

The Archival Turn and the Archival Turnip: Towards a Critical Bilingual Edition of Samuel Beckett's Works*

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Abstract

In Anglophone literary studies, the phrase 'the archival turn' is gaining currency as a term to denote something that has arguably always been part of our discipline, but that has not always been appreciated to the same degree. The 'archival turn' may create expectations that are too high. What is to be found by digging in literary archives is rarely spectacular. Manuscript research is hard and patient work, and it is often serendipitous. The occasional truffle is seldom discovered because one was looking for it. In order to find truffles without running the risk of untimely discouragement, it is probably best to be intent on finding only turnips. Starting from a turnip in the manuscripts of Beckett's novel *L'Innommable*, this article argues for a steady, constant investment in textual and archival studies as an important aspect of literary studies. The urgent need for a critical edition in Beckett studies serves as a case study to, first of all, suggest a rationale for a digital scholarly edition, and more generally make a case for a revaluation of manuscript studies.

Keywords: critical editing, manuscript, Beckett, philology.

The Archival Turnip

In the earliest manuscript of *L'Innommable*, the first-person narrator is in a jar in front of a restaurant owned by a character whom he sometimes calls Marguerite and sometimes Madeleine. He supposes that Marguerite/Madeleine must have realized that his odd presence is a sort of advertisement for her restaurant because she has taken

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the trouble to festoon the jar with Chinese lanterns and to raise it on a pedestal, so that passers-by can more easily read the menu (which is also attached to the jar). The narrator thus learns from the passers-by that Marguerite/Madeleine's "escalope aux champignons" is not as good as it used to be. In the manuscript, the "escalope aux champignons" was subsequently crossed out and replaced by "ses navets au jus" – her turnips in gravy¹. Unless one is doing research into dietary patterns in Beckett's works, this substitution of meat by a vegetable is perhaps not particularly revealing. That is the hard reality of manuscript studies: ninety percent of the time, manuscript research and genetic editing are careful processes of deciphering and transcribing sometimes barely legible words that are crossed out or added between the lines, without any direct reward.

The trick is not to be discouraged, not to expect any truffles, and to "eat your vegetables". After all, these turnips are a good starting point to analyze the first-person narrator's condition. He claims that this is the kind of language he can almost understand, that these are the "clear and simple notions" on which he can build, and he asks for no other "spiritual nourishment": "Un ~~bifteck~~^{navet}, je sais ~~ce que c'est~~^{à quoi ça ressemble}, ~~un champignon~~^{une carotte} aussi" (MS-HRC-SB-3-10, 44v; see BDMP₂). The non-vegetarian beefsteak ("bifteck") was immediately replaced by the turnip and in the next versions (the pre-book publication in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and the first Minuit edition) the type of carrot was specified: "une carotte aussi, surtout la mi-longue, ou nantaise" (Beckett 1953: 85). In the first version of Beckett's English translation, he left a blank space with an ellipsis because he had to look up (in a seed catalogue) the equivalent of this special "nantaise" carrot, a type of carrot without heart: "A turnip, I know roughly what a turnip is like, a carrot too, especially the ... (seed catalogue)" (MS-HRC-SB-5-9-1, 46r; BDMP₂). Whether or

¹ For a digital facsimile and full transcription, see Beckett, Samuel. *L'Innommable / The Unnamable*: an electronic genetic edition (Series "The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project", module 2). Edited by Dirk Van Hulle, Shane Weller and Vincent Neyt. Brussels: University Press Antwerp (ASP/UPA), 2013, www.beckettarchive.org: "C'est ainsi que j'ai appris, tout dernièrement, que ~~son escalope aux champignons est~~^{ses navets au jus sont} moins ~~bonne~~^{bons} qu'autrefois" (MS-HRC-SB-3-10, 44v). Hereafter, the digital edition will be referred to as BDMP₂.

not Beckett acted on this note to himself and looked it up in the seed catalogue, he did make the carrot more specific by calling it “especially the Flakkee, or Colmar Red” in the next version (the typescript for the pre-book publication in the *Chicago Review*, MS-HRC-SB-5-10, 03r; BDMP₂).

