2010

Remembering to Forget: The Event of Memory in Beckett and Joyce

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REMEMBERING TO FORGET: THE EVENT OF MEMORY IN
BECKETT AND JOYCE

By

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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 my mother and father
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank, first and foremost, Stan Gontarski for his guidance, encouragement, and tremendous patience during the many developments of this study. His insights are evident at every turn. This project would not have gone forward without him. I am deeply indebted.

Many thanks to Bruce Boehrer and to R.M. Berry for not only their many insights and comments on this manuscript, but (more importantly) their willingness to be a part of this project, which gave me the confidence to take it forward. Thanks in equal parts goes to Joyce Carbonell and Barry Faulk for their help and insights (especially) on the later stages of this project. I would also like to thank C.J. Ackerley and Deborah Coxwell Teague for being astonishing examples of how to maintain a superhuman work ethic. Thanks to Chiponda Chimbelu and Marc Wegmann at VDM Verlag for their help with my first manuscript. Thanks to Alec Hargreaves and Bill Cloonan for bringing me on as part of the editorial team for Transnational Beckett.

I would be remiss not to extend may thanks to the Finnegans Wake group at FSU, including Laci Mattison, Fred Von Drasek, and, especially, Andrew Baumann. Thanks also to Shawn O’Hare for putting me on the path to Beckett Studies at Florida State. The guidance, motivation, and encouragement that he, Andrew Hazucha, Ernest Lee, Charles Moffat, Joe Bill Sloan, and John Wells provided at the beginning of my academic career has provided an incredible model for me to follow. I would like to thank the associates of the P.I.E. Program for their instructional support and recognition, as well as the Congress of Graduate Students at Florida State for their financial support to travel for international conferences. Thanks also to the staff of the English Department for their work to secure research and travel funding. Many thanks to Jeff Smith, Ryan Houston, and Joe Cronin for their outside perspectives and many words of advice.
Special thanks also to Marsha Gontarski, Debra Brock and Carolyn Hector Hall, who have been constant sources of encouragement. I would also like to thank Doug Cox and Susan Finch, Michael and Megan Garriga, Todd Dorris, Molly Schulte, Brandy Haddock, Stacey Suver, Tara and Jason Stamm, Sean Kennedy, Jennifer and Jessica Sexton, Paul Nagy, Kas Kelly, Rob King, Amie Williams, Anne Coldiron, John Fenstermaker, Eric Walker, and Dennis Moore for their support, and special thanks to Jack Clifford, Stephanie Cameron Kennedy, and Dominika Wrozyński for their editorial help. I am also greatly indebted to Andrew McFeaters and Amit Rai for their conversations, friendship, and making sure that I didn’t spend too much time on the wrong track.
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### Abbreviations

**Samuel Beckett’s**
- *Collected Shorter Plays* (CSP)
- *Proust* (P)
- “German Letter of 1937” (*Disjecta/D*)
- *Murphy* (M)
- *Watt* (W)
- *Texts for Nothing* (TfN)
- *the Unnamable* (U)
- *Malone Dies* (MD)
- *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (DFMW)

**James Joyce’s**
- *Finnegans Wake* (FW)

**Henri Bergson’s**
- *Creative Evolution* (CE)
- *The Creative Mind* (CM)
- *Matter and Memory* (MM)
- *Time and Free Will* (TFW)
- *Mind-Energy* (ME)

**Gillies Deleuze’s**
- *Bergsonism* (B)
- “The Conception of Difference in Bergson” (CD)
- *Difference and Repetition* (D&R)
ABSTRACT

This project is an attempt to re-conceptualizes the interaction between memory and the body, specifically the failures and slippages of memory, in the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. I contend that Beckett’s work (following Joyce’s examples) explores the moment of interaction between the cognitive mind and the corporeal body as memories become actions—or fail to become actions. I examine moments of memory failure or slippage in light of cognitive science developed by neurophilosophers (from Bergson to recent works by Pinker, Kandel, Ramachandran and Damásio) to discuss how these types of memory-events work in studies of phantom limbs and bodies, neuro and physical memory mapping, and in neuropathies as they materialize in language.

To that end, this project takes a two-fold approach: first, to examine how the work on memory that Bergson theorized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is reflected artistically by looking at two texts (Finnegans Wake and Murphy) that develop approaches to memory and cognition similar to Bergson’s own, and, second, to examine how cognitive science has finally caught up with the modernist writing that anticipated much of what contemporary neurophilosophers are studying now.

Chapter one discusses development of cognitive science and its disavowal of its foundation in Bergson’s late nineteenth & early twentieth century work in Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory, The Creative Mind, and Creative Evolution. The second chapter then develops a comparative analysis of those current trends and practices in cognitive science, specifically those related to perception, as well as the artistic cognitive projects that Joyce and Beckett develop that are strikingly similar to those that Bergson pioneered in the late nineteenth century. The third chapter deals with Joyce’s Finnegans Wake as an attempt to remember and the failure inherent in that process. However, since the design of Finnegans Wake is a model of actual cognition (circuïtous and simultaneous rather than sequential), the attempts to remember always imply the process of forgetting. The event of memory in Joyce functions in two ways, first as an inaccessible initial memory but also as a transmutive shift into a new form of memory.
This chapter works backwards from the resulting memories to find the triggering memory-event. Chapter four develops a reading of the set-piece of the Murphy’s mind which is informed by both Bergson’s own development of cognitive zones (based on his reading of Leibniz’s monadic model) and Joyce’s development of the monad into a dyad in *Finnegans Wake*. The third and fourth chapters form discussions of where Joyce ends his study on memory and Beckett begins his study (respectively). The conclusion points to where we might look to develop the discussion further by looking at *Watt* briefly.
INTRODUCTION

REMEMBERING TO FORGET

That’s the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.
—Estragon, Waiting for Godot

Marcel Proust has become one of the leading voices in neuroscience. Contemporary cognitive scientists have begun embracing this master novelist as one of their own, as a neurologist. His literary study on human consciousness, collected in Remembrances of Things Past (1927), has formed the focus of books like Johan Lehrer’s Proust was a Neuroscientist (2008) and Maryanne Wolf’s Proust and the Squid: the Story and Science of the Reading Brain (2007). Linking Proust, among other modernist writers, to 21st century cognitive science suggests the expanding breadth of the field. Cognitive science encompasses almost all approaches to the study of the mind and the brain, from psychology and psychiatry, neuroscience and biology, to linguistics and computer science, and is by nature interdisciplinary. While cognitive science remains committed to objective observations, and, therefore, has not included the humanities, specifically the literary disciplines in the humanities, the field has broadened in the late 20th and early 21st centuries to include authors and their literary texts.

The usefulness of literature and the humanities to scientists and their attitude toward it is thus shifting. Brain scientists such as Bernard Baars and neurophilosophers such as Stephen Pinker have been citing both Modern and contemporary authors as examples of neurology or cognitive studies. Generally, these are limited to passing references to memory in Proust, and occasionally in James Joyce. Literature, they note, can help explain memory processes in cognitive science. Likewise, cognitive science can help us understand the types of memory functions that Modern authors, like Joyce and Samuel Beckett, explore in their texts. To understand how any biological system works, scientists often examine the breakdowns in those
systems. Neurophilosophers understand memory in the same way: looking to the moments of failure helps to explain how systems work. To re-imagine how we discuss memory and consciousness in literary studies, we, too, might examine the moments of memory failure or slippage in light of the cognitive science developed by neurophilosophers, beginning with the initial stages of neuroscience in Wilhelm Wundt and Henri Bergson through the large scale scientific breakthrough in the work of Hilary Putnam, John C. Eccles, and Daniel Dennett to the recent popular surge of this subject in the works of Steven Pinker, Eric Kandel, Vilayanur Ramachandran and António Damásio. This project uses this neurophilosophical framework to discuss these slippages of memory (or what I refer to as memory-events) in studies of phantom limbs and bodies, neuro and physical memory mapping, and neuropathies as they materialize in language and literary texts.

Although his narrator is talking about the universe, two lines from Douglas Adams’ first and last books respectively sum up the difficulty conceptualizing the mind. “Space,” he says, “is big. Really big. You just won’t believe how vastly hugely mind-bogglingly big it is. I mean you may think it’s a long way down the road to the chemist, but that’s just peanuts to space” (HHGG 69), and “[t]he universe is a lot more complicated than you might think even if you start from a position of thinking that its pretty damn complicated to begin with” (MH 150).

Portrayals of psychology in popular media have often given many people a very false sense of security with the mind. The essentialized way that we hear ideas that Freud or Jung or even Lacan developed misused as everyday language is troubling. The terms and vocabulary garnered from early psychological studies that are replicated in fiction, film, and television lulls their unwary audiences into feeling some mastery over the most ineffable concepts we encounter everyday. The truth is that we don’t fully understand ideas like infinity or nothingness. The mind, like Adams’ space, is both vastly hugely mind-bogglingly big and pretty damn complicated. By moving beyond the limitations of psychology, and using the tools of cognitive science, we can more fully understand the complexity of the minds and memories that authors like Beckett and Joyce explore on the page.

One of the most daunting issues in cognitive studies (and by extension, this study) is the relationship between the mind and the brain—between the spirit and the mind. Part of the problem is that cognitive science has no unified position on what constitutes the mind. At its
most fundamental level, the brain is simply the organ that regulates the body. The mind is the
subjective experience that composes and forms individual identity. Clearly, no one is satisfied
with the fundamental discussions of the mind or the brain. Despite this shared dissatisfaction, no
one group necessarily agrees with any other regarding the connections of the mind and the body.

Many Transhumanist Futurists, like George Dvorsky or FM-2030 (aka Fereidoun
Esfandiary), and Christian apologists, like Lehigh University biochemist Michael Behe, still rely
on the computer metaphor for the mind, wherein the brain is the hardware and the mind is the
software (the material brain affects consciousness, but is not necessarily part of it). Monist
purists, like Mriganka Sur (Newton Professor of Neuroscience at MIT), still contend that humans
are 100% percent matter, and the mind is contained entirely within and produced from the brain.
Sur’s work on cortical plasticity and dynamics (the adaptive response of the brain to inputs),
demonstrates the brain’s sensitivity to the environment through manifestations in learning,
memory, and information transmission. The mind, from this standpoint, seems to be a product of
the brain that develops out of stimuli and environmental interaction. Support for this position,
notably Damásio’s work on brain damage and emotional changes is substantial. Monism,
however, is postulated on an understanding that excludes individualism, the sublime phenomena
of personal experience.

Dualists, such as David Chalmers in his book, *The Conscious Mind* (1996), base their
most convincing hypothesizes on conceivability arguments, “the argument from the
conceivability of zombies,” for example. For Chalmers (following Kirk and Kirkpe in the
1970s), the zombie is a thing that is functionally and psychologically identical to human, but not
phenomenally aware; it would, for instance, have no concept of redness. This argument is
tenuous since qualia (the subjective, interactive experiences that separate humans from zombie
existence, or simply put, sensations one can be aware of) are clear, coherent concepts. Daniel
Dennett is one of the most famous combatants of this idea since the tenets on which the zombie
argument is set up (specifically pain-stimulus reactions) are impossible without large-scale
behavioral or physical changes. Vilayanur S. Ramachandran, Director of the Center for Brain
and Cognition at UCSD, discusses the experience of qualia in a more elegant way than
Chalmers, but he also comes down on the dualist side of cognition. He is much more interested
in how neurons assign and develop meaning than in simply settling the issues surrounding qualia
based dualism. For Ramachandran the problem of locating self and consciousness is not solved by qualia, and the bi-lateral mind/body process of consciousness cannot be solved. In many ways, Chalmers and Ramachandran have brought us back to Descartes.

Neurophilosophers like Daniel Dennett avoid the contention altogether. The mind, or consciousness, for Dennett, in *Consciousness Explained*, is part of the brain, but not necessarily a component part. His interest lies in the structure of consciousness. He refers to human consciousness as “a huge complex of memes” (210), or a collection of self-replicating cultural ideas competing for existence. Memes of consciousness are not necessarily limited to human consciousness since higher primates share many human mental practices, such as self-conscious physical exploration and deception (428).

For the purposes of this study, it matters not whether or not the mind (or consciousness) and the body are inextricably linked, since both the conscious mind (the philosophical mind, say) and the autonomic brain (the physically regulatory material) are both self-organizing systems. The focus here is on the moment of interaction between, what Bergson calls, matter and memory. The issue of metaphysical being is secondary to the concept of mind/body interaction (whether that means the processing of phenomenal experience or not is immaterial). Much of what we feel on a daily basis could be experienced virtually or actually. Pain, for instance, falls on both sides of this dichotomy. We can be consciously aware of pain (as when we experience it), but we can also be logically aware of pain (describing the impetus, the neural pathways up the spinal cord to the brain, the chemical process in the thalamus, the simultaneous distribution to the somatosensory cortex [sensation region] and the limbic system [that registers the emotional response to suffering] and the frontal cortex [that assigns meaning], and the resulting neural activity in the Broca’s area [that causes the verbalization of pain]) as we certainly understand bio-neurology. While these experiences seem the same, the second instance, which leaves out the phenomena or internal subjective experience. Awareness might be removable from the material brain, but the experience is not possible without the component material parts. In this way, we see the interaction of the mind/consciousness and the brain/body. The memory of experiencing pain is something that we can be aware of without actually physically experiencing it, and the brain can even simulate pain in non-existent physical areas (phantom limbs, for instance). Beckett is developing both an examination of qualia and, more importantly, an examination of
the moment in which memory becomes actualized as a physical part of the body (specifically in speech). Deleuze’s concept of the machinic and rhizomatic multiplicity—based on Bergson’s spectrum of duration—is the most useful model to understand that process.

Proust’s expansive novel is the first major work to explore how a subject recalls a memory, and more importantly, what the narrator can do with a memory. Samuel Beckett’s 1931 monograph, *Proust*, characterizes Proust’s main character, Marcel, is not only fixed in the past, but also can (and sometimes must) act. He explains:

> The man with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. His memory is uniform, a creature of routine, at once a condition and function of his impeccable habit, an instrument of reference instead of an instrument of discovery. The paean of his memory: ‘I remember as well as I remember yesterday...’ is also its epitaph, and gives the precise expression of its value. He cannot remember yesterday any more than he can remember tomorrow. He can contemplate yesterday hung out to dry with the wettest August bank holiday on record a little further down the clothes-line. Because his memory is a clothes-line and the images of his past dirty linen redeemed and the infallibly complacent servants of his reminiscential needs. (17)

Beckett’s reading of Proust shows how multifaceted Proust’s approach to memory is, which is the exact reason Proust is so attractive to cognitive scientists. Unlike psychologists—who use memory to explain how Marcel might cope with exterior influences—the cognitive scientist focuses on how these memories effect his cognitive process to show systematically the relationship among cognition, perception, and memory.

Proustian memory processes are so diverse and extensive that any number of neurophilosophical approaches can enhance our reading of his work. For contemporary neurophilosophers like Dennett, Ramachandran, Kirpke, and Jackson, Proust is the ideal literary model because Marcel’s memory reflects the qualia of identity. Not only does Marcel consider his memories accurate, but he considers them unique and necessary to life. We see this most
clearly as Marcel describes his grandmother’s death. For Marcel, the body and the consciousness separate, and when the memories evaporate only the body (or the beast) is left:

But if this was only a beast that was stirring there, where could my grandmother be? Yes, I could recognize the shoe of her nose, which bore no relation now to the rest of her face, but to the corner of which a beauty spot still adhered, and the hand that kept thrusting the blankets aside with a gesture which formerly would have meant that those blankets were pressing upon her, but now meant nothing. (1139)

The narrator of *Remembrances* is as close a model of the computational theory of brain as we find in literature. This model, originally put forth by Hilary Putnam and Jerry Fodor in the 60s and 70s, is now championed by Steven Pinker among others. For him the brain is an information processing system, which makes thought (and memory) a type of computation. The computations in these studies are all done along the lines of symbol manipulation. So, the input symbol (the madeleine cake) is computed and the output is a further mental state (the *memory* of Sundays past). In the case of Marcel, these symbols can be complex, and require, what Jerry Fodor calls “the language of thought” (99), which allows Marcel’s brain to process these symbols based on his own semantic system. His brain, like Fodor’s computer model, recalls exactly those things connected to a given item when prompted involuntarily. Proust makes clear that voluntary memories are always partial. Clearly, Proust is the trailblazer in the exploration of literary consciousness and memory, but other writers at the beginning of the 20th century—other inexhaustible authors like Joyce and Beckett—further developed the approaches to memory that Proust began. Contemporary advances in neuroscience and cognitive studies, moreover, have given us new tools to re-evaluate the way we discuss memory in Joyce and Beckett, and to identify the oversights that we’ve made about memory’s role in Modern literature.

Most *extended* studies on Beckett or Joyce and the mind or consciousness have tended towards purely psychoanalytic models. Rather than focusing on psychoanalytics, this study incorporates contemporary bio-cognitive and philosophical approaches to consciousness and cognition, specifically memory. To that end, this study continues the discussion of Henri Bergson’s role in early cognitive science, and examines Beckett and Joyce in light of his research
as well as contemporary work in cognitive sciences. Rather than simply focusing on one author or the other, this study attempts to show the primary ways in which these two major authors converge in developing an artistic neurophilosophy.  

Because Beckett’s literary treatment of the mind and memory is so radically different from the conventional discourse, we need a new, equally radical model to understand the relationship between mind and body. After all, most modern authors from Proust to Stoppard portray memories in a domino pattern—one toppling into the next. Beckett, like Joyce, depicts memories as they are, not associative, but simultaneous. The simultaneous and nonhierarchical models of cognitive studies provides both the new and necessary vocabulary to discuss memory in Beckett’s work, as well as an interconnective rhizomatic model by which one can see how Beckett’s fiction (like Joyce’s *Wake*) demonstrates a number of cognitive and memory issues simultaneously. The complexity of Beckett’s novels makes it difficult to discuss cognition and memory in each one individually without creating lists of examples where character X displays symptoms Z. Many of these cognitive issues reappear in slightly different and evolved forms throughout Beckett’s work, and to understand them fully each development in memory must be studied as an ongoing process throughout his texts. Unfortunately, such a hyperlinked and overlapping format is not conducive to a monograph. One of Beckett’s own nonfiction works provides a compromise, though. Beckett’s model in “Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce” was something of a purloined letter—a message hidden in plain sight. Instead of forming a defense, as Beckett does with Joyce’s tradition in “Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce,” I discuss both the background and tradition that Beckett is writing in and to then explain how he begins writing beyond of that tradition. We should create a counter-part discussion of Proust—Bergson—Joyce—Beckett. To that end, this project begins with discussions of both Bergson and Joyce to foreground Beckett’s work.  

This study is composed of seven discussions in three larger sections. One of the most famous quotes on Joyce and Beckett comes from Mel Gussow’s *New York Times* interview, “Beckett at 75—An Appraisal,” where Beckett said that, “[Joyce] was a synthesizer, trying to bring in as much as he could. I am an analyzer, trying to leave out as much as I can” (19 April 1981). To understand Beckett’s work on the mind and memory fully, we need to understand his context, specifically (at least) the developments of memory in both Henri Bergson and James
Joyce. Therefore, each section highlights the headway in cognitive science and fiction that makes the subsequent sections possible, from Bergson early work on memory and duration, to Joyce’s reconceptualization of memory as a creative and then transmutive process, to Beckett’s demonstration of the irrecoverability of memory.

Chapter one, “Cognitive Science Fiction: from Proust to Pinker,” discusses development of cognitive science and its disavowal of its foundation in Bergson’s late nineteenth & early twentieth century work in *Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory, The Creative Mind,* and *Creative Evolution.* By examining Bergsonism (mediated through Deleuze) as a point of departure for current trends in cognitive science, we can see how these new cognitive studies provide innovative models to examine Beckett’s work. As Peter Fifield explains in his study of Beckett’s narration and Cotard’s syndrome,

Neuropsychology, however, with its substantial models and extensive clinical evidence, re-locates the Beckettian post-obit text from its more abstract interpretations into the realm of substantial empirical inquiry. As such, the use of a concrete medical model, including data from actual case-studies, redresses a certain blindness often exhibited in critical work on some of Beckett’s most radical texts. (170)

The first three chapters are broken into smaller discussions, each of which is intended to lay the groundwork for the following section—from the existing methods of discussing memory in fiction to the new models and methods this study creates. The opening section, “Memory as Schrödinger’s Cat,” discusses the current understanding of memory in the cognitive science community, and how the models of reconstructive memory can enhance some of the more complex and inventive approaches to memory that Beckett consistently develops following the innovations in perception and memory that Joyce initiates in *Finnegans Wake,* as well as, how Bergson’s major theories can extend the boundaries of those existing studies. Section three of chapter one, “Memory’s Zero Point, A New Badiouian Bergsonism,” describes new models of memory and memory-events created by synthesizing Bergson’s memory cones with Badiou’s event and consequence model. The following section, “Dark Matters and Astronomemory,”
discusses the metaphors that are later used to explain the memory-event in both Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* and Beckett’s works in the following chapters.

The second chapter, “The Stuff of Thought and How the Mind Works,” then develops a comparative analysis of those current trends and practices in cognitive science, specifically those related to perception, that are strikingly similar to those that Bergson pioneered in the late nineteenth century. The chapter’s second section, “Beckett & Bergson, Memory & Metempsychosis,” then analyzes Bergson’s concepts of duration and multiplicity as they act as integral components of memory in his three major works concerning perception and memory: *Time and Free Will*, *The Creative Mind*, and *Matter and Memory*. The following section, “Modernizing Bergson,” discusses Bergson after Deleuze, and the way in which Deleuze’s understanding of duration and the machinic process further informs the actualization (i.e., verbalization or materialization) of memory-events in Beckett and Joyce.

The third chapter, “Joyce’s Memory Makers,” deals with Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* as an attempt to remember and the failure inherent in that process. However, since the design of *Finnegans Wake* is a model of actual cognition (circuitous and simultaneous rather than sequential), the attempts to remember always imply the process of forgetting. The event of memory in Joyce functions in two ways, first as an inaccessible initial memory but also as a transmutive shift into a new form of memory. This chapter works backwards from the resulting memories to find the triggering memory-event. Instead of approaching this initial cultural memory via an individual’s memory, Joyce uses much larger cultural markers, from creation narratives to divisions in language families, to highlight these failures. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce continually explores the impossibility of locating the initial event, or recalling the memory of that event. The genesis of memory is always already slipping away from the Wakian avatars—the zero point is mired in forgetting. The forgetting, for Joyce, enables the possibility of remembering. Something must fall into place to fill the initial gap in memory, and the forgetting allows for the moment in which memories are changed or created to fill the identifiable void.

By examining these acts of transmutation in light of Bergson’s theories of memory and perception, we can see how memory undergoes that change (largely from thought to material as a type of transubstantiation) as the *Wakian* characters find it impossible to access any kind of legitimate original memory. The mutability of character in *Finnegans Wake*, which Kenner
discusses in *Joyce’s Voices*, stems from the proximity of voices to one another. These shifts that we see take place in *Finnegans Wake*, moreover, might anticipate the simultaneous voices we find in *Texts for Nothing*, or even the development of voice that we see in *Malone Dies* and the *Unnamable*. Joyce hints at the genesis of these changes in Stephan Dedalus’s proclamation at the end of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that he will go forth and “forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (213). While the traditional reading of his statement focuses on the nationalistic element, the underlying importance of Stephan’s claim is the way in which he will create this consciousness. Always precise with language, Joyce fully intended the pun on forgery. *Portrait, Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake* are all forgeries fraught with forgetting and misremembering. What Joyce declares in *Portrait*, begins in *Ulysses*, and comes full circle in *Finnegans Wake* is a series of forged memories. Whether they are fabricated, imagined, or simply misremembered, these forged memories are called up voluntarily. As both Proust and Bergson explain, however, voluntary memories are always flawed or partial. We find ideas very similar to Bergson’s theories of both duration and voluntary memory in John Eccles’ continuity of memories, and Gary Marcus’ “kluge” of memory, both of which show how Joyce might structure and fabricate memory. Specifically in Eccles’s discussion of consciousness as a process of linking memories (those memories need not be temporally close as they can be understood differently at different times—even across a lifetime), we can see a way in which the play of memory in *Finnegans Wake* works to undermine anything like an “authentic” memory. As part of this description of a cognitive self, Eccles claims that some continuity exists among memories and that continuity helps join the gaps of unconsciousness. The actual self, as a conscious cognitive entity, exists in spite any of the gaps that we experience, such as in, say, sleep. The memories that we have of what must be gaps are by nature fabricated or imagined, even if they seem natural since we draw them based on our conscious selves.

Like Joyce’s creative arc, Beckett’s work develops in a similar way: first by dealing with perception, then with adaptation (or transmutation in Joyce) within a closed system, and finally recognition of the impossibility of escaping perception’s interaction with memory-images. Chapter four, “Zones of Indetermination: Beckett’s Consciousness, Cognition, and the Event of Memory,” develops a reading of the set-piece of the Murphy’s mind which is informed by both Bergson’s own development of cognitive zones (based on his reading of Leibniz’s monadic
model) and Joyce’s development of the monad into a dyad in *Finnegans Wake*. The image of the monad becomes important in both *Finnegans Wake* and *Murphy*—it functions much like Bergsonian duration. More precisely, the seamless movement from monad to dyad functions similarly to, what we will discuss as, a qualitative multiplicity. Duration, for Bergson is never wholly a unity nor wholly a multiplicity. Duration is closer to variations in a state without fundamental change to that state. In *The Creative Mind*, Bergson uses the movement of an elastic band as an example of how we might conceive of duration (*CM* 164). The band can be contracted to an infinitesimal point or stretched to great length without fundamentally changing the band itself. The movement, or extension, of the band becomes all important. The band marks an extension through space into new areas, but is still also interconnected to its point of origin. For Beckett and Joyce, the extension of the monad is modified: it is both unified (in the monad) and multiple (in the dyad). This allows Murphy to exist representationally and actually, and Joyce’s Wakian avatars to extend backwards to search for their shared point of origin. While this seems counter to Bergson’s claim, in the introduction to *Creative Evolution* he explains that even things in the same state are varied and constantly in transition. *Murphy* shows both the difficulties of perception and the transmutive process that memories undergo as they decompose and recompose when memory-images and representation interact. The zones of Murphy’s mind form the starting point for characters in Beckett’s post-*Murphy* fiction, such as *Watt*, *Texts for Nothing*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*. These characters contain characteristics of all three zones, but privilege certain zones as they move further into a type of genuinely closed world. By looking at narratives within a closed system, we can see how Beckett might be achieving the goal that he described to Alex Kaun as the “language of the unword.”

In an interview published in 2006, Bernard Baars commented on the split between the science and humanities communities that we are unfortunately part of. He goes on to say that his earnest desire is to close that gap between the arts & sciences, and to see the mistake that the sciences have made by ignoring the contributions that the humanities have in the study of consciousness disappear. For Baars the re-integration of these fields of inquiry into cognitive functioning has to happen in the next decade or not at all. That integration, to a small extent, already exists. The types of dyslexic synesthesia studies that Bergson, in *Matter and Memory* (in 1896) and Ramachandran, in *A Brief Tour of Consciousness* (in 2006), cite shed a new light on
characters like Watt. The concluding chapter, “Effing the Ineffable: the Science of Beckett’s Memory,” discusses the ways in which we can see these two fields coming together in memory narratives such as Watt, and where they might converge in Beckett’s later fiction.
CHAPTER I

COGNITIVE SCIENCE FICTION: FROM PROUST TO PINKER

…the only world that has reality and significance, the world of our own latent consciousness.
—Samuel Beckett, Proust

…and one of the truly unique characteristics of human memory: its knowledge of its own knowledge.
—Janet Metcalfe, Metamemory: Theory and Data

MEMORY AS SCHRODINGER’S CAT

“Remembering,” says neurologist L. Weiskrantz in *The Story of Memory, and Memory of the Story* (2000), “is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form” (647). Memory is thus not a thing that we call upon. Memory is an event that we experience. Each time we speak, we do not access a memory, but create a new memory—we compose a new memory-event. Our memory is a constant process of decomposition and recomposition, and this process, in many ways, is who we are. Our everyday communication is governed by a complex cognitive process so innate in our neurological composition that we rarely pause to consider it. The interaction between memory and the body, specifically the failures and slippages of memory in 20th century Irish literature, is central to the works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Beckett re-introduced René Descartes’ split between the mind and body, not to affirm that schism, but to explore its implications. Much of Beckettian criticism has only examined the dualist split between the body and the disembodied mind or voice. Following Joyce, Beckett explores less the split than the moment of interaction between the cognitive mind and the corporeal body as memories become actions—or
fail to become actions. In *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time* or *Remembrance of Things Past*), Marcel seems always to recalls memories successfully, and if the memories are incomplete he dismisses the absent segments or details as insignificant. The validity of Marcel’s remembrances is never in question. The innovation in Proust is Marcel’s success in memory recall. Conversely, Joyce and Beckett revel in the failure of memory. In Beckett, memories are in a constant process of decomposition and recomposition. They are always in flux. Beckett is already discussing the dual nature of voluntary memory in his monograph *Proust* (1931). He begins, “the memory that is not memory, but the application of a concordance to the Old Testament of the individual, [Proust] calls ‘voluntary memory,’” and elaborates, “the material that [voluntary memory] furnishes contains nothing of the past, merely a blurred and uniform projection once removed of our anxiety and opportunism—that is to say, nothing” (32-33). To emphasis the dual role of voluntary memory, Beckett creates a scientific metaphor: “Memory [is] a clinical laboratory stock with poison and remedy, stimulant and sedative” (35).

Joyce focuses on how memories resemble each other, but are, simultaneously, different. His characters are always aware that memories are misremembered. In “Dante, Joyce, Beckett, and the Use of Memory in the Process of Literary Creation” (1999), Paul Gleason calls them distortions. He says, “the importance of memory in Joyce’s work, however, extends far beyond his own mnemonic powers and his obsession with reworking and renaming his own past, for his writings, more than those of most writers of prose, depend on elaborate repetitions, reworkings, and distortions of their own materials.” (2) For authors like Joyce and Beckett, the failure, slippage or active distortion of memory (and its linguistic manifestation) teaches us how we think and demonstrates what neurophilosopher David Linden discusses in *The Accidental Mind* (2007). He describes the result of memory-events as “specific change[s] in behavior.” More and more studies examine memories as events rather than as material things, whether these authors fully realize it or not. Although the taxonomy is different, Linden is discussing something very similar to what both Beckett and Bergson called habit memory.

