Celia's delighted hips: a re-assessment of the figure of Celia

Article

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a Re-assessment of the Figure of Celia

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Abstract
This article analyses the figure of Celia, questioning the description that emerges from the main account of Beckett's early women. This account, originally developed by Bryden (1993), claims that women in Beckett's early prose are represented through the filter of the male gaze, and are constructed in opposition to, and as an obstacle for, the male hero. This article argues that, in *Murphy*, the mechanisms set to reduce Celia to a stereotypical Woman, are foregrounded, and hence disrupted, by the presence of several contradicting perspectives, including Celia's own perspective.

Cet article étudie le personnage de Celia pour remettre en question la description qui en est faite dans le discours dominant sur les personnages féminins des premiers textes de Beckett. Développée en premier par Bryden (1993), cette analyse montre comment les femmes sont représentées à travers le filtre du regard masculin et comment elles sont construites en opposition au héros masculin, pour qui elles représentent un obstacle. Cet article soutient que dans *Murphy* les mécanismes mis en place pour réduire Celia à l'image d'une femme stéréotypée, sont mis en avant, et donc perturbés, par la présence de plusieurs perspectives contradictoires, dont celle de Celia elle-même.

Keywords: Celia, Murphy, Bryden, gender, stereotypes, caricatures.
Celia, Murphy, Bryden, genre, stéréotypes, caricatures

Celia, the main female character of Beckett's novel *Murphy*, is first described to the reader by listing her physical features (9). Celia's body remains the focus of the narrator's attention who, soon after this description, reports that, after having called Murphy, "she stormed away from the callbox, accompanied delightedly by her hips, etc" (9). The emphasis placed on the movement of Celia's hips, not only calls attention to her body, but is also a comic reminder of her profession: Celia is a prostitute and when she moves, she does so "with a swagger that could not be disguised" (94). Celia's body and her way of walking are recurrently stressed throughout *Murphy*, to the point that Ruby Cohn suggests that "she is caricaturised by her professional gait" (1962, 48).

The fact of seeing Celia as the caricature of a prostitute is in line with the readings of Beckett's early prose as offering an essentialist and misogynistic representation of women. According to these readings, Beckett's early women are construed as embodying stereotypical gendered features, through the centralising male gaze of the narrator. Women are reduced to their body and to their sexual prowess, and are an obstacle for male characters, who, by opposition, aspire to a pure intellectual life only. As section 1 will show, this reading—first found in Linda Ben-Zvi's edited volume *Women in Beckett*, and then thoroughly developed in Mary Bryden's ground-breaking *Women in Samuel Beckett's Prose and Drama*—remains *the main account* of Beckett's early women. This article questions the validity of this reading for the character of Celia, and, in doing so, reveals and explores a tension internal to the main account. As it will be shown, although most scholars who hold this view group Celia with other early Beckett women, they nonetheless acknowledge her exceptionality.

This article argues that a close analysis of Celia allows for sketching a different picture of the role played by her character. In *Murphy*, the mechanisms behind the construction of stereotypical gender roles are those described by Bryden (1993) and Brienza (1990) [section 2], however they are exposed and disrupted, rather than being passively embodied by Celia. This article reveals that *Murphy*, far from being dominated by the centralising gaze of the male narrator, is inhabited by multiple and contrasting perspectives, including Celia's own. This clash of perspectives foregrounds the male gaze and the

mechanisms set to reduce Celia to a stereotypical Woman [sections 3 and 4]. Celia certainly shares the essentialist and misogynistic features of Beckett's early women, however, rather than embodying these features, she is haunted by them. As the conclusion of this article will show, a contrast between identity as essentialist and identity as performance, as theorised by Judith Butler (2006), might be at play in *Murphy*.

1. Tracing the Stereotype: the Main Account of Beckett's Early Women

Questions related to the role that gender plays in Beckett's work have been at the centre of a fruitful debate that has questioned the assumption that—as Linda Ben-Zvi puts it—"the metaphysical human condition that Beckett describes is not gender specific" (1990, ix).[1] Whilst the question about the extent to which gender and sexuality play a role in Beckett's works is still open,[2] scholars tend to agree on the significant difference between the representation of women in Beckett's early works, and in mature to late works (for example Brienza (1990), Morrison (1990), McMullan (2004) Kim (2005, 2010)).[3] Particularly, these studies agree with Bryden's claim that Beckett's works evolve "from an essentialist and often deeply misogynistic construction of Woman towards much more erratic, often contingent or indeterminate gender configurations" (1993, 7). In this picture, only late Beckett works question gender normativity and the processes at the base of gender construction. By contrast, early works[4] do not present such questioning—they are 'essentialist'— and offer a misogynistic representation of women.

