

Music, Mood and Attunement in the Early Novels of Samuel Beckett

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the connections between music, mood and notions of ‘attunement’ in Samuel Beckett’s early novels *Murphy* and *Watt*. It considers the intersection between ideas of music in these novels and their philosophical underpinnings, focusing specifically on the concept of melancholia. Throughout western history, melancholia has been associated with intellectual or artistic inspiration. This thesis argues that Beckett’s recourse to ideas of music in his early work draws on and critiques this aspect of the cultural configuration of melancholia.

Part One considers the use of music and tuning in *Murphy*. It argues that Beckett’s musical references animate the (often comic) exploration of the nature and limits of different forms of knowledge in relation to the insights produced by the melancholic disposition. In doing so, Part One draws out the implications of Beckett’s creative engagement with key literary, philosophical and musical sources – especially Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, the musical theories of Jean-Phillipe Rameau, and the technicalities of musical tuning in Pythagorean philosophy, subsequently reworked by Schopenhauer.

Broadening the exploration of ideas of tuning, Part Two addresses how the idea of ‘attunement’ (which is encompassed by Heidegger’s term ‘*Stimmung*’, denoting one’s orientation to the world through mood) brings into view the affective quality of *Watt*. It considers the text in relation to the epistemic feeling states associated with melancholia and demonstrates how Beckett draws on and critiques intersecting musical and philosophical discourses of ‘harmony’ – especially in the work of Leibniz – so as to explore alternative conceptions of attunement rooted in embodiment. As such, Part Two of this thesis attempts to reconfigure our understanding of the way in which Beckett’s work can be understood as musical. Overall, by exploring the epistemic affective states associated with music and melancholia in Beckett’s early novels, this thesis contributes to a wider understanding of the role played by music in modernist literature.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Catherine Laws for her support and encouragement throughout this project.

Introduction: “The Soundless Tumult of the Inner Lamentation”¹

Introduction

This thesis investigates the philosophical connections established between music, mood and different notions of ‘attunement’ in Samuel Beckett’s early novels *Murphy* and *Watt*. Music in Beckett’s work materialises in several different but highly significant ways. Throughout his novels there are references to musicians, composers, musical genres, musical works and musical techniques and terminology, as well as the incorporation of snippets of musical notation in the texts themselves. These references often amount to a thematic exploration of music’s potential relative to literature, encompassed by Beckett’s interest in the possibilities and limits of language; an interdisciplinary exploration typified by the appearance of music as a character in *Words and Music*² and *Cascando*.³ In his plays for stage, television and radio Beckett invokes a range of music, sometimes directly and other times via allusion, from pieces by canonical western classical composers through to popular music hall ballads and operetta songs. Beyond this, Beckett’s late works possess a compelling sonic dimension, owing to the fragmentation and disintegration of the literary surface, revealing his meticulous attention to the sounds of language. In addition to these more obvious ways in which the writer’s work might be considered musical, Beckett’s attention to sonic experience – to listening in general, and to the experience of music, in particular – is striking, both in its textual depiction at the level of character, and through the way in which the writing is carefully orchestrated to engage and affect the reader.⁴

Beckett’s novels act as a type of philosophical testing ground for examining the nature and limits of consciousness, perception and memory: Beckett expressed to Tom Driver that the task of the artist is “to find a form that accommodates the mess”.⁵ Music in Beckett’s work plays an important part in articulating the recalcitrance of this “mess”, which arises from

¹ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 187.

² Samuel Beckett, *Words and Music* in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 285–294.

³ Samuel Beckett, *Cascando* in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London, Faber and Faber, 2006), 295–304.

⁴ For an introductory overview of the role of music in Beckett’s work see David Tucker, “‘Oh Lovely Art!’: Beckett and Music”, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts*, ed. S. E. Gontarski, 373–387 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

⁵ Beckett to Tom Driver in interview of Summer 1961. Interview reproduced in Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, ed., *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 219.

Beckett's penetrating investigation into human experience and the nature of subjectivity. This is of course encompassed by Beckett's exploration of the role of creative artist, which is closely aligned with the trope of melancholic inspiration and the melancholic's orientation or aspiration towards truth and sagacity. The aim of this investigation then, is to understand the philosophical significance that music, and specifically 'attunement', hold in *Murphy* and *Watt*, with regard to Beckett's exploration of specific affective states.

'Attunement' is used in the philosophical sense, where, in the work of Martin Heidegger specifically, it refers to the individual orientation towards the world – how one is disposed to it – and is mediated by 'Stimmung' (mood). The term is particularly useful in its adjacency to the notion of tuning: philosophical attunement is inherently approximate to the musical sense of attunement, both invoking processes becoming 'harmonious'.

In particular, this thesis is concerned with the 'Stimmung' of the pervasive tropes of melancholy often, in western cultural history, associated with intellectual or artistic inspiration. Beckett makes recourse to this tradition in his writing, and in his correspondence he sometimes draws upon such ideas to frame his own experience creatively. This thesis explores how music is drawn into the exploration of these epistemic feeling states. Accordingly, it demonstrates how Beckett derives an alternative embodied conception of 'attunement' from his readings in philosophy, to explore the relationship between mood and perspective. It demonstrates, then, how Beckett employs music to articulate our sense of orientation towards the world relative to the moods that we experience.

A key concern of the thesis, therefore, is the significance of the many musical details that are scattered throughout Samuel Beckett's early novels *Murphy*⁶ and *Watt*.⁷ What sort of picture can we build from these fleeting references to music and sound, and how do they contribute to our understanding of the novels? Sometimes these musical details are overt, such as when musical notation is incorporated in the text; other times the allusions are buried, unlikely to be apparent to most readers. However, they are always significant; they should not be considered simply as instances of writerly flair, or expressions of learnedness and authorial dexterity. When we attend to the different subtexts underpinning

⁶ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

the musical details in *Murphy* and *Watt*, we start to appreciate Beckett's use of music and specifically musical 'attunement' to animate different conceptions of knowledge.

Beckett and Music

This thesis sits firmly in the context of Beckett Studies; more specifically in the subfield 'Beckett and music'. Several of the earliest articles in this area – particularly those by Susan Field Seneff (1964)⁸ and Eric Park (1975)⁹ – considered Beckett's inclusion of musical references as evidence of his interdisciplinary interests. Drawing out the musical content of the early novels, these short studies revealed aspects of Beckett's nuanced understanding of music – something that was later confirmed in the first collection of essays on the topic, edited by Mary Bryden (1998),¹⁰ and also in James Knowlson's biography (1997).¹¹ Collectively, these publications evidenced the extent of Beckett's skill as a musician, his listening habits and the relationships forged with composers. However, despite their detailed discussion of Beckett's musical knowledge and experience and his deployment of this in his writing, these studies were little concerned with the writer's interest in the conceptual significance of music, nor his acute sensitivity to the role of music in the philosophical systems that undergird his texts.

The musical contingent of Beckett's work and his exploration of philosophical themes and ideas were mostly considered somewhat separately until the work of Franz Michael Maier and Catherine Laws. Maier's work, which includes articles on Beckett's TV plays *Ghost Trio* and *Nacht und Träume* and a short monograph, *Beckett's Melodien: Die Musik und die Idee des Zusammenhangs bei Schopenhauer, Proust and Beckett*, explores aspects of the formal, philosophical and aesthetic implications of Beckett's use of music.¹² Laws'

⁸ Susan Field Seneff, "Sound and Music in Samuel Beckett's 'Watt'", *Modern Fiction Studies* 10, no. 2 (1964): 137-149.

⁹ Eric Park, "Fundamental Sounds: Music in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* and *Watt*", *Modern Fiction Studies* 21, no. 2 (1975): 157-171.

¹⁰ Mary Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and Music* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1998).

¹¹ James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997).

¹² Franz Michael Maier, "Geistertrio: Beethoven's Music in Samuel Beckett's *Ghost Trio*", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 11 (2002): 267-78; Franz Michael Maier, *Beckett's Melodien: Die Musik und die Idee des Zusammenhangs bei Schopenhauer, Proust and Beckett* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006); Franz Michael Maier, "Two Versions of *Nacht und Träume*: What Franz Schubert Tells Us about a Favourite Song of Beckett", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 18, no.1 (2007): 91-100; Franz Michael Maier, "Samuel Beckett and The Idea of Melodic Connection in Samuel Beckett", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61, no.2 (2008), 373-410; Franz Michael Maier, "Models of Musical Communication in

study *Headaches Among the Overtones: Music in Beckett / Beckett in Music* is substantial in its attention to the use of music in Beckett's work.¹³ Here, and in other publications, she also considers the significance of listening in Beckett's work, his exploitation of the nature of radio sound in his collaboration with the BBC in the 1950s, and composers' responses to his texts. Notably with respect to this thesis, the first half of Laws' monograph foregrounds Beckett as a writer who uses music to think through and interrogate themes such as "subjectivity and embodiment, authority and agency, representation and mediation".¹⁴ Laws draws attention to the various musical, musicological and philosophical sources that inspired Beckett's sophisticated use of music in exploring these key themes. However, she does not consider in any detail the use of music in the novels *Murphy* and *Watt*, nor the influential role of philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz on Beckett's exploration and critique of ideas of harmony.

Other significant contributions to the field of Beckett and music include Eric Prieto's examination of the use of music in modernist literature (including Beckett) to facilitate what he refers to as a process of "listening in": an "inwardly directed mode of mimesis", where "the primary object of representation is ... the subtly modulating interactions between consciousness and world".¹⁵ Thomas Mansell's unpublished doctoral dissertation, 'Beckett and Music: Incarnating the Idea' (2011),¹⁶ and his two subsequent articles, pay substantial attention to the influence of Beckett's practical experience of music on aspects of his work.¹⁷ Finally, two more books have broadened and deepened the understanding of the multiple roles of music in Beckett's writing: the collection of essays, *Beckett and Musicality*,

Proust and Beckett", in *Proust / Deleuze's Proust*, ed. Mary Bryden and Margaret Topping (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 128-35.

¹³ Catherine Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones: Music in Beckett/Beckett in Music* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013). Key additional publications include: Catherine Laws, "Beckett and Unheard Sound", in *Beckett and Nothing*, ed. Daniella Caselli (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 176–191; Catherine Laws, "Beckett in New Musical Composition", *Journal of Beckett Studies* 23, no.1 (2014): 54–72; Catherine Laws, "Imagining Radio Sound: Interference and Collaboration in the BBC Radio Production of Beckett's *All That Fall*", in *Samuel Beckett and the BBC*, ed. David Addyman, Matthew Feldman and Erik Tønning (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 103–138.

¹⁴ Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones*, 13.

¹⁵ Eric Prieto, *Listening In: Music, Mind and the Modernist Narrative* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), x.

¹⁶ Thomas Mansell, 'Beckett and Music: Incarnating the idea'. PhD thesis, Birbeck, University of London, 2011.

¹⁷ Thomas Mansell, "Different Music: Beckett's Theatrical Conduct", in *Samuel Beckett Today / Auhjord'hui* 15 (2005): 225–239; Thomas Mansell, "Sam's Shambles: Beckett's Piano Pedalling Technique", in *Performance Research* 12, no.1 (2011): 124–36.

(2014), edited by Sarah Jane Bailes and Nicholas Till,¹⁸ and John McGrath's *Samuel Beckett, Repetition and Modern Music*.¹⁹

Part of the process of really understanding the significance of the often obscure musical details in Beckett is to consider their role in the various philosophical systems underpinning the novels in question. These are systems of thought which allow Beckett, in the words of Shane Weller, to “explore in unremittingly interrogative spirit the nature of cognition, perception, consciousness, memory, temporality, being and non-being”.²⁰ Music, as this thesis demonstrates, figures significantly in this process and this can, as discussed in the following section, be empirically verified with reference to Beckett's notebooks.

Beckett and Philosophy and ‘Genetic Beckett Studies’

The second field of study in which this research takes place is that of Beckett and philosophy. This subfield of Beckett studies encompasses, but is not limited to, examining philosophical influence based on literary-philosophical intertextuality. Early critical studies in this area were primarily concerned with the influence of individual philosophers; Descartes was a primary focus,²¹ especially before this was somewhat superseded by greater interest in Beckett's awareness of the Occasionalists, due to the study of his notes and letters.

The field has broadened considerably, especially with the study of Beckett's ‘Philosophy Notes’,²² which have invited reflections on Beckett's recourse to the philosophies of the Ancient Greek Atomists, Arnold Geulincx, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Fritz Mauthner (amongst others). Running parallel to this work, premised on what Richard Lane refers to as a type of authorial “authorisation”,²³ are studies that have sought not to identify verifiable influence but rather to situate Beckett's work in relation to – or read it through –

¹⁸ Sarah Jane Bailes and Nicholas Till, *Beckett and Musicality* (Farnham: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁹ John McGrath, *Samuel Beckett, Repetition and Modern Music* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2.

²⁰ Shane Weller, ‘Foreword’ in *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'*, by Matthew Feldman (London: Continuum, 2006), vii.

²¹ Ruby Cohn, *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962); Hugh Kenner, ‘The Cartesian Centaur’, *Perspective* (Autumn 1959), 132–141.

²² Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, ed. Steven Matthews and Matthew Feldman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²³ Richard Lane, ed. *Beckett and Philosophy* (New York: Palgrave), 3.

the work of twentieth-century philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Giles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Theodor Adorno.

This prompts reflection on a methodological aspect of this thesis, which is both informed by and directly draws upon the trend towards ‘genetic’ criticism in Beckett studies: an empirical approach, focused on identifying Beckett’s sources and analysing the ways in which he incorporates them into his work. In particular, this thesis has benefited from the publication of some of the archival documents from the periods in which Beckett was particularly concerned with studying and note-taking: the recently published edition of the ‘Philosophy Notes’ is key, here.²⁴ The focus of this thesis is not to assume a rigorous ‘genetic’ approach. However, it does make use of available archival materials, such as the *Murphy* manuscript notebooks,²⁵ to highlight instances of musical notation and musical doodles in the marginalia that predate the published editions of the text and which provide a window onto Beckett’s use of music in his exploration of key philosophical themes.

C. J. Ackerley’s annotated studies of *Murphy* and *Watt*²⁶ form hugely significant contributions to our understanding of the vast range of interwoven references and allusions in Beckett’s early texts, and this work has been vital for my study. Ackerley pinpoints the rich variety of literary, scientific, philosophical and religious ideas that are threaded through the novels, as well as laying out in meticulous detail the numerous changes that occurred across the versions of the manuscripts and different published editions. While Ackerley is keen to examine the basis of Beckett’s intertextual practice, his work does not extend to comprehensively examining the links between the identified textual sources and the note-taking practices that accompanied Beckett’s vociferous reading habits, as evidenced by the rich corpus of notebooks and typewritten sheets.

Matthew Feldman’s *Beckett’s Books: A Cultural History of the Interwar Notes* takes the opposite approach, working from the extant “archival deposits”²⁷ to the texts, and therefore

²⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, ed. Steven Matthews and Matthew Feldman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy Notebooks*, BC MS 5517. Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading.

²⁶ C. J. Ackerley, *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy* (Florida: Journal of Beckett Studies Books, 1998); C. J. Ackerley, *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

²⁷ Matthew Feldman, *Beckett’s Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett’s ‘Interwar Notes’* (London: Continuum, 2006), 6.

addressing this relationship.²⁸ The corpus of archival material that Feldman terms Beckett's 'interwar notes' comprises the '*Whoroscope Notebook*', the 500 typed and handwritten sheets forming the 'Philosophy Notes' and the 20,000 typewritten words on psychology and psychoanalysis that make up the 'Psychology Notes'. Through his extensive work on this material, Feldman has prompted a re-assessment of Beckett's philosophical interests, revealing their full extent and also demonstrating that his knowledge of Western philosophy was derived from consulting mostly secondary sources, including synoptic texts. Importantly, Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes' demonstrate that, rather than the preoccupation with Cartesianism assumed by certain early critics, Beckett "spent the most time and energy of the beginnings of philosophy, consulting texts on epistemology, the progression of Greek thought and...its heritage".²⁹ This underpins aspects of my thesis, not least the discussion of Beckett's use of Pythagoras' understanding of tuning. The 'Philosophy Notes' (and Feldman's critical exegesis) are drawn on throughout my research with respect to the significance of other philosophies – and philosophies of music – in *Murphy* and *Watt*.

Melancholia and Attunement

In addition to the domains of 'Beckett and music' and 'Beckett and philosophy', this research is situated in relation to a third area: a particular strand of historical thought that connects philosophy and psychology. Attending to the different subtexts underpinning the musical details of *Murphy* and *Watt*, we can appreciate Beckett's use of music and specifically ideas of 'attunement' to animate different conceptions of knowledge. This interest in epistemology is accompanied by a coupling of these references to 'attunement' with a particular conception of melancholia. In this respect, this thesis seeks to understand Beckett's early novels as part of the modernist recourse to and problematisation of music as a higher art in consideration of the historical tradition of intellectual or creative melancholia.

²⁸ Matthew Feldman, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (London: Continuum, 2006).

²⁹ Feldman, *Beckett's Books*, 36.

The history of melancholia in western thought begins with Greek humoral lore,³⁰ which maintained that melancholia was amongst the many diseases caused by black bile, one of the four bodily humours thought to cause “unwarrantedly dispirited and apprehensive affective states”.³¹ The humoral model was reiterated in Hippocratic writing, later endorsed by Galen and preserved in the writings of the Islamic medical scholars Ishaq ibn Ímran, Al-Majusi (Haly Abbas) and Ibn Sina (Avicenna).³² As a result, the Ancient Greek ascription of moods of fear and sadness “without cause” to melancholia persisted throughout the modern period.³³ As Radden observes, though, writers on melancholia began to depend more on their own observations and to use scientific reasoning to frame and explain them.³⁴ Accordingly, the nineteenth century saw the dawn of modern-day scientific psychiatry and psychology; notably, in Philippe Pinel’s account of melancholia in *A Treatise on Insanity* (1806)³⁵ there is no longer a reliance on humoral accounts of melancholia, but the plurality of seemingly contradictory associated symptoms remains in place.³⁶

Running in parallel to and often intersecting with the medical history of melancholia is a particular intellectual or artistic conception of the condition. This thesis is specifically concerned with Beckett’s creative affinity with and recourse to this tradition, which is concerned with the historical cultural content of melancholia – the set of prevalent cultural associations and tropes that have attached to melancholia across its history – rather than its symptomology.

Melancholia was first linked with the potential for intellectual inquiry in the writings of Aristotle (drawing on Plato’s earlier notion of inspired frenzy). In Aristotle’s *Problems*, he asks his famous question: “Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, or are infected by the

³⁰ Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic to Modern Times* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 7–10.

³¹ Jennifer Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* See also, Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10–12.

³⁴ Jennifer Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression*, 6.

³⁵ Philippe Pinel, “Melancholia or Delirium Upon One Subject Exclusively”, in *A Treatise on Insanity, In Which are Contained the Principles of New and More Practical Nosology of Maniacal Disorders Than Has Yet Been Offered to the Public*, trans. D. D. Davis (Sheffield: W. Todd, 1806) 136–149.

³⁶ Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 10.

diseases arising from black bile?”³⁷ Democritus is also credited with “initiating a tradition of locating philosophical significance in melancholia” in a series of written correspondence detailing his supposed melancholia.³⁸ As discussed later in the thesis, Beckett was familiar with the philosophy of Democritus from his note-taking on the Atomists – the reference to the “guffaw of the Abderite”³⁹ in *Murphy* is to the ‘laughing philosopher’, Democritus – and he was also aware of the story of Democritus’s melancholia from his reading of Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, in which Burton adopts the character Democritus Junior.

As Radden observes, this concept of the philosophical potential of melancholia – also termed “heroic melancholia” – has been echoed through the centuries.⁴⁰ It was adopted by the Florentine Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino (1433-99),⁴¹ with his astrological version then depicted in Dürer’s allegorical *Melancholia I*⁴² – another topic of Beckett’s note-taking.⁴³ English writing on the subject in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries includes Timothie Bright’s 1586 *A Treatise of Melancholie*⁴⁴ and the great tome from which Beckett sought insight into his own ill health, the aforementioned *Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton.⁴⁵ Radden notes that in subsequent decades there was a waning of “confidence in the idea the exalted qualities accompanying it adequately compensated for melancholy suffering”,⁴⁶ but by the early nineteenth century the intellectual and artistic model of melancholia was revived in European literary Romanticism, where it was conceptualised as “valuable and even pleasurable, though dark and painful”.⁴⁷

³⁷ Aristotle, “*Problemata xxxi*”, in *Aristotle’s Works*, ed. W. D. Ross (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1955).

³⁸ Joshua Bell, *Melancholia: The Western Malady* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 27.

³⁹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 154.

⁴⁰ Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 12. Radden explains elsewhere that the “heroic” view has “waxed and waned” in different eras and has been subject to many subtle modifications, see Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression*, 17.

⁴¹ Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic to Modern Times*, 100-102.

⁴² Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 14-15. For a detailed discussion of Albrecht Dürer’s *Melancholia I* see Raymond Kiblancksy, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

⁴³ Beckett’s notes on Albrecht Dürer are amongst, Samuel Beckett, *Beckett’s Notes on European Painting*, UoR MS 5001. Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading.

⁴⁴ Timothie Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholy* (London: Thomas Vautrolier, 1586).

⁴⁵ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2001).

⁴⁶ Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

This resonates with Beckett's own gravitation towards German Romanticism in the 1930s, apparent in his *German Diaries*;⁴⁸ especially towards writers such as Keats and Goethe, both of whom Beckett read and returned to throughout his career, and who glorified "the melancholy man" who "felt more deeply, saw more clearly and came closer to the sublime than ordinary mortals",⁴⁹ but also to the music of Schubert and Beethoven⁵⁰ and the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, which he also understood in these terms.⁵¹ In the English context, this trend was accompanied by Samuel Johnson's adjectival uses of "melancholy" in his influential dictionary, to capture a subjective mood associated with literary work.⁵² Indeed, Beckett studied Johnson's life in preparation for writing his unfinished play *Human Wishes*.⁵³ The persistence of these tropes into the twentieth century, notwithstanding the new and very different ideas emerging across psychiatry at the time, is apparent in Freud's seminal 'Mourning and Melancholia' of 1917, in which he credits the melancholic with a "keener eye for the truth".⁵⁴

Beckett's reading choices indicate that he gravitated towards philosophical and literary traditions that adopted a philosophical-tragic attitude, associated with states synonymous with melancholia and (in later terminology) depression. Importantly, in these philosophical and literary traditions the "tragic view"⁵⁵ encompasses moods, feeling, attitudes and beliefs encompassed by depressive and melancholic subjectivity that indicate a type of epistemological orientation. This is central to Beckett's preoccupations: he draws this tradition into his own artistic purposes. There have been relatively few attempts to understand this vein of melancholia in Beckett works, or in light of his initial recourse to philosophy in the 1930s more broadly, but a small number of studies are very important. Mark Nixon's *Beckett's German Diaries* brings to light Beckett's immersion in German

⁴⁸ Samuel Beckett, 'German Diaries' [Six Notebooks]. Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading. For a discussion of Beckett's 'German Diaries' see, Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936–1937* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

⁴⁹ Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy*, 15.

⁵⁰ Laws notes that Beckett's invoking of Schubert and Beethoven in his work is part of his wider recourse to what he perceives as the melancholic strain of German Romanticism. See Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones*, 99–101, 152–160 and 172–174.

⁵¹ Mark Nixon, "Beckett and Romanticism in the 1930s", *Samuel Beckett Today / Auhourd'hui* 18, no.1 (2007): 61–76.

⁵² Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays on Melancholy and Depression*, 44.

⁵³ For a discussion of Beckett's interest in Samuel Johnson see Frederik N. Smith, *Samuel Beckett's Eighteenth Century* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 110–131.

⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia", in *Collected Papers*, trans. Joan Rivière (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 156.

⁵⁵ Radden, *Moody Minds Distempered*, 192.

culture, including the melancholic tradition, in the 1930s.⁵⁶ In contrast, the work of Angela Moorjani,⁵⁷ and later Phil Baker,⁵⁸ approaches melancholia in Beckett's work from a primarily psychoanalytic perspective. The latest of such studies in this psychoanalytic vein is Rina Kim's *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia*,⁵⁹ which offers a Kleinian reading of Beckett's treatment of women and Ireland, specifically with regards to the themes of mourning and reparation.

It is through the focus on musical 'attunement' and the linked conception of melancholia, developed in Part One of this thesis, that this study pivots from its singular focus on the musical subtexts of *Murphy* to a broader consideration of the dimension of 'mood' in relation to *Watt*. 'Mood' is part of an associative network of meanings which link the musical and the psychological, especially when we consider its relation to the German term 'Stimmung'. Stimmung, meaning both 'attunement' and 'mood', also gestures towards 'voice' through its etymological root 'stimme'. Consequently, it is rich with musical and philosophical significance and thus of great use in thinking through the chief concerns of this thesis. Birgit Breidenbach's exploration of 'Stimmung' in modernist literature is foundational here, and includes discussion of Beckett's novels, focusing on the intersection of his existentialist and aesthetic concerns.⁶⁰ However, Breidenbach does not consider the important role that Beckett's philosophical subtexts and his musical references play in establishing the specific "plane of attunement" that she perceives between the text and the reader in modernist literature.⁶¹ In contrast, my thesis demonstrates that, from his reading, Beckett establishes a particular affective music – or more precisely "attunement" – rooted in embodiment.

⁵⁶ Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936–1937* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 60.

⁵⁷ Angela Moorjani, "A Mythic Reading of Molloy", in *Samuel Beckett: The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Edouard Morot-Sir, Howard Harper and Dougald McMillan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 225-35; Angela Moorjani, *Abysmal Games in the Novels of Samuel Beckett* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Angela Moorjani, "Beckett's Devious Deictics", in *Rethinking Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Lance St. John Butler and Robin J. Davies (London: Macmillan, 1990), 20–30; Angela Moorjani, *The Aesthetics of Loss and Lessness* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Angela Moorjani, "Mourning, Schopenhauer and Beckett's Art of Shadows", in *Beckett On and On...*, ed. Lois Oppenheim and Marius Buning (Cranbury, NJ and London: Associated University Presses, 1996) 83-101; Angela Moorjani, *Beyond Fetishism and Other Excursions in Psychopragmatics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

⁵⁸ Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

⁵⁹ Rina Kim, *Beckett and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁶⁰ Birgit Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood: Stimmung and Modernity* (New York, Routledge, 2020).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

Overview of the Thesis: Parts and Chapters

This thesis is comprised of two parts: Part One considers the novel *Murphy*, while Part Two focuses on *Watt*. The first three chapters, which make up Part One, consider the metaphorical use of music in *Murphy*, especially the allusions to musical tuning that are embedded in references to the corporeal body. It examines Beckett's recourse to different philosophical conceptions of tuning and harmony in relation to his notes on Ancient Greek thought, particularly the ideas of Pythagoras and Democritus. The implications of this are drawn out through their convergence with the traces of Beckett's reading of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and his attention to the resonances in Schopenhauer's philosophy of Jean Phillippe Rameau's theory of music (itself inspired by Pythagoras). Part One of this thesis then focuses specifically on how references to music and tuning in *Murphy* participate in the animation of different philosophical conceptions of knowledge. It also considers how Beckett draws on the modernist valorisation of music as a high art capable of articulating inner life to explore and critique the historical tradition of intellectual melancholia that has endorsed interiority.

To date, there has been little critical consideration of how Beckett's texts operate *affectively* for the reader, or how 'Stimmung' or mood operates at the level of character and narrative events. Part Two of this thesis examines this in *Watt*, arguing that the *mood* of the text offers a kind of musical experience; that music figures in Beckett's exploration of mood and his process of both establishing and critiquing a plane of 'attunement' between text and reader. Chapter Four provides a backdrop, explaining the term 'Stimmung' and its significance to music, literature and philosophy, particularly through the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Chapter Five first considers the mood of *Watt's* philosophical subtexts, most particularly the work of Descartes and Leibniz. *Watt* is strongly influenced by Descartes: his *Méthode* underpins the epistemological concerns which manifest in *Watt's* extreme rationalisations. However, the discussion here considers Beckett's use of Descartes to establish a modernist variant of intellectual or inspired melancholy, in which there is a positive association with the aspiration towards truth.

This leads to the role of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, particularly his concept of the monad and the relationship that can be identified between Heideggerian 'Stimmung' and monadic perspective. Beckett's attention to Leibniz's ideas in the 'Philosophy Notes' is here

discussed in detail for the first time. By studying examples of Beckett's correspondence from the 1930's, I argue that Beckett used the format of the Leibnizian monad to frame his own experiences of and reflections upon melancholia in this period. This provides a basis for the detailed consideration of the more overt instances of music in *Watt* in the following chapter: Chapter Six draws on this Leibnizian and Heideggerian philosophical grounding to illustrate the fundamental role ascribed to instances of music in condensing the atmosphere of the novel and the particular type of relationality it fashions with the reader. Most specifically, it enables an understanding of how this technique runs parallel to the overt resonance of Leibnizian references in the text itself. Finally, following on from this, Chapter Seven addresses the other significant manifestation of music in *Watt*, which can also be understood through a Leibnizian reading: the tuning scene. It discusses Beckett's exploration of alternative modes of attunement rooted in embodied experience.

PART ONE: MUSIC, MELANCHOLIA AND KNOWLEDGE IN MURPHY

Chapter One – “...Into Murphy’s Heart It Would Not Enter”: Issues of Achieving ‘Attunement’ in *Murphy*

Introduction

Murphy was Beckett’s second novel and was written during his period of residency in London in 1935. The three chapters that comprise Part One of this thesis explore the ways in which *Murphy* can be considered a musical novel. More specifically, they investigate how music becomes characterised by a notion of melancholia that appears to be associated with heightened insight, arising out of particular forms of interiority. Building upon this, they explore the way in which Beckett provides a musicalised allegorisation of intellectual or inspired melancholy, drawing upon his own engagement with this tradition. Chapters One and Two explore the musical subtext of the ‘Apmonia’ scene at the beginning of the novel, the associations that are established between different musical constructs and the opposing qualities of desire and intellectual enlightenment that characterise the scene. Chapter Three investigates the link that is established between music, knowledge and melancholic interiority: it explores the final encounter between *Murphy* and Mr Endon in terms of a subtext of Mr Endon’s characterisation derived from the Greek philosopher Democritus. The investigation of the musical characterisation of the opposing qualities of desire and intellectual enlightenment explored in Chapters One and Two extend into a consideration of two forms of language that are given a decidedly musical framing throughout *Murphy*. Overall, Part One of this thesis contributes to our understanding of the prevalent affective orientation or basis of music’s designation in modernist literature as a higher art that is capable of articulating inner life; it is melancholia that conjoins interiority and a heightened sense of insight brought about by intensely inward-focused vision.

Chapter One begins by providing an introduction to the various philosophical systems that underpin the work. The chapter then moves on to a consideration of Pythagorean tuning, which undergirds the metaphorical employment of music in the novel and provides a way in to understanding the musical evocations of the ‘attunement’ scene. An analysis of the gestures of Neary’s attunement practice further reveals the musical logic of the scene and

opens up the relationship that is established between different conceptions of elements of music theory. Investigating the historical paradox of Pythagorean musical practice locates a subtext for Neary's failed endeavours.

Murphy's Retreat from the "Big World"

As Chris Ackerley has argued, *Murphy* is characterised by a desire for radical solipsism: "one quality that distinguishes *Murphy* from its successor *Watt* is that despite their common matrix, the former enacts the Cartesian catastrophe of the solitary monad, whereas the latter rehearses the tragedy of the monad that tried to accommodate itself to 'the establishment'".⁶² Murphy desires a deterministic world that allows him to retreat from the nexus of social and personal relations within which he is entangled: "having now been seated for over an hour without any ill effects, carried through his daily fraud and found a use for a pot poet, Murphy felt he had earned the long rapture flat on his back in the most pleasant of natural laps available, the Cockpit in Hyde Park".⁶³ More specifically, Murphy's quest is to achieve complete mind and body autonomy so that he can retreat into the quiet of his psyche, untrammelled by physical and sensuous willing: "his body lay down more and more in a less precarious abeyance than that of sleep, for its own convenience and so that the mind might move".⁶⁴ This paradoxical desire (a will to achieve a will-less state) is pursued through Murphy's various attempts to annul the animalistic urges of his body and to eschew pressing relationships that entail emotional responsibility. Accordingly, Murphy periodically straps his naked form into a rocking chair in an attempt to anaesthetise his body through repetitive motion. He is quick to instill his faith in an elaborate horoscope, a "life-warrant", that predetermines his behaviour and interactions so as little as possible is left to his own choice and determination: "But you wouldn't have me go against the diagram," said Murphy "surely to god".⁶⁵

⁶² C. J. Ackerley, *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy* (Florida: Journal of Beckett Studies Books, 1998), 68.

⁶³ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 60

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

Murphy's disdain for the "big blooming buzzing confusion"⁶⁶ of the exterior world is premised on a distrust of the senses as a source of knowledge and a preference for the inner life, since "life in his mind gave him pleasure, such pleasure that pleasure was not the word".⁶⁷ Throughout, Murphy is subject to the demands of the macrocosm, which impinge upon his retreat into the microcosm of his mind. Sensorial objects of the "Big World",⁶⁸ his "deplorable susceptibility" to Celia, his lover, or "the ginger", his favourite biscuit – implicate Murphy's body and provoke a disturbance in his deeply solipsistic sense of self. Consequently, "the part of him that he hated craved for Celia, the part that he loved shrivelled up at the thought of her".⁶⁹

Murphy's "little bull of incommunication",⁷⁰ his personalised horoscope, advises employment. This "prognostication"⁷¹ simultaneously facilitates and evades Celia's attempt to reconcile him with the "Big World" by urging him to find work, a move that would allow her to withdraw from prostitution and secure his companionship. Professor Suk's "celestial prescriptions"⁷² are thus termed "a corpus of deterrents"⁷³ and a "separation order".⁷⁴ Murphy secures a job at a sanatorium for the mentally ill, only to find that the peculiar environment and the detachment of those that inhabit it satisfy his preference for the most secluded sanctum of his psyche: "the impression he received was of that self-immersed indifference to the contingencies of the contingent world which he had chosen for himself as the only felicity achieved and so seldom".⁷⁵

When Murphy realises what is at stake in pursuing his "seedy solipsism" he resolves to return to Celia and the "Big World". In an ironic turn of events, Murphy dies in a gas explosion, securing the ultimate retreat from everyday life. The various acts of willing in the novel are never simply appeased, as the object of desire is forever mutating and therefore imperceptibly out of reach. This is dramatised by the numerous individuals who pursue the

⁶⁶ Beckett, *Murphy*, 4. See Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 10. Ackerley explains that this phrase appears in Robert S. Woodworth, *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* (London: Methuen, 1931), 107. Woodworth takes the phrase directly from the pragmatist William James.

⁶⁷ Beckett, *Murphy*, 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

enigmatic Murphy through the streets of London, tangled in the machinery of the “Big World”. Mr Kelly’s exasperation captures the intrigue that Murphy provokes: “What is he? Where does he come from? What is his family? What does he do? Has he any money? Has he any prospects? Has he any retrospects? Is he, has he, anything at all?”⁷⁶

This characterisation of events is dependent upon several of the “private dialogues” Beckett established during his periods of self-directed study of philosophy and psychology, now the matter of considerable critical discussion.⁷⁷ Beckett’s earliest creative endeavours were heavily reliant upon reference books: these provided what J. D. O’Hara has referred to as his “structures of thought”.⁷⁸ Feldman has since argued that these instances of erudition are employed by Beckett in order to be critiqued and dismantled in his writing. Subsequently, no one system of thought is wholly subscribed to in his texts; rather, each is drawn upon for examination and scrutiny.⁷⁹ Beckett’s referential scaffoldings were informed by the many detailed annotations preserved in his notebooks and diaries, subsequently mined by scholars for keys to his concurrent literary projects. With *Murphy*, we must look specifically at the ideas explored within the ‘Whoroscope Notebook’, the ‘Psychology Notes’ and the ‘Philosophy Notes’.⁸⁰

Murphy is characterised, most recognisably, by a critique or distrust of Cartesian Dualism. When reflecting upon the protagonist, the narrator summarises that he is “split in two, a body and a mind”.⁸¹ However, as Chris Ackerley observes, “Murphy’s wish to apperceive himself in the third zone of his mind” is also a Kantian one, but “moderated by the pessimism of Schopenhauer, *The Critique of Pure Reason* as qualified by *The World as Will and Idea* (which Beckett read in the Heldane translation)”.⁸² Drawn into the construction of the novel we also find Spinoza’s *Ethics*, Leibniz’s *Monadology*, Proustian thought and Robert S. Woodworth’s *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*, as well as “the added complication of paradigms created from Greek Philosophy, Christian Mysticism, and

⁷⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁷ See Matthew Feldman, *Beckett’s Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett’s ‘Interwar Notes’* (London: Continuum, 2006), 21–25.

⁷⁸ J. D. O’Hara, *Samuel Beckett’s Hidden Drives* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1998).

⁷⁹ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 15.

⁸⁰ The ‘Whoroscope Notebook’ is held at The University of Reading, RUL MS 3000. The ‘Psychology Notes’ are held at Trinity College Dublin, TCD MS 10971. The ‘Philosophy Notes’ are held at Trinity College Dublin, TCD MS 10967.

⁸¹ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*, 70.

⁸² Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, xix.

post-Newtonian physics”.⁸³ What, it might be asked, do these systems of thought lend to the characterisation of Murphy and his desire for a deterministic world that offers respite from the will? More specifically, what role does music play in these structures of thought?

The novel is predicated on Murphy’s quest for the inner life, detailing the various obstructions that subtend that journey. Consequently, Chapter Six veers from sequential narrative discourse, so as to provide a “justification of the expression ‘Murphy’s mind’”.⁸⁴ Murphy’s psychical space is presented as having a tripartite body-tight structure, portrayed as a sphere consisting of three zones or, rather, a series of sealed concentric circles: “Murphy’s mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without”.⁸⁵ Thus, the first and most important feature of this enigmatic mental constitution is the autonomy it maintains from the body: “His mind was a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body.”⁸⁶ Each of the zones of Murphy’s mind is characterised by relative gradations of light. Consequently, the three zones are referred to as “the light”, “the half-light” and “the dark”.⁸⁷ In each of these zones, perception and experience are figured differently. In the novel, Beckett refers to the outer “light zone” as “the actual”: here, experience is both mental and physical.⁸⁸ In the middle “half-light” zone, perceptions are a hybrid of the perceptual and the virtual and exist between mental and physical realms. As Ackerley notes, in this realm “the constraints of reason and consciousness are relaxed as an involuntary activity”,⁸⁹ and therefore, forms are present but, as Beckett puts it in the novel, “without parallel”.⁹⁰

In the inner “dark zone” of the mind, one has virtual experiences only: here, there are, in the words of the narrator, “forms becoming and crumbling into the fragments of a new beginning”.⁹¹ In this zone, objects are neither in parallel form or without parallel form, but part of a “dark flux of forms” that create a “tumult of non-Newtonian motion” where Murphy

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Beckett, *Murphy*, 69.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 71–72.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁹ Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 112.

⁹⁰ Beckett, *Murphy*, 71.

⁹¹ Ibid., 72

exists as a “missile without provenance”.⁹² Essential to our understanding is that Murphy desires the retreat of the third “dark zone”, but is only capable of journeying there by anaesthetising his physical form. Thus, “As he lapsed in the body he felt himself coming alive in mind, set free to move among its treasures”.⁹³ Curiously, this is achieved not by fixing his body in stasis, but by setting it in continuous repetitive motions (as in the rocking chair), such that the idiosyncrasies of movement and gesture are annulled by the body’s occupation with a type of overriding blanket gesture: later in the novel this is referred to as “the numb peace of their suspension”.⁹⁴

Murphy’s Philosophical Subtexts

In order to examine the tuning scene – and hence the role of music – in *Murphy* it is necessary to develop an understanding of the three main philosophical subtexts underpinning the novel. These systems of thought lead us on to consider how music operates in the text. In Chapter Six of the novel we encounter the frequently discussed Cartesian Dualism informing the picture of Murphy’s three zones. Aside from this, the first philosophical system of relevance to both the modelling of Murphy’s psychical space and the ways in which events in the novel unfold is Arthur Schopenhauer’s theory of the Will. Beckett became acquainted with Schopenhauer in the 1930s when preparing his essay *Proust*. As C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski note, “Schopenhauer underwrote Beckett’s view that suffering is the norm, that Will represents an unwelcome intrusion and that real consciousness lies beyond human understanding”.⁹⁵ Beckett was specifically drawn to this aspect of Schopenhauerian thought, developed in *The World as Will and Representation*.

For Schopenhauer, the world consists of ideas that are constructed from the shaping effects of space, time and causality on manifold and undifferentiated sense data.⁹⁶ Thus, as Schopenhauer understood it, the perceiving faculties receive data as an effect and

⁹² *Ibid.*, 72.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of Beckett’s use of repetition in *Murphy* see Chapter Three, “Musico-Literary interaction in modern Ireland and the musical aesthetic of Samuel Beckett”, in John McGrath, *Samuel Beckett, Repetition and Modern Music* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 53–64.

⁹⁵ C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 511.

⁹⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 1:8–18.

apply a temporal framework to that effect so as to provide a cause: “What the eye, the ear, or the hand experiences is not perception; it is mere data. Only by the passing of the understanding from the effect to the cause does the world stand out as perception extended in space, varying in respect of form, persisting through all time as regards matter.”⁹⁷ However, the effects of space, time and causality on undifferentiated sense data are themselves manipulated by the Will. This is a driving force within each individual that conditions the way in which one experiences the world: “Everything that in any way belongs and can belong to the world is inevitably associated with this being-conditioned by the subject, and it exists only for the subject. The world is representation.”⁹⁸ The Will serves to make the world a representation of the individual’s own intellect, so that true knowledge – a knowledge of things in themselves – remains almost inaccessible. As such, Schopenhauer suggests, in order to capture the effect of experience the artist usually resorts to capturing the cause, which is in fact the construction of the Will. The conditioning effects of the Will, Schopenhauer maintains, can only be suspended by the genius, or through aesthetic contemplation.⁹⁹

Immediately, we are able to see the way in which Schopenhauerian thought extends to the design of Beckett’s novel. Murphy’s predicament throughout is whether or not freedom exists in controlling the chaos of experience in a mechanistic fashion by predetermining the direction of his Will, as with the horoscope, or in re-engaging with chaos by escaping the Will to enter a truly desire-free zone: what Schopenhauer referred to as “the state of contemplation”.¹⁰⁰ Throughout, Murphy is snared by his physical willing, especially for Celia and ginger biscuits, and incapable of reaching an understanding of “things in themselves”¹⁰¹ because of the conditioning effect of his wilful desire. Ackerley has argued that Schopenhauer’s three manifestations of the Will as space, time and causality feed into the characterisation of the successive zones of Murphy’s mind, each presenting forms to consciousness under gradually decreasing effects of the Will.¹⁰² Consequently, the dark of Murphy’s mind is also a state of will-lessness akin to Schopenhauer’s contemplative state.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:12.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:379.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:267.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1:263.

¹⁰² Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 111–113.

The second philosophical system to have imparted “the shape of ideas” to *Murphy* is that of the Occasionalist School. The seventeenth-century philosopher Arnold Geulincx established a middle ground between the dualism of Descartes and the prospect of an integrated mind and body complex, via the interpolation of a divine mediator. Ackerley notes that “the term Occasionalism derives from *L. occasio*, ‘an event’, i.e., the theory that matter and mind do not act upon each directly but that upon occasion of changes in one, God intervenes to bring about corresponding changes in the other”.¹⁰³ David Tucker explains further: “the term has come to denote a unifying, usually monotheistic thesis which seeks to prove that only one single agent causes interaction between a mind and body, between minds and other minds and between bodies and other bodies”.¹⁰⁴

Beckett developed his understanding of Geulincx’s philosophy by transcribing key passages from *Metaphysica Vera* and *Ethica*.¹⁰⁵ Through his reading and note-taking practice, Beckett encountered the key metaphysical axiom of Geulincx’s philosophy, that if one cannot say how something had happened then one cannot claim that action as one’s own.¹⁰⁶ As Geulincx sees it, an individual only has autonomy within the mind, since its extension in space is determined by God. Consequently, as David Hesla explains, “Geulincx circumscribed the ‘I’ strictly within the realm of thinking”.¹⁰⁷ As such, “the I exists, or is what it is, only in acts of thinking”, giving us the formulation, “the I is, or is active and free and responsible, only when it is engaged in doing something which it knows how to do. But the only act the ‘I’ knows how to perform is the act of thought”.¹⁰⁸ As such, we can appreciate a resemblance between Geulincx’s supposition that true autonomy only exists in the mind and the freedom of Murphy’s purely psychological dark zone, “cut off from the physical experience”. Moreover, Uhlmann notes the comparison between Murphy’s rocking chair and Geulincx’s frequently employed analogy of a cradle.¹⁰⁹ Geulincx maintains that just as a principle of causation is implied between a crying child and the rocking motion of a cradle, “man” too believes that he is capable of causing things to

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁰⁴ David Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing a Literary Fantasia* (London: Continuum Press, 2012), 13.

¹⁰⁵ Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ David H. Hesla, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 38.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), 85.

happen and his willing underpins this.¹¹⁰ Similarly, as Hesla points out, Geulincx's conviction of God's intermediary power supplies the notion of "divine ease" which is reduplicated in Murphy's lack of personal responsibility, extending most noticeably to his distaste for the utility of working life: "You do what you are, you do a fraction of what you are, you suffer a dreary ooze of your being into doing".¹¹¹

The third position that is instrumental amongst the philosophical systems underpinning *Murphy* is that of the ancient Greek Atomists. As C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski note, when preparing to write his second novel, Beckett read systematically, consulting surveys of early Greek philosophy more broadly and Presocratic thought specifically. Amongst such texts, Matthew Feldman counts John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*,¹¹² Wilhelm Windelband's *History of Philosophy*,¹¹³ and John Beare's *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition*¹¹⁴ as essential in conditioning Beckett's understanding of Ancient Greek theory. As Ackerley explains, Beckett was attracted to the Atomists' attempt to "explain the world without reference to purpose of first cause".¹¹⁵ The belief was that the universe is "composed of physical atoms, literally 'uncuttables', these atoms "strike against one another, rebound and interlock in an infinite void".¹¹⁶

The idea of Atomist flux as a metaphor for chaotic novelistic form features in Beckett's earlier novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and the later novel, *Watt*. In *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, for example, the disintegration of the narrative surface is compared to "the ultimately unprevisible atom threatening to come asunder".¹¹⁷ David Hesla contends that the Atomist principle of a "perpetual coming together and falling asunder of forms" appealed to Beckett's aesthetic ideal, expressed to Tom Driver later in his artistic career: "To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now".¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Arnold Geulincx, *Ethics: with Samuel Beckett's Notes*, ed. Han Van Ruler and Anthony Uhlmann, trans. Martin Wilson (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2006), 50.

¹¹¹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 26.

¹¹² John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Part 1: Thales to Plato* (London: Macmillan, 1914).

¹¹³ Wilhelm Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, trans. James Haydn Tufts (London: Macmillan, 1910).

¹¹⁴ John I. Beare, *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition from Alcmaeon to Aristotle* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1906).

¹¹⁵ Ackerley and Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, 29.

¹¹⁶ Sylvia Berryman, "Democritus: Atomist Doctrine", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman accessed 23 March 2023

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/democritus/>

¹¹⁷ Beckett, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (London: Calder, 1993), 139.

¹¹⁸ Beckett to Driver in interview of Summer 1961. Interview reproduced in Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, ed., *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 219.

However, in *Murphy* the frenetic image imparted by the Atomist understanding of matter and existence provides the stimulus for the exterior chaos from which the chief protagonist longs to withdraw. Meanwhile, “the Real, the Void beyond”, facilitated by the clashing and resolving of oppositions, informs the characterisation of the dark zone where Murphy exists as a “missile without provenance or target”.¹¹⁹ From the Atomist perspective, then, all encounters in the exterior world are non-teleological, subject to re-formation and suspended in a state of flux, due to the continuous material interaction of bodies in space.

Prevalent in Beckett’s notes on the Atomists is his attentiveness to the work of Pythagoras, and this starts to move us more concretely in the direction of ideas of music. The Ancient Greek stipulation of a pre-established harmony underpinning an ordered and rational universe is brought under attack in the novel when Murphy’s counterpart, Neary, a Pythagorean teacher of ‘Attunement’ theory, from Cork, who is capable of “blending the opposites in his heart”, discovers that “the world is all rather irregular”.¹²⁰ Beckett’s summary in the ‘Psychology Notes’ seizes upon Pythagoras’ systematisation of rationality and existence:

Virtue: realisation of harmony through exercise of asceticism, music, gymnastics, geometry.

