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Samuel Beckett's maternal passion or hysteria at work in *company/* *compagnie*

Pascale Sardin

Beckett, Surrealism and Hysteria

- ¹ In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Samuel Beckett translated a number of texts by prominent French Surrealists, amongst which celebrated poems by Eluard and by Breton, which appeared in the 1932 'Surrealist Number' of *This Quarter* edited by Edward W. Titus and André Breton himself. Moreover, Beckett worked on the translation of excerpts from *The Immaculate Conception*, an experimental series of long prose poems by André Breton and Paul Eluard tracing life from 'Conception' to 'Death' and simulating five forms of mental disorder, and also put into English an editorial published in *La Révolution surréaliste* signed by Breton and Aragon in honour of the 'Fiftieth Anniversary of Hysteria.'¹ In this very short manifesto, the authors, who were reasserting their severance from traditional modes of writing, defined hysteria 'as a supreme means of expression' and celebrated 'the greatest poetic discovery of the latter nineteenth century.' (320-321) Although Beckett probably did not agree with the optimism that accompanied the Surrealists' championing of the powers of love and dreams, their insistence on the breakdown of reason most certainly struck the young intellectual, while confirming his belief that the future of art lay in avant-garde and the relinquishing of realistic forms of writing. Beckett's 1934 essay on 'Recent Irish Poetry,' which highlights the split in the subject-object relation, also explicitly echoes Breton and Aragon's extolling of hysteria, which, according to them is 'marked by the subversion [...] of the relations established between the subject and the moral world' (321) (Knowlson, 1996: 107 and Albright: 11)
- ² We also know from Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' held at Trinity College Dublin—which he took in the mid-thirties—that he had read extensively on the subject of

psychoanalysis. More specifically, he studied very closely the topic of hysteria dealt with in chapters 2, 4 and 7 of *The Treatment of Neuroses* by Ernest Jones. He was also well aware, from having annotated Otto Rank's *Trauma of Birth* that psychoanalysis was invented by Anna O. the first patient whom Joseph Breuer treated in 1881 and whose case was published in 1895 in *Studies in Hysteria* by Freud and Breuer. What is not recorded in Beckett's 1930s notes, but what is of utmost importance for his future as a bilingual writer, is that one of Anna O.'s most dramatic hysterical symptoms was her impaired ability to speak German, her mother tongue, and her recourse to foreign languages to express herself when her illness was most acute.

- 3 Moreover, critics have shown that Beckett's *Psychology Notes* were probably taken during his own psychoanalysis with Bion, which was begun after his father's death in 1933. (Engelberts: 157-159) As is well-known, Beckett stated that he had memories of being into his mother's womb. Far from being pleasurable, these intrauterine memories were quite unpleasant; he recalled feeling 'trapped' and 'imprisoned,' 'crying to be let out': 'I remember being in pain but being unable to do anything about it. I used to go back to my digs and write notes on what had happened, on what I'd come up with.' (Knowlson, 2006: 68) In a February 1970 interview he also said:

Even before the foetus can draw breath it is in a state of barrenness and of pain. I have a clear memory of my own foetal existence. It was an existence where no voice, no possible movement could free me from the agony and darkness I was subjected to. (Cronin 2)

- 4 The pain and powerlessness the young man reminisced were then vividly echoed in Jung's London 1935 lecture Beckett attended about a girl the world-renowned psychoanalyst could not treat because she had, he said, never actually been born. Beckett was later to refer to this famous case history several times in his *oeuvre*. He fictionalized it to great effect in the play *Footfalls* some forty years later, a play further echoed in the novella *Company* written in the late seventies.
- 5 It is also well-known that Beckett was a bilingual writer, a writer who nearly systematically translated, adapted or rewrote his text(s) in the other language, be it French or English, depending on the language chosen for the first version of a piece. According to Linda Collinge, who studied Beckett's rewriting of *Malone meurt* into English, the recourse to a foreign language was one way for the bilingual writer to cope with the suffering linked to his mother tongue:

En choisissant le français comme langue d'expression, Beckett trouvait un moyen d'éviter les pièges affectifs de la langue maternelle et de s'éloigner des douleurs qu'ils impliquaient. [...] En s'auto-traduisant, Beckett accepte de retourner dans cet espace linguistiquement difficile, sans accepter pour autant d'être en prise directe avec la douleur affective du retour à la langue maternelle. (76-77)

- 6 What I would like to add to this analysis is that Beckett found in bilingual writing—understood as a complex rewriting process in the other language—a way of dealing with the intense state of anxiety originating in the uterus; in other words, that he found in bilingual writing his own 'supreme means of expression,' that is to say a mode of expression having to do with *hysteria*. To try and prove this, I will focus on *Company/Compagnie*, a *hysterical* text both in form and content, as I will purport to show through a series of analogies, but also probably the apotheosis of Beckett's intricate self-translating process.

