

Partial Interpretations and *Company*.
Beckett, Foucault, et al. and the Author Question

Jim Hicks

University of Massachusetts, Boston

Si ça continue c'est moi que je vais
perdre et les mille chemins qui y mènent.
Et je ressemblerai à ces infortunés de fable,
écrasés sous le poids de leur vœu exaucé.

—*Malone meurt*

It may well be the case that any argument against philosophy faces itself as first and most formidable opponent; that in short, by arguing against philosophy, one does philosophy. Unless, that is, one decides to critique philosophy by playing the piano, a decision, it would seem, with obvious limitations. No doubt the opposite case, a critique of music by philosophical argument, is also not without its problems. Nonetheless, the career of at least one philosopher, that of Nietzsche, got its start by doing precisely that. Moreover, if one accepts certain opinions of that notorious author, at least one major composer of classical music, Richard Wagner, found the most important source for his early music, not in dialogue with the history of classical composition, but in response to Schopenhauer's philosophy. While such examples do little to weaken the argument alluded to above, and even less to excuse the various eccentricities in the prose of this essay, they may serve to illustrate the genealogical complexity and heterogeneous constitution of both art and philosophy in the present era, a period which is of course still marked by the monumental productions of, and the conflicts between, such figures as Nietzsche and Wagner.

The analysis which follows, by offering an extended commentary on a single literary text in order to demonstrate a philosophical point, will not be, I hope, merely playing piano (although for some ears it might just as well be). Given the issue addressed, i.e. the change in status of the author in recent literary production, such a demonstration should imply rather more than the interference or insouciance which might be banged out on a keyboard. Instead, this essay will attempt to illustrate, by way of example, certain consequences of that "murmur of indifference" towards the author that Michel Foucault, in 1969, called "one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing (116)."

As its introductory comments specify, Foucault's "What is an Author?" essay is intended both as an attempt at self-criticism and a response to criticism by others. Specifically, Foucault addresses the accusation that, in *The Order of Things*, he played fast and loose in his discussion of certain authors (Marx and Buffon are cited) and their works. In answer to such criticisms, Foucault responds that the intentions of his analysis have not been understood, that discursive formations (such as "natural history" and "political economy") and not authors and their works were his object of analysis in that book. However, in a clever reversal, Foucault admits that, in the historical period which his work discussed, the "question of the author" was in fact a means of ordering discourse that he ought to have addressed; the essay that follows offers that analysis. Thus, rather than admit that his analysis was indeed disrespectful of the rights of various founding fathers of modern thought, Foucault chooses instead to elaborate the nature of the mores that demand respect for such figures.

A recent essay on the author question by Alexander Nehamas, which purports "to take some of [Foucault's] views but use them against him" (33-34), offers this summary of the position of the French thinker:

Schematically and in abstract terms, [Foucault's] argument consists of two stages. Beginning with the idea that the notion of the author is an historical phenomenon and that the way of reading texts associated with it has a definite temporal beginning, the first stage concludes that this notion *can* come to an end. The second stage then produces what it considers as good reasons for actually bringing this possible end about. The argument finally concludes that both the notion of the author and the treatment of texts it underwrites, that is to say, literary interpretation, *must* come to an end. (3)

Nehamas' schematization of the Foucauldian argument is striking both for the narrative form in which it is given (complete with beginning, middle and end), and for the linear simplicity of that narrative form. In narratological terms, that which is offered here is the "story" (*histoire*); as has already been suggested above, the narrative "discourse" (*récit*) of Foucault's essay is rather more complex. Such a comparison is meant to raise a few eyebrows; the story/discourse distinction, which is drawn from the tradition of Russian Formalism and French Structuralism, is not one with which, I assume, either Nehamas or Foucault would be entirely comfortable.

