Mindless Modernism

JOSHUA GANG

When we talk about the modernist mind, we talk about a mind that is knowable and introspective. We inherited this idea from texts such as Henry James's "The Art of Fiction" (1884), Marcel Proust's *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1896), and Virginia Woolf's "Modern Fiction" (1919). "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall," Woolf wrote. "Let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon consciousness" (107). The responsibility of the modern novelist, she continues, is to look inward at the pattern left by these atoms—to explore "the dark places of psychology" (108). Modernism's illumination of these "dark places" has been a mainstay of interest, particularly the relationship between modernist techniques of introspection and psychoanalysis.[1] According to John Brenkman, psychoanalysis's "amalgam of free association, dream, and transference" constituted modernism's "new mode of mastery at the level of individual self-narration" (173). For critics such as Brenkman, the centrality of psychoanalysis to modernism is indisputable. But, as Judith Ryan warns, "the subsequent preeminence of Freud has tended to obscure the importance of pre-Freudian psychology for the beginnings of literary modernism" (2). As Ryan and others demonstrate, the introspective and associative techniques we associate with modernism and psychoanalysis can actually be traced back to the empiricist psychology of the late nineteenth century (particularly Franz Brentano, Wilhelm Wundt, and William James).[2] However they might disagree, the histories represented here by Brenkman and Ryan converge on a key point: introspection. Both characterize modernist literature as anchored by psychological introspection and interiority, however it got that way.

Like its author, this article owes much to the intelligence and generosity of Rebecca Walkowitz, Jonathan Kramnick, Douglas Mao, Greg Ellermann, Naomi Levine, Colleen Rosenfeld, and the editors of *Novel*.

1 Among critics, this interest in psychoanalysis can be dated back to as early as the 1950s, including Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination*. More recently, psychoanalysis has maintained a defining presence in several influential accounts of modernism, including Perry Meisel's *Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850*; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's introduction (1–66) and "The Beast in the Closet" (182–212) in *Epistemology of the Closet*; and Jean-Michel Rabaté's *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*, particularly "Everyday Life and the New Episteme" (72–95) and "The Splintered Subject of Modernism" (141–63). For other discussions of psychoanalysis's place in modernist literature, see Louis Sass 174–212; and, in Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska's edited anthology *Modernism*, see Dirk Van Hulle's "Modernism, Consciousness, Poetics of Process."

2 For more on the relationship between modern literature and nonpsychoanalytic psychology, see Mark S. Micale's edited collection *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880–1940*, particularly Lawrence Rainey's "Shock Effects: Marinetti, Pathology, and Italian Avant-Garde Poetics" and Martin Jay's "Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism." See also Steven Meyer and Nicholas Dames, respectively.

 DOI 10.1215/00295132-2019137

This characterization is not incorrect, but it is also not complete. Psychology, and modernism's relationship to psychology, did not end with introspection. In 1913, John Broadus Watson published "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," in which he argued for the redefinition of psychology away from introspection and toward the analysis of observable phenomena (i.e., behavior). "Psychology as the behaviorist views it," Watson wrote, "is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness" (158). Like empiricist psychology and psychoanalysis, this behaviorist critique of introspection and mental states was translated into the formal conventions of the modernist novel. In the 1920s, writers such as Woolf tasked the novel with exploring the "dark places of psychology." But in the 1930s, writers including Samuel Beckett found those dark places inaccessible and drew on behaviorism to reconsider literature's relationship to introspection. Beckett experimented with the implications of *mindlessness*—of minds that could not be known or represented, whose nature and existence could not be proved empirically.

My hope is to consider these experiments and entertain such mindlessness as a useful concept for literary history. A novel such as Beckett's *Murphy* (1936) shows exactly how useful mindlessness can be. Indeed, *Murphy* translates behaviorism's critique of introspection into a reconsideration of what fiction can be expected to represent. The introspective foundations of fiction, the novel tells us, are themselves fictional—as are the concepts of selfhood and psychological interiority built upon them. This article, therefore, has two intertwined goals. The first is to show how behaviorism shaped Beckett's thinking about modernism, the relationship of literature to mind, and the composition of *Murphy*. Building on that, the second goal is to see what happens when we revisit and push against the characterization of modernism as a psychological "turn inward."[3] Modernism was not psychologically monolithic; instead, an array of psychological theories—including behaviorism, structuralism, and psychoanalysis—circulated simultaneously and competed against each other.[4] To choose one theory was to choose not only a model of mind but also a set of aesthetic, philosophical, and political entailments. Beckett's vision

[3] The characterization of modernism as a psychological turn inward had one of its earliest proponents in Georg Lukács, who argued that modernist and expressionist literature distorted the objective movements of history. For more on Lukács's argument, see his "Reportage or Portrayal" in *Essays on Realism*; see also Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetics and Politics*, featuring essays by Lukács and responses by Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Adorno, and Walter Benjamin.

[4] By the 1920s, something of a rivalry developed between psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Freud understood behaviorism as an indication of a more general American intellectual degeneracy. As he wrote in a 26 January 1917 letter to Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi, "Your duel with Watson must have been fun. The entire impoverishment of the American mentality has become manifest in pragmatism and behaviorism" (*Correspondence* 298.) Conversely, Watson began arguing that psychoanalytic categories such as neurosis and wish fulfillment could be explained behavioristically without recourse to mental states. See Watson, "The Psychology of Wish Fulfillment," and Watson and Rosalie Rayner, "Conditioned Emotional Reactions."

of a mindless modernism demonstrates not only how empirical concerns shaped the form of the modernist novel but how dynamic and contingent modernist psychology actually was. Furthermore, it should remind us of the implications these psychologies had for modernist fiction and the entailments they continue to have in criticism today.

