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Decomposing the asylum in Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies*: Genetic criticism and the author¹

Summary

This article focuses on Samuel Beckett's use of the asylum in his novel *Malone Dies* to explore the role of non-textual elements in genetic criticism (the study of a writer's creative process through the analysis of their compositional manuscripts), as well as the function of the author in genetic analysis. Taking as its starting point Iain Bailey's challenge to genetic critics to account for the biographical author which underpins the discipline's study of written traces in authorial manuscripts, the article contends that genetic criticism must be used in tandem with other approaches such as historicism when studying spaces like Beckett's asylums. Though Beckett took a scholarly approach when integrating such material into earlier work, making research notes which can be regarded as part of the genetic dossier, the asylum in *Malone Dies* – based on Dublin's Saint John of God Hospital – leaves no such trail of textual breadcrumbs. Therefore, we must pay particular attention to the historical function of Saint John of God's in order to understand how the asylum works in composition and reception. In doing so, an author existing beyond the written traces they leave behind can retake their place in a necessarily incomplete empirical field over five decades after Roland Barthes prematurely declared their death.

Keywords: Samuel Beckett, asylum, genetic criticism, manuscript, biography

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In his PhD thesis ‘Samuel Beckett, Intertextuality, and the Bible’, Iain Bailey raises a problem for the field of genetic criticism (the study of a writer’s creative process through the analysis of their compositional manuscripts). Since, as Almuth Grésillon puts it, ‘all genetic investigation is based on the existence of written traces’, this raises the questions of how material external to the writing process becomes integrated into that process and how such material should be analysed by genetic critics (Grésillon 1994: 215, qtd. and trans. in Bailey 2010: 92). Focussing on Raymond Debray-Genette’s key conceptual distinction for genetic criticism between ‘exogenesis’ (a writer’s ‘selection and appropriation of sources’) and ‘endogenesis’ (the ‘production and transformation of redactional levels’), Bailey points to the paradoxical notion that “external documents” have to become internal to the genetic dossier (part of the process) before they can be read as external’ (Bailey 2010: 90–1). This leads Bailey to a critique of genetic criticism’s reliance on a biographical author outside the creative process in order to underpin its study of this author’s absorption and redaction of compositional material. It is not the case that information gained from studying an author’s written traces is not valuable, says Bailey. But genetic criticism, ‘which grounds its knowledge about what external material made its way into the author’s oeuvre wholly on [...] “written traces”, also relies on a tacit understanding that the documentation represents only a portion of the author’s activity’ (Bailey 2010: 92).

This argument is particularly pertinent with regard to the genesis of literary space, particularly since Bailey’s critique raises the question of how far the concept of the ‘text’—and with it the ‘genetic dossier’—should be extended.² Though genetic criticism ‘grows out of a structuralist and poststructuralist notion of “text”’, it generally retains a stricter idea of the text than some of its theoretical stalemates (Ferrer and Groden 2004: 2). One possible approach is to think of ‘the world as text’ (Barthes [1967] 1977: 147), extending the idea of the text so that it encompasses the spatial, levelling out the differences between architectural structures and literary compositions. This article takes another approach, using a relatively narrow definition of the text as ‘the sequence of words and pauses recorded in a document’, rather than expanding its boundaries, and consequently those of the genetic dossier, to an unmanageably large extent (Shillingsburg 1999: 174). Instead of extending the text so that it colonizes every object the author draws on, it is more helpful

2 I use Grésillon’s definition of the genetic dossier as a ‘set of all the preserved written genetic witnesses of a work or of a project of writing, classed according to successive stages of their chronology. Synonym: “*avant-texte*” [“ensemble de tous les témoins génétiques écrits conservés d’une œuvre ou d’un projet d’écriture, et classés en fonction de leur chronologie des étapes successives. Synonyme: “*avant-texte*”]. Grésillon suggests this term as an alternative to ‘*avant-texte*’ to allow for the genetic analysis of written evidence of the creative process for which a textual model is not suitable (Grésillon 1994: 242, 109).

to recognize the limits of textuality and then build bridges across methodological boundaries. The asylums that feature in Beckett's prose offer an ideal opportunity to rethink the genetic study of such spatial elements as they are integrated into the creative process, demonstrating 'the necessity of carefully locating and measuring the mediations that bind, as well as separate, the genetic avant-texte and its sociocultural space' (Mitterand 2004: 130). Because of the importance of spatial elements in Beckett's representations of coercive confinement, this article draws on the tools of historicism in parallel with those of genetic criticism. First, I give an overview of the asylums in Beckett's early prose, before zooming in on the 'decomposition' of Dublin's Saint John of God Hospital in *Malone Dies* as my main case study. This will allow for a reconsideration of the relationship between textual and non-textual elements in genetic criticism, as well as the place of the author in literary analysis.