Only after the introductory comments alluded to above, and after setting aside any sociohistorical analysis of the rise of the author, does

Foucault's essay begin its forward movement, borrowing direction from a Beckett text. In the textual moment that follows, the "death or disappearance of the author" (117) ("since Mallarmé, an event of our time" [120]) is assumed by Foucault as a fact of history whose importance still is not fully appreciated (117). After a further discussion of this present state of affairs, the essay finally begins to discuss the historical aspects of the relationship between author and text. At least in the discourse of this essay, it would seem as if the "empty space left by the author's disappearance" (121) is the necessary discursive position from which analysis of the author can begin. Thus, the "two-stage" summary given by Nehamas actually reverses the argument as it is represented in the opening of Foucault's essay. Rather than a political assassination, the Foucauldian discourse suggests a memorial service: because the author has disappeared, his story can and must be told.

As history suggests, the pomp and circumstances involved in a particular rite of mourning are often excellent indications of the character of the new sovereign. For the moment, however, I would like to reconsider the "authorless" present state of affairs as it is evoked by Foucault, and to offer a reading of that "murmur of indifference" to which he alludes as well as illustrate that "lack of appreciation" still present in most literary criticism. In order to do so, I will comment upon a recent work by Samuel Beckett, discussing in particular its critical reception, especially the reading of that text by Wayne Booth, a critic whose views on the author question are quite close to those of Nehamas.¹

In the "Afterword" to his most influential study (appended in 1983, twenty-one years after the first edition), Booth offers an extensive commentary on Beckett's *Company* (1980). This analysis serves, at least in part, to demonstrate that the author of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* does in fact appreciate a text that some might expect him to attack. The first question which his commentary poses is by no means unexpected; first and foremost Booth wonders, "Who is speaking?" (445). In that same year, elsewhere on the critical scene, Iain Wright, like Booth, is occupied with finding a speaker for Beckett texts, in an essay entitled "'What Matter Who's Speaking': Beckett, the Authorial Subject and Contemporary Critical Theory."² In the particular case of *Company*, it is not always merely an "implied author" that critics are after; Beckett's dauntless biographer, like Booth, rushed in on the new ground, concluding that for this work her subject ("Beckett") needed a "new directness" in telling "the facts of his life one more time" (Bair 17). John Fletcher seems to have even made the irreverent suggestion that *Company* is Beckett's response to the (then recent) publication of his biography (1978), a suggestion that, in the more pious opinion of Linda Ben-Zvi, would

diminish "the greatness of the work and the greatness of the author" (Ben-Zvi 83).

This catalogue of critics is not meant to equate Booth's analysis of *Company* with the other Beckett readings mentioned, merely to relate them, in an order of increasing irrelevance. I shall argue that Booth's reading fails, although it fails in a more interesting manner than most. The reasons offered for that failure I borrow from Foucault, who may well have been the best reader of Beckett to ever not write on the subject. In short, the central concerns shared by the critics catalogued above are the "tiresome repetitions" that he outlines at the end of the "Author" essay: "Who is the real author?"; "Have we proof of his authenticity and originality?"; and "What has he revealed of his most profound self?" (138). Booth's commentary, although it addresses these questions, does not offer much in the way of answers; nonetheless, if such efforts are themselves misdirected, his lack of conclusions seems a good reason to value the attempt.

Of course, essays on Beckett texts have also been written that do not merely repeat those questions criticized by Foucault. However, it may also be true that Beckett studies have more often attempted to demonstrate the fruitlessness of author-centered inquiry than to inquire in other directions. As for analyses of *Company*, at least two have been written, by Eric Levy and by Livio Dobrez, that demonstrate admirably the difficulty, and perhaps the impossibility, of "interpreting" this work in any traditional sense of the term. Despite their merits, these two essays ultimately tell us what Booth also shows, that which ought not to be done. As Foucault insists, other questions remain unasked; questions to which, it is my opinion, *Company* responds.

Before this essay proceeds in commenting on either Booth or Beckett, it will be helpful to evoke in some detail the particular context of our analysis. The Grove Press edition of *Company* prints the following summary on its back cover:

In *Company*, Samuel Beckett's most extended narrative since *The Lost Ones*, a voice comes to "one on his back in the dark," and speaks to him, or to some "other," describing significant moments in a life: a child asking his mother if the sky is not farther away than it seems, a man avoiding the thought of his lover being pregnant, a child being born the day Christ died. And yet, we are told it is all a fable, these memories, or figments of the imagination of one—perhaps himself—devised or imagined, for the sake of company.

