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Dowd, Garin ORCID logoORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6435-640X (2006) "All out": the dismantling of the face in Murphy. The Journal of Beckett Studies, 16 (1-2). pp. 64-84. ISSN 0309-5207

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"All out": the dismantling of the face in *Murphy*

By Garin Dowd

"Yes, the face has a great future, but only if it is destroyed, dismantled."
—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus* 171)

Year zero

The present essay brings into dialogue the concern evinced in *Murphy* with the question of form and the "pragmatics" (or schizoanalysis) of non-con*form*ity Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They define "pragmatics" as "a politics of language"; it insists, as Jean-Jacques Lecercle has commented, "on the materiality of language, on its origins in the primary processes of the body" (129). Deriving impetus from Bakhtin, they argue against models of linguistics that sequester language from the extra-linguistic by means of an operation identified as "extracting constants" (85). The constants—be they of the order of syntax, morphology, and phonematics—serve, in a problematic fashion, to tie "the statement to a signifier and enunciation to a subject" (85). For Deleuze and Guattari this is a flawed understanding of language. On the one hand it presupposes a regime of figure and ground, and on the other is based on a hierarchy that ensures that the extra-linguistic operates according to a model of causality that ultimately keeps the linguistic free of the corporeal, the social and the political. It fails, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, because it is insufficiently abstract, or abstract in the wrong way, and is unable, therefore to "reach the *abstract machine* that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field" (7).

For Deleuze and Guattari such architecture should be and is in *A Thousand Plateaus* subject to torsion whereby the corporeal, social, and political are all regarded as immanent to language. It is in the concept of the speech act that this relation can be seen in its exemplary operation, and which Deleuze and Guattari take to be the basis for their whole approach to the postulates of linguistics in plateau 4 of the book, "November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics." If speech acts concern a transformation effectuated upon bodies by words—as

in the iteration by a judge of a judicial sentence upon a person found guilty of a crime—they (along with the transformation) operate *within* language, rather than are the expression of power exterior to language but employing it as a conduit: "The instantaneousness of the order-word, its immediacy, gives it a power of variation in relation to the bodies to which the transformation is attributed" (82). The order-word is part of a grid that manifests itself in the social field. It operates in two spheres of this field identified as *signifiance* on the one hand and *subjectification* on the other. Signifiance—a term borrowed from the linguistics of Emile Benveniste—which may be understood as "signifying capacity," for Deleuze and Guattari, should not be left in the domain of the exclusively linguistic or textual. Signifiance and subjectification operate according to binary logic and biunivocal relationships and these, Deleuze and Guattari assert, "dominate psychoanalysis . . ., linguistics, structuralism" (5). Such is their antipathy to Saussurian linguistics and its heritage that they conclude: "In truth, signifiance and interpretosis are the two diseases of the earth or the skin, in other words, humankind's fundamental neurosis" (114).

In an illuminating study, Zsuzsa Baross has referred to the aspects of Deleuze's approach to language that highlight specific divergences from the habits of thought associated with deconstruction and with Jacques Derrida in particular. The abyssal, deferred, and vertiginous depth disclosed by deconstruction is made to come to the surface of Deleuze's "dermatology," giving what is described as "a philosophy of nomination and not of discourse" (33). It is in this respect that the linguistics of Hjelmslev is crucial. His theory of language, as Deleuze and Guattari see it, disrupts the "discredited notions of the signifier and the signified" (42) by virtue of its distinction, "Not between forms and substances but between content and expression, expression having just as much substance as content, just as much form as expression" (44).

In Deleuze's conception, writing (or certain types of writing, often in what Deleuze and Guattari call a "minor" mode), as a force of de-stratification, deformation, and scrambling, moves to the limit of language where it "may arrest the irresistible movement of its own graphic mark toward becoming sign, *semeia*, signification" (33).[1] This "planeology" or "dermatology" finds itself strikingly instantiated in plateau 7 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the chapter that forms the central conceptual strand in the present study. There, signifiance and subjectification are recast as the two components of the system of social organization identified by Deleuze and Guattari as the white screen-black hole system that they summarize under the concept of "faciality" (*visagéité*).

As Deleuze would later formulate the question, the face has three roles:

> it is individuating (it distinguishes or characterises each person); it is socialising (it manifests a social role); it is relational or communicating (it ensures not only communication between two people, but also, in a single person, the internal agreement between his character and his role). (*Cinema 1* 99)[2]

A specific area of organization operative in art and literature in particular, but nonetheless investing all areas of social organization—insofar as faciality names an essential and inescapable aspect of signification and subject formation—faciality is given a separate chapter by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

The face and its effacement

Insofar as we intend to focus on *Murphy* by means of the conceptual framework provided by faciality, some key orientations in the lead-up to the faciality plateau as sketched briefly above require reiteration in order to signal the specific mobilization to which these will be subject in the pages that follow.

1. Interpretation as a "disease of the earth"
2. Subjectification linked to subjection
3. Face of the loved one in passional love as possible location for destratification
4. Destratification/defacing.

All of these orientations find a particular coalescence in faciality. The face is central to interpretation. It signifies; signification requires it: "faciality reigns materially over that whole constellation of signifiances and interpretations" (115). The face of the deity in the temple, or the face of the god as administered by the priest, or the despotic face are prerequisites for subjection, while in the establishment of the white face as that from which other faces are thought of as deviations, in the massive enterprise of imperial expansion and colonial consolidation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a specific form of subjection operates along racial lines (182). The face becomes the locus of fetishized investment in passional love in which "each subject provides statements for the other to identify themselves with" (Goodchild 110). Given the amalgamation of disparate areas of sociality in this list it is perhaps already to some extent clear that faciality does not name a value or principle identified as either intrinsically to be supported or to be abhorred. Such would be contradictory of the abiding commitment to a thinking of immanence in

Deleuze and Guattari's thought.[3] This is where the fourth entry in the above list is required: de-stratification is the force of undoing that can serve to dismantle the gridding, exclusionary, and reifying regimes of faciality. Importantly, however, de-stratification is immanent to faciality rather than introduced from outside its architecture.