All of these memory tasks that are retained in amnesiacs (priming, skill and habit learning, classical conditioning, as well as some others I didn’t discuss) fall into a category called
nondeclarative, or implicit, memory: they are forms of memory that do not involve conscious retrieval. These memories are not recalled, but rather are manifest as a specific change in behavior. [...] So, is memory storage localized or not? The answer is not so simple. It’s also a bit different for nondeclarative versus declarative memory. Nondeclarative memory is not consciously recollected. Rather, it is evoked by a specific stimulus or set of stimuli and is manifested as a change in behavior. As a result, nondeclarative memories can often be localized, not just to a brain region, but to a certain subregion or even class of neuron. Declarative memory is a different story. Such memories are consciously recollected. They are useful in large part because we can access them using stimuli that are very different from the ones that created them initially. (112-114)

Here, as Linden discusses types of memory, we see both a clear statement of memory as a type of action (or behavioral change, or event), and a move away from memory simply as a thing to be read. His “conscious retrieval” is strikingly similar to Proust’s “voluntary memories.” These voluntary memories, however, are called into question by both Proust and Beckett.

Although the sciences and the humanities have taken very divergent paths in the 20th century, contemporary 21st century neurophilosophy now deals with these theories scientifically where authors in the early 20th century intuited them in something like fictive case-studies. The interdisciplinary nature of cognitive science now allows scientists to begin looking to the humanities to illustrate their systems of consciousness. Contemporary scientists and philosophers are using the same tropes as Joyce and Beckett used to examine when and how memory occurs. With Joyce and Beckett, the interaction of memory and the body is the focus, not the memory itself or the implication of memory. The physicality, embodiment, or action of the memory-event can best be demonstrated in the slippage or failure of memory and perception. Whether the transaction is between the mind and specific body parts, like the eye or mouth, or the entire body
(or lack thereof), both Beckett and Joyce, like Kandel and Ramachandran, examine the process of that interaction.

The epilogue of Linden’s *The Accidental Mind*, (like many of the contemporary neuroscience bestsellers) returns to the science of memory, but what separates Linden’s approach from so many others is his focus on neurochemical transmissions rather than the result of those transfers.

What’s missing is that middle thing. How is it that changing the strength of some synapses in the hippocampal circuit actually gives rise to memories for facts and events, as recalled during behavior? We have a molecular explanation for how synapses get weaker and stronger. At a behavioral level, we can show that interfering with this molecular process (and perhaps some other things as well) disrupts memory. But our understanding of the intervening steps is almost nonexistent: that middle thing is a big, nasty, embarrassing gap for brain scientists. Unfortunately, the middle-thing problem is not confined just to learning and memory. Similar gaps between molecules and behavior exist for our understanding of many other complex and perceptual phenomena. (249)

An approach like Linden’s allows us to understand that memory for Beckett and Joyce is Schrödinger’s cat. Where he sees this middle part as a problem, the literary culture can see it as the moment that demonstrates the failures of memory (and thus the focus on forgetting) in modern authors. This study focuses on that middle part, or the instance of interaction between mind and body (or in Joyce’s case bodies), or remembering and forgetting. Joyce codifies this as a monadic moment where opposites meet, and he focuses on the instance of meeting. The goal is always the interaction between memory and the body—the middle part or the slippage itself. To understand this slippage or interaction fully we should, first, briefly, look at the current state of cognitive science to appreciate how many new ideas (especially cognitive physiology focused on phantom limbs) are found in foundational cognitive studies that have fallen out of favor,
specifically, the work of Henri Bergson. His influence on writers like Proust, Joyce and Beckett created a major shift in the way in which memory is demonstrated on the page and stage.

Rather than simply read Joyce and Beckett in terms of “consciousness studies,” we should examine how these authors might be read in light of cognitive sciences, both those contemporary to their own work and those currently emerging. I hesitate to use Delueze’s term, “Bergsonism” as a theoretical model since Neurophilosophy may suit this study better, as it looks to developments in cognitive science rather than to psychoanalysis to explain some of the overlooked instances of memory and forgetting in the drama and fiction of Beckett and Joyce. The trend in Beckettian memory studies still favors psychology. Most psychological studies tend to reflect the same mentality that Gramsci develops in his *Prison Notebooks* (1930) where he says, “the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena of the most varied kind come to pass” (33). Even thorough and thoughtful psychological treatises on Beckett and Joyce, like Sabine Kozdon’s 2005 study, *Memory in Samuel Beckett’s Plays*, fail to get past the morbidly stagnant image that Gramsci creates: old and infirm memories are in a steady state of decline, and those old memories occupy the space that new memories should occupy. The extent that most studies discuss the interaction between body and mind, they regard it as dementia.

Kozdon’s monograph is the first full-length study on memory in Beckett’s plays. As she points out, while the significance of memory has been apparent since the late 1950s, only a few articles and marginal comments deal with memory in depth. Kozdon’s work is a significant starting point, and her limitations are largely self-imposed. She approaches Beckett’s plays chronologically, discussing the failure of memory in *Eleutheria, Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, moving on to a discussion of deliberate recollections of the past in *Happy Days* and *Krapp’s Last Tape*, and concludes with an analysis of three of Beckett’s late “memory plays,” *Play, Not I* and *That Time*. Her approach to Beckettian memory, essentially, focuses on the characters’ internal tension between past and present (one time threatening to influence the other), and that tension allows the audience to see each character’s search for truth. As the focus of her project is Beckett’s drama, it is not surprising to see that she discusses Beckett’s prose in one small section. Verna Brown’s dissertation, “Yesterday’s Deformities” (2005), is also a thorough discussion of memory in Beckett’s plays. Brown’s project focuses primarily on the
decaying and traumatizing memories of, what she calls, time-damaged characters. Like Kozdon’s monograph, Brown’s study begins with Beckett’s *Proust*, but it ignores Proust’s contemporaries working on memory, like Bergson or Wundt (both of whom would have certainly influenced Beckett’s work as much as Proust’s) in favor of mining *Proust* for evidence of obsession, neurosis or psychological trauma. While Kozdon limits her treatment of Joyce to counting him along with Proust as an influence on Beckett (she does note that Joyce distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary memory in regards to epiphanies [21]), Brown doesn’t mention Joyce at all. The neurological reading proposed by this study may be outside of the purview of Kozdon’s and Brown’s books, as both privilege the psychological implications of amnesia or dementia on characters. These two projects build on earlier psychoanalytic readings of Beckett’s works, such Abbott’s “Beckett’s Lawlessness,” Rabinowitz’s “Beckett and Psychology,” or Anzieu’s “Beckett and the Psychoanalyst” (just to name a few from a single journal), to form a psychoanalysis of memory rather than a substantive neuro-physiological study of memory. Kozdon’s book does discuss some neurological work on memory, but since, she notes, the definitive scientific information is limited, her focus remains on the psychological implications of cognition. Her physiological discussion pertains to more global and permanent disorders like amnesia than to any specific neuro-biological disorders. Of course, there is a neuro-biological implication within studies of amnesia, but the extent that these two projects incorporate neurology does not develop the fundamental connection between identity formation, sensory perception, memory retrieval or memory encoding, and the hippocampus, as Postle discusses in his 2008 “The Hippocampus, Memory, and Consciousness” (326-329). This study should function as a counterpart to these projects—a companion piece to the existing psycho-social philosophical readings of memory by discussing the neurophilosophical aspects of memory in Beckett’s work (in conjunction with and reacting against those of Joyce).

The limitation that psychoanalytic structures imposes on studies, like Kozdon’s or Brown’s, is that the focus ultimately becomes about either identification or simply recovery. The genius of Beckett’s work with memory—best understood as a development in the Joycean memory tradition—is the simultaneity of decomposition and recomposition as process. The inaccessible memory-event occurred, and, because of its unknowability, it does not simply degrade towards a point of failure (with a pejorative connotation), but continues along a
spectrum of decomposition and recomposition that can only be accessed through the surface effects that process creates in the surrounding or connected memory processes. We might see this most clearly in Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing* and Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, but also in the physical transference and degradation of memories between characters in much of Beckett’s work, from *Murphy* to *Waiting for Godot* to *Stirrings Still*, and Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

A small number of neuro-physio disorders, like Cotard’s syndrome or “Walking Corpse” Syndrome, might be applied, in retrospect, to some of Beckett’s characters. The Cotard’s afflicted patient genuinely believes that he or she is dead, does not exist, or has had all his blood or organs removed—like the Deleuzian *Body Without Organs*, or the development of Mahood and Worm of *The Unnamable*. Likewise, we might read *Molloy* as a demonstration of Capgras’s Syndrome (closely related to Cotard’s). Peter Fifield discusses this disorder specifically in regards to “the Calmative” and *Footfalls* in “Beckett, Cotard’s Syndrome and the Narrative Patient” (2009). This disorder causes the sufferer honestly to believe someone (at times his or her self) has been replaced with an imposter or a doppelganger. This neuropathy (sometimes called Prosopagnosia) effects the fusiform gyrus (the area of the brain that recognizes faces) preventing memory recognition. In their 1982 article, “Prosopagnosia: Anatomic basis and behavioral mechanisms.” Antonio and Hanna Damásio explain that Prosopagnosia is not always specific to human faces: “the phenomenon appears in relation to any visually ‘ambiguous’ stimulus whose recognition depends on contextual memory evocation” (331). Since both Cotard’s and Capgras’s syndromes sometimes prevent the ability to recognize faces, patients fail to recognize themselves and distance themselves emotionally from their own reflections, believing they don’t exist or have died, much like the dissociation that we see with characters like O in *Film*, the Speaker of *A Piece of Monologue* who destroys all of the photos in his room, or Molloy’s Moran as he fails to recognize himself as Molloy.

A disorder that highlights memory’s role in neuro-physio disorders is Body Identity Integrity Disorder, in which one has a compulsion towards becoming an amputee, or is completely dissociated from his or her physical self. While some BIID patients do amputate healthy limbs, the compulsion to separate and the inability to identify with the physical body distinguishes this disorder from traditional body dysmorphic neurosis. This neuropathy has been (tentatively) linked to Somatoparaphrenia (damage to the parietal lobe after a stroke), in which
parts of the body seem dead or inaccessible. Without citing this disorder specifically, Beckett actor Alvin Epstein posits an analysis where the speaker of *Not I* had a similar disorder. During the The Philoctetes Center’s November 2008 roundtable discussion, “I’ll Go On: An Afternoon of Samuel Beckett,” Epstein suggests that while recovering consciousness from an event that precedes the action of the play, the speaker is unable to recognize or accept her body as her own because of a neuro-biological episode (that he calls a stroke). During the November 2008 roundtable discussion with Epstein, Tom Bishop, Lois Oppenheim, John Turturro, and Edward Albee, Oppenheim, unfortunately, dismisses Epstein’s idea out-of-hand. She demands that he explain why the event that precedes the action of *Not I* could be an “organic deficit” since, according to Oppenheim, “[the play] is about rape,” as an issue of psychological trauma. Epstein points to lines from the text as he tries to explain that the play might be better understood as a moment where the speaker is *trying* to recover from an internal organic trauma, and is still unable to bridge the gap between her consciousness and a recognizable body. Oppenheim offers no substantiation for her psychoanalytic reading of the play. Her attitude is that the burden of proof lies on anyone suggesting something other than a psychological rationale.

Apart from *Not I*, consider the dissolving body of Malone in *Malone Dies*, the phantom body of the Unnamable, or Nagg and Nell cut-off at the knees in *Endgame*, or the bodiless heads of *Play* or *That Time*, or even those characters who retain their crippled limbs like Hamm, the A and B of *Rough for Theatre I*. One reading is that these characters are facing some psychological disorder that prevents their identifying with their bodies. To leave the discussion at that point ignores the new science that might help further illuminate the real underlying issues that Beckett’s work anticipates.

Beckett was certainly not the first after Proust to explore the role of memory in innovative and complex ways. Richard Ellmann tells us in *The Consciousness of Joyce* that memory and imagination are inseparable, and that during the time Joyce was working on *Finnegans Wake* (while Beckett was working with Joyce), he “accepted Vico’s idea that the phantasmal faculty was essentially a function of memory” (3). We can see this, even before *Finnegans Wake*, in *Ulysses*. As Stephen sets out across the strand, his imagination and memory mingle as they are triggered by both senses and memories of senses to show us an early version of creative recollection: “the ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought
through my eyes” (31). The phantasmal in Beckett’s work takes other forms, perhaps most notably the disembodied voices of *Eh Joe* or *That Time*, but Beckett’s work continually revisits the theme of the ineluctable modalities of sensory perception, and their collection and storage (e.g. Krapp’s reels of tapes in *Krapp’s Last Tape*, Morvan and Bertram’s file folders in *Rough for Theatre II*, Malone’s notebook in *Malone Dies*, etc…).

In his 1988 book on Proust and Beckett, Nicolas Zurbrugg says Beckett’s break between the consciousness of yesterday and of today, “Proust’s characters constantly discover that the ‘aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday’s ego, not to-day’s’” (105). It would seem in light of Bergson that this notion no longer applies to Beckett the same way it might to Proust. That is, when we consider the overlooked implications of Beckett’s *Proust* (from multiplicity and becoming to authenticity and the existence of authentic memory), and their similarity to much of Bergson’s work, the idea of yesterday’s ego becomes yesterday’s news. Memory, and its present manifestation as it constantly appears in contemporary texts, has come to play an increasingly large role in our current study of last century’s writing. Memory, ironically, seems to be the future of our field.

The extent of the Bergson’s influence is becoming more evident in the current trend of cognitive studies in literary criticism, especially as we see the development of the binary (recollective and inventive) memory discourse. In Eric Berlatsky’s 2003 article on memory’s necessity in resisting power, “Memory as Forgetting,” he discusses authenticity in memory; he says: “Kundera and Spiegelman show in their hybridized texts of fact and fiction, of memory and creation, that memory cannot be seen as a security blanket against the master narrative of history, because memory itself dynamically creates history and is an implement of power or ideology” (137). In *Testaments Betrayed* (1993), Kundera acknowledges the difficulty of supporting the memory/forgetting binary: “We do not know [reality] as it is in the present, in the moment when it’s happening, when it is. The present moment is unlike the memory of it. Remembering is not the negative of forgetting. Remembering is a form of forgetting” (128).

While a number of critics and scholars, in extended studies, have tied Bergson to Modern authors in the past, none has him along-side Beckett. Leon Howard’s *Literature and the American Tradition* (1960) examines the past in Willa Cather’s novels, but only alludes to connects with the past in Bergson’s, Eliot’s, or Proust’s works. Likewise, Thomas Wolfe,
according to Karin Pfister in *Time and Reality of Thomas Wolfe* (1954), bases his concept of time on the theories of both Proust and Bergson. Samuel French Morse’s *ELH* article, “Wallace Stevens, Bergson, Pater” (March 1964), details the influence of Bergson’s theory of comedy on Stevens’ poems between 1915 and 1921. Green Wyrick’s very brief piece in *Modern Fiction Studies*, “Hemingway and Bergson: The Elan Vital” (1955), tenuously connects the former’s masculinity with the latter’s life force. Whereas, in the September 1954 issue of *PMLA*, Fredric Carpenter’s “Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension” thoroughly explicates Bergson’s “two types of time”—psychological and physical duration from Bergson’s response to Einstein in *Duration and Simultaneity*—(mediated through Gertrude Stein) as the basis for Hemingway’s approach to “time-sequencing and immediacy” (711).

A much more developed study appears in *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (1949), where Kristian Smidt uses Bergson’s *duration* (which he refers to simply as *time*) with proto-analytic philosopher F.H. Bradley’s Idealist concept of *reality* to explain Eliot’s approaches to both Oriental and Christian myth in his poetic imagination. Both Smidt and Paul Douglass, in *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* (1986), cite Eliot’s attendance of Bergson’s lectures at the Collège de France in 1910 and 1911 as a fundamental influence on Eliot’s own metaphysics. In his letter to Pound (on February 2nd, 1915), Eliot seems much more skeptical of Bergson as he feared that Pound would philosophically “hitch [Vorticism] up to Bergson or James” (*Letters* 87). However, Douglass asserts that despite Eliot’s “flirtation with [Bergsonian] heresy” and dismissal of Bergson’s metaphysics, Bergson’s intuition is influential in Eliot’s poetry and prose (58).

The discussion of the relationship between Beckett’s works and Bergson’s theories has yet to develop fully though. In his 2006 presentation at the *Beckett at 100: New Perspectives* conference, Jean-Michel Rabaté pointed out that Shane Weller’s *A Taste for the Negative* has taken a step into that burgeoning discourse. Weller, in his 2005 study, discusses Beckett’s theoretical work with Joyce on Giordano Bruno and Giambattista Vico and his independent work on Proust, specifically noting the impact that Proust’s “brief eternity” had on the young scholar (41). In order to situate the influence of Proust within a philosophical tradition, Weller points to the maxims of Democritus (τίποτα δεν είναι πραγματικότερο από τίποτα—”Nothing is more real than Nothing”) and Arnold Geulincx (*ubi Nihil vales, ibi nihil velis”—”want nothing where you
are worth nothing”), which we find in *Malone Dies* (192) and *Murphy* (178) respectively.

Beckett’s work, for Weller, is not simply “the suffering of being,” but rather the suffering of “ever-less-than-being” (4).

While Weller finds a more direct connection between Bergson and Proust than Bergson and Beckett, his reading does highlight the core connection between all three of these writers: the role of habit in memory formation. He says, “Beckett’s formulation of an excavatory art differs from that of both Bergson and Proust, however, in its characterization of that which would lie beneath the surface constructed by reason and habit” (46). The difference between the three authors is not merely semantic: what Bergson calls a ‘new shape’ (or “new form” [CE 332]) and Proust calls ‘something’ (*quelque chose*), Beckett calls *nothing* or “the core of the eddy” (Weller 46). Where Proust and Bergson imagine this habit memory as type of creative process, Beckett imagines it as both creation or action and simultaneous dissolution. In *Proust*, Beckett suggests that moment where consciousness moves away from habitual memory is the closest approximation of the new form that Bergson describes. Beckett tells us of moments, or events, that pull the present out of habitual action:

> Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals; the world being a projection of the individual’s consciousness […] habit then is the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless objects. The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations […] represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being. (*P* 19)

According to Weller, Beckett attempts to move beyond Bergson and Proust in three primary areas: memory, language or communication, and art. The first difference is the most fundamental, as it forms the basis of the other two. Weller says, “Beckett reinscribes the possibility of a complete identification through involuntary memory within a more general
economy of disintegration” (46). By disintegration, Weller means more than simple dissolution of matter. Disintegration is becoming, as he says, “or more precisely an un-becoming or becoming nothing [...] disintegration ruins the possibility of any community” (52). This is counter to Deleuze’s use of disintegration, in *Spinoza* or in *the Logic of Sense*, as a type of Bergsonian becoming where disintegration as pure becoming implies an ongoing multiplicity and connectivity rather than isolation. In *the Logic of Sense*, Deleuze’s Bergson-based disintegration, or what he calls “regress,” is always becoming more as it is becoming less. He defines this type of becoming as the “paradox of regress, or of indefinite proliferation” (35). Weller cites both the internal wasting of characters, such as those who shrink from themselves like Belacqua (81), whereas Deleuze’s regress is evident in characters who continue to proliferate, like Malone, even as they diminish, physically, mentally, or socially. Weller’s reading shows the specific differences between Beckett and Proust. He explains that involuntary memory, for Proust, is a solution. This type of memory is both a restorative and epiphanic experience where, “disintegration is overcome, the rift between subject and object [is] healed,” and saves identification beyond “the most radical of discontinuities; namely, death itself” (37-38). Proustian involuntary memory, according to Weller, is something like a mystical experience (86)—the closest that Beckett comes to this kind of mystical experience, he says, would be the “dark gulf” of Belacqua’s “third being” (*DFMW* 121) or Murphy’s physical and spiritual dissolution (*M* 275).

Weller explains that Beckett’s critique of Proust’s artistic procedure is “an unremitting labour of negation, at first a Bergsonian excavation beyond the deluding constructions of reason and habit, later a dissolution of language itself, undertaken in order to bring the essential to appearance” (67). Weller finds greater tension between Beckett and Bergson. He posits that some of Beckett’s texts and characters are almost anti-Bergsonian; Belacqua, in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, theorizes a reality, which Weller calls “radically incoherent,” and an art that “would capture this incoherence simply by reproducing it” (50). In *Matter and Memory*, however, Bergson provides a slightly different development in memory theory with two “theoretically independent” forms of memory: one, a recorder of “memory-images,” whichcatalogues every detail of life as it occurs, and it is through this type of memory that we recognize the perception of that which we have already experienced; the other, is an
accumulation of those details, what he calls a prolonged perception of “nascent actions” that forms a “series of mechanisms […] with reactions to external stimuli.” This type of memory does not represent the past, but reenacts or replicates the past built into our mechanized reactions (MM 81-82). Reproduction in Beckett’s works moves beyond simple habitual replication or mimicry. Reproduction is more akin to repetition. Belacqua certainly is not the parrot that we find in Malone Dies: a creature capable only of reproducing a logical phrase (“nihil in intellectu”) without being able to finish the thought that accompanies it: “These first three words the bird managed well enough, but the celebrated restriction was too much for it, all you heard was a series of squawks” (MD 218).

Memory studies in Beckett’s work clearly cover a broad range of specialized areas, including spatial locations of characters and voices, such as we see in Jonathan Boutler’s notion that Beckett’s “narrator inhabits a twilight world that may exist only as a memory beyond the grave” (334) to Justin Beplate’s study of the “complex relations between memory, identity, and language” (154). Beplate explains the importance of memory and its role in identity creation in Malone Dies: “Malone, a narrator of short memory, affirms his uncertain existence through his written records—an enterprise inextricably bound up with creating an abiding memory for himself and his ‘figments’” (155). We can see the continuation of this model, with the same figments, in Ill Seen, Ill Said: “Not possible any longer except as figment. Not endurable. Nothing for it but to close the eye for good and see her. Her and the rest. Close it for and all and see her to death. Unremittant.” (65).

Jeanne-Sarah de Larquier’s 2004 article, “Beckett’s Molloy: Inscribing Molloy in a Metalanguage Story,” looks expressly at the failure of language and memory in Molloy, but her assessment could as easily be adapted to address Watt or Malone Dies: “In addition to creating problems of miscommunication, language plays tricks on memory, and vice versa. A certain combination of words or length of phrase, interfering with temporary break-ups in Molloy’s memory, contribute to his periodically faulty memory” (45). Watt shares many similarities with the specific complications of memory and language she discusses in Molloy, for instance, the vague and subtly misused language we see in Moran and his son as they review his vocabulary in the botanical garden, or as he sends the boy off to buy a bicycle. He cannot draw together the objects and their names, although in Watt, she claims, the limitation is imposed by multiple
characters: “The ultimate limitation brought to language by a faulty memory is that of the impossibility of naming when one fails to remember” (46). This failure might (or might not) be working toward the same end that Badiou discusses in On Beckett (2004), as he says, “the function of words is that of bringing about the failure of things, because things themselves are failures of being. The ground of everything is but void and dim” (114). Badiou could easily take this to the next step, where not only would words bring about the failure of things, and the failure of things the failure of being, but also the failure of memory results from the failure of being.

However, many of these studies follow the genetic thread back to Proust and Beckett’s work on him. Ackerley and Gontarski, in the Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett (2004), provide a comprehensive rundown of memory in Beckett’s corpus, as they treat it in terms of a Proustian critique of the basic Cartesian position. As they explain it, being is a sequence of sensory impressions stored unreliably in mind; and thus identity would operate where rational foundations have been undermined by uncertainties. However, “elements of unreliability, of forgetting, offer openings for creative invention. Memory is finally a joust between involuntary and creative recollection” (361).

In his 2003 monograph on Beckett’s connection to Proust, James Reid sets out to discuss the interplay between “allegory and irony” within Beckett and Proust. He contends that most studies in this vein simply construct the relationship between Proust and Beckett as a “clear and distinct historical change from a Proustian narration based on the overcoming of forgetting and the recovering of lost memories of self to a Beckettian narration based on the failure of memory and the absence of self” (2). Reid’s reading is a gross simplification of Beckettian memory. As we saw in Bergson’s thought experiment, the self (or, at least, some residual self) is inescapable. Moreover, memory in Beckett’s works is not the antithesis of Proustian memory, but its evolution. For Proust, the past and present operate simultaneously. This type of Bergsonian becoming forms the basis of Beckettian memory.

One of the most engaging approaches to the issue of memory, expressly Beckettian memory, which seems subconsciously to have its roots in Bergson, is John Wall’s, “A Study of the Imagination in Samuel Beckett’s Watt” (2002). In it he discusses the potential pitfalls of purely psychoanalytical approaches to the problems of Watt’s lack of memory, which, Wall implies, readers have tended to view as the result of a past traumatic experience. We should keep
in mind that any major physical trauma can, and often does, introduce a psychological trauma as well. A trauma of unknown origin that would underlie the general amnesia and other neurotic symptoms afflicting Watt does seems plausible considering the few “wistful and plaintive memories that do manage to break into” the narrative of *Watt* (Wall 534). Wall suggests that instead of treating this question of memory as either a literary or a psychological problem, we should remember that Beckett was still dealing with Proust’s influence. He explains, “in *In Search of Lost Time*, Marcel Proust is concerned with the discrepancy between the impact of an event, that is, the impressions and affects created by certain experiences, and its subsequent expression as a memory” (535). To show the connection to the character Watt, he explores how Watt proceeds to shed “all traces of empirical memory” to the point where “Watt finds that he is unable to recall events of the immediate past,” and is, “interested in, however, the afterimages of specific memory, in which are revealed the structures underlying memory” (536).

In the same spirit, critics like Anthony Uhlmann have begun exploring the connections to memory influenced by both Bergson and Proust. Uhlmann’s 2004 *SubStance* article, “Image and Intuition in Beckett’s *Film,*” concerns “the relevance of Bergson’s ideas to Beckett, and Beckett’s use of the image as a means of translating philosophical ideas into an artistic language” (94). The influence of Giles Deleuze is clear throughout Uhlmann’s work, especially as he focuses on Bergson, and his ideas of image, matter and memory. In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze boils down Bergson’s thesis to the notion that there can not be a difference in kind, only of degree in the “perception of matter and matter itself” (25). He goes on to explain the difference between matter/perception and memory/recollection. Deleuze’s rationale is that being and past are actually the same; presentness does not exist because being present is always *pure becoming*, but the past does not act. The past is useless, inactive, and impassive, and therefore, “identical with being itself” (55). The present is the action or usefulness, because this recollection or memory of the past is always the unconscious and always virtual. Deleuze’s discussion of the virtual (past) co-existing with the actual (becoming) is similar to what Proust’s Marcel develops in *Time Regained*:

> I began to discover the cause by comparing those varying happy impressions which had the common quality of being felt simultaneously at the actual moment and at a distance in time,
because of which common quality the noise of the spoon upon the plate, the unevenness of the paving-stones, the taste of the madeleine, imposed the past upon the present and made me hesitate as to which time I was existing in. Of a truth, the being within me which sensed this impression, sensed what it had in common in former days and now, sensed its extra-temporal character, a being which only appeared when through the medium of the identity of present and past, it found itself in the only setting in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, that is, outside Time. [...] Nothing but a moment of the past? Much more perhaps; something which being common to the past and the present, is more essential than both. [...] But let a sound, a scent already heard and breathed in the past be heard and breathed anew, simultaneously in the present and in the past, real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, then instantly the permanent and characteristic essence hidden in things is freed and our true being which has for long seemed dead but was not so in other ways awakes and revives, thanks to this celestial nourishment. (262-264)

Beckett, the young scholar, seems to align himself with the same notion that Proust outlines here. Ackerley and Gontarski point out that, in *Proust*, Beckett’s distrust of allegory “hardened into his statement that the Proustian equation is never simple (*Proust*, 11) in the recognition of separate dynamisms related by no system of synchronization ([*P*,]17) and and in the affirmation of the ‘ideal real’ ([*P*,]75)” (*Companion* 10). Beckett’s language in *Proust* is strikingly similar: “thanks to this reduplication, the experience is at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extra-temporal” (*P* 75). That presentness seems much more like what we understand as awareness or consciousness, in which we find becoming. The “past” or “in-itself being” is not *being*, but rather the awareness of being. Beckett writes to Mary Manning
Howe in 1937, “the real consciousness is the chaos, a grey commotion of mind, with no premises or conclusions or problems or solutions or cases or judgments” (*Letters* 546).

Because of both new neurological studies by Ramachandran and Damásio, and those that Bergson posited a century earlier, we can see how Beckett and Joyce can be re-read in a new, perhaps more insightful, light. For these authors, the instance or event of memory that occurs as the body and mind interact is the primary concern, not a focus on ethereal or corporal matters alone. While critics like Kenner intimate a union (man and machine/bicycle as the Cartesian centaur) between the mind and body, the focus here is more specific—by focusing on the event (the interaction between the cognitive and the corporeal), Beckett and Joyce can explore the failure or slippage of memory, which Beckett creates in the blending of body and mind when, in *Murphy*, he refers to “a kind of mental *tic douloureux*” (110), or an debilitating intense chronic cognitive pain.

