

PUNS AND WORDPLAY
ON THE THEMES OF SEX AND FOOD

IN

SAMUEL BECKETT'S HOW IT IS

BY

ALISON ELAINE MENZIE

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D.

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 1985

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I Dictionaries/Reference:

CB: T.W. Ross, Chaucer's Bawdy (New York, 1972)

CDES: A Concise Dictionary of English Slang, edited by B. Phythian (London, 1976)

Concise OED: The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, sixth edition, edited by J.B. Sykes (Oxford, 1976)

DAS: The Dictionary of American Slang, edited by W. Wentworth and S.B. Flexner (London, 1960)

DCE: The Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, edited by A. Cowrie and R. Mackin (London, 1975)

DS: A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, edited by E. Partridge, fifth edition (London, 1961)

OED: The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (London, 1979).

II Works by Samuel Beckett:

All That Fall: All That Fall (Faber and Faber: London, 1965)

Endgame: Endgame and Act Without Words (Faber and Faber: London, 1964)

Four Novellas: Four Novellas (John Calder: London, 1977)

Happy Days: Happy Days (Faber and Faber: London, 1966)

how it is: how it is (Calder and Boyars: London, 1964)

Mercier and Camier: Mercier and Camier (Calder and Boyars: London, 1974)

More Pricks Than Kicks: More Pricks Than Kicks (Calder and Boyars: London, 1970)

Murphy: Murphy (John Calder: London, 1977)

Proust: Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit (John Calder: London, 1965)

Trilogy: The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable
(Pan Books: London, 1979)

Watt: Watt (John Calder: London, 1976).

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PREFACE

This thesis is an analysis of one aspect of the language of Samuel Beckett in his work how it is, concentrating upon puns and wordplay. The approach is a lexical one of examining his use of particular words and the way in which their sense is built up through word-patterning. Words relating to the themes of SEX and FOOD have been chosen in order to do this. It is not a complete study of all aspects of the language of the text, but concentrates upon semantics, paying particular attention to the way in which literal and metaphoric senses are combined in wordplay.

I should like to thank my supervisor, Mr Andrew Hamer, for his advice and assistance, and the patience and support of my family, without whom I should not have completed this work.

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic Analysis Rather than Literary Criticism

This thesis presents one linguistic method of exploring the language of a literary work. The use of linguistic methods to analyse literature both assists literary criticism, using rigorous methods of analysing the language of literature, and offers problems of special interest to linguists, since many so-called 'rules' are broken in works of literature. A linguistic theory which accounts for the working of language must also be able to account for literary language. This raises the question of exactly how to proceed in analysing literature, when much of it would normally be 'ungrammatical'. Fowler states at one point that, 'in literature style transcends the demands of grammar and survives, even welcomes, ungrammaticalness'.¹ A sense of the problems involved for linguists can be gleaned from reading his chapter 'On the interpretation of nonsense strings',² and by studying, for example, some of the discussion on E.E. Cummings' 'anyone lived in pretty howtown', which also suggests different linguistic approaches to analysing the language used in literature.³ It is not enough for the linguist to say that in literature, style transcends the demands of grammar, since 'grammatical' or

¹ R. Fowler, The Languages of Literature: Some Linguistic Contributions to Criticism (London, 1971), p.66.

² Fowler, Languages of Literature, pp.238--48.

³ See, for example: S.R. Levin, 'Poetry and Grammaticalness', in Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of Linguistics, edited by H.G. Lunt (The Hague, 1964) 308--14; J.P. Thorne, 'Stylistics and Generative Grammars', Journal of Linguistics, 1 (1965), 49--59; W.O. Hendricks, 'Three Models for the Description of Poetry', Journal of Linguistics, 5 (1969), 1--22.

'ungrammatical', literature is clearly understood, the questions for the linguists: how is it understood, how do the words work?

This thesis does not claim to resolve such problems, but it does have as its starting point that literature is a legitimate area of study for linguists. Further, that semantic study is a useful approach to studying a work of literature wrought with ambiguity. (That the work I have chosen to study is wrought with ambiguity is an assertion that can only be properly backed up by the thesis itself.) This thesis offers one method of analysing how this ambiguity works, with conclusions hopefully of interest both to the semanticist and to the literary critic. It is a study which should open the way to future studies; suggestions for further applications of this thesis are made, along with discussion on its implications, in the conclusion.

There has been considerable literary criticism written about Beckett's work. This has most frequently been concerned with understanding Beckett's work and what he attempts to communicate. E. Webb summarises his view of Beckett by saying, 'Beckett's basic subject has been, from the very beginning, the difficulties of twentieth century man in his efforts to understand his place in the universe'.⁴ Wide though this statement may be, it does encapsulate the essence of critical opinion of Beckett; Esslin's chapter on Beckett in his study of absurd theatre is titled 'The Search for the Self'.⁵ R. Cohn, one of Beckett's foremost literary critics, asserts that:

Words have been mistaken as the only subject of Beckett's own works ... Beckett is no metalinguist (Smuda's word);

⁴ E. Webb, Samuel Beckett: A Study of his Novels (London, 1970), p.21.

⁵ M. Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, revised edition (London, 1968), pp.29--87.

he is a speleologist of human essence -- call it being, self, identity. This essence defies verbalisation and Beckett defiantly tries to object.⁶

Literary criticism is necessarily concerned with what the author is trying to communicate and how this is done. Such interpretations of Beckett's work will be touched upon in this thesis, but my main concern is to analyse the working of the language. At the end of this thesis, the hope is to offer an example of a method of stylistic analysis and to have demonstrated its suitability for analysing how it is.

Why Beckett?

Beckett is self-consciously interested in language, in the form which the writer has to use. Beckett chose to write his later texts in French, and subsequently translated them into English himself. Further, several of Beckett's own comments suggest a special interest in the form of language. For instance:

What I am saying does not mean that there will henceforth be no form in art. It only means that there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now.⁷

Many of Beckett's characters show a concern with language:

It's enough to make you wonder sometimes if you are on the right planet. Even the words desert you, its as bad as that.⁸

⁶ R. Cohn, Back to Beckett (Princeton, New Jersey, 1973), p.6.

⁷ T.F. Driver, 'Beckett by the Madeleine' (Interview), Columbia University Forum, 4 (1961), 21--25 (p.23).

⁸ 'The End', Four Novellas, p.93. (See List of Abbreviations II for full details of editions used for all Beckett references.)

It seemed⁹ to me that all language was an excess of language.

Words fail, there are times when even they fail.¹⁰

His works likewise indicate a concern with the mechanics of language.

The narrator of Watt tells us that

Watt spoke also with scant regard for grammar, for syntax, for pronouns, for enunciation, and very likely, if the truth were¹¹ known, for spelling too, as these are generally received.

The narrator also comments, 'how hideous is the semi-colon'.¹²

I was first attracted to the idea of making a linguistic study of Beckett by reading the novels and becoming aware that they posed a challenge evident even superficially, from their layout and their use of punctuation, for example. Regarding how it is, Federman questions:

What is this book which unravels and repeats the same sets of expressions for, in the French edition, 177 pages of punctuationless prose presented in a series of almost unrelated¹³ paragraphs (poetic stanzas?) of a most illogical syntax?

Other Beckett commentators have noted that Beckett's syntax is 'often the syntax of nonsense, the grammar of absurdity';¹⁴ that Beckett 'abandons normal syntax';¹⁵ that it is 'almost as if Beckett

⁹ Molloy, Trilogy, p.103.

¹⁰ Happy Days, p.20.

¹¹ Watt, p.154.

¹² Watt, p.156.

¹³ R. Federman, Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction (Berkeley, California, 1965), p.5.

¹⁴ I. Hassan, The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett (New York, 1967), p.206.

¹⁵ L.E. Harvey, Samuel Beckett: Poet and Critic (Princeton, New Jersey, 1970), p.63.

is creating a new language with its own rules';¹⁶ that how it is represents the 'final discarding of syntax altogether'.¹⁷ This poses the challenge: what is the language, what is its grammar, how does it work?

Language itself is frequently cited as a theme of Beckett's work, an indication of his preoccupation with the degree to which language can express what the artist needs to express.

If Beckett's plays are concerned with expressing the difficulty of finding meaning in a world subject to incessant change, his use of language probes the limitations of language both as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the expression of valid statements, an instrument of thought.... Beckett's whole work is an endeavour to name the unnamable.¹⁸

Indeed, most of the examples given above from Beckett's works show his characters concerned with the inadequacy of language, with words/language 'failing'. Writing about Proust, Beckett comments, 'There is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication'.¹⁹ Critics have debated whether what Beckett creates is 'anti-language', whether his ultimate goal is silence:

Yet if Miller and Beckett are prophets of silence, the silence they express is various, it stands as a metaphor of anti-literature.²⁰

He now seems intent on the destruction of language.²¹

¹⁶ S.D. Brienza, 'A Stylistic Analysis of Samuel Beckett's Recent Fiction' (unpublished Ph.D.thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1976), p.6.

¹⁷ N.A. Scott, Samuel Beckett (London, 1965), p.81.

¹⁸ M. Esslin, Theatre of Absurd, pp.84--85.

¹⁹ Proust and Three Dialogues with George Duthuit, p.64.

²⁰ Hassan, Literature of Silence, p.201.

²¹ A. Reid, All I Can Manage, More Than I Could: An Approach to the Plays of Samuel Beckett (Dublin, 1968), p.11.

Words are the foundation of Beckett's self confessed art of failure for they form an impenetrable barrier that prevents us from knowing who and what we are.²²

Others argue that:

For I am not one of those who believe ... that the ultimate goal of Beckett's writing is silence.²³

If Beckett were really writing anti-literature it wouldn't matter whether we read the text backwards or forwards, from left to right or from right to left. Of course, terms like 'anti-literature' and 'literature of silence' are rhetorical paradox aimed to suggest a radical degree of innovation: they are not to be taken literally. But they can have the effect of deterring us from engaging closely with a text like 'Ping'.... 'Ping' proves, after all, not to be totally resistant to methods of criticism derived from conventional literature. Its language is not void; its words do not merely demonstrate their emptiness. It is, like any literary artefact, a marriage of form and meaning.²⁴

Resolving this debate is not the concern of this thesis (I am, however, in sympathy with Lodge's remarks, given last); I point to it here as evidence that the nature of Beckett's language has posed a problem for literary critics and that the language itself merits further study.

The work I have chosen to study, how it is, was written first in French in 1960 and published with the title comment c'est in 1961, then translated into English by Beckett and published in 1964 as how it is. It comes after the Trilogy and is an example of the writer's mature work. This study is of the English text, with occasional reference to the French version. As the text was translated by the author himself, this obviates the problem which can arise in

²² M. Robinson, The Long Sonata of the Dead: A Study of Samuel Beckett (London, 1969), p.23.

²³ R. Federman, 'The Impossibility of Saying the Same Old Thing the Same Old Way: Samuel Beckett's Fiction Since Comment C'est', L'Esprit Createur, 11 (1971), 21--43 (p.43).

²⁴ D. Lodge, 'David Lodge in Encounter', in Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage, edited by L. Graver and R. Federman, pp.291--301 (pp.300--1). (Originally in Encounter, Feb 1969, pp.85--89.)

studying the language of a text in translation.²⁵

While first examining the language of how it is, my attention was attracted by such constructions as 'I keep dying in a dying age' (p.18, 14).²⁶ I began to consider how one dealt with constructions that were apparently semantically anomalous. This led me into two further areas of consideration, which I later realised to be closely connected. The first was that in order to understand 'dying' in this construction, it might be necessary to see how Beckett is using this word in the rest of the work; maybe there were grounds for arguing that he meant something different by 'dying' than is commonly understood. This led me to consider the meanings of certain words throughout the work.²⁷ At the same time, I became interested in the use of such words as 'sack' (the narrator says that it is 'thanks' to his 'sack' that he keeps 'dying'; see section IIA9 of this thesis) and 'mud' (the narrator sees 'images' in the 'mud', p.11, 1--5; see IIB6) and began to think it would be useful to examine what senses these words had in how it is. Secondly, I began to think about the use of metaphorical language in how it is. Both areas led me to think about the use of puns and wordplay.

²⁵ Lodge summarises the basic strands of this debate in Language of Fiction, second edition (London, 1984), pp.18--20.

²⁶ References to how it is are all to the Calder and Boyars edition (London, 1964) (see List of Abbreviations II); they are given in the form of a page number, followed by the first line number from which the example is taken (see further notes on the style used in presentation of Beckett quotes below, p.16).

²⁷ 'I keep dying in a dying age' is considered in section IIA9 of this thesis.

Puns and Wordplay

'In the beginning was the pun'.²⁸ The very title of the French version of how it is, comment c'est, as has often been noted, is a pun.²⁹ It is well known that Beckett uses wordplay and puns throughout his works. Scott refers to Beckett's 'great penchant for punning' and to his 'gleeful zest for the surgical dissection of the cliché'.³⁰ Cohn spends a large part of The Comic Gamut examining examples of Beckett's punning and wordplay. Further, she makes comments that illustrate that those puns are not simply gratuitous fun but are often related to central themes of the works as a whole; see, for example, her comments on the title pun of More Pricks Than Kicks,³¹ or her comments on the 'combined misplaced literalism and pun "off his rocker"' in Murphy, where the protagonist is both insane and indulges in rocking on a rocking chair. She considers this pun to be of 'book-long comic importance'.³² I have tended so far to refer to puns or wordplay; in The Comic Gamut, Cohn describes various sorts of wordplay which Beckett uses, such as: 'cliché variants', 'manipulation of familiar phrases', 'twisted quotations', and 'misplaced literalism'. As she indicates, many of these will also have puns working within them.³³

In looking at the use of metaphorical language and puns

²⁸ Murphy, p.41.

²⁹ R. Cohn, Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1962), p.190.

³⁰ Scott, p.68.

³¹ Cohn, Gamut, p.26.

³² Cohn, Gamut, p.53.

³³ Cohn, Gamut, p.51.

used by Beckett, I became interested in what I termed 'reliteralised clichés'. By this will be meant a dead metaphor occurring in a context in which its literal meaning, or at least the literal meaning of one or more of the words employed in the example, is suddenly relevant. The relationship between literal and figurative meaning has been a subject of linguistic discussion, especially in the field of stylistics. Leondar points out that the boundary between figurative and literal statement is more permeable than it sometimes appears and that this can be illustrated by looking at the use of dead metaphor. She gives examples such as 'a head of cabbage' and states that the figurative sense has been lost, and that this is only retrievable through an act of imagination.³⁴ W. Chafe argues, indeed, that the problems presented by idioms and the relationship between literal and figurative language were such that they indicated (in 1968) a need for radical reconsideration of the Chomskyan paradigm, from a syntactic generative to a semantic generative grammar, because they illustrated that semantic arrangements were not constructed within a 'hermetically sealed' semantic level. He argues that speakers are aware of literalisations and relations between idioms and their literal counterparts and if they were not, many puns would not work.³⁵

An example of what I am calling a reliteralised cliché occurs in how it is when the narrator speaks of his state getting worse and says that he is 'sinking' (p.112, 8). That this is a common enough way to refer to things getting worse can be illustrated by

³⁴ B. Leondar, 'Metaphor and Infant Cognition', Poetics, 4 (1975), 273--87 (p.274).

³⁵ W.L. Chafe, 'Idiomatcity in the Chomskyan Paradigm', Foundations of Language, 4 (1968), 107--27 (p.124).

referring to the OED³⁶ definition of the verb 'sink'. Some figurative uses include (senses 11 and 12): 'To fall, lapse, or degenerate into some inferior or unsatisfactory state or condition.... To give way under (beneath) misfortune, affliction, etc.; to be weighed down or crushed.' However, in the physical situation that the narrator is in, surrounded by mud, 'sinking' also takes on a literal meaning. See OED sense 1b: 'To become submerged in water; to go under or to the bottom.... To become partly or completely submerged in quicksand, marshy ground, snow etc.' The use of reliteralised clichés by Beckett has been noticed by other Beckett commentators, for instance, Segre, who says:

Play on words in Watt originates more often with a clustre of words than with a single word. Phrases one has become accustomed to -- simple expressions, clichés and proverbs -- often testimony to the worn out and meaningless quality of language, are the object of Beckett's attacks. He frequently twists these phrases³⁷ and then ridicules them by adding a synonymous clause.

Brienza comments regarding 'Enough', which she regards as a watered down version of how it is,³⁸ that the work abounds in 'metaphors which become puns' and that the literal sense is also exploited to reveal deeper meaning.³⁹ Federman sees this use of puns and clichés as one of Beckett's devices for revealing the 'failure of language'.⁴⁰

³⁶ The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (London, 1979); henceforth referred to as OED; see List of Abbreviations I.

³⁷ E.B. Segre, 'Style in Beckett's Prose: Repetition and the Transformation of the Functions of Language' (unpublished thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1975), p.37.

³⁸ Brienza, p.108.

³⁹ Brienza, p.79.

⁴⁰ Federman, Journey to Chaos, p.139.

My interest however was in the interplay between literal and metaphorical meanings and the significance this had for our understanding of the way Beckett uses words in how it is. There have been other methods of analysing literature linguistically offered in various stylistic studies. For instance, in Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose, Leech and Short analyse a passage from Beckett's Watt, using an approach based on Halliday's 'lexical cohesion'.⁴¹ Given that my primary concern was focussed on a semantic study of individual words, and their use in wordplay, such an approach would not have been suitable for this task. An examination of the senses particular words have in how it is will need to include punning uses. In cataloguing examples of wordplay and punning I observed that there were groups of recurring subjects for punning; for example, death, sex, food. It seemed impossible to adequately explain how one example was working in isolation. It also became clear that these groups of recurring subjects were intimately related to what had previously been seen as themes in Beckett's works. This phenomenon has been observed in other authors. For instance, Mahood, in her study Shakespeare's Wordplay, comments, 'Shakespearian criticism today recognises wordplay as a major poetic device comparable in its effectiveness with the use of recurrent clustered images'.⁴²

One example of a recurrent theme in Beckett's works noted by critics is death. Barge discusses Beckett's obsession with mortality and the terrifying prospect for the Beckettian narrator that he can

⁴¹ G.N. Leech and M.H. Short, Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose, (London, 1981), pp.252--54.

⁴² M. Mahood, Shakespeare's Wordplay (London, 1965), p.11.

never achieve the release of death.⁴³ In Malone, one character is said to be 'the last of all the living as likely as not and dead to what was going on about her'.⁴⁴ Here, 'dead' is understood to mean 'unaware of' but, in the context of reference to 'the last of all the living', takes on its literal meaning, the opposite of being alive. In listing examples of wordplay under subject categories, however, I also noticed that puns in one category cross-referenced to words in another. For example, 'die' can have a secondary meaning, 'to experience orgasm'.⁴⁵ In Standard English, however, 'die' would usually come under the same category as such words as 'death' and 'dead', upon which there were also many puns. Was 'die' therefore a 'sex' pun or a 'death' pun? Both, really, so it would be necessary to cross-reference such a pun.

The more I continued, the more I discovered that such cross-referencing was the rule, not the exception. Frequently, words would have to be cross-referenced not to just one other word or example, but to several, building up a whole series of criss-crossing of references. This cross-referencing suggested that the sense of one word could not be accounted for simply by examining examples of the occurrence of that word and the wordplay associated with it alone, but that its sense was dependent not only upon examples of wordplay upon the same subject, but that there was also interdependency between subjects. Closely related to this cross referencing is the lexical contexts in which words occur. In Standard English, our

⁴³ L. Barge, 'Life and Death in Beckett's Four Stories', South Atlantic Quarterly, 76 (1977), 332--47 (p.335).

⁴⁴ Malone, Trilogy, p.186.

⁴⁵ See T.W. Ross, Chaucer's Bawdy (New York, 1972), p.76. Also, see section IC9 of this thesis where this is more fully discussed.

understanding of a word is partially derived from the words with which it regularly collocates.⁴⁶ This is much more so in literature. In his comments on 'Ping', Lodge showed that cataloguing the words with which 'ping' co-occurred significantly added to our understanding of 'Ping'.⁴⁷

While this interdependency seemed to be complex, I also noticed some consistency. For instance, the tin-opener in how it is, as I shall demonstrate below (in section IA17), is both a means to open tinned food, and symbolises a sexual organ (the penis). This cross-reference between eating and sex occurs again during a description of young lovers eating together (how it is, p.33, 24) and in 'sandwiched between victim and torturer' (p139, 5), as we shall see, the victim and torturer are lovers of a sort. What I have attempted to do in my account of the meaning of certain words in the text is to explore the way in which meaning is built up by such cross-referencing and patterns of collocation.

Procedure

I have chosen to concentrate upon two subject categories, or semantic fields, SEX and FOOD,⁴⁸ which serve to divide the thesis broadly into two parts. The first includes three sections: IA SEX, in which it is demonstrated that the relationship between the creatures is sexual and sadistic and that this is conveyed through

⁴⁶ G. Leech, Semantics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1974), p.20.

⁴⁷ 'Lodge in Encounter', pp.299--300.

⁴⁸ The term 'semantic fields' is used to mean words that are semantically related; for example 'orange', 'blue', 'red' are all in the semantic field of COLOUR. Originally 'semantic fields' was a term used in studies of historical linguistics and for comparing languages. As Lyons illustrates, there are problems with that use of the concept. See J. Lyons, Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics (Cambridge, 1968), p.429; Semantics, Volume I (Cambridge, 1977), pp.250--69.

puns; IB LIFE/CONCEPTION, in which the question of whether this relationship is life-producing is considered and it is argued that the source of life for the narrator of how it is is the 'voice'; and, IC THE END, in which it is argued that puns show the sexual relationship to be anal and the association between death and sex is examined. The second part consists of two sections: IIA FOOD, where we see that sex is confused with eating and that enjoyment gained from torture and suffering replaces the need to eat for the creatures of how it is; and, IIB WASTE, where the occurrence of words indicating waste matter is examined and their association with food, death, and sex observed. Each section is then divided into subsections devoted to the examination of particular words which come under that subject category. These are numbered, for example, IA1 'love', IA2 'fuck', IA3 'cunt', and so on. The entry for an individual word consists of:

1) The relevant common or Standard English sense(s) of the word, taken primarily from the OED, but also from the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (Concise OED). Dictionaries of idioms or slang, such as Partridge's Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (DS) and Phythians's Concise Dictionary of English Slang (CDES), have also been used, because much of the wordplay in how it is depends upon colloquial or vulgar senses which are not given in the OED or the Concise OED. Another work which has been useful and which I also use to reference a sense of a word is Ross's Chaucer's Bawdy (CB).⁴⁹ It will be noticed that several of the words under consideration are not in polite use in Standard English, but they do

⁴⁹ See List of Abbreviations I for full details of the dictionaries used and abbreviations adopted.

reflect Beckett's world vision, and their study is essential here because the wordplay depends upon senses from different levels of meaning being simultaneously called to mind.

2) Examples from how it is of the use of the word. These examples are grouped in subsections under lower-case Roman numerals, according to the particular sense which the examples illustrate.

3) Each example from how it is is followed (after page and line reference in parentheses) by a series of cross-references (c.r.) in parentheses, which include words that occur in the example given other than that being examined, and the section number of the thesis in which they are considered.

4) Sometimes, examples of use of the word in question in other of Beckett's works, usually to establish that he uses it in a particular sense; and observations by critics relevant to Beckett's use of the word in question.

5) From time to time, there is comment following a particular example, usually to illustrate how wordplay results in several senses being applicable. This often takes the form of a listing of various alternative readings for the example, labelled a), b), c) etc. The readings offered will be those relevant to the point being made. It is very likely that the reader will notice other readings, which I have excluded on the grounds of irrelevance to the particular point I am making, or have not noticed. That the reader may notice such additional readings reinforces my central argument, that the work is multiply ambiguous.

Beckett's work abounds in echoes of religious, scholarly and biblical works. I shall not be referencing all of these; where they are particularly relevant to the point I am making, however, there will be footnote reference to his source. In particular we shall

note that he frequently draws on the language of the Bible. I shall be arguing in conclusion that this is another field which could be usefully investigated, and in Appendix 1 give a brief example of religious play on the word 'come' to illustrate this. Another area which is drawn upon is that of the mechanics of fiction itself. Indeed, we shall see that to be a significant theme in Beckett's work. Again, this will be mentioned in the course of the study as a sub-pattern to the word patterning which I am considering, but it will be suggested in the conclusion as another area that could be investigated.

Style

In several instances I have departed from accepted stylistic conventions because Beckett's own form does this, and I want to avoid presenting examples or words in such a way that could imply an interpretation by altering Beckett's style. It may well be that his typography is an experiment in organising the text that is different to Standard English, but significant in conveying Beckett's meaning. We have already seen that Beckett is concerned with finding 'a new form to accommodate the mess'. Fletcher argues of how it is that:

Impressive as this novel is as an embodiment of its author's chief preoccupations, it does not seem, as I have said, to add appreciably to them. The real advance lies in the form: in the typography, syntax and general structure.... Inside each 'verse' the breath-pause alone divides the period.... This typographical innovation is not gratuitous. It responds to a genuine need, that of transcribing as faithfully as possible a voice that can only speak words when it stops panting. A new syntax answers to the same need: main verbs and conjunctions are suppressed here, just as they are in colloquial speech.⁵⁰

Kenner quotes p.17, 1--12 from how it is and comments that the

⁵⁰ J. Fletcher, The Novels of Samuel Beckett (London, 1964), pp.218--19.

gaps between the stanzas (which occur irregularly) are a form of punctuation. He writes, 'Though unpunctuated these are formal sentences, the book's convention for such memories.'⁵¹ In quotations from how it is, original format is maintained, and line endings are indicated by a slash (/). After each example the page number is given, followed by the line number on which the quotation begins. Where several consecutive stanzas form one example, the reference is given at the end of the last stanza of the example. It is not the subject of this thesis, but seems to me quite possible, that at times the way in which the lines end contributes to the meaning. For instance, 'samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my life/up there my wife ...' (p.84, 10), where the single line suggests that 'my life' modifies 'Pim'; if the sense continues over then it may well modify 'up there my wife'. The line break thus accentuates the ambiguity of these words.

Beckett uses very few of the conventional forms of punctuation in how it is. This also contributes to the ambiguity. There are no commas, full stops, or inverted commas, for example. I shall give here a brief example to illustrate that this lack of punctuation contributes to the ambiguity of how it is, and to show that consequently it would be a prejudgement to change the punctuation in my own quotations from how it is. 'he finds the words for the sake of peace HERE/howls this life he can't' (p.108, 2). Is 'howls' a plural noun or a verb, and if the latter, transitive or intransitive; would 'HERE' or 'this life' be the object? Similarly, 'no answer die no answer DIE screams I MAY DIE screams/I SHALL DIE screams

⁵¹ H. Kenner, A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett (London, 1973), p.139.

good' (p.160, 16).

It will also be noticed from this example that Beckett's use of capitalisation is non-conventional. Capital letters are retained for names, but are not used to mark sentence breaks. The examples given above show that occasional individual words are entirely in capitals (one interpretation for this is that these are the words which are shouted). In seeking to avoid any pre-judgement of interpretation I have remained true to Beckett's capitalisation style at all times, including when I quote examples which include words that are all upper case, and when I start sentences with his words which are all lower case. Examples from Beckett of words or phrases under consideration are given in single quotation marks, following the convention in literature studies, in accordance with the Department rules, rather than the convention usual in language studies of italicising examples.

Whilst this thesis does not pretend to be a complete lexicon of the words used in how it is, it does offer a set of mutually reinforcing readings which illustrate the ambiguity of the work. It offers one approach for analysing that ambiguity semantically, and illustrates that word play and punning is a key mechanism to this. In the conclusion, I shall suggest further possible applications of this approach.

7

SECTION I SEXSECTION IA SEX

In this section it will be argued that the relationship between the narrator and Pim, which is the archetype of the relationships between the creatures paired in how it is, parodies a love relationship; that the words used to describe their physical relationship have connotations of sexual, loving actions, whilst describing acts that are sadistic and brutal (see IA11--17 below).

The main words considered in section IA are:

IA1 'love'

IA2 'fuck'

IA3 'cunt'

IA4 'kiss'

IA5 'couple'

IA6 'come'

IA7 'know'

IA8 'have'

IA9 'make'

IA10 (1) 'affair', (2) 'grope', (3) 'thing', (4) 'stand'

IA11 'clinch'

IA12 'cleave'

IA13 'stroke'

IA14 'hold'

IA15 'thump'

IA16 (1) 'score', (2) 'spite', (3) 'passion'

IA17 'open/er'

IA1--10 A LOVING, SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

IA1 'love'

'love' OED sb. 1. That disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person which (arising from recognition of attractive qualities, from instincts of natural relationship, or from sympathy) manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object and usually also in delight in his presence and desire for his approval; warm affection, attachment. 2. In religious use applied in an eminent sense to the paternal benevolence and affection of God towards His children, to the affectionate devotion due to God from His creatures, and to the affection of one created being to another so far as it is prompted by the sense of their common relationship to God. 4. That feeling of attachment which is based upon difference of sex; the affection which subsists between lover and sweetheart and is the normal basis of marriage. 6. The animal instinct between the sexes, and its gratification.

v.¹ 1. trans. With personal obj. or one capable of personification: To bear love to; to entertain a great affection or regard for; to hold dear. 3. absol. and intr. To entertain a strong affection; spec. to have a passionate attachment to a person of the opposite sex; to be in love.

i) The narrator in how it is uses the term 'love' in reference to his relationship with his wife Pam Prim:

Pam Prim we made love every day then every third then the/Saturday then just the odd time to get rid of it tried to revive/it through the arse too late she fell from the window or/jumped broken column (p.85, 1) (c.r. 'revive' IB16; 'arse' IC1)

He refers to her as his 'loved one' during a visit to her in hospital:

iron bed glossy white two feet wide all was white high off/the ground vision of love in it see others' furniture and not/the loved one how can one (p.85, 14)

Again, the narrator talks of 'love' in reference to Pam, as he summarises the course of their marriage:

... my life my/living made my living tried everything building mostly it was/booming all branches plaster mostly met Pam I think

love birth of love increase decrease death efforts to resuscitate/through the arse joint vain through the cunt anew vain jumped/from window or fell broken column hospital marguerites lies/about mistletoe forgiveness (p.93, 23) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'living' IB15; 'birth' IB6; 'death' IC8; 'resusci-

tate' IB16; 'arse' IC1; 'cunt' IA3)

When the narrator uses 'love' to describe his relationship with his wife, we interpret 'love' according to OED sense sb. 4 and OED v.¹ 3. He also uses 'love' in the context of a romantic attachment to a woman who appears in a dream, where we again interpret 'love' as referring to attraction between the sexes:

and yet a dream I am given a dream like someone having /tasted of love of a little woman within my reach and dreaming/too it's in the dream too of a little man within hers I have that/in my life this time sometimes part one as I journey (p.14, 21) (c.r. 'taste' IIA5; 'life' IB12)

In the following examples, however, the narrator talks of 'love' between the creatures in the mud:

from the next mortal to the next leading nowhere and saving/correction no other goal that the next mortal cleave to him/give him a name train him up bloody him all over with/Roman capitals gorge on his fables unite for life in stoic love/to the last shrimp and a little longer (p.69, 1) (c.r. 'mortal' IC9; 'cleave' IA10; 'gorge' IIA5; 'life' IB12; 'shrimp' IIA3)

all this time vast stretch of time all that beyond my strength/truly with Pim my strength is ebbing it's inevitable we're a/pair my right arm presses him against me love fear of being/abandoned a little of each no knowing not said and then (p.73, 20) (c.r. 'abandon' IIB5; 'know' IA7)

samples whatever comes remembered imagined no knowing/ life above life here God in heaven yes or no if he loved me a/little if Pim loved me a little yes or no if I loved him a little/in the dark the mud in spite of all a little affection find someone/at last someone find you at last live together glued together/love each other a little love a little without being loved be/loved a little without loving answer that leave it vague leave/it dark (p.82, 12) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'know' IA7; 'life' IB12; 'mud' IIB6; 'spite' IA16)

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT as it comes bits/and scraps all sorts not so many and to conclude happy end cut/thrust DO YOU LOVE ME no or nails armpit and little song to/conclude happy end of part two leaving only part three and/last the day comes I come to the day Bom comes YOU BOM me/Bom ME BOM you Bom we Bom (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'bear' IB6; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'life' IB12; 'cunt' IA3; 'come' IA6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'end' IC7; 'Bom' IC6)

thump on skull no point in post mortems and then what then/what we'll try and see last words cut thrust a few words DO/YOU LOVE ME CUNT no disappearance of Pim end of part two/leaving only part three and last one can't go on one goes on/as before can one ever stop put a stop that's more like it one/can't go on one can't stop put a stop (p.99, 1) (c.r. 'skull' IC12; 'post mortem' IC12; 'cunt' IA3; 'end' IC7)

questions then DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT that family cut thrust to/make an end got there at last if he remembers how he got here/no one day he found himself here yes like when one is born yes/manner of speaking yes if he knows how long ago no not even/a rough idea no if he remembers how he lived no always lived/like that yes flat on his belly in the mud yes in the dark yes with/his sack yes (p.105, 24) (c.r. 'cunt' IA2; 'family' IB9; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7; 'born' IC6; 'know' IA7; 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9)

Also, see use of the word 'woo':

'woo' OED v. I. intr. (or absol.) 1. To solicit or sue a woman in love; to court, make love.

The narrator uses the term 'woo' to describe the relationship between the pairs of creatures:

and that thus linked bodily together each one of us is at the/same time Bim and Pim tormentor and tormented pedant and/dunce wooer and wooed speechless and reafflicted with speech/in the dark the mud nothing to emend there (p.153, 7) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'mud' IIB6)

This use of the word 'woo' continues to suggest that the narrator views the creatures' relationship as that of lovers.

ii) The following examples of 'love' have among their interpretations that 'love' is understood in sense sb. 2:

thus need for the billionth time part three and last present/formulation at the end before the silence the panting with-out/pause if we are to be possible our couplings journeys and/abandons need of one of us an intelligence somewhere/a love who all along the track at the right places according as/we need them deposits our sacks (p.150, 9) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'couplings' IA5; 'abandons' IIB5; 'sack' IIA9)

That 'a love' is said to deposit sacks suggests that 'a love' refers to an animate being; we can interpret this as indicating either the creatures' love for the being, or that the being acts out

of love for the creatures (or both). 'a love' may be understood in apposition to 'an intelligence'; the narrator is thus positing the existence of benevolent, intelligent life, with the power to answer to the creatures' needs; that is, a deity. Also, see p.82, 12, quoted above (IA1i) where in 'if he loved me a little' the referent for 'he' is ambiguous between Pim and God.

the huge head hatted with birds and flowers is bowed
down/over my curls the eyes burn with severe love I
offer her mine/pale upcast to the sky whence cometh our
help and which I/know perhaps even then with time shall
pass away (p.17, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'know' IA7)

This example (p.17, 1) is commented on fully in 'come' IA6, especially see Appendix I; where it will be argued that the reference to 'severe love' combines connotations both of a deity and a parent.

iii) Other examples of 'love':

I always loved arithmetic (p.41, 7)

never loved anything (p.46, 16)

places loved forgotten (p.92, 20)

Conclusion to IA1 'love'

From the examples of the use of the word 'love' examined in this section we conclude that the relationship between the creatures in the mud is viewed as being potentially a love relationship, as was the relationship described between the narrator and his wife, thus implying that a physical relationship between them would develop into a sexual one.

* * * * *

Introduction to sections IA2--10

Sections IA2--10 consist of an examination of a series of words which can carry sexual meanings. It is being argued that the

quantity of such words and the contexts of their use (that is, reference to a physical relationship in which we have just concluded that there is the possibility of love) results in our having to take their sexual connotations into account in our reading of the text; that the consistent and continued use of words capable of sexual interpretation results in a series of puns indicating the sexual nature of the relationship between the creatures.

IA2 'fuck'

'fuck' DS An act of sexual connexion from c.a. 1800. 2. A person (rarely of the male) viewed in terms of coition as in 'she's a good f...' C.19--20 'fuck' v.t. and i. To have sexual connexion (with).

CDES 1. (v.) Have sexual intercourse with. 2. (n.) Sexual intercourse. 3. Excl. of annoyance. Also in numerous expressions expressing irritation etc.

Examples:

or emotions sensations take a sudden interest in them and even/then what the fuck I quote does it matter who suffers faint/waver here faint tremor

the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer who cries who to/be left in peace in the dark the mud gibbers ten seconds fifteen/seconds of sun clouds earth sea patches of blue clear nights and/of a creature if not still standing still capable of standing always/the same imagination spent looking for a hole that he may be/seen no more in the middle of this faery ... (p.144, 1) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'mud' IIB6; 'creature' IB3; 'stand' IA10; 'hole' IC4)

One reading for both occurrences of 'fuck' given above is that they are both exclamations, 'what the fuck ... does it matter!' (line 2), 'the fuck who suffers!' (line 4), in which the narrator expresses his lack of interest, even his contempt, as to the identity of the sufferer. According to this reading 'fuck' is not interpreted literally, but as it is used colloquially, to express annoyance. Its second occurrence, however, is in a stanza which has other sexual puns (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'stand' IA10; 'hole' IC4) thereby having a reliteralising effect, so that there is a pun upon the literal meaning

of 'fuck'. Such reliteralisations sometimes occur in spoken English where a speaker may exclaim 'fuck John' (meaning 'damn him') and a rejoinder may be 'sure, anytime' (meaning the second speaker finds John attractive). In his article 'Phrases Anglaises sans Sujet Grammatical Apparent', 'Quang Phuc Dong' remarks upon this idiomatic use of 'fuck' and its limitations, in particular the problems posed when the context suggests that it be interpreted literally as an imperative.¹

The example of the use of 'fuck' in how it is given above (p.144, 1) identifies sexual intercourse (through the use of the word 'fuck') with suffering (the punning reliteralisation for 'the fuck' being 'the creature who fucks'); further examples of sex being linked with suffering are given below; see IA11--17.

* * * * *

IA3 'cunt'

'cunt' OED (Shorter). course slang: 1. The female external genital organs. 2. Applied to persons, especially women, as a term of vulgar abuse 1929.

CDES 1. Female private parts. Hence, sexual intercourse. Also as crumpet, but much more vulgar. 2. Objectionable person. Also term of address You silly cunt.

Examples:

i) The narrator uses the term 'cunt' in reference to his relationship with his wife, Pam Prim:

love birth of love increase decrease death efforts to resuscitate/through the arse joint vain through the cunt anew vain jumped/from window or fell broken column hospital marguerites lies/about mistletoe forgiveness (p.94, 1) (c.r.)

¹ Quang Phuc Dong, 'Phrases Anglaises sans Sujet Grammatical Apparent', Langages, 14 (1969), 44--51.

'love' IA1; 'birth' IB6; 'death' IC8; 'resuscitate' IB16; 'arse' IC1)

The above stanza summarises pp.84--6 in which the narrator describes how his wife and he used to make love every day (p.85, 1) then less frequently; then 'tried to revive it through the arse' (p.85, 2; c.r. 'arse' IC1); then how she fell or jumped from a window and died in hospital. In the context in which it is used then, 'cunt' (p.94, 2) is interpreted literally OED (Shorter) sense 1 as 'the female external genital organs'.

ii) In the following examples, 'cunt' is used by the narrator when addressing Pim, whilst torturing him. It will be argued that these occurrences involve wordplay which indicates that the nature of the relationship between the two has sexual overtones. 'cunt' in these examples is interpreted idiomatically as a term of abuse; its co-occurrence, however, with such questions as 'do you love me' (c.r. 'love' IA) and 'come' (c.r. IA6) play upon its literal meaning. This is especially so when we recall the literal use of 'cunt' noted in IA2i in reference to the wife, whose name, 'Pam Prim', recalls and plays on the name 'Pim', with which both 'Pam' and 'Prim' are almost homophonous.

Examples:

second lesson then second series same principle same procedure/third fourth so on vast stretch of time till the day that word/again when stabbed in the arse instead of crying he sings his/song what a cunt this Pim damn it all confuse arse and armpit/horn and steel the thump he gets then I give you my word/happily he is no fool he must have said to himself what is/required of me now what new torment (p.74, 18) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the above example (p.74, 18) the narrator's comment 'what a

cunt' is ambiguous² between abuse (that is 'cunt' in CDES sense 2) or admiration, amazement ('cunt' in OED sense 1).

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT as it comes bits/and scraps all sorts not so many and to conclude happy end cut/thrust DO YOU LOVE ME no or nails armpit and little song ... (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'bear' IB6; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'life' IB12; 'come' IA6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'end' IC7)

Some readings for line 21 above are as follows: a) The narrator is questioning Pim but abuses him by calling him a 'cunt' (as in CDES sense 2) between questions: 'Your life? -- Above? -- (cunt!) -- here? -- (cunt!)'. b) As a), but the narrator refers to Pim seriously as a 'cunt', as a female in a sex relationship. c) 'your life' is modified by 'cunt above cunt'; interpreted according to one reading of 'cunt' as an expression of greatest contempt for 'life'; according to another as indicating one female sexual organ above another. The latter interpretation anticipates the theme of homosexuality considered in IC. d) A pun upon 'life' as 'cunt', since the 'cunt' is the source of new life (c.r. 'life' IB12).

thump on skull no point in post mortems and then what then/what we'll try and see last words cut thrust a few words DO/YOU LOVE ME CUNT no disappearance of Pim end of part two/leaving only part three and last one can't go on one goes on/as before can one ever stop put a stop that's more like it one/can't go on one can't put a stop (p.99, 1) (c.r. 'skull' IC12; 'post mortems' IC12; 'love' IA1; 'end' IC7)

questions then DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT that family cut thrust to/make an end got there at last if he remembers how he got here/no one day he found himself here yes like when one is born yes ... (p.105, 24) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'family' IB9; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'born' IB6)

iii) 'cunt' also occurs:

all I hear leave out more leave out all here no more lie

² As with many of these examples, further readings are possible: for example, 'what a cunt this Pim' as the narrator's song.

there in/my arms the ancient without end me we're talking
 of me/without end that buries all mankind to the last cunt
 they'd be/good moments in the dark the mud hearing nothing
 saying/nothing capable of nothing nothing (p.68, 13) (c.r.
 'end' IC7; 'buries' IC11; 'mud' IIB6)

According to one reading of p.68, 13, 'cunt' is used as a
 term of abuse referring to 'mankind'.

'mankind' OED sb. I. 1. The human species. Now only
collect. Human beings in general. II. 3. The male sex;
 persons of the male sex.

'mankind' OED sense 1 suggests family group or kind (c.r. 'kind'
 IB10), thus emphasising that the species reproduces, so that although
 they are referred to as mankind, there must be a fair proportion
 of female sex organs ('cunts' OED 1) among them to reproduce, to
 continue as a kind. 'the last cunt' then emphasises the death connota-
 tions of 'buries' (c.r. IC11). This is stressed by reference to 'the
 last cunt', that is, to the last organ capable of conceiving, reproduc-
 ing normally. 'mankind' OED sense 3 plays upon the term 'cunt',
 especially since Pim (also male)³ is termed a 'cunt', as we saw
 IA2ii.

Conclusion to IA3 'cunt'

In this section we have observed the use of the term
 'cunt' referring to the narrator's sexual relationship with his wife
 and also used repeatedly during descriptions of the narrator's rela-
 tionship with Pim. Whilst one sense of 'cunt' in reference to Pim is
 as a term of abuse (CDES sense 2), the continued use of 'cunt' in
 addressing Pim, and its co-occurrence with such words as 'love'
 and other words with sexual connotations leads to a pun in which
 'cunt' is understood in its sense of 'female external genital organs'.

³ 'that clinches it he's a little old man we're two little old men/some-
 thing wrong there' (p.60, 20) (c.r. 'clinch' IA11).

It will later be demonstrated that this is indeed appropriate, in that Pim plays a passive role in a homosexual relationship with the narrator, being penetrated (c.r. 'opener' IA17).

* * * * *

IA4 'kiss'

'kiss' OED sb. 1. A touch or pressure given with the lips (see Kiss v. 1), in token of affection, greeting, or reverence; a salute or caress given with the lips. 2. fig. A light touch or impact.

OED v. 1. trans. To press or touch with the lips (at the same time compressing and then separating them), in token of affection or greeting, or as an act of reverence; to salute or caress with the lips; to give a kiss to. 3. fig. a. trans. To touch or impinge upon lightly, as if in affection or greeting.

Examples:

in spite of the life I've been given I've kept my plump lips/two big scarlet blubbers to the feel made for kisses I imagine/they pout out a little more part and fasten on a ruck of the sack/very horsy (p.49, 15) (c.r. 'spite' IA16; 'life' IB12; 'sack' IIA8)

'made for kisses' (p.49, 16) suggests that the emphasis the narrator gives to the function of his lips is that of acts of affection (rather than other actions associated with the lips and mouth generally, such as speech or eating).

and later much later these aeons my God when it stops again/ten more fifteen more in me a murmur scarce a breath then/from mouth to mud brief kiss brush of lips faint kiss (p.148, 11) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

In this example, p.148, 11, the narrator talks of kissing the mud which has connotations of religious reverence for the mud (mimicking, for example, the action of the Pope in kissing the earth of a country he arrives in); it also has implications for our understanding of the 'mud', see below 'mud' IIB6, especially IIB6x. There are no examples of 'kiss' occurring during the relationships between

the narrator and Pim. The significance of the absence of this word indicating an act of affection will become evident later, when we consider the sadistic nature of the creatures' relationship (c.r. IA 11--17 below).

* * * * *

IA5 'couple'

'couple' OED sb. II. A union of two, a pair. 5. A man and woman united by love or marriage; a wedded or engaged pair. 6. Of animals: a. A pair of opposite sexes. 7. gen. Two individuals (persons, animals or things) of the same sort taken together); properly used of such as are paired or associated by some common function or relation; but often loosely, as a mere synonym for two.

OED v. 2. gen. To fasten or link together (properly in pairs) to join or connect in any way. 4. intr. (for refl.) To unite with one of the opposite sex, come together sexually; to pair.

The narrator refers to the pairs of creatures as 'couples'.

Examples:

at the instant Pim reaches the other to form again with him/the only couple he forms apart from the one with me Bem/reaches me to form with me the only couple he forms apart/from the one with the other (p.122, 5)

so in me I quote on when the panting stops scraps of that/ancient voice on itself its errors and exactitudes on us millions/on us three our couples journeys imaginary brothers in me/when the panting stops that was without quaqua on all sides/bits and scraps I murmur them (p.123, 17) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'abandons' IIB5; 'quaqua' IIB3)

See further examples of 'coupl/e/ing/s':

p.22, 4--9; p.26, 6--8; p.72, 7--9; p.125, 20--3; p.126, 7--9; p.126, 11--16; p.127, 18--19; p.128, 13--17; p.131, 17--20; p.132, 11--13; p.140, 5--10; p.143, 2--6; p.143, 13--15; p.144, 23--24; p.150, 1--3; p.150, 9--12; p.150, 15--17; p.151, 7--11; p.152, 21--23; p.154, 14--16.

Conclusion to IA5 'couple'

'couple' is a term frequently used for the pairing between the narrator and Pim, a pairing copied by the other creatures in the mud. As we saw from OED it is a term which both as a noun and as a verb has among its meanings that the partnership is a sexual one. Whilst none of the uses of the individual words taken in isolation would prove that the pairing between the narrator and Pim is sexual, the continued use of 'couple' is a further example of a word used to refer to the creatures' pairing which can indicate sexual union, and given the amount of other words which we have and shall be examining in this section (IA1--10), I am arguing that 'couple' is to be understood also with this sense, that the union is sexual.

* * * * *

IA6 'come'

(See also Appendix 1.)

'come' OED v. gen. An elementary intransitive verb of motion, expressing movement towards or so as to reach the speaker, or the person spoken to, or towards a point where the speaker in thought or imagination places himself, or (when he is not himself in question) towards the person who forms the subject of his narrative. It is thus often used in opposition to go, although the latter does not primarily involve direction, and is often used without reference thereto. Come is also used merely of the accomplishment of the movement, involved in reaching or becoming present at any place or point; and sometimes the entrance upon motion, involved in issuing from a source is alone, or at least chiefly, thought of.

CDES 1 (v.) Experience sexual orgasm. Also 'come off'.
2. (n.) Semen.

'come off' DS To experience the sexual spasm.

In the following examples from how it is 'come' is understood in the OED general sense, but there is also a pun upon the sexual

sense noted in CDES Beckett has used this pun in other works. For instance: 'I'm coming Mrs Rooney, I'm coming, give me time. I'm as stiff as yourself.'⁴

The following occurrence of 'come' in part one of how it is puns sexually, since it occurs during the narrator's description of a physical relationship with a woman, the dream of which he has previously compared to 'having tasted of love' (p.14, 22) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'taste' IIA5).

she would not come to me I would go to her huddle in her/fleece but they add no a beast here no the soul is de rigueur the/mind too a minimum of each otherwise too great an honour (p.15, 3)

This pun anticipates the puns in part two exemplified below.

i) In the first group of examples, 'come' occurs in the context of the description of the physical relationships between the couples of creatures, with one of the creatures as the subject of the verb, thereby resulting in a sexual pun:

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT as it comes bits/and scraps all sorts not so many and to conclude happy end cut/thrust DO YOU LOVE ME no or nails armpit and little song to/conclude happy end of part two leaving only part three and/last the day comes I come to the day Bom comes YOU BOM me/Bom ME BOM you Bom we Bom (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'unbearable' IB6; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'life' IB12; 'cunt' IA3; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'end' IC7; 'love' IA1; 'Bom' IC6)

he's coming (p.84, 1)

can't go on we're talking of me not Pim Pim is finished he has/finished me now part three not Pim my voice not his saying these/words can't go on and Pim that Pim never was and/Bom whose coming I await to finish be finished have finished/me too that Bom will never be no Pim no Bom and this voice/quaqua of us all never was only one

⁴ All That Fall, p.14

voice my voice never any/other (p.95, 14) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'quaqua' IIB3)

Interpreting Bom's coming as Bom's reaching orgasm⁵ results in a sexual reading for the narrator's being finished/finishing, that is, his having reached sexual satisfaction himself.

quaqua the voice of us all who all all those here before me and/to come alone in this wallow or glued together all the Pims/tormentors promoted victims past if it ever passes and to come/that's sure more than ever by the earth undone its light all those (p.116, 13) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3)

One reading for the above example (p.116, 13) is that the narrator presents as alternatives 'coming' alone, or 'coming' glued together, the latter alternative emphasising the sexual connotations of 'coming'.

two there were two of us his hand on my arse someone had/come Bom Bem one syllable m at the end all that matters Bem/had come to cleave to me see later Pim and me I had come to/cleave to Pim the same thing except that me Pim Bem me Bem/left me south

Bem come to cleave to me where I lay abandoned ... (p.118, 9) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'Bom' IC6; 'end' IC7; 'cleave' IA12; 'abandoned' IIB5)

Further examples of 'come' occurring during reference to the creatures' physical relationship, resulting in a sexual pun will be found: p.25, 18--22; p.67, 10--13; p.68, 1--5; p.88, 1--4; p.122, 1--2; p.124, 3; p.129, 9--12; p.132, 18--19; p.143, 19--23.

ii) In the following two examples of 'come' the co-occurrences of references to living and dying provide a context which makes a sexual interpretation for 'come' acceptable (especially 'dying') because of a sexual pun on 'die' to mean 'come' (c.r. 'die' IC9); this will become evident in the analysis of these examples (given in the

⁵ Another interpretation for Bom's coming is suggested in Appendix 1, namely, that 'come' has a religious sense, so that Bom's impending arrival has connotations of the Coming of the Messiah.

sections on 'life' and 'death') that are presented here and should be cross referenced to those sections.

I call it it doesn't come I can't live without it I call it with all my/strength it's not strong enough I grow mortal again (p.16, 1) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'mortal' IC9)

part one before Pim the journey it can't last it lasts I'm calm/calmer you think you're calm and you're not in the lowest/depths and you're on the edge I say it as I hear it and that death/death if it ever comes that's all it dies (p.22, 16) (c.r. 'death' IC8; 'die' IC9)

In the following two examples, the co-occurrences of references to other words examined in this section as sexual puns, and of 'a panting in the mud' (one reading for which is that the narrator comments that all that an orgasm comprises is a panting in the mud) make a sexual pun upon 'come' an acceptable reading.

that yes a panting in the mud to that it all comes in the end the/journey the couple the abandon when the whole tale is told/the tormentor you are said to have had then lost the journey/you are said to have made the victims you are said to have had/then lost the images the sack the little fables of above little scenes a little blue infernal homes (p.140, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IB6; 'end' IC7; 'couple' IA5; 'abandon' IIB5; 'w/whole' IC4; 'tale' IC5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'sack' IIA9)

then that you have your life and that you had it the long/journeys and company of your likes lost and forsaken when the/panting stops to that it all comes in the end a panting in the/dark the mud not unlike certain laughs but not one (p.140, 16) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6)

iii) The following examples of 'come' involve the expression 'come back'; see IC1--6 where it is argued that the sexual relationship in how it is is an anal one, thus suggesting sexual anal wordplay in the use of the term 'come back':

p.13, 14; p.16, 11; p.25, 19; p.26, 23; p.28, 2; p.29, 10; p.35, 5; p.35, 17; p.42, 21; p.44, 11; p.47, 14; p.67, 13--14; p.80, 16; p.80, 19; p.87, 13; p.87, 19; p.105, 12; p.108, 19--20.

iv) One reading for all of the following occurrences of 'come' is that

the subject of the verb 'come' is 'words' or the 'voice'. The implications of this will be confirmed in section IB when further examples of 'words' or the 'voice' being paralleled to the result of a sexual union will be presented, thus suggesting that the following uses of 'come' also include a sexual pun. In several of the quotations below this argument is reinforced by the co-occurrence of 'come' with other words with sexual connotations, as cross referenced.

my life last state last version ill-said ill-heard ill-
recaptured/ill-murmured in the mud brief movements of
the lower face/losses everywhere

recorded none the less it's preferable somehow somewhere
as/it stands as it comes my life my moments not the mil-
lionth/part all lost nearly all someone listening another
noting or/the same (p.7, 12) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'mud' IIB6;
'stands' IA10)

I say it life as it comes natural order my lips move I
can/feel them it comes out in the mud my life what remains
ill-said/... (p.22, 4) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'mud' IIB6)

See further:

p.20, 3--5; p.29, 7--13; p.34, 20; p.47, 1--3; p.87, 13--14; p.87,
19--20; p.89, 12--15; p.93, 1--5, p93, 11--17; p.113, 18--20; p.119,
1--7; p.119, 20--21.

v) 'come' also occurs in the following places where it is not being argued that there is a sexual pun:

a) In the following examples, the subject of the verb 'come' is a part of the body:

tongue: p.9, 5--6; p.30, 3; p.34, 15; p.47, 7.

head: p.38, 2; p.49, 11.

hand: p.15, 15; p.16, 1 (cf. iii above); p.20, 3; p.62, 6.

arm: p.65, 16.

b) Other non-punning occurrences of 'come':

p.11, 2; p.11, 14; p.15, 15; p.16, 13; p.17, 18; p.24, 5; p.25,

10; p.28, 20; p.28, 23; p.28, 25; p.40, 16; p.49, 7; p.49, 11; p.59, 12; p.62, 6; p.65, 16; p.69, 7; p.70, 11; p.71, 6; p.75, 1; p.78, 8; p.79, 21; p.92, 15; p.92, 26; p.111, 10; p.119, 14; p.123, 2; p.126, 3; p.151, 10; p.156, 2.

Conclusion to IA6 'come'

We have observed that the verb 'come' occurs during the description of a physical relationship between two creatures, a relationship during the course of which one creature is asked if he loves the other (p.83, 23; c.r. IA1) and which is referred to as 'coupling' (p.150, 11; c.r. IA5). One of the creatures involved in this relationship is the subject of the verb 'come'. For this group of examples (listed IA3i) we conclude that there is a sexual pun upon 'come', a conclusion reinforced by the co-occurrence in many of the examples of other words with sexual connotations (as noted in the cross references for individual quotes). We further observed the collocation of 'come' with 'voice/words' as the subject of the verb; conclusions regarding this will be made later (c.r. IB especially IB12i); similarly the recurrent phrase 'come back' (c.r. IC). (See also Appendix 1).

* * * * *

IA7 'know'

'know' OED v. II. 5. To be acquainted with (a thing, a place, a person); to be familiar with by experience, or through information or report. Sometimes, To have such familiarity with (something) as gives understanding or insight. 6. To be personally acquainted with (a person); to be familiar or intimate with. 7. trans. To have carnal acquaintance or sexual intercourse with. arch. III. 11. To be cognizant, conscious or aware of (a fact); to be informed of, to have learned; to apprehend; (with the mind), to understand.

DS To possess carnally; has always, despite F&H, been S.E.

i) In the following examples, 'know' occurs in the context of the physical relationship between the couples of creatures; it is being argued that there is wordplay in these occurrences of 'know', with a pun upon 'know' in OED sense 7, that is, that the knowing is sexual.

good a fellow-creature more or less but man woman girl
or/boy cries have neither certain cries sex nor age I try
to turn him/over on his back no the right side still less
the left less still my/strength is ebbing I'll never know
Pim but on his belly (p.60, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7,
IIA5)

A sexual pun on 'know' is reinforced by the physical detail 'on his belly' and by the use of the word 'sex' itself. 'on his belly' is ambiguous as to whether Pim is lying on his own belly, that is, face down (as the preceding lines in the stanza would seem to suggest) so that the narrator's (sexual) knowledge of Pim will always be with Pim underneath and the narrator on his back;⁶ or whether 'on his belly' describes the narrator's position, that the narrator is on Pim's belly.

happy time in its way part two we're talking of part two
with/Pim how it was good moments good for me we're talking
of/me for him too we're talking of him too happy too in
his way/I'll know it later his way of happiness I'll have it
later I have/not yet had all (p.57, 10) (c.r 'have' IA8,
IB7, IIA5)

Again, a sexual pun on 'know' is reinforced by the object of the knowing being 'his way of happiness'.⁷

... ah yes there's reason in me yet because all the things/
I've asked him and don't as much as know what but/only
know if as much that he's there still half in my arms/cleaving

⁶ It should be noted that such a position would indicate that the sexual knowledge was anal; c.r. IC in which it is argued that a series of anal puns in how it is implies exactly that.

⁷ Again, 'his way of happiness' suggests that his way was not the same as everyone else's.

to me with all his little length that's something to/know
and in that little ageless body black with mud when the/
silence falls again enough feeling still for him to be there
still (p.101, 4) (c.r. 'cleave' IA12; 'mud' IIB6)

There is a pun upon 'know' in line 7 according to a reading of 'that's something to know' in which 'that' refers to 'all his little length'; referring to Pim's body; the other occurrences of 'know' in the same stanza need not carry the pun themselves, but they do serve to draw attention to the word through repetition and thus to emphasise it.

In the following examples from part three of how it is 'know' occurs during the narrator's description of the cycle of partner changing through which the creatures practise their physical relationships; thus giving the context for 'know' to carry a sexual pun. The terms 'number 2', 'number 3' etc. refer to the creatures' position in the cycle.⁸ Since speech is extorted through the torture of the creatures by their partner (see IA17; IB), to know someone through speech is knowing them through the physical relationship which we are describing.

Examples:

as for number 3 I do not know him nor consequently he
me/just as number 2 and number 4 do not know each
other

for each of us then if only four of us one of us for

⁸ See:

as for example our course a closed curve and let us be
numbered/1 to 1000000 then number 1000000 on leaving
his tormentor/number 999999 instead of launching forth
into the wilderness/towards an inexistent victim proceeds
towards number 1

and number 1 forsaken by his victim number 2 does not/
remain eternally bereft of tormentor since this latter as
we have/seen in the person of number 1000000 is approach-
ing with all/the speed he can muster right leg right arm
push pull ten yards/fifteen yards (p.127, 6)

ever/unknown or know only by repute there is that possibility (p.128, 18)

similarly if a million strong each knows personally only his/tormentor and victim in other words him who comes im-/mediately behind him and him who goes immediately before/him

and by them alone is personally known

but may quite conceivably in principle know by repute the/999997 others whom by virtue of his position in the round he/has never occasion to meet

and by repute by them be known (p.129, 9) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'behind' IC3; 'conceive' IB4)

Also further examples will be found: p.130, 2--4; p.131, 8--16; p.133, 10--11; p.133, 14--15.

In the following example, as well as a sexual pun upon 'know' lines 1 and 3 there is further wordplay in the repetition of 'no' which is homophonous with 'know':

it's no I'm sorry no one here knows anyone either personally/or otherwise it's the no that turns up I murmur it

and no again I'm sorry again no one here knows himself it's/the place without knowledge whence no doubt its peerlessness (p.134, 1)

The repeated co-occurrence of 'no' and 'know' as shown above emphasises that they are homophones and suggests that the act of (sexual) 'knowing' in how it is is negative; this plays upon the actual nature of the relationship which we shall see to be anal and sadistic (see below IA11--17; IC)

The use of 'personally' in the examples above (p.129, 9; p.134, 1) is also interesting.

'personally' OED adv. 1. In the way of personal presence or action; in person; = (by) himself, themselves, etc. 2. As a person; in the form or character of an individual person. 3. In one's personal capacity; as an individual person (as distinct from others); individually; in oneself; as regards oneself; esp. 'for myself', 'as far as I am concerned'.

'personal' OED B. sb. 2. b. pl. Personal remarks or state-

ments, 'personalities'.

'personally' is ambiguous in these examples (p.129, 9; p.134, 1) since the creatures' 'know' each other sexually therefore intimately, personally; yet they are also referred to as numbers which depersonalises; furthermore the knowledge of one creature by another is passed on by word of mouth from one creature to another so that they are known of individually (personally) by distinct numbers yet each creature does not (intimately, personally) sexually experience every other creature.

Further examples in which 'knowing' (with a sexual pun upon 'know') is denied:

p.34, 19--20; p.67, 8--9; p.73, 20--23; p.80, 6--10; p.80, 11--13; p.86, 20--21; p.101, 25--29.

ii) In the following examples, 'know' occurs in the cliché 'God knows':

'God knows' CDES I don't know.

Examples:

I'm often happy God knows but never more than at this/
instant never so oh I know happiness unhappiness I know
I/know but there's no harm mentioning it (p.48, 16)

of him who God knows who could blame him must sometimes/
wonder if to these perpetual revictualings narrations and/
auditions he might not put an end without ceasing to main-
tain/us in some kind of being without end and some kind
of justice/without flaw who could blame him (p.152, 11)
(c.r. 'end'; 'kind' IB10)

The narrator is discussing in the above example the intelli-
gence/love who, he postulates, must provide the creatures' rations
and listen to their murmuring; we have previously suggested that
the narrator's attitude to this being was that of one to a deity. The
use of 'God knows' in this example implies further wordplay -- a
reliteralisation of the cliché⁹ to mean not so much that the speaker

⁹ Reference to God also occurs in other clichés in how it is, which may involve reliteralisation; e.g., p.15, 1--2; p.38, 7--12.

does not know but to emphasise that God does indeed know. The complement of 'knows' is ambiguous, it could be 'him' or it could be 'who could blame him'; that 'knows' can take a complement stresses the reliteralisation.

what if I were he I would have said it seems to me in the end/to myself but I may be mistaken and God knows I'm not/intelligent otherwise I'd be dead (p.70, 8) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'dead' IC10)

Again, the idiom 'God knows' occurs in a context (p.70, 8-10) which also plays upon its literal meaning, in that the narrator talks of the possibility of his being dead (also in a cliché) and God is traditionally assumed to have power over life and death.

iii) 'know' also occurs in how it is where it is not being argued that the immediate context of its occurrence results in a pun:

a) In the following examples, 'knowing' is negated:

p.8, 1; p.10, 19; p.13, 17; p.14, 1; p.26, 23; p.36, 7; p.38, 10; p.37, 6; p.51, 5; p.51, 10; p.67, 7; p.68, 18; p.78, 22; p.82, 12; p.84, 22; p.85, 22; p.87, 16; p.87, 17; p.87, 22; p.91, 7; p.92, 1; p.95, 7; p.98, 17; p.105, 26; p.106, 3; p.108, 19; p.120, 8; p.139, 11.

b) Others:

p.12, 9; p.13, 10; p.15, 2; p.17, 4; p.18, 16; p.21, 15; p.38, 11; p.34, 8; p.43, 13; p.46, 7; p.63, 10; p.66, 14; p.70, 6; p.78, 19; p.92, 11; p.102, 12; p.111, 9; p.136, 3; p.138, 5; p.136, 9; p.139, 16.

Conclusion to IA7 'know'

In the first set of examples (IA7i) we saw that 'know' is used to refer to the relationships between the creatures and that it co-occurs with other words carrying sexual puns. It is argued that in these examples there is a sexual pun upon 'know', so that as

well as OED senses 5, 6, and 11, there is also play upon OED sense 7. We also observed that 'know' frequently co-occurred with a negative and wordplay upon the cliché 'God knows'.

* * * * *

IA8 'have'

(c.r. 'have' IB7; 'eat' IIA5)

'have' OED v. I. As a main verb (trans. or intr.) *In the sense possess, and uses thence arising. 1. trans. To hold in hand, in keeping, or possession; to hold or possess as property or as something at one's disposal. 5. To be possessed or affected with (something physical or mental); to be subjected to; to experience; to enjoy or suffer. 6. To possess as an intellectual acquirement, to be versed in, to know; to understand, grasp with the mind. **To keep possession of, to hold; and related uses. ***To come into possession of, to get, and connected uses. II. As an auxiliary verb.

Concise OED 1. Hold in possession as one's property or at one's disposal. 2. Experience the possession of (persons etc. in various relations; I have two sons, no uncle, no equal); give birth to (baby); gain advantage over (I had him there); (sl.) cheat, deceive (you were had); have sexual intercourse with. 4. Enjoy.

CDES 2. Have sexual intercourse with, 'have it away together', 'have it in', 'have it off'; copulate.

DS 4. To possess carnally, a vulgarism of C16--20. In C20 generally of women by men, but previously said 'indifferently of, and by, both sexes' F&H.

'have had it' DS To have been seduced. C19--20 low coll. 2. In C20 however, usually (of a girl) to have had sexual experience.

i) The following examples have as one of their interpretations that 'have' is understood in the sense 'to have sex with'. In the first examples below, the narrator talks of 'having' 'it'; a colloquialism for having sex.

when I had it still but I have it still it's in my mouth no it's/not there any more I don't have it any more I am

right I was/right (p.61, 14)

I'll know it later his way of happiness I'll have it later I have/not yet had all (p.57, 13)

and Pim how I found him made him suffer made him speak/ and lost him and all that while it lasts I had it all when the/panting stops (p.138, 14)

all that all that while it lasts all those kinds of lives when the/panting stops I had it all it depends on what you hear knew it/all did and suffered as the case may be (p.139, 15) (c.r. 'kind' IB10; 'live' IB15; 'know' IA7)

... to have a moment's peace I have it I had it opener arse/following scene and words (p.94, 17) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1)

As well as the pun on 'have it/had it' as colloquialisms for 'have sex' in the above example (p.94, 17) the possibility that 'it' refers not to 'peace' but to 'opener arse' emphasises the pun (c.r. IA17; IC1)

In the following examples of 'have it' one reading is that the referent for 'it' is 'voice'; whilst according to another reading, the phrase 'have it' presents a sexual pun:

... and in the hairs against my ear the extorted voice life/above a murmur pestle on kidney louder clearer and what will become/of me when I have it no more I'll have another quaqua of us/all I didn't say it I didn't know it then my own I didn't know it then my own I didn't/say it (p.101, 24) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'quaqua' IIB3; 'know' IA7)

... Pim's voice in my ear that/I'd have it always and life above not possible otherwise ... (p.102, 2)

A sexual pun upon 'have it' (p.102, 3) is further played upon by a pun upon 'always' which is homophonous with 'all ways', meaning 'in every manner'.

he can speak then that's the main thing he has the use without/having really thought about¹⁰ it I must have thought he hadn't/not having it personally¹⁰ and a little more generally no doubt/that only one way of being where I was

¹⁰ See comments on 'personally' made in IA7.

namely my way song/quite out of the question I should have thought (p.62, 16)

for how would it be when I had it no more before I had mine/that vast pit and when I had it at last that vast stretch how it/would be then when I had mine at last and when I had it no/more mine no more how it would be then (p.116, 20) (c.r. 'death' IC8)

A sexual pun upon 'have it/had it' in the above quote (p.116, 20) is emphasised by reference to 'that vast pit', which could also be what was 'had'. 'pit' indicating an excavation or hole (which has sexual connotations, suggesting the vagina or anus, c.r. 'hole' IC4) and to that 'vast stretch' suggesting that the 'having' led to stretching (of skin?). The comment 'no more mine' emphasises the sexual reading for 'having it', that something has been shared and lost in the course of having it. The significance of 'it' meaning voice or speech and also carrying a sexual innuendo will be considered in IB.

and yet a dream I am given a dream like someone having/ tasted of love of a little woman within my reach and dreaming/too it's in the dream too of a little man within hers I have that/in my life this time sometimes part one as I journey (p.14, 21) (c.r. 'taste' IIA5; 'love' IA1; 'life' IB12)

In the above example (p.14, 21) 'that' the complement of 'have' refers to mutual dreams of love (line 22) and physical contact ('reach', line 22). 'have' then means to experience the dream, but in view of the nature of the dream, there is a pun upon 'have' to mean possess sexually.

I have had company mine because it amuses me I say it as I/hear it and a little girl friend's is under the sky of April or of/May we are gone I stay there (p.35, 1)

As with the previous example (p.14, 23) the reference to a woman, to a 'girlfriend', gives the pun to 'had' in this example (p.35, 1)

... all gone the tins the opener an opener/and no tins I'm spared that this time tins and no opener I/won't have had that in my life this time (p.51, 16) (c.r. 'tins' IIA5; 'opener' IA17; 'life' IB12)

One reading of the above example (p.51, 16) has 'that' as complement of 'have had', referring to the 'opener'. Later in section IA it will be argued that the 'opener' parodies both the male and female sexual organs in the physical relationship between the creatures; to talk of 'having' the 'opener' is then a sexual pun.

the cries tell me which end the head but I may be mistaken/
with the result all hangs together that the hand slides
right and/there to be sure there's the fork it's as I thought
then back left/just the same just to clinch it and there to
be sure there's the/arse again then oh without tarrying
down in a hollow then/guided by stump of thumb on spine
on up to the floating/ribs that clinches it the anatomy I
had no point in insisting/further his cries continue that
clinches it this won't work in/the past either I'll never
have a past never had (p.60, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'clinch'
IA11; 'arse' IC1)

all that I say it as I hear it every word always and that
having/rummaged in the mud between his legs I bring up
finally what/seems to me a testicle or two the anatomy I
had (p.60, 15) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'bring up' IIB1)

Both of the two examples above permit the reading that the anatomy is the object of the verb 'had' with the narrator as subject. One interpretation of this is that the narrator exclaims regarding having experienced Pim's company ('have' OED sense 5). A sexual pun on 'have' is emphasised by the use of the term 'anatomy', thus stressing that it was his physical presence the narrator recalls, and by the description of the narrator's exploration of Pim's body.

... he will always/have me with him a murmur of moments
at will from the long/pest that did not finish us then yah
solitary rat from head to/foot in the dark the mud (p.104,
22) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

... the tormentor you are said to have had then lost the
journey/you are said to have made the victim you are said
to have had/then lost the images the sack the little fables
of above little/scenes a little blue infernal homes (p.140,
7) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'sack' IIA9)

impossible that at every journey we should have had to
scale/a mountain of sacks and should still have and should
for ever/have each one of us at every journey in order to
reach his/victim to scale a mountain of sacks ... (p.148,
20) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9)

In the above example (p.148, 20) a pun occurs because 'to scale a mountain of sacks', the complement of 'have' (lines 20 and 21), is separated from 'have' by embedded clauses 'at every journey' 'in order to reach his victim'; thus suggesting the reading that 'each one of us' is the complement of 'have' which is then interpreted to indicate that each one of the creatures must be possessed sexually en route.

the morale at the outset before things got out of hand
satis-/factory ah the soul I had in those days the equanimity
that's/why they gave me a companion (p.27, 17) (c.r.
'soul' IC11; 'things' IA10)

The pun in this example (p.27, 17) depends upon our interpretation of 'soul' (c.r. IC11). If 'soul' is interpreted in OED sense 12 'a person, an individual', it leads to a sexual reading for 'had' with 'soul' meaning individual as the object of 'had'.

it is stopped at the season of our journeys and in that
case/solitude guaranteed for all assuredly but not in justice
since the/traveller to whom life owes a victim will never
have another/and never another tormentor the abandoned
to whom life/owes one (p.154, 17) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'aban-
doned' IIB5)

One reading of p.154, 17, is that the traveller will never (sexually) 'have' another victim.

ii) In the following examples a sexual pun upon 'have' is emphasised by an anal pun on 'arse' and 'rump' (c.r. IC):

I look to me about sixteen and to crown all glorious
weather/egg-blue sky and scamper of little clouds I have
my back/turned to me and the girl too whom I hold who
holds me by/the hand the arse I have (p.31, 19) (c.r.
'arse' IC1)

again about turn introrse at ninety degrees fleeting face
to face/transfer of things mingling of hands swinging of
arms stillness/of dog the rump I have (p.33, 8) (c.r.
'rump' IC1)

then Pim the lost tins the groping hand the arse the two
cries/mine mute the birth of hope on with it get it over
have it/behind me feel the heart going hear it said you're

nearly there (p.25, 15) (c.r. 'tins' IIA2; 'groping' IA10; 'arse' IC1; 'birth' IB6; 'behind' IC3)

be with Pim have been with Pim have him behind me ... (p.25, 18) (c.r. 'behind' IC3)

... it's the big scene of the sack it's done I have it behind me/the day is well advanced ... (p.39, 21) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'behind' IC3)

The significance of the co-occurrence of a sexual pun upon 'have' with anal puns will be considered in section IC, when it will be argued that the nature of the sexual relationship between the creatures is an anal one.

iii) In the following examples, the complement of 'have' is 'life' (or 'it' referring to 'life'), modified by an article, possessive pronoun or demonstrative adjective:

... you will have a little life ... (p.26, 2) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

... that's where I have/my life where I had it where I'll have it ... (p.57, 6) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

Similarly: p.29, 14--17; p.67, 6--7; p.67, 17--18; p.84, 1--2; p.140, 16; p.140, 20--23; p.146, 13.

Our interpretation of 'have' with 'a/the/my/this' 'life' as complement depends upon our interpretation of 'life', which is considered in full in section IB. For now we may assume that three alternative readings are valid for the above example: a) 'life' refers to a 'person' or 'creature'; as the complement of 'have' then, it is part of a sexual pun. b) 'have a life' means 'to give birth' to a new life, to a new creature. c) 'have a life' means 'to live', 'experience life'.

iv) 'have' also occurs in how it is without any sexual meaning:

p.8, 4; p.10, 12; p.11, 13; p.11, 18; p.12, 13; p.12, 16; p.13, 1; p.13, 12; p.13, 15; p.13, 20; p.13, 28; p.14, 2; p.14, 12; p.14,

21; p.15, 20; p.18, 5; p.18, 7; p.19, 7; p.19, 20; p.21, 21; p.22,
 10; p.22, 3; p.23, 17; p.24, 13; p.24, 20; p.24, 22; p.25, 3;
 p.26, 1; p.27, 3; p.28, 15; p.30, 10; p.31, 3; p.31, 11; p.32, 6;
 p.32, 21; p.33, 12; p.34, 7; p.34, 10; p.34, 17; p.34, 18; p.35,
 7; p.35, 19; p.36, 1; p.38, 12; p.40, 1; p.40, 3; p.40, 20; p.41,
 6; p. 41, 7; p.41, 9; p.41, 11; p.41, 22; p.42, 15; p.42, 22;
 p.43, 10; p.43, 14; p.44, 2; p.44, 7; p.45, 1; p.45, 10; p.45, 19;
 p.45, 21; p.46, 8; p.47, 13; p.47, 14; p.47, 15; p.47, 16; p.48,
 4; p.48, 14; p.49, 3; p.49, 5; p.49, 11; p.49, 15; p.50, 3; p.50,
 21; p.52, 5; p.52, 15; p.53, 13; p.53, 16; p.53, 20; p.57, 1;
 p.58, 2; p.58, 10; p.58, 15; p.59, 3; p.59, 4; p.59, 7; p.59, 9;
 p.59, 22; p.59, 23; p.60, 9; p.60, 11; p.60, 15; p.60, 24; p.61,
 9; p.62, 14; p.62, 15; p.62, 16; p.62, 17; p.62, 20; p.63, 2;
 p.63, 6; p.64, 23; p.65, 12; p.66, 4; p.66, 7; p.66, 11; p.66, 12;
 p.66, 14; p.66, 15; p.66, 18; p.67, 10; p.67, 15; p.68, 3; p.70,
 8; p.70, 20; p.71, 8; p.71, 17; p.72, 3; p.72, 4; p.72, 5; p.72,
 7; p.72, 9; p.72, 14; p.72, 16; p.74, 12; p.74, 23; p.75, 2; p.77,
 13; p.77, 20; p.78, 1; p.78, 2; p.78, 19; p.79, 4; p.79, 17; p.80,
 11; p.82, 4; p.82, 5; p.83, 8; p.83, 9; p.83, 14; p.83, 20; p.84,
 1; p.84, 9; p.85, 7; p.86, 1; p.86, 4; p.86, 10; p.87, 9; p.87,
 16; p.87, 17; p.91, 12; p.93, 6; p.94, 7; p.94, 14; p.95, 14;
 p.96, 1; p.98, 20; p.98, 23; p.99, 23; p.100, 8; p.100, 12;
 p.100, 18; p.101, 23; p.104, 9; p.106, 14; p.106, 20; p.107, 6;
 p.107, 9; p.107, 10; p.112, 7; p.112, 14; p.113, 16; p.117, 13;
 p.118, 9; p.120, 5; p.120, 6; p.120, 7; p.120, 8; p.120, 9; p.120,
 13; p.120, 15; p.120, 20; p.120, 21; p.121, 3; p.121, 7; p.123, 5;
 p.124, 1; p.125, 5; p.125, 17; p.125, 18; p.126, 7; p.127, 11;
 p.128, 6; p.129, 8; p.129, 16; p.130, 3; p.130, 8; p.131, 8; p.131,
 9; p.131, 10; p.131, 11; p.131, 12; p.133, 2; p.134, 12; p.135,

15; p.135, 16; p.136, 4; p.139, 11; p.140, 8; p.143, 3; p.143, 6;
 p.143, 7; p.143, 19; p.144, 17; p.148, 3; p.148, 4; p.148, 21;
 p.148, 23; p.149, 8; p.149, 12; p.149, 14; p.151, 3; p.151, 15;
 p.151, 25; p.153, 4; p.153, 13; p.155, 1; p.155, 10; p.156, 1;
 p.157, 5; p.157, 6; p.157, 9; p.157, 10; p.158, 10.

Conclusion to IA8 'have'

From the examples quoted of the use of the verb 'have' in how it is we conclude that its sexual meaning does contribute to the argument that is being made in section IA; that the relationship between the creatures is sexual. We have also noted that sexual puns upon 'have' co-occur with anal puns; with the use of 'it' to represent simultaneously the voice and punningly sex; with 'life'. The significance of these patterns is considered in the appropriate sections, as cross referenced.

It should also be noted that occurrences of 'have' will be referred to again in IB7, where its sense of 'to give birth to' will be considered; and in IIA5 where its sense of to 'consume', 'eat' will be considered.

* * * * *

IA9 'make'

'make' OED v.¹ I. Senses in which the object of the verb is a product or result. *To bring into existence by construction or elaboration. 1. trans. To produce (a material thing) by combination of parts, or by giving certain form to a portion of matter; to construct, frame, fashion.

CDES 2. (persuade to) have sexual intercourse with (one).
 5. Make it together -- copulate.

In IA9 we are simply concerned with the use of 'make' where one interpretation is in the sexual senses quoted from CDES above; uses of 'make' which can be interpreted in other punning

senses are examined in IB2 where the examples given in this section will also be referred to in a fuller consideration of the use of the word 'make' in how it is.

i) The following examples have among their interpretations that 'make' is used in a sexual sense:

that yes a panting in the mud to that it all comes in the end the/journey the couple the abandon when the whole tale is told/the tormentor you are said to have had then lost the journey/you are said to have made the victim you are said to have had/then lost the images the sack the little fables of above little/scenes a little blue infernal homes (p.140, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'couple' IA5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9)

or then that all begins and then the life you'll have the tor-/mentor you'll have the journey you'll make the victim you/have the two lives the three lives the life you had the life you/have the life you'll have (p.140, 20) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

One reading of p.140, 20, is that the object of the verb 'make' is 'the victim'; one interpretation for this is that the 'you' will have sex with the victim.

that life then said to have been his invented remembered a/little of each no knowing that thing above he gave it to me/I made it mine what I fancied skies especially and the paths/ ... (p.80, 11) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'know' IA7; 'thing' IA10)

One reading of p.80, 11, is that 'that thing above' is the object of the verb 'make'; in IA10 below we shall argue that 'thing' also has a sexual meaning, for now we should note the previous occurrence of 'CUNT ABOVE' (c.r. IA3) suggesting that 'that thing above' is a 'cunt'. In IA10iii we shall argue that one sense of 'thing' is 'sexual organ' and that this sense is played upon in how it is. The stanza is also full of other sexual puns, 'he gave it to me' (c.r. IA10 iii), 'no knowing' (c.r. IA7), use of the word 'fancy' (c.r. IA10iii), which are mutually reinforcing of the argument that 'make' is a sexual pun here.

the journey I made in the dark the mud straight line sack
 tied/to my neck never quite fallen from my species and I
 made that/journey

then something else and I didn't make it then again and I
 made/it again

and Pim how I found him made him suffer made him speak/
 and lost him and all that while it lasts I had it all when
 the/panting stops (p.138, 9) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9;
 'species' IB11; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

'make/made it again', lines 12--13 (p.138), have as one of
 their interpretations that the narrator has sex. This is reinforced
 by the following stanza (p.138, 14--16) where line 14 has as one of
 its readings that 'him' (Pim) is the object of 'made': 'and Pim, how
 I found him made him (suffer), made him (speak)'. 'suffer' and
 'speak' act as the narrator's interjections on what is going on in
 the present (for example, that the narrator orders Pim to 'suffer',
 to 'speak') as opposed to reading 'suffer' and 'speak' as complements
 of 'made him'.

the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer who cries who
 to/be left in peace ... (p.144, 4) (c.r. 'fuck' IA2)

One reading of p.144, 4, is that 'to suffer' is the complement of
 'makes'; the narrator saying that he doesn't care who suffers, who
 causes another to suffer. Another reading is 'the fuck, who suffers,
 who makes to suffer', in which 'the fuck', meaning 'the creature
 who has sex', is the subject of 'who suffers' and 'who makes to
 suffer'. 'makes' in this sense then reinforces and plays on the pun
 which we observed on 'the fuck' (c.r. IA2). One interpretation is
 that the creature 'makes', that is, has sex, in order to suffer. It
 also identifies sex with suffering, a theme which we shall see occurs
 throughout how it is, see below IA11--17.

The phrase 'makes to suffer' is repeated in the past tense
 on the last page of how it is and recalls the pun on its occurrence

on p.144, 4, resulting in a pun on the following use of 'made':

...no never made to suffer/... (p.160, 2)

he has stopped I have made him stop suffered him to stop
it's/one or the other not specified the thing stops ...
(p.93, 6) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'thing' IA10)

In the above example (p.93, 6), one reading is that 'him' is the object of 'made'; 'stop' then is not the complement of 'made' but the narrator punctuating what he is saying. Notice that again 'make' with a sexual pun co-occurs with 'suffer' and also with 'thing'.

ii) In the following examples, 'make' co-occurs with 'end'; in these examples there is a pun upon 'make' meaning 'copulate', especially since, as will be argued in 'end' IC7, there is an anal sexual pun upon 'make': p.105, 9; p.105, 25; p.108, 7; p.114, 17--18.

For other occurrences of 'make' see 'make' IB2.

* * * * *

IA10 (1) 'affair', (2) 'grope', (3) 'thing', (4) 'stand'

The words considered in this section have not been considered in separate sections because they are not words which occur frequently in how it is (some occurring only once); they do, however, add to the evidence that words which can have sexual meanings are being used as puns to imply that the relationships between the creatures is sexual.

(1) 'affair'

'affair' OED 1. What one has to do, or has ado with; what has to be done, business, operation. b. More vaguely, A thing that concerns anyone; a concern, a matter.

OED (under 'love' 16. Special combs.) 'love-affair', in early use pl. the experiences connected with being in love; now sing. (in somewhat disparaging use) an amatory episode in a person's life, an amour.

'affair' Concise OED 3. 'have an affair' (with sb.); have an

emotional (and sexual) relationship with sb. to whom one is not married.

Examples:

fleeting impression I quote that in trying to present in three/parts or episodes an affair which all things considered involves/four one is in danger of being incomplete (p.142, 4)

The narrator refers to the sequences of the creatures' relationship as 'an affair'; we understand this in OED sense 1b, with a pun upon Concise OED sense 3, OED 'love-affair'.

(2) 'grope'

'grope' OED v. 2. To attempt to find something by feeling about as in the dark or as a blind person; to feel for (or after) something with the hand ... to feel about in order to find one's way. +3. trans. To touch with the hands; to examine by the touch; to handle, feel; to probe (a wound) ... +b. in indecent sense. Obs.

CDES Caress intimately, also (n).

DS to feel a woman, and 'grotto', the pudend are, despite F&H, S.E.

CB to feel, but (as Baun says) suggestive of amorous play.

Examples:

then Pim the lost tins the groping hand the arse the two cries/mine mute the birth of hope on with it get it over have it/behind me feel the heart going her it said you're nearly there (p.25, 15) ('tins' IIA2; 'arse' IC1; 'birth' IB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'behind' IC3)

and when on the unpredictable arse for the millionth time the/groping hand descends that for the hand it is the first arse for/the arse the first hand (p.132, 1) (c.r. 'arse' IC1)

first lesson then second series but first take away his sack he/resists I claw his left hand to the bone it's not far he cries but/won't let go the blood he must have lost by this time vast/stretch of time I am not a brute as I may have said before access/to the sack that I have my left hand enters gropes for the/opener here a parenthesis (p.72, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'opener' IA17)

In these examples, the groping hand occurs in the context of the exploration of one of the creatures by the other; in the first

two examples, 'groping' co-occurs with 'arse', in the third example 'the opener' is the object of the 'groping'. The reading which I am here assuming is that p.25, 15 represents a list summarising the events in the (future/past) relationship between the creatures; the 'groping hand' is thus taken to refer to the hand's exploration of Pim's body (especially the 'arse', line 15) as detailed p.132, 1. In section IC it will be argued that the co-occurrence of a word with connotations of sexual exploration in reference to the investigation of the 'arse' is significant, since it will be shown in that section that the sexual relationship which is parodied in how it is is an anal one, and that this is indicated through the use of anal puns. In section IA17 it will be argued that the 'opener' is symbolic of a sexual organ, thus the sexual connotations of 'groping' are significant.

(3) 'thing'

'thing' OED sb.¹3. That with which one is concerned (in action, speech, or thought); an affair, business, concern, matter, subject; pl. affairs, concerns, matters. 8. esp. b. A being without life or consciousness; an inanimate object, as distinguished from a person or living creature. 9. Applied (usually with qualifying word) to a living being or creature; occasionally to a plant. 10. Applied to a person, now only in contempt, reproach, pity, or affection (esp. to a woman or child). b. without qualification, in contempt or reproach implying unworthiness to be called a person. 11. c. euphem. Privy member, private parts.

CB The Wife of Bath calls them, tenderly 'thynges smale'; the genitals. She insists she demonstrates, that they were made for purposes other than urination and differentiating the sexes.

Examples:

the proportion of invention vast assuredly vast proportion/a thing you don't know the threat the bleeding arse the/cracking nerves you invent but real or imaginary no knowing/it's impossible it's not said it doesn't matter it does it did that's superb a thing that matters (p.80, 6) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'arse' IC1)

'a thing' (line 7) carries a sexual sense in the context of its occurring as the object of 'you don't know'; 'know' and 'thing'

thus being mutually reinforcing sexual puns. According to one reading, 'the bleeding arse' is in apposition to, and equated with, 'thing you don't know'; the significance of this will become apparent in IC.

that life then said to have been his invented remembered a/little of each no knowing that thing above he gave it to me/I made it mine what I fancied skies especially and the paths/he crept along ... (p.80, 11) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'know' IA7; 'make' IA9, IB2)

A pun upon 'that thing above' (line 12) referring to a sexual organ is reinforced by the co-occurrence of 'knowing' (c.r. IA7), of the 'things' being given and possessed, and fancied.¹¹ 'that thing above' could also be read in apposition to 'that life', which adds further sexual connotations since we recall 'YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT' (p.83, 21).

'thing' also occurs (without a sexual pun): p.12, 14; p.12, 17; p.22, 7; p.29, 11; p.45, 21; p.51, 19; p.62, 16; p.75, 10; p.81, 11; p.84, 3; p.85, 10; p.89, 7; p.95, 5; p.97, 5; p.107, 6; p.113, 17, p.113, 20; p.116, 5; p.118, 12; p.124, 6; p.131, 7; p.142, 10; p.147, 18, p.156, 2.

(4) 'stand'

'stand' OED sb.¹ II. Place of standing. 12. The post or station of a soldier, sentinal, watchman, or the like.

v. I. Of persons and animals in lit. and fig. senses. 1. intr. To assume or maintain an erect attitude on one's feet (with distinction, expressed or understood, from sit,

¹¹ 'what I fancied' has then the meaning in this context of OED 8, but since it is 'said to have been invented' (line 11), also of OED 4b, that is, something imagined. See:

'fancy' OED 4. b. A mental image. 8. Capricious or arbitrary preference; individual taste; an inclination, liking. b. spec. Amorous inclination, love. Obs.
DS A harlot's protector and/or lover; her husband; low. Fancy woman: A temporary mistress, a kept woman, low coll.

lie, kneel, etc.).

CDES 1. (n.) Erection of penis.

DS An erectio penis: low coll C.19-20 Ex. the v.

'stonden' CB To make the penis stand; to have (get) an erection.

Examples:

the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer who cries who to /be left in peace in the dark the mud gibbers ten seconds fifteen/seconds of sun clouds earth sea patches of blue clear nights and/of a creature if not still standing still capable of standing always/the same imagination spent looking for a hole that he may be/seen no more in the middle of this faery ... (p.144, 4) (c.r. 'fuck' IA2; 'mud' IIB6; 'hole' IC4; 'creature' IB3; 'make' IA9, IB2)

A sexual pun upon 'standing' is emphasised by its co-occurrence with 'fuck' (c.r. IA2) and with 'looking for a hole' (c.r. IC4). 'still capable of standing' introduces the question of capability which is interpreted sexually as a question of potency.

Krim too straight as a die at his stand ballpoint at the ready on/the alert for the least never long idle if nothing I invent must/keep busy otherwise death (p.90, 6) (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'death' IC8)

A pun on 'at his stand' is emphasised by 'straight as a die' and 'at the ready on the alert' (leading to a further phallic innuendo regarding the 'ballpoint').

See also:

recorded none the less it's preferable somehow somewhere as/it stands as it comes my life my moments not the millionth/part all lost nearly all someone listening another noting/or the same (p.7, 13) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'life' IB12)

'it comes' follows 'it stands', that is, the orgasm follows the erection; the co-occurrence of these words in this order leads to a pun upon both.

'stand' also occurs without a sexual pun: p.8, 6--7; p.29, 2; p.88, 14; p.103, 5.

In the following example, the context gives a sexual reading

to 'tried them all'; 'all' as a referent for 'men all colours black to white' so that one reading for to have 'tried' 'men' is to have sampled them sexually. That this is then followed by his meeting his wife, further emphasises the pun, that having tried sexual relationships with men, the narrator went on to marry a woman (aptness of such wordplay will become apparent in IC where it is argued that the creatures' relationship parodies a male homosexual relationship).

Example:

what men all colours black to white tried them all then
gave/up no worse too vague pardon pity home to native
land to die/in my twenties iron constitution above in the
light my life my/living made my living tried everything
building mostly it was/booming all branches plaster mostly
met Pam I think (p.93, 21) (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'life' IB12;
'living' IB15)

Conclusion to IA10 (1) 'affair', (2) 'grope', (3) 'thing', (4) 'stand'

In this section we saw further examples of the use of sexual puns with reference to the creatures' physical relationship in how it is.

* * * * *

IA11--17 A BRUTAL, SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Introduction to IA11--17

We have seen in sections IA1--10 the wordplay which illustrates that the relationship between the creatures is sexual. We will now illustrate that the act between the creatures is not a normal sex act, but one that parodies sex. Critics have viewed the relationship between the creatures as a degenerated love relationship. For instance, Coe comments:

The encounter with Pim, when it actually occurs, is painful beyond description -- one of the most savage and bitter caricatures of human 'love' or friendship that has ever

been written ... the dream of love ... has degenerated into the Sartrean reality; lover and beloved are tyrant and slave, executioner and victim.¹²

Kern considers that the creatures combine a feeling of love with their torturous acts:

As it crawls ... it encounters another being in the mud, whom it both tortures and loves. It, in turn, will be found by another who will love and torture it.¹³

Similarly, Hassan remarks:

Of this we can be more certain: the relation between Bom and Pim, whoever they may be, is the usual Beckettian relation of small affection and great cruelty intensified. Bom tortures his creature outright; in his actions sexual sadism is explicit.... But this ghastly relation, insinuated to us as an archetype of marriage or friendship, indeed of all human covenants, and contracts, fails to give their life in the mud some reality.¹⁴

Robinson also sees it as an extreme example of Beckett's description of relationships:

... as horrible a description of human relationships as even Beckett himself has written. Bom's original conception of an ideal love degenerates into a ghastly reality wherein lover and beloved have become torturer and victim.¹⁵

The narrator describes the actions of the creatures' 'coupling' in which they stab one another with a tin-opener (c.r. IA17) (for example, p.74, 1) and scratch each other's buttocks (for example, p.77, 8). He comments that this mutual torture is the purpose of their pairing:

a million then if a million strong a million Pims now motion-/

¹² R. Coe, Beckett, revised edition (London, 1968), pp.84--85.

¹³ E. Kern, Existential Thought and Fictional Technique: Kierkegaard, Sartre, Beckett (London, 1970), pp.233--34.

¹⁴ Hassan, The Literature of Silence, p.170.

