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Lidan Lin

This article freshly reveals that Beckett’s experiment with metafiction began with his first novel and was inspired by his knowledge of Chinese music, which he obtained from Laiy. From the ways in which Chinese music developed from obeying formula to gaining freedom of expression, Beckett ingeniously perceived a narrative model: just as Chinese music must break free of the theory of liu liu to embrace the freedom of expression, English fiction must reinvent the nineteenth-century realist formula, in which authors like Balzac and Austen exercised rigid control over their plots and characters. The outcome of Beckett’s appropriation of Chinese music is a metafictional novel that is usually seen as belonging to postmodern fiction. Yet, Beckett’s attack on literary realism does not result in the total negation of the real, but in viewing the real as fundamentally mystic. In this sense, Beckett may be called a “mystic realist”. Thus, Beckett’s own aesthetics emerges in his simultaneous negotiations with realism and postmodernism. These negotiations are also inspired by the legacy of Proust and Joyce: the legacy of inner fiction.

Although Samuel Beckett’s experiment with postmodern metafiction is indebted to his knowledge of Chinese music and began with his first novel Dream of Fair to Middling Women,1 critics have largely neglected this important topic—they have focused mainly on Beckett’s application of metafiction in Trilogy (1958) and post-Trilogy works. Inger Christensen, for example, devotes a chapter in his book The Meaning of Metafiction (1981) to the study of Beckett’s application of metafiction in Trilogy and focuses on the unstable narrator-narratee relationship. This study is followed by Susan Brienza’s book-length study Samuel Beckett’s New Worlds: Style in Metafiction (1987), which examines Beckett’s use of metafiction in his post-Trilogy works.

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1Dream of Fair to Middling Women, hereafter, posthumously published in 1992. All references are to this edition.

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works. This essay will fill this neglected gap by exploring the ways in which Beckett appropriates Chinese music as a narrative model to parody nineteenth-century realist fiction that largely represents the outer reality. In experimenting with metafiction, Beckett not only inherited the modernist legacy of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, the legacy of “inner fiction” that emphasizes fiction’s ability to represent the inner flow of consciousness and involuntary memory, but he creatively pushed that legacy further into the postmodern domain by turning the modernist question of epistemology into the postmodernist question of ontology. Yet Beckett’s postmodern negotiation with realist fiction results not in the total negation or endless deferral of the real, but in affirming the real as being mystic and ineffable, just as Proust does in Remembrance of Things Past, thus irreducible to logical and neat identification.

Dream is, no doubt, one of the most experimental novels ever written in English, comparable to Joyce’s Ulysses (1922) and Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse (1927). Throughout the novel Beckett’s meta-narrator frequently intervenes to deplore the failure of the novel-in-progress and the failure of nineteenth-century realist fiction to resemble real life, and the characters have a better chance to appear as real, living human beings, instead of mechanic, lifeless puppets found in the fiction of Austen and Balzac. At the same time, the meta-narrator introduces a new way of writing fiction that calls for the release of authorial control so that the characters and plots can be free to develop themselves. In this new way, the meta-narrator believes, the narrative events have a better chance to resemble real life, and the characters have a better chance to appear as real, living human beings, instead of mechanic, lifeless puppets found in the fiction of Austen and Balzac. Interestingly, Beckett’s experiment with metafiction is inspired by a book he read about Chinese music. As Beckett’s Dream Notebook shows, Beckett read Louis Laloy’s La Musique Chinoise, originally published in French c. 1900, in which Laloy tells of a legend about how Chinese music was first invented. The Chinese Emperor Hoang-ti wished to have musical notes invented, and he sent his music master to the northern part of China to look for these notes. The music master successfully accomplished his task, and this is how he accomplished it. At the end of a deserted valley, he cut a bamboo stem between two knots, blew on it, and produced a tone. Then two phoenixes, one male, one female, came out and rested on a tree. The male

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2 Brian McHale’s distinction between modernist and postmodernist fiction developed in his highly influential book Postmodernist Fiction. As he writes: “I will formulate it as a general thesis about modernist and postmodernist fiction: the dominant of modernist fiction is epistemological. That is, modernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as those mentioned by Dick Higgins in my epigraph: ‘How can I interpret this world of which I am a part?’ The dominant of postmodernist fiction is ontological. That is, postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like the ones Dick Higgins calls ‘post-cognitive; ‘which world is this’ What is to be done in it’?” (McHale, 9-10).