The context in which Deleuze develops his own distinct, albeit intimately linked, approach to faciality is, perhaps not surprisingly, in his analysis of the close-up in cinema. If painting, as we shall later see, had released a certain potential of the represented face as analyzed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, cinema goes further still because of the possibilities established by the technological advance that it represents as such and the rapid developments in approaches to montage, framing, and image capture to which it gave rise in the key second and third decades of the twentieth century. The face as it appears in cinema already participates in the dynamic of figure and ground identified as the poles of the regime of faciality. The following passage from *Cinema 1* elaborates on this conjunction:

> The face is this organ-carrying plate of nerves which has sacrificed most of its global mobility and which gathers or expresses in a free way all kinds of tiny local movements which the rest of the body usually keeps hidden. Each time we discover these two poles in something—reflecting surface and intensive micro-movements—we can say that this thing has been treated as a face: it has been 'envisaged' or rather 'facified' [*visagifiée*], and in turn it stares at us [*dévisage*], it looks at us. . . . even if it does not resemble a face. (89)

The classical close-up, typified by D.W. Griffith, ensures a partial reflection in so far as the face looks in a direction different from that of the camera, and thus "forces the spectator to rebound on the surface of the screen" (94), but in the case of Josef Von Sternberg there is a particular use of the "intensive" close-up of the face by virtue of the fact that his faces refract light, rather than simply reflect it: "[T]he face is displaced, raised in the shallow depth, darkened at the edges, and enters into an intensive series depending on whether the figure slides towards the dark edge, or the edge slides towards the light figure" (95).

By definition, according to Deleuze, the background becomes an "any-space whatever" when a close up is involved—even in depth of field such as we witness in the films of Orson Welles. The loss of spatio-temporal co-ordinates that the close-up/affection image instantiates is inherent to the close-up but

accentuated in certain approaches to filmmaking. Deleuze identifies Ingmar Bergman as the director who goes furthest in a use of the close-up that will push the loss of co-ordinates to the limit. Citing the director's own words emphasizing that "drawing near to the human face is the primary originality and the distinctive quality of the cinema," Deleuze links the abandonment of a profession, renunciation of a social role, refusal of communication and loss of individuation to a pervasive dissolution operative in Bergman's films of these functions of the face (99). In films such as *Persona* "[t]he close-up has . . . pushed the face to those regions where the principle of individuation ceases to hold sway" (100). In suspending individuation the facial close-up is both the face and its *effacement*. This effacement is in part because the face in close-up empties specificity—in extreme close-up the face is unrecognizable; it is monstrous, and effectively inhuman.[4] Bergman attains the plane of immanence of cinema by making the "photogramme" itself "burn, with Fear as its only affect" (100). It is at this point that Deleuze makes a statement of great interest as far as our present purposes are concerned. Having some thirty pages earlier in *Cinema I* identified Beckett's *Film* as establishing the very conditions of possibility of future experimental film by setting out to extinguish action-images, perception-images, and affection-images, we now learn that Bergman is equaled in his face-effacement enterprise by none other than Beckett.

Film and *Proust*

The concern with faciality as understood by Deleuze, which we are about to claim of the novel, is therefore not limited to *Murphy*. *Film* betrays a particular interest in the theme, perhaps largely because of the specific characteristics of cinematographic representation. One of the most interesting aspects of the film is that in its scenic directions as effectuated in the screenplay, through the *explicit* invocation of a restriction on camera movement ("angle of immunity"), Beckett evokes, while significantly modifying, one of the conventions of cinematographic artifice, namely the rule of 180 degrees that decrees that, for reasons of spatial and orientational logic for the viewer, in its movement in order to represent the mutual perception of, or communication between, two subjects or the perception by a subject of an object, the camera not exceed this angle. When this convention is disregarded by certain directors the camera can begin to take on the "machinic" life which the convention helps to occlude. While in *Film* the two characters are not in mutual perception or communication, O's face remaining hidden (with two brief exceptions corrected by E) to E until the final scene (which in fact finally releases O and E into "mutual" perception), the fact that E is also taken to be the camera itself invites association with the 180 degree convention. In *Film* the 45 degree angle of immunity serves, the film reveals at the end, to protect the character O from self-recognition.

As character, however, the camera is, in the first instance already, in facing the character O, operating at the limit of the 180 degree opening. This means that when the angle is opened by E *as camera* beyond the 45 degree angle of immunity the transgression is simultaneously an encroachment by E *as character* beyond the 180 degree opening. The camera-as-character of *Film* attempts to probe a zone that it is debarred, first by convention and second by Beckett's own extra-diegetic proscription, from entering. The very re-marking, however, of the convention means that as industry guideline it comes to inhabit the diegetic space (by means of its reflection and carrying out, more precisely "acting" out, of the screenplay's explicit directives). Hence the re-marking in the screenplay serves to split the convention between two roles, one profilmic the other not. One is interior, the other exterior. *Film* itself becomes the name of a zone or membrane between the two.

In this sense the work *Film*, or the labor that is undertaken by Beckett under this title, is "prophylactic" or "membranic." What he creates is the interface itself; neither the viewing nor the viewed can hold their place, but are subject to an oscillation in and on boundaries and borders. The interest in the theme of enclosure is part of this problematic as explored in the film. O shuffles along the wall, and refuses frontality; his is always a sideways orientation, or gaze and bodily trajectory within a spatial economy of dislocation. The terror is reserved for facing (signified by the "angle of immunity" in *Film*), for perceiving the façade of the self; its home; its partition; its boundary, the wall containing its perceptual and sensory orifices: mouth, nose, eyes.[5]

The concern with the affection-image and therefore with the close-up, as Deleuze understands it, is advanced further in Beckett's plays for television, a discussion of which I will undertake in another study. It is, however, also perhaps because of Beckett's detailed knowledge of Proust, with its insistent evocations of a figure-ground dynamic (signifying regime), but no less of its heavy investment in faces as legers of time's passage, that may account for the preoccupations in this regard of *Murphy*.