The Deity: The One (First Unity) devoid of oppositions. (TCD MS 10967/16)¹²¹

Further annotations reveal Beckett’s understanding of the dialectical thinking of the Presocratics, including Pythagoras’ theory of harmony, premised on the reconciliation of oppositional structures. Beckett’s annotations include Pythagoras’ lists of juxtaposed, oppositional qualities, such as One/Many, Limited/Non-Limited, Odd/Even, Male/Female, Light/Darkness, Heat/Cold, Dry/Wet, Good/Bad, At Rest/In Motion.¹²² Following these dichotomous pairings, Beckett writes:

Their Weltanschauung becomes thus dualistic: over against the limited, odd, perfect, and good stand the limitless, even, imperfect, and bad. As,

¹¹⁹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 72.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹²¹ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 71.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 72.

however, both principles are united in the number one, which has the value of an even as well as an odd number, so in the world as a whole these antitheses are adjusted to form a harmony. The world is harmony of numbers. (TCD MS 10967/17.1)¹²³

As Feldman has argued, the ruse of Pythagoras' doctrine of fundamental harmony furnished Beckett with the conceit of *Murphy*: Neary finally realises that his "Doctrine of the Limit", or rather the "attunement" he teaches, is incommensurate with lived experience.¹²⁴ Beckett's understanding of the maladjustments in Pythagoras' theories is suggested by his inclusion of Hippasos in the 'Whoroscope Notebook':

Tradition represents Hippasos as divulger of Pythagorean secret, and he is said to have been drowned at sea for revealing incommensurability of side and diagonal, or for publishing construction of the regular dodecahedron. (TCMD MS 10967/22.1)¹²⁵

While Pythagoras' use of the term "harmony" appears to evoke music (and prefigures his subsequent themes of tuning and melody), here, "harmony" is indicative of the broader sense in which the term was used in Ancient Greek thought. In this sense of the term, the objects of the universe adhere to a divine order and structure. As part of this culture, the natural world was adopted as a paradigm of organic wholeness, imbued with system and pattern.¹²⁶ Edward Lippman argues that this was one part of a progressive "interrelation of man and the world" in which "natural order" was introduced into "the human province" and, in a reciprocal gesture, "ethical, religious and aesthetic values" conditioned the natural sphere.¹²⁷ Consequently, in this context "harmony" is not simply musical. Importantly, though, as Lippman notes, music was inherently suitable to the Ancient Greeks' project on the basis that it "conspicuously contains the factor of agreeable sensation; it is based on the internal adjustment of the opposites high and low; and it presents that complex example of fitting together which manifested in the harmonica or musical system of the

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²⁶ Edward A. Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece*, (New York: Da Capo Press: 1975), 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

octave".¹²⁸ This musical sense of harmony was also of interest to Beckett and is discussed in more detail below.

Musical Tuning in *Murphy*

As is suggested above, references to the concept of universal harmony begin to infer the presence of musical ideas in *Murphy*. Incorporated within the exploration of the broader concept of harmony are specific musical terms of particular importance to the themes of the novel. With a basic understanding of the three 'structures of thought' and their application, it is now possible to approach the key question: in what way can we consider *Murphy* to be a musical novel? Unlike the later novel *Watt*, in *Murphy* there is no integration of musical notation in the text. However, Chris Ackerley has listed over forty references to music and sound embedded within the narrative.¹²⁹ The majority of these inclusions are used metaphorically to animate the various philosophical systems that have been touched upon above. The following discussion, then, examines the musical subtext of the 'Attunement' scene. In attending to the musical resonances of the opening of the novel, we can consider the more specific relevance, in relation to ideas of music, of some of Beckett's notes on psychology and philosophy, unpicking his use of subtle musical references.

Firstly, though, it is important to consider more broadly the metaphorical employment of music in the novel. In many ways, the use of music in *Murphy* is an extension of the thematic preoccupations explored in Beckett's first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, where, in the words of Catherine Laws, "Music is associated with women and sexual activity (and subsequently with the unpicking of oppositions between male and female, mind and body, self and other)". As part of this process, Beckett, as Laws informs us, also calls upon "often obscure theories of tuning, melody and harmony".¹³⁰ In *Dream* these metaphorical inclusions play a part in the "broader disintegration of coherence of form and character that is both a tendency within and, in part, the subject of the book".¹³¹ In contrast, *Murphy* is perhaps Beckett's least self-referential exercise compared to the

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ See the index entry for 'music' in C. J. Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 251.

¹³⁰ Catherine Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones: Music in Beckett / Beckett in Music* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 64.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

earlier *Dream* or its novelistic successor, *Watt*, where the narrative appears to grapple with its own form. That said, ideas of tuning are employed to similar ends in these three works, as a means of assisting character development. As John McGrath has observed, “Murphy is entirely out of tune with his surroundings, and the celestial prescriptions of Suk [the horoscope] advise Murphy to ‘resort to harmony’, but it is impossible for him to achieve this”.¹³² Indeed, in much the same way that the character Watt receives the world off-key because he hears a tone flat, Murphy, upon being born, cried not “the proper A of international concert pitch, with 435 double vibrations per-second, but the double flat of this”.¹³³ The narrator explains:

How he winced, the honest obstetrician, a devout member of the Dublin Amateur Orchestral Society and an amateur flautist of some merit. With what sorrow he recorded that all of the little larynges cursing in unison at the particular moment. The infant Murphy’s alone was off note.¹³⁴

The introduction to the Pythagorean subtext of the novel elaborated earlier supplies us with a philosophical context for this musical reference. As such, the references to Murphy’s dubious pitch participates in the novel’s critique of Pythagorean order. Evidence for this suggestion surfaces in Beckett’s attention to Pythagoras’ use of music to support his doctrines. Amongst the thirteen pages of notes on Pythagoras in Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’ we find the following explanation of Pythagoras’ extension of systematised rationalism to acoustics:

[margin: Music]

It is certain that P. discovered numerical ratios which determine concordant intervals of scale. Harmony (apmonia) in classical Greek music refers not to chords but to melodic progressions and means, first ‘tuning’ and then ‘scale’. (TCM MS 10967/26)¹³⁵

¹³² John McGrath, *Samuel Beckett, Repetition and Modern Music* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 60. Here McGrath is quoting Beckett, *Murphy*, 23.

¹³³ Beckett, *Murphy*, 47.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 69.

To briefly establish the basis of Pythagoras' musical investigations, we should note that he approached music as a tool for supporting hypotheses regarding the mathematical foundations of the cosmos. Two principles governing the Pythagoreans' examination of the universe informed their musical investigations: the first of these was dualism, as evidenced by the list of oppositional structures that Beckett recorded in his notebook, and the second was numerical specification.¹³⁶ The musical investigations were facilitated by experiments with a monochord: a musical instrument consisting of a single string divided by an adjustable bridge to create two lengths of variable tension.¹³⁷ Pythagoras observed that musical intervals arose from different combinations of these plucked string lengths, and was drawn to their expression as simple numerical ratios. In doing so, he demonstrated a mathematical relationship underpinning the difference in pitch between two tones. It was Pythagoras's belief that the world was a material representation of numerical truth and that this truth was expressed by such elementary musical consonances.¹³⁸

Practitioners of Pythagoras's school extended the Atomist appreciation of integer arithmetic to all matters.¹³⁹ Consequently, when it came to theorising music they were specifically concerned with those musical intervals that could be expressed as frequency ratios using the integer numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4.¹⁴⁰ They found that these consonant intervals also sounded simpler to the human ear. The octave (1:2), the fifth (2:3) and the fourth (3:4) thereby became the basis of all Greek music and were termed 'pure concords'. While the numerical basis of the ratios underpinning these musical consonances is readily apparent, the quality of dualism can also be located in the integer numbers that comprise

¹³⁶ Mark Linley, 'Pythagorean intonation', *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 02 August 2019. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022604>.

¹³⁷ For more details on the evolution of the monochord see Adkins, Cecil, 'Monochord', *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 15 July 2019. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018973>.

¹³⁸ Barbera André, 'Pythagoras', *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 27 April 2021. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022603>.

¹³⁹ Integer numbers are the first whole numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4. They were represented by the Greeks using points. Each point represented an indivisible atomic like particle referred to as a unit. Crocker explains the integer numbers series was of such interest to the Pythagoreans because of the wealth of different relationships that exist between the numbers at the beginning of the series. For more information see Richard L. Crocker, "Pythagorean Mathematics and Music", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 22, no. 2 (1963): 190–192. doi:10.2307/427754.

¹⁴⁰ Crocker, "Pythagorean Mathematics and Music," 192.

them; each of the ratios contain an even and an odd number, hence their classification as “epimore ratios”.¹⁴¹

However, the consonant intervals of the fifth, the third and the octave that assumed primacy within the Ancient Greek system were found to be incompatible with each other in their pure form.¹⁴² As Mark Lindley explains, using the example of the incommensurability of the pure third and the octave: “Three major thirds (for example, A b – C – E – G \sharp) fall short of a pure octave by approximately one-fifth of a whole tone (lesser diesis); four pure minor thirds (G \sharp – B – D – F – A b) exceed an octave by half as much again (greater diesis)”.¹⁴³ This incommensurability is also exemplified by the circle of fifths’ lack of complete closure. If we move up or down in a sequence of perfect fifths, starting from a particular pitch classification, in theory the twelfth note is the same as the first: we have a completed a circle (for example, C – G – D – A – E – B – F \sharp – C \sharp – G \sharp – D \sharp – A \sharp – E \sharp (F) – C).¹⁴⁴ However, if the fifth is tuned to the Pythagorean ratio of 3:2, we do not return to exactly the same pitch, but a pitch that is a quarter of a semi-tone different to the original. For many of the Ancient Greeks, this harmonic reality proved an issue in specific musical contexts where the material fixity of certain instruments prohibited the immediacy of flexible pitch inflection in performance.¹⁴⁵ The process of resolving this anomaly has been refined and reconfigured numerous times throughout the history of the western tonal system. It has given rise to the artificial and systematic manipulation of the pure concords through a process referred to as ‘tempering’. From the early 1700s onwards, tempering, in its broadest musical application, has referred to the incremental adjustment of the ratios underpinning the scale in order to make them compatible: this is achieved by diffusing the remaining pitch discrepancy across each of the pure concords to prevent any single

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Cecil Adkins, ‘Monochord’, *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 31 August 2019. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018973>.

¹⁴³ Mark Lindley, ‘Temperaments’, *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 28 August 2019. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027643>.

¹⁴⁴ For more information see William Drabikin, ‘Circle of fifths’, *Grove Music Online* (2001) accessed 4 June 2021. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005806>.

¹⁴⁵ Lindley, ‘Temperaments’, *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 28 August 2019. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027643>.

interval from being perceived as markedly out of tune.¹⁴⁶ This process of systematic manipulation achieved a degree of standardisation with the tuning system referred to as equal temperament, which was developed in seventeenth-century Europe and forms the basis of the tuning of most keyboard instruments and the western diatonic system of musical key relationships still in primary use today. In this system, as Linley explains, fourths are made slightly smaller than their pure equivalent while fifths are adjusted to be slightly larger. The major third is tempered seven times as much as the fifth; the minor thirds and major sixth, eight times as much. In doing so, the scale is divided up into 12 equal portions, these 12 equal portions are otherwise known as the twelve semitones of the western octave scale.¹⁴⁷

This transition from the simple integer ratios of the Pythagorean scale to the twelve equal intervals that constitute today's western octave evidences the western tonal system's manipulation of acoustic reality. The adjustments of equal tempering facilitate the smooth transition between keys, as exploited by Johann Sebastian Bach for his *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the first collection of fully composed keyboard pieces in all keys. Beckett interpreted this inherent manipulation of 'natural' acoustics as a musical ruse and employed it to bolster his critique of Pythagorean rationality. Heath Lees has brought to light Beckett's employment of this anomaly in the later novel *Watt*,¹⁴⁸ in which Beckett dramatises the irony of the protagonist's inability to reconcile his distorted self with a warped world: Watt, for instance, hears everything a tone flat and is unable to make sense of the piano tuning Gall's attempt to temper Mr Knott's dilapidated piano.¹⁴⁹ However, this concern with tuning and intonation first finds articulation in the earlier novels *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* and *Murphy*, as the description of Murphy's birth cry, quoted above, demonstrates.

Although the infant Murphy deviates from international concert pitch by crying at a pitch of A double-flat, the status of the 'correct' pitch is itself questionable, given the different approaches to its production.¹⁵⁰ Here, as Chris Ackerley has observed, Beckett draws upon a historical debate regarding pitch standards in which the assumed A of international

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Heath Lees, "'Watt': Music, Tuning and Tonality", *Journal of Beckett Studies* 9 (1984): 5–24.

¹⁴⁹ Beckett, *Watt*, 57–66.

¹⁵⁰ Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 69.

concert pitch has been defined variously as “870 vibrations or 435 double vibrations (cycles) per second”, as adopted by the French government in 1859, and 440 cycles per second as adopted by the British in 1939.¹⁵¹ Both attempts to fix pitch were reactions to an unruly rise in orchestral pitch that had occurred due to a lack of standardisation. As such, there was (and remains) no definitive international standardisation of pitch.

This musical subtext supplies us with Beckett’s intended inference; issues of pitch and tuning are employed to dramatise the ramifications of attempted reconciliation with a standard, premised on the intention of correction, itself unsystematised, nonstandard and, therefore, incorrect. As such, the use of tuning metaphors in *Murphy* supplies a further illustration of Beckett’s simultaneous attraction to and critique of neat, rational and coherent systems that are unable to accommodate the unwieldy chaos of the world. This chimes with the use of tuning metaphors in *Dream* and *Watt*. However, there is a subtle but significant point of divergence of which we should take note: whereas *Watt* receives an already out of tune world incorrectly due to hearing everything a tone flat, *Murphy* is himself cast as the sounding device, an anthropomorphic musical note out of tune with a world that is already potentially *off* pitch.

The Irrational Heart

Similarly, throughout the novel, *Murphy* is himself characterised as a sonic entity, an errant note in a highly organised composition. However, his musical characterisation appears to stem *from* his physicality. As explained earlier in this chapter, *Murphy* seeks the help of Neary, to help ease his cardiac concerns, his heart being “one moment in such labour that it seemed on the point of seizing, the next in such ebullition that it seemed on the point of bursting”.¹⁵² As such, *Murphy*’s predicament is, from the outset of the novel, given a physical locus: his “irrational heart”.¹⁵³ Neary is tasked with “blending the opposites”¹⁵⁴ in *Murphy*’s heart, to resolve its contradictions. This practice is given a decidedly musical

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Beckett, *Murphy*, 4. Amongst the meanings of ‘Ebullition’ in the OED we find “the state of bubbling into which a liquid is thrown by being heated to the boiling point” and also “a state or agitation in the blood or ‘humours’ due to heat; formerly supposed to be the cause or action of the heart...”. See ‘ebullition, n.’, *OED Online* (September 2019), Oxford University Press, accessed 20 September 2019. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/59219?redirectedFrom=Ebullition>.

¹⁵³ Beckett, *Murphy*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

framing through its description as “the attunement”.¹⁵⁵ Given that Neary is explicitly a Pythagorean, this appears to be a gloss on the Pythagorean notion of harmonised opposites and references the list of oppositional structures that Beckett preserved in the ‘Philosophy Notes’ when studying the Presocratic philosophers. These pairings are reducible and self-cancelling because of their diametrical relation to one another; Light/Dark, and so on. However, it was the Pythagorean discovery of the mathematical ratios underpinning the concordant intervals of the musical scale that set a precedent for these dichotomous structures, as explained by John Burnet in his summative study, *The Presocratic Philosophers*:

In principle at least this suggests an entirely new view of the relation between the traditional ‘opposites’. If a perfect attunement of the high and low can be attained by observing these ratios it is clear that other opposites may be similarly harmonizedThe ‘strife of opposites’ is really an attunement.¹⁵⁶

The sought-after equilibrium that Neary aims to instill in his pupil is referred to incorrectly by Neary, the guru, as “apmonia”, hearkening after the Greek word for harmony. In Beckett’s notes on Pythagoras, quoted above, he preserves the original Greek term, (“Harmony (apmonia) in classical Greek music...”): Its use in *Murphy*, then, is a direct echo of this Ancient musico-theoretical context.

Therefore, Murphy’s conflicted heart, as the seat of his ills, is brought directly into association with the Ancient Greek notion of musical harmony. Consequently, when the reader is informed that “Neary could not blend the opposites in Murphy’s heart”,¹⁵⁷ the Pythagorean subtext suggests that the impossibility of resolution is not due to the “strife of opposites” that Murphy embodies, since Pythagorean logic would dictate that their diametrical characterisation would produce a self-cancelling attunement, but rather the protagonist’s underlying irrational qualities. In the context of the “apmonia” technique, these irrational qualities have a corollary in the tempered intervals of the modern twelve-

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 6–7.

¹⁵⁷ Beckett. *Murphy*, 4.

tone scale.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, by situating an irrational heart at the root of Murphy's ills, Beckett casts his protagonist's predicament as a musical surd: a sonic flaw, embodied by the irresolute solipsist.

In order to further grasp the extent of the musical subtext of the attunement scene, we have to look closely at Neary's behaviour, which evokes specific musical ideas. When Neary eventually awakens from one of his "dead sleeps", in which he literally pauses his heart in order to avoid, amongst other things, "the pangs of hopeless sexual inclination",¹⁵⁹ his thoughts turn immediately to his love interest, Miss Dwyer. As his desires reinstate themselves and his heart resumes function, the systole–diastole process of the cardiac cycle is alluded to in the hand gestures that accompany his pining:

Neary clenched his fists and raised them before his face.

"To gain the affection of Miss Dwyer," he said, "even for one short hour, would benefit me no end."

The knuckles stood out white under the skin in the usual way – that was the position. The hands then opened quite correctly to the utmost limit of their compass – that was the negation. It now seemed to Murphy that there were two equally legitimate ways in which the gesture may be concluded and the sublation effected. The hands might be clapped to the head in a smart gesture of despair, or let fall limply to the seams of the trousers. Judge then of his annoyance when Neary clenched them again more violently than before and dashed them against his breast-bone.¹⁶⁰

As part of his attunement practice, Neary's hand gestures reduplicate the repetitive and alternating components of the cardiac cycle, which is dyadic in structure and echoes the strife of opposites of the Pythagorean dualisms. Moreover, by focusing on this biological process mimicked in Neary's movement, Beckett brings into association the chordae tendineae (tendinous cords), this reference thereby interacting with the idea of the heart as the base of Murphy's irrationality. These string-like physical structures are known informally as the 'heart-strings'. In the ventricular diastole process of the cardiac cycle

¹⁵⁸ In maths, a surd refers to an irrational number that is purposely put into its square-root form. If an irrational number is left in its decimal format it produces an infinite decimal number.

¹⁵⁹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 4.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5. The 'sublation' is Beckett's play on the psychoanalytic term 'sublimation'.

performed by Neary's fist, which approximates the heart in size and shape, the chords or strings relax and appear stretched as the heart dilates and fills with blood. During the second phase, the ventricular systole process, the strings contract and appear compressed, as the heart muscle squeezes blood out into the body through the arteries.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, the squeezing of the heart is dramatised in the tightening of Neary's fist, with the knuckles standing out, "white under the skin".¹⁶² Through the reference to the movement of tendinous chords, the literal alternation of musical chords is brought into focus.

As we can see, then, the resumption of Neary's dualistic heart-beat accompanies the reinstatement of his desires. As such, Beckett directly links the dyadic movement of the chords, both tendinous and musical, with desire and the Pythagorean notion of oppositional structures. However, as O'Hara points out, Neary's willing desire limits his strained attempts to achieve 'higher knowledge'.¹⁶³ Consequently, Beckett appears to challenge the dichotomous structure of the "strife of opposites" as a system of knowledge, in which the 'heart strings' or tendinous chords/musical chords participate during Neary's moments of desiring. As Ackerley explains, it follows from "the traditional opposites" that "wisdom is not a knowledge of many things, but the perception of the underlying unity of warring opposites".¹⁶⁴ The association of this oppositional system with the accrual of knowledge is therefore problematised. This critique of knowledge, premised on the bland alternation between two systems, is revealed by Murphy's anticipation and application of a Hegelian framework to the thwarted progression of Neary's gestures. Ackerley describes the process as follows:

Murphy anticipates Neary achieving a transition from lower to higher in three phases of activity and movement of one to the other; first, the position, or, in Hegel's terms *Unmittelbar* ["immediate"], the starting point or presupposition, the given; next, *Negativität* ["negation"], the principal of both destruction (of the previous position) and production (of a new immediacy); finally through the exercise of negation the effect of *Aufheben* ["sublation"],

¹⁶¹ 'Systole Heart Function', *Britannica*, last amended 16 April 2016.

<https://www.britannica.com/science/systole-heart-function>.

¹⁶² Beckett, *Murphy*, 5.

¹⁶³ O'Hara, *Beckett's Hidden Drives*, 106.

¹⁶⁴ Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 7.

the higher category brought to light as a consequence of the dialectical process".¹⁶⁵

As this passage from the novel's text demonstrates, when Neary's heart resumes beating and his yearnings return, he attempts to sublimate his desire and transform it into knowledge by making a dialectical synthesis premised on the dyadic structure of the heartbeat. However, a higher synthesis of the opposites is impossible: it fails, and Neary simply resumes the alternating gestural process of the heartbeat by remaking a fist with his hands: "Judge then of his [Murphy's] annoyance when Neary clenched them again more violently than before and dashed them against his breast-bone". Consequently, a network of associations arises between the physicality of the heart, musical harmony/irrationality and the tug and pull between the aspiration towards higher knowledge and the desiring instincts.

Fitting it Together: Ancient Greek Harmony in *Murphy*

Why might the evocation of musical *chords* and more specifically *strings* be at fault here? As will be explained, both of these features are intertwined in the paradox that defines Pythagorean music. One might interpret Pythagoras' engagement with intervals as an act of simultaneity: it is concerned with the simultaneous sounding of more than one tone, and therefore much more akin to the modern notion of tonal harmony premised on the construction of chords. Indeed, the broader sense of the term 'harmony' that encompassed Pythagoras' activity is partly responsible: as Lippman writes, "it means simply 'fitting together', as manifested typically in carpentry in the joining of two pieces of wood".¹⁶⁶ In the tuning of the lyre there also existed a "simultaneity' that was possible not just an example but the true model of the whole conception".¹⁶⁷ However, while the Ancient Greeks' stipulations were later developed into theories of tonal harmony for compositional purposes, Lippman reminds us: "The process of fitting together is peculiarly applicable to spatial or simultaneous constituents, and Greek music is in essence purely melodic".¹⁶⁸ Lippman's use of "Greek Music" refers here to two distinct concepts that envisage the *purely melodic* in different ways. Due to its presence within both the Ancients'

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶⁶ Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece*, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

metaphysical conception of universal harmony and their philosophy of ethics, music occupied a dual status as both abstract numerical phenomena and material sonority. In the former, music is envisaged as intervals and scales, both of which indicate music's temporal dimension through their sequential nature, and thus their ability to move *in time*. However, *tone*, as the sonic dimension of pitch constitutive of the intervallic and scalic specifications in question, was maligned by the Ancient Greeks and pitch was envisioned as a silent, numerical phenomenon. Lippman attests to this idea: "In the case of harmony, intervals and scales exist merely as the example par excellence of a conception of order to which the concept of sonority is typically, irrelevant."¹⁶⁹ The relegation of tone had specific ramifications for envisaging music as an abstracted idea, separate from material reality, since, as Lippman argues, tone is the "most tangible embodiment of temporal rhythm".¹⁷⁰ Without tone, music was rendered a static art within the domain of the Ancient Greeks' philosophy of harmony.

Moreover, the notion of simultaneity did not enter the second manifestation of music in Ancient Greek thought. Music within "the broad sphere of the Muses",¹⁷¹ included *actual* practical music making, a fusion of music and poetry and gesture as well as dance and astronomy.¹⁷² The arts within the "sphere of the Muses" encompassed by the term 'music' were "of *rhythm* or of *time*" precisely because their tonal dimension was realised sonically.¹⁷³ This version of music, which involves the sounding-out of pitch, immediately occupied a lower ontological status because of its "extreme concreteness".¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the combining of tones simultaneously to produce harmonies was still not yet evident in this musical practice.

These two concepts of music in Ancient Greek thought throw into relief two different interpretations of the universe. Lippman attests to this relationship: "Thus the harmony of the spheres is silent"; "As a corollary the Greek division of the arts was not into categories temporal and spatial but into temporal and static, of which the first group can equally be called rhythmic and tonal".¹⁷⁵ It is this paradox of Ancient Greek music as harmonic that I

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 88–89.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece*, 89.

wish to foreground. As Lippman explains, “a simultaneous relationship was attached to a predominantly temporal art” and later in history when ‘harmony’ began to denote music’s realisation as chords, “there occurred something like a historical solution to a paradox”.¹⁷⁶ It is precisely this interpretive slipperiness that engages Beckett’s interest, as is apparent in his specific comment on harmony as “melodic progressions” in the ‘Philosophy Notes’.¹⁷⁷

As such, in Pythagoras’ philosophy of harmony it was the tuning of the strings of the lyre and the relegation of tone from pitch, not compositional harmonic practice, that gave rise to the notion of static simultaneity, since music remained a primarily melodic and temporal art. Perhaps this is the grounds upon which ‘chords’ and ‘strings’ are aligned in Beckett’s thinking as insignia of this paradox of Pythagorean music. Beckett’s manuscript notebooks lend support to this idea: on page 114 of Notebook Four of the original *Murphy* manuscript, Beckett has made a simple sketch of a string instrument which roughly resembles a psaltery.¹⁷⁸ The strings are rendered with broken pen marks so that they appear to be vibrating simultaneously.

Consequently, Neary’s dialectical gesture, premised on the dyadic structure of the heartbeat, might be understood as referencing the dialectic-as-harmonic. It is potentially flawed on the basis that, despite correctly condensing a Pythagorean oppositional structure, it misinterprets ‘the dialect-as-harmonic’ as chordal harmony. In doing so, it overlooks the subtle temporal configuration of Pythagorean intervallic specifications. It is telling both that Beckett’s note places emphasis on “melodic progressions”, thereby homing in on the extension of ‘attunement’ principles to music’s temporal dimension, and that the movement of the heart, upon which Neary premises his gestural action and which acts as a type of framework for this referential play, is also a temporal organ that beats *in time*. The dialectic-as-harmonic is realised horizontally as intervals and scales and not musical chords in Pythagorean theory and practice. As such, Neary’s practice is premised on a misunderstanding of Pythagorean musical principles brought about by the paradox of Ancient Greek music.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 69.

¹⁷⁸ See Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* Notebook 4, BC MS 5517/4/114. University of Reading Samuel Beckett Collection.

Finally, then, close examination of the musical subtext of the attunement scene and its referential implications is revealing with regard to the significance of the idea of music in *Murphy* at several levels. With close examination, it is possible to appreciate Beckett's engagement with the nuances of Ancient Greek music theory and philosophy. Following the Ancient Greek stipulation that wisdom arises from the underlying unity of warring opposites and dichotomous pairings, Neary's method of attunement is premised on transforming willing desire into knowledge, using the dyadic heartbeat as a framework for this practice. The account of Neary's gestures suggests that musical chords are evoked, as the movement of the heart's tendinous chords are imitated by Neary's hand gestures. As such, musical chords become associated with a desire that delimits knowledge, and thus forms a lower stage in Murphy and Neary's journey to progressive intellectual enlightenment. Neary's attunement practice fails because he incorrectly premises his method on chordal harmony; this arises out of Beckett's exploitation of the historical paradox of Ancient Greek musical harmony as a chordal practice. To conclude, close examination of the musical subtext of the attunement scene is revealing with regard to the significance of Beckett's own conceptions of elements of music theory.

PART ONE: MUSIC, MELANCHOLIA AND KNOWLEDGE IN MURPHY

Chapter Two – Pitching Different Notions of Attunement: Beckett's Musical Marginalia and the Employment of Schopenhauer in *Murphy*

Introduction

In Chapter One, the analysis of the gestures that comprise Neary's attunement practice brought to light a specific set of musical associations that comprise the logic of the tuning scene. Musical chords, as the misinterpretation of Pythagorean harmony, are directly linked with desiring, which obstructs higher knowledge. Intervals which possess a temporal dimension are, however, the true basis of the Pythagorean dialectic-as-harmonic and the root to intellectual enlightenment; as discussed below, these associations characterise the opposing values of Murphy and Neary. This chapter examines the Schopenhauerian subtext of these associations, exploring how they characterise the attunement scene. I argue that Schopenhauer's writings on music provide a subtext for Beckett's interest in the paradox of Pythagorean musical principles and Neary's failed attunement practice. Examining Schopenhauer's philosophy of music, we find an association of chords with an early, undeveloped stage in the enlightenment of the Will, and of melody, music's temporal dimension, with the intellectually enlightened Will; this aspect of Schopenhauer's philosophy is directly drawn upon in Beckett's use of musical ideas in *Murphy*.

Murphy and Neary's Quips: The Musical Underpinnings

To explore this idea further it is important to consider Murphy and Neary's parting exchange at the close of the tuning scene. When Neary awakes after having stopped his heart, the following occurs:

Neary came out of one of his dead sleeps and said:

"Murphy all life is figure and ground"

"But a wandering to find home," said Murphy

“The face,” said Neary, “or system of faces against the big blooming buzzing confusion. I think of Miss Dwyer.”¹⁷⁹

These anecdotal quips are exchanged as Neary’s heart resumes functioning and his yearning for Miss Dwyer returns. Thus, the dialogue is symptomatic of the characters’ respective approaches to the desiring instinct. Neary adheres to Pythagorean doctrine but here recruits a complementary Gestaltist sentiment to animate what, after examining the subtexts, we might understand as a belief in a universe imbued with pattern and single closed forms: as Matthew Feldman has observed, when compiling the ‘Psychology Notes’ Beckett consulted a fifteen-page entry on ‘Figure and Ground in Gestalt Psychology’ in R. S. Woodworth’s *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*.¹⁸⁰ The following passage from Beckett’s notes precises Woodworth’s own summative chapter and fastens upon the Pythagorean principles of order, balance and closed form within Gestalt theory:

The closed figure has an advantage over all the others competing for separation from the ground. A natural tendency of brain dynamics is to close up gaps. Brain processes tend towards equilibrium & minimal tension & this is achieved by removing unbalanced tensions and gaps. The seeing of figures is inherent in perceptive activity. In the same way symmetry is perceived more readily than asymmetry. The organic unity of optical sensorium & motorium. Sense perception and & motor response imbedded in the total activity of the organism. (TCD MS 10971/7/12; emphasis in original)¹⁸¹

Meanwhile, Murphy’s expression “but a wandering to find a home” suggests an antithetical sense of questing, articulated through its reference to Schopenhauer’s writing on the endless progression of melody. The subtext for his remark appears in Volume One of Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*:

Melody is always a deviation from the keynote through a thousand crotchety wanderings up to the most painful discord. After this, it at last

¹⁷⁹ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 4.

¹⁸⁰ Matthew Feldman, *Beckett’s Books: A Cultural History of the Interwar Notes* (London: Continuum, 2006), 103.

¹⁸¹ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 104.

finds the keynote again which expresses the satisfaction and composure of the Will.¹⁸²

Here, Murphy's statement condenses Schopenhauer's theory of willing, which details the gradual journey towards human enlightenment *through* the incremental progression of the Will. As such, it proposes a specific paradigmatic notion of attunement upon which Neary's practice is premised. The "thousand crotchety wanderings" of the Will are illustrative with regard to this ethos, evoking the infinite variety of the Will's movement in emotions before reaching a point of ultimate composure. The emphasis, as such, is on the *process* of achieving a state of enlightenment through the cumulative experiences of the Will's movements.

Neary's practice, premised on this notion of processual attunement, fails for his pupil, partly because Murphy prioritises an inward journey to the self that is achieved through stasis. In 1936 Beckett read Walther Bauer's *Die Notwendige Reise* (*The Necessary Journey*) which was lent to him by his German friend Axel Kaun.¹⁸³ As Knowlson explains, Beckett found in Bauer "the inevitable business about the journey to the self".¹⁸⁴ However, as the following diary note demonstrates, Beckett was specifically concerned with defining the way in which the key features of Murphy's solipsism spoke of a different, more static conception of the "journey to the self", one imbued with stasis and resignation:

Journey anyway is the wrong figure. How can one travel to that from which one cannot move away. Das Notwendige Bleiben (The Necessary Staying Put) is more like it. That is also in the figure of Murphy in the chair, surrender to the thongs of self, a simple materialisation of self-bondage, acceptance of which is the fundamental unheroic. In the end it is better to perish than be freed. But the heroic, the nosce te ipsum [know thyself], that these Germans see as a journey, is merely a different attitude to the thongs and chair, a setting of will and muscle and fingers against them.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Dover Publications: New York, 1966), 1:321.

¹⁸³ Walther Bauer, *Die Notwendige Reise* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1932).

¹⁸⁴ James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 247.

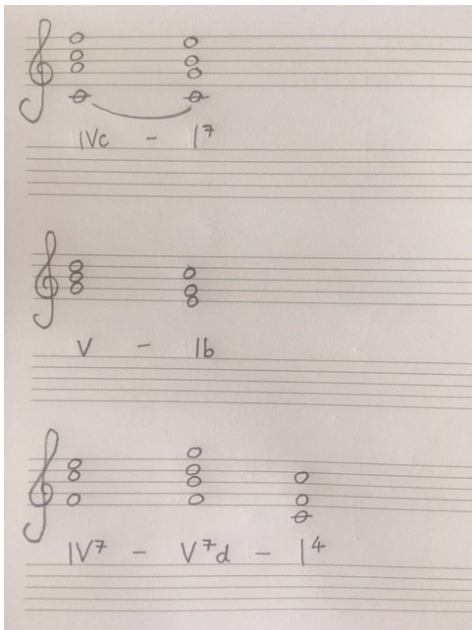
¹⁸⁵ See Samuel Beckett, *German Diaries*, Notebook 4, 18 January 1937. Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading.

In the early manuscript notebooks Beckett often doodled across the header and footer of pages and in the margins, and occasionally these doodles are of a musical nature. Beckett's musical marginalia, initially seemingly insignificant, open up a corresponding sound world that supports the image of Murphy's thwarted 'unheroic' journey. As explained previously, Schopenhauer animated his analogy of the journeying Will by envisioning an endless progression of melody that finds "satisfaction" and "composure" in locating the keynote after a "thousand crotchety wanderings" to "painful discords". In Notebook Three of the *Murphy* manuscripts, Beckett draws out a series of three cadences that each depict the movement from chord V (the dominant) or chord IV (the subdominant) to chord I (the tonic or, in Schopenhauer's terminology, the keynote).¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, even though the chord progressions all move to the tonic chord, some of the chords are put into different inversions and some exhibit particular harmonic peculiarities such as the absence of thirds and the addition of dissonant sevenths, a feature I will return to discussing later. Most importantly, Beckett ensures that the tonic chord in each cadence does not appear in root position and therefore does not provide the "composure" or sense of return envisaged in Schopenhauer's analogy of a musical journey. It is possible to approach these musical marginalia as aural illustrations of Murphy's opposition to the notion of progressive attunement or enlightenment captured in the image of heroic melodic wanderings.

Figure 1: Sketch reproduction of cadences given in *Murphy* Notebook 3.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Beckett also includes a fourth cadence that might be read as moving from IV to I. However, it is unlikely that one would *hear* the progression as such. It could be understood as a plagal cadential sequence in G, but the sequence includes the first inversion of the chord on the supertonic (second degree of the scale) which blurs the clear sense of movement from IV to I and also undermines the establishing of the initial C major chord as necessarily the subdominant. In addition to this, there is a clear statement of C major at the beginning of the progression which undermines the sense of G. Finally, Beckett's key signature for the progression includes a D \flat alongside an F \sharp : this does not correspond to any diatonic key, so is either an error or evidence of Beckett playing around with further destabilisations of the basic chord sequences.

¹⁸⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* Notebook 3, BC MS 5517/3/186 3. Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading. Below the cadences I have included a summary of the progressions. Thank you to Professor Catherine Laws for providing me with the summary of these progressions.



The psychological and philosophical subtexts of Neary's comment, "all life is figure and ground", and Murphy's retort, "But a wandering to find home", as well as the musical marginalia in question, imply a juxtaposition of Neary's and Murphy's values with the paradigmatic notion of attunement that both characters fail to achieve through their individual practices. Schopenhauer's theory of willing, which takes an integrative approach to desire, knowledge and temporality, and is represented by wandering melody, is pitched against two separate methods of attunement. The first of these is Murphy's thwarted or stunted deviation, envisioned by the musical notation I have discussed. The second method of attunement is Neary's Pythagorean notion of intellectual enlightenment, premised on a dialectical synthesis of oppositional structures that produces finite and static closed forms. As such, underpinning the exchanges between Murphy and Neary are three different and conflicting notions of attunement – Schopenhauer's paradigmatic wandering journey, the Pythagorean notion of enlightenment and the thwarted, unheroic journey inwards.

Importantly, Beckett is not only drawn to these three notions of attunement, which are also different idiosyncratic theories of knowledge. Additionally, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, he is specifically concerned with the ways in which music is drawn into each system, to animate the transition from desire to intellectual enlightenment. In the former, the Will or desiring instinct journeys towards intellectual finitude, whereas in its Pythagorean counterpart, desire is all but absent. However, Neary erroneously projects Miss Dwyer onto the abstract closed figure in an acknowledgement that conflates the

Pythagorean and Gestaltist systems of thought: “the one closed figure in the waste without form and void! My tetraykt!”.¹⁸⁸ Importantly, the Gestalt twist lends Neary’s vision a further degree of temporal stasis, since it deals with the immediacy of visual sense experience, something that Neary himself begins to realise does not conform to the successive quality of lived experience: “the face,” said Neary, “or *system of faces*, against the big blooming buzzing confusion. I think of Miss Dwyer”.¹⁸⁹

As such, Murphy’s retort “but a wandering to find a home” does not simply reference Schopenhauer on music, as noted above, but indicates that Neary’s musical attunement practice fails for both characters, not only because it misinterprets Pythagorean musical thought, but because, in doing so, it overlooks temporality and its role in the integrative approach towards desire and knowledge. In what follows, I demonstrate that the ideal notion of attunement evoked by the tuning scene is derived from Schopenhauer’s writings on music. Moreover, the subtext of Beckett’s critique of a Pythagorean approach to the quelling of the heart’s errant desires, as well as Neary’s misinterpretation of ‘attunement’ as a chordal adventure, can be located in Schopenhauer’s musical musings. Thus, in highlighting how Schopenhauer tracks the movement from a vertical, chordal view of music to a horizontal one in neat correspondence with the progressive enlightenment of the Will, I hope to demonstrate how Schopenhauer’s writing on music provides a subtext for Beckett’s interest in the misinterpretation of Pythagorean musical principals and Neary’s failed practice.

In order to understand this, it is important to set out the key, relevant ideas in Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*. Here, the metaphysical discussion of music’s representational capacity situates the heart as the original set of the Will. Analysing this, it becomes clear that music serves as a flexible analogy for the movement of the heart’s willing. We need, therefore, to pay attention to the way in which the specific form of music employed in Schopenhauer’s analogic discussions of the heart’s movement changes in neat correspondence with the description of the Will’s progression towards enlightenment.

¹⁸⁸ Beckett, *Murphy*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Schopenhauer, Music and the Will

As noted earlier, for Schopenhauer all human behaviour is governed by 'Will': a single, irrational, impersonal force that is constantly striving and which is objectified to varying degrees in all the objects of the world.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the Will, as "the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole",¹⁹¹ despite being directly unknowable, is accessible to varying degrees in each of the world's objects, depending on the grade of the Will's objectification in that object.¹⁹² The level of the objectification of the Will functions as a type of idea-template, referred to by Schopenhauer as the "platonic idea".¹⁹³ Thus, every object carries its essential Idea.¹⁹⁴ As such, different artforms are suited to the expression of a particular Idea or level of the objectification of the Will, depending upon their representational capacities.¹⁹⁵ Music, Schopenhauer argues, is different from the other arts because it is not a copy of the Ideas (the grade of the Will's objectification) but "a copy of the Will itself".¹⁹⁶

In the introduction to the philosophical subtexts of *Murphy* in Chapter One, I explained how music's presentation mode informs Schopenhauer's prioritisation of music as the "copy of the Will". Here, I wish to extrapolate *what* music, as Schopenhauer's privileged imitation of the Will, can express. On the one hand, Schopenhauer is occupied by a series of analogies between music and the Ideas: if all of the objects in the world are different grades of the Will's objectification and music is a copy of the Will itself, then it follows that music is able to speak of all of the objects that constitute the phenomenal world. This provides the context for Schopenhauer's stipulation that "the definite intervals of the scale are parallel to the definite grades of the Will's objectification, the definite species in nature".¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, the highest grade of the Will's objectification is in 'man' himself: the 'noumenal' reality of the Will materialises most clearly as the human condition

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 1:110.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1:110.

¹⁹² Alex Neill, 'Schopenhauer', in *The Routledge Companion to Music and Philosophy*, ed. Theodore Grayk and Andrew Kania (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 340.

¹⁹³ Neill, 'Schopenhauer', 341.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:257.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:258.

of willing.¹⁹⁸ Importantly, it is the latter condition of Will, objectified in ‘man’, that Schopenhauer aligns with the physical locus of the heart:

Everything that is a matter of the Will in the widest sense, such as desire, passion, pain, goodness, malice, and whatever is usually understood by the term ‘spirit’ ... is attributed to the heart.¹⁹⁹

Music’s designation as “a copy of the Will itself” implies two expressive functions that recruit different features of music’s material manifestation. The first is music’s expression of the world’s phenomena, whereby different gradations of pitch signify different gradations of the Will’s objectification. From Schopenhauer’s writings we can deduce that he envisaged this aspect of the Will as realised through the vertical ordering or layering of musical parts.²⁰⁰ The second is music’s expression of Will objectified in ‘man’ and the incremental progression towards intellectual enlightenment. Schopenhauer aligns this altogether different version of willing with the heart. The first relevant passage is as follows:

Therefore music consists generally in a constant succession of chords more or less quieting and satisfying, i.e., of chords exciting desire, with chords more or less quieting and satisfying; just as the life of the heart (the Will) is a constant succession of greater or lesser disquietude through desire or fear with composure in degrees just as varied.²⁰¹

In this extract, Schopenhauer’s attention shifts from the vertical arrangement of musical parts, as expressive of the world’s phenomena, to the horizontal succession of chords, as expressive of the heart’s willing. Here we come across the first indicator that Neary’s failed practice has a distinctly Schopenhauerian subtext, since Schopenhauer concretely links the Will objectified as human willing, or desiring, to the beating of the heart, and discusses its musical corollary as a succession of chords.²⁰² Importantly, the shift in musical focus is precipitated by the introduction of temporality, a key component in the Will objectified as

¹⁹⁸ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:260–262.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:321.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:258–260.

²⁰¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 2:456.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

human willing. However, as we can see from the above passage, the movement of musical chords is described here in unspecific and broad brushstrokes as “a constant succession of chords more or less quieting and satisfying, i.e., of chords exciting desire, with chords more or less quieting and satisfying”²⁰³ to capture a sense of a less nuanced oscillation between extremes of the heart’s desire, fear and composure. This remains in keeping with my earlier hypothesis that Neary’s attunement practice fails partly because the bland alteration of chords – representative of the undeveloped Will – does not accommodate the paradigmatic tuning ethos whereby the Will journeys via a “thousand crotchety wanderings” to a point of intellectual enlightenment. As such, Schopenhauer suggests that the unnuanced succession of chords is indicative of a lower stage in the Will’s progression towards enlightenment; this supplies us with the basis of Neary’s chordal practice, premised on the alternating dyadic movement of the chords and which prevents him from achieving higher knowledge.

As Schopenhauer’s account of the incremental development of human willing unfolds, the quality of temporality gleans further attention and his emphasis on music’s concurrent expression changes from “a constant succession of chords”, only capable of “exciting desire” and “quieting and satisfying”, to a focus upon temporally determined musical patterning such as “sequencing” and “movement”.²⁰⁴ Consequently, as Schopenhauer’s discussion of the heart’s condition becomes more varied, so as to express the elaborate movement of the Will, his concept of harmonic movement becomes increasingly complex:

Now as that rational and irrational element in the numerical relations of the vibrations admits in innumerable degrees, nuances, sequences, and vibrations, music by means of it becomes the material in which all movements of the heart, i.e. of the Will, movements whose essential nature is always satisfaction and dissatisfaction, although in innumerable degrees, can be faithfully portrayed and reproduced in all finest shades and modifications; and this takes place by means of the invention of their melody.²⁰⁵

Eventually, as a more refined picture of human willing arises, the gradual elaboration of harmonic movement relative to the progress of the human Will described in previous

²⁰³ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2:456.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:451.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

passages is superseded by melody. Where previously the movement of Will was described as a simple alteration between “exciting and quieting desire”, with basic harmonic alteration and its progressive diversification drafted in to articulate this stifled movement, here the highest objectification of the Will as *human willing* is cast as a more intricate progression, characterised by numerous fluctuations in the wide ambit of human feeling. It is this elaborated movement that characterises the type of paradigmatic notion of attunement that Neary aspires towards through his practice, and which is captured in Murphy’s retort to Neary, “but a wandering to find a home”.²⁰⁶ As we can see in the following quotation – here given in the commonly used translation by E. F. J. Payne – Schopenhauer argues that this can only be realised in the more fluid and dynamic musical construct of melody, which is capable of articulating the temporal dimension of the Will’s progression:

In keeping with this, melody alone has significant and intentional connexion from beginning to end. Consequently, it relates the story of the intellectually enlightened Will, the copy or impression whereof in actual life is the series of its deeds. Melody, however, says more; it relates the most secret history of the intellectually enlightened will, portrays every agitation, every effort, every movement of the Will, everything which the faculty of reasons summarises under the wide and negative concept of feeling, and which cannot be further taken up into the abstractions of reason.²⁰⁷

Importantly, Franz Michael Maier provides an English translation of the section of Schopenhauer’s text containing this passage, using the third German edition (by Ludger Lutkehaus). The translation of the above passage that Maier chooses is no different to Payne’s, but his version of the preceding lines signals the integrative interaction between the Will, temporality and eventual enlightenment. As can be seen in the following excerpt from Maier’s translation, which sets the above lines in context, connective, self-referential melody provides an analogy for the Will’s journey, which requires that an individual periodically “looks before and after on the path of his actual life and its innumerable possibilities” in this process towards enlightenment:

²⁰⁶ Beckett, *Murphy*, 4.

²⁰⁷ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1: 259.

Lastly, in the melody, in the high singing principal voice, leading the whole and progressing with unrestrained freedom, in the significant connection of one through from beginning to end I recognize the highest grade of the objectification of the Will, the *intellectual* life and effort of man. As he alone, because endowed with reason constantly looks before and after on the path of his actual life and its innumerable possibilities, and so achieves a course of life which is intellectual, and therefore connected as a whole.

Corresponding to this, I say, the melody has significant intellectual connection from beginning to end, it records the most secret history of his intellectually enlightened Will, pictures every excitement, every effort, every movement of it, all that which the reason collects under the wide and negative concept of feeling, and which it cannot apprehend further through its abstract concepts.²⁰⁸

Maier's translation emphasises Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory of music's representational capacity. This suggests that Schopenhauer employs a flexible musical analogy to describe the heart's movement, one that responds to the multifariousness of the Will as one progresses towards a point of intellectual enlightenment. Importantly, from Maier's translation we can see that the diversification of melody occupies the foreground of Schopenhauer's analogies when he becomes reliant upon the concept of temporality and memory to articulate the integration of the desiring Will and intellectual enlightenment. Earlier, I suggested that it is possible to locate the subtext of Beckett's critique of a Pythagorean approach to the quelling of the heart's errant desires in Schopenhauer's writing. Similarly, it is also possible to find there the basis of Neary's misinterpretation of 'attunement' as a chordal adventure. Indeed, it is revealing that Schopenhauer uses the bland alteration of 'chords', and not melody, as an analogy for the undeveloped Will. Moreover, Schopenhauer refers to both the "rational and irrational numerical relations of the vibrations" when he begins to manipulate his musical analogy to accommodate the maturation of the Will:

²⁰⁸ Franz Michael Maier, "The Idea of Melodic Connection in Samuel Beckett", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61, no. 2 (2008): 373–410, 383. In his article Maier provides the extract in German from Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 3rd ed., ed. Ludger Lutkehaus (Zurich: Haffmans Verlag, 1988), 1:343. In the footnotes to his article Maier provides the English translation (quoted here) from Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, 1883), 1:335.

Now as that rational and irrational element in the numerical relations of the vibrations admits in innumerable degrees, nuances, sequences, and vibrations, music by means of it becomes the material in which all movements of the heart, i.e. of the Will, movements whose essential nature is always satisfaction and dissatisfaction, although in innumerable degrees, can be faithfully portrayed and reproduced in all finest shades and modifications; and this takes place by means of the invention of their melody.²⁰⁹

As established in Chapter One, with the review of Pythagorean musical principles, these ‘rational’ numerical relations refer to the Ancient Greek stipulations regarding the simple integer intervals, or ‘epimore ratios’, that are the basis of the paradox of Pythagorean harmony. Here, in the Schopenhauer quotation, the ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ combine to produce “innumerable degrees, nuances and sequences” that can speak of the “finest shades and modifications” of the heart’s Willing. This implies that the “rational element” alone figures as a precursor to the rational and irrational combination and thus corresponds to an earlier stage in the Will’s progression. What does this lend to our investigation? It suggests that the musical analogy of the chord in Schopenhauer’s thinking corresponds to an early, undeveloped stage of the Will in which temporality, the Will as desiring instinct and intellectual enlightenment are not integrated. Most importantly, Schopenhauer’s choice of language in emphasising the “rational and irrational element” indicates that he has in mind the musical theory of the Ancient Greeks in the articulation of this musical analogy. As such, Beckett’s use of Schopenhauer provides the subtext for Neary’s failed practice, premised on musical chords due to his misinterpretation of Pythagorean musical practice.

It is now possible to appreciate Beckett’s use not just of Pythagoras, but also of Schopenhauer (incorporating Schopenhauer’s version of Pythagoras) in his subtle deployment of music in *Murphy*, and especially in relation to the attunement scene. Due to the absence of temporality in his attunement practice, Neary’s method fails for Murphy. This arises because of the paradox of Pythagorean principles upon which the ‘apmonia’ is premised,

²⁰⁹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2:451.

and due to Murphy's preference for stasis and the inward journey. It is Schopenhauer who supplies this interpretive subtext and the key to resolving Murphy's ills; the chordal analogy in Schopenhauer's thinking corresponds to the stage of the intellectually undeveloped Will and, as I will go on to show, is premised on a theory of chordal harmony itself based upon Pythagorean musical principles.

