

# LE TEXTE ÉTRANGER

« THE SEX GOES ON AT THE END » : TRANSLATING CORPORA IN  
BECKETT'S *FIN DE PARTIE / ENDGAME*

Anthony Cordingley

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This article focuses on Beckett's tropes of translation in *Fin de partie*, particularly his exploitation of the rituals of instruction in French to which he was submitted as a schoolboy. It highlights the degree to which Hamm and Clov's discourse is indebted to the formulaic rhetoric of textbooks of foreign language learning. The language play between Hamm and Clov, and particularly the way that Clov's speech mirrors and refracts Hamm's, is considered within the context of the fact that Clov has had to learn to speak Hamm's language. The power which Hamm exercises over Clov is argued to be not only that of a master over his slave, their relationship is shown to be a perversion of a pedagogical dynamic between teacher and student. Clov's wheeling Hamm around the stage and his execution of Hamm's orders thus animates the tropes of translation present within their dialogue. This division of labour upon the stage of *Fin de partie* and the respective language roles which Beckett ascribes to his characters embodies Beckett's relationship to French, from when he was first taught French under the threat of punishment in the classroom through to his experience of translating his self in order to write his works in French in the post-World War II period.

Exploring these issues and the many ironies which arise in their self-translation into the English of *Endgame*, this article reconsiders the critical commonplace that writing in French afforded Beckett an ecstatic release into a purity of form "*sans style*", a form beyond that which his English would permit, for it was haunted by his lifetime of learning, reading and experience. Rather, seeing the boards of the classroom beneath those of the stage illuminates how Hamm and Clov mobilise Beckett's experience of language as mediated by institutions and their inscribed relationships of control and servitude, mastery and apprenticeship, and, ultimately, Beckett's struggle to escape their persistence.