



In the Dim Void: Samuel Beckett's Late Trilogy: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said and Worstward Ho (European Writers)

Gregory Johns

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IN THE DIM VOID: SAMUEL BECKETT'S LATE TRILOGY: COMPANY, ILL SEEN ILL SAID AND WORSTWARD HO BY GREGORY JOHNS Revised and updated, with new illustrations This book considers Samuel Beckett's 1980-83 trilogy of short texts, Company, Ill Seen Ill Said and Worstward Ho, otherwise known as the Company or Nohow Trilogy, published not long before Beckett's death in 1988. These are dense, complex, allusive, highly lyrical and emotional pieces which contain many of Beckett's key philosophies and approaches to writing. Includes photographs of Samuel Beckett and his plays, and a bibliography. ISBN 9781861712974. This new edition has been completely revised. Also available in hardback. www.crmoon.com EXTRACT FROM CHAPTER ONE The emotional core of Company is a nostalgic yearning, manifested in those vignettes or memories, which some see as having correlations with Beckett's own life, so that Company is the closest thing in the Beckett canon to autobiography. Certainly many of the sections in Company have the whiff of autobiography, but these are memories mediated, edited, shaped, compressed and transformed by Samuel Beckett's various voices. For in Company we find a narrator, a voice, a remembering self, in fact a complex hierarchy of various levels of consciousness and self-consciousness. Some of the passages are Beckett at his most lyrical, his most self-indulgently lyrical, one might add, for no sooner is lyricism evoked than it is stamped out. Ornamental writing is detested by Beckett, yet he can be as poetic in the ecstatic sense as any other poet. Here is a powerful sequence from Company: the light there was then. On your back in the dark the light there was then. Sunless cloudless brightness. You slip away at break of day and climb to your hiding place on the hillside. A nook in the gorse. East beyond the sea the faint shape of high mountain. Seventy miles away according to your Longman. For the third or fourth time in your life. The first time you told them and were derided. All you had seen was clod. So now you heard it in your heart with the rest. Back home at nightfall supperless to bed. You lie in the dark and are back in that light. Straining out from your nest in the gorse with your eyes across the water until 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. Fall asleep in that sunless cloudless light. Sleep till morning light. (20) This memory sequence is a kind of ecstasy. An everyday sort of ecstasy, perhaps, but even Beckett's rigorous control of language and his hyper-realist outlook on life cannot hide the joy in this passage. For there is joy in Beckett's art, though always, as in Thomas Hardy's fiction, very brief joy, soon smothered by all manner of other concerns. AUTHOR'S NOTE: The late trilogy of short prose works, the Nohow or Company trilogy, is a beautiful, lyrical work from Samuel Beckett, which I have explored in I hope is an informative and insightful manner. I have revised the text throughout, and have also brought the bibliography and references up-to-date. IN THE DIM VOID CONTENTS 1 : Into the Darkness: Company 2 : What When Words Gone? Beckett and Language 3 : In the Zone of Stones: Ill Seen Ill Said 4 : Sometimes in the Light of the Moon: Magic and Ritual in Ill Seen Ill Said 5 : No Words Left: Worstward Ho 6 : From Void to Void: Beckett and Philosophy Illustrations Bibliography

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