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NEGOTIATING INSANITY AS AN APPEALING ALTERNATIVE: SAMUEL BECKETT'S *MURPHY* AND MICHEL FOUCAULT'S *MADNESS AND CIVILIZATION*

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Abstract:

In this article I have tried to read Beckett's novel Murphy in the light of Foucault's poststructuralist theories and ideas regarding madness. First, I have tried to show that how Murphy's solipsism can be interpreted as his rejection of the traditional ideas of sanity constructed by our society. I also talked about Beckett's use of chaos as a deliberate weapon as used in this novel and tried to locate the element of divergence between Beckett and Foucault. Unlike Foucault's treatment, in Beckett's Murphy, asylum becomes a space, where freedom can be gained, where autonomy of human behaviour can be exercised. It becomes the "little world" for the solipsist Murphy, an internal abode where he can take refuge from the daily rituals of conventional society. Rather than being a place of repression of unregulated desires as asylum appears in Foucault's works, in Beckett's novel it is a place which ensures freedom from daily drudgery. I conclude the paper by portraying how Beckett ends his novel by transforming madness to 'nothingness' in order to give complete freedom to Murphy from his ritualistic 'habit'.

1.1 Michel Foucault and Samuel Beckett: Poetry in Madness and Madness in Poetry

Foucault's thinking and Beckett's writing unfold as an enquiry into madness, a significant opening towards what constitutes the hidden face of their undertaking, towards what is at the same time its origin and end. In a sense, it is the experience of madness that relates the works of Beckett and Foucault in the same paradigm, but it is precisely this paradigmatic foundation which in a paradoxical way also ruins every construction: "In the happiness of the work, at the limit of its language, arises, in order to reduce it in silence and finish it, this Limit that the work was itself against everything that was not it. […] What founded (the work) also ruins it" (*Called and Writings I* 198). Foucault speaks here of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin's[1] work in general; but the "Limit" he talks about appears

most of all in the different stages of Hölderlin's drama - *Death of Empedocles* (1798-1800). That Greek pre-Socratic philosopher becomes a part of legend when Diogenes Laërtius records that he died by throwing himself into an active volcano (Mount Etna in Sicily), so that people would believe his body had vanished and he had turned into an immortal god; the volcano, however, threw back one of his bronze sandals, revealing the deceit. From that day Empedocles becomes a representative of the connection between poetry, insanity and philosophy.

Animated by a shuddering desire, Hölderlin's Empedocles throws himself into the fire of the Etna. And the poet adds: "Yet still I hold you sacred […], audaciously perishing" (Hölderlin 54). Empedocles, the poetic philosopher, and Hölderlin, the philosophical poet: in more than one sense they herald the figures of Foucault and Beckett. Empedocles as the sacrifice of thought faced with the unthinkable; Hölderlin as the sacrifice of poetry faced with the Unnamable. Thought and poetry, confronted with their Other, whose name is also *madness* (emphasis mine), become sacrifice, offering themselves to what exceeds them, finishes and destroys them just like the protagonist of Samuel Beckett's novel *Murphy* (1938), who seeing the inability of madness in achieving freedom, immolates himself with the assistance of a gas in a hospital and hence transformed his madness into "nothingness" and his ashes are properly spread amidst the grime of a bar. My primary aim in this chapter of my dissertation is to read Samuel Beckett's novel *Murphy* in the light of Foucault's poststructuralist theories and ideas regarding madness.

The character of the Empedocles as the 'Chosen One' whom Foucault describes as a figure that fades away when "the area of a language lost at its utmost borders opens up, when it is most foreign to itself, the area of the signs that do not signify" (*Called and Writings I* 201). The lyricism of the latter Hölderlin opens towards madness in just the way Empedocles throws himself into the volcano, in a movement of challenge and dereliction, of almost Nietzschean pride and utmost modesty.

Foucault characterizes the beginning of the 1960s, when he wrote these lines, by what he calls the "eternal debate between reason and madness" (*Called and Writings I* 168). In the last pages of *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault defines madness in its most general form as the *absence* of a work, as a *silence* or a *break* (italicised words denotes my emphasis), but also and more surprisingly as the truth of a work which designs its outer contour or its "Limit". To write the history of madness as Foucault does it means to capture the original split that makes the work possible; but it also means to see in a work its own absence which makes it impossible as a total work. In Foucault's eyes, a work is always an experience in the Bataillian[2] sense of the term, an experience that leads to a place of loss, of nonsense. Foucault is interested in the "presence of madness in literature" (*Called and Writings I* 168) as he sees it at work in Blachot, Roussel or Artaud, in Nietzsche, Van Gogh or Hölderlin. But what

about Beckett? Is he also part of this family of writers who are not in front of madness, but on the verge of it, simultaneously inside and outside?