3 Joyce’s Ulysses in John Filling’s view. Beckett’s English fiction could have been more popular if written in a more accessible style. As he writes: “Beckett’s English fiction, for all its many virtues . . . can legitimately be seen as a forced growth: extremely ambitious, courageously experimental, but a little too exotic . . . to take root and be widely admired.” (Filling, 10.)
In addition to the legacy of Proust and Joyce and his own creative ingenuity, Beckett had another edge to his advantage when he wrote *Dream* in 1932 in Paris: he was surrounded by academic and publication success. He had been awarded Scholars of the House, the highest award an undergraduate could achieve at Trinity College, Dublin, and he came top in his class in the examination in Modern Literature. His outstanding academic record led to his nomination in 1927 for the exchange lecturer from Dublin, or London was willing to take the risk to publish. This was evidence by the world. Belacqua's relation with women is also discernible in his entrance into a heterosexuality relationship. He is a passionate, passive, and indolent, Belacqua is portrayed as a "sentimental purist." One of his dreams is to avoid the world as much as possible and stay intact in the womb tomb—where he can be free from the hassle and temptation of the big world. His other dream is to engage in a purely spiritual and non-sexual relationship with women. But, as the narrator tells us, Belacqua is reluctant to inhabit in these two strata of his being; the only place he wishes to dwell in is the depth layer of his being, which appears like an enclosed "tunnel" completely sealed off from the outside world. Belacqua's relationship with women, as his relationship with the big world, equally disturbs him. Although he adamantly rejects a sexual relationship with women, he passionately yearns for their company. Ironically, Belacqua never fares well with his lovers for long and invariably ends with disappointing break-ups because all these women demand sexual intimacy while he can only "clap a chaste kiss" at the most when he is up to it. To bring Belacqua to fulfill his erotic needs, these women appear as aggressive suitoresses: Miranda being described as a "predator" and "a masochist,", and the Smeraldina-Rima being described as a rapist. Even the less predatory and somewhat enlightened Alba blast Belacqua with her violent curses of his notion of purity. While these women all take on an active working part usually associated with the male in a heterosexual relationship, Belacqua displays a distinctly passive response usually associated with the female.

Dante... Bruno... Joyce..." in which Beckett highly praises Joyce's stylistic experiment in his work-in-progress later published as *Finnegans Wake,* an experiment cut off from form and content.

953), in which Beckett insists on the impossible to present the real Belacqua, who simply appears as a "cubic unknown," and thus laments the failure of the author. Aided by Laloy and Chinese music, Beckett's postmodern negotiation with realist fiction early in his novel, when the narrator just finishes the account of Belacqua's farewell to his lover, the Smeraldina-Rima, a German-speaking student of music. The narrator then switches to the role of meta-narrator and issues the first warning that the author does not know how the rest of the story will continue because some characters will not obey the author's will; that is, they cannot be made to stand for something: "The fact of the matter is we do not quite know where we are in this story. It is possible that little control, like his "chase of the Smeraldina-Rima" to Vienna and [his] flight from her to Paris." The middle layer represents a part of his daily life, of which he can exercise some control; he could, for example, willfully imagine the sensualist Syra-Cusa turned into "a saint", and "have [the Smeraldina-Rima] according to his [purist] God." He could even perform the "dirty confusion" by mingling the two women. But, as the narrator tells us, Belacqua is reluctant to inhabit in these two strata of his being: the only place he wishes to dwell in is the depth layer of his being, which appears like an enclosed "tunnel" completely sealed off from the outside world. Belacqua's relationship with women, as his relationship with the big world, equally disturbs him. Although he adamantly rejects a sexual relationship with women, he passionately yearns for their company. Ironically, Belacqua never fares well with his lovers for long and invariably ends with disappointing break-ups because all these women demand sexual intimacy while he can only "clap a chaste kiss" at the most when he is up to it. To bring Belacqua to fulfill his erotic needs, these women appear as aggressive suitoresses: Miranda being described as a "predator" and "a masochist," and the Smeraldina-Rima being described as a rapist. Even the less predatory and somewhat enlightened Alba blast Belacqua with her violent curses of his notion of purity. While these women all take on an active working part usually associated with the male in a heterosexual relationship, Belacqua displays a distinctly passive response usually associated with the female.

