

# RESTLESSNESS, WANDERLUST AND MIGRATION IN *ENDGAME*<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This paper offers an insight into Samuel Beckett's *Fin de partie* / *Endgame* from the viewpoints of restlessness, wanderlust and migration. The close-reading of unpublished, discarded manuscripts from the early stages of the genesis of the play provide a deeper understanding of the relationship dynamics between Hamm and Clov. Both the preliminary versions of *Fin de partie* and Beckett's own directions (1967, 1980) suggest that the characters and their forerunners express a strong desire to leave the premises of Hamm's shelter and be elsewhere (the kitchen, shopping, the raft), or preferably be nowhere at all. The continuation of life and reproduction are enemies to Hamm. Consequently, he fails to help people who turn to him in mortal danger. The aspect of migration can be best traced in Hamm's story about a displaced, uprooted man, the sole survivor of a catastrophe who comes to him one Christmas Eve to ask for some bread for his son.

**Keywords:** Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, *Fin de partie*, Hamm, Clov, manuscript, migration

Restlessness is an essential motif of Samuel Beckett's *Fin de partie* / *Endgame* from the onset of the play's genesis. Clov's constant desire to leave his master and be elsewhere, either in his kitchen or outside, even if it means certain death, is a governing dramatic force throughout. Traces of Hamm's wanderlust are also detectable in a number of earlier manuscripts of *Fin de partie*. The idea of the raft is already present in the first two-act preliminary version of the play (which Beckett later cut down to one act before publication), an undated, unpublished manuscript held in the Beckett Manuscript Collection of the University of Reading under the reference number MS 1660 (henceforth referred to as *A&B*)<sup>2</sup>. In *Fin*

1 Special thanks to Bernard Adams for proofreading. I would like to express my gratitude to KRE for sponsoring my trip to IFTR Belgrade 2018, and to the Hungarian State Eotvos Scholarship for supporting my research.

2 This corrected French typescript of an early version of *Fin de partie* in two acts is located at the University of Reading's Samuel Beckett Collection under the catalogue supplement number MS 1660. The 27x21 cm typescript takes up 59 pages, the first fifteen of which are typed with a black ribbon, while pages 16 to 46 are printed with a blue ribbon, and pages 47 to 58 again with a black ribbon. The text is corrected in black ink, red ball-pen and type. The opening page is torn, taped, and unnumbered and there are two page 38s. Pages 16, 17, 18 and 24 bear autograph foliation and page 25 is corrected by hand, changing it from the typed page 24. Act I has twenty-six leaves foliated 2-35 and Act II is foliated 36-58 with the two page 38s. The play consists of a dialogue between players A and B in an interior clearly related to the setting of *Fin de partie*. For more detailed information, see Mary Bryden, Julian

*de partie*, however, the presence of the raft is greatly reduced, but Clov's desire to leave the shelter and its inhabitants, alive and dead, remains a key issue throughout. My paper also explores counter-movements in the play, namely the arrival of a man one Christmas Eve in Hamm's unfinished story, a stranger, the only survivor of an unspecified cataclysm who approaches Hamm, crawling on his belly, to ask for some bread for his child—definitely outside his comfort zone, fully in Hamm's power, far away from his home to which there is no return. This will lead us to the arcane topic of Clov's origin—his arrival to Hamm's shelter to become an exploited household slave.

In both *Avant Fin de partie*<sup>3</sup> and *A&B* manuscripts, there is a kitchen attached to the interior. Each time it is assigned to the pre-Clov character, so much so that in *Avant Fin de partie* X (pre-Hamm) dismisses F (pre-Clov) on one occasion telling him “Retourne dans ta cuisine” (*Avant Fin de partie* undated: 6; Rákóczy 2017: 48)<sup>4</sup>. This is so partly for practical reasons, as F and B are still to a limited extent mobile, as opposed to their masters, who are confined to the object and cannot change their spatial position without help. However, in both cases, and also in Clov's, the kitchen is a signifier of another world, where one might see one's own light dying, a place away from the premises and to which F, B and Clov desperately want to retreat—but cannot.