**Memory’s Zero Point, A New Badiouian Bergsonism**

Like remembering, forgetting is an event as well. While Beckett quietly examines the event as it moves from memory to forgetting, Joyce, on the other hand, does this explicitly as all of the *Wakian* characters are always already in the space of forgetting, and attempting to discover the memory-event that sets all of the consequences in motion. Neurologist Janet Metcalfe, in *Metamemory* (2000), explains forgetting as an active event process within memory:

> Suppose we try to recall a forgotten name. The state of our consciousness is peculiar. There is a gap therein; but no mere gap. It is a gap that is intensely active. A sort of wraith of the name is in it, beckoning us in a given direction, making us at moments tingle with the sense of our closeness, and then letting us sink back without the longed-for term. (197)

To understand the interplay of memory and forgetting in Beckett and Joyce, we might look to Alain Badiou’s concept of “evental sites” and Henri Bergson’s notions of space, time, and
duration as they relate to the specific instances or events of memory glissade or slippage. Beckett’s *Murphy* shows the significance of apperception in that act of perceiving, while *Watt* is something like a manual to understanding the function of forgetting as part of the memory process. *Endgame* becomes a dramatic handbook to forgetting as an art and science. Much of Beckett’s fiction, like *Molloy*, *Texts for Nothing*, or *The Unnamable*, and his drama provide us with characters who have forgotten basic heuristic facts: where they are, how they got there, or who they are. The characters of *Endgame* are not simply creatures without memories; the play shows us the process of these characters’ forgetting. We see memories decompose and recompose until they are no longer recoverable—memories that remain depend on the physical well-being of the characters. As neurologist Damásio discusses in *Descartes’ Error* (1995), the body is the genesis of thought, so the failing body is the genesis of forgetting. The physical states of the characters are these failures of memory. Where Beckett creates these failures by looking at the single instances, Joyce focuses on the whole of the failure. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce works backwards from the resulting memories to find the triggering memory-event. Instead of approaching recovery via an individual’s memory, Joyce uses much larger cultural markers, from creation narratives to divisions in language families, to highlight these failures. The possibility of finding the initial event, or the memory of that event, is always already slipping away from the Wakian avatars—the zero point is mired in forgetting.

By combining Badiou’s event trajectory model with Bergson’s memory cones (figure 1.6), we can visualize the fundamental failure of original memory—the event of forgetting—in *Finnegans Wake*. Badiou’s model exposes the potential for “transformative innovation” in any given situation. These innovations can only initiate an exceptional, though fleeting, break with the status quo, what he calls an “event.” While the process of backtracking to find this initial event is always convoluted, that process, for Badiou, always points to a single moment of origin—where the plane of inaction is broken by sudden action. If we were to imagine Bergson’s memory cone from the plane up (rather than the wider circles down), we can see how the telescoping image of memories demonstrates a point of origin (or more accurately, action) and the subsequent assemblage of consequences.

The zero point, or initial memory, for both models is the event of memory. Even though the *Wake* is a rolling archeological project of uncovering this original event (H.C.E.’s Phoenix
Park indiscretion), the *Wake*—and all of its characters—never achieves this zero point. The failure of this “unveiling” and unraveling of memory [503] is that the process never reaches the point of origin. The concept of the zero point—the original memory—is itself a myth. As neuroscientist Eric Kandel’s book, *In Search of Memory* (2007), describes the (very Bergsonian durative) process of remembering, the memory is always active at what seems like the far-end of the present, rather than the legitimate past.

It is brought back, recalled, fished up, so to speak, from a reservoir in which, with countless other objects, it lay buried and lost from view. But an object of primary memory is not thus brought back; it never was lost; its date was never cut off in consciousness from that of the immediately present moment. In fact it comes to us as belonging to the rearward portion of the present space of time, and not to the genuine past. (84)

The model that the *Wake* develops to visualize the process of backtracking memory to the point of origin is the epochs of gods and men. The metaphor is apt; each mythos acts as an explanation for the origin of its respective culture, and each begins with a singular event.

The process that develops throughout the *Wake* mirrors Clov’s process of forgetting in *Endgame*. The millets, like myths, represent the inescapable problem of origin. Instead of the traditional structure that classical myths use, the *Wakian* versions of these myths evolve in the context of the surrounding inquisition of memory. However, before we can begin this discussion, we must first delineate more fully what we mean by memory and what we mean by memory-event.

**Dark Matters and Astronomemory**

In the 1960s, Murray Gell-Mann appropriated Joyce’s term “quarks,” from the opening lines of Book II chapter IV of *Finnegans Wake*, to describe the new, smallest component parts of matter he discovered. Since memory, like quantum physics, is a concept that defies rational and logical descriptions, it might be best to borrow a metaphor from Gell-Mann’s own world of astro and
particle physics to explain it. The easiest way to discuss the difference between memories and memory-events is to borrow a metaphor from *Murphy* and imagine memories and memory-events as stars and black holes respectively. “Between him and his stars no doubt there was correspondence,” Murphy’s narrator explains, “[t]hey were his stars, he was the prior system” (183).

We know that when we look up into the night sky, we are not seeing stars at that second, but light is an event that originated from stars millions of years ago. When we look at stars, we are, essentially, looking at the past. Stars are light in the past that are independent and isolated, measurable and datable, and fixed or unchanging, although our perspective on them might change as the earth rotates. We understand them in terms of constellations that show some human and arbitrary interconnections, but they are not fundamentally linked. Their linkage is not necessarily arbitrary, however. Rather these constellations demonstrate some insight into the process of meaning creation for the ancient people of the world. The importance here is that stars are fixed and observable.

Black holes, on the other hand, are unobservable (without elaborate multispectrum equipment). We do not know exactly when or how they occurred. We know they have immense weight and density, but we cannot measure or observe them (since they destroy the fabric of the universe as stars, gases, even light is obliterated in the gravitational pull). However, material is always drawn towards it. Cosmologically, black holes are categorized as dark matter, or hypothetical matter that is unobservable (or only observable by radiated energy or gravitational distortion surrounding it). We know that they exist by their interactions with the material surrounding them, and trace the borders of black holes only up to their event horizons. Since we cannot perceive them, we create models that represent what we imagine black holes to look like.

We have generally understood memories in the same way—again as things in the past that are independent and isolated like stars, measurable and datable, and fixed or unchanging although, our perspective on them might change, in this metaphor, as we age. Traditionally, we understand memories, as with stars, in terms of constellations that show some interconnections (again only arbitrarily linked), but distributed in constellations that demonstrate to the viewer some insight into their own process of meaning creation. Again as with stars, the importance
here is that these memories are permanent and observable. They are also limited to the visual interaction of the viewer as subjective experiences.

Memory-events are to black holes as memories are to stars. They are memories that are inaccessible, and are only understandable in context of the interactions of the objects (in this case, connected memories) around or after them. In many ways, memory-events are external memories, or memories of events that we have not individually experienced. For instance, we have no memory of, say, the first thing we perceived. We know that event happened, but we cannot access the memory itself. Instead, we trace our memories back along a continuum to the point that we can no longer remember what that original memory was. Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* playfully demonstrates this with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s conversation about home:

\[
\text{GUIL: [...] What’s the first thing you remember?}
\]

\[
\text{ROS: Oh, let’s see…the first thing that comes into my head you mean?}
\]

\[
\text{GUIL: No—the first thing you remember.}
\]

\[
\text{ROS: Ah. (pause) No, it’s no good. It was a long time ago.}
\]

\[
\text{GUIL: (patient, but edged) You don’t take my meaning. What’s the first thing you remember after all the things you’ve forgotten?} \ (16)
\]

The memory-event might also exist outside of our own experience, as in Jung’s genetic memory—which Joyce might read as cultural memory. As with black holes, memory-events are dark matter, or hypothetical memories that are unobservable (or only observable by radiated memories or distortion of memories surrounding it and interconnected to it). We know that they exist by their interactions with the material surrounding them, and trace the borders of memory-events only up to their event horizons, or first set of contexts that we can observe. The importance here is that because they are unobservable, we must recreate models of what we imagine or what those original occurrences were like. These memory-events, like black holes, are in a constant flux of both destruction and construction. The gravity well is destroying
material around it while simultaneously changing the context of the surrounding constellations. Since these memory-events are always already occurring in the past we must recompose these memories based on the contextually interconnected memories that have accrued in our past.

This concept of the memory-event is not considerably different from the “event-based” memory system that Kesner and Martinez discuss in *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory* (2007). They explain that the event-based memory system “provides temporary representations of incoming data concerning the present, with an emphasis on data and events that are usually personal or egocentric and that occur within specific external and internal contexts” (272). While this system does fit with the basic Proustian model of memory as tied to a personally-significant present symbol, the key difference with the Beckettian memory-events is that their discussions presuppose neat, knowable, legitimate, corollary, past experiences—Kesner and Martinez discuss memories as things rather than events along a spectrum. This type of spectrum of memory is the very same that we find in Bergson’s work published nearly a century earlier than this Kesner and Martinez study.

**New Decades of the Brain**

In *How the Mind Works* (1999), Steven Pinker calls the 1990s “the Decade of the Brain” (24). The last decade of the Twentieth century might well have been the moment of critical mass in neuroscience—a decade of great advances in cognitive neurology, bio-neuroscience or neuro-linguistic pathologies. However, his look back is limited. He gives considerable space to Richard Dawkins, Stephen Jay Gould, and Charles Darwin (and he even mentions René Descartes twice), but Pinker overlooks the history of neuro-research in the earlier parts of this century—including 13 Nobel Prizes (11 shared) and 23 recipients before 1990. Apart from these phsyio and medical awards at least one other scientist-philosopher won the Nobel for work on neurology: Henri Bergson. However, like Freud, who was awarded the Goethe literary prestige prize (1930) despite his work in cognition and neurology, Bergson received the Nobel Prize in not Physiology or Medicine but in Literature (1946). Although Pinker discusses thinkers and writers from Galileo to H.L. Mencken, he never refers to Bergson. This might be most notable because one of
Bergson’s social contemporaries, Proust (who Pinker uses as an adjective for contemplation [139]), focused on similar issues of cognition in memory, time, duration, and space, is so well received by the scientific community.

While issues of cognition date back to Descartes, by overlooking Bergson, contemporary neurophilosophers like Pinker, Dennett and Damásio are, in part, and unknowingly, simply creating new metaphors for old concepts. We see the influence of Bergson everywhere in Pinker, especially in his lexicon. Even Linden uses one of Bergson’s bywords to delineate types of memory: “Memories may be classified not only by type but also by duration” (116). Despite Bergson’s overt exclusion his shadowy presence remains. Most often, we see him glossed over or simply noted rather than discussed. Gordon Bower’s “A Brief History of Memory Research” (2000) merely notes Bergson as stepping-stone to Tulving’s descriptions of memory:

Following observations by philosophers writing about memory (e.g.- Bergson, 1911; Russell,1921), Endel Tulving (1972) introduced to psychologists the distinction between episodic memory and semantic memory, an episodic memory is about a specific event that occurred at a particular time and place, such as your memory of getting a traffic ticket or observing a car accident, in contrast, semantic memory is [according to Tulving] the ‘mental thesaurus, organized knowledge a person possesses about words and other verbal symbols, their meaning and referents, about relations among them, and about rules, formulas, and algorithms’ for manipulating them. (22)

Episodic memory, according to John R. Hodge, refers to memory for “personally experienced and temporally specific events or episodes. Retrieval from episodic memory necessitates so-called mental time travel, and successful remembering is said to be associated with a special kind of ‘autonoetic’ conscious awareness” (442). The description that Hodge develops sounds strikingly like Bergson’s own models, but Bergson’s discussions of episode or duration from *Matter and Memory* (1911) are absent in Hodge’s work.
Hodge is not alone in neglecting Bergson, nor is Bergson the only early neurophilosopher that Hodge overlooks. A contemporary of Bergson, and counterpart influence on Beckett, Wilhelm Wundt was also attempting to analyze mind and body interconnection as both a scientific and psychological study. Wundt’s *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (1874) develops a concept of the immediate experiences of consciousness (which, like Damásio’s later understanding of consciousness, includes feelings and emotions) based on a quasi-objective self-examination of conscious experience. This objective process requires that a person examine his or her conscious self by retrieving a specific episode from the continuum of memory surrounding it. Wundt’s immediate concern is that we should associate experience with memory by developing a conscious awareness of the memory and the connections to the surrounding memories,

> Since therefore the immediate contents of consciousness always find expression in the elementary qualities originating in direct connexion with the peripheral functions everything favours the view that the activities of the higher central elements consist solely in the effects which they produce by the combination and under certain circumstances by the inhibition of the excitations conveyed to them. (323)

Like Bergson, Wundt is largely overlooked in Beckett studies. He generally appears as a footnote in Beckett’s early philosophical investigations. The two pieces that develop any kind of discussions of Wundt’s physiological psychology in regards to Beckett, are Laura Salisbury’s article, “‘What Is the Word’: Beckett’s Aphasic Modernism” (2009), and Matthew Feldman’s *Beckett’s Books* (2006). Feldman’s discussion is indirect as it only focuses on Wundt via critiques of Edward Titchener. Neither of these studies, however, shows a connection between the contemporary works of Bergson and Wundt and their possible relation to Beckett’s own work on a physiological psychology of memory.

In his introduction to *Principles*, Wundt lists one of the stumbling blocks in his methodology. His inability to conduct, what he would consider, legitimate scientific experiments in physiological psychology prevented him from developing this thesis beyond a psychological
model. Bergson encounters the same problem. He solved it, however, by instituting intuition as a scientific method. Despite situating psychophysics as an auxiliary to both physiology and psychology, Wundt concedes that psychological properties will always outweigh physiological aspects since psychophysical problems are rooted in psychology:

Physiological psychology [...] is competent to investigate the relations that hold between the processes of the physical and those of the mental life. And in so far as it accepts this second problem, we may name it a psychophysics? If we free this term from any sort of metaphysical implication as to the relation of mind and body, and understand by it nothing more than an investigation of the relations that may be shown empirically to obtain between the psychical and the physical aspects of vital processes, it is clear at once that psychophysics becomes for us not, what it is sometimes taken to be, a science intermediate between physiology and psychology, but rather a science that is auxiliary to both. It must, however, render service more especially to psychology, since the relations existing between determinate conditions of the physical organisation, on the one hand, and the processes of consciousness, on the other, are primarily of interest to the psychologist. In its final purpose, therefore, this psychophysical problem that we have assigned to physiological psychology proves to be itself psychological. [...] Fortunately for the science, there are other sources of objective psychological knowledge, which become accessible at the very point where the experimental method fails us. (4-5)

Wundt derives this concept of psychophysics from Gustav Fechner’s 1860 *Elemente der Psychophysik*, in which Fechner defines psychophysics as an “exact science of the functional relations or relations of dependency between body and mind, or, in more general terms, between the bodily and mental, the physical and psychical worlds” (8, cited in Wundt). According to
Wundt, Fechner’s objective is to establish the laws that govern the interaction of mental and bodily phenomena (Wundt 3-4).

While these omissions are prevalent throughout contemporary cognitive science and memory studies, the absence of Bergson in the newer and more popular neuroscience bestsellers is more troubling. Take, for instance, the discussion that Pinker forms around the role of the eye in cognitive image formation in *How the Mind Works* (primarily on pages 155-159). Gilles Deleuze, in *Bergsonism* (1991), explains that the primacy of the image in meaning making is fundamental to Bergson’s construction of memory-images. The inclusion of the eye (biologically) and the imagistic description (figuratively) are key parts of Pinker explanation of the computational theory of the mind:

> It says that beliefs and desires are information, incarnated as configurations of symbols. The symbols are the physical states of bits of matter, like chips in a computer or neurons in the brain. They symbolize the thing in the world because they are triggered by those things via our sense organs, and because of what they do once they are triggered. (25)

This description of the brain as an incarnated configurer of symbols sounds strikingly like the description that Bergson sets out in the third chapter of *Matter and Memory*, “Of the Survival of Images,” over a century earlier in 1896:

> Psychical life, then, is entirely summed up in these two elements, sensation and image. And as, on the one hand, this theory drowns in the image the pure memory which makes the image into an original state, and, on the other hand, brings the image yet closer to perception by putting into perception, in advance, something of the image itself; it ends by finding between these two states only a difference of degree, or of intensity. [...] *To picture* is not to *remember*. No doubt a recollection, as it becomes actual, tends to live in an image; but the converse is not true, and the image, pure and simple, will not be referred to the past unless, indeed, it
was in the past that I sought it, thus following the continuous progress which brought it from darkness into light. This is what psychologists too often forget when they conclude, from the fact that a remembered sensation becomes more actual the more we dwell upon it, that the memory of the sensation is the sensation itself beginning to be. (172-174)

Bergson continues his conception of the physiology of the eye in *Creative Evolution* (1910). Two points are equally striking in an organ like the eye: the complexity of its structure and the simplicity of its function. The eye is composed of distinct parts, such as the sclerotic, the cornea, the retina, the crystalline lens, etc. In each of these parts the detail is infinite. The retina alone comprises three layers of nervous elements—multipolar cells, bipolar cells, visual cells—each of which has its individuality and is undoubtedly a very complicated organism: so complicated, indeed, is the retinal membrane in its intimate structure, that no simple description can give an adequate idea of it. The mechanism of the eye is, in short, composed of an infinity of mechanisms, all of extreme complexity. Yet vision is one simple fact. As soon as the eye opens, the visual act is effected. Just because the act is simple, the slightest negligence on the part of nature in the building of the infinitely complex machine would have made vision impossible. This contrast between the complexity of the organ and the unity of the function is what gives us pause. [...] It is the picture, i.e. the simple act, projected on the canvas, which, by the mere fact of entering into our perception, is decomposed before our eyes into thousands and thousands of little squares which present, as recomposed, a wonderful arrangement. So the eye, with its marvelous complexity of structure, may be only the
simple act of vision, divided for us into a mosaic of cells, whose order seems marvelous to us because we have conceived the whole as an assemblage. (88-90)

Like Hodge, Pinker also overlooks Bergson’s role in cognitive image formation. Keith Rayner’s edited collection for the Springer Series in Neuropsychology, *Eye Movements and Visual Cognition* (1992), covers the relationship between the eye, visual cognition, and perception, but nowhere mentions Bergson. Even historical overviews and introductions to cognitive studies, such as Michael Leyton’s overview of the computational process of causality, memory, and the eye’s image formation (134-137) in LePore and Pylyshyn’s *What is Cognitive Science* (1999), acknowledge the groundwork that Bergson sets down in *Matter and Memory*. Neither Larry Thibos’s overview of neural sampling and aliasing in cognitive perception, nor Jack Gallant’s discussion of memory and computational principles of optical-to-neural representations mentions Bergson (or Wilder Penfield, for that matter). Even interdisciplinary studies of the eye and perception, like the Sörös, Vo, Husstedt, Evers, & Gerding 2003 collaboration, “Phantom eye syndrome,” in *Neurology* ignore what seem like obvious connections to Bergson’s work.

The most interesting omissions are those that now incorporate imaging technologies into their research. Although Bergson’s science was not nearly as advanced as contemporary understandings of cortical area-specific injuries and adaptations, his early work on examining the lesions in the brain anticipates today’s MRI or MEG based studies, like those of Alyssa Brewer (at UC Irvine’s Center for Cognitive Neuroscience) in which she tracks visual perception through mapping visual fields in the brain (specifically in her 2008 talk as part of the “Take Your Time by Olafur Eliasson” lecture series). Even very low-tech studies, like V.S. Ramachandran’s work on phantom sensory input and cognition, overlook Bergson. In his D.O. Hebb lecture (1998) with William Hirstein, on the perception of phantom limbs, he addresses the issue of the eye, but incorporates it into a larger sensory schema that he, later in 2003, calls “sensory neurons and conscious experience” (*Brain* 1606). However, it is difficult not to call Bergson to mind as he discusses the durative aspects of the conscious awareness of the phantom limb. Although Bergson does not use a modern metaphor for these memory-images, his interconnected description of sensation to image to memory, and vice versa, speaks to the same notion that
Pinker posits in his text. Even at the end of the 20th century, the neuroscientific field barely mentioned Bergson.
CHAPTER II

THE STUFF OF THOUGHT, AND HOW THE MIND WORKS

The present contains nothing more than the past, and what is found in the effect was already in the cause.

—Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution

RECOLLECTING BERGSON

Gilles Deleuze has spearheaded the recent renaissance of Bergsonism, and, as we will see, Deleuze’s own thoughts are under the influence of Bergson, specifically in his discussion of multiplicity and duration. The combination of multiplicity and duration form the basis of Deleuze’s becomings, as we see Deleuze set up becoming in opposition to duration in Difference & Repetition (239). Additionally, Bergson’s critique of the Hegelian negative dialectic in Creative Evolution must have been attractive to Deleuze, as it provided the basis of an alternative to Heideggerian phenomenological thought. Deleuze gives us new ways of discussing the effects of memory on language, wherein we can begin to see the complex ways that writers materialize memory in their work—those writers contemporary to Bergson, namely Proust, Joyce and Beckett.

Bergson’s duration is neither fully a unity nor a multiplicity, but rather a type of, what Deleuze would call, assemblage. In A Thousand Plateaus (1988), Deleuze describes the assemblage as a “dynamic interconnection of congruent singularities that remove the subject/object interface, yet retain elements of specificity” (12). However, since both Bergson’s and Deleuze’s theories of duration are ineffable, the assemblage can only be understood through intuition. When we consider the movement (or force, the elan vital) of Bergson’s spool metaphor, it also speaks to the machinic philosophy that he develops. In The Creative Mind (1928), Bergson provides an image to explain duration and qualitative multiplicities: two spools,
with a tape running between them, one spool unwinding the tape, the other winding it up (164-65). According to Bergson, the future decreases as we age, while the past increases proportionally. This image shows how the continuity of experiences operates simultaneously rather than in juxtaposition. Duration is a continuity of progress and heterogeneity that conserves the past. The machinic assemblage is a multiplicity of forces in motion not of fixed components. Deleuze later describes the human as a machinic linkage of body (eyes, ears, mouth, etc…), brain (voluntary and involuntary nervous system), and mind (consciousness).

Duration, especially regarding memory, then, becomes a constant process of recomposition. In Matter and Memory, Bergson describes it this way:

The true effect of repetition is to decompose and then to recompose, and thus appeal to the intelligence of the body [...] In this sense, a movement is learned when the body has been made to understand it [...] Now the logic of the body admits of no tacit implications. It demands that all constituent parts of the required movement shall be set forth one by one, and then put together again. (137)

In Memory: from Mind to Molecule (2000), Nobel Prize winner, Eric Kandel, concisely writes out a large part of the project that he began in the mid-1960s. Kandel’s studies on neuron-chemical transmission all worked toward demonstrating the fluid location of memory within the synaptic action, rather than the cortical area-specific storage model of the brain. In this book, he mentions Bergson twice, and his description of the active accretive practice of memory looks stunningly like Bergson’s own model:

Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience, and to a little outstanding detail which commonly appears in image or in language form. (6)
Through Kandel’s mechanism, we can more clearly understand Bergson’s discussion of
nothingness and becoming. *Creative Evolution* positions duration and becoming as inextricably
meshed. While on the one hand, becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari in *What is
Philosophy?* (1991), is simply the “extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations
without resemblance” (173). It is also the melding of subjects. Similar to Bergson’s discussion of
duration, becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, dismisses binaries while allowing multiple
transformations. The key difference is, perhaps, that the spectator’s consciousness is a necessary
aspect of becoming, whereas duration is a vital force of nature.

Bergsonian nothingness (or absence) is always offset by the positive nature (presence) of
reality. What he is really interested in is the ways that we can only perceive absences.
Representationally, we can only ever replace absence with something else: an image of limited
nothingness, or language describing nothingness. We see a similar goal in Beckett’s work. In his
1937 letter to Axel Kaun he explains that he is looking for the language of the “unword”—that
nothingness behind language. Bergson’s process of discovering nothingness, which he develops
in chapter four of *Creative Evolution*, is one that is fraught with failure. That is, becoming
nothingness is a process of failure. He first tries to block out sensory perception (as we later find
in the narrator of *The Unnamable* or Stephen Dedalus in the “Proteus” chapter of *Ulysses*), but
finds that his consciousness is inextinguishable—or impossible to actualize—so he contents
himself with conceptualizing nothingness. However, he finds that even as he attempts to close
down this consciousness, another is always already starting up.

Bergson takes this slightly further by forming nothingness into a type of pseudo-idea.
When he talks about voids, he implies that they are always full—regardless of whether they are
voids of matter or memory (*CE* 283). Because of the durative nature of consciousness, the old
concept of the void is always quasi-present in the new conception of the void: the mind cannot
form a new analysis of nothingness without first conceptualizing a positive representation of
something for the nothing to replace, what he calls a substitution. Eventually, everything is
affirmed as positive, since negation is always a process of creation/removal.

In order to discuss Bergson’s concept of nothingness, we should look at two early
critiques of Bergson’s idea of nothingness presented in *Creative Evolution*, one by Jean-Paul
Sartre and one by Emmanuel Levinas. Like Bergson, Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943),
makes clear that nothingness is not necessarily a product of consciousness, but argues against the subjectivity in Bergson’s idea of nothingness. Sartre says:

Consciousness moreover can not produce a negation except in the form of consciousness of negation. No category can ‘inhabit’ consciousness and reside there in the manner of a thing. The not, as an abrupt intuitive discovery, appears as consciousness (of being), consciousness of the not. In a word, if being is everywhere, it is not only Nothing which, as Bergson maintains, is inconceivable; for negation will never be derived from being. (11)

Sartre’s reading of Bergson’s nothingness, in essence, explains that negation is always responsible for non-being or nothingness. At best, nothingness can only be conceptualized by suppressing an understanding of a thing in reality; at worst nothingness is simply the suppression of the awareness of being. Sartre rejects this theory because it equates consciousness and intention. The difference between this phenomenological intention and Bergson’s perception might only be semantic however. For Bergson, perception is not limited to the closed sensory apparatuses between the eye or the ear and the brain. Perceptions, images, and representations might all exist beginning at the object, rather than just within the brain or the eye. Bergsonian perception might always be reaching towards the object of focus in a manner similar to the way phenomenological conscious is always aware that it is extending towards its object of focus.

On the other hand, Bergson’s struggle with nothingness is reflected in Levinas’ difficulties in conceiving of a pure nothingness that he describes in “There is: Existence without Existent” (1946). Levinas posits a similar question to Bergson’s own from the fourth chapter of Creative Evolution:

Let us imagine all being, things and persons, reverting to nothingness. One cannot put this return to nothingness outside of all events. But what of the nothingness itself? Something would happen, if only night and the silence of nothingness. [...] But this nothing is not that of pure nothingness. There is no longer this of
Levinas goes on to explain that in the last chapter of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson equates nothingness with being “crossed out,” a productive act that Levinas associates with his concept of the “there is,” or the being of nothingness (34). He continues to align himself with Bergson only up to a point. According to Levinas, Bergson’s critique of nothingness is directed at the necessity of being, something must always exist. While this type of rejecting one thing in order to replace with another thing demonstrates a process of the mind (what Deleuze would call becoming), when applied to a “totality of being,” Bergson’s concept of nothingness fails (34). “Total negation then would be impossible,” Levinas says of Bergson’s critique, “and the concept of nothing illusory” (35). Levinas ultimately develops a concept of nothingness similar to the Heideggarian anxiety of not-being. “To ‘realize’ the concept of nothingness,” he says, “is not to see nothingness, but to die” (35). Despite this divergence from Bergson’s critique, Levinas still recognizes the materiality of absence just as Bergson does. Nothingness has limitations and boundaries. Where Bergson sees it as a gap, Levinas sees it as the end, or at least an interval, of being.

John Mullarkey, in *Bergson and Philosophy* (1999), clearly lays out Bergson’s objective in the fourth chapter of *Creative Evolution*: “Existence appears to me like a conquest over nought. I say to myself that there might be, that indeed there ought to be, nothing, and I then wonder that there is something” (*CE* 276). Bergson, according to Mullarkey, intends to expose the confusion within the “ontological question of why being rather than nothing exists” (128). He explains that nothingness is secondary both to being and the act of negation or suppression. What this ultimately means in Bergson’s critique is that nothingness is always an act of suppression or denial, which points to some type of being as that suppressor. Therefore, not only can absolute nothingness fail to exist, but partial nothingness is likewise impossible. Mullarkey points out the underlying paradoxical complexity of Bergson’s critique: “in denying [nothingness] he is himself attributing nothingness to it” (129). Since nothingness is, at best, limited by being, it is already part of being, and therefore part of the process of becoming. While absolute nothingness is practically impossible, degrees of difference in nothingness exist along a continuum of
becoming: more nothingness and less nothingness in regards to being. In this light, Bergson could provide another way to think about the progression of “all the Murphys, Merciers, Molloys, Morans, and Malones” that the narrator of Malone Dies recounts (MD 236), and that progression might later evolve into Mahood and Worm in The Unnamable. Nothingness, will ultimately become a type durative process—a process of simultaneous decomposition and composition.

Within Bergson’s discussions of nothingness, though, we find two images that later appear in Beckett’s novels: the painting of the circle from Watt, and the bodiless consciousness of The Unnamable. The image that Beckett creates in Watt is the sole decoration in Erskine’s room, a picture of a point outside (just east) of a circle. Bergson writes in Creative Evolution:

A circle drawn with chalk on a blackboard is a thing which needs explanation: this entirely physical existence has not by itself where-with [sic] to vanquish non-existence. But the ‘logical essence’ of the circle, that is to say, the possibility of drawing it according to a certain law—in short, its definition—is a thing which appears to me eternal: it has neither place nor date; for nowhere, at no moment, has the drawing of a circle begun to be possible. Suppose, then, that the principle on which all things rest, and which all things manifest possesses an existence of the same nature as that of the definition of the circle, or as that of the axiom A=A: the mystery of existence vanishes, for the being that is at the base of everything posits itself then in eternity, as logic itself does. (277)

Whereas Bergson uses this chalk circle to illustrate a way in which we should understand the certainty of being, Beckett uses it to unravel that same notion. In a set piece from Watt, Beckett destabilizes this certainty of being: “And he wondered what the artist had intended to represent (Watt knew nothing about painting), a circle and its centre in search of each other [...] or a circle and a centre not its center in search of a centre and its circle respectively, in boundless space, in endless time [...]” (129).

While Watt’s nearly infinite variations of circle undercut Bergson’s mathematical axiomatic certainty of being and existence, the connection is largely based on the image. The
thought experiment, which Bergson conducts only a page later in order to discuss what he means by thinking about nothing, explains that we must always imagine or conceive of an image of nothing that is connected to some concept of self (even without physical sensation).