The blank space with ellipsis and Beckett’s note to himself – “(seed catalogue)” – is an interesting instance where the writing reaches the limits of what Raymonde Debray Genette called “endogenesis” (the “inside” of the writing process) and reaches out. The “exogenetic” source text has not (yet) been found. Whether he consulted a seed catalogue or whether he just used another source of information, such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, to find a translation or replacement for the “nantaise”, is hard to determine with certainty. But the instance of the note to himself, the “gap” in the border between exogenesis and endogenesis, is interesting in and of itself. And the “navet/carotte” passage is certainly not the only instance of interplay between exo- and endogenesis. On the same page (44v), there is a Latin phrase, “De nobis ipsis silemus” [“We do not speak of ourselves”]. This is the way the first-person narrator moves from the topic of the “nantaise” to the Latin phrase: he notes that, at certain moments, he seems to grasp the nuance between what is edible (“~~mangeable~~”) and what is not. This is immediately replaced by what is good and what is less so (“ce qui est bon et ce qui l’est moins”). The “worsening” tendency that characterizes the entire making of *L’Innommable* / *The Unnamable* (Van Hulle and Weller 2014) is noticeable in the next version, where what is good and what is less so is replaced in the pre-book publication in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* by what is bad and worse: “ce qui est mauvais et ce qui l’est encore plus” (BDMP₂). Although this is made more positive in the *Minuit* edition (“ce qui est mauvais et ce qui l’est moins”, Beckett 1953: 85), it becomes “bad and worse” in the English translation (pre-book publication in *Chicago Review*). The narrator likes to fancy he is something of a small capital to the owner of the restaurant; that she will be genuinely disturbed if he dies; that she will try to make sure the jar is not removed; and that she will put a melon in the place now occupied by his head, “in memory of me” (“en souvenir de moi”). But then he realizes that by talking about Marguerite/Madeleine, he has “started lying again”, talking about himself, which he shouldn’t: “De nobis ipsis silemus, decidedly that

should have been my motto". ("De nobis ipsis silemus, décidément cela aurait dû être ma devise"; MS-HRC-SB-3-10, 44v).

At the back of the first notebook containing the first half of the French manuscript of *L'Innommable*, there is a note that reads "De nobis ipsis silemus (Bacon, Intro. Novum Organon)" (MS-HRC-SB-3-10, inside back cover). Although the note only mentions Francis Bacon as the author of this motto, Beckett almost certainly encountered it in *Kants Werke* (in eleven volumes preserved in the private library of Anne Atik), notably in volume XI, the introduction by Ernst Cassirer, where this Latin sentence is marked with a short vertical pencil line in the margin next to the sentence: "Das Wort 'De nobis ipsis silemus', das er aus Bacon entnimmt, um es der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' als Motto voranzusetzen" ("The phrase 'De nobis ipsis silemus', which he took from Bacon to use as a motto for the *Critique of Pure Reason*") (Cassirer 1921: 5). From Beckett's correspondence, we know that the eleven volumes of Kant's complete works arrived in Paris in early January 1938 (Beckett 2009b: 581). Shortly afterwards Beckett also noted the Latin phrase in his so-called "Whoroscope" Notebook: "Bacon's 'De nobis ipsis silemus' taken by Kant as epigraph to KRITIK der R[einen] V[ernunft]" (UoR MS 3000, 44r).

So, in the space of less than one page in the manuscript, the text has led us from a turnip to Bacon and to Kant's complete works. And the interplay between exogenesis and endogenesis is enriched by a third, epigenetic dimension (the continuation of the genesis after publication): after the publication of the French text, Beckett not only wrote notes to himself such as the reference to the "(seed catalogue)", he also added new subtle exogenetic references during the translation process. For instance, in the first few pages of the novel, the first-person narrator claims that he has always been "here":

I have been here, ever since I began to be, my appearances elsewhere being due to other parties. All has proceeded, all this time, in the utmost calm, the most perfect order, apart from one or two manifestations the meaning of which escapes me. No, it is not that their meaning escapes me, my own escapes me just as much. Here all things, no, I shall not say it, being unable to. (Beckett 1958: 7).