Probably not. Beckett's name does not appear on the lists of 'maudits' writers and thinkers Foucault likes to compile; and it does not appear very often in Foucault's writings in general. Nevertheless, it would be premature to conclude that Beckett's work did not have an influence on Foucault. In each of the few references Foucault makes to Beckett, he attributes a crucial position to him: that of a break with a certain past, of a new starting point for a fundamentally different kind of discourse. Secondly, Foucault insists in interviews[3] that *Waiting for Godot* (1953) was a break with the Marxism, Phenomenology and Existentialism that was not only his background, but also that of a whole generation immediately after the war. But more importantly, Foucault quotes Beckett in two of his most important texts to introduce and support his own case: in "What is an Author?" (1969) and in "The Discourse on Language" (1970), his inaugural lecture at the College de France. In both texts, Foucault tries to redirect his thinking towards a more explicit and more concrete analysis of the relations of power that govern every discourse. On the one hand, this redirection implies a questioning of the notion of an author as a particularly striking example of the tendency towards individualization that still very much pervades social sciences; on the other hand, it opens up his predominantly historical thinking towards the domain of politics, by focusing on the strategies of delimitation and exclusion society uses to keep discourse under control. In this light, Foucault's use of Beckett makes sense: the passages from *Texts for Nothing* and the *Unnamable* that Foucault quotes - indicating the author's name in 1969, but not in 1970 - allow him to open up a space by giving a voice to the 'desire' of the one who is supposed to submit himself to the order of discourse but hesitates:

> At the moment of speaking, I would like to have a perceived a nameless voice, long proceeding me merely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense, to beckon to me. (*Critical Theory Since 1965* 148)

Importantly, Foucault chooses to speak through Beckett's voice here - but not without modifying it first. His slightly altered Beckett's quote emphasizes mainly the impossibility to express, against Beckett's own conviction that the 'impossibility to express' is always accompanied by the 'obligation to express' (*Disjecta* 139).

Beckett's work shares with Foucault's, a nostalgic, but nevertheless radical view of madness: for example *Murphy* or *Watt*. Another tendency they both have in common is the fact that in their work madness is intrinsically related to language and to the relationship the subject tries to establish with and through language. But whereas in Foucault, the discourse allows the subject to gain its freedom by loosing itself, in Beckett's work the gap between the subject and its speech is the source of constant anxiety. In Foucault's eyes, the transition from *creation* to *madness* is a *qualitative* leap (my emphasis) as exemplified in artists and

philosophers like Van Gogh, Hölderlin or Nerval, a leap that transgresses each time the boundaries between work and life, between representation and presence. In Beckett's view it is only a *qualitative* leap inside representation, from one level of representation to another. In his work, madness seizes only the characters; every time a narrator (or the 'author') is affected, he is lowered to the level of the characters by yet another narrator who appears behind him. Against Foucault's *abyss of madness*, Beckett proposes the *madness of the abyss*; against the *different* discourse madness promises, he proposes *other* discourses that try to control, without much success, the madness that catches them one after the other. Keeping this converging and diverging paradigm in mind regarding madness, between these two thinkers, I will discuss Beckett's 1938 novel *Murphy* in this context.

1.2 *Murphy*: Rebellion against *Doxa*[4] through Chaotic Madness

Although several critics have noted the role that chaos plays in *Murphy*, there is no critical consensus as to what constitutes its essence. What is common to several readings that deal with it as a formal or thematic principle is their invocation of Beckett's comments, made to Tom F. Driver, about the irrationality of human experience:

> What I am saying does not mean that there will henceforth be no form in art. It only means that there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now[5]. (*The Shape of Chaos* 7)

Granting that Beckett's remarks to Driver constitute an aesthetic programme ("the task of the artist now"), it does not follow necessarily that the chaos Beckett describes in 1961 is the chaos that he promotes in *Murphy* (1938). Readings that equate *Murphy*'s chaos with the type of irrationality that Beckett articulates in the interview and which therefore interpret the novel as an attempt to accommodate or subsume chaos beneath the category of form - fail to perceive the extent to which chaos is imagined as a liberating alternative to the habitual world of the novel. *Murphy*'s chaos is an escape from the problem of "the nothing new", or the condition of a universe governed by the immutable laws of physics and rationality. It is a solution, if only an imperfect one, to the constraints of both the universe of fact and the universe of mind. In distinction to eternal recurrence, chaos is perceived as a condition of endless enumeration.

From the beginning of the novel, Murphy's quest is to get himself entirely contained in the "little world" of his mind, concurrently severing all relations between himself and the "big world" of the outside, physical reality. Like all of Beckett's heroes, Murphy is ungainly,

unsightly and incompetent. Hence, he is scorned by the world and leads an unhappy existence in it. On the other hand, within his mind Murphy experiences various feelings of freedom by way of intellectual reprisal - "the kick that the physical Murphy received, the, metal Murphy gave" (*Murphy* 111) - or of pure contemplation, which Beckett calls "the Belacqua bliss" (*Murphy* 111). Finally, there is a third, dark region of Murphy's mind where, "he was not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom" (*Murphy* 112). It is toward this complete "will-lessness", the uncontrolled consummation of the self "in a tumult of non-Newtonian motion" (113), that Murphy aspires. It is a rather large order, to discard the world and the body and silence both the analytic and contemplative spheres of the mind. And Murphy does not really come very close to success; it will take the combined researches of Watt, Molloy and Malone to bring the Unnamable somewhere near this desired chaos in the core of the mind, only to discover that this too is distinct from and antagonistic to the true self.

