittles this figure's importance, thereby revealing his complete lack of pity for this individual. This chilling lack of sympathy and empathy further establishes Hamm's predilection for sadism as an essential element of his being. To adapt Bataille's phraseology, sadism is, and always has been, an 'irreducible part' (Bataille 2022, 51) of Hamm.

The Sadean tinge of the above-quoted passage is then rendered more evident through Hamm's becoming enraged at the man's mentioning of his 'little one'. Upon learning that he has a child, Hamm remarks that having a 'little one' is 'bad' before questioning whether this beggar expects him to believe that he willingly left his child alone, without sustenance. Hamm's disdain for the beggar's progeny is reflective of a wider Beckettian aversion to the possibility of procreation which is undoubtedly shaped by the Sadean libertines' animus against families and their desire to negate all without them. Consequently, it is clear that both Hamm and Sade's characters share a desire to inflict devastation upon the young so as to ensure that 'humanity' cannot 'start […] again' (*Endgame*, 22).

Furthermore, Hamm only decides to offer this man a position in his service so as to tempt him to abandon his child. Hamm's contempt for this child is rendered palpable through his caustic dismissing of the boy as a 'brat' whose 'sex' is of no concern to him, and through the deliberately misleading syntactical semantics that Hamm employs whilst telling his story. After expressing his indifference as to whether the man's child is a boy or a girl, Hamm asks: 'Where did he come from?' before immediately recalling that the man 'named the hole'. Whilst the term 'hole' may colloquially refer to a socio-economically deprived area, it can also be read as a misogynistic reduction of this child's mother to nothing more than her sexual organs – an action reminiscent of A's (the proto-Hamm) diminishing of women to 'Deux mamelles et une vulve' [two breasts and a vulva] (*Fdp* FM2, 18r; *Fdp* FT3, 28r) – which chimes with Sade's widespread presentation of women as mere sex-objects upon which libertines may enact their cruel, carnal desires. Hamm's stating that the 'hole' which the beggar named was 'A good half-day, on horse' from where he and the beggar encountered one another gives priority to the former trace; however, Hamm's interest in how far the beggar travelled is still underlaid by his marked interest in the possibility of the beggar's child dying: 'you expect me to believe you have left your little one back there […]?'. Hamm's speech therefore combines Sade's misogynistic dismissal of women with his disdain at the possibility of the continuation of humanity in a chilling example of psychological torture.

The beggar's repeated requests for 'bread' or 'corn' for him and his child eventually cause Hamm to explode into a fit of despairing rage: 'Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that!' and 'what in God's name do you imagine? That earth will wake in spring? That the seas and rivers will run with fish again? That there's manna in heaven for imbeciles like you?'. These statements and questions unveil an

essential difference between Hamm's despair at the possibility of the continuation of humanity and Sade's libertines' desires to negate humanity in its entirety. Whereas Sade's characters are motivated to violence because of their unquenchable desires to assert themselves upon the without as an expression of their sovereign power and their perpetual chasing of *jouissance*, Hamm's wishes to prevent humanity from recurring originate from his 'systematically pessimistic' (Heine 2022b, 33) view of the world. In Hamm's understanding of the world, justice and pity are in short supply. Thus, why should he extend inter-personal pity to any who he encounters?

Another essential difference between Hamm's refusal to feed both the man and his child and Sade's libertines' employment of starvation in the fourth section of *120 journées* is that, once again, Beckett's text refuses to grant Hamm's described violence physical expression. The violence of Hamm's actions outlined in his 'story' are expressed through a strictly verbal medium. Moreover, the description of Hamm's utterance as a 'story' and a 'chronicle' (*Endgame*, 36) calls into question the authenticity of the tale which he has just told. As Simpson points out, it is impossible to discern whether Hamm is recalling a memory or telling a fiction (Simpson 2022, 94). Consequently, there is a further spectralisation of violence within *Endgame*. Hamm's 'story' and its positioning as the 'focal point of the entire play' emphasises how Beckett's text is primarily concerned with the *idea* of violence. Beckett therefore moves the savagery of Sade's texts from the physical, enacted realm into a lexical realm, imbuing language itself with inescapable violence.

Sade's animus against families can also be said to motivate Hamm's abusing of his father for bringing him into the world. From the very first time 'Pépé', the proto-Nagg, is introduced, he is called 'Sale progéniteur!' ['Dirty progenitor'] (*Fdp* FM2, 05r) and 'Maudit fornicateur' ['Accursed fornicator'] (*Fdp* FM2, 06v). Beckett later replaces the adjective

'Sale' with 'Maudit', 'creating an echo effect between "Maudit progéniteur!" and "Maudit fornicateur!"' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 213), before translating these phrases as 'Accursed progenitor' and 'Accursed fornicator' in *Endgame* (9, 10). As Van Hulle and Weller comment, Beckett's translating of the adjective 'Maudit' as 'Accursed' 'highlight[s] the latent allusion to Frankenstein's "monster or "creature", who damns his maker by shouting "Accursed creator!", following the example of John Milton's Adam, whose words serve as the epigraph to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818): "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/To mould me Man, did I solicit thee/From darkness to promote me?"' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 213). Sade's animus against families and the perpetuation of humanity – which is espoused through Hamm's cursing of his father for having brought him into the world and which culminates in his posing of the Miltonian question: 'Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?' (*Endgame*, 31) – is clearly overlaid with a Romantic and Gothic rallying against creators who have abandoned their creations to lives characterised by isolation, loneliness, and suffering.

Due to a lack of evidence, it is impossible to date precisely when Beckett read *Frankenstein*; however, I propose that Beckett's referencing of this work in *Endgame* may have been prompted by a combination of his early-1951 reading of 'Sade et le roman noir' and his November 1955 re-reading of *Paradise Lost* (*LSB II*, 565-66). Whilst *Frankenstein* is not mentioned in 'Sade et le roman noir', it is difficult to believe that Beckett would not have sought this text out due to its monumental status within the English and Gothic literary canons. Given how *Frankenstein*'s epigraph is taken from *Paradise Lost*, it seems likely that Beckett's 1955 reading of this epic poem may have awoken his memories of his earlier reading of Shelley's masterpiece. There is therefore a layering of allusion contained within Hamm's deriding of his father as an 'Accursed progenitor/fornicator'. Sade's desire to

desecrate the family is here refracted through the lenses of Beckett's knowledge of *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost*. This, in turn, demonstrates how Beckett's knowledge of Sade is defamiliarised in *Endgame* through its becoming entangled with his knowledge of other authors' works.

One of the most striking examples of Beckett's knowledge of Sadean conceptions of violence becoming intertwined with his reading of another author's works can be found at the close of *Endgame,* when Hamm compels Clov to speak to him one final time before departing:

> Hamm Before you go…[CLOV *halts near door*]…say something.
> [...]
> Hamm A few words…from your heart.
> [*Pause*.]
> Clov [*Fixed gaze, tonelessly, towards auditorium*.] They said to me, That's love, yes yes, not a doubt (*Endgame*, 47)

According to Weller, 'in Beckett's [reading of] Racine' – whose *Andromaque*, *Phèdre* (1677), and *Bérénice* (1670) he re-read whilst writing *Endgame* (Knowlson 1996, 377) – 'the passion of passions is love/hate, love as hate and hate as love' (Weller 2008, 206; cf. Weller 2009, 76). Clov's assertion, 'That's love, yes yes, not a doubt', voiced as he reflects upon the abuse to which Hamm has subjected him enacts precisely such a collapsing of love and hatred into the singular point of love/hate. When combined with Clov's remaining upon the stage at the end of the text despite his previously expressed desire to leave Hamm's service (*Endgame*, 46-50), it become apparent that *Endgame* is here utilising a Beckettian-Racinian comprehension of the indistinguishableness of love and hatred in combination with a visual demonstration of the bonds existing between torturer and victim – as theorised by Blanchot (2022, 45-46) – to create a lasting dramatic impression of the interminability of suffering. However, this reading is complicated by Clov's revealing that an incorporeal collection of

beings denoted by the indistinct third-person plural pronun, ‘they’, tried to ingrain this idea of love/hate in him. This results in Clov’s statement becoming infused with doubt and dissatisfaction – two nuances which are emphasised by Clov’s hollow tone and his ‘Fix[ing]’ the audience with a broken ‘gaze’. Thus, *Endgame* blends Blanchot’s commentary about the conjoining of torturers and victims through the act of violence with a Beckettian-Racinian collapsing of love and hate, only to then suffuse this very formulation of love/hate with intense instability. In so doing, the text implicitly asks: can love exist within such a brutal bond as that which exists between Hamm and Clov?

This posing of an essentially unanswerable question points towards another aspect of Beckett’s play shaped by his knowledge of Sade: the text’s sustained criticism of Enlightened Reason. In *Endgame* Beckett approaches this issue in three distinct, but interlinked, ways. Firstly, Beckett directly questions the validity of Reason’s ability, and ridicules its tendency, to discern meaning within all that it considers. After commanding Clov to look upon the without with a telescope, Hamm suddenly cries ‘Clov!’ in an ‘*Anguished*’ tone before then asking his servant: ‘We’re not beginning to…to…mean something?’ (*Endgame*, 22). To this fearful proposal Clov responds: ‘Mean something! You and I mean something! [*Brief laugh.*] Ah that’s a good one!’ (*Endgame*, 22). Hamm then immediately picks up Clov’s dismissive, comedic trace by launching into a parody of the rhetoric used by critics extrapolating ‘meaning’ from the play: ‘I wonder. [*Pause.*] Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn’t he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. [*Voice of rational being*.] Ah, good, now I see what they're at!’ (*Endgame*, 22). By parodying such discourse, Hamm pointedly reveals the ridiculousness, or misguidedness, of critical activity seeking to discover so-called ‘truths’ about the ‘human condition’. Through Hamm’s and Clov’s adversity to the application of reasoning seeking to

rationalise their situation by assuming that they must function upon a 'plane of transcendence' (Gontarski 2015, 133), the text underscores its active denigration of 'the pretentions' (Heine 2022a, 9), pomposity, and thinly veiled assumptions of dominating power intrinsic to the Enlightenment's unbridled celebration of Reason.

This denigration of Reason then becomes connected to violence when, immediately after the above, Clov begins '*scratching himself*' before '*Anguished*[ly]' informing Hamm that he 'ha[s] a flea' (*Endgame*, 22). Following this, Hamm asks 'Are there still fleas?' and, with a '*very perturbed tone*', cries: 'But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God! […] Let him have it!' (*Endgame*, 22). Hamm's adoption of a 'mock Darwinian, evolutionist position' (Worton 1994, 83) enables *Endgame* to expose how Reason may be used to justify acts of violence, whilst simultaneously hinting at the centrality of violence to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. As Van Hulle and Nixon note, Beckett's personal copy of Darwin's *On the Origin of* Species (1859) has 'remarkably large dog-ears' throughout the third chapter (Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 203). In this chapter Darwin elucidates how the 'Struggle for Existence' is defined by 'severe competition' (Darwin 1902, 58) and extreme violence both between and within species. Consequently, Hamm's cry that 'humanity might start […] all over again' if the flea accosting Clov is allowed to live combines a warped Darwinian reasoning with a modified Sadean desire – Hamm's cry is inspired by fear rather than a desire to dominate the without – for negation. In so doing, *Endgame* exposes how violence is central not only to the Enlightenment's conception of Reason, but also to both the sustaining and extinguishing of life.

Moreover, Hamm also challenges the dominance of Reason by juxtaposing it with the apocalyptic artistic vision of a supposed 'madman' whom he used to visit in 'the asylum':

> I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter – and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! [*Pause.*] He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes. [*Pause*.] He alone had been spared. [*Pause*.] Forgotten. [*Pause*.] It appears the case is…was not so…so unusual. (*Endgame*, 28)

The allusion to Blake's *Book of Job* (1823-26) within this passage (see McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988m, 222n; cf. Gontarski 2015, 133) is, as Beckett himself stated, 'unintended' (qtd in Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 288n251). Rather, this passage's 'roots [lie] in Beckett's notes on Albrecht Dürer and his Nürnberg contemporaries (UoR MS 5001), for which Beckett consulted *The life of Albrecht Dürer of Nürnberg* […] by Mary Margaret Keymer Heaton' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 233). In this book, Heaton described the German artist, Veit Stoss, as 'a painter, and an engraver' (Heaton, qtd in Van Hulle and Weller 2018, 234) – phraseology which Beckett directly echoes in stating that the 'madman' about whom he is talking 'was a painter – and engraver'. However, there is still a curiosity to be resolved here: Veit Stoss was never condemned to an asylum during his life. Consequently, there is appears to be another, veiled allusion waiting to be excavated within this passage.

I propose that Beckett's 1951 translation of Heine's 'Avant-propos au *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*' and re-reading of Apollinaire's *L'Œuvre de Sade*, provides us with the final piece of this puzzle. At the beginning of this formerly mentioned text, Heine quotes La Lande's politically charged assertion of the Sade's intelligence and ability to reason, before commenting:

> Perhaps this worthy man [La Lande] was anxious not to give umbrage to his colleagues at the National Institute, to that Buonaparte whom Sylvain Maréchal had rashly named, five years earlier, in his *Dictionnaire des athées anciens et modernes*, and who had since become the anointed of the Lord. However this may be, Napoleon was on the throne and the Marquis de Sade at Charenton: there was therefore no want of courage in thus crediting the prisoner with that reason…which the *raison d'état* denied him. (Heine 2022a, 6-7)

Additionally, in the introductory essay to *L'Œuvre de Sade*, Apollinaire quotes Charles Nodier, who recalls how Sade was condemned to languish in Charenton until his death by 'le Conseil d'État' [the Council of State]:

> Sade est le prototype des victimes *extra*-judiciaires de la haute justice du Consulat et de l'Empire. On ne sut comment soumettre aux tribunaux, à leurs formes publiques et à leurs débats spectaculeux un délit qui offensait tellement la pudeur morale de la société tout entière qu'on pouvait à peine le caractériser sans danger, et il est vrai de dire que les matériaux de cette hideuse procédure [les textes de Sade] étaient plus repoussants à explorer que le haillon sanglant et le lambeau de chair meurtrie qui décèlent un assassinat. Ce fut un corps non judicaire, le Conseil d'État, je crois, qui prononça contre l'accusé la détention perpétuelle […] sur ce *précédent* arbitraire… (Nodier qtd by Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 8)[45]

Later in this essay, Apollinaire quotes Baudot, who states that in Sade's works: 'Il y avait là des germes de dépravation, mais pas de folie' [There were germs of depravity, but not of madness there] (Sade 1909, 12). According to both Heine and Apollinaire, Sade was perfectly sane from the point of view of the Enlightenment's limited comprehension of the subtleties of mental illness. Consequently, it becomes apparent that Sade was sent to Charenton asylum not because of concerns for his mental health, but rather because of the 'absolute' (Heine 2022a, 10) character of his mind and the shocking force of his artistic vision. Similarly, the 'madman' painter-engraver about whom Hamm speaks in *Endgame* is not described as exhibiting obvious signs of disordered thinking or being 'unreasonable' according to the Enlightenment's understanding of this term. Rather, like Sade, the painter-engraver about whom Hamm speaks has been placed in an 'asylum' due to his inability to regard the world in a neurotypical manner; he is incapable of recognising the beauty of the world, instead seeing only a 'Desert' (*Endgame*, 17) of 'ashes'. The figure of the 'madman' can hence be said to be a creative amalgam of Heaton's image of Veit Stoss with Heine's and Apollinaire's depictions of Sade.

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[45] See p. 335 in the appendix for a translation.

The critique of the Enlightenment's conceptions of 'madness' and 'reason' as an oppositional dualism defined from the perspective of neurotypicality voiced through Hamm's anecdote about the 'madman' painter-engraver has, according to Gontarski, received insufficient critical attention when concerning the question: from 'what […] [has] the "madman" been spared' (Gontarski 2015, 133)? The revelation that the figure of the 'madman' is modelled upon a combination of Veit Stoss and Sade actually enables us to propose an answer to this all-important question. The 'madman' has not only been spared from 'preoccupation with the requirements of a transcendent world […] that will close and explain experience' as Gontarski says (2015, 133), but also from the Enlightenment's dictatorial emphasis upon the interconnectedness of Virtue, Truth, and Reason which, as Sade demonstrates and Adorno and Horkheimer explore, gives rise to a calculating rationality that 'treats emotions "ac si quaestio de lineis, planis aut de corporibus esset" ["as if the question were about lines, planes, or bodies"]' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 86; cf. Spinoza 2018, 94). The 'madman' has, essentially, been 'spared' from the 'madness' of Enlightened Reason; yet, as his being interned in an asylum implies, he, like Sade, is also a victim of this madness.

There remains but one final aspect of *Endgame* which may be said to be in conversation with Beckett's early 1950s reading of Blanchot's and Bataille's analysis of Sade: Beckett's conceiving of solitude as an expression of absolute powerlessness. The most moving instance of this formulation of solitude is found when Nagg first turns to Nell's bin and knocks upon its lid, causing his wife to arise from within her prison:

> [NAGG *knocks on the lid of the other bin. Pause. He knocks harder. The lid lifts and the hands of* NELL *appear, gripping the rim. Then her head emerges. Lace cap. Very white face.*]
>
> NELL: What is it my pet? [*Pause*.] Time for love?
> NAGG: Were you asleep?
> NELL: Oh no!
> NAGG: Kiss me.

NELL: We can't.
NAGG: Try.
[*Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.*]
NELL: Why this farce, day after day? (*Endgame*, 12)

Nell's love for Nagg is initially communicated to the viewer through her use of the affectionate term, 'pet', and by her asking if it is 'Time for love?'. This latter phrase is a revision of the original French, 'C'est pour la bagatelle?' (Beckett 1957, 29), which diminishes the sexual undertones elicited in *Fin de partie*, instead injecting the English text with a moment of tenderness which bespeaks the gentleness, compassion, and complexity of the 'love' that exists between Nagg and Nell. The caring nature of the love between these two figures is then further emphasised by Nagg's querying whether Nell was 'asleep' – a question which reveals Nagg's concern for his wife's comfort and well-being. Following these introductory glimpses into the loving nature of their relations, Nagg and Nell attempt to affirm their love through the act of a 'kiss'; however, due to their diminished physical states, these figures are unable to come together as one. Under Conor McPherson's direction in his 2000 production of *Endgame* for the *Beckett on Film* project, this inability of the two characters to affirm their love for one another through the medium of physical action is brought to the fore by the actors' groaning and grimacing as they strain their impaired bodies in a hopeless attempt to kiss (Beckett 2000, 15.21-15.28).

Contrastingly, in the *Berlin Diary* kept by Michael Haerdter during the rehearsals for the 1967 Schiller-Theatre Werkstatt production of *Endspiel*, Haerdter records that Beckett specified that Nagg and Nell's dialogue 'has to be spoken quickly and "without colour"' (Beckett qtd by Haerdter in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1998, 206), instructing Werner Stock, who played Nagg, and Gudrun Genest, who played Nell, to 'hold back completely' (Beckett qtd by Haerdter in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1998, 207) when delivering their lines. Beckett

even toyed with the idea of having Nagg and Nell remain completely immobile when speaking to one another (Gontarski and Knowlson in Beckett 2019, 53), bringing the tenderness of their lexis and desire to express their love for one another into stark juxtaposition with their unmoving nature and tonality. The dissonance between the aural, visual, and lexical dynamics generated at this point darkens the atmosphere of the text, bringing the desperation and hopelessness central to the play's conception of Nagg and Nell's relations into stark relief. Through this juxtaposition, the solitary, powerless, nature of these figures is rendered tangible. In an inversion of the paradigm identified by Blanchot and Bataille where the isolation of Sade's characters serves as a symbol, and is a result, of their absolute power (Blanchot 2022, 44-45; Bataille 2022, 54), Beckett affirms the powerlessness of Nagg and Nell by situating them within a position of enforced isolation from one another. This agonisingly enforced isolation represents Beckett's most emotionally powerful negativisation of a central aspect of Sade's literary *œuvre*.

The 1950s represent the pinnacle of Beckett's critical engagement with Sade. His reading and translating of Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade', Lely's introductory essay to *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…*, Heine's 'Avant-propos au *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*' and his 'Sade et le roman noir', Klossowski's *Sade mon prochain*, and Bataille's 'Préface à *Justine*' between December 1950 and July 1951 fashioned Beckett with new approaches to the issues of cognition, sovereignty, isolation, and the dominance of violence within the human psyche. However, as Beckett and Duthuit did not release the seventh issue of *Transition* centring around Sade for reasons currently unknown, Beckett's involvement in the 'Sade Boom' of this period was forced to take on a different form to that of de Beauvoir, Blanchot, and Bataille. Rather than making a direct critical contribution to this decentralised

movement, Beckett participates in the rehabilitation of Sade's image within the cultural consciousness of postwar Europe by integrating and modifying ideas which he gleans from his reading of the above-mentioned critical texts studying Sade, *Philosophie*, and from his re-reading of *120 journées* within his own creative works.

Throughout the *Texts for Nothing* Beckett repeatedly negativises the Blanchotian-Sadean conception of sovereignty, presenting readers with a series of unnerving textual portraits of non-sovereign individuals struggling to quell the unlocatable, de-physicalised source of their suffering: the detuned elements of their own cognition manifest as an unknowable other inhabiting the 'I' concomitantly with the speaker. This experience of non-sovereign existence is figured as an intrinsically painful one which often drives the speakers into a state of frenzy or madness because of the fact that they are continually abused by the unlocatable other 'I' within them. Furthermore, in a manner redolent of his early practice of 'notesnatching', in *Texts for Nothing* Beckett redeploys imagery encountered through his reading the Gothic works of literature mentioned in Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir', defamiliarising it by adapting it into his wider textual concern with his speaker's lack of sovereignty. Thus, like Bataille, Beckett exposes the centrality of violence to our cognitive processes.

In *Endgame* Beckett further demonstrates the essentialness of violence to humanity through the formulation of a brutal, Beckettian-Sadean portrayal of master-slave dialectics emblematised by Hamm's continual abusing of Clov. In so doing Beckett rewrites Sade's understanding of the absolute power and isolation of the master by dramatically illustrating how violence binds the torturer and the victim to one another. This is accompanied by a textual disempowering of physical violence to the status of a non-event recurring within a world punctuated by savage non-events. Complementing this, Beckett's modifying of

instances of realised violence encountered in Sade’s *120 journées* into a de-physicalised, verbal manifestation of violence enables the perpetual threat of violence to suffuse this text. Cruelty thus proliferates throughout the very fabric of the play as a spectrally present, yet seemingly indeterminate, reality. In addition to the emphasis placed upon the centrality of violence to interpersonal relations, this work also engages in a systematic critique of Reason, comparable to that seen within *Watt*, through its utilisation of ‘cruel logic’ and its exposing of the madness of Reason. Finally, Beckett reconceives the Sadean idea of isolation as the marker, and result, of the Unique one’s absolute power by presenting solitude as the final sign of his characters’ painful inability to find community with the other. Agonising solitude, the instability of the self, and the violence intrinsic to man’s desire to know themselves are the signifiers of Beckett’s textual engagement with Sade throughout this period of his literary career.

5. Humanity in Ruins: *How It Is*, the 'Closed Space' Texts (*Faux départs*, *All Strange Away*, *Imagination Dead Imagine*, *The Lost Ones*, *Ping*), the 'Torture Plays' (*Rough for Radio II*, *Catastrophe*, *What Where*), and the Minimalist Plays of Entrapment (*Breath*, *Not I*, *Quad*)

After Beckett's mentioning of his re-reading *120 journées* in a letter of 3 January 1952 to Duthuit (*LSB II*, 311), there are only five allusions to Sade within the Irish author's extant correspondence. The first of these references is located in a letter of 30 June 1964 to Barbara Bray, in which Beckett mentions: 'Pat[rick Magee] to play [the part of the] divine marquis in [Peter] Weiss['s *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (written 1963; henceforth *Marat/Sade*)]' (*LSB III*, 604). Shortly after, in a letter to Bray dated 10 July 1964, Beckett comments: 'Got books on Sade from Mary H. for Pat' (*LSB III*, 607). As Rabaté elucidates, Beckett is here 'alluding to the fact that he had borrowed three books from Mary Hutchinson' (Rabaté 2020, 9) about Sade which he intended to pass to Magee to aid with his preparation for playing the Divine Marquis in the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) October 1964 premiere of *Marat/Sade* at the Aldwych Theatre in London.

