Introduction:
Beckett and the Sense of an Ending

In the manuscript of *En attendant Godot*, when Pozzo and Lucky have just left and a boy's voice is heard backstage, Lévy (as Estragon was still called at that moment in the writing process) comments: '~~Et ce n'est pas fini~~.' (*BDMP6*, FN, 68r) Beckett crossed out the sentence and replaced it with: 'Ça recommence.' The observation that it is not finished presages Clov's opening statement in *Fin de partie*: 'Fini, c'est fini, ça va finir, ça va peut-être finir.' (1957, 15) Even though this opening statement is not negatively formulated like the deleted sentence in the *Godot* manuscript, the observation comes down to the same conclusion: one might have thought or wished it was finished but it is not. This idea also applies to Beckett's own writing practice. After finishing *L'Innommable*, Beckett had reached an impasse. He tried to find ways to get out of it and move on, notably by writing four almost illegible vignettes ('Au bout de ces années perdues', 'Hourrah je me suis repris', 'On le tortura bien', 'Ici personne ne vient jamais'; see Cohn 2001, 203-6; Nixon 2014, 287-90). He managed to write thirteen *Textes pour rien* and switched to writing in English to compose *From an Abandoned Work*. But as for his dramatic texts, the ease with which he had been able to write *En attendant Godot* did not return. On the contrary, *Fin de partie* was to become the work with the most complicated and difficult genesis of all of Beckett's dramatic texts.

The way in which this work came together also differs from the making of most of Beckett's other writings, with the possible exception of his novel *Watt*. But *Watt* was completed in 1945 – that is, before what he would later describe to Lawrence Shainberg as a 'revelation' (see Knowlson 1996, 351). Returning to Dublin shortly after the end of the Second World War, Beckett found out that his mother had contracted Parkinson's Disease:

> Her face was a mask, completely unrecognizable. Looking at her, I had a sudden realization that all the work I'd done before was on the wrong track. I guess you'd have to call it a revelation. Strong word, I know, but so it was. I simply understood that there was no sense adding to the store of information, gathering knowledge. The whole attempt at knowledge, it seemed to me, had come to nothing. It was all haywire. What I had to do was investigate not-knowing, not-perceiving, the whole world of incompleteness. (Beckett qtd. in Shainberg 1987, 106)

The works written in the five years after this moment are characterized by a relatively smooth and straightforward genesis. The manuscripts of *Molloy*, *Malone meurt*, *L'Innommable* and especially *En attendant Godot* show a writing process that coincides almost perfectly with the narrative or dramatic sequence of these works, to such a degree that it seems as if Beckett, in an anti-Balzacian gesture, set himself the task of writing without a plan (see *BDMP2*, *4*, *5*, *6*). This procedure changed dramatically when he tried to write his second major play. He drafted several dramatic fragments – dialogues between 'A&B', 'X&F', 'Louis & Blanc', 'Ernest & Alice', 'Espace souterrain', 'Coups de gong' – but for a long time he remained unable to turn these fragments into a play.

To some extent, the genesis of *Fin de partie* resembles James Joyce's approach when writing *Finnegans Wake*, starting with a set of vignettes (on such topics as St Kevin, St Patrick and the Druid, Tristan and Isolde). However, unlike Beckett, Joyce was always confident that he could use whatever linguistic matter he encountered, and that the pieces would 'fuse of themselves' (Joyce 1957, 204). This confidence was not ill-placed, for ultimately he indeed managed to integrate almost all of his early vignettes into *Finnegans Wake*. In contrast, Beckett did not make an attempt to incorporate his early dramatic fragments into the play. The result is that Beckett scholars have disagreed as to whether some of these fragments actually belong to the *avant-texte* of the play or not. For instance, Giuseppina Restivo (1994) argues that the fragment 'Ernest & Alice' is a precursor of *Fin de partie*, whereas Ruby Cohn finds too few correspondences to warrant its inclusion in her 'stemma' of the composition process (Cohn 2001, 220). In her *Beckett Canon* it is therefore treated as a separate, unpublished work. In this book, as well as in the digital genetic edition, we do include it and treat it as an abandoned section that is part of the period which Beckett himself identified as 'avant *Fin de partie*'.