Introspection and Its Discontents

Although behaviorism would grow to have wide philosophical appeal, it began as a narrow methodological intervention against introspective psychology. An outsider to experimental psychology, Freud was not the target of Watson's "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It." Instead, Watson was aiming at the introspective techniques of Wilhelm Wundt's structuralism. Hypothesizing an analogical relationship between molecular structure and the organization of consciousness (hence the name *structuralism*), Wundt suggested that sensations were effectively the "atoms" of the mind. Much as atoms form molecules and molecules form larger molecules, sensations form the building blocks of perceptions, associations, ideas, memories, and so on. The best way to map these sensations, he argued, was through systematic and empirically-minded introspection.

But as a concept, introspection needed to be revised. The trouble with "classical introspection," Wundt wrote in *Outlines of Psychology* (1897), was that it mistakenly separated experience of the external world from experience of mental states. Rather than construct a "science of inner experience," psychologists needed to understand inner experience and experience of the external world as different facets of the same phenomenon (1). "Outer experience and inner experience do not indicate different objects," Wundt wrote, "but *different points of view* from which we start in the consideration and scientific treatment of a unitary experience" (2). In this way, introspection was not merely self-reflection but a kind of empirical observation of one's own consciousness.

This methodology was elaborated by Wundt's students—including William Bradford Titchener, who became the face of structuralism in the United States (and Watson's most vocal critic), and the so-called Würzburg School, led by Oswald Külpe.[5] Within the history of psychology, Külpe's research is generally understood as a departure from Wundt's; in his own *Outlines of Psychology* (1893), Külpe argued that not all thoughts comprised "images," meaning that sensations were not necessarily the atomistic building blocks of mental content. But in terms of experimental introspection, Külpe largely continued in the spirit of Wundt's research. The Würzburg School, whose work plays a significant part in *Murphy*, developed an extensive theoretical apparatus for the gathering of introspective data and extended Wundt's analysis of present-tense sensations to include sense-memories. "If we term the immediate apprehension and description of mental processes 'inner perception' or 'introspection,'" Külpe wrote in *Outlines*, "the subjective form of the direct method may be named the *introspective method*. Its objective form will be the *experimental method*, since its objectivity depends upon the employment of experi-

[5] For a fuller history of psychological introspection, see Edwin Boring.

ment. The indirect method may be similarly divided into a *memorial method*, which is subjective, and a *linguistic method*, which is objective" (8).

These methods were Watson's target. The trouble with these approaches, he argued, was that they stemmed from an unachievable desire: to observe the unobservable and gather objective knowledge about mental states. If mental content is reducible to constituent sensations, then no objective knowledge of that content is possible, because sensations themselves are qualia:

> *"A sensation is defined in terms of its attributes. One psychologist will state with readiness that the attributes of a visual sensation are quality, extension, duration, and intensity. Another will add clearness. . . . [If] we say that every just noticeable difference in the spectrum is a simple sensation . . . we are forced to admit that the number is so large and the conditions for obtaining them so complex that the concept of sensation is unusable, either for the purpose of analysis or that of synthesis."* (Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" 164)

An even greater problem, Watson continued, was structuralism's use of behavioral data. To the introspective psychologist, "behavior data . . . have no value per se. They possess significance only in so far as they may throw light upon conscious states. Such data must have at least an analogical or indirect reference to belong to the realm of psychology" (158–59). Because behavior does not necessarily parallel mental states, the introspective tradition of psychology attached no inherent value to "behavioral data." But in so doing, Watson suggests, structuralist psychologists had devalued the only empirical data they could collect. Any theory that neglects the "independent value of behavior material," he wrote, "will inevitably force us to the absurd position of attempting to *construct* the conscious content of the animal whose behavior we have been studying" (159). If consciousness cannot be known objectively through behavior or introspection, then psychology—"purely objective, experimental"—should move away from the study of consciousness and study behavior exclusively. Over the course of the following decade, this disciplinary polemic became broader as Watson attacked not only the methods of introspective psychology but the ontology of introspection and consciousness. Because there was no empirical proof for the existence of mental states, Watson began to suggest that such mental states did not exist at all. This slippage informed the strict reductionism of his work after "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It"; if mental states did not exist, then the phenomena we attribute to mental states had to have physiological origins. Introspection, he claimed in *Behaviorism* (1924), was "nothing but another name for talking about obscure bodily reactions which are taking place. It is not a genuine psychological method at all" (39).[6] And he claimed that "what the psychologists have hitherto called thought is in short nothing but talking to ourselves . . . the muscular habits learned in overt speech are responsible for implicit or internal speech (thought)" (238–39). For Watson, "thought" itself was

[6] Watson's reductionism in *Behaviorism* roughly prefigures Gilbert Ryle's indictment of Cartesian dualism as a category mistake. See Ryle 1–14, 136–78, 292–300.

the mislabeling of physiological processes and verbal behaviors. The behavior of introspection itself had created the illusion of consciousness.

