

Reception and Translations of Beckett's Bilingual Work

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Abstract: *This essay deals with the characteristics of repetition in Beckett's works and how it constitutes an issue no translator of these works can ignore. It is pointed out that the kind of repetition employed by the author has a direct bearing on his decision to become the translator of most of his writings, thus creating a bilingual work. Both the features of his bilinguism and the reception these bilingual works received in the French and Anglo-American world are commented here. By way of these comments, we argue that the beckettian translator should always consider the English and the French texts, as both integrate an oeuvre in which a sharp distinction between "original" and "translation" no longer holds.*

Repetition and Change: The Making of an Oeuvre

In the criticism of Beckett's works, the orchestration to which the author subjected his works gave rise to two basic ways of dealing with his literature: one that underlines the unity; the other, the diversity of the texts. These two distinct, and yet complementary, approaches are exemplified by Hugh Kenner in his two books totally dedicated to Beckett's oeuvre. In the first, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study*, Kenner said he tried to emphasize the coherence and unity of the writings. Therefore, he produced a study that enhanced the similarities found both in the prose and the theater works. Of course Kenner continued to refer to this orchestration of the oeuvre later, but in his second book about the author, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett*, the critic intended to emphasize the peculiarity of each individual work in order to call attention to the *variety* of Beckett's literature. This new approach opened other reading possibilities since the great majority of critics tended to do away with the differences in favor of the many similarities found in the works, narrowing the focus of their analyses.

Nevertheless, the objective Beckett relentlessly pursues is the one of inserting changes and variations in his works, employing his own peculiar mode of repetition as a way of not repeating himself, as a way of moving always one step further away from the previous work in his "*work in regress*". That is, even though themes, names, characters, phrases, expressions, comments on the literary composition itself reappear

in several texts, there is always something inherent to the composition of each individual work that differentiates it from the previous ones, no matter how much the bonds among them be reinforced. The mentioned aspects of differentiation can be exemplified by a more extreme physical deterioration, a growing doubt concerning the validity of the literary creations themselves, and even doubts about the presence of a reliable voice, as happens in the post-war trilogy and in *How It Is* as well. Another major change can be seen in the introduction of a prose discourse which rectifies itself so densely and continuously that it allows the author in *The Unnamable* (1953) to produce a text whose main feature is the anxious urgency of the narrative voice in search of its identity, especially in the final pages of the book. Other changes can still be noticed in the theater as, for instance, an original way of dealing with stage resources, aspect that becomes evident in all his oeuvre from *Waiting for Godot* to plays like *Not I* (1972) and *What Where* (1983), not to mention *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), in which the dialogue of the protagonist with his younger selves is created through the simple use of a tape recorder and some tapes.

According to H. Porter Abbott, it is in the fear of repetition and in the search for constant innovation that reside Samuel Beckett's most markedly modernist characteristic. The introduction of elements of precariousness and poverty in his works becomes more and more intense, manifesting itself either in the reduction of the characters's physical abilities until they reach almost total immobility, or in the scantiness of events, or even in the economy of the language. The reutilization of elements present in previous works – one of the most commented features of the beckettian oeuvre – leads to a kind of repetition, defined by the critic in the following way:

[...] by repeating names, images, and motifs from one work to another – sufficiently developed to be recognizable, insufficiently developed to connect – Beckett was constantly reinventing his entire oeuvre. [...] There is the constant sense of a continuation, together with the absence of any clear repetition. Additions to the oeuvre are as unexpected and disorienting as they are, in retrospect, somehow fitting. (1996. 20-1)