The final step in investigating the musical subtexts underpinning the attunement scene involves considering the influence of the eighteenth-century music theories of Jean-Philippe Rameau and his 1722 treatise on musical harmony. This brings to light the resonances of Pythagorean musical principles in Schopenhauer's discussion of musical harmony as a predominantly vertical, chordal practice.

Rameau's Theory of Harmonic Progression: Developing Pythagorean Harmony into a Theory of Chordal Harmony.

Franz Michael Maier has examined the possible influence of Jean-Philippe Rameau on Beckett, concluding that it is likely that Beckett engaged with the ideas of the eighteenth-century composer and theorist in the 1930s, independently as well as through his reading of *The World as Will and Representation*.²¹⁰ Maier interprets the Frog Song from the later novel *Watt*, comprised primarily of a series of non-relational amphibious croaks – Kriks, Kreks and Kraks – as a parody of the frog chorus from the composer's comic opera *Platée*.²¹¹ Building from this, I examine the role of Rameau's thinking, influenced by Pythagoras, in Schopenhauer's musical philosophy, so as to draw out the complexity of Beckett's use of ideas of tuning, melody and harmony in *Murphy*.

Like the Ancient Greeks, Rameau believed that music was intricately connected to nature and natural science in particular.²¹² Rameau subscribed to a Cartesian mechanistic view of the natural world and was influenced by the scientific synthesis of Descartes and Newton. As Thomas Christensen has observed, Rameau understood music as an "empirical body of acoustical evidence for which rational principles could be found".²¹³ Therefore, he

²¹⁰ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1969).

²¹¹ Franz Michael Maier, "The Idea of Melodic Connection in Samuel Beckett", 8.

²¹² Thomas Street Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 13.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

sought empirical evidence for his theory of music in the natural world. His work synthesises and extends the insights and rationale of Ancient Greek musical practice²¹⁴ – those with which Beckett had developed familiarity. While the Pythagoreans were instrumental in establishing the relationship between integer pairs, or epimore ratios, and consonant musical intervals, Rameau aimed to establish a system of musical harmony founded upon the natural laws of acoustics.

Instrumental in Rameau's thought was the idea that sounding bodies, which naturally vibrate, emit harmonic overtones: he referred to this phenomenon as the 'corps sonore'.²¹⁵ Rameau based his treatise on the musical monochord, as in Pythagorean practice. It was his contention that the undivided string length figured as a "generative fundamental".²¹⁶ In his treatise, Rameau writes, "Each string contains in itself all other strings shorter than it, but not those which are longer. Therefore, all high sounds are contained in low ones, but low ones, conversely, are not contained in high ones".²¹⁷ Christensen explains that, extrapolating from this, Rameau devised the notion of the *son fondamentale* (fundamental sound), whereby "those intervals that share common fundamental sounds may be combined to form chords, while conversely, chords can be analysed as composites of intervals sharing the same fundamental sound".²²⁰

Consequently, Rameau located what he considered to be a fundamental 'root' in all chords, despite its form or inversion.²¹⁸ As we can see in Figure 2, below, when a chord is in an inverted position, with the tones still disposed vertically but arranged in a different order, the true bass note of the chord is not the tone in the bass position but is one of the higher sounding notes.

Figure 2: Inversions of a C major chord²¹⁹

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²¹⁵ Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment*, 133–169.

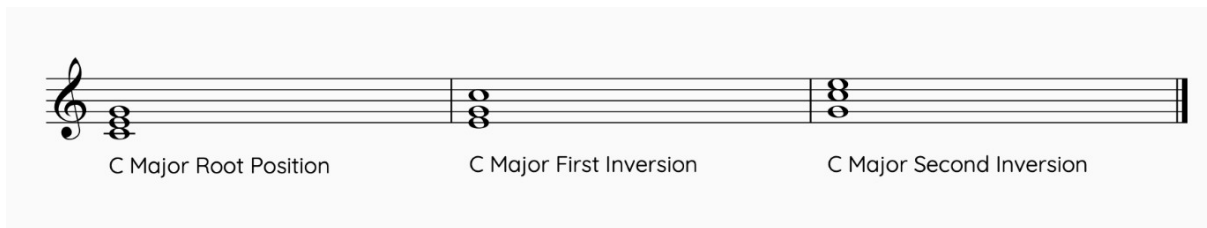
²¹⁶ Graham Sadler and Thomas Christensen, 'Rameau, Jean-Philippe', *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 1 September 2019, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022832>

²¹⁷ Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Treatise on Harmony*, trans. Phillip Gossett (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 5.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51–56.

²¹⁹ The figure shows the note 'C', the root of the chord, in different positions

²²⁰ Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment*, 91.



Thus, Rameau conceptualised a second bass line by tracking the root notes in a chordal sequence: this he referred to as the ‘bass-fundamental’.²²⁰ The notes in this series were essential to Rameau’s deductive and empirical theory of tonal harmony on two levels: firstly, because the true bass or ‘root’ generates the upper tones of the harmonic triad, which are realised vertically by the chord; and secondly, because in Rameau’s prescriptive vision of how music should be constructed, music is effective when the interval ratios of the linear horizontal movement of the fundamental bass are the same as those ratios of which the chords are constructed.²²¹ As Christensen explains, “of particular interest was Rameau’s observation that the intervals by which the fundamental bass progressed (primarily perfect 5ths, secondarily major and minor 3rds, with ascending 2nds introduced by license) are those of which chords were constructed”.²²² This means that, as Rameau himself wrote in his treatise, “The sounds, or rather the intervals, appropriate to the progression of the fundamental bass should also be found everywhere in the accompanying parts”.²²³

This fact offered powerful support to Rameau’s claim that his principle of harmony was indeed a comprehensive one, accounting for both the “vocabulary and the grammar of music”.²²⁴ Prior to the Renaissance, the combining of tones in musical practice was a popular means of producing harmonic dissonance and consonance through polyphonic writing, whereby simultaneously sounding tones, otherwise termed a ‘chord’, arose as a result of the combination of two or more independent melodic lines. This method of producing harmony was exploited in the techniques of organum and Renaissance polyphony. In western staff notation, where the horizontal axis denotes time and the vertical axis denotes pitch, the notes of a chord are often, although not exclusively, arranged vertically so that they appear stacked. However, harmonic theory which evolved

²²⁰ Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment*, 51–56.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries presented the notion of a chord as an indivisible independent unit rather than the payoff of a contrapuntal texture, as in the earlier techniques described above.²²⁵ Rameau's synthesis of Pythagorean principles and their development into a technique of *chordal* harmony occupies an important juncture in the paradox of 'harmony', which formerly did not refer to the simultaneous sounding of tones.

Rameau's insights are taken as a turning point in the conception of music as organised vertically rather than horizontally:²²⁶ his theory justified the broad shift in western music from conceiving of harmony as the consequence of the intersection of two or more musical lines, towards an understanding of harmony as vertically-conceived and chordal. As I will go on to explain, it is the quasi-Pythagorean elements of Rameau's theory of chordal harmony that Schopenhauer synthesised in his writing on music and which clearly resonated with Beckett. These are used analogously by Schopenhauer to articulate a lower stage of human willing, where the integration of the Will as desiring instinct, intellectual enlightenment and temporality is unmastered. As discussed above, it is precisely this type of mastery that Murphy and Neary aim to acquire, but which Neary's chordal attunement practice cannot offer.

Rameau's Resonance

Importantly, Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music both drew upon and contradicted Rameau's conceptualisation. In Volume Two of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer declares that Rameau had "laid the foundation" for "the most precise rules" of music.²²⁷ In *The World as Will and Representation* he commends Rameau's empirical project for its "root in the natural origin of the tonal system".²²⁸ Indeed, Schopenhauer gravitated to Rameau's theory because of its recitation of Pythagorean acoustic principles, especially the theory of the monochord from which Rameau derived his generative theory of the

²²⁵ Richard Cohn, Brian Hyer, Carl Dahlhaus, Julian Anderson and Charles Wilson, 'Harmony', *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 12 April 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000050818>.

²²⁶ Lawrence Ferrara, "Music as the Embodiment of Will", in *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Dale Jaquette (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 191.

²²⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, Volume 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1:430.

²²⁸ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2:145.

fundamental. The following paragraph from the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* echoes Rameau's prioritisation of the 'root' as the generative site of tonal harmony, incorporating it into the argument that the objects of the world result from incremental gradations of the objectification of the Will:

High notes ... may be regarded as resulting from the simultaneous vibrations of the deep bass-note. With the sounding of the low note, the high notes always sound faintly at the same time, and it is a law of harmony that a bass-note may be accompanied only by those high notes that actually sound automatically and simultaneously with it (sons harmoniques) through the accompanying vibrations.... [A]ll the bodies and organization of nature must be regarded as having come into existence through gradual development out of the mass of the planet. This is both their supporter and their source, and the high notes have the same relation to the ground-bass ... just as a certain degree of pitch is inseparable from the tone as such, so a certain grade of the Will's manifestation is inseparable from matter.²²⁹

Interestingly, Rameau's quasi-Pythagorean and highly deductive ethos can be tracked in Schopenhauer's ideas of musical emotion, explored earlier. Across his numerous discussions of music, Schopenhauer occasionally argues that music can be reduced to a movement between consonance and dissonance: "the most vehement conflict ... is transformed the next moment into the most beautiful harmony. It is return *concordia discors*".²³⁰ This also originates from his reading of Rameau and, more specifically, Rameau's application of the Pythagorean attention to the mathematical underpinnings of musical acoustics to galvanise his rational project.²³¹

Rameau believed that all tonal harmony could be fundamentally conceived as rooted in just two chords: the triad and the "dissonant seventh" (the dominant seventh chord, in more recent terms).²³² As Christensen explains "all compounds, inversions, added notes, suspensions and chromatic alternations of these chords could be reduced to these two

²²⁹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:258.

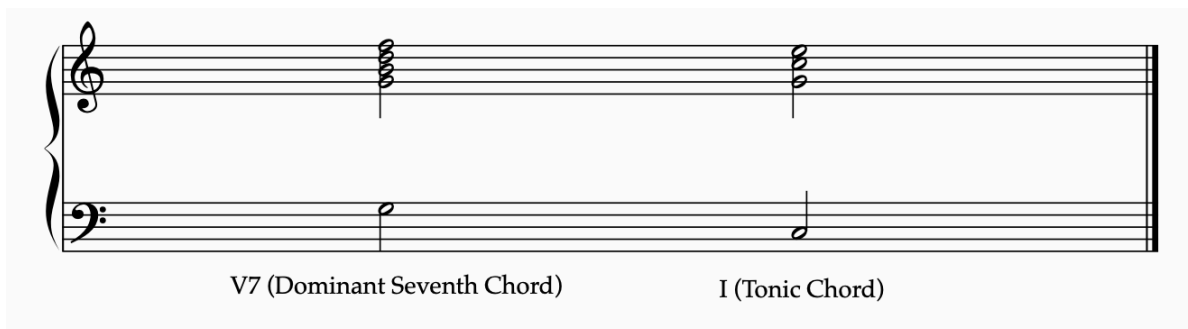
²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:259.

²³¹ Christensen, *Rameau and Musical Thought in the Enlightenment*, 71–73.

²³² *Ibid.*, 5. The 'dissonant seventh' chord is now commonly referred to as the 'dominant seventh' chord.

chords, and hence back to a common fundamental source.²³³ In a perfect cadence, a dominant chord – the chord on the fifth scale degree – is followed by a tonic chord (on the first scale degree). Occasionally, the dominant chord has an additional note – the seventh – regarded by Rameau as discordant: this forms a dominant seventh chord. The dominant seventh resolves to form a consonant triad on the tonic, thereby producing Rameau’s sought-after alteration between ‘displacement’ and ‘repose’. Observing that the horizontal movement of chords – harmonic progression – could be reduced to alternations between these two very different sounding chords, Rameau deduced that music was comprised of an alteration between ‘displacement’ and ‘repose’ due to the seventh’s dissonant quality and the triad’s consonance. For Rameau, this harmonic movement was exemplified by the changes between major and minor tonalities in local chord connections, initiated by the horizontal movement of tones in perfect cadences.²³⁴

Figure 3: Perfect cadence in C Major



In the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer outlines the relationship between the acoustic and empirical underpinnings of music and the effects this creates for the listener:

I start from the theory generally known and by no means overthrown by recent objections, that all harmony of the tones rests on the coincidence of the vibrations. When two tones sound simultaneously, the coincidence occurs perhaps at every second, third, or fourth vibration, according to which they are the octave, the fifth, or the fourth of one another, and so on.

²³³ Ibid., 102.

²³⁴ Graham Sadler and Thomas Christensen, ‘Rameau, Jean-Philippe’, *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 1 September 2019, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022832>.

Thus, so long as the vibrations of the two tones have a rational relation to one another, expressible in small numbers, they can be taken together in our appreciation through their constantly recurring coincidence; the tones are blended and thus in harmony. On the other hand, if that relation is an irrational one, or one expressible only in large numbers, no intelligible coincidence of the vibration occurs, but *obstrepunt sibi perpetuo*, and in this way they resist being taken together in our apprehension, and accordingly are called a dissonance.²³⁵

Here, Schopenhauer is referring to the small, epimore or ‘integer’ ratios underpinning the consonant intervals of the musical scale. Importantly, it is these intervals that form the harmonic triad that Rameau identifies as the basis of all musical consonance. Similarly, the “irrational relations” are those produced by larger, non-epimore ratios which inform the ‘dissonant seventh’ chord that Rameau considered the basis of all possible musical dissonances. Indeed, Schopenhauer recites Rameau’s deductive view of tonal harmony that reduces the relation between chords and the expression of emotion to the alteration between the harmonic triad, supplying consonance, and the seventh, supplying dissonance: “in the whole of music there are two fundamental chords, the dissonant chord of the seventh and the harmonious triad”, “just as there are for the Will at bottom only satisfaction and dissatisfaction”.²³⁶ Thus we are able to track the following progression: Rameau synthesised the Pythagoreans’ discovery of the numerical relations underpinning musical intervals into a theory of chordal harmony, which, according to the reductive ethos of Rameau, is characterised by its unelaborated harmonic movement. Schopenhauer echoed Rameau’s theory of harmonic progression, premised on Pythagorean principles, in his writings on music and recruits this non-digressive chordal movement in his musical analogy. By employing this specific type of chordal movement, Schopenhauer is able to articulate the highly undifferentiated movement of the Will at the early stage of its progression towards enlightenment.

Importantly, Rameau’s notion of the *son fondamentale*, as discussed earlier in this chapter, chimes with Beckett’s frequently cited comment to the theatre director Alan Schneider regarding the meaning of his works: “My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke

²³⁵ Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, 2:450.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 456.

intended), made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin".²³⁷ As Catherine Laws has noted, while the comment may easily be dismissed as a joke, the reference to overtones indicates Beckett's nuanced understanding of tuning and the importance of overtone frequencies for determining the quality of a musical sound, thereby suggesting the latent meaning that resides in the surplus resonances of Beckett's work.²³⁸ Noting this additional link to Rameau's phraseology allows for further speculation, not just that Beckett's web of tuning references was informed by Rameau as well as Pythagoras and Schopenhauer, but also that Rameau's ideas might form the basis of the harmonic peculiarities identified earlier in Beckett's doodled sketches: the absence of thirds from some chords and the addition of dissonant sevenths to others could be a play on Rameau's stipulations for the sought-after alternation between displacement and repose.

The Ideal Notion of Attunement

The above discussion helps to identify a concealed subtext for Neary's failed attunement practice. What follows, then, attends to this question: following the underpinning Schopenhauerian logic, exactly what form of attunement were Murphy and Neary aiming for? To answer this it is necessary to return to those parts of Schopenhauer's theory of music from which Murphy's dictum "a wandering to find a home" is derived. Despite the connections, and the common origin in Pythagorean musical thought, there are areas of Schopenhauer's philosophy that deviate from and occasionally contradict Rameau's chordal interpretation of harmonic movement. At the basis of these discrepancies is the disjunction between the late Baroque style of Rameau and the Classical and early Romantic repertoire that Schopenhauer held in mind when devising his metaphysical interpretation of music.²³⁹ As Lawrence Ferrara has observed, Rameau's treatise was received primarily as a theory of music and was not employed as a manual for composition as he intended.²⁴⁰ In contrast to Rameau's preoccupations, the music with which Schopenhauer was primarily concerned was generally characterised by extensive motivic

²³⁷ Maurice Harmon, ed., *No Author Better Served: The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 24.

²³⁸ Catherine Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2013), 9.

²³⁹ Ferrara, "Music as the embodiment of the Will", 195.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

development and was therefore dependent upon the exploitation of temporality overlooked by Rameau's prioritisation of vertical procedure. Indeed, as Ferrara observes, many composers of this period drew upon a theory of free composition, derived from the Fuxian counterpoint practiced by numerous masters of western music, from J. S. Bach to Brahms.²⁴¹

There are areas of Schopenhauer's discussions of music where he appears to advocate melodic primacy. The most blatant of these, recorded in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, reads: "I regard melody as the core of music to which harmony is related as the sauce to roast meat".²⁴² However, as Ferrara has observed, Schopenhauer's other, less grandiose and generalised remarks demonstrate a more nuanced recognition of the nature of formal growth in much of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European music.²⁴³ More importantly, in this process there is a dual employment of rhythm and harmony, with both integrated into the overarching drive towards more formal freedom and innovation. As Ferrara explains, musical form, for Schopenhauer, becomes the alteration of "discord and reconciliation" where the reconciliation results from an amalgamation of rhythmic (as form and metre) and harmonic satisfaction in the form of the return to the original key in a "symmetrically correct moment of the work and on a strong beat of the final measures".²⁴⁴ It is precisely this idea of 'attunement', where rhythm is used to accommodate and confirm the digression of melody, that is captured in Murphy's retort, "but a wandering to find a home". Murphy's quip derives from Schopenhauer's writing on melody:

Melody is always a deviation from the keynote through a thousand crotchety wanderings up to the most painful discord. After this, it at last finds the keynote again which expresses the satisfaction and composure of the Will.²⁴⁵

A theory of attunement based upon the combination of rhythm and harmony is a theme that extends through the novel. The heart is primarily percussive: the organ is characterised by its pulsating movement and we talk of the 'beating' of a heart. This

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁴² Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1:416.

²⁴³ Ferrara, "Music as the embodiment of Will", 191.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:321.

temporal dimension of the internal body part comes to the fore in medical discourse concerned with ‘rate’ and ‘arrhythmia’. Indeed, it is this rhythmic aspect of the heart that Beckett uses to denote its errant behaviour. The medical condition of ‘bradycardia’ provides the blueprint for Neary’s investment in slowing his heartrate to complete stasis, while Murphy’s heart operates at the extremities of tempo, “one moment in such labour that it seemed on the point of seizing, the next in such ebullition that it seemed on the point of bursting”.²⁴⁶ As such, Beckett places a strong emphasis on rhythm. However, the evocations of chords and strings – terms associated with music’s manifestation as a tonal art – brings to the fore a different and perhaps less well-known association with tuning, rooted in the philosophical backdrop that has now been uncovered. As such, through an emphasis on the mechanics of the heart, Beckett is able to draw attention to the coupling of tonal and rhythmic domains, suggesting that it is the interdependence and interaction between these two factions that is of interest.

Further examples from latter parts of the novel, as well as from his other pre-war fiction, lend support to the notion that, for Beckett, the concept of attunement relates to the interface between pitch and rhythm, a conflation that is explored through the play of terminology that has referential significance in both domains. Calling upon the terminology of campanology (bell ringing), Heath Lees, in a footnote to his essay ‘*Watt*, Music, Tuning and Tonality’, argues that the Threne melody from the novel *Watt* depicts chain-ringing in the round through the transcription of the intervallic specifications of a peel of bells.²⁴⁷ A passage from the typescript, omitted from the published editions of the text, indicates that the use of the term ‘interval’ is employed to articulate a lack of precise rhythmic co-ordination in the peel, which in turn generates a disturbance in pitch content, since the term captures both junctures of time and the distance of a given pair of tones:

Deep and slow, high and swift, so that for every three peels of the former there were no fewer than five of the latter, and that the third and fifth, the sixth and tenth, the ninth and fifteenth, the twelfth and twentieth, etcetera, strokes, on the one hand of the reformed, on the other hand of the aboriginal clapper, produced a chord, a charming chord, a charming charming second a comma sharp, a charming charming third a comma flat,

²⁴⁶ Beckett, *Murphy*, 4.

²⁴⁷ Heath Lees, “*Watt*: Music, Tuning and Tonality”, 12.

assuming that the bell ringers began to ring their bells at precisely the same moment and continued to ring them at intervals in each case identical with the initial interval.²⁴⁸

The word ‘comma’ is important: it denotes the intervallic discrepancy between tuning twelve perfect fifths and seven perfect octaves, known as the ‘Pythagorean comma’. The term is used twice, with the purposeful omission of its grammatical namesake. As such, the text performs the clashing of pitches and the *temporal* intervallic disturbance upon which it is predicated. Consequently, both ‘round’ and ‘interval’ in this context have tonal and rhythmic resonances, but also simultaneously register the terms upon which pitch and rhythm bear consequence upon one another.

When we return to *Murphy* we find, similarly, that both ‘round’ and ‘interval’ arise in close proximity. The following passage reflects on the duties of the wardens at the Magdalene Mental Mercy Seat:

A round took ten minutes, all being well, if all was not well, if a patient had cut his throat, or required attention, then the extra time taken by the round was levied on the pause. For it was an inflexible rule of the M.M.M., laid down in terms so strong as to be almost abusive, that every patient and not merely those on parchment (or on caution), should be visited at regular intervals of not more than twenty minutes throughout the night.²⁴⁹

Here, the terms are used in a temporal sense. However, the series of pitches later used in the *Watt* typescript to denote the peels of bells is perhaps not far from Beckett’s mind.²⁵⁰ The aim of any M.M.M. employee is to achieve a perfectly executed round: “a clean round, facetiously called a ‘virgin’”.²⁵¹ Here, Beckett is playing on the multiple meanings of round, both the hospital round and the musical round. It is also possible to suggest that Beckett seems to be returning to the terminological evocations of campanology, where an

²⁴⁸ Extract from the ‘Watt’ typescript Draft B page 241 and reproduced in Lees, “*Watt*, Music, Tuning and Tonality”, 11.

²⁴⁹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 147.

²⁵⁰ Catherine Laws also discusses Beckett’s engagement with the tuning of bells in Chapter Two of *Laws, Headaches Among the Overtones*, 63–121.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

undisturbed round is referred to as ‘the truth’,²⁵² and a series of undisturbed rounds is called a ‘touch’.²⁵³ Similarly, following Miss Counihan’s declaration of love for Murphy, Wylie offers the following reply:

“Who knows what dirty story, what even better dirty story, it may be even one we have not heard before, told at some colossal pitch of pure smut, beats at this moment in vain against our eardrums?”²⁵⁴

In this instance, the word ‘beat’ is used to evoke not only the vain beating of a heart, but the acoustic sense of the word, which refers to the percussive sensation in the inner ear that arises from the interference of soundwaves that do not create a perfect unison. As such, these examples speak of the interaction between rhythm and pitch, wherein ‘attunement’ is envisaged as the synchronisation of tonal and temporal domains. As we can see, then, it is possible to read Beckett’s musical references on two levels: on the one hand, words such as ‘beat’ do not, on the surface, seem to bear a great deal of referential significance, but when we engage with the subtexts underlying these inclusions through recourse to Beckett’s notes and readings, the complex web of meaning at play emerges, and this supports the articulation of ideas of music throughout the novel more broadly.

In this way, the ideal attunement promoted by the novel but continually thwarted by Beckett’s characters is one in which the temporal and melodic domains are able to accommodate one another flexibly. This notion of attunement adheres to a Schopenhauerian ethos, whereby the enlightenment of the Will is reached *in time*, and *through* the varied cumulative experiences of the desiring instinct. For Schopenhauer, this is captured in the winding digression of the melody and the confirmation of its return to the home key in a moment where harmonic and rhythmic domains are employed in combination.

Chapters One and Two have explored the nature of Murphy’s ideal notion of attunement and why it is that Neary’s attunement practice fails, thereby unravelling the musical logic of the apnomia scene. We can now appreciate how Beckett draws attention to the nuances

²⁵² John C. G. Sturdy, “Glossary of Ringing Terms”, accessed 30 May 30 2020, <http://www.cb1.com/-john/ringing/glossary.html#Touch>.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Beckett, *Murphy*, 136.

of opposing notions of attunement embedded in different concepts of music theory and music philosophy. These different musico-philosophical positions are pitched against one another to animate and critique the concepts of desire, insight and journeying that characterise the scene and the novel as a whole. Beckett's musical marginalia provide further insights into Beckett's thinking: the series of hastily sketched out cadences produce a sonic realisation of Murphy's thwarted attunement journey. As such, the attunement scene at the beginning of the novel opens up a relationship between different musical constructs and conditions of knowledge: to be attuned is to be in possession or pursuit of a certain level of insight. As explored in the next chapter, this relationship extends to the characterisation of Mr Endon and is linked up with the notion of melancholic interiority through an emphasis on the thought of Democritus.

PART ONE: MUSIC, MELANCHOLIA AND KNOWLEDGE IN MURPHY

Chapter Three – Mr Endon’s Inner Voice: Democritean Knowledge and the Melancholic Constitution

The Musicality of Interiority: The First Model of Music in *Murphy*

Introduction

Chapter Three focuses on further instances of music in *Murphy*, allowing for greater exploration of the relationship between music and the idea of knowledge or insight identified in the previous chapters. Moreover, the discussion explores the ways in which this relationship between music and the subjective quality of knowledge becomes closely associated with the idea of melancholic interiority, through Beckett’s oblique use of the philosophy of Democritus. As such, the chapter investigates how music is characterised by a notion of melancholia associated with Democritus. I argue that the opposing qualities of knowledge and desire, explored in the previous chapter, are extended to inform two notions of musical expression that find characterisation throughout the novel. This involves exploring the language of the character Mr Endon, a patient who Murphy meets at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat. Mr Endon’s language is characterized as inwardly-focused and counterpoints the opposing language of Celia and the exterior world.

As such, the first part of this chapter focuses on the musical significance of the character Mr Endon, demonstrating how his ‘musicality’ helps us understand his function in certain scenes. In doing so, this chapter teases out the significance of the web of subtexts that informs the novel in general and the character of Endon specifically. Beckett’s extensive reading, evidenced by his notetaking, is instrumental in shaping the various notions of music that are brought to light by Beckett’s covert references and nuances of language. When these details are examined in relation to one another, it is possible to appreciate the way in which the seemingly disparate threads of thought on music and melancholia become intertwined in Beckett’s thinking and writing.

Mr Endon’s Musical Inner Voice

Endon's inner voice is described for the reader as "unobtrusive and melodious, a gentle continuo in the whole consort of his hallucinations".²⁵⁵ In the mental asylum, Murphy finds himself perversely enthralled by the inmates' mental detachment from the exterior world. The closed space of the asylum and the figures that inhabit it leave Murphy feeling overwhelmed with "respect and unworthiness"²⁵⁶ since he finds himself amidst a "brotherhood" and "race of people he had long since despaired of finding".²⁵⁷ However, particular satisfaction is derived from his engagements with Mr Endon, "a schizophrenic of the most amiable variety",²⁵⁸ who inhabits an enclosed, padded cell and is completely incapable of acknowledging the exterior world. Mr Endon embodies the indifference that Murphy longs for and when Murphy gazes into the infamous patient's eyes he discovers that he is only "a speck in Mr Endon's unseen".²⁵⁹ In order to understand the significance of Mr Endon's musical characterisation and its relevance to Murphy's revelation, we must take into consideration Matthew Feldman's interpretation of the novel's events. Feldman posits that Murphy undergoes a moment of "trueborn" knowledge – in the sense Beckett takes from Democritus²⁶⁰ – while in the company of Endon. This will involve us engaging with the philosophical subtext of Murphy's moment of "trueborn" knowledge and looking more specifically at Beckett's engagement with Democritean thought.

Many earlier Beckett critics, including Ruby Cohn, Hugh Kenner and Lawrence Harvey,²⁶¹ preferred a primarily Cartesian reading of the novel, in which Murphy finally grasps the ramifications of radical autonomy upon encountering Mr Endon. Mr Endon's complete lack of 'apperception' leaves him deprived of an understanding of his own consciousness – or, to put it another way, of the perception of the process of perceiving. As Chris Ackerley explains, "Mr. Endon's tragedy is not so much that he fails to 'see' Murphy, but rather that Murphy sees that Mr. Endon sees but does not perceive his own existence".²⁶² Thus, many critics argue that Murphy rejects his solipsistic project: the premise of this reading is that

²⁵⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 116.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

²⁶⁰ Beckett's use of the word "trueborn" derives from his note in the 'Psychology Notes': "There are two forms of knowledge, the trueborn and the bastard. To the bastard belong all these: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The trueborn is quite apart from these' (Fr. 11)" (TCD MS 10967/79). See Matthew Feldman, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (London: Continuum, 2008), 58.

²⁶¹ Lawrence Harvey, *Samuel Beckett: Poet and Critic* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970); Ruby Cohn, *Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962); Hugh Kenner, 'The Cartesian Centaur', *Perspective* (Autumn 1959), 132–141.

²⁶² Feldman, *Beckett's Books*, 58.

he does not want to forgo his own sanity. The ironic twist here is that Murphy does, in fact, achieve the ultimate state of freedom at the end of the novel, when he returns to Celia and the “Big World”, only to perish in a gas explosion. Moreover, Matthew Feldman has developed a different interpretation by examining Beckett’s comments on Democritus in the ‘Philosophy Notes’, which were drawn from the author’s reading of Windelband’s *A History of Philosophy*. Feldman’s alternative stance is based upon an Atomist subtext revealed by affinities between the text and specific passages on Democritean thought preserved in the ‘Philosophy Notes’. What is this Democritean thought in question?

Democritus taught that the senses are unreliable, and that all knowledge emanates from within. He considered there to be two different types of knowledge, “trueborn” and “bastard”. As Beckett copied down into his notebook, “To the bastard belong all these: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The trueborn is quite apart from these” (TCD MS 10967/79).⁸ As such, Democritus held that changes to one’s soul could occur independently of the five senses. This understanding is apparent in Beckett’s notes on Democritus, which comprise part of the ‘Philosophy Notes’:

The atoms outside us can affect our soul atoms directly without intervention of special senses. Soul atoms permeate the body and could come into immediate contact with external atoms and so know them as they really are. Thus Democritus refused like Socrates to separate sense and thought. “Poor mind” he makes the sense say (Fr 125) “it is from us thou hast got the proofs to throw us with. Thy throw is a fall.” Trueborn knowledge not thought, but a kind of inner-sense, with objects like the ‘common sensibles’ of Aristotle. (TCD MS 10967/79)²⁶³

Based on this Democritean emphasis on unreliable sense perception, Murphy’s encounter with Mr Endon and the revelation arising from it is one in which he sees himself “unseen”,²⁶⁴ leading to a denunciation of solipsism. Feldman emphasises this point in countering the readings of Ackerley and others.²⁶⁵ As Feldman sees it, the use of the word ‘endon’, from the Greek for ‘within’, coupled with the Democritean emphasis upon

²⁶³ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 59.

²⁶⁴ Beckett, *Murphy*, 156.

²⁶⁵ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 58–59.

“trueborn” knowledge arising from ‘within’, suggests that the Endon encounter endorses Murphy’s conviction that retreat to the interior *is* viable. Murphy’s engagement with Mr Endon’s internal void, if read from a Democritean standpoint, provokes a form of disclosure which provides Murphy with insight: it shows him that an autonomous existence can be pursued as a route to true knowledge. As Feldman writes, “Murphy’s inner revelation, arising from his (unreliable) perceptions of Endon’s eyes, animates Democritus’ perhaps most famous extant fragment: ‘Truth is in the depths’” (TCD MS 10967/781).²⁶⁶

Democritus believed that true perception – or “trueborn” knowledge – is premised upon the atom and void; atoms, conceived of as tiny images that emanate from perceived objects, set in motion the fire atoms of man’s soul.²⁶⁷ This goes some way towards explaining Murphy’s accidental death in a gas explosion; when Murphy longs to escape into his mind and eschew the demands of his body, he straps himself into his rocking chair in the hope that the repetitive rhythm of its movement will facilitate his retreat inwards. With Democritus’ model in mind, it would appear that this is also the point at which “trueborn” knowledge begins to arise, causing the fire in which Murphy dies. Feldman suggests that this detail is drawn from Beckett’s notes on Democritus’ ‘Doctrine of Perception’ in the ‘Philosophy Notes’:

Doctrine of perception: We perceive through our high-class fire atoms. The emanations from things set in motion the fire-atoms of the soul of man. These emanations are the images (infinitely small copies) of the things whence they proceed and their effect on fire atoms constitutes perception. (TCD MS 10967/75)²⁶⁸

The notion that Murphy’s encounter with Endon validates Murphy’s solipsistic intent is confirmed for Feldman by the inclusion of a specific Democritean detail in Murphy’s death scene. When Murphy straps himself into the rocking chair for the final time and begins his

²⁶⁶ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 59.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

journey towards the “dark of his mind”,²⁶⁹ the room is filled with “excellent gas”²⁷⁰ and “superfine chaos”,²⁷¹ and he perishes in the gas explosion.

In Feldman’s interpretation of events, then, Murphy’s encounter with Mr Endon is one in which a form of communication arises between the parties in question, but not necessarily through the common perceptual senses. I wish to argue that the musicality of Mr Endon’s inner voice plays a role in Murphy’s moment of insight. Murphy assumes a position of physical symmetry with Mr Endon after the chess match, with “fingers, lips, nose and forehead almost touching”.²⁷² However, Feldman stresses that this revelation does not come from his “butterfly kiss”²⁷³ with Endon – “for Democritus taught that the senses are unreliable” – but from within himself.²⁷⁴ Consequently the “(unreliable) perceptions of Mr. Endon’s eyes” generate an “inner-revelation” that amounts to Murphy speaking his inner “true born” knowledge:²⁷⁵

Murphy *heard* words demanding so strongly to be spoken that he spoke them right into Mr. Endon’s face, Murphy, who did not speak at all in the ordinary way unless spoken to, and not even then.

“the last at last seen of him
himself unseen by him
and of himself”²⁷⁶

Paradoxically, Murphy reaches his “trueborn” moment of realisation upon rejecting the sense perceptions as a source of knowledge, but his moment of inner revelation is predicated upon *hearing* words from within that demand to be spoken aloud. As will be explored further, this annunciation is not just a response to the stigmatised image of himself as unperceived, but, with its repetition and self-cancelling rhetoric, a type of aural condensation or reverberation of the space from which it arises. This considered, it

²⁶⁹ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 59.

²⁷⁰ Beckett, *Murphy*, 158.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 156.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 56.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁷⁶ Beckett, *Murphy*, 156.

appears that the knowledge disclosure, and Murphy's subsequent final revelation, is facilitated by Mr Endon's musical inner voice: this is able to generate Murphy's internal voice, which he hears and then verbalises. This argument is supported by one detail in particular. When Murphy retreats to his room, overcome by his experience with Endon, he vows to leave the asylum, "leaving Ticklepenny to face the music, Music, MUSIC".²⁷⁷ Ticklepenny, then, is left to return to the 'music' of Mr Endon, which has brought about Murphy's revelation. The particular musical dimension of Endon will be explored in greater detail later; but, as we can see, drawing out the Democritean underpinning of the scene demonstrates that Murphy's encounter with Mr Endon is actually a knowledge disclosure facilitated by Mr Endon's inner musical voice. Importantly, this knowledge disclosure is provoked from within, interior to him. As such, through the Democritean subtext, an emphasis is placed on the association between interiority and the production of knowledge, with this interiority is figured as a musical voice.

What, it might be asked, does the nature of this exchange feed back to our understanding of Mr Endon's musical inner voice? Why is Endon's musical voice able to produce such a reaction? To answer these questions, we need to better understand the form of communication between Endon and Murphy and how it relates to Mr Endon's unusual psychic constitution. The scene immediately prior to the butterfly kiss can help with this.

The Schopenhauerian Aesthetic Encounter: Mr Endon's Musical Inner Voice

Murphy's revelation is specifically facilitated by Endon's musical status. This is confirmed by the fact that Murphy's reaction is in keeping with a model of aesthetic experience that was of particular importance to Beckett. As explained in Chapter Two, Beckett first came across the writings of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer in the 1930s, noting in a letter to Thomas MacGreevy that "his intellectual justification of unhappiness – the greatest that has ever been attempted – is worth the examination".²⁷⁸ For Schopenhauer, each of the fine arts is indicative of a specific juncture in the gradation of the Will, except Music, which

²⁷⁷ Beckett, *Murphy*, 157.

²⁷⁸ Samuel Beckett to Thomas MacGreevy, July 1930. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32–33.

is an expression of the Will. For Schopenhauer, music is “independent of the phenomenal world”²⁷⁹ and is not “like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself”.²⁸⁰ The Will encompasses all the human passions, and for Schopenhauer music is therefore capable of “tracing the secret history of the will”,²⁸¹ the essential essence of each emotion, otherwise unknowable. Music does this immediately and outside of a referential system, such that the essence of the Will can be grasped independent of processes of cause and effect. Moreover, Schopenhauer believed that in an aesthetic encounter, the Will is suspended, and the subject becomes one with the essence of the object. In such a Schopenhauerian encounter one becomes “a purposeless, disinterested subject released from wilful wants, cravings and longings”: one is freed “from the service of the will” and is thereby a “will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge”.²⁸² In this state, one forgets oneself, so that the perceived, pure aesthetic object, alone, is left in the consciousness.²⁸³ As such, we can think of Mr Endon’s inner voice as a pure expression of the Will – like music, in Schopenhauer’s terms – where the musical voice invites Murphy to suspend the conditioning faculties of his own Will. Like aesthetic experience, where the onlooker becomes one with the essence of the object in question because of the suspension of the conditioning Will, Mr Endon as void-space invites Murphy to become one with that void-space: “Mr. Endon’s finery persisted for a little in an after image scarcely inferior to the original. Then this also faded and Murphy began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare postnatal treat”.²⁸⁴

Fittingly, then, the characterisation of Murphy’s experience as “the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real”,²⁸⁵ indicates that Mr Endon’s musical voice, emanating from his inner space, is not the expression of a void, as such, but a type of musical present-absence: a distillation of the Democritean maxim “nothing is more real than nothing”. It is precisely the musical quality of Mr Endon’s inner voice that is responsible for the peculiar exchange of nothing between the protagonists; in keeping with Schopenhauer’s theory of musical experience, Mr Endon’s inner voice as present-void is

²⁷⁹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 1:257.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 3rd ed., ed. Ludger Lutkehaus (Zurich: Haffmans Verlag, 1988), 1:343.

²⁸² Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:287.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1:185.

²⁸⁴ Beckett, *Murphy*, 154.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

able to initiate Murphy's vacant third zone because, like musical experience, it suspends the conditioning faculties of the listener's Will. As such, the something of the 'nothing' encountered therein is able to produce Murphy's equally self-cancelling annunciation, as though the spaces were not interacting per se, but resonating with one another.

"Unobtrusive and Melodious, a Gentle Continuo in the Whole Consort of His Hallucinations"²⁸⁶: Exploring the Subtexts of Mr Endon's Inner Voice

Mr Endon's interior music is described as "unobtrusive and melodious, a gentle continuo in the whole consort of his hallucinations".²⁸⁷ We can begin to understand the implications of this description when we consider the intermixture of Schopenhauerian and Freudian thought that shape it. In referring to Endon's voice as a "continuo", Beckett evokes the bass line in Baroque music, usually played by a bass instrument (often a low string instrument, such as a cello or viola da gamba, or sometimes a bassoon), with a keyboard instrument or lute also playing that line but additionally filling in the harmony, usually according to figured bass notation that indicates the intervallic relationship of the notes in the chord to the bass. This suggests an interpretation of the bass as a stabilising and supportive entity. However, these positive connotations are reversed in Schopenhauer's analogous discussion of the bass voice.

In Schopenhauer's writings, he specifies that because music 'is' the Will, and all of the representations in the world are various manifestations of the Will in objectified form, music is capable of resembling all of the world's representations.²⁸⁸ As such, he establishes a series of analogies between grades of the objectifications of the Will in nature and the syntax of music. The distribution of tones in a scale, according to Schopenhauer, corresponds to these gradations of the Will that produce the world of representations and hence to "the whole gradation of the Ideas in which the will objectifies itself": "The definite intervals of the scale are parallel to the definite grades of the Will's objectifications, the definite species in nature".²⁸⁹ Interestingly, Schopenhauer specified that the bass tones are indicative of "inorganic nature and the mass of the planet", the

²⁸⁶ Beckett, *Murphy*, 116.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:258.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:258 and 2:447.

“crudest mass”.²⁹⁰ Consequently, a friction arises between the two connotations of the descriptor ‘continuo’. On the one hand it brings into association a ‘basso-continuo’ and by extension, Schopenhauer’s coarse bass. In Beckett’s pre-war and wartime fiction, including the novel *Watt*, the reader encounters such devious voices: here, singing specifically is rendered vulgar, disruptive and marginal (as with the marginal voices of the Threne from *Watt*²⁹¹). On the other hand, a basso continuo indicates unobtrusive stability; it provides a bedrock for the melody from which performers derive the harmonic material, acting as a type of musical scaffolding. To understand *why* Mr Endon’s inner voice, described as a continuo, is unusually unobtrusive, we need to consider his characterisation in light of Beckett’s comments in his ‘Psychology Notes’.

The “Unobtrusiveness”²⁹² of Endon’s Bass: The ‘Psychology Notes’

Between 1934 and 1935, Beckett began gathering his ‘Psychology Notes’ as an attempt to educate himself in psychological and psychoanalytic thought.²⁹³ Upon the recommendation of his friend Geoffrey Thompson, Beckett sought therapy with Wilfred Bion in London, in order to address psychosomatic symptoms including panic attacks and night sweats. This stemmed, as Feldman has argued, from “a personal attempt to diagnose his psychological maladies during this time”.²⁹⁴ However, as Feldman observes, the notes that Beckett collated from nine psychological texts over a period of twelve months not only offered Beckett an insight into his own condition, but also constituted a source of creative sustenance.²⁹⁵

Mr Endon is described in the novel as the most catatonic of the inmates at the M.M.M. He is not only indifferent to the exterior world, but embodies ultimate abstraction and isolation, as the narrator explains: “Mr. Endon would have been less than Mr. Endon if he had known what it was to have a friend”.²⁹⁶ In the novel, Endon is referred to as a

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Samuel Beckett, *Watt*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 27–28.

²⁹² Beckett, *Murphy*, 116.

²⁹³ As Feldman has observed, the ‘Psychology Notes’ comprise 20,000 typewritten words and were likely compiled at Gertrude Street, Beckett’s London residence, using books that he borrowed from public libraries in London with a British Library card. It is likely that Beckett frequented Camden Library specifically because it specialised in philosophy and psychology. See Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 95–96

²⁹⁴ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 7.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹⁶ Beckett, *Murphy*, 150.

“psychotic”.²⁹⁷ In his seminal discussion of psychogenic disturbances, Freud made a distinction between the more common and arguably less serious case of ‘neurosis’ and the psychoanalytic conception of schizophrenia termed ‘psychosis’: “neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its id, whereas psychosis is the analogous outcome of a similar disturbance in the relations between the ego and the external world”.²⁹⁸ As Ackerley and Gontarski explain, in the psychoanalytical approach to the severe psychic disintegration indicative of schizophrenia, “analysts hold that psychotic fragmentation is caused by a disruption of the ego’s unity and indiscriminate thrusting into consciousness of autonomous complexes deriving from primitive sexual or archetypal material”.²⁹⁹ Despite this distinction between psychosis and neurosis, Ackerley and Gontarski note that the psychoanalytic process (with the archetypal neurotic in analysis) is in Beckett’s work depicted to evoke experiences similar to schizophrenia: Beckett remained “uncommitted regarding the psychoanalytic theory and making no attempt to dramatize the dubious psychoanalytic version of psychosis”.³⁰⁰ Thus, Mr Endon’s symptoms as an extreme neurotic do not accord with the use of the term ‘psychotic’.

Amongst the topics under Beckett’s consideration in his reading on psychology and psychoanalysis was that of non-conscious experience. This formed a key and guiding principle in determining the material he chose to extract from the synoptic texts consulted. The work of Ernest Jones was a particular point of focus. The ‘Psychology Notes’ demonstrate that three chapters of Jones’ *Papers on Psycho-analysis* were of particular import. The titles here all point to an interest in the unconscious: ‘The Repression Theory in its Relation to Memory’, ‘The Unconscious and its Significance for Psychopathology’ and ‘The Theory of Symbolism’. From these chapters, Beckett gravitated towards specific topics, as Feldman explains: these included “repressed memories, dreams, psychoanalytic symbols” and “preconscious thoughts”.³⁰¹

As noted above, the suffering of the neurotic, unlike that of the psychotic, is predicated upon a friction between the ego and the id – or, in Freud’s topographical model, the

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁹⁸ Sigmund Freud, “Neurosis and Psychosis”, in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 19, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 19:149.

²⁹⁹ Ackerley and Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, 402.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 468

³⁰¹ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 108.

unconscious and preconscious versus the conscious mind – so that “unacceptable memories, phantasies, wishes, thoughts, ideas and painful events are pushed back by repression along with their associated emotions”.³⁰² The following extract from the ‘Psychology Notes’ evidences Beckett’s close attention to this concept, and in particular the network of associations Jones points to between the unconscious and the instinctual aspect of personality:

The unconscious is essentially a function of repressing & consisting of mental material incompatible with the conscious personality. This is its 1st characteristic, 2nd being the independent and typically conative nature of its process. The 3rd its close relation to crude & primitive instincts. The 4th its infantile nature and origin. The splitting up of mentality takes place in 1st year of life, as a result of the conflict between congenital amoral and primordial endowments on the one hand & on the other the inhabiting social forces (some inborn but mostly acquired). The primordial impulses are repressed & their energy diverted to social aims, but they continue to exist underground & to manifest themselves circuitously and symbolically.
(TCD MS 10971/8/9)³⁰³

This concretely links the “crude & primitive” components of the personality with their relegation to the unconscious, cast not as separate and distinct from consciousness, but prone to erupt and “manifest” inadvertently. Later in Beckett’s notes we find an explanation for this instinctual aspect of the personality, by way of a description of the id which appears underlined under the section titled ‘Psychoanalysis and Related Schools’:

Lining of psyche which has no direct contact with environment. The Ego is conscious in so far as it is in contact with environment, unconscious in so far as it is merged in the Id. “The Ego tries to mediate between the world & the Id, to make the Id comply with the world’s demands, and, by means of muscular activity, to accommodate the world to the Id’s desires.”³⁰⁴

³⁰² Anthony Bateman and Jeremy Holmes, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis: Contemporary Theory and Practice* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 35.

³⁰³ Feldman, *Beckett’s Books*, 98.

³⁰⁴ Samuel Beckett, The ‘Psychology Notes’, TCD MS 10971/7, TCD MS 10971/8. Trinity College Dublin.

To understand the relevance of these ideas from the 'Psychology Notes' for our understanding of Mr Endon's voice, a comparison between Mr Endon's unobtrusive voice and those found elsewhere in the early fiction is required: the distinct differences are important, despite the similar use of music in relation to the characterisation of mental states. As Chapter Six demonstrates, music in the later novel *Watt* evolves out of disruptive introjects that offer abrupt comment on the protagonist's predicament; such is the threnody that 'detains' Watt on his way to the station, emanating from the little patter of voices he experiences on the tram to the house of Mr Knott.³⁰⁵ In this retrospective context, the musical description of Endon's voice as a "melodious continuo" is strikingly different, despite the – in itself striking – common proximity of interior voices and musical interjections in Beckett's early fiction.

With Beckett's understanding of the psychoanalytic processes in mind, the disruptive interjections from the bass voice in Beckett's work are not only a distillation of Schopenhauer's musical hierarchy but a refraction of the Freudian interaction between the conscious and its censored unconscious material. The bass part of the Threne, with its particularly "crude" characterisation – "Hem!", "Christ!", "phew!", "Jesus!"³⁰⁶ – is a case in point. The Threne from *Watt* is indicative of the exclamations that disrupt the protagonist's train of thought and is predominantly neurotic in design. The heard voices themselves are not constitutive of the individual but interfere and interrupt the coherent sense of self, thereby playing on the characterisation of the id as a force that is only partially successfully repressed by the ego and likely to erupt and disturb the subject. In contrast, as a catatonic schizophrenic, Endon eradicates the duality of any such neurotic format of voice interplay. Here, instead, we find a psychotic design in which previously disruptive heard voices, impinging upon the subject's peace, actually become constitutive of the subject's identity. It is possible to observe that the music in *Watt* evolves out of the protagonist's internal voices: "the tiny patter" inside Watt's head.³⁰⁷ As such, the abrupt internal voices and their development into actual music is proportional to Watt's gradual destabilisation: an indication of his gradual descent from neurosis to psychosis. Consequently, music appears to act as a barometer for relative degrees of psychogenic disturbance in both novels but the operation of the music in each is different. Heath Lees, in his essay '*Watt*: Music,

³⁰⁵ Beckett, *Watt*, 28–29.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ Beckett, *Watt*, 201.

