ABSTRACT

"I can't go on; I'll go on": Narrative Consolation in the Works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett

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This dissertation examines the role of narrative consolation in the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Specifically, I argue that narrative holds immense consolatory power for Joyce and Beckett. Despite the clear manifestations of the trials and anguish of the human condition in their works, these two authors ultimately share a tenacious, optimistic faith in story. While Joyce and Beckett's works both affirm the consolatory power narrative holds, each author seeks to redress specific ills with his chosen literary form. That is, their widely varying styles reveal both similar affirmations of storytelling as well as different modes through which narrative responds to different elements of suffering. I examine the specific claims these authors stake for narrative's consolatory capacity and elucidate the specific powers each author ascribes to narrative. I first focus on the role of art as consolation and a replacement for things lost for Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* I then posit that in *Ulysses,* Joyce proclaims his faith in narrative's ability to offer the consolation of place through

literature's imaginative power and its ability to build possible worlds. Next, I examine narrative as persistence and witness in Beckett's dramas *Happy Days* and *Endgame,* arguing that these plays are explorations of language's power in the midst of decline, suffering, and death through which Beckett makes an argument for the necessity of narrative for survival and then uses narrative to respond to the horrors of the human condition with witness. Finally, I argue that Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby* make a powerful argument for the power of narrative, specifically dramatic narrative, to offer consolation for the particular human suffering of isolation through the way in which these plays engage and deploy the power of the audience. Thus, both Joyce and Beckett make powerful arguments for narrative's ability to offer consolation in times of suffering.

"I can't go on, I'll go on": Narrative Consolation in the Works of
James Joyce and Samuel Beckett

by

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A Dissertation

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## DEDICATION

*to the mother who taught me to love reading books and the father who reads books because I love them*

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

With his final words, Samuel Beckett's Unnameable articulates the paradoxical claim "I can't go on, I'll go on," leading to much debate as to whether his life and narration cease or persist, and what the motivations might be for either trajectory. When asked in an interview if he, like some people, would continue to keep trying if he struggled to find words, Beckett responded "there are others, like Nicolas de Stael, who threw themselves out of a window" ("Moody Man of Letters" 1). Beckett's life and *oeuvre* give the lie to this morbid response as he did, indeed, go on writing and living for many years after this 1956 interview until his death in 1989. Though Beckett himself only offers this evasive response, his work posits a far richer answer as to why he, like the Unnameable, keeps telling stories.

In his 1995 Nobel Prize Lecture, Seamus Heaney claims

> the form of the poem…is crucial to poetry's power to do the thing which always is and always will be to poetry's credit: the power to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it, the power to remind us that we are hunters and gatherers of values, that our very solitudes and distresses are creditable, in so far as they, too, are an earnest of our veritable human being. (430)

In short, Heaney credits poetry's ability to console the human soul living in a horrific, even despairing, world. Its form, as he states, joins the content in its powerful affirmation of humanity's values and humanity itself.

Though Heaney speaks here specifically about poetry, he could very well have been articulating the capacity for consolation in literature across genres as

explored in the works of his fellow Irishmen, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Joyce and Beckett lived in a world desperately in need of consolation. They were born and raised in an Ireland first dominated by the British and then dominated by the violence of the Troubles. Joyce's childhood gave him first-hand experience with the poverty and struggles of his "dear dirty Dublin" (*Dubliners* 86) . Both lived to see the horror of World War I and the violent beginnings of World War II, as Joyce died in 1941. Beckett, who served in the French Resistance, witnessed the evil and anguish of the Holocaust as well as the immense destruction of the atomic bomb. These two preeminent writers thus found themselves caught in the crisis of narrative in the modern and postmodern eras. In Emily Griesinger's articulation, this crisis stems from "the relation between postmodern suspicion of grand narratives and the crisis of hope that grips us" (3). Writing in the twentieth century, both Joyce and Beckett experienced suspicion of the overarching narratives supposedly governing their existence. Both rejected Christianity, with Joyce turning from his Catholic upbringing and Beckett lapsing from his Protestant faith. Joyce explicitly resented what he termed the tyranny of Rome and the tyranny of England, both of which he considered destructive, paralyzing agents in Ireland.[1] Both lived the majority of their lives in self-imposed exile, unable to live at home in their native country. Thus, Joyce and Beckett found themselves lacking, to an extent, both the metanarrative of faith and that of nationality, which were often intertwined in Ireland.

Intensely aware of the failure and fragmentation running rampant across their worlds, Joyce and Beckett also recognized the need for something to stem the

[1] See *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, 166.

tide of despair. Bereft of other options, Joyce and Beckett turn to storytelling. In this dissertation, I examine the role of narrative consolation in the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. I demonstrate that these authors, responding to suffering, turn to storytelling as a means of countering loss and despair. Specifically, I argue that narrative holds immense consolatory power for Joyce and Beckett. Despite the clear manifestations of the trials and anguish of the human condition in their works, these two authors ultimately share a tenacious, optimistic faith in story.

Joyce and Beckett share a significant personal relationship; nonetheless, the two developed radically different writing styles. The young Beckett, after leaving Ireland for Europe much like Joyce before him, maintained a close relationship with James Joyce, working as his amanuensis for a time, developing a relationship with his family, and writing about his work.[2] Beckett's close relationship with Joyce led to Beckett's recognition of Joyce's awesome mastery of language, which in turn lead to Beckett's intentional development of an oppositional literary style. If Joyce could master a literature of embellishment, Beckett could master a literature of diminishment. Beckett himself offers the clearest explication of their differences:

> The more Joyce knew the more he could. He's tending toward omniscience and omnipotence as an artist. I'm working with impotence, ignorance…My little exploration is that whole zone of being that has always been set aside by artists as something unuseable… I think anyone nowadays who pays the slightest attention to his own experience finds it the experience of a non-knower, a non-can-er. ("Moody Man of Letters" 3)

Beckett and Joyce are thus stylistic opposites who nevertheless both work to affirm the role of storytelling in their respective works.

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[2] For more on the relationship between Joyce and Beckett, see Sam Slote, "The Joyce Circle"; Richard Ellman, *James Joyce*, James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, and Anthony Cronin, *The Last Modernist*.

Given the significant biographical connection between Joyce and Beckett, research asserting the importance of studying the two in conjunction with each other abounds. Scholarship focuses on the role of influence in the relationship between these two authors, primarily in terms of Joyce's influence on the younger Beckett, but also in terms of how Beckett responds to or reacts against this influence.[3] While Joycean influence can be traced in Beckett's work, especially in his early fiction, as P.J. Murphy asserts, critics who consider Joyce's influence in Beckett's work, tend to consider it "no longer relevant to the Beckettian enterprise" by the time of Beckett's 1953 novel *Watt* (14). In contrast, Murphy, in *Beckett's Dedalus*, explores "how Beckett's critical encounter with Joycean aesthetics plays a heretofore unrecognized and vital role in the development of his own theories" (4). Specifically, Murphy claims that, aesthetically, "Beckett has chosen Joyce as his starting point….Beckett's choice of Joyce as a means of initiating his own writing focuses primarily on one figure, namely, Stephen Dedalus" and thus examines Beckett's exploration and testing of Dedalus' aesthetic theories across his own fiction, not just through *Watt* but into and across Beckett's later fiction as well (5). While Murphy focuses on Beckett's aesthetics, his work still functions in terms of influence as it explores how aesthetics set forth in Joyce's work manifest in Beckett's fiction.

Beyond Joyce's influence on Beckett, critics have explored differences and similarities extant in these two authors' work. Ruby Cohn clearly articulates their

[3] Ed Jewinski and Kevin Dettmar both consider Joyce's influence on Beckett in terms of Harold Bloom's theories of influence. See Jewinski, "James Joyce and Samuel Beckett: From Anti-Epiphany to Epiphany" and Dettmar, "The Joyce that Beckett Built."

opposing styles as "Joyce attempting to embrace all knowledge, all experience, all language; Beckett doubting all knowledge, all experience, all language, and doubting even the Cartesian tradition of doubt" (381). Their stylistic differences are clear, and Beckett's analysis of Joyce as moving towards omniscience as an artist and himself as working with impotence rings true. In terms of similarities, Peter Boxall argues that a tension between the international and the national exists in both Beckett and Joyce's writing, and that as both of their works take up this tension, the movement from Joyce's writing to Beckett's "mirrored" a "passage from national to global" that also happened in the historical events and movements of their times (149). Dirk Van Hulle, in his *Manuscript Genetics*, examines "the role of the composition history and its equal importance of the works of two authors with quite divergent poetics" with the aim of showing "how Joyce used the textual history to write a history of the world and how Beckett made a direct link between the development of the text and that of the individual (3). That is, Van Hulle argues "no matter how their poetics may diverge, the role of the writing process in their works is equally important" (6). Joyce and Beckett develop opposite poetics and deploy textual history to different ends; however, the two place equal importance on the role of revisions and the writing process, thus maintaining a similarity in their approach to their craft despite their opposite styles. In his book devoted to exploring the role of oral performance—storytelling, hospitality, musical performance—in the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, Alan Friedman argues "both Joyce and Beckett experienced and embodied the continuing oral tradition of social performance

Ireland and embedded it within their writings, even while they felt like uninvited guests in their own homes" (xxv).

Steven Connor joins Van Hulle and Friedman in considering how Beckett and Joyce approached their art, arguing for the significance of the "artistic and cultural context in which they came together," namely positing that "the work of Joyce and Beckett is framed interestingly by the avant-garde aesthetics of [late 1920s Paris] and in particular by the aesthetics of Dada and surrealism," especially "the tension maintained in [these aesthetics] between control and freedom" (147-148). While Connor situates Joyce and Beckett in similar contexts and through a shared aesthetic tension, he suggests that this tension between control and freedom, which he examines in terms of authorship and authority, manifests differently as "Beckett's view of the relationship between artist and work is much less certain and confident than Joyce's"; while the two share this tension amongst their works there is a "movement from an aesthetic of authority (Joyce) to an aesthetic impotence (Beckett)" (152, 158).

Such scholarship explores the influential role of Joyce on Beckett and vice versa, as well as similar themes and theories at work in these two authors' writing despite their artistic differences.[4] More needs to be done to assert the similarity between the philosophies underlying their major works, specifically the similarities in their beliefs regarding their art form: narrative. Much as Van Hulle argues for a similar conviction regarding the importance of the writing process, Friedman argues

[4] Other extant studies devoted solely to Joyce and Beckett include Jarruetche, *Beckett, Joyce, and the Art of the Negative* and Gluck, Gluck, *Beckett and Joyce: Friendship and Fiction.*

for participation in a shared oral tradition, and Connor and Boxall argue for the deployment of similar themes and ideas, this dissertation examines another similarity underlying the admittedly divergent styles of these two significant and intertwined twentieth century authors. The ideas and theories explored by critics—Dedalus' aesthetics, the tension between local and global, the oral tradition, authorship and authority, the significance of the writing process—appear in different modes and forms across Joyce and Beckett's *oeuvres* but nonetheless indicate philosophical and thematic similarities underlying their narrative craft.

Joining these studies, this dissertation asserts that more needs to be done to articulate and examine not their influential relationship, but the shared themes and beliefs regarding narrative and writing. The influential links between these two authors are certainly significant; however, this project is not primarily an influence study. The allusive and influential connections between Joyce and Beckett lay the foundation from which to explore their related philosophies of narrative. Narrative in this project refers not solely to prose, but instead functions as a broader term including other modes of storytelling. Narrative here, then, is defined as storytelling articulated through written, literary language across genres. I centrally argue that Joyce and Beckett's respective works reveal a shared belief that narrative can offer a viable, consolatory response to suffering. If Joyce's exorbitant style and Beckett's literature of diminishment are opposites, the two styles are nonetheless capable of manifesting philosophical similarities, one of which is their shared exploration of literature's consolatory powers and abilities. Joyce and Beckett, in their respective works, both manifest a belief in the consolatory powers of literature and explore the

specific ways in which literature can respond to specific forms of suffering through the power of its varied forms.

The study of narrative and its consolation goes back as far as Aristotle and his definition of catharsis in the *Poetics.* In the *Poetics,* Aristotle argues “the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation” (37). For Aristotle, tragedy provides this catharsis as “an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude…through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions” (38). Art—specifically narrative art—is a place, in Aristotle’s view, to mediate fear and pity and achieve some form of relief. In Richard Kearney’s explication, Aristotle “believed that dramatized stories could offer us the freedom to behold all kinds of unpalatable and unliveable events, which by being narrated have some of the harm removed” (137). As he further explains, catharsis “comprises a double attitude of both empathy and detachment” which allows a reader, or an audience, to gain enough distance from horror to be able to grasp “the meaning of it all” while “amplif[ying] the range of those we might empathize with” (Kearney 138).

Although Aristotle aligns this definition with drama, specifically tragedy, literature’s ability to serve as a vehicle mediating human emotion manifests itself across literary genres. For instance, with the development of the modern elegy in Milton’s “Lycidas,” consolation becomes part of a poem. In Milton’s definition, an elegiac poem consists of three parts: lament, praise, and consolation. Thus, consolation becomes an explicit role for poetry. This turn to consolation in elegiac poetry does not remain with Milton, but continues in modern and contemporary

poetry, taken up by W.H. Auden, W.B. Yeats, and Seamus Heaney. In terms of fiction, Flannery O'Connor claims the reading and writing of novels as fundamentally hopeful acts: "people without hope do not write novels" (77). That is, writing a novel "is a plunge into reality" that is "very shocking to the system"; thus, "people without hope not only don't write novels, but…they don't read them" (78). Reading, O'Connor writes, requires courage; people without hope "don't take long looks at anything, because they lack the courage…the way to despair is to refuse to have any kind of experience, and the novel, of course, is a way to have experience" (78). Reading, for O'Connor, "requires the kind of mind that is willing to have its sense of mystery deepened by contact with reality, and its sense of reality deepened by contact with mystery" (79). Fiction, then, offers a deepened sense of reality and mystery—an experience—that can function as an antidote to "the way to despair" (78).

Contemporary scholars and theorists take up the exploration of narrative's ability to offer a response to chaos and despair. In Richard Kearney's *On Stories*, he argues "in our own postmodern era of fragmentation and fracture…narrative provides us with one of our most viable forms of *identity*—individual and communal" (4). As he explains, stories are essentially communal acts because they all involve "someone telling something to someone about something" (Kearney 5). Further, he argues "sometimes an ethics of memory is obliged to resort to the aesthetics of storytelling. Viewers need not only to be made intellectually aware of the horrors of history; they also need to experience the horror of that suffering as if they were actually there" (Kearney 62). For Kearney, then, the act of storytelling offers identity

both to human beings as individuals and as members of a community, in addition to serving as a necessary witness to the horrors of the age. Story is not only a vehicle of community and witness but, because of these things, it is also a locus of morality. Thus, Kearney claims, "there will always be human selves to recite and receive stories. And these narrative selves will always be capable of ethically responsible action" (152).

Paul Ricoeur, too, argues for the power of narrative in human life. As he claims in his essay "Life in Quest of Narrative," life includes "a genuine demand for narrative" (29). For Ricoeur, this is due to story's ability to reconfigure life. This reconfiguration of life, is not transient but "something that endures and remains across that which passes and flows away" (22). Ricoeur explains life's demand for story largely in terms of the mechanics of reading. Because "to appropriate a work through reading is to unfold the world horizon implicit in it," the reader "belongs at once to the work's horizon of experience in imagination and to that of his or her own real action" (26). Due to this dual citizenship, "we…have to look for the points of support that the narrative can find in the living experience of acting and suffering; and that which, in this experience, demands the assistance of narrative and expresses the need for it" (28). Narrative intersects with life and in so doing fills a need created by "the living experience of acting and suffering" (28). Thus, as Ricoeur argues, "if it is true that fiction is only completed in life and that life can be understood only through the stories that we tell about it, then an examined life, in the sense of the word as we have borrowed it from Socrates, is a life recounted," or,

in Kearney's paraphrase of Ricoeur, "the untold life is not worth living" (Ricoeur 31, Kearney 28).

In their explorations of the consolatory capacities of literature, Ricoeur and Kearney stand apart from other voices in contemporary narratology. While the power of narrative and its influence on those who encounter it is not challenged by narratology, narrative's ability to console and to comfort, to offer hope and provide order, is not a central part of the conversation. Though narratology began with the structuralists and their focus on the building blocks of narrative, more recently narrative theory, as James Phelan notes, is "increasingly concerned with historical, political, and ethical questions" (3). Traditional narratology, as begun by the Russian Formalists, would be very resistant to the consideration of narrative consolation as they "argued that the structural analysis of narrative should not be viewed as a handmaiden to interpretation," but consider structural analysis alone (Herman 30). In moving beyond study focused on form and structure as practiced by Todorov and Propp, narratologists now consider a variety of narrative contexts (for example, gender, politics, history, and postcolonialism). Though not explicitly considering consolation, this type of study acknowledges the power of texts and the power of form to encounter and engage the world outside the narrative, thus making room for the study of narrative consolation.

Moving towards consolation, James Phelan considers narrative in conjunction with ethics in his *Experiencing Fiction* (2007).[5] In so doing, Phelan

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[5] Theologians also consider the significance of narrative for theology and ethics. For an exploration of narrative's theological and ethical significance, see Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, *Why Narrative.*

follows the earlier work of Martha Nussbaum, who in *Love's Knowledge* argues for the necessity of joining moral philosophy with literary study. For Nussbaum, "certain truths about human life can only be fittingly and accurately stated in the language and forms characteristic of the narrative artist" (5). Thus, Nussbaum argues "we should *add* the study of certain novels to the study of [ethics and philosophy] on the grounds that without them we will not have a fully adequate statement of a powerful ethical conception" (27).[6] That is, literature— in part because of its particular forms—not only explores ethical questions about how human beings ought to live, but also plays a necessary role in the study of these essential questions.

In his volume, Phelan investigates the interaction between ethics and aesthetics, arguing "texts are designed to affect readers in particular ways" and that this leads to ethical judgments in narrative "not only the ones we make about the characters and their actions but also those we make about the ethics of storytelling itself, especially the ethics of the implied author's relation to the narrator, the characters, and the audience" (*Experiencing* 4, 12). Phelan thus investigates what types of ethical judgments are sought and made through the form and aesthetics of a story; however, his discussion of ethics and aesthetics is more detached than Kearney and Ricoeur's considerations of the role of narrative in human life. While Phelan makes a clear argument for the power of narrative form and its relation to ethics and aesthetics, he focuses on narrative can shape and form a reader's ethical

[6] In chapter 6 of *Love's Knowledge*, as she argues for the role of ethics in literary theory, Nussbaum imagines a future in which literary theory…will also join with ethical theory in pursuit of the question, 'How should one live?' " in chapter 6, thereby anticipating later work like Phelan's (168).

judgments about the world in which they live whereas they dive into the human need for narrative as a response to suffering and to life itself.

Derek Attridge also argues for the ethics of narrative, suggesting that "all creative shapings of language…make demands that can…be called ethical" (130). Attridge focuses heavily on the role and responsibility of the reader and claims "literature, for all the force which it is capable of exercising, can achieve nothing without readers—responsible readers" (131). Ethics comes in how a reader encounters and engages a text: "to respond to the demand of the literary work as the demand of the other is as a unique event whose happening is a call, a challenge, an obligation" (131). For Attridge, narrative ("creative shapings of language") demands certain responses from its readers; it is a powerful medium that asks readers to pay attention and "understand how little you understand me, translate my untranslatability, learn me by heart and thus learn the otherness that inhabits the heart" (131). This otherness, for Attridge, not only makes ethical demands of response but also enables literature to offer consolation. Literature leads readers "to modes of mental processing, ideas and motions, or conceptual possibilities that had hitherto been impossible because the status quo (cognitive, affective, ethical) depended on their exclusion" (58). These alternate modes can offer consolation; in Attridge's words, "there is ample testimony to the power of literary works to offer profound consolation to their readers" and this consolation "happens when the experience of the work enables the reader to reconceive his or her situation—by… the changes brought about through the acceptance of that which had been excluded" (77). Attridge, then, joins Kearney and Ricoeur in acknowledging literature's powers

of consolation. Though Kearney and Ricoeur would agree with Phelan and Nussbaum about the intersection of narrative and ethics, and narrative's powerful ability to evoke responses from its readers, as well as Attridge's acknowledgment of literature's ability to offer consolation, they move further than these narratologists towards the consolatory and cathartic role of narrative in their analysis of human need for narrative because of the horror and grief extant in the human condition.

Perhaps anticipating the claims of Kearney and Ricoeur, J.R.R. Tolkien makes an explicit claim for literature as consolation. In his *On Fairy-Stories,* Tolkien argues that fairy-stories have three functions: recovery, escape, and consolation. Consolation comes from the euctastrophe, "the sudden joyous 'turn'….a sudden and miraculous grace….never to be counted on to recur" (154). Significantly, the eucatastrophe "does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe* of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies…universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (154). Consolation, then, depends not only on the sudden and unexpected turn to joy, but also the acknowledgment "of sorrow and failure" and story can and does offer both (Tolkien 154). While Tolkien's work focuses on the genre of fairy-story specifically, his belief in story's ability to console resonates with the works of Joyce and Beckett, in which they engage "sorrow and failure" but also offer narrative itself as consolation.

Joyce and Beckett's shared belief in story stands in tension with their opposing styles. As Richard Kearney explains, "on the one hand, we have the Beckettian persuasion that…we should pare our stories down…on the other hand,

we have the Joycean imperative to recreate history in its entirety…this later signals an aesthetic of bold omnipotence at the opposite end of the spectrum to Beckett's self-confessed aesthetic of failure" (Kearney 22). Joyce and Beckett, though their stylistic trajectories are polar opposites, are ultimately doing the same thing: affirming their faith in narrative and its capacity to console.

The manifestation of narrative consolation in two authors with such contrasting styles emphasizes consolation as a fundamental element of narrative not bound to any particular genre or form as well as reveals the variety of ways in which words can and do respond to suffering with consolation. While Joyce and Beckett's works both affirm the consolatory power narrative holds, each author seeks to redress specific ills with his chosen literary form. That is, their widely varying styles reveal both similar affirmations of storytelling as well as different modes through which narrative responds to different elements of suffering. In the chapters that follow, I examine the specific claims these authors stake for narrative's consolatory capacity. By studying the manifestations of story offered by each author, I elucidate the specific powers each author ascribes to narrative.

In my first chapter on James Joyce, because Joyce's concern with the role of the artist is crucial to understanding his conception of narrative's abilities, I consider *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* before turning to *Ulysses*. The chapter thus focuses on the role of art as consolation and a replacement for things lost for the novel's protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, who moves through various social and religious structures. I examine his movement through different paradigms—school, overindulgence in aestheticism, and the church—as a quest for consolation that

culminates in his epiphanic turn to narrative art. Dedalus manifests the need for consolation and an ultimate decision to locate that consolation in the act of writing.

In the next chapter, I posit that in *Ulysses,* Joyce proclaims his faith in narrative's ability to embody place through literature's imaginative power and its ability to build possible worlds. In so doing, Joyce manifests narrative's ability to offer the consolation of place. He lived in Europe in self-imposed exile for the vast majority of his adulthood, but retains a deep attachment to Dublin that manifests itself strongly in his fiction. An intensely local novel, *Ulysses* uses both its incredibly detailed, elaborate style and deep investment in place to offer a fictive home. *Ulysses* thus combines the experiences of home and exile. More specifically, Joyce employs the expansive, world-making capacities of fiction to construct a narrative that offers home amidst exile. I specifically examine "Wandering Rocks" in order to argue that by writing intensely local fiction that constructs a very particular possible world and, significantly, because the world he constructs is the home from which he is exiled, Joyce declares not only the world-building power of narrative, but also narrative's ability to offer a particular consolation for a particular mode of suffering: home amidst exile.

The next two chapters turn to Beckett and explore the role of storytelling as human persistence. Beckett does not look at the expansive capabilities of storytelling, but instead focuses on story's ability to remain, and affirm humanity when all else fails. He writes both plays and novels on the brink of nihilism and despair; however, his trajectory of diminishment emphasizes talk and thus ultimately locates place, identity, and even hope, in the narrative act itself. In my

analysis of Beckett's drama, I focus not only on the primacy given to the spoken stories of the narrators, but also the community of telling and witness created amidst a play and its audience.

Chapter four examines narrative as persistence and witness in Beckett's dramas *Happy Days* and *Endgame*. Capable of little else, Beckett's disabled and dying narrators cannot resist their compulsion to narrate. In the act of narrating, they are able to persist and to affirm their humanity. In *Endgame* and *Happy* Days, Beckett depicts characters going about the Sisyphean task of living through the power of narrative. Amidst their apocalyptic settings, these characters turn to narrative. Narrative enables these characters to craft the reality necessary for their survival; while they engage in different forms of speech, they consistently rely on narrative for their persistence and survival. Much as his characters rely on narrative's power within the horrific world of the plays, Beckett conjoins horror and story in the world that witnesses and reads the plays. By putting horror on the stage in the form of dramatic narrative, he demands that his audience witnesses the suffering of others. Thus, these plays are explorations of language's power in the midst of decline, suffering, and death through which Beckett makes an argument for the necessity of narrative for survival and then uses narrative to respond to the horrors of the human condition with witness.

From this foundation, chapter five explores the extent to which dramatic narrative addresses the particular suffering of isolation. I turn to *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby* and argue that these plays' protagonists, Krapp and W, both affirm their capacity for human speech and creativity, as well as their suffering and longing

via their narratives. As these characters speak, they record despair and isolation while also expressing their desire for community and seeking to console themselves via narrative. By engaging their verbal recordings, Krapp and W not only turn towards narrative as their means of meaning and persistence, but also use narrative as a remedy for isolation. Further, Beckett's plays make a powerful argument for the power of narrative to offer consolation for the particular human suffering of isolation through the way in which these plays engage and deploy the power of the audience. Both of these plays model the actor and audience relationship, and the consolation the character derives from it, within the world of the play while also taking advantage of the audience in the theater and its communal role as a further means of countering isolation. Thus, Beckett, in these single-narrator plays, makes an argument for narrative, specifically dramatic narrative, as offering consolation for the particular human suffering of isolation.

Joyce and Beckett measure their art against the difficulties of their time and ask what role narrative can play, what their chosen artistic medium can offer, if anything, to counter the horrors of the modern world. Their texts take suffering seriously and do not shy away from depicting the travails of the human condition. Whether encountering Dedalus' anxieties and failed paradigms; *Ulysses*' longing for home; or being confronted by the degradation, pain, and decay placed front and center in Beckett's plays, to read the work of Joyce and Beckett is to read work that addresses difficulty and pain. Both of these authors evince a dual commitment to depicting the despair and grief of human life while also firmly positing narrative as consolation. Storytelling is order in the chaos; it is place in exile, an anchored locus

of hope and meaning in a violent, chaotic, disappearing world. Responding to various kinds of violence and chaos, or experiences of isolation and despair, Joyce and Beckett turn to storytelling. Thus, I argue both authors evince remarkable hope in both the form and content of their works. They fully engage both the harsh reality of the human condition and the power of story.  In so doing, they make powerful arguments for narrative's ability to offer consolation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### "Transmuting the Daily Bread of Experience into the Radiant Body of Everliving Life": Narrative Consolation in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

In an oft-quoted statement to his brother Stanislaus, James Joyce hopes that his writing will "give people a kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment by converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own" (Joyce, Stanislaus, 103-104). Words, Joyce believes, can offer "mental, moral, and spiritual uplift" (Joyce, Stanislaus, 103-104). This claim, which reappears in the words of Joyce's nascent artist, Stephen Dedalus when he claims to be "a priest of the eternal imagination… transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life," articulates a belief in the consolatory power of narrative (221). Joyce lays the foundation for this narrative consolation within the context of Stephen's artistic formation itself. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, narrative functions as consolation for Stephen as he moves through various social and religious structures. To an extent, his movement through different paradigms—school, overindulgence in sensory experiences, and the church—is a quest for consolation that culminates in his epiphanic turn to narrative art at the novel's end. As he shifts from worldview to worldview, his constant movement suggests he is still reaching for the consolation he seeks. His different social and religious structures throughout the novel are not sufficient because they fail to provide a lasting source of consolation; however, responding to challenges within the novel, he continually turns to narrative. Amidst his paradigmatic shifts, he

consistently tells his story through a layered narration style that repeats and recasts specific details and elements as the novel progresses. This careful reworking of language demonstrates his need for a narrative response to his suffering and signals the value specific linguistic and formal choices hold. Even as his tentative consolations fail, Stephen thus manifests his need for, and turn to, narrative. Ultimately, he decides to be an artist and remains steadfast in this choice, thereby bringing this turn to narrative to the fore. Each of his worldviews offers temporary consolation amidst his difficulties; however, narrative—as indicated by both Stephen's consistent turn to narrative in the novel and his lasting decision to pursue art at the novel's end—provides a more permanent source of solace. In this way, he manifests the human need for consolation and an ultimate decision to locate that consolation in the narrative power of his role as an artist and a writer.

Stephen's turn towards narrative from suffering participates in Joyce's own artistic project of narrative as a redress for suffering. As Richard Kearney articulates, in Joyce's writing "what is at issue is a narrative miracle of transubstantiation where simple contingencies of everyday existence can be transmuted into narrative 'epiphanies.' A literary version of divine demiurgy" (19). That is, Joyce uses language to mediate the human experience and to transform "contingencies" of the everyday into something epiphanic. The religious language with which Kearney speaks of Joyce's project, and with which Joyce himself endows his act of conversion and Stephen's act of transmutation, serves to emphasize the power of language, specifically narrative, to offer transcendence in the mundane. Joyce will "convert the bread of everyday life" into "permanent artistic life" and Stephen will transmute the

daily into the radiant. Both will respond to the ordinary challenges of the everyday with the extraordinary powers of language.

Paul Ricoeur's mimetic understanding of the intersection between life and narrative explicates the inherent nature of a human turn to language, as well as the essential reciprocity between life and narrative that makes such a turn a viable response to hardship. Ricoeur argues that because life itself is "purely biological" until it is interpreted and because fiction plays an integral role in this interpretation, "we therefore have to look for the points of support that the narrative can find in the living experience of acting and suffering; and that which, in this experience, demands the assistance of narrative and expresses the need for it" (28). Acknowledging the mimesis extant between life and narrative, then, is an essential part of human life. Stephen's continual paradigm shifts—from the social to the sensual to the religious—are, at least in part, due to his search for an adequate response to the hardships he endures and an adequate framework through which to understand and constitute his identity and life within the constraining parameters of his difficult reality.[1] Stephen is very much engaged in "the living experience of acting and suffering," and his life expresses a need for narrative. Thus, he engages in a dual quest—for consolation and for narrative—that can only be fulfilled in drawing the two together.

Because *Portrait* is a novel generically predicated upon the development of self-understanding, the self-understanding enabled through the intersection of life

[1] The language of social, sensual, and religious as names for Stephen's various paradigms originates with Weldon Thornton in *The Antimodernsim of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

and narrative takes on great significance. In terms of genre, *Portrait* clearly engages the *bildungsroman.*[2] Many of the defining characteristics of a bildungsroman pertain in Joyce's novel,[3] but the most significant to Stephen's search is that the protagonist of a *bildungsroman* seeks not a literal father (as would the hero of a picaresque) but "a principle by which he can live" (Thornton *Antimodernism* 71).[4] That is, the hero of a bildungsroman partakes in a quest of sorts for his life-principle. He "has a sense of inner determination, of building his own life," and this developmental quest forms the content of the novel (Thornton *Antimodernism* 71).[5] Stephen ultimately chooses the aesthetic—his art—as his life-principle. That is, his need for narrative becomes inextricable with the way in which he builds and understands his own life.

In Ricoeur's analysis, not only does life express a need for narrative but also human beings seek a narrative understanding of themselves. Indeed, he posits "we are justified in speaking of life…as an *activity and a passion in search of a narrative*" (29, emphasis original). Further, Ricoeur argues for a reciprocal wholeness extant between life and narrative:

> Fiction, in particular narrative fiction, is an irreducible dimension of *self-understanding*. If it is true that fiction is only completed in life and that life

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[2] See Thornton's *Antimodernism*, as well as Gregory Castle's analysis of bildungsroman and empire, as well as Katherine Ebury's argument that Joyce plays with the *bildungsroman* form by making the narrative entropic.

[3] For a fuller description of the *bildungsroman* genre and its conventions in *Portrait*, see Thornton *Antimodernism.*

[4] Alan Friedman argues that Stephen's trajectory in the novel is not a movement towards something, but rather a negative flight "*from* his father and all that he embodies—familially, culturally, politically, historically, and performatively—rather than toward his goal of artistic creation" (57).

[5] David Van Laan, instead of referring to a life-principle, argues that Stephen searches for a myth throughout the novel (148).

> can be understood only through the stories that we tell about it, then an *examined* life, in the sense of the word as we have borrowed it from Socrates, is a life *recounted*. (31)

As Stephen both examines and recounts his life throughout *Portrait*, he selects language as a tool through which to mediate his various experiences. Thus, in participating in the quest for a life-principle, he is engaging in a quest for narrative.

Stephen's quest for narrative, in part, is due to what narrative can and does offer him in response to adversity. As he shifts from paradigm to paradigm he seems to locate elation and epiphany in his movement from one mode of living to another, only to find each new model still lacking. At least in part, this shift from equilibrium to chaos, from epiphany to depression, occurs because of his continued suffering and continued encounter with the harsh reality of human life that is not mitigated by each new social or religious structure. His momentary schoolboy fame following his confrontation with the rector does not heal his sick heart or prevent his removal from school and the life he built there, much as his wild spending of his prize money cannot dam the sordid tide of life for long, nor can his experiences with prostitutes provide lasting fulfillment. Even the church fails to provide Stephen with what he seeks—he temporarily experiences grace and seems to find comfort in his life at the church, but ultimately finds the priesthood also lacking. His different paradigms offer temporary consolations, but none seem sufficient until the end of the novel when he chooses to be an artist.

Implicit in his movement throughout the previous paradigms and his final locus in the aesthetic realm of an artist is that this final life-principle mitigates Stephen's suffering in a way the others did not. That is, he experiences some form of

consolation in his artistic life unavailable to him in the social, sensuous, and religious realms. As a *bildungsroman* protagonist, then, Stephen thus not only embarks on a quest for destiny and self-determination, but also a quest for consolation, a quest that culminates in his turn to narrative. His life, in Ricoeur's words, is indeed "in search of a narrative" (Ricoeur 29). Over and against hs shifting worldviews, another, more constant, narrative is at work from the novel's incipient pages as Stephen continually attempts to cast himself and his experiences as narrative. Even as the paradigms are failing Stephen, he continually chooses to cast his life in narrative, and thus prefigures his turn toward narrative at the novel's end. The structure of the novel, alongside the plot, manifests Stephen's shifts in a even as, in terms of language, the novel maintains his turn to narrative in response to the difficulties he experiences.

In terms of plot, each of Stephen's stages of development, as represented by each of the novel's chapters, present encounters with hardship. In response, he seeks out some form of consolation by engaging a particular worldview or lifestyle. While at school in Clongowes Wood, he is most notably traumatized by the pandybatting incident; however, he also describes being pushed into a ditch by a classmate and becoming "sick in his heart if you could be sick in that place"; imagines his own death as he lies in the infirmary; and hides with a "terrorstricken face" under his family's table at Christmas (13, 39). He is isolated and homesick, thinking of how "he would change the number pasted up inside his desk from seventy-seven to seventysix" as he counts down the days towards his return home (10). In response to his ostracization, and most of all his unjust punishment, Stephen

embraces the social worldview of Clongowes and becomes its hero by confronting the rector about his unjust punishment. He seeks consolation through justice, and he is at least momentarily successful as he is "hoisted up among" his comrades and his peers exultantly commend his success (59). This victory is fleeting and his social success does not last as he is shortly removed from Clongowes for good.

Following his time at Clongowes, Stephen suffers his family's move to Dublin and attends Belvedere. He understands "that his father was in trouble and that this was the reason why he himself had not been sent back"; watches men with "two great yellow caravans" come "tramping into the house to dismantle it" as his mother cries; experiences cruelty at the hands of "tormentors" like Heron; encounters "humiliation" while traveling with his father and comes to describe his own life as a "sordid tide" (64-65, 82, 98). In response, Stephen rejoices in his receipt of prize money as a viable way to respond to the scum of his new life. Hating poverty, he embraces a sensory aesthetic that depends on the presence of money. He and his family eat well, attend the theatre, consume chocolate, receive presents, and paint walls a pink enamel. It is a "season of pleasure" (98). Indulgently and extravagantly, he spends and spends, only for the money to run out. Classifying his attempt as "foolish," he describes the futility of his effort:

> He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless. From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole. (99)

That is, Stephen used his money in an attempt to use "order and elegance" to console himself and his family but ultimately finds that "the sordid tide of life" still overwhelms him despite any amount of hedonism (99).

Following Stephen's sensory overindulgence, his lust and desire to "sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him" remain (99-100). He walks the nighttown district of Dublin, hoping the sexual indulgence might offer some satiation for his lust and compensation for his inability to step outside of his impoverished life. After his indulgence with prostitutes, Stephen attends a retreat at Belvedere and feels as if "every word of it was for him. Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed" (115). His solution—his consolation—has become his damnation.

In a return to grace, Stephen confesses and turns to the church. He finds comfort in grace and joy in Marian devotion; however, even Catholicism cannot provide a lasting consolation. In his time of devotion, he "gr[ows] troubled and wondered whether the grace which he had refused to lose was not being filched from him little by little" (153). His comfort in grace does not last as "the clear certitude of his own immunity grew dim and to it succeeded a vague fear that his soul had really fallen unawares" (153). Instead of joy in God, Stephen now has fear. As well, his absolution seems uncertain and transient as his confessor forces him to confess certain sins over and again, which "humiliated and shamed [him] to think that he would never be freed from it wholly…a restless feeling of guilt would always be present with him: he would confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly" (153). Because of this lack of

fulfillment and grace, amidst other things, when Stephen is asked to be a priest, he rejects the offer.[6] Though he realizes his sin with horror and locates redemption in the church, this very redemption becomes a transient grace that transforms into a longing to escape and a longing for a different sort of pride and power.

Unable to locate lasting consolation in the regard of his peers, the transient gift of money, the indulgence of lust, and in the Church, Stephen ultimately turns to art. As he muses upon his desire to enter university and his rejection of the priesthood, he embarks on a walk that culminates in his epiphanic encounter with the girl at the ocean. In this crucial scene, he takes the final step in his quest and chooses the destiny the novel's title declared for him from the beginning: he will be an artist. Though his own artistic ability at the novel's end is questionable, and though his decision to be an artist certainly does not provide an end to his suffering and challenges, his turn to art is his final turn. Stephen chooses to be an artist, and an artist he will remain. While not the sole motivation for his decision, narrative's ability to provide consolation is a crucial part of this ultimate turn towards art. Stephen, at each point in the novel, thinks his current worldview offers consolation, as they all do for a time. The elation of a chosen worldview and the disappointment of its transient consolation appears not only in the novel's plot, but also in its structure. This dual manifestation—on the level of plot and the level of structure—of Stephen's continual quest for consolation serves to emphasize both his need for consolation and the inability of his ever-shifting worldviews to offer the lasting consolation he seeks.

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[6] Lee Lemon and Weldon Thornton both offer helpful explications of Stephen's decision to reject the priesthood in terms of the motifs at work in the novel.

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* depicts the quest for the consolation structurally through the rising and falling action of its chapters. Thornton most clearly articulates the movement of this structure and the way in which it aligns with the novel's content when he argues that the structures of the novel are indistinguishable from the structures of Stephen's psyche (85). As Thornton states, "in each of the first four chapters Stephen responds to some call, some impulsion, which seeks to manifest the life-principle he is seeking," which results in the "rising action" and "climactic scene" that ends each chapter, only for the next chapter to begin with his realization that the previous life-principle proved insufficient.[7] In part, the structure of both his psyche and thereby the novel are formed on his quest for consolation.

The novel's structure—and especially the way in which the chapters pertain to the whole—has been interpreted in myriad ways.[8] One of the most frequently

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[7] The underlying structural pattern to these shifts between various potential life-principles, Thornton argues, is oscillatory. That is, Thornton argues that Stephen, and with him the novel's structure, "oscillat[es] between poles that can best be described as inner/outer, subjective/objective, private/public" (88)[7]. In so doing, *Portrait* further exemplifies the *bildungsroman* genre by not only presenting a protagonist in search of a life-principle but also depicting this protagonist as "involved in an oscillatory movement between poles of experience" (89).

[8] Hugh Kenner famously argues that the first two pages of the novel "enact the entire action in microcosm." Michael Levenson argues "the diary serves as an epilogue that does not merely conclude the action of the novel but recapitulates it through an elaborate set of veiled references" (194). Fritz Senn argues that *Portrait's* epigraph, because of its Latinate structure, functions as "a reading exercise for [the] verbal labyrinths" of the novel (140). Kevin Farrell argues "the specific structural model around which Joyce fashions his text is that of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church" (28). Van Laan argues the Ignatian spiritual exercises inform *Portrait's* structure and that Joyce intentionally employs the structure of Ignatian meditation for the novel—in terms of events in the novel, each individual chapter, and the novel as a whole (145,148). If nothing else, these various interpretations agree on at least one thing: the language and structure of *Portrait* are important and notoriously complicated.To name a few others, Frank O'Connor argues the novel is a study in differentiation, and this differentiation manifests itself through the structure and careful, repetitive prose style of the novel. Richard Ellmann suggests that *Portrait* is the "depiction of a soul's growth from embryo to flight" ("The Growth of Imagination," 395). Brivic and Lillienfield offer Freudian readings of the novel's structure. Kenner, stepping back from the first two pages and considering the

commented-upon structures present in *Portrait* is the way in which chapters end and begin. John Paul Riquelme, Hugh Kenner, and Wayne Booth all make arguments that align with the rise and fall noted by Thornton.  Riquelme argues "at the end of each of *A Portrait's* five parts, Joyce uses elevated language to suggest that Stephen achieves a momentary insight and intensity through a transforming experience…at the start of each succeeding part, Joyce counters ironically…by switching immediately and unexpectedly to a realistic style and realistic details" (Riquelme "Transforming the Nightmare of History" 116). In Hugh Kenner's words, "each of the chapters…works toward an equilibrium which, when is dashed when in the next chapter Stephen's world becomes larger and his frame of reference more complex" (Kenner, "The *Portrait* in Perspective," 427). Similarly, Wayne Booth articulates "each of the first four sections ends a period of Stephen's life with what Joyce, in an earlier draft, calls an epiphany: a peculiar revelation of the inner reality of an experience, accompanied with great elation, as in a mystical religious experience. Each is followed by the opening of a new chapter on a very prosaic, even depressed level" (Booth 458). As Stephen searches out a life-principle capable of providing the consolation he seeks, the shifts in tone and style between the chapters embody the exhilaration and depression experienced by the protagonist. By holding these changes over and against his consistent turn to narrative, the constancy of narrative and his need for it becomes all the more striking.