"He Felt His Mind to Be Bodytight"

The reliability of introspection is a theme and formal principle within Beckett's writings, particularly in his early fiction and critical texts. *Murphy* is no exception. And on the face of things, *Murphy* relies on the success of introspective knowledge. The character Murphy spends whatever time he can engaged in introspection, withdrawn from the physical world. Introspection "set him free in his mind. For it was not until his body was appeased that he could come alive in his mind, as described in section six. And life in his mind gave him pleasure, such pleasure that pleasure was not the word" (*Murphy* 2). As we might infer from the allusion to "section six" of Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), *Murphy* is a novel haunted by Cartesian dualism. And, unsurprisingly, Cartesian dualism has haunted the novel's critics, too.[7]

I am less interested in *Murphy*'s relationship to Cartesian dualism and occasionalist philosophy, of course, than I am in its formal and thematic relationships to introspection. For while the character Murphy seems neatly divided into body and mind, the novel tells us that this differentiation is false—an illusion created by introspection. And so in disclosing that Murphy "felt his mind to be bodytight," my emphasis is not the perceived split between body and mind but rather Murphy's belief that he could know or "feel" his own mind (109). Introspection, the novel suggests, creates the illusion of a mind able to examine itself from both objective and subjective perspectives—of a mind that can seemingly break into pieces and observe itself from afar. Murphy, we read, "disconnected his mind from the gross importunities of sensation and reflection. . . . Nothing can stop me now, was his last thought before he lapsed into consciousness, and nothing will stop me" (105). He lapses *into* consciousness—but from what? Faced with the distortions and paradoxes created by such psychological interiority, the novel attempts a mode of writing that replaces the representation of covert mental states with the representation of overt behaviors and actions.

[7] Some critics, such as Hugh Kenner, see Cartesian dualism mapping onto Murphy cleanly. As he wrote in the seminal *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study*, "For Murphy . . . the central situation is that his body loves Celia . . . while his mind abhors the complications she introduces into his quest for anonymity, for a state of being 'not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom'" (51). More recently, however, critics have been more reluctant to see *Murphy* as an extension of Cartesianism. Michael Mooney suggests that Cartesian interest in *Murphy* is a "fact of the critical history only" and that the novel "can be better understood by reference to . . . Democritus of Abdera and to Sextua Empiricus' scepticism" (215). Unlike Mooney, Gary Kemp and Richard Begam find Cartesian thinking in Beckett's writings—but only insofar as such thinking is parodied and undermined. Kemp suggests that both Wittgenstein and Beckett thought Cartesian dualism "might be refuted, overcome, left in the past alongside alchemy and vitalism" (165). Begam suggests that Beckett identified Proust and James Joyce as still "working within a Cartesian paradigm, one that is based on dualistic and mimetic assumptions" (37). In contrast, he writes, *Murphy* "discovers at the heart of the cogito not the rationalism of the Enlightenment but the derangement of the lunatic asylum" (38).

In these ways, *Murphy* is indicative of a larger push against introspection in Beckett's early works—an empirically-minded rejection of high modernism's mentalistic arguments and techniques. This rejection is most explicit in "Dante . . . Bruno . . . Vico . . . Joyce" (1929) and *Proust* (1930), in which behaviorism grounds a physiological analysis of the relationship between texts and the consciousness of both readers and writers. Most readers, Beckett explains in "Dante . . . Bruno," "are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other" (502–3). This is because, rather than reading carefully, they skim:

> *The rapid skimming and absorption of the scant cream of sense is made possible by what I may call a continuous process of copious intellectual salivation. The form that is an arbitrary and independent phenomenon can fulfill no higher function than that of a stimulus for a tertiary or quartary conditioned reflex of dribbling comprehension. When Miss Rebecca West clears her decks for a sorrowful deprecation of the Narcissistic element in Mr. Joyce by the purchase of 3 hats, one feels that she might very well wear her bib at all her intellectual banquets, or alternatively, assert a more noteworthy control over her salivary glands than is possible for Monsieur Pavlov's unfortunate dogs.* ("Dante . . . Bruno" 503)

Beckett's invocation of stimulus-response neurology here is both literal and figurative. Rendered as "Monsieur Pavlov's unfortunate dogs," neither Rebecca West nor modern readers are spared Beckett's nastiness. West and these readers do not think; they drool, "dribbling comprehension" in a "continuous process of copious intellectual salivation" (503). The reason for this is the literal valence Beckett assigns to stimulus-response neurology. When readers skim, they break the relationship between form and content and thereby reduce form to a physiological phenomenon that is not itself intellectually meaningful. When we do not read carefully, form can fulfill no higher function "than that of a stimulus," the physiological cue that produces an unthinking reflexive response. In *Murphy*, this disdain for skimming is maintained; the novel's narrator harbors a deep mistrust of his audience, whom he accuses of laziness and even grifting. The imagined readers glean information much the way that Murphy scams a local restaurant: they skim, they steal. After explaining how Murphy "defrauded a vested interest every day for his lunch, to the honourable extent of paying for one cup of tea and consuming 1.83 cups approximately," the narrator says: "Try it sometime, gentle skimmer" (84).

In *Proust*, consciousness—particularly authorial consciousness—is reduced to physiology almost entirely. In "Dante . . . Bruno," it was implied that all reading relies on stimulus-response neurology but that a good reader (who does not skim) has more than unthinking, reflexive reactions to literary stimuli. In "Proust," however, no such good reader—or writer—exists. Beckett takes Proust's flights into memory as an opportunity to attack the validity of introspective psychology and therefore the literature built upon it. Marcel's memories, we are told, are not practices of mind so much as they are involuntary, physiological reflexes. "The laws of memory," we read, "are subject to the more general laws of habit . . . a compromise

between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities" (515). Not only that, but memory is "conditioned by perception" (ibid.), meaning that a memory's perceived accuracy is a product not of mental acuity but rather of reflex conditioning. In discussing Marcel's memories of childhood insomnia, Beckett makes an analogous point about introspection in both its literary and experimental forms. "The most successful evocative experiment," he concludes, "can only project the echo of a past sensation, because, being an act of intellection, it is conditioned by the prejudices of the intelligence which abstracts from any given sensation, as being illogical and insignificant, a discordant and frivolous intruder, whatever word or gesture, sound or perfume, cannot be fitted into the puzzle of a concept" (*Proust* 543).