The aposiopesis (the figure of speech that marks a moment when the speaker comes to a sudden halt) is combined with the most prominent figure of speech in *L'Innommable* / *The Unnamable*: epanorthosis or self-correction (Van Hulle and Weller 2014: 28), which was not yet part of the first draft, but already appeared in the first French edition: “Tout ici, non, je ne le dirai pas, ne pouvant pas. Je ne dois mon existence à personne, ces *lueurs* ne sont pas de celles qui éclairent ou brûlent”. (Beckett 1953: 13; emphasis added). Beckett slightly overtranslated “lueurs” (glow, glimmer) as “faint fires” (MS-HRC-SB-5-9-1, 04r). The use of the word “fire” serves as an intertextual trigger as it alludes to one of Beckett’s favourite lines from Petrarch: “chi può dir com’egli arde, è ’n picciol foco” – which Beckett translated as “He who knows he is burning is burning in a small fire” (Atik 2001: 80). Although this was one of Beckett’s favourite lines – he liked to quote it by heart, according to Anne Atik (2001: 80) – it is *not* marked in his otherwise sometimes heavily marked two-volume copy of Petrarch’s *Le Rime di Messer Francesco Petrarca* (Classica Biblioteca Italiana series, Milan: Nicolò Bettoni, 1824; see Van Hulle and Nixon 2013: 112-4). My suggestion is that Beckett actually encountered it in Michel de Montaigne’s essay “De la tristesse” (where it is quoted) and noted it down in his “Sam Francis” Notebook (UoR MS 2926, 19v; Van Hulle 2015: 176). Only a few months after Beckett finished his translation of *L'Innommable* into English, he quoted the line from Petrarch in a letter to Con Leventhal (21 April 1958), explaining that he understood “arde” more generally than in Petrarch’s original *Canzoniere*, and connecting it to Gorgias’s third proposition:

1 Nothing is.

2 If anything is, it cannot be known.

3 If anything is, and can be known, it cannot be expressed in speech.

(Beckett 2014: 136)

In that sense, the line “He who knows he is burning, is burning in a small fire” (or in John Nott’s 1777 translation “Faint is the flame that language can express”) comes closer to the line from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, which Beckett excerpted in his “Sottisier” Notebook: “The worst is not, So long as one can say, ‘this is the worst’” (UoR

MS 2901, 14v), informing the poetics of his late works *Worstward Ho*, *Stirrings Still* and *Comment dire*.

This intertextual tour illustrates how a seemingly insignificant substitution in a manuscript, such as the replacement of an “escalope” by a “navet”, can quickly grow in significance: an adventurous tour from the “clear and simple notions” on which the first-person narrator can build, to the linguistic scepticism vis à vis the possibility of expressing any knowledge in speech. But of course, Beckett’s readers need the necessary equipment in order to explore his manuscripts and retrace his exogenetic ventures. To provide that equipment in a suitable edition, I would like to suggest a rationale for the combination of a digital scholarly edition with a critical edition of Beckett’s works.

Towards a Critical Edition of Samuel Beckett’s Works

At this moment, French scholars studying Beckett’s works use the publications by Les Éditions de Minuit. These texts are not flawless, but the publishing house has silently corrected some textual errors that were pointed out to them by scholars. The variants between the different editions are not recorded in a critical apparatus or documented in a revision narrative. Anglophone critics either turn to the four-volume “centenary edition” by Grove Press (2006) or to the seventeen-volume series of editions by Faber and Faber (published in 2009-2010, shortly after Faber bought the rights from John Calder). Both editions have their flaws. The “centenary edition” was only partially edited, as was the Faber edition. In the latter case, most of the prose fiction was slightly emended, but the dramatic works were not edited. The Faber texts were reprinted and preceded by a preface. For instance, whereas the edition of *The Unnamable* mentions that it is “edited by Steven Connor”, the volume *Krapp’s Last Tape and Other Shorter Plays* does not indicate that it was edited, only that it has a “preface by S. E. Gontarski”. In fact, it was S. E. Gontarski who, in 2011, called the two editions generated by the centenary of Beckett’s birth in 2006 “missed opportunities”: “Despite the costly efforts and best intentions of both English-language publishers of Samuel Beckett’s work and the labours of textual scholars during and just after Beckett’s centenary year, Beckett’s texts have improved only incrementally and inconsistently in these new centenary and

post-centenary editions” (Gontarski 2011: 357). As Gontarski notes, “not only have major publishing opportunities been lost, but current efforts may have retarded future corrections. It may be some time before other such efforts to correct Beckett’s texts in uniform editions are launched” (357).

Since Beckett translated so many of his own writings either from French into English or vice versa, and since he fully endorsed the first attempts to make a scholarly bilingual edition², it seems self-evident that a critical edition should be bilingual – preferably with the French and English versions in parallel presentation (the original text on the left-hand side, the translation on the right). This crucial aspect of his oeuvre is not always taken into account in critical analyses, arguably because most of the available editions do not reflect this bilingual aspect. Given this precarious textual situation in Beckett studies, a recent special issue of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* (Spring 2015) was entirely devoted to “The State of Beckett’s Texts”, the editorial of which expresses the gravity of the situation and the academic need for a critical edition.

