

## The Demeter Myth in Beckett

Grace to breath that void. Know happiness—Beckett<sup>1</sup>

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A survey of the Beckett criticism of the seventies reveals an overwhelming emphasis by the critics on Beckett's concern with philosophy. Beckett's use of such ideas as rationalism, pessimism, and existentialism, shaped according to their formalist, absurdist, or deconstructive molds, has been well documented.<sup>2</sup> A similar survey of mythic studies of Beckett reveals a very different story. Over the past twenty-three years only five critics have made myth the center of their focus on Beckett.<sup>3</sup>

And yet Beckett's personal letters and critical writings convey a mythic rather than philosophic approach to language. He refers, for instance, in a letter to Axel Kaun, to the undersurface of all things, to the invasion of surface by ground, to the evocation of the unsaid by the said.<sup>4</sup> A mythic view of ground and undersurface suggests a relation between earth and underworld (Hades), alive mythically but hidden to logical thought processes. In "Peintres de l'empêchement" the ground of the unsaid takes on substance, having depth, like a shadow. Shadow "shades" darkness, giving it contours, allowing it to come alive as its own universe. Beckett writes, "on commence enfin à voir, dans le noir. Dans le noir qui est aube et midi et soir et nuit..."<sup>5</sup>

These mythic understandings of Beckett are very close to the psychological truths of which Carl Jung spoke. Jung, strongly influenced by the myth of Amor and Psyche, based his theory of the unconscious on the presence of the Shadow. As our unseen other self, the Shadow hides in images, Jung said, revealing its presence variously: in dreams, visionary poetry, neurotic disturbance. Because the psyche "loves" imaginary life, Jung felt ego consciousness could be transformed by greater attention to poetic images. Indeed, he warned that unless we allow ourselves to mingle with images of the unconscious, we would be doomed to leading soulless, mechanical lives, uninformed by the depths which ground us.<sup>6</sup>

Beckett's texts reveal the Jungian dilemma of modern man in search of soul. And the Beckettian search is mythic, through and through. Quests to and from, characters who are archetypes not stereotypes, variations upon sames: all imply an insistence like that of myth to return to the ground of being. The effect on the reader is extra-audenary.<sup>7</sup> Readers and viewers of Beckett find it impossible to respond to the texts intellectually, only. Like dreams, these texts require us to live in them. Deepest feelings get riled, truths get contradicted, uncertainty prevails. Beckett brings from below rhythms of the past, the purpose of which was then, and is now, to let in the dark side.

The recent presence of women in Beckett's plays deepens the mythic sense by giving it feminine consciousness. Beckett presents what the poets and mythmakers knew of old: that feminine consciousness takes us "back in" and "right down." The haunted females of the recent plays show what it is to be a living soul. It is to live with images. It is to be earthly in a more chthonic way. It gives meaning to Beckett's remark in *Proust* about suffering and art,<sup>8</sup> because suffering

for feminine consciousness is a poetry of the soul. Three qualities, then, make mythic drama its own distinct type. Each of these qualities overturns the dominant, philosophical, Aristotelian requirements of Western drama. Not plot, but image; not action, but rhythm; not character, but ghosts: these three negatives clear the way for Beckett's new drama of myth.

What better myth to give structure to such qualities than the myth of Demeter? The myth that explores the dynamic between mother and daughter is also the myth that explores the dynamic between body and soul, ground and under-surface, seen and unseen, sudden action and long, long suffering. Significantly, although the central event of the myth is Persephone's abduction, the central impact of the abduction is on the mother, Demeter. Goddess of pigs and corn, Demeter had always been oriented to earth and its bounty. Suddenly this orientation shifts with the disappearance of her daughter. She becomes consumed by absence. At the core of the myth is a mystery of this shift, for it is Demeter—not Persephone—who is led away (abducted). Consciousness, not flesh, is abducted. The rape of Persephone is myth's metaphor for the thrust of an Other world, and for the unwillingness of ego to be led down to the dark side.