Bryden's account of women in Beckett is especially helpful for discussing the figure of Celia. In addition to being, to this day, the only complete and thorough analysis of the construction of gender roles in Beckett's early prose, it also provides crucial tools and a remarkably clear framework for anyone who wants to carry out a similar analysis. Bryden—as Brienza (1990) had previously done—claims that women in Beckett's early prose are "for the most part firmly demarcated from their 'opposite' (male) value" (1993, 7). These women have fixed and stereotypical features, which are construed in contraposition to, and valued against, those of the male characters.[5] Bryden offers a list of three main stereotypical oppositions employed in the construction of women in Beckett's early prose. Firstly, whilst male characters privilege *intellectual* activities, female characters are pictured as predominantly *emotional* (20-23). This contraposition pairs up with the second opposition between *spiritual* male and *physical* female characters (23-33). In Beckett's early works, female body parts are recurrently emphasised, and it is the woman that acts on her sexual desire and stimulates the otherwise dormant male sexual appetite. These women are an interference and an obstacle for the male characters, whose desire is that of living inside their mind. These two contrapositions create a marked communality between women as well as a marked contraposition to men; Woman is thus represented as the radical other of Man. The third contraposition is then between the position of normality occupied by men, and the perception of women as being a deviation from normality and inhabiting a radical *Otherness* (33-39).

According to Bryden, responsible for this "deference to sexual polarities" and to gender roles is the "centralising male narratorial voice" (14). The three key stereotypical contrapositions are filtered through the "eyes of the jaundiced male narrator", who sees women "loom large and fearful" (15). In agreement with this last consideration, Bryden claims—but similar considerations are made for example

[1] For a more recent discussion of this assumption, see Boxall (2002).

[2] Several lines of investigations have developed in Beckett's scholarship. Recent studies have analysed Beckett's works by looking at issues of gender—e.g. Kim (2005) (2010) (2021), McMullan (2007)—; of sexuality—e.g. Boxall (2004), Stewart (2011)—; of misogyny, motherhood, and feminism—e.g. Diamond (2004), Stewart (2011), Wehling-Giorgi (2011), O'Connell (2021).

[3] By contrast, Rabinovitz (1990) is somehow skeptical.

[4] Bryden considers Beckett's early prose works up until *L'Innommable* (1993, 15).

[5] For a discussion of philosophical and cultural influences on Beckett in relation to these stereotypical features see for example Acheson (1990), Morrison (1990), Kim (2005, 2010). Mercier (1977) also draws attention to the Man/Woman opposition, but Bryden (1993) points out that his framework does not fit well with Beckett's late women.

by Ben-Zvi (1990), McMullan (1993), and Kim (2010, 2021)—that the turning point for the representation of women is Beckett's engagement with theatre, where "the male narratorial vantage point" (7) is lost and women are given the opportunity to speak in their own voice.

Bryden's overall position can be then summarised in three key claims: women in Beckett's early prose are (i) built through the male narrator's gaze, (ii) the narrator's gaze reduces them to stereotypical features, (iii) and these are judged against the features of male characters. As a look at recent studies shows (see McMullan (2004), Diamond (2004), Kim (2010)), these claims are still highly influential and remain unchallenged, giving us a further reason to focus on Bryden's account. Engaging with Bryden's claims is to engage with the *main account* of women in Beckett's early prose.

In addition, a final reason to focus on Bryden's account is that Bryden appears to be at unease when she extends her account to include Celia. For example, when she argues for the *otherness* of Beckett's early women, she uses Celia as main illustration, but she also acknowledges that Celia embodies the othering features in a more "dignified" and "graceful" manner than other early women (36). A similar discomfort is found in many of the scholars who hold a view close to Bryden. For example, Brienza recognises Celia as Beckett's most sympathetic female character (1990, 100), Morrison adds that she is the only character in *Murphy* who is not a puppet (1990, 87), and Cohn says that Celia "arouses more affection" than any other of Beckett's early women (1962, 47).[6] In all these studies, however, the recognition of Celia's exceptionality does not go much further than passing remarks. Engaging with Bryden's account gives us the opportunity to explore and explain the tension inside the main account of women in Beckett's early prose, which is yet to be investigated.

