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Joyce ... Beckett ... Dedalus ... Molloy:

A Study in Abjection and Masochism

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
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Abbreviations in the Text

In this thesis I discuss multiple works by the same author. To avoid confusion, I indicate them thus:

Kevin Barry, ed. *OCPW – Occasional, Critical and Political Writings*

James Joyce, *P – A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

U – James Joyce, Ulysses

Julia Kristeva: *DL – Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*

PH – Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection

Jacques Lacan: *MS – “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience.”*

SP – The Signification of the Phallus

Joyce ... Beckett ... Dedalus ... Molloy:
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ABSTRACT

Irish male identity in James Joyce's and Samuel Beckett's novels shows evidence of abjection. The oppressive natures of the Church and State in Ireland contribute to abjection in some Irish men. Furthermore, the state of abject being can lead to masochistic practices. According to Julia Kristeva, abjection translates into a “conceptual space” that has its roots in the Freudian Oedipal complex. Kristeva, following Lacan, also points to the connection between abjection and language. Joyce’s character Stephen Dedalus and Beckett’s Molloy/Moran both utilize this conceptual space and language in the narrative provides clues to their abject states. Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* show Stephen’s abjection through his feelings of separation from his fellow citizens as well as his status as an Irish Catholic. Like Stephen, Beckett’s protagonist Molloy/Moran endures abjection in terms of separation from the mother. Nevertheless, abjection by an oppressive social construct such as nationalism or religion is not as evident in *Molloy*. Although Beckett is an Irish author and Ireland is evident in the novel, Molloy/Moran is a universal character. He is abject by his own design – what Kristeva calls “self abjection” – in order to complete the

search for the mother. Molloy/Moran's search is also a search for the self as he reconciles with approaching death. This is similar to Stephen's self-abjection but Stephen abjects himself in order to separate himself from his fellow Irishmen. Stephen's concerns with death take on different ramifications, as Stephen is not at the same point in his life as Molloy/Moran. Death, for Stephen, is his mother's death and the oppressive guilt she has instilled in him by her admonitions to repent. Masochism is a response to abjection.

The age of modernism influenced Joyce's writing, just as the shift from high modernism to postmodernism influenced Beckett's. The Irish response to the changes attendant with modernization, both at the *fin-de-siècle* for Joyce and in the post- World War II years when Beckett wrote, is evident in Stephen Dedalus and Molloy/Moran. According to Suzanne R. Stewart, the turn of the century brought changes in culture through advertising and the advent of consumer capitalism and the bourgeois masculine status quo was threatened. Stewart argues that masochism is partly a masculine response to these changes. I argue that Stephen and Molloy/Moran reflect that response. The result of deferring or suspending either confrontation or resolution is pleasure, or *jouissance* as the term is used by Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva. Neither Joyce nor Beckett makes clear whether Stephen or Molloy/Moran achieve *jouissance*, effectively leaving the reader suspended, without resolution to the characters' stories.

Abjection and masochism link Stephen and Molloy/Moran as symbols of unaccommodated man and are remarkable in that they reflect not only an Irish masculine identity but also a universal masculine identity at both the turn of the century and post-World War II.

Introduction

Dejected and Abject: Joyce and Beckett's Irishmen

When one considers the Irish character, one might be tempted to describe the typical Irishman in terms of his genial nature: he is friendly, witty, always up for a bit of *craic*, or fun. However, there is another, darker facet to the Irish male that the American stereotype does not always capture. G. K. Chesterton writes, “The great Gaels¹ of Ireland / the men whom God made mad / Whose wars are always merry / but whose songs are always sad.” These lines point to what Cheryl Herr calls a “fatal divisiveness”² that marks Irish Catholic male identity. James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, the preeminent Irish authors of the twentieth century, reveal this fatal identity through the characters of Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus and Beckett’s Molloy/Moran.³ These characters are imbued with a tradition of misery coupled with rampant nationalism, and each suffers varying degrees of abjection.

In this thesis I will argue that Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Beckett’s *Molloy* reveal an abject condition in the characterizations of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, and Molloy/Moran in *Molloy*. I argue that abjection is closely related to the Oedipal terrain that men must navigate in order to establish identity, and I explain how this abjection results in masochism. Chapter One deals with Stephen Dedalus’s abjection in terms of Joyce’s coded discourse of Irish nationalism to illustrate Stephen’s “nightmare of history.” Chapter Two investigates Beckett’s *Molloy* and the nature of abjection in terms

¹ His poem, “The Ballad of the White Horse,” is sometimes quoted with “men” replacing “Gaels.”

² Assigning traits to any nationality can be read as stereotyping but, as Herr points out, “most writers on Ireland sooner or later put forward one trait that they see as definitive of the ‘Irish mind’ or ‘Celtic consciousness’” (6).

³ I refer to the characters of Molloy and Moran in this way because, as I will argue later, I see both as separate aspects of one identity.

of the return to the mother for Molloy and the patriarchal discourse, or Law of the Father for Moran. Both chapters link these concepts with the concept of moral masochism as it is defined by such authorities as Sigmund Freud, who provides us with the ur-text on masochism and Gilles Deleuze, whose *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty together with the entire text of Venus in Furs by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch*, still provides the standard for study of that form of perversion fifty years after its original publication.⁴ More recent studies in identity and masculinity by scholars such as Kaja Silverman and Suzanne Stewart still rely on Freud and Deleuze but expand upon the original scholarship from a twenty-first century perspective.

In this thesis I use the terms “abject” and “abjection” in two ways. The first is the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition: “cast down, downcast, brought low in position, condition, or estate, low-lying.” It also means, “cast off, cast out, rejected.” The second way I use these terms is based on the writings of Julia Kristeva, specifically in her treatise *The Powers of Horror*. Kristeva’s definitions of abject and abjection are intertwined within language, Freudian psychology, and Lacanian philosophy among others, and often depart from rigid dictionary definitions. Jerold E. Hogle explains Kristeva’s uses of the term to mean “‘throwing off’ and ‘being thrown under,’” and states that this is “the condition of being half inside and half outside the mother at the moment of birth – of being half dead and half alive from the start and thus undecidably (sic) in motion between logical contradictory states, including life and death.” This condition, he claims, causes us “to shift the most multifarious, inconsistent and conflated aspects of our beings ... into

⁴ *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty* was originally published in France under the title *Presentation de Sacher-Masoch* in 1967. Its first United States printing was in 1971.

seemingly repulsive monsters or ghosts that both conceal and reveal this ‘otherness’ from our preferred selves” (295).

The fact that Kristeva’s definitions of abjection are often abstract raises difficulty in interpretation. Her translator, Leon Roudiez, says in his preface to *Powers of Horror*, “Kristeva is not averse to using polysemy to her advantage” (viii). Indeed, Kristeva complicates the dictionary definition of the state of abjection by comparing it, for example, to a “receptacle” within which “looms [...] one of those violent, dark, revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside” (1). The concept of the “receptacle” is important in that I view abjection not only in terms of separation on a conceptual level, but also as a state of being, or a position of marginalization. Compare this to Ireland, a land marked by borders, whether they be the centuries-old stone walls that divide parcels of land or the conceptual borders imposed by the ruling classes, and this concept can be quite helpful in understanding how each character is marginalized and it should be noted, as with the word “abjection,” that I use “border” in more than its literal sense. Earl G. Ingersoll writes that it was Lacan who took the Saussurean concept of Signifier/sign (S/s) to mean that the difference, the arbitrary line that separates the Signifier from the signified, is “a barrier, or *barre* of repression that divides signifier in the manifest text from its signified in the unconscious text” (8). Irish have suffered ages of marginalization and degradation by one conquering tribe or another. Beginning with the Viking invasions toward the end of the eighth century, the Irish were continually bombarded by the assaults of an assortment of tribes and conquerors who tried various methods to divest the natives of their ancestral homes. Ireland’s centuries-old struggle with England has resulted in the marginalization and

abjection of the Irish Catholic by virtue of such draconian measures as the Penal Laws, which effectively stripped the Irish natives of what few holdings they had. The fact that this was supported by the Catholic Church, which held the Irish Catholic in a stifling grip of its own was not lost on Joyce, who states in his lecture “Ireland, Land of Saints and Sages,” “I confess that I do not see what good it does to fulminate against English tyranny while the tyranny of Rome still holds the dwelling place of the soul” (*OCPW* 119). While England kept the Irishman abject, the Church did nothing to help him improve his lot and, in Joyce’s estimation, was responsible for the fact that the Irish had not managed to overcome their oppressors. However, attempts in Joycean scholarship to pinpoint Joyce’s nationalist leanings, by such notable scholars as Richard Ellmann, Seamus Deane, Conor Cruise O’Brien, Dominic Manganiello, and Theresa O’Connor, have been met with varying results. Emer Nolan, who illuminates the divergence of critical historiological views in her book *James Joyce and Nationalism*, maintains that Joyce’s “influential readers can disclose nothing but polar opposition between Joycean modernism and Irish nationalism” (xi), and so urges us to look past the simple assumption that Joyce took a particular political stance. I maintain, however, that Irish masculine identity must necessarily include nationalism to some extent, and that nationalism is evident in his narrative.

Ideally, one is identified in Ireland as either Catholic or Protestant, Ulsterman or Free Stater, Green or Orange, all signs that identify the difference between the disadvantaged and the privileged. Protestants could be upwardly mobile whereas most Catholics were restricted in terms of social benefits such as jobs and housing. All these signs are evident in *Ulysses* in patriarchal discourse and the representation of the mother

as horrific ghost. This representation of May is what Herr refers to as “Ireland’s Dominatrix-body [...] as Kathleen Ni Houlihan, as Queen Medb, as the formidably misunderstood Irish mother, as a pervasive Irish resistance to achieving cultural identity in the terms that those outside of Irish society often deem necessary” (8).