¹⁵ Robinson, Long Sonata, p.218.

less agglutinated two by two in the interests of torment¹⁶
(p.125, 10)

He shows how they take it in turns to be victim and torturer:

I frequent number 4 and number 2 in my quality of victim and/tormentor respectively and number 2 and number 4 frequent/number 3 in their quality of tormentor and victim respectively (p.129, 1)

The creatures' relationship is characterised as one of 'suffering'. See, for example: p.123, 4--6; p.133, 1; p.138, 14--16; p.144, 2; p.144, 3; p.156, 18--21; p.160, 3. Other occurrences of 'suffer' play upon the creatures' relationship actually constituting mutual suffering and infliction of suffering: p.25, 2--9; p.25, 10--14; p.42, 15--19; p.71, 20; p.93, 6--10; p.103, 1--6. The wordplay especially occurs in the last two examples, when 'suffering' is a word used during a description of the torturer's relationship, but used also in its sense of 'to tolerate':

then Pim's voice I make it stop suffer it to stop (p.103, 2)

'suffer' OED v. I. To undergo, endure. 1. trans. To have (something painful, distressing, or injurious) inflicted or imposed upon one; to submit to with pain, distress, or grief. 2. To go or pass through, be subjected to, undergo, experience (now usually something evil or painful). 3. intr. To undergo or submit to pain, punishment, or death. II. To tolerate, allow. 13. To allow (a thing) to be done, exist, or take place; to allow to go on without interference or objection, put up with, tolerate. arch. or dial. 15. To allow oneself, submit to be treated in a certain way; to endure, consent to be or to do something.

so true it is that here one knows one's tormentor only as long/as it takes to suffer him and one's victim only as long as it takes/to enjoy him if as long (p.131, 14) (c.r. 'know' IA7)

Suffering, torment, are viewed then as a sort of pleasure (c.r.

¹⁶ In part one, the narrator considers the 'souls in torment' (p.40, 3) and the 'great damned' (p.40, 11); such references give religious connotations to the nature of the suffering and lead to an interpretation that the creatures are in some sort of hell (see Appendix 1).

'martyr' IC12).

In sections IA11--17 examples of words which have meanings both of physical affection and of physical aggression will be presented; it will be argued that in these examples are puns which illustrate that the relationship between the creatures is both sexual and sadistic.

IA11 'clinch'

'clinch' OED v.¹ 2. d. intr. To close and struggle at close grips. 5. trans. To make firm and sure (a matter, assertion, argument, bargain, etc.); to drive home; to make conclusive, confirm, establish.

CDES (n.) Embrace.

Examples, in which it is argued that all three above senses apply:

the cries tell me which end the head but I may be mistaken/
with the result all hangs together that the hand slides
right and/there to be sure there's the fork it's as I thought
then back left/just the same just to clinch it and there to
be sure there's the/arse again then oh without tarrying
down in a hollow then/guided by stump of thumb on spine
on up to the floating/ribs that clinches it the anatomy I
had no point in insisting/further his cries continue that
clinches it this won't work in/the past either I'll never
have a past never had (p.60, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'arse'
IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

as I hear it and murmur in the mud that I hoist myself if
I may/say so a little forward to feel the skull it's bald no
delete the face/it's preferable mass of hairs all white to
the feel that clinches it/he's a little old man we're two
little old men something wrong/there (p.60, 18) (c.r. 'mud'
IIB6; 'skull' IC12)

the hand approaches under the mud comes up at a venture
the/index encounters the mouth it's vague it's well judged
the/thumb the cheek somewhere something wrong there
dimple/malar the anatomy all astir lips hairs buccinators
it's as I thought/he's singing that clinches it (p.62, 6)

my head same movement it encounters his it's as I thought
but/I may be mistaken with the result it draws back again
and/launches right the expected shock ensues that clinches
it I'm the/taller (p.64, 6)

* * * * *

IA12 'cleave'

'cleave' OED v.¹ 1. trans. To part or divide by a cutting blow; to hew asunder; to split.

v.² 1. To stick fast or adhere, as by a glutinous surface.
4. To adhere or cling to (a person, party, principle, practice, etc.); to remain attached, devoted, or faithful to.

In all of the following examples of 'cleave' occurring in how it is 'cleave' can be interpreted in the sense of OED v.² 4. The use of the tin-opener as a weapon with which to jab and stab, however, as one of the features of the creatures' relationship results in a pun upon 'cleave' in the sense OED v.¹.

Examples:

I resume my pose cleave to him closer he ends at my ankle two/or three inches shorter than me I put it down to seniority (p. 64,10) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

from the next mortal to the next leading nowhere and saving/correction no other goal than the next mortal cleave to him/give him a name train him up bloody him all over with Roman/capitals gorge on his fables unite for life in stoic love/to the last shrimp and a little longer (p. 69, 1) (c.r. 'mortal' IC9; 'gorge' IIA5; 'life' IB12; 'shrimp' IIA3)

... all the/things I've asked him and don't know as much as know what but/only know if as much that he's there still half in my arms/cleaving to me with all his little length that's something to/know ... (p.101, 4) (c.r. 'things' IA10; 'know' IA7)

two there were two of us his hand on my arse someone had/come Bom Bem one syllable m at the end all that matters Bem/had some to cleave to me see later Pim and me I had come to/cleave to Pim the same thing except that me Pim Bem me Bem/left me south

Bem come to cleave to me where I lay abandoned to give me/a name his name to give me a life make me talk of a life said/to have been mine above in the light before I fell all the already/said part two with Pim another part two before part one/except that me Pim Bem me Bem left me south I hear it/murmur it in the mud (p. 118, 9) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'come' IA6; 'thing' IA10; 'Bom' IC6; 'abandoned' IIB5; 'mud' IIB6)

In these examples the use of the word 'cleave' in its OED v.² senses 1 and 4 play upon the biblical use of cleave to describe

marriage partnership, as in Genesis:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.¹⁷

The following example in particular suggests such wordplay; whilst 'cleave' is not actually used it describes what has been referred to as the creatures' cleaving together (see above) so as to play on the Genesis phrase 'and they shall be one flesh':

but that in reality we are one and all from the unthinkable/ first to the no less unthinkable last glued together in a vast/imbrication of flesh without breach or fissure (p.153, 1) (c.r. 'flesh' IIA4)

* * * * *

IA13 'stroke'

'stroke' OED sb.¹ 1. An act of striking a blow; a blow given or received. 2. Phrases. e. At one stroke, at a stroke: with a single blow; fig. all at once. 16. A movement of the pen, pencil, graver, etc.; in writing, painting, drawing, etc.; a single movement of a brush, chisel, knife, file, etc. over the surface operated on.

OED v.¹ 1. trans. To rub (a surface) softly with the hand or some implement; esp. to pass the hand softly in one direction over (the head, body, hair, of a person or animal) by way of caress or as a method of healing.

Examples:

stab him simply in the arse that is to say speak and he will say/anything what he can whereas I need proof so stab him/in a certain way signifying answer once and for all which I do/therefore what an improvement how I've improved

a special stroke indescribable a trick of the hand with the/gratifying result one fine day vast stretch of time me Jim or/Tim not Pim in any case not yet the back is not yet uniformly/sensitive but it will be cheers none the less done it more or less/rest (p.79, 1) (c.r. 'arse' IC1)

E then good and deep quick now the end above sick of

¹⁷ Genesis 2. 24.

light/and nail on skin for the down-stroke of the Roman N when/suddenly too soon too soon a few more little scenes suddenly/cross it out good and deep Saint Andrew of the Black Sea/and opener signifying again I'm subject to these whims (p.97, 6) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'end' IC7; 'sick' IIB1; 'opener' IA17)

The above stanza (p.97, 6) describes the narrator communicating with Pim by scratching letters into his skin. 'down-stroke' (in the context of Roman N) is in the sense of OED sb.¹ 16); with puns upon 'stroke' OED sb.¹ 1 and 'stroke' OED v.¹.

without being reduced on that account to whelming us one/and all even to the unimaginable last at one stroke in this black/mud and nothing on its surface ever more to sully it (p.155, 6) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'sully' IIB1)

In example p.155, 6, 'at one stroke' is interpreted in the sense of OED sb.¹ 2e, with pun upon OED sb.¹ 1, which involves a reliteralisation of the idiom and pun upon OED v.¹. 'stroke' also occurs in the idiom 'at the same stroke' (p.154, 8)

* * * * *

IA14 'hold'

'hold' OED v.¹ 2. To keep from getting away; to keep fast, grasp. 7. To keep, preserve, retain; not to lose, let go, part with, or emit; to detain; to arrest, rivet the attention of. 11. To keep back from action, hinder, prevent, restrain.

DCE 1. Have or keep in one's possession, keep fast or steady, in or with the hand(s), arm(s) or other part of the body, e.g. the teeth, or with a tool: 'The girl was holding the father's hand'. 'They held hands/held each other's hand'; 'There to be no holding', It is impossible to restrain or control; 'There was no holding her' e.g. because she was so determined or high spirited.

Examples:

I look to me about sixteen and to crown all glorious weather/egg-blue sky and scamper of little clouds I have my back/turned to me and the girl too whom I hold who holds me by/the hand the arse I have (p.31, 19) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'arse' IC1)

In this example (p.31, 19) 'hold(s)' is ambiguous. It is

interpreted in the sense of DSE 1, the narrator and the girl clinging to each other's hand imprisoning each other; in the context of their later affection (p.33, 24--27; p.34, 1--5) their holding is understood also as an affectionate (even romantic) action. The use of 'hold' when the narrator refers to his relationship with Pim, however, which this anticipates,¹⁸ is explicitly ambiguous, since the narrator literally 'imprisons' Pim as his victim (p.74, 1; p.76, 9--11)

I then nothing about me my life what life never anything/
hardly ever he nothing either unless driven never on his/
own but once launched not without pleasure the impression/
or illusion no stopping him thump thump all his fat-headed
meatus in the shit no holding him thump thump (p.80, 1)
(c.r. 'life' IB12; 'shit' IIB1; 'meatus' IIA4)

samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my
life/up there my wife stop opener arse slow to start then
no holding/him thump on skull long silence (p.84, 10)
(c.r. 'life' IB12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'skull' IC12)

In the above two examples (p.80, 1; p.84, 10) 'hold' is interpreted as in the phrase exemplified in DCE. That there be 'no holding' results in a pun upon 'hold' in sense OED 7, especially since the narrator has previously used the term 'imprison' with regard to his physical grasping of Pim ('then with my right leg thrown crosswise imprison his two, p.74, 1); and a further pun upon holding as an act of affection, especially p.84, 10, in the context of reference to the narrator's wife.

'hold' also occurs: p.74, 8 (in reference to the 'opener' c.r. IA17); p.21, 3; p.21, 4; p.77, 2.

* * * * *

¹⁸ c.r. IC where it is argued that Pim's 'arse' is the part of Pim with which the narrator is primarily concerned for sexual gratification. That 'the arse I have' can be read in apposition to 'the girl' plays upon the parallel between the narrator's relationship with her and with Pim; also on the parallel between the narrator's relationship with his wife and with Pim.

IA15 'thump'

'thump' OED sb. 1. 'A hard heavy dead dull blow with something blunt' (J.), as with a club or the fist; a heavy knock; also, the heavy sound of such a blow (not so dull as a thud). Also fig. c. Repeated, expressing a series of thumps.

v. 1. trans. To strike or beat heavily, as with the fist, a club, or any blunt instrument, producing a dead, dull, somewhat hard sound; also, without reference to the sound produced, to hammer, pound, knock forcibly.

DS v.t. (see 'hit' and 'strike', 'clap' and 'cope' and 'fuck' and the modern slang term 'bang'; all sadistic or perhaps merely would be manly) To copulate with (a woman); with a connotation of vigour ... An echoic word.

i) In the following examples, the narrator talks of 'thump on skull', one of the moves in the torture sequence:

first lesson theme song I dig my nails into his armpit
right hand/right pit he cries I withdraw them thump with
fist on skull his/face sinks in the mud his cries cease end
of first lesson (p.69, 16) (c.r. 'skull' IC12; 'end' IC7)

'thump on skull' also occurs: p.69, 19; p.71, 5; p.71, 9; p.75, 9;
p.75, 16--17; p.75, 18--19; p.76, 6; p.76, 21; p.83, 19; p.84, 12;
p.99, 1; p.99, 5; p.99, 8; p.100, 16; p.153, 14.

On these occasions, 'thump' is interpreted according to OED s.b. 1, that is, as a violent action by the torturer; that the 'skull' is the target emphasises the viciousness of the torturer since a blow to the head could prove fatal (c.r. IC12). The narrator of how it is is not, however, the first of Beckett's characters to use this method of communication; for example, Molloy communicates thus with his mother.¹⁹

ii) In the following six examples, 'thump' occurs alone, not as part of the phrase 'thump on skull'. At one level, this is interpreted as

¹⁹ Molloy, Trilogy, pp.18--19.

an elliptical way of referring to the thump on the skull; on another level, however, it introduces a pun upon 'thump' meaning to have sex with, especially when it is repeated 'thump thump' (see DS definition above):

second lesson then second series same principle same procedure/third fourth so on vast stretch of time till the day that word/again when stabbed in the arse instead of crying he sings his/song what a cunt this Pim damn it all confuse arse and armpit/horn and steel the thump he gets then I give you my word/happily he is no fool he must have said to himself what is/required of me now what new torment (p.74, 18) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'cunt' IA3; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

so on with now and then lest he get rusty return to the armpit/the song ascends that's working thump doused on the spot ... (p.76, 1)

I then nothing about me my life what life never anything/hardly ever he nothing either unless driven never on his own but once launched not without pleasure the impression/or illusion no stopping him thump thump all his fat-headed/meatus in the shit no holding him thump thump (p.80, 1) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'meatus' IIA4; 'shit' IIB1)

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely/curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears/of unbutcherable brother (p.82, 1) (c.r. 'prick' IIA17; 'end' IC7; 'alive' IB13; 'mud' IIB6; 'butcher' IC12, IIA5)

and now to continue to conclude to be able a few more little/scenes life above in the light as it comes as I hear it word for/word last little scenes I set him off stop him short thump thump/can't take any more or he stops can't give any more it's on/or the other opener instantly or not often not silence rest (p.93, 1) (c.r. 'opener' IA17)

In the next two examples, 'thump' is followed by '(whole) face in the mud'; it is ambiguous whether the two are separate clauses, that is whether a) the narrator records that a thump occurs then comments on the position of the face; or b) the face is in the mud as a result of the thump:

... the nail breaks quick another in the furrows HERE HERE/howls thump the whole face in the mud mouth nose no more/breath ... (p.105, 17) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'mud' IIB6)

but he can't affirm anything no deny anything no things

may/have been different yes his life here pause YOUR
LIFE HERE good/and deep in the furrows howls thump
face in the mud nose/mouth howls good he wins he can't
(p.107, 16) (c.r. 'thing' IA10; 'life' IB12; 'mud' IB6)

Conclusion to IA15 'thump'

In this section, we have observed the use of the word 'thump', a word which has a meaning indicating an act of violence, yet is also used to indicate an act of sex, in such a way as to permit both meanings to apply at once (in list ii). Occurrences of 'thump' thus continue the argument that the acts between the creatures combine sex and sadism and that this is emphasised through wordplay.

* * * * *

IA16 Other examples (1) 'score', (2) 'spite', (3) 'passion'

(1) 'score'

'score' OED v. I. To cut, mark with incisions. 1. trans. To cut superficially; to make scores or cuts in; to mark with incisions, notches, or abrasions of the skin. II. 6. To mark with a line or lines. 16. transf. and fig. (chiefly colloq.) a. trans. To gain, win (a success, etc.).

DAS v.i. 1. To be liked or admired by another. 2. To win sexual intercourse with a girl or woman by being agreeable and convincing.

Example:

BOM scored by finger-nail athwart the arse the vowel in the/hole ... (p.67, 5) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'BOM' IC6; 'hole' IC4)

In this example (p.67, 5) 'BOM' is interpreted as the letters which are cut into the flesh by the finger-nail; 'scored' is understood in OED sense 1. A pun on this however is that 'BOM' refers to the creature named Bom, who is the object of the verb 'score' in DAS sense 2; that is, the narrator persuaded BOM to have sex with him. It should also be noted that the narrator uses

the linguistic term 'vowel' in this example and locates the 'vowel' in the 'hole' (anus/vagina c.r. IC4); the theme of language and its relation to the sexual wordplay will be considered further in IB as will the association between excretion/waste material and language in IIB.

(2) 'spite'

'spite' OED sb. 2. A strong feeling of (contempt) hatred or ill-will; intense grudge or desire to injure; rancorous or envious malice. 5. Phrase. In spite of, in defiance (scorn or contempt) of; in the face of; notwithstanding.

Example:

...if Pim loved me a little yes or no if I loved him a little/in the dark the mud in spite of all a little affection ... (p.82, 14) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'mud' IIB6)

The phrase 'in spite of' is understood according to sense OED 5, that is 'in the face of, in defiance of', but its being preceded by 'love' and followed by 'affection' has a reliteralising effect, punning upon 'spite' in contrast to 'loved' and 'affection', implying malice into the affection that is found. 'spite' also occurs in reference again to the creatures' physical intimacy:

sudden question if in spite of this conglomeration of all our/bodies we are not still the object of a slow translation from/west to east one is tempted (p.155, 12)

(3) 'passion'

'passion' (c.r. 'passion' IC12) OED sb. I. The suffering of pain. 1. (Now usually with capital). The sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross (also often including the Agony in Gethsemane). 2. The sufferings of a martyr, martyrdom. arch. III. An affection of the mind. 6. Any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or moved; a vehement, commanding, or overpowering emotion; in psychology and art, any mode in which the mind is affected or acted upon (whether vehemently or not), as ambition, avarice, desire, hope, fear, love, hatred, joy, grief, anger, revenge. Sometimes personified. 8. Amorous feeling; strong sexual affection; love; also in pl., amorous feelings or desires. Often tender passion. a. Sexual desire or impulse.

Example:

fire in the rectum how surmounted reflections on the

passion/of pain irresistible departure with preparatives ap-
 pertaining/uneventful journey sudden arrival lights low
 lights out bye-bye/is it a dream (p.42, 8) (c.r. 'rectum'
 IC1)

This example occurs before the description of the creatures' physical relationship; reference to 'fire in the rectum' does however suggest it (as argued in IC1, it plays upon 'fire in the loins' in the context of an anal sexual relationship). This is the only occurrence of the word 'passion' in how it is. The phrase 'passion of pain' suggests a strong (sexual) desire for pain. Further, 'passion' itself also has a sense 'suffering' OED sb. II, suggesting a comparison between the torment the creatures undergo in their relationship and that of Christ or at least the martyrs (c.r. 'martyr' IC12; 'passion' IC12)

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Conclusion to IA11--16

All of the words examined in this section play upon the affectionate/aggressive nature of the creatures' sexual relationship; all of the words can have (at least) two senses, one of which implies affection, the other aggression. In how it is, both senses apply simultaneously, resulting in a pun.

* * * * *

IA17 'open/opener'

In section IA17 we shall examine the use of the words 'opener' and 'open' which present further examples of wordplay regarding the sadistic/sexual nature of the relationship between the two creatures.

'open' OED v. I. Transitive senses. 1. To move or turn (a door, gate, or the like) away from its closed position, so as to admit of passage. 3. To spread apart, widen, expand, unfold, unroll, extend. b. To expand, enlarge (a hole or aperture). 6. To clear of obstruction or hindrance; to make (a road) free for passage. Chiefly fig. II. intr. 16. To become open, unshut, or unclosed: (a) of a door or other means of entrance; (b) of the passage or doorway; (c) of the space or enclosure to which this gives access. Hence, (d) generally, to come apart or asunder, so as to admit of passage, disclose a gap or vacant space, display the interior or contents. (e) Of an abscess, To burst and discharge. 18. To expand, extend, spread apart. Of a collective body or its units: To move apart so as to present openings or wider interstices. b. fig. To expand in intellect or sympathy. 20. To disclose or declare one's knowledge, thoughts, or feelings in speech, to speak out, to speak explicitly, explain.

'opener' OED 1. One who or that which opens, in the senses of the verb.

'tin-opener' OED (under 'tin' sb. 5. Special Combs.) An instrument for opening soldered tins.

i) The opener as an instrument for opening tins.

(c.r. 'tins' IIA2)

The first reference to the 'tin-opener' in how it is is 'questions if I were to lose the tin-opener there's another object' (p.10, 9) from which, along with 'take the cord from the sack there's another object' (p.12, 8) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9) 'in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord' (p.21, 8) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA5) and 'with remaining fingers clamp the objects against the palm the tin the opener' (p.37, 14) (c.r. 'tin' IIA5), we learn that the tin-opener, abbreviated to 'the opener' after its first occurrence, is one of the narrator's possessions and that it is carried in the sack with the tins and a cord. This is reinforced when the narrator's sack bursts and he contemplates what may have been lost:

no emotion all is lost the bottom burst the wet the dragging/the rubbing the hugging the ages old coal-sack five stone six/stone that hangs together all gone the tins the

opener an opener/and no tins I'm spared that this time
tins and no opener I/won't have had that in my life this
time (p.51, 14) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2; 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA2;
'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12)

In part one of how it is we learn that the narrator's purpose in
carrying the opener is to enable him to open the tins of food.

it brings out the little oval tin transfers it to the other
hand/goes back to look for the opener finds it at last
brings it out the/opener we're talking of the opener with
its spindle bone/handle to the feel rest (p.37, 8) (c.r.
'tins' IIA2)

nothing now but to eat ten twelve episodes open the tin
put/away the tool raise the tin slowly to the nose irre-
proachable/freshness distant perfume of laurel felicity then
dream or not/empty the tin or not throw it away or not
all that it's not said/I can't see no great importance wipe
my mouth that without/fail so on and at last (p.39, 14)
(c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'tin' IIA2; 'tool' IA17)

struggles to open tin long struggles couldn't see of what/
change our lamps gives up puts back tin and opener in
sack/very calm (p.88, 19) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'sack' IIA9)

Also see the use of 'open', as in p.39, 14 quoted above and in the
following examples which again confirms that 'open/er' is used with
reference to the 'tins':

the tin broached put back in the sack or kept in the
hand it's/one or the other I remember when appetite revives
or I forget/open another it's one or the other something
wrong there it's/the beginning of my life present formulation
(p.8, 20) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'sack' IIA9; 'appetite' IIA6;
'revive' IB16; 'life' IB12)

ii) The 'opener' as a tool of phallic sadism.

In part two of how it is we see that the 'opener' is used
to torture Pim, banging him on the kidney 'with the handle of the
opener as with a pestle bang on the right kidney' (p.75, 15) and
jabbing him in the buttocks:

then with my right leg thrown crosswise imprison his two
one/can see the movement take the opener in my right
hand move/it down along the spine and drive it into the
arse not the hole/not such a fool the check a check he
cries I withdraw it thump on skull the cries cease it's
mechanical end of first lesson second/series rest and here

parenthesis (p.74, 1) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'hole' IC4; 'skull' IC12; 'end' IC7; 'thump' IA15)

The action is repeated and forms part of a torture sequence in which the narrator stimulates his victim (Pim) into crying, singing, murmuring:

table of basic stimuli one sing nails in armpit two speak blade/in arse three stop thump on skull four louder pestle on kidney

five softer index in anus six bravo clap athwart arse seven/lousy same as three eight encore same as one or two as may/be (p.76, 20) ('arse' IC1; 'skull' IC12; 'thump' IA15; 'anus' IC1)

This series of actions is also performed upon the narrator when his role is reversed to that of victim:

instead of me sticking the opener into Pim's arse Bom sticking/it into mine

and instead of Pim's cries his song and extorted voice be heard/indistinguishable similar mine (p.142, 11) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'Bom' IC6)

This activity is then repeated by all the couples:

as long as I with Pim the other with Bem a hundred thousand/prone glued two by two together vast stretch of time nothing/stirring save the tormentors those whose turn it is on and off/right arm claw the armpit for the song carve the scriptions/plunge the opener pestle the kidney all the needful (p.121, 22) (c.r. 'carve' IIA5)

there he is then again last figures the inevitable number 777777/at the instant when he buries the opener in the arse of number/777778 and is rewarded by a feeble cry cut short as we have/seen by the thump on skull who on being stimulated at the/same instant and in the same way by number 777776 makes his/own private moan which same fate (p.153, 11) (c.r. 'buries' IC11; 'arse' IC1; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12)

We learn further that after being used as an implement of torture, the 'opener' is no longer kept in the sack when not being used, emphasising that its function has deviated from its original function as a tin-opener.

this opener where put it when not needed put it back in the/sack with the tins certainly not hold it in the hand in

the mouth/certainly not the muscles relax the mud engulfs where then

between the cheeks of his arse not very elastic but still/sufficiently there it's in safety saying to myself I say it as I hear/it that with someone to keep me company I would have been/a different man more universal

no not there lower down between the thighs it's preferable/the point downward and only the little bulb protruding of the/piriform handle there it's out of danger saying to myself too/late a companion too late (p.74, 7) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA5; 'mud' IIB6; 'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

The use of the opener to torture Pim by jabbing him in the arse instead of opening tins is punned upon:

... clap athwart the arse opener between the/thighs arm round his poor shoulders done it rest (p.79, 14) (c.r. 'arse' IC1)

One reading of line 14 is 'the arse-opener' (further readings are suggested below where the stanza is quoted in full), emphasising that the tin-opener is used to 'open' the 'arse'. In section IIA the significance of the tin-opener's change of function from the normal one of opening tinned food to use as an instrument in a sadistic/sexual act will be further remarked upon, when we will see that there is consistent cross-referencing between the semantic fields of SEX and FOOD in how it is through wordplay.

Further wordplay results from the use of the 'opener' upon Pim when it causes Pim to have an 'open wound':

no fool merely slow and the day comes we come to the day/when stabbed in the arse now an open wound instead of the/cry a brief murmur done it at last (p.75, 12) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'arse' IC1)

The narrator speaks of causing a 'wound' in Pim; the term associated with the crucifixion of Christ.²⁰ 'open' in this occurrence is under-

²⁰ For further comparisons with Christ's sufferings, see: 'martyr' IC12; 'passion' IA16, IC12; 'sack' IIA9.

'wound' O E D sb. 1. A hurt caused by the laceration or separation of tissues of the body by a hard or sharp instrument, a bullet, etc.: an external injury. b. Esp. in the (Five) Wounds of Christ.

stood according to its sense as given OED 5, 'not covered so as to be concealed or protected; bare, exposed'. It plays however on the fact that the wound has been caused by an 'opener' suggesting that the narrator has been successful in trying to open up Pim's body.

'open' also occurs with the sense OED 5a in the following two examples:

that or something else the day comes that word again we come/to the day at the end of how long no figures vast stretch of/time when clawed in the armpit long since an open sore for/try a new place one is tempted desperation more sensitive the/eye the glañs no only confuse him fatal thing avoid at all costs (p.70, 11) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'fatal' IC12; 'thing' IA10)

Krim dead are you mad one doesn't die here and with that with/his long index claw Kram shaken pierces the mud two little/flues to the skins then to Krim right for you they are warm/Krim to Kram roles reversed it's the mud Kram we'll leave/them open and see one year two years Kram's finger skins still/warm (p.102, 15) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'die' IC9; 'mud' IIB6)

The existence of wordplay upon the 'open wound' is echoed in the above two occurrences of 'open' (p.70, 11; p.102, 15), suggesting that the piercing action with the nails is another method which is attempted of opening the victim's body. In both these examples the 'opening' results from clawing. Use of the term 'claw' indicates that the narrator's reference to 'nails' with which he scratches Pim's armpit (p.69, 16; p.69, 20; p.71, 1, for example) is to his fingernails, rather than to a metal nail.²¹ The term 'claw' emphasises the brutality of the act by its animal connotations. One reading for the 'open sore' (p.70, 13) which results from the torturer's clawing is then the same as the initial reading for the 'open wound'. This use of

²¹ The 'sore' has been caused by (finger) nails, (metal) nails having been the cause of Christ's wounds. The ambiguity between finger-nails and metal nails also occurs pp.58--59 when a 'sage' dies as his hands are pierced by nails (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'die' IC9).

'open sore' then continues the wordplay we noted in the occurrence of 'open wound' in that it plays upon the fact that the 'wound/sore' has been caused by an 'opener'.

The action of the 'opener' as an implement of torture is to be thrust and withdrawn into the 'arse' of the victim, thus parodying a phallic role in a sexual relationship:

thump on skull no point in post mortems and then what then/what we'll try and see last words cut thrust a few words DO/YOU LOVE ME CUNT ... (p.99, 1) (c.r. 'skull' IC12; 'post mortems' IC12; 'love' IA1; 'cunt' IA3)

questions then DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT that family cut thrust to/make an end ... (p.105, 24) (c.r. 'cunt' IA3; 'love' IA1; 'family' IB9; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7)

'thrust' as well as functioning to emphasise the phallic role of the 'opener' appears here in the phrase 'cut thrust' suggesting the action of a sword fighter, recalling that the act is aggressive in how it is as well as affectionate, resulting in the reliteralisation of the cliché 'cut thrust'. 'I withdraw it' occurs with reference to the tin-opener p.74, 4; see the use of 'withdraw' to refer to the action of the penis during sexual intercourse.

Beckett has used inanimate objects as phallic symbols in other works, Ehrhard observes regarding a character in Watt 'La canne de M. Hackett, accrochée à son cou, ressemble à un phallus: elle "pendait entre ses jambes"'.²²

In how it is the phallic role of the 'opener' is emphasised by the punning use of such words as 'prick', 'tool', 'point' which also play upon its use as a weapon.

'tool' OED sb. 1. 'Any instrument of manual operation' (J.); a mechanical implement for working upon something, as by cutting, striking, rubbing, or other process, in any manual art or industry. 2. fig. Anything used in the

²² P. Ehrhard, Anatomic de Samuel Beckett (Basle, 1976), p.227.

manner of a tool; a thing (concrete or abstract) with which some operation is performed; a means of effecting something; an instrument. b. A bodily organ; spec. the male generative organ (or pl. organs). Now arch. or slang.

CDES (n.) Penis.

Examples:

nothing now but to eat ten twelve episodes open the tin
put/away the tool ... (p.39, 14) (c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'tin'
IIA2)

In the above example 'tool' is interpreted according to sb.

1 OED. The context of the following example, however, implies a sexual pun in which 'tool' refers to the tin-opener but puns upon the colloquial use of 'tool' to refer to the penis:

I put away the tool between his thighs take my right leg
from/off his two imprison his shoulders with my right arm
he can't/leave me ... (p.76, 9)

The narrator describes his action of thrusting the 'opener' into Pim's 'arse' and withdrawing it as 'pricking' him:

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end ... (p.82, 1)
(c.r. 'end' IC7)

'prick' OED v. 1. trans. To pierce slightly, make a minute hole in (a surface or body) with a fine or sharp point; to puncture; hence, to wound (or hurt) with or as with a pointed instrument or weapon. Said also of the instrument. Also fig.

sb. 17. The penis. (Now low).

CDES (n.) penis.

There is evidence to suggest that the verb 'priken' in Middle English was used with sexual connotations, to mean 'have intercourse with'; Ross comments of 'priken', 'as a synonym for "to have intercourse", the word does not really occur very often in Chaucer ... the noun "prick" for penis was not yet in use and consequently development was slow'²³. This does assume that 'priken'

²³ CB, p.167. Also in the entry under 'priken' Ross states 'See Robbins' Poem No. 28: "he prikede & he pransede" (28); and No. 32: "and ye begyn on me ffor to prycke" (39), which the editor glosses as "to have intercourse with." (CB, p.169).

meant or came to have a sense of 'to have intercourse with' as the noun 'prick' came to have a sexual sense.

Beckett has been observed using 'prick' with a sexual pun before, for example, considering the title of his collection of short stories More Pricks Than Kicks, Cohn comments:

The very title of the volume incorporates puns and a twisted quotation.... Standard definitions of both 'prick' and 'kick' involve pain, but in colloquial usage a kick is a passing pleasure²⁴ and a prick the sexual instrument for obtaining pleasure.

In this example (p.82, 1) from how it is 'pricked' functions to combine a term describing a wounding action performed by a sharp instrument, the tin-opener, with a phallic pun, thus contributing to the argument that the act between the creatures is both sexual and sadistic and that one of the roles of the tin-opener is phallic.

Also see the use of 'point':

the gaps are the holes otherwise it flows more or less more or/less profound the holes we're talking of the holes not specified/not possible no point I feel them ... (p.93, 11) (c.r. 'hole' IC4;)

The idiom 'no point' used colloquially to mean 'no purpose' is punned upon here with reference to the tin-opener whose pointed end has made the holes:

'point' OED sb¹. I. A prick, a dot. 1. A minute hole or impression made by pricking; a prick, a puncture. Obs. rare. B. I. 1. A sharp end to which anything tapers used for pricking, piercing, scratching, pointing out, etc.; as of a weapon, tool, pin, pen, pointer. 3. An object or instrument consisting of or characterized by a point (in sense 1) or which pricks or pierces. a. A pointed weapon or instrument for stabbing or piercing; a dagger, pointed sword, or the like; also, a bodkin.

v.¹ I. 1. trans. To prick with something sharp, to pierce, puncture. Obs.

²⁴ Cohn, Gamut, pp.26--27.

A sense recorded in DS for 'pointer', 'The penis', suggests that this pun on point may also include a phallic reference. Alternative readings for line 13 then are: a) 'no point' as an idiom, meaning there seems to be no reason. b) A pun on 'point' meaning sharp, a puncture made by a pointed instrument. c) Possible phallic pun on 'point' made by the tin-opener. d) The idiom 'no point' is then re-interpreted (the denial of the point indicating impotence?). Thus 'point' punningly combines reference to the tin-opener's dual role as phallus and weapon.

'point' also occurs: p.76, 19; p.79, 16; p.93, 13; p.99, 1.

That the tin-opener mimics the actions of a sexual organ performing a potentially life-creating function is anticipated in an example of wordplay in part one:

grope in a panic in the mud for the opener that is my life
but/of what cannot as much be said could not as much be
always/said my little lost always vast stretch of time (p.37,
21) (c.r. 'grope' IA10; 'mud' IIB6; 'life' IB12)

The idiom 'that is my life' means 'that is typical of my life', 'that is typical of what happens to me, of how I spend my time'. The narrator comments that it is typical that he should be in a panic, searching for the tin-opener. There is also however a pun upon 'life' in which the referent for 'that' is 'the opener' and 'life' is understood in its sense of source of life, vital spot:

'life' OED sb. 3. e. A vital or vulnerable point of an animal's body; the 'life' spot.

Also, in p.103, 6, 'hanging on to humankind' (c.r. 'kind' IB9) follows reference to 'the one and only opener' suggesting again that the 'opener' represents life/identity.

iii) The 'opener' as the receptacle of phallic sadism

In the following examples, the narrator's use of the term

'opener' to refer to the tin-opener as it is used to perform a sadistic phallic role, results in a pun upon 'opener' to mean that which is opened (see OED 'open' can have transitive and intransitive senses). In the context then of the physical relationship parodying sex, 'opener' refers to the receptacle of the phallus, to the organ playing the female role in the sex act (that it is not, however, the vagina which is penetrated in how it is will be argued later c.r. IC)

simply try again not yet say die a good deep P and the apposite/stab and inevitable one fine day should it mean his trying all/the consonants in the Roman alphabet that he will answer in/the end it's inevitable me Pim which he does in the end it was/inevitable me Pim clap athwart the arse opener between the/thighs arm round his poor shoulders done it rest (p.79, 10) (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'end' IC7; 'arse' IC19)

'opener between the thighs' (lines 14--15) is ambiguous between stating that the tin-opener has been placed between the thighs (its phallic/sadistic role) and modifying the 'arse'. According to the latter interpretation it describes the 'arse' as being that which is 'opened' between the thighs. The following three examples all have among their readings: a) The tin-opener is thrust into the 'arse'. b) The 'arse' is that which is 'opened':

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT as it comes bits (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'unbearable' IB6; 'skull' IC12; 'arse' IC1; 'life' IB12; 'cunt' IA3)

samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my life/up there my wife stop opener arse slow to start then no holding/him thump on skull long silence (p. 84, 10) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'arse' IC1; 'hold' IA14; 'skull' IC12)

In the above example (p,84, 10) there is a further ambiguity in that the 'opener' could refer to 'my wife' since in the context of a normal sexual relationship, it would naturally be her sexual organs that would be penetrated. A pun thus suggests a parallel between the narrator's relationship with Pim and his relationship with his

wife, which is also suggested by the syntactic ambiguity of this stanza, since 'my wife' (line 11) could, according to one reading, modify 'Pim' (line 10), as a phrase in apposition after the embedded clause 'my life up there'. This parallel, between the wife and Pim, will be considered further in section IC1 'arse'.

what sun what have I said no matter I've said something
that's/what was needed seen something called it above said
it was so/said it was me ten twelve years old sleeping in
the sun in the/dust to have a moment's peace I have it I
had it opener arse/following scene and words (p.94, 14)
(c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'arse' IC1)

The following six examples of 'opener' occur during description of the torture performed upon Pim by the narrator. They thus continue to pun upon the 'opener' as that which causes the 'opening' and that which is opened by the instrument:

and now to continue to conclude to be able a few more
little/scenes life above in the light as it comes as I hear
it word for/word last little scenes I set him off stop him
short thump thump/can't take any more or he stops can't
give any more it's one/or the other opener instantly or
not often not silence rest (p.93, 1) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'come'
IA6)

According to one reading of the above example (p.93, 1) 'it's one or the other' pre-modifies 'opener', which plays upon the ambiguity of the 'opener'.

he has stopped I have made him stop suffered him to stop
it's/one or the other not specified the thing stops and
more or less/long silence not specified more or less long
rest I set him off/again opener or capitals as the case
may be otherwise never a/word new instalment so on (p.93,
6) (c.r. 'thing' IA10)

the gaps are the holes otherwise it flows more or less
more or/less profound the holes we're talking of the holes
not specified/not possible no point I feel them and wait
till he can out and on/again or I don't and opener or I do
and opener just the same/that helps him out as I hear it
as it comes word for word to continue to conclude to be
able part two leaving only three and last (p.93, 11) (c.r.
'hole' IC4)

E then good and deep quick now the end above sick of
light/and nail on skin for the down-stroke of the Roman
N when/suddenly too soon too soon a few more little scenes

suddenly/I cross it out good and deep Saint Andrew of the Black Sea/and opener signifying again I'm subject to these whims (p.97, 6) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'end' IC7; 'sick' IIB1; 'stroke' IA13)

me at least him I have still to ask what becomes of me at least/when the silence I stop then start again opener or capitals and in/the hairs against my ear the extorted voice life above a/murmur pestle on kidney louder clearer and what will become/of me when I have it no more I'll have another quaqu of us/all I didn't say it I didn't know it then my own I didn't know it then my own I didn't/say it (p.101, 23) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'quaqu' IIB3; 'know' IA7)

in a word once more once and for all Pim's voice then nothing/nothing then Pim's voice I make it stop suffer it to stop then/set it off again that I at last may be no more then at last be again/something there that escapes me since how can I opener/capitals and not be it's impossible it stands to reason there's/reason in me yet (p.103, 1) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'stands' IA10)

iv) The 'opener' as an instrument for extorting speech; the 'opener' as the victim who speaks

We have observed that the narrator tortures Pim with the 'opener'. One of the purposes of the torture is to extort the voice from Pim 'two speak blade in arse' (p.76, 20) (c.r. 'arse' IC1). A further play upon the use of the opener is thus suggested: it is the instrument for forcing Pim to open out verbally. Ruby Cohn comments: 'Since Pim has a voice, he is taught to speak by having the can opener plunged into his buttocks. Pim becomes a can to disgorge its contents; "c'est mécanique".'²⁵ Again, the ambiguity of 'the opener' as that which is opened occurs, in that the opener also applies to Pim as the one who opens out, who begins to speak. See also Beckett's play Cascando, where the role of the 'opener' is to incite both the voice and the music.

²⁵ Cohn, Gamut, p.201.

Examples:

now at rest my left hand part two second half what is it doing/grasping the sack beside Pim's body no more about this sack the/opener the opener soon Pim will speak (p.73, 13) (c.r. 'sack' IIA)

The following examples are quoted in the previous section to exemplify the use of 'the opener' as a sexual organ (penetrator and penetrated); they are referred to again here because they also include wordplay on 'the opener' as that which talks and that which causes to talk: p.79, 10--15; p.83, 19--21; p.84, 10--12; p.94, 14--18; p.93, 1--6; p.93, 7--17; p.101, 23--29; p.103, 1--6.²⁶

See also:

so many tins still remaining something there that escapes me/I take them out left hand one by one in the mud till at last the/opener I put it in my mouth put back the tins I don't say all and/my right arm all this time (p.73, 16) (c.r. 'tins' IIA2, 'mud' IIB6)

In the above example (p.73, 16) the narrator talks (according to one reading) of putting the opener in his mouth; this plays upon the mouth itself being an 'opener' in another sense (one of the reasons for the mouth to open is to speak)

See also: 'opening up of vistas' p.30, 15.

The significance of the 'opener' as that which causes the voice/is the voice will be referred to again in IB, where I shall be commenting further upon the separate sub-pattern of wordplay on language in how it is, concentrating on the connection between the

²⁶ 'opener capitals' (p.103, 4--5) has additional ambiguities. It could indicate the use of the 'opener' to stab the 'arse', followed by 'capitals' being 'drawn' on the skin, as separate items on a list of torture methods used. Other readings however include that the 'opener' is what is used to score the capitals, the capitals being the first method of communication used; thus the narrator comments that the 'capitals' are the 'opener', that is, what he opens/starts with. The juxtaposition of 'opener' with a reference to a means of communication reinforces the connection between the 'opener' and vocal sound/speech.

production of language and sex.

v) Other occurrences of 'opener'

... access/to the sack that I have my left hand enters gropes for the/opener here a parenthesis (p.72, 4) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'gropes' IA10)

It can now be seen, as was suggested in IA10, that the sexual role of the 'opener' reinforces a sexual pun on 'gropes'.

in a word more lively that's what I was getting at I've got at/it I say it as I hear it more how shall I say more lively there's/nothing better before Pim part one more independent seeing/my own little scenes crawling eating thinking if you/insist an odd dim thought losing the one and only opener/hanging on to humankind a thousand and one last shifts with/emotions laughter even and tears to match soon dried in a word/hanging on (p.103, 7) (c.r. 'lively' IB14; 'eat' IIA5; 'kind' IB19)

Having observed that the 'opener' plays several roles in how it is, especially that it is both penetrator and penetrated in a parody of a sexual relationship, results in special emphasis on there only being one 'opener'. That 'hanging on to humankind' follows reference to the 'opener' implies a causal connection between the 'opener' and hanging on to humankind. One interpretation of this is that by attempting reproduction the narrator hopes to allow the species of humans to persist, another is that by using it in a relationship with another creature, the narrator clings to another being. Neither should we forget that according to the original function of the 'opener', as a tin-opener, it gives the narrator the means to procure food and therefore life and humanity (c.r. 'family' IIB9; 'kind' IIB10; 'species' IB11)

Conclusion to the use of the '(tin)-opener'

We have observed that the narrator carries with him a tin-opener which is used to open tinned food. The tin-opener however is also used as a weapon with which to torture Pim (an action later repeated in the other couplings), the action of the tin-opener in

being thrust into and withdrawn from the victim's 'arse' parodying a phallic role in a sexual relationship. The tin-opener's function has thus been altered, from one of helping to procure food, to one participating in a relationship combining sex and sadism. Further wordplay occurs when the tin-opener is referred to as 'the opener' so that there is ambiguity between that which causes something else to open and that which is itself opened. That this sexual sadistic relationship produces the voice is emphasised by the play upon 'the opener' as that which causes Pim to open out with words, to speak; as a pun this plays upon 'the opener' as the instrument both opening something else and as that which is opened.

Thus the 'opener' is used as a tool of sexual sadism where we would have expected it to be used to procure food (c.r. IIA FOOD), an act which results in the 'voice'. That this sexual/sadistic relationship which induces the voice is significant, is illustrated in IB LIFE/CONCEPTION where there is further consideration of this relationship between sexual reproduction and the production of language; between the creation of life and the creation of fiction(-al life) in how it is; and the way in which these semantic fields (SEX and LIFE/CONCEPTION) are linked through wordplay (via the sub-pattern of language).

vi) Other occurrences of 'open'

During the consideration of 'opener' in how it is we noted some occurrences of 'open' which were especially relevant to the argument and which contributed to the wordplay on 'opener'. Below is a brief examination of other occurrences of 'open' in how it is.

'open air' OED 1. The unconfined atmosphere; hence the unconfined space outside buildings, usually more or less exposed to the weather.

Examples:

quick the head in the sack where saving your reverence I
 have/all the suffering of all the ages I don't give a curse
 for it and howls of laughter in every cell the tins rattle
 like castanets and/under me convulsed the mud goes
 guggle-guggle I fart and/piss in the same breath

blessed day last of the journey all goes without a hitch
 the joke/dies too old the convulsions die I come back to
 the open air/to serious things had I only the little finger
 to raise to be/wafted straight to Abraham's bosom I'd tell
 him to stick it/up (p.42, 15) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'sack'
 IIA9; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'tins' IIA2; 'mud' IIB6; 'fart'
 IIB1; 'piss' IIB2; 'die' IC9; 'come' IA6)

The narrator's return to the 'open air' in the example above (p.42,
 15) follows his laughter with his head in the sack; 'open air' is
 thus seen in opposition to confinement in the sack.

with that of a slowness difficult to conceive the procession
 we/are talking of a procession advancing in jerks or spasms
 like/shit in the guts till one wonders days of great gaiety
 if we shall/not end one after another two by two by being
 shat into/the open air the light of day the regimen of
 grace (p.135, 17) (c.r. 'conceive' IB4; 'shit' IIB1; 'end'
 IC7)

According to one reading of p.135, 17, the narrator wonders
 whether he and his fellow creatures will in the end be excreted into
 'the open air', suggesting that they are currently confined. According
 to one reading 'the light of day the regimen of grace' are in apposition
 to, and thus equated with, 'the open air', suggesting that the
 creatures are in a dark, graceless place. (This example will be
 discussed further see sections IB4, IC7, IIB1.)

'open' also occurs in how it is in the following places:

vii) In co-occurrence with 'tin(s)': p.8, 20--4; p.88, 19.

viii) In co-occurrence with parts of the body:

with mouth: p.9, 5; p.29, 4; p.29, 9; p.30, 3; p.30, 3; p.38, 6;
 p.49, 7.

with eye(s): p.15, 15--16; p.94, 24; p.97, 21.

with hand(s): p.31, 7--12; p.34, 12 (these last two examples are

ambiguous in that one reading is that it is the 'mud' which 'opens', c.r. 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v).

ix) The following examples are quoted in full and examined in 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v: p.30, 13; p.43, 3; p.49, 20; p.51, 2; p.106, 15.

See also:

'aperture' OED 3. An opening, an open space between portions of solid matter; a gap, cleft, chasm, or hole; the mouth of the shell of a mollusc.

Example:

now his arms Saint Andrew's cross top V reduced aperture/
my left hand moves up the left branch follows it into the
sack/he holds his sack on the inside near the mouth more
daring/than me my hand lingers a moment on his like
cords his veins/withdraws and resumes its place on the
left in the mud no more/about this sack for the moment
(p.64, 12) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'mud' IIB6)

In this example, the 'aperture' refers to a gap in the shape of the victim's body, which is compared to that of Saint Andrew's cross implying that the victim is a martyr.²⁷

* * * * *

Conclusion to IA SEX

In this section IA1--17 we have argued that the narrator of how it is describes a physical relationship between pairs of creatures which is sexual, and that the sexual implications of their act are drawn out through wordplay. Thus, words like 'fuck' and 'cunt' are reliteralised when used in the context of a relationship in which

²⁷ 'Saint Andrew's Cross': 'Of the cross proper there were three shapes -- the crux immissa or four-armed cross, the crux commissa or three-armed cross and the crux de cussata, which is more commonly known as Saint Andrew's Cross', Encyclopaedia Biblica, edited by T.K. Cheyne and J.S. Black (London, 1899).

one creature asks if the other 'loves' him (c.r. 'love' IA1); and words such as 'couple', 'come', 'know' are sexual puns. Further we saw that the wordplay supported critical opinion such as Cohn's who saw the relationship as 'sustained and deliberate ambiguity as to whether the members of the couple are lovers or victim and executioner'.²⁸ We saw that such ambiguity is wrought through consistent wordplay. We also noticed that on several occasions the wordplay included the use of biblical language, and that the use of several words such as 'passion' (c.r. IA16; IC12), 'suffering', 'torment' suggested that the suffering being undergone by the creature(s) was being likened to that of Christ's on the cross, or at least to that of Man in hell or purgatory. We shall see further examples of this in subsequent sections below.

We saw that the tin-opener, which we would expect to be considered in the semantic field of FOOD, is rarely used to open tins of food, but is instead used as an instrument of torture in a sadistic parody of sex and that this is also emphasised by puns. In particular, we noted play upon the ambiguity of the very word 'opener' both as that which causes to open (phallic role) and that which is opened (its female role).

The narrator tortures Pim in order to extort screams, howls, songs, murmurs, speech from him; we noted in this again wordplay upon the 'opener' as that which causes to open/opens (out into speech/para-linguistic sound). The theme of attempted extortion of speech/para-linguistic sound through an act which parodies sex will be further developed in later sections, especially IB below.

²⁸ Cohn, Gamut, p.199.

SECTION IB LIFE/CONCEPTION

Introduction to IB

The examples in this section concern the possibility that the relationship between the creatures, which in IA we saw to be sexual, may be life-producing. We shall be examining the use of words whose meanings are concerned with the presence and creation of life and their occurrence in reference to the narrator's existence and especially his relationship with Pim and the other creatures in the mud. Once the narrator discovers that Pim has the ability to speak ('he can speak then that's the main thing', p.62, 16), the narrator sets about training Pim ('training early days', p.67, 19), to do so in response to torture:

training continued no point skip

table of basic stimuli one sing nails in armpit two speak
blade/in arse three stop thump on skull four louder pestle
on kidney

five softer index in anus six bravo clap athwart arse
seven/lousy same as three eight encore same as one or
two as may/be (p.76, 19) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'thump' IA15;
'skull' IC12)

One of the narrator's aims in torturing Pim is to make him talk or sing; to make him produce language or para-linguistic sound. This is of particular interest here because we shall see wordplay which puns upon the physical conception of life through sex and conception created by language, that is, fiction.

Critics have observed that an equation between fictional and physical creation or punning upon this is common in Beckett. For instance, Federman notes that 'Throughout Beckett's fiction, from the 1934 More Pricks Than Kicks up to the 1961 Comment C'est, images of physical birth are equated with the act of creating fiction -- the act of a writer sitting in front of a white sheet of

paper deliberately inventing people, a world, a reality that destroys reality.¹ Cohn notes Beckett's punning on the theme of conception as a mental and physical act, when she observes that the Unnamable 'declares in a pun that embraces body and mind "I shall never get born having failed to be conceived"²

It will be argued in this section that the references to physical conception play upon the narrator's mental creation/conception of the story which he is telling, so that the sexual connotations of the relationship between the creatures provide a parallel in physical action for the attempts at mental conception. This argument requires us to recall the revelation by the narrator at the end of how it is that the story of Pim and the narrator's relationship with Pim was a fiction.

and this business of a procession no answer this business of a/procession yes never any procession no nor any journey no/never any Pim no nor any Bom no never anyone no only me/no answer only me yes so that was true yes it was true about/me yes and what's my name no answer WHAT'S MY NAME/screams good (p.159, 9) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6)

We shall further be illustrating that this revelation is anticipated by wordplay at earlier stages in how it is.

Challenging the convention of fiction was a theme in Beckett's earlier work, for example 'Then I went back to the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining.'³ The fiction within a fiction of how it is has been variously interpreted; some arguing that at

¹ Federman, Journey to Chaos, p.200.

² Cohn, Gamut, p.133.

³ Molloy, Trilogy, p.162.

the end, the narrator destroys all that has gone before (for example, Federman,⁴ Coe⁵); others claiming that even this is uncertain. They point to the words 'end of quotation' (p.160, 19) in the very last stanza, which come after the revelation that the narrative thus far has been a fiction, arguing that these suggest that the reader has still not reached the source of the narrative. Bruns⁶ and Wellershoff⁷ are examples of critics who argue this. In his introduction to Journey to Chaos Federman propounds his theory that fiction itself is one of the themes of Beckett's novels and that comment c'est is the result of progressive effort throughout Beckett's fiction to strip characters of their social reality and concentrate on exposing the nature of the creation of narrative fiction.⁸ We are not concerned in this thesis with this theme per se, but rather the way in which the sub-pattern of wordplay on the themes of language and fiction relates to the patterns of wordplay in the fields of SEX and FOOD.

The main words considered in IB are:

IB1 'quick/en'

IB2 'make'

IB3 (1) 'creature', (2) 'fashion', (3) 'composition'

⁴ Federman, 'Beckett and the Fiction of Mud', in On Contemporary Literature, edited by R. Kostelanetz (New York, 1964), pp.255--61 (p.260).

⁵ Coe, Beckett, p.87.

⁶ G.L. Bruns, 'Samuel Beckett's How It Is', James Joyce Quarterly, 8 (1971), 318--31 (p.330).

⁷ Q. Wellershoff, 'Failure Of An Attempt At De-mythologisation', in Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by M. Esslin, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), p.106. (From Der Gleichgultige Versuch uber Hemmingway, Camus und Beckett, Cologne, 1963, translated by Esslin, 1965.)

⁸ Federman, Journey to Chaos, pp.3-27.

IB4 'in/conceive/able'

IB5 'bear/born/e/birth'

IB6 'womb'

IB7 'have'

IB8 (1) 'mother', (2) 'mamma', (3) 'mum'

IB9 'famil/y/iar'

IB10 'kind'

IB11 'species'

IB12 'life'

IB13 'alive'

IB14 'lively'

IB15 'live'

IB16 (1) 'revive', (2) 'resurrect', (3) 'resuscitate'

* * * * *

IB1 'quick/en'

'quicken' O E D v. I. Transitive senses. 1. To give or restore life to; to make alive; to vivify or revive; to animate (as the soul the body). b. fig. in renderings of Biblical passages, or echoes of these, occas. with ref. to spiritual life. 2. To give, add or restore vigour to (a person or thing); to stimulate, stir up, rouse, excite, inspire. a. a person. II. Intransitive senses. 6. To receive life, to become living; also, to recover life, to revive. b. Of a female: To reach the stage of pregnancy at which the child shows signs of life.

i) Example:

my part but for me he would never Pim we're talking of/Pim never be but for me anything but a dumb limp lump flat/for ever in the mud but I'll quicken him you wait and see and/how I can efface myself behind my creature when the fit takes me now my nails (p.58, 18) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'behind' IC3; 'creature' IB3)

See also the use of the word 'animate':

'animate' OED v. I. To give life to, make alive or active. I. trans. To breathe life into, endow with life, give life

to or sustain in life, quicken, vivify. 2. To represent as alive, give the appearance of life to. arch. 3. To impart liveliness, vividness, or interest to; to enliven. II. To give spirit, inspiration, or impulse. 6. trans. To move mentally, to excite to action of any kind: to inspire, actuate, incite, stir up. 7. To actuate, move, or put in motion (a thing).

Example:

never did for anyone what I for him animate no sure yes
never/felt another flesh against his no happy no unhappy
no if he/feels me against him no only when I torment him
yes (p.106, 6) (c.r. 'flesh' IIA4)

The above two examples (p.58, 18 and p.106, 6) are both understood according to 'quicken' in OED sense 2, 'animate' in OED senses 3 and 6; that is, Pim already exists as a companion to the narrator, but one who is inactive. The narrator spurs him to greater action, proving that Pim is alive when he responds to torture. In the context of the fiction of Pim being a creation of the narrator's (as argued in the introduction to IB), 'animate' and 'quicken' are also understood literally, 'quicken' in OED sense 1 and 'animate' in OED sense 1. These stanzas are then interpreted as playing upon the fact that the narrator has actually given Pim life, created him (especially in the context of 'my creature', c.r. 'creature' IB3). The physical action which is described in the narration, of Pim's being brought to life is thus a metaphorical parallel of the narrator's own formation. That 'quicken' has a further sense (OED sense 6b) which refers specifically to the result of sexual conception emphasises the complexity of the situation. Pim is a fictional creation of the narrator's, 'quicken' implying a comparison between Pim and a foetus brought to life by the narrator -- and yet we have seen that the relationship between the narrator and Pim, the method the narrator uses to 'quicken' Pim, is sexual (c.r. IA). Pim is the narrator's conception and his partner in attempting to conceive.

'quick' OED A. adj. I. Characterized by the presence of life. 1. Living, endowed with life, in contrast to what is naturally inanimate. Now dial. or arch. 4. a. Quick with child, said of a female in the stage of pregnancy at which the motion of the foetus is felt. Now rare or Obs. III. Having in a high degree the vigour or energy characteristic of life, and hence distinguished by, or capable of, prompt or rapid action or movement. 19. Of persons (or animals): Full of vigour, energy, or activity (now rare); prompt or ready to act; acting, or able to act, with speed or rapidity (frequently with suggestion or implication of sense 23). 21. Mentally active or vigorous; of ready apprehension or wit; prompt to learn, think, invent, etc. 23. Moving, or able to move, with speed. 25. Of an action, occurrence, process, etc: That is done, happens, or takes place rapidly or with speed. B. Elliptical or absolute uses passing into sb. (sb.¹). 1. a. pl. (without article or s.) Living persons. b. The quick, the living. Usu. pl., and in conjunction with the dead. 4. The quick: the tender or sensitive flesh in any part of the body, as that under the nails or beneath callous parts; also, the tender part of a sore or wound. Usu. in phr. to the quick. d. With a. and pl.: A tender, sensitive, or vital part. rare. 5. The quick: the life (see LIFE sb. 7). Chiefly in phr. to the quick. C. adv. 1. = QUICKLY. 2. Used imperatively.

ii) In the following examples there is a pun upon 'quick' interpreted as an adverb, usually as an imperative (OED C2) and 'quick' interpreted as an adjective. As an adjective it continues the ambiguity shown by 'quicken' between the weaker senses OED III and the senses given OED I:

YOUR LIFE HERE long pause YOUR LIFE HERE good and deep long/pause this dead soul what appal I can imagine YOUR LIFE/unfinished for murmur light of day light of night little scene/HERE to the quick and someone kneeling or huddled in a corner/in the gloom start of little scene in the gloom HERE HERE to the/bone the nail breaks quick another in the furrows HERE HERE/howls thump ... (p.105, 12) (c.r 'life' IB12; 'dead' IC10)

In the above example, (p.105, 12), which is part of the torture sequence, the repetition of 'life' emphasises the pun on 'quick' sense OED I, especially in the context of the ambiguity of 'HERE' (whether it modifies 'YOUR LIFE' and refers to an environment; or whether it refers to a specific place on Pim's body, saying that this is his vital part, c.r. 'life here' IB12vii). Furthermore, the

co-occurrence of 'dead' in the same stanza as 'quick' suggests that it be interpreted to mean 'living', see OED B1b. Indeed reference to 'this dead soul' suggests that the narrator is bringing Pim back to life from the dead.⁹ Beckett has used 'quick' as a noun meaning 'the living' in earlier works, for example:

Warmth, ease, conviction, the right manner, as if it were my own voice, pronouncing my own words, words pronouncing me alive, since that's how they want me to be, I don't know why, with their billions of quick, their trillions of dead, that's not enough for them, I too must contribute my little convulsion, mewl, howl, gasp₁₀ and rattle, loving my neighbour and blessed with reason.

'to the quick' has further the sense OED B4, emphasising that a vital sensitive part of the body is being hurt, so that Pim is 'quickeneth' (made alive) by being wounded 'to the quick'. In line 17 'quick' acts as an imperative, ordering that the nail be plunged into the furrows; a pun upon 'quick' as an adjective however suggests

⁹ If 'this dead soul' does refer to Pim then a literal reading for 'this dead soul' gives the torturer the role of reviving the dead, a role usually associated with God or Christ.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. (John 5. 21)

Even God, who quickeneth the dead. (Romans 5. 17)

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he hath raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8. 11)

Also, see:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah. (I Peter 3. 18--20)

This last is quoted by Hulme as one of the origins of the legend of the Harrowing of Hell (The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus edited by W.H. Hulme ([London], 1907), pp.lxii--lxiii. The role of the torturer then is compared to that of Christ; see Appendix 1, in which it is suggested that the narrator's waiting for one to come to torture him is like awaiting the (Second) Coming of Christ.

¹⁰ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.308.

that the nail is causing 'quickness' (life) to break out in the 'furrows'. According to another reading, 'quick' modifies 'another' (creature) playing upon the fertile connotations of 'furrows'.¹¹

... murmur to the mud quick quick soon I won't/be able either never any Pim never was anything of all/this little quick then the little that is left add it quick before/Bom before he comes to ask me how it was my life here before/him the little that is left add it quick how it was after Pim before/Bom how it is (p.108, 8) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'Bom' IC6; 'come' IA6; 'life' IB12)

One reading of 'quick' line 10 is that it is an adverb. According to another reading however, 'quick' is a noun modified by 'this little'. 'this little quick', referring to Pim, either comments that Pim is now alive, or that Pim is the 'quick', the life centre, the potential for life.

...try and hear a few old/words after Pim how it was how it is quick

Pim quick after Pim before he vanishes never was only me me/Pim how it was before me with me after me how it is quick (p.113, 11)

no more motion than a slab and forbidden to take our eyes/off him what's the use of that Krim says his number's up so is/mine we daren't leave him quick all numbers up it's the only/solution (p.89, 16) (c.r. 'number's up' IC11)

As is argued in IC, one sense of 'his number's up' is that the creature is due to die. This leads to a pun; the adverb 'quick' is apparently an urgent demand for speedy action; its other meaning describes the creature as alive.

iii) In the following examples, 'quick' co-occurs with 'mud' and/or the 'sack', the significance of a pun in this context is discussed

11

'furrow' O E D sb. 1. A narrow trench made in the earth with a plough, esp. for the reception of seed. 4. Anything resembling a furrow; a. generally, e.g. a rut or track, a groove, indentation, or depression narrow in proportion to its length. b. on the face: A deep wrinkle.

later (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9): p.42, 15; p.113, 15; p.114, 2; p.108, 8.

iv) In the following examples, 'quick' co-occurs with 'end'. The significance of a pun in this context is discussed later (c.r. 'end' IC7): p.96, 11; p.97, 6; p.105, 10--1; p.108, 14.

v) 'quick' also occurs: p.12, 6; p.58, 9; p.78, 14; p.86, 22; p.87, 4; p.103, 24.

Conclusion to IB1 'quick/en'

We have observed that the words 'quicken' and 'quick' have been punned upon in how it is to suggest that the narrator gives Pim life. This wordplay operates at several levels. a) That the narrator does not literally give him life, but rather forces him to act, invigorates him, and thereby proves that he is alive. This meaning is played upon further, since the response which is extorted from Pim is the 'voice' and, as will become evident in 'life' IB12i, the voice is equated with 'life'. b) The narrator has created the fiction of Pim, that is, brought him to life through words. This is paralleled in the action of the narration when he enlivens Pim. c) The act between the two creatures is sexual, with Pim playing the female role (c.r. IA; IC). In a normal sexual act the female could become pregnant as a result of sex, thus on one level there is the possibility that the narrator impregnates Pim with potential for life sexually. d) We further observed a pun on Pim's being 'quickenened' by being hurt 'to the quick'.

* * * * *

IA2 'make'

(c.r. 'make' IA9)

'make' OED v. I. Senses in which the object of the verb is a product or result. *To bring into existence by construction or elaboration. 1. trans. To produce (a material thing) by combination of parts, or by giving a certain form to a portion of matter; to construct, frame, fashion. 3. Said of God as Creator; with reference both to material and spiritual objects. 5. To compose, write as the author. V. To do, perform, accomplish. 57. f. With reference to locomotion or travel, in phrases to make a journey.

i) The following examples play upon several senses for 'make' and include the reading that the narrator has created Pim, his fellow creatures in the mud, and all their actions. The common phrase, 'make a journey' (in sense OED 57f), is played upon, when 'make' is reinterpreted with the knowledge that the journey did not occur, but was an invention of the narrator's, 'never any procession nor any journey nor' (p.159, 10), so that the 'journey' was also 'made' in sense OED I (especially sense 5).

that yes a panting in the mud to that it all comes in the end the/journey the couple the abandon when the whole tale is told/the tormentor you are said to have had then lost the journey/you are said to have made the victim you are said to have had/then lost the images the sack the little fables of above little/scenes a little blue infernal homes (p.140, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'couple' IA5; 'abandon' IIB5; 'whole' IC4; 'tale' IC5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

or then that all begins and then the life you'll have the tor-/mentor you'll have the journey you'll make the victim you'll/have the two lives the three lives the life you had the life you/have the life you'll have (p.140, 20) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the above two examples (p.140, 5; 20) wordplay is emphasised by syntactic ambiguity, since for both examples there are (at least) two readings, one in which 'the journey' is the object of 'make', another in which the object of 'make' is the 'victim'. As observed in 'make' IA9, there is further a sexual pun on 'make' meaning to (persuade to) have sex with, when the object of 'make'

is the narrator or a fellow creature. In the word 'make' puns are combined from both the semantic field of SEX and the field of (fictional) CREATION, thus emphasising a parallel between the act of (fictional) creation and the act of sex.

that life then said to have been his invented remembered a/little of each no knowing that thing above he gave it to me/made it mine what I fancied skies especially and the paths/he crept along ... (p.80, 11) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'know' IA7; 'thing' IA10)

'I made it mine' is ambiguous; according to one reading, the narrator causes the descriptions of Pim's 'life above' to become his own (OED 'make' sense III). That is, once Pim has invented them or remembered them and told the narrator, the narrator takes them over as his own. Another reading, however, plays upon the revelation at the end of how it is that all these details have been a fiction invented by the narrator (p.159). According to this reading, the narrator comments that the life that was said to be Pim's was made by the narrator: 'I made it mine'. 'mine', according to this reading, is not the complement of 'made' but an exclamation after the statement 'I made it' in which 'it' is the referent for Pim's life, and the object of 'made'; 'mine' merely emphasising that it was his own.

the journey I made in the dark the mud straight line sack tied/to my neck never quite fallen from my species and I made that/journey

then something else and I didn't make it again and I made/it again (p.138, 9) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9)

question am I happy in the present still such ancient things a/little happy on and off part one before Pim brief void and/barely audible no no I would feel it and brief apostil barely/audible not made really for happiness unhappiness peace/of mind (p.20, 11)

or of the fragile kind made for the blackbirds when to the day/the long night yields at last and to the night a little later the/interminable day but us this life how it was how it is how most/certainly it will be not made for

that a second time next per/shaving and in that case no surprise to be expected either (p.147, 13) (c.r. 'kind' IB10; 'life' IB12)

In the above two examples (p.20, 11; p.147, 13) the idiom 'not made for that' (usually understood as 'not suitable for') plays upon the question of who made the narrator. 'made' is reliteralised in the context of the wordplay upon 'make' and the creation of Pim and the events in the mud by the narrator.

In the following examples, 'make' co-occurs with 'suffer':

the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer who cries who to/be left in peace ... (p.144, 4) (c.r. 'fuck' IA2)

never crawled no in an amble no right leg right arm push pull/ten yards fifteen yards no never stirred no never made to suffer/no never suffered no answer NEVER SUFFERED no never aban-/doned no never was abandoned no so that's life here no answer/THAT'S MY LIFE HERE screams good (p.160, 1) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'abandoned' IIB5)

In the above two examples (p.144, 4; p.160, 1) 'make to suffer' can be interpreted as: a) Cause to suffer. b) Create a creature who will then suffer. c) Have sex with in order to suffer (c.r. 'make' IA9). 'make' and 'suffer' co-occur further:

he has stopped I have made him stop suffered him to stop it's/one or the other not specified the thing stops ... (p.93, 6) (c.r. 'have' IA8; 'thing' IA10)

In the above example, the wordplay results from the ambiguity of 'stop'. According to one reading, 'stop' is the complement of 'suffered him' (line 6); according to another reading, 'stop' is a pause between statements, mimicking telegram style.¹²

and Pim how I found him made him suffer made him speak/ and lost him and all that while it lasts I had it all when the/panting stops (p.138, 14) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

See also:

'make' OED 96. 'make up' g. To compose, compile. (c) To

¹² 'quasi-telegraphese', according to J.J. Mayoux, Writers and Their Work: Samuel Beckett (London, 1974), p.27.

concoct, invent, fabricate (a story, lie). Also, to compose (verses, etc.) impromptu; to improvise. h. Said of component parts. (b) To form the components of; to constitute, compose; to contribute to the formation of; to go to form or produce. Freq. in passive to be made up (of certain parts).

an image in its discontinuity of the journeys of which it is the/sum made up if stages and of halts and of those stages of which/the journey is the sum (p.137, 8)

In the above example, 'made up' puns upon OED 96. h(b); that the stages and halts that constitute the journey and the image; and OED 96g(c) that it is all a fiction, a lie, a fabrication, since we learn later that the journeys never happened.

ii) In the following examples, 'make' co-occurs with 'words' or 'phrases'; since these are terms describing the actual language components that are used to create a story, this emphasises again that the story is made out of words, that it is a fiction.

that kind an image not for the eyes made of words not for the/ears the day is ended I'm safe till tomorrow the mud opens/I depart till tomorrow the head in the sack the arms round it the/rest anyhow (p.51, 1) (c.r. 'kind' IB10; 'mud' IIB6; 'open' IA17)

... stop/panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds a few old words/on and off string them together make phrases (p.114, 21)

of this old tale quaqu on all sides then in me bits and scraps try/and hear a few scraps two or three each time per day and night/string them together make phrases more phrases the last how/it was after Pim how it is something wrong there end of part/three and last (p.115, 10) (c.r. 'tale' IC5; 'quaqu' IIB3; 'scraps' IIB4)

See also:

I can't make out the words the mud muffles or perhaps a/foreign tongue perhaps he's singing a lied in the original/perhaps a foreigner (p.62, 11) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

iii) 'make' also occurs: p.12, 2; p.14, 6; p.28, 3; p.28, 15; p.28, 21; p.31, 6; p.44, 19; p.50, 11; p.52, 1; p.52, 3; p. 73, 5; p.103, 23; p.153, 15.

Conclusion to IB2 'make'

In this section we have observed that 'make' occurs in contexts which play upon the events and characters of the narration as being a fiction created by the narrator. The possibility in some of the examples of a further, sexual, pun should be seen as contributing to the argument of IA, that the relationship between the creatures in the story is sexual. That both puns occur in the one word furthers the argument of IB, namely, that there is a parallel between the attempted sex act between the creatures in the mud, and the creation of the fiction of fellow creatures by the narrator.

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IB3 (1) 'creature', (2) 'fashion', (3) 'compose'

In this section we shall be examining the use of several different words which continue to play upon the events of the narration being a fictional creation by the narrator.

(1) 'creature'

'creature' OED 1. Anything created; a created being, animate or inanimate; a product of creative action; a creation. 2. A living 'creature' or created being, an animate being; an animal; often as distinct from 'man'. 3. A human being; a person or individual (as in 'every creature in the room'). Common in the phrase 'our fellow creatures'. b. With qualifications expressing (a) admiration, approbation, affection, or tenderness (sometimes playfully); (b) compassion or commiseration. c. Expressing reprobation or contempt. 4. fig. That which is produced by, or owes its being solely to, another thing; a result, product, or offspring of anything. 5. One who owes his fortune and position to a patron, one who is actuated by the will of another, or is ready to do his bidding; an instrument or puppet.

Examples:

my part but for me he would never Pim we're talking of/Pim never be but for me anything but a dumb limp lump flat/for ever in the mud but I'll quicken him you wait and see and/how I can efface myself behind my creature when the fit takes/me now my nails (p.58, 18) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'quicken' IB1; 'behind' IC3)

In the above example, the narrator's referring to Pim as 'my creature' is understood at one level as referring to Pim as the one who does his bidding, OED sense 4. Pim is the narrator's instrument in the sense that he is forced to act for the narrator in response to torture. This is played upon also by the sense of 'creature' as an affectionate address by the narrator to one with whom he has a (sexual) intimate relationship (continuing the wordplay we noted in IA upon the affectionate/aggressive nature of the relationship). At another level there is a pun upon 'creature' meaning something created, OED sense 1, that Pim is the narrator's creature in the sense that the narrator has created him in the story out of words.

'creature' also occurs: p.8, 7; p.70, 5; p.75, 3; p.80, 17; p.144, 7.

(2) 'fashion'

'fashion' OED v. 1. trans. To give fashion or shape to; to form, mould, shape.

sb. 2. Make, build, shape. Hence, in wider sense, visible characteristics, appearance. 5. Manner, mode, way, esp. in After, of, in, on, this, such a, my, his, etc. fashion.

Example:

life in the light first image some creature or other I watched/him after my fashion from afar through my spy-glass sidelong/in mirrors through windows at night first image (p.9, 9) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

In the above example (p.9, 9) the pun upon 'creature' is further emphasised by the idiom 'after my fashion'. According to one reading 'after my fashion' modifies 'watched', describing the manner in which the narrator watched the creature and stating that it was typical. Another reading however reliteralises the idiom 'after my fashion' and modifies 'creature', suggesting that the narrator 'fashioned' the creature, that this event took place after he had

fashioned (made) the creature.

'after my fashion' also occurs:

Pim's then quaqu of us all then mine alone that of us all mine/alone after my fashion a murmur in the mud ... (p.104, 1) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'quaqu' IIB3)

One reading of p.104, 1, is that the narrator is discussing the 'voice'. Once again 'after my fashion' is ambiguous between being understood as an idiom, thus stating that the narrator's style was copied; or being understood literally again, thus recalling that 'Pim's (voice)', 'quaqu of us all' are both fashioned, created by the narrator.

(3) 'composition'

'composition' OED I. As an action *generally. 1. The action of putting together or combining; the fact of being put together or combined; combination (of things as parts or elements of a whole). 2. The forming (of anything) by combination of various elements, parts, or ingredients; formation, constitution, construction, making up. 6. b. The due arrangement of words into sentences and of sentences into periods; the art of constructing sentences and of writing prose or verse. 7. The composing of anything for oral delivery, or to be read; the practice or art of literary production. II. The mode, with the resulting condition or state. 16. Of persons: a. Constitution of body. Obs. b. Mental constitution, or constitution of mind and body combined; the combination of personal qualities that make anyone what he is. III. The product. 21. b. A train of ideas put into words; a literary production. In school and college language, one written as an exercise in the putting of ideas into prose or verse.

Example:

to be feared well well that in this part I may be not extinguished/no that is not said that is not yet in my composition no dimmed/what is said is dimmed before I flare up Pim gone even more/lively if that is possible ... (p.58, 11) (c.r. 'lively' IB14)

In the above example (p.58, 11) 'composition' is interpreted in OED sense 16a or 16b, that is, referring to the narrator's state of mind or body; there is also play upon senses 6b, 7 and 21b, that this particular feature is not yet in the current text being

composed.

'compose' also occurs: p.143, 18.

* * * * *

IB4 'in/conceive/able'

'conceive' OED v. I. To conceive seed or offspring: with extension of this sense. 1. trans. Of a female: To receive (seed) in the womb; to become pregnant with (young). b. pass. To be created or formed in the womb, to be engendered. c. loosely. To cause to be conceived, to beget. 2. intr. To become pregnant. II. To take into, or form in, the mind; to plan, devise, formulate in idea. b. To form or evolve the idea of any creation of skill or genius). 8. To form a mental representation or idea of; to form or have a conception or notion of, to think of, imagine. d. intr. To conceive of: to form or have a conception of, to imagine. 9. To grasp with the mind, 'take in', to apprehend, understand, comprehend. 14. To formulate, express in words or other form; to couch.

'conceivable' OED a. 2. That can be conceived, imagined or thought of: imaginable, supposable.

'conceived' OED ppl.a.1. Of offspring: Brought into embryonic existence in the womb. b. Of a female; pregnant. 2. Admitted into, or originated in, the mind; imagined, thought of, etc: see the verb.

In the following examples of 'conceive/d/able' etc. in how it is it is being argued that they are interpreted according to OED sense II of the verb, but that the sexual context of how it is, the sexual nature of the relationship between the creatures, results in a pun upon 'conceive' OED I.

i) Recurrent in the following examples is the suggestion that conception is difficult:

in other words in simple words I quote on either I am alone/and no further problem or else we are innumerable and no/further problem either

save that of conceiving but no doubt it can be done a pro-/cession in a straight line with neither head nor tail in the dark/the mud with all the various infinitudes that such a conception/involves

nothing to be done in any case we have our being in justice I/have never heard of anything to the contrary

with that of a slowness difficult to conceive the procession we/are talking of a procession advancing in jerks or spasms like/shit in the guts till one wonders days of great gaiety if we shall/not end one after another or two by two by being shat into/the open air the light of day the regimen of grace (p.135, 8) (c.r. 'tail' IC5; 'mud' IIB6; 'shit' IIB1; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17)

In the above example (p.135, 8) the narrator talks directly of the problem of conceiving, imagining (OED sense II) other creatures in the mud with him (see lines 7--11 especially); thus in the course of the narration he is close to admitting that he may be alone and his companions imaginary. Having 'conceived' (imagined) (line 11 onwards) the creatures, he then goes on to describe them moving in a procession. That the procession may then be ejected out into the 'open air' suggests, especially with the repetition of 'conceive', 'conception', that having mentally conceived the creatures he now imagines for them a kind of birth (for discussion of what kind of birth see 'end' IC7 where this example is discussed again, and for the nature of birth generally in how it is see 'birth' IB5 below). Thus the narrator's mental activity of invention is incorporated into that which he invents; there is a physical image in the narration which parallels his having narrated it.

hard to conceive this last when instead of beginning as traveller/I begin as victim and instead of continuing as tormentor I/continue as traveller and instead of ending abandoned (p.141, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'abandon' IIB5)

In p.141, 1 the narrator comments that he finds it difficult to imagine a life in which he begins as victim, thus 'conceive' is understood in OED senses II. In the previous stanza (p.140, 20--3) the narrator has been talking of 'the life you'll have' (p.140, 23); one interpretation of this ('the life to which you will give birth' c.r. 'have' IB7) puns upon 'conceive' OED sense I.

and if it is still possible at this late hour to conceive of other/worlds

as just as ours but less exquisitely organized (p.156, 12)

In this example (p.156, 12) 'conceive' is understood in OED sense II. 'Conceiving' different worlds is of course what writers of fiction do.

ii) Whilst in the examples given in IB4i conception was said to be difficult, or the possibility of it at least questioned, the following examples are of the word 'inconceivable', which denies the possibility of conception.

'inconceivable' OED a. (sb.) 1. That cannot be conceived or realized in the imagination; unthinkable, unimaginable, incredible. Often with exaggerative force for 'hardly credible', 'incalculable', 'extraordinary', of things which transcend common experience.

It is being argued that in these examples also, there is a pun upon physical conception, in the context of the sexual relationships between the creatures, and the puns already observed:

dream come of a sky an under-earth where I am/inconceivable aah no sound in the rectum a redhot spike that day/we prayed no further (p.40, 22) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'rectum' IC1)

The narrator talks (p.40, 22) of a dream of a place where he is 'inconceivable'; if 'inconceivable' is interpreted according to sense OED I, then this is paradoxical, since he talks of dreaming (mentally visualising) that he is 'inconceivable' (cannot be mentally envisaged). Thus we are led to look for alternative interpretations for p.40, 22, some of which are: a) The narrator does not mean literally that he cannot be imagined, but rather that in this place he is extraordinary; 'inconceivable' used with 'exaggerative force'. b) By 'dream come' the narrator does not actually mean that he has had the dream but that he wishes for such a state, by 'dream' he indicates a desire, a wish for it to be possible that he cannot be imagined, similar to a

wish that one does not exist. That he does not, however, say that he wishes that he does not exist, but wishes it were impossible for him to be imagined, implies that his being imagined is equivalent to his being; that someone conceiving of him mentally has forced him into existence (as a character in fiction is brought into existence by the author). This leads to c) A pun upon 'inconceivable' in which 'inconceivable' is understood to mean 'cannot be conceived physically', the opposite of 'conceive' OED sense I.

In the following examples, 'inconceivable' co-occurs with 'the beginning', 'start', or 'outset', indicating that the starting point is the most difficult to imagine. In IC it will be argued that the difficulty in conceiving physically results from the anal, sadistic and anti-life nature of the (parody of a) sex act in how it is.

here confused reckonings to the effect I can't have deviated/more than a second or so from the direction imparted to me/one day one night at the inconceivable outset by chance by/necessity by a little of each it's one of the three from west/strong feeling from west to east (p.45, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

and these same couples that eternally form and form again all/along this immense circuit that the millionth time that's/conceivable is as the inconceivable first and always two/strangers uniting in the interests of torment (p.131, 17) (c.r. 'couple' IA5)

The context of the reference to couples uniting, and the co-occurrence with 'conceivable' suggest a pun upon physical conception; 'that's conceivable' is ambiguous; it could be a statement of fact, or an inserted question or exclamation (the last two would continue the idea of conception being difficult).

namely string them together last reasonings namely these/sacks these sacks one must understand try and understand these/sacks innumerable with us here for our journeys innumerable/on this narrow track one foot two foot all here in position/already like us all here in position at the inconceivable start/of this caravan no impossible (p.148, 14) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9)

so on and similarly all along the chain in both directions

for all/our other joys and sorrows all we extort and endure from one/another from the one to the other inconceivable end of this/immeasurable wallow (p.154, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'wallow' IIB1)

In the last example (p.154, 1) 'from the one to the other ... end' implies that it is not the beginning alone which is inconceivable, but the beginning and the end.

iii) 'conceive' also occurs:

even Pim with Pim in the beginning part two first half first/quarter more lively when I think that I could as I did train/them up as I did conceive that system then apply I can't get over/it make it work my undoing for ever since it's clear ever since/nothing left but voice (p.103, 20) (c.r. 'lively' IIB15; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'quick' IB1)

By 'that system' the narrator refers to his system of torturing Pim into communicating, described as a programme of training (p.76, 20). The sexual implications of the actions involved in the system (c.r. IA) indicate a pun upon 'conceive', that he imagined, mentally conceived, a system which mimics an act that could lead to physical conception. (In section II it will be argued that another pattern in wordplay involves the digestive system, suggesting a further pun upon 'system' here.) 'I can't get over it' interpreted as an idiom means 'I'm very surprised' and thus suggests that he did not expect his idea to succeed; thus continuing the theme of the examples given in IB4i and IB4ii where conception was seen to be difficult or impossible, by suggesting here that even when accomplished it will lead to failure.

Another reading of 'I can't get over it' continues the idea that the 'system' is sexual. The bawdy reading of 'I can't get over it' being that he cannot mount, copulate. 'make it' is thus ambiguous between the following readings: a) 'make it' is complemented by 'work', the narrator continuing his exclamation of surprise at success. This is then followed however by the exclamation that this had led

to his 'undoing', that is, to his failure, downfall.

'undoing' OED 3. The action of bringing to nought, destroying, ruining. 4. A cause of ruin or destruction.

b) 'make it' is modified by 'can't'. A sexual reading for 'make' (c.r. IA9) leads to this being interpreted as he cannot reach sexual satisfaction. A further pun upon 'undoing' applies to readings a) and b), in which 'do' is understood as:

'do' C.D.E.S. 4. (v.) To have sexual intercourse with.

'undoing' thus comments upon a failure to have sex. c) 'make it' modifies 'work' with 'my undoing' as the complement of 'work'. He makes it (the 'system') cause his undoing -- thus playing upon the usual meaning of 'work' to mean 'succeed'.

'work' v. OED 10. To effect, bring about, bring to pass, to accomplish, achieve; to cause, produce.

That this leads to there being 'nothing left but voice' plays upon a further reading for 'undoing', suggesting that the rest of the narrator not only no longer functions, but suggests the image of his body being unfastened, physically falling apart. Beckett's heroes are frequently in a decrepit physical state.¹³

'undo' OED I. 1. To unfasten and open.

Another use of 'undoing', to undo one's flies, has of course sexual connotations.

iv) 'conceivably' occurs:

but may quite conceivably in principle know by repute the/999997 others whom by virtue of his position in the

¹³ As Alvarez comments of Beckett heroes in general and those of the Trilogy in particular, they 'become more and more disembodied and uncharacterised, losing habits, memories, even limbs'. A. Alvarez, Beckett, Fontana Modern Masters (Glasgow, 1973), p.46.

round he/has never occasion to meet (p.129, 14) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Conclusion to IB4 'conceive'

In this section we have observed the uses of 'conceive' 'conception' etc. in how it is and noted that in all the examples a reading in which 'conceive' refers to mental conception is acceptable. We noted that in a majority of cases conception was said to be difficult and that 'inconceivable' tended to collocate with words indicating the beginning of something. Words such as 'unthinkable', 'unimaginable', which also indicate the difficulty or impossibility of mental realisation also collocate with words indicating the beginning of something in how it is. However, they have not been examined in detail because they do not also have a sense of physical creation.¹⁴

In the case of 'conceive', one word carries both strands of our argument, thus illustrating it through wordplay; namely, that references to mental creation are paralleled in attempts at physical creation described in how it is. Words relating to sexual reproduction take on significance regarding mental creation and vice versa. It is being argued not simply that Beckett is concerned with the problems of fictional creation in this text, or even that this is sometimes equated with physical creation, but that the theme can be observed in detail in the way in which specific words are used; and that these words are part of a complex system of wordplay and patterning built up throughout the text. In this instance wordplay consistently indicates that conception is to take on both its major OED senses; mental and physical creation. 'conceive' and related

¹⁴ For example, 'the unthinkable first' (p.132, 11; p.149, 17); 'the unimaginable number 1' (p.149, 6); 'the unthinkable first to the no less unthinkable last' (p.153, 1).

words operate both in the field of MENTAL CREATION, fiction; and in the field of SEX.

* * * * *

IB5 'bear/born/e/birth'

'bear' OED v.¹ Main senses; I. to carry; II. to sustain; III. to thrust, press; IV. to bring forth. I. 2. b. To bear in mind: to carry or keep in remembrance. II. 15. b. To suffer without succumbing, to sustain without giving away, endure. c. To endure without opposition or resistance, to tolerate (a thing). 23. To have written or inscribed upon it. III. 26. trans. To move (a thing) onward by force of pressure; to push, force, drive. IV. To bring forth, produce, give birth to. 43. Of female mammalia, and esp. women: To bring forth, produce, give birth to (offspring).

'born' OED ppl. and a. A. Senses of to be born. 1. To be brought forth as offspring, to come into the world. 2. fig. a. Of things: To come into existence (chiefly poet. and rhetorical.).

'birth' OED sb.¹ 1. The bearing of offspring. Viewed as an act of the mother. a. Bringing forth, giving birth. 2. fig. Of things: Origin, origination, commencement of existence, beginning.

'borne' OED ppl. 1. Carried, sustained, endured etc. Used attributively chiefly in such constructions as 'patiently borne injuries', 'the breeze-borne note'.

In this section puns on 'bear/born' and related words will be examined. Beckett has punned upon these words in other works, for example, Molloy comments 'She never called me son, fortunately, I couldn't have borne it',¹⁵ punning upon the homophony of 'born' with 'borne'. The Unnamable puns upon 'bear' in sense I, in this case meaning 'relevant', and 'bear' in sense IV in the context of his reference to being 'born': 'But what's all this about not being able to die, live, be born, that must have some bearing'.¹⁶

¹⁵ Molloy, Trilogy, p.18.

¹⁶ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.340.

i) In the following examples it will be argued that 'bear' is used in senses OED I and II, but that there are puns upon OED sense IV. In some of these examples it will also be shown that there is a correlation between physical creation (conception through sexual intercourse) and creation through words (fiction, mental conception).

faint shrill cry then foretaste of this semi-castrate mutter
 I must/bear how long no more figures there's another little
 difference/compared to what precedes not the slightest figure
 henceforth/all measures vague ... (p.57, 15) (c.r.
 'foretaste' IIA5; 'mutter' IB8)

Among readings for the above example (p.57, 15) are: a) 'semi-castrate' is an adjective modifying the noun 'mutter', suggesting that the 'mutter' is very shrill, almost as high-pitched a noise as that produced by one who has been castrated.

'castrate' OED a. A. adj. 'castrated' Obs. exc. in Bot.

'castrate' v. 1. trans. To remove the testicles of; to geld, emasculate.

'castrato' A male singer castrated in boyhood so as to retain soprano or alto voice.

'bear' is interpreted according to OED III, especially 15c, that the shrillness of the cry is something to be tolerated, endured, suffered. Thus the possibility of suffering for the hearer (the torturer) is introduced (c.r. IA). b) 'bear' interpreted according to OED IV, 'to produce', 'bring forth'. 'mutter' is the object of this verb, it is the 'mutter' which the narrator brings forth. 'mutter' is modified by 'semi-castrate' referring to its shrillness. 'semi-castrate' also plays upon the fertile connotations of the narrator's bringing forth, since what he brings forth is half emasculated, not fully fertile.¹⁷ This

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with the gesture of one dealing cards and also to be observed/among certain sowers of seed I throw away the empty tins/they fall without a sound (p.11, 20) (c.r. 'tins' IIA5)

This comparison also implies sterility; the tins are compared to seeds, but are empty (and give no sound).

reading plays upon an identification between the production of children, a physical giving birth, OED sense 42, and the production of language ('mutter'), general sense OED IV. Physical and mental creation are thus paralleled. A further pun on 'mutter' to mean 'mother' emphasising wordplay between the fields of mental and physical creation is considered in IB8. c) 'semi-castrate' as a noun; 'this semi-castrate' then refers to a creature (Pim/the narrator?) who must be tolerated (OED sense II) or produced (OED sense IV). This again introduces the theme of sterility by referring to the creature as 'semi-castrate', one who may have difficulty in reproducing. It also continues the argument that the narrator created Pim.

his right cheek to the mud his mouth to my ear our
 narrow/shoulders overlapping his hairs in mine human
 breath shrill/murmur if too loud finger in arse I'll stir no
 more from this/place I'm still there

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch
 of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has
 lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT
 as it comes ... (p.83, 15) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'arse' IC1;
 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'life' IB12; 'cunt'
 IA3)

Among readings for p.83, 15 are: a) 'unbearable' according to OED of 'bear', meaning 'intolerable, difficult to endure'. Its occurrence, line 19, is ambiguous as to whether 'unbearable' refers back to the previous stanza, the narrator saying that his present location has become intolerable, or whether 'unbearable' refers to the 'thump on skull' or to the 'long silence'; whether it refers to Pim's speaking 'his mouth to my ear', whether the narrator thumps him on the skull in order to obtain silence. The occurrence of 'unbearable' line 20 is again ambiguous as to what it modifies, the silence which lasts too long, or the agony of the torture signalled by 'opener arse'. b) A pun upon 'unbearable' in the context of the sexual nature of the

torture. This plays upon 'bear' OED sense IV; the 'opener' is 'unbearable', cannot lead to conception because it is a lifeless object, not a penis, although its role is punningly compared to that of a phallus (c.r. IA17). That the 'opener' is used as an instrument of torture and may be intolerable, 'unbearable' as such, continues the link between sex and sadism observed in IA11--17. 'unbearable' also continues the theme we noted in IB4, that conception is difficult or impossible. (A third development of the pun on 'unbearable' meaning unable/difficult to conceive is suggested in IC when it is argued that the sex in how it is is anal.)

two more years to put in a little more then back to the surface/ah no lie down if I could lie down never stir never any more I feel/I could weakness for pity's sake honour of the family if I could/move on a little further if there is a further we only know this/little pool of light there was a time he moved it's in the book/a little further in the mud the dark and drop my first-born/dying to his grandchild your papa's grandpapa disappeared/never came up never seen again bear it in mind when your time comes (p.92, 8) (c.r. 'family' IB9; 'mud' IIB6; 'dying' IC9; 'come' IA6)

The expression 'bear it in mind' is interpreted according to OED sense I, the particular phrase being given 2b as 'to carry or keep in remembrance'. In the context however of discussing 'first-born' there is a pun upon 'bear' meaning 'to give birth to', thus linking the mental act of remembering with physical reproduction. It is both remembered and given birth to, in the mind.

'time' OED 15. The appointed, due, or proper time. b. Qualified by poss. pron. as his, her, its; often ellipt. for time of death, of childbirth, etc; before (his, etc.) time, -- prematurely.

'when your time comes' thus is interpreted to mean when the date of childbirth arrives, which continues the pun suggesting that when the time for birth arrives it should be a mental creation ('bear it in mind'). (The co-occurrence of birth/death connotations is considered

below.)

then Pim the lost tins the groping hand the arse the two
cries/mine mute the birth of hope on with it get it over
have it/behind me feel the heart going hear it said you're
nearly there (p.25, 15) (c.r. 'tins' IIA2; 'grobe' IA10;
'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8; 'behind' IC3)

'birth of hope' is understood figuratively, that hope begins. However sexual puns in the stanza ('grobe', 'arse', 'over it', 'have' etc., c.r. IA, IC) lead to a pun on birth as physical production of offspring. That what is 'born' is 'hope', something which exists in the mind, continues the theme of conception being mental.

ii) The following occurrences of 'born/birth' etc. are connected with death:

others who had always known me here in my last place
they/talk of me of themselves of me perhaps too in the
end of/fleeting joys and of sorrows of empires that are
born and die as/though nothing had happened (p.13, 20)
(c.r. 'know' IA7; 'end' IC7; 'die' IC9; 'have' IA8, IB7,
IIA5)

Among readings for the above stanza (p.13, 20) is 'that are born and die as though nothing had happened' is the predicate of: a) 'others' (other creatures) or b) '(fleeting joys and sorrows) empires'. According to reading a), 'born and die' is literal. According to reading b) 'born and die' is figurative. According to these readings, 'born and die' have the same subject and further are modified by 'as though nothing had happened'; birth is thus negated by death (see also 'life too and death as though nothing had happened', p.13, 11--2; c.r. 'life' IB12; 'death' IC8). A further relevant interpretation is that 'as though nothing has happened' refers to their talking rather than doing.

that childhood said to have been mine the difficulty of
believ-/ing in it the feeling rather of having been born
octogenarian/at the age when one dies in the dark the
mud upwards born/upwards floating up like the drowned
and tattle tattle four full/back of close characters the

childhood the belief the blue the/miracles all lost never was (p.78, 1) (c.r. 'dies' IC9; 'mud' IIB6)

The second occurrence of 'born' in this stanza (line 3) puns upon 'born/borne', because it is ambiguous between describing the manner in which the narrator was given birth to, and his being carried by a current of mud. Birth is linked to death by his being born 'at the age when one dies' and by his being born described as a manner of death 'floating up like the drowned'. One interpretation of this is that the birth fluids themselves have caused the death, since drowning is the particular death referred to.

two more years to put in a little more then back to the surface/ah no lie down if I could lie down never stir any more I feel/I could weakness for pity's sake honour of the family if I could/move on a little further if there is a further we only know this/little pool of light there was a time he moved it's in the book/a little further in the mud the dark and drop my first-born/dying to his grandchild your papa's grandpapa disappeared/never came up never again bear it in mind when your/time comes (p.92, 8) (c.r. 'family' IB9; 'know' IA7; 'mud' IIB6; 'dying' IC9; 'come' IA6)

In the above example (p.92, 8) the negation of birth by death is suggested by the syntactic ambiguity of 'dying'; according to one reading it modifies the narrator, the one who drops his 'first-born' so that one who had just been born is already said to be dying.