Tuning and Tonality', makes a different although related point concerning Watt's response to instances of music. Observing that Watt's recognition of the heard sounds and singing voices diminishes as the novel progresses, Lees maintains that had Watt responded to the aesthetic encounters offered by the music, his spiralling epistemological crisis may have been prevented.³⁰⁸

Thus, the somewhat contradictory characterisation of Mr Endon's inner voice as a melodious continuo, evoking both Schopenhauer's crude bass part at the bottom of the musical hierarchy and the stability of the basso continuo, can be approached anew. What Beckett invokes here is the disruptive and crude voice of the unconscious: the material that disturbs the neurotic, such as the bass voice of the Threne. However, with the bipartite structure lifted, the crude unconscious voice is no longer a burdening presence, since the frictional interaction of the conscious and the unconscious, the duality of the ego and the id, does not apply to the schizophrenic Mr Endon. The crude unconscious (the bass voice) exists untrammelled and free of repression. Mr Endon's exchange implies an association between interiority and the production of a form of insight, so that the musical inner voice that emanates from Mr Endon's deep interior is capable of disclosing knowledge to Murphy. We can now add to this that the musical inner voice is not just a peculiar musical 'present-absence' that, in keeping with Schopenhauerian experience of music, is able to initiate a parallel state in its listener, but also an expression of the uncensored unconscious. Through Endon, music is directly linked to psychic experience and the expression and sharing of that experience. As such, if music is a form of knowledge disclosure derived from within, then that musical knowledge is shaped by psychic experience.

"The Guffaw of the Abderite"³⁰⁹: The Melancholy Character of Democritus and Mr Endon's Inner Voice

I have argued that Mr Endon's musical inner voice functions as a means of knowledge disclosure for Murphy. Moreover, this 'musical knowledge', emanating from 'within' is, as shown above, closely linked to his unusual psychic status. This interaction between Mr

³⁰⁸ Heath Lees, "Watt: Music, Tuning and Tonality", *Journal of Beckett Studies* no. 9, (1984): 6.

³⁰⁹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 154.

Endon's mental constitution, Murphy's moment of "trueborn" knowledge and the musical status of his voice begins to suggest a relationship between music, knowledge and psychic interiority. It is possible to understand the specificity of the recourse to psychology by examining another strand of Beckett's engagement with Democritus.

As has been discussed, Beckett systematically developed a familiarity with the ideas of Democritus when compiling his notes on Presocratic thought for the 'Philosophy Notes'. Consequently, the "dark" of Murphy's mind and Mr Endon's interior chasm are on one level a refraction of both Schopenhauerian Will-lessness and the Presocratic Atomist void – most specifically Democritus' interior site of "trueborn" knowledge. In what follows I explore Beckett's engagement with Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which Beckett consulted frequently throughout the 1930s. More specifically, the discussion examines how an emphasis on the *character* of Democritus brings melancholia into focus in relation to the interiority manifested in the character of Mr Endon. The remainder of this chapter therefore investigates the associative network established between music, melancholia and knowledge.

The Anatomy of Melancholy and 'Democritus Junior': An Introduction

As Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle have observed in *Samuel Beckett's Library*, Beckett was in possession of the three-volume edition of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited by A. R. Shilleto and published in 1893. This encyclopaedic text approaches melancholia from medical and philosophical perspectives, considering its causes and potential cures. The multi-volume work appears to have appealed the most to Beckett's "grafting technique", since it is from this that the author lifted over 720 phrases and quotations in English and Latin for his 'Dream Notebook'. However, it is not these 'note-snatchings' that apply to *Murphy*, but those taken from the 'Whoroscope Notebook' some eight years later, in the late 1930s, when Beckett returned to *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in order to consult the preface. As Nixon and Hulle note, "Whereas the earlier notes derive from all three parts ('Partitions') of the book, the notes in the 'Whoroscope' Notebook largely derive from the introductory section, 'Democritus to the Reader' and the first partition ending with page 323 of the latter".³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle, *Samuel Beckett's Library* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 119.

In the preface to the compendium, Burton assumes the persona of Democritus' heir, under the pseudonym 'Democritus Junior'. As Burton specifies in the introduction, the *Anatomy* was begun in order to stave off his own melancholia and as a means of fathoming the root of the condition. Thus, as Mary Ann Lund writes, "The work's genesis was a form of self-therapy for the author and is a product of his melancholy in a more symptomatic sense: 'one must need scratch where it itcheth'".³¹¹ It was also Burton's contention that the grand form of the work, an accretion of the melancholic temper, would have curative effects for the melancholic reader.³¹²

As explained below, through the design of the preface and his choice of Democritus Junior as alter ego, Burton foregrounds a specific variety of melancholic temperament which had resonance for Beckett. Accordingly, Burton, as Democritus Junior, moves erratically between an encyclopaedic range of authorities on melancholia but without concern for the reconciling of the numerous interpretations advanced. As Ruth A. Fox writes, the *Anatomy* "unites in the space of a single book his [Burton's] extensive reading in classical authors, Church Fathers, medical authorities, Scripture, ancient and all the other kinds of fictional, scientific, historical, philosophical and theological writers who filled the library and the mind of a solitary Oxford Scholar".³¹³ This confused eclecticism, or what A. D. Nuttall has referred to as "a syncretism that won't syncretise",³¹⁴ is also reduplicated in the tone of the work, a feature which Lund is keen to note: "in his persona as Democritian Melancholic, Burton often exhibits his symptoms by oscillating between moods of aggression and submission, mocking laughter and anxious sorrow".³¹⁵ Indeed, Burton-as-Democritus not only creates these shifts in topic and affect in the text, but in an overtly self-reflexive manner draws the reader's attention to the text's own haphazard wanderings. As Jennifer Radden observes, "In a further description of his own style, he also notes 'other faults' of 'Barbarism, extemporaneous style, tautologies, apish imitation, a rhapsody of rages gathered together from several dung hills, excrements of other authors, toys and fopperies

³¹¹ Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University press, 2010), 4.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

³¹³ Ruth A. Fox, *The Tangled Chain: The Structure of Disorder in The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 8.

³¹⁴ A. D. Nuttall, "Review of *The Anatomy of Melancholy: Vol 1*", in *London Review of Books*, 23 November 1989 (XI:22), 18–19.

³¹⁵ Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England*, 7.

confusedly tumbled out. Without art, invention, judgement, wit, learning, harsh, raw, rude, phantastical, absurd, insolent, indiscreet, ill composed, indigested, vain, scurrile, idle, dull and dry”.³¹⁶

These moments of authorial self-consciousness in the preface serve to promote the archaic form of the subsequent Partitions, which feeds into Burton’s interpretation of the melancholic temperament driving this design. Thus, Democritus is invoked in the preface on the basis that he satisfied the inquisitive, searching propensity that Burton associated with the intellectual melancholy that drove the work into existence. This character association may easily have gone unnoticed by Beckett when he returned to consult the preface of the *Anatomy* in the late 1930s, when compiling the ‘Whoroscope Notebook’, had it not been for Burton’s detailed explanation of his choice of alter ego within the body of the text.

Hippocrates’ ‘Epistle to Damagetus’ and Democritus’ Melancholic Search for Knowledge

As Lund observes, Burton consulted numerous classical sources for the character of Democritus, but the most significant among them was the ‘Epistle to Damagetus’ by the Ancient Greek physician Hippocrates.³¹⁷ This letter tells of how Hippocrates was sent by the people of Abdera to treat Democritus, who, on account of his hysterical laughter, was believed to have gone mad. The scenario relayed in Hippocrates’ letter is paraphrased almost exactly by Burton (as Democritus Junior). According to Burton’s version of events, Hippocrates found Democritus in a field surrounded by animal carcasses, performing dissections in order to “finde out the seat of this *atra bilis* or Melancholy, whence it proceeds, and how it was engendered in men’s bodies, to the intent he might better cure it in himselfe, by his writings and observations, teach others how to prevent & avoid it”.³¹⁸ Democritus told Hippocrates that his laughter was brought about by contemplating the absurdity of people’s woes. Hippocrates concluded that Democritus was not mad but rather a wise melancholic who, through his musings, had glimpsed the truth of human sorrow.

³¹⁶ Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130.

³¹⁷ Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England*, 153.

³¹⁸ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2001), 20.

In Burton's text, the details of Hippocrates' story are manipulated in numerous ways to foreground his own view of the 'laughing philosopher'. In the original, Democritus is searching for the seat of madness – referred to as melancholia by Burton – and as P. H. Holland has observed, Burton "interpolates" the notion that Democritus aims to cure the disease in himself, not just others.³¹⁹ As such, Lund contends that in the preface to the *Anatomy* Burton foregrounds a more overtly melancholic Democritus than the "laughing philosopher commonly evoked in seventeenth-century art practices".³²⁰

How does Burton's rendering of Democritus in the *Anatomy* extend to the Democritean void, subsequently employed by Beckett to characterise Murphy's engagements with Mr Endon? As specified earlier, prior to seeing himself "unseen" in the inmates' eyes, Murphy initiates a game of chess with Endon. He does so with the intention of garnering a response that acknowledges Murphy as an object of which Endon is aware. Instead, Murphy finds a "positive peace that comes when the somethings give way or perhaps simply add up to the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real".³²¹ Consequently, when the narrator refers to the guffaw he alludes to the maxim "nothing is more real than nothing", where the "Abderite" is Democritus himself.

As such, when Beckett uses "the guffaw of the Abderite" (the laughter of Democritus) to refer to the impact that Mr Endon creates, he is drawing on a network of associations that arise in the scene from the epistle. Occasionally, as in this instance, the connections between these interwoven ideas form covert, multilayered reference points which cohere beneath the surface of the writing. In Hippocrates' story, Democritus' melancholic search inwards, by means of his relentless anatomising process, produces profound understanding, as acknowledged by Hippocrates. This new knowledge from within initiates the simultaneity of the seemingly contradictory affects of melancholia and laughter. Earlier in the chapter, through engagement with the Atomist theory of Democritus, it was possible to see that 'trueborn' knowledge arises from within the self. The story from the epistle adds the notion that the retreat inwards is facilitated by melancholic interiority, and that the insight arising from it is specifically melancholic in character.

³¹⁹ P. H. Holland, 'Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and Meinippean Satire, Humanist and English', unpublished PhD thesis (University College London, 1979), 187 and 190.

³²⁰ Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion in Early Modern England*, 154.

³²¹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 154.

Fundamentally, then, in examining the character of Mr Endon, one specific conception of music arises in *Murphy*: a music associated with interiority. This idea of musical disclosure is situated at the top of a symbolic hierarchy, due to its ability to impart knowledge.

Through the web of underlying associations, this interiority is closely allied with the psychic life, and in particular a melancholic constitution. The musical inner language of Mr Endon is thus associated with the heightened sensibility of the melancholic: music becomes the basis of an interior language that can offer true insight. As such, through the musical characterisation of Mr Endon, Beckett allegorises his own intellectual or inspired melancholy (as explored in the introduction to this thesis) where music, as a form of knowledge or revelatory language, is promoted as the preserve of the melancholic's depth focused vision.

Faux Musicality: The Second Model of Music in *Murphy*

While Mr Endon's highly unusual musical discourse provides Murphy with his moment of trueborn knowledge, throughout the novel communicative language is frequently situated as a banal intrusion upon a potentially more enlightening solitary interiority. The apparatus of the exterior world is for Murphy a hindrance that impinges upon his retreat into the dark-zone of his mind: "these were sights and sounds that he did not like. They detained him in the world to which they belonged, but not he, as he fondly hoped".³²² Language, in particular, is specifically associated with adherence to life outside the inner sanctum of his mind and is therefore considered unnecessary, absurd and strenuous. Murphy's horoscope advises him to "avoid exhaustion by speech",³²³ since his "fourth highest attribute is silence",³²⁴ and when he duels verbally with Celia, the particularly taxing role that this talking places on him is emphasised: "'I have heard bilge', she said, and did not bother to finish. 'Hear a little more', said Murphy, 'and then I expire'".³²⁵ The reader is given the impression that Murphy remains undisturbed by his lack of ability to comprehend language: "'Not the slightest idea', he murmured, 'of what her words mean. No more

³²² Beckett, *Murphy*, 6.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 23.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

insight into their implications than a parrot into its profanities”³²⁶ Moreover, his own language is indecipherable to others:

She felt so often with Murphy, spattered with words that went dead as soon as they sounded; each word obliterated, before it had time to make sense, by the word that came next; so that in the end she did not know what had been said. It was like difficult music heard for the first time.³²⁷

Constrained Performances: Celia as a Musical Note

Clearly, the attempts at communication that Murphy despises are closely associated with his partner, Celia. Celia hopes to encourage Murphy’s prospects in the exterior world, but Murphy is adamant about retreating from society, which he associates with his lover: “he slipped away, from the pensums and prizes, from Celia, chandlers, public highways, etc., from Celia, buses, public gardens, etc., to where there were no pensums and no prizes but only Murphy himself, improved out of all knowledge”³²⁸ Importantly, throughout the novel, Celia, whose name references the patron saint of music, is given a decidedly musical characterisation – as though, I will go on to argue, she were a musical note. When she threatens to leave Murphy, the move is framed in musical terms – “‘I won’t come back’, she said. ‘I won’t open your letters. I’ll move my pitch’”³²⁹

As such, language, as a stipulation of the exterior world that Celia inhabits, and which impinges upon Murphy’s solipsism, becomes associated with the materiality of musical performance. When Murphy communicates with Celia, the reader experiences his reluctant formulating of how to respond to her:

He thought it wiser not to capitulate until it was certain that she would not. In the meantime what about a small outburst. It could do no harm, it might do good. He did not feel really up to it, he knew long before the end he would wish he had not begun. But it was perhaps better than lying there silent, watching her lick her lips and waiting.³³⁰

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

³²⁹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 25.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

Indeed, throughout the novel there are several instances where one character behaves to another in a mannered way, in order to detain them. These contrived performances are often given a decidedly musical framing. For instance, the narrator informs us that in speaking persuasively to Celia, Murphy “assumed a tone adopted by exhibitionists for their last word on earth”,³³¹ with “the voice rising here to a note that did him credit”.³³² Later in the novel, Murphy encounters Mr Ticklepenny, a “pot poet”³³³ turned alcoholic, employed at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat to feed the patients, who has had to hang up his lyre and turn to sobriety. Murphy recognises Ticklepenny from Dublin and is reluctant to engage with him, but, as Murphy is about to leave, he finds himself trapped under the table by Ticklepenny. In a turn of phrase that imitates the description of Murphy’s ‘performance’ to Celia, we are told that Ticklepenny “worked up to such a pitch his gambadoes [exaggerated dance moves] under the table that Murphy’s memory began to vibrate”.³³⁴ Curiously, this idea appears again, when Miss Counihan attempts to explain to Wylie, Neary and Cooper why it is that she finds Murphy’s Cartesian philosophy compelling: “Miss Counihan seized her opportunity, at just such intensity, pitch, quality and speed as could conveniently be worked up in the few words at her disposal”.³³⁵ As we can see, this little turn of phrase, “working up to pitch”, seems to accompany different characters’ attempts to detain each other via verbal and rhetorical means. Language, as such, functions as an expression of desire or Willing, characterised by this pun on musical pitch. However, another significant musical reference within the novel can help to elucidate this.

Language Appropriating Music

When Murphy enters service at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat, he finds a strange type of solace and comfort amidst the mentally unstable, but his mind begins to wander back to his relationship with Celia. The narrator informs us that “after many fruitless hours in the chair, it would be just about the time Celia was telling her story, M.M.M. stood suddenly for music, Music, MUSIC, in brilliant, brevier and canon”.³³⁶ The gradated text here seems to

³³¹ Beckett, *Murphy*, 27.

³³² *Ibid.*, 25.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

be imitating something like a musical crescendo; Beckett is suggesting that the words have a dimension beyond their semantic content.

Earlier in the novel, Murphy and Celia's sexual relations are described in musical terms, as "serenade, nocturne and albada" (referencing morning, afternoon and evening songs).³³⁷ The suggestion appears to be that music in the novel is coupled with the physical and sensual dimension of Murphy's divided self. However, in this instance, the long hours spent with Celia after the unfruitful ventures in his chair to numb his body are recast as "stories".³³⁸ Again, Beckett is clearly evoking the couple's sexual relations. However, it seems somewhat odd that although Murphy directly links his relations with Celia to music, they are here demoted from their condition as song to "story". Some investigation into the peculiar "brilliant, brevier and canon" and a further narratorial interjection can help clarify this matter.

As Chris Ackerley has observed, the terms "brilliant, brevier and canon" derive from the art of typesetting. They refer to different sized and shaped typefaces and are reflected in the setting of the words "music, Music, MUSIC".³³⁹ Here, then, Beckett produces a kind of strained textuality that results from trying to force words into the presentation mode of music. By appropriating music into language in this way, he creates what we might consider to be a form of frugal musicality – an impoverished version of music – where the impact and effect of music is evoked but also constrained by its textual representation. The notion that Beckett should consider this whole endeavour to be contrived and somewhat futile is further endorsed by the comment, "or some such typographical scream".³⁴⁰ Indeed,

³³⁷ Beckett, *Murphy*, 74. The serenade, nocturne and albada are all songs that are performed to loved ones at specific, different times of day.

A serenade is a song traditionally performed in the evening: see H. Unverricht and C. Eisen, 'Serenade', *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000025454>.

A nocturne is a song performed at night time: see Brown, J. E. Maurice and Kenneth L. Hamilton, 'Nocturne (i)', *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000020012>.

An albada is performed at the break of dawn: see M. Gómez, 'Alborada', *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000000466>.

³³⁸ Beckett, *Murphy*, 147.

³³⁹ Chris Ackerley, *Demented Particulars*, 184.

³⁴⁰ Beckett, *Murphy*, 147.

the materiality of the construct is underscored with the phrase “if the gentle compositor would be so friendly”:³⁴¹ here, the narrator addresses the typesetter of the novel, thereby highlighting its reluctant containment within the realm of language.

With this idea in mind, Murphy’s sexual relations with Celia and the physical pole of the Cartesian conundrum are not so much linked with music in the novel, but rather produce a type of constrained faux-musicality that stems from the working of the body and the rhetoric of language, both driven by the desiring and Willing faculties. This perhaps explains why each of the characters’ verbal performances, executed in order to detain an object of desire, is described as a “working up to pitch”,³⁴² never attaining the condition of music as such, but, to adopt Pater’s words, shown to be aspiring towards it.³⁴³ Chapters One and Two established that the musical construct of a chord becomes associated with a desire that constrains knowledge. This is, then, extended into a kind of faux-musicalised language – one that is, again, associated with desire, which drives language and communication in the exterior world. Running parallel to this, as the earlier part of this chapter has demonstrated, the association of melody with the journey of the intellectually enlightened will is extended into a notion of musical knowledge that emanates from a melancholic interior site.

Conclusion: The Duality of Music in *Murphy*

Overall, by engaging with the Democritean thought underpinning Murphy’s relationship with Mr Endon, an alternative interpretation of the novel arises, which sees Murphy experiencing a form of insight in response to Mr Endon. This is of significance to the investigation of the musical dimension of *Murphy*, since it appears that Mr Endon’s musical inner voice is responsible for the revelation that an inner retreat is viable. In turn, this Democritean emphasis promotes the significance of a specific form of musical disclosure that facilitates the interiority at the centre of the novel. Schopenhauer’s model of aesthetic experience, well known to Beckett and clearly drawn on here, provides a way to understand how Mr Endon’s inner voice is able to produce such a reaction from Murphy. The Schopenhauerian quality of the exchange confirms that it is specifically the aesthetic

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Beckett, *Murphy*, 25, 27 and 55.

³⁴³ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 86.

dimension of the encounter between Murphy and Mr Endon that is responsible for Murphy's revelation. As such, building upon the hypothesis established in Chapters One and Two, it becomes clear that music in the novel is linked directly to Beckett's preoccupation with the production and status of a form of insight, through an emphasis on the thought of Democritus. Beckett's notes on unconscious reality, preserved in the 'Psychology Notes', provide the Freudian subtext to the description of Mr Endon's inner voice. Through consideration of these notes, in combination with key tenets of Schopenhauerian thought on music's representational capacity, it is possible to see how Mr Endon's musical inner voice, able to impart knowledge, emanates from his unusual psychic constitution. As such, a link is established between musical knowledge and mental reality in the novel.

Beckett's reading of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* provides a second use of Democritus in relation to the characterisation of Mr Endon's musical inner voice. Burton establishes a series of connections between Democritus' superior knowledge, his inner retreat through the anatomising process and the melancholia from which he suffers. As such, when Beckett uses "the guffaw of the Abderite" to refer to Mr Endon's musical inner voice, he does so in order to reference this associative network.

Finally, from the consideration of several music references linked with the character Celia, a second interpretation of music in the novel arises which counterpoints the first. As such, we find two ideas of music extending through *Murphy*, both linked with the conditions of language, knowledge and desire. The first is a musical language associated with psychic life and the melancholic constitution, able to impart knowledge that emanates from within. The second idea of music engages the notion of a constrained, faux musicality or musical performance, associated with language of the exterior world that is driven by the desiring and Willing instincts.

Conclusion to Part One

Part one of this thesis has dealt with music's significance in the novel *Murphy* by investigating how music is integral to understanding how certain scenes within the novel function. It has identified that music is used to animate the dualistic conditions of insight and desire that characterise the novel, and that musical insight is derived from and

associated with Democritean melancholic interiority. As such, it has demonstrated how music, knowledge and melancholia become intertwined throughout the novel through an emphasis on the character and thought of Democritus. Chapters One and Two began by investigating the musical subtext of the attunement scene, bringing to light, through a close reading of Neary's gestures, Beckett's engagement with Pythagorean music theory and his use of its historical interpretation to animate the warring conditions of desire and enlightenment that underpin the Schopenhauerian context of the scene. As such, specific musical constructs and conceptions of elements of music theory become associated with varying junctures in the journey towards the intellectual enlightenment of the Will; chords are associated with a desire that obstructs intellectual enlightenment, whereas the winding digressions of melody become associated with the journey towards intellectual enlightenment. In doing so, Beckett pitches and plays off opposing notions of 'attunement' against one another, his musical marginalia depicting disrupted and inverted V-I cadences evidencing a wry critique of the paradigmatic notion of attunement captured in Schopenhauer's analogy of the winding melody returning to the home key to dramatise the 'heroic' journey of the Will.

Chapter Three supports the identification of a relationship between a form of insight and music established in Chapters One and Two by demonstrating that it is Mr Endon's musical inner voice that is responsible for Murphy's Democritean moment of trueborn knowledge at the end of the novel. Schopenhauer's model of aesthetic experience allows us to appreciate how it is the specifically musical quality of Mr Endon's voice that is responsible for Murphy's revelation. The Freudian subtext of the description of Mr Endon's inner voice demonstrates that his musical inner voice, which is able to impart knowledge, is a refraction of his psychic constitution; as such a link is established between musical knowledge and mental reality. This link is confirmed by Beckett's inference of Democritus Junior, the avatar of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, when he refers to Mr Endon's inner music as "the guffaw of the Abderite", which refers to the story of Democritus told in the epistle, where his superior knowledge as a philosopher is linked to his process of anatomising animal carcasses in search of the cause of melancholia. Consequently, it has been argued that when Beckett uses "the guffaw of the Abderite" to refer to Mr Endon's voice he is suggesting that the musical voice is associated with knowledge and emanates from a melancholic interior site fashioned by the melancholic's retreat inwards. Consequently, it is through the emphasis on the character and thought of Democritus that

a notion of musical language associated with melancholic interiority arises. Through recourse to Beckett's first novel, it has been argued that we can view this musicalisation of Mr Endon as an extension of Beckett's own musical allegorisation of intellectual or inspired melancholy, which he first establishes in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*.

PART TWO: MOOD, MUSIC AND ATTUNEMENT IN *WATT*

Chapter Four – The Theoretical Backdrop to Music in *Watt*: The Metaphorical Origins and Resonances of ‘Stimmung’

Introduction

Part One of this thesis investigated the philosophical exploration of tuning in *Murphy*, drawing upon Beckett’s technical understanding of the process and his knowledge of tuning analogies in Pythagorean and Schopenhauerian thought, as evidenced by his notebooks and early reading. There, different notions of attunement embedded in musico-philosophical discourse were used to articulate the idiosyncratic approaches to knowledge, desire and journeying that characterise the novel. Part Two is an examination of the ways in which Martin Heidegger’s concept of ‘Stimmung’ can shed light on Beckett’s preoccupation with musical attunement. It explores the relationship between the contingency that underpins the experience of modernity and the context in which the novel was written. In doing so, we see Beckett’s interest in and depiction of ‘mood’ shift from a focus upon individual subjectivity and solipsism towards a form of intersubjectivity that transcends the subject/object distinction.

This chapter begins by discussing the historical trajectory of the term ‘Stimmung’, focusing specifically on its evolving musical dimension. From this, it is possible to unfold a relationship between the idea of Stimmung, notions of tuning and harmony and the tradition of intellectual melancholia; a nexus that informs the subsequent understanding of the role of music in *Watt*. Following a short introduction to the context in which the novel was written, the modern reconceptualization of Stimmung by Martin Heidegger assumes the focus, positioned within the domain of existentialist philosophy and in relation to the discourse on Beckett and Heideggerian thought. Lastly, the chapter explores how ‘Stimmung’ has been conceptualised in key studies in literature. As such, the chapter provides a framework for reading Stimmung in *Watt* in the following chapters.

Exploring ‘Stimmung’: Semantics and Conceptual History

The applicability of *Stimmung* to an investigation of Beckett's preoccupation with the notion of attunement can be grasped by exploring the semantic peculiarity of the German term; its particular "significations and shades of meaning",³⁴⁴ which are evidenced by its untranslatability. In English, *Stimmung* is often translated as 'mood', which can refer to an individual's psychology or that of a group or collective. *Stimmung* is also frequently interpreted as 'climate' or 'atmosphere',³⁴⁵ which pertains to a sense of situatedness or positionality, characterised by what we might describe as a type of affective resonance. Finally, and most importantly for this study, *Stimmung* evokes musical tuning through its connection with the noun 'Stimme', meaning 'voice', and 'Stimmen', meaning 'to tune' or 'to be correct'. As Erik Wallrup observes, if the shortest etymological root 'stimm' is taken into consideration, the breadth of related meanings is even greater: 'part' (Stimme), 'dispose' (Stimmen), 'correspond' (übereinstimmen), 'agree' (einstimmen), 'dejection' (verstimmung).³⁴⁶

David E. Wellbery's comprehensive history of the term, first published in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Historisches Wörterbuch in Sieben Bänden (2000–5)* [*Historical Dictionary of Basic Concepts of Aesthetics*], tracks the semantic evolution of *Stimmung*.³⁴⁷ Since its publication, there has been a resurgence of interest in the concept from the perspective of literary theory; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's *Stimmungen lesen: Über eine verdeckte Wirklichkeit der Literatur* (2011) [*Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*] and Birgit Breidenbach's *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood: Stimmung and Modernity*³⁴⁸ both attempt to grapple with the aesthetic category of mood, with Breidenbach doing so in relation to modernist literature, specifically. In providing a theoretical exploration of *Stimmung*, both studies draw upon and advance Wellbery's already comprehensive contribution to the lexicon. Following Wellbery, Darío González has traced the development of the term within the domain of aesthetics.³⁴⁹ Noticing the absence of a conceptual foundation of *Stimmung* in music, the musicologist Eric Wallrup

³⁴⁴ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 3.

³⁴⁵ For more on affective atmospheres see Friedlind Riedel, "Atmosphere", in *Affective Societies: Key Concepts*, ed. Jan Slaby and Christian Von Scheve (New York: Routledge, 2019).

³⁴⁶ Erik Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned: The Act of Listening to Music* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 15.

³⁴⁷ David E. Wellbery, "Stimmung", trans. by Rebecca Pohl, *New Formations*, 93 (2018), 6–45.

<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁴⁸ Birgit Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood: Stimmung and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

³⁴⁹ Darío González, "Mood/Attunement", in *German Aesthetics: Fundamental Concepts from Baumgarten to Adorno*, ed. J. D. Mininger and Jason Michael Peck (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

meticulously tracks its development as a musical concept from the 1770s through to the early twentieth century, before applying Heidegger's concept of *Stimmung* to the act of musical listening with the intention of establishing a new perspective on the affective capacity of music.³⁵⁰ In order to map out the aspects of the aesthetic trajectory of *Stimmung* relevant to the role of music in *Watt*, the following discussion outlines several key moments in its semantic history as outlined by Wellbery, Gumbrecht, Breidenbach, González and Wallrup, paying particular attention to the morphology of the *musical* dimension of *Stimmung*.

Reviewing the lexical significance of the term in the eighteenth century, Wellbery begins by drawing attention to *Stimmung*'s purely musical manifestation. In Johan Christoph Adelung's *Wörterbuch* (1774–1786) the word occurs as a 'nominalisation' for 'Stimmen' and means "giving the instrument, or its constituent parts, the relative height and depth of pitch".³⁵¹ However, since the end of the seventeenth century the noun *Stimmen* has referred not only to the *process* of tuning but to the specific condition of being tuned:³⁵² this is evidenced in instrumental music manuals of the period, such as Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's 1753 treatise on piano playing.³⁵³

This musical dimension of *Stimmung*, which pertains to the adjustment of musical parts, helps to animate the second sense of the term listed above: *Stimmung* as 'climate' or 'atmosphere', which implies a specific type of affective relationality. As Chapter One discussed, musical tuning aims to impart a sense of coherence to disparate elements by stipulating adherence to an accepted norm. Through the process of musical tuning, the individual parts of an instrument (such as the strings) are manipulated so that an instrument's notes are rendered interdependent, tuned to pitches that will produce the most effective overtone resonances for the particular harmonic system, while retaining their individuality. Likewise, in an ensemble, individually tuned instruments are then tuned to each other, again so as to produce the required harmonic resonances. As Breidenbach explains: "Through the process of musical attunement, difference is thus not erased but

³⁵⁰ Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2015).

³⁵¹ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', 6–45. <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

See Johann Christoph Adelung, 'Stimmen', in *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Vol. IV, Leipzig Breitkopf, 1801, 383.

³⁵² Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁵³ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans and ed. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949).

integrated into a condition of mutual interdependence whereby different elements are brought into a relationship marked by a pre-configured, normative sense of consonance and harmony".³⁵⁴ As such, the musical dimension of *Stimmung*, denoting not only musical attunement but *harmony*, helps us to grasp the keen sense of relationality that underpins the concept of *Stimmung*.

Taking a different focus to Welberry, the Austrian philologist Leo Spitzer, writing at the end of World War Two in *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word 'Stimmung'*,³⁵⁵ conducts a survey of the prehistory of the word, thereby tracking the semantic precedents of *Stimmung* up to the Renaissance period, where he detects a decline in the resonance of the concept due to gradual dechristianisation. As such, the Pythagorean idea of 'world harmony', Spitzer argues, was pursued as an aesthetic and philosophical ideal and transformed in Christian theology under the writings of St Augustine.³⁵⁶ Here, attunement is envisioned as the mind's capacity to integrate different 'tones' that constitute the world. As Breidenbach explains, in the transition from classical to Christian thought *Stimmung* is developed from an "all-encompassing transcendent harmony to an inner-worldly, phenomenologically significant form of attunement".³⁵⁷

In a similar vein, Wellbery discusses *Stimmung*'s historical transition from the domain of music to that of aesthetics, which occurred by way of a metaphorical transference. Quoting a translation of Vitruvius, Wellbery notes that *Stimmung* was employed as a musical metaphor as early as 1547:³⁵⁸ "just as the lute/ or any other instrument/ may by tuned higher or lower/ so that it maintain/ the concert of *Stimmung* and sweetness/ so real true symmetry/ can be found/ in equal harmony/ in small and large bodies."³⁵⁹ As Dario Gonzalez explains, Vitruvius uses the term "Concert der *Stimmung*", drawing on *Mässathetik* – the aesthetics of measurements and proportions – thereby demonstrating

³⁵⁴ Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 15.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵⁶ Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word 'Stimmung'*, ed. A. Granville Hatcher (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1963), 19–33.

³⁵⁷ Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 17.

³⁵⁸ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the broad applicability of the concept to different empirical fields, and in particular to the practice of synaesthesia.³⁶⁰

Towards the end of the seventeenth century there was a more systematic development of the metaphorical dimension of Stimmung, where the terms of musical practice were used to semantically organise indicators of aesthetic experience.³⁶¹ Here, as Wellbery explains, Stimmung referred variously to three possible states: first, the process of tuning [Stimmen]; second, the result of this process (being tuned); and third, the instrument's readiness to play. As Wellbery writes, "All three moments, preparation, internal structure of relationality and disposition, are actualised in aesthetic discourse".³⁶²

Following on from this, Stimmung was used throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the domain of aesthetics as a metaphor derived from the musical term. Indeed, Stimmung finds its strongest aesthetic use in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, where the philosopher uses the tuning of the parts of a musical instrument as a metaphorical frame of reference. Here, Stimmung pertains to the proportional agreement or "free play" between different faculties of the mind, namely the balance between rational judgement (intellect) and emotional sensibility (imagination) when combined in judgements of taste.³⁶³ As Wellbery is keen to point out, Kant's interpretation of attunement, like the musical tuning of an instrument, is still purely objective and does not imply subjectivism.³⁶⁴ Similarly, for Schiller, Stimmung was constituted by the intersection of feeling and reason, mapped onto the poles of subjectivity and objectivity. This is evidenced by his twentieth letter in *On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*:

To pass from sensation to thought, the soul traverses a medium position, in which sensibility and reason act simultaneously. Sensibility and reason combine to suspend the power that determines them both; that is, their antagonism produces a negation. This medium situation – in which the soul

³⁶⁰ Dario Gonzalez, 'Mood/Attunement', 189.

³⁶¹ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 113.

³⁶⁴ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

is neither morally nor physically constrained, yet is active in two ways – merits being called a state of freedom.³⁶⁵

In C. F. Von Schiller's approach to *Stimmung* we find a gradual shift away from Kant's use of the metaphorical musical designations of the term. Whereas Kant emphasises the balanced relation between the faculties, Schiller instead posits a broader and more diffuse aesthetic state or "disposition" that arises from the negation of feeling and reason to produce a specifically "aesthetic disposition of the mind" [ästhetische Stimmung des Gemüths].³⁶⁶ For Wellbery, this indicates a recognition of its musical origins: "The vehicle – the wellproportioned relation of the strings – is lost from view. All that is left is the third element of the musical sense of the term, namely the aspect of disposition".³⁶⁷ As Gonzalez explains, following Schiller's advocacy of an intermediary disposition:

the "excellence of a work of art" is considered "proportional to the universality of the disposition" that it produces beyond the diversity of material forces operating in the specific media. Therefore, the different arts come to resemble each other more and more in the action which *they exercise on the mind*.³⁶⁸

As Breidenbach observes, in the writings of the German Idealists, including Schlegel, Hegel and Dilthey, *Stimmung* shifts more markedly from the objective pole to become the "innermost form of subjective feeling".³⁶⁹ As will be explored in later chapters, in the 1930s Beckett developed a rich knowledge of German Romantic culture, including literature, philosophy and music. Mark Nixon writes that in this "associative complex" Beckett found "a sombre and tragic quality reflecting, yet also helping to shape, his own worldview".³⁷⁰ As discussed in Part One of this thesis, Beckett's familiarity with German Idealist thought was heavily mediated by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, with which he felt a peculiar affinity. As Wallrup observes, although the concept of *Stimmung* does not feature heavily

³⁶⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans and ed. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 141.

³⁶⁶ Walter Biemel, *Die Bedeutung von Kants Begründung der Ästhetik für die Philosophie der Kunst* (Köln: Kölner Universitäts-Verlag, 1959), 145.

³⁶⁷ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁶⁸ Gonzalez, 'Mood/Attunement', 190–191.

³⁶⁹ Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 15.

³⁷⁰ Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries 1936–1937* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 60.

in Schopenhauer's writing, he reconceptualised notions of mood in terms of the Will, also arguing that music acted directly on the Will and tuned [umstimmt] it in a new way.³⁷¹ Consequently, the wider German Idealist focus on Stimmung foregrounds interior, subjective feeling, which filters through to Schopenhauer's prioritisation of the Will. Importantly, for Schopenhauer, only the melancholy artist is able to perceive the correspondences between their interior, subjective feeling and the manifold objects of the outside world, and this relationship or Stimmung is framed in the language of tuning and harmony, with which Beckett was familiar on a technical and philosophical level.

The "first personal"³⁷² dimension of Stimmung takes greater shape throughout the nineteenth century and directly informs Johann Gottlieb Fichte's aesthetic theory, proposed in *On the Spirit and Letter of Philosophy*.³⁷³ For Fichte, there is a "singular, indivisible fundamental force in man" that "drives self-activity" and which finds expression specifically through aesthetics. To animate his concept of aesthetic Stimmung, Fichte invokes the character of Mignon in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*:

In order to have an adequate image of aesthetic Stimmung, just think – as you can – like the poet – of the lovely night-time singer.... Unbeknownst to herself the singer drives her spirit's direction up and down the scale and over the course of the manifold accords this spirit gradually develops its full capacity. Each new accord ... resonates with the singer's ur-drive, which she is unaware of.

Here, like Kant, Fichte also employs the musical dimension of Stimmung and specifically the notion of harmony. However, the emphasis shifts from an 'accord' of imagination and reason to a sense of consonance conjoining "individual representations (tones) and the 'ur-drive' as innermost source of subjectivity (self-activity)".³⁷⁴ As such, there is a semantic linking of Stimmung with the idea of the unconscious or the most unrepresentable aspect of oneself.³⁷⁵ Fichte's aesthetic theory helps us to approach Beckett's negotiation of affect

³⁷¹ Eric Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, 45.

³⁷² Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁷³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Über Geist und Buchstab der Philosophie' (1794), in Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, vol. VIII, (Berlin: Veit und Comp, 1846), 287.

³⁷⁴ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

in *Watt*, since it shares certain parallels with the reading practices proposed by those literary studies that promote critical readings through the concept of *Stimmung* (discussed later in this chapter).

Fichte's aesthetic theory stipulates that the artist communicates their innermost self through the artistic process, which is subsequently transferred directly to the recipient when they contemplate the work, and Fichte deploys musical imagery to convey this:

So the enthusiastic artist expresses his mind's *Stimmung* in a moveable body, and the movement, the course, the flow of his creations expresses the innermost vibrations of his soul.... Our spirit is the final aim of his art and those creations are the mediators between him and us, just like the air is the mediator between our ear and the strings of an instrument.³⁷⁶

This essence of *Stimmung* as something that is uniquely perceived by an artistic sensibility is captured in Johann Wolfgang Goethe's 'Falconet' essay, where "a formal complex comprised of cross references and corresponding to a subjective correlate within the artist"³⁷⁷ is emphasised:

everywhere he sees these divine vibrations, these scarcely perceptible tones by means of which nature unites all objects into a whole.... The artist does not only feel the effects of this but enters into their causes. The world lies before him ... [and he] also enjoys all the harmonies through which it was made and in which it exists.... And it is this that moves in the soul of the artist, that little by little forces itself into lucid expression, without having passed through the mind.³⁷⁸

This idea of artistic sensibility chimes with Schopenhauer's notion of the melancholy genius, who is also capable of comprehending the nexus of relations between self and world. As Gumbrecht observes, Friedrich Hölderlin advanced a concept of *Stimmung* that responded to Fichte's subjectivised aesthetic theory but thought of mood in much more

³⁷⁶ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Über Geist und Buchstab der Philosophie" (1794), in Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, vol. VIII, (Berlin: Veit und Comp, 1846), 287.

³⁷⁷ Wellbery, 'Stimmung', <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.3898/NEWF:93.02.2017>.

³⁷⁸ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Commentary on Falconet", *Goethe on Art*, London, ed. and trans Press, 1980, 17.

specific terms; for Hölderlin, the term *Stimmung* conjured “ancient sounds” uncovered in the works of the Greek philosophers.³⁷⁹ This link in the network of meanings is of particular relevance, given Beckett’s interest in Hölderlin: we know that he became very interested in Hölderlin in the late 1930s, towards the end of his extended period of acquaintance with German literature. Importantly, in his ‘Notes on German Literature’ Beckett transcribed facts about Hölderlin’s life and details of his insanity from J. G. Robertson’s *History of German Literature*, also specifically noting Hölderlin’s “passion for Greece” and his work’s “melancholy nature”.³⁸⁰ As Mark Nixon observes, Beckett went on to purchase an edition of Hölderlin’s complete works; his personal copy³⁸¹ carries the inscription “24/12/37” and the underlined passages within demonstrate Beckett’s susceptibility to “expressions of nostalgia and melancholy”.³⁸² Beckett’s engagement with Hölderlin is also evidenced in his writing of this period; Hölderlin’s poem ‘Der Spaziergang’ influenced Beckett’s ‘Dieppe’, and Beckett used a fractured version of the closing stanza of the poem ‘Hyperions Schicksalslied’ of 1789, from the second book of *Hyperion*, towards the end of *Watt*.³⁸³

In a similar vein to Hölderlin, Nietzsche theorised *Stimmung* as “memories and intuitions” dating from early civilization.³⁸⁴ Both Hölderlin’s and Nietzsche’s ideas pertain to a type of historical reconstruction, whereby disparate aspects of past times are harmonised and made available in the present.³⁸⁵ This notion gained currency in the modern age, where the idea of harmony was considered inconceivable. As Breidenbach observes, to this end, the nineteenth-century art historian Alois Riegl proposes a kinship between aesthetic *Stimmung* and modernity; he argues that, historically, organised religion satisfied a proclivity for proportion and harmony, and, by a similar token, much modern art attempted to impart a sense of lost wholeness by foregrounding scientific causality and order.³⁸⁶ Consequently, Riegl believed that *Stimmung* could function successfully in the modern age as a type of “nostalgia principle”.³⁸⁷ Here, it is possible to detect a relationship arising between the musical designations of *Stimmung* and the nostalgic facet of melancholia,

³⁷⁹ Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, 8.

³⁸⁰ Nixon, *Beckett’s German Diaries*, 80–81.

³⁸¹ Held at the Beckett Archive at the University of Reading Archives.

³⁸² Nixon, *Beckett’s German Diaries*, 80–81.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, 8.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Alois Riegl, ‘Die Stimmung als Inhalt der modernen Kunst’, *Graphische Künste XXII* (1899), 47–56. Some of the art works Riegl gives as examples are by Max Liebermann and Storm van-Gravesande.

³⁸⁷ Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, 9.

whereby ‘harmony’ pertains to the unification of disparate fragments. As will be shown in the subsequent analysis of *Watt* and its Addenda of literary shards, this idea chimes with the modernist project as manifested in aspects of Beckett’s work. However, assuming an antithetical position to Hölderlin, Nietzsche and Riegl, Spitzer stipulates that harmony in the modern age can no longer be used metaphorically to articulate a sense of unification and mediation and that further investigations into the transformation of *Stimmung* in this period are required. Later in this chapter I discuss the transformation of *Stimmung* in the modernist period, by way of an explanation of Heidegger’s use of the concept.

For Erik Wallrup, Spitzer’s suggestion that *Stimmung* became redundant at the beginning of the Renaissance is particularly problematic given that it seems to ignore Leibniz’s renowned concept of *harmonia*. Beckett developed familiarity with Leibniz through his reading of *The Monadology*, and a brief explanation of Occasionalist thought was provided in Chapter One in relation to his engagement with the philosopher Arnold Geulincx. Beyond this, though, it is important to note that Leibniz, too, made frequent recourse to musical metaphors, such as two choirs singing without knowledge of each other, to elaborate his theory of preestablished harmony and the attunement between monad and the world.³⁸⁸

Tracking the “vicissitudes”³⁸⁹ of the concept and focusing on the aesthetics of music and musical composition specifically, Wallrup argues that it is possible to locate five further “decisive steps” in the post-renaissance history of *Stimmung* as a musical concept.³⁹⁰ Wallrup pays close attention to changes in the degrees of passivity and activity across the developing use of this term, as well as to the implied mode of organisation between the subject and the world. For the purposes of this investigation, it is worth reflecting briefly on those junctures that intersect with Beckett’s aesthetic inclinations, particularly in relation to his investment in Romantic music and visual art, as well as the connections that arise from this vein of influence with the phenomenon of melancholia.

One such juncture is what Wallrup identifies as a third transformation of *Stimmung*: a belated “new sensitivity”³⁹¹ in the Romantic ‘character piece’, exemplified by the lieder of

³⁸⁸ Erik Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, 18.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁹¹ Erik Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, 37.

Franz Schubert. In chronicling Beckett's musical interests, James Knowlson has observed that an intimate familiarity with German lieder was developed from an early date.³⁹² Mark Nixon also notes in passing that many of Beckett's German references originate in texts set to music by Schubert.³⁹³ Indeed, the act of musical listening in Beckett's early stories, such as 'Walking Out', occasionally focuses in on Schubert, while references to winter journeys, following *Winterreise*, are to be found in *Texts For Nothing* 2 and 12, and the radio plays *All That Fall* and *Nacht and Träume* both use excerpts of Schubert's songs.³⁹⁴ Wallrup's discussion of the specifics of Stimmung in this context³⁹⁵ feeds into the discussion of Beckett's musical doodles in *Watt*, in Chapter Five. Likewise, Wallrup makes a subsequent link between Stimmung and the debates about musical autonomy in the writings of Hegel³⁹⁶ and Eduard Hanslick,³⁹⁷ and this sense of the term illuminates Beckett's coupling of music and melancholia with interiority in *Murphy*.

Wallrup identifies a final transformation of musical Stimmung in the psychologising of aesthetic experience at the turn of the nineteenth century, led by Johannes Volkelt³⁹⁸ and Theodor Lipps.³⁹⁹ Integral to this new approach was the theory of empathy [Einfühlungstheorie] of which Stimmung was a constitutive element.⁴⁰⁰ As Gerhard Thonhauser explains, 'Einfühlung' (meaning to feel something *into* something else) "denoted the mental act of projecting oneself into an object and thereby vitalizing or animating it".⁴⁰¹ Wallrup demonstrates that the psychological version of Stimmung promoted a mode of organising the relation between the subject and the world which had repercussions for composition. This version of the term Stimmung is revitalised in titles of collections of works by several composers including Richard Strauss and Antonin Dvorák.

³⁹² James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 98.

³⁹³ Mark Nixon, *Beckett's German Diaries*, 60–61.

³⁹⁴ Further detailed work on Beckett's engagement with Schubert can be found in Catherine Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones: Music in Beckett / Beckett and Music* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2013).

³⁹⁵ Erik Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, 39. Wallrup describes a *spielfigur* as "a reiterated accompaniment figuration used from the first to the last bar which enables the composer to be emotionally penetrating in a new way"; see Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, 35.

³⁹⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, vol. 3, in *Werke*, vol. 15, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1986, 420 (trans. in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. Thomas Malcolm Knox, vol. 3, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988 [1975], 420).

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ Johannes Volkelt, *System der Ästhetik* (München: Beck, 1905).

³⁹⁹ Theodor Lipps, *Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Voss, 1903).

⁴⁰⁰ Gerhard Thonhauser 'Beyond Mood and Atmosphere: A Conceptual History of the Term *Stimmung*', *Philosophia* 49, 1247–1265 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-020-00290-7>.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

The collections in question embrace the idea of ‘Stimmungsbilder’ [mood pictures]; the compositions look back to the Romantic landscape painting of the early nineteenth century, exemplified by the likes of Caspar David Friedrich and Philipp Otto Runge, whose works “disclosed the landscape in a way that made it into a mindscape”.⁴⁰² For Wallrup, the pictorial precedent of Stimmungsbilder is reflected in the creative decision to evoke the atmosphere of an idealised or actual landscape.⁴⁰³

Nixon’s study of Beckett’s German Diaries recounts Beckett’s dismissal of Romantic grandeur and his modest attraction to the “quiet melancholy” of Romantic paintings.⁴⁰⁴ Beckett acknowledged the influence of Friedrich’s *Zwei Männer den Mond Betrachtend* [Two Men Observing the Moon, 1819] on *Waiting for Godot*, writing in reaction to this painting: “Pleasant predilection for 2 tiny languid men in his landscape, as in the little moon landscape, that is the only kind of romantic still tolerable, the *bémolisé* [the minor key]”.⁴⁰⁵ Here, the notion of Stimmung sets up a specific relationship between image and music, one that underpins the discussion in Chapter Five of *Watt*’s linking of musical topoi with visual art.

Wallrup’s generally chronological post-Renaissance history of ‘Stimmung’ brings us firmly into the twentieth century and therefore closer to both the unusual context in which *Watt* was written and the tumultuous period in which Stimmung underwent its most rigorous philosophical reconceptualisation, by the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger. Before approaching Heidegger’s reinterpretation of Stimmung, an introduction to the context in which *Watt* was written is in order.

The Context in which *Watt* was Written

The conditions that gave rise to Beckett’s wartime novel are some of the most familiar in western history, yet the complexities of the various idiosyncratic and often highly divergent societal experiences that were imposed by the German occupation and the Vichy Regime are less fully understood. It is within this context, further explored later in this thesis, that

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁰³ Wallrup, *Being Musically Attuned*, 56.

⁴⁰⁴ Nixon, *Beckett’s German Diaries*, 142.

⁴⁰⁵ German Diaries, 14 February 1937.

the composition of *Watt* is located. To begin, a brief account of the novel's chequered genesis provides an indication of the socio-historical circumstances being approached.

As Carlton Lake's summary of the *Watt* manuscripts details, the first notebook is signed and marked "Watt I", with the following note: "*Watt* was written in France during the war 1940–45 and published in 1953 by the Olympia Press".⁴⁰⁶ On an inserted sheet, Beckett has written, "Begun evening of Tuesday 11/2/41", tying his first compositional efforts to occupied Paris.⁴⁰⁷ The first page of Notebook Two displays the date "3/12/41", four months after Beckett had formally joined the Paris-based Resistance cell 'Gloria SMH' on 1 September 1941.⁴⁰⁸ Chris Ackerley notes that the novel also took shape during Beckett's second transit south, after a shift in location was precipitated by the exposure of the resistance cell by the Catholic priest, Robert Alesch.⁴⁰⁹ Drawing upon the date specified in the third notebook – 5 May 1942 – Knowlson suggests that a small section of the novel was written while Beckett and Suzanne were hiding in Vanves.⁴¹⁰ The dates given in subsequent notebooks indicate that the rest of the novel was written and completed while Beckett was seeking refuge from the Gestapo in the Vaucluse village of Roussillon. As Lake notes, "The cover of the fourth notebook is marked 'Poor Johnny/ Watt / Roussillon',⁴¹¹ with the date 'October 4th, 1943' inscribed on the first page".⁴¹² Beckett finished the sixth notebook with the date "Dec 28th 1944 / End", 7 months after he had chosen to join the resistance in Roussillon in May 1944.⁴¹³ This chronology is reaffirmed by Beckett's comment to his friend George Reavey that *Watt* was composed "first on the run, then of an evening after the clodhopping":⁴¹⁴ this peculiar word choice refers to the physical labour of the farm work that Beckett undertook while in Roussillon.