'Before' and 'Towards' *Fin de partie*

In this context, 'avant' has at least two meanings: on the one hand, it suggests that what comes before bears some relationship with, or is a precursor of, *Fin de partie*; on the other hand, it can mean that what comes

before does not yet belong to the genesis of *Fin de partie*. We have therefore divided the earliest drafts according to this double logic:

a) The dialogues between 'A&B' and 'X&F' (FN1, FN2, FT1) can be regarded as precursors of *Fin de partie*, since they contain scenes and motifs that clearly recur in the published play.

b) The abandoned sections 'Espace souterrain' (AS1), 'Coups de gong' (AS2), as well as the dialogues between Louis & Blanc (AS3), Ernest & Alice (AS4) and 'Chien anagramme de niche' (AS5) also contain themes – such as the rationalization of human suffering – that are developed in *Fin de partie*. Although they are less easily recognizable as precursors, they nonetheless belong to the period between *En attendant Godot* and *Fin de partie*, which we refer to as 'Before *Fin de partie*', following Beckett's example. If they were less 'successful' in making it into the published version, this 'failure' was as necessary a stage in the writing process as were the more 'successful' drafts.

There is a sense of 'dysteleology' that characterizes these dialogues. Not unlike vestigial organs, such as a boa constrictor's remnants of hind legs, the vestigial dialogues are a reminder that a writing process is sometimes not a teleological process in the sense that the 'telos' or goal is not always in view from the outset. Like the snake's vestigial hind legs, the early dialogues may not play any role in the published text, but they did have a crucial function at some point in the genesis, even if that function was simply to make Beckett realize that this was not the right way to proceed.

The moment the contours of a play start to emerge, however, it is possible to discern a certain teleology. That is why we have called the second part of the genesis 'Towards *Fin de partie*'. For the structure of this part, we resort to Beckett's own division of the play into sixteen parts. While this structure was devised after the fact (during the rehearsals for the 1967 Schiller-Theater Werkstatt production in Berlin), and while it is therefore somewhat artificial to impose it retrospectively upon the genesis, it does serve the pragmatic purpose of structuring the teleological part of that genesis. The sixteen parts can be found in the production notebook of the 1967 Schiller-Theater Werkstatt performance, as published in the second volume of the *Theatrical Notebooks* (*TN2* 80). They correspond to the sixteen 'Abschnitte' mentioned by the dramaturge Michael Haerdter in his diary of the 1967 rehearsals,[1]

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1   Michael Haerdter's diary of the 1967 production was published under the title 'Samuel Beckett inszeniert das "Endspiel". Bericht von den Proben der Berliner

which Beckett dictated by heart to the actors on the first day of rehearsals for the Berlin performance, Friday 18 August 1967 (the text in bold is Beckett's summary; *TN2* 80). These are followed by Michael Haerdter's paraphrases of how Beckett communicated the sixteen sections to the actors in Berlin on 21 August 1967:

1   **Clov – 1st inspection:** Clov's mime-show and first soliloquy.
2   **Hamm:** Hamm's wakening, first soliloquy, first dialogue with Clov.
3   **Nagg – Nell:** Dialogue, Nagg and Nell.
4   **1st round:** The dialogue between Hamm and Clov including the 'little turn – right around the world!' and ending with Clov's 'If I could kill him …'
5   **2nd inspection:** Clov's 'comedy' with ladder and telescope.
6   **Flea:** Hamm's interrogation of Clov, rising to the burlesque flea scene.
7   **Dog:** Dialogue between Hamm and Clov, ending with the ironic mirror image of the dog episode.
8   **Pegg – Boat hook – Madman – Alarm:** Clov's rebellion, leading into Hamm's story of the madman and trailing off into the alarm clock scene.
9   **Hamm:** Hamm's story of the beggar.
10 **Nagg's curse:** The prayer, ending with Nagg's curse.
11 **Order – Hamm's story – Nell dead:** Hamm's and Clov's play within a play: Hamm's chronicle.
12 **2nd round:** The second turn with the chair.
13 **Rug – Clov's refusal to touch:** Dialogue between Hamm and Clov, leading into:
14 **Hamm:** Hamm's rôle.
15 **Rat escaped – no more pain k[iller] – 3rd inspection:** Emancipation of Clov, ending with his monologue and exit.
16 **Hamm:** Hamm's final monologue.[2]