How then is it possible to reconcile this kind of “repetition”¹ with the innovation present from one work to the next? It is worth analyzing a concept, developed throughout Porter Abbott's book, in which the typical beckettian characteristic of reutilizing motifs, characters, and their peculiar features, phrases, and rhythms is referred to by the suggestive expression “recollection by invention” (Abbott 1996. 28)². When he defines this concept, elaborated to characterize Beckett's oeuvre, Porter Abbott finds it on the preoccupation with “opposition” and “resistance”, dominant in Modernism. Both these aspects were translated into the artist's refusal to see his or her work widely accepted and reduced to formulas or schemes, either by the critics or by the public. Moreover, there was the artist's fear of repetition, the fear of not being able to innovate anymore. It is in this sense that Porter Abbott sees the process of “recollection by invention” as “Beckett's most significant

refinement of modernist oppositional practice". This "recollection by invention" consists of "a technique of deliberate metamorphosis, a kind of remembering by misremembering in successive works of elements from those that went before." (1996. 27-30). Such a procedure establishes the already mentioned continuity and similarity among the texts. The similarities, however, never surface in an unmistakably clear and unequivocal way, but do appear in fact as incomplete, altered, and contaminated by other elements. The systematic use of repetition in Beckett impresses one as the most effective way of not repeating oneself. Add to these repetitions the writer's self-translations, and one is able to draw a finer picture of what can be called a bilingual oeuvre.

In the first book of what would become his first trilogy, Samuel Beckett makes Molloy, the narrator, say in the French original, finished in 1947: "Cette fois-ci, puis encore une je pense, puis c'en sera fini je pense, de ce monde-là aussi. C'est le sens de l'avant-dernier." (Beckett 1982. 8). In the English translation published in 1955 and carried out by the writer himself in collaboration with the South-African poet Patrick Bowles (Cohn 1962. 272-3), one finds an addition: "This time, then once more I think, *then perhaps a last time*, then I think it'll be over, with that world too. Premonition of the last but one but one." (Beckett 1991. 8, my italics) The inclusion of "then perhaps a last time" leaves no doubt as to the fact that Beckett decided to revise his own writing when he translated *Molloy* into English. As the three novels had already been completed since 1951, "then once more I think" refers certainly to *Malone Dies* (1948) and "then perhaps a last time" to *The Unnamable*, thus indicating that *The Unnamable* (1948) was not part of Beckett's plans by the time of the writing of *Molloy* (1947) in French.

This addition at the beginning of the English *Molloy* was noticed and commented upon in several ways by a number of Beckett's critics. Ruby Cohn, one of the first, pinpoints the change in order to show how carefully Beckett translated his work and to prove that if he did not do all the translation work himself, he certainly revised and altered it (Cohn 1962. 272-3). A revision of this magnitude also indicates the awareness of an intimate articulation among his books had been gaining strength and clarity since the writing of this sequence of three novels. This intimate articulation surfaces through the revival of characters from the previous novels, including the protagonists of *Murphy* (1938) and *Watt* (1944), at the opening of *The Unnamable*. So that from this last novel of the postwar trilogy on such an articulation among the works will become an essential characteristic, to be refined with the incorporation of Beckett's self-translation practice into his creative process.

The Problem of Reception

Here it is worth asking the following questions: What is the difference between a translation carried out by the writer of the text himself and one carried out by a third party? More specifically, what is the difference between a translation by Samuel Beckett himself and the original text? According to Brian Fitch, the distinction is most obviously

realized in terms of the reception of the work. Readers tend to consider a translation done by the writer himself as closer to the original, more authorial and, consequently, more authorized (Fitch 1988. 19). In Beckett's case, even some of his critics tended to overlook differences between the two texts: they studied and quoted either the English or the French text, depending on the language they were writing in. That is to say that one or the other text was, and sometimes still is, treated as the "original" and, in some cases, there is not even the slightest mention to its pair in the other language (Fitch 1988. 190; Perloff 1987. 44). It is relevant to point out, however, that among the first and best critics of these works there has always been a concern to deal with both the French and English texts, even when translation matters were not exclusively discussed.³

Brian Fitch established a valuable distinction between two different critical approaches in relation to Samuel Beckett's works. In one of them, "the critic restricts his interpretative commentary to aspects of the fictive heterocosm and the unfolding of the plot-line"; in this case, according to Fitch, it does not make much of a difference which text has been adopted. In the other, when the critic "turns his attention to the formal properties of the text in question and more particularly to its detailed stylistic texture", his comments can only be valid for the text studied in that particular language (Fitch 1988. 172). But such observations do not invalidate the statement that readers, editors, and critics view the translation done by the author himself as the most authorized substitute of the original; often as another original. Taking this into consideration, we do not address here only the issue of the bilingual writer, but the particular one of the author Samuel Beckett, who since the late 1940's – with the exception of *Murphy's* translation into French, started in collaboration with Alfred Péron before World War II –, and systematically from the 1950's on, assumes the translation of his works both from French into English and vice-versa, depending on the language used in the writing of the "original".

