2010

How the Irish Ended History: Postmodern Writings of James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, and Samuel Beckett

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HOW THE IRISH ENDED HISTORY:
POSTMODERN WRITINGS OF JAMES JOYCE,
FLANN O’BRIEN, AND SAMUEL BECKETT

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Summer Semester, 2010
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For Eliezane, my muse, without whom
I still would be sitting still
on that sidewalk all those years ago.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Stan Gontarski for his inestimable support and guidance over the years. His many insights on the works of Samuel Beckett and James Joyce are the turning-points upon which the fire of intellect is fed. I thank, too, the other members of my committee: Ralph Berry, Andrew Epstein, and William Cloonan. Their advice and support has been of invaluable service to the growth of my work. Thanks, also, to Amit Rai, a paragon of dynamic energy and innovative ideas. To be sure, the collective think tank of Florida State University’s *Finnegans Wake* Reading Group has been a source of unending inspiration and stimulation over the years, and so a heartfelt thanks goes out to my friends and colleagues, Dustin Anderson, Zachary Hanson, Andrew Baumann, Fred Von Drasek, Amber Coady, Chris Sekulksi, and Nick Morris, the punsters and pranksters of our makeshift Phoenix Park. I thank also Carolyn Hall, Tara Stamm, and Stephanie Cameron Kennedy, the collective wheels and will of Florida State University’s English Department. Above all, I thank my partner in life and crime, Eliezane, whose bountiful love and support has kept, keeps, and will always keep me going forward on the Liffey of life.
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ABSTRACT

*How the Irish Ended History: Postmodern Writings of James Joyce, Flann O’Brien, and Samuel Beckett*, forming a pun based on Thomas Cahill’s popular book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, takes as its subject, not the monks who preserved history through scholarly diligence during the so-called Dark Ages, but three 20th Century Irish writers who, in reaction to the ideological pressures and limits of Irish nationalist forces, marry cultural representation with experimental writing with the following result: the end of history.

James Joyce, Flann O’Brien (nom de plume of Brian Ó Nualláin), and Samuel Beckett interrogate and complicate the notion of the archive as that which stores and disseminates *factive* and fictive histories. While Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, through the collapse of the real and the imaginary in the image of the *museyroom* (museum), formulates the cure to Stephen Dedalus’s nightmare in *Ulysses*, history being the “nightmare from which [he is] trying to wake,” O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* and *The Dalkey Archive* corrupt reality with alternative histories that recover the heretical thinking of the nonlinear. The supernatural world of *The Third Policeman* is, in fact, the product of a bureaucratic machine that rewrites the laws of time and space; whereas *The Dalkey Archive* reduces the eschatological and the catastrophic to the quotidian and the anticlimactic. Finally, Beckett contracts history into the moment of memory, complicating distinctions between excavation and invention in consciousness itself. While *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time* expose nostalgia as conscious, creative event, *What Where* and *Catastrophe* gesture towards a moment that has yet to be staged. Beckett’s *Three Novels*, on the other hand, unseats the image from distinctions between recollection, imagination, and perception as it suggests a new kind of non-representational image in place of narrative subjectivity.

The writings of Joyce, O’Brien, and Beckett effect critiques of conventionalized modes of historicity through discursive maneuvers. By destabilizing signifying relations, constructing systems of paradox, and complicating figures of archives, their writings produce a radical reconfiguration of historical understanding that supplants linearity with an aesthetics of simultaneity. The figure of the archive plays a central role in the historical dynamism generated by these authors’ works, as it gestures beyond its function as mere repository of past events and formulates a historical sensibility that prefigures postmodern conditions.
CHAPTER ONE
AN INTRODUCTION: HIBERNIA, HYPERBOLE, AND THE HYPERREAL

The title *How the Irish Ended History: Postmodern Writings of James Joyce, Flann O’Brien, and Samuel Beckett* forms a pun based on Thomas Cahill’s popular book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (1995). Each title gestures towards the hyperbolic, a rhetorical strategy common to Irish literature, and each communicates a sense of finality. The implication of Cahill’s book is that civilization would have ended had Irish scribes not recorded and maintained, like curators of history, so many of the literary and philosophical efforts of Western Civilization. Such an argument is premised on a specific idea of history, as if history can follow but one path, an idea vaguely theological and certainly, in this case, Eurocentric in its implications.

Cahill asks some revealing questions about history before attempting to recover his island of saints and sages: “How real is history? Is it just an enormous soup, so full of disparate ingredients that it is uncharacterizable? Is it true, as Emil Cioran has remarked, that history proves nothing because it contains everything? Is not the reverse side of this that history can be made to say whatever we wish it to” (5)? These questions acknowledge the malleable nature of history, as an archival discourse determined by the cultural biases of nations, institutions, and historiographers. Furthermore, the idea that history contains everything does more than expose history as narrative; it exposes history as a multiplicity of narratives and undermines the notion of history as a grand narrative. In Trieste, James Joyce proclaimed in his 1907 lecture, “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages”: “It is well past time for Ireland to have done once and for all with failure. If she is truly capable of reviving, let her awake, or let her cover up her head and lie down decently in her grave forever” (174). While the efforts of Irish nationalism would eventually succeed in waking an independent Ireland, even if involving mixed results, Joyce’s words prophesize ironically another kind of waking. His *Finnegans Wake*, often cited for its excess of histories, effects an end to teleological history itself. The subject of the present study focuses on a time period other than Cahill’s, one that has more to do with how specific writers
were more concerned with complicating rather than founding archives upon which notions of identity, nationalist or otherwise, can be grounded.

The writings of James Joyce, Flann O’Brien (nom de plume of Brian Ó Nualláin), and Samuel Beckett effect critiques of conventionalized modes of historicity through discursive maneuvers. By destabilizing signifying relations, constructing systems of paradox, and complicating figures of archives, their writings produce a radical reconfiguration of historical understanding that supplants linearity with an aesthetics of simultaneity. Joyce, O’Brien, and Beckett’s cumulative aesthetics diverge from teleological models of history fostered by nationalisms, theologies, and philosophical traditions. In the wake of the Irish Literary Revival and other movements that promulgated unified, often politically productive, though ultimately limited, formulations of Irish identity--grounded in shared mythologies, histories, interests, and desires--these writers sought new expressions of art and identity. The figure of the archive plays an important role in the historical dynamism generated by these authors’ works, as it gestures beyond the archive’s function as mere repository of past events or as memorial to the heroic, sacred, or tragic, and generates instead a historical sensibility that prefigures postmodern conditions.

In “Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance” (2001), Joep Leerssen explicates the development of Irish nationalism within the critical framework of Friedrich Nietzsche’s 1874 essay, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” (“Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für Leben”), which famously posits three kinds of historical understanding: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. Briefly put, monumental history, as exemplified by monuments, celebrates past people and events as worthy of imitation and as sources of inspiration for present and future actions; antiquarian history evinces reverence and nostalgia for the past and eschews new developments, like a museum docent who maintains an unchanging record of artifacts; and critical history evaluates history. As Nietzsche writes in his essay,

If the man who wants to do something great has need of the past at all he appropriates it by means of monumental history; he, on the other hand, who likes to persist in the familiar and the revered of old, tends the past as an antiquarian historian; and only he who is oppressed by a present need, and who wants to

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1 Friedrich Nietzsche’s “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” provides the critical framework for many of the essays collected in Ian McBride’s History and Memory in Modern Ireland (2001), from which derives Leerssen’s “Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance.”
throw off this burden at any cost, has need of critical history, that is to say a history that judges and condemns. (72)

Generally speaking, nations and cultures practice some combination of these at any given time in their own developments. Regarding monumental history, Leerssen points out the “rhetorical and discursive” potential of monuments, using a monument at Dublin’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral as an example (206-7). Print media achieves the same discursive function free of the spatial restrictions that come with monuments. As Leerssen demonstrates, Irish nationalism waged an intensifying war of monumental history against England’s colonizing, monumental presence—statue against statue, history against history, and art against art. Likewise, the Irish Literary Revival consciously fostered the growth of this kind of monumental history through its literary productions.

In speaking of Irish history and legend, William Butler Yeats writes in “Ireland and the Arts” (1901), “I would have our writers and craftsmen of many kinds master this history and these legends, and fix upon their memory the appearance of mountains and rivers and make it all visible again in their arts, so that Irishmen, even though they had gone thousands of miles away, would still be in their own country” (384). The idea is to fix memory in the minds of a people, fostering a shared sense of identity as a defense against colonizing forces. Be that as it may, the Irish Revivalists were more than aware that they were involved in a practice blending excavation with invention, that history and legend acted as monumental constructions. As Lady Gregory reveals in Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland (1920), “It is hard sometimes to tell what has been a real vision and what is tradition, a legend hanging in the air, a ‘vanity’ as our people call it, made use of by a story-teller here and there, or as impressing itself as a real experience on some sensitive or imaginative mind” (3). What becomes clear in the efforts of the Irish Literary Revival is that the distinction between legend and real experience is secondary to the production of monumental history. While the Revivalists themselves held complex understandings of legend and history, the results of their work supported a sense of nationalist identity operating on much less complex understandings, producing a monumental archive of heroic martyrs and tragic events to inspire political action and a sense of continuous, collective identity.

A discontent for Ireland’s revivalist developments can be seen early in the works of Joyce, Beckett, and O’Brien. Joyce’s “The Day of the Rabblement” (1901) expresses his dismay at The Irish Literary Theater’s (later called the Abbey Theater) abandonment of its initially
progressive aesthetics for a style of representation that merely reflects popular expectations. Beckett’s “Recent Irish Poetry” (1934) criticizes poets working in outdated expressions of Irish art: “These are the antiquarians, delivering with the altitudinous complacency of the Victorian Gael the Ossianic goods” (70). According to Declan Kiberd’s Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation, Flann O’Brien’s 1941 An Béal Bocht (The Poor Mouth) is a “subversive anti-pastoral, a characteristic nineteen-forties reaction against pious evasions of the revivalists” (498). While it is evident that these writers reacted to the ideological pressures and limits of the Revival and its legacy, it is important to understand that their writings took part also in a larger context in which the accelerating forces of modernization were taking place. An analysis of these Irish writers in relation only to Ireland echoes the isolationist politics of Ireland in the first half of the 20th Century. Furthermore, a discussion of Irish writing in relation to an international community does not diminish the importance of that writing as Irish. These are oversimplifications in the same vein as those that imagine Flann O’Brien stuck in a provincial Ireland and Joyce and Beckett as simply postnational. The writings of Joyce, O’Brien, and Beckett, regardless of where or when they were written, or even in what language they were written, implement a series of discursive maneuvers (often involving inversions and paradoxes that suggest roots in satire and Jesuit education) that collectively lead to the end of historicity (in the monumental and teleological sense). This end signifies simultaneously a rejection of the eventually stultifying forces of Revivalism and an early manifestation of postmodernity.

Critical studies themselves can practice a kind of monumental historicism, which in itself bespeaks a hyperbolic strategy, as it singles out certain events over others, and imbues those events with values reflecting the overall narrative purpose of that strategy. While some studies, like Cahill’s, demonstrate a suspect reverence in their hyperbolic discourses, other studies use hyperbole as a stylistic flourish. Hugh Kenner’s A Colder Eye: The Modern Irish Writers (1983), which recasts Irish writers with the importance of mythic Celtic heroes, purposefully blends history with myth in such a way that a reader might envision William Butler Yeats reading poems from a chariot draped in the trophy skulls of adversaries. Kenner’s critical discourse juxtaposes mythic and historical series in order to illuminate cultural and political points, a strategy supported by his own mimesis of Irish storytelling. Such hyperbole has the tendency to inject history with inflated comedic, epic, tragic, or romanticized tones—a way of investing history with attributes normally tied to imagination and story. Suspicious of such strategies,
Seamus Deane’s “Heroic Styles: The Tradition of an Idea” (1984)² casts a cold eye on Kenner’s methods, pointing out that the book “exploits the whimsical Irishness of the writers in a particularly inane and offensive manner. Kenner’s point is not simply that the Irish are different. It is that they are absurdly different because of the disabling, if fascinating, separation between their notion of reality and that of everybody else” (24). Reality, like history, is a matter of perspective. Cahill’s attempt to recover a history ignored by a tradition of education with an Anglocentric bias ultimately canonizes Ireland like a saint. Declan Kiberd’s more sober Inventing Ireland (1995) foregrounds its Irish literary history with a discussion on how communities are often imagined through the lens of others: “Through many centuries, Ireland was pressed into service as a foil to set off English virtues, as a laboratory in which to conduct experiments, and as a fantasy-land in which to meet fairies and monsters” (1). As Kiberd’s title suggests, part and parcel of developing an independent Ireland would involve self-invention. Writers like Yeats played a crucial role in this invention. Forward action was contingent upon imagining a past, a realization embodied by Yeats’ Abbey Theater, a site of political and cultural genesis and solidarity throughout the Irish Revival. Yeats was adept at forging real politics through fantastic subject matter, at grounding reality in the imaginary. Although his own understanding of history was complex, much of his poetry and politics fostered an essentialized Ireland. As Edward Said says in Culture and Imperialism, “Yeats’ early poetry is not only about Ireland, but about Irishness” (229).³

The hyperbolic title of the present study persists somewhere between fact and fiction. While no monumental event took place to end history in any commonsense understanding of the term—Joyce, O’Brien, and Beckett never conspired along with O’Brien’s De Selby to annihilate the universe with a bomb—the writings of these authors effectively critique grand narratives and generate fluid archival figures that present hyperreal dynamics (that point in which distinctions between reality and the imaginary no longer effect productive descriptions of the world). In a manner of speaking, to speak of dreams and reality no longer makes sense. Instead, there is only the perpetual waking, a condition in which notions of authenticity and forgery, distinctions grounded in terms of origins, copies and simulacra, no longer apply. In the present study,

² Seamus Deane’s essay was reprinted in Theorizing Ireland (2003), edited by Claire Connolly.
³ Edward Said’s Culture and Imperialism (1993) offers a deft analysis of Yeats’ shifting attitudes towards the developments of Irish nationalism, as Yeats moved from his early representations of heroic myths towards a more ambivalent engagement with historical events.
Finnegans Wake is taken as the pivotal work that first reveals these hyperreal conditions in a sustained and vigorous sense. That said, while Joyce’s Ulysses ultimately still maintains a modernist aesthetic of history as teleologically driven, it does prefigure the ahistorical aesthetics of Finnegans Wake, whose image of the museum supplants linearity with a Möbius effect. Flann O’Brien’s The Third Policeman and The Dalkey Archive, on the other hand, depict worlds that invert and implode the poles of reality and fantasy, the former grounding the fantastic in a mechanical, materialistic, and bureaucratic world, the latter reducing romanticized and apocalyptic developments to an uneventful anticlimax. Finally, Beckett contracts Joyce’s historical canvas into memory operations that elide excavation with invention, undo the staging of history, and collapse all images into an ontological moment of pastiche.

The following chapter, “A Joycean Waking of Histories,” explores the ways in which Ulysses operates within Modernist referential systems such as allusion and parody. For example, one can take the action of the novel—such as Stephen and Bloom’s meanderings throughout the day—as a privileged signifying series, Telemachus and Odysseus occupying the signified series. Whether the signified series functions as the object of parody or reverence is not important. The structural relationship between the series persists relatively intact throughout the novel. We never confuse Molly with Penelope. However, at discrete points within Ulysses the relationship becomes unstable between given series. Bloom’s encounter with Gerty occupies a space wherein parody and sentimentality exist simultaneously, not in the sense that we confuse the characters with their Hellenic counterparts, but in a thematic sense in which the encounter is both ridiculous and heartfelt at the same time. Other narrative maneuvers in Ulysses resist static referential systems, undercutting genealogical relations in favor of an aesthetics of metempsychosis, marked by fluid exchanges rather than Platonic distinctions between origin, copy, and simulacra. The tension occurs between what Nicholas Andrew Miller calls memorials and counter-memorials in Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory, the former suggesting static engagements with history, the latter fluid engagements that reveal history as narrative. However, in spite of those moments when the distanitation between signifying and signified series collapse, such as in the hallucinatory “Circe” episode, the memorial reasserts itself in Ulysses. For Bloom, artifacts in a museum become erotic objects. For Stephen, the nightmare of history persists in his plight as an Irishman in a sociopolitical system dominated by British imperialism. He remains paralyzed within historical relations.
Finnegans Wake’s radical departure from historical thinking is embodied by the image of the museum, or “Museyroom” (8.10). Chapter Three, “The Möbius Museyroom of Finnegans Wake,” demonstrates how Finnegans Wake abandons these systems in favor of hyperreality. Plato’s origin, or even Walter Benjamin’s aura, is subsumed by Jean Baudrillard’s hyperreality, moving beyond the chimeras of authenticity exemplified in the processes of what he calls museumification and de-museumification. The museum of Finnegans Wake implode the poles of the real and the imaginary, bending museum walls, normally thought of as forming a closed structure, into the figure of the Möbius strip. Art, exemplified by the novel itself, and artifacts, exemplified by history, fuse with the world. This condition is effected by textual and representational maneuvers. The Museyroom elides realities, as solid space becomes penetrable and chromolithographs, radios, and televisions fuse with the world. Entrances and exits into media modalities dissolve in favor of a fluid and multi-dynamic experience. At the level of text, history is flattened into surface as language. Historical verticality is replaced by a horizontal, paratactic effect. Similarly, conventional practices of novel reading are continuously undercut. For instance, the Museyroom section is later paralleled by a Mewseyfume section. Each section acts as a productive aperture into the novel’s reading—meaning, Finnegans Wake is a book that can be started from any place in the text. This is not the superficial result of the fact that the novel’s last sentence elides with its first sentence (they form one sentence), thereby creating the appearance of a circular narrative; rather, because of the multi-serial narrativity of the novel, its many repeating threads, and in conjunction with the experimental use of neologisms, portmanteau words and polyglotism, overarching teleological readings are overshadowed by the play of language and mini-narratives.

The image of the telescope repeats in the novel, it in itself highlighting the role that perception, voyeurism, and witnessing play in Finnegans Wake. The telescopic effect, however, as that which asserts the distantiation between subject and object, collapses in favor of what I call the rhizoscope. Like the Möbius figuration of the museum, which dissolves divisions between inside and outside, and past and present, Finnegans Wake invites a rhizomatic reading experience. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say in A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, “There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)” (23). The rhizoscope is the aperture into the rhizome, paralleling the ways in which one can dive into Finnegans Wake.
from different places in the text and through fluctuating prioritizations of themes. Finally, the rhizoscope reflects genetic reading in the sense that stages between drafts, coupled with supplementary texts, suggest rhizomatic dynamics rather than readings that privilege so-called urtexts.

Chapter Four, “O’Brien’s Heretical Endings,” recovers a novel from the archives of critical failure. Flann O’Brien’s *The Dalkey Archive* is generally considered to be a failure in itself and in comparison to O’Brien’s other works. Many of its parts (characters, ideas, passages) were taken from O’Brien’s more critically successful *The Third Policeman*, though neither novel was a success in its own time. *The Dalkey Archive*, however, is an aesthetics about failure rather than a failure itself. The novel acts as an inverted image of *The Third Policeman*, casting the latter’s fantastic world into an ordinary setting while retaining themes relating to infinite regress, futile ambitions, and temporal paradoxes. At the level of action, *The Dalkey Archive* portrays several characters whose ambitions, whether literary, romantic, or terroristic, lead to uneventful, anticlimactic results. These anticlimaxes are themselves anticipated by temporal ruptures.

Dalkey’s archive is, in fact, an anti-archive whose heretical counter-histories—represented by De Selby’s undersea cove in which Saint Augustine and other historical figures appear seemingly ex nihilo to present opinions and facts at odds with official history—effect a simultaneity of time.

*The Third Policeman*, on the other hand, portrays a fantastic otherworld replete with mystical developments. For this reason it is often explicated for its metaphysical themes. Such a reading, however, overlooks its basis in grim realities. Its world is contingent on an industrial underbelly and nightmarish bureaucracy, and its protagonist is not like Dante’s Dante, who journeys through Otherworlds for the sake of moral knowledge, but like an antihero consumed by material gain. Material gain supplants the search for truth. Ultimately, *The Third Policeman* and *The Dalkey Archive* implode the polarization between reality and fantasy, thus inscribing the mythic and historical into a system of exchange best symbolized by materialist desires expressed in *The Third Policeman* and the deflated developments in *The Dalkey Archive*. In the latter, De Selby’s D.M.P., that chemical force with which he plans to destroy the universe, is easily displaced into a security box in a bank, symbolizing the new faith of a new Ireland in which the sacred, too, is an exchangeable commodity among commodities.