Murphy's break with the big world of mercantile gehenna and its quid pro quo is a break with *doxa* and it finds an alternative in his falling back upon the little world, immersing himself into the recesses of his mind. The famous sixth chapter declares, there are three zones in his mind, as I have already mentioned. In the first zone of light, mental forms exist with physical parallels. In the second zone of half light, the forms do not have any parallel in the physical world. While the third zone of darkness is "a flux of forms, a perpetual coming together and falling asunder of forms" (*Murphy* 111). There are no states or elements in this zone, and what we have is a constant process of becoming. Murphy sees himself in this world of pure "will-lessness" as a "point in the ceaseless unconditioned generation and passing away of line" (*Murphy* 111). In this world he is like "a mote in its absolute freedom" (*Murphy* 111). The third zone's claim to freedom lies in its autonomy and constant dynamism. The trajectory of Murphy's movement, from the world of mercantile *doxa* to an autonomous world of insanity is mediated by his encounter with the psychotic Mr. Endon in Magdalen Mental Mercyseat later, where Murphy joins as a male nurse.

We can now recall Foucault of *Madness and Civilization* (1967) in this context. In that book, Foucault embarked on an archaeological exploration of the historical conditions underlying the emergence of some key institutions within European culture and especially in France. Rather than reifying madness, Foucault traces the way that madness has been constructed in different forms and judged in different ways throughout history. According to Foucault in the Classical Age, madness was regarded as a fundamental choice in favour of unreason (*deraison*), where unreason is any basic rejection of the norms of rationality constituting the boundaries of bourgeois social life. Among the various forms of unreason (including sexual promiscuity and deviancy, irreligion and idleness), madness was distinguished by its embracing the animal aspect of human nature at the expense of all higher aspects. To Foucault this strict categorisation between sane and insane and treatment of mad people as mentally ill is a product of the modern psychiatric movement. He aimed to try to

demonstrate that rather than madness being a stable condition, mental illness should rather be seen as "the result of social contradictions in which (humans are) historically alienated" (Eribon 70). These social contradictions change from era to era. He saw madness as being constructed at a particular point in history; madness is constituted to ring-fence reason or sanity and to create clear distinctions between madness and sanity. After the era of medicalization of madness, behaviour such as hearing imaginary voices, hallucinating, hysteria, speaking in tongues, which would, in other periods of history, have been seen as possessions by spirits or God, or visions inspired by angels, instead of being valued and sanctified by the Church, became something which needed to be treated by confinement and the administering of drugs. Foucault identifies a shift in the way that madness is conceptualised:

> …in the Renaissance, madness was present everywhere and mingled with every experience by its images or its dangers. During the classical period, madness was shown, but on the other side of the bars; if present, it was at a distance, under the eyes of a reason that no longer felt any relation to it and would not compromise itself by too close a resemblance. (*Madness and Civilisation* 70)

Rather than assuming that the distinction between madness and sanity self-evidently exists, Foucault examines, in *Madness and Civilisation* (1967), the way that institutional changes, such as the availability of houses of confinement, contributed to the development of such a distinction. A second fundamental change noted is that of the dehumanisation of the mad during the period of the great confinement. Where, once madness had been intrinsic to the perceived nature of the human condition, suddenly madness became comprehensible as the trace of animality in the human being. The madman gives in to his passions, rather than being governed by reason. This gives rise to the earliest form of psychiatry, to the invention for the first time of taxonomies of madness, the labelling of forms that the exercise of the passions could take: mania, melancholia, hysteria and hypochondria. Foucault describes the way that the institutionalisation of those considered to be insane developed from the practice in the twelfth century of confining those who were suffering from the highly infectious disease leprosy:

> …the asylum was substituted for the (leper) house, in the geography of haunted places as in the landscape of the moral universe. The old rites of excommunication were revived, but in the world of production and commerce. It was in these places of doomed and despised idleness, in this space invented by a society which had derived an ethical transcendence from the law of work, that madness would appear and soon expand until it had annexed them… The nineteenth century would consent, would even insist that to the mad and to them alone be transferred these lands on which a hundred and fifty years before, men had sought to pen the poor, the vagabond, the unemployed. (*Madness and Civilisation* 57)

Most of the Beckett's characters fall into the categories mentioned by Foucault: they are vagabond, unemployed and persons who are unable to measure the unfathomable depth of their self and Murphy is not an exception.

1.3 Subsuming Chaos beneath the Category of Form:

During the first part of the novel, Murphy is still experimenting with astrology as a viable system outside the microcosm of the self - he is in fact perusing the heavens when first accosted by Celia (*Murphy* l4). To this end, he refuses to look for work until Celia has gone to visit "a swami who cast excellent nativities for sixpence" (*Murphy* 23). The conditions of the horoscope prove nearly impossible to meet (how, for instance, will the penniless Murphy afford the diamonds and amethysts he should wear to ensure success?), but throughout the story Murphy reflects back on his "life warrant" or "bull of incommunication" as he calls it (*Murphy* 31). Most significantly, it is by recalling two points in the horoscope that "the lunatic would easy succumb" to his "great Magical Ability of the eye" (*Murphy* 32) and that he would excel as a "custodian" (*Murphy* 33) - that Murphy persuades himself to accept employment at an insane asylum, when the opportunity arises.

