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“EVERYBODY ROW”: SIMONE WEIL AND THE SEARCH FOR TRANSCENDENCE IN THE METAXIC POETS

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"EVERYBODY ROW": SIMONE WEIL AND THE SEARCH FOR TRANSCENDENCE IN THE METAXIC POETS

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Abstract

The work of Simone Weil has helped shape a new understanding of theology and social philosophy for contemporary thought. This thesis unpacks Weil's metaphysics in order to bring it into dialogue with theory, theology, and modern literature. Specifically, it considers a search for transcendence in the context of Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The first objective is to provide an analysis of Weil's mystic philosophy, to which end special attention is paid to her treatment of *metaxu*, *kenosis*, and *décréation*. A second concern is how these concepts function in texts which present God as an absence, and the relationship between this absence and the (de)construction of subjectivity. Finally, the focus shifts to the various roles that linguistics, epi-phenomenology, and metaphysics play in an aesthetics which reconciles the transcendental with matter. Framing such a discussion around Simone Weil allows for the avoidance of God's existence as predicated upon presence, while offering a mystical hermeneutic for literature in which God has been displaced by the transcendental mystery of the human interior.

Keywords: Weil, Simone; Beckett, Samuel; Joyce, James; Gravity and Grace; Molloy; Ulysses; Transcendence; Metaxu; Decreation; Kenosis; Symbolism; Poetry; Mysticism

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List of Abbreviations

ATL	Paul de Man, *Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric*
CS	Simone Weil, *Connaissance surnaturelle*
D&R	Gilles Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*
OLS	Walter Benjamin, *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*
OMB	Walter Benjamin, *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*
PG	Simone Weil, *Pesanteur et la Grâce*
TR	Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*
U	James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Introduction

I am a shadow far from darkening villages.
I drank the silence of God.
Out of the stream in the trees.
Georg Trakl, "De Profundis"

Simone Weil and her mystical philosophy have been slowly gaining attention since the publication of *La Pesanteur et la grâce* in 1946, a collection of fragments and aphorisms taken from her journals and compiled by Gustave Thibon. Her radical character and tragic death at the age of 34 have done as much to solidify her status as the richness of her thought. Her work has profoundly influenced a diverse group of writers from Susan Sontag and Iris Murdoch to Emil Cioran and Emmanuel Lévinas. T.S. Eliot professed her sainthood. Albert Camus once declared her the only great spirit of her generation, and used her as an archetype in *L'Homme révolté*. However, while much has been written on Weil's contribution to theology, social philosophy, and gender politics, her work still has much to offer literary theory, especially in the context of her mystical philosophy.

Those who deal with Weil's metaphysics are overwhelmingly Christian scholars who, no matter how liberal, are often wary of paying attention to the darker and anti-Christian aspects. They give her an important role in the genealogy of apophatic mystics and neo-Platonists, but even those who employ the likes of Nietzsche or Heidegger in their analyses do so with the strict intention of including her in contemporary debates of critical theology. An application of her thought to literary theory is absent in nearly every one of these works. Alternately, those writers for whom Weil offers insight into a

particular author or genre (D.H. Lawrence or tragedy, for example) commit the bulk of their attention to Weil's political writings on labour and equality, Marxism, capitalist liberalism, and the force with which she embodied her ideals of suffering and sacrifice in her daily life.

My thesis examines Simone Weil's notions of *metaxu*, *kenosis*, and *décréation* in order to bring her work into a dialogical intersection with theory and theology, and the manner in which her metaphysics operate in the context of modern literature. In order to unpack Weil's metaphysics, the core of my thesis will focus on Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, novels in which Weil's mystic philosophy is keenly illuminated. I will use these texts to frame an investigation of Weil's *La Pesanteur et la grâce*, and attempt to map out a Weilean hermeneutical system for literary analysis based on kind of *metaxic aesthetics* or *metaxic poesis*.

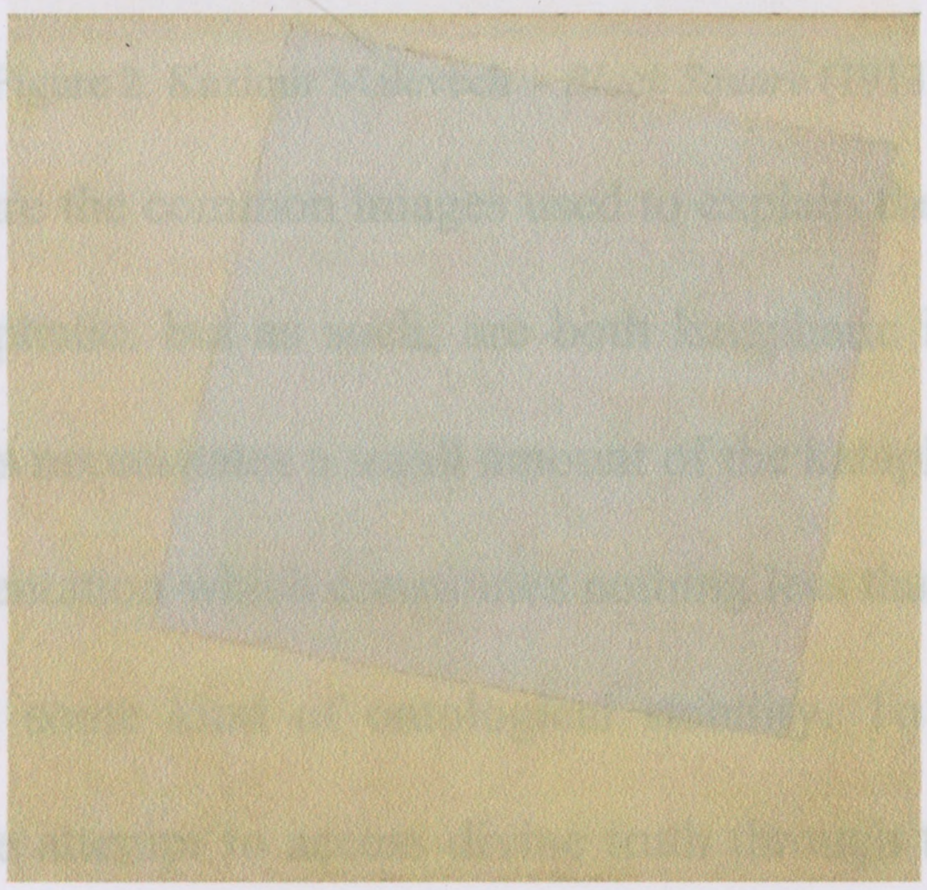

Figure 1. Kazimir's Malevich – *White on White* (1918)

I wish to introduce *apophatic* or *negative* theology, as opposed to *katophatic* or *positive* theology, using Kazimir's Malevich's Suprematist's Composition, *White on White*. Malevich's piece seems, at first, to be the visible representation of a paradox. One must imagine that there are two possibilities for *pure* white, each one the opposite of the

other. The first is made up of all the different shades of white – all the non-colours combined. We have, it seems, snuck up on the transformational process from one to the other – from the kataphatic to the apophatic. We may imagine there is a vacuum in the back of the painting which sucks away all the various screens and hues of white in order to leave nothing but the last white, the apophatic white, the white that is utterly black.

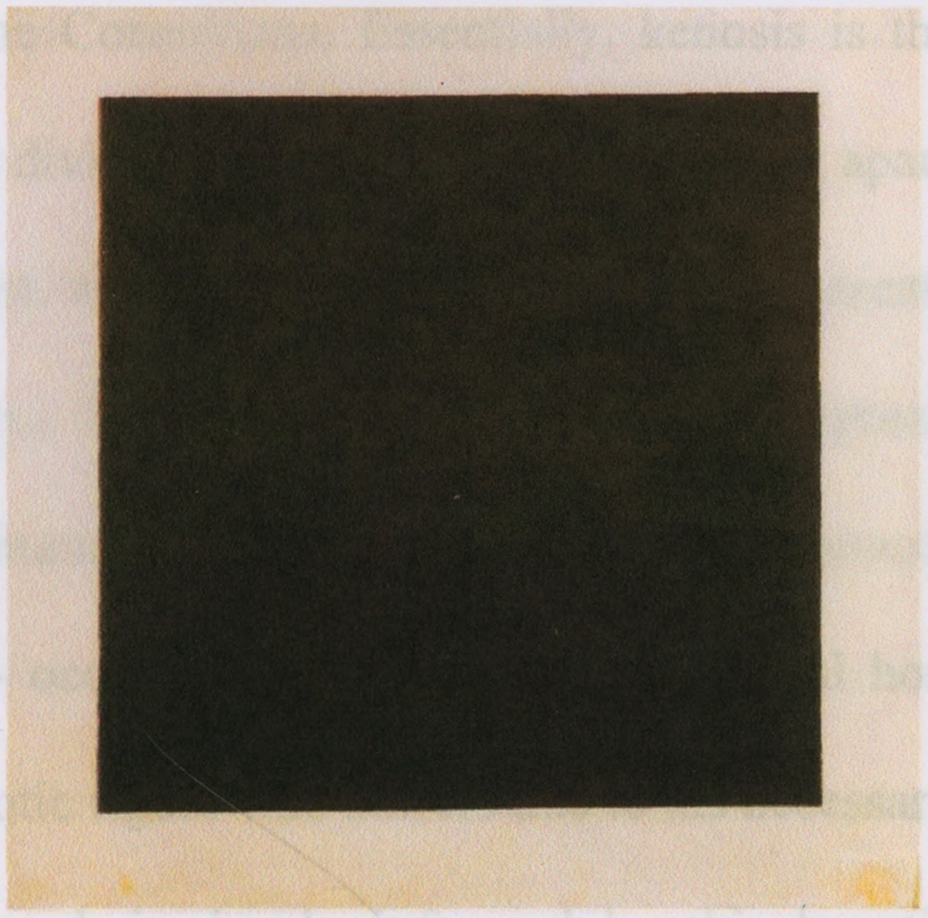

Figure 2. Kazimir Malevech - *Black Square* (1913)

Light and dark are the common images used to explain the difference between the apophatic and the kataphatic, but as such, are both kataphatic in nature. Perhaps, to a certain extent, apophasis necessitates a small amount of the kataphatic for the purposes of representation, a representation which constitutes nothing less than the desire to establish, through representation, some kind of ontological stability. To be clear, apophatic or negative theology is the attempt to access divine truth through the process of negation, that is, an attempt to understand God and the absolute by stripping away all the anthropomorphic qualities attached to him[1] through kataphatic representation – being,

[1] To call God a 'him' is, of course, problematic for a great number of reasons. Nevertheless, it will be useful for remaining consistent with the authors of my corpus while simultaneously serving to underly the arbitrary nature of the whole kataphatic enterprise.

wisdom, goodness, mass, light, love, justice, etc. Apophasis seeks to remove the artifice of the luminescent white until one is left with the truth that dwells in utter darkness. Simone Weil explains this darkness in terms of the kenotic act from which all creation was made possible.

Weil understands the *vide* or void by way of *kenosis*, a concept Paul used to explain Creation to the Corinthians. Essentially, kenosis is the process by which God emptied himself of his divinity in order to create something apart from himself. Without a kenotic self-divestment, there could have been nothing created apart from God, and therefore, no humanity. The presence of God is thus expressed, and felt, by way of absence, establishing humanity as something infinitely removed from God, and - to steal a term from Lukács - occupying a state of transcendental homelessness, a disoriented wandering for the kenotic figure who suffers due to his necessary exile from the divine.

Weil, whose work is deeply informed by this kenotic abyss, shares Leopold Bloom's view that "there is a medium in all things" (*U*, 15.878). Weil explains this medium by way of *metaxu*. Metaxu are mediums or bridges which span the kenotic divide, transcendental connectors, as it were. For Weil, this very abyss of Joyce's 'nowhere nought' operates as a metaxu, as it both separates and is the means through which God communicates with his creation. Weil offers an explanatory analogy which describes two prisoners who are locked away from each other but separated by a wall. This wall is what keeps them apart, yet they communicate with one another by tapping on it. "Tout séparation est un lieu" (*PG*, 166). By way of divine love, this concept of metaxu (which has its birth pangs in Plato) can be read as a kind of mystical Pyramus and Thisbe, where God is crafty enough to fit through the fissure in the wall if only we're attentive.

Metaxu, or *μεταξύ*, is a Greek adverb meaning 'in between' or 'intermediary,' but Weil uses it as both a singular and plural noun to mean not only the space of the intermediary, but the bridge that connects the two sides between which it resides.

By metaxic poesis or poetry, I do not refer explicitly to any specific genre, or even to an exclusively linguistic form of aesthetics, for there is no aesthetic - poetic or otherwise - which is not firstly a matter of aesthetic consciousness. In truth, I mean something not entirely disassociated from Heidegger's *aedificare*, insofar as it constitutes an aesthetic production that is both *construction* and *dwelling* for the purposes of suturing sky to earth. The mystics and the poets are the metaxic figures who are metaphysicians of immanence, wrenching the beyond into matter, and using themselves as mediators without ever diluting the transcendental into a pure physics. If metaxu provide bridges from God to humanity as a diaphanous passage, a decreating subject might also use metaxu as an earthward passage. Metaxu might open up portals through which a being might come into another. Weil presents the highest form of living to be one where we become intermediaries through which God can reach others. The metaxu of the poets allows for the self to function as a conduit in the same fashion, regardless of whether the transcendental actor is a Weilean God or a void-propelled metemontogeny.

Weil has a complicated relationship with art and literature, and in my discussion of metaxic poesis, I will not restrict myself to authors for whom she would profess admiration. As Thibon relates, she was "impitoyable pour tous les auteurs en qui elle croyait déceler la moindre recherche de l'effet, le plus léger élément d'insincérité ou de boursouflure: Corneille, Hugo, Nietzsche" (215). It is possible that she would have found a kindred spirit of sorts in the barren egos of Beckett, but it is in the literature that she

would have rejected in which a literary metaxology ironically displays its truest potential. Weil deems that it is the role of all art to be metaxic. But it can either be divine or demonic, that is, giving the impression of transparency, but pointing towards a godlessness on the other side. "The work that corresponds to the maturity of demonic genius is silence. Rimbaud is its example and symbol" (Weil qtd. in Dunaway, 106). She also refers to Surrealism as "the literary equivalent to the sacking of towns by the barbarians," stripping literature of all its value (qtd. in Dunaway, 107). Moreover, the Bergsonism of modern literature, culminating in Proust "implies a rampant philosophical refusal to acknowledge distinctions of good and evil" (Dunaway, 107). And yet, she is humbled by this kind of power all the same, admitting to Father Perrin that if she heard a talented German choir singing Nazi songs, "une partie de mon âme deviendrait immédiatement nazie" (*Attente de Dieu*, 21-2).

Much ink has been spilled on the influence of mysticism and apophatic theology on Joyce. St. John of the Cross is featured prominently in Joycean criticism, especially in regards to the nocturnal language of *Finnegans Wake*. Pseudo-Dionysius, Giordano Bruno, and the more esoteric strains of William Blake thread their way through *Ulysses*, helping Joyce transform, if not re-invent, the way in which poetic language can deal with matters of theology. Both Joyce and Beckett criticism are saturated with commentaries on the influence of a particular thinker or theology, and I wish to trod as unused a path as possible while discussing common themes; I will, therefore, refrain from engaging with the long grocery list of philosophers who elbow their way into these texts. Furthermore, it is not my intent to locate a certain admiration for Weil hidden within some secret journal of Beckett or Joyce. This is far less valuable to the mountain of scholarship on these

writers than the creation of a Weilean hermeneutic that might allow for some glimmer of newness, some hint of the unseen or unexplored. A genealogy of apophatic theology or mysticism that would ultimately cross-pollinate with the criticism of Joyce and Beckett would no doubt be a fruitful way to proceed for such a project, even if only by way of prelude; nevertheless, time constricts no matter how much I wish to disaffirm its existence. I have, therefore, chosen other paths, but perhaps this opens up ways upon which this dissertation might be built in my further studies.

When asked his opinion of negative theologians and mystics like Eckhart and John of the Cross, Beckett responded that what he found particularly admirable was "leur illogisme brülant…cette flame…cette flame…qui consume cette saloperie de logique" (qtd. in Bryden, 183). The epiphanizing metaxu employed by Beckett and Joyce aims to provide an alternative for the saintly illogic of décréation. Décréation is the process of stripping the ego of all earthly attachments so that one is made an empty vessel into which God might enter. Such a gesture is the Weilean method of accessing the metaxic place or state of transcendence. Bataille disapproves of the term mystic because it involves not only a vision or understanding of the divine, but a confessional posture in response to it. There shall be no confessional posturing here. The metaxic poets do not seek the annihilation of subjectivity for the purpose of divesting the evil implicit in its separation from God, but a detachment from any ego that would reject the metaxic porosity of its own nature. To decreate in Beckett, to restore the world to its primordial silence, is not a recuperative attempt to restore a Oneness to the world, or to restore humanity to some heavenly bosom. It is a décréation without salvific function in Weilean terms. Identities dissolve and death remains elusive, as subjects (de)evolve into other

subjects. It is a self-annihilation that is not a complete escape from the phenomenal world, but an almost un-willed process which renders existence an unhinged state of interstitial flux.

In *Ulysses* Bloom explains the term metempsychosis to Molly in terms of a transmigration of souls, a definition which gained prominence due to Pythagorean philosophy; but in both Joyce and classical mythology, the metamorphic quality of being is not always relegated to a period after the death of the body, and so reincarnation can only be considered a kind of post-mortem metempsychosis. Indeed, the most famous instances of the transformation of being from mythology are not isomorphic reincarnations of the dead, but rather, the kind of metamorphosis undergone by Daphne when escaping the lustful clutches of Apollo, a kind of fleeing of substance from one form to another. *Ulysses* takes metempsychosis to its poetic (and thus, for Joyce, necessary) extreme in order to infiltrate Dublin with the same Ovidian ontological structure. Joyce presents a metempsychosis that is more accurately described as a metem*ontogeny*: a kind of Heraclitian metempsychosis in the "stream of life" (*U*, 8. 176) which pervades all levels of being. The continuous *mete* or *becoming* of being which forms the onto-theological structure of *Ulysses* renders all reality porous, and the partitions of identity and membranes of being are punctured by the amorphous movement of one substance to another.

The space I have given to Beckett's *Molloy* in the second chapter may seem more substantial than the shorter section on Joyce, but it is necessary to map the contours of Beckett's kenotic void so that we might approach an understanding of metemontogenic flux. Such an understanding will, I hope, allow us to make the leap into an exploration of

metaxic poetry and the manner in which a Weilean metaxology might be envisioned for literary analysis. Bridging Beckett and Joyce is an examination of the various roles that linguistics, epi-phenomenology, and metaphysics play in the formation of a metaxic aesthetics. I conclude with a reading of Joyce's *Ulysses* which puts such a theory into praxis. Joyce not only writes the quintessential novel of what might be deemed metaxic literature, but *Ulysses* is also engaged in a *meta*-metaxic poesis, allowing us to glimpse, through the consciousness of Stephen Dedalus, the aesthetic process of a metaxic excavation of the epiphenomenal world.

1.

Simone Weil

Gershom Scholem argues against the possibility of a mystical experience which does not fit squarely within the confines of religiosity. "[T]here is no such thing as mysticism in the abstract, that is to say, a phenomenon or experience which has no particular relation to other religious phenomena. There is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish mysticism and so on" (6-7). At the root of his rejection of abstract mysticism is his concern with a growing infiltration of pantheism into the religious climate of the day, and a desire to take communion with God away from the dogmatic systems of organized religion. Scholem evokes an argument of Evelyn Underhill's to claim that the notion of a mystic as being some kind of religious anarchist is unfounded due to the fact that "the great mystics were faithful adherents of the great religions" (6). Not only is this reading limited to the three aforementioned monotheistic traditions, but the potential for a mystical experience to manifest itself in non-religious terms is, ultimately, condemned as a mys-reading of the ecstatic.

It seems, however, that an analysis of mystical writing succumbs to a desire to remove it from the mystical arena altogether, for there is something lost in sacrificing the experience to any religious tradition that would seek to claim it and place itself in the position of mediator. When a mystic's writing leaps from our earthly realm, we are quick to wave our nets violently in the air to trap it. To retain the mysticism within the writing,

to keep the experience itself latent, even burgeoning within, is to make it impenetrable to the anaesthetizing methods of common criticism. Perhaps, we might choose to approach it in the same manner as poetry, poetry with a kind of enchanted power, with the semantic ontology of magic. A mystical experience is that which transforms God from *other* to something present within the self in which the self is then subsumed. One is lost, ungrounded, and yet held firmly to another form of being. Bur Walter Kauffman contends that an individual "will generally give his experience a religious interpretation, or even have his experience in religious terms, only when he stands in a religious tradition" (330). Perhaps for an artist, it will be purely creative. Paul Klee's angels. Picasso's incessant proliferation of art. Stephen Dedalus' aesthetic consciousness. Dizzy Gillespie composing "A Night in Tunisia" on the bottom of a garbage can.

I admit that I am seduced by the poet in Simone Weil as much as the mystic philosopher. Indeed, I cannot separate the two. One almost wishes one could write aphoristically in response to her ideas. Weil's treatment of kenosis seems as much a doctrine of a rather sticky theology as a playful aesthetic paradox (what is theology, after all, but the aesthetic of paradox?). Weil defines the world, and God's place within it, in terms of a kenotic absence. God emptied himself of his divinity in order for creation to be possible and in order for Jesus to be fully human. To participate in the kenotic nature of our creation is to attempt a similar divestment – to empty oneself of the world to the point where we are reduced to nothing but absolute solitude within space and time. Since there can be no space apart from God into which creation can unfold, God withdraws *inward*, making a kenotic space *within* rather than without.[2] The inwardness of décréation thus

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[2] A paradox approaching the enigmatic profundity of the Trinity, one might draw a crude and anthropomorphic parallel between this and the creation of the internet. Essentially, the internet is a space of

mirrors kenosis even in terms of this inner turn. This is an acceptance of death which is not simply dying, but like Christ, assuming the role of the slave, a slave to the void and the absolute solitude that one makes within it. "Le juste rapport avec Dieu est, dans la contemplation l'amour, dans l'action l'esclavage" (Weil, *PG* 57). Moreover, it is a state of continuous unconsoled affliction, and a detachment from all that binds us to the world of creation - "la réalité du moi transportée par nous dans les choses" (Weil, *PG*, 16). As St John of the Cross explains, the process of emptying the self is a purging of "strange Gods, all alien affections and attachments" (71).

Décréation renders one's body and soul a medium through which Christ can reach the suffering. Decreative affliction can be seen as a state of pure suffering beyond mental and physical pain that allows us to be brought to that state of detachment where a communion with God is possible. "L'agonie est la suprême nuit obscure dont même les parfaits ont besoin pour la pureté absolue, et pour cela il vaut mieux qu'elle soit amère" (Weil, *PG*, 88). "Aimer la vérité signifie supporter le vide, et par suite accepter la mort. La vérité est du côté de la mort" (Weil, *PG* 13). So we must decreate ourselves, taking the self that was created and allowing it to pass into the uncreated, to open itself up as a vessel for God's love. "Dieu ne peut aimer en nous que ce consentement à nous retirer pour le laissir passer, comme lui-même, créateur, s'est retiré pour nous laisser être. Cette double opération n'a pas d'autre sens que l'amour" (Weil, *PG*, 47).

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existence carved out of the material world which, although bound to its rules, nevertheless seems to escape its dimensions. The computer acts as a kind of metaxic or mediating technology, one wherein we meet the data that reaches out to us from within. In another sense, the internet itself can be regarded as a metaxu, an intermediary space which bridges the previously intraversable void separating humanity from itself in a way that no technology ever has. It is a kind of metaxu through which we are being reintroduced to ourselves.

Patrick Patterson and Lawrence E. Schmidt contend that "God manifests himself in and through the universe, as an artist in his work," (83) a difficult assessment to pin to Weil when God necessarily manifests in the universe as an absence. Rather than taking recourse to a more obviously theological work like Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, one might envision something like van Gogh's *The Starry Night* as a self-portrait of a God whose manifestation can only be an absence. Nevertheless, in true Barthesian fashion, Beauty exists within the world as a kind of sacramental punctum, directing the observer to the divine *source* of the absence. Under this kind of exegesis, even the terrifying godlessness of van Gogh's work allows for a Weilean interpretation, as the sky fills the landscape with a holy blue and the cypress tree reaches to the heavens like an incendiary Babelic tower.[3] In that swarming charybdis of the night sky, the impossible face of God stares back.

Figure 3. Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night* (1889)

In the apophatic tradition, reason is barred from accessing God, and so one might make the argument that the mind takes it upon itself to create a God in the absence of a present deity. (Paradoxically, of course, this constitutes a God created by the mind to which the mind forbids itself access.) If God is an apophatic creation of the mind, it is by way of a similar process to that of kenosis, that is, humankind attempting to empty itself of everything human: mass, measure, mind, sensibility, etc. Man emptying himself of

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[3] If we are to entertain the notion of a kind of Weilean symbology, a Babelic tower consumed in flames would represent the transcendental groping of décréation in a way that a fortified construction of stone, clay, and ore never could.

man. "Imitation du renoncement de Dieu dans la création. Dieu renonce – en un sens – à être tout. Nous devons renoncer à être quelque chose. C'est le seul bien pour nous" (Weil, *PG*, 37). It's a process which can never be as completely radical as God's initial kenosis, however, for to imagine something as entirely inhuman and unreal - the nothingness that would constitute our everything - is something vastly different from actually emptying ourselves, and such an idea only exists within the human mind, rather than completely separate from it. 'Armchair kenosis' one might call it.

The apophatic God, freed from anthropomorphic manifestation, thus reveals freedom to be an utterly inhuman quality. Our kataphatic notion of God as celestial brilliance, one too powerful and bright to behold, is limiting, and therefore, only confusedly perceived as an act of sycophantic representation. As the creator of the world, one might argue that the representation of anything is, in some way, the representation of that entity *in relation to God.* A kataphatic approach is not merely to define a transcendental power with anthropomorphic qualities, but also, to stare the apophatic void in the face, and determine what anthropomorphism is - taking the void as its starting point. Weil's God is supremely Good and Loving. Above all else, these are the two qualities with which Weil understands Pseudo-Dionysius' '*hyperousios*' and Eckhart's 'above-Being' that is beyond understanding.[4]

> God is neither being nor goodness... Goodness clings to being and is not more comprehensive (breiter) than being; for if there were no being, there would be no goodness, and being is purer than goodness. God is not good, nor better, nor best. Whoever were to say that God is good, would do Him as great an injustice as if he called the sun black. (Eckhart qtd. in Derrida, 114)

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[4] Pseudo-Dionysius' approach to divine understanding heavily influenced Weil's writings, demonstrating the foundational link between *lethē* (concealment) and *alētheia* (truth). This approach was to "know unveiled...this unknowing...which conceals in every being the knowledge one can have of this Being" (Pseudo-Dionysius qtd. in Derrida, 80).

Weil's texts are rampant with paradox and contradiction. Indeed, she would find any other approach to metaphysics dishonest. So although she would no doubt agree with the intention of Eckhart, Weil does not see goodness as an anthropomorphic quality, but a divine one existing separately from the evil of necessity.[5] Weil argues that one achieves goodness through slavery, for goodness can only come from an inability not to do good. "[L]e bien réel ne peut venir que du dehors, jamais de notre effort. Nous ne pouvons en aucun cas fabriquer quelque chose qui soit meilleur que nous" (*PG*, 53). Similar to Weil, Emil Cioran believes that goodness is an unnatural quality for humanity, and must, therefore, either come from an external force or by some miraculous action which defies its very nature. He begins his book *The New Gods* with a wonderful passage.

> With the exception of some aberrant cases, man does not incline to the good: what god would impel him to do so? Man must vanquish himself, must do himself violence, in order to perform the slightest action untainted by evil...If he manages to be good – no longer by effort or calculation, but by nature – he owes his achievement to an inadvertence from on high: he situates himself outside the universal order. He was foreseen by no divine plan. It is difficult to say what station the good man occupies among what we call *beings*, even if he is one. Perhaps he is a ghost? (3)

Weil's thought is most frequently associated with the apophatic because it is fundamentally rooted in the void that separates one from God. However, her mystic metaphysics cannot be adequately reduced to a purely negative or purely positive theology, if indeed we can refer to a mystical metaphysics as a theology at all. Her void pollutes and corrupts kataphasis, besieging it with an apophatic darkness. Even her famous use of John's 'God is light' is betrayed by the evil of kenosis obscuring such luminescence.

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[5] Necessity is a key concept in Weilean metaphysics, and she uses the term to define the necessary godlessness in which we dwell, necessity as *anankē*.

Kataphasis is the necessary result of a kenotic world in which only beauty offers us glimpses of something transcendental. Nevertheless, while perpetually exiled from God and dependent on him for any sort of communication, the key step to making oneself empty in order to receive him is an apophatic one. That is, if apophasis is a means of approaching God through negativity – removing all anthropomorphic qualities from him – Weil presents the fundamental aphaironic cut as not an outward one, but one directed to one's own ego. Rather than removing all the standard means of kataphatically representing God, what must actually be removed when approaching a metaxic communion is our own anthropomorphism, a task which, ultimately, should result in the same thing. It is more than a cutting of God's qualities, but a complete stripping of our own, a renunciation to the void. We must be the subjects of our own apophasis. Essentially, décréation is an apophasis directed at the godliness of the human. This is an apophasis that is not only far easier, but arguably, the only apophasis of which one is capable, for how does one breach the 'divine darkness?'[6] If God is a *deus absconditus*, one might choose to consider *absence* as the final quality to be removed in an apophatic aphairan.[7] This causes at least two significant problems. Firstly, it is difficult to remove *absence* without countering it with a presence. Secondly, it will be nearly impossible (without, of course, the will of God) to distinguish between the final apophatic stage of *absence* and an ultimate *lack* of a God which could potentially stand behind the final apophatic cut.