Like Watson's "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," this is an explicit attack on the methods of structuralist psychology. The choice of words here is no accident. Beckett likens Marcel's memories to an "evocative experiment" designed to recall "past sensation" into presently accessible mental states. Such introspection, however, can only "project the echo" of past sensations, as the introspective apparatus itself has been "conditioned by the prejudices of the intelligence" to focus on some sensations and overlook others. The possibility of objective introspection is therefore rejected on behaviorist grounds. And so, despite the apparent similarities between Marcel's memories and structuralist introspection, *Proust* attempts to revise literary history by accounting for modernism's techniques without recourse to mentalistic, introspective psychology.

In *Murphy*, such "evocative experiments" are an ongoing joke, part of the novel's explicit parody of structuralist psychology (particularly Külpe's Würzburg school). Murphy's strategy of getting 1.83 cups of tea for the price of one, we read, apparently had its origins in post-Wundtian structuralist psychology. Speaking to a waitress, Murphy says,

> *"Bring me," in the voice of an usher resolved to order the chef's special selection for a school outing. He paused after this preparatory signal to let the fore-period develop, that first of the three moments of reaction in which, according to the Külpe school, the major torments of response are undergone. Then he applied the stimulus proper.*
>
> *"A cup of tea and a packet of assorted biscuits." Twopence the tea, twopence the biscuits, a perfectly balanced meal.* (80)

Murphy's bizarre behavior here is an attempt to adapt Külpe's experimental protocols to the end of acquiring free tea and biscuits. The technique of separating a "preparatory signal" ("Bring me") from "the stimulus proper" ("A cup of tea") is lifted almost directly from Külpe's *Outlines of Psychology*. Expectation of a stimulus, Külpe explained, increases the "sensitivity and sensible discrimination" of the test subject, thereby better facilitating the accuracy and consistency of introspection. Therefore, "it is customary to give a signal at some fixed interval before the appearance of the stimulus in each experiment, so that the subject's mind is prepared for its reception" (39). Murphy's stimulus does not have the intended effect; in this particular instance, Murphy's waitress does not give him free tea but rather mumbles, "Vera to you, dear" (81). The waitress's response, the narrator explains,

"was not a caress" (81). But despite this result, we read, "Murphy had some faith in the Külpe [Würzburg] school. Marbe and Bühler might be deceived, even Watt was only human, but how could Ache be wrong?" (81).

The underlying argument of *Murphy* is that these psychologists were indeed wrong and that this error has distorted how we understand the form and content of modernist fiction. Whatever possibilities Murphy himself finds in structuralist psychology, the narrator insists that the knowledge produced by his introspection is fictional. Soon after Murphy's discounted lunch, the narrator explains: "It is most unfortunate, but the point of this story has been reached where a justification of the expression 'Murphy's mind' has to be attempted. Happily we need not concern ourselves with this apparatus as it really was—that would be an extravagance and an impertinence—but solely with what it felt and pictured itself to be. Murphy's mind is after all the gravamen of these informations" (107).

This direct address to readers dismisses the conditions, and reliability, of Murphy's self-knowledge. According to the narrator, Murphy's knowledge of his own mind is irrevocably false. The introspective methods he employs do not reveal his mind as it actually exists "but solely . . . what it felt and pictured itself to be" (107). His introspective efforts are not so much observational—establishing relationships among stimuli, sensations, and memories—as they are imaginative. And these introspective reflections create the illusion of their own accuracy. Instead of being able to withdraw into his mind because of mind-body separation, this dualism is itself a mirage created by the act of introspection. "Murphy's mind," the narrator explains, "pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe" and to bodily existence (107). Within the real world presented by the novel's narrator, Murphy's experience of being "split in two, a body and a mind," is a fiction that he naively perpetuates about his existence (109).

But as much as this address is about Murphy's self-deception, it is also a statement about the representation of mental states and novelistic form, a statement about the expectation that readers and narrators have unfettered access to character minds. Perhaps to our surprise, the seemingly omniscient narrator of *Murphy* has roughly the same knowledge of "Murphy's mind" that we do. Like us, he has access to Murphy's introspective reflections but no access to the mind that produces those reflections, to "the apparatus as it really was" (107). Knowledge of that apparatus, he assures us, would be neither necessary ("extravagance") nor even possible ("impertinence"). We are so unsure as to the composition and contents of "Murphy's mind" that the "expression" itself requires "justification": in its wording, the expression "Murphy's mind" implicitly separates mind from body, even though such separation is one of any number of attributes we do not know. In terms of what the novel can represent, the question of Murphy's mental states presents a problem. If neither reader nor narrator can know the "apparatus as it really was," if all we can know are introspection's distortions of consciousness and reality, then what is it that the novel is giving us? What is the novel's responsibility to the representation of mental states?

The answer *Murphy* arrives at, I believe, is that novels have no such responsibility. *Murphy* extends Beckett's empiricist's skepticism of introspection and consciousness into the fictional world and suggests that even fictional minds present

problems of knowability.[8] Novels, we infer from *Murphy*'s narrator, do not grant us special access to mental states, even if that is precisely what they promise to do. The perceived effects of psychological interiority discussed in *Proust* are just that—effects. Generating an image of seemingly infinite psychological interiority, they belie their physiological origins. And so in contrast to Proust, as well as James Joyce, Woolf, and William Faulkner, *Murphy* attempts a kind of novelistic representation that both forgoes and parodies the possibility of psychological interiority. Instead of appealing to techniques that invoke the viability of introspection, it attempts a behavioristic mode of narration, one that jarringly cuts behavior and affect away from covert mental states and that therefore avoids the pitfalls discussed above.