In the third volume of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (608n.5), Fehsenfeld et al. reveal that one of the books that Beckett borrowed from Mary Hutchinson was Geoffrey Gorer's *The Revolutionary Ideas of the Marquis de Sade* (1934) – a work which Rabaté argues played a major role in the development of Beckett's opinions about Sade (Rabaté 2020, 54-57) and which, he asserts, Beckett 'likely read […] soon after its publication'

(Rabaté 2020, 9).[46] Whilst Rabaté's analysis of Gorer's 'historical and political' critique of Sade, which emphasises the Divine Marquis' 'unleashing of revolutionary energy, and his critique of the rapacity of the powerful tyrants who oppress the people' (Rabaté 2020, 55), is highly informative, there is no evidence of Beckett having read Gorer's monograph in any of his extant manuscripts, typescripts, notebooks, or correspondence. It is, therefore, impossible to substantiate Rabaté's assertion that Beckett must have read Gorer's study. Given the fact that Beckett does not mention any of the titles of the books that he borrowed from Hutchinson for Magee, it seems highly likely that the Irish author simply asked Hutchinson to lend him any books on Sade in her possession in the hopes of aiding his close friend in his preparation for the upcoming role.

The next mention of Sade in Beckett's correspondence is in a letter of 24 January 1965 to Magee, where he passingly remarks: 'You must have your bellyful of Sade by now' (*LSB III,* 649). Here Beckett is casually noting that Magee must be drowning in Sade due to his having performed as the French author onstage since October 1964, with his preparation for the role obviously beginning at an even earlier date. *Marat/Sade* would continue to play at the Aldwych theatre until March 1965, before then transferring to the Martin Beck Theatre on Broadway on 27 December 1965. Magee reprised his role as Sade for the 145 performance-long run of the play in New York to wide-spread critical acclaim, and even won a Tony award for 'Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Play' in 1966. Despite the ostensible quality of Magee's performance, Beckett wrote to Bray on 21 February 1965, after watching the 1964-65 RSC production of *Marat/Sade* on 19 February 1965, that he felt

[46] The titles of the two other books Beckett borrowed are unknown.

'Rather disappointed' by the play, characterising it as 'very sloppy' with 'Excellent moments' marred by 'incomprehensible lapses' in quality (*LSB III*, 658).

Following this judgement, Beckett continues: 'Pat wrong I thought except in whipping scene' (*LSB III*, 658). As Rabaté notes, the scene to which Beckett alludes presents the audience with the spectacle of the Divine Marquis playing the role of a 'willing victim' – a role which he himself did actually assume within his personal life and which his characters readily assume at multiple points in *120 journées* (Sade 2016, 218-372; Sade 2011a, 219-361) – whilst espousing his horror and 'revulsion' when confronted by the actuality of mass, state-sanctioned slaughter as facilitated by the Revolutionary French government's use of the guillotine during the Terror (Rabaté 2020, 51):

> My imaginary giants committed/desecrations and tortures/I committed them myself/and like them allowed myself to be bound and beaten/And even now I should like to take/this beauty here/[*pointing to* CORDAY, *who is brought forward*]/[…]/and let her beat me/while I talk to you about the Revolution/[*The* SISTERS *place* CORDAY *in the arena.* SADE *hands her a many-stranded whip. He tears off his shirt and offers his back to* CORDAY. (…)]/At first I saw in the revolution a chance/for a tremendous outburst of revenge/an orgy greater than all my dreams/[CORDAY *slowly raises the whip and lashes him.* SADE *cowers.*]/But then I saw/when I sat in the courtroom myself/[*Whiplash.* SADE *gasps.*]/not as I had been before the accused/but as a judge/I couldn't bring myself/to deliver the prisoner to the hangman/[*Whiplash.*]/I did all I could to release him or let him escape/I saw I wasn't capable of murder/[*Whiplash.* SADE *groans asthmatically.*]/although murder/was the final proof of my existence/and now/[*Whiplash. He gasps and groans.*]/the very thought of it/horrifies me/[…]/as the tumbrels ran regularly to the scaffolds/and the blade dropped and was winched up and dropped again/[*Whiplash.*]/all the meaning drained out of this revenge/It had become mechanical/[*Another blow. He crumped.* CORDAY *stands very erect.*]/It was inhuman it was dull/and curiously technocratic/[*Whiplash*.]/And now Marat/[*Whiplash.* SADE *breathes heavily.*]/now I see where/this revolution is leading/[…]/To the withering of the individual man/and a slow merging into uniformity (Weiss 1982, 55-57)

It is within the later lines of Sade's above-quoted speech, where he explains that he is not fundamentally opposed to the visceral eroticism of violence, but rather to the

depersonalised character of murder as conceived and utilised under the 'technocratic', universalising impulses of the Revolution, that both the crux of Weiss' fictionalised portrayal of Sade and the source of Beckett's praise for this aspect of the play are to be found.

Beckett was keenly attentive to the nuances of Sade's opposition to the death penalty, even suggesting that if he and Duthuit wished to illumine this aspect of the Divine Marquis' complex personality within the cancelled seventh issue of *Transition*, they would have to consult *Philosophie* (letter of 8 January 1951 to Duthuit, *LSB II*, 222). In *L'Œuvre de Sade* Apollinaire excerpts the majority of 'Français! encore un effort, si vous voulez être Républicains' [Frenchman! One more effort, if you want to be Republicans] (Sade 1909, 197-252; cf. Sade 2000, 110-62; Sade 2006, 104-57) as an example of Sade's writing. In Apollinaire's excerpt, Dolomancé argues that state-sanctioned capital punishment must be abolished because 'la loi froide par elle-même ne saurait être accessible aux passions qui peuvent légitimer dans l'homme la cruelle action du meurtre' ['unfeeling in and of itself, the law cannot be accessible to the human passions that legitimise the cruel act of murder'] (Sade 1909, 214; cf. Sade 2000, 125; Sade 2006, 119). Thus, through Dolomancé, Sade argues that if passion and desire are removed from the act of murder, as is the case when it is demanded by the apparatus of the law, then violence is metamorphosed from a legitimate, sovereign drive into a gross injustice imposed upon man. It therefore becomes apparent that Beckett's understanding of Sade's opposition to the death penalty – and hence his reason for praising *Marat/Sade*'s presentation of Sade during the scene in question – stems primarily from *Philosophie*'s rendering of this opposition as being fundamentally grounded within the Divine Marquis' insistence that humanity must be at the centre of the act of violence in order to legitimise it, rather than from Gorer's 1934 monograph.

The final mention of Sade within Beckett's correspondence does not occur until a letter of 29 August 1972 to Reavey, where he writes: 'I think I know the Apollinaire Sade you mention, in a series entitled "Les Maîtres de l'amour" (Bibliothèque des Curieux). I once had it and find I still have, in the same collection, his Divine Aretino in 2 vols. He must have been the initiator of the Sade boom' (*LSB IV*, 306). This seven year-long gap between mentions of the Divine Marquis within Beckett's correspondence, as well as the elapsing of eight years since the Irish author met with Edward Albee, Harold Pinter, and Magee 'in the pub enthusiastically discussing the Marquis de Sade' (Knowlson 1996, 452), is seemingly indicative of Beckett's declining interest in Sade at this point in his career. However, as *How It Is*, the 'Closed Space' texts, his 'Torture Plays', and his minimalist plays of entrapment reveal, Beckett's direct, and indirect, engagement with the works and thought of the Divine Marquis had a lasting, significant impact upon his later fictional concerns and aesthetics.[47]

5.1. *How It Is*

In *Beckett and Sade*, Rabaté asserts that *How It Is* 'permits us to […] glimpse […] Beckett's Sadean fantasy', arguing that this challenging work actively 'grappl[es] with Sade's texts' without reducing them to mere 'pathology or literature' (Rabaté 2020, 41). Indeed, parallels between the violence enacted by the narrator of *How It Is* and that exacted by Sade's libertines in *120 journées* are plain to see, with Beckett's narrator clearly taking a sadistic

[47] Despite *As the Story Was Told* (1973) recapitulating elements from 'On le tortura bien' (see Cohn 2005, 325) and its narrator speaking about a 'poor man' (*ATSWT*, 160) who, like Fox in *Rough for Radio II*, is tortured throughout his life in 'harrowing' 'sessions' (*ATSWT*, 159) intended to force him to say an unknown phrase which would result in his being pardoned (*ASTWT*, 160), Sade does not appear to play a significant role in Beckett's writing of this text. Rather, this work appears almost Kafkaesque in its inflections, with the violence central to this work is only entering into the text in a shadowy fashion. For more on *As the Story Was Told* and Kafka – especially *In the Penal Colony* (1919) – see Fraser 2009, 77n3; and, Baroghel DPhil thesis, 275-76. For more on Beckett and Kafka, see Adelman 2003, 77-103; and, Van Hulle and Nixon 2013, 101.

pleasure in torturing Pim. The narrator openly states that the second part of his 'life', when he was with Pim, was a 'happy time' (*HII*, 43) during which he could freely 'drink the screams' (*HII*, 45) of a victim completely incapable of 'repel[ling] [him]' (*HII*, 47). The phrase 'drink the screams' communicates both a carnal 'need' to hear, and a disturbing sense of luxuriation in, the physical manifestations of Pim's agony forced from his body by the narrator's cutting and stabbing him with his nails and the tin-opener contained in his sack (*HII*, 52-85). Hence, the narrator of *How It Is* is ostensibly fashioned as a sadist par excellence whose existence is validated by the suffering of his victim. These implications are then furthered by the narrator's stating that Pim 'can't repel [him]', with this phrase establishing an unequal torturer-victim relationship that accords perfectly with Blanchot's metatextual analysis of the Sadean master-slave dynamic (Blanchot 2022, 45-46).

This reading of the narrator of *How It Is* as a sadist is augmented by the superficially sexualised targets upon which he exacts his violence and by his commentary upon potentially sexualised aspects of Pim's body. In the first part of the text the narrator remarks: 'Pim's [butt-cheeks were] undersized […] he could have done with a third I fleshed them indistinctly' (*HII*, 30). By limiting his attention to the dimensions of Pim's backside here the narrator fragments his victim's body, drawing the reader's attention to a singular corporeal element of this faceless being in a manner redolent of Sade's libertines' fixation with specific body parts during their tormenting of their victims. For example, in the 36th passion described during the second part of *120 journées* an unnamed libertine arranges 24 women 'in such a way that they show only their arses; the rest of the body is entirely hidden' (Sade 2016, 321; Sade 2011a, 314) and, in the fourth section of this novel, Zelmire is punished by the libertines for being unable to defecate upon demand by having her 'arse pricked with a gold needle until the skin is completely drenched in blood' (Sade 2016, 369;

Sade 2011a, 354). Zelmire's aforementioned punishment is proleptic of the narrator of *How It Is*' specific manner of torturing Pim; both Sade's libertines and the narrator exhibit an obsession with piercing the skin of their victim's rear, with the violent aorist 'fleshed' employed in Beckett's text indicating that the narrator viciously tears the skin on Pim's backside during his so-called training of him. The difference between Sade's libertines use of a golden needle to torture Zelmire, and the narrator of *How It Is*' favouring of his nails and can opener during his so-called training of Pim is that the latter's weapons are considerably cruder than the libertines', and are devoid of any aesthetic beauty. Thus, in *How It Is* there is a Beckettian 'worsening' and decaying of the 'beauty of violence' signified in the libertines of *120 journees*' decorating of their torture-implements. In the mud-world of *How It Is* beauty is but a fleeting dream. Only the savagery of the narrator's violence remains.

Even the narrator's pondering where to store the can-opener with which he carves Pim's skin when it is not in use is seemingly indicative of a fetishisation of both certain aspects of Pim's body and the narrator's weapon:

> this opener where put it when not needed put it back in the sack with the tins certainly not hold it in the hand in the mouth certainly not the muscles relax the mud engulfs where then
>
> between the cheeks of his arse not very elastic but still sufficiently there it's in safety […]
>
> no not there lower down between the thighs it's preferable the point downward and only the little bulb protruding of the piriform handle there it's out of danger (*HII*, 57-58)

By shifting through multiple potential 'locations' – 'the sack', the narrator's 'hand' and 'mouth', and Pim's 'arse' – before finally deciding to nestle the tin-opener between Pim's 'thighs', the narrator once again actively fragments the body in a manner mimetic of the 'pornographic imagination's' sectioning of the body into a series of repeated sites of erotic possibility (Fraser 1995 515-16 and 521; cf. Kuhn 1985, 36-37). Moreover, the care with which the narrator considers these potential locations functions in conjunction with the

final resting place in which he eventually situates it to accentuate the importance of this weapon within the text, thereby revealing the value which he places upon it. By nestling the can-opener between his victim's thighs, the narrator reduces Pim to the status of a mere object whilst simultaneously enshrining his weapon in a position of potential sexual reverence. Additionally, the situating of this weapon between Pim's thighs also elevates the sadistic connotations of the narrator's actions by 'making explicit the link between the [potential] castrating tool and the inner thigh' (Rabaté 2020, 45). Ergo, upon an initial reading it is easy to understand why one may feel that the narrator enjoys partaking in 'sadism pure and simple' (*HII*, 54), torturing his victim in order to affect a conjoining of the sexual and the violent. However, closer analysis of Beckett's text reveals that this classification of the narrator as a sadist obsessed with inflicting pain upon Pim so as to satisfy his own 'lubricious ferocity' (*HII*, 58) is, in fact, a misreading.[48] The very possibility of the narrator's violence being inspired by 'lubricious ferocity' is dismissed by the narrator himself who, when imagining Pim's internal monologue, muses: 'what is the meaning of this new torment//[…] lubricious ferocity no we have seen it is not that' (*HII*, 58). If the narrator's violent actions committed against Pim are not simply manifestations of the former's sexual desire to inflict violence upon an other, then what is their purpose? – what motivates his torturing of Pim, and to what end is he harming him?

The answers to these questions are complex and multifaceted, as the violence with which the narrator acts morphs through numerous different forms during his encounter

[48] Baroghel comments: 'In the *120 journées*, Sade systematically uses a phrase combining the adjective "lubricious" ("lubrique") and a noun denoting anger or cruelty, […] to designate the apex of sexual excitation, […]. Beckett revives this typically Sadean combination, which becomes "lubricious ferocity" ([*HII*], 58) and functions as a metonymical equivalent of the term "sadism" employed previously [*HII*, 51], thus dispelling any ambiguity as to where the mention of sadism really stems from' (Baroghel 2022, 85).

with Pim. The narrator's first physical interaction with Pim is key to revealing the initial function of his violence within the text:

> Pim's right buttock then first contact he must have heard them [the narrator's unusually sharp nails which he uses to inflict pain] grate […] I could have dug them in if I had wished I longed claw dig deep furrows drink the screams […]
>
> the cries tell me which end the head but I may be mistaken with the result all hangs together that the hand slides right and there to be sure there's the fork it's as I thought then back left just the same just to clinch it and there to be sure there's the arse again then oh without tarrying down in a hollow then guided by stump of thumb on spine on up to the floating ribs that clinches it the anatomy I had no point in insisting further his cries continue that clinches it (*HII*, 45-46)

Despite the narrator's revelling in Pim's cries implying sadistic glee, this is not the primary motivation underlying his initial digging of his nails into the 'furrows' of Pim's skin. Rather, the narrator's earliest utilisation of scarification within this text is designed to allow him to gain knowledge of precisely 'what' he has encountered within the mud through which he crawls – he pierces Pim's skin with his nails so as to begin to 'know' an absolutely unknown other and to ascertain whether this thing which he has stumbled upon in the mud is an object, like the sack that he carries, or a 'fellow-creature' (*HII*, 46). After establishing that Pim is a 'fellow-creature' by listening to his screams, the narrator doubts his conclusions and, in an attempt to confirm his initial theory, continues to scar Pim's body by running his nails along his victim's back before then driving his thumb into Pim's back and dragging it across to his victim's ribs.

Whilst there is no doubt that the narrator enjoys the cacophony of screams which these actions elicit from his victim, he is once again not torturing him to solely fulfil his own sadistic desires or out of boredom. Instead, the narrator is here conducting a series of twisted 'scientific' (Heine 2022b, 23) experiments designed to test the aforementioned hypothesis that Pim is a living being. The narrator then shows a sense of 'self-discipline' reminiscent of that exerted by the libertines in the earliest parts of Sade's *120 journées* as,

after having definitively affirmed his hypothesis, he ceases to scar Pim's body, stating that there is 'no point insisting further'. It is this willingness to cease his torturing of his victim after having gained the knowledge which he seeks which differentiates the narrator from a mere sadist – rather than seeking to create a continual crescendo of suffering which eventually results in a climax of 'lubricious fury' as the 'untrained' or 'un-practiced' sadist may, the narrator of *How It Is* utilises violence during his opening encounter with Pim in a manner which enables him to fulfil his objective of learning about his victim without succumbing to his baser desires. His 'scientific' deployment of violence at this point in the text is not only coloured by a warped deployment of Reason which considers the other's suffering from a detached, 'anethical' perspective (Weller 2008, 213-16), but also reveals the ways in which Beckett pastiches and modifies the 'lubricious fury' of Sade's libertines. Unlike Sade's libertines who seek carnal pleasure and to impose themselves upon the without through violence, the narrator of *How It Is* initially seeks to gain knowledge of the other through the application of torture.

Following this 'scientific' use of violence, the narrator of *How It Is* modifies the ways in which he deploys violence so as to enable him to both exert power over his victim and to communicate with him through a painful, even cruel, systematised 'training' regime (*HII*, 52) – which he continually reviews and refines – intended to forcibly endow Pim with language. Interestingly, the first instance of the narrator driving Pim towards language through the application of brutal violence is not presented in a notably Sadean manner, but is instead fashioned as an 'egregious gap': 'training early days or heroic prior to the script the refinements difficult to describe just the broad lines on stop that family beyond my strength' (*HII*, 52). By presenting the initial training stages in this manner Beckett disrupts the overarchingly Beckettian-Sadean portrayal of violence within the work, temporarily

supplanting it with a treatment of violence akin to that found in his earlier so-called trilogy, and especially similar to the lapse in memory experienced by Moran when he commits murder (*Molloy,* 157-58; cf. pp. 121-24 of this thesis). This Gidean-Dostoevskian treatment of violence is blended with an allusion to the ideas of Giambattista Vico through the use of the term 'heroic'. As Graham Fraser notes, in *La Scienza Nuova* (1725) – a book that Beckett read whilst working on his 1929 essay, 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce', critiquing Joyce's *Work in Progress*/*Finnegans Wake* – Vico argues that 'history falls into three [cyclical] parts: the theocratic, the heroic, and the human age […], corresponding to hieroglyphic, poetic, and discursive language' (Fraser 2009, 61; cf. Vico 1999, 50-687) respectively. By invoking a Vichian conception of history alongside the Gidean-Dostoevskian (non-)portrayal of the violence associated with the earliest stages of the narrator's 'training' of Pim, *How It Is*' narrator suggests a cyclicity and eternality to his tormenting of Pim. Unlike in Sade's *120 journées* where the victims of the libertines are eventually afforded the mercy of death, *How It Is* here suggests that Pim will never be released from his suffering.

This Gidean-Dostoevskian conceptualisation of violence does, nevertheless, rapidly give way to a more Sadean figuring of violence as the narrator moves to describe the 'first' and 'second lesson[s]' (*HII*, 54-55) that he inflicts upon Pim:

> first lesson theme song I dig my nails into his armpit right hand right pit he cries I withdraw them thump with fist on skull his face sinks in the mud his cries cease end of first lesson
>
> second lesson same theme nails in armpit cries thump on skull silence end of second lesson
>
> but this man is no fool he must say to himself I would if I were he what does he require of me or better still what is required of me that I am tormented thus and the answer sparsim little by little vast tracts of time
>
> not that I should cry that is evident since when I do I am punished instanter
>
> sadism pure and simple no since I may not cry
>
> something perhaps beyond my powers assuredly not this creature is no fool one senses that

> what is not beyond my powers known not to be beyond them song it is required therefore that I sing (*HII*, 54)

The 'physical brutality of this training is emphasised from the start' (Fraser 2009, 61), with Pim letting forth 'cries' of pain similar to those he produced as the narrator explored his body through the process of scarification during their initial meeting. Rather than being content to 'drink' these screams as he was previously, the narrator withdraws his nails from Pim's armpit upon hearing an undesired response and immediately 'thump[s]' Pim upon his head, driving his face into the mud in order to silence him. Following this, the narrator deploys the same initial, didactic physical stimulus, piercing Pim's skin to such an extent and with such ferocity that he eventually causes an 'open sore' to develop at the injury site (*HII*, 54), before immediately striking Pim upon the skull once again in order to silence him. Unlike in the first lesson, the narrator does not remove his nails from Pim's armpit whilst hitting him upon the head in the second lesson, signalling to Pim that he has had an erroneous response to the physical stimulus. Consequently, the reader, like Pim, becomes increasingly aware of the narrator's violent acts as being systematised according to an obscure code. Such a systematisation of violence is, of course, comparable to that seen throughout *120 journées*, in which Sade's libertine protagonists develop a methodical approach to violence whereby the passions that they indulge in become increasingly bellicose so as to facilitate the creation of a perpetual crescendo of desire and *jouissance*; but, in *How It Is* this systematisation of violence has a markedly different purpose to that witnessed in Sade's novel. Rather than seeking *jouissance*, the narrator is trying to bring his 'mute' (*HII*, 18) victim to song – towards comprehensible language. This inverts the Blanchotian-Sadean conception of the torturer's isolation from his victim (Blanchot 2022, 44-47) by making communication with the victim the goal of the torturous act, whilst also

aligning the narrator's pedagogical use of brutal violence at this point of the text with that witnessed throughout Dolomancé and Madame de Saint-Ange's instruction of Eugénie in *Philosophie* (Sade 2006,12-173; Sade 2000, 14-178).

Furthermore, like Sade's libertines, the narrator of *How It Is* begins to '"reason" upon [his] gesture[s]' (Rabaté 2020, 25) after having stabbed Pim in the armpit with his nails and struck him upon his head; yet, upon closer inspection, one realises that the narrator's 'reasoning' represents a modification of Sade's libertines' practice of reflecting upon the torments they inflict. Whereas Sade's libertines 'reason' about how to 'improve' their tortures in order to maximise the pain they exact, the narrator of *How It Is* ruminates upon his victim's potential thoughts. This action, however, should not be read as a genuine attempt at empathetic engagement with his victim's agony because the narrator does not have access to Pim's thoughts. He has no way of knowing if Pim is attempting to make sense of his pain through the application of Reason. Subsequently, the narrator's voicing of Pim's apparent thoughts is representative of his desire to exert his power over Pim, to dominate every aspect of his being – a desire that is emblematised in the narrator's naming of his victim: 'he had no name […] so I gave him one the name Pim for more commodity more convenience […] when this has sunk in I let him know that I too Pim my name Pim' (*HII*, 51). Hence, it becomes clear that whilst Beckett is here deploying a Sadean framework, he adapts this framework by subtly highlighting how his narrator's desire for communication with the unknowable unknown of the 'mute' other is underpinned by a disturbing need to dominate the without through self-projection. Beckett therefore disrupts the Sadean idea of the torturer as a sovereign individual isolated from others by re-envisaging the processes of self-actualisation as potentially achievable via the horrifying technique of torture as externalised introspection.

Additionally, when Pim 'completes' this 'second lesson' by realising that he is meant to sing when the narrator stabs his finger-nails into his armpit, the narrator rejoices before then reflecting upon the specific mechanics of how the thump on the head silences Pim:

> the day then when clawed in the armpit instead of crying he sings his song the song ascends in the present it's off again in the present
>
> I withdraw my nails he continues the same air it seems to me I am rather musical this time […] cheers […] what a blessing
>
> that's not all he stops nails in armpit he resumes cheers done it armpit song and this music as sure as if I pressed a button I can indulge in it any time henceforward
>
> that's not all he continues thump on skull he stops and stop it likewise the thump on skull signifying stop at all times and that come to think of it almost mechanically […]
>
> why mechanically why simply because it has the effect the thump on skull we're talking of the thump on skull the effect of plunging the face in the mud the mouth the nose and even the eyes and what but words could be involved in the case of Pim a few words what he can now and then I am not a monster (*HII*, 54-55)

Whilst the narrator's statement that he may 'indulge' in Pim's song through the application of the painful stimulus which he has developed 'at any time henceforward' serves to further reveal his sadistic joy inspired by his applying pain to Pim's body and listening to the effects which his systematised violence produces, and the narrator's rumination upon how his chosen technique of silencing Pim is 'mechanical' once again calls to mind Sade's libertines' reflections upon the ways in which the particular methods of torture which they utilise in their pursual of *jouissance* function and may be improved, it is the closing phrase of the final above-quoted verset which is the most striking aspect of the narrator's reflections. The narrator's assertion that he 'is not a monster' may, at first glance, shock readers given the extremity of the repeated violence which he enacts upon Pim's body. But, when considered in conjunction with Beckett's early-1950s reading of Bataille's 'Préface to *Justine*', the true significance of this phrase is revealed. As Beckett illustrates in 'Vice is Perhaps the Heart of Man', Bataille argues that the power of Sade's literary utterances originates from how he

treats sadism as a 'sovereign and irreducible part of man' which 'strike[s] to the most vital centre of human existence' (Bataille 2022, 51). In light of these comments, the narrator of *How It Is*' assertion of his 'not [being] a monster' must be read as a primally disturbing admission of his own humanity; the narrator is here subverting the expected resonances of the phrase in question by reminding the reader that he is human because he is capable of exerting horrifyingly systematised violence. In *How It Is*, Beckett therefore uses his knowledge of Bataille's metatextual writing about Sade to negativise the traditional humanistic comprehension of the links between suffering and being, instead producing a fundamentally distressing representation of the depths of humanity's potentiality for destruction.