⁴⁰⁶ Carlton Lake, ed. *No Symbols Where None Intended: A Catalogue of Books, Manuscripts and Other Materials Relating to Samuel Beckett in the Collections of the Humanities Research Centre* (Austin: Harry Random Research Centre, 1984), 75–76.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁰⁸ James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 304.

⁴⁰⁹ C. J. Ackerley, *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 13.

⁴¹⁰ Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 333.

⁴¹¹ 'Johnny' is Watt's first name in the early typescript. See C. J. Ackerley, *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh University Press: 2005), 27–28.

⁴¹² Lake, *No Symbols Where None Intended*, 76.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ Beckett's letter to George Reavey 14 May 1947 in Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 2, 1941–1956 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55–56.

Subsequently, the majority of *Watt*, excluding the revisions made to its typescript and the numerous alterations between editions, was committed to paper under inarguably obscure conditions. James Knowlson's account of Beckett's resistance activities, his escape to Roussillon and the period of refuge is certainly helpful in creating a provisional picture of the atmosphere in which *Watt* materialised.⁴¹⁵ However, more direct insight might be offered by what little remains of Beckett's personal correspondence during this time. While the editors of *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* have brought over 2,500 letters, covering almost sixty years of Beckett's life, to publication,⁴¹⁶ the rather small corpus of written communication from this period is unavailable for consultation. The letters in question were written to Josette and Henri Hayden, whom Beckett befriended while the three were together in hiding in Roussillon between 1943 and 1945; as such, they may well offer a more concrete insight into his wartime experiences. However, as the editors to the second volume of letters report, the current owners have not permitted access.⁴¹⁷ This aside, Beckett's "epistolary letter writing habits"⁴¹⁸ were curtailed by his responsibilities during the war, meaning that his output was much smaller compared to the correspondence of the 1930s and the post-war period.

Due to Beckett's precarious circumstances in this period, letter writing would have been reserved for essential matters and, as the editors to the letters explain, it is likely that most ancillary documents and papers were disposed of, with Beckett's correspondents travelling between different countries with severely limited capacity to transport personal belongings.⁴¹⁹ This near cessation in written communication offers us a way into understanding the peculiar environment in which *Watt* materialised and the events perpetuating it. A grasp of this environment is not only instrumental to understanding the events of the novel, but to establishing a sense of the affective atmosphere that the text articulates, which will be unpicked with recourse to Heidegger's theory of *Stimmung*. In turn, this allows for an appreciation of the fundamental role ascribed to music in articulating the dynamics of the affective environment in question. For this reason, we need to consider Martin Heidegger's specifically 'modern' reformulation of *Stimmung*.

⁴¹⁵ James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 297–338.

⁴¹⁶ Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, 4 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009–2016).

⁴¹⁷ Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 2, 1941–1956 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), xxv.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxv.

The “Thrownness” of ‘Being-in-the-World’: Heideggerian Stimmung

Stimmung is given the most rigorous philosophical consideration in the work of the twentieth-century existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger. The concept is introduced in his 1927 treatise, *Being and Time*, and is a feature of Heidegger’s exploration of ‘Being-in-the-World’.⁴²⁰ Heidegger’s term for ‘being’ or existence, ‘Dasein’, translates literally as ‘being there’. As Hubert L. Dreyfus explains, Dasein or being there, which can refer more broadly to the condition of being or to an individual subject,⁴²¹ is characterised by its *existential* condition of Being-in-the-World: as such, the subject is fundamentally defined through its relationship with the world in which it finds itself.

Importantly, ‘Being-in-the-World’ is characterised by a sense of dislocation or “thrownness”.⁴²² Dasein is always in pursuit of ‘dwelling’,⁴²³ since our sense of Being-in-the-world is fundamentally disturbed due to our experience of perpetual dislocation caused by our “thrownness”.⁴²⁴ In attempting to explain the existential constitution of the ‘There’ of ‘being-in’, Heidegger introduces the concept of ‘Befindlichkeit’, which John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson translate as “State of mind”, but which, in keeping with the aforementioned sense of thrownness, literally means “the state in which one may be found”.⁴²⁵ Heidegger stresses that “states of mind” are amongst the basic conditions of being that condition us prior to cognition. These fundamental states are called “existentials”:

What we indicate ontically by the term ‘state of mind’ is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our Stimmung our Being-Attuned. Prior to all psychology of moods, a field which in any case still lies fallow, it is necessary to see this phenomenon as a fundamental existentiale and to outline its structure.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

⁴²¹ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being in the World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (New Baskerville: The MIT Press, 1991), 14,

⁴²² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 174, 179.

⁴²⁴ Dreyfus, *Being in the World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I*, 173.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 169. Dreyfus notes that ‘Befindlichkeit’ derives from “Wie befinden Sie sich?” meaning “How do you find yourself?”; for Dreyfus the translator’s term “state of mind” is too indicative of a mental state and a

Macquarie and Robinson choose the English word *mood* for *Stimmung*. As Hubert L. Dreyfus emphasises, Heidegger's *Stimmung* is capacious in the range of different affective states that it encompasses:

As Heidegger uses the term, mood can refer to the sensibility of an age (such as Romantic), the culture of a company (such as aggressive), the temper of the times (such as revolutionary), as well as the mood in a current situation (such as the eager mood in a classroom), and of course the mood of an individual.⁴²⁷

Stimmung is the most tangible form of *Befindlichkeit* and demonstrates our everyday affectedness by the world. As such, *Stimmung* is broader and more fundamental than the subjective experience of emotion. *Stimmung* doesn't reside within the self or belong directly to the subject, but manifests between self and world. For Heidegger, states of mind, or one's *Stimmung*, disclose the particularity of Being-in-the-World. This refers to how being or *Dasein* feels to us personally – our thrownness⁴²⁸ – including the specific ways in which we are oriented towards the world as a result of this thrownness: “a mood does not ‘discover’ entities but ‘discloses’ something about the kind of being that I am”.⁴²⁹

Therefore, one's mood or *Stimmung* determines *Dasein*'s relation to the world and what is important to it. *Stimmung* locates us within a specific community: as Heidegger writes, “*Dasein*'s openness to the world is constituted existentially by the attunement of affectedness”.⁴³⁰ Importantly, *Dasein* is always already attuned; we are therefore always in one kind of mood or another: “the fact that moods can deteriorate [*verdorben werden*] and change over means simply that in every case ‘*Dasein*’ always has some mood [*gesimmt ist*]”.⁴³¹ Mood reveals *Dasein* primordially, prior to cognition, and therefore does not constitute any degree of consciousness of Being-in-the-World.⁴³² Rather, mood discloses Being-in-the-World as a specific type of practical orientation. Matthew Ratcliffe

⁴²⁷ Dreyfus, *Being in the World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, Division 1, 169.

⁴²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 173–74.

⁴²⁹ Steven Crowell, “Responsibility, Autonomy, Affectivity: A Heideggerian Approach”, in *Heidegger, Authenticity and the Self: Themes from Division Two of 'Being and Time'*, ed. Denis McManus (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 221.

⁴³⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 175.

summarises: therefore, “moods are not subjective or psychic phenomena but are instead prior to the sense of a theoretical subject-object distinction”.⁴³³

For Heidegger, mood, as the backdrop to our everyday existence, only becomes apparent when we are ‘out of tune’ or in a bad mood. Often, we do not realise that we are in a particular mood until one mood changes to another: “The most powerful moods are those that we do not at all attend to and examine even less, those moods that attune us as if there were no moods there at all”.⁴³⁴ Furthermore, Heidegger stresses the importance of “mastering moods” by way of counter-moods that change our orientation towards the world.⁴³⁵ The condition of being ‘out of tune’, or mustering a counter-mood, is considered by Heidegger a more useful state, since it facilitates insight into a state of affectedness to which we do not otherwise have access.

Heidegger argues that moods “assail” Dasein, and as a result he rejects the distinction between interiority and exteriority, self and world. Stimmung figures as the bridge that intertwines subjectivity and worldliness:

A mood is not related to the psychological...and is not itself an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on things and persons.... It comes neither from “outside” nor from “inside” but arises out of being-in-the world, as a way of such being.⁴³⁶

Following Michael Haar’s stipulation that Stimmung is “both a property and not a property, both relative to the I and relative to the world”,⁴³⁷ Breidenbach explains that because the noun Stimmung ends with the suffix ‘-ung’, its “processual” character is emphasised.⁴³⁸ The suffix ‘-ung’ is added to German verb stems and is equivalent to the English ‘-ing’,

⁴³³ Matthew Ratcliffe, “Heidegger’s Attunement and the Neuropsychology of Emotion”, *Phenomenology and The Cognitive Sciences* 1 (2002), 288.

⁴³⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Der Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (1929/30), in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol.29/30, 100.

⁴³⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 175.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴³⁷ Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being*, trans. by Reginald Lilly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 37.

⁴³⁸ Birgit Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 22. As Breidenbach explains, “Heidegger’s *Stimmung*, then, describes a relational process between the subject and the world which is marked by degrees of consonance and dissonance. This interpretation noticeably hinges on the musical metaphor from which the concept was derived in the first place.” Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 22.

used to form the English gerund. Consequently, Stimmung cannot be considered a stable constituent of Dasein, rather it points to the continually unfolding process which is the *attunement* of human existence to the world as ontic environment.⁴³⁹

Due to the ambivalence and intersubjective quality of Stimmung, it is apparent to Heidegger that moods can affect not only an individual but a collective or a group of individuals who share similar experiences: “publicness, as the kind of being which belongs to the one, not only has in general its own way of having a mood, but nevertheless needs moods and makes them for itself”.⁴⁴⁰ Heidegger approaches the social dimension of mood in greater detail in his 1929 lectures:

Moods are not accompanying phenomena, rather, they are the sort of thing that determines being-with-one-another in advance. It seems as if, so to speak, a mood is in each case already there, like an atmosphere in which we are steeped and by which we are thoroughly determined.⁴⁴¹

Describing the totality of Dasein’s ontological structure, Heidegger employs the term ‘Sorge’, meaning ‘care’, and lists its three constituent components: facticity (past experience), being-ahead-of-oneself (future or ‘existentiality’), and being-with (present or ‘falling’). As such, our affectedness is subject to a type of temporality. Sorge, or care, refers to the things we find ourselves oriented towards due to our thrownness. Our past, present and future condition this care. Therefore, our care for others unifies these temporal dimensions; our being, Dasein, is, in its affectedness, constituted by the simultaneity of past, present and future.

With this overview of the conceptual history of Stimmung and its unusual metaphorical employment of music in place, along with Heidegger’s specific application of the concept, it becomes possible for us to consider Beckett’s preoccupation with attunement in *Watt*, and by extension, the significance of music in the novel. Surprisingly few studies of Beckett and philosophy have focused on a relationship to Heidegger. However, Steve Barfield provides a useful overview of scholarly engagement with this relationship, as well as his

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁴¹ Heidegger, *Der Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 100.

own brief critical reading.⁴⁴² As Barfield observes, in the field of Beckett and philosophy, “the governing principle of research is evidence of Beckett’s interest in a particular philosopher (or vice versa).⁴⁴³ Beyond this, when critics have been concerned with Beckett’s affinity with, rather than direct references to, philosophy, the overriding emphasis has been on post-structuralist philosophers such as Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze, despite their very different political views to Heidegger. However, as Barfield argues, given that Heidegger’s work is considered a precursor of these three’s, a comparative investigation of Beckett and Heidegger could be “the missing link between poststructuralist accounts of Beckett and accounts of Beckett and philosophy that are concerned with the relationship of language, ‘existence’ and the ‘human’ subject”.⁴⁴⁴ Notably, those studies that have drawn the two together, such as Lance St John Butler’s *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being* and P. J. Murphy’s *Reconstructing Beckett*, have instead focused within the frame of post-war existentialism. Responding to Simon Critchley’s observation that the Beckettian oeuvre is somewhat “resistant to philosophical interpretation”,⁴⁴⁵ Barfield proposes that Beckett and Heidegger share an “uncanny and unsettling relationship to one another, which shows similar preoccupations but does not necessarily mean any influence of one to the other”.⁴⁴⁶

Textual Stimmung: Conceptualizing Affect in Literature

The conceptual overview of Stimmung given early in this chapter, drawn from Wellbery’s study, demonstrates how the term was transferred from the domain of aesthetics to existential philosophy. How, then, can we think of Stimmung – including specifically Heidegger’s conception of Stimmung – in relation to a text? Two aforementioned works are devoted to implementing the concept of Stimmung within the domain of literary enquiry: Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On the Hidden Potential of Literature* (2011) and Birgit Breidenbach’s 2020 monograph *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood: Stimmung and Modernity*. Following a similar vein, Johnathan Flatley’s *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* also explores the

⁴⁴² Steve Barfield, “Beckett and Heidegger: A Critical Survey in *Beckett and Philosophy*”, ed. Richard Lane (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 154–176.

⁴⁴³ Barfield, ‘Beckett and Heidegger: A Critical Survey’, 154.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 156

⁴⁴⁵ Simon Critchley, *Very Little ... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1977),

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⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 156

socio-political dimension of melancholia in texts and its ability to inspire political agency. Key aspects of the approaches in these studies are central to understanding how the musical inclusions in *Watt* contribute to the 'mood'-orientated dynamics of the text and their relationship to the circumstances of the novel's composition.

For Gumbrecht, the concept of *Stimmung* and its significant experiential connotations form a third position or middle ground between two dominant but opposing schools of thought: deconstruction and cultural studies. Gumbrecht moves between their respective, albeit somewhat incompatible, positions on representation: on the one hand, language cannot meaningfully refer beyond itself; on the other, literature draws all its meaning from the exterior world. Instead, Gumbrecht promotes an intermediary solution capable of "disclosing a new perspective on – and possibility for – the 'ontology of literature'".⁴⁴⁷ In contrast, an ontology of literature that relies on concepts derived from the sphere of *Stimmung* does not place the paradigm of representation front-and-centre. 'Reading for *Stimmung*' always means paying attention to the textual dimension of the forms that envelop us and our bodies as a physical reality – something that can catalyze inner feelings without matters of representation necessarily being involved.⁴⁴⁸

Before considering Gumbrecht's position in more detail, it is worth specifying that this approach, and the dichotomy in which it is rooted, immediately seems relevant to Beckett's writing and his unique approach to the question of representation. Beckett's early work often appears curiously estranged from its social, cultural and political context (although to a lesser extent than the radically abstracted later work). Despite this, his pre-war prose consists of layers of often oblique allusions – a kind of referential scaffolding, underpinning the surface self-referentiality – to everything from the arts to philosophy, religion and beyond; a good example is the overview of the philosophical subtexts of *Murphy*, given in Chapter One. Moreover, as Emilie Morin demonstrates, Beckett's seemingly abstract texts reimagine the political circumstances of France, Ireland and Europe but through a subtle and nuanced practice of "satire, displacement, elision, substitution and imaginative appropriation".⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, 2.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴⁹ Emilie Morin, *Beckett's Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Notably, given this context, Gumbrecht stresses the potential of textual *Stimmung* to bring history into the present in a markedly non-representative or allegorical fashion:

This immediacy in the experience of past presents occurs without it being necessary to understand what the atmospheres and moods mean; we do not have to know what motivations and circumstances occasioned them. For what affects us in the act of reading involves the present of the past in substance – not a sign of the past or its representation.⁴⁵⁰

As such, *Stimmung* as a literary concept answers a call for the analysis of a new kind of “vitality” and “aesthetic immediacy” that, Gumbrecht argues, is not reached by other interpretive approaches. Drawing upon a paradoxical comment from Toni Morrison’s novel *Jazz*, Gumbrecht describes this experience as “being touched as if from inside”. Indeed, to describe the types of experiences that a *Stimmung*- oriented analysis could give rise to, Gumbrecht makes recourse to music:

I am most interested in the component of meaning that connects *Stimmung* with music and the hearing of sounds. As is well known, we do not hear with our inner and outer ear alone. Hearing is a complex form of behaviour that involves the entire body. Skin and haptic modalities of perception play an important role. Every tone we perceive is, of course, a form of physical reality (if an invisible one) that ‘happens’ to our body and, at the same time, ‘surrounds’ it.⁴⁵¹

Birgit Breidenbach moves beyond Gumbrecht in attempting to conceptualise how *Stimmung* operates in modernist literature, arguing that the very condition of modernity, defined by flux and instability, shares an affinity with the “moment-to-moment” attunement of Heideggerian *Stimmung*.⁴⁵² For Breidenbach, not only does the precariousness of *Stimmung* replace the stability of ‘world harmony’, it provides “insight into a correlation between ways of understanding human existence and the experience of art that constitutes such a foundational discourse for the category of the modern”.⁴⁵³ This

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵¹ Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, 4.

⁴⁵² Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 18–19.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

becomes relevant in considering *Watt*, since, as argued in later chapters, the conditions of refuge and exile in which the novel developed made for similar states of instability and provisionality, which subsequently shaped the text.

Gumbrecht shares a vision of aesthetic *Stimmung* similar to that of Fichte and other nineteenth-century philosophers, whereby art serves as a vehicle for affect which then envelops the audience. Instead, Breidenbach, focusing on literary affect, promotes a type of dialectical and processual attunement *between* text and reader. In doing so, she seeks to approach the reader's encounter with the text as though it were a Heideggerian encounter with the world; as a scene of thrownness and affective orientation:

Rethinking literary mood through existentialist philosophy requires that we consider the act of reading as a process that, in some way, re-enacts the basic modes in which we experience and conceptualize our own existence. Our affectedness through a text and the sense of perceiving the 'atmosphere' of a fictional world predicate on the implied forms of Being-in-the-world to which we are always already subject through the originary structure of existence.⁴⁵⁴

Breidenbach expands upon literature's capacity to "negotiate" *Stimmung*, in doing so bridging the gap between philosophical notions of attunement and its manifestation in literary form.⁴⁵⁵ In order to help bring shape to the "modalities" and "analytical categories" of textual *Stimmung* based on Heidegger's interpretation of the concept, Breidenbach, influenced by Dreyfus' quantitative discussion of different types of affect based on their capaciousness and duration⁴⁵⁶ identifies four different levels. Firstly, texts depict characters and their relation to, or attunement to, the fictional world, other characters and narrative events. Secondly, different genres conform to specific moods that play an instrumental part in shaping textual understanding. Thirdly, every text is in tune with, although not necessarily directly representative of, its broader cultural environment, or 'Grundstimmung' as Heidegger called it. Lastly, and of most importance to Breidenbach, literature initiates a "plane" of attunement between the reader and the text, through the narrative act.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁵⁵ Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 38–39

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

In order to elaborate her theory of dialectical attunement between text and reader, Breidenbach makes specific recourse to the reader response criticism of Stanley Fish⁴⁵⁷ and Wolfgang Iser,⁴⁵⁸ whose theories of the dynamic relationship between text and recipient share certain affinities with her notion of textual Stimmung.⁴⁵⁹ For Iser, the reader participates in the creation of a text's meaning, and this involvement generates a non-rational and untheorisable structure of affect which constitutes how the text *matters* to the reader. As we might anticipate, Breidenbach compares the structure of relationality, which arises through the reader's involvement in meaning-making, to Heidegger's concept of care: "By participating in the process of meaning-construction, the reader is drawn into a temporal structure of affectedness which is marked by 'caring' about the text".⁴⁶⁰ This is important for the later discussion in Chapter Six of some of the unusual devices in *Watt*, including ellipses, omissions replaced with question marks, actual questions directed towards that reader, and incomplete tables, series and musical scores, all of which solicit the reader's attention, drawing them into its processes of meaning-making and engaging them directly with how they 'care' about the text.

This chapter has introduced the textual study of mood, moving from Gumbrecht's call for attention to the non-representational facets of writing, to Breidenbach's interpretation of Heideggerian Stimmung as a modernist mode of attunement. When reading for Stimmung in *Watt* the following chapters will consider the affectivity of the novel in light of Gumbrecht's and Breidenbach's theories and various topologies of Stimmung and how they operate within a text. Following Breidenbach's Heideggerian notion of literary Stimmung, the following chapters will thereby explore the depiction of different modes of Stimmung within the novel as well as the unique form of attunement that manifests between text and reader. While Breidenbach has already included *Watt* amongst her readings of Stimmung in modernist texts, this study will differentiate itself somewhat considerably. As the conceptual history of Stimmung has demonstrated, the term is

⁴⁵⁷ Stanley E. Fish, 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins (London and Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 70–100.

⁴⁵⁸ Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (London and Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

⁴⁵⁹ It is worth noting here that Beckett has been integral to Iser's elaboration of such ideas. See *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Beckett's Prose Fiction: From Bunyan to Beckett* (London and Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

⁴⁶⁰ Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood*, 40.

inseparable from its musical origins; as such, the following chapters will focus specifically on the unusual place that music plays in modulating these scenes and experiential modes of attunement. If, as Breidenbach argues, “Literature can thus be regarded as both a vehicle of (ontic) implicit cultural notions of the self and the world and as a ‘playground’ for ontological possibilities”, what role does the literary inclusion of music play in elaborating both this implicit relationality and its modification and manipulation? These questions will be pursued in the following chapters.

PART TWO: MUSIC, MOOD AND ATTUNEMENT IN *WATT***Chapter Five – “A Very Baroque Solipsism”: The ‘Stimmung’ of *Watt*’s Seventeenth-Century Undertones****Introducing *Watt*: “Who, What, Where, by What Means, Why, in What Way, When”⁴⁶¹**

Following an introduction to the series of events that constitute the ‘narrative’ of *Watt*, this chapter continues by unpicking the affective dimension of the novel through a ‘Stimmung’-oriented reading that is attentive to the tone of the philosophical frameworks underpinning the text. The latter half of the chapter introduces Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s philosophy, particularly his concept of the monad and the relationship that can be identified between Heideggerian Stimmung and the monadic perspective. Beckett’s attention to Leibniz’s ideas in the ‘Philosophy Notes’ is considered, and it is proposed that Beckett used the format of the Leibnizian monad to frame his own experiences of and reflections upon melancholia during this period. This provides a basis for the detailed consideration of certain instances of music in *Watt* that follows in Chapter Six: advancing the Stimmung-oriented reading developed here, the chapter draws on this Leibnizian and Heideggerian philosophical grounding to illustrate the fundamental role ascribed to instances of music in condensing the atmosphere of the novel and the particular type of relationality it fashions with the reader. Most specifically, it enables an understanding of how this technique runs parallel to the overt resonance of Leibnizian references in the text itself.

Watt, the chief protagonist of Beckett’s war-time text, is introduced to the reader indirectly by the Nixons and “hunchy”⁴⁶² Mr Hackett, who spots the itinerant character disembarking from a tram at a station that resembles the Harcourt Street of Beckett’s native Dublin. At the station Watt catches a train and onboard he encounters the “bright and cheerful”⁴⁶³ Mr Spiro, nicknamed “Dum”,⁴⁶⁴ an anagram of ‘mud’ – a “fellow wanderer”⁴⁶⁵ and the editor of the Catholic monthly *Crux* – who initiates a one-sided conversation on the topic of consecration.

⁴⁶¹ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* Notebook One, page 3. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas at Austin, Box 6.5–7 and Box 7.1–4.

⁴⁶² Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 5

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Watt fails to engage with Spiro due to the cacophony of “other voices”⁴⁶⁶ which are “singing, crying, stating, murmuring, things unintelligible, in his ear”.⁴⁶⁷ With an “unpleasant yellow”⁴⁶⁸ moon above him, Watt alights and “advances due east”⁴⁶⁹ with a “funambulistic stagger”⁴⁷⁰ to the house of Mr Knott, where he plans to take up a post as servant to the master of the house. Feeling overcome by weakness after Lady McCann catapults a stone at his head, Watt rests a while in a ditch edged with “high pouting hemlock”⁴⁷¹ and listens in to the “little nightsounds”⁴⁷² in the hedgerows when the voices of a mixed choir come to him “from without”⁴⁷³ and “detain”⁴⁷⁴ him.

After resuming his journey, Watt shortly finds himself sitting in Mr Knott’s dimly lit kitchen with no knowledge of how he ended up inside. He busies himself by playing an “innocent little game”,⁴⁷⁵ watching the ashes “greyen, redden, greyen, redden”,⁴⁷⁶ when the departing servant Arsene appears “dressed for the road”⁴⁷⁷ and with “information of a practical nature to impart”.⁴⁷⁸ Arsene delivers a long, prophetic monologue with a “feeling that closely resembles in every particular the feeling of sorrow”,⁴⁷⁹ in which he tries to articulate his unspeakable experience of working at the Knott abode and to forewarn Watt of the problems that he might encounter there – even though, as Arsene admits, “the result would always be the same”.⁴⁸⁰

Part Two of the novel describes Watt’s first year of service and details the routines at the Knott abode, such as the emptying of Mr Knott’s “slops”.⁴⁸¹ Certain scenes from Watt’s daily life assume prominence and set the precedent for his spiralling epistemological conundrums, such as the appearance of the Galls “father and son”,⁴⁸² who arrive to

⁴⁶⁶ Beckett. *Watt*, 22.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 57.

“choon”⁴⁸³ the piano. Watt is vexed by their visit, since it continues “to unfold in Watt’s head from beginning to end, over and over again”,⁴⁸⁴ beginning to lose “all meaning, even the most literal”.⁴⁸⁵ Following this obscure encounter, Watt begins to experience some peculiar difficulties, such as when he considers the nature of one of Mr Knott’s pots: for Watt the word “pot” becomes a point of obsession; due to its inadequate powers of representation it does not offer the “semantic succour”⁴⁸⁶ that he longs for:

It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot and be comforted. It was in vain that it answered, with unexceptionable adequacy, all the purposes, and performed all the offices, of a pot, it was not a pot.⁴⁸⁷

Subsequently, Watt finds that even small tasks begin to generate complexities beyond his understanding. To gain some sort of grasp on his surroundings, Watt responds by making lists and series of objects in his immediate environment, such as the coming and going of the servants, the sounding of a bell in the room of fellow servant, Erskine, and the correct description of a picture hanging in his room, as well as the “five generations, twenty-eight souls, nine hundred and eighty years”⁴⁸⁸ of the Lynch family record. Despite the meticulous but nevertheless erroneous lists of permutations that he generates, Watt finds that he is none the wiser and is unable to produce any satisfactory understanding of his context or of his master, Mr Knott.

At the end of Part Two, Watt finds that his fellow servant, Erskine, has departed, and a new man has appeared in Knott’s kitchen ready to assume a new point in the series of servants at Knott’s house. Part Three of the novel is set in an asylum-like space and, accordingly, the narrative events become increasingly irrational and unstable. Watt is befriended by a fellow inmate named Sam, with whom he destroys birds and feeds rats with their own offspring, concluding that “on such occasions”, “we came nearest to God”.⁴⁸⁹ Sam manages to talk with his friend, who converses in “rapid” and “muffled”

⁴⁸³ Beckett, *Watt*, 57.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

utterances due to his “inverted”⁴⁹⁰ speech, about his experience at the Knott household. Despite several impediments to their communication, such as the weather, the fence separating their pavilions, Watt’s deteriorating language and Sam’s poor hearing, Watt tells Sam of the “closing period”⁴⁹¹ of his stay at Watt’s house. Part Four of the novel switches back to the end of Watt’s service at the Knott abode and his eventual departure. It is comprised of Sam’s account of Watt’s testimony, detailing his journey from Knott’s house towards the asylum. Watt stays the night in a station waiting room and resides there in complete darkness until the room is unlocked the next morning by Mr Case, and Watt is knocked unconscious and then revived with the contents of a waste bucket to the derision of those on the station platform. Watt is roused by Cack-faced Miller, who, in lieu of a conventional greeting, places a hand under Watt’s head and resides with him a while. As the novel reaches its close, Watt has left.

“Art Has Nothing To Do With Clarity, Does Not Dabble in the Clear and Does Not Make Clear”:⁴⁹² Critical Approaches to *Watt*’s Historical Context

The most striking feature of *Watt* is its peculiarly resistant form, which appears to evade the reader’s comprehension by thwarting reliable novelistic conventions. Writing to Maria Peron in 1951, Beckett underscored the opacity of the novel: “While I was about it I reread almost all of that odd work and was able to establish, to my satisfaction, that I can make no sense of it anymore.”⁴⁹³ Although the elusive series of events that constitutes *Watt* departs from the traditional notion of narrative ‘content’ the text is erratic in its oscillation between different degrees of readability, ranging from conventional narrative prose concerned with the representational, to impenetrable passages of permutation and inversion. It is perhaps the latter that Anna Teekell has in mind in describing the reader’s experience of the text as “purgatorial”: “in format alone, that is, the book is very nearly unreadable, and, like Dante in Canto III, one is tempted to weep from bewilderment at the cacophonous text”.⁴⁹⁴ This problem of readability is reflected in early critical responses.

⁴⁹⁰ Beckett, *Watt*, 144.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 94.

⁴⁹³ Samuel Beckett writing to Maria Peron on 4 August 1951. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 2, 1941–1956 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 277.

⁴⁹⁴ Anna Teekell, “Beckett in Purgatory: ‘Unspeakable’ *Watt* and The Second World War”, *Twentieth Century Literature* 62, no.3 (2016) para. 7, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/stable/26806749>

Reviewing the novel in 1953, Richard Seaver wrote that *Watt* is either “devoid of meaning or profoundly significant”.⁴⁹⁵ Putting the question of intelligibility aside, the centrality of language in *Watt* cannot be overemphasised. Indeed, Derval Tubridy has argued that an evaluation of the meaning of the novel “depends upon our attitude to language; for concerns about language – its structure, significance and sense – lie at the heart of this peculiar novel”.⁴⁹⁶ As such, critical interpretations of *Watt* often prioritize post-structural approaches to the text that focus on language and form. A consequence of this is that the relationship between the novel’s concretisation of its own historical time at the subtle level of language and form, and the currents of feeling initiated by the historical events that influenced this stylistic turn, are often neglected: they do not occupy sufficient critical attention. Despite some critics starting to attend to the novel’s unusual manner of engaging with its historical context – including those discussed below – there have been few attempts to think through the way in which the novel speaks in an indirect way of the affective dimension of this context; this might be revealed by a Stimmung-oriented reading.

As Teekell observes, the critical trend concerned with Beckett’s work at the level of language and form stems from attempts to read *Watt* to establish its place “in the series” of Beckett’s philosophy;⁴⁹⁷ this is related to but separate from the approaches considered above. Discussing interpretations by Stan Gontarski and Jonathan Boulter, Teekell notes their linkage of linguistic and philosophical concerns: for instance, Gontarski writes that *Watt*’s “textual anomalies and signals of incompleteness ... suggest irresolution and negation, textual and aesthetic, and so anticipate the epistemological crises that dominate Beckett’s subsequent work”.⁴⁹⁸

Several critics, however, have historicised *Watt* and elucidated its “resistant”⁴⁹⁹ form in relation to World War II. William Davies’ *Samuel Beckett and the Second World War* is the most comprehensive examination of Beckett’s response to the material conditions and

⁴⁹⁵ Richard Seaver, *Nimbus* (Autumn, 1953), 61–62.

⁴⁹⁶ Derval Tubridy, *Samuel Beckett and the Language of Subjectivity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), ch.1, accessed 3 April 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316981221.002>

⁴⁹⁷ Teekell, “Beckett in Purgatory: ‘Unspeakable’ *Watt* and The Second World War”, para. 7.

⁴⁹⁸ Stan Gontarski, ‘Preface’, in *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated ‘Watt’*, by C. J. Ackerley (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 9.

⁴⁹⁹ Teekell, “Beckett in Purgatory: ‘Unspeakable’ *Watt* and The Second World War”, para. 12.

sociopolitical and cultural climates of war-time France.⁵⁰⁰ Treating Beckett's works as examples of "war writing",⁵⁰¹ Davies draws out Beckett's recourse to the notion of 'the provisional' in response to the day-to-day conditions of war, where "the spectacular or extraordinary can become the everyday".⁵⁰² In addition to examining the way in which Beckett's "war writing" registers the "'universe'-altering effects of total war",⁵⁰³ Davies focuses on how the techniques of propaganda that Beckett encountered are subjected to "inversion, parody and revision",⁵⁰⁴ thereby contributing to our understanding of the political processes of Beckett's writing. Noting that war is not engaged with directly in *Watt*, or encompassed within the span of narrative events, Davies draws on the published text and the 'ur Watt',⁵⁰⁵ which is comprised of the unpublished manuscript notebooks and extant typescripts, carefully identifying the incorporation of small fragments of overt war experience, alongside moments related to the fraught but nevertheless quotidian circumstances of everyday life under occupation in Paris and in hiding in Roussillon.⁵⁰⁶

Emilie Morin's *Beckett's Political Imagination* is very finely attuned to the political dimension of the oeuvre's historical register.⁵⁰⁷ It sheds new light on the politically-inclined networks that Beckett encountered and the literary partnerships that he formed in the 1930s, thereby demonstrating how Beckett's early and often challenging engagements with history were always inflected with a "political charge".⁵⁰⁸ However, it is Beckett's translation work that Morin considers foundational in instigating Beckett's "political consciousness": she situates projects such as his translation work for *Negro: Anthology Made by Nancy Cunard* within a broader and often self-governed engagement with "the history of empire, colonialism, social injustice and segregation", which contributed an Internationalist quality to his developing political sensibility.⁵⁰⁹ In this regard, Morin does

⁵⁰⁰ William Davies, *Samuel Beckett and The Second World War: Politics, Propaganda and a 'Universe Become Provisional'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁰⁵ Davies uses this term to refer to the drafts of *Watt* in Davies, *Samuel Beckett and The Second World War*, 24. In doing so he follows its use in two previous studies; Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Séan Kennedy, "Beckett and the Irish Big House", in *The Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts*, ed. S. E. Gontarski (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

⁵⁰⁶ Davies, *Samuel Beckett and the Second World War*, 23–26, 64–66.

⁵⁰⁷ Emilie Morin, *Beckett's Political Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

not pay great attention to the work of the war years, writing, “The war years were entirely dedicated to survival and resistance, were not germane to sustained writing and did not provide anything other than dangerous and precarious circumstances for creative thought”.⁵¹⁰ As such, *Watt* is briefly referenced in her discussion of post-war texts that carefully negotiate the “unresolved legacies of French collaborationism” and the “principles of testimony”.⁵¹¹ Notably, though, in drawing on the sinister description of a barbed fence enclosing a garden, in which there is a brief encounter in part three of *Watt*, Morin observes that “The makeshift nature of this garden works by analogy and recalls the intermediary transit and detention camps close to Paris”.⁵¹²

Two further interpretations depend upon the “Irish tincture” of *Watt* lent by the scattering of references to Beckett’s native Dublin. James McNaughton reads the novel as a “critique of Irish neutrality” and argues that *Watt* contains “traces” of war encoded in its language, a process of “containing European war” he terms “a propaganda of apathy”.⁵¹³ Anna Teekell suggests that the novel can be read as a “purgatorial allegory of neutral Ireland”.⁵¹⁴ Drawing correspondences between sceptical acts of reading in the novel, Watt’s agonising experience of nothing and the war-time use of language and censorship in the Irish Free State, Teekell argues that *Watt* is an attempt to enact the impossibility of “war-time epistemology” in neutral Ireland: the impossibility of full knowledge of or engagement with the details of the war due to the position of Irish neutrality.⁵¹⁵ More specifically, Teekell argues that this question of epistemology, relevant to both Watt’s testimony with respect to Knott’s house and the Irish experience of World War II, is shaped by trauma in so far as, in the words of Cathy Caruth, both evoke history as “referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence”.⁵¹⁶

In this way, McNaughton and Teekell historicise *Watt* in relation to war-time Ireland but thereby overlook how Beckett’s own experience of World War II in France marks the

⁵¹⁰ Emilie Morin, *Beckett’s Political Imagination*, 131.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵¹³ James McNaughton, “Beckett’s ‘Brilliant Obscurantics’: *Watt* and the Problem of Propaganda”, in *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive*, ed. Séan Kennedy (London: Palgrave, 2010), 47–69.

⁵¹⁴ Teekell, “Beckett in Purgatory: ‘Unspeakable’ *Watt* and The Second World War”, para. 12.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 16.

⁵¹⁶ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), 19.

character of the novel. Marjorie Perloff has attended to the influence of this context, maintaining that there is a direct link between Beckett's translation and transcription work and the narrative of *Watt*.⁵¹⁷ More specifically, she suggests that Watt and Sam's peculiar conversations were inspired by the dictates of a code system used by Beckett's resistance cell. She also perceives a correspondence between certain sequences in *Watt* and the 'cutout' system of operation, whereby cell members would report to another member entirely unknown to them.⁵¹⁸

Laura Salisbury moves beyond Perloff's observations, highlighting how Beckett's resistance activity, specifically his experience of coded communications and their often imperfect transmission, provided an understanding of language as plastic and mutable information, which is reflected in *Watt*'s permutational linguistic behaviour.⁵¹⁹ As Salisbury writes, "by reading the material circumstances that lead to the appearance of *Watt* as part of a broader discursive environment particularly engaged by a fraught sense of the contingency of meaning-making, one might get a stronger sense of Beckett's cryptic aesthetic".⁵²⁰ In doing so, Salisbury also begins to approach the compelling relationship between the codified, labyrinthine text of *Watt* and its affective dimension. Arguing against Hugh Kenner's suggestion that the "display of orderly syntax, in celebrating the exactness of each word's placement, can drain off the potential of any word to evoke feeling",⁵²¹ Salisbury maintains that "affective states ... ooze through the holes in algorithmic syntax"⁵²² and that "the bound style of a text like *Watt* actually produces a very specific set of affective experiences":⁵²³

Its permutations – pursued with inhuman perseverance punctuated by overdetermined details and syntactical slackenings that allow a little comic relief and then followed up with a return to the compulsive parsing of information – produce an off affective state that seems to oscillate between astonishment and boredom.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁷ Marjorie Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 137.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ Laura Salisbury, "Gloria SMH and Beckett's Linguistic Encryptions", in *The Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett*, ed. S. E. Gontarski (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 157.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵²¹ Hugh Kenner, *The Mechanic Muse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 97.

⁵²² Salisbury, "Gloria SMH and Beckett's Linguistic Encryptions," 163.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 164-65.

Consequently, the pervasive narrative and linguistic pedantry that characterises many of the passages in *Watt* does not just amount to a dry reading experience: as Salisbury demonstrates, it can invoke a range of affective states for the reader.

“Encounters With Presence”:⁵²⁵ The Necessity of a Stimmung-Focused Reading

To scrutinize the affective dimension of *Watt*, it is necessary to probe the mood associated with the particular shape of philosophical enquiry that drives the novel and produces its unusual texture. Despite its abundant references to literature, history, philosophy, religion and science, evidenced by C. J. Ackerley’s painstaking textual genetic study,⁵²⁶ unlike the earlier *Murphy*, *Watt* did not arise from an accretion of carefully interlaced literary and philosophical subtexts. The precarious circumstances in which the novel was written did not permit the transportation of many personal belongings, including books. In composing the text, therefore, Beckett was drawing upon his years of vast erudition from memory.⁵²⁷ As such, the philosophical systems employed throughout operate more diffusely to inform the broad character of the novel. It is for this reason that a Stimmung-oriented reading of the philosophical ideas underpinning the text is perhaps apposite.

Attending to the intangible experiential dimension of our encounters with art that escape elucidation through traditional methodologies and analytical procedures, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht advocates an approach that is governed by “cases of presence, immediacy and objectivity”⁵²⁸ and “contexts always already associated with atmosphere and mood”.⁵²⁹ Nevertheless, he is resistant to developing a technique for Stimmung-centred reading practices. He suggests that “reading for ‘Stimmung’”⁵³⁰ is already “the orientation of a great number of non-professional readers”⁵³¹ – those who choose to read not for the purposes of

⁵²⁵ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 7.

⁵²⁶ C. J. Ackerley, *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

⁵²⁷ Matthew Feldman, *Beckett’s Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett’s ‘Interwar Notes’* (London: Continuum, 2006), 121.

⁵²⁸ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 13.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

exegesis but for the experience that a text offers – and instead calls for a specific mode of “counterintuitive”⁵³² thinking:

Counterintuitive thinking is not afraid to deviate from the norms of rationality and logic that govern everyday life (and for good reason!). Instead, it is set into motion by ‘hunches.’ Often, we are alerted to a potential mood in a text by the irritation and fascination provoked by a single word or small detail – the hint of a different tone or rhythm. Following a hunch means trusting an implicit promise for a while and making a step toward describing a phenomenon that remains unknown.⁵³³

In applying “counterintuitive thinking” to *Watt*, we are already taking heed of the novel’s mounting critique and satirising of the hermeneutical endeavour; as this chapter will explore, *Watt* stages scenes of dangerously fanatical ‘reading’, governed by a maddening logical scrutiny that serves to highlight the absurdity of rationality. Poised between poles of novelistic realism and an abstract absurdity that arises from the hyper-intensification of a logical perspective, *Watt*’s engagement with history and, specifically, historical currents of feeling, are elusive. However, such “affective atmospheres”⁵³⁴ remain significant to Beckett’s impetus to write the novel and can be traced in the relationship that it develops with the reader. As such, the novel may profit from an alternative reading that seeks to trace vestiges of the past in what Gumbrecht describes as the “textual dimension of the forms that envelop us and our bodies as a physical reality”;⁵³⁵ that is, “something that can catalyze inner feelings without matters of representation necessarily being involved”.⁵³⁶ While critical attention has been directed towards the novel’s concretisation of Beckett’s sceptical attitude towards knowledge, the spectrum of affect underpinning the epistemological enquiry at the heart of the novel and the dimension of affect that both sustains it and which it generates have not been subject to scrutiny. As such, this chapter

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid., 17. As Birgit Breidenbach observes, Gumbrecht’s “ethos” is part of a broader movement towards “postcritical” interpretations that promote the aesthetic experience of the text over the application of critical theory. Building upon reader response criticism, studies such as Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) endeavoured to reorient critical attention towards the encounter between reader and text.

⁵³⁴ This term is used by Jonathan Flatley in *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 19.

⁵³⁵ Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 5.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

calls for what Steven Connor has referred to as ‘epistemopathy’, a term which captures “the production and development of complex states of feeling and imaginative projection in relation to knowledge”.⁵³⁷

Descartes’ Melancholy *Méthode*

What is the nature of the rational form of philosophical enquiry underpinning *Watt*? As James Knowlson has observed, the defining characteristic of *Watt* is its comic attack on rationality.⁵³⁸ Although previous studies, such as that by Jacqueline Hofer, have approached *Watt*’s dealings with rationality from a logical positivist angle, C. J. Ackerley has argued that *Watt* is sustained by a specific “Cartesian framework”.⁵³⁹ As Stan Gontarski and C. J. Ackerley note, Beckett studied Descartes closely between November 1928 and September 1930, during his time at the *École Normale Supérieure*. While the dualism of mind and body prevalent in Descartes’ philosophy informs Murphy’s disastrous inability to reconcile physical and logical faculties, *Watt* is governed by his adherence to ‘*La Méthode*’. Descartes sets out the rules governing his formula as follows:

The first rule was never to receive anything as true unless I knew it evidently to be such – that is to say, to avoid assiduously precipitation and obstinacy – and to include nothing among my judgements except what presented itself so clearly and so distinctly to my mind that I would have no occasion to place it in doubt.

The second rule was to divide each of the difficulties I would examine in as many parts as would be possible, and as would be required in order to solve them better.

The third rule was to direct my thoughts according to an order, beginning with the simplest objects, and those easiest to know, in order to lead up little by little, as by degrees, to the knowledge of the most composite

⁵³⁷ Steven Connor, *The Madness of Knowledge: On Wisdom, Ignorance and Fantasies of Knowing* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), 10.

⁵³⁸ James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 334.

⁵³⁹ C. J. Ackerley, *Obscure locks: Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 13–14.

objects, supposing an order even among those that have no natural precedence one over the other.

The last rule was in every case to make such complete enumerations and such general reviews that I would be assured of omitting nothing.⁵⁴⁰

The result of Watt's commitment to upholding this rationalist framework is the production of comprehensive lists, complete realisations of potential possibilities and meticulous attention to observational detail. For example, analysing Knott's movements, Watt becomes increasingly preoccupied with logging the hours at which his master rises and retires:

One of the first things that Watt learned by these means was that Mr Knott sometimes rose late and retired early, and sometimes rose very late and retired very early, and sometimes did not rise at all, nor at all retire, for who can retire who does not rise?... For on Monday, Tuesday and Friday he rose at eleven and retired at seven, and on Wednesday and Saturday he rose at nine and retired at eight, and on Sunday he did not rise at all, nor at all retire.⁵⁴¹

In certain passages throughout the novel the narrator informs the reader of Watt's pedantry. For instance, we are told that one of Watt's duties is "to weigh, to measure and to count, with the *utmost exactness*"⁵⁴² the ingredients of Mr Knott's 'poss'. Elsewhere, Watt's series unfold in the course of the narrative, such as the twelve possibilities of his awareness of the conditions of his contract and the numerous potential ways in which the dog and the remainders of Mr Knott's leftovers could be brought together, which are individually questioned and scrutinised.

The narrative voice also adopts Watt's fastidiousness. Describing Watt's walk, the narrator attentively logs each of his idiosyncratic movements with unrelenting attention to detail:

⁵⁴⁰ René Descartes, *Discourse on Méthode*, trans. Paul J. Olscamp (IN: Hackett Publishing, 2011), 128.

⁵⁴¹ Beckett, *Watt*, 71–72.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 73 (my emphasis).

Watt's way of advancing due east, for example, was to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north at the same time to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and at the same time to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north.... So, standing first on one leg and then on the other, he moved forward, a headlong tardigrade in a straight line. The knees, on these occasions, did not bend.⁵⁴³

What, it might be asked, does the presence of Descartes's *Méthode* undergirding the permutations of *Watt* indicate regarding the affective ambit of the text and its fastidiousness? René Rosfort and Giovanni Stanghellini have observed that, although emotion is often the subject of philosophical scrutiny, philosophers rarely direct their attention to the affective grounds of their own discourse, despite that it has a discernible influence over the "reflective scope" of the text.⁵⁴⁴ Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber attend to this issue by investigating how mood has determined the shape and character of philosophical thought throughout history.⁵⁴⁵ In doing so, they assign "fundamental" moods to three different epochs of philosophical enquiry. For the purposes of this study, it is important to understand the relationship between the moods that – they argue – have shaped the philosophical thinking of Ancient Greece and the seventeenth century; notably, these are two periods of intellectual enquiry with which Beckett developed an early familiarity through his reading and notetaking at the *École Normale Supérieure* and, later, the compiling of his 'Philosophy Notes', as noted in Chapters One and Two.⁵⁴⁶

As Kenaan and Ferber explain, the mood of 'wonder' was valorised by the Ancient Greeks; considered forefront in initiating philosophical exploration, wonder constituted the impetus driving the discipline and was associated with a specific form of engagement with meaning that resisted exhaustion and concrete conceptualisation.⁵⁴⁷ Kenaan and Ferber explore

⁵⁴³ Beckett, *Watt*, 23–24.

⁵⁴⁴ René Rosfort and Giovanni Stanghellini, "In the Mood for Thought: Thinking and Feeling in Philosophy", *New Literary History* 43, no. 3 (2012): 395–417.

⁵⁴⁵ Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber, *Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking* (Springer: New York, 2011), 6.

⁵⁴⁶ C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski include an entry on Beckett's engagement with the philosophy of René Descartes in their *The Beckett Studies Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 132–125. Beckett's notes on Ancient Greek philosophy have been published in *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, ed. Steven Matthews and Matthew Feldman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 3–179.

⁵⁴⁷ Kenaan and Ferber, *Philosophy's Moods*, 7.

this configuration of the mood with recourse to Plato's evocation of wonder in response to the rainbow; the beauty of a rainbow initiates our curiosity, but in the service of providing a physical explanation for the impression it creates we find that the enigma escapes rational designations.⁵⁴⁸ As Keenan and Ferber write, "Wonder, consequently, is not a monolithic mood, but grounds philosophy by resonating the twofold structure of its response to the mystery of the word. It causes our fascination and captivation with the world to resonate while concomitantly responding to a fundamental discontent vis-à-vis what escapes explanation."⁵⁴⁹

Kenaan and Ferber identify a new development at the dawn of the seventeenth century, whereby the ancient philosophical "desire to know", considered more broadly paradigmatic of subsequent philosophy, folds in on itself through the ascendancy of a different atmosphere of philosophical ferment:

The inability to know is no longer linked with wonder and its accompanying forms of desire but with melancholy and doubt. Philosophy's confrontation with its own limits apropos the impossibility of knowing the world no longer finds its expression in passionate wonder but now takes the form of a deep melancholic recognition of what lies outside the scope of knowledge.⁵⁵⁰

The doubt underpinning Descartes's *Méthode* is, for Kenaan and Ferber, indicative of this melancholic turn and evidences "a radical withdrawal into the domain of disinterested inquiry" where "doubt overshadows fascination".⁵⁵¹ Consequently, "the systematic purging of passion and the deliverance from the attraction of unjustified belief become the only way to overcome this melancholic predicament".⁵⁵²

In tracing this paradigm shift, it is interesting to note that Kenaan and Ferber appear to overlook the foundational role of melancholy in inspiring wonder for the Ancient Greeks. As they observe, the "desire to know"⁵⁵³ was exemplified by ancient Aristotelian wonder, but it

⁵⁴⁸ Kenaan and Ferber, *Philosophy's Moods*, 7.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

was Aristotle who initially ascribed this generative mood to the melancholic temperament. Although Aristotle would write in the *Metaphysics* that “All men naturally desire knowledge”,⁵⁵⁴ he proposed that melancholics, specifically, were exceptional in this domain. Referring to mythical and philosophical figures ranging from Ajax and Bellerophon to Plato and Socrates, Aristotle raised a question that would continue to resonate for millennia: “Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry, or the arts are melancholic?”⁵⁵⁵

The progression from the Ancient Greeks’ passionate fascination to Descartes’ melancholic resignation, traced by Kenaan and Ferber, requires some careful consideration. The current of melancholia underpinning philosophical doubt in the seventeenth century served to acknowledge “what lay outside of the scope of knowledge”.⁵⁵⁶ However, doubt was ultimately harnessed in the project of galvanising *epistemological* insight: this is what might be understood as a pursuit of *knowledge of our own knowing*. As Steven Connor explains, “there is an epistemopathic payload within every epistemology, an excited yearning, for instance, to strive for a kind of self-realization and self-government in knowledge”.⁵⁵⁷ It might be proposed, therefore, that there remains a “desire to know”⁵⁵⁸ embedded within Descartes’ melancholic *Méthode*. As Connor writes:

The drive to know may well be accompanied by decisive feelings, or the desire for decision, but it may, and perhaps always must, also be accompanied by more mixed and shifting complexions of feelings ... even and especially in the itinerant or suspensive conditions we call surmising, supposing, *doubting*, or wondering.⁵⁵⁹

It would appear, then, that while melancholia underpins the philosophical mood of both Ancient Greek and Cartesian thought, the difference lies in the direction of the philosophical curiosity that is instigated by that mood. To this end, Kenaan and Ferber’s

⁵⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics, Books I–IX*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA and London, 1933), 3.

