

WRITING BEFORE THE LETTER IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

“WRITING BEFORE THE LETTER” IN SAMUEL BECKETT S DRAMA

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This thesis aims to re-read the questions of language, subjectivity, and expression in selected short plays of Samuel Beckett. It explores the violence of writing in music in *Words and Music* and *Cascando* and the violence of writing in bodily/inner voice in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*. By revealing the problematics of the metaphysics of music, the metaphysics of voice, and “the logic of supplementarity” in the interpretations of these texts, it hopes to open them to a different reading, focusing on the Dionysian force of *différance* in these texts within which “expression” neither can be attached to an “origin” nor can be said to arrive at a *telos*, but rather deferred in an infinite “chain of supplementarity.” This thesis offers “the complicity of origins” instead of “the myth of the simplicity of origin,” the embracement of force instead of the effacement of it. It offers the possibility of reading the infinite movement—*différance*—as the *aporia* in language, subjectivity, and expression, that is, is the possibility and the impossibility of language, subjectivity, and expression.

Keywords: Language, Expression, Metaphysics of Music, Metaphysics of Bodily/Inner voice, Writing/*Différance*.



ÖZ

SAMUEL BECKETTİN OYUNLARINDAKİ “WRITING BEFPORE THE LETTER”

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Bu tez, Samuel Beckett'in seçilmiş kısa oyunlarında dil, öznellik ve ifade sorularına yeni bir okuma yöntemi getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. *Words and Music* [Sözcükler ve Müzik] ve *Cascando*'da müzikteki “yazım eylemini” ve *Footfalls* [Ayak Sesleri], *Not I* [Ben Değil] ve *Rockaby*'de bedensel/içsel sesteki “yazım eylemini” mercek altına alır. Müziğin metafiziğini, sesin metafiziğini ve bu metinlerin yorumlarındaki “supplementarity” sorunsallarını ortaya çıkararak, bu metinleri farklı bir okumaya açmayı amaçlar. Bu metinlerdeki Dionysoscu farklılık gücüne odaklanarak, “ifade” ne bir “kökene” bağlanabilir ne de bir *telos*'a ulaştığı söylenebilir, bunun yerine sonsuz bir tamamlayıcılık zincirinde ertelenebilir, sonucuna varır. Bu tez, bu sonsuz hareketi, farklılığı, dilde, öznellikte ve ifadede *aporia*, yani dil, öznellik ve ifadenin olasılığı ve imkansızlığı olarak okuma imkânı sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil, İfade, Müzik Metafiziği, Bedensel/İçsel Ses Metafiziği, Writing/Différance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDW	<i>The Complete Dramatic Works</i>
D	<i>Dissemination</i>
MO	<i>Monolingualism of the Other; or The Prothesis of Origin</i>
MP	<i>Margins of Philosophy</i>
OG	<i>Of Grammatology</i>
OL	“The Other’s Language: Jacques Derrida Interviews Ornette Coleman”
P	<i>Positions</i>
PTD	<i>Proust and Three Dialogues</i>
SP	<i>Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs</i>
T	<i>Trilogy: Molloy; Mallone Dies; The Unnamable</i>
WD	<i>Writing and Difference</i>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

[O]ne says “language” for action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc. Now we tend to say “writing” *for all that and more*. (Derrida, OG 9; emphasis added)

It goes without saying that Beckett’s drama does not fit into the classic definition of drama.¹ It not only troubles the boundary between *mimesis* and *diegesis*² but also the boundary between drama and other genres; it is an amalgam of drama, narrative, poetry, song, music, mime, dance, and other forms of art. In other words, his drama is characterised by generic hybridity. However, Beckett’s drama cannot be easily pinned down into the modern classifications either. Rather, it radically diverges from the conventions of the drama and the theatre. “Beckett abandoned the whole convention of playwriting,” that is, “the idea that a play should have a beginning, a middle and an end, the notion that characters should be consistent and plausible, the presumption that action and plot were necessary to create dramatic energy” (McDonald 27). The classic requirements of plot, character, thought, and diction are obviously undermined in Beckett’s drama; his drama erodes plot and

¹ For Aristotle, “[p]oetry is either . . . non-mimetic or . . . mimetic” (CT 950). He divides the former into “historical” and “instructive” and the latter into “narrative” and “dramatic” (ibid.). The dramatic, which is divided into tragedy and comedy, mine, and satyr-dramas, according to Aristotle “[directly] present[s] action” (ibid.).

² Although we see story-telling in Beckett’s early plays such as *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy days*, his later works are dominated by narrative; his later characters emerge as narrators, resembling Molloy, Malone, and the unnameable narrator of *The Unnameable*.

character which are the fundamental elements of drama; it is characterised not by action and speech, which are at the heart of drama, but rather the crisis of action and speech. Expectations of action and plot in the conventional sense inexorably lead to a sense of frustration. Even more frustrating is the incoherent and fragmented dialogues, monologues, voices, and echoes. Instead of “characters,” one sees nomads wandering or crawling on the stage; one sees crippled, blind,³ or otherwise paralysed creatures confined in dark, limited spaces; one sees creatures in bins,⁴ urns,⁵ and creatures buried in mound.⁶ In other words, rather than present body and voice, one sees fragmented body parts and hears fragmented voices and echoes whose “origins” are not identifiable. More catastrophic, however, is the absence of beginnings and endings in the conventional sense; “nothing ever simply begins or ends, but is always instead *in the process* of beginning or ending” (Gendron xiv). The endless repetitions in Beckett’s drama makes one “find [oneself] bound in a perpetual cycle of *déjà vu*, or more precisely, *deja lu*” (ibid.). In short, the “present” bodies, voices, cries, screams, gestures, movements, and actions induce not a sense of presence, but rather absence, depriving the audience/reader of their taken-for-granted categories of presence. Thus, Beckett’s drama can be argued to undermine the foundations of “the theatre of presence,”⁷ inviting one to re-think one’s taken-for-granted categories of presence and, more importantly, presence itself.

Beckett’s drama was not only a significant breakthrough in the conventions of the drama and the theatre,⁸ but it has also had—alongside his

³ For instance, Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot*, Ham in *Endgame*, Mr Rooney in *All That Fall*, and A in *Rough for Theatre I*, among others.

⁴ Nagg and Nell in *Endgames*.

⁵ The three characters in *Play*.

⁶ Winnie in *Happy Days*.

⁷ A term borrowed from Steven Connor.

⁸ Although modernists, such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf had revolutionised poetry and the novel, English drama had not been influenced much by “modernist experiment and ‘difficulty’ ” (McDonald 27). However, Beckett was not the first to challenge realist drama. Luigi Pirandello in Italy and Bertolt Brecht in Germany had already posed challenges to the “realist conventions” of the drama and the theatre (27-28).

fiction—an undeniable influence on Western thought.⁹ It closely deals with a wide range of philosophical concepts—among them language, subjectivity, and expression. The intensity with which Beckett deals with the questions of language and representation is unprecedented in drama.

Beckett's drama marks the crisis of representation; it is an amalgam of *failing* speeches, voices, cries, actions, movements, and music; that is, “verbal” and “non-verbal” signifiers that fail to arrive at a transcendental signified, that is, a *telos*. One cannot pin down these fragmented speeches, voices, cries, actions, movements, and music into meaningful wholes—into the categories with which one conventionally understands “expression;” nor can one attribute them “origins” such as subjectivity, intention, thought, memory, consciousness/unconscious, or intuition. In other words, these signs cannot be reduced to any form of presence; rather, they render “the reappropriation of presence,” borrowing Derrida's words (OG 10), impossible. This means that presence, whose absence is attempted to be replaced by these signs—whether “verbal” or “non-verbal”—is eternally deferred.¹⁰ However, this *différance*, which is at the heart of Beckett's drama, cannot be understood as merely a disruptive power. As well as a disruptive force, *différance* is the very originary force behind “language;” it is “a kind of “writing before the letter,” an archi-writing without a present origin, without archi-” (MP 15). In other words, this “play of differences” is the force that both gives rise to “language” and disrupts it.

Despite the persistence of force in Beckett's drama, some critics have attempted at giving it forms, that is, they have attempted at reducing *différance* to different forms of presence. These critics have tried to save the logos from

⁹ The fact that so many thinkers such as “George Lukács, Julia Kristeva, Jean-François Lyotard, Phillippe Sollers, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Theodor Adorno” (Gendron xvii-xviii), and Gilles Deleuze have written about his works suggests this enormous influence. Foucault refers to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as a “break” in his “intellectual odyssey” (Miller 65). He says, “I belong to that generation who, as students, had before their eyes, and were limited by, a horizon consisting of Marxism, phenomenology, and existentialism. For me the break was first Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a breathtaking performance” (qtd. in Miller 65).

¹⁰ “The sign presents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence” (Derrida, MP 9).

ruins. Such an attempt at the “reappropriation of presence”¹¹ entails not only the concealment of absence but also the very act of the concealment itself. This concealment, however, is not a happy concealment since absence eternally haunts the constructed presence. The aim of this thesis is to reveal this concealed absence that haunts the metaphysics of “interiority,” “immediacy,” and “expression.” Since I maintain that “language” in Beckett’s plays cannot be approached with conventional theories of language, I will draw on the Derridean notion of “writing before the letter.” I will try to reveal the limitations of the conventional approaches to “language” in Beckett’s texts, that is, the metaphysical assumptions and sedimented metaphors which conventional theories of language are fraught with.¹² I will argue that the study of language in Beckett’s drama cannot be reduced to the phone and speech, that is, to the “verbal signs.” I will argue further that the “non-verbal” signs cannot be taken as the “non-linguistic” outside of “language.” By trying to show that this opposition between “language” and “non-language,” the “sign” and the “non-sign,” the “verbal” and the “non-verbal,” are themselves effects of “language,” I will try to open up the possibility of a broader understanding of “language” in Beckett’s drama, that is, language as writing—“writing before the letter;” language as the force that gives rise not only to voice and speech but also to action, movement, cry, music and other forms of inscription.¹³

Due to the limitation of space, I have limited the focus of my study to the exploration of the question of “language” and “non-language” in *Words and Music*, *Cascando*, *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*—not only because they closely deal with the boundary between “language” and “non-language” but also because they have received more reductionist approaches in comparison to other plays. While this reduction in *Words and Music* and *Cascando* can be put down

¹¹ A term borrowed from Derrida (OG).

¹² Innocence and corruption, immediacy and mediacy, the pre-linguistic/extra-linguistic and the linguistic, expression and indication, expressive and non-expressive, the (maternal) body and the (paternal) Law, the material body and linguistic/discursive body, the bodily/inner voice and the voice of discourse, the self and the other, presence and absence, etc. which all stem from the easy distinction between the inside and the outside.

¹³ “And thus we say ‘writing’ for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice” (Derrida, OG 9; emphasis added).

to “music Platonism,”¹⁴ in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*, it often stems from the female voice and its evocation of Womb/Mother metaphor, which I shall touch on briefly.

1.1.1. “The Ruins of the Logos”¹⁵ in the Reception of Beckett’s Drama

The Bible is the most sublime of all books, . . . but it is after all a book . . . It is not at all in a few sparse pages that one should look for God's law, but in the human heart where His hand deigned to write. (Rousseau qtd. in Derrida, *OG* 17)

The more I retreat into myself, the more I consult myself, the more plainly do I read these words written in my soul: be just and you will be happy. (Rousseau, *E* 254)

I do not derive these rules from the principles of the higher philosophy, I find them in the depths of my heart written by nature in characters which nothing can efface. (249)

This ideal motion, in which through the sound what is as it were the simple subjectivity, the soul of the material thing expresses itself, the ear receives also in a theoretical way, just as the eye shape and colour, thus allowing the interiority of the object to become interiority itself The ear, on the contrary, perceives the result of that interior vibration of material substance without placing itself in a practical relation toward the objects, a result by means of which it is no longer the material form in its repose, but the first, more ideal activity of the soul itself which is manifested. (Hegel, *PFA* 15-16)

The history of metaphysics, as Derrida reveals, is a history of logocentrism which has always been phonocentric. Within this history, voice/speech has always represented immediacy and interiority and, hence, absolute presence. This phonocentric history, thus, has always debased writing as the exterior, the secondary, the copy, the supplement, that is, absence. This erasure of writing is as old as philosophy itself. Plato sees writing as “the auxilliary aide-memoire to

¹⁴ A term borrowed by Christopher Morris.

¹⁵ I have borrowed this term from Judith Butler (*BTM* viii) to refer to the tendency in literary criticism to save the self-de-constructing logos in Beckett’s theatre from the ruins by an attempt at re-constructing it; that is, to the inability of criticism to tolerate absence as absence, the tendency to give account of absence by recourse to a discourse of presence.

the living memory” (Derrida, *OG* 37). Writing, for him, is “[f]orgetfulness because it is a mediation and the departure of the logos from itself” (ibid.).¹⁶ For Aristotle, “[s]poken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words” (Aristotle sec.1). Since Plato and Aristotle, philosophy has never been able to do away with these sediments. One can easily see these Platonic and Aristotelian sediments not only in Saussure but also after Saussure. Saussure asserts that “[l]anguage and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first” (23). For him, “[t]he only true bond [is] the bond of sound” (25). This assumption of a natural relation between sound and sense as well as the prioritisation of speech over writing has always permeated Western thought.

Rousseau occupies an important place in the history of the debasement of writing. In the “Essay on the Origin of Languages,” he traces the “origin” of language and that of music. He offers a hierarchical series of natural and unnatural means of communication based on their degree of “immediacy” and “expressiveness.” Not surprisingly, he places writing at the bottom of this hierarchy. For Rousseau, writing is the evil that changes and corrupts language: “it changes not its words but its genius; it substitutes *precision* for *expressiveness*” (Rousseau, *EOL* 300; emphasis added). When language “becomes more precise,” it loses its expressive quality; this non-expressive, corrupted language is the language of reason, not the language of the heart (296). Thus, he contends that “[f]eelings are conveyed when one speaks and ideas when one writes” (300). For him, the only natural languages are “the language of gesture and that of the voice” (290). While the former arises from

¹⁶ In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Socrates tries to persuade Phaedrus of the unreliability of writing: “The loyalty you feel to writing, as its originator, has just led you to tell me the opposite of its true effect. It will atrophy people’s memories. Trust in writing will make them remember things by relying on marks made by others, *from outside themselves, not on their own inner resources*, and so writing will make the things they have learnt disappear from their minds” (69; emphasis added). Socrates resembles the “dead” writing to painting which is equally dead: “The offspring of painting stand there as if alive, but if you ask them a question they maintain an aloof silence. It’s the same with written words: you might think they were speaking as if they had some intelligence, but if you want an explanation of any of the things they’re saying and you ask them about it, they just go on and on for ever giving the same single piece of information. Once any account has been written down, you find it all over the place, hobnobbing with completely inappropriate people no less than with those who understand it, and completely failing to know who it should and shouldn’t talk to. And faced with rudeness and unfair abuse it always needs its father to come to its assistance, since it is incapable of defending or helping itself” (70).

needs (“physical needs”), passions (“moral needs”) give rise to the latter (292-94).

Rousseau’s hierarchy does not end here. Although voice seems to be natural for him, some voices, he claims, are less natural. This is due to the evil of articulation which corrupts accent and replaces it. The more accented, the more natural a language is; the more articulated, the less natural it becomes (296). Thus, the most natural language, for him, is the inarticulate sounds of nature. Rousseau makes a distinction between the sounds of nature and voice. He argues that unlike voice, which is articulated, natural sounds are inarticulate. (295-96). Hence, the most natural sound, the pure sound, is the one that is not corrupted by the evil of articulation.

We see this order of “naturalness” and “unnaturalness” in his philosophy of music, as well. Although music, being a form of art, is merely an imitation of nature, this imitation can be more “natural” if it imitates more “natural” sounds. Thus, for Rousseau, melody is more natural because “[i]t imitates the accents of languages” (322). Interestingly enough, “it not only imitates, it speaks, and its language, inarticulate but lively, ardent, passionate, has a hundred times more energy than speech itself” (ibid.). Harmony, however, is the corruptive element like writing; much like writing which corrupts speech, harmony “deprives it [melody] of energy and *expression*” by bringing exactness to it (ibid.; emphasis added).

We see this hierarchical series of metaphors in the reception of Beckett’s drama; absence in Beckett’s plays has often been reduced to different discourses of presence. These “reappropriations of presence” might be partly put down to the nature of the theatre. As Steven Connor has pointed out, the drama has a greater tendency than the novel to induce metaphysical assumptions; this is largely due to the “presence” of body and voice on the stage:

The drama’s claim to embody a “metaphysics of presence” rests largely upon two claims: that it represents human beings with the actual bodies of other human beings, and that it represents spoken words with words spoken by those actual human beings. The relationship between these claims is an intimate and necessary one. Thus it is a commonplace to argue that the theatre’s reliance on speech rather than on “dead” writing gives it an immediacy which the novel, or any other written narrative, can never match. (140)

However, I argue that the metaphysical assumptions are not as much a result of this tendency of the theatre as that of literary criticism which is inevitably entangled in the metaphysical history, that is, the history of the effacement of writing. If some critics have reduced Beckett's drama to "the theatre of presence," borrowing Connor's term (132), it is because criticism cannot tolerate ambiguities, uncertainties, and paradoxes, that is, absence; it has to fill in absence with a constructed presence. In the plays I will discuss throughout this study, the discourses of presence that have often helped the critics to fill in the absence are "music Platonism" and the discourse of the *chora* and the separation.¹⁷

1.1.1. "Music Platonism"

As Christopher Morris observes, "music Platonism" has always held sway in music studies. This Platonist tendency, according to him, arises from

the assumption . . . that any particular score instantiates a pattern that is in principle knowable ahead of time. *Plato's doctrine of pre-existence is thus a way of assuring that music corresponds to an "objective" reality* similar to that claimed for numbers in mathematics. This anchoring assumption then allows musical analysis to proceed without the risk of subjectivism. At the same time, *the "objectivity" of music requires that its perception cannot be influenced by language.* (98-9; emphasis added)

Despite the pervasive critique of Platonism in literary studies, Platonism has been—ironically—the dominant approach to music and musicality in literature. Music has often been seen as opposed to language, the repressed other of language, its outside. In a Rousseauistic fashion, music has always been associated with "passion" and language with "reason;" it has often been assumed to "convey feelings" as opposed to language which "conveys ideas," in Rousseau's words (318). The dominant attitude in academia is the presumption

¹⁷ Due to their exceptional richness, Beckett's texts have received highly diverse interpretations. Early readings of Beckett are dominantly phenomenological, existentialist, and absurdist. There are also a large number of Biblical interpretations as well as archetypal/mythological readings. As to his dramatic texts, there are interesting studies of the production and the performance. The focus of this study, however, is on the question of language, subject, and expression which are often approached by "poststructuralists," psychoanalytic, and feminist critics.

that music is “immedia[te], accessibil[e], and presen[t]” (Morris 103), whether this presumption is admitted or not. This presumption, however, is not firmly grounded; it is simply built on music-language binarism in literary theory. Since this approach attributes the qualities of mediacy, inaccessibility, and absence to music, language’s assumed opposite—music—has been endowed with the above mentioned qualities. This opposition, however, has not been provided with sufficient justification.

Although the idealisation of music—especially “‘absolute’ music”—can be traced back to “the cosmic harmonies of Pythagoras” (94), in modern philosophy and arts it is indebted to “Schopenhauer’s . . . ‘will’ ” and “Nietzsche’s Dionysos” (ibid). We can see Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean approaches to music and musicality in literature, as well. The approach to music and musicality in Beckett, for instance, has both Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean dimensions. Many critics who have studied music and musicality in Beckett associate this quality with Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophy of art.¹⁸ For Schopenhauer, music is the highest form of art:

It stands completely apart from all the others [other forms of art]. What we recognize in it is *not an imitation or repetition of some Idea of the essence of the world*: nonetheless, it is such a great and magisterial art, it exercises so powerful an effect within us, is understood so deeply and entirely by us as a wholly *universal language* whose clarity exceeds even that of the intuitive world itself. . . [M]usic must in some sense relate to the world as *presentation to presented, as copy to original*. . . . (283; emphasis added)

Those who adopt a Schopenhauerian approach to music in literature mostly focus on the “expressiveness” of music and, hence, its superiority over language which is articulated and, hence, lacks “expressiveness.” Despite different approaches to music and musicality in Beckett, there has been an agreement that Beckett turns to music out of his frustration with language and its referential

¹⁸ Associating music and musicality in Beckett with German Romantic music—especially Wagnerism—or Schopenhauer’s philosophy of art is often autobiographical. It is largely due to Beckett’s reference to Schopenhauer in his reading of Proust. It has been claimed that Beckett’s “presentation of Proust’s work shows the potential development of his own” (Locatelli qtd. in Laws 45). Some critics attempt at digging out Beckett’s ideas on music in his *Proust* and pinning down what they have found on Beckett’s own texts. Beckett’s remark that “Music always wins” (qtd. in Worth, 16), which is cited by many critics, has also led to metaphysical interpretations of music in his texts.

nature, seeking a non-referential language which could be more “expressive” (Bailes and Till 1, Laws 10, McGrath 2, Ristani 120, Ojrzynska 48). It has been argued that Beckett is trying to do away with “the burden of literal and figurative meaning” (Bailes and Till 2). According to these critics, since language, with its referential nature, prevents “the direct expression of ideas,” Beckett “attempt[s at negating] the referential content of words in order to maximise their ability to express ideas” (Laws 10). They have seen Beckett’s attempt as an attempt to “[capture] the experience of human existence” (Bailes and Till 2). I argue that these interpretations are all founded on the metaphors of immediacy and presence of experience, that is, the metaphor of self-presence. For instance, in *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, both of which closely deal with the questions of language, music, and “expression,” although both language and music are claimed to represent the “reality” of Croak and Opener’s mind or psyche, in both plays music is considered to be a more immediate representation of presence; it is claimed to grasp the reality that is beyond the grasp of language.

However, there is another approach to music and musicality in literary studies which gives more weight to the subversive power of music as against language. This approach, which is more common in relation to (post)modern texts, has Nietzschean overtones; whether referred to Nietzsche or not, this tendency is largely inspired by Nietzsche’s Apollonian-Dionysian opposition; it usually stems from a simplistic reading of Nietzsche’s Apollonian-Dionysian and an anachronistic application of it to (post)modernist texts. Many contemporary literary critics view music—any music regardless of its form and content—as a challenge to language which, according to them, represents culture, cultural norms or the Symbolic. Nevertheless, it is never clear how they dis-entangle music from culture and cultural norms, how they render music pure, that is, uncontaminated by these norms. Thus, I argue that while the Platonism of the Schopenhauerian approach is explicit and acknowledged, the Platonism that stems from Nietzschean approach remains implicit and unacknowledged.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche bases his theory of art on Apollo and Dionysus, two Greek gods of art. Apollo is “the god of the sun and light, music

and poetry, healing and plagues, prophecy and knowledge, order and beauty, archery and agriculture” who is associated with “harmony, reason and moderation” (GM) while Dionysus is “the god of wine, winemaking, grape cultivation, fertility, ritual madness, theater, and religious ecstasy” (GGG). He is also “considered a patron of the arts” and is associated with “joy,” “divine ecstasy and “brutal and blinding rage, . . . reflecting the dual nature of wine” (GM). Unlike Apollo, who is “moderation personified,” “Dionysus and his followers could not be bound by fetters” (GM).

For Nietzsche, “Apolline art [is] the image-maker” art while Dionysiac art is “the imageless art” (14). These two kinds of art belong to “art-world of *dream* and *intoxication*” (ibid.). The Apolline artist is, thus, a “dream-artist” and Dionysic artist an “artist of intoxication” (19). Nietzsche writes,

Every human being is fully an artist when creating the worlds of dream, and the lovely semblance of dream is the precondition of all the arts of image-making, including, as we shall see, an important half of poetry. We take pleasure in dreaming, understanding its figures without mediation; all forms speak to us; nothing is indifferent or unnecessary (15).

The Dionysiac, on the contrary, lies in “the enormous *horror* which seizes people when they suddenly become confused and lose faith in the cognitive forms of the phenomenal world If we add to this horror the blissful ecstasy . . . we catch a glimpse of the essence of the *Dionysiac*” (17). This state, according to Nietzsche, “is best conveyed by the analogy of *intoxication*” (ibid.). Nietzsche asserts that the Apolline-Dionysiac conflict is at the heart of all art and the highest form of art—which, according to him, is the attic tragedy of the Greeks— is “a work of art which is Dionysiac and Apolline in equal measures” (14).

For Nietzsche, not only Apolline art but also Dionysiac art are illusions like philosophy; he sees “these three levels of illusion [which] are only for those equipped with nobler natures,” illusions arisen from the Will to “force [creatures] to carry on living” (85). He contends that these deceptions are noble illusions that save us: philosophy saves one “by the Socratic pleasure in understanding,” the Apolline art by “seductive veil of beauty,” and the

Dionysiac art by “the metaphysical solace that eternal life flows on indestructibly beneath the turmoil of appearances” (ibid.).

Nietzsche asserts that we are unable to confront “the highest idea of the world,” that is, the pure Dionysiac (101). Thus, we need “the symbolic image of myth,” that is, “Apolline *deception*” to save us from this confrontation, that is, the “direct oneness with Dionysiac music” (102, 111, 111). It is important to note that what Nietzsche calls Dionysiac art is not always synonymous with Dionysiac force; nor with Dionysiac wisdom/knowledge or Dionysus; such a confusion might be misleading. For Nietzsche, the pure Dionysus, that is, “the spirit of music, music itself, in its absolute sovereignty, has no need at all of images and concepts” (36); it is invisible. Dionysiac art is what Nietzsche sees as the highest form of art. In this kind of art—tragedy and lyric poetry, for instance—the “Dionysiac wisdom,” which is itself unconscious, is expressed through symbols; in other words, it is translated into “the language of images” (80); it is “under the influence of Apolline dream” that music which is “[t]he image-less and concept-less reflection of the original pain” of the world “becomes visible . . . as in a *symbolic dream-image*” (30). The produced image is, thus, “a dream scene which gives sensuous expression to the primal contradiction and pain, along with its primal lust for and pleasure in semblance” (30). In short, “music struggles to inform us about its nature [its Dionysiac nature] in Apolline images” (80). It “stimulates us to *contemplate symbolically* Dionysiac universality, and it causes the symbolic image to emerge with the *highest degree of significance*” (79).

It is true that following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche sees music as “the [direct] language of the Will” (79). However, we must bear in mind that music is not necessarily the pure music—the image-less music—that Nietzsche attributes to the Will. As Nietzsche reminds us, “music was already familiar to the Greeks as an Apolline art;” it had “image-making power” (21). For Nietzsche “music of Apollo was Doric architectonics in sound” (21). Furthermore, Nietzsche distinguishes between the music that is “a miserable copy of a phenomenon” and the music that is “a general mirror of the world-will,” that is Apolline music and Dionysiac music. Although he claims that “music struggles to inform us about its nature [its Dionysiac nature] in Apolline

images” (80), in reference to Beethoven’s symphony, which makes one “to speak in images” (34), he argues that “symbolic representations born out of music (as opposed to the objects imitated by the music), . . . are quite incapable of informing us about the *Dionysiac* content of music, and . . . indeed have no exclusive value as compared with other images” (35). These Apolline images are only “appearance[s]” as opposed to the Dionysiac “essence” of music (ibid.). It is not clear when images can achieve “the *highest degree of significance*” (79) and when they “have no exclusive value as compared with other images” (35).

I assert that it is not possible to derive easy binarisms from *The Birth of Tragedy*. Although Nietzsche generally associates Apollonian art with sculpture (plastic arts) and Dionysian art with music, a closer reading of *The Birth of Tragedy* reveals these categories not to be fixed, as commonly assumed. Thus, the tendency to label music as necessarily Dionysian and language as necessarily Apollonian is only a superficial reading of Nietzsche. Even if such a reading is possible, I assert that what Nietzsche defines as Dionysian art does not apply to (post)modernist art in which Apollonian images can no longer be formed. However, rather than an image-less art—which is not possible—(post)modernist art, I assert, is an image-distorting art. This is not the impossible “symbolic incapacity” that Rousseau wishes (Derrida OG 242), but rather the distortion of all symbols. Here, metaphysics can no longer save us. (Post)modernist art does what Nietzsche could not predict. In (post)modernist art the Apollonian illusion is dispelled and the Dionysian is fully embraced, without horror; one no longer seeks “the metaphysical solace.” With (post)modernist distortion of images, the horror of loss turns into pleasure, but a pleasure far from that which is derived from Apollonian illusion. A work of art that embraces Dionysus without the need for Apollo is, borrowing Roland Barthes’ terms, “text of bliss” as opposed to “text of pleasure”¹⁹ which saves you with Apollonian illusion:

Text of pleasure; the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked

¹⁹ Barthes draws a distinction between “pleasure” (*plaisir*) and “bliss” (*jouissance*)

to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss; the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that *discomforts* . . . , *unsettles* the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (PT 14; 1st emphasis original)

With this definition, it can be argued that the Apollonian art gives pleasure by the illusion with which it saves one from Dionysian horror, while the Dionysian art evokes a sense of bliss by distorting Apollonian images, by embracing the infinite movement of these images, that is, pure force of Dionysus. Derrida writes,

If we must say, along with Schelling, that “all is but Dionysus,” we must know—and *this is to write*—that, like *pure force*, *Dionysus is worked by difference*. He sees and lets himself be seen. And tears out (his) eyes. For all eternity, he has had a relationship to his exterior, to visible form, to structure, as he does to his death. This is how he appears (to himself). (WD 34; emphasis added)

Throughout this thesis I will be referring to Dionysian force as the force of movement, that is, the pure force, which is not about the medium but the element of movement which can be identified in language as well as in music. Drawing on this re-reading of Dionysus, I will re-read the relationship between language and music as well as the question of “expression” in *Words and Music* and *Cascando*. By exploring the play of Apollo and Dionysus in these two plays, I will try to show that we cannot necessarily associate Dionysus with music and Apollo with language. I will try to show how this easy binarism as well as the metaphysical interpretations of both texts arise not from the texts themselves but from the Rousseauistic desire for “full presence,” the “pure origin,” the non-supplementarity “before” the violence of addition. I will argue that to see music as more “expressive” than language, as closer to the “pure origin,” as a medium uncorrupted by referentiality and signification, is to ignore the violence of language in music. In other words, associating music with Dionysian force and language with Apollonian form is not only to ignore the possibility of the Apollonian form in music and the possibility of the Dionysian force in language but also the very force behind the possibility of both language and music, the force which is not only their possibility but, at the same time, their impossibility. I will argue that both texts invite us to re-think this

irreducible force which “produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing that it makes impossible;” this force is the force that Derrida calls *différance* (OG 143).

The reduction of this force in *Words and Music* and *Cascando* to certain “origins” becomes possible only by means of effacement. In order to reduce music in these plays to different forms of presence, many critics have effaced the violence of writing which threatens not only these forms but also the notions of presence and absence in general. As Derrida reminds us, in order to render a metaphor as presence, metaphysics has to efface the metaphoricity of this metaphor; in other words, in order to maintain the illusion of presence, metaphysics has to efface absence by concealing the originary metaphors that produce the notions of presence and absence; it has to efface the metaphoricity, that is, the supplementarity of the origin; it has to efface the impurity of the pure, the absence of presence. This is why the myth of origin, is, as Derrida reveals, “the myth of the effacement of the trace” (167). This trace, however, continues to haunt presence eternally (44).

The aim of this thesis is to reveal the force which has been reduced to the forms of presence. I will track down the trace which haunts the metaphysics of music. I will try to reveal the catastrophic moment, the mid-point which is effaced in a Rousseauistic manner in order for presence to be present.²⁰ By trying to reveal the supplementarity in the non-supplementary, the impurity in the pure, the absence in the presence, I will try to reveal the violence of writing in music. In other words, I will try to show that “there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements” (159). The aim of this thesis is to reveal this “movement of supplementarity” not only as the disruptive force but only as the very originary force, the “*différance* [that] produces what it forbids” (143), the *différance* at the “origin” of both language and music, the *différance* which disrupts presence in both language and music.

²⁰ According to Derrida, what Rousseau attempts at erasing is “mediacy” which is “the mid-point and the mediation, the middle term between *total absence* and the *absolute plenitude of presence*” (157; emphasis added). For Rousseau, “there has never been an intermediary between *everything* or *nothing*”. (Rousseau qtd. in Derrida 157; emphasis added). In a Rousseauistic manner, critics have tried but failed to efface this mediacy.

In short, I will try to show that the *aporia* in language is the *aporia* in music, as well.

1.1.2. The Discourse of the *Chora* and the Separation

Another dominant discourse in literary studies which is often invoked in approaches to the question of language, especially the relationship between language and subjectivity, is Julia Kristeva's discourse of the semiotic *chora*. Kristeva "borrow[s] the term *chora* from Plato's *Timaeus* to denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases" (25). According to her, this is an "uncertain and indeterminate *articulation*" unlike the "*disposition* that . . . depends on representation" (25). In other words, for Kristeva, "[t]he *chora* is a modality of signification in which *the linguistic sign is not yet articulated*" (26; emphasis added). This modality of articulation is what Kristeva calls the semiotic mode of signification which precedes the symbolic mode of signification:

According to a number of psycholinguists, "concrete operations" precede the acquisition of language, and organize pre verbal semiotic space according to logical categories, which are thereby shown to *precede or transcend language*. From their research we shall retain not the principle of an operational state but that of a preverbal functional state that governs the connections between the body (in the process of constituting itself as a body proper), objects, and the protagonists of family structure. *But we shall distinguish this functioning from symbolic operations that depend on language as a sign system—whether the language [langue] is vocalized or gestural (as with deaf-mutes). The kinetic functional stage of the semiotic precedes the establishment of the sign; it is not, therefore, cognitive in the sense of being assumed by a knowing, already constituted subject.* (27; emphasis added)

This mode of signification is, thus, a pre-linguistic, pre-Symbolic mode of signification, that is, a "psychosomatic modality of the signifying process" which is "anterior to sign and syntax" (28, 29); it is a "rhythmic space" resembling "vocal or kinetic rhythm" (26). Kristeva claims that the pre-Symbolic drives that are at work within the semiotic *chora* "connect and orient

the body to the mother” (27). “The mother’s body is therefore what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora* which is on the path of destruction, aggressivity, and death” (27-8). The subject, according to Kristeva, emerges during the break from the semiotic which is the realm of “drives and their articulation” and the entry into the “realm of signification” (43), that is, “the threshold of language” (45); she calls this break “the *thetic* phase” (43).

Based on the distinction between two modes of signification, that is, the semiotic and the symbolic modes of signification, Kristeva identifies two different functions of the text: “the genotext” and “the phenotext” (86). A genotext is a text dominated by the semiotic mode of signification, resembling the *chora*, while a phenotext is a text dominated by the symbolic mode of signification. In other words, a genotext “include[s] semiotic processes but also the advent of the symbolic” while a phenotext includes “the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorial fields” (ibid.). According to Kristeva, the process of signification entails “both the genotext and the phenotext” (87-8). However, “certain literary texts of the avant-garde (Mallarme, Joyce),” according to her, are able to “reach the semiotic *chora*, which modifies linguistic structures” (88). These texts foreground

the transfers of drive energy that can be detected in phonematic devices (such as the accumulation and repetition of phonemes or rhyme) and melodic devices (such as intonation or rhythm), in the way semantic and categorial fields are set out in syntactic and logical features, or in the economy of mimesis (fantasy, the ferment of denotation, narrative, etc.). The genotext is thus the only transfer of drive energies that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a split unity that will become blurred, giving rise to the symbolic. Instead, the place it organizes is one in which the subject will be *generated* as such by a process of facilitations and marks within the constraints of the biological and social structure. (86)

Interestingly, however, Kristeva contends that despite “be[ing] seen in language, the genotext is not linguistic” (86). “It is, rather, a process, which tends to articulate structures that are ephemeral (unstable, threatened by drive charges, ‘quanta’ rather than ‘marks’) and nonsignifying (devices that do not have a double articulation)” (86). Thus, it can be argued that the genotext which

is “language's underlying foundation” (87), that is, the pre-linguistic conditions giving rise to language, remains as the extra-linguistic element within the linguistic. This Kristivan theorization of the “pre-linguistic” and the “extra-linguistic,” especially the power of the “extra-linguistic” to challenge language is a dominant approach in literary studies to the subversive uses of language. Beckett's texts are not exempt from this approach. Although the claims of the “pre-linguistic” and the “extra-linguistic” are often supported by a number of other theories, regarding what has been classified as Beckett's “woman plays” (Cohn 361)—*Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*—it is often Kristeva's discourse of the semiotic *chora* that has been referred to.

The embodied, disembodied, and recorded voices in Beckett's drama have drawn the attention of a large number of critics, receiving different interpretations which provide new insights to his drama. Despite great insights they offer us, some of these interpretations have ended up “reappropriating presence” by attributing an origin—memory, the past self, the unconscious, the repressed body or self—to these voices, that is, by reducing them to forms of presence. Most of psychoanalytic readings are founded on the metaphors of interiority and exteriority, based on which voice has been seen as the exteriorisation of the interior. The fragmented voices in Beckett's plays have been often reduced to “psychological expression” (Besbes 246), that is, “the voicing of the individual subject's repressed desires, wishes, and ambitions” (244). In other words, they have been seen as “*exteriorization* of unconscious wishes” (254; emphasis added). Nevertheless, reduction is more interesting regarding female voices, for instance, the Mouth's speech in *Not I*, the old woman's speech in *Rockaby*, and the voice of May's mother in *Footfalls*. Many (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics have not hesitated to force a connection between these voices and Kristeva's notion of *chora*, a pre-linguistic space where the infant is in union with the mother. Hence, they have seen these voices as the desire for re-union with the mother.