The kitchen plays a crucial part also in the post-publication development of the drama. On both occasions that Beckett directed *Endspiel/Endgame* he changed Clov's position right from the beginning of the play. Instead of standing “motionless by the door” (*Endspiel, Fin de partie, Endgame* 1974: 8), he is situated “motionless at A (a point midway between the door and the chair)” (*The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, Volume II, Endgame* 1992: xviii, 3). This position, which is called O in the Schiller production notebook and A in both the Riverside notebook and the *Revised Text*, is a fixed point on stage designed for Clov, halfway

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Garforth and Peter Mills, *Beckett at Reading. Catalogue of the Beckett Manuscript Collection at The University of Reading*. Reading: Whiteknights Press and the Beckett International Foundation, 1998. The typescript is FT2 on the genetic map of Dirk van Hulle and Shane Weller, *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Fin de partie / Endgame*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

3 This experimental fragment was probably written in 1953 or even as early as 1952, as Gontarski records. It is a 22 leaves long, 27x21 cm, incomplete, undated typescript with manuscript insertions and corrections by Beckett. Pagination is in type, last leaf is blank, f. 1 inscribed ‘*avant Fin de partie*’ and ‘for Reading University Library, Sam. Beckett’ in 1973. The *Avant Fin de partie* typescript was donated by Beckett to the University of Reading's Beckett Collection (MS 1227/7/16/7), but the holograph manuscript draft is held at Trinity College, Dublin. This text is closely related to the genesis of *Fin de partie*. The typescript is FT1 on the genetic map of Dirk van Hulle and Shane Weller, *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Fin de partie/Endgame*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

4 [Go back to your kitchen.], quoted in Anita Rákóczy, “In Search of Space and Locale in the Genesis of Beckett's *Fin de partie*”, in *Samuel Beckett and Europe* eds. Michela Bariselli et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017): 48. Translated by Bernard Adams. This paper contains the section “Away” of the above-mentioned chapter (48-50).

between Hamm's chair and the kitchen. This theatrical position adds tension to the visual representation of the characters from the start by indicating Clov's elemental desire to get back to his kitchen, as far away from Hamm as possible. As Beckett remarked one time during the rehearsals of *Endgame* in Berlin, "Clov has only one wish, to get back to his kitchen—that must be always evident, just like Hamm's constant effort to stop him. This tension is an essential motif of the play" (Fehsenfeld 1988: 220). This motion pattern was further developed in the Riverside notebook, where Beckett instructed Bud Thorpe's Clov to move towards the door after each "I'll leave you", after which he inserted "towards the door" in the *Revised Text* (*The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, Volume II, Endgame* 1992: 58).

Beckett's experiment with an imaginary or non-materializing space for the subordinate character that would serve as a temporary hiding place, a relief, a pause from the ceaseless battles with X, A or Hamm, began at the earliest preliminary stages of the creation process. In a short, unfinished dialogue fragment from the early 1950s, Ernest's (pre-Hamm's) wife, Alice (pre-Clov), also has "things to do" away from him. Shopping, laundry, and washing-up give Alice the chance to leave the interior and her husband—erected or lowered on a mechanical cross—and spend time in the outside world, which prolongs any relationship (MS 1227/7/16/2 undated). In *Fin de partie* shopping is out of the question. There is no escape for Clov or any of the characters for that matter—all the ways of escape are interiorized (the kitchen, the syringe, the painkiller).

However, in some preliminary versions of *Fin de partie*, it is not only the character of Clov that is eager to be elsewhere but Hamm too has a strong intention to travel, to go away once and for all. The idea of the raft first occurs in *A&B*, expressing A's (and later, Hamm's) desperate desire to leave. A is very keen on the idea of the raft, and even more so on going away, therefore he orders B to make him a raft so that they can both head South, by sea: "[...] Les courants nous emporteront, loin, vers d'autres hommes"<sup>5</sup> (MS 1660: 22; Rákóczy 2017: 49). The raft, mentioned multiple times in the play, satisfies A's wanderlust, the thought of B following his orders and making a raft for him. Likewise, B welcomes the opportunity of such a task: he even promises to start it immediately, as it gives him the chance to leave the premises, and also in the hope that A would sail out by himself and be miles away the next day. A's departure would save B the trouble of having to go away himself. In *Fin de partie*, and also in *Endgame*, Beckett is less optimistic about mankind and prefers to sail his characters "to other... mammals" (*Endspiel. Fin de partie. Endgame* 1974: 50-52). There is, however, one feature common to both waters—both A and Hamm warn us that if there are still sharks, there will be some on the

5 [The currents will carry us off, far away, to other men.], quoted in Anita Rákóczy, "In Search of Space and Locale in the Genesis of Beckett's *Fin de partie*", 49. Translated by Bernard Adams.

way (MS 1660 undated: 24). The characters' relation to space is governed by their wish to occupy another space—or preferably, none at all.