Chapter Five, “Samuel Beckett’s Short Plays: The Staging of Subtracted Histories,” explores how Samuel Beckett’s short plays increasingly develop an aesthetics divorced from
representations of identifiable past times and places—of milieu or context, as it were. While *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time* complicate and excavate memory through the exposing of nostalgia and archive as artifice, *What Where* and *Catastrophe* focus on either a continuous circuit of presence or an as yet un-staged future. This subtraction of history follows from an assertion Beckett once made to James Knowlson, wishing to move away from James Joyce’s “direction of knowing more” towards an aesthetics of “impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than adding” (*Damned to Fame* 319). The nostalgic fabric of *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time* is undercut by a tripartite narrative layering that variously converges and diverges with the stage image in such a way that representations of the past rupture the present, thus creating an aesthetics of simultaneity evocative of Henri Bergson’s theory in which conscious time expresses itself through varying degrees of contraction, the present being the most contracted version of the past. Likewise, Beckett’s representations of archives, taking the form of recording devices, ledgers, portrait galleries, and libraries, are exposed for their narrative functions.

Curiously, Beckett’s dynamics of memory, while featuring qualities like Sigmund Freud’s mystic writing pad and Nicholas Andrew Miller’s composition of historical subjectivity, are best illustrated by his own critical work, “Dante. . . Bruno. Vico. . Joyce” (from *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*), which examines the mutli-directional temporalities of *Finnegans Wake*. Ultimately, Beckett, in his aesthetics of subtraction, whittles Joyce’s history-scape into a memory-scape while retaining similar temporal dynamics. *What Where* refines this process, erasing all sense of a past into a perpetual present, and *Catastrophe* denies catastrophe as it is normally understood—teleology comes to an end as the play suspends its audience into a timeless ontology. Mysteriously, *Krapp’s Last Tape* begins with a stage direction that cannot be represented on stage: “A late evening in the future” (3). *Catastrophe*, as if solving a conundrum Beckett had faced in the writing and directing of *Krapp’s Last Tape*, manages to situate the theatric action of a play into a future by splitting the audience between the effect of a past and future audience. This effect, along with the fact that *Catastrophe* is about a rehearsal for a future performance, forces the real audience to occupy several times at once, thus creating a theater of simultaneity.

Beckett’s novels, *Molloy, Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, express also an aesthetics of subtraction. Chapter Six, “Beckett’s *Three Novels* and the Moment of Ontological Pastiche,”
interrogates the ways in which Beckett’s prose makes use of images in order to create a sense of pastiche that reflects a non-linear, non-hierarchical ontological condition. Beckett’s images act as Bergsonian images more than poetic images, simulating what Bergson calls the aggregate of images—all images of experience, visual, aural, tactile, mnemonic, imagined, etc. These images, like the ebb and flow of fleeting stories in Beckett’s writing, seem to orbit around a field of interiority—a gravity first expressed through familiar images, possessions and body parts, and then through linguistic representations of being (pronouns and names). Ultimately a centrifugal motion of displacement intensifies as all images, perceived, recalled, imagined, as well as constructed through articulations of subject, are displaced, revealing a sense of image that evades representation, a non-representational gravity around which fluid aggregates orbit. Such as it is, history, too, becomes one of many fluid aggregates in moments of ontological pastiche.

This chapter moves beyond traditional theoretical, critical, and literary resources to appropriate a concept theorized in neurology by Antonio Damasio in his *Descartes’s Error*. René Descartes’ cogito has been applied frequently to Beckett’s writing either as a means of showing agreement or disagreement between Descartes’ methods and the representation of those methods in Beckett’s aesthetics. Though Damasio devotes effort to dispel the mystifications surrounding the split between body and mind for which Descartes is so well known, it is Damasio’s notion of a third kind of image that helps to elucidate the moment of ontological pastiche. This image is different in kind from other images without articulating concepts of ego or identity grounded in traditional representation. The *third image*, as it is called in this chapter, is an image of self watching self that functions separate from language. Beckett’s continuous displacement of images, which negates sustained story, setting, character, and image in general, opens the reader up to perpetual reflection of a consciousness that exceeds language. Such a sense of subjectivity persists without language and history.

The final chapter, “A Conclusion: Transhifting Histories,” breaks from the ironically chronological approach of this study, whose exegetical analysis, moving from Joyce, to O’Brien, and finishing with Beckett, all the while ordering the works of these authors in sequence, reinforces a sense of history that makes for strange company when confronted by an aesthetics of simultaneity. This being the case, the final chapter diverges from order and leaps through time, taking as part of its subject *The Boston Irish Famine Memorial*, built in 1998, a memorial that
loses its anchor in history in a hyperreal city, a condition anticipated by the works of these authors.

An intriguing observation repeatedly surfaced through the writing of this study. Some of its theoretical frameworks seemed to be not only anticipated by these Irish authors, but, in fact, indebted to them as influences. Like other French-speaking post-structuralist theorists, Gilles Deleuze and Jacque Derrida were highly conscious of Joyce and Beckett. (Joyce and Beckett influenced also notable psychoanalytic theorists as well.) This is shown in both direct writings about these authors’ works as well as in the ways that their works are used to exemplify and develop theoretical arguments. In *The French Joyce* (1990), Geert Lernout demonstrates the strong impact that Joyce’s work had on several French critics and theorists. This exchange between post-structural theory and Irish fiction creates its own simultaneity of sorts—and it is true that France was haunted by both Joyce and Beckett. (Of course, it can’t be ignored that Beckett, given the length of his productive life, is coterminous with these theorists.) Perhaps this exchange points also to the prescience of Joyce and Beckett’s postmodern aesthetics—and, I would add, Flann O’Brien’s, even if his work was unrecognized for so long. He, too, is here, summoned by De Selby’s cavernous time machine. As De Selby says, in trying to explain his theory of time to Mick and Hackett, “Divergences, incompatibilities, irreconcilables are everywhere” (*The Dalkey Archive*).
On April 27th, 1907, James Joyce presented in Italian the lecture “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” at the Università Popolare in Trieste. According Richard Ellman’s *James Joyce*, the lecture lacked the irony typical of Joyce’s recent articles: “Joyce was less ironic than might be expected. Its point was that Ireland had once deserved the name of Island of Saints and Sages—and a good deal of evidence, only occasionally inaccurate, is marshaled as proof—but had deteriorated monstrously under British rule” (258). The written lecture is one of Joyce’s longest critical works, tracing Ireland’s political, cultural, and intellectual history since well before British colonization, and assigning Irish history a classical gravity, alluding at various points to Greek, Roman, and Egyptian history, as well as to other histories. One of his closing proclamations speaks to the possibility of a new age of history: “One thing alone seems clear to me. It is well past time for Ireland to have done once and for all with failure. If she is truly capable of reviving, let her awake, or let her cover up her head and lie down decently in her grave forever” (*The Critical Writings* 174). Joyce paints the picture of a country with a unique sense of identity but also of a people whose ancestors derive from varied cultures. While the language in the lecture is populated with facts from the past, the rhetoric is clearly geared towards the making of a future. One can only wonder what the Joyce of 1907 would have thought of the Joyce of 1939, whose *Finnegans Wake*, then published in full, wakes Ireland to a world so saturated with histories that linear history longer exists and all histories become simultaneous.

Though much of Joyce’s fictive writings are populated with saints and sages, his later works, like *Ulysses*, and especially *Finnegans Wake*, generate a multiplicity of discourses that preclude the possibility of privileging any one discourse, whether nationalist, religious or otherwise, and its saints and sages derive from varied times and places. Among the intellectual movers and shakers who influenced Modernist artists and thinkers was Henri Bergson. As Robert Klawitter states in “Henri Bergson and James Joyce’s Fictional World,” “Bergson was present in the intellectual world of the twenties like the Joycean artist, imperceptible in the world he had
helped to bring into being” (429). While numerous artists, like W.B. Yeats, Marcel Proust, T.S. Eliot and, later, Flann O’Brien and Samuel Beckett, would appropriate Bergson’s ideas on memory, time and image into their aesthetics, artists like Wyndham Lewis had been less receptive to Bergson’s theories. In “Joyce, Bergson and the Memory of Words” Justin Beplate encapsulates Wyndham Lewis condemnation of *Ulysses*, who felt “that the language of *Ulysses* betrays Joyce’s overwhelming preoccupation with ‘Time-philosophy.’” [Lewis] associates this particular obsession primarily with the pernicious influence of Bergson” (300). Whatever the influence of Bergson on Joyce, whether it was the result of direct study or ideational dissemination, *Ulysses* is certainly a novel preoccupied with time, memory, and history. Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* explicates Bergson’s philosophy in terms of the paradoxes that dissolve naïve divisions between past, present, and future. He writes,

> This is the first paradox: the contemporaneity of the past with the present that 
> *was*. It gives us the reason for the passing of the present. Every present passes, in 
> favour of a new present, because the past is contemporaneous with itself as 
> present. A second paradox emerges: the paradox of coexistence. If each past is 
> contemporaneous with the present that it was, the *all* of the past coexists with the 
> new present in relation to which it is now present. (81-2)

Conceiving of temporalities in a simultaneous way effectively collapses the tidy epistemological and ontological divisions between past, present, and future. While all moments bend towards a future, the collapse of past and present polarities evokes another sage whose influence on Joyce’s aesthetic developments would be difficult to overestimate. In the “Prefatory Epistle” to his *Cause, Principle and Unity*, the 16th Century philosopher Giordano Bruno explicates the theory of the coincidence of contraries through a series of differentiated signs. He writes that “in the two extremes that are assigned to the extremities of nature’s ladder, we must not see two principles, but only one and the same congruence. There height is depth, the abyss is inaccessible light, gloom is clarity, great is small, the confused is distinct, discord is amity, the divisible is indivisible, the atom is immensity—and all inversely” (11). Bruno, whom Joyce calls the “father of [ . . . ] modern philosophy” (133) in his early essay, “The Bruno Philosophy,” argues that two oppositional and codetermined qualities, when extended to their furthest degrees, such as largeness to infinite growth and smallness to infinite reduction, meet in a transcendent unity. Along with Thomas Aquinas’ theory of claritas and Giambattista Vico’s cyclic theory of history,
Bruno’s ideas provided material for the writing of *Finnegans Wake* rather than a transparent skeleton key to unraveling the text. The coincidence of contraries functions as a semantic and aesthetic device expressing a unity only insofar as it paradoxically undercuts a totalized reading of *Finnegans Wake*—in the same way that Vico’s cyclic theory of history provides a scaffold for Joyce’s text, from book to book and chapter to chapter, without necessarily retaining Vico’s grand narrative of teleological history. For my purposes, Bruno’s metaphysics provides a happy coincidence with Bergson’s temporal paradoxes as well as with Deleuzian and Baudrillardian theoretical concepts. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze explores semantic and narrative series that destabilize the privileging of any one series over others. His exegeses of Lewis Carroll’s works put forth an aesthetics of contradiction and paradox that undermines traditional narrative thinking, and many of these involve the rejection of binary relations. Jean Baudrillard’s theory of hyperreality, which results in the implosion of the polarization between reality and the imaginary, and his theory of simulation, wherein Platonic ideas of authenticity, origin, and copy dissolve in the face of genetic models—the generation of models without origin—share certain structural dynamics with Bruno’s philosophy, though replacing the transcendent with something altogether different. Ultimately these philosophers, or sages, whether preceding or following Joyce’s time, help to elucidate the historical significance of Joyce’s developing aesthetics.

_*Finnegans Wake*_ implodes numerous narrative and signifying structures through a variety of textual maneuvers. Among these are the portmanteau word, which Deleuze discusses in *The Logic of Sense*; the encyclopedic scale of Joyce’s subjects—leading to the “overpotentialized” textuality and “hypermnesc machine” of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* discussed in Jacques Derrida’s “Ulysses Gramophone” (281); and the inversion and collapse of referential structures like allusion and parody across diverse discourses of knowledge to a point where Fredric Jameson’s ahistorical pastiche takes over, except to say that the historical and the ahistorical fail to qualify the significance that *Finnegans Wake* holds in the place of literature and history. All too often *Finnegans Wake* is characterized as Modernist, for its scale, complexity, and use of allusion, or as Postmodernist, for its indeterminacy, language games, and mixing of “high” and “low” cultural artifacts. What is lost by these aesthetic and periodized categories is the significance of *Finnegans Wake* as the death knell to historicity itself, a development precipitated by the obsession with, and excavation and invention of, history and cultural identity that came
with and after the Irish Revival, the creation of history that led to the end of history as understood in any teleologically driven sense, nationalist or otherwise.

It could be said that *Finnegans Wake* is the answer to Stephen Dedalus’ desire to awake in *Ulysses*. Stephen’s famous proclamation to Mr. Deasey is that “History [...] is the nightmare from which [he is] trying to awake” (2.377). The problem is that *Finnegans Wake* is a book of the night. In *James Joyce*, Richard Ellmann discloses Joyce’s explanation of *Wakean* methods to Max Eastman. Joyce says, “In writing of the night, I really could not, I felt I could not, use words in their ordinary connections. Used that way they do not express how things are in the night, in the different stages—conscious, then semi-conscious, then unconscious. I found that it could not be done with ordinary relations and connections” (546). In Brunonian fashion, *Finnegans Wake* can be made clear through only the gloom of night, a coincidence of contraries. In this sense, Stephen would wake to find himself in another dream (a precursor to horror film narrative technique). Furthermore, the nightmare would not be that Stephen is haunted by personal, nationalist, or even Western history, but by the loss of history as a grand narrative which has been subsumed by a chaosmos of converging and diverging series of histories, real, mythic, quotidian, and epic.

This imagined scenario of Stephen waking to find himself immersed in the fabric of *Finnegans Wake* can elucidate profound differences between *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, differences that register a change in attitudes towards historical thinking (though it is important to realize that the *Finnegans Wake* completes a project already foregrounded in *Ulysses*). In speaking of the narrative structures that coordinate parallel timelines, Deleuze mentions Joyce’s *Ulysses* in *The Logic of Sense*: “Joyce […] secured the relation between the signifying series ‘Bloom’ and the signified series ‘Ulysses,’ thanks to multiple forms which include an archeology of narrative modes, a system of correspondence between numbers, a prodigious employment of esoteric words, a method of question and answer and the establishment of currents of thought or multiple trains of thought” (39). *Ulysses*, portraying Bloom and Stephen’s activities of June 16, 1904, acts as a signifying series to the episodic developments in Homer’s *Odyssey*, which acts as the signified series. This is how extended structures of allusion work. The signified series of allusion complicates the signifying series with contrasting values, but it does not usurp the overall signifying/signified serial relations. Bloom is always Bloom; he is never confused with

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4 Richard Ellmann’s source is Max Easton’s *The Literary Mind*
Odysseus. He, along with Stephen and Molly, represents the infusion of the quotidian with the heroic with varying effects—comic, tragic, always ironic. There are instances in *Ulysses*, however, where traditional narrative polarities, those that normally operate at the level of allusion or parody, introduce new signifying possibilities. While the overall extended structure of allusion retains its integrity throughout *Ulysses*, discrete points within the novel unsettle traditional signifying relations that exceed what Christopher Butler calls “that awareness of allusion and split level response” in “Joyce, Modernism and Post-Modernism” (264). This establishes an “ironic gap,” which Butler identifies in *Ulysses’* predecessor *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, often ascribed to Modernist works. The gap develops between the established allusive series and a tone of departure from that series. *Ulysses*, however, opens up a semantic space where the distinctions between the allusive or parodied series and the ironic gap become less clear.

In the “Nausicaa” episode Bloom gazes at Gerty MacDowell from a distance on Sandymount Strand. The episode moves between Bloom and Gerty’s perspectives during their sexually objectifying and exhibitionist encounter. (Bloom pleasures himself as Gerty exposes herself.) Gerty invests the encounter with sentimental values akin with those found in romance novels of the time.5 She watches his watching: “And while she gazed her heart went pitapat. Yes, it was her he was looking at, and there was meaning in his look. His eyes burned in her as though they would search her through and through, read her very soul” (13.411-13). She compares the “intellectual face” of the “foreigner” to the “image of the photo she had of Martin Harvey, the matinée idol” (13.416-17). Famously Bloom’s climax is accompanied by fireworks in the distance: “[T]he Roman candle burst and it was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of it a stream of gold hair threads [. . .] O so lovely, O, soft, sweet, soft” (13.737-40)! Gerty reproaches him from a distance and promises to herself to keep their secret. In spite of all the saccharine language, the final comic climax, and the apparent shared complicity in the sexual exchange, the overall effect of the episode retains a romantic sincerity, thus gesturing beyond basic parody. Because of this, the signified series overturns the parodic function of the signifying series and inverts their relations. It is not that the parodic values

5 Don Gifford points out in *Ulysses Annotated* that Gerty’s name is based on the heroine, Gerty Flint, of Maria Cummin’s novel, *Lamplighter*, a narrative with all the romantic bells and whistles—a life of hardship, a rise to riches, and an eventual happy marriage. Gerty McDowell herself read this novel (13.633).
discontinue in the episode, but that parody and sincerity occupy the same signifying space; or one could say that parody exists and does not exist simultaneously.

Throughout *Ulysses* Stephen ponders various paradoxes wherein causality is undermined by the inversion of relations. Aside from the numerous allusions Stephen makes to the Holy Trinity, in its official or heretical permutations of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, his theory on Shakespeare and *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* blurs genealogical causality. For Stephen, King Hamlet was played by Shakespeare himself. He introduces his theory in the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode: “It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare” (9.165-6). Prince Hamlet was played by Burbage. However, the name Hamlet is linked to Shakespeare’s dead son Hamnet. In the play the ghost speaks to his son; on stage Shakespeare speaks to his son. The crux is that Shakespeare is occupying the place of the ghost, which would be the place of his son. Shakespeare is occupying the position of father and son. He speaks to himself as his son, and, of course, all parts were created, or fathered, by Shakespeare the playwright. Finally, the terms *father* and *son* are obviously codetermined. Each depends on the other for its definition, a semantic relation that contradicts the genealogical relations of their actual referents.

In *Ulysses* this preoccupation with genealogical relations is demonstrated through the recurrent concept of metempsychosis. Stephen reflects on the idea near the conclusion of the “Proteus” episode: “Bag of corpsegas sopping in foul brine. A quiver of minnows, fat of a spongy titbit, flash through the slits of his buttoned trouserfly. God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain” (3.476-9). Following the overarching double-narrative structure of the novel itself, the ghosts of Homer’s characters are reborn in Joyce’s Dublin of June 16, 1904. At the level of language, *metempsychosis* itself transforms into Molly’s *met him pike hoses*, Molly’s full pronunciation of which we hear from Leopold in the “Sirens” episode: “Mrs Marion. Met him pike hoses. Smell of burn. Of Paul de Kock. Nice name he” (11.500-1). Finally, Stephen ponders his own genealogy in “Proteus” when thinking about the ancient people of Ireland: “Famine, plague and slaughters. Their blood is in me, their lusts my waves. I moved among them on the frozen Liffey, that I, a changeling, among the sputtering resin fires” (3.306-8). This genealogy begins to move beyond basic causal chains and gestures towards another kind of genealogy, one where distinctions between origin and copy lose ground in the face of the proliferation of genes without origin. Baudrillard conceives of the genetic as
operating at the level of the model or the code, not as derivative from some other source, not as copy of an original, but as operating as simulation. He writes in *Simulacra and Simulation* that

> It is the gap [between cause and effect, between subject and object] in the process of genetic coding, in which indeterminacy is not so much a question of molecular randomness as of the abolition, pure and simple, of the *relation*. In the process of molecular control, which “goes” from the DNA nucleus to the “substance” that it “informs,” there is no longer the traversal of an effect, of an energy, of a determination, of a message [. . .]. In fact, this whole process can only be understood in its negative form: nothing separates one pole from another anymore, the beginning from the end. (31)

Though Baudrillard frequently discusses the technological developments that led to the conditions of simulation that now dominate the world—the rise of television, for example—it is clear that simulation effects and is effected by language itself. His discussion of the genetic is literal and figurative, the latter pertaining to signification; but this is not a genealogy of signs in the etymological sense, nor does it involve a textual genetics traceable to an original draft. The genetic is without origin. It implodes relations causal or otherwise. *Ulysses* begins to gesture towards a world wherein the poles of causality begin to implode. The metempsychotic chain loosens its causal movement because the former and the latter, the creator and the created, the father and the son, become interchangeable. This is as true of Stephen’s paradoxes as it is of the intertextual relations in the novel itself—such as with *metempsychosis* and *met him pike hoses* or with Bloom’s preoccupation with *heliotrope*. The signs begin to accumulate meaning horizontally rather than vertically (genealogically/etymologically). History likewise begins to lose its verticality.