While Besbes has read Mouth's speech in *Not I* as simply “the exposure of the inner self” (255), or to put it better, “the protagonist's desire to exteriorize her inner tensions and frustrations” (256), many (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics have gone further to relate this interior space to the Mother, reading

Mouth's speech as "reliving the trauma of the primordial moment when the body senses its split from the Real" (Wright 113). The voice of the mother in *Footfalls* has received similar interpretations. Many (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics have interpreted the disembodied voice of the mother as May's melancholia over the loss of the original union with her mother and her desire to re-unite with her: "the voice is simply the echo of an *original presence*" (McMullan 92; emphasis added). It has been claimed that "the loss of the Mother's body/voice chains the subject to the perpetual repetition of the staging of that loss" (96). The discourse of the original union with the mother has come to help some critics in reading *Rockaby*, as well. The "soothing musical rhythm" of the voice is associated with "cradle and lullaby," that is, with the maternal (McMullan 106). The fluidity of language in this play has been reduced to the fluid language of the chora: "*Rockaby* recalls the rhythms of the *chora* in its 'nonchronological, repetitious, spiralling, cumulative, fluid language' " (99).

In their approaches to the "pre-linguistic" and the "extra-linguistic," while some critics have only stressed the nostalgia for "origin," others have foregrounded the subversive potential that lies in the "extra-linguistic;" they have seen the so-called extra-linguistic elements in the texts as semiotic mode of signification that poses a challenge to language. Although Kristevan genotext is not often referred to, the subversive use of language is likened to the mode of signification in the *chora*. We see similar approaches to music; as the subversive use of language, music and musicality in Beckett's plays have sometimes been associated with Kristeva's notion of the pre-linguistic *chora*; they have been attributed to "pre-linguistic rhythms and 'pulsions,' " that is, to "the realm of the body, the drives, the unconscious" (Ristani 123, 129). It has been argued that "the semiotic 'gives 'music' to literature' as a result of the 'maternal music' of the pre-Oedipal relationship" (Laws 185). Music and musicality have been claimed to be "non-symbolising elements" which "disrupt the Symbolic order" (180).

Nevertheless, I assert that the question of language posed in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby* is too complicated to be explored by the simple inside-outside dualism or simple stories of "origin." By re-examining the questions of

language and subjectivity in these texts, I will try to reveal the complexity with which these texts deal with language and the subject. I will try to show how the easy distinction between the pre-linguistic and the linguistic which is founded on the easy distinction between the inside and outside arises not from the texts themselves but from the Rousseauistic desire for “full presence,” the “pure origin,” that is, the non-supplementarity “before” the violence of language. I will assert that *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby* defy such simple stories of “origin” and, hence, they cannot be approached by conventional theories of language.

As I argued above, the reduction of force to “origin” becomes possible only by means of effacement. In order to attribute presence to the so-called bodily/inner voices in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*,²¹ many critics have effaced the violence of writing, that is, the force which threatens not only the forms they have tried to impose on the text but also the notions of presence and absence in general. As Derrida reveals, to render voice and speech as presence, metaphysics has to efface the violence of writing. He argues that “[t]his logocentrism, this *epoch* of the full speech, has always placed in parenthesis, *suspended*, and suppressed for essential reasons, all free reflection on *the origin and status of writing*” (OG 43; last emphasis added). In other words, in order to maintain the illusion of presence, metaphysics has to conceal the originary metaphors that produce the notions of presence and absence; it has to efface the metaphoricity, that is, the supplementarity of the origin; it has to efface the impurity of the pure, the absence of presence. Hence, the myth of origin, is, as Derrida puts it, “the myth of the effacement of the trace” (167). This trace, however, continues to haunt presence eternally: “what was chased off limits, the wandering outcast of linguistics, has indeed *never ceased to haunt language* as its primary and most intimate possibility” (44; emphasis added).

The aim of this thesis is to track down this trace which, I assert, haunts Beckett’s drama. I will draw on Derrida in tracking down this trace, that is, the violence of writing. Derrida contends that “[d]econstructing this tradition will . . . not consist of reversing it, of making writing innocent. *Rather of showing why*

²¹ Although voice in *Not I*, and *Rockaby* is argued to be the voice of the other (the discourse), the assumption of the bodily/inner which is repressed by the voice of the other entraps these arguments in the metaphysics of voice which is a “metaphysics of presence.”

the violence of writing does not befall an innocent language. There is an originary violence of writing because language is first . . . writing” (37; emphasis added). He asserts that writing does not usurp pure speech, but rather “‘[u]surpation’ has always already begun” (ibid.; emphasis added). That is to say, the violence has always already taken place. By tracking down the supplementarity in the non-supplementary, the metaphoricity in the proper, the impurity in the pure, the absence in the presence, I will try to reveal the effaced trace, that is, the violence of writing in the bodily/inner voice. I will try to show the possibility of reading the bodily/inner voice in Beckett’s plays not as the “origin,” but as an originary metaphor, that is, the concealed metaphor/supplement at the “origin,” the metaphor of presence which precedes all binarisms. I will try to reveal the force—the irreducible force, the irreducible writing, the irreducible *différance*—which disrupts presence in Beckett’s drama.

1.2. The Trajectory of this Thesis

Chapter 2 will briefly look at the effacement of writing in the history of Western thought from Plato to Saussure and discuss Derrida’s problematisation of this metaphysical tradition. I will argue that the Derridean notion of writing cannot be understood by the metaphysical notion of writing, that is, “writing in the narrow sense,” which is the other of speech. I will try to clarify the Derridean notion of writing, that is, his re-thinking of writing as “writing before the letter,” as *différance*, which is the irreducible force that is—far from an “origin”—the possibility and the impossibility of language, subjectivity, intention, thought, consciousness/unconscious. With this re-thinking of writing as “writing before the letter” or *différance*, I will try to open a different understanding of writing in Beckett’s dramatic texts in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 will explore the violence of writing in music. It will explore language, music, and the question of “expression” in *Words and Music* and *Cascando*. The aim of this chapter is to reveal Platonism/“music Platonism” and “the logic of supplementarity” in the interpretations of these texts and open these two texts to a different reading, focusing on the Dionysian force which cannot be reduced to any form, foregrounding the infinite movement within

which Apollonian images and identities are dissolved and within which the “expression” neither can be attached to an “origin” nor can be said to arrive at a *telos*, but rather deferred in an infinite chain of supplementarity. I will argue that this infinite movement, the *différance*, is the possibility and the impossibility of expression, that is, the *aporia* in expression. I will further argue that Croak and Opener can in no sense be assumed to hold an outside position in relation to this infinite movement; rather, they are irrevocably entangled in it.

Chapter 4 will explore the violence of writing in the bodily/inner voice. It will explore embodied and disembodied voices in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*. In this chapter, I will explore the boundary between interiority and exteriority and the way this boundary is troubled in these texts. The aim of this chapter is to show how the sedimented metaphor of Womb/Mother in the interpretations of these texts functions not only as a simulacrum of “origin” but also a simulacrum of *telos*, that is, a supplement which supplements the absence of origin and *telos* in the text, which cannot be tolerated by discourses founded on “the metaphysics of presence;” I will try to show how this invented origin and *telos*—with the binarisms it engenders—comes to efface the infinite movement—the force of *différance*—which allows neither an imposition of an origin nor that of a *telos*. I will also try to show how May, Voice, Amy, and the narrators of *Not I* and *Rockaby* are irrevocably entangled in this infinite movement which makes possible not only their narrative but also their so-called selves. I will argue that this infinite movement, the *différance*, is the possibility and the impossibility of language and, thereby, the possibility and the impossibility of subjectivity. In other words, I will try to show how the *aporia* in language is the *aporia* in subjectivity.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FROM “WRITING IN THE NARROW SENSE” TO “WRITING BEFORE THE LETTER”

It is not possible to appreciate the irreducible force in Beckett’s texts—the force that dissolves all forms of presence as well as the notion of presence itself—with the logocentric approaches to language, subjectivity, intention, thought, consciousness/unconscious; nor with metaphysical notions of interiority/exteriority, immediacy, and expression. To tackle the reductions which result from such approaches, I will draw on Jacques Derrida’s notion of writing. Thus, this chapter aims to clarify Derrida’s notion of writing, that is, “writing before the letter,” with the help of which I will try to offer a different understanding of writing in Beckett’s dramatic texts in the following chapters. This chapter will discuss the exclusion of writing in the history of metaphysics as well as the strategies of this exclusion, especially Rousseau’s discourse of the supplement.²² The focus of the chapter, however, will be on Derrida’s deconstruction of this metaphysical tradition, his problematisation of the metaphysical notion of writing, that is, “writing in the narrow sense,” which is the other of speech, and his re-thinking of writing as *différance*, which is the irreducible force that is—far from an “origin”—the possibility and the impossibility of language, subjectivity, intention, thought, consciousness/unconscious.

2.1. Logocentrism/Phonocentrism, and the Debasement of Writing

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines the Greek word *logos* (plural: *logoi*) as “ ‘word’, ‘speech’, ‘reason’ ” which was used in five major senses in ancient Greek:

²² This is due to its relevance to this study.

(1) Rule, principle, law. E.g., in Stoicism the *logos* is the divine order and in Neoplatonism the intelligible regulating forces displayed in the sensible world. The term came thus to refer, in Christianity, to the Word of God, to the instantiation of his agency in creation, and, in the New Testament, to the person of Christ. (2) Proposition, account, explanation, thesis, argument. E.g., Aristotle presents a *logos* from first principles. (3) Reason, reasoning, the rational faculty, abstract theory (as opposed to experience), discursive reasoning (as opposed to intuition). E.g., Plato's *Republic* uses the term to refer to the intellectual part of the soul. (4) Measure, relation, proportion, ratio. E.g., Aristotle speaks of the *logoi* of the musical scales. (5) Value, worth. E.g., Heraclitus speaks of the man whose *logos* is greater than that of others. (518)

Whatever meaning *logos* took, it has always represented presence; it has been seen as the manifestation of an *ideal reality*—whether this be the representation of the world of Ideas in Plato, the manifestation of the Word of God in Christianity, or the expression of mental reality—intention, thought, intuition—in phenomenology and psychic reality—whether consciousness or unconscious—in psychology. *Logos* has always been assumed to refer to a *transcendental meaning or truth*, that is, a *transcendental signified*. It is this attribution of a transcendental signified, that is, *presence* to the *logos* that Derrida calls logocentrism.²³ Thus, the history of metaphysics is, for him, a history of logocentrism.

This logocentric tradition has always been phonocentric. Within this history speech has always been seen closer to this transcendental signified and due to this supposed *immediacy*, it has always represented *interiority* and, hence, *presence*. Writing, however, has always been rendered as the *exterior*. In other words, it has always represented *absence*:

Spoken words are the *symbols of mental experience* and written words are the *symbols of spoken words*.” (Aristotle, sec.1; emphasis added)

²³ The terms *logocentric* was first used by Ludwig Klages in 1900. Later in 1931, in “On Truth and Actuality,” he used the term *logocentrism* in opposition to *biocentrism*. He associated the former with idealism and the latter with materialism (Josephson-Storm 221).

Writing is nothing but *the representation of speech*; it is bizarre that one gives more care to the determining of the image than to the object. (Rousseau qtd. in Derrida, *OG* 27; emphasis added)²⁴

While on the subject of spoken language (which is the original language), we can also mention, but here only in passing, written language; this is merely a further development within the particular province of language which enlists the help of an externally practical activity. Written language proceeds to the field of immediate spatial intuition, in which it takes and produces signs (§454). More precisely, hieroglyphic script designates representations with spatial figures, whereas *alphabetic script designates sounds which are themselves already signs*. *Alphabetical writing thus consists of signs of signs*, and in such a way that it analyses the concrete signs of spoken language, words, into their simple elements and designates these elements. (Hegel, *PM* 195-96; first emphasis original)

Language and writing are *two distinct systems of signs*; the second exists for the sole purpose of *representing the first*. (Saussure 23; emphasis added)

As we see, writing has always been seen as merely a representation of speech; being the representation of the representation, it has been nothing but a secondary representation. Writing has been the supplement of speech which itself supplements presence. Hence, it has been rendered “derivative, accidental, particular, exterior, *doubling the signifier*: phonetic,” or to put it better, “‘[s]ign of a sign’ ” (Derrida, *OG* 29; emphasis added). This supplement has always been associated with violence; it has been seen as an evil that corrupts speech and deprives it of presence. Hence, as Derrida shows, “[m]etaphysics has constituted an exemplary *system of defence against the threat of writing*” (101; emphasis added). This defence system, however, is ruptured by the very thing it has excluded. From Plato to Saussure and Levi-Strauss, the supplement of writing, this outside, this excluded other of speech, has haunted not only the presence in speech but the notion of *presence* which is, as Derrida puts it, “the ether of metaphysics” (*MP* 16). The following sections focus on this rupture, that is, the absence at the heart of presence.

²⁴ Quoted from an unpublished fragment.

2.1.1. Rousseau, Writing, and the Supplement

For Rousseau, speech marks the boundary between the animal and the human (EOL 289). In “Essay on the Origin of Languages,” he traces this transition from “animality” to “humanity,” that is, the transition from “nature” to “culture.” Interestingly, however, he finds this transition from nature to culture a natural transition: “speech, being the first *social institution*, owes its form only to *natural causes*” (ibid.; emphasis added). This means that it is *natural* that nature becomes culture. This *natural* process of the becoming culture of nature entails a series of corruptions, that is, a chain of supplementary corruptions.

Rousseau maintains that “movement and the voice” are both natural means of communication (290). According to him, although “the language of gesture and that of the voice are equally natural,” movements and gestures are more immediate and, hence, less conventional (ibid.). That is to say that although gesture and voice are “*equally natural*,” gesture is *more natural*. This distinction, like most of Rousseau’s distinctions, is built upon his initial distinction between *need* and *passion*. While he sees need behind the languages of gesture, he attributes voice to passion: “needs dictated the first gestures and . . . the passions wrested the first voices” (293). Rousseau puts down the origin of speech to the natural “desire or the need to communicate . . . feelings and thoughts” (289-90). He claims that “if we had never had anything but physical needs, we might very well never have spoken and would have understood one another perfectly by the language of gesture alone” (292).

Passion, according to Rousseau, gives rise not only to speech but also to music: “the periodic and measured recurrences of rhythm, the melodious inflections of accents caused poetry and music to be born along with language; or rather, all this was nothing but language itself in those happy climates and those happy times” (318). Rousseau claims that music was initially nothing but melody and this melody was nothing but “varied sound of speech” (ibid.). This follows that “*to speak and to sing were the same thing*” in those days (ibid.; emphasis added).

Although Rousseau asserts that the language of the voice is a natural language, he does not regard all voices as equally natural. For him, “natural

voices are unarticulated” (295). For instance, “cries and groans are simple voices” that “issue naturally from the throat” (ibid.). Articulations, however, are produced by “modifications of tongue and palate” which requires the acquisition of rules and conventions of a particular language (ibid.). Rousseau sees *articulation* as an evil that corrupts *accent* and replaces it. Hence, the most natural sound, the pure sound, is the one that is not corrupted by the evil of articulation. Following this, the more accented a language is, the closer it is to nature; the more articulated it becomes, the farther it is removed from nature (296). This is why Rousseau finds melody more immediate and, hence, more expressive than speech. He claims that unlike the voice of anger which is articulated by “the tongue and the palate,” “the voice of tenderness” is issued through the glottis; being inarticulate, “this voice becomes a sound” (318).

While in his distinction between gesture and voice, Rousseau relies on the distinction between *need* and *passion*, to draw a distinction between accent and articulation, he seeks recourse in the distinction between *passion* and *reason*. According to Rousseau, “[w]e did not begin by *reasoning* but by *feeling*” or in other words, “the *passions* spoke before *reason*,” (293; emphasis added). According to him, this is why “poetry was discovered before prose” (318); this is also why music was initially pure melody. In other words, this is why the first languages were “lively and figurative” (239). For Rousseau, reason was what corrupted these passionate languages: “The study of philosophy and the progress of reason, having perfected grammar, deprived language of that lively and passionate tone which had at first made it so tuneful” (329). Since first languages were melodious, a language that loses melody cannot “convey feelings;” it can only “convey ideas” (318). In the same way that reason corrupted language, it corrupted music: “In proportion as language was perfected, melody imperceptibly lost its ancient energy by imposing new rules upon itself” (329). When language was deprived of melody, due to the emergence of Greek philosophy and the dominance of reason, “music became more independent of words” (ibid.); as sophists and philosophers dominated Greece, good poets and musicians disappeared (ibid.).

Thus, this becoming voice of the cry, the becoming articulation of the accent, that is, *the becoming reason of the passion*, is the process of the degeneration of language in Rousseau's account. Rousseau writes,

In proportion as needs increase, as affairs become entangled, as enlightenment extends, language changes character; it becomes *more precise* and *less passionate*; it substitutes *ideas* for *feelings*, it no longer speaks to the *heart* but to *reason*. As a result, *accent* is extinguished, *articulation* extends, language becomes more exact and clearer, but more drawn out, more muted, and colder. *This progress appears completely natural to me.* (296; emphasis added)

Rousseau's account of the process of the degeneration of music is quite similar to his account of the degeneration of language. This is due to the fact that he attributes similar origins to language and music. Since he sees passion at the origin of both language and music he finds the corruption of both in the *becoming reason of this passion*. According to Rousseau, harmony is what corrupts melody which is the pure form of music. Thus, the process of the degeneration of music is the becoming harmony of melody. He writes,

Melody, by imitating the inflections of the voice, expresses complaints, cries of sadness or of joy, threats, and moans; all the vocal signs of the passions are within its scope. *It imitates the accents of languages*, and the turns of phrase appropriate in each idiom to certain movements of the soul; *it not only imitates, it speaks, and its language, inarticulate but lively, ardent, passionate, has a hundred times more energy than speech itself.* . . . Harmony may, in certain systems, cooperate with this by linking the succession of sounds through certain laws of modulations, by *making the intonations more exact*, by providing the ear with reliable evidence of this *exactness*, by bringing together and determining imperceptible inflections into consonant and linked intervals. But by thus shackling the melody, *it deprives it of energy and expression*, it eliminates passionate accent in order to substitute the harmonic interval for it. . . . it effaces and destroys multitudes of sounds or intervals that do enter into its system; in a word, it separates *song* from *speech* so much that these two languages combat one another, contradict one another. . . . (322; emphasis added)

Now the question is the place of writing in Rousseau's philosophy. For Rousseau, "[l]anguages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as *a supplement to speech*. . . . Speech represents thought by conventional signs, and writing represents the same with regard to speech. Thus *the art of writing is*

nothing but a mediated representation of thought” (Rousseau qtd. in Derrida, OG 144; emphasis added). He sees writing as the evil that changes and corrupts language: “it changes not its words but its genius; it substitutes *precision* for *expressiveness*” (Rousseau, EOL 300; emphasis added). As language “becomes more precise,” it loses its expressiveness; this non-expressive—corrupted—language is the language of reason, not the language of the heart (296). He contends that “Feelings are conveyed when one speaks and ideas when one writes” (300). Thus, it can be concluded that like the becoming articulation of the cry, the becoming writing of speech is attributed to the becoming reason of passion. If this is so, this becoming reason of passion must itself be entangled in a chain consisting of other supplementary corruptions, the most corruptive supplement of which must be writing. This means that although speech—articulated voice—supplements and corrupts the cry, accent, and song—inarticulate voices—it is yet to be supplemented and corrupted by writing within this becoming reason of passion.

Interestingly, however, despite the attribution of writing to the progress of reason, in his division of writing into three stages, Rousseau cannot deny the existence of writing in passionate languages:

The first manner of writing is *not to depict sounds but the objects themselves*, whether directly as the Mexicans did, or by allegorical figures as the Egyptians did of old. This state corresponds to *passionate language*, and *already presupposes some degree of society and some needs to which the passions have given rise*.

The second manner is *to represent words and propositions* by conventional characters, which can be done only when *the language is completely formed* and when an entire people is united by common Laws; for there is already here a *double convention*. Such is the writing of the Chinese: this is truly to depict sounds and to speak to the eyes.

The third is to break down the speaking voice into a certain number of elementary parts, whether vowels or articulations, with which one could form all imaginable words and syllables. . . . *This is not precisely to depict speech, it is to analyze it*.

These three manners of writing correspond fairly accurately to the three different states in terms of which one can consider men assembled into nations. The depiction of objects suits *savage peoples*; signs of words and propositions *barbarous*

peoples; and the alphabet *civilized peoples*. (297; emphasis added)

Not only does Rousseau fail to dissociate writing from first languages—which, according to him, were passionate and, hence, more genuine—but he also fails to dissociate alphabetic writing—which he claims to be the “last invention” (ibid.)—from early forms of language and writing. Although he attributes alphabetic writing to civilisation, he has to concede, paradoxically, that “[a]lphabetic writing seems to go back as far as any other” and, more importantly, that “*we lack the records of times when people did not write*” (297; emphasis added).

Clearly, Rousseau fails to mark the “origin” of writing, the moment when speech becomes writing. Not being able to justify this becoming writing of speech, he tries to detach writing from language by claiming that “[t]he art of writing does not at all depend upon that of speaking. It depends upon needs of another nature which arise earlier or later according to circumstances completely independent of the time span of peoples, and which might never have arisen in very ancient Nations” (298; emphasis added). Despite attributing “needs of another nature” to writing, Rousseau is never able to clarify such needs.

Rousseau’s failure to tackle the problem of writing is even more evident in his discussion of Homer. Rousseau claims that the Greek alphabet is “much more modern than” what we assume (300); he doubts whether “Homer knew how to write” (ibid.); he also doubts whether “anyone wrote in his [Homer’s] time” (301). He assumes that “[i]f the *Iliad* had been written, it would have been sung much less” (ibid.). He, however, acknowledges the fact that his doubt is not reasonable due to some stories in the *Iliad* where we can see the trace of writing (ibid.). This means that Homer’s writing is *not* writing and it *is* writing at the same time. So, what is writing for Rousseau? If writing can be something other than writing, does it not mean that the category of writing is problematic? Does it not mean that writing is indissociable from song and speech? Is this failure to give account of writing as well as Rousseau’s inability to explain the needs that give rise to writing, that is, “needs of another nature” acknowledging not only the fact that writing is beyond the speech-writing binarism but also the

unnamability of the force behind writing and the speech-writing binarism itself? Is this not also acknowledging the fact that writing cannot be reduced to “writing in the narrow sense”? Do all these problems not show that writing cannot be un-tangled from language, that “[t]he question of the origin of writing and the question of the origin of language are difficult to separate” (Derrida, *OG* 28; emphasis added)? These are the questions that I will discuss in the following sections.

2.1.2. Rousseau’s Inheritors and the Supplement of Writing

Claude Levi-Strauss and Ferdinand de Saussure adopt better strategies of exclusion than that of Rousseau to maintain the exteriority of writing. They both reduce writing to phonetic-alphabetic writing. As Derrida reveals, “the ideology which governs” Saussure’s and Levi-Strauss’ “exclusion of writing [is] a profound ethnocentrism privileging the model of phonetic writing, a model that makes the exclusion of the *graphie* easier and more legitimate” (*OG* 12). *Graphie* (“writing”) comes from the Greek word *graphein* which means “to scratch,” “to crave,” and “to write.” Unlike “writing in the narrow sense,” this word is “general enough to cover the words, drawings, photographs, CAD models, webs of notes, and the like” (McMillan and Krandall). Reducing this general *graphein* to mere phonetic-alphabetic writing helps both Saussure and Levi-Strauss to avoid some of the problems that Rousseau faces.²⁵ Nevertheless, the structuralisms of both are troubled by the supplement of writing. Neither Levi-Strauss nor Saussure can justify the exteriority of writing and avert the catastrophe of the supplement.

For Levi-Strauss, what marks the transition from barbarism to civilisation is writing; he maintains that “[o]f all the criteria by which people habitually distinguish *civilization* from *barbarism*, this should be the most worth retaining: that *certain people write and others do not*” (WL 291; emphasis added). Since by writing he means only the alphabetic writing, it can be argued that for him, like Rousseau, what marks this transition is the alphabet. This can also be said

²⁵ If Rousseau excluded the *graphein* from writing, he could protect passionate language against the violence of writing.

to be the transition from “freedom” to “enslavement” since, according to Levi-Strauss, “the primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is the enslavement of other human beings” (292). For him, violence comes with the appearance of writing. He claims that it is the “knowledge of the written word” that enables people “to think in formulae” (293); it is the “misleading effects of the printed word” that enslaves “free” people (*ibid.*). It is, however, not clear how he exempts oral tradition from formulae and enslavement.²⁶

The Nambikwara²⁷ are an example of what Levi-Strauss calls an authentic society—an authentic “community of [pure] speech,” borrowing Derrida’s words (*OG* 136)—who do not know how to write. In “A Writing Lesson,” he recounts how he taught the Nambikwara to write. “That the Nambikwara *could not write* goes without saying. But they were *also unable to draw*, except for a few *dots* and *zigzags* on their calabashes” (288; emphasis added). They did not use the papers and pencils that Levi-Strauss had handed out to them initially. Levi-Strauss sees this as their resistance to “falsehood” and enslavement (293). Later, however, the Nambikwara started “drawing wavy horizontal lines on the paper” (288) which Levi-Strauss sees as their failed imitation of his writing: “What were they trying to do? I could conclude that they were writing—or, more exactly, that *they were trying to do so* as I did with my pencil” (*ibid.*; emphasis added). He believes that their leader was the only one who could understand “what writing was for” (*ibid.*). However, he could not write either:

[H]e asked me for one of my notepads; and when we were working together *he did not give me answers in words*, but traced *a wavy line or two* on the paper and gave it to me, as if I could read what he had to say. *He himself was all but deceived by his own play-acting*. Each time he drew a line he would examine it with great care, as if its meaning must suddenly leap to the eye; and every time a look of disappointment came over his face. But he would never give up trying, and there was an unspoken agreement between us that his scribbles had a meaning that I did my best to decipher; his own verbal commentary was so prompt in coming that I had no need to ask him to explain what he had written. (288-89; emphasis added)

²⁶ This argument is outside the scope of this thesis.

²⁷ A group of people living in Brazil.

. . . he drew forth . . . a piece of paper covered with scribbled lines *and pretended to read* from it. (289; emphasis added)

Levi-Strauss regards the writing of the Nambikwara and that of their leader not as writing but merely as *a failed imitation of writing* since for him the only writing is the alphabetic writing. The Nambikwara are considered “people without writing,” they are considered to be “play[ing] the civilized man” (293), simply because their writing is different from and, hence, unintelligible to “people with writing,” that is, the civilised people. Just because their writing cannot be reduced to “writing in the narrow sense,” “just because they use a word meaning ‘to scratch,’ ‘to engrave,’ ‘to scribble,’ ‘to scrape,’ ‘to incise,’ ‘to trace,’ ‘to imprint,’ etc.” (Derrida, *OG* 123; emphasis added), they are considered to be the “people who do not write.” This is, as Derrida puts it, an “ethnocentric assimilation/exclusion” (123). It is an assimilation of writings to writing in the narrow sense, that is, the exclusion of all non-alphabetic writings.

Although by excluding the *graphein* Levi-Strauss can avoid the first contradiction in Rousseau’s division, like Rousseau, he cannot give any account for the transition from speech to writing, from freedom to enslavement. As Derrida shows, he considers this passage “as a *leap*, as the instantaneous crossing of a line of discontinuity: passage from a fully oral language, pure of writing—*pure*, innocent—to a language appending to itself its graphic ‘representation’ as an accessory signifier of a new type, opening a technique of oppression” (*OG* 120). Thus, the problem he cannot resolve is, like that of Rousseau, the intermediacy, the supplement. This problem is evident in his account of the appearance of language, as well:

Whatever may have been the moment and the circumstances of its appearance in the ascent of animal life, *language can only have arisen all at once*. Things cannot have begun to signify gradually. In the wake of a transformation which is not a subject of study for the social sciences, but for biology and psychology, a shift occurred from a stage when *nothing had a meaning* to another stage when *everything had meaning*. (Levi-Strauss, *IWMM* 59-60; emphasis added)

Unlike Rousseau and Levi-Strauss, Saussure is not interested in the “origin” of writing or that of language; rather, he is interested in their functions. However, sustaining the myth of the exteriority of writing to speech is as crucial

to his linguistics as it is to the discourses of Rousseau and Levi-Strauss. In order to protect the boundaries of speech against writing, or to make this easier at least, Saussure, much like Levi-Strauss, has to reduce the *graphein*; he identifies only “two systems of writing:” the ideographic system and phonetic system (Saussure 25). In the first system “each word is represented by a single sign that is unrelated to the component sounds of the word itself” while the second one “reproduce[s] the succession of sounds that make up a word” (25, 26). Thus, he does not consider hieroglyphs as writing which is not surprising due to his exclusion of all symbolic systems from the system of language. Symbols cannot be considered as signs because the linguistic sign, for Saussure, is arbitrary. A symbol “is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty” (68). Saussure sees in symbol “a natural bond between the signifier and the signified” (ibid.) which excludes it from the system of language. Since there is no symbolic language, there cannot be a symbolic writing.

Saussure asserts that “[l]anguage and writing are *two distinct systems of signs*” (23; emphasis added). Like Aristotle, Rousseau, and Hegel, he believes that “the second exists for the sole purpose of *representing the first*” (ibid.; emphasis added). According to him, “[l]anguage does have a definite and stable *oral tradition that is independent of writing*” (24; emphasis added). He sees the supposed unity between the graph and the phone as “a purely fictitious unity” (25). For him, “[t]he only true bond [is] the bond of sound” (ibid.). Thus, the object of linguistic study is not both the written system and the spoken system; rather, “the spoken form alone constitutes the object” (23-4). He sees writing as misleading supplement. He asserts that “[w]riting obscures language; it is not a guise for language but a disguise” (30). Writing, according to Saussure, “should be for the use of linguists only” (34). According to him, since language is “governed by a code” and since this code “consists of a written set of strict rules of usage,” writing misleadingly seems to be prior to speech (25). In other words, this makes “people forget that they learn to *speak before they learn to write* and the natural sequence is reversed” (ibid.; emphasis added). He believes that if we did not have to use “written texts” in the study of languages, including our native language, “we would have a *direct text* at our disposal” (23; emphasis added). However, he has to admit that even if we could “[record]

samples of all languages,” it would not be possible to transmit them to others without writing (ibid.). Hence, he acknowledges that “[w]riting, *though unrelated to its inner system, is used continually to represent language. We cannot simply disregard it.* We must be acquainted with its usefulness, shortcomings, and dangers (23; emphasis added).

Like Rousseau and Levi-Strauss, Saussure’s failure to exteriorise writing is evident: speech represents interiority—full presence—and is completely independent from its exterior—writing. Interestingly, however, speech requires writing—its outside—to be represented; it requires writing despite its total independence from it; it can also be adversely affected by writing despite this independence. Hence, this independence has already been put in question; this *independence* that Saussure wishes to render can only *be* an *interdependence*. Saussure already acknowledges this interdependence by admitting that “[w]e cannot simply disregard it [writing].” This acknowledgment is the catastrophe of Saussure’s discourse. This means that writing is *necessary despite being unnecessary*; it is a supplement, but a *necessary supplement*. Thus, Saussure, quite like Rousseau and Levi-Strauss, tries but fails to discard the supplement.

2.2. The Logic of the Supplement

Rousseau’s “Essay on the Origin of Languages” is an attempt to mark the “origin,” that is, the “pure origin.” This “pure origin,” for Rousseau is the “pure” language of nature, uncorrupted by any supplement. As Derrida puts it, Rousseau wants to “separate originarity from supplementarity” (OG 243). In other words, he seeks the “original” “*fixity, . . . symbolic incapacity, . . . nonsupplementarity,*” that is, “a moment of life which knows nothing of symbol, substitution, lack and supplementary addition” (242; emphasis added). If he can do this, if his account seems to be unproblematic on the surface, if he can conceal the ruptures in his discourse, it is because “[a]ll the rights constituted by our logos are on his side” (243); logic dictates that the origin be nonsupplementary, that it be *pure presence*. In Rousseau’s philosophy, this pure presence, this nonsupplementary origin is the voice of nature. Speech and song are the supplements that substitute this natural voice. However, they are

themselves supplemented by more corruptive supplements; speech is supplemented and corrupted by writing while melody is supplemented and corrupted by harmony. This supplementary chain, this process of distancing is the process of deviation from nature, that is, the process of the corruption of nature; the loss of immediacy is the loss of expressiveness.

In order for nature to be “pure” and “innocent,” and in order for the supplement to be “evil,” that is, in order to set a clear cut boundary between the innocent—pure presence—and the evil—pure absence—which corrupts it, there must be a clear cut boundary between *the inside* and *the outside*. The evil must “come from an outside which [is] simply the outside” (215). In other words, in order to sustain the myth of presence, metaphysics has to “[exclude] non-presence by determining the supplement as *simple exteriority*, pure addition or pure absence” (167). This is what Rousseau tries to do. For Rousseau, “the dangerous supplement . . . *adds itself from the outside as evil and lack* to happy and *innocent plenitude*” (Derrida, *OG* 215; 2nd emphasis added). Here, however, one might ask how presence can be supplemented by absence; how the “innocent plenitude” can be supplemented by “evil and lack.” This is what Rousseau fails to justify. Rousseau tries to render writing as pure supplement, pure exteriority which intrudes and corrupts speech. However, he fails to justify not only the exteriority of writing but also the intrusion of this exteriority, the necessity of this supplement, that is, the necessity of this addition. This is obviously because what necessitates this exteriority is in the very interiority; this “evil and lack” comes from the very “innocent plenitude;” this means that absence comes from presence. Rousseau cannot acknowledge this lack and absence in presence because such an acknowledgment would question all the boundaries he has set, trouble all his distinctions, dismantle the whole discourse he has constructed.

Although Rousseau tries to render the supplement—the evil—exterior to nature, he cannot un-tangle this exteriority from interiority. In several occasions he has to admit—or borrowing Derrida’s words, what he “say[s] *without saying*” (*OG* 215)—that what is exterior to nature is in fact interior to it. At the beginning of “Essay on the Origin of Languages,” he acknowledges that although speech is a “*social institution*,”—“the first social institution”—it

“owes its form only to *natural causes*” (Rousseau 289; emphasis added). This means that the birth of language is a natural birth. If the birth of language, which marks the birth of society, is a natural birth, it follows that language, society, and culture, all of which represent exteriority, are born in nature which represents interiority. Rousseau faces this problem of protecting the purity of interiority and exteriority in all his distinctions. In his account of the degeneration of language—the corruption of speech and melody—that is, the becoming articulation of the accent and the becoming writing of speech, he still sees nothing but natural forces: “This progress appears *completely natural* to me” (296; emphasis added). This means that the supplement which represents evil and absence comes from nature and is, therefore, natural. Thus, the supplementary corruption—the corruption of cry by articulation, of passion by reason, of speech by writing, of harmony by melody—is a natural corruption. In other words, what corrupts nature is natural; what is *exterior* to nature is *interior* to it.

Rousseau’s failure to un-tangle exteriority and interiority is also obvious in his account of music. As we have seen, for Rousseau the purest language is the language of nature and “[t]he beauty of sounds is from nature” (321). Paradoxically, however, listening to beautiful sounds gives pleasure due to one’s familiarity with them; a song that touches one might be no more than noise to the ear that is not used to it (*ibid.*). Without supplements the voice of nature is merely noise and since musicians cannot “render noise with noise,” they should “render noise with song” (323). For instance, if they want to “make frogs croak, [they have] to make them sing” (*ibid.*). Pure imitation is not enough to impress; supplements are required to achieve that effect (*ibid.*). Hence, Rousseau asserts that “in every imitation *a type of discourse always has to supplement the voice of nature*” (*ibid.*; emphasis added). This acknowledgement of the necessity of the supplement is, at the same time the acknowledgement of the lack in nature, what Rousseau’s discourse, paradoxically, argues against. This paradox is the paradox of Nature. Derrida writes,

Such is the truth of nature. And yet nature is affected—from without—by an overturning which modifies it in its interior, denatures it and obliges it to be separated from itself. *Nature denaturing itself*, being separated from itself, naturally gathering

its outside into its inside, is catastrophe, *a natural event that overthrows nature, or monstrosity, a natural deviation within nature*. (OG 41; emphasis added)

Although “metaphysics consists of excluding non-presence by determining the supplement as *simple exteriority*, pure addition or pure absence,” this chain of “exclusion operates within the structure of supplementarity” (167) and, hence, is haunted by the paradox of the supplement. The paradox is that “the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one *fills a void*” (145; 2nd emphasis added). In Rousseau’s account, however, the supplement is added to pure presence. According to Derrida, although our logic allows that pure presence can be supplemented by absence, this contradicts the logic of supplementarity. Derrida argues that,

This conforms to the logic of identity and to the principle of classical ontology (the outside is outside, being is, etc.) but not to *the logic of supplementarity, which would have it that the outside be inside*, that the other and the lack come to add themselves as a plus that *replaces a minus*, that what adds itself to something *takes the place of a default in the thing*, that the default, as *the outside of the inside, should be already within the inside*, etc. What Rousseau in fact describes is that the lack, adding itself as a plus to a plus, cuts into an energy which *must (should) have* been and remain intact. And indeed it breaks in as a dangerous supplement, as a *substitute that enfeebles, enslaves, effaces, separates, and falsifies . . .* (215; first four emphases added)

Thus, the catastrophe of the supplement is that it puts into question the notions of *interiority* and *exteriority* as well as those of *presence* and *absence*; it blurs the boundary between the two. When the corruption of nature turns out to be natural, it follows that the supplement of nature—which represents exteriority and absence—arises from nature—which represents interiority and presence. Thus, “*nothing seems more natural than this destruction of Nature*” (151; emphasis added). This is, according to Derrida, “the scandal of Reason” (ibid.). If the supplement of nature is in nature, it follows that that *the outside* cannot be simply the outside, but rather that *the outside must be inside*, that *presence* and *absence* cannot be un-tangled, but must be *irrevocably entangled*. Thus, “[w]hat . . . Rousseau say[s] without saying, see[s] without seeing [is t]hat *substitution has always already begun, . . . that in Nature it is always that which supplies*

Nature's lack, a voice that is substituted for the voice of Nature" (Derrida 215; emphasis added). If Rousseau "say[s this] without saying," it is because the Reason which he has inherited cannot think this catastrophe. Derrida writes,

Reason is incapable of thinking this double infringement upon Nature: that there is *lack* in Nature and that *because of that very fact* something is *added* to it. Yet one should not say that Reason is *powerless to think this*; it is constituted by that lack of power. It is the principle of identity. It is the thought of the self-identity of the natural being. *It cannot even determine the supplement as its other, as the irrational and the non-natural, for the supplement comes naturally to put itself in Nature's place. The supplement is the image and the representation of Nature. The image is neither in nor out of Nature. The supplement is therefore equally dangerous for Reason, the natural health of Reason.* (149; last emphasis added)

Thus, "[t]he supplement is what *neither Nature nor Reason can tolerate*" (148; emphasis added); the supplement is the scandal of reason because it is the scandal of presence, that of the thing-in-itself which is infinitely deferred within the endless movement of supplementarity. Supplementarity is "*an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself*, of immediate presence, of originary perception" (157; emphasis added). Within this endless "play of substitution" the lack might be *filled* temporarily, but it is *marked* infinitely (ibid.). Thus, this eternal movement of substitution is what makes presence impossible. What reason cannot tolerate is this absence of presence, the supplementarity of the thing-in-itself, the supplementarity of origin, the fact that "there have never been anything but supplements" (159). As Derrida shows, "[t]he supplement is maddening because it is *neither presence nor absence*" (154; emphasis added). Rather, it "*occupies the middle point between total absence and total presence*" (157; emphasis added). If reason cannot tolerate the supplement, it is because it cannot conceive this neither/nor, this mid-point. Reason requires that everything be reduced to the discourse of either/or; it cannot conceive intermediacy (ibid.).

