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Existential Death and (In)authenticity in Beckett's *Molloy*: A Yalomian Reading

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Abstract: This study explores Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* through the lens of existential psychotherapy, particularly the theories of Irvin D. Yalom. It examines the interplay between death, existential angst, and psychological defenses in Beckett's characters. By analyzing Yalom's existential psychoanalytical ideas, the study aims to understand how characters confront or transcend their existential anxieties to achieve existential awareness. This theoretical framework extends beyond traditional Freudian and Neo-Freudian psychoanalysis, focusing on the practical manifestations of human neurosis related to the ultimate concern of death. The findings highlight Beckett's portrayal of authentic existence and his characters' engagement with concepts such as the knight of resignation, ultimate man, and inauthentic Dasein. Additionally, the study delves into the psychological mechanisms employed by Beckett's characters to cope with their existential dread, exploring whether these defenses are ultimately successful or if they lead to a deeper understanding of their own mortality. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Beckett's work reflects and addresses profound existential questions, offering insights into the human condition and the ways in which individuals navigate the inevitability of death. The study also considers the broader implications of these findings for existential psychotherapy and literary analysis surrounding death and authenticity.

Keywords: Beckett's *Molloy*; Death; Immortality; Yalom; Authenticity; Inauthenticity.

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1. Introduction

Samuel Beckett, a modern author and philosopher, drew inspiration from his personal experiences and early twentieth-century European pessimism, and used literature to express human pain and grief during post-war horror. Along with Yeats and Joyce, Beckett significantly influenced literature and philosophy in Ireland, England, and France. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett*, Ronan McDonald addresses Beckett "as the truest voice of a ravaged postwar world" (2) where existential and post-human notions emerged, and he accurately traced these concepts in his plays and writings which included various philosophical schools, historical allusions, and mythical narratives. However, he held contradictory views on philosophy. In an interview in 1961, he denied being influenced by contemporary philosophers: "I never read philosophers…. I never understand anything they write" (D'Aubarède 238). Nonetheless, he also stated that if he were "a critic beginning out to write on Beckett's works … he would start with two lines, one by Geulincx: Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil valis, and one by Democritus: Nothing is more real than nothing" (Fifield 211). Some critics believe that Beckett never set out to become a philosopher and that readers might properly judge "his post-war hostility to the language of ratiocination and philosophy" (McDonald 25). Nevertheless, one needs to keep in mind that one cannot reject something without being aware of that idea. Beckett's disdain for philosophy undoubtedly originated from his early exposure to it. He never aimed to expound any theory; yet, his works encompass concepts from numerous authors and philosophers, including Dante, Descartes, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, Kafka, Joyce, and Proust, as well as the viewpoints of Geulincx and Democritus.

His personal life also had a significant impact on his writing. Regarding Beckett's personal life, we must initially address the death of his father in 1930, which had a profound effect on him and made him confront both the horrors of the cosmos and the agony of man. In 1933, he moved to London due to his depression and started a two-year-long therapy there. During this time, he read extensively in psychology, including works by Freud, Rank, Jones, and Adler. This made him familiar with Neo-Freudians and existential psychotherapy, as well as mainstream Freudian psychoanalysis. Upon recovering from depression, Beckett witnessed the decline of ethical principles and human civilization during WWII. This experience influenced his personal and professional life, leading to the creation of his works that prominently featured themes of absurdity, isolation, and death.

A review of Beckett's works shows emblematic instances of his engagement with the concept of existential death. For instance, in *Waiting for Godot*, Pozzo serves as a poignant exemplar of the shift in the perception of death. Despite going blind and becoming reliant on others, Pozzo does not succumb to death. His predicament symbolizes an existence where death is not a release from suffering but rather an extension of it. Another example is *Krapp's Last Tape* where Krapp's interactions with his recorded voice reveal a multifaceted relationship with death. His engagement with past desires and regrets serves as an illustration of how the concept of death is intricately woven into the ongoing process of self-discovery and personal reckoning. In addition, Beckett's *Endgame* can also be considered as "an omen of impending death" which remains throughout the play (Gatewood 57).

This preoccupation with the notion of death also appears in Beckett's fiction. For instance, *Molloy*, the novel chosen for the purpose of this study, establishes a solid dialogue with death. Of course, the novel focuses on a variety of issues and can be interpreted through multiple perspectives. As a case in point, some critics stress the fragility of being and powerlessness in the novel. For example, "crutches and the bicycle" represent the protagonists' weakness and means of protection (Chung 109). Other critics shed light on the theme of journey, which achieves an unexpected meaning in *Molloy*. Kenner describes Molloy's journey as "the degeneration of the body into physical wreckage" (95).