Shortly after the above, the narrator begins administering the 'second series' of 'lessons' to Pim, which he summarises in a 'table of basic stimuli':

> table of basic stimuli one sing nails in armpit two speak blade in arse three stop thump on skull four louder pestle on kidney
>
> five softer index in anus six bravo clap athwart arse seven lousy same as three eight encore same as one or two as may be
>
> all with right hand […] and the left all this time vast stretch of time it holds the sack (*HII*, 59-60)

Baroghel describes this 'table' as 'the most obvious allusion to Sade's classifications of the passions' (Baroghel 2022, 83), remarking: 'This systematic classification of violent actions is unmistakably Sadean: the numbered "stimuli" follow a strict order' (Baroghel 2022, 83). Complementing Baroghel's analysis, it is worth pointing out that throughout *120 journées* Sade regularly includes summary tables to survey the progress of the passions described to, and enacted by, the libertines. The most arresting of these tables are situated at the close of the fourth part of the novel. In three separate tables, Sade reviews who, and how many people, the libertines have slaughtered during their stay at Castle Silling, before noting that

the libertines go on to kill an additional 20 people before returning to Paris (Sade 2016, 394-96; Sade 2011a, 380-82). In Sade's text the detached, mathematical nature of these tables supplements the ataraxic nature of the novel's narration to produce an unnerving, 'anethical' consideration of the event of violence.

Contrastingly, in *How It Is* the narrator's outlining of his 'table of basic stimuli' masks his emotional turmoil. Notably, when the narrator is describing the troubles which he experiences whilst attempting to force Pim to internalise the 'second lesson' of the 'second series' (*HII*, 58-59), he rages: 'what a cunt this Pim damn it all' (*HII*, 58) before later despairingly lamenting: 'this is killing me I'm about to give up' (*HII*, 59). The narrator's first bout of outrage punctuated by the expletive, 'cunt', bespeaks his growing anger and frustration with how 'slow' Pim is to discern the veiled intentions behind his violence. This implies that the narrator is not immune to Pim's failures, creating an emotional connection between torturer and victim which violates the Blanchotian-Sadean concept of the torturer's isolation from the one whom he tortures. This idea of reciprocal, if imbalanced, suffering is supplemented by the narrator's statement, 'this is killing me', and his admission that he is 'about to give up', which indicate that he is susceptible to both lapses in his will and exhaustion. This, in turn, enhances the distance between Beckett's narrator and Sade's libertine-torturers. As Blanchot points out, in Sade's worlds

> One scene of ferocity follows hard on another. The repetitions are endless, fabulous. I[t] often happens that each libertine sacrifices four or five hundred victims at a single session; the next day he begins again; the same evening, a new ceremony; the dispositions are slightly varied, there is a new access of ardour and hecatomb is heaped on hecatomb (Blanchot 2022, 47)

Sade's libertines are 'inexhaustible' (Blanchot 2022, 46) – they are endowed with a superhuman vigour that enables them to enact their darkest desires with an efficacy outstripped only by the very real horrors of technologically facilitated modern genocides

such as the Holocaust. Beckett's narrator, on the other hand, tires whilst administering his tortures. He is fallible in his need to torture Pim when he fails to attain the results he wishes to achieve. Moreover, he is emotionally invested in the process of 'training' Pim and is hence unable to maintain an ataraxic exterior as Sade's libertines do. Additionally, as outlined above, the motivation underpinning the narrator's torturing of Pim is substantially different from that lying behind the actions of Sade's libertines. Hence, it becomes clear that Beckett is subverting the tropes of inexhaustibility and immunity central to Sade's portrayal of his libertines whilst simultaneously employing an ataraxic, Sadean form to summarise the violence enacted by the narrator during the 'second series' of 'lessons'. The resulting dissonance between these two aspects of Beckett's text amplifies the sheer brutality and horror of the violent torture to which Pim is forced to submit whilst concomitantly humanising the narrator, thereby forcing the reader to confront the troubling reality that only people are capable of inflicting systematised violence upon their 'fellow-creatures'. In *How It Is*, Beckett never allows the reader to forget that mankind's propensity to inflict harm in an organised fashion is, as Bataille says (2022, 51-52), one of the essential measures of their humanity.

Following an undefined 'vast stretch of time' (*HII*, 60) after the 'second series' of 'lessons', the narrator eventually decides that it is time for the next stage of Pim's cruel apprenticeship:

> with the nail then of the right index I carve when it breaks or falls until it grows again with another on Pim's back intact at the outset from left to right and top to bottom as in our civilisation I carve my Roman capitals (*HII*, 60)

Again, whilst there is a precedent for the practices of scarification, bleeding, and inscription upon a victim's skin in *120 journées* – as in the 73rd passion described during the third section ('He traces numbers and letters with the tip of a needle on her breasts, but the

needle is poisoned, her bosom swells and she suffers a great deal' [Sade 2016, 346-47; Sade 2011a, 337]) or the 74th passion depicted in the final section ('The one who used to enjoy bleeding girls now drains half an ounce of blood each day until they die. This one is warmly applauded' [Sade 2016, 372; Sade 2011a, 360]) – Beckett innovates upon these practices by enabling the reader access to precisely what the narrator viciously carves into Pim's skin as well as the manner in which he carves his 'Roman capitals':

> with the nail then of the right index in great capitals two full lines the shorter the communication the greater the capitals one has only to know a little beforehand what one wants to say he feels the great ornate letter the snakes the imps God be praised it won't be long YOU PIM pause YOU PIM in the furrows (*HII*, 61)

This carving of Pim's skin represents 'the objectivation of a power relationship' (Baroghel 2022, 87). By inscribing 'YOU PIM' into his victim's back, the narrator is 'forcibly inculcating [Pim] with [an] imaginary identity' (Baroghel 2022, 87) which he has created and, hence, stripping Pim of his sovereignty. Furthermore, this exertion of the narrator's power over Pim is combined with a desire to maximise Pim's discomfort. As the narrator himself comments, not only is his script written in a savage, 'unbroken' fashion characterised by an absence of 'paragraphs', 'commas', and breaks (*HII*, 61) – meaning that the narrator is actively trying to cover as much of Pim's 'bleeding' back (*HII*, 61) with writing as possible – but it is also 'decorated' with 'imps', 'snakes' and 'ornate' lettering. The narrator's decision to unnecessarily embellish his writing with these symbols unveils his willingness to inflict unprecedented violence upon his victim and collapses the infernal world of Dante and the vicious world of Sade into one another; the inclusion of hellish symbolism within a brutally Sadean practice of scarification unites the Divine Marquis and the Supreme Poet through the conduit of violence. Ergo, in *How It Is* Beckett re-envisages the Sadean practice of scarification as a technique through which the torturer may forcibly strip their victim of

their own identity and replace it with an identity which they have created, whilst also using this torture technique as a nexus point through which the brutality of Sade's and Dante's literary worlds are joined.[49]

Another way in which Beckett develops Sade's use of scarification can be seen in the narrator's attempts to verify whether Pim understands the words carved into his body. Immediately following his inscribing of 'YOU PIM' into his victim's back, the narrator remarks: 'here a difficulty has he grasped no knowing' (*HII*, 61) before asserting: 'proof I need proof' (*HII*, 61). The narrator's 'solution' to resolve this difficulty is to 'stab [Pim] in a certain way signifying answer' (*HII*, 61):

> a special stroke indescribable a trick of the hand with the gratifying result one fine day vast stretch of time me Jim or Tim not Pim in any case not yet the back is not yet uniformly sensitive but it will be cheers none the less done it more or less rest
>
> simply try again not yet say die a good deep P and the apposite stab and inevitable one fine day should it mean his trying all the consonants in the Roman alphabet that he will answer in the end it's inevitable me Pim which he does in the end it was inevitable me Pim clap athwart the arse opener between the thighs round his poor shoulders done it rest (*HII*, 61)

The narrator's decision to 'stab' Pim in some 'indescribable' manner signalling that he should answer whether he understands the words being carved into him parodies Sade's libertines' practice of 'improving' their tortures so as to make them more effective. Unlike Sade's torturers, the narrator of *How It Is* is incapable of creating a refined system through which his demands can be immediately recognised and his wishes fulfilled; his 'improvements' to his system consist in simply repeating a previous action with the result that Pim is reduced to desperately cycling through every letter of the alphabet in an attempt to prevent further pain being inflicted upon his body. Thus, whilst the narrator's carving of Pim's skin reconfigures the victim's body as 'not [simply] a vehicle for the transmission of

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[49] For more on the confluence of Dante and Sade in *How It Is*, see Rabaté 2020, 47-50.

the word[, but] [r]ather [as] […] the space in which […] language is embodied and translated and produced' (Tubridy 2018, 113), the process through which this acquisition and embodiment of language is facilitated is marred by savage imperfection – Pim's chancing upon the correct response to the narrator's carving and 'stabbing' of his body is achieved through a mechanical process of elimination. As the narrator himself admits, unlike Sade's torturers he is a 'bad master' (*HII*, 62) whose 'improvements' do not necessarily ameliorate the efficacy of his teaching/torture techniques despite engendering a tangible increase in their brutality.

Indeed, this lack of noticeable improvement in the efficacy of the narrator's torture techniques becomes increasingly evident as the narrator continues to carve his 'Roman capitals' into his victim's back, with Pim eventually falling silent for such an extended period of time that the narrator begins to torment him in order to verify whether he is still alive: 'I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears of unbutcherable brother' (*HII*, 64). Whilst the narrator's admission that he 'pricked' Pim 'purely' out of 'curiosity' to check if he has perished bespeaks the failure of the system which he has developed to communicate with Pim, it is the final phrase of the priorly quoted verset that definitively reveals the impact of Beckett's early 1950s reading about Sade at this point in the text. The narrator's description of Pim as 'unbutcherable' again endows the narrator's torturing of his victim with a sense of eternality that is evocative of Blanchot's assertion:

> Man as conceived by Sade derives his existence from the death he inflicts and sometimes, desiring an eternity of life, dreams of a death within his power to inflict eternally, with the result that executioner and victim, set face to face eternally, find themselves invested with the same power, the same divine attribute of eternity. (Blanchot 2022, 46)

Contrastingly to Sade's libertines, the narrator of *How It Is* finds no pleasure in this being held eternally 'face to face' with his victim. The adjective 'vile' implies that the narrator has come to disdain his 'unbutcherable brother' due to the fact that Pim's speech causes him intense discomfort: 'I set him off stop him short thump thump can't take any more' (*HII*, 73). Subsequently, in *How It Is*' portrayal of the narrator and Pim's final moments together, Beckett actively draws upon Blanchot's reading of violence within Sade's works as creating a bond of eternal torment between victim and torturer whilst simultaneously defamiliarising Sade's comprehension of eternal violence by exposing how, in the Irish author's configuring of the torturer-victim relationship, the torturer themself is also in agony. The Beckettian master-slave dynamic explored in *How It Is* is therefore coloured by a reciprocity of suffering.

This reciprocity of suffering is displayed in a deeply visceral manner immediately prior to the narrator's being abandoned by Pim – an action which itself subverts the Sadean conception of the absolute power of the torturer by forcibly destroying the master-slave dynamic that has, to this point, dominated the text without re-envisaging it in a Hegelian manner by resituating the victim as the new master. Just before being abandoned, the narrator flies into a frenzy, repeatedly carving 'DO YOU LOVE ME' (*HII*, 65) and 'DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT' (*HII*, 78, 83) into Pim's skin. This violent question illuminates the narrator's intense desire for connection, and its repetition, in spite of its being met with the single-word answer, 'no', when asked (*HII*, 65, 78), inflects the narrator's willingness to continually commit violence with an undeniable sense of desperation. Consequently, the text figures the narrator as a victim of isolation, thereby inverting the Blanchotian-Sadean conception of the torturer's supremacy and invulnerability being affirmed by his being set upon a 'plane where he has no longer any common measure with [his victims]' (Blanchot 2022, 48).

Subsequently, the narrator's violent actions are injected with overwhelming pathos; his torturing of his victim is emptied of its sadistic joy and is, instead, suffused with agony at his having failed to attain community with Pim. Therefore, at the moment of the abandon Beckett's text radically rewrites the Blanchotian-Sadean conceptualisation of solitude as a manifestation of power by envisaging isolation as an affirmation of desolation.

In the final section of this novel, the narrator attempts to rationalise the agony of the abandon through the application of a form of Reason shaped by his sadistic comprehension of the mud-world in which he now lingers alone. He does this by imagining himself, Pim, and the unencountered, theoretical third figure of Bom – whom he envisages as travelling towards him in order to submit him to a similar regime of torture as that to which he subjected Pim (*HII*, 52, 85) – as members of a 'procession' (*HII*, 107) in which no victim is ever without an assigned torturer and vice versa. When describing the complexities of this theorised procession, the narrator states:

> our course a closed curve and let us be numbered 1 to 1000000 then number 1000000 on leaving his tormentor number 999999 instead of launching forth into the wilderness towards an inexistent victim proceeds towards number 1
>
> and number 1 forsaken by his victim number 2 does not remain eternally bereft of tormentor since this latter as we have seen in the person of number 1000000 is approaching with all the speed he can muster right leg right arm push pull ten yards fifteen yards
>
> and three if only three of us and so numbered only 1 to 3 four rather it's preferable clearer picture if only four of us and so numbered only 1 to 4
>
> then two places only at the extremities of the greatest chord say A and B for the four couples the four abandoned
>
> two tracks only of a semi-orbit each say how shall we say AB and BA for the travellers
>
> let me for example be numbered 1 it's not asking a great deal and at a given moment find myself abandoned that is to say again abandoned at the extremity A of the great chord and assuming we turn deasil
>
> then before I can find myself again at the same point and in much the same state I shall have been successively
>
> victim of number 4 at A en route along AB tormentor of number 2 at B abandoned again but this time at B victim again of number 4 but this time at B en route again but this time along BA tormentor of

> number 2 again but this time at A and finally abandoned again at A and all set to begin again (*HII*, 102-03)

The narrator's de-individualisation of the beings within this theorised 'procession' to mere numbers through the application of 'anethical' reasoning functions in a manner perfectly analogous with Blanchot's assertion that the Sadean libertine 'does not regard hi[s] [victims] as existing on his own account, as having discrete being, but as a mere sign, indefinitely renewable, in an immense [sadistic] equation' (Blanchot 2022, 47).[50] Moreover, the narrator's changing of the number of potential victims and torturers highlights how, from his perspective, every 'creature' absorbed into his universalising system of administered violence is essentially identical and, hence, replaceable.

The difference between Sade's application of Reason to create brutally reductive sadistic systems and that seen in *How It Is* is contained in the fact that in Sade's works these systems are tangible and definitely defined, whereas in Beckett's text the narrator's system remains purely theoretical. Furthermore, the theoretical nature of the narrator's system in *How It Is* can never be surmounted by those said to be subjected to it, as the victims of this system are fated to only ever torture a single victim and to become the victim of a single torturer *ad infinitum*. They are therefore confined to an experientially limited perspective. Unless one is capable of accomplishing the impossible task of removing oneself from their position within the narrator's theorised system so as to become the ur-observer of the text's mud world and the 'justice' (*HII*, 97, 99, 108) – by which the narrator means the regulation of pain engendered in the belief that no victim is without a torturer and no torturer without a victim – proliferated within it, one cannot state with certainty if this

[50] Baroghel states that this numbering enables 'the long shadow of the Shoah [Holocaust]' to suffuse Beckett's text through its parallels with the Nazi's 'dehumanising practice of identifying prisoners by attributing a serial number to each individual – often tattooed directly on the skin' (Baroghel 2022, 89).

system actually exists. Consequently, unknowability and instability breathe throughout the entirety of the narrator of *How It Is*' reasoning: whilst his theories accord perfectly with Sadean principles, they remain unverifiable theories predicated upon his application of pure Reason to his situation.

Yet it is not this narrator's application of pure Reason to generate a series of sadistic equations where Beckett's most radical rewriting of Blanchot's interpretation of Sade's literary utterances is found. Towards the conclusion of *How It Is*, the narrator claims that he is the 'sole [being] responsible for this unqualifiable murmur' (*HII*, 126), before then systematically negating and modifying almost every aspect of the text given voice thus far:

> all these calculations yes explanations yes the whole story from beginning to end yes completely false that wasn't how it was no not at all no how then no answer how was it then no answer HOW WAS IT screams good
>
> […]
>
> and the mud yes the dark yes the mud and the dark are true yes nothing to regret there no
>
> but all this business of voices yes […]
>
> all this business of sacks deposited yes at the end of a cord no doubt yes of an ear listening to me yes […] yes all balls yes
>
> […]
>
> and this business of a procession no answer this business of a procession yes never any procession no nor any journey no never any Pim no nor any Bom no never anyone no only me no answer only me yes so that was true yes it was true about me yes and what's my name no answer WHAT'S MY NAME screams good
>
> [...]
>
> only me yes alone yes with my voice yes my murmur yes when the panting stops yes all that holds yes panting yes worse and worse no answer WORSE AND WORSE yes flat on my belly yes in the mud yes the dark yes nothing to emend there no the arms spread yes like a cross no answer LIKE A CROSS no answer YES OR NO yes
>
> never crawled no in an amble no right leg right arm push pull ten yards fifteen yards no never stirred no never made to suffer no never suffered no answer NEVER SUFFERED no never abandoned no never was abandoned no so that's life here no answer THAT'S MY LIFE HERE screams good
>
> alone in the mud yes the dark yes sure yes panting yes someone hears me no no one hears me no murmuring sometimes yes when the panting stops yes on and off yes a few words yes a few scraps yes that no one hears no but less and less no answer LESS AND LESS yes

> so things may change no answer end no answer I may choke no answer sink no answer sully the mud no more no answer the dark no answer trouble the peace no more no answer the silence no answer die no answer DIE screams I MAY DIE screams I SHALL DIE screams good
>
> good good end at last of part three and last that's how it was end of quotation after Pim how it is (*HII*, 126-29)

These closing versets reconfigure the entirety of this novel in the most extreme of fashions, posing perhaps the greatest challenge to the concept of sovereignty within the entirety of Beckett's *œuvre*. In particular, the re-emergence of the block capitals within the textual fabric of the narrator's utterance significantly complicate how one reads this novel. Until this point in the work, these block capitals have been read as a transcription of the words which the narrator carves into Pim's skin with one exception – the moment when the narrator remarks that the name 'BOM' will be carved into his skin 'athwart the arse the vowel in the hole' (*HII*, 52) when this torturer comes to subject the narrator to torment as the narrator has done to Pim; but, if we take the narrator's declaration that there was 'never any Pim […] nor any Bom' at face value, then we are forced to ask: why have these capitals re-emerged here? – and, how are we to account for their presence throughout the narrative prior to this conclusion? There appears to be but a single way in which one may explain the presence of this violent script within the text whilst still respecting the aspects of the text which the narrator asserts are undeniably true and still present about him. Throughout this novel, the narrator has not been inflicting violence upon the unknowable other of Pim, but has been continually inflicting violence upon his own, isolated body in a brutal attempt to know himself.

Adopting this position not only enables the reader to unify this ending with the material which precedes it, but also has significant implications for one seeking to understand the Beckettian treatment of sovereignty within this work. By depicting the narrator as the administrator of the violence enacted throughout the text as well as the

hitherto unwitting victim of this very same violence – which he continues to exact upon himself, as indicated by the sustained presence of 'Roman capitals' in the text – Beckett disrupts the Blanchotian-Sadean idea of the master having absolute control over himself and exerting this control upon the without through the application of brutal violence. Rather, the torturer/victim figure of the narrator appears powerless, at the mercy of the disruptive machinations of his own mind which, throughout the rest of this text, has alienated itself from his body by presenting this body as the othered Pim. Beckett's protagonist in *How It Is* may thus be said to be the absolute inverse of the Sadean sovereign man. Moreover, by classifying the narrator as both torturer and victim, Beckett metamorphoses the very concept of sadism into an essentially immanent, introspective tool through which one may gain knowledge of their self. Consequently, *How It Is* represents the most radical Beckettian rewriting of Sadean conceptions of violence, logical reasoning, and sovereignty within the Irish author's canon.

5.2. The 'Closed Space' Texts

Faux départs (written 1964, pub. 1965) readily displays Beckett's imaginative interest in the specific characteristics of Sade's cell in Vincennes as described in *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…*:

> I have been to the dungeon of Vincennes, a gigantic tomb with four flanking towers. I have climbed the winding stairs which led to execution. The cells opened to my anguish and compassion: narrow, hugely high and condemned to eternal twilight shed by a loophole with double row of bars. It was in one of these icy cylinders, plunged in this funereal horror, that the Marquis de Sade penned his letters. (Lely in Sade 2022a, 56)

In the first of the *Faux départs*, the narrator describes the space he inhabits, and in which he undertakes the task of imagining, as follows: 'Mon cabinet a ceci de particulier, ou plutôt moi, que j'y ai fait aménager une stalle á ma taille. C'est là, au fond, face au mur, dans la

pénombre, que j'imagine, tantôt assis, tantôt debout, au besoin à genoux' [My office has this particularity, or rather me, that I had a stall made there to my size. It is there, at the back, facing the wall, in the twilight, that I imagine, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing, if necessary on my knees] (*Fd*, 69). The narrator's declaration that he imagines in the 'pénombre' within the tightly constraining 'stalle' resonates with Lely's image of Sade 'penn[ing] his letters' whilst shrouded in the 'eternal twilight' half-illuminating his cell. Thus, it becomes clear that even within this earliest inception of the 'Closed Space' texts, Beckett is actively drawing upon the imagery associated with Sade's imprisonment in Vincennes as depicted in *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…* and defamiliarising it by presenting it within a minimalist textual situation that prevents the reader from definitively envisaging a 'complete' world due to the omnipresence of 'terminal indeterminacy' (Porter Abbott 1996, 135) within the text. Just as the reader, like the narrator, begins to imagine the textual space more definitively, it is abandoned with a dismissive 'Bah' (*Fd*, 69).

The last of the *Faux départs*, meanwhile, creates a space suffused by funereality as well as carcerality, characterised by claustrophobic dimensions, and bathed in an oppressive, unnatural light which fluctuates between searing brightness and absolute darkness. When initially calling upon the reader to 'Imagine a place', the narrator of this final *Faux départ* commands: 'Imagine a place, then someone in it, that again./Crawl out of the frowsy deathbed and drag it to a place to die in' (*Fd*, 70).[51] The adjective 'frowsy' causes the reader to imagine this previously undefined space as one that has been neglected by its inhabitant, covered in filth and decay. These suggestions are then strengthened by the narrator's use of the noun 'deathbed', which not only causes the space simultaneously

[51] The former of these lines is proleptic of the investigation of the coincidence and co-dependence of space and being in *Worstward Ho* (1983). See Van Hulle 2012, 277-88; and, Byron 2017, 126-36.

called into being, and depicted, by the narrator's instructive addressing of the reader to assume an overwhelming shade of the funereal, but which also endows the hitherto undefined 'someone' situated in this place to take on a determinable aspect: he is dying. Yet, this clearer definition of the imagined space and 'someone' raises a question: if this 'someone' is already situated in their 'frowsy deathbed', why do they need to 'Crawl' from this space to 'drag' themselves to another as of yet unimagined 'place' in which to 'die'? This question is negated as soon as it is raised by the narrator's abandoning of these two funereal spaces through his use of the phrase: 'no, not that again' (*Fd*, 70). Consequently, the air of the funereal suffusing these two spaces, and the being envisaged as inhabiting them, is transformed from a definitively accessible surface-aspect of the text into an textual-imaginative pentimento underlying the subsequent places which the narrator demands we 'imagine'.[52]

Following this reconfiguration of the funereal as a paradoxically readily-discernible pentimento, the narrator redefines the imagined space as 'A closed space five foot square by six high' (*Fd*, 70) and demands: 'try for him there' (*Fd*, 70). The carcerality of this space is then augmented by the narrator's remarking that the person located within this imagined prison 'can't get out' (*Fd*, 70). But, even this assertion is immediately complicated by the narrator's remarking that the inhabitant of this prison-like space 'Couldn't have got in, […] did get in, will get out' (*Fd*, 70). By highlighting the impossibility of the imagined-figure's interactions with the imagined-space, this text disturbs the seemingly inescapable nature of the carceral space and, in so doing, draws the reader's attention to the potential paradoxes of logic and disjunctions of rational thought which characterise the imaginative act.

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[52] For more on the significance of textual pentimenti, see Van Hulle 2022a, 144-151, 224-26.