Inszenierung 1967', in *Materialien zu Beckett's 'Endspiel'* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 36-111; an English translation under the title 'Michael Heardter: A Rehearsal Diary' was published in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 204-38.
2   See Haerdter 1968, 42-3; McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 206. Beckett made an alternative division in the notebook (UoR MS 1974) and the annotated copy (UoR

While the genesis of *Fin de partie* is quite complicated, the translation proceeded remarkably swiftly, although it did entail doubts regarding two key passages in French: Clov's song and the exchange between Hamm and Clov regarding the boy. Ultimately, Beckett would not include either passage in the published English version, even though a space was left for the song on both the autograph manuscript and the first typescript of the English translation (see EN, 73r, ET1, 49r) and it would be included in the original German translation of the play.

The pattern of this bilingual genesis is in many ways the exact opposite of *L'Innommable / The Unnamable*: the French manuscript of *L'Innommable* was written relatively fast, in about ten months (29 March 1949 – January 1950), whereas it took Beckett two years to finish his translation of the novel (see *BDMP2*). In the case of *Fin de partie*, the French genesis took more than six years, whereas the translation was completed in a matter of months (May-August 1957), during a period when Beckett had broken off from his attempt to translate *L'Innommable* (see Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 187). That said, and again in striking contrast to *L'Innommable / The Unnamable*, the versions of *Fin de partie* and *Endgame* published in 1957 and 1958 respectively were anything but definitive. Beckett proposed revisions to the published French and English texts, as well as to the original German translation, these revisions being reflected in a range of manuscript documents, as well as in the German, French and English texts published in the 1969 and 1974 Suhrkamp editions and in the 'Revised Text' of *Endgame*

MS 1975) that he used for the production in 1980 at the Riverside Studios, London:

1. 11-12: C's opening, monologue, exit.
2. 12-18: H wakes – exit C, H: 'We're getting on.'
3. 18-22: Dialogue N-N
4. 22-26: H: 'Silence' – C's move to chair from window & H: 'You give me the shivers.'
5. 26-35: C: 'Why this farce ...' – exit C, H: 'Got him that time.'
6. 35-39: N: 'I'm listening', H's story, N's curse
7. 39-44: H: 'Our revels...', – C: 'If I don't kill that rat...' & exit.
8. 44-53: H's monologue – end.' (*TN2* 187)

That this division consists of only eight sections (as opposed to the sixteen sections of the 1967 production) indicates that these structures were devised mainly for pragmatic purposes – in Beckett's case, to direct his play in varying circumstances; in our case, to analyse its genesis. We have chosen to employ the 16-part structure because it allows us to discuss the genesis by means of relatively small units of text.

published posthumously, in the second volume of the *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*.[3]

Materials

It would, of course, not be possible to analyse the genesis of *Fin de partie / Endgame* if Beckett had not kept his manuscripts. He not only preserved them, he also gave some of them to friends. For instance, notebook MS-OSU-RARE-115 (FN3) is called the 'Tara MacGowran' Notebook because Beckett gave it to the actor Jack MacGowran's daughter, to enable her to go to college later in life. Compared to some of Beckett's other works, the genetic dossier of *Fin de partie / Endgame* is rich, but there are also lacunae. For instance, we have not been able to find the French typescript that was sent to Minuit and from which the French edition was typeset; neither have we found any proofs for that edition.[4]

As for the English genesis, both the autograph manuscript – referred to by Beckett in his correspondence as the 'first version' – and the first typescript are extant. These documents include some gaps, where Beckett did not immediately find the right translation. The exchange between Hamm and Clov regarding the flea, for instance (1957, 51), was not translated at autograph manuscript stage, Beckett leaving a blank for the translation to be added later (see EN, 31r); when preparing the first typescript, he again left a blank (see ET1, 17r), before finding a solution in English to the play on the difference in French between 'coite' and 'coïte' and adding the relevant lines by hand. As noted above, Beckett also left a space on both the autograph

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3   On the title page of the 1974 Suhrkamp edition is the note: 'Alle drei Fassungen wurden vom Autor und vom übersetzer für diese Ausgabe durchgesehen und überarbeitet' ['All three versions (German, French and English) were checked and revised by the author and the translator for this edition']. However, it is clear that Beckett did not see the proofs of this edition, in which the English text is marred by numerous typographical errors.