Hamm, the survivor of an unknown world disaster, of which the 20th century produced a large variety to choose from, considers the extermination of every living creature that has the ability to reproduce to be his principal task, besides finishing his Opus Magnum. It is not only the father (of the story) who owes his death to Hamm, but also rats, fleas and Mother Pegg, who died of darkness as Hamm refused to give her oil in her lamp.

CLOV (*Anguished, scratching himself.*) I have a flea!

HAMMA flea! Are there still fleas?

CLOV On me there's one. (*Scratching.*) Unless it's a crablouse.

HAMM (*Very perturbed.*) But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God! (*Endspiel, Fin de partie, Endgame* 1974: 48-50)

Like the relationship between A and B in terms of remorse and accusation, the conflict between Hamm and Clov is increased by the fact that, whatever the nature of the catastrophe, Hamm appears to have played an important role in it (Astro 1992: 134). As Beckett expressed during the rehearsals of *Endgame* in Berlin, "Clov holds Hamm responsible for everything connected with death" (Fehsenfeld 1988: 232).

HAMM [...] That old doctor, he's dead, naturally?

CLOV He wasn't old.

HAMM But he's dead?

CLOV Naturally. (*Pause.*) You ask me that? (*Pause.*) (*Endspiel, Fin de partie, Endgame* 1974: 38)

Progenitors are not popular either, as they are responsible for the perpetuation of mankind. Hamm blames and curses his parents, Nagg and Nell, too (especially the former), for all his miseries—and, in return, Nagg repays him with his fatherly curse. As Cavell points out in his essay, *Ending the Waiting Game*, "the old are also good at heaping curses on their young and controlling them through guilt, the traditional weapons of the weak and dependent. Nagg uses the most ancient of all parental devices, claiming that something is due to him from his son for the mere fact of having begot him" (Cavell 2002: 118). However, Hamm is, euphemistically, not a suitable subject for being made grateful for his life: in fact, he cannot wait to call it a day.

The aspect of migration in *Endgame* can be best traced in Hamm's story, or the "novel" as György Kurtág calls it.<sup>6</sup> The first appearance of Hamm's Opus Magnum is located at the end of Act I in the *A&B* manuscript. A closer analysis of A's monologue and its subsequent resonances in the text might bring the reader closer to understanding the reasons behind some of the tensions and underlying conflicts between A and B. The "novel" of *A&B* is in a highly advanced form at this early stage of the play's development; A's Opus Magnum shares numerous common features and topics with Hamm's story, including the time aspect, the Christmas Eve and the weather conditions, a windy and sunny day, with sunset by the time the action takes place. The basic plot of the monologue is the same in the two plays: a man approaching A, crawling on his belly, and begging him for some bread for the son that he had left behind in deep sleep, at a place that is about half a day away on horseback and where the whole population has perished due to an unspecified cataclysm.

In *Endgame*, Beckett makes a deliberate distinction between *silence* and *pause*. *Silence* as stage direction appears only once in the play, namely, in the collective prayer scene. It follows Hamm's monologue, in which, for the first time, he attempts to tell his story about the man who begged him for bread for his son. However, when reaching the most delicate issue, he changes the subject instead of finishing his story. Then, all of a sudden, he has an urge to pray to God, and commands Clov and Nagg to pray with him in silence.

HAMM [...] In the end he asked me would I consent to take in the child as well—if he were still alive. (*Pause.*) It was the moment I was waiting for. (*Pause.*) Would I consent to take in the child ... (*Pause.*) I can see him still, down on his knees, his hands flat on the ground, glaring at me with his mad eyes, in defiance of my wishes. (*Pause. Normal tone.*) I'll soon have finished with this story. (*Pause.*) Unless I bring in other characters. (*Pause.*) But where would I find them? (*Pause.*) Where would I look for them? (*Pause. He whistles. Enter Clov.*) Let us pray to God. [...] Silence! In silence! Where are your manners? (*Pause.*) Off we go. (*Attitudes of prayer. Silence.*). (*Endspiel, Fin de partie, Endgame* 1974: 76-78)

A strong sense of remorse might have led Hamm to perform and conduct this action of spiritual exercise, which is unlike him. Like his predecessors, Ernest in the *Ernest & Alice Fragment* and also X in *Avant Fin de partie*, Hamm has a peculiar love-hate relationship with God, whom he calls "the bastard" who "doesn't exist" (*Endspiel, Fin de partie, Endgame* 1974: 80).

