Genetic Narratology

Analysing Narrative across Versions

Edited by

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1. An Introduction to Genetic Narratology: Geneses of Narratives and Narratives of Geneses

Dirk Van Hulle

A story to start with: once upon a time there was a block of white marble from Carrara. In 1408, the committee responsible for the decoration of the Duomo in Florence had decided to adorn the building's roofline with massive statues of biblical prophets and mythological figures. The slab of Carrara marble was destined to become one of these statues. The first sculptor to set to work on it was Agostino di Duccio. He received the commission to make a statue of the biblical hero David, who slayed the giant Goliath. Agostino started working on the legs first. But he abandoned the project. A second sculptor, Antonio Rossellino, was hired in 1476. Yet he, too, withdrew from his assignment, this time blaming the poor quality of the marble. The stone was exposed to the elements for the rest of the century, and it was not until 1501 that a new sculptor was found: the then 26-year-old Michelangelo. So far, the story has been one of laborious and slow progress, but in Britannica's narrative its ending is all of a sudden a fast-paced, one sentence apotheosis: 'Early in the morning on September 13, 1501, the young artist got to work on the slab, extracting the figure of David in a miraculous process that the artist and writer Giorgio Vasari would later describe as "the bringing back to life of one who was dead."'[1]

The 'miraculous' nature of this process is a persistent myth, reinforced by that other tale told of Michelangelo, who allegedly said

1 https://www.britannica.com/story/how-a-rejected-block-of-marble-became-the-worlds-most-famous-statue

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that the sculpture is already complete within the marble block before one starts working on it; that one just has to chisel away the superfluous material. The story makes it seem as if any marble sculpture, even the famous statue of David, was just waiting to be liberated from a block of stone. He simply needed to extract what was already there in essence, as it were. This would imply a rather essentialist and deterministic view, as in the belief that things have a set of characteristics which make them what they are and that the task of the artist is their discovery. In fact, the statement attributed to Michelangelo is a way of moulding the creative invention into a discovery model, implying the pre-existence of the thing to be dis-covered.

Very often, however, that is not how the creative process works. The slow, difficult groping process of trial and error is easily forgotten after the fact, and replaced—with hindsight—by a narrative of 'eureka' instances and 'breakthrough' moments. The mythmaking mechanisms are part of the narrativising impulses we all tend to have—whether we are creative writers talking about their writing in retrospect or fans eager to aggrandise their literary heroes' genius.

It is good to be aware of these narrativising impulses. And in this respect, two subdisciplines may be of help: narratology and genetic criticism. On the one hand, narratology is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'The study of the structure and function of narrative […]; the examination and classification of the traditional themes, conventions, and symbols of the narrated story.' On the other hand, the study of creative processes is the province of genetic criticism. In combination with 'narratology', the adjective 'genetic' refers on the one hand to the genesis of narratives (the writing process of stories), but on the other hand also to narratives of this kind of genesis. That double focus is what this introductory essay wants to explore.

Genetic narratology combines methodologies of genetic criticism and narrative analysis. When Lars Bernaerts, Gunther Martens and I explored the possibility of such a combination in 2011 and 2013, we observed a general trend among narratologists to focus more on reception than on production. But we also discovered that in the past, quite a few narratologists had felt very comfortable using manuscript material in their arguments whenever they deemed it useful for their narrative analysis—Dorrit Cohn with Kafka, Franz Karl Stanzel with