4   To our question as to whether any manuscripts, typescripts or annotated proofs of *Fin de partie* have survived, Mme Irène Lindon replied: 'Je regrette de ne pouvoir vous aider dans votre recherche mais les manuscrits comme les épreuves sont toujours renvoyés aux auteurs' ['I regret not being able to help you in your research but manuscripts and proofs alike are always returned to the authors'] (email correspondence with Dirk Van Hulle, 20 November 2016).

manuscript and the first typescript for Clov's song, before deciding not to include it in the English version of the play.

On the basis of the first typescript, a second (revised) typescript was produced in the summer of 1957. On 12 August 1957, Beckett sent this revised typescript to his American publisher, Barney Rosset. On the same day, he also sent copies to George Devine at the Royal Court Theatre, London, and to Peter du Sautoy at Faber and Faber. To date, none of these three documents has been retrieved.[5] However, Devine did have Beckett's typescript retyped, and this copy was submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's Office for approval in March 1957 (BL, LCP-CORR-1957-578). This typescript is close to the published version, but does contain some notable differences from the latter, these pointing in all likelihood to revisions made to the text at the copy-editing and proof stages. At this point, the Lord Chamberlain's typescript is the closest we can come to Beckett's final typescript of *Endgame*, even though this copy was neither typed nor seen by Beckett himself and therefore has to be treated with caution (see chapter 1.4.2, LC playscript). Devine's (missing) copy also served as the basis for another typescript, now held at Trinity College Dublin, which was also not typed by Beckett and which served as the playscript for Jack MacGowran, when he played Clov in the first British production of *Endgame*, at the Royal Court Theatre, London, where, under the direction of George Devine, it opened in October 1958 (see chapter 1.4.2, MacGowran a.c.).

Chapter 1 offers a description of all the extant documents. What is not included in the digital edition, due to an agreement with the Beckett Estate, is the material belonging to the epigenesis (that is, the continuation of the genesis after publication). Beckett's direction of his own play led to several changes in the text, in its French, English and German versions. Many, although not all, of these revisions are noted in annotated copies of the published text – see chapter 1.4.2, 'McWhinnie a.c.' and 'Fac(B)', copies of the Faber and Faber paperback edition annotated by Beckett

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5   The Grove Press Records at Syracuse University do not hold a typescript of *Endgame*. The Faber and Faber archive is currently 'not open to academic researchers', but archivist Robert Brown has informed us that 'there are no Beckett manuscripts, typescripts or marked proofs here (to the best of my knowledge)' (email to Dirk Van Hulle, 1 February 2016). The papers of George Devine in the archives of the English Stage Company (University of Leeds) do not contain the document either.

for Donald McWhinnie and Rick Cluchey respectively – and reflected, as noted above, in the 1969 and 1974 Suhrkamp bi- and trilingual editions (in which the German, French and English texts have all been revised), in the posthumously published 'Revised Text' in the second volume of the *Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, and in his production notebooks). In the *Theatrical Notebooks*, S. E. Gontarski gives a detailed account of many of these epigenetic changes,[6] and they are analysed in the present volume in chapter 3.3.

In chapter 2, we analyse the French genesis of the play. The thematic focus of this analysis is the notion of 'beginning again'. From an artistic point of view, this recommencement was clearly a problem for Beckett after the completion of *L'Innommable*. But the issue of recommencing is not limited to the level of the writing process. It also dominates both the content and the form of *Fin de partie / Endgame*. The opening word 'Fini' immediately implies its opposite – incompletion. This is a familiar Beckettian strategy: in his 1936 'Clare Street' Notebook, he had written a short text in German about the 'veil of hope';[7] in his July 1937 German letter to Axel Kaun (*LSB I* 512-21), he again employed the metaphor of the 'veil' to describe language, suggesting that behind this veil lay 'something or nothing'; later on, the same effect would be achieved by his focus on 'closed spaces':[8] every inside implies an outside, every 'bare interior' – such as the one in *Endgame* (1958b, 11; *E 5*) – suggests an exterior – or what, translating that which in *Fin de partie* is termed '*le dehors*', he would, after having considered 'the outer world', term, with striking negativity, 'the without' (EN, 27r). Beckett often criticizes this human tendency to create a beyond, as he did in his previous play. After all, *Waiting for Godot* epitomizes the creation of such a beyond and the persistence of this mechanism. In the German text on the 'veil of hope', Beckett had already compared this mechanism to a cataract: 'Und wenn der

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6   The English paperback copy annotated by Beckett for Donald McWhinnie is not taken into account in the *Theatrical Notebooks*, and neither are the two French annotated editions that Beckett gave to John Fletcher and Marek Kedzierski (see chapter 1.4.1).