Beckett's *Molloy* has also been read through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis because it "depicts psychic disintegration; ego, id, and libido are dramatized as separate entities interacting under tension" (Ackerly 468). In the preface to *Molloy*, the editor addresses Thomas Hogan, who "identified Molloy as a representation of the id, and the narrator of Part II, Jacques Moran, as a representation of the ego" (3). In addition, one may turn to Fletcher who examines Beckett's depiction of characters struggling with their internal minds and physical existence, influenced by Cartesian dualism. Molloy depicts the mind as a spatial entity that is both distinct from and connected to a decaying body, recalling Descartes' impact. Molloy's mind is described as "ruins" and a labyrinth, implying a separation from his deteriorating body. The body operates mechanically, responding solely to the command of the mind, representing the conflicts inherent to Cartesian dualism (Beloborodova 12). Although these studies have used psychoanalytic approaches to read *Molloy*, a Yalomian approach has not be employed in Beckett scholarship. Therefore, this study will undertake the task of reading the novel from a Yalomian perspective to investigate existential anxiety and the ways it leads to inauthentic existence.

2. Existential Death and Anxiety, Meaning, and Background

Death has been a subject of exploration for many philosophers throughout history. Initially, it is crucial to understand the concept of existential death and anxiety and distinguish it from the physical demise of the body. In *Existential Psychotherapy*, Yalom refers to Jacques Choron's breakdown of the fear of death into three dimensions: "(1) what comes after death, (2) the "event" of dying, and (3) ceasing to be" (43). The anxiety surrounding the cessation of existence is a universal concern that "can awaken in existence at any moment" (Priest 30). In this sense, "death whirs continuously beneath the membrane of life" and its anxiety is an inevitable part of our existence (Yalom, *Existential* 43).

Kierkegaard and Heidegger also emphasized that existential death generates a sense of anxiety, not an ordinary fear. The difference is that "the person who fears has an object for that fear" while when it comes to anxiety "the target is actually not any one thing but one's whole world is threatened" (Paskow 48). Rollo May further elucidates that "anxiety is an ontological characteristic of man, rooted in his very existence" (50). Discussing death in an existential sense involves contemplating man's non-existence or ceasing to be. Death triggers fundamental anxiety, addressing non-existence or non-being. Many existential philosophers and psychoanalysts delve into the concept of ceasing to be, and the accompanying anxiety, offering insights into how our minds conceal the omnipresence of death and alleviate its associated anxiety. Regarding the anxiety of ceasing to be, Carman elucidates the distinction Heidegger made between death in the physical and existential senses in *Being and Time (SZ)* by elaborating on terms 'demise' and 'dying': "what Heidegger calls 'demise' (Ableben), or what one might call death in the biographical sense" (296) represents an objective or third-person perspective when considering the physical death of another person. Conversely, "my own death, death understood from the point of view of the person whose death it is, is 'dying' (Sterben) proper, or death in the existential sense" (Carman 290). Therefore, in this existential context, 'dying' is revealed not as the process immediately preceding one's demise but rather as "the mode of being in which Dasein is toward its death" (Heidegger 247).

Aligning with Heidegger, Herbert Fingarette asserts that the awareness of death or existential death serves as a reflective mirror: "A mirror, too, is empty, without content, yet it reflects us back to ourselves in a reverse image. To try to contemplate the meaning of my death is in fact to reveal to myself the meaning of my life" (5). And finally,

assimilating insights from various existentialist figures, Piort Mroz encapsulates their collective perspective on existential death as “the most unique, the inevitable possibility one cannot avoid, shirk or ignore: It looms over our life-horizon as the most authentic offer so to speak: it is our death, confirming the fact of our real status” (133).

2.1. Death Confrontation as a Boundary Situation

Becker posits that by the age of nine or ten, each individual inherently possesses an awareness of ceasing to be. However, in an effort to elude the accompanying anxiety, there is a constant attempt to conceal this awareness. While every Dasein prefers to dwell in a state of forgetfulness of being, merging into the routine of everydayness and disregarding existential notions such as existential death and its associated anxiety, certain boundary situations, as Karl Jasper called it, “succeed in awakening the individual self to its existential content” (Peach 42). In the face of these boundary situations or urgent experiences, Dasein may transit from the former state of forgetfulness of being to a more authentic state of mindfulness of being. Nevertheless, this journey from the former stage to the latter is arduous, accompanied by fear, anxiety, and despair. Only a few authentic individuals can embark on this challenging journey and attain death's gift – a truly authentic life.