I am going to close my eyes, stop my ears, extinguish one by one the sensations that come to me from the outer world. Now it is done; all my perceptions vanish, the material universe sinks into silence and the night.—I subsist, however, and cannot help myself subsisting. I am still there, with the organic sensations which come to me from the surface and from the interior of my body, with the recollections which my past perceptions have left behind them—nay, with the impression, most positive and full, of the void I have just made about me. How can I suppress all this? How eliminate myself? I can even, it may be, blot out and forget my recollections up to my immediate past; but at least I keep the consciousness of my present reduced to its extremest poverty, that is to say, of the actual state of my body. I will try, however, to do away even with this consciousness itself. I will reduce more and more the sensations my body sends in to me: now they are almost gone; now they are gone, they have disappeared in the night where all things else have already died away. But no! At the very instant that my consciousness is extinguished, another consciousness lights up—or rather, it was already alight: it had arisen the instant before, in order to witness the extinction of the first; for the first could disappear only for another and in the presence of another. I see myself annihilated only if I have already resuscitated myself by an act which is positive, however involuntary and unconscious. So, do what I will, I am always perceiving something, either from without or from within. When I no longer know anything of external objects, it is because I have taken refuge in the consciousness that I have of myself. If I abolish this inner self, its very abolition becomes an object for an imaginary self which now perceives as an external object the self that is dying away. Be it external or internal,
some object there always is that my imagination is representing. My imagination, it is true, can go from one to the other, I can by turns imagine a nought of external perception or a nought of internal perception, but not both at once, for the absence of one consists, at bottom, in the exclusive presence of the other. But, from the fact that two relative noughts are imaginable in turn, we wrongly conclude that they are imaginable together: a conclusion the absurdity of which must be obvious, for we cannot imagine a nought without perceiving, at least confusedly, that we are imagining it, consequently that we are acting, that we are thinking, and therefore that something still subsists. (278-279)

This thought experiment seems like the experiments that Stephen Dedalus attempts while he blocks out the sights and sounds of the shore as he shuffles along Sandymount Strand in the “Proteus” chapter of Ulysses, or O’s attempt to abolish the imaginary selves of his room in Film, or the narrator’s physical situation at the opening of The Unnamable. Even in the narrator’s isolation and sensory deprivation, it is impossible for him to be alone. He is alone. He says, “I am of course alone. Alone” (292). We can see that he is in the same kind of sense-less darkness of Bergson’s experiment: the darkness, “And how can one be sure in such darkness?” (292) and the lack of surroundings, “Where now? Who now? When now?” (291). However, he is immediately aware of others around him (Malone, Molloy in Malone’s hat, and Murphy). By acknowledging these others, he demonstrates an awareness, however limited, of self. Likewise, Bergson’s approach to negation informs the aporia that permeates the end of the novel. The negativity expressed by the narrator’s thanatopic desire to cease—”I can’t go on”—is already juxtaposed to the creative impetus goading him along—”I’ll go on” (414). Despite the fact that Beckett’s characters seem to be working toward nothingness, or in case of memory, working toward forgetting something remains—as described by Bergson—that Beckett depicts in the residual narratives of The Unnamable’s narrator, as well as in the little trail of ash Clov sees trailing behind himself in Endgame. What Beckett writes about in this characters is not nothing,
but the replacement of nothing with something else. They are not in states of absence, but in states of durative multiplicity or becoming.

**Beckett & Bergson, Memory & Metempsychosis**

In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze explains that from *Time and Free Will* onward, consciousness is always a multiplicity for Bergson (117). Bergson’s introduction of multiplicity, in the “Space and Homogeneity” section of *TFW*’s second chapter, complicates Kant mostly by developing a critique of Kant’s approach to spatialized sensation and perception in consciousness. The conclusion of *TFW* returns to the difficulty of imagining duration by citing Kant’s understanding of homogeneity as he explains that “[i]n this very confusion of true duration with its symbol both the strength and weakness of Kantianism reside” (233). Deleuze explains that while Bergson borrows some ideas from Kant (such as illusions [21]), he moves past Kant. For Deleuze, this is in large part due to the implicit multiplicity and negation in Bergsonian perception. He explains, “[t]he heart of Bergson’s project is to think differences in kind independently of all forms of negation: There are differences in being and yet nothing negative” (46).

In his discussion of Kant’s influence in *Watt*, John Wall explains that in *Critique of Pure Reason* (§15), Kant “wanted to establish that there exist certain *a priori* conditions of consciousness that shape perception and the logical understanding of the world.” Wall goes on to discuss the component parts of Kant’s concept of consciousness: “*a priori* elements of consciousness are made up of sensory perception, the concepts of understanding, apperception, and imagination. As regards the senses, Kant argues that they give the world to subjective consciousness as space and time. Thus, nothing can be perceived or understood outside of this ‘manifold of intuition’” (537). Apperception is equally important to Beckett’s own concept of consciousness; Gontarski and Ackerley’s *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* ascribes Beckettian apperception to an adherence to Geulincx (110), but it might well stem from equal parts occasionalist philosophy and Bergson’s critique of Kant. Deleuze explains that Bergson ultimately sees this post-Kantian multiplicity as a simultaneous constructive and deconstructive process: “the One is created and is combined with its opposite, the Multiple in general, to
reconstruct all things from the standpoint of the force opposed to the multiple or to the deterioration of the One” (*Bergsonism* 47).

Bergson’s concept of multiplicity is central to understanding memory as a continuous or durative process, and consists largely of the ways in which we should understand the relationship between perception and memory. Bergson’s theory of perception, image and representation, discussed in *Matter and Memory*, stems from his dissatisfaction with preceding philosophies of cognition; both “realism and idealism both go too far” for Bergson (9). “It is a mistake,” he says, “to reduce matter to the perception which we have of it, a mistake also to make of it a thing able to produce in us perceptions, but in itself of another nature than they. Matter, in our, view, is an aggregate of ‘images.’ And by ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less that which the realist calls a thing—an existence placed halfway between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’” (9).

Both matter and representation interact with, what I will call, the durative aggregate of memory-images. We should note the difference between images and memory-images. Images are always part of a process of duration. They always resemble one another—they are similar despite slight recognizable differences. The image comes from matter, and should therefore be consistent regardless of who perceives the material object of focus. Memory-image, however, is unique to each individual person. They contain something like, what neuro-philosopher V.S. Ramachandran would call, the qualia of experience, and because of that qualia are much closer to representation that simple images. These individual memory-images cannot exist without the surrounding images to provide the qualitative context, so they are also durative. In the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson shows the slight difference that is dependent on some type of unknowable change. The single instance of perception—by our sensory cells (i.e., the eye)—are changed by the “miraculous power” of the cerebral cortex “into a representation of things” that will ultimately become part of our pure memory (29).

Matter itself cannot create representations, but the process of change, which our perceptions undergo as they become memory-images, ultimately builds the representational aggregate. The perception of matter is different from the image the same way—to borrow Arsene’s metaphor from *Watt*—that the grain of sand is different from the mountain (*W* 43). The character or material of both the sand and the mountain are the same, but the grain is not the
same thing as the mountain. The multiplicity of the grain is the mountain. Likewise, the memory-image is the single isolated unit of the aggregate, but cannot function independently of it. The difference between image and representation is one of degree, not a difference of kind.

Because of the durative aggregate of memory-image, our perception cannot simply be an isolated interaction with an exterior material object. Our perception immediately forms transactions with single memory-images from the aggregate to interpret the object and simultaneously create a new memory-image of it. Like the single face drawn out of the buzzing confusion of Murphy’s mind, the memory-image is an isolated image of the face but it is both the memory-image of that single instance and always part of the whole representation of all that it is connected to spatially: that individual, faces Murphy recognizes, and the concept of face. All of these latter categories are part of Bergson’s pure memory, and the concretizations that are based on the immediate perceptions that we discern. The memory-image is created anew every time perception interacts with the representational whole (diagrammed here as pure memory in fig 1.3).

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 1.3:** Bergson’s sliding scale of Pure Memory through the memory-image to Perception (MM 132).

For Bergson, we cannot genuinely exist in a state of pure perception. When we perceive, our focus immediately creates a new image of the object being perceived, rather than the object itself. Bergson shows something of his metaphysical colors here, as he says that the “spirit”
creates a kind of “necessary poverty” in our perception that allows us to filter or discern certain elements of our perceptions (MM 33). What makes our individual aggregates unique is that the transaction, which occurs between the thing being perceived and the thing itself, discards whatever our individual consciousness has no interest in or no function for our cognitive needs. The transactions of the image as it moves along the continuum of perception to memory is “in the etymological sense of the word, discernment” (MM 38). This discernment does not add or take away from any memory-image, but creates a new aspect of that image. On a continuous basis, this creates a multiplicity of images that is separate from, but not different from the representation.

Bergson creates a continuum of image with pure memory and pure perception at opposite poles. For Bergson, there is no fundamental difference between matter, what we encounter as pure perception, and representation, what comprises pure memory. It might be helpful to think of pure perception as perception devoid of memory, and pure memory as representation without specific perceptions. The memory-image is always caught somewhere in between those two poles. The memory-image is not wholly virtual like representation, but neither is it wholly actual like perception. When we perceive the material world around us aurally, visually, and tactility, we take in an extraordinary amount of information. However, we cannot consciously process the entirety of those immediate perceptions. Rather, as Bergson says, we discern or focus on a very small percentage of those perception that interest either our current thought process or bodily needs. The reminder of those selections or pieces of perceptions are not necessarily filtered out, but continuously build our unconscious representation of the world. 8

Bergson juxtaposes representation of this sort with action. In Matter and Memory, he seems to say that the past (representation) is powerless because it is unable to act. By virtue of being virtual, representation only has the potential for action. The present, or what is of immediate perceptive interest, summons one to constant action (137). He returns to this point in Creative Evolution to explain instinct and learned intelligence. “Representation,” he says, “is stopped up by action” (CE 136). Representation must wholly exist in the unconscious, and therefore must be instinctual. He cites the movements of a sleepwalker as existing in representation only. If an obstacle impedes those movements the sleepwalker, who is completely subsumed in the representational world, must regain conscious perception to react.
Representation remains powerless since it cannot enact any change. From this standpoint he says, “the consciousness of a living being may be defined as an arithmetical difference between potential and real activity. It measures the interval between representation and action” (CE 136). Mullarkey, in Bergson and Philosophy, explains that this difference of action manifests in multiple types of memory as well. According to Mullarkey, pure memory or representation can only imagine the past, while habit-memory can only repeat the past (51).

In “Bergson’s Conception of Difference,” Deleuze points to the virtual nature of pure memory (what he calls recollection) to explain difference. “Memory,” explains Deleuze, “is not a representation of something, it represents nothing, it is [...]” (55). To explain memory in terms of representation, he cites the “False Recognition” chapter of Bergson’s Mind-Energy, “[recollection] does not present to us something which has been, but simply something which is; it advances pari passu [on equal footing] with the perception which it reproduces. It is a recollection of the present moment in that actual moment itself. It is of the past in its form and of the present in its matter. It is a memory of the present” (ME 167). What Deleuze’s comments make clear is that the perception-representation continuum is not a sequential order. For Deleuze, because representation is not dependent on or subsequent to conscious perception, past and present coexist, or as he says, “it does not have to wait for perception to disappear, it is not subsequent to perception” (55).

We should see the difference here between pure memory or representation and a memory-image. Because a memory-image has a specific binding to a single instance of conscious perception, it differs from material sensory perception only in degree. Representation, however, having no immediate connection to the body is radically different from perception. Representation can exist apart from actual perception. As we will see in the discussion of mind in Beckett’s Murphy, Bergson says in the introduction to Matter and Memory that we contain a representation of our entire universe. We see the actions of that representative universe act of its own accord as we experience dreams. The events of that representation might not have ever been perceived in our unconscious peripheral vision or hearing, but could be events without specific material analogs. This is the difference between memory and déjà vu or promnesia. If we perceive something that we have only experienced in our virtual representation, we cannot firmly establish an association with it since no specific memory-image existed leaving us with a sense
of, what Freud called, the *uncanny* or, what contemporary neurophilosophers call, cognitive dissonance. Bergson, in *TFW*, says that we encounter the difference between this type of representation and image regularly. He uses the example of vaguely hearing footsteps on a street. When we hear that noise, he explains, we immediately have “a confused vision of somebody walking along” without any specific image of that person (86). However, when we perceive an object or event that we have already actually perceived in the past, we connect it or associate it with a specific image. That image is much closer to the actual perception, and therefore more real.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson says that the more we dwell on a memory-image, the more actual it becomes (135). It is not merely a virtual recollection of the past, but closer to an experience of actual perception. Bergson says that once we begin to dwell on memory, it “begets sensations as it materializes” (*MM* 139). Once it begins to act, that aspect of representation is no longer a memory, but now, what Bergson calls, a “present thing” or “something actually lived” (*MM* 139). Because of memory’s active ability to become, Deleuze sees memory (the past) and perception (the present) existing simultaneously. Both pure memory and pure perception are durative. Because they are durative, they are both constantly acting. At the end of the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson initially explains this connection practically. “Memory,” he says, “inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration, and thus by a twofold operation compells [sic] us, de facto, to perceive matter in ourselves, whereas we, de jure, perceive matter within matter” (*MM* 73). Deleuze sees both these actual and virtual perceptions as part of an ongoing creative and active process: “In a different way from Freud, but just as profoundly, Bergson saw that memory was a function of the future, that memory and will were but one and the same function, that only a being capable of memory could turn away from its past, detach itself, not repeat it, do something new” (56).

One of the difficulties in Bergson’s concept of multiplicity is that it, along with intuition, cannot be represented. In the third chapter of *Matter and Memory*, he says that as we try to reconnect discontinuous or individual memory-images from our daily experiences—which can be done only by focusing on the movement or mobility between each image—we find that our perception of the material world “resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in
uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other” (MM 208). Each vibration is a motile degree along a continuum. Since consciousness exists on this continuum, it can never fully be either fully habitual or fully pure memory. We must limit or filter our interactions with both physical perception and memory-images from pure memory. The moment of discerning the perception of a single memory-image from the durative aggregate is the instance of consciousness. When it interacts with perception to form a new memory-image, the memory-event takes place. The event is the “contraction” of the aggregate into a single memory-image that interacts with our immediate physical perception: “In just the same way the multitudinous successive positions of a runner are contracted into a single symbolic attitude, which our eyes perceive, which art reproduces, and which becomes for us all the image of a man running” (MM 209). This “symbolic attitude” is the representational whole from which we involuntarily isolate single images that correlate with what we have filtered from our entire perception to establish what become memory-events.

As opposed to involuntary memories, these memory-events more clearly demonstrate the durative nature of memory. Rather than the complex example of a runner, Bergson uses, initially in TFW, a Point on a material Line to explain how duration should work in consciousness. In the “Duration, Succession, and Space” section of chapter two, he explains that if the Point were self-aware, then it would feel itself change or move positions along the Line, and would thus perceive itself as a succession of points along that line (103). Each successive Point would be a single but interconnected instance along the Line indicating the duration of the representative whole (or Line in this instance) while the single image (or Point) allows us to perceive spatially the multiplicity of memory.

Bergson explains, in TFW, that duration in memory is a qualitative multiplicity rather than a quantitative multiplicity. He provides a number of examples of quantitative multiplicities—most importantly—the homogeneous flock of sheep, which we can count despite their homogeneity because each one occupies a specific spatial location.

It is not enough to say that number is a collection of units; we must add that these units are identical with one another, or at least that they are assumed to be identical when they are counted. No doubt we can count the sheep in a flock and say that there are
fifty, although they are all different from one another and are
easily recognized by the shepard: but the reason is that we agree
in that case to neglect their individual differences and to take into
account only what they have in common. (76)

This example is one of the most important in Bergson’s early philosophy because it introduces
both the aggregate whole from which memory-images are individuated, and perception’s role in
creating representation. Although he initially talks about duration, in the “Psychophysics”
section of TFW, as a continuity apart from conventional modes of representation (66), he
modifies the term, in the beginning of chapter two, to duration as part of multiplicity in
consciousness. He begins with the idea of every number being a “synthesis of the one and the
many” rather than just a collection of other component numbers, and goes onto explain the idea
that the number is “the representation of something else as well” (75-76).

Once we focus our attention on a single sheep, one of two things happens: we see this
flock as either a quantitative or qualitative multiplicity. We can imagine that the succession of
sheep remains a flock, which forces us to see the flock as a homogenous whole made up of
identical sheep. If we perceive the sheep spatially, however, we can no longer grasp the
connections to the total of the flock, or once we focus on the individual memory-image, we can
no longer see the totality of the representative aggregate as pure duration since the individual
image (or sheep) has now been fixed in space. Because the perception of that instance has been
fixed in space it becomes juxtaposed with every preceding and successive image. “In truth,” he
concludes in the second chapter’s “Space and Homogeneity” section, “qualitative differences
exist everywhere in nature, and I do not see why two concrete directions should not be marked in
immediate perception as two colours” (97). Once we understand memory as an aggregate of
perceptions, then we can see that they are simply a succession of images, but that every memory-
image interacts with perception to form a multiplicity of simultaneous images (101).

Memory, in this light, is a combination of habit-memory, which establishes automatic
behavior in sensory-motor mechanisms through repetition, and pure memory, which is the whole
of our unconscious representation of the world. Habit-memory stems from physical sensory
perception, while pure memory is the aggregate of what we have already encountered. Bergson illustrates this with a memory cone in *Matter and Memory*.

Plane, \( P \), as Bergson calls it, is the “plane of my actual representation of the universe” (*MM* 152). The cone \( SAB \) is supposed to represent pure memory (or what Deleuze refers to as regressive memory). At the cone’s base, \( AB \), are earlier memory-images that have some connection to the current perception. As the cone comes to point \( S \), multiple memory-images of the past \((A1/B1, A2/B2, \text{etc...})\) are spatialized according to their connection to the present perception, as we can see in the horizontal lines bisecting the second cone (figure 1.5). At the point of the cone, \( S \), the congregation of images is focused into a single image as it interacts with both our perception and with the plane (or representation of the universe).

This cone shows both the interactivity and mobility of memory-images. This progressive movement of memory as a whole takes place, according to Deleuze, between the extremes of the immobile base of pure memory and the plane of action (*Bergsonism* 59-60). Consciousness occurs when pure memories form transactions as they moves down into singular images or instances—what Deleuze describes as a “new monism” since there is a “contraction-memory”
(the cone’s $S$) within each transaction of “recollection-memory” ($A1/B1, A2/B2$, etc...) as it moves down the cone (74). Because of this contraction of numerous constituent images, memory-images are always multiplicities. They are simultaneously one and many images.

We might also understand the fluidity of character in *Finnegans Wake* as qualitative multiplicity, for instance. A group of father figures is their own type of flock. They are all individually identifiable, but share so many commonalities that they can seamlessly fit into one another’s roles—they are not a succession of fathers, but reiterations of a father figure. HCE, Adam, Mark, Finn MacCool, Parnell, and Tim Finnegan are all the genesis of their family. Each father-figure is heroic in some way, each is accused of some crime or has a fall from grace. Because they can co-exist in one space (HCE is all of the preceding characters), they do not exclude or discount one another.

When, in *The Creative Mind*, Bergson explains that duration must be understood as a heterogeneous qualitative multiplicity, the most notable example he uses is the image of reel-to-reel tape spools (164). In classic Bergsonian style, Bergson problematizes that example immediately after he introduces it. We see in Proust’s explanation of the extra-temporal convergence of the past and the present within memory that memory can conserve both the virtual and actual elements of the past experience. Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* develops in a similar fashion. Krapp re-experiences his specific memory-images simultaneously with the event of hearing the memory anew. This image is always incomplete, however. Bergson claims that no image can represent duration, because the image is immobile, while duration is “pure mobility” (*CM* 165). These images show us that duration actually has as much to do with unity as it does multiplicity, or as Bergson says, “the unrolling of our duration in certain aspects resembles the unity of a movement which progresses, in others, a multiplicity of states spreading out” (*CM* 165). Patrick McNamara’s reading of Bergsonian memory in *The Mind and Variability*, is helpful with characters like Krapp. He says, “every instance of a spontaneous remembering is composed of a series of phases” (37). McNamara’s notion implicitly situates duration within memory.

Much of Beckett’s work focuses on memory, but little of it depicts memory in such a literal fashion. Unlike his other plays like *What Where* or *Eh Joe*, we know where the disembodied voice is coming from, and who the speaker is in *Krapp’s Last Tape*. Krapp listens
to a recorded diary entry that he made on his 39th birthday, in which he talks about listening to an entry from his 29th birthday. And finally, Krapp makes a new entry before listening to the rest of the tape. In this play, Beckett is able to take a seemingly solipsistic situation (a man alone with his memories), and develop it into an intersubjective experiment in memory studies.

In this metaphor, he must experience the memory within the contextual layer of the surrounding tape. The smaller side of the reel is our perception of the present. The presentness is always connected to the perceptions of the past on the larger side. As the tape spool grows on the larger side the tape begins to overlap, and memories begin to overlay one another. The memories are not simply stationary points that can be accessed on their own. He must scroll through the tape to find what we are looking for, and thereby re-engage all of the surrounding and associated memories.

Bergson’s example indicates that memory conserves the past, and that conservation does not imply that we experiences the past the same way, but differently. Beckett explores this scenario on stage as Krapp experiences his memory simultaneously with the event of hearing the memory. For Bergson, one moment is added to the older ones, and the next moment is added onto all the other old ones plus the one that came immediately before. This accumulative image is similar to the growing boxes of tapes that Krapp accrues between his 31st and 69th birthdays. The past is larger at the current moment than it was at the previous moment. By using the example of the tape spool, Bergson demonstrates how memory is durative by highlighting both the mobility and connected prolongation of the past into the present.

In his earlier recording, voice occasionally shifts from narrator to editor. He editorializes in these tapes rather than simply dictating the present environment, which points to, at least, a level of awareness that these memories are interactive. As the recorded voice of the 39-year-old Krapp talks about his compulsive drive to eat bananas, the taped voice pauses and suddenly shouts “(Vehemently.) Cut ‘em out!” (14) as if commanding the future Krapp to stop troubling his stomach. Later, the taped 39-year-old voice comments on the taped 29-year-old’s judgment that his youth is over, “Thank God.” The taped voice pauses, and pointedly comments on the assertion from his younger self. “False ring there” he explains to what will be his 69-year-old self. We see this editorializing as an ongoing process, not something that he has done once or twice in the past. As our present Krapp begins recording, he almost immediately falls into the
same methodology: to editorialize his memories for his future self. Krapp dictates, “Everything there, everything on this old muckball, all the light and dark and famine and feasting of...the ages!”, and then in a sudden shout, commands himself to, “Let that go! Jesus! Take his mind off his homework! Jesus” (24) before he pauses wearily and switches the recorder off momentarily. Then just as his early taped voice tells us he did, Krapp consults his notes scribbled on the back of an envelope. As with the earlier voice, our 69-year-old Krapp violently advises his future self to suppress any of his “last fancies” as he shouts, “Keep ‘em under!” (25).

At first glance, that type of editorializing might seem incidental, but early on in the play we see that Krapp (even at 39) intimately knows that his memories are constantly enveloping and interacting with one another. Like droplets of mercury, his memories are drawn together in a new amalgam, just as Krapp himself is physically drawn to a phantom body that memories on the tape indicates. Krapp is literally drawn to the recorder as he leans closer and closer, and almost caresses it when his younger voice brings up Bianca. “I love to get up and move about in [the darkness],” the taped voice tells him, “then back here to ...(hesitates)...me. (pause.) Krapp” (15). However, these individual isolated memories are impossible to pin down. They are individually ineffable. The younger Krapp tries to express that notion when he says, “The grain, now what I wonder do I mean by that, I mean...(hesitates)...I suppose I mean those things worth having when all the dust has—when all my dust has settled. I close my eyes and try and imagine them” (15). The only response he receives to that type of imagining is “extraordinary silence.”

What the 39-year-old Krapp has stumbled onto should be memory as a durative process, a process that requires the surrounding memory context to have any authentic meaning. However, one memory is constantly slipping into another, and to pull one out strips it of intrinsic value and makes it a meaningless symbol. In The Creative Mind, Bergson explains that no one can experience two identical moments. They might be strikingly similar, as in the two acts of Waiting for Godot, but the second moment will always have the memory of the first (164). The development of Krapp’s personality works similarly. Krapp displays consistencies in actions, desires, and demeanor, but the drama goes much deeper than depicting a character as a complex or layered self. The play is the multiplicity of memory. From a certain point-of-view, it might show how those memory-images slip in and out of our consciousness.
The most important example of this recurrent memory multiplicity is the memory of Bianca. Here we can see how Bergson’s memory cone actually functions as the memory-event occurs. We see 69-year-old Krapp listening to the recording of his 39-year-old self listening to himself as a man 10 years younger:

Just been listening to an old year, passages at random. I did not check in the book, but it must be at least ten or twelve years ago. At that time I think I was still living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street. Well out of that, Jesus yes! Hopeless business. *(Pause.*) Not much about her, apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm. I suddenly saw them again. *(Pause.*) Incomparable! *(Pause.*) Ah well...*(Pause.*) These old P.M.s are gruesome, but I often find them—*(Krapp switches off, broods, switches on)—a help before embarking on a new...*(hesitates)...retrospect. (16)

The result is the new memory-event that Krapp creates for his last tape. The earlier memory has infiltrated his consciousness in a new vital way to change his thought process actively. He sits down to record his thoughts on listening to the younger Krapp and is suddenly aware of Bianca. “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that’s all done with anyway. *(Pause.*) The eyes she had!” (24).

*figure 1.6: Krapp's Memory Cone of Bianca*
Should Krapp record another tape, he will have this new tier of memories through which to filter the new narration. Bergson’s models might look something like this: The initial, or early, memory when Krapp actually lived with and recorded about being with Bianca at age 29. For Bergson, the earliest recording is the $A$ instance. $B$ then is specific mentioning of Bianca. We don’t see this on stage, but understand it through the second layer of memory that brings all of the surrounding perceptions of the relationship with it (i.e., “Well out of that, Jesus yes!”) at age 39. Bergson would mark the second recording as $A1/B1$ since it is always already interacting with the initial instance $(A/B)$. $A2/B2$ then is the staged experiences that Krapp portrays as he listens to the recording at 69, which has already been interacting with $A/B$ [Krapp at 29] and $A1/B1$ [Krapp at 39], and $S$ (the moment of the memory-event) is when all of these memories aggregate in the new perception of Bianca at 69: “The eyes she had!” (24). This memory-event seems to occur involuntarily since it is couched in Krapp’s comments about himself and his recordings. For Krapp, when the spool collapses the aggregate memories coalesce.

Even though the spool metaphor is imperfect, as Bergson himself was aware that it implied a static or quantitative quality to what should a fluid qualitative multiplicity, since it seems to imply unintentionally a storage model of memory. However, Krapp’s interaction with the spools as a failed durative process complicates Bergson’s model, and demonstrates how we can use Bergson as a starting point in our understanding of how memory works at a neurological level. Failure of memory as an authentic durative process in Krapp happens in two ways. First, language fixes or spatializes these memories into independent artifacts that cannot fluidly reconnect with other memories. Second, the discrimination with which Krapp selects his memories precludes their fully integrating into a new memory-event. The materiality of the tape spools separates them too far from non-material memory to form a singular consciousness.

**Modernizing Bergson**

“Consciousness,” for Bergson, “lies in just this choice [of what we perceive]” (MM38). Likewise, consciousness, for Deleuze, is a product of the process of selection. Deleuze’s process, however, has two primary elements that stand apart from the “realism and idealism” that
Bergson refers to in *Matter and Memory* (26). For Deleuze these components are *the virtual* and *the actual*, or the virtual world beyond experience, and the world actualized via experience. Deleuze, like Bergson, is on guard against Kantian or Cartesian notions of these words. Deleuze uses them not as a binary or dichotomy, but as interconnected and solid aspects of a process.

In Deleuze’s scheme, the selections of the surrounding world that are perceived are those of organic interest and so initiate a connection between sensation and memory in such a way that consciousness is actualized. During this actualization two events happen: certain surroundings are acknowledged as being of interest, and then a new entity emerges when the body and mind coordinate with the surrounding environment. That entity is the selection, or event, of consciousness. The virtual is, in turn, the entire moving material universe. Deleuze follows Bergson regarding this notion: Bergson notes, “the images which surround us will appear to turn toward our body the side, emphasized by the light upon it, which interests our body” (*MM* 36). In *Bergsonism* Deleuze clarifies the same point: “by virtue of the cerebral interval, in effect, a being can retain from the material object and the actions issuing from it only those elements that interest him [...] it is not the object plus something, but the object minus something, minus everything that does not interest us” (24-25). The virtual not only acts on our bodies, but also enters the body through contact with the senses. The body, through its own virtual complexity, builds system upon system toward the brain and nervous system, thus our digestive and respiratory systems first interact with a taste or smell, which is then transferred through the nervous system, and is processed by the brain which provides us with a memory of that specific taste or smell. The same is true of images and the eye. This system completes the machine that actualizes consciousness by selecting things, objects, or events of relevance for the conscious exercise of will. The body responds to this exchange by generating a multitude of possible thoughts, actions, and utterances—much like Miss Dwyer’s system of faces, or the image of Neary’s “big blooming buzzing confusion” of a mind in Beckett’s *Murphy* (245). Literary critic Andrew Gibson, in *Beckett and Badiou* (2006), reads the mind in *Murphy* as an echo of William James’ notion of the empirical approximation of actual infinity (in *Principles of Psychology*). By extension, he creates an almost Gestalt-like reading by creating an allusion that strangely compares Murphy’s mind to that of a new-born infant (149). Both of these types of minds still
practice discernment, an impetus behind what is consciously perceived. For Bergson, that impetus is always the *élan vital*.