In the “Nestor” episode Stephen repeatedly expresses his ambivalence towards history. As one who is haunted by history, he is placed in the unhappy position of one who teaches history—perhaps analogous to Joyce in his early “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages.” Stephen’s thoughts are interspersed throughout the history lesson he gives to his students. At one point he thinks,

> Had Pyrrhus not fallen by a beldam’s hand in Argos or Julius Caesar not been knifed to death. They are not to be thought away. Time has branded them and fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted.
But can those have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass? Weave, weaver of the wind. (2.48-53)

Following this a student asks: “Tell us a story, sir” (2.54). Another student follows: “O, do, sir. A ghoststory” (2.55). The narrative function of history is exposed between Stephen’s thoughts and the students’ requests, and Stephen’s thoughts on alternative histories (a history where Caesar is not assassinated, etc.) recognizes both the imaginary and real determinants of history, that history, a story about ghosts, is a narrative that memorializes past events. Andrew Nicholas Miller’s Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory theorizes two distinct engagements with history: the memorial and the counter-memorial. He explicates the former through the perceptual modalities shown in Stephen’s thoughts in the “Proteus” episode. What is of importance is that historical engagement is being configured through a subjective determination of an object. Miller explains, “On the plane of historical perception, the faculty of memory effects a similar textualization of the object, the past. Like so many seaspawn and seawrack, the jetsam of history appears before the historical gaze as a collection of signifiers—events, people, lives, stories—that are at once irreducibly contextual [...] and irreducibly textual” (23). Miller conceives of the memorial as a discursive force through which history is enclosed as a decodable narrative, thereby excluding alternative histories and concealing history itself as mutable and fluid. The counter-memorial, on the other hand, invites continuous engagement and exposes the present as an active constructor of history. He uses Jochen Gerz’s 2,146 Stones as an example of the counter-memorial, a memorial in Saarbrücker, Germany that memorializes the genocide of Jewish families by placing family names face-down on the stones of a public square. It is the invisibility of the names that forces viewers to engage their active roles as definers of history rather than as passive witnesses to a prewritten text.

Returning to Stephen’s ambivalence to history in the “Nestor” episode, we see that his nightmare is such that he cannot escape his role as archivist of history, especially as an Irishman who works for the Unionist Mr. Deasy; for the realities of history are such that the alternative of a liberated Ireland can be only imagined, a state of affairs rudely made concrete as Mr. Deasy dispenses financial advice to Stephen as he pays him his ironical sovereigns. Stephen takes his payment: “Stephen’s hand, free again, went back to the hollow shells. Symbols of beauty and of power. A lump in my pocket: symbols soiled by greed and misery” (2.226-8). What the “Nestor” episode reveals is that Stephen, despite his cognizance of the narrativity of history, still
participates in the dissemination of history and struggles with history himself, a situation clearly made palpable by the sociopolitical forces leading to his economic limitations, a theme represented through Stephen’s homelessness and through the appearances of his father and sister throughout *Ulysses*. Finally, the point is that Stephen ultimately maintains the subject-object distance necessary for the regulation of history as a memorializing grand narrative—despite his philosophical inversions of relations demonstrated in his theory on Shakespeare and other reflections. As such, despite discrete moments in *Ulysses* wherein an aesthetics of simultaneity appears—recalling Bergson’s collapse of temporal poles so much like Bruno’s coincidence of contraries—the overall framework of *Ulysses* manages to retain the gap between signifying and signified series. In other words, despite the ruptures between temporalities exposed in episodes like “Circe,” in which ghosts like Paddy Dignam walk the earth, a historical order manages to close these ruptures. Stephen hallucinates, and a hallucination is defined in relation to a convention of reality.

Leopold Bloom maintains a similar signifying distance as he fetishizes the past as sexual object. In the “Lestrygonians” episode he anticipates his visit to the National Museum. The grooves in the oak slab at Davy Byrne’s pub remind him of the curves in statues of goddesses: “Beauty: it curves: curves are beauty. Shapely goddesses, Venus,, Juno: curves the world admires. Can see them library museum standing in the round hall, naked goddesses” (8.920-2). Like the image of the nymph that hangs in Leopold’s bedroom, history is determined as a sexual object. What this reveals is not so much Leopold’s libidinous appetite as much as the process of fetishization through which museums operate. Stephen’s object of horror and Bloom’s pornographic object are corollaries to what Baudrillard calls “museumification” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 10). The ordering of artifacts, through sequencing them, by culturally defining them through spatial and chronological symbolic systems, by assigning them plaques with their mini-narratives, encodes the artifact within historical narrative and as text, all for the view of the subject’s gaze. What Baudrillard further points out is that demuseumification, the process by which ethnologists attempt to return the artifact, the site, or the people to its or their “original” context is “nothing but another spiral of artificiality” (11). The discourse of museumification or demuseumification still operates within a historical sensibility that accepts Platonic divisions between origin, copy, and forgery. *Ulysses*, though prefiguring the implosion of history wrought by *Finnegans Wake* through discrete textual maneuvers, ultimately retains the polarization
between the imaginary and the real. To put it more concretely, the museum still retains the integrity of its walls; the history book, like a tomb, sustains its gravity; and the active narrative of June 16, 1904 retains it signifying status in relation to the signified narrative of Odysseus’ journey. Stephen ponders the surrounding books in the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode: “Coffined thoughts around me, in mummmycases, embalmed in spice of words” (9.352-3). History remains intact as the memorial that narrates the past. This is the effect of Miller’s memorial; however, *Finnegans Wake* completes the project prefigured by *Ulysses*. The museyroom of *Finnegans Wake* is the counter-memorial that implodes the polarization of the real and the imaginary. “[M]istress Kathe,” our tour guide and a Wakean avatar, invites the reader into the museyroom: “This the way to the museyroom. Mind your hats goan in! Now yiz are in the Willingdone Museyroom,” (8.8-10). says “mistress Kathe,” the “janitrix” to this museyroom (*FW* 8.8). But the *Wakean* world, where our hypothetical Stephen now awakes, is neither inside nor outside, and represents a history without walls or foundations.

In *Matter and Memory* Henri Bergson locates present experience in the most contracted version of the past, as something that has already happened. He writes, “When we think this present as going to be, it exists not yet, and when we think it as existing, it is already past” (150). While he is speaking of past and present in terms of conscious experience, in terms of memory, its implications for historicity are seismic—if history is a vital phenomenon rather than a mere collection of sterile books, supplements creating the illusion that history is static and distant rather than fluid and personal. The idea of wakefulness is useful here. As Joyce says in his lecture, “If [Ireland] is truly capable of reviving, let her awake” (*The Critical Writings* 174). Stephen desires to wake from his nightmare of history. That waking, or revival, however, is at odds with the kind of history espoused by the nationalist forces of the Irish Revival, which sought to reconnect the present to a distant past that had long been compromised by colonialism, famine, and emigration. “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” excavates and locates history, but it also exposes history as narrative. It begins, “Nations have their ego, just like individuals. The case of a people who like to attribute to themselves qualities and glories foreign to other people has not been entirely unknown in history” (154). The sentiment recognizes the role that cultures play in crafting their own histories. Certainly, the Irish Revival was heavily invested in such a process, and certainly Joyce’s “waking” acknowledges the willful generative forces in developing cultural cohesion. It is in this light that *Finnegans Wake* occupies an ambivalent...
space as a landmark work in the history of Irish literature and as an aesthetic development that implodes historical structure in favor of the simultaneity of all histories. In this sense, Stephen’s nightmare of history ends because history ends. Another Stephen famously speaks of forging in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: “I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (213). Forging involves acts of moving forward, creating something, and falsifying something, acts that need not be mutually exclusive where Platonic categories no longer exist. Conceiving of forging in terms of Baudrillard’s genetic coding, in which origins and copies are replaced by simulacra, posits a very different kind of waking reality. After whiskey scatters over Tim’s body in the song “Finnegan’s Wake,” “Timothy rising from the bed,/ Says, ‘Whirl your liquor round like blazes,/ Thanam o’n dhoul, do ye think I’m dead?’” (*James Joyce* 544). The listener of the song is tempted to deduce that Tim came back from the grave or was never dead, the first deduction couched in mythological or religious terms, the latter in a logical empiricism. The question is whether a third alternative is available, whether some other kind of transformation has taken place, one less grounded in distinctions between beginnings and endings, one open to the waking of simulacra.
CHAPTER THREE
THE MÖBIUS MUSEYROOM OF FINNEGANS WAKE

The figure of the museum appears in the first few pages of *Finnegan Wake*, first described as the “Wallinstone national museum” (8.1-2), as the “museumound” (8.5) and as the “Willingdone Museyroom” (8.10). According to Geert Lernout’s genetic analysis, “The Beginning: Chapter I.1” (from *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake*), the initial workings of the first chapter of *Finnegans Wake* was not added until 1926 (two years after the first published fragment of *Work in Progress*), Joyce having designated an important role to these passages: “Joyce began to write a chapter that is in many ways an overture and a prelude” (49). A key role to the section establishes an aesthetics of historicity that sets the tone for the entire book. Like many concepts, themes and tropes in *Finnegans Wake*, the image of the museum accumulates ideational density and complexity through a ramifying series based on orthographic variations, conceptual associations, and repetitions of rhythmic phrasal structures (the rhythm of the phrase repeats enough that conceptual and orthographic identities can take on greater variation because the rhythmic structure recalls word and concept through inference).

Each of the above variations displayed in the Museyroom section carries its own connotation. The first frames the museum in terms of nationalism (though which nationalism is not specified), the second, suggesting an image like the ancient Hill of Tara, in terms of anthropology, archeology, geology, mythology or even paleontology--beware the “brontoichthyan form” (7.20)!--and the third expresses a willing (perhaps “Thy will be done” from the “Pater Noster”), a musing and *musée*, as befits some of the French and Belgian history enclosed therein. Lernout points out that the “Wallinstone national museum” is the Wellington Museum of Mont Saint Jean, Belguim (56). As early as in Joyce’s short story, “The Dead,” the Wellington Monument of Phoenix Park, Dublin represents a conflict between Irish nationalism and British imperialism. What takes place in the opening of *Finnegans Wake* is a scene in which Kate guides us into, through and out of a museum whose multi-serial contents reference various battles and wars, most specifically Napoleonic Wars, and a sexual scandal at Phoenix Park which involves either voyeurism, exhibitionism or some combination thereof. Ultimately this image of
the museum communicates a radical implication for history itself. Before taking a closer look into these passages, the reader will find it worthwhile to explore *Finnegans Wake*’s museum within a larger theoretical framework.

Walter Benjamin’s “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” stipulates that the aura of the work of art is tied to the time and space of its original creation. The notion of origin is essential here: “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence” (220). Originary distance seems to bear also a significant relation to the aura: “[The] desire of contemporary masses [is] to bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly [. . . .] through picture magazines and newsreels” (223). The mediation of the original experience fails to reproduce the aura of that experience. Much of Benjamin’s critique is couched in the vocabulary of “origin” and “reproduction” for obvious reasons. Ultimately this conceptual model is analogous to Platonism, wherein Form or Idea holds originary status and all else is either a copy or a simulacrum (phantasm). Similar to Benjamin’s critique of modernity with its suspect techno-cinematic, and therefore ontological, accelerations, is Jean Baudrillard’s critique of postmodernity. Though the technological and scientific milieus of their theoretical engagements are strikingly different, as are their conclusions, the image of the museum plays an important role in each. Furthermore, Platonism lurks in the background of each, albeit it fairs poorly in a postmodern world of simulation, as does the sacral significance of the aura, which suggests not only the privileging of the original art object, but a conception of historicity grounded in origin.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Baudrillard speaks of museumification and demuseumification, the former involving the “[transplanting of mummies] to an order of history, science, and museums, our order, which no longer masters anything, which only knows how to condemn what preceded it to a decay and death” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 10-11). Mummies are merely an example. One could just as easily replace them with Grecian urns or painted cassoni from the Renaissance. In the case of demuseumification, any attempt to return the object to its original foundation has similar results: “And just as with ethnology, which plays at extricating itself from its object to better secure itself in its pure form, *demuseumification* is nothing but another spiral of artificiality” (11). Baudrillard’s museum simulates history, reveals
history as simulation, a condition that ultimately reflects the condition of the world—world as simulation. His example of a Disneyland which becomes more real than reality signifies the collapse between the polarization of the real and the imaginary that leads to “the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation” (12). He states that “It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real” (12-13). As mentioned earlier, Baudrillard’s collapse of poles operates on dynamics similar to those expressed in Giordano Bruno’s *Cause, Principle and Unity*, whose coincidence of contraries extends binary values, like macro and micro, to such an extreme that they become equal, as though two antithetical objects traveled in opposite directions on a single line only to find that line is a circle. Bruno’s theory of the coincidence of contraries plays a substantive role throughout *Finnegans Wake*. Beside the fact that his name is often referenced and that binary values are frequently represented through Shem and Shaun, Issy and her mirror image, between father and sons and mother and daughter, in all manner of conflicts, familial or epic, the paradoxical function of Bruno’s theory seems to surface in numerous aesthetic and epistemological issues in *Finnegans Wake*. The Museyroom plays a pivotal role in complicating a system of differentials like inside/outside, past/present, and factual/fictive.

Imagine a museum whose walls twist inside out and whose exhibit plaques display language that runs off the borders of those plaques, onto the walls that twist, and into the surrounding environs, joining language and world in a fluidity full of limitless potential. Though the walls themselves might at first suggest a closed space, like a circle, for example, the twisting of those walls reveal the paradoxical aspect that there is only one side and that side faces inside and outside. In other words, the walls of the museum are the walls of a Möbius strip. Follow them and you will be neither inside nor out. You will be everywhere and nowhere amid Nietzschean intoxication and anti-Oedipal schizophrenia. Gilles Deleuze discusses the Möbius strip in *The Logic of Sense* to express the effect of paradox-writing in Lewis Carroll’s *Sylvie and Bruno*: “Fortunatus’ purse, presented as a Möbius strip, is made of handkerchiefs sewn in the wrong way, in such a manner that its outer surface is continuous with its inner surface: it envelops the entire world, and makes that which is inside be on the outside and vice versa” (11).

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6 Just as Friedrich Nietzsche writes about the intoxicated man in the *Birth of Tragedy*, where ontological borders dissolve—“He is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art” (37)—, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write about the schizophrenic’s own distortion of ontological borders in the *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*: “[The] self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever” (2).
Deleuze demonstrates how Carroll’s writing creates paradox, where distinctions between ordinary binaries, such as large and small, up and down, and inside and outside, are cross-inverted in such a way that the normally unquestioned contradictions of language, of effects, come to the surface, thus mitigating the measurability of values based on depth--the language of adults rather than children, like Alice in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (10).

Normally a museum circumscribes history in a closed space, assigning aesthetic, epistemological, and moral values to enclosed artifacts, often operating in sacred, tragic, nostalgic, or heroic value systems. The system is ultimately referential. *This was then. Here is the meaning of what happened.* This frames the past, and therefore present and future, in a fixed memorializing narrative structure. Grounding the past, positions the future. *Finnegans Wake* itself is often positioned in this sense, as a work expressing the trauma and nostalgia so often ascribed to Modernism. However, the walls of the museum in *Finnegans Wake* do not circumscribe history but implode the structural devices that support historical narrative, imploding distinctions between past and present, inside and outside; or, to put it in more Brunonian terms, extends the binaries to the point where they become the same. In fact, the idea that implosion and extension, seemingly antithetical movements, should have the same result is entirely Brunonian. Follow the exit and you will end up inside. Enter to go outside. Christine van Boheemen mentions the Möbius figure in *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative and Postcolonialism*. Though she ultimately positions Joyce’s writing in a nationalist framework (insofar as it operates in relation to British imperialism), as that which somehow expresses the trauma of postcolonial experience through the unrepresentable subaltern perspective, the Möbius effect, which “subvert[s] the distinction between inside and outside, text and world” (36) leads to similar results as Deleuze’s. She writes that “[Joyce’s] webs trap the reader into witnessing the unspoken moment of their occasion. Rather than free-play, his syncreticism and impenetrability are a resistance against the self-righteous, ‘colonizing’ power of hegemonic readings (structuralist, poststructuralist, or hermeneutic) over the literary text.” Discarding Boheemen’s strange use of postructuralism in this passage, I wish to point out that the de-hegemonic effect of the Möbius strip aligns itself with Deleuze’s discussion of the Stoic revolution in thought, the outcome of which dispels the illusion of depth and focuses on the surface of language—all that language ever was. Deleuze writes that
“The Stoics discovered surface effects. Simulacra cease to be subterranean rebels and make the most of their effects [. . .]. The most concealed becomes the most manifest. All the old paradoxes of becoming must again take shape in a new youthfulness—transmutation” (The Logic of Sense 7-8). The outcome is that the Platonic system that divides origin, copy, and simulacrum, a differentiation which privileges origin, unravels in the face of paradox. Likewise, Louis Armand writes of paradox in Technē: James Joyce, Hypertext & Technology when he speaks of the “Janus-like (FW 272.16) point of double articulation” (88) in which time unfolds in two directions in Finnegans Wake: “In other words, a later epoch (A.D.) is shown, not to proceed from an earlier epoch (B.C.), but in a sense to precede it, and also to encompass it in apparent movement of ‘concentricity’” (87). Finally, Armand goes on to point out that “In Joyce’s punning text, the cycle is both the passage of history and the vehicle of history, its terminus and commencement” (90) and uses Joyce’s diagrammatic variation on Euclid’s first proposition to make his point (see FW 293 for diagram). Janus appears also in the Museyroom section, and represents that very point where inside and outside meet on the Möbius strip. What is essential to understand is its effect on historical discourse. Also important to the Janus figure is the act of looking, which, as I will explore later, elides the museum/memorial with the image of the telescope, generating an innovative perspectivist reading. At the threshold to the Museyroom section, as well as to the Museyroom itself, we read,

Hence when the clouds roll by, jamey, a proudseye view is enjoyable of our mounding’s mass, now Wallinstone national museum, with, in some greenish distance, the charming waterloose country and the two quitewhite villagettes who hear show of themselves so gigglesomes minxt the follyages, the prettilees! Penetrators are permitted into the museumound free. Welsh and the Paddy Patkinses, one shelenk! Redismembers invalids of old guard find poussepousse pousseypram to sate the sort of their butt. For her passkey supply to the janitrix, the mistress Kathe. Tip. (FW 7.36-8.8)

What was originally a mound representing part of the “brontoichthyan form outlined aslumbered” (7.20-21) is now a museum, which is itself a reconfiguration of the Wellington Monument. The solid obelisk has become penetrable. The very idea of passing into a solid

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7 Armand uses the musical notation on page 272 of Book II to make his point. Alongside the notation, which is in the left margin, the main body of the text reads, “Please stop if you’re a B.C. minded missy, please do. But you should prefer A.D. stepplease” (FW 272.12-14).
mound evokes the image of the Sídhe mounds in Irish mythology, representing passageways into
the otherworld of the faeries. The Museyroom, in its conversion from obelisk to museum, is an
updated version of the Sídhe mound; history is grounded in prehistory, an obvious paradox. Kate, our docent, is the “janitrix,” a genitrix (mother), a female janitor/doorkeeper, and Janus, the Roman god who guards gateways, facing inside and outside. She escorts us into, “Mind your hats goan in!” (8.9), and out of, “Mind your boots goan out” (9.22-23), the Museyroom, but the separation of the inside and the outside, of the worlds represented by each, persists only at the surface of words, and the coincidence of these contraries dissolves the walls of the museum, exposing the narrativity of history, its groundlessness, and its condition as simulation.

