

## “(HIATUS IN MS.)”

### Towards a TEI compliant typology of textual lacunae in Samuel Beckett’s manuscripts

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<sup>2</sup> DE BIASI, P.-M. What is a literary draft? Toward a functional typology of genetic documentation. *Yale French Studies*, 89, 1996, p. 37.

MODERN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE KIND WE ARE DEALING WITH at the *Beckett Digital Manuscript Project* (BDMP) often still contain a number of “gaps”: zones in the manuscript’s text that are either left completely blank, or are otherwise indicated to be filled in at a later stage in the writing process. The fact that such *lacunae* would appear in draft documents is only to be expected. As the organized collection of texts that were produced before the *bon à tirer* moment,<sup>2</sup> *avant-textes* are essentially collections of “unfinished” texts that need to be reworked before they can be fixed in the form of a publication. Until that moment, the draft remains an exploratory and experimental workspace, a place where everything is still possible, and where the author’s work can still take various exciting new directions. This makes textual *lacunae* in draft materials especially interesting for genetic critics, as they may indicate a hesitation in the author’s writing process – a name not yet decided on, a word that momentarily eludes the author, a phrase that needs fine-tuning, etc. Since there is still no need to commit to anything, the draft format leaves the author free to postpone some of her decisions to a later stage in the writing process and to fill in the gaps as she goes along – sometimes quite literally so.

Already an interesting aspect of the author’s writing process in itself, the textual lacuna can become even more important for the genetic critic when it offers an insight into the chronology of the work’s genesis. For example, when we are confronted with two undated draft versions, one of which (A) contains a textual lacuna where the other one (B) introduces a textual variant, we may safely assume that A was written before B. That this type of information may have important implications for a work’s *avant-texte* may be illustrated by turning to Dirk Van Hulle and Shane Weller’s recent monograph *The Making of Samuel Beckett’s L’Innommable / The Unnamable* – a genetic essay on Beckett’s bilingual writing process that was published as the printed component of the BDMP’s second module. In their description of the documents, Van Hulle and Weller explain that the first draft of the original French version of Beckett’s *The Unnamable* was written in two notebooks.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the first notebook, we find two loose sheets that were pasted onto the flyleaf at the back. Although undated, a close inspection of their textual context reveals that these sheets are not in their right place: the text on the last page of the first notebook continues on the first page of the second notebook with no regard of the text on the loose sheets, a text that moreover holds an early version of a passage that only occurs much later in the novel’s published version. In their monograph, Van Hulle and Weller indicate that alongside a letter Beckett had written to Georges Duthuit, a textual lacuna played an important role in dating these loose sheets and restoring them to their rightful place in the writing process:

<sup>3</sup> VAN HULLE, Dirk and WELLER, S. *The making of Samuel Beckett’s L’Innommable / The Unnamable*. London and Brussels: Bloomsbury Academic and University Press Antwerp (UPA/ASP), 2014, p. 33. In the BDMP’s online genetic edition, these two notebooks are referred to as MS-HRC-SB-3-10 and MS-HRC-SB-4-1. Both notebooks are held at the Harry Ransom Research Center, in Austin, Texas.

In the manuscript, on the loose sheet pasted to the last page of FN1, Mahood has no name yet. He is simply referred to as ‘M...’ (FN1, 78r), just as on the pages between the first mention of ‘M...’ (FN1, 20v) and the first time Mahood is mentioned by name (FN1, 27v), which corresponds in time with what Beckett describes in his letter to Duthuit.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, pp. 126-7.  
<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 126.  
<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 247.  
<sup>7</sup> e.g. BECKETT, S. *Watt*. Edited by Chris J. Ackerley. London: Faber & Faber, 2009d, p. 25, p. 86, p. 145.