Beckett's asylums

Beckett's interest in asylums – and the terminology associated with them – ran deep. As early as 1929, in 'Dante ... Bruno . Vico .. Joyce', he called James Joyce's critics 'monodialectical arcadians', who mistook an emerging masterpiece, 'Work in Progress', for 'the "ravings of a Bedlamite"', thus drawing on a long tradition of Anglophone writing on mental disorder which saw 'bedlam' enter the *OED* to denote 'a scene of uproar and confusion' (*Dis*: 31). Central to this tradition of literary melancholy, madness and, in the terminology of Beckett's day, neurosis and psychosis, was London's Bethlem Royal Hospital, whose status as a national institution of mental illness Beckett came across in his reading. He would have encountered Jonathan Swift's vicious satire on the confinement of the insane when reading *A Tale of a Tub*, whose narrator claims to have been an inmate in Bethlem (Swift [1704] 2004: 98; see Smith 2002: 30). Beckett's creative use of Bethlem Asylum, on which he based the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat in his novel *Murphy*, can be traced in his reading notes on James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, in which Beckett noted Johnson and Boswell's asylum visit of 8 May 1775: 'He [Boswell] calls the cells in Bedlam the "mansions" (& the corridors the galleries)' (UoR MS 3461/1: 15r, qtd. in Smith 2002: 24).³ We can track Beckett's own visiting of Bethlem in his correspondence with Thomas McGreevy: 'I was down at Bedlam this day week & went round the wards for the first time, with scarcely any sense of horror, though I saw everything, from mild depression to profound dementia' (SB to TM, 22 September 1935, *LSB I*: 277). Furthermore, we can study Beckett's research notebooks,

³ As C. J. Ackerley points out, the detail in parentheses is taken from a footnote added by John Wilson Croker to his edition of Boswell's *Life*, with Beckett incorrectly attributing the word 'galleries' to Boswell himself (2010: 150).

which record the detailed knowledge he accumulated as he made his way around Bethlem. In the 'Whoroscope' Notebook, Beckett took notes on the procedure for putting patients on suicide watch, the practice of patients being bullied by the staff, the specific terminology used to describe the asylum cells, the hierarchy among the staff and the living arrangements for nurses, all of which he used in the novel (UoR MS 3000: 11r–13r). These 'Whoroscope' Notes form part of the genetic dossier, giving us a written trace of Beckett's creative process as he gathered material with a view to writing *Murphy*.

As Beckett's own writing process developed, however, 'references are absorbed rather than overtly visible' (Nixon 2011: 187) and his creative use of confined space leaves fewer traces in the written record. So, the wartime novel *Watt* features a 'vaguened' form of *Murphy*'s asylum, identifiable only through the two novels' common use of the word 'mansions', which Beckett borrowed from Boswell's description of Bethlem.⁴ The postwar novellas 'The End' and 'The Expelled' kickstart their narratives with evictions from institutions which are identifiably institutional, though the exact type of institution is not identifiable. Crucially, the genetic dossier provides no evidence of a recognisable source for these buildings. On current available evidence, it is impossible to identify the novellas' 'realistic and traditional substructure' that S. E. Gontarski sees as the starting point for Beckett's working process of 'undoing' (in the playtexts).⁵ For instance, in 'L'Expulsé', Beckett uses the unusual term 'alvéoles', a word more commonly used to describe an anatomical cavity, to describe the institution from which he has just been evicted: 'Ils étaient tous rentrés dans leurs alvéoles et chacun vaquait à ses travaux' (2014: 17) ['They had all gone back into their dens and resumed their occupations' (CSP: 49)]. On the evidence of the notebook draft (HRC SB MS 3/6), this institution was not 'vaguened' from a 'realistic substructure'. Rather, Beckett seems to have decomposed this spatial detail in the process of drafting an institution which is quite close to that in the published text.