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holistic structure of the novel from a different perspective suggests that, because of its dynamic viewpoint (painter and subject are constantly moving in ever-shifting relation to each other), "*Portrait* may be the first piece of cubism in literary history" (173).

The way in which narrative functions as the locus of consolation for Stephen reflects Joyce's own exploration of what narrative might be able to offer in the face of the difficulties of human life. For instance, Joyce believed his writing could offer "mental, moral, and spiritual uplift." In writing *Dubliners,* Joyce felt he could reveal the paralysis of early-20th century Dublin and offer its citizens a helpful mirror through which to view their condition. In *On Stories*, Richard Kearney suggests Joyce "looked to storytelling as compensation for the mortifications of famine, disinheritance, poverty, priest-ridden philistinism, insular rivalry, loss of language, and mass emigration" (21). Kearney's philosophy of story further includes his argument that stories can function "as creative solutions for actual problems" (30). That is, stories can offer not only a means of cultural connection or artistic creation, but also "cathartic survival" (30). Kearney turns to "Joyce's narrative task of transmuting the grist of everyday suffering into a sublimated work of art" as exemplar of "fiction as healing and transformative fantasy" (30). The linguistic similarity between Kearney's analysis, Joyce's own project of "converting the bread of everyday life," and Stephen's goal of transmutation emphasizes the role narrative plays in consolation. Narrative bears a transformative power, one that lends understanding, offers a viable form of response, and perhaps even aids healing. Suffering demands a response, and Stephen finds linguistic expression adequate to his experience.

Literature bears consolatory power for Stephen because of the way in which it uses words to respond to, and comprehend, the world. According to Derek Attridge, one effect of "linguistic innovation…may be a temporary remaking of

norms…that produces not an interpretation but something like an experience of meaning *in process,* of 'meaning' understood as a participle of the verb 'to mean' rather than as a noun—as the experience of an event, in short" (58). Literature, for Attridge, "the event of this reformulation" and it is first experienced by "the writer reading or articulating the words as they emerge" (58). These transformations bestow the necessary quality of alterity on literature, an alterity that invites both writer and reader "to modes of mental processing, ideas and motions, or conceptual possibilities that had hitherto been impossible because the status quo (cognitive, affective, ethical) depended on their exclusion" (58). That is, literature bears the transmuting and converting power Joyce and Stephen claim and, through this power, enables a new comprehension of the world. As Attridge articulates, this comprehension is itself a form of consolation:

> There is ample testimony to the power of literary works to offer profound consolation to their readers; this happens when the experience of the work enables the reader to reconceive his or her situation—by, in other words, the changes brought about through the acceptance of that which had been excluded. (77)

By engaging narrative and its particular linguistic qualities as a way of responding to the hardships and confusions present in his world, Stephen accesses this literary power of reconception and is thereby consoled, ultimately leading to his desire to provide this same conversion of the everyday to others.

Similarly to the way in which *A Portrait* depicts Stephen's quest for consolation in terms of its structure and content, the novel evinces a continual foundation of his explicit turn toward narrative art in both plot and language. Responding to his many challenges within the novel—cruelty at school, the loss of

his family's home and possessions, his rejection of the Catholic faith—Stephen turns to narrative. Even as his continual movements articulate his need for the consolation the previous paradigm lack, his stops along the way prefigure his turn to art narrative. Much as these shifts manifest his need for consolation, they also evince qualities of his ultimate turn to narrative for that consolation.

On the level of plot, the very things to which Stephen turns throughout the novel before declaring himself an artist bear qualities of his ultimate turn to narrative. As Thornton articulates, the social, sensuous, and religious "seem to manifest the life-principle" Stephen is longing for (88). To an extent, these various structures appear to fulfill the life principle because they bear at least some quality of his ultimate location in the aesthetic realm. His schoolboy heartache and ultimate fame at Clongowes Wood takes place in the context of his youthful desire to imagine himself as a great man with a destiny. When he makes the choice to confront the rector about his unjust punishment, he recalls "a thing like that had been done before by somebody in history, by some great person whose head was in the books of history" (53). When sick in the infirmary, Stephen's imaginative visions of his own death and Parnell's align the schoolboy with the Irish hero. Later on in childhood, he will imagine himself as Napoleon. As Stephen chooses art, he thinks of his "strange name" as a "prophecy" and envisions "a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being" (169). The language of prophecy and destiny in this final turn connote the greatness

and singularity Stephen ascribes to his role as an artist, much as the elevated and epiphanic language of "a new soaring impalpable imperishable being" reflects the grandiose nature of his ambition. Similarly, his sensuality and the way in which he indulges it prefigures the sensual manner in which he engages the aesthetics of his art. When he begins his artistic career with the crafting of his villanelle, he imagines the poem through the language of his encounters with women. Indeed, some of his descriptions of his writing process could easily describe an encounter with a prostitute: "a glow of desire kindled again his soul and fired and fulfilled all his body. Conscious of his desire she was waking form odorous sleep, the temptress of his villanelle" (223). In this way, Stephen's poetic task aligns with his earlier indulgence of lust.

The framework through which Stephen articulates his artistic destiny is made possible by his flirtation with the priesthood. He ultimately comes to imagine art as a priesthood—"a priest of the eternal imagination" (221). In Kevin Farrell's words, "Stephen's progression towards the life of the artist is made possible by his simultaneous progression towards the life of the priest" (30). When Stephen articulates his rejection of the priesthood, he does so in language that references his longheld belief in his destiny and language that reflects his turn away from all previous societal structures. Stephen decides "his destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. This wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (162). He describes his art in eucharistic terms, declaring that in his role as the priest of the imagination, he

will be “transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life” (221).[9]

Stephen’s continual turn to narrative in the novel occurs both across the plot writ large, as indicated by the similarities between his temporary worldviews and his artistic destiny, and within the microcosm of small scenes. At several points, the novel depicts him instantaneously turning, in the midst some sort of difficult experience, to language and credits whatever comfort he is able to derive in the face of his suffering to the narratives and language he seeks.[10] For example, while on the train to Cork with his father, Stephen experiences “the terror of sleep” and watches ‘the neighbourhood of unseen sleepers…with strange dread” (87). In response, he begins a prayer “addressed neither to God nor saint” that “ended in a trail of foolish words which he made to fit the insistent rhythm of the train,” finding that “this furious music allayed his dread” (87).[11] The words and their aesthetic alignment with his experience explicitly provide comfort in the face of his fear. In his time of repentance in the church, Stephen’s soul “traversed a period of desolation in which the sacraments themselves seemed to have turned into dried up sources” and he finds that he can experience spiritual communions only during certain visits to the Blessed Sacrament in which he uses a book. The book, “written by saint Alphonsus Liguori” offers him the spirituality his soul longs for in its time of “desolation” (152).

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[9] In his article “James Joyce and the Power of Word,” Weldon Thornton offers helpful diagrams that epict the parallels between art and the priesthood in *Portrait.*

[10] Alan Friedman argues that the young Stephen finds his imagination is more powerful than performance and that “his richest experiences are vicarious, imagined, or envisioned” (60).

[11] From this train scene, John McCombe makes the fascinating argument that “*A Portrait* can be linked aesthetically and ideologically to the blues and, in particular, that the image of the train plays a significant role in both” (477-478).

In contrast to the sacraments that have become "dried up sources," Stephen finds that "a faded world of fervent love and virginal responses seemed to be evoked for his soul by the reading of its pages" (152). In the encounters with the saint's narrative, he finds the "dissolving moments of virginal selfsurrender" that he sought and could not find in the sacraments (152). When walking in the streets with Cranly, Cranly stops and says "mulier cantat," and "the soft beauty of the Latin word touched with an enchanting touch the dark of the evening," and "the strife of their minds was quelled" (244). Language functions explicitly as the catalyst for the turn from strife to calm, from desolation to communion, from dread to music.

While the moments in which Stephen turns from some sort of hardship or adversity or distress to language most clearly manifest narrative's consolatory power, his need for narrative as a powerful means of mediating his life experiences appears in other engagements with language throughout the novel. Stephen's response to "the word *foetus* cut several times in the dark stained wood" of a desk speaks to the evocative power of language (89). From reading this word, Stephen's imagination brings forth a world: "he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life…sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk" (89-90). When considering his priestly vocation, Stephen again imagines a world out of a word as he thinks of the name "The Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S.J." and "his name in that new life leaped into characters before his eyes" (161). In both of these moments, he is using language to engage the life happening around him. Language and its imaginative power enables him to form an understanding of his experience.

In addition to manifesting the turn to narrative throughout the novel's content, the novel lays a continual foundation of Stephen's turn to narrative through its language. As Stephen evolves through different paradigms, he continually reconfigures and reworks the language through which he articulates his experience. His constant transformation of language indicates his need for narrative. It is not enough for him to experience his life; he must instead articulate his story through specific linguistic forms. Stephen, at least in the earlier parts of the novel, does not necessarily make a conscious and self-aware choice to turn to narrative. As Thornton argues, *Portrait* "illustrate[s] how limited and incomplete Stephen's self-awareness is, how much richer his psyche is than he can consciously realize" (128). Part of this richness is his ability to turn to the aesthetic power of language in response to his life's need for narrative. He may not consciously articulate his movement from suffering into narrative, but he still makes this crucial turn. Subconsciously responding to suffering with narrative, he consistently articulates narrative responses to his life experiences. In so doing, Stephen depicts narrative's ability to provide consolation throughout the novel even as he only articulates language's ability to "transmute the bread of daily experience into the radiant body of everlasting life" towards the novel's end (221). Specifically, Stephen consistently tells his story through a layered narration style that repeats and recasts specific details and elements as the novel progresses.[12] These details and elements, manifested in the novel's reliance upon motifs, not only anticipate his life-principle but also develop Joyce's articulation of narrative consolation even as the novel

[12] These passages were chosen because they seem to reflect words and images that are particularly Stephen's own, and not that of the narrator.

develops Joyce's portrait of his young artist. This careful reworking of language demonstrates his need for a narrative response even as Dedalus' constant movement suggests he is still reaching for the consolation he seeks. The transience of the worldviews through which Stephen moves makes narrative art, its permanence, and its continual, foundational presence in the novel all the more striking. His turn toward art differs from the prior worldviews as art functions more permanently in terms of consolation, as manifested by its status as Stephen's final turn in his quest for consolation and a life-principle, but most strongly as manifested by the continual presence of consolatory narrative power throughout the novel as a whole.

The motifs particularly function as a structural device through which the novel articulates Stephen's artistic development and his agency in that development.[13] According to Lee Lemon, the primary way in which the motifs function as part of the context and the structure of the novel is the way in which they depict Stephen's growth as an artist. Lemon argues that Stephen shifts from having his associations dictated to him to seeing clearly for himself and forging his own associations. Stephen gains agency throughout the novel, especially with the

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[13] Because of the prevalence and significance of the many intricately woven motifs in the novel, many critics offer insight into their roles in the novel. Bernard Benstock suggests that, in the shift from Stephen Hero to Portrait, "to replace the narrative and descriptive functions of the auctorial voice Joyce evolved a complicated set of "symbols and portents" as the structural device of his novel" (185). In a related argument, Lee Lemon claims "A Portrait is the first novel in which motifs per se are of primary importance, the first novel in which both theme and structure depend upon such minor elements" (440). As Richard Ellman argues, words in this novel "move from rudimentary meanings to more complex ones" (396). O'Connor argues that the way Joyce repeats words and phrases throughout Portrait "is not an attempt at communicating the experience to the reader…but at equating the prose with the experience. Indeed, one might say that it aims at replacing the experience by the prose" (374).

way in which he mediates his world via language.[14] That is, Stephen "has to learn is that [motifs] are ambiguous, and that the job of the artist is to create a stable meaning out of the raw flux of reality" (Lemon 448). Thus, "Joyce's handling of motifs, then, not only unifies *A Portrait* but also shows both the motivation for Stephen's change from a sensitive boy besieged by a hostile world to a young man in control of his environment and the peculiar qualities of mind Joyce felt the young artist must possess" (Lemon 450). Similarly, Thornton argues for Stephen's agency via language by articulating that "by the end of the novel Stephen has moved from being a pawn of his language and an applier of handed-down labels to being a manipulator of language and a creator of complex "words" to map reality (Thornton Power of Word 191). Thornton's argument goes further than Lemon's for while Lemon suggests that Stephen needs to create his own associations, Thornton argues that Stephen must create "phrases, sentences, and the poem " in order "to map his own view of reality" (191). In creating these linguistic structures, Stephen "gives form to his diverse experiences" (191). Stephen, then, perceives the world through narrative and his growing power and capability with this perception manifests itself as the motifs recur throughout the novel. Katy Marre claims "the pattern of paired

[14] For a discussion of the reader's agency with these motifs, see Riquelme's argument that "Rather than presenting Stephen explicitly recollecting opposing moments, Joyce depends on the reader's remembering, connecting, and anticipating. And he presents Stephen's thoughts in language that, through repetitions from earlier scenes, suggests that a remembering and crossing-over may be taking place" (117). Michael Gillespie also argues argues for the responsibility of the reader of *Portrait*: "A more precise articulation of the work's epiphanic impulses must expand the range of compositional responsibility, for, in a significant way, the sense of self-portrait that we derive from the novel comes out of elements in its formal structure that persistently remind us of our role as readers…the novel insists on our full participation: we do not simply create an image of text; we take responsibility for its extension and provisional completion" (81). In William Tindall's estimation, the recurrent images gain significance throughout he novel by "bringing meaning from one place to another" (85).

repetition in *Portrait* shows how Stephen's recollections serve to establish a coherent sense of himself" (208). Moving a step further, R.B. Kershner argues that, most importantly, repetitive passages show "a mind whose mode of conscious perception is narrative. Stephen not only thinks but perceives in phrases and sentences" (887-888). The novel's language thus aligns with Stephen's development as he reconfigures and reworks language as he evolves.

Thornton's analysis of the ornithic imagery deployed across *Portrait* indicates the way in which Stephen recasts and reconstructs the current motifs throughout the novel. As Thornton articulates, the bird image begins with Dante's terrifying song of eagles coming to pluck out young Stephen's eyes and "has consistently negative associations for Stephen" until "Stephen reconstrues the image, in terms more appropriate to his own wishes" at the end of the novel's fourth chapter by reconstituting the bird image "which always has connotations of fear and guilt" into "an image of beauty and of his destiny" when he imagines "a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea" (142). As Thornton articulates, Stephen may not be fully aware of all he has wrought with his transformed bird image. With this Daedalian image, he also "unwittingly…casts himself as Icarus, expressing a subconscious sense that his flight to freedom is not so secure as he would like to believe" (145). Even as he might not always be aware of the depths of his psyche and imagery, he still actively seeks the transformative power of narrative as he recasts the bird motif. Significantly, the consolation available in narrative does not necessarily come from what Stephen transforms his various motifs and experiences into. That is, he does not rewrite his hardships as stories with happy endings, nor

use his narrative to forget his challenges. The consolation is in the act of the layered narration itself, in the act of storytelling itself. Through this act of turning to language and accessing its transformative, evocative power, Stephen can mediate his experiences and, to echo Ricoeur, respond to the elements in his life that express a need for narrative. In doing so, Stephen can convert the exigencies of the everyday into "something with a permanent artistic life of its own"; he can respond to his difficulties through language that enriches understanding and engages beauty. Whether a victorious Dedalus or a falling Icarus, Stephen has transmuted his daily experiences into something with a permanent artistic life, full of imagery and myth, of its own. The narrative response is sufficient unto itself.

As Stephen evolves, then, he continually reconfigures and reworks the language through which he articulates his experience. It is not enough for him to experience his life; he must instead articulate his story through specific modes of language. The repeated details and elements, manifested in the novel's reliance upon motifs, indicate the integral role narrative plays throughout the novel. Stephen needs narrative and its assistance whether he is schoolboy or near-priest. All else may change, but the need for, and creation of narrative, remains constant.

The way in which Stephen conflates, then transforms, the sounds and images of bells and waves exemplifies the layered narration style with which he carries the novel's motifs. As he lies in the infirmary at Clongowes Wood, he imagines the possibility of his own death. His envisioning of his own funeral is in and of itself an act of narrative consolation—a moment in which Stephen turns from his difficult reality to his ability to tell a story as he did while on the train to Cork. In his funereal

imagination, bells take on great significance. He imagines that “Wells would be sorry then for what he had done. And the bell would toll slowly” (24). He then focuses on the sensory detail of sound, announcing “he could hear the tolling” and repeats to himself a song about funerals and castle bells he learned from Brigid, reflecting “how beautiful and sad that was!” (24). Stephen’s meditation on bells culminates with an emphatic bell-frenzy: “the bell! The bell! Farewell! O farewell!” (24). A few pages later, still lying in the infirmary, he reworks the story of death and its associated sounds by linking a funeral scene with the sound of waves, not bells. Now, instead of imagining his own death, he imagines Parnell’s. Stephen, through key repeated details, links his death scene with Parnell’s. In both stories, there is a death and a catafalque; something or someone is tall, whether it be “tall yellow candles” in Stephen’s death or “a tall man” who stands on the deck in Parnell’s; Brother Michael is present in both instances, in reality by Stephen’s bedside in the infirmary and imaginatively in Parnell’s death, Brother Michael is the tall man on the deck; and, most significantly, in both death is heralded by a sound. Just as Stephen imagines bells at his death, he hears a key sound at Parnell’s: the sound of waves. He imagines “the noise of the waves…the waves were talking among themselves as they rose and fell” (26-27). The sound of waves and the sound of bells, through their function as the key sensory details in this linked imaginative deaths, are thus linked.

Much later in the novel, during Stephen’s exultant epiphany on the beach, he recasts the bell and water sounds into a new narrative. As the girl moves her foot in the water, “the first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep” (171). Bells and waves are no longer

separate, but cohere in the same imaginative aural metaphor. Stephen has layered the sounds from the two stories of his imagination into one narrative element. Further, these two sounds are no longer associated with death but with epiphany and Stephen's turn towards art. This new association continues as he again recasts the bells and water narrative with a new layer as he writes his villanelle. After he writes his villanelle, he thinks:

> A soft liquid joy like the noise of many waters flowed over his memory and he felt in his heart the soft peace of silent spaces of fading tenuous sky above the waters, of oceanic silence, of swallows flying through the seadusk over the flowing waters. A soft liquid joy flowed through the words where the soft long vowels hurtled noiselessly and fell away, lapping and flowing back and ever shaking the white bells of their waves in mute chime and mute peal and soft low swooning cry…(226)

Again, Stephen combines the sound of bells with the sound of waves, a connection carried forth from his imaginative deaths in the first chapter. Words are now included in these sounds, as indicated by his repeated description of the "soft liquid joy" that "flowed through the words" (226). The waves, first metaphorically aligned with bells, are now also metaphorically aligned with the words that function as waves, "lapping and flowing back and ever shaking the white bells of their waves" (226). That is, the sounds of bells and of waves are now again recast as the sounds of words as Stephen continues to weave the narrative of these sounds. Further, the narrative of these sounds now also contains the layer of artistic epiphany through the swallows and birds that dart and come forth from Stephen's art. Given the earlier appearance of bells and waves with his artistic epiphany, the birds here now drive home the epiphanic connection. Thus, even in only these four passages drawn from the full span of the novel, he evinces his determination (whether conscious or

subconscious) to tell and retell narratives, using language and his own creative power as a means of mediating his experiences.

The way in which Stephen's layered linguistic style transforms prevalent motifs amidst their changing contextual significances across the novel in response to his life experiences emphasizes his continual crafting of narratives. In the novel's first chapter, Joyce manifests the nascent artistic tendencies of the young Stephen Dedalus through the boy's intense reaction to aesthetic and sensory details. Motifs incipient from these early stages—slime, flowers, and the ivory and gold of the litany of the Blessed Virgin—persist throughout the novel in continually evolving states as the layered narration style carry these details throughout the novel as a whole. Similarly, the recurrence and reshaping of these motifs highlights the nascent aesthetic and narrative tendencies that persist from Stephen's youth to his choice of self-imposed exile. The pervasive role of narrative and the unending flexibility of language manifested in the evolution of these motifs from the first chapter to the rest of the novel emphasizes his ever-present turn to narrative on the level of form much as the similarities between his aesthetic turn and his other shifts throughout the novel build the continual role of narrative on the level of plot. Stephen's constant linguistic turn both charts his movement towards his role as an artist and insists on narrative's ability to provide consolation—to meet a need manifested in human life—throughout the entirety of the novel. Indeed, the consistent way in which Stephen latches onto certain motifs to narrate certain elements of his life indicates, from the very beginning, that the other paradigms will never be sufficient. Even as Stephen moves through these worldviews, he always turns to the motifs as a way of

understanding and responding to his life. Thus, not only do the other paradigms not last, but also they never stand alone.

The slimy water and the sewer of the ditch into which Stephen is shoved by a classmate at Clongowes Wood become a narrative lynchpin that recurs throughout the novel as Stephen narrates his turn away from and back towards the Catholic church. In the novel's first chapter, Stephen recalls a school incident in which his schoolmate Wells "shoulder[ed]" him into the square ditch" and carries the sensory detail of the "cold slimy water" throughout the chapter. When Stephen first thinks through the incident he remembers "that was mean of Wells" and "how cold and slimy the water had been!" and associates this slime imaginatively with rats, for "a fellow had once seen a big rat jump into the scum" (10). A few pages later, Stephen is mocked by his fellow students and mentally associates this particular embarrassment with the earlier ditch incident. As Wells and the others laugh, the confused Stephen thinks of when Wells "shouldered him into the square ditch" and retells the story with slightly altered syntax. This time, Stephen thinks "it was a mean thing to do; all the fellows said it was," now adding in the detail of his compatriots' support. This detail, though tiny, is significant as it relays the importance of his social aptitude and community to the schoolboy Stephen. As he did the first time, he thinks of "how cold and slimy the water had been! And a fellow had once seen a big rat jump plop into the scum" (14). Here, Stephen's fascination with sound enters the story as he adds the onomatopoeic "plop" to his original verb

"jump" (14).[15] He then imaginatively transfers the ditch incident to his current humiliation. As he sits in confusion, "the cold slime of the ditch covered his whole body" and he feels "the cold air of the corridor and staircase inside his clothes" as he files out of the classroom with his peers (14). In this way, Stephen begins the layered narration of the cold and slimy ditch: he associates the aesthetics of the ditch with the sensation of embarrassment, and thus retells his slime story in the context of a new tale. Through the associative powers of his imagination, Stephen crafts a narrative that enables the young, homesick boy to respond to, and comprehend, his emotions.

Stephen's repeated emphasis on the "cold" sensation of the ditch aligns the slime motif with a sensory juxtaposition that occurs from the novel's first page. The young Stephen articulates "when you wet the bird first it is warm then it gets cold" (7). When first introduced, the story of Wells and the ditch is framed by two stories of warmth. Immediately before recollecting the ditch incident, Stephen thinks of the castle and how "it was nice and warm to see the lights in the castle" and "it would be nice to lie on the hearthrug before the fire" (10). Immediately shifting from these thoughts of warmth to thoughts of cold, his thoughts on the fire in one sentence seemingly leave as "he shivered as if he had cold slimy water next to his skin" in the next, moving into his memory of the ditch (10). Stephen spends three sentences on his initial telling of the ditch story and then, without transition, immediately thinks "Mother was sitting at the fire with Dante…her jewelly slippers were so hot and they had such a lovely warm smell!" (10). Thus, the order in which Stephen recalls these

[15] Stephen retains a fascination with the sounds water makes throughout the first chapter, as indicated by the repetition of "pick, pack, pock, puck" (59).

moments embodies the hot and cold dichotomy introduced on the novel's first page. Emphasizing the dichotomy, as Stephen continues to think he recalls a lavatory in the Wicklow hotel whose memory "made him feel cold and then hot," much as the sink had "two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot" (11). Stephen himself then "felt cold and then a little hot" (11). Cold and hot thus join the slimy ditch as essential narrative fragments of the young Stephen's experiences.

As the slime story continues to be told throughout the chapter, the narrative details fade while the sensory impression, including the layering of slime with Stephen's juxtaposition of hot and cold, grows stronger. When sick Stephen enters the infirmary, he feels "his forehead warm and damp against the prefect's cold damp hand" (22). The sewer incident is now explicitly linked with the warm and cold—Stephen is warm with the fever of his illness, which makes the prefect's hand "cold and damp" like the ditch by comparison (22). Instead of recalling the ditch, he immediately leaps to the physical sensations of the incident and his worry over the rat by comparing the prefect's hand to "the way a rat felt, slimy and damp and cold" (22). He then embellishes his picture of the rat, thinking of rats' "sleek slimy coats, little feet tucked up to jump, black shiny eyes to look out of" and even going so far as to mentally proclaim "the minds of rats could not understand trigonometry. When they were dead they lay on their sides…they were only dead things" (22). In this third recurrence of the ditch story, then, the picture of the rat grows in the young artist's mind as he leaves behind the facts in favor of the cold and slimy sensations and his mind's worry at the rat. The rat is now a character in Stephen's mind, limned in careful detail. Stephen, as a young artist, privileges the sensory and the

imaginative over the bare facts of the incident as he grows more imaginative and poetic in his prose each time the incident recurs. Thus, he alters the ditch story in his mental retellings as he nurtures the artistic and imaginative functions of his mind. By presenting the narrative in multiple forms that alter as the text layers the ditch story with other incidents, Joyce's narration emphasizes that the young Stephen is an artist in formation who already seeks the experiences and words necessary to tell a story as he best sees fit.

In the next iteration of Stephen's development, he lives a new life in Dublin with his family. The sewer motif, retaining its layers of disgust and illness from Stephen's slimy incident and resultant illness at Clongowes, is now recast both as a squalor internal to Stephen's mind and as the primary way in which he is able to narrate his turn towards lust and sin. Now, instead of regarding the external slime and the prefect's hand as rat and sewer, Stephen reflects on the "squalor of his own mind and home" (79). Much as he reacted negatively to the slime of the square ditch, he here casts a vision of himself at Belvedere as a leader "battling against the squalor of his life and against the riot of his mind" (91). This "riot" and "squalor" are aligned with the ditch narrative not only through the reference to "squalor," a word carrying connotations aligned with the foul and slimy water, but through illness as Stephen reacts to his own thoughts through a "spittle in this throat" that "grew bitter and foul" and a "faint sickness" that "climbed to his brain" (91). His linguistic and sensory experience with slime provides the diction through which processes the beginning of his family's downward spiral and the changing way in which his brain functions as he grows from childhood into adolescence.

When Stephen turns towards prostitutes, his movement is narrated in terms of the slime. Both the sewer and the heat it causes through illness prove important to his narrative in the act of indulging his lust through the motifs that accompanied his fall into the slime. The heat of fever, which initially made Stephen's forehead "warm and damp" becomes "the wasting fires of lust" within his body (99). As he looks for a prostitute, Stephen "wandered up and down the dark slimy streets" (99). In this way, the fever and slime of the ditch are now a layer of the story of Stephen's turn to sin as he reworks narrative elements of his past into his story of the present. Ultimately, fully immersed in the indulgent path he has chosen, he describes his life "the swamp of spiritual and bodily sloth in which his whole being had sunk" (106). The square ditch transforms, via language, from literal sludge into a metaphorical swamp in which both physical and spiritual illness reside and Stephen, no longer shouldered in by a classmate, has now willingly sunk himself into the sewer.

Through the retreat sermon, Stephen's slime narrative gains another layer that precipitates his turn from sin to the church. In the retreat sermon, the priest asks "while your soul within is a foul swamp of sin, how will it fare with you in that terrible day?" (114). The priest's sewer-like dictation, which echoes Stephen's own description of his life as "swamp" unsurprisingly resonates deeply with Stephen. Stephen, when he describes his reaction to the sermon, thinks "against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed. The preacher's knife had probed deeply into his diseased conscience and he felt now that his soul was festering in sin "(115). The sin retains the swamp and sewer connotations and Stephen brings his childhood narrative of slime and illness to bear upon his current spiritual state,

describing his sin as foul and his conscience as “diseased” (115). No longer solely a schoolboy story, the square ditch and its resultant illness function as a framework through which he can metaphorically narrate his spiritual state. He further layers the narrative of his present sin with his past ditch and its associated illness when he has a terrifying vision of creatures in a field “of solid excrement” from which “an evil smell, faint and foul as the light curled upwards” (137). Stephen’s nightmare ditch causes him to stumble around his room, “clasping his cold forehead” in an echo of the cold, slimy hand of the prefect from his schoolboy illness (138). The experience of lust thus becomes further aligned with the slime and illness of the ditch as Stephen joins the priest’s swamp language to his own narrative.

To this dual layer of childhood illness and teenaged lust, Stephen adds a layer of repentance as he narrates his turn from sin towards the church in the language of slime. As his conscience aches and he walks through the streets guided not by squalid lust but by his desire to rid himself of sin, he reflects on satanic serpent imagery and his soul “sickened at the thought of a torpid snaky life feeding itself out of the tender marrow of his life and fattening upon the slime of lust” (140). The story of disease and slime now takes the embodied form of a serpent destroying Stephen’s life, a life still located within the ditch-like “slime of lust”. He then confesses and purges himself of these sins, seeking healing much as he sought recovery in the school infirmary. As Stephen confesses, his “sins trickled from his lips, one by one, trickled in shameful drops form his soul festering and oozing like a sore, a squalid stream of vice” until ‘the last sins oozed forth, sluggish, filthy” (144). Aligned with the slimy water of the ditch, his sins become a “stream.” Aligned with

disease, his sins are "a sore" on his soul (144). Aligned with animals or beasts, the narrative has no rats but now has Satan in his serpent form.

Slime and lust remain part of Stephen's storytelling through the end of the novel. When he imaginatively tells himself a story of incest, he does so through recasting the slime motif: "a game of swans flew there and the water and the shore beneath were fouled with their greenwhite slime…They embraced softly…they embraced without joy or passion, his arm about his sister's neck" (128). Similarly, the story Stephen tells himself about the Stuart court bears the slime imprint: "and what was their shimmer but the shimmer of the scum that mantled the cesspool of the court of a slobbering Stuart" (233). Both stories retain the association of lust with slime and refer to the slime and scum of the ditch. Transformed from a literal ditch to a sewer of sin to a fire of lust and a diseased soul to consistent presence in the stories Stephen tells himself as a college student on the precipice of leaving Ireland, he continually retells the story of the square ditch, adding layer upon layer to the narration.

Flowers, specifically roses, function as another retold and recast motif in the text that emphasizes Stephen's compulsion towards narrative. Through his imaginative link with flowers, Stephen engages his imagination and ultimately finds a syntax through which to envision the state of his soul. Much as the ditch becomes the narrative foundation through which Stephen mediates the more squalid elements of his life, flowers become the narrative lynchpin through which Stephen can imaginatively articulate his spiritual state. Flowers first appear in the text as a childhood song that is both sung to and sung by Stephen. A song in which "*the wild*

*rose blossoms/on the little green place"* is sung to Stephen and, famously, he sings it as "his song": *O, the green wothe botheth"* (7).[16] Roses recur in his life in the York and Lancaster divisions amongst the students at Clongowes. Stephen projects his emotions onto his white rose. When "the sum was too hard and he felt confused," his "little silk badge with the white rose on it that was pinned on the breast of his jacket began to flutter" (12). Not only is his anxiety manifested in the movements of his rose, but also the colors of the opposing roses. Stephen describes Jack Lawton's "red rose" and then feels "his own face red too, thinking of all the bets about who would get first place in elements" (12). He then shifts back to his own rose and its colours, as the badge "fluttered and fluttered as he worked the next sum" and "he thought his face must be white because it felt so cool" (12). Thus, he transforms the colors of the flowers around him into a narrative mode for his emotions. Turning from his anxiety towards the beauty of the roses and the colors, he returns to the colorful variety of roses available to his imagination. The "white roses and red roses" are "beautiful colours to think of" and "the cards for first place and second place and third place were beautiful colours too: pink and cream and lavender. Lavender and cream and pink roses were beautiful to think of" (12). The roses thus shift from a symbolic representation of Stephen's feelings to an imaginative vision. His investment in imaginative reality causes him to think "perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and he remembered the song about the wild rose blossom on the little green place. But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could" (12). Stephen's imagination both reflects on an earlier stage of

[16] For other analyses of the song, see Kenner ("A Portrait in Perspective"); Thornton ("Power of Word"); and O'Connor ("Joyce and Dissociated Metaphor")

his childhood and considers adhering to a larger sense of reality. Unwilling to locate his imaginative vision fully inside the parameters of reality, he tells himself a story of memory in terms of reality, acknowledging the more realistic turn in his thought through his recognition that "you could not have a green rose" before concluding his story in favor of the imagination by asserting that "perhaps somewhere in the world you could" (12).

Roses—and flowers more generally—continue to function as a mode through which Stephen can narrate his state of being throughout *Portrait*. Following his confession to the priest after the retreat sermon, Stephen imagines his prayers "ascend[ing] to heaven from his purified heart like perfume streaming upwards from a heart of white rose" (145). In this new iteration, the white rose gains purity. Where the boy Stephen thought of the fluttering white rose in terms of anxiety, the adolescent Stephen associates the "white rose" with his "purified heart". The white rose further gains sensory significance as he assigns it a smell that streams heavenward. No longer merely a reflection of his emotional state, the rose now stands for purity and provides an image through which Stephen can narrate his movement toward heaven. He continues to narrate his newfound purity through the white rose in "a waking dream" in which he "knelt among" the other boys "happy and shy" before an altar "heaped with fragrant masses of white flowers" (146). Though the white flower imagery remains key to his picture of his new soul, he now transforms from flower to flame. Instead of a solitary white rose, his soul is now as "clear and silent" as "the pale flames of candles among the white flowers" (146).

Roses—both red and white—join Stephen's use of flower imagery as the primary way in which he imagines his soul following his epiphanic vision of the girl in the ocean. He describes his reaction in terms of his soul

> swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings. A world, a glimmer, or a flower? Glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to itself, breaking in full crimson and unfolding and fading to palest rose, leaf by leaf and wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flushes, every flush deeper than other." (172)[17]

In order to describe his soul's reaction, Stephen returns to the flower imagery that has long served both as an impetus to his imagination, starting with the green and lavender and other colored roses, and as an image of a soul's transformation, beginning with his penitent prayers and purified soul. The rose carries the full significance of both artistic imagination and transformation as his swooning soul unfolds as an opening flower that is both "full crimson," in an echo of Jack Lawton's red rose, and "palest rose," in an echo of Stephen's white rose, the perfume of his prayers, and the silent flames of his return to the church.

Now carrying with it the significance of Stephen's epiphanic turn towards art, the rose narrative recurs in a feminized moment of imagination as he begins to write his villanelle. Immediately preceding the composition of his villanelle, Stephen reflects on the enchantment of the previous night and the state of his imagination, which he envisions as a "virgin womb" in which "the word was made flesh"; a place where "Gabriel the seraph had come to the virgin's chamber" (217). Stephen then continues to describe his imaginative process:

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[17] In a very different image, Stephen also imagines his soul as a math equation (103).

> An afterglow deepened within his spirit, whence the white flame had passed, deepening to a rose and ardent light. That rose and ardent light was her strange wilful heart, strange that no man had known or would know, willful from before the beginning of the world: and lured by that ardent roselike glow the choirs of the seraphim were falling from heaven. (217)

The "white flame" here echoes the candle flames amidst the flowers heaped on the altar and the rose color of the light echoes the consistent rose imagery to which Stephen has turned throughout the novel. He now adds detail to the imagined woman by characterizing her with a "strange" and "willful heart" (217). The light and the heart continue as Stephen composes his villanelle through his imaginative interaction with "the roselike glow" that "sent forth its rays of rhyme; ways, days, blaze, praise, raise. Its rays burned up the world, consumed the hearts of men and angels: the rays from the rose that was her wilful heart" (218). The light from the flame and the rose now bears the agency for the rhyme and he assigns the rose the specific symbolic function of being "her wilful heart" (218). Much as a rose has served to reflect Stephen's emotions and embody his soul, now it represents the heart of his poetic muse.

As Stephen's imaginative vision and ecstasy fade, he reflects with anguish upon EC and the life of the university "about to awake in common noises, hoarse voices, sleep y prayers" around him (221). In response, "shrinking from that life," he turns "towards the wall, making a cowl of the blanket and staring at the great overblown scarlet flowers of the tattered wallpaper. He tried to warm his perishing joy in their scarlet glow, imagining a roseway from where he lay upwards to heaven all strewn with scarlet flowers" (222). Just as the young Stephen at Clongowes Wood turned from anxiety to the beauty of the rose, university student Stephen seeks "joy"

in the “scarlet glow” of the roses on the wallpaper and, in order to comfort himself, images “a roseway” to heaven (222). Significantly, he articulates a version of the rose story that resonates with its initial emotional function, its transforming purifying function, and its artistic beauty. Throughout the entire novel, he imagines roses, though the novel’s ending image of roses is far different from the green rose of its beginning. The perfume of the white rose is no longer a symbol for prayers but buried within the narrative of the scarlet roseway to heaven. Thus, from beginning to end, the young artist articulates a narrative of a rose that gains layers and transforms throughout the course of the novel, much as his own mind and spirit evolves.

The myriad ways in which Stephen deploys his childhood obsession with the language of the litany of the Blessed Virgin across the novel emphasizes the flexible and diverse nature of narrative. Through his continual engagement with this litany, Stephen employs Mary and the words with which the church describes her as another central motif in his consistent turn to narrative. The Catholic church, and its worship of Mary, captivates Stephen’s imagination from a young age. Dante condemns the young Stephen for playing with protestant Eileen. He, in childlike fashion, assigns a motive for her action: “when she was young she knew children that used to play with protestants and the protestants used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin. *Tower of Ivory*, they used to say, *House of Gold!* (35). The ivory and gold language thus initially functions as a component of a story about Dante that Stephen needs in order to comprehend her rejection of Eileen; however, the language of the litany precipitates an imaginative query as he wonders “how could a

woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold?" (35). As he does with many things in the course of *Portrait's* first chapter, Stephen seeks a definition for the term "tower of ivory".[18] Eileen embodies his initial definition of "tower of ivory." While describing Eileen, he thinks "Eileen had long white hands" and recalls "one evening when playing tig she had put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*" (36). Through the description of Eileen's hands, Stephen arrives at the definition he seeks at classifies ivory as "a cold white thing" through the lens of the story of his encounter with Eileen's hands.

Through his particular definition of ivory, Stephen begins a narrative that links his fascination with the litany of the blessed virgin with his obsession with the hands of others.[19] He recalls an incident at school when "Boyle had said that an elephant had two tuskers instead of two tusks and that was why he was called Tusker Boyle but some fellows called him Lady Boyle because he was always at his nails, paring them" (42-3). As he considers the various reasons for his classmate's nickname, the description of nails associated with a feminine nickname recalls Eileen and he immediately returns to the story of Eileen and the litany of the blessed virgin. Following the description of Boyle paring his nails Stephen, without any transition, thinks "Eileen had long thin cool white hands too because she was a girl. They were like ivory; only soft. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory* but

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[18] Stephen repeatedly defines words, phrases, and experiences throughout the first chapter, a behavior he repeats in the novel's final chapter when he declares "Aristotle has not defined pity and terror. I have" (204).

[19] For a discussion of the hands motif, see James F. Carens, "Motif of Hands."

protestants could not understand it and made fun of it" (42-3). Stephen's understands his companion's nickname through his understanding of not only Eileen's hands and the litany of the virgin, but through the way in which protestants interact with the litany. The story of his encounter with Eileen now includes the story of Dante's past. Stephen then again provides a narrative of Eileen's hands, though this narrative is different than the game of tig:

> She had put her hands into his pocket where his hand was and he had felt how cool and thin and soft her hand was. She had said that pockets were funny things to have: and then all of a sudden she had broken away and had run laughing down the sloping curve of the path. Her fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun. *Tower of Ivory. House of Gold*. By thinking of things you could understand them. (42-3)

Stephen's new story of his relationship with Eileen includes the ivory detail of her "cool and thin and soft" hand but now also extends to his full repetition of the litany as her "fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun" and thus provided an image through which he can answer his own question of how a woman can be a tower of ivory and a house of gold. He is not just thinking of things, but instead using language to examine and comprehend his life.

The pleasant recollections of Eileen's hands contrast sharply with masculine hands, as for Stephen masculine hands become part of his definition of punishment instead of part of his understanding of the Blessed Virgin. As Stephen re-narrates Tusker Boyle's hands, he presents them in a fuller, more terrifying, context of other masculine hands. In a playground conversation, Stephen and his classmates discuss the flogging their peers will soon receive. Stephen's companion Athy "rolled up his sleeves to show how Mr. Gleeson would roll up his sleeves"; however, Stephen's imagination rejects this version and casts an alternate version of the scene:

> But Mr. Gleeson had round shiny cuffs and clean white wrists and fattish white hands and the nails of them were long and pointed. Perhaps he pared them too like Lady Boyle. But they were terribly long and pointed nails. So long and cruel they were though the white fattish hands were not cruel but gentle. (45)

An innocuous image—that of a schoolmate's hands—is here transformed into a terrifying one. Perhaps because of his previous understanding of hands, Stephen's vision of Mr. Gleeson's hands leads to a paradoxical response: "cold and fright" at "the cruel long nails and of the high whistling sound of the cane" but "queer quiet pleasure" at the "white fattish hands, clean and strong and gentle" (45). He thus defines women's hands through the litany of the virgin and begins to associate men's hands with cruelty and punishment, though at this point his narrative leaves room for some gentleness.