Additionally, in a reprise of the idea of eternal twilight, the text calls upon the reader to imagine an impossible light illuminating this space: 'Imagine light./No visible source, strong at full, spread all over, no shadow, all six planes, shining the same, slow on, ten seconds to full, same off' (*Fd*, 70). As Peter Boxall comments, the surplus of light in the 'Closed Space' texts results in light and dark becoming 'difficult to distinguish' (Boxall 2015, 41) from one another. 'Light itself sheds a kind of darkness' and, 'Where all is light we find ourselves projected into a kind of universal dark' (Boxall 2015, 41) which is no more penetrable than the eternal twilight of Vincennes. This text therefore uses an imagined the carceral space modelled in part upon a transposition of the characteristics of the cells in Vincennes as a tool through which the bizarre mechanics of the imaginative act may be exposed.

All Strange Away (written 1964, pub. 1976) opens by repeating the formulating of space seen in the last of the *Faux départs* with a few minor differences:

> Imagination dead imagine. A place, that again. Never another question. A place, then someone in it, that again. Crawl out of the frowsy deathbed and drag it to a place to die in. Out of the door and down the road in the old hat and coat like after the war, no, not that again. Five foot square, six high, no way in, none out, try for him there. Stool, bare walls when the light comes on, women's faces on the walls when the light comes on. In a corner when the light comes on tattered syntaxes if Jolly and Draeger Praeger Draeger, all right. Light off and let him be, on the stool, talking to himself in the last person, murmuring, no sound. (*ASA*, 73)

By substituting the phrases 'Couldn't have got in, can't get out, did get in, will get out' with the far simpler 'no way in, none out', *All Strange Away* emphasises the feeling of entrapment generated by its creation of a physically constraining space, thereby giving additional weight to the carceral dimensions of the space whilst still maintaining the impossibility of the 'someone' within this space ever having gained access to it. The text's utilisation of the double-negative formulation, 'no way in, none out', also brings the sense of fatality carried through the work as a pentimento due to the cancellation of the 'frowsy deathbed' space into focus. The now envisaged 'five foot square, six high' space is thus

characterised as an impossible prison suffused with fatality. The text's outlining of the carceral dimensions comprising this impossible prison is then complemented by the air of finality in the indeterminate phrase, 'talking to himself in the last person'. By using the preposition, 'in', in this phrase the narrator marries the latent fatality pervading the text with an idea of disunity. Therefore, the text implies not only that the person whom the reader envisages is the 'last person' alive, but also that they address themselves with a term bespeaking the multiplicity of their psyche – they are suggested as possessing an internal polylogue which uses the third-person plural pronoun, 'they', rather than a monologue. Consequently, the text inspires the reader to consider the impacts of this carceral space upon the mind of the individual entrapped within it. It is this subtle examination of the disunity of self that subjection to the intense carcerality of the imagined space produces which demonstrates how Beckett defamiliarises the concept of isolated entrapment encountered in *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…*. *All Strange Away* confronts its reader with a fictionalised depiction of the impacts of carcerality upon the mind of the one constrained within the prison-esque space through the unnerving action of pronominal confusion.

Following the above, the text moves to explore the physical impacts of entrapment by calling the reader to envisage a new space defined by its lack of accommodating space and the presence of a perpetually fluctuating light:

> start again, another place, someone in it […] The longer he lives and so the further goes the smaller they grow, the reasoning being the fuller he fills the space and so on, and the emptier, same reasoning. Hell this light from nothing no reason any moment […] Light flows, eyes close, stay closed till it ebbs, no, can't do that, eyes stay open […]. Black bag over his head, no good, all the rest still in light, front, sides, back, between the legs. (*ASA*, 74)

In highlighting the fact that this new 'place' shrinks the more its inhabitant grows, the narrator draws the reader's attention to the restrictive, limiting dimensions of the space without ever actually endowing this area with fully realised dimensionality. This results in

the generation of a carceral arena which is 'not there' yet also 'not not there' (Sofer 2013, 4).[53] This conceptualisation of space enables the text to create an elastic carceral space which is omnipresent in spite of its lack of describable physical measurements. Moreover, the narrator's entertaining of the possibility of the figure within this space being forced to wear a 'Black bag over his head' anticipates the 'Black, wide-brimmed hat' (*Catastrophe*, 143) initially worn by the Protagonist of *Catastrophe* (1982) and, for contemporary readers as Rabaté points out, 'cannot help but call up recent images from Abu Ghraib, the shameful reminder that the US army has used torture in the recent past' (Rabaté 2020, 59), or from the harrowing footage of the FSB's brutalising of prisoners in the wake of the 2024 terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall in Moscow. This de-individualising, and even de-humanising, strategy of covering the imagined figure's face underlines the punitive aspect of the carceral space. In turn, this detail enables the text to gain greater resonance with the punitive incarceration to which the Sade was subjected whilst simultaneously summoning the horrifying spectres of torture associated with both the Holocaust and the Algerian war of the 1960s, two conflicts which haunted the 'cultural anxieties' of France at the time when *All Strange Away* was written (Simpson 2022, 118-24). The combination of these aspects of the text with the narrator's delineating of how the light within this space 'flows' and 'ebbs' works to further strengthen the existent connections between *All Strange Away*'s treatment of space and the harsh conditions of Sade's cell as described in *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…*.

[53] Moreover, as Little notes, this figuring of the relations between space and matter 'echoes the spatial theory of Albert Einstein as explained in [James] Jeans's *Universe Around Us* [1929], on which Beckett took the following notes in the 1930s: "Dimensions of space determined by the amount of matter it contains. More matter, less space. No matter, infinite space" (Beckett 1999, 150; see Jeans 1929, 93). It also recalls Hamm's lines on suffering in *Endgame*: "the bigger a man is the fuller he is. [P*ause. Gloomily.*] And the emptier"' (Little 2020, 171).

Suddenly, the above-described space is negated (*ASA*, 74) and the reader is instructed to envisage a space: 'five foot square, six high, all white when light at full, no way in, none out' (*ASA*, 74). After this redefining of the imagined carceral space, the narrator instructs: 'Imagine eyes burnt ashen blue and lashes gone, lifetime of unseeing glaring, jammed open' (*ASA*, 74). The text's employment of the viscerally affecting adverbial modifier, 'burnt', endows the narrator's blindness resulting from his continual exposure to all-encompassing light and twilight with a definitive sense of violence. This violence is furthered by the idea that this figure's eyes are 'jammed open' due to the lack of 'lashes'. This image closely resembles the 83rd passion described in the third part of Sade's *120 journées*, in which an anonymous libertine 'burns off [his female victim's] eyelashes with a match, which prevents her from getting any rest at night, or from being able to close her eyes to sleep' (Sade 2016, 348; Sade 2011a, 338). Beckett is therefore actively defamiliarising an act of torture initially depicted in *120 journées* by transposing it into a space which may be described as a 'vaguened' variation of Vincennes' 'icy cylinder[s]' and by complicating the interpersonal nature of torment displayed in Sade's texts. Rather than the victim's suffering in this space being directly caused by another character, it is instead a result of his interning within a torturous locale created by the joint action of ataraxic narration and the reader's imagination.

Comparably to its configuring of the imagination as the primary medium through which the violence intrinsic to the carceral space is facilitated, *All Strange Away* also situates desire definitively within the realm of the imaginative through its depiction of the image of Emma upon the walls of the envisaged space:

> say all of Emma. First face alone, lovely beyond words, leave it at that, then deasil breasts alone, then thighs and cunt alone, then arse and hole alone, all lovely beyond words. See how he crouches down and back to see, back of head against face when eyes on cunt, against breasts when on hole, and vice

> versa, all most clear. So in this soft and mild, crouched down and back with hands on knees to hold himself together, say deasil first from face through hole then back through face, murmuring, Imagine him kissing, caressing, licking, sucking, fucking and buggering all this stuff (*ASA*, 75)

As Fraser comments, the 'repetition of "alone"' in the above-quoted passage 'isolates the fragment[s]' of Emma's body (Fraser 1995, 521) which the narrator describes using highly sexualised language. This results in Emma existing 'not in nude panorama, but as a collage of dissected images' (Fraser 1995, 521) redolent of pornography's – and Sade's – manner of presenting the body as a series of sites of erotic potential. By constraining the unnamed male figure's sexual desires to the realm of the imaginary, *All Strange Away* aligns the male-figure's sexual desires with Blanchot's description of Sade's eroticism: 'Sade's eroticism is a dream eroticism, since it only finds satisfaction, the greater part of the time, in fiction' (Blanchot 2022, 49). Furthermore, the narrator's reporting of the unnamed male figure's desire to carnally experience Emma's shade-like body is figured as 'a strange mixture of the fevered and the bland' (Fraser 1995, 522): the sexual intensity of his desires is 'evident in the rising eroticism of the progression of "kissing, caressing, licking, sucking, fucking and buggering"[;] [y]et the catalogue of sexual acts is run through too quickly to be sensual' (Fraser 1995, 522). This rapidity is undeniably similar to the effect achieved within the third and fourth sections of *120 journées*. The formulaic, list-like structure of these parts of Sade's work robs the actions described within the text of their erotic value whilst still, seemingly paradoxically, highlighting the violent, sexual content of the work. This results in a narration which scintillates with brutality whilst concomitantly underlining the banality of the actions depicted when considered from the perspective of the libertine. Thus, at this point in *All Strange Away* Beckett fuses Sade's ataraxic narrating style with a deliberate emphasising of the unfulfillable nature of sexual desire within the carceral world generated by the text, in turn highlighting the absolute isolation of the currently unnamed male figure.

The same is true in Beckett's text's depicting of Emma's sexual desires following the narrator's switching of her and this aforementioned male figure's positions: 'Emmo on the walls, first the face, handsome beyond words, then deasil details later. And how crouching down and back she turns murmuring, Fancy her being all kissed, licked, sucked, fucked and so on by all that' (*ASA*, 76). Whilst the narrator's surveying of the shade of Emmo's body opens in a comparable manner to this speaker's 'saw[ing] apart' (Fraser 1995, 521) of Emma's body, it takes on a severely 'abbreviated' form (Fraser 1995, 523). The treatment of Emmo's body by the narrator is consequently less eroticised than his depiction of Emma's body and, in fact, serves to highlight the 'imprint[ing] of sexual difference' (Little 2020, 172) upon the very walls of the imagined space. This emphasising of sexual differences is then accentuated by Emma's imagining of herself being subjected to a list of sexual actions which recalls, but modifies, Emmo's imaginings. As Fraser notes, the sentence in which Emma envisions 'being all kissed, licked, sucked, fucked and so on' 'is cast in the passive, making Emma less the *source* than the *object* of desire' (Fraser 1995, 523). This configuring of Emma as the object upon which the sexual act is enacted, rather than the subject actively participating in the sexual action, works in tandem with the text's aforementioned ataraxic treatment of the erotic act itself to cast female sexuality not as an autonomous and essential part of being a woman, but rather as something intended to be enjoyed by men. Beckett's work's treatment of female desire therefore accords with how it is portrayed in *120 journées*, a text in which every female character exists purely for the 'enjoyment' of the libertine-protagonists and female sexuality is only ever considered in relation to the ways in which it may be said to enhance male *jouissance*. Therefore, in both *All Strange Away* and *120 journées*, female erotic desire and sexuality are defined solely through their dialectic relations to male sexual desire.

Following the narrator's repositioning of Emma as the protagonist interned within the imagined carceral space, the dimensions of this space undergo further transformation:

> note how place no longer cube but rotunda three foot diameter eighteen inched high supporting a dome semi-circular in section as in the Pantheon at Rome or certain beehive tombs and consequently three foot from ground to vertex that is at its highest point no lower than before with loss of floor space in the neighbourhood of two square feet or six square inches per lost angle and consequences for recumbent readily imaginable and of cubic an even higher figure (*ASA*, 79-80)

This reformulation of the imagined carceral space as a 'rotunda' introduces multiple layers of implied violence into the text through its inter- and intra-textual resonances, as well as a notable air of mourning due to its comparison with the mausoleums such as the Pantheon or a 'beehive tomb[]'. Not only does this reshaping of space more directly align this imagined place with the 'icy cylinder' in which Sade was imprisoned, thereby imbuing the text with a latent sense of institutional violence, but it also functions as a reprise of the Beckettian 'rotunda' located at the centre of the 'enclosure' through which Mahood limps in *The Unnamable* (*TU*, 26-37). In the 'rotunda' depicted in *The Unnamable*, Mahood stamps upon the remains of his deceased family so as to completely destroy them. Consequently, Sade's animus against families covertly bleeds into the textual fabric of *All Strange Away*. Additionally, the shape of the 'rotunda' echoes Dante's depiction of Hell in the *Inferno* as a conical space (see Dante 2008, 46). The 'rotunda' of *All Strange Away* thus conflates Dantean, Sadean, and prior Beckettian environments of violence and agony to produce a space of intense, carceral suffering from which there is no escape; we leave Emma languishing in 'sorrow at faint memory of a lying side by side and fancy murmured dead' (*ASA*, 84) .

After abandoning *All Strange Away* in early 1965 due to its spiralling complexity (Knowlson 1996, 462), Beckett wrote *Imagination Dead Imagine* (1965), a piece of 'residual precipitate' (Beckett qtd in Nixon in Beckett 2010f, xiv) born from the remains of the

aforementioned earlier text. Unlike in *All Strange Away*, the space presented in *Imagination Dead Imagine* is characterised as a rotunda bathed in oppressive white light – an environment similar to Lely's description of Vincennes' cells – from the outset:

> No trace anywhere of life, you say, pah, no difficulty there, imagination not dead yet, yes dead, good, imagination dead imagine. Islands, waters, azure, verdure, one glimpse and vanished, endlessly, omit. Till all white in the whiteness of the rotunda. No way in, go in, measure. Diameter three feet, three feet from ground to summit of the vault. (*IDI*, 87)

By summoning the shades of external environments before immediately negating them through the imperative 'omit', the text evokes a sense of denied freedom. This cancellation of these familiar spaces gives additional weight to the intrinsic carcerality of the space which the reader is now tasked with imagining. Additionally, following the above-establishing of the basic characteristics of the rotunda, the narrator further defines the interior of this space and situates two bodies within it: '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' (*IDI*, 87). As Nixon notes (in Beckett 2010f, xiv), the narrator's use of 'mathematical' terminology to divide the rotunda's floor into two semicircles generates a disturbing, 'impersonal' sense of distance between the speaker's delineating of the claustrophobic dimensions of the space being envisaged by the reader and the pain experienced by beings entrapped in this space. This rationalistic, detached approach to suffering pastiches the matter-of-fact manner in which the narrator of *120 journées* reports the tortures to which the victims in Sade's *chef d'œuvre* are subjected. Furthermore, the narrator's arranging of the two inhabitants of the textual space back to back 'recall[s] Dante's damned, placed "arsy-versy", "watering their bottoms with their tears" as Beckett […] put[s] it' in the 'Eté 56' notebook (Knowlson 1996, 467; cf. Beckett UoR MS 1227/7/1, and, Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XX.127-31.1-130). Consequently, the rotunda in this work

functions as a point of confluence between the suffering evoked in Dante's *Inferno*, that orchestrated by the libertines in Sade's *120 journées*, and that endured by Sade in Vincennes. Moreover, the speaker's description of the bodies of those trapped within this rotunda as 'white' presents these figures as living corpses whilst also serving as a proleptic signifier of their final status as 'white speck[s] lost in whiteness' (*IDI*, 89). Like the victims of Sade's libertines (see Blanchot 2022, 48), the beings trapped in the rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine* are negated from the very outset of the text.

This emphasis upon the idea of living-death is then expanded to encompass the entirety of the imagined place. The narrative's perspective briefly shifts from within the rotunda to the inaccessible (at least for those entrapped within the rotunda) without, commenting that the exterior of the rotunda is also 'all white in the whiteness' (*IDI*, 87) before moving back inside and stating that the walls of the rotunda are 'solid throughout, a ring as in the imagination the ring of bone' (*IDI*, 87). The comparison of this place with 'the ring of bone' which forms an intrinsic part of, and 'contains', the imagination serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it emphasises the fact that in *Imagination Dead Imagine* Beckett is 'not provid[ing] an image of what happens when imagination is actually dead, but, rather, engag[ing] with the very process of its dying' (Degani-Raz 2012, 228) by establishing a definitive limit to the imagined space and alluding to the existence of an undefined, and hence not fully imagined, exterior space within which the rotunda itself is contained. This 'draws our attention to the world without' (Little 2020, 156) whilst concomitantly rendering the relationship of the imagined rotunda to the unimagined external space indeterminate. There is no way of telling if this unimagined space is a 'better elsewhere' (*IDI*, 89) or if it is simply an expanse of 'nothing' in which 'No life begins or ends' (*IDI*, 89) as it is, essentially, unimaginable. On the other hand, the invocation of this 'ring of bone' injects the entirety of

this text with a sense of fatality and funereality. As Knowlson comments, the illuminating of how the white 'vault' of the rotunda 'has [a] ring of bone about it' evokes images of 'a human skull' (Knowlson 1996, 467). The imagined space consequently becomes associated with an ur-image of death, indicating that the space of the rotunda is one in which living-death becomes tangible.

Additionally, this idea of the imagined space of the rotunda as one caught between life and death is supplemented by Beckett's reported remark to Avigdor Arikha that the rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine* was partially inspired by 'the view from Beckett's study window' (Knowlson 1996, 467). As Beckett's letters of 17 October 1959 to Bray (*LSB III,* 247) and 7 February 1960 to McGreevy (*LSB III*, 299) reveal, from this window Beckett had a clear view of the Santé prison, the spectacle of which greatly moved and disturbed him. According to Knowlson, 'Beckett used to scan the tiny, bared windows of the cells in the Santé prison, often feeling emotion for those who were imprisoned inside' (2010, 15). Thus, it becomes apparent that the cruel realities of life delayed and execution emblematised by the Santé prison deeply impacted Beckett, further augmenting the argument that his reading about the brutal conditions in which Sade was held within Vincennes, and the 'funereal horror' of both this prison and the prison which he could see from the window of his study, contribute to the deathly atmosphere suffusing this work's 'rotunda'. The space depicted in this text thus seems to be a fictional amalgam of the horrifyingly torturous actualities of multiple carceral spaces.

Upon returning to the interior space of the rotunda portrayed within this text, the narrator informs the reader that the whiteness of this space originates, like that in *All Strange Away*, from a 'light […] [with] no visible source' (*IDI*, 87). However, unlike in the earlier text, and in a manoeuvre which anticipates the description of the conditions within

the ‘icy cylinder’ of *The Lost Ones*, this light becomes inextricably connected to the temperature within this space:

> heat, whiteness, wait, the light goes down, all grows dark together, ground wall, vault, bodies, say twenty seconds, all the greys, the light goes out, all vanishes. At the same time the temperature goes down, to reach its minimum, say freezing-point, at the same instant that the black is reached […]. Wait, more or less long, light and heat come back, all grows white and hot together, ground, wall, vault, bodies, say twenty seconds, all the greys, till the initial level is reached whence fall began. More or less long, for there may intervene, experience shows, between end of fall and beginning of rise, pauses of varying length, from the fraction of the second to what would have seemed , in other times, other places, an eternity. Same remark for the other pause, between end of rise and beginning of fall. The extremes, as long as they last, are perfectly stable […]. It is possible too, experience shows, for rise and fall to stop short at any point and mark a pause, more or less long, before resuming, or reversing, the rise now fall, the fall rise, these in their turn to be completed, or to stop short and mark a pause, more or less long, before resuming, or again reversing, and so on, till finally one or the other extreme is reached. Such variations of rise and fall, combining in countless rhythms, commonly attend the passage from white and heat to black and cold, and vice versa. The extremes alone are stable (*IDI*, 87-88)

By connecting light and temperature, the narrator introduces an additional element into the text’s constructing of space when compared to the earlier spaces conceived in *All Strange Away*, thereby enabling this work to subject the imagined beings within the space to a greater degree of suffering than that faced by the inhabitants of the earlier work’s amorphous, Protean place. Additionally, this introduction of temperature as a central aspect of the work’s formulation of a ‘protoglobal space […] in which all forms of withdrawal […] have been banished’ (Boxall 2015, 41) enables it to evoke the ‘icy’ character of the freezing ‘cylinder’ in which Sade was held whilst also provoking associations with the glacial wasteland of Cocytus. But, as Cohn keenly highlights and as the text itself makes clear, within the punitive, carceral space of *Imagination Dead Imagine*’s rotunda, ‘light and temperature fluctuate unceasingly – and erratically. [...] Rather than a pendulum-like oscillation between light/heat and dark/cold […], the variations [between these extremes] are swift and unpredictable’ (Cohn 2005, 292-93). This continual, even seemingly mercurial, shifting of temperature from an absolute maximum to an absolute minimum has the effect

of preventing the bodies contained within the rotunda from ever becoming habituated to a single atmospheric condition.

Drawing upon Beckett's early positing of the interrelation of Habit and suffering in *Proust* (Beckett 1965, 18-29), this volatile oscillation between the poles of temperature within the space prevents the anaesthetic effects of Habit from ever gaining a foothold within the being's interned in the rotunda's experiences. Subsequently, these beings are launched into a state of continual suffering – they are forced to permanently exist within a 'perilous zone' (Beckett 1965, 19) in which the 'perpetual adjustment and readjustment of [one's] organic sensibility to the conditions of its world[]' (Beckett 1965, 28) is rendered impossible. As a result, these beings are fated to lay, forever 'sweating and icy' (*IDI*, 89) within the 'stress of th[e] storm' (*IDI*, 89) contained in the rotunda. Ergo, in this text Beckett creates a space which, whilst sometimes consistent with the transposed 'icy' conditions of Sade's cell in Vincennes, is capable of exacting a far greater sense of suffering than this aforementioned space due to its being dominated by environmental flux. The beings trapped in the rotunda are thus defined as residual shards of humanity ensnared in the unending action of dying; even as they are left 'sweating and icy' within this 'storm', they still draw breath (*IDI*, 89). Hence, the space of *Imagination Dead Imagine* utilises the horrifying conditions of an ur-funereal and ur-carceral space partially inspired by Beckett's transposing of details from *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…* to render tangible the Blanchotian-Sadean desire to envisage a death inflicted eternally (Blanchot 2022, 46).

Beckett's penultimate 'Closed Space' text, *The Lost Ones* (written 1965/1970, pub. 1970/1972), maintains the circular shape of the narrative's space as established at the end of *All Strange Away* and continued in *Imagination Dead Imagine*, but modifies it by greatly expanding its dimensions: 'Inside a flattened cylinder fifty metres round and sixteen high'

(*TLO*, 101). By stating that the ceiling of this new 'Abode' (*TLO*, 101) is sixteen metres high, the narrator more closely aligns the dimensions of this space with those noted by Lely when describing the 'hugely high' ceilings of the cells in Vincennes. Additionally, similarly to in *Imagination Dead Imagine*, light and heat are also intrinsically bound to one another in this cylinder:

> The temperature. It oscillates with more measured beat between hot and cold. It passes from one extreme to the other in about four seconds. It too has its moments of stillness more or less hot. They coincide with those of the light. (*TLO*, 101)

This oscillation of light, as well as the pauses which occur during this oscillation, enables the actuality of twilight to become perpetually present within the cylinder, bathing everything in a permanent state of 'gloom' (*TLO*, 103, 111) which makes it 'difficult' for the 205 inhabitants to 'recogni[se]' (*TLO*, 103) one another through the condensing of a sunrise or sunset into the short space of 'four seconds' (*TLO*, 113). The temperature, meanwhile, never reaches the extremes of that in *Imagination Dead Imagine*, varying instead between 'twenty-five degrees approximately to a minimum of approximately five whence regular variation of five degrees per second' (*TLO*, 104, 113). Importantly, this range of temperatures means that the climate of the cylinder never reaches a maximum which could be considered anything more than comfortable, whilst still reaching a minimum which, due to the nakedness of the cylinder's inhabitants ('The desiccation of the envelope robs nudity of much of its charms' [*TLO*, 117]), is uncomfortably 'icy'.

Moreover, unlike in the earlier 'Closed Space' texts, the narrator of *The Lost Ones* is highly concerned with immediately observing the impacts of this climate upon the bodies of those trapped in the cylinder. After detailing the dimness and colour of the light in the cylinder, the narrator comments: 'Consequences of this light for the searching eye. Consequences for the eye which having ceased to search is fastened to the ground or raised

to the distant ceiling where none can be' (*TLO*, 101) and, after revealing that light and heat within the cylinder are correlated, observes:

> Consequences of this climate for the skin. It shrivels. The bodies brush together with a rustle of leaves. The mucous membrane itself is affected. A kiss makes an indescribable sound. Those with stomach still to copulate strive in vain. But they will not give in' (*TLO*, 101)

This practice of noting the impacts which the climate has upon the human body contributes significantly to the sense of 'scientific procedure' and the 'impersonal' feeling (Nixon in Beckett 2010f, xv) which dominate the narrator's utterance, configuring this figure as an objective observer studying life within the cylinder. Due to the harshness of the conditions in the cylinder as well as the air of detachment generated by the narrator's tone, this form of narration generates a disturbing air which is, in turn, evocative of Heine's comment that 'terror finds in Sade one of its scientific organisers' (Heine 2022b, 23) and of Bataille's assertion of the 'inarticulateness' of violence (Bataille 2022, 54).