Based on this reduction of topographical detail in his postwar work, the trajectory of Beckett's subtractive working process has been mapped onto his entire

4 'It was about this time that Watt was transferred to another pavilion, leaving me behind in the old pavilion. We consequently met, and conversed, less than formerly [...]. For we seldom left our mansions, Watt seldom left his mansion and I seldom left mine' (*W*: 129). The passage appears in similar form in *Watt* Notebook 4 (HRC SB MS 7/1/93), including the oblique reference to Boswell. I follow Rosemary Pountney's use of the term 'vaguened', which she found in a draft of *Happy Days* and interprets as 'explicit testimony to Beckett's policy of "vaguening" the later drafts of his plays' (1988: 149).

5 '[T]he plays most often emerge from and rest on a realistic and traditional substructure, against which the final work develops dialectically. While Beckett labors to undo that traditional structure and realistic content, he never wholly does so. The final work retains those originary tracings and is virtually a palimpsest' (Gontarski 1985: 2).

oeuvre. Rosemary Pountney sees the process of 'vaguening' as taking place not just in each text (her book too examines his plays), but also across Beckett's body of work: 'The process of drafting each play [...] may be seen as a microcosm of the development of Beckett's oeuvre as a whole, a refining and scaling down of the text' (1988: 195). In this model, there is a move from 'the Dublin-landmarked stories of *More Pricks Than Kicks* to the nameless spaces of his later fiction and drama' (Greene 2014: 129). But this needs to be nuanced. As more recent genetic studies of Beckett's work have argued, 'it would be too straightforward to conclude that Beckett's way of proceeding was merely a matter of pruning and undoing. The procedure also involved adding and redoing' (Van Hulle and Weller 2018: 243). A crucial case study in this regard is Beckett's novel *Malone Dies*, the last of his works to contain an identifiable asylum.

Malone decomposes

To describe Beckett's poetics, Dirk Van Hulle uses the term 'decomposition', which is apt with regard to the topographical disintegration that occurs in much of Beckett's postwar work, given that 'decompose' has its roots in the French verb *poser*, meaning 'to place'. Van Hulle cites Malone, a victim of physical decay himself, who claims to have 'lost the faculty of decomposing' the buzzing he hears, a buzzing caused by the sounds of the world merging into one (*MD*: 33, qtd. in Van Hulle 2008: 169). With its meaning ghosted by Malone's own impending death, decomposition is for this dying narrator an 'analytical activity' which separates out elements of information and tries to follow them back to their sources in order to make sense of them (Van Hulle 2008: 172). In the case of the asylum created by Malone as the setting for one of the stories he tells, such analytical decomposition points towards an important institutional space in Dublin. However, as Van Hulle points out, 'in order to study the dynamics of the writing process, it is not enough to follow it upstream to discover a few sources; it is also necessary to follow the "flux" downstream' (2008: 163), and to say as much as we can about how source material was absorbed into the creative process.

Towards the beginning of the novel, Malone distances himself from his fictional predecessors by describing his room: 'It is not a room in a hospital, or in a madhouse, I can feel that' (*MD*: 7). That this needs to be pointed out to the reader demonstrates the extent to which such institutions became staples of Beckett's work. Just after this line, Malone hypothesizes that, were it not for the fact that he can feel himself dying, he may have thought he was 'in one of heaven's mansions' (*MD*: 8), repeating the term used to describe the asylums of *Murphy* and *Watt*, but emphasizing its biblical intertext rather than the link to Boswell.⁶ In spite of these

⁶ 'In my father's house there are many mansions' (John 14.2).

narrative shifts away from the institutions which populate the earlier prose, the final section of *Malone Dies* is located unambiguously in an asylum, where the last of Malone's own fictional creatures is confined. Here, Beckett revisits another asylum mentioned in *Murphy* (*Mu*: 29–30); not Bethlem Asylum, but Dublin's Saint John of God Hospital:

One day, much later, to judge by his appearance, Macmann came to again, once again, in a kind of asylum. At first he did not know it was one, being plunged within it, but he was told so as soon as he was in a condition to receive news. They said in substance, You are now in the House of Saint John of God, with the number one hundred and sixty-six. Fear nothing, you are among friends. Friends! Well well. Take no thought for anything, it is we shall think and act for you, from now forward. We like it. (*MD*: 84)