It is this mid-point that troubles Rousseau's absolute categories, and the absolute boundary he tries to set between interiority and exteriority; if Rousseau cannot sustain the fixed boundaries he establishes, this is because he cannot get

rid of the mid-point, the impure, indeterminate moment. This is also why Rousseau fails to give account of the moment of the corruption, that is, the moment when the animal cry becomes speech, when the animal becomes human, when speech becomes writing, when melody becomes harmony, and, in short, when Nature becomes Culture. Not being able to tackle the mediacy, he simply effaces this moment. For Rousseau, as he himself admits, “*there has never been any intermediate point . . . between all and nothing*” (C 278; emphasis added). For him, there is either *presence* or *absence*. This “*middle term between total absence and the absolute plenitude of presence,*” that is, the intermediary is what “Rousseau wanted opinionatedly to efface,” (Derrida, *OG* 157). Despite being effaced, however, this mid-point, that is, *the supplement* is what haunts Rousseau’s philosophy.

Rousseau faces this troubling mid-point from the very beginning when he tries to mark the “origin” of language. The moment when the animal cry becomes speech is the mid-point between the cry and speech, that is, the moment which, in Derrida’s words, “is *already* that of a language that has broken with gesture, need, animality, etc. But of a language that *has not yet* been corrupted by articulation, convention, supplementarity” (244). At this moment language is neither cry nor articulation; rather, it can only be something in-between which is both cry and articulation. One is, thus, neither animal nor human at this moment; one can only be something in-between which is both animal and human. Hence, this moment is the moment of *undecidability*. This “unstable, inaccessible, mythic limit between that *already* and this *not-yet*” is the moment of the birth of language (ibid.). In other words, this “moment of the birth of language” which marks the transition from animality to humanity is an *undecidable* moment. This undecidability is what not only troubles the notion of “origin” but also the boundary between the cry and speech, between the animal and human. This is because if there can be a moment at which cry can be speech or speech can be cry, a moment at which the animal can be human and the human can be animal, none of these categories can be pure.

This in-betweenness, this undecidable moment is what haunts all Rousseau’s naive distinctions—his definite distinctions not only between cry and speech but also between speech and writing, melody and harmony, passion

and need, nature and culture. When Rousseau claims, despite acknowledging the contradiction in his own claim, that Homer's *Iliad* was not written (Rousseau 300), he encounters this in-betweenness, but since his discourse cannot tolerate the in-betweenness—the mid-point between song and writing in this case—he has to turn a blind eye to this encounter. He has a similar encounter when he tries to set melody and harmony apart; he has to acknowledge that “Just as there is a good musical form (melody) and a bad musical form (harmony), there is a good and a bad melodic form” (Derrida, *OG* 212). For him, good melody is pure melody while bad melody is harmonic melody. However, as Derrida points out, “[t]his second dissociation between good and bad melodic form puts the first exteriority into question: there is harmony already within melody” (ibid.). Thus, this is an implicit acknowledgement of the dissociability of melody and harmony, that is, their entanglement. Elsewhere, Rousseau acknowledges this entanglement more explicitly: “[*melody*] has its principle in harmony” (Rousseau qtd. in Derrida, *OG* 212). Thus, Rousseau *tries* but *fails* to efface the mid-point. This undecidable and unnamable moment, that is, the effaced mid-point—the becoming-speech of the cry, the becoming-human of the animal, the becoming-writing of speech, the becoming-harmony of melody, the becoming need of passion, the becoming-Culture of Nature—is what ruptures Rousseau's discourse from within.

The failure to exteriorise writing, that is, the supplement, is the problem that Saussure faces, as well. Although Saussure has a different approach to language, for him, like Rousseau, writing is only a representation of speech; it is exterior to the linguistic system. Although for him speech and writing are completely independent, writing is required to represent speech; this representation, however, is a misrepresentation. Although he tries to render speech as an independent institution, he claims that speech can be supplemented and corrupted by writing which we cannot do away with. This second claim clearly troubles the first one. As Derrida puts it, “Saussure wishes at the same time to demonstrate the *corruption of speech by writing*, to denounce the harm that the latter does to the former, and to underline *the inalterable and natural independence of language [speech]*” (*OG* 41; emphasis added). In other words,

he tries to reconcile independence and the possibility of supplementarity which entails interdependence. This contradiction, as we saw in Rousseau's case, is what the logic of supplementarity does not allow. The possibility of supplementarity suggests that "[t]he outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, *anything but simple exteriority*" (Derrida, OG 35; emphasis added). Supplementarity is the very relationship between the inside and the outside, the irrevocable entanglement of interiority and exteriority.

Hence, the notion of representation, as Derrida shows, "is not innocent" (35). In any representation, that which represents "mingles with what it represents" (36). Representation is nothing but a "play of representation" whereby it becomes impossible to dissociate the representer from the represented, reflection from the reflected (ibid.). Hence, "the point of origin becomes ungraspable" (ibid.). Rather than "simple origin," rather than "a source, a spring," within the play, "there are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other" (ibid.). This is because "what is reflected is split in itself and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles" (ibid.). In other words, "[t]he origin of the speculation becomes a difference" (36; emphasis added).

This "*originary difference*" is what Rousseau, Saussure, and Levi-Strauss—following the Platonic tradition—have all attempted to efface; by this effacement, they have all attempted to conceal the supplementarity of the "origin," rendering it a non-supplementary point of absolute "presence," on which ground the myth of the supplement as well as the notions of presence and absence are founded. As Derrida asserts,

The concept of origin or nature is nothing but the myth of addition, of supplementarity annulled by being purely additive. It is the myth of the effacement of the trace, that is to say of an originary difference that is neither absence nor presence, neither negative nor positive. Originary difference is supplementarity as structure. Here structure means the irreducible complexity within which one can only shape or shift the play of presence or absence: that within which metaphysics can be produced but which metaphysics cannot think. (167; emphasis added)

2.3. Re-Thinking Writing as *Différance*

The history of metaphysics is the history of supplements, the history of supplements whose supplementarity has been concealed. As Derrida asserts, this history can be characterised “as a series of substitutions of centre for centre,” that is, a series of supplementations (WD 353). Throughout this history, different metaphors have occupied the centre. Thus, the history of Western metaphysics is “the history of . . . metaphors and metonymies” (ibid.). These metaphoric centres—such as “*eidos*, *archē*, *telos*, *energia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject), *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth”—have always replaced an absent centre, that is, the *absent presence*; they have, in other words, supplemented the *absence in presence*. However, what all these supplements have in common is, according to Derrida, “*the determination of Being as presence*” (ibid.; emphasis added).

These signs have “*always [been] the supplement of the thing itself*” (OG 145; last emphasis added); and since the thing-in-itself is itself absent, they have only been the simulacra of the thing-in-itself, that is, “the simulacr[a] of presence,” borrowing Derrida’s term (MP 24). Despite being merely simulacra, however, they have been able to render themselves as presence; this is because they have *effaced their metaphoricity and supplementarity*. In order to maintain the illusion of presence, metaphysics has to conceal the originary metaphors that give rise to the notions of *presence* and *absence*; it has to efface the metaphoricity, that is, the supplementarity of the “origin,” it has to efface the impurity of the pure, the absence of presence. In other words, it has to reduce the irreducible metaphoricity and the irreducible supplementarity at the “origin.” For instance, as we saw in previous sections, if voice has come to represent presence, if it has been able to render its other—writing—as only a supplement, that is, absence, it is only by effacing the metaphors that have produced speech-writing opposition, among all other oppositions. As Derrida reveals, “[t]his logocentrism, this *epoch* of the full speech, has always placed in parenthesis, *suspended*, and suppressed for essential reasons, all free reflection on the origin and status of writing” (OG 43; last emphasis added). In order to

render writing as supplement, metaphysics has concealed the supplementarity of the “origin” itself.

Throughout the history of metaphysics, the centre, which presents itself as presence—despite being a “simulacrum of presence”—has functioned as “the organizing principle of the structure,” that is as stabilising element of the structure (WD 352). Although it is this centre which allows “the play of its elements,” it is, at the same time, what controls the very same play, that is, what “closes off the play” (ibid.). In other words, it is the element that assures “a play based on fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility” (ibid.). This centre has functioned successfully because it has always “escape[d] structurality;” despite being “at the centre of a totality” and governing this totality, it has never “belong[ed] to this totality;” that is, despite being inside the totality, it has always managed to be outside it. In other words, it has always been “*within the structure and outside it*” (ibid.). Thus, despite presenting itself as a coherent discourse, and despite “represent[ing] coherence itself,” the concept of the centre as well as that of a “centred structure” have always been “*contradictorily coherent*” (ibid.; emphasis added).

This contradictory coherence has origins in the “rupture,” which Derrida finds within the history of metaphysics, a rupture which he calls an “event” (351). This event is the crisis in the notion of the centre, that is, when the centre can no longer maintain the illusion of the centre:

[I]t became necessary to think both the law which somehow governed the desire for a center in the constitution of structure, and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence—but a *central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute*. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that *there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus* in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play. (353-54; emphasis added)

Acknowledging the fact that “[t]he centre is not the centre” (352), is acknowledging “the structurality of the structure” (353). Although “the structurality of the structure . . . has always been at work,” it has been reduced

by being assigned a centre (352). When the centre becomes only “a function, a sort of nonlocus” within which signs are interminably substituted with other signs, no the “transcendental signified” can claim to be outside the structures; no “transcendental signified” can claim presence. The so-called signified becomes only a signifier *within* “the system of differences” and, hence, subject to “*the play of signification*” (354; emphasis added).

This absence of the centre, as Derrida argues, is *provisionally* substituted by signs; however, these signs which have replaced the centre are only *supplements* or surpluses which are continuously added within “the movement of signification” (365). Thus, there always remains “something missing” (ibid.). It is due to this missing element, that is, lack, that there is always something more to be added, something that can *provisionally* “supplement [this] lack on the part of the signified,” but this *supplement* remains floating for ever (ibid.). In other words, the lack of the centre produces a continuous movement, a “movement of *supplemetarity*” (ibid.). This substitution is, according to Derrida, “both *secondary* and *provisional*” (SP 138). It is secondary because it substitutes the “lost presence,” and is provisional because it is connected to the “missing presence” (138). In other words, it functions “as a movement of *mediation*” that defers the thing itself (ibid.; emphasis added). That is to say, “the thing itself,” the present-being is constantly deferred by the flow of signs (ibid.). The sign is, thus, a “deferred presence” (ibid.). If signs cannot represent “presence,” but rather “represent the present in its absence, and if they take the place of the present” (ibid.), it means that they are nothing more than metaphors for presence.

This “movement of signification,” according to Derrida becomes “possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, *is related to something other than itself*, thereby keeping within itself the mark of a *past element*, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the *future element*” (MP 13; emphasis added). This is what Derrida calls the “trace” (ibid.). The trace relates both to the past and the future, “constituting what is called the present by means of this very *relation to what it is not*: what it absolutely is not, not even to a past or future as a modified present” (ibid.; emphasis added). Hence, trace can never be presence; rather

than presence, it is “*the simulacrum of a presence* that dislocates itself, displaces itself” (24; emphasis added). Never being present, never having a site, *trace is an eternal erasure*: “*erasure belongs to its structure*” (ibid.; emphasis added).

This infinite disruption of presence which makes any “conceptual order and denomination” impossible is what Derrida calls *différance* (SP 131). In French, the word *différance* means both “the *different*,” implying spatial difference and “the *deferred*,” implying temporal difference (129). Thus, *différance* is “a spacing and temporalizing that puts off until ‘later’ what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible” (ibid.). In other words, it is a continuous temporalisation that cannot be reduced to any set of associations, that is, presence (130). Rather, it is a continuous dissociation (ibid.).

Derrida constantly warns against reducing *différance* to a word or a concept²⁸ (MP 3). He asserts that far from being a concept or a word, it is the very force behind the possibility and the impossibility of the concept and the word. *Différance* cannot be a concept since there is no “signified concept” that can be present in the present: “Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. Such a play, *différance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the *possibility of conceptuality*, of the conceptual process and system in general” (11; emphasis added). Thus, as “the *possibility of conceptuality*,” *différance* incessantly refers to other concepts. In other words, *différance* can never become a “master concept” (ibid.). *Différance* cannot be a word either, since it cannot be reduced to a unified, self-referential sign, that is, a signifier with a present signified (ibid.). Although *différance* enables the “the presentation of the being-present,” it cannot itself be presented as being-present, because it cannot be contained by any “category of being, whether present or absent” (6); it has “no essence” (25). *Différance* cannot be reduced to “ontological or theological . . . reappropriation[s]” (6). Rather, it makes such reappropriations impossible by

²⁸ However, he says that he will “call [it so] *provisionally*” (MP 3; emphasis added).

constant disruption of presence, by constant resistance to onto-theological and philosophical reductions. In other words, it goes beyond onto-theology and philosophy, that is, “it exceeds the order of truth” (ibid.).

Différance must be understood as an unnameable, irreducible *force*. This force cannot be reduced and named since “[f]orce itself is never present;” rather, “it is [itself] only a play of differences between forces” (17).²⁹ In other words, it is “the ‘active,’ *moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces*” (18; emphasis added). It is within the play of these multiple forces that all oppositions of metaphysics come into being. All differences are *differed* and *deferred* by this originary force;³⁰ this means that *différance* “marks not only the activity of ‘originary’ difference, but also the temporalizing detour of *deferral*” (14; emphasis added).³¹ All binary opposition of metaphysics, which hold the positions of “the same” and “the other,” are produced and de-produced within this force.

The same, precisely, is *différance* (with an a) as *the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another*, from one term of an opposition to the other. . . . [E]ach of the terms [in the pairs of opposites] must appear as the *différance* of *the other*, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same (the intelligible as differing deferring the sensible, as the sensible different and deferred; the concept as different and deferred, differing-deferring intuition; culture as nature different and deferred, differing-deferring; all the others of *physis* . . . as *physis* different and deferred, or as *physis* differing and deferring. *Physis* in *différance*. (17; emphasis added)³²

²⁹ To elaborate force here, Derrida refers to Nietzsche, quoting from Gilles Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.

³⁰ In David B. Allison’s translation—published in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*—“Differences are . . . ‘produced’—deferred—by *différance*” (MP 14) while in Alan Bass’s translation—published in *Margins of Philosophy*—“Differences are . . . ‘produced’—differed—by difference” (SP 145). I have referred to this production as both differed and deferred due to the double sense of *différance*.

³¹ This “‘originary’ difference” in Bass (14) is translated as “primordial difference” in Allison (145).

³² This “different and deferred differing-deferring” in Bass is translated as “differed-differing” in Allison: “one of the terms appears as the difference of the other, the other as “differed” within the systematic ordering of the same (e.g., the intelligible as differing from the sensible, as sensible differed; the concept as differed-differing intuition, life as differing-differed matter; mind as differed-differing life; culture as differed-differing nature” (148-9). I have preferred Bass’s translation since he keeps the double sense of *différance*.

Like all binary oppositions, speech-writing opposition is produced and de-produced within this force, that is, *différance*. Writing is the deferred other of speech; it is speech “different and deferred,” or speech in *différance*. *Différance* produces both speech and writing but belongs to none (5). Rather, it is “like the middle voice” (9); it is what tangles speech and writing (15). In other words, *différance* is not only what produces this opposition but, at the same time, what makes this opposition impossible: “this *différance* in language, and in the relation of speech to language, forbids the essential dissociation of speech and language” (ibid.). By forbidding this dissociation, *différance* forbids the dissociation of presence and absence—to which it gives rise—as well.

If “the ether of metaphysics” is the “privilege [given to presence]” (16), *différance* is what revokes this privilege; it is what suspends this “determination of Being as presence or as beingness” (21). *Différance* is the *aporia* in language; it is the force which produces language and, paradoxically, the very force that dispossesses it; it is, in other words, the very force that eternally dispossesses language of any *presence*. This eternal dispossession which constitutes and de-constitutes the speaking subject, that is, de-constitutes the subject in constituting it, is, according to Derrida, “a law of language” (OG 141). This force “operates as *a power of death in the heart of living speech*: a power all the more redoubtable because it *opens as much as it threatens the possibility of the spoken word*. (ibid.; emphasis added). Thus, “[w]e are dispossessed of the longed-for presence in the gesture of language by which we attempt to seize it” (ibid.); presence “promises itself as it escapes, gives itself as moves away;” hence, it is revealed to be nothing but a chimera (154).

The infinite absence in speech, this “absence of speech,” this infinite *différance*, is, in fact, “the writing in speech” (139). This “writing in speech” is what has always been effaced by metaphysics. The voice, which has always represented presence throughout the history of metaphysics, is nothing but voice in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in voice—is effaced; Nature, with which voice is associated, is nothing but Nature in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in Nature—is effaced. This effacement, however, is never successful; the effaced trace continues to haunt presence in voice and Nature infinitely: “what was chased off limits, the wandering outcast of

linguistics, has indeed *never ceased to haunt language* as its primary and most intimate possibility” (44; emphasis added). The trace of writing, which has been attempted to be effaced, is what dispossesses Voice and Nature of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, makes the disentanglement of Voice and Nature from the movement impossible.

In this infinite *différance*, that is, the infinite “movement of supplementarity,” the voice, the Voice of Nature, and Nature itself are revealed to be nothing but only supplements. Just in the same way that voice and speech supplement the Voice of Nature, the Voice of Nature supplements the infinitely deferred Nature, the Nature which is infinitely in *différance*. In other words, it supplements the absent Nature, that is, the absent presence, concealing its absence. Hence, these signs are all simulacra of Nature which replace one another in the absence of Nature; Nature itself is nothing but a “simulacrum of presence,” of an absent presence, in this maddening spiral of supplements, that is,

substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the “real” supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus to infinity, for we have read, in the text, that the absolute present, Nature, that which words like “real mother” name, have always already escaped, have never existed; that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence. (159; emphasis added)

Writing is, thus, “the power of death” in nature; it is the very violent force that dispossesses nature of presence. However, this violence cannot be understood as *total absence* that comes to corrupt *total presence*, as an absolute *exterior* that intrudes *interiority*, as it is in Rousseau, Saussure and Levi-Strauss; rather, this violence of writing precedes both speech and “writing in the narrow sense.” Derrida asserts that “if writing is to be related to violence, *writing appears well before writing in the narrow sense; already in the difference*,” it is the force “that *opens speech itself*” (128). Writing, far from being “writing in the narrow sense,” is the name that Derrida gives to *the eternal movement of differences*: “Writing will appear to us more and more as another name for this structure of supplementarity” (245), that is, *the eternal movement of supplementarity*, the

infinite “synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions and protentions” (MP 13), the infinite structure of birth and death. For him, this writing is “writing before the letter” the “archi-writing, archi-trace, or *différance*” (ibid.),³³ the originary force that gives rise not only to the writing in the narrow sense—as well as the opposition of speech and writing—but to all oppositions of our metaphysical language: “*there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements*” (OG 159; emphasis added). As Derrida reveals, this writing is the *différance* which is not only the originary force that produces differences—that is, the same and the other—but, at the same time, a movement within which the dissociation of the same and the other becomes impossible. In other words, it is the “[d]ifférance [that] produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing that it makes impossible (143); as *différance*, it is the condition of possibility as well as the condition of impossibility of any notions of presence and absence; it is, in fact, “the obliterated origin of absence and Presence” (ibid.).

³³ “[A]rchi-writing,” and “archi-trace” are translated as “protowriting” and “prototrace” by Allison.

CHAPTER 3

THE VIOLENCE OF WRITING IN MUSIC: RE-READING MUSIC IN WORDS AND MUSIC AND CASCANDO

Both *Words and Music* and *Cascando* revolve around the questions of “expression” and the limits of “expression,” whether this “expression” is seen as an artistic “expression” or a more general one. These questions have often been approached by recourse to “metaphysics of presence,” that is, an assumption of present “origin.” The assumed “origin” is usually attributed to Croak and Opener’s thoughts, feelings, consciousness and unconscious. In other words, Croak and Opener’s thoughts, feelings, consciousness and unconscious are assumed to be present, and Words, Voice, and Music are, in turn, assumed to represent these present “origins.” Although both Words and Music in *Words and Music*, and both Voice and Music in *Cascando* are said to represent the “reality” of Croak and Opener’s mind or psyche, in both plays Music is considered to be a more immediate representation of presence. Hence, I assert that these assumptions arise not only from Platonism in general but particularly from “music Platonism” which is dominant in literary studies as well as Apollonian tendency of literary criticism whose task is to eliminate ambiguities and uncertainties by excluding the Dionysian force. The aim of this chapter is to reveal Platonism/“music Platonism” and “the logic of supplementarity” in these unfounded assumptions and open these two texts to a different reading, focusing on the Dionysian force which cannot be reduced to any form, foregrounding the infinite movement within which Apollonian images and identities are dissolved and within which the “expression” can neither be attached to an “origin” nor be said to arrive at a *telos*, but rather deferred in an infinite chain of supplementarity. I will argue that this infinite movement, the *différance*, is the possibility and the impossibility of expression, that is, the *aporia* in expression.

I will further argue that Croak and Opener can in no sense be assumed to hold an outside position in relation to this infinite movement; rather, they are irrevocably entangled in it.

3.1. Dissolution of Ordinary Metaphors in *Words and Music*

Words and Music is a short radio play with three characters: Croak, Words, and Music. Although referred to as Words and Music in speech direction, these characters are called, by Croak, Joe and Bob respectively.³⁴ The play opens with Words and Music having been confined in a dark space. Words expresses his dissatisfaction about this company. Accompanied by Music, however, he performs a piece on sloth. When Croak appears, it becomes clear that Words and Music are in his service. Croak, who calls the two “[his] comforts,” demands them to be friends (CDW 287). Croak demands “[his] club” to produce pieces on love, age, and face—different themes which he chooses for the night (288, 288-91). Despite their continuing disagreement, Words and Music try to cooperate in producing the demanded pieces. While singing a piece on face, Words gives up and Croak, who seems to be dissatisfied, leaves; Words implores that Music continue and Music does so. The play ends with a “*Deep sigh*” let out by Words (294).

Many critics have seen *Words and Music* as a composition about composition (Cohn 268), “an allegory of art as a process of imaginative exploration” (Webb 102). Croak has been seen as an artist who is pursuing reality “indirectly in the distancing medium of fiction” through “a fusion of emotion and rational thought” which are attributed to music and language respectively (ibid.). Croak is said to represent the conscious self of the artist. It is he who sets the other forces in motion by his command and watches them critically as they work (ibid.). Words and Music, however, are seen as

³⁴ This play, like all plays, might be analysed on different levels: with the focus on the text or the performance. Regarding the performance, the names Joe and Bob might lead to ambiguities; the audience might assume Joe and Bob to be persons who respond with language and music respectively; the reader, however, is more likely to take Words and Music as characters. Although the analysis of the performance can offer significant insight, it is beyond the scope of this study the focus of which will be on the text.

representations of his unconscious (103). Words represents his faculties of reason and Music that of emotion (102-3).

Reducing Words and Music to music-language binarism is the easiest interpretation of *Words and Music*. It is easy to reduce all the force to a “contrast between a ‘verbal [i.e. rational] ... [and] a musical (i.e. emotional) stream of consciousness’ ” (Esslin qtd. in Bailes and Till 80); it is easy to see Music (Bob) as “the inspiration,” and Words (Joe) as “the articulation” (Clap 545); it is easy to label Words as Apollonian and Music as Dionysian; it is easy to see the play as representative of Schopenhauerian metaphysics for whom “music is ‘the most direct, intuitive form of access to an underlying reality which is essentially resistant to discursive articulation’ ” (Boyce 80). Consequently, it is easy to conclude that “[m]usic . . . holds the real orchestrating power over both Croak’s emotions and the soloist’s performance and in this way manifests its supremacy over the verbal order” (Ojrzynska 61). The fact that the play ends with the retreat of Words and the dominance of music brings about the hasty conclusion that music is more “expressive” than language, that is, the naïve view that while language fails to “express” Croak’s thoughts and feelings, music succeeds in doing so.³⁵ Taking a closer look at the text, however, suspends all these easy interpretations. By looking closely at the text, I will try to reveal the fact that most of these interpretations have no origin in the text, but in our preconceived ideas—the sedimented metaphors—about language and music, that is, our complicity in Platonism, as well as our Apollonian desire to illuminate and Rousseauistic nostalgia for the “pure origin.” Later, I will try to reveal the force of *différance*—the “writing before the letter”—which precedes not only Words and Music but also Croak himself and his so-called thoughts and feelings; I will try to reveal the force of this

³⁵ Beckett’s remark that “Music always wins” (qtd. in Worth, 16), is cited by many critics to support this claim. This is not only the reduction of the text to the Author but also an easy interpretation; even if one, following this single remark, reduces the whole text to the victory of music, I assert that it is still not possible to see this victory as a metaphysical victory; this is a question which deserves deeper analysis; such an analysis, however, is beyond the scope of my study; this study is not interested in the writer’s view of music, nor his “intention;” the focus of this study is textual.

movement from which neither Words and Music nor Croak can be disentangled.

3.1.1. “Music Platonism” and *Words and Music*

The first performances of Words and Music are pieces on love. It is Words (Joe) whom Croak calls on first. When Croak commands Words to perform a piece on love, Words repeats exactly the same piece on sloth—the piece he had performed before Croak’s arrival. Croak’s “[v]iolent thum[s] of club” and “[a]nguished” utterances are heard alongside Words’ speech (CDW 288). Later, Croak calls on Music (Bob) who performs a soft, “expressive” music accompanied by Words’ “groans and protestations” (288). Responding by “[Anguished.] Oh!,” Croak demands a louder music and Music performs a “*fortissimo*” whereby “*all expression [is] gone*” and Words’ disrupting groans are suffocated (ibid.). Croak turns to Words again, calling him “Joe sweet” (ibid.), and Words continues his speech on love. Croak’s groans and “[a]nguished” utterances are heard as before. Interrupting Words’ speech—by uttering “Alas!”—he calls on Music imploringly. Music performs “[I]ove and soul music,” accompanied, as before, by Words’ “protestations” (289). It is at this point that Croak changes the theme (ibid.).

Many critics agree that Words fails to “express” love although they have different approaches to this failure. Eugene Webb attributes Words’ failure to “express” love to the unoriginality of his performance. He contends that Words’ performance of love—which is a repetition of his performance of sloth—is entrapped in philosophical clichés (103-4). According to Webb, this entrapment in clichés is due to the fact that “[l]eft to its own devices, thought has no interest in exploring new territory but prefers to occupy itself with comfortable old clichés” (103). Webb argues that upon the second call by Croak, Words, who has now run out of formulaic clichés, “ha[s] to do some genuinely original thinking” (104).

WORDS: What? [*Pause. Very rhetorical.*] Is love the word?
[*Pause. Do.*] Is soul the word? [*Pause. Do.*] Do we mean
love, when we say love?
[*Pause. Pause. Do.*] Soul, when we say soul? (CDW 289)

However, Words is, according to Webb, still “reluctant to step out into this uncharted area where the guideposts of cliché are no longer present to mark his path” (104). Webb likens Words to “an analytic philosopher” who “examin[es] . . . language” (104, 105). This, according to Webb is the cause of Croak’s dissatisfaction. He takes Croak’s groans as an indication of his dissatisfaction: “Anguished at this failure of Words, Croak turns once again to Music, who obliges” him (105) with “[l]ove and soul music” (CDW 289). Webb associates music with “the element of nonrational feeling” as opposed to Words which he sees as “the articulate and rational element” (102, 103). For Webb, “Music represents” the “nondiscursive knowledge” which Words is suspicious of (104). It is, thus, a more authentic “guide than reason to the . . . reality of one’s life” (103). In other words, Music is successful in “express[ing] . . . the reality” that Croak wishes to express since he “is quite willing to plunge head first into areas that lie beyond the realm in which conceptual thought is able to operate comfortably” (105).

The first question that arises from Webb’s interpretation is how Webb can conclude that Music “obliges” Croak. The only response Croak makes is “[anguished.] Oh!” and “groans” (CDW 287-89). There is no sign in the text which can be indicative of his satisfaction. Moreover, if we are to take Croak’s “[anguished.] Oh!” and “groans” as indications of his dissatisfaction,³⁶ and take this dissatisfaction as Words’ failure to “express” what Croak wants to be “expressed,” how can we justify the same response to Music? And if the recourse to Music is an indication of this dissatisfaction, how can we justify his recourse to Words? Although some critics highlighted Croak’s recourse to Music out of his dissatisfaction with Words, they have turned a blind eye to the same response from Croak upon his dissatisfaction about Music:

CROAK: [Anguished.] Oh!
 WORDS: [As before.] . . .
 [Violent thump of club.]
 CROAK: Bob.
 WORDS: . . .
 [Violent thump of club.]
 CROAK: Bob!
 MUSIC: As before.

³⁶ Some have taken them as indication of his pain or suffering.

CROAK: Love!

MUSIC: *Rap of baton on stand. Soft music worthy of foregoing, great expression, with audible groans and protestations—‘No!’ ‘Please!’ etc.—from WORDS. Pause.*

CROAK: [Anguished.] Oh! [Thump of club.] Louder!

MUSIC: *Loud rap of baton and as before fortissimo, all expression gone, drowning WORDS’ protestations. Pause.*

CROAK: My comforts! [Pause.] Joe sweet.

WORDS: [As before.] . . .

CROAK: Groans.

WORDS: . . .

CROAK: Alas!

WORDS: . . .

CROAK: [Anguished.] Oh! [Pause.] Bob dear.

WORDS: . . .

CROAK: [Imploring.] Bob!

MUSIC: *Rap of baton. Love and soul music, with just audible protestations—‘No!’ ‘Please!’ ‘Peace!’ etc.—from WORDS. Pause.*

CROAK: [Anguished.] Oh! (288-89)

As we see, Croak’s response to the performance of Music—“[Anguished.] Oh!”—is the same as his response to the performance of Words. Thus, the claims that Music “obliges” Croak (Webb 105), or that “Music . . . holds the real orchestrating power over both Croak’s emotions” (Ojrzynska 61) have obviously no justification in the text. Neither do the claims that dissatisfaction with Words is the cause of Croak’s recourse to Music. As to the question of Croak’s recourse to Words, Webb—in order to keep this question out of his way—claims that despite Music being a more authentic “guide than reason to the . . . reality of [Croak’s] life,” Words “is nevertheless necessary if the experience of reality is to be expressed objectively in full clarity” (103). This does not answer the question, but, on the contrary, brings about more complicated questions: Where does this necessity come from? If Music has more immediate access “to the . . . reality of [Croak’s] life,” if music has the ability to “express” this “reality,” what does necessitate sweet Words? Why does this immediate medium require the mediation of Words? Why does Music which acquires insight to the genuine feeling by venturing to the “uncharted territory” need the charted territory of Words to “express” it? If its inarticulate language is “expressive,” why does it need articulation? Why does the

“nondiscursive knowledge” require the discursive to be clarified? Why does “clarity”—which belongs to the realm of reason—become necessary to “express” “feeling”? In other words, why does music require supplements? And more important questions follow: what happens “to the . . . reality of [Croak’s] life” within this “chain of supplementarity”? When this “reality” is expressed through supplements, to what extent can it be said to be “real”? When the “non-discursive” is expressed through the “discursive,” how does it remain non-discursive?³⁷

In a Rousseauistic manner, Webb—among other critics—is looking for the “original” “*fixity, . . . symbolic incapacity, . . . nonsupplementarity*,” for “a moment of life which knows nothing of symbol, substitution, lack and supplementary addition,” borrowing Derrida’s words (OG 242; emphasis added). In other words, he is trying to “separate *originarity* from *supplementarity*” (243; emphasis added). However, as obviously seen, we end up with a chain of supplementations: Croak’s “feeling”—which is said to be “present”—is supplemented by music—which already separates it from the “origin”—requires the supplement of speech which—as a second supplement—is a double separation from the “origin.” Thus, this “origin” is accessible only through a chain of supplements. As I argued in chapter 2, in order to sustain the myth of presence, metaphysics has to “[exclude] non-presence by determining the supplement as simple exteriority, pure addition or pure absence” (167). Nevertheless, the chain of “exclusion operates within the structure of supplementarity” (ibid.) and, hence, is haunted by the paradox of the supplement: “the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one *fills a void*” (145; 2nd emphasis added). Thus, it can be argued that if Croak’s “feeling” has to be supplemented by Music, there must be a lack in Music, and if Music has to be supplemented by Words, there must be a lack in Music. Hence, neither Music nor Croak’s feeling can be claimed to be more present—more immediate—than Words. According to “the logic of supplementarity,” presence cannot be replaced by a supplement, that is, by absence; rather, “the other and the lack come to add themselves as a plus that replaces a minus, that what adds itself to

³⁷ I will deal with these questions in the next section (sec. 3.1.2).

something takes the place of a default in the thing” (215). As a result, Croak’s so-called feeling cannot be said to be present, but rather a supplement of presence, or to put it better, “a simulacrum of presence,” in Derrida’s words (*MP* 13). In other words, the so-called origin itself turns out to be nothing, but a supplement, a simulacrum.

In a similar way, Brynhildur Boyce sees “engagement [as] the very essence of love” and attributes the failure to “express” love to the lack of engagement with this theme; she, however, attributes this lack of engagement not only to Words but to all the three characters. She asserts that if “nothing is communicated,” it is not only Words’ “detachment” and his lack of “engage[ment] in [a] meaningful way” with the theme of love but also the “absen[ce of] the impulse towards, and the effort to achieve, understanding, an impulse that must underpin the very process of communication” (68). Although like Webb, Boyce supports this claim by referring to Words’ mechanical repetition of the speech on sloth, she does not think that Music is engaged with the theme more than Words. She also refers to Croak’s “regular shift in focus” as empty gestures (*ibid.*). She claims that none of the three characters has the “desire to convey meaning [or] . . . to grasp it” (*ibid.*). She sees the “*fortissimo*, [whereby] *all expression* [is] *gone*” (*CDW* 288) as an “actualize[ation of] the hollow, inflated quality of the sentiments being proclaimed and to reflect the empty sounds—whether verbal or musical” (Boyce 68).

Boyce’s claim, regarding the first performance, that none of the three characters has the “desire to convey meaning [or] . . . to grasp it” (*ibid.*) is not firmly grounded in the text either (it is too metaphysical to be supported empirically). There are no textual clues suggesting Croak’s engagement or lack of engagement; nor any clues suggesting his changing attitude upon choosing different themes. It is true that the “shift of focus” occurs less often on the theme of age and is not seen on the theme of face, but the “shift of focus” is not strong enough to support his lack of engagement; it cannot say much about his attitude which remains highly ambiguous throughout the play. As to Words, he is always reluctant to speak and finally gives up after Croak’s exit. Thus, his lack of engagement cannot be said to be specific to the first performance. Speaking of Music’s attitude, there are no signs signifying a change.

Nevertheless, the claim that communication fails makes sense; there is ample evidence in the text suggesting the failure of communication; similar evidence, however, supports the failure of communication in the other performances. Thus, it is not specific to the performance of love.³⁸

Many other critics have attributed the failure to “express” in the first performance to the lack of cooperation between Words and Music. According to Katherine Worth, if Words and Music fail to “express” love, if Croak “get[s] only clichés back,” it is due to “Words’ reluctance to commit himself to feeling and Music’s over-indulgence in it” (13). Similarly, Ruby Cohn has argued that they fail because “Words is pedantic, whereas Music is overemotional” (268). In short, many critics agree that Words and Music fail to express in this first performance due to the failure “to reconcile the two media into a single, unified composition” (Lyon 137). As I argued above, this assumption is problematised considering the performances on age and face which are co-performed by Words and Music. As we will see, Croak’s response does not change much.

The second theme Croak chooses is age; choosing this theme, Croak calls upon Words (Joe) first, as he did on the theme of love. Words performs a speech which is soon disrupted by Croak who turns to Music. Music’s performance of “[a]ge music” is disrupted soon like that of Words:

CROAK: My balms! [*Pause.*] Age. [*Pause.*] Joe. [*Pause. Thump of club.*] Joe.

WORDS: [*As before.*] My Lord.

CROAK: Age!

[*Pause.*]

WORDS: [*Faltering.*] Age is ... age is when ... old age I mean ... if that is what my Lord means ... is when ... if you’re a man ... were a man ... huddled ... nodding ... the ingle ... waiting—

[*Violent thump of club.*]

CROAK: Bob. [*Pause.*] Age. [*Pause. Violent thump of club.*] Age!

MUSIC: *Rap of baton. Age music, soon interrupted by violent thump.*

CROAK: Together. [*Pause. Thump.*] Together! [*Pause. Violent thump.*] Together, dogs!

MUSIC: *Long la.*

WORDS: [*Imploring.*] No!

³⁸ The content of the performances—communication and the failure of communication—will be analysed in the following section (3.1.2).