The voice announces that words, and "the fable of one fabling of one

with you in the dark'' are coming to an end, and that the being lying on his back is, as he always was, alone.

In this summary a certain bias is apparent, one that is also shared by the critics catalogued above. Given the three primary subjective positions of the text, which Booth describes—

we have one in the dark, listening; then the "voice" addressing him in second person; and the voice of a third, perhaps in another dark, devising it all, cankerously, for company. (447)

—the summary that markets *Company*, like the criticism that interprets it, tends to privilege two positions, that of the hearer and that of the second person voice, to the near exclusion of the third, the "other," whose third person discourse (not "voice") in fact dominates the text (in number of paragraphs, by more than two to one; in pages, by roughly that). The temptation to privilege the second person voice, and the "significant moments" that it records, is perhaps understandable; these passages do appear to demonstrate, as Booth suggests, that "beauty is, after all, in [Beckett's] line" (453). Like others, I cannot resist the simple homage of citation:

The light there was then. On your back in the dark the light there was then. Sunless cloudless brightness. . . . Straining out from your nest in the gorse with your eyes across the water till they ache. You close them while you count a hundred. Then open and strain again. Again and again. Till in the end it is there. Palest blue against the pale sky. You lie in the dark and are back in that light. (25)

Such revery is no doubt seductive. Nonetheless, it is difficult to understand how the very critics who center their effort on postulating an author manage to be so easily seduced into turning away from the "authorial" third position, that of "another devising it all for company" (8). Here again Booth is exemplary; he notes, "If we rule out the pages about the problems of telling, of imagining, of remembering the story, we have a lifetime in about twenty short pages" (450). Whether or not *Company* belongs in the fictional tradition that Booth characterizes as "almost frantic imitation of Tristram Shandyism" (451), it should be clear that, if one is attempting to comment on the "author-function" of this text, a tendency to rule out the pages of a text that themselves address that function is not a tendency to be encouraged.

After having reconstructed *Company* as the “story of a complete, or nearly complete, life and of its fragmentary telling, reduced . . . to a bare outline of its materials,” Booth speculates that these materials “could have been made into any number of fully realized plots with radically different effects” (448). He then illustrates this comment by showing how, through capitalizing on different parts of that base material, the text might have been realized as a “bitter but funny farce,” as a “long biographical novel,” or as a “lament about the meaninglessness of the world” (448–49). Since Booth has chosen this text with appreciation in mind, one is not entirely surprised when such speculations end by concluding that Beckett’s “finished tale is designed to give the reader the greatest possible pleasure” (450). However, if, in that text as Booth argues, “every stroke is in a direction different from what would be dictated by—or at least effective in—realizing the other inherently possible plots” (450), one might wonder just what is so pleasurable about this accumulation of frustrated potential. Here Booth’s explanations lead him against the grain of his intended “appreciation” and, in order to resolve the conflict, he falls back on an impressionistic evocation of “mysterious catharsis” and “determination” somehow analogous to “moral choice” (450). In earlier analyses within *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, similar explanations led to radically dissimilar conclusions.

Over and above the complexities of Booth’s appreciation of Beckett, his reading of *Company* is finally, I believe, merely a whitewashed version of his earlier reading of Celine’s *Journey to the End of the Night*.³ In both cases, the bottom line in Booth’s reading is its author’s resistance to reading. Faced with Celine, that resistance is shown in its most characteristic mode; it surfaces most abruptly in a sentence that interrupts Booth’s “sympathetic” portrayal of the perspective shared by Bardamu and Celine. Such sympathy can only go so far, he argues, “And then we draw back” (383, my emphasis). Here Booth’s reaction (which is not ours) and the subsequent reversal in rhetoric are elicited by revulsion (in both an early, seventeenth-century sense of the word, “the action of drawing, or the fact of being drawn, back or away” [*Compact OED* 2533] and in the modern sense as well). Such a reaction is, in my opinion, a profoundly political gesture; Booth would probably say that it is moral.