Henry James, Gérard Genette with Proust, Philippe Hamon with Zola, Seymour Chatman with Virginia Woolf (2013, 303). The Oxford colloquium 'Genetic Narratology'[2] developed some of these earlier explorations of the possibilities to combine narratology with genetic criticism. They mutually enrich each other in all aspects of classical, structuralist narratology, which usually works with three large categories of narrative analysis: (*1*) *story*, consisting of 'actions', 'actants' and 'setting'; (2) *narrative*, encompassing 'time', 'characterisation' and 'focalisation'; and (3) *narration* (the ways in which the story is told), covering 'types of narrators' (intra-, extra-, homo-, heterodiegetic) and the 'representation of consciousness' (Herman and Vervaeck 2019, 42). Postclassical narratology has broadened the scope of this basic set of focal points in terms of intermedial, rhetorical, cognitive, feminist, queer, postcolonial, cultural, natural and unnatural narratology. David Herman defines postclassical narratology as a set of forms of narrative analysis that respect classical (mainly structuralist, text-oriented) narratology, but add contextual dimensions to it.[3] My suggestion is to add 'genetic narratology' to this list, and the present volume of essays is an attempt to show, by means of various examples ranging from the early nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, how genetic criticism can enrich and refine narrative analysis, and vice versa. A genetic-narratological approach enriches the reading experience as it broadens the traditional focus on the product (the published text) to also include the process (the genesis of the text).

The devil's advocate might retort that genetic critics are thus using narratology as a crutch or a scaffolding which they can throw away when they do not need it anymore. This would suggest that genetic narratology might be only unidirectionally enriching; that genetic critics benefit from narratology but that this does not work the other way around. It is certainly true that genetic critics can use and apply

2 Several of the essays in the present collection originated in papers presented at this international colloquium 'Genetic Narratology' (Jesus College, Oxford, 23–24 February 2023).

3 David Herman in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/38.html; see also Jan Christoph Meister, 'Narratology', https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/48.html: 'Over the past twenty years, narratologists have paid increasing attention to the historicity and contextuality of modes of narrative representation as well as to its pragmatic function across various media.'

narratological models, such as the structuralist framework, because it offers a vocabulary for the phenomena we encounter in the manuscripts. But I do believe that the enrichment is mutual. It also works in the other direction: narratologists can use models from genetic criticism, because it offers a vocabulary and framework for the analysis of narrative across versions. For instance, one such framework is the triangular model of the dynamics between *endogenesis*, *epigenesis* and *exogenesis*. Endogenesis encompasses the 'inside' of the genesis, the chronological sequence of notes, drafts and other textual versions before the first publication. Epigenesis is the continuation of the genesis after publication. And exogenesis consists of the author's interaction with external source texts (for instance when they look something up in an encyclopaedia).

In addition to discussing the ways in which narratology can offer useful tools and vocabulary to examine the genesis of narratives using the tripartite structure of *story, narrative* and *narration* (Van Hulle 2022),[4] we could proceed in a similar way and examine how the genetic model of *endo-, epi-* and *exogenesis*[5] could—in its turn—be beneficial to narratology. Given the pioneering nature of this first full-length volume to merge genetic criticism with narratology, this collection of essays tries to find out if this exchange of methodologies and vocabularies can be mutually beneficial, and if that turns out to be the case genetic narratology can hopefully develop into something that is more than the sum of its parts, offering an innovative approach to understanding literature.

This introduction consists of two sections, one about studying 'the genesis of narratives', and one about the mechanisms behind the ways in which we inevitably make 'narratives of the genesis'. The first part of the essay focuses not only on the *narrated* but also on the *unnarrated*. While the first part discusses various methods of analysing the genesis of narratives, the second part examines narratives of the genesis. Very often, the writing process is the object of narrativisation. In interviews, letters or conversations, authors are invited to talk about the making-of. Due to numerous circumstances, certain elements of the writing process are emphasised, magnified, exaggerated, others are obscured or forgotten, either on purpose or by accident. This narrativisation

4 See especially the chapter called 'Genetic Narratology' in *Genetic Criticism: Tracing Creativity in Literature* (2022), 149–63.

5 See Karin Kukkonen's essay for an interesting fourth dimension to this approach.

of literary geneses is just as much the object of scrutiny in genetic narratology as the genesis of narratives. The second section of this introduction will therefore discuss how the genesis of narratives and narratives of the genesis relate to each other—a topic that will recur in several of the essays in this volume.