2. Fitting the Stereotype: Celia as one of Beckett's Early Women

One does not have to dig deep into *Murphy* to find elements that fit Bryden's account of early women. The novel opens with Murphy attempting to escape the big world of material exchanges and bodily desires to find solace in the intellectual bliss of the little world of his mind (7-8). By contrast, as aforementioned, the first description of Celia is completely focused on her physical features (9). The stereotypical oppositions outlined by Bryden are well illustrated since the first exchange between Murphy and Celia:

> 'God blast you'
> 'He is doing so,' she replied. Celia.
> He laid the receiver hastily in his lap. The part of him that he hated craved for Celia, the part that he loved shrivelled up at the thought of her. The voice lamented faintly against his flesh.
> He bore it for a little, then took the receiver and said:
> 'Are you never coming back?'
> 'I have it,' she said.
> 'Don't I know,' said Murphy.
> 'I don't mean that,' she said, 'I mean what you told me-'
> 'I know what you mean,' said Murphy.
> Beckett 2009, 7

Murphy's ironic response—'I have it', 'Don't I know'—, reduces Celia to her physicality, revealing the prominence of this aspect for their relationship. In the novel, Celia appears to be aware of the power of her body over Murphy and exploits it to her own advantage. For example, she uses it to attract Murphy when they first meet—"with outstretched arms she began slowly to rotate" (11)—, and she uses sex as a leverage to force Murphy to find a job (43).

Moreover, the passage above presents Celia as an obstacle for the intellectual Murphy, who distinguishes between the part he loves—his mind—, from the part he hates—his body. Celia distracts Murphy from his mind, which "shrivelled" at the mere thought of Celia. This contrast is reflected in the comedy: Celia's voice does not reach Murphy's mind, but laments against his flesh, "in his lap". This

[6] For a list of other scholars who have made similar remarks on Celia, see Cohn (2001, 78-79).

is the first of many situations where Celia interferes with Murphy's plans, be these short term—investigating the sky (12), or enjoying a bus ride (61)—or larger plans. A key motif that structures *Murphy* is Celia's insistence that Murphy finds a job, against his desire not to do so. As a case in point, when Murphy finally finds an occupation, this is described as "Celia's triumph over Murphy" (73).

Murphy presents also the other stereotypical contrapositions outlined by Bryden. Whilst Celia's physical aspects are foregrounded, her intellectual prowess is played down. For example, Celia seeks advice from Mr Kelly, as she hopes that where her "brain which was not very large for the best way to say it" failed, Mr Kelly's "immense cerebrum" (14) would not. Murphy, whose mind is praised—"few minds were better concocted than this native's" (24) —and has a dedicated chapter, does not have a high consideration of Celia's intellect. He describes her as short-sighted and delusional (26, 27, 43), and patronisingly decides when he should or should not remedy to her intellectual shortcomings (27). Furthermore, Celia appears to give prominent value to emotions, as she describes herself as a "bumbailiff" following the orders of the "bailiff", Love (19). Mr Kelly too recognises the power that emotions play for Celia—"I bow to passion" (18)—and desists trying to convince Celia to leave Murphy. Finally, the otherness of women is illustrated in the passage below, where a frustrated Murphy groups all women together, by being all "bloody same", and radically different from men.

> Women are all the same bloody same, you can't love, you can't stay the course, the only feeling you can stand is being felt, you can't love for five minutes without wanting it abolished in brats and house bloody wifery.
> Beckett 2009, 26.

Murphy's frustrated remark fits Bryden's claim that "Woman, as Other, constitutes a discrete order of being to which man does not belong" (1993, 33). Bryden continues by showing that the figure of Celia is constituted as Other by embodying, not without tension, both the stereotype of Woman as Eve —a figure of the prostitute—and Woman as Mary, particularly thanks to the dignity she manifests at the end of the novel (35-36). To use John Pilling's term, she is made Other by embodying the "madonna-prostitute" figure (1976, 119).