The dating of these sheets has important interpretative implications for the text they carry, as it allows Van Hulle and Weller to posit that the passage was originally intended to become “the last page of the book”.<sup>5</sup> As such, this example demonstrates how important textual *lacunae* can be for the genetic critic’s reconstruction of a work’s *avant-texte*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 197, p. 202, p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 207.

In Beckett’s case, these textual *lacunae* are especially significant, because they feature so prominently in his published works as well. Perhaps one of the most straightforward examples is the quoted phrase in this paper’s title, which was taken from Beckett’s second (published) novel *Watt*. Towards the end of the novel, it becomes clear that Watt’s story is told by a narrator called Sam, and that the novel is supposedly published on the basis of Sam’s incomplete and at times illegible manuscript. The novel ends with an addendum and an editorial note saying that “[t]he following precious and illuminating material should be carefully studied” and that “[o]nly fatigue and disgust prevented” it to be included in the novel proper.<sup>6</sup> In other words: despite recognizing their value, the novel’s fictional author/editor gave up trying to incorporate these addenda into the text, and decided to present the reader with an unfinished text instead. This explains the many textual *lacunae* that appear throughout the novel. In the novel’s first three parts, there should be a white space (indent) before and after the question mark, as such: “?”.<sup>7</sup> In the fourth and last part, however, they become more frequent and more explicit: three ellipses are introduced by a question mark,<sup>8</sup> two by the parenthesis “(Hiatus in MS.)”,<sup>9</sup> and one by the parenthesis “(MS. Illegible)”.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 209. This fourth part of *Watt* also has a number of ellipses in the form of dotted lines (207) and em-dashes (Beckett 2009d, 187, 211, 212). Rather than *lacunae* in Sam’s fictional manuscript, however, these seem to be *lacunae* in the narrative: the dotted lines are fragments of a speech Watt cannot make out, and the em-dashes are used to conceal place names (not an uncommon practice in fiction). To complicate things even further, the chapter also uses em-dashes to represent pauses (207) and interrupted speech (207, 209), and dotted lines to represent delayed speech (211).

<sup>11</sup> BECKETT, S. “Worstward Ho.” In: *Company / Ill Seen Ill Said / Worstward Ho / Stirrings Still*. Edited by Dirk Van Hulle. London: Faber & Faber, 2009f, p. 81.

In the course of his writing career Beckett adopted the textual lacuna as one of a series of devices like narrative pauses, interruptions and false starts that could be used to emphasize his narrators’ fallibility, as well as the urge to “[t]ry again” and “[f]ail better”.<sup>11</sup> A nice example from one of his later works can be found in Beckett’s last prose text *Stirrings Still*. In the text’s third section, the protagonist is listening to a voice “from deep within”, but struggles to hear exactly what the voice is saying.<sup>12</sup> The first time the voice speaks, we read: “oh how *and here a word he could not catch* it were to end”; the second time we read “oh how *and here that missing word again* it were to end”.<sup>13</sup> As Dirk Van Hulle argues in his introduction to *The making of Samuel Beckett’s Stirrings Still / Soubresauts and Comment dire / what is the word*, this whole section hinges on the content of that missing word: if it is a negative word, it would encourage the

<sup>12</sup> BECKETT, S. “Stirrings Still.” In: *Company / Ill Seen Ill Said / Worstward Ho / Stirrings Still*. Edited by Dirk Van Hulle. London: Faber & Faber, 2009c, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, emphasis added.

protagonist to “press on”; if not, it would encourage him to “stir no more”.<sup>14</sup> A similar example can be found in Beckett’s very last text: the poem “what is the word”, which can be read as a narrator’s failed attempt to write a single sentence.<sup>15</sup> Struggling to finish the sentence, the narrator interrupts the writing process time and time again by interjecting the phrase “what is the word” and starting over.<sup>16</sup> These late examples too can be interpreted as cases of textual *lacunae* – albeit perhaps narratological rather than purely textual ones. Much like the question marks or parentheses that were used in *Watt*, the phrases “and here a word he could not catch”, “and here that missing word again”, and “what is the word” are used to fill a textual lacuna and expose it at the same time.