The story of Belacqua would have been acceptable in realist fiction, in which the all-knowing authors would have no doubts about the stories they tell. For Beckett, however, the story of Belacqua and the narrative events revolving around him are by no means credible. Such incredibility is constantly stressed by the meta-narrator, who insists on the impossibility to present the real Belacqua, who simply appears as a "cubic unknown," and thus laments the failure of the author. Aided by Laloy and Chinese music, Beckett's postmodern negotiation with realist fiction begins early in the novel, when the narrator just finishes the account of Belacqua's farewell to his lover, the Smeraldina-Rima, a German-speaking student of music. The narrator then switches to the role of meta-narrator and issues the first warning that the author does not know how the rest of the story will continue because some characters will not obey the author's will; that is, they cannot be made to stand for something: "The fact of the matter is we do not quite know where we are in this story. It is possible that

11Ibid., 120.
12Ibid., 111.
13Ibid., 120.
14Ibid., 79.
15Ibid., 45.
16Ibid., 237.
17Ibid., 11.
18Ibid., 18.
some of our creatures will do their dope all right and give no trouble. And it is certain that others will not. Let us suppose that Nemo is one of those that will not.\textsuperscript{122}

Beckett's meta-narrator then turns to Chinese music for help:

Supposing we told a little story about China in order to orchestrate what we mean. Yes! Ling-Lung [the Emperor's music-master] then, let us say, went to the confines of the West, to Bamboo Valley, and having cut there a stem between two knots and blown into same was charmed to perceive that it gave forth the sound of its own voice when he spoke, as he mostly did, without passion. From this the phoenix male had the kindness to sing six notes and the phoenix female six other notes and Ling-Lung the minister cut yet eleven stems to correspond with all that he has heard. Then he remitted the twelve liu liu to his master, the six liu male phoenix and the six liu female phoenix: the Yellow Bell, let us say, the Great Liu, the Great Steepleiron, the Stifled Bell, the Ancient Purification, the Young Liu, the Beneficent Fecundity, the Bell of the Woods, the Equable Rule, the Southern Liu, the Imperfect, the Echo Bell.\textsuperscript{21}

Being fluent in English and French, Beckett provided his own English translation of Chinese music as a Narrative Model

placed in charge of the public morale, the Chinese music has had, from its most tender age, discernment of the allowable and the forbidden. The Occidental imagination is pleased to see the arts as guided, at their beginnings, solely by fantasy, which theory must convert into formulas. That is a fiction of innocence, like that of the earthly paradise, but which is imposed by no dogma: Nothing proves that things have happened thus, quite on the contrary. It seems that the primitive arts are also the most formalistic, that the freedom of invention had grown with a continuous progress, and that the human mind proceeds always from the abstract to the concrete.

That which is certain is that the Chinese music began by being formulaic, but with a science which agreed with its sentiment, and reinforced it in place of restraining or bending it.\textsuperscript{24}

From these two passages, which demonstrate the development of Chinese music from being guided by theory to reinforcing the freedom of sentiment, Beckett saw the possibility to use Chinese music as a narrative model for Dream: just as Chinese music evolved from the formula of liu liu to gaining the freedom of invention, the novel must expand the narrative convention of the nineteenth century in order to dramatize the characters and events as naturally as possible rather than what the author orchestrates. In order to illustrate the limits of realist fiction, the meta-narrator assigns each character to one of the twelve liu notes, for example, John as Yellow Bell, the Smeraldina-Rima as the Young Liu and so on and so forth. In this way, the meta-narrator assures, mockingly, one can easily write a novel one gets from one's "favorite novelist":\textsuperscript{25} If all our characters were like that—liu liu-minded—we could write a little book that would be purely melodic, think now nice that would be, linear, a lovely Pythagorean chain-chant solo of cause and effect.\textsuperscript{26} However, the meta-narrator immediately questions such an easy approach to fiction by stating that not all characters in the novel can correspond to a liu; Nemo, for example, "will not for any consideration be condensed into a liu, who is not a note but the most regrettable simultaneity of notes."\textsuperscript{27} Belacqua, "the principal boy",\textsuperscript{28} will not either. Like Nemo, Belacqua is "symphonic", rather than melodic, and represents the simultaneity of notes; he is even "bi-sexual".\textsuperscript{29}