Samuel Beckett, on the other hand, was Protestant and privileged and even less candid about his politics than Joyce, choosing to portray the abject Irish male who is cast out of his self and socially imposed barriers instead of suffering abjection at the hands of a larger, colonial construct. Nationalist discourse is downplayed in *Molloy*, while Beckett focuses more on the state of the “unaccommodated” man. As John P. Harrington points out in *The Irish Beckett*,

The dual narrators of *Molloy* adumbrate a dialectic of place that is fundamental of modern Irish literature and to literary representations of colonialism and postcolonialism. The model of exile, of aloofness to home, and of superiority to intellectual provincialism is, of course, that of Joyce and his work. The model of attachment to place, of establishment at home, and the use of imaginative provincialism is Yeats and his work.
(158)

Kristeva, in her seminal essay, “The Father, Love, and Banishment,” deals extensively with Beckett’s two works, *First Love*, and the drama *Not I*. Her findings indicate that all Beckett’s works oppose those of Joyce. According to Jennifer Birkett, this opposition places emphasis on “the negative, that which poetic language must seek to subvert: ‘the pillars of our imagination,’ the internalized ideology by which we maintain our confinement to a sterile universe” (5). Social constructs are observed, but they are

prohibitive and limiting. Molloy/Moran subverts these structures with Molloy acting in a more renegade way, while Moran exerts control over his interactions with such dominant structures as the Church. For Beckett, the oppressive order was the Protestant, Anglo-Irish ascendancy that was more akin to rigid Calvinism than the Church of England. As Anthony Cronin maintains,

Beckett's feeling [was] that mere being was an offence, a feeling powerfully reinforced by Schopenhauer. No doubt his Low Church Irish Protestantism, so near to Calvinism, had something to do with this too. If you were not among the elect, being was an offence. And how could someone of Beckett's temperament feel himself to be among the elect?"
(376)

The abject state of "being" shows marginalization at the hands of a Protestant ascendancy nonetheless. It operates in both *Ulysses* and *Molloy* to produce a certain amount of humiliation on the part of both Stephen Dedalus and Molloy/Moran, although it manifests itself in different ways according to each author. This humiliation, or sense of abjection ("brought low in condition"), is what I see as the connection to the concept of masochism.

Humiliation, according to Gilles Deleuze, is how Leopold von Sacher-Masoch "derives an almost 'secondary gain' which is specifically masochistic" (23-24). Although Sacher-Masoch portrays ritualized, overtly sexual masochism, at some points in this thesis I discuss masochism in terms of moral masochism, which does not require a flesh-and-blood cruel mistress. Deleuze continues that Sacher-Masoch "finds justification for masochistic behavior in the most varied motivations or in the demands of fateful and

agonizing situations.” Although masochism is generally thought of as a ritualized agreement between a weak male and a dominant female, the male need not be necessarily weak, nor does the female have to be the cruel dominatrix. For Stephen Dedalus, the cruel libertine appears as a terrifying ghost and an oppressive nation and church. He cannot awake from this historical “nightmare.” For Beckett’s Molloy/Moran, on the other hand, that libertine is evident in the “disintegrating voyage toward the mother” for Molloy and both the desire and failure on the part of Moran to maintain control within his sphere of existence.

It is arguable that the tendency of the Irishman to be dejected and an outcast in his own country is a result of living as a subject under the control of a competing ideology. Joyce and Beckett offer us images of the Irish Catholic male as outcast and dejected. Indeed, the link between de-ject and ab-ject is a short one. Being abject, (in a low state, cast out or cast away), results in dejection, which in turn can become a type of meanness. The abject male may turn to masochism as a way of gaining control over some aspect of his life as well as supplanting pain with pleasure.⁵ This tendency toward masochism, then, is what I believe to be a response to the low state in which the Irish Catholic man finds himself: separated in class, distanced from the dominating, impassive Church, and severely limited in terms of choices.

⁵ While masochism is not gender-specific, Kaja Silverman, in “Masochism and Male Subjectivity,” points out that Sigmund Freud, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and Theodor Reik all arrived at the conclusion, through their research, that men are more masochistic than women (24).

Chapter One

James Joyce's *Ulysses*: Stephen Dedalus and the "Feminized Betrayer"

In "Telemachus," the first chapter of *Ulysses*, it is the morning of June 16, 1904. Stephen Dedalus is trying to shake off the dream of his mother, "—giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes" (*U*-1:104-5). Buck Mulligan's exhortation to the "great sweet mother" shifts to the observation, "—The aunt thinks you killed your mother" (*U*-1:88-9), to which Stephen responds, "— someone killed her" (*U*1:90).

Immediately within this exchange, one sees the larger of Stephen's problems. His mother is dead, and he did not heed her dying wish to "repent." He has exiled himself to Martello Tower, but this move is only temporary. By the end of *Ulysses*, his future is just as uncertain.

The changing focus of the modern era, combined with the Church's rigid adherence to an aging paradigm, was most likely confusing to the Irish Catholic male who was uncertain of his place in a rapidly changing world. Before we are two pages into "Telemachus," set against the sweeping background of the Irish Sea, we find Stephen wrestling with the three things that keep him abject: the ghost of his mother, the Catholic Church, and the English Crown.

Stephen is the same age and temperament as Shakespeare's Hamlet. Both Hamlet and Stephen are dejected, which sets them apart from their peers. Hamlet seeks to avenge his father's death, but Stephen wishes to banish the specter of his mother. Stephen is casting about for confirmation of his "ineluctable modality of the visible" (*U*

3:1).⁶ He is older than when we last saw him in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. When we meet Stephen he is intent on suppressing the vision that haunts him even while he is awake. What transpires over the course of the day gives the reader a deeper understanding of why Stephen feels dejected and to what extent Stephen is abject just as the events that unfold throughout Hamlet's day ultimately reveal his folly.

At the beginning of *Ulysses*, we meet a Stephen who has recently returned from Paris with his Latin Quarter hat and new eyes. Stephen finds himself adrift among the nightmares of a mother, church, and country that have left him abject. The hat, symbolic of Paris and the freedom of thought it represents, sets him apart from his fellow Dubliners. Stephen has gained a decidedly new outlook after being immersed in *fin-de-siècle* Paris and this transition from *A Portrait* to *Ulysses* mirrors the transition of the turn of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth. Part of the joy of reading Joyce is the brilliance of his use of mirrors and dichotomies, his simultaneously macro-micro view of the world, and the sheer genius of revealing old-order Ireland through the eyes of a disaffected Stephen Dedalus.

In this chapter I will show how I interpret Stephen's abjection as it is construed as conceptual "space," as well as other Kristevan interpretations. I will discuss the dichotomous aspects of May Dedalus's ghost and how she represents a stifling Ireland in a larger sense. Part One will deal with the Oedipal ramifications of Stephen's relationship with his mother and how these operate with the abject. Part Two will discuss the paternal aspects of Stephen's struggle as they are mirrored in what I view as a coded nationalist discourse that reveals the Word and Law of the Church and Crown. Part

⁶ Frank Budgen says that it is "about six months" (39).

Three will focus on a specific type of masochism – moral masochism – that is manifest in Stephen’s actions and is a result of his inability to reconcile his mother’s ghost.

Throughout the text of *Ulysses*, and culminating in “Circe,” the fifteenth chapter, the ghost of May Dedalus takes on different aspects, including that of “Ireland, the feminized betrayer” (Siegel 189). The identity with which Joyce endows Stephen is a binary opposition of May Dedalus, who represents the old order of Ireland. Stephen delays his fate in terms of accepting the parental (paternal) imperative and exhibits an uncanny understanding of the class and religious borders that separate him from his fellow Irishmen. He is abject by virtue of his religion and his own nativity at a time when Ireland was undergoing serious change due, in part, to a fight for home rule that lasted from 1870 to 1918 (Hollis 107).

The two powerful forces of Stephen’s “two masters,” “the imperial British state [...] and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church” (*U* 1:643-4), have kept Ireland a cultural anachronism until 1904 and have threatened Stephen’s ability to express his artistic self. The Church, which had provided shelter, education, companionship, and succor for Stephen, became the root of his shame, acting as a repressive super-ego in *A Portrait*. In *Ulysses* that repressive super-ego is multiplied by three. Joyce uses the Church, the laws of the English oppressors and Stephen’s memories of his dying mother to keep him abject and marginalized. As Emer Nolan notes, “Stephen is searching for an alternative and heterodox tradition with which to identify” (37). Nolan compares him with Yeats, for whom, she notes, “‘Irishness’ is an aspect of the identity he desires to create; for Stephen it is the identity he wishes to escape” (37).

Escape, for Stephen, means a separation from his family and his homeland. This separation is best evidenced in his “I will not serve” speech at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist*. This speech is an act of renunciation that allows Stephen the freedom to forge his own life as an artist. As a “man of letters,” Stephen stands out in juxtaposition with what Tracy Teets Schwarze calls the “more rough hewn and hypermasculine exaggerations of the Citizen” (71). Remaining in Dublin ties him to an ideology with which he would rather not identify.

In *Ulysses*, because of his mother’s death, he defers his dreams and shifts them into the realm of fantasy. The suspension of these dreams has lasted almost one year to the day, which we learn from the narrative. Stephen has suspended his artistic dreams, trading them for guilt and humiliation. His mother is a constant reminder of an oppressive Church from which he is abject.

Stephen’s inability to confront is inherently masochistic according to Gilles Deleuze who maintains, “Disavowal, suspense, waiting, fetishism and phantasy together make up the specific constellation of masochism. Reality [...] is affected not by negation but by a disavowal that transposes it into phantasy” (63). Stephen enacts that “phantasy” in *Ulysses*, by rejecting the old ways, the onus of paternity, and the stifling mantle of the Catholic church.

Part One

*Amor matris*⁷

In “Telemachus,” an exchange between Stephen and the Englishman Haines illuminates the crux of Stephen’s issues. As Stephen states, he serves two masters but his reference to the Italian one, the Pope and Church, is only known to the reader, who is allowed to see Stephen’s inner thoughts by virtue of Joyce’s “Arranger.” Stephen then offers, as an afterthought, a cryptic “third:”

– I am a servant of two masters, Stephen said, an English and an Italian” –

-- Italian? Haines said.

A crazy queen, old and jealous. Kneel down before me.

-- And a third, Stephen said, there is who wants me for odd jobs. (*U1*: 638-641).

This reference, while non-gendered, could refer to Stephen’s mother for various reasons. Stephen relegates her to the lowest position in the list. This action concurs with his attitude toward her, which has been one of veiled contempt. But, May still must exert considerable power over Stephen because he assigns her a place with his other two “masters.” The reference to “odd jobs” can also suggest the unnatural, autoerotic aspects of the mother. These aspects make her the sexual, forbidden, “feminized betrayer.” Stephen’s abjection comes from an inability to resolve the Oedipal imperative that demands that the son reject the mother as erotic object, which takes what Kristeva calls “drive energy.” The performative failure, on Stephen’s part, is that he is still half in and

⁷ James Joyce, “Scylla and Charybdis.” *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler. (New York: Random House, 1986) 9:842-43.

half out of his separation from the mother at an age where he should be well beyond this resolution. He prefers to suspend resolution in favor of the narcissistic ego.