Company and the 'Wombtomb' Experience

- 7 As attested by Beckett's 'Sottisier Notebook' held at the University of Reading (MS 2901), in which Beckett jotted down notes in the period covering 1976-1982 and containing 'draft notes prefiguring *Company*,' (Bryden: 195) Beckett started working on the novella shortly after completing *Footfalls* in 1975. *Company* was begun under the working title 'The Voice VERBATIM' on January 16th, 1977 (UoR MS 2910, see Krance: 189). In April of 1977, Beckett had been busy translating *Footfalls* into *Pas*, a task which he completed the next month. Indeed, on May 5th he began the so-called 'Olympic notebook' containing a more advanced, and bilingual, version of the novella entitled 'COMPANY - COMPAGNIE, May 77 - August 79.' (UoR MS 1822, qtd in Bryden: 109) But a few days later, he asserted that he was 'pleased that he now has a reasonably good French translation of *Footfalls*.' (Pilling: 203) Such proximity might account for the lexical echoes of *Footfalls* in *Company* as when one reads: 'Sole sound in the silence your footfalls,' (11) or when the phrase *it all*—which was also the working title of *Footfalls*—crops up in the repetitive chant of the text (in the phrase 'devising it all for company,' 18, 27, 35). Both texts reflect Beckett's fascination for the morbid mother-child link originating in the uterus, one reason for his well-documented lifelong dread of women and fertility². As I have argued elsewhere, *Footfalls* is a *hysterical* play, in so far as *hysteria* etymologically originates in the *uterus*. Indeed the play takes place in the metaphorical 'chamber' of the womb/tomb, placing the spectators, individually, in the position of an *infans*, a pre-verbal, pre-sexual being, perceiving in May's abject formlessness their own regressions. Looking back at the very origins of theatre, the play performs a tragic ritualistic ceremony that will never be accomplished. (Sardin: 2008) To a certain extent, *Company* can be seen to be *Footfalls*' pendant in prose form, and for a *male* voice. In both texts, the structural apparatus of *Footfalls/Pas* relies on a form of dissociation of sight and sound. In *Company*, instead of being shown, this dissociation is told. (5) Instead of experiencing it in the *here* and *now* of the theatre, the reader is asked to 'Imagine.'³ In *Company*, as in *Footfalls*, 'A voice comes to one in the dark.'⁽⁵⁾⁴
- 8 In both texts also, Beckett toys with the French homophony *naître/n'être* ('to be born'/ 'not to be' or 'to be nothing') and with the English *womb/tomb* paronomasia⁵. The Hearer, lying inert on his back, could well be a paralysed old man, agonising and suffering from a linguistic form of dissociation, hearing his own voice in the second and third person singular. In 'The Voice VERBATIM,' a primitive version of *Company*, Beckett expounds the vocal apparatus of the text: 'Speech by A overheard by B described to C [...] A, B, C, one and the same.' (UoR MS 2901, qtd. in Krance: 194) What the character hears are memories of his past life which both gratify and torment him. As Stanley E. Gontarski and Chris Ackerley have justly underlined, the 'piece is dominated by scenes of Samuel Beckett's early life recurrent in his work that assailed him psychologically until the end. Many are painful. The child in these memories seems never to have been the boy his parents wanted.' (106) Like the hysteric, the protagonist lives in the past and suffers from memories of the past, especially that of his own birth. ⁶ He also keeps imagining the room around him as a womb. As Matthew Feldman quite rightly observed, one can read in *Company* echoes of Beckett's notes on Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*, especially in 'the darkened, embryonic condition of the narrator.' (107) The situation of the hearer 'huddled with his legs drawn up within the semi-circle of