In the realm of literary works, characters who undertake this journey with courage and determination are noteworthy. For instance, consider Andrey[1] who confronts death as a boundary situation, resulting in a profound transformation in his personality. Ivan Illich[2], initially suppressing his death anxiety during illness, eventually realizes that “death can act as a catalyst to plunge us into more authentic life modes and enhance our pleasure in the living of life” (Yalom, Existential 33). Similarly, Meursault[3], like other individuals, initially attempts to evade death and its accompanying anxiety but bravely confronts it, experiencing what Heidegger refers to as “the moment of vision” (Letteri 24). However, as Heidegger posits, “Dasein can certainly achieve such transcendence momentarily in the moment of vision and with anticipatory resoluteness, but this is by no means an achievement that can be taken for granted” (Letteri ix).

Most individuals, like Beckett’s characters, strive to escape from death due to a lack of the 'courage' and 'resoluteness' that Heidegger emphasizes, which is necessary to confront their individuality, despair, and angst. By concealing death these individuals “temporarily escape the anxiety of death, of ‘non-being,’ but it is at the price of forfeiting life” (May 514). This confrontation with death is evident in the character of Molloy from the very beginning of the novel and it happens several times through the novel but instead of taking these boundary situations as a way to live his life more fully, he clings to different means to escape the anxiety of “non-being” at the price of forfeiting his life. This will be further elaborated in the following.

2.2. Death Anxiety and Different Means to Conceal It

Before delving into various boundary situations and the diverse responses in Beckett's *Molloy*, it is essential to briefly examine potential means through which individuals may seek to escape death and its accompanying anxiety. It is crucial to note, however, that all the forthcoming responses are deemed inauthentic and futile, hence resulting in various forms of psychopathologies. Existential philosophers and psychoanalysts posit that the majority of individuals tend to adopt various strategies, delineated as defense mechanisms in Yalom's lexicon, immortality projects according to Becker, and symbolic immortality in Lifton's terminology. These approaches serve as means through which individuals delay confronting their mortality, seeking solace in the pursuit of a mythical fountain of immortality. Mark Leffert, an American psychoanalyst, also mentions the persistent "attempts at imagining that aging can be avoided and fantasies that death can be endlessly postponed" (50).

Several theologians and philosophers have discussed this human wish to either delay or eradicate death in one way or another; initially we can address Yalom himself who in *Staring at the Sun* refers to Socrates and Plato and their concentration on the soul's immortality and their focus on preparation for afterlife. These ideas, which the Neo-Platonists held in high regard, eventually influenced early Christian theology (69). Yalom also elaborates that not only philosophy but "many religions offer… some form of continuation, immortality, or reincarnation, all of which deny death's finality" (*Existential* 202). But the paradoxical point is the fact that although "Christians know that death is far better than continued existence on earth," still it is "an obligation to extend physical life as long as possible" (Yalom, *Matter* 35). Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* addressed Homer's Sisyphus, and stated that "Sisyphus's scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing" (Camus 93). Ernest Becker also notes that people have been interested in immortality since ancient times; in prehistoric epoch, "the hero was the man who could go into the world of dead and return alive" (12), and in Mediterranean regions we can trace the cult of death and resurrection; likewise, in Christianity and other Abrahamic religions we can recognize the promise of resurrection and immortal life, and eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism "performed the ingenious trick of pretending not to want to be reborn, which is a sort of negative magic: claiming not to want what you really want most" (Becker 12). This enduring desire for immortality has manifested throughout human history, prompting individuals across diverse cultural and religious landscapes to engage in various

immortality projects. These projects encompass "specific acts or actions through which the individual could strive for a symbolic immortality long after the decay of the body" (Pustay 23). By undertaking rituals, adopting specific behaviors, participating in carnivals, and weaving narratives that promise an afterlife, individuals endeavor to confront mortality and attain a fictionalized form of everlasting existence.

In *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life*, Robert J. Lifton also examines five means through which individuals seek to secure their survival beyond the confines of physical death. He declares that "The sense of immortality may be expressed in five general modes: the biological[4], theological[5], creative (through 'works') [6], natural[7], and the special mode of experiential[8] transcendence" (18). Finally, we can address Yalom who, in *Existential Psychotherapy*, recommends three defensive mechanisms, of which two are major and one is minor. These defenses are all interconnected, so when one of them malfunctions, our mind immediately shifts to another. The two main denial-based mechanisms are 'clinging to an ultimate rescuer' and 'believing in our own specialness'; the minor strategy is engaging in 'sexual affairs.' He explains that these responses or defense mechanisms are not only inauthentic modes to cope with death anxiety but also lead to a variety of psychopathological forms. Yalom also refers to two other psychologists, Otto Rank and Erich Fromm, who addressed the major defense mechanisms, but in different terminologies. When confronted with anxiety, Rank argues, one finds safety by merging with another (clinging to an eternal rescuer) or by taking the opposite approach and separating from another (believing in one's own specialness); in other words, "either he becomes his own father, or he remains the eternal son" (Yalom, *Existential* 116). Fromm also considered man as either seeking obedience (eternal rescuer) or dominance (specialness) to get along with anxieties.