The use of the word "original" between quotes can be justified based on the same work by Brian Fitch. In his book he compares two pairs of texts: in the first, *Company/Compagnie*, the texts were written in English and translated into French; in the second, *Le Dépeupler/The Lost Ones*, it was the other way around. The conclusions drawn from these comparisons offer great interest for any work that deals with bilingualism and self-translation. The most general, supported by another pair of texts – *From an Abandoned Work/D'Un Ouvrage Abandonné* and *Imagination morte imaginez/Imagination Dead Imagine* –, relates to the fact that the English texts tend to be longer, no matter the language in which the first text was written. In Beckett's self-translations, therefore, the English texts are, in the works cited, longer than the French ones. In a work called *Syntaxe comparée du français et de l'anglais*, Jacqueline Guillemin-Flescher compares translations into English of *Madame Bovary* with the original, elaborating a study of syntactical differences between both languages. One of the conclusions she reaches is that the English language demands more explicit, precise, and concrete

determinations, as well as more detailed and cohesive descriptions than the French, something which supports Fitch's conclusions (Guillemin-Flescher; Lewis 1985. 36)⁴.

Less frequently in the compared texts, there can also be generally observed that the French text may clarify doubts raised by the English texts, no matter which one appeared first, whether the English or the French. Fitch concludes without further examples or explanations that this fact is due to the relationship between the two languages rather than to the relationship between the two Beckettian texts. Thus, he once more defines a general feature of the languages involved, and not exactly a characteristic of Samuel Beckett's self-translations (Fitch 1988. 122). We have observed more specifically in our translation of *How It Is* into Portuguese that the French text clarifies the English in so far as the latter is ambiguous, because of the lack of gender differentiation of adjectives and of many nouns in the English language, for instance.

It is interesting to point out that both of Brian Fitch's observations apply to the pair *Comment c'est/How It Is*: *How It Is* is longer than *Comment c'est*, and *Comment c'est* tends to clarify eventual doubts one has when reading *How It Is*. At times, however, the English text has helped us with difficulties come across in the French text. But the most helpful feature we found was the result of a greater development of the English text, unrelated to the specific character of the languages in question. As a matter of fact, the lengthening of the English text results from additions Beckett inserted by way of more repetitions than the ones already present in the French text. When it comes to equivalent passages, it is really the French text which wipes the doubts raised by its English counterpart.

When he studied the manuscripts of *Bing* (French "original") and *Ping* (English "translation"), Fitch showed that Beckett not only used the final text in French for his self-translation, but also utilized earlier drafts of the work. Based on this discovery, the scholar comes to the conclusion that nobody but Beckett himself, no "mere" translator, could have written *Ping*, since the author relied on his own manuscripts in the source language. Contrary to that is the conclusion Fitch reaches when he compares the texts and manuscripts of *Still* and *Immobile* later in the same chapter. Then he states that it is possible to imagine that the text of *Immobile* had been produced by any other translator, and not by Beckett himself. In view of this, Fitch asserts that one cannot generalize about the text used by Beckett as the "original" for his translations without a detailed analysis of both the "final" published texts and the manuscripts or earlier drafts.