Although more covert, an analogous move is involved in Booth’s reading of *Company*. Even more than the analytic techniques described above (both the privileging of “significant moments” at the expense of the author-function and the extended description of how textual material is *not* used by the text, either of which could be argued to manifest resistance), the concluding paragraphs of Booth’s reading display his fundamental antipathy toward that sort of writing that he refers to as

“lament[s] for the human condition” (456). In Booth’s opinion, which he has managed to defer until these concluding remarks, such a “genre or mode” is:

an extremely limited kind, limited because . . . it is ethically, politically, and metaphysically maimed and perhaps even capable, with many readers, of maiming. (456)

The reading ends with an acknowledgement of the test that a “work as good as this” puts to its critics, concluding with a striking last sentence. With his last words on the subject, the author recognizes that,

Even when I move to the proud moment of resistance, I know that I am wrestling with a powerful angel indeed. (456-57)

Such moments of self-reflection make it evident that, even if Booth fails, it is at a higher level than that on which most critics succeed.

Nonetheless, it remains my opinion that Booth meant demon where he wrote angel, and that, at least in criticism, there probably isn’t much difference between the two. That which I should like to reiterate here is the manner in which Booth’s wrestling first leads him to discount the importance of major portions of the text, then to propose alternative modes of narrativizing “avoided” by the text, finally leading him to sermonize against the dangers of a “genre or mode” probably invented by Booth in order to give him something besides Beckett to attack. All this, strangely enough, is done in the name of “appreciation.” Booth’s problems with this text, I would argue, result from his attempts to rationalize his a priori endorsement of a text that counters the author-centered foundation of his appreciative enterprise.

Nonetheless, I do not wish to suggest that Booth is simply wrong, either to wrestle or to narrativize; hence my own characterization of the Beckett text (itself suggestive of certain narrative possibilities) as capable of countering, and by extension of endorsing, certain interpretive practices. To my knowledge, there are at least two distinct ways to respond to a narrative which effectively deflate its representational claims without contesting the veracity of those claims. The first is to re-represent that narrative as a minor part of another, more compelling narrative. The second method is to respond, “So what?” (a response that William Labov argues narratives constantly work to fend off). The discourse of Foucault’s “Author” essay, by suggesting that historical study of the author can be initiated only after the appearance of “authorless” writing, illustrates that the former method, the attempt at

subsuming one narrative under another, may in some cases be grounded in the values that give rise to the latter.

Beckett, it seems to me, responds in just this manner to a Boothian concern with the author. Beginning and ending in that ethic of indifference to which Foucault alludes, *Company* takes the "self-constructing" enterprise of Booth et al. under its wing (primarily through the assertions of the second person voice) only to displace or dismantle such concerns through the investigation of its own discursive situation. As such, it is not surprising that Booth and others tend to "rule out" the third person discourse in the text; it is precisely that discourse that subordinates their own practice under another which, almost by definition, they ignore. The least that may be said is that this "other" practice is beyond the scope of their interests. In order to elaborate the means by which *Company* manages to subsume interest in the author into its own larger enterprise, it will be necessary to look more closely at certain characteristics of the text.

Excepting the mixed introductory paragraphs, and perhaps a few final pages as well, the largest part of *Company* proceeds by an uneven alternation between anecdotal paragraphs (from the voice, fifteen in all) and analytic paragraphs (from the other, thirty-seven in all). As Ben-Zvi has shown, the anecdotes told by the voice can be divided into groups according to the age of their protagonist; they represent the history of either a child, an adult, or an old man. Those that tell of a child predominate early in the text, those of an old man dominate in the end:

<u>Youth</u>	1	2	4	5	6	8	9
<u>Adult</u>						11	12
<u>Old Age</u>	3		7	10	13	14	15 (Ben-Zvi 77)

The third-person, analytic passages also have a "developmental" tendency, although in a different sense of the word. Although its intertextual structuring is more complex, the discursive mode of the other also develops, or at least accumulates, direction. These "other" passages analyze the following:

The Hearer / The Voice / The Other / Another Still

1 1

2 (multiple objects multiply marked)

	3	
	4	
	5	
6		
7	7	
8		
	9	
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		14
		15
		16
		17
18		
		19
20		
21	21	
		22
	23	
24		
25	25	25
		26
		27
	28	
	29	
	30	
		31
		32
33	33	
	34	
35	35	
36		
		37