Stephen's own hands soon experience the cruel punishment he fears and, to an extent, he processes his traumatic experience of his punishment by narrating the story of his maimed hands. After Father Dolan beats him, Stephen imagines his hands "as if they were not his own but someone else's that he felt sorry for" (51). That is, he must transform his unjust experience into a narrative through which he can feel empathy. Stephen's first recollection of the incident consists of a memory of "the hands which he had held out in the air with the palms up and of the firm touch of the prefect of studies when he had steadied the shaking fingers and of the beaten swollen reddened mass of palm and fingers that shook helplessly in the air" (51). Hands provide the means through which he can narrate the story. Hands remain significant in Stephen's next, longer retelling of the full story that includes the lost glasses and the letter. As he engages in extended reflection on the incident, he

consistently returns to the hands detail: "He felt the touch of the prefect's fingers as they had steadied his hand and at fist he had thought he was going to shake hands with him because the fingers were soft and firm"; "the nocoloured eyes behind the steelrimmed spectacles were cruel looking because he had steadied the hand first with his firm soft fingers and that was to hit it better and louder" (52). Stephen now adds the detail of his confused misperception, made in the moment of his terror, that the prefect "was going to shake hands with him" (52). He then defines Dolan's eyes as cruel "because" of how Dolan steadied Stephen's hands. In this way, Stephen's association of cruelty with Gleeson's hands bleeds into the story of his own punishment, as Dolan's actions with hands are Stephen's reason for calling Dolan "cruel" (52). Hands, then, gain a full narrative context of punishment and fear.

Perhaps surprisingly in light of Stephen's punishment, though certainly not surprisingly in light of his continual association of the Blessed Virgin with Eileen, and then with Emma, Stephen imagines hands as a way through which he can be reconciled to the church out of his sin. Stephen, in the agony of repentance, imagines that God is "too great and stern and the Blessed Virgin too pure," but he can imagine himself standing "near Emma" (116). Approaching the Virgin through Emma, he is then able to imagine a scene in which Mary responds to his error, and to Emma's, with a beautiful scene of reconciliation:

> Their error had offended deeply God's majesty though it was the error of two children, but it had not offended her whose beauty *is not like earthly beauty, dangerous to look upon, but like the morning star which is its emblem, bright and musical*. The eyes were not offended which she turned upon them nor reproachful. She placed their hands together, hand in hand, and said, speaking to their hearts: Take hands, Stephen and Emma. It is a beautiful evening now in heaven. You have erred but you are always my children. It is one heart that loves another heart. Take hands together, my dear children,

> and you will be happy together and your hearts will love each other. (116, emphasis original)

Here, his hand narrative returns to its original context as part of his relationship with Mary and, by extension, the ivory and gold of Mary's litany. In his original association of Mary with hands, he defines Mary's "tower of ivory" as Eileen's hand, and Mary's "house of gold" as Eileen's hair. In this imaginative vision of forgiveness, Stephen imagines Mary linking his hands with Emma. Touching a woman's hand is again a positive experience for him, now told not in terms of his childhood encounters but in his imaginative vision of forgiveness.

Mary and her litany again provide a narrative framework for Stephen's experience in his encounter with the girl on the beach. In his description of the girl he, as critics frequently note, cast her as Mary.[20] Further, he does so in terms of the tower of ivory, house of gold, litany from the first chapter. The girl has thighs "softhued as ivory" and "her long fair hair" was girlish (171). Thus, his narrative of women consistently bears the Marian significance of the litany, much as his narrative of feminine hands also retains a Marian layer.

Ivory remains linked not only with Mary, but with Tusker Boyle's schoolboy error regarding elephants. In this rendition of ivory, Stephen walks along a street and makes rhymes about ivy, which lead him to reject the rhymes with disgust but find that "Yellow ivy…was all right. Yellow ivory also. And what about ivory ivy?" (179). Stephen latches onto the word ivory, which "now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants" (179). Instead of recalling Tusker Boyle, Stephen instead tells the story of the rector with

[20] See Centola, Lemon, and Benstock.

"the shrewed northern face" who taught him "one of the first examples that he had learnt in Latin… *India mittit ebur"* (179). The Marian and Latinate ivory narratives cohere toward the novel's end as he, within a month or so of his departure, walks the streets with Cranly. Cranly and Stephen hear a servant woman singing *Rosie O' Grady*. Cranly stops to listen and says "*mulier cantat*." Stephen then transforms the scene from a moment on the street in Dublin to a spiritual moment through the Latin language:

> The soft beauty of the Latin word touched with an enchanting touch the dark of the evening, with a touch fainter and more persuading than the touch of music or of a woman's hand. The strife of their minds was quelled. The figure of woman as she appears in the liturgy of the church passed silently through the darkness: a whiterobed figure…her voice, frail and high as a boy's, was heard…and all hearts were touched and turned to her voice, shining like a young star, shining clearer… (244)

The woman, the Latin, the hand, and the Marian allusion to a "whiterobed figure" from "the liturgy of the church" associated with a star all bear the weight of Stephen's earlier iterations of these motifs. Thus, much like the slime and rose motifs, this motif and its language remains a part of his imagistic and linguistic milieu throughout the novel.

In the novel's final chapter, Stephen experiences the challenges of previous chapters but still rejects the paradigms that came before art. The continual foundation of a turn towards narrative joins Stephen's quest for consolation with his decision to be an artist and a writer, a decision whose consequences are apparent in the last chapter. Now an adult, Stephen still faces isolation and rejection. The Irish woman "waited in the doorway as Davin had passed by at night and…all but wooed him to her bed…but [Stephen] no woman's eyes had wooed" (238). Cranly,

Stephen's supposed friend, responds to Stephen's "ardent and wayward confessions" with "harsh comments" and the "sudden intrusions of rude speech" and Stephen himself even finds "this rudeness also in himself towards himself" (232). His family remains in poverty, as evidenced by the "watery tea" he drinks at the opening of the chapter and "the box of pawntickets" in the Dedalus family kitchen" (175). His spirit still struggles and he feels "his heart already bitten by an ache of loathing and bitterness" 175). Even so, Stephen does not return to any of his previously rejected worldviews: he makes no attempt at heroism among his peers, but instead chooses exile and rejects the "nets" of "nationality, language, religion"; he does not seek out aesthetic indulgence or the company of women, but instead responds bitterly and with "anger against" the woman he desires and summons "secret and enflaming images" only to find they "gave him no pleasure"; and he retains a wary vision of the priesthood, describing the dean of studies as having a body that had "waxed old in lowly service of the Lord" and strongly asserting to Cranly that he has lost his faith and will not pretend otherwise, even for his mother's sake (203, 233, 185). However, Stephen does still turn to narrative art, and thus affirms both all his other consolatory attempts as transient and narrative's tenacious, if tenuous, ability to offer something more lasting.  Stephen, as the novel closes, still acts as an artist and indeed leaves Ireland "to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race" (253). In so doing, Stephen responds to Ireland's ills with narrative art. He considers the peasant woman of Davin's nighttime encounter "a type of her race and his own, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness" (183).  No longer able to live in Ireland, Stephen diagnoses

his race as "uncreated" and located "in darkness and secrecy and loneliness" (183). He responds with his art—art that "transmut[es] the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life," an art that Stephen believes he can use "to forge" the conscience his race needs (221). This, then, is how Stephen expresses the consolatory power of narrative: it is the proper response to the ills of his homeland.

The need for consolation in the face of suffering and the decision to, at least to an extent, locate this consolation in narrative seems a human state and, especially for a novelist, commendable act. Despite the potential value of Stephen's consolatory locus and its parallels to Joyce's own narrative project, he himself is not necessarily an admirable character nor a character praised by readers or even by his creator. The extent to which Joyce does or does not commend, have sympathy for, or express derision toward, Stephen is a long-debated matter in Joycean scholarship. Chester Anderson articulates the primary critical camps that have formed in response to the question of distance between Joyce and Stephen in *Portrait* as follows: that Joyce either commends Stephen and asks the reader to join him in his commendation; that Joyce rejects Stephen and asks the reader to join him in his rejection; or that Joyce's "view of his own past in Stephen is mixed, both ironic and romantic or sympathetic" (Anderson 451).[21] Aligning perhaps with this final group, Wayne Booth answers the question of how much distance Joyce has from his hero by suggesting both that it is near impossible to offer an absolute or final response to this question and that "Joyce was always a bit uncertain about his attitude toward Stephen" (461). In contrast, Robert Scholes, based on his reading of

[21] For a history of the debate over Joyce's distance (or lack thereof) see Anderson, "The Question of Esthetic Distance."

Stephen's villanelle, argues that by the end of the novel, "Joyce has deliberately set out in his description of Stephen's inspiration to fulfill the theoretical requirements he had set himself" and that the inspiration and the poem "are both intended to be genuine" (480). Thus, at this point in the novel, "Stephen ceases to be an aesthete and becomes a poet" (480). In a more contemporary interpretation, John Paul Riquelme posits that Stephen is the writer of *Portrait.* This means "the large problem of his future as an artist can no longer be at issue…the story itself as text provides the strongest possible indication that his choice of vocation will yield more valuable work than the writing he produces within the narrative" (92). The novel, when viewed as a whole, thus encompasses more than Stephen in indicating the value of his choice. Whether or not Joyce takes his protagonist seriously as an artist, and whether or not he commends Stephen's artistic attempts at the novel's end, he does take Stephen's quest for consolation and his attempt to locate it in narrative seriously.

Ultimately, the novel reflects not Stephen's narrative project, but Joyce's. The novel goes beyond its protagonist in offering a far more holistic and developed picture of Stephen that he realizes or would even be capable of offering. The novel uses third person narration and thus "enables the writer to suggest levels of the psyche far beyond what the protagonist himself is aware of" (Thornton 72). The depth available in the novel, a novel "devoted to the evocation of Stephen's psyche in its fullest context," bolsters the significance of narrative to Stephen, and thereby the development of narrative consolation, even amidst Stephen's personal, paradigmatic, and artistic shortcomings (127). Stephen may not fully comprehend

all that is at work within his development in *Portrait*; however, the novel is both a portrait of Stephen and a Joycean artistic creation. The investment of both form and content in the novel's articulation of narrative consolation lends gravity to Stephen's suffering-motivated turn to narrative and suggests the value of Stephen's choice even if Stephen's grandiose artistic ambitions lead to failures.

Given the narrative current running throughout the novel, Stephen's sole act of intentional artistic creation in the novel—his villanelle—confounds expectations. Besides not being a very good poem, Stephen's villanelle responds not to the lack of an Irish conscience with which he seems to be concerned but seemingly instead to his own frustrated desire and the perceived flirtation of a woman with the priest. Significantly, the villanelle is very different from the narratives that precede it and these differences are the hallmarks of its failure. The passage that perhaps most clearly reveals these differences is Stephen's epiphanic, aesthetic apprehension of the girl at the beach, which functions as the most comphrensive and sublime engagement with the motifs in the novel. As Stephen articulates the vision of the girl, his linguistic powers are at their height:

> She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and softhued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark plumaged dove…the first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence…faint as the bells of sleep…a faint flame trembled on her cheek. (171)

Bird imagery, fascination with color, the conflation of bells and water, the ivory of the virgin Mary, and even flame imagery all cohere in this rich passage and cause

“an outburst of profane joy” in Stephen’s soul. The passage, while well-crafted and linguistically beautiful, is rooted in the concrete presence of the girl on the beach and bears the transformative powers of the motifs. It does not stand alone, but as an integral part, of Stephen’s language, world, and life. In contrast, the villanelle contains stilted stanzas such as “are you not weary of ardent ways/lure of the fallen seraphim?/tell no more of enchanted days,” that not only fail to flow as the imagery of the beach scene does, but lack evocative imagery and any sort of awareness of Stephen’s life. Further, because the villanelle in part stems from Stephen’s perception of the girl’s flirtation with the priest, it lacks the gravitas of illness, poverty, and the turn from faith to which his previous narratives responded. The villanelle differs in quality, engagement with life, and gravity from the preceding motif-driven narratives and thus cannot serve as a viable means of narrative consolation or even as a well-written poem.  Where Stephen’s continual transformation of motifs produced narratives engaged in the concrete realities of life even as the language itself grew more figurative and lovely, the villanelle is far too abstract. Separate from life, the villanelle fails to perform the essential “transmuting” or “converting” action by which narrative consoles. In his longing to fly, he fails to recognize what Joyce deeply knows: that writing must be part of, not separate from, life. The villanelle’s abstract nature, lack of profundity, and poor quality join together in signifying the novel’s privileging of other narratives—the narratives crafted by Stephen throughout the novel and the narrative art of *A Portrait* itself.

While Stephen names the villanelle as his primary act of artistic creation, Joyce's almost excessive presence of motifs in the novel proclaim another. Ironically, Stephen values the villanelle as his artistic creation, while failing to recognize the value of the narratives he has crafted all along. As Riquelme argues, the novel itself reveals a far more valuable narrative artistry than Stephen produces in the poem. Through the motifs, he has gained a facility with words and language that he can then use when he becomes an artist to make verbal art and become the storyteller—the priest of the eternal imagination—that he needs and longs to be. Stephen's motifs and their transformation, anchored in the ordinary but presenting it in transmuted, and beautiful, forms engage the power of language due to both its form and content. As Attridge claims "formal inventiveness is not merely a matter of finding new ways of constructing sentences or managing verbal rhythms" but relies upon the dual engagement of language and life (109). That is,

> The possibility of creating an otherness… springs not just from the fact that words consist of certain sounds and shapes, but also from the fact that these sounds and shapes are nexuses of meaning and feeling and hence deeply rooted in culture, history, and the varieties of human experience. (109)

Significantly, because of this grounding in culture, history, and experience, "the formal sequence therefore functions as a staging of meaning and feeling…works of literature offer many kinds of pleasure, but one aspect of the pleasure that can be called peculiarly literary derives from this staging, this intense but distanced playing out of what might be the most intimate, the most strongly felt, constituents of our lives" (109). In moving toward the theoretical and abstract with the villanelle, Stephen actually separates himself from the facility with language he has developed throughout he novel, a facility that does the very thing Attridge describes. At the

novel's end, instead of embracing this ability, Stephen writes his villanelle and rejects "language, nationality, religion" (203). Joyce, far more aware than Stephen, does not condone this move towards isolation but instead joins Stephen's mother's wish that Stephen "may learn in [his] own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels" (252). Where Stephen may think he can leave all of these things behind, Joyce rejects the movement towards isolation and abstraction. For Joyce, a portrait "is not an identificative paper but rather the curve of an emotion" (Joyce, "A Portrait of the Artist," 258). This "curve of an emotion" aptly describes the evolving motifs find in *A Portrait's* pages. As Joyce goes to a great deal of trouble to show throughout the rich presence of motifs, Stephen's narrative art does not culminate in the villanelle, but in the scene with the girl at the beach where his engagement with his lifetime of motifs and language is most beautifully crafted and evident. Thus, Joyce does not make the same mistakes as Stephen and in *Portrait* continues the transformative work of converting the everyday into the artistic, work begun in *Dubliners* that will continue in *Ulysses* and its paean to the ordinary.

Through Stephen's consistent turn to narrative, as manifested in his repetition and transformation of certain elements of his life, Stephen not only identifies himself as an artist but also provides himself with a source of consolation. In what are arguably some of Stephen's most despairing moments in the novel—his schoolboy agony as an outcast, his family's poverty, and his conviction of his own damnation—he crafts a narrative. The novel, through its simultaneous depiction of Stephen's need for consolation and his continual turn to art inextricably joins the

two. Indeed, the novel aligns Stephen's narrative foundation, in both linguistic form and bildungsroman plot, with the form and content of Stephen's quest for consolation. Ultimately, Stephen's epiphanic choice of narrative art is not one in a series of paradigmatic shifts but instead the life-principle towards which Stephen turned throughout the novel.

In part, Stephen's suffering, and his inability to locate consolation in one of his other structures, motivates this constant turn to narrative. Each of the worldviews through which Stephen moves throughout the novel offers temporary consolation; however, narrative—as indicated by both Stephen's consistent turn to narrative in the novel and his lasting decision to pursue art at the novel's end—provides permanent solace. As indicated by the nature of Stephen's narration throughout the novel, the content of his story does not necessarily change his material conditions and it does not offer an alternative reality. That is, Stephen's consolation in these narratives does not come from their content but from the creation of narrative itself. Narrative cannot—and does not—actually provide an end to Stephen's difficulties; however, it can and does provide a meaningful way to respond to the challenges of human experience. Narrative mediates Stephen's experiences, proves viable as a life-principle, and enables the transmutation or conversation of mundane exigencies into permanent art.

As Stephen learns and as Joyce demonstrates through the development of his protagonist, narrative language bears consolatory power through the way in which it meets and mediates the difficulties of human life. The transformation of life to narrative is enough. By continually constructing these narratives, Stephen himself is

"transmuting the daily bread of [his] experience into the radiant body of everliving life"; Stephen himself is transforming his experiences into something with a "permanent artistic life" of their own. In so doing, Stephen reveals the human need for narrative. The story in its form and existence is consolation with or without a change in Stephen's outer life; it provides, in Joyce's words, "mental, moral, and spiritual uplift." By choosing to become an artist when the other options have failed, and by transforming his "daily bread" into narrative, Stephen cements art's ability to provide something his other options lacked as he manifests the human need for consolation and a decision to locate that consolation in the narrative power of his role as an artist and a writer.

## CHAPTER THREE

## "Reconstructed out of my book"[1]: Exile, Possible Worlds, and Home in Ulysses

The famous claim that Dublin could be rebuilt from the pages of *Ulysses* bears out, even in the contemporary streets of Dublin. Visitors to the city can still follow Leopold Bloom's morning walk to acquire his kidney for breakfast, Bloom and Stephen's late-night careening through the streets, and view the ocean from Dedalus' Martello tower.[2] This is, in large part, due to Joyce's devotion to exacting and elaborate language. As Samuel Beckett claims regarding Joyce's writing, "here form *is* content, content *is* form…His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*" (Beckett 2, emphasis original). In *Ulysses*, Joyce seeks to write not about Dublin, but to construct Dublin itself. As an intensely local novel, *Ulysses* uses both its incredibly detailed, elaborate style and deep investment in place to offer its readers a fictive Irish city notably resonant with its real-world counterpart. With this setting, Joyce uses his literature to proclaim his faith in narrative's ability to embody place through the imaginative powers of literature. In so doing, Joyce manifests narrative's ability to offer the consolation of place.

Joyce paradoxically writes this local literature while residing in exile outside Ireland. As the final words in *Ulysses* convey, this premier novel of Dublin was written from Paris, Trieste, and Zurich. *Ulysses* thus combines the experiences of

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[1] Quoted in Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, 67.

[2] Joyce's walking instructions are aligned so closely with the city that the James Joyce Centre offers tours that follow these very walking routes throughout the city.

home and exile, which makes its investment in Dublin all the more poignant. The novel's devotion to Dublin is perhaps most evident in "Wandering Rocks," the central episode of the novel. Because of its emphasis on the city over any particular character, "Wandering Rocks" exemplifies the world-making ability of fiction at work in *Ulysses*. Across the novel, and especially in this episode, Joyce employs the expansive, world-making capacities of fiction to construct a narrative that offers home amidst exile. In this way Joyce declares not only the world-building power of narrative, but also its particular consolatory power of offering home to those in exile. Indeed, through the construction of a fictional world in *Ulysses*, Joyce crafts a home to which even an exile can return over and again.

Edward Casey, in his seminal work *Getting Back into Place,* acknowledges both the crucial role of place in human life and the alienating consequences of displacement; however, he also acknowledges narrative's power to offer a corrective for displacement. Casey writes that human beings are "alienated…in many ways—so lost in space and time as to be displaced from place itself—but the existence of pictorial and narrational journeys to and between places reminds us that we are not altogether without resources in our placelessness" (310). That is, narrative can aid the "resolute return to place" that comes with a "renewed sensitivity to place" and "a refreshed sense of its continuing importance in our lives and those of others" (Casey 310). Joyce, as manifested in *Ulysses*, recognizes narrative's ability to build and to aid those who encounter its language in their return to place, and he thus crafts a narrative that offers the consolation of home through the way in which it builds a fictional world.

The novel's ability to provide a home, even for its peripatetic author, stems most strongly from fiction's ability to create possible worlds. As Lubomir Dolezel asserts the "possible-worlds semantic insists that the world is constructed by its author and the reader's role is to reconstruct it. The text that was composed by the writer's labors is a set of instructions for the reader according to which the world reconstruction proceeds" (21). This act of reconstruction enables the reader to incorporate the fictional world into reality. That is, "having reconstructed the fictional world as a mental image the reader can ponder it and make it a part of his experience, just as he experientially appropriates the actual world. The appropriation…integrates fictional worlds into the reader's reality" (Dolezel 21). The particularities of a text and the words it uses to refer to and build its place offer a means by which the reader can enter a fictional world and acquire it as part of reality. Story thus has the capacity to function as a place through the world-making powers of narrative. Considered in light of possible worlds theory, then, fiction bears the ability to offer a real home to which even an exile can return.

By consistently presenting characters journeying across the city, both the novel and "Wandering Rocks" emphasize the breadth of world-construction at work in Joyce's fictional Dublin. While these journeys all engage the streets and pedestrians of Dublin, the novel's tenth episode, the episode in which the city itself becomes the primary character, most strongly manifests the world-making at work in *Ulysses*.[3] "Wandering Rocks," in name alone, recalls the experience of exile. The

[3] Many critics argue that the city of Dublin itself is the primary character in "Wandering Rocks." Trevor Williams argues that "Wandering Rocks" is "the only episode… where the focus is on the city as a whole, the only one in which its characters are citizens before they are individuals, and

chapter, the only episode in *Ulysses* named for a Homeric parallel not encountered by Odysseus on his homeward journey, serves as a reminder for the inaccessibility places can bear. Ironically for a chapter bearing such a name, "Wandering Rocks" offers immense accessibility to another place: Dublin. The urban properties emphasized in "Wandering Rocks," alongside the episode's commitment to the city itself, cohere as Joyce's most detailed "set of instructions" for reconstructing the fictive Dublin. Joyce's detailed construction of 1904 Dublin emphasizes the concrete reality of its place, the variety of people that exist in the city, and how these people interact communally with their places and with others. The episode is very concerned with where people and places are in space, as well as concerned with when people and places are in time. Joyce, in "Wandering Rocks", is not only constructing the world of the city but also insisting that it matters, down to very specific details, when, where, and how people and places exist and interact. Additionally, "Wandering Rocks," through its simultaneity, focuses not on a singular journey through the city, but the whole city at once. Ultimately, the "instructions for the reader" Joyce offers in *Ulysses*, particularly as manifested in "Wandering Rocks," evince Joyce's commitment to giving the reader the experience of a full city as a place constituted by a variety of people and places, all existing simultaneously. Thus,

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the one that provides the clearest glimpose of the citizens in relationship to their environment" (Williams 267). Richard Brown suggests "the central concern of "WR" might be said to be not so much any individual character as the impersonal force of the city itself" (Brown 58). In a similar argument, Marilyn French articulates "Dublin is a character in the novel, as fictional and as real as Bloom and Stephen. It is shown for the most part in its most negative aspects, although the language of its inhabitants is vivid and taking" (French 30). Michael Rubenstein, in his more inventive take on the city's role in the novel, argues "the formal experiments of *Ulysses* attempt to give ontological and epistemological teeth to the idea that the city itself can be a character in fiction" (113). More specifically, Rubenstein argues that various modes of urban infrastructure (the newspaper in Aeolus and the sewer system in "Wandering Rocks") function "as plausible points of view from which the action of each episode is perceived" (113). Thus, "the city is…a speaking character in fiction" (122).

Joyce through both the form and content of "Wandering Rocks" does not replicate the individual human experience of being in a city, but instead simulates the experience of a city writ large by insisting that readers invest in the simultaneity of place, time, and human experience extant within a city. Further, some of Joyce's characters appear not only in both history and fiction, but also across the Joycean canon. In this way, "Wandering Rocks" emphasizes both its connection to the historical Dublin and to the unified place in which Joyce's fictional worlds are anchored. That Joyce builds this textual world from his exilic framework indicates the consolatory response literature can offer to experiences of isolation and exile. Joyce's local literature asserts that story can function as home for this exilic author and, in so doing, invokes fiction's ability—as a world crafted by words—to offer exiles a return home. Narrative can, and in *Ulysses* does, provide consolation for exile by offering a fictional place in recompense for a home lost.[4]

Joyce's status as an exilic writer make an understanding of exile and how it influences his fiction a crucial part of interpreting Joyce's works, especially when it comes to his works' interaction with his homeland. As Richard Kain notes, though living in various European cities, Joyce "often remarked to his friends that his imagination had never left Dublin" (180). Though Joyce's exile was self-imposed, as Michael Gillespie asserts, "in the end the most convincing reason for seeing Joyce as an exile writer comes not because he fits any received view of the term but because events in his life made it possible for him plausibly to see himself as one" (2). Exile,

[4] Declan Kiberd's *Ulysses and Us* considers other consolatory aims of *Ulysses*. He claims "the whole of *Ulysses* might be taken as…an extended hymn to the dignity of everyday living, when cast against the backdrop of a world war" (288).

according to Gillespie, creates a peculiar relationship with place. Exilic writers have an "oscillating perspective" which moves "the individual, particularly if that person is a writer, simultaneously toward backward and forward visions. The traumatic parting from the homeland severs the physical ties to a place even as the terms of that separation reaffirm an emotional bond to what is now lost" (11). For an exilic writer like Joyce, the "consequences" of exile and his response to it are "demonstrated time and again in the construction of his fiction" (32-33). Gillespie identifies "feelings of nostalgia and hostility" as "fundamental feelings" of the exilic condition (13). Thus, Gillespie looks for these characteristic emotions in Joyce's fictional presentations. With regard to *Ulysses*, Gillespie claims "once one has identified this exilic pattern of sentimentality and rancor in the views of the novel's central characters, it becomes easy to see Dublin as a city full of exiles, isolated characters looking backwards" (134). By analyzing Stephen, Leopold Bloom, and Molly, Gillespie focuses his analysis of Joyce's exilic imagination at work in *Ulysses* on characters, concluding "the value of orienting one's reading according to issues and experiences related to exile lies in the intensification of our understanding of characters' behavior at various stages of the day" (134). Gillespie's insightful analysis of the exilic mindset in *Ulysses* provides an excellent foundation from which to consider exilic implications for *Ulysses* while leaving room for a consideration of how the novel's realistic presentation of place engages the condition of exile.[5]

[5] Declan Kiberd, in *Inventing Ireland*, argues that the nation of Ireland itself experienced an exilic paradigm during Joyce's time. Kiberd suggests "Ireland was indeed a precarious invention, a fiction which might yet be sufficiently imagined to become a fact: but in 1907 its people were estranged from the past, a nation of exiles and migrants, caught on the cusp between tradition and innovation." (328). In Kiberd's analysis, because of this particular estranged state, "there were so many different levels of national experience to comprehend: and yet there was available to Joyce no

Joyce's world-making abilities and his employment of realism in *Ulysses* are complex elements of his work. Weldon Thornton argues that Joyce "regarded the acts of the imagination, and the cultural milieu that sustains them, as the true and appropriate objects of the imitation that 'realism' involves. That is, for Joyce the novel's mimesis, its realism, refers not to its capacity to represent any physical reality…but its capacity to evoke, to simulate and to *interpret* a whole imaginative-cultural world" (17). Karen Lawrence's analysis of realism in the novel also evinces a concern with multiple layers that shape reality. Lawrence asserts that the realism of the book is twofold in that it "retains the specificity of place and event" and also provides an "imitation of the wealth of life" through "the *surplus* of detail" (11, 12). Certainly the ability of fiction "to evoke, to simulate, and to interpret" a world beyond its physical dimensions to its cultural, imaginative, and communal reality, as Thornton argues, is a central concern in *Ulysses*; however, the physical reality of the city, as acknowledged by Lawrence's claims regarding specificity and surplus, plays a crucial role in the novel's ability to do those very things.[6] This is especially true in terms of the "Wandering Rocks" episode. Vivian Igoe, in her encyclopedic *The Real People of Joyce's Ulysses: A Biographical Guide*, meticulously documents the reality of Joyce's Dublin by providing biographies of the myriad characters pulled from the

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overarching central image, no single explanatory category, no internal source of authority. Too mobile, too adaptable, the Irish were everywhere and nowhere, scattered across the earth and yet feeling like strangers in their own land" (Kiberd 328). Thus, Kiberd argues Joyce "began *Ulysses* in the hope of discovering through it a form adequate to this strange experience, one which might allow him eventually to proclaim the tables of a new law in the language of the outlaw, to burrow down into his own 'Third World" of the mind. For an audience in the made world, he wished to evoke a world still in the making" (Kiberd 328).

[6] Stuart Gilbert claims that without the "many topical allusions to characteristic sights of Dublin streets, to facts and personalities of the Dublin *milieu* of nearly half a century ago," the "realism of the silent monolgues would have been impaired" (16).

real world of Joyce's Dublin and placed in *Ulysses.* As Igoe asserts, the verisimilitude of Joyce's characters "reveals how Joyce manipulated and rew on his intimate knowledge of the city and tis inhabitants in many of the nieghbourhoods where he lives…and offers a vast mosaic of Dublin life and society in 1904" (Igoe 1). Igoe's own life confirms the novel's reality, as she grew up knowing "direct descendants of named people in *Ulysses*" (Igoe 4). Whether Joyce inserted an historical figure or actual Dubliner into his novel, or included a character amalgamated from various Dubliners he knew, his novel constantly works to chronicle and represent the reality of one of its most significant characters: the city itself.

The city's role as a character is perhaps nowhere more evident than in "Wanderng Rocks." As Clive Hart famously argues, "Wandering Rocks, following immediately on Stephen's theorizing, is Joyce's most direct, most complete celebration of Dublin, demonstrating succinctly his conception of the importance of physical reality, meticulously documented, as the soil from which fictions may best grow" (181). Thornton's own reading of "Wandering Rocks" suggests how the physical and the imaginative-cultural elements work in concert with each other. Thornton argues that, in this episode, "the secondary narrator presents a realistic/naturalistic view of the city as fragmented and mechanical, but his agenda is subverted…by the richer and more positive image of the city…offered by the novel as a whole" (142). An episode relentlessly full of the physical reality of Dublin can both reflect and reject a mechanistic presentation of the city through its commitment to world-making and contextual placement in a novel that celebrates the very same reality. Ironically, not only is the narrator's mechanistic presentation

subverted by the novel writ large, as Thornton argues, but also the details of the city the narrator gives in the episode make a major contribution to the novel's construction of a fictional world and thus aid Joyce's project of creating a Dublin to which he can return via the power of narrative. Joyce's city is not purely mechanical and naturalistic, but its physical reality does lay the foundation from which the imaginative, interpretive, and cultural elements of the novel, the place, and the interpretation of both, come.[7] Thus, Thornton's insistence on Joyce's investment in the capacity of a novel's realism to engage "the imagination and the cultural milieu," Lawrence's insight into the specificity of place and wealth of detail, and Hart's acknowledgement of the importance of physical reality as a foundation for fiction prove integral to understanding the world crafted in *Ulysses*.

The contrast between the world-building project at work in "Wandering Rocks" and its narrator's harsh depiction of the city together indicate Joyce's complex perspective on his native city. Further, the contrast indicates the complex tension between novel and narrator that Thornton articulates with his argument for the way in which the novel subverts many of its narrators.[8] To an extent, the

[7] The narrator of "Wandering Rocks" is most frequently read as mechanistic. For a strong articulation of this view, see Thornton, *Voices and Values in Ulysses*. Recently, some critics have begun to oppose this view. For example, see Stefan Haag's argument in "Listen and Be Touched: Aural Space in Wandering Rocks." As well, Liam Lanigan rejects authoritarian views of the narrator and instead suggests the value of the narrator for the episode's depiction of the city with his argument that "the narrative perspective thus allows us to see the city in its full complexity and synchronicity, unfettered by the physical demand that we remain in one place at one time, but does so by circumventing the limits of normal human perception" (Lanigan 161-62). In a different take on analyzing the narrator of "Wandering Rocks," Bonnie Kime-Scott offers an analysis that argues the episode "contains numerous moments of being that enact the marginal experiences of minor characters who seem to have little control over their lives. Its narrator is disliked by critics partially because his methods exert a devious form of control. The episode offers ideal material for studying issues of mastery, both in the author's writing and the critics' interpreting" (Kime-Scott 136).

[8] See Thornton, *Voices and Values in Ulysses*.

juxtaposition of the mechanistic way in which the narrator presents the city and the consolatory fictional world-building within the same episode reflect the nostalgia and hostility Gillespie identifies as hallmarks of an exilic author's approach to home. Joyce certainly does not view Dublin in an idealistic way, nor does he present it as a perfect sight of community, but he nevertheless seeks to create a Dublin to which he can return via the power of narrative. Thus, slippage exists between the episode and the narrator as, even amidst the narrator's negative depiction of the city, the episode does a significant amount of constructive, world-building work for Joyce's fictional Dublin. That is, whatever the narrator thinks, the novel—especially in "Wandering Rocks"—grounds the reader in the physical aspects of the city through its insistence on place and people. As Joyce claims, one of the purposes of the novel is to "give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book" (Budgen 67-68). Joyce, then, builds a fictional world not to extol Dublin as an exemplar of place or community, but to provide the consolation of place amidst exile. Indeed, Joyce's ever-present world building in "Wandering Rocks" continually subverts the narrator's mechanistic presentation as the fictional world construction signifies the importance of place despite whatever imperfections a place may hold—or whatever hostility or rancor an exile may feel towards his (former) home and its inhabitants.

The craft and reception of world-making as discussed by Thornton, Lawrence, and Hart—what a fictional text evokes, how it interprets and presents its fictive world, and the details it chooses to privilege—intersect with the concerns of possible worlds theory. As Margot Norris articulates, these types of studies, while

crucial to the critical conversation surrounding *Ulysses*, "attend chiefly to modulations of voice and strategies of storytelling in the work—as opposed to the ontology of its fictional worlds" (*Virgin and Veteran* 5).[9] Addressing this ontology through possible worlds theory enables new, and essential, considerations of Joyce's work. Possible worlds theory, as Norris asserts, "offers a different conceptual system for determining what is true or false in fiction precisely by redefining its reference to the actual world," which in turn enables a new consideration of the historical entities present in the novel. In her work on possible worlds theory and *Ulysses*, particularly the "Wandering Rocks" episode, Norris posits that the "Wandering Rocks" episode involves the readers' ethical judgments and empathy. According to Norris, gaps in the text, when considered in conjunction with the historical existence of characters and the status of Joyce's Dublin as fiction, provide readers opportunity to make judgments, which in turn asks readers to be ethical and empathetic.[10] This reading joins the contrast between the narrator's mechanistic presentation and the episode's world-building work as an indication of the tension, even disagreement, between narrator and novel. Norris' foundational work on possible words theory and *Ulysses* proves the value of considering Joyce's

[9] Norris specifically refers to Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses*, as well as to studies by Franz Stanzel, David Hayman, and Erwin Steinberg.

[10] Norris also articulates a possible worlds theory of analysis of "Wandering Rocks" in her article "Possible-Worlds Theory and Joyce's 'Wandering Rocks': The Case of Father Conmee," where she states that her aim is "not only to explore the process of world creation in "Wandering Rocks" but also to extend the implications of possible-worlds theory for an ethics of reading the episode," arguing that the bridges between the actual world and the fictional world "challenge reader responsibility to be just—both to real and fictional persons, as well as to the text itself" (22). In this article, Norris primarily focuses on Father John Conmee to consider these questions: "How does "Wandering rocks' reproduce not only the *actual* characters that populate 1904 Dublin but also the *worlds* created in and by their minds? And what is the consequence of inventing imaginary, or possible, worlds for fictional figures drawn from real life?".

fictional world as just that: a world made accessible and real through the power of fiction.

When considered in conjunction with Michael Gillespie's work on Joyce's exilic imagination, the implications of possible worlds theory in *Ulysses* extend beyond the ethical implications explored by Norris to consolatory implications. Gillespie chooses to focus on the exilic mental state of Joycean characters; however, when his exilic concerns are considered alongside Norris' ontological concerns, the coherence of these two critical viewpoints indicates the significant way in which Joyce's exile affected his writing's engagement with place. Eric Bulson suggests that the "intersection between geography and storytelling" in Joyce's writing "prompts serious consideration of Joyce's motivation for such heightened geographical realism" (81).[11] Amidst the exilic forces shaping Joyce's writing, fiction's status as something ontologically different from, yet capable of engaging with, reality offers him the ability to explore narrative's capacity to create a world that is real and accessible in a way that a physical, yet absent, homeland is not. Literature, by offering a possible world, can function as home and place amidst exile and thus provide consolation for those bereft of their home.

Possible worlds theorists articulate the ways in which a fictional world can be real, and what this sort of reality can provide. Marie-Laure Ryan states "once we become immersed in a fiction, the characters become real for us, and the world they

[11] Bulson makes this argument for Joyce's geographical, exilic imagination in service to his larger argument that "Joyce's 1906 'wish' for a map and his decision to map-out Dublin is nothing short of a political gesture that allowed him to bring Ireland to the world and give Ireland back to the Irish" in the aftermath of the ordnance survey (Bulson 83). In addressing Ireland's colonial past, Bulson joins a critical discussion that addresss *Ulysess* in general and "Wandering Rocks" in particular in light of postcolonial concerns. See Len Platt, Liam Lanigan, Shan-Yu Huang, Enda Duffy ("Disappearing"), Andrew Gibson, and Anne Fogarty.

live in momentarily takes the place of the actual world" (21). In her own articulation of this claim, Ruth Ronen argues "fictional worlds are based on a logic of parallelism that guarantees their autonomy in relation to the actual world," which indicates "that fictional facts do not relate *what could have or could not have occurred in actuality, but rather, what did occur and what could have occurred in fiction*" (8,9). Thomas Pavel assigns motivations to the crafting of these fictional worlds when he asserts "since we need an alien space in which to deploy the energy of the imagination, there have always been and always will be distant fictional worlds—but we may also use close fictional worlds for mimetic purposes, in order to gather relevant information or just for the pleasure of recognition" (148). Joyce's critiques and at times harsh depiction of Dublin may reflect the hostility Gillespie notes as part of the exilic mindset, but his investment in the creation of a fictional Dublin coheres with "the pleasure of recognition" and longing for home that come from separation. Exploring what fictional autonomy enables, and what a narrative's presentation of a fictional world can offer a reader through the specific way in which it constructs and presents a world reveals Joyce's employment of fiction's expansive world-making capabilities to craft a home amidst exile and thereby gain consolation through the power of narrative.

For Joyce, narrative's ability to offer consolation amidst exile relies on narrative's ability to manifest not just a fictional world, but a fictional world closely aligned with a particular reality. When addressing the role of a fictional text in presenting a world rooted in reality, Ronen argues "the distance between fiction and actuality, or their relative possibility, is part of the rhetoric of a fictional text: the

more a fictional world is presented as possible relative to actuality, the more the rhetoric of fiction will emphasize the great extent to which it draws on a world familiar to its readers" (94-95). With its closeness to actuality, the fictional rhetoric of "Wandering Rocks" certainly emphasizes this familiarity; however, the rhetoric of fiction at work in "Wandering Rocks" addresses far more than far more than its closeness to actuality in its presentation of Dublin as a real, accessible, and possible world. Certainly, Joyce's depiction of the city is concerned with its particular place and real people and places it shares with his actual Dublin, but the fictional rhetoric also privileges certain elements of a city and its life that bolster Joyce's attempt to create an imaginative home. Ronen offers an example of how to analyze the presentation of a place in a novel when she claims:

> In Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir*, characters walk or drive outdoors without the least reference to concrete places in Paris where their actions take place…in the fictional world of Stendhal's novel, and from the point of view of its hero Julien Sorel, arriving in Paris from a provincial town signals his ascent on the social ladder and this is the only relevant property of Paris that applies to this fictional world. There is therefore no relevance to the concrete city life or public events in Paris, and the place serves only to connote a social dynamics. (128)

In sharp contrast, Joyce's fictional rhetoric of the city ostentatiously emphasizes the concrete aspects, as well as the people and things that inhabit the concrete places as relevant properties in his fictional world. These properties—the aspects of the city and of experiencing a city—privileged by the text illuminate the kind of world the text creates and what this world offers to its readers alongside the historic parallels that assert the novel's verisimilitude with 1904 Dublin.

The relevant properties of Joyce's fictional Dublin function as what Dolezel might call the "set of instructions" by which the reader experiences and engages the

reality of his possible, fictional world (Dolezel 21). Through the journeys his characters take across the city, Joyce offers these world-making instructions to his readers. By moving dynamically, rather than remaining stagnant in a library or a tower, Joyce's characters—and thereby his novel—are able to explore the breadth of the streets, people, and experiences extant in Dublin. By the time June 16 reaches 3 o'clock, and with it a chapter full of walks short and long across various parts of Dublin, many journeys through parts of the city have occurred. These journeys, through their similarities to "Wandering Rocks," extend the world-making project across the novel as a whole, while their differences highlight the focal role "Wandering Rocks" plays in constructing Joyce's fictional Dublin.

