

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: THE THEME OF OLD AGE IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S *WORDS AND MUSIC*

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Abstract: *This article sets out to properly acknowledge and make sense of the theme of old age in Samuel Beckett's 1962 radio work Words and Music. As seems to be the case relatively often in literary studies in general, it could be said to be hiding in plain sight: critics tend to overlook this theme's richness and vitality in Words and Music despite its explicit and indeed catalytic evocation. Beckett's treatment of the theme of agedness is then compared to and contrasted with its equivalent in William Butler Yeats's poetry, a logical touchstone given the significant way in which the presence of the Irish poet is felt in Words and Music.*

Keywords: *Samuel Beckett; Words and Music; Old age; William Butler Yeats.*

Resumo: *Este artigo propõe-se reconhecer adequadamente e melhor compreender o tema da velhice na obra radiofónica de 1962 Words and Music, de Samuel Beckett. Tal como parece ser relativamente comum nos estudos literários em geral, poder-se-ia dizer que ele está escondido em plena vista: os críticos tendem a negligenciar a riqueza e vitalidade deste tema em Words and Music apesar da sua evocação explícita e até mesmo catalítica. O tratamento do tema da maturidade por parte de Beckett é depois comparado ao e contrastado com o seu equivalente na poesia de William Butler Yeats, uma pedra de toque lógica tendo em conta a forma significativa como a presença do poeta irlandês é sentida em Words and Music.*

Palavras chave: *Samuel Beckett; Words and Music; Velhice; William Butler Yeats.*

The paucity of happenings in Samuel Beckett's radiophonic work *Words and Music* (broadcast and published in 1962) means that a summary of it could easily fit into a couple of sentences, but for the benefit of those unfamiliar with it this article might as well begin with a thorough account of its entire plot, since it only takes up a few hundred words. It opens with Words (or Joe) and Music (or Bob)¹ warming up for their recital; they are shown to be at odds with each other. They are Croak's servants; he appears and announces that the first theme of the day is love. Words quickly rattles off his earlier speech about sloth, simply replacing the one word for the other, but is eventually interrupted by a couple of violent thumps of Croak's club. Bob too gives it a go, to Joe's chagrin — but is not interrupted, only subsides after a

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¹ Hereafter I will alternate between two denominative pairs by borrowing Croak's nomenclature on occasion, sometimes for the sake of a smoother syntax, sometimes to avoid repeating the words «Words» and «Music» too often, especially in sentences where I mention both the characters and the name of the work.

while. Croak is eager to reconcile his «comforts»² with each other, but so far to no avail. The next theme is age, and Words is first reluctant to start, then falters as he improvises a poem on that subject. Croak now commands his «dogs»³ to perform together, and this they do, after much hesitation and not a few false starts, and with Music clearly at the helm. Eventually, they manage to create and give expression to a song on age. The last theme is «the face», and Joe reels off another piece of pedantic prose on the topic, all the while disregarding Bob again. However, when he switches to verse and begins to compose another poem, Words again starts to follow Music's suggestions, and in no time the second song is complete. As he hears it, Croak lets his club fall and shuffles away, leaving Words and Music alone in the dark again. It ends with Joe imploring Bob for a musical phrase or two, and then letting out a «[d] eep sigh»⁴.

This is a rather unique radiophonic piece, so it is not surprising that it both «received a polarized reception»⁵ and went on to exert an outsize influence in the medium for which it was written. According to Melissa Chia, «further plans to develop this combination of poetry and music featuring Beckett's poems met with strong opposition from the BBC management», partly because «it appeared that many listeners and critics alike were not enthusiastic about the combination of the two arts»⁶. Like so many other Beckett works, however, the first broadcast of *Words and Music* would also have a significant ripple effect: Chia writes that «[j]ust as *All That Fall* was a springboard for the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop, this play was the catalyst for a program featuring a commingling of poetry and music, which would begin in 1968 on the Third: it too would be called "Words and Music"»⁷. So today critics look on radio as the best medium for words-as-music⁸ or play with musical form⁹, even though at the time the idea of «mixing music and poetry» spooked BBC executives and perplexed radio listeners¹⁰.

