Samuel Beckett's Sonic Femininities

The Derivation and Evolution of the Disembodied Female Voice in the Drama for Radio, Stage and Television

(1958-1976)

Jivitesh Vashisht

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of English

April 2019

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Jivitesh Vashisht to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

© 2019 The University of Leeds and Jivitesh Vashisht

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the University of Leeds for the award of a Leeds International Research Scholarship, without which I could never have embarked on doctoral research as an overseas student. The Gilchrist Educational Trust's study grant came at a very opportune moment in my candidature and helped ease the financial uncertainties of the final year of the PhD.

Fittingly enough for a study of Samuel Beckett, the writing of this thesis has been an exercise in perpetual deferral, and I have many individuals to thank for their presence—and understandable frustration—during its protracted making.

Dr Nick Ray and Dr Mark Taylor-Batty have supervised this project with exceptional acuity and generosity, to say nothing of their unstinting support and encouragement. I thank them for the superhuman patience with which they awaited drafts and oversaw the transformation of these fizzles, roughs and *pochades* into what is now contained between the covers of this document. In Professor Anna McMullan and Dr Richard Brown this thesis found its intended and ideal readers and examiners. The effortless clarity of Prof John Fletcher's thinking and expression is something I aspire to in everything I do, and I thank him for his time and invaluable mentorship.

It never ceases to astound me that my family, especially my parents, have braved separation anxiety, kept me in their prayers, and unquestioningly offered financial assistance so that I could continue the bookish pursuits of which they have little understanding: for this and everything else, I thank the Vashishts, the Kashyaps, and the Malhotras.

Sreya Mallika Datta unhesitatingly lent a hand at the last minute with the drudgery of finishing touches. Samuel Perks and Angus Young helped make Leeds a home-away-from-home for three years with their friendship and good humour. During the same time, others came to straddle the divide between friends and family effortlessly. Saira Fatima Dogar has been, and continues to be, an exemplary example of both. It is difficult to imagine the PhD journey without Arunima Bhattacharya, who has been an emotional anchor throughout, and who, I know, will indulge this costive expression of gratitude.

For close to four years now, Dr James Johnston has witnessed the difficult making of this thesis—alongside much else—with an unknowing intimacy that has made all the difference.

Finally, I ask for Udit Bhatia's forgiveness, for I am bypassing the impossible task of articulating the debt of his friendship and love over the years by simply dedicating this thesis to him.

ABSTRACT

Samuel Beckett's radical experiments with corporeality in his mid-to-late dramas bear directly on the unique challenges of thinking about the sensory articulation of gender in this phase of his work. Progressively inhabiting a register of loss, absence, and memory, the female body is increasingly obliterated from the visual fields of Beckett's stage and media plays while persisting therein as a dis-embodied voice or an unseen sound that is identifiably gendered. The vocal metamorphosis of the female body in Beckett's later drama anticipates and contributes to the ongoing critique of the ocularcentrism of certain influential strands of gender theory, where an overriding preoccupation with the visible body and/or the gaze often precludes a consideration of aural—and indeed other non-visual—modalities of the production of gender. And yet, while phenomenologically-orientated scholarship on the body and the senses has transformed our understanding of the varied auralities at work in Beckett's oeuvre, considerations such as gender have been largely overlooked within it.

Drawing on the productive cross-fertilization, since the 19990s, of gender and sound theory within psychoanalytically-inflected film, opera and literary studies, this thesis traces the emergence and evolution of Beckett's disembodied female voices across two decades of his late dramatic work and probes the politics of a non-specular model of sexual difference that is rooted in voice and sound. I ask: over and beyond the identities that their listeners (sometimes) attribute to them, what is *female* about these disembodied female voices? To what extent are Beckett's sonic femininities a function of female corporeality? And finally, how do these voices interact with a wider technological and cultural imaginary pertaining to female vocality that exceeds Beckett's drama? Premised on the claim that gender and sound have a mutually-constitutive relationship in Beckett's drama, this thesis ultimately argues that subjectivity and intertextuality emerge as profoundly implicated in aurality once we attend to the gender of the disembodied voice as well as the ear that is attuned to it. On the one hand, the perception of the disembodied female voice by Beckett's auditors revives those foundational scenarios, typically elaborated within various psychoanalytic paradigms, in which subjectivity is (de)formed; on the other hand—or rather, at the same time—the representation of this auditory perception entails Beckett's revisiting of his key literary and intellectual influences, here identified as Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*, both of which engaged his readerly attention in the 1930s.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 3

Abstract 4

Abbreviations 6

Introduction 9

I

(1930-1935)

Chapter One 32

The Reader as Listener: *Proust*'s Female Voices

Chapter Two 61

The 'Psychology Notes' and the Embodiment of Difference

II

(1958-1976)

Chapter Three 81

Web and Flow: The Abject Female Voice in *Embers* and *Eh Joe*

Chapter Four 121

Inaudible Utterances: The Female Voice as Lost Object in *Krapp's Last Tape*, *…but the clouds…* and *Ghost Trio*

Conclusion 168

Bibliography 170

ABBREVIATIONS

I. Archival Sources

UoR BC	The Beckett Collection, University of Reading Special Collections
UoR BWA	The Billie Whitelaw Archive, University of Reading Special Collections
TCD	Samuel Beckett Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Trinity College Dublin

II. Published Sources

Drama

In-text citations of the following plays by Samuel Beckett are taken from *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990):

ATF	*All That Fall* [1956]
E	*Embers* [1958]
EG	*Endgame* [1958]
F	*Film* [1963]
EJ	*Eh Joe* [1965]
NI	*Not I* [1972]
FF	*Footfalls* [1975]
GT	*Ghost Trio* [1975]
btc	*…but the clouds…* [1976]
TT	*That Time* [1976]
R	*Rockaby* [1980]

KLT	*Krapp's Last Tape* [1958]. In view of Beckett's significant reshaping of the play following its first publication in *The Evergreen Review* (1958), I have referred instead to the 'Revised Text' published in *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape*, vol. 3, ed. by James Knowlson (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

Fictional and Critical Prose

PTD	*Proust and Three Dialogues with George Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965)
M	*Murphy* [1937], in *The Grove Centenary Editions of Samuel Beckett: Novels I*, ed. by Paul Auster (New York: Grove Press, 2006)
D	*Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* [1929-1961], ed. by Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983)
FL	*First Love* [1946], in *The Complete Short Prose*, 1929-1989, ed. by S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1996)
TE	*The End* [1946], in *The Complete Short Prose*, 1929-1989, ed. by S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1996)
Mo	*Molloy* [1951], ed. by Shane Weller (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)
U	*The Unnamable* [1953], ed. by Steven Connor (London: Faber and Faber, 2010)
HII	*How It Is* [1964], ed. by Edouard Magessa O'Reilly (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)
C	*Company* [1980], ed. by Dirk Van Hulle (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

Letters

NABS	*No Author Better Served: the Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider*, ed. by Maurice Harmonn (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998)
LSB I	*The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1929-1940), vol.1, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
LSB II	*The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1941-1956), vol.2, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
LSB III	*The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1957-1965), vol.3, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)
LSB IV	*The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1966-1989), vol.4, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Miscellaneous Sources

RTP I	Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past: Swann's Way; Within a Budding Grove,* vol.1, trans. by F. Scott-Montcrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Penguin, 1989)
RTP II	Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past: The Guermantes Way; Cities of the Plain*, vol.2, trans. by F. Scott-Montcrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Penguin, 1986)
RTP III	Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past: The Captive; The Fugitive; Time Regained,* vol.3, trans. by F. Scott-Montcrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Penguin, 1986)
TB	Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (London: Routledge, 1929)
JOBS	*The Journal of Beckett Studies*
SBTA	*Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*

INTRODUCTION

> 'Women should be seen and not heard', goes the famous adage of patriarchal wisdom.[1]

> To allow her to be heard without being seen would be even more dangerous, since it would disrupt the specular regime upon which mainstream cinema relies; it would put her beyond the control of the male gaze, and release her voice from the signifying obligations which the gaze sustains. It would be to open the possibility of woman participating in phallic discourse, and so escaping the interrogation about her place, her time and her desires which constantly re-secures her […] Indeed, to dis-embody the female subject in this way would be to challenge every conception by means of which we have previously known her, since it is precisely *as body* that she is constructed.[2]

> To have your body removed as a woman is one of the greatest gifts I have ever known. (Lisa Dwan on performing *Not I.*)[3]

Leaving aside the question of its subversive potential for now, the disembodied female voice that Kaja Silverman considers an exception to classical Hollywood's dominant audio-visual regime is, increasingly, the norm in Samuel Beckett's dramas for the stage, television, and radio. Without conflating the not inconsiderable differences between the production and reception contexts of mainstream cinema and Beckett's plays—to say nothing of their varying representational strategies,

---

[1] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. by Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p.117.
[2] Kaja Silverman, 'Dis-Embodying the Female Voice', in *In Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. by Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp and Linda Williams (Frederick: University Publications of America in association with the American Film Institute, 1984), pp. 131-149 (p.135).
[3] Manufacturing Intellect, 'Meet Samuel Beckett with Richard Wilson (2015)', 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NlOI5Q-ar0> [accessed 2 March 2019].

especially in case of the radio—the contrast between their respective approaches to gendered embodiment is certainly striking. In Silverman's canonical thesis, the woman is incarcerated within the frame as a diegetic body and voice while the man is frequently liberated of the corporeal encumbrance necessary for him to assume the role of the transcendental, omniscient, and dis-embodied voice-over.[4] On the contrary, the intently listening figures (or 'auditors') in Beckett's mid-to-late period plays—predominated by the recurring 'motif of listener and speaker'—are often male, while the disembodied voices that they perceive are female.[5] The dramatic oeuvre thus increasingly inverts the two imperatives of the infamous adage that 'women should be seen and not heard', for Beckett's women are increasingly heard—sometimes insistently and uncontrollably so—but only seldom seen.

This thesis focusses on these disembodied female voices and their non-vocal equivalents—that is, both human and non-human sounds that are invisible yet gendered—with the aim of examining a simultaneously non-visual and aural mode of gendered disembodiment that pervades Beckett's mid-to-late dramatic works (1958-1980). The questions that drive my investigation all concern and cohere around this distinctive production of gender as both a blind spot and a sonic trace in the performance of these works. I ask: over and beyond the identities that their listeners (sometimes) attribute to them, what is 'female' about these 'disembodied female voices'? Can a voice be disembodied and female at the same time? In other words, to what extent are Beckett's sonic femininities a function of female corporeality? Does the voices' gender determine the affects that they call forth in their auditors? And finally, how do these voices interact with a more expansive technological and cultural imaginary pertaining to female vocality that exceeds Beckett's drama?

The present study is predicated on the claim that, notwithstanding its surprising disregard by burgeoning scholarship on Beckett's auralities, gender is an indispensable critical lens through which to study the disembodied voices in the drama. This thesis contends that Beckett's disembodied female voices are located at the threshold between his dramatic work and the early critical writings that he

---

[4] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: the Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.54.

[5] Bernard Beckerman, 'Samuel Beckett and the Art of Listening', in *Beckett at 80/ Beckett in Context*, ed. by Enoch Brater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.150. It is striking that the reversal of this listening situation—i.e. a *female* auditor listening to a disembodied *male* voice—is not found in any of the plays.

famously denigrated as *disjecta membra*;[6] at the same time, these gendered voices also link the published canon with that parallel corpus of letters, manuscripts, reading notes, directorial notebooks and performers' testimonies—in short the literary and performance archive—that S. E. Gontarski has called Beckett's 'grey' canon.[7] The central claim running through this study is that Beckett's shifting and contingent configuring of the 'female' in the disembodied female voice needs to be understood *relationally*. It is the outcome in each instance of two inextricable interactions: between the embodied and gendered subjectivities of the auditor and those produced by the disembodied voice on one level, and between Beckett's creative practice and his literary and intellectual influences on another.

To elaborate, for Beckett's male and female auditors alike, the aural both mediates and helps negotiate the maternal, which casts a long shadow over the Beckettian oeuvre, especially in the form of a womb *topos*.[8] The distinctive feature of this study lies in its demonstration that this interpenetration of the maternal-feminine and the aural in Beckett's drama is not an *ex nihilo* phenomenon. Rather, it is informed by an intertextual and intellectual infrastructure with which Beckett acquainted himself during the formative decade of the 1930s. Over the course of his reading of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927) and Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* (1924) during the first half of that decade, Beckett encountered a rich set of scenarios and tropes through which the maternal-feminine is figured as both sound and body. The auditors' use of listening as either a conduit towards, or a barrier against, the maternal-feminine—in other words, an acknowledgement or repudiation of the constitutive (m)other—is both analogous to, as well as a result of, Beckett the writer's revisiting of the intellectual and literary debts accrued by Beckett the reader.

The present moment is particularly apposite for undertaking a full-length investigation of the sustained 'vocal metamorphosis' of the female body in Beckett's

---

[6] 'Disjecta' is the title that Beckett reluctantly suggested to Ruby Cohn for her edited anthology of Beckett's literary journalism and art criticism. Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. by Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983).
[7] S. E. Gontarski, 'Greying the Canon: Beckett in Performance', in *Beckett after Beckett*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski and Anthony Uhlmann (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), pp.141-157.
[8] For introductory overviews, see 'Birth' and 'Mother' in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Work, Life, and Thought*, ed. by C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p.72; pp.328-330.

drama.[9] This is because of the significant advances made within the last decade by three broad sub-fields of Beckett Studies—discussed subsequently in greater detail—at whose crossroads this thesis is situated. On the one hand, I draw heavily upon phenomenological and materialist understandings of sensory perception in Beckett's critical, fictional and dramatic work—and especially upon the recent intensification of interest in 'the voice' therein. On the other hand, equally important for my investigation is scholarship—both longstanding as well as recent—on Beckett's mutating approach to gender and its manifestation in issues of embodiment in his writings. Although there undoubtedly exists some overlap between these areas of enquiry, the dialogue between them has not gone very far. While Beckett's feminist critics have paid some attention to the audio-visual construction of gender in the drama, phenomenological enquiries, despite their grounding of perception in embodied and intersubjective contexts, have repeatedly and problematically set aside the question of gender altogether. The thesis, then, attempts an overdue rapprochement between them by reintroducing gender as a critical lens when considering the voice, and the acoustic more generally, in Beckett's work. I simultaneously advocate that feminist scholarship take greater cognizance, or hear anew, the significant extent to which the feminine is mediated aurally in the drama. This reconcilement is grounded in the ongoing 'archival turn' within Beckett Studies, which has seen—to mention just two of its most prominent manifestations—the publication of all four volumes of Beckett's correspondence as well as accounts of Beckett's reading traces and practices, especially those pertaining to the 1930s.[10] Finally, outside of Beckett scholarship, this thesis is also informed by a rich body of multidisciplinary investigations of female vocality, originating specifically from

[9] Anna McMullan, 'From Matron to Matrix: Gender, Authority and (Dis)Embodiment in Beckett's Theatre', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.97-108 (p.106).