When one confronts death anxiety, the unconscious mind uses the defense mechanisms to conceal the anxiety. But Yalom suggests that individuals whose defense mechanism is oriented toward a sense of specialness may develop various psychopathologies. For example, 'narcissism' is a manifestation of psychopathology when a belief in personal inviolability is combined with a diminished recognition of the rights and specialness of others. Another maladaptive form is 'aggression and control', which is used to ease death anxiety. Yalom underscores that while the specialness-oriented coping mechanism may provide temporary relief from death anxiety, the anxiety inevitably resurfaces when individuals confront their individuation. When faith in personal specialness fails to alleviate anxiety, individuals may turn to an alternative denial system – belief in a personal ultimate rescuer (*Existential* 125-128). However, as with the belief

in one's own specialness, this reliance on an eternal rescuer can also lead to various forms of psychopathology, including self-effacement, dread of love withdrawal, apathy, dependency, self-immolation, resistance to embracing maturity, and despair. And finally, the psychopathology that may stem from sexual affair is sexual compulsivity when one through productivity in sexual relation tries to escape mortality and its accompanied anxiety.

As Becker states, "sex is a disappointing answer to life's riddle" and "biological solution of the problem of humanity is ungratifying and inadequate" (164). Thus, defense mechanisms hinder authenticity by concealing existential concerns and anxiety. Yalom suggests that there is a gap between knowing and truly knowing, between everyday knowledge of death and facing my death. Facing 'my death' confronts one with the bitter fact that one is mortal, that one's life finally ends; that the world will continue to exist without us; that one is one among many and the universe neither acknowledges one's specialness nor will save him or her from death. And the sooner we perceive this bitter fact, the closer we are to authenticity. It is important to remember that feeling anxious about death is a natural reaction, and nearly everyone, including Beckett's character in Molloy, employs defense mechanisms to ease their angst. However, what distinguishes the authentic self from the inauthentic self is whether the person stays in denial or, through bravery and determination, acknowledges death as an unavoidable aspect of existence, realizing they cannot control or avoid it.

3. Analysis

3.1. Death Confrontation and Becker's Immortality Project

One of the immortality projects in Becker's psychoanalysis is 'Eucharist' or 'holy communion' which we can find as a motif in *Molloy*. Different scholars have examined the significance of the eucharist in this novel; but their main focus is on the eucharist failure whereby they take it as the death of God in the modern era. Joanne Shaw, for instance, in *Impotence and Making in Samuel Beckett's Trilogy*, states the fact that the communion fails in *Molloy* and this failure represents God's impotence in the modern era. But why does Moran insist on participating in the eucharist? Christians eat bread and drink wine in memory of Christ's body and blood in communion. In Becker's view, this ritual indicates the Christians' desire to obtain the Son of God's soul. By eating bread and drinking wine, Christians symbolically pour Jesus Christ's blood into their body and wish to be reborn after their death; in other words, they wish to experience the promised resignation. Thus, according to Becker, we can claim that Moran's insistence to be in mass, eat bread, and drink wine indicates his desire to obtain immortality: "if there was one thing displeased me, at that time, it was being late for the last mass… I who never missed mass" (85).

Similarly, Yalom asserts that "acceptance of socially sanctioned religious beliefs…detoxify death" (*Existential* 111). In *Molloy*, we witness the narrator's effort to detoxify death by a religious act. Nevertheless, at some points, he grapples with the absurdity of his beliefs, confronting the Kierkegaardian fact that "God (light) becomes historical" (Shaw 40). Beckett represents this confrontation thus: "on and on heaping up and up, until there is no room, no light, for anymore. What is certain is that the man with the stick did not pass by again that night, because I would have heard him if he had" (14). The absence of the man with the stick (representing God or Christ) – and the assertion that he would have heard him if he had passed by – underscore the absurdity of the narrator's beliefs. Despite this confrontation, the narrator does not readily accept it and, instead, turns to alternative means to reconcile his wavering faith apparent in his words: "The truth is I don't know much. For example, my mother's death. Was she already dead when I came? Or did she only die later? I mean enough to bury. I don't know" (Beckett 8).