⁵⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Problemata xxxi*, in *Aristotle’s Works*, ed. W. D. Ross (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1955).

⁵⁵⁶ Kenaan and Ferber, “Moods and Philosophy”, in *Philosophy’s Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking*, ed. Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber (Springer: New York, 2011), 7.

⁵⁵⁷ Connor, *The Madness of Knowledge*, 11.

⁵⁵⁸ Kenaan and Ferber, “Moods and Philosophy”, 7.

⁵⁵⁹ Connor, *The Madness of Knowledge*, 24 (my emphasis).

explanation is instructive in describing the “gaze’s” shift from the exterior to interior as a movement from “great yearning and attraction to closure and self-sufficiency”:

When melancholic scrutiny conditions the disclosure of the world, the self becomes formative for the appearance of meaning and the disclosure of the world. In this respect Melancholy can be said to gather a special class of moods in which detachment from the world and absorption in the self become essential.⁵⁶⁰

Consequently, we can understand Descartes’ *Méthode*, the major philosophical structure contributing to the tone and tenor of *Watt*, as melancholic. The concern with knowledge and the compulsion to think – formerly the insignia of melancholic wonder – are, however, tempered and refracted inwards to produce a system that is shaped by sceptical deduction, demonstrating, in its “self-absorption”, an epistemological urge for “self-government in knowledge”. The weave of fastidious permutations, lists and series which form the texture of *Watt* shows us the brittle by-products of this rational method of proceeding, turning Descartes’ melancholic concern with securing ascertainable truth into humorous parody.

As Ilit Ferber has demonstrated, melancholic philosophy exhibits a simultaneous “detachment and utter closure”⁵⁶¹ from the world with an “intensely vital expressiveness regarding that world”,⁵⁶² and this is bound up with the discourse’s use of musical notions of harmony and attunement.⁵⁶³ This relationship manifests in *Watt*, underpinned by the presence of the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. As a result, it is necessary to introduce Leibniz’s theory of the monad. The presence in *Watt* of Leibnizian references in the text allows us to productively apply Heideggerian thought to help understand Watt’s own unusual situation. This provides a window onto the various levels at which mood and perspective operate in and through the working of the text. This is inspired by and dramatised through recourse to ideas of music. Moreover, as the following chapter will

⁵⁶⁰ Kenaan and Ferber, “Moods and Philosophy”, 7.

⁵⁶¹ Ilit Ferber, “Leibniz’s Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, in *Philosophy’s Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking*, ed. Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber (Springer: New York, 2011), 62.

⁵⁶² Ferber, “Leibniz’s Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, 62.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 65.

demonstrate, some of these ideas of music had already been deployed by the philosophers in question.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and *The Monadology*

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was a mathematician and philosopher who was instrumental in developing calculus in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Beckett developed familiarity with Leibniz's ideas when he was compiling the commonplace books referred to as the *Dream Notebook* (1931–1932) and the *Whoroscope Notebook* (1935–1938).⁵⁶⁴ When Beckett wrote in 1933 that Leibniz was “a great cod, but full of splendid little pictures”,⁵⁶⁵ he was homing in on the appeal of Leibniz's metaphysical monad. This is perhaps related to a statement to which David Tucker draws attention in writing about Beckett's attraction to Geulincx and Schopenhauer: in a letter to Thomas MacGreevy, Beckett states his preference for “a philosopher that can be read like a poet”,⁵⁶⁶ and for Tucker this is evidence of how Beckett's engagement with philosophy extends “beyond the bounds of analytic accuracy”.⁵⁶⁷ A more sustained engagement with Leibniz's ideas features in Beckett's ‘Philosophy Notes’, which he worked on throughout the 1930s.⁵⁶⁸

Differentiating himself from the Atomists, whom Beckett studied initially as a student at Trinity College Dublin and later while teaching at the *École Normale Supérieure*, Leibniz's philosophy hinges on his understanding of the monad as an individual, microcosmic unit lacking extension and in perpetual motion. A monad is a “simple substance” which is able to combine with other monads to form “compounds”.⁵⁶⁹ A single monad is not formed through a gradual accretion of individual parts but develops due to a principle of internal

⁵⁶⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, ed. Steven Matthews and Matthew Feldman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), xi.

⁵⁶⁵ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 6 December 1933. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol.1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 172.

⁵⁶⁶ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 21 September 1937. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol.1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 550.

⁵⁶⁷ David Tucker, *Samuel Beckett and Arnold Geulincx: Tracing 'a Literary Fantasia'* (London: Continuum: 2012), 32.

⁵⁶⁸ Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, xiii. As Steven Matthews observes, the specific dates of composition for Beckett's ‘Philosophy Notes’ are unknown but he suggests a “maximal” account as being between mid-1932 and mid-1938.

⁵⁶⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta, (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), 217.

growth.⁵⁷⁰ Consequently, monads are essentially indivisible; they are therefore considered by Leibniz to be “the real atoms of nature”.⁵⁷¹ Each monad exists independently of causation, and is therefore “windowless”: as Leibniz writes, “it is impossible to change the place of anything in it or to conceive in it any internal motion which could be produced, directed, or diminished therein”.⁵⁷² However, it is possible for changes to occur between the “simple substances”⁵⁷³ that comprise compounds.⁵⁷⁴

Leibniz specifies that a “mutual agreement” is established between these “simple substances” that coincide with each other in space and time, and between the soul and the body of the individual monad, through a “preestablished harmony”.⁵⁷⁵ Despite monads being “simple substances”,⁵⁷⁶ each is, as Ackerley and Gontarski explain, configured like “a microcosm, the world in little”.⁵⁷⁷ A harmony is maintained because each change that occurs in a monad derives from an “internal principle” and is “continuous” in every other monad, such that a change in one leads to a change in another.⁵⁷⁸ A process which Leibniz refers to as “sympathy” is integral to the non-causal act of a monad’s ‘expression’: “This [form of] expression takes place everywhere because every substance sympathizes with all the others and receives a proportional change corresponding to the slightest change which occurs in the whole world.”⁵⁷⁹ Leibniz envisions the monad as a “perpetual living mirror of the universe”:⁵⁸⁰ “Each portion of matter may be conceived as like a garden full of plants and like a pond full of fishes. But each branch or every plant, each member of every animal, each drop of its liquid parts, is also some such garden or pond.”⁵⁸¹

Leibniz refers to the representation of a continually changing “multiplicity” within the monad as “Perception”.⁵⁸² In his correspondence with Arnauld, he uses ‘expression’ to refer to the

⁵⁷⁰ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 218.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 219.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵⁷⁷ C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski, *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 379.

⁵⁷⁸ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 222–223.

⁵⁷⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz writing to Antoine Arnauld on 8 October 1687. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “Correspondence with Arnauld”, in *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology*, trans. George R. Montgomery (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1973), 339.

⁵⁸⁰ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 248.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 224.

monad's 'perception'. Importantly, in Leibniz's work neither of these terms – 'expression' and 'perception' – suggests a process which is externally focused, such as visual perception or verbal expression.⁵⁸³ The process of perception is internal and the force or "internal principal" that produces changes between perceptions is referred to as "appetition".⁵⁸⁴ Appetition, envisioned by Leibniz as a type of desire, underpins the monad's perception, which is indicative of its individuality: "It is true that desire [*l'appétit*] cannot always fully attain the whole perception at which it aims, but it always obtains some of it and attains to new perceptions."⁵⁸⁵

Countering Descartes, Leibniz held that not all perception is available to consciousness: unconscious perceptions, or "petites perceptions", constitute part of the representative life of monads and function like small, unconscious mental states. It is not possible for a monad to be conscious of each of these "impressions" on an individual level because they are either "too small and too numerous or too closely combined [*trop unies*]". However, a confused awareness of them arises when they are perceived collectively as a whole.⁵⁸⁶ To illustrate this idea, Leibniz employs his analogy of the sound of the sea:

In order to hear this sound as we do, we must hear the parts of which the whole sound is made up, that is to say the sounds which come from each wave, although each of these little sounds makes itself known only in the confused combination of all the sounds taken together, that is to say, in the moaning of the sea, and no one of the sounds would be observed if the wave which makes it were alone. For we must be affected a little by the motion of this wave, and we must have some perception of each of these sounds, however little they may be; otherwise we should not have the perception of a hundred thousand waves, for a hundred thousand nothings cannot make something.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ Ilit Ferber draws attention to this detail in, "Leibniz's Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony", in *Philosophy's Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking*, ed. Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber (Springer: New York, 2011), 58. See also Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 224.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "New Essays", in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta, (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), 370 (bracketed text in source).

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 371.

Each monad perceives a specific portion of the world with clarity and distinctness. However, as Ronald Bogue explains, Leibniz's sea analogy helps to illustrate that the monad's distinct perception is comprised of "an infinity of vague and decreasingly distinguishable micro perceptions".⁵⁸⁸ Consequently, as Latta emphasises, confused perceptions are not "mistakes or illusions" but rather "belong to the real order of things, which without them could not be what it is".⁵⁸⁹ Despite this, it is interesting to note that there always remains a cleavage between the expression of a monad and the thing expressed:

We can pass from a consideration of the relations in the expression to a knowledge of the corresponding properties of the thing expressed. Hence, it is clearly not necessary for that which expresses to be like the thing expressed, if only a certain analogy is maintained between the relations.⁵⁹⁰

Leibniz explains that each monad is individual due to differences among their "intrinsic" qualities.⁵⁹¹ Consequently, each monad expresses a different portion of the world distinctly according to its intrinsic qualities. Leibniz refers to this as the principle of the 'Identity of indiscernibles':

Indeed, each Monad must be different from every other. For in nature there are never two beings which are perfectly alike and in which it is not possible to find an internal difference, or at least a difference founded upon an intrinsic quality [dénomination].⁵⁹²

It follows that, for Leibniz, the world is an 'expression' of all monads. Importantly, however, when considering the monad's internal differences or intrinsic qualities, Leibniz specifies that "there must be a particular series of changes [un detail de ce qui change], which

⁵⁸⁸ Ronald Bogue, "The New Harmony", in *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (London: Continuum, 2019), 60.

⁵⁸⁹ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 49.

⁵⁹⁰ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Paper and Letters*, trans. and ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1969), 208.

⁵⁹¹ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 222.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

constitutes, so to speak, the specific nature and variety of simple substances”.⁵⁹³ On this, Leibniz writes:

This particular series of changes should involve a multiplicity in the unit [unité] or in that which is simple. For, as every natural change takes place gradually, something changes and something remains unchanged; and consequently a simple substance must be affected and related in many ways although it has no parts.⁵⁹⁴

This is referred to as ‘The Law of Continuity’, where in the state of continual change there is a “permanent” and “varying” component: “That is to say, at any moment, everything both ‘is’ and ‘is not,’ everything is becoming something else – something which is nevertheless, not entirely ‘other.’”⁵⁹⁵

The individuation of each monad – what we might term its individual perspective, which materialises in the specific portion of the world that it expresses with clarity – is not only determined by its intrinsic qualities, subject to change, but the principle of internal growth and the process of accommodation that occurs between monads due to these changes. In the *Monadology*, Leibniz indicates how monads are adapted to accommodate each other:⁵⁹⁶

A created thing is said to *act* outwardly in so far as it has perfection, and to suffer [or to be passive, *pâtir*] in relation to another, in so far as it is imperfect. Thus *activity* [action] is attributed to a Monad, in so far as it has distinct perceptions, and passivity [passion] in so far as its perceptions are confused.⁵⁹⁷

As Leibniz specifies, every degree of action in one monad leads to a passivity in another monad and vice versa:

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 223 (bracketed text in source).

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.* (bracketed text in source).

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ This ‘suffering’ consists of being ‘passive’, but interestingly Latta’s bracketed additions suggest to the reader that in using ‘passivity’ here Leibniz is drawing on the word’s connection to ‘passion’.

⁵⁹⁷ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 245 (bracketed text in source; my emphasis).

Accordingly, among created things, activities and passivities are mutual. For God, comparing two simple substances, finds reasons in each which oblige Him to adapt the other to it, and consequently what is active in certain respects is passive from another point of view; active in so far as what we distinctly know in it serves to explain [render raison de] what takes place in another, and passive in so far as the explanation [raison] of what takes place in it is to be found in that which is distinctly known in another.⁵⁹⁸

The monad is in quite specific ways “affected” by and “related” to the world, despite its seclusion. Importantly, for the current context, Ilit Ferber links this to Heidegger’s principle of ‘Being-in-the-World’. Ferber writes, “their [monads’] being is determined and defined by their being-in-the world or, more precisely, the world being-in-them, and the specific ways they relate to this world”.⁵⁹⁹

As will be explained later in this chapter, Ferber engages the multifaceted term *Stimmung* to convey the monad’s special structure; the metaphysical unit is imbued with inner feeling but remains in concordance with the exterior world. However, by drawing Heidegger’s concept of Being-in-the-World and his own specific use of *Stimmung* in relation to this into dialogue with Leibniz’s monad, a relationship can be identified between the monad’s *perspective*, in particular, and the specifically *disclosive* potential of *Stimmung*. Each monad’s clear zone of perception, the accord that it produces, constitutes its individual perspective which is imparted by its intrinsic qualities and its process of accommodation in relation to other monads. As such, the monad’s clear zone of perception is akin to our *Stimmung* or ontological state-of-mind [befindlichkeit] that we recognise ontically as our mood in that it has the potential to reveal to us the particularity of our Being-in-the-World, the ‘that-it-is’ of the being of the ‘there’, that is, the condition of Dasein’s thrownness. Our ‘mood’ or ‘affectedness’, disclosing our thrownness, provides the ground for what ‘matters’ to us in the world. As such, our mood constitutes the ways in which we are open to the world.

This connection perhaps calls for an interpretation of Being-in-the-World, and by extension *Stimmung* or mood, that embraces more change and fluidity than Heidegger admits.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 247 (bracketed text in source).

⁵⁹⁹ Ilit Ferber, “Leibniz’s Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, 59.

Thinking of the subject's "entanglement"⁶⁰⁰ with the world at the level of mood specifically, Hagi Kenaan observes that Heidegger "ultimately ends up privileging the changeless core (rather than the changeability) of our experience with moods", which "reflects his wider concerns in *Being and Time* which include a notion of authenticity that is based on Dasein's being-a-whole and in a corollary manner, on the privileging of only one kind of mood as ontologically fundamental".⁶⁰¹ Despite this, Kenaan and Birgit Breidenbach draw out the philosophical potential of the changeability of mood that remains latent in Heidegger's discussion of Stimmung. As Kenaan notes, "moods are never fully determined, closed, emotional frameworks, but always have transcendence – the possibility of infringing on and reaching beyond their own bounds – as part of their essence".⁶⁰² Drawing attention to the suffix '-ung' of Stimmung and its process-oriented implications in the German language, Breidenbach explains that Stimmung "signifies the continual process of tuning human existence, and of attuning it to the world".⁶⁰³

This fluid interpretation of Stimmung provides a way to understand the principle of internal growth underpinning the ascending monad, which is responsible for its expanding clear zone of perception or perspective. To use Heidegger's terms, our thrownness into the world cannot be subject to change: it is our foundness or givenness. This produces a particular Stimmung which we recognise as our mood, and this makes the world seem open and closed to us in specific ways. By engaging with the way in which the world is disclosed to us *through mood*, it may be possible for the world to attune us anew, thus changing the Stimmung in which we find ourselves and the way in which the world matters to us. This allows for an expansion of perspective due to the change of Stimmung. It is this trajectory that provides the basis for Jonathan Flatley's theory of Affective Mapping, which seeks to transform constraining and inhibiting moods into those that are enabling and empowering. In this regard, engagement with one's mood or perspective is the key to the principle of internal growth underpinning the monad.

⁶⁰⁰ Hagi Keenan, 'Changing Moods', in *Mood, Interdisciplinary Perspectives, New Theories*, ed. Birgit Breidenbach and Thomas Docherty (New York: Routledge, 2019) 42–43.

⁶⁰¹ Kenaan, "Changing Moods", 44.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶⁰³ Birgit Breidenbach, *Aesthetic and Philosophical Reflections on Mood: Stimmung and Modernity* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2020), 22.

Beckett's Engagement with Leibniz

Several article length studies by Garin V. Dowd, Naoya Mori and C. J. Ackerley have usefully traced the presence of Leibniz in Beckett's oeuvre.⁶⁰⁴ The impetus his ideas such as "pre-established harmony", appetite and the "petites perceptions" supply to the explorations of music, tuning and harmony, specifically with regards to how these are used to elaborate explorations of mood and perspective that are endemic to melancholia, however, remains unexplored. I have argued that a relationship can be identified between the monad's *perspective*, (its clear and distinct representations) and the specifically *disclosive* potential of Heideggerian Stimmung, where our mood has the potential to reveal to us our thrownness: the specificity of Being-in-the-World. By engaging the idea of monadic perspective with Heideggerian Stimmung, a particular trajectory has been traced that provides a window onto the monad's "principle of internal growth"; engagement with one's Stimmung or perspective can serve as a route for the transformation, expansion and diversification of that Stimmung. Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes' end with a chapter on nineteenth-century philosophy: there is no mention of Heidegger in Beckett's transcriptions.⁶⁰⁵ However, in one of Beckett's comments on Leibniz in his 'Philosophy Notes', he includes a passage which emphasises the "identity of part with the whole" and the resulting "unity in plurality" that is ensured by the fact that every force applies to all monads and that every substance represents other substances. 'Omnia ubique' translates as 'everything everywhere', thereby underscoring the idea that all monads have the potential to represent each other based on their common content:

Every force world-force in particular phase, every substance world-substance in particular form. Omnia ubique. Substance is unity in plurality.

⁶⁰⁴ Garin V. Dowd, "Nomadology: Reading the Beckettian Baroque", *Journal of Beckett Studies* 8, no.1 (1998), 15–50; Naoya Mori, "Beckett's Windows and the Windowless Self", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 14 (2004): 357–370; Mori, "Becoming Stone: A Leibnizian Reading of Beckett's Fiction", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*, 19 (2008): 201–210; Mori, "Beckett's Faint Cries: Leibniz's *Petites Perceptions* in *First Love* and *Malone Dies*", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 24, no.1 (2012): 189–204; C. J. Ackerley, 'Monadology: Samuel Beckett and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz', in *Beckett/Philosophy*, ed. Matthew Feldman and Karim Mamdani (Sofia: Sofia University Press St Kliment Ohridski, 2012), 156.

⁶⁰⁵ Rodney Sharkey proposes that Beckett was familiar with Heidegger's philosophy in the 1930s. Instrumental to his early acquaintance with Heidegger was Beckett's then friend Jean Beaufret, who nurtured Beckett's interest in philosophy. Sharkey sees Beckett's post-war work as a response to both Beaufret and Heidegger. Rodney Sharkey, "Beaufret, Beckett and Heidegger: The Question(s) of Influence", *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 22, (2010): 409–422.

Every substance ‘represents’ (Vorstellt: unifies manifold) multitude of other substances. (TCD MS 10967/191r)⁶⁰⁶

Beckett’s comments on Leibniz capture the philosopher’s response to Descartes’ radical solipsism; through the paradoxical design of the monad as a self-sufficient archive of worldly impressions, Leibniz attempted to re-establish an “enunciative centre” in his project to rekindle the subject’s relationship with the world. Beckett’s notes fasten upon what Garin Dowd has described as Leibniz’s unusual and alternative “inclusion, envelopment or expression” of the world.⁶⁰⁷ As we can see, then, Beckett’s notes on Leibniz emphasise the philosopher’s response to Descartes and do so with a distinctly Heideggerian character, foregrounding the appeal to community carried by Being-in-the World.

More substantially, in order to highlight the amenability of Beckett’s philosophical frameworks to a Stimmung-oriented reading due to their underlying musical conception, it is important to note the extent to which the ‘Philosophy Notes’ provide evidence of Beckett’s engagement with Leibniz, via his reading of Archibald B. D. Alexander’s *A Short History of Philosophy* and Wilhelm Windelband’s *A History of Philosophy*. The notes include short transcribed passages and comments summarising key topics such as the attributes of the Leibnizian monad, including its “windowlessness”.⁶⁰⁸ Leibnizian notions of perception and appetite (including the role of petites perceptions)⁶⁰⁹ and the principle of the identity of ‘indiscernibles’⁶¹⁰ are given attention, in addition to the relationship between causality and freedom, emphasising the freedom that is permitted by ethical action, which Leibniz equates with reason.⁶¹¹ In the course of the following chapters, specific transcriptions and comments on these topics will be drawn out for consideration. Here, it is necessary to reflect briefly on the most salient passages that relate to the musical focus of this study.

⁶⁰⁶ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, 327.

⁶⁰⁷ Garin Dowd, *Abstract Machines: Samuel Beckett and Philosophy after Deleuze and Guattari* (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 2007), 134. In a reappropriation of Heidegger’s ‘Being-in-the World’, Deleuze has recognised this as a Leibnizian ‘being-for-the-world’. See Giles Deleuze, *The Fold* (London: Continuum Press, 2010), 28.

⁶⁰⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, TCD MS 10967/181r, 327.

⁶⁰⁹ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, TCD MS 10967/191r and 10967/191v, 328–329.

⁶¹⁰ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, TCD MS 10967/101r, 327–28.

⁶¹¹ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, TCD MS 1096/191v, 329.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given Beckett's recourse to philosophical appropriations of musical terms, Beckett's notes include comments on Leibniz's doctrine of "pre-established harmony". Notably, this is first referenced in Beckett's notes on causality, in relation to Geulincx's use of the analogy of two synchronised clocks to illustrate the intervention of God underpinning Occasionalism. Beckett observes that Leibniz uses the same example of two clocks set in harmony by God to illustrate his own theory and to set in relief Cartesian and Occasionalist conceptions. Later in the same section, Beckett's notes elaborate upon the "pre-established harmony" maintained between monads:

All [Monads] harmonize by virtue of their common content, hence the action of one substance on another. This motion is the harmonie préétablie des substances – in which principle of correspondence of Geulincx and Spinoza for relation of 2 attributes is extended to totality of substances. And with Leibniz, as with them, this principle excludes all chance and freedom (uncaused action). The only freedom is ethical: *Eo magis est libertas quo magis agitur ex ratione.* (TCD MS 1096/191V)⁶¹²

There are additional places where Beckett is clearly considering Leibnizian representation in relation to a Cartesian backdrop; an example is the comment, "Thus Descartes' epistemological criterion becomes metaphysical predicate, by the fact that Leibniz, like Scotus, conceives the distinct-corporeal antithesis in terms of intensity of representation"). Importantly, then, these notes show Beckett to be linking aspects of Cartesianism and Occasionalism with Leibnizian philosophy, often via the metaphor of harmony. Earlier in this chapter it was argued that Descartes' *Méthode* can be understood as a melancholic refraction of Aristotelian wonder. The philosophical framework supplied by the *Méthode* not only provides impetus to the novel's events but plays an important role in shaping the affective character of the text. Considering the nature of Beckett's notes on Leibniz, it must also be emphasised that, in addition to Descartes melancholy *Méthode*, the format of the Leibnizian monad held significance for Beckett, specifically with regards to how he creatively framed his own experiences of melancholia.

⁶¹² Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, 329.

Beckett's *personal* proclivity for the melancholy temperament can be glimpsed in his comments and admissions to friends and colleagues throughout his life. However, the correspondence that coincides with the early period work, prior to the writing of *Watt*, is particularly revealing in this regard. In a letter written to MacGreevy in 1935, Beckett reflects on his early susceptibility to melancholy and draws directly on Thomas à Kempis to couch his experience of those symptoms we might associate with a classical presentation of the condition – apathy, resignation and self-imposed withdrawal – in terms of a Quietist ethos.⁶¹³ Chris Ackerley has attended to the presence of Thomas à Kempis in Beckett's oeuvre and describes Quietism as a “doctrine of extreme ascetism and contemplative devotion teaching that the chief duty of man is the contemplation of God, or Christ, to become independent of outward circumstances and sensual distraction”.⁶¹⁴ Beckett's own self-confessed “twisting”⁶¹⁵ of Kempis' Quietist doctrine is formative of what Feldman calls Beckett's “Agnostic Quietism”; a pervasive “trope” of artistic “melancholic contemplation” that arises specifically from his early readings and intellectual development, concerned with “suffering, failure, uncertainty and stoicism”.⁶¹⁶

It seems that Beckett himself saw this artistic sublimation of melancholia as something of a ‘solution’ to his early experience of the condition. Later in the same letter, after musing on his favourite quotations from Thomas à Kempis' *De imitatione Christi*, Beckett implies that his earlier somewhat narcissistic melancholia has transformed into what I would characterise as a kind of writerly melancholic contemplation. In the letter, Beckett dramatises this narcissistic facet of the condition through an allusion to early genial conceptions of melancholia, such as Plato's notion of inspired frenzy and the Aristotelian association of the melancholic temperament with intellectual fortitude. Reflecting on his psychoanalytic treatment, Beckett refers to his affliction as a “bubble on a puddle”, evoking the heating of a fluid substance such as the melancholy humour of black bile:

⁶¹³ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 10 March 1935. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 257.

⁶¹⁴ C. J. Ackerley, “Samuel Beckett and Thomas à Kempis: The Roots of Quietism”, in *Beckett and Religion: Beckett/Aesthetics/Politics*, ed. Marius Buning, Matthijs Engelberts and Onno Kusters (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2000), 88.

⁶¹⁵ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 10 March 1935. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 257.

⁶¹⁶ Feldman, *Falsifying Beckett: Essays on Archives, Philosophy and Methodology in Beckett Studies* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2015), 106.

If the heart still bubbles it is because the puddle has not been drained, and the fact of it bubbling more fiercely than ever is perhaps open to receive consolation from the waste that splutters most, when the bath is nearly empty.⁶¹⁷

This association is drawn from Marcillio Ficino's *Three Books on Life*, via Burton: As Jennifer Radden observes, Ficino, who is extensively referenced in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, revived the Aristotelian link between melancholy and brilliance and further related such "inspiration and exalted moods and achievements of genius"⁶¹⁸ to black bile, drawing on the humoral accounts of early physicians. Importantly, through this, Beckett's reflections on his early experience of melancholia are correlated with the movement of the heart, echoing the associations of the musical references in *Murphy* discussed in Part One. In the letter, Beckett refers to his psychoanalytic treatment as "an expensive canular",⁶¹⁹ punning on 'canular' as a hoax or joke and simultaneously the homophone of 'cannula': a medical drain for the passage of fluids. As such, Beckett's framing of his early narcissistic melancholia, transformed into an artistic trope of melancholic contemplation, testifies to his association of the impetus to think and philosophise with a hermetic subjectivity – a type of monadic design where the world captured within, a world of unfolding thought, is envisaged as a site of musical happening – as the unfolding melodic progressions like those of Murphy's heart. Indeed, in describing his early egotism Beckett envisages himself as a type of radically self-contained musical entity harbouring an aggressive accumulation of negative emotion. As we might expect, the movement of the heart acts as a type of physical barometer attuned to the melodic flux, and the intensification of his "apathy & sneers" is described as a crescendo. This supports the implication that Beckett's interior retreat has a specifically musical architecture:

For years I was unhappy, consciously and deliberately ever since I left school & went into T.C.D., so that I isolated myself more and more,

⁶¹⁷ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 10 March 1935. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 259.

⁶¹⁸ Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 88.

⁶¹⁹ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 10 March 1935. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 259.

undertook less and less and lent myself to a crescendo of disparagement of others and myself. But in all that there was nothing that struck me as morbid. The misery and solitude and apathy & the sneers were the elements of an index of superiority & guaranteed the feeling of arrogant otherness....in short, if the heart had not put the fear of death into me I would be still boozing & sneering & lounging around & feeling that I was too good for anything else.⁶²⁰

The letter to MacGreevy may also indicate that Beckett associated the development of his own condition, and what he called a resulting “abject self-referring quietism”, with Leibniz’s highly expressive but simultaneously isolated monad. It is possible to trace two relevant allusions to Leibniz, one before and one after his reflections on his early narcissistic experience of melancholia. Firstly, Beckett refers to this state of mind as “a very baroque solipsism”;⁶²¹ considering the period in which the *Monadology* was written and the inherent musicality of the ideas explored therein, as well as the self-retentive design of Leibniz’s metaphysical unit, it is plausible here that Beckett was alluding to the Leibnizian monad. Secondly, later in the letter,⁶²² when recalling Wilfred Bion’s therapeutic evaluation of his early feelings of melancholia, Beckett notes that he “cods” himself with such explanations as those provided by his analyst. In doing so, Beckett alludes to his previous dismissal of Leibniz as “a great cod but full of splendid little pictures”.⁶²³ Clearly, then, he is recalling Leibniz at a crucial moment of self-reflection upon a point of almost imperceptible transformation brought about by Bion’s treatment. As such, we might understand Beckett’s own ‘Agnostic Quietism’ (to use Feldman’s term), with ‘artistic melancholy’ couched within it, as presented in the letter and perhaps in Beckett’s understanding of his own personal trajectory, to have grown out of his reflections on his early experience of the narcissistic facet of melancholy.

⁶²⁰ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 10 March 1935. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 258–259.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶²³ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 6 December 1933. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck vol. 1 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 172.

The Unrealised Monad: A “Coenaesthesia of Mind” or Melancholia’s Creative Kernel

As the analysis of Beckett’s letter to MacGreevy suggests, and the remainder of this chapter further demonstrates, through engagement with Beckett’s correspondence it is possible to trace a continuum from the narcissistic facet of the melancholic condition, to its reframing as a type of Agnostic Quietism that envelopes his artistic melancholy, and subsequently to the writerly creative impulse. Moreover, the latter part of this trajectory is supported by Beckett’s own understanding of the development of the monad, as evidenced by his transcriptions on Leibniz in the ‘Philosophy Notes’.

In this regard, an extract from a letter written to Mary Manning in 1937 is particularly useful, indicating that Beckett recruited Leibniz’s idea of the monad to grasp at his own personal melancholy. In the passage below, Beckett dramatises a state of self-absorption in which he is developing a sense of his own self-contained potential:

There is an ecstasy of accidia – willless in a grey tumult of idées obscures.....The real consciousness is the chaos, a grey commotion of mind, with no premises or conclusions or problems or solutions or cases of judgements. I lie for days on the floor, or in the woods, accompanied & unaccompanied, in a coenaesthesia of mind, a fullness of mental self-aesthesia that is entirely useless. The monad without the conflict, lightless and darkless. I used to pretend to work, I do so no longer. I used to dig about in the mental sand for the lugworms of likes and dislikes, I do so no longer. The lugworms of *understanding*.⁶²⁴

The extract is particularly interesting in the context of the present discussion, due to the heightened sentience that it ascribes to the melancholic. The experience is described as “an ecstasy of accidia”; Beckett may have been familiar with this term through his reading of Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Although ‘accidia’ gained popularity in the later Middle Ages and became the accepted term, as Stanley W. Jackson observes, “the

⁶²⁴ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 546.

Latin ‘acedia’ was the transliteration of the Greek ἀκηδία meaning heedless, sluggish torpor, literally non-caring state”.⁶²⁵ Jackson notes of accidia that:

This troublesome state was not merely dejection or sorrow. Nevertheless, from its beginnings it was associated with *tristitia* (dejection, sadness, sorrow), and this connection continued; there were frequent references to *desperatio* (despair) in writings about melancholia and it was intermittently brought into association with *melancholia* in the late Middle Ages.⁶²⁶

Beckett couples accidia with ecstasy to convey a sublime form of slothfulness or animated melancholia that is experienced as a mental plenitude, which the afflicted individual conceals within themselves; a “mental self-aesthesia” (in the previous quotation) denotes the sensitivity of one’s own mind, while a “coenaesthesia of mind” conveys the feeling of fully inhabiting one’s mental faculties. As such, both are assigned to a type of embodied mind.

Perhaps most significant to our current investigation is Beckett’s association of this rich psychical inner life of the melancholic with the Leibnizian monad. Here, Beckett imagines himself as Leibniz’s metaphysical unit, “without the conflict, lightless and darkless”. Abdicating ascent, this is the monad at its most hermetic and self-contained. It is tempting to speculate whether Beckett associated this lack of realisation of self in relation to other monads with the experience of mental plenitude that is “entirely useless”; this conception of melancholia perhaps has Leibnizian undertones.

Accidia was associated with carelessness towards one’s faith and a lack of responsibility towards religious duty.⁶²⁷ In a passage from Beckett’s transcriptions of Leibniz in the ‘Philosophy Notes’, the conception of the monad’s being as “psychical” and “internal” is connected in Beckett’s transcription to what is referred to as its “immanent activity”, pointing to the monad’s inherent but contained potential, which manifests as the presence of God but is otherwise figured as activity towards the limits of possible experience of

⁶²⁵ Stanley W. Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 65.

⁶²⁶ Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression*, 66.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

knowledge. Beckett's transcription reads, "Monad a purely internal principle, psychical not physical, and therefore substance a force of immanent activity" (TCD MS 10967/181r).⁶²⁸

The transcription suggests that in realising its inherent but contained potential through engagement with other monads, the self-as-monad embarks upon an epistemological trajectory of "immanent activity", which is the materialisation of God's presence and plan. In Beckett's creative framing, then, an "ecstasy of accidia", with the mind at its most sentient, is the experience of abiding alone with God's creative impulse, which prefigures knowledge and its realisation in the world as such; it is contorted into the "premises or conclusions or solutions or cases of judgement" of the letter to Mary Manning and, as I will go on to explain, it is this refraction that is dramatised in *Watt*. The latter seems to emanate from the former.

The presence of Leibniz underpinning this conception of melancholia is further confirmed by Beckett's depiction of this inner state, which he describes as a "Grey tumult of Idées obscures": this "grey commotion of mind" resembles the petites perceptions of Leibniz. Beckett's transcriptions also include reference to the role of the tiny and diffuse petites perceptions; they are envisioned as "impulses", the "force" that underpins a monad's representations. These petites perceptions are therefore more akin to appetite here than elsewhere in Beckett's transcriptions. Accordingly, the extract describes the petites perceptions as "unconscious mental states". As Feldman observes, the term petites perceptions does not appear in standard editions of *The Monadology*: it is Windelband who uses the unusual expression and who associates them with the unconscious.⁶²⁹ Beckett's transcription, drawing on Windelband, reads, "Representative force of monads made up of infinite small impulses (petites perceptions), the unconscious mental states of modern psychology" (TCD MS 10967/191v).⁶³⁰ The petites perceptions are acknowledged by Leibniz as imparting an aesthetic quality to our perceptions:

When I recognise one thing among others without being able to say in what its differences or properties consist ... the recognition is confused. This is how we know sometimes clearly, without having any doubts, that a poem, a

⁶²⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, 327.

⁶²⁹ Feldman, *Beckett's Books*, 65.

⁶³⁰ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, 328.

painting is well or poorly made, since there is in it a *je ne sçay quoy* that satisfies or shocks us.

This lends support to the previous suggestion that the experience of “an ecstasy of accidia” implies immersion in a latent type of creative energy. As John Bolin has pointed out, in the same letter to Mary Manning, Beckett writes, “The state that suits me best”, is the one in which “I do nothing” but “write the odd poem when it is there”; writing poetry is “the only thing worth doing”. Elaborating upon the “Grey tumult of idées obscures”, Beckett specifies in the extract that the “the real consciousness is the chaos”.⁶³¹

It is possible for us to understand the extract from the letter to Mary Manning as a reflection upon the unrealised monadic self, where, through the actual act of writing, the monad’s self-potential is realised. The passage from the letter leans towards the writerly, rather than the quotidian. As an early stage in the refraction from creative impulse towards “knowledge”, the extract is somewhat poetic in its evocation of a burgeoning, incandescent mind, the somewhat romanticised torpidity of lying “for days on the floor, or in the woods”, and its refrain-like repetitions, “I used to pretend to work, I do so no longer. I used to dig about in the mental sand for the lugworms of likes and dislikes, I do so no longer”, which imbue the text with its own type of musicality. Although he no longer looks in the sand for the “lugworms of *understanding*”, and no longer *pretends* to work, the author seems to have come closer to a true understanding of himself and in doing so is fulfilling his vocation as a writer. From his position of agnostic quietism in the earlier letter to Thomas MacGreevy, Beckett asks, “is there some way of devoting pain and monstrosity & incapacitation to the service of a deserving cause? Is one to insist on a crucifixion for which there is no demand?”⁶³²

Finally, then, it is possible to understand the philosophical frameworks underpinning *Watt* as intrinsically melancholy in character. It is clear that Beckett conceived of them in this way and used Leibniz’s monad specifically to frame his own experience of the condition. This chapter has begun attending to the affective dimension of *Watt* through a Stimmung-oriented reading of its undergirding systems of thought, a reading that establishes the

⁶³¹ John Bolin, *Beckett and the Modern Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 68.

⁶³² Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 10 March 1935. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 258 (my emphasis).

ground for the next chapter's analysis of how the instances of music in *Watt* contribute to the novel's multilayered engagement with the concept of Stimmung. As a refraction of Aristotelian wonder, we can now understand Descartes' *Méthode* as melancholic. Considering the complicity of Beckett's philosophical sources with some of Heidegger's thought, it has been possible to identify a relationship between Heideggerian Stimmung and the Leibnizian monad's clear zone of perception; both figure as a type of perspective on the world and are subject to change and expansion through engagement with mood. Not only can we understand this as the principle of the monad's *internal* growth, but it is also possible to interpret the monad's trajectory of increasing perceptive clarity as harbouring a similar melancholic quality to the fastidious *Méthode*. This comes to the fore in Beckett's thinking in the 1930s, as evidenced by his correspondence. Here, he uses the Leibnizian monad to frame his own experiences of melancholia as a type of trajectory emanating from the unrealised monadic self; Beckett conceives of himself as a "monad without the conflict, lightless and darkless", who experiences a "coenesthesia of mind", a type of creative impulse akin to self-contained Aristotelian wonder, that (as the following chapter will demonstrate with recourse to *Watt*) is melancholically refracted into the "premises or conclusions or problems or solutions or cases of judgements"⁶³³ of epistemological consciousness that he scornfully dismisses in his correspondence.

⁶³³ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 546.

PART TWO: MUSIC, MOOD AND ATTUNEMENT IN WATT

Chapter Six – Alternative Modes of ‘Attunement’: The Threne and Arsene’s Monologue

Introduction

In his 1937 letter to Mary Manning, cited in the previous chapter, Beckett employs his understanding of the Leibnizian monad to capture his own encounter with melancholia and to articulate the way in which the epistemological quality of the condition is experienced in terms of the self’s engagement with the exterior world. In this creative framing, a type of self-contained creative impetus precedes its own contrived refraction into knowledge. *Watt* dramatises this cumbersome transformation of the “chaos”-like “real consciousness” lent by the “petites perceptions” into the “premises or conclusions or problems or solutions or cases of judgements”⁶³⁴ that comprise an absurd attempt at “accord” with the exterior world.

The idealised vision of the self-contained monad simultaneously encompasses the world as a wealth of knowledge while unfolding this plenitude as a series of perceptions – the “splendid little pictures”⁶³⁵ that chime with its exterior – all while remaining radically separate from that same world. This vision is, for Ilit Ferber, indicative of the monad’s “melancholic structure”, and this chapter draws on Ferber’s concept of the monad’s melancholic design, directing attention to the significant role of music and harmony in this aspect of Leibniz’s philosophy. Beckett uses instances of musical notation throughout the novel; Ferber’s account of the idealized vision of the melancholic monad and the attention she draws to Leibniz’s recourse to music to presence this design provides a basis from which to consider the threne that Watt hears on his way to Mr Knott’s house: it helps to expose the Leibnizian heritage of the musical notation and song text, leading to the conclusion that the incorporation of this musical event acts, on one level, as a critique of Leibnizian thought.

⁶³⁴ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929–1940*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 257.

⁶³⁵ Samuel Beckett writing to Thomas MacGreevy on 6 December 1933. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 172.

Beckett attempts an alternative form of ‘attunement’ with the reader, derived from his understanding and creative reframing of Leibniz’s notion of the petites perceptions. As such, this chapter draws attention to the series of innervating attempts throughout the novel to reattune the reader and *Watt* to an alternative form of harmony and thus, an alternative way of experiencing and engaging with the world.

“The Musical Score Which the Soul Reads”:⁶³⁶ Leibniz’s Monad as ‘Melancholically Structured’

Importantly, as Ilit Ferber has demonstrated, Leibniz’s monad can be understood as “melancholically structured”.⁶³⁷ Moreover, musical concepts play a fundamental role in facilitating this specifically melancholic design. Reflecting on the variegated but nevertheless stable historical connection between melancholy and philosophy, Ferber asks why it is that “a mood so persistently characterized by closure and detachment can be the same mood that gains us access to truth, which requires openness and involvement”.⁶³⁸

How, then, can we understand the monad as “melancholically structured”? As Ferber stresses, Leibniz was recognised for his persistent optimism and does not refer to melancholia directly in his work.⁶³⁹ Despite this, the monad’s relationship with the world is constituted by a “melancholic attunement”.⁶⁴⁰ The monad, like the melancholic subject remains detached from the exterior world. As such, and as with the melancholic individual, the monad’s activity exists independent of and is resistant to causation. Ferber notes that

⁶³⁶ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Paper and Letters*, trans and ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1969), 580.

⁶³⁷ Ilit Ferber, “Leibniz’s Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, in *Philosophy’s Moods: The Affective Grounds of Thinking*, ed. Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber (Springer: New York, 2011), 54.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

monadic motion occurs “spontaneously”⁶⁴¹ and is reliant not on exterior stimulus but on interior depth. Leibniz writes: “Anything which occurs in what is strictly a substance must be a case of action in the metaphysically rigorous sense of something ... spontaneously arising out of its own depths”.⁶⁴² Subsequently, Ferber explains:

since all the monad’s predicates have always belonged to it, and since these predicates include the monad’s complete history, it follows that the monad’s activity and development in time are mere consequences of its own notions, spontaneously derived from its own depths, never from other substances.⁶⁴³

For Ferber, Leibniz develops a specific kind of melancholic solipsism that parallels what Freud identifies as the melancholic’s narcissistic self-absorption.⁶⁴⁴ Rather than the monad coexisting with others in the world, the world resides within it. Here, the world is incorporated within the monad and materialises in the monad’s unique ‘expression’ of the world: “whence it appears that in the smallest particle of matter there is a world of creatures, living beings, animals, entelechies, souls”.⁶⁴⁵

Importantly musical concepts and analogies are essential in helping to shape and sustain the specifically melancholic design. It is Leibniz’s notion of “pre-established harmony” that ensures that the monad retains a fundamental detachment from the world through its principle of internal accord. To this end, *musical harmony* acts as a fundamental metaphor for Leibniz’s melancholic format. Monads do not act upon each other directly but are held in relation to one another by a “pre-established harmony”.⁶⁴⁶ Monadic harmony operates on two levels: firstly, it links the monad to the world that it expresses; secondly, it operates between the various expressions of each monad, which materialise as a multiplicity of independent perspectives. The monad therefore remains *internally* open to the world from *within* its complete closure. Indeed, Ferber maintains that “harmony’s musical connotations

⁶⁴¹ Ferber, “Leibniz’s Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, 62. Leibniz uses “spontaneously” in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ‘New Essays’, in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta, (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), 218.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*

⁶⁴³ Ferber, “Leibniz’s Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, 62–63.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁴⁵ Leibniz, *The Monadology*, 256.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

are crucial to unfolding the problematization of the monad's special encounter with the world, together with its philosophical implications";⁶⁴⁷ harmony should not be thought of as synonymous with perfection or precise relation but, as in the musical sense, a position of agreement.

Leibniz illustrates this idea with his analogy of two choirs singing. He imagines two separate choirs that can neither see nor hear each other. Both choirs follow their individual parts and in doing so produce harmony: the listener perceives a coherent whole despite the two choirs being separate from one another. An individual listening in close proximity to one choir (which they can hear but not see) may be able to imagine what the other choir (which they can see but not hear) is doing by listening in to the nearest choir. In doing so, Leibniz says, they would hear the music of the closest choir as an "echo" of the other, and would then deduce, using certain rules of "symphony" (harmony) applied to the further choir, specific "interludes" of their own. In Leibniz's analogy, the listener can attribute to the closest choir specific "movements" according to what is implied musically by the melody of the other choir. The listener does this without knowing that singers in the other choir are also behaving according to their own specific plan:

To employ a comparison, I will say in regard to this concomitance, which I hold to be true, that it is like several bands of musicians or choirs separately taking up their parts and placed in such a way that they neither see nor hear one another, though they nevertheless, agree perfectly in following their notes, each one his own, in such a way that he who hears the whole finds in it a wonderful harmony much more surprising than if there were a connection between the two performers. It is quite possible also that a person who is close by one of two such choirs could judge from the one what the other was doing, and would form such a habit (particularly if we supposed that he was able to hear his own choir without seeing it and to see the other without hearing it), that his imagination would come to his aid and he would no longer think of the choir where he was, but of the other, and he would take his own for an echo of the other, attributing to his own only certain interludes, in which certain rules of symphony by which he

⁶⁴⁷ Ferber, "Leibniz's Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony", 65.

understood the other did not appear, or else attributing to his own certain movements which he caused to be made from his side, according to certain plans that he thought were imitated by the other because of the inter-relationship which he found in the kind of melody, not knowing at all that those who were in the other choir were doing also something which corresponded according to their own plans.⁶⁴⁸

The choirs, like monads themselves, have no external relation but operate within a structure of agreement. As Ferber notes, elsewhere Leibniz elaborates upon the role of perception in the monad's ability to remain in such a state of concomitance:

It is therefore these present perceptions, along with their regulated tendency to change in conformity to what is outside, which form the musical score which the soul reads. "But" says Mr. Bayle, "must not the soul recognise the sequence of notes (distinctly), and so actually think of them?" I answer "No"; it suffices that the soul has included them in its confused thoughts in the same way that it has a thousand things in its memory without thinking of them distinctly.⁶⁴⁹

It is interesting that Leibniz conceives of the congruence between the two choirs in terms of a musical score, constituted by the amorphous perceptions and 'read' by the soul of each independent melancholic monad. However, as Ferber explains, the series of notes – the "congruence" in question – is not directly available to the consciousness for distinct apprehension, but instead remains part of the diffuse internal perceptions and memories: the petites perceptions. As Ferber says, "this accord can only be intuitively felt, springing as it does from the depth of indistinct perceptions, in the same way that music is enjoyed precisely from the unconscious perception of its harmonic structures".⁶⁵⁰ This provides something of a solution to the monad's melancholic detachment, since the movement and orientation of the melancholic entity is governed spontaneously by a type of unheard, internal music: an indistinct "sequence of notes" that is not available to consciousness. It is

⁶⁴⁸ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'Correspondence with Arnauld', in *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology*, trans. George R. Montgomery (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1973), 188.

⁶⁴⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Paper and Letters*, 580.

⁶⁵⁰ Ferber, "Leibniz's Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony", 66.

through its specifically *musical* structure – understood, following Ferber, as melancholic – that the monad can remain both detached and in accord with the world.

“Little Nightsounds”: The Threne and the Addenda Melody

Leibniz’s musical analogies, incorporating this choral exemplification and linked to a particular understanding of melancholia, are drawn directly into *Watt*. One of the instances of music in the novel is particularly prominent due to its manifestation as musical notation: this is the threne heard by Watt on his hazardous journey from the station to the house of Mr Knott. During an onset of overwhelming physical weakness, Beckett’s itinerant protagonist takes refuge in a ditch by the roadside. At that point, “voices, indifferent in quality of a mixed choir” are heard “afar, from without”.⁶⁵¹ A footnote at the bottom of the page informs the reader that the music Watt hears is a threne: a song of mourning and lamentation. Initially, Watt rests a while, listening to the “little night sounds” burgeoning in the hedgerows, until the light of the moon begins to disturb his peace.⁶⁵² Once ensconced in the ditch, Watt finds himself detained by this two-verse dirge.