In *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory, and History* Derek Attridge, focusing on the overall language effects of *Finnegans Wake*, comes to similar conclusions: “[The] model of the novel as simulacrum is shattered, and with it the model of historical writing as simulacrum of the novel. If the language which the historian has to use possesses all the properties revealed in *Finnegans Wake* [. . . ], then the dream of capturing in words ‘what really happened’ must be abandoned” (88). (It is important to note here that Attridge is speaking of Plato’s simulacrum rather than Baudrillard’s.) If the novel is no longer a Platonic simulacrum, then its connections to the reader and the world operate by other means. In fact, *Finnegans Wake* acts as a rhizome, of which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*: “There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders [. . . ]. In short, we think that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside” (23). Curiously, Deleuze and Guattari fail to see the rhizomatic qualities of *Finnegans Wake*, overemphasizing the closed circuit of its narrative (Joyce’s final sentence is the first sentence) as well as the unified effect of its multiplicity. They write that “Joyce’s words, accurately described as having ‘multiple roots,’ shatter the linear unity of the word, even of language, only to posit a cyclic unity of the sentence, text, or knowledge” (6). Such an assertion surprisingly overestimates the

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8 Curiously, this resembles the dimensional inversion that precedes the exposition of the Möbius strip in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, when the narrator witnesses the collapse of the real and the imaginary poles as the ethereal Professor becomes real: “What was to be done? Had the fairy-life been merged in the real life? Or was Lady Muriel ‘eerie’ also, and thus able to enter into the fairy-world along with me” (Carroll 703). The inversion works both ways, thus evoking the Möbius strip. Immediately following this, Lady Muriel coincidentally utters the exact words on the narrator’s mind. As the worlds collapse into the hyperreal, time becomes circular.
aesthetic and epistemological implications of Joyce’s final/first sentence as well as perhaps his use of Vico’s cyclic development of history. Ironically, they say that The Thousand Plateaus itself features a “circular form [. . .] only for laughs” (22). Joyce, too, had a knack for jokes. For Attridge, Finnegans Wake “undoes history [because it] does not contain within itself a clear determination of a time and place, of a sequence of events, or of a set of existents. It is not that history is absent; on the contrary, history is omnipresent” (88). What becomes visible in Finnegans Wake are floating narrative islands capable of continuous resequencing and fluid relational structures. There are times and places, but these overlap and shift. Histories are points in motion, momentarily placed side-by-side or in coterminous series. In fact, the rhizomatic qualities of Finnegans Wake invite genetic studies, having already subverted notions of an urtext. More than this, the Museyroom’s Möbius effect illustrates Finnegans Wake as a rhizome, imploding boundaries between the museum/book and the world.

Within the museum itself—if such a distinction can be made now—Kate leads us from site to site. It is not clear whether she is showing us paintings, reliefs, or something else, and this ambiguity not only helps to blur spatial relations but also fuses image with plaque, illustration with caption—her descriptions operate on both levels. While the historical references largely surround the Napoleonic Wars, the section presents also Kate’s role at Finnegan’s/O’Reilly’s/Earwicker’s/Finn MacCool’s Irish wake as well as the scandal at Phoenix Park. Kate seems to possess an abundance of knowledge as she relates to the tourists/mourners this multi-serial history wherein the “jinnies” are two girls and the “lipoleums” are three soldiers: “This is jinnies in the bonny bawn blooches. This is lipoleums in the rowdy howses. This is the Willingdone, by the splinters of Cork, order fire” (9.21-3). Not surprisingly the center of the scandal is “Willingdone,” whose will is done despite all impropriety. The scope of the museum’s content exceeds Napoleonic events, however, featuring direct or indirect references to the Battle of Hastings, the Battle of Bannockburn, the Crimean War, the Trojan War, and no doubt other militaristic and scandalous events (perhaps the suggestion is that, beyond HCE’s or the Russian General’s indiscretions, war is the greatest obscenity of all). The “tip” sound that demarcates the division between scenes during the tour resonates throughout Finnegans Wake. In the Museyroom section it signals the transition from one museum scene to another, almost suggesting the clicking of a slide show. However, it also suggests the sound of a shilling dropping into a receptacle: “Welsh and the Paddy Patkinses, one shelenk” (8.6). This is the fee
for egress into the museum and perhaps also doubles as donations at the Irish wake. As the conjunction-like figure that separates military scenes, “tip” has a paratactic effect on the ordering of the scenes: no scene, image, or event has greater significance over any other. Because the deceptively diminutive word seems to function more as a spacing effect than a concept, its equalization of values creates a condition similar to Deleuze’s notion of pure Difference in *Difference and Repetition*, which is arrived at through the eternal return: “Every thing, animal or being assumes the status of simulacrum; so that the thinker of eternal return – who indeed refuses to be drawn out of the cave, finding instead another cave beyond, always another in which to hide – can rightly say that he is himself burdened with the superior form of everything” (67). The cave here is Plato’s cave from the *Republic*, except that Plato’s world order wherein Form is the good, and copy and simulacrum corruptions thereof, is flooded by a sea of simulacra. There are only simulacra. Forms are now simulacra. The intelligible is no longer privileged over the corporeal or sensible. Because the seemingly trivial “tip” levels any hierarchical stratification of history and knowledge, language itself comes to the surface and Pure Difference, rather than a system of differences, takes place. Deleuze explicates the eternal return with his concept of the third repetition. Interestingly, his three repetitions are linked to Giambattista Vico’s cyclic model of history. William York Tindall’s *Reader’s Guide to James Joyce* points out the overarching structural use of Vico’s cyclic conception of history in *Finnegans Wake*, the four books of *Finnegans Wake* matching the four ages in Vico’s history: Divine Age, Heroic Age, Human Age, and the Ricorso. My point is that Deleuze’s third repetition is equated with Vico’s ricorso.

To better explain Deleuze’s third repetition, I will have to quote several passages from *Difference and Repetition*. He discusses three syntheses of repetition: first, second and third; or, the Before, the During, and the After, which is the Future, which is the “repetition within the eternal return” (297). The Before is “defined by default or in a negative manner: one repeats because one does not know, because one does not remember” (295). The During is “defined by a becoming-similar or a becoming-equal: one becomes capable of performing an action, one becomes equal to the image of the action” (295). The third repetition, however, which is the future and the eternal return, “affirms difference, […] dissemblance and disparateness, chance, multiplicity and becoming” (300). The third repetition “distributes [the Before and the During] in accordance with the straight line of time, but also eliminates them, determining them to operate only once and for all, keeping the ‘all times’ for the third time alone” (296-7). According to
Deleuze the “content”–if such a word can be used here–of the third time comprises simulacra (299). As Deleuze’s third repetition subsumes and cancels out the previous repetitions, so does the ricorso suffuse the entirety of *Finnegans Wake*. There is only the ricorso, which, as Deleuze’s Difference, formulates all history as virtuality and simulation. The ricorso “[keeps] the ‘all times’ for the third time alone.” In this light, *Finnegans Wake* moves beyond the Modernist trauma of history, recasting mourning and nostalgia as simulation and, in effect, pastiche rather than through parody and allusion (both referring back to a privileged sign). These latter referential systems operate on a principle of distance and privilege. In the previous chapter I discussed relations between signifying and signified series. In the case of allusion and parody, the relations are fixed. In other words, the objects of allusion and parody retain their status as signifieds. By contrast, pastiche collapses the distance between signifying and signified series. Despite this, the condition of language is such that we still, even if for only fleeting moments, think through a signifying distance. This does not lessen, however, the radical effects of collapsing poles between subject and object.

Closely following the museyroom’s first appearance the monument is described as a “Willingdone mormorial tallowscoop,” an image echoed shortly after as “This is the Willingdone branlish his same marmorial tallowscoop” (8.35, 9.33-4). (The telescope recalls the image of the obelisk, which is no doubt also phallic, as Willingdone “[waggles] his tailoscrupp” (10.13).) As with any reading of *Finnegans Wake*, the analysis of words invites repeated play. Aside from forming the aural (here meaning sound rather than sacred quality) connection between *tallowscoop* and *telescope*, *Finnegans Wake* invites a reader to break *telescope* into its constituent parts, in this case conventionally etymological, as the combination of distance and seeing. While the act of looking, just as in *Ulysses*, comes up repeatedly in *Finnegans Wake*—through an act of voyeurism in Phoenix Park, through those who seemed to witness the scandalous act and who testify to this witnessing in court proceedings, and through the image of the kaleidoscope (143.28)—this act of looking recalls a historical function through retrospective distance. While the model of the telescope implies distance between the viewing subject and the viewable object, however, the way that telescoping functions in *Finnegans Wake* suggests an entirely different way of seeing, what I would like to call rhizoscopic (to evoke Deleuze and

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9 This preoccupation with the act of looking surfaces also in *Dubliners* and *Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man*. “Araby” and “The Dead” conflate desire with historical imagination and *Portrait* evokes the mythic with Stephen gazing at the young, bird-like woman on the beach.
Guattari’s rhizome). While substantial scholarship has been conducted on the unique ways in which *Finnegans Wake* constructs reader-subjectivity\(^\text{10}\), what I would like to suggest is that the rhizoscopic dynamics of *Finnegans Wake* engenders a way of thinking that not only reveals the subjective role in historical production and the confrontation with alterity, with all the ethical implications that come with such a role, but signifies a way of thinking that anticipates a world closely resembling our own, one mediated through web browsers, palm pilots, iPhones, and the virtualization of identity; one wherein, like the graphic chaos and white noise of news on Fox News or CNN, in which the informational value of roadside bombings, stock market statistics, weather reports, sports scores, celebrity gossip, pharmaceutical recalls and the newest, sleek designs of cars and shoes are equalized in an ocean of simulation.

Despite the semblance of subject-object dynamics, the acceleration and multimodality of the reader’s engagement with *Finnegans Wake*, with the idea that signifying series and signified series can be overturned at the blink of an eye, lead to a suffusing effect involving the simultaneity of all series operating as signifier *and* signified. The rhizoscope looks both ways, spins every which way, bends and pivots, and reveals phenomena of varying scope and import. The general becomes the particular, the particular the general, all in a wash of simulation. This leads to countless reversal effects. The television looks outward, the radio listens, the chromolithograph becomes a doorway and the solid becomes penetrable. One could conceive of the Museyroom itself as a form of data storage and data transmission in which the manner, form, and rhythm of expression become flexible and dynamic; but, most importantly, the hardwiring between museum and world is seamless and fluid. A Möbius effect occurs wherein categorical orders of knowledge contingent on polar notions of inside and outside dissolve.

The Museyroom repeats much later in *Finnegans Wake* as the “mewseyfume” (333.16). Various parallels occur: “[K]atekattershin clopped, clopped, clopped [. . . ] back and along the danzing corridor, as she was going to pimpim him, way boy wally, not without her complement of cavarnan men, between the two deathdealing allied divisions and the lines of readypresent fire of the corkedagains upstored, taken in giving the saloot, band your hands going in, bind your heads coming out” (333.7-13). In this section Kate appears to be delivering a message from ALP

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\(^{10}\) Colin MacCabe’s *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, Sheldon Brivic’s *Veil of Signs: Joyce, Lacan and Perception*, Christine van Boheemen’s *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative, and Postcolonialism*, Marian Eide’s *Ethical Joyce* and, as mentioned earlier, Nicholas Andrew Miller’s *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* all explore the construction of the reading subject.
to HCE. As can be seen in the above quote, military references occur. A conversation soon takes place, in what is probably the pub, between “Mr ‘Gladstone Browne,’” “Mr ‘Bonaparte Nolan,’” and he who “willingtoned,” who is Wellington (334.6-13). Giordano Bruno (Bruno of Nola) is suggested by “Browne” and “Nolan,” and the word “Dip” follows each speaker’s utterance, recalling “Tip” from the Museyroom section. The “dip” might suggest payment or the quaffing of a drink after speaking, in which case “tip” might now suggest the tipsiness that might accompany an Irish wake. What is significant in this section is that the repetition of war imagery, the invitation to a tryst, and the role of Kate as janitrix and conveyer of information are preceded by “mewseyfume.” Following the brief dialogue, the “pub’s pobbel done a stare. On the mizzatint wall. With its chromo for all, crimm crimms” (334.24-25). This image is a chromolithograph depicting the charge of the light brigade in the Crimean War. The chromolithograph, however, acts more like an aperture into another world.

David Haymen’s “Male Maturity or the Public Rise & Private Decline of HC Earwicker: Chapter II.3” explores the genetic developments behind this section. He writes, “So the passage that began with Kipling’s ‘boots’ has ended with the chromolithograph that hangs on the ‘mizzatint wall,’ which may be the immediate ‘realistic’ inspiration for the next pub tale” (267) which features Buckley and the Russian General. However, he overstresses the intermediary role of the Mewseyfume section. In spite of the section’s relative brevity, as Kate interrupts the publican activities to deliver a message from ALP to HCE, its reinforcement of the Möbius effect of the Wakean museum, enacts the continuous resequencing of histories and orders of experience and knowledge. As with the Museyroom section, the Mewseyfume section twists the line that separates the real and the imaginary. What intensifies the Möbius effect is the inclusion of other modes of representation in keeping with the technological accelerations of the 20th Century. The pub in Finnegans Wake comes equipped with all the bells and whistles of today’s sports bars. Earlier in this chapter there appears a radio, a “tolvtubular high fidelity daildialler” (309.14), later in the chapter a television, a “bairdboard bombardment screen” (349.9). (John Logie Baird invented the television in 1926). However, neither the chromolithograph, the radio nor the television represents different orders of reality. As soon as one registers the presence of these, one is already inside them. The television engulfs reality, evoking the hyperreal. Like the caves of simulation through which Deleuze’s thinker of eternal return jumps, the television, radio and chromolithograph suggest no ontological or epistemological categorical differences from the
“real.” There are no boundaries. It is this lack of spatial boundary that collapses distinctions of inside and outside, which in turn collapses history in the face of the virtual that subsumes all. Haymen’s genetic research uncovers the compositional developments of this section. He demonstrates that the drafting of the Mewseyfume section was initially limited to practical concerns. Joyce needed a transition between the story of the Norwegian Captain and the tale of Buckley and the Russian General. It wasn’t until “the second typescript [. . . ] that Joyce lavished the most care, and it was there that he actually developed his detailed comic portrait of [Kate] the slavey” (265). While it is true that Kate seems to interrupt the storytelling activities of the publicans, the image of the museum, along with a series of historical references that echo the Museyroom section, recall history as simulation, a fact highlighted by storytelling. The walls between history and fiction as well as museum and world are twisted into the Möbius. Not surprisingly, genetic research, as a method of research that forms connections between varied texts, forms part of that rhizome.

Genetic research works out of archives constituting recovered and carefully collated texts, some of which were dated to begin with, while others require a kind of historical detective investigation in order to ascertain date of composition. *Finnegans Wake* archives maintain an enormous body of texts spread throughout libraries, universities, and private collections throughout the world—forming a rhizome, as it were. Such an archive acts as a body of history, charting the development of *Work in Progress*. Scholars read through drafts and notebooks in order to reconstruct Joyce’s aesthetic process. Because of the intertextual and linguistic complexity of *Finnegans Wake*, genetic reading seems like a natural outgrowth of that complexity. One already delves into texts beyond *Finnegans Wake* in order to better understand its meanings. Jean-Michel Rabaté discusses the “genreader” in *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism*:

Facing an expanding archive, the “genreader” will be *genetic* in that (s)he (like the she-hen viewing literature as a mound of rubbish from which meaning will be finally extracted) is always becoming, and transforming the text whose intentions are to be ascribed to a whole unstable archive, and *generic* because always poised in some sort of textual and sexual undecidability. (207)

Rabaté shows that Joyce’s writing anticipates new readings based on that undecidability, always inviting and rebuffing stable meaning, thereby exposing how reading produces meaning—and
this includes a reading informed by historical thinking. Rabaté writes, “Finnegans Wake is both historical and trans-historical in the way that it exploits current debates about the nature of textuality and transforms them into the text itself” (206). While Rabaté is partly discussing a specific occasion in which Joyce chose to incorporate a genetic debate surrounding the Tristan variations in Finnegans Wake, he speaks to a larger issue in the way that Finnegans Wake invites textual debates about itself.

The curious outcome of genetic reading is that, while it historicizes textual relations, as between drafts, it produces a play of language pointing to new potentials. David Hayman calls this a “canon in flux” in “Genetic Criticism and Joyce: An Introduction.” He points out that

The existence of the manuscript record not only enlarges enormously the textual field by introducing quantities of fresh matter: it also mobilizes matter, accentuating the already-existing instability of a text instinct with productive contradictions. In the process, though few will see this at first, it provides us with fresh sources of delight, more room to play, a field full of surprises. (13-4)

Hayman’s preface to the James Joyce Archive recounts the development of Chapter I of Book I of Finnegans Wake. After having competed the first draft of the Museyroom section in the fall of 1926, Joyce was so “taken with the [...] episode that he not only stopped to revise but also made a clean copy, freely interpolating sentences, adding characters and action, and revising details” (xxiv). The initial version reads “Janitrix, the Mistress Kate. Tip” and then, after what appears to be the word shoes, “This way to the mewseyroom. Mind your hat going in” (17). (Hat replaces a crossed out word.) The spelling of “mewseyroom” makes it to the immediate redraft but changes to “museyroom” in the typescript later that year (150). However, Kate’s exit undergoes different revisions. What first reads as “This way the mewseyroom. Mind your boots going out” is altered in the first draft with “room” crossed out and with “ruim” appearing as its replacement, thus forming “mewseyruim” (21) The following redraft instead reads “This way the mewseyroom. Mind your boots goan out” (going was revised to goan) (30). This version makes it to the following typescript. What stands out over all of these changes is the momentary appearance of the word mewseyruim. While removal of mewseyroom for museyroom draws more attention to the museum-like function of this section, the removal of mewseyruim no longer evokes the idea of ruin. (Note: these changes also reflect Kate’s working-class brogue.) Positioning the Museyroom in relation to ruin might have better reflected the martial content of
the museum or perhaps the dissolution of history itself, as the feats of history lay in ruins soon to be forgotten. One wonders, however, if this would cast a Modernist sense of trauma and nostalgia on the Museyroom and, by extension, on *Finnegans Wake* itself, as the Museyroom section acts as an overture to the whole of *Finnegans Wake*. The very idea of ruin reflects also a beginning and ending. Ruin is a fixed state of affairs. The Museyroom, however, acts as the end of historicity rather than an end to a state of affairs before some new state takes its place. The Museyroom, rather, to play off of Hayman’s description of genetic studies, “Provides us with fresh sources of delight, more room to play, a field full of surprises” (“Genetic Criticism and Joyce” 14). It acts as a “canon in flux” (13). Such is the paradox of *Finnegans Wake* as a work that is chronicled by archives but which puts those archives in a state of flux by forming a rhizome between text, reader and world. The museum opens to the world. Joyce seems to have anticipated the Centre George Pomidou, whose inside opens to the outside.

The Museyroom’s Möbius effect ultimately invites a comparison between genetic studies and Baudrillard’s genetic model: “It is the gap [between cause and effect, between subject and object] in the process of genetic coding, in which indeterminacy is not so much a question of molecular randomness as of the abolition, pure and simple, of the relation” (*Simulacra and Simulation* 31). A comparison between genetic studies and Baudrillard’s genetic model opens up simultaneity between what would normally be thought of in terms of stages of composition. This is not to say that one should confuse a 1926 notebook with a book published in 1939—in spite of the errors that accompanied the printing of that book—but it does unseat the practice of privileging an urtext. An urtext functions like a museum, attempting to suppress the field of instability surrounding its construction. The genetic text, on the other hand, is the Museyroom that exposes history as simulation. The archive is in flux and, like the novel, multiplies access points into the textual experience. One can begin a reading from any point, *rhizoscopically*, between the Museyroom and the Mewseyfume, the archive and the book, effecting genetic play rather than hierarchical structures.
Flann O’Brien’s The Dalkey Archive (1964) is more or less a reworking of the posthumously published The Third Policeman, the latter completed in 1940 though not published until 1967, having faced a series of rejections generally attributed to the irrelevance of its fantastic subject matter to a world facing the realities of war. Perhaps reworking is not the right word. The Third Policeman is the raw material out of which The Dalkey Archive was formed, its parts variously discarded, scrambled, or copied word for word. Keith Hopper’s Flann O’Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist echoes the typical critical response to O’Brien’s final novel: “The Dalkey Archive is essentially a pilfered pastiche of disparate thematic elements from The Third Policeman [. . .]. Less mythopoeic, it lacks the vibrant linguistic and intertextual cohesion of The Third Policeman, and thus loses the controlled, satirical precision that made the original work such a stimulating proposition in the first place” (44). Anthony Cronin’s No Laughing Matter: The life and Times of Flann O’Brien details the problems and frustrations that O’Brien faced in writing the work and cites various anachronisms found in the novel, the result of a harried writing process. In its initial inception, the novel was meant to be a scathing satire on literary trends. On November 28th of 1963, O’Brien wrote in a letter to literary agent Mark Hamilton: “The Dalkey Archive is not a novel, though on the surface there is a perfectly coherent story suitable for a girl of 14, provided she could overlook certain theological discourse and a threatened denouement worse than the nuclear bomb. The book is really an essay in extreme derision of literary attitudes and people” (qtd. in Cronin 230). In spite of these intentions, the work functions as a novel about a world in which the past—represented by time-traveling beings and intentional anachronisms rather than satirized literary conventions—ruptures present reality.