Brodribb believes that "Beckett dramatizes Heidegger's thrownness" (38). This thrownness appears in the very beginning of the novel. Molloy discovers himself in his mother's room, presumably after her passing which foreshadows his own demise: "I am in my mother's room…. I have taken her place. I must resemble her more and more" (Beckett 8). Rank posits that "the room, the space…for the Unconscious regularly symbolizes the female genitals…the place in which before the birth trauma one was protected and warmed" (85), where a child experiences a sense of security within the confines of the mother's body before being thrust into the unfamiliar realm of existence. This explains Molloy's refuge in his mother's room before facing the trauma associated with death.

The narrator in *Molloy* begins the narrative by acknowledging a confrontation with mortality: "What I'd like now is to speak of the things that are left, say my good-byes, finish dying" (Beckett 8). Despite this acknowledgment, the narrator employs various strategies to conceal his existential fragility. Yalom argues that when an individual confronts someone's death, "the survivor has not only suffered an 'object loss' but has encountered the loss of himself or herself as well. Beneath the grief for the loss of another lies the message, [if] your mother … dies, then you will die, too" (*Existential* 56). Having faced his mother's death and its message, the narrator clings to symbolic immortality through a 'biological mode' to ease the intertwined anxieties of death and castration.[9] Consequently, after his mother's death, Molloy unconsciously desires a son and establishes a connection with the enduring chain of biological attachments: "I must

resemble her more and more. All I need now is a son" (Beckett 8). However, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that this attempt to attain immortality through 'biological mode' proves ineffective. In the second section of the novel, Jacques Moran introduces his son whose name is Jacques, just like his father. And this similarity of the names indicates Moran's wish to live through his son. But then, Moran reports that there is no affinity between him and his son. "He was not worthy of me, not in the same class at all. I could not escape this conclusion." (94). Moran's fear of not being loved and remembered by his son indicates his death anxiety. And finally, we see that his son leaves him.

The other mode used by Molloy to mask his existential angst is the experiential transcendent mode. In this mode, the narrator seeks to immerse himself in an intense state where time and death lose their significance, and he resides in the continuous present: "My life, my life, now I speak of it as of something over, now as of a joke which still goes on, and it is neither, for at the same time it is over and it goes on, and is there any tense for that?" (33). In this state, there is no past or future, and the conclusion remains elusive. In an attempt to evade death, the narrator psychologically numbs himself. Yalom draws on Kierkegaard, asserting that "man limited and diminished himself in order to avoid the perception of the "terror, perdition and annihilation that dwell next door to any man" (qtd. in Yalom, *Existential* 111). It can be argued that Molloy employs a similar strategy to distance himself from the contemplation of mortality. "To be literally incapable of motion at last, that must be something! My mind swoons when I think of it. And mute into the bargain! And perhaps as deaf as a post! And who knows as blind as a bat! And as likely as not your memory a blank! And just enough brain intact to allow you to exult! And to dread death like a regeneration" (Beckett 126). Therefore, he attempts to hide true death by undergoing partial death and psychological numbing, rendering himself motionless, deaf, and paralyzed. Another traceable path to obtain symbolic immortality is believing in an everlasting nature mode, which happens when one desires to survive by rejoining the whirling life forces of nature; like Moran who states: "I am no longer with Lousse, but out in the heart again of the pre-established harmony" (56). In this novel, both Molloy and Moran really wish to consider themselves as a part of natural harmony and, in this way, attempt to obtain symbolic immortality.

3.2. Yalomian Defense Mechanisms in Molloy

Yalom argues that death is an ever-present reality in our lives, and through various defense mechanisms, we try to conceal it and achieve immortality. However, our awareness of our fragility of being and the possibility of death can sometimes manifest in everyday fears, such as the fear of not being loved, growing old, or castration. These fears are all rooted in death anxiety, and as we become conscious of this latent anxiety,

we develop defense mechanisms to suppress it. This is evident in Beckett's characters who protect themselves from existential death and anxiety through defense mechanisms. According to Yalomian existential psychotherapy, some patients believe in an eternal rescuer in order to reduce anxiety, avoid death, and "to be found, protected, and saved" (*Existential* 115). This defense mechanism manifests in *Molloy*. Molloy has killed Lousse's dog and Lousse wants Molloy to take the place of the pet: "I could not prevent her from having a weakness for me, neither could she. I would live in her home, as though it were my own…. I would as it was taking the place of the dog I had killed" (Beckett 43). In this scene, Molloy, who always acts as if he does not have any choice, stays with her for a while. But his ignorance of the choice is intended as a way through which he escapes death, just like Jane in Yalom's experience.