On the opposite page, Beckett provides the musical score of the threnody, along with the lyrics of the first and second verse (see Figure Four). This notation, provided in the main text of the novel, specifies only rhythmic note values. As apparent in Figure Four, no pitches are included. *Watt* is unusual amongst Beckett’s novels due to its inclusion of an ‘Addenda’ that contains thirty-seven fragments of “precious and illuminating material” which has been prevented from incorporation due to “fatigue and disgust”.⁶⁵³ A footnote to the first page of the Addenda recommends that the material be “carefully studied”.⁶⁵⁴ However, the last entry of the Addenda warns us: “no symbols where non intended”.⁶⁵⁵ As Ackerley observes, “most [of the Addenda fragments] come from the HRHRC Notebooks; some from the *Whoroscope* Notebook; a few from other identified sources; and one from places unknown”.⁶⁵⁶ It is in the Addenda that Beckett provides the pitch specifications for the soprano line (see Figure Five), where the handwritten melody is provided along with an

⁶⁵¹ Beckett, *Watt*, 26.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁵⁶ Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt*, 205.

explanation: “Threne heard by Watt on way from station. The Soprano sang:”.⁶⁵⁷ In the Olympia text – the first edition of *Watt*, published in 1953 – the melody in the Addenda is accompanied by the incorrect wording “on way for station”, then corrected in the 1959 Grove edition. As Ackerley explains, in the Calder (Jupiter) text – the first British edition, published in 1963 – the melody in the Addenda was left out of the publishing galleys: the Addenda of this edition simply leaves a blank space after the words, where the melody should be (and the 1968 French translation omitted both the melody and the accompanying words).⁶⁵⁸

Figure 4: Rhythmic notation of the threne, included in the main text of *Watt*.⁶⁵⁹

WATT

SOP.	Fifty	two	point	two	eight	five	seven	one	four	
ALT.	Fifty	two	two	two	fifty	two		point		
TEN.	Fiffee	fiffee	fiffee	two	tootee	tootee	tootee	tootee		
BAS.	Hem!	fi	-----				f	-----		

SOP.	two	eight	five	seven	one	four	two	greatgran	
ALT.	two	eight	five	seven	one	four	two	eight	
TEN.	two	tootee	tootee	tootee	pointee		two	eight	
BAS.	Christ!	fi	-----				f	phew!	ty

SOP.	ma	Ma	grew	how	do	you
ALT.	five	seven	one	four	two	gran
TEN.	five	seveence	once	fource	two	eight
BAS.	two	point	two	eight	five	seven

SOP.	do	blooming	thanks	and	you	drooping
ALT.	grew	how	do	you	do	blooming
TEN.	two	ma	ma	Ma	grew	how
BAS.	two	eight	five	seven	one	four

SOP.	thanks	and	you	withered	thanks	and	you	for
ALT.	thanks	and	you	drooping	thanks	and	you	withered
TEN.	doe	doe	doe	doe	do	blooming	thanks	and
BAS.	Miss	Ma	grew	how	do	you	do	blooming

SOP.	gotten	thanks	and	you	thanks	for	gotten	too	greatgran
ALT.	thanks	and		you	thanks		withered	too	granma
TEN.	thanks	and		you	thanks		drooping	too	mamamama
BAS.	thanks	and		you	thanks		blooming	too	Miss oh

⁶⁵⁷ Beckett, *Watt*, 223.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 55. As Ackerley notes, Beckett specified “Music and note. Save one whole page—inset to be supplied”.

⁶⁵⁹ Beckett, *Watt*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 27–28.

WATT

SOP.	ma	Ma	grew	and the	sa
ALT.	ma	Ma	grew	and the	and the
TEN.	mamamama	Mama	grew	and the	sa
BAS.	Miss	Ma	grew and the	sa	sa

SOP.	and the	same	to	you
ALT.	sa	me	to	you
TEN.		me	to	you
BAS.		me	to	you

This verse was followed by a second:

*Fifty-two point one
 four two eight five seven one
 four two eight five seven one
 oh a bun a big fat bun
 a big fat yellow bun
 for Mr Man and a bun
 for Mrs Man and a bun
 for Master Man and a bun
 for Miss Man and a bun
 a big fat bun
 for everyone
 four two eight five seven one
 four two eight five seven one
 till all the buns are done
 and everyone is gone
 home to oblivion.*

Figure 5: Pitch specifications for the soprano line of the threne, provided in the Addenda.⁶⁶⁰

Threne heard by Watt in ditch on way from station. The soprano sang:



As indicated above, the most striking feature of the threne notation in the main text is this absence of pitch specifications; only rhythmic note values are provided and the lack of a musical staff, clef and/or key signature hinders the ascription of any tonal character to the individual parts, preventing us from understanding the harmonic relationship between the voices. What are we to make of this peculiar choice? Interestingly, the sparse rhythmic demarcation is suggestive of an original harmonic scheme, although no definitive realisation can be reliably determined. This is an observation that Eric Prieto seems to point to when he notes that the lyrics in the soprano part are distributed syllabically (with one syllable per rhythmic value) to support the clear demarcation of the text, thereby indicating that the soprano, in keeping with traditional part-writing for mixed voice choirs, sings a melody.⁶⁶¹ Meanwhile the prolonged notes in the bass might suggest pedal points, conventionally most likely to be on the tonic or fifth of a chord, sustained to pull the harmony back to its root and re-establish the tonality. Similarly, the sequential entries of

⁶⁶⁰ The notation reproduced in Figure Five is from the Faber edition, Beckett, *Watt*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 223. The sentence and the music only appear in the Olympia, Grove, Italian and Faber editions. As Ackerley explains, the Calder edition retains the introductory sentence but omits the music while the Minuit and German editions do not include either. Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 216–217.

⁶⁶¹ Eric Prieto, “Samuel Beckett and The Heart of Things”, in *Listening In: Music Mind and the Modernist Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 155–252: 157.

the very last phrase imply a clear triadic relationship: as Prieto says, Beckett's intention is apparent, exploiting "the cumulative effect of the successive entries, with each voice building on the previous entries".⁶⁶² Consequently, the rhythmic character of each voice part of the threne discloses a sense of its potential tonal attributes and harmonic function, despite the absence of pitch notation; the rhythmic distribution of the notes indicates that the threne *is* a tonal and harmonic entity, and this is supported by the penultimate entry of the Addenda. Importantly, it is here that Beckett specifies that the 'melody' is that of a threne – the main text simply refers to the voices of a choir, without further characterising the music – and therefore a song of grieving.

The melody of the threne provided in the Addenda comprises a six-note, four-beat, core motif, repeated eleven times.⁶⁶³ The intervallic relationship between the notes is predominately conjunct and stepwise as the motif traces the descending B-minor scale with some disjunct motion. Beckett maps the verse's text to the four-beat phrase and varies the note lengths according to the syllables of each word and their stresses. Therefore, in all hearings, other than the first, second, ninth and tenth iterations, a rhythmic gesture arises where two notes are doubled in length and the third degree of the scale, D (and occasionally also the F#), is omitted. A more drastic change is introduced by the ascending final phrase, which includes the previously omitted notes, confirming the sense of key as B minor (ending, somewhat idiosyncratically, on the previously unsounded leading note of B minor – A# – as if to initiate the continuation back into the next verse, necessary for its resolution back to the B).

In order to appreciate the threne's Leibnizian character, it is necessary to consider some of its unusual musical constituents in relation to the equally bizarre lyrics. The soprano's first and second verses are as follows:

Verse one:

Fifty two point two,
eight five seven one four two

⁶⁶² Prieto, "Samuel Beckett and The Heart of Things", 159.

eight five seven one four two
 greatgran ma Ma grew
 how do you do?
 blooming thanks and you
 dropping thanks and you
 withered thanks and you
 forgotten thanks and you
 thanks forgotten too
 greatgran ma Ma grew
 and the same to you

Verse two:

Fifty-two point one
 four two eight five seven one
 four two right five seven one
 oh a bun a big fat bun
 a big fat yellow bun
 for Mr Man and a bun
 for Mrs Man and a bun
 for Master Man and a bun
 for Miss Man and a bun
 a big fat bun
 for everyone
 four two eight five seven one
 four two eight five seven one
 till all the buns are done
 and everyone is gone
 home to oblivion⁶⁶⁴

The other three voices beneath the soprano sing variations on these lines, and the words are distributed such that more can be understood from the text as we move up the voice parts, from the bass' exclamations to the soprano's fully enunciated expressions. For

⁶⁶⁴ Beckett, *Watt*, 27–28.

example, for the first line of the first verse the bass simply sings “Hem! Fi—f— Christ!”. The tenor, though more rhythmically active than the other voices, only manages to articulate slightly more of the text (“fiffee fiffee fiffee two tootee tootee tootee two”), while the alto starts in unison with the soprano but then falls away from her fully rendered phrases, as if stuck: “fifty two two two fifty two point two”.

The threne’s structure acts as a parody of Leibniz’s hierarchy of monads. In Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’, under the entry on Leibniz, “representation” is used to refer to the activity of perception. In his transcription, the monad’s “representations” constitute the “state” of a monad – the level of the monad within the hierarchy – and in addition to noting the “impulse” quality of appetite and its role in developing “representations”, Beckett picks up on Leibniz’s likening of the monad to a “mirror of the universe”:

States of monad are representations, and principle of its activity an impulse (appetition) to pass over from one representation to another. Each monad a “mirror of the universe”, i.e. indistinguishable by the content they represent. (TCD MS 10967/191r)⁶⁶⁵

The threne’s structure can be understood as a parody of Leibniz’s principle of the ‘identity of indiscernibles’, of which Beckett took note. Leibniz’s concept finds expression in a passage in Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’ which fastens upon how the individuality of each monad, with its place in the “great system of development”, is dependent upon its representational capacity:

But yet each [monad] is individual, there are no 2 substances alike. Hence their idiosyncrasy can only consist in the different degree of clearness and distinctness with which they “represent” the universe. Thus Descartes’ epistemological criterion becomes metaphysical predicate, by the fact that Leibniz, like Scotus, conceives the distinct-corporeal antithesis in terms of intensity of representation. (TCD MS 10967/101r)⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett’s ‘Philosophy Notes’*, 329.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 327–28.

In emphasising the degree of a monad's perfection, Beckett's account here references Descartes' "epistemological criterion" (the necessity of knowledge to be "based in complete or perfect certainty" – hence Descartes' method of doubt), in order to summarise Leibniz's development of this into a "metaphysical predicate" (where the monad embodies the ascent towards a state of near perfection, realising itself through its "immanent activity"). As such, the monad's "idiosyncrasy" is determined, on a psychical level, by its "intensity of representation".

The texts of the bass, tenor, alto and soprano voice parts comically trace an analogous kind of hierarchy, but ironically so (hence the descending musical content of the Addenda melody). In the same way that Leibniz's monads are inclined to ascend, thereby aspiring to higher degrees of perfection, the different expressions of the various layers of voices that comprise the threne are humorously clarified as we move up the voice parts; while the bass swears and grunts, the soprano is able to sing actual words. Beckett presents us with a critique of Leibniz's "great system of development", where the soprano functions as the clearest "mirror of the universe" – a universe that is sardonically rendered, as becomes more apparent if we are aware that in the early typescript Beckett characterised the theme (using Italian terms, as conventional for classical music) as "Mesto quasi arrabbiato. Marcatissima la misura" (Sadly, almost angry. Strongly marked beat/metre).⁶⁶⁷ Leibniz establishes a progressive continuum, reaching from inorganic matter to man; in ironic contrast, the text of the threne briefly suggests a reverse trajectory in the "blooming, drooping, withered" plant life and the family lineage, "Greatgran ma", "Ma" and "Miss", plotted backwards from the eldest to the youngest (rather than as a system of maturation akin to the development of the monad).

The threne encapsulates and discloses a world in miniature, as Susan Seneff observes:

A cycle has been implied by the whole first verse, the number 52...1428 implies the number of weeks in the cycle of a regular year; the number of notes the bass sings the apparent number of weeks in a year; the number of phrases between the quarter rests when all four parts are silent, twelve,

⁶⁶⁷ Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt*, 55.

the number of months in a year; the digits ... 142857 the value of the decimal part of twenty-two sevenths, or, approximately π .⁶⁶⁸

Consequently, it might be possible to argue, even, that the second verse is Beckett's critique of Leibniz's dictum "the best of possible worlds". As Latta explains:

While the choice of God is free, being unlimited in its application, it is not an arbitrary choice but a choice according to reason. God chooses as the actual universe that whose compossible elements admit of the greatest amount of perfection and or reality, that is to say, the fullest and most complete essence. Thus the actual universe is 'the best of possible worlds' – of all worlds which are really worlds or systems, that is, in Leibniz's language, of all worlds whose elements are compossible.⁶⁶⁹

In the second of the threne's verses, 'man', in various manifestations (Mr Man, Mrs Man, Master Man, Miss Man) populates a communal scene in which "everyone" is treated to a "big fat yellow bun" before "forgetting" and going "home to oblivion". As Ilit Ferber observes, Leibniz's "best of all possible worlds" entails an aspect of loss, since "the choice of the best world inherently entails the loss of other worlds".⁶⁷⁰ The threne, is, of course, a song of lamentation and mourning and Leibniz's 'Divine Choice Theory' may indicate why there is the strange coincidence of a scene of merry feasting and oblivion in a funerary song.

The sung text of the threne is somewhat unusual in beginning both of its verses with the foregrounding of numbers: the soprano sings the numbers 52.2857142 and 52.1428571. As Ackerley has observed, "the song reflects the number of days in the year 2080, the date (a leap year), as predicted in the manuscripts, of the likely publication of Arsene's book *A Clean Old Man* (not mentioned in the final text)".⁶⁷¹ This lends support to my contention that the rhetoric of the threne and Arsene's monologue are interconnected. Indeed, the numerical text also plays upon a quotation of Leibniz's, which, although not

⁶⁶⁸ Susan Field Seneff, "Sound and Music in Samuel Beckett's *Watt*", *Modern Fiction Studies* 10, no. 2 (1964), 139, ellipses in original.

⁶⁶⁹ Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 66.

⁶⁷⁰ Ferber, "Leibniz's Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony", 63.

⁶⁷¹ Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt*, 55.

included in his 'Philosophy Notes', is something of which Beckett may still have been aware, due to it being the most well-known of the philosopher's statements on music:

Music is a secret exercise of arithmetic where the mind is unaware that it is counting. For, in confused or insensible perceptions, the mind does many things it cannot notice by a distinct apperception. Indeed, those who think that nothing happens in the soul of which it is not conscious are mistaken. Therefore, even if the soul does not realize it is counting, it nevertheless feels the effect of this insensible calculation, that is, the pleasure in consonances resulting therefrom or the vexation in dissonances. For pleasure arises from many insensible congruities.⁶⁷²

The "confused and insensible perceptions" to which the passage refers are Leibniz's *petites perceptions*. Consequently, Beckett casts the cycle that the soprano is singing of – the snapshot of a world in miniature, which coincides with the publication of Arsene's potentially autobiographical book – as the sensation of a type of unconscious, interior music. Indeed, elsewhere in the novel we are informed of the specifically internal and diffuse voices that Watt experiences "singing, crying, stating, murmuring things unintelligible, in his ear".⁶⁷³ When Watt first hears the ditch voices, he speculates over their origin: they appear to emanate from an external source, "and it was to him lying thus that there came, with great distinctness, from afar, from without, yes really *it seemed* from without, the voices, indifferent in quality, of a mixed choir".⁶⁷⁴ We might then understand the threne music as the realisation of the "musical score which the soul reads"⁶⁷⁵ to which Leibniz refers in his correspondence with Arnauld: that is, a realisation of what was earlier described as an unheard internal music responsible for the monad's movement and orientation and the solution to its melancholic detachment.

"Then Let Me Speak Rather of My Present Feeling, Which So Closely Resembles the Feeling of Sorrow":⁶⁷⁶ The Threne as Affective Apparatus

⁶⁷² Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz to Christian Goldbach, 17 April 1712.

⁶⁷³ Beckett, *Watt*, 22.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁷⁵ Leibniz, *Philosophical Paper and Letters*, 580.

⁶⁷⁶ Beckett, *Watt*, 40.

To what degree does Beckett's inclusion of the threne mark an engagement with Leibniz's idea of "pre-established harmony"? To establish the basis of this, it is informative first to look to another of Beckett's unusual musical events in the novel: Watt's encounter with a chorus of three croaking frogs, whose amphibious noises, "Krik", "Krek" and "Krak" sound at periodic intervals of 3, 5 and 8, invoking the Fibonacci series.⁶⁷⁷ The frogs begin by coinciding rhythmically, all making their various sounds together on the first beat. One frog then sounds a "Krik!" every three beats, another a "Krek!" every five beats, and the third a "Krak!" every eight beats. Consequently, the full cycle is comprised of 120 beats and the song ends with the frogs all sounding in unison, as at the beginning. The 'Frog Song' is one of the various different complex permutational systems that fill out the novel and which produce series that figure as lists in the text.

In critiquing Leibniz's notion of "pre-established" harmony, Beckett draws specifically on the intervals that underpin western tonal concordance: major and minor chords of western harmony are constructed by adding to the tonic the third, fifth and often the eighth tones of the scale (the latter doubling the tonic at the octave). These numbers occur in the Fibonacci series, first described by Leonardo di Pisa: "a sequence of numbers in which each is the sum of the previous two, thus: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 etc."⁶⁷⁸ In addition to in the chords of western tonality, the Fibonacci series is found in intricate and complex structures of the natural world, such as the shape of sunflowers, snail shells and spiral galaxies. As Tatlow observes, "the ratio between the successive terms of the Fibonacci series ... is an arithmetical expression of Euclid's golden ratio", also termed the "divine proportion", frequently considered synonymous with geometrical perfection and often, as a result, ascribed transcendental status.⁶⁷⁹ Consequently, as Ackerley explains in relation to the frog song, this "meticulous paradigm ... exposes the *transcendental machinery* behind the experience".⁶⁸⁰ Beckett in this way seems to parody the intimation of a heavenly choir of singing angels sounding in harmony with a chorus of systematically croaking frogs whose voices rarely coincide. Consequently, the curious detail of a chorus of ribbiting amphibians further evidences the presence of Leibniz's pre-established harmony as a

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 118.

⁶⁷⁸ Ruth Tatlow, "Fibonacci series", *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 20 February 2023, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000049578>.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ C. J. Ackerley, "Monadology: Samuel Beckett and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz", in *Beckett/Philosophy*, ed. Matthew Feldman and Karim Mamdani (Sofia: Sofia University Press St Kliment Ohridski, 2012), 156.

subtext drawn up for critique and parody; Leibniz is not only present with regard to the deconstruction of rationality in the novel, but clearly the musical analogies Leibniz used to articulate this appealed to Beckett (as evidenced by the author's notes) and are carried through to the text in question as part of Beckett's appropriation and critique of Leibniz's philosophical system.

Beyond the frog song, Leibniz's idea of pre-established harmony seems also to be drawn into the unusual organisation of the threne. Like the Leibnizian monad, the threne has a specifically melancholic attunement, since it discloses a microcosmic world that is interior to Beckett's ditch dweller. However, a specific feature of the threne's presentation indicates that it is specifically concerned with attempting to establish an alternative *causal* plane of attunement between the text and the reader; one that breaches a pre-established harmony. Evidence for this resides not only in the novel itself, but specifically in the eleventh of the thirty-four numbered sections that comprise the initial structural plan of *Murphy*, which Beckett mapped out in the opening pages of the 'Whoroscope Notebook'. The manifestation of the threne notation as an instrument of affective attunement can be traced back to the wording of this note, as explained below. Building toward this, the fourth note already confirms Beckett's conception of Murphy's monadic characterisation and his attunement with the Horoscope he acquires:

4

X [Murphy] and H [whoroscope] clarified side by side. Monads in the arcanum of circumstance, each apperceiving in the other till no more of the petites perceptions, that are life. So that H. more and more organic, is realised in X. as he [via] it and they must perish together (fire oder was)⁶⁸¹

Then, in the tenth section, "vocation" (focused on Murphy's search for employment) is aligned with purgatory, while "defunction" is the "negation" of this trajectory. The "cornices" of purgatory in the world of "vocation" are characterised by the "metaphysical achievement" of "physical failure"; that is, the rising of Leibnizian *petites perceptions* into clarity, resulting in appetite:

⁶⁸¹ Samuel Beckett, 'Whoroscope Notebook', Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading UoR MS3000, 1–2 as produced in Matthew Feldman, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (London: Continuum, 2006), 64–65.

Each ‘cornice’ occupied by the physical failure, which is the metaphysical achievement, in so far as it narrows the physical field (petites perceptions) and constitutes an increase in the apperceived. Vocation the essence of purgatory, defunction its negation.⁶⁸²

As such, vocation is aligned with the self-consciousness of apperception, achieved by the unfolding of confused perception into the clear and distinct. This corresponds with the format of the monadic self that Beckett used to frame his own experience of melancholia in his letter to Mary Manning, as discussed in Chapter Five; here, the monadic self, once immersed in “an ecstasy of accedia” – the “chaos” of “real consciousness”, which resembles the domain of the confused petites perceptions – begins to realise its contained potential in the world (vocation) through engagement with other monads, thereby transforming the “grey tumult” of the petites perceptions into accords of self-awareness or appetite. Moreover, Beckett’s reflection on the monadic self in his letter plays on the “physical” quality of the petites perceptions through his specific foregrounding of the embodied mind. The specification of this physical quality is carried through to note ten above. Indeed, both the use of “coenaestheisa of mind” and “mental self-aesthesia” in his letter to Mary Manning, and the designation of the petites perceptions as the “physical field” in note ten, clearly indicate Beckett’s association of these “unconscious mental states” with the corporeal.

It is in the eleventh of these enigmatic fragments from the ‘*Whoroscope Notebook*’ that Beckett develops these Leibnizian undertones towards the realm of music. The note is revealing in its wording – “varying technique”, the “successive defunctions” and a “hardly perceptible” “attunement” – and brings together the themes set out in the previous two sections in such a way that we can trace the faint outline of the first conception of the threne:

⁶⁸² Ibid.

Important to vary technique in demonstrating the successive defunctions. Thus an elegiac tune for a quasi-vocation where attunement hardly perceptible, debasing X [Murphy] in the virtual and threatening to incarcerate him.⁶⁸³

The passage refers to an “elegiac tune” as the result of the necessity to “vary technique”; we might assume that in this instance he does so by using musical notation. This will aid the demonstration of “the successive defunctions”; that is, X’s (Murphy’s) negation of the trajectory towards vocation and his debasement in the ‘virtual’ realm, to which he has escaped to avoid the external world, thereby risking incarceration. Consequently, the elegiac tune is both for the true vocation of life –that is, pre-established harmony with other monads, which X [Murphy] sacrifices for the quasi-vocation of the virtual realm – and for X himself, who, imperceptibly attuned to the virtual quasi-vocation, finds himself nearing incarceration.

Note 11 represents a development of aspects of the ideas in notes 4 and 10 into an explicit presentation of the idea of pre-established harmony as the “true vocation”. At the same time, the details of notes 4 and 10, taken together, actually point us towards a different idea of harmony. The attunement offered by the threne, while mourning – or rather critiquing – the vocation offered by a pre-established position in the harmony of the world, is of a different order; a more affective and physical innervating harmony is proposed by the apparatus of the threne. The descending pitch specifications provided attempt to reach back towards a model of attunement that precedes the highly contrived, pre-established kind. This follows the precedent of the petites perceptions and the originary “chaos” of “real consciousness” that Beckett associated them with, as suggested by his letter to Mary Manning.

The eleventh section is revealing with regard to Watt’s threne when we consider the melody given in the Addenda and also the questions that appear in a footnote to the main text, when Watt hears the threne: “What it may be enquired was the music of this threne?”

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

What at least it may be demanded, did the soprano sing?"⁶⁸⁴ Here, an external voice of uncertain origin seems to intervene, directing the reader towards the melodic content of the threne. It is particularly interesting to consider this feature of the threne, specifically its separation from the notated rhythms, in mind of Latta's comment, in his introduction to *The Monadology*, that "the spontaneous development from the written notes of the score to the system of sounds that they signify" in choral harmony "might be said to correspond to the passage from unconscious to conscious perception in the monad. An unconscious perception is, for Leibniz, a symbol of the corresponding conscious perception."⁶⁸⁵ With the case of the threne, the "development from the written signs to the sounds signified", as an analogy of "the passage from unconscious to conscious perception", is hindered by the divorcing of the soprano melody from the representation of the threne in the main text and its relegation to the Addenda, as well as the omission of the pitch content of the other voice parts. The threne does not exist as a fully rendered score for complete musical realisation; the unconscious perception cannot unfold into its conscious equivalent. The divorcing of the melody from the other musical information induces the reader into an imaginative process of hypothesising the remaining musical material. As such, the arrangement of the various elements of the threne serves to "imperceptibly attune" the reader, but in a specifically *causal* manner.

The threne footnote, which enquires into its sonic dimension, encourages the reader to engage with the domain of the unrealised petites perceptions through a type of musical play. Indeed, the melody of the soprano part plots a downward trajectory, which depicts the "successive defunctions" of the monad that has abdicated ascent: that is, from the process of transforming the petites perceptions, which "are life", into appetition, back towards the tumult of the petites perceptions. As was argued earlier in the chapter, Beckett appears to align the petites perceptions that Windelband refers to as "unconscious mental states" with music. For Murphy, this dabbling with the unconscious ends up being disastrous, but for Watt the scenario is somewhat different: as Heath Lees says, "all the available evidence properly interpreted suggest that had Watt learned to respond to the non-literal language of music his mental catastrophe might have been avoided".⁶⁸⁶ Lees continues:

⁶⁸⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Watt*, 26.

⁶⁸⁵ Latta, introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, trans. Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), 47.

⁶⁸⁶ Heath Lees, "'Watt': Music, Tuning and Tonality", *Journal of Beckett Studies*, no. 9 (1984), 6.

By embedding specifically musical material in the novel, Beckett subtly demonstrates that Watt is exposed to musical stimuli which exert a diminishing influence on him. Musically speaking, indeed, the novel might be described as a *diminuendo al niente* – a fading into nothing – and symptomatic of Watt’s failure to achieve what Murphy too fails to achieve, attunement.⁶⁸⁷

Therefore, it is possible to consider the threne as Beckett’s representation of a futile attempt at reconfiguring Watt’s particular *mode* of attunement. Moreover, the music represents a specific unconscious mental state that the Addenda melody is trying to communicate and to which Watt and the reader are encouraged to attune. The threne melody, based around the partial statement of a minor scalic descent, is effectively attempting to realise the type of pitch contour often associated, in the western classical tradition, with aesthetic depictions of melancholy. In this sense, the threne melody is striving to trace a type of regression back through the epistemic qualities of melancholia, of refracted “accidia”, to the original feeling state of the unrealised monadic self: the “monad without conflict, lightless and darkless”.⁶⁸⁸ A full statement of the minor scalic descent would be an expression of the “ecstasy of accidia” that Beckett describes in his letter and aligns with the regression of the monad; this type of statement lies behind each of the threne’s attempts at enunciation. However, the threne’s stifling repetitions – eleven iterations in total, with non-digressive and simple variations – indicate that the melodic material also parallels Watt’s lists and series. It is thereby expressive of the same obsessive process of enumeration, indicative of the epistemic quality of melancholia discussed in the previous chapter and aligned with the refraction of accidia. As such, there is a kind of tug and pull between the expression of the minor scalic descent indicative of the unrealised monadic self and its epistemic refraction, which resembles the monad in motion.

As each statement of the melodic motif begins on the sixth degree and passes through the notes of the scale before reaching the tonic B, the melodic statement is, as it were,

⁶⁸⁷ Lees, “Watt’: Music, Tuning and Tonality”, 6.

⁶⁸⁸ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 546.

proceeding towards security and anchorage in the manner of Watt's sets of permutations and is thus expressive of the same impulse to solidify relations. The tentative rhythmic variations and intervallic changes give the impression that the motif is prone to inconsistency and is repeating itself to pin down and capture a more accurate rendition akin to Watt's permutational reworking of other series. Accordingly, a parallel arises between the implied model of the active monadic self that Beckett juxtaposes with the more explicitly articulated inactive monadic self in his letter to Mary Manning, and the final expression of the threne; the last phrase breaks away from the repeated attempts at a statement of the original feeling state of the unrealised monadic self, that is, the "ecstasy of accidia" articulated by the descending minor statement. A slightly strident upwards flourish sounds the seventh of the scale quite awkwardly, confirming the B minor tonality. The final phrase provides a musical realisation of the monad's contrived ascent, of refracted accidia, returning haphazardly to releasing itself in the world through the "premises or conclusions or problems or solutions or cases of judgements"⁶⁸⁹ of epistemological consciousness, which comprise a heavy-handed attempt at accord with the world.

A passage from Notebook One of *Watt* is revealing with regard to Beckett's early intentions for the novel:

To endeavor to formulate a modest demand as to of whom it is in question. And as to of what. To essay a tentative outline or rough sketch of mind of same. And of body of same. To hazard a manner of enquiry or search after possible relations with other persons. And with other things. To throw out a cautious feeler with regard to the situation in time. And with respect to the situation in space. To propose with gentlemanly diffidence: the vexed question of the possession; the knotty problem of the act; the well-known tease of the suffering.⁶⁹⁰ (NB1:17r)

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* notebooks, Notebook 1, 17r. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas at Austin, Box 6.5-7 and Box 7.1-4.

The above extract speaks specifically of the novel's attempts to seek "relations" with the reader, confirming the novel's specifically affective dimension; the intention is to achieve this directly causal relationship with the reader through an emphasis *on the body*, noting the physical attributes of space and time and hence the necessity of throwing out a "cautious feeler". This supports the idea of a physical, innervating harmony, which is proposed by the threne due its alignment with the characterisation of the petites perceptions in Beckett's numbered notes. The passage validates the sense of the specific quality of the affective experience in question; the aim is to propose "the well-known tease of the suffering", and we might understand this as refracted accidia, which is imbued with an epistemic quality since it is in search of the "possession" of knowledge. Overall, then, by examining this, we can understand the way in which Beckett calls upon and critiques Leibniz's system of thought; he specifically draws out Leibniz's use of tuning and harmony and from this develops his own musical analogies to articulate the felt experience of knowledge in melancholia and the remedying process of affect attunement.

Arsene's Monologue: Promises of "Pre-established Harmony"

It is possible to trace a closely related series of innervating attempts at re-configuring attunement in *Watt*. Drawing on the late phenomenological tradition, Jonathan Boulter has argued that the reader is placed in "specular"⁶⁹¹ relation to the novel's protagonist, a mimetic experience that is reduplicated elsewhere in the oeuvre:

As readers move through Beckett's corpus they find themselves in increasingly close relation to the experience of the characters in the novel; their hermeneutic bafflement mirrors or is mirrored by the character's own; their experience of what Heidegger calls 'thrownness' is identical to that of the character; their sense of the necessity to read is close to that of the character.⁶⁹²

So far, this chapter has uncovered the unusual plane of causal attunement (as opposed to a pre-established harmony) between the text and the reader. This mode of attunement is

⁶⁹¹ Jonathan Boulter, *Interpreting Narrative in the Novels of Samuel Beckett* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2001), 19.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

implicitly proposed by the threne when we approach it as a type of affective apparatus. It has been argued that the threne ventures to re-establish the reader's mode of attunement. Later in the novel we encounter Arsene's attempt, manifested in a lengthy monologue, to reconfigure Watt's mode of relation to the world – his sense of accord. As such, there is a close relationship between Arsene's monologue and the threne notation; in Arsene's monologue the attempt at reconfiguring attunement operates at a thematic level between the characters, while the threne's functions at the level of readerly interaction.

The second half of this chapter therefore focuses on Arsene's monologue, so as to examine the novelistic depiction of characters and their attunement to the fictional world, other characters and narrative events. This operates as an analogue of the way in which attunement functions between text and reader, particularly via the threne. To draw out the correspondences between Arsene's monologue and the threne, we must first focus on the role of Leibniz. C. J. Ackerley's annotated versions of *Watt* and *Murphy*, in *Obscure Locks* and *Demented Particulars*, track the many references to Leibniz that are scattered through these novels. In the article 'Monadology: Samuel Beckett and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz', Ackerley concentrates on how Leibniz's ideas in *The Monadology* inform – and are implicitly reworked in – each text; *Murphy* and *Watt*, he argues, offer a "sustained critique" of Leibniz's doctrine of pre-established harmony.⁶⁹³ However, many interconnections between the numerous references to Leibniz in Arsene's monologue and the threne remain overlooked by Ackerley. For example, even though he acknowledges the erroneous promise of salvation offered by the threne, he stops well short of recognising the narrative that these scattered references imply with regard to Watt's experience, or the significance of Arsene's monologue that is subsequently apparent: this remains to be considered.

As specified in the introduction to this chapter, Watt first encounters the departing servant Arsene upon arriving at Knott's house to take up his position as the new servant. This pattern of "incredibly and outbouncing"⁶⁹⁴ visitors to the establishment is dictated by Mr Knott's tradition of employment and promotion. As Ackerley observes, Arsene's initiation speech, which appears as a single, unbroken paragraph in the text, is a significant feature of the novel owing to its extreme length – twenty-two pages, in the Faber and Faber

⁶⁹³ C. J. Ackerley, "Monadology: Samuel Beckett and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz", 156.

⁶⁹⁴ Beckett, *Watt*, 41.

edition – and the extraordinary number of rhetorical devices that it deploys.⁶⁹⁵ The substantial monologue, which the narrator ironically terms a “short statement”,⁶⁹⁶ is prophetic in forecasting Watt’s experience of working for Mr Knott. Arsene recounts his own period of employment, during which there was a highly unusual “change” that he is eager to grasp and explain but is unable to. Watt’s experience, Arsene informs us, will echo his own. Towards the beginning of his lengthy effusion, Arsene details the sense of affinity between Watt and his environment: this manifests as a compelling promise of a pre-established harmony wherein Watt, as in Leibniz’s garden analogy, is imagined as a “portion of matter” in which the whole world resides:

He feels it. The sensations, the premonitions of harmony are irrefragable, of imminent harmony, when all outside him will be he, the flowers the flowers that he is among him, the sky the sky that he is above him, the earth trodden, the earth treading and all sound his echo. When in a word he will be in his midst at last after so many tedious years spent clinging to the perimeter.⁶⁹⁷

Upon his arrival at the Knott household, we have the impression that Watt, as nomadic monad, has achieved a new level of perceptual acuity. Prior to the sensation of the world residing within him, which leads him to imagine that “the fit is perfect”,⁶⁹⁸ Watt is driven unknowingly towards the Knott household, such that he arrives in an initial state of “weary watchful vacancy”.⁶⁹⁹ The “dark ways all behind, all within, the long dark ways”⁷⁰⁰ indicate the stirrings of the monad’s appetitive, drive-like qualities; appetite, as Chapter Five detailed, is the internal principal or dynamic force that “produces change or passage from one perception to another”.⁷⁰¹ Latta explains it in the following terms:

Thus the part must have a certain spontaneity or power of acting from within itself, and in virtue of this Leibniz describes the individual substance as essentially a ‘force’ rather than a quantity.... Both of these

⁶⁹⁵ Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 57.

⁶⁹⁶ Beckett, *Watt*, 31.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁹⁸ Beckett, *Watt*, 33.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

⁷⁰¹ Latta, introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 35.

characteristics [perception and appetite] must belong to it, for, if it had perception alone, the part would merely represent one aspect of the whole, like an unchanging picture. It is in virtue of its appetite that the part is able to realize the life of the whole, to unfold spontaneously from within itself all the variations of that which it represents.⁷⁰²

Arsene's commentary seems to indicate that Watt, having now ascended in monadic status due to his broadening perception, has developed a new degree of apperception; a level of self-consciousness with respect to his perceptions and their consonance with the exterior world:

He is well pleased. For he knows he is in the right place, at last. And he knows he is the right man, at last. In another place he would be the wrong man still, and for another man, yes, for another man it would be the wrong place again. But he being what he has become and the place being what it was made, the fit is perfect.⁷⁰³

Latta, following Leibniz, explains that the *apperceptive*, self-conscious monad's capacity to fathom connections between their perceptions develops, through "powers of reflexion" and "self-consciousness", from the "empirical sequence of memory" to the engagement of the logical faculty and the powers of reason.⁷⁰⁴ This allows for the extraction of "a knowledge of eternal and necessary truths" which are "simply perceptions developed to the highest degree of distinctness".⁷⁰⁵ As Leibniz writes, "it is also through the knowledge of necessary truths, and through their abstract expression, that we rise to acts of reflexion, which make us think of what is called I, and observe this or that is within us".⁷⁰⁶ Indeed, Arsene's comment suggests that Watt is not simply abiding with his memories – the sequence of "dark ways" that led to his appointment at the Knott residency – but that his past now assumes significance and is imbued with contour, as he appreciates "with what sudden colours past trails and errors glow, seen in their new, their true perspective".⁷⁰⁷ This notion

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁰³ Beckett, *Watt*, 33.

⁷⁰⁴ Latta, introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 120.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁶ Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 234.

⁷⁰⁷ Beckett, *Watt*, 33.

of the itinerant, journeying self, reappears elsewhere in the novel, and if we consider this in relation to the fleeting reference to Mr Case's book of verse, 'Songs by the Way', which the station master endeavours but fails to leave behind towards the close of the novel, the implication is that Beckett may have envisioned spiritual and metaphysical journeying as possessing an underlying musical impetus. This is owing to Leibniz's conception of bodies, as noted in Beckett's transcriptions, "not as extension, nor as impenetrability, but as capacity to do work – force",⁷⁰⁸ and his conflation of this with the idea that, in generating their unfolding representations of the world, monads produce accords of varying distinctness and clarity and are accordingly held in relation to one another through a pre-established harmony.⁷⁰⁹

Consequently, the first part of Arsene's monologue suggests that Watt's mode of attunement – his means of relating to the world upon his arrival – chimes with the Leibnizian notion of a pre-established harmony that is independent of causality. But what is the significance of these fleeting glimpses of harmony towards the beginning of the monologue? By engaging the idea of Leibniz's harmonic monad as melancholically structured with Heidegger's concepts of 'Stimmung' and 'Being-in-the-World', it is possible to explore how these musical intimations underpin the way in which philosophical attunement is explored at the narrative level. As Chapter Five argued, we can understand Leibniz's pre-established harmony and Heideggerian Stimmung or *mood* as types of orientation towards the world that are akin to *perspective*. Each monad's clear zone of perception – the pre-established accord that it produces – constitutes its pre-determined individual outlook: this is akin to Stimmung or state-of-mind [Befindlichkeit]. Stimmung conditions Dasein as an existential state and therefore has the potential to disclose to us the particularity of our Being-in-the-World and the condition of Dasein's thrownness, which in turn dictates what "matters" to us. Consequently, the musical subtext of Arsene's monologue helps us to understand the way in which philosophical attunement – or *mood as perspective* – is established, manipulated and breached in an attempt to reconfigure Watt's means of relating to that world.

⁷⁰⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, 326.

⁷⁰⁹ This Leibnizian detail provides a counterpoint to the musical germ of Murphy's thwarted will, which, as explained in Chapters One and Two, was elaborated through Schopenhauer's recourse to the analogy of melody.

Heidegger and Leibniz: Knott's Abode and The Curious Question of Causality

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Heideggerian Dasein's Being-in-the-World is distinguished by its encounter with the world as totality, the eradication of subject–object distinctions and causal relations. For Heidegger, one's *Befindlichkeit* (state of mind, but literally “the state in which one may be found”), discloses the particularity of Being-in-the-World – our thrownness⁷¹⁰ – and one's mood or *Stimmung* determines Dasein's relation to the world and what is important to it. Ilit Ferber notes that the monad's pre-established harmony “lucidly presents a state in which complete closure and detachment accompany an endless expression of the world together with the perfection of that expression”. As such, it offers “an interesting interpretation to [Heidegger's] Being-in-the-World, or the world being in the monad when viewed as a relationship avoiding representation and intentionality”.⁷¹¹

Watt's feelings of transcendence upon arrival, dramatised through the sensation of “irrefragable”⁷¹² harmony, not only imply a new sense of alignment within a Leibnizian pre-established harmony but his sense of Being-in-the-World. Indeed, as discussed below, the many philosophical resonances of Arsene's monologue shed light upon the equivalence of Heidegger's conception of Being-in-the-World and the Leibnizian ‘Being-for-the-World’. Drawing on Heidegger's concept of “falling”⁷¹³ it might be possible to argue that upon arriving at the Knott establishment Watt has embarked upon an experience of falling into the world, towards the perfect condition of Being-in-the-World.⁷¹⁴ Heideggerian falling constitutes the means by which Dasein turns away from primordial being – the “authentic potentiality for Being its Self” – through the process of being “absorbed” by the “they” and “Being-with-one-another” of the world.⁷¹⁵ It is for this reason that “Being-in”, as Dreyfus explains, is differentiated from *being in*: Dasein will always be occupied with things.⁷¹⁶ To quote Heidegger:

⁷¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 173–174.

⁷¹¹ Ferber, “Leibniz's Monad: A Study in Melancholy and Harmony”, 57.

⁷¹² Beckett, *Watt*, 33.

⁷¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 219–228.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁷¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 220.

⁷¹⁶ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997), 43.

Dasein is never 'proximally' a being which is, so to speak, free from being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' toward the world. Taking up a relationship toward the world is possible only because Dasein, as Being-in-the-World, is as it is.⁷¹⁷

During Watt's period of employment, he develops a fascination with his environment and with seeking an understanding and knowledge of his master, Knott, while remaining radically separate from him. Despite the paucity of their encounters, Watt's inquisitiveness extends not only to his chance glimpses of Knott but to scrutinising his habits and routines and the objects in his house.

Later in the novel, reflecting back upon the early period of Watt's residency, the narrator comments on the extent of Watt's curiosity, noting his extraordinary attentiveness to the auditory environment. Watt captures his sonic surroundings in an integrative and almost metabolic gesture that bears similarity to what was described earlier as the monad's melancholic solipsism: what Freud identifies as the melancholic's narcissistic self-absorption, where the world is felt to reside within oneself:

Watt's attention was extreme, in the beginning, to all that went on about him. Not a sound was made, within earshot, that he did not capture and, when necessary, interrogate, and he opened wide his eyes to all that passed, near and at a distance, to all that came and went and paused and stirred, and to all that brightened and darkened and grew and dwindled and he grasped, in many cases, the nature of the object affected, and even the immediate cause of it being so.⁷¹⁸

Following Arsene's predictions, Watt, having found himself in a world in which "he will be in his midst at last, after so many years spent clinging to the perimeter",⁷¹⁹ takes to working for Knott with both a sense of purpose and a feeling of self-fulfilment, so that he may "abide, as he is, where he is, and that where he is may abide about him, as it is".⁷²⁰ This

⁷¹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 84.

⁷¹⁸ Beckett, *Watt*, 71.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

chimes with the Heideggerian “sein-bei”, which Dreyfus translates as “being-amidst”.⁷²¹ It is as a consequence of this condition of being amidst that Dasein, through finding itself touched by objects and others, discovers what ‘matters’.⁷²² Accordingly, Watt submits to what Heidegger refers to as an “everyday interpretation of the self” which “has a tendency to understand itself in terms of the world with which it is concerned”:⁷²³

For the first time, since in anguish and disgust he relieved his mother of her milk definite tasks of unquestionable utility are assigned to him.... His [Watt’s] indignation undergoes a similar reduction, and calm and glad at last he goes about his work, calm and glad he peels the potato and empties the nightstool, calm and glad he witnesses and is witnessed.⁷²⁴

As such, it appears that the Knott residency operates according to two complementary conceptions of the world: Leibniz’s pre-orchestrated monadic network and Heidegger’s intentionality- and causality-free totality. Ronald Bogue, writing on Deleuze, captures the ideal of the perfect monadic network and its highly co-ordinated musical inscription:

The course of each monad’s unfolding has been inscribed in it from its creation, that course like a musical score that the soloist monad performs without promptings from its sonic surroundings. The monad’s unfolding, then, though manifested in a horizontal temporality, exists virtually as a vertical score, the total history of the monad’s changing accords already written in its soloist part. In the simplest terms, one may say that the monad’s accords are like arpeggios, melodies made up of the notes of a chord, temporal unfoldings of simultaneous, virtual forms. In that each monad integrates multiple series, however, we must imagine its solo score as one made up not solely of monodic arpeggios but also of multi-voiced chordal progressions (perhaps the score of a truly grand piano).⁷²⁵

⁷²¹ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 45.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, 168–169.

⁷²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 321–322.

⁷²⁴ Beckett, *Watt*, 33.

⁷²⁵ Ronald Bogue, “The New Harmony”, 60–61.

Drawing on this, we might begin to understand the happenings in the Knott abode as if undergirded by a musical score that dictates just such a highly orchestrated arrangement, one in which Watt has sought refuge. Indeed, Knott's abode resembles a monadic network presided over by a God-like supreme monad. As Arsene stresses, in the ways in which their lives and their perceptions are focused on and revolve around their master, the two servants are "for ever about Mr Knott in tireless assiduity turning ... eternally turning about Mr Knott in tireless love".⁷²⁶

As the novel unfolds, there are exceptional moments and events which seem to operate outside of this system. These often manifest in the various incidents and objects of *Watt* that carry musical associations, which intrude, often silently and unheard, as with the pitch-less threne,⁷²⁷ into the narrative: broken pianos, singing and whistling perceived as out of tune, botched key signatures and finally a thwarted glissando in Arsene's speech.

"Gliss – iss – iss – STOP!": Intimations of Dissonance

As Arsene leaves Knott's house, bequeathing his role to Watt, he treats Watt's fleeting "feeling of security"⁷²⁸ with scorn and ridicule: "He [Watt] removes his hat without misgiving, he unbuttons his coat and sits down, proffered all pure and open to the long joys of being himself, like a basin to vomit."⁷²⁹ In particular, Arsene is critical of the promise of harmony: "But he being what he has become, and the place being what it was made, the fit is perfect. And he knows this. No. *Let us remain calm*. He feels it. The sensations, the *premonitions* of harmony are irrefragable".⁷³⁰ Recollecting his own arrival in the same kitchen in which Watt now finds himself, Arsene describes a scene of unresolved absolution, where the emphasis appears to be on the offering up of the self and the *deferral* of forgiveness and healing:

How I feel it all again after so long, here and here, and in my hands, and in my eyes, like a face raised, a face offered, all trust and innocence and

⁷²⁶ Beckett, *Watt*, 52.

⁷²⁷ There is another instance of pitch-less music in *Watt*. The song is alluded to in Chapter Four but the pitch-less notation is relegated to the addenda. Like the threne, the exile air, which is referred to as a descant, is set for four voices.

⁷²⁸ Beckett, *Watt*, 33.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

candour, all the old soil and fear and weakness offered, to be sponged away and forgiven! Haw! Or did I never feel it till now? Now when there is no warrant? Wouldn't surprise me. All forgiven and healed. For ever. In a moment. To-morrow. Six, five, four hours still, of the old dark, the old burden, lightening, lightening.⁷³¹

In contrast to Watt, Arsene is jaded by his apperceptive skill. He seems to find self-consciousness and refinement of perspective burdensome, provoking bitterness: this emerges in little comments – “personally of course I regret everything”⁷³² – and ejaculations such as the “mirthless”⁷³³ laugh, “Haw!”⁷³⁴ which punctuate his speech. Arsene describes his specific mode of “ululation”⁷³⁵ as “the laugh laughing at the laugh, the beholding, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word the laugh that laughs – silence please – at that which is unhappy”.⁷³⁶ Leibniz argued that each monad contains enfolded within itself all that it is to be, “It is big with its future”;⁷³⁷ the departing housekeeper possesses something close to a type of ‘omniscience’ in this regard:

For do not imagine me to suggest that what has happened to me, what is happening to me, will ever happen to you, or that what is happening to you, what will happen to you, has ever happened to me, or rather, if it will, if it has, that there is any great change of it being admitted. For in truth the same things happen to us all, especially to men in our situation, whatever that is, if only we choose to know it.⁷³⁸

As Latta explains, a monad such as this “could see the reality and history of the whole universe within the lowest monad”.⁷³⁹ From this position of understanding, Arsene takes it upon himself to attempt to convey to Watt how things will unfold while in service to Knott. However, despite his attempts to offer direction and guidance to Watt regarding his duties

⁷³¹ Beckett, *Watt*, 32.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷³⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 231.

⁷³⁸ Beckett, *Watt*, 37.

⁷³⁹ Latta, Introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 50.

at the big house, Arsene becomes absorbed by the unfathomable circumstances of the event that constituted his own mysterious “change”:

The change. In what did it consist? It is hard to say. Something slipped. There I was, warm and bright, smoking my tobacco-pipe, watching the warm bright wall, when suddenly somewhere some little thing slipped, some little tiny thing. Gliss – iss – iss – STOP! I trust I make myself clear.... It was a slip like that I felt, that Tuesday afternoon, millions of little things moving all together out of their old place into a new one nearby, and furtively as though it were forbidden.⁷⁴⁰

Here the “change” which Arsene recounts departs quite subtly from the state of equilibrium and harmony of which he speaks somewhat lyrically near the beginning of his monologue. It seems that, upon arrival at the Knott residency, both servants have developed an apperceptive awareness, owing to the expansion of their perceptual horizons. However, in telling us how “some little thing slipped” and suddenly all the “little things” started shifting, Arsene seems to be recounting a situation in which he senses the *presence* of the Leibnizian petites perceptions. If a clear and distinct perception is the rising of the petites perceptions to produce an accord, here the tiny shards of unconscious mental states and memories have risen and manifested but the possibility of resolution and clarity, a clear accord, is denied: “Gliss – iss – iss – STOP!”⁷⁴¹ As Ackerley explains, Arsene’s glissando is a moment of failed apperception, illustrative of “the mind’s incapacity to register the impossible process, the ‘change of degree’”.⁷⁴² Arsene, stressing that he “did not see the thing happen, nor hear it”,⁷⁴³ finds his perceptual capacities limited and can barely distinguish, anymore, between internal and external events:

My personal system was so distended at the period of which I speak that the distinction between what was inside it and what was outside it was not at all easy to draw. Everything that happened happened inside it, and everything that happened happened outside it.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴⁰ Beckett, *Watt*, 35.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴² Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt*, 64.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

As mentioned previously, Arsene dramatises his change with reference to a ladder analogy, thereby amalgamating Leibnizian and Heideggerian systems of thought:

But in what did the change *consist*? What was changed and how? What was changed, if my information is correct, was the sentiment that a change, other than a change of degree, had taken place. What was changed was existence off the ladder. Do not come down the ladder, I for, I haf taken it away. This I am happy to inform you is the reverse metamorphosis.⁷⁴⁵

With the reference to the ladder, Beckett turns Heidegger's falling analogy upside down; Arsene, in slipping from the ladder, falls out of Being-in-the-World, rather than into it. As Chris Ackerley explains, Beckett's ladder reference here derives from Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, drawing specifically on the passage of the *scala perfectionis* of which there are three stages: "the purgative; the illuminative; and the unitive" or "state of perfect contemplation".⁷⁴⁶ *Scala perfectionis* translates as "scale of perfection" and the implication here is that harmony is used to indicate an ever-finer degree of accommodation of self to world: the inevitable slip from that position amidst the pre-established harmony is here rendered as a glissando.