The primary tendency demonstrated is clear: early in the text, analysis is most occupied with the hearer; toward the end, it is instead most often directed at the other himself. This tendency is also correlated with an development in subject matter: as the object intended increasingly becomes the other himself, that other becomes progressively less adequate to his function of “deviser.” The point is that, while in both its anecdotes

and in analysis, *Company* does develop a certain directional bias, the critics, by privileging these textual tendencies to the exclusion of all others, construct a story that moves in only that direction. On one hand, in the second person anecdotes, we get the objectification (and corresponding interiorization) of solitude: the voice first tells of childish failures in the search for "company," it then presents adults and old men seemingly incapable affecting their surroundings at all. Alternately, in the situational analysis of the third person discourse, we get commentary which, because of its "reason-ridden" imagination (cf. 33, 53), tends increasingly to objectify the failed and failing labor of its own generation, finally reaching a point where both the "deviser" and the "hearer" are portrayed as equally pathetic, helpless bodies (the first prone and immobile, the other nude, supine, and seemingly manacled [56-57]). If this were the whole matter, if the story moved only in this direction, Beckett's text would clearly be the latter-day equivalent of a sentimental novel, full of the paternal, patronizing identification with the accursed share of a pathetic object.

In fact, another aspect of *Company* pointed out by Ben-Zvi serves to counter such critical tendencies, i.e., the textual thematization of movement "withershins" (78).⁴ The pervasive resonance of this word in the text (think of the immobile figure on the strand [54], staring at the shadow of his staff in the dying light) marks, in a rather primordial fashion, a violation of "natural motion" which disrupts that hardening and simplifying of narrative direction that is elaborated above.

Ben-Zvi equates this theme with a (naive) attempt at liberation, and she emphasizes the inevitability of its defeat. Propounding the inevitability of natural motion, she comments:

Beckett assigns all his characters the same direction, from east to west, indicating their common journey from birth to death. This movement is also indicated in the novel by shifts from light to dark. The boy (of the first anecdote), like the figures who follow him, starts out in the light of early morning and heads into darkness. It is the same, inevitable darkness of night and age experienced by the man in the dark who imagines these scenes of the past. Against the pull of the inevitable direction of motion, there is the attempted rebellion. In one memory, after following the familiar direction, "suddenly you cut through the hedge and vanish hobbling east across the gallops" (24). . . . In old age the figure, no longer able to go out and traverse the countryside, sits staring at the inevitable rounds of the hands of the clock. "Withershins" is now impossible. (78)

This is clearly persuasive commentary, and again, one would not want to say that it is wrong, at least in any simple fashion. Nonetheless I cannot be satisfied, as this commentator apparently is, with a "lament for the human condition."

Both Booth and Ben-Zvi single out for comment that anecdote which describes at length an old man whose eyes light on the face of a watch, and who begins to analyze the variation in distance between the second hand and its shadow during a single revolution of that hand (57-59). In fact, Booth comments upon the passage twice; first to characterize it as boring, as "the one fault of craft that I find in the book" (451). Later, with a rare blunder, Booth confuses the deviser, said to be lying prone by this time (56), with the supine hearer, who has been portrayed as nude, with his feet splayed and his hands "invisibly manacled" in the preceding paragraph (56-57). Booth then assumes that this composite figure invented by his reading is also the same as that in the old man and the watch anecdote that quickly follows, and, for a moment, imagines that this might be the narrator that he has long awaited, the one "who understands and controls all this" (454). The section of *Company* that follows, which posits again the possibility of "another still," dashes the hopes of Booth's homogenizing reader, who must then conclude that he has let himself be "tricked again" (454).

In fact, Booth's disappointment is once again symptomatic; this passage from *Company* demonstrates both the analytic will-to-structure and the forces that counter that will. If one were inclined to allegorize, as it appears we are, what could be a more apt parody of the failed search for origins than the observation of that second hand stubbornly preceding its shadow, or, for that matter, a better parody of imminent death than a second hand whose shadow lies just ahead? And, of course, with a little reflection (or with a change in the direction of the light source), these relationships can be reversed: one might also contemplate the *trotteuse* that chases its mythic origin, or else tries to escape the inevitability of closure. In any case, the search here, and the search of representation in general, is for the particular constants that may be revealed in any situation. Here as elsewhere there are constants to be found; their number, like the attention of the old man, is limited only by exhaustion or disgust.