[10] Matthew Feldman's *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (London: Continuum, 2006) is a systematic overview of Beckett's self-education in philosophy and psychology in the 1930s. Mark Nixon's and Dirk Van Hulle's *Samuel Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), which, although far broader in its thematic and chronological sweep, supplements Feldman's study with a more nuanced approach to Beckett's reading practices in its drawing upon disciplines like genetic criticism and marginalia and annotation studies.

feminist-psychoanalytic scholarship within film, literary and opera studies since the 1990s.[11]

*

An invisible 'Female Voice' or a 'Woman's Voice' appears with increasing regularity amongst the dramatis personae of the plays written from the 1950s onward, a selection of which is studied in this thesis. Beckett's uncoupling of the female body and voice is overdetermined: it is necessitated thematically when these voices are either from beyond the grave or belong to the realm of memory, and is facilitated technologically by either the radio and television medium or the increasing use of recorded voices in the stage drama. Katherine Worth has noted how 'women began to come into their own in Beckett's theatre at the time he discovered the attraction of writing for radio'.[12] Beckett's first female protagonist, Maddy Rooney from *All that Fall* (1956), is accordingly a radiophonic voice as well as the aural perspective through which the entire play's soundscape reaches listeners. She is followed by the faint-sounding Ada in the subsequent radio play, *Embers* (1959). Ada's voice contrasts sharply with Mrs Rooney's vocal corpulence; unlike her predecessor, she is not so much an embodied radio character as a spectral voice located within the mind of her husband, Henry. The eponymous male protagonist of Beckett's first teleplay, *Eh Joe* (1966), also hears—this time against his will—an internal female whisper called Voice, who holds him culpable for another woman's suicide. One of the most readily-recognizable—if still partially embodied—female voices in the Beckettian canon is found in *Not I* (1972), whose uncontrolled ramblings in the third person emanate from a lone mouth suspended high up on a

---

[11] Representative examples from these fields that inform my approach are Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*; Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Felicia Miller-Frank, *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice, and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Claire Kahane, *Passions of the Voice: Hysteria, Narrative and the Figure of the Speaking* Woman: 1850-1915 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. by Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). Although not focussed on the female voice as such, Konstantinos Thomaidis's *Theatre & Voice* (London: Red Globe Press, 2017) attempts to synthesize many of these sources in order to re-think the voice in performance more generally.

[12] Katherine Worth, 'Women in Beckett's Radio and Television Plays', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*), ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp.236-242 (p.236).

dark stage. Beckett's second teleplay, *Ghost Trio*, features yet another 'faint' female voice-over (V) that comments on a male figure's wait for a woman, although, in this instance, she is not perceived by the object of her scrutiny. In the late stage play, *Footfalls* (1975) the darkness that engulfs the compulsively pacing May resonates with the voice of her dying mother. While the disembodied voice (V) that rocks the female protagonist of *Rockaby* to a restful sleep—and quite likely, even her death—is her own, the narrative that it devises for this purpose has an overtly lullaby-like quality and thus mimics the maternal voice.

And yet, this broad-brush description of the gendered auditory fields of the drama only conveys a dominant trend. Sarah West, citing the examples of the sea sound in *Embers* and the knock in *Ohio Impromptu* (1981), rightly argues that Beckett's dramatic voices occasionally manifest as non-vocal and non-human sounds.[13] I would argue that, when considered carefully, some of these non-vocal sounds are also gendered. For instance, the sea in *Embers* is a conspicuously feminine entity and, by extension, so is the sound through which it torments Henry. The ambiguous sounds in *Ghost Trio*, which originate outside F's room and periodically rouse him from his reverie, are similarly attributed to the play's absent 'her' as she ostensibly approaches the site of their agreed tryst. Finally, interspersed with the previously listed sounding voices are those female voices that resist being heard by their auditors, and in remaining inaudible haunt the soundscapes of these plays as sonic voids. In *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), Krapp's recording from his thirty-ninth birthday is replete with references to as many as six women; yet, despite crowding the soundscape that emanates from the tape recorder, these women persist therein as silent, evoked, and fragmented body parts. The most iconic instance of an unheard female voice in the Beckettian canon is arguably found in the third television play, *...but the clouds...* (1976), where the beloved's ghost returns as a face that silently mouths lines from W. B. Yeats's poem 'The Tower' (1928).

A brief shift of focus to matters of performance is also instructive for this overview. Pierre Chabert has argued that Beckett approaches the performing body as a 'genuine raw material which may be modified, sculpted, shaped and distorted for

---

[13] Sarah West, *Say It: The Performative Voice in the Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), p.244.

the stage'.[14] The actor's voice is particularly subject to this sculpting process in the drama, either in response to the famed musicality of the language or Beckett's exigent stipulation of toneless and expressionless voices with tempos that considerably challenge the audience's comprehension (e.g. the voices of *Play* and *Not I*). While these vocal challenges are applicable to actors across genders, they are undoubtedly intensified for the female performer, who, following the body's increasing visual erasure, is reduced to a voice alone. It is entirely unsurprising, then, that reflective accounts of playing Beckett's female roles, such as those found in the first part of Linda Ben-Zvi's *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives* (1992), invariably turn to the intricacies of voicing these parts.[15]

The Beckettian actress's predicament of increasingly submitting to a sounding invisibility—or, stated differently, of performing as a radiophonic voice even in the stage and television plays—has elicited varying responses. Katherine Worth, who directed Elvi Hale as Ada and Voice in *Embers* and *Eh Joe* respectively, recalls that Hale 'was a little worried at having to rely on voice, being more experienced on stage and in film than on radio'.[16] Others, such as Lisa Dwan in the third epigraph to this Introduction, speak of these disembodied roles as emancipatory—indeed, almost gender-neutral—enclaves within a culture where women are defined entirely in terms of their bodies in an ostensibly restrictive way. Lastly, little needs to be said in this context about Billie Whitelaw, who perfected the 'low, distinct, remote' voice with such finesse that it came to be permanently etched onto Beckett's mind (*EJ*, p.361).[17] In her extensive accounts of working with Beckett, Whitelaw describes her transformation into a playback device capable of emitting pre-recorded sounds upon the pressing of a button, exemplified in her asking Beckett during *Not I*'s rehearsals: 'Shall I use the scream button here, as I

[14] Pierre Chabert, 'The Body in Beckett's Theatre', *JOBS*, 8 (1982), 23-28 (p.23). For an account of how the body in Beckett's drama is (dis)figured as a result of his directorial practice, see Anna McMullan, 'Beckett as Director: the Art of Mastering Failure', in *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett*, ed. by John Pilling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.196-208 (pp.202-204).

[15] 'Acting Beckett's Women' contains twelve interviews with seasoned Beckett actresses (e.g. Billie Whitelaw, Madeleine Renaud, Nancy Illig, Shivaun O'Casey, Brenda Bynum etc.) from England, Ireland, France, Germany, Poland, Israel, Ireland and the United States. *Women in Beckett*, pp.3-59.

[16] Katherine Worth, *Samuel Beckett's Theatre: Life Journeys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p.134.

[17] '[Sam] had for some reason carried the sound of my voice around in his head—not my normal voice, but the voice I used in *Play*'. Billie Whitelaw, *Billie Whitelaw…Who He?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1995), p.165.

used the laugh button in *Play*?'.[18] In addition to her autobiography and published interviews on performing Beckett, Whitelaw has also left behind a sizeable archive, acquired by the University of Reading in 2014, which remains haunted by distinctive traces of her voice. In his recent overview of the Billie Whitelaw Archive, David Pattie has drawn attention to the personal shorthand—comprising of arcs, underlines, marginalia and vertical bars—that the actress used when scoring her Beckett play scripts for the ideal tempo, rhythm and intonation of the voice.[19] These annotations strikingly collapse the distinction between the printed voice of the play text and the phenomenal voice of the actor heard in performance.

*

According to Martin Jay's now-familiar claim, Western metaphysics' positing of vision as the most reliable and epistemologically-secure of all senses came under attack with the ascendancy of a 'hostility to visual primacy' towards the end of the nineteenth century.[20] This tendency culminated in the articulation of a 'profound suspicion of vision and its hegemonic role' in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray among others, all of whom developed alternative models of sight within their respective intellectual projects.[21] Beckett's critical, fictional, and dramatic writings have also been placed in this 'anti-ocularcentric' tradition due to their regular and insistent undermining of the visual.[22] For instance, Tim Lawrence's recent examination of visual tropes in the prose fiction, read through the prism of Beckett's art criticism (1938-1966), contends that sight is linked in these works 'to modes of consciousness resistant to intellectual revelation'.[23] Beckett's uncoupling of vision and the intellect, Lawrence argues, is a reaction against the veneration of sight in Kantian notions of apperception, representation and aesthetic evaluation, with which Beckett had closely engaged when reading the philosopher.

---

[18] ibid., p.119.
[19] David Pattie, '"Let What Happens Happen": The Whitelaw Archive', *JOBS*, 25 (2016), 206-223.
[20] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.14.
[21] ibid.
[22] At the same time, his formative relationship with the visual arts and cinema has also been re-iterated with unprecedented empirical conviction, such as in Conor Carville's *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) and Anthony Paraskeva's *Samuel Beckett and Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
[23] Tim Lawrence, *Samuel Beckett's Critical Aesthetics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.4.

Even before this recent intensification of interest in Beckett and the optic, however, scholarship on Beckett's drama has long underscored the prominence of visual impediments in the reception of the stage and television plays—to say nothing of the radio drama, whose fabled 'blindness' allured Beckett to write six plays for the medium over a six-year period (1956-1962). In a comprehensive reading of the late drama's visual fields, Anna McMullan places Beckett in a theatrical counter-tradition on account of his introduction of 'more and more blind spots into the field of the spectator's vision':

> The performance space leaks at the borders into the unseen and unknown space of the off stage, or in the later plays, the darkness which surrounds the image, and encroaches into the supposedly visually available arena on stage. Bodies are often only partially seen, or presented under conditions of visibility/lighting which frustrate any attempt to apprehend the whole image.[24]

McMullan's identification of the performing body as a consistent blind spot in the late drama has also been influentially understood, in S. E. Gontarski's formulation, as Beckett's 'assault' on the metaphysics of presence that underpins the dramatic representation of character as a visible, audible, and embodied being located in the here-and-now of the performance.[25]

Theoretical elaborations of the voice insistently make a case for placing its sonic materiality on an equal footing with its linguistic dimension. This advocacy is part of a larger strategy of reversing what Adriana Cavarero has influentially called the 'devocalization of logos'.[26] According to Cavarero, a longstanding philosophical logocentricism in the West has envisioned the voice as primarily a carrier of language and posited its phonic dimension as an 'empty sound' associated with irrationality, animality or simply an 'excess'.[27] This refocussing of attention on the sound of the voice has gone hand-in-hand with a theoretical recognition of its bodily substrate. Mladen Dolar, elaborating his claim that the voice is located between

---

[24] Anna McMullan, 'Performing Vision(s)', in *Samuel Beckett: A Casebook*, ed. by Jennifer M. Jeffers (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.133-158 (p.137).
[25] S.E. Gontarski, 'The Body in the Body of Beckett's Theatre', *SBTA: Endlessness in the Year 2000/ Fin sans fin en l'an 2000,* 11 (2001), 169-177 (pp.169-170).
[26] For Cavarero's concise account of philosophy's devocalizing tendencies, see Chapter 3.2, 'A Vocal Ontology of Uniqueness, in *For More than One Voice*, esp. pp.173-176.
[27] ibid., p.35.

language and body, describes the voice as 'a bodily missile which has detached itself from its source, emancipated itself, yet remains corporeal'.[28] Indeed, Dolar's recognition of the in-betweenness of the voice—and, by extension, its irreducible corporeal anchorage—has also been influentially iterated before him by Roland Barthes as the voice's 'grain', and by Paul Zumthor as 'vocality'.[29]

The emergence of the multidisciplinary and heterogeneous body of scholarship on female vocality in the last two decades is as much a consequence of this theoretical recognition of the body-in-the-voice as it is an attempt to show that this corporeal anchorage is, in turn, gendered. Thus, Leslie C. Dunne and Nancy A. Jones write in the introduction to their field-defining *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (1994):

> [s]ince both language and society are structured by codes of sexual difference, both the body and its voice are *inescapably gendered*. This is not to say that voices possess intrinsically masculine or feminine qualities. Rather, vocal gendering appears to be the product of a complex interplay between anatomical differences, socialization into culturally prescribed gender roles, and the "contrasting possibilities for expression for men and women within a given society".[30]

On the one hand, the claim that the gendered voice follows from a gendered body serves as an important premise to pay heed to Beckett's voices as 'inescapably gendered'; on the other hand, it renders the continued eschewal of this perspective by existing scholarship all the more surprising. There are several reasons for this. First, Dunne's and Jones's argument applies even more forcefully, if somewhat counter-intuitively, to the so-called disembodied voices that predominate Beckett's plays. For

[28] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2006), p.73.
[29] Barthes describes the 'voluptuousness of its [the singing voice's] sound-signifiers' as its unique 'grain': 'The grain is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs'. Paul Zumthor coined the term 'vocality' in response to the speech-focussed ambit of Walter Ong's 'orality'.[29] For Zumthor, speech is 'not the only one and perhaps not even the most important' manifestation of the voice, which freely traverses a spectrum of pre- and trans-linguistic sounds in acts of phonation where the 'physiological force' of the body is revealed with greater clarity than in speech. Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp.179-189 (p.182; p.188); Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: an Introduction*, trans. by Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p.18.
[30] Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, 'Introduction', in *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.1-15 (p.2, my emphasis).

in this instance, gender is not only one of the first attributes to be isolated and identified by the listener, but it is that vital piece of the jigsaw puzzle without which the auditory knowledge of the disincarnate voice's bodily source cannot be completed. Secondly, in what appears to be an echo of Dolar's argument, it has been argued routinely that Beckett's voices remain thoroughly suffused by the body regardless of whether they are accompanied by it. This corporeal inextricability is either manifested as the Barthesian 'grain' (e.g. the cracked quality of Krapp's voice) or through voices' alignment with, and mimicking of, corporeal rhythms and discharges, such as the figuring of *Not I*'s uncontrollable voice as interchangeably vomit and excrement. Finally, Anna McMullan argues that the voices of the late drama are no longer simply bodily emissions but rather specific kinds of *sensory bodies* in themselves. More precisely, she considers these 'provisional, constructed bodies of words, sound or light' as manifestations of 'an alternative experience of corporeality' in the late Beckett, which she terms 'embodiment' in contradistinction to the 'body'.[31] The difference between the two terms is elaborated elsewhere as follows:

> the term 'body' seems inappropriate to describe the fractured subjects and body parts of the late drama. I therefore prefer the term 'embodiment', which can accommodate the unstable and uncanny incarnations in Beckett's work, such as a mouth, a voice or even an intake and outtake of breath.[32]

By underscoring the cyclical relationship of the body and the voice—whereby bodies produce and persist in voices, which in turn produce 'embodiment'—these observations challenge any conception of Beckett's voices as 'dis-embodied' in the sense of them being non-corporeal. Concurring entirely with this important claim, when this thesis describes Beckett's female voices as 'disembodied', it is purely to designate the visual absence of their bodily source rather than to imply that they

[31] Anna McMullan, 'Versions of Embodiment/Visions of the Body in Beckett's "…but the clouds…"', *SBTA: Crossroads and Borderlines/ l'Oeuvre Carrefour/ l'Oeuvre Limite*, 6 (1997), 353-364 (p.357).
[32] Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p.4. McMullan's argument here approximates what Steven Connor has independently called the 'embodying power of the voice' through which it 'conjures for itself a different kind of body; an imaginary body which may contradict, compete with, replace, or even reshape the actual visible body of the speaker'. Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.36.

transcend corporeality. Indeed, when compared to synonyms such as ‘incorporeal’ or ‘bodiless’, ‘disembodied’ remains the least misleading description of Beckett’s dramatic voices.