1. The Genesis of Narratives

The Narrated: The Telling of the Tale

Endogenesis: endogenetic narratology often analyses narrative elements across versions, comparing for instance a manuscript version with the published text. But even within one version, a comparison of subsequent writing layers (all the deletions, substitutions, additions within one document, as in Dorrit Cohn's analysis of Kafka's manuscript of *Das Schloss*) qualifies as endogenetic narratology. As a narratologist, Cohn was one of the first scholars to draw attention to a striking shift from first-person to third-person narration in the manuscript, preserved at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, not as part of a genetic analysis but as a narratological study. This already happens in the novel's opening sentence: 'Es war spät abend, wenn ich K. ankam' ['It was late in the evening when I K. arrived.'] (Bodleian, MS. Kafka 34, fol. 2v).[6] Again, the devil's advocate might argue that narratology only analyses one version at a time or one layer at a time; that there is not really a dynamic, temporal dimension. But Cohn gives narratological explanations for the change from first-person to third-person narration, trying to answer questions about free indirect style. With only a few minimal changes, Kafka manages to create a major stylistic effect: the impact of this shift from 'self-narrated monologue' to 'narrated monologue' (Cohn 1978, 169-70) is that the narrator is 'effaced', and the emphasis shifts to the experiencing character. In other words, a narratological argument is developed, not just for one layer and then for the next, but also for the narrative metamorphosis, for the change from one to the other. In

6 The aim of the transcription conventions used in the present volume is to facilitate the reading by using as few diacritical signs as a possible, crossing out deleted passages and using superscript for additions.

Narrative Discourse Revisited, Gérard Genette discusses this example as a case of 'transvocalization'—shifts in voice from one version to another (1988, 109-11). In Kafka's manuscript, this transvocalization was remarkably easy, Cohn argues, because the original first-person narration was atypical, in the sense that the narrating 'I' completely gave way to the experiencing 'I'. It was 'a first-person narrative in grammatical form only, not in structure'; as a result, 'there was no obstacle whatever to the substitution of K. for ich in the manuscript' (1968, 33).

Epigenesis: The same principle of analysing narratives across versions can be applied to narratives across editions, if the genesis continues after publication, that is, if the author keeps making changes. Good examples are the various editions during the author's lifetime of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*; or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In the first edition, Frankenstein falls in love with his blood cousin Elizabeth Lavenza; in the 1831 edition, Mary Shelley turned her into an adoptive sister, to avoid any suggestions of incest. This change has an impact with regard to the actants and to some extent the characterisation. Sometimes an author destroys their manuscripts, but keeps making changes to every new edition of their work, as in the case of the Danish author Henrik Pontoppidan's novel *A Fortunate Man*, which makes it an excellent case study for epigenetic narratology (see Josefine Hilfling's contribution to this volume).

Exogenesis: Genetic narratology does not need to be limited to narrative analysis across versions. There is also an exogenetic dimension. With reference to characterisation, it is interesting to see how Alan Bennett gave shape to the character of the King in *The Madness of George III* by making detailed notes on Nesta Pain's *George III at Home* (1975). Or with reference to setting, in the case of *The Remains of the Day*, Kazuo Ishiguro took extensive notes from books on English country houses in the late 1930s, because this setting is such an integral part of the ideology. The butler's role in this chronotope is the central metaphor of the novel. Genetic narratology is interested in the role of this chronotopical metaphor in the creative development: was it the metaphor that triggered the narrative or was it the other way around? Was it the narrative that developed in such a way that gradually the butler's position turned into a metaphor for the average person's subservient position in global politics? It is not always clear what came first: was it the ideological idea that determined the setting, or was it the setting that led to a crystallisation of the ideology?