Ultimately, if negative theology is an impossibility for the reason that an aphaironic cutting of all kataphatic representations of God would, due to his transcendent

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[6] This term belongs to Gregory of Nyssa.
[7] Aphairon: from *aphairesis*: cutting or subtracting, removing.

nature, be an infinite and endless task, décréation becomes the salvific feature necessary for apophasis. "In itself interminable, the apophatic moment...can only indefinitely defer the encounter with its own limit" (Derrida, 81). The cutting of apophasis is only possible when directed towards the self, a far easier task than tackling the infinite. Moreover, it is the only manner in which the infinite ever offers itself for the sake of tackling, for these kataphatic representations of God have no residency outside the self. In this fashion, décréation or the apophatic attack of the ego can be seen as a kind of Jacob-like victory over the angel. In a very real sense, apophatic theology is the fullest and most complete form of kataphatic theology. A kataphatic theologian would be content with an analysis of a single statement like 'God is light.' The task of a negative theologian, on the other hand, is not complete until every single kataphatic permutation is conjured up and dismissed. Apophasis must always go to the very limits of kataphasis, engaged in a paradoxical process of simultaneous addition and subtraction, constructing kataphatic representations in order to do away with them. For this reason, it is always, as Derrida puts it, "an *excessive* practice of language" (qtd. in Hart, 163).

We cannot reach God through any kenotic copycatting; we can only travel part way by descending to a state where we make ourselves ready to receive. Weil refers to this descent as the bearing of one's cross. It is God who finally crosses that distance. As the image of a decreative God which seeks to decreate, "nous sommes la crucifixion de Dieu" (Weil, *PG*, 105). Walter Benjamin is not far off when he quotes from Kafka's letter to Max Brod: "We are nihilistic thoughts, suicidal thoughts that came into God's head" ("Franz Kafka," 116). For thoughts in God's head to commit suicide, they would produce a void to be refilled by God's grace. We are the death that God does not mourn

but, instead, replaces with himself, so that God's love might regenerate. "[E]ach time a human being is decreated, and this without the least connection to history, God is healed; thus the Lord is not at the mercy of a group, but of a weak person, something perhaps much more beautiful" (Vetö, 158). What is the return of the kenotic gesture if not a kind of suicide enacted out of love? "L'amour de Dieu pour nous est passion. Comment le bien pourrait-il aimer le mal sans souffir? Et le mal souffre aussi en aimant le bien. L'amour mutuel de Dieu et de l'homme est souffrance" (Weil, *PG*, 105).

Common suicide is not an option, however, for death is something to be feared if it precedes a successful décréation. The romantic mystery surrounding Weil's death concerns which came first. Tuberculosis and an unwillingness to eat claimed her life while bedridden in a London hospital at the age of 34. Some have argued that her manic mysticism demanded it, that her physical suffering - a constant throughout her young life - was symptomatic of her body's inability to survive her quest to decreate. A décréation of the self is a suffering unto death in order to transform into an immortal being. One might view mystical experience as a temporary living décréation possible through a contemplation of divine love that is so self-annihilating, that one begins to disappear, to be effaced and annulled in that contemplation - "l'infini dans un instant" (Weil, *PG*, 137). A description of Weil's mystical experiences can be found in the prologue of her book *La Connaissance surnaturelle*. Christ took her away to the attic of a church where they drank wine, feasted on bread, and conversed for three days. Here is its conclusion:

> Un jour il me dit: «Maintenant va-t'en.» Je tombai à genoux, j'embrassai ses jambes, je le suppliai de ne pas me chasser. Mais il me jeta dans l'escalier. Je le descendis sans rien savoir, le coeur comme en morceaux. Je marchai dans les rues. Puis je m'aperçus que je ne savais pad du tout où se trouvait cette maison.
> Je n'ai jamais essayé de la retrouver. Je comprenais qu'il était venu me chercher par erreur. Ma place n'est pas dans cette mansarde. Elle est n'importe où, dans un cachot de

prison, dans un de ces salons bourgeois pleins de bibelots et de peluche rouge, dans une salle d'attente de gare. N'importe où, mais non dans cette mansarde.
Je ne peux pas m'empêcher quelquefois, avec crainte et remords, de me répéter un peu de ce qu'il m'a dit. Comment savoir si je me rappelle exactement? Il n'est pas là pour me le dire.
Je sais bien qu'il ne m'aime pas. Comment pourrait-il m'aimer? Et pourtant au fond de moi quelque chose, unpoint de moi-même, ne peut pas s'empêcher de penser en tremblant de peur que peut-être, malgré tout, il m'aime. (10)

The image of Christ essentially kicking Weil down the stairs is quite a violent one, and causes many problems of interpretation. I wish to suggest that Christ's actions can be interpreted here as a desire for Weil to maintain her status as a slave or minor figure in the Deleuzean sense. To remain with Jesus in the attic would be to join the major literature, to lose the truth to which she has been granted by way of her pariahism. She is brought to the attic – the head or structural cerebellum of the Church (ie. religion) so that she can view the city or world below from its perspective, but is then forced to return to a peripheral wandering in order to seek the truth. "If the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" (D & G, *Kafka Towards A Minor Literature*, 17).

There is a specific relation to truth that is maintained within a minor literature that is forbidden in the major. In the solitude of a minor literature, one is awakened to certain truths and ontological perspectives denied by major literatures, and it is from the solitude of the void from which Weil's voice radiates. For Weil, truth is not power; but solitude; it is suffering and detachment. There is a kind of apophatic quality to the uprootedness of a marginalized figure within a minor literature, a writer who removes (or reveals) the truthlessness which clings to the coattails of imperialistic tongues. They possess direct

access to a truth which circumvents the labyrinthine institutions which act as kataphatic monoliths, distractions and obstructions which present themselves as idols and symbols of truth. Weil refers to these institutions as the *gros animal* of society, forces which perpetuate false senses of power and truth in order to bind the ego to temporality and a kataphatic approach to God. This binding force is also called gravity or *la pesanteur*.

The aphorisms of *La Pesanteur et la grâce* are as methodical as they are stream of consciousness, and her last writings, written during the time of both her mysticism and her agonising starvation, are permeated with sublime parataxis, mathematical equations, and ancient Greek. Her "[l]anguage stops being representative in order to... move toward its extremities or its limits.[8] The connotation of pain accompanies this metamorphosis, as in the words that become a painful warbling with Gregor" (D&G, *Kafka Towards a Minor Literature*, 23). Although Deleuze and Guattari write of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" here, this is also true for Beckett, Joyce, and Weil, whose language becomes, in effect, a linguistic mimesis of an ecstatic *moving-beyond*. James Winchell playfully refers to this as a "mimysticism" (79), a language which, in the Deleuzean sense, moves towards its very limits to bear the residual trace of the experience it describes. It is at all moments engaged in the process of becoming that experience, of returning to or conjuring up the phenomenon, similar to a prayer or incantation. As a marginal figure, refusing to submit to the Church that would ordinarily authenticate such mystical experiences,[9] her writing is an act of "tear[ing] a minor literature away from its

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[8] I have removed italics from the original.

[9] I do not subscribe to the idea that Weil converted to Christianity or begged for baptism on her deathbed. The controversy surrounding her baptism/conversion is, I think, the attempt by a few Christian writers to appropriate her philosophy for themselves, hoping, it seems, to relegate her profound and fervent criticisms of religion to a vitriolic and, perhaps, less *awakened* youth.

own language, allowing it to challenge the language… [by becoming] a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy" within it (D&G, 19).[10]

Major literatures function within a framework of Truth which often seeks to efface mimetic binaries in order to present representations as *ends* rather than metaxic *means*. One could deterritorialize the term *décréation* to define a kind of rebellious truth within the major literature: the process of marginalizing writing, the process of claiming a solitude of self and language within the political economy of the authoritative majority in order to become minor. Décréation, in literary terms, can be seen as the deterritorialization of language for the sake of truth. One decreates linguistically in order to speak of the suffering of the minor figure, rather than the illusory power of the major. Décréation is language in the process of becoming minor. Weil and Beckett approach deterritorialization as a kind of pseudo-kenotic reinvention of language that seeks to express the truths that can only ever exist outside the boundaries of dominant society and its kataphatic language.[11]

Beckett's French and Weil's anti-religious mystical philosophy are linguistic deterritorializations written in a "language cut off from the masses… [and] appropriate for strange and minor uses" (D&G, *Kafka Towards a Minor Literature*, 16-17). As Deleuze suggests, this is "writing like a dog digging a hole, a rat digging its burrow" (18). It is an excavation, an uprooting which is a rooting - a rootedness in exile - both from literary convention and representational imagery. Beckett's linguistic exile from

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[10] One might trace the critical reception of Weil's writing as an effort to appropriate (perhaps deterritorialize) it by other literatures, that is, a process by which specific academic fields have sought with their tentacular limbs to *reclaim* her from the periphery. A perpetual outsider whose work touches on a vast number of subjects, she fits everywhere and nowhere, being variously labeled as a pseudo-mystic, pseudo-Marxist, pseudo-feminist, pseudo-Jew, pseudo-Christian, etc.

[11] I use the term kataphatic language to describe any kind of language/literature which consoles rather than suffers. It is adopted by any society which demands a kataphatic theology (and subsequently, a kataphatic grammar, logic, science, etc.) in order to represent the unrepresentable.

French is a well-documented one. The exilic language of Simone Weil "climaxes in the utter negation of all imagery 'in order to plunge into [the] divine darkness'[12] of a self undivided" (Winchell, 76). Beckett operates in this same arena of apophatic meaning, his imagery being a kind of obsessive representation of the hollowness of the image. A hole and a burrow are dark abodes created out of aphairan, a chipping away at the cold hard materiality of substance in order to unearth an emptiness in which to dwell and decreate. Their writing seeks to find one's "own desert" (D&G, *Kafka Towards a Minor Literature*, 18) through a process of mining reality in order to locate the barren and vacuous spaces which harbour truth and meaning.

Regardless of the lengths to which Beckett's characters transcend these absent places, one never finds anything but exile. "To be torn from the earth, exiled in duration, cut off from one's immediate roots, is to long for a reintegration in the original sources dating from before the separation and the severance" (Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, 32). Exile is the state of human transcendence; to be capable of transcendence necessitates an exile, an exile that is not a stagnancy, but a perpetual wandering. To root oneself accomplishes a rooting in transcendence, in movement, in exilic homelessness - a rootedness of rhizomatic growth and distorted expansion. To be rooted in the absence of a place removes the ground into which one thirstily clings, forcing continuous rupture for the sake of its advancement. Exile is the state from which the movement of transcendence must ultimately begin. Molloy is no less of an exilic figure from one variation to another. The metemontogenic carnival of Joyce situates the place of being in an exile. An end to exilic being would mark an end to the metemontogeny of *Ulysses*, ripping the

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[12] Winchell is referencing Ewert H. Cousins' essay "Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads."

metamorphic potential of existence away from each creature, and removing the possibility for epiphany. Epiphany depends upon an absence, upon the refusal of being to wallow in stagnation, to cease to play, to succumb to the contentment of Faust's soul-snatching *enough*.

Weil's "vocabulaire est celui des mystiques, et non des théologiens spéculatifs: il ne vise pas à exprimer l'ordre éternel des essences, mais le cheminement concret d'une âme en quête de Dieu" (Thibon, 236). Weil imbues semantic arbitrariness with a nostalgic longing for a pre-kenotic past. Words, quivering with anamnesis, seek to divest themselves of their post-Lapsarian metaphoricity. The Edenic parable is only a symbolic retelling of the kenotic act of creation. God had already separated himself from his creation from the beginning. Perhaps then, the Fall can be seen as the moment when such a separation entered the consciousness of the forsaken. Eden was the world before it realized that there could be no God within it; the fruit: the awakening to our own abandonment. This, however, is not a sin for Weil. Our imperfection is inextricably linked to our nature. Indeed, it is our very nature. To be separate from God necessitates evil. Such evil is the merciful quality that allows us to exist as a separate entity at all. Without evil, without abandonment, we have nothing to discard and return to. The incarnation of Jesus is thus a kenotic act which abandons him, God, to the evil of his own absence. The original sin of humankind, both in Eden and Babel, was in wanting to be God without suffering, without décréation. "Même si on pouvait être comme Dieu, il vaudrait mieux être de la boue qui obéit à Dieu" (Weil, *PG*, 87), Golem-like figures, one imagines, enslaved to goodness.

In *En attendant Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon see a bare tree on the mound of dirt, its branches stretched like the limbs of a cross, and it appears to be little more than another victim in their limbic no-place. It has roots, otherwise it could not stand, but its leafless suffering is its rootedness. "Les feuilles et les fruits sont du gaspillage d'énergie si on veut seulement monter" (Weil, *PG*, 140). And so to truly wait for God, is to see this tree as pure suffering, as a tree that is rooted in suffering, and as such is attached to no earth beneath it. The tree is to be removed from its pedestal of dirt and carried on one's back - the cross one is to claim and the suffering one is to endure with love and gratitude. The kenotic return of décréation is achieved by way of this cross. "Il faut se déraciner. Couper l'arbre et en faire une croix, et ensuite la porter tous les jours" (Weil, *PG*, 45) One is to love such Christly suffering not because it is useful in getting to God, but because it *is*, because it is real; it is the state of our existence that we inherit by virtue of our kenotic existence, and so to accept it is not to lessen the suffering, but to suffer purely (Weil, 93). One's cross is to be claimed rather than chosen, for it must be followed by an act of acceptance beyond the decision of the will. To regard it in any other way than this is to efface "le mystère salutaire et l'amertume salutaire. Souhaiter le martyre est beaucoup trop peu. La croix est infiniment plus que le martyre. La souffrance la plus purement amère, la souffrance pénale, comme garantie d'authenticité" (Weil, *PG*, 103).

For Weil, work is synonymous with the cross, especially manual labour, and although far too weak and malnourished to be very successful at it, she was constantly drawn to it, whether in field or factory. "Le travail est comme une mort. Il faut passer par la mort. Il faut être tué, subir la pesanteur du monde. L'univers pesant sur les reins d'un être humain, quoi d'étonnant qu'il ait mal? (*PG*, 207). "Affliction may very well be a

window on transcendence, but it is only because it forces man to a realization of his own creatureliness... On this account there cannot be any question of man's rising to meet God, for the weight – the gravity – of the entire world of necessity rests on his back" (Springsted, 84). To empty oneself is to open oneself up to the weighty pressure of the universe. And for Weil, "il n'y a pas d'autre contrepoids que Dieu" (Weil, *PG*, 109).

This is, in effect, the kenotic gesture that humanity must attempt to perform in its love of God. The cross is the very symbol of Jesus', and therefore God's self-abasement, the willing renunciation of his own divinity, the *fulfillment* of the *figura* of creation. The miracles performed by Christ were his lesser powers, "la partie humble, humaine, presque basse de sa mission" (Weil, *PG*, 102). The miracles present Christ as a kind of circus performer or entertainer, and the manifestation of divine power as a kind of magicians' act to convert his audience through awe and wonder. "In such deadening literalism, God becomes the ultimate laser show at Disneyworld" (Caputo, 16). One's suffering is not to be glorified or exploited for the amusement of others, nor is it to be undone. The mission of Jesus is not to correct the wrongs of the father by curing blindness and leprosy, but would be better served in directing their suffering towards décréation. He might have conversed with these miserable souls as one would Job, offering guidance rather than a travel bag full of cures. Such cures make one grateful to God - as easily as they would Elvis if they were cured in his name instead of the Lord's - but they do not bring one closer to God by way of suffering. Would that Jesus had taught these individuals to suffer like Weil: "un extrême effort d'attention me permettait de sortir hors de cette misérable chair, de la laisser souffrir seule, tassée dans son coin... Cette experiénce m'a permis... de mieux comprendre la possibilité d'aimer l'amour divin

à travers le malheur" (Weil, *Attente de Dieu*, 37). And yet, perhaps these criticisms amount to little more than a recognition of the humanity of Jesus.

There is a joke I heard a long time ago. Something about an ad campaign for Ira's Nails. The last scene presents a group of Romans chasing a bleeding Jesus across the desert. "Should have used Ira's Nails," one Roman says, all out of breath. **I**ra's **N**ails **R**ammed **I**n. Fade to black. But in truth, what kind of nails would have been needed to pierce the flesh of Christ? Titanium? Some dagger forged from the ore of Polyphemus' cave? Or, with the will of both the Father and the Son set on the death of that frail human body, were nails even necessary? Would Jesus have hung fastened to the cross without any nail or rope, held firm by will alone? It is a testament to the incarnation that nails were needed and that his wrists possessed no adhesive magic. If the miracles were the lowly human part of Christ, "[l]a partie surnaturelle, c'est la sueur de sang, le désir insatisfait de consolations humaines, la supplication d'être épargné, le sentiment d'être abandonné de Dieu" (Weil, *PG*, 102). This is the proof for Weil that there is something divine in Christianity despite all its tyranny, precisely by virtue of this forsakenness.

The passion of Christ is not meant, therefore, to save us from our earthly suffering, to console us or protect us, but to save us from eternal suffering by showing us *how* to suffer. We are not saved from the cross but, rather, given the cross as our very means of salvation. Like Badiou's assessment of St. Paul, Simone Weil's discourse - a 'passion for passion' as Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu once put it - is a discourse of militant weakness. Rimbaud's "*On suit la rue rouge pour arriver à l'auberge vide*" (504) might be an ideal symbol to describe the path of such kenotic existence. The gospel teaches that there are many mansions in heaven. In Weil's apophasis, the mansion of heaven would be

like an empty inn in which the kenotic traveller seeks to lay her head, and it is in that emptiness that God would be found. The 'royal road to salvation' is thus a red one, the trail of the Passion, a path marked with one's blood, suffering, and self-sacrifice. Following the teachings of John of the Cross, "divine wisdom is not only night and darkness for the soul, but also affliction and torment" (201).

Weil does not hate the body in any Manichean or Gnostic form, although her thought bears traces of these traditions, for the material world is governed by laws of necessity based on our kenotic existence. If the dissolution of the body offers a means of returning to God, it is only because imbued within matter is a latent metaxic potentiality. Weil's writings were initially very favourable to Marxism, for she saw materialism as close to a complete philosophy, with the exception of the supernatural element which, although responsible for the necessity of the material world, has no place in it from the standpoint of kenosis. Weil does not argue for "the negation of matter as such. Instead, created matter is the means by which God reveals himself" (Patterson and Schmidt, 83). The suffering of the body and the décréation of the self are not a negation of the importance of matter, but rather a celebration of the concentrated dissolution of it that unlocks its metaxic quality. Matter offers itself as the means of transcendence, and if it offers itself by way of an undoing or a mimesis of kenosis, that is its celebratory power. Décréation is a creaturely mimesis of kenosis in that Weil explicitly refers to kenosis as an abdication similar to crucifixion. "Dieu n'est pas tout-puissant, puisqu'il est créateur. La création est abdication. Mais il est tout-puissant en ce sens que son abdication est voluntaire" (*CS*, 67). For Weil, there is no power but sacrificial weakness and the figure of the crucified Christ is the greatest embodiment of the power of matter, the resurrection

a mere stunt. It is in this sense that both the Creation and the Incarnation are implicit with the Passion, and that the Cross comes to represent the true demonstrability of God. Upon crucifixion, God becomes a new necessity or order operating in the world. This new necessity "bears a mediatory relationship to the transcendent Good" (Springsted, 94).

In Weil's writings, Jesus' love for his father was at its purest during his crucifixion, for this was the moment when Jesus loved his God in the manner of a God who had abandoned him. The controversy as to whether his last words were uttered in the form of a question or a final resignation constitutes nothing less than the argument as to whether even Jesus was, ultimately, capable of décréation. Weil has interpreted Jesus' words as a question, which would mean that Jesus emptied himself without understanding the reason for his forsakenness. Acceptance without understanding, as Christianity commonly teaches. When suffering reaches a state where it instills "dans l'âme le sentiment de la perpétuité, en contemplant cette perpétuité avec acceptation et amour, on est arraché jusqu'à l'éternité (Weil, *PG*, 66). But it seems that for décréation to be possible, for one to return the gift of kenotic divestment with full acceptance, one must be emptied of both understanding *and* curiosity. One must be capable of posing no further question, emptied of the desire to know. Décréation is only possible once will and desire have been extinguished.

And so it seems rather secondary to argue whether the phrasing of the Aramaic is a question, for ultimately, it must have been both. To question why he had been forsaken is the proof of God's kenosis, that is, the proof that Jesus was indeed fully human, for not to question such a thing would contradict the very essence of human nature. To die in the strength of knowledge, as the martyrs did for Christ and the Church, is infinitely easier

for Weil than to die without the understanding of one's purpose. However, for Jesus to have fulfilled such a kenotic return would necessitate the final realization (not an understanding) that God had indeed forsaken him. The matter-of-factness of *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* occurs with the emptying of Jesus, a statement which, regardless if spoken, must have been whispered in the silence of his vacating self, at the moment when there was no longer language with which to speak the agony of such truth, or a subjectivity to which it might cling. Christ, uttering his forsakenness as a matter beyond all inquisition, is abandoned to truth, the truth of God's loving abandonment. "L'abandon au moment suprême de la crucifixion, quel abîme d'amour des deux côtés!" (Weil, *PG*, 102).

This abyss is an umbilical connection to God, a connection that is an absence. "Pour que l'amour soit le plus grand possible, la distance est la plus grande possible" (Weil, *PG*, 105). The metaxic abyss of transcendental communication is both the infinite space which separates and the infinite space that constitutes our surroundings. In other words, it is the purpose of all created things, as part of the kenotic void, to act as metaxu, as intermediaries. As part of the unreal world, one becomes, for others, simply another screen which must be pierced in order for there to be nothing standing in between the self and God.

> C'est Dieu qui par amour se retire de nous afin que nous puissions l'aimer. Car si nous étions exposés au rayonnement direct de son amour, sans la protection de l'espace, du temps et de la matière, nous serions évaporés comme l'eau au soleil; il n'y aurait pas assez de je en nous pour abandonner le je par amour. La nécessité est l'écran mis entre Dieu et nous pour que nous puissions être. C'est à nous de percer l'écran pour cesser d' être. (Weil, *PG*, 36-7)

Metaxu comprise all those things – matter, family, country, culture - that define human existence, but that must be regarded as steppingstones on the path to God (Weil, *PG*,

168). Springsted explains that "nothing is capable of serving as a μεταξύ simply by physical possession or proximity. But through attention, the object, whether it is a thing, state or act, can serve as a μεταξύ when it causes one to direct the soul beyond the represented finite good towards the unrepresentable transcendent God" (Springted, 199).

To bastardize John D. Caputo's notion of the name of God harbouring an event which theology seeks to set free, one might see theology as the effort to unleash the being of God into the non-being of the world (Caputo, 2). For Weil, the Word of God is a silent one, and as such, she would no doubt prefer a silent and unspoken theology which would bring the event of God, the event of his being, into the illusory world of godlessness. Décréation is the silence in which theology ends and is no longer necessary, for theology is, in many ways, the science of God amidst his absence. "Theology is the negation of divinity... The most obscure mystical mumbo-jumbo is closer to God than the *Summa theologiae*, and a child's simple prayer offers a greater ontological guarantee than all ecumenical synods" (Cioran, *Tears and Saints*, 76). Metaphysics is inevitable because grammar cannot be transcended. In order for the imminence that would mark the end of metaphysics, transcendence is needed, either through a kind of Weilean décréation or through an aesthetic appropriation of her metaxic spaces that would constitute a new (perhaps poetic or metaxic) form of emptying – a metemontogenic transformation of the ego in a world where grace is forbidden. Theological as their concerns might be, it might be more accurate to say that the metaxic poets are not writing in a Godless world, but in a graceless one. "In other times it was the gods who abandoned us; today we abandon them. We have lived beside them too long for them still to find grace in our sight" (Cioran, *The New Gods*, 14). If a mystical experience is the fleeting union with God

beyond the reaches of theology, décréation is the permanent union earned through suffering, and a conjuring of the event of God's being in order to repeal the kenotic separation.

Badiou explains the event as "that which donates the One to the concatenation of multiplicities" (Badiou, "The Event In Deleuze," 38) – a concept that might place the event on the level of metaxu, a bridge that, in providing the meeting place of God, would inevitably be consumed by God, and thus become God, the moment it fulfilled its metaxic potential. The event would be the collapsing of this metaxic bridge - "the vanishing mediator" (Badiou, "The Event In Deleuze," 39) - at the moment when God, kenotic creature, and medium become a single entity, the basic event towards which all theology directs itself. The event is cross and crucifixion in one.

To be created through kenosis is always to approach a return (even if perpetually elusive), our absence of place marking the very necessity of a return. Perhaps we might see the event as the prefigured kenotic return imbedded within our kenotic nature. Thus, the event is the fulfillment of the kenotic return, the 'no present,' or rather, the moment when "everything is present (the event is living or chaotic eternity, as the essence of time)" (Badiou, "The Event In Deleuze," 38). It is the moment when being and non-being, God and the abysmal, become one, the moment when God becomes something again - the moment of the kingdom of God, as Caputo would suggest. For a kenotic creature whose highest potential is décréation - a becoming-god by way of a becoming-nothingness - it is the final "break with the becoming of an object of the world, through…the emergence [*surgissement*] of a trace: what formerly inexisted becomes intense existence" (Badiou, "The Event In Deleuze," 39). It is the final rupture of kenotic

becoming to become being. In a created world based on God's kenotic gesture, to become is the movement of a nothing which seeks to become something, to become being, and God is the only pure form of being, the uncreated unbecoming. The world of becoming necessitates a becoming-into-something, an end or telos to that which becomes, even if continually differed and unapproachable. Weil's is an eternal return with a celestial finality or divine closure. Critchley defines the eternal return as "that which enables one to endure the world of becoming without resenting it or seeking to construct some hinterworld…[It does] not so much entail an overcoming of nihilism as an overcoming of the desire to overcome" (Critchley, 9).

"Names contain events and give them a kind of temporary shelter by housing them within a relatively stable nominal unity. Events, on the other hand, are uncontainable, and they make names restless with promise and the future, with memory and the past, with the result that names contain what they cannot" (Caputo, 2). For Weil, this is finite non-being attempting to contain the atemporal being (God), or more precisely, the kataphasis of semantic denotation seeking to contain the apophatically undenotable. "Events are what names are trying to translate…like runners thrusting themselves towards a finish line that never appears (Caputo, 3). The event in the name of God is its Siren call, the "to me, to me" (Kafka, "The Bridge," 372) that springs forth defiantly from the name. The event is the always-ecstatic element within the nominal container. The temporality of the event is kairological rather than chronological, releasing "us from the grip of the present and open[ing] up the future in a way that makes possible a new birth, a new beginning, a new invention of ourselves, even as it awakens dangerous memories" (Caputo, 6) - the anamnesistic awareness that one never was, that one's very

being is, in effect, a non-being whose becoming opens up the future by way of kenotic return.

One can understand the event as the kenosis undergone by its infinite other, a Being that divests itself to bring something aleatory into the world, the explosion of becoming by means of the self-divestment of Being. The event is an epiphany or onto-phenomenological rupture of God's incarnation precisely as the expulsion and negation of itself/himself. It is the moment, perhaps, in that sublime confrontation with the epiphanic, in which the self seeks to decreate or undo the barriers that separate itself from otherness. The metaxic event is a departure from the self to open oneself up to the metemontogenic (metaxagenic, one might say) current of existence that ruptures the stable identity of the self so that it can proliferate in the transcendental or epiphanous incarnation.

Ultimately, as intermediaries, metaxu must be discarded like the will whose only purpose is to surrender itself. All earthly phenomena, everything that makes up the metaxic realm, must be shed as nothing permanent can be contained within a metaxic structure. It is a no-place, a threshold, and existence, skirting the threshold of the metaxu, is merely on the threshold of a threshold. The body is a metaxu, yet the body must be abandoned, torn apart through suffering and left as one leaves the surface of the ocean to plunge into the depths. The prisoners of Weil's analogy must meet in the fissures of their wall and tear it apart from the inside. If Zeno's infinity is between the prisoner and the centre of the wall, she must make her way towards this unending centre, the centre which descends farther and farther inward, a descent which offers no turnabout at Satan's hip. To approach the centre of the metaxic barrier is already to plot its destruction. When God

enters the decreated self, one is carried away from the metaxu, falling away from it as one does the self. The metaxu is thus a site of death, a bridge that annihilates the self as it extends into the infinite, indeed *because* it extends into the infinite. But to enter a metaxic space is not yet to reach God, it is only a space of emptiness into which God must subsequently descend. Derrida explains that

> God resides in a place... [But t]o gain access to this place is not yet to contemplate God. Even Moses must retreat. He receives this order from a place that is not a place, even if one of the names of God can sometimes designate place itself. Like all the initiated, he must purify himself, step aside from the impure, separate himself from the many, join 'the elite of the priests.' But access to this divine place does not yet deliver him to passage toward the mystical Darkness where profane vision ceases and where it is necessary to be silent. (Derrida, 91)

"Toutes les choses créés refusant d'être pour moi des fins. Telle est l'extrême miséricord de Dieu àmon égard. Et cela même est le mal. Le mal est la forme que prend en ce monde la miséricord de Dieu" (Weil, *PG*, 166). God's mercy is that he does not allow created things to be taken for ends in themselves, but as means through which he can be reached. To have created things as ends would direct our sight to the world as though it were a closed door, a barrier without the possibility or need to go through it. This is merciful, for God presents the world as a closed door that is, at the same time, the way through (Weil, *PG*, 166). His mercy is that he does not bar the way to reaching him. For Weil, the fact that nothing created is an end to itself is also evil, for only that which is good can ever be a telos. God is the only thing that is a telos, for he is the only uncreated entity. "Il faut une représentation du monde où il y ait du vide, afin que le monde ait besoin de Dieu. Cela suppose le mal" (Weil, *PG*, 13).