[Violent thump.]
CROAK: Dogs! (CDW 289)

As we see, Croak's response to the performances of both Words and Music is the same as his response to their performances of love; if we are to take his groans as a signifier of his dissatisfaction, as claimed by many critics, we cannot claim that he is more satisfied with the second performance; nor can we say that Music "obliges" him or "holds the real orchestrating power over both [his] emotions" (Ojrzynska 61) since age music is soon interrupted violently by Croak in the same way that Words' speech is interrupted. Thus, I assert that these claims stem not at all from the text, but rather from the already taken-for-granted emotion-reason binarism, the already erroneous assumption of the possibility of transcendence in music, that is, "music Platonism" which is brought to the text.

After Words and Music's separate performances of age, Croak commands them to perform together; in response to this command, Music initiates by performing a "[l]ong la" while Words is reluctant to perform (CDW 289). Music performs another "La" on Croak's second command. Finally, Words "tr[ies] to sing," receiving continuous suggestions from Music according to which he tries to improve his song (ibid.). Croak's groans and thumps as well as his utterance "Dogs!" are heard along this co-performance by Words and Music, much like the first performance.

According to many critics, Words and Music, who fail to "express" love, are successful in "expressing" age; they attribute this "expressiveness" to the cooperation between Words and Music (Boyce 70, Lyons 137, Cohn 268). Boyce argues that unlike the previous performance which was "estranging and estranged rhetoric," this joint performance is "comprehensive eloquence" (70). She believes that "dialogue manner," unlike the monotone of before, succeeds in "searching for and shaping the phrases that ring true" (ibid.). She sees Music's attempt to articulate—"long la"³⁹—and Words' attempt to sing their point of convergence (71). Boyce calls this a "musico-linguistic conceit" (ibid.)

³⁹ "In its 'long la' Music might . . . be said to be playing 'A' for age" since "'la' is always A" in Latin countries where the use "fixed do system" (Boyce 71).

whereby Words and Music “join forces in the pursuit of the quintessence of age” (70). According to her, with ‘*long la*’ Music “articulates . . . a particular quintessence of age” (ibid.). She argues that “[t]he non-linguistic speech sound ‘la’ forms, in this way, a meeting place between the verbal and the musical, pointing in one direction to a particular letter, and in the other to a particular note” (ibid.). She further argues that, this “conflat[ion] of words and music” is a process in which Words learns how to sing; this, for Boyce, suggests the ability of Words and Music “to ‘tune in’ to each other” (71) and she claims that it is only by this “tun[ing] in to each other,” that is, by “communicating with another, that these characters’ utterances have meaning, since it is only now they have meaning to express” (74).

As I mentioned above, the only response from Croak is his groans and thumps as well as his utterance “Dogs!” (CDW 290-91). Thus, Croak’s attitude is still ambiguous; there is not enough textual clue to claim that this co-performance satisfies him. It cannot be claimed either that his attitude has changed. Thus, if Croak’s response is taken to be the proof of the “expressiveness” of this co-performance, the claim that the co-performance is a successful expression remains unsubstantiated.

Moreover, the claim that the quintessence of age has been expressed well by Words and Music in this co-performance—unlike that of love which is not—contradicts Boyce’s earlier claims. As I have mentioned, Boyce attributes the failure of the first performance to the “mechanical repetition of the framework of communication” and the “absent . . . impulse towards, and the effort to achieve understanding” (68). The contradiction that arises here is that expression of the *quintessence* is always already a “mechanical repetition of the [a certain] framework.” Does not the possibility of the judgement of the previous performance as “estranging and estranged rhetoric,” and this co-performance as “comprehensive eloquence,” or phrases that ring true” (70) suggest the pre-existing criteria of judgment, that is, a pre-existing framework which is repeated—whether successfully or unsuccessfully? Can these phrases “ring true,” can comprehension take place without one being familiar with the quintessence of age? And are Words and Music able to “produce phrases that ring true” without familiarity with the same criteria, that is, without being coded

within the pre-existing framework? If not, *what do they express*? Is not the so-called “effort to achieve understanding” is nothing but “mechanical repetition of the framework of communication”? Are the quintessences they express not Croak’s feelings, but the codes already defined within the pre-existing framework? I will deal with these questions in the next section.⁴⁰

Face is the last theme chosen by Croak. When Croak chooses this theme, he does not call upon Joe or Bob separately; he just demands a performance on the theme of face. It is Music who starts, and Words joins later. Music makes suggestions to which Words is initially indifferent; he continues alone until Music “[i]nterrupt[s] violently” (CDW 291). Croak demands that they “[b]e friends” (ibid.), but Words continues performing on his own. Croak’s groans are heard as before. This follows the sudden interruption by Music:

MUSIC: *Irrepressible burst of spreading and subsiding music
with vain protestations—‘Peace!’ ‘No!’ ‘Please!’ etc.—
from*

WORDS: *Triumph and conclusion.*

WORDS: [*Gently expostulatory.*] My Lord! [*Pause. Faint thump
of club.*] I resume, . . . [*Pause.*] . . .

CROAK: [*Anguished.*] No! (292-93)

This “[*Anguished.*] No!” in response to Words’ performance of face is Croak’s last response. After this point there is no response from him.

As we see, Croak’s groans are still heard in the last performance. If one accepts that these groans signify his dissatisfaction, one has to admit that he is still dissatisfied. To justify the failure of Words to “express,” some critics have referred not only to Croak’s response but also to that of Music. Music’s interruption in this performance has been seen as his “frustrat[ion] by Words’ attempt to represent Croak’s experience of this remembered moment” (Laws, WM 286).⁴¹ Nevertheless, if we see Music’s interruption of Words as Words’ failure, how can we justify Words’ interruptions of Music? Furthermore, it might be true that Words fails to “express” Croak’s “experience,” but does this

⁴⁰ The question of repetition and the comparison of the content of these two performances will be carried out in the next section (3.1.2).

⁴¹ In her analysis of the piece performed by Music, Catherine Laws argues that “the increased dynamic and the repeated 5-note semitonal ascending scales in the flute and piccolo give the music a more urgent sense of searching, even of yearning” (Laws, WM 286).

mean that Music can express it better than Words? Is there a sign signifying Music's success or Croak's satisfaction with Music's performance? Does this claim not stem from an assumption of a transcendental truth that music can uncover, that is from "music Platonism"?

Words continues his performance, "[c]hange[ing] to poetic tone" and trying to sing the suggestions made by Music; they start performing together as they did on the theme of age. Worth sees this scene—the cooperation between Words and Music—as "a battle between 'cold' and warm' approaches" (14). According to her, "it is left to Music to supply the feeling" which Words fails to "express, that is, "shaking Words out of self-consciousness," forcing him "into deep feeling" (ibid.). She claims that "music . . . must guide a reformed Words to 'try' and sing of a region beyond words" (ibid.).

As we see again, the criticism of *Words and Music* cannot go deeper than the emotion-reason binarism and Rousseauistic metaphors. I assert that it is the reduction of the play to these metaphors that overshadows the significance of the co-performance of Words and Music. In my reading, the co-performances of Words and Music do not suggest the different realms of Words and Music; quite the contrary, they suggests their entrapment in the same realm, that is, the encoded realm of culture. When Words and Music start performing together—on the theme of age (290) and face (293)—Music makes suggestions which Words "[tries] to sing":

WORDS: [*Trying to sing.*] . . .
MUSIC: *Improvement of above.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .
MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .
MUSIC: *Improvement of above.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .
MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .
..... (290)

MUSIC: *Discreet suggestion for above.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .
MUSIC: *Discreet suggestion for following.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .
MUSIC: *More confident suggestion for following.*
WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] . . .

MUSIC: *Invites with opening, pause, invites again and finally accompanies very softly.*
WORDS: *[Trying to sing, softly.] . . . (293)*

As we see, in both co-performances, the stage directions specify the content of music: “*Improvement of above*” and “*Suggestion for following.*” Not only the fact that Music makes suggestion for Words and improves his utterances but, more importantly, the fact that Words “[*tries*] *to sing this,*” that is, Music’s suggestions and improvements, suggests that the content they are dealing with is the same although the media are not. This, in turn, suggests the complicity of Music in the contaminated territory which is said to belong to Words; in other words, it suggests the fact that music is not free of signifying content. The “*Long la*” performed by Music earlier has already pointed out the coded nature of music. This reminds us of the fact that music is also a coded language, that one “*write[s] music in a coded form all the same*” (Derrida, LO 320; emphasis added).⁴² If music were not coded, and if one were not familiar with these codes, how would one be able to make sense of it? How would one be able to judge music to be “expressive” or not? How could one make a distinction between love music and age music? Without codes, what would be the difference between music and noise or sounds? Even Rousseau—who insists that music is more immediate than language—sees—although “without seeing,” borrowing Derrida’s terms (OG 215)—the mediacy in music; despite his attempt to deny mediacy, he has to admit that “*in every imitation a type of discourse always has to supplement the voice of nature*” (ibid.; emphasis added). For him, without supplements, the voice of nature is merely noise (323). Although Rousseau claims that “[t]he beauty of sounds is from nature,” he has to admit that “[t]he most beautiful songs, to our taste, will always only indifferently touch an *ear that is not at all accustomed to them; it is a language for which one has to have the Dictionary*” (321; emphasis added). He believes that “[r]ustic ears hear only noise in our consonances” (322). Thus, even Rousseau cannot deny the codedness of music. Following Rousseau’s argument,

⁴² “Language of the Other” is Derrida’s interview with Ornette Coleman—a composer—where Derrida tries to reveal the fact that music is not uncontaminated by language—in response to Coleman’s claim that “sound has a much more democratic relationship to information” (LO 319).

Croak's ear must be "accustomed to" love or age music in order for music to sound "expressive" or "non-expressive" for him. Hence, music—like language—pre-exists Croak's feelings which it is claimed to express. In other words, it is *the other*—like language—in relation to Croak and his so-called feelings.⁴³

Furthermore, these co-performances, with the repeated stage directions "*Improvement of above*" and "*Suggestion for following*," "*Trying to sing this*" are not only reminders of this coded system, "the pre-written framework," borrowing Derrida's terms (LO 322), but also reminders of the fact that it is only with language that we can perceive music and talk about it. The paradox that we perceive and argue the anti-linguistic quality of music within language and its anti-reason quality within the realm of reason is quite telling: "If music can insinuate . . . a critique of reason, how should it be spoken of?" (Morris 104).

Croak's exit is probably the most ambiguous scene of the play. He leaves while Words is singing. Croak's exit shocks Words, who stops singing and implores Music to continue. After a "*rude retort*," Music continues by performing repeated pieces. The play ends with a "[d]eep sigh" uttered by Words (CDW 294). This scene has received different interpretations. It has been usually agreed that "Croak is no longer needed" after "draw[ing] Words and Music together" (Clap 545). Worth interprets the ending not as an indication of frustration but as a development of a vision; she attributes Croak's exit to "the intensity of the achieved vision" rather than frustration (16). Having achieved this vision, according to her, Croak no longer needs Words and Music (ibid.). Worth claims that "the last tiny reprise" suggests the fact that "the work [is] completed" (ibid.). Much like Worth, Webb sees Croak's exit as an indication of the acquired vision and the completion of the intended work. He argues that Croak leaves since "[t]he composition [has] been completed [and] the vision [has] been formulated" although this vision is merely "the vision of art, hypothetical and incomplete" (107). According to Ojrzynska, however, Croak is "either too overwhelmed by the achieved effect, which instead of comfort brings him pain, or perhaps unwilling to finish his work, for the fear of

⁴³ Croak's relationship with Words and Music will be examined in the last section (sec. 3.3).

completion would amount to silence and creative emptiness” (60). He sees this exit as Croak’s “renounce[iation of] his power” (ibid.).

What all these different interpretations have in common is an imposition of a *telos* on an open-ended play, that is, to foreclose a text which arrives at no closure. I assert that these teleological interpretations arise not from the text, but rather from our Rousseauistic nostalgia for the “pure origin” and our teleological mentality, reinforced by the Apollonian tendency of literary criticism. As Derrida argues,

criticism will have neither the means nor, more particularly, the motive for renouncing eurythmics, geometry, *the privilege given to vision, the Apollonian ecstasy* which “acts above all as a force stimulating the eye, so that it acquires the power of vision.” *It will not be able to exceed itself to the point of embracing both force and the movement which displaces lines, nor to the point of embracing force as movement*, as desire, for itself, and not as the accident or epiphany of lines. *To the point of embracing it as writing.* (WD 33; emphasis added)

The “Apollonian ecstasy” of criticism comes from its power to invent an origin and a *telos* which controls movement. This Apollonian invention is that “*which risks enclosing progression toward the future—becoming—by giving it form. That which risks stifling force under form*” (31; emphasis added). The easiest way for the critics to resolve the ambiguities of the text and eliminate its uncertainties—particularly regarding the ending—is the recourse to form, and the best form that can save this text from movement is “music Platonism.”

Interestingly, the critics who elevate the role of Music due to its superiority to reason, its ability to transcend the realm of reason to achieve a transcendental reality are—paradoxically—only able to make such claims within the discourse of reason, since it is only the discourse of reason that cannot tolerate absence, the absence of presence. What criticism of *Words and Music* cannot tolerate is the absence of presence in the text generated by the movement of supplementarity; not being able to tolerate the absence of presence, they have to reduce the force, the movement which endangers presence to a form which safeguards the myth of presence; they have to efface the supplementarity of Croak’s thoughts and feelings, the supplementarity of the thing-in-itself, the supplementarity of origin since it implies their absence.

3.1.2. Words, Music and the Force of *Différance* in *Words and Music*

As I argued above, the Apollonian tendency of literary criticism to invent an origin and a *telos* “*risks enclosing progression toward the future—becoming—by giving it form. . . . [It] risks stifling force under form*” (Derrida, WD 31; emphasis added); it helps the critics to resolve the ambiguities of the text and eliminate its uncertainties. In the reception of *Words and Music*, it is this reduction of the force, the Dionysian movement, that is the infinite movement of supplementarity—*différance*—that allows the invention of an origin and a *telos*, and the creation of a coherent narrative, that is, a whole. However, this effaced movement—as we have already seen—irrevocably haunts the invented origin and a *telos*; it remains a rupture at the heart of the seeming coherence; it leaves a *hole* at the heart of the *whole*, that is infinite absence at the heart of the seeming presence. In this section, I will try to reveal the force of this movement in *Words and Music*.

The structure of repetition in *Words and Music*—which, I assert, the play foregrounds from the very beginning—is largely ignored. The only repetition that is referred to is the mechanical repetition of Words’ speech on love which has been seen as a sign of his non-involvement. As I have already mentioned, Words’ first performance of love is an identical repetition of his performance of sloth before Croak’s entrance:

WORDS: [*Orotund.*] Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of love. [*Clears throat.*] This is the mode in which the mind is most strongly affected and indeed in no mode is the mind more strongly affected than in this. [*Pause.*]

CROAK: *Rending sigh. Thump of club.*

WORDS: [*As before.*] By passion we are to understand a movement of the mind pursuing or fleeing real or imagined pleasure or pain. [*Clears throat.*] Of all—

CROAK: [*Anguished.*] Oh!

WORDS: [*As before.*] Of all these movements then and who can number them and they are legion sloth is the LOVE is the most urgent and indeed by no manner of movement is the soul more urged than by this, to and—
[*Violent thump of club.*] (CDW 288)

This repetition, in my reading, is highly significant. If this performance were not preceded by an identical speech on sloth, we could read it as clichéic representation of love. The fact that it is preceded by such an identical performance, however, suspends this easy interpretation. Replacing sloth with love makes this performance highly parodic; one is obliged to think deeper not only about this repetition but the repetition itself. It is true that this performance is “non-original;” however, this “non-originality” at the very beginning of play draws attention to the notion of “originality” and “non-originality,” and that of repetition which is entirely ignored. It is, of course, only in relation to the whole play—the ignored repetition in the entire play—that the significance of this repetition can be grasped.

If we take a closer look at the play, we find repetition as an undeniable force in the play. To start with, if we examine the performance of age we see that the words and phrases from the first performance of age by Words—“Age is ... age is when ... old age I mean ... if that is what my Lord means ... is when ... if you’re a man ... were a man ... huddled ... nodding ... the ingle ... waiting” (289)—are repeated again and again in Words and Music’s attempt at cooperation and in the final song. In the attempt at cooperation, other words are added to these phrases:

WORDS: [*Trying to sing.*] Age is when ... to a man ...

MUSIC: *Improvement of above.*

WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] Age is when to a man ...

MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*

WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] Huddled o’er ... the ingle

[*Pause. Violent thump. Trying to sing.*] Waiting for the
hag to put the ... pan in the bed ...

MUSIC: *Improvement of above.*

WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] Waiting for the hag to put the pan
in the bed.

MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*

WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] And bring the ... arrowroot ...

[*Pause. Violent thump. As before.*] And bring the toddy...

[*Pause. Tremendous thump.*]

CROAK: Dogs!

MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*

WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] She comes in the ashes

[*Imploring.*] No!

MUSIC: *Repeats suggestion.*

WORDS: [*Trying to sing this.*] She comes in the ashes who
loved could not be ... won or ...

[Pause.]
 MUSIC: *Repeats end of previous suggestion.*
 WORDS: [Trying to sing this.] Or won not loved ... [Wearily.]
 ... or some other trouble [Pause. Trying to sing.]
 Comes in the ashes like in that old—
 MUSIC: *Interrupts with improvement of this and brief suggestion.*
 WORDS: [Trying to sing this.] Comes in the ashes like in that
 old light ... her face ... in the ashes
 [Pause.]
 CROAK: *Groans.*
 MUSIC: *Suggestion for following.*
 WORDS: [Trying to sing this.] That old moonlight ... on the
 earth ... again. (290)

As we see, although new words and phrases are added to Words' initial utterances, the so-called new phrases revolve around the same image produced by Words' initial utterances. The final song—which is claimed to be a successful cooperation—is the repetition of above phrases; the only change is the change of “[w]aiting for the hag” (ibid.) to “[s]hivering for the hag” (291), and “[t]hat old moonlight” (290) to “[t]hat old starlight” (291).

Similar to the performance of age, in the performance of face, repetition occurs when Words starts singing the suggestions made by Music:

WORDS: . . . Then down a little way ... [Pause. Change to poetic tone. Low.]
 Then down a little way
 Through the trash
 To where ... towards where
 [Pause.]
 MUSIC: *Discreet suggestion for above.*
 WORDS: [Trying to sing this.]
 Then down a little way
 Through the trash
 Towards where ...
 [Pause.]
 MUSIC: *Discreet suggestion for following.*
 WORDS: [Trying to sing this.]
 All dark no begging
 No giving no words
 No sense no need
 [Pause.]
 MUSIC: *More confident suggestion for following.*
 WORDS: [Trying to sing this.]
 Through the scum
 Down a little way

To where one glimpse
Of that wellhead. (293-94)

This cooperated trial to sing follows Words' final song which is an exact repetition of all these lines. The most significant repetition, however, is the repetition at the end of the play. After Croak's exit, when Words gives up and implores Music to continue, Music performs pieces that have been performed before, that is, repetitive pieces:

WORDS: Music. [*Imploring.*] Music!

[*Pause.*]

MUSIC: *Rap of baton and statement with elements already used
or wellhead alone.*

[*Pause.*]

WORDS: Again. [*Pause. Imploring.*] Again!

MUSIC: *As before or only very slightly varied.*

[*Pause.*]

WORDS: *Deep sigh.* (294)

Although some critics have highlighted the repetitive performance of Words at the beginning of the play, this repetition and, more importantly, the fact that the play ends with a repetition is totally ignored. This is not surprising since the first repetition obviously helps some critics to accuse Words of "unoriginality," which, in turn, supports the binarism underpinning their narrative while this final repetition which closes the play creates a rupture in their narratives; it not only contradicts their claims about Music but also brings about questions that cannot be answer. Thus, it has to be ignored.

As we have seen, repetition is foregrounded in the play—especially through the repetition at the beginning and the end of the play. This foregrounded repetition obliges us to re-think the notion of repetition as well as the notions of "original" and "non-original" productions. In my reading, the foregrounded structure of repetition, particularly the fact that the play starts with a repetition and ends with a repetition, suggests the fact that not only the repetitions in the play but also the play as a repetition is a part of a larger repetition that has already been at work; it is part of the pre-existing repetition that makes it possible. As Derrida maintains "the very concept of improvisation verges upon reading, since what we often understand by improvisation is the

creation of something new, yet something which doesn't exclude the pre-written framework that makes it possible" (LO 322). Derrida asserts,

the unique event that is produced only one time is nevertheless repeated in its very structure. Thus, there is a repetition, in the work, that is intrinsic to the initial creation—that which compromises or complicates the concept of improvisation. Repetition is already in improvisation. (322-23; emphasis added)

With this pre-existing repetition at work, no performance can be said to be more "original" than the other. When "the unique event" becomes nothing but a repetition, that is, when improvisation is entangled in repetition, the boundary between improvisation and repetition is troubled. Thus, the so-called original productions of Words and Music are rendered nothing but repetitions of repetitions, that is, repetitions within the already-existing structures within which the concepts of love, age, and face become possible. In order to perform love, age, and face, both Words and Music must have an idea of these concepts. This means that the concept of love, age, and face must exist in their structures, that is, it must have been defined within the structures of language which are those of music, as well. Hence, none of their performances can be an improvisation; all Words and Music perform are enabled by the pre-existing structures and are reproductions of these structures. The stage directions which specify "*Love and soul music*," "*Age music*" reminds us—self-reflexively—of these pre-existing structures. Even the critics' claims that Words fails to "express" the essence of love while he can "express" the essence of age in collaboration with Music suggest the fact that these performances are repetitions within an already-existing structures. Without there being structures within which love is defined, how can we judge Words to have failed to "express" it or without there being structures within which age is defined, how can we judge him to have "expressed" it successfully? As I argued above, the possibility of judgment suggests the pre-existing criteria of judgment, and, hence, a pre-existing framework which is repeated—whether successfully or unsuccessfully.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that these structures—the structures within which concepts such as love, age, face, and all other concepts are produced—are never stable; the force that makes these concepts possible is the very force

that makes them impossible. This force that is “the possibility [and the impossibility] of conceptuality” is what Derrida refers to as *différance*:

Essentially and lawfully, *every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences*. Such a play, *différance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the *possibility of conceptuality*, of the conceptual process and system in general. (MP 11; emphasis added).

Thus, the repetition in the play must not be understood as unoriginality, but rather an effect of this “play of differences,” an infinite movement, a Dionysian force which dismantles all forms and structures. Thus, despite arising from the pre-existing structures, each improvisation/repetition opens up these concepts to a new future. In other words, repetition does not reinforce old clichés, but rather brings about difference.

Alongside the structure of repetition in the text, the Dionysian content of the text must be explored in relation to the “force and the movement which displaces lines,” in Derrida’s words (WD 33). With re-thinking the notion of repetition, we can now re-think the function of the repetition at the beginning of the play. As I argued above, if this performance were not preceded by an identical speech on sloth, we could interpret it as clichéic repetition of the discourses on love, that is, a reinforcement of Apollonian images. However, the fact that this performance is an identical repetition of the previous performance on sloth gives it an ironic and parodic tone. The fact that love is equated with sloth parodies love, suggesting—ironically—that love is nothing but a cliché; this repetition, in other words, questions the “origin” of the notion of love; thus, Words’ performance can be said to have image-distorting power, that is Dionysian power. The critics’ response to this piece is quite telling, as well; if many critics see this performance as a failure, it is because rather than create Apollonian images, or reinforce them, Words’ ironic performance distorts these images. Thus, the effect of Words’ performance is Dionysian. This image-distorting Dionysian force is less implicit in Words’ second performance:

WORDS: What? [*Pause. Very rhetorical.*] Is love the word? [*Pause. Do.*] Is soul the word? [*Pause. Do.*] Do we mean love, when we say love? [*Pause. Pause. Do.*] Soul, when we say soul? (CDW 289)

Although thought is conventionally associated with the Apollonian desire to know, Words' contemplation does not lead to knowing, but rather problematises knowing. Rather than reconcile love with a transcendental signified, Words opens it to the Dionysian force of movement. Thus, far from Apollonian illuminating power, it has an unsettling power which is highly Dionysian. It makes sense that Boyce refers to this speech as "estranging and estranged rhetoric" (70), but this "estranging" effect is due to the image-distorting force of Dionysus.

Music's performance of love, on the contrary, can be argued to be Apollonian, that is, image-making. The first performance of Music is "*great expressive music*" (CDW 288) and the second "[*l*]ove and soul music" (289).⁴⁴ If Music's performance is expressive here, it means that the signifiers—musical notes that aim to express—can arrive (or be assumed to have arrived) at a transcendental signified—the intended expression. Similarly, "Love and soul music" is only possible if the signifiers can produce the images of love, that is, symbolic expression of love which is Apollonian. The same argument goes for Music's performance of age which is specified as "[*a*]ge music" (289). Much like Music's performances of love, this performance can only be called age music if it can give rise to symbolic expression, images that fit into the pre-existing forms with which we conceive age.

Words' performance of age might, on the surface, seem to be image-making since the words initially uttered by Words produce images of an old man. Boyce sees the combination of "the. . . arrowroot," "the hag [who] . . . put[s] the pan in the bed" and "the toddy" (CDW 290) as a complex but eloquent evocation of old age:

One might point to the complex manner in which old age is here evoked. At a semantic level, it emerges with such precision that 'arrowroot', associated in the Victorian period with childhood, becomes in the hands of the nurse-like 'hag' a signifier of second infancy. The replacement of this porridge by the more age-appropriate toddy only serves to confirm the evocation. (70)

As opposed to the performance of love which is claimed to be "estranging and estranged rhetoric," Boyce sees this co-performance of age as "comprehensive

⁴⁴ Since the focus of this study is textual, I take the stage direction as the content of music. The study of music—being the task of musicology—is beyond the scope of this study.

eloquence” (ibid.). She maintains that Words and Music, who cooperate now, are able to produce “phrases ring true” (ibid.). Nevertheless, she cannot deny the deferral of meaning; she argues that the deferral of “when” in Words’ attempt to explain age “enacts the endlessness of old age, demonstrating syntactically the way in which time is protracted by the anticipation of an ever-deferred conclusion” (ibid.). Elsewhere, Boyce admits, contradictorily, the “syntactic void” (79) in the play:

The poem establishes a tangible sense of presence, partly through the vividness of the verbs – ‘huddled’ and ‘shivering’ – and partly through the concrete particularity of ‘the pan’, ‘the bed’ and ‘the face’. At the same time, however, it is riddled with absence. The man derives no warmth from the fire over which he shivers, its burnt-out ashes serving only to make palpable the lack of heat. (ibid.)

She also points to “[t]he face in the ashes” which, according to her, signifies the “doubl[e] remov[al]” of the face “on the one hand there in the ashes, like the memory of some long-extinguished passion, and on the other looking down on him with a chilly, distant starlight gaze” (ibid.). Although Boyce has to admit that “[a]ge is hardly expressed ‘through’ these images,” she attributes the “syntactic void” and the failure of expression to the failure of communication between Words and Music (ibid.).

However, I argue that the fact that the fragmented images of the old man produced by Words’ speech do not cohere into a whole, giving rise to the movement of signifiers, that is, this play of presence and absence cannot be put down to the relationship between Words and Music, but rather the force that not only produces both Words and Music but also entraps them both in infinite movement. This force is the force of *différance* within which images are produced and distorted at the same time; it is the force of *différance* within which these images are infinitely deferred, never arriving at a transcendental signified, that is, at a *telos*. Thus, I argue that despite producing images, the performance of Words cannot be said to be image-making, that is Apollonian. If we understand Dionysian art not as the impossible “imageless art” as Nietzsche claims (14), but rather as an image-distorting art, we can see the Dionysian power of Words’ speech. As I argued in chapter 1, the Dionysian force has

nothing to do with the medium of music; nor does it have to do with the so-called musicality; it is, rather, the force of movement, that is, *différance*.

Words' performance of face, like that of age, might seem image-making on the surface. It is true that Words "create[s] the image of a face" (Webb 106) during a sexual intercourse, as many readers agree; these images, however, are only fragmented images, much like the images of the old man. Words' first lines (the first scene)—"Seen from above at such close quarters in that radiance so cold and faint with eyes so dimmed by ... what had passed, its quite ... piercing beauty is a little" (CDW 291)—evoke the image of a face after a sexual intercourse. Although these detailed descriptions of the face might evoke a sense of presence, this presence is constantly deferred. This scene follows Words' ironic remarks:

... blunted. Some moments later however, such are the powers of recuperation at this age, the head is drawn back to a distance of two or three feet, the eyes widen to a stare and begin to feast again. [*Pause.*] *What then is seen would have been better seen in the light of day, that is incontestable. But how often it has, in recent months, how often, at all hours, under all angles, in cloud and shine, been seen I mean.* And there is, is there not, in that clarity of silver ... that clarity of silver ... is there not ... my Lord [*Pause.*] Now and then the rye, swayed by a light wind, casts and withdraws its shadow. (292; emphasis added)

These ironic remarks put the clarity of the produced images into question, resulting not in presence, but rather a play of presence and absence. This ironic description follows another image of the face during sexual intercourse: "the brows knitted in a groove suggesting pain but simply concentration more likely all things considered on some consummate inner process, the eyes of course closed in keeping with this, the lashes ... [*Pause.*] ... the nose ... [*Pause.*] ... nothing, a little pinched perhaps, the lips" (292). It is here that Croak responds "Lily!" (292). Many critics have seen this scene as evocation of Croak's memories, that is, a sense of presence. Whether we see Croak's sudden utterance "Lily!" as a "present" memory, that is, a "present" past or an effect of Words and Music's performances, the so-called presence is never fully present in the text; rather, it is infinitely deferred. As I argued in chapter 2, presence is always momentary since it is constantly disrupted by the endless movement of supplementarity, which is the scandal of presence. Although Words evokes

images of a face, these fragmented images cannot be said to be present since they are deferred within the Dionysian movement in the text. As Derrida argues, supplementarity is “*an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception*” (OG 157; emphasis added). The image of the face that Words produces is nothing but a mirage, a sense of what is deferred. This performance of the face never arrives at a closure. Words continues his speech which later turns to a song:

–the brows uncloud, the lips part and the eyes ... [Pause.] ... the brows uncloud, the nostrils dilate, the lips part and the eyes ... [Pause.] ... a little colour comes back into the cheeks and the eyes ... [Reverently.] ... open. [Pause.] Then down a little way ... [Pause. Change to poetic tone. Low.]

Then down a little way
Through the trash
To where ... towards where (293; emphasis added)

The question that is evoked here is of great significance since it heightens the sense of the infinite deferral. This song, which is later cooperated by Music, leads nowhere—to no *telos*—but a “wellhead” which signifies nothing but absolute darkness, and the endlessness of this plunge into the darkness. The fact that the play ends with the repetition of this “wellhead”—the stage directions say, “*statement with elements already used or wellhead alone*” (294)—suggests a non-arrival, an infinite movement, that is *différance*. This force is the “*progression toward the future—becoming,*” in Derrida’s terms (WD 31; emphasis added) which critics have tried to efface “by giving it form;” which critics have tried to “*stifl[e] . . . under form*” (ibid.; emphasis added). However, as I have argued in the previous chapters, this effaced movement—despite being effaced—infinately haunts presence; the ruptures I have tried to show are all signifiers of absence at the heart of the constructed presence, that is, the coherent narratives critics have tried to construct with recourse to discourses of presence. This absence in the play can be attributed neither to the failure of Words nor to that of Music. It cannot be attributed to the lack of cooperation or communication between them either. The so-called presence in speech is nothing but speech in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in speech—is

effaced; the so-called presence in music is music in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in music—is effaced. The effaced trace, however, continues to haunt presence in speech and music; this trace of writing, which has been attempted to be effaced by critics, is what dispossesses both Words and Music of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, irrevocably entangles them with the movement within which presence is infinitely deferred. Thus, the infinite absence in the play, that is, the absence in the speech of Words and the music of Music is the effect of the infinite *différance*, that is, the force of writing in speech and the force writing in music. As Derrida asserts, “*all is but Dionysus . . . and this is to write*—that, like *pure force*” since “*Dionysus is worked by difference*” (34; emphasis added).

3.2. Dissolution of Originary Metaphors in *Cascando*

Like *Words and Music*, *Cascando*⁴⁵ is a radio play with three characters: the Opener, Voice, and Music. Unlike *Words and Music*, however, Voice and Music are not addressed by names. Voice and Music both perform on the Opener’s demand; they are both opened and closed by the Opener. Voice tells the story of Woburn, an old man who sets on a never-ending journey. He hopes to finish the story of Woburn, which, apparently, has been going on for a long time and he hopes this is his last story. However, he can finish neither Woburn’s story nor the act of story-telling; both go on until the play ends with silence.

Like *Words and Music*, *Cascando* is seen by many critics as “a play-making process” (Cohn 273-74), “the process of artistic creation” (Kelly 153), “sifting through conscious and unconscious creativity, and a movement through externals toward being” (Cohn 274). Opener, according to many critics, represents the artist who is seeking “reality” or “vision” through art—through unifying rational and emotional forms of “expression,” that is, the unity between language and music. Tom Vandeveld argues that Opener is a

⁴⁵ *Cascando* is an Italian word which might mean “waning” (Cohn 274), “falling, stumbling, falling into ruins, tumbling down” (Webb 109).

“monodramatic narrator” (262) since “the three characters indeed seem faculties of a single person” (262). Voice and Music—like Words and Music in *Words and Music*—have been claimed to represent Opener’s faculties of reason and emotion. Drawing parallels between *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, Clap sees Music as “the inspiration,” and Voice as “the articulation” (545). They are, in other words, the “externals” (Cohn 274) through which Opener seeks “reality.” The vision Opener is claimed to seek, according to Webb, is “a mode of vision that will leave concepts behind and arrive at the being of reality itself” (109). Worth even goes further to claim that the collaboration between Voice and Music achieves “the complete ‘poem with music’ having been there all the time, in some unknown space, waiting for the collaboration to achieve it” (16).

Like the reception of *Words and Music*, the interpretations of *Cascando* are replete with preconceived ideas—the sedimented metaphors—about language and music, that is, complicity in Platonism, as well as our Apollonian desire to illuminate and Rousseauistic nostalgia for the “pure origin.” Alongside the complicity in Platonism, I assert that the interpretations that *Cascando* has received are largely coloured by the interpretations of *Words and Music* which precedes it. By taking a closer look at the text, I will try to reveal the fact that most of these interpretations—much like the interpretations of *Words and Music*—have no origin in the text, but in our preconceived ideas brought to it. With a similar approach to *Words and Music*, I will try to reveal the metaphysical assumptions with recourse to which critics have built their seemingly coherent narratives, and the force of *différance*—the “writing before the letter”—which they have effaced in order to maintain the coherence of these narratives; I will try to reveal the force of movement—the rupture at the heart of the constructed coherence—within which not only Voice and Music but Opener himself are eternally entangled.

3.2.1. “Music Platonism” and *Cascando*

Cascando opens by Opener’s ambiguous statements:

OPENER: [*Cold.*] It is the month of May ... for me.
 [*Pause.*]
 Correct.

[Pause.]
I open. (CDW 297)

After this opening, Voice starts telling the story of Woburn. Before Woburn's story, however, he states his wish to finish story-telling: "–story ... if you could finish it ... you could rest ... sleep ... no more stories ... no more words" (ibid.). Opener tells the story of Woburn who goes out at night having to choose between "the sea [on his right] and the hills [on his left]" (297). This is all he says about Woburn in the first opening. It is here that he closes Voice "[With VOICE.] And I close" and opens Music:

I open the other.
MUSIC:
...
OPENER: [With MUSIC.] And I close. (ibid.)

Stage directions specify the content of music by these dots. After closing Music, there is "[Silence.]" after which Opener opens both Voice and Music: "I open both" (298). Voice and Music speak together. The content of Voice's speech does not change at all; as before, he states his wish to finish story-telling. As to the content of Music, it is specified with dots—as before—in every other line. Opener opens and closes Voice and Music again—separately and together; this pattern goes on until the end of the play.

According to some critics, "Music tell[s] the same story as Voice" (Worth 17). Besbes, for instance, claims that "language and music become almost two interchangeable modes of expression" (103). According to others, however, it tells a contradictory story. Some even claim that it "correct[s]" or "change[s]" the Voice's story (Worth 17). In my opinion, the claims that Music tells a different or a contradictory story arise not only from "music Platonism" and the pre-conceptions it brings to the text but also from the interpretations of *Words and Music* which precedes this play. I assert that there is no textual evidence to support these claims. Unlike *Words and Music*, there is not any signifier of contradiction or disagreement in *Cascando*. The fact that the content of Music's story is specified as series of dots by stage directions,⁴⁶ does not mean at all that

⁴⁶ As I have mentioned before, the focus of this study is not on the performance, but on the text and the importance of textual signifiers. The study of the music composed by Marcel Mihalovici for this play, and its relation to the music specified by the stage direction would be the task of musicology and, hence, beyond the scope of this study.

they can be replaced by any signifier and can be attached to any signified; rather, they might suggest the impossibility of the signified. I take these series of dots as signifiers of movement, that is, signifiers of the infinite movement of signifiers. I argue that the content of Music's story in relation to the story of Voice—its similarity or dissimilarity to Woburn's story—does not matter much; what matters is the fact that Music is also telling a story; it is opened and closed in the same way as Voice; it is repeated in the same way; and it is in movement in the same way. The focus of the text, in my reading, is on story-telling itself rather than the story of Woburn or the story told by Music. No matter what story Music tells, no matter whether it is the same/similar story or a different one, like the story of Woburn, it is repeated until the end. I assert that it is the repetitive structure—not only that of Voice and Music but also that of the play itself—as well as the element of movement—not only the movement in the stories told by Voice and Music but also the movement generated in the text—that matters here. In other words, it is the repetition and movement that matter in the text.⁴⁷

Upon being opened by Opener again in other openings, Voice continues telling fragments of Woburn's story although most of what he says is a repetition of previous openings. Woburn "goes on . . . hugging the bank" (298). He "falls" with his "face in the mud" (ibid.). He gets on his feet and continues with "vague memory" of "a cave" which might be "a hole" or "a shelter" (ibid.). He gets up and falls several times, with his face "in the sand" and later "in the stones . . . no more sand" (300). He goes further, floating with a boat without oars with "face in the bilge" (301), "heading nowhere . . . for the island . . . then no more" (302). Later Opener tells us that the "island [is] gone" and what is left is "open sea" (ibid.). Woburn is now "searching . . . in the dark . . . elsewhere" (ibid.). The co-performances of Voice and Music are nothing but the repetition of the wish to finish story-telling. The play, however, ends without Woburn arriving anywhere and without the story finishing.