Paul Lawley calls the man in the story Hamm's vassal (1988: 531). However, there is no evidence that the only survivor of the catastrophe would be Hamm's subordinate in any official way. The man is exposed to Hamm only due to circumstance: being deprived of all his property,

6 György Kurtág's *Fin de partie* opera premiered in Milano Scala on 15 November 2018.

homeless, starving and having a child to feed, he turns to another human being still in possession of food and shelter, driven by a basic survival instinct, to extend his own and his son's life by any length of time, be it a day or mere hours, or until the next morsel of bread. In this sense, according to (one of) the current definition(s) of UNESCO, the man in Hamm's story may be seen as a migrant, migration being "the crossing of the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. It includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants. Internal migration refers to a move from one area (a province, district or municipality) to another within one country" (UNESCO 2017). However, instead of immediate help, Hamm provides the man a philosophical lecture while scolding him for his "stupidity, optimism, and irresponsibility" (Lawley 1988: 531).

Both A and Hamm leave their stories unfinished. We never find out what really happened to the man, whether he entered A's (or Hamm's) services or left the shelter to go back to his son, whether he received any food to take with him to feed André or left empty-handed. Still, it is obvious from the play and the offers that Hamm makes to the starving man (taking him into his service, employing him as a gardener) that Hamm sees "all relationships, whether with his 'son' or with his toy dog [...], with his retainers or with his 'bottled' father, in terms of dominance and servitude" (Lawley 1988: 529-530). In the *A&B* manuscript once A reaches the passage about introducing new characters, the lid of the coffin that is present on stage the entire time opens, and a head emerges, looking straight at the audience. Beckett later cut this surreal element, a direct reference to death, and inserted the prayer scene where the coffin was. However, the coffin is one of the many dramatic hints in *A&B* suggesting that the story would have come to a bad end, had A ever completed it. A contemplates out loud, then touches the point when the man asks if he would agree to accept his son into his service too, if he is still alive of course. A admits to having enjoyed the situation as the father's question to him was the very moment he was waiting for. A can still see the man on his knees, his mad eyes, remembers his hands pressing on the ground, this helpless person fully in his power (MS 1660 undated: 34-35).

However, A interrupts himself just before unpleasant things might transpire. A does not like coming to an end with his story. Especially not when he has a great deal at stake, the only personal connection he has left—his relationship with B. For the most relevant question "the novel" raises is not whether A helped the man who begged for his support, as it is obvious from the numerous analogical examples in the play that he did not; he presumably let another person die beside X's mother, the doctor and Mrs C without any positive intervention to avoid the tragedy. Moreover, as A's remark, which Beckett first cut and then added again, "that was the moment I was waiting for", indicates, he finds delight in



spotting the weakest point of the man, the vulnerability of the father, and tremendously enjoys being in a position to turn him down.

The real question that remains is what happened to the man's son, who in *A&B* is called André. At the beginning of Act II, A insists that B ask questions about his *Opus Magnum*. B's reaction to their brief dialogue implies that he is more involved in the story of the man than a casual listener would be. Shortly after A begins to summarize how far he has managed to get on with his story, in the middle of his third sentence, B bursts out laughing in a most unexpected way. To A's question (and guesses) regarding what he finds so funny, B gives short and ambiguous answers, then finally makes a reference to the son, which is immediately followed by a pause in Beckett's stage directions (MS 1660 undated: 37).

There is an uncertainty, a dark secret about the son that never comes to light. A is closest to disclosing it to the audience after B's "final" departure, before he re-enters disguised as a boy. A is alone on stage, perhaps believing that his solitude is final, and as he starts to remember events from the past, shadows begin to return. However, there is a new element mingled into his meditation that A has never mentioned before. He talks about a small boy, sitting on the ground, leaning back against a rock, an image that appears to be his memory. While uttering elliptic sentences that are divided by pauses, A tries to remember when it all happened; he also admits to be playing but declares that the game is over, and then asks the rhetorical question: is this why he (perhaps referring to B) left him (MS 1660 undated: 55).

This recollection takes place shortly after B looks out the window, spots the (non-existent) boy outside, and leaves to check whether he is alive—never to return. This is the exact way in which B describes him. Although it is highly likely that A and B have been acting out the scene with the boy for the *n*<sup>th</sup> time, A's remarks about the boy refer not to some random role-playing the previous day, week or month, but to an specific event in the past that had actually happened, and that he had personally experienced.