'drop' O E D v. I. Intransitive senses. 3. To fall vertically, like a single drop, under the simple influence of gravity; to descend. II. Transitive senses. 13. To let fall. 14. To let fall in birth; to give birth to (young); to lay (an egg). The usual word in reference to sheep.

In this example, both senses of 'drop' are punningly applicable, since it could be interpreted as meaning:

a) That the narrator drops, gives birth to, his first born. Since 'drop' is not usually used of humans giving birth but of animals, especially sheep (see O E D 14), it is a debasing way of viewing

birth; it also plays upon the ambiguity of the creatures' actual species c.r. 'family' IB8, 'kind' IB9, 'species' IB10.

b) That he allows his first born to fall to its death. 'when your time comes' can refer to time of childbirth or death. In Malone's story of the Saposcat family death is balanced out (negated) by birth:

But we are cramped as it is, said Mrs Saposcat. And it was an understood thing that they would be more and more so with every passing year until the day came when, the departure of the first-born compensating the arrival of the new-born, a kind of equilibrium would be attained.¹⁸

three o'clock morning starts muttering my astoundment then/succeed in catching a few scraps Pim Bim proper names/presumably imagination dreams things memories lives im-/possible here's my first-born old workshop farewell (p.89, 5) (c.r. 'lives' IB15)

In the above example (p.89, 5) 'old' is ambiguous as to whether it modifies 'workshop' or 'first-born'; if 'first-born' then it continues the connection we have been observing between birth and death, that one is dying/close to death when one is born.

See also:

love birth of love increase decrease death efforts to resuscitate/through the arse joint vain through the cunt anew vain jumped/from window or fell broken column hospital marguerities lies/about mistletoe forgiveness (p.94, 1) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'death' IC8; 'resuscitate' IB16; 'arse' IC1; 'cunt' IA3)

We understand 'birth of love' figuratively (O E D 2), meaning that 'love' began; using the word 'birth' to refer to 'love', and especially to sexual 'love', leads to a pun on birth literally meaning physical conception. The 'birth of love' is followed here by 'death'; at first reading we may take this to be a continuation of the metaphor, that love was born (began) and then died (ended).

¹⁸ Malone, Trilogy, p.173.

However, the narrator goes on to discuss the fall from the window and hospital, thus recalling the literal death of his wife (compare p.93, 25; p.94, 1 with details of the narrator's relationship with his wife and her death given p.84, 10--22; p.85, 1--25; p.86, 1--5). 'death' is understood figuratively of love and literally of life, thus emphasising the pun on 'birth' both literal and figurative. In both readings 'birth' is closely followed by 'death'.

iii) In the following examples, 'bear/born/birth' whilst not directly negated by death, occur in examples with negative associations, sometimes, for example, questioning whether the narrator has been born at all.

if I was born it was not left-handed the right hand transfers/the tin to the other and this to that the same instant the tool/pretty movements little swirl of fingers and palms little miracle¹⁹/thanks to which little miracle among so many thanks to which/I live on lived on (p.39, 9) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'live' IB15)

a little cheerful the less you're there the more you're cheerful/when you're there less tears a little less when you're there words/lacking all lacking less tears for lack of words lack of food even/birth it's lacking all that makes you cheerful it must be that/all that a little more cheerful (p.112, 15) (c.r. 'food' IIA1)

One reading for the above example (p.112, 15) is that 'birth' is said to be lacking: 'even birth, it's lacking!' According to this reading, 'all that' (line 18) is the subject of 'makes you cheerful' and not the subject of 'it's lacking'.

.../all the possible a sack with food a body entire alive still yes/living stop panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds hear/this breath token of life hear it said say you hear it good pant on

on and off as if born on the wind but not a breath sharp

¹⁹ 'miracle' has religious connotations which are considered in 'live' IB15.

and/faint God's old clapper old mill threshing the void or
 in another/mood as though it had changed great shears of
 the black old hag/older than the world born of night click
 clack click clack two/threads a second five every two never
 mine

no more I'll hear no more see no more yes I must to make
 an/end a few more old words find a few more not quite so
 old as/when Pim part two those are done never were but
 old too vast/stretch of time this voice these voices as if
 borne on all the winds/but not a breath another antiquity
 a little more recent stop/panting let it stop ten seconds
 fifteen seconds a few old words/on and off string them
 together make phrases (p.114, 9) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'food'
 IIA1; 'alive' IB13; 'living' IB15; 'life' IB12; 'make' IA9,
 IB2; 'end' IC7)

'as if borne on the wind' (line 12) suggests that the
 sound of the words ('hear it said' line 11) or the sound of panting
 breath (lines 10--11) is carried as if on the wind, that it reaches
 the narrator's ears. 'not a breath' is interpreted according to common
 idiom to mean, not the slightest movement of wind, thus denying
 the possibility that the voice/panting is carried on the wind.

'breath' OED 4. A gentle blowing, a puff; now usually of
air or of wind; but in early times used absolutely in
 sense of 'wind, breeze, air in motion'.

That it is a 'token of life' which may be 'borne on the
 wind' indicates a pun on borne/born. Even so, we have seen that
 this is negated; 'not a breath' then takes on the significance of
 denying air-movement but also the breath which is the token of life
 (c.r. 'life' IB12). 'born of night' (line 15) has negative connotations
 emphasised in its reference to 'the black old hag'.

'hag' OED sb.¹ 1. An evil spirit, daemon, or infernal
 being, in female form: applied in early use to the Furies,
 Harpies etc. of Graeco-Latin mythology; also to malicious
 female sprites or 'fairies' of Teutonic mythology. Obs. or
arch. 2. A woman supposed to have dealings with Satan
 and the infernal world; a witch; sometimes an infernally
 wicked woman. Now associated with 3. 3. An ugly, repulsive,
 old woman: often with implications of viciousness or malici-
 ousness. b. fig. Applied to personifications of evil or of
 vice.

One interpretation of her role is that she is a midwife, cutting the cords; that the narrator's is never cut would suggest that he was never born (see 'if I was born', p.39, 9). As a midwife, however, she brings negative associations to birth, a 'black old hag' (OED senses 3 and 2) using 'shears'. There is also an allusion to the Furies, 'hag' OED sense 1, of Classical literature, which suggests that the threads being cut are the threads of life, that it is death that the narrator is excluded from ('never mine', p.14, 16).

questions then DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT that family cut thrust to/make an end got there at last if he remembers how he got there/no one day he found himself here yes like when one is born yes/manner of speaking yes if he knows how long ago no not even/a rough idea no if he remembers how he lived no always lived/like that yes flat on his belly in the mud yes in the dark yes with/his sack yes (p.105, 24) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'cunt' IA3; 'family' IB8; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7; 'know' IA7; 'live' IB15; 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9)

That the narrator's victim arrived 'like when one is born' suggests that his arrival, though comparable to birth, did not constitute an actual birth. 'manner of speaking', which we interpret as a question whether this is the way, the manner, of describing the nature of his arrival, also plays upon the theme of creation being through language, that one's being born is equated to a manner of speaking.

iv) 'bear/born/birth' also occur: p.14, 12; p.65, 10 (c.r. 'behind' IC3).

v) See also:

'crib' OED sb. 1. A barred receptacle for fodder used in cowsheds and fold-yards; also in fields, for beasts lying out during the winter; a CRATCH. (In nearly all early quots. applied to the manger in which the infant Christ was laid.)

I pissed and shat another image in my crib never so clean/since (p.9, 19) (c.r. 'piss' IIB2; 'shat' IIB1)

This example is considered in IIB1 and IIB2 where it is argued that crib is understood to mean receptacle in which the infant narrator was laid, that the dirt associations of 'shat' and 'piss' add negative connotations to a reference to the newly born. Also see that sense 1 of 'crib' associates the newly born²⁰ with animal food (see IIA and also comments on 'drop', p.92, 8--16).

Conclusion to IB5 'bear/born/e/birth'

In this section we have noted puns upon figurative uses of 'born/e/bear/birth' which result in the application of their literal senses, emphasising the theme of physical birth, the narrator's concern with sexual reproduction. We further noted a punning connection between mental and physical creation (especially in use of the word 'bear') thus continuing the theme we observed in IB4 'conceive', that is, a parallel between mental and physical creation, between creating through language and creating in the flesh. A common tendency which we observed in IB5 was for birth (figurative or literal) to be negated by death (figurative or literal), or at least to occur in contexts which added negative associations. We shall be further noting that 'life' and words to do with 'life' are also subject to the same associations, being negated by death and/or closely associated with it (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'live' IB15; 'death' IC8; 'die' IC9; 'dead' IC10). This opens up as one possible interpretation that the narrator doubts if he has been physically born, and questions whether he has conceived this whole fiction including the fiction of himself. This negation of birth by death, a telescoping of the span

²⁰ Not just any newly-born; there is a suggestion of a comparison between the narrator and Christ (see OED 'crib').

of life between the two, can be observed elsewhere in Beckett's fiction.

For instance:

'How beautiful in a way,' said the coroner, 'birthmark, deathmark, I mean, rounding off the life somehow, don't you think, full circle, you know, eh Agnus?'²¹

I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth to into death, such is my impression.²²

Mahood I couldn't die. Worm will I ever get born? It's the same problem.²³

In 'The Expelled' the narrator seems not to distinguish between cradle and grave:

It was neither the cradle nor the grave of anything whatever. Or rather it resembled so many other cradles, so many other graves, that I'm lost.²⁴

Beckett's practice of conflating life and death thus has led L. Barge, in consideration of his four stories, to comment: 'Because Beckett conceives of physical life as an experience of dying and because he suspects the human consciousness of being does not end with physical death, the meanings of the words merge, life becomes death, and death is a continuation of life.'²⁵ This is one explanation for birth's being presented as a kind of death in how it is, since birth is an initiation into the world of physical decay.

It is also worth noting in this context several examples from how it is in which youth and age are merged:

²¹ Murphy, p.150.

²² Malone, Trilogy, p.260.

²³ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.323.

²⁴ Four Novellas, p.35.

²⁵ L. Barge, 'Life and Death in Beckett's Four Stories', South Atlantic Quarterly, 76 (1977), 332--47 (p.336).

... and there another image yet another a boy/sitting on a bed in the dark or a small old man I can't see with/his head be it young or be it old his head in his hands I appro-/priate that heart (p.20, 7)

an old infant (p.105, 20)

... he's there still half in my arms/cleaving to me with all his little length that's something to/know and in that little ageless body black with mud when the/silence falls again enough feeling still for him to be there still (p.101, 6) (c.r. 'cleave' IA12; 'know' IA7; 'mud' IIB6)

'ageless' (p.101, 8) is ambiguous between being a way of saying that he is so old that he cannot be accurately aged and that he is minus age; so young that he has not yet started ageing, that is, pre-birth.

The reader is also referred to IIB (especially 'mud' IIB6; also see 'sack' IIA9) where it is argued that the narrator has not yet been properly born and is in a womb-like environment.

* * * * *

IB6 'womb'

'womb' O.E.D. sb. 1. a. The abdomen. Obs. b. The stomach (as the receptacle of food). c. The bowels. Obs. d. The belly-piece of a hide or skin. Obs. 2. The uterus. 3. transf. A hollow space or cavity, or something conceived as such (e.g. the depth of night); +also, a belly-shaped object or part. 4. fig. (from 2) A place or medium of conception and development; a place or point of origin and growth; sometimes spec., as the matrix of metals, etc.

Example:

nothing too to be sure often nothing in spite of 'everything/
dead as mutton warm and rosy always inclined that way
ever/since the womb if I may judge by what I know less
and less/that's true of myself since the womb the panting
stops I/murmur it (p.103, 15) (c.r. 'spite' IA16; 'dead'
IC10; 'mutton' IIA4; 'know' IA7)

'womb' (p.103, 17) is interpreted in sense O E D 2. 'dead as mutton' and 'warm and rosy' however can both be describing his state since birth, 'warm and rosy' having connotations of life in

contradiction to 'dead as mutton'. That he has been 'dead as mutton' since birth is consistent with examples to be seen in IB5 where death and birth are conflated. There may also be puns upon the obsolete senses of 'womb' listed in O E D sense 1. The reference to 'mutton' (a kind of food c.r. IIA4) plays upon 'womb' O E D sense 1a and 1b, suggesting that it is dead food which is born, especially since there is wordplay connecting sex and birth with eating and digestion (c.r. IIA; IIB). Since we shall see in IC that the sex in how it is is anal, and in IIB that birth is equated to excretion, there may also be play on the related sense of 'womb' O.E.D. 1c, the bowels.

* * * * *

IB7 'have'

(c.r. 'have' IA8; 'eat' IIA5)

'have' Concise O E D 1. Hold in possession as one's property or at one's disposal. 2. Experience the possession of; give birth to (baby).

In section IA5 occurrences of 'have' in how it is were considered, particularly examples of sexual puns. It is noted that some of these examples carry a further meaning of 'have', 'to give birth to'.

See:

'have' with a creature as its complement: 'I'll have another quaqu of us' (p.101, 17); 'the victim you are said to have had then lost' (p.140, 8); 'the traveller to whom life owes a victim will never have another' (p.15, 19).

'have' with 'a life' as its complement: 'you will have a little life' (p.26, 2) (c.r. 'life' IB12). Similarly: p.29, 14--7; p.57, 6--7; p.67, 17--8; p.84, 1--2; p.140, 16; p.140, 20--3; p.146, 13.

'have' with body parts as its complement: 'the anatomy I had' (p.60, 17); 'the hand the arse I have' (p.31, 22) (c.r. 'arse' IC1); 'dog the rump I have' (p.33, 9) (c.r. 'rump' IC1).

That 'have' occurs both as a sexual pun, and with play upon 'have' meaning 'to give birth to', emphasises the link between the puns in IA SEX and IB LIFE/CONCEPTION. As we shall consider later, in IIA5, there is also play on 'have' to mean 'eat'.

* * * * *

IB8 'mother/mamma/mum'

'mother' OED sb. 1. A female parent; a woman who has given birth to a child. Correlative with son or daughter.

'mamma' OED sb. A. word employed as the equivalent of mother.

'mum' OED sb.¹ A. 1. An inarticulate sound made with closed lips, esp. as an indication of inability or unwillingness to speak. Also in negative or hypothetical context '(not) the slightest word'. 3. b. to play mum is to be silent.

sb.³ dial. A 'pet' name for 'mother' (shortened form of mummy).

'mum' CDES 1. Mother, also mummy 2. Silence.

i) In the following examples 'mother/mamma/mum' are connected with/equated with language or words, thus continuing the argument that creative potential is to be found for the narrator of how it is in language, linking words with the meaning 'one who physically gives birth to', with language, the substance of fictional creation.

it comes the word we're talking of words I have some still it/would seem at my disposal at this period one is enough aha/signifying mamma impossible with open mouth it comes I let/it at once or in extremis or between the two there is room to/spare aha signifying mamma or some other thing some other/sound barely audible signifying some other thing no matter/the first to come and restore me to my dignity (p.29, 7) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA8; 'open' IA17)

In this example (p.29, 7) 'mamma' is identified specifically

as a 'word'; it is as a word that it has significance for the narrator. We also recall that 'mamma' is Latin for 'breast'; hence one interpretation of 'impossible', since Pim and the narrator are both male, 'we're two little old men', p.60, 20.

question if always good old question if always like that since/the world world for me from the murmurs of my mother/shat into the incredible tohu-bohu (p.47, 17) (c.r. 'shat' IIB1)

One reading of the above example (p.47, 17) is that it recalls the narrator's birth, that the world came into existence for him, when his mother gave birth to him, murmuring as she did so. 'if always like that since the world' recalls 'always inclined that way ever since the womb' (p.103, 16-17) (c.r. 'womb' IB6). 'from the murmurs of my mother' however plays upon this further, implying that the narrator's world was created out of ('from') his mother's murmurs, that is, it was created from speech, words. 'tohu-bohu' is understood: a) As an echoic word suggesting the confused sounds of world to a newly born baby. b):

'tohu-bohu' OED (a. Heb. thohy-wu-bhohy 'emptiness and desolation', in Gen i 2 rendered in Bible of 1611, 'without form and void'.) That which is empty and formless; chaos; utter confusion.

That a word which is used thus in the Bible is chosen here suggests that the narrator is born into chaos of being, like the first creation.

the moment when I would need to say and could not mamma/papa hear those sounds slake my thirst for labials and could not/from then on words for that moment and following wast/stretch of time (p.117, 1) (c.r. 'thirst' IIA6)

In this example (p.117, 1), 'mamma' (and 'papa') is significant as a word, emphasised by the linguistic term 'labials', as sounds he needed to be able to say; moreover, once these have been produced, there is no difficulty in saying others, according to one reading of 'from then on' (line 4).

faint shrill cry then foretaste of this semi-castrate mutter

I must/bear how long no more figures ... (p.57, 15) (c.r. 'foretaste' IIA5; 'bear' IIB5)

This example has already been considered in some detail under 'bear' IB5. Here however, we should note the possibility of a pun on 'mutter'. In the context of a pun on 'bear' meaning physically to give birth to, the German sense of 'mutter' ('mother') becomes relevant.²⁶ This leads to (at least) two readings significant here: a) 'semi-castrate' as an adjective modifies 'mutter' as a noun, thus indicating that the mother (whose role one would expect to be reproductive) is 1) not completely fertile ('implications of 'semi-castrate', 2) male (to have been castrated). The narrator then comments that he has to 'tolerate/give birth to' this mother. This reading coheres with our observation that the narrator created Pim, then in the course of the narration, re-enacts the act of sexual creation, this time with Pim as his partner. Thus the narrator gives birth to one who is a potential mother; one however who is male ('he's a little old man we're both little old men', p.60, 21) and whose fertility is in doubt. b) 'I' is in apposition to 'mutter' so that the narrator identifies himself as the (semi-castrate?) one who must 'bear/give birth to'.

reread our notes pass the time more about me than him hardly/a word out of him now not a mum this past year and more I/lose the nine-tenths it starts so sudden comes so faint goes so/fast ends so soon I'm on it in a flash it's over (p.89, 12) ('come' IA6; 'end' IC7)

One reading for 'not a mum' accords with OED sense A, that the creature being observed does not make a sound. A punning reading, however, denies that the creature is a mother (OED sb. dial.). This last reading has as one of its interpretations that the

²⁶ Cassell's German English and English German Dictionary, edited by K. Breul, 12th edition (London, 1955).

creature has not yet reproduced, another that it cannot. A further reading denies the existence of any 'mums', mothers, in the vicinity. In this example, then, the same word applies to one who sexually reproduces and to speech/words/language.

'mamma' also occurs:

mamma none either column of jade bible invisible in the
black/hand only the edge red gilt the black finger inside
psalm one/hundred and something oh God man his days as
grass flower/of the field wind above in the clouds the
face ivory pallor/muttering lips all the lower it's possible
(p.86, 15)

That 'muttering lips' refers back to 'mamma' according to one reading of the above stanza (p.86, 15) recalls the 'mutter/mother' pun we observed in a previous example (p.57, 15).

It is significant that the narrator comments 'psalm one hundred and something oh God man his days as grass flowers of the field' above since this is a biblical reference to a theme (namely, that man is born to die) we noted previously in IB (see especially IB5) and shall notice again (for example, 'life' IB12; 'live' IB15; 'death' IC8; 'die' IC9; 'dead' IC10) in how it is.

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over it, and ²⁷it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

* * * * *

IB9 'family/familiar'

'family' OED sb. 2. The body of persons who live in one house or under one head, including parents, children, servants, etc. 3. The group of persons consisting of the parents and their children, whether actually living together or not; in wider sense, the unity formed by those who are nearly connected by blood or affinity. 4. Those de-

27 Psalms 103. 15--16.

scended or claiming descent from a common ancestor; a house, kindred, lineage. c. In wider sense: A race, a people or group of peoples assumed to be descended from a common stock. 6. A group or assemblage of objects connected together and distinct from others by the possession of some common features or properties. 10. b. (To be) in the family way: pregnant.

'familiar' OED a. 1. a. Of or pertaining to one's family or household. (Now rare and with a mixture of other senses.) 2. Of persons and their relations: On a family footing, extremely friendly, intimately associated, intimate. 6. Of things: Known from constant association; pertaining to everyday knowledge: well-known.

DS: 'familiar way, in the'; pregnant, jocular, colloquial. Punning 'in the family way'.

i) In the following examples, one common acceptable reading is that 'family' occurs in reference to 'words', 'questions', 'thoughts' etc., thus it is understood according to OED 6. That a word whose other meanings refer to relationship through blood, which ultimately implies relationship through sexual reproduction, is used to describe 'words', 'thoughts', 'questions', the materials of fictional creation, continues our argument that there is a parallel between mental and physical creation being developed in how it is.

questions if I were to lose the tin-opener there's another object/or when the sack is empty that family (p.10, 9) (c.r. 'tin-opener' IA15; 'sack' IIA)

these words of those for whom and under whom and all about/the earth turns and all turns these words here again days nights/years seasons that family (p.18, 20)

find something else to last a little more questions who were/they what beings what point of the earth that family whence/this dumb show better nothing eat something (p.35, 20) (c.r. 'eat' IIA5)

the panting stops I am on my side which side the right it's/preferable I part the mouth of the sack and questions what my/God can I desire what hunger to eat what was my last meal/that family time passes I remain (p.36, 18) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'hunger' IIA6; 'eat' IIA5; 'meal' IIA4)

training early days or heroic prior to the script the refinements/difficult to describe just the broad lines on stop that family/beyond my strength he floundered I floundered but little by/little little by little (p.67, 19)

questions then DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT that family cut

thrust to/make an end ... (p.105, 24) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'cunt' IA3; 'make' IA9, IB3; 'end' IC7)

before Pim long before with Pim vast tracts of time kinds/of thoughts same family divers doubts emotions too yes/emotions some with tears yes tears motions too and movements/both parts and whole as when he sets out to seek out all of him/sets out to seek out the true home (p.111, 18) (c.r. 'kind' IB)

dark bright those words each time they come night day/shadow light that family the wish to laugh each time no/sometimes three every ten four every fifteen that ratio try/sometimes same ratio succeed sometimes same ratio (p.119, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'kind' IB)

See also:

in the familiar form of questions I am said to ask myself and/answers I am said to give myself however unlikely that may/appear (p.157, 16)

ii) 'family' also occurs in the phrase 'honour of the family':

yesterday in grandpa's notes the place where he wishes he were/dead weakness happily honour of the family short-lived he/stuck it out till his time was up whereas happy me tedium/inaction don't make me laugh question of character and the/business in the blood (p.89, 20) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'make' IA9, IB2)

he the first to have pity happily to no effect honour of the/family to eliminate the little stool regrettable innovation/discarded and the idea of the three books set aside where's the/greatness it is there (p.91, 12) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'stool' IIB1)

two more years to put in a little more then back to the surface/ah no lie down if I could lie down never stir any more I feel/I could weakness for pity's sake honour of the family if I could/move on a little further ... (p.92, 8)

See also:

that it was vain to wish for him an unfamiliar guise whose/coming it announced right leg right arm push pull ten yards/fifteen yards (p.123, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6)

According to one reading 'unfamiliar' in this context (p.123,

1) is understood according to OED 6, that is, an unexpected, a surprising guise, one not known from everyday knowledge. A pun on 'familiar' however results in our interpreting it according to OED 1, that it was not worthwhile expecting anyone other than a member

of the family, identifying the creatures in the mud as a 'family'.

iii) 'familiar' also co-occurs with 'slime' (c.r. 'slime' IIB1) p.20, 18; p.54, 4; p.88, 2.

and with 'mud': p.64, 1 (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

iv) 'family' also occurs p.12, 13.

'familiar' also occurs p.14, 15.

* * * * *

IB10 'kind'

'kind' OED sb. 7. Gender, sex. Obs. b. The sexual organs. Obs. rare. 9. Character as determining the class to which a thing belongs. II. A class, group, or division of things. 10. A race, or natural group of animals or plants having a common origin. 11. A subdivision of a race with same descent, a family, tribe, etc. b. Offspring, brood, progeny; descendents. 13. A class of individuals or objects distinguished by attributes possessed in common; a genus or species; also, in vaguer sense: A sort, variety, or description. Now the chief sense.

'kind' OED a. I. Natural, native. 1. Of things, qualities etc. Natural in various senses. Obs. II. Of good birth, kind, nature or disposition. 5. Of persons: Naturally well-disposed; having a gentle, sympathetic, or benevolent nature; ready to assist, or show consideration for, others.

'kindly' OED a. 2. With natural affection, affectionately, lovingly; with sympathy, benevolence, or good nature. b. fig. Benignly, genially.

i) 'kind' occurs in reference to 'thoughts', 'questions' etc. (c.r. 'family' IB8) p.111, 18; p.119, 6 both quoted in full above under 'family' IB9i; the co-occurrence of 'kind' and 'family' leads to a mutual pun which reinforces our argument.

when the last meal the last journey what have I done
where/been that kind mute screams abandon hope gleam of
hope/frantic departure the cord around my neck the sack
in my/mouth a dog (p.52, 5) (c.r. 'meal' IIA4; 'sack'
IIA9)

According to one reading of the above example 'kind' is

understood according to OED 13, 'that kind' referring to 'when the last meal', 'the last journey', 'what have I done', 'where been', stating that this is the style of question that the narrator asks. Syntactic ambiguity however leads to other readings, for example, 'mute' as a noun, the subject of the verb 'screams', modified by the adjective 'kind'.

ii) 'kind' co-occurs with 'image' (c.r. 'mud' IIB6 especially 'images in the mud') p.11, 17--9; p.51, 1--4.

iii)

of him who god knows who could blame him must sometimes/
wonder if to these perpetual revictuallings narrations and/
auditions he might not put an end without ceasing to main-
tain/us in some kind of being without end and some kind
of justice/without flaw who could blame him (p.152, 11)
(c.r. 'know' IA7; 'end' IC7)

In the example above (p.152, 11-5) both occurrences of 'kind' are understood in a general way, OED 13. There is also however a pun on the first occurrence of 'kind', 'some kind of being', that a God-like creature maintains them in some species of being, some family form; this reading is suggested by the idea that a God keeps them in being; a God having different kinds (species) at his disposal.

but all this business of voices yes quaqu yes of other
worlds/yes of someone in another world yes whose kind of
dream I/am yes said to be yes that he dreams all the time
yes tells all the/time yes his only dream yes his only
story yes (p.158, 16) (c.r. 'quaqu' IIB3)

This last example recalls the wordplay of that quoted previously (p.152, 11--5); punning between the vague general sense of 'kind' meaning 'sort' (OED 13) and a more specific sense of the word, 'species'. According to the last reading, the narrator is the species which a character in another world dreams/imagines.

See also:

'kindred' OED A. sb. 1. The being of kin; related by

blood or descent (occasionally, but incorrectly, by marriage); kinship. B. attrib. passing into adj. 1. Of the same kin; related by birth or descent; cognate.

and yet a dream I am given a dream like someone having/ tasted of love of a little woman within my reach and dreaming/too it's in the dream too of a little man within hers I have that/in my life this time sometimes part one as I journey

or failing kindred meat a llama emergency dream an alpaca/ llama the history I knew my God the natural (p.14, 21) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'taste' IIA5; 'love' IA1; 'life' IB12; 'meat' IIA4; 'know' IA7)

According to one reading of the above example, 'kindred' (p.15, 1) is understood according to OED sb. 1, the narrator contemplating who he might have for company; if he has not 'kindred', then at least he may perhaps imagine an animal, such as a llama. That the opposition is between reference to a woman/man and a llama implies that 'kindred' refers to 'species' rather than immediate family. According to another reading, the 'llama' is the narrator's kindred, or the nearest to it he will get, raising questions about the narrator's genus. 'llama' is understood to mean a kind of camel. There may however be a pun upon its homophone 'lama', meaning a Buddhist priest, given the reference to an 'eastern sage', p.59, 2 (where dreaming is also involved -- p.59, 17--8) (see 'live' IB12).
 iv) 'kind' also occurs: p.58, 2; p.147, 13. 'kindly consider' occurs p.151, 4; p.156, 21.

* * * * *

IB11 'species'

'species' OED sb. II. 8. A class composed of individuals having some common qualities or characteristics, freq. as a subdivision of a larger class or genus. 9. A distinct class, sort, or kind, of something specifically mentioned or indicated. d. With possessive pronouns, usually with reference to man or animals. e. The species, the human race. 10. Zool. and Bot. A group or class of animals or

plants (usually constituting a subdivision of a genus) having certain common and permanent characteristics which clearly distinguish it from other groups.

i) In the following examples, the narrator shows concern that he may 'lose' 'species'; 'species' occurs as the object of loss and also of clinging/hanging on to:

suddenly like all that happens to be hanging on by the finger-/nails to one's species that of those who laugh too soon alpine/image or speluncar atrocious moment it's here words have/their utility the mud is mute (p.28, 13) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

my life natural order more or less in the present more or less/part one before Pim how it was things so ancient the journey/last stage I come back to me to my place clutch the sack it drips/a tin clinks loss of species one word no sound it's the beginning/of my life present formulation I can go pursue my life it will/still be a man (p.29, 18) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'things' IA10; 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA5).

dear figures when all fails a few figures to wind up with part/one before Pim the golden age the good moments the losses/of species I was young I clung on on to the species we're talking/of the species the human saying to myself brief moments no/sound two and two twice two and so on (p.52, 16)

then of a sudden like all that starts again no knowing set/forth forth again ten yards fifteen yards right leg right arm/push pull a few images patches of blue a few words no sound/cling to species a few sardines yawn of mud burst the sack/drivel on drone on in a word the old road (p.68, 18) (c.r. 'sardines' IIA3; 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9)

time to forget all lose all be ignorant of all whence I come/whither I go frequent halts brief naps a sardine tongue in the/mud loss of speech so dearly regained a few images skies/homes little scenes falls half out of species brief movements of/the lower no sound loss of the noble name of Bem part one/before Pim how it was vast stretch of time it's done (p.119, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'sardine' IIA3; 'mud' IIB6)

the journey I made in the dark the mud straight line sack tied/to my neck never quite fallen from my species and I made that/journey (p.138, 9) (c.r. 'made' IA9, IB2; 'mud' IIB6; 'sack' IIA9)

The above examples illustrate that the narrator fears 'losing' 'species'. The collocation of 'species' with 'cling to/hang on to/fall from/loss of' presents problems of interpretation since 'species',

being an abstract noun, is not something that one can literally cling onto, neither is it common in figurative speech to use it in this way.

These are some of the interpretations:

a) The narrator is expressing a basic fear of loss of identity; especially emphasised when it co-occurs in the same stanza as 'loss of the noble name of Bem' (p.119, 18) see interpretation g, which links the retention of species with torture, implying that one of the functions of the coupling is to find identity. That he 'clings' to 'species' recalls the 'cleaving' of the partners to each other (c.r. 'cleave' IA12). Indeed, the narrator refers to these relationships as name-givings upon several occasions: for example 'the name we give to one another and give and give again' (p.125, 22) which follows reference to the creatures as 'nameless' between couplings 'nameless solitaires' (p.125, 13); 'nameless each awaits his Bom nameless goes towards his Pim' (p.124, 6). Such name-giving suggests that the coupling is also baptismal (c.r. Appendix 1).

b) The narrator is expecting death, loss of species indicating loss of life as it is known (by him) see interpretation h, regarding the religious connotations of 'falls'.

c) The narrator fears reaching a stage in which he is indefinable; not just loss of the 'species' he is now, but being completely indefinable. Compare The Unnameable, which Solomon views as a further attempt (after Molloy and Malone Dies) to find a language which can define the self, commenting of the narrator:

He is the self that his predecessors in the trilogy sought. He is a dimensionless point in the void; but until he finds words that will say nothing, he cannot locate himself.... If the Unnameable can describe where he is, he will be able to give himself a name, a name that will coincide with

his I and not describe a fiction.²⁸

Solomon sees as an important theme in the trilogy the need to find a language that will express the self; since the self is not space-bound however, and language is space-bound, there exists a contradiction from which spring the fictional narrations. He thus sees the narrators as indefinable because the self cannot be defined in language, an interpretation which could also be applied to the narrator of how it is, offering one explanation of his lacking species. Also, see e) below.

d) 'we're talking of the species the human' (p.52, 18) has as one of its readings that the narrator states that the species to which he clings is the human species; that his fear is loss of specific species, the loss of being human. This is further reinforced by reference to 'humanity'; and leads itself to several further interpretations (some of which are given here as e) and f).

e) The narrator fears loss of one or more features which he associates with being human, and he figuratively equates loss of one or more of these with loss of humanity, such as the loss of the ability to speak. An equation between 'speech' and 'species' is suggested by the parallelism of the phrases 'loss of species' (p.29, 21) and 'loss of speech' (p.119, 16) and the resulting pun on 'speech/species'. Brienza comments that 'Almost invariably "loss of speech" occurs in the linguistic environment of "no sound" thus reinforcing the connection between man and speech'.²⁹ We also notice that in all the above examples but one, 'species' closely co-occurs with 'word/s', 'talking'

²⁸ P. Solomon, Life After Birth: Imagery in Samuel Beckett's Trilogy (Mississippi, 1975), p.44.

²⁹ Brienza, p.117.

or 'speech'.

f) By 'loss of species' the narrator means loss of fellow-creatures for company. 'species the human' (as a reading for p.52, 19) refers to an individual 'human' (Pim?), it is a noun rather than an adjective modifying 'species' elliptically.

g) 'hanging on by the finger-nails' is interpreted as an idiom/cliché in the same way as the cliché 'hanging on by the fingertips'. Reference to the fingernails however anticipates the torture sequence in which the fingernails are used as an instrument of torture, for example 'nails in armpit' (p.76, 20) so that 'hanging on by the fingernails' is reliteralised, resulting in interpretations: 1. An emphasis upon e), since the torturer hopes to force Pim to speak. 2. Adding to interpretation f) that this is how the narrator maintains contact with his fellows. 3. It is by virtue of the torture that the narrator remains definable, remains within some definable class/species.

Some other points:

h) 'falls' has religious connotations:

'fall' OED v. III. To lose the erect position (primarily with suddenness). 19. intr. To be brought or come suddenly to the ground. 22. In moral sense: To yield to temptation, to sin; esp. of a woman: To surrender her chastity.

sb.¹ I. A falling from a height. 1. A dropping down from a high or relatively high position, by the force of gravity. b. fig.; esp. a descent from high estate or from moral elevation. III. A falling from the erect posture. 12. A falling to the ground: a. of persons. 16. fig. A succumbing to temptation, a lapse into sin or folly. In stronger sense: Moral ruin. b. Theol. The fall, The fall of Man: the sudden lapse into a sinful state produced by Adam's transgression.

That the narrator talks of falling out of, or from 'species' (p.138, 10; p.119, 7) suggests that it is concomitant with a fall from grace, that it follows a moral transgression.

i) 'cling' co-occurs with 'species' (p.52, 16; p.68, 18), 'cling' is then understood as an idiom, see reading g) for 'hanging on'. How-

ever, 'cling' co-occurs with the 'sack' in how it is; furthermore the narrator talks of the sack's being tied around his neck in the same stanza that he talks of having 'never quite fallen from my species' (p.138, 9); implying that maintaining contact with his sack is connected to not losing species (c.r. 'sack' IIA9).

j) Reference to 'sardines' co-occurs with species, c.r. 'sardines' IIA3, one possible interpretation being that the species of the narrator, or that he fears losing, is that of a sardine, not human, or that sardine is what he has fallen to, from human.

ii) The following examples are also of interest, in the context of the examples we have seen of 'family' IB9, 'kind' IB10 and especially 'species' IB11,

hanging on to humankind (p.103, 12)

which reinforces the suggestion that the 'species' the narrator was clinging on to was human.

what to begin with drink to begin with I turn over on my face/that lasts a good moment I last with that a moment in the end/the mouth opens the tongue comes out lolls in the mud that/lasts a good moment they are good moments perhaps the best/difficult to choose the face in the mud the mouth open the mud/in the mouth thirst abating humanity regained (p.30, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17; 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'thirst' IIA6)

'humanity' OED I. Connected with human. 1. The quality or condition of being human, manhood; the human faculties or attributes collectively; human nature; man in the abstract. b. pl. Human attributes; traits or touches of human nature or feeling; points that concern man or appeal to human sensibilities. 2. The human race; mankind; human beings collectively. II. Connected with humane. 3. The character or quality of being humane; behaviour or disposition towards others such as befits a man. a. Civility, courtesy, politeness, good behaviour; kindness as shown in courteous or friendly acts, obligingness. b. Disposition to treat human beings and animals with consideration and compassion, and to relieve their distresses; kindness, benevolence: =HUMANENESS. c. pl. Instances or acts of humanity; courtesies (obs.): kindnesses, tenderesses.

That 'thirst abating' is followed by 'humanity regained'

has (p.30, 5) several interpretations, among which are: a) Having satisfied his thirst, the narrator now feels more human, that is, he felt nearly dead, unable to function properly, when he was thirsty. b) The narrator now feels better disposed, more benevolent. c) There are religious connotations to 'humanity regained' suggested especially by the use of the word 'regained', playing upon Milton's Paradise Regained, thus evoking the fall from paradise and recalling the narrator's talk of 'falling from species'.

See also:

the humanities I had (p.133, 14) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

in the days when I still hugged the walls in the midst of my/brotherly likes (p.41, 14)

some reflections none the less while waiting for things to/improve on the fragility of euphoria among the different/orders of the animal kingdom beginning with the sponges/when suddenly I can't stay a second longer this episode is/therefore lost (p.43, 1)

One reading of p.43, 1 is that the episode that is lost is the narrator's passing the time by reflecting upon different species' capability for euphoria; another is that the whole (historic) 'episode', a phase in evolution (the narrator's evolution or that of the animal kingdom as a whole) is lost.

Both of the following examples play upon the question of what 'species' the narrator is; as idioms they are reliteralised:

I am not a brute (p.71, 12)

I am not a monster (p.72, 4)

Conclusion to IB9 'family/familiar', IB10 'kind', IB11 'species'

In the sections on 'family' and 'kind' in particular we noted the use of these words to refer to certain kinds of language. We observed here continuing wordplay upon the theme of language/fictional creation/sexual reproduction, since these words refer to

persons related through blood, through sexual reproduction, playing upon a parallel between the creation through language of the narration and the attempt to create through sex another being. We also noted the use of 'family' and 'kind' to denote group identity and in the case of 'kind' to play upon the theme of the narrator's species, group identity, particularly 'of him who God knows who ... he might not put an end without ceasing to maintain in some kind of being without end ...' (p.152, 12, 13) (c.r. 'end' IC7), in which the exact defining nature of the creatures' 'being' is unclear.

In the section on 'species' we have the use of a word which specifically relates to genus and does not usually have the more general, vaguer uses common for 'kind' and 'family', thus raising very concretely a concern with what physical form the narrator actually takes, what he is. We observed that 'species' also co-occurs with words referring to language, 'words' (p.28, 13; p.68, 18), 'talking/saying' (p.52, 16), 'loss of speech' (p.68, 18). This last example according to one reading is a play upon 'loss of species' suggesting that it is loss of speech which concerns him, that the parallelism of the phrases suggests equation between speech/species; that what is important to the narrator is that man has the ability to speak (something the narrator does not have and uses Pim for 'he can speak then that's the main thing' p.62, 16, c.r. 'things' IA10), thus emphasising the importance of language to the narrator. We also noted that one reading for the concern with 'loss of species' was a fear for loss of identity, something emphasised by reference to 'loss of the noble name of Bem' (p.119, 14); one's 'name' especially being the linguistic way in which man finds identity, thus emphasising the use of language as a way to establish identity.

It is interesting to note that one critical work on Beckett

is actually titled Beckett and The Voice of Species, in which E. Levy argues that Beckettian man is man considered from the standpoint of species. Thus the individual is robbed of personality and all that's left is what marks man off from other species: 'A species can accomplish nothing, not even its own termination.'³⁰

Having observed in IB 1--7 a concern with conception, creation, we have been observing in IB9--11 a concern with the family, with the nature of the creatures. Conception was associated with (at least) difficulty, identification is shown to be in jeopardy. We noted in particular the role that language has to play for the narrator of how it is both for conception and identity.

* * * * *

IB12 'life'

Introduction to IB12 'life'

In this section we shall be considering occurrences of the word 'life' in how it is. As we shall see, 'life' occurs many times in how it is and is considered here in several subsections which will be tied back to the main argumentation of IB. Having seen that language is an important theme in how it is and having commented in previous sections in IB that there is a parallel between physical conception and mental conception/fictional creation we shall now see that 'life', which we would expect to be the result of physical conception following sexual intercourse, is equated with the voice in how it is (section IB12i); that it is also closely related/equated with Pim who is both the source of the voice and the narrator's sexual

³⁰ E.P. Levy, Beckett and the Voice of Species: A Study of the Prose Fiction, (London, 1980), p.64.

partner. We shall see that 'life' co-occurs with 'give' and 'have' with implications of sexual connotations (c.r. IA), and, in the case of 'have', also with implications of cannibalism (c.r. IIA). We shall also examine 'life here' and 'life above', the latter having sexual connotations (c.r. IA). It will also be shown that words to be examined in later sections, such as 'sack' (c.r. IIA9) and 'mud' (c.r. IIB6) co-occur with 'life'. Especially when we come to examine words semantically related to 'life', such as the verb 'live' and the adjective 'alive', we shall note a conflation of life and death which recalls the comments made earlier in IB regarding birth and which will be further commented upon in IC. Throughout these examples we shall note also religious wordplay.

The examples of the occurrences of 'life' are listed under eleven different categories. In many cases the same example is felt to illustrate more than one point and may thus appear several times under different headings. Where there has been a double entry of this nature and the example is quoted in the text the cross reference within IB11 is recorded after the cross referencing to other words, and comment will be reserved upon each aspect of the word's usage for the relevant category heading.

The subsections are:

- i) 'life' as 'voice'
- ii) 'life' and Pim
- iii) 'life in common'
- iv) 'life' and 'give'
- v) 'have a life'
- vi) 'life above'
- vii) 'life here'
- viii) 'life' and 'sack'

- ix) 'life' and waste
- x) 'life' and time
- xi) 'life' -- other examples.

'life' OED sb. I. The condition or attribute of living or being alive; animate existence. Opposed to death. 1. a. Primarily, the condition, quality, or fact of being a living person or animal. b. In a wider sense: The property which constitutes the essential difference between a living animal or plant, or a living portion of organic tissue, and dead or non-living matter; the assemblage of the functional activities by which the presence of this property is manifested. Often with defining word, as in animal, vegetable, psychical. c. Continuance or prolongation of animal existence; opposed to death. 3. e. A vital or vulnerable point of an animal's body; the 'life-spot'. 4. Energy in action, thought, or expression; liveliness in feeling, manner or aspect; animation, vivacity, spirit. 6. In various concrete applications. a. A living being, a person. Obs. II. With reference to duration. 8. The animate terrestrial existence of an individual viewed with regard to its duration; the period from birth to death. III. Course, condition, or manner of living. 12. The series of actions and occurrences constituting the history of an individual (esp. a human being) from birth to death. In generalized sense, the course of human existence from birth to death. b. The Biblical phrase this life is (as also the or this present life) to denote the earthly state of human existence in contradistinction to the future life (occas. another life, etc.), the state of existence after death. Hence arises an occasional use of life for: Either of the two states of human existence separated by death. c. A particular manner or course of living; characterized as good, bad, happy, wretched, etc. 13. A written account of a person's 'life' (sense 12); a biography.

i) 'life' as 'voice'

A reading which all of the following examples have in common is that 'life' is something which is said and heard:

recorded none the less it's preferable somehow somewhere as/it stands as it comes my life my moments not the millionth/part all lost nearly all someone listening another noting or/the same (p.7, 13) (c.r. 'stands' IA10; 'comes' IA6) (c.r. 'life' and time IB12x)

here then part one how it was before Pim we follow I quote/the natural order more or less my life last state last version/what remains bits and scraps I hear it my life natural order /more or less I learn it I quote a given moment long past vast/stretch of time on from there that moment and following not/all a selection natural order vast tracts of time (p.7, 17) (c.r. 'remains' IIB4; 'bits and

scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' and waste IB12ix; 'life' and time IB12x)

this voice once quaqu then in me when the panting stops part/three after Pim not before not with I have journeyed found/Pim lost Pim it is over I am in part three after Pim how it was/how it is I say it as I hear it natural order more or less bits and/scraps in the mud my life murmur it to the mud (p.21, 20) (c.r. 'quaqu' IIB3; 'have' IA8,IB7, IIA5; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' and 'mud' IB12ixb; 'life' and waste IB12ixa)

Further examples in which 'life' is said or heard:

P.22, 6--7; p.57, 7--9; p.104, 18--19; p.114, 10--11; p.139, 15--20; p.145, 7--18; p.146, 13--14; p.146, 22--27.

and now to continue to conclude to be able a few more little/scenes life above in the light as it comes as I hear it word for/word last little scenes I set him off stop him short thump thump/can't take any more or he stops can't give any more it's one/or the other opener instantly or not often silence rest (p.93, 1) (c.r. 'comes' IA6; 'thump' IA15; 'opener' IA17) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

The above quote directly indicates that the 'life' derives from Pim's voice, that it is extorted from Pim. In the previous examples (such as p.146, 13) 'I hear it my life' is ambiguous between all of what is heard being equated to the narrator's life, and the narrator's simply hearing two words 'my life'. From the following examples in which 'life' is equated with 'voice', we conclude that the former interpretation is the correct one.

you will have a little voice it will be barely audible you will/whisper in his ear you will have a little life you will whisper/it in his ear it will be different quite different quite a different/music you'll see a little like Pim a little life music but in your/mouth it will be new to you (p.26, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life' and 'have' IB12v; 'life' and 'Pim' IB12ii)

.../the voice stops for one or the other reason and life along with/it above in the light and we along with it that is what becomes/of us

me at least him I have still to ask what becomes of me at least/when the silence I stop then start again opener or capitals and/in the hairs against my ear the extorted voice life above a/murmur pestle on kidney louder clearer and what will become/of me when I have it no more I'll have another quaqu of us/all I didn't say it I didn't know it

then my own I didn't/say it (p.101, 20) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'opener' IA17; 'quaqua' IIB3; 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

in a word Pim's voice then nothing life as we say little scenes/one minute two minutes good moments then nothing ... (p.102, 11) (c.r. 'life' and time IB12x)

Further examples of this will be found: p.102, 1--3; p.23, 17--18; p.104, 11--13; p.122, 9--11; p.133, 2--5; p.138, 1; p.138, 5--8; p.141, 6--9; p.142, 15--17; p.145, 1--6; p.146, 7--12; p.151, 22--25; p.157, 5--7.

In the next two examples, syntactic ambiguity results in a play upon the equation of 'life' with (as illustrated above) the 'voice':

... and howls still never saw that before his life here howls (p.105, 18) (c.r. 'life here' IB12vii)

... he finds words for the sake of peace HERE/howls this life ... (p.108, 2) (c.r. 'life here' IB12vii)

In both examples, 'howls' is ambiguous between being a verb and a noun (plural). If the former, 'life' is, according to one reading, the object of the verb; if the latter, than 'life here' and 'this life' are equated with 'howls'.

In the previous examples, 'life' has been identified with words or the 'voice' or 'howls', that is, either with language or para-linguistic sound. The following two examples indicate that 'life' is not only spoken, but also written:

there then more or less more of old less of late very little these/last tracts they are the last extremely little hardly at all a few/seconds on and off enough to mark a life several lives crosses/everywhere indelible traces (p.112, 1) (c.r. 'life' and time IB12x)

'tract' OED sb.¹ I. 1. Literary treatment or discussion. Obs. 2. A book or written work treating of some particular topic; a treatise, a written or printed discourse or dissertation.

(In IIB6 other senses of 'tracts' will also be considered.)

unless recordings on ebonite or suchlike a whole life genera-/tions on ebonite one can imagine it nothing to

prevent one mix/it all up change the natural order play about with that (p.115, 22) (c.r. 'hole' IC4)

The examples listed of 'life' so far, then, suggest that 'life' in how it is is something which is said or heard, equated with the 'voice'. Moreover:

my life last state last version ill-said ill-heard ill-recaptured/ill-murmured in the mud brief movements of the lower face/losses everywhere (p.7, 10)

One reading for p.7, 10 is that 'last state', 'last version' modify 'my life'. See definitions of 'state' and 'version':

'state' OED sb. I. Condition, manner of existing. 1. A combination of circumstances or attributes belonging for the time being to a person or thing; a particular manner or way of existing, as defined by the presence of certain circumstances or attributes; a condition. d. as regards health of mind and body. 2. A condition (of mind or feeling); the mental or emotional condition in which a person finds himself at a particular time. 4. Physical condition as regards internal make or constitution, molecular form or structure, and the like. Also, one of several forms or conditions in which an object -- animal, vegetable, or mineral -- is found to exist; a phase or stage of existence.

'version' OED sb. 2. The particular form of a statement, account, report, etc., given by one person or party; an account resting upon limited authority or embodying a particular point of view.

Both of these imply, from the example p.7, 10, that there could be other 'states' or 'versions' of 'my life'; that 'life' can vary. There is an ambiguity in 'last' between most recent and final, an ambiguity that occurs elsewhere in Beckett; Mercier comments on the title of Beckett's play Krapp's Last Tapes, 'The title suggests that he will have his wish (death), yet there is an ambiguity: "last" can mean "most recent" as well as "ultimate".'³¹ 'last state/version' of 'life' suggests according to one sense of 'last' that death is near; that the narrator's life may be at its final stage c.r. 'end' IC. 'version'

³¹ V. Mercier, Beckett/Beckett (New York, 1977), p.184.

in particular implies that 'my life' is a story, a text, which can be told in different ways.

The following examples are of a co-occurrence between 'my life' and 'present formulation' suggesting that the narrator's 'life' is something that has not yet been definitively expressed, continuing the suggestion that 'life' exists in different versions which can change.

'formulation' OED The action of the vb FORMULATE.

'formulate' OED v. To reduce to a formula; to express in (or as in) a formula; to set forth in a definite and systematic statement.

the tin broached put back in the sack or kept in the hand it's/one or the other I remember when appetite revives or I forget/open another it's one or the other something wrong there it's/the beginning of my life present formulation (p.8, 20) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'sack' IIA9; 'appetite' IIA6; 'open' IA17)

See also:

this new formulation namely this new life to have done with/that (p.155, 10) ('have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Further examples of 'life' co-occurring with 'present formulation': p.14, 10--2; p.23, 20--4; p.14, p.27, 1--3; p.28, 1--4; p.29, 18--23.

(These examples are also referred to in 'life' and time IB12x)

In this section we have seen examples which lead to the conclusion that 'life' in how it is is something that is said, heard, and sometimes written; and that the versions can vary. The following examples play upon this:

other extravagances including the use of speech it will come/back to me that much is true it has come back to me here it/is I listen I speak brief movements of the lower face with sound/in the mud a murmur all sorts one Pim a life I'm said to have had/before him with him after him a life I'm said to have (p.67, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3; 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life' and 'Pim' IB12ii; 'life' and 'have' IB12v)

that life then said to have been his invented remembered ... (p.80, 11) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life' and 'have' IB12v)

Bem come to cleave to me where I lay abandoned to give me/a name his name to give me a life make me talk of a life said/to have been mine ... (p.118, 14) (c.r. 'Bom' IC4; 'come' IA6; 'cleave' IA12; 'abandoned' IIB5; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life' and 'give' IB12iv)

it's then I hear it my life here a life somewhere said to have been/mine still mine and still in store ... (p.145, 7) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life here' IB12v)

The expression 'said to' usually infers doubt or uncertainty ~~as to~~ what follows, that is, that something is only said to be so, not that it necessarily is so. In the context, however, of 'life' anyway being something that is spoken, the idiom 'said to' is reliteralised.

this solitude when the voice recounts it sole means of living it

my life we're talking of my life (p.141, 6) (c.r. 'live' IB15)

.../how it was my life we're still talking of my life (p.141, 14)

... how it was/my life we're talking of my life in the dark the mud with Pim (p.57, 4) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

In the above three examples 'talking of' is interpreted as indicating the subject of the conversation; however, it plays upon the other occurrences which we have been noting that identify 'life' with the 'voice' (the 'voice' talks of 'life').

others knowing nothing of my beginnings save what they could/glean by hearsay or in public records nothing of my beginnings/in life (p.13, 17) (c.r. 'know' IA7)

'hearsay' OED 1. That which one hears or has heard someone say; information received by word of mouth, usually with implication that it is not trustworthy; oral tidings; report, tradition, rumour, common talk, gossip.

There is play upon the use of the word 'hearsay' in reference to the narrator's 'life' which we have thus far seen to be frequently associated with 'saying' and 'hearing', indeed being the object of these verbs, so that the single word 'hearsay' is understood at one level according to OED sense 1, with play at another level

upon the two words that make it 'hear' and 'say'; a reliteralisation.

my day my day my life so they come back the old words
(p.47, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3) (c.r. 'life' and
time IB12x)

At one level, 'life' is just a word the narrator is used to hearing in
example p.47, 1; this also plays upon the identification between the
'life' and the 'voice'.

In the following examples, the narrator talks of things
being 'put in his life (this time)' or of 'having' (something) in his
'life (this time)', which implies that his 'life' is variable and that
someone else has control of it. It furthers the argument that 'life'
is equated with a life-story, a story that someone else tells.

in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord
but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to
have been/given to me this time the image of other things
with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within
reach no that doesn't/seem to have been put in my life
this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IA2; 'opener'
IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' and
time IB12x)

and yet a dream I am given a dream like someone having/
tasted of love of a little woman within my reach and dream-
ing/too it's in the dream too of a little man within hers I
have that/in my life this time sometimes part one as I
journey (p.14, 21) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'taste'
IIA5; 'love' IA1) (c.r. 'life' and time IB12x)

no emotion all is lost the bottom burst the wet the drag-
ging/the rubbing the hugging the ages old coal-sack five
stone six/stone that hangs together all gone the tins the
opener an opener/and no tins I'm spared that this time
tins and no opener I/won't have had that in my life this
time (p.51, 14) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2; 'sack' IIA9; 'opener'
IA17; 'tins' IIA2; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life' and
time IB12x)

I withdraw my nails he continues the same air it seems to
me/I am rather musical this time I have that in my life
this time/and this time on the wing a word or two eyes
skies the or thee/cheers we use the same idiom what a
blessing (p.70, 19) (c.r. 'life' and time IB12x)

sky and earth yes people poking about yes all over the
place/yes and him there somewhere yes skulking somewhere
yes as if/the mud opened yes or turned transparent yes
but not often no/not long no otherwise black yes and he
calls that life above yes/as against life here pause HERE

howls good (p.106, 13) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'open' IA17)
(c.r. 'life here' IB12vii; 'life above' IB12vi)

In the example above (p.106, 13) there is play upon 'calls' between meaning 'names' and 'calls out, cries'.

... so that's my life here no answer/THAT'S MY LIFE
HERE SCREAMS GOOD (p.160, 4) (c.r. 'life here' IB12vii)

Among readings for p.160, 4 are: a) that 'life here' is equated with 'SCREAMS', b) that 'SCREAMS' is the response the narrator gets. According to one reading, 'life' has been equated with para-linguistic sound.

and how there are three of us four a million and there I
am/always was with Pim Bom and another and 999997
others/journeying alone rotting alone martyring and being
martyred/oh moderately listlessly a little blood a few cries
life above in/the light a little blue little scenes for the
thirst for the sake of/peace (p.138, 17) (c.r. 'martyr'
IC12) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

One reading of the above (p.138, 17) is that 'life above'
modifies the preceding phrases; another is that it modifies 'a few
cries'; that 'a few cries' is what 'life' consists of.

no the wish to be less wretched a little less the wish for
a little/beauty no when the panting stops I hear nothing
of the kind/that's not how I'm told this time

nor callers in my life this time no wish for callers hasten-
ing/from all sides all sorts to talk to me about themselves
life too/and death as though nothing had happened me
perhaps too in/the end to help me last then goodbye till
we meet again each/back the way he came (p.13, 7) (c.r.
'kind' IB10; 'death' IC8; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7;
'back' IC3)

The example above (p.13, 7) plays upon the equation of
'life' with the 'voice' in that 'life' is one of the subjects talked
about; this in itself is played upon by 'caller' which is read in OED
sense 2 but with play upon O E D sense 1. (See also 'he calls that
life above', p.106, 16, quoted above.)

'caller' OED sb. 1. a. One who cries aloud, or proclaims.
2. One who pays a short or complimentary visit. (The
chief current sense.)

There is also ambiguity in the previous stanza (p.13, 7), in the context of 'life's being equated with the 'voice', in line 9, where 'I' is ambiguous between being the indirect or direct object of 'told'. That is, whether a) 'I' represents a creature who hears from someone else, 'I' as indirect object; or b) whether 'I' equates the creature narrating with what is narrated, that he, his existence, his 'life' is what is told, his only existence is what the voice tells. Cohn says that plot and character 'virtually coincide' in a narrator, in how it is.³²

Conclusion to IB12i 'life' as 'voice'

We have observed examples in which 'life' is the object repeatedly of 'say/hear' and again examples in which it is directly identified with the 'voice'. At one level, this can be understood hyperbolically, a way of saying that 'life' for the narrator is so bad, so uneventful, that hearing the 'voice' is the only interest in his life that he has and is therefore the only thing worth living for, so 'voice' comes to be identified with 'life' itself. That 'life' is so frequently in how it is shown to be something which is heard/said and sometimes written, that it may have different versions, suggests something more than this. It is being argued that we understand 'life' in these examples as something verbal, composed of language (or at least, of para-linguistic sound, 'howls', 'screams'), see OED sense 13 of 'life'. We have further observed that this identification between 'life' and language/para-linguistic sound is emphasised by wordplay.

This has relevance for the theme we have been observing

³² R. Cohn, 'Comment C'est: De Quoi Rire', French Review, 35 (1962), 563--69 (p.563).

IB1--11, that there is a parallel between physical and mental conception. 'life' which usually comes into being through physical birth after sexual union is here commonly identified with the 'voice'. We have seen (see Introduction to IB) that the voice is extorted through acts of torture which the narrator trains Pim to respond to once he realises that Pim has a voice (p.62, 16--8; p.75, 12--4; p.76, 19--24) and that he hopes that another creature will arrive to treat him as he ^{treats} Pim, and that the narrator will then be tortured into talking, which is identified with having a 'life'.

two there were two of us his hand on my arse someone had/come Bom Bem one syllable m at the end all that matters Bem/had come to cleave to me see later Pim and me I had come to/cleave to Pim the same thing except that me Pim Bem me Bem/left me south

Bem come to cleave to me where I lay abandoned to give me/a name his name to give me a life make me talk of a life said/to have been mine above in the light before I fell all the already/said part two with Pim another part two before part one/except that me Pim Bem me Bem left me south I hear it/murmur it in the mud (p118, 9) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'come' IA6; 'Bom' IC6; 'end' IC7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'cleave' IA12; 'abandoned' IIB5; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' and 'have' IB12v; 'life' and 'give' IB12iv; 'life above' IB12vi)

See also, with regard to this last example, Appendix 1, where it is argued that the coming of Bom/Bem to give the narrator a name has religious connotations of baptism. We also recall that there is a biblical association between spoken language and God, the creator of all life:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.
In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 33

This suggests a comparison between the 'voice' in how it is and God the Creator who, like the 'voice' (also like the creator of the fiction, the narrator and the creator of the narrator, Beckett) creates being out of words.

We have already seen that these acts of torture parody a sex act (c.r. IA). In several of the examples considered in IB12i 'howls' and 'screams', which are the cries of one being tortured, are equated with 'life'. This emphasises the pattern that we have been observing in which sex in how it is is a form of torture, and the 'life' conceived by this act is language, or para-linguistic sound. This reminds us of and reinforces the puns observed in 'conceive', IB4, since language is one result of mental conception. See 'he's coming I'll have a voice ...' (p.84,1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'come' IA6) in which the possession of a 'voice' by the narrator directly follows another creature's orgasm -- a reading given through wordplay.

ii) 'life' and 'Pim'

The following examples all have as one of their readings an equation (in most cases by reading 'Pim'/'life' in apposition to each other) between 'life' and 'Pim':

it's still my day part one before Pim my life present formula-/tion the very beginning bits and scraps ... (p.28, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life' and time IB12x; 'life' and waste IB12ix)

you will have a little voice it will be barely audible you will/whisper in his ear you will have a little life you will whisper/it in his ear it will be different quite different quite a different/music you'll see a little like Pim a little life music but in your/mouth it will be new to you (p.26, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'have' and 'life' IB12v; 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

other extravagances including the use of speech it will come/back to me that much is true it has come back to me here it/is I listen I speak brief movements of the lower

face with sound/in the mud a murmur all sorts one Pim a life I'm said to have/had before him with him after him a life I'm said to have (p.67, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA8; 'back' IC3; 'have' IA8; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life' and 'have' IB12v)

samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my life/up there my wife stop opener arse slow to start then no holding/him thump on skull long silence (p.84, 10) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'hold' IA14; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

so Pim stops life above in the light he can't give any more me/permitting or thump on skull I can't take any more it's one/or the other and what then him me I'll ask him but first me/when Pim stops what becomes of me but first the bodies glued/together mine on the north good so much for the trunks the/legs but the hands when Pim stops where are they the arms/the hands what are they at (p.99, 7) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

In the last example (p.99, 7) as well as the reading a) 'Pim stops' meaning that 'life (above) (in the light)' ceases when Pim ceases (talking), one can also have the reading: b) 'stops' as a transitive verb with 'Pim' as its subject and 'life (above) (in the light)' as the object, suggesting that 'Pim' has power over 'life (above) (in the light)'. One reason for this could be because he narrates it (c.r. IB12i 'life' as 'voice').

I have journeyed found Pim lost Pim it's over that life those/periods of that life (p.22, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

One reading for the lines above (p.22, 10) is that 'that life' refers to 'Pim'.

See also the following examples:

I learn it natural order more or less before Pim with Pim vast/tracts of time how it was my vanished life then after then now/after Pim how it is my life bits and scraps (p.22, 1) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' and waste IIB12ix)

script and then Pim's voice till he vanishes end of part two/leaving only part three and last (p.77, 6) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

but quick an example from among the simple from the

early/days or heroic then Pim to speak until he vanishes
end of part/two leaving only three and last (p.78, 14)
(c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'end' IC7)

One reading for p.22, 1 is that 'my vanished life' refers to 'Pim', a
reading suggested by p.77, 6; p.78, 14, when Pim is said to 'vanish'.

Conclusion to IB12 ii 'life' and 'Pim'

The equation between 'Pim' and 'life' has several possible
interpretations, among which are: a) 'Pim' is the narrator's companion
in life, the creature with whom he experiences life, thus is identified
with 'life' (c.r. 'life in common' IB12iii). A variation of this is that
'Pim' being the narrator's only source of company/pleasure is identified
with 'life'; in the same way that lovers declare that they cannot live
without each other, that the presence of the other makes life worth
living -- as we saw in IA, the narrator and Pim are lovers of a
sort. b) Pim is the narrator's source of 'life'. 1. We saw in IA that
Pim plays the female role in a parody of a sexual relationship, from
which a natural conclusion would be that Pim could conceive and
produce life. 2. Pim is the source of the 'voice' which is equated
with 'life'. c) 'Pim' is the narrator. This interpretation is reinforced
when the narrator fails clearly to distinguish between himself and
Pim, for example:

YOUR LIFE ABOVE no more need of light two lines only
and Pim/to speak he turns his head tears in the eyes my
tears my eyes if/I had any it was then I needed them not
now (p.83, 12) (c.r. 'have' IA8).

Moreover, we recall that at the end of how it is we learn that there
is no fellow creature with the narrator and that it has been the
narrator's voice all along:

never any Pim no nor any Bom no never anyone no only
me/no answer only me yes ... (p.159, 11) (c.r. 'Bom'
IC4)

only me yes alone yes with my voice yes my murmur yes
(p.159, 19).

iii) 'life in common'

'common' OED sb. 13. In common. b. Ordinarily, usually, commonly. d. In joint use or possession; to be held or enjoyed equally by a number of persons. g. In union, in communion, in a community. h. Said of participation in attributes, characteristics, actions, etc. Esp. in phr. to have in (formerly of) common (with).

In the following examples 'life in common' is used with reference to the narrator and Pim (or Bom):

in the dark the mud my head against his my side glued to
his/my right arm round his shoulders his cries have ceased
we lie/thus a good moment they are good moments

how long thus without motion or sound of any kind were/it
but of breath vast a vast stretch of time under my arm
no/and then a deeper breath heaves him slowly up leaves
him at/last and sets him slowly down others would say a
sigh

thus our life in common we begin it thus I do not say it
is not/said as others at the end of theirs clinging almost
to each other/I never saw any it seems never any such
but even beasts/observe each other I saw some once it
seems and they observ-/ing each other let him understand
who has a wish to I have/none (p.60, 23) (c.r. 'kind'
IB10; 'end' IC7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

vast stretch of time then for our beginnings a dizzy figure
in/the days of figures the beginnings of our life in common
and/question what brings this long peace to a close at
last and makes us better acquainted what hitch (p.61, 17)
(c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2)

awful moment in any case if there ever was one what
vistas/that closes the first phase of our life in common
and unlatches/the second and for that matter last more
fertile in vicissitudes/and peripeteias the best in my life
perhaps best moment I mean/it is difficult to choose (p.62,
21)

there then behind us already at last the first phase of
our life/in common leaving only the second and last end
of part two/leaving only part three and last (p.63, 18)
(c.r. 'end' IC7; 'behind' IC3)

but first have done with this part two with Pim life in
common/how it was leaving only part three and last when
I hear among/other extravagances that he is coming ten
yards fifteen yards/who for me for whom I what I for Pim
Pim for me (p67, 10)

between sessions sometimes a sprat a prawn that could
happen/it goes on in the past ah if only all past all in
the past Bom come/I gone and Bom on our life in common

we had good moments/they were good moments drivell drivell
no matter a sprat a/prawn (p.68, 1) (c.r. 'prawn' IIA3;
'Bom' IC6; 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sprat' IIA3)

orgy of false being life in common brief shames I am not
dead/to inexistence not irretrievably time will tell it's telling
but/what a hog's wallow pah not even not even pah brief
move-/ments of the lower face profit while ye may silence
gather while/ye may deathly silence patience patience (p.76,
14) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'wallow' IIB1; 'deathly' IC8)

... where do I go from/then to then and in between but
first quick make an end of/life in common end at last of
part two leaving only last at last (p.105, 9) (c.r. 'quick'
IB1; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7)

together then life in common me Bem he Bem we Bem
vast/stretch of time until the day hear day say day murmur
it don't/be ashamed as if there were an earth a sun moments
of less dark/more dark there laugh (p.118, 20)

See also:

from the next mortal to the next leading nowhere and
saving/correction no other goal than the next mortal cleave
to him/give him a name train him up bloody him all over
with/Roman capitals gorge on his fables unite for life in
stoic love/to the last shrimp and a little longer (p.69, 1)
(c.r. 'mortal' IC9; 'gorge' IIA5; 'love' IA1; 'shrimp' IIA3)

to the effect it is leaving me like the others then nothing/
nothing but nothing then Bom life with Bom the old words/
back from the dead a few old words his wish ... (p.104,
14) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'dead' IC10)

how it was my life still with Pim how it is how it will be
with/Bom (p.142, 2) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6)

and sudden light on the sacks at what moment renewed at
some/moment in the life of the couples ... (p.151, 7)
(c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'couple' IIA5)

Conclusion to IB12iii 'life in common'

In these examples we have seen that the expression 'life
in common' is used with reference to the creatures when they are
'coupled'. Among interpretations for this are: a) 'life' understood in
the sense of OED 12c; that this is held 'in common' therefore indicates
that the two creatures undergo the same experiences together, that
they are companions during a particular phase in their lives. This
reading is reinforced by examples p.69, 1; p.104, 14; p.151, 7;

see 'life' in OED sense 13, that they have the same life history in common, which could mean that they are the same creature or simply that they have undergone the same experiences. However, other readings for 'life in common' play upon the interpretation: b) 'life' in OED sense 1b, that what the two creatures have in common, the feature that they both have, is that they are both alive rather than dead. c) 'life' in OED sense 12a, indicating that they are one and the same creature, that they share the only life there is, c.r. 'life' and 'Pim' IB12ii. d) The sexual nature of their relationship suggests further play, that they created a 'life' between them -- see OED sense 6a -- that is, they conceived another creature together.

iv) 'life' and 'give'

In the following examples, 'life' occurs as the object of the verb 'give':

that's the speech I've been given part one before Pim
question/do I use it freely it's not said or I don't hear
it's one or the other/all I hear is that a witness I'd need
a witness

he lives bent over me that's the life he has been given all
my/visible surface bathing in the light of his lamps when
I go he/follows me bent in two (p.19, 17) (c.r. 'live'
IB15)

In this example (p.19, 17) we should note the parallel between 'the speech ... been given' (line 17) and 'the life ... been given' (line 20) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i); also, a syntactic ambiguity which plays upon the readings discussed in IB12ii and IB12iii; 'all my visible surface' as the object of 'give' thus identifying the 'life' given to the witness as the narrator's visible surface.

now yes or no a fold of the sack between the lips that
can/happen not in the mouth between the lips in the vesti-
bule

in spite of the life I've been given I've kept my plump
lips/two big scarlet blubbers to the feel made for kisses I

imagine/they pout out a little more part and fasten on a ruck of the sack/very horsy (p.49, 13) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'spite' IA10; 'kiss' IA4)

that life then said to have been his invented remembered a/little of each no knowing that thing above he gave it to me/I made it mine what I fancied skies especially and the paths/he crept along how they changed with the sky and where you/were going on the Atlantic in the evening on the ocean going/to the isles or coming back the mood of the moment less/important the creatures encountered hardly any always the/same I picked my fancy good moments nothing left

dear Pim come back from the living he got it from another/ that dog's life to take and to leave I'll give it to another the/voice said so the voice in me that was without quaqu on all/sides hard to believe here in the dark the mud that only one/life above from age to age eternally allowances made for/preferences ah that's it allowance made for needs (p.80, 11) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'know' IA'; 'thing' IA10; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3; 'living' IB15) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life' and 'have' IB12v; 'life above' IB12vi; 'life' and waste IB12ix)

Bem come to cleave to me where I lay abandoned to give me/a name his name to give me a life make me talk of a life said/to have been mine above in the light before I fell all the already/said part two with Pim another part two before part one/except that me Pim Bem me Bem left me south I hear it/murmur it in the mud (p.118, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'cleave' IA12; 'abandoned' IIB5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi; 'life' and 'have' IB12v; 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

In the above example, notice the parallelism between 'give me a name' and 'give me a life' suggesting equation between 'life' and 'name', that the creature cannot have a 'life' until he has a 'name'.

See also:

.../howls thump the whole face in the mud mouth nose no more/breath and howls still never saw that before his life here howls/in the black air and the mud like an old infant's never to be/stifled good try again HERE HERE to the marrow howls to drink/solar years no figures until at last food he wins life here this/life he can't (p.105, 18) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'mud' IIB6; 'drink' IIA7) (c.r. 'life here' IB12vii; 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

In the last example (p.105, 18) syntactic ambiguity as to whether 'he wins' (line 22) is transitive or intransitive results in one reading being 'life here' as the object of 'wins'.

Conclusion to IB12iv 'life' and 'give'

Some of the interpretations for the occurrences of 'life' as the object of 'give' are as follows: a) 'a life' in senses OED 12 and 13; a particular set of life experiences are being given. That this co-occurs with examples of 'life' as 'voice' see p.80, 11; p. 118, 14; p.105, 18 and parallels with 'speech' p.19, 17 suggest an interpretation for 'a life' as a life story and giving as telling, relating. That it is equated, p.118, 14 with giving someone a name suggest that until the creature is named, until defined in language, the creature does not exist. b) A change of emphasis upon reading a), suggested especially by p.19, 17 and p.49, 13; is that the life story the creature is given is how the creature has to live, that is, it is not just a story told, but the telling is equated with living it. This literalisation of 'a life' in OED sense 1 raises the question of the state of the creatures before being given 'a life' (c.r. 'alive' IB13, 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10). c) The sexual nature of the creatures' physical relationship leads to 'give a life' being interpreted as 'to impregnate'. This sexual reading continues the parallel we have been observing throughout IB between physical and mental conception. This reading is emphasised by p.80, 11, 'when he gave it to me': 'it' could refer to 'that life', but 'gave it to me' is also a sexual innuendo. d) The example quoted of 'wins life here' (p.105, 18) is considered in this section because it suggests that 'life' can be given (as a prize).

'win' OED v.¹ 4. absol. or intr. To overcome one's adversary, opponent, or competitor; to be victorious, gain the victory (now chiefly in sports or games of skill); fig. to prevail. 6. To get, obtain, acquire; esp. to get as something profitable or desired; to gain, procure.

e) A further implication of these examples is that there exists someone who can 'give a life', which can be interpreted: 1. Literally to give

someone life is to give birth to them; suggesting that the someone in how it is is Pim, who after sexual torture will produce the 'voice/life'. 2. Since it is the male in the sex act who impregnates the female and since the narrator plays the male role in how it is, the narrator could also, figuratively, be the one who gives 'life'. 3. It is revealed, as we have seen, at the end of how it is, that there is no Pim, only the narrator; the narrator has created Pim in words, if not in body, given him a fictional life. 4. The narrator's giving fictional life to Pim mimics the act of fictional creation by Beckett of the narrator. 5. Another interpretation for someone who has the power to give 'life' is God; we saw in p.118, 14 that the narrator's awaiting one who will come to give him a 'life/name' has religious connotations of one waiting for Christ (see Appendix 1); there is then a comparison suggested between the creator(s) of fictional life in how it is and God or His Son.

v) 'have' and 'life'

(c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

The following examples have in common as one of their readings that 'a life' is the object of the verb 'have'. Also note that in all of them there is an equation between 'having a life' and the action of the 'voice'; either co-occurrence of 'voice', 'murmur' etc., often with parallelism of such phrases as 'have a life' and 'have a voice' or 'have a life' and 'murmur' a 'life' (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i).

he's coming I'll have a voice no voice in the world but mine/a murmur had a life up above down here I'll see my things/again a little blue in the mud a little white our things little/scenes skies especially and paths (p.84, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

.../my life we're talking of my life in the dark the mud

with Pim/part two leaving only part three and last that's where I have/my life where I had it where I'll have it vast tracts of time part/three and last in the dark the mud my life murmur it bits and/scraps (p.57, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life' and waste IB12ix)

Similar examples will be found: p.67, 14--18; p.140, 11--23; p.145, 11--18; p.146, 13--14. Also compare:

the paltry need of a life a voice of one who has neither (p.133, 2) (c.r. 'life' IB12i)

all that all that while it lasts all those kinds of lives when the/panting stops I had it all it depends on what you hear knew it/all did and suffered as the case may be ... (p.139, 15) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'kind' IB10; 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

Also see the occurrences of 'life' 'said to (have) be(en) mine' referred to in IB12i:p.8, 4; p.80, 11; p.118, 15--16; p.145, 7.

Some of the interpretations for the occurrences of 'have' with 'life' as its object are:

- a) To experience a life, to live. That the narrator uses the future and the past indicates that having a life, living, is distinct from his current state (c.r. 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10).
- b) 'life' in OED sense 6a, that the narrator talks of giving birth to new life c.r. 'bear/born/e/birth' IB5.

you will have a little voice it will be barely audible you will/whisper in his ear you will have a little life you will whisper/it in his ear it will be different quite different quite a different/music you'll see a little like Pim a little life music but in your/mouth it will be new to you (p.26, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

'a little life' is interpreted in OED sense 4, saying that 'you' will be a bit lively; other occurrences of 'have a life' however lead to a play upon reading b, that 'you' will give birth, 'little' suggesting infant.

- c) 'life' in sense 6a, with a sexual pun on 'have' (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5), 'having a life' meaning then to have sex with a creature.
- d) By having a life is meant possessing someone else's life, taking

their life, that is, killing, which can be the outcome of torture (thus playing on reading c).

BOM scored by finger-nail athwart the arse the vowel in the/hole I would say in a scene from my life he would oblige me/to have had a life the Boms sir you don't know the Boms sir/you can shit on a Bom sir you can't humiliate him a Bom/sir the Boms sir (p.67, 5) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'score'IA16; 'arse' IC1; 'hole' IC4; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'know' IA7; 'shit' IIB1)

According to one reading of the example above (p67, 5) 'to have had a life' is the complement of 'he would oblige me'; this presents problems of interpretation, especially for reading a), that to 'have a life' means to live.

'oblige' OED v. I. 1. trans. To bind (a person) by an oath, promise, contract, or any moral or legal tie (to a person or a course, or to do a thing); to put under an obligation or engagement, to engage. Now only in Law. 2. ref. To bind oneself by an oath, promise, or contract (to a person, to a course or to do something, that something shall be done): to come under an obligation, to pledge, engage oneself. II. 7. pass. To be bound to a person by ties of gratitude; to owe or feel gratitude, to be indebted to a person (or thing) for something. Now said only in reference to small services, esp. in making an acknowledgement or request; also, formally, where there is no real indebtedness, as in ordering goods from a tradesman, etc. IV. 9. trans. To constrain, esp. by moral or legal force or influence; to force, compel. a. to do something. b. to a course of action, etc.

According to reading a) 'have a life' is equivalent to living; for Bom to be able to compel the narrator to have lived indicates that Bom has power over life and death (like God; or like the creator of fiction who has power over the fictional life and death of his characters). It suggests that the past can be altered (that Bom compels the narrator to have a life in the past suggests that if he didn't compel him, the narrator wouldn't have had, the past would be different). One interpretation for this is that the narrator is obliged to have a life in sense d), murder. However this co-occurrence is also explained if we recall IB12i, and our conclusion that a consistent use of 'life' in how it is was to indicate life story, a series of

happenings constructed from language. Thus in p.67, 5, Bom compels the narrator to have a story of life (past) to tell him. The problem for readings b) and c) for p.67, 5, is that the narrator is being obliged to have given birth to a life and to have had a creature sexually in the past, implying that the events of the past can be made to be different. This can again be understood if we see life's activities as fictional creations through language, events in a story which can be revised, re-written.

Conclusion to IB12v 'have' and 'life'

In how it is there are several occurrences in which 'life' is the object of the verb 'have'. This leads to four basic interpretations, listed as a), b), c), and d) above. That the past and or future tenses are often used in these examples suggests that the narrator exists separately from the contemporary possession of 'life'. We noted the recurring sense of 'life' as OED sense 13, that 'life' means life story, biography; that 'life' in how it is is created through language.

vi) 'life above'

1) The following examples include the occurrence of 'life above' or have as one of their readings that 'life' is modified by 'above':

life life the other above in the light said to have been mine on/and off no going back up there no question no one asking that/of me never there a few images on and off in the mud earth sky/a few creatures in the light some still standing (p.8, 4) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'back' IC3; 'mud' IIB6; 'creature' IB3) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life' and 'have' IB12v)

I nothing only say this say that your life above YOUR LIFE pause/my life above in the light almost an octosyllable come to think/of it a coincidence (p.79, 19) (c.r. 'come' IA6)

that life then said to have been his invented remembered a/little of each no knowing that thing above he gave it to me/I made it mine what I fancied skies especially and the paths/he crept along ... (p.80, 11) (c.r. 'have' IA8,

IB7, IIA5; 'thing' IA10; 'made' IA9, IB2) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

samples whatever comes remembered imagined no knowing/
life above life here God in heaven yes or no if he loved
me a/little if Pim loved me a little yes or no ... (p.82,
12) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'love' IA1; 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'life
here' IB12vii)

samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my
life/up there my wife stop opener arse slow to start then
no holding/him thump on skull long silence

my wife above Pam Prim can't remember can't see her
she/shaved her mound never saw that I talk like him I
do we're/talking of me like him little blurts midget grammar
past that/then plof down the hole (p.84, 10)

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch
of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has
lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT
as it comes bits/... (p.83, 19.) (c.r. 'bear' IB5; 'thump'
IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'cunt' IA3;
'come' IA6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life here' IB12vii;
'life' and waste IB12ix)

More examples will be found: p.80, 19--24; p.83, 12--14; p.84,
1--4; p.86, 20--21; p.87, 19--22; p.93, 1--5; p.97, 11--15; p.98,
19--23; p.99, 7--8; p.102, 1--5; p.104, 7--13; p.106, 13--17; p.116,
5--8; p.118, 14--19; p.138, 17--22.

The following example is discussed in detail in 'live' IB15
and 'dead' IC10. According to one reading 'the people' are complaining
about 'life above':

the people above whining about not living strange at such
a/time such a bubble in the head all dead now others for
whom/it is not a life and what follows very strange namely
that I/understand them (p.46, 9) (c.r. 'living' IB15; 'dead'
IC10)

2) 'life' in the 'light'; 'life' as something visual (c.r. 'little scenes
in the mud' IIB6iv). Of those examples listed above of 'life above'
'life' co-occurred with 'in the light' and 'images' p.8, 4 and 'life' in
the 'light' and 'scenes' p.138, 9. Other examples listed above in
which 'life above' co-occurred with 'light': p.79, 19; p.82, 12; p.93,
1; p.93, 21; p.97, 11; p.99, 7; p.101, 20; p.104, 10; p.118, 14.

Other examples listed above in which 'life above' is something visual:
p.80, 11; p.84, 14; p.102, 1; p.196, 9; p.116, 8.

'life' occurs with light and vision without the specification
'above' in the following example:

that's all for the moment there I leave I hear it murmur it
to/the mud there I leave for the moment life in the light
it goes/out (p.10, 4) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

In p.10, 4, there are two possible referents for 'it' resulting in
ambiguity as to whether the light alone goes out, or whether 'life'
is synonymous with, and extinguished along with, light. This suggests
that 'life' has no other presence than visual.

his right arm about me his left hand in mine in the sack
his ear/against my mouth my life in the light a murmur a
few mouldy/old reliables azure that never dies morning
with evening in/its train other subdivisions of time one or
two usual flowers/night always too light whatever may be
said to the contrary (p.104, 17) (c.r. 'die' IC9) (c.r.
'life' as 'voice' IB12)

I learn it natural order more or less before Pim with Pim
vast/tracts of time how it was my vanished life then after
then now/after Pim how it is my life bits and scraps (p.22,
1) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' and waste
IB12ix)

'vanish' OED 1. intr. To disappear from sight, to become
invisible, esp. in a rapid and mysterious manner.

That 'life' can 'vanish' implies that it was of a visual nature before.

BOM scored by finger-nail athwart the arse the vowel in
the/hole I would say in a scene from my life he would
oblige me/to have had a life the Boms sir you don't know
the Boms sir/you can shit on a Bom sir you can't humiliate
him a Bom/sir the Boms sir (p.67, 5) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6;
'scored' IA10; 'arse' IC1; 'hole' IC4; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5;
'know' IA7; 'shit' IIB1) (c.r. 'life' and 'have' IB12v)

'scene' OED sb. I. With reference to the theatre. 5. A
subdivision of an act of a play. II. In various established
metaphorical uses. 9. A view or picture presented to the
eye (or to the mind) of a place, concourse, incident,
series of actions or events, assemblage of objects, etc.
10. An action, episode, complication of events, or situation,
in real life.

life little scenes just time to see the hangings part heavy
swing/of black velvet what life whose life ten twelve years
old/sleeping in the sun at the foot of the wall white dust

a palm/thick azure little clouds other details silence falls again (p.94, 10)

Whilst the above example (p.94, 10) has as one of its readings that 'life' is visual ('life' being modified by 'little scenes'), note that the scenes appear to end with 'silence falls again', reinforcing the oral nature of 'life' observed previously (IB12i).

I see all sizes life included if that's mine the light goes on in the/mud the prayer the head on the table the crocus the old man/in tears the tears behind the hands skies all sorts different sorts/on land and sea blue of a sudden gold and green of the earth of/a sudden in the mud (p.23, 6) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'behind' IC3)

Other examples in which 'life' is visual: ; p.9, 9--11; p.81, 11--15; p.81, 16--18; p.102, 1--5; p.102, 10--11.

Conclusion to IB12 vi 'life above'

There is a recurring sexual theme associated with 'life above' which is conveyed through word patterning. This is most strong when the narrator is talking about his wife, who was part of his 'life above'. For example, p.84, 10, when 'my life up there my wife' has as one of its readings an equation between 'my life' and 'my wife' reinforced by the occurrence two lines later of 'my wife above' (line 13), which plays phonetically upon the recurring 'my life above'. This follows the occurrence of 'YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT' (p.83, 21) in which 'cunt' is closely associated with 'life above'. On p.80, 12, 'that thing above' could also be referring to a sex organ (c.r. IA10). Also, that the creatures that the narrator sees in the light are 'still standing' is again a sexual pun (c.r. 'stand' IA10). Thus is suggested an association between 'life above' and vaginal sex ('CUNT'), a place of fertility ('CUNT') and potency ('stand').

'life above' is closely linked to 'little scenes' (c.r. 'mud' IIB6iv), mostly through their common co-occurrence with 'light'.

Frequently 'life above' is something that the narrator learns about from the 'voice' (of Pim). The term 'life above' has religious connotations:

And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

And I will shew wonders in heaven above; and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.³⁴

These suggest that 'life above' is a heavenly place, in contrast to the earth beneath -- see also the occurrence of 'heaven' on the same line as 'life above' in how it is (p.82, 13). The co-occurrence of 'life above' with 'light' reinforces these heavenly connotations:

'light' OED sb. 7. Often with spiritual reference (said of the brightness of Heaven, the illumination of the soul by divine truth or love, etc.). Angel (or spirit) of light, one who dwells in Heaven.

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.³⁵

E. Levy considers that 'life above' in how it is is a reference to heaven but that the narrator has become confused and can no longer keep clear a stratificational distinction between 'the place here, the place above (heaven), and the place below (hell)'.³⁶

That 'Kram goes back up into the light to end his days' (p.146, 19) is ambiguous; it could refer to heaven after death, but it could also mean a return to the world of light for the last few days (years) of one's life. The actual details which we are given concerning 'life above' suggest a place which more closely resembles the reader's world, that is, everyday life on earth, than it does either the mud world of the narrator or a description of heaven.

³⁴ John 8. 23; Acts 2. 19.

³⁵ Isaiah 2. 5.

³⁶ E. Levy, Voice of Species, p.86.

Features of 'life above' include 'earth sky' (p8,6); 'paths' (p.80, 13); 'my wife' (p.84, 11); making a living in the building trade (p.93, 24); 'clouds', 'stars at night' (p.102, 4,); 'people' (p.46, 9). In reference to the images of life above in the light which the narrator in how it is sees, Bruns comments,

... at the very least it is given to him to dream, as he journeys, of a life recognisably human. What is to the point, however, is that such dreams as this of love and 'a little woman' are part of a process, the unfolding (in 'natural order more or less') of the store of memory.³⁷

Mercier also views these images of 'life above' as memories. He remarks:

... with how it is and Play we are once more in an indefinite future, this time beyond the grave in hell or purgatory. The characters, however, remember fragments of their life 'in the light' when they had a civil status -- in fact their memories are part of their punishment.³⁸

Whilst Knowlson and Pilling consider that the images of part one:

Represent not just a profound nostalgia for a world of light in which colour and contour are restored to prominence, but also a deep need to people³⁹ the solitude with relationships that were once meaningful.

We also recall that the narrator talks of having 'fallen' (c.r. 'species' IB11) and that his 'species' is not clear, as if the narrator has fallen further from grace than Adam, fallen from earth, from being human.

I do not think that any one of these interpretations alone can provide the ultimate explanation of what is meant by 'life above' in how it is; what is important is that all these possibilities are introduced through wordplay and word patterning as we have

37 G.L. Bruns, 'Samuel Beckett's How It Is', p.320.

38 Mercier, Beckett/Beckett, p.56.

39 J. Knowlson and J. Pilling, Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett (London, 1979), p.65.

observed. To emphasise the way in which these themes are inseparable because of the nature of the wordplay in how it is we should remember the sexual connotations in 'life above' which we observed and recall that another interpretation which plays upon the creatures' relationship is that 'above' could be a preposition describing the creatures' position physically in relation to each other, especially for example 'CUNT ABOVE CUNT'. This a) tells us that the sexual organs together are of the same sex (c.r. IC where it is argued that the sex in how it is is homosexual); b) conveys a picture of bodies ('cunt' as 'silly person' c.r. 'cunt' IA3) piled up together.

vii) 'life here'

In this section we shall be considering references to 'life here'. We notice that the narrator views 'life here' as different from, distinguished from, 'life above':

silence more and more longer and longer silences vast tracts/of time we at a loss more and more he for answers I for/questions sick of life in the light one question how often no/more figures no more time vast figure vast stretch of time on/his life in the dark the mud before me mainly curiosity was/he still alive YOUR LIFE HERE BEFORE ME utter confusion (p.81, 16) (c.r. 'sick' IB1; 'mud' IIB6; 'alive' IB13) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi; 'life' and time IB12x; 'life' and waste IB12ix)

sky and earth yes people poking about yes all over the place/yes and him there somewhere yes skulking somewhere yes as if/the mud opened yes or turned transparent yes but not often no/not long otherwise black yes and he calls that life above yes/as against life here pause HERE howls good (p.106, 13) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'open' IA17) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life above' IB12vi)

In these examples 'life' is understood in a) OED sense 12, especially sense 12c, as meaning manner of living, way of life; 'here' referring to the narrator's environment, his location in the mud and the dark (c.r. 'mud' IIB6). b) sense OED 1, thus the narrator is commenting that 'here', in this location, exists 'life'. c) When 'life here' occurs during descriptions of torture, another reading for 'life' is OED

sense 3e, that 'life' refers to a vital or vulnerable point of an animal's body, is applicable.

mine what I need that's it most need changing aspects that's/it ever changing aspects of the never changing life according/to the needs but the needs surely for ever here the/same needs from age to age the same thirsts the voice say so

it said I murmur for us here one after another the same thirsts/and life unchanging here as above/according to the unchanging/needs hard to believe it depends on the moment the mood of/the moment the mood remains a little changeful you may say/no sound there is nothing to prevent you today I am perhaps/not quite so sad as yesterday there is nothing to stop you (p.81, 1) (c.r. 'thirst' IIA6)

This last example (p.81, 1) is ambiguous so as to play upon the opposition between 'life above' and 'life here'; 'unchanging here as above' could indicate that 'life here' and 'life above' are both different, but neither of them change. It could also equate the two, that they do not change, 'as' indicating that they are both the same.

samples whatever comes remembered imagined no knowing/ life above life here God in heaven yes or no ... (p.82, 12) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

Ambiguity in this example (p.82, 12) results in one reading in which 'no knowing' postmodifies 'remembered imagined' indicating that the narrator is not certain which. According to another reading 'no knowing' premodifies 'life above', indicating that the narrator is not certain about 'life above' but that he is about 'life here'; or even that both 'life above' and 'life here' are premodified by 'no knowing' -- 'life' understood in OED sense 1, that the narrator does not know if there is animate existence 'here' and 'above'.

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT as it comes bits (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'bear' IB5; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'cunt' IA3; 'come' IA6; 'bits' IIB4) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

In the last example (p83, 19) one reading interprets 'life' according to OED sense 12, that 'life here' and 'above' is 'cunt' (either an insult, that it is very unpleasant, or a sexual reference). Another reading has 'life' interpreted according to OED sense 3e, 'life' as a vital or vulnerable spot of an animal's body, playing upon the literal meaning of 'cunt' (c.r. 'cunt' IA3).

he's coming I'll have a voice no voice in the world but mine/a murmur had a life up above down here I'll see my things/again a little blue in the mud a little white our things little/scenes skies especially and paths (p.84, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'things' IA10; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life above' IB12vi)

so many words so many lost one every three two every five/first the sound then the sense same ratio or else not one not one/lost I hear all understand all and live again have lived again I/don't say above in the light among the shades in search of/shade I say here YOUR LIFE HERE in a word my voice otherwise/nothing therefore nothing otherwise my voice therefore my/voice so many words strung together to the effect first example (p.104, 7) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'shade' IC12) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi; 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

YOUR LIFE HERE long pause YOUR LIFE HERE good and deep long/pause this dead soul what appal I can imagine YOUR LIFE/unfinished for murmur light of day light of night little scene/HERE to the quick and someone kneeling or huddled in a corner/in the gloom start of little scene in the gloom HERE HERE to the/bone the nail breaks quick another in the furrows HERE HERE/howls thump the whole face in the mud mouth nose no more/breath and howls still never saw that before his life here howls/in the black air and the mud like an old infant's never to be/stifled good try again HERE HERE to the marrow howls to drink/solar years no figures until at last good he wins life here this/life he can't (p.105, 12) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'soul' IC11; 'quick' IB1; 'thump' IB15; 'mud' IIB6; 'drink' IIA7) (c.r. 'life' and 'give' IB12iv; 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

Again in this last example, p.105, 12, there is play upon 'life' in OED sense 3e, in the context of the torture that is taking place, a sense emphasised by reference to 'quick' (c.r. IB1).

but he can't affirm anything no deny anything no things may/have been different yes his life here pause YOUR LIFE HERE good/and deep in the furrows howls thump face in the mud nose/mouth howls good he wins he can't (p.107, 16) (c.r. 'things' IA10; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

Reference to 'in the furrows' here closely follows 'life here' permitting reading of 'life' in sense OED 1 and playing upon the fertile connotations of furrows (as commented IB1).

ABOVE the light goes on little scenes in the mud or memories/of scenes past he finds the words for the sake of peace HERE/howls this life he can't or can't any more he was able once how/it was before the other with the other after the other before me/the little there was nearly all like me my life here before Pim/with Pim how it was the little there was I've said it I've been/able I think so as I hear it and say to make an end with him a/warning to me murmur to the mud quick quick soon I won't/be able either never any Pim never was never anything of all/this little quick then the little that is left add it quick before/Bom before he comes to ask me how it was my life here before/him the little that is left add it quick how it was after Pim before/Bom how it is (p.108, 1) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7; 'quick' IB1; 'Bom' IC6; 'come' IA6) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

it's then I hear it my life here life somewhere said to have been/mine still mine and still in store bits and scraps strung together/vast stretch of time an old tale my old life each time Pim leaves me till Bom finds me it is there (p.145, 7) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'tale' IC5; 'Bom' IC6) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life' and 'have' IB12v; 'life' and waste IB12ix)

The close co-occurrence of 'hear' with its homophone 'here' results in wordplay (p.145, 7); that 'life here' is followed by 'a life somewhere' indicates uncertainty as to the location of 'life'. 'still in store' implies that 'life' is in suspension, waiting to be used.

never crawled no in an amble no right leg right arm push pull/ten yards fifteen yards no never stirred no never made to suffer/no never suffered no answer NEVER SUFFERED no never aban-/doned no never was abandoned no so that's life here no answer/THAT'S MY LIFE HERE screams good (p.160, 1) (c.r. 'made' IA9, IB2; 'abandoned' IIB5) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

In the above example some of the ambiguities are, for example, that 'so that's life here' refers to 'never was abandoned' or to 'no answer'. 'THAT'S MY LIFE HERE' could be a repetition, the narrator shouting in order to emphasise his point, 'screams' either indicating that he or Pim is shouting. Another reading is that 'screams' modifies 'THAT'S MY LIFE HERE' saying that 'life

here' is simply 'screams'.