After Belacqua joins the Smeraldina-Rima in Vienna, their relationship goes well for a while until she unexpectedly "raped" him.\textsuperscript{30} Tiffs began, and the two lovers eventually break up, with Belacqua walking out on her shortly before New Year. At this point Beckett's meta-narrator intervenes to comment on the progress of the novel and complains that the characters have failed to be liu liu; they have let down the author: "Ah, these Lius and Lius! How have they stayed the course? Have they been doing their dope? ... But they will let us down, they will insist on being themselves, as soon as they are called on for a little strenuous collaboration."\textsuperscript{31} The meta-narrator then concludes that there is no point of going on writing: "We call the curtain of silence."\textsuperscript{32} The only decent way to end this type of realist fiction is by "deploy [ing) a fabric goes unstitched .... The music comes to pieces. The notes fly about all over the whole performance off, we call the book off, it tails off in a horrid manner. The whole meta-narrator immediately questions such an easy approach to fiction by stating that not all characters in the novel can correspond to a liu; Nemo, for example, "will not for any consideration be condensed into a liu, who is not a note but the most regrettable simultaneity of notes."\textsuperscript{27} Belacqua, "the principal boy",\textsuperscript{28} will not either. Like Nemo, Belacqua is "symphonic", rather than melodic, and represents the simultaneity of notes; he is even "bi-sexual".\textsuperscript{29}

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break-up with the Smeraldina-Rima, Belacqua wrote a piece for a Dublin magazine, in which he summarizes the ups and downs of their relationship, celebrating their transitory spiritual and affectionate communion, in which he "had her... according to his God, i.e. the current Belacqua Jesus,"35 while he regrets her inability to hold on to such communion. Belacqua decides that the best thing to do is to move on, salvaging as many remnants as possible from his lost "love,"36 for her. This scene also marks the Smeraldina-Rima’s exit from the novel, and in order to justify her disappearance, the meta-narrator intervenes again to suggest that the author could, by his will, have forced her to stay in the novel and, accordingly, drag on their relationship, but to do so would be "irresponsible" because her presence will lead to the "bursting up of our tune all along the line."37 The tune Beckett tries to protect here is precisely the new narrative model he wants to experiment with, and the main component of this tune is Belacqua, who is alone allowed to "drift about" to "thicken this tune."38

The disappearance of the Smeraldina-Rima is followed by the meta-narrator’s vehement assault against realist fiction, stating that all the characters in the novel cannot be treated as "Lucien" unless the author forces them to be by, for example, "organizing a [conjugal] collision"39 of Lucien and the Syra-Cusa, which is expected to happen in realistic fiction. But the meta-narrator cautions that this gesture willfully forces "the fruit of a congruence of enormous improbability."40 Such wilful encroachment on the characters is typical in the fiction of Balzac, who is good at putting his characters into "types"41 with no regard to their own personality:

To read Balzac is to receive the impression of a chloroformed world. He is absolute master of his material, he can do what he likes with it, he can foresee and calculate its least vicissitude, he can write the end of his book before he has finished the first paragraph, because he has turned all his creatures into clockwork cabbages and can rely on their staying put wherever needed or staying gone at whatever direction he chooses.42

Beckett’s parody of Balzac necessarily paves the way for his dramatization of Belacqua’s complex contour of being, which consists of three layers, each as real and unreal as the other two, to show that the real Belacqua cannot be trimmed into a clockwork cabbage. Belacqua’s complex and fluid being affords Beckett more ammunition to strike yet another blow on realist fiction through his meta-narrator: “Something might yet be saved from the wreck if only he [Belacqua] would have the goodness to fix his vibrations and be a lieu on the grand scale. But he will not.”43 Belacqua simply will not be "one pure permanent lieu"44 like Charles Dickens’s Miss Flite. The narrative then turns to Belacqua’s visit to Germany following his break-up with the Smeraldina-Rima. This account is interrupted by the meta-narrator’s summary of the several foregoing episodes as a transition to the next episode—Belacqua’s return to Ireland from Germany:

Now it occurs to us that for the moment at least we have had more than enough of Belacqua the trial man with his bomb and likes and dislikes and petty triumphs and defeats and exclusions and general incompetence... We had fully intended to present in some detail his more notorious physical particulars... But now we are tired of him. We feel, we simply cannot help feeling, that the rest must wait until we can all turn to it for relief.45

Here we see a candid narrator, who tells the reader: look, I’m tired of writing, and I need a break; hang in there, and I’ll come back.