One of the signifying regimes Proust foregrounded and both Deleuze and Beckett picked up on in their respective studies separated by three decades is faces as morphological register of time's passage, as in the "Bal de têtes" section of *Le Temps retrouvé*, and (especially in the case of faces of the beloved) as metamorphic and anamorphic registers of multiplicity. The following is one of the innumerable examples of a face looming out of the *matinée* to confront the narrator:

> Les lignes ne résistaient pas à cet agrandissement. Celle du nez se brisait de près, s'arrondissait, envahie par les mêmes cercles huileux que le reste de la figure; et de près les yeux rentraient sous les poches qui détruissaient le resemblance du visage actuel avec celle du visage d'autrefois qu'on avait cru retrouver. (Proust, *Le Temps* 344)
>
> Nor could the lines of the face stand up to this magnification. That of the nose was seen now to be broken and rounded, its regularity marred by the same oily patches as the rest of the face; and the eyes at short range retreated behind pockets of flesh which destroyed the resemblance of the person before me to the one whom I had known in the past and thought that I had met again. (Proust, *In Search of* 6: 318)

The narrator concludes that the age of the invitees increases along with the enlargement of the face upon his approach as it does with the possibility of observing the face from different angles. Age for him "était amenée par le progrès moins des années que, dans la vision de l'observateur, du degré de l'échelle" (344); ("was made apparent not so much by the advance of the years as by a greater degree of accuracy in the scale of the observer's vision" [319]). For Beckett in his account of Proustian individuation (anticipating Deleuze), Albertine is the coalescence formed out of the little band at Balbec: "She has no individuality. She is merely one blossom in this fragile hedge of Pennsylvanian roses breaking the line of the waves" (*Proust* 46). From this premise, with the understanding that, once "captive," Albertine has been detached from this band, Beckett goes on to enumerate the processes whereby Albertine is subjected to a series of subtractions from the "first Albertine" of the little band. The first Albertine as he describes her is reduced and displaced to a second characterized by a set of attributes and thence to a third mutation of those attributes. Beckett lists four attributes of the second Albertine that find themselves subjected to a downgrading at the third remove. What is especially interesting from the point of view of a Deleuzean context here is that, of the four, two attributes pertain to Albertine's face. The first is "the effect of a declamatory beauty-spot on her chin" (46), the second "the provisional inflammation of her temple constituting an optical centre of gravity about which the composition of her features is organised" (46-47).[6]

Beckett stresses that this multiplicity of strata in Albertine puts the "subject" into parentheses.[7] Indeed a consequence is the abeyance of the subject as a category. In the terms Deleuze later developed, Albertine is an *individuation*,

not an identity. The migration, as Beckett puts it, of her beauty-spot from chin to lip is not only a movement across a superficies or façade that would contain the manifold or the multiplicity under a deteminant form; it is rather indicative of a turmoil and mutation "in depth," of a "turmoil of objective and immanent contradictions over which the subject has no control" (47).

The emphasis on the face is even more apparent in Beckett's transition (in a description that prefigures his account of the face of Cooper in *Murphy*) in the course of his argument to:

> Yet he already concludes, before the kaleidoscope of her expressions, before this face that from being all surface, smooth and waxed, passes to an almost fluid state of translucid gaiety, and from the chiselled polish of an opal to the feverish black-red congestion of a cyclamen, that the Name is an example of a barbarous society's primitivism, and as conventionally inadequate as 'Homer' or 'the sea.' (47-48)

Beckett here is alert to aspects of Proustian individuation that Deleuze and Guattari would later schematize in terms of the "white wall, black hole" model of identification, but he is also alert specifically to the convertibility of surface into black hole and vice-versa, the susceptibility of the captured face to *monstrism*:

> But even as this new Albertine is multiple, and just as the most modern applications of photography can frame a single church successively in the arcades of all the others and the entire horizon in the arch of a bridge or between two adjacent leaves, thus decomposing the illusion of a solid object into its manifold component aspects, so the short journey of his lips to the cheek of Albertine creates ten Albertines, and transforms a human banality into a many-headed goddess. (49)

The example of the approach to the cheek of Albertine is for Deleuze, as for Beckett, articulated in terms of planes and of a proliferation of objects such that it is molecularized or compartmentalized and fragmented.[8] There is a jump from plane to plane (anticipating the machinic connect and cut of the *Anti-Oedipus*).

It is fascinating that Beckett in the emphasis he places on certain of his examples that he anticipates Deleuze in many respects. He already identifies

the face as a privileged site for the playing out of Proust's thanatography, and is, moreover, alert to the redemptive role played by the work of art as vocation within the context of a future-oriented labor:

> It will be necessary, for example, to interrupt (disfigure) the luminous projection of subject desire with the comic relief of features. It will be impossible to prepare the hundreds of masks that rightly belong to the objects of even his most disinterested scrutiny. (11-12)

It is my contention that the interest in the face and in faciality (understood in the context introduced above and developed below in relation to Deleuze and Guattari) in *Proust* is carried through into *Murphy*.

Faciality

Faciality as it is analyzed in Plateau 7 names a particular modality of organization, formation, or engendering. The chapter is given "year zero" as its temporal co-ordinate because it marks the beginning of the so-called Christian era. The association with the figure and face of Christ here in part arises because of the central role played by a divinity or the representation of a divinity, either in the form of plastic representation, or through its representative in the "temple." The key contribution of Christianity to faciality is that it causes the complete interpenetration of signifiance and subjectification (of white wall and black hole). Christ is central also because of his role in the development of Western painting that serves as another organizing idea in Plateau 7. In painting, they assert:

> Not only did Christ preside over the facialization of the entire body (his own) and the landscapification of all milieus (his own), but he composed all of the elementary faces and had every divergence at his disposal: Christ-athlete at the fair, Christ-Mannerist queer, Christ-Negro. (178)

They exemplify this presiding role by way of illustration that will come back later: in Giotto's fresco (in the Vatican library) depicting the transfiguration of St. Francis:

> against the white background of the landscape and the black-blue hole of the sky, the crucified Christ-turned-kite-machine sends stigmata to Saint Francis by rays; the stigmata effect the facialization of the body of the saint, in the image of the

> body of Christ; but the rays carrying the stigmata to the saint are also the strings Francis uses to pull the divine kite. It was under the sign of the cross that people learned to steer the face and processes of facialization in all directions. (178-79)

Guattari's approach to the question of the face and representation may be traced to his attempt to disavow certain orthodoxies of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and in particular the role of the face in certain theories of infant psychology, not least in the Lacanian mirror phase. More specifically

> Psychoanalysis is a definite case of a mixed semiotic: a despotic regime of signifiance and interpretation, with irradiation of the face, but also an authoritarian regime of subjectification and prophetism, with a turning away of the face (the positioning of the psychoanalyst behind the patient suddenly takes on its full significance). (*Plateaus* 125)

The system of faciality has two components: white walls (upon which signifiance inscribes its signs and redundancies) and black holes (in which it lodges its consciousness, passion, and redundancies). Their combination yields "[a] broad face with white cheeks, a chalk face with eyes cut in for a black hole. Clown head, white clown, moon-white mime, angel of death, Holy Shroud" (*Plateaus* 167). That these two components or values (white walls, black holes) could, in another philosophical system, designate on the one hand a "positive" value—with the white wall being regarded as flat, solid and capable of being projected upon—and on the other a "negative" value—with the black hole thought of as, *inter alia*, a vortex, an absence, or anti-matter, does not mean that a binary function will characterize their ultimate use here. Indeed it comes as no surprise to the reader of Deleuze and Guattari already familiar with their work that these values are established only to be suspended, amounting to a vectorial rather than an encompassing arrangement of terrain.