7   In his taking up of the metaphor of the veil, Beckett was possibly inspired by Schopenhauer, who in his turn encountered the notion of the 'veil of Maya' in ancient Indian philosophy (see Tonning 2007, 184-5).

8   For an analysis of the notion of confinement in Beckett's work, see James Little, *Closed Spaces: Beckett and Confinement* (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, October 2017).

Star auch für den Augenblick geheilt worden sein mag, so bildet er sich fast immer bald von neuem, so auch die Hoffnung' ['And if the cataract may have been healed for the moment, it almost always forms again immediately, as does the hope'] (UoR MS 5003, 17r-18r; qtd. and trans. in Nixon 2011, 170). Beckett was well aware of this mechanism and he kept employing it in his later works.

Thus, *Endgame*'s 'bare interior', which has often been interpreted as the interior of a skull, can also be read as a staging of the self-confinement of characters such as Belacqua and Murphy in Beckett's early works. And the idea of presenting the mind as a 'closed space' or 'little world' can be read as a critique of Fichte's philosophy that 'the "I" or self can only be "posited" by being distinguished from a "Not-I" or "not-self"' (Windelband 1958, 593).[9] Beckett was quite consistent regarding this staged self-confinement: after having quite the 'fourth wall' in *Eleutheria* and *En attendant Godot*, he told the actors at the Schiller-Theater when he directed *Endspiel* in 1967 that, this time, they did have to imagine a fourth wall, but not in the traditional sense of realistic theatre: 'he was not using this so much as the standard theatrical device,' Anthony Uhlmann notes, 'but because he wanted his actors to be aware of their confinement' (2013, 180). Indeed, when revising the text after its publication, Beckett would cut the section in which Clov directs the telescope at the audience (see Sac(B), 50; 1974, 44). He would also have Clov comment on the outside without, as instructed by Hamm, actually looking out through the window.

The theme of confinement became very concrete when Beckett heard about Karl-Franz Lembke, a German prisoner who translated *En attendant Godot* into German and staged it at Lüttringhausen prison with his fellow inmates. Beckett replied to a letter from Lembke in mid-October 1954 and made a considerable effort in writing a draft of it in his 'L'Aigle' Notebook (TCD MS 4662). We include a full transcription of this moving letter in chapter 1 (1.1.1) because it marks the chronological transition between the early precursors of Beckett's play and the actual '*avant-texte*' of *Fin de partie*, in which the theme of confinement is elaborated in various successive versions.

9   Beckett knew Fichte's philosophy through Wilhelm Windelband's *A History of Philosophy*. Windelband further explains: 'Since, however, the not-self is posited only in the self [...] the self and the not-self (i.e. subject and object) must reciprocally determine each other within the "I" or self.' (Windelband 1958, 593)

Beckett was, of course, well aware that this confinement also functions as a narrative impetus, because the bare interior entices both characters and audience to imagine an exterior, a space beyond. Beckett applied this principle until the very end of his career, when he thematized this irrational longing for a beyond, this 'folly for to need to seem to glimpse afaint afar away over there what – / what – / what is the word –' (*CIWS* 134-5).

According to the same principle, the very utterance of the end ('Fini') implies a new beginning or a continuation: '[t]out cesse, sans cesse' (*Dis* 128) ['Everything is coming to an end, endlessly' (trans. in Mori 2008, 116)], as Beckett phrased it in his essay 'La Peinture des van Velde ou le monde et le pantalon'. And every beginning implies a search for closure, according to what Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending* dubs the tick-tock model, an organization which humanizes time by giving it a form (Kermode 1967, 45). From a different critical angle, Daniel C. Dennett argues that telling stories is 'our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition' (Dennett 1991, 418) and Jonathan Gottschall claims that 'The storytelling mind is a crucial evolutionary adaptation. It allows us to experience our lives as coherent, orderly, and meaningful' (Gottschall 2012, 102). According to this paradigm, order would be not only that of which Clov dreams, but also what Hamm tries to create by telling his chronicle. The difference between Gottschall and Beckett, however, is that while the former embraces the storytelling impulse, Beckett constantly criticizes it, having it fail again and again to render either identity or experience coherent or meaningful.