On the other hand, the substitution of Molloy for the lost dog – the dog playing the role of a child – implies that Lousse is looking forward to achieving symbolic immortality through biological mode: "I would as it was taking the place of the dog I had killed, as it for her had taken the place of a child…All she asked was to feel me near her, with her" (43). Lousse's and Molloy's conditions parallel Yalom's clinical cases: Lousse is engaged in a masochistic relationship with Molloy, fulfilling her desire to possess him. She seeks to evade isolation and its associated death by merging with a rescuer, whether a dog or an unfamiliar person. Molloy, too, yearns for protection from a dominant figure but never asks for Lousse's help. The desire to be protected by an omnipotent power is also found in other sections of the novel but this time this omnipotent power is a divine being.

In the second section of the novel, we are introduced to Youdi, Moran's boss whose wishes Moran always attempts to satisfy, thus preventing his anger. Being a suggestive clue, the name 'Youdi' derives from the Chinese root 'Yudi.' In *Encyclopedia of China: The Essential Reference to China, Its History and Culture*, Dorothy Perkins explains that people in China believed that heaven was ruled by an immortal God called Yuhuang or Yudi (118). Those who live according to Yudi's principles will be allowed to enter Yudi's domain after their death and will be reborn as immortal gods. Thus, we can claim that here Beckett's Youdi is that Chinese immortal God (Yudi) who offers immortality to mortal Moran. At this point, therefore, Moran reveals his belief in an eternal rescuer, Yudi. By obeying Yudi's command, Moran wishes to obtain immortality and avoid death and its accompanied anxiety, "I shall follow it from this day forth, no matter what it commands. And when it ceases, leaving me in doubt and darkness, I shall wait for it to come back, and do nothing" (Beckett 119).

Elsewhere, when Moran refers to his afterlife, he remarks: "I shall be far away, before these lines are read, in a place where no one will dream of coming to look for me. And then Youdi will take care of me" (140). Thus, in Beckett's *Molloy*, Youdi serves as a rescuer. Moran creates what Fromm called the 'magic helper' or what Masserman called 'the omnipotent servant' in his mind, obeying his command which is against his real desires to first negate his freedom and then to enter Youdi's (Yudi's) domain and be reborn as an immortal God.

Drawing on the myth of Juno on his way to find Molloy, and amidst the silence of the plain and the utter isolation, Moran confronts his mortality anxiety but soon suppresses it: "I heard them straying about again and grazing. I distinguished at last, at the limit of the plain, a dim glow, the sum of countless points of light blurred by the distance, I thought of Juno's milk" (144). Juno's milk again is a symbol of immortality in Greek mythology. Here, this mythological allusion depicts Moran's belief in an eternal rescuer who will not leave him alone, and even if he dies, he will obtain a higher immortal status at the end. At the narrative's conclusion, Moran's fear of death reemerges as he approaches his destination, seeking an eternal savior to protect him from inevitable finality. In this crucial moment, Gaber[10] emerges as the defender and messenger, arriving to save Moran from the brink of finality: "I said, I shall soon lose consciousness altogether, it is merely a question of time. But Gaber's arrival put a stop to these frolics" (147).

The protagonist, whether through the persona of Molloy or Moran, predominantly employs passive defense mechanisms. We can claim that Beckett's characters are "avoiding non-being by avoiding being" (Laing 111). This suggests that they often rely on the concept of an 'eternal rescuer' or a 'magical other' to mitigate their anxiety about death. However, in some points of the narrative, Molloy – or Moran – finds out that his belief in an eternal rescuer falls short in alleviating death anxiety, whereby he turns to an alternative denial system, that is, placing faith in their personal specialness. This shift is evident when he demonstrates his hatred of both humans and non-humans (Beckett 95). This shift from relying on an eternal rescuer to emphasizing personal specialness reflects the character's death anxiety. Yalom's theory suggests that individuals with a sense of specialness often exhibit aggressive behavior. This defense mechanism, seen in Lacanian psychoanalysis as a way to defeat the ideal self against oedipal desires, is also seen in existential psychoanalysis as a shield against mortality (*Existential* 121). This defense mechanism expands one's control and attempts to exclude death, sometimes even resulting in intense acts like killing another person. Ernest Becker states that "killing is a symbolic solution of a biological limitation" (99) and Otto Rank also addresses the same notion: "the death fear of the ego is lessened by the killing, the sacrifice, of the other through the death of the other, one buys oneself free from the penalty of dying, of being killed" (qtd. in Becker 99).