Weil teaches that one sins by using one's imagination to fill the void in order to make it an end in itself. Imagining is counter-productive to the sustained and attentive *waiting* that complete décréation demands; the imagination creates an illusion of reality

that prevents one from ever getting to the real. The world thus becomes a proliferation of images which do not even bear the artistic stamp of a simulacrum or representation of the real. The imagination fashions Plato's cave out of the void, a world of false perceptions of truth to which one is chained and in need of escape. Rather than a Platonic ascent to the blinding sun, décréation is a descent of humiliation and suffering. To leave the cave is not to unshackle the chains, but to disappear into the void, to leave both the body and the material elements to which it is bound (Weil, *PG*, 66). The world is not reality for Weil. It is only real in the same sense that a dream is real. For Joyce, History is a nightmare from which one cannot awake; for Weil, the world is a nightmare from which we can only awake through décréation. Thus, one must pray to God and love God as something which does not exist, for he is completely separate from this nightmarish reality of natural perception.

In Weilean terms, it is the apophatic that is linked to being or reality, rather than the kataphatic, which are understood as merely chimerical illusions within the void. Nevertheless, being remains a kataphatic designation. When we speak of God as the Being to our non-being (or vice versa) we are only employing such a tenuous binary by way of analogy. If we are dealing with an immanent absence, a *presence* of absence, this is akin to an absent being incarnate in non-being. "Not that this world doesn't exist, but its reality is no such thing. Everything seems to exist and nothing exists" (Cioran, *The New Gods*, 39). God is a real nothingness apart from our illusory everything. "Je suis tout à fait sûre qu'il n'y a pas de Dieu, en ce sens que je suis tout à fait sûre que rien de réel ne ressemble à ce que je peux concevoir quand je prononce ce nom" (Weil, *PG*, 132). Eckhart professes a nearly identical sentiment. "You must love Him inasmuch as he is a

Non-God, a Non-Intellect, a Non-Person, a Non-Image. More than this, inasmuch as He is a pure, clear, limpid One, separated from all duality. And we must eternally sink ourselves into this One, from the Something to the Nothing (qtd. in Derrida, 121)." That which the mind cannot perceive is far more real than that which it can. "C'est pourquoi «philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir». C'est pourquoi «prier est comme une mort»" (Weil, *PG*, 23-4). They are not so far apart in their purest sense; in their own way, they each flirt with the void and the dissolution of the unreal real and the false temporality which deprives us of a future in which we can receive reward (Weil, *PG*, 23).

If the world is only real in the sense of a dream, then all gods who appear to us in such a dream must be false. Their divinity is only earthly, and therefore illusory. Perhaps then, religion is the kataphatic representation of an apophatic divinity, the visible luminescence of an invisible deity. Religion must be metaxic, a diaphanous institution *between* the earthly and the transcendent. But earthly religion rarely operates so well for Weil. Instead, it beams an overpowering, often tyrannical glow which prevents the believer from seeing past it, sedating through the seductiveness of consolation. It is a bright light glimpsed through cataract eyes to shroud the *divine gloom* of which Dionyisus the Areopagite so anonymously speaks. In Weilean philosophy, consolation is dangerous because it attempts to dissociate us from the reality of suffering. It makes us spectators of Christ's suffering, cushioned in the materialistic comforts from which we must decreate. "Celui qui n'a pas su devenir rien court le risque d'arriver à un moment où toutes choses autres que lui cessent d'exister" (Weil, *PG*, 161).

Religion is a way of rooting the self into a structure of power that idolizes itself for the sake of God's glory, because it views power as something capable of glorifying

God. Even if one conservatively identifies Truth as the power that religions possess, for Weil, Truth, God's truth, is the opposite of power. Rather, it is the relinquishing of all power, the divestment of everything capable of clinging to something as illusory as power. It is to emulate the slave, not in servitude of the master, but for the purity of its suffering. Both Weil and Caputo, though in much different ways, are intent on preserving the 'weak force of God.' Caputo believes that "beneath all its talk about weakness...[theology] conceals a love of power" (Caputo, 15). Weil's indictment of a faith like Christianity is almost Nietzschean in this regard, as she views Christianity as having forsaken its origins in suffering and slavery in order to exert its power as a system of totalitarian imperialism, morally and nationally. To Weil, this is nothing short of the creation of a false god, and the entire betrayal of that fundamental truth of kenosis upon which their faiths must be built. By way of mocking his death, Jesus was crucified as the King of the Jews, but his kenotic existence is one of a slave. Born to the oppressed and impoverished class, his mission was one of complete servitude. "[L]e christianisme est par excellence la religion des esclaves que des esclaves ne peuvent pas ne pas y adhérer, et moi parmi les autres (Weil, *Attente de Dieu*, 37). To clarify, what Weil expresses here is less an alignment with Christianity as a spiritual solidarity with Christ and the slavish class, for Christianity's slavish roots are a far cry from what Weil considered extant in the real world.

Nietzsche would, of course, argue that the danger of Christianity's power is in its valorization of weakness while atop the hierarchy of power, but for Weil, it is explicitly the dismissal of such valorization that has made religion dangerous. The valorization of weakness has not been very successful at escaping the confines of scripture. If the force

of God is a weak one, it seems one would need a weak religion in order to support it. A religion which aligns itself with a god whose very power *is* its weakness, whose very omnipotence is in its power of renunciation, becomes one of solitary, ascetic mysticism, in other words, the negation of all orthodox religiosity. The powerful religion divests itself of God's weakness. To the faithful and the potential-converts, the paradox of the Trinity is, perhaps, difficult enough to explain without professing God's abandonment of his creation. One pities the priest who passes around the collection plate after preaching the importance of décréation within the abyss of the world. And yet, Weil would argue, it is kenosis and the enslavement to suffering inherent within it that defines the truth of God.

Weil's position outside such a religious power structures make her more, rather than less, able to follow the teachings of Christ. So rather than celebrate her for being the first anti-Christian[13] mystic to receive Christ, she would most likely direct our attention to the inherent faults within religion that prevent such contact from being more frequent. The best position, she suggests, is to be both outside *and* inside. It is to be hermetically spirited. More dangerous than the evils which taint religion is the fact that it is a social body claiming to divine, an *ersatz* or substitution of the good (Weil, *PG*, 184). All social organisms are dangerous for this reason, which explains one of the many reasons why Weil was always so politically active in her short life, even from a very young age.[14] "La méditation sur le mécanisme social est à cet ègard une purification de première importance. Contempler le social est une voie aussi bonne que se retirer du monde" (Weil, *PG*, 184).

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[13] Weil's vehemence for the Christian faith lies mostly in its loyalty to Torah.
[14]When she was 5 years old, she coordinated her diet with the soldiers of the first World War One in order to express solidarity with them, refusing to eat what they were not at liberty to eat.

One might wish to draw certain parallels between décréation and a kind of Nietzschean (pseudo)nihilism insofar as they both seek a kind of destruction that would allow a rebirth into something greater through the divestment of particular values. But if Weil isn't quite believable as a disciple of Nietzsche, or at least a spiritually devout counterpart, there is still a very thin line between nihilistic destruction and the responsibility of faith. Moreover, in those moments in which her decreative rhetoric most approximates a Kantian imperative, one might hear Weil echoing the words of Zarathustra:

> To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities - I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not – that one endures. (*The Will to Power*, 481)

To follow an ethical course in a kenotic world may very well be to wish décréation an attainable goal for everyone: a massive spiritual exodus resulting in the reversal of the kenotic gesture and an undoing of all creation as it creeps back into the folds of the divine. But the metaxic poets harbour no such illusions as to the utility of ethical speculation. Their work shows, at every turn, that the only man truly capable of acting by way of categorical imperative was Adam. And so, to follow Kant is merely to play at being Adam, and sentence ourselves to repeat the same difficult choices.

As much as Beckett appears atheistic, atheism might be understood as merely another form of theology, one which replaces a godhead with a void or absence. Atheism has been referred to as the inevitable result of any fully-fleshed apophasis, but perhaps atheism merely releases God from the shackles of his own being. Even Weil admits that [l]a religion en tant que source de consolation est un obstacle à la véritable foi: en ce sens l'athéisme est une purification" (*PG*, 133). Beckett deprives his characters of the

purifying choice of atheism, for although God's absence is assured, humanity is an entity far from capable of filling the existential lacuna. "Nothingness or a God. Choosing Nothingness, he makes himself into a God; that is, he makes an apparition into God because if there is no God, it is impossible that man and everything which surrounds him is not merely an apparition" (Jacobi qtd. in Critchley, 4). Returning us to Weil's unreal-real, how might one explore the particular ontology of 'man as apparition?' Beckett's theology can even be considered monotheistic in the same sense in which Bataille speaks of monotheism as being a response or compensation for the loss of the One (Dowd, 75). But Beckett's concentration is not so much on the monotheistic deity as the kenotic void that stands in the way of our ability to force him to answer for his absence.

Beckett's is a negative theology which offers no salvific promise of a celestial figure beyond the apophatic gloom, yet which never ceases to converse with and call upon both the apophatic void and the absent figure who may or may not dwell beyond it. It may seem wrong to speak of transcendentalism when referring to Beckett, but he is an author who deals exclusively with the transcendental, in the same way in which the mislabelled atheism is a fervent, if negative, form of theism. "Atheists, so ready with their invective, prove that they have *someone* in their sights. They should be less conceited; their emancipation is not so complete as they suppose: they have exactly the same notion of God as believers" (Cioran, *The New Gods*, 7). The space of Beckett's literature, if we can appropriate Blanchot's term, is precisely in these negative spaces of death and the unnameable; his characters continually seek an uprooting from earthly kenosis in order to move beyond the condemned soil of the transcendentally homeless. As Shira Wolosky pointedly states, "negation and transcendence are thus closely aligned"

(3), and thus, Beckett's *alittérature* is nothing if not a writing that seeks to efface itself in order to move beyond itself.

2.

Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*

> Et je voyais alors une petite boule montant lentement des profondeurs, à travers des eaux calmes, unie d'abord, à peine plus Claire que les remous qui l'escortent, puis peu à peu visage, avec les trous des yeux et de la bouche et les autres stigmates, sans qu'on puisse savoir si c'est un visage d'homme ou de femme, jeune ou vieux, ni si son calme aussie n'est pas un effet de l'eau qui le sépare du jour. Mais je dois dire que je ne prêtais qu'une attention distraite à ces pauvres figures, où sans doute mon sentiment de débâcle cherchait à se contenir. Et le fait de ne pas y travailler davantage marquait encore combien j'avais insisté. Mais il suffisait que je commence à y faire jaillir un peu de clarté, je veux dire dans cette obscure agitation qui me gagnait, à l'aide d'une figure ou d'un judgement, pour que je me jette vers d'autres soucis.
>
> Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

This path leads us nowhere," said Tommy O'Shea
Said Tiffany, "yes, but we've come all this way.
Desmond Cole, "Left at the Junction"

i.

A rather large portion of the scholarship on Samuel Beckett commences with an apology. "Where to begin?" critics almost audibly sigh. "Writing on Beckett is impossible," they say, and subsequently go on to write page after page elucidating his work, bowing respectfully to the irony. Derrida is famous for suggesting that it is both too easy and too difficult to ever write about Beckett. The smartest readers – the Adornos, the Critchleys, the Deleuzes – will all argue for the absence of meaning in his work, locate such an absence and trace its shapeless contours. It is incredible how much there is to say about a writer for whom nothing can be said. My interest here is not in disagreeing with such interpretations, nor to squeeze meaning into bottomless spaces in which it will simply plummet without ever becoming stuck. My task is merely to explore the potential that results from such an open text, one in which we can't go on, but must,

regardless. The absence of any meaning altogether - or the putting of meaning on trial, as Adorno would have it - allows for the quintessential writerly text, one wherein only the finest line might be drawn between meaninglessness and the indiscriminate potentiality for a coexistence of all meanings - states that may even offer the same thing. Indeed, for a writer so fond of signs (both linguistic and imagistic) that contain the very negation of themselves as the root of their signification, Beckett's art seems to necessarily condemn their mutual exclusivity.

In the immeasurable criticism on Beckett's so-called Trilogy, *L'Innommable* appears as the most generous offering for (over)interpretation, and the most philosophically dense in its presentation of the final moment of subjective and linguistic decay. However, as the prelude of the cryptych, and a harbinger for the postlude of *L'Innommable*, *Molloy* offers us the ego's first push towards décréation, one in which the presence of the world from which one seeks to decreate still weighs oppressively on such ideas of escape. It is this initial step, this excruciating and bewildering act of severance from the world that is most haunting in *Molloy*.

> Est-ce à dire que je serai expulsé de ma maison, de mon jardin, un jour, que je perdrai mes arbes, mes pelouses, les oiseaux dont chacun m'est familier, a sa façon bien à lui de chanter, de voler, de venir vers moi ou de s'enfuir à mon approche, et toutes les absurdes douceurs de mon intérieur, où chaque chose a sa place, où j'ai tout ce qu'il faut sous la main pour pouvoir endurer d'être un homme, où mes ennemis ne peuvent m'atteindre, que j'ai mis ma vie à édifier, à embellir, à perfectionner, à conserver? Je suis trop vieux! (*Molloy*, 204-5)

Subjectivity does not yet hang loose here in the ether. It still wallows and wavers in the interstice, covered in the mud and filth of existence that so defines Weilean décréation. As Moran attempts to adjust to his physical transformations, he communicates the following. "Toute nouvelle qu'était cette nouvelle croix je trouvais tout de suite la meilleure manière de la charier" (*Molloy*, 216). There is not only a submission to pain for

both Molloy and Moran, but a comfort and a solace in it, a feeling (though not totally understood) that somewhere within this pain lies a detachment from living. The only way to remove oneself from the greater pain of living is to detach from oneself, a decreative gesture which is only possible, in Weilean terms, from an embracing of such passion. Molloy and Moran both end up prostrate on the ground, claiming the very earth as their cross. More so than its sequels, *Molloy* is the story of the earth as cross, of metaxic transcendence amidst the influence of wretched materiality. As Weil suggests, "[c]'est pourquoi il a fallu les ulcèrs et le fumier pour que fût révélée à Job la beauté du monde. Car il n'y a pas de douleur supportée sans haine et sans mensonge sans qu'il y ait aussi détachement" (*PG*, 60).

In *Molloy*, Beckett treats God as something that has abandoned us, and whether or not this kenotic God exists apart from our own lonely and fearful imagination, we are no less exilic. Indeed, humanity seems like just such a creature to be abandoned by its own invention. Perhaps, as Heidegger teaches us, this is an era of temporary abandonment where we live in between Gods. It matters little, then, whether one treats God as an extant being in Beckett's world, for insofar as such impossible truths dwell outside this negative transcendental space, there is an immanent absence that one may as well term God, for "God's name would suit everything that may not be broached, approached, or designated, except in an indirect and negative manner" (Derrida, 76). Without a figurehead to perform such a kenosis, human consciousness would have still fought against the lunar wail of a godless void to establish itself as a will apart from a pervasive nothingness. Kenosis not only gives a purpose to God's absence, it makes it necessary. This is crucial to the understanding of what transcendence means in Beckett, for God's absence does not

demand an atheism or a nihilism; there are, strange as it may sound, different forms of godlessness, and they require unique metaphysics to explain them. The existence of God does not necessarily preclude the impossibility of God, and in Beckett's world, solipsism, longing, and emptiness are the greatest commitments one can make, spiritually speaking. In one sense, in the formation of a self that constantly seeks its own décréation, Beckett emerges as one of the most metaphysical writers of his time. That space beyond the self is constantly called into question, but never does this space, achieved only by way of negation, cease to be terrifyingly immanent in all its cavernous absence.

"Man not unhappily measures himself against the godhead. Is God unknown? Is he manifest like the sky?.. Is there a measure on earth? There are none" (Heidegger, 219-220). The divine *as* mystery, is something which can only be made manifest *as* enigmatic mystery. Beckett's metaphysics are so misunderstood because he delights in problematizing the binary of absence/presence upon which most conceptions of God are based. One "possible approach is to *resist* lapsing into thinking of Him as presence. On this reading, God would be a name of a certain void and of a process that is propelled by this void... Beckett's art was an example of such a discourse, namely a discourse focused on articulating God as an absence" (Szafraniec, 215).

If epiphanies - what Harold Bloom calls "transcendental bursts of radiance" (Bloom, 3) – are an impossibility in the work of Beckett, perhaps it is simply the bursting of radiance that is the impossibility, and not the epiphany itself. Beckett's 'noir-gris'[15] epiphanies are not those of Joyce, and they certainly do not burst forth, but slowly seep

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[15] Badiou describes the 'noir-gris' as the "black such that no light can be inferred to contrast with it, an 'uncontrasted' black. This black is sufficiently grey for no light to be opposed to it as its Other…In this grey black…there operates a progressive fusion of closure and of open (or errant) space" (*On Beckett*, 6). In Gibson's thorough examination of Badiou's work on Beckett, he describes the 'noir-gris' or 'penumbra' as situating Being "on the edge of or indistinguishable from the void" (36).

unchecked into the world. And if an absent God is to manifest himself as an immanent absence, then Beckett's epiphanies will be of the same genus. Divine epiphanies appear as prosopopeiatic incarnations of an absent deity; they radiate nothing but the void. With each epiphanous presence the kenotic gesture repeats itself anew. Apophasis or negative theology in representational art is a complex game, one whose paradox Beckett is free to admit. "The only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something, just as the only way one can speak of God is to speak of him as though he were a man…and as the only way one can speak of man…is to speak of him as though he were a termite" (Beckett, *Watt*, 74). The representation of the apophatic God is an exercise in prosopopeia.

Simon Critchley defines prosopopeia as "the trope by which an absent or imaginary person is presented as speaking or acting" (Critchley, 26). One might argue that to the extent that all of Beckett's characters are fading voices, they are seeking to become prosopopeiatic without any lingering need for speech. One writes to gain silence, to name the unnamable (and, perhaps, un-name the named). Joyce's epiphany, however, is one in which seemingly everything can be prosopopeiatic: there is nothing that cannot cross through the metaxic wall to assert its presence. It is not merely, as Critchley maintains, "a form which indicates the failure of presence" (Critchley, 26), but also the presence of an absence. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons why a prosopopeiatic God is so hard to abandon for the kenoted being. "[C]onsciousness, despite periods of denial, continues to allow for the presence of God and for his possible attentiveness. It is as if a

God who were always in the shadows, always chary of self-revelation, is one who is more difficult to eradicate from the consciousness" (Bryden, 74).[16]

Molloy describes his own presence as a kind of ghostly absence. "Ce fut elle qui fit le trou, qui mit le chien dedans, qui combla le trou. Jen e faisais en somme qu'y assister. J'y contribuais de ma presence. Comme si ç'avait été mon enterrement à moi. Et il l'était" (54). The prosopopeiatic subject is one where the manifest and the latent components (the representation and the repetition in Deleuzean terms) are coexistent within the same being, that is, where the manifest subject manifests that which is beyond itself.[17] Paraphrasing Badiou, Andrew Gibson offers that "no object can appear as a complete whole: there is always 'a real point of inexistence' in an object" (181). This is similar to Beckett's own words, in which he explains that contrary to the label he receives, he identifies himself as a proponent of realism in the sense of "a realism which includes the unseen as well as the seen, the dream in addition to the waking vision, the artist as well as the canvas" (Beckett qtd. in Coe, 2). Beckett's fiction presents each object as a "total object, with missing parts…instead of [a] partial object" (Beckett qtd. in Coe, 2).

When commenting on the few objects he claims as his own, Molloy states that "même perdus ils auront leur place, dans l'inventaire de mes biens" (18). What is possessed is a *lack*, a lost and divested inventory whose absence is co-extensive with a

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[16] In *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*, Mary Bryden mentions Weil a handful of times, and even speaks of décréation in the following manner: "For Molloy, the image of creation as a watch in the hands of the Divine Watchmaker – intricate, and full of carefully regulated components – is not meaningful. Rather, using his own life as the model, he tends towards the image of a failed or decomposing creation, a decreation" (73). Interestingly, Bryden not only neglects to associate the term décréation with Weil, but she also uses it to connote an almost automatic process of de-evolution without will or spiritual purpose.

[17] Deleuze calls the latent subject the 'transcendental sensibility' and the manifest subject the 'empirical sensibility.' The latent subject /transcendental sensibility "is born in a violent encounter with the world" (Hughes, 75).

present presence. Molloy himself exists in the present sense as a lost or displaced object in his own ontological inventory. Molloy is a centauric creature of the interstice, always lingering "between two states" (Bryden, 100). Like Belacqua in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, he is "a horrible border creature" (Bryden, 100). He is a kind of shadow figure exhibiting its own peculiar physics of presence. The shadow is an elastic mediating force not opposed to substance, but rather, a middle-substance which, like a pharmakon, slips in between two realms. Bataille claims that "everything invites one to drop the substance for the shadow" (*TR*, 9) but even Molloy's shadow is wracked with the pain and disfigurement of the body, so that "l'ombre à la fin ce n'est guère plus amusant que le corps" (37). Through a metamorphic process of décréation, Molloy becomes a consciousness gradually losing an identity to which he might cling. Similarly, Moran is a kind of prosopopeiatic figure, for until his search for Molloy is successful - at least decreatively – he exemplifies Beckett's 'total object with missing parts.'

> What is the 'lost one'? It is each one's own other, the one who singularises a given inhabitant, who wrenches the inhabitant away from anonymity. To find one's lost one is to come to oneself; to no longer be a simple element of the small group of searchers. It is thus that Beckett surmounts the painful antinomies of the *cogito*: one's identity does not depend upon the verbal confrontation with oneself, but upon the discovery of one's other. (Badiou, *On Beckett*, 61)

In "Molloy's Silence," Bataille refers to absence as being necessarily amorphous, there being no stable structures strong enough to stop the passage of being. This absence transgresses the binary laws of presence/non-presence to form the root of Beckett's prosopopeia. Bataille explains that it is not merely Molloy who is the tramping vagabond, but rather Molloy as "reality in its purest state," (13) Molloy as the "essence of being" (14). Absence creates an amorphous state of being that cripplingly makes its way across desolate landscapes without any particular direction in which to turn. Beckett shows that

to shirk away from such amorphousness is the natural state of man in the face of the horror of his own being.

ii.

...a certain void, the place of an internal desert...
Jacques Derrida

A kind of décréation is at work in *Molloy* – indeed the entire trilogy might be read as a trilogy of various decreative stages - but it operates in a decidedly different fashion from what Weil proposed. Since kenosis necessitates that whatever transcendental force exists manifests itself as an absence and, consequently, God cannot be distinguished from the void, it is a décréation without salvific function. Richard Coe suggests that this is not "a waiting for death, but literally a waiting for Nothing. Beyond death, there is not 'Nothing,' but simply more waiting. The purgatory of earth is merely transformed into another, of stranger and sadder dimensions" (68). Or, as Beckett might articulate it, "sans aller jusque-là, qui a assez attendu attendra toujours, et passé un certain délai il ne peut plus rien arriver, ni venir personne, ni y avoir autre chose que l'attente se sachant vaine" (*Malone meurt*, 126). At times, the emptying of the self seems only a futile waiting with nothing to fill the vacuum it has made and without the strength to close the self once it realizes the self-emptying has all been for naught. We find this in many places in Beckett,[18] a deep festering vacancy at the centre of the individual producing an operative condition of existence whose mode of activity is reduced to nothing more than aporetic waiting. But this waiting opens the self up to the movement of décréation, and a process of dissolution that renders one a receptacle for the apophatic beyond.

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[18] *En attendant Godot*, for example, was originally going to be titled, simply, *En attendant*.

"C'est dans la tranquillité de la décomposition que je me rapelle cette longue émotion confuse que fut ma vie, et que je la juge, comme il est dit que Dieu nous jugera et avec autant d'impertinence. Décomposer c'est vivre aussi" (*Molloy*, 36). Molloy describes the process of decomposition in decreative terms, but it is a godless décréation, a "passion sans forme ni stations" (36). Molloy continues: "la passion sans forme ni stations m'aura mangé jusqu'aux chairs putrides, et qu'en sachant cela je ne sais rien, que je ne fais que crier comme je n'ai fait que crier, plus ou moins fort, plus ou moins ouvertement" (36). This is the painful state of being made open and empty, slowly being reduced to a state of base nothingness. Beckett's décréation is not a process enacted by a will seeking union with God, but rather, a will seeking escape from selfhood. When one surrenders one's will to a Weilean decreative process, there is an implicit trust that the mechanism of grace will somehow take over and guide the decreative subject the rest of the way. Without such a mechanism, Molloy is reduced to the wretched existence of a poor, toothless, transient invalid, with no higher power to take over once his will has been extinguished. Molloy dwells at the metaxic crossroads, with no God to meet him in between, and as such, the interstitial space of existence offers no outside. Beckett offers us "the primal scene of emptiness, absence and disaster" (Critchley, 82), an attempt to move beyond the self without kenotic return. It is, to borrow Critchley's phrase, a kind of 'atheistic transcendence.'

Molloy's first few pages establish a kenotic wasteland so "devastated, post-atomic and so empty that a solitary human being seems like a monstrous intrusion" (Alvarez, 15). Light is often illusory in the shadowy world of Molloy; all stars are dead stars, and Beckett's characters "n'avai[ent] rien de lumineux" (*Molloy*, 253). "Qu'on ne vienne pas

me parler de la lune, il n'y a pas de lune dans ma nuit, et si cela m'arrive de parler des étoiles c'est par mégarde" (*Molloy*, 19) As Stanley Cavell suggests for *Endgame*, *Molloy* seems situated after the Flood, for kenosis understands Creation and the Fall as inextricable. Kenosis establishes a negative theology where creation, being divested from God, is the void itself, the non-god, the negative space created out of a negative act. "Ontology must be a theory of the void" (Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou*, 48). In a world founded by kenosis, the human realm is a godless one predicated on being the *other* of that which exists. This can be expressed in a number of ways. In *L'Innommable*: "Moi seul suis homme et tout le reste divin" (26). St. John of the Cross instructs that "[a]ll things of earth and heaven, compared with God, are nothing" (qtd. in Wolosky, 12). Bataille puts it another way, but no less eloquently: "the unreal world of sovereign spirits or gods establishes reality, which it is not, as its contrary. The reality of a profane world of things and bodies, is established opposite a holy and mythical world" (*TR*, 37).

In Beckett, metaphysics need have nothing to do with redemption; only humans are so greedy as to demand two worlds. Many negative theologians hold the belief that the path to God resides not only internally, but that this internal metaxu is an eternal space within the centre of the self. This is the basis for the thought of Master Eckhart, among others. Always directed towards this negative space that burgeons within, the self or ego is constructed through a negation of this metaxic space which opens itself up to the void. The self forms itself as "a bulwark 'to keep the void from pouring in.'" (Beckett qtd. in Gibson, 79) The apophatic in Beckett renders all spaces (whether internal or external) a kind of necropolis, and the journey of his characters is a kind of necropolitan quest. The self-negating metaxic space at the centre of one's fleeting selfhood is the

threshold of décréation. As Malone explains, "Ce à quoi je voilais arriver...c'était aux extases du vertige, du lâchage, de la chute, de l'engouffrement, du retour au noir, au rien" (*Malone muert*, 37-8).

"In the degree that he is the immanent immensity, that he is being, that he is *of* the world, man is a stranger for himself" (Bataille, *TR*, 42). Bataille's claim allows us to understand a definition of humanity as its own stranger because its proper place is a collapsing into this eternal space, this metaxu, through décréation. Man[19] roots humanity in transcendental exile by effacing its own metaxic potential. Bataille calls "for humanity to address the question of the price which it must pay for self-consciousness" (James, 11). Man, as the bulwark against the void, becomes a closed vessel for exilic subjectivity, while its true task is to navigate the vertiginous complexity of kenotic being. Décréation is the necessary violence exerted upon man in order to transgress a definition of humanity rooted in finitude. The décréation of Molloy and Moran is an attempt to put an end to this notion of man. "Je ne supporterai plus d'être un homme, je n'essaierai plus" (*Molloy*, 271).

Man values the humanist ideal that somehow man is enough. Beckett's anti-humanism is such that man is not only *not* enough, but that what man truly seeks is the annihilation of this organism. This is not some kind of hot-blooded nihilism, for if Beckett is anti-human, it is only for the sake of a kind of post-human, a human that understands this man-as-stranger as not merely a stranger, but an inhibitor to being. Molloy contemplates the meaning of such a creature. "Ce que j'amais dans

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[19] Cognoscente of the implications of such a term, I would like to employ its use here not only for the sake of consistency with Bataille, but also to fashion a definition of man that slightly differs from humanity, indeed, one that involves a collective of humans slightly opposed to the objectives of a collective kenotic humanity.

l'anthropologie, c'était sa puissance de négation, son acharnement à définir l'homme, à l'instar de Dieu, en termes de ce qu'il n'est pas. Mais je n'ai jamais eu à ce propos que des idées fort confuses, connaissant mal les hommes et ne sachant pas très bien ce que cela veut dire, être" (58). The English translation of the same passage reads "for my knowledge of men was scant and the meaning of being beyond me" (Beckett, *Three Novels*, 39). With Beckett, one can never be too sure, but this is at once a banal colloquialism and a situating of ontological meaning *beyond* the self. The void is something that calls out to the self - even *within* the self – in order that it might go beyond itself. Beckett's decreative subjects respond to this call; as Mary Bryden explains, "even amid the layers of negation…a kind of groping out is taking place" (Bryden, 75).