This latter assertion is encapsulated in the arresting brevity of the narrator's comment upon how the skin 'shrivels' as a result of its exposure to these harsh environmental conditions. Rather than providing the reader with a dense, metaphorical or highly descriptive elaboration of this shrivelling, the narrator gives the reader pause by forcing them to come into direct contact with the reality of the suffering elicited by the environment. Furthermore, the narrator's noting of how the 'mucous membrane' is 'affected' by this environment is complemented by his mentioning of the 'indescribably' repulsive sounds produced by a kiss when the 'dessicat[ed]' lips of the cylinder's inhabitants come together to reveal Beckett's marked interest in the aesthetics of disgust. Consequently, it is evident that Beckett is here drawing upon the harsh conditions found within Sade's cell in Vincennes and mingling it with his consistent interest in the aesthetics of disgust to produce a text which is intrinsically concerned with portraying, in a

distressingly 'dispassionate' (to borrow Beckett's own description of the narrative tone of Sade's *120 journées* [*LSB I*, 607]) manner, the brutal realities of suffering elicited by the fact of beings existing within a space antithetical to their survival ('here all should die' [*TLO*, 104]). Beckett's innovation in this text is thus twofold: instead of focusing upon the pleasures which inflicting suffering brings to a torturer (as Sade does) the narrator of *The Lost Ones* is fundamentally concerned with outlining the impacts of a torturous environment upon the bodies of the victims, and, rather than presenting readers with multiple portraits of horrifically violent master-slave relations, Beckett highlights how the place itself inflicts pain upon its inhabitants.

Beckett's textual focus on the impacts of place upon the inhabitants becomes further elaborated towards the conclusion of this work, when the narrator states:

> The effect of this climate on the soul is not to be underestimated. But it suffers certainly less than the skin whose entire defensive system from sweat to goose bumps is under constant stress. It continues none the less feebly to resist and indeed honourable compared to the eye which with the best will in the world it is difficult not to consign at the close of all its efforts to nothing short of blindness. For skin in its own way as it is not to mention its humours and lids it has not merely one adversary to contend with. The desiccation of the envelope robs nudity of much of its charm as pink turns grey and transforms into a rustling of nettles the natural succulence of flesh against flesh. The mucous membrane itself is affected which would not greatly matter were it not for its hampering effect on the work of love. But even from this point of view no great harm is done so rare is erection in the cylinder. It does occur none the less followed by more or less happy penetration in the nearest tube. Even man and wife may sometimes be seen in virtue of the law of probabilities to come together again in this way without their knowledge. The spectacle then is one to be remembered of frenzies prolonged in pain and hopelessness long beyond what even the most gifted lovers can achieve in camera. (*TLO*, 117)

By shifting his focus from the speculative effects of the environment within the cylinder upon the 'soul[s]' of its inhabitants to the far more readily observable bodies of these beings, the narrator signals that his primary interest when surveying these prisoners lies in the recording of the embodied effects of suffering. As in Sade's texts, the body is thus prioritised over the mind. Furthermore, as Baroghel notes, the narrator's description of the inhabitants of the cylinder as having skin which has turned 'grey', and become

'dessiccat[ed]' because of environmental factors, causes these figures to 'have the appearance of corpses' (Baroghel DPhil, 287). Consequently, these figures, like those contained within the rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine* and the victims of Sade's libertines, are identified as being 'already dead' – a fact which is also communicated to the reader through the narrator's outlining of how 'here all should die but with so gradual and to put it plainly so fluctuant a death as to escape the notice even of a visitor' (*TLO*, 104-05).

This envisaging of the inhabitants of the cylinder as existing in a state which conflates the act of living with the actuality of dying, and hence negativises the idea of life itself to form an unnervingly Beckettian concept of living-death comparable to that metatextually identified in Sade's work by Blanchot (Blanchot 2022, 48), is also essential to Beckett's grotesque defamiliarisation of the erotic act within this text. Rather than disgust increasing the eroticism of sex as it does for the libertines in Sade's *120 journées*, in *The Lost Ones* the confluence of the sexual and the grotesque serves to accentuate the agony experienced by those engaging in intercourse within the cylinder. The narrator's description of the sexual act as a 'spectacle […] of frenzies prolonged in pain and hopelessness long beyond what even the most gifted of lovers can achieve in camera' highlights the awfulness and violence of this action; due to the drying up of the vaginal 'mucous membrane' sexual intercourse causes intense pain to those engaging in it and, as such, becomes a horrifying example of desperate, de-eroticised violence. Consequently, in the savage world of *The Lost Ones* Beckett transposes and modifies Sade's depictions of corporeal decay, using this aspect to render the sexual act both repulsive and unerotically violent.[54]

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[54] Additionally, Beckett's description of the women forced to endure the violent sexual act as the 'nearest tube' objectifies them in a manner comparable to Sade's reducing of women to mere body-parts upon which the erotic desires of the libertines may be enacted.

Violence within the cylinder, however, is not limited solely to the occurrence of sexual intercourse in this space. Rather, it serves as the primary form of communication between the beings within this Sadean-Dantean hellscape, as well as the predominant method through which they regulate, and enforce, the 'laws' governing movement and searching within this space. In order to understand the significance of this conceptualisation of violence, it is first necessary to outline the systematisation of being and space in the cylinder. As the narrator states, there are ostensibly four states of being within the cylinder:

> Firstly those perpetually in motion. Secondly those who sometimes pause. Thirdly those who short of being driven off never stir from the coign they have won and when driven off pounce on the first free one that offers and freeze again. That is not quite accurate. For if among these sedentary are those the need to climb is dead it is none the less subject to strange resurrections. The quidam then quits his post in search of a free ladder or to join the nearest or shortest queue. The truth is that no searcher can readily forgo the ladder. Paradoxically the sedentary are those whose acts of violence most disrupt the cylinder's quiet. Fourthly those who do not search or non-searchers [referred to as the 'vanquished' (*TLO*, 106-20)] sitting for the most part against the wall in the attitude which wrung from Dante one of his rare wan smiles [the Belacqua pose]. (*TLO*, 103)

The division of the inhabitants of the cylinder into these distinct-yet-porous groups is mirrored by the ways in which these beings are organised within the space itself:

> The bed of the cylinder comprises three distinct zones separated by clear-cut mental or imaginary frontiers invisible to the eye of flesh. First an outer belt roughly one metre wide reserved for the climbers and strange to say favoured by most of the sedentary and vanquished. Next a slightly narrower inner belt where those weary of searching in mid-cylinder slowly revolve in Indian file intent on the periphery. Finally the arena proper representing an area of one hundred and fifty square metres round numbers and chosen hunting ground of the majority. Let numbers be assigned to these three zones and it appears clearly that from the third to the second and inversely the searcher moves at will whereas on entering and leaving the first he is held to a certain discipline. […] Thus access to the climbers' reserve is authorised only when one of them leaves it to rejoin the searchers of the arena or exceptionally those of the intermediate zone. While infringement of this rule is rare it does none the less occur as when for example a particularly nervous searcher can no longer resist the lure of the niches and tries to steal in among the climbers without the warrant of a departure. Whereupon he is unfailingly ejected by the queue nearest to the point of trespass and the matter goes no further. (*TLO*, 113-14)

As Francesca Del Moro and Daniella Caselli highlight, this division of space into a series of concentric rings comprised of bands of contrapuntal movement hypertextually combines how the seventh circle of the *Inferno* is divided into three separate zone – an internal 'sandy

waste,/From the surface of which every living plant has been scoured' where 'The ground was thickly covered with dry sand' and 'droves of naked souls,/[…] weep[] in great wretchedness' as 'flakes of fire' rain upon them (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XIV.102.8-9, 13, 19-20, 27), surrounded by 'a wood/Which had no path marked in it at all' in which people who have committed suicide are transformed into 'knotted and twisted' trees with 'poisonous thorns' and fed upon ceaselessly by harpies (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XIII.97-100.2-3, 5-6, 101-02), which is, in turn, encircled by 'a wide ditch' where people who have committed violence against others are drowned in a 'boil[ing]' 'river of blood' (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XII.94-95.47-52) – with the movement of those ensnared in the Malebolge, where 'the damned walk in two opposite "rings"; those walking in the larger ring come towards the poet, those in the narrower one walk in his direction' (Caselli 2005, 201-204; cf. Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XVIII.119.26-27; and, Del Moro, PhD thesis, 191-92). Furthermore, the division of souls within the cylinder of *The Lost Ones* into three broad categories – the searchers, the sedentary, and the vanquished – echoes the way in which those who are violent against God, nature, and art are subjected to three sets of 'different laws' in the inner arena of the seventh circle of hell: 'Some off them lay supine on the ground;/While others were sitting there, all hunched up;/And others were continually wandering' (Dante 2008, *Inferno*, XIV.102.22-25; cf. Caselli 2005, 202). However, unlike in Dante's text, the divisions between the differing areas of *The Lost Ones*' cylinder are not enforced by geographical differences or through the action of beings external to those suffering.

Instead, the divisions in the cylinder are maintained by the inhabitants themselves. The searchers who queue for and eventually climb the ladders in search of an escape from the cylinder, and the sedentary, are particularly bellicose in enforcing the rules which enable

the continued existence of these divisions. Of the former of these groups, the narrator warns:

> Woe the rash searcher who carried away by his passion dare lay a finger on the least among them. Like a single body the whole queue falls on the offender. Of all the scenes of violence the cylinder has to offer none approaches this (*TLO*, 119)

and, of the latter group, the narrator observes: ‘A sedentary searcher stepped on instead of over is capable of such an outburst of fury as to throw the entire cylinder into a ferment’ (*TLO*, 108). The Sadean dimension of these reactions to the slightest infringement is twofold: firstly, the silence of the beings within the cylinder and their willingness to exact violence in order to ensure the continued existence of the ‘conventions of obscure origin’ (*TLO*, 106) that constitute the Rule of Law within this space, is informed by Bataille’s metatextual assertion that violence is a paradoxically silent language through which power is actualised (Bataille 2022, 53). As Bataille states, the unspoken ‘language of the executioner is the expression, not of the violence that he exerts in the name of an established power, but of that power itself, which seemingly excuses him, vindicates him and loftily justifies’ his utilisation of violence (Bataille 2022, 53). Equally, the violent actions of the searchers utilising ladders and of the sedentary searchers are justified within the space of the cylinder through the unelaborated actuality of their occurrence: these violent actions take place in accordance with the unspoken rules of the cylinder and hence warrant no further elaboration and no repercussions. Secondly, the severity of this violence demonstrates a Sadean unbalancing of the Dantean concept of *contrapasso* comparable to that seen within Beckett’s so-called trilogy and that observed by Rabaté as taking place in the mud world of *How It Is* (Rabaté 2020, 47). Comparably to how Moran reacts to the infringement of his personal space by an unknown individual with an undescribed act of extreme violence (*Molloy,* 157-58; cf. pp. 121-24 of this thesis), so too do the sedentary and

the searchers using ladders brutalise the individuals who unintentionally violate their space. Thus, within the cylinder of *The Lost Ones* one encounters a complex layering of Sadean and Dantean violence. In this text Beckett combines Dantean conceptions of space with a Bataillean-Sadean understanding of the operation of violence in accordance with the predetermined laws of the cylinder to present the reader with a disturbing glimpse into an unremittingly cruel world where violence has become normalised due to its function as the sole means of ensuring the continued existence of order within their 'Abode'.

Complementing the above-discussed normalisation of violence in the cylinder, violence is also depicted as being the only method of communication between the inhabitants of the cylinder. According to the narrator, the ladders utilised by those searching for a way out of the cylinder are occasionally also used by individuals that have long since lost the desire to continue searching 'to get clear of the ground' (*TLO*, 107). It is said that these climbers will 'mount to the level of their choice and there stay and settle standing as a rule with their faces to the wall' (*TLO*, 107). Due to their indifference to the act of searching, these climbers are 'liable to exceed the allotted time' (*TLO*, 107) afforded to those searching in the 'niches' and 'tunnels' (*TLO*, 102) for an exit from the cylinder. Upon encountering one of these individuals within a niche or a tunnel, the searcher climbing the ladder in search or a way out, 'by means of one or more thumps on the back bring[s] him [the non-searching climber] back to a sense of his surroundings. Upon which he unfailingly hastens to descend preceded by his successor who has then merely to take over the ladder subject to the usual conditions' (*TLO*, 107). As Baroghel notes (DPhil thesis, 266), this utilisation of violence as the only method of communication in the cylinder ensures that the idea of mutual respect is abandoned in favour of a normalisation of violence which accords with the ways in which violence within Sade's universe is so normalised that it is, at least at certain moments,

almost robbed of its horrifying significance. Violence in the 'Abode' of *The Lost Ones* is such a regular occurrence that it is entirely unspectacular – it is unremarkable and silent in its happening. Subsequently, in *The Lost Ones* Beckett renders the striking indifference to violence provoked by its omnipresence tangible on a textual level through both the reconfiguration of violence as a silent communicative method, and through the speaker of this text's ataraxic, nonplussed approach to the event of violence. Unlike in Sade's works where violence, whilst expected, is still seen as a method through which the libertine may reach a state of *jouissance*, in Beckett's text violence is rendered in its disturbing, silent, and detached actuality. Violence simply is.

The final way in which Sade may be seen to impact *The Lost Ones* is revealed when the narrator delineates how 'It is […] forbidden to withhold the face or other part from the searcher who demands it' (*TLO*, 118-19). The idea of the inhabitants of the cylinder having to willingly expose any part of their body whenever it is demanded of them stems from Beckett's early 1950s reading of Blanchot's metatextual 'La Raison de Sade'. In this text, Blanchot illustrates how Sade twists the idea of equality amongst beings into a twisted statement of one's right to 'use' another's body:

> Given that all beings are equal in the eyes of Nature, this fact allows me the right not to sacrifice myself to preserve others, whose ruin is indispensable to my happiness. Or better yet, he drafts a sort of Declaration of the Rights of Eroticism, with this maxim as its fundamental principle, applicable as much for women as for men: Give yourself over to all those who desire you, take all those you desire. 'What evil do I do, what crime do I commit when, greeting a beautiful creature, I say: "Give me the part of your body that can satisfy me now, and if you like, pleasure yourself with the part of my body that might be pleasing to yours?"' […] 'Never can an act of possession be exercised on a free human being,' he writes. But what conclusions does he draw from this? Not that it is forbidden to commit a violent act against another human being and to enjoy hurting them, inflicting them with pain against their will, but rather that no one has the right to use an exclusive relationship, one of 'possession', as an excuse to refuse themselves to him. The equality of beings is the right to make equal use of all beings; freedom is the power to subject each person to his own will and wishes. (Blanchot 2004, 10-11)

This conceptualisation of the equality of beings as the basis for a belief in one's right to do as one wishes without regard for the desires of the other clearly resonates with the way in which those within the cylinder are allowed to manipulate the bodies of each other so long as it does not violate the unwritten laws governing searching within the space, and can even be said to extend to the fashion in which sexual intercourse takes place in the cylinder between two complete strangers upon the rare occasion of an 'erection' (*TLO*, 117).

Yet, the last actions of the 'last body' within the cylinder (*TLO*, 119) reveal how Beckett modifies this transposed Sadean conceptualisation of one's rights to another's body to produce a deeply affecting image of the essential solitude of the Beckettian individual:

> there he stirs this last of all if a man and slowly draws himself up and some time later opens his burnt eyes. At the foot of the ladders propped against the wall with scant regard to harmony no climber waits his turn. The aged vanquished of the third zone has none about him now but others in his image motionless and bowed. The mite still in the white-haired woman's clasp is no more than a shadow in her lap. Seen from the front the red head sunk to the uttermost exposes part of the nape. There he opens then his eyes this last of all if a man and some time later threads his way to that first among the vanquished so often taken for a guide. On his knees he parts the heavy hair and raises the unresisting head. Once devoured the face thus laid bare the eyes at a touch of the thumbs open without demur. In those calm wastes he lets his wander till they are the first to close and the head relinquished falls back into its place. He himself after a pause impossible to time finds at last his place and pose whereupon dark descends and at the same instant the temperature comes to rest not far from freezing point. Hushed in the same breath the faint stridulence mentioned above whence suddenly such silence as to drown all the faint breathings put together. So much roughly speaking for the last state of the cylinder and of this little people of searchers (*TLO*, 120)

This last of the searchers' of gazing into the 'burnt eyes' of the 'aged vanquished' – those 'calm wastes' in which 'he lets his wander till they are the first to close' – is suffused with carnal desire and an air of intense, possessive violence through the text's use of the aorist 'devoured'; however, unlike in Sade's conceptualising of solitude, these actions bespeak a desolate longing for connection with another being rather than an affirmation of this individual's unshakeable sovereign power. At the very beginning of *The Lost Ones* it is asserted that the beings within the cylinder are desperately 'searching for [their] lost one' (*TLO*, 101) – for an unfindable companion with whom they are in a relationship which can

be accurately defined as a sociological manifestation of the Derridean idea of supplementarity. In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida defines a supplement simultaneously as 'a plenitude enriching another plenitude' (Derrida 2016, 272) and as a thing or being which 'lacks something in order for the lack to be filled' (Derrida 2016, 361). This accords perfectly with the image of the 'bodies roam[ing] each searching for its lost one' in the *The Lost Ones*' cylinder; each individual is searching, in vain, for their other so as to become 'whole' through the establishment of a reciprocal relationship with this equally lacking, yet concomitantly absolute, individual. Consequently, this 'last of all' being's brushing aside the first of the vanquished hair so as to gaze into her eyes becomes emblematic of the latent, melancholic hope for connection which underpins the actions of all beings within the cylinder and which still subsists within this last of the searchers. Furthermore, as the vanquished cannot 'recover' from their 'abandonment' (*TLO*, 109), even if this first of the vanquished were this last of the searcher's 'lost one' he would have no way of resurrecting her from her stasis so as to form a relationship with her. The *pathos* inspired by the final images of this last of the searchers' isolation is thus generated not only by how this figure absolutely is alone despite still yearning for connection, but also by the fact that he is powerless to alter his situation. Entrapment in a state of absolute, exhausted stasis is the only possible fate for this last figure, and for all other of the cylinder's inhabitants. Subsequently, Beckett subverts the Blanchotian-Sadean notion of isolation as both the mark and result of the individual's absolute power by utilising solitude as the ultimate signifier bespeaking the final, uncompromising desolate agony of individuals within the cylinder.

In a note attached to the original French manuscripts of *Bing* (1966), Beckett specifies that this text and its English translation, *Ping* (1967), 'may be regarded as the result or miniaturization of *Le Dépeupleur* abandoned [in June 1966 (Beckett, letter of 21 June

1966 to Arikha and Anne Atik, *LSB IV*, 33-34)] because of its intractable complexities' (qtd in Nixon in Beckett 2010f, xvi).[55] Like *The Lost Ones*, *Ping* confronts the reader with an unremittingly brutal world suffused by violence. Near the beginning of *Ping*, and then repeatedly throughout the text, the narrator states that the 'Legs' of the body envisaged as inhabiting the torturous white space of this work's environment are 'joined like sewn heels together right angle' (*Ping*, 123, 124, 125). As the text progresses, it is revealed that not only are the legs joined together in this manner, but also the toes ('toes joined like sewn heels together right angle' [*Ping*, 123]; 'White feet toes joined like sewn heels together right angle ping' [*Ping*, 124]) and the mouth ('Eyes holes light blue almost white mouth white seam like sewn invisible' [*Ping*, 123]; 'Nose ears white holes mouth white seam like sewn invisible' [*Ping*, 124]). The recurrent employment of the epithet 'like sewn' is hypertextually evocative of Sade's textual predilection for the sewing together of certain parts of people's bodies. The earliest description of this act in *120 journées* occurs in Duclos' narrating of the third passion described on the 24th day of the first part of the text, when she recalls 'a man who visited me for over five years in a row for the unique pleasure of having his arsehole sewn up' (Sade 2016, 264; Sade 2011a, 262); however, this is not the only example of the libertines sewing people's body parts together found within the texts written by the Divine Marquis with which Beckett was familiar. In the third part of *120 journées*, Madame Martaine tells the libertine protagonists of a man who 'swells [his victim] with water; next he sews up her cunt and her arse as well as her mouth and leaves her like this until the water breaks through the passages or she dies' (Sade 2016, 356; Sade 2011a, 346) and, in the fourth part of the text, Desgranges tells the libertines of a man who enjoys tearing a

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[55] Beckett's claim of having abandoned *Le Dépeupleur* is potentially somewhat misleading, as he returned to the text in 1970. See Nixon in Beckett 2010f, xiv; and *LSB IV*, 230, 232-34.

girl's heart out before then sewing it back into her chest and watching her die (Sade 2016, 373; Sade 2011a, 361). Moreover, at the conclusion of *Philosophie*, Eugénie is instructed by Dolmancé and Madame de Saint-Ange to sew her mother's vagina and anus closed (Sade 2006, 171-73; Sade 2000, 175-78). Subsequently, the narrator of *Ping*'s recurrent employment of the epithet 'like sewn' endows his descriptions of the protagonist of *Ping*'s body with a sense of Sadean violence. Whilst it is not clear whether this being's body is actually sewn together, the reader cannot help but feel that an act of violence has taken place at some point prior to the narrator's observing of this figure, resulting in this figure's legs, toes, and mouth having the appearance of having been viciously joined or closed.

The narrator's later observation that the body of this figure is covered in 'White scars invisible same white as flesh torn of old' (*Ping*, 124) affirms the reader's suspicions of pre-textual violence. By rendering the 'scars' upon this figure's body almost indistinguishable from the rest of this being's body, and from the light colouring the space in which they are interned ('all white bare white body fixed one yard legs joined like sewn' [*Ping*, 123]), this text minimalises the presence of violence by rendering it essentially undetectable to anyone but a person who, like the narrator, fixates upon the nuances of this body. But, at the same time, the narrator clearly accentuates the impacts which prior violence has had upon the body of the figure entrapped within the white space of *Ping*. The narrator's use of the viscerally affecting noun, 'flesh', functions in conjunction with the barbarous aoristic adjective, 'torn', to highlight the viciousness of the treatment to which the figure entrapped within *Ping*'s closed space has previously been subjected. The resultant dissonance produced by this concomitant minimalization and emphasising of the impacts of physical torment upon the observed figure's body characterises the actuality of violence as a tangible phantom within the very fabric of this text. In a modification of

Bataille's metatextual commentary concerning how Sade's originality and literary power results from his unflinching identification of sadism as the very centre of humanity, Beckett's text situates the unseen event of violence as a precondition of existence within its closed space. In *Ping* it is agony, rather than violence, which stands as the ultimate remainder of residual humanity.

5.3. The 'Torture Plays'

At a casual glance *Rough for Radio II* (written 1958, pub. 1975/1976) appears to centre around the violent torture of Fox as orchestrated by an Animator, recorded by a Stenographer, and carried out by Dick. This play's opening foregrounds the violent act, with the Animator asking if Dick is 'on [his] toes' (*RfRII*, 275), inspiring this mute torturer to '*Swish* [the] *bull's pizzle*' (*RfRII*, 275) which he wields in response. Upon hearing this sound, the Animator '*Admiringly*' (*RfRII*, 275) exclaims: 'Wow! Let's hear it land' (*RfRII*, 275), leading Dick to '*swish*' the bull's pizzle once more, this time with it landing with a '*formidable thud*' (*RfRII*, 275). And, as the text continues, the listener repeatedly hears the *'Swish and thud of pizzle on flesh*' (*RfRII*, 277-78), once as a '*Mild thud'* (*RfRII*, 281) after the Animator instructs Dick to hit Fox 'Just a shade lighter' (*RfRII*, 281) and once as a '*violent thud*' (*RfRII*, 281) eliciting a '*Faint cry from* FOX' (*RfRII*, 281). As Baroghel asserts, 'The violence that suffuses [this play] is directly reflected in the props chosen', with the bull's pizzle in particular having 'patent […] sadistic connotations' (DPhil thesis, 252). In *120 journées* victims of the libertines are described as being flogged with a 'bull's pizzle' (in French a 'nerf de bœuf' – a term which Beckett employs directly in the French text of *Rough for Radio II*, *Pochade radiophonique* [Beckett 1975, 2]) on 15 separate occasions (Sade 2016, 234-389; Sade

2011a, 234-375). Due to the prevalence of the 'bull's pizzle' within Sade's work, it becomes apparent that Beckett's choice of weapon for Dick within *Rough for Radio II* is no mere accident. Rather, this weapon constitutes a definitive, transpositional link between Beckett's and Sade's texts bespeaking the centrality of the Divine Marquis' *chef d'œuve* to Beckett's envisioning of violence within his own dramatic *œuvre* at this point in time.