For these two values are not themselves fixed within a hierarchical system; it is the *Face* that makes them fixed and that makes them signify. The Face, so-named to designate a quasi-Platonic status as a Form, is the set of operations performed *on* the abstract machine of faciality.[9] Through its pervasive annexing drive, the Face functions such that it will "landscapize" (in the case of landscape) or "subjectivize" (in the case of the body) any outcropping or emergence of the pure abstract machine. The abstract machine of faciality further serves in its general function to

> set up functional correlations between distinctions made on one level and analogous distinctions on another, suggesting a web of standardized symbolic relays between levels. This authorizes one to proceed metaphorically from any given distinction to its counterpart on any level. (Massumi 173n54)

This explains how the landscape is codified as a face, or as if a face. Correlatively this is how body parts can be invested semiotically to the extent that they too become "facialized." The Face, then, touches all levels and imbues them with co-ordinates upon which a recognition function can find omnipresent refuge. A kind of immunity from a-signifying neutrality is granted, while there will always be a satisfying trace of subjectivity, a crumb at least of substance. As Deleuze and Guattari characterized, a particular colonization or conjugation facilitate such immunity and refuge: "The movement of the black hole across the screen, the trajectory of the third eye over the surface of reference, constitutes so many dichotomies or arborescences" (*Plateaus* 177). The vectorized space is colonized and made subject to retrospective formation. The Holy Shroud becomes the presence of Christ.[10]

The conversion of this "pure" machine into an abstract machine of faciality indicates the tendency towards Form and conformity (where there is form there is nothing but conformities, as Deleuze reports in *Difference and Repetition* [134]). The abstract machine of faciality as Deleuze and Guattari envision it comprises the white wall/black hole system (with what they describe as its hovering Christ = black hole/central computer) as well as the machine selecting and rejecting faces that do not conform (despotic machine of faciality). However, the abstract machine (even one of faciality) can "return" in order to "defacialize" (190), and a facialized body that has not been subject to defacialization, its surroundings and objects, coupled with the "landscapification" (*paysagéificiation*) of all worlds and milieus (181) describes what can be summarized in an equation: Christianized = Facialized. One possibility of the year zero of the title of plateau 7 is, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, with a heavy dose of irony, that a new Christ be installed, in the form of Spinoza. Less ironically intended is the argument that, instead of forcing flows into signifiances and subjects, which is what the Face-Christianity does, what is needed is an ethology (derived from Spinoza's *Ethics*). Spinoza furnishes a way of theorizing what Deleuze and Guattari call at this point in plateau 7 "inhumanities," the inhumanities that make up humans. Access to these inhumanities is equivalent to finding the 'probe head' under the face; it is an essentially "demonic" operation:

> In short, between substantial forms and determined subjects, between the two, there is not only a whole operation of demonic local transports but a natural play of haecceities, degrees, intensities, events, and accidents that compose individuations totally different from those of the well-formed subjects that receive them. (*Plateaus* 253)

This in-between state of affairs is that of the *pure* abstract machine, as opposed to the abstract machine already become an abstract machine of faciality. Whereas the latter gives elements that already tend toward form and function, the former are "abstract" even though perfectly real (253-54). On this level Deleuze and Guattari address the question of univocity under the inspiration of Spinoza: "A fixed plane of life upon which everything stirs, slows down or accelerates [*précipite*]" (255). It is time to turn in more detail to *Murphy* to explore the nature of its participation in faciality within the context of a more pervasive novelistic ethology within and on a univocal plane (or plane of immanence).[11]

The faces of *Murphy*

Murphy, not surprisingly, has given rise to a number of readings that emphasize its figure ground relation, either in the terms provide by *Gestalt* psychology—familiar of course to the author—or by recourse to concepts derived from the history of art. *Morphē* or *Murphy*: the shape, we often read, of chaos.[12] This is a novel that takes its name from "form" and that is reducible to an erudite disquisition through the medium of the novel upon the form of the novel. Various critics have formulated compelling accounts of the nature of *Murphy*'s experiment with novelistic form in so far as this latter endeavor is bound up with a more pervasive interest in the (philosophical and aesthetic) question of form as such.[13]

In particular however there is a predilection for the concept in a very specific modality in several readings of *Murphy* to have emerged in post-1990 studies, namely anamorphosis. Indeed Leslie Hill's attempt to suggest the author's cryptic signature may be found spread across *Murphy* as well as throughout the work, or, indeed, across the corpus is in its way an argument for an anamorphic conception of the signature that has a precedent in anamorphic art itself.[14] In Jacques Lacan's reading of Holbein's *Ambassadors*—during the course of which his indebtedness to Jurgis Baltrusaïtis (the author most associated with the concept) is acknowledged—through recourse to anamorphosis (specifically the distended skull) the artist "makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated" (88).[15] While

according to the letter of Lacan's elaboration of the concept (leaving to one the problematic hermeneutic stamp of castration) a certain transposition to the world of *Murphy* would perhaps fall under the category of "superficial" resemblance to anamorphosis, the concept nonetheless remains richly suggestive in respect of the novel, and thus it will return later.[16]

The first exchange of dialogue in *Murphy* establishes what is arguably the central antagonism of the novel, that between the Newtonian-Pythagorean Neary and the non-Newtonian Murphy. Where Neary, via the *form* of Miss Dwyer, seeks figure and face (these are deemed equivalent), Murphy (whose name of course paradoxically suggests *morphē*, or Greek "form") flees *form*, even though he will think of, and occasionally be detained by, what could be formed or take form on the way. The source for one and the destination for the other is "the big blooming buzzing confusion" ("I think of Miss Dwyer" says Neary, the text following his theorem with, "Murphy *could* have thought of a Miss Counihan" [6-7, emphasis added]).