The suggestion that the gender of Beckett’s disembodied voices results from the gender of the body with which they are linked, may invite a pertinent objection at this point. The sound theorist Marie Thompson cautions against conceiving sound (including the voice) as an uncomplicated reflection of a gender binary, and argues instead that ‘sound is one of a number of materialities and mediums with which gender is made and remade, produced and reproduced’.[33] She further adds that a classification of sounds or voices as ‘male’ or ‘female’ simplifies the volatility of gender altogether and overlooks the ‘multitude of masculinities, femininities, a-gender, transgender and genderqueer modes of being’.[34] In her influential account of the audio-visual ‘deconstruction’ of sexual difference in experimental theatre, Helga Finter has also drawn attention to the deliberate erasure, through enunciative and technological means, of the ‘gender- and sex-specific timbre of the voice’ in works by Laurie Anderson and Meredith Monk.[35] Sure enough, as the rigid gender polarity from Beckett’s early work gives way to a ‘sexual indifference’ in the later prose and drama, the certainty of the gender of the body and the voice similarly comes into question.[36] This phase of Beckett’s work regularly features bodies whose gender cannot be apprehended by the reader/spectator, with the cloaked bodies of the ‘sex indeterminate’ Auditor in *Not I* and the ‘sex indifferent’ dancers of the teleplay *Quad* (1982) being two noteworthy instances of Beckett’s ‘degenderation’—to use Shane Weller’s term—in the late drama.[37] On the other hand, glimpses of the ambiguously gendered voice can be found as early as *Watt* (1953), where one of the schizoid voices heard by the eponymous protagonist ‘might have been a high male voice, or it might have been a deep female voice’.[38] The narrator of *How It Is* states even more

[33] Marie Thompson, ‘Gendered Sound’, in *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, ed. by Michael C. Bull (London: Routledge, 2018), pp.108-117 (pp.109-110).
[34] ibid, p.110.
[35] Helga Finter, ‘The Body and its Doubles: On the (De-)Construction of Femininity on Stage’, *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 9 (1997), 119-141 (p.129).
[36] Mary Bryden, *Women in Beckett’s Prose and Drama*, p.198.
[37] Shane Weller, *Beckett, Literature and the Ethics of Alterity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.
[38] Cited in Enoch Brater, *The Drama in the Text*, p.60.

pertinently that 'man woman girl or boy cries have neither certain cries sex nor age' (*HII*, p.46).

These examples undoubtedly invite the conclusion that the gender of Beckett's voices is neither as distinctly perceptible nor as significant as I have hitherto contended it is. However, it is equally telling that these instances of ambiguously gendered voices and sexless cries occur in Beckett's *prose*, where they are exempt from materializing in sound. As Enoch Brater puts it, the 'sound of androgyny […] can only be imagined; unlike all the other voices, this "species" can only be recorded in silence'.[39] That the gender of the voice can only be erased if it is silent or evoked is further evident from the absence of a dramatic counterpart to these aforementioned voices. On the contrary, Beckett's dramatization of sexual indifference operates exclusively in the visual register. Both *Not I* and *Quad* feature bodies that are not only hidden beneath hooded gowns but are also entirely mute since the exercise of the voice would inevitably reveal them as either male or female. There exists, then, a contradiction between Beckett's degendering of the voice in his prose writings on the one hand, and his acceptance of the impossibility of replicating it in the drama—where the voice remains irreducibly gendered—except through silencing it altogether. This contradiction is at the heart of the impasse entailed in the staging of certain prose works such as *Enough* (1965). As Leslie Hill has shown through a simultaneous consideration of the French and the English translation, the bodily identity of the speaking voice remains profoundly uncertain until the very end of the piece, although it was performed by Billie Whitelaw in 1984.[40]

*

Writing in 2004, Jim Drobnick claimed in *Aural Cultures* that an auditory equivalent to the discipline of visual studies was still in the making and deployed the term 'sonic turn' as an interim descriptor of the ascendancy of discourse on sound since the 1990s.[41] As little as eight years later, Jonathan Sterne was indeed introducing a nascent field called 'Sound Studies', whose mandate was the investigation of 'the contexts in which [sounds] happen, the ways of hearing or non-hearing attached to

---

[39] Ibid.
[40] Leslie Hill, *Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.156.
[41] Jim Drobnick, 'Listening Awry', in *Aural Cultures*, ed. by Jim Drobnick (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), pp.9-18 (p.10).

them, [and] the practices, people and institutions associated with them'.[42] The conceptual apparatus of this emerging field of enquiry originates from disciplines like musicology, film and media studies, phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and draws upon the work of a now-familiar assemblage of thinkers like Murray Schaffer, Don Ihde, Jacques Attali, Friedrich Kittler, Douglas Kahn, Kaja Silverman, Michel Chion, Adriana Cavarero etc. Armed with these multidisciplinary approaches, both modernist and theatre studies—the two disciplinary fields in which this thesis is broadly implicated—have been increasingly scrutinizing the entire spectrum of sonic phenomena from silence to noise via music and the voice. The soundscapes of Beckett's fictional and dramatic works have been privileged within these broader investigations.[43] Beckett's emergence as something of a patron saint of literary sound studies has largely to do with the thematic significance of listening and auditory perception in his work on the one hand, and his pioneering experiments with acoustic technologies of his time on the other.

At the same time, Beckett Studies of the last decade has also embarked on an unprecedented examination of the aural and its varying manifestations across the oeuvre. The 'sonic turn' within Beckett studies can be directly attributed to the critical dominance, since the late 2000s, of phenomenological and materialist approaches and their concerted attempts to remedy the relative disregard of issues like embodiment and sensory perception in turn-of-the-century poststructuralist scholarship.[44] These approaches—drawing equally on philosophers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and sound theorists mentioned above—have advanced two important claims that broadly inform my own investigation in the following pages: first, that

[42] Jonathan Sterne, 'Introduction', in *The Sound Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.1-18 (p.1).
[43] Beckett's plays are discussed in Emily C. Bloom, *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Jeffrey Porter, *Lost Sound: The Forgotten Art of Radio Storytelling* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Sam Halliday, *Sonic Modernity: Representing Sound in Literature, Culture and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); *Broadcasting Modernism*, ed. by Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle and Jane A. Lewty (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013); Eric Prieto, *Listening In: Music, Mind and Modernist Narrative* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); George Home-Cooke, *Theatre and Aural Attention*: *Stretching Ourselves* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); and *Theatre Sound: The Sound of Performance*, ed. by Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011).
[44] For instance, Ulrika Maude's *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (2009)—a defining text of Beckett Studies' phenomenological turn—simultaneously positions itself against early Cartesian readings of the 'inherent otherness' of the Beckettian body on the one hand, and the subsequent privileging of 'the discursively produced body at the expense of the material, fleshy one' in poststructuralist criticism on the other (pp.1-2).

auditory perception in Beckett's work is the activity of an *embodied* subject; and secondly, that Beckett's representation of sound is shaped by historical, technological and intellectual contexts.[45] Some examples are in order here. Ulrika Maude's exemplary account of hearing in the radio and stage drama calls attention to the acoustic materiality and bodily provenance of the voices and sounds therein. Maude demonstrates sound's tangible impact on embodied subjectivity in these plays, such as its transportation of the auditor to a different time and space, or its unsettling of the limits of the listening body.[46] More recently, Emilie Morin has written about the historical and technological overlap between Beckett's radiophonic writing and Pierre Schaeffer's post-War experiments with *musique concrète*. Morin attributes Beckett's and Schaeffer's shared privileging of unseen or 'acousmatic' sound in their respective work as symptomatic of a wider modernist interest in phonography, sound transmission, and spiritualism.[47] Luz María Sánchez has also argued in Morin's wake that Beckett's experiments with sound in his plays were galvanized by two 'technological epiphanies': his first encounter with magnetic tape recording at the BBC studios in Paris (1958), and his subsequent discovery of the *phonogène*—a device for altering the tempo of a recorded voice without affecting its pitch—during the filmic adaptation of *Comédie* (1966).[48]

While these scholars make little distinction between voices and other musical or non-musical sounds, a parallel strand of enquiry has emerged alongside their work, which shares a broadly phenomenological/materialist orientation but takes 'the voice' as its focus. To clarify, the voice, by virtue of being Beckett's 'most profound

---

[45] Critics have additionally noted how Beckett's own sound-based work has influenced artists and musicians. Derval Tubridy has illuminatingly shown on two different occasions (2007; 2017) that the writer's 'subjected and subsumed sounds' have either informed the work of practitioners like Janet Cardiff and Bruce Naumann or occasioned creative homages from others like Charles Amirkhanian, John Philips, Danny McCarthy etc. The second part of Catherine Laws's study of Beckett and music similarly addresses his impact on musicians like Morton Feldman, Richard Barrett, and György Kurtág. See respectively, Derval Tubridy, 'Sounding Spaces: Aurality in Samuel Beckett, Janet Cardiff and Bruce Nauman', *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 12 (2007), 5-11; Derval Tubridy, 'Samuel Beckett and Sonic Art', in *Samuel Beckett and Contemporary Art*, ed. by David Houston Jones, Robert Reginio, and Katherine Weiss (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2017), pp.265-290; Catherine Laws, *Headaches Among the Overtones: Music in Beckett/Beckett in Music* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013).

[46] See Chapter 3, 'Hearing Beckett', in Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.47-69.

[47] Emilie Morin, 'Beckett's Speaking Machines: Sound, Radiophonics, Acousmatics', *Modernism/Modernity*, 21 (2014), 1-14 (p.7).

[48] Luz María Sánchez, *The Technological Epiphanies of Samuel Beckett: Machines of Inscriptional and Audiovisual Manipulation*, trans. by John Z. Komurki (Mexico City: Futura Textos, S.A de C.V., 2016), p.20.

literary creation', has always been a consistent focus of Beckett scholarship—so much so that it would be impossible to offer an overview of the numerous texts devoted to the voices of individual prose or dramatic works.[49] However, it is only with the publication of two monographs on the voice in the last decade—namely, Sarah West's *Say It: The Performative Voice in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Works* (2009) and Llewellyn Brown's *Beckett, Lacan and the Voice* (2016)—that the localized focus of earlier scholarship has given way to more comprehensive accounts.[50] West applies Enoch Brater's concept of the 'performative voice' from the late prose to Beckett's drama, and argues that the post-War prose contains the germ of the future dramatic voices that are 'trapped in print' at this stage.[51] Focussing on plays from *Krapp's Last Tape* to *Ghost Trio*, West shows the voice's increasing autonomy and self-assertion vis-à-vis its auditors as it transitions from a 'performing' to a 'performative' voice, ultimately becoming a protagonist in itself. Brown's dense text studies the entire prose and dramatic canon, privileging Jacques Lacan's theorization of the voice as the most suitable framework for understanding Beckett's voices. Brown's reading expectedly approaches the Beckettian voice as a primarily *linguistic* entity, attributing its varying incarnations to the vicissitudes of the Lacanian accounts of subject formation in relation to signifying mechanisms.

On the one hand, the diachronic approach of these works has revealed the complex and shape-shifting trajectory of the voice across the prose and the drama; on the other hand, their synchronic analyses of its dominant mechanics during various phases of the oeuvre has generated a valuable taxonomy of the Beckettian voice as 'performing' and 'performative' (West) or 'continuous' and 'interrupted' (Brown).[52] In sum, they have established a rigorous framework for further re-assessments of Beckett's voices, such as one undertaken in this thesis. That said, phenomenological

---

[49] 'Voice', in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, pp.506-514 (p.506).

[50] Sarah West, *Say It: The Performative Voice in the Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010); Llewellyn Brown, *Beckett, Lacan and the Voice* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2016).

[51] West, *Say It*, p.12. According to Enoch Brater, Beckett's late prose texts collapse the distinction between speech and writing (and possibly even prose and poetry) in that they are written in order to be read aloud. He therefore terms the first-person voices of these works as 'performative'. Enoch Brater, *The Drama in the Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[52] Also see S. E. Gontarski, 'Beckett's Voice(s)', in *Beckett Matters: Essays on Beckett's Late Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp.19-39. Despite its relative brevity, Gontarski's essay is a formidably nuanced overview of the evolution of the 'indeterminate, evasive, ghostly, receding, [and] counterfeited' voice in Beckett's work—from its 'schizoid' origins in *Murphy* (1937) and *Watt* (1953) to its efflorescence in The Trilogy and late prose, via the intervening media and stage plays (p.19).

approaches to the question of embodied sensory perception in general, and of the voice in particular, have taken little cognizance of the gender of either polarity of Beckett's auditor/voice couple.[53] The paradoxical coexistence therein of an emphasis on the body and a blindness to markers such as gender can be attributed to the reproduction of a problematic distinction—ostensibly borrowed from phenomenological thinking—between a 'raw' and a 'cultured' corporeality, and the privileging of the former of the two. As Maude states: 'Beckett explores *the very basics of bodily existence*, those conditions that are already in swing before culture lays its mark on embodied identity, and that are thereafter modified and reshaped by its effects'.[54] Gender equally emerges as a critical blind spot in the aforementioned studies of 'the voice', where its disregard implies its superfluity to the various categorizations posited therein. For instance, West's analyses of *Eh Joe*, *Not I*, and *Ghost Trio* repeatedly allude to 'the female voice' of these plays; however, since the 'performative' voice that she studies in the dramatic oeuvre is gender-neutral—or so she implies—the 'femaleness' of these voices is simply treated as a given and not scrutinized further.[55] Indeed, the classificatory endeavours of these recent monographs risk homogenizing the voices of Beckett's plays to such an extent that they are stripped of their singularity and described as abstract, genderless, essences or motifs—signalled in the very term, '*the* voice'. In doing so, this strand of Beckett Studies exemplifies Adriana Cavarero's charge that even those discursive elaborations of the voice that are attentive to its materiality—to 'the hot rhythms of its emission, the pleasure of the throat and the saliva'—are complicit in an erasure of its irreducible uniqueness, of which its gender is a crucial manifestation. Instead, she

---

[53] Indeed, it is a norm within this body of scholarship to acknowledge this lacuna early on. Ulrika Maude declares 'the question of gender' as 'beyond the scope' of *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (p.4); none of the essays from the field-defining collection, *Beckett and Phenomenology* (2009), conceive of the 'embodied' subject of phenomenology as gendered; similarly, Tim Lawrence acknowledges that 'Beckett's subjects are essentially gendered' while immediately adding that his analysis of the visual in Beckett's prose and art criticism (also positioned within the phenomenological turn in Beckett Studies) is relatively unconcerned with gender. Tim Lawrence, *Samuel Beckett's Critical Aesthetics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.12.