In addition to this primary triad of genetic dimensions, this volume of essays explores other avenues such as Karin Kukkonen's suggestion to take account of a work's metagenesis as a way of expanding the genetic dossier and contributing to a narratological understanding of metafiction. Genetic approaches to narratives will often concentrate on a work's macrogenesis (the genesis of a work in its entirety across multiple versions) or microgenesis (the revisions within one document or for instance the processing of one particular exogenetic source text)—see the essays by Matthias Grüne, Luc Herman and John M. Krafft, Charles Mascia, Vincent Neyt, Joshua Phillips, Claire Qu, Kaia Sherry, Pim Verhulst, Joris Žiliukas in this collection—but they can also include narrative analysis on the level of the nanogenesis, thanks to keystroke logging applied to born-digital work—see Lamyk Bekius's contribution to this volume—or on the level of the megagenesis, transcending the limits of a single work, encompassing for instance a whole cycle of novels or the recurrence of a certain narrative phenomenon such as a particular type of character in several novels by the same author—see the essays by Lars Bernaerts and Jane Loughman in this collection. In general, this is another opportunity to pay special attention to the oeuvre as a whole. Classical theories of both narratology and genetic criticism, as well as typologies of draft material (de Biasi 1996) tend to focus on the texts and *avant-textes* of single works. This is a plea to also take account of the oeuvre and the 'sous-oeuvre' (Van Hulle 2022, 113–19; 164)—the entire oeuvre's genetic dossier, including for instance notes, commonplace books, diaries, correspondence, marginalia in personal libraries and unpublished or abandoned works that did not make it into the author's official canon.

No matter on which scale these literary geneses are studied, they 'beckon the reader to investigate the messily unresolved inconsistencies and disunities that corrupt the text', as Charles Mascia notes with reference to the ragged narration in Melville's *Billy Budd*, referring to John Wenke's unsettling observation that, although a Genetic Text edition exists of this work (edited by Hayford and Sealts), 'as late as 2006 [...] virtually no *Billy Budd* criticism has made use of the materials of the Genetic Text' (Wenke 2006, 502; see Mascia's essay in this volume). That is why it is appropriate to conclude the present volume with an essay on the relationship between genetic narratology and scholarly editing by Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth, who made an equally

shocking observation regarding the relative neglect of genetic and historical-critical editions in German literary criticism and discusses the bidirectional interdisciplinary potential, in terms of both narratological considerations as a precondition for editorial decisions, and editorial representations as a basis for narrative analysis.

The Unnarrated: The Allure of the Untold

So far, to make the point about the mutual enrichment of narratology and genetic criticism, the focus has been on what is being narrated. But a field where genetic narratology becomes especially fascinating is the realm of the unnarrated. There is no shortage of negative designations in narratology. Brian Richardson introduced the notion of 'denarration' for narrative situations in which the narrator blatantly contradicts or denies what he has just told us (Richardson 2006, 87), as in the last lines of Beckett's *Molloy*: 'Then I went back into the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining.' (Beckett 2009, 184); and Gerald Prince discusses the 'unnarratable' (for instance, when in certain periods the recounting of certain actions is taboo) and the 'disnarrated' (actions which do not happen in the world represented, but which are mentioned nonetheless). (Prince 1988, 3).[7]

The 'unnarrated', in contrast, consists of 'ellipses found in narrative', either 'inferrable from a significant lacuna in the chronology' or 'explicitly underlined by the narrator ("I will not recount what happened during that fateful week")' (Prince 1988, 2). This kind of ellipsis has a special allure. There is a fascination that emanates from the 'unnarrated'. And while 'unnarrating' or 'untelling' may sound weird, it does make sense as a verb in the sense of making something untold.