This brief overview shows that, in *Murphy*, gender roles are built through the oppositions described by Bryden. However, the next two sections question whether Celia actually embodies the stereotypical role of Woman. The re-assessment of Celia's figure starts by focussing on the caricature of Celia-the-prostitute and moves to the mechanisms set to reduce her to a Woman.

3. Escaping the Caricature: Celia Haunted by the Caricature of a Prostitute

In accordance with the overview offered in the previous section, the recurrent emphasis on Celia's walk in *Murphy* could be read as building a caricature of Celia-the-prostitute. According to Bergson, a character becomes a caricature when they are associated with a 'type', as, for example, when their demeanour is taken over by attitudes, gestures, jargon or way of thinking specific to their profession (1911, 170). Thus, a character is a caricature of a doctor when they can't help but using medical jargon, regardless of the circumstances. To generalise, a character becomes a comic type or a caricature when they do not act according to the situation they are in, but when they act mindlessly, in accordance with their personality or profession.

Caricatures of this kind are built by exaggerating and emphasising certain professional or personality traits. In line with this, Celia's caricature as a prostitute is built by emphasising and exaggerating her 'professional' gait, as it is shown by the following brief collection of passages from *Murphy*.

> She stormed away from the callbox, accompanied delightedly by her hips, etc (9).
> She then made her way rapidly on foot, followed by four football pool collectors at four shillings in the pound commission, to the apartment in Tyburnia of her paternal grandfather, Mr Willoughby Kelly (9).
> She preferred to pace to and fro, clasping and unclasping her hands, in the usual manner (10).

> Celia set off towards Pentoville, with the swagger that could not be disguised. The char stared after her at length (94-95).
> Cooper was standing under a tree in the Cockpit […]. He recognised Celia as she swaggered past. He let her get well ahead and then started after her (95).
> It began to rain, she moved into the shelter. A young man followed her, pleasantly spoken, amorously disposed. She could not blame him, it was a natural mistake, she felt sorry for him, she disabused him (96).

Celia's gait is presented as the gait of a prostitute walking the street. Celia "swaggers", she "paces to and fro"[7] with movements so accentuated that her hips appear to accompany her. The reactions of those around Celia contribute to emphasise her professional and alluring walk. If the char limits himself to "star[ing] at her at length", the "four pool collectors" follow her to Mr Kelly's apartment, a "young man" follows her in the park, and Cooper to her apartment. Regardless of where Celia is or what she is doing, her gait always bears the signs of her profession.

If the accentuation of Celia's movements and the power she exerts on the passers-by contribute to her caricature as a prostitute, other elements in the passages are more troublesome. In the first passage above, which opened this article, Celia's hips are given agency: they follow Celia "*delightedly"*. Saying that Celia's hips followed her *delightfully* would have sufficed for building the caricature of Celia-the-prostitute. Instead, Celia's hips are given agency to the point that the body appears separated from her: the result is that she is followed by her body rather than being a mere body. Celia appears to lack control over her body, its movements, and the effects it generates. Likewise, the four football collectors follow Celia and the char stares at her, but it is not Celia that willingly attracts their attention. Or again, the young man is mistaken when he thinks that Celia is willingly attracting his attention. This is a mistake that Celia easily pardons: it is "natural" and depends on how her body moves and on a "swagger that simply cannot be disguised".

Unlike Bergson's caricatural characters, Celia does not act mindlessly in different situations, rather, her body acts independently from her intentions. The recurrent emphasis placed on Celia's walk reveals the mechanisms set to build her as a caricature of a prostitute. The effect of foregrounding these mechanisms is that of presenting Celia as followed and haunted by her body and profession, rather than Celia embodying her profession.

4. Emphasising the Stereotype: Clashing Perspectives

The mechanisms set to impose stereotypical features onto Celia are not only foregrounded when Celia walks. We are alerted to these mechanisms all along the novel. In line with Bryden's analysis of Beckett's early women, the figure of Celia is negotiated by the male gaze. However, not only is this gaze embodied by several characters, but readers are also offered Celia's own perspective. *Murphy* is inhabited by several perspectives which often clash, revealing the mechanisms at play to reduce Celia to the stereotypical Woman.