Beckett’s constant juxtaposition of narrative and meta-narrative is no doubt challenging to the reader. It is as though Beckett himself anticipated such reaction from the reader and was ready for an explanation. Such explanation was offered through Belacqua, who decides, on the ship back to Dublin, that he will write a book, in which he writes, "The experience of my reader shall be the menace, the miracle, the memory, of an unspeakable dream of purity and manages to "appreciate his stand-offishness, his personality."48 She carries with her a mystic milieu of silence—the silence of body and the tenuous emanations of real personality."49 She even seems to understand his dream of purity and manages to "appreciate his stand-offishness, his shrinking away from contact with the frail dust of her body."50 After all, she is not in a hurry to "stir [him]"51 because she is so spiritual that "her soul is her only poste

36Ibid., 114.
37Ibid., 115.
38Ibid., 117. A lover of music himself and husband of a pianist, Beckett frequently alludes to music in his other texts besides Dream. For comments on Beckett’s use of non-Chinese music, see Bryden, Samuel Beckett and Chinese Music; Albright, Lives.
39Beckett, Dream, 117.
40Ibid.
41Ibid., 118.
42Ibid., 120.
How would their relationship than the whimper.

For a while Belacqua is happily caught "in the reeds of their relations". Yet, rather than being assured of a banal closure of the novel, the reader is given the hint at the absence of a banal closure by the meta-narrator's parodic tone. As for the other characters, the meta-narrator states that the author has no "plans" for them at all except for "a few nebulous directions". What the reader repeatedly hears from the meta-narrator is the message that Beckett the author does not know what he is doing in the novel, a message rarely hears from an author of all times. Yet it is this message that marks Dream's extreme postmodern self-consciousness and radical departure from realist fiction. But for an author to say "I don't know what I'm doing in my novel" is to admit his/her incompetence, and if the author is incompetent, why should a press publish the novel, and why should a reader read it? Writing Dream at a time when Beckett had rejected all other career paths and made up his mind to make a living by writing, he definitely needed his first novel to be a success and could not have ignored the high stake he placed on his metafictional self-debasement in the novel—he is too smart to bring self-destruction this way.

Beckett thus often undercuts his self-debasing metafictional comments by his ruthless mocking of realist authors and others in their company, and by his explanation through Belacqua as in the example of Belacqua's musing on how he would write his book. Not surprisingly, shortly after the meta-narrator hints at the lack of a finale for the Belacqua plotline and admits that the author has no plans for other characters, the meta-narrator evokes liu liu again and launches yet another attack on realist fiction and Cezanne's painting, which Beckett aligns with realist fiction because of their common emphasis on artistic proportion, whether the media is verbal or visual:

Now once more and for the last time we are obliged to hark back to the liu liu business, a dreadful business, feeling heartily sorry that we ever fell into the temptation of putting up that owld Tale of a Tub concerning Christopher Lin and his bamboo Yankee doodle. Our excuse must be that we were once upon temptation of putting up that owld Tale of a Tub concerning Christopher Lin and his bamboo Yankee doodle. Our excuse must be that we were once upon a time inclined to fancy ourself as the Cezanne ... of the printed page, very strong on aestheticism. We live and learn: we draw breath from our heels now, like a pure man, and we honor our Father, our Mother, and Goethe.37

In this much-loaded passage, Beckett not only compares the Chinese model of liu liu to the narrative convention of the eighteenth century by alluding to Jonathan Swift's Tale of a Tub and Paul Cezanne's impressionist painting in the twentieth century, but he stresses the need for a change, the need for inventing a new way to write fiction. Such need is suggested by "we live and learn", which alludes to Laloy's passage about how Chinese music evolves in the course of history. In other words, Beckett's meta-narrator is saying: look, we have come a long way to the stage where we realize that we need a breakthrough in fiction writing, just as Chinese music came a long way to embrace the freedom of expression. Beckett's meta-narrator then subtly explains the new fiction he was writing in Dream through his allusion to the Taoist "pure man", which appears in H. A. Giles's The Civilization of China, which Beckett read while preparing himself to write Dream. The concept of pure men is introduced by Giles in the section on Taoism, where he points out that Chuang Tzu (370-300 BCE), a disciple of Lao Tzu (born between 600 and 300 BCE), the founder of Taoism, further developed Taoism by developing the notion of pure men.

But what is a pure man? The pure men of old acted without calculation, not seeking to secure results. They laid no plans. Therefore, failing, they had no cause for regret; succeeding, no cause for congratulation. And thus they could scale heights without fear; enter water without becoming wet, and fire without feeling hot. The pure men of old slept without dreams, and walked without anxiety. They ate without discrimination, breathing deep breaths. For pure men draw breath from their heels; the vulgar from only their throats.