his arms and his head on his knees,' (21) seeking the comfort of another's presence, reminds us of the '[a]nxiety of [the] child left alone in [a] dark room due to his unconscious being reminded (*er-innert*) of [the] intrauterine situation,' as described by Beckett in one of his entries on Rank. (TCD MS 10971/8/34, qtd. in Feldman *ibid.*) In another entry, hysteria and intrauterine life are explicitly linked in Beckett's notes: 'hysterical paralysis' is said to bring the patient 'to realisation of primal situation, with the horror of being freed from it,' when the 'analytic situation identified with [the] intrauterine one' also puts the 'patient back in position of [the] unborn.' (*Idem*) According to Juan-David Nasio, 'the fundamental fantasy' in hysteria is that of the womb; and the way he describes this fantasy is greatly reminiscent both of *Company* and *Imagine Dead Imagine*:

The scenario is very simple: a man and a woman, their bodies intertwined, conceive a child without any genital penetration. The hysteric is not only the creator and the actor in this dream, playing the role of the immaculate Virgin as well as that of the omnipotent Father; he is also, and above all, the place in which the divine encounter occurs. [...] In this fantasy there is one primary identification: the uterus, the organ that is the hollow womb containing the actual encounter in which life is generated. It is as though the hysteric identifies with the uterus in both of the forms that it assumes in his dreams. [...] Either he is the uterus as an internal organ [...] or he is the uterus assimilated to the hysterical body itself [...]. [...] A uterus contained within a body, and at the same time a uterus containing two bodies [...]. (55-56)

- 9 Surrealism and its fascination for the unconscious are called to mind here, especially if we remember that the second part of *L'immaculée conception*—though not translated by Beckett himself—is actually entitled 'Intra-uterine (sic) Life.' Unsurprisingly, its incipit reads: 'To be nothing.' This key sentence in the Beckettian corpus is indirectly echoed in *Company* when the narrative voice says: 'You were once. You were never. Were you ever?' (16) Furthermore, automatic writing is hinted at, or maybe a parody of automatic writing, such combinations of words and phrases suggesting language operates on its own, as if severed both from reality and from reason:⁷

Deviser of the voice and of its hearer and of himself. Deviser of himself for company. Leave it at that. He speaks of himself as of another. He says speaking of himself, He speaks of himself as of another. (20)

- 10 The voice heard in *Company* seems at times quite detached, amused even, as when it envisions the addition to company a rat or a fly would represent. (22) Hearer's salvation lies in humour and in word play, intermittently present in the body of the text.⁸ Playing, a sterile activity, Roger Caillois reminds us in *Les Jeux et les hommes*, does not produce anything. Indeed, if playing takes place in the 'world,' it ignores 'reality,' focusing only on its own accomplishment regardless of the outside world. (9, 101) Thus, in *Company*, Beckett suggests that nothing lies outside the text and outside language; that the dissociation between word and world is complete. This dissociation subverts, like the hysteric does, even if with different means, the 'relations established between the subject and the moral world' as Aragon and Breton put it in their text celebrating the 'Fiftieth Anniversary of Hysteria' that Beckett translated as a young man (321). The Beckettian prose poem is *uterine* in that it is self-sufficient, non-referential, only existing in the boundaries of language. Humour and playfulness on the one hand, hysteria on the other: two self-contained modes of expression, yet based on a principle of discordance or dissociation, thereby very much like *Company* itself, a *double* text, existing also in its 'authorized' French version entitled *Compagnie*.

