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The Will to Live: a Study of Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*

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Abstract

The article explores Book One of Beckett's *Trilogy* (*Molloy*) in the context of the author's explicit rejection of Freud's rather speculative idea of death drives. In highlighting this rejection Beckett also demonstrates his attempt at incorporating, within his own work, Schopenhauer's concept of the 'Will'. Indeed, Beckett modifies and adapts Schopenhauer's ideas in the creation of his own aesthetic. In particular, this can be seen through the author's adoption of Schopenhauer's music analogy. Schopenhauer clearly equates music with his idea of the Will in that melody (in its purest form) is essentially a pattern formed out of sound and, consequently, without the need of visual representation. In a similar way, Beckett seeks to get beyond representation within his own art in order to explore the indelible trace or pattern of human existence. It is this ongoing process which explains the extreme representational reductionism of the later prose and drama.

Perhaps the most defining feature of the so-called 'Beckettian character' consists of the desire or drive to persist, to keep on going, no matter how worn the body or depleted the environment in which it inhabits. Indeed, within the confines of their stark fictional settings, Beckett's troubled creations simply do not succumb to despair or even die. The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons why this specific trait is so central to the moribund of characters which litter both Beckett's prose and drama, because in solving this enigma it becomes possible to understand Beckett's whole artistic approach and the central influence on which it was shaped. For the sake of concision, the present study will focus mainly on Book One of the *Trilogy: Molloy*. The reason for starting with this specific work, is simply that by

the time the author begins the *Trilogy* there is a clear and marked contrast with earlier fictions, such as *Dream Of Fair to Middling Women*, *Murphy* and *Watt*, indicating he had largely formulated the aesthetic which would shape the later works, particularly the extreme representational reductionism characteristic of the late novellas *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho* and such dramatic works as *Quad*.¹

Where death is concerned, Beckett often draws a grotesquely comic connection with birth and excrement.² A powerful example of this is to be found in the pages of *Molloy*, when the title character contemplates suicide in a squalid back alley (Beckett 1979: 56–9). He imagines its use for illicit love making along with defecating dogs and humans: In drawing the two so feelingly together there is the strong sense that life is only the beginning of a long and far from gentle decay. Perhaps it is this and *Molloy*'s own estrangement from the world, which leads him to stand uncommunicative next to a young vagrant sheltering in a doorway. The suggestion is that he sees himself in that solitary figure whom he cannot reach out to; just as he longed to embrace the two nameless figures A and C (Beckett 1979: 10–13), providing them with algebraic terms so that in this equation he can readily convert them, filling each with the significance of his own desires as they pass by on the

¹ This middle to later period, in terms of Beckett's work, marks both a conversion from the French language as the primary medium for his art and the well documented transformation of style from the arguably more Joycean novels, to a more definite affirmation of ideas concerning art and creativity already expressed to some extent in the nascent prose and critical writings.

² It is interesting to note, in this context, that William Hutchings in an article published in 1985 describes Beckett's *How It Is* in terms of a 'peristaltic journey'; and goes on to consider (with something of Beckett's own dark humour) that 'The central metaphor of *How It Is* – that the narrator (and by extension every human being) is a turd in the cosmic digestive process of time – is a metaphysical conceit startling as any of Donne's, embodying an excremental view of the world that surpasses even Swift's in its all inclusiveness'. (Hutchings 1985: 321–322) Hutchings ends the article considering the protagonists movement towards annihilation or re-birth: '[...] Despite its resemblance to the marmorean geometric solids of Beckett's later prose works – the white rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine*, the almost white cube of *Ping*, the yellow-lit cylinder of *The Lost Ones* – the chamber of *How It Is* is no mere reification. Instead, it is the necessary and appropriate end for the narrator's journey through the cosmic digestive tract, the opposite site for his release from the burdensome obligations of speech and movement that have characterized his subsistence for so long. Until the unknown moment of his release occurs, however, the narrator of *How It Is*, like the rest of Beckett's characters, "must go on", alternately tormenting and being tormented, never knowing whether his next collapse will be – as he hopes – the last.' (Hutchings 1985: 330–331). Andrew Christensen sees this use of the scatological as essentially part of Beckett's exploration of the human condition and this searching for a base pattern which is the veiled code of the species: 'Ultimately, scatological art makes us face excrement, and in facing excrement we face dilemma: we find it disgusting, yet produce it – we are the source of our own disgust. What are we to do? One option is to laugh. *Molloy*'s presentation of his own toilet paper as identification and observation of human and dog excrement intermixed reminds us of our nature and condition (Christensen 2017: 90–104).

quiet road. Further prompting Molloy to imagine a possible meeting, first between A and C and then they with him; and in the anxiety of rejection begins to shape the returning C into an image of himself which finally collapses into nothing. Perhaps it is all these things, in the alley alone, telling Molloy to kill himself with the old rusty blade; and yet he simply cannot do it, he has never been able to bear pain. The irony here is strong, for the greatest pain is derived from the long rigour of life.