In the following instance, we can observe aggressive maneuver on different occasions which is a type of believing in one's own specialness. This manner, first, is noticeable when Moran accepts the commission to take the journey and find Molloy. Molloy's is a journey to the "unheimlich" that, like death, terrifies Moran. That is why he shows aggressive maneuver: "I wondered, suddenly rebellious, what compelled me to accept this commission. But I had already accepted it, I had given my word. Too late" (Beckett 95). This maneuver is also recognizable in a scene where Moran kills the stranger in the forest (75). He thinks that the strange man wants to keep him by himself. To avoid this trap, he kills the man. Another case in point is the relations between Moran and his son at the beginning of the second section, where Moran wishes to control every single act of his son, which again manifests his occasional "aggression and control" defense mechanism.

The third common way to escape death and its accompanied anxiety is through sexual affairs. Catlett and Firestone explain that "sexual relationships can function as a means of partially gratifying primitive longings for reassurance and security as well as reducing the anxiety about one's finite existence" (83). They further explain that many couples just have routine intercourse without any lovemaking or affection, which can be a clue to their death anxiety. Yalom, also, discusses clinical cases where death anxiety turns into castration fear, and patients temporarily suppress it by engaging in sexual affairs (*Existential 146*). Thus, to defeat death anxiety, one can engage in reproduction and intercourse. Before explaining sexual affair as a defense mechanism against death anxiety in *Molloy*, we will briefly address Beckett's writing in the context of Rank's notion of the trauma of birth because his views can aid us in better understanding of the novel. In *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work*, Paul Stewart explains Rank's idea that "the trauma of birth can be assuaged through successful heterosexual intercourse with the gratification of partially returning to the mother" (68) and in *Molloy,* we can follow the various clues where Molloy desires to return to his mother's womb. In *Molloy*, this desire is depicted through his "intrauterine recall" (Stewart 66). Stewart adds that Beckett's protagonists attempt to conquer the trauma of birth either through heterosexual relationships or through procreation but their attempts constantly fail and "the protagonists would then be reasserting the need to entirely return to the womb" (68). Stewart further asserts that "Molloy and Lousse, and Malone and the woman who brings him the dish and pot are womb-like shelters to the Beckettian man, yet such shelter is only temporary and unsatisfactory" (75) and they leave the women in favor of returning to the mother.

Accordingly, Beckett's characters will turn to either sexual affairs or procreation as a means of forgetting their trauma of birth, but these two strategies are not satisfactory and cannot heal the pain they experience at birth. It is important to realize the similarities between giving birth and a near-death in both experiences whereby one leaves the Heimlich for the Unheimlich. Therefore, engaging in sexual activity could act as an unconscious defense against both birth trauma and death anxiety. In the initial section of *Molloy*, Molloy reflects on his encounter with a woman named Ruth, expressing, "A mug's game in my opinion and tiring on top of that, in the long run. But I lent myself to it with a good enough grace, knowing it was love, for she had told me so" (51). However, Molloy later questions the nature of his experience, stating, "differently. I wonder what she meant exactly. Perhaps after all she put me in her rectum. A matter of complete indifference to me, I needn't tell you. But is it true love, in the rectum? That's what bothers me sometimes. Have I never known true love, after all?" (52). Molloy engages in intercourse not out of love but as a means to alleviate his anxiety about finitude.

3.3. Molloy (Moran) as an Inauthentic Dasein

Death is the given of existence from which there is no way to flee, hence, one cannot control or master it. Heidegger also explains the fact that death is not something that simply happens at the end of one's life but "Dasein has awareness that it will die, that it may die at any moment" (Inwood 69), and this awareness that Dasein moves to its own death shapes Dasein's whole life and distinguishes the inauthentic Dasein from the authentic Dasein. In *SZ*, Heidegger posits that inauthentic Dasein views death as a distant possibility and uses defense mechanisms to shield itself from the anxiety of death. In contrast, authentic Dasein acknowledges the possibility of death, which negates all other possibilities, and this experience is the only one that "individualizes Dasein down to itself" (308). Yalom, too, argues that there is a "difference between knowing and truly knowing, between the everyday awareness of death we all possess and the full facing of my death" (*Existential* 120). Hence, it is only by truly knowing about death that one will be able to make every decision in the light of death and embrace his or her existential death.