At a structural level, the presence of multiple perspectives in *Murphy* appears in the organisation of the chapters and in the development of the plot. As described by Cohn, "*Murphy* deftly intertwines four strands that may be designated by their principal components—Murphy, Celia, the Irish posse, the Mercyseat population" (2001, 74). Accordingly, several chapters of the book are dedicated to characters other than Murphy. The development of Celia's character and the unfolding of her story takes up a large part of the novel. Specifically, Celia has two chapters entirely dedicated to her (against the four chapters dedicated to Murphy), shares three chapters with Murphy, and two other additional chapters with the "Irish posse" (whereas Murphy does not).[8] This structural organisation allows us to see different perspectives and, importantly, to see the discrepancy between Celia's point of view and that of other characters.

[7] See also Beckett (2009, 41, 141)
[8] The remaining two chapters are focused on the minor characters.

The previous section has shown that the emphasis on the male reactions to Celia's swagger alerts the reader to the mechanisms set to align her with the caricature of a prostitute. Similarly, the discrepancy between Celia's view on her profession as a prostitute, and the perspectives of Mr Kelly and Murphy alerts the reader to the attempt to reduce Celia to her physicality. Both Mr Kelly and Murphy see a close connection between Celia and her job, reinforcing the image of her as a stereotypical Woman who exploits her sexual prowess. Mr Kelly sees "her made for the life" (Beckett 2009, 43), and Murphy believes to have paid Celia a tribute when he praises her professional success (15). However, Celia's view on the matter is different: she finds the job "dull" (43), and Murphy's tribute "miscarriages" as Celia does not find Murphy's suggestion a compliment (15). Celia's perspective clashes with Murphy's and Mr Kelly's, alerting the reader to, and hence disrupting, the attempt to reduce her to her profession.

A similar clash of perspectives takes place later in the novel when Neary hears Celia "swaggering to and fro" (141) in the upstairs room. Neary ventures an explanation: Celia "never still, made restless by the protracted absence of her young, her ambitious husband" recurrently goes to the window in the hope of Murphy's return (141). However, when Miss Carridge announces the arrival of Neary and his fellow travellers to Celia, it becomes clear that Neary is misguided. Celia, as she says, has been "dead to the voices of the street" (142), and she is not aware of the arrival of the visitors. Not only is she not pacing from the room to the window, but she is not in trepidant wait of Murphy either, as she is convinced he has left her.[9] The discrepancy between Neary's perspective and Celia's allows us to see the attempt to impose a specific image on her. In this case, the image is that of a Woman, consumed by emotions, who is helplessly waiting for her lover to come back.

The presence of Celia's own perspective offers a crucial insight into her character which opens to the possibility that there is more to her than the stereotypical elements highlighted in section 2. If her emotions and sexual prowess are recurrently emphasised, and are presented as an interference for Murphy, on a few occasions we are given a glimpse of her thoughts. This provides a more nuanced image of her: Celia is not blinded by her emotions and her passion. By contrast, she is doubtful and worries about the effects that her request that Murphy find a job may have on their relationship, and on him. She knows that he would see her as "creeping upon him in the dark" (Beckett 2009, 19). For this reason, she second guesses her position on the matter: she asks Mr Kelly for advice (9-18), and later she tosses a coin and leaves it up to fate to determine whether to follow through with her decision (20).[10]

Moreover, although her intellect is often played down, during a few of their tense arguments—as Brienza recognises—"the reader perceives that Celia matches Murphy's wit and could in fact be equally cerebral and pensive" (1990, 97). For example, during their first phone call she promptly blocks Murphy's ambiguous sexual allusion—"I have it", "Don't I know it", "I don't mean that" (Beckett 2009, 7)—and she calls him out for making up excuses—"I expect a friend", "You have no friends" (7). Or again, when Murphy complains that their love gives him "a pain in the neck", she shrewdly replies "not in the feet?" (25), referring to the indication of Murphy's horoscope to guard against "pains in the neck and feet" (23), and thus ridiculing Murphy's decision to follow his horoscope to the letter.

Finally, the insight into Celia's thoughts scales down her radical otherness. Although the 'madonna-prostitute' features that she embodies set her in contraposition to Murphy, as the novel unfolds, she grows closer to him. Since early in the novel, she has considered whether Murphy's resistance may not be due to mere indolence (22), and as soon as she starts using his chair, she starts understanding him (44). Later in the novel she rocks away in Murphy's chair reaching the state of bliss painfully sought after by him:"the places and things and people were untwisted and scattered, she was lying down, she had no history" (94). The insight into Celia's perspective allows the reader to see her evolution and to realize that she is less of a stereotype than what the recurrent emphasis on her body, her sexuality, her emotions, and her otherness would have them believe.