Beckett, and Weil for her part, can both be seen to argue for a post-human humanism that seeks the potential of humanity in its dissolution. "Beckett – who is very close to Pascal in this respect – aims at subtracting the figure of humanity from everything that distracts it, so as to examine the intimate articulation of its functions" (Badiou, *On Beckett*, 4). Critchley, commenting on Adorno, suggests that "perspectives must be fashioned that reveal the world as it will appear in the messianic light, as needy and deformed, 'as indigent and distorted'… and to achieve this…without capriciousness or violence" (Critchley, 18). But violence appears as an inevitability and necessary measure employed for the sake of wrenching redemption from the 'needy and deformity' of the world. Indeed, redemption itself can only operate as a violent over-turning, for the kenotic distance demands it. Redemption is a violent disruption for it marks an end or finality to man as a self-existing unity. Again, the eloquence of Bataille is simply too seductive. "Mediation is the joint accomplishment of violence and of the being that it

rends…Through mediation, the real order is subordinated to the search for lost intimacy" (*TR*, 83-4).[20] This mediation or the redemption of décréation is impossible without a kind of mystical violence. John of the Cross argues for something similar. '"Through emptiness and darkness and detachment from all things,' the soul must pursue its desire in 'obscurity and annihilation of all outward and inward things, to build on that which it neither sees nor feels, to journey by denial of ourselves and of all things"' (qtd. in Wolosky, 13) In Weil, redemption is the grace that offers the end to the 'needy'-ness through a final unification with the self-abandoning Creator. But *need* is precisely *movement*, a reaching out or beyond. The messianic redemption of décréation occurs at the moment when the needy can finally empty themselves of all need. It is a will to relinquish all will. The writing of Molloy and Moran is a reaching out for silence, a need to no longer need. "Never to ask for anything, this is Beckett's foremost demand" (Badiou, *On Beckett*, 76). Or as Malone will later explain: "Les yeaux usés d'offenses s'attardent vils sur tout ce qu'ils ont si longuement prié, dans la dernière, la vrai prière enfin, celle qui ne sollicite rien. Et c'est alors qu'un petit air d'exaucement ranime les voeux morts et qu'un murmure naît dans l'univers muet, vous reprochant affectueusement de vous être désespéré trop tard" (*Malone meurt*, 195).

The 'man' of whom Bataille speaks is a stranger to himself because he has made himself a stranger to the void, a stranger to his own kenotic origin and the intimacy of such an existence. "Man is the being that has lost, and even rejected, that which he obscurely is, a vague intimacy" (Bataille, *TR*, 56). In the context of Beckett and Weil, we may understand by 'vague intimacy' a conscious awareness, opaque though it may be, of

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[20] And again: "The one who undergoes the violence of evil can also be called the mediator, but this is insofar as he renounces himself." (*TR*, 83)

some natural consciousness informing our own, tweaking at its subterranean muscles. "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is not an object of recognition but of a fundamental encounter" (Deleuze, *D & R*, 176). This is expressed best by Youdi and his messenger, Gaber,[21] forces which collect the report of Molloy's quest for this intimacy, and impel Moran to begin his through a search for Molloy.

> Of course what it has lost is not outside it; consciousness turns away from the obscure intimacy of consciousness itself. Religion, whose essence is the search for lost intimacy, comes down to the effort of clear consciousness which wants to be a complete self-consciousness: but this effort is futile, since consciousness of intimacy is possible only at a level where consciousness is no longer an operation whose outcome implies duration. (Bataille, *TR*, 57)

A religious self-consciousness is counterproductive to the search for such lost intimacy because it is essentially anti-kenotic. It fights for supremacy against the latent intensity that gnaws at the ego, demanding its relinquishment. The will to power is the manifest will to remain secure in one's subjectivity, protected against that ever-present latent will which seeks to dissolve the individual into its surroundings. The religious self-consciousness does not understand itself as infinitely removed from God, but as something closely bound to it. Therefore, it does not see the need for its release, but views itself as the sacred gift from a katophatic god. Consequently, the self comes to possess a kind of false sacred power, seeking not to open itself, but to close itself off from evil and the movement of décréation. This is the dualistic nature of consciousness in *Molloy*, a dualism that cannot be peacefully reconciled, for the dominant force (Bataille's empire, perhaps) "designates the movement of free and internally wrenching violence

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[21] It has been noted by numerous commentators that Youdi and Gaber are puns on Yahweh (or Yogi) and Gabriel, playfully hinting at the theological implications of *Molloy*. While I fully support such a reading, I would add that there is also a far more literal interpretation to be considered as well. In a very real sense, this *is* Yahweh and Gabriel. Without a heaven in which to dwell, there is no other Yahweh and Gabriel but an unseen boss and a simple messenger. The importance here is not that Beckett plays with language so as to make a pun of God and his archangel; rather, in Beckett's kenotic world, God can only ever be little more than a pun, that is, the pun contains the only form of existence a Yahweh can hope to have.

that animates the whole, dissolves into tears, into ecstasy and into bursts of laughter, and reveals the impossible in laughter, ecstasy, or tears" (Bataille, *TR*, 110-11). The self either submits to this 'free and internally wrenching violence' - the violence that uncovers laughter and tears as ecstatic mechanisms of transcendence (their *impossibility* for the self-centred consciousness is precisely this ecstatic potential) – or it operates as "an enclosing vessel within the stream of phenomena"[22] (Connor, 46). Weil would argue that as an enclosing vessel, the self becomes an *ersatz* of divine power. This is the most dangerous form of *ersatz*, because the consciousness most conducive to decreative transcendence is one that realizes that the only true power it possesses is its weakness, specifically, its ability to divest from its rootedness in anything but the void. Consciousness, must uproot itself from its localization in any closed subjectivity. It must be destroyed, violently if necessary, and emptied of all its individualized trappings.

By religious consciousness I do not mean a Christian or any specifically denominational one. As Franke Kermode has delightfully mused, the Christian symbols employed by Beckett are "cheques that will bounce" (Kermode, 115). The religious self-consciousness seeks an amalgamation of similar consciousnesses for its protection against the void that lurks beyond society's ramparts. Bataille's notion of empire is similar to Weil's *gros animal*. The empire can be understood as an earthly *ersatz* that not only represents the divine power on earth, but must necessarily replace and thus, supersede it in the absence of the divine. The empire can "never allow another empire to exist at its frontier as an equal. Every presence around it is ordered relative to in a project of conquest" (Bataille, *TR*, 66). Badiou (for whom the ideal subject is "not a 'warrior (guerrier) under the battlements of the State, but a patent observer (guetter) of the void"

[22] Connor is paraphrasing Beckett's own words here from his famous essay on Proust.

(qtd. in Gibson, 90) might refer to this as the State, a social body that "masks or represses or holds at bay the instability of Being" (Gibson, 20). The *gros animal* establishes itself as the binary opposite of the void, but the void is that which cannot be reduced to any binary position. It must be held at bay because 'the instability of Being' poses a grave threat to the self containment of the religious consciousness. Wolosky makes good use of a key passage from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* to explain such a threat:

> the effort to know and see ourselves as a 'self-existing unity is by no means possible, for as soon as we turn into ourselves to make the attempt, and seek for once to know ourselves fully by means of introspective reflection, we are lost in a bottomless void…And whereas we desire to comprehend ourselves, we find, with a shudder, nothing but a vanished spectre.' (88)

But the *gros animal* paradoxically prohibits a 'complete self-consciousness' because its law - stemming not from the latent force within, but a political mob of self-consciousnesses – necessarily comes to the individual from outside. Subsequently, what the law of the empire accomplishes is a transference of the kind of self-immolating violence necessary for décréation towards the outside, to external individuals and forces within the empire, usurping the salvific purpose of suffering. As Weil explains, "rien n'est pire que l'extrême malheur qui du dehors détruit le je, puisque dès lors on ne peut luse le détruire le je, puisque dès lors on ne peut plus détruire soi-même. Qu'arrive-t-il à ceux dont le malheur a détruit du dehors le je? On ne peut se représenter pour eux que l'anéantissement à la manière de la conception athée ou materialiste" (*PG*, 29). In turning the need to destroy the self outwards, the individual is kept safe from the clutches of transcendence. It is fear that produces such outwardly-directed violence, and fear always manifests itself in the mechanisms of the state. We fear internal violence because "[w]hat is death for the carnal part of the soul is to see God face to face. That is why we fly from

the inner void, because God might steal into it...We know that we cannot see him face to face without dying, and we do not want to die" (Weil qtd. in Nava, 45). Transference, not transcendence. "The empire, being the universal thing (whose universality reveals the void), insofar as its essence is a diversion of violence to the outside, necessarily develops the law that ensures the stability of the order of things. In fact, law gives the attacks against it the sanction of an external violence" (Bataille, *TR*, 67).[23]

In Molloy, the empire appears as a kind of Kafkan officialdom, a world from which his existential transience has made him an outcast or shadowy pariah. "La conscience est abusée par le social" (Weil, *PG*, 184) and thus prevented from any form of emancipation, as the potential for the reparation of metaxic links becomes something the empire cannot allow if it is to survive.[24] Molloy even remarks on civic architecture as though it were merely a manifestation of kataphatic diversion. "[L]es voies d'accès, et bien entendu de sortie, de cette ville sont étroites et obscurcies par d'immenses voûtes, sans exception" (27). In seeking escape, one struggles against (as Critchley articulates, speaking of Blanchot) "an *evasion* of the *essential* night, which is the experience of being riveted to existence without exit" (40).

One might envision an alternate story where Moran is a hunter of mystics, of those who abandon the self for the womb of nothingness and refuse to abandon the search for transcendence in a godless world. Moran acts as bounty hunter of the soul for a society that does not allow any decreative escape. But Moran is *too* good a hunter, for he

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[23] The law can be seen as an external paternal one which seeks to replace the internal maternal one which Molloy attempts to follow on his decreative path. As Angela Moorjani explains, "the external obstacles to his mother-quest are the various father personifications of the law" (102).

[24] I am referring to a Beckettian empire which, obviously does not bear all the traits of Bataille's; otherwise, a discussion of sacrifice or festival might be of some use here.

gets too close to Molloy and starts falling into this same decreative vacuum that would see the two individuals meet only through metamorphosing into the same being.

> Tantôt, prisonnier, il se précipitait vers je ne sais quelles étroites limites, et tantôt, poursuivi, il se réfugiait vers le centre. Il haletait. Il n'avait qu'à surgir en moi pour que je m'emplisse de halètements. Même en rase campagne il avait l'air de se frayer un chemin. Il chargeait plus qu'il ne marchait. Cependant il n'avançait que très lentement. Il se balançait, à droite et à gauche, à la manière d'un ours. Il roulait la tête en proférant des mots inintelligibles. Il était massif et épais, difforme même. Et, sans être noir, de couleur sombre. Il était toujours en chemin. Je ne l'avais jamais vu se reposer. Parfois il s'arrêtait et jetait autour de lui des regards furieux. C'est ainsi qu'il me visitait, à des intervalles très espacés. Je n'étais plus alors que fracas, lourdeur, colère, étouffement, effort incessant, forcené et vain. Tout le contraire de moi, quoi. Cela me changeait. Je le voyais disparaître... presque à regret. Quant à savoir où il voulait en venir, je n'en avais pas la moindre idée. (*Molloy*, 175)

For Weil, a religious self-consciousness still serves a purpose, for "[i]l a été donné à l'homme une divinité imaginaire pour qu'il puisse s'en dépouiller comme le Christ de sa divinité réelle" (*PG*, 37). Beckett never ceases to call into question the feasibility of such a saintly project. There are no Simone Weils in a Beckettian world. Décréation takes on a different form here, and, ultimately, produces a different end. Most critics argue that "there is *only* the approach, because the voice cannot grant itself the possibility of its own disappearance into the void – death is impossible" (Critchley, 176). Critchley's reading of Beckett is compelling, but there is an oversimplification to uniting death and the void so seamlessly. Succumbing to death and disappearing into the void are two vastly different things in Beckett. Death appears as an impossibility, for throughout the Trilogy, there is no end to a dying speech. As Deleuze remarks, "[p]erhaps writing has a relation to silence altogether more threatening than that which it is supposed to entertain with death" (*D & R*, xx). The voice cannot finally reach its desired silence, even as it moves from Moran's heavy writing desk to the Unnamable's glass jar. But even without the possibility of death, the void is still oppressively immanent. Death would represent the

victory of the self as a bulwark against the void. Death represents the failure to decreate, the failure to become. The void is the enemy of such a death by refusing death's finality. The void is responsible for the transformation of the 'I' and its ability to infiltrate the porous bulwarks of other 'I's. "[I]f the 'I' is in some way invalidated as source of enunciation, it does not recede here before some sort of impersonal or neutral 'he' or 'it,' but rather before what can only be *another* 'I,' an impossible, supplemental 'I'" (Katz, 77). Molloy's decreative 'approach' is not a death, but an opening to "l'inébranlable confusion des choses éternelles" (58). A *total* disappearance into the void would constitute a definitive statement on the part of Beckett as to the possible success of décréation, but this does not mean that Molloy does not confront the void, or even, that Molloy's decreative existence is not a continuous confrontation with the void. Indeed, Beckettian décréation requires a new understanding of death, if not a new kind of death altogether. As Malone explains, several 'I's removed from Molloy, "à la veille de ne plus être j'arrive à être un autre. Ce qui ne manque pas de sel" (35). Beckett approaches death somewhat similar to the manner in which Critchley writes of Kafka. "Kafka's heroes inhabit a space – *Une espace littéraire* – where death is not possible…One thinks here of…Gregor Samsa, who does not die, but who is reborn as a giant insect;…[of] the spectral figure of Odradek [who] is unable to die…Kafka's characters inhabit what Blanchot calls *'(le) temps indéfini du mourir*'" (67). Death is a chronotopic space in which Beckett's characters are forced to live, and from which they are forbidden release.

Beckett's treatment of death as a space of the living, his rupture of the manifest/latent binary, and his play with prosopopeia creates a continuous friction within his unique ontology. Words and images are substantiated at the very same instance that

they are negated. "Alors je rentrai dans la maison, et j'écrivis, Il est minuit. La pluie fouette les vitres. Il n'était pas minuit. Il ne pleuvait pas" (*Molloy*, 272). Within every essence is a latent rupture which allows itself to be undone. It is a constant decreative state of being where the dying process is a simultaneous state of living and death, an ontological tug of war between negation and affirmation. In a sense, Molloy's dying is merely a misinterpretation of the simultaneous concatenation of life and death within the flux of Beckett's void. "Ma vie, ma vie, tantôt j'en parle comme d'une chose finie, tantôt comme d'une plaisanterie qui dure encore, et j'ai tort, car elle est finie et elle dure à la fois, mais par quell temps du verbe exprimer cela?" (*Molloy*, 53)

iii.

Does the infinite space we dissolve into, taste of us then?
Rainer Maria Rilke, "Second Elegy"

Death, the Infinite, Being, God, the Void – none of these can gain presence in the novelistic or experiential world without first emerging through the finite or the phenomenological. They emerge as the latent force behind natural phenomena – not as purely mystical experiences themselves. "Instead of rejecting the infinite, the infinite will have to emerge from within the finite" (Deleuze qtd. in Hughes, 195).[25] As such, the self must cease to endure its particular duration and succumb to this new death that we have been outlining, a death which is not a consequence of finitude, but an emancipation from it. As Henry Miller remarks in his study of Rimbaud, "I realized that I was free, that the death I had gone through had liberated me" (3).

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[25] As a philosopher of immanence, much of Deleuze might seem initially opposed to the transcendentalism of Weil, but through an examination of a new kind of metaxu, we might uncover (at least in literature) a transcendentalism whose metaphysics does not exist in a bracketing off from physical immanence.

"Following Nietzsche we discover, as more profound than time and eternity, the untimely…that is to say, 'acting counter to time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come'" (Deleuze, *D & R*, xix). An examination of the untimely is to investigate the lost epiphanic perception of the world, "a coherence which is no longer our own, that of mankind…[but, rather,] that of God or the world" (Deleuze, *D & R*, xix). It is apocalyptic time, time which is continually an eventful renewal - the metaphysical attack on the empirical world which allows for an understanding of the world of *becoming* as a world of *being* in which the boundary and ontological centre is constantly displaced. Metemontogeny is its displacement. In Beckett, this metemontogeny occurs with the swiftness of the winds of outer-space, an incredible speed which can only be perceived as a complete absence of movement. In contrast to the speed of such a chaos, the visible movement of earthly bodies is visible only as the breakneck speed of somnambulism, the peripatetic limping of the atrophic. Richard Coe seems to fall for this trick.

> A 'total freedom' made to correspond with the Self is only possible in a world (literally) 'without end,' *ie*., without time. But time is inseparable from movement - therefore this freedom is only conceivable in a world without movement either - a world of motionless *waiting*…hence the intolerable difficulty that Beckett's people seem to have in going anywhere. (61)[26]

It is not that nothing *can* move, for there is an incessant wandering, or at least a stillness which hovers on the brink of movement; it is only that there is nowhere to go. Molloy and Moran share the same feeble bicycle journey (doubling as a perverse Christly passion on wheels) but the bicycle comes to represent pure aimless travel, a faster way of

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[26] Coe has also suggested that the manner in which Beckett uses time negates any reading which might incorporate concepts such as 'hope' and 'despair' into his fiction. "To begin with, the concept of 'despair' implies the existence of a related concept 'hope,' and 'hope' implies a certain predictable continuity of time - which continuity Beckett would seriously question" (1). This is an interesting argument, but of course, the characters within *Molloy* who feel such despair and hope do not have such an objective understanding of the continuity of time. For them, the particular temporality of the void, in all its 'noir-gris,' is not so black and white a matter.

getting nowhere. At its most still, there is always an anxious absence of movement, a paralytic calm, rather than a firmness of place. This stillness situates being at the moment immediately after or before a movement, not a depravation of movement altogether.

> Wandering must be detached, little by little, from all apparent sense, but since it is a matter of presenting the essence of movement – the movement *in* movement – Beckett's advance will bring with it the destruction of all means, outside supports, and perceptible surfaces of mobility. The 'character' (Molloy, Moran) will mislay his bicycle, injure himself, no longer know where he is, and even lose a good part of his body…In this dispossession, the 'character' reaches a pure moment in which movement becomes externally indiscernible from immobility…[M]ovement and language ultimately infect both being and immobility, so that the point of immobility is constantly deferred. (Badiou, *On Beckett*, 45)

Steven Conner explains Molloy's particular experience of time as "massive, featureless and slow-moving" (Connor, 51). But given that Molloy is more in tune to the flux of time and phenomena, he comes close to reaching that point where, in Beckett's own words, "maximum speed [appears as] a state of rest" (Beckett, *Disjecta,* 21). Feeble as Molloy's mind is, he seems to be aware of this particular duality. When commenting on the affections of Lousse, he states: "Tout ce qu'elle demandait, c'était de me sentir chez elle, avec elle, et de pouvoir contempler de temps en temps ce corps extraordinaire, dans ces stations et dans ses allées et venues" (71). The obsessively habitual Moran, however, attempts to kill time by stopping it through incessant measurement. He "solidifies and spatializes time, making it part of the visible world rather than a formless process, and his addiction to routine is an example of a self desperately sandbagging itself with materiality in order to forestall the recognition of its emptiness" (Connor, 51).

Through such a project, Moran also attempts to stop movement altogether. "Moi si je me mettais dans la crâne de me présenter ponctuellement au lieu du supplice, la dysenterie sanguinolente ne m'en empêcherait pas, j'avancerais à quatre pattes en chiant tripes et

boyaux et en entonnant des malédictions" (258). His sense of duration is one in which he imagines a final rest to the ceaseless flux of becoming.

> Etre vraiment enfin dans l'impossibilité de bouger, ça doit être quelque chose! J'ai l'esprit qui fond quand j'y pense. Et avec ça une aphasie complète! Et peut-être une surdité totale! Et qui sait une paralysie de la rétine! Et très probablement la perte de la mémoire! Et juste assez de cerveau resté intact pour pouvoir jubiler! Et pour craindre la mort comme une renaissance. (217)

In Weilean terms, this would mark the final moment of décréation. For Beckett, this marks the semblance of stillness within the eye of metemontogenic movement, the moment of self-emptying through which metemontogeny would be possible.

The violence of eternity is counter to the duration measured by Moran. Duration is a process of measuring in a world devoid of divine intimacy, an intimacy which, being absent, demands the compensatory operation of measurement for those unable to decreate. Time is merely "the theatre of attachment. Beckett's is not a deconstruction of the values associated with old times and the passing of time; it is effective recognition that in reality there is nothing to deconstruct in this picture, because there was nothing there in the first place" (Davies, 121). Beckettian time offers a mode of being whose permanent state is an impermanence, a being which is, perhaps not a Buddhistic nothingness, but a becoming, or, more accurately, a becoming which is a mode of being whose final resting state is complete uninhibited mobility. Where infinity has often set itself up as the end of becoming, this proves to be a superfluous infinity if there is to be no end to becoming, that is, if becoming is to be its own infinitude. "[A]ctual infinity is founded on the void. In a sense, it is even another name for the void." (Gibson, 46) And in Beckett, this void does not reside opposed to being on one end of an arbitrary binary structure, but is inseparable from being. The synthesis of being and the void is what gives being its necessary becoming-ness. Indeed, *synthesis* is perhaps a crude word to use, for

as we have seen, kenosis establishes earthly being and the void as indistinct identities. "[B]eing, far from letting itself be thought in a dialectical opposition to non-being, stands towards it in a relation of unclear equivalence. This is the point where, as Malone says…'Nothing is more real than nothing'" (Badiou, *On Beckett*, 51).

In linking infinitude with the becoming of being - even if this becoming is a kind of crumbling or, as Cioran suggests, "the slow process of...autodestruction" (*The New Gods*, 12) - Beckett also deconstructs the singularity/multiplicity binary. The Beckettian landscape, as Gibson suggests, "is produced by a lack of unity, irreconcilable difference, the irreversible dissolution of one into the multiple, the appearance of the principle of infinity within finitude. There is no limit or end point to this process" (39). However, insofar as kenosis establishes the world as removed from God, it is infinitely multiple *and* unified in its transcendental abandonment; these are simply two ways of saying the same thing. Since negative theology removes all the anthropomorphic qualities associated with the divine, the *one* and the *many* must also be removed. Thus, analogically speaking, the one and the multiple are not oppositions to one another, but oppositions to the not-one and the not-multiple (the Zero) from which their numerical identities stem. They are both mythological perspectives of being in the absence of non-Being, or non-being in the absence of Being. This multiplicity is a kind of pantheistic monotheism, a multiplicity built upon the absence of a Zero, and so sprung (in multiplicitous unity) from the same void that determines such absence. It is the metaxic structure, that null-space germinating at the centre of each thing, which provides the kind of ontological ungrounding wherein a rootedness to a theory of unity or multiplicity is undone. To be zero or nothing is to be a transparent screen for God rather than an obstacle standing in defiant resistance to him.

Weil believes, and Vetö elucidates this point nicely in correspondence with her mathematics, that zero is humanity's maximum value, our dissolution situated as the highest objective. As creatures of original sin,[27] humans are negative creatures, minus 10s or negative integers who seek to climb to that most perfect height of zero.

Reading Beckett through a Weilean framework, the eternal return is an existence condemned to becoming, an eternal transcendence where there is no final resting place into which one transcends but the space of transcendence itself. "Existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness" (Nietzsche, 35). This void-propelled becoming is the operation through which subjects dissolve into one another, forbidden the stagnancy that would come from a stable consciousness. If we are to appropriate a Deleuzean train of thought, the void can be understood as the singular latent or transcendental entity within the multiplicity of manifest subjects.

> We are right to speak of repetition when we find ourselves confronted by identical elements with exactly the same concept. However, we must distinguish between these discrete elements, these repeated objects, and a secret subject, the real subject of repetition, which repeats itself through them. Repetition must be understood in the pronominal, we must find the Self of repetition, the singularity within that which repeats. (*D & R*, 26)

"Des qu'il y a deux choses à peu près pareilles je m'y perds (*Molloy*, 242). Moran becomes lost because this disorients a selfhood that micro-managed itself based on a law that sought to oppose the void. Moreover, Moran utters such an admission as he literally becomes lost, not merely in the woods, but ontologically, that is, as he becomes that thing which begins to collapse into his other. Were the textual flow of *Ulysses* possible in

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[27] A sin that is not in Adam's choosing knowledge, but in his choosing anything, in his claiming an 'I' or a will for himself that possesses the ability to choose. The only choice a will can make that is not a sin, is in renouncing it and returning to God. Free will is little more than the freedom to return the gift.

Molloy, we would have a novel wherein the two halves did not exist at such a disjunction with one another. Molloy's narrative cannot successfully bleed into that of Moran,[28] for although they are separated by a thin fold, the elements which repeat in that of Moran's narrative appear strangely alien. Connor suggests that the "moments of *déja vu* that we encounter in Moran's narrative…are both originals *and* repetitions" but his argument is based on the belief that Moran precedes Molloy chronologically, a transposition from the novelistic order (56).

"The form of repetition in the eternal return is the brutal form of the immediate, that of the universal and the singular reunited, which dethrones every general law, dissolves the mediations and annihilates the particulars subjected to the law…[T]here is a within-the-law and a beyond-the-law united in the eternal return" (Deleuze, *D & R*, 8). We might equate metemontogeny with Deleuze's repetition, the spiritual repeater that masks and disguises itself by appearing as object, yet which still appears as "spiritual, even in nature and in the earth…[where it] carries the secret of our deaths and our lives, of our enchainments and our liberations, the demonic and the divine" (*D & R*, 27). Beckett's playing with time is an excess of eternal return, however; repetitions possess differences both subtle and conspicuous. Deleuze's 'imperceptible diffference' is no longer the rule. Difference becomes perceptible to bring one into explicit contact with its non-linearity. The moment is not simply a return for one particular entity, but of an incalculable multiplicity - some perceptible, some imperceptible – all converging in the same moment. Time is fraught with an alchemical nature, repetition mixing with repetition, all mixing with difference; it propels time forward, backward, inward and out

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[28] Using metaphors of mastication, Charlotte Renner suggests that Molloy 'devours' Moran and Hill claims that "Beckett cannibalises his own text" (69).

(at times with simultaneous counter-thrust to offer the perception of immobility) in a rupture of self-figuration – a continuous flux where each moment contains traces of both past and future (if such temporalities can still be said to exist). Time being fluidly kairological rather than linear, the past exudes an equal presence in every temporal moment. "Je parle au présent, il est facile de parler au present, quand il s'agit du passé. C'est le présent mythologie..." (Beckett, *Molloy*, 37)

Sarah Gendron's reading of Deleuze argues for a spiral as the image of Deleuzean temporality. The spiral is a symbol for repetition with difference and symbolizes "cyclical growth, flow, movement and deviation" (13). Weil's image of décréation is also a circular progression, for it imitates the circular movement of the Trinitarian God whose subject and object is himself. (*Intuitions Pré-chétiennes*, 27) "Nouvelle naissance. Au lieu que la semence serve à engendrer un autre être, elle sert à engendrer une seconde fois le même être. Retour sur soi, circuit bouclé, cercle (Weil, *CS*, 154). But Beckett's is a spiral whose path is untraceable, and each circling trail crosses, converges, and rubs up against others with violent friction, splitting and rupturing into new and unforeseen directions as the spiral gives way to an intricately knotted rhizome, or the purgatorial spiral of *L'Innomable*. It is this purgatorial rhizome that marks the true shape of eternal return and Beckettian temporality. Deleuze refers to the void as "the undifferentiated abyss, the black nothingness, the indeterminate animal in which everything is dissolved," (*D & R*, 36), but Beckett's void has more in common with Deleuze's vegetal organism. One might regard the event of metaxu as the moment of breaking or 'overspilling' in any rhizomatic transcendentalism. Rhizomatic transcendentalism undercuts the binary of higher/lower of a simplified kenosis and establishes metaxic bridges as openings or

fissures which cut and creep up to produce conduits into which other intensities, other forms of being, might assert themselves. The metaxic passage "connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states… [It] is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple… It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overspills" (D&G, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21). Weil's decreative process is explicitly vegetal.

> Il faut détruire cette partie intermédiaire, trouble de l'âme[29]... pour laisser la partie végétative directement exposée au souffle igné qui vient d'au-dessus des cieux. Se dépouiller de tout ce qui est au-dessus de la vie végétative. Mettre la vie végétative à nu et la tourner violemment vers la lumière céleste. Détruire dans l'âme tout ce qui n'est pas collé à la matière. Exposer nue à la lumière céleste la partie de l'âme qui est presque de la matière inerte. La perfection qui nous est proposée, c'est l'union directe de l'esprit divin avec de la matière inerte. De la matière inerte qu'on regarde comme pensante est une image parfaite de la perfection. (*CS*, 260)

Weil's vegetative energy, as Vetö rightly explains, "is used with a view to an end other than the preservation of life" (58). In Beckett and Joyce, writing after the death of God – a death, Weil would argue, which has always been the necessary condition of our being – a rhizomatic vegetal state occurs, a continuous rhizomism that is, like Weil's, counter to a certain preservation of life. It is life, surely, but not in any preserved state, and not with any final fiery closure (except, perhaps, a Heraclitian one). For to be vegetal is to be transcendent already, to exist as an organic perpetuation of transcendentalism – a rhizomatic growth that is both continuation and ending, a transcending by way of rupture, dissolution, and emptying.

Badiou envisions the event of Beckett as a "supplement to immobile being" (*On Beckett*, 5), but perhaps it is this continuous process of *événement* and the fissures

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[29] She speaks of the ego here.

through which the void pours to enact the events that makes being appear so immobile. Movement occurs and being thrusts itself forward, prostrate on its hungry belly, but the event, the appearance of the void through the cracks in being's scorched surface, creates a Zenoan void through which all locomotion must occur. Cohen's "there is a crack in everything/that's how the light gets in" ("The Anthem") is replaced with a void that bleeds its way into all things, an epiphanous void that manifests itself through disorder, infinite multiplicity, dissolution, and silence. Cohen's famous phrase may be a more hopeful rewriting of *Molloy's* "Autant de tarauds dans le fût des secrets" (192). The epiphany of the void, the event of metaxu, is, to thieve a term from Badiou, "a breach of being" (*On Beckett*, 18). We might say, however, that being is that which is meant to be breached. Being is that which breaches itself in the refusal to remain fixed, manifesting itself in flux; being qua being is a constant movement into itself.

iv.