The repetitive stories of Woburn have been seen by many critics as failed attempts at the creation of an ideal story while the final story has been seen as

⁴⁷ I will try to show the significance of the repetitive structure and the movement in the text in the following section (sec 3.2.2).

an arrival at such an ideal: It is claimed that “[e]ach work, in turn, becomes a failure as it is judged inadequate in comparison with the ideal narrative that will end the storytelling function” (Lyons 141). To justify this claim, some have referred to Opener’s statement “[f]rom one world to another, it’s as though they drew together. We have not much further to go. Good” (CDW 301). Drawing on this statement, they have claimed that “the verbal and musical sequences draw together toward the final vision that will unite them in a fusion of thought and feeling” (Webb 111) which results in the Opener’s “approv[al] of the Voice-Music blend” (Cohn 272). Cohn has also referred to the “two outings and a single return” as a suggestion of this union (273).

The claim that the final story is a successful one as opposed to the unsuccessful previous stories is revealed to have no firm foundation with a comparison between this final story and the previous ones. In the final story, like the previous stories, Woburn goes on, but never arrives:

[Voice and Music together]—nearly . . . just a few more . . . a few
 ..
 more . . . I’m there . . . nearly . . . Woburn . . . it’s him . . .
 it
 . . .
 Was him . . . I’ve got him . . . nearly—
 OPENER: [*With VOICE and MUSIC, fervently.*] Good!
 [Voice and Music together]—this time . . . it’s the right one . . .
 . . .
 Finish . . . no more stories . . . sleep . . . we’re there . . .
 nearly
 . . .
 . . . just a few more . . . don’t let go . . . Woburn . . . he
 clings
 . . .
 on . . . come on . . . come on—
 . . .
 [Silence.] (CDW 304)

As we can clearly see, there is no change in this final fragment. I argue that these last fragments are not only the repetition of the previous fragments but

also a repetition of the very beginning. The narrator thinks that he has found the right story this time and, hence, he can find peace. These statements are identical not only to those of the previous fragments, not only to those in the beginning, but to the statements the narrator has always repeated throughout his life. It is in the first opening that Voice tells us that he has been telling himself the same things so far: “saying to myself ... finish this one ... then rest ... this time ... it’s the right one ... this time ... you have it ... and finished it ... and not the right one ... couldn’t rest ... straight away another ... but this one ... it’s different ... I’ll finish it ... I’ve got it ... Woburn” (297). The claim that the union between Voice and Music brings them to the intended destination is no more strongly grounded. Unlike *Words and Music*, in which Words is initially reluctant to cooperate with Music, in *Cascando* Voice and Music cooperate from the first time when they are opened together; there is no sign of either their previous lack of cooperation or the increasing cooperation during the play; nor is there a signifier of the effectiveness of this cooperation. As to the Opener’s statement “Good!” which has been taken as a sign of approval, I argue that it appeared not in response to the final fragment but much earlier (301), and is repeated until the end of the play; this “Good!,” which is seen as a sign of approval, never results in an ending, but rather a continuation.

The ending of *Cascando*—like the ending of *Words and Music*—has been seen by many as the completion of a work of art. Lyons maintains that as the story is completed, Voice “reach[es] the objective he seeks [which is] peace and silence” and since this finally successful story satisfies Opener, it “mark[s] the end of his process of making stories public” (143). He interprets the last image of Woburn as his suicide which, according to him, is “a reflection of the consciousness of the storyteller” and its movement into death” (ibid.). He also refers to the stage direction “*Silence*” at the end of the play (CDW 304) which, according to him, “may signify that Voice has reached his objective” although “the words themselves establish no formal close to the narrative, leaving the ultimate end unresolved but potentially achieved” (144). Kelly even sees “the outing” and “the return” (CDW 303) not only as “the two-and-fro movement that characterizes Woburn’s progress” but also as “a sense of finality to the play that the successful completion of the Voice’s narrative cannot hope to achieve”

(163). According to him, the coexistence of “anywhere” and “nowhere” (CDW 302) is not paradoxical; but rather, “such an image implies in its very formulation the always-already completion of the ambiguous journey undertaken by Woburn as depicted by the Voice” (163). According to Worth, although “Voice [has] no sense of arrival,” “the music [has] arrived at it” (Worth 19). Thus, “[t]he desired ‘ending’ might, after all, exist” (ibid.). She claims that “Music, Voice, and Opener, separately but mysteriously in collaboration, [have] composed a work of art that Music [knows] to be ‘finished’ ” (Worth 20).

It is obviously not possible to interpret the stage direction “*Silence*” at the end of the play as a signifier of an accomplished objective since this stage direction “*Silence*” appears at the end of each fragment; it is repeated twenty times—including this final “*Silence*”—throughout the text. Considering the previous stage directions “*Silence*,” they have never signified an end; they rather follow a new opening each. Regarding the content of the final fragment, as I argued above, there is no change in comparison to the beginning. The play ends without Woburn’s journey coming to an end; the story has not arrived at an end, but only *nearly* arrived at an end: “I’m there . . . *nearly* . . . Woburn . . . it’s him . . . it was him . . . I’ve got him . . . *nearly*,” “we’re there . . . *nearly* . . . *just a few more* . . . *don’t let go* . . . Woburn . . . he clings on . . . come on . . . come on” (CDW 304; emphasis added). These final lines, particularly “just a few more . . . don’t let go,” signifies not only the continuation of the story but, more importantly, the act of story-telling.

As to the claims that unlike Voice, “the music [has] arrived at it [the ideal reality]” (Worth 19), I argue that this is only a recourse to “music Platonism” to substantiate the claim that “[t]he desired ‘ending’ might, after all, exist” (ibid.). Since there is no textual evidence to support the arrival at a *telos* in the end, the only solution is the assumption (or rather an invention) of an ideal arrival, that is, an ideal *telos*; it is here that “music Platonism” comes to help the critics. To me, the music in the play inevitably attracts Platonic readings; music predetermines the forms imposed on the text; if the Voice’s narrative did not accompany that of Music, the play would not attract so many Platonic readings. Compared to the reception of Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, in which we see a

strikingly similar repetitive structure—where the repetition of waiting, particularly at the beginning and at the end, suggests the eternal recurrence of this waiting—or Beckett’s *Trilogy* in which the act of story-telling never comes to an end, the role of music in the metaphysical interpretations of *Cascando* can be realised. While the absence and the non-arrival in *Waiting for Godot* and *Trilogy* is often foregrounded by critics, the absence in *Cascando* is often effaced by recourse to different forms of presence.

The desire for *telos* is so strong that even those who cannot deny the open-endedness of Woburn’s story, find a way to attach a transcendental signified to it. Cohn argues that the desired silence and peace “is both attained and not attained” (273). Although he sees Woburn’s “cling[ing] on” (CDW 304) at the end of the play as signifying the non-attained silence and peace, he seeks recourse in “Opener[’s] approv[al of] the joint repetition of phrases” and the fact that the play ends to force a *telos* to this open ending. Similarly, Webb, who believes that “[t]he artist cannot bring this story to its end,” claims that “[t]he play ends with expressions of hope that the end will come and of determination to press on resolutely toward it” (112).

As I tried to show in my reading of the interpretations of *Words and Music* earlier, all these interpretations can be claimed to be an attempt to impose a *telos* on an open-ended play, that is, to foreclose a text which arrives at no closure; it is an attempt to avert the catastrophe of absence. Like the teleological interpretations of *Words and Music*, these interpretations arise not from the text, but rather from our Rousseauistic nostalgia for the “pure origin” and our teleological mentality, reinforced by the Apollonian tendency of literary criticism, which with “the privilege given to vision, the Apollonian ecstasy” cannot “[embrace] both force and the movement which displaces lines, nor to the point of embracing force as movement” (Derrida, *WD* 33); which has to “stifl[e] [this] force under form” (31), in order to resolve ambiguities and uncertainties of the text.

3.2.2. Voice, Music, and the force of *Différance* in *Cascando*

As I argued in the previous sections, the invention of an origin and a *telos* to resolve the ambiguities and to eliminate the uncertainties of the text, is only possible by the effacement of the force, the Dionysian movement, that is, the infinite movement of supplementarity—*différance*. This effacement, however, is not entirely successful since it irrevocably haunts the invented origin and *telos*, endangering their seeming presence. In this section, I will try to reveal this effaced force and show how it troubles the origin and the *telos* imposed on the text.

The force of repetition in *Cascando* is much stronger than that in *Words and Music*. *Cascando* begins with a repetition and ends with a repetition.⁴⁸ The play does not begin by story-telling, but a continuation of a long-on-going act of story-telling. Thus, the beginning is not a beginning, but only a continuation:

VOICE: [*Low, panting.*] –story ... if you could finish it ... you could rest ... sleep ... not before ... oh I know ... the ones I've finished ... thousands and one ... all I ever did ... in my life ... with my life ... saying to myself ... finish this one ... it's the right one ... then rest ... sleep ... no more stories ... no more words ... and finished it ... and not the right one ... couldn't rest ... straight away another ... to begin ... to finish ... saying to myself ... finish this one ... then rest ... this time ... it's the right one ... this time ... you have it ... and finished it ... and not the right one ... couldn't rest ... straight away another ... but this one ... it's different ... I'll finish it ... I've got it ... (CDW 297)

This opening suggests that the act of story-telling has always been going on and the narrator has always tried but failed to bring it to an end. Although he wishes to finish story-telling, although he thinks he has found the right story this time, this opening already casts doubt on such a possibility. As the story-telling goes on it is revealed that even the story of Woburn is not a new story: “Woburn ... *I resume* ... a long life ... already ... say what you like ... a few misfortunes ... that's enough ... five years later ... ten ... I don't know ... Woburn ... *he's changed* ... not enough ... recognizable ... in the shed ... yet another ...” (ibid.; emphasis added). Voice's statements “I resume” and “Woburn [has] changed”

⁴⁸ Although *Words and Music* also begins and ends with a repetition, the repetition in it is more implicit and, hence, easier to be ignored.

suggest that Woburn is not a new character, that the story of Woburn has also already been going on. The statement “say what you like” suggests that the narrator is trying to change Woburn, probably to create a new character.

As the story of Woburn’s journey goes on with each new opening, we see not a progress or arrival, but rather a deferral; Woburn’s arrival is constantly deferred. There are twenty-eight openings in the play; Voice and Music are opened ten times separately, and eight times together. What every opening adds to the story is another struggle of Woburn to go ahead and another fall. The only thing that changes is his face “in the sand,” later “in the stones . . . no more sand” (300), and later “face in the bilge” when he is floating in a boat on the sea (301). Woburn’s journey never comes to an end; he does not arrive anywhere; the “island [is] gone” and he is floating in the “open sea” (302). The final fragment suggests that neither Woburn’s journey nor the act of story-telling comes to an end:

[Voice and Music together]—this time . . . it’s the right one . . .
.....
...
Finish . . . no more stories . . . sleep . . . we’re there . . .
nearly
.....
...
. . . just a few more . . . don’t let go . . . Woburn . . . he
clings
.....
...
on . . . come on . . . come on—
.....
...
[*Silence.*] (304)

This ending, as I discussed above, reminds us of the beginning with these statements being identical not only to those of the first opening and the following but also to the statements the narrator has always repeated throughout his life. At this point, it becomes inevitable to see this attempt by the narrator as another failed attempt to finish story-telling; and it is impossible to see this ending as an ending. Thus, there are double levels of repetition in the play: the repetition of the story-telling in the play and that of Woburn’s journey.

The structure of repetition in *Cascando*, like that of *Words and Music*, is significant since it obliges us to re-think the notion of repetition as well as the notions of “original” and “non-original” productions. Although it is claimed that Woburn’s story “seems to be spoken for the first time rather than being one version of a series of repetitions and the fate of Woburn remains unknown to Voice as he follows the progress of the boat past the island towards the open sea” (Lyons 143). In my reading, the foregrounded structure of repetition, particularly the long-on-going repetition of Woburn’s story, suggests the fact that not only Woburn’s story but also the act of story-telling itself is a part of a larger repetition that has already been at work; it is part of the pre-existing repetition that makes it possible. Woburn’s story might be a “unique event,” but this unique event” as Derrida argues “doesn’t exclude the pre-written framework that makes it possible” (LO 322). Rather, “the unique event that is produced only one time is . . . repeated in its very structure. Thus, there is a repetition, in the work, that is intrinsic to the initial creation” (ibid.). In other words, not only the “unique” story of Woburn but any story becomes possible within the already-existing and eternally on-going structures of repetition.

The structure of repetition, which becomes a motif in *Cascando*, brings about a Dionysian movement which constantly disrupts presence. The fact that the play ends with Woburn and the story-telling both going on—like the repetition of this “wellhead” as well as “*statement with elements already used or wellhead alone*” (294) at the end of *Words and Music*—suggests a non-arrival, an infinite movement, that is, *différance*. This force is the “*progression toward the future—becoming*” (Derrida, *WD* 31; emphasis added) which—despite the critics’ attempt to efface—infinately haunts presence.

If the force of *différance* is more difficult to efface in *Cascando* than in *Words and Music*, it is not merely due to the strength of repetition in this text, but also the contents of the performances of Voice and Music, both of which are more Dionysian than those of Words and Music in *Words and Music*. Although the story told by Voice evokes the image of an old man heading to the sea, this image is nothing but a moving image; the image of Woburn floating on the sea is, far from an Apollonian image, an unsettling image, an image in *différance*, an image whose birth is its death, that is, an image which is self-distorting.

Thus, I assert that Woburn's story is highly Dionysian. As to the content of Music, if we take the series of dots as the infinite movement of signifiers, it can be argued to be even more Dionysian than that of Voice since it is pure movement within which any form of presence is dissolved.

The absence in the text can be attributed neither to the failure of Voice nor to that of Music; rather, it is at the heart of any notion of presence. The so-called presence in the speech of Voice is nothing but speech in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in speech—is effaced; the so-called presence in the music of Music is music in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in music—is effaced; it is this effaced trace that continues to haunt presence in speech and music; this trace of writing, which has been attempted to be effaced by critics, is what dispossesses both Voice and Music—like Words and Music in *Words and Music*—of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, irrevocably entangles them with the movement within which presence is infinitely deferred. Thus, the infinite absence in the play, the absence in the stories of Voice and Music as well as the absence in the play—like the absence in the performances of Words and Music in *Words and Music*—is the effect of the infinite *différance*, that is, the force of writing in speech and the force of writing in music.

3.3. Croak, Opener, and the Question of “Origin”

As I discussed above, many have seen *Words and Music* and *Cascando* as meta-theatrical comments on art and the process of its creation. Croak and Opener have been seen as artists who are seeking (artistic) “reality” or “vision” by merging language and music. Words and Voice represent, for many, the artist's reason and Music their emotion. Thus, the “origin” of Words and Music in *Words and Music* as well as that of Voice and Music in *Cascando* is attributed to Croak and Opener, whether to their reason or emotion, whether to their consciousness or unconscious. In my reading, this attribution of presence to Croak and Opener's reason, emotion, consciousness or unconscious is the major factor behind the reductionist readings of both plays.

To start with *Words and Music*, many attribute absolute agency to Croak since they have seen Croak's role essential in "instigat[ing] their [Words and Music's] attempt to tune in to each other" (Boyce 67). Some critics—like Webb, Lyons and Ojrzynska, among others—despite attributing agency to Croak, do not see it as an absolute agency. Although Webb claims that "without [Croak's] conscious direction their energies remain uncoordinated: Words can ruminate over old ideas, and Music can tune up, but neither can move forward alone," he argues that Words and Music "have a kind of latent life of their own in the artist's unconscious" (103). Lyons argues that although Croak "exercises some control over them," his power is only arbitrary and limited" (139). According to Ojrzynska, Croak's power gradually declines and he finally "renounces his power" (60); his exit has been seen as an indication of this renunciation.

On the surface, it might seem that Croak not only has absolute control over Words and Music but is the power behind them since both Words and Music respond to his call and perform on his demand and since Words calls him "My Lord" (CDW 287). A closer reading, however, suspends this assumption. Although "Croak and Opener are formally in command," as Worth argues, "whether they drive or are driven is uncertain" (10). This question requires a closer look at Croak's relationship with Words and Music. I assert that the biggest fact that is ignored in the analysis of Croak's relationship with Words and Music is the on-going performances of Words and Music not only before Croak's arrival but also after his exit. The fact that the play starts without Croak and ends without him is of great significance and cannot be ignored.

Upon Croak's arrival, both Words and Music have already been performing. The play starts with Music's orchestration and Words' search for a theme. Words chooses the theme of sloth and starts giving a performance:

MUSIC: *Small orchestra softly tuning up.*

WORDS: Please! [*Tuning. Louder.*] Please! [*Tuning dies away.*]

How much

longer cooped up here in the dark? [*With loathing.*] With you! [*Pause.*] Theme.... [*Pause.*] Theme ... sloth.

Sloth is (CDW 288)

Similarly, after Croak leaves, the performance continues; although Words gives up performing, he implores Music to continue:

[*Pause. Shocked.*] My Lord! [*Sound of club let fall. As before.*] My Lord! [*Shuffling slippers, with halts. They die away. Long pause.*] Bob. [*Pause.*] Bob!

MUSIC: *Brief rude retort.*

WORDS: Music. [*Imploring.*] Music!

[*Pause.*]

MUSIC: *Rap of baton and statement with elements already used or wellhead alone.*

[*Pause.*]

WORDS: Again. [*Pause. Imploring.*] Again!

MUSIC: *As before or only very slightly varied.*

[*Pause.*]

WORDS: *Deep sigh.* (294)

These on-going performances in the absence of Croak open his seeming authority and control over Words and Music into question. Words and Music who are said to be in command of Croak not only precede him but also outlive him. If they are said to represent a medium—rational-emotional—through which Croak “expresses” his thoughts and feelings, this medium not only pre-exists Croak but also exceeds him. The externalisation of Words and Music is also of great significance with regard to the question of Croak’s subjectivity. If the medium with which Croak “expresses” his thoughts and feelings is external to him, how can it be an “authentic expression” of an “inner reality”? If this “inner reality” is mediated by something external, how can it remain immediate?

I assert that both Words and Music, with which Croak tries to “express” his “innermost” thoughts and feelings are nothing but the “language of the other.”⁴⁹ This external mediation puts the notion of “interiority” into question: Not only is it with the “language of the other” that one can “express,” that is, “externalise” the “interior,” but also it is with the “language of the other” that one can think, and it is with the “language of the other” that one can perceive his “own innermost” feelings. Hence, this so-called interiority is nothing but an effect of the “language of the other;” it is the “language of the other,” that is, the “*entirely other*” (Derrida, *MO* 65)—whose representatives are Words and Music

⁴⁹ Borrowed from the title of Derrida’s “Language of the Other.”

here—that produce the effect that it is claimed to “express.” Furthermore, if Croak, as it is claimed, is seeking reality or artistic vision, it is only with the “language of the other” that he can do so. Thus, the reality or the artistic vision that he is claimed to have achieved is nothing but an effect of the “language of the other” and, hence, the creation of the other, the “*entirely other*.” Not only Croak’s thoughts and feelings, not only the “expression” of those thoughts and feelings but also his subjectivity and assumed authority as well as his attempt to “create” are effects produced by the movement of supplementarity—the *différance*—which is already at work. It is the “language of the other” that supplements Croak’s thoughts and feelings, and it is this movement of supplementarity that defers Croak’s so-called thoughts and feelings. As Derrida reveals, supplementarity is “*an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception*” (OG 157; emphasis added). Within this endless “play of substitution” the lack might be filled temporarily, but it is marked infinitely (ibid.). Thus, this eternal movement of substitution is what makes presence, that is, Croak’s thoughts and feelings impossible. Thus, “origin” turns out to be nothing but the “language of the other,” the “supplement of the origin” or rather “supplement at the origin,” in Derrida’s words (OG 313). Thus, Croak, in my reading, does not represent the “origin,” but rather the “*complicity of origins*,” dispelling “*the myth of the simplicity of origin*,” in Derrida’s words (OG 92; emphasis added).

Like Croak, Opener seems—on the surface—to be controlling Voice and Music. Opener’s repeated assertion “I open” has led many to attribute absolute power to him. The fact that he opens and closes Voice and Music leads to the naïve assumption that Opener—like Croak—has an absolute control over them. Like Croak, Opener has been seen as “the manipulator of all action. He is in command of both Music and Voice” (Besbes 150), “an artist in control of words and music” (Webb 109). Clap, who has seen Voice and Music as representing “the two aspects of the psyche,” claims that Opener is the one who “brings [them] together” (545). Similarly, Lyons has seen him—like Croak—as the “directing ego,” that is, “that aspect of the self that perceives and judges the

fiction-making as Opener” (140, 141). However, a closer look at the text puts Opener’s directing power—like that of Croak—into question.

The play opens by Opener’s assertion that he opens. The assertions “I open” and “I close” might seem to be signifiers of Opener’s control over Voice and Music at the beginning. However, as the play goes on they take ironic overtones; after a few openings, Opener’s authority begins to seem dubious. Opener implies that others—it is not clear who these others are—challenge his authority over the openings; despite others’ denial of this authority, however, he claims absolute authority:

So, at Will.
They say, It’s in his head.
No. I open. (CDW 299)

As the play goes on, Opener himself questions his own agency despite insisting that he is the one who is in control of openings:

So, at will.
It’s my life, I live on that.
[Pause.]
Correct.
[Pause.]
What do I open?
They say, He opens nothing, he has nothing to open, it’s in his head.
They don’t see me, they don’t see what I do, they don’t see what I have, and they say, He opens nothing, he has nothing to open, it’s in his head.
I don’t protest any more, I don’t say any more, There is nothing in my head.
I don’t answer any more.
I open and close. (299-300; emphasis added)

Drawing parallels between Woburn’s story and Opener’s speech, Webb sees this point as Opener’s protest against those who challenge his openings—the unknown “they.” Webb has seen the land and the sea as metaphors of constraint and transcendence beyond those constraints respectively; the land, according to him, stands for “the universe that man has domesticated by fitting onto it the harness of his concepts and persuading himself that the harness fits” while the sea stands for “untamed, raw reality” (110). Webb interprets the unknown “they” who do not see Opener as an opener, the “they” who question

his authority as people who doubt the reality of his stories and the necessity of artistic vision (ibid.). He sees Woburn's venture to the sea as Opener's protest against them and his growing independence from them (110-111). Webb claims that Opener "is doing his own thinking now, with his own mind, pursuing a goal that he knows he can never reach except alone" (111).

In my reading, however, this speech by Opener is highly self-conscious. Although Opener still insists that he opens, he asks "What do I open?" which reveals his own doubt about his opening. He grows even more self-conscious:

OPENER: They said, It's his own, it's his voice, it's in his head.

[Pause.]

VOICE: . . .

[Pause.]

OPENER: No resemblance.

I answered, And that . . .

MUSIC: [Brief.]

[Silence.]

... *is that mine too?*

But I don't answer any more.

And they don't say anything any more.

They have quit.

Good.

[Pause.]

I open.

[Pause.]

I'm afraid to open.

But *I must open.*

So I open. (CDW 302; emphasis added)

Although he denies, or tries to deny, that Voice is his "own" voice asserting it has "[n]o resemblance," his expression of doubt over Music—"is that mine *too?*"—reveals his doubt over Voice, as well. At this point, Opener no longer claims that he opens "at will," but rather has to admit the obligation to open. The acknowledgement of the obligation—"I must open"—suggests his lack of control over the openings. The fact that he says "[t]hey have quit" might not have to do with them, but with his own growing admittance—although undeclared—that "[h]e opens nothing, he has nothing to open." The fear of opening might be due to the questioned authority, that is, due to his lack of control over the openings.

As we see, Opener—like Croak—does not represent the “origin,” but rather the “*complicity of origins*” defying “*the myth of the simplicity of origin*,” in Derrida’s words (OG 92; emphasis added). Thus, the question of Opener’s agency—like that of Croak—cannot be approached by naive theories of subjectivity which render the “subject” either as one who has absolute agency or a determined linguistic construct with no agency. This is why Webb who interprets Opener’s self-conscious speech as a protest against others and his growing independence from them, cannot justify his contradictory claim that the independence he claims—the independence of Opener from “the[m]”—is not fully achieved: “he finds he still cannot leave the land” which represents constraints “entirely behind; he has brought some of it with him, woven into his own person” (112). According to Webb, “the face in the bilge” suggests that he cannot see the new realm into which he has penetrated (ibid.).

The paradox of subjectivity/agency lies in the fact that it is an effect of the “language of the other” which pre-exists the subject. If Opener can open at all, it is because he is himself opened—like Croak—by the “language of the other,” the “*entirely other*” (Derrida, MO 65); he is opened by the force of *différance* which produces language and, paradoxically, the very force that dispossesses it; he is opened by the force that constitutes and de-constitutes the speaking subject, that is, de-constitutes the subject while constituting it. This force—as “a law of language” (OG 141)—is a force that “operates as *a power of death in the heart of living speech*: a power all the more redoubtable because it *opens as much as it threatens the possibility of the spoken word*” (ibid.; emphasis added). It is within this force that Opener as well as Croak “are dispossessed of the longed-for presence in the gesture of language by which [they] attempt to seize it” (ibid.); whether this language be the language of Words, Voice or Music, presence which is attempted to be seized by it “promises itself as it escapes, gives itself as it moves away” (154). Opener’s fear to open is the fear of this Dionysian force within which his identity is dissolved, within which Opener can no longer protect the Apollonian “I” against dissolution.

By way of conclusion, the question of “expression”—whether the “expression” by means of language or that of music—in *Words and Music* and

Cascando is too ambivalent to be explored by recourse to myths of “origin” established by Platonism/“music Platonism.” Unable to tolerate absence, Platonism/“music Platonism has to reduce the irreducible force to forms of presence, as I have tried to show; it has to efface the infinite movement within which Apollonian images and identities are dissolved; the movement within “expression” can neither be attached to an “origin” nor be said to arrive at a *telos*—due to the infinite deferral of the subject, its intentions, thoughts, and consciousness/unconscious. As I have shown, however, this effaced movement—despite being effaced—infinately haunts presence; the so-called presence in the speech of Words in *Words and Music* and Voice in *Cascando* is nothing but speech in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in speech—is effaced; the so-called presence in the music of Music—in both *Words and Music* and *Cascando*—is music in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in music—is effaced; the so-called presence in the thoughts and feelings of Croak and Opener is nothing but these thoughts and feelings in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in thoughts and feelings—is effaced. The effaced trace, thus, continues to haunt presence not only in speech and music but also in the very thoughts and feelings of Croak and Opener. The trace of writing, which has been attempted to be effaced, is what dispossesses not only language and music but also Croak and Opener’s thoughts and feelings—which are claimed to be expressed by language and music—of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, irrevocably entangles Croak and Opener with the movement within which presence is infinitely deferred. Thus, the infinite absence in the play, that is, the absence in the speech of Words and Voice as well as the music of Music is the effect of the infinite *différance*, that is, the force of writing in the thoughts and feelings, the force of writing in speech, the force of writing in music, the force that is “the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility” of expression.

CHAPTER 4

THE VIOLENCE OF WRITING IN VOICE: RE-READING THE BODILY/INNER VOICE IN *FOOTFALLS*, *NOT I*, AND *ROCKABY*

Footfalls, *Not I*, and *Rockaby* pose the questions of “self” and subjectivity, especially in relation to language. These texts—especially *Not I* and *Rockaby*—pose perplexing paradoxes—regarding the subject and language—which are persistently unresolvable. These paradoxes, however, have often been reduced to a series of binarisms, which, I assert, are rooted in the easy distinction between the inside—which represents innocence, immediacy, and presence—and the outside—which represents corruption, mediacy, and absence. I argue that approaching the texts with this inside-outside binarism—which, in the context of these plays, is often supported by the psychoanalytic discourse of the *chora* and the separation with its central Womb/Mother metaphor—perpetuates a series of other problematic binarisms—non-language and language (whether pre-linguistic or extra-linguistic), the maternal body and the paternal Law, the material body and linguistic/discursive body, inner voice and the voice of discourse, the self and the other—which simplify the complexity of language and the subject’s relation to it. The aim of this chapter is to show how the sedimented metaphor of Womb/Mother functions not only as a simulacrum of “origin” but also a simulacrum of *telos*, that is, a supplement which supplements the absence of origin and *telos* in the text, which cannot be tolerated by the discourse of psychoanalysis and literary criticism, both of which are castrated by the Apollonian tendency to illuminate. I will try to show how this invented origin and *telos*—with the binarisms it engenders—comes to efface the infinite movement—the force of *différance*—which allows neither an imposition of an origin nor that of a *telos*. I will also try to show how May, Voice, Amy, and the narrators of *Not I* and *Rockaby* are irrevocably

entangled in this infinite movement which makes possible not only their narrative but also their so-called selves. I will argue that this infinite movement, the *différance*, is the possibility and the impossibility of language and, thereby, the possibility and the impossibility of subjectivity. In other words, I will try to show how the *aporia* in language is the *aporia* in subjectivity.

4.1. Dissolution of Originary Metaphors in *Footfalls*

Footfalls is a play with a single character, May, who paces up and down on a dark stage, and a woman's voice—a voice coming “*from dark upstage*” (CDW 399). May keeps pacing up and down throughout the play, pausing at times, and then continuing pacing. The play is often said to be divided into four sections, marked by four chimes which grow fainter and fainter. The first chime follows a dialogue between May and Voice. In this section Voice seems to be the voice of May's dead mother. The second chime—“*a little fainter*” (400)—follows a monologue by Voice in which Voice tells us that May started pacing in her childhood and has never stopped pacing ever since; we learn that the now bare floor “once was carpeted;” the carpet was removed so that May could “hear the feet” (401). The third chime—“*a little fainter still*” (402)—follows a monologue by May in which May tells a story of a “she” who “walk[ed] up and down” a church where she slips in at night (402); later, this story appears to be the story of a mother and daughter—Mrs Winter and her daughter, Amy. The play ends with an empty stage; after the fourth chime—“*a little fainter still*” (403)—there is nothing but a dark stage: “*No trace of May*” (403).

The voice of the mother in *Footfalls* has often invoked the metaphor of the Womb/Mother; many (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics have interpreted the disembodied voice of the mother as May's melancholia over the loss of the original union with the Mother: “the voice is simply the echo of an *original presence*” (McMullan 92; emphasis added), and May's compulsive act of pacing and “revolving it all” has, consequently, been seen the result of this original loss: “the loss of the Mother's body/voice chains the subject to the perpetual repetition of the staging of that loss” (96). Section two, which is dominated by Voice's story, has been seen as “the contained, internal space of

the womb, where the divisions between self and other are fluid, and which is, in a sense, the ‘space’ of the Mother’s voice” and section three, which is dominated by May’s story, “the unbounded space of infinite loss and absence” (ibid.). It is claimed that although “the Mother’s voice no longer animates the external space of the stage, . . . it haunts May’s discourse”(ibid.).

Footfalls has been interpreted “as a discourse of displacement, of collapsing boundaries, and of (failed) abjection” (Smith 76). It has been claimed that “May has remained in the Imaginary, and that the spectator has joined her there, in her psychotic state, seeing and hearing only what she sees and hears” (76). In this interpretation, not being able to enter the Symbolic, May is “constantly on the edge of this division, constantly subject to the pulsional pressure of the *chora*, from beneath and from within, manifesting itself in the ‘contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences’ within the language” (77). This inability is attributed to the “inability to make the final move into the Symbolic from the Imaginary,” that is, “the inability to separate from the mother/(M)other,” to “the absence of the Father” (76); this claim is supported by the absence of May’s father in the play.

The number of the steps—nine—has been taken as a symbol of “the gestational period of a woman”⁵⁰ and “a reversion to the womb” (Ahlawat 654) is detected in the “neurotic regression to the ghostliness and marginality of “the old home” (ibid.). Accordingly, it is claimed that May, “this confined woman,” is “caged within the nine existential steps of damned maternity” (654). May’s endless act of pacing is seen as a “[desperate] clinging or attempting a reproduction of the child-birth experience” (655). Both May and her mother—as “several of Beckett’s women figures” who perform rituals obsessively—have been seen as hysteric women (655); they are diagnosed with “what Greer calls depressive psychoses or involuntional melancholia” (656).⁵¹ Drawing on

⁵⁰ “It has been pointed out how Beckett increased the number of steps May takes in the initial version of *Footfalls* from seven to nine in the final version. Evidently, he had a symbolic dramatization of the gestational period of a woman in mind, each step corresponding to a month in the pregnancy cycle” (Ahlawat 654).

⁵¹ She even goes further to claim that “it is as if despair and hopelessness by default prey on the female progenies of this family” (656).

Kristeva and Irigaray, it is contended that the bond between May and her mother is an incestuous one; it is claimed that “May tak[es] both the maternal role as well that of a lover” (658); this love is claimed to “[stem] from an exclusion from the order of the Father” (ibid.). It is argued that “this love between mother and daughter is always outside the patriarchal regime” and, hence, “a regression to animality” (658). “Lesbianism,” is claimed to be “an act of regression to one’s own origin as well as the ‘places’ of origin of the other women” (657). Similarly, it is claimed that May assumes the role of a mother by taking care of her mother in the first section; alongside her story of mother-daughter in the third section, this has been interpreted as May’s “identification with the mother” and her own “desire for motherhood” (Besbes 261, 260). Drawing on Kristeva, this so-called “identification with the mother” is claimed to have “the homosexual-maternal facet” (261).

I see the Womb/Mother metaphor and the interpretations which stem from it as a Rousseauistic nostalgia for the “origin,” that is, for the pre-linguistic “innocence.” By looking closely at the text, I will try to reveal the fact that most of these interpretations which arise from the sedimented metaphor of the Womb/Mother have no foundation in the text. Later, I will try to reveal the infinite movement—the force of *différance* or the “writing before the letter”—in the text which defers presence infinitely, and which dissolves all notions of origin and *telos*.

4.1.1. *Footfalls* and the Stories of Origin

The dialogue in the first section of *Footfalls* might initially seem to be the remembered memories of May’s dying mother, especially with May’s emphasis on the word “again”:

M: Would you like me to inject you *again*?

.....

.....

M: Would you like me to change your position *again*?

.....

.....

M: Straighten your pillows? [*Pause.*] Change your drawsheet?
[*Pause.*] Pass you the bedpan? [*Pause.*] The warming-
pan? [*Pause.*] Dress your sores? [*Pause.*] Sponge you

down? [*Pause.*] Moisten your poor lips? [*Pause.*] Pray with you? [*Pause.*] For you? [*Pause.*] *Again.* (CDW 400; emphasis added)

The woman's voice implies that this all happens in May's mind:

V: Will you never have done? [*Pause.*] Will you never have done ... revolving it all?

M: [*Halting.*] It?

V: It all. [*Pause.*] In your poor mind. [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause.*] It all. (ibid.)

At this point, one might assume that what May keeps revolving in her mind is the memory of her dead mother. This assumption is, however, challenged in the following sections, where Voice and May both grow highly self-reflexive. In the second section, Voice emerges as a heterodiegetic narrator, addressing the audience, telling them the story of May's childhood when she started pacing:

Till one night, while still little more than a child, she called her mother and said, Mother, this is not enough. The mother: Not enough? May—the child's given name—May: Not enough. The mother: What do you mean, May, not enough, what can you possibly mean, May, not enough? May: I mean, Mother, that I must hear the feet, however faint they fall. The mother: The motion alone is not enough? May: No, Mother, the motion alone is not enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall. [*Pause. M resumes pacing. With pacing.*] Does she still sleep, it may be asked? Yes, some nights she does, in snatches, bows her poor head against the wall and snatches a little sleep. [*Pause.*] Still speak? Yes, some nights she does, when she fancies none can hear. [*Pause.*] Tells how it was. [*Pause.*] Tries to tell how it was. [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause.*] It all. (401)

As can be seen, Voice refers to both May and the mother in the third person, which suspends the assumption that she is the voice of May's dead mother. Rather, both May and the mother turn out to be involved in her narrative; or, perhaps, as McMullan has observed, rather than "identify itself as May's mother," Voice "plays the role of mother" (94). Despite appearing to be the narrator of this section, Voice cannot be said to have authorial power since the boundary between memory and narrative, or reality and imagination has, by now, been troubled; with the boundary between memory and narrative having been troubled, "this creator . . . herself" now seems to be "created or projected by May" (94). In other words, everything might be revolving in "[May's] poor mind" as Voice has suggested earlier, and as McMullan argues, "[i]f one is the

origin of the other, no centre is designated: the one reflects the other, like a dialogue of echoes. The very notion of an origin or original/authorial voice is thus progressively undermined” (ibid.).

Although McMullan accentuates the absence of origin in the text, she ends up substituting this absence of origin with a simulacrum of origin; despite arguing that “the notion of May and V as separate identities is . . . radically questioned” in this section (94), she attributes this lack of differentiation to “the ‘space’ of the Mother’s voice,” that is, “the contained, internal space of the womb, where the divisions between self and other are fluid” (96). Thus, her argument is entrapped in the metaphors of the Womb/Mother which comes to supplement the absent origin, and, hence, becomes a simulacrum of origin.