In this failure, despite everything, to kill himself (and he informs us such attempts have been made before) we have a marked departure from Freud's idea of a powerful death as well as life drive.³ Here there is only a strange affirmation of life even at the thought of death, strange because it is equally incomprehensible to Molloy, who recognises fully, in that moment, his greatest suffering is to exist; however, he gently resigns himself to fate.

It is important to stress at this point that a number of commentators have, quite wrongly, considered Beckett's work as manifesting the presence of the Freudian 'death drive' as one of the key forces underpinning existence. Raymond T. Riva, for example, in an article published as early as 1970 made the following connection between Beckett and Freud:

[...] let us look for a moment at Man's instinctual apparatus. According to Freud, there are two complexes of instincts, or drives. One is Eros, the other is the death instinct... Obviously this urge to non-being is subtle and repressed from our

³ In Freud's essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he rather speculatively discusses the possibility of 'death drives'. Beckett, in Molloy's narrative, appears to parody part of Freud's essay as if to comically dispel this notion of competing drives that might ultimately lead to human extinction. For example, when Moran, speculating on the mode of travel he and his son might take, has a rush of pleasure at the thought of being able to use his autocycle and laments that 'thus was inscribed the fatal pleasure principle'. (Beckett: 91). More subtly, Beckett plays on the analogy of the 'fort/da' game employed by Freud to describe the compulsion to repeat – a strategy described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* through which the child is able to assert an individual sense of control of the fact that he or she is denied complete access to the mother. Beckett consciously parodies this process through a verbal reconstruction of the fort/da: 'At the same time I satisfied a deep and doubtless unacknowledged need, the need to have a Ma, and to proclaim it audibly. For before you say Mag, you say Ma, inevitably. And Da in my part of the world means father.' (Beckett 1979: 18). The name Molloy gives to his mother is Mag – Mag because the first syllable for the word Ma – while the final letter 'g' produces the effect of obliterating and spitting on it, each time Molloy speaks the name he spits on his own mother. However there is a curious difference in this endearing trait from that of the Freudian conception for Molloy's act of revenge seems more allied by the fact that his mother could have thought to bring him into this terrible purgatorial struggle in the first place, rather than on her in any way leaving him (remember that for Beckett, as for Schopenhauer, original sin consists in simply being born, thus there cannot be any alleviation even through a process of admitting guilt, to which there is ultimately no recourse). Also, we must consider that Molloy's image of himself is so tied up with his mother's that this act effectively must threaten to obliterate his own identity.

consciousness, but manifests itself in a great many ways. And Beckett's works imply again and again the power – even the desirability – of our instinct toward social disintegration. Death, or rather an apparent death, a state in which all appears dead save the ability to speech and monologue seems highly prized. Beckett's characters would often seem to aspire to just such a state or non-state of being [...] And it is quite possible that Beckett, by playing upon our totally unconscious and equally unknowable desire to return to an inorganic state (the death-wish) is striking a most sympathetic and responsive chord within us (Riva 1970: 163).

Similarly John Fletcher claims that the heroes of Beckett's Trilogy 'long for a state of being like death'. (Fletcher: 147) Although Fletcher is careful to underline that this is a state 'like death' rather than actual 'death', it nevertheless implies a denial of life, a definite 'longing' or desire for non-existence which drives the principle protagonists of Beckett's fictions. However, as we shall see this apparent desire is not a drive towards death but, in fact, its very opposite: the affirmation of life in a terrible purgatorial world of representation.