Paolo Marrati uses Deleuze’s *Difference & Repetition* to explain further Bergson’s concept of *élan vital* (or vital force), which provides a “systematic conceptualization of this Bergsonian insight” crucial to Deleuze’s own philosophy:

Deleuze compares, and opposes, two pairs of concepts: the possible and the real, on the one hand, and the actual and the virtual, on the other. Between the possible and the real there is a perfect resemblance: each one of them is the mirror image of the other. The only difference between them is the category of existence: the real exists, but the possible does not, or not yet. But precisely because existence does not conceptually add anything new to its own possibility, it becomes impossible to account for it; paradoxically speaking, existence becomes irrelevant, the shadow of a pre-given possibility. By contrast, the conceptual pair of the virtual and the actual displays a very different logic. First of all, the virtual and the actual are both real, that is, they are different modalities of reality. Secondly, the passage from the virtual to the actual, what Deleuze calls *actualization*, is not governed by any resemblance. The virtual and the actual do not resemble each other. The very process of actualization is here one of *differentiation*. From this perspective, existence does make a difference: it implies a creative process of differentiation. (1109)

For Marrati, Deleuze’s attempt to recover Bergson’s idea of *élan vital*, in *Bergsonism*, changes both the concept and the term. This force would no longer be a type of mystical or elusive force acting on animal matter. *Élan vital*, for Deleuze, becomes the substance in which the difference between organic and inorganic matter is unclear, and the emergence of life unresolvable. Duration is no longer intangible, but something that is material and solid.

Joyce and Beckett actualize memory-events, but that actualization comes through specific and separate types of spatialization. Two chief distinctions emerge in this slippage or change. First, the memory-event in Beckett is much more specified or localized. The memory-event for
Beckett is the interaction of the body and the mind, whereas the memory-event for Joyce is the interaction of the mind and the body politic. The individual experience is paramount in Beckett. Like Proust, Beckett draws on the experience unique to a character or characters. The memory-event for Erskine and Watt are specific to Mr Knott’s house. At best, the situations, in a novel like Watt for instance, form a loose allegory for something vaguely Irish. However, for Joyce—primarily in Finnegans Wake—these memory-events speak to the larger culture and history of Ireland. While this is certainly not always the case in Portrait or Ulysses, the spectre of Irish history, culture, and terrain looms over all of the characters. The allegory dissolves in Finnegans Wake as the memory-events are directly linked to a type of national character.

Second, for Joyce, original memory must be created. For Beckett, memory is irrecoverable. Memory has been too transformed and, like Malone, it cannot hold itself together. Beckettian and Joycean memories, however, are no longer intangible ideas, but concrete things, be they organic, as in Beckett’s case, or material writing (and the body) for Joyce. Moreover, the way that Beckett and Joyce spatialize memory forces a linguistic shift or transformation. Spatialized memory forces language to shift or transform into a type of representative image. For Bergson, this type of spatializing always distorts the memory-image into something new. This shift can either be concretized, as in the case of Joyce’s specifically preternational Hiberno-Dublin images or the transubstantiated texts his characters create, or abstracted as is the case with Beckett’s creation of aphasic and amnesic characters who render language porous. The moment, or event, of “actualization” is where memory slips for these writers. Virtual surroundings become literal in some cases and even more elusively figurative in others. Daniel Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne, in “Time and the Observer: The Where and When of Consciousness in the Brain” (1995), explain this spatialization of memory-events in their model of a Multiple Draft memory. For Dennett and Kinsbourne, memory is not a linear system that builds on progressive elements until a whole memory is achieved. Rather the memory-event is a synchronous accessing of disparate memory elements. These elements are not necessarily connected in a rational way, but are instead triggered by the associations that they have with the event at hand. These elements are then mapped onto specific associative triggers to form a spatialization of that memory-event. They explain this concept thus,
We perceive—and remember— perceptual events, not a successively analyzed trickle of perceptual elements or attributes locked into succession as if pinned into place on a continuous film. Different attributes of events are indeed extracted by different neural facilities at different rates, (e.g. location versus shape versus color) and people, if asked to respond to the presence of each one in isolation, would do so with different latencies, depending on which it was, and on other well-explored factors. The relative timing of inputs plays a necessary role in determining the information or content in experience, but it is not obligatorily tied to any stage or point of time during central processing. How soon we can respond to one in isolation, and how soon to the other, does not exactly indicate what will be the temporal relationship of the two in percepts that incorporate them both. (245)

For Beckett, the actualization of memory-events comes through specific and separate types of spatialization. The memory-event in Beckett is much more specified or localized in the interaction of the body and the mind. This moment of spatialization transforms Krapp’s physically mapped memories, like those noted in the ledger and recorded on the tape, in a forced elusive figurativeness. The only entry in the ledger that Krapp is puzzled by is the ironically “memorable equinox.” When encountered with a locus on which to align these memories—the piece of information that will allow him to draw together all of the disparate memory-images—Krapp intentionally skips over the sections of the tape:

This fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory, warm or cold, for the miracle that...(*hesitates*)...for the fire that set it alight. What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely—(*Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on*)
again)—great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propellor, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality—(Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape foreward, switches on again)—unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire—(Krapp curses loader, switches off, winds tape foreward, switches on again) (21)

As Dennett and Kinesbourne explain, these memories never truly work in isolation. What their study illuminates is the interconnectedness and asynchronicity of our memories, even those we try to forget. Single, isolated memory, for Beckett, is irrecoverable. The way that Beckett spatializes memory forces a linguistic shift or transformation into a type of representative image. This shift is developed abstractly in the creation of aphasic and amnesic characters who render language porous. The moment, or event, of “actualization” is where memory slips for these characters. Virtual surroundings become literal in some cases and even more elusively figurative in others.

In both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, we see this spatialization in two ways. The location event and its counterpart memory are tied directly to the place itself. Consider the “Nighttown” episode of *Ulysses*, which is both a series of seemingly random memories and a continual confluence of disparate memory-events based on the surroundings of Stephan or Bloom. Each of them encounters the same environs and experiences similar memories, but manifest very different memory-images. These memories occur when the characters interact with or arrive at the physical locale (the mapped space) that coincides with that memory-event.

The locative mapping becomes more literalized in *Finnegans Wake* as the phantasmal Ireland, and Dublin specifically (or the superimposed body of the Earwicker [HCE] over Dublin as John Bishop suggests in *the Book of the Dark*), as the specific and mythic locations, and their tenants, correspond to the created memory-events. The Black Pool and the Pale (both geographic Dublin) location-images allow the avatars to shift quickly back and forth between those Gaelic (*dubh linn*) and those Norse (*djúp lind*); both the Gaelic and the Norse are contained within the remembered word Dublin (before it became *Baile Átha Cliath*). As the characters or avatars
move from one geographic location to another within any of the phantasmagorical Irelands (i.e. Éire, Tara, Tír na Nóg, etc…) or geographical Ireland, the places instigate specific hiberno-cultural memory-events in which the avatars participate in various degrees. This happens on the literal level in the *Wake* as the memory of Shem and Shaun is transfigured into actual bodies and missive texts. Dennett and Kinsbourne’s notion of memory drafts—the concurrent operation of multiple memories and versions of those memories—speaks not only to the act of writing itself, in which both Shem and Shaun participate, but also to the concurrent and recurrent (or accordioned) events that move the characters and situations from *Ulysses* into a permutated form in *Finnegans Wake*. The absence of authentic national memories drives the reverse-engineering nature of the *Wake*. The characters are constantly searching for the initial memory-event or memory-image that will allow them to tell their stories from the beginning.
CHAPTER III

JOYCE’S MEMORY MAKERS:
BEGINNING, BEGETTING, AND FORGETTING THE INITIAL MEMORY-EVENT IN FINNEGANS WAKE

And it is as though where Agni araflammed and Mithra monished and Shiva slew as mayamutras the obluvial waters of our noarchic memory withdrew, windingly goharksome, to some hastyswasty timberman torchpriest, flamenfan, the ward of the wind that lightened the fire that lay in the wood that Jove bolt, at his rude word. Posidonius O’Fluctuary!

—[FW 80: 24-29]

A claribel cumbeck to errind. Hers before his even, posted ere penned. He’s your change, thinkyou methim.

—[FW 232: 16-17]

Joyce codifies memory as a monadic moment where opposites meet, and focuses on the instance of meeting. The goal is always the transaction between memory and the body—the middle part, the moment of interaction, the slippage itself. Joyce approaches memory in three primary ways. He does this first by dealing with the search for authentic and original memory. That search inevitably highlights the role of perception in memory, and the creative impact perception has on the memory process. Because of the creative input that perception instills in that process, all memories become entropic or transmutative in nature. In Finnegans Wake, the process of transmutation (what will become the flux of forms in the third zone of Murphy’s mind, and the slippages in the Beckett’s Watt or Endgame) must paradoxically take place within a system that is both closed and porous. However, because the original perception has undergone a substantial change (or in Joyce’s case, a transsubstantial change) is it becomes an image, the original
memory-event is nearly impossible to recover. Since those originals are inaccessible, Joyce leaves forgeries or new manufactured memories in their place.

Much of the work on memory in Joyce’s fiction focuses on either Ulysses or A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. When Finnegans Wake is mentioned, it is either connected to Portrait or Ulysses without discussion, or it is brought up simply to indicate the difficulty of identifying memory that the Wake presents. John Coyle’s 1998 handbook, James Joyce, Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, makes that latter point neatly: “If memory is constructed in the present, the past, as such, can never be recovered” (104). This is a noteworthy observation since it succinctly indicates the creative and active process of memory—rather than memory as a thing—and implies the ongoing attempt that each character makes to recover memory in Joyce’s work. Readings like Coyle’s imply a Bergsonian approach to memory, but fail to mention him specifically. However, a small few texts do focus on the relationship between Bergson and Joyce.

In Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (1962), the earliest of these texts, Shiv Kumar is careful not to claim a strong link between Bergson and Joyce. The tie between the two is not as tenuous as Kumar might fear though. A small number of scholars draw Bergson and Joyce together critically by using Wyndham Lewis’ comment, from Time and Western Man, that Bergson planted the seed for Ulysses and that Joyce is “very strictly of the school of Bergson-Einstein-Proust” as a point of departure (106). John Rickard mentions in the first chapter of his book, Joyce’s Book of Memory: the Mnemotechnic of Ulysses (1999), that Bergson’s elan vital could serve as a “useful narratological term for Joyce’s development of plot in Ulysses” (29). Rickard is right, though, to not assign a direct Bergsonian influence on Joyce’s work. The relationship between Bergson and Joyce might have more to do with their being contemporaries and both seeking to understand how memory works rather than simply using memory as an artifact. As Rickard says, “Joyce, like his contemporaries Proust and Bergson, imagined other modes of memory” (85). Rickard provides a solid reading of how we might understand both involuntary and habit memory better in Ulysses through Bergson’s elan vital, but he limits his discussion to Ulysses. He scarcely mentions the Wake despite that he points out (perhaps the best textual connection between the two authors)
Joyce’s throw-away style comment on Bergson: “Shadows by the film folk, masses by the good people. Promptings by Elanio Vitale” [FW 221:21-22].


Yee’s discussion does include *Finnegans Wake*, but only discusses Bergsonian perception in a limited capacity. During his critique of Lewis’ *The Art of Being Ruled*, Yee draws Bergsonian and Joycean perception together, first against Lewis’ purely intellectual understanding of visual and aural perception, and again as Lewis sees both Joyce and Bergson as “enemies of the eye” (69-71). The majority of Yee’s discussion of Bergson, though, has to do with time. He mentions *Creative Évolution*’s use of flux (as Bergson talks about the flow of *time* as *reality*) to explain how *Ulysses* is caught up in a stream of language and consciousness (48). Much of Yee’s discussion is similar to Kumar’s critique of both time and duration in Joyce’s work. While Rickard cites Kumar, twice in regards to involuntary memory as “a permanent aspect of [Marcel’s and Stephen & Bloom’s] mental processes” (qtd. in Rickard 129) in both *A la recherche du temps perdu* and *Ulysses*, Yee does not mention Kumar at all.

Both Rickard and Yee are writing soon after Mary Ann Gillies, whose book *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (1996) not only uses Kumar’s study as a starting point but develops his ideas past the limitations of that the earlier study incidentally imposed on itself. The limitation, according to Gillies happens primarily because it could not take into account materials found on Joyce, Woolf, Richardson and Bergson since its publication 1963, and because his study “is hampered by its desire to ‘bring out the parallelism between the notion of the stream of consciousness as it appears in [Woolf, Joyce, and Richardson] and the Bergsonian concept of flux’” (3). Despite that Kumar’s conclusions are admittedly limited, Gillies follows through on the study that Kumar began. In the introduction of *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*, Kumar explains how Bergson’s theories of duration, memory and intuition are necessary steps to move beyond psychoanalytical readings of Modern novels:
A psycho-analytical interpretation of the stream of consciousness novel would hardly illuminate its treatment and presentation of *la durée*, *mémoire involontaire* and *intuition*, nor would it bring out the significance of the various protagonists’ preoccupation with the ultimate nature of reality. It is here that Bergsonism attempts to reach out beyond the limits of psycho-analysis. In being more sympathetic towards aesthetic inclinations, more attuned to the mysterious nature of creative processes, Bergson’s philosophical theories of time, memory and consciousness provide a more useful clue to the understanding of the new technique. The emergence of time as a new mode of artistic perception in the contemporary novel would alone justify the Bergsonian approach as being more aesthetic than the mechanistic treatment of psycho-analysts. (3-4)

Gillies modifies Kumar’s approach to move beyond his focus on technique by incorporating the philosophical implications of Bergson’s theories among early twentieth century artists. Rather than providing, what she calls, a “specific historical-materialist analysis” of Modern writers’ works, Gillies contends that “Bergson exerted an influence on modernists, because he was part of the general social condition of the time” (5). Although she does not mention specifically the predominant role of psychoanalysis in memory studies on Modern texts, Gillies does point to other studies, like Margaret Church’s *Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, as examples of how discussions of Bergson are limited to “temporal issues” while memory falls generally under the aegis of psychoanalysts (134).

Where studies like Yee’s and Rickard’s focus on a combination of Bergsonian flux and time, Gillies incorporates Bergsonian memory and intuition as well. Gillies sees Joyce in opposition to an author like Woolf (who focuses on, what she calls, “the opposition of *durée* and *l’étendu*”) since his “interest in time” is focused on how to represent “life’s fluid inner world” (134). Gillies pursues the connection between Bergson and Joyce further than Kumar to say that “Joyce’s borrowings from Bergson are central to the development of his unique treatment of
characters in fiction” (134). While the direct connection is questionable, her explanation of Joyce’s use of memory as a narrative structure takes Bergson’s role in Joyce’s fiction in a more production direction. The epiphany in Joyce, according to Gillies, is Bergsonian memory. The Joycean epiphany and Bergsonian memory are both, “the recollection of the past moment illuminat[ing] both the previous experience from which it comes and the present experience that prompted the recollection in the first place” (136). She does not point to Matter and Memory specifically in this instance, but the epiphany’s resemblance to Bergson’s memory cone is striking (see figures 1.4 & 1.5 in Chapter 2). The initial recollection (or first memory-image) interacts with both the aggregate representation of pure memory (or previous experience) and with perception to create the epiphany (or moment of consciousness).

Gillies’ epiphanic memory reading of Joyce’s *Dubliners, Stephen Hero, Portrait* and *Ulysses* works well because it can also point back to the initial memory-image. *Finnegans Wake* is left out of her commentary, perhaps because that initial memory-image is impossible to recover. Gillies, like Rickard, merely cites a passage from the *Wake* to demonstrate Joyce’s dislike for Bergson:

Answer: No, blank ye! So you think I have impulsivism? Did they tell you I am one of the fortysixths? And I suppose you heard I had a wag on my ears? And I suppose they told you too that my roll of life is not natural? But before proceeding to conclusively confute this begging question it would be far fitter for you, if you dare! to hesitate to consult with and consequentially attempt at my disposal of the same dime-cash problem elsewhere naturalistically of course, from the blinkpoint of so eminent a spatialist. From it you will here notice, Schott, upon my for the first remarking you that the sophology of Bitchson while driven as under by a purely dime-dime urge is not without his cashcash characktericksticks, borrowed for its nonce ends from the fiery goodmother Miss Fortune (who the lost time we had the pleasure we have had our little recherché brush with, what, Schott?) and as I further could have told you as brisk as
your D.B.C. beha-viouristically pailleté with a coat of homoid icing which is in reality only a done by chance ridiculisation of the whoo-whoo and where’s hairs theories of Winestain. To put it all the more plumbsily. The speechform is a mere surrogate. Whilst the qua-lity and tality (I shall explex what you ought to mean by this with its proper when and where and why and how in the subsequent sentence) are alternativomentally harrogate and arrogate, as the gates may be. [FW 149:12-32]

The “sophology of Bitchson,” Gillies contends is a slight on Bergson’s theories of time (132). However, the reticence that Joyce’s narrator voices in this passage might have more to do with the ease of identifying specific instances of memories rather than an attack on Bergson’s theory of duration. Gillies focuses on the Bitchson and Winestain (Bergson and Einstein) rather than on the “Miss Fortune […] who lost time.” Proust too appears to be the object of derision. The ease with which Marcel recalls specific memories is nowhere to be found in *Finnegans Wake*. The characters in the *Wake* all encounter new moments of perception, experience both habit and involuntary memories, and create new memory-images, but are unable to draw any of these back to their original memory-events. The *Wakian* characters are in a constant state of presentness. The closest that any character can get to an original memory is the transitions between images. Memory in the *Wake* is always caught in the middle. They are unable to connect present perception and past individual memory-images to that initial image within the aggregate (“harrogate and arrogate”) of pure memory.

To understand Joyce conceptualizes memory, we must first look at how Joyce reverse-engineers memories to find the triggering original memory-event in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce uses much larger cultural markers than a single individual’s memory to highlight the missing isolated memory-image. By first examining the search for memories, we are able to see better the moments of transmutation in *Finnegans Wake* that inform the later moments of slippage in Beckett’s work. Like the characters themselves, memories in *Finnegans Wake* are in constant flux. By examining the act of transmutation we can see the changes memory undergoes when *Wakian* characters find it impossible to access any kind of legitimate original memory. Both the
absence of genuine original memory-images and the constant change that memory experiences
point to Stephan’s declaration at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephan’s
desire to “forge in the smithy of [his] soul” (213) the consciousness of his people comes full
circle in *Finnegans Wake*. Since both individual and cultural memories are inaccessible,
memory, for Joyce, becomes a series of forgeries.

Joyce is not the first to tackle these issues, of course. He operates within an Irish tradition
by questioning the authenticity of memory and the identity that is created around it. In *Tristram
Shandy*, Sterne employed similar omissions to those that we see both in *Finnegans Wake* and
later in Beckett’s *Watt*. The elided details replaced with ***s in Chapter XX or Chapter XXII, or
the completely empty Chapter XVIII & XIX, speak not only to the inconsistency or unreliability
of memory but also to the notion of remembering what one chooses. The cock-and-bull story that
Sterne creates through *Shandy* is thematically similar to Joyce’s *Wake*, but Swift’s skepticism in
*Gulliver’s Travels* is more closely related to the textual inauthenticity that Joyce forges in the
*Wake*. Gulliver’s spatially mapped memory in the *Wake*. For each instance of storytelling, we not
only see a shift in language (and learn how Gulliver comes to this new language), but we also
find that he remembers these instances based on where they happened geographically. Each
instance has a time and a place that corresponds with the concurrent memory creation. These
mythical lands and people mutate as easily in Gulliver’s memory as the avatars in *Finnegans
Wake*.

Swift’s conclusion—albeit a bit frustrated—seems to be the impossibility of authentic
communication through language due, in large part, to translation or transcription. The middle
stage (for Swift, translation) changes the original into something entirely different. Swift’s
protagonist continually muddles, mumbles through, or misinterprets the languages and the stories
during his adventures (even those mediated by a translator). This conclusion does appear in text,
but appears briefly as Gulliver speaks with a necromantically resurrected Alexander in
Glubdubdrib: “Alexander was called up into the room: it was with great difficulty that I
understood his Greek, and had but little of my own” (184). Despite the fact that they cannot
communicate, Gulliver is able to garner the meaning of their conversation. Swift’s skepticism of
the authenticity of communication—or perhaps the authentic memory of language, specifically

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writing and the written word—comes full circle while Gulliver is in the Grand Academy of Laputa, where language is reduced to un-signified symbols and mechanical reproduction.

This mechanization of words and stories might most closely approximate the plagiarizing Shem as he forges palimpsests: an enactment of Wittgenstein’s words on the arrangement and understanding of knowledge. He says, “problems are solved, not by reporting new experience, but by arranging what we have always known” (§109). Like Cavell, we must go back and challenge what we assumed to know as true. As he explains, “what precedes certain discoveries is a necessity to return to a work, in fact or in memory, as to unfinished business” (Disowning Knowledge 85). We so often return only in memory to these events, and, then, misremember them, or appropriate these misrememberings as authentic memory. By validating Joyce’s example of recreational re-creation, the reader has been duped. In reading this narrative of forgetting, have we forgotten the claim that young Stephen makes in Portrait? We have avoided what we know, that a prominent and recurrent character (not to mention the one often used to represent Joyce himself) has declared that he will create—will forge—this consciousness. If we misremember this fact, we miss the joke as well. More importantly though, when we overlook this transformational act, we fail to see the way memory shapes language in all its representative forms.

At the beginning of the most popular section of Finnegans Wake, the Washerwomen, Joyce draws attention to the telling of tales, or rather the variance of the telling of tales, and the notion that that variance should be obvious. But he says it anyway: “Well, you know or don’t you kennet or haven’t I told you every telling has a tailing and that’s the he and the she of it” [FW 213:11-12]. The concept of variance within repetition seems so native to reading Joyce that it should be unnecessary to remind either reader or character that every tale has its own way of being told. But he says it anyway.

This repetition, the oldest rhetorical device, should, of course, draw our attention, and here specifically to the phrase “every telling has a tailing,” or the telling of tales. We all know how telling tales works: characters are introduced, plots begin to develop as the character experiences this or that event, and so on. Whenever tales don’t begin this way—when our genre-based expectation is subverted by the omission of this linear development—we take notice. Immediately, we notice that Samuel Beckett’s Molloy fails to begin right away. Rather Molloy
begins not through introducing the component characters and important plot points, but by *talking* about beginning rather than simply beginning the narrative proper: “I began at the beginning, like an old bollocks, can you imagine that? Here’s my beginning. Because they’re keeping it apparently” (8). Beckett provides us the beginning of beginnings. While he does not give us the Bergsonian presentness of the story, Molloy’s narrator does provide the first telling of the first tale. As Gillies explains, the original telling (or experience) is always built into every subsequent telling (or experience) that resembles the initial memory-image (136).

Of course, the cyclical nature of history is pronounced in *Finnegans Wake*, but the question of *why* remains. In *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*, Clive Hart asserts that this type of ritualistic return to pattern and revisitation of motif is the staving off of forgetfulness (53). Whether this type of mytho-historic accumulation is the same thing as mankind’s forgetful nature is unclear. This forgetfulness seems somehow far more fabricated than incidental. In the second epigraph, the speaker announces that the memory of something is about to be both unveiled and un-availed. There is no subject here. Is it that the memory is inaccessible or forgotten? This inaccessible memory appears to the Ur memory—the initial event—which is always inaccessible in Joyce’s translations of the various world creation stories. Even as Joyce moves the mytho-narratives backwards towards a point of origin, he simultaneously moves them forwards as he “encircle him circuly” [*FW* 505:13]. Because of this dual movement Joyce cannot translate the initial event. Like the black hole, the story is drawn toward the initial event, but the original point of origin remains unobservable.

The key to *Finnegans Wake*, like *Molloy*, is a question of beginnings. However, unlike *Molloy*, which bluntly states that it is beginning its beginning, we never see the beginning—the origin event—in the *Wake*. There is no perception of a material event. There is no discernible actual event, only a fluid virtual representation of the event. All we ever see are the permutations or the consequences, some more closely positioned to the origin than others. The closest that we can come in the *Wake* is an allusion to the beginning (the fortunate fall or *felix culpa*), which is always paired with H.C.E. as the tumbler (“O foenix culprit!” [*FW* 23.16]), and is recalled mostly in this section as the dead Tim Finnegan “Oh Finlay coldpalled!” [*FW* 506.9] (*Finlay* as in Tim Finnegan or Finn McCool or H.C.E., and *coldpalled* as in deathly pallor or cold and pallbearer-ed). Bernard Benstock criticizes Niall Montgomery’s reading of the pun on St.
Augustine’s exclamation “O felix culpa” as missing the underlying suggestion of universal sexual guilt in favor of propounding the concept of Original Sin (82). However, Benstock oversimplifies this notion as well. Instead, we should consider Walter Benjamin’s citation of Karl Kraus’s *Worte in Versen*: original sin is not the goal, rather “Origin is the goal” (261). The *Wake* always begins *in medias res* (like the *Odyssey* or *Paradise Lost* and later *Molloy*) rather *ab ovo* (like *Tristram Shandy*). Even in the most basic stories, we never see the beginning. Consider the Edenic reference in the epigraph. In this instance, *in the beginning was a story being told of Adam post-creation and post-lapsarian lives, not the story of (or perhaps narration of) Adam’s creation, or anything anticipating that creation. There is no Verse 1 of Chapter 1 (i.e. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” or “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”). The narrative threads in the *Wake* appear already formed, like Athena bursting full-grown from Zeus’s head.

We see this model patterned throughout the *Wake* (though typically in a Vicoian vein). The first consequence leads to the second, but the third is not only a byproduct of the second, but also an ideological accumulation of the first and second; the third consequence would be both a byproduct of the third, and an accumulation of the first two consequences. Thus in the Vicoian structure of the *Wake* the Age of Gods leads to the Age of Heroes, and the combination of those two ages (or the acts and ideals therein) lead to the Age of Men, and all three ages combine in the ricorso. We find the structure specifically developing in content as well. The inquisitors find Yuan drunkenly sprawled or crucified in the flowery middenheap. Consequently, they interrogate him. The entirety of Book III Chapter 3 is that interrogation coupled with the drunkenness leads to an inebriatedly (recodified and unfinished) telling of all those events that brought him to this point (i.e. H.C.E and A.L.P. first coming together and producing the twins onwards), and so on.

Historically, we imagine this kind of consequence as a linear progression (consequence 1 leads to consequence 2, etc). The trends of most Western histories develop the same way. In the Judeo-Christian canon we see this trend develop through expulsions: Satan first breaks with God, and we find the repetition of that pride-based break in Eden. Satan is expelled by God from Heaven, and consequent of Satan’s and their own actions, Adam & Eve are expelled from Eden. Then Cain is expelled by Adam, Ham is expelled by Noah, Ishmael by Abraham, Jacob by Isaac,
Joseph by his brothers, and the Israelites are expelled by the Egyptians. The ancient Greek cosmology happens with births and coups: Ouranos sires the Titans, and foresees that they will overthrow him, thus he imprisons them in Gaia; consequentially Gaia helps Kronos usurp Ouranos (and, incidentally, produces many other offspring) and takes power. As a consequence of his own actions, he cunningly eats his children before they can vie for power with him. Despite his attempt at infantiphagy, Kronos is overthrown by Zeus. Zeus follows his father’s and grandfather’s methods and eats Metis (with whom he has coupled), and, consequentially, Athena is born from Zeus’s head. That birth consequentially drives Hera to parthenogenically produce Hephaestus, and so on (or the Titanomachy, Gigantomachy, Theomachy). Norse cosmology develops with counterparts and dualities in the battles between the Æsir & Ásynjur and Jotans, Jotans and Humans, etc. However, if we chart out the typical readings of these mythologies by combining Badiou’s evental site chain and Bergson’s memory cone (see Chapter 1§3), we see that the history of events stems from a single point of origin:

Figure 1.7: The Event-Myth Tree: an incorporation of Badiou’s Event Trajectory Model and Bergson’s Memory Cone.
From the initial event we see a series of consequences develop. While the events vary in detail from one another, they remain thematically consistent. Each event is an independent monadic moment, but extends to interact with every subsequent monadic moment. The Judeo-Christian mythos begins with the Void being replaced by Heaven and Earth (IE\textsubscript{Jc}), the Greek with Chaos (IE\textsubscript{G}), the Norse with airs of Fire & Ice (IE\textsubscript{N}). The consequences work likewise. The first one involves power struggle between creator and created. The first Judeo-Christian consequence is Satan’s challenge to God (C\textsubscript{Jc}\textsuperscript{1}), while the first Greek consequence is Ouranos’s eating his children (C\textsubscript{G}\textsuperscript{1}), and Ymir begetting Bure (C\textsubscript{N}\textsuperscript{1}) in the Norse mythos. The second set of consequences focuses on the expulsion or imprisonment of the losing party: Satan’s expulsion (C\textsubscript{Jc}\textsuperscript{2}), Ouranos’s imprisonment (C\textsubscript{G}\textsuperscript{2}), and Ymir’s murder (C\textsubscript{N}\textsuperscript{2}). The third consequence shows a repetition in action as the consequences begin to accumulate: Adam & Eve suffering their own fall mirroring Satan’s expulsion (C\textsubscript{Jc}\textsuperscript{3}), Zeus eating Metis (C\textsubscript{G}\textsuperscript{3}), and Baldr’s murder by his brother Höðr (C\textsubscript{N}\textsuperscript{3}). Every subsequent consequence both develops new byproducts while accumulating byproducts related to the initial event (for instance C\textsubscript{Jc}\textsuperscript{X} might be Noah’s olive branch and Christ’s cross, C\textsubscript{G}\textsuperscript{X} might be Odysseus’ bedpost, and C\textsubscript{N}\textsuperscript{X} could be the tree-grazing goat, Heiðrún, that produces all the Scandinavian rivers). In each of these cases, at least one byproduct remains consistent: the Tree (the Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil, the tree that Zeus is hidden in, or the World Tree, Ydddrasil).

Joyce’s interest in the memory of these initial events seems to lie in two areas: the byproduct of the initial event and the innovations of specific consequences. The important innovation in the Greek trend, for instance, is this: Ouranos imprisons Kronos, Kronos imprisons Zeus, Zeus imprisons Prometheus and Meits. From these latter actions two transformative innovations occur. In both instances the victims (they known for their cunning) are able to produce a new free radical consequence; that is, they make possible an evolution in the traditional consequence trend. Prometheus’s imprisonment is the consequence of not imprisoning (through physical or intellectual means) his offspring, mankind. Because Prometheus first releases Athena from Zeus’s head (because he ate Metis), Athena is able to instruct Prometheus on how to bring fire to man, thus enabling man to create/invent all other things (like civilization)—allowing the human story to move forward.
That byproduct is as far back as Joyce translates these histories. The beginning is absent in the *Wake*, represented only by silence. This silence is always set apart and appears in a numerically significant fashion: three times, “(Silent.)” [*FW* 14:6], “(Silents)” [*FW* 334:32], and “SILENCE.” [*FW* 501:6]. He never focuses on the initial event, rather on the first common byproducts and consequences. The silence is an interruption of a previous line, and is always passed by quickly (moving immediately into noise of various kinds—history lessons on 566 A.D. and 1132 A.D. [*FW* 14:11], the “mewseyfume’s” lithographs on the “mizzatant wall” [*FW* 334:24], or stage directions [*FW* 501: 6-7].