Conclusion to IB12vii 'life here'

Among readings for 'life here' are: a) 'life' in OED sense 12, 'here' locating the narrator in an environment of dark and mud, in contradistinction to 'life above'. Indeed, 'life here' seems very unpleasant by any reading, consisting of a victim/torturer partnership with Pim and other creatures and co-occurring with 'howls' and 'screams' (c.r. IB12i). b) The narrator is announcing that there is 'life' OED sense 1, 'here' in this location. 'here' is understood then either to refer to the general environment of mud and dark, or to a particular location, especially during the torture sequence. c) Following from the last reading, 'life' in sense 3e, especially during the torture sequence, thus emphasising the possibility of life creation through the sexual relationship between the creatures. d) Also, a pun on 'here/hear', especially since 'life' so often collocates with 'hear' c.r. IB12i.

viii) 'life' and the 'sack'

In the following places, 'life' co-occurs with 'sack' (these examples will be quoted in full and their significance discussed in section 'sack' IIA9): p.8, 8--11; p.12, 15--16; p.27, 12; p.38, 6--17; p.39, 5--8; p.49, 13--15; p.97, 11--15.

ix) 'life' and waste.

The following examples all have as one of their readings an equation or close association between 'life' and waste matter. The actual vocabulary of waste in how it is is considered in IIB, so that words cross-referenced to that section are words with waste connotations; some of the examples are also cross-referenced to IC, where anal/death puns are considered, since these are also related to waste.

... my life last state last version/what remains bits and scraps I hear it my life natural order (p.7, 17) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice')

rags of life in the light I hear and don't deny ... (p.23, 1) (c.r. 'rags' IIB4) ('life' as 'voice' IB12i; 'life above' IB12vi)

illumination here Bem is therefore Bom or Bom Bem and the voice/quaqua from which I get my life these scraps of life in/me when the panting stops of three things one (p.122, 9) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'quaqua' IIB3; 'scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

'of three things one' (p.122, 11) has religious connotations, recalling the argument in IB12i that the 'voice' being equated to 'life' suggested John 1. 1--4, equating God with the 'word' and 'life'. This example suggests that the 'voice' that follows after the panting is the Holy Trinity.

Further examples of 'life' equated/associated with waste:

words quaqua then in me when the panting stops bits and scraps/a murmur this old life same old words same old scraps ... (p.145, 11) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3; 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

my life a voice without quaqua on all sides words scraps then/nothing then again more words more scraps the same ill-spoken/ill-heard then nothing vast stretch of time then in me in the/vault bone-white if there were a light bits and scraps ten/seconds fifteen seconds ill-heard ill-murmured ill-heard ill-/recorded my whole life a gibberish garbled sixfold (p.146, 7) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3; 'scraps' IIB4; 'gibberish' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

Note in the last example (p.146, 7) that the narrator's whole life is said to be 'gibberish'; 'gibberish' emphasising both 'life' as waste and also as waste language (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i).

Further examples of 'life' equated with or closely associated with waste: p.21, 23--24; p.22, 3; p.22, 4--9; p.26, 14--15; p.28, 1--4; p.57, 7--9; p.81, 17--18; p.82, 21--22; p.104, 14--15; p.112, 20; p.139, 19--20; p.145, 7--10; p.146, 7--12; p.146, 23--24; p.151, 22--25.

See also:

dear Pim come back from the living he got it from another/
that dog's life to take and to leave I'll give it to another
... (p.80, 19) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'living' IB15) (c.r. 'life'
and 'give' IB12iv)

In this last example (p.80, 19) 'dog's life' is understood
idiomatically to indicate a way of life ('life' in sense OED 12) which
is not very pleasant or dignified.

'a dog's life' DS A miserable life: a wretchedly subservient
life (mid C19/20 dates fr. C16).

This sense is reinforced by its occurrence elsewhere in Beckett

Up till then he had been content to expose himself vaguely
in aloof able-bodied postures on the fringes of the better-
attended slave-markets, or to drag from pillar to post
among the ⁴⁰agencies, a dog's life without a dog's
prerogative.

'got it' reinforces the unpleasant connotations especially when followed
by the narrator's passing it on 'to another' since it suggests a
disease. That the narrator talks of passing the 'life' on also has the
effect of suggesting reproduction, that what he passes on is a
'dog's life' reliteralises the idiom to suggest that it is not so like
reproduction but more like reincarnation.

The following examples have in common the reading that
the 'mud' is equated with 'life'. These examples are listed separately
because in IIB we shall be considering 'mud' as a special kind of
dirt/waste. In the following, 'mud' occurs in apposition to 'my life':
p.21, 24; p.22, 5; p.57, 9. Others: p.17, 21; p.29, 16--17; p.80,
20; p.151, 22.

Conclusion to IB12ix 'life' and waste

In these examples we have noticed a recurrent association/
equation between 'life' and waste matter. This suggests a) the narrator
has a derogatory view of (his) life; he uses these terms to express

⁴⁰ Murphy, p.47.

his dislike of it metaphorically; and/or, b) 'life' derives from waste matter, thus playing upon the fertility of dead and waste matter and suggesting a life cycle in which that which is rejected as waste later returns as a source of life.

What is especially interesting is that we are beginning to see the way in which patterns are being built up linking one theme with another. (Human) 'life' usually results from sex. Here one of the themes we have observed is that 'life' comes from the 'voice' which is extorted during a relationship which parodies sex. That the 'life' is, at the very least, not very pleasant, could then be a comment on the manner in which it has been produced. Further however, we have seen that 'life' is directly associated with words which we will be considering in the section on WASTE IIB; this further links back to the manner in which it is produced since in IC we shall be arguing that the sexual relationship which is parodied by the creatures in the extorting of the 'voice' ('life') is an anal one. In IIA we shall observe that word patterning associates the act of sex with the act of eating.

x) 'life' and time

The following examples are of the co-occurrence of 'life' with reference to 'time' or units of time.

1) 'my life this time'

in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to have been/given to me this time the image of other things with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within reach no that doesn't/seem to have been put in my life this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'have' IA8; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB12i; 'life' and 'sack' IB12viii)

Further examples: p.13, 10; p.14, 21--25; p.23, 21--24; p.51, 14--18; p.70, 19--22.

2) 'life' co-occurs with units of time such as 'day, 'moments', 'minutes' etc. or with 'vast tracts/stretch of time':

how it was how it is when the panting stops bits and scraps I/wake off I go my day my life part one bits and scraps (p.26, 14) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'life' and waste IB12ix)

what to begin my long day my life present formulation last/a moment with that coiled round my treasure listening my/God to have to murmur that (p.27, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB12i)

my life ten seconds fifteen seconds it's then I have it murmur/if it's preferable more logical brief movements of the lower/face with murmur in the mud (p.145, 16) (c.r. 'have' IA8; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB12i; 'life' and 'have' IB12v)

in a word Pim's voice then nothing life as we say little scene/one minute two minutes good moments then nothing ... (p.102, 10) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB12i; 'life above' IB12vi)

from it everything I know how it was before Pim before that/again with Pim after Pim how it is words for that too how it/will be words for that in a word my life vast tracts of time (p.138, 5) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB12i)

p.7, 13--16; p.8, 8--11; p.28, 1--2; p.39, 5--8; p.47, 1--3; p.57, 6--9; p.71, 19--22; p.81, 16--21; p.88, 16--18; p.112, 1--4; p.139, 18--20; p.145, 7--10; p.146, 10--12.

See also:

a fancy I am given a fancy the panting stops and a breath-clock/breath of life head in the bag oxygen for half an hour wake/when you choke repeat five times six times that's enough now/I know I'm rested my strength restored the day can begin these/scraps barely audible of a fantasy (p.21, 12) (c.r. 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB7) (c.r. 'life' and waste IB12ix; 'life' -- others IB12xi)

One reading for the example given above (p.21, 12) is an equation between 'breath-clock' and 'breath of life'; that the panting gives some measure of time to the narrator's life, that it is the 'breath of life' (c.r. 'life' -- others), actually indicates that it is the source of life. (This example is considered in full in IB12xi.)

See also:

for when number 814336 describes number 814337 to number/814335 and number 814335 to number 814337 for example he/is merely in fact describing himself to two lifelong acquaint-/ances (p.131, 2)

Conclusion to IB12x 'life' and time

'my life this time' has among its readings a) that 'my life' has occurred on other occasions, at other times, c.r. occurrences of 'my life present formulation' IB12i 'life' as voice. Another reading is that 'this time' is in apposition to and is equated with 'my life', that his 'life' is simply 'time'. One interpretation of this is that it is meant metaphorically, that life is so boring, nothing happens, there is nothing to fill passing time, so that all his life consists of is time passing. That 'life' co-occurs with time units again happens in such a way that the units of time can be equated with his life, but we have seen that the units of time vary. The narrator's life is both a matter of 'days', 'seconds', 'moments' and also 'vast stretch/tracts of time'. One reading of this is that the narrator has lost all track of time. Or similarly, that these are understood hyperbolically, a day in the narrator's life seems like years, because it goes so slowly for him, but because so little happens to distinguish one day from another his whole life also seems like one day. This uncertainty as to the passing of time recalls that we have considered that the narrator may not be existing on the reader's earth, that he may be in a place where there is no time, but he still uses the vocabulary of earthly time. It also means that 'lifelong' (p.131, 4) is ambiguous as regards any meaningful measuring of time.

E. Levy believes that the narrator uses the act of narration to create time:

Even after these illusions dissolve, the narrator still has a last means of manufacturing time, and that is the very act of narration. The phrase, 'present formulation', appears repeatedly and applies to the narrator's choice of this story to represent his predicament. He gains a kind of

present by telling it.⁴¹

This interpretation is of special interest to us here because of the equation through word patterning which we noted between the voice and 'life' (IB11i) and indeed reinforces it.

xi) This section consists of examples or readings of examples of the word 'life' in how it is which have not been dealt with in any of the previous sections in IB12 'life'.

(1) 'breath'

'breath' OED 2. c. with a mixture of the sense of 'puff': A little of the air, a whiff. 3. a. The air exhaled from the lungs, originally as made manifest by smell, or as a visible exhalation; hence b. generally, The air received into and expelled from the lungs in the act of respiration. To draw breath: to inhale air, breathe.

Also, we see that in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible 'breath' is cross referenced to 'spirit':

So far as it depends on physiological suggestion, in all languages 'spirit' is the same -- the inhaling of the 'breath' and so 'wind' and more remotely 'life' and so is closely allied to 'soul'⁴². which depends upon a similar physiological derivation.

Examples:

a body what matter say a body see a body all the rear white/originally some light spots still say grey of hair growing still/that's enough a head say a head say you've seen a head all that/all the possible a sack with food a body entire alive still yes/living stop panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds hear/this breath token of life hear it said say you hear it good pant on (p.114, 6) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'food' IIA4; 'alive' IB13) (c.r. 'life' as 'voice' IB12i)

the voice quaqu on all sides then within in the little vault/empty closed eight planes bone-white if there were a light a/tiny flame all would be white ten words fifteen words like a/fume of sighs when the panting stops then

⁴¹ E. Levy, Voice of Species, p.93.

⁴² Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible (Edinburgh, 1905), IV, 612.

the storm the breath/token of life part three and last it must be nearly ended (p.140, 11) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB4; 'end' IC7)

all that once without scraps in me when the panting stops ten/seconds fifteen seconds all that fainter weaker less clear but the/purport in me when it abates the breath we're talking of a/breath token of life when it abates like a last in the light then/resumes a hundred and ten fifteen to the minute when it abates/ten seconds fifteen seconds (p.145, 1) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB4)

In the above three examples, 'token of life' follows 'the/this breath'; one reading which results from this is that they are in apposition and thus are equated. Our interpretation of this reading depends upon the emphasis we place upon 'token'. 'token' could be understood as only a token of life (as in 'a token gesture') or as proof that there is 'life'. Either reading indicates that there was previously uncertainty as to the existence of 'life'. The equation between 'breath' and 'life' and the previously observed equation between 'life' and 'voice' is played upon by 'we're talking of a breath'. The references to 'the panting stops' and to 'life/breath' abating imply death. (According to one reading, that is, 'the panting' stops is ambiguous as to whether the narrator means that it ceases finally, or whether he refers to a pause between pantings, or whether panting is followed by a different sort of breathing.)

(2) In the following examples, 'life' occurs in a negative context, in a context which casts doubt upon the presence of 'life' or closely associates it with death.

nor callers in my life this time no wish for callers hastening/from all sides all sorts to talk to me about themselves life too/and death as though nothing had happened me perhaps too in/the end to help me last then goodbye till we meet again each/back the way he came (p.13, 10) (c.r. 'death' IC8; 'have' IA8, IB', IIA5; 'end' IC7; 'back' IC3; 'come' IA6) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB12i; 'life' and time IB12x)

I have journeyed found Pim lost Pim it's over that life those/periods of that life first second now third pant pant the panting/stops and I hear barely audible how I journey with my sack my/tins in the dark the mud crawl in an

amble towards Pim/unwitting bits and scraps in the present things so ancient hear/them murmur them as they come barely audible to the mud (p.22, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA2; 'mud' IIB6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'things' IA10; 'come' IA6)

One reading of p.22, 10--11 is that 'that life' is 'over'.

the words of Pim his extorted voice he stops I step in all the/needful he starts again I could listen to him for ever but mine/have done with mine natural order before Pim the little I say/no sound the little I see of a life I don't deny don't believe but/what believe the sack perhaps the dark the mud death perhaps/to wind up with after so much life there are moments (p.23, 15) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9; 'mud' IIB6; 'death' IC8) (c.r. 'life' as voice IB11i; 'life above' IB11vi)

One reading of the last example is that 'of a life' is the complement of 'the little I see', indicating that the narrator does not 'see' much of 'a life'. One interpretation of this is that it is idiomatic, that the narrator does not feel that his life is very active or interesting; another interpretation reads 'see' literally in the context of examples given in 'life above' IIB12vi. Furthermore, according to one reading, 'don't deny don't believe but what believe' modify 'a life', suggesting the narrator is less than positive in his response to 'a life'. Reference to 'the little I see of a life' suggests that 'after so much life' is contradictory or ironic.

how it was before Pim first say that natural order the same/things the same things say them as I hear them murmur them/to the mud divide into three a single eternity for the sake of/clarity I wake and off I go all life part one before Pim how it/was leaving only with Pim how it was leaving only after Pim/how it was how it is when the panting stops bits and scraps I/wake off I go my day my life part one bits and scraps' (p.26, 9) (c.r. 'thing' IA10; 'mud' IIB6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4)

'all life' is ambiguous; modifying 'I go' would indicate that the narrator is lively: 'full of life', that is, behaving energetically. Read as modifying 'part one' it suggests that 'all life' (= animate existence OED sense 1) occurs in part one indicating that there is no life in parts two and three.

my life natural order more or less in the present more or less/part one before Pim (p.29, 18)

The repetition of 'more or less' in this example has a negative effect, especially in an interpretation which reads 'more or less' as modifying 'my life' and not 'natural order'.

rest then my mistakes are my life the knees draw up the back/bends the head comes to rest on the sack between the hands my/sack my body all mine all these parts every part (p.38, 1) (c.r. 'come' IB6; 'sack' IIA9)

I then nothing about me my life what life never anything/hardly ever he nothing either unless driven never on his/own but once launched not without pleasure the impression/or illusion no stopping him thump thump all his fat-headed/meatus in the shit no holding him thump thump (p.80, 1) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'shit' IIB1; 'hold' IA14)

'what life' could be an exclamation of admiration, but that it is followed by 'never anything' indicates that it is the reverse, an exclamation of contempt; as a question it would also imply belittling/contempt.

(3) 'pursue'

'pursue' OED v. 2. To follow with intent to overtake and capture or kill; to chase, to hunt. 5. To sue for, to seek after; to try to obtain or accomplish, to aim at. 9. To follow up, carry on further, proceed with, continue (a course of action, etc. begun). 10. To follow as an occupation or profession; to carry on, practise; to make a pursuit of.

my life natural order more or less in the present more or less/part one before Pim how it was things so ancient the journey/last stage I come back to me my place clutch the sack it drops/a tin clinks loss of species one word no sound it's the beginning/of my life present formulation I can go pursue my life it will/still be a man (p.29, 18) (c.r. 'thing' IA10; 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3; 'sack' IIA9; 'tin' IIA2; 'species' IB11)

According to one reading of the last example (p.29, 18) 'my life' is the object of 'pursue'. This leads to interpretations in which: a) The narrator is somehow separate from his 'life' in that he hunts after it, chases it. This reading is emphasised by 'it will still be a man' (suggesting that there is some doubt as to what form

his life will take, c.r. 'species' IB11) in which the use of 'it' for 'my life' again stresses that the narrator is distinct from his 'life'. One interpretation for this is to understand by 'life', life story, an account of events of the narrator's life. b) By 'my life' the narrator refers to another creature (Pim) whom he pursues as one hunts. c) 'pursue' understood in OED sense 10, so that the narrator follows his 'life' rather as one follows a career or profession.

(4)

the people above whining about not living strange at such a/time such a bubble in the head all dead now others for whom/it is not a life and what follows very strange namely that I/understand them (p.46, 9) (c.r. 'living' IB15; 'dead' IC10) (c.r. 'life above' IB12vi)

In this example also 'life' may or may not be equated with 'it', for some 'it' constitutes a 'life', for others not. One explanation for this is that 'a life' or not being 'a life' is not the difference between life and death, but simply a way of passing judgement on how active, how interesting this way of life is. The co-occurrence of 'all dead' however plays upon this reading by implying a literal interpretation for 'life', in opposition to being dead (c.r. 'dead' IC10). Also c.r. IB12i 'life' and IB12vi 'life above' in which it is suggested that some of the tales of 'life' in how it is may be memories or inventions with reference to 'such bubble in the head'.

(5)

seen full face the girl is less hideous it's not with her I am/concerned me pale staring hair red pudding face with pimples/protruding belly gaping fly spindle legs sagging knocking at/the knees wide astraddle for greater stability feet splayed one/hundred and thirty degrees fatuous half-smile to posterior/horizon figuring the morn of life green tweed yellow boots/all those colours cowslip or suchlike in the buttonhole (p.33, 1) (c.r. 'pudding' IIA4; 'posterior' IC1)

'morn of life' can be read as postmodifying 'horizon' a figurative way of referring to where the day starts with the sunrise.

It could also be a figurative way of referring to the start of life, to new born life, but the narrator is in a pretty decrepit state in this stanza. (See comments in 'bear/born/e/birth' IB5, where we saw references to being born as an old man ready to die.)

... and a little later having thus/lived done this done that clenched his fists all his life thus lived/died at last saying to himself latest breath that they'd grow on (p.59, 9) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'live' IB15; 'died' IC9)

on what the nails that can go on the hand dead a fraction of an/inch life a little slow to leave them the hair the head head a/hoop rolled by a child me higher than him me I fall diappear/the hoop rolls on a little way loses way rocks falls disappears/the garden-path is still (p.95, 9) (c.r. 'dead' IC10)

three o'clock morning starts muttering my astoundment then/succeed in catching a few scraps Pim Bim proper names presumably imagination dreams things memories lives im-/possible here's my first-born old workshop farewell (p.89, 5) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB4; 'born' IB5; 'thing' IA10; 'live' IB15)

According to one reading for p.89, 5, 'lives' is the plural noun and is one of the things which the imagination dreams. Similarly 'lives' here is ambiguous between verb/plural noun:

but of course here too no knowing our senses our lights what/do they amount to look at me and even if I here thirteen lives/I say thirteen but long before who knows how long how many/other dynasties (p.92, 1) (c.r. 'know' IA7)

Conclusion to IB12 'life'

In section IB12 'life' we have observed the continuation, and cross relation through word patterning, of several themes observed previously in IA and IB1--11: in particular, the equation/confusion between sexual conception and mental conception and hence between life and language; related to this a concern with the form that the narrator's life takes (c.r. 'species' IB11). We saw in IB12i that 'life' could be said and heard; it was therefore concluded that by 'life' in these examples the narrator meant biography, a story of activities or experiences of a creature's life. In the same section we

saw that the source of this life story is the 'voice', and that this 'voice' has been extorted through torture which we connected to the sexual nature of the torture. We noted that such a vicious circle in which the narrator created Pim who gives him a life mimics the fictional creation by Beckett of the narrator and his narration and that such equation of 'life' with language has a biblical antecedent.

Reference to 'life above' and 'life here', whilst the former sometimes involved (sexual) puns regarding the positioning of the creatures, suggested that the story of 'life' was of experiences on two planes in which 'above' is associated with 'light' and with experiences closer to the reader's world than 'here' which describes a world of dark, mud, Pim, and torture. We further commented that this division of 'life' into planes played upon a religious view of hell, earth, and heaven as life on different planes above and below.

Occurrences such as 'having a life' and 'giving a life' were also explained by understanding 'life' in the sense of 'life story', but they suggest that a life story is something one can pass on, narrate, as does the narrator of how it is. 'life' seemed to be something the narrator/Pim/fellow creatures could choose when to 'have' rather than a life story being true and unique for each creature. Similarly, the equation between Pim and 'life' (Pim as source of the 'voice') and references to 'life in common' are explained by our understanding 'life' in the sense 'story of life'. All of these have connotations of 'life' as the result of sexual reproduction, thus underlining the parallel between physical and mental conception.

We observed an equation between 'life' and waste matter which we interpreted a) as a contemptuous view of 'life'; b) as an expression of a life-cycle, in which waste is recycled as new life. More cross referencing and word patterning will become evident and

related back to this when in IC it is argued that the sex in how it is is anal and further in IIA and IIB where we see that food/waste are associated consistently with sex in how it is and will also see that the fertility of waste is a common theme in how it is.

In the references to 'life' and time we noted that 'life' could be equated to 'time' or to units of time, but that the size of the units with which it was equated was not constant. This leads to ambiguity as to whether the concept of time reflects the narrator's viewpoint alone and is not being measured by objective standards; that is, to subjective perception a moment could hyperbolically be seen as eternity. The narrator may indeed be in a world in which time no longer exists as the reader knows it. This recalls the question of whether he is in earth/heaven/hell or some other place and thus whether he is dead or alive -- regarding the latter further points will be made emphasising such an ambiguity in 'die/dying/dead' IC8/9/10, also c.r. 'alive/lively/live' IB13/14/15 and 'mud' IIB6, especially 'mud' and 'time' IIB6xiii.

For now, we note that Levy's interpretation that the narrator is creating time through the act of narration fits in with the predominant sense of 'life' we have seen in how it is, life as language. We noted equations between 'life' and the 'sack' and 'life' and 'mud', both of which are dealt with under their respective sections: 'sack' IIA9 and 'mud' IIB6.

* * * * *

IB13 'alive'

'alive' OED adv. or pred. a. 1. In life; in the living state; living. 2. Often used for emphasis: 'any man alive', any living man whatever, any man in the world. b. Hence as intensive or expletive. colloq. 3. fig. in reference, to e.g. fire, courage, discontent, fame, memory, or anything

which is liable to subside, fail, or decay: In full force or vigour, unextinguished, unabated, unforgetten. 4. In the sentient or susceptible condition which distinguishes life from death; fully susceptible (to any sensation or idea); sensitive, awake, fully conscious. 5. In the active condition which distinguishes life from death; full of alacrity, lively, vivacious, brisk, quick of action. To look alive (colloq.): to make haste. 6. In a state of commotion, stirring, or swarming with things in motion.

The following examples have in common that they have as one of their readings a question as to whether the narrator or Pim is still alive.

silence more and more longer and longer silences vast tracts/of time we at a loss more and more he for answers I for/questions sick of life in the light one question how often no/more figures no more time vast figure vast stretch of time on/his life in the dark the mud before me mainly curiosity was/he still alive YOUR LIFE BEFORE ME utter confusion (p.81, 16) (c.r. 'sick' IIB1; 'life' IB12; 'mud' IIB6)

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely/curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears/of unbutcherable brother (p.82, 1) (c.r. 'prick' IA17; 'end' IC7; 'thump' IA15; 'mud' IIB6, 'butcher' IC12, IIA5)

a body what matter say a body see a body all the rear white/originally some light spots still say grey of hair growing still/that's enough a head say you've seen a head all that/all the possible a sack with food a body entire alive still yes/living stop panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds hear/this breath token of life hear it said say you hear it good pant on (p.114, 6) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'food' IIA4; 'life' IB12)

In this last example, 'still' is ambiguous between referring to time, a comment as to whether he is still alive; and motion, meaning motionless; if the latter it could negate the statement 'alive ... yes living'.

In the following examples 'alive' occurs in contexts which imply a state between life and death (c.r. 'bear/born/e/birth' IB5 and 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10).

false like that dead head the hand alive still the little table/tossing in the clouds the woman jumping to her feet and/rushing out into the wind (p.18, 1) (c.r. 'dead' IC10)

It is not made clear in this example whether the 'hand' and the 'head' belong to the same body. If they do, then it is odd for the hand to be alive and the head to be dead, unless the process of death is just taking place. 'dead head' could be understood idiomatically to mean 'dozy', not very intelligent, but its co-occurrence with 'alive' emphasises the literal meaning of the word in contradistinction to 'alive'.

you are there somewhere alive somewhere vast stretch of time/then it's over you are there no more alive no more then again/you are there again alive again it wasn't over an error you/begin again all over more or less in the same place or in another/as when another image above in the light you come to in/hospital in the dark (p.24, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6)

In the example above (p.24, 1) being or not being 'alive' is not seen as an absolute quality; 'you are there again alive again' suggests that one can move between states of being alive and not being alive. If 'alive' is understood literally, then this suggests that life and death are not regarded as absolute states in which death is final and excludes a return to life. Another reading is that 'alive' is intended figuratively, meaning lively, energetic.

Conclusion to IB12 'alive'

The narrator expresses uncertainty as to whether the creatures are still 'alive', in particular, Pim, implying the grisly spectre that the narrator may be torturing a dead body. The need to ask such a question indicates that it is not immediately obvious in how it is whether a creature is alive or dead. The narrator also suggests that one can die and then later be 'alive' again. a) The narrator is using the terms 'alive' and 'dead' figuratively to mean degrees of liveliness (we shall see that the extent to which similar occurrences recur in how it is, such as 'live' and 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10, makes this an insufficient explanation). b) The creatures are in a

state in which it is difficult to ascertain whether they are alive or dead, they appear to have features of both states, suggesting that they are somewhere between the two. c) 'life' and 'death' mean something different in how it is than in the reader's world, we have already observed that 'life' is equated with the 'voice', so that being alive could simply mean speaking: if no voice, no proof of life.

* * * * *

IB14 'lively'

'lively' OED a. 1. Possessed of life, living, animate; = ALIVE. Obs. 4. Full of life. a. Of persons (occas. of animals), their faculties and actions: Vigorous, energetic, active, brisk. b. Of feelings, impressions, sensations, memory: Vivid, intense, strong. c. Of evidence, illuminations, expressions: Vivid or forcible in effect, convincing, striking, telling. d. Of physical processes: Active, vigorous, brisk.

Examples:

to be feared well well that in this part I may be not extinguished/no that is not said that is not yet in my composition no dimmed/what is said is dimmed before I flare up Pim gone even more/lively if that is possible than before we met more what is the/word more lively there's nothing better the man who has only/to appear and no ears no eyes for anyone else too strong as/always yes to be feared by part now the utility-man's (p.58, 11) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'composition' IB2)

in a word more lively that's what I was getting at I've got at/it I say it as I hear it more how shall I say more lively there's/nothing better before Pim part one more independent seeing/my own little scenes crawling eating thinking even if you/insist an odd dim thought losing the one and only opener/hanging on to humankind a thousand and one last shifts with/emotions laughter even and tears to match soon dried in a word/hanging on (p.103, 7) (c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'opener' IA7)

even Pim with Pim in the beginning part two first half first/quarter more lively when I think that I could as I did train/him up as I did conceive that system then apply I can't get over/it make it work my undoing for ever since it's clear eyelids/part close again quick I've seen myself quite clear ever since/nothing left but voice (p.103,

20) (c.r. 'conceive' IB4; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'quick' IB1)

Pim's then quaqu of us all then mine alone that of us all mine/alone after my fashion a murmur in the mud the thin black air/nothing left but short waves three hundred four hundred yards/per second brief movements of the lower with murmur little/tremble flush with the mud one yard two yards me so lively/nothing left but words a murmur on and off (p.104, 1) (c.r. 'quaqu' IIB4; 'mud' IIB6)

In all of these examples, 'lively' can be interpreted according to OED 4. On three occasions we see that it is modified by terms which are relative ('more', 'so') resulting in our not knowing what degree of liveliness is exhibited. The co-occurrence of being 'lively' with such things as 'in a word' plays upon the association between 'voice' and 'life' seen in IB11.

* * * * *

IB15 'live'

'live' OED v.¹ 1. intr. To be alive; to have life either as an animal or as a plant; to be capable of vital functions. b. fig. of things: To exist, be found. poet. 2. To supply oneself with food; to feed, subsist. b. fig. 3. To procure oneself the means of subsistence. Const. by, of, on or upon, with. 4. To pass life in a specified fashion, indicated by an adv. or advb. phrase (occas. an adj. or compl. sb.) having reference a. to the manner of regulation of conduct, esp. in a moral aspect. b. to personal conditions. eg. degree of happiness, comfort, splendour, repute, or the contrary. c. to the rule or guiding principle, or to the object and purpose of one's life. 8. intr. In an emphatic sense: To have life that is worthy of the name; to enjoy or use one's life abundantly. 9. To continue in life; to be alive for a longer or shorter period; to have one's life prolonged. d. To escape spiritual death. e. fig. (poet. and rhetorical). Of things: To survive, continue in operation. 11. To continue in the memory of men; to be permanently commemorated; to escape obliteration or oblivion. 12. To make one's abode; to dwell, reside.

i) The following example equates 'living' with the 'voice' and should be cross referred to IB11i, since it continues the theme of identifying 'life' with the voice.

this solitude when the voice recounts it sole means of living it (p.141, 6)

ii) In the following examples, 'living' co-occurs with reference to death or has other negative associations. In some of the examples this is discussed, in others it is evident from the cross references that follow the quotes to words in IC 'death/die/dead'.

I call it it doesn't come I can't live without it I call it
with all my/strength it's not strong enough I grow mortal
again (p.16, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'mortal' IC9)

Interpretations for the above example (p.16, 1-2) depend upon whether or not we interpret 'life' as literal and referent of 'it'. a) The narrator identifies something without which he literally cannot live in OED sense 1b) The narrator identifies something which is important to his continued existence ('live' OED 1) and expresses this hyperbolically. c) 'live' in OED sense 4 d) 'live' in OED sense 8. The identity of 'it' is not clear; the previous stanzas⁴³ indicate:
a) The narrator's hand (which has the significance of being one of the instruments in the torture sequence, during which the 'voice' is extorted, and is identified as a means of procuring the 'voice', when the narrator comments 'all with the right hand I've said this' (p.77, 1), in the midst of training Pim to speak by torturing him; c.r. IB12 where we saw that 'life' was equated with the voice). b) Specifically to his ability to touch himself. c) 'this time' d) The

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it comes close to my eyes I don't see it I close my eyes
some-/thing is lacking whereas normally closed or open
my eyes
if that is not enough I flutter it my hand we're talking of
my/hand ten seconds fifteen seconds close my eyes a curtain
falls
if that is not enough I lay it on my face it covers it
entirely but/I don't like to touch myself they haven't left
me that this/time (p.15, 15) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6;
'open' IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

stanzas following the quote identify 'it' as the narrator's memory.⁴⁴

the people above whining about not living strange at such a/time such a bubble in the head all dead now others for whom/it is not a life and what follows very strange namely that I/understand them (p.46, 9) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'dead' IC10)

That the people are able to 'whine' about 'not living' indicates that 'living' is not to be understood as 'live' OED 1. One interpretation of this is that 'living' in how it is is not to be understood as it is in the reader's world; another is that it is being used emphatically, as in OED 8, that it is not a life worthy of the name, a reading emphasised by 'for whom it is not a life'.

my nails well to mention only the hands not to mention that/eastern sage they were in a sorry state that extreme eastern/sage who having clenched his fists from the tenderest age it's/vague till the hour of his death it is not said at what age having/done that

the hour of his death at what age it is not said was enabled to/see them at last a little before his nails his death having pierced/the palms through and through was enabled to see them/emerging at last on the other side and a little later having thus/lived done this done that clenched his fists all his life thus lived/died at last saying to himself latest breath that they'd grow on

the curtains parted part one I saw his friends come to visit him/where squatting in the deep shade of a tomb or a bo his fists/clenched on his knees he lived thus (p.59, 1) (c.r. 'death/die' IC8/9; 'come' IA6; 'tomb' IC11; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

All the occurrences of 'lived' quoted from p.59 can be interpreted in OED sense 4 'to pass life in a specified manner'. They occur however in a negative context, this manner of living (with fists clenched) causing death. Further, lines 10/11 'thus lived

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my memory obviously the panting stops and question of my/memory obviously that too all-important too most important/this voice is truly changeable of which so little left in me bits/and scraps barely audible when the panting stops so little so/faint not the millionth part I say it as I hear it murmur it to/the mud every word always (p.16, 3) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'mud' IIB6)

died at last' emphasises that the cause of his death was inherent in the manner of his life. Indeed, the combination 'lived died' implies a fusion of life and death, that the sage's life was death-like.

These stanzas also suggest a parallel/parody between the sage and Christ/Buddha. Both the 'sage' and Christ die due to 'nails'; both in the east; according to one reading of p.59, 12--14, the sage is visited in the tomb after death as Christ was (see Mark 16). Both the 'sage' and Buddha have experiences in the shade of a 'bo' (the tree where Buddha attained Nirvana) and again are eastern. These similarities suggest an alternative interpretation for the paradox of 'lived died' as a state beyond life and death. They also reverse the emphasis of death being the ending, suggesting that it is rebirth into a different kind of life, a different plane of living.

Religious connotations (possibly ironic) also occur in:

if I was born it was not left-handed the right hand transfers/the tin to the other and this to that the same instant the tool/pretty movement little swirl of fingers and little miracle/thanks to which little miracle among so many thanks to which/I live on lived on (p.39, 9) (c.r. 'born' IB5; 'tin' IIA2; 'tool' IA17)

'miracle' OED sb. 1. A marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural being; chiefly, an act (e.g. of healing) exhibiting control over the laws of nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either divine or is specially favoured by God. 2. transf. in various uses, esp. as applied hyperbolically to an achievement seemingly beyond human power, or an occurrence so marvellous as to appear supernatural.

This suggests that the narrator's continuing to 'live' is due to a 'miracle', which may be interpreted a) hyperbolically or b) literally.

dear Pim come back from the living he got it from another/
that dog's life to take and to leave I'll give it to another
the/voice said so the voice in me that was without quaqua
(p.80, 19) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3; 'life' IB12; 'quaqua'
IIB3)

In this example (p.80, 19) 'the living' occurs in a phrase

where it is common idiom for 'the dead' to occur; it is common to implore a loved one to return from the grave, but not from among the 'living'. Similar examples occur elsewhere in Beckett, for example, Molloy says 'I was on my way to my mother, whose charity kept me dying'⁴⁵ -- 'dying' occurs where we would expect 'living'. 'the living' is ambiguous between being an adjective/noun, 'the living (creatures)' or a verbal noun (his experience of living). One possible interpretation is that Pim is enjoying telling the story so much and the narrator implores him to stop. What concerns us here is that it is an unusual construction and as we have seen, and continue to see, not alone concerning 'living' or 'dying'.

so many words so many lost one every three now every five/first the sound then the sense same ratio or else not one not one/lost I hear all understand all and live again have lived again/don't say above in the light among the shades in search of/shade I say here YOUR LIFE HERE is a word my voice otherwise/nothing therefore nothing otherwise my voice therefore my/voice so many words strung together to the effect first example (p.104, 7) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12; 'shades' IC11)

a body what matter say a body see a body all the rear white/originally some light spots still say grey of hair growing still/that's enough a head say a head say you've seen a head all that/all the possible a sack with food a body entire alive still yes/living stop panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds hear/this breath token of life hear it said say you hear it good pant on (p.114, 6) (c.r. 'rear' IC1; 'sack' IIA9; 'food' IIA4; 'life' IB12)

According to one reading of the example above, living is followed and negated by 'stop'; according to another reading, 'stop' modifies 'panting' which it precedes. Since 'panting' indicates (heavy) breathing one understanding of its cessation would again be that death has occurred.

stay for ever in the same place never had any other ambition/with my little dead weight in the warm mire scoop

⁴⁵ Molloy, Trilogy, p.22.

my wallow/and stir from it no more that old dream back
again I live it now/at this creeping hour know what it's
worth was worth (p.43, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5;
'dead' IC10; 'mire' IIB1; 'know' IA7)

That the narrator talks of living an 'old dream' has as one of its
connotations that his life is no more substantial than a dream and
that it is an old one at that.

See also:

.../a little turn at evening to the sea-shore seawards
then back drop/sleep wake in the silence eyes that dare
open stay open live old/dream on crabs kelp (p.94, 23)
(c.r. 'open' IA17; 'crabs' IIA3; 'live on' IIA5)

One reading of the above example is that 'old dream' modifies
'live' suggesting that the narrator's idea that he lives is only an
old dream. Also, notice the cyclicity of 'turn at evening ... then
back', mimicking the many cycles in how it is.

three o'clock morning starts muttering my astoundment
then/succeed in catching a few scraps Pim Bim proper
names/presumably imagination dreams things memories lives
im-/possible here's my first-born old workshop farewell
(p.89, 5) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB4; 'life' IB12; 'born' IB5)

One reading for the example above (p.89, 5) is that 'lives' is a
verb, modified (thus negated) by 'impossible'.

yesterday in grandpa's notes the place where he wishes
he were/dead weakness happily honour of the family short-
lived he/stuck it out till his time was up whereas happy
me tedium/inaction don't make me laugh question of charac-
ter and the/business in the blood (p.89, 20) (c.r. 'dead'
IC10; 'family' IB9; 'make' IA9, IB2)

In this example, (p.98, 20) 'lived' is modified by 'short'. 'short-lived'
refers to the grandpa's wish that he was dead according to one
reading, in which 'dead' plays on the expression 'short-lived'.

iii) 'lived' also occurs: p.19, 20--22; p.82, 12--19; p.93, 21--28;
p.105, 24--30; p.114, 24--26.

In the following examples, 'live on' occurs, in which 'on' can be
read as a preposition (= 'upon') or adverb (= 'continually'), rather
than 'live on' as a phrasal verb, which will be considered in IIA5:

p.19, 8--10; p.39, 9--13; p.94, 23--25.

* * * * *

IB16 (1) 'revive', (2) 'resurrect', (3) 'resuscitate'.

In this section we shall examine the use of words whose meaning is to return to life, to bring back to life again.

(1) 'revive'

'revive' OED v. I. intr. 1. To return to consciousness; to recover from a swoon or faint. 2. To return or come back to life; to regain vital activity, after being dead; to live again. II. trans. 5. To restore to consciousness; to bring back from a swoon or faint, or from a state of suspended animation. 6. To restore to life; to resuscitate or reanimate; to bring back from death or the grave. 7. To restore from a languid, depressed, or morbid state; to infuse fresh life or vigour into. c. To renew; to restore again from or after decline or decay. 8. To set going, make active, or operative again. c. To reawaken (a desire, etc.). 9. To bring into existence or use, to set up, again; to restore or re-establish (something which has been discontinued or out of use). b. To bring back again into knowledge, notice, or currency.

Pam Prim we made love every day then every third then the/Saturday then just the odd time to get rid of it tried to revive/it through the arse too late she fell from the window or/jumped broken column (p.85, 1) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'love' IA1; 'arse' IC1)

One reading for this example is that 'revive' is understood in OED sense 7, 'it' referring to the couple's sex life, that they attempted to recover their interest in it through anal sex (c.r. IC1). There is however play upon 'revive' in sense 6, to restore to life, in the context of the narrator and his wife's relationship which could have led to the conception of new life, but which ends in the death of the wife.

'revive' also occurs p.8, 21, when it collocates with 'appetite' (c.r. IIA6)

(2) 'resuscitate'

'resuscitate' OED v. I. trans. To restore (a person) to

life (physical or spiritual) or to consciousness. 2. To revive, renew, restore (a thing). 3. intr. To revive, to come to life again.

love birth of love increase decrease death efforts to resuscitate/through the arse joint vain through the cunt anew vain jumped/from window or fell broken column hospital marguerites lies/about mistletoe forgiveness (p.94, 1) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'birth' IB5; 'death' IC8; 'arse' IC1; 'cunt' IA3)

Again, one reading for this example is that the narrator and his wife attempted to rekindle interest in their love/sex life through anal sex. Again, the literal meaning of 'resuscitate' is played upon by reference to the events which led to the wife's death ('jumped from the window' etc.). Resuscitation, when it is performed literally and physically is usually mouth to mouth; that the narrator says 'efforts to resuscitate through the arse', elliptically deleting what is to be resuscitated, evokes a picture of the narrator artificially resuscitating his wife through her anus.

(3) 'resurrect'

'resurrect' OED v. 1. trans. To raise (a person) from the dead or from the grave; to restore to life or to view again. b. fig. with reference to persons. c. fig. with reference to things. 2. intr. To rise again from the dead. Also fig.

'resurrection' sb. I. 1. The rising again of Christ after His death and burial.

bright dark that family for every hundred times they come/ three laughs four laughs brought off the kind that convulse an/instant resurrect an/instant then leave for deader than before (p.119, 5) (c.r. 'family' IB9; 'come' IA6; 'kind' IB10; 'dead' IC10)

One reading of this example is that laughing makes the narrator feel more lively, 'resurrect' and 'deader' both being understood figuratively. The combination of the words 'resurrect' and 'dead' do however lead one to be aware of the literal meaning of 'resurrect', suggesting a reliteralisation. This suggests play upon the Resurrection of Christ, since 'resurrect' understood literally is

associated with His rising from the dead, here it is (ironically) 'laughs' which lead to resurrection (though not long lasting).

Conclusion to IB16

Three words meaning 'restore to life' all co-occur with 'death/dead' or in a context which clearly has connotations of death, thus while in each case the words can be interpreted figuratively, their literal sense is played upon. In two out of three of these examples, the context is clearly sexual, and anal sex at that (c.r. IC1). In all the examples, the revival either does not succeed or is temporary in its success. In IC it will be argued that the failure of the sex and the death that follows are the result of the anal nature of the sex which is practised.

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Conclusion to IB LIFE/CONCEPTION

In this section we have examined the occurrences of words related to conception and life, in the context of the sexual nature of the creatures' physical relationship (c.r. IA SEX). We have remarked that there is wordplay especially suggesting a parallel between words indicating sexual conception and words referring to mental conception, to fictional creation. We observed that the narrator's only hope for 'life' was through the 'voice', through narration. The creation of the fiction of Pim is reflected in the physical action of the text when the narrator 'animates' and 'quicken's' him. This act of quickening however is the very parody of sex examined in IA and it results in the 'voice' which is equated with 'life' (IB12i), stressing that the act between the creatures is an attempt at conception. Pim is viewed as the female who will give birth; this is reinforced by word patterning which associates Pim with the narrator's wife,

as well as with the female organs ('cunt' c.r. IA3). What Pim gives birth to, however, is the 'voice'.

Copeland is just one example of a critic who argues that 'the works of Samuel Beckett are dominated by an obsession with the creative act'.⁴⁶ The subject of Beckett's narration may well be fiction itself and the difficulty of mentally conceiving, then adequately expressing the conception in physical form, that is, in language. This would lead us to interpret how it is as a metaphor for the difficulty a writer faces (remembering Beckett's oft-quoted statement that he prefers 'The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express'⁴⁷), a not untenable or new interpretation (see, for example, the critical comments quoted in the introduction to this section). Our concern here has been to examine the theme as it is developed through wordplay and as it relates to the theme of SEX in how it is.

On many occasions we have noted uses of 'life/alive/live' etc., which interpreted literally would be weird in the reader's world and we have thus offered a figurative interpretation. We have noted however that the frequency of such occurrences and the fact that in many of them the literal meaning is brought to mind by the co-occurrence of other words which insists that we are aware of the literal meaning. This practice does lead to the suggestion that our understanding of 'life' in how it is is not fully covered by one or another OED sense alone, but plays between them. This will be

⁴⁶ H. Copeland, Art and the Artist in the Works of Samuel Beckett (The Hague, 1975), p.11.

⁴⁷ 'Tal Coat', Proust, p.103.

shown to be true of words which mean the opposite of 'life'; see 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10. We noted further that the narrator's own state is not clear, he does not 'live' as we understand life for a man. We saw references in relation to this to the narrator's concern about his 'kind/species'; also, many religious references. Our understanding of life and conception in how it is also has to include reference to words from the fields of religion and species continuation as well as that of language.

Upon several occasions (for example, 'inconceivable' in IB4) conception was seen to be difficult. 'life' and 'birth', the assumed results of normal sexual reproduction, were at times difficult to distinguish from waste and death. Our understanding of 'life' and 'conception' would also then have to include cross reference to the semantic field of death and waste. These fields will be examined in the sections following, where it will be argued that they also cross refer back to the words that were examined in the first section, to words relating to SEX. In particular, in the next section IC THE END it will be argued that sex in how it is is anal, that it is not an act likely to lead to reproduction, but symbolises in how it is an anti-life act.

SECTION IC THE END

Introduction to IC

In section IA we established that the relationship between Pim and the narrator was sexual; that the narrator's thrusting of the tin-opener into Pim's 'arse' parodied a sexual act and that the sexual connotations of this relationship were emphasised by a series of puns. That it is an 'arse' which is penetrated and not a vagina suggests that the act being parodied is one of anal intercourse; this is emphasised by lack of reference to 'vagina'.¹ Reference to the anus is not uncommon in Beckett. For instance: 'We underestimate this little hole, it seems to me, we call it the arse-hole and affect to despise it. But is it not the true portal of our being and the celebrated mouth no more than the kitchen-door.'² Ehrhard calls one section of his book 'Anus, Fesses et Environs'. In it he comments: 'Si la pudeur ne me retient pas d'évoquer un objet aussi délicat que l'anús, c'est parce que Beckett y attache une extrême importance.'³

In section IC1 we will consider references to 'arse', 'anus', 'rectum', 'buttocks' in how it is in order to illustrate that the concern is with an anal relationship. In the following sections (IC2--7) we will examine wordplay upon the anal nature of the relationship. It will be argued that there is continuing wordplay upon the parallel which we have seen previously (c.r. IB) between sexual and fictional creation. It will further be argued that since the sex act parodied

¹ The word 'vagina' does not occur in how it is; 'cunt' occurs as a term of abuse (with wordplay upon its literal meaning as illustrated IA3); the narrator refers to his wife's 'mound', p.84, 14; p.85, 7.

² Molloy, Trilogy, p.74.

³ Ehrhard, Anatomie, p.231.

in how it is is anal, it cannot result in the physical conception of life and that there is wordplay upon the anti-life connotations of the act. This is shown most clearly in the use of the word 'end', which is both an anal pun and a death reference (c.r. 'the end' IC7). Sections IC7--12 will consider the use of words in how it is with senses related to 'death' and show how the use of these is related to the use of words considered in previous sections.

The main words which are examined in section IC are:

IC1 (1) 'arse', (2) 'posterior', (3) 'rump', (4) 'buttocks',
(5) 'anus', (6) 'rectum'

IC2 'bottom'

IC3 (1) 'behind', (2) 'back'

IC4 'hole'

IC5 'tail'

IC6 'Bom'

IC7 'end'

IC8 'death'

IC9 (1) 'die', (2) 'mortal'

IC10 'dead'

IC11 Other words with meanings related to death:

(1) 'bury', (2) 'soul', (3) 'number's up', (4) 'tomb',
(5) 'vault', (6) 'effects', (7) 'shades', (8) 'hearse',
(9) 'knell', (10) 'cortege'

IC12 Other words with meanings related to death; unnatural death: (1) 'kill', (2) 'drown', (3) 'fatal', (4) 'post mortem',
(5) 'butcher', (6) 'martyr', (7) 'passion'

* * * * *

IC1 'arse'

'arse' OED sb. Obs. in polite use. 1. The fundament, buttocks, posteriors, or rump of an animal.

i) In the following examples, 'arse' occurs with reference to the narrator's relationship with his wife:

Pam Prim we made love every day then every third then the/Saturday then just the odd time to get rid of it tried to revive/it through the arse too late she fell from the window or/jumped broken column (p.85, 1) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'love' IA1; 'revive' IB16)

...met Pam I think

love birth of love increase decrease death efforts to resuscitate/through the arse joint vain through the cunt anew vain jumped/from window or fell broken column hospital marguerites lies/about mistletoe forgiveness (p.93, 25) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'birth' IB5; 'death' IC8; 'resuscitate' IB16; 'cunt' IA3)

From these examples, we see that the narrator's sexual relationship with his wife Pam Prim changed from being vaginal to anal. This leads to ambiguity in the following example as to whether 'opener arse' refers to the torture which is being performed upon Pim, or describing the sexual relationship with Pam Prim in which the 'arse' becomes the 'opener':

samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my life/up there my wife stop opener arse slow to start then no holding/him thump on skull long silence (p.84, 10) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'opener' IA17; 'hold' IA14; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12)

This ambiguity suggests a parallel between the narrator's relationship with Pim and his relationship with Pam Prim, a parallel deriving from their both being anal sexual relationships.

ii) In the following examples, 'arse' occurs in the context of reference to a woman/women.

I look to me about sixteen and to crown all glorious weather/egg-blue sky and scamper of little clouds I have my back/turned to me and the girl too whom I hold who holds me by/the hand the arse I have (p.31, 19) (c.r. 'egg-blue' IIA4; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'hold' IA14)

See also the use of (2) 'posterior' and (3) 'rump' (c.r. IIA4):

'posterior' OED A. adj. 1. Later, subsequent in time; opposed to prior. 2. Coming after in a series or order. 3. Hinder; situated behind, or farther back than something else. B. sb. 2. pl. The hinder parts of the body; the buttocks. b. The hinder part or backside (of anything).

'rump' OED sb. 1. That part of the body (of an animal or bird) from which the tail springs; the tail; hence by extension, the hind-quarters, posteriors, buttocks.

seen full face the girl is less hideous it's not with her I am/concerned me pale staring hair red pudding face with pimples/protruding belly gaping fly spindle legs sagging knocking at/the knees wide astraddle for greater stability feet splayed one/hundred and thirty degrees fatuous half-smile to posterior/horizon figuring the morn of life green tweeds yellow boots/all those colours cowslip or suchlike in the buttonhole (p.33, 1) (c.r. 'pudding' IIA4; 'life' IB12)

In example p.33, 1, 'posterior' is ambiguous between being an adjective modifying 'horizon' (O.E.D. sense 3) or being a noun OED sense B2.

again about turn introrse at ninety degrees fleeting face to face/transfer of things mingling of hands swinging of arms stillness/of dog the rump I have (p.33, 8) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

This example (p.33, 8) directly follows the description of the scene with the narrator and the girl (p.33, 1).

iii) In the following examples, the 'arse' occurs in reference to the physical relationship between the creatures:

the cries tell me which end the head but I may be mistaken/ with the result all hangs together that the hand slides right and/there to be sure there's the fork it's as I thought then back left/just the same just to clinch it and there to be sure there's the/arse again ... (p.60, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'clinch' IA11)

BOM scored by finger-nail athwart the arse the vowel in the/hole I would say in a scene from my life he would oblige me/to have had a life the Boms sir you don't know the Boms sir/... (p.67, 5) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'scored' IA16; 'hole' IC4; 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'know' IA7)

then with my right leg thrown crosswise imprison his two one/can see the movement take the opener in my right

hand move/it down along the spine and drive it into the arse not the hole/not such a fool the cheek a cheek he cries I withdraw it thump/on skull the cries cease it's mechanical end of first lesson second/series rest and here parenthesis (p.74, 1) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'hole' IC4; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC4; 'end' IC7)

this opener where put it when not needed ...

between the cheeks of his arse not very elastic but still/sufficiently there it's in safety ... (p.74, 9) (c.r. 'cunt' IA3; 'thump' IA15)

no fool merely slow and the day comes we come to the day/when stabbed in the arse now an open wound instead of the/cry a brief murmur done it at last (p.75, 12) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'open' IA17)

with the handle of the opener as with a pestle bang on the/right kidney handier than the other from where I lie cry thump/on skull silence brief rest jab in arse unintelligible murmur bang/on kidney signifying louder once and for all cry thump on/skull silence brief rest (p.75, 15) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12)

table of basic stimuli one sing nails in armpit two speak blade/in arse three stop thump on skull four louder pestle on kidney (p.76, 20) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12)

five softer index in anus six bravo clap athwart arse seven/lousy same as three eight encore same as one or two as may/be (p.76, 22) (c.r. 'anus' IC1)

stab him simply in the arse that is to say speak and he will say/anything what he can whereas proof I need proof so stab him/in a certain way signifying answer once and for all which I do/therefore what an improvement how I've improved (p.79, 1)

As we shall see in 'the sack' and 'suffering' (IIA9xii), 'simply' is associated with 'sadism' in how it is through co-occurrence; that 'simply' follows 'stab him' is consistent with this.

... he will answer in/the end it's inevitable me Pim which he does in the end it was/inevitable me Pim clap athwart the arse opener between the/thighs arm round his poor shoulders done it rest (p.79, 12) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'opener' IA17)

Thus far we have observed that the opener is used as an instrument of torture, playing a phallic role in an act which mimics sex (c.r. 'opener' IA17); from the examples above we can see that

it is the 'arse' which the opener is used upon. We observed in 'opener' IA17 that 'opener' is used punningly to refer to that which causes to open (phallic role) and that which is opened (female role). The example above (p.79, 12) is an example of this ambiguity, since 'opener between the thighs' has amongst its readings: a) that the tin-opener is put between the thighs (phallic role); b) that the 'arse' is the 'opener' situated between the thighs, the thing which is opened, that the 'arse' is playing the role of the female organ.

the proportion of invention vast assuredly vast proportion/a thing you don't know the threat the bleeding arse the/cracking nerves you invent but real or imaginary no knowing/it's impossible it's not said it doesn't matter it does it did that's/superb a thing that matters (p.80, 6) (c.r. 'thing' IA10; 'know' IA7)

The 'arse' bleeds as a result of the torture with the tin-opener. Bleeding is normally associated with the female organs during menstruation. That the 'arse' bleeds: a) suggests a comparison between the 'arse' and the vagina, emphasising that the 'arse' has replaced the vagina in the sexual act in how it is; b) emphasises the difference between the 'arse' and a vagina, in that the female organs bleed naturally, stressing the infertility of the 'arse'.

his right cheek to the mud his mouth to my ear our narrow/shoulders overlapping his hairs in mine human breath shrill/murmur if too loud finger in arse I'll stir no more from this/place I'm still there (p.83, 15) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

There may be a further pun in the above example (p.83, 15) upon 'stir'.

'stir' OED v. I. Transitive senses. 1. To move, set in motion. 3. To agitate with hand or an implement so as to alter the relative position or the parts of: a. a liquid. II. Intransitive senses. 12. To pass from rest to motion, to begin to move; to make a slight movement, to move lightly (esp. to and fro); to make any movement, to move at all or in the least (chiefly with negative); to leave one's place, to budge; not to remain still; occas. to show signs of life or consciousness (after sleep or a faint).

The pun in the above stanza depends upon ambiguity between senses

12 and 3 of the OED definition of 'stir'. One reading is a) that the narrator says that he will not move from where he is (sense 12); another reading is b) that he stirs his finger around in the 'arse' ('stir' sense 3).

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch
of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has
lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT
... (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'bear' IB5; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12;
'opener' IA17; 'life' IB12; 'cunt' IA3)

One reading of the above example is that the tin-opener is stabbed into the 'arse', and that the pain is intolerable. Another reading derives from the ambiguity of 'opener', that which is opened. The arse however is unable to 'bear' (give birth) as the female organ can (c.r. 'bear' IB5), thus emphasising that it is usually the vagina which is opened in a sexual relationship.

samples my life above Pim's life we're talking of Pim my
life/up there my wife stop opener arse slow to start then
no holding/him thump on skull long silence (p.84, 10)
(c.r. 'life' IB12; 'opener' IA17; 'hold' IA14; 'thump' IA15;
'skull' IC12)

In this example of Pim's being tortured 'opener arse slow to start' follows reference to the narrator's life with his wife and thus confuses them, suggesting a parallel between the two relationships which is confirmed later (c.r. IC11) (p.85, 1--4; p.94, 1--3).

if Bom never came if only that but then how end the
hand/dipping clawing for the tin the arse instead of the
familiar slime/all imagination and all the rest this voice its
promises and/ solaces all imagination dear bud dear worm
(p.88, 1) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7, 'tin'
IIA2; 'familiar' IB9; 'slime' IIB6)

'instead of the familiar slime' registers surprise at the discovery of a companion in the mud (c.r. 'slime' IIB6). The pun upon 'familiar' (c.r. IB9) however emphasises that the 'arse' is discovered instead of fertile slime.

Further examples of 'arse' in the relationship between the creatures:

what sun what have I said no matter I've said something that's/what was needed seen something called it above said it was so/said it was me ten twelve years old sleeping in the sun in the/dust to have a moment's peace I have it I had it opener arse/following scene and words (p.94, 14) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'opener' IA17)

my behests by a different set of signals quite different more/humane more subtle from left hand to left hand in the sack/nails and palm scratching pressing but no always the right hand/thump on skull claws in armpit for the song blade in arse/pestle on kidney slap athwart and index in hole all the needful/up to the end great pity good and the heads (p.100, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'hole' IC4; 'end' IC7)

two there were two of us his hand on my arse someone had come/Bom Bem one syllable m at the end all that matters Bem/had come to cleave to me see later Pim and me I had come to/cleave to Pim the same thing except that me Pim Bem me Bem/left me south (p.118, 9) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'come' IA6; 'Bom' IC6; 'end' IC7; 'cleave' IA12; 'thing' IA10)

and when on the unpredictable arse for the millionth time the/groping hand descends that for the hand it is the first arse for/the arse the first hand (p.132, 1) (c.r. 'grope' IA10)

instead of me sticking the opener into Pim's arse Bom sticking/it into mine (p.142, 11) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'Bom' IC6)

there he is then again last figures the inevitable number 777777/at the instant when he buries the opener in the arse of number/777778 and is rewarded by a feeble cry cut short as we have/seen ... (p.153, 11) (c.r. 'bury' IC11; 'opener' IA17)

iv) The following examples anticipate the relationship described in examples in section ICliii above.

the hand dips clawing for the take instead of the familiar slime/an arse on his belly he too before that what else that's enough/I'm going (p.20, 18) (c.r. 'familiar' IB9; 'slime' IIB6)

Similarly: p.25, 15--17; p.42, 12--14; p.54, 1--6.

v) 'arse' also occurs:

p.40, 6--10; p.50, 15--18; p.86, 11--14.

See also:

(4) 'buttocks'

'buttock' OED sb. 1. One of the two protuberances of the rump (of men and beasts). Usually in pl. the rump, the posteriors.

one buttock twice too big the other twice too small unless an/optical delusion ... (p.41, 4)

Pim's right buttock then first contact he must have heard them/grate there's a noble past I could have dug them in if I had/wished I longed claw dig deep furrows drink the screams ... (p.59, 22) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'drink' IIA)

forbidden to touch him we might relieve him Krim is all for/it and be damned clean his buttocks at least wipe his face what/do we risk no one will know you never know safer not (p.91, 5)

(5) 'anus'

'anus' OED sb. 1. The posterior opening of the alimentary canal in animals, through which the excrements are ejected.

by the tongue when it sticks out the mouth when the lips part/the nostrils the eyes when the lids part the anus no it's high and/dry the ears no (p.72, 21)

In this example (p.72, 21) the narrator is wondering how Pim is nourished (c.r. IIA). He wonders whether the anus absorbs food (line 22), according to this reading, c.r. IIA8. Another reading plays upon the sexual relationship between the creatures, with the narrator's mouth causing the anus to open 'part'. This wordplay emphasises an association between sex/eating/excreting which will be illustrated in IIA FOOD and IIB WASTE.

(6) 'rectum'

'rectum' OED The final section of the large intestine (so called from its form in some animals), extending in man from the sigmoid flexure of the colon to the anus.

dream come of a sky an earth an under-earth where I am/inconceivable ahh no sound in the rectum a redhot spike that day/we prayed no further (p.40, 22) (c.r. 'come' IA , 'inconceivable' IIB ; 'earth' IIB)

In the example above (p.40, 22) reference to the rectum

co-occurs with 'inconceivable', which we have previously noted may involve a pun upon the impossibility of physical conception (c.r. IB). One interpretation of 'no sound in the rectum' is that there is no sign of life in the rectum (c.r. IB11 where it is argued there is an equation between language and life). Another reading for this example is 'in the rectum a redhot spike', which recalls the death of Edward II. Reference to such a death in this context combines wordplay upon the anal sex described in how it is with play upon the sadism of the particular act with the tin-opener, and its anti-life connotations (c.r. IC7--12).

fire in the rectum how surmounted reflections on the
 passion/of pain irresistible departure with preparatives
 appertaining/uneventful journey sudden arrival lights low
 lights out bye-bye/is it a dream (p.42, 8) (c.r. 'passion'
 IA16; IC12)

The association between anal sadism and sex is continued here in the co-occurrence of 'fire', 'rectum', 'passion of pain' and emphasised by 'fire in the rectum' which plays upon the idiomatic expression 'fire in the loins' meaning full of sexual desire.

See:

'fire' OED sb. 13. In certain figurative applications of sense 1. a. A burning passion or feeling esp. of love or rage. Shakes. Merry W II i 68 The wicked fire of lust.

Conclusion to IC1 'arse'

We have established from the examples in this section that the form of torture between the creatures, seen to be sexual in section IA, is anal. The anal concern is emphasised by the recurrence of such words as 'arse', 'rump', 'anus', 'buttock' throughout how it is, especially in the context of physical relationships, including those between the sexes (for example, the little scenes between the narrator and the girl, the relationship with the wife). The details of the relationship between the narrator and Pam Prim and Pim,

along with the evidence already given that Pim is viewed as a 'cunt' (c.r. 'cunt' IA3), stress a contrast between heterosexual sex acts and the act between the narrator and Pim/Pam Prim. The reference to the 'bleeding arse' reinforces that the natural bleeding of the female has been replaced by blood drawn from torturous anal relationships. Death and failure to conceive are also observed as part of the relationships described, something that will be looked at further (c.r. 'end/death/die/' IC7/8/9; 'conceive' IB4; 'bear/born/e/birth' IB5). In sections IC2--7 below we will examine punning and wordplay upon the anal nature of the relationship.

* * * * *

IC2 'bottom'

'bottom' OED sb. I. The lowest surface or part of anything.
1. The lowest part of anything, considered as a material thing; the lower or under surface, that surface of a thing on which it stands or rests: the base ... b. The sitting part of a man, the posteriors, the seat (Colloq.).

i) The following examples involve the idiomatic expression 'from top to bottom', occurring in the context of reference to the body, thus resulting in a pun upon 'bottom' OED sense 1b.

all this tenement of naught from top to bottom from hair to toe/and finger-nails what little sensation it still has of what it/still is in all its parts and dream (p.40, 19) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

with the nail then of the right index I carve and when it breaks/or falls until it grows again with another on Pim's back intact/at the outset from left to right and top to bottom as in our/civilisation I carve my Roman capitals (p.77, 8) (c.r. 'carve' IIA5)

In particular, the second example (p.77, 8) refers to the scratching of letters into Pim's flesh by the narrator.

ii) See also:

all that almost blank nothing to get out of it almost nothing/

nothing to put in that's the saddest that would be the saddest/imagination on the decline having attained the bottom what/one calls sinking one is tempted

or ascending heaven at last no place like it in the end

or not stirring that too that's defensible half in the mud half/out

no more head in any case hardly any no more heart just enough/to be thankful for it a little thankful to be so little there and/sinking a little at last having attained the bottom (p.112, 5) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6)

In the example quoted above (p.112, 5) 'having attained the bottom' reads ironically since to 'attain' something usually indicates achievement. A pun upon 'bottom' is reinforced by its co-occurrence with 'end' (c.r. IC7). One interpretation for having 'nothing to put in' is that it is sexual, suggesting impotency.

iii) In the following examples, 'bottom' co-occurs with 'sack' c.r. 'sack' IIA9: p.10, 19--20; p.24, 22--23; p.40, 6--10; p.51, 14--15; p.52, 2.

* * * * *

IC3 (1) 'behind', (2) 'back'

'behind' OED adv. prep. (sb.) A. adv. *In relationship to an object in motion. 1. In a place whence those to whom the reference is made have departed; remaining after the others have gone. c. In the time which one has lived beyond, in the past. 3. In the rear of anything moving; following, in the train; not so far forward. To come behind: to follow, come after. **In relationship to objects at rest. 7. On the back side, at the back; in the rear of anything stationary having a recognized front. B. prep. *With the object in motion. 3. In the rear of (one moving); following, after. **With the object at rest. 5. In the space lying to the rear of, on the back side of (a person, or object that has a front and back). 8. Into the space lying to the rear of, to the back or further side of. C. (as sb.) (colloq. and vulgar). The back side or rear part (of the person or of a garment); the posteriors.

i) The following examples of 'behind' result in a pun upon 'behind' in OED sense C.

then Pim the lost tins the groping hand the arse the two
cries/mine mute the birth of hope one with it get it over
have it/behind me feel the heart going hear it said you're
nearly there (p.25, 15) (c.r. 'grope' IA10; 'arse' IC1;
'birth' IB5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

be with Pim have been with Pim have him behind me hear
it/said he'll come back another will come better than Pim
he's/coming right leg right arm push pull ten yards fifteen
yards/you stay quiet where you are in the dark the mud
and on you/suddenly a hand like yours on Pim two cries
his mute (p.25, 18) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'come'
IA6; 'mud' IIB6)

take the sack in my arms strain it so light to me lay my
cheek/on it it's the big scene of the sack it's done I have
it behind me the day is well advanced close the eyes at
last and wait for my/pain that with it I may last a little
more and while waiting (p.39, 20) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'have'
IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the above three examples a pun upon 'behind' is re-
inforced by the context of other sexual puns ('have', 'come'). 'have
it/him behind me' has among its readings: a) that the experience
will be in the past; b) that the sexual experience will be anal.
Thus an anal sexual pun occurs parallel to a reading referring to
the order of what is being narrated.

my part but for me he would never Pim we're talking
of/Pim never be but for me anything but a dumb limp
lump flat/for ever in the mud but I'll quicken him you
wait and see and/how I can efface myself behind my creature
when the fit takes/me now my nails (p.58, 18) (c.r. 'mud'
IIB6; 'quicken' IB1; 'creature' IB3)

The above example (p.58, 18) makes an anal pun upon 'behind' in
the context of a pun upon Pim's being the narrator's fictional creation
(c.r. IB):

me again always everywhere in the light age unknown
seen/from behind on my knees arse bare on the summit of
a muck-/heap clad in a sack bottom burst to let the head
through/holding in my mouth the horizontal staff of a vast
banner on/which I read (p.40, 6) (c.r. 'unknown' IA7;
'arse' IC1; 'muckheap' IIB1; 'sack' IIA9; 'bottom' IC2)

A pun upon 'behind' is reinforced by the co-occurrence of 'arse bare'.

dream come of a sky an earth an under-earth where I
am/inconceivable aah no sound in the rectum a redhot
spike that day/we prayed no further

how often kneeling how often from behind kneeling from/
every angle from behind in every posture if he wasn't me
he/was always the same cold comfort (p.40, 22) (c.r. 'come'
IA6; 'earth' IIB6; 'rectum' IC1)

A pun upon 'behind' is emphasised in the context of refer-
ence to 'rectum'; 'how often from behind' reads then as a question
regarding the position in which sexual intercourse took place, 'cold
comfort' punningly contradicting 'red-hot spike'.

a few more moments put the arm back where I found it
then/towards me again the other way overhead sinistro
until it jams/one can see the movement grasp the wrist
with my left hand/and pull while bearing from behind with
the right on the/elbow or thereabouts all that beyond my
strength (p65, 7) (c.r. 'bearing' IB5)

The pun on 'behind' is reinforced by its co-occurring with 'bearing'
suggesting that (sexual) pressure is coming from behind.

similarly if a million strong each knows personally only
his/tormentor and victim in other words him who comes
im-/mediately behind him and him who goes immediately
before/him (p.129, 9) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'come' IA6)

That a creature 'knows' one who 'comes' (has an orgasm) behind
him suggests that the sex that has taken place is anal.

ii) 'behind' also occurs:

p.10, 16; p.23, 9; p.53, 19; p.63, 18.

(2) 'back'

'back' OED sb.¹ I. Original sense. 1. properly The convex
surface of the body of man and vertebrated animals which
is adjacent to the spinal axis, and opposite to the belly
and most of the special organs. It extends from the neck
and shoulders to the extremity of the backbone. II. transf.
The surface of things analagous in position to the (human
back); the hinder side.

a. from the sb. 1. Situated behind or in the rear, or

away from the front.

adv. 1. In a direction to the rear. 1. lit. In the direction of one's back, or the back of any object in question; towards the rear; away from a forward position. Often with the vb. (go, come, etc.) omitted, esp. in the imperative. 2. Away from what is treated as the front; from the actual or ordinary position.

number 814327 may speak misnomer the tormentors being/ mute as we have seen part two may speak of number 814326/to number 814328 who may speak of him to number 814329/who may speak of him to number/814345 who in this way may know number 814326 by repute

similarly number 814326 may know by repute number 814345/number 814344 having spoken of him to number 814343 and/this last to number 814326 who in this way may know number/814345 by repute (p.130, 2) (c.r 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'know' IA7)

last reasonings last figures number 777777 leaves number/ 777776 on his way unwitting towards number 777778 finds/ the sack without which he would not go far appropriates it/to himself and continues on his way the same to be taken by/number 777776 in his turn and after him by number 777775/and so back to the unimaginable number 1 each one no sooner/on his way than he finds the sack indispensable to his journey/and not to be relinquished till a little before arrival as we have/seen (p.149, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the last two examples there is a pun between 'back' as an adverb OED sense 2, that the information will be transmitted away from what is treated as the front; and 'back' as in sb. OED sense 1, that is, the creature transmits this knowledge to another in the physical position of having his back to him, thus playing upon the anal nature of the relationship.

* * * * *

IC4 'hole'

'hole' OED sb. I. A hollow place, cavity, excavation, etc. 1. A hollow place or cavity in a solid body; a pit, cave, den, hiding place in the earth; a deep place in a stream, pond, etc. b. An excavation made in the ground for habitation by an animal, as the fox or badger; a burrow. II. A perforation, and connected senses. 7. An aperture passing

through anything; a perforation, an opening. 8. The orifice of an organ or part of the body.

CDES 1. Awkward situation. 2. Sexual intercourse -- a bit of hole. 3. Abbr. arse hole. 4. Untidy, squalid, unattractive place.

i) In the following examples, 'hole' occurs in sense OED 8, specifically referring to the 'anus':

BOM scored by the finger-nail athwart the arse the vowel in the/hole (p.67, 5) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'scored' IA16; 'arse' IC1)

then with my right leg thrown crosswise imprison his two one/can see the movement take the opener in my right hand move/it down along the spine and drive it into the arse not the hole/not such a fool the cheek a cheek he cries I withdraw it thump/on skull the cries cease it's mechanical end of first lesson second/series rest and here parenthesis (p.74, 1) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'end' IC7)

my behests by a different set of signals quite different more/humane more subtle from left hand to left hand in the sack/nails and palm scratching pressing but no always the right hand/thump on skull claws in armpit for the song blade in arse/pestle on kidney slap athwart and index in hole all the needful/up to the end great pity good and the heads (p.100, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'arse' IC1; 'end' IC7)

From these examples we conclude that 'hole' is used in how it is to refer to the victim's anus and that it is attacked in the torture sequence.

ii) The following examples of 'hole' involve meanings other than 'anus', but involve a pun upon that sense in the context of an anal relationship.

the gaps are the holes otherwise it flows more or less more or/less profound the holes we're talking of the holes not specified/not possible no point I feel them and wait till he can out and on/again or I don't and opener or I do and opener just the same/that helps him out as I hear it as it comes word for word to/continue to conclude to be able part two leaving only three/and last (p.93, 11) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'come' IA6)

One reading of 'holes' in the example above (p.93, 11) is that they refer to the scratches made on the victim's skin by the

tin-opener, OED sense 7, this is suggested by the narrator's feeling them, also his reference to the 'opener' in this stanza and to 'no point'; another reading is that the 'holes' refers to the flaw in his construction, which give the lie to the story he is telling. In both cases, there is a play upon 'hole' meaning 'anus'.

iii) The following examples involve the occurrence of 'whole'; it is being argued that there is a pun upon its homophone 'hole' in CDES sense 3 to mean 'anus'. See:

'hol' (including 'hole', 'whole', 'wholly') CB 'hole' and 'whole' were not only homophones in Middle English, but both were usually written without the initial w.... 'Hol' could be used for any external body orifice including the female pudendum.

all these calculations yes explanations yes the whole story from/beginning to end yes completely false yes (p.158, 1)

A pun upon 'whole' in this example is apt since it then describes the fiction as being about the 'arse-hole', thus linking the fiction with the anal sex. See also p.140, 6, 'the whole tale', which is quoted in 'tail' IC4.

See also:

... bits and scraps ten/seconds fifteen seconds ill-heard ill-murmured ill-heard ill-/recorded my whole life a gibberish garbled sixfold (p.146, 10) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'life' IB12; 'gibberish' IIB4)

iv) 'hole' also occurs: p.86, 7; p.94, 5.

Conclusion to IC4 'hole'

'hole' is used in how it is to refer to the 'anus'; occurrences of 'whole' punning upon this. That 'hole' can also be used to refer to the 'vagina' (see CB) and to heterosexual intercourse (see CDES 2) suggests irony which emphasises that the 'hole' in how it is is an anus, not a vagina.

* * * * *

IC5 'tail'

'tail' OED sb. 1. The posterior extremity of an animal, in position opposite to the head, either forming a distinct flexible appendage to the trunk, or being the continuation of the trunk itself behind the anus. 5. The lower and hinder part of the human body; the fundament, posteriors, buttocks, backside. c. Sexual member; penis or (oftener) pudendum. 4. The lower or hinder extremity of anything; the part opposite to what is regarded as the head. c. The rear end of an army or marching column, of a procession, etc.

i) 'tail' occurs:

... sound of sweeping the dog's tail we want to go/on home at last (p.97, 19)

how I last some day it will be night and all asleep we shall slip/out the tail sweeps the straw it hasn't all its wits ... (p.98, 19) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the two examples above, 'tail' is understood in OED sense 1.

ii) In the following examples, the occurrence of 'tail' with reference to the creatures in procession results in a pun upon 'tail' in OED sense 5, given the context of the anal relationship.

save that of conceiving but no doubt it can be done a pro-/cession in a straight line with neither head nor tail in the dark/the mud with all the various infinitudes that such a conception/involves (p.135, 11) (c.r. 'conceive' IB4; 'mud' IIB6)

at the instant Pim leaves me and goes towards the other Bem/leaves the other and comes towards me I place myself at my/point of view migration of slime-worms then or tailed latrinal/scissiparous frenzy days of great gaiety (p.122, 1) (c.r. 'comes' IA6; 'slime' IIB6; 'latrinal' IIB1)

iii) In the following examples, 'tale' puns upon its homophone 'tail' in the context of the sexual puns, especially anal sexual puns in how it is. Scatalogical puns in these examples also emphasise this (c.r. IIB WASTE):

of this old tale quaqua on all sides then in me bits and scraps try/and hear a few scraps two or three each time per day and night/string them together make phrases more phrases the last how/it was after Pim how it is something wrong there end of part/three and last (p.115, 10) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'make' IA9, IB2;

'end' IC7)

that yes a panting in the mud to that it all comes in the end the/journey the couple the abandon when the whole tale is told/the tormentor you are said to have had then lost the journey/you are said to have made the victim you are said to have had/then lost the images the sack the little fables of above little/scenes a little blue infernal homes (p.140, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'couple' IA5; 'abandon' IIB5; 'whole' IC4; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'make' IA9,IB2; 'sack' IIA9)

then I hear it my life here a life somewhere said to have been/mine still mine and still in store bits and scraps strung together/vast stretch of time an old tale my old life each time Pim leaves/me till Bom finds me it is there (p.145, 7) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'Bom' IC69)

passing time is told to me and time past vast tracts of time the/panting stops and scraps of an enormous tale as heard so/murmured to this mud which is told to me natural order part/three it's there I have my life (p.29, 14) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB4; 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12)

Conclusion to IC5 'tail'

'tail' is used in how it is in OED sense 1; there is also a pun upon OED sense 5 in the context of the sexual relationships which we have noted previously (c.r. IA); given the nature of these relationships (c.r. IC1) the pun is an anal one. However, as with 'hole' there is irony in that the word is more usually used in a sexual sense to mean 'the female sex organs', but here is used in reference to an anal relationship. The pun on 'tail/tale' emphasises the parallel we noticed in IB between sexual and fictional creation and links the wordplay upon fictional creation with the particular nature of the sex act in how it is.

* * * * *

IC6 'Bom'

In the following examples, the narrator refers to 'Bom', the creature whom he awaits to be tortured by. Bom's relationship

to the narrator will parallel the narrator's relationship to Pim; that is, he will torture him as the narrator tortured Pim, including stabbing him in the 'arse' and giving him a name. The name 'Bom' has occurred in Beckett previously, when it also referred to someone cruel; 'Bom was what is vulgarly called a sadist'.⁴ Cohn remarks on Beckett's use of the name 'Bom':

From the time of his collection of stories More Pricks Than Kicks ... Bim and Bom recur sporadically in Beckett's work. Russian clowns whose comic routines contained -- and were permitted to contain -- criticism of the Soviet regime, they became for Beckett emblems of human cruelty, disguised under comic garb. In a deleted passage of Waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon compare Pozzo and Lucky to Bim and Bom.⁵

In this section it is being argued that 'Bom' puns upon 'bum'.

'bum' Concise OED n.¹ 1. (sl.) Buttocks.

n.² (sl.) 1. Habitual loafer or tramp; lazy dissolute person; 'on the bum', vagrant, begging.

A pun upon 'bum' plays upon the anal nature of the sexual torture, 'bum' n.¹ (Concise OED). It is also very likely that there is a pun upon 'bum' meaning 'tramp' (n.² Concise OE), especially given the amount of tramps/vagrants in Beckett's work (most famously, of course, Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot).

i) In many of these examples, the pun is emphasised by its co-occurrence with other sexual puns:

the one I'm waiting for oh not that I believe in him I say
it as/I hear it he can give me another it will be my first
Bom he can/call me Bom for more commodity that would
appeal to me/m at the end and one syllable the rest indiffer-
ent

BOM scored by finger-nail athwart the arse the vowel in
the/hole I would say in a scene from my life he would

⁴ Murphy, p.133.

⁵ Cohn, Just Play: Beckett's Theatre (Princeton, New Jersey, 1980), p.17.

oblige me/to have had a life the Boms sir you don't know the Boms sir/you can shit on a Bom sir you can't humiliate him a Bom/sir the Boms sir (p.67, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'scored' IA16; 'arse' IC1; 'hole' IC4; 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'shit' IIB1)

between sessions sometimes a sprat a prawn that could happen/it goes on in the past ah if only all past in the past Bom come/I gone and Bom on our life in common we had good moments/they were good moments drivél drivél no matter a sprat a/prawn (p.68, 1) (c.r. 'sprat' IIA3; 'prawn' IIA3; 'come' IA6; 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch of/time soon unbearable opener arse or capitals if he has lost the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT as it comes bits/and scraps all sorts not so many and to conclude happy end cut/thrust DO YOU LOVE ME no or nails and armpit and little song to/conclude happy end of part two leaving only part three and/last the day comes I come to the day Bom comes YOU BOM me/Bom ME BOM you Bom we Bom (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'unbearable' IB5; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'life' IB12; 'cunt' IA3; 'come' IA6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'end' IC7; 'love' IA1)

One reading of the above (p.83, 24) records confusion of identity between Bom and the narrator, as they alternate in the role of Bom. This is ambiguous since the one who is Bom is the torturer, yet, by a pun on 'Bom/bum', he may be the victim (the one whose 'bum' is penetrated/injured). 'You Bom me Bom we Bom' plays upon a verb paradigm, implying that there is a verb 'to Bom' which would punningly mean to torture (anally, 'bum').

Further examples of anal sexual puns upon 'Bom':

if Bom never came if only that but then how end the hand/dipping clawing for the tin the arse instead of the familiar slime/all imagination and all the rest this voice it⁶ promises and/solaces all imagination dear bud dear worm (p.88, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'tin' IIA2; 'arse' IC1; 'familiar' IB9; 'slime' IIB1)

... and Pim that Pim never was and/Bom whose coming I await to finish be finished have finished/me too that Bom

⁶ One of the Unnamable's inventions is a character called 'Worm', The Unnamable, Trilogy, p. 310

will never be no Pim no Bom and this voice/quaqua of us all never was only one voice my voice never any/other (p.95, 16) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'quaqua' IIB3)

to the effect it is leaving me like the others then nothing/ nothing but nothing then Bom life with Bom the old words/ back from the dead ... (p.104, 14) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'dead' IC10)

... then the little that is left add it quick before/Bom before he comes to ask me how it was my life here before/him the little that is left add it quick how it was after Pim before/Bom how it is (p.108, 10) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'come' IA6; 'life' IBA12)

two there were two of us his hand on my arse someone had/come Bom Bem one syllable m at the end all that matters Bem had come to cleave to me see later Pim and me I had come to/cleave to Pim the same thing except that me Pim Bem me Bem/left me south (p.118, 9) (c.r. 'arse' IC1; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'cleave' IA12; 'thing' IA10)

millions millions there are millions of us and there are three/I place myself at my point of view Bem is Bom Bom Bem let/us say Bom it's preferable Bom then me and Pim me in the/middle (p.123, 13)

Bom to the abandoned not me Bom you Bom me Bom but/me Bom you Pim I to the abandoned not me Pim you Pim/we Pim but me Bom you Pim something very wrong there (p.124, 9) (c.r. 'abandoned')

or one alone one name alone the noble name of Pim and I hear/wrong or the voice says wrong and when I hear Bom or it says/Bom in me when the panting stops the scrap Bom that was/without quaqua on all sides (p.124, 19) (c.r. 'scrap' IIB4; 'quaqua' IIB3)

when I hear or in fact it says that before going towards Pim/part one I was with Bom as Pim with me part two (p.125, 1)

to say after that that I knew Pim that Pim knew me and Bom/and I that we shall know each other even fleetingly (p.133, 14) (c.r. 'know' IA7)

having already appeared with Pim in my quality of tormentor/part two I have not to take cognizance of a part four in which/I would appear with Bom in my quality of victim it is sufficient/for this episode to be announced Bom comes right leg right/arm push pull ten yards fifteen yards (p.143, 19) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'come' IA6)

instead of me sticking the opener into Pim's arse Bom sticking/it into mine (p.142, 11) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1)

In the last example, there is the additional punning sense that 'Bom' is the name given to Pim's 'arse'.

ii) We observed that the co-occurrence with other sexual puns emphasised the anal sexual pun on 'Bom'. It should also be noted that the co-occurrence of 'Bom' with 'come' is examined in Appendix 1, where it is argued that 'come' has religious significance, playing upon the Second Coming, or the arrival of John the Baptist. In the following example it is clear that the 'Pim/Bom' relationship results in the naming of the creatures:

the same voice the same things nothing changing but the names/and hardly they two are enough nameless each awaits his Bom/nameless goes towards his Pim (p.124, 6) (c.r. 'thing' IA10)

iii) In the following examples, 'Bom' is denied; thus reminding us that Pim is at times also said to be a fiction created by the narrator (c.r. IB):

and to the effect second example no Pim no Bom I alone my/voice no other it leaves me I leave me it comes back to me ... (p.105, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6)

or alone and no further problem never any Pim never any Bom/never any journey never anything but the dark the mud ... (p.139, 8) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

and this business of a procession no answer this business of a/procession yes never any procession no nor any journey no never/any Pim no nor any Bom no never anyone only me ... (p.159, 9)

iv) 'Bom' also occurs:

p.84, 17; p.108, 15; p.24; p.120, 2; p.122, 13; p.122, 16; p.122, 17; p.124, 3; p.124, 13; p.125, 3; p.133, 8; p.138, 18; p.139, 2; p.141, 17; p.142, 1; p.142, 2; p.142, 3; p.142, 25; p.145, 10; p.145, 14; p.146, 2.

Also, see occurrence of 'Bem':

p.120, 2; p.120, 3; p.120, 4; p.120, 6; p.122, 9; p.122, 23.

IC7 'end'

'end' OED sb. I. With reference to space. 1. The extremity or outermost part (in any direction) of a portion or space, or of anything extended in space; utmost limit. 3. One of the two extremities of a line, or of the 'length' or greatest dimension of any object; that part of anything that includes the extremity of its length. II. With reference to time or serial order. 7. The limit of duration, or close, of a period of time; the termination, conclusion, of an action, process, continuing state, or course of events; the terminal point of a series; the conclusion of a discourse, book, chapter, etc. 8. Termination of existence; destruction, abolition. III. Idiomatic phrases. 16.c. In the end, in end; ultimately, in the long run.

Concise OED n. 4. Conclusion (of period, action, state, book, etc; end of the WORLD; WORLD without end); latter or final part; destruction, downfall, death; ultimate state or condition.

In this section it will be argued that 'the end' combines punning reference both to the anal nature of the creatures' sexual relationship, and to death. This argument is reinforced by Beckett's use of 'end' in other works. For example, 'end' as 'death':

Yes, a world at an end, in spite of appearances, its end brought forth, ending it began, is it clear enough? And I too am at an end, when I am there, my eyes close, my sufferings cease and I end, I wither as the living cannot.

The end of a life is always vivifying.⁸

In both these last examples, there is also a suggesting that ending is seen as a kind of beginning. In Beckett's short story 'The End', the hero drifts out to sea in a boat in which ^{he} has pulled out the plug.⁹ This character also shows an anal preoccupation as regards sexual gratification:

Real scratching is superior to masturbation, in my opinion.... It was in the arse I had the most pleasure, I

⁷ Molloy, Trilogy, pp.38--39.

⁸ Malone, Trilogy, p.195.

⁹ 'The End', Four Novellas, pp.94--95; see Barge's comment in 'Life and Death in Beckett', p.344.

stuck my forefinger up to the knuckle.¹⁰

'end' also occurs in Beckett as an anal pun:

For my arse, for example, which can hardly be accused of being the end of anything.¹¹

Cohn is clearly aware of the use by Beckett of 'end' as an anal pun, since she quotes Malone Dies 'to be sure of finding in the end it's a question of elimination' and comments that this is an example of two scatological puns in two phrases.¹²

i) The following examples of the phrase 'in the end' have amongst their readings: a) A time phrase, OED sense 16c. b) 'end' as an anal pun. The phrase 'in the end' thus locates x in the 'arse', which refers, for example, to where the creature is hit, stabbed. Another reading would locate a creature (the narrator) as actually existing in the 'arse', a reading which plays upon the disgusting nature of the creatures' environment (c.r. IIB WASTE, especially IIB1 and IIB6) and also upon comparisons which again are examined in IIB1 between the creatures and waste matter, in particular between the creatures and faeces. c) A time phrase, in which the 'end' means death.

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely/curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears/of unbutcherable brother (p.82, 1) (c.r. 'prick' IA17; 'alive' IB13; 'thump' IA15; 'mud' IIB6; 'butcher' IC12; IIA5)

This example (p.82, 1) very clearly illustrates how 'end' is used as an anal pun, as the place where the victim is 'pricked', which we know to be the 'arse' (c.r. IC1). Its use as a time phrase is

¹⁰ 'The End', Four Novellas, p.88.

¹¹ Malone, Trilogy, p.215.

¹² Cohn, Gamut, p.133.

suggested by its being followed by 'long before'; references to 'alive' and 'unbutcherable' suggest further a death pun (c.r. 'alive' IB13; 'butcher' IC12).

simply try again not yet say die a good deep P and the apposite/stab and inevitable one fine day should it mean his trying all/the consonants in the Roman alphabet that he will answer in/the end it's inevitable me Pim which he does in the end it was/inevitable me Pim clap athwart the arse opener between the/thighs arm round his poor shoulder done it rest (p.79, 10) (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'arse' IC1; 'opener' IA17)

arduous beginnings then less he is no fool merely slow in the/end he understands all almost all I have nothing to say almost/nothing even God that old favourite my rain and shine brief/illusions not infrequent as in the tender years it's vague he/almost understands (p.77, 12) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

that yes a panting in the mud to that it all comes in the end the/journey the couple the abandon when the whole tale is told/the tormentor you are said to have had then lost the journey/you are said to have made the victim you are said to have had/then lost the images the sack the little fables of above little/scenes a little blue infernal homes (p.140, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6; 'couple' IA5; 'abandon' IIB5; 'hole' IC4; 'tail' IC5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9; 'make' IA9, IB2)

all that almost blank nothing to get out of it almost nothing/ nothing to put in that's the saddest that would be the saddest/imagination on the decline having attained the bottom what/one calls sinking one is tempted

or ascending heaven no place like it in the end (p.112, 5) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2)

In this example (p.112, 5) 'no place like it' acts as an idiomatic phrase when 'in the end' is read as a time phrase; it states (with irony) that there is nothing heavenly about being located in the 'arse' when 'end' is read as 'arse'.

Further examples of 'in the end' used as a time phrase with anal and death puns will be found:

p.13, 10--14; p.13, 20--23; p.30, 1--6; p.66, 8--10; p.70, 8--10; p.82, 7--11; p.102, 10--14; p.140, 10--19.

ii) The following examples of 'the end' involve anal and death puns

upon 'end'. Many of these puns are emphasised by their co-occurrence with other anal and sexual puns as cross referenced.

more humid fewer gleams no gleam and hushed the dear/
sounds pretext for speculation I must have slipped you
are in/the depths it's the end you have ceased you slip
you continue (p.24, 12) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

According to one reading of the example above (p.24, 12) 'in the depths' and 'slipped' are non-literal idioms indicating that the quality of life has become very poor indeed. Another reading however plays upon this; if 'end' refers to the 'arse', then slipping and being in the depths have a literal, physical sense. A further reading of 'the end' to mean 'death' is reinforced by 'you have ceased' which has interpretations a) 'you have ceased (to move, do whatever you were doing before)' and b) 'you have died'.

two there were two of us his hand on my arse someone
had/come Bom Bem one syllable m at the end all that
matters Bem/had come to cleave to me see later Pim and
me I had come to/cleave to Pim the same thing except that
me Pim Bem me Bem/left me south (p.118, 9) (c.r. 'arse'
IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'come' IA6; 'cleave' IA12; 'thing'
IA10)

outside the road going down lined with trees thousands
all/the same species never knew which miles of hill
straight/as a ribbon never saw that toil in winter to the
top the frozen/slush the black boughs grey with hoar she
at the end at the top/dying forgiving all white (p.85, 21)
(c.r. 'die' IC9)

In this last example (p.85, 20) the narrator is talking about the death of his wife; a death which followed, and as we saw in IC1 (also see IC8/9/10) was closely related to, the 'death' of their love-life and a change from vaginal to anal sex.

my behests by a different set of signals quite different
more/humane more subtle from left hand to left hand in
the sack/nails and palm scratching pressing but no always
the right hand/thump on skull claws in armpit for the
song blade in arse/pestle on kidney slap athwart and index
in hole all the needful/up to the end great pity good and
the heads (p.100, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'thump' IA15; 'skull'
IC12; 'arse' IC1; 'hole' IC4)

Further examples of 'end' as an anal/death pun will be found:

p.61, 5--10; p.67, 1--4; p.68, 13--17; p.78, 10--13; p.90, 17--22;
 p.98, 1--6; p.119, 8--13; p.147, 18--20; p.148, 6--10; p.150, 9--14;
 p.152, 1--2.

In the following examples, puns on 'end' are emphasised by its co-occurrence with 'make' which puns sexually so that to 'make an end' means 'to have sex with' 'an end', that is with 'an arse' (c.r. 'make' IA9). It also involves play upon the narration being a fiction of the narrator's 'making' (c.r. 'make' IB2)

... then where do I go from/then to then and in between but first quick make an end of/life in common end at last of part two leaving only last at last (p.105, 9) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'make' IA9,IB2; 'life' IB12)

no more I'll hear no more see no more yes I must to make an/end a few more old words ... (p.114, 17) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2)

questions then DO YOU LOVE ME CUNT that family cut thrust to/make an end go there at last ... (p.105, 24) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'cunt' IA3; 'family' IB9; 'make' IA9, IB2)

.../the little there was nearly all like me my life here before Pim/with Pim how it was the little there was I've said it I've been/able I think so as I hear it and say to make an end with him a/warning to me murmur to the mud quick quick ... (p.108, 5) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'make' IA9,IB2; 'quick' IB1; 'mud' IIB6)

E then good and deep quick now the end above sick of light/and nail on skin for the down-stroke of the Roman N when/suddenly too soon too soon a few more little scenes suddenly/I cross it out ... (p.97, 6) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'sick' IIB1)

Barnard interprets this as the narrator's attempting to write 'END' on Pim's back,¹³ an acceptable interpretation which plays upon the punning identification between a part of Pim's body (the 'end' as the 'arse') and a time phrase. In the last two examples, the puns on 'end' are emphasised by co-occurrence with 'quick'

¹³ G.C. Barnard, Samuel Beckett, A New Approach (London, 1970), p.73.

(c.r. 'quick' IB1); this emphasises 'end' as 'death' by contrast with 'quick' as 'the living' and upon 'end' as 'arse' by suggesting that the 'end' is 'quick' with conceived life.