The existence of the French and the English texts, both legitimated by the authorial rubric, has given rise in its turn to two basic and distinct critical receptions: an English and a French one. Marjorie Perloff calls attention to the change in tone between the them:

From the vestibule of hell (Bataille) to the circus: the difference in emphasis between Bataille and Blanchot on the one hand, Davie and Kenner on the other, cannot of course be accounted for simply by the differences between the French and English texts. [...] To understand the difference, one would have to study the contrasting cultural formations of postwar Paris and postwar Britain/America,

beginning with the profound malaise of the Occupation, a malaise surely inconceivable for British and especially for American critics, for whom war is always, so to speak, somewhere else. (1987. 46)

In Perloff's view, therefore, the differences in the reception of Beckett's works between the French and British or American critics are not only due to alterations met with in the French or English text, but to the modes of reception of this oeuvre, dictated by heterogeneous situations of critical reception. Besides, not only did the literary traditions to which Beckett's works in English and Beckett's works in French were related differ, but also the texts themselves made part of distinct published works: *Murphy* (1938) was practically unknown in French, *Watt*, finished in 1945, only came out in France in 1968, fifteen years after its publication in English, and neither the stories of *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) nor the volume of poems called *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935) was translated into French by Beckett. The inaccessibility of those texts in France contributed in a first moment for the appreciation of Beckett as the playwright of *En Attendant Godot* and the author of the trilogy of novels *Molloy*, *Malone meurt* and *L'Innommable*. The first French critics did not consider his previous career as a writer of some short stories, poems, and novels in English.

It is part of what we have come to notice that some divergent views in the reception of Samuel Beckett's English and French texts stem from generic, sometimes even idiosyncratic, comments without much basis on a theoretical ground. Such subjective characteristics of commentary seem akin to the ones which are found in analyses of different translations of the same text. These analyses, based on seemingly objective criteria, not rarely have as their ultimate justification the reader/critic's taste. A good example is the case of the comments about *En Attendant Godot/Waiting for Godot* made practically at the same time by two renowned critics of Beckett's oeuvre: the French Ludovic Janvier and the American Ruby Cohn.

Ludovic Janvier in *Pour Samuel Beckett* says that: "Sometimes the French equivalent of an expression is inferior in humor or in poetry to its English homologue." (1966. 227, my translation). In her turn, Ruby Cohn in *The Comic Gamut* states that: "Perhaps because of these deletions, perhaps because of the less colloquial tone, the English *Godot* seems bleaker than the French." (1962. 269)

The two comments, placed side by side, seem to contradict each other. And yet, reading them more carefully and taking into account their respective contexts, one can notice that the difference lies in the aspects the critics value most: in Ludovic Janvier's case, the more self-contained text of the English *Godot*, whose humor is more "delicate and calculated [compassé]", as opposed to what he qualifies as the "brevity, and concise vulgarity of the French" (1966. 227, my translation); in Ruby Cohn's, colloquialism is the valued aspect of the language of the French *Godot* – exactly with its features of brevity and vulgarity. The proximity achieved between the French text and the oral language is praised by the American critic, whose study focuses on the comic character of the oeuvre and highlights the humor present in the texts. Moreover, for Ruby Cohn,

despite Beckett's efforts "the French remains the more authentically colloquial of the two versions, and thereby the more comic." (1962. 268) This comic feature closely related to the colloquialism in the French language is not recognized, however, as a guarantee of humor by the French critic.

The divergence found in the comments by Cohn and Janvier about the play could be set to rights if one resorted to the analysis which was carried out in the excellent essay by Helen Atsbury (2002. 446-453) on the French and the English texts of the postwar trilogy. She discusses the use Beckett makes of a sentence type practiced by Céline. Astbury, following a study by Léo Spitzer about Céline's style, detects from *Molloy* to *L'Innommable* the presence of "binary-turned" sentences which consist of repeating redundantly the subject or the object through the addition of a noun or pronoun before or after the verb, as in these examples, taken from *Molloy*: "Il l'aura, son rapport" or "Mes oiseaux, on ne les avait pas tués". Then, the critic shows that only when Beckett translated *The Unnamable* into English did he manipulate the syntax of his mother tongue in a similar way, and even then he only translated this binary-turn in some of the sentences. In English, the writer compensated for both the lack of colloquialism and the hesitations transmitted by the binary-turned sentences by including, on the one hand, hesitations of the narrator as to certain words, duplicating them, as in the following example from *Malone Dies*: "Son corps était dans le grand trou qu'il creusait pour son mulet", translated into "His body in the *hole or pit* he had dug for his mule". On the other hand, he strove to maintain the colloquial tone through the addition of Anglo-Irish expressions, like in this example from *Molloy*: "c'est un *beau rêve* que je viens de faire là, un excellent rêve"; in English: "that's a *darling dream* I've been having, a *broth of a dream*".