Section three renders the relationship between May, the mother, and Voice even more complicated. It is May who emerges as a heterodiegetic narrator in this section. She begins this section by calling it a sequel; her sequel is the story of a girl who “walk[s], up and down, up and down” a church where she secretly slips in:

Some nights she would halt, as one frozen by some shudder of the mind, and stand stark still till she could move again. But many also were the nights when she paced without pause, up and down, up and down, before vanishing the way she came. [Pause.] No sound. [Pause.] None at least to be heard. [Pause.] The semblance. [Pause. Resumes pacing. After two lengths halts facing front at R. Pause.] The semblance. Faint, though by no means invisible, in a certain light. [Pause.] Given the right light. [Pause.] Grey rather than white, a pale shade of grey. [Pause.] Tattered. [Pause.] A tangle of tatters. [Pause.] Watch it pass— [Pause.]—watch her pass before the candelabrum, how its flames, their light ... like moon through passing rack. [Pause.] Soon then after she was gone, as though never there, began to walk, up and down, up and down, that poor arm. [Pause.] At nightfall. [Pause.] (CDW 402)

This story of the pacing girl is obviously a repetition of the story of pacing May. As it progresses, the story seems to be a story of a mother (Mrs Winter) and a daughter (Amy). May suggests that the characters in her story are familiar characters; she refers to “Old Mrs Winter” as the one “whom the reader will remember” (ibid.); she does the same upon introducing Amy’s name: “Amy—the daughter’s given name, as the reader will remember” (403). Although the story

is familiar enough by now, the fact that it is referred to as a sequel as well as the fact that it involves familiar characters creates a highly self-reflexive and confusing mood. At this point, not only the boundary between memory and narrative or reality and imagination but also that of the narrator and the narrative has been completely dissolved. May seems to be paradoxically both inside and outside the story. Thus, one can no longer decide who the narrator of the story is.

The ending of the story in this section alongside the ending of the play even accentuates this sense of confusion:

Amy. [*Pause. No louder.*] Amy. [*Pause.*] Yes, Mother, [*Pause.*] Will you never have done? [*Pause.*] Will you never have done ... revolving it all? [*Pause.*] It? [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause.*] In your poor mind. [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause.*] It all. [*Pause. Fade out on strip. All in darkness.*]
Pause. (ibid.)

This conversation between Amy and her mother is obviously a repetition of the dialogue between May and her mother in the first section.⁵² As McMullan puts it, “[t]he initial dialogue between May and Voice now diverges further to become *a chorus of echoes*” (95; emphasis added). According to her, “[a]ll that is left in the third section is *a ghost-like echo composed of other echoes, condemned to a cycle of repetition*” (96; emphasis added).

Although McMullan points out the “displacement of presence” in the text, she attributes a present origin to this absence; she sees the third section as “the unbounded space of infinite loss and absence . . . when the Mother’s voice no longer animates the external space of the stage, although it haunts May’s discourse” (96). She contends that “[i]f the loss of original (paternal/maternal) presence multiplies the play of signification and identity, the loss of the Mother’s body/voice chains the subject to the perpetual repetition of the staging of that loss” (96). Hence, as I have argued in the previous sections, her argument is entrapped in the Womb/Mother metaphor which functions as a simulacrum of origin. In other words, her notion of absence is entrapped in “the metaphysics of presence” which does not allow absence as absence.

⁵² Some have referred to Amy, “an anagram of May” (Besbes 260, Cohn 336, Smith 74).

No scene evokes the sense of absence as much as the final scene; the final scene—section four—which is marked by the final chime is a scene of absence:

*Chime even a little fainter still. Pause for echoes.
Fade up to even a little less still on strip.
No trace of MAY.
Hold ten seconds.
Fade out.] (CDW 403)*

May's absence in this final scene is of great significance since it invites one to re-think the absence in the play. Although McMullan sees no origin and no ending in *Footfalls* (97), her interpretation of silence at the end of the play is teleological; her argument renders—implicitly—this silence as a *telos*, a result of “the repetition of increasing cycles of loss” since, for her, “[a]ll that is left in the third section is a ghost-like echo composed of other echoes, condemned to a cycle of repetition until it finally fades completely into silence and absence in the fourth section” (96). However, I assert that the absence in the ending section cannot be read as a *telos* since absence has already been foregrounded in the text. In the first section, the sense of absence is evoked not only by the absence of mother, that is, the absence of the “origin” of the voice, but also by May's ghost-like “presence.” In the second section, absence is suggested by the absence of the voices in the first section; they appear to have no existence outside the narrative. The sense of absence, however, grows stronger in section three with the story of Amy. The absence of Amy is suggested ambiguously: “A little later, when she was quite forgotten, she began to—[Pause.] A little later, when as though she had never been, it never been, she began to walk. [Pause.] At nightfall. [Pause.]” (CDW 402). A similar suggestion of her absence follows in the story: “Soon then after she was gone, as though never there, began to walk, up and down, up and down, that poor arm. [Pause.] At nightfall [Pause.]” (ibid.). Amy herself denies her presence in the church in the conversation with the mother: “I was not there. Mrs W: Not there? Amy: Not there. Mrs W: But I heard you respond. [Pause.] I heard you say Amen. [Pause.] How could you have responded if you were not there? [Pause.] How could you possibly have said Amen if, as you claim, you were not there? [Pause.]” (403). Thus, I assert that this final scene of absence only accentuates the infinity of absence. May's

absence might be seen as a repetition of her story, that is, the repetition of Amy's absence. Both May and Amy turn out to be absent despite their endless pacing, despite the endless "revolving it all" in their minds. This absence, in my reading, is neither simply the absence of May or Amy, nor that of Voice. I see this absence as the absence of the narrator. I maintain that there remains no narrator, but only the narration.

4.1.2. The Force of *Différance* in *Footfalls*

As I argued in the previous chapter, the Apollonian tendency of literary criticism to invent an origin and a *telos* "*risks enclosing progression toward the future—becoming—by giving it form. . . . [It] risks stifling force under form*" (Derrida, *WD* 31; emphasis added); it helps the critics to fill in the infinite absence in the text. It is this reduction of the force, the Dionysian movement, that is, the infinite movement of *différance*, that allows the invention of an origin and a *telos*, which are necessitated in the creation a coherent narrative, that is, a whole. Like "music Platonism" which helps the critics to build a coherent narrative regarding *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, the discourse of the *chora* and the separation comes to help (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics to invent an origin and a *telos*. However, as I have argued in the previous chapters, this effaced movement irrevocably haunts the invented origin and *telos*; it remains a rupture at the heart of the seeming coherence; it leaves a *hole* at the heart of the *whole*, that is, infinite absence at the heart of the seeming presence. In this section, I will try to reveal the force of this infinite movement in *Footfalls* which does not allow presence.

The interpretations that impose an origin and a *telos* on the text—whether explicitly or implicitly—largely ignore the significance of repetition in the text. However, the force of repetition is striking in *Footfalls*—much like in *Cascando*. *Footfalls* resembles a *mise en abyme*⁵³ in which the act of pacing and story-telling both seem to be endless; it is a vertiginous spiral of voices that appear as narrators, but disappear soon, transfiguring into other voices and other

⁵³ As referred to by Hoon-Sung Hwang (368).

narrators. There might be different narrative levels in the text, but they are inextricably intermingled.⁵⁴

As Charles Lyons has observed, “May . . . performs two compulsive activities: she paces along a prescribed length of the stage, and she recites a strangely disconnected narrative” (166). In other words, it emerges that her compulsive act of pacing is simultaneous with her compulsive act of “revolving it all” in her mind, that is, in my reading, her endless act of story-telling. Thus, May closely resembles Henry in *Embers* who keeps going to the sea—compulsively—to tell stories. Henry goes to the sea calling his dead father to be with him and listen to his stories; he tells him stories of Bolton and Holloway. Growing tired of him, he calls his dead wife Ada to be with him, imploring her not to leave and just be with him: “You needn’t speak. Just listen. Not even. Be with me” (CDW 263). He goes on telling the stories of Bolton and Holloway. Initially, Henry seems to remember his dead father and wife. Later, however, when he emerges as an unreliable narrator, this assumption is suspended:

ADA: You should see a doctor about your talking, it’s worse, what must it be like for Addie? [*Pause.*] Do you know what she said to me once, when she was still quite small, she said, Mummy, why does Daddy keep on talking all the time? She heard you in the lavatory. I didn’t know what to answer.

HENRY: Daddy! Addie! [*Pause.*] I told you to tell her I was praying. [*Pause.*] Roaring prayers at God and his saints.

ADA: It’s very bad for the child. [*Pause.*] It’s silly to say it keeps you from hearing it, it doesn’t keep you from hearing it and even if it does you shouldn’t be hearing it, there must be something wrong with your brain. [*Pause.*]

HENRY: That! I shouldn’t be hearing that!

ADA: I don’t think you are hearing it. And if you are what’s wrong with it, it’s a lovely peaceful gentle soothing sound, why do you hate it? [*Pause.*] And if you hate it why don’t you keep away from it? Why are you always coming down here? [*Pause.*] There’s something wrong with your brain, you ought to see Holloway, he’s alive still, isn’t he? [*Pause.*] (260)

⁵⁴ Hwang has carried out “a semiotic investigation” of this resonance and meta-function (369-74).

Like Ada's voice who tells us about the sounds Henry hears and about his compulsion to talk, Voice in *Footfalls* tells us about May's compulsion to pace; in both cases, the compulsion turns out to be a compulsion to tell stories. There is enough evidence in *Embers* to take Henry's compulsion to talk as his compulsion to tell stories; earlier in the text, Henry suggests his effort to give an end to this compulsion: "I once went to Switzerland to get away from the cursed thing and never stopped all the time I was there. [Pause.] I usen't to need anyone, just to myself, stories, there was a great one about an old fellow called Bolton, I never finished it, I never finished any of them, I never finished anything, everything always went on for ever" (254). He also tells his father about this compulsion:

Father! [Pause. Agitated.] Stories, stories, years and years of stories, till the need came on me, for someone, to be with me, anyone, a stranger, to talk to, imagine he hears me, years of that, and then, now, for someone who ... knew me, in the old days, anyone, to be with me, imagine he hears me, what I am, now. [Pause.] No good either. [Pause.] Not there either. [Pause.] Try again. [Pause.] White world, not a sound. [Pause.] (255)

Like Henry in *Embers*, May in *Footfalls* grows increasingly self-reflexive, drawing attention to what is revolved in her mind as fiction. Thus, like Henry, May initially seems to be remembering the past, but as the play progresses the boundary between the past and the present, or memory and narrative is blurred, with memory emerging as a narrative. One can no longer decide whether May's mother—like Henry's father and wife—is remembered or just figments of her imagination.

What is significant is the fact that in both texts the stories the narrators tell are implicated in older stories, suggesting the endlessly on-going act of story-telling—like the endless story of Woburn in *Cascando*. Henry refers to Bolton and Holloway as old men: "Holloway, Bolton, Bolton, Holloway, old men, great trouble, white world, not a sound" (255). This is also suggested by Ada's voice who tells Henry to go to Holloway: "you ought to see Holloway, he's alive still, isn't he?" (260). Similarly, May refers to her own story as a sequel, and her characters as ones "the reader will remember" (254, 255). This suggests the fact that not only the story of Bolton and Holloway as well as the story of pacing girl who "revolv[es] it all" but also the act of story-telling itself

is implicated in a larger narrative—a larger structure of repetition—that has already been at work; it is implicated in the pre-existing narrative—pre-existing structures of repetition—that makes these stories possible. The stories of Bolton, Holloway, and the pacing girl who “revolve it all” in her mind might each be a “unique event,” but these “unique event[s]” as Derrida argues, “[do not] exclude the pre-written framework that makes [them] possible” (LO 322). Rather, it is this pre-existing structure of repetition that makes any “unique event” possible: “the unique event that is produced only one time is . . . repeated in its very structure. Thus, there is a repetition, in the work, that is intrinsic to the initial creation” (ibid.). In other words, not only the “unique” stories of Henry and May but any story becomes possible within the already-existing and eternally on-going structures of repetition. This endlessly on-going structure of repetition in both plays brings about a Dionysian movement which defers origin and *telos* infinitely. The fact that both plays end with an on-going act of the story-telling—especially *Footfalls* which ends with an ambiguous repetition—suggests—like *Cascando*—a non-arrival, an infinite movement, that is, *différance*. This force is the “*progression toward the future—becoming*” that I have referred to earlier (Derrida, *WD* 31; emphasis added).

The Dionysian force is, however, immensely stronger in *Footfalls* due to the multiplication of the narrators; there are at least three identifiable narrators: May, Voice, and Amy. However, both May and Voice tell the story of a girl who cannot stop pacing and story-telling. As to Amy, it is only suggested to “revolve it all” in her mind like May, but do not have her version of the narrative. Thus, there is only one narrative or, rather, different versions of the same narrative despite there being many voices and narrators. Yet, repetition is foregrounded in *Footfalls* not only by the multiplication of the narrators who offer a different version of the narrative but, more immensely, by the enactment of the repeated story, which is itself another repetition. By pacing up and down the stage, May keeps repeating the story that has been going on. The dialogue in the first section is also an enactment of the mother-daughter story, rather than precede them chronologically. It is no longer possible to identify whose narrative precedes the other’s and whose narrative is a repetition of the preceding narrative; there remains only the narrative and the infinite repetition.

With these repetitions, not only the repeated narrative but the narrators themselves are revealed to be implicated in the pre-existing narrative, that is, the pre-existing structures of repetition. The narrative can no longer be said to belong to May; nor to Voice, Amy, or any other narrator; it is no longer possible to mark the boundary between the narrative and the narrators; all assumed narrators are dissolved in the narrative and the infinity of repetition.⁵⁵

4.2. Dissolution of Originary Metaphors in *Not I* and *Rockaby*

Not I is a short play with two characters: a hanging mouth “8 feet above stage level” and an auditor in *djellaba* “standing on invisible podium” (CDW 376). Mouth’s “unintelligible” speech is heard before the curtain rises. When the curtain rises, Mouth’s speech becomes more intelligible. She tells a fragmented story of a seventy-year-old woman who was born “before her time,” received “no love of any kind” (376), and suffered (377). The woman kept hearing a buzzing sound “in the ears” and “in the skull” (378) and keeps hearing it in the present, not being able to stop it. Despite being speechless, the woman has to tell something, something she does not know (381). The play ends with “[v]oice continu[ing] behind curtain” (383).

Rockaby is a play with a single character, a woman in a rocking-chair which is “[c]ontrolled mechanically without assistance from” her (435). The rocking woman is listening to “[h]er recorded voice” which—like the narrator of *Not I*—tells the story of a woman (436). The play starts with the listener’s demand “More” (ibid.), which follows “[r]ock and voice together” (ibid). Voice tells the story of a woman who—much like Voice in *Cascando* who desires to finish story-telling—desires to stop “going to and fro” (rocking) but

⁵⁵ Drawing on the initially specified number of steps which was 8 instead of 9, Enoch Brater has argued that the number 8 might be standing for ∞ and, accordingly, symbolising infinity (37). Accordingly, for him, “Footfalls is a constant becoming” (40). R. Thomas Simone has seen the infinity in the play as “persistence of humanity in spite of all conscious rejection” (445). Cohn has seen the mother as a suggestion of the eternal recurrence of humanity: “Mothers give birth to daughters who give birth to daughters, who give birth to human beings who begin to die as soon as they are born” (Cohn 336). According to her, the “three moving scenes choreograph ‘revolving it all.’ They culminate in a human ‘Amen’ to a prayer without evidence of divine presence. Finally, human presence vanishes” (ibid.).

can never stop. The play includes a series of extremely repeated lines, with the woman looking for another (435), sitting “at her window” (437), not finding anyone (438), retreating to her mother’s rocking chair (440), demanding the rocker to “rock her off” (442).

The narrators of *Not I* and *Rockaby* are both entangled in an endless movement which is beyond their control; this movement is foregrounded by the endless buzzing sounds and the stream of words in *Not I*, and the endless rocking in *Rockaby*. The narrators of both *Not I* and *Rockaby* narrate a story of a “she” which, in both plays, turns out to resemble the narrator herself; however, they never use the first person “I”. Thus, they have attracted the many critics’ attention to the notions of the self and the other, especially otherness in discourse. Having been classified as Beckett’s “woman plays” (Cohn 361),—alongside *Footfalls*—their otherness has been often attributed to the marginal position of women in discourse.

Although—unlike *Footfall*—there is no mother in *Not I* and *Rockaby*, the so-called resemblance of the mouth to a vagina⁵⁶ in *Not I* and the reference to the mother’s rocking chair in *Rockaby* have invoked—like *Footfalls*—the metaphor of the Womb/Mother. Like May’s compulsive act of pacing and “revolving it all,” which has been seen as chaining the subject to “the perpetual repetition of the staging of . . . loss” (McMullan 96), that is, “the loss of the Mother’s body/voice” (ibid.), the uncontrollable speech of Mouth in *Not I* as well as the endless rocking in *Rockaby* have been attributed to the original loss and the melancholia over that loss.

Not I has been seen as “theatre of the unconscious” and “the return of the repressed” (Catanzaro 46, 47); it has been seen as staging the “tension between two aspects of language, the symbolic and the semiotic” (Tubridy 102). The Symbolic is said to be “represented by the figure of the Auditor who stands in the place of the Law” and the semiotic “by the Mouth” (ibid.).⁵⁷ While

⁵⁶ The reference to “godforsaken hole” in the text (CDW 376) has been interpreted as “[a]n ambiguous reference to the vagina” (Beryl et al. qtd. in Lawley 408). Some have also referred to “the image of Mouth” which resembles a vagina (McMullan 73-74). The so-called “Mouth-as-vagina” is claimed to be “overwhelmingly evident” in the TV adaptation” (Lawley 409).

⁵⁷ Khaled Besbes, who has attributed the “excess of verbal delivery” to the “voicing of the unconscious” (255), that is, “a process of exteriorization—of verbal vomiting” (184), has

“Mouth’s difficulty with speech” is attributed by some to the “phallic power and authority” from which “there is no way out,” and within which “female must identify as negativity” (Catanzaro 41), it is seen by others as “the undifferentiated somatic language which undermines the symbolic language of the Law” (Tubridy 102) and “threatens the conceptual stability and fixity established by the Symbolic” (McMullan 73). Many (feminist-)psychoanalytic approaches have attributed this “somatic language” to the “maternal body” and the “pre-linguistic space,” that is, the *chora*. Mouth’s speech has been interpreted as “the trauma of the primordial moment when the body senses its split from the Real” (Wright 113). According to these critics, this traumatic “experience can neither be included in the Imaginary, the realm of illusory wholeness, nor can it be part of the Symbolic, the domain which grants a conditional identity” (ibid.). Thus, it “return[s] in psychosis as the experience of the ‘fragmented body’, unique for every subject, remainder and reminder of this fracture, appearing in art as images of grotesque dismemberment” (ibid.). Mouth’s narrative is seen, in this interpretation, as “the attempt to catch up retrospectively on this traumatic separation, to tell this happening again and again, to re-count it: the narrative of the subject caught in the net of signifiers” (ibid.). Mouth’s repetition of the story of the birth—much like May’s story telling—has been seen as a re-enactment of birth which is “the doorway into madness” (Catanzaro 42); her uncontrollable, repetitive speech has been interpreted as a nightmarish narrative resulting from the “internaliz[ation of] the (absent) mother” (ibid.). In other words, Mouth is said to be “explor[ing] her vocal terrain from which to speak herself in the space reminiscent of the (m)other’s body” (ibid.).

The Womb/Mother metaphor is invoked in the interpretation of *Rockaby*, as well. Many critics have referred to the poetic quality of *Rockaby*.⁵⁸ Some critics have likened the “lyrical atmosphere” (Taniue 90) of the text to a lullaby and its nursery rhymes (Taniue 90, Jones qtd. in Taniue 91, Kalb 469, Shrubsall

interpreted the Auditor as a psychiatrist who is listening to Mouth’s speech (256). Sarah Gendron, however, has seen this as “a parody of the psychoanalytic endeavour” (121).

⁵⁸ The play has also been seen as a poem: “the language is not merely poetic, but a poem complete in itself” (Brater, LSM 346).

56, Zeifman qtd. in Cohn 360).⁵⁹ The rhythm of *Rockaby*, especially the rhythm of the rocking alongside the poetic and lyrical quality of the narrative reminds some of “the rhythms of the *chora* in its ‘nonchronological, repetitious, spiralling, cumulative, fluid language,’ ” (McMullan 99). Since the mother has been seen “as harbour and harbinger of death” (ibid.), it has been argued that “[t]he evocation of a ritualized movement of contraction and descent seems to reflect a return to the womb and the soothing quality of the voice seems to seduce the daughter into death, as her image fuses with that of her dead/dying mother” (ibid.). It has been claimed that “the speaking of the text becomes a rite of passage which enacts a transformation—from loss to comfort, from life to death and from speech to silence” (ibid.). Even the room has been interpreted as “a metaphor for the body and the relationship between the inner and the outer worlds,” and, thereby, “[t]he withdrawal into the room” has been seen “a withdrawal into the body (finally revealed as the maternal body, the initial lost object/other which announces the exile of the subject and his/her essential incompleteness and which is therefore the final resting place and object of desire)” (105).⁶⁰ The mother’s rocker is associated with the womb; drawing on the statement “those arms at last” (CDW 442), “[t]he arms of the rocking chair” are likened to the arms of the mother. It is claimed that “the woman wishes to be in her mother’s safe womb, where she can experience the first and last peaceful sleep and death, just as her own mother would like to sleep in the arms of the very same rocking chain” (Taniue 90). The mother’s womb has also been seen as “fusion and convergence” as against “the earlier dispersal and alienation” (McMullan 105.). Accordingly, the return to the womb has been seen as a passage from “the split subject” which is produced within language (101-2) to the pre-linguistic space uncorrupted by duality: “Differences and

⁵⁹ This interpretation often arises from “[t]he French title *Berceuse* [which] stems from the French word *berceuse*, meaning ‘lullaby’, which evokes the same image as *Rockaby*” (Taniue 90). Taniue has also pointed out the repetitive quality of lullaby: “a lullaby is a simple, innocent and repetitive narrative, which seems to end, but then starts again at the beginning” (ibid.). “[T]he ‘lullaby’ quality” is also said to be foregrounded by “the tension between Woman and Voice, Speech and recorded speech” (Shrubsall 56).

⁶⁰ Similarly, Zeifman has seen *Rockaby* as “a journey from the outside . . . to the inside,” that is “a descent into the . . . [maternal] rocking chair” (Zeifman qtd. in Cohn 360).

dualities are not transformed into unity (the One), but are resolved within this fusion of all forms and identities and times and spaces with the mother” (106).

We can obviously see the Rousseauistic nostalgia for the pure origin in this approach; the discourse of the *chora* and the separation resembles Rousseau’s discourse of separation from nature; it is a Rousseauistic myth of origin. In a Rousseauistic fashion, these critics have attempted to “*separate originarity from supplementarity*,” in Derrida’s terms (OG 243; emphasis added). They have tried to mark an uncorrupted moment, that is, the moment of “*symbolic incapacity, . . . nonsupplementarity*,” that is, “a moment of life which knows nothing of symbol, substitution, lack and supplementary addition,” in Derrida’s words (242; emphasis added). As Derrida argues, in order to sustain the myth of presence, metaphysics has to “[exclude] non-presence by determining the supplement as simple exteriority, pure addition or pure absence” (167). Thus, in order to construct a coherent narrative to give a coherent account of the pure “origin” and the corruption of this “origin”—that is, the myth of the *chora* and the separation—(feminist-)psychoanalytic critics have to establish clear-cut boundaries between the “origin” and the “supplement,” that is, the pre-linguistic and the linguistic, the maternal body and the paternal law. In this way, language, which represents the outside—the “pure addition”—is said to supplement and corrupt the pre-linguistic presence; the paternal Law, which represents pure exteriority, is said to supplement the maternal body, which represents absolute interiority.

The Womb/Mother which becomes the origin and the *telos*—much like the Christian God—eliminates paradoxes and ambiguities in the text, reducing the complexity of language and the subject’s relation to it. I do assert that in the context of both *Not I* and *Rockaby* most dualistic interpretations stem from the easy distinction between the Symbolic and the semiotic, that is, the easy distinction between the outside—which represents corruption, mediacy, and absence—and the inside—which represents innocence, immediacy, and presence—perpetuates a series of binarisms—non-language and language (whether pre-linguistic or extra-linguistic), the maternal body and the paternal Law, the material body and linguistic/discursive body, inner voice and the voice of discourse, the self and the other—which, I assert, are highly problematized in

the text. By trying to reveal the inextricable unresolvability of the paradoxes in both texts, and by focusing on the significance of these paradoxes, I will try to reveal the complexities of language and subjectivity which cannot be explained by simple binarisms. Later, I will try to reveal the infinite movement—the force of *différance* or the “writing before the letter”—within which the narrators of *Not I* and *Rockaby* are irrevocably entangled.

4.2.1. Voice and the Stories of Origin in *Not I* and *Rockaby*

Both *Not I* and *Rockaby*—especially *Not I*—pose unresolvable paradoxes that perplex the critics. The inside-outside binarism, the easy distinction between the non-discursive and the discursive, however, engenders dualisms which reduce the significance of these paradoxes in both plays. For instance, in the interpretations of both *Not I* and *Rockaby* the paradoxical relationship between the body and language is reduced to a simple dualism. In *Not I*, the paradox which has troubled the critics is the absence and presence of the body.

“[A] voice without a body” has been seen as a contradiction (Tubridy 99). The contradiction arises from the disjunction between “the embodied and disembodied voice” (ibid.). The voice is embodied since it is uttered “through the body of an actress” and disembodied since the body is invisible (ibid.). In approach to this absent body, while some “reappropriated presence” explicitly,⁶¹ in others this “reappropriation of presence” often remains implicit.⁶² Some critics who foreground the absence of the body, attribute this absence to the repression by language; thus—explicitly or implicitly—they take the “pre-linguistic” “material body” as the immediate, present, interior space, and language as the intruding outside, that which represses and alienates the body. In other words, language is taken as violence against the pre-linguistic (maternal) body. This is how the voice in *Not I* is claimed to be an estranged voice, a voice “sunder[ed] . . . from body” within the “structure of authority and

⁶¹ Paul Lawley, for instance, claims that despite the absence of the body on the stage, since theatre is “the medium of presence” (413)—that is, since absence is presented, contradictorily, through “the medium of presence”—the “clichés involving the body” are “renovate[d]” (412).

⁶² Besbes, Catanzaro, McCarthy, McMullan, Tubridy, Wright, Zeifman, among many.

obligation (both linguistic and juridical)” (Tubridy 84). It is argued that “the body [is dislocated] from ordinary language precisely to show that communication as we commonly know it is an inadequate bonding device,” and that it fails to “convey even the most minimal personal feeling” (Catanzaro 37). In short, the “expressive” voice of the body is claimed to have become the “non-expressive” language of the discourse.

Although the absence of the body is foregrounded in the approaches grounded in the discourses of repression and alienation, the foregrounded absence is attributed a present origin, a presence which becomes absent under the violence of language. Thus, this argument is entangled in the discourses of repression and alienation which entail a rigid distinction between the inside and the outside. I argue that the becoming language of the body, the becoming discourse of the inner/bodily voice in this account is a Rousseauistic story of the intrusion of the innocent inside—the origin—by the corrupted outside—the supplement—which, I assert, has no basis in the text. Despite the numerous references to the body in the text, the notion of ever present body is challenged.

What has invoked the discourses of repression and alienation is mostly the references in the text to the dulled or insentient body:

all silent as the grave ... no part— ... what? .. the buzzing? .. yes
... all silent but for the buzzing ... so-called ... *no part of her*
moving ... that she could feel ... just the eyelids ... presumably
... on and off ... shut out the light ... reflex they call it ... no
feeling of any kind ... but the lids ... even best of times ... who
feels them? ... opening ... shutting ... all that moisture ... but the
brain still ... still sufficiently ... oh very much so! (CDW 378)

Although the insentient body alongside the repeated expression “whole body like gone . . . just the mouth” (380, 381, 382) might be taken by some as suggestions of a once “present” body—the pre-linguistic immediacy and wholeness—by looking at the text closely, it can be argued that the body is dealt with irony throughout the text. First of all, there is no present body on the stage; there is only a mouth—which is usually assumed to represent language. Moreover, this mouth is the narrator. It is through Mouth that we come to know about the woman’s fragmented, insentient body, and, ironically, it is through the buzzing that the woman in Mouth’s story comes to know about her “own” body and comes to talk about her “own” body:

when suddenly ... gradually ... all went out ... all that early April morninglight ... and she found herself in the— ... what? .. who? .. no! .. she! .. [*Pause and movement 1.*] ... found herself in the dark ... and if not exactly ... insentient ... insentient ... for she could still hear the buzzing ... so-called ... in the ears ... and a ray of light came and went ... came and went ... such as the moon might cast ... drifting ... in and out of cloud ... but so dulled ... feeling ... feeling so dulled ... she did not know ... what position she was in ... imagine! .. what position she was in! .. whether standing ... or sitting ... but the brain— ... what? .. kneeling? .. yes ... whether standing ... or sitting ... or kneeling ... but the brain— ... what? .. lying? .. yes ... whether standing ... or sitting ... or kneeling ... or lying ... but the brain still ... still ... in a way ... (CDW 376-77)

This April morning which recurs in the text several times is often considered to be the origin of the buzzing⁶³ which, in turn, is seen as the cause of repression and alienation of the body.⁶⁴ With such an assumption, the immediate, present body of the woman is “gone” with the buzzing. This account, however, gives rise to unanswerable questions: Is the body—the woman’s “own” body—not accessible to her only through the buzzing? And is it not accessible to Mouth only in the third person? And is it not accessible to us only through Mouth’s narrative? If so, is the body not accessible *only* through a “chain of supplementary mediations”? But what happens to the woman’s “own” body within this “chain of supplementary mediations,” that is, the “chain of supplementarity”? When this immediate, present body is expressed through supplements, to what extent can it be said to be immediate and present? When the “pre-linguistic” innocent is accessed and expressed through the “linguistic,” to what extent can it be said to be innocent? When the “non-discursive” is expressed through the “discursive,” how does it remain non-discursive?

If the body is repressed and alienated by the buzzing, and if the woman has access to her “own” body through the buzzing, it follows that the body cannot be dislodged from the buzzing. As Steven Connor argues, the text “resist[s] the notion of the innocent self-evidence of the body and its language” (185). According to him, what the text invites us to think about is the fact that

⁶³ (Brater, I 190, Brater, N 257, Cohn 317, Catanzaro 44, West 138, Zeifman 36).

⁶⁴ The April morning, I assert, cannot be taken as the origin of the buzzing; I will discuss the problematics of this interpretation in the following section (sec 4.2.2).

“the body is knowable only in repetitions and representations” (ibid.). The fact that there is no reference to the “sentient” body, that is, the pre-linguistic body that could feel, before the buzzing, also supports this reading. The body has always already been absent; the woman has never had access to that “pre-linguistic” body, except with the linguistic. Thus, rather than being repressed, this “pre-linguistic” body as well as the very distinction between the pre-linguistic and the linguistic are produced within language.

Furthermore, we cannot ignore the fact that not only the so-called feeling and buzzing, which is said to have repressed feeling, but also the very “feeling” and “non-feeling” are, oftentimes, simultaneous:

when *suddenly she felt ... gradually she felt ... her lips moving ... imagine! .. her lips moving! .. as of course till then she had not ...* and not alone the lips ... the cheeks ... the jaws ... the whole face ... all those— ... what? .. the tongue? .. yes ... the tongue in the mouth ... *all those contortions without which ... no speech possible ... and yet in the ordinary way ... not felt at all ...* so intent one is ... on what one is saying ... the whole being ... hanging on its words ... so that not only she had ... had she ... not only had she ... to give up ... admit hers alone ... her voice alone ... but this other awful thought ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... even more awful if possible ... *that feeling was coming back ... imagine! .. feeling coming back! .. starting at the top ... then working down ... the whole machine ... but no ... spared that ... the mouth alone ... so far ... ha! .. so far ... then thinking ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... it can't go on ... all this ... all that ... steady stream ... straining to hear ... make something of it ... and her own thoughts ... make something of them ... all what? .. the buzzing? .. yes ... all the time the buzzing ... so-called ... all that together ... imagine! .. whole body like gone ... just the mouth ... lips ... cheeks ... jaws ... never— ... what? .. tongue? .. yes ... lips ... cheeks ... jaws ... tongue ... never still a second ... mouth on fire ... stream of words ... in her ear ... practically in her ear ...* (CDW 379-80; emphasis added)

Examining this speech closely, it seems that on the one hand, Mouth calls attention to the physicality of what is uttered from the woman's mouth, but on the other hand, it calls such an assumption into question. If “*till then she had not [felt her lips moving]*,” it means that the feeling comes with the buzzing. In other words, it is the buzzing that makes the woman feel her lips. Besides, the notion of feeling is deeply ambivalent and highly paradoxical; the woman

appears to be feeling and not feeling, at once: “*and yet in the ordinary way ... not felt at all.*” Furthermore, both language and body might be suggested to operate like a machine. In my reading, the reference to “*all those contortions without which ... no speech possible*” suggests language as a system, as a machine. Hence, it can be argued to be a suggestion of the complexity of language. If “*the whole machine*” refers to the body, then this body cannot be said to be an organic whole; it is, rather, a machine-like whole, that is, a constructed whole; and it is in the system of language that the sense of wholeness is constituted.

Connor has contended that, “[i]f the body is enacted not as presence, but as a spatial process which itself creates space, then this has implications too for our sense of its relationship to its language” (179-80). For Connor, the whole play, especially this absence of presence “might be seen as an attempt to subject to scrutiny the proposition that speech comes ‘from’ the mouth, or the body” (180). He asserts that “although we are clearly being forced to contemplate the physical struggle involved in producing language,” the text does not allow the “[i]dentification of] language and the body;” rather, “this very intensity of focus is what prevents us from identifying language and the body; we cannot say where language comes from, or where it is in relation to the furious physical contortions that we see before us” (ibid.). Thus, “[a]ll we have are the metaphors we inherit about voice and the body, as well as those metaphors suggested in the spoken text, and none of these metaphors proves to be continuously sustainable” (ibid.; emphasis added).

Although not as often, we see similar dualistic approaches to body and language in the interpretations of *Rockaby*, that is, the tendency to take the “pre-linguistic” “material body” as the immediate, present, interior space—whether implicitly or explicitly—and language as the intruding outside, that which represses and alienates the body. Thus, as in *Not I*, language is seen as violence against the pre-linguistic (maternal) body. Much like the absence of the body in *Not I*, the confinement and passivity of the body in *Rockaby*, that is, the fact that it is mechanically controlled has invoked the discourses of repression and alienation. Reiko Taniue has likened the confined body of the rocking woman to the floating Mouth in *Not I*, the buried body of Winnie in *Happy Days*, and

May's confinement within "the small strip" in *Footfalls* (87). She argues that although the "body rocks back and forth a little," this movement is produced by the chair not by the woman's "own will" (ibid.). According to her, the fact that the woman lacks will and cannot "[stand] up or [walk]" suggests "her entrapment," inducing a "powerful image of a prison" (ibid.). Derval Tubridy also has also pointed out the importance of the chair and its mechanical rocking, which she sees as an indication of "the importance of physical location and corporeal position" (161). She argues that "[t]he body of the woman conforms to the shape of the chair, and this chair controls the movement of the body" (ibid.). Tubridy sees this as "a change in the relationship between language and the body" (ibid.); she claims that "the body is no longer the site for the transmission of the voice" (ibid.); it is, rather, "the place of production of language" (ibid.). Although the absence of the body is foregrounded in this approach, the absence—much like the foregrounded absence of the body in *Not I*—is attributed a present origin, a presence which becomes absent under the violence of language.

This is the same problematic story of the becoming language of the body, the becoming discourse of the inner/bodily voice, that is, a Rousseauistic story of the intrusion of the innocent inside from the corrupted outside—which I discussed in relation to *Not I*—that has no basis in the text. It is true that the chair suggests confinement, but there is no evidence in the text that might suggest the pre-discursive body, the body that used to be "the site for the transmission of the voice." Does the fact that the body is not "the site for the transmission of the voice" in the text but rather, "the place of production of language" not invite us to re-think the notion of the body? Does it not suggest that body has never been "the site for the transmission of the voice," but rather always already "the place of production of language"?

I acknowledge that the emphasis on physicality and physical confinement in both *Not I* and *Rockaby* is undeniable, but I argue that this physicality turns out—ironically—to be entangled in language. Thus, I argue that the text obliges us to re-think the easy distinction between the body and language. It is only within language that these distinctions—the distinction between the origin and the supplement, the pre-linguistic innocence and the linguistic corruption, the

maternal body and the paternal Law—are perceived or become possible. If we see power not as repressive, but rather as productive—as Foucault does⁶⁵—we can argue that language does not repress the body, but rather produces it; the paternal Law does not repress the maternal, but rather produces it. I assert that the arguments for the repressed “pre-linguistic” body are entangled in “the metaphysics of presence” which cannot tolerate absence as absence.

As I have argued, the easy distinction between the inside and the outside engenders other dualisms which reduce the significance of the paradoxes in both *Not I* and *Rockaby*. The dualism of self and other is rooted not only in this dualistic approach to the inside and the outside but also in the tenacious body-language dualism.⁶⁶ In both plays, the use of “she” instead of “I”—especially in *Not I* where the narrator refuses the first person “I” vehemently (CDW 375)⁶⁷—has attracted the attention of critics to the notion of otherness. There seems to be

⁶⁵ In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault asserts that “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (194).

⁶⁶ McCarthy, for instance, identifies double dualism, that is, in the text and in the performance: “First the body is disconnected from the projected ‘self,’ the ‘she’ who is the agent in the narrative. Then the self is equated with ‘the whole brain begging,’ and specifically something *ill* the brain, thus dissociating the self from the brain. Ultimately self and brain are distinct: the brain is out of control, ‘flickering away like mad’ and ‘something in her’ begs it all to stop. The narrative alone is a remarkable image of the dualism widely understood to be fundamental to Beckett’s work and the ideology behind it. Additionally, performance mirrors the narrative” (463). Zeifman has also identified a “Cartesian split between mind and body” (37).