Before he is ready to achieve this final stage in his journey toward the dark, inner world, however, Murphy must face a more mundane gamut of demons - the normal appetites of the body in which his mind is imprisoned. Murphy is ostensibly in London to make his fortune in order that he may marry and suitably provide for Miss Counihan, an Irish girl who is hopelessly enamoured of him. Or at least this is what Miss Counihan claims, by way of fending off the advances of Neary, whom she does not find attractive. In fact, it appears that Murphy has in London retreated to almost a vegetative existence, "eating , drinking, sleeping and putting his clothes on and off" in a seedy room in West Brompton. Murphy's sole means of support derives from an arrangement with his landlady who, "sent exquisitely cooked accounts to Mr. Quigley (Murphy's Dutch uncle) and handed over the difference, less a reasonable commission, to Murphy" (*Murphy* 19). Thus he has managed to withdraw from the economic round of the "big world", having found a little retreat such as Malone later prescribes for his creature Macmann. Murphy's major activity in this state seems to be rocking himself in his rocking chair, to which he straps himself, naked. Continued long enough, the rocking will "quiet" his body, thus freeing his mind. As one might expect, this is at best a temporary escape, requires special conditions (solitude, presence in his room) and is cumbersome and unsatisfying to effect, requiring as it does apparatus outside the self. Nonetheless, Murphy continues to use the chair until the end of the book, being finally immolated during a rocking session at the asylum.

Included among Murphy's "innumerable classifications of experience" is his division of jokes into those "that had once been good" and those "that had never been good" (*Murphy*

65). The narrative voice condemns this principle of differentiation on the basis of the following paradox: "What but an imperfect sense of burnout could have made such a mess of chaos" (*Murphy* 65). Two of the central terms from the interview with Driver are brought together in this moment, chaos and the mess, with the understanding that chaos, the undifferentiated, is preferred over the limitation that order, habit, and distinction provide. This argument against differentiation is an indictment of *Genesis*, or the moment in which God divided one thing from another, the darkness from the light, the heavens from the earth. Into the category of jokes that Murphy considers good, or once good, is placed the pun of the "stout porter" which he tells in chapter eight: "Why did the barmaid champagne? Because the stout porter bitter" (*Murphy* 139). Following its recitation, Murphy sinks down "on the dream of Descartes linoleum" to imagine the scene of the barmaid and the porter who bites her. His reconstruction of their encounter concludes with an allusion to Tintoretto: "Then the nip, and Tintoretto's *Origin of the Milky Way*" (*Murphy* 140). Tintoretto's painting depicts Hera coddling the infant Heracles; in the act of suckling, he bites her breast, unleashing a small stream of milk that creates the band of stars. In the allusion to this painting, Murphy's imperfect sense of humour is affirmed as a cosmological principle. The mess that it makes of chaos is the formation of a new and arbitrary world of distinctions. Murphy is condemned for the process of segregation that he enacts through the sin of delineation.

The case against Murphy's love of ginger is made in response to his ritual consumption of his assorted biscuits (Ginger, Osborne, Digestive, Pettit Beurre, anonymous), which he purchases each day and consumes in ceremonial fashion[6]. "He always ate the first-named last, because he liked it the best, and the anonymous first, because he thought it very likely the least palatable" (*Murphy* 96). Commenting on this sentence, J. M. Coetzee has observed its internal contradiction: "A statement of probability implies that the unexpected is possible, and there can be nothing unexpected in the world of habit[7]". In the moment before consumption, Murphy discovers this inconsistency. To favour one of the five biscuits over another, and to consume them on the basis of this fondness alone, depletes substantially the number of ways in which the biscuits can be enjoyed. If he were able to overcome both his love of ginger and his prejudice against the anonymous, he would be presented with the full scope of their possible arrangement, or what Murphy calls "the dream of total permutability." His "prepossessions" (96), he realizes, offend against the very principle of variety, namely its randomness. Desire is in this way analogous to Neary's "doctrine of the limit" (50), which encapsulates the Pythagorean notion of a perfectly composed universe of numbers. Both of these principles (differentiation and limitation) fashion the world of experience into form, but do so at the expense of the universe's natural abundance. Both Murphy and the novel struggle to overcome this tendency towards habit, Murphy through his vision of chaos, and the novel through what J.M. Coetzee calls its "pure anarchic play with the temporal code of narration" (Andonian 11) . Truly, Beckett's treatment of the people who are different from the majority,

reminds us specifically about Foucault's works and more generally about the predominant voice of the Poststructuralism.