Eoin O'Brien has outlined the correspondences between the asylum in Beckett's text and the Saint John of God Hospital in South County Dublin, a psychiatric institution less than fifteen minutes' cycle from the author's childhood home in Foxrock (1986: 240–5). Beckett remembered this asylum long after he had left Dublin, recalling the Hospital as being part of the local topography of his youth in a 1971 letter to Barbara Bray.⁷ However, it is not possible to trace a textual trail back to where this particular was picked up for inclusion in *Malone Dies*, though the level of descriptive detail in the novel suggests that Beckett, in line with his previous reconnoitring of psychiatric institutions for inclusion in his short story 'Fingal' and *Murphy*, may well have made a trip there on one of his postwar visits home.⁸ As far as we know, there is no surviving notebook for the early postwar fiction of a kind similar to the 'Whoroscope' Notebook, in which the written descriptions of Beckett's visits to the Bethlem Royal Hospital form part of the genetic dossier of *Murphy*. However, the Saint John of God Hospital is nevertheless a crucial element in the book's composition. Bailey notes a similar issue when he argues that studying the Bible in Beckett's work necessarily takes us beyond the tracing of evidence in what Grésillon, discussing the benefit of knowing the exact editions which writers used when reading for their own work, calls a 'manière sûre' (Grésillon 1994: 216, qtd. in Bailey 2010: 90). As in the case of Beckett's notes on Boswell, such information is extremely useful. But we must also be able to track the function of elements in the composi-

7 'Cabinteely a little village not far from old home on main Dublin road. Remember letting out the old Swift [bicycle] to get up the hill. Near St. John of God's' (SB to Bray, 2 November 1971, *LSB* IV: 272).

8 For Beckett's trips to Portrane Asylum, the setting for 'Fingal', see SB to McGreevy, 5 January 1933, *LSB* I: 150 and SB to McGreevy, 23 April 1933, *LSB* I: 154. Beckett spent part of 1947 in Dublin and wrote the asylum section of *Malone Dies* in 1948 (Pilling 2006: 101; *BDMP* V).

tional process which do not provide a detailed trail as part of the chronologically reconstituted *avant-texte*. In taking into account the social function of an institution like the Saint John of God Hospital, we can enrich our interpretation of the closing section of *Malone Dies* by tracking the novel's genesis of space using a historicist approach which complements the genetic study of his written traces.

The hospital setting would have had an interesting resonance for the novel's earliest readers when it was first published in 1951 as *Malone meurt*, in which Macmann is found in 'l'asile Saint-Jean-de-Dieu' (Beckett 2012: 132). Only the most dedicated of Beckett's tiny cadre of early readers would have recognized this as the same hospital mentioned in *Murphy*, the French translation of which was published in April 1947 and which had sold no more than 285 copies in 1951 (Pilling 2006: 100–1). Certainly, Francophone readers would have been less likely to recognize the topological details taken from the surroundings of the Dublin hospital than their later Anglophone counterparts. But given the strong international presence of the Order of Saint John of God—with branches in France, the UK and the United States—the name of the institution is likely to have had a similarly vague association with some form of clerical medical care for the early readers of *Malone meurt* and those of *Malone Dies*. The reference ends up working in a similar way to the request of the lost narrator in 'The Expelled' that a cabman bring him to the zoo. 'It is rare for a capital to be without a Zoo', he tells us, thereby keeping the possible topographical interpretations of the story open (CSP: 53). In *Molloy*, Moran uses the same trick when confronted by a farmer, who angrily accuses him of trespassing, by telling him that he is on a pilgrimage to the local statue of the Virgin Mary: 'To the Turdy Madonna, I said. The Turdy Madonna? he said, as if he knew Turdy like the back of his hand and there were no Madonna in the length and breadth of it. But where is the place in which there is no Madonna?' (*Mo*: 181). It may be rare for a capital to be without a zoo or for a Christian, particularly a Catholic, country to be without a Marian statue; it is equally rare for a Western European country not to have a psychiatric institution named after a Christian saint. In spite of having a very specific, local source, the function of the reference to the House of Saint John of God becomes hermeneutically open in reception and translation, taking us beyond the certainty of a one-to-one identification.