Joyce's employment of the journey, specifically the pedestrian act of walking, is especially appropriate to both the exilic imagination shaping his writing and his project of recreating Dublin. These walks, tram journeys, and carriage rides across the city, whether they cover the space of a few blocks or the city as a whole, are significant not only for the variety of life and places they bring into the novel, but also for the significance of the act of traveling across a city itself. As Michel DeCerteau articulates

> To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place—an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations… compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric. (103)

Movement, particularly walking, across a city thus reflects an exilic condition while also offering compensation for the lack of place. The act of walking continually asserts the lack of place but footsteps, taken together as a "swarming mass" of "an

innumerable collection of singularities," create "intertwined paths" that "give shape to spaces" as "they weave places together" (97).[12] The particular nature of walking in the city, as analyzed by DeCerteau, indicates the way in which the journeys in *Ulysses* both replicate the exilic experience and enable the creation of a fictional Dublin that allows a return home without a denial of the isolation and other challenges inherent to a city. Further, Joyce's interest, especially as manifested in "Wandering Rocks," in the walks of multiple characters reflects Joyce's investment in the city as a place of myriad individuals and experiences, which "weave places together" through their vast singularities.

While sharing some similarities with the journeys taken in "Wandering Rocks," in contrast to the structure of "Wandering Rocks," other journeys across the city in *Ulysses* privilege character—and the thoughts and interactions of a particular character—over the place in which he travels. For instance, Leopold Bloom's walks in "Calypso" and "Lotus Eaters" share some of the characteristics of walks in "Wandering Rocks," as Bloom's turns in the city streets are, at least at moments, carefully narrated and due attention is paid to the concrete details of people and places he passes along the way. When Bloom leaves his house to fetch his morning kidney, he stands on his doorstep and crosses "to the bright side, avoiding the loose cellarflap of a number seventyfive" before he turns "into Dorset street" (U 4.77-78). The specificity of place is important here, as it will be later in "Wandering Rocks". Similarly, "Lotus Eaters" opens with a detailed description of Bloom's journey:

[12] Declan Kiberd argues that the fragmented sections of "Wandering Rocks" celebrate "the random, uncontrollable circulation of bodies through the streets" (*Ulysses and Us* 167).

> by lorries along sir John Rogerson's quay, Mr. Bloom walked soberly, past Windmill lane, Leask's the linseed crusher, the postal telegraph office…and past the sailors' home. He turned from the morning noises of the quayside and walked through Lime street. By Brady's cottages…he crossed Townsend street…and past Nichols' the undertaker…in Westland row he halted". (U 5.1-17)

Here, as will be the case in "Wandering Rocks," the geographic details of places and movements are significant. Despite this similarity, these journeys remain very different than the journeys in "Wandering Rocks" because they remain focused on, processed through, and even propelled by the thoughts of Leopold Bloom.

Just as "Wandering Rocks" continually shifts the reader across the city as it jumps from section to section, "Hades" insists that that reader remembers the carriage ride is a journey across a place through a series of abrupt interruptions detailing the carriage's movement. The carriage in "Hades" primarily interrupts through its noises. From its "creaking" when Martin Cunningham enters in the first sentence of the episode, the narrator continually uses the carriage's noises as a reminder of the journey and movement of the chapter. As the carriage fills, "all waited. Then wheels were heard from in front, turning…their carriage began to move, creaking and swaying" (U 6.24-26). As Simon Dedalus and Bloom discuss Stephen, whom they've just seen on the street, the narrator interrupts the conversation with "the carriage, passing the opened rains and mounds of rippedup roadway…lurched round the corner and, swerving back to the tramtrack, rolled on noisily with chattering wheels" (U 6.45-47). When the men discuss suicide, "the carriage rattled swiftly along Blessington street. Over the stones" (U 6.366). The journey's end is signaled not by any character's words, but by "the felly harshed against the curbstone: stopped" (U 6.490). Through these examples of the carriage's

interruption and others that occur throughout the episode, the narrative insists on reminding the reader that the carriage is on a journey and that the conversations in the carriage occur both across time and across the space of a journey.

In another similarity to "Wandering Rocks," the journey in "Hades" is always anchored in the concrete and human specificities of Dublin. The carriage encounters monuments and waterways, passes a house where the Childs murder took place, and the characters within acknowledge the existence of some individuals and places on the streets outside. Leopold Bloom thinks about the outside world, and every now and then the rest of the carriage comments on something or someone passing in the streets, as does the narrator; however, the chapter very rarely pays more attention than a phrase or two. The focus in "Hades" is on the singular journey through the city to the funeral, and even more particularly on the conversations of the men as they journey, not the fullness of Dublin itself. The setting remains on the periphery. In this way, "Hades" prepares for the full, if jaundiced, depiction of the city to come in "Wandering Rocks" even as it retains key differences from the novel's central episode.

Thus, while the journeys in "Calypso," "Lotus Eaters," and "Hades" are focused on the characters whereas "Wandering Rocks" turns its focus to the city, *Ulysses* does build toward its paean to place in "Wandering Rocks." The concern "Wandering Rocks" evinces for the concrete reality of the people and places of 1904 Dublin carries across the novel as a whole. Nevertheless, "Wandering Rocks," due to its focus on the city, serves as a focal point for articulating and engaging the relevant properties of the fictional world of Dublin. In the journeys of "Wandering Rocks," the

narrative's commitment to concrete details of streets and spaces both public and private, its emphasis on the variety of people and experiences, the attention it pays to how people and places interact with each other, its employment of simultaneity, and its adherence to historical reality, serve as hallmarks of the narrative rhetoric at work in Joyce's creation of his fictional world. Through privileging these elements of Dublin, Joyce claims both the physical reality and broader cultural and communal reality as crucial parts of his fictional world. In addition, the earlier journeys focus on a singular experience of the city, such as Bloom's walk to buy a kidney or the particular carriage's journey to the funeral, whereas the fictional world project in "Wandering Rocks' is a far more ambitious presentation: to replicate the fullness of the city itself, and not just one of its people or parts.[13] Its narrator seeks not to focus on a character and his experience, but to inundate the reader with the variety of life and concrete places that occur simultaneously in the space of an hour in a city.[14] Indeed, the city becomes the primary character of the episode. In so doing, "Wandering Rocks" plays a vital role in the fictional world made possible by Joyce's

[13] Anne Fogarty makes a claim for the holistic representation of the city in "Wandering Rocks": "Rather than showing us a closed world in a state of animated suspension that simply courts our moral condemnation, this pivotal chapter holds all of the political, social, and cultural elements of Dublin in 1904 in fluid dissolution and invites its readers actively to immerse themselves in the unforeclosed processes and concrete materialities of a living history that it engagingly and playfully mirrors and refracts" (58).

[14] Maria Tymozcko suggests there are particularly Irish qualities in the writing of "Wandering Rocks." According to Tymozcko, "Joyce emerges most clearly as senchaid in two specific episodes of *Ulysses,* "Wandering Rocks" and "Ithaca," and "collections of stories such as exist in "Wandering Rocks" are common in many types of Irish senchas: the episode is similar to the historical anecdotes grouped in the medieval manuscripts, to genealogical information and anecdotes, to collections of onomastic lore, and to collections of placelore" (141, 142). In her estimation, Joyce, to an extent, follows the Irish tradition of dindshenchas and "is not merely a raconteur of events and anecdotes about Dublin…his attention to the topography and traditions of Dublin is an extension of the nationalist validation of local tradition, story, and geography in Ireland at the turn of the century" (157).

novel and enables a reader to access and appropriate 1904 Dublin as part of reality. Significantly, the episode crafts this fictional world amidst, or in spite of, the narrator's fragmented and mechanistic depiction of the city. That is, even as the narrator leaps from segment to segment and character to character, the language's insistence on the details of the city, alongside  the episode's commitment to simultaneity and a variety of places and people, fulfill Joyce's goal of building a fictional Dublin. Autonomous and ontologically distinct from the actual world, the language of the episode crafts a holistic Dublin through which an exile can return home and thus asserts the real power of narrative consolation.

The fictional rhetoric of Joyce's Dublin foregrounds the concrete reality of the city through the minute details his narrator offers of characters' journeys across the city. If the fictional text, as Dolezel claims, is a set of instructions through which the reader can recreate the world of the text, Joyce's instructions are detailed and demanding to an extreme. The concrete reality of the city itself, and the infrastructure that forms it, takes a primary role in the narration of "Wandering Rocks." In many of the 19 vignettes that constitute the episode, the narration repeatedly calls attention to the geographic and spatial details of the characters location, thereby emphasizing the concrete reality of the city streets. Ironically, the fragmented way in which the narrator shifts from vignette to vignette ultimately contributes to the episode's project of depicting a variety of places and emphasizing a variety of concrete details within Dublin. The episode opens with the particular details of a character's travel across place and time: John Conmee coming "down the presbytery steps," noting the time as "five to three. Just nice time to walk to Artane"

(U 10.2-3). The text provides further physical context for the presbytery steps through the onelegged sailor's movements. The sailor "jerked short before the convent of the sisters of charity" to hold his cap out to Conmee, after which Conmee "crossed to Mountjoy square" (U 10.7-9). Through these details, the reader pays attention to the details of the place and imaginatively enters the fictional world where the presbytery steps are close to the convent and both are across Mountjoy square. The physical location, and the name of the location, matters.[15]

The narrator's insistence on including concrete details of the city not pertinent to the plot emphasizes the novel's deep investment in its physical setting. As Father Conmee stops three schoolboys to mail a letter, the text describes "Master Brunny Lynam's" run across the road to put the letter into the mailbox. The details of the mailbox's location and appearance are repeated within the short scene: first, Conmee gives the letter to the child and points "to the red pillarbox at the corner of Fitzgibbon street" and then the boy runs across the road to put the letter "into the mouth of the bright red letterbox" (U 10.47, 52-53). By detailing the mailbox's location and repeating its color twice, the text insists that knowledge of the mailbox's appearance matters. The mailbox's color is inconsequential for the plot—Conmee's letter is mailed whether the mailbox is blue or black or red or whether the reader ever even learns what color it might be—but, because of the rhetorical emphasis on the concrete reality of Joyce's fictional Dublin, the color matters to the construction of the possible world.

[15] Richmond street appears on Conmee's walk and also in Joyce's short story, "Araby," in *Dubliners.*

The importance of the physical reality of the city itself, as constructed through microcosmic depictions of its parts, continues through this first vignette and through the chapter as a whole.[16] As the episode develops from Conmee's opening vignette to vignettes following other Dubliners across various points in the city, the narration continues to emphasize the minute geographic details of their journeys. Conmee's walk itself contains further detailed narration. The priest "walked down Great Charles street and glanced at the shutup free church on his left…turned the corner and walked along the North Circular road…a band of satchelled schoolboys crossed from Richmond street…Father Conmee greeted them" (U 10.76-78). Based on this directional narration, the reader knows that Great Charles street contains a church, intersects with the North Circular road, which in turn engages Richmond street. The narration constructs both streets and certain places on the streets through the details of where Conmee walks and what he notes in passing. The same level of detail occurs in the narration of other vignettes throughout the episode. When Lenehan and M'Coy take a walk, the text offers the following description:

> He followed M'Coy out across the tiny square of Crampton court…they passed Dan Lowry's music hall where Marie Kendall, charming soubrette, smiled on them from a poster a dauby smile…going down the path of Sycamore street beside the Empire musichall…M'Coy peered into Marcus Tertius Moses' somber office, then at O'Neill's clock…they went up the steps and under the Merchants' arch…they crossed to the metal bridge and went along Wellington quay by the riverwall. (U 10.491-533)

[16] Marilyn French asserts the value of the physical, concrete details about Dublin to its construction as a fictional world based in reality: "In these chapters [Aeolus, Lestrygonians, Scylla and Charybdis, Wandering Rocks] Dublin becomes as important as Bloom and Stephen and takes its place as the third character in the plot…it is primarily in these episodes that the substance of Dublin—its buildings, streets, sounds, smells, and motions—is asserted…these chapters hypostatize the city, make it a dependable piece of reality " (93).

As the narrator did with Conmee, the text emphasizes place in terms of both streets and buildings. There is the "tiny square of Crampton court" and "Sycamore street" and the "Merchants' arch" and "Wellington quay" with its metal bridge and riverwall. There is also "Dan Lowry's musichall" and its Marie Kendall poster, "the Empire musichall," "Marcus Tertius Moses' somber office" and "O'Neill's clock" (U 10.491-533). The city exists as a grid of streets and as a place with buildings. Further, these buildings have names and owners and décor. By giving this level of detail repeatedly across the episode, on Conmee's walk, on this walk, and on other walks taken by characters within the episode—for example, Kernan's walk from James' gate to Pembroke quay and Cashel Boyle O'Connor Fitzmaurice Tisdall Farrell's walk along Merrion square among many others—the text continually emphasizes the concrete, geographic, spatial reality of the city as a physical place with buildings and streets, functioning almost as a map of the city in its intense level of detail. These walks provide detailed instructions for how to construct the city as the text over and again emphasizes the physicality of the city and the details of its infrastructure as relevant properties to Joyce's fictional Dublin.

The episode's investment in the minute details of place is so strong that it even gives the detailed location of a piece of paper across the episode. In "Lestrygonians," Leopold Bloom throws a piece of paper into the Liffey, and that very paper becomes a constant presence in "Wandering Rocks." The paper's recurrence throughout "Wandering Rocks" manifests the episode's concern with the physical nature of the city and with the city as a whole. Like many of the characters in "Wandering Rocks," the paper embarks on a journey that allows the fictional

rhetoric of the text to emphasize the concrete nature and geographic details of the city. In its first appearance, "a skiff, a crumpled throwaway, Elijah is coming, rode lightly down the Liffey, under Loopline bridge, shooting the rapids where water chafed around the bridgepiers, sailing eastward past hulls and anchorchains, between the Customhouse old dock and George's quay" (U 10.294-97). Much like the descriptions of characters' walks, the text describes the geographic movements in terms of both streets (or in this case, bridges) and physical things the paper passes. This same characteristic mode of description continues in the second appearance of the paper: "north wall and sir John Rogerson's quay, with hulls and anchorchains, sailing westward, sailed by a skiff, a crumpled throwaway, rocked on the ferrywash, Elijah is coming" (U 10.752-54). As the "crumpled throwaway" continues to appear, it continues to travel, emphasizing the breadth of the city and the chapter's insistence on moving the reader across the city. In its third appearance, the throwaway "sailed eastward by flanks of ships and trawlers, amid an archipelago of corks, beyond New Wapping street past Benson's ferry, and by the threemasted schooner *Rosevean* from Bridgwater with bricks" (U 10.1096-99). Here, the narration uses the specific visual detail of "an archipelago of corks" to aid in the imagistic depiction of the journey and the place. By lending this detailed narration to an object and its movements, the text further emphasizes its concern with the concrete and the physical. The Dublin of "Wandering Rocks" invests in the movement of this particular paper because the possible world the episode constructs is one that emphasizes the geographic parameters and physical nature of

the city; it is one that insists that the details of a place and its concrete reality matters.

"Wandering Rocks" also emphasizes the concrete nature of its fictional Dublin through the sensory details it provides about the places characters visit. The previously discussed mailbox is not just a mailbox, but also a red mailbox. The sensory details available in "Wandering Rocks" extend beyond the visual to the physical and the aural. As Ned Lambert and others stand in "the historic council chamber of saint Mary's abbey," the narrator describes how the "mouldy air closed round them" (U 10.404-05). It is not enough for the text to give Lambert's location; it also works to give the reader a visceral sense of place through the movement and scent of the air. Similarly, the repeated onomatopoeia of the auction room outside of which Dilly Dedalus meets with Simon heightens the reader's imaginative engagement with Dublin through the aural nature of its language. Throughout Dilly's conversation with her father, the text narrates the lacquey's shaking of his handbell, and articulates the sound onomatopoeically through repeated "barang!" and "bang!" insertions (U 10.650, 689). Through these sensory details, the text emphasizes how the city feels and sounds and foreground the sensory experience of walking in a city.

In addition to narrating characters' geographic journeys through both the streets on which they walk and the places they pass, the narrator enters a few of the places and gives descriptions of their interiors. In so doing, the narrator pays attention to the exterior and interior modes of Dublin's reality, and narrates the concrete nature of its private spaces alongside its public streets. The Dedalus kitchen, for instance, is described as "closesteaming" and contains a "greyish mass

beneath bubbling suds"; "a heavy fume"; and a "table" at which Katey sits across from Boody (U 10.259-262). The D.B.C., nicknamed by Buck Mulligan, has "thick carpet"; "a small table near the window"; and "a chessboard" (U 10.242, 245-46). The book cart has a "counter" and a "dingy curtain" (U 10.596-98). Though tiny, these details all work to emphasize the physicality of the interior of Dublin's buildings. These places, the details articulate, are important due to the concrete nature of their reality.

Much as with the repeated detail of the red mailbox, the text occasionally repeats spatial details in order to emphasize the concrete reality of the city. These repetitions join the minute details of the walks' insistence on the city as a place constituted by the details of its construction. When Conmee enters a tram, the text narrates his movement twice. First, "on Newcomen bridge the very reverend John Conmee S. J. of saint Francis Xavier's church, upper Gardiner street, stepped on to an outward bound tram," then "at Newcomen bridge Father Conmee stepped into an outward bound tram for he disliked to traverse on foot the dingy way past Mud Island" (U 10.107-109, 113-14). Through the two separate narrations of Conmee's action, different details of his movement are emphasized. In both instances, the text articulates that Conmee is entering a tram on Newcomen bridge; however, the second adds to the depiction of Dublin by describing "the dingy way past Mud Island" (U 10.108). This detail names another place and gives it a description—Mud Island is dingy—and also gives a sense of where Conmee's journey will take him, because it will enable him to travel "past Mud Island" without going on foot (U 10.108). Thus, the text informs the reader that the outward tram from Newcomen bridge passes

Mud Island. The sentence that interrupts the two descriptions also describes a tram journey, though this journey does not belong to Conmee: "Off an inward bound tram stepped the reverend Nicholas Dudley C.C. of saint Agatha's church, north William street, on to Newcomen bridge" (U 10.110-12). Significantly, both men are identified by place—by church and street. Further, the concatenation of their actions repeatedly iterates the location of the tram stop at Newcomen bridge and thereby repeatedly insists that the reader pays attention to the geographic details of Dublin's transit system. The men and their actions take the background to the primacy of the depiction of the city.

Beyond the detailed descriptions of characters' journeys and the privileging of minor details that underscore the concrete reality of the city, Conmee's vignette also manifests another characteristic of the episode's engagement with its place: the multiplicity of places and occurrences within a city. That is, "Wandering Rocks" is concerned not only with the physical reality of a given character's location in space and time during this episode, but with the physical reality of a city that contains myriad places. Immediately following the mailing of Conmee's letter, the text abruptly shifts to a description of 'Mr. Denis J. Maginni, professor of dancing…walking with grave deportment…as he passed lady Maxwell at the corner of Dignam's court" (U 10.56-60). Following this description of Maginni, the text just as abruptly returns to Conmee and his encounter with Mrs. M'Guinness. The disjointed nature of the Maginni insertion, the lack of transition in the text, and the abrupt movement back to Conmee are characteristic of the narration style of "Wandering Rocks," which contains many interruptions. In terms of the possible

world of Dublin created in Joyce's fiction, this insertion works to emphasize the multiplicity of places in the city. That is, the novel's fictional rhetoric not only emphasizes the concrete reality of the city through its minutiae of place and time, but also heightens awareness of the simultaneity of many such places that exist in a city at a given time on a given day.

The abrupt movement between the vignettes, and the details that connect their varied narrations, contribute to the constant sense of traveling and translocation in the episode, which in turn contributes to the text's project of emphasizing the multiplicity of places in the city. The insertion of Maginni into Father Conmee's opening walk emphasizes that Mountjoy Square and Dignam Court are both present, physical aspects of the city and reveals that "Wandering Rocks" is concerned with the fictional depiction of the entire city, not just one specific locale. Certainly it is impossible for a literary text to replicate comprehensively an entire city; however, Joyce's encyclopedic insistence in "Wandering Rocks" on naming and entering so many places signifies the attempt, and the importance of the multiplicity of places to the fictional world. Further, as Marie-Laure Ryan claims, when a fictional world includes people or places from an actual world, the principle of minimal departure "instructs us to accept the entire inventory…if a novel has Rouen, it also has Paris; if it has Napoleon, it also has Josephine and Marie-Louise in its background as well as Charlemagne and Louis XIV among the figures of its past" (54). By claiming parts of Dublin, then, *Ulysses* has all of the streets and individuals it cannot mention due to the finite nature of novels.

The variety of people in Dublin is also a relevant, and emphasized, property of the fictional world created in "Wandering Rocks." Much as the episode is concerned with depicting the concrete, geographic details of characters' spatial movements across the city, it is also concerned with acknowledging the myriad citizens that fill the streets. Due to the number of its characters, the episode references a variety of people from a variety of life stages and socioeconomic classes. Joyce's depiction of Dublin is not just thorough geographically, but also experientially as he depicts a variety of human experiences: children whose father's dissolute habits force them to fend for themselves, a child who has recently lost a father, a man whose wife is committing adultery as well as the man with whom she is having the affair, a dance instructor, the upper echelon who travel throughout the city in a cavalcade, a priest, a sailor who begs, etc. The vast experiential spectrum on which the characters in "Wandering Rocks" fall highlights the plethora of life available in the city. Just as the reader encountered the many concrete places of the chapter, so does the reader engage, or at least view, the variety of experiences available to the variety of people in the city.

While the vignettes focus on one, or perhaps two, characters, many vignettes also reference a significant number of characters who are not addressed in detail. Some characters in "Wandering Rocks" are characters about whom a reader may already know a great deal from the rest of the novel, such as Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, whereas others exist only for a phrase or two within the episode itself. While the episode's 19 vignettes may contribute to the mechanistic narration style, and even to a depiction of characters' lives bereft of the depth human life

deserves, it also significantly contributes to the depiction of the city offered in the episode.[17] Even so, the depiction to which it contributes emphasizes the presence of many individuals but does not necessarily indicate, or place value on, the way in which individuals form a community. In this, the mechanistic narration of "Wandering Rocks" contrasts with the other narration styles at work in Ulysses. Taken together, the more continuous styles of the other episodes—such as "Lotus Eaters," "Calypso," and "Hades" with their primary focus on a single journey, smaller groups of characters, and deep investment in the thoughts of individual characters— suggest that Joyce has a flexible, fluid view of community over and against these mechanistic vignettes. The narration of "Wandering Rocks," then, does not celebrate, or perhaps even acknowledge, the communal coherence available within a city. Nevertheless, by insisting on naming and presenting a large number of characters, the episode does insist on the multitude and diversity of Dublin's citizens as an integral element of the fictional world. In so doing, the episode claims people and place as part of the fictional world and enhances the consolatory recreation of home amidst exile by claiming people alongside place as parts of the fictional world Joyce builds in *Ulysses*.

Even as the varying levels of depiction acknowledge the harsh realities of isolation and community in a city, where some places and people are known and

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[17] Weldon Thornton notes that "even when these vignettes involve presentation of a character's psyche, that presentation is brief and unsympathetic and prevents our knowing the characters in any depth" (135). Similarly, Karen Lawrence argues "the minor characters are reduced to the status of phrases. The existence of the 'young woman' seems to be totally contingent upon the particular phrase that identifies her, as if she and her linguistic tag were identical" (85). While all of the characters in "Wandering Rocks" are certainly not well-developed, their presence (however brief), signifies the importance of the variety and number of people in Dublin to the fictional world constructed in the episode.

others are not, the presence of these many characters goes beyond the usual protagonist-oriented purview of a novel and strives to include multitudes. In Declan Kiberd's view, "by focusing on the city as a whole, [Joyce] allows it to stake its claim as an entity, but he also restores the claims of many secondary characters on our attention" (154). Stephen Dedalus' vignette, ostensibly focused on Stephen and his surprise encounter with Dilly, is one such episode interrupted by the intrusion of other characters. One of these interruptions comes when the narrator, abruptly and briefly, shifts to a description of Father Conmee walking "through the hamlet of Donnycarney, murmuring vespers" (U 10.843). This interpolation functions as a reminder of both the other physical locations available in Dublin and another individual who partakes in June 16, 1904. Father Conmee is a character about whom the reader knows a great deal, at least from this episode if not from other places in the Joycean canon. In contrast, the other characters who intrude in Stephen's vignette are barely known. The narrator also interrupts the description of Stephen's walk with "two old women, fresh from their whiff of the briny" who "trudged through Irishtown along London bridge road, one with a sanded tired umbrella, one with a midwife's bag in which eleven cockles rolled" (U 10.818-20). While these women are not given names or identifying characteristics beyond their locale and burdens, the narrator nonetheless brings them into the chapter and the city. These two women appear again in the viceregal cavalcade's march across the city as "two sanded women halted themselves, an umbrella and a bag in which eleven cockles rolled to view with wonder the lord mayor and lady mayoress" (U 10.1275-77). Identifiable by their belongings only, these women form a part of the fabric of

Joyce's fictional Dublin. By detailing the thoughts of some characters, presenting some characters with whom the reader has no familiarity and others with whom the reader has a great deal of familiarity, by spending a great deal of time with some characters and next to no time with others, the narrator calls attention to the variety of people and experiences as an integral property of the fictional world. In so doing, the various styles of character development in this episode contribute to the overall project of constructing an intensely detailed city aware of the breadth of concrete places and live individuals.

The vignette that most clearly manifests the episode's emphatic desire to foreground the quantity of individuals present in Dublin is the final vignette detailing the viceregal cavalcade's journey across the city. Indicating the inability of the text, and even the impossibility of any text, to actually depict an entire city and the life resident within it, many of the characters in this section appear literally in name only. Given a place of honor in the cavalcade, "the honourable Mrs Paget, Miss de Courcy, and the honourable Gerald Ward A.D.C" receive no place of honor or primacy in the novel, as they are identified only by their name and location in the carriage (U 10.1178-79). In contrast, many of the other characters present in this final section are lent at least a minimal depth through the description of their reaction to the cavalcade's passing. In some instances, the narrator describes the interaction with the cavalcade in detail, as in the case of Gerty MacDowell. In her interaction with the cavalcade the text offers a great deal of information about Gerty:

> Gerty MacDowell, carrying the Catesby's cork lino letters for her father who was laid up, knew by the style it was the lord and lady lieutenant but she

> couldn't see what Her Excellency had on because the tram and Spring's big yellow furniture van had to stop in front of her on account of its being the lord lieutenant. (U 10.1206-10)

Though brief, this description offers quite a bit of information about Gerty. The reader learns that she is on an errand for her father, who is ill; that she cares about fashion and clothing; and that her view is blocked by her physical location behind a furniture van, specifically Spring's van and specifically a yellow van. While lending some narrative depth to Gerty MacDowell, other descriptions of citizens' interactions with the cavalcade are not granted the same attention. For instance, the text also describes "thither of the wall the quartermile flat handicappers, M.C. Green, H. Thrift, T. M. Patey, C. Scaife, J.B. Jeffs, G. N. Morphy, F. Stevenson, C. Adderly and W.C. Huggard" who "started in pursuit" (U 10.1258-60). In contrast to Gerty's relatively lengthy description and the information that can be gleaned from it, these men are all relegated to the same shallow sentence and not even given first names. Adding a further complication to the spectrum of characters and characterization in this vignette, many of the characters present on the cavalcade's path already appeared earlier in the episode. Thomas Kernan, Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce, Simon Dedalus, Lenehan and M'Coy, John Wyse Nolan, Dilly Dedalus, Blazes Boylan, and many others reappear in this final sweep of the city. The variety of depictions reveals that the narrator does not, and perhaps cannot, fully do justice to these individual's lives or even to their names. Even so, the sheer quantity of individuals present in this one section of the episode firmly points to the integral role of the population in this fictional world. In this way, the final vignette functions as a microcosm for the entire episode and its concern with the variety and number of

Dublin's residents. Significantly, because this section also offers a close description of the cavalcade's journey by detailing its specific twists and turns through the naming of streets and bridges in Dublin, this section also foregrounds the episode's concern with the physical reality of the city. The variety of life in the city bolsters the episode's investment in the city writ large as it seeks to include the breadth of people and places available in Dublin.

The concrete, physical details of the city's geography and its construction, as well as the variety and number of people and experiences that fill it are thus important properties of the fictional Dublin created in *Ulysses'* pages; however, the text evinces a concern for more than their physical and living presences. Another crucial property for the Dublin of Wandering Rocks is the interaction between the people and places. That is, the episode goes beyond emphasizing the existence of people and places to emphasizing the interactions extant in the city.[18] With this dual emphasis, the episode asserts not only the importance of place for its fictional world, but also the importance of the individuals as part of a place. Through describing the interactions between various characters, "Wandering Rocks" engages the human reality of the city alongside the physical reality. During Conmee's walk across the city, the narrator seems almost obsessed with recording the characters' greetings. When Conmee walks "along the North Strand Road," he "was saluted by Mr. William Gallagher" and "saluted Mr. William Gallagher" (U 10.85-87). Continuing, Conmee "went by Daniel Bergin's publichouse against the window of which two unlabouring

[18] One strand of "Wandering Rocks" criticism argues for human interaction, particularly the charity or lack thereof in human interaction, as the unifying theme of the episode. See John Wenke, "Charity: The Measure of Morality in WR" and Vincent Sherry, "Distant Music: WR and the Art of Gratuity."

men lounged. They saluted him and were saluted" (U 10.93-95). A few steps later, "a constable on his beat saluted Father Conmee and Father Conmee saluted the constable" (U 10.98-100). Later on the journey when Conmee gets off the tram, he "was saluted by the conductor and saluted in his turn" (U 10.153-54). Greeting and reciprocation form a crucial part of Conmee's walk; the episode takes care to describe not only his journey but also insists on noting the human interaction it affords. The greetings are meticulously recorded; however, their presentation by the narrator seems trite. That is, the interaction is present but mocked or undermined through the perfunctory way in which the narrator presents the greetings. While the narrator's tone is certainly a crucial part of the role the chapter plays in the novel, it is less significant to the fictional world construction at work in the chapter. That is, the narrator's emotions toward the community, as manifested in tone and structure, signify far less for the construction of the possible world than the presence of the community in the episode. The narrator may obscure the reader's ability to understand the characters through false representation or a distanced, mechanical tone, or even satirize their interactions; however, these obfuscations and hostile depictions do not ameliorate the presence of the individuals and their city in the fictional world. Through being named, and through acting, the characters join the autonomous imaginative milieu of the fictional world and in so doing contribute to the episode's project of crafting a home amidst exile via the consolatory powers of narrative.

Significantly, Conmee's casual and brief salutes contrast with moments of greater human connection in the episode, such as Almidano Artifoni's farewell to

Stephen. As the two part, "his heavy hand took Stephen's firmly. Human eyes. They gazed curiously an instant and turned quickly towards a Dalkey tram" (U 10.356-57). This moment of physical interaction highlights the community between the men through the handclasp, the humanity of Artifoni's eyes, and the curiosity with which he looks at Stephen. The slippage between the narrator and the episode indicated by the trite presentation of Conmee's greetings and the more real communal moment between Artifoni and Stephen further serves to emphasize the dual projects at work in the episode: the narrator's mechanistic, fragmentary work and Joyce's larger fictional world-building, which succeeds despite the narrator.

"Wandering Rocks" also emphasizes the various forms of human interaction by depicting the interactions of different characters with the same individual. Blazes Boylan appears in a flirtatious interaction with "the blond girl in Thornton's" as he purchases a gift. Boylan and the girl interact as customer and merchant as he asks questions and gives instructions for his order and she responds (U 10.299). They also interact on a sexual level as Boylan "looked into the cut of her blouse" and flirtatiously puts "the stalk of the red flower between his smiling teeth" (U 10.327, 334-35). He appears in a different type of interaction with Miss Dunne, as the narrator details her side of a phone conversation with Boylan: "Mr. Boylan! Hello! That gentleman from *Sport* was in looking for you. Mr. Lenehan, yes. He said he'll be in the Ormond at four" (U 10.394-96). Boylan also appears in human interactions where he is explicitly not present, when Lenehan tells Rochford "I'll see him now in the Ormond…and sound him" and Rochford responds "tell him I'm Boylan with impatience" (U 10.484, 486). In yet another appearance, Boylan passes

unrecognized as Patrick Dignam, in "Grafton Street," sees "a red flower in a toff's mouth and a swell pair of kicks on him and he listening to what the drunk was telling him" (U 10.1150-52). In this way, "Wandering Rocks" reveals the variety of ways in which human beings can form some sort of community with each other, thereby emphasizing human communication and interaction as a property of fictional Dublin. In terms of the reader's role in reconstructing the fictional world, these various interactions with the same individual are significant for the variety of instructions they give to the reader as the reader witnesses all of these interactions. Much as the geographic elements of the chapter work to emphasize the fullness of the city by referencing these many places, these interactions work to offer a full depiction of the city by offering the reader a God's-eye view on these various interactions where the reader's knowledge can identify the toff as Boylan through the flower in his teeth.

Because each of the vignettes includes some form of human interaction, the episode foregrounds the community—whether positive or negative— of the city. In some cases, the interaction takes the form of conversation. In others, characters discuss their fellow citizens, as Lenehan and M'Coy's discuss Leopold Bloom after seeing him look at books. The sight of Bloom prompts a conversation where M'Coy wonders what Bloom is buying and goes on to describe Bloom as "dead nuts on sales" before sharing a lascivious memory of a trip with Bloom and Molly (U 10.525). Moments such as these emphasize the longevity of human relationships—Bloom and M'Coy knew each other before June 16, 1904—but also indicate that all human interactions are not necessarily positive. To an extent, this nuanced presentation of

human interaction reflects the rancor and sentimentality that, according to Gillespie, characterize exilic writing. Human engagement even occurs in a vignette such as Patrick Dignam's, where no vocal conversation occurs. Though he doesn't converse, Dignam interacts with others by watching them, as he does when he "saw a red flower in a toff's mouth and as well pair of kicks on him and he listening to what the drunk was telling him" or through the power of his memory, such as his recollection of how his father "told me to be a good son to ma" (U 10.1171). The episode's focus is not so much on privileging human interaction as it is indicating the type, variety, and inevitability of human community, or at least intersection, in the city.

In addition to human interactions, "Wandering Rocks" also explores human engagement with the physical reality of the city through the way in which characters respond to different places as they journey across Dublin. For example, as Conmee walks across Dublin, he has different thoughts as he passes different places. When "near Aldborough house Father Conmee thought of that spendthrift nobleman" and his walk along Malahide road prompts an historical fantasy (U 10.83-84). Throughout the hour from three to four, the episode highlights several different characters interacting with the same landmark. One such landmark is the poster of Marie Kendall. When Miss Dunne sees the poster, she "stared at the large poster of Marie Kendall, charming soubrette, and, listlessly lolling, scribbled on the jotter sixteens and capital esses. Mustard hair and dauby cheeks. She's not nicelooking, is she? The way she's holding up her bit of a skirt" (U 10.380-84). Because of Miss Dunne's boredom at work and because of her particular concerns, her reaction to the poster is mindless drawing and a reflection on the other woman's pose and

appearance. In contrast, when Lenehan and M'Coy walk by the poster, they bear no agency in their interaction as "they passed Dan Lowry's musichall where Marie Kendall, charming soubrette, smiled on them from a poster a dauby smile" (U 10.495-96). In contrast to Miss Dunne's staring at the poster, Lenehan and M'Coy pass by its physical presence without even realizing it; the poster smiles on them and they do not acknowledge its presence. It yet another appearance, Patrick Aloysius Dignam offers a third response to the poster. He "saw the image of Marie Kendall, charming soubrette, beside the two puckers. One of them mots that do be in the packet of fags Stoer smokes that his old fellow welted hell out of him for one time he found out" (U 10.1140-44). When Dignam sees the poster, he is immediately drawn to the objects on its periphery and the schoolboy reflections they evoke. Instead of a reflection on the mustard color and the holding of the skirt, Dignam continues to focus on the puckers: "the best pucker going for strength was Fitzsimons. One puck in the wind from that fellow would knock you into the middle of next week, man" (U 10.1045-47). The different ways in which different people interact with the same place function as a mode of characterization. As a young woman, Miss Dunne considers the appearance; as men on an errand, Lenehan and M'Coy do not even notice the poster; as a schoolboy, Dignam's imaginations are drawn to a different aspect of the poster and its neighbors completely unnoticed by Miss Dunne. The interactions of many different people with the same place serves to emphasize the separate and varied experiences of different individuals in the city. Additionally, and amidst other interactions with place, these interactions highlight

not only the existence of a place but individual's engagements with their physical place as a significant property of the fictional Dublin of "Wandering Rocks."

In addition to its emphasis on the variety of interactions and individuals, "Wandering Rocks" insists on a truly holistic depiction of the city by working to make the reader present across multiple places in the city at once. Throughout the episode, various time markers insist on the simultaneity of action in the city.[19] These markers, or interpolations, or interlocations go by many names in Joycean studies and are oft-discussed pieces of the episode. Hart claims that "in order to watch the "synchronisms of the action we have imaginatively to raise ourselves to a god's eye viewpoint, looking down on to the city as on to a map" (194).[20] Similarly, Fritz Senn argues "the interlocations, trademarks of the chapter, are also alternatives within the episode, paths not taken by the main narrative, but flashed on quickly as reminders of some action elsewhere, and, incidentally, reminders that numerous events are constantly taking place outside of one's perceptual range" (159). In Hart and Senn's estimation, the interpolations contribute to the novel's project of depicting the fullness of a city in which more than one thing happens at the same time. David Spurr strongly promotes this argument with his claim that "the

[19] William Mottolese argues for Joyce's full presentation of the city in "Wandering Rocks": "Joyce inscribes the modern ethnographic notion of culture as a complex whole with many interrelated parts into the most obvious features of the narrative structure of "Wandering Rocks." The episode consists of nineteen sections that constitute separate micro-episodes of Dublin life but are, at the same time, interconnected through narrative strategies that give this rendition of Dublin a unity of time, space, and action" (260).

[20] In addition to temporal simultaneity, Hart also explores the thematic and causal relationships between the vignettes, suggesting that understanding the spatio-temporal relationships and the causal relationships allows a reader to learn "still more about the temper of the narrative mind which is at work" (193).

primary and perhaps only purpose of creating this rather aleatory link between one scene and the other is to recreate in textual form the form of city life itself" (32). Richard Brown, while acknowledging the difficulties the interpolations present, argues that "readerly reaction to the episode should also be seen as itself a kind of process" through which the interpolations "can deliver an experience which…brings the reader closer to an intimation of totality that requires a God-like…point of view" (66). Kathleen McCormick also makes an argument regarding the reader reaction to the interpolations, suggesting "strong readers of the interpolations will gather as much information as they can, use their imagination to the fullest, and leave as many interpretive options open as possible in order to escape the chaos and confusion into which the interpolations threaten to plunge them" (276). The interpolations, then, join the geographic and human details and make the simultaneity of the city a relevant property of Joyce's fictional Dublin, and a key part of the instructions for reconstructing this fictional world. Through the simultaneity, readers must pay attention to many people and places at once. In this way, the narrator of the episode offers fullness despite himself as he privileges this holistic depiction of the city. Taken together with the rest of the ficitional rhetoric that surrounds the episode's investment in place—its presentation of many places and people and a variety of interactions—the simultaneity thus further emphasizes "Wandering Rocks" attempt to construct not an individual's experience of the city, but the city of Dublin itself as Joyce continually uses his narrative to craft a viable home in exile.

The segments that bookend the episode—Father Conmee's walk and the viceregal cavalcade's journey—provide foundational chronologies for Joyce's

simultaneity. Father Conmee's movements, as detailed in the first section, allow for the temporal placement of several sections that follow. As Corny Kelleher leans against a door, the text inserts "Father John Conmee stepped into the Dollymount tram on Newcomen bridge" (U 10.213-14). As Katey, Boody, and Maggy Dedalus struggle in the kitchen, "Father Conmee walked through Clongowes fields, his thinsocked ankles tickled by stubble" (U 10.264-65). While Stephen Dedalus walks towards the bookcart where he will encounter Dilly, "Father Conmee, having red his little hours, walked through the hamlet of Donnycarney, murmuring vespers" (U 10.842-43). These actions are originally narrated in the very first section of the episode, yet recur throughout and enable a sequencing of the sections to come, as Conmee's sequential actions align with separate parts of the narrative. In this way, Joyce emphasizes the simultaneity of action in the city and requires his readers to acknowledge not an individual movement, but a plurality of movements.

The viceregal cavalcade's journey marks time in an inversion of Conmee's walk, as readers encounter the cavalcade's journey first as brief interruptions, and only as a fully narrated journey in the episode's final section. Lenehan and M'Coy, walking the streets of Dublin, have their narrative interrupted briefly by the announcement that "the gates of the drive opened wide to give egress to the viceregal cavalcade" (U 10.515-16). Mr. Kernan almost witnesses "a cavalcade in easy trot along Pembroke quay" (U 10.794-95). Both of these actions, along with many others, recur in the final segment as William Humble "drove out after luncheon from the viceregal lodge" and "at Bloody bridge Mr. Thomas Kernan beyond the river greeted him vainly from afar" (U 10.117784-85). Thus, where as

Conmee's story provides sequence and simultaneity for what follows in advance, the cavalcade's journey provides sequence and simultaneity in retrospect.

While the first and last segment most noticeably work to encapsulate the episode's simultaneity, many other elements of the chapter are repeated to the same temporal effect. Corny Kelleher's chewing of the hay links the second segment to the first, much as Patrick Dignam's journey for steak appears in his own segment and in Tom Kernan's. Leopold Bloom looks at books on the cart in multiple segments—the reader is present with Bloom in one, and observing Bloom through the eyes of Lenehan and M'Coy in another. Molly's throwing of the coin occurs in Corny Kelleher's segment and the segment that follow. The list goes on and on. As Lawrence and Thornton note, when characters or events are re-presented, the narrator treats them as if the reader is encountering them for the first time (Lawrence 84-85, Thornton 136). Much like the fragmented leaping from place to place, this characterization seemingly serves the narrator's mechanistic presentation; however, it also contributes to the work of building the fictional world. This presentation style, as well as the episode's simultaneity, manifests Joyce's projection of his fictional world not as an individual's solitary experience of a city, but as an attempt to construct Dublin in its entirety and an attempt to emphasize the simultaneity of experiences in a city an integral property of his fictional world. Thus, the narrator attempts to isolate the individuals by presenting them anew even as their presence and actions, by their simultaneity with other presences and actions, instruct the reader to pay attention to the city and its variety of people and places beyond the sole actions of one individual. In this way, the episode ultimately

privileges the city as a character above other characters and signals the importance of place in "Wandering Rocks."