The narrative of Book III chapter 3 suffers the same kind of noisy interference of memory. Here again we see the story start in the midst of things as Yuan is commanded to retell his own creation narrative, as the inquisitors demand he “Recount!” about his “Ma’s da. Da’s ma” [*FW* 496:17 & 20] or his “ouragan of spaces” [*FW* 504:14]. His first implies his connection to Milton on comments about his own style (“Your bard’s highview” [*FW* 504:16] and “without too much italiote interferance” [*FW* 504:17-18]). Yuan’s telling of his origin, however, becomes progressively more Miltonic as Yuan proceeds with references to Milton’s characters, such as silvertongued Satan (“Godamedy, you’re a delville of a tolkar!” [*FW* 503:17]), Adam as he names the animals (“put his own nickname on every toad, duck and herring” [*FW* 506:1-2]), and the soaring angels of paradise (“Amengst menlike trees walking or trees like angels weeping nobirdy aviar soar anywing to eagle it!” [*FW* 505: 16-17]).

He consistently develops allusions to themes and events in *Paradise Lost*, such as the serpent “snakedst-tu-naughsy” [*FW* 505:7], the earth and Eve dichotomy “creation and her leaves” [*FW* 505:9], and the repeated sinning “sinsin-sinning” [*FW* 505:9-10]. More tellingly, Joyce conflates the fall and the tree in phrases like “Upfellbowm” [*FW* 505:29] and “treemanangel” [*FW* 505:33]. The “treemanangel” or tree-man-angel and “menlike trees” or men who are treelike points to the focus that Joyce is putting on the role of the tree in the creation narrative. He again concentrates on the tree when he alludes to God’s commanding Adam to admit to eating from the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in “Telleth that eke the treeth?” [*FW* 505:19], and “Woe! Woe! So that was kow he became the foerst of our treefellers?” [*FW* 506:15-16], and “Now, no hiding your wren under a bushle! What was it doing there, for
instance? Standing foreninst us. In Summerian sunshine? And in Cimmerian shudders. You saw it visibly from your hidingplace? No. From my invisibly lyingplace” [FW 504:3-9].

This telling of a tale also draws together the parallels of the Judeo-Christian and Norse myths (as well as Sumerian Ur myths) as Joyce pairs Adam & Eve, the first couple, with Yggdrasil as he says, “An evernasty ashtray. I see. Now do you know the wellknown kikkinmidden where the illassorted first couple first met with each other?” [FW 503:7-9] and “There used to be a tree stuck up? An overlisting eshtree? There used, sure enough. Beside the Annar. At the ford of Slivenamond. Oakley Ashe’s elm” [FW 503:30-32]. Yuan, however, never goes further back than the Miltonic telling of this creation tale—there is no Void, no chaos—the characters are always already in motion. The closest that Yuan can come is the trees in these stories.

The trees, a particular initial event byproduct, might allow Joyce to unwind Celtic cosmology. The reason that Celtic cosmology won’t fit neatly into the Event-Myth Tree (figure 2.3) is because the Celts have no creation narrative (if there was one, it didn’t survive the Roman empire). The Irish are missing the fundamental piece of cultural identity that would allow them to form a cosmology completely separate from the rest of the Western world. These Celtic mythic cycles are all derived explicitly and directly from the Greek or Judeo-Christian mythogenealogies (i.e. Cessair, Noah’s granddaughter, lead the early inhabitants). We never see the initial event—no chaos, no void, no word. Each of the Cycles begins in medias res: biblical or magical in the Mythological Cycle, romantic in the Fenian Cycle, heroic in the Ulster Cycle, or all of these (to lesser degrees) in the Historical cycle. The earliest instance that we find in these Cycles is the long onomastic lists that comprise the Metrical Dindshenchas (Metrical Lore of Places), which would parallel it with Adam’s nicknaming animals; or the Lebor Gabála Érenn (The Book of Invasions or The Book of the Taking of Ireland) that traces the Irish patriarchial line directly back to Noah making it a late Genesis equivalent at best. Animals in Irish cosmology have always had names. Adam and the Earth have always existed, and there has never been just the Void. Irish cosmology has no initial event. There is no original memory-image to organize the subsequent images. The linkages between perception and the pure memory aggregate is missing, and it must then be forged anew.
However, the initial event byproduct of the trees allows Joyce to move closer to the preter-rational cosmological world. The Celtic trees (*Crann Bethadh* or *Trees of Life*) and their counterpart deities (in the surviving *Lebor Gabála Érenn* account) precede the Irish alphabet, and the letters (thus language) are ultimately derived from it. The third tree (Ash) is what we find Joyce returning to in this cosmological vein (though certainly not exclusively). Each of these trees not only has a counterpart deity, but a totem animal and element as well. The Ash was a sacred chieftain tree, which was associated both with lightning strikes and the Adder. The prominence of this tree isn’t surprising given its totem’s association in other cosmologies: the adder/caduceus as a symbol of Hermes, Loki, and Satan, each of these acting as tricksters or storytellers. Hermes is perhaps most important here as he forms the model of alchemical Hermetic methods concerned with transmutation of substances. All of these mytho-genealogies deal with trees as symbols of knowledge, but more importantly the mutation of knowledge into a more permanent form (that is, the written word, the letter). The emphasis of Norse mythology might have to do with the chimerical nature of that transmutation, as Yggdrasil is guarded by both the serpent Jormungandr, and devoured by the basilisk pair Nidhogg (the serpent) and Gullinkambi (the rooster). Like the Edenic forbidden tree, the Norse tree, Yggdrasil, is where Odin obtained the Rune Alphabet, and sacrificed an eye to gain wisdom.

Translation, transmutation, chimerical biology, and alchemy are all bound for Joyce, as they represent the flux of being. Though most connections between the basilisk and alchemy come from the 13th century, uber-alchemist, Hermes Trismegistus, who is credited with creating the legend of the basilisk’s ashes being able to convert silver into gold.

The connections to Trismegistus and the basilisk could also come from Stern’s *Tristam Shandy* (whose father nearly named him Trismegistus or Archimedes [in chapter 19] both famous alchemists) or from Jonathan Swift’s “Ode to Sir William Temple”: “See how she rears her head, / And rolls about her dreadful eyes, / To drive all virtue out, or look it dead! / ‘Twas sure this basilisk sent Temple thence.” Temple was also Swift’s employer, who negotiated the marriage of William of Orange and Mary II—a unique protestant chimera in their own right.

Beyond the recurring trees, Joyce also hints at an earlier, more fundamental (the pun on fundament would not be lost on Joyce) element: earth, from which both God and Prometheus made man/Adam. In quick succession, Joyce moves from merely mentioning dirt (“Simply awful
the dirt” [FW 503:7] and “dirt on him than an old dog has fleas” [FW 506:36]) to connecting the fundament to our ability to speak: “Get out, you dirt! A strangely striking part of speech for the hottest worked word of ur sprogue. You’re not! Unhindered and odd times? Mere thumbshow? Lately?” [FW 507:21-23]. The “ur sprogue” we should focus on is your brogue, but Úr or Úir is also the Irish name of the eighteenth letter of the Ogham alphabet, meaning “clay,” “earth,” or “soil.” Ur, in southern Mesopotamia, was considered one of the earliest known civilizations in world history. The Ur, as described in the Biblical book of Genesis, is the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham, thus the beginning point of the Western lines of Hebraic man. Moreover, Ur is the richest archaeological find of cuneiform, the earliest written language. The mid-nineteenth century excavations of the ziggurats by J.G. Taylor, as described in “Volume V” of Leonard Woolley’s Ur Excavations (1939), showed that Ur was part of the ancient Babylonian necropolis even after it had ceased to be inhabited. The cuneiform was preserved largely in shards of broken pottery and limestone tablets from the tombs (Woolley 94-97). Ur, as language, represents what we traditionally have considered the unified pre-Babel (proto-World), or pure, language.

It is hard to consider the phrase “pure language” without thinking immediately of Benjamin’s discussion of translation in his introduction to “The Translation of Baudelaire’s Tableaux parisiens”—especially given his invocation of Messianic tsimtsum:

Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel. (78)

This kind of quasi-translation and amalgamation bears a striking resemblance to Joyce’s polyglot portmanteau words, a series of creations that seem as if they come as close to Benjamin’s notion of pure language as possible: “For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language” (80). Joyce conveys similar phono/archeological tendencies when he
describes the “clay-layers” of Oisin making gradual “morphological changes in [the] body politic”:

> these modes carrying us back to the superimposed claylayers of eocene and pleastoseen formation and the gradual morphological changes in our body politic which Professor Ebahi-Ahuri of Philadespoinis (Ill)—whose bluebutterbust I have just given his coupe de grass to—neatly names a boîte á surprises. [FW 165:25-30]

In this instance, Professor Ebahi-Ahuri’s interpretation superimposes the image of hod-carrying ancient Celts (“pleastoseen” as the Pleistocene epoch of geological history) over the contemporary Irish “body politic” (British Plasticine modelling clay), which creates a new barrier to realizing the original or genuine image of either the Celts or the Irish. The break, or here “coupe de grass,” matches the barrier it must overcome. These breaks are always subjective based on how we understand these barriers being conceived or imagined. Like Vico’s ricorso, these barriers are accumulations of the previous consequences that must be destroyed to be resurrected, or more specifically we must be able to see both the image of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil simultaneously with the crucifix.

To grasp the genuine relationship between an original and a translation requires an investigation analogous to the argumentation by which a critique of cognition would have to prove the impossibility of an image theory. There it is a matter of showing that in cognition there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it, if it dealt with images of reality; here it can be demonstrated that no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife—which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living—the original undergoes a change. (73)
Every stage of language (proto-, preter-, or otherwise) undergoes this type of translation and change. Even in the development stage of language, the nursery rhyme, we find content translation. With the “House that Jack Built” we find Benjaminian translation throughout Joyce’s text. We see it first with Zeus & Prometheus: “to some hastyswasty timberman torch priest, flamenfan, the ward of the wind that lightened the fire that lay in the wood that Jove bolt” [FW 80:26-28]; later with God & Adam: “This is the glider that gladdened the girl that list to the wind that lifted the leaves that folded the fruit that hung on the tree that grew in the garden Gough gave” [FW 271:25-29]; and finally with Zeus & Europa/Lyda (who are simultaneously H.C.E. and A.L.P.): “So this was the dope that woolied the cad that kinked the ruck that noised the rape that tried the sap that hugged the mort? That legged in the hoax that joke bilked” [FW 511:32-34]. This type of accumulated history is something that Benjamin explains in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” as he discusses the interconnected, and cyclical nature of history, History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger’s leap into the past. (261)

Benjamin says to understand the modality of translation we always must go back to the original to find the laws governing the potential translation to determine whether this translation can have a dual meaning (70). However, without that original, we cannot identify a legitimate or pure language. Without the zero point (the memory-event) language will always be a translation. Translation, in these instances, include the original sense of the word as well: to transform, as in Bottom’s transformation into a half-man/half-ass in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (“Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou are translated!” [III.i.118]). And like Bottom, the linguistic creations are always evolving as free radical variable mutations with “The form masculine. The gender
feminine” [FW 505:25]. The transformative innovations allow the stories to develop into something new and chimerical rather than simply stagnating in the routine ritual of slight variances in story translations—something new, not the origin. The innovations in memory ultimately point out how these characters are always in the past. Although, the characters think they are experiencing the what Bergson would describe as presentness, Joyce shows how these characters are perceiving the present as past—they think they are hearing the first telling of a tale (the telling in the present), but the characters are framed within a narration (so the telling has already happened). Those characters who are seeing the first telling of the first tale, have already seen it since they are described within the frame of the re-telling; or as Joyce puts it, “And were they watching you as watcher as well?” [FW 508:35-36]. The best that these characters can do is to forge or fabricate of the point of origin.

All memory in the Wake is mediated through the surrounding contextual memories. The accretion of memories always includes those memories adjacent to them. Because of this accretion, the memory-event is inaccessible. Just like the image of the tape reel Bergson introduces in the Creative Mind and Beckett uses in Krapp's Last Tape, the memory process in the Wake can only be one of ongoing creation and compilation—like the flux of forms from Murphy’s third zone—rather than the discovery of some original memory-event. The memory-event of H.C.E.’s crime in the park, like the moment when the Irish became Irish is always out of reach, just over the event horizon.
CHAPTER IV

ZONES OF INDETERMINATION:
BECKETT'S CONSCIOUSNESS, COGNITION AND THE EVENT OF MEMORY

Thus Murphy felt himself split in two, a body and a mind. They had intercourse apparently, otherwise he could not have known that they had anything in common. But he felt his mind to be bodytight and did not understand through what channel the intercourse was effected, nor how the two experiences came to overlap.

—Murphy

In Hidden Drives, J.D. O’Hara dismisses the chapter on Murphy’s mind as “irrelevant” since the chapter “describes an impossible Murphy,” and it “does not bring together the bits and pieces of philosophy and philosophical descriptions of the mind with which it and the novel are filled” (54). However, O’Hara’s discussion points out that even though this “deliberate set-piece” (53) does not fit into Murphy’s narrative, it does exactly what Beckett claims Finnegans Wake does: it enacts its subject. O’Hara means Murphy’s philosophical journey (or the psychological depth of the character) when he talks of this set-piece “enact[ing] something,” but, by short extension, we can see how this chapter of Murphy—even as an out-of-place set-piece—enacts the mind, or rather begins to enact the mind. At the very least, it demonstrates memory in the apperceptive mind that Beckett continues to develop in later texts like Watt, Texts for Nothing and the Unnamable.

In Murphy, Beckett develops a new approach to memory that both incorporates and challenges the depictions established by Bergson and Joyce. The evolution of memory-events in Beckett’s work begins with the complication of Cartesian Dualism in Murphy. Murphy is not only the point of departure for Beckett’s explanations of the mind, but also establishes the forms that mind will take in later work. In the set-piece describing Murphy’s mind (chapter six of
Murphy), the narrator depicts Murphy’s mind as split into three zones. While Murphy desires to exist solely in the third zone (or “dark” zone that contains “flux of forms” that constantly materialize and dematerialize) like the patients of the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, Murphy appears to operate primarily in the first, the zone of “light,” that contains “forms with associations.” These associations appear largely as Murphy’s perceptions of the patients at the MMM, whose cells are something like the second zone of “half-light,” that contains “forms without associations.” By examining this schema of the mind in light of Bergson’s forms of memory, readers can understand how Beckett is not simply writing about the mind, but enacting cognition and consciousness in this text. As he explores the nature and paradoxes of being, he shows, as Steven Pinker says, how the mind works.

Descartes’ influence in Murphy is so pervasive that one might easily mistake Beckett for a Cartesian dualist. The “the body” and “the mind” binary appears in, at least, 16 overt instances throughout the novel. Some stem from the narration focusing on Murphy himself, as we see in the novels’ opening pages as he sits bound and rocking in the chair: “First it gave his body pleasure, it appeased his body. Then it set him free in mind. For it was not until his body was appeased that he could come alive in his mind [...]” (2), and again, “As he lapsed in body he felt himself coming alive in mind, set free to move among its treasures. The body has its stock, the mind its treasures” (111). Other instances come from characters referring to Murphy as we see with Miss Counihan’s post-mortem description of Murphy, “He did not suffer from this—er—psychosomatic fistula, Murphy my fiance. Both mind and body, neither mind that is nor body, what can there be beside him [...]” (219). The binary appears again and again, culminating in the “kicking” metaphor that delineates the actual and virtual, but the two polemic states are not the real focus of the mind/body problem. Murphy’s division, though, is not a Cartesian split. The Cartesian connector, as Neary points out, for Murphy—his conarium, or pineal gland—has “shrunk to nothing” (6).

Beckett’s first published novel challenges the binary of body and mind by focusing not on their separation, but on their interaction. In doing so, Beckett creates a third category, something between mind and body, but partaking of both: memory. Murphy is always “dimly” aware of the interaction of memory as an event. His body and mind converge—what Murphy’s narrator refers to as a “congruence” of “the world of [Murphy’s] mind with the world of his
body” (109). The novel’s sixth chapter opens with a poetic explanation of Murphy’s interaction with his own mind: “Amor intellectualis quo Murphy se ipsum amat” (107), which the narrator roughly translates three chapters later, as, “the intellectual love in which alone he [Murphy] could love himself” (179). Anthony Ulhmann points out that this quotation is taken directly from Spinoza’s 35th Proposition in Ethics, with the small change of God (Deus) to Murphy (98).

The narrator, shortly thereafter, explains Murphy’s intellectualization of his mind by describing it as a closed internal system. “Murphy’s mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without” (107). Such self-reflexive picturing illustrates how Murphy simultaneously conceives of his own perceptive process. Apperception, which Ackerley and Gontarski describe as “the active process of the mind reflecting upon itself, [...] the consciousness of being conscious” (Grove Companion 16), might be a better description than perception for how his mind pictured itself, since it should not, however, be able to see itself from the outside if indeed it were “hermetically closed” to everything without. Thus, one half of this perception is virtual, the other actual. If the mind is closed it should not be able to interact with anything outside of itself, and thus should not be able to convey the hollowness that the narrator describes. At first glance, this description resembles Bergson’s initial reading of Leibniz’s monad model in Matter and Memory (38) but is actually a development of that idea. That is, rather than a true monad, Murphy’s mind might be a dyad. His mind is closed but also viewable by another interactive version of itself. Such tautological perception is not a single instance, nor is it limited to Murphy alone.

The narrator describes Celia, too, with such a dual nature. Her mind is more porous than Murphy’s as she moves into “the cell of her mind” to be with Murphy (149). Thus Celia is able to simultaneously perceive her mind both actually and virtually. That perception should be impossible since the viewer (her mind) viewing itself is closed off from any vantage point from which it should be able to see itself. The self-reflexivity in the self-loving pun on Spinoza is similar to the finite regress that Murphy discovers by looking into Mr. Endon’s eyes, as he says, vaguely, “the last at last seen of him himself unseen by him and of himself” or, specifically, “the last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Endon was Mr. Murphy unseen by Mr. Endon. This was also the last Murphy saw of Murphy” (250). Murphy seems to believe that he is now shut off from himself,
but regardless of access he is still painfully aware of perceiving himself (possibly for the last time).

Although the term *closed system* has recently been re-popularized in systems theory (as a state that is isolated from surrounding states), Beckett’s closed system looks much more like the Bergsonian version of Leibnizian monad model. The adapted Pythagorian circle-within-the-sphere image of Leibniz’s monad (discussed as spheres in sections 83-85 of *Monadology* and the 13th section of *Discourse on Metaphysics*) might be how Murphy’s narrator is attempting to explain his mind, but such a mind image is impossible to realize. Since Murphy’s mind always already contains all possible past and future forms (as representations), it should remain in a constant or stagnant state. His mind should be something like Bergson’s description of Leibniz’s “God,” in *Creative Evolution*, as “the substance that has no point of view” (352). Without a change in view, the individual image will remain the same. The aggregate representation must always remain free from external input for his mind to function as he imagines it as a closed system: “his mind was a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body” (109). Murphy, the narrator explains, takes little interest in anything that might present counter-evidence that his mind is a hermetically sealed or closed system. Murphy idealizes his mind breaking free from and operating independently of his body. The narrator describes Murphy’s body laying in a state of “precarious abeyance” so that his mind is free to move (110). However, Murphy’s mind is not free from perceptions of the world outside as his mind becomes privy to the actions of his body. Even as he sees it as a closed system, his mind is in constant transaction with his body. By looking at Murphy’s mind in context of Bergson’s reading of Leibniz, we can see that the Leibnizian monad becomes a Diogenian dyad, but more importantly it becomes the same type of dyad found in *Finnegans Wake*. 
Sighle Kennedy, in *Murphy’s Bed*, first attempts to explain *Murphy’s* “surreal associations” by examining the themes from “Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce.” While her study draws together Beckett’s fiction (*Murphy*), criticism (“D...B.V..J” & *Proust*), and poetry (“Whoroscope”), she limits her focus to Danten and mythological allusions shared between Beckett and Joyce. Even Proust’s concept of Time, in her reading, becomes a kind of surreal mythic beast. Although the allusions that Kennedy draws out seem more closely related to the zones of flattened cylinder of *The Lost Ones* that those of *Murphy*, her reading of *Murphy* does, however, bring together the sphere and zones of Murphy’s mind with the spheres and zones that Joyce cultivates in *Finnegans Wake*. With the invocation of Milton’s love-song, in Book II Chapter III, we see the mind along with these zones appear in threes: “Meltons and his lovsang of the short and shifty, I will turn my thinks to things alove and I will speak but threes ones, sayd he, my truest patrions good founter, poles a port and zones asunder” [*FW* 328:6-9].

Kennedy’s reading of the monads, spheres, and cycles in Beckett’s “Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce” shows the development between Murphy’s zones, Vico’s cyclic sphere, and Dante’s planes, but it also associates Murphy’s third, dark zone with Dante’s Hell and the antithesis of the Viconian heroic first zone. By limiting this connection to an allusion to the Danten binary of Heaven & Hell, Kennedy incorrectly assigns these zones. What “Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce” actually seems to indicate is that Paradise, which Beckett calls, “the static lifelessness of unrelieved immaculation,” should be the first zone of light; Hell, “the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness,” should be the second zone of half-light (as *Play*’s W1
indicates with “Hellish half-light”); and Purgatory then, the “flood of movement and vitality,” should be the third zone of dark (*Disjecta* 33). By placing Purgatory in Beckett’s third zone (the “flux of forms” [*M* 112]), we can see how Beckett operates in the tradition of Joyce to create something like the model of Murphy’s mind. In “Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce,” Beckett explains that where Dante’s *Purgatory* is “absolute progression,” Joyce’s is always in “flux” or the “absolute absence of the Absolute” (*D* 33). The absolute absence is similar to the Nothingness that Murphy is able to momentarily experience as Endon and the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat melt into the background “buzzing confusion” of his mind.

However, a more direct connection to Joyce’s model appears in in Book II, Chapter II of *Finnegans Wake*, when Shem, Shaun, and Issy have begun their lessons. As their proctor attempts to explain grammar, history, letter writing, and mathematics, the children add their own commentary to the lessons. The most memorable of these is the Euclidean diagram that the boys turn into a dirty joke in the *marginalia*. This change begins with Shaun’s question, “WHY MY AS LIKewise WHIS HIS” [*FW* 293:1-3]. Shem’s answer indicates their shared point of origin—the “Uteraltrnce or the Interplay of the Bones in the Womb” from which they emerged as “The Vortex. Spring of Sprung Verse. The Vertex” [*FW* 293: 13-22]. When the proctor lists the coordinant points as Alpha, Lambda, and Pi (or ALP), and the interconnecting sphere points are drawn together, Shem notices that the internal triangles resemble the birth canal of their mother Anna Livia Plurabelle (or ALP).

![figure 1.9 Joyce’s mathematical/biological dyad](image-url)
The diagram also serves as an illustration of the way the boys combine to produce their own type of offspring: Mark (or HCE). The boys begin as their own individual monads. Shem (Alpha or A), the left monadic sphere, and Shaun (Lambda or L), the right monadic sphere, interact to create a third space or character. The two monads become a dynad that is always coming together and falling apart. When the boys combine to become Humphrey Chimpton Earwicker (HCE), he is represented by characters like Humpty-Dumpty (first as the “humptyhillhead” who had “the great fall offwall” [FW 3:17-20]) and Tim Finnegan (as “Bygmester Finnegan” who also had a fall as “Haroun Childeric Eggberth” [FW 4:18, 25]), both of which are continually partially put back together after their respective falls. The consciousnesses of Shem and Shaun converge to form a new constantly decomposing consciousness in HCE. The two become both three and one at the same time. The three consciousnesses are still distinct monads (demonstrated by the emergences of specific personality traits), but are also a single larger monadic consciousness. The diagram shows how they are supposed to be a monad comprised of monads, or a macrosystem of distinct yet similar microsystems.

All of these annotations, marginalia, and connections are centered around the proctor’s mathematical lesson on Coss or the Unknown Quantity. In this section, that unknown quantity becomes a name: Murphy.

Coss? Cossist? Your parn! You, you make what name? (and in truth, as a poor soul is between shift and shift ere the teath he has lived through becomes the life he is to die into, he or he had albut --- he was rickets as to reasons but the balance of his minds was stables --- lost himself or himself some som-nione sciupiones, soswhitchoverswitch had he or he gazet, murphy come, murphy go, murphy plant, murphy grow, a maryamyriamurphies, in the lazily eye of his lapis,

[FW 293:1-10]
The proctor’s Murphy is a poor soul who is seeking the death that he can live into by losing himself when the stability of multiple minds (meliamurphies) becomes unbalanced. Like the Murphy described here, Beckett’s Murphy also has a strange walk (rickets) and focuses on the eyes (the lapis lazuli eye), but more importantly, he balances multiple areas or zones of his mind and ultimately loses himself as he gazes into Endon’s eyes. The combination of the Joycean and Leibnizean (via Bergsonian) monadic models thus closely resembles the three zones of Murphy’s mind—two interconnected areas comprised of smaller versions of the themselves, and those two areas produce a third emergent area. That emergence in Joyce is the Shem-Shaun composite of Mark; in Bergson the emergence is becoming, and in Leibniz it is extension.

Initially, in Time and Free Will, Bergson attempts to explain Leibniz’s determinism by critiquing his causal system composed entirely of monads. He says even though the single, non-interactive, unextended monad still perceives outside of itself, that perception does not necessitate the existence of other adjacent monads. However, he posits, because “real conscious states” always spread matter (as inner states), these monads should be subject to external mechanisms. Thus, “if the succession of external qualities or phenomena is understood as the succession of our own ideas,” he says, “these qualities must be regarded as simple states or perceptions, and the matter which supports them as an unextended monad, analogous to our soul” (TFW 213). That external mechanism could be perception that the monad has of itself, which would indicate that the monad is not necessarily impermeable (or entirely isolated), but actually always interacting with its own representation, or the double of itself (its own perception).

Bergson later returns to monads, in the fourth chapter of Creative Evolution, as he discusses Spinoza and Leibniz again in order to critique Descartes. To do so, he focuses on the necessary multiplicity of monads, and how the operation of those monads, even in isolation, must be perceptive. “In just the same way, the visible relief of an object is equivalent to the whole set of stereoscopic views taken of it from all points, so that, instead of seeing in the relief a juxtaposition of solid parts, we might quite as well look upon it as made of the reciprocal complementarity of these whole views, each given in block, each indivisible, each different from all the others and yet representative of the same thing” (CE 351-352). The whole for Leibniz, he goes on to explain, is God or the substance with no point of view. So, to extend itself spatially,
the monad as an unit must be able to perceive itself from internal and external positions. What he actually describes, though, comes closer to apperception. He explains that Leibniz’s multiplicity of monads is little more that the isolated monad engaging with the “manifold views that it can take of its own substance” (CE 353). For it to have substance, the monad must be able to extend its perception outwards. Once the monad begins to take up material space by extending, its perception, according to Bergson, will always become confused since that material perception must always stem from an imperfect mind (rather than from an ideal form of mind). That imperfect perception moves it out of the universe of isolated monads and into a multiplicity of monads, which indicates, as Bergson says, “that the real Whole has no parts, but is repeated to infinity, each time integrally (though diversely) within itself, and that all these repetitions are complementary to each other” (CE 352). These monads then, even if they remain self-centered, must interact with themselves and must create an image, memory, or understanding of their own perception. The further these monads move away from the ideal forms, the more like dynads they become. Once the monad is a physical analogue, even if it is individualized as a closed system, the development of a dynad is inevitable.

Since, for Leibniz, bodies are types of monads, they should also function as closed systems. Bergson discusses the natural inclination for bodies to be closed systems, as well. He says, “the subdivision of matter into separate bodies is relative to our perception, while the building of closed-off systems of material points is relative to our science, the living body has been separated and closed off by nature herself. It is composed of unlike parts that complete each other. It performs diverse functions that involve each other. It is an individual [...]” (CE 12). This is essentializing, though, as it discounts the body’s necessary interaction with (consumption and expulsion of) nature to survive. Likewise, the mind cannot preclude all that it encounters, even if those encounters are self-contained within a all-encompassing mind. To gain perspective, this mind must view an exterior element that resembles itself. It must become apperceptive.

The term monad itself only appears once in Murphy, as part of the description of the MMM’s padded cell’s: “the compartment was windowless, like a monad, except for the shuttered judas door, at which a sane eye appeared, or was employed to appear, at frequent intervals throughout the twenty-four hours” (181). With the inclusion of the judas door, the monad metaphor becomes imperfect. Although the narrator does not appear to be aware of it, the
model becomes a dyad of apperception, indicating the inherent transaction that must be made between the two states, which are, in this case, percipere (perceiver) and percipi (perceived). Especially in Bergson’s later reading of Leibniz’s monad populated universe, we can see something resembling Murphy within the MMM. But, like Bergson’s critique, that interaction must be apperceptive, and therefore dyadic as it incorporates a multiplicity of perceptions. The importance of this type of cognition is that it points out the impossibility of a singular, monadic existence (or the examples of life realized in the microcosmic relief) for which Murphy strives. The mind is always watching itself. It is always apperceptive, and therefore always dyadic in nature.

