

Lists in Literary Manuscripts: Creative and Cognitive Tools in an Aesthetics of Incompletion

Dirk Van Hulle

In *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing*, Robert E. Belknap suggests that “pragmatic” lists can be extended to infinity, whereas “literary” lists are closed: “The principle of expandability may apply in theory to literary lists, but in practice these lists are regulated by aesthetic requirements as well. The list form may suggest the idea of inclusivity and expansive accretion, but literary compilations have a limit to the number of items they can hold, beyond which the addition of further units becomes detrimental” (31). Umberto Eco contests this view, claiming that functional or “pragmatic” lists are finite and literary lists can be extended to infinity – as the title of his book *The Infinity of Lists* emphasizes:

Belknap [...] thinks that “pragmatic” lists can be extended to infinity [...] whereas the lists he calls “literary” are in fact closed owing to the formal constraints of the work that contains them (meter, rhyme, sonnet-form, and so on). It seems to me that the argument can easily be turned on its head: insofar as practical lists designate a series of things that, when the list is drawn up, are what they are and no more, then such lists are finite [...] whereas, immaterial of the constraints involved in poetic techniques, Homer could have extended his catalogue of ships to infinity and Ezekiel could have added new attributes to the city of Tyre. (116)

I would like to argue that in the context of lists in literary manuscripts, the controversy between Belknap and Eco about whether a literary list is finite or the other way around appears to be a false dichotomy. What seems crucial is the list’s potential of creating the *illusion* of finiteness, of closure. And whether a list in a literary manuscript is “literary” or merely “pragmatic” depends on whether the reader chooses to frame it as part of the literary work or not. In both cases the list is both finite and expandable. The list has the potential to give us the illusion of closure: when we have the feeling we are out of control and are losing the plot, we make a to-do list assuming that, once we have accomplished all its items, we shall be on top of

things again. But as Sabine Mainberger notes, this comforting sense of closure is only one of a list's functions. She discerns three types: "(1) die endliche, erschöpfend darzustellende"; (2) "die unendliche, nicht erschöpfend darzustellende"; (3) "die endliche, nicht erschöpfend darzustellende". Literary lists are usually of the first or the third type, and they have opposite functions:

Literarische Texte haben es v.a. mit der ersten und der dritten Variante zu tun. Die eine erlaubt, im Sprechen oder Schreiben ein Ganzes zu erreichen, die andere im Gegenteil, wenn nicht immer, so doch zumindest sehr lange weiterzumachen. Vollständig aufzuzählen und so zu einem abgeschlossenen, befriedigenden Totum zu gelangen oder aber aufzählend in ein (relatives) Unendliches und Offenes zu treiben sind zwei grundsätzliche Möglichkeiten des Enumerativen. (11)

My hypothesis is that, although a literary list may be potentially endlessly expandable, its finite nature is actually a crucial characteristic to express this potential and give shape to an aesthetics of incompleteness. In this paper I would like to investigate this matter by taking Samuel Beckett's "pragmatic" and "literary" lists in his manuscripts as a case study. The corpus consists mainly of the Beckett Digital Library and the manuscripts of *Malone meurt / Malone Dies*,¹ a novel in which a key role is played by an *inventory*, the first type of list in Sabine Mainberger's list of lists in the *Einleitung* to her book *Die Kunst des Aufzählens: Elemente zu einer Poetik des Enumerativen* (2). But I shall start with another type of list: the "top five."

Lists and the Fictional Mind

In the top five of novels about lists, my number one is the novel *High Fidelity* by Nick Hornby (published in 1995). In another list, the BBC's list of the Big Read in 2003, it ended on the 143rd place. The novel is about Rob Fleming, who owns a record shop, where he and his employees, Dick and Barry, constantly make top-five lists of different types of music to show off their expertise. When Rob's girlfriend Laura breaks up with him, his reaction is to make a top-five list of memorable split-ups, and

¹ Both the library and the manuscripts are part of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (www.beckettarchive.org). *Malone meurt / Malone Dies* is the fifth edition and will henceforth be referred to as BDMP 5.