Although not stated in the manuscript, it is not unlikely that the man begging for bread for his son was B's father, and B himself is the child that A received into his home and took into his services under mysterious circumstances. As Beckett was not satisfied with the *A&B* manuscript, he continued to develop the play, which at a significantly later point resulted in *Fin de partie*. Before writing another full manuscript of another two-act preliminary version (split between Ohio State University and Trinity College, Dublin), Beckett outlined the play twice, and also prepared five pages of notes, in which further light is shed on his preoccupation with the problematic origin of B, Clov and the whole suspicious lot. "Amid this farrago of paraplegics and amputees [first mention of mémé and pépé, predecessors of Nell and Nagg], the line >> Pas stérile dans notre famille

<< (>> No one is sterile in our family <<)> has a particularly cutting edge. Another note suggests that his father and son are adopted; that is, Nagg too may have been someone taken into the shelter as a servant: >> A un père adoptif/un fils adoptif. <<” (Gontarski 1985: 52). Therefore, it is possible that by the departure of B and the arrival of the young boy that B once used to be (and still is, in disguise, apparently) the same cycle is repeated, and re-enacted again.

However, Gontarski recalls that during the rehearsals of *Endgame* at the Riverside Studios in London in 1980, Rick Cluchey, who played the role of Hamm, asked Beckett whether the small boy is actually Clov as a child. Beckett responded, “Don’t know if the little boy is the young Clov, Rick, simply don’t know.” (Knowlson 2006: 260-261). Still, the *A&B* manuscript offers possible ways of interpreting this matter, the clues to which are deeply embedded in textual and dramaturgical levels of the play. However, it would be misleading to assume that Beckett’s drama is a detective story whose secrets will all unravel at the end:

Beckett has both extended the primacy of the playwright, and so authorial power, to an unprecedented extent, while simultaneously proclaiming authorial impotence, a diminished authority. That creates an ideological and aesthetic vacuum, which many a director and actor [and scholar] are all too willing to fill. It is a vacuum, however, that Beckett expects no one to fill, that, in fact, defines Beckettian performance, separates it from that of others. If actor or director [or scholar] fills that space, Beckett becomes Ibsen (Knowlson 2006: 261).

The aim of this paper is not to answer questions that Beckett himself could not answer. For the play does not really come to an end but restarts, and the secrets remain untold. However, having explored various aspects of restlessness, wanderlust and migration in *Endgame* (including the kitchen, the outside world, the raft and Hamm’s *Opus Magnum*), from the onset of the play’s genesis to its post-publication staging history, it is apparent that both Hamm and Clov (and their predecessors in the *Fin de partie* manuscripts) have a strong desire to be elsewhere and leave their given space once and for all. In a way they both share the uprootedness and vulnerability of the man who begged for some bread for his child on Christmas Eve; the only survivor or an unspecified catastrophe comes to ask for Hamm’s protection, who, despite being another survivor, one of the last of his species with only a slight advantage over the man, still does not seem too keen to help him or anyone else for that matter. The unfinished *Opus Magnum* with its secrets, as well as the dramaturgical function of the raft and the kitchen all increase the theatrical tension between Hamm and Clov as “their war is the nucleus of the play” (*The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett, Volume II, Endgame* 1992: 50).



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*Немир, жеља за путовањем и сеоба у Крају партије*

*Резиме*

Полазећи од раних верзија рукописа садржаних у архивској грађи, рад истражује појмове немира, жеље за путовањем и сеобом у *Крају њарџије* Самјуела Бекета, анализом обухватајући и Бекетова сценска упутства. Будући да жеља да се настане на другом месту – или, уколико је то могуће, нити на једном, темељно обележава однос ликова према простору, разматрају се драматуршке функције кухиње као означитеља другог света, места које је удаљено од просторија и у које Ф, Б и Клов очајнички желе да се склоне, али нису у стању. Неке од раних верзија *Краја њарџије* показују да, поред Клова који жуди да буде негде другде, јаку жељу да отпутује заувек осећа и Хам. У том светлу, идеја сплага као још једног битно обележеног топоса појављује се у МС 1660, изражавајући Б-ову (доцније Хамову) жељу да оде. Такође, у Хамовој наравији може се уочити и мотив сеобе из *Краја њарџије*, којим се човек из приче додатно обележава као мигрант. Подробнија анализа монолога А и његовог потоњег присуства у тексту приближава читаоца разумевању разлога неких од напетости и наглашених сукоба између А и Б, Хама и Клова.

*Кључне речи:* Самјуел Бекет, *Крај њарџије*, Хам, Клов, рукопис, миграција

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