One of the most remarkable features of *Words and Music*, which is unfailingly pointed out by critics, is the fact that Music is a character in its own right, as opposed to merely being «acoustic wallpaper»¹¹; not only that, it clearly emerges as the catalyst¹² — if not the dominant force outright, according to a comment Beckett himself made

² *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 287.

³ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 289.

⁴ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 294.

⁵ CHIA, 2017: 229.

⁶ CHIA, 2017: 237, 239.

⁷ CHIA, 2017: 230.

⁸ GURALNICK, 1996: 98.

⁹ BRANIGAN, 2008: 95.

¹⁰ CHIA, 2017: 239.

¹¹ WORTH, 1981: 193.

¹² CHIA, 2017: 241.

to Worth¹³ — in the relationship between words and music. This work is already a refined specimen from a phase in Beckett's oeuvre in which «there emerges a particular focus on the act of listening»¹⁴. His use of music in his artistic output for radio is constant, multifarious, and of increasing significance¹⁵; his first radio work *All That Fall* also stands to benefit from an interpretation guided by musical precepts¹⁶, as does his second one, *Embers*¹⁷. A due acknowledgement of music's complex, ambiguous, and at times even predominant status in Beckett's radio art is obviously productive when discussing the peculiar dynamics between words and music in the eponymous work, and in fact this has already been expertly done by musicologists¹⁸.

However, and while *Words and Music* clearly stands much to gain from a study of its formal features, which are as bold and ingenious as they are radiogenic, some thematic aspects are perhaps too often overlooked in the process. One of the literal themes of *Words and Music* in particular — one which, as it happens, represents a crucial turn in the radio piece — can be said to have been hiding in plain sight: the theme of old age.

THE THEMATIC IMPORTANCE (AND CRITICAL NEGLECT) OF AGEDNESS IN *WORDS AND MUSIC*

Words and Music begins with Music (Bob) «softly tuning up» and Words (Joe) doing the verbal equivalent, that is, rehearsing the delivery of a speech — on this occasion, he chooses sloth for its theme¹⁹. The oration is then «[r]attled off, low»: «Sloth is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of sloth, this is the mode in which the mind is most affected»²⁰. Joe's description of sloth as «the most powerful passion» can be interpreted in different ways: an earnest belief in its literal truth (which would not be shocking, considering Joe's reluctance to creatively exert himself throughout the radio piece); the rehearsal of a speech variant like any other (since he could conceivably deliver a similar speech every day, *mutatis mutandis*); a simple bout of flippancy; or a combination of the above. Be that as it may, the effortless (in the original broadcast even languid) way in which it flows suggests that the «passion» speech is standard fare, a go-to template.

Moments later, their old master Croak shuffles his way into earshot, and upon arrival is greeted by Joe and Bob's humble aural curtsies. He bids them to «[b]e

¹³ WORTH, 1981: 210.

¹⁴ LAWS, 2017: 103.

¹⁵ BRANIGAN, 2008: 14, 132, 18.

¹⁶ BRANIGAN, 2008: 95-106.

¹⁷ OJRZYŃSKA, 2014: 55.

¹⁸ See, e.g., LAWS, 2001.

¹⁹ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 287.

²⁰ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 287.

friends!» and apologises for his delay, which is seemingly the result of being haunted by memory and regret: «I am late, forgive. [*Pause.*] The face. [*Pause.*] On the stairs. [*Pause.*] Forgive»²¹. «Theme tonight... love», and surely enough, Joe is ready for it: «[*Orotund.*] Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion²²». *Mutatis mutandis*, then — with the occasional stumble: «sloth is the LOVE is the most urgent»²³. In the beginning, Bob's own contributions are invariably met with Joe's «audible groans and protestations»²⁴. As for Croak, he simply lets out an anguished «Oh!» after each of their performances²⁵.

Then comes the turning point of the radio piece: the moment when Croak declares the second theme: «Age»²⁶. Joe is clearly taken aback: «[*Faltering.*]: Age is... age is when... old age I mean... if that is what my Lord means... is when... if you're a man... were a man... huddled... nodding... the ingle... waiting—»²⁷. This is the only time he «falters», which again can mean different things: he might not deem it lofty enough for his own laureate prowess as an orator; or he might simply not be accustomed to churning out speeches on such dismal topics. Afterwards, Bob plays his «Age music», which is interrupted by Croak's demand that they play «Together, dogs!»²⁸. Joe, as usual, is loath to cooperate with Bob, but in the end allows Bob to gently guide him by constantly giving him prompts, what the directions term «improvements» and «suggestions»²⁹. The verses, whose words are more or less wrenched piecemeal from Joe and set to music in real time by Bob, are then pieced together, and the net result of their troubles is a lovely little poem:

*Age is when to a man
Huddled o'er the ingle
Shivering for the hag
To put the pan in the bed
And bring the toddy
She comes in the ashes
Who loved could not be won
Or won not loved*

²¹ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 287.