As a "constant," an infinitesimally slight halt in the course of natural motion, the shadow's disappearance might not even be recognized as the ground of withershins. Although infinitely brief, this sort of disappearance is perhaps also infinitely expandable. Indeed, such extension may be an emblem for the "whole" of *Company*, such as it is. ("A voice comes to one on his back in the dark. Imagine.") Even the final paragraph of the text, which is not its last word, expands such a moment.

In this closing paragraph, which utilizes second person discourse, that which is staged is that "unexpected grace" with which its subject assumes the position of object. In a gesture said to be repeated until the impulse toward its "converse operation" is exhausted, the subject, sitting huddled, arms around the legs, suddenly releases that hold and lies, assuming a supine position. This shift, which takes its mobility from the "deviser" and brings that function into the abject position of the "hearer," might easily be read to unify those very textual concerns which had just been most fully isolated or "objectified." However, it is the disruptive force of this moment which is given most emphasis by the text. Like the "deviser," who, it is said, "could not conceivably create while crawling" (53), the subject of this paragraph, the "one fabling," must "cut short" his fable during both the "act of lying" and its "converse operation" (62). Mimicking the collapse of this other, the narrative itself (its yield said to be only "labour lost and silence") is cut short on the following page (63).

It seems safe to suggest that, for a text that fails to construct a protagonist, and which sacrifices its "fabler" in order "to make an end at any price" (60), the interpretive construction of an "author-figure" seems ill-advised. However, an enterprising literary critic, in an attempt to capitalize on this failure (this is the position of Iain Wright), might yet claim that the text's author is in fact that very figure responsible for advancing failure as the only true result of fabling. Although I have no real defense against such claims, defending against them is perhaps unnecessary, given the fact that they appear to defeat themselves. Literary interpretations, as readings, are also arguments for reading, and I cannot conceive of an instance in which criticism might produce such a "failed" author, except (as in the case of Booth or Wright) in order to dispose of him. And if Foucault is right—as I think he is—about the contemporary ethic of authorial indifference, getting rid of "Beckett" is not going to rid us of Beckettian discourse. Rather, it is Beckettian discourse that will rid us of "Beckett."

In his description of the interpretive process, Nehamas claims that, although the author is a construct, and thus a product of interpretation, the construction of this author-figure is not, in any useful sense of the term, "arbitrary." This style of argumentation seems to have been borrowed from Stanley Fish, a critic who has long labored to make conservatism appear scandalous. By first distinguishing his "author-figure" from the historical "writer," Nehamas evokes a phantom of the arbitrary which, in philosophy, goes back at least to Locke's blank slate and Descartes' *cogito*. However, within a very few lines, Nehamas

pledges his allegiance to tradition as well, or at least to the administrative force of tradition. He argues:

In general, the author is to be construed as a plausible historical variant of the writer, as a character the writer could have been.

. . . To show that a well-established practice is arbitrary entails showing that at least one alternative practice, truly distinct from it, actually exists and makes a claim to being followed. . . . Only a consistent effort to read an entire text in a thoroughly anachronistic manner, an effort which would involve nothing less than reading the entire history of the literary tradition in this manner, would show that the figure of the author is arbitrary in an important or harmful sense.(27-28)

In the Beckett text discussed above, it is of course the third person discourse that analyzes the actuality of that text's discursive situation. In so doing, Beckett manages to turn Benveniste, and his crucial distinction between *discours* and *histoire*, upside down. For Benveniste, it is the subjective, I-dominated transactions of first and second person discourse (based in the grammatical "now" of linguistic instantiation) that tend to foster the extrapolation of "personality" over objective, historical time. For *Company*, it is the reverse: the objective facticity of the present is the a priori which precedes any attempt (including failed attempts) at a subjective construction of the past. Given the fact that the Beckett text explicitly presents itself as extrapolating from the present, I wonder if Nehamas would consider this particular, albeit literary, text as "a consistent effort to read . . . in a thoroughly anachronistic manner" (28).