Not surprisingly, Beckett also uses different kinds of textual *lacunae* as narratological devices in his most obviously metafictional work: *Malone Dies*. In that novel we meet Malone, a bedridden octogenarian who plans to spend the little time he has left writing stories. It soon becomes clear, however, that writing does not come easy to Malone, and that he will not be able to complete his carefully laid out plans. Of the three stories in his original design, Malone will only start the first, and by the end of the novel it is not entirely clear whether he was able to finish even that. Malone’s plans keep changing, and he keeps interrupting his story with reflexive interludes and comments on the writing process. After these interludes, Malone invariably returns to his story with wavering success, until the moment when Malone’s story and that of his protagonist simultaneously come to an end on the very last page of the novel.

The first “hiatus” we come across in *Malone Dies* is perhaps a little different from the textual *lacunae* we discussed in *Watt*, *Stirrings Still*, and “what is the word”. Rather than a gap in the *text*, Malone explains that he has a gap in his “memory” when he writes: “I benefit from a hiatus in my recollections”.<sup>17</sup> Finding himself alone in an unfamiliar room, Malone has trouble remembering how he got there. Making an effort, he vaguely remembers a forest, and suspects he was “stunned with a blow”, which may have caused his blackout.<sup>18</sup> These details bear a striking resemblance to the story of Molloy – the first protagonist of Beckett’s previous novel *Molloy*. Like Malone, Molloy too found himself in a room (his mother’s), trying to piece together how he ended up there. Interestingly, Molloy’s story ends in a forest, where one of the last things he sees is a couple of “travellers” with “a club”.<sup>19</sup> Could these be the ones who knocked out Molloy / Malone before he ended up in his room? The question is not so easily answered. When Malone talks about his “hiatus”, he confesses that he has “often amused [him] self with trying to invent them, those same lost events”.<sup>20</sup> This raises the question whether Molloy’s entire story isn’t merely one of Malone’s inventions.

This hypothesis becomes even more plausible when we take all the other echoes from Beckett’s previous works in *Malone Dies* into account. At one point, Malone expresses his hope that when he dies “it will be all over with the Murphys, Merciers, Molloyes, Morans and Malones” – all protagonists in Beckett’s earlier stories.<sup>21</sup> In the same breath, Malone refers to the city of London, someone who was set on fire, and someone whose throat was slit with a razor – all references to Beckett’s first novel *Murphy*.<sup>22</sup> And the novel is riddled with more

<sup>14</sup> VAN HULLE, D. *The making of Samuel Beckett's Stirrings Still / Soubresauts and Comment dire / what is the word*. Brussels: University Press Antwerp (UPA/ASP), 2011, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> BECKETT, S. “what is the word.” In: *Company / Ill Seen Ill Said / Worstward Ho / Stirrings Still*. Edited by Dirk Van Hulle. London: Faber & Faber, 2009e, 2009e, throughout.

<sup>17</sup> BECKETT, S. *Malone dies*. Edited by Peter Boxall. London: Faber & Faber, 2010, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> BECKETT, S. *Molloy*. Edited by Shane Weller. London: Faber & Faber, 2009a, p. 93.

<sup>20</sup> BECKETT, S. *Malone dies*. Edited by Peter Boxall. London: Faber & Faber, 2010, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

subtle references to other works as well, like when Malone abandons a scene where Sapo's eyes are described as "pale and unwavering as a gull's" because it reminds him too much of "an old shipwreck",<sup>23</sup> this can be interpreted as a reference to "The Calmative", a short story Beckett had written only a few years earlier.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps this means that we can retroactively interpret all of Beckett's earlier works as "amusing inventions" – half-forgotten texts written by Malone to fill the *lacunae* in his memory.