A curious parallel develops between The Dalkey Archive’s subject matter and O’Brien’s use of The Third Policeman for literary scavenging, both involving excavations into the past in such a way that distinctions between past and present become obscured. History had been looted, so to speak, and refashioned into a supposed archive of Dalkey, a town southeast of Dublin.
whose own archivist, according to Mick, the central character in *The Dalkey Archive*, is James Joyce. As Mick says to the still living James Joyce, “But it is a really deep pleasure to meet a man of your attainments face to face. Your name stands on high in the world. You are a most remarkable writer, an innovator, Dublin’s incomparable archivist” (132). (Joyce is hiding incognito in Skerries while the world persists under the impression that he died in 1941.) If Joyce’s archive of Dublin cannot be matched, perhaps it made sense for O’Brien to set about archiving someplace else—or to create some other kind of archive, with its own rules and purpose. Hopper locates *The Third Policeman*, along with Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, as a landmark work at the dawn of postmodern experimentalism, preferring to see *At-Swim-Two-Birds* as a transitional work that still evinces some Modernist methods (13). Hopper also recognizes an aesthetic congruence between O’Brien and Beckett: “Where Eliot and Joyce had gathered fragments to shore against their ruins, O’Brien and Beckett are content to loiter and play in the literary rubble” (15). Overlooking Hopper’s suspect conflation between Joyce and Eliot (he is unclear about which of Joyce’s works applies here), one can certainly recognize connections between O’Brien and Beckett. *The Third Policeman*, Hopper’s central subject, presents a purgatorial world driven by paradox, generalized or distorted settings, and detours from traditional plot. Strangely, he overlooks the significance of *The Dalkey Archive* as a text whose aesthetics is similar to Beckett’s. *The Dalkey Archive* is a work about failure rather than a failure itself. It portrays an anticlimactic world riddled with abandoned dreams and devoid of grand narratives. While *The Dalkey Archive* might not exhibit the explosion of literary pastiche of which *At-Swim-Two-Birds* is known, it presents a kind of ahistorical pastiche that prefigures Frederic Jameson’s postmodern condition. In many respects, *The Dalkey Archive* inverts the world of *The Third Policeman*. While the latter masks sociopolitical realities in a metaphysical world, the former infuses metaphysical and ontological mysteries into everyday reality. The inversions, however, lead to similar results: a critique of a postmodern condition in which the polarization between history and myth is ruptured (to recall Baudrillard’s hyperreality discussed in the previous chapter).

O’Brien’s archive is very different from Joyce’s. *Ulysses*, for example, is often haunted by the memory of the deceased; *The Dalkey Archive*, on the other hand, belies the rules of temporal physics and mortality, not so much through the appearance of the character Joyce, but through the appearance of Saint Augustine in a cove beneath the tides of the Irish Sea. De Selby,
through the release of his experimental gas called \( D.M.P. \)--supposedly not to be associated with the Dublin Metropolitan Police--is able to eradicate all oxygen with a vacuum, in this case the cove, thereby negating time, which as a result allows beings like Saint Augustine and John the Baptist to appear seemingly ex nihilo. De Selby explains to Mick and Hackett that “a deoxygenated atmosphere cancels the apparently serial nature of time and confronts us with true time and simultaneously with all the things and creatures that time has ever contained or will contain, provided we evoke them” (22). In the cove De Selby, Mick, and Hackett encounter Saint Augustine, and De Selby, due to the technological sophistication of his breathing apparatus, is able to converse with him. What the reader ultimately learns from Saint Augustine is that many of our conceptions of past events, our knowledge of history, are misconceptions. The sacred truthiness of the past is riddled with lies. As matters turn out, St. Augustine is part Irish, many of the tales of his debaucheries were grossly exaggerated, and there are, in fact, four Saint Patricks (34-37). The archive of history is corrupted. Along this line, among the most important themes presented in \( \text{The Dalkey Archive} \) is heresy. In fact, there is only heresy, that which deviates from official record. Hackett himself expresses a desire to set the record straight through exegeses of the Apocrypha and by rewriting parts of the Bible in the attempt to exonerate Saint Judas, who has been unfairly represented (67). Judas is also “at heart a country Irishman” (66). Similarly, De Selby earlier stipulates a theory that Lucifer might have defeated God during the great rebellion and that Lucifer is responsible for the Biblical stories as part of a master plan to deceive humankind (22). The effect of these heresies, these counter-histories, is that official history loses its officiousness and that all histories function simultaneously, acting as De Selby’s “true time.” The archive acts something like Joyce’s image of the museum in \( \text{Finnegans Wake} \) by juxtaposing disjunctive narratives, none of which achieves narrative dominance over any others. (Interestingly, the four gospels in \( \text{Finnegans Wake} \) also corrupt official history by expressing alternative perspectives on events such as the nature of HCE’s offense in Phoenix Park.)

The object of O’Brien’s deflation of history includes also literary and philosophical history. Joyce’s \( \text{Finnegans Wake} \) and \( \text{Ulysses} \) are parodied in the first few pages of \( \text{The Dalkey Archive} \), and O’Brien’s jibes at Joyce operate as literary heresy, in that heresy is always informed by reverence.\(^{11}\) (Heresy is a reaction to reverence and is thus contingent upon reverence.)

\(^{11}\) Anthony Cronin’s \( \text{No Laughing Matter: The life and Times of Flann O’Brien} \) demonstrates some of the spite O’Brien felt towards Joyce, as one who cast a shadow on O’Brien. Myles na Gopaleen (another of O’Nolan’s pseudonyms) often expressed criticism in the \( \text{Irish} \) Times. Cronin writes, “Often, with particular reference to
O’Brien’s novel begins with a panoramic exposition of Dalkey, a major focus of which is Vico Road. Also featured is an “obelisk surmounting some steps” as well as “the peninsula of Howth across the bay” (8), all well known landmarks in Irish writing, especially Joyce’s. The unknown narrator asks us, “But why this name Vico Road? Is there to be recalled in this magnificence a certain philosopher’s pattern of man’s lot on earth—thesis, antithesis, synthesis, chaos?” and answers for us, “Hardly” (7). This is a clear reference to Joyce’s use of Vico’s cyclic model of history in *Finnegans Wake*. Soon thereafter the “Telemachus” episode of *Ulysses* is fleetingly parodied when Mick and Hackett head for a swim in the sea, though their excursion is sidetracked when they encounter De Selby. In the first few pages in *The Dalkey Archive*, Giambattista Vico, Friedrich Hegel and James Joyce have been recalled and dismissed as if the playthings of De Selby’s D.M.P. Likewise when De Selby explains his quick yet effective whiskey-aging process to Mick and Hackett, he declares that “Consideration of time [. . . ] from intellectual, philosophic or even mathematical criteria is fatuity, and the preoccupation of slovens. In such unseemly brawls some priestly fop is bound to induce a sort of catalepsy by bringing forward terms such as infinity and eternity” (14). Prior to this declaration, De Selby dismisses Isaac Newton, Barush Spinoza, Henri Bergson, René Descartes and Albert Einstein. Philosophy, theology and science, all practiced by De Selby, become the object of ridicule for De Selby.12 Much criticism, such as Carol Taaffe’s recent *Ireland Through the Looking-Glass*, tends to locate O’Brien’s parody as still operating from a Catholic perspective. Regardless of whether this is true, his writing’s practice in the discourse of heresy necessarily negates any demonstrable alternative to the butt of the joke. The overall effect of O’Brien’s referentialism, whether literary, theological, scientific or philosophical, is neither strictly satiric, parodic, nor reverent; this is especially the case with *The Dalkey Archive*, which, if anything, operates at the level of pastiche.

In an *Irish Times* review of Everyman’s Library’s 2008 publication of *The Complete Novels*, titled “Oblomov in Dublin,” Fintan O’Toole presents a concise yet substantive overview of Flann O’Brien’s writing, arguing that O’Brien’s use of postmodern writing techniques has more do with the inability of the realist novel to represent life in Ireland rather than any reaction

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*Finnegans Wake*, Joyce was said to be a willfully obscure writer, or even an incoherent one, whose experiments had been destructive of the English language” (172). Be that as it may, *The Dalkey Archive* displays both ridicule and reverence towards Joyce.

12 These references complement the ways in which Joyce is characterized in *Dalkey Archive*, which, according to critics like Ronald L. Dotterer, exemplify the anxiety of influence (Harold Bloom) that Joyce had on O’Brien. See Dotterer’s article, “Flann O’Brien, James Joyce, and *The Dalkey Archive*” in *New Hibernia Review/Iris Ireannach Nua*, 8:2 (Summer/Samhradh, 2004), 54-63.
to “the conditions of ‘late capitalism’” (clearly a reference to Frederic Jameson’s work). According to O’Toole, Irish writers such as O’Brien turned to innovative writing techniques, making use of “the deconstruction of narrative, the replacement of nature by culture, an ahistoric sensibility in which tropes and genres from different eras can be mixed and matched promiscuously, the prominence of pastiche [and] the notion of language itself as the real author of the work.” (Here O’Toole refers specifically to At Swim-Two-Birds.) O’Toole locates the problem specifically in Ireland’s regressive economic, political and intellectual conditions: its political insularity, even in a time of global war, its practices of censorship, and its agrarian base of economy. Yet this is to overlook O’Brien’s residence in a city of growing cosmopolitanism as well as his intellectual participation in an international scene as one who communicates international matters to a Dublin populace through the voice of Myles na Gopaleen in The Irish Times. O’Brien might not have been the exile that Joyce and Beckett were, but he was their necessary counterpart, one who did his best to keep Irish culture from regressing any further. While At Swim-Two-Birds may be a piece of literature concerned with literatures, ancient, popular, obscene, or finally polyphonic—the latter having received substantive critical attention in works such as M. Keith Booker’s Flann O’Brien, Bakhtin and Menippean Satire (1995) as well as Kimberly Bohman-Kalaja’s Reading Games: An Aesthetics of Play in Flann O’Brien, Samuel Beckett and Georges Perec (2007) -- it is Flann O’Brien’s less commercially successful The Third Policeman and The Dalkey Archive that portray a sensibility more in line with a postmodern condition.

The Third Policeman, despite the fantastic world that it portrays, is a novel also that situates its protagonist in a Kafkaesque landscape of surveillance and mindless bureaucracy which operates from a center of machines that appear like “American cash registers” (132). The critical attention given to The Third Policeman tends to focus on the purgatorial world that it portrays, subsuming the scientific and technological within the moralistic and metaphysical consequences of the protagonist’s crime. However, a less literal reading of the fantastic yields a different perspective, one that emphasizes the nightmarish nature of a real world, one populated by an insular, ineffectual and irrational repressive state apparatus, that collapses the distinction between scientific and occult discourses, and that represents the degree to which the pursuit of wealth inscribes and directs human behavior. The Dalkey Archive deals with similar themes,
albeit, with the exception of the timeless cove beneath the sea, it generally portrays a realist setting.

_The Dalkey Archive_ is more often than not considered to be a failed work. For example, Taaffe writes: “The few who had read _The Third Policeman_ might have been hopeful that ‘time and the physical universe will get scant respect’ in the new work, but _The Dalkey Archive_ ends O’Brien’s career on a downward note, a rushed job in which his ambition was not matched by his powers of execution” (194). The failure to execute is precisely the point of _The Dalkey Archive_, a novel that suggests a romantic subject through its elaboration on the relationship between Mick and Mary only to culminate in an anticlimactic and lackluster marriage forced by pregnancy, that dashes Mick’s adoration for James Joyce, and that avoids the destruction of all life on Earth through an all too easy and uneventful relocation of De Selby’s D.M.P. to a security box in the Bank of Ireland. Romance, suspense, and tragedy deteriorate into the ordinary world of ennui, a world of idiotic officials, cantankerous publicans and ubiquitous pubs. The apocalypse, as the endpoint of historical narrative, is reduced to a fleeting and trite daydream and the archive of Dalkey is not worth remembering. History is not remembered, stored or maintained; rather, the only symbolic system capable of storage and maintenance is the Bank of Ireland, which converts eschatological narrative to monetary value, suffusing all things and ideas within the capitalist system of exchange, the lone institution capable of communicating reverence in the postmodern world: “Later, as Mick entered the Bank of Ireland preceded by Charlie carrying the cask, he felt he was in effect entering the Cistercian Order of Trappists. Perhaps there is a certain monastic quality in banks, a sacred symbolism in money, silver and gold” (168). The conflation between the sacred and the commercial has the same anticlimactic effect that Mick and Joyce’s own monastic goals have. Mick passes up priestly aspirations for a lackluster marriage, while Joyce’s own Jesuitical aspirations are misunderstood by Father Cobble, who intends to have Joyce wash and mend clerical undergarments in the service of the church. At the novel’s end, the brief and confusing lover’s quarrel is summed up as such: “What had happened, after all? Nothing much” (203). This can be taken as a commentary on the novel itself. The world does not end in cataclysmic destruction. De Selby disappears. Nothing comes of Mick, Hackett, or Mary’s literary pretensions. Joyce, who has disavowed any responsibility for the creation of his later works, is to become like a washerwoman in the _Finnegans Wake_ he never wrote, and the narrative arcs initially foreshadowed by _The Dalkey Archive_, romantic or
apocalyptic, become awash in ahistorical pastiche. This is not the overt literary pastiche presented in *At-Swim-Two-Birds*, but a more subtle and whittled down pastiche evinced in the conjunction of De Selby’s temporal experiments and the rejection of romantic and eschatological narrative. In fact, the failure of writing in *The Dalkey Archive* could be taken as a critique of the literary aspirations displayed in *At-Swim-Two-Birds*, which is very much a writer’s novel, about a writer writing about a writer writing about a writer. While *At-Swim-Two-Birds* has all the literary fireworks exemplified in James Joyce’s work, *The Dalkey Archive* seems to have more in common with Samuel Beckett’s stark prose and general resistance to plot development.

In “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” Frederic Jameson elucidates pastiche as

> A world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment of the past. (1965)

This description does not express adequately the full ontological implications of pastiche; in fact, one might say that the past is irredeemably liberated in the present, always simultaneous, and the added implication to this condition is that the future is without narrative direction. Jameson, in speaking of the ubiquity of nostalgia films in modern day cinema—and this nostalgia operates even in films that attempt to represent the present--says that “for some reason, we were unable today to focus our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving representations of our own current experience. But if that is so, then it is a terrible indictment of consumer capitalism itself—or, at the very least, an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history” (1967). While O’Toole locates O’Brien’s literary experimentalism in the inability of the traditional novel to represent the particulars of 20th Century Irish experience—with the implication that such novelistic representation is still possible for other cultures-- Jameson’s postmodernism better illuminates the larger historical forces at work, the effect of those forces being that history has forever changed.

Substantial scholarship has emphasized the reaction of experimental Irish writers to the ideological and aesthetic restrictions of the Irish Revival, and those reactions take on diverse
forms. Declan Kiberd’s *Inventing Ireland* explores the discursive forms of resistance found in Flann O’Brien’s *An Béal Bocht (A Poor Mouth)*, a novel, written in Irish, that undercuts the widespread images of pastoral Ireland, the stage Irishman, and some of the excesses of Irish nationalism. In *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, Gregory Castle also highlights the experimentalist reaction to the Irish Revival, saying of writers like Joyce that “narrative self-reflexivity and pluravocality [. . .] signal a commitment less to an ethnographic imagination than to a critique of that mode of imagining” and adds that these modernist techniques serve “as a salutary self-criticism of the Revival’s reliance on a redemptive discourse that purports to offer a pro-nationalist representation of traditional Irish culture” (30). While Castle does not specifically mention O’Brien here, the connection can be drawn easily enough. While it is not my intention to counter O’Toole, Kiberd, or Castle’s positioning of Irish experimental writing in reaction to the often inhibiting cultural projects of the Irish Revival, such critical readings can overshadow other ways to engage these experimental texts. In this light, it is not my intention to temper the generative and inhibitive influences of the Irish Revival on Joyce, O’Brien, Beckett and other writers. I wish to consider rather other cultural and ideational forces at work. To be sure, O’Brien problematizes and overtly critiques representations of Irish identity throughout his writings, especially in *An Béal Bocht, At-Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Dalkey Archive*. In the last, Mick says, “Oh De Selby’s no foreigner. Not a bit of him. If the way he talks is any sign he’s a native of our beloved Ireland. And he doesn’t like Ireland, or like anywhere else in the world” (58). To which Hackett responds: “Don’t tell me he’s another angry patriot?” The ambivalence is clear enough, but it is important to notice that Ireland is not divorced from the world here. In fact, it is as subject to the world’s sociopolitical developments as anywhere else, despite the isolationist politics of the Irish Revival. Terry Eagleton charts the uneven socioeconomic developments of Ireland in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, wherein he shows the forward and backward developments of Ireland in its pre- and post-famine periods. He writes,

> By 1850, Ireland had one of the most commercially advanced agricultures in the world, and was fast developing one of the world’s densest railroad systems. It also

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13 Castle’s tendency to situate “self-reflexivity” and “pluravocality” within a Modernist literary program speaks to a larger debate between Modernist experimentalism and Postmodern developments which is not particularly crucial to my discussion of O’Brien, suffice it to say that I am placing anti-essentialist and anti-grand narrative writing techniques within a Postmodern paradigm.
contained the fifth greatest industrial city on earth. The consumer market expanded, as imports increased five-fold between 1850 and 1914. The literacy rate was impressively high, the number of National Schools, along with the number of newspapers, doubled from 1850-1900 [. . .]. [Daniel] O’Connell’s political machine prefigured in almost every respect the modern political party, of which he could justly be said to be the pioneer. (274)

While many of these advances suffered setbacks during and after famines, mass emigrations, and colonial conflicts, Eagleton reminds us that Ireland did not exist separately from modernizing influences, even several decades before O’Brien put pen to paper.

*The Dalkey Archive and The Third Policeman* portray worlds influenced by scientific theories and technological developments. In the former, technology opens portals through time and carries the prospect for world destruction; in the latter, a world of appearances seems to be manufactured by machines hidden underground. (One imagines a Dorothy pulling a curtain aside to reveal the man behind the wizard in *Wizard of Oz.*) In “Science, Philosophy, and ‘The Third Policeman’: Flann O’Brien and the Epistemology of Futility,” M. Keith Booker explores the influence and role of science in O’Brien’s otherwise otherworldly novel. Even though Booker is ultimately more concerned with the ways in which science transformed epistemology from the naivety of truth-based discourses to relativistic and perspectivist discourses, and how these discourses are represented and parodied in O’Brien’s writing, it becomes clear that this transformation goes hand in glove with technological advances. Atomic theory, after all, is part and parcel of experiment and praxis, and not just a set of ideas. Booker points out that many “elements of O’Brien’s [*The Third Policeman*] are usefully illuminated through recourse to the theories of modern physics. These include Sergeant Pluck’s ‘Atomic Theory,’ which argues that bicycle riders are in danger of exchanging atoms with their bicycles to the point that the riders themselves are more bicycle than human, which the bicycles are more human than machine” (44). This image, with its quasi-cybernetic implication, is repeated in *The Dalkey Archive,* and suggests a world wherein the boundaries between machine and human have become less clear. Booker discusses also the various images of infinite regress featured in *The Third Policeman,* the chests containing chests to a point where those chests become imperceptible to human vision, or

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14 The city to which Eagleton refers is Belfast, but the other phenomena about which he speaks is not limited to Belfast.
de Selby’s experiment with mirrors, image within image to the point where one can see one’s own distant past, and ties this to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. These shifts in perspective and scope show time and space as fluid rather than fixed. In the end Booker argues that *The Third Policeman*, while “reflect[ing] many of the concepts and concerns of modern physics and philosophy, [finally parodies] the attempts of such human endeavors to grasp a reality that is ultimately unknowable” (52). The scientific theories parodied in O’Brien’s writing often have, however, practical applications. For instance, despite the seeming absurdity of MacCuiskeen’s light-mangling machine, the shout-like noises produced by the mangling are collected to produce energy for artificial light and heat. (The fact that the mangling of natural light produces sounds like shouts and screams suggests a torturous application in keeping with the lynching machine being built for the protagonist’s seemingly inevitable execution.) Likewise, the mechanical otherworld presented in *The Third Policeman*, despite its similarities to a mad scientist’s lab, where the purpose of experiments is not always evident, acts as an industrial complex that creates and sustains the world in the novel. All the “noise-machines,” the “thick wires [or] pipes,” the “nest of clocks and knobs resembling a control board,” the “hissing steam” and “great cogwheels” suggest a world whose functioning hinges on technology (131).