Mal(é)dictions

- 11 Bilingualism, hysteria and creativity—three concepts intimately linked in *Company*. The structural apparatus announced by the narrator: ‘A voice comes to one in the dark. To one on his back in the dark,’ (5) is reminiscent of the creative programme developed by French Surrealists in their 1924 *Manifesto*:
- Placez-vous dans l'état le plus passif, ou réceptif que vous pourrez. [...] Dites-vous bien que la littérature est un des plus tristes chemins qui mènent à tout. [...] La première phrase viendra toute seule, tant il est vrai qu'à chaque seconde il est une phrase étrangère à notre pensée consciente qui ne demande qu'à s'extérioriser. (41)
- 12 Hysterical dissociation as witnessed by Breuer in *Anna O.* was probably one of the sources of inspiration for the dissociation of two mental states invoked here. When *Anna O.* was speaking, two states of consciousness would alternate, one normal, the other pathological, which Breuer referred to as ‘absences or *condition seconde*.’ (35) As Dianne Hunter has noted, this French phrase ‘suggests that for Breuer [...] the abnormal states of consciousness represented foreign parts of the self.’ (91-92) Likewise, in *Company*, the narrative voice alternates between two time sequences and two modes of self-expression involving the second and third person pronouns, ‘absences’ being represented by the numerous blanks and breaks in the narrative. The elliptical and disorganized style of *Company* is also reminiscent of *Anna O.*'s other symptoms. Indeed, her ability to speak was greatly impaired during her attacks of hysteria, on both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of language; often at a loss for words, she also lost her command of syntax. She no longer conjugated verbs and finally used only infinitives. She also omitted articles. (Breuer 29) All these linguistic symptoms seem to have been, as it were, transposed by Beckett into stylistic devices in *Company*.
- 13 At times, *Anna O.*'s loss of words was such that she had to make them up; in *Company* Beckett imitated this strategy, as when he coined the neologism *philogenitiveness* (42) which is translated as *philogénéativité* in the *Minuit* edition. (70) As an alternative to making up words, Beckett uses difficult or uncommon nouns, mostly of Latin origin like *incontrovertibility* (5), *saltation* (26), *unnamability* (37) and *calcaneum* (42), or learned-sounding adjectives like *rectigrade* (43) and *alacrious* (51). As a result, the voice sounds strange. But this strangeness of the voice is not a privilege of the English version. In the French manuscript, Beckett prefers *entendeur* to *auditeur*, more commonly used (in section 32). Likewise, to translate *lie inert*, he chooses the verb *gésir* of rare, literary usage. In French still, he refers to the archaic *milles*, instead of the more modern *kilomètres*,⁹ and chooses *le noir immensurable* to translate *encompassing surface* after having first contemplated both the very odd-sounding *enceignante* and the more banal *environnante* (in section 36). In *Company* as well as in *Compagnie*, Beckett makes the language seem foreign, one language filtering through another and vice versa.
- 14 In *Company/Compagnie*, the two meanings of the English word *diction* coalesce to make the voice seem strange. Not only does the ‘style or speaking or writing as dependent upon choice of words’ seem at times odd-sounding, but the ‘the accent, inflection, intonation [...] manifested by a speaker’ is remarkable. (*Random House Webster College Dictionary* 374) In ‘Verbatim,’ Beckett wrote about the voice: ‘No mention of accent. Indefinable. Of one whose mother tongue as foreign as the others.’ (qtd. in Krance 193) Though devoid of accent, the voice sounds ‘foreign,’ distant and strange, while the

character is said to be '[e]stranged from words, things.' (qtd. in Krance 194) Beckett's parallel conception of the bilingual texts and the back and forth movement from one language to another it permitted—what Charles Krance has coined 'transtextual confluence'¹⁰—probably accounts for part of this effect. Indeed, close scrutiny of the bilingual set of manuscripts proves that Beckett 'subjected [...] his 'original' to revisions based on the translated adaptation' (Krance xx). This intricate bilingual genesis resulted in the conception of two texts in two different languages, yet each one literally 'speaking in tongues.' Again, hysteria comes to mind, for when Anna O. was actually capable of speaking, she would only speak in French, English or Italian, never in German, her mother tongue; sometimes, she would mix up to four or five languages, becoming nearly unintelligible. (Breuer 29) At times, she would only speak English, and if reading a text in Italian or French, would 'sight-read an excellent English translation with astonishing rapidity and fluency.' (Breuer 30) And it should not come as a surprise that Anna O. became a translator after her symptoms had receded for good, translating memoirs of one of her ancestors as well as 'German sagas and legends from the Talmud and Midrashn together with folk tales and The Women's Bible.' (Hunter 109) Interestingly, the metaphor of bilingualism and translation surfaces in *Studies in Hysteria*; Freud compares the symptoms of hysteria with a 'pictographic script' interpreted after the discovery of a 'few cases of bilingualism.' (132) In hysteria, the body speaks, becoming a signifier, a language to be deciphered and, as it were, *translated*. The 'pathogenic material' as Freud puts it 'behaves like a foreign body,' like an 'infiltration' of the 'living tissue,' (291-292) the tissue, an appropriate metaphor for the living body *and* for the text.