It is the fact that in its first and yet so central and generative exchange that it is the *face* that Neary selects in order to identify the essence of Miss Dwyer, or the index of her emergence as form, into form, that is of specific interest here, insofar as it both inaugurates the antagonism of Neary and Murphy and sparks off the first of many "rallies" between body and mind (7) that will enliven the proceedings amongst the novel's moribund marionettes. Indeed it will be argued below that it is possible to read *Murphy*—or a stratum of the novel—in the context of what Neary refers to as "the system of faces." Faces (with the eyes—the agents, metaphorically speaking, of all countenancing—often functioning as a synecdoche) are inclined, to the firmament in both brightness (12, 39, 42) and obscurity (54), to the sky both replete and abandoned (141), to an "anoint[ing]" light (27),[17] to solar and lunar (62) orbs themselves described as faces (75-76), to rain, to weather of all sorts (27, 39, 156), to other faces (18, 140), to rear-ends (which in *Murphy* themselves are often "faces" capable of expression); faces are frozen in torpor (36), ravaged and in shadow (67), "narrow and seamed" (11), clamped into various types of millinery (158), set off by skulls and cranial domes of various dimensions, hues, and degrees of hirsuteness (11, 62, 67, 105); they can be highly mobile of feature (140) or they can be blank screens; they can have eyes open or closed; closed they are a shuttered façade (as in the "defence of West Brompton, by West Brompton, against West Brompton" [70] with its shutters down), open, open for business. Eyes are either sunken (as is the case with Mr. Kelly, 11) into inhuman inexpressiveness (30) or give off illumination themselves ("blue glitter of the eyes in the depth of their orbit": 17, 155). The eyes can form a gaze that is "pythonic," "delphique," (24) or "chessy" (135)

and, without necessarily furnishing a gaze, they can also be "like a gull's" (26). Faces have both color (notably yellow [21], "blue and olive" [135]) and weight, and occasionally both ("leaden face" [19] or "tête plombée" in the French version of the novel [25]).

The faces, along with their features, like other parts of Mr. Kelly's corporeal expanse, can migrate (67, 139), as in the *voltefesses* attributed by the novel to Neary locally (112) and to Socrates via intertextual relay (as noted in the novel itself: 112), or be migrated to, as in the suppressed whiskers of Neary that were (before they were "suppressed without pity") the outcropping of a "virility" lacking other corporeal channels for expression (30-31).[18] In the end the star-gazing (a pastime including looking at and for Celia [12, 21, 54, 56]) is a scrutiny of the expanse, into or out of which latter definition may or may not emerge (106). Murphy himself is such a blotch (single compact and organized, to employ Neary's words to Murphy [7]) under the scrutiny of Mr. Endon (from the Greek for "within" as Ackerley notes); he is merely a speck in Endon's unseen (140), a speck in a backdrop (or "backwash" as *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* puts it), even though his sky is merely a void. The cosmos is the screen out of which form can be arrived at; otherwise, "Tous les jours le *visage* blanc sous les spasmes blanchâtres" in a formulation Beckett added to the French translation (53, emphasis added). Star-gazing, then, as mediated via a "corpus" either of "deterrents" or "incentives," is *facing*, looking for "face" or countenance: it is hermeneutics, or form imposed on forces.

Posture (which has already been briefly discussed above) of course is another way in which, in a corporeal context, form is imposed on forces. The face-down posture is notable for its frequency in *Murphy*, giving distended, distorted, and hidden faces. This is how Rosie Dew ends up accosting Murphy in the Cockpit in Hyde Park (57). Celia is also found in this way on the bed (62) and will, reciprocally, find Murphy similarly arrayed, albeit in his case on the floor (20), while the "old boy" upstairs from them dies when he "falls on his face with the razor under him, zzzeeeppp" according to Miss Carridge's "onomatopoei(c)" report (84). These are instances in the novel's system of faces where the face is "counteractualized," de-faced, or de-figured. There is no one to face, no one to scrutinize, no one to yield face, or to countenance. The faces face away from the scrutinizing subject ("Is it its back that the moon can never turn to the earth, or its face?" asks the narrator [75-76]). One might say, adopting the French version's formulation, that it is where "le monde s'*effaça*" (11, my emphasis). The system of Faces, façades, and facing cannot access the concrete multiplicity of faces.

Murphy and *Murphy* in anamorphic repose

When, out of the big blooming buzzing confusion, the flux of forms (65), or matrix of surds (66), a face emerges what occurs is the genesis of form and line, but also of social organization, conjugality, and coupling (the "music" that Murphy attempts to get out of his head). When Murphy acquires an address he also acquires a marital status (or at least becomes engaged to marry): "so all things limp together for the only possible" (131), declares the novel in a pared down palimpsest of Leibniz.

Cooper's agile features constitute a high-speed economical index of the face that, despite the phenomenal speed of its alterations, remains under the determining form of the Face:

> Now Cooper's face, though it did not seem to move a muscle, brought together and threw off in a single grimace the finest shades of irresolution, revulsion, doglike devotion, catlike discretion, fatigue, hunger, thirst and reserves of strength, in a very small fraction of the time that the finest oratory would require for a greatly inferior evasion, and without exposing its proprietor to misquotation. (115)

Cooper, by profession himself an agent of retrieval, is an example of multiplicity delivered over a threshold of unity. The novel however has other thresholds that permit no such deliverance, as when the "abstract faciality machine" is switched on, exemplified by Murphy when he manages to speed his rock up to the velocity required for him to come out in his mind or to enter his zone. Deleuze and Guattari would perhaps see in this moment the "probe head" beginning to "de-facialize" the face, creating the conditions for the proliferation of other abstract machines (in Deleuze's analysis of the paintings of Bacon the "meat" overwhelms the Face and figurality [*Francis Bacon*]).[19] Murphy also manages to get close to such a state in playing chess. The face that peers through the judas into Mr. Endon's cell in *Murphy* is the face of the institution of psychiatry with its taxonomical and often carceral *modus operandi*. Such a manner of facing should enable the maintenance of subject-object relations, the surveillant and the surveilled frontally arranged. Such of course is not the arrangement sustained in the encounters between Murphy and Mr. Endon: "Mr Murphy is a speck in Mr Endon's unseen" (140); here subjectivization has broken down. The carefully named object—Murphy—dwindles to the status of an undifferentiated "blotch," but within Mr. Endon's (as subject) out of field vision. In their extreme intimacy, however, anamorphosis contaminates distance by introducing a distorted spacing and distribution of perceiver and

perceived. The *facing* players plunge back into a state of abyssal and recursive *façade*. The face is defaced at the interface.