Amidst all of these pieces of and participants in the city, "Wandering Rocks" proves to be especially concerned with its alignment with the real, nonfictional, city of Dublin. As Ronen writes, "the more a fictional world is presented as possible relative to actuality, the more the rhetoric of fiction will emphasize the great extent to which it draws on a world familiar to its readers" (94-95). *Ulysses*, and especially "Wandering Rocks," certainly "emphasizes the great extent to which it draws on a world familiar to its readers" through both places and people. The historical particularity of the episode is well-documented. Hart claims "Wandering Rocks" evinces a "documentary reality" and documents the encyclopedic nature of Joyce's Dublin references; Norris' work acknowledges the significant presence of historical figures; Igoe's careful biographical work "reinforces the perception of Joyce as a historian and faithful chronicler of his native city"; Joyce himself makes the claim that Dublin could be reconstructed from the language of his novel (Hart 182, Igoe 5).[21]

These points of similarity are part of what enable a reader to come to, enter, and interpret a fictional world. The close alignment of the Dublin of "Wandering Rocks" to the Dublin of the actual world plays a critical role in the episode's ability to offer return to an exile. With this verisimilitude, Joyce manifests narrative's ability to offer access to a place from which the reader and even the writer are separated. Close alignment with the real world enables fiction to do what it must do

[21] For further discussions of how Joyce employs the history and reality of Dublin in "Wandering Rocks," see Anne Fogarty, Len Platt, and Enda Duffy ("Setting").

to “function smoothly”: the “reader and the author must pretend that there was no suspension of disbelief, that travel to the fictional land did not occur and that the fictional egos have in a sense always been there” (Pavel 89). Joyce’s detailed inclusion of people and places from the actual Dublin helps minimize this difference and thereby the smooth functioning of fiction. Further, the close alignment with reality enables the accessibility of Joyce’s fictional Dublin. As Marie Laure Ryan posits, “ a world is possible…if it is accessible” (31). Accessibility, by common definition in possible worlds theory, “has to do with a relation obtaining between fiction and the actual world” (Ronen 70). [22] Dublin as constructed in *Ulysses*, and especially in “Wandering Rocks,” brings the actual, historical Dublin to the foreground of Joyce’s fictional world and claims the close relationship between the text and the actual, specific world of Dublin as a relevant property for Joyce’s fictional world.

Because “Wandering Rocks” emphasizes the close relationship between his fictional world and the actual world, this relationship becomes an important part of a reader’s interpretation of the episode. That Joyce cannot actually fully replicate a day in Dublin is clear, from the oft-discussed potential errors in Wandering Rocks to the varying levels of attention paid by the narrator to different characters.[23] The

[22] Ryan articulates many types of accessibility relations, most of which pertain to “Wandering Rocks” and Dublin. Identity of properties, identity of inventory, compatibility of inventory, chronological compatibility, physical compatibility, taxonomic compatibility, logical compatibility, analytical compatibility, and linguistic compatibility are pertain due to Joyce’s invocation of actual people, places, and their history. For definitions of these terms, see Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artifical Intelligence, and Narrative Theory.*

[23] For discussions of the errors, see Hart, Norris, and Thornton. While errors in Joyce’s depiction of the city, or omissions in his literary map of Dublin, are critical to discussions of the role of history, colonialism, and the episode’s narrator, in terms of Possible World construction, the errors

fictional representation will always remain somewhat incomplete, despite its extraordinarily thorough relationship to the actual world. All fictional texts and worlds are this way. In Dolezel's articulation, "finite texts, the only texts human are capable of producing, are bound to create incomplete worlds" (169). This incompleteness, however, does not reflect in a reader's comprehension or construction of the fictional world. Ryan argues "it is by virtue of the principle of minimal departure that readers are able to form reasonably comprehensive representations of the foreign worlds created through discourse, even though the verbal representation of these worlds is always incomplete" (52). The principle of minimal departure "states that we reconstrue the central world of a textual universe…as conforming as far as possible to our representation of [the actual world]. We will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text" (51). "Wandering Rocks" asks for few adjustments; its adherence to reality takes advantage of this principle by actively encouraging the reader to reconstrue the central textual world as 1904 Dublin. This principle aids and enables Joyce's project, especially since he includes historical people and places in "Wandering Rocks." By asking for so few adjustments, by including so many people and places from the inventory of the actual world, Joyce asserts a very specific role for his fictional world: it is not just a fictional city, but a fictional reconstruction of 1904 Dublin.

do not violate the validity of the fictional world. In Ronen's articulation, "since fictional worlds are autonomous they are not more or less fictional according to degrees of affinity between fiction and reality: facts of the actual world are not constant reference points for the facts of fiction" (Ronen 12).

The relationship between a fictional world and an actual world can thus be an extremely close one, and the fictional rhetoric of "Wandering Rocks" insists on a near-identical reality to the actual world of Dublin. Especially due to this close relationship, the distinction between the actual world and the fictional world remains incredibly important. Significantly, "the autonomy of fiction is compatible with the extensive modeling of fiction on history" (Ronen 96). As Ryan argues, "fictional universes always differ through at least one property from our own system of reality: even if the sender of the fictional text recenters the textual universe around a world… in which everything is supposed to be exactly the way it is in [the actual world]," the two remain distinct because of the text's status as fiction. That is, "in all points other than its own existence as fiction, however, a fictional text may offer an exact reproduction of reality" (33). Thus, while deeply invested in its relationship to the actual Dublin of 1904, Joyce's fictional world retains its ontological status as fiction. A work of fiction, "contemplated from within, it is populated by ontologically compete human beings who would have existed and experienced certain events even if nobody had undertaken the task of telling their story" (Ryan 23). Ryan's claim for ontological completeness extends from ontologically complete human beings to ontologically complete places, whereby the possible worlds in fiction are not fragmented references but permanent and whole. This status proves essential to the consolation of home provided by the literary text. By constructing a fictional world, Joyce can access Dublin in a way that he cannot in the actual world. He can engage with historical places and people, but by putting them in a fictional world, he puts them in the semantic domain of fictionality and

thus creates world, a home, to which he, and any reader, can return to over and again.

Joyce's commitment to using the expansive capabilities of literature to craft a home continues beyond "Wandering Rocks" and *Ulysses* into the rest of his *oeuvre*. Joyce does not solely build his fictional Dublin, his fictional home, through one novel but constructs a fictional Dublin extant across multiple texts. This ostentatious deployment of fictional worlds emphasizes Joyce's consolatory project and the narrative lengths to which he could and would go to find a way home. The fictional Dublin of "Wandering Rocks" engages both the historical Dublin of the actual world and Joyce's other fictional representations of the same city. Through the characters placed on the streets of Dublin in "Wandering Rocks," Joyce draws on characters who are familiar historically and characters who are familiar fictionally. By appearing in more than one fictional text, these characters have transworld identities.[24] Stephen Dedalus, as the protagonist of *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, is the most obvious example of this type of character, but he is far from the only example. Father Conmee exists not only historically, but also in the pages of *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. Simon Dedalus also plays roles in both novels. Lenehan, from

[24] Proper names function as "rigid designators" that announce a character's transworld identity (Dolezel 18). Transworld identity refers both to characters who exist across fictional worlds and characters who exist in an actual world and a fictional world. While "fictional persons and their actual prototypes are linked by transworld identity," as Dolezel asserts, "all fictional entities are of the same ontological nature, regardless of transworld identity (Dolezel 17, 18). For example, Margot Norris basis her anaylsis of Conmee on his status in *Ulysses* as a figure "whose prototype was indeed the historical rector of Clongowes Wood": however, she is careful to assert that "within the fictional world of *Ulysses*, Father Conmee is a 'factual' entity *not* because he actually lived in Dublin in 1904 but because the narrator claims or warrants that he is an actual person in the fictional Dublin of the novel" (Norris 6). Conmee thus has "the same ontological status in the text as Leopold Bloom" and all of the other purely fictional characters (Norris 6). In Joyce's fictional Dublin, names function as rigid designators that carry prototypes from history into fiction as well as designators that carry fictional characters across texts.

"Two Gallants," and Tom Kernan, Martin Cunningham, Jack Power, and M'Coy from "Grace," appear on Dublin's streets in "Wandering Rocks." These recurring appearances by characters across Joyce's text are by no means a comprehensive list, but nonetheless serve as embodiments of Joyce's commitment to engaging the same fictional characters across multiple fictional texts.

Marie Laure Ryan's distinction between the textual actual world (TAW) and the textual reference world (TRW) provides a helpful framework through which to consider the Joycean characters with transworld identities across fictional texts. In Ryan's definitions, the Actual World (AW) is "our native system…the actually actual world" (24). An author located in AW writes a text, and "every text projects a universe" (24). The center of this universe is TAW, and TAW "is offered as the accurate image of a world TRW, which is assumed…to exist independently of TAW" (25). These terms prove crucial when multiple texts refer to the same world, as the majority of Joyce's *oeuvre* does. In Ryan's analysis, "the principle of minimal departure permits the choice, not only of the real world, but also of a textual universe as a frame of reference. This happens whenever an author expands, rewrites, or parodies a preexisting fiction, or whenever a fiction includes the universe of another fiction in its system of reality" (54). Joyce's intensely local literature – *Dubliners, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* and *Ulysses* – include each other's universes in their own systems of reality, as indicated by their similar settings and especially as indicated by the continual presence from characters in one fictional text in another. That is, Joyce's fictional Dublin functions as a TRW for all of his Dublin texts. Joyce thus creates a fictional home that extends beyond

"Wandering Rocks" into the rest of *Ulysses* and beyond into *Dubliners* and *Portrait*. He repeatedly asserts the existence of an imagined, yet possible and textually real, city. In so doing, Joyce employs the expansive capabilities of literature to create a fictional world deeply resonant with, and even embodying, Dublin.

This novel named for, and modeled after, an epic quest for home, serves as its own answer to the quest for home by embodying home in and of itself. By writing intensely local fiction that constructs a very particular possible world and, significantly, because the world he constructs is the home from which he is exiled, Joyce declares narrative's ability to offer a particular consolation for a particular mode of suffering: home amidst exile. "Wandering Rocks" fulfills Joyce's desire to "give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book" through its construction of a fictional world that strives for a specific and full depiction of its chosen city (Budgen 67-68). By creating a fictional world insistent on the breadth of life, experience, place, and action present in the city—and by presenting this world through intensely detailed instructions—Joyce gives his readers not an individual's experience of the city but a broader fictional world. The way in which Joyce crafts his narrative demonstrates his commitment to creating a fictional world that presents the experience not of an individual, but of Dublin writ large. By virtue of reading *Ulysses*, and especially "Wandering Rocks," the reader must recreate Dublin and is empowered imaginatively to do so by the fictional rhetoric with which Joyce crafts his world. As Joyce over and again uses the power of fiction to construct connected possible worlds in *Ulysses* and his other works, and as he emphatically

asserts the specificity of these worlds' link to Dublin, he continually uses the power of narrative to engage the realities of his home. The expansive capabilities of fiction, in the hands of an exile, thus provide the consolation of home.

CHAPTER FOUR

## "You're on earth, there's no cure for that": Narrative Persistence and Witness in Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* and *Endgame*

In a 1961 interview with Tom Driver, Samuel Beckett declares that there must be a new form of art, one that "will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else" (23). For Beckett, "to find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now" (Driver 23). All too aware of the chaos and suffering extant in his world, Beckett believed that his art must find language true to the world around it. True to his claim, his own work consistently depicts chaos, suffering, and even despair as he attunes his plays to the real suffering and horror extant in his world. In so doing, he presents art that to an extent reflects the artistic vision of Anna Akhmatova who while standing in line outside a prison in Stalin's Russia, she was asked if she could describe the scene, with its attendant grief, pain, fear, and extreme physical suffering, responded "yes".[1] In Seamus Heaney's words, what the woman sought from Akhmatova was poetry that "can be equal to *and* true at the same time" (Heaney 428). Beckett responds to this longing with a resounding yes of his own. Living during and after World War II, with its unprecedented genocide and advent of nuclear warfare, Beckett writes plays that depict extreme human suffering. *Endgame* (1956) and *Happy Days* (1961) are both such plays. Trapped in some form of bunker after an unnamed catastrophe, *Endgame's* characters are decaying and dying and at times unforgivably vicious to

[1] For an account of this story, see Carolyn Forché, "Reading the Living Archives."

each other because of their suffering. Winnie, the protagonist of *Happy Days*, lives trapped in an ever-heightening mound of sand with no possibility of rescue or aid. Beckett's characters are dying and not yet dead, suffering and living in the face of appalling circumstances. Yet, even as he creates plays that are unflinching portraits of despair and suffering, he also writes plays that make profound claims for the power of narrative as a response to suffering and as an essential part of the human condition in its own right. In so doing, he demonstrates the capacity of narrative to be both true and equal by providing the consolation of persistence and witness.

Both the characters in *Endgame* (1956) and the characters in *Happy Days* (1961), especially Winnie, are characters for whom the end is in the beginning. Their lives occur in viciously repetitive circadian rhythms at the end of the world, yet, as Hamm articulates, they "go on" (126). To a great extent, they persist through their constant speech—Winnie in her monologue to Willie and Hamm, Clov, and the rest of their family in conversation with each other. Trapped in sand or decaying and dying, these characters cannot move. Further, their worlds are ending and they cannot enact change. Nearing death and physically restricted, they can still speak. Far from a minor act, their narrative acts function as a means of survival in consolation in the play as Beckett deploys their narratives to reveal the persistence and value of language, even at the end of the world.

In response to destruction, Beckett posits language as a means of consolation that enables survival and demands witness. Narrative enables these characters to craft the reality necessary for their survival; while they engage in different forms of speech, they consistently rely on narrative for their persistence and survival. That is,

in *Endgame* and *Happy* Days, Beckett depicts characters going about the Sisyphean task of living through the power of narrative. Amidst their apocalyptic settings, these characters turn to narrative. As Winnie turns to narrative, she deploys a variety of language and modes of speech not only as a powerful means of continuing to exist rather than choosing death, but also as a means of speaking an alternate reality into being for herself that offers some form of solace. In *Endgame,* the characters repeat the same phrases and questions over and again, crafting and employing narrative rituals as a means of enduring each day, navigating their unimaginable experience, and forming necessary—if tenuous and troubled—community with each other.

Much as his characters rely on narrative's power within the horrific world of the plays, Beckett conjoins horror and story in the world that witnesses and reads the plays, positing that narrative is an essential response to suffering—that narrative must speak to and speak amidst suffering and enable witness. As Richard Kearney argues, "stories bring the horror home to us. They singularize suffering against the anonymity of evil" (62). Beckett's plays, which use the dramatic form both to depict horror and to compel witness from an audience, do exactly as Kearney says. Thus, these plays are explorations of language's power in the midst of decline, suffering, and death through which Beckett makes an argument for the necessity of narrative amidst suffering and then uses dramatic narrative, to respond to the horrors of the human condition with witness.

Living in the aftermath of World War II, Beckett lived and wrote in a world that had experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, the atom bomb, and the

devastation of war. Through his life in occupied France, active participation in the French resistance, and work at a hospital following the war, he dealt with World War II not only as a distant observer, but also as a suffering participant.[2] James Knowlson writes

> The war years as a whole had a profound effect on Beckett. It is difficult to imagine him writing the stories, novels, and plays that he produced in the creative maelstrom of the immediate postwar period without the experiences of those five years. It was one thing to appreciate fear, danger, anxiety, and deprivation intellectually. It was quite another to live them himself….Many of the features of Beckett's later prose and plays arise directly from his experiences of radical uncertainty, disorientation, exile, hunger, and need. (318)

Beckett's time as a member of the Gloria resistance cell, his narrow escape from the Nazis, and his time working at the hospital in St. Lo, Normandy are particular examples of his engagement with the war in significant, personal ways. Of course, he was also a more distant observer to the horrors of the Holocaust and the fighting of the war itself, though certainly these things had incredibly real and profound implications in his life as he was not only aware of their existence but also experienced the arrest, and death, of friends in France. For instance, Beckett's Jewish friend, Paul Léon, was arrested in Paris and eventually died in a concentration camp. Beckett joined the resistance only ten days after Léon's arrest and, according to James Knowlson, Léon's disappearance was "one of the key factors in [Beckett's] decision to join the Resistance cell" (279). Beckett, then, was not only a man who witnessed the suffering of the war and its attendant horrors but also was compelled to act in response. Alfred Peron, a close friend and fellow member of the

[2] See Cronin, p. 306-355 and Knowlson, p. 273-308.

Gloria Resistance cell, was arrested when the cell was betrayed and deported to a concentration camp, dying in 1945 briefly following his liberation.[3]

The extent to which Beckett engages history, specifically WWII, in his works, is a matter of critical contention. James McNaughton argues that Beckett's visit to Germany in 1936 and 1937 transformed his writing, changing the way in which he dealt with history in his work.[4] For McNaughton, following his trip in which he was "confronted with Nazi totalizing narratives of art and history," Beckett altered his thought and writing. Specifically, McNaughton suggests "Beckett appears caught in a paradox: on the one hand, without memory and the capacity to rationalize the past, the present cannot be understood and the same events threaten to repeat. On the other hand, he rejects causes and background and finds the rationalization of them intellectually dishonest and politically dangerous" (111). While this paradox complicates the way in which Beckett responds to history in his work, McNaughton claims "far from making him an ahistorical writer…this paradox reveals Beckett caught between the fear of forgetting the past and greater fear of rationally misshaping it" (111). Similarly, Seán Kennedy, in his exploration of history in Beckett's work, claims that for Beckett "history could neither be expressed or escaped" (187). Thus, Kennedy argues, in "texts written immediately after WWII….Beckett situates his characters in ways that both invite and defy historical analysis" (188). Specifically with regard to *Endgame,* Russell Smith argues "*Endgame*

[3] See Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 288 and p. 310, for further details.

[4] Mark Nixon also examines Beckett's time in Germany and its impact on his view of history, specifically examining "the effect Beckett's journey through Germany from October 1936 to March 1937 had on his concept of history, and the way he reacted to the situation within Nazi Germany" (32).

address itself in particular to the historical situation of Europe after the Second World War, and to the problem of loss and of what to do with what remains" (99). Emilie Morin provides another historical context for *Endgame*, claiming "Beckett initially imagined the play as located in the aftermath of First World War Battles…as Beckett redrafted the play, these historical markers receded, giving way to an unspecified catastrophe that recalls not only the First World War, but also the Second World War, the Great Irish Famine, and modern atomic warfare" (Morin 69). Indeed, Morin speaks to the contemporary resonance of Beckett's work with her claim that "during the 1950s, Beckett's representations of destruction and destitution seemed disturbingly topical: *Endgame* in particular spoke in powerful ways to Cold War threats of atomic warfare and fears of annihilation" (61).[5] Thus, as the play's exact historical reference may be difficult to pin down, indicative of the paradox noted by Kennedy and McNaughton, it clearly depicts human suffering and the horrors of war in real and resonant ways.

In terms of *Happy Days* and its historical situation, Katherine Weiss argues "Winnie, resists readings by those who…desire to situate Beckett's stage images outside of history" (37). Instead, Weiss suggests "*Happy Days* rewinds and revolves historical narratives through its repetition, fragmentation, and stage image of a

[5] Other critics also address the historical resonances of *Endgame*, particularly with regards to war. Martina Kolb, in her comparison of Brecht and Beckett, also classifies *Endgame* (alongside *Mother Courage*) as a post-war play "about loss—the loss of language and the language of loss, the loss of sense and coherence, of sense and limbs, of words, movements, and lives. Both works portray the bareness of life, of war and postwar life in particular, and the physical and mental pain it imposes on the living, ailing, and dying" (73). So resonant are Beckett's themes of "imprisonment, waiting, uncertainty and loss" that Andrew Kincaid even goes so far as to explore the ways in which *Endgame* prophesies the 21st century War on Terror following September 11th (169).

woman caught in a mound….*Happy Days* can be read in terms of Beckett's experience of working with the reconstruction of Saint-Lo, Normandy" (Weiss 42). For Weiss, Beckett's experiences in the war "are like ghosts haunting Beckett's stage, paralleling the past that haunts Winnie. Beckett's creative output reveals that history leaves marks…. changes us" (Weiss 38). History and historical context, then, are complex subjects in the world of Beckett studies, but he is certainly a playwright impacted by the traumas of his age who engages and responds to those traumas in his writing, not a deracinated, detached nihilist as he was portrayed for a time. David Kleinberg-Levin posits "Beckett's struggle with words was not only the struggle of a storyteller to say something that would speak in a meaningful way to the needs of his time. It was also the struggle of a storyteller to serve his time as a *witness* morally committed, regardless of the necessary aesthetic sacrifices, to the need for truth" (Kleinberg-Levin 73). Beckett, always attuned to pain and grief, lived in traumatic times of immense human suffering and responds to this suffering in his plays. While critics do not agree on the specific historical context, a critical consensus has emerged that Beckett was profoundly influenced by the terrors of his time and responded to it in his writing as he responded to real suffering and horror with narrative.

Through the apocalyptic locus of these plays, Beckett explores various universal elements of human suffering that allow him to engage and respond to the horrors of his time. Both *Happy Days* and *Endgame* take place in catastrophic, even apocalyptic, settings where the end of the world seems to be approaching quickly. *Endgame* takes place at the end of the world, as its setting and the words of its

characters make clear. The play opens in a bunker of some sort that the stage directions describe as spare and strange: "*bare interior. grey light. left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn. front right, a door. hanging near door, its face to wall, picture. Front left, touching each other, covered with an old sheet, two ashbins. Centre, in an armchair on castors, covered with an old sheet,* Hamm. *Motionless by the door, his eyes fixed on* Hamm, Clov. *Very red face."* (92). As Richard Halpern notes, the two primary interpretations of the play's setting are that "it is a bomb shelter in which they have survived a nuclear war" or "it is a Noah's ark in which they have survived a second Flood" (Halpern 744). Beyond the play's spare setting, characters in the play continually reference the coming end and the disastrous world extant outside their small dwelling. Outside of the bunker, there is nothing. As Clov articulates, "What in God's name could there be on the horizon?" (107). The opening lines of the play, spoken by Clov, set the tone of ending for the entire play as he intones "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" in an echo of Christ's words on the cross (93). In response to Hamm's questions of "what's happening?," Clov can only respond "Something is taking its course" (98). Descriptions of the outer world and the disintegration taking place on the stage make it clear that the "something" is the end of the world. Clov seems most clearly aware of the situation when he laments "the earth is extinguished though I never saw it lit" (132). Throughout the play, the characters continually create lists of absent things, with "there's no more" functioning as a continual frame. The list of things that are no more includes "bicycle-wheels," "nature," "biscuits," "painkiller," and "coffins" (96, 97, 130). Further verbal clues to the apocalypse include the

assertion that "the whole place stinks of corpses….the whole universe" and "outside of here it's death" (114, 96). Stories told within the play reveal that the play's four characters used to live in a world that sounds much more like a recognizable world akin to Beckett's own, but lived through some horror that resulted in a desert wasteland and a famine outside. While aware of their dangerous and ever-diminishing atmosphere, the characters remain less than explicit about what, exactly, is happening. The "something," though seems to continue throughout. About midway through the play, Clov looks out the window and exclaims "never seen anything like that!....the light is sunk….There was a bit left," indicating that what little may remain outside is fast coming to a close (106).

While more subtle and absurd than the apocalypse that occurred in *Endgame, Happy Days* also seems to take place as the world comes to an end. Setting-wise, *Happy Days* takes place in an "expanse of scorched grass" that rises to a "low mound" underneath "blazing light" (138). For an unnamed and unclear reason, Winnie exists "embedded up to her waist in exact centre of mound" while Willie remains free to move around (139). Whatever force buries her only grows stronger as the play continues. By Act Two, the sand encroaches even further on Winnie, now "embedded up to neck" and "her head, which she can no longer turn, nor bow, nor raise, faces front motionless throughout act" (160). While the bizarre setting does not necessarily offer any clues as to what may happen beyond Winnie's continued burial, her descriptions point to an end. She declares "if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes….and wait for the day to come….the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of

the moon has so many hundred hours" (144). Winnie, then, is anticipating a day will come when her flesh melts in the heat. Other references to the heat in the play indicate the coming end of the world. As she considers the feeling of being trapped in the sand, Winnie wonders "the earth is very tight today, can it be I have put on flesh, I trust not…The great heat possibly…All things expanding, some more than others…Some less" (149). The heat in the play itself is so great that Winnie's parasol spontaneously combusts, which prompts another reflection on the ever-increasing heat:

> With the sun blazing so much fiercer down, and hourly fiercer, is it not natural things should go on fire never known to do so, in this way I mean, spontaneous like. Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end, or burn, oh I do not mean necessarily burst into flames, no, just little by little be charred to a black cinder, all this…visible flesh. On the other hand, did I ever know a temperate time? (154)

Winnie, then, has never known a "temperate time," even in better days before she was buried in sand, and she explicitly acknowledges that the sun blazes "hourly fiercer." The temperature, it seems, will increase until everything is dead and burned. Later in the play, Winnie asks Willie the ominous question "do you think the earth has lost its atmosphere, Willie?" which suggests a potential reason for the increasing heat and the impending doom (161).[6]

Exacerbating the horror of the situations faced by the characters in these plays, their desperate situations seemed to be monitored or controlled by powers outside of their control. Clov's opening monologue claims not only that "it must be nearly finished' but also "I can't be punished any more," a line in the passive voice

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[6] So hellish are Winnie's circumstances that Julien Carriere notes the many similarities between *Happy Days* and Dante's Inferno (specifically canto 10) and argues for the *Inferno* as an important part of the structure and theme of Beckett's play.

that implies someone or something else enacting punishment. He refers to his unnamed punishers later in the play, saying: "I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you…you must be there better than that if you want them to let you go—one day" (132). The outside force in *Happy Days* manifests in the form of a bell. The play begins with the bell: "*Long pause. A bell rings piercingly, say ten seconds, stops. [Winnie] does not move. Pause. Bell more piercingly, say five seconds. She wakes. Bell stops*" (138). According to Winnie's descriptions, the bell rings for waking and rings for sleeping but, as the play continues, increasingly rings whenever she closes her eyes. Bereft of the presence of other humans, and any option of escape or change, these characters are seemingly at the mercy of either vindictive or apathetic higher powers, and thus have no spiritual recourse in the face of the end of their worlds and their own mortality.

In addition to these similarities, both *Happy Days* and *Endgame* are circadian plays in which one identical day seemingly follows another and thus he narratives and language these characters engage and create enable their Sisyphean task of living in spare worlds where nothing ever changes. The inability to escape their horrific situations and the appalling sameness of their quotidian experience are powerful forces pulling these characters towards despair and death, yet they persist through the power of language. Beyond the bells that orchestrate her waking and sleeping, and her inability to move, Winnie's own deep convictions that all will be the same day after day bolster the play's insistence on quotidian repetition.

Following the spontaneous combustion of her parasol, she describes her days to Willie:

> Yes something seems to have occurred, something has seemed to occur, and nothing has occurred, nothing at all, you are quite right, Willie…The sunshade will be there again tomorrow, beside me on this mound, to help me through the day….I take up this little glass, I shiver it on a stone—I throw it away—it will be in the bag again tomorrow, without a scratch, to help me through the day. No, one can do nothing" (154)

Convinced of her inability to change the identical repetition of her days, Winnie expresses a belief that a burned parasol and a broken glass will be present, unharmed, the next day. She attributes real agency and power to the sameness of her environment. In order to combat boredom that verges on despair, Winnie plans and relies on certain actions:

> One keeps putting off—putting up—for fear of putting up too soon—and the day goes by—quite by—without one's having put up—at all….ah yes, so little to say, so little to do, and the fear so great, certain days, of finding oneself….left, with hours still to run, before the bell for sleep, and nothing more to say, nothing more to do, that the days go by, certain days go by, quite by, the bell goes, and little or nothing said, little or nothing done. That is the danger. To be guarded against. (152)

Winnie cannot counteract the repetitive nature of her days trapped in sand and ruled by bells except through her words and actions. As she indicates, she does not want to fill her day "too soon" but there is also a real "danger" in spending her day without doing or saying enough. Tragically, Winnie only has the same bag, the same objects, and the same actions with which to pass the time; she cannot effect actual change in the structure and order of her days. Significantly, narrative plays a key role. As she acknowledges, "There is so little one can bring up, one brings up all….all one can" (165).

Much like *Happy Days, Endgame* presents a world in which all is the same day after day. Both plays seemingly occur across the course of a day, which, other than the continual decline of the world, is just like the days before it and after it. When Hamm asks Clov, "what time is it?," Clov can only respond "the same as usual" (94). Other questions the characters ask each other emphasize the sameness, questions such as "it's the end of the day like any other day, isn't it, Clov?" and repeated instances of "why this farce, day after day?" (98, 99, 107). Trapped in a small space together, all of their days are the same, and this sameness depresses the characters and causes grief. Hamm and Clov frequently speak of the despair of their identical days:

> Hamm: Do you not think this has gone on long enough?
> Clov: Yes! [*Pause.*] What?
> Hamm: This…this…thing.
> Clov: I've always thought so [*Pause.*] You not?
> Hamm: [Gloomily.] Then it's a day like any other day.
> Clov: As long as it lasts. [*Pause*] All life long the same inanities. (114)

Clov's "always" indicates both his resentment of the nature of his life and the longevity of his situation; it's "always". Hamm again asserts that the day of the play is a day "like any other day," to which Clov responds with further assertions of the length of time "as long as it lasts" and "all life long" (114). Each day, they experience this "thing" that they cannot fully describe, but which is constituted by "the same inanities" daily.

Regardless, then, of the extent to which he depicts any particular historical event on the stage, Beckett's postwar plays respond to the horror by depicting human suffering and despair on the page and on the stage, thereby demanding that the audience and narrative itself reckon with it. This narrative reckoning partly

occurs through the powerful ways in which his works, and thereby his readers and audience, bear witness to the horror and partly occurs through the way in which narrative enables his characters to persist, endure, and survive. As Emilie Morin observes, "if Beckett's characters frequently admit defeat, they are never vanquished: they continue to speak in spite of all, and find solace in the contemplation of an irrevocable and yet elusive ending" (Morin 60). Joseph Anderton also notes the conjunction of survival and speech in Beckett's work, claiming, "Beckett produces an aesthetic of survival whereby his creatures manage to keep speaking through figments, attachments to real and projected others, and the supplement of humour… which not only parallels the real survival of the context but also appears to recognize the status of art after Auschwitz. The obligation to speak despite the inability to speak in Beckett is the artistic predicament after, and artistic equivalent to, the historical climate of survival" (Anderton 180). Beckett depicts suffering at extremes to both ask and reveal what narrative can offer in response to catastrophe, and the choice to speak and continue speaking proves crucial as his characters cling to narrative in order to survive.

Given their apocalyptic settings and their never-ending string of identical days, characters in these plays wait for the end much as Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot, and again like Didi and Gogo, do not kill themselves but instead speak to pass the time. Their worlds are failing them, as are their bodies. Winnie cannot move due to the sand and Hamm and Clov cannot move due to the failure of their bodies. Hamm is blind and confined to a wheelchair; Clov's legs are "bad" and he claims that he "can't sit" (110, 97). Willie seems capable of little, crawling in and out

of a whole, and Nell and Nagg live and die encased in trash cans, and apparently have "stumps" for legs (96). Confronted with appalling sameness and boredom, the end of the world, and pain and suffering, all has seemingly failed these characters except for narrative. They choose to live and persist and endure through the power of narrative. Language offers a means of endurance, a way to constitute and fill their days and, thereby, continue.

Despite being trapped in ominous situations and subject to absent and indifferent deities, suicide remains a tempting but never chosen option. Rather than choosing to end, these characters choose to continue. Winnie derives much of her daily entertainment from the contents of her large black bag; however, the contents of the bag prove more sinister than benign. Early in the play, Winnie "*turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out revolver, holds it up, kisses it rapidly, puts it back*" (141). Winnie initially resists pulling the gun out of the bag in a passage that articulates her choice between life and death: "*she makes to rummage in bag, arrests gesture*…. No….No no….Gently Winnie….What then?....Winnie!....What *is* the alternative….What is the al….would I had let you sleep on" (144-145). Winnie must tell herself "no" and command herself to go "gently" to prevent more violent action with the gun; however, she also asks herself "what *is* the alternative". The revolver only grows more prominent throughout the play. By the start of Act Two, the revolver, no longer hidden, sits "conspicuous to [Winnie's] right on mound" (160). Much as Winnie constantly considers, but never turns to, suicide, Hamm and Clov consider ending their lives and each other but express a reluctance to end their lives. Hamm states "enough, it's time it ended, in the refuge too. And yet I hesitate, I hesitate

to….to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to—to end" (93). When Hamm asks Clov "why don't you finish us?" and even attempts to bribe him to do so by offering to "tell you the combination of the larder if you promise to finish me," Clov simply responds "I couldn't finish you" (110). Clov does not specify a reason, but the end result is clear: despite their despair and horror, these Beckettian figures choose to live.

Both plays intertwine the will to live with narrative by equating silence with death and emphasizing the characters' fear of the cessation of speech. Winnie seems to long for death, kissing the revolver and envying Willie's sleep; however, she fears the cessation of language. In part of her never-ending monologue, Winnie claims, "words fail, there are times when even they fail" and then asks Willie "what is one to do then, until they come again?" (147). Her fear of silence joins with her fear of solitude. In many ways, Winnie's fear in being alone is a fear of silence. Not only does she need words, but apparently she needs a witness to have words. When Winnie imagines what should would do if Willie was not there to listen, she thinks that she would "simply gaze before me with compressed lips…Not another word as long as I drew breath, nothing to break the silence of this place" (145). After she envisions this potential future, Winnie rejects a life of silence:

> Oh no doubt the time will come when before I can utter a word I must make sure you heard the one that went before and then no doubt another come another time when I must learn to talk to myself a thing I could never bear to do such wilderness…Or gaze before me with compressed lips [*She does so.*] All day long [*Gaze and lips again.*] No.…No no….There is of course the bag.…There will always be the bag. (148)

That is, if she cannot speak, Winnie plans to turn to suicide. Despite her clear will to live, she cannot abide the thought of living without speech and relies on the bag to

be there for her when words fail. Winnie equates silence with suicide. Upon deciding that it is too soon to turn to her song, Winnie considers what else she might do to pass the time. As she is temporarily putting off the consolation of narrative, Winnie thinks "there is of course the bag…. but something tells me, Do not overdo the bag, Winnie, make use of it of course, let it help you….along, when stuck, by all means, but cast your mind forward, something tells me, cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail—and do not overdo the bag" (151). In other words, she cannot use the bag too soon because she knows she will be in desperate need of it if and when words fail. She associates Brownie (the revolver) with silence and relies upon its presence much as she relies upon Willie to be her audience.[7] As she says to comfort herself, "Brownie is there, Willie, beside me…What would I do without them, when words fail? Gaze before me, with compressed lips. I cannot" (162). When speech fails, Winnie knows she "cannot" continue (162).

Much like Winnie, in *Endgame*, Hamm and Clov consider the eventuality of a silence-filled future. When Hamm speaks of the approaching end, he exclaims "it's finished, we're finished…nearly finished…there'll be no more speech" (116). Adding speech to the ever-growing litany of "no more," Hamm uses future tense to indicate that when speech fails, it will truly end. He again equates the end with silence when he envisions what it will be like at the end:

> It will be the end and there I'll be, wondering what can have brought it on and wondering what can have….why it was so long coming….There I'll be, in the old refuge, alone against the silence and….the stillness. If I can hold my peace and sit quiet, it will be all over with sound, and motion, all over and done with. (126)

[7] Interestingly, the continual presence of a gun that is never fired violates Chekhov's dictum that a loaded gun on the stage must go off.

Hamm's description equates silence with the end in telling ways. He imagines his end as isolated, where he will be "alone against the silence" (126). That is, Hamm does not long for but imagines himself as *contra* to the silence, a position made all the more difficult by solitude and the lack of someone else to talk to and stand "against the silence" with. Further, he acknowledges that if he is able to sit "quiet," it "will be all over…all over and done with" (126). Once again, then, silence equals death. Hamm and Clov further manifest this need for speech to live when they insist to each other "keep going, can't you keep going" and "keep going, keep going" to the other during a pause in conversation (121,122). Following Clov's injunction to Hamm to "keep going" with his story, he asks Hamm "will it not soon be the end?" to which Hamm responds "I'm afraid it will" (122). In turn, Clov insists "Pah! You'll make up another" (122). Hamm, by indicating his fear of the end of his story and Clov, by evoking his ability to "make up another," further reveals the way in which the continuation of words is a crucial task and silence, the end of speech and story, is feared. Much like Winnie in *Happy Days,* characters here equate a cessation of speech with death and, to an extent, speak to postpone the end. Ominously, in both plays, characters lines are peppered with pauses which serve as continual indications of the silence they are desperate to fill. As Ruby Cohn observes with regard to *Happy Days,* "although words do not fail [Winnie] for the duration of the stage happy days, Beckett conveys a feeling of their failure through her frequent pauses, self-interruptions, and constant qualifiers" (*A Beckett Canon* 265). Thus, narrative and the possibility of its end coexist on the stage, further emphasizing the desperate need for, and persistent power of, language.

While *Happy Days* and *Endgame* explore different types of narrative persistence, as Winnie speaks almost alone on the stage and Hamm and Clov have each other as well as Nell and Nagg, both *Happy Days* and *Endgame* are replete with allusions to other literature, which both indicates the destruction of the known world but also the resonant persistence of language. As Michael Worton argues, "suspicious of all authority and especially of the authority of the founding texts of Western Culture, Beckett studs *Godot* and *Endgame* with references to these very texts in order to make his readers…participate in his anxious oscillation between certainty about what is true and uncertainty about what may be true" (Worton 85). In response to *Happy Days* and its allusions, S.E. Gontarski suggests "the philosophies, literature, and religion of western man comprise the fragmented mythology against which Winnie fails and suffers, and like a jeweler's foil, mythology highlights the suffering" (Gontarski Allusions 244). George Steiner speaks to this tension between allusions and new narratives in *Grammars of Creation* when he claims that a "serious writer…will be exceptionally attuned to the history of words" but "will be conscious almost to despair…of the ways in which the coin in his or her hand has been rubbed flat, devalued, or altogether debased…by universal usage" (Steiner 146-147). According to Steiner, "what the poet aims for is that novelty of combinations which will suggest to the listener, to the reader, a corona, a new-lit sphere of perceptible meanings, of radiant energy, at once understandable and adding to (transcending) what is already to hand' (147). As indicated by the fragmented nature of the allusions and the suspicion and anxiety they induce, these characters cannot use language that was but instead must create

their own forms of language and narrative. That is, their choices with words—spare or incoherent though they may be—are intentional acts of engagement and creation with language. Reliant on language for persistence, they also are able to derive consolation from the narratives they create and thus stave off death and nihilism for at least one more day. As they seek a linguistic form that accommodates their reality, Beckett's characters do not solely draw on the language of the past but instead rely on the language they can create and imbue with the significance required for them to continue.

Through Winnie's varied experiments with language, Beckett explores language's capaciousness in the face of despair. Winnie constantly test and prods language's capabilities and in so doing continues to survive. She tries out different styles of words and narratives to see what they can offer. As she says, "there is so little one can speak of. One speaks of it all. All one can" (160). In the play, Winnie deploys command, question, dialogue, allusion, prayer, first person and addressing herself in the third person, reading (toothbrush handle and medicine label), stories from the past, description, and apostrophe, among other forms of language.[8] In this way, the play functions as a multifaceted exploration of language's power in the face of despair. Winnie's diverse narratives provide variety otherwise lacking in her day, a means of entertainment and persistence, a way to access her memories, and a way to engage Willie in whatever form of conversation she can. Beyond all of this, Winnie's incessant narration is necessary for survival; she has to keep talking to

[8] Ruby Cohn notes that Winnie's bag and its contents are significant to her; however, "even more important and familiar are the invisible props—the inventory of possessions, the repetitive refrains, the constant doubts and denials, the literary echoes and creations—with which [she]…attempts to fill the void of existence" (*Gamut* 252).

keep living and keep avoiding the ever-present revolver. To do so, Winnie takes advantage of the varieties of language in order to keep speaking and keep living. Her spoken narrative, which forms the vast majority of the play, evinces a profound understanding of the capabilities of different modes of language. Further, she uses her words to speak an alternate reality, one in which she has blessings and each day is happy into being. Whether or not Winnie is completely successful in using her words to craft a reality other than the absurd, trapped world in which she lives, she turns to language as consolation in her despair, as something that can offer her the ability to live and to even find hope, however minimal, as indicated by her trajectory from stasis to song across the two acts of the play.