²² *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 288.

²³ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 288.

²⁴ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 288.

²⁵ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 288.

²⁶ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 289.

²⁷ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 289. Just like some scholars, Joe does not seem to be wholly certain that by «Age» Croak means to broach old age («old age I mean... if that is what my Lord means»). The French translation, *Paroles et musique*, puts any such doubts to rest: the word used in it is «vieillesse» (BECKETT, 1966: 69) — and not «l'âge», for example.

²⁸ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 289.

²⁹ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 290.

*Or some other trouble
Comes in the ashes
Like in that old light
The face in the ashes
That old starlight
On the earth again*³⁰.

Its effect on Croak is noteworthy: a long pause follows (for one of only two times in *Words and Music*), and then a powerful, unsettling murmur: «The face. [Pause.] The face. [Pause.] The face. [Pause.] The face»³¹.

It beggars belief that such an overt thematisation of old age should be overlooked by commentators — and yet, often enough, that is the case. The most common course of action, however, is to briefly acknowledge the agedness motif without delving into it. For instance, Marjorie Perloff does mention the «Age» theme — touching upon the fact that Croak «is regularly referred to as an old man», and that «both Croak and Words are given “old” voices» in the broadcast³² — but attributes no specific importance to it³³, at least not beyond its *vaudeville* role of giving what she terms «a parodic edge» to the Age poem³⁴. Claus Zilliacus actually goes further than most by noting the traces of the theme of old age in the genesis of *Words and Music*: Croak was, in earlier versions of the manuscript, «first called Old man’s whisper, then Whisper, then Senile Croak, and finally Croak»³⁵. This informs Zilliacus’s reading of *Words and Music* as the «mental process» of «a senile mind», and of Croak as «an old artist»³⁶, but too little is made of old age itself in general and of the «faltering and aimless» nature of Joe’s essay on age in particular³⁷.

Sometimes, such remissness is deliberate and, it must be admitted, not poorly argued for. Perloff finds that Kalb, Worth, and other commentators are «assuming that the radio play is a vehicle for a particular theme», whereas «the fact is that in *Words and Music* frustrated love becomes, in its turn, the occasion for an analysis of the relative power of words and music to produce an emotional charge»; «It is the *telling*, not the details of landscape or face, that is foregrounded»³⁸. This is how she pivots from the explicit themes to the underlying ones discussed here in the previous subchapter, and it is not an artless move: the fact that age is explicitly thematised

³⁰ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 291.

³¹ *WaM* in BECKETT, 2006: 291.

³² PERLOFF, 2004: 122.

³³ PERLOFF, 2004: 124.

³⁴ PERLOFF, 2004: 125.

³⁵ ZILLIACUS, 1976: 100.

³⁶ ZILLIACUS, 1976: 105, 112.

³⁷ ZILLIACUS, 1976: 108.

³⁸ PERLOFF, 2004: 121, 123; original emphasis.

should give us pause, which means that the «real» theme lies elsewhere. This I do not dispute; I do not mean to argue that old age is *the* central theme of *Words and Music*.

Instead, my claim is that old age is a vital concept for an adequate understanding of this work and therefore its thematic import ought not to be simply dismissed offhand, especially when the textual evidence gives it salience. However, that is precisely what routinely happens. Kathryn White, to her credit, does say something about how Joe's «pauses and hesitations register the impossibility of finding the right verbal formula to capture what Age actually is»³⁹. But arguing that he does so the better «to portray how it is to be old», however, is debatable, and by reckoning, like Perloff, that in Beckett «often it is not what is said that is important but rather how it is said»⁴⁰, White effectively finds a way out of addressing the theme in greater detail. A more extreme instance of wilful disregard of old age as a theme can be found in Worth, who somewhat incredibly treats Croak's repeated command for Joe and Bob to riff on the theme of age (the first such command, by the way, being preceded by a pause) as a mere, inconsequential accident: according to her, «reluctantly, seemingly without conscious intent, he lets slip the word “Age”»⁴¹.