7 'For me, and to put it most generally, terms, phrases, and passages that consider what did not or does not take place ("this could've happened but didn't"; "this didn't happen but could've"), whether they pertain to the narrator and his or her narration [...] or to one of the characters and his or her actions [...] constitute the disnarrated. When I speak of the latter, I am thus referring to alethic expressions of impossibility or unrealized possibility, deontic expressions of observed prohibition, epistemic expressions of ignorance, ontologic expressions of nonexistence, purely imagined worlds, desired worlds, or intended worlds, unfulfilled expectations, unwarranted beliefs, failed attempts, crushed hopes, suppositions and false calculations, errors and lies, and so forth.' (Prince 1988, 3)

A good example can be found in Samuel Beckett's novel *Molloy*, written in French first and then translated into English by Beckett himself. At a certain moment, the narrator asks the rhetorical question: 'What then was the source of Ballyba's prosperity?' And he immediately adds: 'I'll tell you.' He then tries to present himself as an omniscient narrator, one who purports to give an 'authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals'—one of the 'various technical characteristics of the novel' according to Ian Watt (1957, 27). But then the narrator suddenly says: 'No, I'll tell you nothing. Nothing.' (Beckett 2009, 140)

Several pages further in the published text, there is another strange moment, when a character is introduced out of the blue and just as quickly abandoned again. He is called the 'Obidil':

> And with regard to the Obidil, of whom I have refrained from speaking, until now, and whom I so longed to see face to face, all I can say with regard to him is this, that I never saw him, either face to face or darkly, perhaps there is no such person, that would not greatly surprise me. (Beckett 2009, 170)

As a result, the textual surface is disturbed by these two anomalies: first, the narrator's announcement that he is going to tell us something which, on second thought, he doesn't do; and secondly the totally incongruous mention of a character called Obidil who does not feature anywhere else in the published text.

To scrutinise what is happening here, it is useful to know that while the eponymous character Molloy is the narrator of the first part of the novel, the second part is narrated by a man called Moran. Moran has been assigned to go and look for Molloy. Before he sets out, he describes the Molloy country, called 'Ballyba'. He talks about its geography and its agriculture, and then he starts explaining Ballyba's economy:

> D'où Ballyba tirait-il donc ses richesses? Je vais vous le dire.
> [What then was the source of Ballyba's prosperity? I'll tell you.]
> (Beckett 2009, 140)

In the manuscript, this is followed by a sizeable section describing Ballyba's remarkable economy, entirely based on the excrements of its citizens. According to Moran's account, the citizens' stools were the source of Ballyba's riches. Starting from the age of two, every citizen was to oblige the Market Gardening Organisation with a certain amount

of faecal matter every year. All of this is taken very seriously, and recounted accordingly. To keep the faecal production at the highest level and producing primarily for the home market, travel abroad is strictly limited by the Organisation, headed by the Obidil, an official who is entirely dressed in white and who is the only one who can issue travel orders. The substantial fragment—more than a dozen handwritten pages—is meticulous in the scatological description of this economy. And it establishes a context for the mysterious character of the Obidil.

When Beckett had finished a typescript of his novel and had shown it to confidants, he decided to cut the passage. In grey pencil, he marks the start of the cut by means of an X in the right margin and a vertical line just after the sentence 'Je vais vous le dire', adding above the line: 'Non, je ne dirai rien.'—'No, I'll tell you nothing.' (BDMP4, FT1, 214r) In the printer's copy (kept at the University of Reading, UoR MS 5859, 214r), Beckett crossed out the whole passage with a big St Andrew's cross in blue pencil. If he had simply wanted to omit this ten-page passage, he could easily have done so without leaving any traces by starting the cut just *before* the question 'What then was the source of Ballyba's prosperity?' But he chose to let the narrator ask the question, say that he was going to tell us and then unsay his statement, leaving a textual scar and drawing attention to the unnarrated passage, so that the readers are left with the sense that they don't get to see everything.