We could say, then, that the myth of Demeter reveals a potency of mind's imaginings. The mother feels her daughter's absence not intellectually, abstractly, but sensually, concretely. Her grief becomes bodied forth as felt grief: in the feet (she wanders the earth for nine days); in the mouth (she never tastes ambrosia or nectar); and in the flesh (she never washes).<sup>9</sup> When her daughter is returned to her, there is no reunion, for a pattern has been set of everpresent absence. Unlike the quest of the father who captures and retains his boon, the quest of the mother never ends. Demeter must forever share Persephone with the king of the underworld. She must live in her soul as one lives in spring and winter.

It is easy to feel such psychological overtones reverberating in all of Beckett's work. No other writer, surely, has so consistently envisioned the dark side as the more-real, more-felt side of self. In varying degrees of specificity, Beckett makes us aware of his mythic vision. The titles, alone, are one indication. "Footfalls," a play without plot, transforms "pacing feet" into a poetic image of suffering. "Come and Go" suggests the flux of past with present; "That Time" turns past event into mythic event, and so everpresent event. "Ghost Trio" shows the insubstantiality of flesh, with its ghostly layers of being.

But there is specific reference, as well, to the myth of Demeter in the Beckettian corpus. In the early 1937-39 collection of poems, the twelfth poem refers to the plains of Enna, Proserpina, and rape:<sup>10</sup>

jusque dans la caverne ciel et sol  
et une à une les vieilles voix  
d'outre-tombe  
et lentement la même lumière  
qui sur les plaines d'Enna en long viols  
macérait naguère les capillaires  
et les même lois  
que naguère  
et lentement au loin qui éteint

Proserpine et Atropos  
adorable de vide douteux  
encore la bouche d'ombre

Basic to the poem, as to the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, are images of sun, shadow, maidenhair, cavern, and mouth. Tensions between pairs of images imply a mutuality and interdependability, which come to focus on the central image of raped maidenhair: “en long viols / macérait naguère les capillaires.” The syntax of the poem is so ambiguous that it is unclear what, or who, is the object of the rape. The “long viols” or long rapes can refer to the fierce sunlight “raping” the grassy meadows of Enna—as if too much clarity is ruinous; or it can imply the unseen action of Hades, the invisible god of darkness, who in broad daylight, raped Proserpina. Similarly, poetic syntax creates ambiguity by the juxtaposition of cavern and mouth. At the poem’s beginning, sky and sun form a cavern, such that the world is a smaller part of the larger “hole.” At the end of the poem, this cavern becomes a mouth of shadow, “la bouche d’ombre,” as if the entire macrocosm were now about to be swallowed by darkness. Or as if the shadow were coming alive. Image and syntax set off reverberations outside the text. Said and unsaid activate patterns in the reader’s mind and imitate—brilliantly—Demeter’s conundrum. Is it not true that, indeed, we are the objects which the poetic text consumes?

The three mythic qualities—image, rhythm, and ghosts—can be seen in those Beckett plays where women chart a movement from fleshly, sunny, substantially toward evermore greying ghostliness. Winnie, in *Happy Days* (1962) is illustrative of the beginning of this movement. Discovered in blazing light, surrounded by an expanse of scorched grass, Winnie shows the devastating effect on feminine consciousness when it is exposed to too much light. Implanted too firmly in the earth, Winnie is stuck—cut off from *memoria*. Her speech, filled with empty words, and snippets of song or story, is not at all a mingling of soul with image. It is, rather, a grab-bag of literary allusions, like the brushes and combs she removes from her bag—objects, merely, to pass through boredom. When Winnie tells her story of a young girl’s descent down the stairs and sudden seduction, however, she is beginning a descent of consciousness. The story could be considered a parody of the Demeter myth, with reference to “the scream” and “underthings.” The seductor, a mouse, is not the horsedrawn god! And yet the function of the animal is animating to the soul. The mouse disturbs Winnie’s boredom out of its normalcy, interrupting “the old style” of plot, as a forward series of actions seeking resolution. Winnie’s story halts at image, which works like a rat of the unconscious gnawing at the psyche.<sup>11</sup>

Feminine consciousness darkens and deepens further in *Not I* (1972),<sup>12</sup> where a female character called Mouth takes us back to the “mouth” or source of suffering. At the source is image’s power in complete sensory array: seen, heard, felt. The play throws us into a Demeter situation of dry grief; we hear of a hellish life lived without the springs of emotion. But just when life seems most lost, at rock bottom, the wellspring gushes forth in a buzzing of images. A life that was once lived, mechanically and surfacely, is now lived suddenly, with the full force of imagination.