It must be acknowledged that the neglect of agedness as a theme in *Words and Music* is, to some extent, made understandable by the inherently slippery nature of old age, that «infinitely adaptable» theme⁴²: even when it is flushed out of hiding, or else merely spotted out in the open, it somehow manages to scuttle back into its lair of unknowability. We see how elusive the theme of old age can be even at its most pivotal in *Words and Music*, where it is thematised as explicitly (indeed literally) as is conceivable. In her discussion of «the pursuit of the quintessence of age» in the Age poem, Brynhildur Boyce gives an apt account of the phenomenon: «Age is hardly expressed “through” these images, for they chiefly express themselves, and when a shift is again made to a metaphoric meaning, what is shown in the starlight is not age but “the face”. In attempting to grasp it, in other words, the poem slips past its ostensible subject matter»⁴³. As Helen Small pointedly remarks, «representations of old age are rarely “just” about old age»⁴⁴, and, as we have seen, critics such as Perloff⁴⁵, White⁴⁶, and others have resorted (not entirely without cause) to similar arguments to justify a less than vigorous engagement with that topic.

³⁹ WHITE, 2009: 122.

⁴⁰ WHITE, 2009: 122.

⁴¹ WORTH, 1981: 209.

⁴² JOCHUM, 2004: 18.

⁴³ BOYCE, 2014: 69, 79.

⁴⁴ SMALL, 2007: 182.

⁴⁵ PERLOFF, 2004: 121, 123.

⁴⁶ WHITE, 2009: 122.

However, such reasoning and the resulting silence is also a sobering illustration of the standing of the theme of old age in academic literary circles — given literature's «prominent and ongoing tradition of engagement with old age», it is all «the more surprising that so few critics have read these works for what they have to say about old age»⁴⁷. Small's pithy assessment of this strange situation could be, *mutatis mutandis*, an apt comment on the critical response to the theme of age in Beckett in general and *Words and Music* in particular: «Old age in literature is rarely if ever only about itself — but as far as criticism has been concerned, it has oddly rarely been much about itself at all»⁴⁸.

That being said, there are, of course, critics who are not oblivious to the significance of the Age poem in particular and of the theme of old age in *Words and Music* in general. Everett Frost considers the Age poem «one of the most remarkable poems Samuel Beckett ever wrote»⁴⁹, and notes that Beckett nurtured a great «affection for the poem» and «could recite [it] from memory»⁵⁰. Boyce too, as we shall see presently, explicitly engages with that theme at greater length than most⁵¹. And for her part, Elissa Guralnick points out that Croak is another instance of the «ageing man», that habitual archetype of the Beckett universe, and that «love and age», while also being key themes in previous works by Beckett (for instance, *All That Fall*, *Embers*, and *Krapp's Last Tape*), are combined, in *Words and Music*, into a single one, in such a way that the core idea of the whole radio piece might be plausibly described as «the persistence of desire in old age»⁵².

That is certainly a crucial sentiment, key to not only the Age poem but *Words and Music* as a whole. But there are other ways of defining that forlorn mixture of longing and despair, and they are worth looking into. That Beckett sought, in this work just like in so many others, to explore agedness in a way befitting of its complexity is clear in the way Joe struggles to piece together an intelligible speech on «Age». Just as enlightening in this regard, though, is Bob's retort. While Words «struggles to speak coherently» on the topic, «Music, on the other hand, launches directly into “Age music” as he did before with “Love music”»⁵³. Drawing on Morton Feldman's thoughts on the difficulty of music to engage with a «universal concept — such as age» without resulting in a cliché, Boyce considers that «Music's response to the theme of age is likely to be formulaic, and it therefore stands to reason that Croak should seek to complicate the concept and thereby enrich its expression, by forcing

⁴⁷ SMALL, 2007: 5.

⁴⁸ SMALL, 2007: 6.

⁴⁹ FROST, 2014: 261.

⁵⁰ FROST, 1991: 372.

⁵¹ BOYCE, 2014: 69-70.