Beckett deliberately gives us just enough tips to make us suspect a gigantic narrative iceberg underneath the textual surface—the underlying link between the two narrative anomalies. And this invisible iceberg turns out to be a biting satire of Ireland's religious, economic and political attitudes at the time. For Ballyba is said to be the region around the market-town of 'Bally', most probably inspired by the Irish name for Dublin, Baile átha Cliath, pronounced 'Bally ah cleeah'. Its self-sufficient economy based on its citizens' own faeces reads like a satire of Ireland's policy of economic protectionism in the 1930s, introduced by the Fianna Fáil government under Éamon de Valera. And the Obidil, the only person who can issue travel orders—dressed in white like a pope, deciding who goes to heaven and who doesn't—is an anagram (and a mirror image) of Libido. That underlying iceberg is the unnarrated. In this particular case, it turns the setting into a satirical chronotope, the ideological centre of the text. Most remarkable—both genetically

and narratologically—is that Beckett decides to *take away* that centre; moreover, he does not take it away himself but makes his narrator decide to do so. In terms of narrative time, he moves from one extreme to the other on Mieke Bal's scale—between 'time of narration' and 'story time' (qtd. in Herman and Vervaeck 2019, 66; see also Bal 2017). In the manuscript, the narrative is 'paused' when Moran starts talking about the economy of Ballyba, which the reader does not really need in order to be able to follow the narrative of Moran's pursuit of Molloy. By cutting this bit, Beckett could have simply turned it into a continuation of the narrative (in the middle of Bal's scale, where 'time of narration' and 'story time' are more or less equal). But by making his narrator say 'No, I'll tell you nothing', he actually presents it as an ellipsis.

In terms of 'narration', it is important that he does not do so implicitly but *explicitly*. Beckett first styles Moran as a Balzacian narrator or storyteller, focused on the pursuit of clarity. His aim is what Beckett criticised in Balzac's treatment of characters, 'situating them in facts that will explain them' (Rachel Burrows's student notes, TCD MIC 60, 69). Against this background, it is telling that Beckett makes Moran undo or 'unnarrate' his explanation of Ballyba's economy, burying it, hiding it under the surface, obscuring it. Beckett's counterexample to Balzac was Dostoevsky, whose characters always seem to remain in the shadows (Gide 1923, 75; TCD MIC 60, 21). The unnarrated contributes to this feeling of obscurity. It makes the narrative less clear, but therefore more intriguing. Instead of Balzacian clarity, Beckett gives us a literary *clair-obscur*. The narrator first presents himself as the explainer, but then immediately becomes the teaser. No sooner has he whet the reader's curiosity than he frustrates it. If Beckett had made the cut *before* the question 'What was the source of Ballyba's prosperity?', the reader would have been blissfully ignorant; they would not even have been aware of any '*Leerstelle*' or 'gap of indeterminacy' in Wolfgang Iser's terms (Iser 1980). By making the cut *after* the question, readers are not blissfully but painfully ignorant; they are made aware of a gap. The narrator gestures towards something that is actually there but is not being told. What would the economy of Ballyba have been like? He invites us to fill the gap in whatever way we want. As genetically informed readers, we do find a suggestion (the narrator gestures in a certain satirical direction) but we also find the clear trace of a narratologically highly relevant act:

the conscious omission of this suggestion, as well as the deliberate trace of this act in the published text.

Playing the devil's advocate again, one could argue that taking this suggestion into account limits our reading experience. But the question is whether that is necessarily the case. As a general reader of the published text, one can read this passage as an invitation to fill the gap with whatever economy one can come up with. And it seems fair to say that not many readers, if any, would ever come up with an economy based on its own citizens' faeces. In that sense, taking the drafts into account can open up a reader's limited imaginative capacities and enrich their reading experience.

Genetic narratology is a form of framing. Usually, narratologists work with only one textual version—'the' published text. But if an author's drafts have been preserved, narratologists have the choice to frame the work in various ways. They can choose to work with the finished product only, but they can also frame the work differently and include the manuscripts in their narratological analysis.