To establish a rationale for a critical edition of Beckett’s works it is necessary to define the notion of a critical edition³. According to John Bryant, “The critical edition is a genre of scholarly editing in which a text is constructed usually after the inspection, and sometimes the conflation, of significant versions of the work; it is also a text that is invariably emended along certain principles so as to bring it closer to an announced notion of intentionality” (Bryant 2002: 20). This thorny problem of intentionality – inevitably linked to Wimsatt and Beardsley’s notion of the “intentional fallacy” – is elegantly dealt with by Bryant’s notion of the “Intentional Fallacy Fallacy”⁴. In critical editing, authorial intention remains an

² The bilingual Faber edition of *Happy Days / Oh les beaux jours* by James Knowlson points out the differences between the English and French versions by listing the passages that were left untranslated (Beckett 1978: 121). The bilingual editions by Charles Krance (Beckett 1993b; 1996) and Edouard Magessa O’Reilly (Beckett 2001) highlight translation variants in the reading texts.

³ For a selection of historical definitions of terms relating to textual scholarship, see the Lexicon of Scholarly Editing (<http://uahost.uantwerpen.be/lse/>) hosted by the Centre for Manuscript Genetics (University of Antwerp).

⁴ “It is, of course, a truism that we cannot retrieve the creative process, nor, according to the ‘intentional fallacy,’ can we use some magically derived sense of

important, but difficult issue, because it involves a critical act, as Paul Eggert notes: “The business of determining what the author intended is inevitably a critical act, though in a critical edition its subjectivity is traditionally hedged in at every point by whatever can be ascertained or inferred about the history of the work’s writing and early production” (Eggert 2013: 104).

The question in the case of Beckett’s works, however, is to determine not just what the author intended, but what he intended at what stage in his career. His intentions tended to change over time. For instance, in the first edition, the ending of *L’Innommable* is “il faut continuer, je vais continuer” (Beckett 1953: 261); in the English translation, Beckett changed this into “you must go on, I can’t go on, I’ll go on” (Beckett 1958: 179); and it was not until 1971, after he received the Nobel prize for literature, that Beckett was able to adapt the French version to bring it in line with the English version: “il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer” (Beckett 1971: 212).

So, not just one but several intentions need to be determined. And not just in two languages, but sometimes even a third language plays a role as well. In 1963, the German publisher Suhrkamp published the first volume of the trilingual edition *Dramatische Dichtungen in drei Sprachen*. Before this first volume went into production, Suhrkamp’s chief executive officer, Siegfried Unseld, made it clear that he wanted his texts to be absolutely flawless when he wrote to Jérôme Lindon on 22 October 1962, asking for the most up-to-date versions of the French: “Il m’est très important de publier des textes tout à fait irréprochables”⁵. But when Beckett received a copy of this first volume, he noticed a “major error” and did not fail to draw the publisher’s attention to it:

There is one major error which I am very sorry to have to point out to you. For the English text of *Godot* you have followed the Faber edition. But

a writer’s intentions as a validation of or substitute for an interpretation of a text. But in the past century, some advocates of this tenet have grown so doctrinaire as to commit what might be called the Intentional Fallacy Fallacy, which is essentially to imagine that because intentions have no critical relevance they are not even discussable” (Bryant 2002: 8).

⁵ Correspondence, Siegfried Unseld – Jérôme Lindon (DLA, SUA: Briefwechsel Les Editions de Minuit).

this version is the one authorised by the Lord Chamberlain, and contains a good many changes and cuts, so many indeed as to be at moments barely intelligible. An edition of this sort has no raison d'être outside England (Beckett 2014: 581).

Because of what went wrong in the first volume (containing the plays originally written in French), he suggested that it would be in everyone's interest if he could reread all the English and French texts, make changes wherever necessary and correct the proofs of the second volume (containing the plays originally written in English) – which the publisher granted⁶.

Beckett used this opportunity to make a few changes in the English text of *Krapp's Last Tape*, using a second printing of a 1960 first Evergreen edition. Thus, for instance, the “cardboard boxes” were replaced by “tin boxes” (Beckett 1960: 10) and “better than a kick in the crutch” was changed into “better [than]⁷ between finger and thumb” (25). Similarly, the French text (*La Dernière Bande*) was slightly adapted as well. The “boîtes en carton” became “boîtes en fer blanc” (Beckett 1959: 8). And because of this introduction of a white element (“fer blanc”) Beckett decided to introduce another black element as well, thus reinforcing the tension between black and white that characterizes the play: “vieux point faible” thus became “vieux point noir” (Beckett 1959: 14).