- 15 What is more, Anna O., who was portrayed by Breuer as 'indulging in systematic daydreaming' described by her as her 'private theatre,' and who told, under hypnosis, 'sad and fanciful stories,' (Hunter 94-96) can also be considered the paradigm of the hysterical artist. The creative potential of the hysteric was also a point Beckett had underlined when reading Ernest Jones, adding his own commentaries:

An important characteristic of hysterical disorder is the excessive development of fantasy at the expense of adjustment to reality. Thus it becomes practically irrelevant whether a given traumatic memory from the unconscious corresponds with a fact or not, the effect on the patient is the same. Dungeons in Spain. (Mine own.) (Qtd. in Feldman 101)

- 16 Anna O. even told Breuer that 'the whole business had been simulated' (Hunter 101). In *Company*, in place of 'simulation,' Beckett speaks of 'imagination.' Variations pertaining to the idea of 'imagination' are numerous in his bilingual manuscripts, proving the writer was uncomfortable with the very subject matter of his text. While writing the first paragraph, he successively contemplated using the verbs *develop*, *belie*, and *confute*, before deciding on *imagine* inspired by the French version (where he also considered *réfuter*). In the next paragraph, it is the idea of 'telling a story' that seems to have bothered him: after considering the verbs *recount*, *relate*, *submit* Beckett opted for *tell of* [*his life/past*] in the end, while in French he hesitated between *soumettre*, *évoquer* and *égrener* [*un/son passé*].
- 17 Beckett's difficulty in expressing the very idea of story-telling may be due to the fact that language, the very medium of the artist, seemed to have failed him constantly —'Try again. Fail again. Fail better,' says the narrative voice of *Worstward Ho* (101). Such a failure might be explained by the way we come to speech. After birth, when the mother-child fusion comes to an end, speech becomes a simulacrum of the lost

primitive mother-child relationship, playing the part of substitute for the severed bodily connection. As Claude Hagège explains:

La mère est au commencement, comme celle à laquelle l'enfant veut d'abord parler, vers laquelle il agite ses lèvres comme si, à mesure qu'elle étend l'espace de séparation, il était hanté de nostalgie et accablé d'exil. L'amour des langues n'est fondateur que dans la mesure où la mère, après avoir donné la vie, accompagne les premiers gestes puis s'en va pour toujours, comme par une première mort... (17)

- 18 Since in Beckett's experience, be it true or not, this primal experience of the womb was remembered and reconstructed (and later to be fictionalized) as intensely unpleasant, his model for language must have been a flawed and inadequate one. Consequently, this situation would account for his oft mentioned aesthetics of failure, ignorance and impotence: since language can endow the child with but an imperfect link, writing, too, is condemned to be but a series of fiascos. Thus the *mal-diction* effect pertaining to the double text *Company/Compagnie* and to Beckettian writing might well find its origin in the *malédiction* of being born from a deathly womb.

Beckett's Maternal Passion

- 19 Beckett probably found in bilingual writing an aesthetic means to deal with the deathliness of the mother-tongue which he kept dis(re)membering from one version to another. The very deathliness of language kept being relived and displaced in the bilingual rewriting process. The maniacal recourse to another language, along with the painful self-translating process this induced, can be read as symptoms of Beckett's maternal passion. In *Le Régime des passions et autres textes* French philosopher Clément Rosset draws a parallel between 'passion' and 'all the forms of hysteria,' both maladies staging 'an obstinate quest for unhappiness.' (28) Beckett's maternal passion, an obstinate desire to disfigure the body of language, is placated by playfulness and humour. In the bilingual text *Company/Compagnie*, this passion takes the form of Beckett's hysterical mode of writing which places the reader in the powerless position of a foetus, hardly grasping what is going on in the confines of the enclosed universe of the text(s) yet forced to experience the estranged body of the amorphous mother-text of language.

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NOTES

1. In the Franklin Rosemont standard edition of *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings* (London, 1978), Beckett is credited for having translated seven texts: 'Introduction of the Possessions,' 'Simulation of Mental Debility,' 'Simulation of General Paralysis,' 'Simulation of Delirium of Interpretation,' (all of which are taken from the second part of 'The Immaculate Conception')

'Surrealism and the Treatment of Mental Illness,' 'The Fiftieth Anniversary of Hysteria,' and 'Murderous Humanitarianism.' Beckett's early relationship to French Surrealism in general and hysteria in particular was first brought to my attention when reading Daniel Albright's *Beckett and Aesthetics* to whose work I am greatly indebted. These were first published in *This Quarter*, 'Surréaliste Number,' Guest Editor : André Breton, vol. V, n°1, Sept. 1932.