Thus, the study of "binary-turned" sentences carried out by Helen Atsbury about the trilogy could well ground a similar comparison between the two *Godots*, since it supplies a basis for measuring the colloquialism of the lines of the play in French as well as the compensations introduced in the English version. Of course it would not be a matter of deciding on the superiority of one version over the other, but of studying them with more objective analytical tools. Anyway, it interests to register here that, besides the divergences between the beckettian French and English texts thoroughly pointed out by Brian Fitch; the different configuration of French and Anglo-American critical traditions underlined by Marjorie Perloff; there still are divergences of taste when it comes to comments on such intrinsic features of one or the other language as in the analyses of *En attendant Godot* and its English pair *Waiting for Godot* by Ruby Cohn and Ludovic Janvier.

Which Original? Which Translation?

Now we should start by discussing the answer Marjorie Perloff gave to the question that underlies every comparison of original and translated texts by Beckett: "Which version is the 'real' or the 'better' one? Obviously both and neither. The scene

of Beckett's writing exists somewhere between the two, a space where neither French nor English has autonomy." (1987. 47) Nonetheless, it is necessary to emphasize the existence of a dialogue as well as a constant mobility between the two languages in Beckett's writing. As Hugh Kenner declares, Beckett masters the "microforces of language" (1995. 189) which are related to semantic choice, syntactic elaboration, and rhythmical pattern in both languages. So, the distinctions between the versions would be limited to adopted solutions according to the specificities of each language. Of course one can still indicate a better textual performance, to one's taste, in some passages of one text or the other, but a relevant difference in the quality of the versions has never been so far consistently shown by any of the critics specialized in this issue.

What can be observed in Beckett's case, therefore, is not related to the better quality of one text over the other. The beckettian self-translation is responsible for a displacement of the status of the original, it corrupts and usurps this status; but, at the same time, his translations continue to depend on the "originals" and so they are intrinsically linked. This link is established in both directions: the original also comes to depend on the translation since both texts can be compared and thus clarify each other. The loss of autonomy of the texts does not imply that there is a writing "somewhere between the two", as Perloff puts it, but a writing that concretely exists *in both languages*, questioning the ascendancy of the creative act over the re-creative, the "original" over the "translation".

It is in this sense that the analogy Lori Chamberlain establishes between original and translation in Beckett and the permutative and indistinct relationship to which the narrator and the voice quaqu are subject in *How It Is* deserves to be mentioned:

By pretending to be only a faithful scribe, merely repeating what he has heard, the narrator denies authority for the narrative, placing himself in a secondary position analogous to that of the translator. Also in a repetition of Beckett's oscillation between writing and translation, the work consistently confuses the distinction between saying and hearing, between the voice and the scribe, between teller and told. The basis of this confusion rests finally on linguistic grounds over what words or signs really mean – a confusion doubled in translation. (1987. 19)

Translation in Beckett – especially when he employs unpublished manuscripts – reveals the frailty of the original, the possibility of its own transformation, its state of incompleteness. The "intra-intertextuality" of Beckett's oeuvre, to quote Brian Fitch's term for the characteristic of repetition and doubling in the texts (1988. 23), raises rather complex questions about the composition of his own literature. Among them, his procedures of self-translation stand out. Given this inherent trait of most of Beckett's works, the issue which his translator must tackle is the need to resort to the "other" text, no matter the language she/he is translating from, whether French or English. Only by establishing a privileged contact with both texts can the translator of these works foster improved solutions to her/his version or, at least, clarify doubts.