Joyce was an avid reader of Sigmund Freud's works although he resisted psychoanalysis himself. In *Ulysses*, Freudian psychology reveals a flaw in Stephen's Oedipal development. Freudian constructs such as denial and the Oedipal stages, especially the mirror stage, are necessary for us to understand Stephen's abjection the way Kristeva sees it. Kristeva, who relies on Freud and Lacan to support her thesis, sees abjection as a type of separation from the mother, the source, or the *omphalos*, a theme repeated throughout *Ulysses* but especially in the Telemachiad.⁸ Separation from the mother, Kristeva writes, "preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which the body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10). Separation can also be from a territory of safety and security: as the mother's body expels the fetus so does the infant separate from the mother in order to enter a terrifying new world.

It appears that Stephen does not manage to overcome the conflict between the pre-Oedipal stage, when the ego is in its primacy, and the Oedipal stage, when the ego and the super-ego are locked in what is essentially a battle for supremacy. The result is that Stephen must fight the specter of his mother throughout *Ulysses* in order to expel himself from her but Stephen is unable to break away from his mother's ghost until much later in the novel. Marilu Hill provides perhaps a more succinct explanation of Stephen's struggle, "between needing his mother as a nurturer wholly subject to his desire and accepting her as an autonomous self with desires of her own" (331). Hill explains,

⁸ The Telemachiad is the collective name for Part I of *Ulysses* and contains the chapters "Telemachus," "Nestor," and "Proteus."

What is particularly threatening to Stephen is his mother's ability to speak for herself, especially since language is his domain both as a writer and as a male. Consequently, the living mother must be silenced and denied the opportunity to speak except as she is filtered through Stephen's censoring consciousness. In the Telemachiad, even the memory of her is consistently silenced, coming to Stephen in a dream with only "mute, secret words [1.272]". (331-2)

A preoccupation with secrets reveals how Stephen reconciles his memory of his mother to language by way of symbols. Stephen substitutes "secret words" with signifiers:

The twining stresses, two by two. A hand plucking the harpstrings,
merging their twining chords. Wavewhite wedded words shimmering on
the dim tide.(U 1:245-247),

This theme of secrecy is repeated:

Her *secrets*: old featherfans, tasseled dancecards, powdered with musk
[...] A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a
girl" (U 1:255-257) (emphasis mine).

May Dedalus's "secrets" reside, for Stephen, in an erotic realm. This space is set apart from Stephen's own abject, "borderline" state, which is a place of safety for Stephen as it keeps his mother's memory at a distance. Friedman states that Stephen "flees from any possible contact in order to sustain the ideal form, beyond action, beyond language" (81).

This flight is tantamount to abjection. Kristeva puts forth, in *Powers of Horror*, “[a] narrative is, all in all, the most elaborate attempt, next to syntactic competence, to situate a speaking between his desires and their prohibitions, in short, within the Oedipal triangle” (140). In *Ulysses*, Joyce has Stephen banish the erotic May by repeatedly transferring her memory to a dream:

Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes. (*U* 1:104-5)

These images are repeated almost verbatim in lines 270-272:

In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wet ashes.

These images drive away any erotic aspects of “merging” and “twining” and “wedded” as well as other erotic signs: “Her *shapely* fingernails *reddened* by the blood of squashed lice from the children’s shirts” (*U*1:267-269) (emphasis mine). By transferring any kindly thoughts to her, Stephen risks eroticizing the mother, which is at the very heart of the Oedipal complex. By deferring this eroticization to a conceptual place, he can attempt to stave off the moment when he will have to reconcile the Oedipal imperative.

May plays a dual role that necessitates nationalist discourse. This discourse can reveal the state of the disaffected Irishman, according to Hill, who states that May can easily be translated “as Ireland and religion, becoming that which Stephen rebels against,

even as she is forced by his manipulations to be also the all-giving mother. *A Portrait* solidifies her character as both the silent affirmer and the object of Stephen's rebellion" (332).

As Ireland and as a symbol of the Church, May is the "feminized betrayer" that he rebels against and is the object of his "*Non serviam*." She has betrayed him as did the Church. Anthony Burgess concurs:

Amor matris is a big theme in *Ulysses* but only one of its meanings. Stephen Dedalus remembers his mother with pity, but, when she rises from the dead in the late-night brothel scene, she is the enemy [...] she seems to provoke the same feelings as those two greater mothers, Ireland and the Church – a mixture of guilt, anger, terror and disdain. (27)

The brothel scene in "Circe" indicates the point of separation, or the culmination of Stephen's struggles with May's ghost. I believe that this culmination is accomplished when Stephen, with the shattering of Bella Cohen's chandelier, is finally able to abolish May as the Other, as she exists in the symbolic order.

This culmination involves what Jacques Lacan refers to as *jouissance*, a complex psychological term that, literally translated, means "pleasure" and "orgasm," but which, for Jacques Lacan, holds a different meaning. Defined in the *Literary Encyclopedia*, *jouissance* "seems to imply a desire to abolish the condition of lack (*la manque*) to which we are condemned by our acceptance of the signs of the symbolic order in place of the Real."⁹ Stephen's inability to resolve the Oedipal "mirror phase" in which the child separates from the mother, reveals a castration complex, where he essentially finds

⁹ Robert Clark, University of East Anglia, "Jouissance," *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 1 Jan. 2004, The Literary Dictionary Company, 27 March 2006, <<http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=602>>

himself in the tricky psychological position of dealing with a “phallic mother,” who threatens him and his ability to achieve culmination, or *jouissance*.

Part Two

“Paternity may be legal fiction”¹⁰

If incest dread, according to Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, marks the struggle with the mother, symbolic or real, then murder surely marks the struggle with the father. Like Hamlet’s struggle, Stephen’s struggle in *Ulysses* is not so much with his real father as it is with a symbolic one. In the “Nestor” episode, we find Stephen at his job of teaching at the Dalkey School. As he helps his student, Cyril Sargent, he is reminded of himself at the same age. Stephen finds no joy in the thought that he will be tied forever to a life that affords him little freedom of expression, no rapture, and no epiphany so great it could free his artistic self from the constraints of the Church and Crown. At Dalkey School, Stephen is abject in terms of his place in the social order. He has to teach privileged children to earn his pay when he would prefer to be plying his craft. Paternal mandates, in the “Nestor” segment, come from Garrett Deasy, headmaster of the school and Stephen’s employer.

Simon Dedalus, at this point in *Ulysses*, still resides in *A Portrait of the Artist*. He has not made his entrance in *Ulysses*, where his presence underscores the chasm that exists between himself and Stephen. Simon does not appear until Chapter Six, “Hades,” but Stephen has already dispatched the Oedipal father in *A Portrait*. While in Cork, Stephen watches Simon against the backdrop of a history that will never be recaptured. His alienation is further reinforced as he looks on at the pub while his father performs a ritual that generations of Irish men have performed: “the three glasses being raised from the counter as his father and his two cronies drank to the memory of their past” (*P* 95). Stephen’s separation from Simon is nearly complete as he realizes,

¹⁰ Joyce, *Ulysses* 9:844.

An abyss of fortune or of temperament sundered him from them. His mind seemed older than theirs: it shone coldly on their strifes and happiness and regrets like a moon upon a younger earth. No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them. He had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude male health nor filial piety. Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys, and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon. (*P* 96-97)

The abyss leaves Stephen abject in terms of his relationship with his father. Stephen's estrangement from Simon's world accomplishes symbolic separation. By the end of *A Portrait of the Artist* his self-exile to France will accomplish the physical, if only for a short time.

Joyce uses a carefully coded language of nationalism to illuminate the dichotomy between the modern world and the lagging Irish identity that had its roots in British imperialism. Signs and symbols of the monarchy appear everywhere, but nationalism is disguised, sometimes as symbol and sometimes as a separate language (Mulligan refers to Haines as a *sassenach*).¹¹

Rather than make broad pronouncements about Ireland's troubles and elevate a romanticized Irishman as a cultural icon, Joyce chose to do away with "the cultural obsession with the past," according to Robert Spoo. "Stephen's nightmare, and the text of *Ulysses* itself are distinct but related responses to what Nietzsche called "the malady of history" [...] which, Nietzsche believed, was destroying intellectual and moral health in

¹¹ According to Gifford, "Irish for the Saxon (or English) conqueror" (18).

the nineteenth century” (6). This destruction led to intense subjectivity and masochistic behavior as one of the ways in which the Irish male acted out his frustrations in the face of rapidly changing mores. As an increasingly modern society threatened to remove a largely agrarian society from a way of life established centuries earlier and which survived despite the numerous efforts of conquerors to destroy it, Joyce took it upon himself to “stand against the subordinating force of social discourse” (Schwarze 5).

Along with the centuries of oppression that took their toll on the Irish psyche, modernism heaped another set of problems onto a tenuous situation for the marginalized Irish Catholic man. Marjorie Howes states,

Colonialism and nationalism were among the period’s most visible sources of conflict and change, and were the subjects of much discussion and debate. At the same time they were so important and pervasive – both as realities and as ideologies -- that they became part of contemporary conceptions of ‘reality’ and ‘common sense’ and supplied many of the unspoken rules and assumptions of the time. (254)

These rules and assumptions were destined to clash with a world undergoing swift change. The tide of modernism overtaking Europe threatened the hegemonic order in which the Irish Catholic male was ensconced and abjection was becoming common. In Joyce’s Dublin, where a heightened sense of colonialism and a caste-like system was explicit as well as implicit, everyone knew his or her “place.” “[Joyce’s] writing,” states Schwarze, “showcases both the insurgencies of modernist thought and the indoctrinations that characterized fin de siècle subjectivity” (5).

Stephen carries out his own abjection, or “separation,” by distancing himself from proscriptions against British rule. As Nolan points out, “Stephen’s refusal of political commitment in art becomes the subject of general comment and controversy [in *Ulysses*]. His assertion of artistic autonomy is assailed and defended, continually thematized and understood as politically charged at the outset” (44) only these assertions separate Stephen from his peers the same way “the destitute or abject subject includes within himself his own exclusions” (Silverman 28). Stephen’s “peers” are for social purposes only, as he does not really count any of them as confidants. He abjects himself in this case, in the same manner that the deject subject does. Stephen is complicit in his abjection, and he acts to separate, or abject himself from oppressive ideologies. Kristeva maintains,

Necessarily dichotomous, somewhat Manichæan¹², [the deject] divides, excludes, and without, properly speaking, wishing to know his abjections is not at all unaware of them. Often, moreover, he includes himself among them, thus casting within himself the scalpel that carries out his separations” (8).