[54] *Beckett, Technology and the Body,* p.2 (my emphasis). Two complementary studies that carefully eschew this tendency of positing an 'uncontaminated' (and therefore gender-free) corporeality in Beckett—primarily by supplementing phenomenology with other theoretical approaches such as psychoanalysis and gender studies—are Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) and Trish McTighe, *The Haptic Aesthetic in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013). Another important exception is Catherine Laws' *Headaches Among the Overtones*, which routinely draws upon feminist musicology when addressing, for instance, Beckett's use of Schubert and Beethoven in *All That Fall* and *Ghost Trio* respectively.

[55] West, *Say It*, p.89; p.155.

argues, they posit a generic and anonymous 'voice that is doubtlessly rooted in the fleshiness of the body, a voice of *everyone and no one*'.[56]

A complementary situation emerges once we turn to more longstanding investigations of the treatment of gender in Beckett's work. On the whole, the thrust of feminist scholarship has been to trace Beckett's movement from a misogynistic to a complex—and indeed, even compassionate—representation of women in the later work. The most canonical iteration of this thesis is Mary Bryden's positing of the shift from Beckett's 'essentialist and deeply misogynistic construction of Women towards a much more erratic, often contingent or indeterminate gender configurations'.[57] Rina Kim has recently re-interpreted this shifting representation of women—interlinked with that of Ireland—across the oeuvre in terms of a psychoanalytic *telos*. In Kim's assessment, Beckett's early English and French writing is characterized by an abjection of women and a melancholic disavowal of this loss by their male protagonists; as the work progresses, the loss of these expelled female others is gradually acknowledged in the mid-period drama and actively mourned in a gesture of Kleinian 'reparation' in the late work.[58] These examinations of Beckett's contingent representation of the gendered other—upon which my own analysis of the female voices is premised—are largely rooted in a thematic (Bryden) and a character-based (Kim) approach. There are, without doubt, frequent references to the female voice in these works. However, the usage of the term is also predominantly metaphorical rather than literal. Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones have argued that 'the female voice' has been deployed as a metaphor for women's 'cultural agency, political enfranchisement, sexual autonomy and expressive freedom' to such an extent that the 'concrete physical dimension of the female voice' that informs the metaphor has been effaced altogether.[59] Kim appears to substantiate this observation when she argues that Beckett 'gives voice to women in *Happy Days*

[56] Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, p.11 (my emphasis).
[57] Mary Bryden, *Women in Beckett's Prose and Drama: Her Own Other* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993), p.7.
[58] Rina Kim, *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[59] *Embodied Voices*, p.1

and *Play*' or that he 'uses the female voice in order to express his own sense of loss and alienation' in *All That Fall*.[60]

Thus, just as phenomenological/materialist approaches to Beckett's voices and their perception disregard issues of gender, it could be argued that feminist scholarship—beyond analyses of certain prominent plays like *Not I* or *Eh Joe*, that is—has not paid sustained attention to the specifically sonic or vocal construction of gender in the mid-to-late period drama.[61] A noteworthy exception to this dominant trend is Anna McMullan's essay, 'From Matron to Matrix: Gender, Authority and (Dis)Embodiment in Beckett's Theatre', which remains one of the few comprehensive treatments of the 'disjuncture between the vocal and the visible' female body in Beckett's drama.[62] She argues that the early plays (e.g. *Human Wishes* and *Eleutheria*) are peopled with the figure of the fleshy mother or 'matron', who is progressively de-corporealized until she becomes an invisible 'matrix' of sound in the late theatre. This dissolution of the flesh is catalysed by Beckett's writing for the radio, which McMullan credits with attenuating the biological essentialism of the early work and the Cartesian horror of the female body therein.[63] As might be evident, the 'matron to matrix' thesis remains the most pertinent critical precursor to my own investigation. While McMullan primarily restricts herself to a consideration of plays with female protagonists, this thesis extends her examination of Beckett's 'politics of embodied and disembodied representation' to a series of plays, discussed in Chapters Three and Four, which would ordinarily not be the most obvious test cases on account of male auditor-protagonists.[64] At the same time, I also depart from her claim—which is also echoed in Kaja Silverman's and Lisa Dwan's

---

[60] ibid, p.114. This erasure of the materiality of the voice, especially of the *dramatic* voice, is symptomatic of Kim's textual interpretations of Beckett's plays throughout her study, which extends little consideration to questions of performance or to the representational codes of the medium for which they were written.

[61] For broadly opposing readings of *Not I*'s female voice as respectively marginalized by, and a disruptive force within, the phallocentric Symbolic, see Ann Wilson, '"Her Lips Moving"': the Castrated Voice of *Not I*', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Cultural Perspectives,* pp.190-200 and Anna McMullan, *Theatre on Trial: Samuel Beckett's Later Drama* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.75-76. Two important explorations of the disembodied female voice in *Eh Joe* are Karen Laughlin, 'Sadism Demands a Story: Looking at Gender and Pain in Samuel Beckett's Plays', in *Samuel Beckett: A Casebook*, ed. by Jennifer M. Jeffers (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.159-178 and Trish McTighe, *The Haptic Aesthetic in Samuel Beckett's Drama,* pp.37-48.

[62] Anna McMullan, 'From Matron to Matrix: Gender, Authority and (Dis)Embodiment in Beckett's Theatre', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.97-108 (p.106).

[63] ibid., p.102.

[64] ibid., p.98.

epigraphs—that Beckett's visual erasure of gendered corporeality is an emancipatory strategy. As I show in Chapter Four, instead of erasing 'reproductive female corporeality and embodied difference', Beckett's representation of the female body as spatially-dispersed sound reinforces them resoundingly through the figuring of the female voice as the interchangeably predatory and abject maternal body.[65]

*

This thesis is divided into two parts that, taken together, span five decades of Beckett's intellectual and creative development from 1930 to 1980. The first part focusses on the years 1930-1935, bookended by Beckett's commencement of an intensive reading of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and the conclusion of his immersion in psychology and psychoanalysis with the note-taking on Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*. Each of the two chapters therein is tasked with a re-assessment of Beckett's reading practices with the respective aim of foregrounding his interest in Proust's representation of auditory perception and Rank's approach to gendered embodiment vis-à-vis the theory of birth trauma. Instead of focussing exclusively on the 'final' iterations of Beckett's encounters with these literary and psychoanalytical sources (i.e. *Proust* and the typed manuscript of the 'Psychology Notes'), I treat them as starting points primarily. The reconstructive exercise undertaken in these chapters, I argue, necessitates a simultaneously *retrospective* and *prospective* evaluation of Beckett's reading. That is, on the one hand his critical interpretations or reading notes have to be contextualized against scenes from the *Recherche* and arguments from *The Trauma of Birth*—the latter needing to be placed, themselves, amongst the psychoanalytic debates in which they intervene; on the other hand, where possible, consideration also has to be extended to archival traces of Beckett's site-specific engagements with these sources (e.g. as annotations, marginalia, or correspondence at the time of reading) since they contain extremely pertinent observations that are not always reflected in the 'official' record of his reading. The nature of the critical task at hand is such that I work with a considerably expanded notion of the Beckettian 'text', treating a published monograph with the same attention as typewritten archival notes, verbal marginalia, non-verbal annotations, and letters.

[65] 'From Matron to Matrix', p.107.

Chapter One posits that Beckett's critique of the *Recherche* in *Proust* is based on a mode of reading by-the-ear that pays close attention to the novel's non-musical soundscapes. The increasing acknowledgement of *Proust*'s sonic focus in phenomenological investigations of the aural in Beckett's work, I observe, nonetheless disregards his careful attention to the gendered dimension of the novel's voices and sounds, as well as the intersubjective and relational contexts in which the narrator's auditory activity is embedded. After establishing these parameters, each subsequent section of the chapter approaches Beckett's analysis of the narrator's non-habitual perception of a female voice, or another gendered sound, beginning with the grandmother's communication with him through tapping at the partition between their rooms at the Grand Hôtel in Balbec. This is followed by a re-appraisal of Beckett's commentary on Marcel's defamiliarizing perception of the grandmother as a disembodied telephonic voice. I show that Beckett's brief but dense reading of this technological encounter between the two characters reveals a familiarity with not only similar episodes from the novel but also a wider cultural imaginary in which telephony is feminized. The next section turns to Beckett's marginalia and annotations in his individual volumes of the *Recherche* in order to amplify his brief allusion in *Proust* to the narrator's deployment of an 'indirect' or 'instinctive' auditory perception when waiting to be reunited a loved woman. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of Beckett's misreadings of some of these episodes, rightly attributed by critics to his Schopenhauerian reading of Proust, where I suggest that these critical misinterpretations often anticipate the distorted resurfacings of Proustian voices and sounds in Beckett's plays.

Chapter Two shifts attention to the second element of the 'body/voice' pair, and to Beckett's reading and note-taking on the emerging intellectual discourse of psychoanalysis during 1934-1935. Where Beckett had primarily encountered the feminine as *sound* in Proust's novel, the interwar 'Psychology Notes' reveal his focus on the psychoanalytic theorization of the gendered body, which, I argue, mediates the perception of the disembodied female voices by their auditors in the subsequent drama. The chapter turns to the controversial Freudian postulate of the 'castration complex'—as well as its post-Freudian developments and contestations—as the problematic through which the 'Psychology Notes' are re-assessed. This re-assessment unfolds with a particular focus on the note-snatching from Otto Rank's

The Trauma of Birth (1924), whose discussion of the birth event as a psychophysical trauma entails a parallel account of the subject's founding relation to the reproductive female body. The chapter specifically addresses the implications of a theory of 'birth trauma' for both male and female subjectivity, as well as its manifestations in Beckett's notes.

The second part of the thesis, then, offers extended close readings of a selection of Beckett's plays in relation to these reading projects of the 1930s, as well as the canonical performances of these plays as blueprinted in Beckett's directorial notebooks and correspondence. I have concentrated on the period 1958-1976 for two main reasons: first, as scholars such as Sarah West have shown, it is during this phase of Beckett's dramatic canon that the disembodied voice progressively establishes itself as a discernible entity; secondly, this is also the period during which Beckett supplemented his writing for the stage with experiments in radio and television. If the media plays receive a significantly greater share of attention in this thesis than their theatrical counterparts, it is because—with certain exceptions—they continue to be relatively under-represented in the scholarship on the drama. The plays discussed in the two chapters comprising this section are broadly overlapping in terms of their chronology, thereby revealing how varying configurations of the disembodied female voice can operate during the same chronological span. Chapter Three studies the abject qualities of the disembodied female voice in *Embers* and *Eh Joe*, discussed respectively through the framework of birth trauma and the representation of telephony in the *Recherche*, whereby it both entraps and invades the male auditor. In Chapter Four, the female voice transforms itself from an abject entity to a lost object that the auditors in *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Ghost Trio* and *...but the clouds...* seek to recover in vain. As before, the silencing of the female voice, and the loss-centred subjectivity of the auditors, results from Beckett's shaping of his key modernist interlocutors: Proust and Yeats.

PART I

1930-1935

CHAPTER ONE

The Reader as Listener: *Proust*'s Female Voices

RE-ATTUNING THE CRITICAL EAR

Incorporating into the fabric of its argument several instances from Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* that feature acts of listening, Beckett's *Proust* (1931) meditates on auditory perception from time to time. A survey of critical commentaries on the essay reveals how often the monograph is mined for discussions of aurality, broadly speaking, in Beckett's work. John Pilling's invaluable early account of the marginalia in Beckett's personal volumes of the novel repeatedly alludes to the latter's interest in matters concerning the perception of sound in the novel. Anticipating as well as vindicating the claims of this chapter, Pilling shows a pattern in the annotations whereby 'Beckett tends to score not those passages that deal with the peculiarities of visual perception, but, almost exclusively, those dealing with strange and unexpected sounds', revealing a 'sensitivity to sound [that] is in fact almost as neurasthenic as Proust's'.[1] Similarly, Julie Campbell's astute discussions of *Embers* and *All That Fall* argue that the challenges and accomplishments of Beckett's self-reflexive radiophonic art are clearly anticipated in his recognition of the 'powerful audio possibilities' of the disembodied voice in *Proust*.[2] More recently, Catherine Laws's exhaustive study on music and/in Beckett opens with the emphatic claim that

> No consideration of music in Beckett can ignore the influence of Proust or the significant role of Schopenhauer's philosophy in Beckett's perspectives on *Remembrance of Things Past*. The seeds of Beckett's later approach to music are sown in his early monograph on this huge novel, with Beckett using Proust's and Schopenhauer's

[1] John Pilling, 'Beckett's *Proust*', in *The Beckett Studies Reader*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993), pp. 9-28 (p.18).
[2] Julie Campbell, '"A Voice Comes to One in the Dark. Imagine": Radio, the Listener, and the Dark Comedy of *All That Fall*', in *Beckett and Death*, ed. by Philip Tew and Steven Barfield (London: Continuum, 2009), pp.147-168 (p.148).

ideas about music to evolve his own thinking on art, communication, and the self: themes around which Beckett's entire oeuvre revolves.[3]

'Music', 'the voice', or simply 'sound'—the choice of the critical views above broadly conveys the three aural objects from Proust's novel, which are routinely studied for their legacy in Beckett's *Proust*. Voice's inclusion in the umbrella term of 'sound' in Pilling's and Campbell's texts has the productive consequence of placing its sonic materiality on an equal footing as the linguistic message that it conveys, particularly relevant for an analysis of voices in the *Recherche* as the novel's narrative often excludes the linguistic aspect of the voice altogether, choosing instead to expend long passages on highly metaphorical descriptions of its tone and timbre, as well as the affective currents of desire, nostalgia and suffering that it sets into motion for the narrator/auditor, Marcel. At the same time, to relegate a voice entirely and consistently to the level of sound—or its obverse: to attempt to trace the afterlife of a monolithic category of *the* voice from Proust's novel in Beckett's plays, as critics routinely do—risks disregarding its gendered specificity.