After directing his play in 1969 (at the Schiller-Theater Werkstatt in Berlin) and 1970 (at the Théâtre Récamier in Paris)⁸, Beckett had the chance of incorporating the changes he had made during rehearsals into the French text of a new trilingual edition of *Das letzte Band / Krapp's Last Tape / La dernière bande*, this time in a separate, illustrated paperback edition. But this edition also introduced many new errors. Moreover, it largely ignored the changes Beckett had already made to the 1964 version in *Dramatische Dichtungen II*, since he did not use the 1964 edition as the base text for the new alterations. In the case of several other

⁶ Siegfried Unseld to Samuel Beckett, 6 April 1964 (DLA, SUA: Briefwechsel Suhrkamp – Samuel Beckett, 1963–64).

⁷ Beckett inadvertently omitted “than”.

⁸ James Knowlson lists the changes Beckett made to the texts for these productions (TN3, 279–82).

plays, these kinds of late changes due to Beckett's direction of his own plays have been incorporated in the so-called "revised texts" in the *Theatrical Notebooks*.

The choice of the copy-text is a delicate matter. Because of Beckett's multiple intentions, it is judicious to use the first edition as a copy-text. The guiding principle is that the first edition is the version in which the work (in its entirety) started to lead a public life. In the case of the French texts, this is relatively straightforward, compared to the transatlantic complications with regard to the English texts. But even in the case of the English texts, it is possible to work with the principle that the copy-text represents the first appearance of the work in its entirety in that language, no matter whether it first appeared in Europe or in the US.

In itself, the choice of the first edition as copy-text is not particularly controversial in Beckett's works. Take for instance the case of *Waiting for Godot*. The first edition was published by Grove Press in 1954. Two years after this first American edition, however, Faber and Faber published an expurgated version of the play in the UK in 1956, censored by the Lord Chamberlain. For example, the word "erection" was apparently still intolerable in the 1950s in the UK. This is the way the text appeared:

ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?

Vladimir whispers to Estragon. Estragon highly excited.

VLADIMIR: With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow.

In this version, the audience has no clue whatsoever as to what Vladimir is whispering and what is meant by the line "With all that follows". In 1965, a "revised and unexpurgated text [...] authorized by Mr. Beckett as definitive" was published by Faber and Faber, in which the same passage reads:

ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR: Hmm. It'd give us an erection!

ESTRAGON: (*highly excited*). An erection!

VLADIMIR: With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow.

In this new 1965 edition, the passage was restored to how it appeared in the first edition of the play published by Grove Press in 1954, thus overriding the expurgated 1956 edition by Faber and

Faber. So, in this particular textual instance, the problem seems to be solved. But this does not imply that there would not be any need for a critical edition. One of the main purposes of a critical edition would be to enhance readers' textual awareness by calling attention to the fact that something did happen at this instance in the textual history and by briefly explaining the substantive variants in a revision narrative.

The 1965 edition by Faber did not simply restore the expurgated lines. It is also a "revised" text, which differs substantially in many other respects from both the preceding 1954 and 1956 editions. Moreover, this edition is not as "definitive" as it claims to be, since Beckett continued revising the play in later years. The challenge for any critical edition of *Waiting for Godot* is to give the reader a sense of this textual history. The choice of the first edition as copy-text implies that the subsequent revisions are not part of this copy-text, but all the revisions are marked, preferably on the same page, either in footnotes or in revision narratives, as in the edition of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* by John Bryant and Haskell Springer (2007).

The editorial method for the constitution of the edited text is in line with the current practice in Anglo-American textual scholarship rather than with the German *Editionswissenschaft*. Whereas the latter chooses one base text and only emends strictly defined types of textual errors (*Textfehler*) without recourse to other versions⁹, the former does allow the editor to make a critically informed choice among different readings in the multiple versions when it comes to substantive variants (as opposed to accidentals, in W. W. Greg's sense). This eclectic approach is based on critical judgement, which is communicated to the reader in the revision narrative. The substantive variant under discussion is printed in a shade of grey and thus marked unobtrusively, but noticeably, in the text.