he sets on a quest to re-evaluate his failed relationships. In the end, this re-examination, together with the death of Laura's father, brings the two together again. It is however hard to decide whether the making of lists is a positive or a negative element in this process. On the one hand, the making of top-five lists shows Rob's (and his two employees') almost Peter Pan-like refusal to grow up. In the end, life turns out to be just a bit too complex to be summarized and categorized in top-five lists. On the other hand, the top five of memorable split-ups, and later on, the top-five list Rob makes of his favourite professions, help him create some order in the chaos. When Laura happens to find the list of top-five professions, she notices that the fifth profession is "architect" – something for which Rob (who is already in his thirties) would have to go to university and study for several years, which is quite unrealistic. She also notices that owning a record shop is not on the list. When she asks him if he does not like to work in the music business, he has to admit that he does. So she crosses out item five ("architect") and replaces it by "record shop owner" (223). It is not number one on the list, but still a modest sign of satisfaction; not complacency but enough to get on with one's life. This kind of list may be literary in the sense that it is part of a work of literature, but in the fictional world it is a functional or pragmatic list. Belknap refers to the inventory of supplies necessary to outfit a fleet of whalers, which Ishmael copies from an ancient book in *Moby-Dick* (Belknap 2004, 12). But whereas the pragmatic list is expandable according to Belknap, the top five in *High Fidelity* is clearly finite. At the same time, it is also a "literary" list, and Eco may claim that a literary list is endlessly expandable, but then it would not be a top five anymore. In Belknap's sense, it is a "literary" list and therefore finite, because of the sense of closure it suggests, unlike a pragmatic list: "A grocery list [...] has no requisite force of closure" (30), "additional items can always be added" (31). In fact, the "literary" list in *High Fidelity* is necessarily finite, for it is crucial that Rob's own profession makes it into the list of five items in order for him to find enough satisfaction in his profession to move on.

This example shows that it is not always easy to decide whether a list is pragmatic or literary. And perhaps the controversy is not really the core of the matter. What seems most crucial is the *illusion* of finiteness to give a sense of closure. Even in a pragmatic, functional grocery list, the fact that it is expandable is less important than the sense of closure it provides when one has found all the items on the list in the supermarket and can proceed to the pay desk. It has an obvious cognitive function.

The list is an excellent example to illustrate the so-called “extended mind” hypothesis, suggested by Clark and Chalmers (1998). In their seminal article “The Extended Mind,” they suggest that the mind is not confined to the inside of the skull but should rather be conceived as the nexus between an intelligent agent and its environment. This hypothesis is illustrated by means of the example of the fictitious Alzheimer’s patient (“Otto”), who uses a notebook to remember the address of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Otto’s memory may not function the way it works in other people’s minds, but his notebook serves as an extension of his mind (Clark and Chalmers [1998] 2010, 33-4). The example of an Alzheimer’s patient may create the impression that the extension is only relevant to exceptional cases. But people with a fully functioning biological memory also constantly use extensions, and computers, smart phones and lists are all examples of the so-called “coupled cognitive systems” in which both the external object and the brain are equally indispensable (29).

Lists and the Writing Mind

The workings of the extended mind can be examined in the context of creative writing by examining a literary work’s genesis, for instance with keystroke logging software in the case of born-digital works, or by means of manuscripts and marginalia in the case of analogue writing processes. Manuscripts and authors’ personal copies of books often contain lists, which can help us examine the role of lists as a cognition-enhancing tool. In Samuel Beckett’s personal library, there are a few books that contain snippets of paper with lists. For instance, a list of his favorite poems by Verlaine is inserted in his copy of the Pléiade edition of Verlaine’s complete works. It happens to be a “top five”:

Dans le vieux parc (F.G. 121)
Un gd. sommeil noir (S.)
Le ciel est par-dessus le toit — (S.)
Je fais souvent ce rêve — (P.S.)
Le Pal²

² See the Beckett Digital Library, ed. Dirk Van Hulle, Mark Nixon and Vincent Neyt, <http://www.beckettarchive.org/library/VER-OEU.html>

The first lines of these five poems are written on a piece of paper inserted in Beckett's unmarked copy of Verlaine's *Œuvres poétiques complètes* in the Pléiade edition (cf. Van Hulle and Nixon, 61). Beckett acquired this book rather late in his life (in 1968), but that does not mean he read Verlaine only after that time. As a student, he had studied Verlaine (one of Verlaine's books was on the list of required reading at Trinity College Dublin when Beckett was studying there), but at that moment in his life, he did not yet have the means to purchase all the books he read. He usually borrowed them from the library. So it is hard to tell "whose" top five this is: whether it represents the favourite poems of the author as a sixty-year-old reader, or a reconstruction by this sexagenarian artist of the poems he used to like when he was still a young man.