Beckett's varied methods of 'undoing' are again evident in his use of another Dublin institution of religion, Glasnevin cemetery, which is mentioned by name and receives a footnote in *Malone meurt* as 'un cimetière local très estimé' [a highly regarded local cemetery], but is translated in *Malone Dies* as 'the nearest cemetery'. This reference appears in a poem written by Macmann to his lover Moll: 'La main dans la main vers Glasnevin / C'est le meilleur du chemin' [Hand in hand towards Glasnevin / It is the best of ways] (Beckett 2012: 143). In the iambic English translation, 'the nearest' could have easily been replaced by the three-syllable 'Glasnevin'. That Beckett chose not to draw our attention to the proper noun's absence:

*To the lifelong promised land
Of the nearest cemetery
With his Sucky hand in hand
Love it is at last leads Hairy. (MD: 92)*

Seán Kennedy rightly sees this topographical change between French and English versions of the novel as evidence of Beckett's 'undoing' in translation, part of the author's 'way of situating himself in oblique relation to his own personal and cultural history' (2005: 22). However, by using 'cemetery' in the English text, Beckett is returning to the vague 'cimetière' in the earliest extant draft of the poem, which was then changed to the more specific 'Glasnevin', before being 'undone' again in translation (HRC SB MS 7/4: 79v, *BDMP* V). Along with the translation of 'l'asile Saint-Jean-de-Dieu' into English, which brings a topographical reference closer to home, this process of first making the cemetery reference more specific and only later subjecting it to 'undoing' in translation shows that Beckett did not have a fixed method of 'vaguening' place.

Another way in which Beckett decomposed the asylum setting was to make the staff who administer it lay rather than clerical (O'Brien 1986: 244). However, this decomposed space retains many scenic details of its source. In outlining the panoramic view of the land surrounding the asylum, Malone calls to mind a description of asylum grounds in Beckett's prewar prose:

From here a fine view was to be obtained of the plain, the sea, the mountains, the smoke of the town and the buildings of the institution, bulking large in spite of their remoteness and all astir with little dots or flecks forever appearing and disappearing, in reality the keepers coming and going, perhaps mingled with I was going to say with the prisoners ['prisonniers']! For seen from this distance the striped cloak had no stripes, nor indeed any great resemblance to a cloak at all. So that one could only say, when the first shock of surprise was past, Those are men and women, you know, people, without being able to specify further. A stream at long intervals bestrid—but to hell with all this fucking scenery. (*MD*: 107–8; Beckett 2012: 167)

As Sam Slote points out, the last line of the English translation is far more violent than its French counterpart: 'Une rivière qu'enjambaient de loin en loin—mais il s'agit bien de la nature' (Beckett 2012: 167; see Slote 2011: 210). This makes it possible to read the passage as a focused attack on Beckett's prewar style, such as a similar passage describing the asylum grounds in 'Fingal'.⁹ In *Malone Dies*, it is

⁹ 'Now the loonies poured out into the sun, the better behaved left to their own devices, the others in herds in charge of warders. The whistle blew and the herd stopped; again, and it proceeded. [...] Below in the playground on their right some of the milder patients were kicking

not only asylum and narrator that are decomposed, but also a prose style centred on verisimilitude which Beckett had critiqued with the hyper-fastidious realism of 'demented particulars' in *Murphy* (*Mu*: 11). Having then featured as a key space in *Watt*, it is fitting that an asylum should be at the centre of Beckett's two-fingered farewell to the 'fucking scenery' of realist fiction.

Conclusion: the author dies on

At the end of his novel, the disintegration of the text into fragmented, gapped sentences indicates that Malone has, finally, died. However, given the importance of Beckett as an authorial figure in manuscript studies of his work, our idea of Malone's author may be better captured by the phrase '[d]ying on' (*CDW*: 426), particularly given the ongoing publication of Beckett's 'grey canon'.¹⁰ This might help us rethink Barthes's famous 'death of the author', proclaimed over five decades ago. 'To give a text an Author', Barthes declares, 'is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing' ([1967] 1977: 147). Literary criticism in the wake of Barthes's essay has produced a substantially more complex figure of the author. In the field of Beckett studies alone, H. Porter Abbott's notion of 'autography' constructs a picture of life writing which is not limited to story of the author's life (autobiography) but which encompasses all forms of 'self-writing'. 'Preferable to all these is the coinage "autographical action", for it concentrates attention on the text, both as "self"-writing and as immediate action taking place as it is written' (Abbott 1996: x). In her study of Beckett and intertextuality, Daniela Caselli has shown how the constructed figure of "Mr Beckett" [a self-reference in Beckett's first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (*D*: 141)] as the authority behind the texts is produced by repetitions, echoes', including those from broader culture (Caselli 2005: 3). Writing more broadly of literary studies and aesthetics, Rita Felski contends that '[t]he "death of the author" thesis [...] has come to seem increasingly outdated, as authors become ever more visible, voluble, and inescapable' (2020, 90). This is also the case when an author such as Beckett retains a strong public presence after death, 'dying on' through posthumous publications and interpretations.

a football. Others were lounging about, alone and in knots, taking their ease in the sun. The head of one appeared over the wall, the hands on the wall, the cheek on the hands. Another, he must have been a very tame one, came half-way up the slope, disappeared into a hollow, emerged after a moment and went back the way he had come. Another, his back turned to them, stood fumbling at the wall that divided the grounds of the asylum from the field where they were. One of the gangs was walking round and round the playground. Below on the other hand a long line of workmen's dwellings, in the gardens children playing and crying. Abstract the asylum and there was little left of Portrane but ruins' (*MPTK*: 22-3).