When he finally starts to write his story, however, we see that this act of invention is quite a challenge for Malone. After writing only two short sentences ("The man's name is Saposcat. Like his father's"),<sup>25</sup> he already feels the need to interrupt the story to express his doubts ("Christian name? I don't know").<sup>26</sup> The rest of the novel is filled with such metafictional interludes – some of them longer than others. They create rifts in Malone's narrative, often literally leaving a gap between Malone's story and Sapo's by means of whitespace. Because he is apparently more fluent writing about himself than he is writing about his fictional characters, this act of alternating between his own story and Sapo's gradually seems to evolve into a successful tactic Malone resorts to whenever he gets stuck writing his story for some reason or other.<sup>27</sup>

About halfway through the novel, at the end of a particularly long and abrupt interlude, Malone returns to Sapo's story only to establish that he can hardly recognize his own protagonist. So much time has passed since Sapo's previous episode that Malone cannot help but wonder: "Perhaps it is not he".<sup>28</sup> The difference between the young Sapo and this much older character is so remarkable that Malone even decides to change his name:

For Sapo – no, I can't call him that any more, and I even wonder how I was able to stomach such a name till now. So then for, let me see, for Macmann, that's not much better but there is no time to lose, for Macmann might be stark staring naked under this surtout for all anyone would be any the wiser.<sup>29</sup>

As yet another example of the difficulties Malone faces during the writing process, this passage also illustrates how Malone's metafictional interludes tend to leave unresolved *lacunae* in the story he is writing.

Not all of the gaps in Sapo/Macmann's story are caused by Malone's difficulties with "inventing", however: at times Malone's writing process is also influenced by external factors. At one point, for instance, Sapo's story stops mid-sentence, because Malone has lost his pencil – forcing him to spend "two unforgettable days of which nothing will ever be known" recovering the pencil before he can continue to write.<sup>30</sup> Another time, Malone's writing process is disturbed by a visitor, who takes everything away from him except for two items he was able to hide: the exercise-book and pencil he uses to write.<sup>31</sup> And then there is of course the factor of Malone's impending death; while encouraging Malone to write with renewed vigour, the fear of dying also causes him to abandon his story for a while and write up the inventory of his possessions he had promised to write.<sup>32</sup> Towards the end of the novel we see Malone desperately trying to fill the gap, to finish his story before it is too late.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> BECKETT, S. "The calmative." In: *Samuel Beckett: The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989*. Edited by S.E. Gontarski. New York: Grove Press, 1995, pp. 65-6.

<sup>25</sup> BECKETT, S. Op. cit., 2010, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, Beckett may have used a similar technique himself while he was writing *Stirrings Still*: in *The Making of Stirrings Still / Soubresauts and Comment dire / what is the word*, Van Hulle explains how Beckett alternated between English and French at the beginning of the work's writing process (2011, 54).

<sup>28</sup> BECKETT, S. Op. cit., 2010, p. 53.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, pp. 97-105.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, pp. 75-82.

Examples like these indicate how conscious Beckett was about the writing process itself and of all the difficulties this process brings along with it. And a case could certainly be made that Beckett drew from his personal experience as a writer to create some of the metafictional (and in his later prose perhaps “metanarrational”) effects he was looking for in his fiction. In the first part of this paper, I already referred to the textual *lacunae* Beckett left in his manuscript of *L’Innommable* when he wanted to introduce a new M-character before having decided on that character’s name. Interestingly, he also used this mechanism in the manuscripts of *Malone meurt*. Not under the same time pressure as Malone, Beckett could afford to take his time deciding on a new name for Sapo. So when we first meet Sapo’s successor in the manuscripts, he is initially called “M ...” (twice in the same sentence), and later “M” on two occasions. Afterwards, Beckett would first try out the name Mac Mahon three times, to finally delete his third attempt, and replace it with “Macmann”. Before coming to this decision, however, Beckett had first tried out the name on the page’s facing leaf twice – one of which was deleted and turned into a doodle.