We know that, as a young man, Beckett memorized several poems, and probably knew at least parts of Verlaine's poetry by heart. By the time he wrote the novel *Molloy*, shortly after the Second World War, he was in his forties, and apparently he still remembered his Verlaine. In the novel, the eponymous character is digressing about a voice he hears: "I listen and the voice is of a world collapsing endlessly" (38). In the French manuscript, the voice is clearly Molloy's: "~~J'écoute et m'entends dicter un monde figé en perte d'équilibre~~" (BDMP 4, FN2, 24r), i.e. he hears *himself*, dictating a fictional world that is on the verge of collapsing. But then, he cancels this passage. The act of cancellation coincides with the end of a writing session, and in the next versions it becomes less and less clear if the voice is really his own. Beckett started rewriting the passage on a new page (BDMP 4, FN2, 25r), marking the date "7.8.47" on the verso (BDMP 4, FN2, 24v). The voice becomes a whisper, and here the manuscript gives a rare hint as to the origin of this allusion: "Et j'écouterais encore ~~cette chère voix~~ ce cher souffle lointain, depuis longtemps tue (on dirait du Verlaine) et que j'entends enfin" (BDMP 4, FN2, 24v-25r). The reference is to the last lines of Paul Verlaine's sonnet "Mon rêve familier," from the first section ("Melancholia") of his *Poèmes saturniens* (1866). The first and fourth stanzas read as follows:

Je fais souvent ce rêve étrange et pénétrant
 D'une femme inconnue, et que j'aime, et qui m'aime
 Et qui n'est, chaque fois, ni tout à fait la même
 Ni tout à fait une autre, et m'aime et me comprend.
 [...]

Son regard est pareil au regard des statues,
Et, pour sa *voix, lointaine*, et calme, et grave, elle a
L'inflexion des *voix chères* qui se sont *tues*. (Verlaine, 12-14; emphasis added)

[I often have a strange and searing dream / About an unknown woman whom I love / And who loves me. Never quite the same / Nor someone else, she loves, she understands me. [...] Her gaze is like a statue's gaze, / And in her calm and grave and distant voice / Are modulations of loved voices gone to earth. (trans. Martin Sorrell; 15)]

The manuscript of *Malone meurt* is the only version in which Beckett adds the parenthesis with the explicit reference to Verlaine; in the subsequent versions, he covers the intertextual reference. And in the translation it has become so faint that it is barely recognizable as an intertextual reference. But thanks to the manuscript and thanks to the list in the copy of the Pléiade edition, we know it is an allusion to number four in Beckett's top five of Verlaine poems.

This kind of list can be useful in intertextual research. But not all lists in Beckett's library are of the same nature. In his copy of the complete works by Shakespeare, there is a shopping list with three items: "Briquets / foie / whiskey".³ These kinds of lists raise a question Michel Foucault asked in his essay "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" Foucault notes that even when an individual has been accepted as an author, we must still ask whether everything that he wrote, said, or left behind is part of his work, and whether for instance a laundry list by Nietzsche might be a work by the "author" Nietzsche. In his essay, Foucault first coins the notion of the "author function" and notes:

Even when an individual has been accepted as an author, we must still ask whether everything that he wrote, said, or left behind is part of his work. The problem is both theoretical and technical. When undertaking the publication of Nietzsche's works, for example, where should one stop? Surely everything

³ See the Beckett Digital Library, ed. Dirk Van Hulle, Mark Nixon and Vincent Neyt, <http://www.beckettarchive.org/library/SHA-WOR.html>

must be published, but what is “everything”? Everything that Nietzsche himself published, certainly. And what about the rough drafts for his works? Obviously. The plans for his aphorisms? Yes. The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a laundry list: is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum. (103-104)

Of course, Foucault is playing a rhetorical trick and there won't be many readers who will start analysing this shopping list as a newly discovered poem by Samuel Beckett. In the case of Beckett's shopping list, one can hardly regard this as a work (in the sense of an *oeuvre*) but it can be considered part of the work (in the sense of *travail*). Smoking, eating, drinking and reading Shakespeare were part of the *creative ecology* in which Beckett's works took shape. So, yes, in that sense even grocery lists can be part of a work in progress.