This mode becomes most pronounced when Murphy begins working as a porter at Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (MMM), a local mental hospital tending to Dublin residents who have become "immured by mind" (180). Although Murphy distinguishes himself from the residents at MMM, he is similarly "immured by mind": he perceives his mind "not as an instrument but as a place" where he can hide from the physical world (178). Both Murphy and his patients understand their own minds as walls against the onslaught of sensation. Recessing from the world into what they falsely picture as the hidden mechanisms behind consciousness, Murphy and the patients at MMM are "'cut off' from reality, from the rudimentary blessings of layman's reality" (177). The hope for these patients, the novel explains, is that therapy and treatment would overcome the walls created by introspection, that they would "bridge the gulf, translate the sufferer from his own pernicious little private dungheap to the glorious world of discrete particles" (177).

Of the patients at MMM, one is of particular interest to Murphy: Mr Endon. Endon is a suicidal "schizoid" who keeps trying to kill himself through intentional "apnoea," even though his doctors have told him it is a "physiological impossibility" to commit suicide by holding your breath (185). But it is not Endon's suicidality that draws Murphy to him. Instead, it is Endon's affect—or, rather, lack of affect. "Mr. Endon," the narrator explains, "was a schizophrenic of the most amiable variety, at least for the purposes of such a humble and envious outsider as Murphy. The languor in which he passed his days, while deepening every now and then to the extent of some charming suspension of gesture, was never so profound as to inhibit all movement . . . In short, a psychosis so limpid and imperturbable that Murphy felt drawn to it as Narcissus to his fountain" (186).

Much like Murphy when he is on his rocking chair, Endon spends his days in the space of his own mind. His mental states (whatever they actually comprise) are "immured" from his body, from the physical environment, and from the infer-

[8] Recently, there has been a surge of interest in literary representations of mental states and the relationship between fictional minds and real ones. Of particular concern has been theory of mind, the process by which one mind infers or simulates the contents of another. Such theories of mind, of course, would have been rejected outright by behaviorism. Drawing on recent philosophy of mind and cognitive science, Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* argues that fiction stimulates and challenges the brain's inborn mind-reading abilities. See also Paula Leverage, Howard Mancing, Richard Schweickert, and Jennifer Marston William's edited volume.

ence of outsiders (including the narrator). His "psychosis" is at once "limpid" and relaxed but also "imperturbable." Seeing Endon's achieved separation between mental states and physical states, Murphy swoons. Endon is able to achieve for indefinite periods what Murphy could achieve only when meditating in his rocking chair. To Murphy, Endon represents an attainable ideal of withdrawing from the body and world into the mind. He becomes Endon's regular chess partner, unaware that Endon views him not as a friend or even a human being but as merely the bringer of chess. "The sad truth," we read, was "that while Mr. Endon for Murphy was no less than bliss, Murphy for Mr. Endon was no more than chess. Murphy's eye? Say rather, the chessy eye. Mr. Endon had vibrated to the chessy eye upon him and made his preparations accordingly" (242). The stimulus of Murphy's "chessy eye" causes Endon to "vibrate" and begin preparations for their next game.

The games of chess between Murphy and Endon comprise the novel's climax and also its central push against the representation of mental states. Additionally, these games of chess were a crucial element in how Beckett understood *Murphy*'s intellectual project, marketing, and circulation. Finding an image of two chess players on page 10 of the 11 July 1936 edition of the *Daily Sketch* (London), Beckett wrote several letters to his agent George Reavey about the possibility of using the photo "as a frontispiece [to *Murphy*], or better still on the jacket" (406). "I am also very anxious," he wrote to Reavey in November 1936, "to obtain permission to use enclosed photograph, without subscript, as frontispiece. I came across it first in a Daily Sketch months ago, & found it again here in an Illustrierte [magazine]" (*Letters* 381). The image Beckett had found appears here as figure 1.

The original caption for the image was a tongue-in-cheek "But he's done it! Mate!" And as Beckett wrote to Reaves in a later letter, "The chimpanzees [in the photo] are more or less a good joke" (*Letters* 406). But in addition to being funny, the image represents the stakes of a chess game between Murphy and Endon.