One of the numerous charges that Nicholas Zurbrugg lays at *Proust*'s door is that its claims about the novel and its author remain circumscribed to the narrative's autobiographical mode since Beckett 'neglects the significance of those many other characters who implicitly or explicitly evince the Proustian truths that the immature Marcel invariably overlooks'.[4] While Beckett's unreflexive donning of the narrative blinkers that the novel advances to its readers (i.e. its unremitting focalization through Marcel's perspective) is a legitimate shortcoming for some critics of the monograph, an extended consequence of the novel's focalization technique is that the reader accesses the novel's soundscape through Marcel's listening perspective. 'Listening' is commonly differentiated from 'hearing' as a highly subjective reception of auditory stimuli: as Roland Barthes famously clarified, '[h]earing is a physiological phenomenon; listening is a psychological act'.[5] As a result, any account of Beckett's treatment of the act of listening in *Proust* must acknowledge

---

[3] Catherine Laws, *Headaches among the Overtones: Music in Beckett/Beckett in Music* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), p.27.
[4] Nicholas Zurbrugg, *Beckett and Proust* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1988), p.102.
[5] Roland Barthes, 'Listening', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1991), pp. 245-260 (p.245).

this highly selective and idiosyncratic mediation of the *Recherche*'s acoustic universe through its narrator's ears, which is deeply invested in the sound of the female voice. It is my claim in this chapter that in borrowing Beckett's remarks on listening—particularly to 'the disembodied voice' in the novel—for a consideration of his own dramatic works, critics have invariably overlooked Marcel's auditory perspective. Paralleling Cavarero's notion of a 'devocalized' voice, critical writing on *Proust* has neutralized the novel's female voices of their sexual specificity, thereby speaking of a chimerical voice stripped of its gender difference.

It is equally vital to register that that while multiple references to the female voice in the novel can be found afloat on the surface of Beckett's study, on the whole these remain sealed off from one another, embedded in different arguments and sections of the text. This is rightly so as Beckett's aims and intentions in writing *Proust* were certainly not to give centre-stage to the female voices of the novel. While this chapter reads *Proust* alongside the novel it sets out to critique, there exists an additional need to read the essay against *itself* so as to render manifest the latent continuities and connections between Proust's use of various instances of a male auditor's listening to the female voice in the *Recherche* and Beckett's use of similar tropes in his later dramatic work. Furthermore, as a monograph on the *Recherche,* Beckett's *Proust* tantalizingly presents itself as the *locus classicus* for this evidence, but his observations therein only constitute the manifest tip of the iceberg. Indeed, the reconstructive exercise that follows posits the monograph—and by extension, any account of Beckett's reading of the *Recherche*—as an essentially unbounded text that oozes and spills over from within its containing frame in different directions, temporalities, and contexts. Beckett's copious reading traces in the form of verbal and nonverbal marginalia remain the most valuable indices of his engagement with sound in the novel outside *Proust*; similarly, many references to the novel that do not make their way into the monograph are found in the correspondence with Thomas MacGreevy during its composition, and (as I discuss in Chapter Four) with Barbara Bray and Harold Pinter many decades after its publication. In their account of Beckett's readerly practices as documented in his personal library, Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle describe Beckett as an 'extractor' and a 'marginalist'—often simultaneously so—but also a 'rereader', who left distinct traces of each reading in

his books.[6] In the specific context of his study of the *Recherche*, Beckett's re-readings can be traced through his verbal and nonverbal marginalia in his sixteen-volume Gallimard edition of the novel housed at the Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading. John Pilling's early yet still invaluable essay on Beckett's marginalia summarizes it as follows:

> Beckett's copy of Proust bears witness to how intensive his reading had been, each volume being heavily scored in the margins, with any number of crucial individual words underlined, often very heavily, in ink or crayon or pencil. From the evidence one might have supposed him to have read the whole work many more times than twice; obviously certain parts were read many times.[7]

Nixon and Van Hulle identify a handful of themes—the act of reading, the nature of memory, the narrator's development as a writer—that interested Beckett throughout the novel, and that were eventually worked into *Proust*. Beckett uses a combination of marginal observations and graphic annotation of key passages using 'consistently straight, vertical lines in the margins', which generally testify to 'a disciplined, diligent and remarkably even-tempered reading'.[8] These function as *Proust*'s 'confidential' and 'intimate epitexts': Gérard Genette's designation for those paratexts that are located outside the text that they mediate and explicate, and that are respectively addressed by the author to a correspondent and to himself.[9] Within these texts lies encrypted the rich sonic universe of Proust's novel, focalized through Marcel's ears and registered by Beckett's readerly attention.

This chapter aims to re-read and listen anew to the *female* voice in the context of Beckett's analysis of the major theme of Habit in *Proust*. I consider the privileging of the aural in his discussion of Habit and its vicissitudes in the novel. While

---

[6] Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle, *Samuel Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2013), p.12. This framework comes from Daniel Ferrer who describes 'extractors' as those writer-readers who, like James Joyce, 'cut up and mutilate' the source text and typically record these textual excisions verbatim in journals and notebooks. On the other hand, the self-explanatory category of 'marginalists' eschew this approach and prefer to 'preserve its [the text's] integrity' while inscribing in its margins 'idiosyncratic marks' and 'commentaries of all kinds'. See Daniel Ferrer, 'Towards a Marginalist Economy of Textual Genesis', *Variants: Reading Notes*, 2/3 (2004), 7-18 (pp.7-8).
[7] Pilling, 'Beckett's *Proust*', p.13.
[8] *Samuel Beckett's Library*, p.7
[9] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

concurring with critics such as Julie Campbell (2009) that in Beckett's account specific modes of listening circumvent and challenge habitual modes of perception—as in his radiophonic and televisual work's use of disembodied voices—my aim will be to highlight the important context of Marcel's sonically-mediated relationship with his (grand)mother and lovers. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of Beckett's tendentious misreading of some of these examples of auditory perception and communication in anticipation of their echoes in the plays discussed in the second part of the thesis.

BECKETT'S RELATIONAL LISTENING

Beckett's exegesis of the thematic trinity of time, habit and memory in the novel frequently isolates for close analysis certain defining moments of Marcel's intensely consuming relationship with the novel's three crucial female figures: his mother, grandmother, and later, Albertine. Far from remaining distinct from each other, these women often dovetail into one for Marcel. The novel often aligns two women belonging to different epochs of his life—mother/grandmother, mother/Albertine, or grandmother/Albertine—through a frequent recourse to the male ear as it sets up clear equivalences, as mirrors or foils, between incidents in which Marcel is engaged in a crucial auditory relationship to the voices and sounds belonging to these women. A recurring trope that the novel employs in this context is that of the lover (but also the son, or the grandson) silently awaiting the arrival of the beloved (quite often the mother, or the grandmother). The narrator's nightly waiting for his mother in his bedroom in 'Combray', expecting her footfalls, is later re-enacted in his anguished attention to the sound of the ascending elevator as he waits for Albertine one evening in his Paris apartment. Similarly, at another point in the essay Beckett states that the telephone call from the grandmother is complemented later in the novel by 'its hardly less powerful corollary, when years later, he [Marcel] speaks over the telephone with Albertine on returning home late after his first visit to the Princesse de Guermantes' (*PTD*, p.26).

Beckett's recognition of the equivalence between the narrator's grandmother and mother is particularly crucial and merits a detailed consideration. Critics have long noted that, in Marcel's case, Proust 'displaces the maternal centre with its

division of labour between the mother and the grandmother'.[10] While the most vital recollections of the narrator's childhood in 'Combray' essentially revolve around his separation from and reunion with his mother as a result of the family's dining rituals, after this phase of his life the grandmother takes him into her maternal fold, decisively influencing his upbringing in accordance with the simple but steadfast principles by which she lives her own life. The origin of the quasi-maternal figure of the grandmother has often been understood biographically, based on the similarities between the moving representation of her death in *Le côté de Guermantes* and the feelings evoked in Proust upon the death of his own mother, Jeanne-Clémence Proust. Both J. Hillis Miller and Angela Moorjani emphasize the genesis and writing of the novel as an act of mourning the dead mother by her fictionalized resurrection: 'Proust's feelings…about his mother's death, were so painful that he needed, in writing the *Recherche*, to displace them onto a fictitious Marcel's feeling for a fictitious grandmother, both when he talks to her on the telephone and when, later in the same chapter, she dies'.[11]

Early critical writing on Beckett's *Proust* often minimizes the psychological dimension of the monograph, opting instead for the aesthetic or the metaphysical as the dominant strand of enquiry adopted by the young Beckett. Terence McQueeny thus claims that Beckett's critique of Proust is 'metaphysical rather than psychological'.[12] For John Pilling, despite the equally heavy annotations in *Du côté de chez Swann* I and *Le temps retrouvé* (the first and last volumes respectively of the *Recherche*), the latter proves to be more crucial to the writing of *Proust* since it is 'the mature man on the point of becoming a writer rather than the suffering child [of *Du côté*]…who dominated the monograph Beckett was writing'.[13] Indeed, Beckett's own opening gambit in the Foreword to the essay, '[t]here is no allusion in this book

[10] Elisabeth Ladenson, *Proust's Lesbianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p.110.
[11] J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p.188. Using Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's work, Angela Moorjani performs a compelling 'cryptanalysis' of the encrypted dead mother in the episode where mourning narrator fully registers and re-experiences the death of the grandmother. Angela Moorjani, 'A Cryptanalysis of Proust's "Les Intermittences du Coeur"', *MLN*, 105 (1990), 875-888.
[12] Terence McQueeny, *Beckett as a Critic of Joyce and Proust* (1977), unpublished doctoral thesis, Beckett Collection, University of Reading, p.63.
[13] 'Beckett's *Proust*', p.13. Pilling's reference to 'the suffering child' is presumably to the daily agonies inflicted upon the young Marcel as a result of separation from his mother in 'Combray'.

to the legendary life and death of Marcel Proust…' could be seen as thwarting readerly expectations of a discussion of the author's psychological life.

While he rightly eschews a conflation between an author's life and his work, in two of the essay's strongest sections, i.e. the perceptive account of the narrator's delayed mourning for the dead grandmother in the '*Intermittences du coeur*' passage and the unconsciously-driven 'relationship of reciprocal torture' constituting the 'Albertine tragedy', we find Beckett acknowledging the narrator's incessant theorization of his psychic life. Unsurprisingly, then, critics have deployed a range of archival and theoretical arguments to foreground psychology's important mediation between Beckett and Proust, sometimes even subjecting the 'philosophy/psychology' binary erected by earlier critics to a pressure. J.D. O'Hara has argued that even though the word 'psychology' is conspicuously missing from *Proust*, Beckett's use of Schopenhauer is nonetheless 'less philosophical than psychological' in nature.[14] Moreover, while Beckett would have known little about depth psychology in 1930, he read Armand Dandieu's *Marcel Proust: Sa révélation psychologique* (1930) thoroughly in preparation for his own exegesis. Dandieu's monograph crucially places Proust in dialogue with Freud and the emergent discourse of psychoanalysis.[15]

It is Phil Baker, however, who reframes the interrelationship between Beckett, Proust and psychoanalysis in a manner that is strikingly akin to, and anticipatory of, my own observations in this chapter. *Contra* Pilling, Baker's study first invokes Proust in his discussion of the 'enduring infancy of some of Beckett's narrators', and claims that the latter 'saw the infant in Proust, diagnosing Proustian jealousy as part of his highly developed "infantilism"'.[16] He implies that Proust's great novel serves to enact and offer fictional templates of psychoanalytic concepts that remain discernible in Beckett's work. Baker relevantly claims that Proust's 'romantic psychology', according to which 'our most exclusive love for a person is always our love for something else' (*PTD*, p.57), informs Beckett's representations—rarely free of an element of parody—of his early male protagonist's lovers as linked to each other in a 'play of endlessly translated psychic

---

[14] J. D. O'Hara, *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: Structural Uses of Depth Psychology* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1997), pp.30-31.
[15] ibid.,p.32.
[16] Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p.xv; p.20.

investments'.[17] For Marcel, the elusive Albertine is associatively linked to Gilberte, and finally, his mother. In a similar vein, the women of novellas such as *First Love* and *The Expelled* (1946) eventually come to function as mother substitutes for their narrator-protagonists. Similarly, Molloy thinks of his chambermaid, Lousse, and Ruth 'as one and the same old hag', a trajectory that finally culminates at his mother: 'my [his] mother's image sometimes mingles with theirs, which is literally unendurable' (*Mo*, p.59).

These examples clearly suggest that Beckett registered Proust's psychological realism even if he did not always agree with it, as his subversion of it in his own prose writings indicates. While little of Beckett's metaphysical approach to Proust permits an interest in biographical matters, it is highly probable that he encountered explanations for the link between Mme Proust and the novel's grandmother in his preparatory reading of Léon Pierre Quint's *Marcel Proust: sa vie et son oeuvre* (rev. ed. 1928) and an early French translation of Ernst Robert-Curtius's essay, *Marcel Proust*, by Armand Pierhal (1928).[18] At all events Beckett's cognizance of the blurry demarcations between the novel's mother-daughter pair in their relationship with the narrator is amply evident in *Proust*. The 'maternalization' of the grandmother remains implied—but clearly so—from his description of her comforting presence for the feverish and fatigued Marcel during their first night in the Grand Hôtel. On the other hand, the daughter's transmogrification into her dead mother is explicitly spelled out by him in his perceptive reading of the 'Intermittences du Coeur' passage in the fourth section of the essay:

> His mother has become his grandmother, whether through the suggestion of regret or an idolatrous cult of the dead or the disintegrating effect of loss that breaks the chrysalis and hastens the metamorphosis of an atavistic embryon whose maturation is slow and imperceptible without the stimulus of grief. She carries her mother's bag and her muff, and is never without a volume of Mme. de Sevigne. She who had formerly chaffed her mother for never writing a letter without quoting Mme. de Sevigne or Mme. de Beausergent, builds

[17] ibid., p.33.
[18] Mark Nixon and Dirk Van Hulle, *Samuel Beckett's Library*, p.68.

> now her own to her son around phrases from the *Letters* or the *Memoirs* (*PTD*, pp.39-40).

As we know, Beckett would return to the mother-daughter pair in his own plays such as *All That Fall*, *Footfalls* and especially *Rockaby*, whose female protagonist similarly adopts the identity of her dead mother by wearing the latter's black evening dress and endlessly rocking in a chair.

'I'VE HEARD YOU': THE TAPPING RITUAL AT BALBEC

In light of the observations of the previous section it is hardly surprising that two of *Proust*'s most important allusions to sounds and the female voice—the tapping ritual at the Grand Hôtel and the grandmother's telephoning the narrator from Paris to Doncières—are both key moments in the narrator-grandmother relationship, although they occur in two different epochs of this relationship: the first when the narrator is an adolescent and still his grandmother's charge, and the second after her stroke on the Champs Elysées which precipitously transforms her character and advances her towards her death. While the second among these, the telephone call, has generated some critical interest in the writing on the mediated voice in Beckett's work, the same cannot be said of 'the rhythmical dialogue of…three taps' between the narrator and the grandmother at the Grand Hôtel (*RTP* I, p.720). Since Beckett discusses these acts of communication as corresponding to two specific vicissitudes of habit in Proust's novel, namely, 'the death of Habit and the brief suspension of its vigilance' respectively, this important context needs to be established briefly here (*PTD*, p.23).