Interestingly, the entrance into this world evokes the image of the sidhe mound, preceded by the “lost bowels of a great forest” and the “ground [ . . . ] covered with the damp and rotting fall of many autumns,” though the entrance itself—perhaps suggesting that imagistic marriage between pagan and Christian symbolism-- appears as an “old brown door with ecclesiastical hinges and ornamental ironwork” (127-8). This is not a Newtonian-like universe because it is operated by will, though not by spiritual will, despite the religious associations that come with omnium, which “some people call [ . . . ] God” (111), because this universe is run by the eccentric, comical and brutal repressive state apparatus, and this is a universe whose mysteries are not the product of divinity but of an absurd and dysfunctional bureaucracy.

The machinery of the otherworld is also characterized in commercial terms, featuring “small doors which looked [like] ovens or furnace doors or safe-deposits such as banks have” (131), and there were “thousands of doors like the strong-hinged doors of ovens and arrangements of knobs and keys that reminded me of American cash registers” (132). Finally, when the protagonist is permitted to use the production machines, which are capable of producing any material, the protagonist finds himself “taking an interest in the commercial
possibilities of eternity” (136), ordering a “bottle of whiskey, precious stones to the value of £200,000, some bananas, a fountain-pen and writing materials, and finally a large suit of blue with silk linings” (137). He also orders a destructive weapon in order to attempt escape (138). He is the butt of the Sergeant and MacCruiskeen’s cruel joke, for none of these objects can be removed from the otherworld. Taking this scene within the larger context of the novel’s plot, which is motivated by the protagonist’s desire for wealth rather than knowledge--symbolized by the box once hidden beneath Old Mathers’ floorboards—a reader realizes that the fantastic subject matter of the novel becomes much less fantastic. Beyond the absurd policemen, cybernetic bicycles, and the preponderance of one-legged bandits, The Third Policeman has more in common with Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment than a fairytale.

Furthermore, the fantastic subject matter of The Third Policeman is reminiscent of Franz Kafka’s Metamorphosis, whose fantastic antihero is obsessed with debt, labor, and familial obligation rather than with the supernatural circumstances in which the protagonist finds himself. Ultimately the The Third Policeman blurs the borders between the real and the magical, all of this taking place within a plot driven by greed and a world constructed by mysterious machinery.

Much like the cove featured in The Dalkey Archive, the mechanized otherworld of The Third Policeman operates outside of normal time, which represents a fusion between Christian eternity, Celtic fairy world, and postmodern sensibility. In the last sense, the purgatorial, circular plot of the The Third Policeman is driven by wealth and technology, which leads the protagonist on wild goose chases. Both novels portray a timelessness, though in slightly different ways. The industrial matrix portrayed in The Third Policeman is timeless. The policeman do not age when enclosed within its mechanical walls. The cove in The Dalkey Archive, when sealed from an oxygenated environment “cancels the apparently serial nature of time and confronts us with true time and simultaneously with all the things and creatures that time has ever contained or will contain” (22). Such a condition effaces the principles upon which archives work. If all history is coterminous, history does not exist—at least not in any sustainable teleological sense.

Thus far the postmodern conditions exemplified by these novels have been demonstrated through a variety of representations. While The Third Policeman may not evince the constant textual play found within At-Swim-Two-Birds, the footnotes pertaining to de Selby, to criticism on de Selby, or to criticism on criticism on de Selby, present the linguistic and epistemological equivalent. Like the literary ambitions shown by the characters in The Dalkey Archive, the de
Selby criticism shown in *The Third Policeman* leads only to loose ends. A history, a narrative, cannot be sustained, which is why the protagonist is doomed to circular repetition amid an ineffective bureaucracy suffused by absurd cruelty, incomprehensible technology, elusive treasure chests, and useless cash machines. *The Dalkey Archive*, on the other hand—which deserves critical reevaluation in current O’Brien studies, regardless of what Flann O’Brien thought of the novel himself—depicts its loose ends in the abandoned projects of its characters. Like the plot threads of the novel itself, as soon as a character begins to formulate ambitions to begin a project, those ambitions are abandoned like ill-conceived histories—whether romantic, heroic, or apocalyptic.

There is a proclivity for scholars to bracket O’Brien within his own world, as one of those writers who does not quite fit within the literary schema of the time. He is placed on that island of literary misfits along with writers like Robert Burns or William Blake. This proclivity stems from an absence of a critical framework by which to evaluate at once the entirety of his writings—including those written under Brian Ó Nualláin’s other names. *At-Swim-Two-Birds* is his masterpiece of metafictional experimentalism. *An Béal Bocht* is his concise treatment of the Irish problem. *The Third Policeman* is a metaphysical allegory. *The Dalkey Archive* expresses an aesthetics of failure. Taken together these novels reveal a writing that is at once keenly concerned with Irish politics and culture while simultaneously concerned with the capitalist, technological and scientific developments in the world and developing Ireland. While the otherworldliness of *The Third Policeman* and ordinariness of *The Dalkey Archive*—at least in terms of its anticlimactic developments—seem to distract the reader from these worldly matters, such distraction might best represent the postmodern condition: as one keenly unaware of historicity.
While Flann O’Brien’s response to James Joyce’s position as Dublin’s famed archivist was to situate his archive in Dalkey, Samuel Beckett’s departure from Joyce’s encyclopedic world led to an altogether different kind of place. In Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett, James Knowlson recounts the revelation that Beckett had experienced in 1946, a revelation that “has often been related to the ‘vision’ that Krapp experiences in Krapp’s Last Tape” (318). While the entirety of the recorded Krapp’s artistic vision is never revealed by the Krapp the audience sees on stage, Beckett did reveal his to Knowlson in an interview: “I realized that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, [of being] in control of one’s material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that. I [realized] that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than in adding” (319). While this shift in Beckett’s prose involves a refining process that ultimately abandons character, plot, and setting for an unnamable voice incapable of undoing itself, his plays demonstrate a continuous process of refinement through also the subtraction of representations of place and past. One effect of this subtraction is that specific references to Ireland would largely disappear. While Joyce’s writing motions towards the macroscopic—moving from Dublin streets to world history—Beckett’s becomes increasingly microscopic, in the sense that history is whittled down to the scope of active memory. In fact, Beckett’s later short plays abandon the past in favor of an experience of time befitting postmodern experience. However, before any discussion of this development becomes practicable, it is necessary to first look back at the ways in which two of Beckett’s earlier plays represent and complicate memory and history.

Krapp’s Last Tape and That Time seem cut from the same nostalgic fabric, each short play portraying an old man’s ambivalence towards his past, engaging a compulsion to mark time, and leading to an ambiguous end. Though That Time was written in 1976, its tripartite narrative structure is evocative of Krapp’s Last Tape, which, though first written in 1958, underwent
numerous revisions during the years in which Beckett took a direct role in its productions. While *Krapp’s Last Tape* mentions Irish places like Connaught and Croghan, one of the narrative plains in *That Time* features a memory of a return to Ireland, from London, through Holyhead, and over the Irish sea to what was then called Kingstown: “Straight off the ferry and up with the nighbag to the high street neither right nor left not a curse for the old scenes the old names straight up the rise from the wharf to the high street and there not a wire to be seen only the old rails all rust” (418). However, he soon finds the “Doric terminus of the Great Southern and Eastern all closed down” (421). The nostalgic venture is met with frustration and disappointment and seems to highlight the impossibility of returning to the past. The rails, like the tracings of memory, have degraded over time. The narratives in *That Time* are marked by hesitation and repetition, expressing a strain and equivocation in their attempts to recall past moments. *Krapp’s Last Tape*, on the other hand, attempts to cover up equivocation through supplements to memory, shown in Krapp’s ledger and recording device. In contrast to these exercises in nostalgia-production, Beckett’s *Catastrophe* (1982) and *What Where* (1983), the latter translated by Beckett from his *Quoi ou* (1982), are preoccupied either with an as yet un-staged future or an endlessly looping present. Nostalgia has no place in these plays, and place features no progressive time. Memory, or history, that which is rooted in names and places, has been contracted to the point that names and places are suffused by a language of generality—place without place, time without time.

In speaking of Krapp’s compulsion to annually prepare, record, and listen to, autobiographical audio recordings, Everett C. Frost asks in “Audio Prosthetics and the Problems of a Radio Production of Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*,” ”Who would do such a thing? Forever fixing a (failed) past. Impossible now even for memory to alter, into an irrevocable cycle of eternal repetition that resembles nothing so much as Dante’s *Inferno*—that cauldron of heat without light” (10). While the comparison between Dante’s inferno and eternal repetition can be taken only so far—assuming that Frost is referring to Neitzsche’s eternal return--the temporal implications of Dante’s Otherworlds beckon for further analysis. To better understand the ways in which memory is represented and complicated in *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time*, we find it necessary to explore other models of memory. In *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory*

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15 James Knowlson’s *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp’s Last Tape*, constructs a text based on revised productions between 1969 and 1977, several of which were directed by Beckett himself.
Nicholas Andrew Miller makes use of Dante’s purgatory to exemplify the historical subject (in the psychological sense) in terms of its paradoxical split between temporal directions. For an analogy he discusses the moment in which Dante (the character) stands between purgatory and paradise, the river Lethe dividing the two planes with Dante still standing in purgatory. Dante stares across the river, whose waters wrought forgetfulness, and compares the vision of Beatrice to Proserpina, a literary allusion (41). Miller writes:

The pilgrim’s seeing suggests, rather, that visual recognition is always an act of historical consciousness; present perception passes through the circuit of the past, accessing, in this case, a literary memory. The crucial point is that the perceptual “movement” of this act of remembering is only possible within the system of historical consciousness in which the pilgrim is situated, paradoxically, as staying. (41)

Dante does not move, but he looks forward. In order to look forward, he remembers the past. The gesture implies motion and stasis in one act. As Miller explains, “Historical consciousness is at once a moving beyond the static condition of the subject and a reinscription of its bounded state” (42). Prior to Frost’s mention of Dante, he refers to Jacques Derrida’s discussion of Sigmund Freud’s mystic writing pad, which, like Krapp’s recording device, gestures beyond the function of memory aid or supplement to elucidate the function of memory itself. A reader gleans that the mystic pad’s major innovation resides in its ability to exhibit both permeability and resistance. Derrida writes in “Freud and the Scene of Writing” that the mystic pad is a “double system contained in a single differentiated apparatus [that allows for] a perpetually available innocence and an infinite reserve of traces” (223). This analogizes the ability of the mind to retain the integrity of perception—that part of the mind that senses without permanently recording what is sensed—while maintaining also the potential for memory formation. To quote Freud:

The Mystic Pad is a slab of dark brown resin or wax with a paper edging; over the slab is laid a thin transparent sheet, the top end of which is firmly secured to the slab while its bottom end rests upon it without being fixed to it. This transparent sheet [. . .] consists of two layers which can be detached from each other except at their two ends. The upper layer is a transparent piece of celluloid; the lower layer is made of thin translucent waxed paper. (Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, XIX, 228-229)
Memory forms through a breaching of the psyche, represented by the ability of the wax to retain impressions, while perception, analogized by the celluloid, retains no impression, thus ensuring its continuation.

While Miller’s metaphor for the historical subject and Derrida’s use of Freud’s mystic pad, also metaphorical, explicate the specific moment of ontological experience—as one perceives, as one remembers—Beckett himself proffers a figuration that best illustrates the ontological, and aesthetic, workings of *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time*, and this figuration appears in an early piece of criticism he devoted to the work of *Finnegans Wake* at Joyce’s request. Beckett wrote the essay “Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . . Joyce” as part of *Our Exagmination Round his Fatification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, published in 1929 (also published in *transition* 16-17). Not long after this, his critical monograph *Proust*, which devotes some discussion to the work of Henri Bergson, was published in 1931. Both concern themselves largely with representations of time. As if an early working of Beckett’s *That Time* (1976), *Proust* almost incessantly repeats the word “Time” (“T” always capitalized) throughout its examination of Proust, exploring and complicating the ways in which memory is represented in Proust’s work. “Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . . Joyce,” on the other hand, as befits the subject of its exegesis, figures time at the level of the macroscopic—historical, social, philosophical—exploring the ways in which Joyce’s writing shows time as fluid, non-linear and non-eschatological. After demonstrating that Joyce’s use of Bruno and Vico is grounded in aesthetic choices rather than faithful adaptations, he contrasts two different kinds of purgatories. Dante’s purgatory is “conical and consequently implies culmination [while] Joyce’s is spherical and excludes culmination” (21). In the former, “movement is unidirectional, and a step forward represents a net advance”; in the latter, “movement is non-directional—or multi-directional, and a step forward is, by definition, a step back” (22). In *Krapp’s Last Tape*, the dynamic between the Krapp on stage (his utterances, noises, gestures, and actions) and the Krapps to whom he listens through the recording device can lead to various effects—remonstrance, consolation, condescension, comradery, spite, concord and discord. What complicate temporalities occupied by each Krapp are those moments when the voice of the past Krapp speaks through the present, silent Krapp in a manner suggestive of ventriloquism (an effect comparable to the interaction between Listener and the voices in *That Time*).
As C.J. Ackerley and S.E. Gontarski say of *Krapp’s Last Tape*, “The result is a palimpsest of personalities, a layering of character. By presenting them simultaneously [Beckett] depicted the inability of the self to perceive itself accurately” (*Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* 303). This simultaneity is partly produced by the “stepping forward” and “stepping back” of signified relations. Present and past Krapps are cross-determined in a looping effect. Furthermore, ontological linearity is undercut by discrete moments of silence wherein different Krapps surface at one plain. Added to the simultaneity of narratives, memory itself is put into question by the dubious intentions behind Krapp’s recordings, leaving the audience to ponder whether these recordings are primarily archival or whether they exemplify also Krapp’s occupation as a writer, as one who invents and crafts narratives.

*That Time* presents difficulties to *Krapp’s Last Tape*. Scattered amid the three narrative threads that seem to recount past memories, various passages expose a disposition towards artifice: “just one of those things you kept making up to keep the void out just another one of those old tales to keep the void from pouring in on top of you the shroud” (419); “alone in the same the same scenes making it up that way to keep it going” (422); “hard to believe you even you made up that bit till the time came in the end” (423). In both *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time*, the stage image, what the audience receives as the perceived present, is subsumed, along with the other narrative planes, within one temporal circle—or *sphere*, to employ Beckett’s term, which suggests a multidirectional dynamic. As such, the temporal divisions suggested by Miller’s historical subject and Derrida’s mystic pad are further complicated. While each of these articulates a hydraulics of ontology wherein the historical subject occupies a position of momentary narrative stasis coupled with a fluid potentiality for future movement, as in Miller’s case, or constructs a model of the psyche that maintains perceptive openness while enabling the recording of experience—which Derrida uses to elucidate arch-writing rather than just memory-formation or material writing-- the multi-directional and spherical figuration that Beckett attaches to Joyce’s *Work in Progress* becomes the template for narrativity, memory, and time evinced in so much of Beckett’s writing, the simultaneity of experiences being the radical result. Interestingly, *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time* develop this result through the representation of archival systems. The past is exposed in order to be emptied of its distance from the present.

Among the places enumerated in *That Time’s* narratives are the Portrait Gallery and the Library, each representing an archival function, though subtracting the macroscopic history for
which Joyce is known. The Portrait Gallery involves an experience marked by obscurity. First, the portrait’s subject remains vague: “There before your eyes when they opened a vast oil black with age and dirt someone famous in his time some famous man or woman or even child such as a young prince or princess” (419). As he peers closer at the portrait, he sees an image reflected in the glass: “You peered trying to make it out gradually of all things a face appeared had you swivel on the slab to see who it was there at your elbow.” The experience is pivotal, and perhaps terrifying, leading to an acknowledgement of never again being the same person, which in turn leads him to interrogate identity itself: “Never the same but the same as what for God’s sake did you ever say I to yourself in your life come on now [eyes close] could you ever say I to yourself in your life turning-point that was a great word with you before they dried up altogether always having turning-points” (420). The turning-point, perhaps like a catastrophe, registers a change wherein one can never knowingly return to the previous condition. The archival function of the portrait gallery is undermined by the impossibility, not to recover the past, but to know whether one can recover the past—a state of doubt which itself determines the unrecoverable position of the past. The final sequence of That Time recounts an experience at the library: “Not a sound only the old breath and the leaves turning and then suddenly this dust this whole place suddenly full of dust [. . . ] what was it it said come and gone was that it something like that come and gone” (424). The turning of the pages act as turning-points. Ultimately, this blockage to knowing the past in its original condition might suggest the necessity to move forward towards “culmination,” recalling Beckett’s exegesis on time in Dante’s purgatory, but this motion is undercut by the alternating patterns of narratives of That Time as they hover above Listener’s isolated face. The exact nature of the relationship between the narratives and Listener is obscured by the distance between Listener’s non-speaking face and his voices. Similar to the portrait gallery and the library in That Time—both of which are ultimately exposed for their narrative artifice—the recording device and ledger expose the dubious veracity of Krapp’s personal archives. Steven Connor writes in Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text that

*Krapp’s Last Tape* demonstrates how little is kept in such a ‘faithful’ recording. For Krapp to listen to the tape of himself as a man of thirty-nine is to reveal clearly his ironic non-coincidence with himself. Where the younger Krapp can talk brashly about his mother’s ‘viduity,’ the older Krapp no longer remembers
what the word means, just as he cannot remember the details set down in the ledger about the ‘black ball’ or the ‘memorable equinox’ (128).

Connor’s use of non-coincidence here, meaning absence of agreement, masks the ways in which recollection is complicated in the play; for, were Krapp to recall some context for these entries, the recollections would not be the same as the initial experiences themselves. Fidelity is a feeling rather than duplication. In fact, the dramatic irony of *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *That Time* is that Krapp and Listener’s personal investments in recall and archive, which are continuously reinforced through repetition, effect a dramatic aesthetics that collapses the distance between times. This produces a simultaneity of times evocative of Henri Bergson’s ideas on memory, which provide a critical foundation in Beckett’s *Proust*, as Proust himself was influenced by Bergson.

One last temporal crux of *Krapp’s Last Tape* warrants discussion. James Knowlson remarks that “Beckett’s involvement with *Krapp’s Last Tape* was greater than with any other of his plays” (*Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp’s Late Tape* xxvii). Through its many performances, the play represents a transitional period in Beckett’s career as a playwright and director. Following at the footsteps of Beckett’s highly successful longer plays, *En attendant Godot* (premiered in 1953) and *Fin de partie* (premiered in 1957), *Krapp’s Last Tape* (premiered in 1958) acted as a test subject for his future plays. While several changes had been made in the opening stage notes—Krapp’s purple nose, the envelope upon which he jotted recording notes, and his clumsy keys are omitted, to name just a few alterations—the opening stage note remains the same for all of the productions. The stage notes begin: “A late evening in the future” (3). The next unaltered line reads, “KRAPP’s den.” These two elementary notes draw attention to an obvious difference: while the latter can be presented on stage, the former cannot. Nothing in the play communicates to an audience that the action of the play occurs in a future moment. (In fact, even in Frost’s theoretical radio production of the play, the impetus behind his article, the phrase “A late evening in the future” never makes it into his constructed narrator’s interjections.)