In “Nestor,” Stephen is faced with Mr. Deasy as a larger paternal figure of the Crown as Law as the narrative emphasis shifts to the rhetoric of the Empire. Paternity is evident in Deasy’s fatherly admonishments to Stephen:

¹² The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states, “As the theory of two eternal principles, good and evil, is predominant in this fusion of ideas and gives color to the whole, Manichæism is classified as a form of religious Dualism. It spread with extraordinary rapidity in both East and West and maintained a sporadic and intermittent existence in the West (Africa, Spain, France, North Italy, the Balkans) for a thousand years, but it flourished mainly in the land of its birth, (Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Turkestan) and even further East in Northern India, Western China, and Tibet, where, c. A.D. 1000, the bulk of the population professed its tenets and where it died out at an uncertain date”

– Because you don't save, Mr. Deasy said, pointing his finger. You don't know yet what money is. Money is power. When you have lived long enough as I have I know, I know. *If youth but knew.* (U 2:236-39)

Stephen now has to “kill” this symbolic father in order to obtain his heart's desire, which is the freedom to be an artist. As Spoo states, “[w]ith his silent rebuttals of Deasy, Stephen has already begun to fulfill the vow he will take in ‘Circe’ to ‘kill the priest and the king’ mentally and spiritually [15.4437]” (97). Stephen's focalizations here indicate that he is subject to the old headmaster and he resents it, just as the boy resents the Oedipal father and wishes to kill him. The “priest and king” Stephen wishes to kill are represented here by money, the root of all power, which is discussed as “sovereign.” Reference to the “hollow shells” and “idle shells” (U 2:226; 241) are not only references to money, but they hearken back to “Telemachus” where Stephen observes the *sassenach* Haines and the “shell of his hands” (U-1:621) as he offers a light for Stephen's cigarette. The signs of the monarchy are the same, with shells affecting a skeletal reference as a description of the hollow occupiers.

In the space of Deasy's office, the Empire becomes overarching and as Deasy prattles on, Stephen suffers his rhetoric. Deasy's language oppresses, giving rise to Kristeva's statement that what represses, or abjects, borrows strength from language (32). One can recognize the strength inherent in the rhetoric of the Protestant ascendancy at work here, especially in the refrains of Orange Order marching songs:

“For Ulster will fight / And Ulster will be right” (U 2:397-8) and

Glorious, pious and immortal memory. The lodge of Diamond in Armagh the splendid behung with corpses of papishes. Hoarse masked and armed,

the planters' covenant. The black north and true blue bible. Croppies lie down" (*U 2:273-6*).

Although Deasy appears to be fatherly, he is masking his contempt and sense of superiority. Any altruism on Deasy's part is negated when he exacts a favor from Stephen. Deasy "pays his way" in a sense by offering advice in return for having his letter published. His rhetoric exposes him as a bigot and Stephen must suffer his rants. Spoo describes Deasy as "an anti-Semitic, misogynistic Orangeman who regards his young Catholic assistant as a 'fenian' [2.272]" (90).¹³ Deasy is another "artificer." His rough joke at the end of the chapter reads as a backhanded attempt at congeniality but this is not his intent.

Ireland, they say, has the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the jews. Do you know that? No, do you know why?

He frowned sternly on the bright air.

– Why sir? Stephen asked, beginning to smile.

– Because she never let them in, Mr Deasy said solemnly. (*U 2:437-42*)

Stephen, "beginning to smile" might be brought out of his dark mood by a good joke but the resounding punch line reminds him once again of the differences between himself and Deasy and he finds himself looking across a chasm as the headmaster walks back to his office, laughing. Joyce understood the implications that the Irish, like the Jews, were exiles in their own land, and stripped of all but their self-determination.

Stephen's interior dialogue in "Nestor" enhances our understanding of his subjectivity, and even Joyce's Arranger omnisciently observes Stephen's struggles. Spoo argues that "Nestor" as a

¹³ Another Irish term for "fianna" or mythic warriors of Ireland who followed Fion Mac Cunhail (Finn).

passage of dense interior monologue is a craftily woven tapestry of phrases and images associated with the Anglo-Irish presence in Ireland, from the Elizabethan plantation system established to ‘pacify’ the island to the brutal persecutions of Catholics by the Protestant Orange lodges in the 1790s. (97)

Deasy’s Orange Lodge rhetoric reinforces Stephen’s position outside the borders of privilege and the joke Deasy tells at the end of Nestor is meant to convey Deasy’s bigotry as well as to underscore his superiority. Deasy, by his very nature abjects Stephen and although Deasy targets the Jews in the joke, we also find a caution for Stephen to mind his marginal place in the dominant society.

May in Furs

Joyce, who had a “self-regarded fascination” with masochism, according to Anthony Valente (224), invests Stephen with a modern consciousness. Gleaned from his six months in Paris, this consciousness creates a gap that, according to Stewart, is “within the act of willing, is historically ‘loaded,’ formed by concrete politico-historical configurations that produce a specific form of subjectivity capable of finding a way to enter the symbolic order” (12). This symbolic order for Stephen is the hegemonic order of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. Stephen Dedalus is intensely subjective, and is already suffering the effects of the Protestant paradigm. This subjectivity dominates the narrative of “Telemachus” and indicates Stephen’s alienation from Ireland. Stewart cogently argues the effects of rapid change on the male psyche, explaining,

In the name of marginalization a new norm was constituted: men were viewed and viewed themselves as always already wounded or fragmented, subjected and enslaved to modern civilization by their own desires, which, of necessity, remain unfulfilled. Masochism expressed both a crisis of male subjectivity and the positive valorization of that crisis whereby crisis itself became a constituted feature of that same masculinity. (13)

Joyce recognized this crisis and applied what he knew of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s works to *Ulysses*. The ritualized type of masochism that Sacher-Masoch practices, however, is different from Stephen’s moral masochism, which comes from Freud. Some comprehension of Sacher-Masoch’s work is necessary to see the connection. Ellmann, who knew that “Joyce drew heavily upon Sacher-Masoch’s book, *Venus im Pelz* [*Venus in Furs*],” offers a brief synopsis:

a young man named Severin who so abases himself before his mistress, a wealthy woman named Wanda, and encourages her cruelty toward him, that she becomes increasingly tyrannical, makes him a servile go-between, and then, in a rapturous finale, turns him over to her most recent lover for a whipping” (369).

In “Telemachus,” for example, the reference to the hand plucking the harp (cited in Part One of this thesis) is from Masoch. Carolyn Siegel points out that “Masoch’s continual references to ‘a small woman’s hand’ as a symbol of her paradoxical strength are echoed in Stephen’s belief that he collapsed [in “Circe”] because of ‘the reappearance of a matutinal cloud ... at first no bigger than a woman’s hand’ [p.667]” (186).

Early in “Nestor,” Stephen recalls, “a fox, red reek of *rapine* in his *fur*, with *merciless* bright eyes scraped in the earth, listened, scraped up the earth, listened, scraped and scraped” (*U* 2:148-50) (emphasis mine). Although Joyce refers to “his” fur, the fox could be read as Sacher-Masoch’s feminine, merciless woman wrapped in fur. “Rapine” might also be associated with male identity, yet the etymology of the word is non-gendered.¹⁴ “To plunder, to carry away forcefully” is representative not only of the cruel woman but also the colonial oppressors who would plunder what heritage Ireland had in favor of replacing it with a Anglicized social construct. The reference to the fox and the furs also represents a hunting theme that is evident, according to Deleuze, in most of Sacher-Masoch’s novels. Sacher-Masoch formulates the basis for the romantic, ritualistic form of perversion. He believed, according to Deleuze,

¹⁴ As a noun, the *OED* indicates it as “c. *beast* (etc.) *of rapine*: beast of prey” as well as “to take forcefully.”

The ideal woman hunts a bear or a wolf and despoils it of its fur. We could interpret this symbolically as the struggle of woman against man, from which woman emerges triumphant. But this would be a mistake, since woman has already been invested with an exclusively feminine significance. The animal stands for the primitive hataeric mother, the pre-birth mother, it is hunted and despoiled for the benefit of the oral mother, with the aim of achieving a rebirth, a parthenogenetic second birth in which [...] the father has no part. (53)

Perversion is a shape-shifter when Joyce uses it for his purposes. Kaja Silverman argues, “perversion intrudes as the temptation to engage in a different kind of erotic narrative, one whose organization is aleatory and paratactic rather than direct and hypotactic” (21). In other words, Stephen is avoiding direct contact with the Other. The “rebirth” of which Deleuze speaks is the moment in which Stephen is suspended. This suspension is the avoidance of any kind of culminating factor, or *jouissance*, which would deliver him from his state of alienation and abjection and rid him of his mother’s ghost.

Before I get too far into the discussion, I must note here that “moral masochism” differs from the ritual, contractually agreed-upon form of submission and domination. Silverman asserts that in cases of moral masochism, “the subject functions both as the victim and as the victimizer, dispensing with the need for an external object” (29).

Stewart explains:

[Freud] distinguishes between three types [of masochism] -- the erotogenic or primary form (which grounds all subsequent developments

of the libidinal drive and thus cannot be overcome), feminine masochism (considered a perversion when exhibited by men but a natural tendency of feminine passivity when manifested by women), and moral masochism (which catapults Freud into the cultural domain, for here masochism becomes the mechanism by which cultural allegiance if not obedience is instilled as guilt). (28)

Silverman notes that “conventional subjectivity [...] closely adjoins moral masochism” (26). Stephen’s subjectivity is a form of suspending, or not performing, his male function. The thing desired is the “normal,” heterosexual, romantic, committed love. This kind of love is part of the symbolic order but Stephen strays from the symbolic preferring, instead, to delay and defer, abject and marginalized. His experiences at Clongowes, where he was brought up by Jesuits in a school that emphasized the paternal as well as fraternal “father” (priest) and “brother” (professed), leaves him with the idea that women are mysterious. The refrain of “love’s bitter mystery,” another repeated theme in *Ulysses* that begins in “Telemachus,” underscores Stephen’s impressions of women. Siegel explains, “both [Leopold] Bloom’s and Stephen’s fear of and reluctance to have contact with women might be explained by their belief that women are in some way evil, contemptible creatures” (188). Siegel also points out Stephen’s reference to ““woman’s unclean loins, of man’s flesh made not in God’s likeness, the serpents prey’,” and “Stephen’s cruel image of his mother as Ireland, the feminized betrayer – ‘thou hast suckled me with bitter milk ... thou has left me alone for ever in the dark ways of my bitterness; and with a kiss of ashes thou hast kissed my mouth’” (189)

Stephen literally strikes out at the betrayer in “Circe.” The victim of too much absinthe and not enough food, he is finally face-to-face with the vision of his mother, “bidding him repent, pray, and save his soul from hellfire” (Budgen 243). She ultimately rises “stark through the floor” in his hallucination, causing him to become “horrorstruck:”

(comes nearer, breathing upon him softly her breath of wetted ashes) All must go through it, Stephen. More woman than men in the world. You too. Time will come” (*U* 15:4181-84).