In *Molloy*, the narrator encounters death and its accompanied anxiety in one way or another. He has many boundary situations whereby he uses his anxiety as a turning point of his existence as Kierkegaard suggests: "anxiety can have an awakening function to develop a truer and more courageous self, it is an important tool, a new possibility, towards a fuller life" (Furchert 284) but the protagonist (either Molloy or Moran), after facing death and the ensuing existential anxiety, clings to various forms of defense

mechanisms to shield himself. Thus, he either merges with a divine existence and other existences to flee from nonbeing or clings to an irrational belief in his specialness, thinking "limits, aging, death may apply to them but not to oneself, not to me" (Yalom, *Existential* 296). The defense mechanisms he adopts may temporarily alleviate the pain of death anxiety but it throws him into the very state of non-being that he is afraid of. Thus, *Molloy*'s protagonist deprives himself of being and choosing to exist. There are moments where Moran takes steps toward individuation which lies over the unheimlich, but when he comes across threats on the way, he returns to his Heimlich, that is, to his rescuer (Yudi) and as a result, he never goes through the individuation process that goes beyond his present state, and thus never experiences the joy of life: "But I shall not dwell upon this journey home, its furies and treacheries. And I shall pass over in silence the fiends in human shape and the phantoms of the dead that tried to prevent me from getting home, in obedience to Youdi's command. But one or two words nevertheless, for my own edification and to prepare my soul to make an end" (Beckett 150).

Going back to the Heimlich is synonymous with ignorance and negation of both his individuation and death, and is reminiscent of Kierkergaad's inauthentic self or "the knight of resignation" who is never able to perceive the value of life and the joy of every moment just like Moran who never experiences the joy which resides in the unhelmich, over facing his existential anxiety. In other words, Beckett's protagonist is the inauthentic Dasein, surrounded by death but he decides to be deaf to the message that death brings him; when he encounters boundary situations, instead of taking an Odysseus journey to the self – what Kierkegaard called inwardness – he prefers to fall back into the state of ignorance and as such fails in this journey.

4. Conclusion

Julian Young's "Death and Authenticity" explores the connection between death and authenticity in Heidegger's perspective. He argues that facing death leads to an authentic life, while failing to do so results in inauthenticity (103). Yalom, also, suggests that individuals can either embrace an authentic existence by confronting existential concerns or avoiding them through defense mechanisms. The protagonist of Beckett's *Molloy* adopts the latter approach while confronting existential death and anxiety, consistently relying on defense mechanisms throughout the narrative. Beckett explores the motifs of existential death, vividly portraying boundary conditions where his characters are compelled to confront the existential facet of life, specifically death. Given the predominant passivity among Beckett's characters, they frequently resort to passive defense strategies, such as 'believing in an eternal rescuer.' The parasitic characters in Beckett's narrative, such as Molloy or Moran, utilize others (Lousse, Gaber, His son, Yudi) as magical shields to protect themselves from existential death and its accompanying anxiety.

Molloy's investigation for a father figure[11] indicates his attempt to escape the inevitability of death and its associated angst. Molloy, either through the enactment of rituals and myths or by embodying various characters, endeavors to transcend the state of non-being. He employs a variety of strategies, including self-effacement, passivity, dependency, cultivating masochistic relationships, and a refusal to embrace adulthood, all in an attempt to escape the inevitability of death and to cope with the existential anxiety. However, there are instances when Molloy's belief in an eternal rescuer collapse, thus prompting him to resort to alternative means to conceal his anxiety. During these moments, Molloy shifts to narcissism and control and aggressive maneuvers, reflective of his belief in 'personal specialness,' to postpone the impending reality of his own mortality. In Beckett's works, "it is failure and death – 'the suffering of being' – and the ridiculous absurdity of existence that seem to be paramount" (Malpas 164) and as such, we can claim, his characters fail to recognize that life embodies the possibility of possibility, while death signifies the impossibility of further possibility. Consequently, Beckett's character relinquishes being due to a profound fear of non-being. Paul Tillich contends that "a neurotic, who is aware of nonbeing, wants to banish it and is ready to pay a very high price for this" (Catlett and Firestone 113). In the context of *Molloy*, the neurotic protagonist similarly desires to banish life at the cost of authentic existence.

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Notes

[1] In Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*
[2] In Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich*
[3] In Albert Camus's *The Stranger*
[4] "Epitomized by family continuity" (Lifton 18).
[5] "Include a specific concept of life after death" (Lifton 19).
[6] "Through great works of art, literature, or science, or through more humble influences on people around us" (Lifton 21).
[7] "The perception that the natural environment around us, limitless in space and time, will remain" (Lifton 22).
[8] "It depends on a psychic state-one so intense and all-encompassing that time and death disappear" (Lifton 24).
[9] Death confrontation according to Melanie Klein reinforce the castration anxiety. To assuage death anxiety and the accompanied castration anxiety, one wished to achieve symbolic immortality in biological mode.
[10] The name Gaber comes from the German name 'Gabriel'. There are two important facts about the role of Gabriel in bible. First, In Hebrew bible Gabriel is a defender. On the other hand, Gabriel is a messenger the angel answered and said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.
[11] An important notion in Yalom's book is the wish of the patients to merge with a father figure to escape from death