In the case of the last line of *L'Innommable*, supposing that the first edition serves as the base text, German *Editionswissenschaft* would advise to print "il faut continuer, je vais continuer"

⁹ This type of emendation is restricted to cases where a passage is clearly erroneous, that is, when it contradicts the structure of the text or when it makes no sense in the immediate context (see e.g. Scheibe 1971: 43; Zeller 1971: 70).

(without “je ne peux pas continuer”); the Anglo-American approach¹⁰ would treat the base text as copy-text, allowing for eclectic editing, which could imply the incorporation of the line “je ne peux pas continuer” (marked in grey according to Bryant and Springer’s model, and accompanied by a textual note or revision narrative): “il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer”.

For each substantive variant, there is a corresponding revision narrative or textual note. The rationale behind these revision narratives is that the main aim of the critical edition is not just to produce a so-called “definitive text” – as D. F. McKenzie notes in the Foreword to his Panizzi lectures (1986), “Definitive editions have come to seem an impossible ideal in the face of so much evidence of authorial revision and, therefore, of textual instability” (1999: 2)¹¹. Rather, the main aim is to foreground the fluidity and mutability of Beckett’s texts. To that purpose, a critical edition can make use not only of revision narratives, but also of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (www.beckettarchive.org), a project that has the full support of the Estate of Samuel Beckett¹². This digital genetic edition already enables users to

¹⁰ Which of these two methods of establishing an edited text is preferable (the German or the Anglo-American tradition) is not the main issue; both have their merits. The most important matter is that the editor applies the chosen method consistently and that the critical edition calls attention to the textual history.

¹¹ See also Bryant (2002: 20): “General readers are likely to call a critical edition a ‘definitive’ text, established for all time by scholars, and complemented with notes and critical essays in the back. This is a double misconception: no edition, critical or otherwise, can be ‘definitive,’ and an edition is ‘critical’ not simply because publishers bind the primary text along with secondary criticism”. And Peter Shillingsburg: “There was once a widespread assumption that a text could be edited ‘definitively’. A single text was expected to represent the best or final work of an author who was the ultimate authority over the text. Among editors, it is seldom now expected that a single text can serve all people for all purposes”. (“Work and Text in Non-Literary Text-Based Disciplines”, lecture at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, May 2003).

¹² The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project is a collaboration between the Centre for Manuscript Genetics (University of Antwerp), the Beckett International Foundation (University of Reading) and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (University of Texas at Austin), with the kind permission of the Estate of Samuel Beckett and the support of the European Research Council.

zoom in on any sentence in a given work by Beckett and visualize all the other versions of that sentence in a synoptic sentence view, which arranges these multiple versions underneath each other in chronological order. This form of “versioning” can then be turned into a collation, by activating the automatic collation tool powered by CollateX¹³, which compares the sentences and highlights all the variants between them.

At the moment of writing, the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project includes the textual versions up until the “bon à tirer” moment, the moment the author decided that the text was “ready for printing”. With the permission of the relevant publishing houses (Les Éditions de Minuit, Grove Press, and Faber and Faber) this tool could be expanded to include also the subsequent textual versions. This way, the critical edition of Beckett’s works could refer interested readers to the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, mapping the entire genesis – not only the exogenesis and the endogenesis, but also the epigenesis.

This interaction would be further facilitated if, next to a printed version, there were also a digital version of the critical edition. In this way it would become possible for readers to read the revision history of the last line of *L’Innommable*, with its marked omission/addition, “il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer”; to explore the subtext of the translation variant between “lueurs” and “faint fires” and its intertextual links (through Montaigne) with Petrarch; and to discover the prehistory of the “turnip” (how the original escalope turned into a navet / turnip) and all of its ramifications – including the tension between the narrator’s “clear and simple notions” on the one hand and his linguistic scepticism on the other.

The academic climate in the past few decades, since philology disappeared from curricula, has not exactly been conducive to textual awareness and may be part of the reason why we still do not have a critical edition of Beckett’s complete works. So perhaps we temporarily need an “archival turn” to turn the archival turnip – and manuscript studies in general – into a self-evident part of

¹³ This tool in the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project was developed at the Centre for Manuscript Genetics (University of Antwerp) in collaboration with Ronald Haentjens Dekker at the Huygens ING in The Hague.

literary criticism again. This development will make the term “archival turn” superfluous when archival research is, hopefully soon, accepted again as a self-evident part of our discipline; an aspect that may contribute to the longevity of this discipline in an uncertain academic climate.

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