Further examples of 'quick' and 'end' co-occurring will be found:
p.96, 11--15; p.108, 14--15.

soon unbearable thump on skull long silence vast stretch
of/time soon unbearable opener arse capitals if he has lost
the/thread YOUR LIFE CUNT ABOVE CUNT HERE CUNT
as it comes bits/and scraps all sorts not so many and to
conclude happy end cut/thrust DO YOU LOVE ME no or
nails armpit and little song to/conclude happy end of part
two leaving only part three and/last the day comes I come
to the day Bom comes YOU BOM me/Bom ME BOM you Bom
we Bom (p.83, 19) (c.r. 'unbearable' IB5; 'thump' IA15;
'skull' IC12; 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'life' IB12; 'cunt'
IA3; 'come' IA6; 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'love' IA1; 'Bom'
IC6)

'happy end' in the last example (line 24) plays upon the cliché
'happy ending' (a cliché referring to the world of fiction writing)
whilst also suggesting that the 'end' ('arse') will be happy (experience
sexual pleasure).

iii) In the following examples, 'end' is denied or negated:

p.53, 19--21; p.139, 1--7; p.144, 9--12; p.147, 6--10; p.152, 11--15;
p.154, 1--4.

One interpretation of there being 'no end' is that there is no death
in how it is (c.r. 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10)

iv) 'end' also occurs:

with 'journey': p.28, 4; p.36, 7; p.155, 2.

with 'part one'; 'part two' or 'part three':

p.36, 16; p.42, 12; p.51, 8; p.54, 5; p.63, 19; p.77, 6; p.78, 15;

p.82, 20; p.83, 24; p.99, 3; p.105, 11; p.108, 14; p.108, 22;

p.115, 14; p.119, 10; p.140, 3; p.148, 6; p.160, 18.

with 'lesson': p.69, 18; p.69, 20; p.74, 5.

'end' also occurs:

p.25, 2; p.31, 6; p.31, 13; p.44, 4; p.60, 1; p.70, 12; p.89, 3;
p.92, 21; p.113, 19; p.159, 1; p.160, 19.

'end' as verb

'end' OED v.¹ I. Transitive and absolute senses. 2. To bring to an end, conclude, come to a termination of (an action, a speech, a period of time, one's life, etc.). b. absol.; esp with reference to speech: To finish, conclude. 4. To put an end to, cause to cease, abrogate, destroy; formerly also to dissolve (a parliament). b. To make an end of (a person); to kill. Obs. II. Intransitive senses. 5. Of a period of time, action, continuous state, series, book, chapter, etc.: To come to an end. b. To issue or result in. 6. To die. rare in mod. use. Also to end up (slang). 7. Of a portion of space, material object, treatise, etc.: To terminate, have its end or extremity.

v) In the following examples, 'end' occurs in examples in which one reading of 'end' is in OED sense 6, 'to die'.

so things may change no answer I may choke/no answer
sink no answer sully the mud no more no answer/the dark
no answer trouble the peace no more no answer the/silence
no answer die no answer DIE screams I MAY DIE screams/I
SHALL DIE screams good (p.160, 13) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6;
'die' IC9)

all about pressed tight as a child you would have done it
in the sandpits even you the mud above the temples and
nothing/more be seen but three grey hairs old wig rotting
on a muck-/heap false skull foul with mould and rest you
can say nothing/when time ends you may end (p.96, 1)
(c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'muckheap' IIB1; 'skull' IC12)

the panting stops I hear it my life I have it murmur it
it's/preferable more logical for Kram to note and if we
are/innumerable then Krams innumerable if you like or
one alone/my Kram mine alone he's enough here where
justice reigns one/life all life not two lives our justice one
Kram not one of us/there's reason in my yet his son
begets his son leaves the light/Kram goes back up into
the light to end his days (p.146, 13) (c.r. 'life' IB12;
'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the above examples, we also note that it is not certain that the narrator can expect to 'end' (die).

with that of a slowness difficult to conceive the procession
we/are talking of a procession advancing in jerks or spasms
like/shit in the guts till one wonders days of great gaiety
if we shall/not end one after another or two by two by
being shat into/the open air the light of day the regimen
of grace (p.135, 17) (c.r. 'conceive' IB4; 'shit' IIB1;
'open' IA17)

The creatures in the last example are to be excreted into 'the light of day the regimen of grace', according to one reading. 'the light of day' suggests that they are going to be excreted (born? c.r. 'conceive' IB4) into ordinary life on earth. 'light' however has heavenly connotations (c.r. 'life above' IB12) which are reinforced by the phrase 'regimen of grace'. See:

'grace' OED I. Pleasing quality, gracefulness. II. Favour. 6. Favour, favourable or benignant regard or its manifestation (now only on the part of a superior); favour or goodwill, in contradistinction to right or obligation, as the ground of a concession. b. Said with reference to God (see also 11.a.). 11. In scriptural and theological language a. (Also the grace of God and free grace). The free and unmerited favour of God as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowing of blessings. Doctrines of grace: by Calvinists applied esp. to the doctrines of election, predestination, etc. Used for the source of grace, God. b. The divine influence which operates in men to regenerate and sanctify, to inspire virtuous impulses, and to impart strength to enduring trial and resist temptation. d. The condition of one who is under divine influence. More fully a state of grace. Also in to fall from grace. 13. In sense transf. or weakened from 11.

'regimen' OED 1. The act of governing; government, rule. b. A particular form or kind of government; a regime; a prevailing system.

That they are to move into a 'regimen of grace', a kingdom or government of grace, suggests a place where the rules of grace are in governance, possibly heaven. That they are not currently in a state of grace infers that they have fallen from grace (c.r. 'species' IB11, in which the occurrence of 'fall' is considered). Among interpretations of this is that they are on earth, man having fallen from God's grace; or that they are in hell or purgatory. If 'regimen of grace' does refer to heaven, then 'end' means to 'die'. (Another interpretation would be that 'regimen of grace' is ironic; life on earth appearing heavenly in contrast to the narrator's current environment.) That 'end' co-occurs with 'shit' and 'shat' (c.r. 'shit' IB1), that it is the action of 'shitting' which 'ends' them, gives

'end' also the sense of an anal pun, clearly showing the death to be anal.

vi) The following examples refer to the ending of the narrative or sections of the narrative. They also suggest that the narrator 'ends' with the 'end' of the narrative; this continues the suggestion we saw in IB12, that 'life' in how it is means narrated life, fictional life.

instead of ending abandoned I end as tormentor (p.141, 1) (c.r. 'abandon' IIB5)

from it all that of that so little what little remains I've named/myself the panting stops and I am an instant that old ever/dwindling little that I think I hear of an ancient voice quaqua/on all sides the voice of us all as many as we are as many as/we'll end if we ever end by having been something wrong/there (p.117, 9) (c.r. 'quaqu' IIB4; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Further examples in which the narrator refers to sections of the narrative ending, which may also be read as referring to his 'ending', will be found: p.87, 7--10; p.88, 1--4; p.89, 12--15; p.126, 11--16; p.144, 13--19.

vii) Further examples of 'end' will be found (the majority of them referring to ending the narrative, or sections of it):

p.42, 4--7; p.53, 5--6; p.82, 20--23; p.96, 6--10; p.140, 1--4; p.140, 11--15; p.142, 7--10.

Conclusion to IC7 'end'

We have observed that 'end' is used to discuss the sequence of the narrative and of the creatures in procession; to refer to the death of the creatures; to pun upon the anal nature of the creatures' relationships. 'end' then emphasises the death connotations of the creatures' anal sexual/sadistic act. In the case of Pam Prim we saw that anal sex literally preceded her death. As well as the literal sense of death, there may also be play upon the failure to conceive

(c.r. IC4/5). Sex in how it is leads not to new life but to death. The use of a word which has connotations of death and puns upon the anal nature of the sex act 'end' suggests that there is a causal connection between the failure to conceive and death, between anal sex and death. That 'end' is also used to refer to the sequence of the narrative and also in some of those instances identifies the narrator's 'ending' (dying) with the end of the narrative recalls that in 'life' IB12, we found an equation between 'life' and the 'voice' which is the source of the narrative.

We shall now examine the occurrence of words with senses relating to 'death' and note especially where there is further wordplay relating death to sex.

* * * * *

IC8 'death'

'death' OED I. 1. The act or fact of dying; the end of life; the final cessation of the vital functions of an animal or plant. a. of an individual. b. in the abstract. c. as a personified agent. (Usually figured as a skeleton.) 5. fig. The loss or want of spiritual life; the being or becoming spiritually dead. The second death: the punishment or destruction of lost souls after physical death. c. Of a thing: Cessation of being, end, extinction, destruction.

The association of death with sex is something that occurs quite widely throughout Beckett. In 'First Love', for example, marriage is associated in the narrator's mind with death:

I associate, rightly or ¹⁴wrongly, my marriage with the death of my father, in time.

In Waiting for Godot, Vladimir and Estragon contemplate hanging with special relish when they realise that it will give them an erection:

¹⁴ 'First Love', Four Novellas, p.9.

Estragon: What about hanging ourselves?
 Vladimir: Hmm. It'd give us an erection.
 Estragon: (highly excited) An erection!
 Vladimir: With all that follows ...
 Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately!¹⁵

Vivien Mercier writes of this association of sex with death in Beckett's work:

Whereas macabre humour in the last analysis is inseparable from terror and serves as a defence mechanism against the fear of death, grotesque humour is equally inseparable from awe and serves as a defence mechanism against the holy dread with which we face the mysteries of reproduction.¹⁶

Mercier comments upon what he sees as an Irish tradition in which sex is presented as grotesque and judges Beckett to be in the tradition, 'though not of it'. He sees the reaction of the tramps to the idea that hanging will give them an erection as:

a perfect marriage of the macabre and grotesque in humour. But note the peculiar form of sexuality. Vladimir and Estragon are habitually impotent, like most of the protagonists in Beckett's later work.¹⁷

i) In the following examples from how it is there is a co-occurrence of 'death' and words with sexual meanings (c.r. IA):

what men all colours black to white tried them all then gave/up no worse too vague pardon pity home to native land to die/in my twenties iron constitution above in the light my life my/living made my living tried everything building mostly it was/booming all branches plaster mostly met Pam I think

love birth of love increase decrease death efforts to resuscitate/through the arse joint vain through the cunt anew vain jumped/from window or fell broken column hospital marguerites lies/about mistletoe forgiveness (p.93, 21) (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'life' IB12; 'made' IA9,IB2; 'love' IA1; 'birth' IB5; 'resuscitate' IB16; 'arse' IC1; 'cunt' IA3)

¹⁵ Waiting for Godot, p.17.

¹⁶ V. Mercier, 'Samuel Beckett and the Sheela-na-gig', Kenyon Review, 23 (1961), 299--325 (p.301).

¹⁷ Mercier, 'Samuel Beckett and the Sheela-na-gig', p.322.

One reading of 'death' is that it refers to the end of love, continuing the metaphor of love's 'birth'. Another reading is that 'death' refers to the wife's literal 'death' (pp.84--86); thus to use 'death' of 'love' is true both literally and metaphorically. That she dies shortly after the 'death' of love, along with their 'efforts to resuscitate through the arse', leads to further wordplay: that 'death' is an adjective modifying 'efforts'. These are 'death efforts' because they involve anal intercourse which cannot result in conception and because her literal death follows shortly after these 'efforts'.

in the ward before she went every day all winter she forgave/me everybody all mankind she grew good God calling her/home the blue mound on the deathbed it grew again (p.85, 5) (c.r. 'mankind' IB10; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

'deathbed' OED The bed on which a person dies; the bed of death. (In O.E. the grave).

Whilst 'deathbed' is a common expression for the bed in which a person dies, it plays here on the contrast between the acts of love which normally take place between husband and wife in bed ('she' refers to the narrator's wife cf. pp.84--86) and the 'death' of 'love' between the narrator and his wife which they tried to 'resuscitate' 'through the arse'. It suggests that they have turned the bed into a place not of acts of love but of death. 'it grew again' is read as referring to the 'blue mound', the pubic hair which his wife had shaved ('my wife Pam Prim ... she shaved her mound' p.84, 13). Its regrowth stresses that during death the body continues to grow; in examples below we will see concern that death may not be a final end. It also suggests a return of fertility during death. (That she also 'grows' 'good' suggests that she is cleansed of her sins, which clearly has religious connotations.)

The following examples are of 'death' being associated with sex in reference to the creatures in the mud:

a dream what a hope death of sack arse of Pim end of part one/leaving only part two leaving only part three and last Thalia/for pity's sake a leaf of thine ivy (p.42, 12) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'arse' IC1; 'end' IC7)

One reading for the 'death of sack' is that according to OED 5c, the end/destruction of a thing. At the end of part one the sack bursts (p.51, 14--19; p.53, 20--21; p.68, 6--12) shedding its contents, so that this offers one interpretation for the 'death of sack' (c.r. 'sack bursts' IIA9viii). the parallelism of the phrases 'death of sack' and 'arse of Pim' suggests a parallel between 'death' and 'arse' reinforced by the co-occurrence of 'end' (it is argued in IIA9 that the discovery of Pim's 'arse' replaces the narrator's need for the sack).

Krim too straight as a die at his stand ballpoint at the ready on/the alert for the least never long idle if nothing I invent must/keep busy otherwise death (p.90, 6) (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'stand' IA10)

In section IA it is observed that 'straight as a die', 'at his stand', 'ballpoint at the ready' have mutually reinforcing connotations of sexual potency. Further, 'die at his stand', 'on the alert' suggest military imagery, implying that death may be on the battleground reinforcing the link between sex/torture/death (c.r. IA11--17). One reading for 'otherwise death' is that this will occur if the narrator does not keep busy. That the way he talks of keeping busy is 'inventing' to avoid death plays upon the idea that 'life' in how it is equated with the construction of fiction (c.r. IB). Another reading which exploits the ambiguous syntax is that among alternative inventions the narrator can make are 'death' and 'nothing'.

See also:

part one before Pim the journey it can't last it lasts I'm calm/calmer you think you're calm and you're not in the lowest/depths and you're on the edge I say it as I hear it and that death/if it ever comes that's all it dies (p.22, 16) (c.r. 'comes' IA6; 'die' IC9)

In this example the occurrence of 'death' suggests that 'you're on the edge' means that you are near to death. It will be argued in section IC9 that 'dies' carries a sexual meaning (to experience orgasm). That 'death' co-occurs with 'dies' and 'comes', which we have already seen is a sexual pun (c.r. 'come' IA6), indicates that one reading for the 'death' is that it is a sexual one, the experiencing of orgasm. That when 'death' comes it 'dies' can also be explained in the context of the narrator's desiring death but being unable to finally die (see how it is p.160, also comments in 'die' IC9 and 'live' IB15). Some examples will also be given below of 'death' not being clearly distinguished from 'life' in how it is.

ii) In the following examples, 'death' co-occurs with 'life':

nor callers in my life this time no wish for callers hastening/from all sides all sorts to talk to me about themselves life too/and death as though nothing had happened me perhaps too in/the end to help me last then goodbye till we meet again each back the way he came (p.13, 10) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7; 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3)

One reading for this example is that 'as though nothing had happened' modifies the callers' talking to the narrator. Another reading is that 'as though nothing had happened' modifies '(life too and) death', thus belittling the occurrence of death, or saying that it does not feel any different from his current state (c.r. p.13, 21, quoted below in IC9)

the words of Pim his extorted voice he stops I step in all the/needful he starts again I could listen to him for ever but mine/have done with mine natural order before Pim the little I say/no sound the little I see of a life I don't deny don't believe but/what believe the sack perhaps the dark the mud death perhaps/to wind up with after so much life there are moments (p.23, 15) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'sack' IIA9; 'mud' IIB6)

One reading of this example (p.23, 15) is that 'death' is part of 'the little' the narrator sees of 'life'. A further reading is

that 'mud' modifies 'death' thus indicating the nature/cause of death (c.r. 'mud' IIB6).

iii) The following examples of 'death' occur during the description of the sage's death:

my nails well to mention only the hands not to mention that/eastern sage they were in a sorry state that extreme eastern/sage who having clenched his fists from the tenderest age it's/vague till the hour of his death it is not said at what age having/done that

the hour of his death at what age it is not said was enabled to/see them at last a little before his nails his death having pierced/the palms through and through was enabled to see them/emerging at last on the other side and a little later having thus/lived done this done that clenched his fists all his life thus lived/died at last saying to himself latest breath that they'd grow on

the curtains parted part one I saw his friends come to visit him/where squatting in the deep shade of a tomb or a bo his fists/clenched on his knees he lived thus

they broke for want of chalk or suchlike but not in concert so/that some my nails we're talking of my nails some always long/others presentable I saw him dreaming the mud parted the/light went on I saw him dreaming with the help of a friend or/failing that boon all alone of bending them back to the back/of his hand for them to go through the other way death fore-/stalled him

Pim's right buttock then first contact he must have heard them/grate there's a noble past I could have dug them in if I had/wished I longed dig deep furrows drink the screams the/blue the violent shade the turbaned head bowed over the fist/the circle of friends in their white dhotis without going that/far (p.59, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12; 'live' IB15; 'die' IC9; 'tomb' IC11; 'buttock' IC1; 'drink' IIA7)

'the hour of his death' is a common expression meaning the time at which he died. One reading for lines 3--5 is that the sage had clenched his fists from childhood until he died. 'it's vague ... it is not said at what age having done that' referring then to his starting to clench his fists. Another reading is that 'it's vague till the hour of his death' means that death clarified (playing, as we observed, upon the comparison between the sage and Buddha

c.r. IB15). In line 6 'at what age it is not said' co-occurs with 'the hour of his death' suggesting that the uncertainty is (also) about when he died. In lines 4--5 this leads to a reading in which 'having done that' refers to dying. This is an unusual formulation, since it implies that dying is an action of choice, that it is something which one does (an action one motivates, causes, effects) rather than something which happens to one.

One reading of 'his death' (line 7) is that it is in apposition to 'his nails' identifying them as the cause of his death, thus begging identification between the death of the sage and the death of Christ. The death of the sage and the torture of Pim merge during this apparent aside; the narrator begins by referring to his own nails (line 1) and returns (line 22) to describing the use of his own nails to torture Pim.

'forestall' OED v. 6. To be beforehand with in action; to anticipate the action of, or simply, to anticipate; often with the additional sense of rendering ineffective, nugatory, or useless.

'death forestalled him' suggests that death occurred before his nails could grow back the other way; another is that death anticipated, put an end to 'him'; death occurred before he had really lived.

whether four then revolving or a million four strangers
a/million strangers to themselves to one another but here
I quote/on we do not revolve

that is above in the light where their space is measured
here/the straight line the straight line eastward strange
and death/in the west as a rule (p.134, 5)

The narrator says that there is 'death in the west'. This plays upon the colloquial 'go west' meaning 'to die' (see Concise OED 'go west', (sl.) be killed, lost, wrecked etc.). One reason for there being death in the west is that moving in this direction indicates moving away from the victim/torturer relationship, which produces the 'voice' from which he gets his 'life' (c.r. IB12i). Since we learn

at the end of how it is that the narrator never moved, 'death in the west' may indicate that 'death' is somewhere other than where he is, and he cannot move to it.

iii) The following example is noted with reference to the observations made in conclusion to IB:

orgy of false being life in common brief shames I am not
 dead/to inexistence not irretrievably time will tell it's telling
 but/what a hog's wallow pah not even not even pah brief
 move-/ments of the lower face profit while ye may silence
 gather while/ye may¹⁸ deathly silence patience patience
 (p.76, 14) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'dead' IC10; 'wallow' IIB1)

'deathly silence' is a cliché meaning 'as silent as the dead'. In the context of our conclusions to IB, namely that 'life' is equated with the 'voice', there is play upon the cliché being reliteralised, that silence literally means death for the narrator. A further reliteralising reading of 'deathly silence' is that Pim is literally dead (as a result of the torture?) hence unable to make any noise.

* * * * *

IC9 'die'

'die' OED v.¹ I. Of man and sentient beings. *literally.
 1. To lose life, cease to live, suffer death; to expire. 2.
 c. To die the death: to suffer death, to be put to death.
 4. To suffer the pains or dangers of death; to face death.
 5. Theol. To suffer spiritual death 'to punish everlastingly'
 (J.). 7. To suffer pains identified with those of death;
 (often hyperbolic) to languish, pine away with passion;
 to be consumed with longing desire; to die for, to desire
 keenly or excitedly. c. To die with or of laughing: to be
 exhausted by laughing. II. Of non-sentient objects, sub-
 stances, qualities, actions. 11. To pass gradually away

¹⁸ Compare: 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, / Old Time is still
 a-flying: / And this same flower that smiles to-day, / To-morrow will
 be dying.', R. Herrick, 'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time', in
The New Oxford Book of English Verse 1250-1950, edited by H.
 Gardner (Oxford, 1972), p.243, 1.

(esp. out of hearing or sight) by becoming fainter and fainter; to fade away. 12. To pass by dying (into something else); to change (into) something at death or termination.

CB As every reader of Shakespeare and Donne knows, the Renaissance attached a secondary meaning to this awful word (die); to have an orgasm.

i) In the following examples, 'die' occurs in a sexual context:

... she at the end at the top/dying forgiving all white
(p.85, 24) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

'she' refers to the narrator's wife, who as we have seen, 'dies' after the 'death' of their love.

simply try again not yet say die a good deep P and the apposite/stab and inevitable one fine day should it mean his trying all/the consonants in the Roman alphabet that he will answer in/the end it's inevitable me Pim which he does in the end it was/inevitable me Pim clap athwart the arse opener between the/thighs arm round his poor shoulders done it rest (p.79, 10) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'arse' IC1; 'opener' IA17)

'not say die' plays upon the cliché meaning do not give up yet. Its co-occurrence with 'in the end' emphasises the literal meaning of 'die'. Further, that speech is equated with, and the 'voice' said to be, 'life', means that failure to extort a reply from Pim is equated with death, *twisting the cliché again*.

That the narrator is carving the shapes of letters onto Pim's flesh results in further reading of 'not say die', that the letters do not spell ('say') the word 'die'. The context of the physical relationship which is being described here results also in a pun upon 'die' to mean 'experience orgasm'.

Krim too straight as a die at his stand ballpoint at the ready on/the alert for the least never long idle if nothing I invent must/keep busy otherwise death (p.90, 6) (c.r. 'stand' IA10; 'death' IC8)

There is a pun upon the cliché 'straight as a die' in the context of the other sexual puns which we have already noted in this stanza (p.90, 6).

... I say it as I hear it and that death/death if it ever comes that's all it dies

it dies and I see a crocus in a pot in an area in a basement a/saffron the sun creeps up the wall a hand keeps it in the sun/this yellow flower with a string I see the hand long image/hours long the sun goes the pot goes down the lights on the ground/the hand goes the wall goes (p.22, 18) (c.r. 'death' IC8; 'come' IA6)

Co-occurrence of 'comes' with 'dies' suggests a sexual pun, that the 'death' which 'comes' is a sexual one, an orgasm.

ii) The following examples are of 'die' in contexts which result in a conflation between living and dying, or a suggestion that life and death are not clearly distinguished. Some of these examples also contain sexual puns on 'die'.

others who had always known me here in my last place they/talk to me of themselves of me perhaps too in the end of/fleeting joys and of sorrows of empires that are born and die/as though nothing had happened (p.13, 20) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7; 'born' IB5)

Alternate readings for p.13, 20, include: a) 'that are born and die' modifies 'empires' and/or 'joys and sorrows'; 'die' is then understood in OED sense II. b) 'born and die' modifies 'others'. c) 'as though nothing had happened' modifies 'that are born and die', thus conflating birth and death, viewing them as non-events (c.r. p.13, 10--14):

..having thus/lived done this done that clenched his fists all his life thus lived/died at last saying to himself latest breath that they'd grow on (p.59, 9) (c.r. 'death' IC8; 'life' IB12; 'live' IB15)

This stanza is part of the description of the sage which is quoted in full above (c.r. IC8). One reading for 'thus lived died at last' is that the sage lived in the manner described, then finally died. Another reading is that 'thus' modifies both 'lived' and 'died', saying that the manner of his life was the same as the manner (cause?) of his death. A further reading which plays upon this is

'thus lived-died', a conflation of 'live' and 'die'; that he was always dying, whilst living.

that childhood said to have been mine the difficulty of believ-/ing in it the feeling rather of having been born octogenarian/at the age when one dies in the dark the mud upwards born/upwards floating up like the drowned and tattle tattle four full/back/s of close characters the childhood the belief the blue the/miracles all lost never was (p.78, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

In this example (p.78, 1) the narrator talks of being (perhaps, if he was) born 'octogenarian at the age when one dies', thus commenting that one is born ready to die.

... and drop my first-born/dying to his grandchild your papa's grandpapa disappeared/never came up never seen again bear it in mind when your/time comes (p.92, 13) (c.r. 'family' IB9; 'know' IA8; 'born' IB5; 'come' IA6; 'bear' IB5)

One reading of the above example is that 'dying' modifies the 'first-born'; as we saw in IB5, 'drop' can mean to give birth to, suggesting that the first-born is dying when born. We also observed that 'drop' could mean 'let carelessly fall', suggesting that the death was at least misadventure (if not murder). Another reading is that 'dying' modifies the one giving birth. Both readings associate the start of life (which is usually a result of sexual reproduction) with death.

what men all colours black to white tried them all then gave/up no worse too vague pardon pity home to native land to die/in my twenties iron constitution above in the light my life my/living made my living tried everything building mostly it was/booming all branches plaster mostly met Pam I think (p.93, 21) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'live' IB15; 'make' IA9, IB2)

The narrator talks of dying in his 'twenties' which suggests that he went home to die when young. It should be noted that this follows a punning reference to homosexuality ('what men ... tried them all'). The final reference to Pam again connects death with sex. There may also be a pun upon 'die' to mean 'experience orgasm',

since he went home to 'die' and met his wife. The references to the building trade recall the father/uncle who was also said to be involved in the building trade ('building trade perhaps some branch or other'; repetition of the word 'branch' emphasises this connection). The father/uncle died in a fall, recalling the wife's death.

my sack sole variable my days my nights my seasons and
my/feasts it says Lent everlasting then of a sudden Hallow-
mas no/summer that year if it is the same not much real
spring my/sack thanks to my sack that I keep dying in a
dying age (p.18, 11) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'feasts' IIA4)

'I keep -ing' refers to a process which is being continually repeated, its aspect is imperfective and iterative. B. Comrie characterises imperfective aspect as an 'explicit reference to the internal temporal structure of a situation', whereas perfective aspect denotes 'a complete situation, with beginning, middle and end'.¹⁹ Iterativity is not the same as habituality, according to Comrie, who comments of The temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus (his example of the habitual) that, 'there is no necessary implication that there were several occasions on each of which the temple stood at Ephesus'.²⁰ Whereas, 'The policeman used to stand at the corner for two hours a day includes iterativity'.²¹

'to die' however is a verb which by definition cannot be repeated once the action of the verb is completed. It cannot be done again by the same subject because the subject will be dead, that is, incapable of any further action (see Shorter OED 'die' which points out that once the powers and functions have come to

¹⁹ B. Comrie, An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems (Cambridge, 1976), pp.24, 18.

²⁰ Comrie, p.27.

²¹ Comrie, p.28.

an end, to the extent that they have died, they cannot be restored). Contrast, for example, I keep bumping my knee; the action is completed each time and is repeatable, it implies that the action has happened on several occasions, but need not necessarily be going on all the time. Comrie comments that the English verb 'die' is an exception to his statement that with a telic situation, which he defines as: 'one that involves a process that leads up to a well-defined terminal point, beyond which the process cannot continue ... [it is] possible to use a verbal form with imperfective meaning.'²² He goes on to argue that the English verb 'die' may be an expression of:

... a new class of situations, referring to a punctual event and the immediately preceding process, in the sense that the process preceding the event is so intimately bound up with the event that once the process is under way the event cannot be prevented from occurring.... It seems odd to say ?John was dying but the discovery of a new medicine led to his recovery.... In other words, although John was dying implies that at the time in question he was not yet dead, yet still it seems to imply that he did die (later); similarly John is dying holds out little if any hope for his recovery, unlike Mary is singing a song, where it is still possible that she will be prevented from completing the song.'²³

Quirk et al classify 'die' along with 'arrive', 'fall', 'land', 'leave', 'lose' etc. as 'transitional event verbs' which they say 'occur in the progressive but with a change of meaning compared with simple aspect. The progressive implies inception, that is, only the approach to the transition', and they offer the following for comparison: The train arrived/was arriving. The old man died/was dying.²⁴ This could suggest again that 'I keep dying' is anomalous because 'keep'

²² Comrie, p.45.

²³ Comrie, p.47.

²⁴ R. Quirk and others, A Grammar of Contemporary English (London, 1972), p.95.

introduces an iterative factor, meaning that the progressive is being combined not only with the inception of the event which Quirk et al observed as a practice of contemporary English, but with the suggestion that the event is completed and repeated.

'I keep dying' suggests that death in how it is is not telic, not only by its use of the imperfective but by its collocation with 'keep', hence its use of the iterative aspect (and continuousness); the suggestion that not only does an unexpected recovery happen once, but frequently. Furthermore it is not that the situation is 'was dying' 'then something happened to change it', but the use of 'keep' sees it as normal and acceptable to treat 'die' as though it were not telic. By combining 'die' with an imperfective and iterative form thus the narrator in how it is suggests that 'death' is a telic situation, an action which he repeatedly completes. This is contrary to the definition of 'die' as it is commonly understood in the reader's world and as it is expressed in the OED.

From this reasoning as to why 'I keep dying' is semantically anomalous we have now to decide how to interpret it: whether to deal with it as metaphoric, or whether to decide that this is one illustration that the verb 'die' behaves differently in order to reflect or refer to a different world/set of truth conditions in how it is from those of the reader's world. Levin offers as one means of interpreting deviant sentences in poetry that they:

are to be taken literally that, so taken, they have meaning and thus express truth conditions. This conclusion is enabled by a shift in world orientation. Instead of attempting to construe the expression, that is, make it conform to a sentence that has a truth value in this world, we as it were construe the world, into²⁵ one in which the deviant sentence is no longer deviant.

²⁵ S.L. Levin, The Semantics of Metaphor, (Baltimore, 1977), p.127.

Among interpretations for how it is are: a) 'dying' occurs in a construction where we would expect 'living' -- the narrator is grateful to remain in this state (he is grateful to his 'sack' which contains his provisions c.r. 'sack' IIA9). This recalls comments which occur in other of Beckett's works, for example, 'and that I was on my way to my mother whose charity kept me dying'.²⁶ Also, see other comments in how it is such as 'dear Pim come back from the living' p.80, 19; c.r. 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3; 'live' IB15. This interpretation continues the merging of life and death which we observed in IC8 and have been observing in IC9. 'living' is a form of 'dying', 'dying' a sort of 'living'. b) 'keep' actually refers to a very short space of time which subjectively appears long to the narrator who is in the process of dying. c) 'dying' is understood not in the sense of OED v.¹ but as the verb noted in CB. It is not semantically anomalous for this verb to occur in the construction 'I keep dying'. d) The narrator is not governed by the normal restrictions between life and death. 1. He is a soul in purgatory who keeps suffering the pains of dying. 2. The narrator represents Christ who continually dies for each soul, and thus repeats the action many times over.

In the example we are considering from how it is, 'I keep dying' is followed by 'in a dying age'.

'age' OED sb. I. A period of existence. 1. The time that any animal or vegetable has lived; the length of time that anything has existed in its present form or state; length of existence. 2. The whole duration of the life or existence of any being or thing; the ordinary duration of life. 5. A naturally distinct portion of the existence of a man or other being; a period or stage of life. 6. esp. The latter part of life, when the physical effects of protracted existence become apparent; old age. 7. Hence, The physical effects or qualities themselves; oldness, senility. Of things:

²⁶ Molloy, Trilogy, p.22.

Maturity. II. A period of time. 8. The period of time contemporary with the lifetime of any one; the generation of men to which any one belongs. (Used in fixing a date, but not as a measure.) 9. A lifetime taken as a measure of time; a generation. 10. A long but indefinite space of time, marked by the succession of men l. b. often loosely in exaggeration. c. occas. used for A century. 11. Hist. Any great period or portion of human history distinguished by certain characters real or mythical, as the Golden Age, the Patriarchal Age, the Bronze Age, the Age of the Reformation, the Middle Ages, the Prehistoric Age. 12. Geol. A great period or stage of the history of the Earth, distinguished by its leading physical features; an aeon.

Interpretations for 'a dying age' include the following:

a) 'age' refers to the narrator, that he is old, at the age close to death.

b) 'age' refers to the age of the world in which he exists; 1. The epoch itself is drawing to an end. 2. It is an epoch in which a lot of people die. 3. The environment is degenerating. 4. The concept of an 'age' is dying, that is, time itself is in a state of arrested deterioration, hence the narrator's failure to complete the act of dying. (See IIB6xiii in which it will be considered that the narrator is stuck in time.) 5. As with 4, except that time itself is not objectively in an arrested state, but seems to be to the narrator because he is undergoing the experience of death.

iii) The following examples involve the im/possibility of the narrator's dying.

no appetite a crumb of tunny then mouldy eat mouldy
no/need to worry I won't die I'll never die of hunger
(p.8, 18) (c.r. 'appetite' IIA6; 'crumb' IIA4; 'tunny' IIA3;
'eat' IIA5; 'hunger' IIA6)

Some readings for 'I won't die I'll never die of hunger' are: a) Reading the two as separate statements. This leads to 1. 'I won't die' is the narrator's comment that eating mouldy food will not lead to this death. 2. 'I won't die' is the narrator's categorical statement that he will not die. This may be interpreted literally as an objective

statement by the narrator, that he is immortal (or already dead); or hyperbolically, the narrator's subjective statement that it feels as if he will never die (his dying is taking a long time). 3. 'I'll never die of hunger' plays upon the cliché in which 'die' is used hyperbolically (OED sense 7) The narrator comments that he has sufficient food not to die of hunger since one can in the reader's world literally starve to death, thus playing upon the cliché. 4. The narrator cannot die of hunger, he does not need to eat to survive.

b) The two *as* indicating interdependent statements: 1. 'of hunger' modifies both 'I won't die' and 'I'll never die', so that the narrator begins to say that he will not die of hunger and corrects 'not' to 'never'. As with above, 3 and 4, this may be because he has a never-ending supply of food (c.r. IIA), or it may indicate that he does not need to eat to live. 2. The narrator categorically states that he will not die, as a general statement of fact; from this it follows that one of the possible causes of death in the reader's world, lack of food, cannot cause death to the narrator, since nothing can.

I see me on my face close my eyes not the blue the others/at the back and see me on my face the moth opens the tongue/comes out lolls in the mud and no question of thirst either no/question of dying of thirst either all this time vast stretch of/time (p.9, 4) (c.r. 'open' IA17; 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'thirst' IIA6)

Some readings for this example are:

a) 'no question of dying of thirst' refers back to the tongue's lolling in the mud. The way these actions have been described (especially the use of the definite article with body parts, instead of the possessive pronoun for example) conveys the impression that the mouth and tongue act independently, so that 'no question of thirst' reads as the narrator's attempt to work out the reason(s) for the/his

mouth and tongue having performed these actions. 'no question of dying of thirst' then is an expansion and repetition of this statement, 'dying' interpreted hyperbolically as a cliché.

b) As with the previous example, (p.8, 18), indeed because of this other example, another reading is presented in which 'dying' is understood literally. Thus 1. The narrator will not die of thirst because there is an abundance of liquid. 2. 'thirst' cannot lead to the narrator's death, although other events may, because he does not need liquid to keep alive. 3. The narrator cannot die of thirst because he cannot die at all.

In discussing 'a dying age' we suggested that one reading was that time was deteriorating, being arrested, an interpretation reinforced by the occurrence after 'dying of thirst' of 'all this time vast stretch of time'. We have been observing an ambiguity between whether such statements are literal/objective fact or hyperbolic/subjective; 'vast stretch of time' is ambiguous in the same way, either there is a great deal of time because he will never die (he has all the time in the world) or his death seems to be taking such a long time.

See further examples concerning the question of whether or not the narrator and his companion(s) can die:

Krim dead are you mad one doesn't die here and with that with/his long index claw Kram shaken pierces the mud two little/flues to the skins then to Krim right for you they are warm/Krim to Kram roles reversed it's the mud Kram we'll leave/them open and see one year two years Kram's finger skins still/warm (p.102, 15) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'mud' IIB6; 'open' IA17)

never a gleam no never a soul no never a voice no I the first/yes never stirred no crawled no a few yards no ate pause ATE/good and deep no if he knows what's in the sack no never had/the curiosity no if he thinks he can die one day pause DIE ONE/DAY no (p.106, 1) (c.r. 'ate' IIA5; 'know' IA7; 'sack' IIA9; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

if he talks to himself no thinks no believes in god yes every day/no wishes to die yes but doesn't expect to no he expects to stay/where he is yes flat as a cowclap on his belly yes in the mud yes/without motion yes without thought yes eternally yes (p.107, 1) (c.r. 'mud' IIB5)

a sack that if one died here one might say had belonged to one/dead at last having let it go at the last then sunk beneath the/mud but no and so a simple sack pure and simple a small coal-/sack to the feel five stone six stone wet jute food inside (p.120, 20) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'dead' IC10, 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6; 'food' IIA1)

The examples considered thus far in this section (CI9iii) have concerned not dying, that the narrator cannot complete the act of dying, that death is not a possibility in the narrator's world. The following two examples consider it a possibility:

abandoned here effect of hope that hangs together still the/eternal straight line effect of the pious wish not to die before/my time in the dark the mud not to mention other causes (p.52, 9) (c.r. 'abandon' IIB5; 'mud' IIB6)

Among readings of the above example (p.52, 9) are:

a) 'my time' as a common expression referring to when the speaker expects to die:

'time' OED sb. 15. b. Qualified by poss. pron. as his, her, its; often ellipt. for time of death, of childbirth, etc.; before (his, etc.) time, prematurely.

The narrator comments that he does not wish to die until he has lived out his natural life expectancy.

b) 'my time' is modified by 'in the dark the mud'; thus the narrator does not wish to die until he has spent time there.

c) 'other causes' refers not to 'effect of hope' but to 'the dark the mud' which are said to be possible causes of death (c.r. 'mud' IIB6).

d) The wish not to die before his time is described as 'pious':

'pious' OED a. 1. 'Careful of the duties owed by created beings to God' (J.); characterized by or showing reverence and obedience to God (or the gods); faithful to religious duties and observances; devout, godly, religious. a. Of persons. b. Of actions, things, etc. c. Of fraud or the

like: Practised for the sake of religion or for a good object, or 'under the appearance of religion' (J.).

This suggests 1. That the narrator feels it is his duty not to wish to die before his time; he may wish to die before his time, but perceives that this is not dutiful of him. 2. The narrator is using the term 'pious' ironically; he longs to die, but cannot.

so things may change no answer end no answer I may choke/no answer sink no answer sully the mud no more no answer/the dark no answer trouble the peace no more no answer the/silence no answer die no answer DIE screams I MAY DIE screams/I SHALL DIE screams good (p.160, 13) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6)

In the penultimate stanza of how it is, then (p.160, 13), the narrator states not only that he may die, but that he will die. The response to this, 'screams', neither confirms nor denies this statement/question/demand, so that the narrator has not died in the course of how it is, but still awaits death when the book ends. The narrator's only progress has been from 'may' ('die') to 'shall' ('die').

blessed day last of the journey all goes without a hitch the joke/dies too old the convulsions die I come back to the open air/to serious things had I only the little finger to raise to be/wafted straight to Abraham's bosom I'd tell him to stick it/up (p.42, 20) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'open' IA17; 'things' IA10)

One reading of 'the convulsions die' is that the laughter ceases. That 'convulsions' can also occur prior to death leads to a second reading which plays upon the use of the word 'die' in collocation with 'convulsions' by suggesting that the 'convulsions' cease and the creature (convulsed) dies.

way off on the right the tugging hand the mouth shut grim/the staring eyes glued to the mud perhaps we shall come back/it will be dusk the earth of childhood glimmering again/streaks of dying amber in a murk of ashes the earth must have/been on fire when I see us we are already at hand (p.35, 4) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6)

.../my life in the light a murmur a few mouldy/old reliables azure that never dies morning with evening in/its train other subdivisions of time one or two usual flowers/night

always too light whatever may be said to the contrary (p.104, 18) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

In the last two examples (p.35, 4; p.104, 18) 'die' occurs in a cliché and is interpreted to mean fading/fade; however, granted the context which we have seen before with reference to the movement of time in the narrator's world, there is also a question of play upon their being interpreted literally. In the first example (p.35, 4), it is the 'earth of childhood' which is 'streaks of dying amber', linking the 'dying' light/colour to the narrator's childhood.

(2) 'mortal'

'mortal' OED a. 1. Subject to death, destined to die. 2. Causing death, deadly, fatal. Const. to. Now only of diseases, wounds and blows. b. fig. Destructive or fatal (to a thing). 3. Aiming at the destruction of an adversary. a. Of war, a battle etc: Fought to the death. b. Of an enemy: That will be satisfied only with the death of the object of his hostility; relentless, implacable. Also fig. c. Of enmity, hatred, and the like: Pursued to the death, unappeasable; 'deadly'. Hence fig. or hyperbolically, as a mortal aversion. 4. Of pain, grief, fear, and the like; Such as might cause death; deadly in its effects. Often used hyperbolically and jocularly. 5. Of sin: Entailing spiritual death. 6. Pertaining to or accompanying death. 7. transf. (from sense 1.) Of or pertaining to man as a creature living on this earth and destined to die; relating to humanity. 8. In colloquial and slang uses. a. Extremely great 'awful'. b. As an emphatic expletive. c. slang. Long and tedious.

OED sb. 2. One who is mortal; a human being in contrast with an immortal. b. Often used playfully for 'person'. In negative contexts an emphatic equivalent for '(any) one' '(no) one'.

from the next mortal to the next leading nowhere and saving/correction no other goal than the next mortal cleave to him/give him a name train him up bloody him all over with/Roman capitals gorge on his fables unite for life in stoic love/to the last shrimp and a little longer (p.69, 1) (c.r. 'cleave' IA12; 'gorge' IIA5; 'life' IB12; 'love' IA1; 'shrimp' IIA3)

The two examples above have among their readings: a) 'mortal' describes the creatures who are torturers/victims, 'mortal' in OED sb. sense 2b. b) Sense 2a then plays upon this since it is

not clear whether the creatures are, literally, 'mortal' -- see discussion above regarding the im/possibility of the narrator's dying. c) 'mortal' describes the pain which the creatures will undergo in the relationship, as OED a. sense 4. Since the examples are ambiguous between all of these readings there is an association between the torturer/victim relationship and the ability to 'die' (see discussion in IC12, regarding whether the torture will lead to the death of the victim).

I call it it doesn't come I can't live without it I call it
with all my/strength it's not strong enough I grow mortal
again (p.16, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'live' IB15)

'I grow mortal again' is semantically anomalous if 'mortal' is understood in OED senses, liable to death. It implies that one can move between a state of being liable to death and being not liable to death, between being mortal and immortal. This recalls problems we noticed in interpreting 'I keep dying' (p.18, 14). Immortality is not something which can fluctuate -- proof that you are 'mortal' would be if you were to die; once that happens, you are clearly not immortal. In section IB12 various readings were listed as to what the narrator calls and cannot live without. The following are among readings for 'I grow mortal again':

a) 'mortal' is understood hyperbolically, as is 'I can't live without it'. The narrator jests that without 'it' he becomes liable to death, thus playing upon the cliché 'I can't live without it'.

b) 'mortal' is understood literally; he becomes destined to 'die' if he does not have 'it'; 'it' is something that he literally cannot live without.

c) This still raises the question of how he can move from being the opposite of 'mortal', immortal, to being 'mortal', if 'mortal' is understood literally. We should recall here the discussion regarding the

narrator's 'species'; he did not seem sure if he was human (and therefore liable to death) or not. 'mortal' then is understood to mean 'human', that he feels 'human' again (see OED sense sb. 2).

d) Since we saw other uses of 'mortal' to refer to the creatures in the victim/torturer relationship, the narrator may here be saying that he will be able to take part in that relationship, once he has 'it'; we have seen that it is from this relationship that the 'voice' is produced, without which the narrator cannot live.

e) Playing also on the preceding reading; the dying is not literal, but one that can recur, 'die' in the sense recorded in CB, 'to experience orgasm'. A different reading with 'mortal' having the same sense would be: 'I grow, mortal (,) again'; in which 'mortal' is not the complement of 'grow'; 'grow' therefore refers to erection.

* * * * *

IC10 'dead'

'dead' OED A. adj. I. Literally, and in senses directly connected. *Said of things that have been alive. 1. That has ceased to live; deprived of life; in that state in which the vital functions and powers have come to an end and are incapable of being restored. 2. Bereft of sensation or vitality; benumbed, insensible. a. Of parts of the body. (Also fig.) b. Of persons: Deathlike, insensible, in a swoon. Obs. 3. As good as dead in respect to (something); insensible to. 5. fig. Of things (practices, feelings etc.): No longer in existence, or in use; extinct, obsolete, perished, past. **Said of things naturally without life. 6. Not endowed with life, inanimate. ***Transferred applications of the literal senses. 10. Devoid of 'life' or living organisms; hence, barren, infertile, yielding nothing. II. Deprived of or wanting some 'vital' or characteristic physical quality. 14. Of sound: Without resonance, dull, muffled. III. Without animation, vigour, or activity; inactive, quiet, dull. 17. Without active force or practical effect; ineffectual, inoperative. IV. Without motion (relatively or absolutely). 24. Characterized by complete and abrupt cessation of motion, action, or speech: as a dead stop, a sudden complete stop. V. Unrelieved, unbroken; absolute; completely; utmost. 26. Of calm or silence: Profound, deep.

i) The following example of 'dead' occurs in an anal context:

papa no idea building trade perhaps some branch or other
fell/off the scaffolding on his arse no the scaffolding that
fell and he/with it landed on his arse dead burst it must
have been him or/the uncle God knows (p.86, 11) (c.r.
'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'know' IA7; 'sack bursts'
IIA9viii)

One reading of this example is 'landed on his arse, dead, burst, it must have been him', that is, 'dead' describes the father/uncle after the fall, as does 'burst', describing the effects of the impact of his fall on his body. That the narrator details that he lands on his 'arse' is significant, given the other examples we have already seen of death being related to anal sex (especially see the wife's fall). A reading which plays on this further is 'arse dead' in which 'dead' and possibly 'burst' (c.r. IIA9viii) modify the 'arse'.

ii) In the following examples, 'dead' co-occurs with 'alive' or occurs in contexts in which being 'dead' is not clearly distinguished from, or is merged with, being alive.

on what the nails that can go on the hand dead a fraction
of an/inch life a little slow to leave them the hair the
head dead a/hoop rolled by a child me higher than him me
I fall disappear/the hoop rolls on a little way loses way
rocks falls disappears/the garden-path is still (p.95, 9)
(c.r. 'life' IB12)

false like that dead head the hand alive still the little
table/tossing in the clouds the woman jumping to her feet
and/rushing out into the wind (p.18, 1) (c.r. 'alive' IB13)

the people above whining about not living strange at such
a/time such a bubble in the head all dead now others for
whom/it is not a life and what follows very strange namely
that I/understand them (p.46, 9) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'life'
IB12)

In the last example (p.46, 9), it is ambiguous whether 'all dead' modifies 'the people above' or whether 'all' modifies 'dead', meaning 'totally insensitive'. 'now' is also ambiguous; according to one reading, it modifies 'all dead'; according to another 'others'. In

the latter reading it is then weird that people who are all dead (that is, none of them are left alive) are 'whining' -- this was discussed in IB15. According to another reading, 'now' is telescoped for 'now, now'; it refers to both 'all dead' and 'others'.

question if always good old question if always like that since/the world world for me from the murmurs of my mother/shat into the incredible tohu-bohu

like that unable to take a step particularly at night without/stopping dead on one leg eyes closed breath caught ears cocked/for pursuers and rescuers (p.47, 17) (c.r. 'mother' IB8; 'shit' IIB1)

'stopping dead' is a cliché (OED sense 4) which is played upon here when the narrator questions if he could not move without 'stopping dead'/if he was 'stopped dead', ever since birth. As a cliché, it suggests that he has not been able to move since he was born. Reference to birth results in 'dead' being reliteralised, so that the narrator's question is whether he was dead since birth.

nothing too to be sure often nothing in spite of everything/
dead as mutton warm and rosy always inclined that way
ever/since the womb if I may judge by what I know less
and less/that's true of myself since the womb the panting
stops I/murmur it (p.103, 15) (c.r. 'mutton' IIA4; 'spite'
IA16; 'womb' IB6)

Again, an ambiguous construction gives as one of its readings that the narrator was 'dead' from birth.

orgy of false being life in common brief shames I am not
dead/to inexistence not irretrievably time will tell it's telling
but/what a hog's wallow pah not even not even pah brief
move-/ments of the lower face profit while ye may silence
gather while/ye may deathly silence patience patience (p.76,
14) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'wallow' IIB6; 'deathly' IC9)

'inexistence'¹ OED The fact or condition of existing in something; inherence.

'inexistence'² The fact or condition of not existing; non-existence.

If 'dead to' is read in OED sense 3, the narrator comments that he is not 'dead to', insensible to/unaware of 'inexistence'. One

reading for this is that it is his own inexistence ('inexistence'¹ and² both possible) of which he is aware. That 'inexistence'¹ in OED means 'non-existence' plays upon and reliteralises 'dead'. 'inexistence' also plays upon 'false being' since both are composed of meanings 'negative + being/existence'. That this is an 'orgy' relates, according to one sense of 'orgy', the false being/inexistence to the sexual relationships the narrator takes part in. 'not irretrievably' suggests that he is dead to 'inexistence',²⁷ but that this condition may change, which is acceptable when we read 'dead to' as meaning 'unaware'. However we have already argued that one reading involves a reliteralisation of 'dead' and we recall that we have seen other examples in which death is not a permanent condition in how it is (for example, 'I keep dying' p.18, 14; 'I grow mortal again' p.16, 1)

what if he were I would have said it seems to me in the end/to myself but I may be mistaken and God knows I'm not/intelligent otherwise I'd be dead (p.70, 8) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7; 'know' IA7)

The idiom 'God knows' co-occurs with the idiom 'if I wasn't ... I'd be dead' in this stanza. 'I'm not intelligent otherwise I'd be dead' has among its readings: a) That it is intelligent to be dead, an intelligent person chooses death. b) That 'intelligence' leads to death (God's punishment?). c) A play on a); that one can be 'dead' and 'intelligent' simultaneously, that one can be both 'dead' and mentally alive. The mixing of the idioms has a reliteralising effect, since God traditionally has power over life and death.

yesterday in grandpa's notes the place where he wishes he were/dead weakness happily honour of the family short-lived he/stuck it out till his time was up whereas happy

²⁷ 'inexistent' also occurs: p.127, 9; 'an inexistent victim', where it plays upon the fictional existence of the victims, that they are the narrator's inventions.

me tedium/inaction don't make me laugh question of character and the/business in the blood (p.89, 20) (c.r. 'family' IB9; 'live' IB15; 'make' IA9,IB2)

According to one reading of this stanza (p.89, 20), 'short-lived' modifies the grandfather's 'wish', saying that he did not 'wish' very long. That the 'wish' is for death plays upon this by suggesting that the grandfather did not live long. That he 'stuck it out' implies that life is an unpleasant obligation; the narrator implies a contrast between the grandfather's endurance of life and his own ('whereas happy me'). 'this business in the blood' has among its readings: a) The ability to endure life is inherited. b) A reference to the torture sequence.

bright dark that family for every hundred times they come/
three laughs four laughs brought off the kind that convulse
an/instant resurrect an instant then leave for deader then
before (p.119, 5) (c.r. 'family' IB9; 'come' IA6; 'kind'
IB10; 'resurrect' IB16)

A non-literal reading for 'dead' in this last example is OED sense III, 'inactive'. The literal meaning of 'dead' is brought to mind however and played upon by its co-occurrence with 'resurrect' and 'convulse' (which we have already seen co-occurring with 'die' p.42, 20-4). Once again, being 'dead' is not an absolute state, but recoverable (since the laughs 'resurrect' before returning him to 'deader than before'). Death is also shown in how it is to be a relative condition, because it occurs as a comparable 'deader'.

to the effect it is leaving me like the others then nothing/
nothing but nothing then Bom life with Bom the old words/
back from the dead a few old words his wish ... (p.104,
14) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'life' IB12)

If it is the 'old words' which are 'back from the dead' then we interpret 'dead' metaphorically. If it is 'Bom', we may also interpret 'back from the dead' metaphorically, for example, that the narrator had not seen/heard him for a long time. The other occur-

rences we have seen of 'death/die/dead' suggest that we entertain the idea that it is to be interpreted literally (also, see Appendix 1). In both cases, we note that being 'dead' is something that can be returned from.

YOUR LIFE HERE long pause YOUR LIFE HERE good and deep long/pause this dead soul what appal I can imagine YOUR LIFE/unfinished for murmur light of day light of night little scene (p.105, 12) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'soul' IC11)

That 'dead' modifies 'soul' makes it ambiguous as to whether he is referring to one alive or dead (c.r. 'soul' IC11). One reading for lines 13--4 is that 'unfinished' modifies 'life'.

some on the bough flutter on to the reawakening black dead/flaunting in the green shit yes some in this condition manage/two springs a summer and half three-quarters (p.117, 17) (c.r. 'shit' IIB1)

According to one reading of p.117, 17, something that is 'dead' is also 'reawakening', even 'flaunting'.

the voice extorted a few words life because of cry that's the/proof good and deep no more is needed a little cry all is not/dead one drinks one gives to drink (p.133, 3) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'drink' IIA7)

'all is not dead' operates as a cliché meaning 'all is not lost'; the correlation between 'life' and the 'voice' ('cry') however plays upon this.

...it's someone each in his turn as our justice wills and/ never any end it wills that too all dead or none (p.144, 11) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

This last example considers the possibility of death or not and suggests that they are all trapped in a cycle which maintains them in the same condition (c.r. 'drink' IIA7; 'piss' IIB1, also p.133, 4).

iv) 'dead' also occurs:

In the conversation between Kram and Krim as to whether the creatures are dead (p.102, 10), quoted in 'die' IC9.

In the following three examples, where it is ambiguous whether

'dead' refers to the narrator or the 'sack' (c.r. 'sack' IIA9): p.43, 10-13; p.120, 20--3; p.101, 16--22.

Conclusion to IC8 'death', IC9 'die', IC10 'dead'

We are now in a position to make more general conclusions regarding death in how it is having observed occurrences of 'death/die/dead'.

From the examples in IC8i, IC9i, IC10i we saw that reference to death co-occurs with reference to sex; in the instance of the narrator's wife, literal death follows the 'death' of love. This connection between death and sex is directly emphasised in the use of puns on the word 'die'. In some instances, we argued that interpreting 'die' sexually avoided the semantic anomaly which would be presented by reading 'die' in OED literal senses. Death is seen to be the result of sex in how it is (which in one sense it is in the reader's world too, since life results from sex and death from life) and sexual orgasm a kind of death in itself. We noted that the association between death and sex occurs in other of Beckett's works. We also noted particularly the co-occurrence in how it is of references to death with anal (sexual) references.

Death and life, living and dying are not clearly distinguished states in how it is. This is common in Beckett. It is not clear in several of his works whether the narrator is alive or dead:

I don't know when I died.²⁸

There is naturally another possibility that does not escape me, though it would be a great disappointment to have it confirmed, and that is that I am dead already²⁹ and that all continues more or less as when I was not.

²⁸ 'The Calmative', Four Novellas, p.51.

²⁹ Malone, Trilogy, p.201.

... till you begin to wonder if you have not died without knowing and gone to hell³⁰ or been born again into an even worse palce than before.

I'll sham dead now, whom they couldn't bring to life.³¹

This merging of life and death has various critical interpretations, for example: 1. That Beckett regards life as so dreadful an experience that he terms it dying. According to this interpretation, the use of the term 'dying' when we would expect 'living' is metaphoric. 2. Man is dying from the moment of birth. Only death can reverse the act of birth. Hence death is viewed as birth (as we saw also in IB5) resulting in such statements from Beckett protagonists as:

I am being given, if I may venture the impression, birth into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already, of the great cunt of existence.... My head will be the last to die³². My story ended I'll be living yet. I shall say no more.

For death is a condition³³ I have never been able to conceive to my satisfaction.

Cornell comments that this is not the traditional death-as-rebirth figure:

Death is to be desired because it reverses the act of birth, returning to a condition of pre-consciousness. Never in any of his writing does Beckett consider death as a rebirth.³⁴

Beckett telescopes the experience of life as being an experience of dying, since man is literally nearer to death every second that he lives. Several critics make comments which support this view:

³⁰ Malone, Trilogy, p.208.

³¹ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.298.

³² Malone, Trilogy, p.260.

³³ Molloy, Trilogy, p.63.

³⁴ E.F. Cornwell, 'Samuel Beckett: The flight from self', PMLA, 88 (1973), p.43.

The Lost Ones is entirely about this perception that living is a gradual dying. One of Beckett's favourite conceits is the birth into death.³⁵

In Comment C'est, the direct rapport between birth and death, living and dying, becomes clear when the hero expresses 'l'impression d'être plutôt à l'âge l'on meurt dans le noir la boue'. Man is born dying but the fact is usually admitted only after many years. By focusing on men who are undeniably in the process of wasting away, waiting for the end, Beckett presents an image³⁶ of the human condition uncluttered by superfluous detail.

3. The creature is physically dead, but spiritually still alive. Levy believes that the creature in how it is is a damned soul in hell who is not aware that he has died (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

... Bom's story is of a human soul who does not know that he has died. Just as he clings to a body that was never born ('old sack old cord'), so he gropes towards a death that has already happened: 'I SHALL DIE'. There are a number of hints that Bom may be a damned soul. First, the image of Bom crawling and feeding in the mud is not the representation of a living man of flesh and blood. Second, the frequent references to 'the life above', which we have already noted in a different context, intimate that the region below, in the mud, is hell. Third, Bom has just enough sense of God³⁷ and of grace to be forever tormented by their absence.

It is not yet clear whether the narrator is alive or dead. We don't know whether the narrator's suggestions that death is non-absolute and also that death is impossible for him are hyperbolic, and thus non-literal; or literal. This ambiguity is especially so because of the use of clichés which occur in contexts which lead to their reliteralisation. If the former, then we interpret these statements as the exaggerations of one for whom life was so awful that the time until death seems eternal ('vast stretch of time'). If the latter,

³⁵ Copeland, Art and the Artist, p.82.

³⁶ S.J. Rosen, Samuel Beckett and the Pessimistic Tradition (New Jersey, 1976), p.65.

³⁷ E. Levy, Voice of Species, pp.89--90.

then we note that the narrator is in a state beyond the truth conditions which apply to the reader's world, that he is in a state between life and death, suspended outside the effects of time (c.r. 'mud' IIB6).

We also noted that the absence of the 'voice' is equated with death, punningly; this continues the equation between 'life' and the 'voice'. The narrator's only 'life', the only activity he has, as we learn from the end of the book, is that which he invents. Further, he also reminds us of another explanation for the narrator's strange state; he is, after all, as much a fictional character, invented by Beckett, as the characters Pim and Bom which he in turn invents (c.r. IB).

* * * * *

IC11 Other words relating to death: (1) 'bury', (2) 'soul', (3) 'number's up, (4) 'tomb', (5) 'vault', (6) 'effects', (7) 'shades', (8) 'hearse', (9) 'knell, (10) 'cortege'

In this section we will consider examples of various words which have senses related semantically to 'death', but which do not recur repeatedly in how it is.

i) The following examples are of such words occurring in a sexual context:

(1) 'bury'

'bury' OED v. 1. To deposit (a corpse) in the ground, in a tomb; to inter. Hence to commit (a corpse) to the sea, with appropriate funeral rites. 2. To put under ground for the same purposes as a corpse, e.g. to bury a person alive; to consign to the ground any carcass, decaying organized matter, rubbish, etc.; also, other things, in sign of their final abandonment or abrogation. 4. To plunge or sink deep in, so as to cover from view, to put out of sight.

there he is then again last figures the inevitable number 777777/at the instant when he buries the opener in the arse of number 777778 and is rewarded by a feeble cry cut short as we have/seen by the thump on skull who on being stimulated at the/same instant and in the same way by number 777776 makes his/own private moan which same fate (p.153, 11) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'arse' IC1; 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'make' IA9,IB2)

all I hear leave out more leave out all hear no more lie there in/my arms the ancient without end me we're talking of me/without end that buries all mankind to the last cunt they'd be/good moments in the dark the mud hearing nothing saying/nothing capable of nothing nothing (p.68, 13) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'cunt' IA3; 'mud' IIB6)

In these examples (p.153, 11; p.68, 13), one of the readings is to interpret 'buries' in OED sense 4. In the first example, however, there is play upon OED senses 1 and 2 in that the 'opener' as a phallic instrument (c.r. IA17) is being consigned to the 'arse' and not to a vagina; and is therefore being consigned to where it cannot produce life, to dead matter (c.r. IIB WASTE). In the second example, there is play upon being sunk into the 'end' as well as the 'cunt'; 'end' has senses both of 'death' and 'arse' (c.r. IC7) in how it is. (A further example of 'bury' is given below).

(2) 'soul'

'soul' OED sb. I. 2. The principle of thought and action in man, commonly regarded as an entity distinct from the body; the spiritual part of man in contrast to the purely physical. Also occas., the corresponding or analogous principle in animals. Freq. in connexion with, or in contrast to, body. 3. a. The seat of emotions, feelings, or sentiments; the emotional part of man's nature. b. Intellectual or spiritual power; high development of the mental faculties. 6. fig. Applied to persons: a. As a term of endearment or adoration. II. 8. The spiritual part of man considered in its moral aspect or in relation to God and His precepts. 9. The spiritual part of man regarded as surviving after death and as susceptible of happiness or misery in a future state. b. In phrases implying the death of a person. 10. Used in various asseverative phrases or as an exclamation, as by, for, on, or upon (one's) soul, etc. III. 11. The disembodied spirit of a (deceased) person, regarded as a separate entity, and as invested with some amount of form and personality. 12. A person, an individual; a living thing. Chiefly in enumeration, or with every. b. In negative phrases, esp. not a soul.

the morale at the outset before things got out of hand

satis-/factory ah the soul I had in those days the equanimity that's why they gave me a companion (p.27, 17) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Among readings for this example are: a) The narrator exclaims after emotions which he used to have, OED sense 3. This reading is emphasised by the co-occurrence of 'morale' with 'soul' and 'equanimity'. b) 'soul' in the sense of an individual OED sense 12, the nature of the companion he used to 'have'. c) There is then play upon reading b) with 'soul' in OED senses 9 and 11, that the person he 'had' (c.r. IA8) was dead. d) Also, using senses 9 and 11, play upon reading a), suggesting that the narrator no longer has his own soul, that he has become separated from the spiritual part of himself that lives on after death.

ii) In the following examples, words which have meanings related to death co-occur with reference to 'life/living/alive' etc., or without clear distinction between life and death.

(3) 'number's up'

'number' Concise OED n. 'one's number is up', (colloq.) one dies.

no more motion than a slab and forbidden to take our eyes/off him what's the use of that Krim says his number's up so is/mine we daren't leave him quick all number's up it's the only/solution (P.89, 16) (c.r. 'quick' IB1)

The idiom 'number's up' occurs in the context of 'quick' which can mean 'alive' (c.r. 'quick' IB1), so that according to one reading he is still alive but destined to die soon. That he has no more motion than a slab however queries whether he is not already dead. The reference to 'number' also anticipates part three where the narrator talks of the cycle of partner-changing referring to each creature by number (for example, see p.130, 1--11). Also, see the common colloquial use of 'up' in sexual contexts to mean 'erect'.

'bury'

Further example:

mad or worse transformed a la Haeckel born in Potsdam where/Klopstock too among others lived a space and laboured though/buried in Altona the shadow he casts

at evening with his face to the huge sun or his back I forget/it's not said the great shadow he casts towards his native east/the humanities I had my God and with that flashes of geography (p. 47, 4) (c.r. 'born' IB5; 'live' IB15; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the above example (p.47, 4) 'buried' is doubly ambiguous: a) Klopstock is now dead and buried and casts a metaphoric shadow, that is, his work is remembered. However, lines 7--9 detail a literal shadow which suggests that he is still alive. b) 'buried' is understood figuratively to mean deeply concentrating to the oblivion of all else, absorbed in his work.

(4) 'tomb'

'tomb' OED sb. 1. A place of burial; an excavation in earth or rock for the reception of a dead body, a grave. Also, a chamber or vault formed wholly or partly in the earth and, in early times, a tumulus or mound raised over the body.

the curtains parted part one I saw his friends come to visit him/where squatting in the deep shade of a tomb or a bo his fists/clenched on his knees he lived thus (p.59, 12) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'live' IB15)

This example (p.59, 12) follows the description of the death of the sage (p.59, 1) which we have already considered in some detail (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'die' IC9). According to one reading of lines 12--14 he is in the tomb, which would normally suggest (c.r. OED) that he is now dead, which coheres with the last line of the previous stanza ('dead at last', p.59, 11). His friends visiting him is consistent with this, coming to pay their respects to the dead, visiting his tomb as it is common to visit the grave of one loved or admired. However, it is not clear that he is lying dead in the tomb; 'he lived thus' could be read as a statement referring

back to how he used to live 'his fists clenched on his knees'. 'where squatting in the deep shade of a tomb', however, suggests that this is the position he was in in the tomb. 'he lived thus' suggests according to this reading that he was still alive when they came to visit him; life and death are then merged, after dying he is found to be living in a tomb. That the sage is on his knees (in prayer?), that his friends come to visit him when he is supposed to be dead but find him alive in the tomb, reinforces the comparison between the sage and Christ, which we observed in our previous examinations of this passage. According to another reading, he is not found in the 'tomb', but in the shadow that it casts, he has left the 'tomb' after death; 'in the deep shade of a tomb' being ambiguous as to whether he is inside the tomb or just its shadow.

(5) 'vault'

'vault' OED sb.¹ 1. A structure of stones or bricks so combined as to support each other over a space and serve as a roof or covering to this; an arched surface covering some space or area in the interior of a building, and usually supported by walls or pillars; an arched roof or ceiling. 3. b. A burial chamber (originally with arched roof), usually altogether or partly under ground.

the voice quaqu on all sides then within in the little vault/empty closed eight planes bone-white if there were a light a/tiny flame all would be white ten words fifteen words like a/fume of sighs when the panting stops then the storm the breath/token of life part three and last it must be nearly ended (p.140, 11) (c.r. 'quaqu' IIB3; 'life' IB12; 'end' IC7)

According to one reading, the 'voice' and the breath ('token of life') are located within the vault suggesting that the signs of life are coming from within the death chamber.³⁸

(6) 'effects'

'effect' OED sb. 4. b. pl. To leave no effects: to leave

³⁸ Compare: Matthew 24. 29--31; I Kings 19. 12.

nothing for one's heirs.

till the fine day when flip he vanishes leaving me his effects and/the sooth comes true the new life no more journeys no more/blue a murmur in the mud that's true all must be true and the/other on his way ten yards fifteen yards what I for Pim Pim/for me (p.69, 6) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'life' IB12; 'mud' IIB6)

That Pim leaves the narrator his 'effects' suggests that he has died; but this is followed by reference to 'new life'.

(7) 'shades'

'shade' OED sb. 1. Partial or comparative darkness; absence of complete illumination; esp. the comparative darkness caused by a more or less opaque object intercepting the direct rays of the sun or other luminary. 2. In plural. a. The shades (of night, of evening, etc.): the darkness of night; the growing darkness after sunset. Also fig. b. The shades: the darkness of the nether world; the abode of the dead, Hades. (Often indistinguishable from the collective plural of sense 6). 6. The visible but impalpable form of a dead person, a ghost. Also, a disembodied spirit, an inhabitant of Hades (= L umbra) chiefly with allusion to pagan mythology. Often collective plural, the shades: the world of disembodied spirits, Hades.

so many words so many lost one every three two every five/first the sound then the sense same ratio or else not one not one/lost I hear all understand all and live again have lived again I don't say above in the light among the shades in search of/shade I say here YOUR LIFE HERE in a word my voice otherwise/nothing therefore nothing otherwise my voice therefore my/voice so many words strung together to the effect first example (p.104, 7) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'live' IB12)

'light' here plays upon 'shade' OED sense 1; that the narrator talks of 'living' among the shades however suggests OED senses 2b and 6, especially that he talks of living 'again', suggesting that the next 'life' will be in Hades (where one is dead).

the arms in the middle go through me and part of the bodies/shades through a shade the scene is empty in the mud the sky/goes out the ashes darken no world left for me now but mine/very pretty only not like that it doesn't happen like that (p.35, 13) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

According to one reading 'shades' refers to the images of the young couple that the narrator has just seen in the mud. Calling them 'shades' however plays upon OED senses 2b and 6, suggesting

that he is seeing images from Hades of souls that are dead. 'shades through a shade' has also as one reading that when the narrator tries to touch the images, he is a 'shade' himself, he is dead (like Klopstock?). As with the previous example, the reference to the sky going out, and to the ashes darkening, plays upon OED sense 1.

(8) 'hearse', (9) 'knell', (10) 'cortege'

'hearse' OED sb. 8. A carriage or car constructed for carrying the coffin at a funeral. (The current use.)

'knell' OED sb. The sound made by a bell when struck or rung, esp. the sound of a bell rung slowly and solemnly, as immediately after a death or at a funeral. b. fig. A sound announcing the death of a person or the passing away of something; an omen of death or extinction. Also, allusively, in phrases expressing or having reference to death or extinction. c. transf. A sound resembling a knell; a doleful cry, dirge, etc.

'cortege' OED A train of attendants, or of people in procession.

'cortege' Concise OED n. Train of attendants; (esp. funeral) procession.

and sudden light on the sacks at what moment renewed at some moment/in the life of the couples since it is while the victim/journeys as we have seen and indeed see that the abandoned/tormentor murmurs or else ring the knell while following the/hearse it's possible too there's a poor light (p.151, 7) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'couple' IA5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'abandoned' IIB5)

those dragging on in front those dragging on behind whose/lot has been whose lot will be what your lot is endless cortege/of sacks burst in the interest of all (p.53, 19) (c.r. 'behind' IC3; 'end' IC7; 'sack' IIA9)

In these three examples, the procession of creatures (in the last example, the 'sacks' and also possibly the creatures carrying them) is compared to a funeral procession by the use of the words 'hearse', 'knell', and 'cortege'.

* * * * *

IC12 Other words relating to death; unnatural death: (1) 'skull', (2) 'fatal', (3) 'post mortem', (4) 'kill', (5) 'butcher', (6) 'drown', (7) 'martyr', (8) 'passion'

(c.r. IA11--17)

The following examples concern the possibility of unnatural death; in particular, death as a result of the torturer/victim relationship. They should therefore be cross referenced to IA11--17, in which it was argued that the creatures' relationship was both sexual affection and aggression; also to IC7--10, where we saw an association between death and sex.

(1) 'skull'

'skull' OED 1. The bony case or frame containing or enclosing the brain of man or other vertebrate animals; the cranium, also, the whole bony framework or skeleton of the head. d. A representation of a human skull, as an emblem or reminder of death or mortality.

In 'thump' IA15, we saw that one of the sequences in the torture is to thump the victim on the skull; in IA we were concerned with the sexual/violent connotations of 'thump'. Here we should note:

a) That to thump someone on the head is not the same as to thump them on other parts of the body, such as for example, thumping them on the arm, since a blow to the head can result in death. b) That the narrator does not say 'thump the head' but expressly states 'skull' results in the deathly connotations of 'skull' being brought into play, especially see OED sense 1d, that 'skull' is commonly used to represent human death or mortality. Thus it emphasises that death could result from this 'thump'; it also suggests that the head which the narrator 'thumps' is already dead, giving a grisly necrophiliac sense to the scene and also reminding us of the examples which we saw in which it was not clear if the creatures were currently alive in the sense that it is understood in the reader's world.

Examples of 'thump on skull' will be found: p.69, 19; p.71, 9, p.75, 9; p.75, 16--17; p.75, 18--19; p.76, 6; p.76, 21; p.83, 19; p.84, 12; p.99, 1; p.99, 5; p.99, 8; p.100, 16; p.150, 14.

(2) 'fatal'

'fatal' OED a. 6. Producing or resulting in death, destruction, or irreversible ruin, material or immaterial; deadly, destructive, ruinous. b. Of a weapon, bait, etc., Sure to kill, deadly. 7. the hyperbolic use of the word in sense 6 gives rise to a weakened sense; Causing serious harm, disastrous, gravely mischievous.

that or something else the day comes that word again we come/to the day at the end of how long no figures vast stretch of/time when clawed in the armpit long since an open sore for/try a new place one is tempted desperation more sensitive the/eye the glans no only confuse him fatal thing avoid at all costs (p.70, 11) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17; 'thing' IA10)

The narrator uses 'fatal' in OED sense 7, referring to the bad effect of confusion. According to another reading, however, he uses it literally: a) In sense 6a, referring to the possibility of death resulting from torture. b) In sense 6b referring to the tin-opener as a 'fatal thing'; a deadly weapon ('thing' also as sexual pun c.r. IA10)

(3) 'post mortem'

'post mortem' OED adv. phr., a. and sb. A. advb. phrase. After death. B. adj. Taking place, formed or done after death. C. sb. Short for post-mortem examination. b. attrib. Connected with post-mortem examinations, as post mortem book, record, room, table.

'post mortem'² Concise OED a. & n. (Examination) made after death, esp. to determine its cause; (colloq.) (discussion) after conclusion (of game, election, etc.)

thump on skull no point in post mortems and then what then/what we'll try and see last words cut thrust a few words DO/YOU LOVE ME CUNT no disappearance of Pim end of part two/leaving only part three and last one can't go on one goes on/as before can one ever stop put a stop that's more like it one/can't go on one can't stop put a stop (p.99, 1) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'love' IA1; 'cunt' IA3; 'end' IC7)

'no point in post mortems' plays upon two senses of 'post mortems': a) In the colloquial sense that there is no point in reviewing what went wrong, in a matter not usually as serious as death. b) The original meaning is suggested since it follows 'thump on skull' and also is followed by 'last words', 'disappearance of Pim', 'cut thrust', suggesting that the torture may be the cause of death. Usually, post mortems are carried out when there is some doubt as to the cause of death, for example, if murder is suspected.

(4) 'kill'

'kill' OED v. 2. To put to death; to deprive of life; to slay, slaughter. 6. In hyperbolic use: To come near to killing.

I am not going to kill myself demanding something beyond his/powers that he stand on his head for example or on his feet or/kneel most certainly not (p.71, 13) (c.r. 'stand' IA10)

so on with now and then lest he get rusty return to the armpit/the song ascends that's working thump doused on the spot all/this is killing me I'm about to give up ... (p.76, 1) (c.r. 'thump' IA15)

In both these examples, 'kill' is read in the hyperbolic sense, with play upon its literal sense, given that both examples are from descriptions of the torture scenes. It is significant that the word 'kill' is used in this context of the narrator, when his 'life' depends upon being able to extort the 'voice' (c.r. IB12i).

(5) 'butcher'

(c.r. 'butcher' IIA5)

'butcher' OED v. 1. trans. To slaughter in the manner of a butcher, or in a brutal and indiscriminate manner.

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely/curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears/of unbutcherable brother (p.82, 1) (c.r. 'prick' IA17; 'end' IC7; 'alive' IB13; 'thump' IA15; 'mud' IIB6; 'butcher' IIA5)

It is not clear from this example whether the 'unbutcherable brother' is Pim, whom the narrator cannot kill, or the narrator, whom the

victim would like to kill but cannot.

(6) 'drown'

'drown' OED v. 1. To suffer death by submersion in water; to perish by suffocation under water (or other liquid).

... born/upwards floating up like the drowned ... (p.78, 3) (c.r. 'born' IB5)

This last example associates unnatural death with birth, since the journey of one who has just been born into the world is compared to a way of dying; the newborn is already dead. This is consistent with examples considered previously in IB5 and IC8/9/10, conflating life and death. It also suggests that the sexual relationship, if it does produce life, will produce one who dies before he lives.

(7) 'martyr'

'martyr' OED sb. 1. Eccl. The specific designation of honour (connoting the highest degree of saintship) for: One who voluntarily undergoes the penalty of death for refusing to renounce the Christian faith or any article of it, for perseverance in any Christian virtue, or for obedience to any law or command of the Church. 2. One who undergoes death (more loosely, one who undergoes great suffering) on behalf of any religious or other belief or cause, or as a consequence of his devotion to some object. 3. hyperbolically. One who suffers tortures comparable to those described in the legends of martyrs; a constant sufferer.

and how there are three of us four a million and there I am/always was with Pim Bom and another and 999997 others/journeying alone rotting alone martyring and being martyred/oh moderately listlessly a little blood a few cries life above in/the light a little blue little scenes for the thirst for the sake of/peace (p.138, 17) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'thirst' IIA6)

In this example, the sufferings of the victims are equated with those of the martyrs. Whether this is hyperbolic or literal is ambiguous, especially in view of the comparison the term begs with the death of the sage and the use of the word passion; see below.

(8) 'passion'

(c.r. 'passion' IA16)

'passion' OED sb. 1. The suffering of pain. 1. (Now usually

with capital.) The sufferings of Jesus Christ on the Cross (also often including the Agony in Gethsemane). 2. The sufferings of a martyr, martyrdom. arch.

fire in the rectum how surmounted reflections on the passion/of pain irresistible departure with preparatives appertaining/uneventful journey sudden arrival lights low lights out bye-bye/is it a dream (p. 42, 8) (c.r. 'rectum' IC1)

'passion' compares the suffering of the creature(s) to that of Christ or at least of the martyrs, either hyperbolically, or literally. The use of this word combines both sexual overtones and senses of religious suffering leading to death in one word.

* * * * *

Conclusion to IC THE END

In this section we have established that the sexual sadistic relationship between the creatures in the mud is an anal one (IC1) and that this is punned upon (IC2--7 especially). We have further noted that sex is associated with death in how it is, as directly indicated by wordplay on 'end', which in particular punningly combines reference to death with reference to anal sex. Moreover that 'arse' co-occurred with death words emphasised the association between death and anal sex. As with 'life' IB12, we observed in considering 'death/die/dead' that death is not clearly distinguishable from life as an absolute state, that it is in fact not clear whether the narrator and his fellow creatures are able to die, whether they are alive or dead at the time of narration. In particular we saw that the use of clichés played upon this, their recurrence suggesting that we read them literally.

The creatures undergo suffering whilst victims such that it may lead to their death -- although there is no evidence that it actually does. The use of the word 'passion' emphasised that death

was a possible outcome of the relationship and it also directly links this again to the sexual nature of their suffering (c.r. IA16). 'passion' further includes a religious dimension (also indicated by the use of 'martyr'), which we note in the context of the cross-like position of the narrator in the mud (p.159, 24) and the references to 'nails', as well as in the episode of the eastern sage. These imply comparison between the creatures' sufferings and the crucifixion of Christ. Such an identification would offer one explanation of the creatures' anomalous state between life and death, if understood literally, and the narrator's ability to 'keep dying' and to 'grow mortal again'. However, we also saw that sexual readings also offered explanations for these phrases, and at this stage we shall not make any definitive conclusions as to whether these religious references are to be taken literally, ironically, metaphorically, or hyperbolically. Further comment will be made in part II (see especially 'sack' IIA9; 'mud' IIB6).

* * * * *

Conclusion to Part I SEX (including IA SEX, IB LIFE/CONCEPTION,
IC THE END)

In part IA we established that the relationship between the creatures in the mud was comprised of sadistic acts which parodied sex. In part IB we established a concern with life-creation, with conception, but we noted that conception was often difficult and that it was not clear whether the creatures could conceive and also whether they had yet been born themselves. We noticed that life was consistently identified with language or para-linguistic sound. Thus we argued that the sex act between the creatures, in attempting physical conception, paralleled the narrator's mental creation of Pim

and the events in how it is. In part IC we saw that the sexual relationship between the creatures was anal and further noted that this relationship was associated with death. One interpretation of this pattern of wordplay is that the difficulty in conception noted in IB is caused by the nature of the sexual relationship; that it is not vaginal but anal sex, one that could not normally lead to conception. That the relationship in fact leads to death rather than birth is emphasised both in the actual events referred to (the wife, the father) and through wordplay. Thus the 'end' is both an anal pun and a reference to death.

In both sections IB and IC we noted that life and death were not clearly distinct from each other, and that the narrator and creatures seemed to be in a state between the two in which it is not clear whether they are already dead or whether they have not been born yet. We saw that this is not uncommon in Beckett's works and considered various critical interpretations of this theme in Beckett's work.

The narrator conceives of the events of how it is yet fails to conceive in his acts with Pim/Pam Prim. This anomalous situation, which provides a parody of the conception of the narration, has as one interpretation that how it is is a comment upon the difficulties of fictional creation. We noted that this is something with which Beckett has been seen to be much concerned in the past. The comment about the trapped situation the writer, forced by inner obligation to write yet unable to express precisely what he wishes through language ('there is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication'³⁹), the agony and apparent futility of

³⁹ Beckett, Proust, p.64.

fictional creation, is a view that is drawn out in how it is through a series of puns and wordplay. Fictional creation is represented as an act of sexual torture associated with death. The narrator, who is in one sense the writer, is trapped in a cyclic non-life death, in a no-man's land between life and death. He looks to death to release him from his obligation to narrate when there is nothing to narrate. His only progress, from 'may die' to 'shall die' is followed by words which return him to the start of the whole series of actions again.⁴⁰

We have also noted that the wordplay involves play upon biblical quotations and religious language; this was noted in certain of the words we examined, for example, 'love', 'know', 'cleave', 'come', 'passion'. Thus words which we have considered as being in the semantic field of SEX also operate within the field of RELIGION, and this is drawn out by the echoing of biblical quotations. This suggests a further level of interpretation, raising the question of whether 'life' and 'death' are then understood as referring to spiritual life and death; whether for example, how it is represents the spiritual state of the narrator either in hell or dying or waiting to be born. In this sense, death is closely identified with birth in that it is a rebirth. We have also noted parallels between the narrator and Christ,⁴¹ drawn out by puns and wordplay especially upon terms which are used hyperbolically in colloquial Standard English.

As well as the cross-referencing between sex and language

40 good good end at last of part three and last that's how it was/end of quotation after Pim how it is (p.160, 18) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

In particular, the ending of the French version, 'comment c'est' ('how it is'), has often been noted to be a pun upon 'commencer' ('begin') (for example, Cohn, Gamut, p.190).

41 Brienza comments upon parallels between Christ and the narrator of how it is, pp.128--29.

leading to one interpretation of how it is as being about fictional creation, there is also cross-referencing between words in the fields of RELIGION and SEX; we should further note that these are not clear and distinct from the play on language -- see the use of 'voice' which results from torture. Moreover, the idea that language can create life, as in the equation between 'life' and the 'voice' is a biblical one (see the description of God's creation of the world, in which to say something is to create it).⁴² The 'voice' in how it is is produced through acts of torture which are also compared to the crucifixion of Christ.

At this stage we have noted that the words considered in IA SEX have religious connotations and that these are drawn out in the text of how it is and thus the words act in the fields of SEX, RELIGION, and LANGUAGE. We do not propose here an absolute interpretation for the work as a whole (for example, that its sole subject is the problems of fictional creation, or that the narrator is Christ). We do note that the words operate in several semantic fields, that they cross-refer to each other through puns, so that the sense of one word as used in how it is becomes complex, illustrating the multiple ambiguity of the text; and that wordplay is a key device in building up the meaning of the text.

⁴² Genesis 1.

SECTION II FOOD

SECTION IIA FOOD

Introduction

In this section the nature of the activity of eating and the supply of food will be viewed in the following major categories:

i) What constitutes the narrator's food, that is, the use of terms which would be understood literally (in Standard English) to refer to food, will be analysed. This relates in part to the discussion in Section I as to whether the narrator is alive in the sense that that is understood in the reader's world. ii) Eating as sex and eating as torture; it will be argued that the activity of eating becomes confused with those of sexual relationships in how it is and that terms deriving from the semantic field of EATING and FOOD co-occur with those appropriate to the sadistic-sexual relationship examined in IA SEX. It will be argued that there is, in addition to the sexual-sadism, a cannibalistic quality to the creatures' relationship. This is a new aspect of, and further confirmation of, the death implications in the creatures' relationship. iii) Food as waste, eating as excreting. It will be argued that the activities of digesting and excreting are reversed/become confused. At times a FOOD/WASTE cycle is evoked, but it is distorted. iv) Language as food; examples will be presented in which language or para-linguistic sound forms part of the narrator's sustenance.

The following are the main words considered in IIA FOOD:

IIA1 'food'

IIA2 (1) 'tin-opener', (2) 'tins'

IIA3 Fish: (1) 'sardine', (2) 'herring', (3) 'prawn', (4)

'shrimp', (5) 'sprat', (6) 'cod's-liver oil', (7) 'crab', (8) 'tunny'

IIA4 Other food words: (1) 'olive', (2) 'cherry', (3) 'feasts', (4) 'meal', (5) 'revictual', (6) 'ration', (7) 'meat', (8) 'pudding', (9) 'rump', (10) 'sandwich', (11) 'flesh', (12) 'kidney', (13) 'fork', (14) 'asparagus', (15) 'crust', (16) 'mutton'

IIA5 (1) 'eat', (2) 'bite', (3) 'swallow', (4) 'sweet', (5) 'taste', (6) 'lick', (7) 'butcher', (8) 'carve', (9) 'fill', (10) 'refreshing', (11) 'have'

IIA6 (1) 'appetite', (2) 'hunger', (3) 'thirst'

IIA7 'drink'

IIA8 (1) 'nourish', (2) 'sustain', (3) 'live on'

IIA9 'sack'

* * * * *

IIA1 'food'

'food' OED sb. 1. What is taken into the system to maintain life and growth, and to supply the waste of tissue; aliment, nourishment, provisions, victuals. b. What is edible as opposed to 'drink'. c. Sustenance, 'livelihood'. Obs. 3, fig. b. In sense of: Matter to discuss or dwell upon. 1825 SOUTHEY Tale of Paraguay III. 19 A lively tale, and fraught With ... food for thought.

i) In the following examples, we learn that the narrator's food is contained in his sack:

a body what matter say a body see a body all the rear white/originally some light spots still say grey of hair growing still/that's enough a head say a head say you've seen a head all that/all the possible a sack with food a body entire alive still yes/living stop panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds hear/this breath token of life hear it said say you hear it good pant on (p.114, 6) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'live' IB15; 'life' IB12)

a sack that if one died here one might say had belonged

to one/dead at last having let it go at the last then sunk beneath the/mud but no and so a simple sack pure and simple a small coal-/sack to the feel five stone six stone wet jute food inside (p.120, 20) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'die' IC9; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'dead' IC10; 'mud' IIB6)

This is also illustrated: p.120, 12--14; p.121, 1--8; p.148, 1--2 (also see IIA9i).

There is some doubt expressed, however, as to the origin of the sacks and indeed whether they exist at all (c.r. IIA9); so that the narrator comes to suggest that they do not after all need the sacks with food inside in order to journey:

and if it may seem strange that without food to sustain us we/can drag ourselves thus by the mere grace of our united net/sufferings from west to east towards an inexistent peace we are/invited kindly to consider (p.156, 18) (c.r. 'kind' IB10; 'sustain' IIA8)

centuries I can see me quite tiny the same as now more or less/only tinier quite tiny no more objects no more food and I live/the air sustains me the mud I live on (p.19, 8) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'sustains' IIA8; 'mud' IIB6)

a little cheerful the less you're there the more you're cheerful/when you're there less tears a little less when you're there words/lacking all lacking less tears for lack of words lack of food even/birth it's lacking all that makes you cheerful it must be that/all that a little more cheerful (p.112, 15) (c.r. 'birth' IB5; 'make' IA9, IB2)

These three examples all suggest that the narrator does not need 'food' to live. In the last example (p.112, 15), it is ambiguous as to whether 'it's lacking' is part of the same clause as 'all that makes you cheerful', suggesting that the absence of 'tears', 'food', 'words' is cause for feeling cheerful, according to one reading. According to another, all that could cause cheerfulness is lacking. (It could also be 'birth' that is 'lacking', c.r. IB5)

a simple sack then pure and simple that no sooner on our way/without food or thought of ever finding any or memory of/ever having had any or notion of ever needing any we find no/sooner on our way in the dark the mud for a journey that/would otherwise be brief and is not brief vast stretch of time/and appropriate to ourselves and lose a litte before arrival/together with the uneaten food as we have seen part one how/it was before Pim (p.121, 1) (c.r.

'sack' IIA9; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

ii) p.156, 18, quoted above suggests that the sufferings take the place of food in sustaining the creatures during their journeying; 'we can drag ourselves thus by the mere grace of our united net sufferings' (lines 19--20). This suggests that the torturer/victim relationship replaces the need to eat.

iii) Among the examples already given in i) are readings which suggest an equation between 'food' and language. For instance, one reading of p.112, 15, is that 'lack of food' is in apposition to, and thus equated with, 'lack of words'. The cliché 'food for thought' (c.r. OED 3b 'food') occurs:

I turn to the hand that is free draw it to my face it's a resource/when all fails images dreams sleep food for thought something/wrong there (p.15, 6)

question if what he has said or rather I heard of that voice/ruined from such long silence a third two fifths or every word/question if there when it stops if somewhere there food for/thought prayer without words against a stable-door long icy/toil towards the too late all-forgiving what else night at dead/water on the deep on the little sea poor in isles or else some/other voyage (p.100, 18) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

And in p.121, 1, quoted above, the occurrence 'without food for thought of ever finding any' also plays upon the cliché 'food for thought'.

Conclusion to IIA1 'food'

In this section we have seen contradictory claims as to whether 'food' is necessary for the narrator and his fellow creatures; this 'food' is said to be contained in the sack(s). We have seen that if it does not exist then one alternative source of sustenance is 'suffering'. The cliché 'food for thought' is used to mean that 'food' is in some sense a source of mental nourishment or inspiration.

IIA2 (1) 'tin-opener', (2) 'tins'

(1) 'tin-opener'

'tin' OED sb. 5. Special Combs.: 'tin-opener' an instrument for opening soldered tins.

Cross reference should be made to section 'opener' IA17 where it is observed that the narrator carries with him in the sack a tin-opener, presumably to open tins of food; however, in part two of how it is the '(tin-)opener' is used as an instrument for torturing Pim. Thus we can observe that its usual use as an instrument for obtaining food was replaced by one for obtaining cries resulting from sexual torture. Instead of opening tins, the 'opener' was used to 'open' Pim. We will be observing wordplay between the semantic fields of food and sexual torture again in our analysis of food words occurring in how it is in section IIA FOOD.

(2) 'tins'

'tin' OED sb. 2. A vessel made of tin, or more usually of tinned iron; spec. a vessel in which meat, fish, fruit, etc., is hermetically sealed for preservation.

i) In the following examples it will be seen that the narrator carries with him a supply of food in tins. These examples include references to the tins as carried in the sack, and also details of opening the tins. As with 'food' however it will be seen that the narrator is not certain about the number of tins which he has available.

then on my elbow I quote I see me prop me up thrust in my/arm in the sack we're talking of the sack thrust it in count the/tins impossible with one hand keep trying one day it will be/possible

empty them out in the mud the tins put them back one by one/in the sack impossible too weak fear of loss (p.8, 12) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'mud' IIB6)

the tin broached put back in the sack or kept in the hand it's/one or the other I remember when appetite revives or I forget/open another it's one or the other something wrong there it's/the beginning of my life present formulation (p.8, 20) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'appetite' IIA6; 'open' IA17;

'life' IB12)

it's the scene of the sack the two hands part its mouth
what/can one still desire the left darts in the left hand in
the sack it's/the scene of the sack and the arm after up
to the armpit and/then

it strays among the tins without meddling with how many/
announces a round dozen fastens who knows on the last
prawns/these details for the sake of something

it brings out the little oval tin transfers it to the other
hand/goes back to look for the opener finds it at last
brings it out the/opener we're talking of the opener with
its spindle bone/handle to the feel rest

the hands what are the hands at when at rest difficult to
see/with thumb and index respectively pad of tip and outer
face/of second joint something wrong there nip the sack
and with/remaining fingers clamp the objects against the
palms the tin/the opener these details in preference to
nothing (p.37, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'prawns' IIA3; 'opener'
IA17)

Further examples: p.8, 12--17; p.8, 20--23; p.9, 1--3; p.12, 12--14.

my tins all sorts dwindling but not so fast as appetite
different/shapes no preference but the fingers know no
sooner fastened/at random

dwindling in what strange wise but what is strange here/
undiminished for years then of a sudden half as many
(p.18, 15) (c.r. 'appetite' IIA6)

'dwindle' OED v. 1. intr. To become smaller and smaller;
to shrink, waste away, decline. b. fig. To decline in
quality, value, or estimation to degenerate, 'sink'. 2. trans.
To reduce gradually in size, cause to shrink into small
dimensions.

Among interpretations for the 'tins' dwindling are: a) That
the individual tins become smaller -- which suggests either that
they do not behave as tins do in the reader's world, or that the
narrator's perception of size is peculiar. b) That the supply of tins
lessens, presumably as they are emptied and thrown away (see p.11,
20--23). As the narrator does not specifically state in these lines
that this is the reason for their 'dwindling' it reads as though the
'tins' disappear of their own accord, especially since he states that
he suddenly finds he has half as many: 'undiminished for years

then of a sudden half as many' (line 19). Line 19 reads oddly as an example of the manner in which they 'dwindle' since it contradicts the idea of gradual diminution. One interpretation of this is that it is an illusion, that as the 'tins' are used up one by one their dwindling is unnoticed, so that they appear undiminished until some time has past and it is suddenly noticed that they have slowly used up. In the following three examples the narrator talks of the 'tins' clinking and this is presented, according to one interpretation, as a 'respite' from the silence and as the 'first real sign of life'.

twenty years a hundred years not a sound and I listen
not a/gleam and I strain my eyes four hundred times my
only season/I clasp the sack closer to me a tin clinks
first respite very first/respite from the silence of this
black sap (p.27, 4) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'sap' IIB6)

nothing dries I clutch the sack first real sign of life it
drips a tin/clinks my hair never dry ... (p.27, 12) (c.r.
'sack' IIA9; 'life' IB12)

my life natural order more or less in the present more or
less/part one before Pim how it was things so ancient the
journey/last stage I come back to me to my place clutch
the sack it drips/a tin clinks loss of species one word no
sound it's the beginning/of my life present formulation I
can go pursue my life it will/still be a man (p.29, 18)
(c.r. 'life' IB12; 'come' IA6; 'sack' IIA9; 'species' IB11)

In the following examples, the narrator refers to the throw-
ing away/loss of the 'tins':

with the gesture of one dealing cards and also to be
observed/among certain sowers of seed I throw away the
empty tins/they fall without a sound (p.11, 20) (c.r. 'throw
away' IIB5)

nothing now but to eat ten twelve episodes open the tin
put/away the tool raise the tin slowly to the nose irre-
proachable/freshness distant perfume of laurel felicity then
dream or not/empty the tin or not throw it away or not
all that it's not said/I can't see no great importance wipe
my mouth that without/fail so on and at last (p.39, 14)
(c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'open' IA17; 'tool' IA17; 'throw away'
IIB5)

the dejections no they are me but I love them the old
half-/emptied tins let limply fall no something else the
mud engulfs/all me alone it carries my four stone five
stone it yields a little/under that then no more I don't

flee I am banished (p.43, 6) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'love' IA1)

no emotion all is lost the bottom burst the wet the drag-
ging/the rubbing the hugging the ages old coal-sack five
stone six/stone that hangs together all gone the tins the
opener an opener/and no tins I'm spared that this time
tins and no opener I/won't have had that in my life this
time (p.51, 14) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2; 'sack' IIA9; 'opener'
IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12)

In the first two examples above (p.11, 20; p.39, 14) the narrator talks of throwing away the 'tins' when they are empty. In the third example, they are only half-empty and there is further the suggestion that this is not what happens, 'no something else', that he does not throw the 'tins' away but rather the mud engulfs them. In the fourth example, the 'tins' are lost due to the bursting of the sack. The 'tins' then that had been containers of food now become waste material (c.r. IIB).