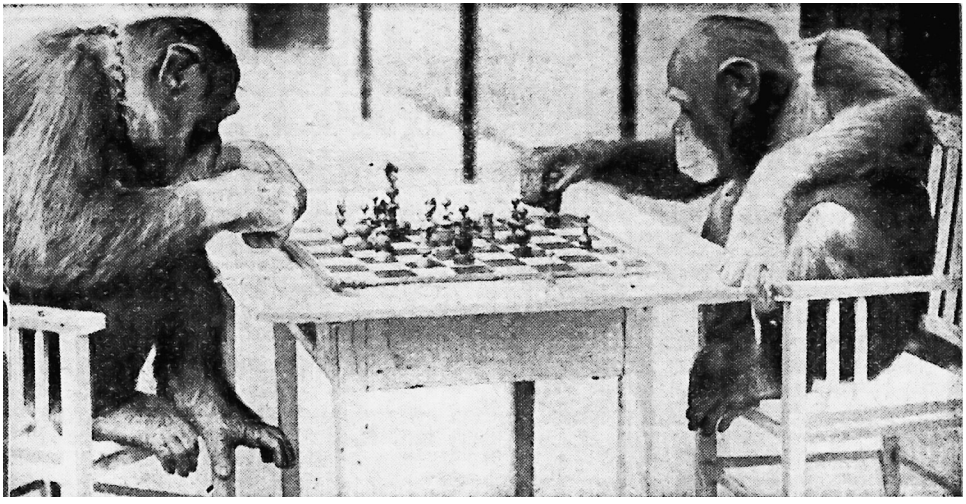

Figure 1

White (Murphy)	*Black* (Mr. Endon) (*a*)
1. P—K4 (*b*)	1. Kt—KR3
2. Kt—KR3	2. R—KKt1
3. R—KKt1	3. Kt—QB3
4. Kt—QB3	4. Kt—K4
5. Kt—Q5 (*c*)	5. R—KR1
6. R—KR1	6. Kt—QB3
7. Kt—QB3	7. Kt—KKt1
8. Kt—QKt1	8. Kt—QKt1 (*d*)
9. Kt—KKt1	9. P—K3
10. P—KKt3 (*e*)	10. Kt—K2
11. Kt—K2	11. Kt—KKt3
12. P—KKt4	12. B—K2
13. Kt—KKt3	13. P—Q3
14. B—K2	14. Q—Q2
15. P—Q3	15. K—Q1 (*f*)
16. Q—Q2	16. Q—K1
17. K—Q1	17. Kt—Q2
18. Kt—QB3 (*g*)	18. R—QKt1
19. R—QKt1	19. Kt—QKt3
20. Kt—QR4	20. B—Q2
21. P—QKt3	21. R—KKt1
22. R—KKt1	22. K—QB1 (*h*)
23. B—QKt2	23. Q—KB1
24. K—QB1	24. B—K1
25. B—QB3 (*i*)	25. Kt—KR1
26. P—QKt4	26. B—Q1
27. Q—KR6 (*j*)	27. Kt—QR1 (*k*)
28. Q—KB6	28. Kt—KKt3
29. B—K5	29. B—K2
30. Kt—QB5 (*l*)	30. K—Q1 (*m*)
31. Kt—KR1 (*n*)	31. B—Q2
32. K—QKt2 ! !	32. R—KR1
33. K—QKt3	33. B—QB1
34. K—QR4	34. Q—K1 (*o*)
35. K—R5	35. Kt—QKt3
36. B—KB4	36. Kt—Q2
37. Q—QB3	37. R—QR1
38. Kt—QR6 (*p*)	38. B—KB1
39. K—QKt5	39. Kt—K2
40. K—QR5	40. Kt—QKt1
41. Q—QB6	41. Kt—KKt1
42. K—QKt5	42. K—K2 (*q*)
43. K—R5	43. Q—Q1 (*r*)

And White surrenders.

Figure 2

In looking at this photograph, what we have access to are behaviors rather than mental states (if mental states are presumed to exist in chimpanzees at all).[9] We can infer nothing about intention or intentionality: instead of saying the chimpanzees are *playing* chess, empirically, we can only say they are sitting opposite a chessboard and pushing the pieces around. Any parallelism between covert and overt phenomena is severed—much as in the case of Endon and Murphy, whose conscious minds are "immured" from the overt movements of behavior and the stimuli of the external world. In terms of what we can establish empirically and with certainty, we are in a world of pure behavior.

"But he's done it! Mate!" did not make the cover or frontispiece of *Murphy*. But the image does clarify the significance of the novel's most mystifying—and most important—moment: the representation of Endon and Murphy's chess game not in prose but in English descriptive chess notation. Rather than recount the actions of the game, the narrator gives us more than a page of symbolic notation followed by footnoted commentary. The pages are reproduced below. "The game," we read, "was *Zweispringspott* [the ridicule of two knights]" and "was as follows" in the pages reproduced here as figure 2 (*Murphy* 244–45).

This shift of register—from novelistic conventions to symbolic notation—indicates a pivotal reconsideration of what *Murphy* can signify. Where novels typically allow access to character minds (something the narrator warned us about

[9] Earlier in the novel, Murphy likens the work of his colleague Neary to the "Tenerife and the apes," which is a reference to Wolfgang Kohler's well-known and anti-behavioristic *The Mentality of Apes* (1917).

earlier), this is a chess game where such access is impossible.[10] Accordingly, narration switches to a register that makes it impossible to infer mental states. English chess notation has no symbols to denote intentions or desires or strategies; it can only describe *actions*. It abstracts a chess match into a chronology of objects moving on a wooden board, regardless of why those movements happen. Effectively, this page from *Murphy* adopts a behavioristic notation, thereby throwing the rest of the novel's narration into relief. The climax of a novel supposedly about the isolated life of the mind culminates in a figure that categorically obscures any access to or representation of mental states. The narrator's pretentious, even cheeky, exclamation points and footnotes reinforce this. They emphasize the degree to which the minds of both Endon and Murphy have become obscured from view—and also the haphazard, even oblivious, nature of their chess playing. In note A, the narrator explains that "Mr. Endon always played Black. If presented with White he would fade, without the least trace of annoyance, away into a light stupor" (244). In note O, we are told that Endon put Murphy's king in check without saying "check"—"nor otherwise giving the slightest indication he was alive" (245). And in note P, the narrator jokingly infers Murphy's mental state but only as a way of disparaging bad chess playing. Any representation of, or even reference to, Murphy's actual mental states are still impossible: "No words can express the torment of mind that goaded White [Murphy] into this abject offensive" (245). No words can express that torment of mind because that mind is sealed off from the narrator, whose conventional role would be the description of character mental states. Instead, the narrator's role has been fundamentally redefined—limited to commentary about overt behaviors and little else.