2. See Bryden Mary, *Women in Samuel Beckett's Prose and Drama: Her Own Other*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993.

3. Thus it should not come as a surprise that *Compagnie* should have been staged to great effect, as in the 1995 Paris Odéon Théâtre production starring David Warrilow.

4. One of the working titles of *Company* was 'Heard in the Dark.' (UoR MS 1765, see Bryden: 111)

5. Beckett spells it as one word in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*.

6. Anna O., the first hysteric whose case history was to be recorded by Breuer, simulated pregnancy and birth during her illness. This was not recorded by Breuer in *Studies in Hysteria* but was reported by Freud in a letter to Stefan Zweig in 1932 (qtd. in Hunter 97). Anna O. was born in 1859 in Vienna in a wealthy Jewish family. She was well-educated; she spoke English, and read both French and Italian. She suffered a hysterical collapse when nursing her sick father when she was twenty-two. She developed a cough that resembled her father's, she also suffered from anorexia, paralysis, somnambulism, became intermittently deaf and had severe disturbances of vision.

7. Today, although hysteria has very often 'disappeared' as a distinct illness from most contemporary clinical nosographies, it continues to fascinate specialists and lay people alike, most probably because hysteria questions the ideas of reason, self and control: 'It is precisely because hysteria contravenes commonsense notions of rational self-control and autonomy that it continues to evoke both theoretical interest and scepticism. Hysteria has much to teach us, not only about the mechanisms of attention, self-control, and awareness, but also about the social and cultural roots of our sense of self.' Peter W. Halligan & John C. Marshall, ed., *Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Hysteria, Clinical and Theoretical Perspectives*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001, p. 267.

8. On humour and self-translation, see Collinge, 45-70.

9. The same move, though contemplated for a while, is not made in *Company*: at the very beginning of his notebook Beckett writes as a reminder: 'leagues instead of miles throughout,' but finally decides against it.

10. The first manuscript draft of *Company* was written over a rather long period of time, from May 5th, 1977 to July 27th 1979, and was followed by the French manuscript draft, begun after completion of the former, on August 3rd 1970 but was written quite quickly on the other hand (less than a month since it was completed on August 27th 1979). The bilingual typescripts (two of each) begun on July 27th, 1979 then overlap. The French text appeared first (Minuit, 1980); followed by the English (Calder, 1980); then the American (Grove, 1982).

ABSTRACTS

Alors qu'il n'avait qu'une vingtaine d'année, Beckett traduisait un texte d'Aragon et Breton dans lequel les deux auteurs estimaient que l'hystérie est « peut être considéré comme un moyen suprême d'expression ». À peu près à la même époque, durant sa psychanalyse avec Bion, étaient revenus au jeune écrivain des souvenirs de son séjour dans le ventre maternel. La douleur et le

sentiment d'impuissance associés à ces souvenirs intra-utérins furent encore ravivés par la conférence que donna Jung en 1935, et à laquelle Beckett assista, au sujet d'une jeune fille que le psychanalyste ne pouvait guérir car elle n'était jamais tout à fait née. L'auteure montre que l'écriture bilingue permit vraisemblablement à Beckett de supporter cet état d'extrême anxiété. Le système complexe de réécriture dans l'autre langue que Beckett mit peu à peu au point au cours de sa carrière devint ainsi son propre « moyen suprême d'expression », mode qui a à voir avec l'hystérie. Pour ce faire, Pascale Sardin analyse *Company/Compagnie*, nouvelle bilingue écrite à la fin des années soixante-dix. Comme *Pas*, dont il est proche, ce long poème théâtral met en scène le lien mortifère mère-enfant qui prend sa source dans l'utérus. Il s'agit en effet d'un texte hystérique, tant du point de vue du fond que de la forme, en ce qu'il s'appuie sur une série des tropes dissociatifs. *Company/Compagnie* peut également être considéré comme l'apothéose du processus auto-transductif beckettien dans lequel une langue ne cesse d'être contaminée par l'autre. Ainsi, l'effet de mal-diction inhérent à ce double texte en particulier, et à l'écriture beckettienne en général, pourrait venir de la malédiction d'être né d'un ventre ou d'une matrice mortifères.

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