In the following examples, the narrator talks of finding 'tins':

semi-side left right leg right arm push pull flat on face
curse/God bless him beseech him no sound with feet and
hands/scrabble in the mud what do I hope a tin lost where
I have/never been a tin half-emptied thrown away ahead
that's all/I hope

where I have never been but others perhaps long before
not/long before it's one or the other or it's both a procession
what/comfort in adversity others what comfort

.../or a celestial tin miraculous sardines sent down by
God at the/news of my mishap wherewith to spew him out
another/week (p.53, 11) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7,
IIA5; 'thrown away' IIB5; 'sardines' IIA3; 'spew' IIB1)

The narrator comments that if he were to find a 'tin' thrown away in a place he had not been before, it would prove the existence of at least one other creature beside himself in the mud.¹

¹ We are reminded of Robinson Crusoe's reaction at finding a footprint in the sand, believing it to indicate the existence of another person on the island. D. Defoe, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, edited by A. Ross (London, 1965), p.162.

He further postulates that he may find a 'tin' which has fallen from the skies. (See below, 'sardines' IIA3, where it will be argued that this has religious connotations.) Despite the narrator's referring to the sack's bursting and the loss of the 'tins', later on in the text, in part two, he refers to the 'tins' again:

so many tins still remaining something there that escapes me/I take them out left hand one by one in the mud till at last the/opener put it in my mouth put back the tins I don't say all and/my right arm this time (p.73, 16) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'opener' IA17)

struggles to open tin long struggles couldn't see of what/change our lamps gives up puts back tin and opener in sack/very calm (p.88, 19) (c.r. 'open' IA 17; 'sack' IIA9)

The reappearance of the 'tins' is explained in the following ways: In the first example, the narrator is referring to 'tins' found inside Pim's sack (there is some confusion as to whether the narrator really has lost his sack and taken over Pim's, c.r. 'sack' IIA9); this may also apply to the second example. Moreover in example p.88, 19, it is the witness who is narrating and commenting upon the creatures' activities in the mud, possibly reading from his notes, which refer to the narrator's previous rather than present activities (see p.88, 11--21; pp.89--92, where the narrator postulates the existence of a witness to all his activities). However, despite these offered interpretations as to why the 'tins' reappear, we are reminded of the uncertainty (noted in 'food' IIA1) as to whether the narrator has food and how much.

ii) In the following examples, 'tins' co-occurs with words previously examined in section I, especially IA SEX and IC THE END:

the dejections no they are me but I love them the old half-/emptied tins let limply fall ... (p.43, 6) (c.r. 'love' IA1)

In p.43, 6, 'I love them' is ambiguous as to whether 'them' refers to 'the dejections' or 'the old half-emptied tins'; whilst

it is common to use the term 'love' hyperbolically for inanimate objects, the scarcity of the narrator's possessions offers one reason to interpret it more literally. In the context of the 'tin-opener' becoming a tool during a sexual-sadistic 'love' relationship (c.r. IA17) the narrator's saying that he 'loves' the 'tins' means that there is wordplay involved in the use of the word 'love'.

then Pim the lost tins the groping hand the arse the two
cries/mine mute the birth of hope on with it get it over
have it/behind me feel the heart going hear it said you're
nearly there (p.25, 15) (c.r. 'grobe' IA10; 'arse' IC1;
'birth' IB5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'behind' IC3)

One interpretation of the 'lost tins' is that this refers to what will happen (c.r. p.51); another is that 'lost tins' following 'then Pim' associates the 'lost tins' with Pim (c.r. 'sack' IIA9, where it is argued that Pim's 'arse' replaces the 'sack/arse'). 'the groping hand' is ambiguous; among readings for this are: a) That the hand simply gropes, for what is not known/said. b) The hand is groping for the 'lost tins', hoping to find them. c) The hand is groping for the 'arse'.

if Bom never came if only that but then how end the
hand/dipping clawing for the tin the arse instead of the
familiar slime/all imagination and all the rest this voice its
promises and/solaces all imagination dear bud dear worm
(p.88, 1) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'arse'
IC1; 'familiar' IB9; 'slime' IIB1)

Again, the 'arse' and the 'tin' co-occur in the context of the 'groping hand'; according to one reading, the 'arse' replaces the 'tin' as the object of the hand's clawing.

iii) We have already noted that once the food has been eaten from the 'tins', they are thrown away, thus becoming waste material. We also saw that at times they are thrown away when only half-empty, suggesting that some of the food in them has become waste matter. That the possibility of finding 'tins' is raised suggests that 'the

lost tins' however are not permanently consigned to being waste material; it suggests that they may still be used.

merrily then once again push pull if only a herring from time/to time a prawn they would be good moments alas wrong road/we are not on that road any more the tins in the depths of the/sack hermetically under vacuum on their dead for ever sealed/the voice stops for one or the other reason and life along with/it above in the light and we along with it that is what becomes/of us (p.101, 16) (c.r. 'herring' IIA3; 'prawn' IIA3; 'sack' IIA9; 'dead' IC10; 'life' IB12)

If we accept one reading of this last example, the narrator's reference to 'their dead' can be interpreted as referring to the fish inside the 'tins' (c.r. 'fish' IIA3), which are of course dead in order to be eaten. It emphasises that dead matter (which in one context is waste) becomes food (a theme developed in IIB WASTE below)

Conclusion to IIA2 (1) 'tin-opener', (2) 'tins'

In these examples, we have observed that the 'tins' are carried in the sack as a source of food; it is not uncommon for Beckett's characters to eat out of tins, especially tinned fish (c.r. fish, IIA3). Molloy and his son, for example 'lived on tinned food which I sent him to get in the villages'; and Molloy tells us 'I ate a whole tin of sardines' and 'I ate my last tin of sardines'.² Tinned sardines are also referred to by the hero of 'The Calmative': 'A good night's nightmare and a tin of sardines would restore my sensitivity.'³ The narrator of how it is is not sure how large his supply of 'tins' is. When the sack bursts at the end of part one, the narrator loses his tins; he then considers whether he can still hope

² Molloy, Trilogy, p.125, p.141, p.142.

³ 'The Calmative', Four Novellas, p.62.

to find tins left for him. In part two, however, we saw reference again to the 'tins', so that their number/loss is uncertain. We noted suggestions that the discovery of Pim and the subsequent physical relationship compensate the narrator for the loss of the 'tins', a point which will be developed further below, see 'sack' IIA9, for example.

* * * * *

IIA3 fish

The following words are considered in this section: (1) 'sardine', (2) 'herring', (3) 'prawn', (4) 'shrimp', (5) 'sprat', (6) 'cod-liver oil', (7) 'crab'. The examples are classified according to the points they are felt to illustrate.

(1) 'sardine'

'sardine'² OED 1. A small fish of the Herring family, Clupea pilchardus, abundant off the shores of Sardinia and Brittany, or a young pilchard of the Cornish coast, when cured, preserved in oil, and packed in tins or other cases for sale as a table delicacy.

(2) 'herring'

'herring' OED sb. 1. A well-known sea fish, Clupea harengus, inhabiting the North Atlantic Ocean and coming near the coast at certain seasons in enormous shoals to spawn. It is an important article of food.

(3) 'prawn'

'prawn' OED sb. A small long-tailed decapod marine crustacean (Palaemon serratus), larger than a shrimp, common off the coasts of Great Britain and used as food. Also extended to allied species of the family.

(4) 'shrimp'

'shrimp' OED 1. Any of the slender, long-tailed, long-legged (chiefly marine) crustaceans of the genus Crangon and allied genera, closely related to the prawn; esp. C. vulgaris, the common shrimp, which inhabits the sands on the coasts of Great Britain and is a common article of food.

(5) 'sprat'

'sprat' OED sb.¹ 1. A small sea fish Clupea Sprattus, common on the Atlantic coasts of Europe.

(6) 'cod-liver oil'

'cod-liver oil' OED Oil expressed from the liver of the cod-fish, much used in medicine.

(7) 'crab'

'crab' OED sb.¹ 1. The common name for decapod crustaceous animals of the tribe Brachyura; applied especially to the edible species found on or near the sea coast in most regions of the world.

(8) 'tunny'

'tunny' OED A scombroid fish of the genus Orcynus, esp. the common tunny, O. thynnus, which has been fished from ancient times in the Mediterranean and Atlantic; it is one of the largest of food-fishes.

i) The narrator makes reference to having different sorts of fish with him:

it's the scene of the sack the two hands part his mouth
what/can one still desire the left darts in the left hand in
the sack it's/the scene of the sack and the arm after up
to the armpit and/then

it strays among the tins without meddling with how many/
announces a round dozen fastens who knows on the last
prawns/these details for the sake of something (p.37, 1)
(c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'tins' IIA2; 'know' IA7)

'the last prawns' is ambiguous between being the last of
the supply of prawns which the narrator has, and the last remaining
specimens of the prawn as a species. (c.r. 'the last shrimp' p.69,
1, commented on below). The latter interpretation recalls the discus-
sion regarding the narrator's species (c.r. IB11).

no appetite a crumb of tunny then mouldy eat mould no/need
to worry I won't die I'll never die of hunger (p.8, 18)
(c.r. 'appetite' IIA6; 'crumb' IIA4; 'eat' IIA5; 'die' IC9;
'hunger' IIA6)

between sessions sometimes a sprat a prawn that could
happen/it goes on in the past ah if only all past all in
the past Bom comes/I gone and Bom on our life in common
we had good moments/they were good moments drivél drivél
no matter a sprat a/prawn (p.68, 1) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6;

'come' IA6; 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

As well as a reference to the fish the narrator carries with him as food, 'sprat' here plays on its meaning of small, unimportant, in the context of 'drivel drivel'.

before Pim the journey part one right leg right arm push
pull/ten yards fifteen yards halt nap a sardine or suchlike
tongue in/the mud an image or two little scenes mute words
hang on off/again push pull all that part one but before
that again (p.117, 20)

One interpretation of the above example is that 'a sardine or suchlike' is recorded as one of a series or summary of events, interpreted as a summary of his eating along the way. 'tongue in the mud' does not state whose tongue; according to one reading, the sardine is in the mud and the narrator puts his tongue there to retrieve it (c.r. 'mud' IIB6). Another reference to fish as food occurs during an 'old dream':

...live old/dream on crabs kelp (p.94, 24) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'live on' IIA8)

ii) In the following examples, fish are associated with sex/torture:

from the next mortal to the next leading nowhere and
saving/correction no other goal than the next mortal cleave
to him/give him a name train him up bloody him all over
with/Roman capitals gorge on his fables unite for life in
stoic love/to the last shrimp and a little longer (p.69, 1)
(c.r. 'mortal' IC9; 'cleave' IA12; 'gorge' IIA5; 'life' IB12;
'love' IA19)

In this example, the duration of love is associated with the amount of shrimp, that is, food. It also follows a description which invokes the sadistic nature of the creatures' physical relationship. The narrator says that they will 'unite for life in stoic love to the last shrimp'. 'to the last shrimp' is ambiguous between the last of the narrator's supply of shrimps or the last shrimp in existence, that is, 'shrimp' as species (c.r. 'the last prawn'). This plays upon common romantic conceits or ways of expressing love; such conceits

usually invoke, if not eternity, at least much longer than an expected lifetime. For instance:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear, / And the rocks melt
wi' the sun; / I will love thee still, my Dear, / While the
sands o' life shall run.⁴

'to the last shrimp', according to the interpretation in which this refers to the creatures' supply of food, is prosaic by comparison -- if the shrimps are abundant then this is a way of swearing long-enduring love, if the shrimps are not abundant the emphasis is altered, implying a relationship not so much of love, but of 'cupboard love', they will stay together whilst there is something material. 'and a little longer' recalls the observation in IA1, that it was not clear whether or not the narrator's continued existence depended on food, since life continues after the loss of food.

See also the following further examples in which fish is associated with sex/torture:

that for the likes of us and no matter how we are
recounted / there is more nourishment in a cry nay a sigh
torn from one / whose only good is silence or in speech
extorted from one at / last delivered from its use than
sardines can ever offer (p.157, 1)

I yes without its being said all is not said almost nothing
and / far too much I have eaten offered him to eat crushed
against his mouth lost in the hairs the mud my palm dripping
with / cod's liver or suchlike rubbed it in labour lost if
he's still / nourished it's on mud if that's what it is I always
said so this / mud by osmosis long run fullness of time by
capillarity (p.72, 15) (c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'mud' IIB6; 'nourish'
IIA8)

(Both these examples are considered in more detail below).

iii) The following examples concern a co-occurrence between fish and 'species':

⁴ R. Burns, 'A Red, Red Rose' in Robert Burns, edited by W. Meikle and W. Beattie, revised edition (London, 1953), p.228.

then of a sudden like all that starts again no knowing
 set/forth forth again ten yards fifteen yards right leg
 right arm/push pull a few images patches of blue a few
 words no sound/cling to species a few sardines yawn of
 mud burst the sack/drivel on drone on in a word the old
 road (p.68, 18) (c.r. 'species' IB11; 'mud' IIB6; 'sack'
 IIA9)

time to forget all lose all be ignorant of all whence I
 come/whither I go frequent halts brief naps a sardine
 tongue in the/mud loss of speech so dearly regained a
 few images skies/homes little scenes falls half out of species
 brief movements of/the lower no sound loss of the noble
 name of Bem part one/before Pim how it was vast stretch
 of time it's done (p.119, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6;
 'species' IB11)

Among interpretations for the above two examples (p.68,
 18; p.119, 14): a) The narrator's reference to 'a few sardines/a
 sardine' is a summary of his action of eating them. b) The sardines
 are the species to which the narrator clings, in the sense that they
 are an example of a species different from himself. c) As b) but
 that the 'sardines' represent the same species as the narrator; this
 reading is especially suggested by p.119, 14, where the ignorance
 of 'whence I came' takes on an existential emphasis in this context.
 Also note p.72, 15, in which the narrator's palm is dripping with
 'cod's liver', imputing fishness to him. That the creatures are said
 to receive nourishment 'by osmosis .. by capillarity' (p.72, 20)
 suggests comparison between themselves and primitive fish-like crea-
 tures absorbing sustenance from the watery environment around them
 (also c.r 'mud' IIB6)

iv) Also see the following example:

or a celestial tin miraculous sardines sent down by God at
 the/news of my mishap wherewith to spew him out another/
 week (p.53, 22) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'spew' IIB1)

One reading of this example is that the narrator hopes to find a tin
 (of 'sardines') sent down to him by god in compensation for the
 loss of his tins due to the sack's bursting. 'celestial' has a sense

not just that the tins have fallen from the skies, but emphasising that they have fallen from the abode of God:

'celestial' OED A. adj. 1. Of or pertaining to the sky or material heavens. 2. Of or pertaining to heaven, as the abode of God (or of the heathen gods), of angels, and of glorified spirits. 3. Of divine or heavenly nature. b. Divinely excellent or beautiful, divine, heavenly.

The narrator thus envisages God's providing him with food as was done for the children of Israel. (This analogy is reinforced by the narrator's frequent references to the 'journey'.) The use of the word 'miraculous' adds further connotations:

'miraculous' OED a. 1. Of the nature of a miracle; produced or effected by miracle; beyond the agency of natural laws; supernatural. 2. transf. and hyperbolically. Resembling a miracle; so extraordinary as to appear supernatural; marvelous, astonishing.

'miraculous' in OED sense 2 is an acceptable reading for this example, the narrator expressing how astonishing the event would be. However, the co-occurrence of 'miraculous' with 'God' suggests a literal interpretation of 'miraculous' thus reinforcing the reading given above in which the narrator's finding food is compared to God's providing sustenance for the Children of Israel. The collocation of 'miraculous' with 'sardines' in particular calls to mind the miracle of the loaves and fishes.⁵

In the context of the argument made in sections IIA3i and IIA3ii that the discovery of the victim acts as compensation for the loss of food, it is worth noting that the only other occurrence of 'miraculous' in how it is is during a description of the narrator's discovery of Pim at the beginning of part two: 'my hand .. settles firm and even with a touch of ownership already on the miraculous flesh' (p. 57, 22) (c.r. 'flesh' IIA4). Four pages earlier (p.53,

⁵ Matthew 15. 32--39.

22--24) hoping to find 'miraculous sardines', the narrator instead finds Pim's 'miraculous flesh'; word patterning through the use of 'miraculous' can clearly be seen to link the two.

* * * * *

IIA4 Other food words

In this section we shall be examining the use of other words which have a sense of food, but occur rarely in how it is. The words which are considered are: (1) 'olive', (2) 'cherry', (3) 'feasts', (4) 'meal', (5) 'revictual', (6) 'ration', (7) 'meat', (8) 'pudding', (9) 'rump', (10) 'sandwich', (11) 'flesh', (12) 'kidney', (13) 'fork', (14) 'asparagus', (15) 'crust', (16) 'mutton'.

i) In the following examples, the narrator refers to food which he has with him to eat:

(1) 'olive'

'olive' OED sb.¹ 2. The fruit or 'berry' of Olea sativa, a small oval drupe, bluish-black when ripe, with bitter pulp abounding in oil, and hard stone; valuable as a source of oil, and also eaten pickled in an unripe state.

(2) 'cherry'

'cherry' OED sb. I. 1. A well-known stone-fruit.

Example:

the fingers deceived the mouth resigned to an olive and given/a cherry but no preference no searching not even for a language/meet for me meet for here no more searching (p.19, 1) (c.r. 'meat' IIA4iv)

(3) 'feasts'

'feast' OED sb. 1. A religious anniversary appointed to be observed with rejoicing (hence opposed to a fast), in commemoration of some event or in honour of some personage. 4. An unusually abundant and delicious meal; something delicious to feed upon; fig. an exquisite gratification, a rich treat.

my sack sole variable my days my nights my seasons and my/feasts it says Lent everlasting then of a sudden Hallow-

mas no/summer that year it it is the same not much real
spring my/sack thanks to my sack that I keep dying in a
dying age (p.18, 11) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9, 'die' IC9)

'feasts' is ambiguous between OED sense 4, suggested by the knowledge that the sack is used to carry tins of food (c.r. IIA2); and OED sense 1, suggested by the references to Lent and Hallowmas. Indeed, that 'feasts' has senses of both religion and food involves wordplay in the context of the religious connotations we have observed thus far in food words. It suggests that the food the narrator carries is for religious celebration in opposition to fasting; see the reference in this stanza to 'Lent', a period of little eating.

(4) 'meal'

'meal' OED sb.² 2. Any of the occasions of taking food which occur by custom or habit at more or less fixed times of the day, as a breakfast, dinner, supper, etc. b. Without reference to time; An occasion of taking food, a repast. Also, the material of a repast; the food eaten at or provided for a repast.

In the following two examples below, 'meal' occurs in the context of the narrator's concern over the frequency of his eating:

the panting stops I am on my side which the right it's/
preferable I part the mouth of the sack and questions
what my/God can I desire what hunger to eat what was
my last meal/that family time passes I remain (p.36, 18)
(c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'hunger' IIA6)

when the last meal the last journey what have I done
where/been that kind mute screams abandon hope gleam of
hope/frantic departure the cord round my neck the sack
in my/mouth a dog (p.52, 5) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5;
'kind' IB9; 'sack' IIA9)

(5) 'revictuals'

'revictual' OED v. 1. trans. To supply (a place, fleet, etc.) with a fresh stock of provisions. 2. absol. To procure or take in a fresh supply of provisions.

(6) 'rations'

'ration' OED sb. 3. A fixed allowance or individual share of provisions; spec. in the army and navy, the daily

amount of certain articles of food allotted to each officer and man. (Sometimes, especially in pl., simply = provisions, food.)

of him to whom we are further indebted for our unfailing/rations which enable us to advance without pause or rest

of him who god knows who could blame him must sometimes/wonder if to these perpetual revictuallings narrations and/auditions he might not put an end without ceasing to maintain/us in some kind of being without end and some kind of justice/without flaw who could blame him (p.152, 11) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'end' IC7; 'kind' IB9)

Again, the narrator suggests that their food is provided by a God-like being. According to one reading, 'narrations' is in apposition to revictuallings, thus equating food with language (see III4iv).

ii) In the following examples, food is associated with the creatures' sexual-sadistic physical relationship. In the first five examples, food is associated with a relationship between the narrator and a woman.

(7) 'meat'

'meat' OED sb. 1. Food in general; anything used as nourishment for men or animals; usually, solid food, in contrast to drink. Now arch. and dial. 3. The flesh of animals used for food. b. pl. Different kinds of meat. c. colloq. or slang. (a) To make meat of: to kill (b). Something enjoyable or advantageous. 2. Applied proleptically to living animals such as are killed for food.

or failing kindred meat a llama emergency dream an alpaca/llama the history I knew my God the natural

she would not come to me I would go to her huddle in her/fleece but they add no a beast here no the soul is de riguer the/mind too a minimum of each otherwise too great an honour (p.15, 1) (c.r. 'know' IA7, 'come' IA6; 'kind' IB9)

'or failing kindred meat' is ambiguous; according to one reading 'meat' is an alternative to 'kindred', so lacking the company of a member of the same species/family is compensated for by the presence of food. According to another reading, 'kindred' modifies 'meat', so that a member of the same family/species is viewed as food, suggesting cannibalism. The lack of 'kindred' is to be compen-

sated for by 'a llama'; 'she would not come to me' adds sexual connotations (c.r. 'come' IA6).

Words with senses of food occur during the scenes between the narrator and the girl:

'pudding' OED sb. I. 1. The stomach or one of the entrails of a pig, sheep, or other animal, stuffed with a mixture of minced meat, suet, oatmeal, seasoning, etc., boiled and kept till needed; a kind of sausage. II. 6. A preparation of food of a soft or moderately firm consistency. III. 11. c. Special combs. pudding-face; a large fat face; hence pudding-faced a.

seen full face the girl is less hideous it's not with her I am/concerned me pale staring hair red pudding face with pimples/protruding belly .. (p.33, 1)

(9) 'rump'

'rump' OED sb.¹ 1. That part of the body (of an animal or bird) from which the tail springs; the tail; hence by extension, the hind-quarters, posteriors, buttocks. 2. This part of an animal or fowl as cut off and used for food.

again about turn introrse at ninety degrees fleeting face to face/transfer of things mingling of hands swinging of arms stillness/of dog the rump I have (p.33, 8) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'rump' IC1)

The word 'rump' has senses both of food and is examined in IC1 as an anal sexual pun, illustrating our argument that food and sex are linked in how it is through word patterning.

I look to me about sixteen and to crown all glorious weather/egg-blue sky and scamper of little clouds I have my back/turned to me and the girl too whom I hold who holds me by/the hand the arse I have (p.31, 19) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'back' IC3)

There is no OED entry for 'egg-blue' but it should be noted that the word 'egg' which is both a form of food and results from sexual reproduction occurs in the context of description of the love scene between the narrator and the girl. The co-occurrence of 'egg' and 'scamper' suggests the movement of children (note that the 'scampering' clouds are 'little', reminiscent of the 'scamper of little feet'), reinforcing the sexual overtones of 'egg'.

(10) 'sandwich'

'sandwich' OED sb.² 1. An article of food for a slight repast, composed of two thin slices of bread, either plain or buttered with a layer of sliced meat, usually beef or ham (or, in later use, of almost any savoury comestible) placed between.

v. 2. trans. To put in or as in a sandwich; chiefly fig., to insert (something) between two other things of a widely different character; also to sandwich in, rarely, to enclose like a sandwich.

suddenly we are eating sandwiches alternate bites I mine she/hers and exchanging endearments my sweet girl I bite she/swallows my sweet boy she bites I swallow we don't yet coo/with our bills full (p.33, 24) (c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'bite' IIA5; 'swallow' IIA5)

This example is examined in detail below (IIA5). For now we can note that the eating of sandwiches occurs during a love relationship which anticipates the narrator's relationship with Pim. Pilling notes that the repetition of the 'strange word' 'sinistro' links together the sandwich-eating scene and the narrator's meeting Pim (see p.32, 18; p.65, 8).⁶

In the next group of examples, food words occur during the descriptions of the victim/torturer relationship; it is being argued that the above examples of food words during scenes with sexual overtones anticipate the use of food words in the following examples:

(11) 'flesh'

'flesh' OED sb. I. As a material substance. 1. The soft substance, esp. the muscular parts, of an animal body; that which covers the framework of bones and is enclosed by the skin. 4. The muscular tissue, or the tissues generally, of animals, regarded as an article of food. 5. The visible surface of the body, with reference to its colour or appearance. II. Extended and figurative uses (chiefly of Biblical origin). 8. That which has corporeal life. 10. The animal or physical nature of man; human nature as

⁶ J. Pilling, 'The Conduct of the Narrative in Samuel Beckett's Prose Fiction' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College, London 1971), p.534.

subject to corporeal necessities and limitations. 11. The sensual appetites and inclinations as antagonistic to the nobler elements of human nature.

The following examples involve the word 'flesh' in sense 5; there is play however upon sense 11, with respect to the sexual nature of the creatures' relationship, and upon sense 4, with respect to the association between food and the creatures' partners in the physical relationship:

smartly as from a block of ice or white-hot my hand recoils/
hangs a moment it's vague in mid air then slowly sinks
again/and settles firm and even with a touch of ownership
already/on the miraculous flesh perpendicular to the crack
the stump/of the thumb and thenar and hypo balls on the
left cheek the/four fingers on the other the right hand
therefore we are not yet head to foot (p.57, 22)

This example in particular emphasises the wordplay upon 'flesh' as food, since 'miraculous' has occurred five stanzas previously, modifying 'sardines'; thus Pim's flesh is viewed as an alternative to the sardines.

suddenly back hugging the flesh west and north with my
right/hand I seize his skin too big for him and pull myself
forward/last little frisk back to my place I should never
have left it I'll/never leave it again I grasp the sack it
has not stirred Pim has/not stirred our hands touch long
silence long rest vast stretch/of time (p.83, 6) (c.r. 'have'
IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9)

never did for anyone what I for him animate no sure yes
never/felt another flesh against his no happy no unhappy
no if he/feels me against him no only when I torment him
yes (p.106, 6) (c.r. 'animate' IB1)

The use of 'flesh' in these examples suggests that the partner in the physical relationship between the creatures is both 'flesh' to be enjoyed in the sensual/sexual sense and also 'flesh' to be devoured as food, connoting a cannibalistic tendency in the relationship.

and how there cannot be only three of us only four only
a/million and there I am always was with Pim Bom innumera-
ble/others in a procession without end or beginning lan-
guidly/wending from left to right straight line eastward

strange in the/dark the mud sandwiched between victim and tormentor and/how these words now weak enough most of them not quite/enough (p.139, 1) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6)

The use of the word 'sandwiched' in its OED sense v. 2 plays upon 'sandwich' as a noun (OED sb.²), comparing the creature (c.r. 'mud' IIB6) to the contents of a sandwich, and recalls the sandwich-eating scene between the boy and the girl (p.33, 24).

'meatus' OED 1. A natural channel or tubular passage. Obs. 2. spec. in Anat. b. With qualifying word expressed or understood, applied to certain passages in the body.

I then nothing about me my life what life anything/hardly ever he nothing either unless driven never on his own/but once launched not without pleasure the impression/or illusion no stopping him thump thump all his fat-headed/meatus in the shit no holding him thump thump (p.80, 1) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'thump' IA15; 'shit' IIB1; 'hold' IA14)

The word 'meatus', which puns upon 'meat', occurs in the context of the description of the creatures' physical relationship, in the example above (p.80, 1-5).

(12) 'kidney'

'kidney' OED 1. One of a pair of glandular organs situated in the abdominal cavity of mammals, birds, and reptiles, which excrete urine and so remove effete nitrogenous matter from the blood. Also a gland with similar functions found in some animals of lower organization. The kidneys of cattle, sheep, and pigs are an article of food.

The narrator refers to the victim's 'kidney' during the torture sequence; whilst it is interpreted to refer to a part of the victim's body which is attacked, our attention is drawn to it as a word which can have the sense of 'an article of food' in the context of the association which we have seen between food and the sexual partner/victim.

Example:

.../thump on skull claws in armpit for the 'song blade in arse/pestle on kidney slap athwart and index in hole ... (p.100, 4) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'skull' IC12; 'arse' IC1; 'hole' IC4)

See also:

(13 'fork'

'fork' OED sb. 1. A pronged instrument. 2. An instrument with two, three, or four prongs, used for holding the food while it's being cut, for conveying it to the mouth, and for other purposes at table or in cooking. 12. A forking, bifurcation, or division into branches; the point at which anything forks. Hence, each of the branches into which anything forks. b. In the human body, the part at which the lower limbs proceed from the trunk. Also (sing. and pl.), the lower limbs themselves; the lower half of the body.

the cries tell me which end the head but I may be mistaken/
with the result all hangs together that the hand slides
right and/there to be sure there's the fork it's as I thought
then back left/just the same just to clinch it and there to
be sure there's the/arse again then oh without tarrying
down in a hollow then/guided by stump of thumb on spine
up to the floating/ribs that clinches it the anatomy I had
no point in insisting/further his cries continue that clinches
it this won't work in/the past either I'll never have a
past never had (p.60, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'clinch' IA11;
'arse' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7; IIA5)

Whilst according to one reading of p.60, 1, 'fork' is understood in OED sense 12b, another reading plays on OED sense 2, suggesting that the narrator reaches for a utensil with which to eat Pim.

iii) In the following three examples, food words not previously considered co-occur with or are equated with, waste matter.

(14) 'asparagus'

'asparagus' OED A plant (Asparagus officinalis N. O. lilia-ces) cultivated for the sake of its vernal shoots, which form a well-known delicacy of the table.

'abscess' OED A collection of pus or purulent matter formed by a morbid process in a cavity of the body.

to speak of happiness one hesitates those awful syllables
first/asparagus burst abscess but good moments yes I
assure you/before Pim with Pim after Pim vast tracts of
time ... (p.28, 5)

(15) 'crust'

'crust' OED sb. 1. The outer part of bread rendered hard and dry in baking. Opposed to crumb. c. By exten-

sion; A scrap of bread which is mainly crust or is hard and dry; often applied slightly to what is much more than crust.

my life above what I did in my life above a little of everything/tried everything then gave up no worse always a hole a ruin/always a crust never any good at anything not made for that/farrago too complicated crawl about in corners and sleep all I/wanted I got it nothing left but go to heaven (p.86, 6) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

(16) 'mutton'

'mutton' OED 1. The flesh of sheep, used as food. 7. In various phrases. As dead as mutton: quite dead.

nothing too to be sure often nothing in spite of everything/
dead as mutton warm and rosy always inclined that way
ever/since the womb if I may judge by what I know less
and less/that's true of myself since the womb the panting
stops I/murmur it (p.103, 15) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'spite'
IA16; 'know' IA7)

In the first example, 'asparagus' co-occurs with 'abscess'. In the second, the narrator's life above is described in derogatory terms, one of them being 'crust'. In the last example, the narrator himself is compared to dead matter which is also food, with reliteralisation of the cliché 'dead as mutton' as a result of its occurring in the context of reference to 'birth'.

iv) In the following examples, food is associated with language:

'meet'OED a. and adv. A. adj. 3. Suitable, fit, proper (for some purpose or occasion, expressed or implied). Const. for, to; also to with inf.

the fingers deceived the mouth resigned to an olive and given/a cherry but no preference no searching not even for a language/meet for me meet for here no more searching (p.19, 1) (c.r. 'olive' IIA4; 'cherry' IIA4)

In the context of 'olive' and 'cherry', there is a pun upon 'meet' in OED sense 3, and 'meat' OED sb.¹, according to one reading of which, 'language' is viewed as sustenance, like 'meat'.

the panting stops I am on my side which side the right it's/preferable I part the mouth of the sack and questions what my/God can I desire what hunger to eat what was my last meal/that family time passes I remain (p.36, 18)

(c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'hunger' IIA6; 'eat' IIA5; 'meal' IIA4; 'family' IB9)

The narrator opens his sack, in which he carries food, to find 'questions', according to one reading of this example.

Also, see p.28, 5, given above (IIA4iii), in which 'those awful syllables' directly precedes 'first asparagus'.

* * * * *

IIA5 'eat'

In 'eat' IIA5, examples of the word 'eat' will be considered, as well as other words which relate to the activity of eating. The other words which are considered in 'eat' IIA5 are: (2) 'bite', (3) 'swallow', (4) 'sweet', (5) 'taste', (6) 'lick', (7) 'butcher', (8) 'carve', (9) 'fill', (10) 'refreshing', (11) 'have'. As with previous sections, the examples are grouped according to the arguments which they illustrate.

(1) 'eat'

'eat' OED v. I. To consume for nutriment. 1. trans. To take into the mouth piecemeal, and masticate and swallow as food; to consume as food. Usually of solids only. d. fig. To submit to, 'swallow' (an insult, an injury). Also, to treasure up, 'feed upon' (thoughts, words, etc.); orig. a Biblical idiom. 3. intr. To consume food, take a meal. 4.c. To eat one's fill: to eat until satisfied. II. To destroy by devouring. 8. trans. To devour, consume (as a beast of prey); to prey upon; to feed destructively upon (crops, vegetation); transf. to ravage, devastate. lit. and fig. b. To absorb (time) wastefully. Obs.

i) In the following examples, the narrator talks about the activity of eating. We shall see however there is some question as to whether he does eat (any more), recalling the examples in 'food' IIAli, where it was unclear whether the narrator needed food to survive, and what constitutes that food.

nothing now but to eat ten twelve episodes open the tin

put/away the tool raise the tin slowly to the nose irreproachable/freshness distant perfume of laurel felicity then dream or not/empty the tin or not throw it away or not all that it's not said/I can't see no great importance wipe my mouth that without/fail so on and at last (p.39, 14) (c.r. 'open' IA17; 'tin' IIA2; 'tool' IA17)

In this example, 'eat' occurs with reference to the 'tin' which contains food; it is not made clear however whether he eats the food therein; he seems not to care; 'empty the tin or not'. That he wipes his mouth suggests that he has eaten it, but we should also note that to speak of 'emptying' the tin does not clearly state that it is emptied by eating, he could simply have thrown the contents onto the ground. There is also play upon food as language, since 'ten twelve episodes' directly follows 'eat', and thus according to one reading, is the object of 'eat'.

no appetite a crumb of tunny then mouldy eat mouldy no/need to worry I won't die I'll never die of hunger (p.8, 18) (c.r. 'appetite' IIA6; 'crumb' IIB4; 'tunny' IIA3; 'die' IC9; 'hunger' IIA6)

In this example, 'eat' occurs in the context of edible substance, 'crumb of tunny'; although it is again not clear that the narrator does actually eat it, since he speaks of having no appetite, and states that he will not die of hunger (c.r. 'die' IC9; 'hunger' IIA6).

In the next example, the narrator does talk of 'eating', although the word is used intransitively:

in a word more lively that's what I was getting at I've got at/it I say it as I hear it more how shall I say more lively there's/nothing better before Pim part one more independent seeing/my own little scenes crawling eating thinking even if you/insist an odd dim thought losing the one and only opener/hanging on to humankind a thousand and one last shifts with/emotions laughter even and tears to match soon dried in a word/hanging on (p.103, 7) (c.r. 'lively' IB14; 'opener' IA17; 'humankind' IB9)

if he is sure of what he says no he can't affirm anything no he/may have forgotten many things no certain little things yes the/little there was yes such as having crawled

a little yes eaten a/little yes thought a little murmured a little for himself alone yes/heard a human voice no he wouldn't have forgotten that no/brushed against a brother me no he wouldn't have/forgotten that no (p.107, 5) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the following examples, the narrator talks of 'eating' 'something', but also raises the question as to whether he eats any more; which is ambiguous between whether he has eaten enough at this particular meal or whether he will ever eat again:

find something else to last a little more questions who were/they what beings what point of the earth that family whence/this dumb show better nothing eat something (p.35, 20) (c.r. 'family' IB9)

that must have lasted a moment there must be worse moments/hope blighted is not the worst the day is well advanced eat/something that will last a moment they will be good moments (p.36, 1)

God sometimes somewhere at this moment but I have chanced/on a good day I would gladly eat something but I won't eat/anything the mouth opens the tongue doesn't come out the/mouth soon closes again (p.49, 5) (c.r. 'open' IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

to have Pim's timepiece something wrong there and nothing/ to time I don't eat any more than no I don't drink any more/and I don't eat any more don't move any more and don't/sleep any more don't see anything any more and don't do/anything any more it will come back perhaps all come back/or a part I hear yes then no (p.44, 7) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'drink' IIA7; 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3)

Also, see p.121, 1--8, where the narrator talks of 'uneaten food', suggesting that his not eating is not to do with lack of food. In the following example, the narrator talks of 'eating' the mud:

end of seventh year of stillness beginning of eighth brief/ movements of the snout would seem to be eating the mud (p.89, 3) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6)

ii) In the following examples, eating is associated with sexual relationships. In the first three examples, we see the word 'eat' and words related to eating occurring during the description of the scenes between the boy (narrator) and the girl, which anticipate the sexual-

sadistic relationship between the creatures.

(2) 'bite'

'bite' OED v. I. Said of the teeth. 1. trans. To cut into, pierce, or nip (anything) with the teeth. 5. trans. To go on nipping (portions of food), to nibble; to eat. Obs.

(3) 'swallow'

'swallow' OED v. 1. trans. To take into the stomach through the throat and gullet, as food or drink. In early use and still poet. also more generally = to eat or drink up, devour.

(4) 'sweet'

'sweet' OED a. and adv. A. adj. 1. Pleasing to the sense of taste; having a pleasant taste or flavour. spec. having the characteristic flavour (ordinarily pleasant when not in excess) of sugar, honey, and many ripe fruits, which corresponds to one of the primary sensations of taste. Also said of the taste or flavour. 5. Pleasing (in general); yielding pleasure or enjoyment; agreeable, delightful, charming. 8. Dearly loved or prized, precious, beloved, dear. c. absol. in affectionate address: Beloved, dear one; also in superlative.

suddenly we are eating sandwiches alternate bites I mine she/hers and exchanging endearments my sweet girl I bite she/swallows my sweet boy she bites I swallow we don't yet coo/with our bills full

my darling girl I bite she swallows my darling boy she bites/I swallow brief black and there we are again dwindling again/across the pastures hand in hand arms swinging heads high/towards the heights smaller smaller out of sight first the/dog then us the scene is shut of us (p.33, 24) (c.r. 'sandwich' IIA4)

The narrator identifies with the boy in this scene; see: 'I look to me about sixteen ... and the girl too whom I hold' (p.31, 19; c.r. 'hold' IA14). The scene describes the two eating during a scene of love and affection 'exchanging endearments'. We saw in IA, however, that this scene is not purely affectionate. The action of eating becomes confused with the exchange of endearments, so that the two appear to be eating each other, a reading suggested by an ambiguous syntax which is emphasised by the lack of punctuation. For example 'my sweet boy' (p.33, 26) is according to one reading the girl's comment about the boy; according to another, it is the

object of 'she swallows'; this is repeated p.35, 1. The ambiguity is stressed by a pun upon 'sweet' meaning both an expression of affection (OED sense 8), and 'sweet tasting' (OED sense 1). Cohn also notes this close association between eating and sex, 'endearments mingle with mastication'.⁷

(5) 'taste'

'taste' OED v. I. Of touch, feeling, or experience generally. 3. fig. To have experience or knowledge of; to experience, feel; to have a slight experience of. II. Of the special sense that resides in the tongue and palate. 4. trans. To perceive by the sense of taste; to perceive or experience the taste or flavour of. 6. d. fig. To make trial of as by the sense of taste; to try the quality of.

and yet a dream I am given a dream like someone having/
tasted of love of a little woman within my reach and dream-
ing/too it's in the dream too of a little man within hers I
have that/in my life this time sometimes part one as I
journey (p.14, 21) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5;
'life' IB12)

'tasted of love' is understood according to OED sense 3 and 6. However, we are seeing a pattern in which words associated with eating are being used to refer to love/actions of love. The example above anticipates the scene of sandwich eating, and this results in a pun upon 'taste' in OED sense II 4.

(6) 'lick'

'lick' OED v. 1. trans. To pass the tongue over (something), e.g., with the object of tasting, moistening the surface, or removing something from it.

brief black and there we are again on the summit the
dog/askew on its hunkers in the heather it lowers its
snout to its/black and pink penis too tired to lick it we
on the contrary/again about turn introrse fleeting face to
face transfer of things/swinging of arms silent relishing
of sea and isles heads pivoting/as one to the city fumes
silent location of steeples and towers/heads back to front
as though on an axle (p.33, 17)

⁷ Cohn, Gamut, p.199.

This reference to a dog licking its genitals directly precedes the sex/eating scene between the boy and girl, in which there is also reference to a dog (p.34, 5) who is present with them.

See also:

out by day no by night less light a little less his by day a hole/a ruin land strewn with ruins all ages my spinal dog it licked/my genitals Skom Skum run over by a dray it hadn't all its/wits broken column in my thirties and still alive robust/construction what am I to do (p.94, 5) (c.r. 'alive' IB13)

The following are examples of words with senses relating to the activity of eating used during the description of the victim/torturer relationship.

(7) 'butcher'

'butcher' OED sb. 1. One whose trade is the slaughtering of large tame animals for food; one who kills such animals and sells their flesh; in mod. use it sometimes denotes a tradesman who merely deals in meat. b. fig. One who slaughters men indiscriminately or brutally, a 'man of blood'; a brutal murderer. 2. An executioner; one who inflicts capital punishment or torture. Obs.

v. 1. trans. To slaughter in the manner of a butcher, or in a brutal and indiscriminate manner.

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely/curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears/of unbutcherable brother (p.82, 1) (c.r. 'prick' IA17; 'end' IC7; 'alive' IB13; 'thump' IA15; 'mud' IIB6; 'butcher' IC12)

That one of the creatures is referred to as 'unbutcherable brother' suggests that the torturer is actually attempting to kill the victim in order to eat him. The reference to 'unbutcherable brother' occurs in a stanza which has already been commented upon several times previously in this thesis because it contains puns which identify the sexual (c.r. 'prick' IA17), anal (c.r. 'end' IC7) nature of the torture. The co-occurrence of these puns with 'unbutcherable' clearly links the sexual-sadistic physical relationship of the creatures with cannibalism.

and Pim all this time vast stretch of time not a movement
 apart/from the lips and thereabouts the lower face to sing
 cry and/convulsive now and again the right hand for pale
 green the/hour to turn that he'll never see and those
 willy-nilly to be sure/by me imparted Pim has not eaten

I yes without its being said all is not said almost nothing
 and/far too much I have eaten offered him to eat crushed
 against/his mouth lost in the hairs the mud my palm dripping
 with/cod's liver or suchlike rubbed it in labour lost if
 he's still/nourished it's on mud if that's what it is I always
 said so this/mud by osmosis long run fullness of time by
 capillarity (p.72, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud'
 IIB6; 'cod's liver' IIA4)

'offer' OED v. 1. trans. To present (something) to God
 (or to a deity, a saint, or the like) as an act of worship
 or devotion; to sacrifice; to give in worship. 3. To present
 or tender for acceptance or refusal; to hold out (a thing)
 to a person to take if he will. (The prevailing sense.)

The narrator here is unclear whether or not Pim has eaten
 or how he receives his nourishment; his musings occur during a
 description of physical intimacy ('crushed against his mouth lost in
 the hairs the mud my palm dripping with cod's liver'). This physical
 intimacy also has overtones of aggression, especially given the ambi-
 guous nature of the relationship which we have already observed
 (c.r. IA); 'crushed' and 'lost' have a sense of being 'destroyed' or
 'crushed in order to be eaten'. There is further ambiguity regarding
 our understanding of 'I have eaten offered him to eat': a) 'offered'
 is understood in OED sense 3, in which 'him' is the indirect object
 and the narrator simply states that he has offered food for Pim to
 eat. b) The narrator is the offered food, 'crushed against his mouth'.
 c) 'offered' in OED sense 1, in which 'him' is the direct object of
 'offered'; the narrator offers Pim up to a deity.

never a gleam no never a soul no never a voice no I the
 first/yes never stirred no crawled no a few yards no ate
 pause ATE/good and deep no if he knows what's in the
 sack no never had/the curiosity no if he thinks he can
 die one day pause DIE ONE/DAY no

never did for anyone what I for him animate no sure yes
 never/felt another flesh against his no happy no unhappy

no if he/feels me against him no only when I torment him
 yes (p.106, 1) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'sack' IIA9; 'have' IA8,
 IB7, IIA5; 'die' IC9; 'animate' IB1; 'flesh' IIA4)

In this example (p.106, 1), the narrator is torturing Pim into answering a series of questions (see p.105, 24--30 in which the sexual torturous nature of the relationship is frequently punned upon) which include the question as to whether Pim eats at all. 'good and deep', which follows 'ATE' is interpreted as referring to the thrusting of the tin-opener, but it can also be read as referring to the enjoyment of a good, satisfying meal. That this stanza is followed by one in which the narrator establishes that the only way Pim recognises the narrator's presence is when the narrator torments him, and that he refers to this as feeling another 'flesh' against him, plays upon 'flesh' (see IIA4 above). It suggests that the narrator is one possible source of food, whilst emphasising that this is inseparable from the action of sexual-torturing, since it is through the sexual torture alone that this presence is felt.

Play on the word 'taste', which we examined earlier in the context of a relationship between the sexes, occurs in the context of the victim/torturer relationship with the use of the word 'foretaste':

'foretaste' OED v. 1. trans. To taste before hand, have a foretaste of. 2. 'To taste before another' (J.).

.../I'll know it later his way of happiness I'll have it later I have/not yet had all

faint shrill cry then foretaste of this semi-castrate mutter I must/bear ... (p.57, 13) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mutter' IB8, 'bear' IB5)

(8) 'carve'

'carve' OED v. I. 1. trans. To cut; formerly the ordinary word for that action in all its varieties. II. To cut artistically or ornamentally. 6. To cut or engrave figures, either in relief or intaglio on (in into) a surface. III. 8. intr. To cut up meat at table. b. trans. e.g. To carve a fowl, a joint, etc.

with the nail then of the right index I carve and when it

breaks/or falls until it grows again with another on Pim's back intact/at the outset from left to right and top to bottom as in our civilisation I carve my Roman capitals (p.77, 8) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2)

as long as I with Pim the other with Bem a hundred thousand/prone glued two by two together vast stretch of time nothingg/stirring save the tormentors those whose turn it is on and off/right arm claw the armpit for the song carve the scriptions/plunge the opener pestle the kidney all the needful (p.121, 22) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'kidney' IIA4)

In these examples, the torture of Pim is described as though the narrator were cutting up meat to eat (c.r. 'unbutcherable' IIA4 (7)).

See also further examples of words relating to eating which occur in the context of the creatures' physical relationship:

(9) 'fill'

'fill' OED sb.¹ 1. A full supply of drink or food; enough to satisfy want or desire.

no minutiae no problems but all this time we've been together/many is the couple would be content with it see each other die/without a murmur having had their fill (p.72, 7) (c.r. 'couple' IA5; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'die' IC9)

(10) 'refreshing'

'refreshing' OED v. 1. trans. Of physical agents (esp. water): To impart freshness to (a place or thing, the air, etc.) by means of cooling or wetting. 2. To make (one) feel fresher than before; to impart fresh vigour to (a person, the spirits or the mind, the eyes, etc.) when fatigued or exhausted; to reanimate, reinvigorate physically, mentally, or spiritually; to provide with refreshment. Said of food, drink, rest, sleep etc., or of persons providing or bestowing these; also freq. in passive without specified agent.

'portion' OED sb. I. 1. The part (of anything) allotted or belonging to one person; a share. Also fig. b. A quantity or allowance of food allotted to, or enough for, one person. 4. That which is allotted to a person by providence; lot, destiny, fate.

and if finally he might not with profit revise us by means for/ example of a pronouncement to the effect that this diversity is/not our portion nor these refreshing transitions from solitary/travellers to tormentors of our immediate fellows and from/abandoned tormentors to their victims (p.152, 16) (c.r. 'abandoned' IIB5)

The partner-changing is seen as 'refreshing' (OED sense 2, with play upon OED sense 1) and that they do this, not their 'portion' (OED sense 4, with play on sense 1b).

(11) 'have'

'have' Concise OED 10. Obtain, receive; eat, drink etc., (have an egg, a cup of tea, a cigarette).

In section IA8, we considered occurrences of 'have' in how it is, especially when there was a sexual pun. From the definition above, we can see that 'have' can also have a sense of 'eat'. We have already seen from examples of other words, that eating and sex become confused in how it is; it is now being argued that as well as a sexual pun, there is also a pun upon 'have' to mean 'eat'. The reader is referred in particular to the following examples, which are given in full in IA8 (the object of the 'having/eating' according to the reading being argued for here is given with each example):

'anatomy' p.60, 7; 'arse' p.31, 22; 'rump' p.33, 9; 'Pim' p.25, 18; 'tormentor' p.40, 7--10; 'victim' p.148, 20--23; 'company' p.35, 1; 'soul' p.27, 17--19.

Also see examples in which 'life' is the object of 'have' (in IB12 it was argued that one interpretation of 'a life' was that it referred to a creature):

p.26, 2; p.57, 6--7; p.29, 14--17; p.67, 17--18; p.84, 1--2; p.140, 16; p.140, 20--23; p.146, 13.

That the very same word combines both eating and sexual activity in one reinforces the argument that the sexual torture between the creatures is also closely associated with eating, that there are suggestions of cannibalism in their relationship.

* * * * *

IIA6 (1) 'appetite', (2) 'hunger', (3) 'thirst'

(1) 'appetite'

'appetite' OED sb. 1. Bent of the mind toward the attainment of a subject, or purpose; desire, inclination, disposition. 3. esp. The determinate desire to satisfy the natural necessities, or fulfill the natural functions, of the body; one of those instinctive cravings which secure the preservation of the individual and the race. 4. spec. Craving for food, hunger. 5. Capacity for food, feeling as regards food; relish.

(2) 'hunger'

'hunger' OED sb. 1. The uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food; craving appetite. Also, the exhausted condition caused by want of food. 3. transf. and fig. Strong desire or craving.

v. 2. intr. To feel, or suffer hunger, be hungry. 3. transf. and fig. To have a longing, or craving; to long for; to hanker after.

(3) 'thirst'

'thirst' OED sb. 1. The uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of drink; also, the physical condition resulting from this want. 2. fig. A vehement desire (of (arch.) for, after something, to do something).

v. 2. intr. To feel or suffer thirst; to be thirsty. 3. fig. To have a longing, craving, or strong desire.

'thirsty' OED a. 1. Having the sensation of thirst; feeling desire or craving for drink. 2. fig. Having or characterize or craving; eager, greedy.

i) The following examples concern lack of appetite/hunger/thirst, or uncertainty whether food or drink are necessary to the narrator's continued existence:

no appetite a crumb of tunny then mouldy eat mouldy
no/need to worry I won't die I'll never die of hunger
(p.8, 19) (c.r. 'crumb' IIB4; 'tunny' IIA3; 'eat' IIA5;
'die' IC9)

The above example is multiply ambiguous. One reading of line 19, for example, is as of a conversation the narrator has (with himself):

A: no appetite

B: a crumb of tunny (then?)

A: mouldy

B: eat!

A: mouldy; no need to worry, I won't die, I'll never die (,) of hunger.

'I won't die I'll never die of hunger' was examined in some detail in IC9; here we should recall that it is not clear why he will never die of hunger; whether there is no problem over food supply, whether he cannot die anyway, whether he can die, but does not need to eat in order to live.

The following three examples continue to illustrate that hunger and thirst fluctuate for the narrator; that he has little appetite for food or drink:

I see me on my face close my eyes not the blue the others/at the back and see me on my face the mouth opens the tongue/comes out lolls in the mud and no question of thirst either no/question of dying of thirst either all this time vast stretch of/time (p.9, 4) (c.r. 'back' IC3; 'opens' IA17; 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'die' IC9)

the tin broached put back in the sack or kept in the hand it's/one or the other I remember when appetite revives or I forget/open another it's one or the other something wrong there it's/the beginning of my life present formulation (p.8, 20) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'know' IA7)

two possible formulations therefore the present and that other/beginning where the present ends and consequently ending/with the journey in the dark the mud the traveller right leg/right arm push pull coming so utterly from nowhere and no/one and so utterly on his way there that he has never ceased/from travelling will never cease from travelling dragging his/sack where provisions are dwindling but not so fast as appetite (p.144, 13) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6; 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7 IIA5; 'sack' IIA9; 'provisions' IIA4)

In the following two examples, the narrator talks of there being no more hunger/thirst. It is not clear in all the examples whether the narrator means that he is not hungry/thirsty at that particular moment, for example, because he has just eaten/drunk; or whether he will not experience these feelings again. The last

interpretation has religious connotations, especially when this expression co-occurs with 'journey', suggesting that he is in/going to a land of plenty. This recalls the journey to Canaan or paradise, where earthly appetites are no more:

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.⁸

They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Examples:

at the end of the myriads of hours an hour mine a quarter of/an hour there are moments it's because I have suffered must/have suffered morally hoped more than once despaired to/match your heart bleeds you lose your heart drop by drop/weep even an odd tear inward no sound no more images no/more journeys no more images no/more journeys no more hunger or thirst the heart is going/you'll soon be there I hear it there are moments they are good/moments (p.25, 2) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

my tongue comes out again lolls in the mud I stay there no more/thirst the tongue goes in the mouth closes it must be a/straight line now it's over it's done I've had the image (p.34, 15) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

The religious implications are stressed when we recall the narrator's comment:

... the mud/in the mouth thirst abating humanity regained (p.30, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'humanity' IB10)

This suggests that he still after all has human thirsts which abate after drinking; see IB10 where the it is argued that 'humanity

⁸ Revelation 7. 15--17.

⁹ Isaiah 49. 10.

regained' has overtones of the fall from paradise.

the panting stops I am on my side which side the right it's/preferable I part the mouth of the sack and questions what my/God can I desire what hunger to eat what was my last meal/that family time passes I remain (p.36, 18) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'eat' IIA5; 'meal' IIA4; 'family' IB9)

In the last example, 'what hunger to eat', there are several possible readings, among which are: a) The narrator expresses surprise that he feels the need to eat: 'What! Hunger, to eat?'. b) He expresses of the severity of the hunger he feels 'What hunger to eat!' c) The narrator asks himself what it is that he is hungry for, what does he want to eat: 'What [do I] hunger to eat?'

mine what I need that's it most need changing aspects that's/it ever changing aspects of the never changing life according/to the needs but the needs the needs surely for ever here the/same needs from age to age the same thirsts the voice says so

it said I murmur for us here one after another the same thirsts/and life unchanging here as above according to the unchanging/needs hard to believe it depends on the moment the mood of/the moment the mood remains a little changeful you may say/no sound there is nothing to prevent you today I am perhaps/not quite so sad as yesterday there is nothing to stop you (p.81, 5) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

That the narrator suffers the 'same thirsts' is ambiguous. According to one reading, the narrator has the same basic 'needs', these do not change, they are assuaged and then after a lapse of time the same things are needed again; according to another reading, he 'needs/thirsts', but these are never satisfied, so the 'thirsts' remain. 'from age to age' continues the ambiguity noted previously, between referring to an epoch in time, or the narrator's own age (see the discussion of 'this dying age', p.18, 14 in IC9).

ii) In the following examples, the narrator's 'thirst/hunger' is associated with language:

the moment when I would need to say and could not mamma/papa hear those sounds slake my thirst for labials and could not/from then on words for that moment and following

vast/stretch of time (p.117, 1) (c.r. 'mamma' IB8)

'labial'OED A. adj. 1. Of or pertaining to the lips. B. sb. 1. A labial sound.

and how there are three of us four million and there I am/always was with Pim Bom and another and 999997 others/journeying alone rotting alone martyring and being martyred/oh moderately listlessly a little blood a few cries life above in/the light a little blue little scenes for the thirst for the sake of/peace (p.138, 17) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'martyr' IC12; 'life' IB12)

It is not clear in this last example (p.138, 17) to what 'for the thirst' refers. a) It refers to the 'little scenes', thus interpreted in OED sense sb. 2 fig. This reading associates 'thirst' with episodes from the narrative. b) 'for the thirst' refers to all the preceding clauses in the stanza, again in OED sense 2 fig. However, there is then play upon the literal sense of 'thirst', given the co-occurrence of 'blood'; since 'blood' is liquid, the narrator could conceivably thirst for it in the specialised literal sense of desiring to drink. Reference to 'blood' and 'a few cries' recalls the torture sequence and suggests pleasure in causing pain, 'thirst' in OED sense 2, evoking the word 'bloodthirsty' (clearly apt in considering the sadism of the creatures' relationship) and playing upon this term by using it in a way that could be interpreted literally as 'drinking blood'.

Conclusion to (1) 'appetite', (2) 'hunger', (3) 'thirst'

From these examples we have seen that the narrator contradicts whether he suffers from 'hunger' and 'thirst' and whether he can die from them. That he can't die from 'hunger' or 'thirst' suggests either that he has an abundance of food and drink, or that his existence is not dependent on them. His appetite is irregular, a common characteristic among Beckett's protagonists:

I ate like a thrush. But the little I did eat I devoured with a voracity usually attributed to heavy eaters, and wrongly, for heavy eaters as a rule eat ponderously and

with method, that follows from the very notion of heavy eating. Whereas I flung myself at the mess, gulped down the half or quarter of it in two mouthfuls without chewing (with what would I have chewed?), then pushed it from me with loathing. One would have thought I ate to live! Similarly I would engulf five or six mugs of beer with one swig, then drink nothing for a week.¹⁰

Other Beckett protagonists show also a concern as to whether they will die from 'hunger':

To think I shall perhaps die of hunger, after all, of starvation rather, after having struggled successfully all my life against that menace. I can't believe it. There's providence for impotent old men, to the end. And when they cannot swallow any more someone rams a tube down their gullet, or up their rectum and fills them full of victimized pap, so as not to be accused of murder. I shall therefore die of old age pure and simple, glutted with days as in the days before the flood, on a full stomach. Perhaps they think I am dead.¹¹

There is little use of 'appetite/hunger/thirst' directly, referring, save for the last example given, to the relationship between the creatures, although we should note that all these words can be used to refer to physical desire in general, other than the need to 'eat' and 'drink'. One hypothesis accounting for the lack of 'appetite/hunger/thirst' is that since the sexual-sadistic relationship between the creatures may also be cannibalistic, this replaces the need to eat food.

* * * * *

IIA7 'drink'

'drink' OED v.¹ I. Transitive senses. 1. To take (liquid) into the stomach; to swallow down, imbibe, quaff. 3. transf. Of porous substances, plants, etc. To absorb (moisture); to suck. Often with up or in. 4. fig. esp., with in: To

¹⁰ Molloy, Trilogy, pp.50--51.

¹¹ Malone, Trilogy, p.232.

take into the mind, esp. by the eyes or the ears, with eager delight of one who satisfies physical thirst: to listen to, gaze upon, or contemplate with rapture. II. Absolute and intransitive senses. 10. absol. To swallow down or imbibe water or other liquid, for nourishment or quenching of thirst. b. To drink deep; to take a large draught, either once or habitually.

i) The following examples of 'drink' can carry a literal interpretation as part of a consideration of the narrator's need to eat, drink etc. It should be noted that there is also reference to time or units of time which co-occur in the examples below; such co-occurrence gains significance in the light of the examples which will be given in IIA7iii below and also in the section on 'mud' and time c.r IIB6x.

what to begin with drink to begin with I turn over on my face/that lasts a good moment I last with that a moment in the end/the mouth opens the tongue comes out lolls in the mud that/lasts a good moment they are good moments perhaps the best/difficult to choose the face in the mud the mouth open the mud/in the mouth thirst abating humanity regained (p.30, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17; 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'thirst' IIA6)

The narrator begins by asking what action he should begin with and replies that he should begin by drinking; according to this interpretation drinking is viewed as the first (and therefore important) action. Since the mud is wet and is the only wet substance the narrator refers to here before his 'thirst' abates, one conclusion is that the narrator drinks the mud, or at least that it is from the mud that he absorbs the liquid he needs to survive. This reading is strengthened by further co-occurrences of 'drink' and 'mud', which we will see below (IIB6). The narrator denies that he 'drinks':

to have Pim's timepiece something wrong there and nothing/ to time I don't eat any more then no I don't drink any more don't move any more and don't/sleep any more don't see anything any more and don't do/anything any more it will come back perhaps all come back/or a part I hear yes then no (p.44, 7) (c.r. 'eat' IIA5; 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3)

yii) In the following examples, drinking is associated with the physical

relationship between the creatures. These examples also have the reading in common that the torturer 'drinks' the cries of pain produced by the victim (for example, 'drink the screams', p.59, 24; 'howls to drink' p.105, 21; given below). One interpretation of 'drink' in these examples is in OED sense 4, that by 'drink' he means 'absorb', 'listen to with great pleasure' (which emphasises the sadistic pleasure the torturer takes in tormenting his victim). However, we have also seen examples in IIA which suggest that the torturer's need for sustenance in the way of food (and will see further examples, c.r. 'sustenance' IIA8) is replaced by torturing the victim. These examples continue this pattern and play on 'drink' OED sense 1.

Pim's right buttock then first contact he must have heard them/grate there's a noble past I could have 'dug them in if I had/wished I longed claw dig deep furrows drink the screams the/blue the violent shade the turbaned head bowed over the fists/the circle of friends in their white dhotis without going that/far (p.59, 22) (c.r. 'buttock' IC1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

howls thump the whole face in the mud mouth nose no more/breath and howls still never saw that before his life here howls/in the black air and the mud like an old infant's never to be/stifled good try again HERE HERE to the marrow howls to drink/solar years no figures until at last good he wins life here this/life he can't (p.105, 18) (c.r. 'thump' IA15; 'mud' IIB6; 'hole' IC4; 'life' IB12)

the voice extorted a few words life because of cry that's the/proof good and deep no more is needed a little cry all is not/dead one drinks one gives to drink goodbye (p.133, 3) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'dead' IC10)

The 'cry', according to one reading of p.133, 3, is what is drunk (and given to drink). 'one drinks one gives to drink' mimics that masochistic-sadistic relationship between the creatures. The referent of 'one' is ambiguous: a) It refers to a different creature on each occasion, saying that whilst one creature is drinking, the other is providing what is drunk (cries of pain). b) 'one' refers to the same creature, in the sense of 'you'; what a creature habitually does, referring to the role-swapping in which one creature

will both torture (drink) and be tortured (scream, that is, 'give to drink'). 'one drinks one gives to drink' suggests a cycle; it recalls 'have eaten offered him to eat' (p.72, 16; c.r. 'eat' IIA5) and also 'the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer' (p.144, 4; c.r. 'fuck' IA2; 'make' IA9, IB2); we shall be commenting further on such cycles in how it is (see especially IIB).

iii) The following examples all have in common the reading that 'time', or units of time, such as 'moment(s)', 'second(s)', 'year(s)' are the object of the verb 'drink'. The examples occur during the description of, or references to the torture sequence, so that one interpretation is that the narrator 'drinks', that is 'takes great pleasure in', the time he spends torturing Pim.

better a big ordinary watch complete with heavy chain
he/holds¹² it tight in his fist my index worms through the/
clenched¹² fingers and says a big ordinary watch complete
with/heavy chain

I draw his arm towards me behind his back it jams ticking
very/greatly improved I drink it for a moment

.../without having had to raise my head from the mud
no/question I finally have the watch to my ear the hand
the fist it's/preferable I drink deep of the seconds delicious
moments and/vistas (p.65, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5;
'mud' IIB6)

The narrator talks of drinking the 'ticking' of the watch in this last example, and of 'drinking' 'seconds delicious moments'; the co-occurrence of 'delicious' and 'moments' reinforces the reading that the 'moments' are 'drunk' by the narrator in OED sense 1.

See:

'delicious' OED a. 1. Highly pleasing or delightful; affording great pleasure or enjoyment. b. Intensely amusing or entertaining. 2. Highly pleasing or enjoyable to the bodily

¹² We recall that the sage also 'clenches' his fists, for example, p.59, 4.

senses, esp. to the taste or smell; affording exquisite sensuous or bodily pleasure.

In light of the play between OED senses fig. and lit. of 'drink' and 'delicious', 'I drink it for a moment' (line 6) is ambiguous: a) 'for a moment' is an adverbial phrase explaining how long he drinks. b) He 'drinks' the 'ticking' in order to extract a 'moment' to 'drink'. One interpretation of the 'ticking' is that it is that of Pim's pulse, evoking the image of the narrator drinking blood (c.r p.138, 17--22 and comments on the co-occurrence of 'thirst' and 'blood'). Further, see p.30, 1--6 (c.r. IIA7i) where the narrator says 'I last a moment with that', suggesting that he exists for a moment whilst he 'drinks'; that drinking allows him to 'last' ('remain alive'). However play on 'last' to mean 'final' suggests that they may be his final moments; the 'drinking' (torture) brings both life and death. See also p. 105, 21 given above, in which the object of 'drink' is, according to one reading, 'howls'; according to another, 'solar years'.

.../who drinks that drop/of piss of being and who with his last gasp pisses it to drink the/moment it's someone each in his turn as our justice wills and/never any end it wills that too all dead or none (p. 144, 9) (c.r. 'piss' IIB1; 'end' IC7; 'dead' IC10)

This example is considered in some detail below, (c.r. 'piss' IIB2); for now we should note that according to one reading 'the moment' is the object of 'to drink' and that the example has the same cyclic quality ('it's someone each in his turn') as we observed in 'one drinks one gives to drink'.

there wherewith to beguile a moment of this vast season or/just a drop of ditch-water I'd be glad of a sup at this/hour (p.100, 25) (c.r. 'thirst' IIA6; 'ditchwater' IIB4)

'sup' OED sb.¹ A small quantity of liquid such as can be taken into the mouth at one time; a mouthful; a sip (Also in fig. context.)

'a moment of this vast season' is offered as an alternative to drinking 'just a drop of water', according to one reading of this last example.

sometimes in this position I fall asleep again the tongue goes/in the mouth closes the mud opens it's I who fall asleep again/stop drinking and sleep again or the tongue out and drink all/night all the time I sleep that's my night present formulation/I have no other I wake from sleep how much nearer to the last/that of men of beasts too I wake ask myself how much nearer I/quote on last a moment with that it's another of my resources (p.30, 12) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'open' IA17)

Two of the readings for p.30, 12 are: a) 'all night', 'all the time (I sleep)' are adverbial time phrases modifying 'I drink', the narrator 'drinks'. b) 'all night' and 'all the time' are the direct object(s) of 'drink'.

iv) 'drink' also occurs: 'exceptionally the worse for drink' (p.41, 19).

* * * * *

IIA8 (1) 'nourish', (2) 'sustain', (3) 'live on'

(1) 'nourish'

'nourish' OED v. II. 5. a. Of a female: To feed (a young animal or child) with milk from the breast; to suckle; to nurse or rear in this way. Obs. b. To sustain (a person or living organism) with food or proper nutriment. c. To supply (a thing) with whatever is necessary to promote its growth or formation, or to maintain it in proper condition.

'nourishment' OED 1. That which nourishes or sustains; aliment, sustenance, food. Also fig. or transf.

(2) 'sustain'

'sustain' OED v. 5. To keep going, keep up (an action or process, occas. a material object); to keep up without intermission. To carry on. 6. To support life in; to provide for the life or bodily needs of; to furnish with the necessities of life; to keep. Obs. d. To support (life, nature) with necessities. 8. To endure without failing or giving way; to bear up against, withstand. 11. To hold up, bear the weight of; to keep from falling by support from below; often simply, to carry, bear. Also with up. Now rare.

'sustenance' OED 1. Means of living or sustenance. Livelihood. 2. Means of sustaining life, food, victuals. c. gen. and fig. nourishment.

(3) 'live on'

'live on' OED (under 'live' v.¹) 2. To supply oneself with food; to feed, subsist. Const. by, of, on, upon, rarely, in. 3. To procure oneself the means of subsistence. Const. by, of, on, or upon, with.

i) In the following examples, the source and or degree of nourishment is uncertain:

the tongue gets clogged with mud that can happen too only/one remedy then pull it in and suck it swallow the mud or spit/it out it's one or the other and question is it nourishing and/vistas last a moment with that

I fill my mouth with it that can happen too it's another of my/resources last a moment with that and question if swallowed/would it nourish and opening up of vistas they are good/moments (p.30, 19) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'swallow' IIA5; 'open' IA17)

... if he's still/nourished it's on mud it that's what it is I always said so this/mud by osmosis long run fullness of time by capillarity (p.72, 18) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'eat' IIA5; 'mud' IIB6; 'cod's liver' IIA4)

We should also note in this last example that 'nourish' occurs during a description of the physical closeness of the two creatures.

centuries I can see me quite tiny the same as now more or less/only tinier quite tiny no more objects no more food and I live/the air sustains me the mud I live on (p.19, 8) (c.r. 'food' IIA1)

'sustains' and 'live on' are both ambiguous in this example between meaning physically supported by ('sustain' OED sense II; 'live on' not as phrasal verb but as verb and preposition indicating place); that is, that the narrator is buoyant in the air/rests on the surface of the mud; and meaning that the air/mud are his source of nourishment.

ii) In the following examples, the sexual/torturous relationship between the creatures offers a source of nourishment:

and if it may seem strange that without food to sustain us we/can drag ourselves thus by the mere grace of our united net/sufferings from west to east towards an inexistent peace we are/invited kindly to consider

that for the likes of us and no matter how we are recounted/there is more nourishment in a cry nay a sigh torn from one/whose only good is silence or in speech extorted from one at/last delivered from its use than sardines can ever offer (p.156, 18) (c.r. 'food' IIA1; 'kindly' IB10; 'sardine' IIA3)

Here, the narrator explicitly states that the sounds produced by the victims have replaced their need for conventional food such as 'sardines'. This confirms the pattern which we have been noticing throughout IIA; the 'miraculous flesh' replacing the hoped-for 'miraculous sardines'; the 'drinking' of the screams, for example.

if I was born it was not left-handed the right hand transfers/the tin to the other and this to that the same instant the tool/pretty movement little swirl of fingers and palms little miracle/thanks to which little miracle among so many thanks to which/I live on lived on (p.39, 9) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'tool' IA17; 'live' IB12)

The 'miracle' to which the narrator attributes his 'living on' is the movement of the 'tool', the tin-opener, which we saw to be an instrument of sexual torture in IA17. The reference to 'tin' and 'tool' suggests a pun upon 'live on lived on', not just to mean 'continued to live', but also as a phrasal verb.

iii) 'live on' also occurs: 'live old/dream on crabs kelp' (p.94, 24; c.r 'crab' IIA3).

* * * * *

Conclusion to IIA1-8

The narrator gives contradictory information as to whether he has food or not, what the food is, and whether he needs to eat and drink. He claims that a supply of food, in the form of tinned fish, is carried with him in the sack, but later suggests that these are of heavenly origin. We have noted that the following are among possible interpretations for this lack of need to eat or drink (noting

also that the narrator's uncertainty/contradictions on this matter may reflect his own ignorance of his condition): a) That the narrator does not exist physically, for example, he is a dead soul (c.r. 'death/die/dead' IC 8/9/10), or an unborn soul, or a figment of someone's imagination. b) That the narrator has ceased to eat or drink and is in the process of dying. c) That the narrator is being hyperbolic when he talks of eating, drinking no more, the time between eating and drinking appears never-ending to the narrator. d) That the narrator gains nourishment from something other than what we would usually recognise as food, that he gains his sustenance elsewhere.

There is a correlation between eating, drinking and the sexual/torturous relationship between the creatures; at times the narrator explicitly states that the creatures take their nourishment from the cries of suffering of the victim. This statement is viewed as non-literal at first, but a series of wordplay and patterning is consistent with the narrator's statement. For example, there is a cannibalistic quality to the relationship, playing upon more conventional forms of oral love play, when, for example, the scenes of the boy and girl 'eating' each other are replaced by the scenes of bloodthirsty sexual sadism between Pim and the narrator. References to drinking time in these contexts could be interpreted as enjoyment in the relationship; however we shall be examining further examples of the narrator's 'drinking' 'time' below (c.r. 'mud'IIB6) and will argue that whilst this is an acceptable interpretation, it is not sufficient.

At times the object of the eating/drinking is language or para-linguistic noises; most usually the sounds produced by the tortured creature. On one level this is interpreted figuratively to

mean that he listens with great rapture; on another level, considering that he does not seem to eat conventional food, that the relationship is portrayed as the creatures eating each other; and that (one of) the objects in torturing is to extort the 'voice', there is also play upon a literal interpretation, suggesting that we 'construe the world', rather than interpret metaphorically according to the truth conditions in the reader's world.¹³

In section IIB WASTE we shall be considering further word-play upon the food/waste cycle; wordplay especially results from the creatures' relationship being cannibalistic and anal.

* * * * *

IIA9 'sack'

'sack' OED sb.¹ I. 1. A large bag oblong in shape and open at one end, usually made of coarse flax or hemp, used for the storing and conveyance of corn, flour, fruit, potatoes, wood, coal, etc.

In this section we shall be considering the use of the word 'sack'. As we shall see, the narrator talks of carrying a 'sack' with him, one function of which is to carry food (IIAi). The word however occurs frequently in how it is, over one hundred times. We shall be examining the sort of words with which 'sack' collocates. The word 'sack' comes to take on senses more than simply of a 'sack' in which food is contained, related to the theme of SEX which was considered in Section I, and to WASTE which will be considered in the next section, IIB.

The example of the occurrences of the word 'sack' are considered in the following subsections:

¹³ Using Levin's terms, from Semantics of Metaphor.

- i) 'sack' as container of food
- ii) 'sack' as the narrator's most basic possession
- iii) 'sack' is equated with 'life' (c.r. IB12)
- iv) 'sack' as a container of language/mental resources
- v) 'sack' is identified with the body
- vi) 'sack' as a companion
- vii) 'sack' as a womb symbol (including 'sack' and time; 'sack' and 'mud')
- viii) the 'sack' bursts
- ix) 'sack' co-occurring with anal puns
- x) 'sack' as a burden/symbol of suffering
- xi) the 'sack' as a fiction

As usual, there will be cross references immediately after each quotation to the other sections in which words in the particular quotation are considered; the second set of cross references will be to sub-sections within this section (IIA9), in which the same quotation is given to illustrate a different point. For the sake of brevity, the actual title of the sub-section will often be abbreviated. In some cases, cross references will also be made at the end of subsections to other subsections; this is when what has been demonstrated in one subsection is felt to help with the argument of another; for example, that the 'sack' is a container of food is related to the argument that it is a womb symbol, so at the end of IIA9i there will be a cross reference to IIA9vii.

i) In the following examples, the 'sack' functions as a container of the narrator's (tinned) food (c.r. 'food' IIA1; 'tins' IIA2; 'fish' IIA3).

then on my elbow I quote I see me prop me up thrust in
my/arm in the sack we're talking of the sack thrust it in
count the/tins impossible with one hand keep trying one

day it will be/possible

empty them out in the mud the tins put them back one by one/in the sack impossible too weak fear of loss (p.8, 12) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'mud' IIB6; 'back' IC3)

in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to have been/given to me this time the image of other things with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within reach no that doesn't seem to have been put in my life this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'tins' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6; 'life' IB12) (c.r. IIA9iii 'sack' as 'life')

all the possible a sack with food a body entire ... (p.114, 9) (c.r. 'food' IIA1) (c.r. IIA9v 'sack' as body)

a sack no doing without a sack without food when you/ journey as we have seen should have seen part one no doing/without them it's regulated thus we're regulated thus (p.120, 12) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'sack' as most basic possession IIA9ii)

... a simple sack pure and simple a small coal-/sack to the feel five stone six stone wet jute food inside (p.120, 22--23) (c.r. 'food' IIA1)

Further examples which illustrate this point will be found:

p.8, 20--23; p.18, 11--14; p.22, 10--15; p.29, 20--21; p.37, 1--11; p.49, 15--18; p.74, 7--8; p.88, 19--21; p.101, 18--20; p.144, 17--19; p.148, 1--2.

Also see: 'mountain of sacks' (p.148, 23) (c.r. 'sack' as burden IIA9x)

'mountain of provisions' (p.149, 23).

Conclusion to IIA9i

The 'sack' contains the narrator's tinned food and the narrator equates its possession with the possession of 'food', 'rations', 'feasts' etc. It should also be noticed that the 'sack' contains the 'opener' (for example, p.12, 12), that is, according to one of the functions of the 'opener', the means for obtaining food from the tins.

(c.r. 'sack' as most basic possession IIA9ii; 'sack' as 'life' IIA9iii;

'sack' as body IIA9v; 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix.)

ii) In the following examples we will note that the 'sack' is viewed as the narrator's most basic possession, that is, these examples establish that the narrator attaches great importance to possessing the 'sack'. He constantly refers to possessing it, carrying it with him, as if he could not envisage existence without it.

When questioning how the narrator came to be where he is, he talks of having the 'sack' with him:

part one before Pim how I got here no question not known/
not said and the sack whence the sack and me if it's me
no/question impossible too weak no importance (p.8, 1)
(c.r. 'sack' as companion IIA9vi; 'sack' as body IIA9v)

the sack sole good sole possession coal-sack to the feel
small or/medium five stone six stone wet jute I clutch it it
drips in the/present but long past long gone vast stretch
of time the begin/ning this life first sign very first of
life (p.8, 8) (c.r. 'life ' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as 'life' IIA9iii)

other certainties the mud the dark I recapitulate the sack
the/tins the mud the dark the silence the solitude nothing
else for/the moment (p.9, 1) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'tins' IIA2

In the following two examples the narrator explicitly states that the 'sack' is important for more than food, in the first he comments (according to one reading) that even when empty it is still important in being a possession:

the sack when it's empty my sack a possession this word/
faintly hissing brief void and finally apposition anomaly/
anomaly a sack here my sack when it's empty bah I've
lashings/of time centuries of time (p.19, 4) (c.r. 'sack'
and time IIA9vii)

the sack as we have seen there being occasions when the
sack/as we have seen is more than a mere larder for us
yes moments/when if needs be it may appear more than a
mere larder to us (p.148, 3) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

a mistake rest we're talking of rest how often suddenly at
this/stage I say it as I hear it in this position the hands

suddenly/empty still nipping¹⁴ the sack never let go the sack otherwise/suddenly empty (p.37, 18)

One reading of p.37, 17, is that if the narrator lets go of the 'sack' it will lose its contents (c.r. 'sack' bursts IIA9viii); another is that existence would be empty for the narrator if he lost his 'sack'.

the sack my life that I never let go here I let it go needing both/hands as when I journey ... (p.38, 16) (c.r. 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as 'life' IIA9iii; 'sack' as fiction IIA9xi)

so many other things too so often imagined never named/ never could useful necessary beautiful to the feel all I was/given present formulation such ancient things all gone but the cord a burst sack a cord I say it as I hear it murmur it to the/mud old sack old cord you remain (p.51, 19) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'sack' bursts IIA9viii; 'sack' as womb IIA9vii;

In the following two examples (p.64, 12; p.72, 1) we see that Pim also has a 'sack'; from p.72, 1, we see that the narrator considers it important to gain access to the 'sack', and that Pim is prepared to suffer in order to keep it:

now his arms Saint Andrew's cross top V reduced aperture/ my left hand moves up the left branch follows it into the sack/he holds his sack on the inside near the mouth more daring/than me my hand lingers a moment on his like cords his veins/withdraws and resumes its place on the left in the mud no more/about this sack for the moment (p.64, 12) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' as burden IIA9x)

first lesson then second series but first take away his sack he/resists I claw his left hand to the bone it's not far he cries but/won't let go the blood he must have lost by this time vast/stretch of time I am not a brute as I may have said before access/to the sack that I have my left hand enters gropes for the/opener here a parenthesis (p.72, 1-6) (c.r. 'gropes' IA10; 'opener' IA17) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

Further examples showing that the narrator views the 'sack' as his

¹⁴ Compare: 'Did you ever wish to kill a child? (Pause) Nip some young doom in the bud.' (Mr Rooney, All That Fall, p.31).

most basic possession can be found:

p.10, 14--17; p.22, 10--15; p.23, 21--24; p.26, 16--22; p.27, 4--7;
 p.27, 12--13; p.28, 14; p.29, 18--23; p.31, 1--4; p.37, 12--16;
 p.39, 20--21; p.49, 9--12; p.51, 1--4; p.51, 11--13; p.73, 4--7;
 p.77, 1--5; p.83, 1; p.105, 28--30; p.113, 15--23.

See especially p.120, 1--24 and p.121, 1--11, where in the space of a page and a half the word 'sack' recurs twenty-four times; illustrating that the narrator regards it as one of his/their fundamental possessions, but cannot establish adequately how they/he came to possess it. His concern^c however illustrates its importance to him/them. Also, see the use of the word 'treasure' in contexts in which one reading is that the 'sack' is the 'treasure', for example, p.27, 2.¹⁵ The narrator also refers to the 'sack' being 'pure and simple'; the interpretation of this which we are concerned with here is that it is 'simple', 'not complex', it is a basic item.

We recall that the possession of a 'sack' or bag is important to other characters in Beckett's work. For instance, throughout Happy Days, Winnie brings objects out of her bag which provide her with entertainment to pass the time. Mercier and Camier consider that: 'the sack is the crux of the whole matter in that it contains, or did contain, certain objects we cannot dispense with ... intuition that the said sack contains something essential to our salvation.'¹⁶

iii) The following examples have in common as one of their readings that the 'sack' is equated with 'life' or is seen as a source of 'life':

¹⁵ Brienza sees a reference to Matthew 6. 19--21 in this use of 'treasure', p.126.

¹⁶ Mercier and Camier, p.59. Note the use of the word 'salvation'; there may be play on the biblical sense of this. See IIA9xi where it is argued that the 'sack' in how it is is the narrator's cross.

the sack my life that I never let go here I let it go
needing both/hands as when I journey ... (p.38, 16) (c.r.
'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

the sack sole good sole possession coal-sack to the feel
small or/medium five stone six stone wet jute I clutch it it
drips in the/present but long past long gone vast stretch
of time the begin-/ning this life first sign very first of
life (p.8, 8) (c.r. 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord
but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to
have been/given to me this time the image of other things
with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within
reach no that doesn't/seem to have been put in my life
this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'tins' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'things'
IA10; 'mud' IIB6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12) (c.r.
'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

That 'put in my life' follows a list of what the narrator has in his
'sack' (p.12, 12) suggests a correlation between the 'sack' and 'life'.

Further examples in which 'sack' is equated with 'life':

... my life clutch the sack it drips first sign this place
a/few scraps (p.23, 23) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'scraps' IIB4)
(c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

nothing dries I clutch the sack first real sign of life it
drips a tin/clinks ... (p.27, 12) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'tin'
IIA2) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

... clutch the sack it drips/a tin clinks loss of species
one word no sound it's the beginning/of my life present
formulation I can go pursue my life it will/still be a man
(p.29, 20) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'come' IA6; 'tin' IIA2; 'species'
IB11) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

with both hands therefore as when I journey or in them
take/my head took my head above in the light I let it go
the sack/therefore but just a moment it's my life I lie
across it therefore/that hangs together still (p.39, 1) (c.r.
'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii; 'sack' as fiction
IIA9xi)

this mud I always said so it keeps a man going and he
clings to/the sack that was the point to be made I say it
as I hear it does/it as much as serve to pillow his head
no he clutches it at arm's/length as he the window-sill
who falls out of the window (p.73, 4) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)
(c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

my life again above in the light the sack stirs grows still
again/stirs again the light through the worn thread strains
less white/sharp sounds distant still but less it's evening
he crawls tiny out/of the sack me again I'm there again
the first is always me then/the others (p.97, 11) (c.r.

'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

See also:

a fancy I am given a fancy the panting stops and a breath-
clock/breath of life head in the bag oxygen for half an
hour wake/when you choke repeat five times six times
that's enough now/I know I'm rested my strength restored
the day can begin these/scraps barely audible of a fantasy
(p.21, 12) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'know' IA7)

The 'bag' that contains the 'breath of life' may well be the 'sack',
since no other similar object is mentioned as available to the narrator
of how it is.

Conclusion to IIA9ii

In these examples, we have seen that the 'sack' is equated
with 'life' by the narrator. One interpretation of this is that as the
container of food, it provides the narrator with the means to continue
living. Knowlson and Pilling interpret the 'sack' as keeping the
narrator alive, keeping him in a condition of 'dying' (c.r. p.18, 124
and discussion IC9) because it provides him 'with material for continu-
ance for as long as he chooses to rely on it'.¹⁷

(c.r. 'sack' as food IIA9i; 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' as fiction
IIA9xi; 'sack' as source of language.)

iv) One reading that all of the following examples have in common is
that the 'sack' contains language, words, the narrator's mental re-
sources.

my sack sole variable my days my nights my seasons and
my/feasts it says Lent everlasting then of a sudden Hallow-
mas ... (p.18, 11) (c.r. 'feasts' IIA4; 'die' IC9) (c.r.
'sack' as basic IIA9ii; 'sack' and time IIA9vii)

The 'sack' is the 'sole variable'; suggesting that it is the source of
the narrator's entertainment. The referent of 'it' (line 12) is ambi-

¹⁷ Frescoes of the Skull, p.76.

guous between the 'voice' (a reading assumed from knowledge of the text) and the 'sack' (a reading suggested by the occurrence of the 'sack' just prior to 'it').

The 'image of other things' is to be found in the 'sack':

in the 'sack' then up to now the tins the opener the cord but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to have been/given to me this time the image of other things with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within reach no that doesn't/seem to have been put in my life this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'tins' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'thing' IA10; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

the panting stops I am on my side which side the right it's/preferable I part the mouth of the sack and questions what my/God can I desire what hunger to eat what was my last meal/that family time passes I remain (p36, 18) (c.r. 'hunger' IIA6; 'eat' IIA5; 'meal' IIA4; 'family' IB9) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

One reading of p.36, 18 is that the 'questions' are inside the 'sack'.

In the following example, the 'sack' is used to make a mental note, to record something in the narrator's memory:

curse God no sound make mental note of the hour and wait/midday midnight curse God or bless him and wait watch in/hand but the dark but the days that word again what about/them with no memory tear a shred from the sack make knots/or the cord too weak (p.44, 16)

that kind an image not for the eyes made of words not for the/ears the day is ended I'm safe till tomorrow the mud opens/I depart till tomorrow the head in the sack the arms round it the/rest anyhow

brief black long black no knowing ... (p.51, 1) (c.r. 'kind' IB9; 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6; 'open' IA17; 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

In the last example (p.51, 1), the narrator's mental state is described whilst his head is in the 'sack'; it could be in the 'sack' that he sees the image or it could be that he does not have his head in the 'sack' until later, when there is a state of blackness 'no knowing'.

... if he knows what's in the sack no never had/the curiosity no ... (p.106, 4) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

One reading of p.106, 4 is that the creature had never felt curious enough to find out what was in the 'sack'; another reading is that he never experienced the 'curiosity' contained in the 'sack'. In the following example, the reading that the 'sacks' are equated with 'last reasonings' is emphasised by 'namely':

namely string them together last reasonings namely these/
sacks these sacks (p.148, 14) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

a sack bravo colour of mud in the mud quick say a sack/
colour of its surroundings having assumed it always had
it/it's one or the other seek no further what else that
thing could/possibly be so many things say sack old word
first to come one/syllable k at the end seek no other all
would vanish a sack that/will do the word the thing it's a
possible thing in this world so/little possible yes world
what more can you ask a possible/thing see it name it see
it enough now rest I'll be back/no alternative some day
(p.113, 15) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'thing' IA10) (c.r.
'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

The 'sack' is identified in this example (p.113, 17) as an 'old word', but also the 'first to come', suggesting that it is: a) The first word to come to the narrator's mind. b) The first word in existence (for him/anyone). The narrator emphasises 'sack' as a 'word', as a language unit. His stress upon the importance of naming it (line 22) also plays upon religious connotations of 'the word' (compare: 'In the beginning was the Word',¹⁸ c.r. IB12i.)

... burst the sack/drivel on drone on in a word the old
road (p.68, 21) (c.r. 'sack' bursts IIA9viii)

This (p.68, 21) suggests that the bursting of the 'sack' results in droning, in the voice.

now at rest my left hand part two second half what is it
doing/grasping the sack beside Pim's no more about this
sack the/opener the opener soon Pim will speak (p.73,
13) (c.r. 'opener' IA17) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

According to one reading of p.73, 13, 'sack' is equated with the

¹⁸ John 1. 1.

'opener', leading Pim to open out, to speak. In the following example, he appears to be looking in the 'sack' for 'a language':

the fingers deceived the mouth resigned to an olive and given/a cherry but no preference no searching not even for a language/meet for me meet for here no more searching

the sack ... (p.19, 1) (c.r. 'olive' IIA4; 'cherry' IIA4; 'meet' IIA4)

whose his in charge of the sacks the sacks and food these words/again the sack as we have seen (p.148, 1) (c.r. 'food' IIA1) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

In the last example (p.148, 1), one reading equates 'sack' with 'words'. Brienza remarks that the 'sacks' are not only indirectly the means to words (through the opener), but that they are equated with 'words' themselves. She goes on to comment: 'Usually the narrator speaks of his phrases being strung together, but at least once it is the sacks which are strung together.'¹⁹ The next example suggests that the 'voice' is sealed inside the 'sack':

... in the depths of the/sack hermetically under vacuum on their dead for ever sealed/the voice (p.101, 19) (c.r. 'dead' IC10) (c.r. 'sack' contains food IIA9i)

Conclusion to IIA9iv

In this section we have observed examples for which one set of readings equate the 'sack' with language or mental resources, suggesting that it contains these, or is the source of the 'voice'. Cohn notes that 'sac' is used in many clichés in French, one of which is relevant here, that 'vider son sac' means to 'have one's say'.²⁰ We have seen that emphasis is placed upon the 'sack' being a 'word', even the 'first word' (which then gives birth to others?). That the 'sack' is seen as a source of life, food, and language,

¹⁹ Brienza, p.135.

²⁰ Cohn, Gamut, p.194.

continues the correlation noted in IB between physical and mental existence/creation. This argument will be further developed, c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' as fiction IIA9i.

v) The following examples have in common that one of their readings gives to the 'sack' the qualities of, or equates it with, a body (of a living creature).

rest then my mistakes are my life the knees draw up the back/bends the head comes to rest on the sack between the hands my/sack my body all mine all these parts every part (p.38, 1) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'come' IA6)

If we read 'my body' in apposition to 'my sack' (p.38, 1), the two are equated; 'my sack' can also be read as part of a list including 'head', 'hands', 'knees', defined as 'my body all these parts every part'.

a body what matter say a body see a body all the rear white/originally some light spots still say grey of hair growing still/that's enough a head say a head say you've seen a head all that/all the possible a sack with food a body entire alive still yes/living stop panting let it stop ten seconds fifteen seconds hear/this breath token of life hear it said say you hear it good pant on (p.114, 6) (c.r. 'food' IIA1; 'alive' IB13; 'live' IB15; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' contains food IIA9i)

In the last example, 'a body entire' follows 'a sack with food', suggesting that the two are equated.

The following examples involve references to the 'sack' having a 'neck', 'mouth' etc.; they are included here since their use as parts of an inanimate object derives from a transference of their sense in reference to animate bodies (see OED below, IIA9vii): p.12, 8--11; p.36, 18--21; p.37, 1--4; p.45, 1--5 (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii).

almost clinging that's too strong as always he can't repel me it's/like my sack when I had it still this providential flesh I'll never/let it go call that constancy if you wish (p.61, 11) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'flesh' IIA4)

In IIA3, IIA4 we noted that the desire for 'miraculous

sardines' (p.53, 22) was replaced by the 'miraculous flesh' (p.57, 25). The sardines, as we saw in IIA9i are in tins which are carried in the 'sack'. One reading of the example above (p.61, 11) is that 'this providential flesh' refers to the 'sack'. This plays upon the function of the 'sack' in containing the sardines, it also continues the pattern in which the need for food is replaced by the discovery of a fellow-creature to torment (c.r. 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix).

A further example of 'sack' co-occurring with 'body' and body parts:

a few old images always was the same no more blue the blue is done/never was the sack the arms the body the mud the dark living/hair and nails all that (p.114, 24) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'live' IB15)

more sacks here then than souls infinitely if we journey/infinitely and what infinite loss without profit there is that/difficulty overcome something wrong there (p.121, 9)

See:

'soul' OED sb. 2. The principle of thought and action in man, commonly regarded as an entity distinct from the body; the spiritual part of man in contrast to the purely physical. Also occas., the corresponding or analogous principle in animals. Freq. in connexion with, or in contrast to, body. 12. A person, an individual.

There is play in this last example (p.121, 9) between 'soul' in OED sense 12, which contrasts the 'sacks' with animate beings (creatures) and OED sense 2, which makes a contrast between bodies ('sacks') and the spiritual part of the creatures ('souls'). (However, see also the discussion under IIA9vi, especially examples from p.8, 8; p.18, 12, in which a pun on 'sole' results in an equation between 'sack' and 'soul'.)