Stephen must face the Oedipal specter that has haunted him throughout the novel. In this scene, Stephen makes his culminating strike against all his mother embodies. This is the final refusal to his mother, his country, and his oppressors. Siegel asserts that “Stephen, declaring ‘*Non serviam*’ to Church and State, and determinedly weaponless, accepting meek martyrdom to the representatives of Britain, [enacts a] role that Severin¹⁵ finds compatible” (186). Stephen enacts a ritual with this declaration, more in keeping with Sacher-Masoch’s ritualized version of masochism. Perhaps Severin would find Stephen’s role compatible because it entails high drama and because “Stephen, like Severin, seems driven toward real torture and real annihilation” (Siegel 184-85).

Joyce perhaps unwittingly anticipated Freud’s assignment of masochism to a social and cultural construct. Joyce’s uses of Sacher-Masoch’s ideas in *Ulysses* work with his characterization of Stephen even though the larger part in the masochistic ritual seems to belong to Leopold Bloom. Spoo argues that we do ourselves a disservice to relegate Stephen’s importance as secondary or even tertiary to Bloom’s. The two characters are intertwined in *Ulysses*, and the culmination of the brothel scene in “Circe”

¹⁵ The protagonist of *Venus in Furs*.

cements their relationship. Bloom steers Stephen clear of the law and takes him under his wing.

Stephen has banished the mother/Other, in an orgiastic response to her and all she represents. When he shatters her image by smashing the chandelier with his ashplant¹⁶ his final cry of “nohung!” asserts his earlier pronouncement of “*Non serviam*,” as an attempt to free himself from his abject existence. Although he still needs Bloom to help him on his way (the symbolic father he finds in “Poldy” ushers him to safety and, hopefully, the next stage of his life), Stephen’s destination is unknown as he leaves the Bloom household in the dawning hours of June 17. Joyce leaves the door open for hope, but the nightmare of history remains with Ireland for another century. Conjecture as to Stephen’s ultimate destination is beside the point but it is safe to say that Stephen’s lot remains unresolved.

¹⁶ Walking stick.

Chapter Two

Vagrancy and Freedom: Beyond Borders

Molloy, the first of Samuel Beckett's trilogy of novels, shows a different aspect of Irish identity than the one we see illustrated in Joyce's work. What we glean from Beckett's seemingly minimalist text is the Irishman in a state of decay, seeking reunification with an essence. That essence could be seen as Ireland, the symbolic mother, or mother earth as a larger construct. The character Molloy and his alter-ego Moran are representative of a universal "Beckett man."¹⁷

In *The Irish Beckett*, John P. Harrington states, "Many have speculated on the relationship between the trilogy of Beckett's novels [*Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*] and the work of Joyce, from stream of consciousness to ironic mythic parallels, from linguistic-referential texts like Joyce's to a discourse on fiction most emphatically not like Joyce's" (156). Harrington also points out that Beckett was more than a mere student enamored of his master. According to Joyce's biographer Richard Ellmann, Beckett thought of Joyce as a second father. He was counted among Joyce's circle, almost married his daughter, and after Joyce's death proceeded to take what he had learned from Joyce and make it new, eschewing Joyce's method of borrowing from classical and romantic sources by creating a nihilistic opposite. Some call Beckett's work "postmodern," and Harold Bloom calls Beckett's work "high modernism" (463). In fact, Beckett straddles the two emerging ideologies of modernism and postmodernism.¹⁸ As

¹⁷ Anthony Cronin describes a " 'Beckett man' ," a universal character "whose differing incarnations have only about as much relevance as have the differing film incarnations of [Charlie] Chaplin's tramp" (379).

¹⁸ In "Defining the Postmodern" (1986) Jean-François Lyotard, marks the delineation between modernism and postmodernism as the Second World War, when modernism's revolutionary progress was appropriated for the purpose of hostility and violence. Postmodernism rejects the destructive tendencies of

Bloom states, “No one [...] will find Beckett deficient in strangeness, in palpable originality. His shadow lies heavily upon the plays of Pinter and Stoppard; his prose fiction seems to have been a dead stop: no one can extend or deepen that mode” (464)

Molloy reflects what Bloom calls the “mature” Beckett. Aging and decay are major themes, if not *the* major theme. Molloy/Moran, the protagonist, is more advanced in age than Stephen Dedalus and Molloy is in search of his mother. Molloy also has an alter-ego, Moran, who takes over the text at midpoint and searches for Molloy. The Oedipal complex as a factor that abjects is presumably part of Molloy/Moran’s past but I contend that Beckett, using high modern *techné*, relies on what I see as a post-Oedipal desire that runs contrary to Freud’s construct. This desire recalls the infant’s desire for the mother. Where Beckett departs from Joyce is that there is movement toward Molloy’s mother rather than repulsion of her, and separation from the father is seen from the father’s (Moran’s) point of view rather than the son’s (Jacques Jr.). The journey toward the mother, in the Kristevan sense, places Molloy/Moran in a conceptual space between realizing potential and refusal, rejection, casting out, ab-jection and de-jection.

Since abjection sometimes results in masochism, and since both authors reveal it as a functional part of their characters, can we say that masochism a part of Irish masculine identity? I believe that if we take Joyce and Beckett at their word (and why should we not?); the answer is an emphatic maybe. It would seem from reading the previous chapter that the statement is true, but this does not account for the fact that Stephen does not consider himself to be like his fellow Irishman. Stephen is a representation of Joyce himself. In the case of Molloy/Moran, there are definite

modernism and urges us to embrace diversity and accept that there is no true way of life that is superior to another.

masochistic tendencies but they are seen on a universal level. The difficulty of ascribing masochism to the Irish character by reading these two texts lays in the fact that Molly/Moran is “a fictitious creation whose life and circumstances were not Samuel Beckett’s life and circumstances and who felt things Samuel Beckett did not necessarily feel” (Cronin 373).

Two comprehensive biographies¹⁹ of Joyce and Beckett mention the affinity Joyce and Beckett shared, with Beckett as the student to Joyce, the master. Cronin’s biography of Beckett takes pains to keep the relationship from seeming idyllic. He insists that Joyce was “self-centered in his greatness” and did not need either a “disciple” or “soul mate” (91). Joyce found, in Beckett, “an obliging, intelligent young Irishman, who shared many of his own interests and something of his own outlook on life, who had a sense of humour and who was prepared to provide admiration and sympathy even at some cost to his own identity” (91). Beckett’s self-exile to France was more about the ideologies of Paris in the 1920s, which suited his personality more, than about any contention he had with Ireland. As Cronin explains, “[Beckett] was, in a sense, made for twentieth-century France. Finding it, he found his homeland” (79).

Beckett deconstructs Joyce in order to forge his own artistic identity. His work, in addition to Joyce’s, has been the subject of essays by Kristeva. In her chapter in *Desire and Language*, titled “The Father, Love, and Banishment,” she indicates that Beckett writes “*against* Joyce, ascetically rejecting the latter’s joyous and insane, incestuous plunge summed up in Molly’s jouissance or the paternal baby talk in *Finnegans Wake*” (151). I suggest that *Molloy* is an example of separation both in terms of the author’s

¹⁹ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), and Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: the Last Modernist* (New York: Da Capo, 1999).

departure from the symbolic father (Joyce), as well as the ideological and physical separations that are carried out in the text. How Beckett accomplishes abjection in his novel is the focus of the first part of this chapter, and how abjection relates to masochism is the focus of the second.

Part One

“Chameleon in spite of himself”: Molloy as Moran

In his article “Who Speaks in the Work of Samuel Beckett?” Simon Critchley credits Beckett with creating “dramatic tension in the Trilogy in the disjunction that opens up between the time of the narrative, the chain of increasingly untellable and untenable stories, and the nonnarratable time of the narrative voice” (115). This disjunction is a conceptual space much the same as the “arkhein” that Herr says,

[Is] a suitably remote, uncertain, and gender-free term to signify elements that might be variously expressed through ideas such as Kristeva’s *abject* or *semiotic* or *chora*, Freud’s Minoan moment, the primarily filmic sense of a nonpatriarchal imaginary, a (m)other tongue, the speaking of Luce Irigaray’s “two lips,” any version of a pre-Oedipal semiotic (in Kristeva’s sense) that sweeps up the possibility of segueing into a matri-symbolic or maternal primary code. (8)

Herr goes on to say that although some of the terms are gendered she references them “to draw forth Ireland’s dominatrix-body – as arkhein, as Kathleen Ni Houlihan, as Queen Medb, as the formidably misunderstood Irish Mother, as a pervasive Irish resistance to achieving cultural identity in the terms that those outside of Irish society often deem necessary” (8).

In a much simpler construct, John P. Harrington refers to this dramatic tension as, “the preoccupation in modern Irish literature with home and away” (155). He argues, “In this particular dialectic of home and away, devoted to consciousness of self, being at

home is subordination of oneself to exterior forms of consciousness, and being away from home is what Moran refers to as vagrancy and freedom”(157).

Beckett follows a long tradition of circles, notable by the title of his early essay “Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce,” where he makes “a distinction between [the circle of] Dante’s purgatory (conical, implying culmination) and that of Joyce (spherical, excluding culmination)” (Ackerly and Gontarski 124). These “circularities,” all manifestations of temporality, form a type of centrifugal force that holds the narrative together. Indeed, any discussion of *Molloy* can begin either with the first half of the novel or the second half because the entire narrative seemingly has no beginning or end, revealing a split in Molloy’s ego, or a recognition of a mirror image or dual aspects of his personality.