⁶⁷ This “vehement refusal to relinquish third person” (CDW 375) has been seen as as the negativity of women’s identity in a phallic discourse (Catanzaro 41), “Mouth’s inability to assume an identity” (West 142) or “claim her subjectivity” (Lyons 157), “a self-denying narrative” (Cohn 316), a “self-mutilation” (Brater, I 194), identity crisis (Besbes 40), “psychic split which forces her . . . to renounce her own identity”(253), a “hysterical denial (41), an “attempt to prevent the return of a repressed subjectivity” (41), a “disguise” (Zeifman 36), Mouth’s “refusal to see herself for what she really is” (42), an attempt to prevent the “exposure of the essential self” (McCarthy 461), “the need to deny the imperfect self and to maintain, even in agony, a fictional other” (Lawley 409); it has been seen a signifier of a painful past that Mouth “refuses to acknowledge . . . as hers” and which “she can only face . . . by making it a third” (Brater, I 190). It has also been seen as a “refus[al] to collapse the inner and outer voices to make herself the subject of her own story,” a “subterfuge for avoiding soliloquy” (West 143). It has also been attributed to Sartrean self-negation and “bad faith” (Besbes 24) as well as the notion of self-negation in Zen philosophy (Gillette).

an agreement among the critics that the third person pronoun “she” marks the otherness of the narrator in discourse, both in *Not I* and *Rockaby*. Many (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics have attributed this otherness to the marginal position of women in discourse.

In *Not I*, the question of the self and the other emerges as early as the question of silence and speech as well as that of body and language. We face similar paradoxes not only in the case of the woman in Moth’s story but also the narrator herself. The narrator tells us about a woman who faces a paradox: her voice seems to be her “own” voice as well as the voice of the other; she both acknowledges the voice as her own and denies it:

when suddenly ... gradually ... she realized ... words were— ... what? .. the buzzing? .. yes ... all dead still but for the buzzing ... when suddenly *she realized ... words were— ... what? .. who? .. no! .. she! .. [Pause and movement 2.] ... realized ... words were coming ... imagine! .. words were coming ... a voice she did not recognize ... at first ... so long since it had sounded ... then finally had to admit ... could be none other ... than her own ... certain vowel sounds ... she had never heard ... elsewhere ... so that people would stare ... the rare occasions ... once or twice a year ... always winter some strange reason ... stare at her uncomprehending ... and now this stream ... steady stream ... she who had never ... on the contrary ... practically speechless ... all her days ... how she survived!* (379; emphasis added)

This draws our attention to the narrator herself who tells a story of a “she” which resembles her own situation, but refuses to say “I.” This paradox of “she” and “I” is persistent throughout the text:

not catching the half of it ... not the quarter ... no idea ... what she was saying ... imagine! .. no idea what she was saying! .. till she began trying to ... delude herself ... it was not hers at all ... not her voice at all ... and no doubt would have ... vital she should ... was on the point ... after long efforts ... when suddenly she felt ... gradually she felt ... her lips moving ... imagine! .. her lips moving! .. as of course till then she had not ... and not alone the lips ... the cheeks ... the jaws ... the whole face ... all those— ... what? .. the tongue? .. yes ... the tongue in the mouth ... all those contortions without which ... no speech possible ... and yet in the ordinary way ... not felt at all ... so intent one is ... on what one is saying ... the whole being ... hanging on its words ... so that not only she had ... had she ... not only had she ... to give up ... admit hers alone ... her voice alone ... (379; emphasis added)

Since reason cannot tolerate this paradox—the possibility of both/and—many critics have reduced it to the discourse of either/or.⁶⁸ It is this dualistic approach—the discourse of either/or—that has tried to resolve the paradox of the self and the other or, that is, to reduce the self which is paradoxically the self and the other to the pre-discursive self that becomes the other within discourse. Such an approach often assumes the “material body” which represents interiority, immediacy, and presence as the self, and language which represents exteriority as the other, that which represses and alienates the body.

For instance, Tubridy—who has carried out a thorough analysis of language and subjectivity in Beckett’s texts—despite admitting that “the ‘I’ . . . is always other to the speaker,” assumes a pre-linguistic self before the intrusion of the other (100). For her, this other is “the self who is made other in discourse” (99). Since the voice is said to be “sunder[ed] . . . from body” within the “structure of authority and obligation (both linguistic and juridical)” (84), the third person “she” is claimed to be the “‘she’ who is sundered from the ‘I’ in the act of speaking” (100). In other words, as the present voice of the body becomes the voice of the discourse, the present voice of “I” becomes the voice of “she.” Thus, the otherness that is referred to by many critics is the otherised “self,” that is, the story of becoming other of the “self.” As I have tried to show earlier, this assumption is entangled in “the metaphysics of presence” which cannot tolerate absence as absence and, hence, has to attribute a present origin to this absence.

As for *Rockaby*, the question of self and other is invoked largely due to the woman’s constant search “for another” (436), that is, her desire “to see” another and “to be seen” by another (439). The use of the third person pronoun “she” also brings about such a question. Like the narrator of *Not I*, the narrator of *Rockaby* tells a story of a “she” which resembles her own predicament, but she never say “I.” The question of self and other is also deeply entwined with the question of body and language already arisen by the fact that the woman’s body is controlled by the mechanical movement of the rocker.

In the interpretations of self and other in *Rockaby*, we see similar approaches as to *Not I*, that is, the self-other binarism, the assumption of a pre-

⁶⁸ Many of the above mentioned critics.

linguistic self—the interior, immediate, and present apace (the maternal body)—that is alienated and otherised by the intrusion of language which represents absolute exteriority. Like *Not I*, the use of third person pronoun “she” in *Rockaby* is seen by some as an indicator of the narrator’s otherness. Taniue argues that since Voice “expresses what the woman feels regardless of her own will,” it “seems to be not her voice” but the voice of the other (94).⁶⁹ She sees the woman’s search as the search for “her own self,” that is, “her lost identity” (95). She attributes “[t]he lack of her true soul” and the woman’s inability to “discover her own self” to the mother from whom she cannot detach herself (93). McMullan, who sees the woman’s diminishing speech as “a rite of passage which enacts a transformation—from loss to comfort, from life to death and from speech to silence” (99), has contended that “[t]he withdrawal into the room” which is, according to her, “a withdrawal into . . . the maternal body” (105) is “an end to the continual reproduction of the cycles of self and other,” that is, “reconciliation of difference” (99). She has claimed that the mother’s womb is a space of “fusion and convergence” as against “the earlier dispersal and alienation” (105.). Hence, she has seen the return to the womb as a passage from “the split subject” which is produced within language (101-2) to the pre-linguistic space uncorrupted by duality (106). For Tubridy, “[t]he ‘she’ of *Rockaby* never becomes the ‘I’ which speaks for the self” (165) and, hence, she always speaks of the self “from the position of alterity” (166). The refusal to speak in the first person, according to her, “reinforces the impossibility of fusion between self and other, speaker and spoken, mother and daughter” (ibid.). Tubridy argues that the woman’s search for another through the window is “a form of address from the self to that self which has been made other in speech, and this address seeks to fulfill that which the voice cannot” (157). In other words, “the other living soul” who is sought is, according to Tubridy, “the protagonist[‘s] . . . own self” (ibid.) and “the gaze is a movement from the self to another which is her own other” (159). Tubridy sees the retreat to the “mother’s rocking chair”—particularly with the woman’s closing eyes—as the cessation of the woman’s search for another and the woman’s “becoming. . .

⁶⁹ However, some others have claimed that Voice is the woman’s inner voice (Brater LSM 343, Lyons 179).

‘her own other’ ” (165). It is this “becoming . . . her own other”—the dissolution of the distinction between the self and the other—that brings an end to speaking to the self, as well: “It is at this moment of conjunction that she ceases to speak to herself” (ibid.).⁷⁰ As can be seen, like the otherness in *Not I*, the approaches grounded in the discourses of repression and alienation have regarded the otherness in *Rockaby* as the otherised self, that is, the becoming other of the self.

What troubles the interpretations founded on the discourses of repression and alienation with their simplistic accounts of the transition from the pre-linguistic to the linguistic is what troubled Rousseau’s account. In this Rousseauistic story of the becoming language of the body, the becoming discourse of the inner/bodily voice, that is, the story of the intrusion of the innocent inside—the origin—by the corrupted outside—the supplement—it is the effaced mid-point that comes to trouble the binarism. As Derrida points out, in the transition from animality to language, there must be a moment which “is *already* that of a language that has broken with gesture, need, animality, etc. But of a language that *has not yet* been corrupted by articulation, convention, supplementarity” (OG 244). Following Derrida’s argument, in the becoming language of the body, there must be a point where the body is no longer a body, but not yet language, in which case it can be neither body nor language, or both body and language. In other words, it is something in-between. Similarly, in the becoming discourse of the inner voice, there must be a point where the voice is no longer the voice of the self, but not yet the voice of discourse in which case the voice can belong neither to the self nor to the discourse, or both to the self and the discourse. These in-between moments are the moments of *undecidability* which question the simplistic accounts of the origin of language, rendering this “origin” as nothing but the “unstable, inaccessible, mythic limit between that *already* and this *not-yet*” (ibid.).

⁷⁰ Lyons has also seen the woman “as ‘her own other’ ” (180). Hence, he contends that “[t]he movement may represent her attempt to create herself within the image of her mother, structuring her present experience to duplicate her perception of her mother’s experience. In this case, her renunciation of the world and the establishment of herself as ‘her own other’ actually avoids her own identity as she submerges it in her mother’s image” (180-81).

Hence, critics have tried to efface this troubling mid-point in the same way that Rousseau tried to efface it—“*there has never been an intermediate point . . . between all and nothing*” (Rousseau, *C* 278; emphasis added). In other words, they have tried to efface what Derrida calls “*the middle point between total absence and total presence*” (157; emphasis added). In this way, the body and the self are associated with “total presence” and language with “total absence.” Nevertheless, the unresolvability of the paradoxes in both *Not I* and *Rockaby* shows that body and discourse, the self and the other cannot be untangled; rather they are irrevocably entangled; it shows that the pre-linguistic is entangled in language; that the pre-discursive is entangled in discourse; that “[t]he outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority,” as Derrida asserts (*OG* 35; emphasis added). Neither the body nor the self can be taken as a present origin; rather than origin, they are “the supplement[s] of origin;” they both function as simulacra which supplement the absence of origin in the text.

4.2.2. The Force of *Différance* in *Not I* and *Rockaby*

As we saw in *Footfalls*, it is only by the reduction of the Dionysian force, that is, the infinite movement of *différance*, that the discourse of the *chora* can sustain the Womb/Mother metaphor which is its invented origin and *telos*. However, as I have argued, this effaced movement irrevocably haunts the invented origin and *telos*. In this section, I will try to reveal the force of *différance* in *Not I* and *Rockaby* which infinitely defers any assumption of an origin or a *telos* in its infinite movement.

Despite the attempts by literary criticism—with its Apollonian tendency to eliminate ambiguity, uncertainty, and absence—to impose an origin and a *telos* on *Not I* and *Rockaby*, both texts defy the notions of origin and *telos*; they have neither beginnings nor endings. *Not I* starts with the unintelligible speech of Mouth before the curtain is up (*CDW* 376) and similarly ends with the continuing, unintelligible speech after the curtain is down (383). The monologue has no beginning and no end. The references to birth and the “speechless infant” have led some to impose a beginning on the play. In my

reading, however, the beginning of the play cannot be said to be a beginning; birth cannot be taken as the beginning of the narrator's story—if there is a story at all—since it is not the beginning, but only a continuation of the story that has been going on. The fact that the first sentence “. . . out . . . into this world . . . this world” (376) has no beginning suggests the absence of such a beginning, as well. Furthermore, the reference to the birth is repeated in the text (382). Thus, there is no coherent, chronological story, only incoherent fragments.

Not being able to mark a conventional beginning such as birth, some other critics have tried to mark the moment of entry to language which is assumed to be the beginning of subjectivity. Since the buzzing sound has often been attributed to language, they have tried to capture the origin of this buzzing sound and since speech is taken as opposed to silence, and overflow of speech as opposed to speechlessness, some critics have tried to reduce the paradoxes in the text to a simple dualism, trying to capture a point of transition, the transition from silence to speech, that is, from non-language to language.⁷¹ The buzzing sound is, thus, often taken as opposed to “the . . . speechless infant” referred to at the beginning of the play (376). In other words, it has been seen as a suggestion of the moments of entry into language. But such an interpretation is not possible as the woman is suggested to be speechless for seventy years: “and now this stream . . . steady stream . . . she who had never . . . on the contrary . . . practically speechless . . . all her days . . . how she survived!” (379).⁷²

We cannot take the April morning as the origin of the buzzing sound either, as some critics have taken; nor can we take it as the origin of the story.⁷³

⁷¹ I will discuss the problematics of this simplistic view of the entry into language—that is, the point at which the pre-linguistic becomes linguistic or the pre-discursive becomes discursive in the following section (sec 4.3). I will try to show how the text does not allow one to identify a point of origin for the subject.

⁷² To clear up this confusion, Cohn has argued that the old woman who “is speechless for most of her seventy years,” “is suddenly afflicted with speech” (317). Similarly, Brater argues that “she get[s] in all the words she may have needed to say during her lifetime silence (91). He sees this excessive speech as a compensation for the woman's long speechlessness: “Mouth's third-person protagonist had, in fact, tried to open her mouth on several occasions long before that fateful April morning within the Proustian budding grove. Yet each opportunity—in a courtroom, supermarket, a public lavatory—had proved a failure or an embarrassment. Her present purgatory is thus a making up” (91). Lyons, however, has seen this transition as the “returns to consciousness” which follows “a buzzing in her head” (154).

⁷³ (Brater, I 190, Brater, N 257, Cohn 317, Catanzaro 44, West 138, Zeifman 36).

The narrator refers to the April morning when “all went out” and “she found herself in the dark” feeling nothing but hearing the buzzing sound: “when suddenly ... gradually ... all went out ... all that early April morning light ... and she found herself in the dark ... and if not exactly ... insentient ... insentient ... for she could still hear the buzzing ... so-called ... in the ears ... and” (CDW 377; emphasis added). The narrator refers to the April morning again when she “fix[ed] with her eye . . . a distant bell” (378), when “words were coming” (379). The April morning appears later more ambiguously: “tender mercies. . . new every morning . . . back in the field . . . April morning” (381-82). This sentence is repeated identically later in the text (382-83). Although the buzzing sound is first mentioned while the narrator is telling the story of an April morning and is accompanied with the buzzing in the following mentions of it, I assert that this April morning cannot be taken as a simple origin. At the first mention of the buzzing, the narrator says that “*she could still hear the buzzing.*” If “*she could still hear the buzzing,*” the buzzing must have been going on before this moment; thus, this moment cannot be the origin of the buzzing sound. Moreover, the mention of “new every morning” makes it more difficult to see this April morning as a simple origin. Thus, I argue that there is no strong textual evidence either as to “the April morning” or any other point as the origin of the buzzing.

In my reading, the buzzing sound cannot be said to have started on this April morning, which is repeated several times in the text (377, 378, 382, 383); nor can it be said to occur in winter, which is referred to twice in the text: “always winter some strange reason” (379, 382). I do assert that the buzzing sound has been going on infinitely: “all the time the buzzing” (378, 380, 381, 382), whether when the woman is speechless or when she is overflowed with speech.⁷⁴

speechless all her days ... practically speechless ... even to herself ... never out loud ... but not completely ... sometimes sudden urge ... once or twice a year ... always winter some strange reason ... the long evenings ... hours of darkness ... sudden urge to ... tell ... then rush out stop the first she saw ... nearest lavatory ... start pouring it out ... steady stream ... mad

⁷⁴ I will explore this speechlessness and the overflow of speech in relation to the buzzing sound in the following section (sec 4.3).

stuff ... half the vowels wrong ... no one could follow ... till she saw the stare she was getting ... then die of shame ... crawl back in ... once or twice a year ... always winter some strange reason ... long hours of darkness ... now this ... this ... quicker and quicker ... the words ... the brain ... flickering away like mad ... quick grab and on ... nothing there ... on somewhere else ... try somewhere else ... all the time something begging ... something in her begging ... begging it all to stop ... unanswered ... prayer unanswered ... or unheard ... too faint ... so on ... keep on ... trying ... not knowing what ... what she was trying ... what to try ... whole body like gone ... just the mouth ... like maddened ... so on ... keep— ... what? .. the buzzing? .. yes ... all the time the buzzing ... (382; emphasis added)

The force of repetition in the text suggests the fact that rather than having a point of origin, the buzzing appears to have already been going on like the endlessly on-going story of Woburn in *Cascando*. Like the narrator in *Cascando*, who has been trying to end the story of Woburn and the story-telling, without being able to do so, the “she” in *Not I* desires to stop the buzzing, “the stream of words,” and the “urge to tell” which are out of her control. This infinite movement of the buzzing sound foregrounds not only the force of movement—the *différance*—in the text but also the force of movement—the *différance*—at the heart of language. If we take the buzzing as an indication of language and “the stream of words” as movement of signifiers, we have to admit that language—like the buzzing in the text—has always already been there; that it cannot be attributed a simple point of origin. Thus, it can be argued that the text defies the simplistic stories of origin and the rigid boundaries between the linguistic and the pre-linguistic, inviting us to re-think the complexities of the system of language.

Like *Not I*, *Rockaby* has neither a beginning nor an ending; the play begins with the woman’s demand “More” (435). Hence, the beginning—like the beginning of *Not I*—is not a beginning but a continuation. The story told by the recorded voice of the woman does not begin with a beginning either:

W: More.

[Pause. *Rock and voice together.*]

V: till in the end

the day came

in the end came

close of a long day

when she said

to herself
whom else
time she stopped
time she stopped
going to and fro (435)

Voice tells us about an on-going story of “going to and fro.” This opening resembles the opening of *Cascando* where it emerges that the narrator has been trying to give an end to the story of Woburn as well as the on-going act of story-telling; we also learn that he has failed to do so in the past. However, the structure of repetition is doubled in *Rockaby*. We not only hear the story of a woman “going to and fro” but also see a woman “going to and fro” on the stage. Thus, there are repetitions at work both in the story of the recorded voice and on the stage: the narrator’s act of listening and her “going to and fro.” Although it is only later that this “going to and fro” is revealed to be “going to and fro” of the rocker, this “going to and fro” suggests repetition from this very beginning. Rocking, thus, resembles a journey like that of Woburn which is endless.

Rocking starts with the voice, following each “More,” and stops with it, with the woman repeating the last lines of each section alongside her recorded voice: “[*Together: echo of . . . , coming to rest of rock, faint fade of light. Long pause.*]” (436, 438, 440, 442). Each “More” follows a series of extremely repetitive lines with only slight changes. The first “More” follows the story of a “she” who is looking “for another,” “another like herself” (436). The second “More” follows the “she” who is “at her window” looking “for another” again, “another like herself” (437). The third “More” follows the “she” “at her window” again, wishes “to see” and “to be seen,” but sees no one (439). The last “More” follows “she” “let[ing] down the blind” of her window and going down into her mother’s rocking chair:

so in the end
close of a long day
went down
in the end went down
down the steep stair
let down the blind and down
right down
into the old rocker
mother rocker
where mother rocked

all the years
all in black
best black
sat and rocked
rocked
till her end came
in the end came
off her head they said
gone off her head
but harmless
no harm in her
dead one day
no
night
dead one night
in the rocker
in her best black
head fallen
and the rocker rocking
rocking away (440)

As I have mentioned above, the retreat to the mother's rocking chair which is associated with the womb is often seen by (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics as the return or the desire to return to the womb, that is, to reunite with the mother. Accordingly, the return to the womb has been seen as a passage from "the split subject" which is produced within language to the pre-linguistic space (Tubridy 101-102). The story told by the voice has been seen as "a lullaby turned threnody, its movement a contraction and descent," that is, "a journey from the outside (a "going to and fro" in search of another) to the inside (a retreat into the room and a more passive variation of that search) to a still deeper inside (the abandonment of the search through a descent into the . . . [maternal] rocking chair" (Zeifman qtd. in Cohn 360). It has been seen as the woman's [wish] to be in her mother's safe womb (Taniue 90). I maintain that this teleological reading comes only to freeze the infinity of the movement which infinitely haunts presence; it is an attempt to fill the absence which cannot be tolerated by the discourse of reason as well as literary criticism.

In my reading, the reference to the mother intensifies the force of repetition in the text, suggesting the eternal repetition of rocking.⁷⁵ At this point,

⁷⁵ Cohn has seen the mother as an indication of the universality of the woman's predicament: "Everywoman, her own mother and her own other. From cradle to grave, we seek another, and

not only is the rocking experience in the past repeated identically in the present—with the identically dressed woman as in V’s description—but it also parallels the mother’s rocking. Thus, the reference to the mother even heightens the sense of repetition and the infinite movement, much like the mother in *Molloy* whose name turns out to have been Molloy, as well (*T* 23). In *Molloy*, the fact that Molloy’s dead mother had the same name and lived in the same room—at the beginning of the story, Molloy finds himself in his mother’s room: “I am in my mother’s room. It’s I who live there now. I don’t know how I got there” (*T* 7)—suggests not only that Molloy’s journey has always been going on—even before him—but also the eternal recurrence of this journey. In my reading, the mother in *Rockaby* has a similar function; the fact that the mother rocked in the same rocker suggests that the rocker has always been rocking; it had been rocking before the mother and it continued rocking after the mother’s head fell off (*CDW* 440). The fact that the woman herself is not rocking the chair also suggests her lack of control over the rocking, that the movement precedes her (and her mother); it has been rocking and will be rocking infinitely. It is, in other words, a suggestion of the movement which pre-exists the woman and outlives her.

The ending of the play is also of great significance; the play ends with the woman’s strong desire to end rocking:

till in the end
 close of a long day
 to herself
 whom else
 time she stopped
 let down the blind and stopped
 time she went down
 down the steep stair
 time she went right down
 was her own other
 own other living soul
 so in the end
 close of a long day
 went down
 let down the blind and down

sometimes, for a while, the blinds are up, but like Everyman in the medieval morality play, we die alone, when the bough breaks” (Cohn 361). She also thinks the “mother rocker” might be “an appositive for the chair itself?” (ibid.). Thus, she maintains that “the ‘she’ who is finally stopped” might be the rocker rather than the mother (ibid.).

right down
 into the old rocker
 and rocked
 rocked
 saying to herself
 no
 done with that
 the rocker
 those arms at last
 saying to the rocker
 rock her off
 stop her eyes
 fuck life
 stop her eyes
 rock her off
 rock her off
 [Together: echo of 'rock her off', coming to rest of rock, slow
 fade out.] (441-42)

Many have seen the ending as the woman's death. It is argued that "the diminishing voice and the gradual decrease in movement as W rocks may indicate that this moment marks her death (Lyons 178). Although this assumed death is often seen by (feminist-)psychoanalytic critics as the return to the womb and the reunion with the mother, as I have mentioned earlier, it has received different approaches. Despite the critics' different approaches to this death, however, it has usually functioned as a *telos*. Cohn has seen this death as the end of the woman's search: "*Rockaby* is the most merciful of the three 'woman' dramaticules, for death comes to soothe the searching spirit" (362). Lyons has seen the "description of W as 'prematurely old' " as "a willed renunciation rather than a physical failure" (179); it has been seen as the woman's "attempt to create herself within the image of her mother, structuring her present experience to duplicate her perception of her mother's experience" (178-79). In other words, "the mother's death" has been seen as "a model that she elects to re-enact or, from another perspective, a restrictive limitation in which she is caught" (180).⁷⁶

Such an interpretation of the ending is obviously an imposition of a *telos* on an open-ended play, that is, to foreclosure of a text which—like *Cascando*—never arrives at closure; like "music Platonism" which comes to avert the

⁷⁶ Anthony Shrubhall has also seen this as re-enactment of the mother's death (63).

catastrophe of absence in *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, the Mother becomes an origin and the *telos* that saves *Rockaby* from the absence generated by the infinity of the movement. Like the teleological interpretations of *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, these interpretations arise not from the text, but rather from our Rousseauistic nostalgia for the “pure origin” and our teleological mentality, reinforced by the Apollonian tendency of literary criticism, which with “the privilege given to vision, the Apollonian ecstasy” cannot “[embrace] both force and the movement which displaces lines, nor to the point of embracing force as movement” (Derrida, *WD* 33); which has to “stifl[e] [this] force under form” (31), in order to resolve ambiguities and uncertainties of the text. I assert that there is no textual evidence either to the woman’s death or to the end of the rocking. The stage direction “*coming to rest of rock*” (442) cannot be taken as an indication of an end since it has been repeated three times before without the rocker having stopped rocking. In my reading, this is only another failed attempt to end rocking—like the narrator of *Cascando*’s failed attempts to end the story of Woburn—which cannot be taken as the end of rocking. Above all, we cannot ignore the significance of the recorded voice; the woman recorded this story of the “she” who cannot stop “going to and fro” in the past, and she is only listening to her own voice in the present; however, the “More” at the beginning of the play suggests that it is not the first time that she is listening to the story; rather, she has been listening to it again and again. In other words, the play takes place temporally ulterior to this recorded voice, and the woman’s present experience of listening and rocking is a repetition of the past listening and rocking. Since the woman has not stopped rocking with the so-called end of the story of the voice before, we cannot assume that she has stopped this time. Therefore, the ending cannot signify an ending, but rather a non-arrival, an infinite movement, that is, *différance* which infinitely defers *telos*.⁷⁷ As Connor puts it, “the tape seems to be caught in a series of self-

⁷⁷ In order to get rid of this repetition which infinitely defers *telos*, Tubridy has argued that “[i]t is from the body of the dead mother that the supplication ‘More’ is spoken, and, though spoken from the past, it is this utterance which defines the present time of the play” (164-65). For her, “the voice of V speaks in the future for this is the voice of the daughter of the woman we see on stage, the woman who is described in the process of death by V” (65). In other words, “the daughter becomes temporarily anterior to the mother” (160-61).

recalling loops, each tending towards an end, but also stimulating an apparently infinite series of delays for recapitulation” (149). The recorded voice, thus, resembles Krapp’s last tape, in the play with the same title, which is never his last.

This foregrounded repetition in both *Not I* and *Rockaby*—with the endlessly on-going buzzing in *Not I* and the endlessly on-going rocking in *Rockaby*—suggests that the “she” of both plays—like the story of Woburn—are parts of larger narratives and larger structures of repetition that have already been at work; they are parts of the pre-existing repetitions that make them possible. The “she” of *Not I* and the “she” of *Rockaby* might be “unique event[s];” their uniqueness, however, “[do]’t exclude the pre-written framework that makes [them] possible,” as Derrida asserts (LO 322). Rather, “the unique event that is produced only one time is . . . repeated in its very structure. Thus, there is a repetition, in the work, that is intrinsic to the initial creation” (ibid.). In other words, not only the “unique” stories narrated by the narrators of *Not I* and *Rockaby* but any narrative becomes possible within the already-existing and eternally on-going structures of repetition.

Apart from the endlessly on-going buzzing in *Not I* and the endlessly on-going rocking in *Rockaby*, there is a deeper repetition at work in both plays; beside the repetitions in the texts, both narrators enact their own story, which is itself another level of repetition—like May in *Footfalls* who repeats her own story by pacing up and down. The narrator of *Not I* narrates the story of a “she” and she embodies the story she narrates. Thus, the narrator herself appears to be implicated in the narrative; this is why the “I” is rendered a “she;” in other words, the boundary between the “I” and the “she” is dissolved; both “I” and “she,” both self and other emerge as narratives. If Mouth is telling the story of the “self” this self turns out to be a narrative, and if it is telling the story of its “own” body, this body turns out to be a narrative. The narrator of *Rockaby* also narrates the story of a “she,” but, as I have already argued, the act of narration is anterior to the play; the narrator is only listening to the story of the “she” while enacting it. By enacting the story, that is, by embodying the story of the “she, like Mouth in *Not I*, she dissolves the boundary between the “I” and the “she” in her story; the narrator herself emerges as a narrative, that is, her very self

appears to be nothing but a narrative, a narrative that pre-exists her. Thus, there remains no narrators, but only narration. In other words, both narrators are effects of narration, that is, the pre-existing force—the force of *différance*—that makes not only their narrative but also their selves possible. It is also within this force that the distinctions between the body and discourse, the self and the other are dissolved. Neither the “body” nor the “self” can be said to be the “origin;” far from an origin, with the ambivalence in *Not I* and *Rockaby*, both the body and the self come to suggest the “*complicity of origins*” defying “*the myth of the simplicity of origin*” in Derrida’s words (OG 92; emphasis added). In other words, they suggest the violence of writing at this so-called point of origin, that is, “writing before the letter.” Far from a simple notion of origin represented by the discourses of repression and alienation, these texts, in my reading, invite us to re-think the notion of origin; they demand “*the withdrawal of the present origin of presence*,” in Derrida’s words (D 168; emphasis added).

4.3. Narration/Narrator(s) and the Question of “Origin” in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*

As I have tried to show, the reductionist dualism of inside/outside fails to deal with the question of language; it only perpetuates a series of binarisms—body/language, and self/other binarisms, among others—that reduce the complexity of language. This problematic view of language and the subject’s relation to language—which arises from dualistic reduction, that is, the attempt to resolve the paradoxes which I have tried to show—results in the problematic view of subjectivity and agency; it engenders the dualistic perception of agency, that is, agency either as an absolute agency or as an absolute lack of agency.

Nevertheless, these dualistic arguments are all haunted by the irreducible paradoxes they have tried to efface. Tubridy, for instance, faces the paradox of agency—in reading *Not I*—without acknowledging it. On the one hand, she sees the narrator’s speech “less of a power than an affliction” (89); according to her, “[t]he speaker has no control over her speech; it pours forth from her mouth like a violent excretion of the body” (ibid.). She sees Mouth “subjected to language

without ever being the subject of language” (101) because for her, “ ‘I’ does not mark the emergence of the subject in language. On the contrary, it immediately distances the speaker from himself and perpetuates the infinite deferral in which ‘I’ is always ‘he’ ” (107). On the other hand, Tubridy assumes that the narrator has the power to refuse her position in the discourse. For Tubridy, “*Not I* is the story of the self [the othered self], but told by one who refuses to assume the position of subjectivity,” that is, one who “maintains her position as other” (85). According to Tubridy, unlike the narrator of *The Unnamable*, the narrator of *Not I* “refus[es] to acknowledge the buzzing in her ears as the murmur of language, by refusing to recognise the words which pour forth from her mouth as her own” (87); she also “refus[es] to adopt the position of the speaking subject by speaking of herself as ‘I’ ” (ibid.). In other words, she refuses the obligation to “tell the story of the self.” Tubridy claims, accordingly, that “Mouth in *Not I* undoes the aporia of *The Unnamable*” (ibid.). Tubridy, however, cannot do away with this *aporia*. Elsewhere, she admits that “Mouth alternates between acceding to and rejecting the voice” (95). However, she attributes this alternation to Mouth’s realisation of “the physical movements of the mouth with which speech is produced” (89).⁷⁸ The questions that arise from Tubridy’s account of Mouth in relation to language are: if Mouth is simply subjected to language without being the subject of language, how can she refuse her position in the discourse? How can she refuse to tell “the story of the self”? Are we to see the narrator as “under control” of language due to her lack of control over the buzzing or “in control” of language due to her rejection of the first person “I”? Do we have to see her speech as an affliction or power? Do we have to force these ambivalent questions into simplistic binarisms?

In their approach to *Not I*, some other critics have faced this paradox—the possibility of the subject which is its impossibility—which is inseparable from the paradox of language—the possibility of language which is its impossibility, the ability to speak which entails the inability to speak. I assert,

⁷⁸ Similarly, Cohn has argued that despite her fear of “the return of the words,” “She is forced to acknowledge the voice as her own, in part because she is so aware of how words form in the mouth, with almost no direction from the brain” (318).

however, that these paradoxes have not received the importance they deserve in most interpretations of *Not I*. This is because the critics have often tried to separate “the condition of possibility” from “the condition of impossibility.” In other words, they have tried to efface the force which is, to put in Derrida’s words, “*at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility” (*D* 168) of language and that of the subject. The paradox of subjectivity/agency arises from the fact that it is an effect of the force—the force of *différance*—which pre-exists the subject. As Derrida maintains, “[n]othing-no present and in-different being-thus precedes *différance* and spacing. There is no subject who is agent, author, and master of *différance*, who eventually and empirically would be overtaken by *différance*” (*P* 28). He does not see subjectivity as opposed to objectivity in the form of a binary opposition. For him, both subjectivity and objectivity are “effect[s] of *différance*, . . . effect[s] inscribed in a system of *différance*” (*ibid.*).

It is true that the buzzing sound in *Not I* and the woman’s uncontrollable speech—as well as that of Mouth—are suggestions of her affliction; it is true that they suggest her subjection to language. From the very beginning, the buzzing sound emerges as an interpellating voice. Each mention of the buzzing follows a mention of a thought imposed on the woman. After the first mention of the buzzing, Mouth talks about the first thought:

but the brain still ... still ... in a way ... for her first thought was ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... brought up as she had been to believe ... with the other waifs ... in a merciful ... [*Brief laugh.*] ... God ... [*Good laugh.*] ... first thought was ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... she was being punished ... for her sins ... (*CDW* 377)

This first thought, in my reading, suggests the interpellating voice of the discourse of religion within which the notions of sin and punishment are produced and human pain is justified. This second thought is referred to at the second mention of the buzzing: “till another thought ... oh long after ... sudden flash ... very foolish really but—... what? .. the buzzing? .. yes ... all the time the buzzing ... so-called ... in the ears ... though of course actually ... not in the ears at all ... in the skull ... dull roar in the skull ...” (378). The fact that this second thought and other thoughts are not specified suggests, for me, the

movement of a series of thoughts that replace each other and are discarded like the first thought which was “dismissed ... as foolish ... was perhaps not so foolish ... after all ... so on ... all that ... vain reasonings ... till another thought ...” (377). The narrator refers to “vain reasonings” (277) “vain questionings” (378) following the buzzings. Although the discourse of religion is foregrounded—there are several allusions to the discourse of religion—the buzzings, I assert, suggest a more complicated network of discourses within which the woman is interpellated, that is, the discourses within which the subject is subjectivated, within which the “I” emerges.

The scene of the courtroom and confession also reminds us of the Foucauldian subject:

Perhaps *something she had to ... had to ... tell* ... could that be it? .. *something she had to ... tell* ... tiny little thing ... before its time ... godforsaken hole ... no love ... spared that ... speechless all her days ... practically speechless ... how she survived! .. that time *in court* ... *what had she to say for herself* ... *guilty or not guilty* ... stand up woman ... speak up woman ... stood there staring into space ... mouth half open as usual ... waiting to be led away ... glad of the hand on her arm ... now this ... *something she had to tell* ... could that be it? .. *something that would tell* ... how it was ... how she— ... what? .. had been? .. yes ... *something that would tell how it had been* ... how she had lived ... lived on and on ... *guilty or not* ... on and on ... to be sixty ... something she— ... what? .. seventy? .. good God! .. on and on to be seventy ... *something she didn't know herself* ... *wouldn't know if she heard* ... then forgiven ... God is love ... tender mercies ... new every morning ... (380-81; emphasis added)

Foucault asserts that the subject has to “produce the truth of power . . . [it] *must* speak the truth; [it is] constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth” (PK 93). It has to “tell the truth about itself” (PPC 38) and it is with telling this truth that one becomes a subject: “if I tell the truth about myself . . . it is in part that I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over me and which I exert over others” (39). Therefore, the subject, the “I,” “is an effect of power” (PK 98), an effect of subjectivation within discourse. Rather than being repressed, the “I” is produced within the network of “power relations” which pre-exist the “I” and the subject; the subject and its notion of the self is always already produced within the discourse of the

other. In other words, the subject is always already positioned in discourse—the discourse of the other—whether she says “I” or not “I”; it is not possible to deny “I” from an outside position; in order to both say “I” and deny “I,” the subject must be positioned in a discourse within which “I” is produced. In other words, both I and not I are positions in discourse and in language. That is why the “I” is always already a S/HE; the self is always already the other; the narrator of *Not I* as well as the narrator of *Rockaby* are not “I,” and have never been “I,” like the narrator of *The Unnamable*: “who is talking, not I, where am I, where is the place where I’ve always been, where are the others, it’s they are talking, talking to me, talking of me., I hear them, I’m mute” (*T* 389). As McMullan has observed, there is an implicit denial of “I” in the case of May and Amy, as well: “within May’s monologue, she is implicitly identified with Amy, who denies her own presence. In a sense May also denies her presence, by representing herself in the third person, as ‘not I’ ” (97). Thus, May says “I,” in a way, by narrating a story, and says not “I” by telling the story in the third person. However, their use of the third person pronoun “she,” especially the “vehement refusal to relinquish third person” in *Not I* (*CDW* 375), cannot easily be taken as the other which is opposed to the repressed or alienated self in a binary fashion. Similarly, the acknowledgement of the voice and its denial must not be seen as contradiction; nor as a change in the attitude of the narrator; it is, rather, a paradox, the paradox of subjectivity.

When the subject is said to be entangled in infinite structures of repetition, when it is said to be an effect of *différance* in Derridian sense or “an effect of power,” in Foucauldian sense, or “a linguistic category, a placeholder” (Butler, *PLP* 11), it must not be taken as a stable immutable category since the subject is never fully formed, but rather it is always in the process of formation; it is, in other words, “a structure in formation” (*ibid.*). As Derrida argues, “the possibility of extraction and of *citational grafting* . . . belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and . . . constitutes every mark as writing” (*MP* 142; emphasis added). According to him, “[e]very sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks” (*ibid*) and it is with this possibility to be cited that “it can break with every given context, and engender

infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion” (ibid). Following Derrida, Butler points out the significance of citationality in the process of subject formation: “the . . . subject is never *fully* constituted in subjection;” it is, rather, “*repeatedly* constituted in subjection” (PLP 94; emphasis added). Hence, linguistic construction is not synonymous with linguistic determinism; as Butler argues, adopting Derrida’s notion of citationality,

[w]hen the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. *The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, *all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; “agency,” then is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition.* (GT 198; emphasis added).

Thus, it is true that the subject is subjected to language, but it is also the subject of language in the act of repetition; this repetition cannot be seen either as affliction or power; it is, rather, both affliction and power. One is afflicted by the structure of repetition, but has the power to repeat the structures, and it is in this act of repetition that the subject can diverge from the structures. It is true that one becomes a subject only by being interpellated, but interpellation is not necessarily a successful process: “[t]he one who is hailed may fail to hear, mishear the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on being addressed in that way” (PLP 95). In other words, interpellation is always open to the possibility of failure and diversion.