While it may be tempting to read Winnie as a foolish woman prattling on, unaware of her desperate situation, the critical discussion of *Happy Days* includes readings that attribute agency and power to Winnie and her words. Joelle Chambon reads the play as "a vision that might help us to enrich our conception of aging. In this reading, Winnie is…someone who fights—by caring, and by the creative use of language and memory—to sustain her humanity in a situation of inevitable decline" (Chambon 170). Michael Bennett acknowledges the necessity of speaking for Winnie's survival: "[Winnie's] body becomes immobile and the inability to *do* – with *doing* long associated with *being* in existentialism—would suggest that Winnie should… cease to exist. However, Winnie understands that reason, which manifests itself in words, becomes her means of survival. The necessity of words and the necessity of reason are foundational to Beckett's play" (118). Cohn, who refers to Winnie's objects and words as a "strategic arsenal," claims "determinedly, Winnie

endures each happy day by following a routine; she carefully deploys objects, husband, prayer, and, in Act Two, her story. In both acts she survives by talking her way through each day" (*A Beckett Canon* 264). Language, then, proves crucial to Winnie's survival and she relies on this power through the creative and varied narrative she speaks that forms the foundation and primary content of Beckett's play.[9]

Winnie employs the power of imperative language to compel herself to keep acting and living. Her verbal commands are the starting point for many of her actions. Following the prayer with which she opens the play, Winnie tells herself "Begin, Winnie… Begin your day, Winnie" and then she does, turning to her bag and taking out her toothpaste and toothbrush (138). Action may be necessary for survival; however, Winnie relies on words to instigate action. In some instances, her commands are efficacious and language's power propels her movements and day forward. She speaks in simple commands or in exclamatory sentences to encourage herself to keep talking and prevent herself from turning to the revolver: "On Winnie," "Winnie!" (140, 145). Winnie also commands herself as to how to speak her narrative and live her life. In higher-pitched emotional moments, such as when she considers suicide or when she tells the story of a little girl named Mildred, she commands herself "gently Winnie" (144, 163). In other instances, Winnie speaks a

[9] Winnie is not the only character in modern Irish drama to craft a reality through language. Christy Mahon, the protagonist of J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, remakes his reality through language in the course of the play. As Steve Wilson argues, "Christy puts on a fine performance, is rewarded for it by a village that finds value in Christy's narratives, and becomes the very thing he describes in his tales" (234). Patricia Meyer Spacks argues the play "presents essentially the vision of a man constructing himself before our eyes" (16). Similarly, Bruce Bigley argues that Christy grows and changes in the play "chiefly through his mastery of language" (98). Thus, Synge's play also demonstrates the ability of language to shape and sustain an alternative reality.

command but cannot follow it. Her words cannot overcome the bells that govern her waking and sleeping, though she often says "ignore it, Winnie, ignore the bell, pay no heed, just sleep and wake, sleep and wake, as you please" (162-163). At other times, Winnie's despair or ennui prove stronger than her commands and she remains inactive despite her words: "how often have I said, Put on your hat now, Winnie, there is nothing for it, take off your hat now, Winnie, like a good girl, it will do you good, and did not…could not" (146). Despite their varied efficacy, these commands manifest Winnie's belief that she can alter her actions through the power of her words and thereby gain some semblance over control over the manner in which she lives.

In addition to the language she creates throughout the play, Winnie has recourse to older forms of language as a means of generating speech. Alongside the classical allusions to which she turns for comfort, Winnie also prays. As the play opens, Winnie prays: "[*clasps hands to breast, closes eyes. Lips move in inaudible prayer, say ten seconds. Lips still. hands remain clasped. low.*] For Jesus Christ sake Amen…World without end Amen." (138). She needs to speak and engages familiar modes and styles of language as a means of producing words. In Act I, at least, Winnie believes her prayers might have some effect and as she stares with a "*fixed lost gaze, brokenly*" articulates that "prayers perhaps not for naught…first thing…last thing" (140). By act II, Winnie changes her mind and instead of praying explains "I used to pray. I say I used to pray. Yes I, must confess I did. Not now. No no. Then…now…what difficulties here, for the mind" (161). Even when she alters her

hopeful stance on prayers "perhaps not for naught," Winnie still speaks of and turns to a traditional, sacred genre of speech as part of her continual flow of words.

In addition to mining the contents of her mind and memory for speech, Winnie takes advantage of the written word. Both she and Willie read out loud, Winnie primarily from a toothbrush and Willie from a newspaper. She exerts herself a great deal to read even the briefest of texts as she obsesses over the words on her toothbrush handle: "*examines handle of brush…*nothing like it*…examines handle, read…*pure…what? (139). Unable to read the handle, Winnie finds her glasses and again "*examines handle of brush…examines handle, reads…*genuine…pure…what?...blind next" (139). After she finally manages to read the toothbrush handle ("fully guaranteed…genuine pure…hog's…setae), Winnie declares "that is what I find so wonderful that not a day goes by…hardly a day, without some addition to one's knowledge, however trifling, the addition I mean, provided one takes the pains" (143). Winnie derives pleasure from the success of her reading and from being able to articulate the words in front of her.

In sharp contrast to her, Willie almost never speaks except when he is reading from a newspaper. While some of his reading involves only two or three words, at other points Willie reads longer phrases and proves language's power to provoke language:

> *Willie opens the newspaper, hands invisible…Willie turns page…Winnie straightens hat, smoothes feather, raises it towards head, arrests gesture as Willie reads…*His Grace and Most Reverend Father in God Dr. Carolus Hunter dead in tub" to which Winnie responds "*tone of fervent reminiscence*…Charlie Hunter! I close my eyes…and am sitting on his knees again, in the back garden at Borough Green. (142)

The text in front of him gives Willie words, which in turn spark a reminiscence from Winnie that allows her to continue talking and gives her something to talk about. Reading not only offers a creative respite, as it gives Winnie and Willie the opportunity to continue speaking and living without having to summon language amidst the wasteland in which they reside, but also it provides avenues to further conversation and narrative.

Memory—the ability to tell stories of her past—serves as another resource to which Winnie turns for narrative and for something to say. Following her recollection of her time with Charlie Hunter in the garden, Winnie continues to turn to memory by narrating her first ball and her first kiss. As Winnie tells these stories, two things seem key to her act of remembrance: closing her eyes (so she can not see what is in front of her) and speaking (so she can see what's not in front of her). As she says, she closes her eyes and then she is "sitting" (142). The gerund indicates the power of the memory; by closing her eyes and speaking out loud, Winnie—present tense—is "sitting on his knees again," in a far different posture and location than her current reality. Memories serve a key function for Winnie in terms of persistence. Far later, Winnie begins to trend towards silence and Willie offers no words in place of hers. Winnie asks "What now, Willie?" which is followed by a "*long pause*" (163). She then immediately says "there is my story of course, when all else fails…a life" (163). That is, when "all else fails" and the only other person extant cannot or does not offer speech, and Winnie's own monologue begins to cease, she can always turn to her "story," to her memories, in order to keep pressing on. Cohn suggests that Winnie uses memory when other forms of language leave, arguing "in Act I Winnie

can stretch the inscription on her toothbrush to a persistent preoccupation, but there is no print to offer her solace in act 2. In compensation, her memories augment" (*A Beckett Canon* 266). Granted, Winnie's memories are far from pleasant; recalls a disturbing memory of a child named Mildred screaming "till all came running…too late"; however, she still turns to her ability to recount the past as a means of filling the time and persisting (165).

Winnie takes care with the language she uses, aspiring to understand the words at hand and to be grammatically correct. After she successfully reads the toothbrush, she cannot remember what "hog" means and repeatedly asks Willie to define the word for her (158-159). When Winnie describes combing her hair, she becomes stuck on a grammatical question and insistently interrogates Willie as to the correct form:

> I shall simply brush and comb them later on, purely and simply, I have the whole—[*Pause. Puzzled*.] Them?...or it?...Brush and comb it?...Sounds improper somehow…what would you say, Willie?...What would you say, Willie, speaking of your hair, them or it…the hair on your head, I mean…the hair on your head, Willie, what would you say speaking of the hair on your head, them or it? (146)

Winnie also takes care with her vocabulary, ensuring she uses the right word at the right time. For instance, after saying "life has taught me that, too," she pauses before finishing, "Yes, life I suppose, there is no other word" (148). Further, as Winnie employs command, dialogue, prayer, and memory she also avoids certain modes of speech. As she tells herself, she "mustn't complain, can't complain" (140). Winnie makes intentional choices about what she says and how. She knows that certain kinds of language evoke certain responses, and that certain forms enable certain things.

Not only does she poke and prod at language in its many forms, Winnie also relies on narrative as something that can speak a reality into being. She needs to believe "this will have been another happy day"; needs to name things as "wonderful" though they are patently not. While the gaps in her narrative indicate an ominous reality, her ability to craft an alternate verbal reality speaks to the power of narrative persistence. Words give her the reality she needs to continue as she crafts a particular narrative of her life so that she might keep living it. That is, Winnie's narrative both allows for her persistence and, though she perhaps fails to realize this, also reveals the true horrors of her situation. Her first description of her world is clearly false, as she proclaims "what a heavenly day," even as the stage direction reveal that the sun is "blazing" and Winnie herself trapped up to her waist in sand. Even so, she declares it heavenly and insists, in her most common refrain, "this is going to be another happy day" (142). In this instance, Winnie's circumstances belie her language through the juxtaposition of her adjectives with the reality presented by the text and the stage. In other instances, gaps in her narrative reveal the difference between the reality she creates for herself with her words and the reality at hand. When Winnie describes her pain, she says she is "no better, no worse. No change. No pain. Hardly any" and insists "no pain. Hardly any….slight headache sometimes" (139, 140). She wants to believe that she is "no worse" with "no pain"; however, she always follows up with the caveat "hardly any" and then specifies that she has a headache. The gap between her instance on "no pain" and the reluctance with which she admits "hardly any" suggests that Winnie actually experiences severe pain that she will not name. Again, as she attempts to insist to herself that

things will return, her attempt to make herself believe certain things via the power of narrative both reveals what she needs to believe and the actual truth of her situation as Winnie insists "all come back" and follows it up with "no not all" (144). She also uses words to convince herself that horrific elements of her experience are actually merciful elements. For instance, Winnie looks at the blazing desert around her sand mound and says "what a blessing nothing grows, imagine if all this stuff were to start growing. Imagine. Ah yes, great mercies" (152). Via language, she can tell herself that it is a "blessing" rather than a "curse" that nothing grows on the earth anymore. Once again, the gaps in her speech as she allows herself a moment to imagine before returning to her insistence on the "great mercies" of the death of nature indicate the distance between the reality Winnie crafts with her narrative and the reality at hand.

Despite their falsehood, Winnie's ability to craft a consoling narrative with her words that grants her another reality than the one in which she must live proves crucial to her ability to continue. Winnie turns to several key refrains consistently throughout the play in order to speak her alternate reality into being. Cohn admires Winnie's choices here, arguing "the more painfully we are immersed in Winnie's situation, the more we can appreciate her courageous enumeration of "great," "tender," "many," or "abounding mercies" (*A Beckett Canon* 266). Winnie frequently insists, "Oh, this is going to be another happy day!" (142). One of the things that causes her to proclaim her day as happy is Willie's speech. That is, not only Winnie's language but the language of another can bring her consolation. "Oh, you are going to talk to me today, this is going to be a happy day! [*Pause. Joy off.*] Another happy

day." (146). She also frequently refers to "great mercies," "many mercies," "abounding mercies" in reference to elements of her life (140, 166). Further, she builds a continual litany of things that are "wonderful." In the course of the play, Winnie claims many things are wonderful: "some addition to one's knowledge" (143); that though she forgets things "all comes back" (144); that "not a day goes by…without some blessing…in disguise" (147); "the way man adapts himself. to changing conditions" 9153); that "my two lamps, when one goes out the other burns brighter" (153); that "a part remains, of one's classics, to help one through the day" (164). Winnie has a desperate need for an alternate reality and language is her only option for making this so. As she insists on all the things that are wonderful, whether these are things she actually has or not, Winnie is able to persist, to keep talking and to keep living, through the power of the alternate reality she crafts through her language.

As indicated by Winnie's successes and failures with commands, her turn to and away from prayer, her insistence on speaking a reality into being and the gaps in that language-based reality, her language experiences seeming failures alongside its triumphs in the play. Finally, however, the play privileges speaking and attributes language with a consolatory, enduring power. Winnie knows she must continue speaking; as she says, "I can do no more. Say no more. But I must say more" (166). In order to fulfill the life-giving injunction to "say more", Winnie explores the capacities of various types of language, knowing that "there is so little one can bring up, one brings up all. All one can" (165). Speech equals endurance; therefore speech must multiply and continue. The juxtaposition of language's seeming failure at the

end of Act I with its efficacy at the end of Act II manifests the positive trajectory of narrative consolation in *Happy Days.* At the end of Act I, Winnie attempts to compel herself to sing or to pray, but cannot do so. Significantly, song and prayer are two locuses of hope for her throughout the play. Winnie opens her day with prayer and wants to believe that her prayers have some effect. Further, she relies on her song as a last resort of continuing; it is her ultimate narrative weapon. As she carefully contemplates what actions to perform in what order, she considers the appropriate timing for her song: "The day is now well advanced…and yet it is perhaps a little soon for my song…to sing too soon is a great mistake, I find" (151). Winnie knows that "to sing too soon is fatal" (163). She needs and relies upon her song as a measure of hope and endurance when all else fails. Even so, she worries that her song will not always be effective. She knows that "song must come from the heart, that is what I always say, pour out from the inmost, like a thrush" and acknowledges that she cannot always summon song, for "how often I have said, in evil hours, Sing now, Winnie, sing your song, there is nothing else for it, and did not…could not" (155). A song comes from her "inmost" being and is something she can only do from and for herself. Further, when "in evil hours," she turns to song; it is her consolation and her hope.

At the end of Act I, song seemingly fails as, despite Winnie's command to herself to "Sing…Sing your song, Winnie…No?...Then pray…Pray your prayer, Winnie…Pray your old prayer, Winnie," all that comes is a "[*Long pause.*]" (159). In sharp contrast to this seeming failure, the play's trajectory moves towards efficacious language as Act II ends with the singing of Winnie's song. As opposed to

Winnie's fountain of words in Act II, Willie only speaks one word in the entirety of the second act: "Win" (168). Following his use of her name, she declares "Win! Oh this *is* a happy day, this will have been another happy day! After all. So far. [*Pause. She hums tentatively beginning of song, then sings softly, musical-box tune.*] (168). She sings several lines of her song, and the play closes with Winnie and Willie looking at each other (168). Winnie, then, moves from stasis to song through the power of her continued language. In *Happy Days* narrative works as a means of endurance amidst the end of the world and as a means of choosing life over death.

Whereas Winnie explores varied forms of language as a means of deploying its enduring hope and capaciousness in the face of encroaching death and despair, *Endgame* depicts narrative rituals sustaining existence as its characters turn to the same questions, the same answers, and rehearsed and oft-told stories in order to form rituals consisting of and constituted by narrative that allow them to shape a life amidst the end of the world. Critics have noted the repetitive nature of language in *Endgame*. As Cohn notes, "verbal repetition…is unprecedented in *Endgame*" (A Beckett Canon 229). S.E. Gontarski reads the repetition in terms of theater, suggesting

> like most actors, Clov…is mouthing the words of another…the implication from the play's first words is thus of a possible succession, a turn from the steady decline of life already catapulting towards its end from its beginning, to a return to the end that is a beginning, some form of (or mockery of) regeneration, if only in the recycling of words and images, as in all theatrical performance. (*An End* 421)

That is, repetition proves true to the play as a play and also a viable form that mirrors the circular content as the end approaches each day but never quite comes. Nursel Icoz argues for the significance of the repetition, noting "although to repeat

oneself implies saying progressively less, it actually involves saying more in Beckett's work. The desires and fears, the hopes and frustrations of the characters, as well as the themes of the plays, are conveyed through repetitive devices… the repetition often intensifies the meaning of the original and reveals the work's hidden meaning" (Icoz 283). While Icoz insightfully points to the repetitive nature of the play, her assertion that "repetitive devices are used to reinforce the absurdity of their existence, their helplessness, and desolation" fails to acknowledge essential differences between the characters' repetitive situations and the repetitive ways in which they act within these absurd and horrifying situations (288).

Indeed, words play a crucial role for the lives of the characters in *Endgame.* Cohn, who carefully catalogs and describes the types of repetition at work in *Endgame*, suggests that "for both *Endgame* couples, words are a weapon against time" (*Working* 202). Similarly, Michael Worton acknowledges the essential role of repetition in the characters' lives, writing that in the entropic world of *Endgame,* "the characters take refuge in repetition, repeating their own actions and words and often those of others—in order to pass the time" (Worton 69). Matthew Fledderjohann, in his Beckettian analysis of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, claims that in Beckett's plays, including *Endgame*, "the repetitions themselves provide rationale for continuance" (Fledderjohann 54). In addition to persistence, these narrative rituals also offer "compelling meaning in the repetitions that sustain their being" as they "ritualize their words and actions and evoke them again and again as means of prolonging their existences" (48). That is, by participating in rituals "they sustain both their continuation and their reasons for dong so" (55). Even as their

language repeats much as their days repeat, their narrative rituals offer persistence and even consolation rather than despairing sameness.

The prevalence of these rituals and the things they enable demonstrate the necessity of language in the face of appalling suffering, and language's ability to offer at least the consolation of navigating and articulating the horrors and absurdities of their existence, the rituals that enable these characters to continue and to live, and even community with each other. The built-up repetition of language in the course of the play forms not exhausted echoes but a sustaining narrative ritual that enables characters to have the dialogue they need to continue.

In the face of their absurd and horrific situation, characters in *Endgame* express a desire for meaning and significance and turn to words as a necessary means of meaning making. Throughout *Endgame*, Hamm frequently asks "what's happening" as he grapples with his absurd, tragic, and pain-filled reality and attempts to understand the apocalypse around him. While Clov continually responds, "something is taking its course," Hamm expresses a desire for more, specifically a desire for meaning and significance as true elements of his reality:

> Hamm: We're not beginning to…to…mean something?
> Clov: Mean something! You and I, mean something! [*Brief laugh.*] Ah that's a good one!
> Hamm: 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 it is, yes, now I understand what they're at!...[*Normal voice.*] and without going so far as that, we ourselves…[*with emotion*]…we ourselves… at certain moments…[*Vehemently.*] To think it perhaps it won't all have been for nothing! (107-108)

Hamm wants to "mean something" and he wants all of their suffering to not "have been for nothing." Though the question of ultimate meaning remains unanswered in

the play, the characters consistently turn to language as a source of meaning. The repeated, ritualistic use of language responds to Hamm's desire to mean something. That is, through their diminished, yet repetitive, language, the characters in *Endgame* are able to engage communal rituals and the phrases they use, the repeated questions and answers they engage, form a means of navigating and enduring their stark experience.

Much as Hamm longs for meaning, Clov insists on his words bearing meaning and significance. He "*violently*" insists to Hamm "I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent" (113). As indicated by his implicit admission of language's meaning, Clov needs and wants for his words to mean something; if his language lacks meaning, he demands other words in their place. When pondering his suffering, Clov speaks of what he does not understand: "Then one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes, I don't understand, it dies or it's me, I don't understand that either. I ask the words that remain—sleeping, waking, morning, evening. They have nothing to say. [*Pause.*] I open the door of my cell and go." (132). The change, end, and death Clov describes are part of a future he imagines, as indicated by his inclusion of "I open the door of my cell and go" (132). While he frequently speaks of leaving in the play, he never actually does so; here, he is not describing something that has happened but something he knows or imagines might happen some day when the end comes. At the end, lacking understanding in the face of his suffering and end, Clov envisions turning to language for a source of meaning and imagines that, when the words have nothing to say, the end will come. Thus, while the characters are frequently cruel with their words and are certainly

far from eloquent, they still rely on language. Dina Sherzer notes "the cruel, ridiculous, laughable, thin deeds of the characters in *Endgame* are performed with talk, on and in language. These are the only deeds they can do to distinguish themselves in their aimlessness, solitude, and emptiness, but their talk is far from meaningless" (Sherzer 301). The words these characters speak matter and their repeated use of phrases intensifies the meaning their particular forms of language bear.

The way in which Hamm and Clov speak of language iterates its ability to provide something vital, even the meaning for which they long. When pondering leaving, as he does throughout the play, Clov asks Hamm "what is there to keep me here?" to which Hamm responds "the dialogue" (120-121). Significantly, Hamm does not choose to answer with the obvious pragmatic reasons—shelter, food, and Clov's decaying and pain-filled legs—but instead points to language. Clov does not argue; language proves highly significant and full of meaning to him, too.

Out of their desire for language and meaning at the end of the world, Hamm, Clov, and the other characters in *Endgame* turn to narrative rituals as a means of persistence, and as a means of navigating an unimaginable experience. Language functions as the source of persistence and community in the play and thereby offers the characters enough meaning and sustenance to continue living. Narrative is the foundation of their continued existence. In their dialogue, Hamm and Clov explicitly articulate the repetitive nature of their language:

> Hamm: Have you not had enough?
> Clov: Yes! [*Pause.*] Of what?
> Hamm: Of this…this…thing.
> Clov: I always had. [*Pause.*] Not you?

> Hamm: Then there's no reason for it to change.
> Clov: It may end. [*Pause.*] All life long, the same questions, the same answers. (94)

Both Hamm and Clov have had "enough" of their existence and know that the only form of real change will come in the end that they express longing for but also actively stave off throughout the play. Having chosen life, the two continue "all life long" with "the same questions, the same answers" (94). These questions and answers constitute their days and their existence. Indeed, they have built up a vocabulary together in which the sameness and repetitive narrative rituals sustain them. As Clov articulates, Hamm has asked him these questions "millions of times" (110). The nature of language in *Endgame,* then, coheres in repeated questions, answers, and phrases that together constitute the linguistic fabric of life.

Significantly, through their repetitive use of language in the play, the characters in *Endgame* deploy their diminishing vocabularies in a communal and ritualistic fashion through which language becomes a means of navigating their stark experience. Several of the narrative rituals at work in *Endgame* focus on understanding and articulating what exactly is happening in the world and to the characters. Hamm's most-asked question, which the stage directions repeatedly specify he asks in "*anguished*" fashion, is "what's happening, what's happening?" (98). In response to Hamm's repeated, "what's happening," Clov always responds "something is taking its course" (107). This pattern is a call and response narrative that the two use as a means of articulating their confusion and powerlessness at their fate. Hamm does not know what is happening; Clov can only respond with a vague "something". Similarly, at different points in the play both Nell and Clov ask

"why this farce, day after day?" (99, 107). Significantly, the situations in which Nell and Clov ask this question are different: Nell asks when she and Nagg are unable to kiss each other, and Clov asks after he and Hamm argue about the greyness and lack of sun outdoors, after which Hamm tells Clov to move because "you give me the shivers" (107). The question, then, can refer to Nell and Nagg's relationship, the greyness outdoors, Hamm and Clov's interactions, as well as the always approaching but never coming end. In short, "the farce" refers to various manifestations of the trapped, absurd existence these individuals face. The question functions as part of a communal vocabulary through which they can express and interrogate the absurdity of their lives.

Hamm and Clov also turn to language as a means of articulating their experience through repetitions of "it's finished." Even from the first line of the play, Clov's language, which echoes Christ on the cross, forms to the reality of his situation: "finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (93). From the beginning, these line indicate the coming end but also the seemingly unending wait for that end as the words and sentences expand from one word to five as they indicate the reality of the always approaching but never quite coming end. Hamm later echoes the phrase in the form of questions: "have you not finished? Will you never finish? Will this never finish?" (103). As well, he verbatim echoes Clov's opening line when he later states "it's finished, we're finished. [*Pause.*] Nearly finished. [*Pause*.] There'll be no more speech" (116). The phrase "there's no more" works to form an apophatic litany throughout the play as Clov delineates the world in which he lives through the absence of objects from the past. In response to

requests from others or mention of objects throughout the play—most commonly in response to commands from Hamm to fetch something—Clov responds "there's no more" and finishes his sentence with the noun for whatever is missing. In the course of the play, this includes "bicycle wheels," "pap," "nature", "tide", "painkiller", "navigators", and "coffins" (96, 97, 122, 127, 124, 130). These repeated sentences express memories of the past while also iterating the horror of the present. Used once for bicycle wheels, the phrase seemingly indicates the obvious: there are not bicycles in a bunker at the end of the world. However, used repeatedly for a series of objects necessary, trivial, and abstract in turn, Clov's litany manifests the horror of the end of the world.

Ironically, given the death-filled wasteland that apparently exists outside the bunker, characters insisting that they will leave constitutes another narrative ritual repeated throughout the play. Hamm and Clov engage in this discussion most frequently, continually discussing Clov's departure.

> Clov: So you all want me to leave you.
> Hamm: Naturally.
> Clov: Then I'll leave you.
> Hamm: You can't leave us.
> Clov: Then I shan't leave you. (110)

Clov repeats "I'll leave you" at several other points in the play, always articulating his desire to leave Hamm. Echoing Hamm and Clov's continual discussion of departure, Nell and Nagg also discuss her departure:

> Nell: Then I'll leave you.
> Nagg: I thought you were going to leave me.
> Nell: I am going to leave you. (101)

Nell, much like Clov, discusses leaving but does not actually do so. Her dialogue with Nagg reflects both repetition of the discussion of departure and the acknowledgement of continual stasis. Despite Clov's insistence on his departure, the furthest movement he ever makes away from Hamm is towards the kitchen. Indeed, the play ends with Clov dressed to depart but standing motionless. Certainly, Clov cannot actually leave the bunker. His dialogue with Hamm reveals why he can only escape briefly to the kitchen but never actually leave the bunker:

> Clov: I'll leave you, I have things to do.
> Hamm: In your kitchen?
> Clov: Yes.
> Hamm: Outside of here it's death. [*Pause*.] all right, be off. (95)

This dialogue reveals that Clov cannot leave unless he wants to die; however, it also implicitly reveals a far more significant reason the two stay together. Hamm and Clov are reliant upon each other's language, and the community it forms, for survival. That is, Clov cannot leave partly because "outside of here it's death" and partly because they need each other. Evan Horowitz, considering the end at which Clov stands dressed by the door but does not leave "as a strangely ambivalent moment in which Clov both leaves and doesn't leave" allows for a reading of the play not through fatalism, but "indeterminacy" (123). More specifically, Horowitz argues that the play's end is an "uncertain" one in which "we fear two things: that Clov will never leave and that Clov will leave (and find nothing). Between those alternatives there is no room for hope, but there is room enough to wonder, and room enough for critics to recognize that Hamm's faint "you remain" is as plaintive as it is commanding" (127). Whether or not Clov's leaving can ever be determined, Hamm's

desire for the presence of another is clear; these two need each other and the dialogue that comes from their relationship to continue.

In the course of the play, Clov and Hamm admit this need as they discuss both why Clov stays and why Hamm keeps Clov near him:

> Clov: Why do you keep me?
> Hamm: There's no one else (95)

In this brief dialogue, Hamm implicitly admits that he needs someone. There is "no on else," and he needs the company of another, therefore Clov must stay. Similarly, Clov needs Hamm:

> Clov: I'll leave you.
> Hamm: No!
> Clov: What is there to keep me here?
> Hamm: The dialogue. (120-121)

Towards the end of the play, when Clov most insistently states his departure and seems to come far closer to leaving, Hamm's request iterates the need the two have for words:

> Clov: I'll leave you. [*He goes towards the door.*]
> Hamm: Before you go… [*Clov halts near the door*]…say something. A few words…to ponder… in my heart (131).

If he cannot have Clov's company and dialogue, Hamm demands his "words." He does not ask for Clov to bring food or other necessary survival elements before he leaves, but instead asks for words to contemplate. A key part of narrative's ability to sustain, then, is dialogue. Hamm and Clov need community with another human being, and find the consolation of that community through dialogue and the words of another. They rely on each other's language to survive. Significantly, Michael Worton argues "all of Beckett's pairs are bound in friendships that are essentially

power-relationships. Above all, each partner needs to know that the other is there: the partners provide proof that they really exist by responding and replying to each other" (Worton 71-72). Along similar lines, Gontarski suggests "Clov is needed more as a witness, a subject, an audience, than as a domestic" (*An End* 425). Hamm and Clov need each other, and language allows them to continue to confirm the vital presence of another. A key part of narrative's ability to sustain in *Endgame*, then, is dialogue. Hamm and Clov need community, and by speaking to and with each other, they gain a relationship with another, however spare and troubling that relationship might be.

Hamm and Clov's insistence that the other keep talking forms another instance of repeated language in the play. Hamm tells Clov that he's "got on with [his] story" and commands Clov "ask me where I've got to," demanding that Clov enter into dialogue by asking a question to which Hamm can then respond (121). As the conversation continues, Hamm interrogatively insists that Clov maintains the dialogue:

> Clov: Oh, by the way, your story?
> Hamm: [*Surprised.*] What story?
> Clov: The one you've been telling yourself all your…days.
> Hamm: Ah you mean my chronicle?
> Clov: That's the one.
> [*Pause.*]
> Hamm: [*Angrily*.] Keep going, can't you, keep going! (121)

As Hamm dives into the story, the roles switch and Clov insists on Hamm's continuing speech. When Hamm pauses in recounting the story, Clov insists "Keep going, can't you, keep going!" (122). The care and need for each other's language manifests in a variety of ways in the play. They tell each other jokes, and ask the

other “don’t we laugh?”, testing the efficacy of their words and demanding a response from each other (97, 106). As well, a characters frequently asks if the other can hear them. As part of their linguistic rituals, these characters also reveal their reliance upon, and need for, each other’s language and the dialogue and community it provides.

Perhaps the most powerful instance of language’s communal function comes towards the end of the play, when the repeated language reveals a moment of near-forgiveness in Hamm and Clov’s usually toxic, tormented relationship. After Clov tells Hamm that he is “making an exit,” Hamm acknowledges “ I’m obliged to you, Clov. For your services.” Clov, in response, makes his own admission: “Ah pardon, it’s I am obliged to you” (132). Hamm concludes their dialogue by stating what is now obvious: “It’s we are obliged to each other” (132). As they use the same words to address each other, the meaning in the phrase builds and allows them to have their most positive interaction in the play, one in which they explicitly acknowledge what they have given to each other.

Beyond their repeated questions, answers, and commands, repeated stories also act as recurring narrative rituals linked to sustained life. Both Hamm and Nagg repeatedly tell the same stories as part of their narrative rituals in the play, and these rehearsed and retold stories manifest narrative’s role as a life-sustaining ritual. Nell’s commentary on funny stories reveals the repetition with which Nagg tells his joke narrative about a tailor and a pair of trousers. Before Nagg tells the story, Nell articulates the story’s repeated role through a simile in which she likens unhappiness to the story: “Yes, it’s like the funny story we have heard to often, we

still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more" (101). Nagg further emphasizes the repeated nature when he opens with "Let me tell it again" (102). As Nagg begins to tell the story, the stage directions specify his "*raconteur's voice*," and thereby specify his role as an intentional storyteller. Significantly Nagg tells a story with a specific end goal—"to cheer [her] up" (102). Nagg wants Nell to laugh and believes his story can accomplish this goal. As he tells his story, Nagg alternates between several voices, most of which are the voices of the story—the raconteur's voice, the tailor's voice, the customer's voice—and one of which is his "normal voice" that he uses to comment on his storytelling as he does it (102). Nagg, who lives in a barrel, somehow retains his ability to act and perform a narrative. Though his story does not elicit a positive reaction from his family, Nagg's repeated story nonetheless forms part of who he is and how he endures.

To a far greater extent than Nagg, Hamm focuses his life and his ability to continue on the practicing and telling of a pivotal story. Hamm longs to mean something, and he turns to narrative to fulfill that longing. In part, he persists by crafting his life into a narrative and continually retelling and reshaping that narrative. For Hamm, extending narrative is a means of extending existence and enduring darkness. He tells his own narrative three times in the play, from the first telling to which he demands Nagg forms an audience, to his last soliloquy where he tells the story to the silence. Jonathan Boulter suggests

> these acts of narrative function as momentary liberations from the constraints, physical and mental, of Hamm's limited present existence. Narrative operates hermeneutically in the sense that it offers the possibility of inscribing an alternate temporality, an alternate way (or time) of being. The narrative act…becomes an act of historiography allowing the teller to interpret—to rewrite—the past. (41)

Through his narrative, Hamm gains the ability to see and think beyond the trapped and limited existence of his day-to-day-life. Also acknowledging the power of narrative in the play, Jeremy Ekberg reads *Endgame* as a play in which those who have power tell stories and those who do not are silenced. Thus, Ekberg suggests, "the narratives and suppressed narratives in the play morph from simple tales into tools that enable characters to assert power over one another, to define their own conscious states, and finally to define who they are and how they function in the endgame" (Ekberg 34). Storytelling, for Ekberg, is key for both power and identity in the play. As his claims regarding power and narrative imply, narrative is a real and vital force in *Endgame* and the characters are aware of its power.

Hamm certainly relies upon his narrative and uses it as his means of describing his own life as well as Clov's. When he first tells his story, Hamm asks Clov "do you want to listen to my story?" and bribes Nagg with a sugarplum to form an audience (115). Much like Nagg, Hamm changes his voice tone as he tells his story; the stage directions specify "*normal tone*," which he uses to provide commentary on his own storytelling, and "*narrative tone*," which he uses when he actually tells the story (116-118). Hamm's continual commentary on his own telling emphasizes his role as a narrative artist and his investment in storytelling, as he acknowledges the strengths ("nicely put, that") and weaknesses ("a bit feeble, that") of his own narration (117). Beyond its first lengthy telling, Hamm tells his story twice more in the play and through this repetition this narrative becomes another ritual instance of language. The practice of transforming life to narrative proves crucial to him. After Hamm asks Clov to say " a few words…to ponder…in my heart,"

he immediately works to transform the dialogue into narrative, even while still asking Clov for the words:

> With the rest, in the end, the shadows, the murmurs, all the trouble, to end up with. [*Pause*.] Clov…He never spoke to me. Then, in the end, before he went, without my having asked him, he spoke to me. He said… (131)

Hamm's description clearly alters reality; Clov has spoken to him throughout the entire play and he has just asked Clov for words. Hamm rewrites their lives and this moment even as it happens as he works to transform his reality into a narrative with which he can live.

In response to the travails and horrors of humanity at the end of the known world, Beckett powerfully privileges narrative. That is, he places suffering front and center with narrative and in so doing demands that the two reckon with each other. His characters who have and can do nothing else speak and thereby continue to live. As he sets language against suffering to proclaim what language can offer as persistence, Beckett not only explores what language does for the characters within the play, but also what language does by recording and writing this play for readers and for an audience. By casting these narratives as plays, Beckett strongly invokes the power of a witnessing audience beyond the way a novel or a poem might assume a reader. The powerful consolatory function of narrative comes not only from narrative as persistence, but also through how the dramatic and written form of the plays offers an alternative response to suffering: witness. Through the plays, Beckett reveals that language is capable of responding to suffering not only by prevailing but by conveying the depth and horrors of this suffering. Further, his chosen dramatic form provides the consolation of witness not only through the truthful, stark

depiction of suffering evinced in his words but through the witness his narratives evoke in his audience and readers .

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle claims that drama has the capacity to "through pity and fear effect… the proper purgation of these emotions" (22). In Richard Kearney's explication, he states, according to Aristotle "we may…experience a certain cathartic release from the tragic sufferings of existence in our role of spectators…why? Because the very contrivance and artifice of *mimesis* detaches us from the action unfolding before us, affording us sufficient distance to grasp the meaning of it all" (138). That is, the genre of dramatic narrative allows viewers to take a necessary step back from horror and gain a vantage point from which they can grapple with and comprehend the extent of the unimaginable suffering on stage. However, "as well as being distanced, we need to be sufficiently *involved* in the action to feel that it matters. Catharsis, as noted, purges us by *pity* as well as fear. It comprises a double attitude of both empathy and detachment" (138). Beyond their ability to convey suffering through words and performance, stories enable an otherwise impossible witness and also compel an empathetic response from their audiences.

The worlds of immense suffering depicted in the plays contain no response, or no viable response, to suffering from others. Indeed, *Endgame* has no witness to its horrors; the family in the bunker lives out their unending end in isolation. In *Happy Days*, Winnie experiences a traumatic response to her suffering from another living being and retells it through her memory of Mr. Shower:

> Well anyway—this man Shower…and the woman—hand in hand—in the other hands bags—kind of big, brown grips—standing there gaping at me—and at last this man Shower…What's she doing? he says—What's the idea? he says…What does it mean? he says—What's it meant to mean—and so on—lot

> more stuff like that—usual drivel…Why doesn't he dig her out? he says—referring to you, my dear—What good is she to him like that?—What good is he to her like that?—and so on—usual tosh—God! she says, have a heart for God's sake—Dig her out, he says, dig her out, no sense in her like that…I'd dig her out with my bare hands, he says…Next thing, they're away—hand in hand—and the bags—dim—then gone—last human kind—to stray this way" (157)

Rather than aiding Winnie, Shower and his companion look at her and speak as if she was not there. Ignoring his own capacity to help Winnie, Shower lacks empathy and only speaks of her in the third person. He articulates that he might act differently were he Willie, as "what good is she to him like that" but feels no compulsion to aid his fellow human being. In his utilitarian and dehumanizing view of Winnie, he refuses to acknowledge her suffering. His companion at least acknowledges this failure of empathy and compassion with her exclamation of "have a heart for God's sake,"; however, she, too fails to offer any other sort of response. The two depart, leaving Winnie alone and buried in the wasteland forever.

Surpassing the failed responses, or even complete lack thereof, to suffering in the plays, the dramatic form of the plays offers an alternative. The characters in these plays, through their allusions to an audience, demand a witness to their suffering, one that both grasps the horror and responds, as Kearney says, with sufficient empathy. Both characters in *Happy Days* and *Endgame* express a need for an audience. Winnie explicitly states that she needs an audience to continue as she speaks to Willie about her condition:

> Ah yes, if only I could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away with not a soul to hear. …not that I flatter myself you hear much, no Willie, God forbid…Days perhaps when you hear nothing,…But days too when you answer…So that I may say at all times, even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing, something of this is being heard, I am not merely talking to myself, that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do—for any length of time.

> …That is what enables me to go on, go on talking, that is...Whereas if you were to die… then what would I do, what *could* I do, all day long I mean between the bell for waking and the bell for sleep? (145)

Winnie needs to speak to live, and she needs an audience to speak. As she tells Willie, she could "never bear" to be alone, speaking to herself, for a significant length of time. Hamm's description of his own potential end and a child in the dark reveals what compels him towards narrative:

> The end is in the beginning and yet you go on. [*Pause.*] Perhaps I could go on with my story, end it and begin another…It will be the end and there I'll be, wondering what can have brought it on and wondering what can have…[*he hesitates*]…why it was so long coming. [Pause]. There I'll be, in the old refuge, alone against the silence and…the stillness. If I can hold my peace, and sit quiet, it will be all over with sound and motion, all over and done with…I'll have called my father and I'll have called my…[*he hesitates*]…my son….And then?...Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark. (126)

Left alone in the silence, Hamm images that he will call out to any audience he can imagine actually present and, if no response comes forth, he will "turn himself into...two…three" as a means of gaining a witness and an audience for himself (126).

In echoes of Didi's sense that "at me too, someone is looking," Winnie, Hamm, and Clov articulate allusions to being seen (*Waiting for Godot* 85). [10] Winnie feels as if she is being watched: "Strange feeling…Strange feeling that someone is looking at me. I am clear, then dim, then gone, then dim again, then clear again, and so on, back and forth, in and out of someone's eye" (155). For Winnie, this is a positive experience and she claims "someone is looking at me still…Caring for me still…That

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[10] The motif of characters expressing a need and desire for, or feeling of, an audience carries from *Waiting for Godot* into both of these plays. In *Godot*, not unlike the comments made by Winnie and Hamm, Vladimir, as he watches the sleeping Estragon, says "At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on" (*Waiting for Godot* 85).

is what I find so wonderful" (160). Unlike Winnie's other claims of things that are "wonderful," this one, thanks to the dramatic form through which she exists, bears truth. The audience is looking at Winnie and must face and reckon with her suffering.  Hamm articulates his sense of being watched as a fragment of his imagination: "all kinds of fantasies! That I'm being watched!" (126). Clov's allusion to the presence of his audience is far more ironic:  [*He gets down, picks up the telescope, turns it on auditorium.*] I see …a multitude…in transports…of joy. [*Pause.*] That's what I call a magnifier"(106). Beyond referring to and indicating its need for an audience *Endgame* constantly refers to itself as a play and therefore asserts its role as a drama with an audience. As Eric Levy notes, the play "foregrounds its own status as a drama" in a variety of ways (263). Some of these, beyond Clov's allusion to the audience, include Hamm's references to "dramatist's tools (aside, dialogue, soliloquy)" (Cohn *Words* 188). As Gontarski observes, Hamm needs " an audience to witness his performance and so to validate his story (and thereby his existence as well)" and this performative need for an audience "brings to the fore the theatrical metaphor for the entire play, the 'game' or 'games' in *Endgame*, which is, after all, a play about a play" (*An End* 425). This play about a play, to use Gontarski's description, emphasizes the significance of and need for a witnessing audience for the characters who speak and suffer on stage.

By putting horror on the stage in the form of dramatic narrative, Beckett demands that his audience witnesses the suffering of others. This exchange enables a powerful witness. Kearney writes "sometimes an ethics of memory is obliged to resort to aesthetics of storytelling. Viewers need not only to be made intellectually

aware of the horrors of history; the also need to experience the horror of that suffering *as if* the were actually there" (63). As a playwright who experienced the horrors of World War II firsthand, Beckett can thus turn to the suffering he can depict on the stage as a means of bearing witness and compelling continued witness for the pain of the human condition. Drama enables this particular sort of witnessing presence, as "the narrated action of a drama… solicits a mode of sympathy more extensive and resonant than that experienced in ordinary life…not simply because it enjoys the poetic licence to suspend our normal protective reflexes…but also because it amplifies the range of those we might empathise with" (Kearney 138). That is, Beckett's plays are capable not only of depicting the truth of horror and suffering and thus requiring his audience to witness suffering but also they compel empathy from the audience, thereby granting his characters the consolation of someone watching them after all. As drama, his plays ask for a deep empathy in response. As Carolyn Forché writes about the poetry of witness, "writing in the *aftermath* … is testamentary writing…it calls upon the reader, who is the *other* of this work, to be in turn marked by what such language makes present before her, what it holds open and begets in the reader, for witness *begets* witness" (137). While Forché here specifically speaks to poetry, her comment applies to Beckett's own writing in the aftermath of World War II and the suffering he experienced and witnessed then. His plays, acts of witness to suffering in and of themselves, beget the witness of their audience who thereby must respond to and engage with the suffering of his characters on the stage.