1.4 "The Little World": Entry into the Asylum

While most critics would see the reform of the asylums in the nineteenth century, and the move away from the harsh treatment of patients, where inmates were chained up, to one where patients were treated more compassionately, where their complaints were listened to, and they were no longer viewed as a 'freakshow' for the middle classes, as a period of liberalisation and as a time when those who were judged to be mentally ill were treated with more care, Foucault argues that this should not be seen as a simple improvement of conditions: "the asylum no longer punished the madman's guilt…but it did more, it organised that guilt. It organised it for the madman as a consciousness of himself" (*Madness and Civilization* 252). Thus, unlike with any other illness, the diagnosis of mental illness seems also to imply a failing on the part of the individual for which they can be blamed. Foucault claims that:

> …the asylum…is not a free realm of observation, diagnosis and therapeutics; it is a juridical space from where one is accused, judged and condemned, and from which one is never released except by the version of this trial in psychological depth, that is by remorse. Madness will be punished in the asylum, even if it is innocent outside of it. For a long time to come, and until our own day at least, it is imprisoned in a moral world. (*Madness and Civilization* 252)

This is an important gesture, as it pre-figures Foucault's later exposition of the model of disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish*: a form of internalised 'authority'. Even in the case of Pinel's clinic, in which religious views were more likely to be viewed through a rational medical lens as symptoms of delirium, rather than as an organising moral principle of rehabilitation, Foucault argues that the asylum became, under this same regime of authority, "a religious domain without religion" (*Madness and Civilization* 244). The authority became embodied, as modern psychiatric medicine developed apart from an explicit concern with morality, in the figure of the doctor, the specialist, the expert. Foucault claims that it was Tuke's and Pinel's[8] purchase on moral authority as doctors (as medicine increasingly gained social status and respectability) that led to them being the ones to treat the mad, rather than any specialist knowledge they possessed, since the treatments used at the beginning of the nineteenth century were not medical in nature. The 'creation' of mental illness as a health-care specialism in the early twentieth century justified the continued authority of doctors over the mad once a medical, rather than moral, model of treatment was adopted.

But however unlike Foucault's treatment, in Beckett's *Murphy*, asylum becomes a space, where freedom can be gained, where autonomy of human behaviour can be exercised.

It becomes the "little world" for the solipsist Murphy, an internal abode where he can take refuge from the daily rituals of conventional society. Rather than being a place of repression of unregulated desires as asylum appears in Foucault's works, in Beckett's novel it is a place which ensures freedom from daily drudgery. The suggestion from Ticklepenny concerning the asylum is most welcome, in part because it solves Murphy's problem of finding employment, but mainly because he senses that the asylum may in some way lead him to knowledge that will decide him in favour of the "little world" (*Murphy* 115). Like Descartes, Murphy is not at all sure of the connection even between his mind and his body, and he is even less certain about the importance of the external world. Beckett is at some pains, however, to point out that Murphy is not an idealist, that is, that he does not reject the external world as a fiction of the mind; "There was the mental fact and there was the physical fact, equally real if not equally pleasant"(*Murphy* 108). Furthermore, the mental and physical realms are so divorced for Murphy that he cannot understand how they can have coexists with one another, "nor how the two experiences came to overlap" (*Murphy* l09). He is willing, however, to accept that there may be some "process of supernatural determination" (*Murphy* 109) which brings about at least a "partial congruence" of the two worlds. This position is essentially that of the Occasionalist school of philosophers who, pushing beyond Descartes, rejected all possibilities of a physical link between mind and body (as, for instance, at the pineal gland), and chose instead to endorse every instance of congruence between the mental and physical worlds as an occasion of divine intervention[9]. Murphy's quest therefore differs from that of Watt, who is seeking "semantic succour" - control of the physical world by containing it in the processes of the mental world. Murphy's quest is instead an attempt to divest himself of those mental processes and preferences which tie him to aspects of the physical world, in order that he may live entirely in the world of the mind. Inveighing against the "char Venus", ritualizing his scanty meal of biscuits and tea, trances in the rocking chair and the incantation of his personal refrain, "I am not of the big world, I am of the little world" (*Murphy* 178), all have some effect but cannot finally mould the reality of Murphy's situation to his convictions. Hence his decision to take over Ticklepenny's position at the asylum, whose inmates have already decided in favour of the "the little world".

Most of Murphy's activities at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat are devoted to establishing the supremacy of the "little world". He observes the clash of the "psychotic and psychiatric" points of view, and opts for the former - a choice which gives him great success with the patients. He greatly admires the padded cells, with their soft, warm, gray roundness. And he finds a little world of his own, a garret to live in, like one in which he had once lived in Hanover but, "twice as good…because half as large" (*Murphy* 162). Into this confined space Murphy insists on introducing a gas heater, to complete the womb-like snugness. For a final touch, the tiny skylight looks out upon the galactic coal-sack, the one piece of sky with no visible stars. This is singularly appropriate since part of Murphy's microcosmic campaign

has been the renunciation of astrology as another case of the imposition of an external system on his internal reality. At the beginning of the novel, by contrast, astrology was the one system outside his own in which Murphy would place any credence.