In the following example, the narrator questions if the 'sack' is him (another reading is that he asks if he is he):

part one before Pim how I got here no question not known/
not said and the sack whence the sack and me if it's me
no/question impossible too weak no importance (p.8, 1)
(c.r. 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

Conclusion to IIA9v

We have seen examples in which the 'sack' represents physical existence; it is equated with body parts and is contrasted to soul or spiritual existence. This is consistent with examples presented in IIA9i where we saw that the 'sack' is a container of food; it is a reasonable extension for it to come to symbolise that physical existence. Cohn comments that in various French idioms, 'sac' can stand for 'belly' or 'brain'.²¹ The suggestion that the creatures' physical and spiritual existence are regarded separately ('more sacks than souls') has implications regarding the narrator's actual state (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'live' IB15; 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10). (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' as burden IIA9x; 'sack' as companion creature.)

vi) The following examples have in common the reading that the 'sack' is treated as a source of comfort, a companion, a fellow creature:

the sack again other connexions I take it in my arms talk to it/put my head in it rub my cheek on it lay my lips on it turn my/back on it turn to it again clasp it to me again say it thou/thou (p.19, 11) (c.r. 'back' IC3)

take the sack in my arms strain it so light to me lay my cheek/on it it's the big scene of the sack it's done I have it behind me/the day is well advanced close the eyes at last and wait for my/pain that with it I may last a little more and while waiting (p.39, 20) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'behind' IC3) (c.r. 'sack' as fiction IIA9xi; 'sack' as basic IIA8ii)

no the truth is this sack I always said so this sack for us there is/something more than a larder than a pillow for the head than/a friend to turn to a thing to embrace a surface to cover with/kisses something far more we don't profit by it in any way any/more and we cling to it I owed it this tribute (p.73, 8) (c.r. 'kiss' IIA4) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

²¹ Cohn, Gamut, p.194.

The examples thus far in this section indicate that the narrator regards the 'sack' as a source of comfort, company; we have seen him treating it with the sort of affection one confers on a lover. Indeed, John Mood remarks that the sack has become a real love object²² and Van Petten, that the narrator 'eulogises it as one would a lover'.²³

ah my young friend this sack if you had seen it I could hardly/drag it and now look my vertex touches the bottom (p.24, 22) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'bottom' IC2) (c.r. 'sack' as burden' IIA9x; 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix)

In the last example, 'my young friend' could be addressing the reader; it could also be referring to the 'sack'; one reading of the following example is that the 'sack' is the object of 'hugging':

no emotion all is lost the bottom burst the wet the dragging/the rubbing the hugging the ages old coal-sack ... (p.51, 14) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2) (c.r. 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix)

In section IIA9ii, where we saw how the narrator considered the 'sack' to be his most basic possession, we considered examples in which the narrator referred to the 'sack' as his 'treasure', according to one reading of them; this reading is also consistent with his treating it as a companion/lover: p.26, 23--25; p.27, 1--3; p.58, 26--27.

In the following examples, the narrator evokes a comparison between the 'sack' and Pim:

thus our life in common we begin it thus I do not say it is not/said as others at the end of theirs clinging almost to each other ...

²² J.J. Mood, 'The Descent into the Self: An Interpretation of the Prose Fiction of Samuel Beckett' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Drew University, United States, 1969), p.291.

²³ C. Van Petten, 'Modulations of Monologue in Beckett's Comment C'est', Symposium, 31 (1977), pp.243--55 (p.244).

almost clinging that's too strong as always he can't repel me it's/like my sack when I had it still this providential flesh I'll never/let it go call that constancy if you wish (p.61, 5, 11) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'end' IC7) (c.r. 'sack' as body IIA9v)

The use of the term 'clinging' recalls the narrator's obsessive holding, 'clutching' of the 'sack'. Use of the word 'constancy' suggests a sort of fidelity to the 'sack' more usually associated with a love relationship.

all I hear hear no more lie there the same as before Pim after/Pim the same as before in my arms with my sack ... (p.69, 11) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

I let go the sack let go Pim that's the worst letting go the sack/... (p.83, 1) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

One reading of p.69, 11, is that the narrator has his arms around the 'sack' until he meets Pim and again 'after Pim', when Pim is no longer there; suggesting that the 'sack' is a substitute lover for Pim, or that Pim is a substitute for his 'sack'. On p.83, 1, either the narrator lets go of both Pim and the 'sack', or he equates/confuses the two.

a dream what a hope death of sack arse of Pim end of part one/... (p.42, 12) (c.r. 'death' IC8; 'arse' IC1; 'end' IC7) (c.r. 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix)

Again, one reading of p.42, 12 is that Pim ('s 'arse') is a replacement for the 'sack', once it has 'died'. Being an inanimate object, the 'sack' could not literally undergo 'death'; one interpretation of the 'death' of the 'sack' is again that the narrator is confusing/equating the 'sack' with Pim.

it's on the left the sack attends me I turn on my right side and/take it so light in my arms ... (p.49, 9) (c.r. 'back' IC3; 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

See:

'attend' OED v. I. To direct the ears, mind, energies to anything. II. To watch over, wait upon, with service, accompany as servant, go with, be present at. III. To wait for, await, expect.

From this we can see that the subject of the verb 'attend' (in this instance the 'sack') is usually animate, since 'attend' implies intention, that the subject is consciously waiting, not just existing.

In the following examples, the 'sack' co-occurs with, and according to one reading, is equated with, 'sole'; as a pun on 'soul' this furthers the argument that the 'sack' is viewed as an animate being; see OED sense 12 of 'soul', 'a person, an individual'.

the sack sole good sole possession ... (p.8, 8) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

my sack sole variable ... (p.18, 14)

A punning reading for p.8, 8, is that the 'sack' is a 'good soul'; for p.18, 12, that the narrator refers to his 'sack-soul'.

Conclusion to IIA9vi

In this section we have seen that the narrator regards the 'sack' as a source of comfort and treats it with affection; more like a companion creature than an inanimate object. Indeed, we saw that the 'sack' becomes confused with Pim; that Pim is seen as a replacement for the 'sack' and vice versa. This further develops the following associations of the 'sack' which we have already observed:

i) 'sack' as the container of food. Having noted in IIA1--8 the association between food and sex in how it is, here we see that the container of food and the narrator's sexual partner are confused with each other.

ii) 'sack' as basic possession.

iii) 'sack' as a life source; here we see it treated as animate, indeed as Pim; Pim is the source of the 'life/voice' produced during the sexual torture.

v) 'sack' as body. Whilst in IIA9v the examples suggested that the

'sack' represented the narrator's body, here it is confused with Pim's.

The identification of the 'sack' with Pim will be referred to and developed in particular in the following later sections: 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix; 'sack' as fiction IIA9xi.

vii) In this section it will be argued that one of the functions of the 'sack' in how it is is as a womb symbol. This develops associations which we have already noted the 'sack' to have, in particular c.r. 'sack' as source of 'life' IIA9iii; 'sack' as source of food IIA9i.

At one point, the narrator describes himself emerging from the 'sack' as if being born:

my life again above in the light the sack stirs grows still
again/stirs again the light through the worn thread strains
less white/sharp sounds distant still but less it's evening
he crawls tiny out/of the sack me again I'm there again
the first is always me then/the others (P.97, 11) (c.r.
'life' IB12)

In the following example, the origin of the narrator is associated with the 'sack':

part one before Pim how I got here no question not known/
not said and the sack whence the sack and me if it's me
no/question impossible too weak no importance (p.8, 1)
(c.r. 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii; 'sack' as
body IIA9v)

The narrator is lying next to the 'sack' as if he has just been born in this next example; the 'panting' (which may have been the heavy breathing of one giving birth) has stopped and he begins to think about eating. (Also, see that one reading is that 'the family' is contained in the 'sack'.) Moreover, he talks of 'parting' the 'mouth' of the sack. Use of the word 'part' with 'mouth' suggests a pun upon 'parturition' (see discussion on the collocation of 'mud' and 'part' IIB6):

'parturition' OED 1. The action of bringing forth or of

being delivered of young; childbirth. (Chiefly in technical use, also fig.)

the panting stops I am on my side which side the right it's/preferable I part the mouth of the sack and questions what my/God can I desire what hunger to eat what was my last meal/that family time passes I remain (p.36, 18) (c.r. 'hunger' IIA6; 'eat' IIA5; 'meal' IIA4; 'family' IB9)

In the following examples, references to the 'neck' of the 'sack' and to the narrator's being attached to the 'sack' by a 'cord' are given as part of the argument that the 'sack' is a womb symbol. One interpretation of the 'cord' is that it plays upon the umbilical cord:

'cord' OED sb.¹ 1. A string composed of several strands twisted or woven together; in ordinary popular use, now restricted to small ropes, and thick or stout strings; but formerly applied more widely. b. A rope for hanging; the hangman's rope. 2. Anat. A structure in the animal body resembling a cord. b. Now applied generally to a nerve trunk, and spec. to certain structures, esp. the spermatic, spinal, and umbilical cord, the vocal cords; see these words.

'umbilical' a. and sb. A. adj. 2. Umbilical cord: a. The flexible string which attaches the foetus to the placenta; the navel string.

'neck' OED sb.¹ I. 1. The back part of that portion of the body lying between the head and shoulders; also, by extension, the whole of this portion, the narrow part below or behind the head. III. In transferred uses, applied to such parts of things as have some resemblance to the neck.

The cervix, or neck of the womb, is a narrow opening that protrudes into the vagina.²⁴

As is clear from the OED the use of 'neck' to refer to parts of an inanimate object is the result of a transfer of senses referring to an animate body. Further, the 'neck' has a specialised sense, referring to the 'neck' or cervix of the womb.

Examples:

²⁴ Good Housekeeping Family Health Encyclopaedia, edited by Dame Josephine Barnes and others (London, 1983), p.54.

take the cord from the sack there's another object tie the neck/of the sack hang it from my neck knowing I'll need both hands/or else instinct ... (P.12, 8) (c.r 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'sack' as burden IIA9x)

uncord the sack and neck I do it I must do it it's the way one is/regulated my fingers do it I feel them (p.48, 22)

... such ancient things all gone but/the cord a burst sack a cord I say it as I hear it murmur it to the/mud old sack old cord you remain (p.51, 21) (c.r. 'thing' IA10; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii; 'sack' bursts IIA9viii)

.../frantic departure the cord round my neck the sack in my/mouth a dog (p.52, 7) (c.r. 'sack' as burden IIA9x)

all this business of sacks deposited yes at the end of a cord ... (p.159, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

A kind of birth is again evoked in the last example, when the narrator talks of 'sacks' being deposited at the end of a cord.

Having seen the narrator 'born' from the 'sack', then attached to it by a 'cord', we will now see examples in which he describes climbing into the 'sack'. This is an image that occurs elsewhere in Beckett; in the second part of Act Without Words, two men emerge from sacks on stage and then return to them. It is common for Beckett heroes to express a desire to return to the womb. For instance, Belacqua in More Pricks Than Kicks, says: 'I want very much to be back in the caul.'²⁵ We are told that: 'Murphy never wore a hat, the memories of the caul were too poignant, especially when he had to take it off'.²⁶ Soloman refers to Molloy's symbolic return to the womb.²⁷

Examples:

²⁵ More Pricks Than Kicks, p.31.

²⁶ Murphy, p.45.

²⁷ Soloman, Life After Birth, p.29.

not fear I quote of losing it something else not known
not/said when it's empty I'll put my head in it then my
shoulders/my crown will touch the bottom (p.10, 18) (c.r.
'know' IA7; 'bottom' IC2) (c.r. 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix)

Whilst 'when it's empty' could indicate that when the 'sack' has no
tins left inside it, then he will climb into it, it could also suggest
that it is not yet empty of him, that he has not yet been fully
ejected from it, born.

ah my young friend this sack if you had seen it I could
hardly/drag it and now look my vertex touches the bottom
(p.24, 22) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'bottom' IC2) (c.r.
'sack' as companion IIA9vi; 'sack' and anal puns IIA9viii)

'vertex' OED 3. Anat. (and Zool.) The crown or top of
the head; esp. in man, the part lying between the occiput
and the sinciput.

quick the head in the sack ... I fart and piss in the
same breath (p.42, 15, 18) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'fart' IIB1;
'piss' IIB2)

.../I depart till tomorrow the head in the sack the arms
round it the/rest anyhow (p.51, 1)

it's the scene of the sack the two hands part its mouth
what/can one still desire the left darts in the left hand in
the sack it's/the scene of the sack and the arm after up
to the armpit and/then (p.37, 1) (c.r. 'sack' as fiction
IIA9xi)

me again always everywhere in the light age unknown
seen/from behind on my knees arse bare on the summit of
a muck-/heap clad in a sack bottom burst to let the head
through/holding in my mouth the horizontal staff of a vast
banner on/which I read (p.40, 6) (c.r. 'behind' IC3; 'arse'
IC1; 'bear' IB5; 'muckheap' IIB1; 'bottom' IC2; 'hold' IA14)
(c.r. 'sack' and anal puns IIA9ix; 'sack' bursts IIA9viii)

That the narrator is still connected to the 'sack', as we
saw above (see examples of 'cord'), suggests that the birth process
has not yet been completed. This is emphasised in the next example:

the journey I made in the dark the mud straight line sack
tied/to my neck never quite fallen from my species and I
made that/journey (p.138, 9) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB2; 'mud'
IIB6; 'species' IB11) (c.r. 'sack' as burden IIA9x)

The 'fall' that the narrator refers to in this last example
(p.138, 9), which he has not completed, is birth, according to one

interpretation. 'species' then refers to the family from which he was conceived; the journey being through the birth channels, connected to the womb by the umbilical cord. This contains negative connotations; that the birth was never quite complete raises the question of how the narrator exists now, whether he is alive, dead, waiting to die, or waiting to be born. That the 'cord' is tied to his neck suggests that it may be strangling him instead of connecting him to nourishment.

See also:

merrily then once again push pull if only a herring from time/to time a prawn they would be good moments alas wrong road/we are not on that road any more the tins in the depths of the/sack hermetically under vacuum on their dead for ever sealed/the voice stops for one or the other reason and life along with/it above in the light and we along with it that is what becomes/of us (p.101, 16) (c.r. 'prawn' IIA3; 'herring' IIA3; 'tin' IIA2; 'dead' IC10; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' contains food IIA9i; 'sack' contains language IIA9iv)

One reading of the above (p.101, 16) is that the narrator is on the 'wrong road', that he is 'in the depths of the sack' 'for ever sealed'; 'life' stopping (he may even be 'hermetically under vacuum' in the 'sack', 'dead'). That is, he is permanently sealed in the 'sack', unable to be born, unable therefore to live.

In the following examples, one reading of the phrase 'in the sack' is that it describes all of the events described in the stanza, in the narrative, as taking place in the 'sack', implying that the narrator is inside it for the duration of the narrative.

Example:

one notebook for the body inodorous farts stools idem pure/mud suckings shudders little spasms of left hand in sack/quiverings of the lower without sound movements of the head/... (p.90, 9) (c.r. 'fart' IIB1; 'stools' IIB1; 'mud' IIB6)

Further examples: p.8, 12--15; p.8, 15--16; p.12, 12--16; p.45, 1--5; p.99, 18--19; p.100, 1--3; p.101, 18--19; p.104, 16--18; p.114,

1--3.

The following imply a relationship between the 'sack' and the 'mud': p.12, 15--16; p.24, 15--17; p.51, 22--23; p.52, 1--2; p.113, 15--16; p.114, 1--2. The significance of this relationship (they are both the same colour, at times the 'mud' seems to be in the 'sack', on other occasions the narrator fills the 'sack' with 'mud') will become apparent in IIB6, where it will be argued that one of the interpretations of the 'mud' is that it is food, another that it is womb fluids. The narrator's filling the 'sack' with 'mud' (p.52, 1) once the 'sack' has burst suggests that he is trying to replace its lost contents. Another interpretation of the 'mud' is that it is 'shit' (see IIB6); see below where it will be argued that the 'sack' is equated with the 'arse'. 'mud' is also equated with 'time'; in this context see: p.12, 12--13; p.42, 15--16; p.51, 14--18; p.18, 11--13; p.27, 4--6; p.19, 4--7; which suggest that 'time' is something that the 'sack' also contains. If, as we have considered, the narrator has been prematurely ejected from the 'sack'/womb, then he currently exists outside time (c.r. 'mud' and time IIB6; 'live' IB15; 'death/die/dead' IC8/9/10).

Conclusion to IIA9vii

Examples have been given in this section in which the 'sack' can be interpreted as a womb symbol. We have already seen that it provides nourishment (c.r. IIA9i) and that it is regarded as a source of life (c.r. IIA9iii). The narrator refers to its 'neck'; to 'parting' its 'mouth'; to being tied to it by a 'cord'. Whilst we have observed examples which suggest that the narrator is inside the 'sack' (still in the womb?) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6), we have also seen that he carries a 'sack' with him, on one occasion describes his exit from it (birth?) and at times puts his hands, arms, head inside it, even trying to climb inside it, suggesting that he has left or been

ejected from the womb and desires return to it. That he does carry the 'sack' with him, that he is at times still connected to it, implies that his ejection from the 'sack'/womb was not one of normal birth; either it has not yet been completed ('never quite fallen') or the process was one of abortion or miscarriage ('screams abandon hope ... frantic departure the cord round my neck the sack in my mouth', p.52, 6).

The 'sack' as a womb symbol is not necessarily a positive association for the 'sack'. Further negative connotations of the 'sack' are considered in the sections below IIA9viii--xi.

viii) In the following examples, 'sack' co-occurs with 'burst':

'burst' OED v. I. 'intr. To break or be broken suddenly. 2. Now chiefly of a surface or thing with extended surface: To break suddenly when in a state of tension, to fly asunder or in pieces; to be broken by expansion of the contents. Of persons or animals: often as an imagined consequence of excess in eating or drinking, or of violent exertion. Also fig. (chiefly with allusion to the bursting of a bubble). b. Said of boils, tumours, etc.: To break the outer covering and discharge the matter. Of a bud: To break the envelope, open out. Of a cloud: To disperse in heavy rain (often fig.).

ppl. a. 1. b. Rent by force when in a state of tension; exploded, torn open.

no emotion all is lost the bottom burst the wet the dragging/the rubbing the ages old coal-sack five stone six/stone that hangs together all gone the tins the opener an opener/ and no tins I'm spared that this time tins and no opener I/won't have had that in my life this time (p.51, 14) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2; 'tins' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'sack' with anal puns IIA9ix; 'sack' as companion IIA9vi)

those dragging on in front those dragging on behind whose/lot has been whose lot will be what your lot is endless cortege/of sacks burst in the interests of all (p.53, 19) (c.r. 'behind' IC3; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7; 'cortege' IC12)

not burst Pim's sack not burst there's no justice or else just one/of those things that pass understanding there are some

older than mine and not burst perhaps better quality jute and/with that still half-full or else something that escapes me

sacks that void and burst others never is it possible the old/business of grace in this sewer why want us all alike some/vanish others never

.../then of a sudden like all that starts starts again no knowing set/forth forth again ten yards fifteen yards right leg right arm/push pull a few images patches of blue a few words no sound/cling to species a few sardines yawn of mud burst the sack/drivel on drone on in a word the old road (p.68, 6, 18) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'species' IB11; 'sardine' IIA3; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'sack' contains language IIA9iv)

The reference to some things which 'pass understanding' evokes man's ignorance in contrast to God's omniscience. The occurrence of 'grace' anticipates the 'regimen of grace' (p.135, 21) which was discussed in IC. The rare occurrence of 'grace' in how it is results in our associating the two occurrences together; both occurrences suggest that the narrator is currently in a graceless place (c.r. IIB).

See also:

me again always everywhere in the light age unknown seen/from behind on my knees arse bare on the summit of a muck-/heap clad in a sack bottom burst to let the head through/... (p.40,6) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'behind' IC3; 'arse' IC1; 'muckheap' IIB1; 'bottom' IC2) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' with anal puns IIA9ix)

'burst' implies an unplanned emptying; the narrator talks of when the 'sack' will be empty but seems to be referring to his finishing the food in the 'sack' (p.10, 9--10; p.10, 19--21; p.19, 4--7; p.37, 17--20). He is disturbed when it does 'burst' (p.51) and tries to think of reasons to account for it (p.51, 14), and work out what has been lost. In the context however of the animate associations which we have noted the 'sack' to have (c.r. IIA9 iii, v, vi, vii), 'bursting' has connotations of death. Indeed, the narrator refers to the 'death of the sack' (p.42, 12); one interpretation of

this is that it refers to the 'sack's 'bursting'. The death connotations of the 'bursting' of the 'sack' are emphasised by 'cortege' (c.r. IC11). (See also, p.120, 20--21, where one reading is that 'if one died' refers to the 'sack'.) There is wordplay on the traditional use of 'burst' to hyperbolically refer to the result of a person's over-eating (see OED sense 2), because the 'sack' contains food. In the previous subsection, IIA9vii, we observed that 'sack' also acts as a womb symbol; in this context its unexpected 'bursting' is offered as an interpretation of the narrator's anomalous state between life and death (c.r. IB12--16; IC8--12); namely that the 'sack'/womb 'burst', ejecting the narrator unexpectedly as a kind of abortion or miscarriage, the umbilical cord still being attached.

ix) In the following examples, 'bottom' co-occurs with 'sack', recalling the anal puns which we noted in IC. These examples are not given in full here because they have all been very recently given in previous subsections considering the 'sack': p.10, 18--20; p.24, 18--20; p.40, 6--10; p.52, 1--4.

We have already noted that one reading for 'death of sack arse of Pim' (p.42, 12) is that the 'arse' of Pim compensates for the 'death' of the 'sack'. Among other readings for this example are: a) 'death of sack-arse, of Pim', in which Pim is referred to as a 'sack-arse'. b) 'death of sack-arse of Pim', the 'sack-arse' belongs to Pim. Both these readings, along with the first offered, equate the 'sack' with an 'arse', and with the anal puns listed above are part of a consistent pattern. Indeed, when the narrator explores Pim's 'sack', the description has connotations of rape (p.72, 1--6); the narrator's hand 'gropes' (c.r. IA10) for access and the victim bleeds.

We also saw that 'arse' co-occurs with 'burst'; 'landed on

his arse dead burst' (p.86, 13). This again recalls the 'death of sack arse of Pim' (p.42, 12) since 'death' and 'sack' co-occur with 'arse' and we have noted that one interpretation for the 'death of the sack' may be its 'bursting'. This pattern of co-occurrence continues the identification between the 'sack' and 'arse'. In 'arse' IC1 we saw that anal sex was associated with death, and in particular with death by falling/jumping. In the following example, 'sack' also co-occurs with reference to falling out of a window. Previously this example was listed as an example of the 'sack' being a source of life, since the metaphor evokes one clinging to it like a man falling from a window clings to the window sill, that is to avoid falling. Here we should note the pejorative associations of the co-occurrence of the 'sack' with reference to falling from a window:

this mud I always said so it keeps a man going and he clings to/the sack that was the point to be made I say it as I hear it does/it as much as serve to pillow his head no he clutches it at arm's/length as he the window-sill who falls out of the window (p.73, 4) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'make' IA9, IB2) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii; 'sack' as life source IIA9iii)

The 'sack' also contains the 'opener', see: p.72, 4; p.12, 12; p.73, 13; p.88, 19; in IA17 we observed that one punning sense of the 'opener' is 'anus'.

It is being argued that the 'sack' is compared to/equated with the 'arse'. This has implications for the senses of the 'sack' which we have previously noted. The 'arse' represents the opposite end of the digestive cycle to that of a container of uneaten food; suggesting a conflation of the digestive cycle, a confusion between fresh food and waste (c.r. IIB WASTE). We observed that the 'sack' also acts as a womb symbol. That it represented a container of food as well, we argued, continued the food-sex association in how it is. That 'sack' also is identified with the 'arse' continues the association;

since sex in how it is is anal and since the 'arse' plays a part in the normal digestive cycle, adding further an association with waste, in that the 'arse' excretes waste food. We observed that a natural and complete birth did not seem to have occurred and that the bursting of the 'sack' emphasised this. In section IB we noted difficulty in conceiving and commented that this may have resulted from the anal nature of the narrator's sex relationship; that the 'sack' should symbolise both the womb and the 'arse' further emphasises this. Again, so does the wordplay associating the father/uncle's death with the wife's, following anal sex, and the 'bursting' of the 'sack-arse'.

There are also other suggestions that the 'sack' is associated with death. We remarked that the 'sack' 'hangs' from his neck and that this implies that the 'sack' may strangle him. This would lead to a pun on 'hanging' as a form of death (usually execution; occasionally suicide). The reference to the cord of the 'sack' 'sawing my neck' also punningly evokes decapitation. That the narrator puts his head inside the 'sack' (as we saw in IIA9vii) is suggestive of the sack that is sometimes used to cover the heads of those about to be executed (raising a question about the 'scaffolding' that the uncle/father fell from, p.86, 11--14). When the narrator says then, 'I'm going the sack/tied to my neck' (p.20, 21), 'going' is understood not only as 'travelling', but also as 'dying' (see 'go' Concise OED, sense 19).

x) In the following examples, the narrator and his fellow creatures find the 'sack' a burden to travel:

take the cord from the sack there's another object tie the neck/of the sack hang it from my neck knowing I'll need both hands/... (p12, 8) (c.r. 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii; 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

impossible that at every journey we should have had to scale/a mountain of sacks and should still have and should for ever/have each one of us at every journey in order to reach his/victim to scale a mountain of sacks our progress as we have/seen while admittedly laborious yet the terrain the terrain try/and understand no accidents no asperities our justice (p.148, 20) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii)

Further examples: p.17, 15--19 (where the narrator talks of the sack jolting at his side and the cord sawing his neck); p.20, 21--23; p.24, 22--23 (where he talks of 'dragging' it); p.38, 16--17; p.45, 1--5; p.52, 5--8; p.138, 9--11; p.144, 17--19.²⁸

In the OED under 'sack' is an entry for 'sackcloth':

'sackcloth' OED 1. b. As the material of mourning or of penitential garb.

Discussing comment c'est, Cohn notes that 'sac a charbon' suggests 'sac et cendres', penitential garb.²⁹ We have already seen from the above examples that the 'sack' is a burden to the narrator; the connotation of penitential garb would suggest that it is a burden the narrator has chosen.

The 'sack' is associated with 'suffering':

quick the head in the sack where saving your reverence I have/all the suffering of all the ages I don't give a curse for it ... (p.42, 15) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

Among interpretations for this example are: a) In containing food, the 'sack' contains 'suffering' since it contains the means to continue life, which is suffering. b) The 'sack' contains the 'opener', which is the instrument of torture between the creatures. This last reading is reinforced by the co-occurrence of both 'sack' and 'sadism' with the phrase 'pure and simple' (p.70, 3; p.112, 22). That the

²⁸ However, contrast p.49, 10, when the narrator takes the 'sack' in his arms and refers to it as 'light'.

²⁹ Cohn, Gamut, p.193.

'sack' contains 'suffering' reinforces the connection between food and sex/torture observed in IIA1--8, since, in IIA9i, we saw that the 'sack' is a container of food.

That the 'suffering' is 'of all the ages' has among its readings: a) The narrator is being hyperolic, exaggerating. b) The narrator is referring to his own 'age', that the 'sack' contains all the 'ages' he will go through. c) The 'ages' refer to time, the narrator is carrying in the 'sack' the suffering of all the ages, of all the epochs of human history. If the narrator is carrying the suffering of all mankind, then he represents himself as a martyr of Christ-like proportions. Another interpretation is that the 'sack' is a curse which the narrator carries, albatross-like, around his neck.

xi) In the following examples, the narrator appears to contradict himself with regard to details concerning the 'sack':

with both hands therefore as when I journey or in them
take/my head took my head above in the light I let go the
sack/therefore but just a moment it's my life I lie across
it therefore/that hangs together still (p.39, 1) (c.r 'life'
IB12) (c.r. 'sack' as basic IIA9ii; 'sack' as 'life' IIA9iii)

... it's/like my sack when I had it still .../when I had it
still but I have it still it's in my mouth no it's not/there
any more I don't have it any more I am right I was/right
(p.61, 11, 14) (c.r. 'flesh' IIA4; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

In the following example, the 'sack' co-occurs with words from language referring to the mechanics of fiction:

it's the big scene of the sack it's done (p.39, 21)

It also co-occurs with 'words' (as we saw in IIA9iv), for example:
p.39, 21; p.113, 18; p.19, 4; p.148, 1.

The narrator has finally to admit that the 'sack' was a fiction:

all this business of sacks deposited yes at the end of a
cord no/doubt yes of an ear listening to me yes a care
for me yes an/ability to note yes all that all balls yes

Krim and Kram yes all/balls yes (p.159, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7) (c.r. 'sack' as womb IIA9vii)

only me in any case yes alone yes in the mud yes the dark yes/that holds yes the mud and the dark hold yes nothing to regret/there with my sack no I beg your pardon no no sack either/no not even a sack with me no (p.159, 15) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

Before this admission, however, the narrator goes to some lengths to overcome discrepancies in his story with regard to the 'sack'. See p.134, where he constructs a system in which none of the creatures is without a 'sack'; followed by p.135, 2, where he talks of someone who is 'in charge of the sacks'. Later, p.148, 20, he admits that the picture he is building up has flaws in it, 'impossible', but makes a last attempt to rectify this.

The 'sack' is a fiction created by the narrator; but he clearly attributes great value to it (c.r. 'sack' as basic possession IIA9ii); it is the last object which he admits to be fictional, he hangs onto its existence for as long as he can. We have seen that the 'sack' is identified with the source of life (IIA9iii) and of language, mental resources (IIA9iv). The source of the resources used to create fictional life is itself a fiction (like Pim).

Conclusion to IIA9 'sack'

Critics have commented that the 'sack' has more than literal value. For instance, Van Petten notes that: 'The meaning of the sack seems to be charged with symbolic value.'³⁰ The words with which the 'sack' collocates have both positive and negative connotations. As a provider of food, mental resources, as a womb symbol and therefore as a source of life, the 'sack' has a positive value. As a container of the implement intended to procure food, the tin-

³⁰ Van Petten, 'Modulations of Monologue', p.244.

opener, whose use as a phallic object could be symbolic of a life-producing activity but is in fact used to torture, the 'sack' is identified with an instrument of torture. This sadism/suffering is, however, said to sustain the narrator more effectively than sardines (p.157, 1--4), thus replacing the value of the food the narrator carries in the 'sack' and continuing the association between food and sex noted in IIA1--8. The identification of the 'sack' with the 'arse' continues the food/sex/torture association; it implies that the 'sack' contains waste, that is, 'shit' (c.r. IIB1), rather than food, a theme developed in IIB WASTE. Reference to the 'sack' 'bursting', emptying, to its 'death', imply that its role as a womb symbol does not reach the conclusion of a birth, but of a sudden eruption; the narrator (foetus) and the 'sack' (placenta) being ejected in a kind of miscarriage or abortion. The association of 'sack' with 'arse' (especially through use of the word 'burst') indicates the nature of the sadistic sexual act as a possible cause for this.

In section IB we noted that there is play between mental and physical conception; in IIA9ix, iv, we noted that one role of the 'sack' was as a provider of mental resources, of language which is used in mental conception; that the 'sack' also functions as a womb symbol continues this.³¹ We further noted in IB difficulties with conception, mental and physical; and these recur in the 'sack' symbol, both in its association with torture, 'arse', and death, and in its finally being shown to be a fiction itself. This again raises the possibility that one of Beckett's themes here is the difficulty of writing itself, of the value of language.

³¹ If the birth is also a mental conception, the creation of fiction, then the narrator is nothing more than the misbegotten narration.

That the narrator has not been properly born is one interpretation for his state between life and death which we observed in IB and IC. His 'journey' could be one into life, or into death. His carrying the 'sack' with him may indicate an attempt to hang onto (the possibility of) life; or it may, as a penitential burden, be seen as a cross which he has to bear. Indeed, when the 'sack' is finally admitted not to exist at the end of how it is, our attention is drawn to the narrator's position in the mud; spread-eagled in the position of one being crucified.³² Thus one reading of the story of the journey with the 'sack' is that this is a representation of the suffering he is undergoing, the 'sack' (on which he hangs) replacing the cross. The 'sack' then contains both negative and positive connotations because, in these terms, death is a rebirth; as well as representing the suffering of death, it is also a womb into which he can return to be reborn.

It was commented (IIA9xi) that the 'sack' contained the suffering of all the ages conferred upon the narrator a status of Christ-like proportion; his position in the mud, and the other religious overtones which we noted, reinforce this. In particular the Old Testament references (for example, the suggestion that God will feed the narrator as he did the Children of Israel), may then be seen as indicating that the journey the narrator is undergoing is the journey of all mankind; the use of such words as 'passion' and 'martyr' (c.r. IA16, IC12) must now be seen as conscious wordplay contributing to this reading. D. Lodge and his colleagues saw a possible reading for Ping as the thoughts of the dying Christ, but we should also

³² Brienza, p.129.

note that Lodge rejected this as the final and sole reading because he found it too reductive:

For a dizzy moment we entertained the possibility that the whole piece might be a bleakly anti-metaphysical rendering of the consciousness of the dying Christ -- Christ in the tomb rather than Christ on the Cross (hence the cramped, cell-like room) -- in short, Beckett's version of 'The Man Who Died'. But this reading seems not only to leave much unexplained, but to be impoverishing; for the piece doesn't read like a riddle to which there is a single answer. However, the possibility₃₃ of some allusion to Christ cannot, I think, be discounted.

I shall also finally offer this not so much as an ultimate interpretation of how it is, but rather as another field of meanings or connotations which Beckett draws upon in how it is and which interacts with words from other semantic fields such as FOOD and SEX through wordplay and word-patterning. When asked by Driver what his reaction was to those who attached religious significance to his plays, Beckett answered: 'Well, really there is none at all. I have no religious feeling'.³⁴

The comparison between the narrator and Christ may after all be ironic at the narrator's expense. We recall that in other of Beckett's works, characters have compared themselves to Christ, and that this is both ironical with regards to their conception of themselves, and also can be seen as part of one of the serious themes of the works. For example, in Waiting for Godot, Estragon comments that he has compared himself to Christ all his life; Vladimir deals with this on the level of the climate in which Christ lived and the suitability of going barefoot.³⁵ In how it is, what we may have

³³ D. Lodge, 'David Lodge in Encounter', p.298.

³⁴ Driver, p.23.

³⁵ Waiting for Godot, p.52.

is the narrator trying to create a fiction, representing this attempt as a hellish task and aggrandising himself in this role. Of course, this also reflects upon the creator of the fiction of the narrator himself, the writer of how it is, Beckett.

SECTION IIB WASTE

Introduction

In this section words will be examined that have as one of their senses waste material, especially waste food material. It will be argued that through word patterning, the functions of digesting and eating become confused, at times reversed. It will be argued that as food and sex were identified, so also there is an association between waste food (both excreted food and uneaten food) and sex, playing upon the anal nature of the sexual relationship.

In I SEX, we saw that the voice/life was a product of the sadistic-sexual relationship between the creatures, and that this connection between the voice/life and the creatures' relationships was shown through wordplay. In IIB further examples will be presented of such cross-association of themes; for example, we will see that waste is associated through word patterning with both sex and with the voice/life. We recall that the Unnamable represents story-telling as an act of excretion, 'then I'll let down my trousers and shit stories on them'.¹

The following are the main words considered in IIB:

IIB1 (1) 'shit', (2) 'vomit', (3) 'muckheap', (4) 'rotting',
 (5) 'sully', (6) 'bring up', (7) 'latrinal', (8) 'eliminate',
 (9) 'stool', (10) 'spew', (11) 'nausea', (12) 'sewer', (13)
 'fart', (14) 'sick', (15) 'slime', (16) 'mire', (17) 'wallow'

IIB2 'piss'

IIB3 'quaqua'

IIB4 'bits and scraps'

¹ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.350.

IIB5 'abandon'

IIB6 'mud'

IIB1 (1) 'shit' and (2) 'vomit'

In IIB1 examples of the occurrences of (1) 'shit' and (2) 'vomit' are presented; the examples are grouped thematically. There are also examples given of the occurrences of other words which are semantically related.

(1) 'shit'

'shit' OED sb. Not now in decent use. 1. Excrement from the bowels, dung. b. A contemptuous epithet applied to a person.

v. 1. intr. To void excrement. 2. trans. To void as excrement, lit. and fig. 3. To defile with excrement.

(2) 'vomit'

'vomit' OED sb. 1. The act of ejecting the contents of the stomach through the mouth. 2. Matter ejected from the stomach by vomiting; = SPEW sb. 1. 3. a. fig. b. Applied with contemptuous force to a person or things of a vile, loathsome, or disgusting character. c. transf. Substance cast out by discharge or eruption.

v. 1. intr. To bring up and eject the contents of the stomach by the mouth; to cast or throw up = SPEW v. 1. 2. trans. To bring up and discharge (swallowed food and drink) through the mouth; to cast out (a matter or substance) in this way = SPEW v. 2. Also fig. 3. fig. a. To eject, reject, cast out or up esp. with abhorrence or loathing.

i) In the following examples, excretion co-occurs with reference to birth, in such a way as to suggest that they are being equated:

question if always good old question if always like that since/the world world for me from the murmurs of my mother/shat into the incredible tohu-bohu (p.47, 17) (c.r. 'mother' IB8)

It was noted in IB8 that the narrator is excreted/born 'from the murmurs of my mother', associating excretion/birth with paralinguistic sound, 'murmurs'.

with that of a slowness difficult to conceive the procession we/are talking of a procession advancing in jerks or spasms

like/shit in the guts till one wonders days of great gaiety if we shall/not end one after another or two by two by being shat into/the open air the light of day regimen of grace (p.135, 17) (c.r. 'conceive' IB4; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17)

This example was considered in some detail in previous sections. Here we should note that birth is presented as an act of excretion, that 'end' indicates that it is also a kind of death, which is consistent with the birth being presented as an act of excretion, the newly-born being waste matter.

In the following example, dirt is associated with the newly-born:

I pissed and shat another image in my crib never so clean/since (p.9, 19) (c.r. 'piss' IIB2)

That birth is described as excretion invites a comparison between the offspring and excrement (see above, p.135, 17), where this comparison is explicit. The following examples also suggest this comparison between the narrator and his fellow creatures to waste matter:

(3) 'muck-heap'

'muck-heap' OED A manure-heap, midden. Also fig.

me again always everywhere in the light age unknown seen/from behind on my knees arse bare on the summit of a muck-/heap clad in a sack bottom burst to let the head through/holding in my mouth the horizontal staff of a vast banner on/which I read (p.40, 6) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'behind' IC3; 'arse' IC1; 'sack' IIA9; 'bottom' IC2; 'hold' IA14)

In the above example, the narrator is on a 'muck-heap', that is, in an environment of excrement; the stanza has several anal references emphasising this ('behind', 'arse', 'bottom' c.r. IC). That his head has been let through by the bursting of the 'bottom' suggests that this is where he belongs. We saw in IIA9 that one reading of this stanza is that the narrator has just been born; we should note here that the waste and anal references suggest that the birth was anal, and that he himself was waste matter.

See also:

all about pressed tight as a child you would have done it in the/sandpits even you the mud above the temples and nothing/more be seen but three grey hairs old wig rotting on a muck-/heap false skull foul with mould and rest you can say nothing/when time ends you may end (p.96, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6; 'skull' IC12; 'end' IC7)

In the above example, reference to a child is full of references to waste and decay; the 'skull' (emblem of death) on top of the 'muck-heap' evoking the picture of a decomposing body. The reference to a 'child', as with the 'birth' of the narrator in the previous example, recalls that while a muck-heap is waste material (excrement, in fact, waste food) it is used to fertilise. The possibility of new life in an environment of waste matter is also suggested in Molloy, when we learn that Molloy met a lover, Edith, in a rubbish dump.²

(4) 'rotting'

'rotting' OED ppl. a. 1. Undergoing decomposition or decay; suffering from rot.

and how there are three of us four a million and there I am/always was with Pim Bom and another and 999997 others/journeying alone rotting alone martyring and being martyred/oh moderately listlessly a little blood a few cries life above in/the light a little blue little scenes for the thirst for the sake of/peace (p.138, 17) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'martyr' IC12)

In this example, 'rotting' is specifically identified with the relationship between the creatures; the reference to 'martyr' recalling that souls are said to 'rot' in hell.

and me still a shitty little chit (p.90, 18)

'chit' OED sb.¹ 1. The young of a beast; whelp, cub; kitten. 2. Applied, more or less contemptuously, to a child, esp. a very young child (cf. kid); a brat. b. A person

² Molloy, Trilogy, p.54.

considered as no better than a child. 'Generally used of young persons in contempt' (J.); now, mostly of a girl or young woman.

'chit-chat' OED 1. Light chat; light familiar conversation.

When the narrator refers to himself as a 'shitty little chit', he is contemptuous of himself. The use of the word 'shitty' results in another comparison between himself as a youngster ('chit') and excrement (emphasised by a pun on 'chit' and 'shit').

(5) 'sully'

'sully' OED v. 1. trans. To pollute, defile; to soil, stain, tarnish. a. in material sense. Now rare or poet. b. in immaterial sense.

without being reduced on that account to whelming us one/and all even to the unimaginable last at one stroke in this black/mud and nothing on its surface ever more to sully it (p.155, 6) (c.r. 'stroke' IA13; 'mud' IIB6)

so things may change no answer end no answer I may choke/no answer sink no answer sully the mud no more no answer ... (p.160, 13) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'mud' IIB6; 'thing' IA10)

In the above two examples, the narrator views himself and his fellows as sullying, dirtying, the mud ('mud' is something which is itself usually regarded as dirty, c.r. IIB6).

(6) 'bring up'

'bring' OED v. 27. 'bring up' j. To vomit. (colloq.)

all that I say it as I hear it every word always and that having/rummaged in the mud between his legs I bring up finally what/seems to me a testicle or two the anatomy I had (p.60, 15) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

One reading of this example is that the 'testicle or two' and/or 'the anatomy' (belonging to the narrator or Pim) are vomited by the narrator.

(7) 'latrinal'

'latrine' OED A privy, esp. in a camp, barracks, hospital, or similar place.

at the instant Pim leaves me and goes towards the other

Bem/leaves the other and comes towards me I place myself at my/point of view migration of slime-worms then or tailed latrinal/scissiparous frenzy days of great gaiety (p.122, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'slime' IIB1; 'tail' IC3)

According to one reading of p.122, 1, the creatures are compared to those that inhabit latrines.

(8) 'eliminate'

'eliminate' OED v. 1. trans. To thrust out of doors, expel. Now somewhat humorous. 3. a. Phys. To expel from the body; esp. to get rid of (waste matter, foreign substances, etc.) from the tissues by excretion. 4. gen. To expel, exclude, remove, get rid of. Used both with reference to material and non-material objects. b. fig. To ignore, treat as non-existent, set aside as irrelevant (certain elements of a question or concept).

he the first to have pity happily to no effect honour of the/family to eliminate the little stool... (p.91, 12)

(9) 'stool'

'stool' OED sb. 2. A wooden seat (for one person) without arms or a back; a piece of furniture consisting in its simplest form of a piece of wood for a seat set upon legs, usually three or four in number, to raise it from the ground. 5. A seat enclosing a chamber utensil; a commode; more explicitly stool of ease. Also, a privy. b. In phrases originally meaning 'the place of evacuation', now (without the) the action of evacuating the bowels. c. The action of evacuating the bowels; an act of discharging faeces. By stool: by faecal, as distinguished from other means of, evacuation. d. A discharge of faecal matter of a specified colour, consistency, etc.; the matter discharged (chiefly pl.).

According to one reading of p.91, 12, 'stool' is understood in OED sense 2, referring to the seat on which the scribe sits (see p.88, 11--14); the co-occurrence of 'eliminate' however results in a pun on 'stool' in OED sense 5d. 'stool' also occurs p.90, 9, where its co-occurrence with 'farts' suggests that it be understood in OED sense 5.

and to whom given our number not unreasonable to attribute/exceptional powers or else at his beck assistants innumerable/and to whom in pursuance of the principle of parsimony not/excessive at times ten seconds fifteen seconds to assign the ear/which Kram eliminated out murmur demands otherwise desert/flower (p.150, 18)

a formulation that would eliminate him completely and so/ admit him to that peace at least while rendering me in the same/breath sole responsible for this unqualifiable murmur of which/consequently here the last scraps at last very last (p.157, 12) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB4)

(10) 'spew'

'spew' OED sb. 1. That which is spewed or cast up from the stomach; vomited matter; vomit. Also fig. or in fig. context.

v. 1. intr. To bring up and discharge the contents of the stomach through the mouth; to vomit. Not now in polite use. 2. trans. To bring up (food or drink) from the stomach and eject through the mouth; to cast up or vomit; to cast out, throw forth, or discharge (blood, poison, etc.) from the mouth. Also in fig. context. 3. To cast out (or up), to eject or reject with abhorrence, contempt or loathing. Also const. out of or forth (a place). 4. To eject, cast or throw out or up, as if by vomiting. c. spec. To eject by volcanic action. 6. intr. Of water, liquids, etc.: To flow, pour, or run in a more or less populous stream; to ooze or be forced out or up.

always sleepy little sleep that's how they're trying to tell me/this time sucked down spewed up yawning yawning always/sleepy little sleep (p.21, 17)

One reading of this is that the narrator is 'spewed up', suggesting a comparison between the narrator and vomit.

(11) 'nausea'

'nausea' OED 1. A feeling of sickness, with loathing of food and inclination to vomit. 2. transf. A strong feeling of disgust, loathing, or aversion.

it must have appealed to him it's understandable finished by/appealing to him he was calling him by it himself in the end/long before Pim Pim ad nauseam I Pim I always say when a/man's name is Pim he hadn't the right and all the things a man/hadn't the right always said when his name was Pim and with/that better from that out livelier chattier (p.66, 8) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'end' IC7)

'ad nauseam' (p.66, 10) is understood in OED sense 2 of 'nausea', that Pim repeats the name 'Pim' so many times that the narrator is tired, sickened of hearing it. Given the other occurrences of 'sickened', 'spew', 'vomit' etc., there is also play on 'nausea' in OED sense 1.

rats no no rats this time I've sickened them what else at this/period part one before Pim vast stretch of time (p.20, 16)

The narrator is such a disgusting specimen that even the rats are tired of him, making him lower than vermin. Another reading would be that he vomits the 'rats'.

... you don't know the Boms sir/you can shit on a Bom sir you can't humiliate him a Bom/sir the Boms sir (p.67, 7) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6)

According to one reading, p.67, 7 is figurative, 'shit on' being interpreted similarly to the expression 'damn', 'to hell with'; see Quang Phuc Dong's examples: Damn Lyndon Johnson, Shit on Lyndon Johnson, To hell with Lyndon Johnson.³ However the use of 'shit on' in this example from how it is suggest that we interpret 'shit on' literally, because 'you can' is not followed by 'say' (for example); because 'Bom' is a creature that one could conceivably excrete over; because 'Bom' is an anal pun (c.r. IC6). Quang Phuc Dong also considers examples in which 'shit on' is grammatically problematic, for example, Shit on all irregular verbs is acceptable; *Shit on each irregular verb is not. He comments upon the ambiguity of *Shit on the carpet, saying that as well as expressing disgust for the carpet this could also be an answer to a question Where shall I shit?⁴ Consequently, this example from how it is suggests that even if a creature (Bom) is excreted over, he cannot be humiliated, he is that low a form of existence.

From such examples, in which the narrator's birth is viewed as excretion (p.47, 17--19); in which the creatures are compared to 'shit in the guts' (p.135, 17--21); in which the creatures are so

³ Quang Phuc Dong, p.48.

⁴ Quang Phuc Dong, pp.48--49. See especially footnote 7 on p.49.

dirty that they 'sully' the mud (p.155, 6--8; p.160, 13--14); it is argued that the narrator and his fellow creatures are consistently compared to waste matter, most frequently excrement and vomit. In this context, note that even the narrator's dog is called 'Skum' (p.94, 7).

ii) In the following examples, the narrator and his fellows' environment is shown to be sewer-like, consisting of waste matter.

... thump thump all his fat-headed/meatus in the shit no holding him thump thump (p.80, 4) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'thump' IA15; 'hold' IA14)

... it's our justice in this muck where all is/identical our ways and way of faring right leg right arm push/pull (p.121, 19) (c.r. 'couple' IA5)

quick a supposition if this so-called mud were nothing more/than all our shit ... (p.58, 23) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

... here when you shit it's the mud that wipes ... (p.41, 5) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

some on the bough flutter on to the reawakening black dead/flaunting in the green shit yes ... (p.117, 17) (c.r. 'dead' IC10)

(12) 'sewer'

'sewer' OED sb.¹ 2. An artificial channel or conduit, now usually covered and underground, for carrying off and discharging waste water and the refuse from houses and towns.

sacks that void and burst others never is it possible the old/business of grace in this sewer why want us all alike some/vanish others never (p.68, 10) (c.r. 'sack', IIA9)

The following examples continue the description of the narrator's environment as being of waste matter; among the readings for 'I go not because of the shit and vomit' are: a) The narrator 'goes', that is, excretes. b) The narrator is distinguishable from the 'shit' and 'vomit'. One possible reason for his departure, although he rejects it as a reason, is because of the presence of 'shit' and 'vomit'. c) He rejects it as a reason because it does not bother him

to be in such surroundings.

suddenly like all that was not then is I go not because of the/shit and vomit something else not known not said ... (p.12, 4) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'quick' IB1)

not the shit not the vomit something else I'm going the sack/tied to my neck ... (p.20, 21) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9)

... then go not because of the shit and vomit/something else not known not said end of the journey (p.36, 6) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'end' IC7)

iii) The narrator talks of the need to 'shit' and 'vomit':

when the great needs fail the need to move on the need to shit/and vomit and the other great needs all my great categories of/being (p.15, 9)

That these are termed 'great needs' (according to one reading, ironically) defining his 'being' indicates the low level of the narrator and his fellow creatures' life.

See also:

billions of us crawling and shitting in their shit hugging/like a treasure in their arms the wherewithal to crawl and shit/a little more now my nails (p.58, 26)

iv) The following examples suggest a confusion of body functions, between the functions of the mouth and of the anus.

(13) 'fart'

'fart' OED sb. Not in decent use. A breaking wind. b. As a type of something worthless. Obs.

v. 1. intr. To break wind. 2. trans. To send forth as wind from the anus.

... I strain with open mouth so as not to/lose a second a fart fraught with meaning issuing through the/mouth no sound in the mud (p.29, 4) (c.r. 'open' IA17; 'mud' IIB6)

... I fart and/piss in the same breath (p.42, 18) (c.r. 'piss' IIB2)

These examples have among their readings, that the narrator confuses mouth and anus; also, that the narrator is contemptuous of speech, terming it waste air, the same as a 'fart'.

'fart' also occurs: p.90, 9.

v)

(14) 'sick'

'sick' OED A. adj. I. 1. Suffering from illness of any kind; ill, unwell, ailing. Now chiefly literary and US. 2. Having an inclination to vomit, or being actually in the condition of vomiting. 5. Thoroughly tired or weary of a thing.

silence more and more longer and longer silences vast tracts/of time we at a loss more and more he for answers I for/questions sick of light in the light ... (p.81, 16) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

E then good and deep quick now the end above sick of light/... (p.97, 6) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'end' IC7)

E then good and deep sick of light quick now the end above/... (p.96, 11) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'end' IC7)

In these three examples one reading for 'sick' is in OED sense 5, that the narrator/Pim is weary of life (in the light). This continues the theme that his/their environment and whole life is wearisome to the extent of making him/them feel sick. In IB12 we saw that the 'life/voice' is the result of the creatures' physical relationship and the examples above emphasise that the 'life' of which Pim/the narrator sicken is that prompted by the torture. These examples show that the outcome of their relationship is something that sickens. Another Beckett character who views his life as 'sicken- ing' is Estragon, who comments 'I've puked my puke of a life away here'.⁵ Further examples in which the 'voice/life' is equated with waste will be given below, see especially 'quaqua' IIB3; 'bits and scraps' IIB4.

⁵ Waiting for Godot, p.62.

(15) 'slime'

'slime' OED sb. 1. Soft glutinous mud; alluvial ooze; viscous matter deposited or collected on stones, etc. b. Applied to bitumen. 2. A viscous substance or fluid of animal or vegetable origin; mucus, semen, etc. 3. fig. a. Applied disparagingly to the human body, to man in general, or to single persons. b. Applied to what is normally filthy, or otherwise disgusting.

I turn on my side which side the left it's preferable throw the/right hand forward bend the right knee these joints are working/the fingers sink the toes sink in the slime these are my holds too/stong slime is too strong holds is too strong I say it as I hear it (p.21, 1) (c.r. 'hold' IA14)

the hand dips clawing for the take instead of the familiar slime/an arse on his belly he too before that what else that's enough/I'm going (p.20, 18) (c.r. 'familiar' IB9; 'arse' IC1)

another age yet another familiar in spite of its strange-nesses/this dark this slime the mild air the black dark the coloured/images the power to crawl all these strange-nesses (p.24, 15) (c.r. 'familiar' IB9; 'spite' IA10; 'sack' IIA9)

semi-side right left leg left arm push pull flat on the face mute/imprecations scrabble in the mud every half-yard eight times/per chevron or three yards of headway clear a little less the/hand dips clawing for the take instead of the familiar slime an/arse two cries one mute end of part one before Pim that's how/it was before Pim (p.54, 1) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6; 'familiar' IB9; 'arse' IC1; 'end' IC7)

if Bom never came if only that but then how end the hand/dipping clawing for the tin the arse instead of the familiar slime/... (p.88, 1) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7; 'tin' IIA2; 'arse' IC11; 'familiar' IB9)

These examples continue to illustrate that the narrator's environment is unpleasant. 'slime' as well as meaning 'dirt', however, is also applied to human bodily substances that are not necessarily dirty, especially those connected with the reproductive processes. This sense is emphasised by the repeated co-occurrence of 'slime' with 'familiar' (c.r. IB).

(16) 'wallow', (17) 'mire'

'wallow' OED sb. 1. The act of wallowing or rolling in mud or filth; also fig. Also concr., the filth in which swine wallow.

'mire' OED sb.¹. A piece of wet, swampy ground; a boggy place in which one may be engulfed or stick fast. Also in generalized sense, swampy ground, bog. 2. Wet or soft mud, slush, dirt. Often in allusion to 2. Pet. ii. 22.

stay for ever in the same place never had any other ambition/with my little dead weight in the warm mire scoop my wallow/and stir from it no more ... (p.43, 10) (c.r. 'dead' IC10)

... from one to the other inconceivable end of this/ immeasurable wallow (p.154, 3) (c.r. 'conceive' IB4; 'end' IC7)

The use of 'wallow' and 'mire' continue to suggest that the narrator is in an environment of dirt. In II Peter 2. 22 they are both associated with the muck that swine live in.

Conclusion to IB1 'shit' and 'vomit'

Examples in this section have illustrated an association between waste matter and sex/life. The narrator views his birth as excretion and views himself as little better than 'shit'. One view of this is that it confuses bodily functions; and it does continue the theme of section I, one interpretation being that attempting reproduction through anal sex results in waste products. The narrator's surroundings are those of 'shit', 'vomit', 'slime'; he wallows in excrement and waste. That the waste that he and the creatures wallow in may be of their own production suggests both a dirty, unclean place, but also a womb-like surrounding. Moreover, waste matter in biological terms is not the termination of a process, but part of a cycle. Waste matter is used to fertilise new growth and this fact is emphasised by the reference to 'muck-heap'. 'slime', we also observed, has meanings both of filth and of the juices of reproduction. Thus these waste references have both negative but also positive connotations and thus interpretations. For instance, 'sick of life' indicates a) 'life' is wearisome, b) 'life' is vomit, c) out of which 'sickening' relationship can come (a sickening sort of) 'life'.

IIB2 'piss'

'piss' OED v. Not now in polite use. 1. intr. To discharge urine, urinate, make water. b. transf. and in various allusive and proverbial senses. 2. trans. To discharge as or with the urine.

i) The following examples illustrate a confusion between the mouth and its natural function and excretory organs and their functions:

... I fart and/piss in the same breath (p.42, 18) (c.r. 'fart' IIB1)

According to one reading of 'in the same breath' the narrator means 'at the same time'. However, its use has the effect of conflating the activities of 'pissing', 'farting' and 'breathing'.

the urethra perhaps after piss the last drop the bladder sucking/in a second after all the pumping out certain pores too the/urethra perhaps a certain number of pores (p.73, 1)

See p.72, 10--23, in which the narrator considers various parts of Pim's anatomy as the point of absorption for food. In the example above, he suggests the urethra as the possible place of entry.

the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer who cries who to/be left in peace in the dark the mud gibbers ten seconds fifteen/seconds of sun clouds earth sea patches of blue clear nights and/of a creature if not still standing still capable of standing always/the same imagination spent looking for a hole that he may be/seen no more in the middle of this faery who drinks that drop/of piss of being and who with his last gasp pisses it to drink the/moment it's someone each in his turn as our justice wills and/never any end it wills that too all dead or none (p.144, 4) (c.r. 'fuck' IA2; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'mud' IIB6; 'creature' IB2; 'stand' IA10; 'hole' IC4; 'drink' IIA7; 'end' IC7; 'dead' IC7)

Among readings for the above occurrence of 'piss' are: a)

The narrator talks of drinking 'piss', lines 9--10, and therefore is drinking waste matter. b) The narrator uses the term 'piss of being' which has among its interpretations that 'being' is waste, that is, worthless. Further, that he 'drinks' 'being', what keeps him alive. c) 'with his last gasp pisses it' has similar ambiguity to 'farting' and 'pissing' 'in the same breath'. 'with his last gasp works as an

idiom meaning 'as his last action'; however, the co-occurrence of 'gasp' and 'piss' suggests that he 'pisses' through the mouth. d) 'pisses it to drink' evokes a cycle of drinking and urinating. Once he has urinated he needs to drink; once he has drunk, he will need to urinate. It also suggests that he will be drinking the same liquid he has excreted, thus, that he is trapped in a cycle, drinking waste. e) Another reading is that 'the moment', line 11, is the object of 'to drink', suggesting that the narrator 'drinks' time (c.r. 'drink' IIA7) and therefore also suggesting that time is 'piss' (the 'piss of being?').

Also see:

suddenly yip left right off we go chins up arms swinging
 the/dog follows head sunk tail on balls no reference to us
 it had/the same notion at the same instant Malebranche
 less the rosy/hue the humanities I had if it stops to piss
 it will piss without/stopping I shout no sound plant her
 there and run cut your/throat (p.33, 11) (c.r. 'tail' IC5;
 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

'if it stops to piss it will piss without stopping' has among its readings: a) The narrator begins a statement 'if it stops to piss' but does not finish it, going straight on to say that the dog will not cease moving in order to urinate. b) That if the dog starts to urinate, it will be unable to stop urinating, it will be caught up in a never-ending cycle. This is suggested by the repetition of the word 'stop', playing upon two of its senses, one being to cease being in motion, the other when 'stop' is used to refer to the activity of the verb which complements it.

ii)

I pissed and shat another image in my crib never so
 clean/since (p.9, 19) (c.r. 'shit' IIB1)

Among readings for p.9, 19, are: a) The narrator excretes in his crib, suggesting the incontinence of a child. b) 'never so

clean since' indicates that the 'crib', the place of the new-born child, has been dirtied, continuing the association noted in IIB1 between birth and dirt/excretion. c) 'never so clean since' indicates that the narrator feels cleaner for having excreted, suggesting that excreting has a purgative effect for him (c.r. 'mud' IIB6xii). d) 'another image' is the object of 'pissed and shat', suggesting that excretion is a creative action, linking mental creation (of an image) with physical waste (c.r. IB).

* * * * *

IIB3 'quaqua'

'quaqua' is not listed in OED. It is being argued here that 'quaqua' has the following senses in how it is: 1. An adaption of the Latinate 'qua' (which means 'In so far as; in the capacity of', according to OED). 2. A nonsense sound (playing upon the Latinate origins of 'qua'), imitating a duck babble; this is the sense which Atkins observed in Lucky's use of 'quaqua', breaking up his long speech in Waiting for Godot.⁶ 3. Pronounced /kae/kae, play upon 'cack', see:

'cack' OED v. Obs. or dial. (Kaek) 1. intr. To void excrement. 2. trans. To void as excrement.

Beckett uses 'cack' in this sense in Mercier and Camier: 'Forgive me, he said, when I think of women I think of maidens, I can't help it. They have no hairs, they pee not neither do they cack.'⁷

4. A play upon French children's use of the word 'quaqua' (/kae/kae/)

⁶ A. Atkins, 'A Note on the Structure of Lucky's Speech', Modern Drama 9 (1966--67), p.309.

⁷ Mercier and Camier, p.54. Compare Luke 12. 27: 'Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, they spin not.'

as a childish word for 'shit'.⁸ In one of his essays, Beckett uses the names Duchess Caca and Duchess Pipi; 'pipi' being the French child's word for 'urine'.⁹ 5. There may also be play upon 'aqua' meaning water. This has the opposite connotations of the previous senses listed here in that water is not waste but necessary to life and is commonly accepted to be the source of life.

In all its occurrences in how it is 'quaqua' occurs with 'voice', thus suggesting that the sound of the 'voice' is repetitive nonsense (sense 2 above), with puns on senses 3 and 4 above, these puns equating the 'voice' with excrement. A further pun upon 'quaqua' in sense 5 as given above, identifies the 'voice' with a source of 'life' (c.r. IB12i, where we saw the 'voice' and 'life' to be equated).

For example:

voice once without quaqua on all sides then in me when
the/panting stops tell me again finish telling me invocation
(p.7, 3)

Among readings for this example are: a) 'quaqua' mimics the 'voice'; readings b) and c) follow from this. b) The 'voice' was once without 'quaqua'; it once lacked the rubbishy sound which it now has. c) The 'voice' used to be 'without' (outside) the narrator, but now comes from within. In the context of 'quaqua' having a sense of excrement (senses 3, 4, 5 above), this suggests a cycle parallel to the food/waste one. The 'voice' has moved from being outside the narrator to being taken in and when emitted it comes out as rubbish (waste). d) 'quaqua' refers to excrement, commenting upon the 'shit'

⁸ Cohn, Back to Beckett, p.230.

⁹ As noted by B. Gluck, Beckett and Joyce: Friendship and Fiction (London, 1979), p.58.

which surrounds the narrator 'on all sides'.

The same argument is illustrated in the following places:

p.21, 20; p.53, 8; p.57, 2; p.84, 19; p.108, 17; p.115, 10; p.123, 2; p.124, 22; p.125, 16; p.137, 14; p.138, 3; p.139, 13; p.139, 23; p.140, 11; p.145, 11; p.146, 7; p.146, 22; p.152, 4; p.154, 8.

'quaqua' also co-occurs with 'voice' in the following places:

p.101, 27; p.115, 16; p.116, 13; p.151, 13; p.158, 6; p.158, 16 (on p.104, 1, 'quaqua' follows 'voice' which is the last word on the previous page).

These co-occurrences of 'voice' with 'quaqua' suggest that the 'voice' is waste, excrement. One interpretation of the origin of the 'voice/life' (c.r. IB) is that it is extorted from the victim by the torturer during their sexual-sadistic relationship. We observed in IIA that this relationship was also presented as one that confused eating and sex; that the product of this relationship, the 'voice/life', is presented in terms of waste food plays upon this. a) That the 'voice/life' is (waste) food play upon the 'eating' theme. b) That the 'voice/life' is waste (food), especially that it is excrement, plays upon the anal nature of the sexual-sadistic relationship. We shall see other words below with sense of waste which co-occur with 'voice' (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4).

It has been argued that the 'voice' is the source of 'life' (c.r. IB12i); this contributes to the argument that we have been developing, that there is fertility in waste matter; that it also has positive connotations as a life source. This is especially illustrated, in the case of 'quaqua', in the following example:

illumination here Bem is therefore Bom or Bom Bem and the/voice quaqua from which I get my life these scraps of life in/me when the panting stops of three things one (p.122, 9) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'life' IB12; 'scraps' IIB4)

* * * * *

IIB4 '(bits and) scraps'

'scrap' OED sb.¹ 1. pl. The remains of a meal; fragments (of food); broken meat. rare in sing. Also fig. 2. A remnant; a small detached piece; a piece very small by comparison with the whole; a fragmentary portion. Often with negative context = (not) the least piece. a. Of material things. b. Of immaterial things; Conversation, literary compositions, etc.

i) In the following examples, 'scraps' co-occurs with 'voice' or with words such as 'audible' or 'murmurs' identifying the 'scraps' with the 'voice' according to one reading.

in me that were without when the panting stops scraps of
an/ancient voice in me not mine (p.7, 8)

Similarly: p.21, 16; p.28, 9; p.29, 15; p.115, 10; p.122, 10; p.123, 17; p.126, 1; p.137, 19; p.140, 2; p.145, 11; p.146, 7--10; p.147, 4; p.154, 22; p.157, 5; p.157, 12; p.157, 18; p.160, 11.

In the following examples, 'scraps' occurs in the formulation 'bits and scraps', also co-occurring with 'voice/life'.

'bit' OED sb.² 1. The portion of food bitten off at once; as much as is taken in the mouth at once; a mouthful. Obs. This passes into the sense of 2. Morsel, small piece (of food) without actual reference to biting. Hence dainty-bit, tit-bit, etc. By extension to other things. 3. A small piece formed by cutting, breaking, or other process; a morsel, a fragment. 4. A small portion or quantity, a little (of anything material or immaterial). Also applied to complete objects, viewed as portions of samples of a substance.

here then part one how it was before Pim we follow I
quote/the natural order more or less my life last state
last version/what remains bits and scraps I hear it my
life natural order/more or less I learn it I quote a given
moment long past vast/stretch of time on from there that
moment and following not/all a selection natural order vast
tracts of time (p.7, 17) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

p.16, 5; p.21, 23; p.22, 3; p.22, 9; p.22, 14; p.26, 14--15; p.28, 2; p.43, 19; p.53, 10; p.57, 2--3; p.57, 8--9; p.83, 21--22; p.84, 19--20; p.87, 15; p. 115, 10; p.123, 21; p.139, 20; p.145, 8; p.145, 11; p.146, 10; p.152, 6.

The co-occurrence of '(bits and) scraps' with 'voice/life' continues

the argument that 'voice/life' is equated with waste food; as we observed in IIB3. The 'scraps' are what are often given to a dog or other pet, the leftover remnants of a human meal.

Also see:

'crust' OED sb. 1. The outer part of bread rendered hard and dry in baking. Opposite to crumb. c. By extension: A scrap of bread which is simply crust or hard and dry; often applied slightly to what is much more than crust.

my life above what I did in my life above a little of everything/tried everything then gave up no worse always a hole a ruin/always a crust never any good at anything not made for that/farrago too complicated crawl about in corners and sleep all I/wanted I got it nothing left but go to heaven (p.86, 6) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'hole' IC4; 'make' IA9, IB7)

ii) In the following examples, as well as referring to 'voice/life', 'scraps' can also be read as describing the narrator's environment.

how I got here if it's me no question too weak no interest but/here this place where I begin this time present formulation/part one my life clutch the sack it drips first sign this place a/few scraps (p.23, 21) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'sack' IIA9)

brief black long black no knowing and there I am again on/my way again something missing here only two or three yards/more and then the precipice only two or three last scraps and/then the end end of part one leaving only part two leaving/only part three and last something missing here things one/knows already or will never know it's one or the other (p.51, 5) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'end' IC7; 'thing' IA10)

iii) In the following examples, 'scraps' can be read not only as referring to 'voice/life' but also to time or units of time.

an image too of this voice ten words fifteen words long silence/ten words fifteen words long silence long solitude once without/quaqua on all sides vast stretch of time then in me when the/panting stops scraps (p.138, 1) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3)

and to whom at times not extravagant to impute that voice/quaqua the voice of us all of which now when the panting/stops ten seconds fifteen seconds definitely the last scraps to/have come down to us and in what a state (p.151, 12) (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Similarly: p.7, 17--22; p.26, 9--15; p.145, 7--10; p.146, 7--12.

iv) The following example has as one of its readings that 'scrap' refers to one of the creatures (Bom):

or one alone one name alone the noble name of Pim and I hear/wrong or the voice says wrong and when I hear Bom or it says/Bom in me when the panting stops the scrap Bom that was/without quaqu on all sides (p.124, 19) (c.r. 'Bom' IC6; 'quaqu' IIB3)

'the scrap Bom' has among its interpretations: a) The narrator is referring to the fact that he only hears one word (the word being 'Bom'). b) The narrator refers to the creature 'Bom' as a 'scrap'; an anal pun on 'Bom' (c.r. IC6) emphasises the waste connotations of 'scrap'. Further, the food sense of 'scrap' plays upon the eating/sex theme in the creatures' relationships which we saw in IIA.

Conclusion to IIB4 '(bits and) scraps'

The very use of a word like 'scraps' combines both waste and food. In section i) we saw examples of '(bits and) scraps' co-occurring with 'voice/life'. We saw that 'voice/life' co-occurs with 'crust', which also has a sense of waste food. The examples presented in IIB4 continue to illustrate that the 'voice/life' is identified with waste food. This: a) plays upon the cannibalistic nature of the creatures' relationship, which produces the 'voice/life'; b) indicates the involvement of the 'voice/life' in a cycle in which waste (food) is recycled. c) That the 'voice/life' is identified with waste plays upon the revelation at the end of the narrative that the narrative has all been a fiction (p.159--60)

We should note here that other words indicating waste/rubbish (not waste food) co-occur with the 'voice/life'. For instance: 'the voice/life' is a 'gibberish' (p.146, 7--12); the narrator refers

to 'words' as 'a few mouldy old reliables' (p.104, 18--19); the narration is said to be 'all balls' (p.158, 5--7; p.159, 18); the narrator talks of 'rags of life' (p.23, 1--2; p.29, 7--10).

We also observed the co-occurrence of '(bits and) scraps' with the creatures' environment and with time, or units of time. This is simply noted here; it should be cross-referred to IIB1 and IIB6.

* * * * *

IIB5 'abandon'

'abandon' OED v. I. To subjugate absolutely. II. To give up absolutely. 2. To give up to the control or discretion of another; to leave to his disposal or mercy; to yield, cede, or surrender absolutely a thing to a person or agent. 4. refl. To give oneself up without resistance, to yield oneself unrestrainedly -- as to the mastery of a passion or unreasoning impulse. 8. To forsake, leave, or desert (a place, person or cause); to leave without one's presence, help, or support. III To let loose. IV. To banish.

sb.² Obs. The act of abandoning; abandonment, relinquishment.

sb.³ Lit. a letting loose, abandonment or surrender to natural impulses; hence entire freedom from artificial constraint or from conventional trammels, unconstrainedness of manner, careless freedom, dash.

'abandoned' ppl. a. 1. Given up, relinquished, forsaken, cast off. 2. Self-given up to any influence or pursuit; devoted. Now always to things evil or opposed to reason. 3. Hence (without to): Given up unrestrainedly to evil influences; utterly bad, immoral, profligate. Of men and their actions.

i) The first two occurrences of 'abandon' are in part one of how it is, where 'abandon' co-occurs with 'hope':

when the last meal the last journey what have I done
where/been that kind mute screams abandon hope gleam of
hope/frantic departure the cord round my neck the sack
in my/mouth a dog (p.52, 5) (c.r. 'meal' IIA4; 'have'
IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'kind' IB10; 'sack' IIA9)

thus north and south of the abandoned arrow effect of

hope/series of sawteeth or chevrons sides two yards base three a/little less this the base we're talking of the base in the old line/of march which I thus revisit an instant between two vertices/... (p.53, 1)

One reading for p.54, 1, is that 'abandoned' modifies 'arrow' and refers to one possible route for the journey which is rejected; that it is followed by 'effect of hope' however plays upon the previous collocation of 'hope' and 'abandoned' (p.52, 5). It also suggests that 'hope' led to the abandonment. (Another reading is that 'the abandoned' refers to abandoned creatures, see examples in IIB5ii below.)

That the narrator talks of 'abandoning' 'hope' suggests that he is in a situation in which despair is a valid response. Previous examples suggested that the narrator's environment was grim (c.r. examples in IIB1 for example). The play upon Dante emphasises this, as Pilling and Knowlson note.¹⁰ It invites a comparison between the narrator's environment and hell itself.

ii) In the following examples, one reading for the 'abandoned' is that it refers to a creature, or creatures.

Bem come to cleave to me where I lay abandoned to give me/a name his name to give me a life make me talk of a life said/to have been mine above in the light before I fell all the already/said part two with Pim another part two before part one/except that me Pim Bem me Bem left me south I hear it/murmur it in the mud (p.118, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'cleave' IA12; 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'mud' IIB6)

Among readings for p.118, 14, are: a) The narrator has been 'abandoned', in OED sense 8, in that the creature who had been his partner has now moved on. b) 'abandoned' in the context of the relationship between the creatures plays upon the sexual

¹⁰ Knowlson and Pilling, Frescoes of the Skull, p.69.

nature of their relationship, 'abandoned' in OED sense sb.¹ 3. We are told that the narrator has 'abandoned' himself to the forces of passion; especially since in this particular example, the narrator 'lay' 'abandoned'. c) 'abandoned' in OED sense 8, but this time with connotations of a forsaken soul, abandoned in hell. In this particular example, this reading is emphasised by 'before I fell', connoting a religious 'fall' from grace. (see comments on 'fall' given in IB11).

The same three readings apply also to the following examples:

p.65, 22; p.73, 23; p.124, 10; p.124, 5; p.124, 16; p.125, 13--14;
 p.127, 19; p.128, 2; p.128, 3; p.136, 6; p.143, 5; p.146, 1; p.149,
 21; p.150, 15; p.151, 9; p.152, 2; p.152, 20; p.156, 6; p.160,
 4--5.¹¹

I say it my life as it comes natural order my lips move I
 can/feel them it comes out in the mud my life what remains
 ill-said/ill-recaptured when the panting stops ill-murmured
 to the/mud in the present all that things so ancient natural
 order the/journey the couple the abandon all that in the
 present barely/audible bits and scraps (p.22, 4) (c.r.
 'life' IB12; 'come' IA6; 'mud' IIB6; 'couple' IIA5; 'bits and
 scraps' IIB4)

One of the readings of p.22, 4, is that 'the abandon'
 refers to one of the stages in the creatures' relationships (and thus
 a stage in the narrative) when their partner leaves them for another,

¹¹ Two of these examples also illustrate the syntactical ambiguity so typical of this work. 'tormentors abandoned victims' (p.125, 13--14) has among its readings: a) 'abandoned' as past participle adjective modifying 'tormentors'. b) 'abandoned' as past participle adjective modifying 'vicitms'. c) That the 'tormentors' are abandoned 'victims'. And in p.136, 6, reference to 'torment' emphasises the reading that they are abandoned in hell. Also note the ambiguity of 'a thousand thousand nameless solitaries half abandoned half abandoning' (lines 13--14), in which 'half' is ambiguous between meaning half the number of solitary creatures, so that one half of the creatures is engaged in the act of abandoning, the other half being abandoned; and 'half' modifying 'abandoned' and 'abandoning', implying that all the solitaries are in a state between these actions.

'abandon' in OED sense sb.² Use of the word 'abandon' in this context plays upon OED sense sb.³, to 'abandon' to 'pleasure or passion'. In the context of its repeated use, 'abandoned' also plays on the hellish connotations of the creatures' abandonment. This reading and these connotations also apply to '(the) abandon(s)' in the following examples:

p.26, 8; p.122, 14; p.122, 22; p.125, 21; p.126, 17; p.128, 14; p.140, 6; p.143, 12; p.143, 14; p.152, 23; p.154, 7; p.156, 2.

In the following examples, the same connotations as above also apply, but there is also a significant interpretation from reading 'abandons' as a verb as well as a plural noun:

his dream of putting an end to our journeys abandons
need of/sustenance and murmurs (p.155, 2) (c.r. 'end'
IC7; 'sustenance' IIA8)

One reading of this example (p.155, 2) is that 'abandons' is a verb with 'need of sustenance' ('and murmurs') as its object.

thus need for the billionth time part three and last present/
formulation at the end before the silence the panting with-
out/pause if we are to be possible our couplings journeys
and/abandons need of one not one of us an intelligence
somewhere/a love who all along the track at the right
places according as/we need them deposits our sacks (p.150,
9) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'couple' IA5; 'love' IA1; 'sack' IIA9)

One reading of the above is that 'abandons' is a verb with 'need of one not one of us' as its object, anticipating the revelation at the end of the book that the existence of the fellow-creatures and their actions was all a fiction (p.159--60).

'abandons' can also be read as a verb in: p.150, 1--8; p.151, 22--5.

In the following examples, we see emphasis upon the narrator's solitude:

so in me I quote on when the panting stops scraps of
that/ancient voice on itself its errors and exactitudes on
us millions/on us three our couples journeys and abandons
on me alone I/quote on my imaginary journey imaginary

brothers in me/when the panting stops that was without
 quaqu on all sides/bits and scraps I murmur them (p.123,
 17) (c.r. 'scraps' IIB4; 'couple' IA5; 'quaqu' IIB3)

Among readings for the above example are: a) 'abandons' as a plural noun along with 'couples' and 'journeys' as stages both in the creatures' relationships and the narration. b) 'abandons' as a verb; that it is 'abandoned' 'on' suggests that the onus of the narration falls on the narrator alone.

and three if three when in me the panting stops this
 voice/which was without quaqu on all sides when I hear
 it speak of/millions and of three which if I had a voice I
 quote a little heart/a little head I might take for mine
 then I alone hear it who alone/am abandoned (p.125, 15)
 (c.r. 'quaqu' IIB3; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

According to one reading of this last example, 'alone' refers to the narrator 'who alone am, abandoned'. This emphasises the solitude which he, as do the other creatures, feel when the partner leaves. A different interpretation however is that the narrator is the only one of the creatures who is abandoned, either the others stay in couples, or the others do not exist, as suggested at the end of how it is.

In the next example, 'abandons' is clearly a verb:

one perhaps there is one perhaps somewhere merciful
 enough/to shelter such frolics where no one ever abandons
 anyone and/no one ever waits for anyone and never two
 bodies touch (p.156, 15)

The narrator imagines a different sort of world (lines 12--13), where there is no 'abandoning'. Reference to the world where no 'abandoning' takes place as 'merciful' emphasises the hellish aspect of the world the narrator inhabits.

See also:

rich testimony I agree questionable into the bargain especially/the yellow book that is not the voice of here here all self to be/abandoned say nothing when nothing (p.91, 16)

That 'all self' is to be 'abandoned' evokes the losing of self in a

love relationship. It also has philosophical implications.¹²

See also:

'banish' OED v. 2. To condemn (a person) by public edict or sentence to leave the country; to exile, expatriate: a. with from, out of. 3. gen. To send or drive away, expel, dismiss imperatively (a person). 4. To drive away, expel, dismiss (a thing).

'banished' OED ppl.a. 2. Exiled, expatriated; driven away, dismissed.

... the mud engulfs/all me alone it carries my four stone five stone it yields a little/under that then no more I don't flee I am banished (p.43, 7) (c.r. 'mud' IIB6)

'forsaken' OED ppl.a. 1. Deserted, left solitary or desolate.

... the long/journeys and company of your likes lost and forsaken when the/panting stops to that it all comes in the end ... (p.140, 16) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'end' IC7)

In this example, it is ambiguous whether: a) 'lost and forsaken' modifies 'company of your likes', meaning that he no longer has company. b) 'lost and forsaken' refers to the condition of the narrator even when he does have their company. c) 'lost and forsaken' describes how the narrator will feel 'when the panting stops'.

Conclusion to IIB5 'abandon'

That the narrator and his fellow creatures are abandoned has among its interpretations: a) The narrator is describing the time between partnerships, with play upon 'abandoned to passion'; b) that they are discarded, waste matter; c) that they are in hell, souls abandoned by God. The use of the word 'abandoned' thus plays upon the connection between waste and sex which we have already observed; it also emphasises the awful loneliness of the narrator's situation, with implications that the creatures may be

¹² Coe considers Beckett's works, including comment c'est, in the way they express the 'I', the 'Self', and the 'Other'. See Coe, p.80.

abandoned in hell.

* * * * *

Conclusion to IIB1--5

It has been noticed from the examples in sections IIB1--5 that words indicating waste are frequently connected in their senses with food and that there is play upon the food/waste cycle. These waste substances are part of the narrator's environment. We commented that on several occasions this caused us to recall the creatures' sexual relationships, which we saw in IIA are described as eating each other. The references to waste food play upon this. That it is waste food plays upon its anal character, especially the treatment of birth as excretion. We noted that at times the narrator viewed both himself and the other creatures as waste. A further reading for the narrator's regarding his environment as waste is that he is a wasted soul, abandoned in hell. Kenner comments that in how it is 'we are perhaps some way down a serial hell, in which the same soul may undergo successive lives'.¹³

In many of the examples, we noticed that 'voice/life' were referred to as waste; this functions as a comment upon the narration in general, but it also plays upon the manner in which the 'voice/life' is produced. That the narration is also rubbish, 'all balls', adds a further reading; it is all a fiction. We have also noted several examples in which time is equated with waste -- this will be commented upon further below, c.r. 'mud' and 'time' IIB6xiv.

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¹³ H. Kenner, Reader's Guide, p.138.

IIB6 'mud'

The word 'mud' occurs over one hundred times in how it is. In this section it is examined in the following subsections:

- i) 'mud' as waste matter.
- ii) 'mud' and 'dark'
- iii) 'mud' as part of the creatures' environment
- iv) 'little scenes' in the 'mud'
- v) 'mud' co-occurs with (1) 'yawn' and 'engulf', (2) 'open', (3) 'part'
- vi) 'mud' as nourishment
- vii) 'mud' and 'sack'
- viii) 'mud' identified with 'life'
- ix) 'mud' as warm
- x) 'mud' as animate
- xi) 'mud' and language
- xii) 'mud' as purifying force
- xiii) 'mud' and time
- xiv) Words with semantic relation to 'mud': (1) 'sap', (2) 'slime', (3) 'swill', (4) 'wallow', (5) 'mire', (6) 'dust', (7) 'earth'

From the examination of these examples, interpretations will be offered in the conclusion to IIB6 for the 'mud' as a metaphor; in particular, it will be argued that the 'mud' represents the narrator's mental as well as his physical environment and that it represents the womb fluids.

'mud' OED sb.¹ 1. Wet and soft soil or earthy matter; mire, sludge. 2. fig. a. As a type of what is worthless or polluting. b. The lowest or worst part of anything; the lowest stratum; the dregs. 3. Phrases. As clear as mud: said in mock commendation of something that is by no means clear.

- i) In the following examples, 'mud' co-occurs with words which we

have already examined as having meanings or connotations of waste.
(c.r. 'mud' as nourishment IIB6vi; 'mud' as 'life' IIB6viii)

quick a supposition if this so-called mud were nothing more/than all our shit yes all if there are not billions of us at the/moment and why not the moment there are two there were/yes billions of us crawling and shitting in their shit hugging/like a treasure in their arms the wherewithal to crawl and shit/a little more now my nails (p.58, 23)
(c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'shit' IIB1)

one buttock twice too big the other twice too small unless an/optical delusion here when you shit it's the mud that wipes I/haven't touched them for an eternity in other words the ratio/four to one I always loved arithmetic it has paid me back in/full (p.41, 4) (c.r. 'shit' IIB1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Among readings for the last example are: a) That the 'mud' wipes the 'arse' after excretion; this suggests that the narrator is excreting directly into the 'mud' so that the two substances become mixed together. b) 'when you shit it's the mud': the narrator comments that what is excreted is 'mud'. This last is emphasised by one reading of the following example, in which 'idem', meaning 'the same', occurs between 'farts stools' and 'pure mud', suggesting that the 'farts' and 'stools' are made from 'mud':

one notebook for the body inodorous farts stools idem pure/mud ... (p.90, 9) (c.r. 'fart' IIB1; 'stool' IIB1)
(c.r. 'mud' purifies IIB6xii)

... the mud is mute (p.28, 16) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

'mute' OED v.¹ Obs. exc. dial. Of a bird, esp. a hawk:
a. intr. To void the faeces. b. To discharge as faeces.

In view of the associations already noted between 'mud' and excrement, the dialect sense of 'mute' may well be played upon here.

In the following examples, 'mud' co-occurs with 'bits and scraps' (c.r. 'mud' as nourishment IIB6vi): p.21, 23--24; p.88, 5--10.

In the following examples, 'mud' co-occurs with 'end', which, we observed, carries anal and death puns. In comment c'est, the association between the 'end' and 'mud' is emphasised, since the

two words 'boue' ('mud') and 'bout' ('end') are homophones.¹⁴ See: p.108, 20--22; p.140, 5; p.140, 17--19.

'mud' is also associated with death:

what believe the sack perhaps the dark the mud death perhaps/to wind up with after so much life there are moments (p.23, 19) (c.r. 'death' IC8; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

One reading of this example is that 'the mud' is an adjectival phrase, describing a kind of death: 'the mud death'. The next two examples both have as one of their readings, that 'mud' is the cause of death:

that childhood said to have been mine the difficulty of believ-/ing in it the feeling rather of having been born octogenarian/at the age when one dies in the dark the mud upwards born/upwards floating up like the drowned ... (p.78, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'born' IB5; 'die' IC9) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

... he moved it's in the book/a little further in the mud the dark and drop my first-born/dying to his grandchild your papa's grandpapa disappeared/never came up never seen again bear it in mind when your/time comes (p.92, 12) (c.r. 'born' IB5; 'die' IC9; 'come' IA6) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

a sack that if one died here one might say had belonged to one/dead at last having let it go at the last then sunk beneath the/mud ... (p.120, 20) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'die' IC9)

One reading of p.120, 20, is that the 'mud' absorbs the dead creatures.

From the examples in this section we see that 'mud' is equated with 'shit', that the narrator suggests that it may even be formed from the creatures' excrement. We learn that he finds 'bits and scraps' (waste food, according to one reading) in it. Further, that it is also 'the end', the cause of death, and receptor of dead bodies. The association of 'mud' with waste draws out the 'dirt'

¹⁴ Cohn, Gamut, p.90.

connotations of 'mud', see OED senses 1 and 2. This association has been noted by critics, for example, Shadoian comments that 'mud is a brutally excremental metaphor'.¹⁵ The association of the 'mud' with death, whilst it continues to suggest that it is formed of waste matter, also has connotations of a cycle, since dead matter is also a source of fertility biologically.

ii)

'dark' OED sb. 1. Absence of light; dark state or condition; darkness, esp. that of night. b. The dark time; night; nightfall. c. A dark place; a place of darkness. 2. fig. 3. Dark colour or shade; spec. in Art. a part of a picture in shadow, as opposed to a light. b. fig. A dark spot, a blot. 4. The condition of being hidden from view, obscure, or unknown; obscurity. In the dark: in concealment or secrecy. b. Obscurity of meaning. Obs. 5. In the dark: in a state of ignorance; without knowledge as regards some particular fact.

a. I. literal. 1. Characterized by (absolute or relative) absence of light; devoid of or deficient in light; unilluminated; said esp. of night. 3. Of the ordinary colour of an object: Approaching black in hue. II. fig. 4. Characterized by absence of moral or spiritual light; evil, wicked; also, in a stronger sense, characterized by a turpitude or wickedness of sombre or unrelieved nature; foul, iniquitous, atrocious. 5. Devoid of that which brightens or cheers; gloomy, cheerless, dismal, sad. 6. Obscure in meaning, hard to understand. 7. Hidden from view or knowledge; concealed, secret. To keep dark: to keep secret (colloq.). 8. Of whom or which nothing is generally known; about whose powers, etc. the public are 'in the dark'. 10. Void of intellectual light, mentally or spiritually blind; unenlightened, uninformed, destitute of knowledge, ignorant.

a) In the following examples, the 'mud' either directly precedes or is directly preceded by 'the dark':

... the image of other things with me there/in the mud
the dark in the sack within reach ... (p.12, 14) (c.r.
'sack' IIA9; 'thing' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii;
'mud' and 'sack' IIB6vii)

¹⁵ J. Shadoian, 'The Achievement of Comment C'est', Critique, 12 (1970), 5--10 (p.15).

Further examples: p.23, 19; p.114, 25; p.137, 19; p.139 4--5; p.139, 9; p.160, 14--15.

One reading for these examples, in which 'the mud' directly precedes or is directly preceded by 'the dark', is that the two are in apposition to each other, thus equating 'the mud' with 'the dark'. This equation is stronger than simply saying that there is 'mud' and there is 'dark' at the same time. It suggests that the 'mud' and the 'dark' are the same thing.

b) The following examples are of the occurrence of 'in the dark the mud':

... if other inhabitants besides me here with me for good
in the dark the/mud long wrangle all lost and finally con-
clusion no me sole/elect (p.14, 17)

Further examples:

p.22, 18; p.25, 21; p.28, 3; p.52, 11; p. 57, 8; p.60, 23; p.68, 16; p.78, 3; p.80, 3; p.80, 22; p.81, 20; p.82, 10; p.92, 23; p.105, 29; p.108, 22; p.115, 21--23; p.119, 9; p.121, 4; p.132, 15; p.133, 11; p.135, 12--13; p.136, 19; p.137, 7; p.138, 9; p.139, 4--5; p.140, 18--19; p.142, 16; p.144, 5; p.144, 15; p.151, 22; p.153, 10; p.158, 9; p.158, 13.

Among readings for the phrase 'in the dark the mud', is again that 'the mud' is in apposition to 'the dark', suggesting an equation between the two. 'in the dark' has among its readings, that there is no light where the narrator is, that he exists in a place where it is continually night-time (see OED sense 1). Another reading of 'in the dark' is in OED sense 5, that the darkness is mental, the narrator is in ignorance.

c) The following examples are of 'in the mud the dark', where 'mud' and 'dark' are again identified with each other:

in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord
but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to

have been/given to me this time the image of other things with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within reach no that doesn't/seem to have been put in my life this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'tin' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'thing' IA10; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' and 'sack' IIB6vii)

See further: p.45, 15; p.49, 1; p.92, 13; p.159, 22; p.160, 6.

d) The following are other examples in which 'mud' and 'dark' co-occur:

on my face in the mud and the dark I see me ... (p.10, 7) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

only me in any case yes alone yes in the mud yes the dark yes/that holds yes the mud and the dark hold yes nothing to regret/there no ... (p.159, 15) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

In both these last examples, 'mud' and 'dark' co-occur, but as separate entities. One reading of p.10, 7, involves wordplay in that 'I see' follows 'the dark', one sense of 'the dark' being that one cannot see.

e) In the following examples, the 'mud' is said to be 'black'; compare 'dark' OED sense 3.

that little ageless body black with mud (p.101, 8) (c.r. 'mud' and time IIB6xiii)

without being reduced on that account to whelming us one/and all even to the unimaginable last at one stroke in this black/mud and nothing on its surface ever more to sully it (p.155, 6) (c.r. 'stroke' IA13) (c.r. 'mud' purifies IIB6xii)

... a tin clinks first respite very first/from the silence of this black sap (p.27, 6) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2) (c.r. 'mud' as nourishment IIB6vi)

as if/the mud opened yes or turned transparent yes but not often no/not long no otherwise black yes ... (p.106, 14) (c.r. 'open' IA17) (c.r. 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v)

That the 'mud' is 'black' in colour has among its interpretations: a) That reference to 'the mud' as 'the dark' is interpreted as referring to the dark colour of the 'mud'; it is in fact black. b) The 'mud' may appear 'black' because the narrator is 'in the dark'.

Also, see occurrences of 'black' with 'air', co-occurring with 'mud':

... a murmur in the mud the thin black air/... (p.104, 2) (c.r. 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

... never saw that before his life here howls/in the black air and the mud ... (p.105, 19) (c.r. 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' as animate; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

One reading of the 'black air' is that it refers to the 'dark', that is, the night air.

Among interpretations of this frequent co-occurrence of 'mud' with 'dark' and 'black' are:

a) 'dark' refers to the atmosphere, the narrator is in a perpetual night. The 'dark' is separate from the 'mud'.

b) The 'dark' refers to the atmosphere. It is like darkness; it is separate from the 'mud', but the two are closely associated in the narrator's mind, he associates being in the 'mud' with being in the 'dark'.

c) 'dark' and 'mud' refer to the same thing; the 'mud' is itself 'dark' in colour. It may be the source of darkness. The dark colour of the 'mud' emphasises the association between 'mud' and waste. There are also implications of the 'mud' as something which 'sullies' metaphorically. We have noted that the 'mud' may be not just 'dark', but 'black'. On p.77, 17, the narrator refers to 'the lamb black with the world's/sins'. This suggests that the 'mud' is a metaphor for spiritual uncleanness, that the narrator is surrounded by the dirt of mankind's sins (he is the lamb?). That the 'mud' is 'dark' also emphasises its association with death. Barge refers to Beckett's use of darkness as a symbol of death, which is suggested by remarks which Beckett made to Driver, and looks at his use of this in some of his works.¹⁶

¹⁶ Barge, 'Life and Death', p.337.

d) That the narrator is 'in the dark' also allows the idiomatic reading that the 'dark' refers to his mental state. That the 'mud' is equated with the 'dark' suggests that being in the 'mud' is being in ignorance (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; little scenes in the 'mud' IIB6iv).

iii) In this section, we will see examples which illustrate that the 'mud' is a feature of the narrator's environment. (c.r. IIB1, in which we saw that the narrator's environment was waste matter, and IIB6i, in which we saw that the 'mud' is also identified with waste matter.)

The first set of examples are of 'the mud' preceded by the preposition 'in'.

past moments old dreams back again or fresh like those
that/pass or things things always and memories I say them
as I hear/them murmur them in the mud (p.7, 5) (c.r.
'thing' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

my life last state last version ill-said ill-heard ill-
recaptured/ill-murmured in the mud brief movements of
the lower face/losses everywhere (p.7, 10) (c.r. 'life' IB12)
(c.r. IIB6viii 'mud' and 'life'; IIB6xi 'mud' and language)

on my face in the mud and the dark I see me it's a halt
nothing/more it's a rest I'm journeying it's a rest nothing
more (p.10, 7) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

Further examples will be found:

p.9, 6; p.11, 3; p.12, 13; p.29, 6; p.30, 5; p.30, 9; p.31, 1;
p.31, 8; p.34, 12; p.34, 15; p.37, 21; p.45, 2; p.45, 15; p.48, 2;
p.49, 1; p.53, 13; p.54, 2; p.57, 4; p.58, 20; p.60, 16; p.60, 18;
p.64, 16; p.65, 21--22; p.67, 17; p.69, 8; p.71, 10; p.73, 17;
p.77, 4; p.82, 2; p.87, 14; p.88, 6; p.92, 12; p.100, 9--10; p.104,
2; p.105, 18; p.107, 3; p.107, 18; p.111, 5; p.113, 15; p.118, 19;
p.119, 15--16; p.126, 1; p.138, 7; p.140, 5; p.145, 18; p.147, 1;
p.155, 7; p.158, 9; p.159, 22; p.160, 6.

It is being argued that the narrator continually refers to (his) activities taking place in the 'mud' and that this indicates that

the 'mud' is part of his environment. The following are examples of 'mud' modified by other prepositions which support this argument:

the hand approaches under the mud comes up at a venture
(p.62, 6) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

... movements of the head/calm unhurried the face raised
from the mud or the left cheek/... (p.90, 11) (c.r. 'mud'
as animate IIB6x)

... even you the mud above the temples ... (p.96, 2)

... flush with the mud one yard two yards me so lively/...
(p.104, 5)

stop your drivel draw the mud about your face ... (p.95,
26)

... and I live/the air sustains me the mud I live on
(p.19, 9) (c.r. 'live' IB15; 'sustain' IIA8; 'live on' IIA8)
(c.r. 'mud' as nourishment IIB6vi; 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

In the following examples, the narrator talks of being 'glued to' the 'mud'.