The final volume of the *Recherche*, as already stated above, convenes upon the appearance, shocking to the narrator, of old friends at the hôtel de Guermantes. The "Bal de têtes" section, if one follows the terminology Deleuze and Guattari proposed, is still organized according to an economy of white wall/black hole with salvation in the form of the work of art to which the narrator is apprenticed. By contrast, for an instant at the end of Beckett's novel—the dialogue of which springs into action with talk of the face—there is a dismantling of this economy in line with the operation of what Deleuze and Guattari would call the "probe-head" ("*tête chercheuse*"; 190). Mr. Kelly is, at this juncture, in his only other position (the first is cruciform or "pinioned"). He is found in Hyde Park in an attitude that retains some of its affinity with the posture of the crucified Christ, albeit with kite rather than cross in hands: "he lay sideways in the chair, his cheek on his shoulder, a fold of the slicker lifting his lip in a mild snarl" (158).[20] The composite picture, with its stricken land-bound body and its airborne, and ultimately fugitive, representative creates an oblique association with another component of Christian belief, the Ascension of Christ. However, while through a process of deformation Mr. Kelly's face becomes a "cramp of bones" and succumbs to the forces playing within, Celia's face is, concomitantly, obscured: what is thereby occluded is the white wall. Meanwhile the heart—that very important organ in this novel—is fatigued and appears to be diminishing in tempo. The organ, at any rate, is cut out of the novel at this almost last moment. In the absence of the white screen, with a Christ who has neither died nor risen (replaced in an inverted form—in the anamorphic and atomized form of a outspread/widespread Murphy on the barroom floor), there is no white wall for recognition to be played out. In such a world it is no longer possible for the levers to be *like* the tired heart; society's "is like" becomes a painfully personalized "is" (Massumi 173). The strictly limited social "foyer" of *Murphy*, where Proustian *mondanité* has been replaced by more marginal or impoverished modalities of social intercourse (Balbec *plage*, courtyard, salon, and the piazza San Marco give way to Cork County, asylum and digs, public house and Brewery Road), then, yields a vortex of subject-object relations with no possibility of conferring coordinates, perspective, and distance in order for a subject or its avatar to thrive. No simile plays about the slowed down bodies of this finale without finality. Not even the solace of metaphor offers the vestige of resolution. The levels have collapsed on to one another; the hierarchy with a vertical relay system organizing and policing analogical gymnastics is no more. Moreover, Celia (*ciel là*: simply there; and tellingly it is Kelly who puns on her name [68]) also closes her eyes:

the black hole disappears, refuge of subjectification. Kelly—the face now that Dwyer has receded from the novel—is a cramp of bones, where once it was a *featured* haven of "craters between nose and cheekbones" (69).[21]

In his writings on film Eisenstein affords a key role to the spectator who, in dealing with monstrous incongruities of scale and disjointed imagery on the cinema screen, reassembles "the disintegrated phenomena into a single whole but from our own perspective, in the light of our own orientation towards the phenomenon" (17). The extreme facial close-up in cinema for a viewer sitting close to the screen and, for Proust, the beloved face as the lover moves toward it are both instances of a kind of anamorphosis. *Murphy* has its own anamorphic elements that assist in the task of articulating another way in which the novel, in its interrogation of faciality, is Spinozist (that much debated and divisive alleged backdrop to the novel), an instance of "spinozism acharné." Murphy is given to us whole at the start and dispersed at the end.[22] His subjectivity is perhaps, in Lacanian terms quoted above, *annihilated*. In Mr. Endon's cornea can be discerned "Murphy's own image but horribly reduced, obscured and distorted." Mr. Kelly is said to be "spread over a vast area" (73). The novel begins with the tethered Murphy and ends with the broken string of the kite. It begins with Murphy out of it (the sun) and ends with the "All out" of dusk. It begins with Murphy in his chair and ends with Mr. Kelly out of his. So, to what extent is *Murphy*'s "wandering to find home" (6) an anamorphic journey, as described by Baltrusaïtis: "instead of reducing forms to their visible limits, it projects them outside themselves and distorts them so that when viewed from a certain point they return to normal"? (1). For Hill, such a return is not the trajectory of the novel since it remains firmly committed to the "purgatorial" line identified in the essay "Dante…Bruno. Vico..Joyce" (1929). Specifically, Hill argues that one consequence of the chiastic patterning of the novel is the maintenance of the abeyance from form that Beckett identifies with the Joyce's purgatorial mode. As far as the present taxonomy of faces, facing, and perspectival approaches to surfaces is concerned, while Cooper could be said to conform to the anamorphic *correction*, in returning to normal spatial, vectorial, and velocity arrangements, Murphy remains caught in the "purgatorial distension" of the anamorphotic: in him the logic of redemption and return (to form) is refused.

Conclusion: *Voltefesses*

Murphy's moribund marionettes, it has been suggested above, play out a sub-Proustian thanatography. The paradox of the immersion and at once the transcendence of the protagonist in the world of Beckett's novel, occupying as he does the role of puppeteer of the others without himself being sustained