In his book *After the Final No*, Thomas J. Cousineau points out,

Molloy’s narrative, organized around the mother, is marked by his longing to return to her. Moran’s narrative tends, rather, to foreground the desire to be recognized as worthy in the eyes of admired paternal figures – to be distinguished from the crowd on the basis of achievements whose worth transcends the momentary satisfaction of instincts. (48)

This adherence to “achievements” rather than a romanticized notion of “the auld sod” is what marks *Molloy* as a postmodern novel. Before one can appropriate Beckett for any particularly nationalist sentiment, one must be aware that Beckett’s “ambivalent” relationship with Ireland was not on par with Joyce’s. Cronin tells us, “Joyce had created a myth out of his own exile; and though in his case the myth was not quite true to the facts [...] it nevertheless had a clear and definite outline which had great force” (266).

Beckett, on the other hand, preferred “France at war to Ireland at peace.”²⁰ Cronin quotes Beckett as saying, “I just slipped away,” (266) while advising us to “beware of seeing him as having conscious motives or making conscious gestures at a time when gestures were far from his mind” (267). Even so, Ackerly and Gontarski contend that “to dismiss [Samuel Beckett’s] Irishness is as reductive as seeing him solely through Irish eyes, smiling or frowning” (277). His Irishness is no more or less important than his fingerprints or his hair color in that they are integral. Beckett writes an Irish novel, about an Irish character but the qualities we are concerned with are universal. According to Cronin, “By the time the ‘Beckett man’ was created the anti-hero had become a familiar figure in European literature, through the civil servant hero of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*, Flaubert’s *Bouvard and Pécuchet* and *Madame Bovary*, Kafka’s *K* and, of course, Joyce’s *Leopold Bloom*” (379).

What we see, then, in *Molloy*, is not abject subjectivity as a result of colonial oppression as it is in Joyce. Molloy/Moran’s subjectivity is indicated by acts of narcissism, eroticism and, ultimately, masochism like Stephen Dedalus’s but it is an example of the subjectivity of all modern men, not just the Irish.

In his book *Into the Breach: Samuel Beckett and the Ends of Literature*, Thomas Tresize posits that Beckett’s shift from writing in English in the third person to writing in French in the first person marked a shift in the intellectual world. “This adaptation of the problem of subjectivity,” Tresize asserts, “came at the very moment when French intellectual life experienced the overwhelming influence of existential phenomenology,

²⁰ According to Ackerly and Gontarski, “SB’s oft-cited preference for France at war to Ireland at peace was as much a statement of solidarity with his adopted land as a slur on Irish patriots. ‘Ireland at peace’ is edged, implying criticism of the dubious neutrality in what his compatriots called ‘The Emergency’ (even as Belfast was bombed by the Nazis) (449).

especially in its Sartrian tendency” (4-5). As with *Watt* and *Krapp’s Last Tape*, Beckett deals with only one main character, investing in duality rather than the panoply of multiple characters. J. D. O’Hara states, “[Beckett] creates two distinct psyches, creating each psyche with imaginative as well as psychological care” (102). His dualities are often mirror images of the postmodern versus fin-de-siècle/modernist *milieux*, and his concentration on one character allows him to focus even more intensely on the subjectivity inherent in self-realization.

Julia Kristeva, in *Desire in Language*, credits Joyce with upholding the symbol of the Mother/Other. Beckett also upholds this symbol in order to emphasize the interiority of Molloy/Moran’s growing helplessness as a reversal of the infant’s growing independence. When we first meet Molloy (*sans* Moran), he is at the closing stages of his life, and seeks to return to the mother. His quest is to find her. By taking her place, or writing from her position Molloy observes from the “mirror stage” of which Lacan speaks, where the infant’s only independence comes through the discovery of language. However, rather than discovering new language, Molloy/Moran is slowly losing his ability to manipulate the language he acquired over a lifetime. He says he has forgotten how to spell, “and half the words” (7). He remarks on that moment when language is only a set of signs. “How agreeable it is,” he writes, “to be confirmed, after a more or less long period of vacillation, in one’s first impressions” (15). This statement suggests the early, verbal stage: he is satisfied that what impressed him first (recognition of the mother) has been confirmed after a lifetime of observation and he can now let go of language and symbolically return to the state in which he finds his mother with her “clattering gabble” (18).

Confirmation, for Molloy, brings with it a heightened sense of self. This echoes Descartes' *cogito* or a confirmation of the self by mere thought. J. D. O'Hara points out "the I [...] is always the object, not the subject of consciousness" (16). Molloy/Moran's "I" becomes Moran, or imago²¹ in Freudian terminology. I view Moran as the imago, who initially represents an ideal: a combination of masculine cultural imperatives that define masculinity. These imperatives include virility, power, and control and harken back to the authority of masculine dominance during the Victorian era. Jean-Jacques Mayoux, who wrote an extensive essay on Beckett for *British Writers* in 1987, explains:

In 1929 Beckett wrote about Joyce, as if to please Joyce, in an objective spirit. In 1931 he wrote about Proust, when he was starting on the quest of himself, as if in the hope of advancing this quest. The influence of Proust succeeded that of Descartes and took its effect from the creative angle: it taught Beckett that the alien world begins with one's body, so that the conscious personality is necessarily split. (Mayoux 46)

Moran represents this split. This form of negation manifests as a removal or what Kristeva perceives as turning aside, rejection, and separation. Molloy, removed from his mother but seeking to return, and Moran, crossing the borders of his comfort zone, are abject by virtue of the fact that the character finds himself "outside," or experiencing what Harrington refers to as "liberation from place" (157).

Liberation from place is a shift from interiority to exteriority. Liberation can be seen as abjection in that abjection is the moment one crosses the border of restraint and enters emancipation. When Molloy/Moran leaves his comfortable place, whether it is

²¹ Glossed in the *OED* as: "A subjective image of someone (esp. a parent) which a person has subconsciously formed and which continues to influence his attitudes and behaviour. So *father-imago*, *mother-imago*."

Mag's bed or Moran's peaceable domain, his physical difficulties increase. The more infirm Molloy/Moran becomes, the more he is abject from "normal" society. Molloy's experiences with the law indicate his abjection at the hands of the police. The police treat him as a vagrant but he is on a specific mission. Moran is on a specific mission but he treats his freedom as vagrancy, dawdling, putting off, suspending the task at hand, which is the step beyond the wicket to find Molloy.

The father does not exist except through Moran and Youdi, who is a mythic father who never appears but who provides the push. As C. J. Ackerly and S. E. Gontarski point out, this push "set[s] [Moran] in motion to find Molloy, to destroy the 'old man' within, to bring himself to such abjection that his succadanea of possessions, religion, comforts, and family are jettisoned that he might find the real state of himself, unaccommodated man" (381). When we first meet Moran in Part II of *Molloy*, he is "the Lord and Master of this diminutive domain" (Tresize, 136). *His* bees and *his* bottles of beer, *his* lemon verbena, and *his* songbirds, even his son, Jacques Jr., is his property.

My trees, *my* bushes, *my* flower-beds, *my* tiny lawns, I used to think I loved them. If I sometimes cut a branch, a flower, it was solely for their good, that they might increase in strength and happiness. (127) (emphasis mine)

He exerts expert control over his housekeeper, Martha, who is relegated to her place in the kitchen and Jacques Jr., whose bowel movements are under his father's control by the administration of enemas rather than letting nature take its due course. Being in control pleases Moran, but this control only works within the inner world of his property. As Tresize explains,

Reminiscent of the cultural metaphors of the *cogito* in Descartes, Moran's property embodies a certain economy (*oikos*, house + *nomos*, management) whose predicates are ascribed to the self and that is here most clearly articulated as the separation of an inside from an outside, that is, as the properly spatial economy of habitation. (44)

The subsequent loss of this economy annoys Moran, whose "last moments of peace and happiness" (93) slip away upon the arrival of Gaber who upsets the status quo. Gaber, messenger of Youdi, directs Moran to find Molloy. After Gaber departs, Moran spends time thinking about what he will do about his journey. He revels in prolonging the planning: "I had a methodical mind and never set out on a mission without prolonged reflection as to the best way of setting out" (98). Moran's attempts to sleep, contemplate autoeroticism, visit the priest, and wait for darkness suggest trepidation about the journey through his wish to delay the first steps out of his comfort zone.

The Freudian aspects of Molloy are evident during his visit to Father Ambrose. The first ritual to be observed is masculine and filled with phallic signifiers: "He offered me a cigar which I accepted with good grace and put in my pocket, between my fountain-pen and my propelling-pencil" (100).

Father Ambrose also offers "a glass of something" in an act of "old boy" congeniality. Moran declines this but the priest's gesture is overshadowed by Moran's masculine-that-hints-at-the-homoerotic linking of Sunday, "without the Body and Blood" and "the kiss without a moustache or beef without mustard" (100). Moran, as representative of the old order, fairly boasts of his manhood. His accomplishments, his possessions, and his control over his son echo the rigid structure of Beckett's Calvinist

upbringing. Moran is the Freudian father, absent in a distinctly Jungian first half of the novel and his attempts to exercise tight control over his son are traditionally Freudian.

As Angela Moorjani writes,

Like Oedipus, then, Moran considers himself powerful and innocent. Yet, he is simultaneously his opposite, Molloy, whom he fails to recognize in himself, but projects on all around him [...] and after suspecting his son of wanting to kill him, in a repetition of Molloy's encounter with the charcoal-burner, Moran hallucinates the murder of the part of himself most closely mirroring the conscious identity of his father. (232)

Jacques Moran Jr. is thirteen or fourteen years old. Jacques Jr. is also at the age where he should reconcile the Oedipal complex. He still imitates Moran Sr.

“instinctively” (94) but begins to challenge his father in his own search for autonomy.

Moran Sr. recognizes the changes in his son and reflects on his own childhood, stating,

“If I were my son I would have left me long ago,” (104). “*Sollst entbehren*,” Moran thinks to himself, “that was the lesson I desired to impress upon him, while he was still young and tender,” (110). Ackerly and Gontarski explain:

Entbehren sollst Du, Du sollst entbehren! ‘You must renounce!’; the words of Goethe’s Faust before he makes his pact with Mephistopheles, to the world’s demand that he live without desire and be satisfied with conventional life. Moran celebrates the ‘magic words’ [*Molloy*, 110], accepting the restraints that Faust laments and using them to justify the harsh treatment of his son. (534)

The Faustian refrain echoes May Dedalus' oft repeated "*repent*" in *Ulysses* and allows Moran to act as the super-ego for Jacques Jr.