Beckett strips the play of plot in order to concentrate on these sensorial depths. Emerging patterns relate to the basic images of the Demeter myth as set forth in Beckett’s 1930s poem: sun, shadow, mouth. But here the dynamic between the opposites suggests two sides of feminine

consciousness: early, and late, spring and winter, young and old, daughter and mother, Persephone and Demeter. The younger, daughter images are less sensorial, relating to such Persephone motifs as sun (16, 17, 21, 21, 23), spring (23), field (15, 20), and scream (16, 17, 21, 23). With the motif of “the scream,” image takes on aural as well as visual dimension.

The Demeter motifs of Mouth’s suffering-speakings give the full sense of psychic depth. Mouth’s words do not “make” sense because they “are” sense: the sense of how it is to have ego consciousness assaulted. When this happens, awareness moves to a different plane (Hades) in a different season (winter). Action freezes so that the Images of unconsciousness can perform, in their own time and place, the work of animating soul. Beckett thus accomplishes mythic drama not only with a primacy of image over plot but also with the establishment of rhythm between ego and psyche. A pattern of sudden/long marks this rhythm. What happened suddenly, once, in the spring, in the sun, activates the dark, wintered-over terrain of the psyche. Rhythmic patterns excavate the “suddenness” with such word-acts as “flickering on and off” (20), “buzzing”(20), “grabbing at the straw” (21), “ferreting around” (21), “sudden flash” (22). These provide their own counterpoint to “long” with such word-acts as “sitting staring” (20), “sat and watched” (20), “walking all her days” (21), “straining to hear” (20), and “speechless all her days” (21). What Lawrence Harvey referred to in *Waiting for Godot* as the “travel”/ “waiting” archetypes<sup>13</sup> become, here, with feminine consciousness, much more intensified.

What happens to Mouth in *Not I* is also what happens to us: we are made to experience differently. We become the objects of “involuntary memory.” This is not like Winnie’s memory, which she selects from the bank of intelligence and clears of the shadow. It is, rather, as Beckett says, “explosive,” and choosing “its own time and place for the performance of its miracle.”<sup>14</sup> Here in the *Proust* passage of 1931 Beckett redefines what in 1929 the Verticalists had called “a new mythological reality,” neither classical nor positivistic.<sup>15</sup> He insists that images are not of our own making and “real” feelings are not governed by conscious rhythms. The miracle that is performed by involuntary memory is its turning subject into objects so that the self can *be created*.

A very different rhythm pervades *Footfalls* (1976), a rhythm that taps the sounds of words. We see onstage a character visibly saddened at the same time we hear a rhythmic tread. A woman with dishevelled gray hair, wrapped in long gray tatters, walks up and down. She and her mother (whom we do not see) talk about events not even they can verify. Only a strip of stage is lighted so that as we strain to see, understanding comes to us more through hearing. A measured touching of feet to the ground transforms a sight of anguish into a sound of beauty. What we see is a slow dance, and what we hear is a cadenced sound of feet, drawing us into its rhythm, the beauty of which seems strangely at odds with the vision of despair. As the stage directions make evident, the play is really a “sounding” of our every faculty:

Strip:     downstage, parallel with front, length nine steps width  
           one meter, a little off centre; audience right.

Pacing:   starting with right foot (r) from right (R ) to left (L), with  
           left foot (l) from L to R.

Steps: clearly audible rhythmic tread.<sup>16</sup>

What is being “sounded,” I suggest, is our own imagination in the caverns of our heads, made to hold two opposing sensory effects together at once. Our seeing is “odd”: grief, nine steps, leftward movement; our hearing, however, is “even”: a precise, rhythmic pacing. While we in the audience are placed “a little off centre,” we watch a precision performance which draws us into *its* center.