Beckett, however, did not like the word “progress” and preferred the notion of mere “gress,” because of what he called its “purity from destination and hence from schedule” (*Letters*, 186). The question this raises is whether Beckett really writes without destination, or without schedule, and what the function of lists is in this oeuvre in gress. Whereas Beckett's personal library serves as a useful corpus for what Belknap calls pragmatic lists, the manuscripts of the post-war novels *Molloy* and *Malone Dies* contain several lists whose status is more ambiguous. Beckett usually writes the body of the text on the recto pages of his notebooks, keeping the versos blank and reserving them for loose jottings or additions. When, on a verso page of his notebook, he jots down a few things he would like to develop in the running text on the rectos, this can still be considered a pragmatic list. But when, as in the case of *Malone Dies*, these lists (almost) coincide with the protagonist's plans to make an inventory before he dies, the clear border between the “pragmatic” and the “literary” starts blurring.

In the beginning of the manuscript of *Malone meurt*, the protagonist does not have a name yet. He comes up with a timetable for his ‘project’ and estimates he will be able to tell himself four stories, one about a man, one about a woman, one about an object and one about an animal, probably a bird. He considers putting the man and the woman in the same story, because there is so little difference between them, but as for

the other two stories, he is explicit about treating them separately: “Mais la chose et l’oiseau, je tiens à les raconter à part” (BDMP 5, FN1, 53r). If he finishes too soon, he intends to speak of the things that remain in his possession. Actually, he is determined to make this inventory no matter what happens. At the back of the notebook, on the verso of the flyleaf, Beckett made a list of items to be included in the inventory:

Inventaire [Inventory]

Béquilles [crutches]

couteau [knife]

pierre [stone]

clefs [keys]

parapluie [umbrella]

bâton [stick]

papillon citron [brimstone butterfly]

rocking-chair

chapeau sans lacet [hat without lace] (BDMP 5, FN1, back flyleaf verso)

Since there is not enough matter for two stories about a man and about a woman, they will be taken together in one story, leaving the narrator with only three stories to tell.⁴ There are multiple versions of what he is going to do if he is still alive after all that. In the first writing layer, he says he will kill himself: “Si après ça *je suis encore en vie je me tuerai.*” (BDMP 5, FN1, 54r; emphasis added) This was immediately crossed out again and replaced by an instant substitution (inline, *currente calamo*) in which Malone says he will get up again: “Si après ça *je tarde à mourir je me lèverai.*” (BDMP 5, FN1, 54r; emphasis added) In the published version, this became: “Si après ça *je vis encore, je ferai le nécessaire, pour être sûr de ne pas m’être trompé*” (*Malone meurt* 12-3; emphasis added) [“If after all that I am still alive I shall take the necessary steps to ensure my not having made a mistake” (*Malone Dies* 6)]. The succession of versions thus also reflects a process of procrastination. Beckett makes Malone divide the remaining time into five, but then wonders: “Into five what?” (*Malone Dies* 6), which is followed by the hilarious comment “Je vais rater ma mort

⁴ The comment ‘Tout ça est très clair’ (*Malone meurt* 12) [‘That is all very clear’ (*Malone Dies* 6)] was not yet part of the manuscript.

si je recommence à réfléchir” (BDMP 5, FN1, 53r) [literally: If I start thinking again I’ll miss my own death; or in Beckett’s translation: “If I start trying to think again I shall make a mess of my decease” (*Malone Dies* 6)].

At that moment in the manuscript, the five elements are: the present situation, three stories and the inventory.⁵ The narrator explicitly calls this a “programme” (BDMP 5, FN1, 53r) and it takes the shape of a list, a “top five” of sorts: the protagonist’s top five of things to do with the rest of his life. Perhaps the question Belknap and Eco were debating – whether a literary list is finite or not – is rather trivial in and of itself, but in Malone’s case it is an existential matter, a matter of life and death: whether his list is “pragmatic” or “literary,” it is definitely finite and he fervently wishes its final item will coincide with his death.