Moreover, Dick's silence whilst torturing Fox draws directly upon Bataille's metatextual analysis of the Sadean formulation of violence espoused in 'Vice is Perhaps the Heart of Man'. As noted above, in this essay Bataille conceptualises violence as a silent language of power (Bataille 2022, 53). Comparably, Dick only hits Fox when ordered to do so by the Animator and maintains a stony silence through the play due to the fact that the violence which he inflicts upon his victim has been *a priori* justified by one in a position of ordained power. The difference between Beckett's formulation of physical violence through the use of the whip within this text and that seen in Sade's work is, of course, that the act of violence itself is unseen in Beckett's play and non-fetishistic. Whilst the listener/reader of *Rough for Radio II* is aware of violence taking place, the actuality of this violence is left entirely to their imagination because of this play's status as a radio play. This enables the work to sustain the presence of violence within its aural atmosphere whilst simultaneously preventing this from becoming the single defining feature of the text; it is almost possible to forget that Dick is a character until the intrusion of the '*thud*' of the 'bull's pizzle' striking Fox's skin recurs. Thus, Beckett defamiliarises Sade's approach to violence by situating it at a certain distance from the reader/listener. Rather than being positioned as a voyeur observing brutally realised violence horrifying as they are in Sade's texts, the listener/reader of *Rough for Radio II* is a detached 'witness' to unseen violence.

Additionally, Dick's repeated whipping is not the only form of violence depicted within this text. In a Beckettian-Sadean reinterpretation of eroticism and sexuality, Beckett here envisages the erotic action as a method of inflicting pain:

> S: He has gone off, sir.
> A: Dick – no, wait. Kiss him, miss, perhaps that will stir some fibre
> S: Where, sir?
> A: In his heart, in his entrails – or some other part.
> S: No, I mean kiss him where, sir?
> A: [*Angry*.] Why on his stinker of a mouth, What do you suppose? [STENOGRAPHER *kisses* FOX. *Howl from* FOX.] Till it bleeds! Kiss it white! [*Howl from* FOX.] Suck his gullet!
> [*Silence*.]
> S: He has fainted away, sir.
> A: Ah…perhaps I went too far. (*RfRII*, 282-83)

As Fox's '*Howl*' indicates, he finds being forcibly kissed by the Stenographer more agonising than being beaten by Dick, thereby aligning Beckett's conceiving of sexuality as a weapon in this work with Sade's explorations of the violence of eroticism in *120 journées*. Furthermore, the Animator's exclamative commands, 'Till it bleeds! Kiss it white! […] [and] Suck his gullet!', suggest a sadistic relish within this figure's witnessing the Steographer's actions whilst concomitantly illustrating how his own sexual and violent desires are enflamed. Moreover, the Animator's description of Fox's mouth as a 'stinker of' an orifice is redolent of Curval's preference for fetid mouths in *120 journées*: 'Curval […] was mad about [Julie]: his most divine pleasures were plucked from her stinking mouth – kissing it sent him into delirium' (Sade 2016, 26; Sade 2011a, 37). When this is considered in combination with the abject implications of the Animator's use of the term 'gullet' and the deathly implications of Fox being 'kiss[ed] white', it becomes clear that in *Rough for Radio II*, as in Sade's works, sexuality is inextricably bonded to violence, power, and the aesthetics of disgust. However, contrastingly to the majority of Sade's torturers, Beckett's Animator acts through proxies rather than administering torture himself, and is incapable of controlling his excitement

when witnessing sexual torture. These two textual nuances reveal how Beckett transposes and alters Sade's conceptualisation of torture whilst still utilising Sadean mechanisms of exerting the master's power over the victim. Unlike Sade's libertines, who express their sovereign power over themselves through their ataraxia in the face of unimaginably harrowing acts of violence, Animator loses control of himself and, in so doing, loses sight of the purpose behind his torturing Fox, stating 'perhaps I went too far'. Animator is thus an imperfectly human torturer.

Despite the complex depiction of quasi-Sadean torture within this play, it would be erroneous to claim that torture lies at the very heart of the text. Rather, as Cohn tacitly comments, 'words are at the core of [*Rough for Radio II*'s] action' (Cohn 2005, 274). This situating of the word as the primary method through which this play's action occurs, and through which the suffering of the Animator and Stenographer are made known to the listener/reader, is most visible at the text's climax:

> A: May we have that passage again, miss?
> S: 'Have yourself opened, Maud would say, opened –'
> A: [*Delighted*.] That frequentative! [*Pause*.] Sorry, miss.
> S: 'Have yourself opened, Maud would say, opened –'
> A: Don't skip, miss, the text in its entirety if you please.
> S: I skip nothing, sir. [*Pause*.] What have I skipped, sir?
> A: [*Emphatically*.] '…between two kisses…' [*Sarcastic.*] That mere trifle! [*Angry*.] How can we ever hope to get anywhere if you suppress gems of that magnitude?
> S: But, sir, he never said anything of the kind.
> A: [*Angry*.] '…Maud would say, *between two kisses*, etc.' Amend.
> S: But, sir, I –
> A: What the devil are you deriding, miss? My hearing? My memory? My good faith? [*Thunderous*.] Amend!
> S: [*Feebly.*] As you will, sir.
> A: Let us hear how it runs now.
> S: [*Tremulous.*] 'Have yourself opened, Maud would say, between two kisses, opened up, it's nothing, I'll give him suck if he's still alive, ah but no, no no.' [*Faint pencil.*] 'No no.'
> [*Silence.*]
> A: Don't cry, miss, dry your pretty eyes and smile at me. Tomorrow, who knows, we may be free. (*RfRII*, 283-84)

Whilst the Animator's abusing of the Stenographer through his questioning of her ability to accurately record Fox's words is demonstrative of the imbalanced master-slave relations existing between them, it is the final line of the text which strikingly recharacterizes the entirety of this work's action. Animator's hope that 'Tomorrow' he and the Stenographer 'may be free' reveals that his actions throughout the play have been ordered by an unseen person or organisation situated within a position of greater authority. Consequently, Animator's role within the recurrent cycles of torture dominating this text is itself recategorized: he is not a master-orchestrator of torture as he has been presented throughout the play, but rather simply another proxy-slave through which violence is enacted. This has a significant impact upon Beckett's conceiving of master-slave dynamics within this text. As Baroghel comments, the 'three torturers [Animator, Stenographer, and Dick] are no freer than Fox himself' (Baroghel DPhil thesis, 253). Beckett's comprehension of master-slave relations in this play subsequently represents a radical rewriting of both Sadean and Hegelian comprehensions of this dynamic; in *Rough for Radio II* the possibility of the slave ever achieving freedom and self-realisation is obliterated by the establishment of a potentially unending cascade of pseudo-masters. In short, in Beckett's comprehension of master-slave dynamics within this play there are no identifiable masters. There are only slaves inflicting violence upon other slaves at the behest of an unseen 'master', who themself may be yet another slave. Thus, only the permanence of suffering without end is guaranteed in Beckett's text.

The unremitting bleakness of *Rough for Radio II*'s presentation of the torturer/victim-victim relationship would later be contrasted by the pathos-inspiring vision of resilience depicted in *Catastrophe*. As Emilie Morin comments, whilst 'Beckett's parallel between brutal oppression and playacting has been widely recognised […] th[is] play's

political dimension evades consensus: it has been read as a solipsistic reflection upon the dispossessed body; as a rumination on the mechanics of theatrical spectacle; as an exposition of the tyranny practiced by Soviet Communism; [and] as an examination of the enduring power of dissent in the face of oppression' (Morin 2017, 243). I propose that by examining this text within the specific context of Beckett's extensive engagement with Sade, it becomes possible to read this play as one of Beckett's most striking theatrical engagements with the idea of sovereignty.

In *Catastrophe*, the Director systematically manipulates and exposes the body of the text's silent protagonist in the hope of perfecting the 'catastrophe' which he wishes to present upon the stage to the thunderous applause of an audience ('There's our catastrophe. In the bag. […] He'll have them on their feet' [*Catastrophe*, 147]). After having conducted an initial survey of the Protagonist's body, contemplated the pose which he is made to strike, and weighed the appropriateness of the Protagonist's outerwear (*Catastrophe*, 143), the Director demands that his Assistant strip the Protagonist of his clothes so as to expose 'His night attire' (*Catastrophe*, 144) – a set of '*old, grey pyjamas*' (*Catastrophe*, 145) visually evocative of the garb worn by prisoners in concentration camps during World War II and the ash-grey uniforms worn by prisoners of the Communist regime in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, which subsequently augment the sense of cruelty suffusing this text. The Protagonist of this play is therefore depicted as being completely subject to the whims of the Director's desires; he '*submits, inert*' (*Catastrophe*, 145) to the Director's commands as carried out by his Assistant. When this state of apparent submission is combined with the spectacle of the Protagonist being placed upon '*a black block 18 inches high*' (*Catastrophe*, 143), and with his continual shivering following the removal of his 'gown' (*Catastrophe*, 143, 145), it becomes clear that 'This play actively stages a structural

homology between the act of staging and the act of torturing' (Rabaté 2020, 60). Furthermore, as Rabaté comments, the Director's planned 'exhibition of a crippled old man on a stage as a degraded subhuman being' calls to mind the sinister, horrifying images of 'Stalinian trials, with their absurd accusations and displays of broken but consenting victims' (Rabate 2020, 60). Hence, *Catastrophe*, for the vast majority of its brief runtime, confronts the viewer with a brutal display of how human cruelty can seemingly strip an individual of their sovereignty, reducing them to nothing more than a living shade.

But at the very end of this play, just as the imagined audience watching the Director's play begins to burst into a '*Distant storm of applause*' (*Catastrophe*, 147), the Protagonist performs the very action that has been forbidden by the tyrannical figure of the Director: 'P *raises his head, fixes the audience. The applause falters, dies*' (*Catastrophe*, 147). This single action completely inverts the play's constructed image of the Protagonist as a broken victim systematically stripped of his sovereignty through the torturous actions of the Director. As Beckett himself elucidated in a meeting with Mel Gussow, the Protagonist's final gesture is 'not inten[ded] […] [as] an appeal to the audience. Rather [it] is meant to cow onlookers into submission through the intensity of his gaze and of his stoicism […] he is a triumphant martyr rather than a sacrificial victim' (Beckett qtd in Gussow 1983, 3). Consequently, the Protagonist of *Catastrophe* reasserts his sovereignty through this defiant, minimalist gesture which informs the audience that, in spite of the suffering which he has endured at the hands of the totalitarian Director, his ability to resist the demands of those torturing him still subsists. Furthermore, this gesture circumvents the bellicose force of the torturous machinery employed by the Director to achieve his aim through its subversive power; the Director's placing of this person upon a stage in a prison-like garb is made, finally, not to belittle the Protagonist, but rather to highlight the transcendent strength of

his resistance. Beckett thus presents the viewer with a 'catastrophe' which completely undermines the Sadean conception of victims as non-sovereign beings whose autonomy has been destroyed by their torturers. Beckett's Protagonist highlights how, even in the face of extreme torture, something eminently human remains. Even when reduced to the horrifying state of being next to nothing through violence, there is an indefinable something which survives. It is this indefinable something – this refusal to be completely broken no matter the hardships endured – which is the central feature of Beckett's later-textual, residual humanity.

Beckett's final dramatic text, *What Where* (1983/1986), presents the entangling of sovereignty and violence in a disconcertingly minimalist manner which facilitates both an accentuation of the impacts of violence as well as a minimalization of the mechanics of torture within the text and which, in turn, gives rise to the uncertain ontological dynamics dominating this play's engagement with questions of sovereignty. But before unravelling the nuances of this text's depiction of the above-mentioned issues, it is necessary to give a brief account of its action. *What Where* features five characters: Bam, Bem, Bim, Bom, and the Voice of Bam. In stage productions only four of these characters physically appear on-stage, with the voice of Bam instead being represented by a '*small megaphone at head level*' (*WW*, 151) situated '*Downstage left*' of the '*3m x 2m*' '*Playing area*' (*WW*, 153). In the tv-adaptations of this work which Beckett prepared for Süddeutscher Rundfunk (1985, henceforth SDR) and for an American production by Magic Theatre, directed by Gontarski and filmed by Global Village (1987), all five characters are visible on-stage at some point in the production, with the voice of Bam permanently occupying the upper left-hand corner of the screen. The play presents the viewer with a series of three formulaic, repetitive accounts of off-stage or off-screen torture intended to make the victim confess to having

said the undefinable 'it' (*WW*, 156, 157) and unlocatable 'where' (*WW*, 158, 159) to his torturer. In the television versions of this play, the abstract pronoun 'it' is replaced with the equally abstract noun, 'what' (Beckett 1987), strengthening the connection between the play's dialogue and its title. Each of the on-stage questionings results in a non-confession, inspiring Bam to order one of the other characters to torture the former interrogator with the cold command: 'Take him away and give him the works until he confesses' (*WW*, 156, 158, 159). Thus, '*What Where* presents a[] […] cycle of damnation in which each torturer becomes a victim in his turn' (Rabaté 2020, 62). Interspersing these accounts of what the torturer did not learn by 'Giv[ing] [his victim] the works', the Voice of Bam records a series of seasonal changes, beginning in spring (*WW*, 153, 154, 155) and concluding in winter (*WW*, 160), whilst reuttering his assertion: 'I am alone' (*WW*, 154, 155, 157, 159, 160). The play closes with the Voice of Bam accompanied by Bam alone, challenging the viewer to 'Make sense who may' (*WW*, 160) before 'switch[ing] off' (*WW*, 160).

This play is suffused with darkly present, yet distanced, violence. At the beginning of each new reporting section, the torturer affirms that he gave his victim 'the works' before responding to Bam's follow-up questions:

> Bam: You gave him the works?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: Yes.
> Bam: And he didn't say it? [p. 156]/And he didn't say where? [p. 158]
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: No.
> Bam: He wept?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: Yes.
> Bam: Screamed?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: Yes.
> Bam: Begged for mercy?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: Yes.
> Bam: But didn't say it? [p. 156]/But didn't say where? [p. 158]
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: No.
> Bam: Then why stop?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: He passed out.
> Bam: And you didn't revive him?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: I tried.
> Bam: Well?
> Bom [p. 156]/Bim [p. 158]: I couldn't. (*WW*, 156, 158)

Bam's own interrogation of Bem – the individual who is charged with giving Bim 'the works' following the latter's failure to extract the required confession from Bom – follows the same pattern as that laid out above, with the editing Voice of Bam summarising it through the dismissive phrase, 'So on' (*WW*, 159). Bam's repeated questioning as to whether 'the works' had the desired physical effect upon the victim to whom they were administered characterises these actions as definitively torturous – they are obviously designed to inflict an absolute maximum of pain and, in so doing, break the victim down until they are willing to provide the torturer with the information they want. Yet the text never details precisely which acts of torture constitute 'the works', and is also careful to prevent the viewer from hearing the tears, screams, and pleas which 'the works' produce. The actuality of the pain which 'the works' inflict is thus kept at a distance from the viewer –they are left to imagine the horrors constituting these actions instead of being subjected to a disturbing aural soundscape or to the distressing spectacle of simulated torture upon the stage/screen. Consequently, 'the works' are capable of 'condens[ing] in four words the thousands of pages written on the topic by Sade, who relished in describing the most painful tortures' (Rabaté 2020, 63) whilst simultaneously bypassing the challenge of shock potentially preventing critical engagement with the play. The Sadean shade of extreme violence is thus invoked in *What Where*, but is prevented from dominating the work.

Furthermore, as Rabaté comments, *What Where*'s depiction of a cyclical recurrence of violence 'creat[es] a vertiginous spiral of questions, to be understood in the Roman or medieval sense of *quaestio*, the investigation of a witness by the means of torture. Each "question" is loaded with unspoken echoes of its abstract semantics allied with the immediate threat of *quaestio per tormenta*' (Rabaté 2020, 63). Even though torture is

inevitable within this play, its efficacy as a method of interrogation is called into question by its repeated failures to achieve its final goal. No matter how horrific 'the works' are, they are incapable of discovering the all-important 'what' and 'where'. Beckett's text may thus be said to be raising ethical concerns about the role of torture within the interrogative process. The text is seemingly asking: what is the point of administering 'the works' repeatedly when their efficacy is indeterminable at best? And, implicitly, is Bam really interested in discovering 'what' and 'where', or does he simply enjoy torture? Naturally, in this minimalist environment these questions remain without answers. Ergo, in *What Where* Beckett rewrites the Sadean justification of torture as a way of exerting power over the other for the sake of exerting power over the other by subtly asking: what is the point of this ostensibly pointless violence? – and, if it is pointless, then why does it persist? The Sadean proposition, of course, is because violence is an essential, sovereign part of humanity.

What Where seems to support this proposal, but does so in a definitively Beckettian manner by recasting the violence of 'the works' as an introspective tool which Bam repeatedly applies to variants of his self represented by Bem, Bim, and Bom. In a note directly beneath the *dramatis personae*, Beckett specifies that the '*Players*' playing Bam, Bem, Bim, and Bom must be '*as alike as possible*' (*WW*, 151), and should all be dressed in the '*Same long grey gown*' (*WW*, 151) with the '*Same long grey hair*' (*WW*, 151). In the television adaptation of this play, Beckett reworked these specifications by 'substitut[ing] [distorted] masklike faces for the full-length grey figures' (Cohn 2005, 378-79; cf. Bernini 2021, 12-14). In his recent essay, 'Making and Remaking Samuel Beckett's *What Where*', Walter Asmus recalls that when Beckett and he were working on the SDR television production of *What Where*, Beckett continually asked for the brightness of the production

to be lowered until it reached 'the limit of what is visible' (Asmus 2021, 183). This had the marked effect of rendering the faces of the four visible characters even more indistinguishable from one another. Consequently, the text itself and the productions of it to which Beckett himself contributed suggest that Bam, Bom, Bim, and Bem are vestiges of a single, fragmented entity. As Bernini eloquently puts it, due to the marked similarities in the characters' appearances *What Where* can be seen as

> a modelling of the apparent self as *altered apparent motion*, showing how nothing or nobody actually moved ('Without journey') because the synchronic eruptions of flashing Pearl-like selves never coalesced into a diachronically unified moving entity. (Bernini 2021, 16)

Bearing this reading in mind – which is supported by Beckett's remark that in this play 'one [is] made up as four' (qtd in Asmus 2021, 176) – reveals how, in *What Where*, Beckett is once again conceptualising violence as an introspective tool enabling the singular-yet-divided torturer/victim entity to plumb the depths of their consciousness. In subjecting each of the other characters to the brutal process of 'the works', Bam is, in actuality, repeatedly inflicting violence upon different versions of himself in an attempt to get them to tell him some unknown, and importantly, unknowable 'what' and 'where' either pertaining to a particular aspect of himself or, given Beckett's description of the playing area in this text as a 'field of memory' (Beckett qtd by Gontarski in Beckett 1995b, 450), relating to some faded memory. Ergo, in *What Where* Beckett again endows violence with the reflexive purpose of self-interrogation and exploration. In so doing, he definitively rewrites the Sadean maxim that violence is a tool to be wielded as an expression of power over another being and hence an affirmation of one's own sovereignty. The de-physicalised violence spectrally portrayed in *What Where* is therefore the manifestation of Bam's desperate attempts, and his inability, to claim sovereign ownership over the externalised ontological cascade comprising the illusion of his self. Therefore, in *What Where* sadism is innately

'bound up with the need felt by' Beckett's characters to try to 'achieve self-consciousness' (Bataille 2022, 52).

5.4. The Later Minimalist Plays of Entrapment

On 17 July 1968, Beckett responded to a request by Kenneth Tynan asking him for previously unproduced or new material to be staged in the 1969 New York revue, *Oh! Calcutta!* (*LSB IV*, 135n.1). Almost three months later, in a letter of 3 October 1968 to Schneider, Beckett stated that he had 'had no request from Tynan for permission to use Come & Go in his N.Y. show. What he did ask for was the "breath play". I gave him permission for this on condition that both you and Grove were consulted and had no objection. As a garbled account of this [the play] had been circulated I wrote it down for the first time' (*LSB IV*, 134). The play to which Beckett alludes is the wordless, intensely minimalist, 35-second dramaticule, *Breath* (written 1966/1968, pub. 1969).[56]

Despite Beckett having granted Tynan permission to include this play in *Oh! Calcutta!*, the event of its initial staging at the Eden Theatre in New York was highly controversial. As Beckett's letter of 16 February 1970 to Francis Warner reveals, Tynan had taken the liberty of 'enrich[ing]' the play's manuscript by appending the phrase, 'including naked bodies' (*LSB IV*, 223), to Beckett's opening tableau of 'miscellaneous rubbish' (*Breath*, 79). This addition, and the subsequent inclusion of staged naked bodies, outraged Beckett not only because it demonstrates an intense disregard for his artistic vision, but also because it directly violates the positioning of the body within this text as simultaneously

[56] According to Cohn, Beckett had written the play out once before the above-mentioned 17 July 1968 letter to Tynan, on a paper tablecloth from a café in 1966. See Ackerley and Gontarski 2006, 73.

present and absent. In the words of Sozita Goudouna, *Breath*'s employment of a recorded human cry at the beginning and ending of the play's action-proper, and its use of recorded breathing between these cries, functions in conjunction with its exclusion of the physical body from the on-stage tableau to generate 'an "aesthetics of presence" (respiration) [and] an "aesthetics of absence" (missing figure)' (Goudouna 2018, 19) held in tension with one another. The inclusion of bodies upon the stage, obviously, decimates this disturbing tension. Whilst the above-detailed reasons adequately explain Beckett's indignation at Tynan's unauthorised editing of his text, I propose that there is third aspect contributing to his anger. By including naked, prone bodies amongst the mess comprising the on-stage tableau – and hence endowing *Breath* with an overtly erotic tinge which brought the play in-line with the emphasis placed upon the sexual throughout *Oh! Calcutta!* – Tynan, albeit unwittingly, came uncomfortably close to unveiling two hidden sources lurking behind Beckett's conceiving of this play: 'La Raison de Sade' and *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…*.

In order to truly appreciate the ways in which Beckett's reading about Sade impacts the formulation of *Breath*, it is necessary to examine how this extremely minimalist piece functions. As Goudouna asserts, *Breath* does not actually begin with a tableau of 'miscellaneous rubbish' strewn across a stage, but rather with the 'classic raising […] of the curtain' (Goudouna 2018, 188; cf. *Breath*, 79) signalling the commencement of the play's action, just as it is finished by the lowering of the curtain signifying the play's close (*Breath*, 79). Thus, in spite of its challenging of theatrical norms through its present-absenting of the ominously de-corporealised body, this dramaticule still utilises traditionally theatrical elements to establish the 'the temporal boundaries of the drama' (Goundouna 2018, 188). Yet, there is formidable dissonance between *Breath*'s actual duration and the narratively implied passage of time within the text.

Following the curtain's raising, the viewer is presented with the arresting image of a stage unoccupied by any actor – and even devoid of any aural cues suggesting the coming presence of an actor – strewn with rubbish, bathed in a dull twilight (*Breath*, 79). The combination of this tableau of rubbish bathed in grey light with the eerie silence is immediately affecting, suffusing the play's opening with feelings of decay and funereality. It is as if the viewer is gazing upon the aftermath of some cataclysmic event – a great catastrophe or conflict between the human, signalled by the presence of rubbish, and the absence of the human engendered by the aforementioned absence of any other sign of humanity. In Herbert Blau's words, the viewer is situated as gazing upon the void, 'the silence of nonexistence' (Blau 2008, 53) bespeaking the present-absence of humanity for the uncomfortable duration of 'about five seconds' (*Breath*, 79) – just long enough for the viewer to begin to wonder about the nature of the catastrophe that occurred prior to *Breath*'s commencement.