The problem of textual status in Beckett's literature is still challenging: does the fact that the author translated his works himself authorize us to study them as if they were "originals" and even translate them? The obvious answer seems to be that the fact he took charge of translating the works enhanced the importance of the task and, eventually, led the author to make the translation interfere in the process of creation and vice-versa. This latter is the case of *Company/Compagnie*, whose process of translation into French made the author return to the English "original" and change it (Connor 1988. 89).

It can be said that by writing in French first, Beckett should have always had the English language in his authorial horizon, for he had already written several works in it. Therefore, both languages came to integrate his authorial horizon. We are far from giving any priority to the mother tongue, trying to avoid the prejudice embedded in privileging what comes *first*, in the sense of origin, for this would result in privileging the author as the most authorized translator, etc. The point here is to recognize the presence of two languages and two processes – of creation and translation – as languages and processes integrated into the writer's work.

André Lefevere discusses the presence in the West of four instances of authority for the acceptance of a translation as relevant to the literary target system, according to the importance of 1) the person or institution that orders the translation; 2) the text to be translated; 3) the writer of the original; 4) the culture that receives the translation (1990. 14-28). In Beckett's case, the three first instances converge on the writer, especially from the 1950's on, when he assumed the translations of his texts himself⁵, and the success of the play *Waiting for Godot* granted his texts immediate publication in both languages so that the translation task was born with the text itself, so to speak. As for the last instance, it is filled in by the relevance of the literary tradition of both languages. Furthermore, there are implications that reach far beyond the issue of authorial authority into the conception of an oeuvre in which the writing of each new text recovers and transfigures elements of previous ones, in an operation that bears great affinities with that of translation.

Beckett's characteristic of repetition, an aspect closely related to self-translation, is given different denominations. Commentators talk about "oeuvre gígone" (Janvier 1966. 66), "clothed repetition" (Connor 1988. 1-14), "intra-intertextuality" (Fitch 1988. 23), "recollection by invention" (Abbott 1996. 27-32). They unanimously affirm, however, Beckett's self-translation as a fundamental part of the composition of his oeuvre, thus placing "originals" and "translations" on an analogous level when they come to consider this peculiar body of works.

This beckettian practice can be illuminated by Jacques Derrida's view of the translator's role and the transformations experienced by the original. According to the philosopher, the myth of Babel "exhibits an incomplete form, an impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something of the order of edification, of architectural construction, of system and architectonics." (1985. 209, my translation).

This view bears similarities with Beckett's. Translation – in this case the beckettian self-translation – points to the unfinished, the imperfect, the destruction of the myth of the all-mighty original.

This does not imply that rigour is eliminated. On the contrary, rigour in the writing of each text is a constant in Beckett. What is dealt with here when one deals with Beckett's oeuvre is the imperative of "ill-saying" which, according to the French philosopher Alain Badiou, is the true free and artistic saying. If rigour is not suppressed, not even in the least is the failure on which Beckett founds his artistic language to be forgotten. Such failure and fault are based on the premise that saying is "ill-saying", and it is precisely "the controlled regulation of ill-saying that takes the prescriptive autonomy of saying to its summit." (Badiou 2002. 131, my translation). It is worth it to dwell on the philosopher's explanation. He touches upon one of the most commented points of Beckett's criticism, shedding light on the essential, but often little understood characteristic of the author's art. When Beckett declares his works tend to incompleteness, poverty, and failure, not only does he point to themes and reduction of means of expression to the most basic ones in his work, but he also indicates that his search for failure is a continuous search for a way of saying things which are not subordinated to what is actually said. Saying something which matches perfectly its meaning would efface the saying itself, which is exactly the artistic part of the expressive process. The so often quoted search for failure in Beckett is a search for a free artistic saying, extremely rigorous in its attempts.