by the life-support of narrative voice, may be regarded as a reworking, impoverishment and subversion of Proustian narration. Over the course of its thirteen chapters, with the sixth in the middle delineating the complexities of Murphy's mind, the novel's hermeneutic grids of astrology, psychiatry, and detection all slide over one another and are subject to a-signifying rupture and scrambling in the world of the characters, in a manner that anticipates Nathalie Sarraute's formulation (which not surprisingly is quoted affirmatively by Deleuze and Guattari) of *sous-conversation*.[23] If faciality names a system that fixes the life-form into an interpretive grid, and if Proust ultimately conforms to the gridding possibilities of white wall-black hole framework, as opposed to the line-of-flight modality, Beckett in *Murphy* generates multiple grids divested of unifying perspectival integrity. In the section of his *Ethics* entitled "Of Human Bondage," Spinoza describes the necessity of proportion to the interaction of rest and motion if the human form is to be maintained: "What constitutes the form of the human body is this, that its parts communicate their motions to one another in a certain fixed proportion" (192). Whatever maintains this proportion, Spinoza continues, is good because it facilitates the human body in affecting other bodies. Conversely, anything that upsets this proportion causes a metamorphosis in the human body. In changing form the human body dies. Death is understood here as the absence of the ability to be affected. In its dismantling of figure and ground relations, in its unfurling of folds of escape from interpretive grids (and from grids in which those folds are already implicated), *Murphy* participates in a dismantling of the system Deleuze and Guattari call faciality. If Proust ends with salvation via the redemptive powers of the work of art, Beckett returns to year zero (or perhaps 33 AD) in a sweep toward the exhaustion of protagonist and followers in the exeunt from Hyde Park. Prior to the novel's end the protagonist has himself been the subject of a literary *pietà*; an autopsy that remarks his loss of recognizability save for his endurance as a mark, a stain, "porto maison, a port-winer," within the space of the mortuary, within the asylum, the *asile* (the shelter or refuge). As the remains of Murphy lie on the mortuary slab, his physical and mental marks endure, as does his originary landscape or surface ("indelible Dublin" as the coroner puts it), encapsulated in the various lists with which those in attendance respond: "Neary saw Clonmachnois on the slab, the castle of the O'Melaghlins, meadow, eskers, thatch on white, something red, the wide bright water, Connaught" (150). Miss Counihan, following her departure from the mortuary, conjures her own list of the homeland: "Oh hand in hand let us return to the dear land of our birth, the bays, the bogs, the moors, the glens, the lakes, the rivers, the streams, the brooks, the mists, the—er—fens, the—er—glens, by tonight's mail-train." The endurance of the mark is sufficient at this juncture to enable the clamping down of the escaped body, the

exploded subject. Not for long: the fetishized birth mark—enduring black hole of subjectification—is spread along with the rest of the Murphy corpus on the bar room floor, slipping out of the grip of Cooper:

> By closing time the body, mind and soul of Murphy were freely distributed over the floor of the saloon; and before another dayspring greyened the earth had been swept away with the sand, the beer, the butts, the glass, the matches, the spits, the vomit. (154)

The body, mind, and soul of Murphy have gone. Exit the mark of form, its marker, its place-marker, its remarkable effigy, its face or façade. Despite the attempts of the mourners, post-mortem, contours—national, corporeal, subjective, objective—do not hold in the *Murphy* cosmos; corporeal frontiers begin to burgeon and blend: "the skull gushed from under the cap . . . the ravaged face was a cramp of bones, throttled sounds jostled in the throat" (158). The combination of anamorphosis and synaesthesia here is suggestive of a post-*Morphē* universe. The stratifications of *Morphē* are in abeyance. The puppet strings are severed and the stigmata are adrift without a body to which to be fixed: there is no one in Murphy's image.[24] But the Murphy cheek is not the only *voltefesse* of the novel. Neary had prior to the pursuit of the protagonist to London discovered an aspect of faciality that precipitates his breakdown in the General Post Office. Having attacked the buttocks of the Statue of Cuchulainn with his own head he explains:

> "That deathless rump was trying to stare me down."
> "But there is no rump," said Wylie. "How could there be? What chance would a rump have in the GPO?"
> "I tell you I saw it," said Neary, "trying to downface me." (36)[25]

An effigy and a monument thus face each other across the Irish sea: Murphy's buttock in mute *fesse-à-fesse* with Cuchulainn's, both in their own ways enduring beyond historical and personal vicissitudes, Murphy's birthmark remaining a fetish for Miss Counihan on the mortuary slab, the bronze Red Branch bum as rendered by Oliver Sheppard an overcoding nucleus in the GPO. Yet in this dying light, this purging, and purgatorial space with its refrain of "All out," form is extinguished, switched off, being as if liquidated by the opening of a valve, something vital stirs: the play of forces that Deleuze would, in his late writings, call "a life": "A fixed plane of life upon which everything stirs, slows down or accelerates [*précipite*]" (*Essays* 255). Where Proust's "Bal de têtes" delivers an

Eisensteinian monstrism—giants, as Proust's narrator has it—secured within the grand and monumental dimensions of the evolving (and for Beckett would-be embalming) work of art, Beckett gives the reader the distended skull-mind of his protagonist and the quite distinct monstrism of leakage, blending, and purgatorial deferral (exhaustion) in the parade of death's heads of his own finale. If not entirely susceptible to being coaxed into systematic shape (to paraphrase Shira Wolosky), *Murphy*, in its dismantling of the face, undeniably plays host to shadows of Spinozist philosophical concepts and to their afterlife in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari, and announces a de-stratification that sweeps through character, form, nation, and homeland. *All out*.

Notes

1. Later referred to in *A Thousand Plateaus* as the principle of a-signifying rupture. For an illuminating account of the centrality of style to Deleuze's theory of writing, see Lecercle.

2. In Roland Barthes's analysis in *Mythologies* (1957) the face of Greta Garbo is a pure mask that operates as a reifying essence, or Platonic Idea, whereas that of Audrey Hepburn, simultaneously "child" and "kitten," is the face as "event," "constituted by an infinite complexity of morphological functions" (57).

3. As we are reminded when they assert that on a molecular level "microfascisms" can lie awaiting the opportunity to coalesce (*Plateaus* 215).

4. Deleuze and Guattari are, however, careful to state that "It would be an error to proceed as though the face became inhuman only beyond a certain threshold: close-up, magnification, recondite expression, etc. The inhuman in human beings: that is what the face is from the start. It is by nature a close-up, with its inanimate white surfaces, its shining black holes, its emptiness and boredom" (*Plateaus* 171).

5. Skin too perhaps, since the naked body might be closer to a face than is the clothed version, a blank face (such as is furnished in a *voltefesses*). Cf. *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* with its façade penetrated by façade (46).

6. See Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 176 on the same passage.

7. The novel itself describes Albertine as a plastic multiplicity: "Had I not detected in Albertine one of those girls beneath whose envelope of flesh more hidden persons stir, I will not say than in a pack of cards still in its box, a closed cathedral or theatre before we enter it, but than in the whole vast ever-changing crowd" (Proust, *In Search of* 5: 99).