By calling Malone’s top five a “programme,” Beckett thematizes the notion of “écriture à programme.” This notion was coined by the godfather of genetic criticism, Louis Hay, as opposed to “écriture à processus” (“Troisième” 313). Beckett’s lists seem to be too changeable to be called a programme. But that in itself may be considered part of a programme: the only programme he had was the resolve to try and write without a programme. In the early nineteen thirties Beckett taught a few terms as a lecturer of French literature at Trinity College, Dublin. In his lectures, he not only conveyed what he liked in literature, but also what he disliked. Balzac was usually the bad example, which he used as a contrasting background to present his own poetics of the modern novel. In his first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, he put the following analysis in the mouth of one of his characters:

To read Balzac is to receive the impression of a chloroformed world. He is absolute master of his material, he can do what he likes with it, he can *foresee and calculate* its least vicissitude, *he can write the end of his book before he has finished the first paragraph*, because he has turned all his creatures into *clockwork cabbages* and can rely on their staying put wherever needed or staying going at whatever speed in whatever direction he chooses. The whole thing, from beginning to end, takes place in a spellbound backwash. (119; emphasis added)

⁵ “Situation présente, trois jeux, inventaire” (BDMP 5, FN1, 53r). The three games became “trois histoires” in the published version (*Malone meurt* 13) [“three stories” (*Malone Dies* 6)].

In spite of his resolve not to write like Balzac, there were moments when it turned out to be difficult for Beckett to stick to his endeavour to write without a programme, and stick to a form of “écriture à processus,” a form of “gress” rather than progress, of going on, without exactly knowing whither. Sometimes, during the writing process, he did make short lists. At first sight, these lists seem finite, but most of them turn out to be eminently changeable. This indicates that Beckett’s writing comes closer to an “écriture à processus” than to an “écriture à programme,” even though his protagonist claims to have a programme. Moreover, by the time Malone calls it a programme, it appears to be mutable – for originally he said he was going to tell four stories. And later on, the programme will change again, the whole point apparently being to undermine any form of “écriture à programme” and to replace it with a radical commitment to the processuality of what H. Porter Abbott has called “autography” – a “mode of action taken in the moment of writing” (x).

The first of his five items is marked by means of an underlined heading in the manuscript: “Situation présente.” (BDMP 5, FN1, 55r) Basically, his situation comes down to eating and defaecating. “What matters,” according to the narrator, “is to eat and excrete” (*Malone Dies* 9); in the manuscript: “L’essentiel c’est de s’alimenter et d’excréter” (BDMP 5, FN1, 57r). The published version adds: “Vase, gamelle, voilà les poles” (*Malone meurt* 18) [“Dish and pot, dish and pot, these are the poles” (*Malone Dies* 9)]. This alternation of dish and pot is prepared in the note “vie vase-gamelle” at the back of the second notebook (BDMP 5, FN2, 152r) – which can hardly be called a list, just a set of notes, but still, together they could be considered a “laundry list” in Foucault’s sense, and – yes – I think this is part of the author Samuel Beckett’s work and deserves to be published as such.

It is important to try and separate the realm of the writer from that of the narrator, but the point is that Beckett deliberately makes the boundary porous. That the narrative will probably deviate from the programme is already foreshadowed at the very moment the narrator presents it as such: “A full programme. I shall not deviate from it any further than I must. So much for that. I feel I am making a great mistake” (*Malone Dies* 6). The chapter that was headed “Situation présente” ends with the words “Telle semble être ma situation” (BDMP 5, FN1, 58r) [“Such would seem to be my present state” (*Malone Dies* 11)]. After a blank line, the narrator starts telling the first story, opening with “L’homme” (BDMP 5, FN1, 59r). So, in the end

he does not take the story of the man and that of the woman together after all. The man is first called Saposy and Sapo, later the narrator changes his name into Macmann, but the situation of the narrator himself also needs to be told. On one of the verso pages, Beckett therefore wrote a brief, functional to-do list for the next few pages:

Se tuer. [Kill himself.]

Il n'écrit pas tout. [He doesn't write everything.]

Abandonner l'histoire. [Give up the story.]

Ne sait plus où il en est. [Forgets where he left off.] (BDMP 5, FN2, 22v)

Further on in the manuscript, Beckett again prepared the next steps in the narrative:

Il perd son bâton

Dort

Se réveille ayant l'impression d'avoir été ~~ravitailé~~ alimenté pendant son sommeil.

Ne perd pas son temps en de vains désespoirs.

Reprend Macmann, jusqu'à son arrivée contre un talus qui l'empêche d'avance [*for* d'avancer]

Récit interrompu par la visite.

?

[He loses his stick / Sleeps / Wakes up with the impression of having been fed in his sleep. / Does not waste his time on useless despairs. / Resumes Macmann, until he arrives at a rampart which prevents him from going on / Story interrupted by the visit. / ?] (BDMP 5, FN2, 68v)

The list is not finite because it ends with a big question mark. On the facing recto, Beckett indeed makes Malone report the loss of his stick.