With the end of the match, the novel reverts to its previous mode of narration, and Murphy attempts introspection once more. "He tried," we read, "to get a picture of Celia. In vain . . . He tried to get a picture in his mind of any creature he had met, animal or human. Scraps of bodies, of landscapes, hands, eyes, lines and colours evoking nothing, rose and climbed out of sight before him" (251–52). But what precipitates this loss is not Endon's victory at chess but intense eye contact with Endon. Close enough "for a butterfly kiss," Murphy sees Endon's withdrawal into the mind as a reflection of himself—both literally and figuratively: "seeing himself stigmatized in those eyes that did not see him" (249). Rather than seeing the contents of Endon's mind, Murphy sees only an image of himself. Endon's eyes, the proverbial windows to the soul, appear empty, and in this reflection, Murphy appears empty to himself. The solipsism enabled by introspection dissolves. Consciousness and bodily action begin to blur and thoughts that might once have been exclusively mental are now *behaved*: "Murphy heard words demanding so strongly to be spoken that he spoke them" (249). Standing only inches away from Endon's

[10] It is worth mentioning that *Murphy* was not the first piece of fiction to incorporate English chess notation. In *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) used chess notation to summarize the book's narrative. But where Beckett substituted such notation for more conventional descriptions of actions and intentions, Carroll's diagram accompanied a traditional table of contents and reinforced the book's thematic and logical interests in chess.

face, Murphy says, "The relation between Mr. Murphy and Mr. Endon could not have been better summed up than by the former's sorrow at seeing himself at the latter's immunity from seeing anything but himself" (250). Losing the capacity for introspection, Murphy must now rely on the reflection produced by Endon's empty, solipsistic gaze. "The last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Endon," we read, "was Mr. Murphy unseen by Mr. Endon. This was also the last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Murphy" (250). All Murphy can know of himself now is his own appearance—his overt actions and movements reflected in the uncaring, inscrutable stare of a man "immured by mind." Endon's mind is now nothing but a wall that reflects the actions of others and hides his own thoughts.

The Ill-Fitting Vestments of the Mind

Beckett's *Murphy*, *Proust*, and "Dante . . . Bruno" present a drastically different image of modernism than we are used to entertaining. As essays, *Proust* and "Dante . . . Bruno" strive toward reducing modernism's most mentalistic phenomena to physiological causes. Similarly, *Murphy* pushes the introspective conventions of the modernist novel until they break. What would the novel look like, *Murphy* asks, if it were *mindless* and had no access to mental states? The novel's ability to access and represent mental states, it argues, is not empirically justifiable. We are asked to imagine that fictional minds are bound by the same problems as real minds. The novel's ability to circumvent these problems, Beckett suggests, is itself a fiction. The psychological interiority we encounter in such novels not only reflects but reinscribes a set of illusory attitudes about mental states. In these ways, Beckett's early writings are not merely counterexamples to the characterization of modernism as a psychological turn inward. Instead, they are indicative of a larger ambivalence about the extent to which aesthetic and philosophical categories can be built on reflective self-knowledge.[11] They are a response to the introspective modernism represented by Woolf, James, and Proust as well as a new narrative of the modernist novel's development.

This is a narrative that we should consider carefully. In treating the introspective mind as a self-evident truth of modernism, we preclude rather than encourage new approaches to the period, particularly if those approaches are invested in the history of science, analytic philosophy, or the empirical study of mind. The study of modernism is as bound by the mentalistic foundations of our own critical pursuits as it is by the introspective psychology we attribute to modernist writers. This is not to suggest that we stop believing in the viability of introspection or that we subject modernist literary study to a scathing behaviorist audit. (Beckett already

[11] Recent work on eighteenth-century literature has taken up similar problems. In *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson*, Jonathan Kramnick reconstructs psychological interiority by looking at how eighteenth-century writers understood the relationship between mental states and the physical world (1–12). In *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*, Sandra McPherson looks at eighteenth-century fiction in terms of accidental (and physical) causation rather than personal will and determination (1–24).

did that.) My point is that we need to stop treating modernism's psychological turn inward as an a priori state of affairs.[12] By the 1920s, behaviorism's objections to structuralist introspection were circulating globally and appearing in a number of different literary circles; "Dante . . . Bruno" and *Proust* speak to this, as do texts by Bertrand Russell, Ivor Armstrong Richards, and Bertolt Brecht.[13] The issue here is not whose concept of mind was right or whose concept was more influential to modernism in the end. Instead, the issue is that these various concepts—some mentalistic, some behavioristic—circulated simultaneously and *competed*. So rather than treat the introspective mind as a self-evident truth of modernism, we should treat it as a contingency. To adhere to a particular concept of mind was to adhere to specific formal and political relationships while precluding others. In failing to consider this contingency, we distort the historical record of modernism's relationship to the sciences of mind and thereby deny ourselves new avenues of inquiry. Even more importantly, we lose sight of the stakes—literary, philosophical, political—that were attached to the success of introspective knowledge.

To examine these stakes, I would like to conclude by returning to Woolf's "Modern Fiction." She writes, "'The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon" (110). This is the introspective mind of modernism at its most capacious, impressive, and familiar. But Woolf's essay is not merely a naive straw man to Beckett's skepticism. If we read "Modern Fiction" as selecting between competing philosophies of mind, then Woolf's own theoretical savvy—even cynicism—becomes easier to see. "Admitting the vagueness that afflicts all criticism of novels," Woolf writes,

> *let us hazard the opinion that for us at this moment the form of fiction most in vogue more often misses than secures the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth, or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide. Nevertheless, we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds.* (105)

[12] In studies of modernism, inquiries into the history of psychological affect have begun this work. In *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai rightly suggests that thinking about affect allows the literary critic new possibilities of thinking about the "aesthetic" and the "political" simultaneously (3). I agree with this formulation but would add scientific and philosophical knowledge to the matrix Ngai describes. The value of discussing affect is that it can prevent us from isolating aesthetic knowledge from its simultaneously political, philosophical, and scientific valences.

[13] Bertrand Russell's often behavioristic *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), which he authored in consultation with Watson, was particularly influential on the logical positivists, particularly Otto Neurauth and Rudolph Carnap. Brecht's interest in behaviorism, as we see in early plays such as *Man Equals Man* (1925) and the essay "The Threepenny Lawsuit" (1931), directly contributed to the development of epic theater. And for Richards, behaviorism became the foundation of what we identify today as close reading. See Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) as well as Joshua Gang, "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading."