Whether Nehamas agrees about the Beckett text or not, it is clear that Foucault's "Author" essay is just such an effort. As mentioned above, that essay pretends to justify and to supplement the critical practice that Foucault employed during his earlier analysis of seventeenth-and eighteenth-century Europe. Thus, the "Author" essay offers a revaluation of the disappearance of the author from *The Order of Things*, suggesting that its "authorless" interpretive practice was in fact only an effect of its contemporary perspective. Rather than argue that, in historical analysis, such effects should be minimized, and that a more "objective" analysis should be attempted, the discourse of Foucault suggests that these anachronisms remain problematic only because they are at present insufficiently disseminated in the contemporary critical practice. The Foucauldian oeuvre marks an impressive attempt, although necessarily incomplete, to remedy that situation.

Like the Beckett text, the discourse of Foucault suggests that the "objectivity" of an expandable present (or, as Deleuze puts it, the "*il y a du langage*") is the true place from which to start, although even this objectivity is itself a discursive fiction, it is in fact no place at all. In a lecture, Nehamas has commented that, ultimately, any effort of literary interpretation implies a complete history of the literary tradition, if not a history of the entire world. If such is indeed the case, it is certainly not only the authorless, anachronistic few that, in their attempts at revision, are destined to "partial interpretations of parts of texts" (28). Nor will it be only graduate students that are plagued with "incompletes."

Notes

1. A discussion of both the similarities and differences between Booth's "implied author" and Nehamas' "postulated author" is contained in the article by Nehamas cited above (10-11).
2. This essay, which owes more to Booth than to Foucault, concludes that the implied author of Beckett's trilogy stands for those ideas frequently referred to as "post-structuralist." The post-structuralists, it will be recalled, purport to have no ideas.
3. A reading which Booth's "Afterword" is explicitly designed to supplement.
4. Ben-Zvi defines the word as meaning "movement in a counterclockwise direction." For this word (of Scottish origin), the *Compact OED* gives two definitions, both dating from the sixteenth century: "1) In a direction opposite to the usual, the wrong way, to *stand* or *start withershins*, (of the hair) to 'stand on end'. *Obs.*; 2) In a direction contrary to the apparent course of the sun (considered as unlucky or causing disaster)" (3801). On the two occasions in which the word appears (38; 50), Beckett's French text gives first "*dans le non-sens des aiguilles*" then "*senestrorsum*"; also, on both occasions, in both versions, usage of the word or phrase is contiguous with a "heart too heavy" (38).

Works Cited

- Bair, Deirdre. "Back the Way He Came . . . or in Some Quite Different Direction": *Company* in the Canon of Samuel Beckett's Writing."

Pennsylvania English, 92/19 1982. 12-19.

<https://newprairiepress.org/stcl/vol17/iss2/9>

DOI: 10.4148/2334-4415.1327

Beckett, Samuel. *Company*. New York: Grove Press, 1980.

_____. *Compagnie*. Paris: Minuit, 1985.

Benveniste, Emile. *Problèmes de linguistique générale*. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Fritz Mauthner for Company." *Journal of Beckett Studies*. 9:1984. 65-88.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1983.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Paris: Minuit, 1987.

Dobrez, Livio. "Samuel Beckett and the Impossibility of Lit. Crit." *Southern Review*. 16.1: 1983. 74-85.

Fletcher, John. "'A Place in the Series': Beckett's Literary Development." *College Literature*. 1981. 271-82.

Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ed. D.F. Bouchard. Trans. D.F. Bouchard, S. Simon. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977. 113-138.

Labov, William. *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1972.

Levy, Eric P. "'Company': The Mirror of Beckettian Mimesis." *Journal of Beckett Studies*. 8:1982. 95-104.

Nehamas, Alexander. "Writer, Text, Author, Work." *Literature and the Question of Philosophy*. Ed. A.J. Cascardi. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987. 267-91.

Wright, Iain. "'What Matter Who's Speaking?': Beckett, the Authorial Subject and Contemporary Critical Theory." *Southern Review*. 16.1: 1983. 5-30.