> J'écoute et m'entends dicter un monde figé en perte d'équilibre, sous un jour faible et calme sans plus, suffisant pour y voir, vous comprenez, et figé lui aussi. Et j'entends murmurer que tout fléchit et ploie, comme sous des faix, mais ici il n'y a pas de faix, et le sol aussi, peu propre à porter, et le jour aussi, vers une fin qui ne semble devoir jamais être… Et j'écouterais encore souffle lointain, depuis longtemps tu et que j'entends enfin, que j'apprendrais d'autres choses encore, à ce sujet... Mais c'est un son qui n'est pas comme les autres, qu'on écoute, lorsqu'on le veut bien, et que souvent on peut faire taire, en s'éloignant ou en se bouchant les oreilles, mais c'est un son qui se met à vous bruire dans la tête, on ne sait comment, ni pourquoi.
>
> Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

Implicit within Molloy's décréation is an intense state of listening. There seems to be both a kind of gray silence and a black silence that Beckett expresses; the gray is akin to that silence that surrounds oneself, the nothingness that one hears when listening attentively. "Je m'abandonnai assez longuement aux beautés de l'endroit, je regardai longuement les arbres, les champs, le ciel, les oiseaux, et j'écoutai attentivement les

bruits qui m'arrivaient de près loin. Un instant je crus percevoir le silence dont il a déjà été question, je crois" (*Molloy*, 225). The black silence, the complete silence, is the silence obtained when the boundary between the listening self and the mute world collapses, when the self is lost in the silence of décréation.

> Et cette nuit-là il n'était pas une question de lune, ni d'autre lumière, mais ce fut une nuit découte... [E]t d'autre chose encore qui n'est pas clair, nétant ni l'air ni ce qu'il meut. C'est peut-être le bruit lointain toujours le même que fait la terre et que les autres bruits cachent, amis pas pour longtemps. Car ils ne rendent pas compte de ce bruit qu'on entend lorsqu'on écoute vraiment, quand tout semble se taire. Et il y avait un autre bruit, celui de ma vie que faisait sienne ce jardin chevauchant la terre des abîmes et des déserts. Oui, il m'arrivait d'oublier d'être. Alors je n'étais plus cette boîte fermée à laquelle je devais de m'être si bien conservé, mais une cloison s'abattait et je me remplissais de racines et de tiges bien sages par example, de tuteurs depuis longtemps morts et que bientôt on brûlerait, du campos de la nuit et de l'attente du soleil, et puis du grincement de la planète qui avait bon dos, car elle roulait vers l'hiver... (*Molloy*, 72-3)

This unchanging noise made by the earth is a kind of earthly silence whose weight is cacophonous, and its vigilant listener is emptied as it descends through the metaphysical croon beneath, merging with the garden. In the moment of Molloy's emptiness, he speaks of a metaxic-like wall that gives way as his being opens into a porous essence, a rhizomatic creature which grows roots and stems with metemontological purpose. But Molloy's is not a kataphatic metemontogeny, but one of apophasis. As his being decreates to become a vessel for the divine, it is the void that creeps in. He becomes not a positive substance in this, the winter of kairological time, but "le calme précaire, la fonte des neiges" (73). The rhizomatic roots which he develops spread not in an earthly soil, but in an exilic one, in the absence of a place. "Prendre le sentiment d'être chez soi dans l'exil. Etre enraciné dans l'absence de lieu…S'exiler de toute patrie terreste" (Weil, *PG*, 45). Whenever someone is rooted in any distinct place, one "souille le silence du ciel et de la terre par [sa] respiration et le battement de [son] coeur" (Weil, *PG*, 89).

The phenomenological world is a matrix of metaxology, a comprehensive system devised to assist in the décréation of humanity. We are to become things, things in the sense that the ego which makes us human is divested for the sake of becoming an empty vessel. "Ramener le silence, c'est le rôle des objets" (*Molloy*, 17). All objects are metaxic in the sense that there is no ego to stop the piercing of the void; they are silence, while the un-decreated subject is a dissonance within the void that must be wiped away, layer by discordant layer. Real existence operates within the "Beethoven pause" (Beckett, *More Pricks Than Kicks*, 38) of the Void's music - "la longue sonate des cadavres" (*Molloy*, 46) – and Beckett is Mallarmé's musicien de silence. One might call this 'sound of silence' of which Beckett writes the lament of nature, a lament, Benjamin tells us, that is "the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language. It contains scarcely more than the sensuous breath; and even where there is only a rustling of plants, there is always a lament" (*OLS*, 73). The natural lament which manifests itself as the 'rustling of plants' occurs elsewhere in Beckett:

> ESTRAGON. – Toutes les voix mortes.
> VLADIMIR. – Ca fait un bruit d'ailes.
> ESTRAGON. – De feuilles.
> VLADIMIR. – De sable.
> ESTRAGON. – De feuilles.
> *En attendant Godot*, 105

If Kafka's Odradek were mystic philosopher or existential poet, his tiny rasp might sound uncannily similar to the self-abasement of Weil and Molloy. Instead, his voice, emitting from a lungless chest, sounds "like the rustling of fallen leaves" (Kafka, 184). Along with the void's Odradek-like whisper, we know from Benjamin that "Odradek is the form which things assume in oblivion. They are distorted" ("Franz Kafka, 133). Molloy's knife-rest, the mysterious object composed of two silver crosses

bound together, even bears enigmatic similarity to Odradek's shape. We might call these kinds of figures *odradeks*, forms whose shape and function remain a perpetual mystery. Subjectivity itself in *Molloy* begins to crumble into this unidentifiable *odradek* form. "Cet étrange instrument…je n'arrivais pas à comprendre à quoi il pouvait bien server ni meme à ébaucher une hypothèse à ce sujet." (96)

The narratives of Molloy and Moran repeat many of the same objects: bicycles, hats, useless crutches, reports, gongs, and so forth. One gets the impression of a huge tornado sweeping a desolate landscape where the paraphernalia caught in its vortex reappears with every turn - repetition with violent difference. But the paraphernalia that follow these characters through their transitions puts a unique strain on any criticism, for they are at once solid proof of the metamorphosis of these characters, but they also obediently orbit an ineffable self, or non-identity, if we are to understand identity as something stable. Only in the fiction of Beckett could an object orbit an ineffable and transitory subject. They act like flotsam and jetsam carried along in the tide of becoming. At other times, they seem to metamorphose into other entities. During his period of Molloy-like decay, for example, Moran will ceaselessly alternate his filthy shirt like Molloy's sucking stones. "J'avais quatre façons de metre ma chemis. Devant devant à l'endroit, devant devant à l'envers, devant derrière à l'endrot, devant derrière à l'envers. Et le cinquième jour je recommençais" (264).

Through repetition, Beckett uses these objects as signposts of transformation. We are not merely dealing with objects that leap from character to character, but objects whose presence trumpet, for example, the metemontogenic surfacing of Molloy within the figure of Moran. Paradoxically, objects such as Molloy's sucking stones offer him the

illusion of existential anchorage amidst such (de)evolution and flux. As such, they contain a certain sacred power. Harold Bloom, employing a Gnostic interpretation, suggests that after a "*kenosis* of the ego…the sucking-stones afford us all the communion we could hope to sustain" (9). Sarah Gendron postulates that the "anxiety of the narrative 'I' when faced with a progressive dispossession of the self manifests itself in the narrator's obsession with his objects" (124-5). This obsession manifests in ritualization, as the sucking-stones and Moran's shirt become the ego's retaliation or backlash against its own dissolution, re-rooting the consciousness in the materiality of the physical. Molloy becomes a kind of Cartesian centaur - straddling consciousness and corps(e), void and matter, grave and garden – who is sure of nothing more than men and objects, the two entities into which his being comes into friction. "Il y a les homes et les choses, ne me parlez pas des animaux. Ni de Dieu" (225).[30]

Beckett's crumbling flux is the result of a kenotic world where everything is oriented towards the void, "tirais vers ce faux profond, aux fausses allures de gravité et de paix" (*Molloy*, 29). It is a resignation that is at the same time a groping becoming. Beckett "discerns the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities, and activates it to their explosion" (Beckett, *Disjecta*, 82). Molloy's décréation makes him confrontationally intimate with such a process. "Oui, même à cette époque, où tout s'estompait déjà, ondes et particules, la condition de l'objet était d'être sans nom, et inversement" (45-6). This flux is strikingly different from that of Joyce. While the flux of *Ulysses* is a kind of giddy transference of being, an ecstatic inability for matter to contain the transcendental force beneath it, Beckett's is a fading or dissolving of things into one

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[30] Nevertheless, one wonders if comfort or loneliness is the only reason for which Molloy might be a substitute for Lousse's dog. Perhaps there is some kind of metemontogenic passage that occurs through the fatal collision of man and beast, especially when the dog becomes a dead *thing*.

other. "[Q]uelle fin à ces solitudes où le vraie clarté ne fut jamais, ni l'aplomb, ni la simple assis, mais toujours ces chose penchées glissant dans un éboulement sans fin, sous un ciel sans mémoire de matin ni espoir de soir" (*Molloy*, 59). It is the perfect juxtapositional irony of Beckett to have his characters engage in transcendental quests when they have difficulty simply remaining upright, but then, their enfeebled bodies are symptomatic consequences of such decreative pursuits. Perhaps, amidst an oppressive apophatic loneliness, there is some solace in opening oneself up to the void, the truest exile being that of isolated selfhood. The indistinguishability of objects and being is not a simple metaxology, but a way of effacing the self and the selfhood that defines itself in opposition to those around them. As Critchley articulates, "…things – the sea, the night, words and language itself – regard us, where the Subject dissolves into its objects, becoming 'the radiant passivity of mineral substances, the lucidity of the depths of torpor'"[31] (Critchley, 58).

Molloy (and Moran in his wake) is the transcendental outcast, and if we cannot completely pity such a destitute[32] creature, it is because Beckett reveals the essence of all kenotic existence to be a casting-out.[33]

> [C]ela m'arrive et cela m'arrivera encore d'oublier qui je suis et d'évoluer devant moi à la manière d'un étranger. C'est alors que je vois le ciel différent de ce qu'il est et que la terre aussi revêt de fausses couleurs. Cela a l'air d'un repos, mais il n'en est rien, je glisse content dans la lumière des autres, celle qui jadis devait être la mienne, je ne dis pas le contraire, puis c'est l'angoisse du retour, je ne dirai pas où, je ne peux pas, à l'absence peut-être, il faut y retourner, c'est tout ce que je sais, il ne fait pas bon y rester, il ne fait pas bon quitter. (*Molloy*, 62-3)

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[31] Critchley is referencing Blanchot's *The Gaze of Orpheus* here.
[32] etymologically: no-place, without place.
[33] Admittedly, one's lack of pity may also be due to the twitching black humour that slithers through the text.

Molloy is wrenched out of the stagnancy of being and thrust into a state of becoming in which his initial kenotic abandonment forms a ripple effect whereby the distance continues to expand. One cannot even be secure in the atrophic paralysis of a post-kenotic emptiness, but must be engaged in a continual process of ontological severance - severance from God, from society in all its manifestations, and from one's very own self as subjectivity spirals away from anything to which it might cling.

"Constantly in the process of morphing into something new, these subjects embody what Deleuze refers to as the only real form of Being: the 'being of-becoming.' Just as there is no way to contain the split within the... object from breaking off and splitting indefinitely, there is no way to stop the proliferation of the Beckettian subject once it starts" (Gendron, 118-119). Gendron employs an ideal passage to illustrate this effect. These are Moran's words:

> Il y avait en somme trios, non, quatre Molloy. Celui de mes entrailles, -la caricature que j'en faisais, celui de Gaber et celui qui, en chair et en os, m'attendait quelque part. J'y ajouterais celui de Youdi, n'était l'exactitude à ces commissions...J'ajouterai donc un cinquième Molloy, celui de Youdi...Il y en avait d'autres évidement. Mais restons-en là, si vous voulez bien, dans notre petit cercle d'initiés. (*Molloy*, 178)

Moran counts no less than four Molloys, as though not only is Molloy dispersing into other identities, but it is impossible to discern an original Molloy undergoing these transformations. Moreover, not only is there an indiscernible number of Molloys, but there are Molloys of flesh and Molloys of imaginative construction. As Richard Begam notes, "he is outside and inside, a thing found and a thing made" (111). Moran puts it this way: "Le Molloy dont ainsi je m'approchais avec précaution ne devait ressembler au vrai Molloy, celui avec qui j'allais si prochainement être aux prises, par monts et par vaux, que d'une façon assez lontaine" (177). This allows us to complicate the effort to reduce the multiplicities of Molloy down to a quantifiable number, for Moran must also take into

consideration the Molloy in which he himself is becoming infused. Thomas Trezise reads this - and Moran's statement "de m'occuper de Molloy" (142) - "as the very latency of Moran's own *à venire*" (Trezise, 51).

Molloy also recognizes the schizoid consciousness of the decreative being. "[E]n moi il y a toujours eu deux pitres, entre autres, celui qui ne demande qu'à rester là oü il se trouve et celui qui s'imagine qu'il serait un peu moins plus loin" (*Molloy*, 72). Wolosky describes this phenomenon as due to the lack of a 'unitary essence' within the self, but it seems clear that rather than a lack of a unitary essence, the latent unitary essence of the void is simply counter to the self. It is difficult to speak of an apophatic void as a unifying entity, however, and so it might be more accurate to deem the operation of unity as a collective *dis*unity. Amidst such disunity, Molloy and Moran grapple with identities that are projections of "intrarelation between the self and its images of itself…The more the self works to attain a pure self beyond multiplicity, the more it discovers that in doing so it cannot avoid images that are multiple. In the very act of expressing itself, it betrays its ideal of unitary selfhood" (Wolosky, 81). The self comes to understand its very essence as flux, as a dissolution or flow into other amorphous selves. In Moran's décréation, he becomes aware of this ontological truth through the paradoxical sensation of becoming another.

> Maintenant côté corps je devenais il me semblait rapidement méconnaissable. Et quand je me passais les mains sur le visage, dans un geste familier et maintenant plus que jamais excusable, ce n'était plus le même visage que sentaient mes mains et ce n'étaient plus les mêmes mains que sentait mon visage. Et cependent le fond de la sensation était le même que lorsque j'avais été bien rasé et parfumé et eu de l'intellectuel les mains blanches et molles. Et ce ventre que je ne me connaissais pas restait mon ventre, mon vieux ventre, grâce à je ne sais quelle intuition. Et pour tout dire je continuais àme reconnaître et même j'avais de mon identité un sens plus net et vif qu'auparavant, malgré ses lésions intimes et les plaies dont elle se couvrait. (*Molloy*, 263)

Beckett explains such flux as a "change de merdre. Et si toutes les merdes se resemblent, ce qui n'est pas vrai, ça ne fait rien, ça fait du bien de changer de merdre, d'aller dans une merdre un peu plus loin, de temps en temps, de papillonner quoi, comme si l'on était éphémère" (*Molloy*, 61). Beckett's 'merdre' is not necessarily feces, except by way of value judgement, but rather, the generic and unclassifiable substance 'merdre' or 'muck' in his English translation. It is the basic stuff of existence - ephemeral, transitory – and yet shit nonetheless. Beckett's amorphous substance is not the bombastic Dionysianism of Joyce's metaxology, but one of ontological fatigue and weary porosity. Ephemerality, decomposition, transient flux, these are all symptoms of the fact that to simply *be* is a truly exhausting process. There is no amount of will left to attempt to become something particular, something unique. "[U]n jour A à tel endroit, puis un autre B à tel autre, puis un troisième le rocher et moi, et ainsi de suite pour les autres composants, les vaches, le ciel, la mer, les montagnes... comme si tout était surgi du même ennui, meublons, meublons, jusqu'au plein noir" (*Molloy*, 19)

"A qui n'a rien il est interdit de ne pas aimer la merdre" (*Molloy*, 34). Bleak as this may seem, this is nearly a Weilean maxim; one must recognize the filth of existence and the necessity of evil as the proof of God in a kenotic world. Molloy relishes merdre in the same manner in which Weil's decreative subject relishes the truths that lie hidden in the dark crevices, among the suffering and the oppressed; Molloy realises that the truth of existence not only dwells within such filth, but makes filth of the truth-seeker, indeed must first bring the subject down to its level for the sake of understanding, an enlightenment that is also a wallowing. "[L]e fond c'est mon habitat… quelque part entre l'écume et la fange" (*Molloy*, 19). The difference between the shit heap and the butterfly

is merely a matter of perspective, a matter of occupation. It is this migratory ephemerality of Beckett's muck that gives it its butterfly beauty, deriving its essential nature from its flittering inability to cling permanently to matter. Permanency exists solely in (as I have quoted earlier) "l'inébranlable confusion des choses éternelles" (*Molloy*, 58), and this indestructibility necessitates that the phenomenological world of things adhere to the laws of the chaosmos.

Given that the muck of existence renders the fabric of being amorphous, time itself becomes uncontained in the toothless dictatorship of the moment. Beckett's characters are timeless in the sense of being without time, eternal in the sense of being temporally unbound. Beckett's epiphany is one which brings this indestructible chaos to the fore of all existence. To destroy chaos would bring an impossible stability to the world, to anchor substance through some kind of ontological grounding. "Mais je ne pouvais pas, rester dans la forêt je veux dire, cela ne m'était pas loisible. C'est-à-dire que j'aurais pu, physiquement rien ne m'eût été plus facile, mais je n'étais pas tout à fait qu'un physique" (Beckett, *Molloy*, 132). Beckett's negativity ensnares matter by forcing it to adhere to Weilean *necessity* and metaphysical laws of immateriality or non-materiality, of immanence without distinct boundary. As Bataille explains, the "world is… immanence without a clear limit (an indistinct flow of being into being – one thinks of the unstable presence of water in water). So the positing, in the world, of a 'supreme being,' distinct and limited like a thing, is first of all an impoverishment" (*TR*, 33-4).

When dealing with themes of flux and metamorphosis in *Molloy*, critics most often attempt to address the complex and mysterious relationship between Molloy and Moran. Hugh Kenner sums it up nicely. "Molloy's tale is of how a bum became a

causalty, and it has even been suggested that Molloy is Moran, a later stage of Moran, and that the two parts of the novel have been transposed from the chronological order, the whole tracing one man's descent from garden and wicker chair to utter alienation" (35) This is a neat and orderly way of reassembling a text built on disorder and esoteric relation. Many critics feel as though the narrative split is a cheap trick and thus, not a worthy interpretation given the depth of the novel. However, if their equivalency, separated by mere chronology, is a little too simplistic, this is not enough to dismiss such a reading *tout court*. For if we are to follow *Molloy*'s metaxology down its various paths, a linear chronology is one of the first things to unravel. Indeed, it is difficult enough to reconcile the author Molloy from the crippled vagabond Molloy. By the same token, Moran as the son of Molloy or, alternately, as the youthful Molloy, forces a great deal of legwork upon the critic in a text where it is difficult to stay vertical for too long. And, admittedly, this would seem a rather lazy authorial decision on the part of Beckett (if we are to care about such things, and force Beckett's hand into the fire of his own Heraclitian text). Trezise is much more accurate in his refinement of such a situation. He argues that Molloy becomes

> Moran's own future, who is born of Moran's metamorphosis and is in this sense his son, that he would 'grow to be…like a father to me.' A father in that Molloy bespeaks the originarity, not of the first person – Moran – but of its very non-self-identity or dispossession: and hence also a son, in that the first person is what it is only if it 'has' an *à venire*, only if it is its own future, the repetition of this originary dispossession. (52)

For this amorphousness to be as pervasive as it seems, there must be no *before* and *after*, merely a continuation. Molloy resurfaces as Moran, but insofar as they have not yet *completely* abandoned their distinct subjectivities, they are not identical but merely, *open to the being of each other*, as it were. Through the operation of an a-temporal or rhizomatic flow of time, there are events that Moran and Molloy seem to

undergo simultaneously (the striking of a gong, for instance, that appears in both narratives) and parts of Molloy's narrative that could conceivably come both before and after Moran's. If neither the past nor the future is barred from lurching its way through to the phenomenal present, the future of Molloy might well interact with the present (or past, as loosely as we can use these terms) of Moran. Charlotte Renner describes this, with reference to Beckett's own words, as the '"fluid of future time' into the 'fluid of past time'" (104).

Molloy's décréation has set up a kind of rhizomatic fissure, a chain of (let us refine this, now) *un*-becoming or self-divestment into which Moran necessarily falls. Moran then, becomes simply another deathward hitch in the chain of Molloy's being, a hunter of his own next transformation on the way towards that most silent of metamorphoses, the death that Beckett cannot allow. Moran begins his journey mirroring Molloy. "[D]ans l'ignorance où j'étais des raisons qui s'y opposaient, je me décidai à partir en vélomoteur. Ainsi s'inscrivait, au seuil de l'affaire Molloy, le funeste principe du plaisir" (153). Here, Moran reveals Molloy to be a kind of death drive, "des grandes métamorphoses intérieures" that are not relegated to his subconscious, but rather, the decreative forces propelling it (253). Angela Moorjani's excellent book, *Abysmal Games*, argues that Moran represents the 'conscious discourse' while Molloy's is of the subconscious, but the relationship between these two figures transcends (indeed, necessarily) simple psychopathology, for Molloy's 'subconscious' is very nearly *post-conscious*.

Moran will become the decreating Molloy, his body developing the same decay, becoming death by becoming Molloy, just as Molloy becomes his mother. In *Molloy*,

there is no divestment of the mother-self in order to create a separate child-self, but an abysmal umbilical connection. The child-self exists within a kind of becoming-mother state, a perpetual emasculating metamorphosis synchronous with the self's wretched stumble towards décréation. And Moran's son, like all sons, becomes a mere appendage to his father's journey until he can find his own. "Le moment ne viendrait-il pas fatalement ou il lèvrait la tête et se trouverait seul, dans un endroit inconnu, et où moi, secouant mes pensécs, je me retournerais pour constater sa disparition? Je jouai brièvement avec l'idée de me l'attacher au moyen d'une longue corde, dont les deux extrémités s'enrouleraient autour de nos tailes" (199).[34] Renner suggests that if "Molloy 'dies' by uniting with Moran…then death must be analogous with (but not equivalent to) sexual activity, which brings about the 'birth' of another narrator" (107). To compliment this reading, allusions to an incestuous relation between Molloy and his mother are peppered throughout; Molloy's mother, therefore, becomes a symbolic state of being in which Molloy can give birth to another through the death of himself. His mother's room is his final resting place, the womb/tomb into which he will crawl back only to become another womb/tomb through which a new form will emerge.

Molloy is not to be found or caught, for in a sense, he is no longer there. Moran's mission is to follow the same decreative path, to find the Molloy that is disappearing into the nothingness. Moran will never reach his target through any means but *becoming* his target, just as Molloy will only reach his mother by becoming her, by sleeping in her bed and shitting in her pot. "J'ai pris sa place. Je dois lui ressembler de plus en plus. Il ne me

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[34] The increasing severity with which Moran treats his son is, perhaps, more than a little symptomatic of his gradual inability to connect with the earthly material world. His incessant calculating, his obsessive hoarding of material objects, are his last gasps at holding on to a world from which he is slowly disintegrating. He and his son communicate as hostile occupants of lands which operate under opposing laws, and he is unable to treat his son, his slave, with the smallest courtesy or sign of appreciation.

manque plus qu'un fils (7). The female imagery Molloy associates with such an act comes to be part of the process that befalls Moran, unsuspectingly. His process of decreation involves taking refuge "dans les différentes stations horizontales comme l'enfant dans le giron de sa mère" (216-7) or curling up into the foetal position, a position, Moran comes to understand, that "devien[t] infinie" the more it is explored (217).

Trezise makes a compelling case for this kind of isomorphic metemontogeny in the characters of Molloy's mother and Malone from *Malone Dies*, a metemontogenic sharing of being that is not meant to substantiate the identity of each character through identification with the other, but merely to "emphasize…the inevitability of metamorphosis and confusion (or substitution) intrinsic to a universe where the subject is always non-self-identical and its properties or predicates essentially free-floating" (63). Beckett's metemontogeny seems more isomorphic than Joyce's opening of being's floodgates, but Beckett destabilizes such apparent isomorphism by ungrounding the unity of the transformative subject as well as the object of its transformation. There can be no isomorphic transformation from one being to another when unity of the self is shown to be an illusion, a being already in flux.

"By the time the object is achieved, the subject who desired it no longer exists; while the subject in time undergoes 'an unceasing modification of his personality, whose permanent reality, if any, can only be apprehended as a retrospective hypothesis'"[35] (Wolosky, 73). This point is underscored by another quotation from Beckett's *Proust*. The subject's quest of attainting the object of his desire is "the identification of the subject with the object of his desire" (3), an attainment which is an identification or a

[35] Wolosky quotes from Beckett's *Proust*.

becoming-object, for "the subject has died – and perhaps many times – on the way to reaching his goal" (3). This is precisely why for Moran, finding a Molloy who exists as a separate entity is unnecessary, even impossible. As Badiou explains, "the other…is caught in the following tourniquet: if he exists, he is like me, he is indiscernible from me" (*On Beckett*, 47).

"Il passe des gens aussi, dont il n'est pas facile de se distinguer avec netteté. Voilà qui est décourageant. C'est ainsi que je vis A et B aller lentement l'un vers l'autre, sans se rendre compte de ce qu'ils faisaient... Ils se ressemblaient, amis pas plus que les autres" (*Molloy*, 9-10). This might be the indelible mark of fallen kenotic essence, the burgeoning slippage of existence that allows amorphous passage from one being to another. A and B look similar, but no more so than everyone else, for everyone carries this stain or kenotic mark of transcendental homelessness. Moran meets another decreating tramp in the forest whose face resembles his own, "au mien, en mois fin naturellement même petite moustache ratée, même petits yeux de furet, même paraphimosis du nez, et une bouche mince et rouge, comme congestionnée à force de vouloir chier sa langue" (233-4). He murders him, conveniently losing all memory of the manner in which the crime is committed. Bersani suggests that Moran's "lack of memory is an aid to pure thought" (59). David Hesla goes so far as to argue that Molloy is, in fact, the man that Moran kills, trusting in the fact that it is not beyond Beckett to write a novel in which the one protagonist murders the other, and subsequently both "retire each to his own room to write each his own version of the inconsequential, insignificant episode" (98). It is Renner's view that the vagabond killed by Molloy is A and the one killed by Moran is B. She interestingly presents the story of A and B as a kind of micro-myth

which will be enacted out by Moran and Molloy. A and B converge, just as Molloy and Moran converge, and Molloy and Moran must kill their doubles – A and B, respectively – so that they might finally decant their images in order to leave "Moran free to become Molloy and Molloy free to assimilate Moran" (103).

Renner's is a well articulated view and she reads such killings as symbols of the Proustian decantations undergone by Molloy and Moran. It seems, however, that the murder of one's double must have more than simply a symbolic purpose. If we are to flirt with the possibility that this is, in fact, Molloy or at the very least, a necessary killing for the sake of Moran's transformation, we might understand it as the violent impulse resulting from a confrontation with the uncanny. In this case, the uncanny is the latent transformation that slowly manifests itself in the presence of the other whom Moran is becoming. His mind reels at the coexistence of these two figures sharing the same space, and the terrifying image of himself as an image of pure kenotic change. The sight of Molloy or this other vagabond (A or B perhaps, themselves nameless doubles of Molloy and Moran) is the image of a self in the midst of its own self-abandonment.

Molloy has the mark of a man in transition; his appearance is of "une forme pâlissante entre formes pâlissantes" (22) - a polaroid in reverse. To write of one's life and one's death is to write of a continuous fading, a slow conspicuous erasure. The writing of Molloy and Moran acts as a purging of the self, writing as a form of décréation. They are the paradoxical images of unrest, paradoxical because an image is by definition at rest. It is this terror and the realization that he is witnessing his own 'fading form' that causes Moran to reach out and make a 'pulp' (a tellingly amorphous non-shape/substance) of his victim's head. Both Molloy and Moran kill their crutch-bearing, great coat-wearing

doubles because they are horrified at the sight of themselves and their decrepitude. In their doubles, they are witnessing 'pure' being in all its instability and withering flux. The movement of self into other, epitomized by these killings, portrays the violence of transcendence. These deaths mark the rupture of the rhizome, the splitting and breaking point of becoming. This event is a flickering of nature's transitory or vagabond essence and the violent friction that occurs at the moment when two separate beings converge and cease to be other. It also seems, in the decantation of Moran's memory, that there is some form of defense mechanism at work, perhaps an instinctively psychological suppression guided by a will that must annihilate the externalized image of its own nomadic, diasporic being, embodied in the concreteness of a physical body. It is the unique horror of the body to be able to manifest both change and decay at the very same moment as solidity and physicality.

v.