The effect of such rhythms is wonderfully, dramatically different. One difference, noted by Yasunari Takahashi, is to compare Beckettian drama with Noh, and to say that the rhythmic patterns of dance help to prepare an empty space for the coming-forth of unappeased spirits.<sup>17</sup> Another difference, noted by mythologist Karl Kerényi, is to discuss the significance of Demeter dance rituals in the Eleusinian mysteries. The counterclockwise movement, to the *left*, was the *wrong* direction, the direction of death.<sup>18</sup> But by moving leftward the dancers could urge their old patterns (ego) to die so that a new psychic life could get born. Both differences suggest the void’s grace. Both imply a psychomythic understanding of emptiness: that the experience of the void gives new meaning to life and that what is not seen must be propitiated. And both differences relate to a particular, feminine consciousness of Beckett’s recent minimalist drama.<sup>19</sup>

At the center of May’s pacing leftward circle is empty space, which becomes the play’s central metaphor. Absence, being “not there,” the reality of unseen forces: these themes are made clear by Beckett’s carefully choreographed stage directions. Aural more than visual impressions require a listening ear, freed of preconception, ready to receive. Beckett’s use of echo technique enhances this sense. Mother and daughter echo each other: one seen, the other heard. Heard in the play as Voice, the Mother tells a story about her daughter, seen in the play as the walking image of despair. Oddly, the daughter embodies the image of Demeter, dressed in her dark cloak cast down from both shoulders, walking over the land and sea like a wildbird.<sup>20</sup> Even what we see in this play suggests more than what is “there.” In our capacity as auditors and viewers we become transposed into listening receptacles, hardly able to sort *out* threads of plot, able only to let them in.

Memories correspond to no known reality. The story is only a “semblance.” *Storytelling* echos *playviewing* by a fusing together (confusion) of sound and sight. The empty space on the stage fills with levels—out There, in Here—until gradually we realize that the only true substance is created—by words and voices—and that such creations are truly dramatic.

Clearly, echo structure is essential to the play’s mythic meaning. Consider Another of Beckett’s stage directions: “Chime a little fainter. Pause for echos. Fade up a little less on strip. Rest in darkness.” By creating a stage of half-light, half-sound, Beckett makes extraordinary demands on his audience, who must fill “the rest” inside the darkness of their heads. Theater becomes an initiatory experience where, if we will, we can sense the dark.

Beckett’s rhythms establish the horizontals and verticals of feeling. Women move up and down, to and fro, high and low, back and forth. Action is sudden and long. In *Rockaby* (1981) it is the chair that establishes the basic rhythmic movement. According to stage notes, the chair is controlled mechanically without assistance from the woman in the chair.<sup>21</sup> As in *Footfalls*, the

central action is “slightly off center” and the audience is “left,” suggesting, again, that the dramatic center is not Out There but In Here. *Rockaby*’s mechanical chair-rocking sets in motion both object *and* subject and as Enoch Brater notes, joins for the first time the protagonist *with* her voice.<sup>22</sup> The implications of these new combinations of rhythms are many. The chair, for example, is not just a thing; its rhythms make it a sensuous thing. Beckett’s description reads “rounded inward curving arms to suggest embrace”(22); and, as the Voice of Woman says, it is “those arms” of the “old rocker” that do the lulling. But the play is *Rockaby*, not *Lullaby*; and “the old rocker” “the mother rocker” that “rocks her off” with *its* mechanical movement rocks her to say to the rocker “fuck life” (20). In French, “chair” means flesh, especially naked flesh, so that the combined image of “rocking chair,” “mother rocker,” and “rocking flesh” bring together inside a single word two realities of subject and object, the object being endowed with subjective realism.

Similarly, objects surrounding “window” endow it with layers of feeling. “Pane” and “blind” imply more than the *things* of windows, and ironically comment on the classical metaphor of “window” as “eyes of the soul.” Beckett’s “performance poem,” as Brater calls it, gives each dramatic line a poetic depth so that the “window” multiple associations can accrue: “for a blind up/ one blind up/ no more/ never mind a face/ behind the pane” (15). The “eyes” that the woman mentions seven times, “all eyes/all sides,” do *not* see into the soul, do *not* see the pain, and therefore can *not* communicate with the other I’s of the self. With these several object-subject combinations we are taken back to the psychological soundings of the Demeter myth. For it was Helios, the sun god, watchman of both gods and men, able to see “all eyes, all sides,” who was “blind” to the “pain” of Demeter. He who witnessed the fleshact was no window into the soul.