By alluding to this passage, Beckett imagines himself acting as a Taoist pure man in writing Dream, the pure man in this case being a purist writer. Like a pure man who

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35Swift.
36Taoism is one of the indigenous religions of China and played a role in the assimilation of Buddhism after its transmission to China. The legendary founder of Taoism is the sage Lao Tzu, whose wisdom it is thought that the Tao-te-ching (The Book of the Way and its Power) was composed. Although probably dates to the 4th to 3rd centuries BCE. The Tao or "Way", is the all-embracing matrix of the patterns by which things happen in the world, and it is from this concept that the school derives its name. Taoists generally hold to the idea of coming to a knowledge or vision of this matrix for a variety of purposes: to see the intricate interconnectedness of all things, to attain longevity, to achieve spontaneity in thoughts and actions, to gain supernatural powers, and so on. Such achievements involve finding a balance between the two opposing energies of yin and yang, from whose interaction all phenomena and change arise. These are seen as two complementary facets of the infinite Tao, represented in the yin-yang symbol of a circle with a two dots in each half, indicating that yin and yang both contain the seed of their opposite. All opposition and duality can be expressed in terms of yin and yang: for example, yin stands for what is feminine, soft, and receptive; and yang for what is masculine, hard, and dynamic. Taoists seek to harmonize these cosmic energies within themselves by observing and reproducing the rhythms of nature, and it is an existential as opposed to an intellectual understanding that they seek. One text in particular, the Chuang-tzu (c. 4th to 2nd centuries BCE), presents a thorough critique of language as a means of communicating thought and discursive thought as a mode of knowledge, and counsels direct observation of nature, both in the world and within oneself. This will lead to a calm acceptance of the circumstances of one's life and the inevitability of one's death, and a joyous spontaneity from day to day.
37Quoted in Giles, 65.
lays no plans for his actions and acts without calculation and, therefore, does not 
secure practical results, Beckett does not write with calculation; he does not, like 
Balzac and Swift, manipulate his materials; nor does he care about the practical result 
of his writing, or if he did, he would have written Human Comedy or Tale of a Tub 
type of novel.61 What Beckett exhibits here is his clever appropriation of Taoist ethics 
and his extremely creative conception of such ethics and his own postmodern 
 aesthetics.

Beckett's repeated metafictional allusion to the liu liu story and parody of realist 
fiction adequately prepares the reader for what seems an unheroic ending of the 
 novel. After his laboured negotiations with the Alba over the possibility of purely 
 spiritual love, Belacqua still fails to persuade her to pursue a purist path, yet he goes 
on to yearn for her company. Belacqua's last interaction with the Alba vividly 
 illustrates such a dilemma of his: while he cannot resist her invitation to tea and 
 secretly wishes to "fit his nape against her thigh",62 he "sits on the floor with his back 
 secured practical results, Beckett does not write with calculation; he does not, like 
'Ibid., 238.
'Ibid., 240.
"Ibid.
'Ibid., 238.
'Ibid., 240.
'Ibid.
'Ibid., 241.

The novel ends with Belacqua out of her place and slowly walking back to 
Dublin. On the one hand, the novel ends with a sense of failure, a sense deriving from 
Belacqua's failed endeavours to transform the Smeraldina-Rima and the Alba. On the 
other hand, the novel ends with a sense of hope, a sense deriving from the narrator's 
hopeful tone and from the magical effect on Belacqua of a mysterious voice. 
Belacqua's dejected mood, after coming out of her place, is vividly and symbolically 
brought out by the darkness of the sky and by his inability to see any light: "When 
Belacqua came out ... no moon was to be seen nor stars of any kind. There was no 
light in the sky whatsoever. At least he could not discover any."64 However, 
Belacqua's low spirit is underscored by the narrator's sure affirmation of hope, which 
foreshadows Belacqua's return to hope: "there was some light, of course there was, it 
being well-known that perfect black is simply not to be had."65 The narrator then 
sympathetically explains why Belacqua could not see any light: "But he was in no 
state of mind to be concerned with any such punctilio. The heavens, he said to 
himself, are darkened, absolutely, beyond any possibility of error."66 The sense of 
hope is also symbolically suggested by the call of a mysterious voice that urges him to 
move on. At the call of this voice, Belacqua is magically transformed; his mood 
brightens, his feet stop hurtling, and he is eager to move on: "Scarce had he made to 
employ them [his hands] on his face when a voice, slightly more in sorrow than in 
anger this time, enjoined him to move on, which the pain being so much better, he 
was too happy to do."67 Belacqua's miracle, which closes the novel, raises an