And Macmann is not the only character in *Malone Dies* Beckett seems to have had difficulties naming. The first time Malone mentions his own name in the manuscript, for instance, Beckett used the combination “M – ?” to fill the gap while he was still deciding what to call his protagonist.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the first time Sapo is mentioned he is called “Saposy”<sup>34</sup> rather than “Saposcat”, and the “Lemuel” character is still called “Samuel” throughout the manuscript. An even more interesting example is when Malone introduces a new character named “Pat”. In Beckett’s manuscript, this character is first called “Jack” four times before that name is deleted and changed into “Pat”. After correcting his previous three mentions of “Jack”, Beckett continues to write about the character, systematically using his new name.<sup>35</sup> On one occasion, however, Beckett accidentally writes the name “Jack” again – a mistake that is not corrected in the manuscript. We can be sure that Beckett noticed his mistake at a later stage in the writing process, however, because it “is” incorporated in the published text – albeit in a rather unexpected way. In the published text, a few lines “before” Beckett’s mistake in the manuscript, Beckett decided to let Malone make a similar mistake, by writing “over to Jack again, no, to Pat again, Jack is a different one”.<sup>36</sup> On the place where Beckett made his mistake, then, the published text reads “the Macmanns on the one hand and the Lemuels, *Pats and Jacks* on the other”,<sup>37</sup> instead of only using “Jack” as in the manuscript. This way, Beckett’s slip of the pen has caused one character with two names in his draft to become two different characters in the published version. This is a great example of how Beckett used his own experiences as a writer to help shape his self-conscious narrators – in this case by turning a mistake of his own into one of Malone’s. This practice may also be extended to the textual *lacunae* that can be found in Beckett’s manuscripts.

Because textual *lacunae* are such an important aspect of Beckett’s manuscripts (that, as I have argued, may even have further interpretative implications for the published versions of his works), we have recently decided to incorporate them into our online genetic edition of Samuel Beckett’s works. Now, when the user visits the BDMP’s search-page ([www.beckettarchive.org/search](http://www.beckettarchive.org/search)),

<sup>33</sup> In this respect, it is interesting to know that Beckett’s notebooks reveal that the novel’s working title was not *Malone meurt*, but *L’Absent*.

<sup>34</sup> In the manuscript, it is difficult to decipher the last two letters of Sapo’s name – but my best bet is “Saposy”. It “is” clear, however, that there are not enough letters in Sapo’s name at this point to spell “Saposcat”, and too many to spell “Sapo”.

<sup>35</sup> We may assume that Beckett changed “Jack” into “Pat” “before” continuing to write the rest of the manuscript, because the fourth time Beckett mentions “Jack”, it is instantly corrected *inline* (*currente calamo*) rather than supralineary like the first three “Jacks”.

<sup>36</sup> BECKETT, S. Op. cit., 2010, p. 106.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, emphasis added.

she can select the option “Gaps” among our selected searches, to search for all the textual *lacunae* in any or all of our online modules. At the moment, this search only displays gaps in the manuscripts of *The Unnamable*, because the manuscripts of *Stirrings Still* and “what is the word” did not contain any textual *lacunae*. But when new modules arrive that “do” contain such *lacunae*, it will become possible to study Beckett’s use of the device throughout his writing career.

Before we could offer this option to our users, however, we needed to find a way to identify textual *lacunae* in our encoding. Because our project uses the Text Encoding Initiative’s (TEI) international standard for encoding texts in XML, this meant going through the latest versions of the TEI’s *Guidelines* to see if any existing tags would do the trick.<sup>38</sup> The first possible candidate we came across was the TEI’s `<gap>` element:

`<gap>` indicates a point where material has been omitted in a transcription, whether for editorial reasons described in the TEI header, as part of a sampling practice, or because the material is illegible, invisible, or inaudible.<sup>39</sup>

At first sight, this element seemed like the perfect fit: we had been using the term “gap” to refer to this phenomenon internally for some time now, and the textual *lacunae* we had come across could certainly be regarded as “omitted materials”. In addition, the `<gap>` element also allows for a `@reason` attribute that can be used to specify the reason for the omission further – which would be ideal for distinguishing different types of `<gap>`s.