On its own, the mention of monad is incidental, but as it is compared with micro- and macrostates, it becomes integral to the understanding of Murphy’s mind. The narrator explains that Murphy believes he has finally found his “kindred at last” in those “melancholics” and “paranoids,” and “higher schizoids” when he arrives at the MMM (180). When the narrator describes the MMM’s effect on Murphy, we should understand the institution as a metaphor for Murphy’s understanding of his own mind. The narrator says, “What more vigorous fillip could be given to the wallows of one bogged in the big world than the example of life to all appearances inalienably realised in the little” (181). The MMM is a macrosystem of monadic microsystems. The narrator describes each cell (the “little”) as a closed system. Murphy buzzes around the ward (the “big world”), stopping to look at the patients’ individual faces through their judas doors, just as he would focus on Celia’s face in the closed system of his mind. Since he envisions them as closed systems (hermetically sealed), both are destined to fail as neither allows from dynamic change or adaptation. Without that adaptation things are lost: memories are forgotten, and patients, like Endon, disappear. Both might be recovered, but upon that recovery they are profoundly changed. Endon has transformed into a systematic auto-perceiver, and Murphy can no longer perceive Nothingness again (having briefly experienced it) as that perception will always be linked to memory-images of Nothingness.

While apperception is similar to Bergsonian memory-images, it also incorporates instances of change. In Proust, Beckett calls this a capturing. He explains, that “Marcel is uniquely gifted with transcendental apperception that can capture the Model, the Idea, the Thing in Itself” (Proust 90). On one hand, this trio looks suspiciously like Bergson’s divisions of
consciousness where the Model is physical perception, the Idea is the aggregate form of representative memory-images, and the Thing in Itself is a memory-event of the two interacting. On the other hand, it emphasizes the active change necessary in apperception. For the mind to be conscious of itself as mind, it must always incorporate the cumulative representations of the earlier memory-images of the mind while perceiving the mind anew.

The narrator initially defended the completeness of Murphy’s self-contained mind, explaining that the hollow hermetically-sealed sphere contained a monadic universe. This sphere containing some version of everything is what Murphy later revels in when he discovers the macrosystem of monads at the MMM. He says tautologically, “[the sealed nature of Murphy’s mind] was not an impoverishment, for it excluded nothing that it did not itself contain. Nothing ever had been, was or would be in the universe outside it but was already present as virtual, or actual, or virtual rising into actual, or actual falling into virtual, in the universe inside it” (M 107). While this exclusive statement appears to say that Murphy’s mind contains everything already, it points, at best, to the Nothingness contained in his mind, or at worst, Murphy’s intellectual denial, such as the narrator’s later explanation, “Nothing remained but to see what he wanted to see” (176). This later instance points out the inherent tension between perception and representation that the apperceptive mind always experiences. Although, Murphy’s mind challenges selective perception, the “wanted” calls to mind Bergson’s description of conscious choice in what we perceive from the totality of representation. In Matter and Memory, Bergson explains:

In one sense we might say that the perception of any unconscious material point whatever, in its instantaneousness, is infinitely greater and more complete than other, since this point gathers and transmits the influences of all the points of the material universe, whereas our consciousness only attains to certain parts and to certain aspects of those parts. Consciousness,—in regard to external perception,—lies in just this choice. But there is, in this necessary poverty of our conscious perception, something that is positive, that fortells spirit: it is, in the etymological sense of the word, discernment. (38)
Even within his all-containing sealed monadic brain, Murphy is a monad within a monad—or a microsystem within the macrosystem (just as his interactions with the monadic cells are constructed in the MMM). The narrator says, “Here he was not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom” (M 112).

The absurdity of a completely formed mental microcosmos was not lost on Bergson either. Early on in *Matter and Memory*, he explains the implausibility of even a virtual self contained, or closed system: “If it [the body] is an image, that image can give but what has been put into it, and since it is, by hypothesis, the image of my body only, it would be absurd to expect to get from it that of the whole universe” (20).

To further illustrate this point, Bergson explains the difference between perception and representation in the closed system model by proposing the physical severance of the core central nervous system organs (spinal cord, brain stem, and brain) from the afferent nervous system (any nerve fibers that transmit information towards the central nervous system). If the brain (or core CNS) is isolated from these external sensory, stimuli receptors, and transmitters, perception, he claims, is impossible (MM 4-8).

All that would remain is a type of representation. Representation, like all processes for Bergson is durative, and thus is part of a larger continuum. In this case, individual images function as microstates in the continuum of the larger representation macrostate, and those representations (as aggregates of images) form the representational end of the consciousness spectrum.

The difficulty of Bergson’s use of the term *image* is that he uses it to describe both established, or previously experienced phenomena that form representations and new material neuro-stimulitic perceptions. The image is thus not fundamentally different from representation. The image is caught somewhere between “pure perception” and “pure representation” (see also Chapter 2§1). Representations are separate (though connected) memories of perceived matter. The image is rather the focused isolated instance from all those connected representations, which interacts with the new neuro-stimulant perception to form a memory-event. That memory-event also will later be incorporated into representational aggregate, but the moment when that new perception interacts with the image from the aggregate is the instance of consciousness. Rather
than *images* aggregating, *Murphy’s* narrator describes the instance of consciousness as fluctuating *forms* coming together and falling apart.

Although this type of *closed system mind* might look like Beckett is falling into the Cartesian trap of “separating” mind from everything else (including, and perhaps specifically, the body), he is actually creating a far more complex staging. Rather than separating mind from body, Beckett is spatializing Murphy’s mind. By doing so, he creates two (nearly) simultaneous modes of perception: the actual and the virtual. Consciousness then, for Murphy, is the *very active* interaction of these two types of perception. Although not identical, this system is close to Deleuze’s idea of the machinic. This resemblance should come as no surprise, as Deleuze develops this machinic flux from Bergson’s color spectrum metaphor of duration from *Time and Free Will* (see also Chapter 2§2). *Murphy’s* divisions of perception are similar to Bergson’s distinctions in *Matter and Memory*. In its second chapter, Bergson discusses the differences in representation (the virtual) and perception (the actual) in memory. According to Bergson, memory is made possible by, what he calls, the “recognition of a perception already experienced” (81). Consciousness, he explains, is the constant comparison of a past memory-image with the present perception that spontaneously evokes that past image (81-88). The importance of this depiction of the mind, for both Beckett and Bergson, is constant bi-lateral movement between the actual, physical perceiving organs (such as the eyes or ears), and the virtual, representative capacity of the mind.

Moreover, the concepts of virtual and actual are not all that Beckett borrows from Bergson’s discussion of perception and representation. Beckett also alludes to the example that Bergson poses to illustrate the difference between conscious understanding of perception and representation, and habitual memory responses to either of those concepts. To distinguish between habit memory and conscious perception, Bergson uses the example of a dog greeting its master.

Of these two memories, of which the one imagines and the other repeats, the second may supply the place of the first and even sometimes be mistaken for it. When a dog welcomes his master, barking and wagging his tail, he certainly recognizes him; but
does this recognition imply the evocation of a past image and the comparison of that image with the present perception? (MM 82)

According to Bergson, it is impossible to know absolutely whether or not the dog is enacting conscious memory or simply habit memory, as the dog is unable to articulate any previous incarnations of past recognitions.

Beckett picks up the image, however, early on in the novel as the narrator describes Murphy’s leading “a dog’s life without a dog’s prerogative” (77). The image of the dog’s perception of the outside world and its arrangement of understanding appears again amidst the discussion of the three zones in Murphy’s mind in chapter six: “In the first were the forms with parallel, a radiant abstract of the dog’s life, the elements of physical experience available for new arrangement” (111). The first zone then functions as habit memory, as the connection to the dog solidifies, but more importantly these parallels indicate that aggregate memory-images exist in all types of memory. As Beckett says in Proust: “habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit” (19). In dog’s mind, these are habitual or static—parallel to new perceptions—rather than actively creating new memory-events as perceptions interact with representations. The zones running in tandem show the constant activity in Murphy’s mind.

It should come as no surprise then that buzzing is the word that Beckett chooses to describe consciousness and memory in Murphy. Like Bergson, Beckett is developing an interaction between the active, eventful brain as organ, and the representation or image-creating ethereal mind. This depiction is notable as it portrays memory as an action rather than relying on the traditional metaphors that cast memory as a database storage system. Memory, in Murphy, is alive and in constant movement, and only single images appear against the perpetually shifting and slipping background of cognition and perception. “The face,” Neary explains to Murphy, is actively drawn out of the more passive “big blooming buzzing confusion” of Neary’s mind (4). The word confusion seems not to operate simply as loss of orientation, but also as a concise description of aggregate images. Confusion also works in Neary’s description as an ongoing blurring, or indiscriminant mixing of heterogeneous stimulants. The image of “buzzing confusion” remains with Murphy throughout his story. He seamlessly appropriates Neary’s metaphor, and incorporates it into his own understanding of memory, which he evokes when he
meets Celia: “The beloved features emerging from chaos were the face against the big blooming buzzing confusion of which Neary had spoken so highly”(29). The novels ends with the culmination of buzzing activity. Murphy begins to perceive something beyond the physical image of Endon’s body, moves, and choices during their chess game. His perception becomes “a vivid blur, Neary’s big blooming buzzing confusion or ground, mercifully free of figure”(245). Murphy is unable to isolate Endon from the buzzing confusion that Endon has slipped into as he moves the chess pieces.

Then this also faded and Murphy began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare postnatal treat, being the absence (to abuse a nice distinction) not of *peripere* but of *percipi*. […] the positive peace that comes when somethings give way, or perhaps simply add up, to the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real. (246)

Not only has Endon slipped away from Murphy’s representational mind (as he blurs into the formless background), he also slips away from Murphy’s perceptive mind. As Murphy finally reaches something like Nothingness, Endon physically slips away and drifts along the corridors, and interacts—as a perceiver—with other patients by observing them through their judas doors, like flies in a jar.

Active change is a component of the narrator’s understanding of Murphy’s mind, even though Murphy might not be be aware of it. His mind is paradoxical. It perceives itself as a hermetically sealed, and thus incapable of change or influence by the “world outside.” However, the narrator problematizes this image by introducing change. He says that as Murphy grows older, he grows stronger in the feeling that “his mind is a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own […]” (109). Moreover, Murphy appears to be envisioning a transaction between the body and the mind as “motion in this world [the sphere of the mind] depended on rest in the world outside [the body]” (110). The narrator makes clear that neither the bodiless mind, nor the mindless body of Murphy constitutes a state of cognizance alone. Each has individual qualities—as the narrator describes “the body has its stock, the mind its treasures” (111)—but neither amounts to consciousness without interacting with the other. The interaction
or transactive shift between them is what might constitute consciousness, as the memory-image of the mind is always in flux, and always engaged in change. This change is clearest in the descriptions of the zones in Murphy’s mind, specifically the third zone.

Even closed systems must experience some type of change. The change that Murphy’s mind undergoes is the transition between the state of perception and the state of representation. The change or action between the two states—the liminal space between the two domains in the dyad—is the memory-event, which constitutes consciousness. As Bergson notes, that moment of consciousness becomes part of the aggregate memory system and will effect all future perceptions. The perception (or actual, or physical aspect) and the representative (or virtual, or mental aspect) converge to produce consciousness.

What develops is a third active state between perception and representation. Beckett also approaches this third state as a comic complication of the mind/body split. Even superficially, the inclusion of a third element moves Murphy beyond simple Cartesian dualism. Consciousness as an interaction (something more than just the physical brain/body and the ethereal mind) only appear, as a third thing or tertium quid, three times in reference to Murphy’s mind, his body, and his soul. This soul is not simply the metaphysical aftermath of life, but rather the merger of the physical body/brain and the intangible mind.

We see this inclusion of the third “thing” first as Neary reads out Murphy’s “will,” which directs Neary to flush his cremated remains down an Abbey Theatre toilet during a performance (269). Dr. Killiecrankie again refers to this triumvirate when he suggests a type of furnace that will “revert” even the “toughest body, mind, and soul” to ash (271), and the dispersal of Murphy’s body as Cooper throws his remains at someone who offended him: “By closing time the body, mind and soul of Murphy were freely distributed over the floor of the saloon” (275). While these instance are humorous, they also point to the convergence of mind and body with a third aspect to create a trinitarian existence: mind, body, and soul. These are individually represented as separate areas in Murphy’s mind.

The tripartite metaphor for Murphy’s mind that the narrator provides is the three zones of light. In the first, “light,” the narrator claims that Murphy experiences “forms with parallels,” while the second, “half-light,” contains “forms without parallels” (111). These are analogues to representations (images that one can instantaneously compare with other similar images since
they have been experienced) and perceptions (images not yet engaged with established associative meaning). The third zone, “dark,” is a “flux of forms, a perpetual coming together and falling asunder of forms” (112), and transcends the traditional binary split. More important, the narrator describes this third zone in Bergsonian terms. The dark contains “neither elements [perceptions] nor states [representations]” it is “nothing but forms of becoming and crumbling into the fragments of a new becoming, without love or hate or any intelligible principle of change” (112).

The third zone, then is an analogue for perception’s role in duration. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson’s discussion of photographic perception uses the Leibnizian monad to explain the relationship between isolated perceptions and virtual memory-images, as well as, the difference between what we actually perceive and what we are conscious of perceiving. This distinction is a matter of choice, he says: a difference of degree, not kind, “between being and being perceived” (37). To do so, he constructs a model of the universe composed of atoms subject to the actions of all other atoms. In addition to Faraday’s lines of force, he invokes Leibniz’s monad as “each [monad] is the mirror of the universe” (38). Like MMM’s self-contained quasi-monadic cells that mirror Murphy as he peers into them. This spatial situating of a single monad’s point-of-view is similar to the zones of Murphy’s mind where perception becomes memory-image, especially the third (dark) zone of forms in flux. Bergson writes,

> Only if when we consider any other given place in the universe we can regard the acton [sic] of all matter as passing through it without resistance and without loss, and the photograph of the whole as translucent: here there is wanting behind the plate the black screen on which the image could be shown. Our ‘zones of indetermination’ play in some sort the part of the screen. They add nothing to what is there; they effect merely this: that the real action passes through, the virtual action remains. (38-39)

As he explains, in *Creative Evolution*, duration is itself flux (342), we see that Murphy’s “forms of becoming” are always in flux, forms and fragments of becoming, which Bergson describes, in *Time and Free Will*, as a qualitative multiplicity. These forms are heterogeneous, but linked.
Both are individual pieces, but as fragments they are part of a larger incorporative spectrum. In either the light or half-light zone, forms are homogeneous, similar to other forms of their zones, but spatially fixed in regards to those other forms. The dark zone is in constant flux, and these forms should be able to adapt into cohesive patterns, but as fragments of becoming, they never reach a point of realization in which Murphy’s mind can engage with them.

Since at least part of his mind functions as a constant becoming of forms, Murphy’s mind resembles, what Murray Gell-Mann describes in *The Quark and the Jaguar*, a complex adaptive system rather than a simple closed system. When Gell-Mann introduced this concept, it was limited to physical systems. Since then a number of neuroscientists, including neurophilosophers at Scott Kelso’s Center for Complex Systems and Brain Sciences, have adopted this model to examine how consciousness is actually created. A closed system is a relatively stable or resistant to changes in state, but a complex adaptive system is a network of parallel systems in constant states of interaction with one another to create some type of order. Despite Murphy’s best efforts to establish his mind as an isolated closed system, we see how he must constantly assimilate new material or adapt new processes into that system. At best, he can situate his system as the primary system in a scheme of parallels, be they stars or states of mind. To justify his (un)natural ease with the MMM patients, he positions his own system as the only reason for his disposition, and rejects other systems such as astrology (Suk’s especially) or fate (in Romeo’s defiant sense). Murphy claims ownership of design: “They were *his* stars, he was the prior system” (*M* 183).

This parallel networking of systems is, in many ways, similar to what Bergson initially sets out to create with his image of the memory cones in *Matter and Memory*. As these microsystems operate, they accrue information (in tandem) that constantly interacts with the information from their partner systems in the complex macrosystem. In Bergson’s model this would the the memory-image of instance $A^1$ (that memory-image at the wide end of the cone) interacting and sharing information with instance $A^2$ (the next rung down of memory-images), so that instance $A^2$ incorporates the memory-image of $A^1$, and $A^3$ would incorporate the aggregate memory-images of both preceding instances to create a memory-event, or an instance of consciousness—or in the terms of the complex adaptive system, an emergence.
The limitation of Bergson’s model—especially as it applies to a text like *Murphy*—is its monadic design. Each memory cone operates in isolation. While that may be fine for how a single memory-image works, it does not reflect complex cognition. By overlaying memory cones in a dynadic constellation, we can see how memory-events effect each other. These memory-events always occur in competition with one another for emergence into consciousness. This order and competition for emergence is the constant becoming of forms that *Murphy*’s narrator depicts as the flux of consciousness. Or, at least it should be. Because of this ongoing state of apperception, Murphy is stuck in the first zone, where he continually faces forms (desires, ideas, and memory-images) with parallels (new perceptions).

Despite his apparent desire to function only like the residents of the MMM (those in the dark zone), Murphy’s mind does function as an adaptive system. His consciousness is constantly emergent. His mind systematically attempts to remain closed by denying the natural assimilation of new perceptions. This attempt to deny change (or plasticity) should prevent Murphy from cognitive development. However, even as Murphy revels in that split (his mind roaming while his body is bound), we see how his consciousness adapts. To affect that type of maladaptation, the only alternative that he can adopt is to surround himself with others who suffer from maladaptive cognitive systems at the MMM. We can see when Murphy looks into Endon’s eyes, that these patients are not quite the monadic mirror of his own hermetically sealed mind that he expects.

His mind is actually a proving ground for a closed, complex, adaptive system. Murphy tells Celia early on that his patron deity, Mercury (god of flux), has “no fixed color” (34). Immediately thereafter Murphy has an exchange with Celia that shows the incredible lengths his mind goes to in adapting new variables into his existing system. Murphy creates a “corpus of deterrents” to be with Celia in an intensely complicated diagram. When Celia responses with a cry of despair, Murphy is revolted by the idea of violating the order of the diagram. He violates it nonetheless as he creates, what he calls, a “separation order” (34). Celia’s response indicates the inherent failure in Murphy’s attempt at systematizing his mind in a rigid fashion. The typical mind, demonstrated by Celia’s though-process, thrives on plasticity. It allows for the incorporation of new variables into that system without fundamental failure.
Something as simple as eating should always be a successfully adaptive system, and even when Murphy is confronted with a potential maladaptive moment in that mundane task, he very obviously adapts. Murphy sets this particular system in motion early on in the day (12 pages before the memory that it concerns occurs). More important than the fact that this is an ongoing process is that this system is couched within other more obviously adaptive systems, such as route planning and the preparation of witty retorts he might make. He establishes an order, allows for an acceptable margin of variation, and proceeds in his routine despite that variation. Each variation demonstrates neuro-plasticity. This type of adaptive ordering is evident in Murphy’s placement of each of the five biscuits from his lunch. He always eats them in order of edibility: the Ginger cookie first, and the anonymous cookie last. His ingestive order is an adaptive system, as the first and last cookies are consistent, but the middle three are not. The narrator says that Murphy is indifferent to the day-to-day irregularity of that order. So, the permutations of ingestion adapt into an unobtrusive order, or Murphy himself adapts to the variable nature of the cookie eating order for the middle three choices as long as the first and final choices remain constant.

Something slips for Murphy, though. The order suddenly becomes obtrusive. The narrator explains, “it struck him for the first time that these prepossessions reduced to a paltry six the number of ways in which he could make this meal. But this was to violate the very essence of assortment, this was red permanganate on the Rima of variety” (96). Some new perception of these cookies dislocates the typical way in which Murphy views this process. This dislocation appears to be the image of the permanganate covered Rima statue, which Murphy’s mind incorporates (as a new perceptive association) into the aggregate memory-images of the cookies on the grass. Regardless of the trigger, what develops is a moment of intense apperception. In Demented Particulars, Ackerley cites “the demon of gingerbread” that Murphy struggles with (M 97) as an allusion to Pascal’s demon of uncertainty, and thus a Cartesian demon invoking the cogito (DP 92). This allusion to the cogito indicates that he is aware that he is struggling with his thought process. Murphy is not debilitated, but drawn into a conscious awareness of his perceptions and memory-images. He already has a series of representational images that consist of variated cookie-eating orders, and these accrue until this disruptive cognitive shift in perception draws a specific memory-image into his consciousness, which enacts a memory-
event. Because the order of cookie consumption is an adaptive system, the dislocative force that causes this memory slippage should be nominal and forgettable. Murphy’s response, though, demonstrates his desire to have this kind of inconsistency limit his ability to function physically.

Instead of his mind adding this instance to the cumulative representational memory-images (as it must have previously done), Murphy does not want to allow this new variation: “Overcome by these perspectives Murphy fell forward on his face on the grass, beside those biscuits of which it could be said as truly as of the stars, that one differed from another, but of which he could not partake in their fullness until he had learnt not to prefer any one to any other” (M 97). For a patient at the MMM, this instance of maladaptive behavior would be debilitating, and it does momentarily reduce Murphy to rolling face-down on the ground unable to move forward with his lunch. He does, however, go on. He is immediately distracted from this conundrum by being asked to hold “the Duck’s” dachshund, Nelly (who incidentally resolves the cookie situation by eating the Ginger biscuit).

The Duck provides Murphy, just as Endon will later, with a comparative maladaptation. Her maladaptation is the desire to repress mentally her own body, where Murphy tries to repress his body physically, by binding himself to the chair. This quickly resolved slippage in the expected order does connect Murphy and the Duck through the solipsism that “psychopathological wholehogs” experience as they embody, what the narrator calls a mentality of, “\textit{non me rebus sed mihi res}” (98), which Ackerley translates as “not me to things, but things to me” (DP 93). Ackerley cites O’Hara’s discussion of solipsism in \textit{Hidden Drives}, as well. O’Hara connects this phrase with Murphy’s solipsistic or “neurotic decision” that his own psyche is a prior system to the universe, and the stars are merely reflections of that psyche (O’Hara 66). However, this world-shaping mentality is not necessarily present in Murphy, but expressed as Murphy’s desire for it. We do not see Murphy suffering from psychosis, but merely trying understand his own mind, which he sees as a complex system. The system might be closed, but it must interact with other systems making pure solipsism impossible. Murphy privileges his own system, but he is aware of other systems around him: “the more his own system closed around him, the less he could tolerate its being subordinated to any other” (M 183).
The culmination of Murphy’s desire to be different, or perhaps unique, which manifests as series of maladaptations, is not an isolated debilitating moment, but rather a moment of apperception. Murphy sees in Endon a model of a closed system that allows the mind to remain unchanged by transactions it has with his body. As a patient at the MMM, Endon exists in a series of closed systems with his hermetically sealed mind at the core. Endon, however, is a model of maladaptation. Because he is unable to correlate his perceptions with his memory-images to demonstrate conventional cognition, Endon is unable to adapt to interactive situations. Even when Endon acts (shuffling down the corridor to activate the switches of the hypomanic’s cells), he is either unwilling or unable to engage with Murphy (who does the same things) apart from the scripted roles of the chess match. Because his body and intellectual mind are not in a constant state of transaction, no recognizable change is evident in Endon’s perception and no recognizable interaction with associated memory-images; there is no outward demonstration of cognition. Murphy sees that Endon thrives on this failure. Endon is able not to see as he fixes his eyes “on some object immeasurably remote, perhaps the famous ant on the sky of an airless world” (248). As Ackerley notes, the onomastic root Endon is the Greek preposition “within” (DP 153). He is locked both within his body and his mind in the same way that Murphy wants to be bound.

Because Murphy is sane, he is not truly able to mirror Endon’s maladaptation. He cannot simply be, nor simply be perceived, but must always perceive himself. Murphy wants to see Endon as a mirror image of himself. As he looks into Endon’s eyes, though, Murphy sees that he is “horribly reduced, obscured, and distorted.” He realizes that he is a “speck in Mr. Endon’s unseen” (M 250) or, as he imagines the third zone of his mind, a “mote in the dark of absolute freedom” (113). Murphy, unlike Endon, is unable to move effortlessly between his external and internal existences. His body and mind are in constant transaction, whereas Endon can not move out of the microcosmos of his mind. Endon is able to exist only in the internal representational world, whereas Murphy must constantly fight away his perceptions as they interact incessantly with his representations in order to achieve the kind of Nothingness that Endon experiences even when he should be perceiving Murphy’s stare.

The closest Murphy can get to Endon’s state is the awareness that he exists even within his own awareness—not nothing, but a material mote or speck in the nothingness. Endon’s entire
mind is the third zone of Murphy’s mind—an actual self-contained, hermetically sealed monad. Murphy’s mind, however, is always caught in the transactions of all three zones, each inhabiting a segment of the dyadic spheres, and thus always interacting with his physical perceptions. Murphy is always aware that he is conscious of his mind—and conscious of himself being conscious of his mind. Instead of Endon’s maladaptation, Murphy can achieve only an affectation of maladaptation. Since he tries to be “not of the big world” but the “little world,” Murphy is stuck in the first zone where his mind is a slightly distorted reflection of the “big world.” Instead of absolute freedom of the constant coming together and falling apart of forms, Murphy is stuck in an aporia of apperception.
CONCLUSION

EFFING THE INEFFABLE:
THE SCIENCE OF BECKETT’S MEMORY

As I was taking them down, strange memory, I heard the word fibrome, or brone, I don’t know which, never knew, never knew what it meant and never had the curiosity to find out. The things one recalls! and records!

—“First Love”

_Murphy_, however, is just the beginning of Beckett’s work on memory and perception. Where Murphy’s slip is a sudden experience suddenly forgotten, the slips in _Watt_ have a far greater impact on the characters. Arsene compares these slips or changes to a few grains of sand among millions, what he calls a “great alp of sand,” shifting position. The slippage, for Arsene, is ineffable: “In what did it consist? It is hard to say. Something slipped” (42). Instead of a parallel metaphor for the apperceptive mind, as we find in _Murphy_, _Watt_ shows the mind without metaphor. Rather than Murphy peering through the judas doors of the MMM cells, these two texts show perception from inside the cells.

_Murphy_ portrays a constant state of perception and the interaction it has with representation. _Watt_, however, shows what happens to memory and the ability to relate memory-images when one cannot distinguish between perception and representation. This portrayal is most clear when the mind ceases to properly function, where memories slip and the mind fails. When the ability to filter perceptions lessens, representations begin to diminish and disappear. Bergson explains, in _Matter and Memory_, that by not filtering our perceptions—or by focusing on the unconsciously formed images—the representational universe ceases to exist since it is actively being perceived (135). No one should be able to authentically exist in a state of pure perception, but characters like Arsene and Watt appear to exist in that very state. Unlike Murphy,
who can draw delineations between the actual material and virtual representation (such as his vote to exist in the “little world” of the mind), Arsene can not. Arsene is unable see the parallel forms of the “big world” around him. He is unable to distinguish between inside and out, between perception and representation.

my personal system was so distended at the period of which I speak that the distinction between what was inside it and what was outside it was not at all easy to draw. Everything that happened happened inside it, and at the same time everything that happened happened outside it. I trust I make myself plain. I did not, need I add, see the thing happen, nor hear it, but I perceived it with a perception so sensuous that in comparison to the impressions of a man buried alive in Lisbon on Lisbon’s great day seem a frigid and artificial construction of the understanding.

(43)

Arsene resembles one of the patients at the MMM much more than Murphy does. This resemblance should not be surprising since Mr Knott’s house contains a number of pavilions, which might function as psychiatric dormitories. This construction then resembles Vienna’s Am Steinhof psychiatric hospital, which opened in 1907. The use of pavilions at hospitals was, by that time, an established practice, as the OED cites that usage from the 1860s (s.v.1,6 “pavilion”). Edmund Parkes explains in his 1864 book, A Manual of Practical Hygiene, that “the hospitals are to be formed by detached buildings, or pavilions arranged in line, or side by side” (298). According to Calum Storrie, patients at hospitals like the Am Steinhof would be assigned or moved to pavilions based on everything from the level of patient supervision required, to their ability to pay, where “some had the freedom of the grounds, other were confined to cells” (2). Hospitals like these (and like the MMM) would be full of patients like Arsene and Watt, who cannot create parallel associations with the world outside.

Without the ability or inclination to draw parallel associations between perceptions and recollections, Watt’s mind is unable to filter all possible sequences or permutation of each event he encounters. He is overwhelmed by perception. He begins to lose memory-images from his
representational universe. Memories are forgotten. Language becomes impossible. We should
not mistake Watt for the same type of novel as Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog
in the Night-Time*. Watt does, however, share some of the autistic spectrum tendencies that
Haddon illustrates in Christopher John Francis Boone’s story, such as unconsciously identifying
the Fibonacci sequence in natural occurrences. Haddon’s book tells the story of someone with
Asperger syndrome—*Watt*, rather, demonstrates how memory works when the brain is unable to
filter perception from representation, and unable to recognize parallels in the exterior world. The
story of Watt exhibits what *Murphy*’s narrator calls the second zone of Murphy’s mind, the half-
light world where everything is “ill told, ill heard, more than half forgotten” (W 74). *Murphy*’s
narrator describes a nearly perfect summary of Watt’s story: “Here the pleasure was
contemplation. This system had no other mode in which to be out of joint and therefore did not
need to be put right in this” (M 111). This inability to filter perceptions (of matter or memory-
images) is portrayed nowhere more clearly than in Watt’s set-pieces. In the first set-piece, he
cannot interact with any other system than his own. Watt’s isolation keeps him from hearing Mr
Spiro’s responses to the questions of the rat and consecrated wafers:

> But Watt heard nothing of this, because of other voices, singing,
crying, stating, murmuring, things unintelligible, in his ear. With
these, if he was not familiar, he was not unfamiliar either. [...]
And sometimes Watt understood all, and sometimes he
understood much, and sometimes he understood little, and
sometimes he understood nothing, as now. (29)

The attributes of mind described in the second of Murphy’s zones operate much more like a
closed system, but they too interact with other systems. However, because that zone is caught up
in the pleasure of contemplation, it is not forced to deal with perception. Murphy is able to
choose, or as Bergson says *discern*, what he perceives—he is able to exist simultaneously in the
material world and his representational universe. The issue of choice is important. Bergson
makes clear that what we consciously perceive is largely a choice. Like Murphy, we hear and see
what we want to hear and see:
Conscious perception signifies choice, and consciousness mainly consists in the practical discernment. The diverse perceptions of the same object, given by my different senses, will not, then when put together, reconstruct the complete images of the object; they will remain separated from each other by intervals which measure, so to speak, the gaps in my needs. (MM 49)

Watt operates in a very different way. He has little or no control over his perceptions (as we see in the voices from the first set piece).