interesting question about Beckett's relationship with postmodernism. I have 
suggested earlier in the essay that Beckett's experiment with metafiction in Dream 
aligns him with postmodernist fiction that questions fiction's stable ontology and . 
submits it to endless deferral of truth. I have also suggested that Beckett's negotiation 
with realist fiction does not result in the total negation of the real, but in locating the 
real in the inner reality seen as unruly mystic, thus irreducible to logical and neat 
identification. Dream's closure thus powerfully illustrates Beckett's complex 
relationship with and discriminating appropriation of postmodernism.68 By allowing 
Belacqua to experience the miracle and by allowing him to overcome his disillusions 
about women, Beckett performs a double transgression of realist aesthetics and 
postmodernist aesthetics to the extent that the novel's miraculous coda derives from 
Belacqua's own "system",69 not from the author's willful arrangement, and that such 
coda affirms Dream's mystic ontology by affirming the positive meaning of 
Belacqua's mystic quest. In this sense, Beckett may be called a mystic realist, just 
as his modernist contemporaries can be called psychological realists. Beckett's 
own aesthetics in Dream emerges precisely in his unwavering transgression of realist 
aesthetics and in his simultaneous appropriation and revision of postmodernist 
aesthetics. The formation of the Beckettian aesthetics, as I have demonstrated in this 
essay, is made possible by Beckett's innovative appropriation of Chinese music.

References


---. have noted that critics do not agree on which of Beckett's fictions are modernist and which are 
postmodernist. For Brian Richardson and Angela Chrisman, Beckett's latter fiction starting from 
Trilogy, is definitely postmodern. For McCabe, it is Trilogy alone that marks Beckett's entrance into the 
postmodernist domain. As he writes: "Samuel Beckett makes the transition from modernist to postmodernist 
portico in the course of his trilogy of novels of the early 1950s" (McCabe, 12). For Brian Finney, however, all 
Beckett's fictions can be assimilated into the postmodern category, as his entry on Beckett's Colman titled 
"Samuel Beckett's Postmodernist Fictions" indicates. My own sense is that there are postmodernist elements in all 
of Beckett's fiction, its play with language and his assault against realist fiction in them is a matter of degree rather than 
one of absence and presence. In other words, we find such play and assault more radical in some of his 
fictions (e.g., Dream, Triggy) than in others (e.g., Murphy, Watt). But to include all the non-trilogy fictions 
from postmodern aesthetics, as McCabe does, and to exclude all the fictions written prior to Trilogy from 
postmodern aesthetics, as Brian Richardson and Chrisman do, is certainly inadequate.

61 Beckett, Dream, 240.
Judging the Degree of Adjectivization of English Nouns: An Investigation of the Discourse Behaviour of a Sample of Frequent Premodifier Nouns

Pierre J. L. Arnau

Some English nouns are frequently used as premodifiers and seem to have acquired adjectival characteristics, which appear in dictionaries in labels such as adj. or modify. To investigate them, the characteristics of adjectives are contrasted with those of nouns. Semantically, attributive adjectives bring a unidimensional, incident type of modification to the head noun, and "adjectival" nouns have undergone semic reduction, which produces a similar kind of modification. Core adjectives also have a range of typical functions and constructions which provide criteria for the possible adjectival conversion of nouns. Corresponding occurrences for a core adjective, a "pure" noun, and the adjectival member of an old noun/adjective pair were searched in the British National Corpus and, if absent, on the Web. A series of six subjectively "adjectival" nouns was similarly investigated, showing a variety of behaviours. The data are synthesized into an adjectivity score with potential use in lexicography.

1. Introduction

The head of a noun phrase may be premodified by an adjective as in a tall man or by a noun as in a mystery man. The purpose of this article is to examine the notion of conversion by reporting on an investigation of some nouns that frequently occur as prenominal modifiers and subjectively appear to share some of the characteristics of adjectives or even to have become members of that class. Such nouns often have dictionary subentries labelled adj. or as modifier. Before we examine the corpus behaviour of these apparently hybrid units, we will investigate the nature of adjectivity and nominality and then validate this investigation by contrasting corpus data on a purely adjectival unit with those on a purely nominal one.