Beckett's explication of the Proustian view of habit unfolds lengthily over the course of the second section of the essay and is suffused with a vocabulary of transactions. 'Habit' here refers less to a specific, involuntary but compulsive action (as the term is commonly understood) than an impoverished *mode of consciousness* in Proust's world, which is variously described by Beckett in contractual terms as a 'compromise', a 'pact', or a 'treaty' that an individual establishes with his surroundings (p.18; p.24). Implicit in this definition is an antagonistic relationship between Proust's characters and their changing surroundings, a tension that is kept minimal by a habitual existence whose involuntary repetitions function as a 'screen against reality' (pp.18-19). The analgesic property of the Proustian habitual life, Beckett contends, lies in its power to absorb the 'suffering and anxiety' attendant

upon a new experience that escapes the everyday, thereby ensuring an eventual homeostasis of the individual's sensory and perceptual economy (p.21). However, these treaties are not always fool-proof, and habit may, according to Beckett, at times found to be 'sleeping' or simply 'dead'(p.21). The first of the two vicissitudes refers only to a temporary suspension of habitual life, which Beckett sees in the telephone conversation with the grandmother. The inevitable contingencies of life, on the other hand, ensure that both individuals and their existence are in a state of constant flux, 'a perpetual exfoliation of the personality', thereby rendering every cultivated habit redundant (or 'dead') when faced with a new reality to be defended against (p.25). What differentiates the suspension of habit from its permanent redundancy is that the latter is 'inseparable from suffering and anxiety' since a new reality calls forth the birth of a new self (p.21).

For Beckett, the individual's propensity to flee the unusual through habit-formation inevitably results in a state of entrapment, conceived as an oscillation between the two extremes of the 'boredom of living' and the 'suffering of being': where on the one hand 'the pernicious devotion of habit paralyses our attention, [and] drugs those handmaidens of perception whose co-operation is not absolutely essential' (p.20), on the other hand, its failure leads to an overwhelmed and assailed state, a 'free play of every faculty' induced by a 'reality, intolerable, absorbed feverishly by…consciousness at the extreme limit of its intensity' (p.22). His description of the fatigued and feverish narrator's arrival at his room at the Grand Hôtel in Balbec underscores a similar visual and auditory assault, 'a storm of sound and an agony of colour', brought about by the encounter with an unknown space after the anaesthetizing familiarity of his bedroom in Paris (p.24). Beckett writes:

> Alone in this room that is not yet a room but a cavern of wild beasts…he desires to die. His grandmother comes in, comforts him, checks the stooping gesture that he makes to unbutton his boots, insists on helping him to undress, puts him to bed, and before leaving him makes him promise to knock on the partition that separates her room from his, should he require anything during the night. He knocks, and she comes again to him. But that night and for many nights he suffered (*PTD*, pp.24-25).

His paraphrasing of the incident makes clear the grandmother's soothing intervention to check her grandson's 'fear of sleeping in a strange room' on being separated from his family and adolescent lover, Gilberte, in Paris (*RTP* I, 720).

Beckett's account, as well as Proust's narrative, dispel any residual uncertainties about the maternal echo in their relationship. Following his grandmother's spontaneous appearance in a cambric dressing-gown ('her servant's smock, her nurse's uniform, her nun's habit') amidst his physical and emotional distress on his first night at the Grand Hôtel, the narrator initiates a lengthy eulogy that exalts her humanity into divinity. He throws himself impulsively into her arms in an embrace of silent gratitude and subsequently kisses her face, remaining 'as motionless, as solemn, *as calmly gluttonous as a babe at the breast*', and transforming the protagonists of this situation from a grandmother and her adolescent grandson into a mother nursing her new-born (*RTP* 1, p.718, my emphasis). Indeed, the grandmother performs this role of the nourishing mother to completion when her sickly, febrile grandson begins each day by knocking at the wall, a call for her to bring him milk, which she insists he drink early every morning.

The narrative repeatedly constructs the grandmother's caregiving role in this episode in terms of her ability to undermine spatial demarcations between herself and the narrator. Before suggesting that he knock at the intervening wall if he needs her during the night, she has already verified that their rooms are arranged such that '[her] bed is on the other side, and the partition is quite thin' (p.719), confirming that the barrier that separates them, is in fact, far from impermeable. Thomas Baldwin approaches the 'epidermal contiguity' of the spatial arrangement of this scene through Didier Anzieu's postulation of 'the common skin', a fantasmatic precursor of the skin-ego, experienced by the infant as a tactile interface between him on the one side and the mother on the other. For Baldwin, the narrator's uninterrupted proximity to the grandmother is only one of the many echoes of a similar tactile intimacy with his mother's body in the novel's earlier 'Drame du Coucher' scene.[19] I would additionally argue that the execution of the grandmother's maternal function in this episode relies on a skilful manipulation of the sensory field between her and

[19] Thomas Baldwin, *The Material Object in the Work of Marcel Proust* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), pp.156-157.

the narrator: in the percussive sound of the knock the tactile *and* the auditory collude to establish a shared code of communication which, while transcending the need for the visual co-presence of the interlocutors, eventually brings about the grandmother's appearance in the narrator's room. While these episodes are conspicuous in the way they dispense with the voice altogether in the transmission of signals—a 'muteness' whose implications I discuss subsequently—the sound of knocking by each of the two characters nonetheless carries the signature of their emotional states. The narrator initiates 'three little taps, timidly, faintly, but for all that distinctly', which are heard by the grandmother as an appeal for her presence; she replies instantly with 'three others, in a different tone from mine, stamped with a calm authority', translated by her auditor into a linguistic message only in a second instance, which tells him: '"Don't get agitated; *I've heard you*; I shall be with you in a minute!"' (p.719, my emphasis).

Just as this to and fro transmission of sound uses two individual 'voices', it also establishes a corresponding binary of listening positions, each oriented towards the audition of the other's sonic signal. There emerges a male and a female ear, performing a different perceptual labour while remaining anatomically identical. The entry of non-verbal sounds, whether human or mechanical (footsteps, knocking, the ascending of an elevator while Marcel awaits Albertine etc.) into an intersubjective dynamic in the novel invariably pivots on the male ear, his longing for a female presence represented sensorially in the anticipation of sonic guarantors of her arrival. Conceived affectively, this mode of listening intersperses ecstasy with anxiety, corresponding to sound and silence respectively. Sharply opposed to the unmitigated 'suffering and anxiety' that Beckett attributes to the death of habitual existence *tout court*, the experience of listening to the quasi-maternal grandmother return his taps fills the partition with tenderness and joy. It is heard by the narrator as 'the promise of her coming, with the swiftness of an annunciation and a musical fidelity' (p.720). But even an echo entails an imperceptible time lag, and the momentary silence that ensues before the grandmother's reply is experienced by the male ear as a void, no sooner formed than filled by the narrator's fear of the rupture of this uninterrupted connectivity with the maternal object: 'I had been afraid she would not hear me, or might think that it was someone in the room beyond who was tapping'. This anxiety of not being heard, however, is only ephemeral at best, as located between the

initiation of the tapping and its return is Granny's ear, whose infallible perceptiveness renders it impossible to

> Mistake my poor pet's knocking for anyone else's! Why, Granny could tell it a mile away! ... Even if it just gave the tiniest scratch, Granny could tell her mouse's sound at once, especially such a poor miserable little mouse as mine is. I could hear it just now, trying to make up its mind, and rustling the bedclothes, and going through all its tricks (p.719).

The affectionate concern for the ailing grandson, located on the other side of the partition for the night where he cannot be (over)seen, both defines and enhances the listening prowess of the maternal ear. Transcending corporeal limitations of auditory perception, the grandmother claims the ability not just to detect the sound of the narrator's 'tiniest scratch' from 'a mile away', but also to unambiguously hear that sound apart from the inchoate sonic universe of the Grand Hôtel.

My references to 'voice' and 'conversation' are at best metaphors for an exchange of nonverbal sound, since, for an episode with such an overt thematic of communication, the voice *qua* linguistic speech is conspicuously subverted by the narrator and the grandmother from its very beginning. The complete absence of the voice paradoxically augments an aural tie to the maternal body that far exceeds mere connectivity and approximates a state of fusion of the mother-son couple instead. We recall that she appears in his room on the first evening even before his distress has been conveyed to her. The narrator's explanation of her spontaneous appearance evokes an image of the mother and son fused together in body and mind, when he states that his 'thoughts were continued and extended in her without undergoing the slightest deflection, since they passed from my mind into hers *without any change of atmosphere or of personality*' (p.718, my emphasis). Intentions and states of mind are silently communicated through various gestural signs, e.g. the grandmother's appearance in her cambric dressing gown suffices to convey her intention to comfort the narrator, and her 'imploring gaze' is the cue for him to let her take over the bedtime ritual of undressing him for bed (p.719). More crucially, the extraordinary communication carries on when neither the visual cues are seen *nor* the voice heard, i.e, through the speechless knocking at the wall at night. This exchange is

'extraordinary' because it is not just restricted to a static code whereby, depending on the source, a knock means a state of distress and the reply its acknowledgement. On the contrary, another aspect of the permeability of the partition is revealed when each of the two characters successfully predicts the silent thoughts of the other across the wall, manifested in the ever-changing nuances of the sound of the knock (faint, timid, firm etc.). This is a game at which the grandmother is particularly adept. Far from threatening this fusion the partition only encourages it in its imposition of restrictions on their perception of each other. It is as if this simultaneously invisible and voiceless interaction at Balbec, bolstered by love, inculcates a maternal mode of listening that cuts through corporeal and psychic demarcations and invades the mind of the male protagonist, admittedly a source of pleasure and comfort for him in this instance. Thus, by the sounding of the rustling of his bedclothes—itself faint—the grandmother is able to 'hear' his concerned hesitation before he decides to knock at the partition, should he mistake her to be awake when she was, in fact asleep: 'I could hear it just now, trying to make up his mind, and rustling the bedclothes, and going through all its tricks' (p.719).

THE GRANDMOTHER ON THE TELEPHONE

The communicational situation between the grandmother and narrator through the partition, relying on an 'extension of ear and voice that is a kind of extra sensory perception', also resembles Marshal McLuhan's explanation of the workings of telephony and anticipates the second episode that Beckett analyses as an example of the suspension of Habit in the novel: the grandmother's brief telephone call to Marcel.[20] Sara Danius argues that that Proust not only documents modern technological inventions in the *Recherche* but 'also delineates a psychology of such transformation, a psychology that may be grasped as a theory in its own right'.[21] Marcel's recollection of his brief telephone conversation with his grandmother in *Le côté de Guermantes* is prefaced by such a 'Proustian psychology of telecommunications', one that documents the affective dimension of the rise of the telephone in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[22] From the narrator's perspective,

[20] Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964), p.265.
[21] Sara Danius, 'Orpheus and the Machine: Proust as a Theorist of Technological Change, and the Case of Joyce', in *Marcel Proust: Bloom's Modern Critical Views*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), pp.121-136 (p.123).
[22] ibid, p.124.

the telephone—like other modern inventions portrayed in the novel—is implicated within the field of desire. Its ‘admirable sorcery’ helps him overcome separation from a (female) love object by transforming the ear into a prosthesis that can hear her voice over a great distance (*RTP* II, p.134). Although the telephone is only one of several means of communication between Marcel and his mother, grandmother, and lovers (letters, notes and telegraphs are also used), its instantaneous transportation of disembodied voices allows individuals to hear each as if they shared the same space and time. By aurally linking the narrator and the grandmother, located respectively in Doncières and Paris, the telephone line attenuates the narrator’s separation anxiety in relation to this proto-maternal figure and takes on a string-like, almost umbilical, function similar to the role played by the partition at Balbec. For instance, he describes his note bidding his mother to come and kiss him goodnight as a vocal thread between his bedroom and the parlour of his grandparents’ house in Combray: ‘my little note […] would whisper about me into her ear […] Now I was no longer separated from her; the barriers were down; an exquisite thread united us’ (*RTP* I, p.32).[23]

Marcel re-discovers his grandmother over the course of this technologically-mediated encounter with her voice in a phone booth in Doncières. Divested of her visual appearance, she is perceived by her grandson as an invisible and isolated voice for the first time in his life. The telephone thus disrupts Marcel’s habitual framework of perception in which the grandmother’s voice is secondary to her image and its perception is filtered through ‘the open score of her face’ (*PTD*, p.33). This audio-visual imbalance is reversed on the telephone as he registers the intonation and timbre of ‘the voice itself’ like never before. As a consequence of his habit-defying confrontation with the grandmother’s disembodied voice, Marcel registers in the sweetness of her isolated voice an ‘outpouring of tenderness’ that the grandmother would have ordinarily restrained in his company. At the same time, neither Proust nor his narrator celebrates the magical accomplishments of telephony uncritically. Marcel is keenly aware that the telephonic voice *qua* ‘the sound of distance

[23] D.W. Winnicott’s case-study, ‘String: A Technique of Communication’, also uses the metaphor of telephony to explain a young child’s obsessive playing with string after a prolonged experience of maternal deprivation: ‘I explained to the mother that this boy was […] attempting to deny separation by his use of string, as one would deny separation from a friend by using the telephone’. D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*: *Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London: Karnac Books, 1990), pp.153-157 (p.154).

overcome' is inhabited by a treacherous paradox whereby 'the voice of the dear one' is heard in intimate detail while she ultimately remains far away (*RTP* II, p.134). It is equally ironic that the technology that fosters such an unparalleled connectivity is responsible for alerting Marcel to the imminent and irreversible loss of his grandmother to death as 'the seeming fullness of presence implied in the warmth of her voice inverts itself into a sharpened awareness of her absence and approaching death'.[24] Indeed, no longer mitigated by the veneer of her face, the 'sorrows that had cracked it [her voice] in the course of a lifetime' are amplified on the telephone alongside her love for her grandson (*RTP* II, p.136). In the grip of this first excruciating premonition of her impending death, he compares the grandmother's disembodied voice to that of a revenant; the telephone connection is severed shortly thereafter, leaving the narrator panicked, confused, and frantically calling out to his grandmother to no avail.

The narrative of Marcel's recollection conspicuously omits the content of their conversation as if it were irrelevant. Catherine Laws has therefore paired the phone call with the earlier tapping ritual at Balbec as methods of Proustian communication where sounds signify independently of the mediation of language:

> [i]t seems significant that it is the *sound of the voice*—[…] its materiality—that causes this reaction, rather than the content of the conversation: effective communication is here dependent upon non-linguistic factors, circumventing the problems of signification that hamper other relationships.[25]

I would add that Marcel's perception of this affect-laden female voice is not too dissimilar from his childhood captivation by his mother's bedtime reading of George Sand's *François le Champi*. Although the mother's voice is 'embodied' in that she is present with him in his bedroom, the narrator is too young to understand the (overtly Oedipal) content of the novel and can only attend to the non-semantic aspects of this female voice that, in Beckett's words, is 'muted and sweetened almost to a lullaby, unwinding all night long its reassuring foil of sound before a child's insomnia' (*PTD*,

[24] Felicia Miller-Frank, *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.14.