Watching Billie Whitelaw perform in *Rockaby*, and knowing how she prepared for this performance, further suggests the importance of rhythm over action in Beckett’s mythic drama. Who can forget the wonderful way Ms. Whitelaw fingered the words as she pronounced them in rehearsal, as if words themselves were palpable and had rhythms that had to be felt? And who can forfeit the spoken lines we heard her say together with Voice? There were only the two. One line was “time she stopped,” a line of three rhythmic beats, but to which she gave five, extending the word “stopped” beyond its utterance. The “stopping” was itself a mode of animation. And the repeated demand “More,” in the play performance, sounded the sounds of the word. “More” became at once “maw” and “Ma.” In that one word “More” we were taken back in and right down to the other feminine sources of *Rockaby*. Mouth, in *Not I*, and the ghostly mother in *Footfalls*. Woman in *Rockaby* is so much “more” than her self. She is, as Charles Lyons observes, the rhythmic rehearsal of other texts as well.<sup>23</sup>

A third feature of Beckett’s mythic drama addresses this last point. Character is not substantial, but ghostly: created by images, voices, and pasts. Bodies of the female characters are containers for the flow of images, objects like “chair,” whose rhythmic physical actions set the soul in motion. They are less “present” because of some compelling past memory. May in *Footfalls* is illustrative. Her obsessive pacing up and down seems a kind of therapy-by-instinct. As she walks in the Left-turn circle, she revolves over and over in her mind a strange thought: something is missing from her life. In a bodied way she is made aware of a psychic void. It is as if her lack of unconscious life were suddenly being felt as a need to turn Left, to bring instinct closer. The telling-walking combination of May’s speech-act, a kind of Demeter dance, brings

forward to consciousness the void she so carefully circumscribes with her feet. When May tells her story, which she calls a “sequel,” she is giving utterance to shadow, becoming “la bouche d’ombre.” As Beckett once said of her, May puns on the words “seek” and “well,” since she is seeking for herself.<sup>24</sup>

The sequel May tells concerns an “old Mrs. Winter,” who discusses with her daughter Amy the possibility that the girl may not, in Reality, exist. The Mother heard “something” at the Evensong worship service. Did Amy not hear it, too? Amy responds: “I observed nothing of any kind, strange or otherwise. I saw nothing, heard nothing of any kind. I was not there” (48). Who, we wonder, is less present, Mother or daughter? And how can one seek for what is “not there”?

May’s sequel is a literary sequel of another crisis-crossed Mother-daughter pairing in the Beckett canon. In *All That Fall* (1957) Miss Fitt and Mrs. Rooney share a similar ghostly pairing, neither of whom is “there” to the other, each of whom has difficulty with “Mother.” Miss Fitt, for example, in looking for her mother at the train station, is caught between *travel / waiting* since (like Godot) the Mother never arrives. This situation colors her relationship with the other Mother-figure of the play, Mrs. Rooney, who in her eyes is “just another big pale blur.”<sup>25</sup>

“Seeing” and re-cognizing or “knowing-again” share, in feminine consciousness, a fundamentally negative dynamic, as when Miss Fitt says to Mrs. Rooney, “I saw you, but I did not know you” (p. 54). So invisible are they to each other, to themselves, that female presences are not able to be “known” because they are, simply, not “there.” Mrs. Rooney remarks, “Don’t mind me. Don’t take notice of me. I do not exist” (48). And Miss Fitt, in an echo of May’s sequel of Amy, says, “Oh, but in church, Mrs. Rooney, in church I am alone with my Maker.... I suppose the truth is I am not there, Mrs. Rooney, just not really there at all” (54-55).

These remarks, embedded in an ongoing drama of searching/not finding, being/not being, are themselves real sequels to another remark in another—psychological—context. Mrs. Rooney is not listening to Mr. Rooney’s “composition” about the train ride, remembering instead the story of a girl told by “a new mind doctor.” The girl could not be treated for her distress and died, but the real trouble, according to the doctor, was that she had never really been born (84). The anecdote is directly attributable to C.G. Jung’s Third Tavistock Lecture given at the Tavistock Clinic (1935). During the discussion period Jung commented on the case of a little girl who had, he said, “the most amazing mythological dreams.... The little girl died a year later of an infectious disease. She had never been born entirely.”<sup>26</sup> What is of interest here is Jung’s placement of this case in a mythological framework which years later (1961) he explained in details that recall the basic pattern of the Demeter myth: destruction and death in the spring of life. Jung wrote of the dreams:

These dreams open up a new and rather terrifying vision of life and death.... For this child, life was a *ver sacrum vovendum*, a vow of a vernal sacrifice. Experience shows that the unknown approach of death casts an adumbration an anticipatory shadow, over the life and dreams of the victim (233-4).