By matching form to content, by writing plays that "accommodate the mess" of a post war, post- Holocaust, post-atom bomb world, Beckett not only demonstrates narrative's persistence but also provides the consolation of a means of navigating that experience and insists that those who remain bear witness to the horror, which in itself is a consolation amidst suffering that the characters long for—that they are not alone or forgotten in their suffering (Driver 23). Winnie, by existing in a drama, always has the audience for which she longs and the same proves true for the family in *Endgame.* Kearney writes that the catharsis enabled by drama "affords a singular mix of pity and fear whereby we experience the suffering of other beings *as if* we were them" which "provokes a reversal of our natural attitude to things and opens us to novel ways of seeing and being" (140). Catharsis, though, he observes relies on this crucial act of seeing and "acknowledging painful truths…rather than some magic potion which miraculously resolves them. Catharsis is a matter of recognition, not remedy" (Kearney 142). Beckett cannot cure the ills of the world through his drama, nor does his seek to do so; however, he can and does bring the reality of suffering to the fore and compel his audiences to recognize and witness it. In so doing, he demands recognition and empathy for the horrors, absurdity, and suffering of his characters on the stage and thereby, through the power of narrative, offers the consolation of witness.

In Beckett's dramas, then, the consolation of witness comes from a thorough and honest depiction of horror, whatever form of language that might take. Through drama, he not only wrote plays that articulate suffering in a stark and true way that responds to its extremes, but also he compelled an empathetic witness from the

audience. Beckett's depiction of human suffering thus forces narrative to address pain and horror, and reveals narrative's powerful ability to bear and evoke witness. Additionally, he reveals the crucial ways in which narrative entwines with human endurance. Writing of his time working at the hospital in St. Lo, Beckett claims:

> What was important was not our having penicillin when they had none…but the occasional glimpse obtained, by us in them and, who knows, by them in us…of that smile at the human conditions as little to be extinguished by bombs as to be broadened by the elixirs of Burroughes and Welcome—the smile deriding, among other things, the having and the not having, the giving and the taking, sickness and health. (*Capital* 277)

In this passage, Beckett recognizes the innate quality in the human spirit, the element of the human condition, that cannot be "extinguished" or "broadened." In *Happy Days* and *Endgame*, this enduring spirit manifests itself in narrative. The absurd and apocalyptic settings in which Beckett places these characters emphasizes the extreme traumas of the human condition, even as Winnie and her suffering counterparts in *Endgame* do not stop talking and thus reveal that their speech enables them to survive and continue in significant ways. Indeed, by juxtaposing suffering and narrative on the stage, Beckett also demonstrates narrative's inherent and crucial role as a means of human persistence. Those who can do and have nothing else turn to their abilities with language to persist and continue living. Narrative, then, has the capacity to respond to suffering its consolatory ability to act as both a means of endurance and of witness.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## "Another Creature Like Herself": The Consolation Of Community In Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* And *Rockaby*

Throughout his dramatic *oeuvre*, Samuel Beckett gives ultimate primacy to the act of speaking. Beckett's dramatic protagonists are disabled, old, bereft, isolated, and dying, but nonetheless they still speak. Amidst their decay and dereliction, characters in Beckett plays continually tell stories. His literary style strips away essentially everything from humanity except the ability to speak as he, to an extent, rejects plot, setting, and even character to affirm story's role as an innately human ability and necessity. He does not look at the expansive capabilities of storytelling, but instead focuses on story's ability to remain and affirm humanity when all else fails. Capable of little else, Beckett's disabled and dying narrators cannot resist their compulsion to narrate. In the act of narrating, they are able to persist and to affirm their humanity; they exist as human beings and they express human desires. Thus, Beckett writes at the brink of nihilism and despair; however, his trajectory of diminishment emphasizes the speech that remains and thus ultimately locates human being, and even consolation, in the narrative act itself.

Two of Beckett's single act, single-actor places—*Rockaby* and *Krapp's Last Tape*-- embody these concepts as in each play the narrator, the sole character, speaks a narrative in the present while listening to recorded stories told by a past self. Both Krapp and the woman in *Rockaby* are isolated and nearing the end of their lives; however, both of these protagonists are also artist figures crafting careful

narratives, deeply engaged in the act of storytelling that functions as the focal point of both their plays. Out of their isolation and decay both characters turn to narrative. Significantly, both seem to persist through this turn to and engagement with narrative as they fill their time not in quiet despair but with the act of speaking and telling. Their spoken narratives are not mindless acts; Krapp and W act as intentional artist figures intent on crafting specific narratives in specific ways. Further, both use their narratives to articulate their lack of, and need for, community. In this way, Krapp and W both affirm their capacity for human speech and creativity, as well as their suffering longing via their narratives. As these characters speak, they record despair and isolation while also expressing their desire for community and seeking to console themselves via narrative.

Even as the narrators' appearance, words, setting, and actions emphasize isolation and decay, their continual speech and the careful, intentional ways in which they craft their stories emphasize their need for story and the turn to narrative for consolation. By engaging their verbal recordings, Krapp and W not only turn towards narrative as their means of meaning and persistence, but also use narrative as a remedy for isolation. Through present engagement with past narratives, these characters are able to form a community, albeit a diminished one. By interacting with their respective recordings, these two characters are both the teller and the listener, the actor and the audience. Significantly, Krapp and W do so as characters in plays themselves. By functioning as both performer and audience, they form and model a spare version of community on the stage, which metadramatically extends to the audience functioning as a community in the theater.

The audience, though it does not enter the stage physically, emotionally engages and responds to the play, acting as a listening, human presence. Thus, Beckett, in these single-narrator plays, makes an argument for narrative, specifically dramatic narrative, as offering consolation for the particular human suffering of isolation. As his characters turn to narrative and craft their stories in specific ways, the plays make an argument for narrative's consolatory power and necessity amidst human suffering; as his characters specifically model and draw on story's power to form community, the plays make an argument for narrative's ability to form community amidst isolation. Through Krapp and W's decay and isolation, their consistent storytelling, and their ultimate creation of unorthodox narrative communities, the plays makes an argument for story as the means by which humanity persists and finds consolation for despairing solitude.[1]

Critics acknowledge the significance of speech in Beckett's plays, though not all critics attribute equal meaning and power to the narrative acts of Beckett's characters. In arguing for the necessity of language to Beckett's characters, Charles Lyons focuses on the repetitive nature of words in the late plays to argue that Beckett presents "the personal texts of his characters…as structures that sustain consciousness, confine consciousness, and in repetition neutralize it" (308). That is, "in Beckett's late plays the text the character speaks or hears defines his or her experience because its repetition is that experience. While the significance of the

[1] While *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby* are the focal points of this argument because they both present characters engaging their own recorded narratives, Beckett indicates the consolatory power of narrative and the community it can form in other plays as well: in the interactions between May and her mother in *Footfalls*, in the haunting speaking mouth in *Not I*, and most notably in the interactions between the Listener and the Reader in *Ohio Impromptu.*

text as history, memory, or invention is diminished, as the words play in mind, they constitute the material of consciousness—even if the mind that sustains them is aware of their presence only as sound" (Lyons 308-309). Words in Beckett, then, maintain and define the consciousness of characters; without words, Beckett's characters could not persist. Andrew Renton places the persistence of speech and sound in the context of Beckett's works as a whole, arguing "the discourse of Beckett's work, in drama and in prose, as it was received during his lifetime, was a continuous narrative construed from the obligation towards speech and, consequently, writing" which in turn was always "tempered by the repeated Beckettian paradigm of impotence" (168). Thus, as Renton states, "Beckett's was an art of impending silence, coupled with the obligation to overcome that silence. This reading gives Beckett and Beckett's work something of a stoic dignity, as it survives against all odds" (168). Speech, then, on the Beckettian stage not only provides persistence but a means of survival and even dignity in the face of silence and impotence.

Going further than Lyons' argument for words as consciousness and Renton's claims for an obligation to overcome silence, Andrew Kennedy posits that voices and speech in Beckett's plays are not only sound sustaining consciousness or only a move against silence, but voices "that create moments of significance out of, or against, the dramatically enacted scenes of human chaos…these voices are charged with human values of great intensity within agnostically ambivalent contexts" (408). Kennedy specifically argues for the power of these voices amidst silence. In regards to *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Waiting for Godot*, and other early Beckett plays Kennedy

posits that moments of silence bear significance for speech in Beckett's plays, because "out of the silence, voices arise that are endowed with existential, I would say spiritual, force and significance …the almost total exclusion of the multiplicity of the external world—the chaos—contributes to creating significant moments… metaphorically, the moments are like subdued rays of light in darkness, even though we are asked to attend to felt loss and dying" (414). Due to the silence, the spare stages, and the despair and even death present on the stage, the voices gain spiritual significance and function as consolation, as "subdued rays of light in darkness" (414). Kennedy rightfully suggests that "dramaturgically these voices from the early plays foreshadow the radical experimentation with dramatic language in the monological late plays" (414). That is, the ability of the voices to be "subdued rays of light" does not only apply to the early plays, but across Beckett's dramatic works. Both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby* are plays that bring significant voice and narrative out of the silence, even and especially because the two plays depict solitary, decaying humans bringing forth narrative in spare, yet significant forms.

Both Krapp and the nameless woman in *Rockaby* are diminished and decaying manifestations of humankind; however, they are also both artist figures who craft and engage narrative. These paradoxical elements of their identities together make the claim that storytelling key to human persistence. As their isolation and decay affirms their suffering, their compulsion to narrate affirms their human nature and human need for community. In both plays, storytelling acts as a means of human persistence amidst inhumane isolation. The speaking voices are by far the richest, and in many ways the only, thing on stage. That is, the plays' scarcity

of setting, character, and plot demands a focus on the spoken voice and in so doing call attention to the wealth of narrative available therein. Thus, the form of Beckett's drama makes an argument that privileges the human voice. The content of the plays centers on narrators who, out of their isolation, turn to narrative as a means of expressing their desires and as a means of consolation for their solitude. By making these two narrators artist figures who carefully craft and control their narratives, Beckett depicts suffering individuals reliant on an active engagement with narrative for persistence, affirmation, and consolation.

*Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) is a 9-page play that takes less than an hour to perform. Its length, or lack thereof, as well as its lack of characters, its spare setting, and its meager plot, manifest Beckett's mastery of literature of diminishment. Throughout the play, Krapp speaks a narrative in the present while listening to recorded stories told by his past self. The play's content manifests the despair that functions as a hallmark of Beckett's work. It depicts an isolation and loss for which there is seemingly no remedy. It is a devastating portrait of a solitary, bitter human being. As Krapp himself states, his "best years…when there was a chance of happiness" are gone (223). He sits alone on the stage for the entirety of the play, except for the brief moments in which he indulges his alcoholism offstage. In a comic, yet pathetic, moment at the opening of the play he slips on a banana peel in an almost-sickening comedic echo of slapstick humor. The stage directions emphasize that Krapp has a "*laborious walk*"; that he is "*very near-sighted (but unspectacled)*; and that he is *"hard of hearing"* (215). Beyond his diminishing ability to walk, see, and hear, Krapp has a "*purple nose*", "*disordered grey hair*" and he is "*unshaven*"

(215). Thus, Krapp exists with diminished sense and physical abilities and a diminished ability to care for himself, as indicated by his alcoholic's nose and his disheveled hair.

Not only is Krapp physically decayed and diminished, but also his quality of life manifests decrepitude. For instance, Krapp is near-sighted, but lacks spectacles. The rest of his clothing joins the significant absence of his glasses in revealing the poverty of the play's protagonist. Krapp wears "*rusty black narrow trousers too short for him*" and a *"grimy white shirt open at neck"* (215). His clothes do not fit, and they are dirty. The stage directions further work to strip Krapp of any dignity he may have as the actor wears a "*surprising pair of dirty white boots*" which serve to emphasize the ridiculousness of his actions as he slips about with banana peels on the stage (215). His actions, and his appearance all present a decaying member of the human race, bereft of any form of community. No one else enters the stage to aid him when he falls, to notice his dirty clothes, or even to notice the "*surprising*" boots (215). His "*den*", as the stage directions identify the setting, only contains a "*small*" table with tape equipment and bananas in its drawers. As indicated by the *"loud pop of cork*" that accompanies his brief trip to the wings, Krapp also has an alcohol stash somewhere; however, that's all he appears to have. His minimal possessions match his decaying appearance.

Taken together, Krapp's appearance and home join the content of his words in emphasizing his isolation. He remains alone on stage for the entirety of the play, without even the suggestion of the presence of another human being to notice his decay and despair. As well, he completely lacks a community and, given his inability

to move or hear well, is rapidly losing his ability to form one. In the course of the play, Krapp refers to significant relationships in his life and describes their demise. Krapp's descriptions of loss emphasize his loss of community, his continual work to reject community, and his paradoxical continual desire for the company of others. According to the tape, Krapp at one point was "living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street"; however, she is now gone (218). Though Krapp seeks to dismiss his relationship with her by claiming there is "not much about her," he also cannot resist mentioning her "incomparable!" eyes that were "very warm" and something he "suddenly saw…again" in his imagination as he listened "to an old year" (218). In addition to the loss of his lover, Krapp describes the death of his mother through his memory of "the house on the canal where mother lay a-dying" (219). Krapp claims to have sat at the window "wishing she were gone" while he watched the regular "nursemaids, infants, old men, dogs" go by in the street (219). In his recollections, Krapp claims that he "got to know them quite well" before quickly correcting himself "oh by appearance of course I mean!" (219). In the loss of his mother, then, Krapp sought the community of others.

Despite his quick correction, Krapp cannot resist narrating more about his relationships with the people on the street, the most significant of which was "one dark young beauty" (219). She becomes another lost relationship as when Krapp spoke to her, she "threatened to call the police" (219-220). Following this rejection, Krapp describes his mother's death. While "throwing a ball for a little white dog," he sees a blind "go down" and knows that it is "all over and done with, at last" (220). In response, Krapp holds the ball out to he dog and remembers "he took it in his mouth,

gently, gently. A small, old, black, hard, solid rubber ball" that Krapp says he "shall feel…in my hand, until my dying day" (220). Though his description of his mother's death as happening "at last," mediated through the window, complies with his desire to appear as one who rejoices in solitude, his careful account of the actions with the dog, and the connection inherent in the moment of sharing the ball, indicate Krapp's need for a connection at the moment of the permanent severing of his relationship with his mother. In each of Krapp's descriptions he describes and attempts to minimize a loss, but cannot fully do so. Though he works to reject the company of others, Krapp's solitary reality adds to his sorrow and decay. Indeed, a large part of Krapp's despair is his isolation and he seeks consolation for his solitude throughout the play.

While Krapp explicitly states his rejection of human community and companionship, the implications of the choices he makes when listening to his tape affirm that the opposite is true. Krapp's actions belie his verbal rejoicing in his lack of community and rejection of his lover. Throughout the play, he over and again replays his most profound moment of human intimacy. Further, Krapp's own recording suggests that the darkness in which he purportedly rejoices actually fails him. Seeking to make a proud claim for darkness, Krapp's recording actually articulates his isolation. The tape states: "With all this darkness round me I feel less alone. [*Pause.*] In a way. [*Pause.*] I love to get up and move about in it, then back here to…[hesitates]…me. [*Pause.*] Krapp" (217). By acknowledging that he feels "less alone," Krapp implicitly admits that he sought some form of remedy for his solitude. Further, through the silence and qualification of "in a way" that follow his implicit

admission, Krapp further suggests that his chosen remedy of darkness fails to fulfill his need (217). When Krapp states that he loves to move about in the darkness and then return, he pauses before being able to state and acknowledge that the only thing or person to whom he can return is "me…Krapp" (217). At the time of this recording, Krapp is 39 as opposed to the 69 of the Krapp on the stage. For 30 years, then, Krapp exists alone in the darkness, continually decaying as time moves forward and continually remaining alone. Though he appears to reject his need for others, Krapp actually remains desperately aware that he is alone and has no other human being to whom he can turn. Alone, Krapp only has his own voice and the recordings of his past, both of which bear great significance and value.

The play's setting and structure works alongside Krapp's words to emphasize his isolation, but also strive to signify the value of his speaking voice in response to this particular form of suffering. Krapp cannot move well, see well, or hear well; however, he can speak. Amidst Krapp's dirt and loss of hearing, sight, and ability to walk, the stage directions offer specific directions for the actor's voice. In contrast to the decay and ridicule extant in the rest of Krapp's appearance, the directions articulate that his voice should be a "*cracked voice*" with "*distinctive intonation*" (215). That is, his voice does not disappear into the rest of his decaying, bizarre appearance but stands out as distinctive. Further, Krapp's voice appears in two different mediums in the play: through the speaking of the physically present actor and through the recording of the actor's voice on the tape. The primacy of the speaking voice thus stands out in a play where no other voice speaks, coming from a character whose other faculties are diminished, and on a stage where not much else

happens other than the spoken word. To be sure, Krapp moves back and forth across the stage and engages his tape player, but almost all of his actions are focused on the production of the speaking voice. Since the stage bears little else besides Krapp—only his table, microphone, tape boxes, and bananas—he remains the focal point of the play, much as his distinctive voice is the focal point of the action. Significantly, most of the objects on the table also evoke verbal narrative and thus contribute to the primacy of the speaking voice in the play. Beckett does not even allow the rest of the empty stage to distract from Krapp's table. Per the stage directions, the "*table and immediately adjacent area"* are *"in strong white light*" while the remainder of the stage sits "*in darkness*" (215). The stage always points to the table and the narrative it bears as a focal point, much as Krapp's distinctive voice points to his ability, and choice, to speak as an integral part of his character.

Krapp's sorrow may have no remedy, and he certainly cannot undo the irrevocable passage of time; however, he nonetheless affirms story and a desire for community as essential parts of humanity, and even as integral parts of his ability to persist. Primarily, the play depicts the human need for community through Krapp's compulsion towards, and engagement with, narrative. Krapp, both past and present, is an active storyteller. Significantly, he is an artist engaged in narrative amidst the anguish of his life and the horror of his isolated degradation. He may be a decaying manifestation of humankind, but he is an artist figure nonetheless and his narrative acts affirm his humanity and fill his life.

The main action of the play consists of Krapp playing tapes for himself on which he recorded days of his life in the past—an audio version of a diary that functions as

a dialogue for Krapp in the present. Krapp's actions in the play are focused on the facilitation of his recording. He carries around a ledger on which he has documented the various tapes and their contents, his table is dedicated to his recording equipment, and his only actions in the play are geared towards his movement to the table, his unlocking of the drawers, and his playing of the tape. The stage directions exhaustively document his machinations with the tape and his recorder. In his first speech in the play alone, Krapp "*bends over the ledger, tuns the pages, finds the entry he wants, reads", "bends over table, starts peering ad poking at the boxes", "takes up box, peers at it", 'lays [a box] on table, opens it and pers at spools inside", "peers at ledger", "peers at spools", "takes out a spool, peers at it", "lays it on table, closes box three, put sit back with others, takes up the spool",* and more (216). All of these stage directions are interspersed within Krapp's words, which are almost, if not fully, outnumbered by the words of the stage directions. Krapp's actions are intense, present, myriad, and cannot be ignored by reader or audience. He compulsively and fully directs his energy at the location and playing of his recorded narrative. Krapp is not a passive listener; instead, he actively engages with his story. As Paul Lawley notes, "to get what he wants, he plays, skips, plays again, winds back and repeats: in short, he *edits*" (90). Further, Lawley argues that Krapp "is not only an editor" but instead "we infer from several details that he is by vocation a writer…in a sense everything we see and hear Krapp doing is authorial: on the tape he (re)imagines his past, and on the stage he edits it into his present" (91). That is, Krapp is an artist, specifically a verbal artist. Eric Levy suggests Krapp's need for control functions as a means of controlling time, that is "recourse to the tape recorder is the primary

means by which Krapp negates the movement of time… the tapes enable him to replace *continuity* with *atomicity*—to replace, that is, the experience of time as an unbroken flow of becoming with the experience of time as a series of discrete, disposable parts, which can be discarded or rememorated at will" (58). Levy, then, argues for the intentionality and efficacy of Krapp's actions: Krapp turns to his tapes—his narrative—in order to engage his experience and memory and construct his life in a specific way. Narrative is no mindless action for Krapp, but a carefully chosen activity that he orchestrates in a specific way for what his narrative can offer him.

His opening lines in the play articulate his emphasis on locating, and listening to, the recording found in box 3, spool 5. That is, Krapp has a specific story to which he wants to listen. As Krapp opens and closes boxes, reads the ledger, and pulls out and peers at spools, he says "box…three…spool…five. Spool! box… three… three… four… two… nine! good God!...seven…ah! the little rascal! Box three Spool… five… five… five…ah! the little scoundrel! spool five. Box three, spool five. Spooool!" (216). The frenetic compulsion of his actions embodies the obsessive nature of his words as Krapp locates not just any story, but the particular narrative for which he longs. Throughout the play, Krapp stops and rewinds tapes as he constructs a new, if chaotic and garbled, narrative out of his old recordings. Further, Krapp wants to listen to this particular story in a particular way. When a box falls and makes a noise, Krapp stops and rewinds the tape. When his past self uses the word "viduity" and Krapp can no longer remember what the word means, he stops to look it up in a dictionary. He wants to hear the story, and he wants to understand. He cannot be

passive in the face of his decay and isolation, but responds with the need to hear a particular narrative

Krapp continues to act as a storyteller throughout his brief stint on the stage and, in so doing, projects his speaking voice and its narrative capabilities as his chosen means of consolation and persistence amidst his isolation and decay. In the course of the play, he not only listens to his past stories, but also makes a new recording. His recorded voice tells the reader that Krapp made the significant tape on box 3, spool 5 when he was 39 years old and in the course of the new recording the living Krapp on the stage announces that he is 69. For at least 30 years, then, Krapp has followed and acted upon his compulsion to speak his story. The verbal act of speaking is crucial to Krapp. At one point in the play, when he lapses into silence while recording, the stage directions announce that Krapp "*realizes he is recording silence*" and "*switches off*" the recorder until he begins speaking again (221). He will not record silence, but specifically uses the tapes as a means of preserving his spoken words. Throughout the play, then, Krapp is either listening to a story or speaking a new one, in both his words on the recorded tapes and the words he speaks to himself as he moves about his room. He is alone, he is at different times angry and sad and skeptical and apathetic and derisive and lonely, he is old, he struggles to walk and to hear and to see, yet he still longs for and still creates narrative.

The content of box 3, spool 5 to which Krapp listens so intently throughout the play highlights his need for community. Krapp seeks out a specific moment on this tape, and plays it 3 times in the course of the play. In the recorded moment,

Krapp recalls lying in a boat with an unnamed woman, looking into her eyes, and experiencing a moment of love and peace in tune with the rocking waves beneath the boat. Krapp thus makes this memory of intimate human connection his most significant memory, and the most significant part of his spoken narrative. Krapp's recurrent playing of the memory in the boat contrasts with the self-narrative his recording puts forward. Krapp's recording claims "perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. but I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now" (223). If this were true, the most significant part of his narrative would far more likely be his epiphany than his romance. In part of his narrative, Krapp has "the vision at last" and makes a recording to record when it became "clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most—" (220). However, in the play, Krapp does not even finish listening to this narrative, but instead "curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again" and again "curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again" until he arrives at the memory of "my face in her breasts and my hands on her" (220).[2] Krapp reacts with vehemence and frustration against the vision that supposedly functions as the culmination of all he wants to be. Instead of even listening fully to

[2] Significantly, some of the more emotional elements of Krapp's narrative bear autobiographical significance for Beckett. John Hurt, an actor who played Krapp, writes in his analysis of the play: "I've always felt that Krapp is an autobiographical piece. You do feel, all the time, that it's Sam saying, "there but for the grace of…" (Hurt). Beckett's biographer Anthony Cronin calls Krapp one of "Beckett's later dramatic alter-egos" (Cronin 105). Both Cronin and Beckett's other biographer, James Knowlson, make claims as to the autobiographical identity of the woman in the boat. Cronin identifies the woman as Peggy Sinclair, whereas Knowlson makes a convincing argument for Ethna McCarthy (Cronin 107, Knolwson 398). Knowlson writes that "Beckett himself…den[ied] that the girl in the boat had anything at all do to with Peggy" and that "the feelings expressed in this passage seem much closer to the tender yearning inspired by Ethna" (398). Knowlson's biography also notes other autobiographical elements in the play, including Beckett's mother's death and the way in which Beckett's own epiphany relates to Krapp's.

that section, he plays the section of lost human connection over and again. Within this memory itself, Krapp exhibits the same paradox:

> I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on and she agreed, without opening her eyes. [*Pause*.] I asked her to look at me and after a few moments- [*Pause.*]-after a few moments she did, but the eye just slits, because of the glare. I bent over her to get them in the shadow and they opened. [*Pause. Low.*] Let me in. (221)

Though Krapp's words indicate hopelessness, his actions indicate his intense desire for community and to be let in by another.

He exhibits the same contradictory approach to his narrative recording itself when he makes a new recording in the course of the play. Krapp speaks derisively of his narrative and suggests that it might end, telling himself "go on with this drivel in the morning. Or leave it at that…Leave it at that" (223). His compulsion to record and to exist with narrative proves stronger than his derision, as he keeps talking and then plays the boat memory again and listens to the tape as the play comes to a close. The play, then, affirms both Krapp's need for community and his consistent turn to narrative amidst his suffering. Capable of little else, Krapp returns to and engages with his narrative, which provides the consolation of a treasured moment, a voice with which to engage in the present, and a means of persisting and articulating his longings and his life.

There are several critical takes on what Krapp's turn to recorded narrative presents in the play. Critics read the play as manifesting Beckett's obsession with Cartesian division[3]; in terms of genre; and as a depiction of failure and lack of self-

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[3] Stanley Gontarski argues that Krapp's central conflict is "the inability of mind to control body, spirit to control flesh," which itself "further develops what may be Beckett's most persistent theme the internal conflict, Cartesian or Manichean, of intellect and emotion, the attempted

awareness. As Ruby Cohn wrestles with the generic classification of Krapp's tapes, she marks a distinction between a solo and a soliloquy, with " a solo's purpose being performance for an audience, and soliloquy's purpose being expression of feeling ostensibly for oneself" (*Just Play* 64). Classifying Krapp's tapes complicates this distinction, because "tapes are usually intended for auditors other than their speakers, but Krapp's tapes are birthday greetings from himself to himself" (65). Thus, "the tape to which Krapp listens was recorded on his thirty-ninth birthday…is not a soliloquy but a deliberate performance for future listening" (65). Cohn thus acknowledges the intentionality of Krapp's recordings; they are no mindless pastime, but deliberate acts of performance.

Stanley Gontarski argues that the tape and its recordings facilitate the play's ability to convey its central theme, which is "the inability of the self to perceive itself accurately in the present" ("Making" 17). That is, The tapes and the themes they embody presents a study of "recurrent failure" as "Krapp is a man who struggled against the fundamental cacophony of the human character, a beaten man who now curses his younger selves at least in part for the decision to abandon love, but Krapp never acquires the self-awareness to see the similarities between his young and old selves" ("Making" 18). Gontarski insightfully identifies a key theme at work in the content of Krapp's tapes—his inability to perceive himself and his inability to

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resolution of which has consumed Krapp's life" (Gontarski Making 17-18). In another Cartesian reading of the play, Ryan Bishop and Walter Spitz argue "although Krapp is the only character presented onstage, the play may be said to feature, at least, two characters" because "Krapp's interaction with the taped voice of his earlier, more exuberant self smacks more of dialogue than of monologue; such interaction in a context of isolation reveals the protagonist's separation of the self from the self" (57). Thus Bishop and Spitz argue that the play depicts "Krapp's continuing descent into (or indulgence in) the sin of separation, which, according to Beckett, is a primary and distinctive feature of Western thought" (Bishop Spitz 57-58).

reconcile his emotion and his intellect—that leads to the isolated despair of the solitary, debilitated narrator on the stage. Krapp has failed, and he does not verbally acknowledge his failure, even though his despairing and ultimately paralyzed return to a recorded moment of connection on the tape signifies at least a continued longing for all that he left behind.

Continuing the other thematic thread of Gontarski's take on the play, Jon Erickson also reads the play, and its recorded narratives, as a commentary on Krapp's self-awareness. Erickson argues that while the tapes "may have begun as a truly self-conscious ritual action of affirming the self through the recording of its experience, and the subsequent contemplation of that experience" they "end up through repetition compulsion as the continual frustration of a narcissistic desire" and "despite this frustration, the force of habit, rather than any real self-conscious reflection, is what keeps Krapp going" (183). Thus, Erickson offers a negative reading of Krapp's narrative tendencies in the play, arguing that "while the unexamined life may not be worth living, the particular method of this overly examined life takes the *place* of living, negating its worth in the long run" (Erickson 183). While acknowledging Krapp's problems and failures, Erickson fails to realize that Krapp's predilection for recording and need for his tapes responds against the divisions, repetitions, and frustrations that have led to his aged solitude and diminishment. The tapes, by virtue of their existence and their continual narrative presence offer something else, something more, than human failure, much as the play itself depicts failure and despair in its content but, as a narrative and dramatic

form and presentation, offers a testament to the human need for community and the consolatory power of narrative.

On Beckett's trajectory of literary diminishment, *Rockaby* (1980) is the diminished version of *Krapp's Last Tape*. Much like Krapp, *Rockaby's* narrator—identified only as "W"— is a decayed and isolated iteration of her former self, though her movements are far more restricted and she seems far closer to death. In the course of the play, W sits in a chair that rocks back and forth of its own accord. The rocking occurs in time with a voice – "V"—that speaks throughout the play. Though no apparatus is apparent, "V" is W's spoken voice and must come from a recording made by W at an earlier time.[4] The entire action of the play consists of W's mechanical rocking, V's speaking, and W's engagement with her own narrative through both the way in which she crafted it in the past and the commands, echoes, and pauses she uses to interact with it in the present. Again, Beckett depicts isolation and suffering with only narrative as a viable response.

Just as Beckett's stage directions in *Krapp's Last Tape* reveal Krapp's decline and isolation, so do the directions in *Rockaby* assert the solitude and impending death of its sole character. According to the stage directions, W is "prematurely old" and her hair is "unkempt" and she bears the signs of former grandeur through the "black lacy high-necked evening gown she wears," whose "jet sequins…glitter when rocking" alongside the "extravagant trimming" on her "flimsy head-dress" (433). This outfit makes her, to an extent, an object of ridicule as her unkempt appearance

[4] The opening stage directions define W as "*woman in chair*" and V as "*her recorded voice*" (Beckett 435).

contrasts with the decayed grandeur of her clothing. Further, the outfit hints at the past and suggests that W has diminished and become something she formerly was not. Beyond her clothes and advancing age, W's minimal actions indicate that her decline occurs continually throughout the play. The opening stage directions state that her eyes are "now closed, now open in unblinking gaze. About equal proportions section 1, increasingly closed 2 and 3, closed for good halfway through 4" (433). Thus, W moves closer and closer to an exhausted sleep, or more likely death, as the audience watches the play. Further, W is motionless and sits "completely still till fade-out of chair. Then in light of spot head slowly inclined" (433). Her stillness indicates her inability to move while her posture suggests sorrow and defeat.

Not only decayed and diminished, W also exists in solitude. In the course of the play, W's recorded voice, V, describes both her mother's death and her own repetitive and futile quest for another. According to V, the rocking chair is "where mother rocked/all the years/all in black/best black…till her end came" and she was

> dead one day
> no
> night
> dead one night
> in the rocker
> in her best black
> head fallen (440)

At one point, then, W/V was with her mother, whom she describes as "harmless/no harm in her" but now the mother is dead (440). Significantly, the description of the mother's death also describes W's current outfit and posture, further indicating the

ways in which this solitary character moves toward and even longs for death in the play. W is alone and moving ever closer to despair and death.

W's physical presence indicates her continued suffering and isolation while V's recording articulates her long-held and long-denied desire for another. In each of the four sections spoken by the recording, V speaks of her desire for community through phrases such as "another creature like herself," "another living soul," "one other living soul," as well as describes the actions of her quest as she goes "all sides/high and low" (435, 437, 439, 441). W/V remains constant in her solitude, her suffering, and her longing for another to ease her isolation.

The setting simultaneously reflects the spare, isolated life of its protagonist and highlights the speaking voice. The stage is dark, except for a "subdued light" highlighting the speaker's face (433). In later drama, specifically *Not I*, Beckett continues along this trajectory to the point where only the speaking mouth of the actress appears on the stage. Here, Beckett presents an earlier iteration of the juxtaposition of a speaking mouth with a dark stage by only highlighting W's face. The darkness of the rest of the set emphasizes the sheer emptiness of the stage and make the prominent absence of other objects and people palpable. Throughout the play, even the spare light diminishes. Thus, the play's setting emphasizes the speaking voice through having barely anything else on stage and through focusing attention on the face of the character from whom the voice comes. The voice also takes on prominence by being doubly present: W and V both speak in the play. That is, W's voice manifests both through the physically present actress and the

recording speaking throughout the play. The only action in the play, beyond the mechanically controlled rocker, is the interaction between these two voices.

Due to the minimal stage and the decline of the narrator, spoken narrative holds the focal role in the play. W/V controls very little in the play; she sits motionless in a rocking chair "controlled mechanically without assistance from W" (434). W cannot control her motion, seems to have minimal speech abilities left, and cannot stop the premature aging of her body; however, she exhibits remarkable control over her narrative, both as the physically present speaker on the stage and as the creator of the recorded voice. W's desire for her narrative and her spoken articulation of that desire precipitate the play itself. The play opens with W's spoken "more" (436). Not content with silence and isolation, W demands more. A period, not a question mark, immediately follows W's monosyllabic sentence, indicating that her words are not a question but a command. In response to her desire for more, W receives words, specifically a carefully crafted narrative of her own creation. Throughout the play, W repeats her "more" at the beginning of each section, reiterating her desire for and control of the recorded narrative.

W not only records and controls the narrative, but she also has extensive knowledge of the recording. The recording plays, but unlike Krapp, W is not pressing buttons or inserting tapes. Thus, each time W pauses and repeats 'more," she reveals her knowledge of the recording; she knows when it will fall silent and she knows when to speak before the narrative begins its next section. W has memorized the recording to the extent to where she can join in at will, as she does at several points throughout the play. She does not join in at random, but at specifically

chosen moments and only with specific lines. In this way, W remains an artist figure as her joining in becomes an additional layer in the craft of her narrative.

Where Krapp controls and shapes his narrative through the way in which he chooses tapes and rewinds and plays the particular points of his story most significant to him, V's narrative recording is already a tightly structured, poetic narrative. While the narrative does contain plot, charted in careful movements across each of the four sections, the basic nature of this plot leaves the primary emphasis of her narrative on the language itself. Her narrative is poetic, and each line manifests the intentionality inherent to V's syntax and diction as she marries form and content. The first four lines exemplify the careful crafting of V's narrative:

> till in the end
> the day came
> in the end came
> close of a long day (435)

As the rest of her narrative will be, the lines are all enjambed without punctuation as each rock and each line propels the narrative forward. Each time W says "more," her monosyllabic command to her narrative ends with a period; however, punctuation never appears in V's spoken recording. The juxtaposition of enjambment with a monosyllabic sentence indicates W's diminishment; where she once spoke a full narrative, she is now speaks one-word sentences. Even so, W persists by engaging her narrative. These opening lines deal with two concepts of time: "the end" and "the day." Broken into short phrases, the lines, as the stage directions indicate, match the mechanical rock of the chair. Though she actively controls neither in the play, at least through any visible technical means, W has attuned the recorded narrative of V to her life. The first line refers only to the time

“the end,” whereas the second refers only to “the day.” In the following two lines, V carefully conflates and further defines these concepts through repetition. The third line repeats “the end” from the first line, but aligns it with “the day” by joining it with the verb came. Thus, the third line repeats both the first and second line: “in the end came.” The end, then, is like the day in that it comes. The object of this second “came” is the fourth line, “close of a long day”. Day is now aligned with a particularly length of time—long—and is something that that has an end, as indicated by V’s addition of “close,” a synonym for “end”. V’s careful repetition thus joins the initially divided concepts of end and day, and uses this conjunction to define the period of time about which she is speaking: the coming end, which is the close of a long day. She understands the power of putting certain words in a certain order. Further, her narrative not only occurs in time with the rocking but also mimics the back and forth of rocking via repetition and line splits: end, day, end, day. The way in which Beckett’s lines are structured on the page embody the rocking movement of W’s chair: end/day/end/day appearing in alternating lines. These opening lines are a foundational part of V’s narrative, a set of words and phrases she employs over and again as she narrates the “close of a long day” which is both the end of a specific day of the play and most likely her life.

As a storyteller, V orchestrates her autobiographical narrative into four separate sections, each set apart through their own specific phrases yet always tied to the others through V’s intentional repetition. Precipitated by W’s “more,” each of the four sections articulates her descent into further isolation towards death. In her narrative, V articulates her suffering and her need for community as she manifests

her poetic abilities as an artist and relies on narrative's power as her means of consolation and persistence when nothing else remains. In the first section, V describes her quest for another; in her second, she describes her retreat to the window; in the third, she focuses on the closed blinds of the other windows; and, finally, in the fourth she descends to the basement to rock and await death. V's diminishing narrative thus matches content to the form of W's diminishing movements as the actress' eyes close more and more, and the stage's own diminishment as the light fades. Each of the sections emphasizes both her suffering and her linguistic mastery, affirming her dual identity as an isolated sufferer and an artistic storyteller.

Where Krapp's desire for control, and his storytelling capabilities, are evident in his machinations with the tape recorder, his tape selection, and his attempts to understand his narrative, V's capabilities are control are evident in her thematic and linguistic lynchpins, and the controlled and poetic way in which her voice relays her narrative. Both narrators—decayed and dying though they might be—thus function as active and engaged storytellers, as isolated human beings who nonetheless seek and perform narrative. In addition to its plot movement, each of the 4 sections also carries its own distinct language; however, V employs repeated phrases to propel and connect her narrative even as she adds additional layers with each new section. These lynchpins maintain its continuity and emphasize its most important themes as the four sections move across the spare plot of the play. V crafts her narrative through careful elision and repetition. Each of the sections begins with some iteration of the temporal description with which V opens the first

section. Time thus joins V's discussion of others, or more accurately, her longing for others, as one of the two most consistent pieces of her narrative. End and isolation thus serve as the most prominent themes V addresses in her narrative. Through the repeated phrases through which she propels and connects her narrative, V maintains careful artistic control of the story she tells.

The first section describes her quest for another in three subtly, yet significantly, different iterations. The beginning of this section, with its emphatic description of time, articulates the mortal and finite parameters within V lives, but also forcefully indicates the proximity of the end as well as the length of time of V's isolated suffering. She then emphasizes her isolation as she describes the actions taking place at this carefully articulated point in time. At the "close of a long day", V "said/to herself/whom else/time she stopped" (435). The line breaks serve as reminders of V's isolation: "whom else" stands alone, on a separate line from the language referring to V, thus further emphasizing her separation from whomever the "whom else" might be (435). As the day ends, so do V's actions. She has been doing something, but now says to herself it is time "she stopped" (435). Specifically, V claims it is "time she stopped" her quest for other human beings and for community. She carefully describes the actions and desires that constitute her quest:

> going to and fro
> all eyes
> all sides
> high and low
> for another
> another like herself
> another creature like herself
> a little like (435)

V’s language is spare, yet conveys an expansive reach. Her movement includes “all eyes” and “all sides” and thus indicates the comprehensive nature of her search. The object of her search, articulated in four different expressions in as many lines, is expansive and diminished. V longs first for “another,” more specifically “another like herself,” even more specifically “another creature,” yet then compresses her desire to a sparer longing for something “a little like.” Following these lines, she repeats “going to and fro” through “for another,” using repetition and the order of her narrative to expand and define. Through its placement, “going to and fro” becomes an ambiguous and multifaceted phrase in the narrative. It seemingly refers to W’s present action in the rocking chair, yet it also, in her narrative, explicitly deals with her search for others, and describes a quality of the other she seeks. The character of “another like herself” in V’s narrative, thus comes to mean another “a little like” V herself, who also exists “going to and fro” in the search of “another”. That is, it means another isolated being searching for community. V articulates a simple, focused desire that stands out for its singularity and for its insistent repetition. Further, by using language that suggests another “like herself” would engage in a similar quest, V indicates that longing for another is at part of being human. This longing is the key detail she ascribes to another creature “like herself” in her imagination. Whoever this individual may be, the first quality V imagines is not physical, but this longing and this quest for others. In this way, the first section reveals the intensity of V’s longing to move out of her isolation and into a relationship with another. Significantly, both V’s articulation of time and her description of her quest carry through the remainder of the play, serving as two key

lynchpins that connect each of the sections to each other and provide the foundation for the layered narrative V constructs.

The second section employs both the time language and V's description of her quest as a framework within which to set the narrative of V's movement inward to her window. In this way, V's narrative continues by describing a diminished version of her already-spare quest, even as her longing for another remains strong. The temporal language of end and close, along with V's acknowledgement that it is time to stop and the encompassing language that describes her quest, thus become lynchpins that carry her desire and quest forward throughout the play, even as her narrative constantly suggest that all is coming to an end. The descriptions of the time and the quest provide a familiar narrative space in which V adds a new element of her story. It still takes place at the "close of a long day" and V still goes "all eyes/all sides/high and low/for another…another like herself"; however, her physical location changes. V now moves past saying it is "time she stopped/going to and fro," to describing what she does next:

> in the end went and sat
> went back in and sat
> at her window
> let up the blind and sat
> quiet at her window
> only window
> facing other windows
> other only windows (437)

V's language and imagery emphasize her isolation and her quest for another, even as they also emphasize the beginning of the end of her quest. Sitting at a window instead of moving "to and fro" indicates a clear decline. If V was alone in her movement, she is certainly alone in her place at her "only window/facing other

windows/only other windows" (437). The repetition of the word "only" emphasizes the spare and minimal world in which V exists and also implies that any other person V may encounter exists in a similar, isolated despair. Her "only window" faces "other only windows"; there does not seem to be another possibility (437). Isolation and desire for another, then, are inherent parts of the human condition. Since the narrative frames V's movement to the window within the time language, but also the expansive "all eyes/all sides/high and low/for another" language that form the first part of her narrative, V clearly reveals her diminishment while also emphasizing her desire and failed search (437). The time and quest lynchpins thus perform their key function of moving the narrative forward while also retaining its continuity. V masterfully uses repetition to encase the new narrative within the old one and to indicate the increase of her isolation and restriction alongside the continuity of her desire.