[25] Catherine Laws, *Headaches among the Overtones*, p.55. Beckett's commentary on the episode has been routinely acknowledged in recent scholarship. See Tajiri (2007, p.94), Campbell (2009, p.148) and Maude (2009, p.121).

p.71).[26] In both instances, Marcel predominantly relies on a form of 'reduced listening' posited by the experimental musician and radio engineer Pierre Schaeffer in which a typically invisible or 'acousmatic' sound is examined with a concerted disregard of its source—or, in case of the speaking voice, the linguistic content of speech. [27] As is the case with Marcel's discoveries, Schaeffer attributes reduced listening with a revelatory or didactic potential that Beckett, following Proust, anticipates and describes as an unmasking of a hidden truth by means of a non-habitual aural perception:

> he hears it [his grandmother's voice] for the first time, in all its purity and reality […] It is a grievous voice, its fragility unmitigated and undisguised by the carefully arranged mask of her features, and this strange real voice is the measure of its owner's suffering. He hears it as a symbol of her isolation, of their separation, as impalpable as a voice from the dead. The voice stops. His grandmother seems as irretrievably lost as Eurydice among the shades (*PTD*, p.27).

Although this episode is meant to be the second of the two examples of the interruption of Habit in the narrator-grandmother relationship in the *Recherche*, Beckett does not stop here. Following the events of the novel, he alludes to Marcel's immediate and unannounced return to Paris to verify his aural impressions of the grandmother's decline:

---

[26] Rather unsurprisingly, this scene has generated voluminous commentary in Proust Studies. Felicia Miller-Frank links the *Recherche* and Rousseau's *Confessions*—which Beckett also read—as texts where a childhood memory of the maternal voice becomes the impetus for the adult writer's autobiographical project (pp.21-23). Adam Watt illuminatingly reads this memory as a Freudian 'primal scene' in which the maternal voice, through its 'ambiguous, suggestive, [and] transgressive performance of a literary text' loads the child with a sexual excess that he can only master and symbolize retrospectively as an adult. Adam Watt, *Reading in Proust's* A la recherche*: 'le délire de la lecture'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.18.

[27] The '*akousmatikoi*' were probationary disciples of the philosopher Pythagoras; as part of their five year-long initiation, they were required to listen to his sermons in complete silence while he remained concealed on the other side of a curtain. Alluding to this unseen voice dissociated from the body by the intervention of a curtain, Schaeffer uses 'acousmatic' as an adjective to designate those verbal or non-verbal sounds that are heard unaccompanied by the appearance of their sources. He attributes their proliferation to nineteenth and twentieth-century technologies of recording and transmitting sound (notably the radio, telephone and tape recorder) that have come to function as modern equivalents of the Pythagorean curtain. Pierre Schaeffer, *Treatise on Musical Objects: an Essay across Disciplines*, trans. by Christine North and John Dack (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), p.64.

> His gaze is no longer the necromancy that sees in each precious object a mirror of the past. The notion of what he should see has not had time to interfere its prism between the eye and its object. His eye functions with the cruel precision of a camera: it photographs the reality of his grandmother. And he realises with horror that his grandmother is dead […] (p.27).

The grandmother's disembodied voice on the telephone thus initiates a process of unconcealing that is confirmed by Marcel's camera-like perception. Beckett's description of the two scenes distinguishes between a mode of seeing and hearing through the distorting but protective film of Habit on the one hand, and a painfully objective mode of audio-visual perception typified through sound and optical technologies on the other. [28]

J. Hillis Miller, in his extended reading of the telephone call, has rightly argued that Proust's narrative 'strongly sexualize[s] or make[s] a matter of gender difference the encounter with the telephone'.[29] This claim needs to be understood first and foremost through the historical figure of the female switchboard operator, or the *démoiselle du téléphone*, who represented an intrinsic connection between the telephone and the female voice, and whose transmission of messages across a communicational network has been compared to the work of female spiritualist mediums and typists around the same time.[30] Indeed, Marcel conceives the subterranean network of the telephone as a realm of darkness manned by these capricious women who transport voices across a subterranean telephonic network. Hillis Miller shows the narrator's complicity in the widespread lampooning and ridiculing of these operators—who worked long hours in poor conditions—when he uses unflattering epithets from Greek and Christian myth to describe these 'Young Ladies of the Telephone' as 'Vigilant Virgins', 'the ironic Furies', 'the ever-irritable handmaidens of the Mystery' etc (*RTP*, p.33). Secondly, in both telephone scenes in the *Recherche*, Marcel is the recipient of phone calls initiated respectively by the

---

[28] Ulrika Maude notes that Beckett's televisual work duplicates such an oscillation between 'subjective, human, ultimately fallible vision' and 'the so-called objective vision of technology and visual inscription methods'. *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.117.
[29] J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p.190.
[30] See, for instance, John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.196.

grandmother (in *Le côté de Guermantes*) and Albertine (in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*). In reporting these conversations through the first-person narrative, the novel not only cements the historical gendering of the telephonic voice but it also sets up an additional pattern whereby the male ear consistently assumes a position of receptivity in relation to these female voices. These calls are preceded by Marcel's agonized waiting for the ringing of the telephone, to which Beckett alludes later in *Proust*: 'he listens for her [Albertine's] step or for the sublime summons of the telephone, not with his ear and mind, but with his heart'.

Beckett's long parenthetic digression prefacing the summary of telephone calls in *Proust* makes it evident that he is not only aware of the historical and the cultural imaginary around the early life of the telephone but that he also registers the female telephonic voices in the novel:

> He [Marcel] telephones to his grandmother in Paris. (After reading the description of this telephone call and its hardly less powerful corollary, when, years later, he speaks over the telephone with Albertine on returning home late after his first visit to the Princesse de Guermantes, Cocteau's *Voix Humaine* seems not merely a banality but an unnecessary banality.) After *the conventional misunderstanding* with the Vigilant Virgins of the central exchange, he hears his grandmother's voice […] (p.26, my emphasis)

Notwithstanding Beckett's misidentification of Marcel as the initiator of the phone call, the passage is densely crowded with intra- and extra-textual references to this episode where this pattern of the female telephonic voice/male receiver is repeated. We see that Beckett's summary not only notes 'the conventional misunderstanding with the Vigilant Virgins' but also links the two key scenes featuring the telephone in the novel: 'this telephone call and its hardly less powerful corollary, when, years later, he speaks over the telephone with Albertine'. In so doing, Beckett signals the recursive trope in the novel whereby Marcel's auditory encounter with one woman frequently mirrors or echoes a similar incident featuring another woman. Finally, the comparison with Jean Cocteau's play, *La Voix Humaine*, is far from fortuitous and only consolidates this series of references to female telephonic users. The suicidal

protagonist of this one-woman play (simply named 'The Woman') delivers a long hysterical monologue into the telephone to her former lover.[31]

WAITING AND 'INDIRECT PERCEPTION': RE-READING BECKETT'S PROUST MARGINALIA

The third, and final, instance of Marcel's non-habitual perception of gendered sound in the novel takes place during recurring episodes of amorous waiting, where his anxious anticipation of the beloved is enacted through a tensing of his sensorium and the deployment of modes of intense and affective listening to sounds of a woman's arrival. In what follows, I take existing scholarship on Beckett's Proust marginalia by John Pilling and Nixon and Van Hulle as my guide in tracing the trajectory of Beckett's interest in the narrator's 'instinctive' or 'indirect perception' of the world around him, that he considers crucial to the narrator's artistic vision and practice in *Proust.* These annotations have been made equally in pencil and ink; going by the surmise that the grey pencil marks correspond to his first reading while those in black ink or blue crayon indicate subsequent readings, it can be concluded that Beckett began identifying recurring examples of 'indirect perception' in his first reading itself and consolidated the list over the course of his re-reading(s) of the novel shortly before writing the essay.[32]

In the concluding section of *Proust* Beckett describes Marcel's self-discovery as a writer in *Le temps retrouvé.* After reading the Goncourt's Journal, the narrator registers the fundamental incompatibility between its high naturalism and his own artistic method—described by Marion Schmid as a disjunction between 'documentary realism' and Marcel's 'aesthetics of subjective perception'.[33] Beckett conveys this difference by recalling Marcel's use of the metaphor of radiography. Unlike photography, which records the surface of an object, 'the radiographical

[31] Notwithstanding his berating of Cocteau in comparison to Proust in the monograph, Anne Atik reports that Beckett admitted to being fascinated by the playwright's dramatic use of the telephone. James Knowlson conjectures that Beckett may have attended a performance of Cocteau's play at the *Comedie Française* in 1930 and worked it into the essay shortly thereafter. See respectively Anne Atik, *How It Was: A Memoir of Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p.24; James Knowlson, 'Beckett's "Bits of Pipe"', in *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*, ed. by Moris Beja, Pierre Astier and S.E. Gontarski (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), pp.16-25 (p.20).
[32] *Samuel Beckett's Library*, p.70.
[33] Marion Schmid, 'The Birth and Development of *A la recherche du temps perdu*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. by Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.58-73 (p.66).

quality of his [Marcel's] observation' penetrates the superficial: 'The copiable he does not see. He searches for a relation, a common factor, substrata'. For Beckett, an 'instinctive perception' is central to Marcel's radiographic poetics, whereby the latter's consciousness apprehends sensory phenomena around him in a peculiar manner:

> his faculties are more violently activated by intermediate than by terminal—capital—stimuli. We find countless examples of these secondary reflexes. Withdrawn in his cool dark room at Combray he extracts the total essence of a scorching midday from the scarlet stellar blows of a hammer in the street and the chamber music of flies in the gloom. Lying in bed at dawn, the exact quality of weather, temperature and visibility, is transmitted to him in terms of sound, in the chimes and the calls of the hawkers (*PTD*, p.83).

In the first of these two examples from *Du côté de chez Swann*, the young narrator lies reading in his bedroom in Combray. Through the lowering of the shutters Marcel seals off his bedroom from the heat and brightness of the summer's day outside, thereby also curtailing his visual perception of the outside world and the room, which has now been plunged into a cool darkness. This external world nevertheless intrudes into his bedroom through the spatial transgression of the sound of Camus's hammer in the street outside. In Beckett's description, the hammer sound is an 'intermediate' stimulus whose association with sensations of brightness and heat in Marcel's memory conveys to him a vivid picture of the day outside, thereby dispensing with the need of a 'terminal' stimulus—in this case, a direct and unmediated perception of the outdoors.[34] Beckett marked this entire passage in pencil on an earlier reading and annotated it later in pen as 'Indirect—and consequently integral—apprehension of reality. Frequent motiv' (p.123).

[34] Yoshiki Tajiri rightly argues that '[w]hat Beckett calls "instinctive perception" or "intuition" here could also be described as synesthetic perception, in which the auditory sense is transferred to the sense of heat'. Although Julie Campbell tendentiously misreads 'radiographical' to mean 'radiophonic' in this passage, she astutely identifies within it the general principle underlying Beckett's radio plays, which rely upon 'the power of [non-visualized] sound in urging the listener to create a world, just as the description of the grandmother's voice in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, when decoupled from the visual, shows how sound encourages the listener in us to experience an unseen reality […]'. Yoshiki Tajiri, *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body*, p.95; Julie Campbell, '"A voice comes to one in the dark"', p.144.

This early, dispassionate use of indirect perception by Marcel is an exception rather than the norm. Each subsequent instance of this 'Frequent motiv' identified by Beckett is coloured by the separation anxiety that results when his intense need and desire for women from various epochs of his life—his mother, grandmother, Gilberte and most crucially, Albertine—comes up against their momentary unavailability or absence. Beginning with the next example from the second volume of *Du côté de chez Swann*, all of Beckett's subsequent identifications of Marcel's 'indirect perception' are framed by this aforementioned maternal/amorous context. As part of his anxious anticipation of his curative evening walks to the Champs-Elysées—his only opportunity to meet his first love, Gilberte—Marcel incessantly tracks the weather while remaining confined within his apartment. If he glimpses his neighbour from the opposite apartment putting on her hat in preparation for going out, he infers in a 'secondary reflex' that Gilberte's governess, too, would bring her to the Champs-Elysées (lady wearing hat → permissible weather → Gilberte → joy). Alternatively, the absence of shadows on the balcony of his apartment is taken as a sign of an overcast sky, and he gloomily prepares himself for the possibility of not seeing Gilberte until the following evening (no shadows on the balcony → grey sky → an absent Gilberte → gloom and anxiety). Since these passages are annotated in black ink, it is quite likely that Beckett identified and marked them on a re-reading where he additionally possessed the gift of hindsight. He notes in this example the centrality of the novel's rooms in facilitating Marcel's indirect perception: 'Most complete perceptions indirect. Cf. bedrooms of Combray and Balbec' (p.257). The marginal observation furnishes the skeleton of this recurring scenario—a man in a room in a state of desirous expectancy for an encounter with a loved woman—that he will continue to trace, although it will come to accumulate two additional nuances. First, Marcel's mode of indirect perception will remain almost-exclusively aural as he uses sound, rather than visual phenomena as in this example, as the intermediary perceptions for his inferences. Secondly, these deployments of indirect perception take place in an interim period as Marcel awaits either the arrival of a woman herself or communication from her in the form of a note, a letter, or a telephone call.

LISTENING 'WITH THE HEART'

The examples that follow are found interspersed (in varying degrees of detail) throughout the few pages that Beckett devotes to his sharp, unforgiving, stage-by-

stage analysis of 'the Albertine tragedy'. The first of these refers to Albertine's surprise visit to Marcel in Paris shortly after his grandmother's death, which adds yet another dimension to Albertine's 'pictorial multiplicity' for the narrator.[35] Marcel sits alone anxiously in the silence of his apartment as he awaits a reply from Mme de Stermaria to his letter requesting her to a 'private dinner' with him. These episodes of waiting are narrated through an alternation between Marcel's digressive meditations on subjects like the apparent slowing of time during anticipation, a mental transport of sorts that grants him a temporary reprieve from the suffering of waiting, only to return suddenly to an intense aural attunement to the ambient soundscapes of the bedroom in which he awaits a beloved. In so doing, the narrative mimics the retreating/projecting rhythms of his consciousness, as well as the attendant fading in and out of the act of listening during waiting. John Pilling notes that 'again and again Proust's recommended cultivation of the inner faculties—what Beckett calls the "immersive necessity" as distinct from the "emersive tendency"—engages Beckett's deepest interest'.[36] Marcel's musings in this case contrast with the emptiness and hostility of the bedroom to the outside world where the object of his desire, Mme de Stermaria, resides. Once again, Beckett's marginal highlighting of the following passage through the drawing of a vertical line in *Le côté de Guermantes* (p.40) foregrounds his interest in the narrator's calculated attempt to reconcile the interior/exterior spatial divide through indirect (auditory) perception:

> Every now and then I heard the sound of the lift coming up, but it was followed by a second sound, not the one I was hoping for, namely its coming to a halt at our landing, but its progress to the floors above and which, because it is so often meant the desertion of my floor when I was expecting a visitor, remained for me later, even when I had ceased to wish for visitors, a sound lugubrious in itself, in which there echoed, as it were a sentence of solitary confinement (*RTP II,* p.363).

[35] 'He concludes that Albertine is virtuous, and his first stay at Balbec closes on that impression. It is corrected by a visit from Albertine in Paris. To a new vocabulary, garnished with such sophistications as "distinguished", "to my mind", "mousmé", "lapse of time", corresponds a new and sophisticated Albertine, as lavish now of her favours as she was formerly parsimonious' (*PTD*, p.47).
[36] John Pilling, 'Beckett's *Proust*', p.16.