On closer inspection, however, some problems with this element started to appear. More specifically, the fact that the “omission” in `<gap>`’s element description applies to the *transcription* and not to the *source document* was problematic, because it meant that the omissions `<gap>` refers to are *editorial* omissions, rather than *authorial* ones. This is an important distinction, because the *lacunae* we are interested in do not refer to passages that are illegible, invisible, inaudible, or damaged in the source text, but to places in the manuscripts where there is little or no text in the document in the first place, because the author consciously left a gap to be filled in later. This meant that the `<gap>` element was not the right choice for us, and that we had to keep looking for a better option.

Further research led us in the direction of the `<space>` element: `<space>` indicates the location of a significant space in the copy text.<sup>40</sup>

Although it clearly applied to the source rather than to its transcription, the vagueness of this element description made it rather unappealing. Nevertheless, the element did have an interesting “note” at the bottom of the page that made the element much more relevant for our research:

This element should be used wherever it is desired to record an unusual space in the source text, e.g. *space left for a word to be filled in later*, for later rubrication, etc. It is not intended to be used to mark normal inter-word space or the like.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> BURNARD, L. and BAUMAN, S., eds. *TEI P5: Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange* (2.6.0). Charlottesville, Virginia: Text Encoding Initiative Consortium, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> TEI Consortium. 2014a. “TEI element gap.” *TEI-C*. <<http://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-gap.html>>. (Last updated on 16 September 2014; accessed on 15 January 2015). (Emphasis in original).

<sup>40</sup> TEI Consortium. 2014b. “TEI element space.” *TEI-C*. <<http://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-space.html>>. (Last updated on 16 September 2014; accessed on 15 January 2015). (Emphasis in original).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

The fact that this note explicitly stated that it could be used to indicate the “space left for a word to be filled in later” instantly made the `<space>` element much more suitable for our needs. Regrettably, however, this new element brought a new set of problems along with it: the attributes that the element allowed for were not as useful as those of `<gap>` had been, since `<space>` did not have a `@reason` attribute or any other attribute that could be used to classify different types of *lacunae*, focussing on the gap’s documentary aspects such as its size (`@quantity` and `@unit`) and rendition (`@rend`) instead.

The `@rend` attribute already goes some way in our quest to catalogue the different kinds of textual *lacunae* we come across in Beckett’s manuscripts. As we already discussed, not all of these *lacunae* are blank spaces. In fact, in the draft materials of Beckett’s *The Unnamable* that can be consulted at the BDMP, all twelve examples of textual *lacunae* are filled with some character, symbol, or a combination of both: nine are filled with a question mark (much like the textual *lacunae* in the published text of *Watt*), and three with a character’s initial. Although the TEI’s element description for `<space>` only offers examples of the element used as an empty element (`<space/>`), which would only be applicable for blank spaces, the element can also be used as a regular element that encloses the characters inside the lacuna – as in `<space>?</space>`. Because Beckett usually uses question marks for elusive words and initials for unresolved character names in the manuscripts we have examined, the `@rend` attribute could help us distinguish between these two types of *lacunae*, for instance by using `<space rend="symbol">?</space>` for the elusive words, and `<space rend="letter">M</space>` for the character names. But this approach can only be useful if Beckett’s use of textual *lacunae* remains consistent throughout his oeuvre. And since we have already noticed slight variations in the relatively few manuscripts we have checked for textual *lacunae* (e.g. “M” versus “M–”, “M...” and “M – ?” in *The Unnamable* and *Malone Dies*), we cannot assume this will always be the case. In particular, Beckett’s placeholder “M – ?” already poses a considerable difficulty. The use of the letter on the one hand and the question mark on the other makes the use of either category problematic – even though we would prefer to group it together with Beckett’s other M-characters.