Moran wants his son to learn to delay pleasure. He inflicts pain in order to accomplish this. Throughout Part II, Moran reinforces the statement "For I was sometimes inclined to go too far when I reprimanded my son, who was consequently a little afraid of me" (95). When Moran takes the opportunity to deny Jacques the pleasure of taking his stamps on the journey, he reflects on Jacques' reaction. "Not a word of reproach," he notes, "a simple prophetic present, on the model of those employed by Youdi" (109).

Youdi performs the same function for Moran in a mirroring of the paternal imperative. Youdi also connects Moran to the outside world by making him part of a collective or "conglomerate" as O'Hara calls it (234). The smaller "conglomerate" of Youdi, Gaber, and Moran is a microcosm of the larger community around him. Moran can act as an agent of the super-ego within this community. His description of his "work" with his son, connected with the "*sollst entbehren*," once again points to his dominion over his son, "and he is at once judging superego and the agent ego" (234).

Silverman explains the concept of the super-ego. She addresses Freud's work in *Civilization and Its Discontents* where "[Freud] describes a situation where the ego comes to take pleasure in the pain inflicted upon it by the super-ego – where fear of punishment gives way to the wish for it, and where cruelty and discipline come to stand for love"(29). Moran, then, has learned from Youdi to take pleasure from the pain Youdi inflicts. This is perhaps why he seems to enjoy (even though he takes care to explain his

methods, indicating that on some level he knows it is wrong) inflicting punishment on his son.

Punishment, the sadistic act, removes the moral gate that stands between normal heterosexual function and perversion.²² This act sheds light on the concept of the agent of the super-ego; giving it the paternal voice that Moran will hear again, when he confronts the self he kills in his own quest to rid himself of the paternal authority. As Silverman states,

The prototypical male subject oscillates endlessly between the mutually exclusive commands of the (male) ego-ideal and the super-ego, wanting both to love the father and to be the father, but prevented from doing either. (29)

This form of moral masochism presupposes that the male “has given up the desire for the father, and may in fact have turned away from the paternal ego-ideal to the maternal one, and from identification with the father to identification with the mother” (29). I believe that this identification with the mother is where Moran becomes Molloy but at this point in the narrative, he is at an impasse. According to Cousineau, “giving ourselves over to our primitive longings or exercising repressive control over them lead in the same alienating direction. It is as though Beckett has placed us in a double bind, an impasse from which there is, apparently, neither retreat nor progress” (53).

Moran is now what O’Hara calls a blank ego, devoid of desire (119). As Silverman asserts, “the morally masochistic male subject has given up on the desire to be the father, and may in fact have turned away from the paternal ego-ideal to the maternal one, and from identification with the father to identification with the mother” (29). By

²² What Kristeva and Silverman term *père version*.

virtue of this, Moran's masochism is exhibited in his return to the place where he can end his quest and where one can conceivably take up the story of Molloy, or the Jungian aspect of the character. When Gaber reads from his notebook: "Moran, Jacques, home, instanter" (163), the command, handed down by Youdi, who represents the super-ego, is meant to be a punishment, ostensibly for not completing his mission of finding Molloy/Moran. Once relieved of the onus of the paternal imperative, however, Moran can begin the slide into a state of decay. This decay mirrors Molloy's own decaying state, and signals the integration of the two egos.

Once Moran makes it back to his wicket, he sees that his bees and his hens have died, his grounds have become overgrown, his house is empty and he has lost control, or rather relinquished it. He is rendered more "Mollose"(111)²³ Molloy than Moran/moraine.²⁴ His statement, "I have been a man long enough, I shall not put up with it any more, I shall not try any more" (175), marks his rejection of the paternal imperative just as Stephen Dedalus' *non serviam* rejects it. By giving up, and slowly sliding back into the person of Molloy, Moran returns to a state of being that mimics the pre-Oedipal state. As he takes his place in the garden, he communes with nature, enjoying the freedom from the constraints of society, and the Father in all his forms. In Beckett's novel *First Love*, according to Beatrice Marie, the "effaced father," is "displaced from the center of the fiction, disposed of before the story begins with a passing reference in a line of text [...] [and] directs our attention less to himself than to the female figure who replaces him"

²³ In an online essay, musician Weliand Hoban remarks, "Moran's uncertainty as to whether his target is called Molloy or Mollose demonstrates that Molloy represents less a person than a principle, an essence; the fact of Molloy's legendary, nebulous status as perceived by Moran underlines this. In this light it seems an obvious choice for Beckett to prevent Moran from encountering Molloy; Moran is destined not to find him, but rather to become him" (Musical Notes).

²⁴ An accumulation of boulders, deposited by glacial activity. A moraine can also be terminal, an indication of Moran's former inflexibility.

(1105). At the beginning of *Molloy*, the focus is more on the Molloy half of Molloy/Moran. Molloy, who identifies more with the mother than the paternal Moran, sets out on a quest to find her. The Molloy half of the persona “the pre-Oedipal abject self” (Critchley 116), is contrary to the Oedipal father figure of Moran.

This passage begins a reintegration of the characters of Molloy and Moran. In this case, even as Moran takes up writing his report in his room, the narrative shifts in tense: “It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining” (176). This shift, if Beckett had begun the novel with Moran’s narrative, signals the beginning of Molloy’s story, which starts “I am in my mother’s room” (7) just as Molloy is in a room in his own house. As Cousineau notes, “It seems, then, that the two narratives [...] constitute a complete familial triangle: Molloy’s mother and Youdi occupy the maternal and paternal poles, and Molloy and Moran represent the third term seen from two different perspectives (56).

Part Two: "A dog for a dog"

If Moran represents the paternal and the masculine, Molloy is the maternal, feminized half of the persona. Molloy begins his narrative reporting to the reader much the same as Moran reports to Youdi. Molloy is taking the place of his mother in a journey toward death:

"I have her room. I sleep in her bed. I piss and shit in her pot. I have taken her place. I must resemble her more and more" (7).

The "resemblance" speaks more toward a reintegration of Molloy with his mother Mag, who is tied to his identity. Although Mag closely resembles May Dedalus in terms of her decrepitude (Stephen recalls his mother as "wasted" which is closely associated with "waste" or excrement, a favored theme of Beckett's), Beckett does not seem to endow her with any mythical status. Mag simply is. She exists as someone from whom Molloy is abject. Mag is also representative of the state to which Molloy wishes to return. His identity is tied to her, even down to the similarities in names, "Molloy," "May," "Mag," and "Ma" (mother). In Part I Molloy states

I called her Mag, because for me, without my knowing why, the letter g abolished the syllable Ma, and as it were spat on it, better than any other letter would have done. And at the same time I satisfied a deep and doubtless unacknowledged need, the need to have a Ma, that is a mother, and to proclaim it, audibly. For before you say mag you say ma, inevitably. And da, in my part of the world, means father. (17)

He renders his "anticipation" of his return to Mag impotent: "When I seek refuge there bet to the world, all shame drunk, my prick in my rectum, who knows?" (19). This

impotency “is a regressive aspect of the protagonist’s quest” according to Beatrice Marie, who cites Kristeva’s concept of “the disintegrating voyage toward the mother” (1105). The decay of this “disintegrating voyage,” is suggested in *Molloy* by the autoerotic reference and defilement by the unclean, and is a strange suggestion of the *ouroboros*.²⁵ There is no separation here, but there is no procreation either and so, in a reversal of the pre-Oedipal, a state where the infant cannot distinguish “I” from “Her,” Molloy finds himself in his mother’s place. Kristeva queries,

For, in the misfire of identification with the mother as well as with the father how else are they to be maintained in the Other? How, if not by incorporating a devouring mother, for want of having been able to introject her and joy in what manifests her, for want of being able to signify her: urine, blood, sperm, excrement. (54)

Kristeva notes in *Desire in Language* that excrement is a key image for Beckett. In her essay dealing with *First Love*, she writes, “*To love* is to survive paternal meaning. It demands that one travel far to discover the futile but exciting presence of a waste-object: a man or woman, fallen off the father, taking the place of his protection” (130).

Beckett, by using excremental images, reduces any signs of eroticism to their origins. This is also a way for Beckett to establish Molloy’s “disintegrating voyage.” The references to sight and smell and the way words “feel” are indicative of an infantile state where everything is perceived through sensation. This reference explains why Molloy calls his mother “Countess Caca” (17), a childish name, and describes her head, “veiled with hair, wrinkles, filth, slobber.” “Pah. I smell a terrible smell. It must have

²⁵ A parody of the cycle, symbolized by the snake swallowing its own tail. In Molloy’s statement he indicates that the life-giving source is inserted into a place where seed cannot take hold, and renders the desire for the Other inconsequential.

come from the bowels. Odour of antiquity,” he remarks (19). It may indeed be himself that he smells, because Molloy, by his own account, is far from the ideal: “I do not diffuse the scents of Araby, myself” (18).

This comparison is also a form of abjection. At Molloy’s age, the Oedipal imperative has been resolved. His desire to get to her cannot be confused with a desire for her as a sexual being. For Molloy to be abject, he must seek her because of a sense of lack. He states,

Yes, so long as I was capable of being bent on anything all lifetime long, and what a lifetime, I had been bent on settling this matter between my mother and me, but had not succeeded. (64-65)

“This matter” is never directly addressed, but is indicative of his want and lack of the object. In this case, the object is Mag. His return must include the ability to fail if it disintegrates, for culmination, or literal *jouissance*, would be adverse to the Oedipal imperative.