Perception in Watt separates it from texts like Murphy. In Murphy, the intellectual elements of the mind are the focus. Murphy is able to consciously choose what he perceives. He can discern. Watt cannot make the same choice. The difference in the ability to perceive might have to do with the fact that Murphy privileges visual perceptions. Watt, however, incorporates each of the perceptive senses, and none more so than the auditory. The perceptions of sound, specifically the perception of language sounds, becomes increasingly important in the course of Watt’s story.

In Watt, the role of perception in consciousness manifests itself grammatically. Since he is unable to consciously focus on selections or pieces of his perception, both the novel’s set-pieces and Watt’s speech pattern function as types of sound poetry. Marjorie Perloff, in 21st Century Modernism, explains that “grammar […] is never arbitrary: part of speech, tense, case, and especially syntax have their own connotative power” (55). She gives us an example of what she means by this in her review of Lyn Hejinian’s Happily. In her 2000 article from The Boston Review, “Happy World,” Perloff describes Hejinian’s grammar as one of accordioning sentences; that is, a sentence with solid sides (a clear beginning and a clear end), but with a middle that is “pleated and flexible.” This allows for an influx of material to surge into any given thought—material that is “charged with various and sometimes even incompatible emotional tonalities.” Hejinian, in the introduction to The Language of Inquiry, explains this as the experiencing of experience. Hejinian replaces logic with syntax, but it appears to operate in a very similar fashion; she says, “poetic language puts into play the wildest possible array of logics, and especially it takes advantage of the numerous logics operative in language, some of
which take shape as grammar, some as sonic chains, some as metaphors, metonyms, ironies, etc. There are also logics of irrationality, impossibility, and a logic of infinite speed. All of these logics make connections, forge linkages” (3). In these last few types of logic that Hejinian describes we can see functioning in Watt, those irrational, impossible, and infinite. The “sonic chains,” rather than the content of Watt’s set-pieces, might be the best way to understand as Beckett’s attempt to get behind language.

Gerald Bruns, in The Material of Poetry, sets out two theses regarding sound, perception, and literature stating that, “there is an internal link between sound and the displacement of the ego,” and “sound […] has a claim on our capacity for listening and responsiveness that is analogous to […] the ethical claim that other people have on us” (46). His own position is that, “sounds overload the function of language” (44). These concepts point to the psychological aspects of sound, which include both the cognitive functions as well as the political machinations of both language and of non-linguistic sound. The neuro-physiological effect that Beckett achieves in Watt’s set-pieces becomes clearer through Bruns’ reading of sound poetry. Sound, even apart from sound poetry, is able to circumvent the limitations of systematic taxonomies in order to unsettle our notion of control over it. Bruns explains that “sound entails a critique or displacement of the cognitive subject exercising rational control and that this in turn makes possible an openness and responsiveness, an acceptance of sound as such, with no more in-sounds versus out-sounds” (49). Although Bruns does provide an explanation of what Levinas or Cage would consider a constitution of sound, we might take his theory further into Beckett’s writings as a parallel.

As the constant and subtle framing devices of Steve Tomasula’s VAS allow us to see, it is the context of poem (sound, performance, or print) that denotes it. Bruns describes the context: “poetry is no longer performed as a reading but becomes itself a performance art; it is no longer an object but an event in which the distance between performer and audience breaks down completely” (60). If we take that along with his claim that “conceptualization is a species of framing or foregrounding; it dramatizes its content” (46), we can see how poetry (and Watt’s set-pieces are a type of sound poetry) frees itself by upsetting traditional hierarchies, or “hence to break with language is to break with the order of rules” (63). We should again think of Alain Badiou’s events and evental sites—an exceptional break with the status quo—in these instances.
These are *events* that force us, both reader and listener, to reorganize our understanding of how language functions once we see or hear them.

In his discussion of sound, Bruns develops an equally strong, though less explicit, theme of the body as well. Through this stress on the body (or body-words) and sound as things corporeal, what we discover is not only a physical response to sound, but also a physical stratification of it. We talk of sound with a lexicon of the body. It is one thing to explain that sound, rather than sight, is porous, but it is another to use a more sanguine metaphor, such as “sound bleeds itself” (45). He goes onto say, “[…] that the sounds of the body can be more violent, more intrusive, than the body’s touch” (62). The agency that sound takes on here (and it does have a distinct difference from language based description) not only displaces the ego, but performs an act that is, in many ways, inescapable. We find the same type of body metaphor in Beckett’s “German Letter of 1937” to Axel Kaun, where grammar becomes porous. The connection to the perception of sound here is important, as for Beckett its employment of repetition operates differently than it might in the writing of other experimental writers that emphasize repetition. Through sound and vocal enunciation of words in repetition and inversion, such as Watt’s difficulty with the pot, Beckett is able to create the type of aphasic dislocation that Bergson mentions in *Matter and Memory*.

Other writers make use of repetition or recurrence in their work, such as Carole Maso or Dan Ferrell, but in their work words are still primary, rather than the *perception* of the word and sounds that appear in *Watt*. We can easily find textual repetitions in *AVA*, even to the point in which they include Beckett. In Maso’s novel we see him appear variously as: “Samuel Beckett in a tree” (10), or “Samuel Beckett waiting for reinforcements. It’s the war. But no reinforcements come” (31), or “Beckett in Roussillon hiding in the red village for two and a half years” (86-7). In Farrell’s prose poem “366, 1996,” we can see a style that resembles the repetition-based language-games of Beckett:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, going into the woods, Sunday, Monday, typical trees, Tuesday, typical grass traces, Wednesday, Thursday, typical excitations, Friday, typical regional sounds, Saturday, Sunday, why
The repetitions that Farrell and Maso use work to a different ends than that of Watt. The difference might be only scope, but the focus on theme rather than individual phonetic components in these two later writings points to an end apart from Beckett’s works. In Maso’s and Farrell’s works, the reiteration of certain words or the reappearance of characters creates something of an open organizing system or schema. While this schema is a complex and esoteric system, it is a syntax, nonetheless. We see in Maso’s novel, Beckett (or the image of Beckett in a tree) operates as a marker by which the speaker associates a consistent theme. With Farrell’s poem we see a pattern of the ordinary appear. What begins as a jumbled or compressed series opens up into a consistent organizational system: the days are always in order, and the events are marked by them. The repetition in these texts does not activate a dissociation with the meaning of the words or phrases. Watt is the opposition to this type of syntax. Its use of sonic repetition removes this organized system or hierarchy and demonstrates how perception can, as Bruns says, overload our received concept of that word and, ideally, language.

More importantly, Watt has no control over the interaction of his perceptions with his recollections. He is no more able to comprehend the single instance of a memory-image than he is able to filter out all of the perceptions he encounters. These perceptive forms should always be isolated, but Watt interacts with the whole of his perception or the whole of his possible perceptions. Unlike Murphy, he is unaware of (or perhaps unfamiliar with) these perceptions. His perceptions, however, exist without any single memory-image parallels in his aggregate recollection of the exterior world. He cannot correlate them with any single memory-image. Watt always experiences these perceptions with every possible permutation. He experiences them with the entirety of his representational universe including every image from his memory aggregate. Watt is unable to draw the face out of the buzzing confusion of his mind. The single image evades him. Bergson explains that phenomenon: “concentrate your mind on that sensation, and
you will feel that the complete image is there, but evanescent, a phantasm that disappears just at
the moment motor activity tries to fix its outline" (*MM* 86-87). When there is no transaction
perception, and memory-images from the representational aggregate the memory-event cannot
take place, then these characters are left in an increasingly dissociative state.

The types of forgetting demonstrated in *Watt* closely resemble the experiment that
Bergson cites, in chapter II of *Matter and Memory*, as an example of memory’s elusive nature. In
this memory experiment, the test subjects were asked to memorize and repeat a sequence in
specific ways. He explains, “A series of letters which [the test subjects] were asked to remember,
was held before their eyes for a few seconds. But, to prevent any accentuating of the letters so
perceived by appropriate movements of articulation, they were asked to repeat continuously a
given syllable while their eyes were fixed on the image” (*MM* 87). These patients, he says, felt
that they could recall the whole image, but were unable to reproduce any of it on demand.
Bergson explains that the newly “acquired recollection” overpowers the “spontaneous
recollection” the subject should normally experience. The spontaneous memory “disappears,” he
says, “at the least movement of the voluntary memory” (87). The repetition of that syllable has
driven “the rest of the image out of [the subject’s] consciousness” (87). Bergson connects this
with the, then emerging, studies of dyslexia in Stuttgart and Berlin. He explains that this *Dyslexie*
is not purely perceptive, where “the patient reads the first words of a sentence aright, and then
stops abruptly, unable to go on, as though the movements of articulation inhibited memory [...]”
we may also compare with these phenomena the remarkable cases of word deafness in which the
patient understands the speech of others, but no longer understands his own” (252). These latter
symptoms sound much more like Conduction or Transcortical motor aphasia, since the
impairment is not only in perception, but in the ability to repeat or replicate memories
linguistically (ICD10: F80.0-2).

Each of these above instance appears in *Watt* as a type of *slippage (or glissade)* where
memory falters. This first slippage in Arsene’s short statement is the beginning from which all
consequences will accrue, and a mechanical memory process will form: the “some little thing
[that] slipped” he says, and Arsene’s verbalized slippage: “Gliss — iss — iss — STOP!” (43).
Zurbrugg rightly notes that “this ‘change’ is the key event in Arsene’s and Watt’s
misadventures” (244), but he underestimates its operative importance. He sees it only as a slip
from the non-habitual to the habitual. This event is not the privileging of one type of memory over another. Rather, we should focus on the failure event’s process, which should be the transaction of perception and representation. However, here we find the failure of memory, its destruction, and subsequent recomposition—that moment of slippage, where something happens and memory is reconstituted, deformed, or manipulated. Uhlmann, in “Image and Intuition in Beckett’s Film,” quotes Bergson’s *The Creative Mind*, as he explains the difficulty in pinpointing the originating memory, or the event catalyst:

But what we shall manage to recapture and to hold is a certain intermediary image between the simplicity of the concrete intuition and the complexity of the abstractions which translate it, a receding and vanishing image, which haunts […] the philosopher […] and which, if it is not the intuition itself, approaches it much more closely than the conceptual expression, of necessity symbolical, to which the intuition must have recourse in order to furnish “explanation.” (128-129)

That “explanation” is forgotten in *Watt*. The instances of forgetting in *Watt* demonstrate how the mind might operate in that half-light zone where forms operate without parallel, and memory-images exist apart from the representational whole. At best, for these characters the only connections they are left with are dissolved references to something that might have come before, which can only be poorly seen and poorly related. Just as Mr Hackett cannot make out Watt as a person, and Mr Nixon has to assure him of Watt’s human form (17), these other images only bear passing resemblance to that which they allude to, such as Hackett’s comparison of meeting Watt with recognizing his father, when he says “I really do not remember, any more than I remember meeting my father” (23), or Watt’s imagined maladies that appeared “in their ancient guise, and consent to be named, with the time-honoured names, and forgotten” (84). Like the test subject Bergson mentions, Mr Knott’s senior retainer, Vincent, is unable to recall any isolated specific physical characteristic (here as *names*), but can readily depict the whole image:

But that all those of whom all trace is not lost, even though their names be forgotten, were, if not big, bony, seedy, shabby,
haggard, knockkneed, rottentoothed and rednosed, at least small, fat seedy, shabby, oily, bandylegged, potbellied and potbottomed, seems certain, if any reliance is to be placed on oral tradition as handed down by word of mouth from one fleeting generation to the next, or, as is more usual, to the next one. (60)

These comments are pieces of a failing memory, which Vincent accesses only through fragments. The Narrator of Watt, like the narrator of The Unnamable, continues using these failures of memory, these ill-heard, ill-remembered descriptions or explanations, which should make impossible the fantastic feats of remembering. However, these isolated instances of memory seem very similar to the “spontaneous recollections” that Bergson claims can be displaced by the “acquired recollections” of the experiment. Like these test subjects, Watt is sometimes debilitated by his exhaustive memory, and we might read him as a Proustian character as see him portrayed growing “warm, on a chair, in the kitchen, even then it would be a poor resting, and a mean warming, beside the rest and warmth that he remembered […]” (221). Watt seems to have the uncanny ability to remember incredible lists of information, but the extended lists he creates are less memory-images from his representational aggregate than they are all possible modes of perception.

Like these test subjects Bergson mentions, Watt is unable to draw specific aspects out of the whole memory. The absences in the texts (which are almost always heuristic in nature) demonstrate how something as simple as repetition can dissociate the basic elements of these memories (the whos, wherees, whats, and whens) from the whole experience of memory. They should be readily accessible but are instead utterly unreachable. These are literally utterly unreachable. They are unutterable.

The narrator, like Watt himself, apparently has no problem articulating some instances that should be impossible for him to recall, but finds it impossible to impart other basic details of the story to the reader. Textually, these absences are replaced with a question mark, like the heavenly favored McCanns of ? [where], or that Watt’s blood is deficient in ? [what] (32), or Erskine’s song that contains an unknown what:
The song that Erskine sang, or rather intoned, was always the same. It was:

?

Perhaps if Watt had spoken to Erskine, Erskine would have spoken to Watt, in reply. But Watt was not so far gone as all that. (85)

The who is missing in the questions of someone’s painful relation to Simon and his young cousin’s wife (102), and “faculties properly so called of ? ? ? ? ? were if possible more vigorous than ever” (169), just like the missing what that Mr Case read from George Russell’s Songs by the Way (228). Although these question marks are different slightly from the dashes used to replace nouns and descriptions, such as “I call that the act of a —, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, —” (191), they (along with the “somethings” in Endgame) might be read as placeholders like we would expect to see in a traditional 19th century novel, but the intense repetition points to something else in Beckett’s work. These instances represent a memory space that is uttered into existence, a space between what Badiou calls, “the deceitful excess of words and the impossibility of silence” (OB 117).

It is not merely the repetition that should draw our attention, but the struggle to express some meaning. In Watt’s case, the inversion series is important not only because it emphasizes both immediate perception and established representations, but also because it shows the elusive nature of the single memory-image. For Watt, just as the reason behind his inversion sequence is inexplicable, the specific memory-image of meaningful speech is unreachable:

Then he took it into his head to invert, no longer the order of the words in the sentence, nor that of the letters in the word, nor that of the sentences in the period, nor simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the letters in the word, nor simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the sentences in the period, nor simultaneously that of the letters in the word and that of the words in the sentences in the period, ho no, but, in the brief course of the same period, now that of the words in the sentence,
now that of the letters in the word, now that of the sentences in the period, now simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the letters in the word, and now simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the sentences in the period, now simultaneously that of the letters in the word and that of the sentences in the period, and now simultaneously that of the letters in the word and that of the words in the sentence and that of that of the sentences in the period. (168)

There is an internal barrier to saying something meaningful. Just as in the experiment Bergson cites, we can see how perception (in this case sound) in Watt’s repetition of words, like “pot,” unseats the received meaning of the word. This repetition, in effect, creates a moment of slippage where the denotation of the word or phrase no longer holds contextual agency or has any power to produce traditional meaning. Rather, these created sounds (as they no longer are recognizable as words) fail to connect either to a single specific memory-image or the representational universe. This textual creation of slippage indicates, what Beckett identifies as, that something or nothing that hides or lurks behind the barrier created by the word that he speaks of in his letter Kaun as the often quoted “literature of the unword” (Disjecta 173).

This slippage is not necessarily a loss, but, what V.S. Ramachandran calls In A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness, a cross-activation. Ramachandran explains that artists, poets, and novelists are seven times more likely to experience synesthesia. While the root might be a genetic development in either the fusiform or angular gyrus, the result is an uncanny skill at forming metaphor due to the ability to link “seemingly unrelated concepts in their brain” (71). This “cross-activation” or “hyperconnectivity” allows that person to derive meaning from stimuli that would not traditionally be considered to hold that meaning. This type of cross-activation extends beyond linguistic metaphor though. According to one of Ramachandran’s more popular experiments, synesthetes will unconsciously assign fricative consonant sounds to abstract shapes with sharp edges, but assign plosive consonant sounds to abstract shapes with rounded edges regardless of the native language (he uses Tamil and English as his examples). The synesthete
might draw associative connections based on anything from non-language based sounds to the “fiveness” of disparate groups of objects or colors (70-73).

Ramachandran’s unorthodox low-tech experiments are not necessarily new, and he cites his inspiration for these studies in perceptive disorders like synesthesia and dyslexia. Ramachandran looks back to the experiments of late nineteenth century scientist Francis Galton. Galton’s initial experiment on synesthesia began by asking subjects to visualize and describe a “number line” consisting of a variable amount of digits in some sequential order. Ramachandran explains that these number lines in synesthetes where “highly convoluted—sometimes even doubling back on itself so that (say) 9 might be nearer to 2 than to 8 in Cartesian space” (135). This convolution is a type of unfiltered associative perception. The roundness or sharpness in shape or sound of the numbers or some other ineffable similarity might draw these numbers together in the subjects number line, but they always form some order within themselves. The memory-images of these numbers, which contain something like qualia, have an implicit value to the individual subject that forms each connection. The qualia of these images, according to Bergson, will always be unutterable since by focusing on the image the subject will perceive the image as material and construct a new different memory-image of that number. The qualia value would be lost in the act of perceiving.

The various cognitive states of both Beckett’s and Joyce’s characters seem to anticipate the same issues that neurophilosophers like Ramachandran are still attempting to solve. For Ramachandran, understanding how perceptions (of everything from language to limbs) create paralyzing effects on consciousness and cognition will allow us to communicate more effectively. For Beckett, the complete removal of the paralyzing effect of the word should, according to his letter to Kaun, allow the reader to participate in the same aphasic space as that of these characters. In this space the word is no longer a symbol but an event that we experience in the same way that the single face can emerge from the buzzing confusion of the mind, or the sound of the musical note and its companion silence that penetrates us. Watt, in this light, demonstrates not only aphasia, but also anticipates the plain and simple aporia by which the narrator of The Unnamable proceeds.
NOTES

1 These portrayals seem to be permeating contemporary television and films. These range from quasi-realistic characters like Gabriel Byrne’s Paul Weston from *In Treatment* and Tim Roth’s Cal Lightman from *Lie to Me* (the latter based on Paul Ekman’s work in microexpressions and deception theory) to surreal characters like Dr. Phil.

2 We can, of course, apply this neurophilosophical methodology to other authors, such as Faulkner, Dostoevsky, Woolf, or Stoppard. Joyce and Beckett, like Proust and Shakespeare, are border crossers in both literary aesthetics (as they move freely across the lines of modernism and postmodernism—in fact, creating much of it as they go) and cultural nationalism (as they pioneer what we now refer to as transnationalism).

3 Antonio Damásio dedicates his entire first chapter, “Unpleasantness in Vermont,” of *Descartes’ Error* to Phineas Gage’s famous accident where an iron spike blew through his head, entering the left cheek and piercing the frontal lobe, and exploding through the top of his skull (figure 1.1). The destruction of the frontal lobe, and resultant damage to the hippocampus and amygdala (figure 1.2) caused a widespread change in emotions, personality, and memory-based decision making.

*figure 1.1* Illustration of Gage’s skull, and the Boston Daily Courier article reporting the accident (September 20, 1848).
Laureys and Tononi have also put forward an idea suggesting that consciousness and cognition can be dissociated from other neural functions including memory and sensory inputs (376).

On the other hand, if we only consider the physio-neurological disorders in these texts, we miss the larger demonstrations of memory’s role. Even though Beckettian or Joycean characters provide numerous examples of undergoing neurological phenomena correlating to specific words or sounds (the opening lines of Portrait, Bloom’s response to Boylan jingling the coins in his pocket, or, as discussed in the Section III, Watt’s pot), we should not leap to apply any new neuropathy, for instance, Mary Hart Epilepsy Syndrome, to Beckett’s work, despite the fact that another character in a tragicomedy about “nothing” experienced it. The disorder, identified by Dr. Venkat Ramani in the New England Journal of Medicine (and popularized in a Chicago Sun-Times article on July 11, 1991), caused seizures at the mere sound of Entertainment Tonight host Mary Hart’s voice (Wallechinsky, et al. 179). The sound-induced MHES epileptic fits, more famously, also affected Seinfeld’s Cosmo Kramer in a season three episode:

Kramer: “Suddenly I got dizzy and the next thing you know I hit my head on the coffee table.” Elaine: That is it! Mary Hart’s voice, don’t you see? There’s something about Mary Hart’s voice that’s giving you seizures” (Alexander 1993).

Gell-Mann’s interaction with Finnegans Wake serves as good of an example as any for the way in which we should understand memory in the texts of these two authors. In The Quark and the Jaguar, Gell-Mann explains that he first had a notion of what the sound of the name for his new finding was, but while reading through the Wake, he came across the opening phrase “Three quarks for Muster Mark!” [FW 383:1], and was struck by the fitness of the corresponding sound—the phrase represented a tidy picture of Gell-Mann’s concept (both in the quarks of a gull’s call and the quarts demanded of the publican) and fit his numerological profile since quarks occur in threes (180).

However, the simultaneous and interconnected nature of Joyce’s text opens itself up to new models of understanding. Likewise, Beckett’s intentions (or not) to represent memory should not be a primary concern to a study of memory. Rather we should focus on the models that are created (the passivity implied here is intentional). Like much of the world of physics, the resulting models of memory might occur as unintended by-products of the original experiment. Consider Röntgen’s work on cathode ray tube having produced X-rays, or Becquerel and Curie’s discovery of radioactivity while studying...
uranium and X-rays, or Patterson discovered the poisonous content of tetraethyl lead while trying to
establish the age of Earth from meteorites, or Plunkett developing Teflon while working on refrigeration,
Spencer creating the microwave oven while working on military radar, or (perhaps most importantly to
this study) Loewi’s composed an experiment on the chemical transference of nerve impulses (rather than
electric transference) based on a dream. Of course, the language experiments that Joyce and Beckett are
conducting in their texts are not scientific, but produce unintentional results as well—Watt, for instance,
certainly was not designed to demonstrate synaptic or cortical plasticity, but it does illustrate the kind
adaptive data encoding and transmittal (as well as compensatory cortical area code switching that Sur and
Rubenstein discuss in their 2005 Science article, “Patterning and plasticity of the cerebral cortex”) in
Watt’s systematic sequences. The connection between Gell-Mann’s terminology and consciousness is not
necessarily new either. Stuart Hameroff, researcher at the University of Arizona Medical Center, has been
developing the Quantum Consciousness model since 1998, but has recently been brought into the
mainstream of Cognitive Science with his article, “The Brain is Both Neurocomputer and Quantum

This is obviously a metaphor in layman’s terms, and ignores (for the sake of simplicity) the
complex astro and quantum physical properties of the creation of black holes (both those formed by
primordial gravitational collapse, and those formed by high energy collisions), which Schwarzschild,
Einstein, Hawking, and Planck developed in light of work by 18th century naturalists, like Michell or
Laplace.

This is an ongoing seamless process that is only recognizable when it fails, such as in individuals
with certain autism spectrum disorders (i.e. Asperger syndrome) who display either under- or over-
responsive sensory abnormalities. Olga Bogdashina, in Sensory Perceptual Issues in Autism and Asperger
Syndrome (2004), uses terminology similar to Bergson’s own to describe sensory responsivity in cases of
hyper- and hyposensitivies: discrimination and discernment (139-140).

Richard Ellmann’s 1982 James Joyce also lists Creative Evolution in the list of books that Joyce
bought from F.H. Schimpff (779).

The Birch Tree (Warrior God, Lugh), The Rowan Tree (Goddess of fertility, Brigid), The Ash
Tree (Magician, storyteller and trickster, Gwydion), The Alder Tree (God of the spirit world, Bran), The
Willow Tree (Moon Goddess, Ceridwen), The Hawthorn Tree (summer flower maiden, Olwen), The Oak
Tree (Father of all Gods, Dagda), The Holly Tree (Smith God, Govannon), The Hazel Tree (Sea God,
Manannan Mac Lir), The Vine Tree (Tuatha De Danaan Gods of Light), The Ive Tree (faery bride,
Guinevere), The Reed Tree (God the Underworld, Pwyll), The Elder Tree (crown Goddess, Cailleach
Beara).

We know that Beckett had a penchant for using esoteric medical terminology in a very precise
and exact fashion. One need only flip through More Pricks than Kicks or Murphy with a medical
cyclopedia at the ready, or remember Willie’s pun on “formication” in Happy Days to see the breadth and
depth of Beckett’s knowledge of these terms. Because no one has yet developed a neuron-biological
reading of Beckett’s work, scholars still quickly respond with aphasia each time we see a language event
take place, or amnesia or dementia every time an instance of forgetting occurs.

Part of this problem may result from our own unfamiliarity, in the arts, with telencephalonic areas
of the brain, and their corresponding processes and disorders. If this is the case, then it would be pertinent,
at least briefly, to examine those other disorders that Beckett might have instead imagined as he created
these characters, specifically those disorders relating to the angular gyrus. This area of the brain is
involved in the majority of processes related to language and cognition.
In *Wittgenstein’s Ladder* (1996), literary theorist Perloff points to colleagues Michel Beausang’s and Jean-Michel Rabaté’s work in *Beckett Avant Beckett* (1985). Here, according to Rabaté, Watt’s language is:

> inextricably dependent on madness and aphasia: missing words, reserves, repetitions, like a stripe on a discs, [there is] never enough direction, and always too many words. (187)

Rabaté implies a kind of directionlessness or powerlessness that Beckett’s characters have when they attempt to convey their stories. Watt’s is exhaustively repetitive, whereas Lucky’s is simply exhausting. While Lucky’s case might be easier to identify than Watt’s, the latter is a bit more complex. That is to say, Watt’s is not a single disorder, but a gathering of neurological impairments. What we come to find with Watt is that he could easily be suffering from both expressive, or Broca’s, aphasia (affecting the area far left in blue), and receptive, or Wernicke’s, aphasia (affecting the area lower right in green). As illustrated in the chart below (see figure 1.10), each affects a separate but related area of the brain. The common symptoms of Broca’s aphasia are that speech becomes difficult to initiate, non-fluent, labored, and halting; we often dismiss this as simple agrammatism—ignoring these symptoms as simple slips-of-the-tongue that any of us might make.

![Diagram of brain areas](image)

*figure 1.10: The Telencephalos contains the primary speech centers and common areas of language disorders in the left hemisphere of the brain; the angular gyrus (far left shaded section) is also responsible for our ability to understand metaphors.*

During (what the narrator tells us is) the onset of Watt’s language problems, he makes these types of mistakes (inverting the order of letters, words, and sentences [165-167]). In Wernicke’s aphasia, speech is preserved but language content is incorrect. This varies from the insertion of a few incorrect or nonexistent words to a profuse outpouring of incomplete thoughts. In addition to the appearances of these disorders in *Godot* and *Watt*, these combined disorders appear either painful or shocking in *Play*: in spoken dialogue with the non-sequitural “Personally I always preferred Lipton’s” quasi-advertisement of M, or in acted gestures both with M’s dysarthric hiccupping and W2’s de-contextualized “*Peal of wild low laughter*” (both recall a receptive aphasia), as well as, the halting, non-fluent speech (or expressive...
limitation) of all three characters (CSP 154, 157). Beckett may well have known about one of the earliest neurobiological case-studies. As Beckett scholar Salisbury explains,

Beckett uses the scenes and discourses of psychological and neurological testing as an analogue for his own textual experimentation in which language is revealed to be a system which is neither confined to, nor does it securely subtend, the imagined coherence of an intentional subject. (99)

Paul Broca’s famous patient, Leborgne, was nicknamed “Tan” after the only word he could say. Watt’s “pot, pot, pot” seems much more tame in comparison. With the characters Beckett authors afterward, he develops acts of semantic severance, or types of positive forced amnestic disorders. All of the aforementioned disorders are present in Lucky’s speech, but a number of other appear in Beckett’s other characters, such as ideoverbal or ideational apraxia seen in Dido and Gogo’s inability to get up after they fall, semantic dementia or fluent aphasia seen in Hamm’s stories that are “forgotten,” or logopenic aphasia seen in Watt’s innumerable sequences or the repetition of pot. This last disorder dislodges or dissolves meaning through a linguistic construction, in most cases repetition, and allows the speaker or reader to experience the word in a completely new or individual way as the restricted definition fades away. Regardless, the transformative actualizations of these disorders—wherein acts of memory no longer align with their linguistic counterparts—permeate Beckett’s texts. They are the manifestations of what Beckett describes in a letter to Axel Kaun. He says that his intention is to create a system that dissolves language, that looks for the material between or before language. This might well be what Bergson would describe as dureé. These characters show the faltering of memory that begins to chip away at language. Beckett’s project shows the inability to recover language and its root in memory, where Joyce’s, however, shows the constant struggle to recover, reclaim, or re-create those memories.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dustin Anderson was born in East Tennessee, and grew up there and in Anchorage and Seattle. He earned his bachelor’s degree in English from Carson Newman College in 2002 and his master’s degree in Literature from Florida State University in 2006. His interests are broadly in 20th century literature, particularly in James Joyce and Samuel Beckett; and in contemporary Irish and British culture. His research crosses recent developments in national modernisms, their literatures, and critical theory, with an emphasis on how the writings of Joyce and Beckett express relations between language and memory. He has published one monograph, *Their Synaptic Selves: Memory and Language in Joyce and Beckett* (2008), and, along with S.E. Gontarski, William Cloonan, & Alec Hargreaves, he edited *Transnational Beckett* (2008). While at Florida State Dustin was awarded the Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE) Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award conferred by the Office of Graduate Studies in 2004, and the Robert O. Lawton Award for Excellence in First Year Writing Instruction in 2005. Dustin also received the 2009 Graduate Student Leadership Award conferred by the Office of Graduate Studies, and the Bert and Ruth Davis Award for Outstanding Graduate Career conferred by the Department of English in 2009. He has served on the English department’s Advisory Council of English Students; Dustin is especially proud of his work as both as the Program Assistant for the First Year Writing program, and as the Associate Editor for *the Journal of Beckett Studies*. 