⁵² GURALNICK, 1996: 89, 90.

⁵³ BOYCE, 2014: 69.

its interpreters towards a more complex, jointly developed understanding of it»⁵⁴ — which is exactly what happens⁵⁵.

Unsurprisingly, the content itself of the Age poem is also revealing of that deeper understanding of the kaleidoscopic nature of agedness. The most basic analysis of it shows how it can be read as an illustration of a non-chronometric way of thinking about old age, namely of the idea of «irremediable regret», whereby regret comes to be seen «as no longer remediable, not even indirectly, not even aspirationally»⁵⁶. This poem is a textbook instance of that notion; «the face» that haunts Croak «comes in the ashes», which suggests a complete depletion of (re)generative power. That she «loved could not be won/Or won not loved» is now not merely regrettable, it is beyond remedy — age is when to a man comes that realisation⁵⁷.

READING OLD AGE IN WORDS AND MUSIC IN THE LIGHT OF (AND AGAINST) YEATS'S POETRY

Speaking of those two lines, reverberating beneath their surface is the despondent echo of one William Butler Yeats — a mere strand, as it turns out, of an intricate web of references to «the quintessential poet who writes of age and unfulfilled desire»⁵⁸. Beckett was initially «ambivalent» about the leader of the Irish Literary Revival, but later he «was fond of citing Yeats as one who did his best work at the end of his life»; the very title of *Words and Music* (from Yeats's «Words for Music Perhaps») derives from one of many «echoes [that] appear with more affection than irony»⁵⁹. Minako Okamuro writes precisely on the several references to Yeats in *Words and Music* — namely in the allusions to «the stairs» and «the tower», the speech beginning with «Arise then and go now the manifest unanswerable», and the lines «She comes in the ashes/Who loved could not be won/Or won not loved»⁶⁰. She sees in *Words and Music* a thematic link with Yeats's «The Tower» in that it is «a poem about the imagination of an old poet and the evocation of the dead», the first part of which «sets up a dissonance between the “absurdity” of old age and an “excited, passionate,

⁵⁴ BOYCE, 2014: 69.

⁵⁵ For a couple of semantic and syntactic insights into «the complex manner in which old age is here evoked», see BOYCE, 2014: 70.

⁵⁶ COWLEY, 2016: 192.

⁵⁷ Note how in this poem Beckett clearly alludes to a harrowing poem on ageing and irremediable regret by the French medieval poet François Villon: «Beckett parodie “Les Regrets de la Belle Heaumière”, rendant ainsi hommage à la lucidité de Villon face au naufrage de la vieillesse» (HUBERT, 2015: 47). The similarities, thematic and morphological, between Beckett's poem and Villon's (especially the last stanza) are striking: «Ainsi le bon temps regrettons/Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sottes,/Assises bas, à croupetons» (Villon in HUBERT, 2015: 47).

⁵⁸ PERLOFF, 2004: 124.

⁵⁹ ACKERLEY, GONTARSKI, 2004: 657, 658. Interestingly, the aforementioned notion of old age as irremediable regret is also eminently applicable to Beckett's television work ... *but the clouds...*, and its title too derives from a poem of Yeats's.

⁶⁰ OKAMURO, 2008: 218-219.

fantastical imagination”⁶¹. In the end, and «[d]espite the initial discordance, old age and imagination [...] come to be reconciled to each other»⁶².

This *dénouement* is set in contrast to the rather more pessimistic ending of *Words and Music*⁶³, but to what extent can it be said to be representative of Yeats's attitude towards age and what it portends? A brief digression on his poetry will not only answer that question but also warn against equating his concept of old age to that of Beckett's. Old age, it is widely acknowledged, is a key explicit theme in Yeats's poetry, where it tends to be disavowed in a stereotypical way, as when in «The Tower» the lyrical subject decries

*this absurdity —
O heart, O troubled heart — this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog's tail*⁶⁴.