8. As Deleuze puts it, "And in each vase an I which lives, which perceives. Which desires and remembers, which keeps vigil or which sleeps, which dies, commits suicide and comes back to life in fits and starts: the "crumbling", the "splitting up" of the Albertine to which a multiplication of selves responds" (*Proust and Signs* 125).

9. "The face is an organised whole" (*Murphy* 38).

10. Hill and Bryden, in their respective studies, have gone furthest in analyzing the trope of crucifixion in Beckett's work. For Hill this latter operates as the "sign of an unresolved conundrum, as a paradigm for the strange impossibility of joining word and flesh together in such a way as to give birth to a speaking human subject in whom name and body share a common bond of identity" (104). See also Bryden 45-62. John Banville's novel *Shroud* (2002), set in Turin and featuring a much anticipated and eventually abandoned visit to view the shroud, makes for interesting reading in this context. In a related context, the strange news that Pier Paolo Pasolini hears, from, as Hardt puts it, the "impure angel" of the crucifixion is that

through this self-emptying rather than the confirmation, via correspondence and conformity, of the form of God, in reality what one is left with is "merely a hollow husk." Paradoxically, "The self-emptying or *kenosis* of Christ, the evacuation of the transcendental, is the affirmation of the plenitude of the material, the fullness of the flesh" and an absence of *mediation*. Instead incarnation is herald of the "intimate complementarity" of transcendence and the immanent (Hardt 78-79). Also see Grossman: "L'homme-Christ Beckettien est recrucifié jusqu'à la fin des temps pour rien" ("The Beckettian Christ-man is re-crucified until the end of time for nothing" [61]).

11. For Foucault, "[univocity] is paradoxically the principal condition which permits difference to escape the domination of identity" (192).

12. As Rabaté remarks, "The submerged Morphē enables Beckett to connect the god of sleep, trance, and half-death with the philosophically loaded interrogation of form" (151). Ackerley offers a series of original additions to the *morphē*/morpheme debate (1).

13. Hill's account also draws out an important link between the essay on Joyce and the experiment of *Murphy*, making particular reference to the "purgatorial" mode that Beckett favors.

14. As noted indeed by Hill himself (113). Cf. Asensi, who in referring to J. Hillis Miller's reading of Wallace Stevens's "The Rock" writes of how, "The opposition between the literal and the figurative remains (they exchange their places, but never fuse); the frictions among the irreducible meanings are kept; the anamorphosis of the pictogram of the 'i' looks at us from the text" (264).

15. Guattari is unequivocal about the halt on processuality that this figure (castration) endorses: "Lacan's phallic function, in so far as it over-codes each partial object, does not give them back a particular identity . . . [and thereby] distributing a lack to each, [it calls] . . . on another form of totalization, this time in the symbolic order" (qtd. in Deleuze, *Desert Islands* 222).

16. "There is no doubt that anamorphosis contributes to the overturning of forms [he wrote] which opened up the way to every sort of deviation; but the resemblance [he is writing specifically about surrealism] is only superficial" (Lacan 130).

17. Not rendered in the French translation.

18. "He thought of his latest *voltefesses*, at once so pleasant and so painful. Pleasant in that Miss Counihan had been eased; painful, in that Murphy had been made worse; *fesses*, as being the part best qualified by nature no only to be kicked but also to mock the kicker, a paradox strikingly illustrated by Socrates, when he turned up the tail of his abolla at the trees" (112-13).

19. Antonioli's gloss on the notion of the pre-face is worth quoting: "L'homme n'est fait que d'inhumanités, mais elles suivent des natures et des vitesses très différentes: dans l'inhumanitié du pré-visage la tête reste une appartenance d'un corps qui ne cesse de se déterritorialiser sur des devenirs spirituels et animaux, dans l'inhumanité à venir au-delà du visage de nouvelles lignes de déterritorialisation forment d'étranges devenirs nouveaux, de nouvelles polyvocités clandestines" ("Man is made up of nothing but inhumanities, but these adopt very different natures and speeds: in the inhumanity of the pre-face the head remains a belonging of the body which ceaselessly deterritorializes itself on spiritual and animal becomings; in the inhumanity to come beyond the face new lines of deterritorialization form strange new becomings, new clandestine polyvalences" [206]).

20. In a link that it would be perhaps be fanciful to pursue here, Deleuze and Guattari develop a link between the representation of Christ in renaissance art and his transformation as a kind of kite (see comments on Giotto above).

21. The pun is "*s'il y a*."

22. For Lecercle the novel possesses "a self-destroying incipit that immediately ruins the expectations it evokes" (227).

23. "[C]e qui dissimule derrière le monologue intérieur: un foissonnement innombrable de sensations, d'images, de sentiments, de souvenirs, d'impulsions, de petits actes larvés qu'aucun langage intérieur n'exprime" ("that which hides behind the interior monologue: a swarming of innumerable sensations, images, feelings, memories, impulses, little larval acts which no interior language expresses" [Sarraute 96]).

24. The narrator of the *Recherche* is, in terms that derive from *L'Anti-Œdipe*, and that anticipate the reading of Giotto in *A Thousand Plateaus*, an organless body or body without organs (181), the strange "plasticity" (182) of which enables it to send out "sticky threads" (182) to open vessels, in order, Deleuze writes, "to make the characters so many marionettes of his delirium, so many intensive powers of his organless body, so many profiles of his own madness" (182).

25. See also the linked "*voltefesses*" (40) and "cheek by jowl" joke about relations at the Mercyseat. My reading of the buttocks encounter, while downplaying the historical referents to which Beckett was so deliberately attuned in choosing this statue in this location—scene of the 1916 rebellion (i.e. the Rising)—and necessarily foregrounding certain locutions while ignoring others (not least the Victorian rendering of "Red Branch"—albeit in the formulation "Red Branch bum" (30)—for a member of the Fianna), is not, in my view, necessarily at the expense of those referents. On these latter McCormack's reading remains indispensable. Beckett's rendering of the key moment in the French translation is "ce cul impérissable qui voulait me faire baisser les yeux," although he jettisons the reinforcement of the facial referent by giving "m'intimider" (46) for the English "downface me."

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