The loss of this stick makes him realize what the stick meant to him. It even leads to a so-called “broadening of the mind” (*Malone Dies* 83) and an understanding

of the stick's Platonic "Stickness" (83). This is an interesting case to investigate the extended mind hypothesis, not on the level of the writing mind but on that of the fictional mind. In Malone's case, his pencil and exercise book seem to serve a similar purpose as Otto's notebook in Clark and Chalmers's essay "The Extended Mind." They constitute a prosthesis of Malone's mind, the way his stick serves as an extension of his arms. But it is paradoxically the *absence* of his stick that makes him realize the "broadening" of his mind and exclaim:

I have lost my stick. [...] It is a disaster. I suppose the wisest thing now is to live it over again, meditate upon it and be edified. It is thus that man distinguishes himself from the ape and rises, from discovery to discovery, ever higher, towards the light. Now that I have lost my stick I realize what it is I have lost and all it meant to me. And thence ascend, painfully, to an understanding of the Stick, shorn of all its accidents, such as I had never dreamt of. What a broadening of the mind. (*Malone Dies* 83)

In this ironic summary, the Enlightenment project ("towards the light") is presented as the human capacity to abstract, to reflect upon the stick's Stickness in the absence of the concrete object. But recent paradigms of cognitive philosophy suggest that what Malone calls the "broadening of the mind" is precisely the extension of the mind by means of the interaction with the intelligent agent's material and cultural environment.

My suggestion is of course that the list plays this role of the mind's extension, both on the level of the fictional mind and on that of the writing mind. Even though we know that Beckett explicitly tried not to write according to a programme, like Balzac, even though his writing is much closer to what Louis Hay called "écriture à processus," he did need a minimum of material extension to keep going. The list is a crucial item in the creative ecology – "ecology" in the broad definition of the interactions among organisms and their environment, in this case a human organism and his environment.

Lists and the Reading Mind

Whether a list is “pragmatic” or “literary” is ultimately a matter of readers’ framing. If one does not regard manuscripts as being part of the literary work, the lists in the manuscripts are clearly just pragmatic and functional tools for the writer. In that case, the manuscripts are kept outside of the frame. But many works of art invite their spectators or readers to reflect on the question whether the preparatory works might be part of the work of art. In the visual arts, this can be simply and literally due to the fact that the work is presented without a frame, as in the case of a fresco by the Belgian artist Michaël Borremans, called “The Virgin.” It shows a dark-haired girl with two beams of light that seem to be coming out of her eyes. Next to the portrait, the artist has painted a few lines.⁶ They merely look like try-out brushstrokes to test the thickness of the brushes, or a “list” of the various colours to be used in the painting. Borremans donated this piece of art to the city of Ghent in 2014 and it is part of the public space, next to the city hall. In the Spring of 2016, a community worker was cleaning the area and accidentally removed the lines of paint next to the portrait. So, the question was: did they belong to the painting or not? According to the artist they did, according to the community worker they clearly didn’t. But the community worker is only one of many readers / spectators. His framing irreversibly undid the “list” of colours. Other readers might have wished to watch the work as a combination of the portrait and its accompanying list of brushstrokes.

Thus, the question is: how do we frame this “list” of brushstrokes / colours, and how do we frame Beckett’s lists? Do we leave them out of the frame and consider them merely as functional, pragmatic lists for the artist? Or do we see them as “literary” lists, as part of the artwork? And what is the use of the latter framing? To try and answer these questions, it might be useful to consider lists as cognition-enhancing tools, not just for the fictional mind or the writing mind, but also for the reading mind. Lists may play a role in what Monika Fludernik has termed “experientiality” (12), the notion recently revised by Marco Caracciolo towards a more reader-oriented approach. As Caracciolo notes, “Fludernik’s definition seems to construe experientiality as a property of narrative rather than as something that ‘happens’ in the text-reader interaction” (47). Caracciolo’s emphasis on the reader’s role in his narrative theory builds on enactivism – another postcognitivist approach to

⁶ See <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws/cultuur%2Ben%2Bmedia/kunsten/1.2626819>, accessed 28 December 2018.