In the meantime, however, Murphy has been having a fine time with his official duties - particularly with a resplendent little patient named Mr. Endon[10]. Together they play endless "Fabian" chess games, while Murphy lights and relights Mr. Radon's immortal cigar and makes disconnected and idiosyncratic speeches at the psychotic, which the latter ignores completely. Each is in his own little world and from the outside they appear happy.[11]

Murphy's demise and subsequent disposition inject a heavy dose of irony into the search for self-annihilation and the defeat of appetite. Following a chess game with Mr. Endon, Murphy goes into one of his occasional trances. On awakening, he finds Mr. Endon has wandered abroad, pressing light switches and indicator buttons in accordance with "a mental pattern" all his own. After returning Mr. Endon to his cell and bed, Murphy looks into the psychotic's eyes and discovers there his own image, "horribly reduced, obscured and distorted" (*Murphy* 249). At the same time he observes that, although he is seeing himself in Mr. Endon's eyes, Mr. Endon is clearly not seeing him; "The relation between Mr. Murphy and Mr. Endon could not have been better summed up than by the former's sorrow at seeing himself in the latter's immunity from seeing anything but himself" (*Murphy* 250) . Having finally achieved "the little world", Murphy now discovers the almost intolerable loneliness that is the price of the condition.

Leaving the ward, Murphy returns to his quarters, taking off his clothes as he goes and finally lying down naked "in a tuft of soaking tuffets" (*Murphy* 251). (This return-to-the-earth gesture is repeated by almost every Beckett character who is capable of doing so, and it presages the reptile state which dominates the latest novels.) In this position he attempts to conjure up pictures of every-body in his life, presumably for use as masturbatory fantasies. His effort is in vain. Instead he gets, "scraps of bodies, of landscapes, hands, eyes, lines and colours evoking nothing…" (*Murphy* 252). This failure further evidenced the great isolation that is inherent in his newly achieved microcosmic state of mind. Alarmed by this turn of events, Murphy runs back to his garret to have a short rock before returning "to Brewery Road, to Celia, serenade, nocturne, alabada" (*Murphy* 252). However, at about the time when the rocking begins to quiet his body, the unpredictable gas-heater, jury-rigged by Ticklepenny, begins to spew gas. Murphy is immolated and his body becomes permanently quiet.

At the coroner's inquest Dr. Killiecrankie (Outer Hebridian Royal Medical Society) produces a singed envelope addressed to "Mrs. Murphy" (*Murphy* 258). After the inquest is over, the envelope is awarded to Celia (presumably because she knew of Murphy's birthmark on his buttocks), for want of anything closer to a "Mrs. Murphy". Celia in turn gives the letter to Neary, who reads it out:

> With regard to the disposal of my body, mind and soul, I desire that they be burnt and placed in a paper bag and brought to the Abbey Theatre, Lr. Abbey Street, Dublin, and without pause into what the great and good Lord Chesterfield calls the necessary house, where their happiest hours have been spent, on the right as one goes down into the pit, and I desire that the chain be there pulled upon them, if possible during the performance of a piece, the whole to be executed without ceremony or show of grief. (*Murphy* 269)

Once the spark of life (wherever that resides) has been extinguished, the Cartesian search implodes and body, mind and soul are lumped together as material for the incinerator and the sewer. Beyond the glee with which the young Beckett is thrusting this shocking irony upon the reader, Murphy's final instructions make sense when considered in the light of the quest he has pursued in the book. The philosophic problems which have motivated his actions disappear if there is no percipient mind on the scene to appreciate them, and the remaining characters - Neary, Wiley, Cooper, Celia, Miss Counihan - care absolutely nothing for this particular quest. His body, mind and soul might just as well, therefore be cast off together to the impersonal mercies of fire and water.

In the end, however, even this simple ceremony is denied to Murphy. When all the others are out of earshot, Neary tells his man Cooper to "Dump it (the ashes) anywhere" (*Murphy* 262), leaving him at the crematorium to receive the remains. Later, Cooper is looking in vain for a trash can in which to deposit the ashes when he comes upon an irresistible pub, and enters:

> Some hours later Cooper took the packet of ash from his pocket, where earlier in the evening he had put it for greater security, and threw it angrily at a man who had given him great offense. It bounced, burst, off the wall on to the floor, where at once it became the object of much dribbling, passing, trapping, shooting, punching, heading and even some recognition from the gentleman's code. By closing time the body, mind and soul of Murphy were freely distributed over the floor of the saloon; and before another dayspring greyened the earth had been swept away with the sand, the beer, the butts, the glass, the matches, the spits, the vomit. (*Murphy* 275)

Murphy has clearly, if posthumously, reached a state that satisfies the condition of *Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil veils* ("Where you are worth nothing, there you should want nothing" - Arnold Geulinx). In the meantime, the irony has grown rather thick and Beckett, doing obeisance to the traditions of fiction, ends the novel on a more resonant note with the beautiful - at times almost purple - concluding chapter concerning Celia and Mr. Kelly in the park. For Murphy and the question of appetite as it relates to the outside world, however, this is the end, a case perhaps of "into ashes all my lust" (Marvell 109).