What is remarkable about *Endgame* in this respect is that Beckett chooses the genre of theatre (rather than prose fiction) for his critique of storytelling. While Gottschall suggests that religions may be part of the same storytelling urge, since 'we abhor explanatory vacuums' – 'humans conjure gods, spirits, and sprites to fill explanatory voids' (121) – Beckett questions the tendency to fill these voids. And not just these. Even when his characters conclude about God that the 'bastard [...] doesn't exist' (1958b, 38; *E* 34), they continue filling explanatory voids by creating what Dennett calls a 'narrative selfhood' (1991, 418), and qualify the deity's non-existence with the remarkable retort: 'Not yet.' (1958b, 38; *E* 34) Whereas Dennett and Gottschall see these narrative urges as necessary evolutionary strategies, Beckett unremittingly emphasizes the deficiencies in his characters' attempts to 'tell' a self. Thus, for instance, after having (re)told the joke of the tailor, Nagg has to admit that he has never told it worse. But it is not just the manner that is mocked;

the very concept of telling a self ('narrative selfhood') is questioned, for as soon as one starts telling it, one turns it into a protagonist of one's own fictions, into the god of one's own creation. Malone therefore concluded: 'J'ai fini de me raconter' (*BDMP5*, FN1, 87r) ['I am done telling myself'], which became: 'J'ai fini de me chercher' (1951, 44) ['The searcher for myself has ended' (*MD* 24)] in the published text. But again, as soon as he says 'fini', as soon as he draws this line, he creates a space beyond it, which is the creative engine that drives the dramatic and narrative action in *Endgame*. Given the importance of (Beckett's critique of) storytelling in this play, the stories (including abandoned stories) in the genesis are a focal point in chapter 2.

In chapter 3 we focus first on the play's translation into English, and then on the English text's epigenesis following its publication first in the US and then in Britain in 1958. This epigenesis passes, crucially, by way of Beckett's own directing of the play in German at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt, Berlin, in 1967, and thus by way of Elmar Tophoven's German translation, *Endspiel*, which, together with both the French and the English versions of the play, would be published in revised form in Germany in 1969 and 1974. Beckett's revisions of the play continued through the 1970s and into the 1980s, as evidenced, for instance, by copies of the published English text annotated by him for Donald McWhinnie and for Rick Cluchey. While the English translation of the French version was, despite Beckett's repeated laments regarding the impending task of translation to numerous corre-spondents in the first half of 1957, a swift affair, the surviving documents – the autograph manuscript and the first typescript, together with what can be established with a degree of reliability regarding the second typescript from the surviving playscripts based upon it – reveal Beckett completing the translation between May and August 1957, but making some significant changes in the process. Of these, the most extensive was his decision to reduce to two lines the long exchange between Hamm and Clov regarding the boy towards the end of the play. This revision entailed the removal of the allusion to Moses glimpsing the Promised Land and the profoundly Beckettian image of a human being contemplating its own navel, both of which are present in the French version. Furthermore, having left a space both in the autograph manuscript and in the first typescript for Clov's song, Beckett ultimately decided not to include the song in the English version of the play, even though it was included in the original German translation by Tophoven. The removal of the song entails the disappearance from the play

of an image of communication – the bird's flight from its cage to the beloved to report the condition of the lover who is 'emmerdé' (1957, 107) – literally, 'in the shit'. This, together with the omission of the exchange regarding the boy, only intensifies the already profound sense of the characters' confinement.

In a letter to the American director Alan Schneider, Beckett famously describes *Fin de partie* as 'more inhuman' than *Godot*, it being a work that depends, he observes, upon 'the power of the text to claw' (*LSB II* 628). In addition to the removal of the exchange regarding the boy (a figure of life outside the 'refuge') and of the song, Beckett's many revisions to his English translation between autograph manuscript and published version, both to the stage directions and to the dialogue, reveal a process that renders the English version, if anything, even 'more inhuman' than the French, and certainly more violent linguistically. This linguistic violence is evident even in small ways – for instance, through the more extensive use of exclamation marks in the English text, as well as through a greater reliance upon incomplete sentences and a particular attention to modal verbs. The manuscript and surviving typescript also reveal Beckett devoting considerable attention to the translation of ideas of ending, with a guiding principle in this respect being verbal echoes and repetitions. Here, too, the effect is an intensification of the idea of confinement, within a verbal universe where only a limited number of forms seems possible.