As the sight of this tableau is verging upon becoming unbearable, the play's action-proper is commenced by a 'Faint brief cry' (*Breath*, 79) – an 'instant of recorded vagitus' (*Breath*, 79) – followed by 'immediate[] inspiration' accompanied by the brightening of the grey light (*Breath*, 79). This 'cry' and the inhalation following it are evocative of a baby's first breaths, whilst also functioning as a crescendo reminiscent of the rising of action in the opening-part of a 'well-made play' (see Aristotle 2013, 64-103) – an aspect of the text amplified by the 'slow increase of light' towards a notably 'Not bright' (*Breath*, 79) maximum. The indicated building of action and tension, and the metaphorical passing of the first-half of a person's life signalled by the play's aural dimensions, captivates the viewer as they approach the central 'Silence' (*Breath*, 79). But, as Simpson points out, the

commencement of this play's action-proper through the 'instant of recorded vagitus' is far from straight-forward in its resonances:

> Richard H. Abrams (1983, 49) reminds us that […] 'from the baby's standpoint the cry expresses agony', and Beckett's reading of Otto Rank's theory of the trauma of birth as the original experience of bodily suffering inflects the emphasis on human respiration and the birth cry in *Breath*. Beckett's notes on Rank's *Trauma of Birth* pay particular attention to the possibility of the 'new-born child's physiological injuries' resulting from labour, and to the trauma of birth arising from 'the change from a highly pleasurable situation to an extremely painful one' (TCD MS 10971/8/35; qtd in Feldman 2008, 111). He also recorded Rank's theorising that breathing pathologies occurring later in life, such as asthma and dysponea, might be understood as 'physical reproductions of the birth trauma' (TCD MS 10971/8/35, qtd in Feldman 2008, 112). This dense interweaving of birth, breath, and physical suffering underlies the structures of Beckett's dramaticule. (Simpson 2022, 158)

Subsequently, the initiating sound of *Breath*'s action-proper is underlaid by pain, thereby accentuating the disconcerting agony established via the play's opening tableau of waste. The viewer is therefore located in a suspended state of unease: 'We find ourselves on the boundary of the painful experience, simultaneously resisting the unsought physical affect that threatens to invade our own body and straining to comprehend the scene before us' (Simpson 2022, 158-59). When this is combined with the aforementioned absence of the physical body from the scene before us, the impact of this unease becomes even more elevated. *Breath* is deliberately locating its viewer in a state of indeterminacy through its indeterminate representation of the body as absent from the stage, but present through the action of the recorded sounds of the initial cry and inhalation, creating an intrinsically disturbing encounter – or non-encounter – with an aurally presently-absent and absently-present person juxtaposed with the actuality of decay.

The 'Silence' at the centre of this play is a pivotal moment filled with anticipation. It is the hesitation present within a gasp, the shocking silence of horror following a catastrophe. Considering this instance of soundlessness within the context of *Breath*'s figural narrative enables it to function as the play's instance of peripeteia; but this only becomes apparent when the play is viewed as a whole. At the actual moment of the pause

the viewer is held in a state of tension: they are thrown into a position of indeterminate expectation once again surveying the remains of a lost 'humanity in ruins' (Beckett 1995a, 278). The eventual 'Expiration' and 'decrease of light' back to the grey of the text's opening (*Breath*, 79) alleviates this tension and may hence be understood as the dénouement of the 'well-made play', operating as a collapse towards *Breath*'s final 'cry' (*Breath*, 79) and an implicit unravelling of the latter half of the unseen figure's life. This short play thus disrupts our conceptions of the 'well-made play' by drastically distorting the temporal constraints associated with Aristotelian notions of dramatic decorum through its use of figural narrative. *Breath*'s viewer simultaneously experiences the literal passing of 35 seconds and, metaphorically, of a lifetime, explaining why Beckett felt that this work is hypertextually connected to Ausone de Chancel's: 'On entre, on crie/Et c'est la vie./On crie, on sort,/Et c'est la mort' [One enters, one cries,/And that's life./One cries, one exits,/And that's death] (letter of 21 April 1969 to John Kobler, *LSB IV*, 207-08).

However, such a neat summary of this play is disrupted by one all-important aspect: the establishment of implied cyclicity engendered in the text's insistence that the closing 'cry' must be 'identical [to the opening cry], switching on and off strictly synchronised light and breath' (*Breath*, 79). Ending *Breath*'s action-proper with a birth-cry indistinguishable from that occurring towards the play's opening, as well as with a re-establishment of the grey light suffusing the work's earliest moments, leads the viewer to anticipate a second rising of light accompanied by another instance of inhalation. *Breath* subsequently recharacterizes its figural narrative as one which not only 'telescope[s] an entire life within a period of time roughly equivalent to that of one respiration' (Goudouna 2018, 188), but also ensnares the viewer within a hellscape where they are continually made to not quite witness the process of 'dying' whilst being perpetually denied the relief of a 'definable

death' (Cohn 1980, 4). It is at this point that the significance of Beckett's reading of Blanchot's 'La Raison de Sade' and Lely's *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…* becomes visible.

In *Breath* Beckett creates a dramaticule portraying an 'infinite death' (Blanchot 2022, 46). The de-corporealised human figure generated by this text's aural atmosphere is presented, through the implied cyclicity of this text, as being caught within a cycle of birth, life, decay, death, and re-birth *ad infinitum*. It is only through the establishing of a definitive temporal boundary in the form of the final curtain that the text is bought to a close. Its figural narrative is without cease. Moreover, Beckett's utilisation of lighting which is deliberately 'Not bright' even when at its maximum can be read as a reprise of the eternal twilight suffusing the cell in which Sade was held in Vincennes. This, in turn, augments the pervasive feeling of the absent-yet-present human figure being entrapped within a carceral situation in which they are eternally tormented. Subsequently, *Breath* utilises ideas gleaned from Beckett's reading of metatexts about Sade to create an intensely condensed dramatic encounter with the horror innate to its negativized portrait of an entrapped, decaying, absent-yet-present humanity. *Breath* concentrates and collapses the dialectics of life and death, presence and absence, and light and dark into a single, deeply disturbing, carceral dramaticule compressing simultaneously an experienced period of a mere 35 seconds, the metaphorical course of an entire lifetime, and an implied eternity of agony.

The carceral situation of a de-corporealised, present-absent being entrapped in a cycle of unending pain and decay in *Breath* anticipates the fashioning of the painful, carceral situation depicted, and 'endured' (Simpson 2022, 125) in an embodied manner by actors, in *Not I* (written 1972, pub. 1973/1975). The opening stage directions specify:

> *As house lights down* MOUTH*'s voice unintelligible behind curtain. House lights out. Voice continues unintelligible behind curtain, 10 seconds. With rise of curtain ad-libbing from text as required leading when curtain fully up and attention sufficient into* [Mouth's monologue-proper] (*NI*, 85)

Equally, following the dropping of the curtain it is stated that Mouth's *'Voice continues behind curtain, unintelligible, 10 seconds, ceases as house lights up*' (*NI*, 93). Consequently, the 'collage of muddled memories' (Simpson 2022, 126) making up the content of Mouth's monologue-proper outlast the physical closure of the play. *Not I* thus indicates that Mouth's exhausting and exhaustive attempt to give voice to the traumatic catastrophe occurring outside of the textual fabric of the play – and, in so doing, claim ownership over her innately disunified self via her practice of shattered, failed testimony – is unending. Subsequently, Mouth is depicted as being entrapped within a ceaseless recurrence of trauma and failed-testimony. The words which are simultaneously forced and flowing from her in a torrent of speech that often overwhelms the viewer's ability to comprehend precisely what she is saying – and which may subsequently be said to predominantly 'work on the nerves of the audience, not its intellect' (Beckett qtd in Brater 1987, 23) – are therefore symptomatic of a 'Beckettian wound': a wound which can never be healed and which is continually reopened by any attempt to heal it (Levy 2007, 13). Pain suffuses Mouth's textual and extra-textual existence. She is trapped within an unending cycle of disassociation and agony constituting a de-physicalised carceral space: a prison constructed from, and by, the fragments of her broken mind.

But, it is only when one interrogates the content of Mouth's monologue that the Sadean dimensions of this text are fully revealed. As indicated by the title, the defining aspect of Mouth's existence is her inability to unify the disparate traces of her self which has been *a priori* fragmented by an extra-textual event of traumatic violence one 'April morning' (*NI*, 86, 88, 91, 93). Due to its unelaborated nature this violent event takes on the form of a void – an 'incommunicable [instance of] suffering unknowable to victim and would-be

witness alike' (Simpson 2022, 136). Mouth is incapable of ever saying 'I' as doing so would constitute an assertion of her ownership over her traumatised body and mind. As Pountney puts it, in *Not I* 'the implication is that if this something is told, all will become clear. […] If Mouth could recognise that she is telling her own story, it is possible that she too would be allowed to stop repeating it' (Pountney 1988, 47, 123). This inability to ever say 'I' is repeatedly literalised in the text, with Mouth repeatedly crying, 'what?...who?...no!...she!...' (*NI*, 86, 88, 91, 92, 93), whenever the threat of her being able to claim ownership over herself becomes almost overwhelming; however, the most striking example of the unbridgeable distance between Mouth's narrating self and the narrated self (which is, in actuality, also herself) is witnessed through her active refusal to acknowledge the narrated body as her own body even as she admits that the narrated self must have come to this realisation:

> all silent as the grave…no part—…what?...the buzzing?...yes…all silent but for the buzzing…so called…no part of her moving…that she could feel…just the eyelids…presumably…on and off…shut out the light…reflex they call it…no feeling of any kind…but the lids…even best of times…who feels them?...opening…shutting…all that moisture…but the brain still…still sufficiently…oh very much so!...at this stage…in control…under control…to question even this…[…]…so it reasoned…[…]…when suddenly…gradually…she realis—…what?...the buzzing?...yes…all dead still but for the buzzing…when suddenly she realised…words were—…what…who?...no!...she!...[…]…realised words were coming…a voice she did not recognise…at first…so long since it had sounded…then finally has to admit…could be none other…than her own…[…]…and now this stream…not catching the half of it…not the quarter…no idea…what she was saying…imagine!...no idea what she was saying!...till she began trying to…delude herself…it was not hers at all…not her voice at all…and no doubt would have…[…]…when suddenly she felt…gradually she felt…her lips moving…imagine!...her lips moving!...(*NI*, 87-89)

Mouth's alienation from her narrated self, her narrated body, and her unnarrated body is communicated to the viewer through the complex interaction of her repeated use of the third-person pronoun singular with a palpable sense of dramatic irony and the visible fragmentation of Mouth's partially-staged body. Mouth continually others her narrated self in a manner indicative of traumatic dissociation (Herman 2015, 34-43) and, through the insistent use of the aforementioned third-person singular pronoun as well as the above-

quoted crying of ‘no!’ whenever it dawns upon her that perhaps she is speaking of herself, repeatedly resists the possibility of re-unification of her shattered self. The sense of dramatic irony within this passage is generated by the fact that Mouth is narrating how her dissociated narrated self is forced into the act of re-unifying of her mind and body through the semantics of corporeal actualities: the narrated self can feel ‘her lips moving’ as she is speaking. It would therefore require an active effort against the forces of Reason for the narrated self to sustain the evident divide between her mind and her narrated body. This active self-denial is precisely the action which Mouth herself undertakes.

When these aspects of Mouth’s utterance are considered in tandem with the fragmentation and isolation of her body through the play’s use of lighting and darkness – Mouth is, as her name implies, an isolated mouth elevated ‘*about 8 feet above stage level*’ (*NI*, 85) seemingly lacking further corporeal existence – it becomes clear that the text is presenting its viewer with a harrowing, de-corporealised, yet still intensely physical, representation of the after-effects of violence upon the self. Mouth’s staged isolation from the rest of her body serves to emphasise her inability to ever reclaim ownership over herself and, in so doing, unify her body and mind. As Simpson states,

> the very concept of healing testimony is antithetical to the more often unsettling experience of watching *Not I* […] In place of any cognitively intelligible insight into the other’s suffering, the corrupted version[] of testimony in *Not I* […] instead stimulate[s] a responsive corporeal discomfort in [its] spectators (Simpson 2022, 127)

through its desecration of the human body and its harrowing insistence upon fragmentation. Subsequently, *Not I* dramatises how violence may strip a person of their sovereign power over their self whilst simultaneously sidestepping the potentially repulsive, and challenging, actualities of violence, but still managing to impart the impacts of violence to the viewer. Hence, this text renders the viewer pre-eminently aware of the effects of

trauma and violence through its portrayal of Mouth as an essentially non-sovereign being, whilst still maintaining the formulation of the occasion of violence as, to borrow Giorgio Agamben's phrase, an 'essential lacuna': Mouth is 'b[earing] witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to' (Agamben 1999, 13). As Simpson says (2022, 147-48), there is no intersubjective comprehension of the pain in this play because there never can be any understanding of Mouth's pain. *Not I* therefore disturbs its viewers by metamorphosing the Sadean perspectival emphasis upon the absolute sovereign power of the torturer into a Beckettian presentation of the decimation of sovereignty experienced by the victim of incomprehensible violence.

Yet this is not the only way in which Beckett's knowledge of Sade informs the formulation of Mouth's monologue. In a truly disturbing passage expressing the numbing impacts which trauma may have upon its victim, Mouth coalesces the notions of pain and pleasure into a single point of unfeeling negation whilst simultaneously belittling the idea of 'a merciful […] God':

> first thought was…oh long after…sudden flash…she was being punished…for her sins…a number of which then…further proof if proof were needed…flashed through her mind…one after another…then dismissed as foolish…oh long after…this thought dismissed…as she suddenly…gradually realised…she was not suffering…imagine!...not suffering!...indeed could not remember…oh hand…when she had suffered less…unless of course she was…*meant* to be suffering…ha!...*thought* to be suffering…just as the off time…in her life…when clearly intended to be having pleasure…she was in fact…having none…not the slightest…in which case of course…that notion of punishment…which had first occurred to her…brought up as she had been to believe…with the other waifs…in a merciful…[*Brief laugh.*]…God…[*Good laugh.*]… (*NI*, 86-87)

Besides the viscerally affecting '*Screams*' (*NI*, 87) interjecting the ceaseless flow of words falling from Mouth's mouth when she is discussing how her narrated self felt 'so disconnected' (*NI*, 87) from her body during the unpictured traumatic event of violence overshadowing the text – two sounds which cut to the viewer's core in their sharp expression of dramatised horror and pain due to the fact that they resonate upon a non-

verbal level with the viewer as an outward, performative expression of agony and fear, thereby accentuating the horrifying numbness felt by Mouth through a *via negativa* – the '*Brief*' and '*Good laugh*' which Mouth gives when voicing the idea of 'a merciful […] God' are the only non-verbal elements of expression within her monologue. Through these actions Mouth compresses Sade's decrying of the possibility of God existing as a benevolent being (see Heine 2022a, 6-15; cf. Klossowski 2022, 37-40) into a damningly dismissive act implicitly asking: how can one believe in a 'merciful […] God' when suffering pervades our world?

This compression of Sade's atheistic challenge to the idea of God's benevolence is situated alongside a disturbing glimpse into the ways in which the ideas of pain and pleasure may be collapsed into each other; however, unlike in Sade's *œuvre*, this coalescing of pleasure and pain does not occur in the mind of the torturer. Instead, it takes place within the victim's mind. Mouth's statement that she was 'not suffering' despite the fact she was '*meant* to be suffering', and her juxtaposing of this experience with her admission that 'when [she was] clearly intended to be having pleasure' she often felt 'none', conflates the ideas pleasure and pain into a singular amalgam of pleasure/pain which is, in turn, nullified by Mouth's numbness – by her feeling 'none'. In other words, as Mouth is incapable of feeling either pleasure or pain, these two notions become indistinguishable from one another, before being negated. This numbness in the face of the pleasure/pain amalgam functions as an 'insistent version of […] auto-dissociation, or what the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (2013, 271-72) describes as the trauma patient's "feeling detached from, and as if one were an outside observer of, one's mental processes or body"' (Simpson 2022, 137) whilst concomitantly serving as a textual 'reproduc[tion] [of] the searing screams of human suffering' (Knowlson and Pilling 1979, 200). In *Not I*'s conflating of pleasure and pain into a perturbing emblem of

mind-body dissociation, Beckett inverts Sade's portrayal of pain and pleasure as the ultimate signifiers of bodily and psychological pleasure within the mind of the torturer. Unlike in Sade's works, violence, its mechanisms, and the ways in which inflicting violence enables one to exert power upon the without, are not the focus of *Not I*. Pain, manifestations of pain, and the incomprehensibility of pain to those witnessing it, form the core of this text.

That being said, whilst violence operates as a primarily spectral presence within the text of *Not I*, it is not a work devoid of actualised violence. Rather violence is displaced from the fictional text onto the body of the performer playing Mouth. The intense physical stress to which actors are subjected when playing Mouth has been well documented. In her autobiography, *Billie Whitelaw…Who He?* (1995), Billie Whitelaw recalls how during rehearsals for the 1973 Royal Court production of the play she 'broke down' midway through her speaking the text, repeating: 'I'm sorry, Sam […] I'm so sorry' (Whitelaw 1995, 124). Moreover, Whitelaw describes the experience of playing Mouth as 'a form of torture' (1995, 125), outlining how at times she felt as though she were 'tumbling off the edge of the rostrum and into the void of the theatre' (1995, 124) whilst performing and clarifying that during the performance, as a result of her being 'strapped' into position so that she could perform the text as required by the script, she 'inflamed [her] already damaged spine and neck' (Whitelaw 1995, 131). Whitelaw then augments this comment by asserting: 'every play I did with Beckett left a little legacy behind in my state of ill-health, a price I have most willingly paid' (Whitelaw 1995, 131).

Additionally, Joy Coghill-Thorne, who worked on the role of Mouth for six months in 1976 before withdrawing from the play, remarks that her time rehearsing for *Not I* a 'most challenging […] horrific experience' and, independently of Whitelaw, describes what is asked

of the actor by this text as ‘a form of torture’ (qtd in Levy 2001, 141). Ruth Geller, comparatively, also reported that she ‘suffered physically and mentally’ whilst playing Mouth in 1996, stating that she even ‘began to doubt [her own] sanity’ (qtd in Levy 2001, 145). More recently Lisa Dwan, who played Mouth in 2005, 2009, 2014, and 2015, revealed: ‘I pull[ed] muscles, I damage[d] my neck, […] but it’s what happens to your mind when you’re in that frenetic, lonely place. The big beast you’re tackling is your own internal *Not I*’ (qtd in Hoggard 2015, n.p.) – an invocation of physical and mental pain which is made all the more unsettling by how, in a 2014 meeting with Anthony Lane, Dwan pointed out that there was ‘still some blood around the edges’ of the device designed to hold her in place during performances (Lane 2014, n.p.). As these accounts reveal, and especially as the repetitive comparisons between the play and the act of torture emphasise, the enduring of embodied pain by the actor of Mouth is a central aspect of *Not I* as a production; however, this endurance is veiled from the viewer by the requirements of the stage directions. There is consequently a complex layering of violence and pain within *Not I*. In this play Beckett utilises the actuality of embodied pain – pain to which, unlike the victims of Sade’s libertines and some of Sade’s real-life victims such as Rose Keller, actors consent and from which they are at liberty to free themselves by either requesting a recess in rehearsals or by leaving the production should they wish – to produce a uniquely unsettling theatrical piece that demonstrates the impossibility of communicating pain in a truly comprehensible manner, whilst also confronting viewers with the distressing image of a person stripped of their sovereignty through an unimaginable act of violence. Hence, in *Not I* Beckett shifts the focus of Sadean violence away from the torturer and onto the victim eternally trapped in a prison formed from the remnants of her shattered mind.

This idea of Beckett's protagonists being entrapped within ceaseless, purgatorial, torturous processes serves as the cornerstone of another of Beckett's most visually arresting later plays, *Quad* (written 1981, pub. 1984). This play is comprised of two distinct parts. The first of these parts, *Quadrat I*, which originally comprised the entirety of the play (see Esslin 1987, 44), depicts four individuals in different coloured 'Gowns' (one white, one yellow, one blue, and one red) (*Quad*, 452) entering into the space in which the play's action – or rather, non-action given the player's insistent avoiding of a zone of 'potentiality' (Deleuze 1995, 13) where an event in the form of a collision may occur – takes place. After entering the dramatic space, these individuals follow their designated courses and, in so doing, form an imagined quadrilateral whilst concomitantly ensuring that they do not collide with one another by performing a jerky sidestep as they reach the 'danger-zone' (*Quad*, 453) at the dramatic space's centre. These figures then depart from the space one by one. Following the recording of *Quadrat I*, Reinhart Müller-Freienfels 'played the tape back to Beckett on his video-machine at [his] home' and mentioned 'that it had also looked very good on the additional black-and-white monitor […]. Beckett was intrigued by this observation and suggested that they go back to next day to make a recording in black-and-white of only one complete circuit, but much slower […] [and with] the only sound being the shuffling of the four figures' feet' (Esslin 1987, 44). Thus, *Quadrat II* was created the following day and appended to *Quadrat I*.

By draining the colour from the production and reducing the pace of the walker's walking to a 'slow tempo' (*Quad*, 453), Beckett endows this second performance with a definitive sense of exhaustion – it is suggested that the four figures of *Quadrat I* have never ceased their walking, instead re-entering the dramatic space to resume their trudging of the 'geometric patterns' (Woycicki 2012, 135) immediately after the first act's conclusion. The

resultant greys of colourlessness which descend upon the space due to Beckett's insistence upon there being 'No colour' in *Quadrat II* (*Quad*, 454) not only convey the passing of an eternity between *Quadrat I* and *II* – as Beckett says, *Quadrat II* looks as though it takes place 'ten thousand years later!' (qtd in Esslin 1987, 44) – by implying that the world through which the four figures move has decayed to a negated 'wilderness' in which 'beings […] are […] less than shadows' (Blanchot 2022, 47), but also accentuate the feelings of carcerality innate to the player's trudging by subtly evoking the eternal twilight of Sade's cell in Vincennes. Furthermore, the figures in *Quadrat II* are no longer differentiated by their 'gowns' being different colours and, instead, are almost completely indistinguishable from one another. As Knowlson notes, in a comment which echoes Sidney Hoffman's description of *Quad* as a 'nightmarish world' (Hoffman 1992, 29), the figures in their de-coloured state 'resembl[e] [those in] Gustave Doré's engravings of Dante['s] Hell' (Knowlson 1996, 587), indicating their status as entrapped beings forced to endure an eternity of suffering.[57] Thus, *Quad* communicates its protagonist's suffering, and their status as figures in captivity, to the viewer through its utilisation of an eternal twilight.

But, as Piotr Woycicki points out, *Quad*'s utilisation of the absence of colour to de-individualise its protagonists is incapable of achieving a complete derealisation of the sovereign trace of humanity intrinsic to them all:

> despite the rigid structure slight traces of character inevitably appear. This is inevitable since each actor has his/her own personality and certain subtle habits which become more apparent as the formal structure is [...] repeated. As an audience we notice those personal touches in "the form of a characteristic walk, a peculiar way of approaching the corner, the very posture of the body, an expression on a face otherwise staring almost blindly ahead" and different moods…when only one player was present or when all four were together" (Woycicki 2012, 144; cf. Hoffman 1992, 29)

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[57] Knowlson also points out that 'The "dancers" always turn to the left' in *Quad*. He then draws a connection between this movement and Beckett's explaining 'that "Dante and Virgil in Hell always go to the left (the damned direction), and in Purgatory always to the right' (Knowlson 1998, 587).

Through these subtleties of performance the figures unconsciously assert their own individuality even as they are ensnared within the process of being shrived clean by the joint functions of eternal twilight and the rigid formal structures dominating their existence within the dramatic carceral space. Hence, in a challenge to the Sadean formulation of carcerality and violence as being capable of shattering an individual to the point of absolute derealisation, in *Quad* Beckett presents the viewer with an image of the exhausted remnant of humanity which, despite one's best efforts, cannot be destroyed. In a textual inversion of the Sadean comprehension of humanity as being absolutely negatable through the suffering imposed upon it from without, this work posits that there is an undefinable something which remains – a part of humanity not connected to our capability to inflict violence, but rather our potential to endure violence, which subsists even unto the point of absolute collapse. This is the lasting trace of Beckett's engagement with Sade: the human remnant trudging endlessly amongst the ruins at the quiet, incomprehensible ending of it all.

Beckett's later prosaic and dramatic texts reveal how his career-long engagement with Sade's work had a significant impact upon his fictionalising methods, his textual aesthetics, and his literary concerns. In *How It Is* Beckett defamiliarises Sadean, and Blanchotian-Sadean, conceptions of violence and logic by rendering the narrator's violence ultimately reflexive, thereby decimating Sade's theorisation of the master-slave dynamic and disrupting his understanding of sovereignty. Consequently, violence becomes intimately tied to man's 'desire to achieve […] self-consciousness' within this work. Furthermore, in the 'Closed Space' texts Beckett defamiliarises the imagery associated with, and dimensions of, Sade's cell in Vincennes – as outlined by Lely in *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle…* – to create a series,

of torturous, carceral locales that are both antithetical to life and punctuated by hypertextual connections to Sade's, Dante's, and Bataille's understanding of violence.

Additionally, in *Rough for Radio II* Beckett re-envisions a Sadean staging of violence as a non-staging of the infliction of pain which is then utilised to illustrate how all the characters are non-sovereign slaves inflicting violence upon other non-sovereign slaves. In *Catastrophe* and *What Where*, meanwhile, Beckett complicates the Blanchotian-Sadean reading of sovereignty by proposing that violence cannot strip a person of their sovereignty, and by again connecting violence with the processes of introspection. In *Breath*, meanwhile, Beckett creates a de-physicalised carceral space which enables the play to stage the entrapment of a non-corporeal person within a perpetual cycle of life and death, whilst in *Not I* and *Quad* he continues his textual investigation into sovereignty by shifting the focus of Sade's texts away from the event of violence and towards the impacts of violence upon the individual. In so doing, Beckett demonstrates how, even in the wake of unspeakable cataclysm, something intrinsically human remains.