1.5 "Oh to be in Atoms, in Atoms![12]": Transforming Madness into Nothingness

Murphy does not return to Celia, even though he contemplates the benefits of doing so. What Celia promises is the warmth and comfort of routine. She promises habit, which in Beckett's vocabulary is equivalent to life. In order to describe what Murphy's refusal (or inability) to return to Brewery Road means in the context of his struggle to avoid habit, it is first necessary to characterize his relationship with Celia. When Celia first encounters him, Murphy vacillates between the earth and heavens. As he is drawn to her, Murphy replaces one version of the heavens for another, the star chart, which he leaves "lying in the gutter" (*Murphy* 15), for Celia, the celestial. She is however an earthly version of the heavenly, both a woman and prostitute, and in both measures sublunary[13]. Throughout their relationship, he continues to regard her in rather unsympathetic terms. For him she is a distraction, exciting his body to the detriment of his mind. The part of himself that he despises and that he wishes to subdue is drawn to her and to her charms. To the extent therefore that she is both terrestrial and heavenly (if only in name) Celia demonstrates the degree to which both the heavens and earth provide obstacles to Murphy's dream of total retreat and total permutability. Those obstacles include the horoscope that Murphy requires (and that Celia procures for him) and the sexual desire that he feels for her. This latter is more powerful than his will to resist and it is on account of it that he consents finally to work. As Eugene Webb has observed, "whereas Beatrice, whose name means 'she who makes blessed' was guiding Dante to a state of blessedness outside time, Murphy's Celia, whose name ('heavenly') suggests her relationship to the solar and sidereal cycles of the temporal system, is trying to draw Murphy into an acceptance of time as the concomitant and price of love".[14]

The relationship between Murphy and Celia is charted on several planes at once. For her it is a material matter, accompanied by material concerns. Though a product of her trade, their union should allow her - in her estimation - to retire from the streets. For Murphy, and for the narrative, their intersection, union, and happiness is a story that must be read in the stars. It is not a human story, but a human embodiment of a more substantial story that is told in the rotation of the Crab and Virgin. The degree to which this is true for Murphy - true at least at the novel's outset - can be seen in his insistence that their marriage occur while the moon is properly aligned: "Resting on Campanella's *City of the Sun*, Murphy said they must get married by hook or by crook before the moon came into opposition. Now it was September, the sun was back in the Virgin again, and their relationship had not yet been regularised" (*Murphy* 17). In Campanella's city, the procreative and matrimonial activities of men and women are determined by the alignment of the heavens[15]. It is however unclear whether for Murphy this demand is a matter of religion or a matter of symmetry, as the word "regularised" embodies both the ecclesiastical meaning of "bound by religious rules" and the geometrical meaning of "exhibiting a principle, harmonious, consistent". Even though their

life together is never consummated by marriage, it nonetheless describes a distinct pattern, that of "serenade, nocturne, albada." It is described this way first in chapter five (*Murphy* 74) and once more in chapter eleven (*Murphy* 252), shortly before Murphy's death, as he considers returning to Brewery Road and to Celia. This decision illustrates the magnetism of routine as a defence against the irregularity of everyday life. Murphy's subsequent death is the ultimate release from the temptation of habit. He does not return in the end to Celia and to the settled life of routine that his marriage to her prophesies. Instead he faces alone and without help the "superfine chaos" of the universe.[16]

Murphy's passage into chaos secures for him a permanent period of "abandonment". This phrase occurs in the monograph on Proust, and is employed to describe the occasions in which habit is destroyed and the mind awakened to the realities of human nature: "Our first nature, therefore, corresponding, as we shall see later, to a deeper instinct than the mere animal instinct of self preservation, is laid bare during these periods of abandonment"[19]. He is no longer at the mercy of the contending circles that control his movement: the system of heavenly bodies, the rotundity of his mind, the movements of his entrance and departure. In the absence of their designs, Murphy is free in the limited sense that he is surrendered to freedom. Absolute freedom, even if it can be imagined, or imagined at least as the unimaginable (as it was for Kant), is not entertained in the novel. Freedom remains the freedom to submit. It is an act of compromise. What changes ultimately is the object to which one genuflects. Habit is subsumed by chaos, as Murphy pledges himself at the novel's close to the will of the universal mess, to the province of eternal motion, to eternal mindlessness. He becomes nothing in the process of nothingness - in the process that precedes his exit and his entry and that precedes the moment of creation itself.

Beckett's use of the institution of asylum in *Murphy* is radically different from that of Foucault. For Beckett it is a site which deconstructs the habits of normative society, while for Foucault, it is place for exercising the discourse of the conventional society. Though for both of them 'madness' is anti-institutional, a rebellion against the societal structures and hence can be interpreted as poststructuralist.

1.6 Conclusion: Foucault and Beckett - their Divergence and Convergence

The conclusion of *Madness and Civilisation* seeks to identify where, in modernity, the voice of unreason, untrammelled by psychopathological discourse, may be heard. The answer, it seems, is in art and literature:

> Since the end of the eighteenth century, the life of unreason no longer manifests itself except in the lightning-flash of works such as those of Hölderlin, of Nietzsche, or of Artaud - forever irreducible to those alienations that can be cured, resisting by their own strengths that gigantic moral imprisonment which we are in the habit of calling,

> doubtless by antiphrasis, the liberation of the insane by Pinel and Tuke. (*Madness and Civilisation* 264)

Foucault does not mention Beckett here, but in his own unique way in *Murphy* and later in *Watt*, Beckett posed that insanity offers a world of freedom and fulfilment for man's true nature, and pushed it to its absurd limit. Murphy flees in terror, in order to resist "regularity" and the promise of peace in the inner chaos is lost forever.