¹⁰ Gontarski coined the term 'grey canon' to denote Beckett's 'letters, notebooks, manuscripts' and other written material which falls outside the published 'white canon' (2006: 143).

What this analysis of *Malone Dies* has shown is that having an author both producing and being produced by the text does not mean that '[t]he *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it' (Barthes [1967] 1977: 143; emphasis in original). Instead, the author can take his or her place in a necessarily incomplete epistemological field as we debate our interpretations of the text. By marking out the border zones between known and unknown in textual and historicist criticism, genetic critics can help in producing this more complex figure of the author. Far from exhuming a corpse-like figure of literary authority over five decades after Barthes declared this figure's death, what emerges from the study of Beckett's manuscripts is an author that must be constructed and critically contested through detailed examinations of 'autographical action'. In *Malone Dies*, we have an asylum that we know Beckett knew about, but what we know of how that asylum became part of the novel contains gaps. Such gaps do not signal a failure of research; instead, they can enrich our interpretations.

In *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, his monograph on modernist writings of the self, Finn Fordham argues:

Genetic criticism doesn't need to fear the resurrection of the single author: by incorporating the process of composition in its social dimensions, it will produce enriched narratives about the social processes of composition. (2010: 33)

I fully agree with Fordham. However, bearing in mind Barthes's critique of the God-like 'Author', I would rather avoid terms like 'resurrection', given its Christological connotations. Admitting a less theological version of the author back into the literary field allows us to stop looking over our shoulder, checking for the return of this repressed figure, and concentrate more on what he or she does. In Beckett's case, this can result in a broadening of our awareness of the author's compositional strategies. Though these strategies were noted in one of the earliest manuscript studies of his work as being 'multiple, varied, even contradictory' (Gontarski 1985: 21), we still have more work to do in outlining the multiplicity of Beckett's poetics. Integrating manuscripts, notebooks and drafts into our existing models of literary analysis produces an author who is not dead, nor reborn, but '[d]ying on'.

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James Little

Dekompozycja przestrzeni szpitalnej w *Malone umiera* Samuela Becketta: autor w świetle krytyki genetycznej

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia sposoby przedstawiania obrazów szpitala psychiatrycznego w powieści Samuela Becketta pt. *Malone umiera*. Jego celem jest analiza pozatekstowych elementów w twórczości autora oraz ich rola w krytyce genetycznej. Dodatkowo artykuł podejmuje refleksję nad pozycją i miejscem autora w krytyce genetycznej. Wyjąciowym założeniem artykułu jest teza stawiana przez Iaina Bailey'a mówiąca o tym, że krytykę genetyczną należy uprawiać w powiązaniu z innymi teoriami jak na przykład historycyzmem. Beckett prowadził niemalże naukowe przygotowania do pisania własnych tekstów, a także dokładał starań, by poczynione obserwacje zintegrować z materiałem stanowiącym podstawę własnego dzieła. Jego rozległe notatki oraz zapiski stanowią zatem doskonałą podstawę do badań genetycznych. Pomimo obfitości materiału dokumentacyjnego obrazu zakładu psychiatrycznego ukazanego w *Malone umiera* (którego pierwowzorem był dubliński szpital Saint John of God) noszą bardzo niewielkie echa pierwotnych tekstów i zapisków. Znaczenie tego szpitala w biografii Becketta odgrywa więc istotną rolę dla rozumienia jego ostatecznego przedstawienia w powieści, zarówno pod względem jej zakomponowania jak i późniejszej recepcji. Z niekompletnych zapisów empirycznych doświadczeń daje się jednak odtworzyć obraz pisarza istniejącego za zasłoną własnych tekstów i po części chociaż odzyskującego istnienie wiele lat po tym, kiedy Roland Barthes ogłosił śmierć autora.

Słowa kluczowe: Samuel Beckett, szpital psychiatryczny, krytyka genetyczna, manuskrypt, biografia

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