Moreover, Beckett's textual conjoining of Sade and Dante in *How It Is* and the 'Closed Space' texts functions in combination with how his creative interest in the potential of Sade's works and Sadean criticism outlasts his actual reading and re-reading of these works to cement Sade as a major figure shaping his *œuvre*. Comparably to the Italian poet, Sade impacts Beckett's works from the earliest moments of his career until his final depictions of 'humanity in ruins' (Beckett 1995a, 278). Sade's caustic view of humanity at its most barbaric perpetually informs Beckett's moving exploration of man at his most dejected. Thus, indirectly, Apollinaire's prediction in *L'Œuvre de Sade* (see Sade 1909, 17; cf. p. 8 of this thesis), came true. Through Beckett's continual interaction with, and reinterpretation of, Sade's envisioning of violence, isolation, and sovereignty, the central

concerns of this author's canon were reinvigorated and, eventually, came to dominate the 20th century.

Conclusion: The Horror of Humanity

‘I, of whom I know nothing, I know my eyes are open, because of the tears that pour from them unceasingly.’ (*TU*, 14)

Like Dante, Sade is a present-absence who breathes throughout Beckett’s canon. He is Beckett’s shadowy companion from the earliest manifestations of his fictionalising impulses until the ‘unthinkable last’ (*Company*, 15) moments of his ‘work in regress’ (Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 163). However, what emerges from Beckett’s continual literary conversation with Sade is not a figure with a preconceived meaning and value. Rather, Beckett’s works configure Sade as an amorphous dialogue – a shade shattered into fragments. The shards of this unstable dialogue suffuse Beckett’s textual ‘wilderness[es]’ (Blanchot 2022, 47) and inner-wildernesses, producing and reproducing a multitude of Sades whose incoherence is emblematic of the essential instability of Beckett’s works.

Tracing the movements of Beckett’s career-long engagement with Sade unveils this sense of dissonance intrinsic to his contemplation of the French author. Beckett’s earliest literary works reveal a dual-conception of the Divine Marquis. In the unpublished *Dream*, Beckett fashions the image of Sade – gleaned from his reading of Praz’s *La carne* and Apollinaire’s *L’Œuvre de Sade* – into a weapon through which women and sexual beings could be presented as ‘monstrous’ because of their sexuality. Meanwhile, in Beckett’s earliest published works, *More Pricks* and *Murphy*, there is a far more complex engagement with Sade’s personal and literary ideas as they are presented in Apollinaire’s *L’Œuvre de Sade* and Praz’s *La carne*. In *More Pricks*, Beckett explores the cruel and unjust nature of state-sanctioned execution in a manner which chimes with the portrayal of Sade’s own

opposition to the death penalty noted by Apollinaire. In *Murphy*, Beckett demonstrates a distinctive shift in his understanding of the connectivity between the erotic and the emetic by utilising grotesque and abject imagery to render the sex-act itself innately repulsive. Moreover, Beckett critiques Descartes' positing of the idea of mind-body dualism by prioritising the body over the mind in a manner according with Sade's anti-Cartesianism, whilst concomitantly revealing his receptivity to the comic potential of Sade's work by creating a series of unrequited love-circuits in which characters use one another as 'levers' to further their own desires. Thus, even at the very beginning of Beckett's canon, two warring images of Sade exist simultaneously.

In 1938 Beckett has his first direct encounter with Sade's texts, reading the '1st & 3rd' (*LSB I*, 607) volumes of Heine's 1931-1935 edition of *120 journées*. He is particularly impressed by the necessarily incomplete form of the text, comparing its composition to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Additionally, Beckett is receptive to the challenging content of Sade's work, being capable of recalling its disturbing imagery by memory, and pays keen attention to Heine's depiction of Sade penning his novel in a state of absolute 'moral' and physical isolation, imprisoned in the Bastille and driven to the extremes of misanthropy by the reality of his irremediable solitude (Heine in Sade 1931-35, xii). The already considerable impression made upon Beckett by *120 journées* is then augmented by the horrifying events of the Second World War, with Beckett and Déchevaux-Dumesnil being forced to flee Paris together following the betrayal of 'Gloria SMH' to the Abwehr and issuing of warrants for their arrest by the Gestapo (Knowlson 1996, 275-84). After travelling across a war-torn France to Roussillon, Beckett endures an equally horrifying isolation to that experienced by Sade, writing *Watt* in the evenings as the world collapses around him.

Beckett's reading of *120 journées* is processed within *Watt*. Throughout this text Beckett not only defamiliarises and de-eroticises Sade's caustic imagery, utilising it to illustrate the banality of evil and create striking, systematically pessimistic depictions of life on earth as an awful yet inevitable affair devoid of beauty, but he also pastiches Sade's literary techniques and models the aesthetics of incompletion dominating *Watt* upon those colouring *120 journées*. Through his adaptation of Sade's ataraxic literary style and his narrative practice of exhaustive enumeration, Beckett deliberately disempowers language by emptying it of meaning, transforming it from a sense-making vehicle into 'inert noises' (Connor 2007, 37). This deflating of language through exhaustive enumeration is an essential element of a wider textual practice of 'satirising the human being's pride in their rational capabilities' (Van Hulle 2022a, 164). One of the most prevalent textual incarnations of this satirical drive is Wattean logic, which is modelled after the examples of Sadean logic displayed in *120 journées*. In both Wattean and Sadean logic, the wielder of Reason is perfectly capable of following the processes of logical enquiry; however, the conclusions drawn from the application of this logic to the world around them are distinctly atypical. Thus, Beckett, like Sade, disconnects Reason from sanity and, in so doing, exposes the 'folly' central to the Enlightenment's endowing of Reason with 'a responsibility it […] can't bear' (Beckett qtd in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 231): the task of elucidating objective meaning within an absurd world experienced in a subjective manner. Consequently, the image of Sade which emerges from *Watt* is distinctly different to that produced by Beckett's earlier works. Through this novel, Sade is presented as a solitary figure, writing as a 'means of staying sane' whilst the world descends into chaos.

During the 'frenzy of writing' Beckett moves away from Sade's methods of literary expression, instead creating truly Beckettian aesthetics of isolation and instability. But,

concomitantly, Beckett's literary concerns become more closely aligned with those explored by Sade in *120 journées*. Between 1946 and 1950, Beckett actively re-engages with the ideas of eroticism and sexuality, drawing upon Sade's presentation of heterosexual and homosexual practices within *120 journées* to render the absolute isolation of the Beckettian figure tangible. Beckett achieves this by derealising the sexual practices favoured by Sade: sodomy, incest, and homosexuality. Whereas in the Divine Marquis' works these events are presented in absolute terms, in Beckett's texts produced during the 'frenzy of writing' the Irish author suffuses the possibility of these events occurring with instability whilst concomitantly inverting Sade's conception of the relations between the emetic and erotic. In so doing, Beckett enables an air of perpetual uncertainty to permeate his texts whilst also underlining how his characters' erotic desires are underlaid by an insistent, but unfulfillable, yearning for community with the other. This transforms the very idea of love within Beckett's works into an unknowable unknown, which, in turn, emphasises the agonising solitude endured by his creatures.

Additionally, within these works Beckett reconceptualises Sadean incarnations of violence by defamiliarising the multiple forms of violence found throughout *120 journées*. In particular, Beckett reconceives Sade's 'animus against families' as: a gateway facilitating the exploration of the impacts of psychological torture upon a victim; a method through which the reader is situated as a witness to incomprehensible violence; and, as a metatextual device enabling Beckett to expose his protagonists' unspoken interest in the mechanics of power associated with the act of violence. Furthermore, Beckett reveals his creative attentiveness to Sade's textual belief in the pedagogical potential of violence by staging instances of supposedly-educational violence within his own works which implicitly question how instructional violence is any different to torture. Moreover, within the texts written

during the ‘frenzy of writing’ Beckett adopts a distinctly Sadean approach to the idea of *lex talionis*, unbalancing the traditional balancing of the severity of offense and response by rendering the retributive violence exacted upon those who have caused offense unjustly brutal. Yet even here Beckett modifies the Sadean formula by: reintroducing human emotion into the application of physical violence; blending the portrayal of extreme retributive violence in his novels with a Gidean-Dostoevskian commitment to textually figuring the ‘integrity of incoherence’; and incarnating violence upon the stage in a manner which forces the viewer to respond in an immediate fashion. This commitment to the ‘integrity of incoherence’ within his prosaic work also results in a transfiguring of Sadean ataraxy in the face of violence into a representation of the insurmountable incomprehensibility of the event of violence as experienced by the witness to extreme violence. However, Beckett’s most radical rewriting of Sade’s understanding of violence at this point in his career is undoubtedly his formulation of the concept of reflexive-sadism, in which the violence of sadism is redirected from the without towards the within in a desperate attempt to afford the torturer/victim relief from the agony perpetually plaguing them. Throughout the ‘frenzy of writing’ there is therefore a dual movement both away from Sade’s methods of literary expression and towards the central concerns of Sade’s *120 journées*: sex and violence. Consequently, Sade becomes reformulated as a spectrally present-absence within these works, with his theorisations of violence and sexuality being refashioned into moving demonstrations of the harrowing isolation of the Beckettian individual and textual representations of the incomprehensibility of violence.

Beckett’s critical engagement with Sade’s work reaches its peak immediately after the ‘frenzy of writing’, with the Irish author working alongside Duthuit to produce an issue of *Transition* focusing upon the Divine Marquis. Between December 1950 and July 1951,

Beckett produces seven translations for the unreleased seventh issue of Duthuit's journal, whilst also re-reading *120 journées* and reading *Philosophie* for the first time. This intense period of engagement with Sade has a profound impact upon how Beckett formulates the concepts of sovereignty, violence, master-slave dialectics, negativity, and isolation within *Texts for Nothing* and *Endgame*. Additionally, Beckett's translating of Heine's 'Sade et le roman noir' prompts him to seek out numerous works of Gothic fiction.

In a manner redolent of his early practice of 'notesnatching', Beckett latches on to imagery encountered through his reading of these Gothic texts and creatively processes both this imagery and his reading of Heine's aforementioned essay by redeploying gothic images within his wider textual strategy of unstable introspective exploration in *Texts for Nothing*. Through the use of this imagery, Beckett lesions the self's ability to recognise the constituent elements of itself, thereby destabilising and negativising the Blanchotian-Sadean concept of sovereignty as absolute power over oneself by othering the detuned elements of his speakers' cognitive functions. Beckett demonstrates the non-sovereign nature of his speakers from both the perspective of the searcher and the unlocatable 'other self' whom the searcher seeks, characterising the relations between these figures as intrinsically violent. This enables Beckett to redefine sadism as an essentially introspective tool and affords him the opportunity to defamiliarise the Sadean conception of the master's absolute power over the slave by de-physicalising the master figure.

In *Endgame* Beckett rewrites the Sadean understanding of why the master is all powerful in relation to the slave. Rather than Hamm being invulnerable because of the insurmountable nature of his subjectivity and hence his sovereign power over himself, Hamm is all-powerful in relation to Clov because Clov is incapable of inflicting meaningful violence upon him. Supplementing this, Beckett draws upon the libertines of *120 journées*'

practice of using starvation as a means of torture to complicate Sade's conceptualisation of the isolation of the torturer from the victim, whilst simultaneously de-physicalising Sadean manifestations of violence by rendering them theoretical. This rendering theoretical of Sade's realised tortures results in the text itself becoming suffused with the omnipresent threat of violence. But, that is not to say that *Endgame* is devoid of physical violence. Rather, this work disempowers Sade's valuation of physical violence by rendering its occurrence a non-event within a world suffused by brutal non-events. In so doing, Beckett's text decimates Sade's unwitting valorisation of the flesh (de Beauvoir 2012, 28). Moreover, within *Endgame* Beckett reprises his earlier Sadean critique of the Enlightenment's valuation of Reason by entangling his reading about Sade with a wider textual denigration of the 'madness' of Reason which exposes the violence intrinsic to this faculty. Complementing this, Beckett also models the 'madman' painter-engraver whom Hamm mentions after an amalgamation of Heaton's portrayal of the German artist, Veit Stoss, with Heine's and Apollinaire's portraits of Sade in 'Avant-propos au *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*' and *L'Œuvre de Sade*. Moreover, Beckett negativises the Blanchotian-Sadean positing of isolation as the ultimate signifier, and product, of the absolute power of the sovereign individual by transforming it into an emotionally resonant demonstration of the agonising powerlessness of his victim-figures. Sade thus becomes an emblem of man's intrinsic cruelty, his agonising solitude, and his viciously fragmented self in *Texts for Nothing* and *Endgame*.

Whilst the early 1950s represents the pinnacle of Beckett's critical engagement with Sade, it is in his later works that his creative engagement with Sade reaches its greatest heights. Throughout *How It Is* Beckett repeatedly defamiliarises Sadean formulations of violence through his narrator's practice of inflicting inscriptive scarification upon Pim's body.

Over the course of the second part of this text, the narrator's violence is variously fashioned as: being 'scientific' (Heine 2022b, 23) in nature; a vehicle through which the speaker may exert his power over the unknowable other of Pim which results in the creation of a seemingly Sadean master-slave relationship; a textual nexus point which conjoins the violent worlds of Dante and Sade; and a signifier of both the narrator's isolation, which is underpinned by a desire for connection with his victim, and his susceptibility to pain when he fails to realise his desires of achieving community with Pim. Consequently, Beckett undermines the Blanchotian-Sadean notion of the master's invulnerability, whilst simultaneously positing one's capacity to inflict systematised violence as an essential measure of one's humanity. This situating of violence as a 'sovereign and irreducible part of man' (Bataille 2022, 51) is maintained throughout the third section of the novel when, following his having been abandoned by Pim – an action which decimates the Sadean master-slave dialectic between these figures – the narrator utilises pure Reason to formulate a series of sadistic systems in which the individual is understood as a 'mere sign, indefinitely renewable, within an immense [sadistic] equation' (Blanchot 2022, 47). Whilst these systems accord with those found in Sade's works, there is an essential difference between them. Unlike Sade's systems, the narrator's systems remain theoretical, resulting once again in a de-physicalisation of Sadean violence which suffuses the narrative of this text with unknowability. However, it is at the end of this novel that one finds Beckett's most radical rewriting of Sade's conceptualisation of violence. Within the closing versets, the narrator systematically negates almost every aspect of the work voiced thus far, revealing instead: 'never anyone no only me no answer only me yes' (*HII*, 128). This revelation engenders a monumental reconfiguration of violence which not only further disrupts the dynamics of the Sadean master-slave relationship, but also completely metamorphoses the

Sadean theorisation of violence. In Beckett's hands, violence is reconfigured as a reflexive tool through the application of which the narrator may come to learn about himself.

Following *How It Is*, Beckett draws upon Lely's description of Sade's cell in Vincennes to create the numerous carceral, punitive spaces portrayed throughout the 'Closed Space' texts. Here Beckett subtly utilises the structural and environmental details of Sade's cell to create a series of locales antithetical to life whilst concomitantly employing an unnervingly detached form of narration directly comparable to that encountered in *120 journées*. Additionally, Beckett suffuses these spaces with covert hypertextual connections to instances of Sadean violence and, in a manoeuvre redolent of Bataille's metatextual analysis of the silent nature of violence (Bataille 2022, 52-55), presents violence as an unelaborated reality which simply is. Furthermore, Beckett defamiliarises Sade's conception of sexuality, desire, and consent within these works to reconceive erotic desire as unfulfillable wish for domination over the other and the sexual act as an innately an-erotic occurrence of violence. This is then blended with a Beckettian inversion of solitude as an expression of power to demonstrate how agony, rather than the actuality of violence, is Beckett's primary textual concern within these later works.

Equally, in his 'Torture Plays', Beckett reconceives Sade's fascination with violence, sovereignty, and power by shifting the focus of his texts away from the event of torture and towards an analysis of the impacts of torture upon the victim. In *Rough for Radio II* Beckett has the silent torturer Dick utilise the distinctly Sadean weapon of a 'bull's pizzle' (*RfRII*, 275) to exact pre-ordained violence upon the victim, Fox, when commanded to do so by the Animator. In this play Beckett disrupts a Sadean scene of torture by using the form of the radio-play to situate the listener as a distanced witness, rather than voyeur, to the act of violence. Furthermore, within this text Beckett conceives of sexuality in distinctly Sadean

terms by using the sexual act as a torture technique. But, towards the end of the play, Beckett disrupts Sade's portrayal of torturers as masters free from the influence of anything external to their own desires by revealing that the Animator himself is actually a slave acting upon the orders of an unseen, other master. This recharacterises this figure as a torturer/victim whilst concomitantly generating a potentially unending cascade of pseudo-masters. Subsequently, Beckett re-envisions the violence within Sade's worlds by portraying violence as an action carried out by slaves and directed towards other slaves. All of Beckett's characters within this play are thus non-sovereign beings subjected to the cruel machinations of other potentially non-sovereign beings *ad infinitum*.

In *Catastrophe* and *What Where* Beckett continues his textual interrogation of the concept of sovereignty through the (non-)staging of violence. Within the former of these texts, Beckett creates an affective minimalist portrayal of violence's inability to completely strip a human being of their sovereignty. Even in the face of the extreme violence of torture, something innately human remains. This disrupts Sade's conception of victims as people shrived clean of their sovereignty through the action of intense violence, their lives 'serv[ing] only to render sensible th[eir] being "already dead" with which it is one' (Blanchot 2022, 48). In the latter text Beckett once again connects violence with the processes of self-examination and man's desires to 'achieve *self-consciousness*' (Bataille 2022, 52) by presenting the four figures of Bam, Bem, Bim, and Bom as externalised manifestations of Bam's self. Consequently, Bam's repeated application of 'the works' (*WW*, 156) to these figures becomes emblematic of his desperate, repeatedly failing, attempts to unify the dissonant traces of his self.

Similarly, Beckett's later plays of entrapment utilise notes gleaned from his reading of texts both by and about Sade to stage: the entrapment of a non-corporeal human figure

within an unending cycle of life and death in *Breath*, which results in the conjoining of life and its negative in a defamiliarisation of the Blanchotian-Sadean idea of living-death; the agony of non-sovereign existence within *Not I*; and the undefinable trace of humanity which endures even unto the quiet, incomprehensible ending of it all in *Quad*. Subsequently, in Beckett's later prosaic and dramatic works Sade becomes an interrogative model through which Beckett can analyse the impacts of violence and carcerality upon the individual. The Divine Marquis' literary concerns are systematically negativised within Beckett's later canon, being utilised to explore what remains in the wake of violence through a series of horrifying, and deeply emotionally affecting, portraits of beings desperately clinging to the last vestiges of the remnants of their humanity.

Despite the multiplicity of the images of Sade generated by Beckett's career-long literary engagement with this author, there are three recurrent aspects of his texts which fascinated the Irish author: violence, the essential humanity of violence, and the sheer isolation of man. Beckett and Sade consider these elements from almost diametrically opposing perspectives. Sade's primary interest within his caustic works is the unflinching portrayal of the event of violence, rendered tangible in all of its silent, horrifying viscerality. Violence forms the very heart of Sadean humanity and the solitude attained through the infliction of pain upon others is the ultimate signifier of the Sadean man's sovereign power. As Foucault says, through his remorselessly cold literary portrayal of violence Sade attains 'The end of Classical discourse and thought' (Foucault 2002, 229). He pushes literature to the absolute limits of representation whilst bespeaking the innate brutality of mankind figured at its most barbaric. Beckett's work portrays what remains in the wake of this extreme violence. His characters are the final traces of a decimated humanity, wandering

endlessly amongst the ruins of a broken world. As readers all we can ‘hear [are their silent] screams’ (Beckett qtd in Bair 1993, 528).

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Appendix of Translations

Introduction

P. 11 – Touchard 1961, n.p (Hannah Simpson's translation; Simpson 2022, 61):

'[*Godot*] expressed, with unbelievable vigour, what we thought no contemporary human voice would ever be able to cry out. Samuel Beckett's miserable heroes sighed forth the mute horror that humanity had been holding on to for some years.'

1. Beckett's Early Image of Sade: *Dream of Fair to middling Women, More Pricks Than Kicks,* and *Murphy*

P. 24 – Sade qtd in Praz 1970, 107 (my translation):

'It is [nature] that I would like to be able to outrage. I would like to disturb her plans, to constrict her progress, to stop the course of the stars, to upset the globes which float in space, to destroy what serves her, to protect what harms her, to edify what irritates her, in a word, to insult her.'

P. 27 – Hugo qtd in Praz 1970, 31 (my translation):

'Death and Beauty are two profound things

Which contain so much shadow and azure that one would say

Two sisters equally terrible and fertile

Having the same origin and the same secret'

P. 31 – Bloch qtd by Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 16-17 (my translation):

‘they show us everything in life that is closely connected with the sexual instincts which, as the Marquis de Sade recognised with undeniable insight, influence almost all human relationships in some way.’

P. 44 – Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 6 (my translation):

‘Sade was a true republican, an admirer of Marat, but opposed to the death penalty […]. In his Idée sur le mode de la sanction des lois, he indicates how he intends for laws proposed by deputies to be voted on by the people, because it is necessary to admit ‘to the sanction of laws this most mistreated section of society, and as it is they whom the law strikes most often, it is therefore up to them to choose with which laws they consent to be struck’. His conduct during the Terror was humane and benevolent; a suspect, without a doubt because of his declamations against the death penalty, he was arrested on 6th December 1793, but released, thanks to deputy Rovère, in October 1794.’

2. Beckett’s Pessimistic, Satirical Pastiche of Sade’s Literary Aesthetics and Techniques: Watt

P. 56 – Heine in Sade 1931-35, xi (my translation):

‘constant refusal of pity unites the human and inhuman in his work & is the principal strength of his singular genius. No one has ever consciously affirmed a more radical contempt for man, and thus for the god in whose image he claims to be made.’

<u>P. 58 – Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 17 (my translation):</u>

'Any investigator who wants to determine the sociological importance of love has to read the primary works of the Marquis de Sade. Not even at the level of hunger, but above it, the love that presides over the movement of the universe. "The love, which moves the Sun and the other stars", cried Dante at the end of the *Divine Comedy*.'

<u>P. 66 – Sade 1909, 162-64 (Joachim Neugroschiel's translation; Sade 2006, 24-26):</u>

'assuming [he] [God] existed as described for us by the religions, [he] would assuredly be the most detestable of beings, since [he] introduced evil into the world, whereas [his] omnipotence could prevent it. […] What do I see in […] God […] but a barbaric and inconsistent being, who creates a world one day, then repents its construction the next day? […] For no apparent reason, God dooms the creature [man] that he himself has moulded. What a horrible God this God is! What a monster!'

3. Beckett's 'Frenzy of Writing': The Impact of Beckett's Reading of Sade within *Mercier and Camier*, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Unnamable*

<u>P. 133 – Sade 1909, 15 (Samuel Beckett's translation; Sade 2022b, 63):</u>

'On [my] grave, once it has been filled, acorns will be sown, so that in due time, the site of the aforesaid grave being garnished anew and the thicket close as before, the traces of my tomb may vanish from the face of the earth as I flatter myself that my memory will be effaced from the minds of men.

> Made at Charenton-Saint-Maurice, with sound body and mind, this day January 30th 1806. Signed: D. A. F. Sade'

4. The 1950s Sade Boom: Beckett's Contribution to the Unpublished Seventh Issue of *Transition*, *Texts for Nothing*, and *Endgame*

P. 148 – Baudot qtd by Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 14 (my translation):

'Sade is the author of several works of monstrous obscenity and diabolical morality. He was, without a doubt, a perverse man in theory. But, he was not mad – he has to be judged on the qualities of his works.

There are seeds of depravity in them, but not of madness; such work presupposes his sanity. The very composition of his works is illustrative of his having undertaken a great amount of research in both ancient and modern literature, and is intended to demonstrate that even the greatest depravities had been previously authorised by the ancient Greeks and Romans. This kind of investigation is, without a doubt, not moral; but, it requires Reason and rationale to carry out. Sound reasoning was needed to carry out this research which he metamorphosed into his novels – novels which establish upon a series of facts a kind of doctrine or system.'

P. 201 – Nodier qtd by Apollinaire in Sade 1909, 8 (my translation):

'Sade is the prototype of the extrajudicial victims of the high justice of the Consulate and Empire. We did not know how to submit to the courts, with their public forms and their spectacular debates, an offense which so offended the moral modesty of society as a whole that it could hardly even be characterised without danger, and it is true to say that the materials examined under this hideous procedure [Sade's texts] were more repulsive to explore than the bloody rags and strips of bruised flesh which reveal an assassination. It was a non-judicial body, the Council of State, I believe, which pronounced the sentence of perpetual detention against the accused […] based upon this arbitrary precedent…'