Much as there is an inherent "vagueness" in literary criticism, novels cannot "contain" a certain element of existence—whether we call it "spirit, truth, or reality." Woolf attributes this ineffability to the nature of existence; it is the "essential thing" that moves and "refuses" our "ill-fitting vestments." But why exactly are these vestments so ill fitting? Are we unable to represent "the essential thing" because of its unrepresentable nature, or are we limited by our abilities to perceive and, through introspection, represent the world? There are two possible answers; logically, both are valid. Either one (or both) could be the reason that some things resist description.

In effect, Woolf *chooses* to attribute this difficulty to external reality, whereas Beckett chose to attribute analogous difficulties to the nature of mind. We must not overlook the calculations and stakes in either choice. Had Woolf attributed these difficulties to the mind, then psychological interiority would have evaporated; reflective self-knowledge—entailing experience, memory, sexuality, desire, intention—would be more elusive to representation. But if knowledge of the outside world is less reliable than reflective self-knowledge, then psychological interiority necessarily becomes the engine of literature. And it also explains not only why the modern novel *can* excavate "the dark places of psychology"—why it turns away from reality and inward to itself—but also why it *must*.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor, et al. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: Verso, 2007.

Beckett, Samuel. "Dante . . . Bruno . . . Vico . . . Joyce." *The Poems, Short Fiction, and Criticism of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove, 2006. 495–510

———. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: 1929–40*. Vol. 1. Ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.

———. *Murphy*. New York: Grove, 1957.

———. *Proust*. *The Poems, Short Fiction, and Criticism of Samuel Beckett*. New York: Grove, 2006. 511–55.

Begam, Richard. *Samuel Beckett and the End of Modernity*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1996.

Boring, Edwin. "History of Introspection." *Psychological Bulletin* 50.3 (1953): 169–86 <doi:10.1037/h0090793>.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Man Equals Man and the Elephant Calf*. Ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willett. Trans. Gerhard Nellhaus. New York: Arcade, 2000.

———. "The Threepenny Lawsuit." *Brecht on Film and Radio*. Ed. Marc D. Silberman. London: Methuen, 2001. 147–202.

Brenkman, John. "Freud the Modernist." *The Mind of Modernism*. Ed. Mark Micale. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 2004. 172–96.

Carroll, Lewis (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson). *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. Illus. John Tenniel. London: Macmillan, 1871.

"Chess Is a Shouting Match the Way These Two Play It." *Daily Sketch*. 6 July 1936.

Dames, Nicholas. *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

Danziger, Kurt. *Wilhelm Wundt: Making of a Scientific Psychology*. Ed. Robert W. Rieber and David K. Robinson. New York: Springer, 2001.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*. Ed. Ernst Falzeder and Eva Brabant, with Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch. Trans. Peter T. Hoffer. Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1993.

Gang, Joshua. "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading." *ELH* 78.1 (2011): 1–25 <doi:10.1353/elh.2011.0003>.

Jay, Martin. "Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism." Micale 352–65.

Kemp, Gary. "Autonomy and Privacy in Wittgenstein and Beckett." *Philosophy and Literature* 27.1 (2003): 164–87 <doi:10.1353/phl.2003.0027>.

Kenner, Hugh. *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1968.

Kramnick, Jonathan. *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010.

———. "Empiricism, Cognitive Science, and the Novel." *Eighteenth Century* 48.3 (2007): 263–85 <doi:10.1353/ecy.2008.0001>.

Külpe, Oswald. *Outlines of Psychology, Based upon the Results of Experimental Investigation*. Trans. Edward Bradford Titchener. London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895.

Leverage, Paula, et al., eds. *Theory of Mind and Literature*. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2010.

Lukács, Georg. "Reportage or Portrayal." *Essays on Realism*. Ed. Rodney Livingstone. Trans. David Fernbach. Cambridge: MIT P, 1983. 45–75.

McPherson, Sandra. *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2010.

Meisel, Perry. *Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989.

Meyer, Steven. *Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002.

Micale, Mark S., ed. *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880–1940*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004.

Mooney, Michael. "Presocratic Scepticism: Beckett's *Murphy* Reconsidered." *ELH* 49.1 (1982): 214–34 <doi:10.2307/2872889>.

Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005.

Rabaté, Jean-Michel. *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*. London: Palgrave, 2007 <doi:10.1002/9780470692202>.

Rainey, Lawrence. "Shock Effects: Marinetti, Pathology, and Italian Avant-Garde Poetics." Micale 197–216.

Richards, Ivor Armstrong. *Practical Criticism.* London: Kegan Paul, 1929.

———. *Principles of Literary Criticism.* London: Kegan Paul, 1924.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Analysis of Mind*. New York: Macmillan, 1921.

Ryan, Judith. *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.

Ryle, Gilbert. *The Concept of Mind: 60th Anniversary Edition*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Sass, Louis. *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1991.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination*. New York: Doubleday, 1950.

Van Hulle, Dirk. "Modernism, Consciousness, Poetics of Process." *Modernism*. Ed. Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska. Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 2007. 321–38.

Watson, John Broadus. *Behaviorism*. 1924. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998.

———. "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It." *Psychological Review* 20.2 (1913): 158–77 <doi:10.1037/h0074428>.

———. "Psychology of Wish Fulfillment." *Scientific Monthly* 3 (1916): 479–84.

Watson, John Broadus, and Rosalie Rayner. "Conditioned Emotional Reactions." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3.1 (1920): 1–14 <doi:10.1037/h0069608>.

Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction." *Collected Essays*. Vol. 2. London: Hogarth, 1966. 103–10.

Wundt, Wilhelm. *Outlines of Psychology.* Trans. C. H. Judd. London: Williams and Norgate, 1897 <doi:10.1037/12908-000>.

Zunshine, Lisa. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006.