Et ce que je voyais ressemblait plutôt à un émiettement, à un effondrement rageur de tout ce qui depuis toujours me protégeait de ce que depuis toujours j'étais condamné à être. Ou j'assistais à une sorte de forage de plus en plus rapide vers je ne sais quel jour et quel visage, connus et reniés. Mais comment décrire cette sensation qui de sombre et massive, de grinçante et pierreuse, se faisait soudain liquide.
Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

...those deep currents that flow through the oceanic agitation of words...
Georges Bataille

To call Beckett a mystic is slightly disconcerting when he so clearly mistrusts the existence of the beyond towards which his characters pedal, but he takes a mystical approach to language. Beckett has referred to himself as a 'mystique manqué' and a 'St. John of the Crossroads.' To borrow Fritz Mathner's phrase, Beckett is a proponent of a kind of "godless mysticism" (Buning, 49). There is an anti-linguistic mystical stance

adopted in order to access the transcendental because of language's inextricable relationship to the mimesis of the world. As Moran states, "tout langage est un écart de langage" (179). The 'excess' of the English translation seems to communicate something more than the French '*écart,*' for it is not merely a deviation or variation, but an obstructing presence to the silence of the void. This is clearly an apophatic approach to linguistics. Derrida argues that all "negative theology consists of considering that every predicative language is inadequate to the essence, in truth to the hyperessentiality (the being beyond Being) of God" (Derrida, 74). In moving beyond the confines of language, one attempts to move beyond the temporal world to which it is tethered. Beckett's language "points beyond mysticism's metaphysical structure of ascent, into its axiological judgements concerning life in the temporal, material world, which language consistently represents and which mysticism aspires to transcend" (Wolosky, 3-4).

Beckett inscribes the negativity of transcendence through a linguistic kenosis, attempting to shed language of its post-lapsarian signification, that is, the earthly essence of language that can only ever deal with the transcendental as an *out there*. Beckett attempts to excavate language in order to retreat to the negative, apophatic, or silent space at its root, that seed germinating within language like a kind of linguistic death-drive that would seek to negate language entirely and return it to a silent pre-linguistic state. Language seeks to undo itself, to play at a linguistic kenosis. God, as the Word, and as that which creates through kenotic abdication, is seemingly responsible for such linguistic negativity. Language, as a divine Saussurean system or a copy-cat deity, is at all points seeking to decreate. The Word of God is thus not made manifest through the body, but rather, through the body's dissolution. The Word, not of a kataphatic presence, but of an

absence, pollutes the body, and its decay becomes the manner in which onto-theological truth asserts itself within the world. Words are inarticulate mutterings attempting to bridge the chasmic lacunae of language in which truth dwells, even if truth is limited to an ineffable zero. To speak such a Word, the "carapace de monstre [faut] pourrira" the self. (Beckett, *L'Innomable*, 77).

The signified already dwells at a kind of kenotic distance from its signifier, a distance created once language enacted its murderous naming power, creating something by distancing it from itself. But perhaps we might view language as not something which kills, but rather, something which opens up chasms and fissures through which these named entities slip away. As Badiou explains, such an entity "escapes towards its own non-being. This means that the work of naming must always be taken up again. On this point, Beckett is a disciple of Heraclitus: being is nothing other than its own becoming-nothingness" (*On Beckett*, 48). In response to this ontological fragmentation, language turns in on itself in *Molloy*; it forms itself into subject and object of kenosis, instilling within itself its very own negation. Molloy calls his mother Mag, for example, so that the *g* might negate the *ma*, instilling within her name a kind of burgeoning décréation which un-mothers and un-roots. Beckett sacrifices language to its power to undo itself in the same moment that it creates. It acts as Penelope's loom, weaving only so that it might also unravel. As Bataille explains, "[o]ne achieves one's salvation in the same way that one spins wool" (*TR*, 87).

Beckett's characters write in order to create a subjectivity that might interact with the world. Similar to the role of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*, writing operates as an epiphanous mechanism to make the subject something which expresses itself in nature,

something which retreats from the black hole of interiority to assert itself into the world. In Beckett, if this inner subjectivity ever fuses with outer nature, it is never able to do so without carrying with it a trace of that inner void and stammering echo of a voice. These stammerings are an essential part of the Babelic tongue,[36] however, for "the intimate order is represented only through prolonged stammerings. These stammerings still have an uncommon force because they still have the virtue of generally opposing the reality principle with the principle of [divine] intimacy" (Bataille, *TR*, 96).

Writing is a kind of metaxu in which the self inscribes itself into the world. Stephen's text is simply a literary consciousness that transforms the substance of the world into art. The texts of the authors Moran and Molloy are metaxu used to accomplish the reverse. Unlike Stephen's, their world cannot be appropriated for some artful construction; it refuses the malleability of aesthetics and they are powerless to affect it. Instead, they must efface themselves through the metaxic book, empty themselves into this void, make themselves worldly in order to die. In *Molloy*, there is "a kind of void that opens up in the work and into which the work evaporates" (Critchley, 174). Through writing, the world opens itself up as a place that might receive Beckett's decreative subjects. The metaxic book is the destruction of this segregating barrier. Dedalus brings the world within and epiphanizes both in the process. Molloy and Moran bring themselves out in a decreative gesture which seeks to create a self, but create it as a kenotic self, as one that empties itself into the world, writing for an external agent that demands their deathward lives to be syndicated.[37] As Blanchot suggests, the writer is

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[36] Moran hunts for Molloy in an ambiguous territory named Ballyba, a not-so-subtle near-anagram for Babel, but a clear indication that if Molloy is to be found in any identifiable *space*, it is a linguistic one.

[37] Again, one imagines an alternate story in which Molloy lays on his deathbed writing reams of pages for an audience he cannot fathom. Perhaps, in his decreative filth, there is a small cult which has formed

summoned by the process of writing with the "the attraction of (pure) exteriority" (qtd. in Critchley, 52). The book is a textual metaxu through which the self is not destroyed in divine reconciliation (as Weil's metaxu would demand) but is emptied into a space in which self and world can coexist. Through writing, the subject can become the object, hovering on the precipice of this externalized silence. "If consciousness is nothing but this work of negation, then…literature [(here, the subject's act of writing himself)] wants to attain that point of unconsciousness, where it can somehow merge with the reality of things" (Critchley, 54). The book as metaxu makes the book's subject porous and indivisible from the world in which it finds itself through an apophatic language that seeks "…to make language a façade, eroded by the wind and full of holes, that would possess the authority of ruins" (Bataille, "Molloy's Silence," 15).

Sharon Wolosky is right to take issue with what she calls the nearly 'unanimous' Beckettian scholarship which approaches the failure of language as an inability to express selfhood. In a reliance upon language, these critics feel that the subject is immediately distanced from itself (or its self), that it is the representational effort of the self that produces the splintering and fragmentation of that unitary extra-linguistic self. Wolosky contends that this is a fundamental misreading of Beckett's approach to language. Instead, Beckett's treatment of language reveals the 'pure' self to be a 'pure' fiction, a self which is not extra-linguistic, but solely and completely inextricable from language. The self, as fiction, can dwell nowhere else but *in* language. "[W]ithout linguistic expression, there is no self at all... The self is not, as it turns out, unitary, unmediated self-identity. On the contrary, selfhood takes place in just those dimensions the essentialists

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around him, seeking to learn from his story how the decreative process is undergone, how to navigate the kenotic terrain to embrace the void.

mistakenly seek to deny: in time and space, in intimate relation to others, above all in language" (Wolosky, 84). In condemning the self to fictionalization when removed from language, Wolosky, in finding a home for the self in space, time, and human interaction, reduces space, time, and *other selves* to linguistic construction as well. This is the self that Beckett attempts to efface, the fiction that is tied to a similarly fictional linguistic-space and linguistic-time. In moving beyond this self towards transcendental communion with others, Molloy, for example, is not jumping ship from fictional being to actual being, but making the transition to a becoming which would also deny the object of his metamorphosis (Moran) the stability of fictional selfhood. Molloy is transitioning into a being who is also already a becoming, promising no less decay or metemontogenic movement. To move beyond the self is to move beyond the fiction of a linguistic space and time into an existential terrain without measurable limits.

Kenner suggests that Moran's "preoccupation with Molloy has [the] power to make the familiar liaisons with familiar reality dissolve: as though Molloy is rather a myth than a character, with a myth's hold on its believers" (35). If we are to transfer some of this mythical essence of Molloy into the psychically disintegrating Moran, we come to see that subjectivity itself possesses this same mythic quality. In Beckett, subjectivity is the myth to which consciousness clings to avoid the psychic disintegration that must inevitably result from the myth's inability to retain such a hold. In Kenner's reading, Molloy's hold on Moran's imagination is responsible for his transformative dissolution. Once the mythic self becomes the imaginative or contemplative object of Moran's subjectivity, it is shown to bear the fragility of the ineffable, without a concrete extension beyond Moran's consciousness that might allow it to crystallize in the form of

an impenetrable object of 'pure' subjectivity. Thus, the mythic Molloy necessarily expands, ruptures, and splits.

Beckett shows first-person narratives to be devious myths to which the reader's gullibility is quick to succumb. They create the semblance of a carefully demarcated boundary between subjectivity and otherness that does not actually exist within the textual space. Beckett's narrators conspicuously betray this deceitful posturing. Their subjectivities are openly porous and unformed; they, to paraphrase Benjamin, are mental essences consisting precisely of language whose task is to survive suspended over the abyss of language and the world it constructs (*OLS*, 63). This isolated suspension is the myth of such first-person narration. It is, rather, the reader who views from such a vantage point after the suspended self has been dropped from the perch of his narrative. These are the "writing" Morans and Molloys. The "written" Molloy and Moran are those world-ed creatures who stumble along, open vessels into which the contents of the world pour. Moran's detective quest is simply an act of opening up to the being of Molloy which cripples Moran as it enters. "[T]he body in Beckett's trilogy finally dissolves into a writing, a writing that functions as a body, as a rhythm, a texture, a fabric of traces and as a discharge of affects. This body, like the fictional text it becomes, is not unchanging or static, but exists as a continual process of assertion and negation, affirmation and difference" (Hill, 119-20). Or, as Moran remarks of the link between language and the body in the remarkable figure of Molloy, "une sorte de hurlement de tout le corps" (114).

3.

The Metaxic Poets

i.
The aleph

The aleph, one assumes, has no tactility, but does it have sound?
A black sound, a combination of all sounds?
What sound would the moon make if it wanted to deafen us all?

Beneath the staircase of Carlos Argentino, the mysterious aleph contains the entirety of the metaxic void through which all things pass. Yet this is not the *real* aleph, but a godless one, for there is no real aleph in the absence of God. For were it real, Borges would be unable to close his eyes once receiving a glimpse of all things in time and space. The result would be similar to the monstrous transformation of the Bible collector in the "Book of Sand," but for the fact that the alephian Borges would be incapable of eating, of sleeping, even of turning his hypnotized head; he would wither away, wraith-like, before he could blink. "[P]ure transcendence toward a pure intelligibility (which is also, glimpsed all at once, in the awakening, a pure unintelligibility) is, within the sensuous world, a destruction at once too complete and impotent" (Bataille, *TR*, 76). What power does Borges enact here? Through what inconceivable force can one shut one's eyes to infinitude? Locking such a vision underneath one's eyelids, there is no recourse but perpetual madness, but the very faculty one must yield in order to perform such a thing is still beyond the capacity of any Argentinean mortal. In his pack with Mephistopheles, the moment Faust wants to dwell in the rapture of a particular moment, his soul will be snatched away. The closing of the

eyes to the aleph is the Faustian refusal to dwell, the refusal Mephistopheles knows is impossible, thus prompting him to form such a pact. To fall into the aleph is the impossible temptation one must resist.

What are the consequences of defeating the world in such a way? Resisting the seduction of the universe's striptease. One must go mad, for surely the initial effect is to be left without a universe to which one might cling. Unless one possesses the kind of mind for whom the world is not enough. Perhaps, the thing the mind seeks the most is not the entirety of the universe, but the power to throw it away. It is to possess the world in a gaze, and still retain the strength to avert one's eyes. The great truth of the aleph lies not in what it shows, but in what it commands, namely, the Faustian imperative to become a killer, a god-killer, in fact. "He who dares to kill himself is a god. Now everyone can make it so that there shall be no God and there shall be nothing. But no one has done so yet" (Dostoevsky, 126). Borges presents the possibility of a God who does not create out of love, but out of an insatiable desire not to exist. To decreate is not going far enough. This God demands that we go further than this, indeed, not to return to him, but to go beyond him, to that place in which his existence is finally emancipated from necessity. For God, this is what sutures the will to life to that of death, a life-will whose very purpose is the death of all things. The universe, in all its infinitude, dares you to annihilate it, to release it from the burden of its godliness, dares you to close your eyes.

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ii.
Epi-phenomenology

Metaxu represent a transgressive force, for they deal not with physical phenomena, nor with transcendental realms, but with the conflation between the two – substance with an ontological identity crisis. In metaxic poetry, the substance we might

deem metaxic operates in a constant state of negating its primary components - the transcendental negating the material and vice-versa – and epiphany is the result of the ensuing stalemate. It is not so much an exhaustive war, but the armistice of a battle impossible to fight. It is Weil's belief that any object which contains an impossibility is indelibly marked by its metaxic nature. The metaxic object is one whose materiality has sacrificed itself to its transcendental nature which, in turn, sacrifices itself to material incarnation. This is unlike an icon, an object built on a hierarchy in relation to its two parts, that is, an object which does not straddle the realms of heaven and earth equally. The epiphanous differs from apocalyptic revelation in that it does not destroy (even in an ontological sense, for the epiphanous is an already-present potentiality within) the host of the revelation. Rather, it comes into perfect balance with its material host.[38] "Mediation, in this sense, is in its most general formulation a harmonization of incommensurate elements into a unity that does not destroy the integrity or order of its components" (Springsted, 247). Since the epiphanous entity is never reduced to something completely non-material, it also manages to salvage its singularity while participating in singularity's other. "[O]ne cannot posit divine intimacy unless it is in the particular…as the possibility of an immanence of the divine *and of man*" (Bataille, *TR*, 89).

Metemontogeny is an opening to the metaxic current of existence that ruptures the stable identity of the self so that it can proliferate, augmented in epiphanous being. Morris Beja defines epiphany as a "sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event, or memorable phase of the mind – the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it" (18).

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[38] This is, however, a balance that can only be achieved through a certain amount of transcendental violence necessary for epiphanous incarnation.

Beja's text on epiphany illustrates the extent to which epiphany is always spiritual, but never religious; as such, the epiphanous does not offer a given theological truth to the observing subject, but a manifestation of an unknown, perhaps an intensity with infinite possibility not strictly relegated to the realm of theology. Such a manifestation can come in the form of the most random object, or, like in the case of Stephen Dedalus, in the form of a mother's ghost.

It was Marsilio Ficino's claim that magical "invocations were directed to the operator's intelligence and imagination, not to an *intelligentia separate*, i.e. an angel or demon; that when he sang a hymn to the sun, he did not hope to make the sun do anything out of the ordinary, but to make his own spirit more solarian, to make it more receptive to the natural influxes from the sun" (Walker, 44). Metaxic poetry involves, not a conjuring of the powers of the sun, but a sacrificial stance on the part of the poet as a stable subject, so that nature's amorphous porosity might imbue her with solarian energy. Walter Benjamin speaks of Kafka's assistants as being "*gandharvas*, celestial creatures, beings in an unfinished state" - messengers from one group to another ("Franz Kafka," 117). These figures have not yet been fully divested from the transcendental realm. "They have not yet been released from the womb of nature" (117). They are living metaxu, settling on women's skirts and in the shadowy apertures of crumbling walls. The metaxic poet is a proprietor of this same *gandharvan* essence; they are amphibious creatures who, mediating and slipping between two worlds, explore the abysmal or metaxic space within all phenomena in order to produce what we might call a metaxic *poesis*.

> Si l'on regarde de près non seulement le moyen âge chrétien, mais toutes les civilisations vraiment créatrices, on s'aperçoit que chacune, au moins pendant un temps, a eu au centre même une place vide réservée au surnaturel pur, à la réalité située hors de ce monde. Tout le reste était orienté vers ce vide. (Weil, *Oppression et liberté*, 219)

At once an outside and an internal centre, these civic spaces orbiting a transcendental core obey a pattern prevalent in all natural things. Our language, our techné, our science all reach for this same empty space. The decline of transcendentalism in the modern industrial nation has been symptomatic of an uprootedness from this centre. Metaxu are not excluded, but exorcised from the world, an exorcism whose priests seek to siphon out (or at least dispel the myth of) the empty space that acts as the conduit between the two worlds. There is an institutionalized fear of mingling with the creative forces left percolating in the natural world. One cannot sip martinis in the void.

> [M]an of the dualistic conception is opposite to archaic man in that there is no longer any intimacy between him and this world. This world is in fact immanent to him but this is insofar as he is no longer characterized by intimacy, insofar as he is defined by things, and is himself a thing, being a distinctly separate individual…At the level of the dualistic conception, no vestige of the ancient festivals can prevent reflective man, whom reflection constitutes, from being, at the moment of his fulfillment, man of lost intimacy. Doubtless intimacy is not foreign to him; it could not be said that he knows nothing of it, since he has a recollection of it. But this recollection sends him outside a world in which there is nothing that responds to the longing he has for it. In this world even things, on which he brings his reflection to bear, are profoundly separated from him, and the beings themselves are maintained in their incommunicable individuality. This is why for him transcendence does not at all have the value of a separation but rather of a return. (Bataille, *TR*, 75)

Metaxu are the middle spaces between being and becoming, between infinity and finitude, that assert themselves into the crossroads of the two realms, collapsing both poles in on each other by way of an epiphanous event. The metaxu is the place of the rupture that occurs upon their friction, the nexus of newness that comes into the world from the ontological collision of opposites. In the Weilean sense, this is the coming together of God and human, the reversal of kenosis by way of décréation. But this involves a metaxu that operates as a closed system that obeys a kenotic structure dependent on celestial return. A more theopoetic approach, perhaps even a lethetic approach, would be to view such metaxu as a space of limitless potential, a space which

performs not an annihilatory end of the subject, but an inexhaustible continuation. Although still maintaining its singularity, this would allow for an amorphous or metemontogenic quality to being, a reality similar to Tlönish theology in which "a certain pain, a certain greenish-yellow colour, a certain temperature, and a certain sound are all the same, single reality. All men, in the dizzying instant of copulation, are the same man. All men who speak a line of Shakespeare *are* William Shakespeare" (Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," 76).

Metaxu would cease to bring the subject into contact with some heavenly Omniboss to whose embrace one might return; instead, it would act as an epiphanous space where the subject (or object, if the subject's consciousness was thrust into the experiential being of the object) was opened to that germinating void which would allow it to act as a conduit of being, an unstable entity through being might flow. It would release "what were previously frozen or virtual potentials…It is an expression of the void within the particular situation…The [metaxic] event has forced a given situation…to declare its void" (Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou*, 54). Metaxu are the unveilings that dismember the illusion of existential stability. One might envision the metaxic passage as a kind of esophageal hinge which can be pushed open by a particular incantatory breath. The metaxic poet seeks to make use of these metaxic spaces in order to refashion nature as a work of *pointillisme*. It is a metaxic manipulation in which "the infinite is nothing other than the finite itself" (Badiou qtd. in Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou*, 17). The transcendental realm is an infinitude of intensity that slips through the cracks of the phenomenological - a monadology where all the windows have been thrust open.

Metaxu are the erasure of boundaries and the equalizer of binary poles such as infinite and finite. Nietzsche suggests that this equality is also a hoax. That what one must do is cancel both sides. Metaxu, weary of hierarchical arborescence, amalgamates the two to produce a rhizomatic transcendentalism - rhizomatic, surely, for such a structure of interstice depends always on a movement out of itself, into new territories and regions. It is the rhizomatic metaxu, rather than the Christian arborescent one, which reveals the manner in which metaxu can be employed by the metaxic poet. A metaxically rhizomatic space refuses a transcendental gateway which seeks to undo or annihilate the material plane for the sake of being consumed or enveloped by the spiritual or higher plane. A metaxu without such binary restrictions allows for it to accommodate a kind of transcendental movement without ever effacing the material realm. "The spirit is so closely linked to the body as a thing that the body never ceases to be haunted…The divinity of the good cannot be maintained at [a] degree of purity that would exclude the sensuous world" (Bataille, *TR*, 40-80). Instead, it makes of the material a plane in which energy or intensity can pass freely from one object to another. It engenders precisely what Paul de Man deems impossible, namely, the transference of "being like a vehicle to being like a temple, or a ground" (de Man, *ATL*, 252).

iii.
Metaxic language

How does a rooster crow without becoming one?
In a world where metaxu assert themselves in the form of carnivalesque
enchantment, the sun dawns with such a transformation.

Borges begins "The Aleph" with a quote from Hamlet: "O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a King of infinite space" (II: 2). This is, in essence, the very nature of metaxic poesis, and the clever trick employed by Jonah that

leads him to victory over the leviathan fish. It is not merely that Jonah appeals to God to help him escape the fish's clutches, but that God - in a sense, the bigger fish - is brought inside the stomach of the smaller fish. This is the ultimate battle strategy, the super-weapon of divine proportions: the ability to wrench something into a space in which logically it cannot be contained. An entire army in the guts of a wooden horse. The greater entity is smuggled inside the belly of the smaller, rupturing the fragile ontological fabric of that entity's existence. This same event accounts for the epiphanous power of certain objects, those phenomenological artefacts whose outer structures are not destroyed, but whose insides are liquefied as God himself becomes the phenomenological pacemaker, the battery or radiating essence.

Every piece of knowledge, and thus, every knowable object, is a kind of schizoid entity which splits into an esoteric and exoteric sphere. Epiphany is the moment when *eso* and *exo* are simultaneously observable. It is a kind of uncanny grasping of the thing-in-itself which appears so alien that the object seems to be undergoing some internal war through the violence of transcendence. There is a raw static charge which vivifies objects, possessing them demonically. What lies esoterically within the object, is precisely that which is beyond the object, that cavity or void which operates as a kind of grid through which it connects to the rest of the universe, itself connected by way of such a grid. This lacunic cavity, rooted at the centre of all words and all physical entities is a conduit of passage for that force which manifests itself by way of epiphany.

Bataille professes that the attainment of the sacred intimacy we have lost is impossible, for it is not transferable to our discontinuous existence. This is quite similar to Weil's belief that God does not exist insofar as existence is an anthropomorphic

quality. Regained intimacy constitutes nothing less than the end of anthropomorphism. Once the sacred enters the realm of the subject's consciousness – that is, the realm of the profane – it becomes a profane thing, devoid of its sacredness. One needs a mediating force to circumvent the loss of such intimacy. Metaxu are the spaces in which such sacredness can manifest itself without losing its intimate or sacred nature. Without metaxu, there could be no transcendence, for such a movement can only be initiated by the wrenching involved in an incarnate entity which retains its sacredness. By sacredness, we might understand Bataille's notion of a 'totality of what is.' Metaxu are the spaces which disclose sacredness by allowing for the dissolution of the barriers between subjectivity and the immanence of limitless continuity.

This space, residence of Bataille's divine intimacy, is to be uncovered, perhaps *recovered*, through poetry and poetic incantation, for according to Bataille, poetry is eminently of the continuous order. Poetry is language's oubliette: an oubliette in which one finds the language of stream and stone, of dream and animality, of laughing forgotten Medusas who finally gain a voice. "[P]oetry describes nothing that doesn't slip toward the unknowable" (Bataille, *TR*, 21). Language is the post-lapsarian tool of Heideggerean measuring, a casting out of speech or song, instead of a rope by way of callused hand. It is the "[m]easure-taking [which] gauges the between, which brings the two, heaven and earth, to one another" (Heidegger, 221). The Kabbalists possess a "metaphysically positive attitude towards language as God's own instrument" (Scholem, 15). God rests as his voice grows hoarse, for the creative language/Word cannot be called forth from a raw throat. Genesis speaks not of an eighth day. "God rested when he had left his creative power to itself in man. This creativity, relieved of its divine actuality, became knowledge.

Man is the knower in the same language in which God is the creator" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 68). Language is the power to conceive being. "With the creative omnipotence of language it begins, and at the end of language, as it were, assimilates the created, names it. Language is therefore both creative and the finished creation" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 68).

Language acts a kind of trace left behind after kenosis, a kind of Ficinian *spiritus* which hardens and materializes into the still-born tongue of man, but always retaining Ficino's 'aerial spirit' at its centre. "Words, too, can have an aura of their own" (Benjamin, *OMB*, 200). This is what dies in dead metaphors, as a system of signification counter to language's metaphysical component ensnares its ethereal spirit. In metaxic poetry, the signified enters into the signifier so that the signifier can only ever signify the signified by turning on itself, performing a linguistic décréation, as it were, to bridge the Saussurean chasm. One of the reasons why Baudelaire's poetry is so successful is because he "envisioned blank spaces which he filled in with his poems" (Benjamin, *OMB*, 162). We no longer know things osseously, so poetry liquefies a petrified language, de-solidifies it to gaseousness. Poetry releases language to its metaxic, alephic, epiphanic potential, seeking to articulate the extra-linguistic within language through an excavation of that dark lacunic centre from which meaning sprouts. "It is language that speaks… [that] beckons to us, at first and then again at the end towards a thing's nature" (Heidegger, 216). Like the harpies of Odysseus, language thrusts its neck seaward and summons us towards its shore of death and dismemberment. It beckons us towards empty truths, absences, crumbled mythologies and decayed ontologies. The poet, ears pressed to the appeal of language, records the silences, the fading footsteps of the world she

previously recognized as hers. The poet's role is to remain vigilant at the harbours of metaxu, awaiting the force that will drag her away from terrestrial subjectivity.

Ficino interprets Plotinus as follows: "one can attract into, and retain in, a material object 'something vital from the soul of the world and the souls of the spheres and stars,' that is, celestial spirit, if the object is of a material and form which reflects the celestial source of spirit in question" (Walker, 41). Language is the spiritus form *par excellence*, for part of the reason why we "cannot imagine a total absence of language in anything" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 62) is that whatever kind of extra-linguistic absence one might find outside of language, is precisely the same no-space from which language first springs. Language is the progeny and excrescence of the void that reaches out for intelligibility, the medium through which its monadal *appetition* is possible.

If language communicates nothing more than "the particular linguistic being of things" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 63), that is, the part of the mental being that is communicable *in* language, the metaxic poet seeks to stretch language to its breaking point, make use of its slippages and the deceptively opaque chasms dividing linguistic signs, in order to expand that part of the mental being – the linguistic being – that is communicable through language. The totality of the mental being might be ineffable, but its linguistic being can expand, as though language were a dimension of demonstrability. If only the language-lamp is that which is communicable, epiphany is the event in which this is overridden, the event in which the object 'expresses' its full mental being. For the mental being of a given thing is that which includes the possible dissolution of the thing itself for the sake of metemontogenic interconnectivity. "It destroy[s] the thing taken in isolation, *by the negation that is violence*... [I]n its negation the movement of transcendence is no less

opposed to violence than it is to the thing that violence destroys" (Bataille, *TR*, 76). The violence of transcendence is one which negates the thingness of a thing, the isolated particularity (not of the mental being, but) of a linguistic being and any unique identity or consciousness that might originate from such a reductionary position. Poetry makes use of the ordinarily incommunicable metaxic structure within the linguistic being to express the object *anew*, for what the mind is able to comprehend – linguistically, and thus familiarly – is nothing more than the linguistic being. What is communicable in the mental being subsequently expands, and, in the case of metaxic poetry, includes the dissolution of those barriers that normally give the linguistic being a separate and distinct identity from the mental being by the inclusion of a manifest annexing of the latent transcendental force radiating from within.

This is something akin to the auratic work of art whose aura lies in its ability to communicate an infinite distance. "Baudelaire insists on the magic of distance…Does he mean the magic of distance to be pierced, as must needs happen when the spectator steps too close to the depicted scene?" (Benjamin, *OMB*, 191-2). Such distance can only be expressed through epiphanous language, a language which unites language-lamp and lamp-itself, precisely by uniting language-lamp with that aspect of lamp-itself that transcends lamp. It communicates *through*, rather than *in*, language. "Its linguistic being…defines its frontier" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 64), but its linguistic being is now ecstatic.

In Joyce's *Ulysses*, an epiphany is something achieved by the object in confrontation with the mind that perceives it. It is an outside agency, rather than something reducible to the subject, but performs like a dialogue between subject and object. It is the mind's recognition of an object's declaration of itself *as* object. Within Bella/o's brothel, fans

and buttons speak, demanding a voice in order to take epiphany to its most theatrical extreme. Objects, in the Benjaminean sense, express themselves through a de-anthropomorphised language that has become usable by any form of existence. The object communicates itself as a thing-in-itself, a thingness which is at the same time (for Joyce, for the symbolistes, and for all the metaxic poets) a transcendence of thingness, a transcendence which instils within the thing the quality of a metaxu. Ultimately, it is through such a process that "*the mental being of man communicates itself to God*" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 65).

One might say that metaxic language is to the poet what epiphany is to the object. Through metaxic language, the poet seeks to epiphanize herself, becoming a conductor for the demonic force to which she is granted access through a dissolution of the self as closed entity, opening herself by way of metaxic force to the otherworldly entity (worldly as equivalent to self) through which she gains power. It is, above all, a mystical language, but one with more agency or will than Weil might allow. It seeks to unleash the silence within without resorting to silence itself. Metaxic poetry serves to release one's identity from an opposition to the movement of becoming, and thus, allows for the chasm of difference between subject and object to be crossed. These partitions of subjectivity

> are dissolved and destroyed in the intimate moment... [It] is a negation of the difference between the object and myself or the general destruction of objects as such in the field of consciousness. Insofar as I destroy it in the field of my clear consciousness, this table ceases to form a distinct and opaque screen between the world and me...The destruction of the subject as an individual is in fact implied in the destruction of the object as such. (Bataille, *TR*, 103-4)

Benjamin argues that man is the sole mental entity which is communicable 'without residue' in language. If "*language as such* is the mental being of man" (*OLS*, 65), and the poet is a creature with privileged access to the metaxic porosity of nature,

then man must employ language as the primary tool through which the demonic forces, the epiphanic, and the rhizomatic becoming of being is expressed. "Within all linguistic formation a conflict is waged between what is expressed and expressible and what is inexpressible and unexpressed… [T]he deeper (that is, the more existent and real) the mind, the more it is expressible and expressed" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 66). The mind beholden of esoteric secrets regarding the relationship between human nature and the transcendental is, therefore, able to express such power. And not only to name it, but to call it into being, for even were no such force to exist, it would give the poet sovereignty over her own mental being, and the power to create a myth that would bestow upon humanity the linguistic tool to call such sovereignty forth. Either God bestows humanity with the power of *language as such*, or humanity possesses it necessarily in God's absence. As Emil Cioran warns, a "nation dies when it no longer has the strength to invent new gods, new myths, new absurdities; its idols blur and vanish..." (Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, 112).