cognition (like the Extended Mind Thesis, see above). Enactivism rejects the internal/external mind/world boundary and insists on the mind's active and constitutive role in creating the world it inhabits by continuously interacting with its environment, rather than passively receiving external inputs and translating them into fixed internal representations. Caracciolo quotes the enactivist philosopher Daniel Hutto to argue that "The only way to understand 'what-it-is-like' to have an experience is to actually undergo it or re-imagine undergoing it" (Hutto qtd. in Caracciolo 98). This re-imagining "requires responding in a way that is enactive, on-line and embodied, or, alternatively, in a way that is re-enactive, off-line and imaginative – and still embodied. It involves undergoing and/or imagining experiences both of acting and of being acted upon" (99). Caracciolo is quick to parry a possible interpretation of Hutto's claim: this kind of imagination, he writes, is "not necessarily re-enactive in the sense that it is forced to re-enact past experience" (99). In other words, one does not need to have experienced, say, a breakup to imagine what Rob's breakups (in *High Fidelity*) must have felt like to him. The imagination necessary for this kind of enactment consists in the "simulation of perception" and "depends on memories and knowledge structures that are part of our experiential background [...], but only insofar as it can use them as raw material for story-driven experiences that are, to some extent, unprecedented" (99).

Even though readers of fiction are aware that a fictional character is basically just a string of letters and therefore not capable of being conscious, they willingly and actively attribute consciousness to a character. Moreover, they also empathetically experience a character's consciousness (122-123), which is what Caracciolo calls "consciousness-enactment," located at the intersection between consciousness-attribution and story-driven experience. Lists can play a role in this process of enactment, usually in the form of what Sabine Mainberger calls "recontextualization": "Was auf einer Liste steht, ist *per definitionem* dekontextualisiert, denn nur, was aus seinem Zusammenhang gelöst wurde, läßt sich auf eine Liste setzen. Dekontextualisierung ist eine der grundlegenden Operationen beim Erstellen einer Liste. Die komplementäre Handlung der Kontextualisierung oder Rekontextualisierung ist dagegen wesentlich für alles Verstehen." (19)

The same recontextualization applies to lists in literary manuscripts. If the reader is a genetic critic, s/he will try to use the list to reconstruct the writer's

cognitive and creative process. Here, a similar form of enactment is at play, even though there is of course a difference: a fictional character is evoked by the content of the literary work and has no consciousness, whereas the author of the autograph manuscripts is not fictional and does have a consciousness. But the process of cognition underlying the writing process needs to be reconstructed *after the fact*, often even after the author's death. The reader of manuscripts therefore applies a form of "cognition enactment," an enactment (or re-enactment, with Caracciolo's disclaimer that it is not necessarily the reader's *own* experience, but in this case the writer's, that is re-enacted) of the author's cognitive process during the writing of his or her work (Van Hulle 194).

If lists in manuscripts or other traces of the writing process of a literary work are available at a public archive or have been made accessible online in a digital archive, a reader has the choice to frame them in an inclusive manner. For instance, in the early manuscripts of *Endgame* the Hamm-like character A asks his servant B to read a passage from the Bible. The passage he reads is the long list of the lineage of Shem, son of Noah: "Et Sélah [...] engendra Héber. [...] Et Héber [...] engendra Péleg. [...] Et Péleg [...] engendra Réhu. [...] Et Réhu, ayant vécu trente-deux ans, engendra—' [And Salah [...] begat Eber. [...] And Eber [...] begat Peleg. [...] And Peleg [...] begat Reu. [...] And Reu, having lived thirty-two years, begat—; (BDMP 7, FT2, 41r; see Genesis 11:14-21)].

At first sight, this passage seems to corroborate what H. Porter Abbott has dubbed the "begat structure" of Genesis as a paradigm of the story of parents begetting children, which he calls "the oldest narrative of identity, older than the quest" (12).⁷ This seems to suggest that a list is a basic narrative. Beckett distrusts narratives of identity or "the self," but he also recognizes the urge to tell, and so he *stages* this storytelling urge. His characters do not simply tell stories, they *enact* the apparent human compulsion to create what Daniel C. Dennett calls a "narrative selfhood" (418). Dennett argues that telling stories is "our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition" (418), and Jonathan Gottschall claims that storytelling is "a crucial evolutionary adaptation": "It allows us to experience our

⁷ But then again, Beckett cut this passage after the first draft and in one of Beckett's conceptual notes for *Endgame*, the character A remarks that everyone in his family is sterile: "Tous stériles dans notre famille" (BDMP 7, FM1, 04r). This note undermines the "begat structure" and implies the opposite starting point, a narrative of *nonidentity*.