In the third section of her narrative, V carries forth the temporal and quest themes, as well as her description of her window; however, she intensifies her sense of isolation and despair through the description of the failure of her window and the poignant, distinct adjective she now uses to describe herself and the other she seeks. The third section opens with a combination of phrases from the first two sections: at the "close of a long day," V describes "sitting at her window/quiet at her window/only window" (438). In conjunction with these repeated phrases, V adds new language that emphasizes the failure of her quest and the desperation of her desire. The windows now are not merely "other windows," but windows with "all

blinds down/never one up" as opposed to "hers alone up" (438). V now longer describes herself seeking "another living soul," but now asks

> for a blind up
> one blind up
> no more
> never mind a face
> behind the pane (438)

Her isolation is so complete that V seemingly would settle for a view of an open window blind, "never mind a face" (438). Her dismissal of the face indicates her recognition of the failure of her quest as she articulates that even a blind might in some way be enough for her as she sits at her only window.

As V continues to describe her desire in the new language of section three, her use of adjective and short lines adds layers of poignancy to the spare language of her narrative:

> never mind a face
> behind the pane
> famished eyes
> like hers
> to see
> be seen
> no
> a blind up
> like hers
> a little like (438)

V describes her own eyes and the eyes of the potential other for whom she longs as "famished" (438). This compelling adjective, a rare part of speech in V's narrative, indicates the starved quality of V's life without others. Following her statement that she longs for a blind up, "never mind a face," V further articulates the diminished nature of her desire as she follows the description of "famished eyes/like hers" and the action "to see/be seen" with an insistent "no" and a return to the blind. The

ambiguous "no" may negate her desire "to see/be seen" and may also be a stark statement of reality in which her "famished eyes" are the only present eyes at a window. Following this moment of self-editing and negation, V returns to the rhythms of sections one and two, and repeats elements of her quest, time, and window lynchpins. Section three, as it began, closes with the combined repetition of time and the quest from the first section and the window from the second. Because it is set within familiar, repeated language, the stark failure of V's quest and the slightly more frenetic, less controlled way in which she describes herself and her life stand out as distinct and strange, yet also expected as V's words conform to the trajectory of diminishment embodied by W, her dress, her eyes, and the light on the stage.

Surprisingly, given the intensely layered, repetitive manner in which V constructs the majority of her narrative, the fourth section contains the least repeated material from the other three sections. V employs her lynchpins here to indicate the end of her time through her use of the temporal language present since the opening of her narrative; however, her other repeated phrases appear here as parts of a past from which she has now moved on. V uses repetition to describe her past, but, in this final section of her narrative, focuses on language that describes her present and her impending future death. As she narrates her mother's death and her own movement "down the steep stair…right down/into the old rocker," V uses "so in the end/close of a long day" twice within the narration to insist that she is coming to an end. Once located in the rocker, at last aligning the recorded narrative with the physical reality of her present, does V refer to other elements of her recording. V

refers to her movement out of the past with relief: she now goes "right down/into the old rocker/those arms at last/and rocked…she so long all eyes/famished eyes/all sides/high and low/to and fro/at her window/to see/be seen" (441). Here, V uses repeated lynchpins from previous sections to compress her autobiographical narrative from four sections to nine lines. The elision she employs to achieve this compressed narrative aligns with the trajectory of diminishment set forth by the play; however, the layered narration of her narrative allows comprehensive understanding of her story. Now that she is in the rocker, with "at last" connoting the relief she feels at approaching the end, V switches from past tense verbs to the gerund form. She "rocked/saying to herself/no/done with that…saying to the rocker/rock her off" (442). Significantly, even as V indicates relief in moving to the end, she does so verbally. V may say she has now relinquished her desire for another in favor of her desire for, and relief at, the end, but she does not ever relinquish her narrative.

Thus, against the isolation and agony her narrative articulates, W always sets the careful craft and form of her story. She never sees another face at the window, but each time she asks for "more" from her narrative she gets it. As Steven Connor notes W "does get more each time, for each passage of narrative is longer than the previous one, and the last passage, with seventy-seven phrases, is over half as long again as the first. The reason for this expansion-in-diminishment is that the less there remains to tell, and the further the voice is on in the narrative, so the more there is to recapitulate" (127) Connor thus argues "the necessity of repetition makes for the deferral of ending" (128). Narrative is no panacea, but language and

narrative are the power W wields amidst her isolation and decay. Even if W does die at the end of the play, she does so with the echo of "rock her off," accompanied even in her final moments by narrative.[5] That is, her story does not offer immortality but it does act as W's sole companion in her despair and carries her humanity and ability to speak and articulate her selfhood and her desires through to the very end.

Thus, in these two single-narrator plays, Beckett juxtaposes isolation and decay with artist figures and a compulsion to narrate. Out of their suffering, these characters turn to narrative and their carefully crafted stories are the focal point of their lives and their plays. Within these narratives, his characters articulate their longing for community. Turning to narrative in their suffering, the characters acknowledge narrative as offering a means of affirming their humanity and as a means of consolation and persistence amidst their diminished and ever-ending lives. The plays affirm narrative as one of the last vestiges of humanity but also as a valuable means of persistence and a source of consolation. Beyond indicating narrative as consolation through the way in which the characters turn, and cling, to narrative as a means of persistence amidst their decay and isolation, these plays also posit that narrative offers the consolation of community amidst the particular human suffering of isolation.

In large part, this consolation comes from the spare form of community Krapp and W are able to create within and for themselves via the power of their recorded narratives. In these plays, narrative—specifically dramatic narrative—offers consolation for solitude and its accompanying despair. Dramatic narrative

[5] The common consensus is that W/V dies at the end of the play; however, Connor argues "the repetitive structure of the monologue does not allow the easy resolution with W's death" (127).

involves an audience. Thus, even as Krapp and W exist in isolation on the stage, they also exist within the dramatic community of actor and audience. Further, Krapp and W manifest their need for this specific mode of narrative and the consolation of community it offers through the types of narratives they construct. Both Krapp and W model the role of an audience for their recorded narratives; they are both storyteller and listener. That is, they become the audience for their own stories through their recorded narratives. By employing recorded narratives, both Krapp and *Rockaby's* narrator seek story and community, and use their own storytelling abilities to provide both. Beckett, by placing them on the stage, both models the community of theater for the audience even as the audience itself forms a sort of community for Krapp and W.

An audience is an integral part of dramatic literature, and a play and an audience coexist in a complex relationship. Susan Bennett claims "it is the interactive relations between audience and stage, spectator and performer which constitute production and reception, and which cause the inner and outer frames to converge for the creation of a particular experience" (229).[6] The performance of a play, then, is a "particular experience" that involves an "interactive" community between the individuals on the stage and the individuals in the audience; dramatic performance happens when the two engage each other. Herbert Blau also notes the

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[6] Bennett claims a theatrical production takes place within two frames: the outer ("all those cultural elements which create and inform the theatrical event") and the inner ("the dramatic production in a particular playing space") (228). This outer/inner structure also relates to the particular role of the audience member. In this regard, Bennett argues "above all the role of the theatre audience involves both the spectator's interaction with performance in both social (audience member) and private (individual capacities" (206).

codependence of audience and performance: "the audience… does not exist before the play but is *initiated* or *precipitated* by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed. The audience is what *happens* when, performing the signs and passwords of a play, something postulates itself and unfolds in response" (Blau 25). The audience happens because of the play; a play is something with the power to precipitate an audience to "unfold" in response. Going further, Richard Barr, in his *Rooms with a View*, argues "modern theater, and indeed theater itself, is *always* about community because performance always involves communal dynamics" (Barr 3). According to Barr, "audiences are equally active participants in empathetic and critical interplay" (13). When a play is performed, a performance community exists "which comprehends the fleeting but potentially formative alignments performance promotes within and between [actors and audience]" (17). This community "is a set of dramaturgically inscribed relationships that a production offers to its participants who may refuse, refine, or embrace them" (22). As Barr argues, this functions differently within works by different playwrights who, in their works, "by reconceptualizing community in general and the performance community in specific" can "open creative options that help shape their distinctive dramatic styles" (23).

Beckett takes advantage of the communal role of the audience through his chosen genre and through the way in which his characters seek to create audiences for themselves as a mode of community rather than remain isolated. Charles Lyons and Matthew Davies note the empathetic and essential role of the audience for Beckett's plays. Lyons posits that in "attending the performance of a Beckett

play…we exercise our tendency to build a narrative whole out of the fragments displayed and… recognize that this created history is a product of our imagination—ephemeral and unverifiable. In that sense, our futile struggle to deal with the intangibility of the experience duplicates the struggle of Beckett's characters as they grapple with their images of the past in the baffling environment of the present" ("Perceiving" 306). That is, spectators watching a Beckett play experience an emotional experience akin to that of the characters on the stage and also must actively engage the narrative fragments offered by the play; the audience is engaged mentally and emotionally and is far more active than passive. Davies asserts the deep need Beckett's characters have to perform: "all his characters must be perceived to exist, and they must perform to be perceived… Driving the dialogue is the characters' terror that they are becoming invisible, unattended; that…silence is pouring into their diminishing existence…Increasingly, Beckett's characters act not for us but for themselves; they are performing for their lives" (80). While Davies aptly acknowledges the need of these characters to perform for an audience, he suggests that "the audience feels as neglected, or rejected as the onstage characters" (80). Due to the powerful way Krapp and W model the role of the audience, while also expressing the innate and universal longing for the presence of another, these plays do not reject their audiences but instead compel the audience's empathy and insist on its communal role.

Specifically with regards to Beckett and the communal role of theater, Barr focuses on *Waiting for Godot* and argues

> if *Waiting for Godot* initially stresses impotence and ignorance, it poses such perilous premises not to confirm them but to explore radical alternatives that

> are unthinkable in less dire circumstances. The two tramps' distinctive discourse is telling in this regard, for, while its communicative value is indeed open to question, its communal consequences are not, since their profoundly provisional linguistic conventions promote social bonds as fragile as Estragon's belt—ties that quickly snap under pressure but which can at least fleetingly connect human beings and confirm human *being*. (35-36)

Much in the same way, *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby* present stories and narrative modes whose value may be open to question, but whose consolatory consequences are not. The narratives presented by Krapp and W/V affirm human being and exist as perhaps the only viable and tenable response to isolation in their dire circumstances. If Didi and Gogo are in dire circumstances, Krapp and W/V's circumstances are unthinkably dire. Bereft of the company of others, Krapp and W must create their own dialogue partners in order for community to exist. By acting as artist figures and crafting narratives in order to form this tenuous form of community, these two characters reveal narrative's power to offer the specific consolation of community for the specific suffering of isolation so deeply emphasized by these plays. Beyond the community formed on stage, the community extant between actors and audience in dramatic performance goes even further in providing the consolation Beckett's characters so desperately require.

Barr explicitly addresses the way in which Didi and Gogo's social bonds, fragile though they may be, offer consolation to the two characters. Barr suggests that "if they are both in some sense storytellers, then they may be able to support each other, though not necessarily in the manners they most desire"; nevertheless, their "intersubjective narratives can at least provide consolation, a commodity no less elusive than truth in the play world" (162). Barr argues that this "cross-talk provides not only consolation but also existential confirmation" (171). Further, Barr

argues that because of the play's instability and the ways in which it shifts perspective, leaving the audience as unstable as the characters and revealing the difference and potential separate ways of understanding amidst the audience that mirrors the push and pull of the characters onstage, "*Waiting for Godot*…invites a performance community among author, actor, and audience in which all creatively develop local conventions and the expense (a bargain) of global unity and uniformity' (180). Ultimately, Barr argues "the most concrete and compelling clue to the power of Beckettian community is the scattered, stifled laughter that *Godot* prompts in the auditorium from its loud lamentations on the stage…the audience's now audible activity thus completes and confirms the play's fiercely provisional mode of community" (36).[7] Thus, in Barr's view, Beckett's play both models the consolation of community and dialogue onstage and creates a "performance community" between the work on stage and the audience. Kennedy makes a similar argument for the community that comes from the audience's response to Beckett, suggesting that the fragmentary voices in Beckett's plays "work communally in the theatre, tending towards communion. The audience response takes place in a concentrated and inward moment, set apart from mental and external distraction, but it is also a shared response. The cryptic and fragmented play language may have an impact like a fallen liturgical text that commands inward attention, is intoned in a subtly cadenced voice but for minds fully awake" (412).

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[7] Where Barr offers a positive reading of Beckett's engagement with his audience, Blau posits a different attitude. Blau argues: "in the tradition of sometimes disdainful, sometimes disconcerted ambivalence toward the audience, Beckett remains pivotal...the more synoptic and extrusive [the plays] are, the more there is a sense of playing into a void, all the more when there is an audience…in respectful or even ritualistic attendance" (34).

In *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby,* Beckett's ability to model consolation via language and the community it creates becomes even more pointed as his solitary figures use their recorded narratives to embody the audience/actor relationship for themselves. W and Krapp are not just artist figures who turn to narrative amidst decay and suffering, but they are specifically dramatic artists who, in dire straits, form community for themselves by engaging recorded narrative.

Krapp's engagement with his present and with his past constitutes a spare form of community that may be a far cry from his memory on the boat, but nonetheless remains an integral part of his humanity and a form of consolation for his despairing solitude. He does not have another human being with which to converse, but he can and does communicate with himself. Telling a story is not enough on its own; Krapp also seeks dialogue and finds it with his recorded narrative. The script alters between lines assigned to "Krapp" and lines assigned to "Tape." This diminished community is something Krapp creates in the play through the story he chooses to tell and the story to which he listens as he responds to his records of the past. In so doing, Krapp embodies the roles of both actor and audience: his recording is his performance and he listens to and engages with it. Through Krapp's need both for story and for community, and the actions he takes to create both, Beckett suggests that narrative can offer the consolation of community amidst desperate solitude.

As earlier noted, Krapp is an intentional storyteller who works to present his story in a specific way. The spare form of community Krapp creates via his recording responds to the lack of human community manifested on the stage. Krapp's intense and constant engagement with his narrative reveals not only his

need as a narrative-maker to present a specific story in a specific way, but also the very active way in which he plays the role of an audience member. When Krapp first turns on the tape, he assumes a posture of active listening: "*he raises his head, broods, bends over machine, switches on and assumes listening posture, i.e. leaning forward, elbows on table, hand cupping ear towards machine, face front*" (217). When he takes on the role of audience by listening to the tapes of his former self, Krapp acts as a careful listener. As Krapp settles himself in to listen more comfortably, "*he knocks one of the boxes off the table, curses, switches off, sweeps boxes and ledger violently to the ground, winds tape back to beginning, switches on, resumes posture*" (217). Krapp is so intent on his role as listener that he will not tolerate anything that might distract from his listening, including inanimate objects.

Krapp also engages physically with the words he hears on the tape. At one point, the tape states "I close my eyes and try and imagine them," and Krapp joins the tape's actions as he "*closes his eyes briefly*" (218). In a similar manner, Krapp expresses a response to the tape through his laughter. When the Krapp on the tape laughs at his past aspirations, it is a "*brief laugh in which Krapp joins*"; when the tape articulates a resolution to drink less, there is a "*brief laugh of Krapp alone*" (219). Krapp thus exhibits the ability of an audience to join in the emotions of the actor but also the ability of the audience to respond with an independent emotion to the words and actions of the actor on the stage. Far from a perfect listener, Krapp also interrupts the tape's narrative to go offstage and drink (219). Once he finds the recording of his time on the tape, Krapp obsessively returns to that moment on the recording again and again. In part, this indicates his desire for human connection;

however, it also emphasizes the ability of certain parts of a narrative to resonate more strongly with an audience than others.

Significantly, Krapp seeks a dialogue with the tape recording. He not only listens and engages, but also records a new tape in response. Krapp must be his own audience and his own storyteller; dialogue via narrative is the only form of spare community he can attain at this desperate point in his life. Krapp vocally responds to his past self with a mixture of derision and longing; he both refers to his past self as “stupid bastard” and states “could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes” (222). Amidst these reactions, he also records elements of his present life, such as his encounters with Fanny, and his contemplations about ending his narrative (223). In expressing all of these things within a relatively short monologue, Krapp indicates the complexity and range of emotions with which an audience can respond to a story.

At the polar opposite of his recorded verbal response, Krapp also responds to his recording with silence. Following the recording of the new tape, Krapp plays the integral moment of his old recording again. This time, when Krapp attempts to respond, he cannot: “*Krapp’s lips move. No sound*” (223). As the play comes to an end, so does the recording on box three, spool five. The end of the tape speaks a younger Krapp’s affirmation of his desire to be alone: “Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn’t want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn’t want them back” (223). In an action that belies the recording’s conviction, as this final piece of the recording plays and ends, the stage directions describe “*Krapp motionless staring before him. The tape runs on in silence*”

(223). Krapp's words may suggest confidence; however, his silence reveals his despair. Steven Connor argues "the final words both assert the primacy and durability of speech across the years and frame it in the dead and interable condition of writing…by the end of this play, with the displacement of the breathing, visible Krapp by the voice of another absent Krapp, the theatre has been transformed from a place of being to a place of writing" (Connor 125).[8] That is, Krapp's narrative maintains its persistent power and remains present even as the play moves into silence; the despair and solitude cannot displace the power of language. Much as Didi and Gogo's social bonds can be fleeting in *Waiting for* Godot, as Barr suggests, so too is the community between audience and narrative that Krapp briefly creates. The performance and audience both end in silence, much as the audience witnessing the play on the stage may very well respond to this silence with silence.

Certainly, Krapp's responses are far more powerful than a typical audience member's engagement with a play might be, as he is listening to his own voice and his own story and an audience member does not usually stand up in the middle of a play to speak a narrative of his own; nevertheless, Krapp models emotions and actions with which an audience can respond to a narrative and thus suggests the power of dramatic narrative to form a community between listener and teller. As

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[8] Andrew Kennedy reads Krapp's silence at the end as a moment in which "Krapp achieves total concentration in listening to one treasured memory" (413). In this way, "the final silence of the final replay, with Krapp motionless and the tape running on, deepens the effect on the stilled audience, transforming a private miniature memory into a communicated experience" (413). Ruby Cohn claims that his act of recording his last tape in the course of the play gradually becomes soliloquy: "the living Krapp soon glides from conscious recording to associational brooding. Moreover, he will never listen to what the play's title informs us is his *last* tape; there will be no more birthday post mortems. By the time of his last tape, he has sunk into a self crystallized in the soliloquy that his recording gradually becomes" (65).

Krapp reveals, narrative compels response and can provoke visceral and emotional reactions in its audience. An audience member, as Krapp suggests through the way in which he performs as his own audience, must not only listen closely to spoken narrative but also respond to it emotionally and physically.

When *Krapp's Last Tape* is considered in its full context as a play performed on the stage and a text that has readers, the community formed through Krapp's storytelling takes on greater significance. Krapp is far from the only witness to his story and to his despair. The play, through the way in which Krapp models the role of an audience, demands that the audience respond to narrative and claims that an audience forms a community. That is, by means of its genre, the play insists that a community found in the theatrical audience and in the reader bears witness to Krapp's degradation and listens to his story. Beckett ensures that his readers and audience members will cling to Krapp's every word through the lengthy stage directions that open the play, directions that take 8-10 minutes of silence to perform. As Susan Bennett argues "a *mise en scène* is inevitably structured so as to give emphasis to a sign or sign-cluster intended to locate audience focalization on that aspect of the drama. In some cases, this focalization is foregrounded by specific dramatic techniques" (Bennett 245). The technique of the lengthy silent opening draws the audience in and compels them to cling to the speaking voice when it at last begins.[9] This lengthy silence provokes a longing for words that is strangely

[9] Kennedy argues that in *Waiting for Godot* "are moments of stillness and silence in which even the already reduced action is suspended to make way for reflection and inwardness. Such occasions can be read out of the text, and demand full attention in a performance that is attentively attuned to make the audience share these moments" (Kennedy 409). Though in a different play, the extended silence here similarly demands full attention. In his review of a performance of the play, Chirstopher Isherwood specifically speaks to the awareness this extended silence brings: "as the

fulfilled through Krapp's weird and tragic performance. Beckett thus uses stage directions and a silent opening to provoke within his audience the same longing for community via spoken narrative Krapp expresses throughout the play. Similarly, Beckett's play works to evoke laughter as well as more serious emotional responses from its audience. In the midst of the lengthy opening stage directions, Krapp "*treads on [banana] skin, slips, nearly falls, recovers himself, stoops and peers at skin and finally pushes it, still stooping, with his foot over edge of stage into pit*" (216). Here, Krapp echoes slapstick humor and encourages the audience to laugh. Krapp even seems oddly aware of his audience when in the course of the lengthy opening movements he "*advances to the edge of the stage…and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him (216).*" As Krapp repeatedly listens to the moment of human connection, his audience, too, must listen. In this way, the play—both for Krapp and for the audience—signals the importance of human connection and even inculcates a desire for this type of closeness within audience members. The play itself then provides a means through which the audience can respond to Krapp much as Krapp responds to his own narrative.

If Krapp's spare manifestation of theater seems extreme in its minimal nature, the manifestation in *Rockaby* makes *Krapp's Last Tape* seem almost abundant. Like *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Rockaby* opens with a silence that makes the audience long for words: The play begins with a "*fade up on* W *in rocking chair*," which is followed by a "*long pause*" before W breaks the silence with a solitary

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seconds tick past, and Mr. Hurt keeps on staring, and stares some more, we become uncomfortably aware of the heavy tread of time as it plods by" ("Unspooling").

word: “more” (435). Significantly, this pause repeats three times in the play as each section of V’s recording ends with a long pause that only ends with W’s next articulated command for more. The desire for words, for speech, for something is thus inculcated in the audience over and again, Unlike *Krapp’s Last Tape*, *Rockaby* includes W’s explicit claim that she can and will function as community for herself. Throughout all four sections of her recorded narrative, V articulates the desire for “another living soul’ (435). By the end of the play, as V’s recording narrates W’s move into the basement, she names community as part of W’s motive for going down. In her incredible desperation, W, “she so long all eyes/famished eyes” and so long failing in her quest, decides it is

> Time she stopped
> Let down the blind and stopped
> Time she went down
> Down the steep stair
> Time she went right down
> Was her own other
> Own other living soul (441)

The actions described in the passage above are precisely the actions W takes, and precisely the actions that lead to the opening of the play. Thus, in retrospect, the readers and audience members of the drama discover that the play itself is precipitated by W’s desire for community and her desperate decision to form that community within and for herself.[10] Daniel Davy argues “that the sought after ‘other’ with whom W/V desires vital human contact, ‘another living soul’ as she later puts it,

[10] Charles Lyons articulates the dual role played by the single figure of W/V in this way: “the woman in the rocking chair has almost no *persona* apart from that provided by the narrative she hears. as a character, however, she experiences the recitation of a history as she listens to the voice. In that sense, the woman herself forms the witnessing public who perceives her character as an object in that space” ( “Narrative” 2).

is her own" (Davy 9). In Davy's reading, W is seeking consciousness, specifically her own consciousness. What remains implicit in Krapp's drama becomes explicit in W's as she tragically recognizes but also clearly claims her role as a community for herself.

Through W's decision to be her own community, the text does not promote this form of community as one that enables human beings to thrive; instead, it affirms W's longing for community, the humanity of that longing, and narrative as a tenable, if desperate, way in which an isolated individual can attain some form of consolation. The spare ways in which W's performance embodies the role of being community for herself attests to the necessity and power of W's decision to be "her own other" through her recording, even as her movement towards death, and the anger she expresses at the end of the play, continually point ot her desperation. Even so, like Krapp, W models the role of the audience as she engages with and responds to V, and thereby points to the communal quality of theater and the way in which narrative, specifically dramatic narrative, can thus provide consolation for isolation.

As the sole audience member for V's narrative within the world of the play, but also its subject and artist, W exhibits remarkable control over the narrative. Her control over the narrative most clearly manifests itself in the distinct pauses that divide the recording into its four distinct sections. W instigates each of the four sections with her monosyllabic, declarative sentence: "more" (435). The narrative then comes out of her desire and out of her command. Thus, Beckett invokes the audience's desire for narrative and participation in a story. Within the world of

*Rockaby*, it is the audience, not the actress, who begins the play. By repeating "more" consistently throughout the play, W suggests that this desire for dramatic narrative cannot be sated; however, as each "more" is met with the next chapter of the story, W also reveals her control over the narrative. Significantly, W's request for "more" is always met with further story. Though she exists alone on the stage, bereft of companionship or aid, following a futile quest for even just the glimpse of another human being's eyes, and does not even control the movement of her own rocking chair, W can express and meet her desire for story, and thereby meet her need for community and for a voice in her isolation, even if it is in a despairing, minimal way.

Beyond her control over the narrative and its continuation after each pause, W also reveals and intense familiarity with the recording spoken by V. At 7 points in the play, dispersed across multiple sections, the recording includes the lines "time she stopped/time she stopped" (435, 436, 437, 439-40). Each time, W joins V for the repeated line and speaks "time she stopped" with the recording. Not only is W familiar enough with the narrative to know what line is repeated and when, she also wants and needs to join the narrative. Thus, Beckett depicts the high degree to which an audience can engage in a narrative community: the words of the actor can also be the words of the audience member. Significantly, by engaging in this repeated line, W is able to continue living. Her isolation continues and her death is imminent, yet by repeating the phrase "time she stopped" W acknowledges her mortality and manages to continue. That is, by repeating the same phrase twice, she extends the period of time for which she is speaking and continuing her active engagement with story; her form of repetition belies the content of the phrase. In

the agony of knowing it is time to die alone, W has the consolation of extending her time by joining her voice with another and using words to expand her existence.

In addition to her intentional repetition, W joins V for the end of each section in a series of echoes. Through the repetition and echoes, W creates a spare form of dialogue with V and thus functions as her own other. The first section of V's recorded narrative ends with these stage directions: "[*Together: echo of 'time she stopped', coming to rest of rock, faint fade of light. long pause.*]" (436). Notable for the juxtaposition of its words and its actions, this echo reveals W's despair as well as her compulsion to speak in community. The words insist it is time to stop; the joined echo of W/V continue the meager community formed on the stage. The repeated echo of "time she stopped" indicates that though it may very well be time, W hesitates to end. Though the echo ends, the rock stops, and silence comes, it is followed by W's more and continued narrative. This same echo occurs at the end of section three, but sections two and four end in different echoes. Section two, instead of emphasizing the end, emphasizes W's need for a living soul. Matching the other echoes in form, only the content is different was W and V together echo "living soul" instead of "time she stopped" (438). These two echoes articulate the dueling desires of the play: W's despair and isolation meet a desire for an end and a desire for community. Even as W comes to an end, she cannot resist her compulsion to join in narrative and thus attain some form of community amidst her isolation and death. In the final lines of the play, the recording begins using the gerund forms of verbs instead of past tense, indicating that the recording no longer only speaks to W's past quest, but to the present action on the stage. V says the woman went down and

rocked
rocked
saying to herself
no
done with that
the rocker
those arms at last
saying to the rocker
rock her off (442)

By personifying the rocking chair, V identifies death as an embrace and an end for which she longs. Even so, the play ends with W and V together echoing " '*rock her off', coming to rest of rock, slow fade out*" (442). At the end, W still engages V's recording by speaking with it and joining her voice in union with another voice. The desire for narrative and the desire for engagement persist even to the end. Jane Hale claims W's life "consisted merely of one long effort to see and be seen, to see another or herself, to be seen by another or by herself" (Hale 75). According to Hale, "this hope, which proved to be so futile, has nevertheless motivated the entire life which she has just described to us and which we have seen pass before our eyes and in our imaginations' (Hale 75). While Hale accurately identifies W's longing, and her hope for its fulfillment, she does not also acknowledge that it is not just her hope that motivates her life but also her active speaking and recording of the narrative that sustains her life by, even in a meager way, offering a dialogue. Further, this articulation of her desire is what allows the audience to now see her, thus metadramatically fulfilling her desire.

Like Krapp, W engages with the recording through her physical actions as well as her spoken words. W's actions mirror the content of the narrative. The opening stage directions indicate the physical ways in which W's actions cohere

with the content of V's narrative as both manifest her decline on the stage. Her eyes close an open throughout the play, "about equal proportions section 2, increasingly closed 2 and 3, closed for good halfway through 4" (433). As well, in the final fade-out, W's "head slowly sinks", mirroring V's description of the mother's death with her "head fallen" in the rocker (433, 440). W thus mimics and mirrors the recording with her words and with her actions, even in these spare and minimal ways. The narrative not only exists for W amidst her solitude, but is also physically and emotionally entertwined with her existence, thereby suggesting the deep ways in which an audience can engage performance. s

Helen Astbury and Veronique Vedrenne argue that in *Rockaby*, "various dramaturgical and textual techniques are employed to give us the impression that the voice we hear on stage is somehow 'sliding off' the character, who cannot or does not have sufficient presence for it to adhere to. But this voice is insistent, and must be heard by someone, and each member of the audience feels that he or she is that someone' (Astbury Védrenne 309-10). Much as V's recorded voice insists and engages W, the voice insists that the audience hears this poetic narrative of despair. In her discussion of Beckett's late plays, Mary Doll argues "split off from their inner core, their souls, the characters must listen, listen, to a voice" (Doll 46). According to Doll, "characters are capable neither of altering its presence nor of fathoming its message. Strangely, however, the voice seems to provide nourishment. It is as if the characters *need* voice to give them substance; as if, *without* the voice, their bodies are but urns" (Doll 46) Thus, "in exercising basic steps and repeated gestures, the women of Beckett's recent plays can thus be considered as initiates, who seek

connection with forces that feed the soul" (Doll 47). This certainly proves true for W as she engages narrative ritually by repeating and interacting with the same set of lines, relying on her narrative and her role as its audience to sustain her life and humanity.

W and V's narrative comes to an end, most likely the final end of death. Like *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Rockaby* is a play that leaves the audience in the silence in which it began. *Rockaby,* with the fragile form of community it depicts, does not stop its protagonist's death, nor does it offer a remedy for her despair; however, it does depict the ability of narrative to offer consolation for isolation. The tenuous narrative community built by W/V for herself on the stage affirms the human longing for story, and the human ability to persist in story and seek community even when nothing else exists. Unlike Krapp, W does not ever seem to recognize her audience or acknowledge that they exist. Her actions nevertheless model an intense need for and connection with narrative, and the way in which she responds to and engages with V's narrative reveals the ways in which story can offer consolation for even the most desperate forms of isolated solitude.

If the audience's stifled laughter at the end of *Godot* affirms the play's "fiercely provisional mode of community" as Barr argues, audience reactions to *Rockaby* and *Krapp's Last Tape* affirm the intense connection between audience and actor that exist in drama, thereby affirming the power of dramatic narrative to bring about a form of community and, tenuously and metadramatically, offer consolation for the suffering of isolation. Mel Gussow, in his review of *Rockaby's* world premiere starring Billie Whitelaw, writes "from the opening second, we cannot avert our eyes

from the actress and her ‘famished eyes’” (Gussow). Whitelaw’s explication of her mental state when rehearsing and performing the play offers insight into the audience’s intense connection with her performance: “when I do ‘Rockaby,” I have a picture in my mind- I think in pictures- of someone staring out a window at a skyscraper block. Perhaps there may be one other person out there. How awful it must be to sit there waiting for death” (Gussow). Whitelaw, then, acts from the very empathy and community the woman seeks and the audience is asked to give. Gussow’s descriptions of the play’s emotional impact affirm not only Whitelaw’s success as an actress, but also the compelling way in which the isolated play forms a community amongst its audience. Gussow writes that “as an intuitive emotional experience, *Rockaby* is overpowering, hypnotizing the audience in its spotlighted gaze”.[11] The speaking voice also claims the audience’s attention; the audience, per Gussow, is “engulfed by her voice on tape” (Gussow). Gussow’s claim that “the play last only 15 minutes, but by any measure other than length this is a major dramatic event, evocatively encapsulating—in words and in visual metaphor—the perdurability of the human spirit, man’s clinging to his mind as life preserver” is a testament to narrative’s success in the play (Gussow). Through narrative, W can cling to the company of her own mind and engulf and hypnotize the audience in front of her.

[11] Corey Wakeling argues that Beckett’s late plays engage in hypnotic dramaturgy and thus, “rather than reduce the characters of *Not I, Footfalls,* and *Rockaby* to diagnoses, the production of Beckett’s plays, by immersing its spectators, induces them to empathize with the essentially fictive constructions of the characters’ worlds” (344).

Terry Byrne describes a more recent production starring Lisa Dwan as similarly powerful, suggesting that by "stripping away all the artifice of the stage, Beckett focuses on a range of feeling, something Dwan delivers with an intensity that is never less than mesmerizing" (Byrne). Out of this intensity, Byrne writes "we meditate with her on the solitude of life's final days," affirming both the solitude of the character and the engagement of the audience. Indeed, for Byrne, "every beat, every breath, becomes fraught with Beckett's layered meaning, fueled by our own emotions" (Byrne). The words of Beckett's drama join the audience's emotion to create the theatrical experience, one that Byrne claims "after you leave the theater you may find yourself aching to repeat…to catch something you are sure you missed the first time around…and isn't that exactly Beckett's point about the way we approach our lives?" (Byrne). The emotive power of the narrative remains with the audience outside the theater, further indicating the evocative power of W's narrative.

Reviews of *Krapp's Last Tape* assert similarly powerful audience responses. Charles Isherwood asserts the power of speech in Beckett's plays in his review of John Hurt's 2011 performance. Isherwood writes "a command of the speaking power of silence is almost a prerequisite for performing the plays of Samuel Beckett. This is particularly true of his sparer works, in which the Irish-born playwright reduced his theatrical means to a minimum, the better to concentrate his ideas and underscore the echoing emptiness that is forever threatening to swallow his characters whole" (Isherwood). Isherwood claims "when Krapp settles down to commemorate this birthday by listening to the tape he made on his 39$^{th}$, the play

slowly enfolds you in its icy grip" (Isherwood). In his review of a performance of *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2017, Michael Billington writes "as we watch the 69-year-old Krapp hunched over a tape recorder, listening to the voice of his 39-year-old self, we encounter a work that counterpoints present pain and past happiness and that combines grief and lyricism" and asserts that these themes and their juxtaposition are "something we can all relate to" (Billington). For Billington, this is part of the "measure of the play's greatness. It appeals to our own sense of mortality, waste, and failure while taking on the lineaments, as McGovern now richly proves, of the actor who is lucky enough to play it" (Billington). The play, then, speaks powerfully to the audience in a relational way, thereby strengthening the audience's connection and community with the figure on stage. Thus, the audience joins the protagonist on stage in responding to isolation by forming community via the power of dramatic narrative.

Both within and without the dramatic worlds of *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby*, narrative offers consolation for the isolation suffered by Krapp and W by providing a means of persistence and consolation for the two decaying narrators. Both of these dying and decaying figures turn to narrative in their suffering, indicating a spare faith in narrative to offer something and they both create carefully crafted narratives out of their isolation as a means of persistence. However, Beckett's plays make an even more powerful argument for the power of narrative, specifically dramatic theatrical narrative, to offer consolation for the particular human suffering of isolation by the way in which these plays engage and deploy the power of the audience. The audience inherent to drama offers consolation for the

solitary despair experienced by W and Krapp in their respective isolation. W and Krapp manifest this consolatory power through the spare ways in which they model an engaged audience/actor relationship on the stage, and this modeling extends metatheatrically as *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Rockaby* are plays intended for performance in front of an audience. Both of these plays model the actor and audience relationship, and the consolation the character derives from it, within the world of the play while also taking advantage of the audience in the theater and its communal role as a further means of countering isolation. If storytelling is the lowest common denominator for humanity—the last vestiges of a human desire for life and existence amongst others—it thus becomes, in Beckett's strange and diminished dramas, an incredibly powerful means of persistence and significance, and even community-building, as these two plays record human suffering alongside humanity's need for narrative and the consolation and community it can provide.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Conclusion

James Joyce and Samuel Beckett respond to suffering—whether their own, horrific events around them, or the trials and grief inherent to the human condition and human life—by proclaiming the power of narrative to offer consolation. Their respective works reveal the specific ways in which these authors stake claims regarding the capabilities and powers of storytelling. Narrative, then, not only engages the real experience of its readers through its engagement with ethical questions, but also as Kearney, Ricoeur, and Tolkien posit, crucially responds to human experience and the pain extant therein in profound and consoling ways.

Joyce's own articulation of his literary project expresses his desire to employ narrative's ability to console. As he wrote in a letter to his brother, Joyce wanted "to give people a kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment by converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own…for their mental, moral, and spiritual uplift".[1] In absentia from his homeland, Joyce emphasizes everyday life in Dublin. *Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* and *Ulysses* are all set in Dublin and all follow the ordinary lives of middle and lower-class Irish citizens in their quotidian and minute actions. As Richard Kearney articulates, in Joyce's fiction "what is at issue is a narrative miracle of transubstantiation where simple contingencies of everyday existence can be

[1] Joyce, qtd. by Terence Brown in his introduction to *Dubliners*.

transmuted into narrative 'epiphanies.' A literary version of divine demiurgy. That, and nothing less, is what storytelling meant to Joyce" (22).

Stephen Dedalus, the young protagonist of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, embodies this tendency as he constantly crafts the events of his life into elaborate motifs and narratives. Unable to locate consolation in any of the other sources or paradigms he explores, Dedalus consistently turns to narrative in a novel that simultaneously depicts his need for consolation and his continual turn to art. In so doing, *Portrait* reveals the human need for narrative and the power of transforming life into narrative.

Joyce's work also asserts that story can function as home for this peripatetic author. His famous claim that Dublin could be rebuilt from the pages of *Ulysses* bears out, even in the contemporary streets of Dublin. Visitors to the city can still follow Leopold Bloom's morning walk to acquire his kidney for breakfast, Bloom and Stephen's late-night careening through the streets, and view the ocean from Dedalus' Martello tower. This is, in large part, because of Joyce's genius and devotion to exacting and elaborate language. As Beckett himself claimed regarding Joyce's writing, "here form *is* content, content *is* form…His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*" ("Dante…Bruno 117). In Joyce's work, literature becomes Dublin as a place and as a community. Story, for Joyce, has the capacity—largely manifested in his expansive style—to function as home and community through the consolatory powers of local narrative.

Where Joyce turns to the elaborate and ostentatious to manifest storytelling's consoling capacities, Beckett turns to the complete lack of any form of

embellishment. If Joyce explores and celebrates literature's expansive capabilities, Beckett asks instead what to do with stories when place, community, and even humanity cease to exist—fair questions to ask in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb. In response to the evils of a world where people literally vanish at the explosion of a bomb, Beckett, to an extent, rejects plot, setting, and even character to affirm story's role as an innately human ability and the harbinger of hope. When Beckett won the Nobel Prize for Literature, the committee awarded him the prize because, in their words

> The perception of human degradation - which we have witnessed, perhaps, to a greater extent than any previous generation - is not possible if human values are denied. But the experience becomes all the more painful as the recognition of human dignity deepens. This is the source of inner cleansing, the life force nevertheless, in Beckett's pessimism. It houses a love of mankind that grows in understanding as it plumbs further into the depths of abhorrence, a despair that has to reach the utmost bounds of suffering to discover that compassion has no bounds. From that position, in the realms of annihilation, rises the writing of Samuel Beckett like a miserere from all mankind, its muffled minor key sounding liberation to the oppressed, and comfort to those in need.[2]

As the committee asserts, Beckett's "pessimism...is dearly bought…and penetrates to mankind's utter destitution" but nevertheless affirms the value of humankind.[3] Beckett's dramatic protagonists are disabled, old, bereft, isolated, and dying but they are still telling stories. Beckett gives ultimate primacy to the act of speaking, and it is this that sounds "liberation" and "comfort." For him, to tell a story is to endure; storytelling is the means by which humanity persists. As his characters speak, they

[2] Karl Ragnar Gierow, Presentation Speech, 1969. The full text of this speech, which was given in Beckett's absence, can be found at https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1969/press.html.

[3] *Ibid.*

keep living and as they tell stories, they record despair, isolation, and horror while insisting that a community, found in the theatrical audience and in the presence of the reader, bears witness to their horror and to their humanity.

As W. H. Auden famously writes in his "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," "poetry makes nothing happen" but "it survives/ a way of happening, a mouth" (36-37). Joyce and Beckett's works, and the manifestations of narrative consolation therein, reveal that while narrative is no panacea for suffering and cannot stop loss, grief, exile, pain, or any of the other ills and challenges of humanity, it can offer consolation as "a way of happening" (36). Much as Auden's elegy functions as an apologia for poetry, so does the work of these two authors function as an apologia for narrative art in a world full of grief, exile, pain, and even horror. Against suffering and decay, narrative "survives" and offers consolation as an alternative to despair. That is, narrative provides a viable, consolatory response to suffering. Narrative can do what Auden commands poets to do, fittingly in the third part of his elegy, the consolation: it can "sing of human unsuccess/in a rapture of distress" but also "in the desert of the heart/let the healing fountain start" (91). Narrative, as seen in Joyce and Beckett's works, is not only a constant consolation when other things fail but also it is capable of offering home amidst exile, persistence and witness amidst decay and death, and community in isolation. By manifesting narrative consolation in various ways in their works, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett reveal not only a shared tenacious faith in story, but also its powerful ability to console.

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