I would suggest that Beckett turns to Schopenhauer here rather than to Freud; as Dedrie Bair observes, Beckett as early as 1928–1929 and while still a student, became fascinated with the writings of Schopenhauer's seminal work, *World as Will and Representation*:

'Schopenhauer's ideas would become in later years the philosophical foundation of much of Beckett's thought [...] He worried about the impossibility of language and the repeated failure to communicate on any meaningful level. He was coming to the Schopenhauerian conclusion that, since the only function of intellect is to assist man in achieving his will, the best role for himself would be the total avoidance of any participation in a world governed by will (Bair: 83–84).

Freud himself, ironically enough, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and when tentatively alluding to the idea of a set of death drives, suggests that in one sense the aim of life is death and considers 'We have unwittingly steered our course into the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For him 'death is the true purpose of life'' (Freud 1991: 322). In the way he employs this quotation from Schopenhauer, Freud demonstrates how far he misunderstands him. Schopenhauer may be saying (and there is an enormous paradox in this) that we should 'make' death the purpose of our lives, but this for Schopenhauer is the product of a conscious letting go of the will-to-live, and not the product of a natural drive towards death. Far from it, there is always and only for Schopenhauer the will-to-live⁴ in whatever

⁴ For example, Schopenhauer here emphatically defines the will purely in terms of the will-to-live. 'The will, considered purely in itself is devoid of knowledge, and is only a blind, irresistible

form that should take. Freud argues (suggesting a link with modern physics in the form of entropy) that living matter strives to regain its inanimate form (Freud 1991: 306–315). Indeed, evolution itself has its retrogressive as well as its progressive sides, and we can see just as much a tendency to revert in form as to go forward, just as we can trace the evolution of humanity from its earliest origins by looking at foetal development, first exhibiting fish-like characteristics. This in itself certainly does not establish a death drive. Schopenhauer argues that all forms of matter are a manifestation of the Will, and in this he locates the emergence of every natural force from gravity to electricity (Schopenhauer 1966: 163–165); and although these forces compete with each other and there is a continual process of change and ascendancy, the ever shifting balance of creation, nevertheless in higher manifestations of the Will (living organisms), all these forces work together in a single unity or idea (Schopenhauer establishes this largely through the Platonic theory of ideas presented in *The Republic*⁵) which overrides any conflict of its components to assert life and life alone.

It is interesting that Beckett should himself focus, even if momentarily, on suicide to demonstrate this affirmation of life in a way that we find so clearly presented in the works of Schopenhauer. For suicide is paradoxically in Schopenhauerian terms one of the ultimate affirmations of the will-to-live.

urge, as we see it appear in inorganic and vegetable matter and in their laws, and also in the vegetative part of our own life' [...] We therefore called the phenomenal world the mirror, the objectivity. Of the will; and as what he wills is always life, just because this is nothing but the presentation of that willing for the representation, it is immaterial and a mere pleonasm if, instead of simply saying "the will", we say "the will-to-live" [My italics]. As the will is the thing-in-itself, the inner content, the essence of the world, but life, the visible world, the phenomenon, is only the mirror of the will, this world will accompany the will as inseparably as a body is accompanied by its shadow; and if will exists, then life, the world, will exist. Therefore life is certain to the will-to-live, and as long as we are filled with the will-to-live we need not be apprehensive for our existence, even at the sight of death.' (Schopenhauer 1966: 275) Following this hypothesis we can conclude that according to Schopenhauer's philosophy there can be no drive toward death, the Will is the force of life itself and has no prevailing or counter force. Conflict and destruction are merely part of the intense struggle for life and continuance.

⁵ Schopenhauer connects the primary phenomena or representations of the Will with Plato's world of 'eternal ideas'. '[...] every universal, original force of nature is, in its inner essence, nothing but the objectification of the will, and we call every such grade an eternal *Idea* in Plato's sense. But the *law of nature* is the relation of the *Idea* to the form of the phenomenon.' (Schopenhauer 1966: 134) However, there is a fundamental difference between Schopenhauer and Plato's conception. For example, Plato considered these 'eternal ideas' to be the ultimate template for all the various forms to be found in the world; Schopenhauer, however, has the Will for his template from which these ideas are merely physical manifestations. It is quite possible that Schopenhauer also has in mind here Plato's *Timaeus* (*Timaeus and Critias* 1977: 40–42). It is in this earlier work that Plato talks of a divine creator who produces a plan or pattern on which the universe is ultimately formed.

Far from being a denial of the will, suicide is a phenomenon of the will's strong affirmation. For denial has its essential nature in the fact that the pleasures of life, not its sorrows, are shunned. The suicide wills life and is dissatisfied merely with the conditions on which it has come to him. Therefore he gives up by no means the will-to-live, but merely life, since he destroys the individual phenomenon (Schopenhauer: 1966: 398).