Why then did Beckett write, and retain in future notes, a stage direction that has no practicable application? Were such a direction communicable to the audience, the implication would be that the audience would be watching Krapp from some point in his past—whether it be from the timeline represented by the played reel, made by Krapp at age 39, or from the recording to which that Krapp himself had listened, made by Krapp in his 20s, or from any other
conceivable time predating the action of the play. Such indeterminacy suggests a kind of infinite regress. It reflects also either timelessness or a fluidity of time much like that represented in Krapp’s ritual of preparing, performing, archiving, and witnessing recordings. The play concludes with an image of Krapp “motionless staring before him” while listening to the last few words of the recording. His response, if it can be called such, is a result of his replaying the account of his romantic experience with a woman on a punt in a lake: “We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side” (10). While the Krapp in the recording states (perhaps unconvincingly) that he “wouldn’t want [these years] back,” the image of Krapp on stage certainly suggests otherwise, particularly after his having visited this part of the recording three distinct times. The contrast between the motionless image of Krapp and the account of the boat drifting in several directions situates the audience between stasis and flux, stepping back and forward as it unknowingly perceives the future; but to register the collapse of temporal and narrative series merely in a future moment is to fail to realize that this future, like the present, already resides in the past, a condition best exemplified by Henri Bergson, who in *Matter and Memory* writes that “every perception is already memory. Practically, we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress gnawing into the future” (150). We are always already in the past, the present moment being merely the most contracted version of the past. As Bergson explains, “It is in this illuminated part of our history that we remain seated.” Though *Krapp’s Last Tape* does not directly communicate the past placement of the audience in relation to Krapp’s future time, the audience is inscribed within the simultaneity of temporal threads—and this fact, perhaps, is what makes Krapp’s purgatory all the more purgatorial, for he himself is not aware of this fact. In *Bergsonism* Gilles Deleuze outlines Bergson’s simultaneity: “The idea of contemporaneity of the present and the past has one final consequence: Not only does the past coexist with the present that has been, but, as it preserves itself in itself (while the present passes), it is the whole, integral past; it is *all* our past, which coexists with each present” (59).

Another way to conceive of these plays is through how they represent a split between two kinds of memory: short-term and long-term. Deleuze and Guattari write that the “difference between them is not simply quantitative: short-term memory is of the rhizome or diagram type, and long-term memory is arborescent and centralized (imprint, engram, tracing, or photograph)” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 16). The representations of archives in Beckett’s plays—the ledger, the
recording device, the portrait gallery, and the library—stand in for long-term memory, while the unfurling of speech and action on stage act as short-term memory. While the moment of writing exemplifies short-term memory, long-term memory, exemplified through "family, race, society or civilization" operates through "traces and translates, [and] what it translates continues to act in it, from a distance, off beat, in an 'untimely' way, not instantaneously." Paradoxically, as *Krapp's Last Tape* and *That Time* expose this difference between these kinds of memories, thus splitting what is normally blended in consciousness, they create a simultaneity between these memory plains. Beckett’s later short plays, however, produce an aesthetics of simultaneity that subtracts this process. The representation of long-term memory is abandoned in favor of a more contracted sense of time.

Both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *That Time* problematize memory and history by blurring the lines between nostalgic excavation and imaginative creation. What is interesting to note, though perhaps this is part and parcel of nostalgic content, is the reference to specific locality—Connaught and Kingstown, for example. Nostalgia, after all, appeals to milieu, even if the object of that nostalgia could be disingenuous. Conversely, Beckett’s later plays, *What Where* and *Catastrophe*, seem to present narratives without a past, further developing Beckett’s aesthetics of subtraction. *What Where,* originally a stage play but soon thereafter adapted for television productions, is another play that hinges on temporal contradiction. It is "Without journey" and yet "time passes" (414). The serial repetitions of interrogation, submission and off-stage torture of homogenous characters, BAM, BEM, BIM and BOM are provided without context, driven without knowable motive and lead to no result—providing that a plot need lead to resolution. Despite the alternation of interrogators and interrogated subjects, comprising all characters but BAM, who determines the roles played by BEM, BIM, and BOM, the only non-repeating variable in the play is the change in seasons, beginning with the spring and concluding with the winter. The seasonal changes, which are pronounced by BAM and not represented in any other way, act as an empty structure whose only function is to maintain the cycle of torture. Taking S.E. Gontarski’s 1992 video production of *What Where*16 (from the video *Peephole Art: Beckett for Television*) to exemplify a performance of the play, one is immediately struck by the homogeneity of the characters amid the “Black ground unbroken” (409). The stage directions

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16 S.E. Gontarski’s video production follows Beckett’s revised text assembled for a 1986 stage performance at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco, directed by Gontarski.
continue: “Players as alike as possible. Only oval faces. Hair, etc. eliminated by make-up and invisible black material.” The one distinction between the performers is shown in BAM, whose face is in fact a “mirror reflection [. . . ], slightly distorted, faintly lit, enough to distinguish closed eyes and lips in speech. [Four to five] times the size of [the other player’s] faces.” His face appears left of the other players, slightly removed from their shared space. The utterances of all the players exhibit a haunting yet staccato tone free of pathos, perhaps what one would expect to hear from the disembodied and deceased.

The effects of these visual and aural qualities reflect the content of the play, marked by starkness and repetition. Beyond the disturbing dialogue, which hinges on torture without context, the theatric effect of the play is marked by an endless present without hope of change. Were it clear that the interrogation and torture had a purpose and could lead to a result, the cycle could be broken, but no such resolution takes place. Such is the condition of terror in What Where. In The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Jean-François Lyotard discusses the enforcement of terror on language-games, thereby negating various legitimation narratives based on criteria of truth vs. falsity, justice vs. injustice, and efficiency vs. inefficiency (46). For Lyotard terror of force persists “outside the realm of language games, because the efficacy of such force is based entirely on the threat to eliminate the opposing player, not on making a better ‘move’” (46). In Lyotard’s language-games, when one player forces his will through intimidation upon another player, with the result that that player is silenced and stripped of agency, the language-game fails. A game without purpose or end persists in a changeless present. Baudrillard writes in reference to his own description of a self-perpetuating system of terror that the staging of history “comes to be annihilated on the television screen. We are in the era of events without consequences” (Simulacra and Simulation 164). Consequences follow within a chain of causality, which follows from a linear sensibility of time grounded in history, but once linearity and historicity are dissolved, no consequences exist. The final lines of What Where are: “Good./ I am alone./ In the present as were I still./ It is winter./ Without journey./ Time passes./ That is all./ Make sense who may./ I switch off” (414). Sense, or meaning, cannot be had. In this case, in contrast to the metaphor of historical subjectivity developed by Miller, in which the future is recognized by reference to the past, meaning, as determined through teleological narrative, disappears. (By meaning, I refer to the order of signs that grounds itself in origins, as opposed to the experience of the hyperreal of which Baudrillard speaks, wherein simulacra become
untethered from notions of origin and copy.) The passing of time without journey, which is a contracted past stripped of nostalgia and milieu—without reference to Ireland or any other place—best captures Baudrillard’s “era of events without consequences.” In fact, the audience has no reason not to think that the cycle of torture and false interrogation won’t continue \textit{ad infinitum}. The role of the questions is to perpetuate the system rather than uncover meanings.

While \textit{What Where} seems to contract the repetition of \textit{Krapp’s Last Tape} and \textit{That Time}, stripping them of the semblance of a past, \textit{Catastrophe} almost seems to answer the conundrum of how to relegate the audience to a point in the past, for the audience is put into a position secondary to a future audience though prior to a recorded audience. Unlike Shakespeare’s \textit{Hamlet}, which features a play within a play, acting as an experiment intended to verify a reality, \textit{Catastrophe} is a play about a rehearsal. With its implicit emphasis on future effects displacing the action of the play, the audience is removed from the dramatic focus and inserted further within the semblance of reality—as if one were watching a genuine rehearsal. Because \textit{Catastrophe} defers its own performance, it implodes the orders of the real and the imaginary. This, in fact, makes possible the player’s final subversive gesture, wherein he raises his head to return the gaze of the rehearsal audience. The gesture silences the applause of the recorded audience, converging the two audiences into one moment. (Of course, the irony is that the real audience, assuming that the production is successful, would applaud once the light fades out, as if applauding the player’s ability to silence his oppressors, the imagined future audience.)

Baudrillard writes that “Death no longer has a stage, neither phantasmatic nor political, on which to represent itself, to play itself out, either a ceremonial or a violent one. And this is the victory of the other nihilism, of the other terrorism, that of the system” (164). The word \textit{catastrophe} signifies a “change or revolution which produces the conclusion or final event of a dramatic piece [. . .]; the dénouement” (\textit{OED}). It is a “final event; a conclusion generally unhappy [. . .], a disastrous end, finish-up, conclusion, upshot; overthrow, ruin, calamitous fate.” The question of \textit{Catastrophe} is what is the revolution? What is being overturned? The play features a tyrannical director ordering a willing assistant to manipulate and exploit the player as material for effect. The isolated image of the player standing on a block evokes those associated with demonstrations of public humiliation, with slave auctions, and with executions—all with the attendant idea of brutal spectacle. The real audience is put into the position of an unwilling accomplice. While the player’s final act of defiance is crucial to the play’s significance, the
temporal implications of the recorded applause is the catastrophe. The real audience is split between two temporalities. It listens to a recording of an audience that represents the future audience for which the rehearsal is preparing. The real audience occupies past, present and future temporalities, all converging on the player’s upturned face. One might imagine that such a dynamic proffers the solution to the riddle of Beckett’s “A late evening in the future” preceding Krapp’s Last Tape. Throughout Catastrophe the audience is made aware of its inevitable relegation into a past, as it is not the intended audience for the ultimate performance, but the catastrophic conclusion collapses the distantiation between times. As such, this is not catastrophe in the historical sense. Rather, this is catastrophe that ends historicity itself. As Baudrillard writes, “One must realize that ‘catastrophe’ has this ‘catastrophic’ meaning of end and annihilation only in relation to a linear vision of accumulation, or productive finality, imposed on us by the system” (Simulacra and Simulation 83). Such a conception imbeds itself in trauma, nostalgia, progress and conclusion; but when conceived in terms of perpetual revolution or overturning, catastrophe signals the end of historicity itself, eliding points in a line into an ontology of simultaneity.
CHAPTER SIX
BECKETT’S THREE NOVELS
AND THE MOMENT OF ONTOLOGICAL PASTICHE

Samuel Beckett’s “Recent Irish Poetry,” published in *The Bookman* in 1934 under the pseudonym Andrew Belis, speaks of a “rupture of the lines of communication” between the subject and the object (*Disjecta* 70). While the “antiquarian” poets, those who fashion poetry out of atrophied images handed down to them by realist figurations of Irish myth and history, intentionally or unintentionally fail to recognize this rupture, some new poets begin to emphasize image as perception rather than verisimilitude. The Irish Revival, like so many nationalist movements, expressed much of its program through realist representation. Literary modes such as novels (traditionally the most historical of forms) and pastoral poetry were ideal vehicles for ideological dissemination, largely because they were forms readymade for popular consumption and thus better able to communicate content comparatively free of formal complications and noticeable ambiguities. This was a problem for anyone who wished to create new art. Beckett’s rupture eschews verisimilitude in favor of exploring the interchange between images, collapsing the so-called subjective and objective poles of reality. Anthony Uhlmann discusses Beckett’s use of the image in *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*, citing Beckett’s continued emphasis on nonrelational art. In speaking of “Recent Irish Poetry” he writes:

> The image, then, offers one way of examining the breakdown of the object/subject relation, one way of avoiding the rational interference of pre-digested interpretation. Rather than interpreting its object for us (representing it by cutting it from everything not considered useful to the conscious perception of that object), art presents us with material that we must struggle to understand. (28)

Uhlmann’s study hinges on the distinction between images that *present* and *represent*, the former of which avoids codified systems of reception, clichés for example. While a representation works with images that are already known through habit, a presentation eludes expectations. Uhlmann’s use of nonrelation ties into presentation. A referential system refers back to something already understood, thus enabling an interpretation. Systems of allusion and historical reference, for
example, are relational. Presentation avoids these relations. Any image that does not refer back to a system that explains the meaning of that image is nonrelational. Such an image is or works within a presentation rather than a representation. As Uhlmann develops his argument, grounding his explication of image through Charles Sanders Peirce, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze, he makes use of the trope of the cinematic screen—partly indebted to Deleuze’s *Cinema* books.

Uhlmann points out that Bergson “is proposing understanding ‘the image’ as a bridge between those objectively existing things and our thoughts. It is a bridge because the image exists both in the thing, which has or projects an image consistent with the nature of its own being, and in our minds, which receive the projected images in the manner of a screen” (8). The analogy between conscious experience and cinematic aesthetics is not new. Daniel C. Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained* exerts considerable effort demystifying what he calls the *Cartesian Theater*, the notion that conscious experience derives from a central mechanism that integrates all mental images visual or otherwise. Descartes located this theater in the pineal gland. As Dennett says, “Descartes proposed a role for it: in order for a person to be conscious of something, traffic from the senses had to arrive at this station, where it thereupon caused a special—indeed, magical—transaction to occur between that person’s material brain and immaterial mind” (105). Of course, Dennett is referring also to the Cartesian split between material and spirit. While Uhlmann is by no means evoking the image of the mind as screen to construct a cognitive or neurological argument—he is concerned with Beckett’s aesthetics of the nonrelational image—this trope nevertheless suggests a sense of unity from which I wish to depart for my own purposes, explicating a disjunctive rather than conjunctive figure to show how images operate in Beckett’s writing. Be that as it may, Uhlmann’s reading of Beckett’s nonrelational image is important to what I wish to say about Beckett’s *Three Novels*, which express what I call the *moment of ontological pastiche*, an ontology, expressed through Beckett’s aesthetics, that reformulates history as a fluid aggregate of images.

For Bergson memories are images, as are percepts. Our bodies, too, are images. He writes, “I call matter the aggregate of images, and perception of matter these same images referred to the eventual action of one particular image, my body” (*Matter and Memory* 22). In Beckett’s *Malone Dies* the narrator repeatedly takes stock of the immediate surroundings in his room and promises to enumerate an inventory of things as an important sequence in his arching narrative. A “family of objects” surrounds him (243)—his stick, his notebook, a cabinet and
other objects. In speaking of a hat that lost its brim, he says that “It is perhaps the only object in my possession the history of which I have not forgotten, I mean counting from the day it became mine,” pointing out that familiarity, based on a kind of history, is contingent on memory or habit. The object-images seem to orbit the narrator throughout *Malone Dies*, acting as grounding points among the more traditional stories (of Saposcat, the Lamberts, Macmann and Lemuel). Among these objects and stories is the image of the body. *The Unnamable* best exemplifies how the body itself functions at the level of image:

I, of whom I know nothing, I know my eyes are open, because of the tears that pour from them unceasingly. I know I am seated, my hands on my knees, because of the pressure against my rump, against the soles of my feet, against the palms of hands, against my knees. Against my palms the pressure is of my knees, against my knees of my palms, but what is it that presses against my rump, against the soles of my feet? I don’t know. (298)

The limits of the diagnostics are determined by what cannot be felt—the floor, if there is one, the chair, if there is one. The passage evinces a circuitry between the knower and that which is known, and this knowledge is made of sensory images. This particular circuit ends with what cannot be felt. The feelings determine the state of the body through a somatosensory circuit, but in Beckett’s writing this circuit is one among many orbital systems that, like objects, memories, thoughts, and stories, are composed of images.

What is important to realize is that those visual phenomena are merely one example of images and that images are multi-sensory, perceived, recalled, and imagined. Of course, all images in Beckett’s writing are represented through the medium of language. For instance, the word on the page represents the image as experienced by the mind, this image, for Bergson, acting as a sensory interpretation of an object-image grounded in the real world. Beckett’s images work against any unified conceptions of being however. In *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text*, Steven Connor examines how Beckett complicates his use of Descartes’ *cogito*, ultimately undercutting any sense of self as unified identity. In speaking of the repetition and circulation of the characters “Belacqua, Murphy, Watt, Mercier and Camier, Moran, Molloy, Malone, Macmann, Mahood, Worm [and] the narrator of *The Unnamable,***” Connor writes that “It seems as though the very drive to fix or position the self as an entity is what brings about the splitting of the self into simulacra” (50). The nominal and pronominal centers of gravity shift
throughout *The Unnamable*, and narrative consistency—who is speaking—becomes frequently relative despite the narrator’s occasional attempts to suggest otherwise. At various junctures an image of centrality is suggested: “Malone is there [. . .]. He passes before me at doubtless regular intervals, unless it is I who pass before him. No, once and for all, I do not move. He passes, motionless” (286); “I like to think I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain. In a sense I would be better off at the circumference, since my eyes are always fixed in the same direction. But I am certainly not at the circumference [. . .]. No, he wheels, I feel it, and about me, like a planet about its sun” (289). While the speaking subject occasionally accrues definition, it is unseated inevitably by new articulations. One sees this when Mahood begins to determine the narrative. The narrator uses phrases like “According to Mahood” (312), “Mahood assured me” (314) and “Mahood dixit” (315). These are “Mahood’s stories” (308). Among the ephemeral stories constructed and abandoned in *The Unnamable* is a story about the narrator’s family who dies from bacillus botulinus through sausage poisoning. Before this unseemly end, the narrator recounts a story wherein his grandparents recount a story about him to his children: “In the evening, after supper, while my wife kept her eye on me, gaffer and gammer related my life history, to the sleepy children. Bedtime story atmosphere. That’s one of Mahood’s favourite tricks, to produce ostensibly independent testimony in support of my historical existence” (312). The initial narrator becomes the object of Mahood’s narration. An example of this narrative technique can be found in also Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing*, which comes out of the same oeuvre: “If at least he would dignify me with the third person, like his other figments, not he, he’ll be satisfied with nothing less than me, for his me” (307). What once was the central “I” is now supplanted by the “he.” The problem, of course, is that “I” is positioning a “he” which is positioning the “I,” each determining a testimony in support of each other’s “historical” existence. Before recounting the tragic end of the family in *The Unnamable*, the narrator says “So we turned, in our respective orbits, I without, they within” (312). Like the “family of objects” and the images of body, images of characters seem to orbit a gravitational center, but with the repeated relegation of the subject to objective positions. Beckett’s writing exposes a dynamic that seems to persist beyond the surface of language. The problem with the “I” in *The Unnamable* is that there are so many of them—the “I” in the jar, the “I” who creates and is created by Mahood, and the “I” that always seems to add an additional layer to the narrative solar system:
He speaks of me, as if I were he, as if I were not he, both, and as if I were others, one after another, he is the afflicted, I am far, do you hear him, he says I’m far, as if I were he, no, as if I were not he, for he is not far, he is here, it’s he who speaks, he says it’s I, then he says it’s not [. . .], he wants me to be he, or another [. . .], he wants me to rise up, up into him, or up into another [. . .], he thinks he’s caught me, he feels me in him, then he says I, as if I were he.” (396)

But the repetition of “I” in The Unnamable is overdetermined such that the ontological and narrative distances between the lyrical “I” and the prosaic “he” (“I’m far, as if I were he”) collapse into a seamless displacement of subjectivity; and this collapse is parallel to the Bergsonian presence of past in a present which is already past, albeit the most contracted version of the past. “I” and “he,” despite their material differences, collapse under the weight of the sameness conferred upon them through their identical roles in expressing passing subjectivity. In Bergsonism Gilles Deleuze outlines one of Bergson’s central ideas (a passage well worth repeating from the previous chapter): “The idea of contemporaneity of the present and the past has one final consequence: Not only does the past coexist with the present that has been, but, as it preserves itself in itself (while the present passes), it is the whole, integral past; it is all our past, which coexists with each present” (59). Beckett’s writing represents this coexistence through both the displacement of subjectivity and the present recurrence of past avatars.