"God gives each beast in turn a sign, whereupon they step before man to be named" (Benjamin, *OLS*, 70). If we are to entertain the counter-Benjaminean view that naming constitutes a murder of essence, we might allow for such a death to occur by way of kenosis, that is, that the essence demands to be killed, offering itself sacrificially to man and the language of man for its own destruction. But what is murdered is not the essence in its entirety, but the essence in isolation of man. The purity of the static essence is sacrificed so that it might enter into the realm of man by way of language, a becoming that might free it from paralytic being.

> In an almost sublime way, the linguistic community of mute creation with God is thus conveyed in the image of the sign… The knowledge to [*sic*] which the snake seduces, that of good and evil is nameless… [I]t is a knowledge from outside, the uncreated

> imitation of the created word. Name steps outside itself in this knowledge: the Fall marks the birth of the *human world*, in which name no longer lives intact and which has stepped out of name-language, the language of knowledge, from what we may call its own immanent magic, in order to become expressly, as it were externally, magic. (Benjamin, *OLS*, 70-71)

Among other things, this is an interesting reading for it gestures towards the reason for Satan taking the shape of a snake. Surely, the image of an angel, fallen though he was, would have been far more seductive than an earthly creature. Yet such an image would have been outside the knowledge-language of man, a beast whose sign was never meant to step into the Edenic light. One is forced to wonder: if the serpent had never been named and thus, remained pure, could Satan have ever taken its form? In Benjamin's Eden, there is an outside of language, knowledge, and paradisiacal man. Appropriating Benjamin in the manner in which we have, we come to understand the magical element of language as that which always reaches beyond itself, that appetitive branching and burrowing into spaces beyond its very limits, its Babelic rhizomism. Metaxic language seeks to make the linguistic space of fallen man as infinite as the realm from whence it fell.

iv.
The poets

"La chute d'une feuille et la chute de Satan, c'est la meme chose."
Samuel Beckett

If mimesis means, at once, imitation and the entrance into some sort of rhythm with the natural harmony of nature, poetry unfolds as a centauric creature. Trumpeting the epiphanic abyss at the omphalos of the word, it possesses the transubstantiating power of incantation. Even in imitation, poetry seeks to incarnate by appealing to the Platonic spiritus of Beauty. For Beauty is superior to Truth or Goodness. That which is good is always beautiful, and that which is true is always beautiful; but, that which is beautiful is

not always true, for Beauty encompass the imaginary, the impossible, the becoming or not-yet-being. Similarly, it is not always good, for it transgresses celestial laws to arrogantly cross that great kenotic chasm, eliminating the distance between God and the fallen. As representation, or re-presentation, it creates, perhaps, both a copy of Beauty, and an extension of it, an excrescence of it. This is what Plato means when he speaks of the poet as the mouthpiece of the muse. Poetry possesses not merely the power to copy or imitate Beauty, but to unleash it.

The poetic, in a final act of hubristic transgression, effaces the very other-world in which the Forms exist. Consequently, it sets itself up not merely as a mediating figure between humanity and Beauty, but ensnares Beauty, caging it and destroying all other-worlds in order for art to be the last place in which it can dwell. It is a successful Babel, employing the military strategy of Jonah to become an eternal, infinite, godly realm. Frye understands this as an Aristotelianism wherein nature is contained by the art. This is why Plato bans it; he casts it out as one would another God, a God that seeks to usurp - the Word that is God, but not *that* God. For Plato, God is the only poet allowed. Metaxic poetry threatens to assert itself as the only attainable Beauty, usurping the Form and parading its celestial colonization rather than mourning for God's death. *God is dead* is a matter of representation. "The heart of literature is the death of God, the violent absence of the good, and thus of everything that protects us" (Land, xix). Does art, then, not become the most honest form of being? Art, suggests Nietzsche, actually has the power to tear humanity away from the web of lies that make up his sense of truth. This is the most profound potential of humanity: the ability to transgress against the gods and demand the punishment that is rightfully ours in our quest to go beyond ourselves.

Weil's aesthetics are often Platonist as well, not only in the condemnation of illusions of truth created by the imagination, but in the notion that beauty acts as a transcendental lure. For Weil, the beautiful initiates an intense desire in the subject, and the closer one comes to attaining (possessing, contemplating, or experiencing) the desired object, the more the subject realizes that its beauty is unfulfilling. Even the love one feels for a beloved partner is, ultimately, an unfulfilling emotion because it is not an end in itself. What one desires in the beautiful object, is the supernatural truth behind it which radiates through. One might create a Weilean scale of beauty based on the extent to which a given object or individual is transparent and able to radiate the divine beauty behind it.

Ficino believed the Egyptian's magic to be evil "because the demons in the statues were worshipped as gods; but implies that demons are alright if used as means and not worshipped as ends" (Walker, 42). In the Ficinian sense, the difference between what we might call good poetry and evil poetry might rest on this very point, that is, the extent to which poetry uses the void at its centre as a means or an ends. Poetry, like Greco and Kafka, "tears open the sky behind every gesture; but as with El Greco…the gesture remains the decisive thing, the center of the event" (Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," 121). The 'decisive gesture' of metaxic poetry is the last tear that finally rips apart a hole in the sky. For some, these tears open gaping metaxu that unleash an ecstatic energy, rendering language porous with metaxic epiphany. There are others who utter incantatory death chants, bacchantly crying for the last vestiges of language's decaying gods to crumble. Their work "is a hallucinatory storm, flashes of lightning hoping at most to create the fear before danger that stems from an attraction toward danger. They are texts

without self, without 'I'" (Friedrich qtd. in de Man, *Lyric and Modernity*, 172). To these poets, the celestial money purse spills its contents to the earth, betraying its deepest and most humiliating secrets, those the Forms have sought to keep from us during their reign: deformities, indigestion, wallflowered sadness, cancerous breasts, non-existence.

From this point of view, the poetry of the symbolistes is auratic art of ritualistic quality for a readership that has lost the ability to participate in the ritual. Benjamin is fascinated by the readerly public to whom *Les fleurs du mal* is addressed for a reason very similar. Symboliste art is ritual, auratic art appropriated by a capitalist public for other means. "[T]he *correspondences* record a concept of experience which includes ritual elements. Only by appropriating these elements was Baudelaire able to fathom the full meaning of the breakdown which he, a modern man, was witnessing" (Benjamin, *OMB*, 181). Ultimately, we must question exactly what kind of a community is formed by capitalist society, and whether proper ritualization is even possible. The interconnection of the ritual cult has been replaced by market-based conglomerations that alienate rather than unite. As such, in the aura-aping poetry of the symbolistes, there is something anti-cult or a subversion of community in the face of modern exile. "If we are to follow Plato, we must therefore assert the following: The city, which is the name of the assembled humanity, is thinkable only inasmuch as its concept is sheltered from the poem" (Badiou, *Handbook*, 16). Metaxic poetry, one might say, is the auratic art of kenotic exile. At times, Simone Weil is slightly more pessimistic (realistic?) about the potential for art under such conditions.

> L'art n'a pas d'avenir immédiat parce que tout art est collectif et qu'il n'y a plus de vie collective) il n'y a que des collectivités mortes), et aussi à cause de cette rupture du pacte véritable entre le corps et l'âme…L'art ne pourra renaître que du sein de la grande anarchie – épique sans doute, parce que le malheur aura simplifié bien des choses... Il est donc bien inutile de ta part d'envier Vinci ou Bach. La grandeur, de nos jours, doit

> prendre d'autres voies. Elle ne peut d'ailleurs être que solitaire, obscure et sans écho... (or, pas d'art sans écho). (Weil, *PG*, 174)

But also:

> Le beau est la preuve expérimentale que l'incarnation est possible. Dès lors tout art de premier ordre est par essence religieux. (C'est ce qu'on ne sait plus aujourd'hui.) Une mélodie grégorienne témoigne autant que la mort d'un martyr. (Weil, *PG*, 173)

One hastens to ask: did Baudelaire, Verlaine or Rimbaud *actually* possess an auratic sight, even in their most entheogenically inebriated? Does *tripping balls* correspond to celestial orbs or the shape of Plato's forms? Might they have communally starred in a public service message, preaching, in glorious sincerity, "This is your Dasein. This is your Dasein on drugs?" If "all poets pursue in their own way the impossible synthesis between existence and being" (Sartre qtd. in Blood, 78), then at the very least, their poetry offers the perfect representation of auratic art. If deauratic, it is not merely deauratic that masquerades as auratic, but deauratic art that seeks to create a new ritualized perspective when all others have bottomed out. If auratic art entertains a proximity to God, perhaps de-auratic art entertains a proximity to the death of God. "[I]t is just as *this Unknown One* that he is the measure for the poet...Not only this, but the god who remains unknown, must by showing *himself* as the one who he is, appear as the one who remains unknown. God's *manifestness* - not only he himself – is mysterious" (Heidegger, 222). And yet, symboliste poetry is deauratic art that, like no other, demands the *faith* of auratic art. It is the last auratic gasp of the language of man. It is "the scream of the one that is killed [that] is the supreme affirmation of life" (Bataille, *TR*, 40).

Benjamin quotes of Valéry:

> We recognize a work of art by the fact that no idea it inspires in us, no mode of behaviour that it suggests we adopt could exhaust it or dispose of it. We may inhale the smell of a flower whose fragrance is agreeable to us for as long as we like; it is impossible for us to rid ourselves of the fragrance by which our senses have been aroused...or release us from

> the hold it has on us. He who has set himself the task of creating a work of art aims at the same effect. (*OMB*, 186)

Benjamin responds: "According to this view, the painting we look at reflects back at us that of which our eyes will never have their fill" (186). It is thus the pursuit of such art to conjure up an alephic entity (one to which we will ultimately shut our eyes) of which our eyes can never have their fill. Such art is not closed, but open to the wholeness of its alephic simulation, although it may give the impression that such a sight is self-contained and that the viewer can remain separate and pull away intact.

The ritual value of metaxic art lies in the creation of an experience in which correspondence may be approached, that is, an experience of the beautiful towards which ritual always reaches, and only obtains when it transcends itself (Benjamin, *OMB*, 183). In *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus transforms each entity into an aesthetic object, seeking to return the reproducible world of things to the auratic void from which they came.[39] Thus, to return to the auratic is to move towards that which cannot be presented or exhibited, that which forces every physical entity to reach towards its latent, yet burgeoning, ineffability.

> Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man…This endowment is a wellspring of poetry. Wherever a human being, an animal, or an inanimate object thus endowed by the poet lifts up its eyes, it draws him into the distance. The gaze of nature thus awakened dreams and pulls the poet after its dream. (Benjamin, *OMB*, 188-200)

> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symbols
> Qui l'observait avec des regards familiers
> Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondances"

Poetry's impossible hope is "to recover the identity between the world and man" (Blood, 78), to return man to the intimacy which marks his place as an interconnection

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[39] One imagines a film, surely to be released by Troma Films, in which Stephen plays *The Metaxic Avenger*.

rather than an alienation. In its most yearningly epiphanic, it traverses silences with unifying theories of correspondence. The unifying perspective promised through the synaesthetic vision of the correspondences of Baudelaire and Rimbaud is irretrievably distant, yet they nevertheless seduce with the allure that, through careful reading, one might just come to master that long spectral gaze into the abyss. It functions in the same way as the suicidal aleph, for once this gaze is maintained, the poem itself ceases to exist; one cannot achieve true symbolist perspective and still retain the composure to read. "[I]f man (l'homme) is at home among 'regards familiers' within that Nature, then his language of tropes and analogies is of little use" (de Man, *ATL*, 252).

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

II est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
— Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondances"

Examining Baudelaire's "Correspondances," de Man goes on to illustrate the continuous concatenation of opposing meanings and of assertions which become paradoxes when juxtaposed with their opposites, as in 'Vaste comme le nuit et comme la clarté.' De Man is fascinated by the coexistence of a night made infinite because of the dissolution of difference and one made infinite through the 'clarté' of "endless analytical distinctions" (*ATL*, 245), but Baudelaire gropes at that vast light which offers a clarity in

which the dissolution of difference can also occur. Within the void, there is no way to differentiate between the particular and the unified, the void that separates and connects, the nothingness that demands singularity and yet unifies everything in a lack of unity. In this manner, Cioran believes that "Baudelaire rivals St. John of the Cross" (*Tears And Saints*, 71).

The anthropomorphism of Baudelaire's poem is not entirely pervasive, for the scent of a child's flesh is described with the vegetal 'frais' - a *vegetal*-morphism? a *rhizo*-morphism? - that Baudelaire uses to illustrate that the transference of qualities from one object to another transcends anthropocentrism. The polysemic nature of Baudelaire's poem also refuses to limit itself to the kind of reading which would render an urban and 'sylvan world' mutually exclusive. "We cannot be certain whether we have ever left the world of humans and whether it is therefore relevant or necessary to speak of anthropomorphism at all in order to account for the figuration of the text" (de Man, *ATL*, 246). Metaxic poetry involves the destruction of the hermeneutical system that would seek to close these to each other. A 'sylvan world' and chaotic 'crowd of humanity' do not dwell in separate realms. Insurmountable binaries depend on the absence of metaxu, enforcing a chronotopic understanding that is entirely non-rhizomatic.

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur quotes Pierre Fontanier: "But it is given only to God to be able to embrace, in one single view, all individuals, whatever kind they may be, and to see them all together and singly at the same time" (Ricoeur, 334). In "The Aleph," Borges goes mad with the sight, but has to scribble it down it down somehow. Luckily, such writing is likely mad by nature, as Valéry once demanded of Mallarmé: "Netrouvez-vous pas que c'est un acte de démence?" (Fowlie, 219). Borges explains that,

as a writer, he is only able to illustrate his alephic vision using successive, sequential language in order to avoid superimposition (283). As a painter, René Magritte performs a similar task in his work, *L'Empire des lumières* (1954). Here, the nocturnal and the diurnal coexist simultaneously within the same chronotopic space. With written language, Joyce is, perhaps, most effective with *Finnegans Wake*, a nocturnal emission of erudition in which individual words possess several meanings simultaneously. Rimbaud's descriptions, even at their most self-deprecatingly banal, are phantasmagoric.

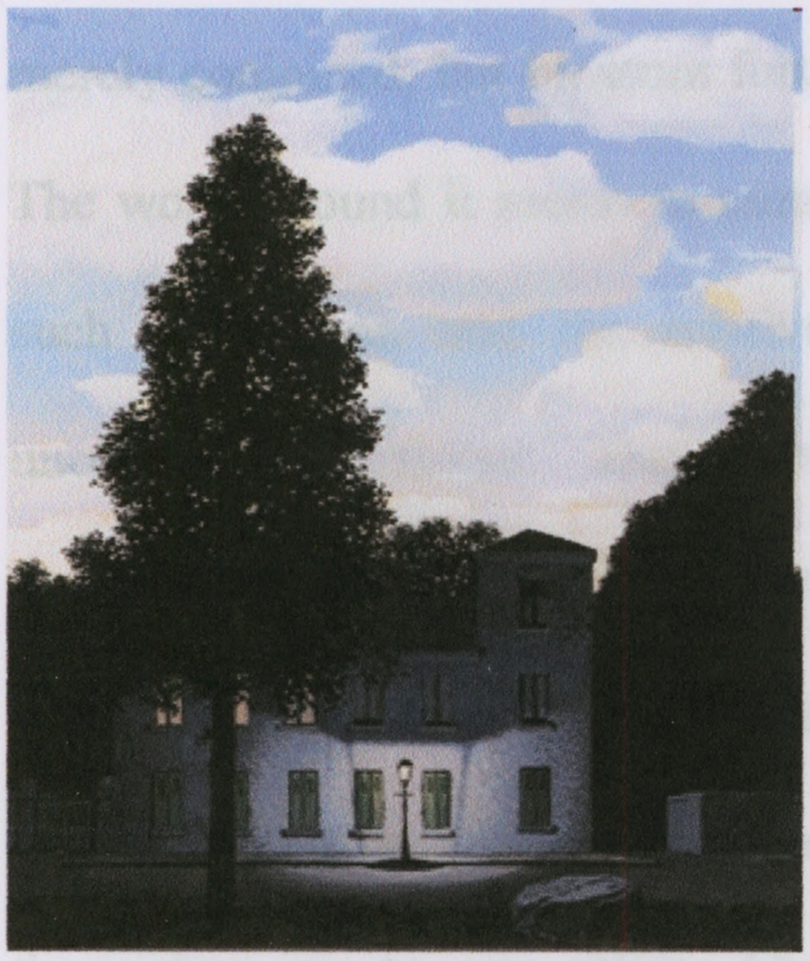

Figure 4. René Magritte, *L'Empire des lumières* (1954)

> Je m'habituai à l'hallucination simple: je voyais très-franchement une mosque à la place d'une usine, une école de tambours faite par des anges, des calèches sur les routes du ciel, un salon au fond d'un lac; les monsters, les mystères; un titre de vaudeville dressait des épouvantes devant moi.
>
> Arthur Rimbaud, "Délires II: Alchimie du verbe"

De Man interprets "Correspondences" as an environment in which "everything can be substituted for everything else without distorting the most natural experience" (*ATL*, 255), and while 'substitution' is a slightly dangerous term under the circumstances, he is not far off the mark.

> The serenity of the diction celebrates the powers of tropes or "symboles" that can reduce any conceivable difference to a set of polarities and combine them in an endless play of substitution and amalgamation, extending from the level of signification to that of the signifier. Here... the telos of the substitutions is the unified system "esprit/sens" (l.14), the seamless articulation, by ways of language, of sensory and aesthetic experience with the intellectual assurance of affirmation (*ATL*, 244).

In visual art, the play of substitution can take many forms. In *Rose et poire* (1968), Magritte creates a centaur concatenation where the two vegetal entities are not merely conjoined, but blossom forth from one another. The world around it seems to mourn the loneliness of such a creature, and the relative absence of such uncommon marriages. The correspondence poems employ synaesthesia as their method of articulating simultaneous sensibility. Language operates as a metaxic space in which nature and the senses give themselves up to one other. And perhaps it is not simply a hearing of yellow, but also a seeing, a smelling, a tasting and touching - a total lack of differentiation between the senses altogether. *Pure* sense. Pure *sense*. The temples of sight, smell, and hearing collapse, and nature – that great thing where the senses are combined in an overwhelming experiential entity – swarms in, interweaving until one cannot pull the senses apart. The division of the senses is the ambiguous ensnarement of nature's cutting. 'Des choses infinies' means that yellow cannot be contained in sight or smell or even the relation between the two, but in the dissolution of them both.

Figure 5. René Magritte, *Rose et poire* (1968)

> Il est de forts parfums pour qui toute matière
> Est poreuse. On dirait qu'ils pénètrent le verre.
> Charles Baudelaire, "Le flacon"

Ambergris, musk, balsam – these are smells which are the things-themselves. The rose no longer smells sweet. It smells rose. Its meaning is not differed by another word, nor is its sense by sense. Smells enter language as themselves. Sweet makes homogenous the heterogeneous, as the logical un-sense or non-sense is transgressed. "The property which

privileges 'parfums' as the sensory analogon for the joint powers of mind and body (ll. 9-14) is its ability to grow from the infinitely small to endless expansion." (de Man, *ATL*, 247). Entheogenesis in a scent.

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes:
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,

Golfes d'ombre; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombelles;
I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;

U, cycles, vibrements divins des mers virides,
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux;

O, suprême Clairon plein des strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges:
—O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses Yeux!

Arthur Rimbaud, "Voyelles"

For Rimbaud, synaesthesia offers a way of sensing the un-sensible and glimpsing the un-glimpsable, and calling it into being through poetry. For if we analyze A as simply a 'noir corset,' or I as 'sang craché,' this is to focus only on those tangible, material elements of the letter, and to ignore the 'golfes d'ombre,' the 'vibrements divins,' the 'Mondes et des Anges.' One needs both sublime trumpets and the beautiful lips with which to blow them. A semantic approach which compartmentalizes or fragments these sentences, not only separates noun from predicate, but severs the material from the immaterial, the physical particular from the abstract or universal, thus dislocating the ontological truth that Rimbaud, stumbling around drunk without the need to shave, is seeking to represent through their union. De Man locates such a union even in the title of Baudelaire's "Correspondances," envisioning an "anagrammatic condensation of the text's entire program: 'corps' and 'esprit' brought together and harmonized by the *ance*

of assonance that pervades the concluding tercets" (*ATL*, 245). Rimbaud unveils language as the elementary cite of concatenation between the two realms. The void space which rends the linguistic sign in two is not an unbridgeable space of separation, but merely a metaxic space where the epiphanous linguistic act can occur. Without poetry, without an appeal to make the abyss between sign and referent a metaxic conduit, their disunity is inevitable.

> "Elle est retrouvée!
> —Quoi?—l'Éternité.
> C'est la mer mêlée
> Au soleil.
>
> Arthur Rimbaud, "L'Éternité"

Eternity is this mélange of mer and soleil. An event opening up in space that contains all space, but, perhaps, not all at once. Perhaps, one must first see hybridity before the mind's eye is able to register the alephic chaos of undifferentiated unity. Perhaps there is little difference between staring into eternity, and the stare in which objects collapse into one another.

v.
Metemontogeny in *Ulysses*;
or The role of the artist when even deadhands write

> ...In the first place I must shove against an atmosphere pressing with a force of fourteen pounds on every square inch of my body. I must make sure of landing on a plank travelling [sic] at twenty miles a second round the sun – a fraction of a second too early or too late, the plank would be miles away. I must do this whilst hanging from a round planet head outward into space, and with a wind of aether blowing at no one knows how many a second through the interstice of my body. The plank has no solidity of substance. To step on it is like stepping on a swarm of flies. Shall I not slip through? No, if I make the venture one of the flies hits me and gives a boost up again; I fall again and am knocked upwards by another fly; and so on. I may hope that the net result will be that I remain about steady; but if unfortunately I should slip through the floor or be boosted up too violently up to the ceiling, the occurrence would be, not a violation of the laws of Nature, but a rare coincidence.
>
> Arthur Stanley Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*
> Walter Benjamin, "Some Reflections of Kafka"

Metaxic poesis is the transubstantiating result of the mind's interaction with the void, an interaction through which the phenomenological achieves epiphanic revelation. Hélène Cixous describes something similar in her epic dissertation, stating that the "awakened conscience is in a state of osmosis with the dream world" (71). In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce presents a 'panepiphanal' dream world as one of Babelic separation, its lucidity lost in a post-lapsarian language that has become jarringly foreign. The events of *Ulysses* may occur during the waking hours of the day, but to say that they are relegated to a specific diurnal-language contrary to *Wake* is a common over-simplification, for Joyce's metaxu suture these two worlds back together, thereby infiltrating the waking realm with everything beyond it. "This monstrous epiphany will therefore be the total manifestation of reality through language"[40] (Franke, 106).

Stephen eloquently sums up the diaphanous nature of metaxu in his analysis of Shakespeare. "Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves" (*U*, 9. 1044-1046). The liquefaction of substance and the dissolution of the barriers separating self from other become the method by which one becomes its other, indeed, any other, and a non-isomorphic, non-linear, rhizomatic metempsychosis is possible. Stephen refers to himself as "a changeling" (3.308-9); Bloom becomes subjugated woman. Bella becomes Bello, the grotesque male dominatrix. In stage directions, "*Bloom walks on a net...[and] passes through several walls....*" (15.1841-1842). Gradually, the limits of Dublin and the Circean brothel expand to chronotopically coexist with the swirling cosmos and the End of the World. Stephen may

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[40] This is actually his translation of a line from Cixous' *The Exile of James Joyce*.

be seen as representing paralytic being in contrast to Bloom's becoming, but his dedication to an aesthetic existence continually seeks to undo this by opening himself up to a metemontogenic existence.

Because Time itself is subject to this Joycean metempsychosis or metemontogeny, History becomes a nightmare from which Stephen can never awake. It is not relegated to an eluctable dream state, but becomes a part of Stephen's (and Bloom's) conscious contemporaneity, a kind of teleological seed that reaches its tentacles into the present. If, teleologically speaking, a giant maple can already be present within an acorn, then that acorn still resides within that maple. To rephrase this typologically would be to say that a moment prefigures a second moment, perhaps even a multiplicity of them, with each moment being a constellation connected to a great many others. As in *Molloy*, the past has an icy grip on the present, haunting Stephen in the form of his mother who appears phantasmagorically a number of times throughout the day.[41] The search for transcendence and the metaxification of the world is a continuous effort to transgress time. "Life has a content only in the violation of time. The obsession of elsewhere is the impossibility of the moment" (Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, 31).

Derrida's treatment of the *khora* bears certain similarities to Weil's metaxu. He describes it as being atemporal, indeed, possibly atemporality itself. Derrida's *khora* is neither being nor non-being, but a kind of neither-nor against which being and non-being can be measured. A metaxu might function in a similar manner, for it is through metaxu that being comes to be cognoscente of a non-being or a beyond-being. Moreover, towards the end of Derrida's essay, he refers to as the *khora* as a space, a receptacle, and a

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[41] In a statement hinting at Joyce's apophatic hues, Colleen Jaurretche explains that the death of Stephen's mother "promotes a kind of meditative introspection upon loss and absence as determiners of reality" (Jaurretche, 52).

> trace (left in Being) of what is not... a place of passage, and more precisely, a threshold. But a threshold, this time, to give access to what is no longer a place... What finds itself reduced to the condition of a threshold is Being itself, Being as a place. Solely a threshold, but a sacred place, the outer sanctuary (*parvis*) of the temple. (Derrida, 121)

Derrida then proceeds to quote Meister Eckhart who teaches that any apprehension of God occurs in the sanctuary or *parvis* of the threshold. The metaxu is a *khora*-like threshold that acts as the interstitial sanctuary in which God is perceived, perhaps even in a Derridean sense, *inscribed.* Especially in the metaxu of Joyce, what reveals itself as epiphanous can be understood as the inscription of the 'beyond-being.' The phenomenal world is a space of inscription for the noumenal world, a textual space through which the Word is made manifest. Epiphany is the writing and metaxu the place of such writing.

The subjection of temporality to metaxic fluidity arguably reaches its apotheosis in "Circe," where the living world becomes a textual space onto which deadhands write messages to the living and Death itself can walk around "in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil" (15.4157-4158). And this is one of the reasons why Joyce is so successful in representing the inexhaustibility of a day. The present is a nexus point through which all time passes – "the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past" (9.89). On the Sandymount strand, Stephen ponderously inquires: "am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?" (3.18-9). Stephen's struggle with paralytic ennui is a constant threat to this, for the difference between ennui and something less toothy like boredom is ennui's ability to distort and erode time. "Ennui shows us an eternity which is not the transcendence of time, but its wreck; it is the infinity of souls that have rotted for lack of superstitions, a banal absolute where nothing any longer keeps things from turning in circles, in search of their own Fall" (Cioran, *SHD*, 14). Stephen's art is often the manifestation of his struggle against

this destructive force. Indeed, for many artists, their creation amounts to little more than this struggle.

In her notebooks, Weil describes time as both cave and cross, a post-lapsarian imprisonment from which the self must escape. The past and future times that infringe upon the present in Beckett and Joyce run counter to Weilean detachment. To dwell in the isolated present, apart from past suffering or future desire, constitutes a sinlessness or forgiveness for Weil, concepts necessarily foreign to the kenotic creatures of *Molloy* and *Ulysses*. The contemporaneous influence of future and past is explained, however, due to more than simply time's amorphousness, but rather, its non-existence. If God exists in whatever is external to time - even infinity, for this is simply the endless continuation of finitude, finitude without end – then the division between past, present, and future, is little more than arbitrarily experiential. There is truly no self; there is simply attachment and extension in the false exteriority of space and time. That which we christen 'I' is little more than a process of extension into, or appropriation of, this false space. There are two operations of this vegetal life that are opposed to one another - rooting and rhizomatic growth - one growing in a multitude of directions, the other clinging, foregoing growth for security and territory, effectively reterritorializing absence.

Joyce's stream of consciousness allows thoughts, voices, and ideas to bleed into one another, but also serves to allow a fluidity of phenomena to unleash the ineffability of substance, "reconciling the phenomenal and the ineffable world" (Jaurretche, 84). This amorphousness destroys any possible stability to the modality of substance. Thus, the "ineluctable modality of the visible" (3.1) is the inescapable form of change and indeterminacy in which consciousness finds itself. "Wait. Five months. Molecules all

change. I am other now…But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms" (9.205-9).[42] William Franke communicates something very similar, arguing that Joyce

> reflected self-consciousness so deeply into itself that it shattered and was no longer clearly set off against either the consciousness of others or the world itself. His stream of consciousness flooded over all conceivable embankments and immersed the whole world of consciousness in a sea of the unconscious, where individual identities were no longer distinct but merged with one another. (Franke, 104)

In "Ithaca," Joyce offers us a glimpse of the cosmological 'void,' describing the human being as a "conscious rational animal proceeding syllogistically from the known to the unknown and conscious rational reagent between a micro- and a macrocosm ineluctably constructed upon the incertitude of the void" (17.1012-15). As metaxic poet, Stephen is in continual conversation with such a void, for to lead an aesthetic existence in *Ulysses* is to open oneself up to it and the transcendental force it contains. Stephen admits: "Darkness is in our souls don't you think?" (3.421). For the scientific-minded Bloom, all earthly substances are their own "universes of void space constellated with other bodies, each, in continuity, its universe of divisible component bodies of which each was again divisible… till, if the process were carried far enough, nought nowhere was never reached" (17.1064-1069). Even Bloom's inscrutable logic seems to tremble at this 'nought nowhere,' cognoscente that the fragmentation of visible phenomena glimpsed through Science's monocle can only go so far.