The readiness to start his translations – in the case of the mature work, from the trilogy on – and all the care thrown into the composition of these versions also indicate the inclusion of the translation procedure in the whole of an oeuvre that is intent on escaping interpretative schemes and the stiffness of a work taken to be finished, complete, untouchable. Also crucial is the role Samuel Beckett's reflection about failure, reduction or subtraction of literary resources has played in his oeuvre. This operation of reduction equally comprises the topics he addresses, the characters and landscapes he makes up, and the inclusion of assertions and denials, pushed into the extreme condition of being inclusive rather than exclusive as it happens at the end of *How It Is*. On the other hand, and Beckett was well aware of that, the search for the minimal could end up giving rise to an oeuvre that unfolds itself. Its branches include the self-translations as well as Beckett's work as stage director of his own plays.

Talking specifically about *How It Is*, the issues of the one and the other, of narrating and being narrated, of the torturer and the victim, of rest and movement, of hearing and saying, as well as the undeniable existence of imperatives – explicit duties that have to be fulfilled at all levels, from the scribes to the narrator who crawls in the mud –, lead to a simulation of a double narrative voice. In the end, however, the narrator has to give in and assume the voice "quaqua" – a voice he claims to be dictating the tale he tells – as his own. Duplication in Beckett's texts, as in *How It Is* the duplication of the narrator's voice in the voice "quaqua", never quite assumes its independence. On the

other hand, the duplicated texts lead a life of their own, maintaining an ambiguous relationship of complementarity and autonomy with the texts from which they stemmed. When one realizes the depth of this relationship, the terms “original” and “translation” cannot be applied naively anymore, nor can the beckettian translator ignore the extent of their new meaning.

Notes

- 1 The word has been written between quotes because, as it has been already exhaustively demonstrated by Steven Connor (*Repetition, Theory and Text*), based on the works of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze (especially on *Différence et Répétition*), the repetitions in Beckett always contain a difference.
- 2 It is important to mention that Porter Abbott’s work establishes a dialogue with work by Steven Connor mentioned above.
- 3 This is the case of Ludovic Janvier (“Combinaison et liberté”, in: *Pour Samuel Beckett*. 224-30) and Ruby Cohn (“Samuel Beckett, self-translator”, in: *The Comic Gamut*. 260-282). More specifically, though in short essays, there are important contributions such as Hugh Kenner’s “Beckett Translating Beckett” (in: *Historical Fictions*. 184-202), John Fletcher’s “Écrivain bilingue” (in: *Cahier de l’Herne: Samuel Beckett*. 201-212), and Erika Ostrovsky’s “Le Silence de Babel” (in: *Cahier de l’Herne: Samuel Beckett*. 190-200). From the 1987 collection *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*, the two most relevant essays for our purposes are Raymond Federman’s “The Writer as Self-Translator” (7-16) which in fact lays the ground for Brian Fitch’s book, as Fitch himself acknowledged (*Beckett and Babel*. 15, n. 11), and Marjorie Perloff’s “Une Voix pas la mienne’: French/English Beckett and the French/English Reader” (36-48). It must be noted that Brian Fitch’s and Steven Connor’s books were published in the same year, 1988. The former is totally dedicated to the question of self-translation and bilinguism, while the latter brings a very interesting chapter about the topic (“Repetition and Self-Translation: *Mercier and Camier, First Love, The Lost Ones*”, chapter 5. 88-114).
- 4 This characteristic of the English language could by itself account for the lengthening of the beckettian text. Nevertheless, we would only be able to affirm it with certainty after a minute comparative linguistic analysis of both texts.
- 5 *Molloy* (1951) was translated into English in collaboration with Patrick Bowles, and was published in 1955; the novellas *L’Expulsé* and *La Fin* (1955) were translated into English in collaboration with Richard Seaver, and were published together with the *Texts for Nothing* in 1967; *Watt* (1953) was translated into French in collaboration with Ludovic and Agnes Janvier, being published in this language only in 1968. The radio plays *All That Fall* (1957) and *Embers* (1959) were translated into French by Robert Pinget, the latter in collaboration with the author, and they came out in the same year as the English publication did. A small text, written while *Comment c’est* was being composed, and published as *L’Image* in 1959 was translated by Edith Fournier into English and published in 1995; by the same French translator is the version of one of Beckett’s last prose texts, *Worstward Ho* (1983); in French, *Cap au pire*.

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