In other words suicide is the great triumph of the ego, not over life but over the terrible conditions it may contain. In lacking the will to kill himself, despite everything, Molloy is denying the ego, and is on the road, according to Schopenhauer, to a more definite salvation.⁶ For Schopenhauer interestingly departs in this from one of the most important tenets of Christian belief while holding to its essential law. To deny one's life in Christian terms is a powerful sin against God's creation in seeking to forsake the struggle and be rid of it. We find for example that in Dante's *Inferno* the suicides have a particularly low status even amongst the damned and are placed in one of Hell's deepest tiers without their original bodily form (Dante 1961: canto xiii), symbolising its former abuse and denial (which after all is cast in God's image). Schopenhauer, on the other hand offers virtually the reverse of this when he claims that suicide in affirming the will-to-live effectively damns us to endless purgation, while to simply and passively let go of the will in all things is the true and only real hope in the form of complete self negation.⁷ However this effectively runs against all natural drive and desire, and therefore is a difficult condition to achieve. I suggest in this we can see the strong influence of the Eastern teachings contained in the Vedas.⁸

⁶ If the Will, the primary force of life, can only ever be the will-to-live then logically it is only through a process of completely letting go of the Will that one can be free of Man's otherwise eternal purgatorial existence. 'There appears to be a special kind of suicide, quite different from the ordinary, which has perhaps not yet been adequately verified. This is voluntarily chosen death by starvation at the highest degree of asceticism. Its manifestation, however, has always been accompanied, and thus rendered vague and obscure, by much religious fanaticism and even superstition. Yet it seems that the complete denial of the will can reach that degree where even the necessary will to maintain vegetative life of the body, by the assimilation of nourishment, cease to exist. This kind of suicide is so far from being the result of the will-to-live, that such a completely resigned ascetic ceases to live merely because he has completely ceased to will (Schopenhauer 1966: 400–401).

⁷ '[...] this consideration is the only one that can permanently console us, when, on the one hand, we have recognized incurable suffering and endless misery as essential to the phenomenon of the will, to the world, and on the other see the world melt away with abolished will, and retain before us only empty nothingness.' (1966: 41)

⁸ As Schopenhauer himself acknowledges when he considers that 'Here indeed the close relationship between life and dream is brought out for us very clearly. We will not be ashamed to confess it, after it has been recognized and expressed by many great men. The Vedas and Puranas know no better simile for the whole knowledge of the actual world, called by them the web of Maya, than the dream, and they use none more frequently.' (Schopenhauer 1966: vol. 17)

If we look at the way death is evoked in the novel we find Molloy in his mother's *chambre* wondering whether she was already dead when he arrived, dead 'enough to bury' (Beckett 1979: 9) anyway and this gives a sense that for Molloy his mother never quite leaves him. The space she has left is filled by the insubstantial presence of her ghost, or a faint but insistent voice, as in the evocation of the dead in the dramatic work, *Embers* (Beckett 1990: 251–264), in which the voice of the living Henry, symbolically figured on the sea's shore, is mingled not only with the sound of the ocean, but with the voices of the dead animated beyond his control, so they seem more than mere memories. Yet despite this they never stand within the terms of their own individuality, and are hardly the substantial shades of Dante's vision; we even come to wonder if Henry himself is not simply one of those voices of the unstill dead.

Another such presentiment occurs when Moran begins his journey to find Molloy, he notes the spot where he is finally to rest. A stone is already there 'a simple Latin cross' (Beckett 1979: 124), but they (village and religious authorities) have not let him put his name on it yet. He notes it is his 'plot in perpetuity', immortality in death and that he sometimes 'smiled, as if...already dead' indeed the mortal grin of a skull, and yet as he passes the grave yard he is aware that 'The land descends, the wall rises, higher and higher. Soon we were faring below the dead' (Beckett 1979: 124).