Consequently, these passages animate reverse Heideggerian falling and a Leibnizian abdication that echoes the descent of the falling threne melody. Both the threne and Arsene's monologue play on the *productive* failure of apperception and the different plane of registration that this implies. So, in reaching the top of the ladder of perception, did Arsene return abruptly to the ground? Did he transition from a perfect state of Being-in-the-World, positioned amidst the pre-established harmony, to a point of dissonance and thus towards a primordial mode of being which is intuitive and perhaps affect-driven? Arsene describes the change as "the presence of what did not exist, that presence without, that

⁷⁴⁵ Beckett, *Watt*, 36.

⁷⁴⁶ C. J. Ackerley, *Obscure Locks, Simple Keys: The Annotated Watt* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 65.

presence within, that presence between”,⁷⁴⁷ this perhaps being the presence of the “real consciousness”:⁷⁴⁸ the “chaos”⁷⁴⁹ of the petites perceptions.

Arsene’s change seems to indicate a type of regression back towards an embodied mode of encounter, one that Beckett may have derived from his understanding of the role of the body in Leibnizian monadic perception. As noted above, Beckett seems to have understood the petites perceptions as aligned with the *physical* as opposed to metaphysical domain. This maps to Leibniz’s theory of perception and the role of the body therein. Christian Barth notes that, for Leibniz, “since each body represents all bodies in the universe, by directly representing its own body and in virtue of transitivity of representation, each monad indirectly represents the complete corporeal universe”.⁷⁵⁰ However, embodiment for Leibniz is a consequence of this *imperfection* of created substance; in his system, God is the only subject without a body, owing to the complete perfection of his perceptions. In keeping with rationalist thought, sense perception is always to some degree confused and the sensory organs participate in this imperfection of created substance by delimiting the possibility of clear and distinct perception in lower monads. Barth emphasises Leibniz’s idea that the representative relation between a monad’s body and its perception consists in being able to “enable epistemic access to what is represented”; the emphasis is therefore on a more diffuse relation of correspondence and not a perfect representation.⁷⁵¹

As such, two perceptual states arise in Leibniz’s system and these can be traced in Arsene’s monologue: the clear and distinct perception that is the monad’s active force, modelled after God’s ability to perceive the world with perfection, and the compromised bodily perception of created substance that is at the root of a monad’s passivity, giving rise to a diffuse relation of correspondence. It is the latter form of perception that Arsene recounts in his monologue; it is precisely the indistinct presence of the petites perceptions, the slip from harmony, that indicates a type of intrusion of a different and more sensorial

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁴⁸ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929–1940*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 257.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ Christian Barth, “Leibniz on Perception, Sensation, Apperception and Conscientia”, in *Philosophy of Mind in the Early Modern and Modern Ages*, vol.4 of *The History of the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Rebecca Copenhaver (London: Routledge, 2018), 224.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

order in Arsene's "personal system".⁷⁵² This slip is brought to life by the glissando, which is unaccompanied by apperceptive awareness. The "Gliss – iss – iss"⁷⁵³ produces Arsene's suddenly "distended"⁷⁵⁴ perceptual horizon, which although felt confusedly is not cognitively registered. This, it might be argued is a type of progressive regression, giving rise to an instinctual and embodied way of perceiving that is affect-driven and cannot be elucidated by apperception. Consequently, two types of musical harmony are played off against each other in Arsene's monologue, the latter and most arresting being a particular type of musical way of feeling, rather than adherence to principals of perfection and similarity.

"You Wiser But Not Sadder and I Sadder But Not Wiser": Approaching Alternative Modes of 'Attunement'

The parody of monadic motion in Arsene's monologue is inextricably tied up with shifts in mood. As was specified in Chapter Five, Leibniz's monad is underpinned by a principle of internal growth. I argued that a parallel can be established between Stimmung, or mood, and monadic perspective, and further, that these provide a way to understand the way in which the monad might develop internally; engagement with one's mood or perspective facilitates re-attunement to a new mood and thus the expansion of perspective.

Latta, noting that, for Leibniz, the body functions as "a special lens through which the soul sees the universe", discusses the dichotomy of the activity and passivity of the monad in relation to mood, specifically in terms of the experience of pleasure and pain. Pleasure is the active force of the monad realising itself, while pain is the passivity of the monad's regression.⁷⁵⁵ In Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes', under a section entitled 'Principles of Morals', he draws attention to and then questions this very association: "Since progress is pleasure and regress pain (??) these follow ancient identification of virtue and

⁷⁵² Beckett. *Watt*. 35.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵ Latta, Introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 140.

happiness".⁷⁵⁶ Beckett's bracketed question marks indicate a degree of ambivalence towards Leibniz's equation: there is something curiously *active* in bodily passivity, and the associated pain, when it serves to determine monadic individuality. In his preface to *The Monadology*, Latta seems to clarify the nature of this potential activity veiled within passivity: he highlights the proximity of Leibniz's passivity to 'passion', an early modern term for emotion. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Five, when Beckett characterises himself as a "monad without the conflict" in the letter to Mary Manning, he ascribes a degree of potential to the embodied mind that yields to the pain of an "ecstasy of accidia";⁷⁵⁷ this oxymoronic condition seems to grant a degree of animation to a state that is otherwise experienced passively.

We can draw from this that Beckett was interested in the affective aspects of embodied perception, specifically the experience of pain and the perspective that it offers. For Heidegger, awareness of one's mood or *Stimmung*, which we have discussed in relation to perspective, remains elusive due its all-encompassing character. The activation of an innervating counter-mood provokes awareness of one's *Stimmung*, mood or point of view, and subjects it to scrutiny, such that it is perceived anew. We can track just such a progression in Arsene's monologue. He tells us that immediately prior to his elusive change, he found himself in a moment of self-reflection while smoking his tobacco-pipe: "so pleasant a conjuncture of one's course, in one's self by oneself".⁷⁵⁸ In response to this, he felt his breast swell like that of a pelican:

Puffing away at the same time at my tobacco-pipe, which was as flat and broad that afternoon as an apothecary's slice, I felt my breast swell, like a Pelican's I think. For Joy? Well, no perhaps not exactly for joy. For the change of which I speak had not yet taken place. Hymenal still it lay, the thing so soon to be changed, between me and the forgotten horrors of joy.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁶ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, 375.

⁷⁵⁷ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 546.

⁷⁵⁸ Beckett, *Watt*, 34

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

Arsene's change involves the transformation of this moment of fullness into the complete distention of his personal system, but, importantly, it is preceded by an incipient, innervating moment of almost-joy that then recedes. Interestingly, the change is facilitated by a "presence" that resembles an affective experience which breaches the notion of pre-established harmony: "I perceived it with a perception so sensuous that in comparison the impressions of a man buried alive in Lisbon on Lisbon's great day seem a frigid and artificial construction of the understanding".⁷⁶⁰ It is telling that Arsene describes the experience of "presence" as though having been "transported".⁷⁶¹

The sun on the wall, since I was looking at the sun on the wall at the time, underwent an instantaneous and I venture to say radical change of appearance. It was the same sun and the same wall, or so little older that the difference may safely be disregarded, but so changed that I felt I had been transported, without my having remarked it, to some quite different yard, and to some quite different season, in an unfamiliar country. At the same time my tobacco-pipe, since I was not eating a banana, ceased so completely from the solace to which I was inured, that I took it out of my mouth to make sure it wasn't a thermometer, or an epileptic's dental wedge.⁷⁶²

The experience of enrapture leads Arsene to re-assess his environment, but the result is a more objective perspective on his melancholic disposition, which engenders an embittered hindsight. Understanding has been consequent upon a type of gradual estrangement from the affective experience itself, which has now been refracted through a disenchanting lens, resulting in his three joyless forms of laughter, "the bitter, the hollow and the mirthless":

They correspond to successive *excoriations of the understanding*, and the passage from the one to the other is the passage from the lesser to the greater, from the lower to the higher, from the outer to the inner, from the gross to the fine, from the matter to the form.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶⁰ Beckett, *Watt*, 37.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 35–36.

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

It is interesting to note the jarring combination of Arsene's "mirthless"⁷⁶⁴ attitude and his nevertheless unrelenting determination to "impart information of a practical nature"⁷⁶⁵ to Watt. It is, as it were, as if Arsene is trying to re-establish Watt's mode of attunement – a parallel to the attunement offered to the reader by the manifestation of the threne.

Indeed, Arsene feels compelled to share something of his original sorrow – a current of feeling that he is trying to, but cannot, rekindle – with Watt: "Then let me speak of my present feeling, which so closely resembles the feeling of sorrow, so closely that I can scarcely distinguish between them".⁷⁶⁶ It is as though Arsene wishes to impart an affective experience that might help Watt to learn from his experience, to bestow upon him a type of intuitive knowledge that is derived from engagement with and estrangement from one's mood:

Yes, these moments together have changed us, your moments and my moments, so that we are not only no longer the same now as when they began – ticktick! ticktick! – to elapse, but we know that we are no longer the same, and not only know that we are no longer the same, but know in what we are no longer the same, you wiser but not sadder and I sadder but not wiser.⁷⁶⁷

Arsene has had a fleeting experience of what Baker, following Freud, refers to as "oceanic belonging", an alternative means of accord with the world premised on a type of affect attunement. He has attempted to find his way back to it, but has failed, and despite his feelings of resignation, he encourages Watt to engage with this experience, too: to re-establish Watt's mode of attunement.

Watt's Sonic Dimension: Drawing Together the Different Modes of Attunement

Overall, then, the fleeting musical details scattered throughout *Watt* point to a broader network of Leibnizian references, primarily concentrated in the threne notation and lyrics but also in Arsene's monologue. Owing to their Leibnizian heritage, the threne and the

⁷⁶⁴ Beckett, *Watt*, 40.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

monologue manifest Beckett's preoccupation with attunement, and also represent an implicit critique of a Leibnizian idea of musical harmony premised on perfection, similarity and assimilation. This produces a hidden sonic dimension of the novel, one in which Beckett plays with different modes of attunement for both the reader and Watt. The alternative mode of attunement Beckett explores is fashioned from his reading of and note-taking from Leibniz, leading to his magnification of the Leibnizian idea of clear and confused perception in the sensory domain of petites perceptions. In particular, the intimations of musical sound, often configured as harmony, point to a much deeper interest in philosophical attunement and how this is configured and reconfigured; the many Leibnizian references facilitate a Heideggerian reading of Arsene's monologue, owing to the similarity of Leibniz's and Heidegger's non-causal systems. Throughout Arsene's speech, references to musical attunement coincide with the recounting of shifts in mood and perspective. As such, the monologue, with its Leibnizian and musical underpinning, provides a window onto the way in which Stimmung or mood can be manipulated through alternative modes of attunement to induce changes of perspective.

PART TWO: MUSIC MOOD AND ATTUNEMENT IN *WATT***Chapter Seven – “Of Great Formal Brilliance and Indeterminable Purport”:⁷⁶⁸ The Tuning Scene from *Watt*****“It Resembled all the Incidents of Note Proposed to Watt”:⁷⁶⁹ Deciphering the Galls’ “fugitive penetration”⁷⁷⁰**

Chapters Five and Six explored the Leibnizian underpinning of *Watt* and the important role it plays in configuring an affective mode of ‘attunement’ for the reader. Examining the explicitly musical incidents – the threne and the frog song – and their affinities with Arsene’s monologue has revealed how the Leibnizian resonances of the novel, particularly the many fleeting references to harmony and pitch, participate in a Heideggerian exploration of the relationship between mood, or ‘Stimmung’, and perspective. It now remains to examine the other significant manifestation of music in *Watt*, which can also be understood through a Leibnizian reading: the tuning scene.

After Arsene’s monologue and during the first half of Watt’s residency, the Knott household is visited by two piano tuners, who, although purporting to be “father and son”,⁷⁷¹ possess no familial likeness and seem to Watt rather more like “stepfather and stepson”.⁷⁷² Watt dutifully invites the pair into a “large bare white room”:⁷⁷³ the music room. Displayed in the room is a ravanastron, the European term for a rāvanahasta, an ancient “musical bow and/or spike fiddle” which, as Joep Bor observes, “played a crucial role in speculations about the origin of the fiddle bow”.⁷⁷⁴ The rāvanahasta was popular in Asia, especially India,⁷⁷⁵ but originally served as the basis for Pythagoras’ experiments with tuning. In addition to this instrument, the room also contains a bust of the composer Dieterich

⁷⁶⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Faber, 2009), 61.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁴ Joep Bor, ‘Rāvanahasta’, *Grove Music Online*, 28 May 2015, accessed 2 March 2023, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-4002281712>.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Buxtehude, also “very white”.⁷⁷⁶ The younger of the Galls begins tuning the piano, while the elder stands by, listening intently. Watt deduces from this that “Mr Gall senior, feeling his end at hand and anxious that his son should follow in his footsteps, was putting the finishing touches to a hasty instruction, before it was too late”.⁷⁷⁷ As the younger Gall goes about assessing the state of the dilapidated instrument a curious exchange occurs:

The mice have returned, he said.

The elder said nothing. Watt wondered if he had heard.

Nine dampers remain, said the younger, and an equal number of hammers.

Not corresponding I hope, said the elder.

In one case, said the younger.

The elder had nothing to say to this.

The strings are in flitters, said the younger.

The elder had nothing to say to this either.

The piano is doomed, in my opinion, said the younger.

The piano-tuner also, said the elder.

The pianist also, said the younger.⁷⁷⁸

This, the narrator informs us, “resembled all the incidents of note proposed to Watt during his stay in Mr Knott’s house”.⁷⁷⁹ As such, it assumes prominence in the novel, initiating Watt’s epistemological crisis. Quite how Beckett configures this mental event musically is explained below.

The tuner’s attempt to repair the broken instrument has a disturbing effect on Watt’s mental faculties and he feels deeply uneasy at the prospect of accepting the “fragility of the outer meaning”⁷⁸⁰ of the event. Watt begins to experience difficulties recalling the occurrence, which ceases to have any literal meaning and instead fractures into “a mere example of light commenting bodies, and stillness motion, and silence sound, and comment comment”.⁷⁸¹ This difficulty with recalling “literal” detail is accompanied,

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁷⁸ Beckett, *Watt*, 59.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

somewhat strangely, by the persistent remembering of the diffuse and amorphous encounter, which sets the precedent for the other “incidents of note”⁷⁸² at the Knott household: the Galls’ visit

resembled them [the “incidents of note”] in the sense that it was not ended when it was past, but continued to unfold, in Watt’s head, from beginning to end, over and over again, the complex connexions of its lights and shadows, the passing from silence to sound and from sound to silence.⁷⁸³

Watt not only finds his memory perturbing, on account of its pernicious recurrence, but it is also subject to a type of sequential development that exceeds the boundaries of simply beginning and ending; as the narrator says, it “continued to unfold”.⁷⁸⁴ Indeed, the ruminations on the nature of this incident circulate for several pages. Watt is left baffled by the occurrence’s “great formal brilliance and indeterminable purport”,⁷⁸⁵ and this obsessive working through of the situation in his mind is repeated throughout the novel in response to other experiences while in service to Mr Knott. Further analysing the content of the “purely plastic” experience, there appears to be an attentiveness to oppositional qualities: the narrator refers not only to the incident’s “lights and shadows”, the diametric qualities of “silence” and “sound”, “stillness” and “movement”, “quickenings” and “retardings”, “approaches” and “separations”, but also to the strangely amalgamated “stillness motion” and “silence sound”.⁷⁸⁶ Considered in mind of the literal event, this play on the blending of oppositional structures, through the sounding and gradual accommodation of interspersed individual notes, points to the work of the tuning process.

The tinkering at the piano indicates that the Galls have attempted but failed to fix the piano’s tuning in equal temperament. As explained in Chapter One, this process is achieved by tuning each note to the frequency that is derived from dividing an octave into twelve equal steps. Watt has a peculiar reaction to listening to the Galls’ work, that is, to the method of adjusting the exactness of musical consonance by fractionally lowering the fifth from its natural overtone state to its equally-tempered frequency. What can be said

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 61.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 59–60.

about this tiny but exact irrational quantity as regards to Watt's reaction? Exploring this question helps to reveal the significant interconnection of the musical and psychological features of the scene. Indeed, it is possible to understand some of the idiosyncrasies of Watt's unusual cogitations via Leibniz's theory of perception. Following Leibniz's bridging of philosophy and psychology, Beckett uses a philosophical system to elaborate his depiction of acute psychological distress; this chapter will demonstrate how this melding of systems unfolds in the part of the novel that comprises the Galls' visit. It is of special interest to this discussion that it is a musical scene, and specifically a *tuning scene*, that is used to facilitate this meditation upon the complementarity of a philosophical system and a specific psychological state. To explore this Leibnizian avenue of enquiry in more detail, Watt's reaction must be considered first.

“For to Explain Had Always Been to Exorcize for Watt”:⁷⁸⁷ Watt's Response to the Galls' Visit

The amorphous details of the tuning scene are characterised by a fluidity and instability that Watt finds curious and unnerving in equal parts. The narrator informs us that the Galls' visit resembles other incidents that take place in the Knott household, precisely because of the “shifting detail of its march and ordinance”.⁷⁸⁸ The characterisation of these events emphasises the incremental drift from order that disturbs Watt. His response to the seeming flux initiated by the Galls' tempering is a desire to revert to his process of living among “face values”.⁷⁸⁹

But whatever it was Watt saw, with the first look, that was enough, that was enough for Watt, that had always been enough for Watt, more than enough for Watt.⁷⁹⁰

It appears that, upon reflection,

Watt did not know what had happened. He did not care, to do him justice, what had happened. But he felt the need to think that such and such a thing

⁷⁸⁷ Beckett, *Watt*, 64.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

had happened then, the need to be able to say, when the scene began to unroll its sequences, yes, I remember, that is what happened then.⁷⁹¹

The influence of Leibniz is important here: Beckett's account of Watt's experience was clearly shaped by his reading of Leibniz's discussion of the "petites perceptions". Unravelling the Leibnizian aspects of Watt's attention to the relationship, in this event, between distinct and rationalisable perceptions and complex, confusing but nevertheless significant experience helps to reveal the significance of music in the novel

As explained briefly in Chapter Five, Leibniz held that not all perception is available to consciousness; unconscious perceptions, or petites perceptions, constitute part of the representative life of monads and function like small, unconscious mental states. As Latta specifies, each monad "actually represents the whole universe, however confusedly or imperfectly, and as each is essentially a force or living principle, proceeding by its own spontaneous activity, from one perception to another",⁷⁹² importantly, "the distinct and the confused [perceptions] are not essentially separate from one another", and "it is possible for the confused perception to unfold into distinctness".⁷⁹³ Drawing on this idea, Giles Deleuze further discusses the process by which the monad's confused perceptions unfold into a state of clarity, whereby the perceptions 'chime' with the reality of the perceived object to produce an "accord".⁷⁹⁴

However, as noted in Chapter Five, for Leibniz (contrary to Descartes) the confused petites perceptions are instrumental to *every* act of clear and distinct perception – that is, to every accord that the monad produces. Instead, from the perspective of Deleuze following Leibniz, confused perceptions play an important role in shaping and adding dimension to perceptual experience. Ronald Bogue gives the example of this being captured in the experience of hunger: "a monad's specific affection is like a moment of hunger, a conscious feeling that integrates a differential series of moments passing by infinite gradation from unconscious appetitive inclination to vague gastric unrest, to fully-

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁹² Robert Latta, introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings* by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, trans. Robert Latta (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 50.

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ Giles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: Continuum, 2010), 153–154.

fledged hunger”.⁷⁹⁵ Leibniz addresses the specifically “unconscious” dimension of the petites perceptions when he explains that they are constitutive of identity. The minute perceptions are inscribed with “traces or expressions”⁷⁹⁶ of the past, and in acting upon the individual in the present they serve to connect past and present states.

The narrator’s comments on Watt’s life prior to his journey to the home of Mr Knott suggest that there was, at that time, something awry with his perceptual processes; he was lacking the “integration” capable of producing a cogitation or accord that resolves from confusion to clarity. This seems in alignment with Leibniz, who specifies that a perfect accord is unachievable and thus confusion normally remains part of the usual perceptual process. However, shortly after the tuning scene the narrator lists a series of Watt’s past experiences, all remembered with clarity of perception:

He could recall, not indeed with any satisfaction, but as ordinary occasions, the time when his dead father appeared to him in a wood with his trousers rolled up over his knees and his shoes and socks in his hand; or the time when in his surprise at hearing a voice urging him, in terms of unusual coarseness, to do away with himself, he narrowly escaped being knocked down, by a dray, or the time when alone in a rowing-boat, far from land, he suddenly smelt flowering currant.⁷⁹⁷

The account of these recollections is to an extent indicative of a potential aesthetic dimension of the experiences, qualifying the events descriptively. Overall, though, there is a perhaps surprising focus away from the sensory impact of, for example, the ghostly apparition or the scent of flowering currant, and towards the facts of the events. As such, these recollections comprise both a tangible, concrete and definable dimension but also a quality less amenable to rational explanation – a less discernible congelation of sensory impressions, memories and associations. Leibniz can help us appreciate what an aesthetic quality lends to an experience. As explained in Chapter Five In his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, he writes:

⁷⁹⁵ Ronald Bogue, “The New Harmony”, in *Thinking with Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 60.

⁷⁹⁶ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “New Essays”, in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta, (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), 373.

⁷⁹⁷ Beckett, Watt. 60.

When I recognise one thing among others without being able to say in what its difference or properties consist the recognition is confused. This is how we know sometimes clearly, without having any doubts, that a poem, a painting is well or poorly made, since there is in it a *je ne sçay quoy* that satisfies or shocks us.⁷⁹⁸

From this, we might conclude that prior to arriving at Mr Knott's house, Watt was primarily focused – perhaps *too* focused – on the immediate and more consciously accountable aspects of perception, at the expense of integration with more nebulous experience. The absence of engagement with *petites perceptions* in Watt's previous integrations suggests a lack of focus on the aspects of experience less immediately present in his conscious experience. It seems, though, that in the tuning scene the priorities of Watt's perceptual process are reversed, as a result of being exposed to the more hazy and diffuse aspects of experience. Here, in contrast, the overall lack of integration is because Watt is awash with these tiny perceptions. The experience is perhaps *too* aesthetic, as indicated by the vague discussion of atmospheric elements: "a mere example of light commenting bodies, and stillness motion, and silence sound, and comment comment".⁷⁹⁹

Interestingly, however, Watt finds himself unable to accept the amorphous quality that the tuning scene possesses: "it caused him to seek for another, for some meaning of what had passed, in the image of how It had passed".⁸⁰⁰ He is drawn not to the "march and ordinance"⁸⁰¹ of the experience itself; rather, its "shifting detail" is what he finds unnerving.⁸⁰² Indeed, the narrator describes how Watt's curiosity regarding the experience is figured as a specific type of urgent "need": "This need remained with Watt, this need not always satisfied, during the greater part of his stay in Mr Knott's house".⁸⁰³ Watt experiences this need as a type of epistemological urge to name the unusual happenings at the piano:

⁷⁹⁸ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Discourse de Métaphysique", in *Die philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C. J. Gerhardt, vol. 4. (1975–1890; Hildersheim: Olms, 1978), 449. Translation as it appears here provided in Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Fifth Hammer: Pythagoras and the Disharmony of the World* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 87.

⁷⁹⁹ Beckett, *Watt*, 60

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 61.

So Watt did know what had happened. He did not care, to do him justice, what had happened. But he felt the need to think that such and such a thing had happened then, the need to be able to say, when the scene began to unroll its sequences, Yes, I remember, that is what happened then.⁸⁰⁴

It is perhaps the *combination* of these two impulses – the need to search out the indefinable quality, but his contrived approach to ascribing meaning and significance (undergirded by Descartes' *Methodé*) – that is dangerous for Watt and that might be behind his permutational attempts to grasp his environment. During the tuning scene Watt experiences the intangible aesthetic petites perceptions and later in the novel he attempts to recapture the indefinable element of this experience but cannot, due to his prioritisation of the facts of the matter. Consequently, following the tuning scene, Watt tries to produce a perfect accord that chimes with the experience in question but with little engagement with and acceptance of its aesthetic qualities.

Uncovering Domains of “Intrinsic Obscurity”:⁸⁰⁵ Theorising the Musically Unintelligible

It is clear, then, that using the musical analogy of the Galls' tempering process, Beckett aligns the tiny irrational quantities involved in equal temperament tuning with the petites perceptions. The period in which Leibniz developed his theory of perception sits in the middle of a particularly interesting phase in the development of the theory and practice of tuning in western music. As Daniel Heller-Roazen explains, the emergence of different theories of tuning throughout the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, recorded and promoted by the likes of Gaffurius, Pietro Aron, Andreas Werckmeister and Fransisco Salinas, promised that the most elusive acoustical phenomena could be recognisable and theorisable through calculation.⁸⁰⁶ This fed the experimental compositional practice of the time, and consequently “in at least one domain – that of sound, namely represented by tonal differences – the universe might well be arithmetically intelligible: such was the

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁸⁰⁵ Heller-Roazen, *The Fifth Hammer*, 83.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 81–83.

promise of modern harmony”.⁸⁰⁷ This growing scientific, rationalisable basis for tuning theory involved attention to the effects – often barely discernible, or more ‘felt’ than identified – of sound frequencies. In developing the various theories of tuning that were amenable to rationalisation, various practitioners made use of tiny quantities underpinned by irrational numbers: the newly identifiable and miniscule domains of “intrinsic obscurity”,⁸⁰⁸ theorised through new methods of measuring sound frequency (as discussed below), were used to form the basis of a rational system.

Leibniz’s theory of perception was to be one of the major innovations of his philosophy, particularly in the field termed ‘pneumatologia’, now referred to as ‘philosophy of mind’; as Christian Barth explains, Leibniz “is the first early modern philosopher who systematically develops the idea of representational acts of which souls are not conscious”.⁸⁰⁹ Leibniz’s concept of clear and distinct perception incorporates confused perception, since it is comprised of infinite and minute petites perceptions: a multitude of what Windelband refers to as “unconscious mental states”⁸¹⁰ are in fact nested within conscious perception. In this respect, as with broadly contemporaneous developments in tuning theory, what we take to be discrete acuity, amenable to rationalisation, is actually comprised of the amorphous, indistinct and unconscious. Consequently, in mind of the wider Leibnizian reading advanced so far in this thesis, we can identify an equivalence between the tiny and previously untheorised quantities used in the tuning process and the petites perceptions – an equivalence that Beckett seems to identify and exploit for his purposes. Both are constituted by micro differential qualities but are also realisations of the world’s domains of intrinsic obscurity.⁸¹¹ For most people, tuning differentials are too small to be perceptible. Consequently, while the irrational quantities used in the tuning process are sonic manifestations of the regions that lie beyond the threshold of our limited perception, the petites perceptions are, as Beckett called them (following Windelband), the “unconscious mental states of modern psychology”.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid. By “modern harmony” Heller-Roazen is referring here to the development of different theories of tuning throughout the modern period, these including ‘mesotonic temperament’, a variety of ‘irregular temperaments’, ‘equal temperament’ and temperament by ‘multiple division’.

⁸⁰⁸ Heller-Roazen, *The Fifth Hammer*, 83.

⁸⁰⁹ Christian Barth, “Leibniz on Perception, Sensation, Apperception and Conscientia”, in *Philosophy of Mind in the Early Modern and Modern Ages*, Vol.4 of *The History of the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Rebecca Copenhaver (London: Routledge, 2018), 4:221.

⁸¹⁰ Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. James Hayden Tufts (London: Macmillan, 1910), 424.

⁸¹¹ Heller-Roazen, *The Fifth Hammer*, 83.

⁸¹² Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, 424.

There is, then, a Leibnizian context within which we can understand Beckett's particular psychological framing of the miniscule quantities that are not amenable to being rationalised, fundamental to experience and also central to the tuning process. Beyond this, though, there are additional musical features of the scene and supporting details from the rest of the novel that suggest that the mental event has a specifically *physical* character. The musical details of the tuning scene build upon an understanding of the mental faculties as embodied, which, as previous chapters have identified, was a preoccupation of Beckett's that stemmed from his reading of Leibniz: Chapter Five, for example, notes the embodied understanding of perception that emerges from Beckett's letter to Mary Manning, in his characterising of himself as a monad and in his references to "coenaesthesia of mind" and "mental self-aesthesia".

Discussing the unlimited "new arithmetical reasoning of the world"⁸¹³ initiated by the emerging field of acoustics in the seventeenth century, Heller-Roazen explains that whereas for ancient and medieval thinkers it was axiomatic that musical consonances were expressions of ratios underpinned by rational numbers, the growing interest in sonorous bodies and the new method of classifying sound by *frequency* meant that musical sounds could now be defined in terms of incommensurable ratios.⁸¹⁴ The tiny irrational quantities used in the tempering process to which Watt is exposed were made theorisable as incommensurable ratios due to a change in the method of classifying sounds: the new method of classifying sound by *frequency*. Measuring them in this way makes them *arithmetically intelligible*. 'Frequency' is the rate at which an object vibrates and can be explained in the following terms:

the number of times per second that a cycle of disturbances is exactly repeated. For example, if a string is vibrating in its fundamental mode, one cycle could be thought of as starting from the mid-position, moving to a maximum displacement in one direction, moving back to zero, moving to a position of maximum displacement in the other direction and finally back to zero.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹³ Heller-Roazen, *The Fifth Hammer*, 83.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸¹⁵ Clive Greated, 'Frequency', *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 2 January 2023, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000010215>.

Musically speaking, then, when Watt is exposed to the tuning process, he encounters something beyond the threshold of limited perception but which is still registered, as a type of physical experience of sound due to its frequency dimension. Watt is oscillating like the vibrating tympanic surface described in *The Unnameable*:

I'm neither on one side or the other, I'm the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, and on the other the world, I don't belong to either.⁸¹⁶

This chimes with the monad's diffuse perceptions: in Leibniz's system, lower monads, who do not perceive the world with distinctness or clarity, experience the world in a confused way.⁸¹⁷ In an article discussing the Leibnizian subtext of Beckett's *Trilogy*, Garin Dowd suggests that the monad's diffuse experience of the world involves receiving vibrational "shocks that indicate their being in accord with a series that includes them, namely their being-for-the-world".⁸¹⁸ A depiction of this in auditory terms is apparent in *Malone Dies*: "The noises too, cries, steps, doors, murmurs cease for whole days, their days. Then that silence ... And softly my little space begins to throb again".⁸¹⁹ As Dowd explains, "the visibilities of Malone's room are reduced to a 'grey incandescence', while audible material is no more than a congeries of vibrations"⁸²⁰ (and Beckett's wording here recalls the "grey commotion of mind" used in his letter to Mary Manning). Accordingly, Dowd concludes that "Malone receives mere vibrations, shocks the sources of which he cannot properly trace backwards or forward into the series of which those vibrations and shocks form part".⁸²¹

⁸¹⁶ Samuel Beckett, *The Unnameable in Malloy, Malone Dies and The Unnameable* (London: Picador, 1979), 352.

⁸¹⁷ Robert Latta, introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 50.

⁸¹⁸ Garin V. Dowd, "Nomadology: Reading the Beckettian Baroque", *Journal of Beckett Studies* 8, no.1 (1998), 25.

⁸¹⁹ Samuel Beckett, "Malone Dies" in *Malloy, Malone Dies and The Unnameable* (London: Picador, 1979), 203.

⁸²⁰ Dowd, "Nomadology: Reading the Beckettian Baroque", 25.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*

The same periodic oscillation between sites of maximum displacement, determining frequency, is apparent in the actions of Murphy's rocking chair, where the vibrational shock is substituted for a pendular motion:

The rock got faster and faster, shorter and shorter, the iridescence was gone, the cry in the mew was gone, soon his body would be quiet. Most things under the moon got slower and slower and then stopped, a rock got faster and faster and then stopped. Soon his body would be quiet. Soon he would be free.⁸²²

It is possible to argue, then, that frequency – or the physical vibrational quality of sound – is something that the petites perceptions and the tiny quantities of the tuning process share. The role of frequency may well be of greater relevance to the tuning scene than has previously been considered; often overlooked in attempts to unpick the eccentric exchanges between the Galls, is Beckett's play on the "hammers" and "dampers"⁸²³ of the worn-out instrument. Notably, his description of the piano's strings is quite peculiar: "nine dampers remain"⁸²⁴ in addition to "an equal number of hammers".⁸²⁵ These hammers and dampers, we learn, are only "corresponding"⁸²⁶ in "one case".⁸²⁷ Much to the tuners' dismay, "the strings are in flitters"⁸²⁸ because the "mice have returned".⁸²⁹ What is the significance of these seemingly opaque but peculiarly specific details?

"The Strings are in Flitters": Sound as Frequency and the Second Picture in Erskine's Room

The hammers and the dampers of a piano are responsible for initiating and terminating the vibration of the instrument's strings. When the pianist presses a key, the corresponding hammer is lowered to strike the string. As the key rises and resumes a neutral position, the damper is lowered and stops the string from vibrating any longer, thereby muting it. With

⁸²² Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 8.

⁸²³ Samuel Beckett, *Watt*, 59.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*

Mr Knott's piano, only "nine dampers remain" and "an equal number of hammers" and they are only corresponding "in one case". In addition, the strings are described as "in flitters", indicating that they are snapped and frayed.⁸³⁰ The state of the strings, in combination with the missing hammers and dampers, could imply a vigorous pianistic technique or that the piano has been used extensively.

If we look to other parts of the novel that are subtly linked to the tuning scene, it begins to become apparent how some of these details relate to Beckett's preoccupation with a lower form of perception, where the subject is imagined as a type of "tympanic surface", receiving and producing vibrations: the subject as a site of sympathetic resonance, as opposed to one in which clear and distinct accordance can be achieved. The narrator informs us that apart from a broken bell, "the only other object of note in Erskine's room was a picture, hanging on the wall, from a nail".⁸³¹ The picture displays "a circle, obviously described by a compass, and broken at its lower point".⁸³² However, the Addenda to *Watt* records the details of a second picture in Erskine's room. The description of this image, which is taken almost verbatim from an extract in the second *Watt* notebook and which also appears in the typescript,⁸³³ supports the idea of a lower form of perception akin to a tympanic surface. The image is described thus:

Second picture in Erskine's room, representing gentleman seated at piano, full length, receding profile right, naked save for a stave-paper resting on lap. With his right hand he sustains a chord which Watt has no difficulty in identifying as that of C major in its second inversion, while with the other he prolongs the pavilion of the left ear. His right foot, assisted from above by its fellow, depresses with force the sustaining pedal.⁸³⁴

For Lees, this indicates that the figure in the painting is focusing in on the sounds of a second inversion C major chord, which uses notes 5, 1 and 3 of the C major scale in that

⁸³⁰ This meaning of "flitters" intended by Beckett is specified in the OED, as follows: <https://www-oed-com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/view/Entry/71718?rkey=NoNxMH&result=5&isAdvanced=false#eid>. Interestingly, the other meaning of "flitters" evoked by the passage is, as the other meaning specified by the OED suggests, to 'flit' and thus move back and forth rapidly in a fluttering motion. This second meaning also supports the focus on instability and the notion of oscillation.

⁸³¹ Beckett, *Watt*, 109.

⁸³² *Ibid.*

⁸³³ Ackerley, *The Annotated Watt*, 213.

⁸³⁴ Beckett, *Watt*, 219.

order: G, C and E (with the G at the bottom).⁸³⁵ The choice of the second inversion seems significant: in this order, the notes are those of the strongest overtones produced by a fundamental of C. The choice of chord, therefore, seems more than arbitrary: as further discussed below, it indicates that particular attention is being paid to matters of frequency, tuning and overtones.

In the passage that follows the above quotation, there is an approximation of the pressure of the stretched strings in the depiction of the strained body: “On muscles of brawny neck, arm, torso, abdomen, loin, thigh and calf, standing out like cords in stress of effort”.⁸³⁶ Consequently, the description of the picture also supports the idea that physical force has been applied to the keys, along with, by extension, impact on the strings and hammers. In this, there is also a reappearance of Beckett’s attention to the physical, muscular “cords” of the body. As explained in Chapter One, these muscular cords are alluded to in *Murphy*; in the “apmonia” scene that opens the novel, Neary tightens and closes his fist, in doing so he imitates the movement of the ‘tendinous chords’ of the heart.⁸³⁷ Through the reference to the contraction of these sinews, known informally as ‘heart strings’, the literal alternation of musical chords is brought into focus. Here, by extension, the association is with the overtone chords that arise from the harmonic series produced by the vibrations of piano strings.

Music and the Body: Leibniz’s “Bare Monad”⁸³⁸

Lees proposes two possible reasons for the posture of the gentleman in the picture (who remains unnamed in the published novel, but who is identified by Lees as Mr Knott Senior).⁸³⁹ The first is that the elder Knott is cupping his hand to his ear to listen intently to the sounded chord: C major in its second inversion. With C as the fundamental, the strongest overtones will be those equivalent to the other tones being played (G and E), followed by a Bb (unplayed, but likely to be audible as the next strongest harmonic). Lees therefore suggests that the man is trying to hear the resonant overtones, and perhaps especially the Bb: “the sound

⁸³⁵ Heath Lees, “‘Watt’: Music, Tuning and Tonality”, *Journal of Beckett Studies*, no. 9 (1984), 23.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁷ ‘Systole Heart Function’, *Britannica*, last amended 16 April 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/science/systole-heart-function>.

⁸³⁸ Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 230.

⁸³⁹ Heath Lees, “‘Watt’: Music, Tuning and Tonality”, 23.

that is heard is the gradual dying away of the concord of C major, and the figure is paying close attention to the gradual appearance of the enharmonic overtones of which B-flat is the least remote".⁸⁴⁰

After further, detailed description of the man's physical position, "bowed over the keyboard" with the facial expression "of man about to be delivered, after many days, of particularly hard stool", we are told that this is in fact the "extraordinary effect produced on musical nature by faint cacophony of remote harmonics stealing over dying accord":⁸⁴¹ this seems to support Lees' argument that Knott Senior is straining to hear the overtones of the chord. Lees' second interpretation focuses on the sounded tones rather than the resultant overtones: possibly, he suggests, Knott Senior is exerting force on the pedal and the keys so as to increase the resonance of the piano strings and sustain the notes of the concord, thereby attempting to *overcome* the inevitable disharmony that resides in the overtone series:

Increased resonance can certainly be imparted to a piano string by removing the dampers over the string, that is, by depressing the right-hand side pedal, and this Mr Knott senior is doing, using all his might, the weight of his body and both his feet.⁸⁴²

However, beyond Lees' suggestions, a third interpretation could be considered, one indicated by the textual relationship (noted above) between the body and the tuning of a string, and that emphasises not just sound as frequency but also the *physical*, material acoustic experience of the reverberating body. The most peculiar feature of the painting is perhaps the man's nakedness, which is oddly juxtaposed with the quite specific details of the chord inversion and the depression of the pedal. Given Beckett's underlying recourse to Leibniz in the novel, and the employment of musical analogies as part of that philosophical framework, it is possible to read this as Beckett punning on Leibniz's description of the lowest monad – a "*bare monad*"⁸⁴³ which perceives the world confusedly, as a series of shocks and vibrations. This interpretation is reinforced by the detail of the use of the sustaining pedal which prevents the application of the hammer and

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁴¹ Beckett, *Watt*, 220.

⁸⁴² Lees, "'Watt': Music, Tuning and Tonality", 23–24.

⁸⁴³ Leibniz, *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 230. Emphasis my own.

dampers, allowing the strings to oscillate freely. Latta, explaining Leibniz's discussion of the nature of substance, writes:

Every substance as we have seen, consists of soul and body. And the soul, being on the one hand the relatively distinct perception of the substance, and on the other hand its activity, is the final cause of the substance, the end for which it is, the self-development of its nature.... The body of every substance, on the other hand, i.e. its matter, its confused perception, its passivity, is the physical or mechanical cause of the substance.⁸⁴⁴

In the letter to Mary Manning quoted in Chapter Five, Beckett alludes to the *petites perceptions* through his description of the mind as “a grey tumult of *idées obscures*”: he describes the “real consciousness” as “the chaos”, a “grey commotion of mind”.⁸⁴⁵ In doing so, he foregrounds ‘aesthesia’ (the ability to experience sensation) through his use of the phrases “coenaesthesia of mind” or “mental self-aesthesia”. Moreover (as discussed in that chapter), Beckett’s dramatisation of his self-absorption in that letter expresses a particular embodied understanding of mental states. Consequently, the confused perception responsible for these states specified in the letter – the *petites perceptions* or “unconscious mental states” – are associated with a heightened bodily awareness and the registering of one’s environment. This is a different form of registration to the soul’s clear and distinct perception. By extension, then, if the *petites perceptions* are aligned with music at the level of their experience as frequency, we can see that Beckett opens up a specific relationship between the body, music and a particular form of perception that is attentive to the nebulous, affective register of experience.

Beyond this, Beckett appears to foreground the body as itself a site of musical reception. In the following passage from the description of the painting, Beckett draws attention to the stretched and tense body of the male figure: “On muscles of brawny neck, arm, torso, abdomen, loin, thigh and calf, standing out like cords in stress of effort”.⁸⁴⁶ Here, Beckett imagines the taut body of Knott Senior as the tensioned piano string, strung like a cord and

⁸⁴⁴ Robert Latta, Introduction to *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, 107.

⁸⁴⁵ Samuel Beckett writing to Mary Manning on 30 August 1937. Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck, vol. 1, 1929–1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 546.

⁸⁴⁶ Beckett, *Watt*, 219.

itself producing an overtone chord. This approximation of music and the body – or, rather, an interest in the *body as musical* – can be traced back to a passage in Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes' in which he focuses on Pythagoras' idea that the body is configured like a stringed instrument:

Physician has to produce proper "blend" of hot and cold, dry and wet. Pythagoreans held the body to be strung like an instrument to a certain pitch. Health is being in tune, disease undue tension or relaxation of strings. Similar view held by Alkmaion (Kroton medical school), according to whom health was "isonomy" of opposites in the body, disease undue predominance of one or other. (TCD MS 1067/21r)⁸⁴⁷

The presence of Leibniz's *petites perceptions* is also evident in the description of the painting from the *Addenda*. The inference of the body stretched like a string instrument resonates with the following quote from *The Monadology*: "we should never break a cord by the greatest effort in the world, if it were not strained and stretched a little by less efforts, though the small extension they produce is not apparent".⁸⁴⁸ As with the noise of the sea in the analogy quoted in Chapter Five, the accumulative significance of the *petites perceptions* is explained through the analogy of a myriad of minor tensions in a string.

In Chapter Six, considering the influence of Leibniz on Arsene's monologue, I suggested that "the slip" that Arsene speaks of, unaccompanied by apperceptive awareness, indicates a type of intrusion of the affective into Arsene's "personal system". This suddenly produces a "distended" perceptual horizon: a type of progressive regression that gives rise to an instinctual way of perceiving – one that is affect-driven and cannot be elucidated by apperception. There, I argued that two types of musical harmony are played off against each other in Arsene's monologue, the latter and most arresting being a particular musical way of *feeling* – that is, a more affective and physical, innervating harmony, as opposed to a harmony based on adherence to principles of perfection and similarity. The former, affective harmony is also produced in the tuning scene and is alluded to in the picture of

⁸⁴⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Samuel Beckett's 'Philosophy Notes'*, ed. Steven Matthews and Matthew Feldman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 35.

⁸⁴⁸ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 'New Essays' in *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. Robert Latta, (London: Oxford University Press, 1898), 372.

the figure at the piano described in the Addenda: Watt experiences a more diffuse form of concordance which foregrounds the embodied musical experience of reverberation.

Overall, then, the subtleties of Beckett's depiction of the Galls' visit are fundamental to the wider concern with alternative forms of attunement in *Watt*. Beckett brings Leibnizian petites perceptions into association with the complexities of the tuning process and by extension the embodied experience of sound as frequency. This suggests a mode of correspondence more akin to affect attunement; Watt's experience is one of intensity and resonance which departs from an idea of harmony and concordance premised on the idea of clear and distinct perception – perception that renders the world with perfection and grants assimilation with that world on those grounds. In his focus on the Galls' activities at the piano, Watt attends to the complexities of tuning – a complexity rooted in his recognition that the process might well be rationalisable, underpinned as it is by the science of acoustics, but one also experienced as ultimately *irrational* due to the effect of the tiny differential quantities (and qualities) of sound. These differentials result from the basis of tuning in incommensurable ratios, underpinned by irrational numbers.

Consequently, during the Galls' visit Watt is exposed to a domain of intrinsic obscurity.⁸⁴⁹

On a perceptual level, he experiences the petites perceptions; these have the quality of unconscious mental states. In response to this, Watt desires a return to his former habits of attributing a face value to an event. However, his exposure to the less immediately conscious aspects of experience initiates a type of inquisitive pursuit born of a curiosity towards this affective, embodied mode of perception. It is perhaps the *combination* of these two impulses – to properly attend to amorphous experience but equally to pin down events and determine their meaning – that is dangerous for Watt, provoking his endless series-making and permutational lists. Watt is trying to produce a perfect accord, but his particular *method* of doing so suggests little engagement with and acceptance of the less immediately conscious aspects of experience that he tries, initially, to fathom.

It is apparent, then, that the musical details of the visit of the Galls – what appears a somewhat brief and obscure scene – are of great import to the underlying concerns of the novel: a particular understanding of tuning, frequency and resonance unfolds from the musical specifics that Beckett includes, and examining this brings the undergirding

⁸⁴⁹ Heller-Roazen, *The Fifth Hammer*, 83.

Leibnizian perceptual framework to the surface. As with his use of so many other philosophical ideas, Beckett employs his own version of Leibniz's system, bringing it into play with musical analogies that extend beyond Leibniz's own, to explore embodied mental experience.

Conclusion

Several published studies have considered the place of music in Beckett's early work. However, they do not attend to its role in Beckett's epistemological concerns, nor its basis in his early reading and self-directed study of philosophy. This thesis fills this lacuna, investigating Beckett's use of music, and specifically musical tuning, in his recourse to, exploration of, and creative affinity with the tradition of creative or intellectual melancholia. It doing so, it considers Beckett's use of music as part of his intertextual practice, examining the relationship between his working notes and the manifestation of music in his texts.

The idea that Beckett's work is melancholic in temperament is prevalent and comprehensively articulated. However, there has been less attention to the affective epistemic qualities of this aesthetic mood, or the shape it takes in the work of a writer, who, during his own period of ill health in the 1930s, dedicated himself to a systematic accumulation of knowledge in this area, as part of his paradoxical creative quest for ignorance. As Anne Atik – author and close friend of Beckett – writes, “He feared erudition, swamping the authenticity of a work, and constantly warned against that danger for other artists, having had to escape from it himself”.⁸⁵⁰ This thesis attends to music's role in the affective qualities of Beckett's *Murphy* and *Watt*, lent by his creative exploration of systems of thought concerned with the status of knowledge. It examines how Beckett's reading of philosophy factors into the experience of his texts for the reader, and in doing so it reconfigures our understanding of the ways in which Beckett's work might be understood as musical. Beyond exploring buried and often opaque references to music in Beckett's texts, the thesis also considers the interactive role that the inclusion of musical notation plays in the affective processes of the writing.

It has long been understood that music is often positioned in literary modernism as a 'higher art', but how does melancholia and, further, its epistemic qualities, figure in this process? This thesis shows how Beckett draws music – instances of musical experience, but also music as a metaphor of internal thought – into play with the intellectual tradition of

⁸⁵⁰ Anne Atik, *How It Was A Memoir of Samuel Beckett* (Faber and Faber: London, 2001), 121 and 52.

melancholia. He suggests a fundamental resonance between the type of inner chasm that melancholic subjectivity supposes and music itself. Exploring this therefore contributes to understandings of the valorisation of both music and melancholia, figured as forms of heightened self-consciousness, in literary modernism. Moreover, it demonstrates how some of Beckett's musical references implicitly critique this idea of musical and melancholic interiority, by exploiting, to ironic extreme, music's radical semantic autonomy. Effectively, Beckett asks us what we find in, or through, this melancholic introspection. Is the melancholic wiser because of their rich inner life, or does their sagacity itself arise from a Democritean acknowledgement of "the Nothing, than which in the guffaw of the Abderite naught is more real",⁸⁵¹ precipitated by living as a solipsist? Beckett's use of music brings such questions into focus.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this research brings to light the importance of the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz for considering the role of music in Beckett's writing, and for Beckett's creative framing of his experiences of melancholia and epistemic emotions relative to this. It shows that Beckett derives, from his reading of Leibniz, his own alternative tuning analogies, rooted in the experience of embodiment and put to use in his exploration of the relationship between mood and perspective. The close consideration of details in Beckett's correspondence confirms that Leibnizian references to music and harmony might be understood as part of a broader exploration of perspective relative to different knowledge states in the experience of melancholia.

⁸⁵¹ Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 154.

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