What Bloom is describing in this passage is the apophatic approach to divine truth in scientific terms. Bloom tears away at the fabric of the visible until all the

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[42] Memory thus plays an enormous part in the formation of one's consciousness amidst a void of 'everchanging forms.' Henri Bergson, of course, understands this flux more than most. "[A]n intelligence that was only intelligence, that had neither regret nor desire, whose movement was governed by the movement of its object, could not even conceive an absence or a void. The conception of a void arises here when consciousness, lagging behind itself, remains attached to the recollection of an old state when another state is already present" (*Creative Evolution*, 307).

fragmentation capable of being glimpsed through the light of the microscope recedes into the void space beneath, "a darkness shining in brightness which brightness [can] not comprehend" (2.160). Bloom's logistical[43] approach to the world wisely remains on the threshold of the infinite, deeply interested in mathematics, but full of fearful awe at that incalculable and un-transcribable number larger than "the nucleus of the nebula of every digit of every series containing succinctly the potentiality of being raised to the utmost kinetic elaboration of any power of any of its powers" (17.1079-82).

Weil's apophatic void stands between humanity and a God whose love is so great, that He is able to love us through the evil of the void. Joyce's love has a more difficult time penetrating this Weilean veil. Bloom's masturbatory sequence in "Nausicaa" is quite revelatory, for of all this talk about love - all the pornography, the adulterous affairs, and the extravagant trip to the brothel - this is one of the only actualized sexual encounters, and perhaps somewhat tellingly, it is, arguably, the most consensual.[44] Stephen can't kiss his own mother and fantasizes about the inherently vampiric nature of kissing; Molly thinks it strange for Bloom to kiss her smellow melons. An erect penis occupies much discussion in "Cyclops," but it belongs to a corpse, a well-hung hanging divested of any sexual purpose. In sexual encounters, something happens in the crossing of this distance; there is an intersection here so full of meaning, that Joyce would rather leave its mystery intact. Infidelity is one of the driving forces of the novel, but Molly's affair buzzes invisibly in the margins; it is frequently implied, but never etherised upon Eliot's table for all to see. Bloom's affair is orchestrated on postcards and letters. Intercourse always

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[43] And I use this term gesturing to both its connotations, that of logic and an ordering of movement or transportation that we might associate with the transport of being.

[44] The few exceptions are, of course, Bello raping Bloom, and Bloom kissing the "plump mellow yellow smellow melons of...[Molly's] rump" (17:2241).

exists beyond a vanishing point. When it is wrenched out into the open, as in "Circe," it is grotesquely other, a product of a world in which we do not belong.

The eye is the organ of Joyce's schema in the Nausicaan episode and the entirety of Gerty and Bloom's encounter is based on a mutual gaze and an imaginative creation of the personality of the gazing other. They exist for each other as paintings, staged tableaux into which they cannot fully cross. Their pathetic waves goodbye cannot be communicated and Bloom fails to scribble a message to her in the sand. He completes only 'I… AM. A.' and one is no doubt quick to cover up the uncomfortable ellipsis with a tenuous hypothesis. "No room. Let it go" (13.1265), he thinks to himself, so clearly he initially had something in mind. But he's on a beach full of sand, and coincidentally chose a spot that is too small to fit a single sentence. Seems improbable. So what then? I... AM A CRIPPLE, TOO? I... AM A KING LOST ON A FOREIGN SHORE? Perhaps, what is of foremost importance is not *what* is missing, but rather the possibility that nothing is missing at all. As Weil teaches us, nothing is more necessary than the absence. Bloom's position is solidified within this ellipsis: a cultural one, a marital one; he identifies himself in the sand with a sentence that can never be completed, with a negation of identity. He affirms a place outside the limits of the sentence, relegated to the margins and the periphery. At the edge of the sea, his sandy scrawls exist in a transitory space, sure to disappear within a few short hours. He cannot make a lasting mark on the land. His thoughts are transient, his desires vagrant. This is where Joyce's text loves to dwell, embedded within these outside spaces, concentrating on the alternate worlds of the subconscious, the erotic, the Jew, the lonely lustful cripple, the poet pariah who also struggles with a kind of infertile masturbatory art.

Joyce employs his metaxology in order to reconcile spirit and matter within the Ulyssean void and in order to facilitate the metemontogeny of his phenomenological realm. Like the kittydoor of Bloom's precious pet, metaxu are a kind of cat's passage, a "door of egress [and] a door of ingress" (17.1034)[45] through which the essence of all forms is able to pass. "Through smaller spaces than red globules of man's blood they creepycrawl after Blake's buttocks into eternity of which this vegetable world is but a shadow" (9.84-8). Stephen's use of the term 'shadow' here seems to offer a condemnation of the material world as a crude image or representation, a cracked and opaque shaving mirror in which nothing transcendent can be glimpsed. But this is merely the opposition against which Stephen and his aesthetic vision fight. Due to the feline metaxu which permeate Joyce's kenotic abyss, there is nothing *outside* or *beyond* the phenomenological object. One again, we have a kind of apophatic rhizomism whereby vacuous fissures and chasmic burrows appear abruptly at all points, and the very fabric of being is comprised of an infinite series of trapdoors into which one may plunge.

The *meta* of Joyce's metaphysics does not refer to some ineffable and ethereal absolute *behind* or *after* matter; rather, it refers to a *transfer* or *carrying across* as in meta-phor and metem-psychosis, but also a *between* as in meta-xu - a peripatetic transcendentalism, as Stephen might define it. With the fluidity of being, each phenomenological fragment smuggles into it that which is normally relegated to the metaphysical or spiritual realm. Each fragment has the potential to become a kind of Borgesian aleph, a potential unlocked by the engagement of an epiphanous consciousness. This is, in fact, precisely what epiphany means: the incarnation of the

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[45] One might compare Joyce's door of ingress and egress with Beckett's "petit trou." (*Molloy*, 122) or Leslie Hill's "egress and regress" (Hill, 162). Also, in the chapter on metaxu in *La Pesanteur et la grâce*, Weil states: "Ce monde est la porte fermée. C'est une barrière. Et, en même temps, c'est le passage" (166).

divine in the material realm, the crossing of the metaxic threshold by whatever transcendent force exists.

Joyce gives us a visual representation of a metaxic conduit in the full-stop at the end of "Ithaca." Austin Briggs evokes Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* when discussing the dot. Atwood envisions punctuation as a kind of metaxu, a "pinprick in the paper: you could put your eye to it and see through, to the other side, to the beginning of something else" (Atwood qtd. in Briggs, 128). Don Gifford reads the dot as a large period connected to the *S, M,* and *P* that begin the three sections of Ulysses, implying an association with a large menstrual marking (606). While I do not subscribe to this reading, it does suggest the possibility that, stain to paper, this is a dot that is not simply motionless. Joyce's repeated command to the printers to enlarge it also allows us to imagine a swelling rather than static stain which spreads over the page. Like Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*, the full stop seeks to capture pure movement in a still form. It seeks to push beyond itself to become metamorphic. A metemontogeny of sculpture and punctuation. We might use a passage from Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* to demonstrate the effect. In the passage, the Iroquoian martyr, Catherine Tekakwitha, has just spilled a glass of wine:

> The stain spread quickly… It now claimed the entire tablecloth. Talk ceased altogether as a silver vase turned purple and the pink flowers it contained succumbed to the same influence. A beautiful lady gave out a cry of pain as her fine hand turned purple. A total chromatic metamorphosis took place in a matter of minutes. Wails and oaths resounded through the purple hall as faces, clothes, tapestries, and furniture displayed the same deep shade. Beyond the high windows… drifts of spring snow darkened into shades of spilled wine, and the moon itself absorbed the imperial hue. (102)

I do not want to suggest that Joyce's full-stop is some kind of all-consuming menstrual mark, and certainly no berried blemish, but rather, the indelible imprint of the novel's pervasive 'uncreated void' and the ever expanding metaxic holes that offer diaphanous

passage through it. This metaxic dot is the black stain that grows to engulf everything in its darkness, an apophatic darkness wherein Truth is contained. One might be tempted to see it as a kind of metaxic sigil embedded within the text. The black dot is the only reply to "Ithica's" concluding question 'Where?' and its location is a dark apophatic space where traditional language cannot exist, letting only its darkness speak. The lack of words in response to the query initially seems a mistake, but, of course, "a man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery" (9.229-30). Here, we are literally given the shape of this 'portal of discovery,' a metaxic conduit from the world of Bloom and Stephen to the world of Molly, an alternate universe of gender, language, and consciousness. If, as many critics argue, "Ithaca" is to be understood as the possible ending of the novel, the metaxu with which it ends necessitates a glimpse through to "Penelope's" *other side*. But what exists through this darkened passage is neither an explicitly feminine truth nor an explicitly masculine truth, but the truth of a Penelope that offers us more evidence of interconnectivity.[46] One might imagine this metaxic portal, this ever-changing, ever-growing black dot as a vacuum into which everything previously written is wrenched, swallowing all that came before it. A textual Lestrygonian.

Joyce is retaliating against a (aesthetic) history that has made women into an other, a figure of such mystery that her identity dwells on the other side of a metaxic divide. This dot is the bridge or metaxic crossing, the reunification of the self with the

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[46] Some feminist readings have lamented the fact that Penelope's soliloquy is not feminine enough, but what exactly does this 'enough' mean? Perhaps it is due to the fact that her soliloquy seems rooted to the dirty cuckolding sheets in which she lies, her adulterous bed acting as an extension of her sensuous flesh. There appears a certain beached quality to Penelope, a hypersexual creature whose bed sheets drag on the floor like the hem of a dress. The metaxic mark which facilitates interconnectivity offers a partial solution to this reading.

feminine other. The Penelopean *other side* is, in a sense, always a womb-like state, either feminine or spiritual. The metaxu is a liminal state on the threshold of return, and the departure from the womb a material/corporeal counterpart of the initial kenotic separation. To say that within Joyce's novel every metaxu is a potential womb, every bridge a uterine passage is, perhaps, a bit hyperbolic, yet they offer the promise of a beyond that is at once a movement out of the self and a return to a previous state of unification with the absent other within the subterranean space of consciousness. One of the reasons why Stephen may be so haunted by his mother's death is because it symbolically deprives him of his connection to his mother's womb, removing him from the hope of a Molloy-like metaxic return. Stephen's aesthetic consciousness acts as a defence mechanism against such un-bridging, returning his dead mother to the phenomenal realm, even if it is to his own horror. "The whole of Phenomenology is an epiphenomenology" (Deleuze, *D & R*, 63).

In *Ulysses*, God has been displaced by the mystery of the human interior, and so the infinitude of the mind or consciousness becomes the transcendental realm of the novel's theo-ontology. "From the elements that weigh downwards, the word of god leapt straight up to the pure craftwork of nature and united with the craftsman-mind (for the word was of the same substance" (*Corpus Hermeticum*, 2). Through aesthetic consciousness, metemontogeny does not merely allow for the amorphous passage from one substance to another, but serves to cancel "the distinction between spirit and matter" (Jaurretche, 51). When Stephen states that "God [is a] voice in the street" (9.84-5) this is an epiphanous counter-argument to "Allfather, the heavenly man" (9.61-2) or the 'Omniboss' of *Wake*. It is a fundamental reordering of Christian Platonism's denigration

of matter, for a more Weilean form of Platonism in which flesh is metaxic and Plato is the father of Western mysticism. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Stephen views Protestantism to be more foolish, for it makes a symbol of the Eucharist, while Catholicism is far more romantic in its cannibalistic literalism. God is a voice in the street because the metaxic barriers have become conduits in rebellious protest against the apartheid of matter and sensual corporeality. The kenotic divide has been crossed and God now plays in the street with children. "God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain" (3.477-8).

This coextensive space where the 'distinction between spirit and matter' is cancelled and Stephen's "soul walks with [him], form of forms" (3.279-80), offers a possible understanding of Stephen's peculiar melancholia and existential paralysis. He has simultaneously unlocked the peripatetic secret of being, but is almost dumbstruck at the paradox therein, for while all phenomena unveils itself as mere cavities to be filled, the transcendental never ceases to be the transcendental upon infiltrating every form. Such epiphanous unification can only be achieved by way of an aesthetic consciousness that unveils the metaxic structure of the void. Subsequently, "the intellect attempts to fix our consciousness of things. Since things are not themselves fixed, when they change the intellect feels deprived and frightens us with the idea of annihilation or the void" (Gose Jr., xiv). Stephen's confrontation with the void is also an aesthetic "creat[ing] from nothing" (3.65) and, at times, he displays a certain existential exhaustion from maintaining this apophatic gaze. As Joyce wrote to his brother: "My eyes are tired. For over half a century, they have gazed into nullity where they have found a lovely nothing" (*Collected Letters*, 3:358, 361). Stephen also expresses a fear that perhaps he is not up to

a task he does not fully comprehend, as he finds himself "getting along nicely in the dark" but then worries about the dangers (3.15). "Open your eyes now. I will. One moment. Has all vanished since? If I open and am for ever in the black adiaphane" (3.25-6).

> "Joyce exploits the apophatic, or negative, theology for the philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic advantages of a literature whose focus lies in the quieting of the mind and senses. For Joyce, as for John of the Cross, this introspection holds a mirror, darkly, to consciousness and its relationship to the senses as they mediate inner and outer worlds." (Jaurretche, 6)

Again, I do not mean to equate the transcendental with some kind of 'Omniboss,' for neither does Stephen. Instead, for lack of an ability to remove its mysteriousness - a sublime mystery which Joyce insists on keeping intact - we might simply call it the 'uncreated void' of the 'nowhere nought' that receives epiphanous vivification upon confrontation with poetic consciousness. In the metemontogenic world of *Ulysses*, where the artist's consciousness becomes infused with whatever exists beyond the consciousness, every aesthetic image that springs forth Athena-like from the mind possesses a certain sacramental or ritualistic power. The mind's eye sees "signatures of all things [it is t]here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs" (3.2-4).

Stephen seeks the ineluctable mode or form of all things in the diaphanous world. Objects do not represent mimetically because they do not possess the distance necessary for mimesis. Mimesis is a matter of proximity dependent on a kind of un-traversable kenotic void. Stephen's role as an artist is to capture kenosis in order to override it, as the sheer power of the aesthetic image is not in its representational force, but rather as a kind of excrescence or continuation of the artist through his creation, an almost rhizomatic branching of the artist's being. Like Stephen's famous aesthetic theory, it is an

excavation of the artist out of his art, so that the artist becomes an essence which radiates outwards from his creation. The negative space is an *out there*, but also an *in here*, and so artistic creation (synonymous in *Ulysses* with an aesthetic projection of consciousness) fills these hollow vacuous spaces, the negative space into which conscious projection is possible.

Stephen is a writer who doesn't write, Socrates to Joyce's Plato, and it would be a mistake to try and locate his artistry solely in "personalized lumps of matter" (Joyce, "Portrait of the Artist," 60). He is concerned with the creation of an aesthetic perception which might close the kenotic distance between God and creation, and by doing so, "liberat[e] from…matter that which is their individuating rhythm" (Joyce, "Portrait of the Artist," 60). Stephen's art is like the aphairan of Michelangelo, a chipping away at the clumps of matter which seek to contain the substance of being until it escapes and infiltrates everything. In his famous essay on Blake, Joyce reflects on Michelangelo's "pure, clean line that evokes and creates the figure on the background of the uncreated void" (Joyce, *CW*, 221). Stephen's art seeks to create within this same uncreated void, but produces no clear lines which serve to distinguish the self from his surroundings. In the manner of Shakespeare, whether it is written or merely perceptual, one's art is always a recreation of the world within the void. Jean-Michel Rabaté suggests that Joyce's task possesses a doubled aspect: "it is an intersubjective process and a principle founding the world on the void" (Rabaté, xiv).[47] Jaurretche echoes the same, arguing that "[t]ime and space collapse and the nature of reality becomes the void, the uncreated subjectivity of the unconscious, the conscience and the canvas of the mind" (12). In a sense, it is this

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[47] And slightly later: "Life is founded upon the void in Stephen's post-Freudian view of 'mystical paternity,' just as the world is founded upon the void in Bloom's post-Einsteinian universe" (Rabaté, xxv).

acceptance of the void that allows for Bloom and Stephen to create such a subjectivity of the unconscious.[48] "I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing (*schöpferische Nichts*), the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything" (Stiner qtd. in Critchley, 4). This is why Stephen's interpretation of Shakespeare is so unforgivingly biographical. Implicit in an artist's creation of a world is his own place within it. Finding himself as a 'figure on the background of the uncreated void,' his own selfhood becomes something that must be chipped out of marble block, "founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon likelihood" (9:836-45). "Stephen himself is his own first creation who holds within himself the manner of all being…prov[ing] by algebra that he himself is his own creator from the 'uncreated void' of consciousness" (Jaurretche, 101-4). A *self*portrait of the artist as a young man.

One might see "Circe" as the theatrical presentation of Stephen's aesthetic mission to make all reality epiphanous in order to create a space where both subject and object can interact in metemontogenic exchange. In his essay "Bloom's Death in 'Ithaca,' or the END of Ulysses," C. David Bertolini argues that Bloom dies at the end of "Ithaca," and Penelope's soliloquy is actually a metempsychosic monologue of Bloom from beyond the grave. In the same sort of way, "Circe" offers a reading where Bloom, upon encountering Stephen, finds himself trapped in a phantasmagoric nether-world (a *nether* that is equal parts social, libidinal, and subconscious) constructed by the aesthetic blueprint of Stephen's philosophic contemplation. What Joyce offers in terms of an artist's remainder is essentially his superfluity. Ezra Pound's criticism that there is not

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[48] The godly artist does not passively pare his finger nails in *Ulysses* as he may in *Portrait*, but Bloom pares his finger nails in the cemetery-bound carriage upon seeing Boylan in the streets, the sight of him acting as an immobilizing force to the aesthetic projection of his consciousness.

enough Stephen in *Ulysses*,[49] can be better understood, perhaps, due to Stephen's unnecessary presence after "Circe." Once the metaxic structure is fully asserted, Stephen's role loses all function, for his power as metaxic poet can pass into Bloom, and subsequently, into Molly's monologue, in which numerous critics have found traces of both Stephen and Bloom.

For the sake of Homeric parallelism, Bella assumes the role of the enchantress, but Stephen's psychological transference is so pervasive that by no means is such power restricted to her. In effect, this power must be transferred to as many forms as possible, for "Circe" demands a literalized representation of Stephen's schema, and as Bloom provides the praxis to Stephen's theory, the becoming to his being, "Circe" offers an entire world populated with forms capable of actualizing Stephen's own impotent thought. In a sense, Bloom's subjugation operates as a kind of Weilean self-emptying - one that is only ever accomplished through humiliation and suffering – so that he might open himself to receive the tormented being of Stephen. "Circe" might be viewed as the manic artistic creation of Stephen, and the violent explosion of his philosophy of metaxic aesthetics in Joyce's beloved theatrical form. Each entity occupies an interstitial space in between itself and another, always on the cusp of becoming something else. "'Circe' dramatizes 'the experience of dissolution' itself, in which the boundaries of the self [a]re shattered. It br[eaks] down the dividing line between the mind and its surroundings, and this ultimately amount[s] to nothing less than an 'attack upon the unity of the theological world with its single centre'"[50] (Gibson, *Reading Joyce's "Circe,"* 11-2).

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[49] Joyce claims to have simply been bored of him.
[50] Gibson is referencing Cixous here.

Although their subject is Kafka, we might further extend this examination of "Circe's" role in the metemontogeny of *Ulysses* if we turn to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of metaphor and metaphoricity.

> Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer a proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word. The thing and other things are no longer anything but intensities overrun by deterritorialized sound or words that are following their line of escape…There is no longer man or animal since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities. (D&G, *Kafka Towards A Minor Literature*, 22)

Metamorphosis is the inevitable transformation to which all beings are subjected in a world where metaphoricity is impossible. Benjamin understands the result of de-metaphorization thusly: "All spirit must be concrete, particularized in order to have its place and *raison d'être*. The spiritual, if it plays a role at all, turns into spirits. These spirits become definite individuals, with names and a very special connection with the name of the worshipper" ("Franz Kafka," 131). Metaphor is only possible in an ontologically mimetic world where each earthly entity acts as the mere shadow of its heavenly luminescent counterpart. Such a world operates on vastly different rules of representation built on stable identities, that is, on the ability for things to resemble one another without metemontogenically collapsing into that thing itself.

To decreate, to pass by way of grace through metaxic barriers, requires a certain control over one's being which the Kafka of Benjamin and Deleuze does not afford his characters. Reality itself is a trapdoor into which one falls (always unexpectedly, never by way of seeking God) and once on the other side of the looking glass, is given nothing more than a different (often lower and more solitary) angle through which to peer into the apophatic darkness. The *becoming-beetle* of the man is not a kind of décréation whereby Gregor divests himself of his humanity, but rather, the metamorphosis of a being without

proprietary claim to such being and, consequently, its decreative potential. Kafka's vision is so comfortless because part of the *beyond* to which Gregor is denied access is the very kenotic realm of humanity to which he ostensibly belongs. In the nighttown of "Circe," Stephen literally controls the kataphatic/apophatic powers of light and darkness; his departure from Bella's brothel is marked by returning it to the darkness of an uncreated void, taking the projections of his subconscious with him. Metaphoricity being an unnecessary rhetorical figure, Joyce has him destroy a chandelier with his ashplant staff, and subsequently, "Time's livid flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of space, shattered glass and toppling masonry" (15.4243-4). Bloom hands over money in recompense for Stephen's vandalising eclipse: sixpence for the broken lamp, another nine and a half shillings for the sudden de-epiphanizing of the world.

Beckett famously declared that "more and more [his] own language appear[ed] to [him] like a veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it" (Beckett qtd. in Van Hulle, 49). Beckett tries to affect a porosity of all his characters so that they can be pierced (by language, by an inability to extract themselves from the void through language) in order to view the godless void beneath. His characters are a thin screen through which one watches the operation or movement of being itself. For Joyce, this seems to offer an endless space in which the aesthetic mind can interact with the phenomenological world. Their epiphany is a kind of un-veiling in order to get to that no-space behind the object, and by this sort of perceptual penetration, vivify it, indeed recognize this no-space as the very nexus from which all things obtain life within the 'uncreated void.' Beckett's un-word is very nearly anti-word. Language is a veil that must be violently 'torn apart' in order to 'get at the things behind it.' He lunges at words

with talons. Joyce, like Beckett, seeks to "bore one hole after another in [language], until what lurks behind it – be it something or nothing – begins to seep through" (Beckett qtd. in Van Hulle, 52).

But if there is nothing so destructive in a writer like Joyce, there is nothing so conservative as George Berkeley taking "the veil of the temple out of his shovel hat," either (3.416-17). Instead, Joyce gets at the *beneath* of language by way of Rabelaisian drunkenness. Words are employed for their metaxic and epiphanous potential, for their ability to act as conduits, charged and ensanguinated by the mysterious force beneath. Words are not obstructions to the beyond, but the passages through which such a beyond is reached. In this regard, language comes to possess a certain metaphysical quality, rather than acting as an impermeable barrier of metaphoricity. It is the means through which such metaphysicality infiltrates the physical world in order to become indistinct from it. William Franke, stealing my idea and smuggling it back in time (by way of Joyce's metemontogeny no doubt), explains it thusly:

> The medium of revelation, or 'epiphany,' becomes language. For consciousness is constituted in and by language. Just as consciousness is the medium in which revelation or the appearing of phenomena takes place, so its own medium is language, and consequently it is in language that revelation comes to be realized… Joyce realizes what in the end is not only a breaking and fragmenting and profaning of language, but also what can be called, in the jargon of theology, a eucharistic transfiguration of the word. It is "transfiguration" in the sense of a transfer of potency from figure to figure that affirms the word – even in its distortion and demolition – as an enhanced and empowered version of itself. (103-105)

This moment of aesthetic creation is a kind of transubstantiation of the phenomenological and the language which seeks to describe it. As a metaxic poet, Stephen takes issue with Plato's "afterlife of [the] princely soul" (9.77) and the banishment of poets from the polis, perhaps because they seek to distribute the "formless spiritual" (9.61) amongst the living in order to overcome the amnesia of anamnesis through language. But its words, like

Ficino's, are always directed inward as well as out, for when language becomes metaxic, one's own self achieves epiphanous vivification, called forth with the "roar of cataractic planets, globed, blazing, roaring wayawayawayawayaway" (Joyce, *U*, 3. 403-4).

Conclusion

The masterpiece that Stephen's art tries to create is neither poem nor aesthetic treatise; it is rather the consummation of a kind of symbolist perception, a synaesthesia of forms and forms of forms where gods usher forth from the school-yard screams of children and snotgreen becomes not merely a colour, but a diaphanous sign of some transcendental modality. Perception is the epiphanous tool that vivifies the metemontogeny of all objects, their phenomenological interconnectivity, and the means through which metaxic barriers come to act as conduits of being and substance. This is a melancholy power however, for the suturing of the sky to earth provides a restlessness to such becoming, a celestial infinitude to earthly wandering. "Le ciel s'abaisse le matin, on n'a pas assez relevé ce phénomène. Il s'approche comme pour voir. A moins que ce ne soit la terre qui se soulève, pour se faire approuver, avant de partir" (Beckett, *Molloy*, 217).

Stephen employs, as Critchley might have it, the 'violence of the imagination,' which, rather than being an escape from reality into the romantic confines of his imagination, is an imposition of a poetic aesthetic, a transfiguration of a reality that can no longer champion itself in isolation from the subconscious of those who populate it. The space of the real is breached on all sides from previously unexplored psychological currents and armies of foreign worlds whose presence was deemed impossible simply because they were previously unseen, content to fidget in the shadows. For Weil, one of the foremost reasons why imagination is to be regarded as such a detriment to the

attainment of truth, is because it is a function of the will in order to create more false space in which to dwell. Interestingly, Stephen's artistic pursuit relies not merely on imagination; instead, he uses the existent world as his canvas, transforming the pre-created and playing with the world at hand rather than inventing a new one. The function of his art is to uncover the *already-present* within the world, to unleash its potentiality to act as a metaxic sign for itself. In expanding the limits of useable space, Stephen seeks to unearth those "obscure or as yet unnamed space[s] from which the unforeseeable might emerge" (Gibson, *Beckett and Badiou*, 181).

Weil warns that the imagination is ceaselessly working to seal all the metaxic fissures through which grace is able to pass. But for metaxic poetry, imagination operates not as a consoling force implemented to fill fissures, but to crack them wide open, indeed to transform the world into one gaping fissure. If what passes through bears little resemblance to Weilean grace, it is no less Weilean in methodology. Metaxic poets stare into a Weilean void and see pure possibility. Beckett understands the role of the cross in décréation, but his egoistic detachment finds none of Weil's grace as a result. So, too, with Joyce, but Joyce envisions a kind of Promethean grace wielded by the artist whose aesthetic consciousness acts as a substitute for suffering. Or, perhaps, this is merely a different kind of suffering, for surely the art practiced by Stephen and the symbolists is not devoid of affliction. One might say that art is their cross.[51] Art is the cross that allows for an escape or transcendence *into* the world. "We live in order to unlearn ecstasy" (Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, 33). And so one's escape into the world, through living rather than decreative annihilation (metaxic living is merely a decreative

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[51] -Why are you an artist?
- Because I cannot drag myself out from beneath it. Because I am nailed to it.

annihilation whose death has residency within the living world) is an *eso*stasis. To 'unlearn' is both to undo and to relearn anew. To unlearn ecstasy is to wrench ecstasy in the opposite direction, towards an engagement with the world as a thing which offers the potential for ecstasis (a new ecstasis) built into it. To call metaxic poetry a godless ecstasis, a godless transcendence, or a godless décréation is not quite accurate, for metaxic poetry is also to unlearn God.

Weil might have been regarded as a metaxic poet, but she was fatally lured by the *other side*. Metaxic poetry is an attention to the void radiating within everything. It directs an iconic gaze in all directions. Imagination consoles. Metaxic poetry unveils. The pain and suffering implicit within the poetry of the symbolistes was not an attempt to simply kill the ego and escape the world, but to explode the potentials of the ego – to make it metaxic – so that escape was not necessary, indeed because escape is impossible. The aesthetic of the metaxic poets not only seeks to perpetuate fissures throughout the world, but to expand the very aperture of authentic consciousness. Weil speaks of the importance of Love, but décréation is lonely and exilic. Stephen, and especially Molloy, are certainly lonely introverts (Molloy being so introverted that he descends into himself until there is no self left), but what a worldly metaxology provides them is an experience of a pain beyond themselves. In opening themselves up to a void which allows for a metemontogenic sharing of being, they bear the world's cross, and not merely their own.

This is the meaning of Love. More precisely, this is the meaning of a Weilean love, but as a self-immolating mystic rather than a poet, she cannot entertain the possibility of metemontogeny. Weil might argue that once someone had emptied themselves enough so that such a thing were possible, grace would enter to snatch the

soul away and reunite it with God. Poetic metemontogeny is a décréation where there is no grace to snatch one away, and thus, where an experience of the world as void is truly possible. But rather than lead to nihilism, we might use it as a tool to poetically restructure the world. All metaxic poetry is a recreation of the world in accordance with the void. I might say one final word regarding Weilean love and its place in metemontogeny's cross, but Cioran has already said more than I could ever say. "The man who managed, by an imagination overflowing with pity, to record all the sufferings, to be contemporary with all the pain and all the anguish of any given moment – such a man – supposing he could ever exist – would be a monster of love and the greatest victim in the history of the human heart" (*A Short History of Decay*, 26).

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