By the time Yeats wrote these lines, he had begun to experience what Raymond and Virginia Pruitt term «the ravages of illness, age, and their attendant debilitation»⁶⁵, thus critics often resort to a «late style» reading of his work — which is certainly called for in Yeats's case if it ever is, and for that reason commonly pursued — in order to unearth causal links that might help explain that recurring repulsion. The fact that «Yeats was undeniably growing old and ill» is often even taken to be a foundational principle of his poetry; according to Raymond and Virginia Pruitt, his «anger over that deterioration has, by consensus, been regarded as a primary impetus to the writing of his last years», and neither is there any doubt in their mind that «Yeats regarded old age as an enemy»⁶⁶. This is a stark assessment, but as it happens eloquent examples of this negative attitude can be found throughout Yeats's writings, including in some of his most well-known poems, namely «Sailing to Byzantium» and «The Tower» — «that masterly poem of rage against old age»⁶⁷.

Having said that, at times, spurred by the waxing and waning of certain moods, Yeats can be rather volatile or at least ambivalent about old age, which is why it can certainly also be said that «for Yeats old age brought wisdom»⁶⁸ — or, as the lyrical subject of «Words for Music Perhaps» puts it: «Bodily decrepitude is wisdom»⁶⁹.

⁶¹ OKAMURO, 2008: 218.

⁶² OKAMURO, 2008: 219.

⁶³ OKAMURO, 2008: 224.

⁶⁴ YEATS, 2000: 164.

⁶⁵ PRUITT, PRUITT, 1988: 45.

⁶⁶ PRUITT, PRUITT, 1988: 41, 38.

⁶⁷ COHN, 2001: 342.

⁶⁸ BUTTEL, 1983: 43.

⁶⁹ YEATS, 2000: 226.

A «late style» reading can be illustrative of this as well, and indeed Yeats's occasional exaltation of the sagacity of agedness — manifest in poems like «Lapis Lazuli», «The Spur», and «An Acre of Grass» — legitimises Robert Buttel's claim that «Yeats would extract from the very desperateness of his condition his final aesthetic triumphs»⁷⁰. For evidence of this mercuriality, one need not look further than the idea of wisdom in old age, which is variously treated earnestly as a very valid notion («Lapis Lazuli»), scathingly as a stale joke («A Prayer for Old Age»), and ironically as a plausible but ultimately disingenuous inference («Men Improve with the Years»).

By and large, however, old age is laden with negative connotations; it is a treacherous thing from which one would do best to hide (as the happy squirrels seem to do in «The Shadowy Waters») which cannot be offset by the comparatively lacklustre consoling traits it brings. As Norman Jeffares writes, Yeats's «regret that his own youth, even if it has been replaced by wisdom, is vanishing is the substance of his personal cry — “O Heart we are old”» (a plaint whose permutations echo in several poems of the collection *The Wild Swans at Coole*), and the unsatisfactory, nay depressing nature of the fated exchange is pervasive in much of his later poetry⁷¹. This neatly encapsulates the crux of the matter: even at its most complex, old age in Yeats is irremediably seen as the reverse side of the age medallion; youth is his sole beacon of light, the north of his poetic compass, to which old age is a despairing, comforting, or simply inevitable foil.

In Beckett, by contrast, the thematisation of youth is virtually absent from any major work written between his seminal «revelation» in 1946⁷² and his own demise over four decades after it. There is rarely a stark juxtaposition of old age and youth; when there is, youth is simply remembered at best, and that vaguely. Nowhere can the «deterministic binarism» that typifies ageist discourse⁷³ — and, as it happens, Yeats's — be found in Beckett; neither does what Jean Améry termed the «alienation» of old age, whereby it is perceived «as an inferior, subaltern phase of life»⁷⁴, find expression in Beckett's work, simply because the thought that there might be a «superior» one would certainly elicit a bemused chuckle from a writer so seldom given to waxing lyrical about the salad days to the detriment of a current state of putative decline. Instead, what we do find is a kind of perpetual old age, increasingly unbound by time, and not quite untethered from the body but as it were coexisting with it as a phenomenon that runs parallel to its workings, that informs them and is informed by

⁷⁰ BUTTEL, 1983: 43.

⁷¹ JEFFARES, 1968: 153, 156, 164.

⁷² KNOWLSON, 1996: 351-353.

⁷³ ZIMMERMAN, 2016: 87, 93.

⁷⁴ ZIMMERMAN, 2016: 87.

them. A kind of old age, then, that can be understood, to borrow a felicitous theory from Thomas Rentsch⁷⁵, as the radicalisation of the human condition.

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⁷⁵ RENTSCH, 2016: 356.

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