Notes and References:

1. Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) was a major German lyric poet, commonly associated with the artistic movement known as Romanticism. Hölderlin was also an important thinker in the development of German Idealism.
2. Alludes to Georges Bataille (1897-1962), a French intellectual and literary figure, whose core areas are eroticism, sovereignty, and transgression.
3. 'Archaeology of a Passion' (1983) in *Called and Writings*, Volume I, Paris: Gullimard, 1994, pp. 190-204.
4. Derived from ancient Greek δόξα from δοκεῖν (dokein) meaning "to expect", "to seem", it denotes common belief or popular opinion, from which are derived the modern terms of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Used by the Greek rhetoricians as a tool for the formation of argument by using common opinions, the *doxa* was often manipulated by sophists to persuade the people, leading to Plato's condemnation of Athenian democracy.
5. See David Hesla's *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971), and J. E. Dearlove's *Accommodating the Chaos: Samuel Beckett's non-relational art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982). Hesla argues that all of Beckett's work is an attempt "to include the formlessness of chaos within the structure of art" (7). In distinction to Hesla, I am arguing that Beckett's work attempts to enter nothingness, not represent it. Dearlove, on the other hand, argues that Beckett develops, in the face of chaos, an art in which there is no relation between the artist, his subject, and his work.
6. Henning discerns in the progression of biscuits the theme of initiation: "Finally settled in the Hyde park Cockpit, Murphy prepares to consume his solid nourishment, from the primary ginger (a rather unstable origin) to the ultimate Anonym" (46). She goes on to argue that both ginger and Celia are "connected with the chaos of gas: ginger as a carminative and Celia as a celestial whore" (47). See Henning, Sylvie Debevec, *Beckett's Critical Complicity: Carnival, Contestation, and Tradition*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988.

7. See J. M. Coetzee, "The Comedy of Point of View in Beckett's Murphy". Coetzee attributes Beckett's manipulation of the codes of narration to an attitude of reserve towards the conventions of realist fiction.
8. Refers to two French thinkers - William Tuke (1732-1822) and Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), who were famous for their execution of 'moral treatment' in the asylum. At the start of the 18th century, the "insane" were typically viewed as wild animals who had lost their reason. They were not held morally responsible but were subject to scorn and ridicule by the public, sometimes kept in madhouses in appalling conditions, often in chains and neglected for years or subject to numerous tortuous "treatments" including whipping, beating, bloodletting, shocking, starvation, irritant chemicals, and isolation. The approach of 'moral therapy' has been praised for freeing sufferers from shackles and barbaric physical treatments, instead considering such things as emotions and social interactions, but has also been criticised for blaming or oppressing individuals according to the standards of a particular social class or religion.
9. Ruby Cohn notes that it is appropriate that Beckett's heroes should be drawn specifically to the Occasioanlist Arnold Geulincx, "who emphasized the delights of the mind" (*Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut*, p.49). The relation of Murphy to the Occasionalists has been considered by many critics but the original source of this interpretation seems to be Samuel Mintz, "Beckett's Murphy: A 'Carteslan' Novel", *Perspective*, Autumn, 1959, pp.156-65).
10. As Ruby Cohn (*Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut*, p.55) and others have note, Endon derives from the Greek word which means "within". Ultimate "withinness" is of course Murphy's initial goal and Mr. Endon is a handy picture of the goal achieved.
11. It is definitely not the case, as Richard N. Coe suggests, that Murphy, "might have lived out happily the rest of his natural life, his nights spent In symbolic chess games with Mr. Endon his days 'at peace' In his cell-like garret." (*Samuel Beckett*, p.22) It is clear from Murphy's sadness at the impenetrabillty of Mr. Endon, as well as from his decision to return to Celia, that the promise.
12. Taken from the radio-play of Beckett, *All That Fall*. See *Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 263
13. The figure of Celia resembles Winfred from the *Witch Of Edmonton*. A point of comparison is a line spoken in Act one: "I will change my life,/ From a loose whore to a repentant wife." See Thomas Dekker and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 15
14. Eugene Webb, *Samuel Beckett: A Study of his Novels* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), p. 46.

15. Campanella describes the activities as follows: "The time for this is determined by the Astrologer and the medical officer; and they always take great care to choose a time when Mercury and Venus are east of the Sun in a favourable house and Jupiter looks upon them in a propitious aspect, and also Saturn and Mars, and similarly the Sun and Moon, which are often influential. For the most part they want to have Virgo in the ascendant, but they are very careful to ensure that neither Saturn nor Mars is in an angle, because all four angles with oppositions and squares are unfavourable and from these angles comes the source of vital strength and destiny, depending upon the harmony of the whole with the parts." See, *The City of the Sun* tr. A.M Elliott and R. Millner (West Nyack: The Journeyman Press, 1981), p. 29-30.
16. The pattern of Murphy and Celia's time together forms a portion of the musical imagery that functions in the novel. Another is the reconfiguration of the anagram MMM (Magdalen Mental Mercyseat) to mean Music, Music, Music. See Mary Bryden, "Beckett and the Sound of Silence", and Peter Szendy, "End Games", both printed in *Samuel Beckett and Music*, ed. Mary Bryden, London: Oxford University Press, 1998.

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