The language is clichéd and the archaic 'faring' with its poetic and heroic associations acts as a reminder of Anchises descent into Hades, (Virgil 1968: 147–174) breathing a little life into the dead language, for now it is the living who seem to pass beneath the dead. We think of the myth of the ancient Egyptian sun God who during night passed down through the dead lands only to rise again in the morning,⁹ though here there is no promise of resurrection, only the recognition that life contains death: The boundaries between life and death blur and spill and like the poetry of Rilke becomes heavy with the presence of the unresurrected dead.¹⁰ Beckett develops this awareness very effectively in his dramatic works. Death then is an everyday part of life, not some terrible drive towards destruction

⁹ The following short extract relates to the Egyptian sun God Amon-Ra: '[...]Each hour centres on the sun god in his barque, and around him are the beings who inhabit that region [...] As the sun god passes, he addresses the beings of each hour, who respond in welcome and are revived by the light he sheds [...] Throughout the night, the sun god had to contend with his arch-enemy, the snake Apep, but in the last hours [...] he himself entered a great snake from which he emerged rejuvenated, to be reborn at dawn. (Willis 1993)

¹⁰ Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Selected Poetry*, Picador, Edited and translated by Stephen Mitchell, 1887. See especially the *Duino Elegies*, pp. 151–205.

but a necessary cycle of change and decay, in which the dead nevertheless still have their part to play.

Beckett's purpose in directing our gaze away from a concept of the 'death drive' in Molloy is to begin the process of turning us, the reader / audience, towards the idea of Will in the Schopenhauerian sense of the word. As Piotr Woycicki writes, 'In his later works the representational aspirations are reduced and this makes the structural performance more visible' (Woyciecki 2012: 137). Although Woycicki in his article is concerned with the 'mathematical code' underlying Beckett's performance art; nevertheless, it underlines Beckett's method of removing the representational elements of his work in order to express a recurring pattern which has a definite structure, corresponding with Schopenhauer's concept of the Will; and, I would suggest, with modern mathematical modelling relating to so-called chaos theory. Audrey Wesser alludes to something similar when she considers that *The Trilogy* with its '...nightmarish recurrences of plot and character gives one the sense of Beckett's having created a kind of alternate universe, where events are generated from a combination of a fixed set of narrative elements.' In other words the whole reflects a complex pattern which emerges from a few recurring fundamentals (Wesser 2011: 248).

Schopenhauer relates the Will to Plato's concept of universal forms in that it acts as the one true reality from which all other things arise. Though there is a crucial difference between the platonic and the Schopenhauerian¹¹ theories, one which is equally valid when considering the nature of Beckett's fictions. For example, Plato thought that the various things and creatures which inhabit the world found their origin in some original archetype or fundamental idea. Schopenhauer on the other hand, describes the apparent visual universe, characterised by its constant state of change and decay, as emerging from a formless base pattern, which nevertheless, contains the primary characteristics or tendencies from which these ever transforming shapes and forms emerge. To take this further, Plato is clearly suggesting that the world's intelligible because it has been well designed by an intelligent creator. Schopenhauer's universe is correspondingly bleaker, with none of the fixity or surety of Plato's vision, for here in effect we have pattern without design or purpose. Purpose and intelligibility are only created through those denizens of the world who have acquired consciousness and therefore, shape a world of representation according to their desires and needs. We can see this expressed by both Beckett and Schopenhauer in the following two quotations; the first extract is taken from Beckett's *Proust* essay written in 1931 when Beckett was only just beginning his career as a writer:

¹¹ Rilke Rainer (1987), *The Selected Poetry*. See especially the *Duino Elegies*, pp. 151–205.

A book could be written on the significance of music in the work of Proust [...] The influence of Schopenhauer on this aspect of the Proustian demonstration is unquestionable. Schopenhauer rejects the Leibnizian view of music as 'occult arithmetic,' and his aesthetic separates it from other arts, which can only produce the idea with its comitant phenomena, whereas music is the idea itself, unaware of the world phenomena, existing ideally outside the universe, apprehended not in space but in time only, and consequently untouched by the teleological hypothesis. This essential quality of music is distorted by the listener who, being an impure subject, insists on giving a figure to that which is ideal and invisible [...] thus, by definition, opera is a hideous corruption of this most immaterial of all the arts (Beckett 1965: 91–92).

The second quotation is taken from volume one of *World as Will and Representation*:

Now the nature of man consists in fact that his will strives, is satisfied, strives anew, and so on: in fact his happiness and well-being consists only in transition from desire to satisfaction, and from this fresh desire, such transition going forward rapidly. For the non-appearance of satisfaction is suffering; the empty longing for a new desire is languor, boredom. Thus, corresponding to this, the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the keynote in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals, the third and dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant seventh, and to the extreme intervals; yet there always follows a final key note (Schopenhauer 1966: 260).