'glue' OED 1. trans. To join or fasten (together) with glue, or some similar viscous substance. 3. transf. and fig. To cause to adhere closely or firmly, to fix or attach firmly (as if by gluing). Formerly often without explicit reference to the literal use, esp. in sense: To attach in sympathy or affection.

way off on the right the tugging hand the mouth shut
grim/the staring eyes glued to the mud ... (p.35, 4)

One reading of p.35, 4, is 'glued to' in a figurative sense, the narrator is unable to tear his attention away from the 'mud' (c.r. 'little scenes' in the 'mud' IIB6iv). However, there is also play upon the literal meaning of glue; a reliteralisation is suggested by the sticky nature of 'mud'. In the following examples, reference to being 'glued' or 'agglutinated' co-occurs with the 'mud', playing again upon the sticky texture of 'mud' and its ubiquitousness in how it is, suggesting that it is the 'mud' which acts as an adhesive.

a million then if a million strong a million Pims now motion-/
less agglutinated two by two in the interests of torment
too/strong five hundred thousand little heaps colour of
mud and/naw a thousand thousand nameless solitaires half

abandoned/half abandoning (p.125, 10) (c.r. 'abandon' IIB5)

glued together like a single body in the dark the mud (p.132, 15) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

Also, see p.133, 11, where the last example is repeated identically.

See also:

I can't make out the words the mud muffles ... (p. 62, 11) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

That the 'mud' muffles what is said suggests that it is close either to the source of sound (Pim), or to the narrator's ears.

From these examples, then, we have seen that the narrator talks of his activities, his 'life' taking place in the 'mud'. From this it is being argued that the 'mud' is a feature of his environment. We saw in IIB6i that the 'mud' is identified with excrement. The 'mud' is ubiquitous; the narrator at one point postulates it may be 'nothing more than all our shit' (p. 58, 23). At this stage, we can interpret the 'mud' as a general term for the narrator's unpleasant surroundings. Beckett has used 'mud' to refer to an unpleasant environment before, although not so literally. To give just one example, Estragon exclaims in Waiting for Godot, 'Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! Look at this muck-heap! I've never stirred from it!'¹⁷

iv)

'scene' OED 5. A subdivision of an act of a play (or of a short play which is not divided into acts), marked by the entrance or departure of one or more actors (and in romantic or non-classic drama, often by a change of local). Hence, the action and dialogue comprised in any one of these subdivisions; a situation between certain actors. II. In

¹⁷ Waiting for Godot, p.61.

various established metaphorical uses. 9. A view or picture presented to the eye (or to the mind) of a place, concourse, incident, series of actions or events, assemblage of objects, etc. 10. An action, episode, complication of events, or situation, in real life.

'image' OED sb. 1. An artificial imitation or representation of the external form of any object, esp. of a person, or of the bust of a person. 2. An optical appearance or counterpart of an object, such as is produced by rays of light either reflected as from a mirror, refracted as through a lens, or falling on a surface after passing through a small aperture. 3. Abstractly. Aspect, appearance, form; semblance, likeness. 4. b. A thing that represents or is taken to represent something else; a symbol, emblem, representation. 5. A mental representation of something (esp. a visible object), not by direct perception, but by memory or imagination; a mental picture or impression; an idea, conception. 6. A representation of something to the mind by speech or writing; a vivid or graphic description. 7. Rhet. A simile, metaphor, or figure of speech.

The following examples have in common the reading that the narrator sees scenes or images in the 'mud':

life life the other above in the light said to have been mine on/and off no going back up there no question no one asking that/of me never there a few images on and off in the mud earth sky/a few creatures in the light some still standing (p.8, 4) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'creature' IB2; 'stand' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

another image so soon again a woman looks up looks at me the/images come at the beginning part one they will cease I say/it as I hear it murmur it in the mud the images part one how it/was before Pim I see them in the mud a light goes on they will/cease a woman I see her in the mud (p.11, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

that's all it wasn't a dream I didn't dream that nor a memory/I haven't been given memories this time it was an image the/kind I see sometimes see in the mud part one sometimes saw (p.11, 17) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

I see all sizes life included if that's mine the light goes on in the/mud the prayer the head on the table the crocus the old man/in tears the tears behind the hands skies all sorts different sorts/on land and sea blue of a sudden gold and green of the earth of/a sudden in the mud (p.23, 8) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'behind' IC3) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

sometimes in this position a fine image fine I mean in move-ment and colour blue and white of clouds in the

wind some-/times some days this time as it happens this day in the mud a/fine image I'll describe it it will be described then go right leg/right arm push pull towards Pim he does not exist (p.30, 7) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

and the legs and the eyes the blue closed no doubt no since/suddenly another image the last there in the mud I say it as I/hear it I see me (p.31, 16) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

blue and white of sky a moment still April morning in the/mud it's over it's done I've had the image the scene is empty a/few animals still then goes out no more blue I stay there (p.34, 9) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

my tongue comes out again lolls in the mud I stay there no more/thirst the tongue goes in the mouth closes it must be a/straight line now it's over it's done I've had the image (p.34, 15) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

the arms in the middle go through me and part of the bodies/shades through a shade the scene is empty in the mud the sky/goes out the ashes darken no world left for me now but mine/very pretty only not like that it doesn't happen like that (p.35, 13)

I won't either in the end I won't hear it any more never heard/it so it said so I murmur no voice only his only Pim's not his/either no more Pim never any Pim never any voice hard to/believe in the dark the mud no voice no image in the end long/before (p.82, 7) (c.r. 'end' IC7) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

he's coming I'll have a voice no voice in the world but mine/a murmur had a life up above down here I'll see my things/again a little blue in the mud a little white our things little/scenes skies especially and paths (p.84, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12; 'thing' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

before Pim the journey part one right leg right arm push pull/the yards fifteen yards halt nap a sardine or suchlike tongue in/the mud an image or two little scenes mute words hang on off/again push pull all that part one but before that again (p.117, 20) (c.r. 'sardine' IIA5) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

time to forget all lose all be ignorant of all whence I come/whither I go frequent halts brief naps a sardine tongue in the/mud loss of the speech so dearly regained a few images skies/homes little scenes falls half out of species brief movements of/the lower no sound loss of the noble name of Bem part one/before Pim how it was vast stretch of time it's done (p.119, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'sardine' IIA3; 'species' IB11) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

Also see: p.20, 6; p.38, 7.

Among readings for the above examples are: a) The narrator records that whilst he is in the 'mud', he sees images. That is, he is in the 'mud', but the images he sees are elsewhere, for example, in his mind. b) However, in many of the examples, such as p.11, 17, the narrator talks of seeing the images/scenes 'in the mud', which can also be interpreted as suggesting that the images actually appear in the 'mud' itself. This reading is emphasised by such occurrences as 'a woman I see her in the mud' (p.11, 5).

Reading b) suggests: 1. That the 'mud' has properties that are not commonly associated with 'mud' in the reader's world. 2. That what the narrator calls 'mud' is not mud at all, but a metaphor for something else, for example, the narrator's mental environment. This has been suggested by previous commentators on Beckett. For instance:

The narrator's immersion in the mud suggests, further, the absence of a transcendent mental dimension in his existence, the absence of forms through which the physical material of existence can be stirred into life. The rudimentary material form of the physical world which he inhabits, reflects, then, the extreme poverty of his mental world.¹⁸

The book's most telling weakness is its setting. Despite the comic grotesquerie promoted by the mud, mud is not, I think, artistically appropriate as the whole physical world of a psychological undergroundling. As an extension of his mental environment, it is at once too obvious and too uniform and inexact. Furthermore it robs the comedy of its poignancy, causing laughter to dissolve too quickly into revulsion and despair.¹⁹

The idiomatic sense of 'in the dark', which we observed

¹⁸ T.J. Cousineau, 'Imagination Imagined: A Commentary on the Novels of Samuel Beckett' (unpublished dissertation, University of California, 1971), p.178.

¹⁹ J.D. Durant, 'How it is by Samuel Beckett', Studies in Short Fiction, 2, (1965) (299--301), p.301.

in IIB6ii reinforces this interpretation. The images which appear in the 'mud' are a change and it should be noted are frequently associated with light. For example, p.8, 7; p.11, 4; p.23, 7. We also saw that the scenes/images 'go out'; p.34, 11; p.35, 15, a phrase usually associated with the actions of a light. In noting the contrast between the association of light with the images/scenes that appear in the 'mud' and the association of the 'dark' with the 'mud' on other occasions, we should also remember the scenes of 'life in the light', which we saw in IB12, when Pim describes 'life above'.

v) In this subsection, we shall be looking at examples which have in common the occurrence of 'mud' with (1) 'yawn' and 'engulf', (2) 'open', (3) 'part'. Most of the examples below have in common the reading that 'mud' is the subject of these verbs.

(1) 'yawn'

'yawn' OED sb. 1. Something that yawns; a gaping opening or entrance; esp. a chasm, abyss. 2. The, or an act, of yawning. a. Gaping or opening wide. b. Involuntary opening of the mouth, as from drowsiness.

v. 2. To lie, stand, or be wide open, as a chasm, abyss, or the like; to have or form a wide opening, gap, or chasm. 4. To make involuntarily a prolonged inspiration with the mouth wide open and lower jaw much depressed, as from drowsiness or fatigue. 5. intr. To open wide as a mouth; to form a chasm; to gape, part asunder.

paradise before the hoping from sleep I come to sleep
return/between the two there is all the doing suffering
failing/bungling achieving until the mud yawns again that's
how/they're trying to tell me this time part one before
Pim from/one sleep to the next (p.25, 10) (c.r. 'mud' as
animate IIB6x)

then of a sudden like all that starts starts again no knowing
set/forth forth again ten yards fifteen yards right leg
right arm/push pull a few images patches of blue a few
words no sound/cling to species a few sardines yawn of
mud burst the sack/drivel on drone on in a word the old
road (p.68, 18) (c.r. 'know' IA7; 'species' IB11; 'sardine'
IIA3; 'sack' IIB9) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

'engulf' OED v. 1. trans. To swallow up in a gulf, abyss,

or whirlpool; to plunge into a gulf; to plunge deeply and inextricably into a surrounding medium. Also refl. and intr. for refl. b. refl. and pass. Of a river: To discharge itself into, be lost in, the sea; also, to disappear underground. 2. transf. (chiefly humorous.) To swallow up like an abyss; to bury completely. 3. fig.

the dejections no they are me but I love them the old half-emptied tins let limply fall no something else the mud engulfs/all me alone it carries my four stone five stone it yields a little/under that then no more I don't flee I am banished (p. 43, 6) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'tin' IIA3)

this opener where put it when not needed put it back in the/sack with the tins certainly not hold it in the hand in the mouth/certainly not the muscles relax the mud engulfs where then (p.74, 7) (c.r. 'opener' IA17; 'sack' IIA9; 'tin' IIA2)

(2) 'open'

(c.r. 'open/er' IA17)

'open' OED v. I. Transitive senses. 1. To move or turn (a door, gate, or the like) away from its closed position, so as to admit of passage. 3. To spread apart, widen, expand, unfold, unroll, extend. b. To expand, enlarge (a hole or aperture). 4. To make an opening in; to cut or break into; to make a hole or incision in. b. To make (the passages of the body) clear; to clear away (obstructions) in the bodily passages. 7. To uncover, lay bare, disclose to sight, expose or exhibit to view, display. II. intr. 16. To become open, unshut, or unclosed. (a) of a door or other means of entrance; (b) of the passage or doorway; (c) of the space or enclosure to which this gives access. Hence, (d) generally, to come apart, or asunder, so as to admit of passage, disclose a gap or vacant space, display the interior or contents. (e) Of an abscess, To burst and discharge. 18. To expand, extend, spread apart. Of a collective body or its units: To move apart so as to present openings or wider intersices. b. fig. To expand in intellect or sympathy. 20. To disclose or declare one's knowledge, thoughts, or feelings in speech, to speak out; to speak explicitly, explain.

what to begin with drink to begin with I turn over on my face/that lasts a good moment I last with that a moment in the end/the mouth opens the tongue comes out lolls in the mud that/lasts a good moment they are good moments perhaps the best/difficult to choose the face in the mud the mouth open the mud/in the mouth thirst abating humanity regained

sometimes in this position I fall asleep again the tongue goes/in the mouth closes the mud opens it's I who fall asleep again/stop drinking and sleep again ... (p.30, 1) (c.r. 'drink' IIA7; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17; 'come' IA6;

'thirst' IIA6) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' as nourishment IIB6vi)

that kind an image not for the eyes made of words not for the/ears the day is ended I'm safe till tomorrow the mud opens/I depart till tomorrow the head in the sack the arms round it the/rest anyhow (p.51, 1) (c.r. 'kind' IB10; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17; 'sack' IIA9)

sky and earth yes people poking about yes all over the place/yes and him there somewhere yes skulking somewhere yes as if/the mud opened yes or turned transparent yes but not often no/not long no otherwise black yes and he calls that life above yes/as against life here pause HERE howls good (p.106, 13) (c.r. 'open' IA17; 'life' IB12)

the right I close my eyes not the blue the others at the back and/finally make it out way off on the right at the end of its arm/full strength in the axis of the clavicle I say it as I hear it opening/and closing in the mud opening and closing it's another of my/resources it helps me (p.31, 5) (c.r. 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

way off on the right in the mud the hand opens and closes that/helps me it's going let it go I realize I'm still smiling that's a/sense in that now been none for a long time now (p.34, 12) (c.r. 'open' IA17)

In both p.31, 5, and p.34, 12, one reading is that it is the 'mud' which is the subject of the verb 'open', a reading particularly suggested because of the other collocations of the 'mud' with 'open' as shown above. Another reading for both these (p.31, 5; p.34, 12) is that it is the hand which is the subject of the verb (for p.31, 5, also see p.31, 11--14)

grope in a panic in the mud for the opener that is my life but/of what cannot as much be said could not as much be always/said my little lost always vast stretch of time (p.37, 21) (c.r. 'grope' IA10; 'opener' IA17)

According to one reading of p.37, 21, the narrator refers to the tin-opener being in the 'mud'; it also however plays upon the examples we have already noted of the 'mud' 'opening', suggesting in fact that the 'mud' is the 'opener' referred to here (line 21), that it is the 'mud' which opens, comes apart.

(3) 'part'

'part' OED v. I. 1. trans. To divide into parts (by actual local separation, or by marking or assigning boundaries, or merely in thought); to divide, break, cleave, sever. Now somewhat rare. c. To separate (the hair), as with a comb, on each side of a dividing line or parting. 2. intr. To suffer division, be divided or severed; to divide, break, come in two or in pieces. 4. To put asunder, separate, sunder (two or more separate persons or things, or one from another); to separate (combatants) so as to stop the combat; to make a separation between (companions, lovers, etc.). Also fig. to separate in thought; to put in a different class or category; to distinguish. b. To keep asunder or separate; to separate, as a boundary; to form a boundary or interval between. 6. In reciprocal sense: To go or come apart or asunder; to separate. Of persons: To go away from each other, quit one another's company. 7. b. To part (hence, out of this life, etc.): to die. III. 9. trans. To divide to or among a number of recipients; to distribute in shares, apportion (With various const.). Somewhat arch. 10. To share with another or others; (of one person) to give a share of to another; (of a number of persons) to take each a share of, divide among themselves. Now rare or Obs. exc. dial.

they broke for want of chalk of suchlike but not in concert so/that some my nails we're talking of my nails some always long/others presentable I saw him dreaming the mud parted the/light went on I saw him dreaming with the help of a friend or/failing that boon all alone of bending them back to the back/of his hand for them to go through the other way death fore-/stalled him (p.59, 15) (c.r. 'death' IC10)

It is ambiguous in p.59, 15, whether the 'mud' 'parting' is what 'he' is seen dreaming, whether it is the predicate of 'dreaming', or whether the narrator sees 'him' dreaming and then in a new clause comments that 'the mud parted'; that is, the 'mud' 'parting' is not a dream.

the things I could no longer see little scenes part one in their/stead Pim's voice Pim in the light blue of day and blue of night/little scenes the curtains parted the mud parted the light went/on he saw for me that too may be said there is nothing against/it (p.81, 11) (c.r. 'thing' IA10) (c.r. 'scenes' in the 'mud' IIB6iv)

In these last two examples, the 'mud' parting is associated with the little scenes/images.

another image so soon again a woman looks up looks at me the/images come at the beginning part one they will cease I say/it as I hear it murmur it in the mud the images

part one how it/was before Pim I see them in the mud a light goes on they will/cease a woman I see her in the mud (p.11, 1) (c.r. 'come' IA6) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'scenes' in the 'mud' IIB6iv)

In this last example, 'mud' and 'part' do not occur in such a way as to be subject and verb. In the context of other examples, however, this may well play upon their collocation, since there is multiple reference to the 'mud', to the 'images' and to 'part one', in which 'part' may be a pun on the verb.

Conclusion to IIB6v

The collocation of 'mud' with 'yawn', 'engulf', 'open', and 'part' suggests that the 'mud' moves. The examples of 'yawn' and 'engulf', and on one occasion 'open' (p.51, 1), suggests that the 'mud' opens up as if to swallow the narrator. It is not clear however if it does indeed do this, since p.43, 6, the narrator notes that the 'mud' engulfs everything except him. 'yawn' and 'engulf' have connotations of death, the yawning abyss; c.r. IIB6i, in which we noted the association of 'mud' with death. That the 'mud' opens for him may suggest a possible escape to death, but he is rejected. 'yawn' however also has another connotation; that the 'mud' is animate (c.r. IIB6x).

The collocation of 'mud' with 'open' and 'part' is frequently associated with the occurrence of 'little scenes/images'. This reverses the death connotations of the 'mud' opening in that the images are associated with light (c.r. IIB6iv) and therefore with 'life above' in the light. This is consistent with the interpretation which we saw for the 'mud' in IIB6iv, that it is a ^ametaphor for the narrator's mental environment. His mind is cloudy/unclear/asleep/dead at times,

then the cloudiness disperses and he sees images. That the 'mud' 'parts' recalls the parting of the Red Sea by Moses.²⁰ 'open' and 'part' both have connotations in the field of sexual reproduction; 'part' as a pun upon parturition; 'open' because of the use of the word 'opener' (c.r. IA17). 'part' as a pun on parturition suggests that 'mud' is a source of life (c.r. 'mud' as 'life' IIB6viii; 'mud' as animate IIB6x). From our examination of the use of 'open/opener' in IA, we know that the word has a more complex web of meanings in how it is than those suggested by the OED definition of 'open'. The co-occurrence of the 'little scenes/images' with 'open' affirms the connection between these scenes and the sexual relationship. 'open' plays upon 'opener', which we observed in IA17 to be symbolic of the sexual organs and which is the instrument used to extract the descriptions of the scenes of the life above from the victim. The scenes/images, then are at one level the 'baby' which results from the creatures' union (like the 'voice').

vi) In the following examples, the narrator talks of 'drinking' the 'mud' (although he is uncertain whether it will nourish him), and of lying with his mouth in the 'mud', his tongue 'lolling' in it.

what to begin with drink to begin with I turn over on my face/that lasts a good moment I last with that a moment in the end/the mouth opens the tongue comes out lolls in the mud that/lasts a good moment perhaps the best/difficult to choose the face in the mud the mouth open the mud/in the mouth thirst abating humanity regained (p.30, 1) (c.r. 'drink' IIA7; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v)

centuries I can see me quite tiny the same as now more or less/only tinier quite tiny no more objects no more food and I live/the air sustains me the mud I live on (p.19, 8) (c.r. 'food' IIA1; 'live' IB15; 'sustain' IIA8;

²⁰ Exodus 14. 16.

'live on' IIA8) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

I yes without it's being said all is not said almost nothing and/far too much I have eaten offered him to eat crushed against/his mouth lost in the hairs the mud my palm dripping with/cod's liver or suchlike rubbed it in labour lost²¹ if he's still/nourished it's on mud if that's what it is I always said so this/mud by osmosis long run fullness of time by capillarity (p.72, 15) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'eat' IIA5; 'cod's liver' IIA4; 'nourish' IIA8)

Further examples of the narrator and his fellow creatures eating or drinking the mud: p.9, 4--8; p.30, 12--15; p.34, 15--17; p.65, 12--15; p.73, 1--3; p.73, 4; p.89, 4; p.117, 21--22; p.119, 15--16.

See also:

... in the/dark the mud sandwiched between victim and tormentor ... (p.139, 4) (c.r. 'sandwich' IIA4) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

This last example plays upon 'sandwich' meaning a type of food as we saw in IIA4. Since the 'mud' is also drunk/eaten, there is further play with a reading that the 'mud' is sandwiched between the victim and tormentor, like the filling of a sandwich.

Two other words, 'swill' and 'sap', should also be considered here, because it is likely that these are other words describing the 'mud'. They both refer to a liquid slush and the narrator uses them on occasions when he could equally well have used 'mud'; further the 'sap' is said to be 'black' (p27, 7); and we have seen that the 'mud' is 'dark' in colour. Both 'sap' and 'swill' have senses of food:²²

'sap' OED sb.¹ The vital juice of fluid which circulates in plants.

²¹ 'labour lost' plays on Love's Labour Lost; 'labour' may also be a pun on childbirth, especially given 'rubbed it in'.

²² Also, note the sense of 'sap' as a verb meaning 'to drain, undermine'. (OED, v.¹, 3. To weaken or destroy insidiously.)

'swill' OED sb.² 1. Liquid, or partly liquid, food, chiefly kitchen refuse, given to swine; hog-wash, pig-wash.

See:

first respite very first/from the silence of this black sap
(p.27, 6)

question old question if yes or no this upheaval daily if
daily/ah to have to hear that word to have to murmur it
this up-/heaval yes or no if daily it heaves me up and
out of my swill (p.44, 1)

vii) In these examples, a relationship between the 'mud' and the 'sack' is suggested.

a) The first examples imply that the narrator and his muddy environment are both contained in the 'dark'.

in the sack then up to now the tins the opener the cord
but the/wish for something else no that doesn't seem to
have been/given to me this time the image of other things
with me there/in the mud the dark in the sack within
reach no that doesn't/seem to have been put in my life
this time (p.12, 12) (c.r. 'tin' IIA2; 'opener' IA17; 'have'
IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9; 'life' IB12; 'thing' IA10) (c.r.
'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as environment)

stop panting say what you hear see what you say say you
see it/an arm colour of mud the hand in the sack quick
say an arm/... (p.114, 1)

a little more to last a little more untwine the rope make
two/ropes tie the bottom of the sack fill it with mud tie
the top it/will make a good pillow it will be soft in my
arms brief/movements of the lower face would they were
the last (p.52, 1) (c.r. 'bottom' IC2; 'sack' IIA9)

The last example suggests that the 'mud' belongs in the 'sack'; we recall that the narrator exists 'in the mud'.

the cord a burst sack a cord I say it as I hear it murmur
it to the/mud old sack old cord you remain (p.51, 22)
(c.r. 'sack' IIA9) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

One reading of p.51, 22, is that the narrator addresses the 'mud' when he murmurs; that he addresses it as 'old sack old cord'.

.../cling to species a few sardines yawn of mud burst the
sack/drivel on drone on in a word the old road (p.68,
21) (c.r. 'species' IB11; 'sardine' IIA3; 'sack' IIA9) (c.r.
'mud' and 'yawn' IIB6v)

One interpretation for these examples is that the sack bursts, spewing the 'mud' contained in it, recalling that the sack is a container of food and that the 'mud' is viewed as sustenance. On p.68, 21, one reading suggests a causal link between the 'mud' yawning and the bursting of the sack, as if the 'mud' yawning stretches the sack to bursting point. We should also remember that the sack contains the opener, and that the 'mud' is said to 'open'.

that kind an image not for the eyes made of words not for the/ears the day is ended I'm safe till tomorrow the mud opens/I depart till tomorrow the head in the sack the arms round it the/rest anyhow (p.51, 1) (c.r. 'kind' IB10; 'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7; 'sack' IIA9) (c.r. 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v)

In p.51, 1, the head's being in the sack follows not the opening of the sack, but of the 'mud'.

b) Further examples of a relationship between the 'mud' and the sack.

murmured it/in the mud it holds the sack ... (p.77, 3) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' as animate IIB6x; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

One reading of p.77, 3, is that the 'mud' and not the 'right hand' (p.77, 1) holds the 'sack'.

a sack bravo colour of mud in the mud quick say a sack/ colour of its surrounding having assumed it always had it/it's one or the other ... (p.113, 15) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'quick' IB1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

... never anything but the dark the mud the/sack perhaps too it seems constant too ... (p.139, 9) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

Also, it is the 'mud' which 'keeps a man going' (p.73, 4) and the 'sack' or the 'mud' is said to be the 'wherewithal' to continue (p.58, 23). The phrase 'pure and simple' is used to refer to the 'sack' (p.120, 22); the 'mud' is referred to as 'pure mud' (p.90, 9) (c.r. 'mud' purifies IIB6xii).

From the examples presented in IIB6vii we have seen that

the 'mud' and 'sack' have in common that they are 'constant' (at least, the 'sack' is said to be at this point in the narrative). They are the same colour; at times the 'mud' and the narrator and all the action of the narrative seem to have taken place inside the 'sack'. The 'sack' contains food and the 'mud' is food. The narrator attempts to fill the 'sack' with 'mud'. There is a suggestion of a relationship between the movements of the 'sack' and the 'mud', especially 'opening/parting/bursting'. One interpretation for this is that the 'mud' was what was originally in the 'sack' before it burst. In the conclusion it will be suggested the narrator and the 'mud' were both contained within the 'sack' before it burst. We shall be arguing that the 'mud' represents the womb fluids.

viii) In the following examples, 'mud' co-occurs with 'life'; all of these examples have as one of their readings that the 'mud' is equated with 'life'. (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

... how it is I say it as I hear it natural order more or less bits and/scraps in the mud my life murmur it to the mud (p.21, 23) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' as waste IIB6i; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

In this example, one reading is that 'the mud' and 'my life' are in apposition; the 'mud' is thus equated with the narrator's 'life'.

Likewise, 'the mud' is followed by 'my life' in p.22, 5; p.80, 22--23.

my life last state last version ill-said ill-heard ill-recaptured/ill-murmured in the mud brief movements of the lower face/losses everywhere (p.7, 10) (c.r. 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

In this last example, 'my life' is located in 'the mud' according to one reading. In the following further examples, the narrator also talks of 'life in the mud': p.57, 3--5; p.81, 18--21; p.151, 22--24.

grope in a panic in the mud for the opener that is my life ... (p.37, 21) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'opener' IA17; 'grope' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v)

.../murmured to this mud which is told to me natural order part/three it's there I have my life (p.29, 16) (c.r. 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

.../my life we're talking of my life in the dark the mud with Pim/part two leaving only part three and last that's where I have/my life where I had it where I'll have it was tracts of time part/three and last in the dark the mud my life murmur it bits and/scraps (p.57, 5) (c.r. 'life' IB12; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'bits and scraps' IIB4) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

For both p.29, 16 and p.57, 5, one reading is that 'that's where I'll have my life' refers to the 'mud'. (Also see 'dust' given IIB6xiii.)

Among the interpretations for the narrator's identification of his life with the 'mud' are: a) As his location, it has become identified in his mind with his present life; he is not literally saying that the 'mud' is life. b) The 'mud' is the location of the scenes of 'life (above)'; as such it provides the nearest he has to contact with what would seem normal life in the reader's world. c) As a source of nourishment, it is a source of life. The narrator relies on the 'mud' to live, in which case it is more literally necessary to his life. The examples in this section therefore give the 'mud' more positive connotations than just being the waste/dirt in which he spends his time.

ix) In the following examples, we learn that 'mud' is warm (c.r. 'mud' is animate IIB6x).

warmth of primeval mud impenetrable dark (p.12, 3) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

the mud never cold never dry it doesn't dry on me the air/laden with warm vapour of water or some other liquid I sniff/the air smell nothing a hundred years not a smell I sniff the air (p.27, 9)

with me someone there with me still and me there still strange/wish the silence there still enough for me to wonder if/only a few seconds if he is breathing still or in my arms already/a true corpse untorturable henceforward and this warmth under/my arm against my side merely the

mud that stays warm as we/have seen words my truant guides with you strange journeys (p.101, 10) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5)

Krim dead are you mad one doesn't die here and with that with/his long index claw Kram shaken pierces the mud two little/flues to the skins then to Krim right for you they are warm/Krim to Kram roles reversed it's the mud Kram we'll leave/them open and see one year two years Kram's finger skins still/warm (p.102, 15) (c.r. 'dead' IC10; 'open' IA17) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

See further, 'with my little dead weight in the warm mire' (p.43, 11), one sense of 'mire' being 'wet or soft mud' (OED sense 2; full definition given IIB1).

From these examples, we conclude that the 'mud' is warm. We have already seen that the narrator lives in a dark, sunless world, so it seems unlikely that the 'mud' has simply become warm from the sun, but rather that it is intrinsically warm. That the 'mud' is also said to be 'primeval' (p.12, 3), has as one interpretation that the narrator is wallowing in 'mud' on an earth recently formed; the 'mud' has only recently reached the surface of the earth and has not yet cooled down. It will be argued in the conclusion that one of the functions of the 'mud' is to act as a metaphor for the womb fluids; that it should also be representing the ooze upon a newly formed earth is not inconsistent with its representing womb fluids. It does not seem likely, however, that the 'mud' is simply the ooze of a newly-formed earth, since what we have learned so far about the narrator's world is that it is more like a world in its death; it is a dark, sunless place; appearing to be eternal night-time.

x) In this section examples will be presented which have in common the reading that 'mud' behaves, has the qualities of, not an inanimate substance, as it is in the reader's world, but those associated with an animate being.

a) One reading for the following examples is that sound is emitted

from the 'mud', or that the narrator expects it to be:

... it's here the words have/their utility the mud is mute (p.28, 15) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'mud' as waste IIB6i; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

Whilst 'the mud is mute' states that the 'mud' is silent, the use of the term 'mute' suggests that it would be expected to speak, but is currently dumb. 'mute' would usually collocate with nouns referring to animate objects. This is emphasised in the OED definition, which refers to 'articulate sound' (emphasis added) and loss of the 'faculty of speech' (emphasis added).

'mute' OED A. adj. 1. Not emitting articulate sound; silent. b. transf. in the sense: Not emitting sound; not manifesting sound. Mute swan: the common swan, Cygnus olor. c. Proverbial phrases: As mute as a fish or fishes (and dialectically, as mute as a mackerel, maid, mouse, poker, statue, stone). 2. Destitute of the faculty of speech, dumb. Also absol. b. Applied to the lower animals as lacking the power of articulate speech. Cf. DUMB a. 1. b. 3. Temporarily bereft of the power of speech. 4. Of things or action: Not characterized by or attended with speech or vocal utterance.

... brief movements of the lower face no sound if you/could come to think of it of what you nearly lost and then this/splendid mud the panting stops and I hear it barely audible/enough to make you laugh soon and late if you could come to/think of it (p.28, 22) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'make' IA9, IB2)

other extravagances including the use of speech it will come/back to me that much is true it has come back to me here it/is I listen I speak brief movements of the lower face with sound/in the mud a murmur all sorts one Pim a life I'm said to have/had before him with him after him a life I'm said to have (p.67, 14) (c.r. 'come' IA6; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

the mud gibbers ... (p.144, 5)

Further examples will be found: p.29, 1--6; p.42, 15--19; p.68, 13--17; p.69, 6--10; p.82, 9--11; p.115, 1--3; p.140, 5--10; p.140, 16--19; p.142, 15--17.

From these we have seen that the 'mud' is identified with sounds the narrator makes, as if the 'mud' produces the sound, as if the

'mud' murmurs:

'murmur' OED v. 1. intr. To make, produce, or emit a low continuous sound. 2. To complain or repine in low muttered tones; to give vent to an inarticulate discontent, to grumble. 3. trans. To utter (sounds, words) in a low voice and indistinctly.

sb. 1. Subdued continuous or continuously repeated sound, an instance of this. Now rare exc. in the murmur of (a brook, the waves, etc.)

'murmur' is used of the sound of a brook or river, thus it is possible that 'the mud' could 'murmur' and still be within the bounds of 'mud' as defined in the OED literally; however, that the narrator 'murmurs' plays on the suggestion that the 'murmur' in the 'mud' is the 'mud' quietly speaking.

b) In the following examples, one reading is that the narrator talks of murmuring 'to the mud'; or of what he says being '(barely) audible to the mud', suggesting that the 'mud' is what he addresses when he speaks. Whilst it is not impossible in the reader's world for someone to speak to something that is inanimate, such statements are usually interpreted as suggesting that the speaker is treating the object as animate, even human.

that's all for the moment there I leave it I hear it murmur
it to/the mud there I leave for the moment life in the
light it goes/out (p.10, 4) (c.r. 'life' IB12)

Further examples will be found: p.15, 12--14; p.16, 3--8; p.21, 24; p.22, 4--5; p.22, 14--15; p.26, 9--11; p.29, 14--17; p.51, 22--23; p.53, 8--10; p.57, 1--5; p.95, 25; p.108, 7--8; p.108, 18--19; p.126, 1--21; p.130, 17--20; p.132, 5--6; p.139, 19--20; p.147, 20--23; p.148, 8--10; p.151, 19--21; p.159, 8--9.

c) In the following examples, parts of a body are referred to as being 'in the mud', or associated with 'the mud', for which one reading is that these are part of 'the mud'. This is emphasised by the use of the definite article to modify body parts, rather than,

for example, the use of the possessive pronoun.²³ Consequently, 'the face in the mud', 'the mouth', and, on occasions, 'the legs' (p.31, 16), 'the eyes' (p.31, 16), 'the hand' (p. 31, 1--9), (where the 'hand' is said to be 'at the end of its arm' (emphasis added), opening and closing in the mud) suggest that disembodied body parts are to be found in the 'mud', or that they are parts of the 'mud' itself.

Examples: p.30, 1--6; p.49, 1--4; p.62, 6--10; p.74, 7--9; p.60, 15--17; p.83, 15; p.90, 12--13; p.100, 8--12; p.101, 8--9; p.105, 18--19; p.114, 24--26.

d) The following examples all have as one of their interpretations that 'the mud' is behaving as an animate being:

... here when you shit it's the mud that wipes ... (p.41, 5) (c.r. 'shit' IIB1) (c.r. 'mud' as waste IIB6)

all with the right hand I've said this and the left all this time/vast stretch of time it holds the sack I've said this heard it said/now in me that was without quaqua on all sides murmured it/in the mud it holds the sack beside Pim's left hand my thumb/has crept between his palm and folded fingers (p.77, 1) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'quaqua' IIB3) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' and 'sack' IIB6vii)

One reading for p.77, 1, is that the 'mud' has replaced the functions of the narrator's hand by holding the 'sack'.

I pricked him how I pricked him in the end long before purely/curiosity was he still alive thump thump in the mud vile tears/of unbutcherable brother (p.82, 1) (c.r. 'prick' IA17; 'end' IC; 'alive' IB15; 'thump' IA15) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

Among readings for p.82, 1, are that: a) The 'mud' goes 'thump thump'. b) The 'mud' is an 'unbutcherable brother', now crying 'vile tears'.

Further examples: p.90, 9--11; p.96, 1--5; p.104, 1--6; p.108,

²³ The use of the definite article for body parts is of course common in French.

8--9; p.130, 19--20; p.136, 18--21; p.144, 13--19; p.148, 11--13; p.108, 8--9; p.113, 15. (In the examples given last, one reading is that 'the mud' is modified by 'quick', c.r. IB1.)

d) In the following examples, one reading is that of an identification between the 'mud' and the narrator.

centuries I can see me quite tiny the same as now more or less/only tinier quite tiny no more objects no more food and I live/the air sustains me the mud I live on (p.19, 8) (c.r. 'food' IIA1; 'live' IB15; 'sustains' IIA8) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' as nourishment IIB6vi)

One reading of p.19, 8, is 'me, the mud, I live on'.

sometimes in this position I fall asleep again the tongue goes/in the mouth closes the mud opens it's I who fall asleep again/... (p.30, 12) (c.r. 'open' IA17) (c.r. 'mud' and 'open' IIB6v)

In p.31, 16, the narrator sees himself in the 'mud'; an ambiguous comment.

but first have done with my travelling days part one before/Pim unspeakable flurry in the mud it's me I say it as I hear it/rummaging in the sack taking out the cord tying the neck of/the sack tying it to my neck turning over on my face taking/leave and away (p.45, 1) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'sack' IIA9) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

According to one reading of p.45, 1, the narrator identifies himself as an 'unspeakable flurry in the mud'.

I hear me again murmur me in the mud and am again (p.138, 8)

paradise before the hoping from sleep I come to sleep return/between the two there is all the doing suffering failing/bungling achieving until the mud yawns again that's how/they're trying to tell me this time part one before Pim from/one sleep to the next (p.25, 10) (c.r. 'come' IA6) (c.r. 'mud' and 'yawn' IIB6v)

In subsection IIB6v, one use of 'yawn' was given from OED which referred to the action of animate beings indicating tiredness; that the narrator refers in the same stanza to 'sleep' three times, including referring to himself as sleeping, 'from sleep I come

to sleep return', and that the 'yawning' of the 'mud' signals the end of 'all our doing', the end of the activities that occur during waking times, suggests play upon 'yawning' as an animate activity. It suggests confusion between the narrator's actions as an animate character and the actions of the 'mud' as an inanimate substance.

From these examples in IIB6x, the following readings have been offered as among those possible: a) The 'mud' speaks, murmurs, as does the narrator. b) The narrator speaks to the 'mud'. c) The 'mud' is confused with parts of an animate body; the 'mud' has parts of a body. d) The 'mud' is confused with the narrator.

Some conclusions as to the nature of the 'mud' from these readings are: 1. That the narrator acts as though he regards the 'mud' as an animate companion because it is all that he has. 2. The narrator does regard the 'mud' as animate. 3. The 'mud' is animate. 4. That the narrator lives so close to the 'mud' that he identifies himself with it. 5. That the 'mud' is primeval, freshly from the not-yet-cooled-down earth, the source of the narrator. 6. The 'mud' is the narrator. Cohn speaks of the narrator being virtually indistinguishable from the 'mud'.²⁴ Other Beckett characters have likened themselves to 'mud'. For instance, Malone states at one point, 'To speak for example of the times when I go liquid and become like mud, what good would that do?'.²⁵

xi) In this section it will be argued that the 'mud' is closely associated with language or para-linguistic sound.

a) In section IIB6viii we saw that 'the mud' is sometimes identified

²⁴ Cohn, 'De Quoi Rire', p.563.

²⁵ Malone, Trilogy, p.206.

with 'life'; in IB12i, we saw that 'life' is itself identified with the 'voice'.

b) In the previous section IIB6x, we saw examples in which 'the mud' 'murmured'. We also saw that to say that the 'mud is mute', suggests that it is only temporarily silent, dumb, that you would expect it to speak.

c) The narrator refers to 'vast tracts' (of time) at least a dozen times (exact references are given in 'mud' and time IIB6xiii). 'tracts' has senses both of land, and of a literary work:

'tracts' OED 1. Literary treatment or discussion. 2. A book or written work. 3. A stretch, or extent, of territory, etc.; a space or expanse of land (more rarely of water, air, etc.); a region, district.

Given the ubiquitousness of the 'mud', and OED sense 3 of 'tracts', one reading must be that 'vast tracts' refers to the 'mud'. (That the majority of these references are to 'vast tracts of time' is considered below c.r. IIB6xiii.) Thus the 'mud' is associated with a word that has, as one of its senses, a literary work.

d) In section IIB6i, we saw examples in which the narrator found 'bits and scraps' in the 'mud' (for example, p.21, 23; p.88, 5); in turn we saw in IIB4 that 'bits and scraps' are closely associated with the 'voice'. In section IIB3 we saw that 'quaqua' had senses both of the sound the voice was making, and of excrement. We noted that the 'voice' 'once without quaqua on all sides then in me' (p.7, 3), had as one of its readings that the 'voice' was once 'on all sides', all around him, outside him ('without' in its sense of 'outside'). Again, the one substance which we immediately identify in how it is as being 'on all sides' of the narrator is the 'mud', which is also, like 'quaqua', identified with excrement (c.r. IB6i).

e) We saw that the 'little scenes' (of 'life above') occur in the 'mud'

(IIB6iv), and that they are later told to the narrator by Pim, that is, that the story of 'life above' came to the narrator from the 'voice'. We also noted that the 'mud' 'opens' to show the 'little scenes', and that the 'opener' is used to force Pim to 'open' out into speech.

f) We saw in IIB6vi that the narrator drinks the 'mud', and after one occasion (p.30, 1--6), comments 'humanity regained'. In 'kind' IB10 and 'species' IB11, we remarked that the narrator's fear of losing 'species' was linked with a fear of losing the ability to speak, that being 'human' was associated with being able to speak. If so, that regaining it follows drinking the 'mud' again associates the 'mud' with language.

All of these points suggest that there is a close association between 'mud' and language, offering the 'mud' as a source of language or para-linguistic sound.

xii) In the following examples, the 'mud' co-occurs with words which have the opposite connotation to those examined in IIB1, that suggest it is not just dirt/waste.

'pure' OED I. In physical sense. a. Not mixed with anything else; free from admixture or adulteration; unmixed, unalloyed; often qualifying nouns of colours. b. esp. Not mixed with, or not having in or upon it, anything that defiles, corrupts, or impures, unsullied, untainted, clean. III. Free from corruption or defilement.

one notebook for the body inodorous farts stools idem pure/mud suckings shudders ... (p.90, 9) (c.r. 'stools' IIB1; 'farts' IIB1) (c.r. 'mud' as waste IIB1; 'mud' as animate IIB6x)

We have already considered this very example in IIB1, where we argued that 'idem' and 'pure' indicated that the 'stools' were made of 'mud'. However, here we see again the ambiguity of the work. Another reading is that the narrator stresses that it is 'mud', and not excrement. Wordplay is suggested by the use of

'pure' to modify the word 'mud', usually associated with dirt and usually a mixture of substances.

so things may change no answer end no answer I may choke/no answer sink no answer sully the mud no more no answer/the dark no answer trouble the peace no more no answer the/silence no answer die no answer DIE screams I MAY DIE screams/I SHALL DIE screams good (p.160, 13) (c.r. 'thing' IA10; 'end' IC7; 'die' IC9) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

'sully' OED v. 1. trans. To pollute, defile; to soil, stain, tarnish.

That the narrator speaks of his 'sully'ing' the 'mud' no more when he dies suggests that he views himself as dirt in comparison to the 'mud'. One interpretation of this we have already seen, that it is hyperbolic, a way of expressing the narrator's contempt for his existence. Another interpretation is that the 'mud' does have a cleansing, purifying quality to it.

'flush' OED v. 2 3. To cleanse (a drain etc.); to drive away (an obstacle) by means of a rush of water.

... brief movements of the lower with murmur little/tremble flush with the mud one yard two yards me so lively/nothing left but words a murmur on and off (p.104, 4) (c.r. 'lively' IB14) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

one buttock twice too big the other twice too small unless an/optical delusion here when you shit it's the mud that wipes I/haven't touched them for an eternity ... (p.41, 4) (c.r. 'buttock' IC1; 'shit' IIB1; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x; 'mud' as waste IIB6i)

In both p.104, 4 and p.41, 4, one reading is that the 'mud' plays the role of cleansing.

In the examples shown in IIB6xii, then, 'the mud' is seen as something clean, not as dirty as the narrator and his fellows. That it is clean in comparison to the narrator suggests that the narrator is entirely worthless, dirty, since we have seen that the 'mud' may be composed of the excrement of all the creatures. This is read with the emphasis upon the worthlessness of the narrator rather

than as an expression of the cleanness of the 'mud'. We recall that in other examples, the narrator and his fellows are compared to waste matter. However, we also saw in this section, examples in which the 'mud' did play a cleansing, purgative role, and in which it collocated with 'pure'. We recall that the word 'pure' is rarely used in how it is. In its other occurrences it collocates with 'sack' (p.120, 22) and with 'sadism' (p.70, 3). That the 'mud' may be a purifying force recalls the religious implications we have previously seen in how it is, especially in connection with the 'sack' and suffering, to which it is related by its collocation with the rarely-used 'pure'. This recalls the suggestion that the narrator is in a hell-like environment, the possibility of purification suggesting that it is more like purgatory; we recall that the 'mud' is 'never cold' (p.27, 9) (c.r. IIB6ix).

xii) The following examples have in common the reading that they equate the 'mud' with time.

a) Suggestions that the 'mud' is drunk:

I see me on my face close my eyes not the blue the others/at the back and see me on my face the mouth opens the tongue/comes out lolls in the mud and no question of thirst either no/question of dying of thirst either all this time vast stretch of/time (p.9, 4) (c.r. 'back' IC3; 'open' IA17; 'come' IA6; 'thirst' IIA6; 'die' IC9) (c.r. 'mud' as sustenance IIB6vi)

One reading of p.9, 4, is that there is 'no question of dying of thirst' because of the abundance of 'time'. We recall that it is the 'mud' which the narrator usually drinks, and which is abundant.

without having had to raise my head from the mud no/question I finally have the watch to my ear the hand the fist it's/preferable I drink deep of the seconds delicious moments and/vistas (p.65, 12) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'drink' IIA7) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

In this example, the narrator talks of 'drinking' 'seconds', without

having had to raise his face from the 'mud'. In IIA7 other examples of the narrator's 'drinking' and (IIB2) urinating time are given; we saw in IIB6vi that the substance that the narrator usually has to drink is the 'mud'.

b) In the following examples, 'time' or units of time occur 'in the mud' (sometimes as 'images'):

that's all it wasn't a dream I didn't dream that nor a memory/I haven't been given memories this time it was an image the/kind I see sometimes see in the mud part one sometimes saw (p.11, 17) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'kind' IB10) (c.r. 'little scenes' IIB6iv)

Further examples will be found: p.12, 11--12; p.30, 7--10; p.34, 9--11; p.68, 13--17.

c) Various other examples which equated the mud with time:

... the same things say them as I hear them murmur them/to the mud divide into three a single eternity for the sake of clarity ... (p.26, 10) (c.r. 'thing' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' as animate IIB6x; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

'to the mud, divide into three, a single eternity' is one reading of this example. The 'mud' is equated with 'a single eternity'. See:

'eternity' OED 1. The quality, condition, or fact of being eternal; eternalness; eternal existence. 2. Infinite time. a. Absolute eternity having neither beginning nor end. 3. Hyperbolic uses of 2. A space of time felt as 'endless'; a term indefinitely remote. 4. In expressed or implied contrast with time. a. In Metaphysical sense. Timelessness; existence with reference to which the relation of succession has no application. b. Opposed to 'time' in its restricted sense of duration measured by the succession of physical phenomena. Hence, the condition into which the soul enters at death; the future life. Also, eternal welfare.

'a single eternity' suggests either that there could be more than one 'which is paradoxical if 'eternity' is literally immeasurable), or that all the narrator's attempts at measurement are invalid, since he is dealing with eternity. In this example, he talks of 'dividing into three' that which he murmurs, which recalls the tripartite structure of how it is; he is trying to divide into three, measure an existence

which is without variation, which is 'a single eternity', which is the 'mud'. 'eternity' is ambiguous between being used literally (senses 1 and 4) and hyperbolically (sense 3); if used literally then it has implications of afterlife, see OED sense 4, implying that the narrator is now dead (c.r. 'death/dead/die' IC8/9/10).

that kind an image not for the eyes made of words not
for the/ears the day is ended I'm safe till tomorrow the
mud opens/I depart till tomorrow the head in the sack the
arms round it the/rest anyhow (p.51, 1) (c.r. 'kind' IB10;
'make' IA9, IB2; 'end' IC7; 'open' IA17; 'sack' IIA9) (c.r.
'mud' and 'open' IIB6v)

In p.51, 1, the opening of the 'mud' signals the end of the day, implying a correlation between time and the movements of the 'mud'.

abandoned here effect of hope that hangs together still
the/eternal straight line effect of the pious wish not to
die before/my time in the dark the mud not to mention
other causes (p.52, 9) (c.r. 'abandon' IIB5; 'die' IC9)
(c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii)

According to one reading of p.52, 9, 'my time' is to be found in the 'mud'.

passing time is told to me and time past vast tracts of
time the/panting stops and scraps of an enormous tale as
heard so/murmured to this mud which is told to me natural
order part/three it's there I have my life (p.29, 14) (c.r.
'scraps' IIB4; 'tale' IC3; 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'life' IB12)
(c.r. 'mud' and 'life' IIB6viii; 'mud' as animate IIB6x;
'mud' and language IIB6xi)

'passing time' 'this mud' are both 'told' to the narrator, according to one reading of this example.

the fuck who suffers who makes to suffer who cries who
to/be left in peace in the dark the mud gibbers ten seconds
fifteen/seconds of sun clouds earth sea patches of blue
clear nights ... (p.144, 4) (c.r. 'fuck' IA2; 'make' IA9,
IB2) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as animate IIB6x;
'mud' and language IIB6xi)

If 'mud' is the subject of 'gibbers', which it is according to one reading, 'ten seconds fifteen seconds' may either be the object of 'gibbers', what the 'mud' 'says' or the result of the 'gibbering' of the 'mud'.

.../only know if as much that he's there still half in my arms/cleaving tome with all his little length that's something to/know and in that little ageless body black with mud when the/silence falls again enough feeling still for him to be there still (p.101, 6) (c.r. 'know' IA7) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii)

In this example, a body which is said to be 'ageless' is 'black with mud'. ageless here is ambiguous, as we have previously remarked, between meaning that he is so old that his age is unknown; that he does not age, is eternally young; that he is outside of time's effects, being unborn, or dead. That 'ageless' is followed by 'black with mud' suggests that the 'mud' has caused the agelessness, that the 'mud' has caused time to stop

The association between 'mud' and 'time' is further illustrated by the use of the word 'tracts'.

'tract' OED sb.³ I. The drawing out, duration, continuance, process, passing, or lapse of time; the course of time. b. Protraction (of time), deferring, putting off. c. A space or extent of time, a period. 3. A stretch or extent of territory, etc.; a space or expanse of land (more rarely, of water, air, etc.); a region, a district.

my voice no objection back at last a voice back at last in my/mouth my mouth no objection a voice at last in the dark the/mud unimaginable tracts of time (p.115, 1) (c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii; 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; 'mud' and language IIB6xi)

In p.115, 1, 'the mud' is followed by 'vast tracts of time', playing directly upon 'tracts' being used in senses of both expansion of time and of land and suggesting that it be understood in both senses 2 and 3; that the 'mud' is the 'unimaginable tracts of time'.

'vast tracts of time' also occurs in how it is: p.7, 22; p.18, 10; p.22, 2--3; p.28, 12; p.29, 14; p.43, 16--17; p.57, 7; p.69, 4; p.81, 16--17; p.113, 4; p.116, 4; p.132, 17; p.138, 7.

See:

The recurrent phrase in How It Is, 'vast tracts of time', clearly shows -- even while insisting that there is still plenty of time -- how time has become space. Of course, to talk of space or vast tracts in How It Is is inevitably

to talk of the mud that stretches everywhere; for in this allegory Beckett wants to make the absence of successive time as concrete as possible.... Mud powerfully symbolises the endless experience of Nothing, an experience without the procession that time confers.²⁶

Also, see the recurrent phrase, 'vast stretch of time'; in the example on p.12, 11, given above, we noted that 'vast stretch of time' occurred where we might have expected 'vast stretch of mud'. 'vast stretch' recalls the 'mud' in two ways. Firstly, our sense of the ubiquitousness of the 'mud' ('all discontinuous save the dark, the mud', p.137, 19, c.r. 'mud' and 'dark' IIB6ii), suggests that it is expansive, that it 'stretches' around him as far as he can see. Secondly, it evokes the movements of the 'mud', 'yawning', and 'opening'; in particular it suggests at points that it is being 'stretched'. If so, then does the 'mud' open/yawn/part to reveal glimpses of 'time' as opposed to eternity? This is especially suggested because most of the scenes which the 'mud' opens to display we have already seen to be similar to life on earth, to the reader's world; that is, to life in time. The complexity and ambiguity of the work does not allow for this as an unambiguous conclusion, but it is one interpretation that we shall return to.

Other occurrences of 'vast stretch of time': p.9, 7; p.20, 17; p.24, 1; p.53, 6; p.57, 3; p.61, 17; p.64, 18--19; p.70, 12--13; p.73, 20; p.77, 2; p.77, 20; p.78, 12--13; p.77, 6; p.81, 19; p.83, 10--11; p.119, 19; p.119, 21--22; p.121, 5; p.121, 23; p.131, 13; p.138, 3; p.149, 9; p.146, 8.

Also see:

always sleepy little sleep that's how they're trying to tell me/this time sucked down spewed up yawning yawning always/sleepy little sleep (p.21, 17) (c.r. 'spew' IIB1

²⁶ Levy, Voice of Species, p.84.

According to one reading of this last example, 'this time' is 'sucked down', 'spewed up', suggesting that it is at the mercy of the movements of the 'mud'.

We have seen from the examples presented in IIB6xiii that the narrator 'drinks' both 'mud' and 'time'; that 'mud' is the source of (images of) time; that time extends before him in a way which recalls the ubiquitous nature of his environment. From this it is being argued that one of the interpretations for 'mud' in how it is is as a metaphor for time.

In Beckett's previous works, time is also presented spatially, as liquid:

The question may be asked, off the record, why time doesn't pass, doesn't pass, from you, why it piles up all about you, instant on instant, on all sides, deeper and deeper, thicker and thicker, your time, other's time, the time of the ancient and dead the dead yet unborn,²⁷ why it buries you grain by grain neither dead nor alive.

Pilling comments that:

Malone sees even time as a liquid for 'what are four days when you have all old age before you .. a drop in the ocean' and 'what is a month, compared to the whole of second childishness, a drop in a bucket'.²⁸

We recall however from previous subsections that the narrator is 'glued to the mud', and also that he has difficulty journeying in it. On p.12, 8--11, for example, we see the effort that movement by the narrator requires. Also, p.21, 1--4, we see that 'the slime' holds him too strongly (according to one reading). Later, the narrator blames the creatures' slow progress on 'the terrain' (p.148, 20--25), which in the immediate context refers to the 'mountain of sacks',

²⁷ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.358.

²⁸ J. Pilling, 'The Conduct of the Narrative in Samuel Beckett's Prose Fiction' (unpublished thesis, London University College, 1971), p.368.

but in the overall context of how it is, refers to the 'mud', which is his 'terrain' (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6ii).

Thus one interpretation of the narrator's relationship with the 'mud' is that he is stuck in time. We commented earlier that this image may be understood to convey literally the experience of a creature in eternity; or that expressions such as 'eternity', the image of being stuck in time ('glued to the mud') may be hyperbolic, the subjective statement of one for whom time appears to have stopped, a graphic representation of Vladimir's comment in Waiting for Godot, 'Time has stopped'.²⁹

xiv) In this section, we shall briefly note the occurrences of words in how it is which either may be other terms used to describe the 'mud', or which play upon the constant reference to 'mud'.

(1) The following words may well be other terms used to describe the 'mud', since, as their OED definitions illustrate, they are semantically very similar, and they occur with reference to the narrator's environment. 'slime', 'wallow' and 'mire' were considered in IIB1 (13) and (14), where they were used to illustrate that the narrator's environment was one of dirt and waste. It was also remarked, however, that 'slime' has a sense of 'bodily juices', in particular the liquids associated with reproduction. We noted that the co-occurrence of 'slime' with 'familiar' emphasised this sense (examples given in IIB1). 'sap', 'swill', and 'tracts' have all been considered in subsections of IIB6 (vi, vi, and xiii).

(2) Also, see the occurrence of 'dust' and 'earth':

'dust' OED sb.¹ 1. Earth or other solid matter in a minute

²⁹ Waiting for Godot, p.36.

and fine state of subdivision, so that the particles are small and light enough to be easily raised and carried in a cloud by the wind; any substance comminuted or pulverised; powder. 3. transf. and fig. (from 1). a. That to which anything is reduced by disintegration or decay; spec. the 'ashes', or mouldered remains, of a dead body. Also in phrases denoting the condition of being dead and buried, laid in the dust, etc. b. Applied to the mortal frame of man (usually in reference to Gen ii 7, iii 19).

the dust there was then the mingled lime and granite stones/piled up to make a wall further on the thorn in flower green/and white quickset mingled privet and thorn

the depth of dust there was then the little feet big for their/age bare in the dust (p.50, 10) (c.r. 'make' IA9, IB7)

In this example, 'dust' implies that everything has dust over it, that it is dirty. However, the references to the 'little feet' and 'bare in the dust' recall OED sense 3b, 'applied to the mortal frame of man', where the OED refers to Genesis, in which God forms man 'of the dust of the ground'.³⁰ That Beckett plays upon this sense of 'dust' in The Unnamable ('they want to make a man out of dust'),³¹ gives weight to the argument that he is doing so in this example from how it is.

Other occurrences of 'dust' in how it is:

the blue there was then the white dust impressions of more/recent date (p.78, 7)

I crawl to the door raise my head yes I assure you peer through/a chink and so I would go to the world's end on my knees to/the world's end and right round it on my knees arms forelegs eyes/an inch from the ground I'd smell the world again my laughter/in dry weather raises the dust on my knees up the gangways/between decks with the emigrants (p.98, 1) (c.r. 'end' IC7)

Again, 'dust' has connotations of uncleanness. The co-occurrence of 'world's end' with 'dust' suggests sense 3a, that is,

³⁰ Genesis 2. 7.

³¹ The Unnamable, Trilogy, p.320.

death; it may also suggest the world's beginning and God's use of 'dust' to create life.

'earth' OED sb.¹ I. The ground. 5. The soil as suited for cultivation. II. The world on which we dwell. 7. The dry land, as opposed to the sea. 8. The world as including land and sea; as distinguished from (material) heaven. 9. Considered as present abode of man; frequently contrasted with heaven or hell. 10. Considered as a sphere, orb, or planet. IV. As a substance or material. 12. The material of which the surface of the ground is composed, soil, mould, dust, clay.

In how it is, 'earth' is used in OED senses I and II. It occurs during the narrator's description of the images/little scenes which appear in the 'mud'. The juxtaposition of 'earth' and 'mud' results in a play upon 'earth' in OED sense IV. For example:

a few images on and off in the mud earth sky/a few creatures in the light some still standing (p.8, 6) (c.r. 'creature' IB3; 'stand' IA10) (c.r. 'mud' as environment IIB6iii; little scenes/images in the 'mud' IIB6iv)

Other occurrences of 'earth' are to be found: p.23, 10--11; p.35, 6--7,³² p.35, 11; p.36, 11; p.40, 22; p.106, 13; p.115, 6; p.117, 15; p.118, 22; p.144, 6; p.159, 6.

All of these occurrences suggest that the 'earth' is something that exists in the little scenes/images, and is different from the narrator's current environment.

Conclusion to IIB6 'the mud'

A) From the examples of the occurrences of 'the mud' in how it is, the following are some of the observations that can be

³² See:

way off on the right the tugging hand the mouth shut grim/the staring eyes glued to the mud perhaps we shall come back/it will be dusk the earth of childhood glimmering again/streaks of dying amber in a murk of ashes the earth must have/been on fire when I see us we are already at hand (p.35, 4) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'come' IA6; 'back' IC3)

The reference to 'the earth of childhood' and its having been on fire suggest the beginning of the world. However, the references to 'dusk', 'dying amber', and 'ashes' suggest the end of the world.

made:

- i) That the 'mud' is dirt, it co-occurs with, and is at times identified with, 'shit', 'vomit', thus including it in the semantic field of WASTE.
- ii) That the 'mud' frequently co-occurs with 'the dark', that it may be identified with 'the dark' is consistent with its being in the semantic field of WASTE.
- iii) That the 'mud' co-occurs with prepositions and formulations which suggest that it is the narrator's physical environment.

All of i--iii are consistent with the OED definition of 'mud'. See however:

- iv) That the narrator sees 'little scenes' and 'images' in the 'mud'. This is not consistent with a literal reading of the 'mud', or common metaphorical readings. One observation from this is that the 'mud' is a metaphor for the narrator's mental environment, his mental state.
- v) The 'mud' collocates with 'yawn', 'open', 'part', and 'engulf'. At one level, this is consistent with 'mud' representing the narrator's physical environment, in that these movements are the movements of the earth. We noted that 'yawn' and 'engulf' have connotations of 'death', which is consistent with our dealing with 'mud' in the semantic field of WASTE. Its co-occurrence with 'open' also adds a reference across to the semantic field of SEX in how it is.
- vi) That the 'mud' co-occurs with words such as 'drink' and 'eat', putting it in the semantic field of FOOD.
- vii) That the 'mud' co-occurs with, in such a way as to be read in some examples in identification with, the 'sack'. This is consistent with vi, that it is in the semantic field of FOOD. It also continues suggestions of the 'mud' as belonging in the field of SEX, especially since we saw that the 'sack' is a womb symbol, and the 'mud' may

at one time have been inside the 'sack'. The words with which the 'mud' co-occurs in common with the 'sack' (such as 'pure', 'life') reinforce this and suggest the religious symbolism of the 'sack'.

viii) That the 'mud' is identified with 'life', drawing it into the semantic field of LIFE and more generally of SEX and, in how it is, with connotations of language and the whole means by which the 'voice/life' is produced. We saw further arguments associating the 'mud' with the 'voice' and speech or para-linguistic sound.

ix) That the 'mud' is treated as, or is, animate, in the same semantic field as the narrator.

x) That the 'mud' is identified with a cleansing force, something which purges; it is not simply waste then and again is given religious associations.

xi) The 'mud' occurs in contexts where we would expect time to occur and is equated with time.

From iv--xi we can see that the 'mud' does not simply remain in the semantic field which we might expect from its literal senses or common metaphorical uses.

B) Among the conclusions/interpretations for the 'mud' in how it is are the following:

i) That the 'mud' is both waste matter and food, in common with other FOOD/WASTE words that we have examined, thus representing the FOOD/WASTE cycle but distorting it. In nature what is waste from one being is food to another; in how it is the same substance is food and waste to one and the same being at the same time.

ii) That the 'mud' is both life and death. This plays on the LIFE/DEATH cycle, which the FOOD/WASTE cycle mimics and is related to.

iii) That the 'mud' is the narrator's physical environment; that it is

also a representation of the narrator's mental world.

iv) That the 'mud' represents a womb-like environment. It is warm, a source of food, it is 'sap'; it is also excreted into, is identified with 'life'. The 'mud' 'parts' and 'opens'; but the narrator does not escape from it in the course of the text. It may have originated in the 'sack' and spilled from it when the 'sack' burst. That the 'mud' is also associated with being a source of language/para-linguistic sound continues the correlation between physical and mental creation, suggesting that it is metaphorically a womb for fictional creation. That the 'mud' has as one of its interpretations womb fluids does not make it necessarily a positive symbol; the narrator is stuck in it, and his only hope of escape is through death, not birth (see p.160, 16).

v) That the 'mud' is a metaphor for time, the narrator being stuck in it. This relates also to his being stuck in cycles and the way in which the FOOD/WASTE and LIFE/DEATH cycles seem distorted from what they are naturally in the reader's world.

vi) The 'mud' represents a hellish environment, possibly a purgatory which he has to go through, since that it is also purifying suggests that it is not eternal torment, although it seems like it to the narrator. That the 'mud' may also equal time is consistent with this. The narrator is not in the reader's world where time applies, but once he has gone through the 'mud' purgation, time may have meaning for him. The life/womb interpretation implies a possible re-birth as a result of the purification/suffering.

* * * * *

Conclusion to IIB WASTE

In this section we have observed examples of the occur-

rences of words which come under the semantic field of WASTE according to their common use in Standard English. We have observed:

- i) That the narrator's environment is one of waste matter.
- ii) That many of the words which occur in the semantic field of WASTE are specifically waste food (for example, 'shit', 'vomit', 'bits and scraps').
- iii) That the narrator and his fellow creatures are identified with waste matter.
- iv) That waste matter is identified with life and death. It is also identified with the 'voice' which again is cycled and recycled 'I say it as I hear it'; but this is a distorted mimicking of the FOOD/WASTE cycle since what the narrator first takes in and says are already 'bits and scraps', waste.
- v) That waste matter is also associated with words in the semantic field of SEX. Through the 'voice' waste is related to the whole victim/torturer relationship which produces the 'voice'. We also saw that the narrator and his fellow creatures are presented as waste matter, in particular, as excrement, and that birth is viewed as excretion. This plays upon the anal nature of the creatures' relationships.
- vi) That words with senses of 'waste' are identified with 'time' (such as 'mud', 'piss') and that the movement of time in relation to the narrator is distorted.
- vii) That words with waste senses are also associated with religious senses/uses (such as 'abandon', 'mud', 'quaqua' and 'bits and scraps', through their identification with the 'voice'), with the suggestion that the BIRTH/DEATH/REBIRTH cycle is being distorted and mimicked in the same way as the FOOD/WASTE cycle.

CONCLUSION

An outline of the 'story' of how it is is relatively simple. A creature, the narrator, is alone in the mud with a few possessions. He speaks in pants as he drags himself along. He tells of another life with a wife, who died. He tells of a meeting with a creature like himself, called Pim; whom he will torture in order to extort the 'voice' and who will in turn torture him. He goes on to say that this is one of a series of such meetings and to describe thousands upon thousands of creatures such as himself, journeying towards a creature such as Pim; the creatures alternately play the roles of victim and torturer. He then becomes confused regarding the actual details of this procedure (especially regarding the 'sack' which each creature carries with him to contain his sparse possessions), and ends by confessing that he is, after all, alone; that there are no other creatures, no Pim, no sack even, just the single creature spreadeagled (like a cross) in the mud; and this is 'how it is'.

Critical interpretations have tended to concentrate thus far upon what such a depiction 'means'. For instance, that it is a representation of life as Beckett sees it, that he portrays it grimly, the question remaining whether there are any redeeming features in it.

The sacks in How It Is are not inhabited but dragged, and the men, far from hoisting one another like luggage, crawl between one another, alternately moving and stationary, to enact the alternate roles of tormentor and victim. The central metaphor is retained, life as an endless track where people are as objects to other people, but the dreadful rite with the can-opener is suffused with efforts

to make them more than objects, to enact a ritual of companionship at once cruel and tender.¹

how it is has been considered as a representation of life as it is for the creator of fiction, who must struggle with a language which cannot describe what he is trying to or is forced to describe (see IB). In general, this work has not been approached in the past by means of a rigorous analysis of the language. Beckett's early use of punning and wordplay has been frequently noted, though not analysed, by critics.² With the exception of Cohn however, few critics comment upon the puns in his later works, including how it is (although it is common to note the 'commencer/comment c'est' pun at the end of the French version).

In the course of this thesis we have examined puns and wordplay especially relating to two particular spheres of activity, SEX and FOOD. From this it is clear that the words used in how it is are not used simply in one single OED sense. The examination uncovers patterns and inter-connecting themes beneath the 'story' outlined above.

The relationship between the pairs of creatures is not just one of victim and torturer. They view each other as lovers (see the use of the words 'love' and 'woo', IA1) and their physical relationship is sexual (shown by puns on words such as 'come', 'know', 'have', 'make', 'coupling', 'thing', 'stand', 'grope', 'affair', 'fuck', 'cunt'; see IA1--10). Words which can have meanings of both affection and aggression are used with play upon both meanings showing that the relationship is both sadistic and sexual (for

¹Kenner, Reader's Guide, p. 143.

²See examples given on p. 8.

example, see the use of words such as 'clinch', 'cleave', 'score', 'stroke', 'hold', 'thump', 'prick'; IA11--17).

The tin-opener mimics^k a phallic role when it is stabbed into the buttocks; it is 'thrust' and 'withdrawn', it is the 'tool' with which Pim is 'pricked' (see IA17). The tin-opener is an inanimate object and could not therefore be expected to produce life in the conventional sense. What is produced is Pim's 'voice' (Pim opens up), and life in how it is is frequently identified with the 'voice', with words, with language (see IB), suggesting that the (only) life the narrator (and fellow creatures) has is through words. There is confusion between conception as a result of sexual union and conception in the sense of thought (shown by examining the usage of such words as 'in/conceive/able', 'bear', 'born', 'birth', 'mother/mamma/mum', 'famil/y/liar'; IB4, IB5, IB8, IB9), in the sense in which a fictional creation is conceived. That finally there is only one creature is anticipated by puns on the 'opener' as both that which penetrates and that which is penetrated; it has to play the role of both organs in the sex act, as if one creature is attempting conception by himself.

As well as the tin-opener, the narrator also carries with him tinned food. A natural assumption would be that he carries the tin-opener precisely in order to open the tins, but it is rare that we see him doing this; instead it is Pim that is opened (causing an open wound) and a 'voice' that is extracted. Sexual activity has replaced eating. This was anticipated in the scene of the two young lovers who eat sandwiches together, yet, according to another reading, eat each other (see IIA5). Pim is 'flesh' to be enjoyed; his 'rump' is both for the narrator's sexual gratification and food for

his consumption (see IIA4). The cries of the victim are said at one point to replace the need for the torturer to seek sustenance. Sex in how it is is sadistic and cannibalistic.

One way of interpreting this relationship between food and sex is by reference to fictional creation. The 'voice' is what the sexual torture actually produces, thus the victim is the torturer's 'food for thought'. Their mutual torment is a representation of what has to be gone through (by the writer, who is both victim and torturer) in order to create fiction.

The sexual act which is mimicked is not one which would usually result in conception, being anal, not vaginal (see 'arse', 'anus', 'posterior', 'rump', 'buttocks', 'rectum', 'bottom', 'behind', 'back', 'hole', 'tale/tail', 'Bom', 'end'; IC1--7). This sheds light on the difficulties in conceiving; a comment that (this or all) fictional creation is unsuccessful because of the means employed in its production. It also links the sexual activity with eating from a different direction, beginning from the other end of the digestive cycle, with the organs of excretion.

There are many references to waste food or sustenance; the 'mud' which the creatures imbibe is at times indistinguishable from 'shit' and 'vomit' (see IIB1, IIB2). The 'voice' is also waste food, 'bits and scraps', 'quaqua' (IIB1--4), so that which is produced by this anal sexual union is at best remnants if not excreta, thus punning upon the method of conception. Also, the creatures themselves appear to be waste matter 'abandoned' (see IIB5) and left to rot (like souls in hell?), playing upon their being food for each other.

The references to food and waste suggest the food/waste cycle, in which excreted food is used to fertilise the growth of new

food; in which dead flesh which is waste in one sense is food in another (to bacteria for example if left; to mammals if taken fresh); in which plants breathe the waste air of mammals and vice versa. While such a cycle is invoked in how it is, it does not work quite like that. The 'voice' is 'bits and scraps', that is, already waste, when the narrator takes it in, and it is waste when it issues from him. In the lines 'who drinks that drop/of piss of being and who with his last gasp pisses it to drink' (p.144, 10) (see IIB2), we saw that according to one reading it is the 'piss' that is being excreted and drunk, rather than being recycled; the 'piss' is the excreta and drink for the same creature. Again, that if the dog 'stops to piss it will piss without/stopping' (P.33, 14) (see IIB2) has a cyclic quality to it, but it is more of a vicious circle that will trap the dog if it enters into the process, than the recycling process that we see in nature that is being invoked. The final words of how it is return us to its beginning, the narrator has to repeat the whole lot again; he is trapped.

I began this thesis with a plan to structure it reflecting the two cycles relevant to the two fields which I was considering; beginning in Part I with the sex act, going through to conception, birth, life and then death; in Part II beginning with food, eating and drinking, going through to excretion and waste matter. It proved however difficult to maintain these separate sections, because there is continual cross referencing between the different parts of the cycles. Death and waste images or puns abound in the midst of references to sex, to life, to food. The conceit that the sexual orgasm is a 'little death' becomes more than a conceit; death is immediately present in the sex, the 'end' through which they copulate

is both the 'arse' and the 'end' of life (see IC7); creatures are born dead before they have lived. The activities of eating and sex are not kept separate, the creatures' relationship is at times cannibalistic, there is also confusion between the organs of reproduction and those of eating, digesting, and excreting.

The use of the words 'death', 'die', 'dying' (see IC8--12) reinforces the idea that the narrator is trapped in a vicious circle, suggesting that he is in a no-man's land between life and death. On the one hand he is going through an elongated process of death 'I keep dying' (p.18, 14), yet on the other, this process never quite reaches its termination. The narrator has progressed from 'may die' to 'SHALL die' in the last stanzas, only to 'commencer'. Is the narrator an old man in his final hours which to him appear to be eternal? Yet to die, one needs to have been born and it is not clear that the narrator has been ('if I was born' p.39, 9). The creatures are described in one stanza as awaiting birth, yet this is said to be 'difficult to conceive' and they are compared to 'shit in the guts', waiting to be born through the anus (p.135, 17). Birth is excretion (see IIB1). The creatures are apparently the narrator's creation (he confesses the invention in the final stanzas of the work), made in his form. He is misbegotten, an abortion, struggling along with the womb-sack hanging from him (hanging him), its cord around his neck (it is his burden and the cross which will crucify him), its contents spewed (the 'sap', the 'shit') all around him. But the 'sack' also is an invention of the narrator's (see IIA9). He has invented the womb which would give birth to him. He imagines returning to this womb, in words which pun upon anal conception, in an image that is full of waste and dying matter (on a 'muckheap', p.40, 6).

Pim is the sack-arse with which he attempts to conceive. Pim is the 'voice' which is life, which tells the narrator's story, invents the creatures, the 'sack' etc. The 'voice' is conceived as a result of Pim and the narrator's union. But Pim is an invention of the narrator's. He is 'made' by the narrator sexually and literally (see IA9, IIB2).

The 'voice' then must be the narrator's seeking its origins, reinventing its birth. The 'voice' is life, all the narrator has, the narrator is nothing more than the 'voice', struggling to take bodily form, to find words to embody him, to escape into form, an attempt portrayed metaphorically through the story of Pim and their failed attempt at conceiving. He is trapped because finally, all he has are words.

We considered what the 'sack' represents (see IIA9); it is a word that occurs over one hundred times in how it is. We saw that it represents the paucity of the narrator's possessions; it is a comfort to him; it is a source of food, of life; it is like a body; it is a womb symbol; it is the 'arse'; it is a burden; it is his cross, his death. It takes on all these roles, but finally, it does not exist, it is a fiction, it is a word.³ The continual repetition of the same word, especially when it occurs twenty odd times in the same page (see p.120, for example), forces attention to it as a word, renders it senseless. Words, tools like this, are all the writer has.

Such a reading takes further a view expressed by a sizeable body of critical opinion, which argues that Beckett's work is about the inability of language to express the self:

³The reader is referred to the sectional conclusion to IIA9, p.361--65, for a fuller statement of this argument.

Demonstrating the inadequacy of language to the task of creation and self exploration, each novel reveals "la parole toujours plus dépouillée, démunie, mise à nu". Communication and expression are equally impossible.⁴

The dilemma of the self-conscious artist is, then, without solution. His agony must go on indefinitely, since he can never find the words which would at last coincide precisely with the essence of his self. He is compelled to recount over and over again the anguish of his plight, in an effort to give it verbal form; but there is no language suited to his purpose, and he can only go on with the hope of someday discovering that idiom which would set him free.⁵

Solomon describes how the narrator/s of the trilogy seek to be able to describe themselves in words, the problem as he sees it being that words are space-bound and the self is not.⁶ Cohn comments that in Beckett's fiction, he is left with a single human protagonist in a generalised human situation, 'an "I" in quest of his "I" through fiction, who is in quest of his "I" through fiction, who etc'.⁷

There is a contradiction in the very existence of works which express what is inexpressible. Kern, who is one of those critics who consider Beckett in the context of existential philosophy, recognises this paradox:

Although the protagonists of all of Beckett's novels published after Murphy are narrators or writers, they have become more and more anonymous and uncertain in their very subjectivity. While in Sartre's concept of the elusiveness of human reality there is the intrinsic conviction that man must assume the responsibility of giving himself an essence, Beckett contents himself with accepting the elusiveness of Being. He has progressively stripped of subjectivity all existential affirmation of the importance of the individual as a responsible existent and a witness to Being, and has replaced such subjectivity by a vision of man as an anonymous link in a meaningless and repetitive chain of suffering mankind. Since the fluid becoming of

⁴Copeland, p.204.

⁵Copeland, p.215.

⁶Soloman, pp.44--47.

⁷Cohn, Gamut, p.299.

Being would be destroyed by any artisan capturing it in a static moment and giving it order, the artist rendering it in language or any other medium cannot help but realise that the essence of his art must be failure. But in spite of such views, it is equally in keeping with the paradox of the Beckettian world that the author has more fervently than any other contemporary writer been in search of new fictional forms and linguistic patterns expressive of his metaphysical insights.⁸

Webb notes:

... the general triumph of chaos at the end of the book. This is undoubtedly the intention of both Beckett and the narrator. In a universe that is absurd, the only relief from chaos is in aesthetic form. If he is honest, the artist must acknowledge the reality of chaos. His problem is to do this while at the same time retaining control of the form in which he expresses this vision. In how it is the artist is both completely honest and firmly in control to the very end.⁹

Some critics argue that this contradiction is resolved in how it is by the way in which the novel is structured, that while all is portrayed as absurd, the work itself has a strict pattern with its various parts. For instance:

To keep the reader's attention for 147 pages of syntaxless, logically discontinuous prose fragments is no easy task, given that all the traditional fictional means for sustaining interest and providing satisfaction (especially resolution of conflict) are absent...

Comment C'est is a structural triumph. It is precise, neat, symmetrical. The three parts are roughly equal in length, and the form is circular, the novel ending where it began.... A careful reader will note an echoic verbal pattern of aesthetic calculation and thematic significance. It is in this, as well as in the novel's structural unity, that its power resides.¹⁰

Abbot argues that what is striking about how it is is its 'phenomenal order':

⁸Kern, p.240.

⁹Webb, p.168

¹⁰Shadoian, p.6--7.

That this is an innovation can be illustrated quite simply by comparing the abilities of Beckett's narrators to keep to their "programs". Since Molloy, they have been fond of announcing programs -- that is, setting up plans for narrations -- and, as he constantly reminds us, the narrator of How It Is has his program, too. What is remarkable in How It Is is the perfection to which the program works, whereas if anything distinguishes the programs of the earlier narrators, it is their perfect failure.¹¹

It is certainly true that the work is very tightly structured. Beneath this form, however, we have seen that meaning bursts out in all directions, is only just contained in the stanzas.

We saw in the introduction that Beckett has been considered as one who is writing anti-literature, one who is moving towards silence. Whilst many critics do not go as far as Hassan, it is common to argue that Beckett is celebrating silence in his works:

Beckett's fiction draws the portrait of the modern nihilistic self, alienated, solipsistically inarticulate, drowned in existential absurdity and despair, full of fear and trembling but without faith, entirely lost. Beckett celebrates the virtue of silence, the absolute of nothingness which will ultimately swallow all human passions. He voices no humanistic evangel, except to reiterate the same forlorn theme that the absurd self must go on, even through there is no reason for doing so. His work represents a courageous effort to embody a creative vision of the lost self in a nihilistic universe.¹²

Further, that this bleak vision of the universe is presented in language which reflects this:

Comment C'est is at once Beckett's simplest and most difficult novel. It is bare to a point of austerity. Its characters are few, its vocabulary stark and undemanding. This is a far cry from Murphy, with its criss-crossing story line, gallery of weird characters, and free-for-all with language. Murphy was a brilliant novelistic debut, but in Comment C'est Beckett, now in his mastery and maturity,

¹¹Abbot, 'Farewell to Incompetence', p.37.

¹²C. Glicksberg, The Self in Modern Literature (Pennsylvania, 1963), p.133.

has abandoned even its attractive attributes. In Comment C'est, verbal flair would seem incongruous, common events and rounded episodes, unreal.¹³

The vocabulary of how it is may be stark in that it repeats the same words and phrases, as Copeland remarks, 'he uses a limited vocabulary, often repeating himself'.¹⁴ But close examination of the way these words are used shows that the vocabulary is not undemanding; the words operate on many levels. The puns and wordplay are not as obtrusive as in Murphy, where they are piled on top of one another and are immediately obvious, but they have been developed as a device for saying many things at the same time. Beckett may wish for silence, but he expresses the wish in language which also, contradictorily, celebrates the power of language.

Redfern, in his recent book on puns, comments that one function of wordplay is to point inwards and refer to the 'duplicity of language itself'.¹⁵ He comments that such wordplay is 'clearly an agent of disorder, a disturbing influence. It breaks the conventions of orthodox speech or writing'.¹⁶ He quotes Stedmond (who is writing about Laurence Sterne):

Puns and double meanings emphasise the unstable nature of language, its dynamic qualities which are so difficult to control. One can never really be sure of saying what one means.¹⁷

For a long time, puns have been regarded as the lowest form of humour. Redfern illustrates this in his introduction:

¹³Shadoian, p.5.

¹⁴Copeland, p.102

¹⁵W. Redfern, Puns (Oxford, 1984), p.10.

¹⁶Redfern, p.14.

¹⁷Redfern, p.14.

The question of reputation is crucial. "The lowest and most grovelling kind of wit which we call clenches," sneered Dryden against Ben Jonson. Like other linguistic modes frequently looked down on but as widely practised -- slang, obscenities, incorrect grammar or mispronunciation -- wordplay often gets a bad press, even from its defendants. In an otherwise alert effort to get to the point of puns, Lionel Duisit describes them as the "least literary" of figures, Shakespeare, Donne, Hugo, Joyce? "Le calembour ne peut avoir de statut linguistique que marginal," he maintains, and even more strangely: "Tout intellectuel est désarçonné par le spectacle du calembour" ("The only literary status the pun can have is a marginal one." "All intellectuals are thrown at the sight of a pun"). Although puns are a fact of life, moral majoritarians have ever wanted to abort them.¹⁸

One function of Beckett's puns in how it is is to show the Protean nature of language, that it is unreliable, that it plays tricks on one by introducing meanings not intended.

Moreover, puns are used to undercut what is said, to debase, to poke fun at what might otherwise be seen simply as serious comments upon his portrayal of the condition of man, using that least respected form of humour to show that it is all ridiculous and not worth taking seriously. how it is does present the existential dilemma of man and portray the agony of fictional creation; it also makes mockery of both. While considering whether or not how it is portrays human life as seen by Beckett, Abbot comments:

After all, Beckett did call his novel How It Is. And if one takes it as a joke, one must remember that almost all Beckett's jokes can be taken in more than one way.¹⁹

We recall Nell's comment in Endgame that 'nothing is funnier than unhappiness'.²⁰ Puns are being used as a serious literary device, but they are, after all, a form of humour. That Beckett jokes a lot and

¹⁸Redfern, p.4.

¹⁹Abbot, Form and Effect, p.145.

²⁰Endgame, p.20

that his jokes can rarely be taken at face value argues against a simplistic reading of how it is and is relevant to our understanding of its ambiguity.

Whilst this study concentrated on two areas in order to illustrate this, there are other fields which would also be rewarding to investigate in this manner. An examination of words relating to the mechanics of literary creation, of language, would be complementary to this, especially since in many cases the words examined here refer back to narration (via 'voice'). This study is intended to open out some of the meanings in how it is, suggesting further areas of study, rather than insist upon a single interpretation. It should be clear that I do not think there is a single interpretation for how it is. Another area which has been hinted at here and which would merit further exploration, is that of religious words. We noted, whilst we did not explore this in depth, the comparisons suggested between the narrator and Christ, and that this offered another slant upon the narrator's being between life and death. We saw that this could be taken as a serious theme, but that it works as a mocking aggrandisement of the narrator, of the creator of the fiction, and of the condition of man. Play upon religious language is another area which Beckett alludes to and draws upon to lead to further opening out of meanings.

If ambiguity in language is expressed through puns illustrating the failure of language to be precise and to mean exactly what one wants it to, it is also a strategy, an intentional way of conveying that things are not so simple; Redfern comments 'wordplay

suits those unconvinced that rational argument suffices'.²¹ Redfern notes that the nature of the pun is contradictory and that for all the sneering, puns abound intentionally and unintentionally in all areas of life, and always have done. For instance, they are used in advertising as attention-grabbers and to condense the most meaning into the shortest space. Puns have a literary history; Mahood shows that Shakespeare's use of wordplay is not always purely decorative. Redfern also points to the use of puns in slang and dreams as a way of avoiding 'taboo' words or ideas.

Whilst apparently seeking silence, whilst claiming to have nothing to say and nothing to say it with, Beckett uses wordplay in how it is so that its apparently stark language takes on multiple meanings. Wordplay opens the door to completely different meanings and is being used to do so in this work. It is being used to develop several themes simultaneously, to set them up in parallel, but then to interlink them, so they do not remain in parallel, but are webbed. Unravelling becomes a complex process; we have seen here one method of doing this, by picking particular subject matters and examining the occurrences and use of words with senses related to these subjects. We have seen this to show that in how it is, despite every apparent tendency to move towards silence, Beckett is in fact straining towards articulacy.

²¹Redfern, p.177.

APPENDIX 1

This Appendix consists of a brief examination of the use of 'come' in how it is, illustrating religious connotations to its use. Some of the examples have already been considered in 'come' IA6, from the point of view of the sexual sense of 'come'.

The first group of examples refer to the narrator's awaiting the arrival of Christ and/or the end of the world:

abject abject ages each heroic seen from the next when
will the/last come when was my golden every rat has its
heyday I say/it as I hear it (p.10, 11) (c.r. 'have' IA8)

One reading for this stanza is that 'the last' refers elliptically to 'age', as the subject of the verb 'come'. The narrator questions when the last age will arrive. Thus we understand the narrator to be asking when the world will end. The belief that the world will end is part of Christian belief. Christ foretells his Second Coming and the subsequent ending of life on earth.¹ Reference to a 'golden age' (interpreting 'age' as having been elliptically omitted from 'golden') reinforces this, by playing upon mythical-religious ideas regarding the age of the world. See:

'Golden age' OED The first and best age of the world, in which, according to Greek and Roman poets, mankind lived in a state of ideal prosperity and happiness, free from all trouble or crime. Hence, the period in which a nation, etc., is at its highest state of prosperity, or in which some department of human activity is its acme of excellence.

According to these ideas, the world degenerates after the Golden age². 'my golden', however, is ambiguous as to whether the possessive

¹ Matthew 24. 25.

² J.E. Cross, 'Aspects of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Old English Literature', in Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G Bordeur, edited by S.B. Greenfield (1963), pp.1--22 (pp.2--3).

indicates it to mean the narrator's own experience of The Golden Age of the world, or whether it refers to a previous stage in his own life. In the latter reading, the narrator parallels the stages in his life with the ages of the world. It has been common to view man as a 'little world' from Anglo-Saxon times.³ The 'last' ('age') then refers to his own, that is, to his death. We have seen a similar ambiguity between 'age' meaning the course of the world and 'age' referring to the narrator; see comments on 'thanks to my sack that I keep dying in a dying age' (p.18, 14) (c.r. 'sack' IIA9; 'die' IC9).

the huge head hatted with birds and flowers is bowed
down/over my curls the eyes burn with severe love I
offer her mine/pale upcast to the sky whence cometh our
help and which I/know perhaps even then with time shall
pass away (p.17, 1) (c.r. 'love' IA1; 'know' IA8)

The above stanza mocks archaic language, 'cometh' using a Middle English verb ending 'eth' superseded in the Sixteenth Century by 's'. C. Barber comments that its use in the 1611 Bible was consciously archaic.⁴ That the narrator talks of help coming from the sky suggests the view in which heaven is literally above the earth. Reference to the sky's 'passing away with time', again mocks biblical language and ideas, in its reference to the transitory nature of the world as we know it. It plays on such biblical phrases as 'Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.'⁵ 'from whence cometh our help' recalls Psalm 121:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh
my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven

³ Cross, 'Aspects of Microcosm'.

⁴ C.L. Barber, The Story of Language, revised edition (London, 1972), p.202.

⁵ Luke 21. 33.

and earth.⁶

That the narrator is offering 'love', 'pale upcast' suggests that he is humbled:

'offer' OED v. 1. trans. To present (something) to God (or to a deity), a saint, or the like) as an act of worship or devotion; to sacrifice; to give in worship.

This equates 'her' with a deity (see another use of 'offer' considered in 'eat' IIA5) The 'burning eyes' and 'severe love' implying a judging, punitive god -- especially since 'burning' has connotations of hellfire:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

However, 'burning' can also be purgative; an ambiguity.

be with Pim have been with Pim have him behind me hear it/said he'll come back another will come better than Pim he's/coming right leg right arm push pull ten yards fifteen yards/you stay quiet where you are in the dark the mud and on you/suddenly a hand like yours on Pim two cries his mute (p25, 18) (c.r. 'have' IA8, IB7, IIA5; 'behind' IC3; 'mud' IIB6)

That 'another will come better than Pim' recalls prophecies of Christ's coming, for example, those of John the Baptist: 'There cometh one mightier than I after me'.⁸ Also, see, 'thus it was vain to wish for him an unfamiliar guise whose/coming it announced right leg right arm ... (p.123, 1). The one who arrives after Pim is Bom (sometimes called Bem, see p.118, 9--13, for example). The narrator speaks of waiting for Bom/Bem; 'the one I'm waiting for oh not that I believe in him' (p.67, 1). This again plays upon expectations of Christ. The use of 'believe' in this context suggests a Christian

⁶ Psalms 121. 1--2.

⁷ Matthew 25. 41, 46.

⁸ Mark 1. 7.

believer.

'belief' OED 1. b. absol. Trust in God; the Christian virtue of faith. arch. or Obs. 3. The thing believed; the proposition or set of propositions held true; in early usage esp. the doctrines believed in by the professors of a religious system, a religion. In modern use often simply = opinion, persuasion.

'believer' OED sb. One who believes. a. One who has faith in the doctrines of religion; esp. a Christian, Christian disciple.

The use of 'come' in these contexts plays upon the expression 'Second Coming', used to refer to the expected return of Christ. Hastings' entry under 'Second Coming' refers the reader to 'Parousia', which is 'a technical term used in NT to denote the coming of Christ in glory at the end of the age'.⁹ Other occurrences of 'come', with Bom as subject of the verb, play upon this:

... add it quick before/Bom before he comes to ask me
how it was my life here before/him the little that is left
add it quick how it was after Pim before/Bom how it is
(p.108, 10) (c.r. 'quick' IB1; 'life' IB12)

The expression 'before Bom' which occurs in this example continues the wordplay by evoking the common use of Christ's arrival on earth to measure worldly time, BC. Also, it should be noted, that the story of how it is is divided into three stages; 'before Pim', 'with Pim', 'after Pim', these expressions occurring twenty-nine, eighteen, and nineteen times each respectively. It has been shown however that the torture is viewed as a form of animating the victim, c.r. IB; also p.118, 14--19, where the narrator tells us that Bom comes to give him a name, and to give the narrator a 'life'; both of these statements continue to imply that Bom's role is Christ-like. That he tortures the narrator could therefore be seen as: a) A cynical comment upon religion. b) A parallel to earthly life or to

⁹ J. Hastings, A Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 3 (Edinburgh, 1905), p.674.

purgatory, that the victim has to suffer in order to be redeemed.

c) Further, we could suggest that the creature is one of those in hell born and died before Christ, thus awaiting the harrowing of hell.

a great gulp of black air and have done at last with my travell-/ing days before Pim part one how it was before the others the/sedentary with Pim after Pim how it was how it is vast tracts/of time when I see nothing more hear his voice then the other/come from afar on the thirty-two winds from the zenith and/depths then in me when the panting stops bits and scraps I/murmur them (p.43, 14) (c.r. 'bits and scraps' IIB4)

According to one reading of the above stanza, 'this other' refers to another 'voice'. A different reading however is that 'this other' refers to another creature or being; given the religious connotations which we have already noted in the use of 'come', with reference to another creature whose arrival the narrator awaits, this also carries such connotations. These are reinforced by 'zenith' being the place the 'other' comes from:

'zenith' OED 1. The point of the sky directly overhead; the highest point of the celestial sphere as viewed from any particular place; the upper pole of the horizon (opp. to NADIR). 2. loosely. The expanse of sky overhead, the upper region of the sky; the highest or culminating point of a heavenly body. 3. fig. Highest point or state, culmination, climax, acme.

That he arrives on 'thirty two winds' suggests violent weather storms, something again associated with Christ's return. See:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the elect from the four winds one end of heaven to the other.¹⁰

¹⁰ Matthew 24. 29--31.

Also, however, stormy weather is associated with Christ's arrival in Hell, according to the legend of the harrowing of hell:

A voice spak pan ful hidosely/als it war thonors blast:/'undo
 3ouwre 3ates bilue, bid I/pai may no longer last,/pe
 king of blis cumen in 3ow by!

It should be noted that the description of Christ's arrival to harrow hell, in all the versions referred to above, compares Christ's voice to a thunder blast; the quote we are considering in how it is is ambiguous between reference to the arrival of a creature/being (with religious connotations) and reference to the arrival of a voice.

Other occurrences of 'come' in how it is with religious connotations:

and to whom at times not extravagant to impute that voice/
 quaqua the voice of us all of which now when the panting/
 stops then seconds fifteen seconds definitely the last scraps
 to/have come down to us and in what a state (p151, 12)
 (c.r. 'quaqua' IIB3; 'scraps' IIB4)

This stanza plays upon the idea of a representative from God coming down to earth to deliver his message, but here the message is distorted. The next stanza continues to define the one to whom the voice belongs as 'not one of us' and talks of a story 'of his own devising ill-inspired ill-told and so ancient so forgotten at each telling that ours may seem faithful that we murmur to the mud to him' (p.151, 16, 18). That the story is told and retold and becomes degenerated with re-tellings. That the narrator uses the term 'faithful' to describe the creatures' reiteration of the tale continues the religious connotations implying identification between the one who is 'not one of us' with God.

Also see the use of 'when your time comes'; we have

¹¹ 'Galba', 116, 1381--85, in W.H. Hulme, ed. The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus [London](1907), p.110.

already seen in the main body of the thesis that this is used to indicate time of death, childbirth. It is a phrase much used in the Bible.¹²

It should be clear from the examples given above that there is evidence of play upon religious senses of the word 'come'. In particular, it is used in reference to the expected arrival of one for whom the narrator (and fellow creatures) await. It is not clear, however, whether this is referring to the first arrival of Christ, as the play upon John the Baptist suggests, or to His Second Coming. We noted that it could also be referring to His coming to harrow hell. This example of the use of 'come' reinforces the argument that further investigation of this theme would find material enough, illustrating that biblical language is a field which Beckett draws upon for wordplay. Among other words whose senses in how it is could usefully be examined in this category (along with 'martyr' and 'passion' already looked at in this study from a different angle, c.r. IC12; IA16), are: 'journey', 'cross', 'voice', 'God', 'forgiveness'.

* * * * *

¹² See, for example, Isaiah 13. 22; Matthew 26. 18; John 7. 6; John 7. 8; John 16. 2.

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