lives as coherent, orderly, and meaningful” (102). But whereas Gottschall seems to embrace the storytelling impulse, Beckett criticizes it, making it fail to render either identity or experience coherent or meaningful.⁸ Whereas Dennett and Gottschall tend to see these narrative urges as necessary evolutionary strategies, Beckett constantly stresses the deficiencies in his characters’ attempts to “tell” a self. The concept of telling a self (“narrative selfhood”) is questioned, for as soon as one starts telling it, one turns this “self” into a protagonist of one’s own fictions. Malone therefore concluded: “J’ai fini de *me raconter*” (literally: I have finished telling myself; BDMP 5, FN1, 87r), which became: “J’ai fini de *me chercher*” in the published text (‘The search for myself is ended’; *Malone meurt*, 44).

As in *Endgame*, however, the word “Fini” / “Finished” is not the end, but the beginning of the play. Closing the door creates the opportunity to open it again. H. Porter Abbott sees Beckett’s work in line with Joyce’s “work in progress”: “though Joyce finally did (as Beckett would with his own work) see the text bound and published, he wrote it in such a way that readers would continue experiencing forever what he had experienced for the last fourteen years of his life. He had succeeded in creating *an art without end*. Work forever in progress” (20; emphasis added). Beckett took this “continuing incompleteness” a step further in that he created not just a work in progress but an oeuvre in ‘gress’, a continuous *écriture à processus*. To give shape to this aesthetics of continuing incompleteness, the finite nature of the list paradoxically played a crucial role as part of Beckett’s extended mind and the creative ecology of his writing.

Works Cited

Abbott, H. Porter. *Beckett Writing Beckett: The Author in the Autograph*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1996.

Beckett, Samuel. *Malone meurt*. Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1951.

Beckett, Samuel. *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. New York: Arcade, 1993.

Beckett, Samuel. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, vol. 8, 1929-1940. Ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.

⁸ In the manuscripts of *L’Innommable*, this urge is called the obligation to produce oneself: “Si seulement je ~~pouvais me taire~~. n’étais pas dans l’obligation de me produire” (literally: If only I ~~could keep quiet~~ was not obliged to produce myself; BDMP 2, FN1, 3v–4v).

- Beckett, Samuel. *Molloy*. Ed. Shane Weller. London: Faber and Faber, 2009.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Malone Dies*. Ed. Peter Boxall. London: Faber and Faber, 2010.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Samuel Beckett's Molloy: A Digital Genetic Edition*. Ed. Edouard Magessa O'Reilly, Dirk Van Hulle, Pim Verhulst and Vincent Neyt. Brussels: University Press Antwerp, 2016. The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, module 4. <www.beckettarchive.org>, accessed 29 December 2018. Abbreviated as BDMP 4.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Samuel Beckett's Malone meurt / Malone Dies: A Digital Genetic Edition*. Ed. Dirk Van Hulle, Pim Verhulst and Vincent Neyt. Brussels: University Press Antwerp, 2017. The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, module 5. <www.beckettarchive.org>, accessed 29 December 2018. Abbreviated as BDMP 5.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Samuel Beckett's Fin de partie / Endgame: A Digital Genetic Edition*. Ed. Dirk Van Hulle, Shane Weller and Vincent Neyt. Brussels: University Press Antwerp, 2017. The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, module 7. <www.beckettarchive.org>, accessed 30 December 2018. Abbreviated as BDMP 7.
- Belknap, Robert. *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Caracciolo, Marco. *The Experientiality of Narrative: An Enactivist Approach*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.
- Clark, Andy and David Chalmers. "The Extended Mind." *The Extended Mind*. Ed. Richard Menary. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, [1998] (2010). 27-42.
- Eco, Umberto. *The Infinity of Lists: An Illustrated Essay*. Rizzoli, 2009.
- Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinov. Trans. Josué V. Harari. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 101-20.
- Hay, Louis. "La troisième dimension de la littérature." *Texte 5/6* (1986-1987): 313-328.
- Mainberger, Sabine. *Die Kunst des Aufzählens: Elemente zu einer Poetik des Enumerativen*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003.
- Van Hulle, Dirk. "Cognition enactment: Beckett's Molloy Manuscripts and the Reader's Role in Genetic Criticism." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui* 29:1 (2017): 185-198.
- Verlaine, Paul. *Selected Poems*. Trans. Martin Sorrell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.