In addition, we may want to specify these two categories further as we are confronted with different types of textual *lacunae* – regardless of how these *lacunae* are rendered in the manuscripts. In the manuscripts of *The Unnamable*, for instance, some of the question marks are used as placeholders for words that eluded Beckett during the writing process, while others point to difficulties that arose during the work’s translation process. These are arguably two different types of textual *lacunae* that will answer different kinds of research questions. But because they are both rendered as question marks, they cannot be distinguished from one another on the basis of their rendition alone. Because the `@rend` attribute can only be used to record the documentary evidence (i.e., “how is the text rendered”) and not our editorial interpretation of that evidence (“why is the text rendered as such”), it is too limited for our purposes. Instead, we need a more flexible attribute that allows us to make a more interpretative classification of textual *lacunae*. The obvious choice would be the `@type` attribute, but presently the TEI does not allow this attribute to be used inside the `<space>` element.

Although we had unmistakably found the right tool for the job with `<space>`, we needed to customize it further if we wanted to unlock its full potential for our Digital Scholarly Edition of Beckett's works. Fortunately, the TEI offers its users the option to extend (or narrow down) their existing tagset by building a personal TEI customization.<sup>42</sup> This allows users to create new elements (or, in our case, to add an attribute to an existing element) as long as these modifications are properly documented. However, if you are convinced that your customization would be useful for the rest of the TEI community, it is also possible to send a feature request to the TEI board,<sup>43</sup> in the hope that it will be accepted and included in the next version of the TEI's *Guidelines*. Because we thought our customization might be useful for other genetic editors as well (and because a recent discussion on the TEI-L mailing list affirmed our suspicions),<sup>44</sup> we decided to go for the second option and draw up a feature request.<sup>45</sup>

Due to fortunate timing (the TEI board convened the day after the request was sent) and a favourable response, the request was accepted three days later, and the feature will therefore become a part of the next TEI P5 release<sup>46</sup>. This will allow us (and other editors who use the TEI) to distinguish between different types of textual *lacunae*, and to offer our users the possibility to filter the results of their query accordingly. We could filter the results on the basis of the lacuna's rendition (`@rend="blank"`, `"symbol"`, `"character"`, etc.), as well as on the lacuna's type. On the basis of the textual *lacunae* that are currently tagged in our edition, we could already suggest three different values for `<space>`'s `@type` attribute: `"name"` (for character's names), `"hesitation"` (for elusive words), and `"translation"` (when the lacuna is caused by the translation process) – but more types could be added to the list as we encounter more *lacunae* in Beckett's manuscripts. Hopefully these new possibilities will inspire further research into textual *lacunae* in draft materials in general.

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<sup>42</sup> See, for instance, BURNARD, L. *What is the text encoding initiative? How to add intelligent markup to digital resources*. new edition [online]. Marseille: OpenEdition Press, 2014, esp. 89-99. <<http://books.openedition.org/oepe/426>>.

<sup>43</sup> These feature requests can be filed (and consulted) here: <<http://sourceforge.net/p/tei/feature-requests/>>.

<sup>44</sup> See ROBINSON, P. (2014) and replies.

<sup>45</sup> See DILLEN, W. "add `<space>` to `att.typed`." *Sourceforge*. <<http://sourceforge.net/p/tei/feature-requests/534/>>. (Feature request created on 14 November 2014; closed on 17 November 2014; accessed on 15 January 2015).

<sup>46</sup> This new TEI P5 release (2.8.0) was published on April 6, 2015 — i.e. between the writing of this paper and its publication. The release notes of TEI P5 2.8.0 (that include a reference to the accepted feature request) can be consulted here: <<http://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/readme-2.8.0.html>>.



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