In spite of the constant displacement of narrator cohesion, an image seems to remain, one exceeding the pronominal subject and separate from the aforementioned kinds of images. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, who argues against the Cartesian Theater based on neurological terms, posits a unique image in Descartes’ Error: “An object that is being represented, an organism responding to an object of representation, and a state of the self in the process of changing because of the organism’s response to the object [. . .] are held simultaneously in working memory and attended, side-by-side or in rapid interpolation, in early sensory cortices” (242). The distinction between these images is important to understand. The object is one image, the organism (here he means us) is another image, but another kind of image develops out of a specific image of the organism interacting with the object. He continues, “I propose that subjectivity emerges during the latter step when the brain is producing not just images of an object, not just images of organism responses to the object, but a third kind of image, that of an organism in the act of perceiving and responding to an object. I believe the
subjective perspective arises out of the content of the third kind of image” (242-3). This third kind of image (which I shall call *third image* from this point on) behaves like a witness to awareness, for being aware is not the same as being self-aware. Damasio goes on to use the term “metaself,” which he theorizes as “purely nonverbal” (243). While Damasio’s concerns are neuroscientific, the *third image* may demonstrate an image unique to Beckett’s writing. ¹⁷

Beckett’s narrative points of articulation, which obviously are made of language, represent something beyond language. This distinction is important. While self may be communicated through language, the sense of self is not contingent upon language. ¹⁸ As Damasio writes, “Language may not be the source of the self, but it certainly is the source of the ‘I’” (243). Because Beckett’s point of narration is constantly displacing the ways in which subjectivity is normally represented in writing (consider the entrenched narrative conventions that formulate subjectivity in realist novels), and because the point of narration persists in spite of this displacement, the reader becomes aware of a kind of image independent of linguistic subjects and objects. Of course, this is another kind of representation because it is created through Beckett’s writing, but it is an image unlike other kinds of images. Beckett’s writing creates an ontological space around which body images, object images, characters and stories orbit. Damasio’s model posits an image “of an organism in the act of perceiving and responding to an object.” This is not mere perception, this is perception of perception, and it exhibits an integrity separate from other images. That being the case, this center of gravity does not act as a Cartesian theater that projects images into a seamless reality. In fact, because of its difference in kind, all other images—deriving from objects, thoughts, and memories—are fluid in narrative importance. Characters, stories, memories, and objects are abandoned as easily as introduced in *Three Novels*, the acceleration of which process grows from novel to novel. Molloy of *Molloy* blends story with memory, and movements from town to seaside to forest are affected by narrative shifts rather than logical plot, a condition of reality Moran increasingly succumbs to in his own adventures as he seems to become Molloy himself. In *Malone Dies* body and object images play as large a role as the stories Malone creates; and soon Macmann transplants Malone

¹⁷ There is nothing awkward in this appropriation of Damasio’s idea. Science and theory have been in correspondence since long before Henri Bergson, Sigmund Freud and René Descartes.

¹⁸ This is a break from psychoanalytic models of subjectivity such as Sigmund Freud’s and Jacques Lacan’s, which model ego formation through the acquisition of language. Interestingly, such an acquisition is determined by the presence of the father. This patriarchal model of language, which enables a patriarchal vision of historicity, is exactly what Beckett’s writing dismantles.
in a narrative that leads to thematic and typographical unraveling, Lemuel’s oars acting as paratactic ors, the oars “trail[ing] in the water” (280) becoming the “or with his pencil or with his stick or” (281). *The Unnamable* completes the project, where the nominal and pronominal subjects of sentences are constantly displaced.

Collectively these maneuvers effect a stream of images displaced by other images. This process flattens story structures. Uhlmann writes that “Images themselves are understood to appear and then dissipate in Beckett, emerging to tear holes in the word surface” (32). The *third image* emerges from these holes. Working out of Gilles Deleuze’s essay, “The Exhausted,” which Uhlmann himself translated for publication, Uhlmann details the “three kinds of ‘language’ in Beckett’s works which all emerge to be exhausted” (31). As he says, “images and spaces aligned to images” are among these and further serve to exhaust the other kinds of language (32). Uhlmann demonstrates how Beckett’s oeuvre moves away from an aesthetics of relation to one of nonrelation. *More Pricks Than Kicks* and *Murphy* exemplify the former through repeated use of allusions and other intertextual maneuvers; later works like *The Unnamable* and *How It Is* largely abandon these reference systems, thus espousing an aesthetics of nonrelation through an emphasis on images that present rather than represent. My assertion is that this latter aesthetics evinces also a series of fluid relations between the varied images operating within the texts, and that the *third image* acts as gravitational hub, itself empty of determined content and identity, around which these images circulate. Despite Beckett’s attempts to exhaust narrative, language and image, the *third image* persists. While Uhlmann speaks of a kind of “background image of a narrator narrating [which] is apparently insubstantial,” this background image is compared to the “image of the cogito” (64), which reasserts the idea of identity. Be that as it may, an aesthetics of nonrelation has clear repercussions for historicity itself.

While the general lack of overt historical reference in Beckett’s works is obvious enough, history, and the potential for history to happen, is undermined also by the relativistic movement of images, the shifting orbits. The phrase “time to time” recurs throughout *Molloy* to a point where it gestures beyond its clichéd use. What becomes apparent is the space between times marked by “to.” A spacing effect comes to the surface. A characteristic of the Cartesian theater is that all images are projected at once. An appeal to Damasio’s model better elucidates the fluidity of images in Beckett’s writing: “It is perhaps more fruitful to think that our strong sense of mind
integration is created from the concerted action of large-scale systems by synchronizing sets of neural activity in separate brain regions, in effect a trick of timing” (95). The idea is that images, even though projecting from different brain regions, support a sense of integrated experience through a trick of timing. That said, this trick belies the reality that those images, which we think are coterminous, are arriving at different times. Beckett, however, exposes this trick of timing through the spacing between images. When history is reduced to image, and images occur from “time to time,” then the continuity of history is broken.

Returning to the earlier passage from *Malone Dies* in which the narrator’s “historical existence” is ostensibly verified by Mahood’s story in which ephemeral grandparents relate a story about the narrator to children, we find that Mahood’s historical existence is likewise verified by the narrator. This circular configuration can serve only to undermine the teleological dynamic necessary for history to exist. History is merely one more image, analogized through the brief stories expressed by Beckett’s narrators or through the duration of objects, exemplified by Malone’s hat. This becomes the moment of ontological pastiche. Circularity is the overarching construct in *Molloy*. Molloy journeys towards his mother’s home while already at this mother’s home. Moran reports a series of events that have and have not already happened. He begins where he ends and ends where he begins. The novel famously concludes: “Then I went back into the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining” (170). The contradiction in fact presents two equally possible realities, two simultaneous images circulating through the overarching narrative. Daniel Katz exposes a similar development in *Say I No More: Subjectivity and Consciousness in the Prose of Samuel Beckett*. *The Unnamable* resolves a dilemma first evident in the original title for *Malone Meurt: L’Absent*, which Katz reads as an initial attempt to invert Descartes’ cogito, for the very attempt to make oneself absent simply proves one’s presence. As Katz says,

The phrase, ‘I am absent,’ however, could never be achieved in a temporality of simultaneity: its very articulation undoes its claims. The absence and witnessing can never coincide—thus in Beckett the methodical repetition is not that of a moment whose own finitude demands its eternal reproduction, but rather the oscillation of two movements each of which always necessitates its own subsequent invalidation. (96)
Beckett better exposes simultaneity through the title *The Unnamable* as an assertion of two coexistent yet contradictory conditions: the naming of the unnamable as the *unnamable*. This is a move away from “oppositional, binary logic” in favor of an “acceptance of contradiction inherent in naming something ‘unnamable’” (Katz 96). The split here is between the word *unnamable* and what it designates. This is another way to displace the subject, or to create a space between language and something that continues to remain regardless of existential propositions, namely the *third image*.

The narrative circles of *Molloy* continue to contract in *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, as images orbit and supplant one another rather than enable traditional novelistic (historical) structures to develop. Circling back to Beckett’s “Recent Irish Poetry,” one can trace the final consequence to Beckett’s “rupture of the lines of communication,” as historicity, a narrative structure grounded in realism, is reduced to an image circulating among images in perception. Beckett denies the static structures necessary for history to take place as well as static figures of being.

Henri Bergson examines the condition of static experience in *Creative Evolution*. The experience of states has more to do with the ways in which we feel, conceptualize, and communicate experience than the underpinnings of actual experience: “For I speak of each of my states as if it formed a block and were a separate whole. I say indeed that I change, but the change seems to me to reside in the passage from one state to the next” (1). *Three Novels* represents blocks, or blockages, of experience through images of closure and immobility—such as with the repeating image of ditches. Other images evince a sense of increasing growth in viscosity, conveyed through hampered movements, such as those shown in the injured, invalid, or bedridden. Brain imagery circulates throughout *Three Novels*, seeming to suggest occasionally limits or finitude. As the narrator of *Malone Dies* says, “You may say it is all in my head, and indeed sometimes it seems to me I am in a head and that these eight, no, six, these six planes that enclose me are of solid bone” (215). The sense of being confined by space and incapable of movement manifests also in the images of jars, which appear in *Molloy* and *The Unnamable*. The jar in *Molloy* is echoed by a cage: “I, when I stayed still, as I did most of the time, was fixed too, and when I moved, from place to place, it was very slowly, as in a cage out of time” (46). This cage seems to suppress the experience of time as fluid. Another of Mahood’s stories in *The Unnamable* recounts the narrator’s experience of being stuck, without limbs, in a jar outside a
“chop-house,” variously producing fertilizer for the proprietress’ “kitchen garden” or acting as an illuminated menu stand for passersby (322). These images represent a condition of static being or of experience as state, those delineations that allow one to say I was happy a moment ago and now I am sad, or that was purple and now it is blue, marking a line in the flow of experiential time. What all these images have in common is their Bergsonian rejection of the Cartesian split. Body and mind occupy the same substance of reality and are subject to the same changing forces.

The images of a being imprisoned by space are contrasted by images of fluidity and indeterminacy. For instance, shortly after the narrator exhibits a series of fluid thoughts—“And during all this time [. . . ] in my head I suppose all was streaming” (217)—thought is characterized as a “brainwave” and the homunculus, that famed symbol of mental finitude, is absent (219). Finally, in The Unnamable the brain itself exhibits fluidity: “The tears stream down my face. There is nothing saddening here. Perhaps it is liquefied brain” (287). These figurations of streams, waves, and liquids ultimately spill over the confines of closed spaces in the same way that Beckett’s narration exceeds the limits of stories. In speaking of the moment-by-moment onrush of diverse experiential data, Bergson says,

Our attention fixes on them because they interest it more, because each of them is borne by the fluid mass of our whole psychical existence. Each is only the best illuminated point of a moving zone which comprises all that we feel or think or will—all, in short, that we are at any given moment. It is this entire zone which in reality makes up our state. Now, states thus defined cannot be regarded as distinct elements. They continue each other in an endless flow. (Creative Evolution 3)

Beckett’s images of flow exceed momentary figures of stasis, these represented in closed spaces and also in the fleeting development of stories. The stories are like coagulations of flow, momentarily circumscribing experience with narrative, as the narrator fixes our attention on those elements that make up stories—setting, character, action, etc. Be that as it may, the outflow of these stories, how they seem to spring from a place without narrative or causal justification, rejects a linear sequencing of states, particularly in any teleological way. The stories, whether recalled or invented, act like Bergsonian memories. Bergson’s notion of Duration helps to elucidate the ways in which stories operate in Beckett’s writing: “Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances” (Creative
Evolution 4). In this sense, stories accrue throughout Three Novels—in fact, reaching back to Beckett’s other novels through Watt, Murphy and Belacqua. But these “memories” are not stored into some tidy location to be accessed later: “These memories, messengers from the unconscious, remind us of what we are dragging behind us unawares” and “we feel vaguely that our past remains present to us” (4). Finally, Bergson asks, “What we are, in fact, what is our character, if not the condensation of the history that we lived from our birth—nay, even before our birth, since we bring with us prenatal dispositions?” In Beckett’s writing, these memories are part and parcel of static moments, but they also can constitute the flow out of which those states develop. They inevitably exceed closures. In this way, Beckett succeeds in avoiding the artificial ways in which language tries to capture mental experience as a sequencing of states grounded by a stable ego: “What we actually obtain in this way is an artificial imitation of the internal life, a static equivalent which will lend itself better to the requirements of logic and language, just because we have eliminated from it the element of real time” (Bergson 4). Beckett’s language, however, perpetually dissolves states, thereby exposing the fluid nature of experience, and this experience unites the material and the mental. Interestingly, the rejection of the Cartesian split parallels Beckett’s rupture between subject and object.

The image of the brain plays two roles in Three Novels, acting both as the mind that experiences and as a thing-in-itself—a biological thing. Early in Molloy the text juxtaposes biology with thought through the processes of decomposition and composition. Molloy says, “It is in the tranquility of decomposition that I remember the long confused emotion which was my life [. . .]. To decompose is to live too, I know, I know, don’t torment me, but one sometimes forgets” (21). Decomposition is asserted as a process of life and thought. It signifies the fluid substratum beneath states in that it works against composition. Conversely, composition is shown as a negative process of to be resisted: “Not to want to say, not to know what you want to say, not to be able to say what you think you want to say, and never to stop saying, or hardly ever, is the thing to keep in mind, even in the heat of composition” (23). The thing is experienced in the mind during the state of composition through an act of saying, but that saying, as language, seems to disrupt—as indicated by the series of halting nots—the ability to represent the changing nature of experience.

Because decomposition and composition are codetermined, each takes on biological and linguistic significance. Working together they enact an evolutionary rather than teleological or
historical development. The composing and decomposing states, which are themselves made of images, suggest an unending line rather than a circularity. However, the result is the same.
CHAPTER SEVEN

A CONCLUSION: TRANSHIPTING HISTORIES

The Boston Irish Famine Memorial, across from the Old South Meeting House on Freedom Trail, stands at the corner of School and Washington Street in Boston, Massachusetts. The memorial, built by Robert Shure and unveiled in 1998, features “two life-size sculptures, one depicting a family leaving Ireland's shores, impoverished and desperate, and another depicting a family arriving in Boston, filled with hope and determination” (Boston Irish Tourism Association). According to the memorial’s official website, which, in a hypertextual way, acts as digital plaque to the site, the original competition for the building of the memorial “[called] for a ‘room within a room’ setting in which pedestrians can move through the park while others can stop and reflect on the ‘moment in time’ that the memorial will capture.” Each bronze sculpture set features a father, mother, and son positioned on a large, conical pedestal of stone. The islands stand several feet away from each other, allowing for passage between, and are themselves partially enclosed by short, circular walls with two entry points—acting as a loosely formed hallway. The site itself is surrounded by the bustling commerce of Boston, with business people, students, workers, tourists and the homeless dotting the area like pigeons. A major corporate bookstore hovers over it. Disregarding the diminutive plaques attached to the monument, the only way to determine the narrative of the memorial is through some pre-learned basis of interpretation. In fact, there is no determined chronology detailing which dramatic set precedes the other. Was the family first starving before it found prosperity? Did starvation and suffering follow a period of health and
prosperity? (Such a reading might suggest a depletion of cultural cohesion and a loss of Irish tradition.) Must a chronological narrative assert itself at all? Like the shifting orbits in Beckett’s *Three Novels*, the determination of meaning becomes a matter of momentary perspective. Where one stands in relation to the memorial can determine its meaning.

In light of its subject matter, and perhaps based on the period clothing of the figures—and perhaps because of the city in which the memorial is located, famed for its history of Irish immigration--its historical content becomes apparent for one versed in American and Irish history. However, without the grafting of this context, the dynamics of the presentation themselves assert simultaneity.

Its capacity to “reflect” any single “moment in time” is undermined. The figures suffer and prosper at the same time. The sculptures mirror each other in contradiction, presenting divergent yet simultaneous states of affairs, perhaps like an unintended reference to the cracked looking-glass in Oscar Wilde’s “The Decay of Lying,” which Stephen of *Ulysses* appropriates himself. The memorial, also, interacts with the multitude of signs in its environs, reflected in store windows and in the glossy panels of Fed Ex trucks.

letter’s origins: “It occurred to me that Issy might well be one of those girls with a multiple personality, and I was led, therefore, to read Dr. Morton Prince’s *The Dissociation of a Personality* (Boston, 1905, 1908), a study of the young woman known as ‘Miss Christine L. Beauchamp’ (90). The famous case provides a great deal of content for Joyce’s letter. The Boston neurologist studied Beauchamp’s multiplying personalities, some of whom wrote letters to one another. This “transhipt from Boston” (111.9), which is a “grotesquely distorted macromass” (111.29) acts as a microscopic representation of *Finnegans Wake*, whose multiple voices and simultaneous histories undercut a unified message and mirror to reality.

Likewise, *The Boston Irish Famine Memorial* communicates simultaneously a series of diverging and converging possibilities within its fluid environment. Despite its intentions to memorialize in a sacral sense, conveying the weight of a historical event, the memorial operates within Frederic Jameson’s world of pastiche: “In a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through masks and with voices of the styles in the imaginary museum” (“Postmodernism and Consumer Society” 1965). History becomes pastiche in this world so “incapable of dealing with time and history” (1967). The memorial attempts to trace a line back to Ireland (Boston and Dublin mirroring one another across the Atlantic Ocean), but the looking-glass is cracked, splintering narrative series, and the “transhipt” (transcript) fails to reach its destination, such as in *Finnegans Wake*. The script is always between two points and without beginning or end.

Boston is often a hyperreal city, its Irish history flooding the city in green simulacra every Saint Patrick’s Day or whenever a local sports franchise makes good on its promise to win a championship. Poles between authenticity and forgery, reality and imaginary, memory and story, implode into the hyperreal. In such a case, there is no difference between Saint Patrick’s Day and Bloomsday, the latter involving a living recreation of fictive events, flooding cities across the world with Leopold Blooms, themselves recreating modern versions of their Hellenic counterparts. There is no qualitative difference between imaginary realities and real imaginings in the hyperreal. Such paradoxical twists are the Möbius effects of Museyrooms.

The glass covering the portrait in Samuel Beckett’s *That Time* reflects an image whose impact on the viewer is so potent that it acts as a turning point in his life, one that has affected the way that he perceives reality. The turning points in the play blur the borders between memory and story, “making it up that way to keep it going” (422). *Ulysses* exposes Dublin as a
city populated by statues and Bloom eroticizes statues at the National Museum, thereby exposing the irretrievable condition of their original contexts. *Finnegans Wake*’s central image, the Museyroom, is a reformulation of the Wellington Monument, whose bas-reliefs act like apertures into paratactic histories and rhizomatic potentials. Finally, Flann O’Brien’s archive is itself imploded by heretical exegeses as long-dead figures occupy the present through simultaneity. The intensity and accumulation of these effects in these writings demonstrate a hyperreal aesthetics in reaction to both the oppressive forces of the Irish Revival as well as a reflection of the postmodern conditions surrounding them.

In one of Myles na Gopaleen’s (nom de plume Brian Ó Nualláin) publications in *The Irish Times* he addresses the state of art in Ireland. The main targets of his vitriol are the privileged class and the high-minded aesthetes who condemn the tastes of the rabblement. The article takes several side roads in its argument, at times mocking aesthetic theories, and at other times presenting brief alternative realities portraying Einstein in Harlem and Charlie Chaplin disappearing into the distance. At one point the article imagines a hypothetical boy enjoying a bath:

> This is life, and stuffed contentedly in the china bath sits the boy it was invented for, morbidly aware of the structure of history, geography, parsing, algebra, chemistry and woodwork; he is up to his chin in carpediurnal present, and simultaneously, in transcendent sense-immediacy, sensible that without *him*, without *his* feeling, *his* observation, *his* diapassional apprehension of all planes, *his* non-pensionable function as catalyst, the whole filmy edifice would crumble into dust. He likes the lukewarm water. He likes himself liking the lukewarm water. He likes himself liking himself liking the lukewarm water. Aesthetics, in other words, is a mental ailment. (*The Best of Myles* 249)

Myles’ satire attacks the self-absorbing and privileged position of an overly educated aesthete who apparently has enough time on his hands to let the bath go lukewarm. In spite of this mockery, Myle’s article reflects many of the themes found in O’Brien’s novels (multiple personalities surface again). History is flooded by the present, or history floods into the present, as the thinker of history bobs in a pool of infinite regress, “liking himself liking himself” *ad infinitum*. On the other hand, the article’s condemnation of the privileged reflects an issue shared by also Joyce and Beckett. Joyce, who led often a life of poverty, fills his novels with ordinary
people. Beckett’s characters often are destitute and invalid. Brian Ó Nualláin, through the voice of Myles in *The Irish Times*, wrote for popular consumption. One wonders if another reason for these authors to undermine historical thinking was because history was written by and for the privileged. History was written by the wealthy, and this certainly has political reverberations when construed in relation to the history of British colonialism. In this light, *The Boston Irish Famine Memorial* takes on deeper meanings. For a moment a historical narrative surfaces as it portrays the history of those whose history was written by someone else, but the narrative is fleeting because the orbits keep on shifting.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andrew V. McFeaters was born and raised in Massachusetts. He earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in English from Florida State University. His areas of research include Irish Literature, Modernism, Postcolonialism, and Critical Theory. He worked on the staff of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* for several years, and has presented work on Samuel Beckett and James Joyce at international conferences. He teaches at Florida State University.