Molloy’s failure as a son is ironically his success. He has already dismissed the father. This dismissal is apparent in the narrative as Molloy explains when his mother confuses their names: “She never called me son, fortunately, I could not have borne it but Dan,” he writes, “I don’t know why, my name is not Dan” (17). In Beckett’s fashion, Molloy recognizes the “not I” that is Dan. In this same passage, we see how Molloy dismisses the father’s image. “She took me for my father and I took her for my mother,” he says, revealing much more in that simple reversal than first meets the eye. Molloy recalls, “we were like a couple of old cronies, sexless, unrelated, with the same memories, the same rancours, the same expectations” (27). This comparison could

mirror the son's desire for the mother, a "marriage" in a manner of speaking. The relationship he describes is like that of a married couple: they are "unrelated" (by blood), beyond the urges of the libido, and linked together by virtue of what they share. Mag is more than just desired. She represents a place of safety and at this stage in his life, that place is the only thing Molloy needs. Angela Moorjani takes up this case in "A Mythic Reading of *Molloy*," where she states,

For Molloy, the mother figure is all-encompassing. She is the origin of life (and therefore of death) and the one who sustains him (she supplies him money); he variously describes her as his sexless, undifferentiated equal [...] or merges her with Rose-Eros, his one experience with love; with Loy-Lousse, a representation of the law; and with the image of the old hag,²⁶ an androgynous, monstrous sphinx [...] She is both mother and not-mother (Mag), self and other, desired and feared, positive and negative, goal and obstacle. (229)

If Molloy represents the Jungian half of the Molloy/Moran split, then Mag would be the archetypal mother rather than the detached mother we see represented in Joyce's novels, and therefore a component of a collective consciousness. O'Hara illuminates:

Molloy cannot complete his Jungian self without finding, knowing, and mastering his anima, especially in its maternal forms. The desire for a fellow, then, states the distant goal of the individuation process: a completed Molloy will be able to take his place among other human beings. (119)

²⁶ The *sean bhean bhocht*, or "poor old woman" that represents Ireland, or even Sheila Na-Gig, the grinning old crone of Irish mythology who displays her genitalia as a way to ward off death.

The importance of the “collective” unconscious should not be lost here as it relates to Jung, or as it relates to the “collective” of which Moran is a part. Since I see Moran as an aspect of Molloy, this is just a different way of viewing the collective entity. This view, however, tends to thwart the concept of abjection since it an inclusive construct while abjection is by definition exclusive.

Beckett’s postwar work shows his awareness of the changes affecting masculine identity. The theme of disillusion with one’s own body as well as a strong sense of decay in *Molloy* echoes a postmodern fixation with the body as a vessel. As Molloy/Moran moves through the narrative, he becomes increasingly “unaccommodated” from the vessel. For Kristeva, the drive to expel, or disassociate, comes from the “improper” and the “unclean” (2). She remarks that the drive to expel is abjection from the father and the mother:

[N]ausea makes me balk [...] separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. “I” want none of that element, sign of their desire; “I” do not want to listen, “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it. (3)

Molloy is abjects himself on a bodily level. Appendages become bothersome. He regards them as if they were old acquaintances, but they are distant and detached. He writes,

I would have been happier, livelier, amputated at the groin. And if they had removed a few testicles into the bargain I wouldn’t have objected, for from such testicles as mine, dangling at mid-thigh at the end of a meager cord, there was nothing more to be squeezed, not a drop. (35)

He wishes to cast parts of himself out as well as to separate himself from his room (which corresponds with the womb). On his journey he encounters Lousse, who I see as the equivalent of Sacher-Masoch's Lady. Molloy enters into an arrangement with Lousse when he accidentally kills her dog Teddy with his bicycle. Inherent in his dealings with Lousse, including his "imprisonment" by her, are some of the basic signifiers of masochism: ritual, contract, parody, and gender role reversal. Beckett presents the traditional type of masochism, the one specified by Sacher-Masoch, wherein there is a contractual agreement Lousse tells Molloy that he must help her bury her dog and he acquiesces (35). Ultimately, Lousse must bury the dog under a tree because Molloy cannot physically perform the act. He remains passive, unable to aid her in the burial, because of his bad leg. He is rendered virtually impotent, which is a theme that recurs throughout the novel

Molloy finds himself powerless and at the bidding of the Lady/Lousse. He will not describe her, but she exacts control over him by making him dependent on her by virtue of a moly, which she surreptitiously feeds him.²⁷The comparison, of course, is with the tale of Circe and her moly and in *Molloy* it suggests Lousse's domination over him. The effects of the moly are best summed up by Philip Howard Solomon in his article "*Molloy, A Dog's Life*" when he recalls,

With the help of her moly (a product fed to Molloy to make him more receptive to Lousse's reasoning and which resembles the potion used by Circe to turn Odysseus' men into swine), Lousse persuades Molloy to remain at her house as a replacement for the dog he has just killed, "*Je remplacerais en quelque sorte le chien que j'avais tué.*" Teddy's burial

²⁷ The use of the moly echoes Joyce's "Circe" chapter in *Ulysses*.

becomes that of Molloy who will be imprisoned (at least temporarily) at Lousse's like the dog whose place he has taken. (85)

Teddy's burial, without box or blanket, suggests the theme of decay and return (to the earth in this case) that repeats in *Molloy*. He has killed her dog, and she exacts from him a replacement, a "dog for a dog," alluding to Molloy's relationship to Teddy. The episode with Teddy is the first ritual after the contractual arrangement. We see the "client" theme that will be repeated with Molloy. This theme is also a nod to Joyce, (Stephen Dedalus' moniker "dogsbody") and the canine theme that runs through *Ulysses*. Although short (less than a page) the burial scene anticipates Molloy's experiences with Lousse, which follow. When one considers a dog's life, there is some resemblance to Molloy. They both smell bad, but a dog is generally free to roam unless someone claims ownership of the animal. Molloy describes how Teddy is buried, "as he was, no box or wrapping of any kind, like a Carthusian monk, but with his collar and lead" (36). The collar and lead allude to the masochistic ritual of dominatrix and slave and its importance should not be lost here. Molloy thinks to himself,

To throw him in the hole was all I could have done and I would have done it gladly. And yet I did not do it. All the things you would do gladly, oh without enthusiasm but gladly, all the things there seems no reason for your not doing and that you do not do! Can it be that we are not free? It might be worth looking into. (36)

Instead, Molloy is "captured" by Lousse. Molloy remarks that he needed her but he adds, "I've forgotten for what" (34). Molloy wishes to escape Lousse in order to find his mother:

I made no bones about telling her I needed neither her nor anyone else,
which was perhaps a slight exaggeration, for I must have needed my
mother, otherwise why this frenzy of wanting to get to her? (34)
(emphasis mine)

That Lousse must tell Molloy that he needs her is indicative of her growing power over him. His “frenzy” is reduced, ultimately, as he spends quite some time in Lousse’s “care” instead of seeking his mother. This is how he suspends action, as Stephen Dedalus suspends action in *Ulysses*. Like the Mother and Church to Stephen Dedalus, Lousse offers Molloy shelter and succor; feeds, bathes and clothes him, but keeps him prisoner, preventing him from going on his quest just as Circe kept Odysseus from his quest. According to Slavoj Žižek, “The Lady, therefore, functions as a unique short circuit in which the Object of desire itself coincides with the force that prevents its attainment” (96). In Molloy’s case, the object of desire is his mother and the force that coincides with her is Lousse.

Conclusion: Comparative Reflections

In the beginning of this thesis, I have argued that abjection and masochism are part of Irish masculine identity at both the turn of the century and post World War II and that the chosen works by Joyce and Beckett support this theory. I have determined that abjection and masochism are found universally, in men mostly, and that there must be some oppressive element in operation. For the Irish, these elements are the Church and the British. In *Ulysses*, national discourse is represented by the specter of May Dedalus as she represents the Irish nation and the Catholic Church. In *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, everyday conversations, Stephen's dealings with Mr. Deasy and the *sassenach* Haines reveal nationalist discourse. In *Molloy*, Ireland exists within Molloy and his alter ego, Moran, in the food that they eat, and the landscapes they travel. National discourse is necessarily part of what makes *Ulysses* and *Molloy* "Irish."

There are differences between the novels in how Stephen and Molloy/Moran are abject. Their abjection is inflicted either by a dominating force or by the self. In addition, subjectivity is an integral part of abjection. Both abjection and subjectivity work to make up the identities of Stephen and Molloy/Moran. In *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, Stephen is abject not only because of his status as an Irish Catholic but also by his own desire to be an artist, unlike his father. His mother's ghost, who is representative of the Church and the Law, keeps him abject. Joyce's "Arranger" as well as Stephen's internal monologues reveal his subjectivity.

In *Molloy*, we have a universal "Beckett man," stripped bare to his soul. Molloy must cross real borders in order to seek out what he desires. As Kristeva states, "There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the

want on which any being, meaning, language, desire is founded” (5). Molloy desires his mother, whom he lacks. Moran desires intrigue and the chase for Molloy but he must also abject himself from his comfortable space in order to pursue Molloy and, ultimately, reintegrate with him. Beckett uses an interior monologue in order to describe Molloy/Moran as subjective. Although Molloy/Moran’s abjection by the Church and Law was similar to Stephen’s experience, Joyce’s bitterness toward the Church is more prevalent in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*. Beckett’s issues with the Protestant ascendancy recede in favor of a focused commentary on the self.

Abjection is also tied to the Oedipal complex. Fathers are present in the characterization of Moran and the discourse of an Anglo-Irish ascendancy. Meanwhile, the mother is problematic for Stephen. May literally haunts Stephen. His guilt becomes almost unbearable. In *Molloy*, the mother’s image appears when Molloy recalls making love to various women: “my mother’s image sometimes mingles with theirs, which is literally unendurable, like being crucified. I don’t know why and I don’t want to” (59). These fearful images keep Stephen and Molloy abject.

A Portrait and *Ulysses* depart from *Molloy* in terms of masochism. Stephen’s masochism is more what Freud termed “moral masochism.” In terms of self-abjection, Stephen is the one inflicting pain upon himself by separating himself from his family and peers, but this pain is necessary in order to achieve his desire of artistic freedom.

Molloy/Moran, on the other hand, acts out masochistically in two ways: Moran, who is sadistic in his dealings with his son, acts as the super-ego to Jacques Jr., just as Youdi acts as Moran’s super-ego. Silverman asserts that, ultimately, for the masochist, “the ego comes to take pleasure in the pain inflicted upon it by the super ego” (29). Molloy’s

masochism is apparent in his dealings with Lousse. The Moran half of the Molloy ego represents masochistic behavior, whether potential or real, of which Molloy is capable.

If we view the social order in Ireland as reflective of centuries of living side-by-side with oppressors, we can say that abjection and masochism are facets of that Irish identity. But they are also facets of our universal psychological make-up. Abjection and masochism link Stephen and Molloy/Moran as symbols of unaccommodated man. These two characters are remarkable in that they reflect not only an Irish masculine identity but also a universal masculine identity at both the turn of the century and post-World War II.

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