In psychomythic terms Mrs. Rooney is not “there” because her daughter has not been born within her. Beckett bears this theme out by the music “Death and the Maiden” and by the death of the little child at the end.

May, too, is not “there.” But in another sense she is everywhere, like a ghost. She is May, daughter-mother in one; May, anagram of Amy; May, real mother of Beckett; May, springtime that dies and comes again; May, our lost youth without which we are not born; May, Everymother to Everyman. May’s pacing, her trailing wraps, her nightfall ritual, provide mythic images and sounds to prepare a listening audience for Woman in *Rockaby*. For, in both plays what we see “there” lives by our memory of her inside the Beckett canon, and within the deepest layers of culture.

Woman, in *Rockaby*, is the epitome of all of Beckett’s female characters. She conveys what Ruby Cohn calls an “exquisite feminine grayness,”<sup>27</sup> on the other end of a continuum from Winnie’s sunny pathos. And in her grayness we see the living soul. She is ghost rather than character; for, like a window pane, she enables us to see *through* her. In her bodied self she is expressionless, insubstantial, unreal—a conduit for an Other reality. Enoch Brater makes this point when he says that *Rockaby* shows the substance of *image*: what we see visually is created by words.<sup>28</sup> Charles Lyons makes a similar observation by commenting that the present “I” in the play is really the residue of consciousness, the accumulated past.<sup>29</sup> But what it means to “be a living soul,” the ghost of a person, relates to the basic grounding myth of feminine consciousness, the myth of Demeter.

“The Homeric Hymn to Demeter” ends with the poet’s referring to a joy that can be gained by understanding loss: “Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries” (II, 480). In other words, those who glimpse the dark know that happiness is “no-ing,” travelling the pathway of the void. To know “nothing” is to experience the ins and outs of one’s own shadow until one knows happiness as no “thing”—just a flowing inside a well. In *Rockaby*, Woman’s search for “another like herself” / “a little like” is not successful. At the “close of a long day” there can be no stopping. Forever in chronological time the orientation of Woman will be psychological and mythological: back and down. If, as is the doom of Woman, physical life must be lived facing “other only windows”/ “all blinds down,” this is a comment on those who have not found the mystery of feminine consciousness, the grace to breathe that void.

It is not enough, finally, to recognize the many similarities between the Demeter myth and Beckett. Nor is it enough to comment on myth’s orientation toward image, rhythm, and ghosts. As modern souls, we must re-cognize our own images, for our own famished eyes. Beckett urges us to see the world of feeling, not There, but Here, in the shadows of the self.

## NOTES

1. Samuel Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said*, trans. from the French by the author (New York: Grove Press, 1981), 59.

2. For critical writings on Beckett's philosophy see particularly Sighle Murphy, *Murphy's Bed: A Study of Real Sources and Sur-real Associations in Samuel Beckett's First Novel* (Lowisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1971); Edith Kern, *Existential Thought and Fictional Technique: Kierkegaard, Sartre, Beckett* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970); Rubin Rabinovitz, "Watt from Descartes to Schopenhauer," *Modern Irish Literature*, ed. Porter and Brophy (New York: Iona College Press, 1972). For critical writings on Beckett's aesthetics see particularly "Beckett and Queneau as Formalists," *James Joyce Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (Summer, 1971) 392-402; H. Porter Abbott, *The Fiction of Samuel Beckett: Form and Effect* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973); Eugene Webb, *The Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972); Frederick Busi, *The Transformations of Godot* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980); David H. Hesla, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971); Mervin J. Friedman, ed. *Samuel Beckett Now: Critical Approaches to His Novels, Poetry and Plays* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).
3. See Curtis M. Brooks, "The Mythic Pattern in *Waiting for Godot*," *Modern Drama* IX (1966). 292-299; Sighle Kennedy, "Spirals of Need: Irish Prototypes in Samuel Beckett's Fiction," *New Light on Three Modern Irish Writers*, ed. McGrory and Unterecker (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1976), 153-166; Edith Kern, "Moran-Molloy: The Hero as Author," *Perspective* XI, no. 3 (Autumn, 1959), 183-193; Vivian Mercier, "Samuel Beckett and the Sheela-Na-Gig," *Kenyon Review* 23, no. 2 (Spring, 1961), 229-328; and Rubin Rabinovitz, "Molloy; and the Archetypal Traveller," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 5 (Autumn, 1979), 25-44.