The presence of various perspectives affects our perception of Murphy too. There is no space here for a thorough assessment, but a brief sketch emerging from the clash between Celia's and Murphy's perspectives should suffice to show that Murphy does appear to the reader to be burdened with a number

[9] Celia knows this because Murphy took with him his chair, and he had told her that this would have been the sign that he had left her for good. (90).

[10] Notice that the coin's cast is to leave Murphy, but the "omen of the coin was overruled" because Celia runs to rescue Murphy in distress (20).

of flaws which question the primacy given to his perspective when interpreting the novel. Whilst Celia initially believes that Murphy tells her everything (11, 15), after Murphy has explained to her why he ties himself up in his rocking chair, she realises that "she knew nothing of this recreation, […] nor did she know anything of his heart attacks" (21). Later in the novel, Murphy tricks Celia into believing that he walks the street all day long looking for a job, when in fact he does not leave the neighbourhood (48). When questioned by Celia about the striking punctuality with which he returns home, he lies and labels it as "the product of love, which forbad him to stay away from her a moment longer than was compatible with duty" (46). Finally, when he finds a job, the reader is aware that Murphy is happy about it, to the point that his consideration of his horoscope changes from his "life-warrant, his bull of incommunication and corpus of deterrents" to "the poem that he alone of the living could write" (60). Nonetheless, when he returns to announce this news to Celia, he throws a tantrum only to make her feel guilty (87-88).

5. Conclusion

This article, by using Bryden's account as a springboard, has drawn attention to the mechanisms set to reduce Celia to a stereotype of Woman. The fruitfulness of engaging with Bryden's is a testament to the acuteness and strength of her considerations. In line with Bryden's view, the reader's attention is constantly drawn to Celia's body, to the role played by her emotions, and to her sexual prowess. However, pace Bryden, Celia's figure is not negotiated *solely* by the centralising gaze of the male narrator; *Murphy* is inhabited by several perspectives, including Celia's own. The clash between perspectives foregrounds, and potentially disrupts, the process of reducing Celia's figure to a stereotypical Woman. Readers are alerted that this process is set in place, and hence offered the opportunity to block it.

There is no space here to carefully analyse how this article's conclusion relates to other claims and further works on Beckett's early women. However at least three directions of investigation should be noted. Firstly, the presence in *Murphy* of multiple perspectives explains the tension found in Bryden and in the main account of Beckett's early women. Despite presenting stereotypical features, Celia becomes 'sympathetic', 'dignified', 'graceful' to readers because they are offered access to her perspective. Secondly, the considerations made in this article are compatible with Bryden's claim that Beckett's representation of women is affected by the presence or absence of a centralizing narratorial gaze. However, they question the fact that the absence of this gaze coincides with Beckett resorting to theatre. Thirdly, this article's conclusion may give reason for thinking that Beckett's questioning of gender normativity and essentialism was already seeded in *Murphy*.[11] Consider, what is perhaps the most evident clash between Murphy's and Celia's perspectives, which takes place during a heated discussion between them.

> 'Have I wanted to change you? Have I pestered you to begin things that don't belong to you and stop things that do? How can I care what you DO?'
> 'I am what I do,' said Celia.
> 'No,' said Murphy. 'You do what you are, you do a fraction of what you are, you suffer a dreary ooze of your being into doing'
> Beckett 2009, 26.

The clash here is between two different conceptions of identity. Murphy's conception is essentialist: one's actions are determined by one's essence ('you do what you are'). By contrast, Celia's conception of identity is performative: one's actions determine one's identity ('I am what I do'). Celia's view of identity chimes with the views of those theorists like Judith Butler that have presented gender as "manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body" (Butler 2006, xv). This article has drawn attention to the "gendered stylization of the body" that is imposed onto Celia by the male characters. It has also shown that some of Celia's actions disrupt the

[11] A step in the direction of analysing gender performativity in Beckett's early prose is made in Kim (2021).

"sustained set of acts" that would manufacture her as a stereotypical Woman. The conclusion of this article is then also an invitation to look more closely to the figure of Celia: not only is it more disruptive of gender normativity as previously recognised, but it may also disrupt narratives of how Beckett's work evolved.

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