The defect in the machine that the narrator of *Not I* refers to, in my reading, suggests this possibility which haunts the process of signification:

could not bring herself ... *some flaw in her make-up* ... incapable of deceit ... *or the machine* ... *more likely the machine* ... *so disconnected* ... *never got the message* ... *or powerless to respond* ... like numbed ... *couldn’t make the sound* ... not any sound ... no sound of any kind ... no screaming for help for example ... should she feel so inclined ... scream ... [Screams.] ... then listen ... [Silence.] ... scream again ... [Screams again.] ... then listen again ... [Silence.] ... no ... spared that ... all silent as the grave ... no part— ... what? .. the buzzing? .. yes ... all silent but for the buzzing ... so-called ... no part of her

moving ... that she could feel ... just the eyelids ... presumably ... on and off ... shut out the light ... reflex they call it ... no feeling of any kind ... but the lids ... even best of times ... who feels them? .. opening ... shutting ... all that moisture ... but the brain still ... still sufficiently ... oh very much so! .. at this stage ... *in control* ... *under control* ... to question even this ... (CDW 378; emphasis added)

The woman is constantly hailed by the buzzings; she becomes a subject only by being hailed by the buzzings; she, however, fails to respond to the buzzing properly. That is why she is “under control” of the buzzing and “in control” of it; this paradox is the paradox of subjectivity; it is the possibility of language which entails its impossibility; the possibility of the subject which entails its impossibility. In other words, it is the irrevocable *aporia* in language, the irrevocable *aporia* in subjectivity.

If the “she” of *Not I* can speak and if she cannot speak, if she can say “I” or not “I,” if she can admit the voice as hers and if she can deny it, it is because she is positioned in language, because she is enabled by the force of *différance* which produces language and, paradoxically, dispossesses it; it is because she is enabled by the force that constitutes and de-constitutes the speaking subject, that is, de-constitutes the subject while constituting it. This force—as “a law of language” (Derrida, *OG* 141)—is a force that “operates as *a power of death in the heart of living speech*: a power all the more redoubtable because it *opens as much as it threatens the possibility of the spoken word*. (ibid.; emphasis added). It is within this force that she is “dispossessed of the longed-for presence in the gesture of language by which [she] attempt[s] to seize it” (ibid.); presence, which is attempted to be seized by it, “promises itself as it escapes, gives itself as it moves away” (154). This is why the woman in *Not I* is at once speechless and overflowed with speech. This is the most confusing paradox that the critics have tried to resolve. From the very “beginning” of the monologue, the questions of silence and speech begin to emerge. However, as the monologue progresses, these questions prove to be too ambivalent to be answered. There is utter silence, but this utter silence is, paradoxically, accompanied by the continuous buzzing sounds; the woman is speechless, but, paradoxically, she is overflowed with words.

Rather than a paradox, silence and speech are seen as opposed to each other in a binary fashion. Seeing it as the origin of the story, some critics have tried to mark the point of transition from non-language to language, that is, to mark the boundary between silence and voice, speechlessness and overflow of speech, a closer look at text, however, renders such distinctions impossible:

not catching the half ... not the quarter ... no idea what she's saying ... imagine! .. no idea what she's saying! ... and *can't stop* ... *no stopping it* ... *she who but a moment before* ... *but a moment!* .. *could not make a sound* ... *no sound of any kind* ... *now can't stop* ... imagine! .. *can't stop the stream* ... and the whole brain begging ... something begging in the brain ... begging the mouth to stop ... pause a moment ... if only for a moment ... and no response ... as if it hadn't heard ... or couldn't ... couldn't pause a second ... like maddened ... all that together ... straining to hear ... piece it together ... and the brain ... raving away on its own ... trying to make sense of it ... or make it stop ... (CDW 380; emphasis added)

As can be seen, speech and silence are irrevocably entangled. If the critics have tried to un-tangle the two, I argue that it is because reason cannot conceive the possibility of both/and or neither/nor. Reason requires that everything be reduced to the discourse of either/or. I assert that one cannot easily un-tangle speechlessness and the overflow of speech in the text. We cannot simply ignore the conjunction of speech and speechlessness; the narrator of *Not I* is *at once* overflowed with speech and speechless. She reminds us of the narrator of *The Unnameable* who is *at once* overflowed with speech and is speechless: "*I must speak*, with this voice that is not mine, but can only be mine ... *it is I who speak, all alone*, since I can't do otherwise. No, *I am speechless*, talking of speaking, *what if I went silent?*" (T, 309; emphasis added); like the "she" in *Not I*, he is afflicted, paradoxically, with "the inability to speak" and the inability to stop speaking: "Yes, in my life, since we must call it so, there were three things, *the inability to speak, the inability to be silent*, and solitude, that's what I've had to make the best of" (T 400; emphasis added).

Although the *aporia* in language as well as that in subjectivity are foregrounded by the paradox of speech and speechlessness that the woman in *Not I* is afflicted with, these *aporias* are implicit in the on-going act of narration in all three plays. If May, Voice, and Amy in *Footfalls* and the narrators of *Not I*

and *Rockaby* can tell stories and if they cannot stop telling stories, if they seem at once to be and not to be the narrators of their stories, it is because these narrators, as well as their narratives, are enabled by the pre-existing structures of narrative which are, in turn, enabled by the force of *difference*, the force that produces language and, paradoxically, dispossesses it; the force that constitutes and de-constitutes the narrating subject. This is why the narratives are haunted by infinite absence; this is why these narrators are all “dispossessed of the longed-for presence . . . [they] attempt to seize.” Presence which is attempted to be seized by language “promises itself as it escapes, gives itself as it moves away” (Derrida, *OG* 145). Although story-telling is an assumption of “I,” this “I” turns out to be a “she” in all the narratives. As McMullan has observed in *Footfalls*, as “the representation of the self” shifts to “the process of representing,” “the production of the self” turns out to be “the failure of production” (97).

As I have argued, although the subject and its ability to say “I” is produced in the movement of *différance*, it is dissolved within the same movement, that is, it is constituted and de-constituted in this movement. Thus, although the narrators we have seen are afflicted by the “I,” their power lies in the ability to divert from it, to say “not I,” to re-contextualise the “I,” to play with the “I.” Although the narrators are implicated in a pre-existing narrative and pre-existing structures of repetition, they are not at all determined by it; rather, they have the power to repeat and this very repetition is their becoming. The repetitive story-telling of May, Voice, Amy and Henry, the repetitive speech of the woman in *Not I*, the repetitive rocking of the woman in *Rockaby* is their “*progression toward the future—becoming*,” in Derrida’s terms (*WD* 31; emphasis added) .

By way of conclusion, the questions of language, subjectivity, and agency are too ambivalent to be explored by recourse to the myth of “origin” established by the discourse of the *chora* and the separation. Being unable to tolerate absence—like Platonism/”music Platonism” that I discussed in the previous chapter—the discourse of the *chora* has to reduce the irreducible force to forms of presence, as I have tried to show; it has to efface the infinite movement within which all notions of origin are dissolved, the movement

within which no “origin” can be identified. However, as I argued before, this effaced movement—despite being effaced—infininitely haunts presence; the ruptures I have tried to show are all signifiers of absence at the heart of the constructed origin and *telos*, with the help of which critics have been able to construct their discourses of presence; this infinite absence in the play cannot simply be attributed to repression and alienation of the once present body and self; rather, the so-called present body is nothing but body in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in body—is effaced; the so-called present self is nothing but self in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in self—is effaced; this trace of writing, which has been attempted to be effaced by critics, is what dispossesses all the narrators, their bodies, their selves of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, irrevocably entangles them with the movement within which presence is infinitely deferred, the movement which is “the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility” of all presence.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express. (Beckett, PTD 103; emphasis added)

Beckett's drama undermines the foundations of "the theatre of presence;" it deprives the audience/reader of their taken-for-granted categories of presence. The "present" bodies, voices, cries, screams, gestures, and movements induce not a sense of presence, but rather absence. This theatre is the theatre of force, an irreducible force within which all assumptions of origin and *telos* are infinitely deferred. This force does not allow associations, but rather infinitely entails dissociations. One cannot attribute "origins" to the voices that are heard; assumptions of "origin" are, rather, infinitely deferred. One cannot reconcile them with a transcendental signified either; rather, "expression" infinitely fails. Beckett's drama is, thus, haunted by traces, by *différance* which infinitely defers presence. Bodies are not present bodies, but bodies infinitely in *différance*; voices are not present voices, but voices infinitely in *différance*. Presence which is the cornerstone of metaphysics goes bankrupt. Thus I assert that Beckett's drama invites us to re-think not only our taken-for-granted categories of presence but presence itself.

As we have seen, none of the plays I have examined begin with a beginning and none of them end with an ending; rather, they begin and end with repetitions. None of these plays can be said to have a plot in the conventional sense; they only offer us fragmented stories. Characters are marked not by

identity, but rather non-identity; they do not even have names, except for May—as to Joe and Bob in *Words and Music*, although they are called Joe and Bob by Croak, they are specified by stage directions as Words and Music, respectively. All the characters we have seen—Croak, Words, and Music in *Words and Music*, Opener, Voice, and Music in *Cascando*, May and Voice in *Footfalls*, Mouth in *Not I*, and the woman in *Rockaby*—are all compelled to speak; they are compelled to say something; in other words, *they are compelled to tell stories* and, interestingly, the stories they tell emerge to be old, long on-going stories. But the so-called attempt to “express” by these characters cannot easily be attributed to a certain notion of “origin;” the so-called thoughts, feelings, body, and inner voice emerge to be entangled in an infinite movement of supplementarity; they turn out to be the simulacra of presence which conceals the absence of presence in the texts. The so-called attempt to “express” by these characters does not arrive at a *telos* either; their stories never come to an end; they do not arrive at a transcendental signified.

By revealing and foregrounding the effaced force of *différance*—“writing before the letter”—in these plays, we have seen the complexities of the questions of language, subjectivity, and expression. We have seen in all these plays that the questions of language and subjectivity are too ambivalent to be examined by recourse to the myths of “origin” established by the discourses founded on “the metaphysics of presence”—for instance “music Platonism” and the discourse of the *chora* and the separation. We have seen that the origin of language and subjectivity cannot be easily marked, and the linguistic cannot be easily un-tangled from the pre-linguistic and the extra-linguistic. We have seen, as well, that these easy distinctions become possible only within language; they are, thus, effects of language.

We have seen in *Words and Music* and *Cascando* that the question of “expression”—whether the “expression” by means of language or music—is too ambivalent to be explored by recourse to myths of “origin” established by Platonism/“music Platonism.” We have seen that the irreducible force in these texts cannot be reduced to any form of presence; the Dionysian movement in both texts dissolves all Apollonian images and identities; the subject, its intentions, thoughts, feelings and consciousness/unconscious are infinitely

deferred within this movement. Thus, “expression” cannot be attached to an “origin;” nor can it be said to arrive at a *telos*—due to the infinite deferral of the signifiers. As I have shown, the so-called presence in the speech of Words in *Words and Music* and Voice in *Cascando* is nothing but speech in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in speech—is effaced; the so-called presence in the music of Music—in both *Words and Music* and *Cascando*—is music in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in music—is effaced; the so-called presence in the thoughts and feelings of Croak and Opener is nothing but these thoughts and feelings in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in thoughts and feelings—is effaced. Although the effacement of the trace might allow a temporary sense of presence, the effaced trace continues to haunt presence infinitely; it haunts the presence not only in speech and music but also in the very thoughts and feelings of Croak and Opener. The trace of writing is what dispossesses not only language and music but also Croak and Opener’s thoughts and feelings—which is claimed to be expressed by language and music—of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, irrevocably entangles Croak and Opener with the movement within which presence is infinitely deferred.

We have seen the same Dionysian movement in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby*, as well; the movement which does not allow an assumption of a present “origin”—whether this be the body, the self or another “origin.” The so-called present body and its voice is nothing but body in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in body/bodily voice—is effaced; the so-called present self and the inner voice is nothing but self in *différance* when the *différance*—the writing in self/inner voice—is effaced. Although the effacement of the trace might allow a temporary sense of presence, as I have argued, the effaced trace continues to haunt presence infinitely; this trace of writing is what dispossesses all the narrators, their bodies, their selves of presence; this trace, the force of *différance*, irrevocably entangles them with the movement within which presence is infinitely deferred.

Thus, as we have seen, the infinite absence in these plays, that is, the absence in the speech of Words and Voice as well as the music of Music in *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, the absence in the narratives of May, Voice, Mouth, and the rocking woman in *Footfalls*, *Not I*, and *Rockaby* is the effect of

the infinite *différance*, that is, the force of writing in the thoughts and feelings, the force of writing in speech, the force writing in music, the force of writing in bodily/inner voice, the force that is “the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility” of expression. If Croak and Opener in *Words and Music* and *Cascando* seem at once to be and not to be in command of language and music, if they seem to have the power to open language and music and if they seem unable to control these openings, if May, Voice, and Amy in *Footfalls* and the narrators of *Not I* and *Rockaby* can tell stories and if they cannot stop telling stories, if they seem at once to be and not to be the narrators of their stories, it is because these characters, as well as their speech, are enabled by the pre-existing movement, that is, the force of *différance*, the force that produces language and, paradoxically, dispossesses it; the force that constitutes and de-constitutes the narrating subject. I have claimed that this is not a contradiction, but rather a paradox; it is the *aporia* in language, the *aporia* in subjectivity, and, thereby, the *aporia* in expression.

To conclude, by a Derridean re-reading of *Words and Music*, *Cascando*, *Footfalls*, *Not I* and *Rockaby*, I have tried to reveal the complexities of language, subjectivity, and expression in these plays that are ignored by discourses of origin and dualistic approaches. I have tried to show how these texts defy not only the imposed origin and *telos* but also easy distinction between the inside and the outside that engenders other binarisms such as the pre-linguistic/the linguistic, the body/language, the self/the other, immediacy/mediacy, innocence/corruption, and presence/absence. I have tried to reveal the Dionysian force within which all assumptions of origin and *telos* are infinitely deferred and all these dualities are dissolved. I have tried to offer the possibility of re-reading the “inner thoughts and feelings” of Croak and Opener as thoughts and feelings in *différance*; the possibility of re-reading the “bodily/inner voices” of May, Mouth, and the rocking woman as voices in *différance*. In short, I have tried to offer the possibility of a new hermeneutics of Beckett’s drama and theatre: the possibility of reading this theatre as the theatre of force, theatre of traces, theatre of *différance*, theatre of *aporias*.

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APPENDICES

A.TURKISH SUMMARY/ TRKE ZET

Beckett dramasının klasik drama tanımına uymadığı açıktır. Sadece *mimesis* ve *diegesis* arasındaki sınırı değil aynı zamanda drama ve diğer türler arasındaki sınırı da yıkar; tiyatro, anlatı, şiir, şarkı, müzik, mim, dans ve diğer sanat türlerini de içinde barındırır. Başka bir deyişle, Beckett tiyatrosu jenerik farklılıkların bir araya gelmesi ile şekillenir. Ancak, Beckett draması modern sınıflandırmalara da sığmaz. Drama ve tiyatronun alışagelmış kurallarından büyük ölçüde sıyrılır. “Beckett oyun yazma geleneğini terk etti,” yani, “oyunun giriş, gelişme ve sonuç bölümüne sahip olması fikrini, karakterlerin tutarlı ve akla yatkın olması kavramını, eylem ve olay örgüsünün dramatik enerji yaratımında gerekli olduğu varsayımını” yıktı (McDonald 27). Olay örgüsü, karakter, düşünce ve diksiyon gibi klasik öğeler Beckett dramasında terkedilir; Beckett draması, dramanın en önemli öğeleri olan olay örgüsünü ve karakteri yıkar; eylem ve sözle değil eylem ve söz yitimi ile şekillenir. Eylem ve olay örgüsü ile ilgili klasik beklentileri karşılamaz. Daha şaşırtıcısı ise, birbiri ile uyumsuz ve parçalanmış diyaloglar, monologlar, sesler ve yankılar barındırmasıdır. “Karakterler”in yerini sahnede başıboş dolaşan ya da sürünen göçebeler; karanlık, sınırlı alanlara hapsedilmiş topal, kör ya da kötürümler; ya da çöp kutularına, büyük vazolara, ya da tümseklere gömülü yaratıklar almıştır. Başka bir deyişle, bütüncül beden ya da ses yerine, kime ait olduğu belirsiz bölünmüş beden bölümleri ve bölünmüş seslerle karşılaşılır. Ancak, daha kötüsü ise klasik dramada yer alan başlangıç ve bitişlerin olmayışıdır; “hiçbir şey basitçe başlayıp bitmez, sürekli bir başlangıç ve bitiş halindedir” (Gendron xiv). Beckett dramadaki sonsuz tekrarlar okuyucuya sürekli “dejavu” yaşattırır (a.y.). Kısacası, “mevcut” bedenler, sesler, hıçkırıklar, çığlıklar, jestler, hareketler ve eylemler varlık hissini değil, dinleyici/okuyucuyu kabullenilmiş varlık sınıflandırmalarından uzaklaştıran yokluk hissini barındırır. Böylece, Beckett dramasının kabullenilmiş varlık kategorilerini ve daha da

önemlisi varlığı sorgulamaya davet ederek, “varlık tiyatrosunu”nun temelini sarstığı söylenebilir.

Beckett draması sadece klasik drama ve tiyatro kurallarından değil—romanlarında da görüldüğü üzere—Batı düşüncesinden de ciddi bir ayrılış sergiler. Dil, öznellik ve ifadenin de arasında bulunduğu farklı felsefi kavramlara geniş yer verir. Beckett’in dil ve temsil sorularını irdleyişi onun dramadaki eşsizliğini sergiler.

Beckett draması temsil yitimini gözler önüne serer; anlam ifade etmeyen konuşmaların, seslerin, çığlıkların, eylemlerin, hareketlerin ve müziğin harmanlanmasıdır; aşkın gösterilene, yani telosa erişemeyen “sözel” ve “sözel olmayan” gösterenlerin birleşimidir. Bu parçalanmış konuşmalardan, seslerden, çığlıklardan, eylemlerden ve müzikten ne anlamlı bir bütüne— bilindik “ifade” kategorilerine—varılır; ne de öznellik, niyet, düşünce, bellek, bilinç/bilinçdışı, ya da sezgi gibi “kökenlere”—tanımlayıcı özelliklere—erişilir. Başka bir deyişle, bu göstergeler herhangi bir anlama indirgenemez. Daha çok, Derrida’nın söylediği gibi “mevcudiyetin yeniden sahiplenilişini” (OG 10) imkânsız kılarlar. Bu, yokluğu “sözel” ya da “sözel olmayan” göstergelerle doldurulan varlığın sürekli ötelendiği anlamına gelir. Ancak, Beckett dramasının içine işlemiş olan bu *öteleme*, sadece yıkıcı bir güç olarak anlaşılmaz. Yıkıcı bir güç olmasının yanında, bu *öteleme*, “dil” arkasındaki kökensel güç; “bir tür ‘harften önce yazı,’ kökensiz, başlangıçsız arke-yazıdır” (MP 15). Diğer bir deyişle, bu “farklar oyunu” “dili” hem başlatan hem de bozan bir güçtür.

Beckett dramasının klasik formlara karşı direncine rağmen bazı eleştirmenler onu belli sınıflandırmalara sokmaya, yani ötelemeyi farklı varlık şekillerine indirgemeye çalışmıştır. Bu eleştirmenler yıkılan logosu yeniden inşa etmeye çabalamışlardır. Varlığın yeniden sahiplenilişine dair bu çaba sadece yokluğun örtülüşünü değil aynı zamanda örtme eyleminin kendisini de içerir. Ancak, bu örtme olumlu bir örtme değildir; çünkü yokluk inşa edilmiş mevcudiyeti sürekli olarak tehdit eder. Bu tezin amacı “içsellik,” “dolaysızlık,” ve “ifade” metafiziğini tehdit eden bu gizli yokluğu açığa çıkarmaktır. Beckett oyunlarındaki dile bilindik dil teorileri ile yaklaşılamayacağını ileri sürdüğüm için Derrida’nın “harften önce yazı” kavramı üzerinden ilerleyeceğim. Alışagelmış dil yaklaşımların, yani geleneksel dil teorilerinin dayandığı

metafizik varsayımların ve ikili metaforların, Beckett metinlerinin irdelenişinde yetersiz kaldığını ortaya koyacağım. Beckett dramadaki dilin sese ve konuşmaya, yani “sözel göstergelere” indirgenemeyeceğini ileri süreceğim. Ayrıca, “sözel-olmayan” göstergelerin “dil dışı” sayılamayacağını iddia edeceğim. “Dil” ve “dilden bağımsız,” “gösterge” ve “gösterge olmayan,” “sözel” ve “sözel olmayan” arasındaki bu karşıtlığı göstermeye çalışarak, Beckett dramadaki “dil” anlayışına yeni açılımlar getireceğim–“harften önce yazı” olarak düşündüğüm bu dil, sadece ses ve söylemi değil, aynı zamanda eylemi, hareketi, çılgılığı, müziği ve diğer yazı formlarını da barındırır.

“Mevcudiyetin yeniden sahiplenilişleri,” kısmen tiyatronun doğasına atfedilebilir. Steven Connor’un söylediği gibi, drama romandan daha fazla metafiziksel varsayımlar içerir; bu çoğunlukla sahnedeki beden ve sesin “mevcudiyetin”den kaynaklanır (140). Ancak, ben metafizik varsayımların, tiyatronun yöneliminin değil, metafiziksel tarih anlayışı ile paralel ilerleyen edebi eleştirinin ürünü olduğu kanısındayım. Connor’un deyişiyle, eleştirmenlerin Beckett tiyatrosunu “varlık tiyatrosuna” (132) indirgemelerindeki neden, eleştirinin yokluk alanını işgal eden müphemliği, belirsizlikleri, çelişkileri kabul edememesi ve yokluğu, inşa edilmiş bir varlıkla örtmeye çalışmasıdır. Bu çalışma boyunca incelediğim oyunlarda, eleştirmenlerin yokluğu doldurmasına yardım eden mevcudiyet diskurları “müzikal Platonizm” ve *kora* ve bölünmedir.

Christopher Norris’in belirttiği gibi, “müzikal Platonizm” müzik çalışmalarına daima hakim olmuştur. Ona göre, bu Platonik eğilim “her sonucun zaman öncesinde bilinebilen bir yapının varlığını kanıtladığı varsayımından kaynaklanır. *Plato’nun varoluş-öncesi doktrini bu nedenle müziğin “objektif gerçekliğe” uyduğunu varsayar*” (98-9; vurgulanmıştır). Edebi çalışmalardaki Platonizmin eleştirisine rağmen, Platonizm ironik bir şekilde edebiyattaki müzik ve müzikaliteyle ilgili baskın yaklaşım olarak kullanılmıştır. Müzik daima dilin karşıtı, dilin bastırılmış ötekisi, dilin dışındaki olarak görülmüştür. Rousseau’nun geleneğinde müzik daima “tutku”yla ilişkilendirilirken, dil ise “akıl” ile ilişkilendirilmiştir; Rousseau’nun belirttiği gibi, “düşünceleri” içeren dile karşıt olarak, müziğin daima “duyguları” içerdiği varsayılmıştır (318). Her ne kadar eleştirilse de, akademideki baskın eğilim

müziğin “doğrudan,” “ulaşılabilir,” ve “mevcut” olduğu kanısıdır (Morris 103). Ancak, bu düşünce yeterince desteklenememiştir. Edebi teorideki müzik-dile dair ikili yaklaşım dolaylılık, erişilemezlik ve yokluk özelliklerini müziğe atfettiği için, dilin varsayılan ötekisi olarak müzik bu özelliklerle tanınmıştır. Ancak, bu karşıtlık için yeterli gerekçe bulunamamıştır.

Müziğin–özellikle “‘salt’ müziğin”–idealleştirilmesi, “Pythagoras’ın kozmik ahenklerine” (94) dayandırılabilirken, modern felsefe ve sanatta Schopenhauer’un “arzu”suna ve Nietzsche’nin Dionysos’una dayandırılabilir (a. y.). Beckett’deki müzik ve müziksellik, hem Schopenhauer’dan hem de Nietzsche’den esintiler içerir. Beckett’deki müzik ve müzikselligi çalışmış çoğu eleştirmen bu özellikleri Arthur Schopenhauer’ın sanat felsefesiyle ilişkilendirir. Schopenhauer için müzik sanatın en üst noktasıdır: müzik “diğer tüm sanat dallarından ayrılır. Onda gördüğümüz şey *yaşamın özüne dair fikirlerin tekrarı ya da taklit edilişi değildir*” (283; vurgulanmıştır). Edebiyatta Schopenhauer’un müzik yaklaşımını kullananlar çoğunlukla müziğin “dışavurumculuk” özelliğine ve dolayısı ile onun konuşulan ve “dışavurumculuk” içermeyen dile üstünlüğüne dikkat çeker. Beckett’deki müzik ve müziksellığe karşı farklı yaklaşımlara rağmen, Beckett’in dilin ve dilin gönderimsel doğasının beklentisini karşılamadığı için, daha “anlatımsal” olan ve gönderimsel olmayan bir dil arayışı içinde müziğe döndüğü bilinmektedir (Bailes and Till 1, Laws 10, McGrath 2, Ristani 120, Ojrzynska 48). Beckett’in “edebi ve mecazi anlam yükünden” sıyrılmaya çalıştığı ileri sürülmüştür (Bailes and Till 2). Bu eleştirmenlere göre, gönderimsel doğasıyla dil “düşüncelerin doğrudan ifadesini” engellediği için Beckett “kelimelerin düşünce ifade etme gücünü yükseltme adına onların gönderimsel içeriklerini olumsuzlamaya çalışır” (Laws 10). Beckett’in bu çabası, “insanın varoluşunun yakalanışı” olarak yorumlanmıştır (Bailes and Till 2). Ben tüm bu yorumlamaların dolaysızlık ve tecrübe varlığı metaforlarına, kendi kendine var olma metaforuna dayandığını düşünmekteyim. Örneğin, her ikisi de dil, müzik ve “ifade” kavramlarıyla ilgili olan *Kelimeler ve Müzik* ve *Cascando*’da hem dilin hem de müziğin Croak ve Opener’in zihin ya da ruhunu temsil ettiği iddia edilmesine rağmen, her iki oyunda da müzik mevcudiyetin daha doğrudan bir sunumu olarak düşünülür; dilin kapsayamadığı gerçekliğe ses verdiği iddia edilir.

Ancak, müziğin dil karşısındaki yıkıcı gücüne daha çok vurgu yapan edebi çalışmalarda müzik ve müzikselliğe dair farklı bir yaklaşım daha vardır. Post(modern) metinlerde daha yaygın olan bu yaklaşım Nietzsche'ye dair esintiler içerir; Nietzsche'ye atfedilsin ya da edilmesin, bu yaklaşım Nietzsche'nin Apollon-Dionysos karşıtlığından etkilenmiştir; yani Nietzsche'nin Apollon-Dionysos kavramlarının basite indirgenerek okunmasından ve (post)modern metinlere anakronistik uygulanışından kaynaklanmıştır. Birçok çağdaş edebi eleştirmen, biçimini ve içeriğini önemsemeksizin kültürü, kültürel normları ve Simgeseli temsil ettiğini düşündükleri dile karşı olarak müziğin bir tehdit oluşturduğunu düşünürler. Bununla beraber, müziği kültürden ve kültürel normlardan nasıl ayırdıkları, müziği bu normlardan nasıl steril tuttukları açık değildir. Buna dayanarak, Schopenhauer'un Platonizm yaklaşımının kabul edilmesine rağmen, Nietzsche'nin yaklaşımından esinlenen Platonizmin örtük kaldığını ve kabul edilmediğini düşünüyorum.

Kelimeler ve Müzik ve Cascando'da bu gücün belirli "köklere" indirgenişi, gizleme ile mümkün kılınır. Bu oyunlardaki müziği mevcudiyetin farklı formlarına indirgemek için, birçok eleştirmen sadece bu biçimleri değil aynı zamanda varlık ve yokluk kavramlarını da tehdit eden yazı saldırısını gizlemiştir. Derrida'nın hatırlattığı gibi, metafizik, metaforu var kılmak için varlık ve yokluk kavramlarını üreten kökensel metaforları gizleyerek, yokluğu örtmek zorundadır; metaforikliği, yani kökün eklentiselliğini gizlemek zorundadır; varlığın yokluğunu, safın kirliliğini gizlemek zorundadır. Bu, Derrida'nın gösterdiği gibi, köken mitinin neden "izin gizlenişinin miti" (167) olduğunu açığa çıkarır. Ancak, bu iz, varlığın peşini hiçbir zaman bırakmaz (44).

Bu tezin amacı varlık formlarına indirgenen gücü açığa çıkarmaktır. Müzik metafiziğini tehdit eden izin peşinden gitmeyi amaçlıyorum. Rousseau bağlamında varlığın var olması için gizlenen orta noktayı, katastrofik anı ortaya çıkarmaya çalışacağım. Eklentisel olmayandaki eklentiselliği, varlıktaki yokluğu, saftaki kirliliği göstermeye çalışarak, müzikteki yazı saldırısını sergileyeceğim. Diğer deyişle, "yazıdan başka bir şey olmadığını; eklentilerden başka bir şey olmadığını" (159) göstermeye çalışacağım. Bu tezin amacı

“eklentisellik hareketini” sadece yıkıcı bir güç olarak değil, aynı zamanda kökensel bir güç; “men ettiğini üreten öteleme” (143); hem dilin hem de müziğin “kök”ündeki *öteleme*; hem müzik hem de dildeki mevcudiyete tehdit oluşturan öteleme olarak göstermektir. Kısacası, dildeki *çıkılmaz* müzikteki *çıkılmaz* anlamına da geldiğini göstereceğim.

Edebi çalışmaların dil sorunsalına dair yaklaşımlarda, özellikle dil ve öznellik ilişkisinde, dayarılan diğerk bir baskın söylem ise Julia Kristeva’nın semiyotik kora kavramıdır.

Beckett’s dramasındaki bedenleşmiş, bedenden ayrıışmış ve kaydedilmiş sesler, ona yeni soluklar getiren birçok eleştirmenin dikkatini çekmiştir. Ancak, bu eleştirilerden bazıları, bellek, geçmiş benlik, bilinçdışı, bastırılmış beden ya da benlik gibi bu seslere köken bularak, yani onları varlık formlarına indirgeyerek, “mevcudiyetin yeniden sahiplenilişin”den öteye geçememiştir. Psikanalitik okumaların çoğu içsellik ve dışsallık metaforlarına, hangi sesin iğerinin tezahürü olduğuna dayanır. Beckett oyunlarındaki bölünmüş sesler çoğunlukla “psikolojik anlatım”a, yani, “öznenin bastırılmış arzularının, dileklerinin ve hırslarının seslendirilişine” indirgenmiştir (Besbes 246; 244). Başka bir deyişle, “bilinçdışı isteklerin tezahürü” (254) olarak görölmüştür. Bununla birlikte, bu indirgeme söz konusu kadın sesleri olduğunda daha da dikkat çeker. Örneğin, *Ben Değil*’deki Ağz, *Beşik*’teki yaşlı kadının konuşması ve *Adımlar*’daki May’in annesinin sesinde olduğu gibi. Birçok (feminist-) psikanalitik eleştirmen bu sesler ve bebeğin annesine semiyotik bağlarla bağlandığı dil öncesi alan olan Kristeva’nın kora kavramı arasında ilişki kurmuştur. Bu bağlamda, bu sesleri, anneyle yeniden birleşme arzusu olarak yorumlamışlardır.

Besbes *Ben Değil*’deki Ağz’ın konuşmasını “iç benliğin dışa vurumu” (255) ya da “ana karakterin iç gerilimlerini ve hayal kırıklarını tezahür etme isteğı” (256) olarak yorumlarken, birçok (feminist-) psikanalitik eleştirmen, Ağz’ın konuşmasını “vücudun Gerçek’ten ayrılışını hissettiğı anın travmasıyla başa çıkılışı” (Wright 113) şeklinde yorumlayarak, bu içsel alanı Anneyle bağdaştırmıştır. *Adımlar*’daki annenin sesi de benzer şekilde yorumlanmıştır. Birçok (feminist-)psikanalitik eleştirmen annenin bedenden ayrı sesini, May’in annesinden kopuşuna dair melankolisine ve onunla yeniden birleşme arzusuna

dayandırmıştır: “ses dil öncesi varoluşun bir yankısıdır” (McMullan 92). “Annenin beden/ses kaybının özneyi sürekli bu kaybın sahnelenişine götürdüğü” iddia edilmiştir (96). Anneyle yeniden birleşme fantezisi *Beşik* oyununun okumalarında da eleştirmenlere ışık tutmuştur. Sesin “yatıştırıcı müziksel ritmi” “beşik ve ninni” ile, yani anne ile ilişkilendirilir (McMullan 106). Bu oyundaki dilin akıcılığı koranın akışkan diline indirgenmiştir: “*Beşik* ‘sırasız, tekrarlı, sarmal hareket eden, giderek artan ve akışkan dili’ ile koranın ritimlerini hatırlatır” (99).

“Dil-öncesi” ve “dil-dışı” kavramlarına yaklaşımlarında bazı eleştirmenler sadece “köken” özlemini vurgularken, diğerleri ise “dil-ötesi”nde yatan yıkıcı potansiyel gücü vurgulamışlardır; metinlerdeki dil-dışı kabul edilen öğelerin dile tehdit niteliğindeki semiyotik anlam alanı oluşturduklarını düşünmüşlerdir. Kristevacı genotekste çok sıklıkla atıfta bulunulmamasına rağmen, dilin yıkıcı kullanımı koradaki anlam oluşumuna benzetilir. Müziğe de benzer yaklaşımlar vardır; çünkü Beckett’in oyunlarındaki dil, müzik ve müzikselliğin tahrip edici kullanımı, bazen Kristeva’nın dil-öncesi korası ile ilişkilendirilmiştir; “dil-öncesi ritim ve itimlere,” yani “beden alanına, dürtülere, bilinçaltına” atfedilmiştir (Ristani 123; 129). “Oedipal-öncesi dönemin ‘anneye ait müziği’ olarak semiyotiğin edebiyata müzik kattığı” iddia edilmiştir (Laws 185). Müzik ve müzikselliğin “Sembolik düzlemi tehdit eden” “dil-dışı öğeler” olduğu ileri sürülmüştür (180).

Bununla beraber, *Adımlar*, *Ben Değil* ve *Beşik*’teki dil sorunsalının basit iç-dış ikiliği ya da “kök” bulma hikayeleri ile irdelenemeyecek kadar derin olduğunu savunuyorum. Bu metinlerdeki dil ve öznellik sorunsalını yeniden inceleyerek, bu metinlerin dil ve özne ile olan ilişkisindeki derinliği ortaya koyacağım. İç ve dış arasındaki ayırmadan doğan dil-öncesi ve dilsel olan ayırımının, metinlerin kendilerinden ortaya çıkmayıp nasıl Rousseau’nun “tam varlık” arzusu, “saf kök,” yani dil işgalinden evvelki eklentisellik dışı kavramlarından çıktığını göstereceğim. *Adımlar*, *Ben Değil* ve *Beşik* oyunlarının “kökene” dair hikâyelere karşı çıktığını, bu nedenle, geleneksel dil teorileriyle okunamayacaklarını ileri sürmekteyim.

Belirttiğim gibi, gücün “kökene” indirgenişi sadece gizleme ile mümkün kılınabilir. *Adımlar*, *Ben Değil* ve *Beşik*’teki bedensel/işsel seslere anlam

atfetmek için, birçok eleştirmen yazı saldırısını gizlemiştir. Derrida'nın belirttiği gibi, ses ve konuşmayı var kılmak için metafizik, yazının saldırısını gizlemek zorundadır. Derrida “bu logosantrizmin, bu dolu söz döneminin, zaruri nedenlerden dolayı yazının kökeni ve statüsüne dair tüm özgür düşünceleri sessiz bıraktığını, askıya aldığını, örtbas ettiğini” iddia eder (OG 43). Başka bir deyişle, metafizik varlık illüzyonunu yaratmak için, varlık ve yokluk kavramlarını üreten kökensel metaforları; mecaziliği yani kökenin eklentiselliğini; safın kirliliğini; varlığın yokluğunu gizlemek zorundadır. Derrida'nın söylediği gibi, “köken miti izin gizlenme mitidir” (167). Bu iz, sürekli olarak varlığı tehdit eder: sınırların dışına kovalanan şey, dilbilimin sürgün edilmiş serserisi, birincil ve en yakın olabilirliği ile dilin içinde dolaşıp durmaktan hiç vazgeçmemiştir (44).

Bu tezin amacı, Beckett'in dramasında dolaşıp durduğunu ileri sürdüğüm bu izin peşine düşmektir. Bu izin, yani yazının tehdidinin peşine düşerken Derrida'ya gönderme yapacağım. Derrida belirtiyor ki “bu geleneğin yapısını sökmek ...onu devirip yazıyı masum kılmak değildir. Bunun yerine yazının saldırısının neden masum bir dilin başına gelmediğini göstermektir. Yazıda kökensel bir güç vardır çünkü dil her şeyden evvel...yazıdır (37). Yazının saf konuşmayı gasp etmediğini, daha çok “gaspın” zaten çoktandır başlamış olduğunu” (a.y.) ifade eder. Yani, saldırı zaten başlamıştı. Eklentisel olmayandaki eklentiselliğin, düz anlatımdaki mecaziliğin, saf olandaki kirliliğin, varlıktaki yokluğun peşine düşerek, örtbas edilen izin, yani bedensel/içsel sesteki yazı baskısına ışık tutacağım. Beckett oyunlarındaki bedensel/içsel sesin okunmasının “köken” olarak değil kökensel metafor olarak, yani, tüm ikiliklerden önce gelen mevcudiyet metaforunda, “kök”te gizlenen metafor/eklenti olarak mümkün olduğunu göstereceğim. Beckett'deki mevcudiyeti tehdit eden gücün, yazının ve *ötelemenin* indirgenemez gücüne ışık tutmaya çalışacağım.

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