Other critics have made passing mention of Beckett's use of myth, notably Breon Mitchell, "The Manuscript Stages of Beckett's *Come and Go*," *Modern Drama* 19, no. 3 (September, 1976), 245-254, in which reference is made to three women as the Three Graces; and S. E. Gontarski's chapter, "A New Mythological Reality: The Literary Allusions in *Happy Days*," *Happy Days: A Manuscript Study* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Libraries, 1977), 59-74, reprinted in *Beckett: Essays and Criticism* (New York; Grove Press, 1986), pp. 308-324, in which literary allusions from every epoch are seen as forming a pervasive myth of the entire Western culture.

4. Unpublished letter of Samuel Beckett to Axel Kaun (September, 1937), trans. George Koenig; Critical review of Denis Devlin's "Intercessions," by Samuel Beckett, *transition* 27 (April-May, 1938), 293.
5. In Lawrence Harvey, *Samuel Beckett: Poet and Critic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 427.
6. Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1958), 83; rpt. *Collected Works* 10 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).
7. See the pun in Beckett, "Denis Devlin," 293.

8. Beckett, *Proust* (New York: Grove Press, 1931), 16.
9. "The Homeric Hymn to Demeter," in *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), lines 45-50. Further references to this work, cited by line, will be in my text.
10. Beckett, *Collected Poems in French and English* (New York: Grove Press, 1977). For drawing my attention to the significance of this poem to the Demeter myth I am grateful to Rubin Rabinovitz.
11. For Winnie's story see *Happy Days* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 54-59. For comment on the rat as a psychic image, see C. G. Jung, "The Functions of the Unconscious," in *The Symbolic Life*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, *Collected Works* 18 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 106.
12. Beckett, *Not I*, in *Ends and Odds* (New York: Grove Press, 1976). The numbers in parentheses refer to pages from this text.
13. Harvey, 212.
14. *Proust*, 20-21.
15. See *transition* 21 (March, 1932), 148.
16. Beckett, *Footfalls* in *Ends and Odds*, 42. All other references to this work will be cited in my text.
17. "Samuel Beckett and the Noh," *Encounter* 58 (April, 1982), 67.
18. *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) 70-100. Also see Patricia Berry, "The Rape of Demeter/ Persephone," *Spring* (1975), 197-98.
19. An exception to this dance of the void can be seen in *Quad*, a minimalist drama of masculine dance. As Martha Fehsenfeld notes, this dance is marked by feverish monotony, excruciating sameness, and an *avoidance* of the center. See her "Beckett's Late Works: An Appraisal," *Modern Drama* 25:3 (September, 1982), 255-62.
20. See "Homeric Hymn," lines 42-3.
21. Beckett, *Rockaby and Other Short Pieces* (New York: Grove Press, 1981), 22. All other references to this play will be cited in my text.
22. "Light, Sound, Movement and Action in Beckett's *Rockaby*," *Modern Drama* 25:3 (September, 1982), 343.

23. "Perceiving *Rockaby*—As a Text, As a Text by Samuel Beckett, As a Text for Performance," *Contemporary Drama* 16:4 (Winter, 1982-3), 303.
24. Walter D. Asmus, "Practical Aspects of Theater, Radio and Television: Rehearsal Notes," trans. Helen Watanabe, *Journal of Beckett Studies* 2 (Summer, 1977), 85.
25. Beckett, *All That Fall in Krapp's Last Tape and Other Dramatic Pieces* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 54. All other references to this work will be in my text.
26. C. G. Jung, "Lecture III," in *Symbolic Life*, 96. The quotation that follows by Jung, cited in parentheses, comes from this citation.
27. *Just Play: Beckett's Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 270.
28. Brater, 344.
29. Lyons, 302.