2. Narratives of the Genesis

While genetic narratology is a form of framing, it also offers a vocabulary to enhance our awareness of this act of framing. Recounting the genesis of a literary work or any creative process is a narrative act in and of itself. A genetic dossier is often marked by several gaps and imperfections in the archival record. Even if the writing process has been recorded with keystroke logging software, there may be moments the author used another writing tool or accidentally forgot (or consciously decided not) to record a certain writing session. Genetic critics try to fill these gaps of indeterminacy by reconstructing the conditions of the creative imagination. The cognitive acts of inventing, undoing and revising can be hard to retrace. It is indeed impossible to enter the writer's mind after the fact, which is why Louis Hay advises critics to stick to the traces of writing: 'la trace, toute la trace et rien que la trace' ['the trace, the whole trace and nothing but the trace'] (Hay in Hay and Lebrave 2010, 154).

But these traces sometimes do give us clues as to what writers did not yet know at certain instances in the process. It is striking how many traces indicate second thoughts or moments the author changed their

mind. While working on her last (unfinished) work, Virginia Woolf first wrote that 'Anon' dies, and then deleted this again 'as though not yet convinced of Anon's death', as Joshua Phillips notes (see his essay in this volume); in his plan for *Die Poggenpuhls*, the German novelist Theodor Fontane develops a scene that takes place on the day before a birthday, 'but Fontane is still unsure whose birthday' as Matthias Grüne observes (see his essay in this volume); in Melville's *Billy Budd*, the dramatisation of misreading and the problem of narrative access are themes that probably did not guide the narrative from its conception but 'emerged gradually', as Charles Mascia concludes (see his essay in this volume). Experienced writers like Stephen King even appear to count on this period of unknowing or this element of narrative ignorance as a measure of suspense, reasoning that 'if I'm not able to guess with any accuracy how the damned thing is going to turn out, even with my inside knowledge of coming events, I can be pretty sure of keeping the reader in a state of page-turning anxiety' (King, qtd. in Vincent Neyt's contribution to this volume).

Writers' own accounts of the writing process are fascinating documents that keep captivating readers' interest, as testified by the series of 'The Art of Fiction' interviews in *The Paris Review* that is still going strong after more than seventy years and more than two hundred and fifty interviews since 1953. But genetic narratology is not a form of intentionalism and the rule of thumb in genetic criticism is never to put full trust in an author's own retrospective statements about what they did or did not do during their works' genesis. This critical distrust is prompted by an awareness of the universal phenomenon of narrativisation. In the context of narratology, narrativisation is described by Monika Fludernik as a coping mechanism to deal with unfamiliar textual features, consisting of 'taking recourse to available, diverse interpretative patterns' and 'narrative schemata' (Fludernik 1996, 31; 34). But while this reading strategy describes a way of coping with strangeness in narrative fiction, reality—as is well known—is often even stranger than fiction. As a result, the phenomenon of narrativisation is—sometimes consciously, but very often inadvertently—applied to the strangeness and oddities of the creative process, imposing the framework of narrativity on the genesis to reduce its inconsistencies.

Samuel Beckett was aware of this phenomenon before it was made explicit and labelled as a narratological phenomenon, applying it in the first instance to the notion of the self. Especially in his novel *L'Innommable / The Unnamable*, he makes the character-narrator repudiate the self rather than being lulled into the belief that it can be grasped by imposing the framework of a narrative onto it (Van Hulle and Weller 2014; Bernaerts and Van Hulle 2013). Elsewhere in his oeuvre, for instance in the manuscripts of the radio play *Cascando* (see Pim Verhulst's essay in this volume), Beckett refers to his aim as conducting a story to the point of unnarratability—'jusqu'à l'inénarrable'. Fully aware of the universal impulse to—retrospectively—narrativise the strangeness of any work's genesis, I suggest we take this Beckettian objective as a motto for all our ventures into genetic narratology: while retracing the writing process will always involve a certain form of narrativisation, we can enhance our awareness of this mechanism and try to pinpoint moments of unnarratability rather than cover up or smooth out the strangeness of creative processes.

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