We can see that in the first quotation Beckett is concerned to present Schopenhauer's ideas concerning music. That music, at least in the visual or tactile sense, is, unlike the other arts, outside of the normal world of representation;¹² for Schopenhauer the world of representation contains the whole of the phenomenal world, right down to the very rocks we stand on. However, the listener, through culture, education and imagination, gives it a shape and representational form it would not otherwise have. Music is the 'idea' itself, in other words it is like the

¹² As Francois-Nicolas Vozel observes: 'Beckett in *Proust* (1931) follows Schopenhauer in casting music as a superior art form in relation to which literature appears impoverished and necessarily lacking' (Vozel 217: 21). However, I disagree with Vozel when he asserts that 'In Beckett's post-Schopenhauerian universe, art tends to reveal a "musical unconsciousness"'. Such an unconsciousness leads to a decentering of the characters; they know nothing about it even when it is obviously "ordering their actions and desires" (Vozel 217: 23). Vozel clearly underestimates the influence of Schopenhauer on Beckett's later works; yes, there is a kind of musical unconsciousness in that we have the sort of recurring patterns we might find in music, which indeed appear to be ordering the lives of the characters, but this is not some post-Schopenhauerian device, but rather an attempt to convey a sense of the Will or set of repeated characteristics which codify the species. In other words, it is an affirmation that within Beckett's developing aesthetic he includes the most fundamental concepts presented in *World as Will and Representation*.

Schopenhaurian concept of the Will which exists outside of time and consequently forms the thing-in-itself or base pattern on which all else is predicated.¹³ In the second quotation it is Schopenhauer who employs the music analogy to describe the nature of man: human life resembles music in that it is full of variations, ‘digression’ and ‘deviation’, stops and starts; yet it will always return to the overall melody or ‘key notes’: set of characteristics or repeating pattern.

This description offered by Schopenhauer strikingly fits the pattern which unfolds in Molloy’s life as he moves from seeming ‘satisfaction’ to ‘languor’ and ‘boredom’ and back again in the course of his travels. Indeed, this sketches the life of the Beckettian character in general, because what Beckett is searching for ultimately within his own art is not the characteristics of the individual, the Will or primary characteristics on which a single person is built, but that of all humanity. In other words, he attempts to capture the indelible trace of the species which lies beyond representation.

In the course of this article we have isolated the nature of what we have termed Beckett’s ‘aesthetic’. The textual evidence we have uncovered so far strongly suggests two underpinning strands which clearly begin to mark the key developments in, and scope of, Beckett’s fictions; two elements which correspond with Schopenhauer’s division of the individual consciousness into the known¹⁴ and the knowing. This dichotomy of intention is particularly advanced and refined within the prose and drama of Beckett’s later period. Firstly, we noted that the *Molloy* text far from endorsing and incorporating the idea and sense of a death drive, as a number of critics have erroneously suggested, in fact stages an implicit denial of such a negative force, and, in its stead, strongly asserts the will-to-live (as defined by Schopenhauer). In fact the text, by deliberately setting out to discard Freud’s theory, would seem to support the hypothesis that the will-to-live is the only real primary force within nature. And as a confirming proof of this we have already begun to see that it is not through a willing for death, that Molloy (or the other protagonists of *The Trilogy* and the later novellas for that matter) will seek freedom from their purgatorial existence, but rather by a process of letting

¹³ Schopenhauer in *World as will and Representation* claims that music is an ‘entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses the world of perception itself’ (Schopenhauer 1966: 256). He goes on to further claim that ‘music is as immediate an objectification of the will as the world is’ (Schopenhauer 1966: 257); it is because of this that music has the power to convey something of the ‘nature of man himself’.

¹⁴ ‘The known’ corresponds to the Will, consisting of the primary characteristics on which all things are built and which, by understanding our own innate characteristics, we can come to ‘know’ over time.

go of the Will; the denial of desire itself, even if that desire is for death. Yet, even this course will be rejected in favour of simply letting go of the trappings of representation rather than seeking a way out of life itself. This brings us to the second strand of Beckett's fictions, that is to expose the illusory world we have created through our cultures and societies which obscures something of the fundamental nature and characteristics of this otherwise inexplicable force; that urge or will-to-live which will force the principle characters of Beckett's work to go on even when they are devoid of reason and purpose.

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