One of the more telling revisions in the process of translation concerns the expression 'il faisait de la peinture' (1957, 62), in Hamm's recollection of the madman whom he claims to have visited in the asylum and whose madness lay in his seeing only ashes where others saw a flourishing natural world. It is only after having tried out a number of translations that Beckett introduced the idea in the English version of this supposedly mad artist being not just a 'painter' but also an 'engraver', the wordplay here suggesting a troubling but highly pertinent connection between art and death. This connection between artistic practice and the process of ending is also reflected thematically in Hamm's 'chronicle' and, of course, in the enactment of the 'endgame' itself. The identification of the mad artist in the English translation not as a 'water-colourist' (as he is described in an early draft) but as an 'engraver' serves, then, to inscribe all the more emphatically into the English version of the play the disturbing idea of art as being located on the side of dying rather than on that of living. Overall, the genesis of the translation is characterized by a darkening of what is already in the original French version a profoundly

troubling vision, one rooted imaginatively in thoughts of the horrors of the First World War, but also, as Theodor Adorno and Andrew Gibson among others have suggested, of a post-Holocaust Cold War environment in which the possibility of nuclear armageddon is all too real.[10]

The play's long epigenesis continues this trajectory towards an even darker mood, albeit one in which humour of a particular kind continues to play an essential role, in line with Beckett's identification during rehearsals for the Schiller-Theater production of Nell's line 'Nothing is funnier than unhappiness' (1958b, 20; *E* 14) as 'the most important sentence in the play' (qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld 1988, 210). For the most part, Beckett's post-publication revisions entail deletions, or what he himself characterized as simplifications. As we shall see, these 'simplifications' may be understood as considerably more than instances of an increasing theatrical minimalism in Beckett's works between the 1960s and 1980s, for they effect what Adorno, taking the idea from his conversations with Beckett in the late 1950s, following the translation of *Fin de partie*, terms a process of 'subtraction' (*Subtraktion*). This process of subtraction darkens rather than liquidates the play's humour, although it does entail the removal of moments of physical comedy that are present in the French version, in particular Clov's prolonged business with the stepladder at the beginning of the play. Continuing a trait that is evident in the genesis of the English translation, this process of subtraction also entails an intensification of verbal violence, in line with Beckett's insistence during the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt rehearsals that the relation between Hamm and Clov is a 'war' (*Krieg*). Above all, however, at a meta-textual level, it renders the play's long epigenesis the reflection – more precisely, the enactment – of the failing attempt to achieve a definitive ending; that is, a final, *definitive* version that would, to adapt the words of Walter Benjamin, be the true death mask of the work's conception.[11]

If to chart the English version's epigenesis is to follow a path towards a more definitive text, or to what in the second volume of Beckett's *Theatrical*

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10   Early French drafts of the play reveal Beckett to have had a post-First World War context in mind. On the other historical catastrophes – or potential catastrophes – that may also have been present in his mind when writing the play, see Gibson 2010, 133-8. See Adorno 1991 for a reading of the play in relation to the Holocaust.

11   The thirteenth, and thus final, thesis in Walter Benjamin's 'The Writer's Technique in Thirteen Theses', in *One-Way Street* (1926), is: 'The work is the death mask of its conception.' (Benjamin 1996, 459)

Notebooks is described as the 'Revised Text', that path also reveals uncertainties on Beckett's part – question marks in the annotated copies, as well as variants across documents. Of *Endgame*'s end, Adorno claims that 'No spectator, and no philosopher, would be capable of saying for sure whether or not the play is starting all over again.' (Adorno 1991, 269) A similar degree of uncertainty surrounds the versions of the play that emerge during its long epigenesis. While there may well be a clear trajectory towards ever greater 'simplification', this does not mean that we arrive at a definitive version, one that is at last hermetically sealed to all historical contingency. To believe that such a genetic endpoint is achieved would be to suppress all the textual evidence that points in the other direction: towards uncertainty, contingency, variation, and an irreducible openness to new contexts.