Marcel's soon-to-be-familiar transformation into an auditor in anticipation relies upon the ear as a means of spatial transport, which situates him at the threshold between his room and its visually inaccessible beyond. Although he remains seated within the bedroom, his aural field undermines his bodily circumscription by traversing this inner/outer divide to detect signs—Beckett's 'intermediary stimuli'—of an arrival. While the halting sound of the elevator at his landing would decisively terminate this perceptual circuit (elevator halts → Mme Stermaria's messenger at hand → resolution of the tension of waiting), he hears the sound of its continued ascension instead. Pilling observes that Beckett appears to be 'intrigued by Proust's oscillations between his impressions of the outer world and his relentless burrowing analyses into what these impressions are in essence'.[37] Here too, no sooner has Marcel analysed the sound as an on omen of a non-arrival, he affectively codes it as 'lugubrious'. It represents a moment in which his outwardly-oriented indirect aural perception ends up reinforcing Marcel's 'sentence of solitary confinement' instead, which in turn re-initiates the entire cycle of his tense surveillance of his ambient soundscape until an entirely unexpected guest, Albertine, is suddenly ushered into his bedroom by Françoise.

Pilling also points to the lack of any straightforward correspondence between the extent of annotation of episodes or passages from the novel and the depth in which they are eventually discussed in *Proust*. This is certainly true of Marcel's tortured wait for Albertine in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* as part of an agreed tryst. The episode is only lightly marked using vertical pencil lines but is privileged in *Proust* as the first foreboding of Marcel's volatile relationship of 'reciprocal torture' with Albertine. Beckett's summary of the situation drives home the narrator's mounting frustration at her delay through recurring negatives: 'after his first visit to the Princesse de Guermantes, he sits alone in his room waiting for Albertine […] who has promised to come and who does not come and whose non-arrival exalts a simple physical irritation into a flame of moral anguish' (*PTD*, p.50). The vigil for Albertine commences in the hall where, in a posture of tense immobility, Marcel gazes uninterruptedly at a strip of transparent glass panel on his front door: 'If, suddenly, this strip turned to a golden yellow, that would mean that Albertine had just entered the building, and would be with me in a minute' (*RTP* II, p.755). After a long period

[37] ibid.

of waiting in vain, he retreats further within his apartment to the bedroom, the privileged site of indirect perception as per Beckett's observation.

With the resigned movement to the bedroom Marcel no longer has access to this visual interface between the inside and the outside of his apartment, and his mode of indirect perception undergoes a sensorial shift by coming to rely exclusively on sounds. Once again, the narrative foregrounds the stillness and silence of the bedroom against which he hears the ticking of the clock. With this ticking silence as a backdrop that underscores Albertine's continued absence and the night's drawing to a close, Marcel's ears begin their habitual surveillance of the room's soundscape, looking out for the sound of Albertine's footsteps approaching his apartment or the 'whirring noise' of a telephone call from her. His feelings transform 'from fear to anxiety, [and] from anxiety to complete despair' as time passes (p.757). When Beckett states in *Proust* that 'he [Marcel] listens for her step or for the sublime summons of the telephone, not with his ear and mind, but with his heart', he paraphrases verbatim Proust's highly suggestive theorization of anticipatory listening in this episode. Rather unsurprisingly, the following passage describing Marcel's waiting for sounds of Albertine's arrival is all that Beckett highlights in his copy of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (p.142):

> I settled down again to listen, to suffer; when we are waiting, from the ear which takes in sounds to the mind which dissects and analyses them, and from the mind to the heart to which it transmits its results, the double journey is so rapid that we cannot even perceive its duration, and imagine that we have been listening directly with our heart (*RTP* II, p.757).

Read closely, this passage lays bare the mechanism of indirect auditory perception in a state of anxious expectancy, where the double circuit of listening goes into such an overdrive that the mind's rational mediation between the ear and the heart appears suspended. In other words, the ear forges an alliance with the heart—here associated with emotion and desire—rather than the cold dissecting mind.

Far from being an external imposition, the resonance that I have sought to establish between these various episodes of waiting is acknowledged and confirmed by Marcel, and recorded by Beckett in *Proust*. In a moment of epiphany that shortly

precedes Albertine's telephone call to him, he understands his 'terrible need' during these scenes of anguished waiting—whether for Albertine or Gilberte—as a revival of the suffering of waiting for his mother's goodnight kiss each evening in Combray. As Beckett observes: 'For in his anxiety he has added yet another crystal to this branch of Salzburg, the crystal of a need, of that need that tortured him at Combray and that only his mother could allay with the host of her lips' (*PTD*, p.44). In viewing Albertine as a maternal avatar, Marcel sets up a direct link between this episode and the formative *drame du coucher* scene from his childhood. Once again, in addition to the figure of the absent woman (mother/lover), this symbolic linkage pivots on the same elements common to both: the anxiogenic bedroom, Marcel's wait, and his listening out for familiar sounds of the two women's arrival.

The titular remembrance of things past in the *Recherche* begins with the adult Marcel's memory of the most primal of his bedrooms, the one in his grandparents' house in Combray: 'long before the time when I should have to go to bed and lie there, unsleeping, far from my mother and grandmother, my bedroom became the fixed point on which my melancholy and anxious thoughts were centred' (*RTP I*, p.9). Marcel is dismissed early to his upper-story bedroom every evening, a space that reminds him of the inaccessibility of his mother and grandmother, who remain downstairs with the rest of the family to entertain Swann during his late-evening visits. Swann evidently triangulates Marcel's access to his mother and grandmother: no sooner has he arrived than the adults of the house dismiss the latter to return to his bedroom, and his mother's goodnight kiss must wait until Swann's departure. As mentioned earlier, in one of his marginal annotations Beckett had linked this bedroom with the one from the Grand Hotel in Balbec, where Marcel's grandmother (the alternate maternal figure of the *Recherche*) would tap at the common partition wall between them to assure him of her comforting presence. Marcel's Combray bedroom is similarly the site of two interlinked cycles of indirect auditory perception that help him infer his mother's whereabouts while being physically distant from her. Beckett isolates blocks of passages in his first volume of *Du côté de chez Swann* from Marcel's memory of these evenings by flanking them with 'ø' symbols in pencil. The sound of the double peal of the garden-gate bell initiates the first-half of the cycle in its signalling of Swann's exit, and thus → the end of the evening → his parents' return to their bedroom for the night → finally, his mother's visit to

Marcel's bedroom *en route* for the goodnight kiss. Assured of this maternal reunion, he subsequently commences the second-half of this chain of indirect perception in which the ringing of the bell is replaced by other intermediary stimuli such as the sound of his mother's footsteps and the rustling of the tassels of her garden dress as they trail along the corridor to his room, both indicative of the increasing proximity between the two (*RTP* I, p.13).

MISREADING, REREADING, PARODYING: PROUSTIAN SOUNDS IN BECKETT'S DRAMA

Beckett's donation of his Proust volumes to the scholarly community initiated a new wave of critical writing on *Proust*, which, through its privileged access to the marginalia, was able to reconstruct the writer's behind-the-scenes thinking. As an unexpected consequence of this decisive archival gain, critics such as Nicholas Zurbrugg (1988) and John Pilling (1998)—and most recently, Catherine Laws (2013)—began increasingly to raise questions about the validity of Beckett's exegesis of Proustian themes in his monograph, given the many sharp divergences between the novel's treatment of these themes and Beckett's reading, and subsequent uses, of them.[38] The thrust of the aforementioned critics has been to characterize the imbalances of Beckett's exegesis in *Proust* as a symptom of his subscription to a Schopenhauerian 'pessimism'. J.D. O'Hara quips that the author's famous admission to John Pilling in the 1970s, 'perhaps I overstated Proust's pessimism a little', is 'itself quite an understatement'.[39] Similarly, Zurbrugg, the most representative critic of this view and my chief interlocutor in this section, pans the young Beckett's most sustained attempt at literary criticism in no uncertain terms by calling it a 'heady mixture of pessimistic prejudice and of carelessly or callously imaginative exegesis'.[40]

For Zurbrugg, each section of Beckett's monograph is characterized by a trend whereby it 'begins relatively accurately, and then degenerates into a reductive

[38] John Pilling, 'Proust and Schopenhauer: Music and Shadows', in *Beckett and Music*, ed. by Mary Bryden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Nicholas Zurbrugg, *Beckett and Proust* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1988). For an excellent account of Beckett's lampooning of involuntary memory in the *Nouvelles* and The Trilogy, see Elizabeth Barry, *Beckett and Authority: The Uses of Cliché* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.69-83.
[39] *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives*, p.26.
[40] *Beckett and Proust*, p.112.

argument illustrated by one-sided examples'.[41] This unethical critical practice, he contends, reduces Proust's dualistic treatment of the positive and negative aspects of Time, Habit and Memory in his novel—acknowledged by Beckett early on in *Proust*—to accord with the latter's own allegedly pessimistic universe where, instead of functioning as 'that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation', this thematic trinity serves as an agent of damnation and suffering *alone* (*PTD*, p.11). Since the Balbec episode is cited in Beckett's arguments about Habit, let us remain with Zurbrugg's specific critique of the second section of *Proust*. He shrewdly observes that even though Beckett momentarily registers Proust's view that the reality that habitual life screens from the individual is a source of both 'cruelties and enchantments', Beckett immediately subverts this claim when he writes that '"Enchantments of reality has the air of a paradox"' (p.22). The result of this inexplicable dismissal of the pleasurable aspect of non-habitual existence is a bleak envisaging of the subject as trapped between the two evils of boredom and suffering, corresponding to the functioning and failure of habit, respectively. In rebutting this implication Zurbrugg clarifies Beckett's blatantly anti-Proustian stance: 'Proust's pendulum traverses a wider arc, moving from the pole of suffering, via the stationary point of boredom, to the pole of enchantment […] But of this Beckett says nothing or next to nothing'.[42]

It is in this context that Zurbrugg foregrounds Beckett's selective inattention to 'the momentous quality' of Marcel's communication with his grandmother through the partition in The Grand Hotel.[43] Since this 'momentous quality' is an irrefutable exemplification of the 'enchantments of [non-habitual] reality', this omission becomes understandable as it consolidates Beckett's reductive thesis that the narrator's departure from his habitual life in Paris could only occasion unequivocal suffering and anxiety. Similarly, Beckett's one-sided emphasis on Marcel's pain on the telephone and his implication of both technologies within a register of death alerts us once again to a misreading of Proust. Catherine Laws and Nicholas Zurbrugg have both observed that in Beckett's brief summary of the episode, this fêted telephonic connection between the narrator and his grandmother

[41] ibid.
[42] ibid., p.114.
[43] ibid., p.117.

constantly teeters on the brink of disconnection, dissolution, and death.[44] He solely emphasizes that the phone call terminates long before it can be concluded; that the grandmother's telephonic voice reveals her vocal proximity as illusory; and finally, that this voice solely communicates her suffering and mortality to Marcel. The magical accomplishments of Proustian telephony are then presented as mere artifice since Beckett's 'pessimistic' account, according to Zurbrugg, fails to recognize Marcel's sensing of the 'benevolence in the intonation of her voice'.[45] Following Zurbrugg's important critical precedent, the second half of the thesis will demonstrate how Proustian sounds continue to be subjected to distortive processes even when they appear in Beckett's own work.

[44] ibid.
[45] ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

The 'Psychology Notes' and the Embodiment of Difference

Shortly after the publication of *Proust* in 1931, Beckett left the École Normale Supérieure to return to teach at Trinity College, Dublin. As is well-known, he would soon relinquish this lecturing position—and with it, any residual aspirations to an academic career—and thereafter enter a period of 'personal and creative disorientations' that entailed frequent movements between Paris, Dublin, London, and Germany.[1] The protracted personal crises of this phase—his father's death in 1933 being the most noteworthy of these—abated somewhat with his resolve of pursuing an artistic vocation and settling permanently in Paris in 1937.

If the 1920s contributed to Beckett's future career as a writer through his simultaneous immersion—during his undergraduate studies and thereafter—in the French, Italian and English literary traditions, the 1930s have taken centre stage within recent scholarship as the decade during which Beckett embarked on the formative intellectual project of compiling his 'Interwar Notes' on philosophy and psychology.[2] While Beckett Studies has always been preoccupied with the writer's reading practices, the last decade has witnessed a decisive renewal of interest in the constellation of literary, theological, philosophical, scientific and psychological texts enfolded within Beckett's oeuvre. Indeed, Steven Connor has famously christened this ongoing phase of scholarship '"AF—After Feldman"', referring to the 'seismic' effect of the publication of Matthew Feldman's *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Samuel Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (2006).[3] The premise of Feldman's wide-ranging study is that 'the explorations of ignorance later pursued in texts like *The Trilogy* and *Waiting for Godot* were paradoxically founded upon years of self-education' during the 1930s. Beckett's copious 'Interwar Notes'—unearthed from the cellar of his Paris apartment after his death and housed in Trinity College Dublin

[1] Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries: 1936-1937* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p.2.
[2] For a compact yet encyclopaedic overview of Beckett's literary and non-literary education during the 1920s and 30s (especially as it pertains to the writing of *Murphy*), see C. J. Ackerley, 'Introduction', in *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), especially pp.14-19.
[3] Connor's comment appears as a blurb on the back-cover of Matthew Feldman's *Beckett's Books* (London: Continuum, 2006).

since 2006—offer testimony of these 'years of self-education', whose aim, at least initially, was that of a 'larger accruing of systematic knowledge'.[4]

Feldman dates the project as commencing in 1932 with notes on the Western philosophical tradition taken shortly after the publication of *Proust* and lasting until Beckett's jottings on Arnold Geulincx and Fritz Mauthner in the 'Whoroscope' Notebook during his travels in Germany (1936-1937).[5] While originating and culminating in philosophical study, the 'Interwar Notes' undergo an important psychological turn between 1934 and 1935, a period during which Beckett was also undergoing psychotherapy with Wilfred Bion at the Tavistock Clinic, London. Indeed, Feldman argues that Beckett's approach to his psychological readings transcended the 'dispassionate erudition' and the quest for memorable phrases or 'verbal booty' that had characterized his immersion in philosophy; instead, he appears to have used texts on academic psychology and psychoanalysis to gain greater insight into his debilitating psychosomatic symptoms, thereby supplementing his concurrent psychotherapy.[6] In sharp contrast to *Proust*'s argumentative prose, Beckett recorded his engagement with his philosophical and psychological sources by lifting individual words, phrases, and sentences from them. As is well known, Beckett inherited this method of note-taking from James Joyce and famously described it as 'note-snatching' or 'phrase-hunting'.[7] Over an eight-month-period, Beckett read the following works of academic psychology and contemporary psychoanalysis (in the sequence in which they appear), and typed approximately 20,000 words of notes on them: Karin Stephen's *Psychoanalysis and Medicine: A Study of the Wish to Fall Ill* (1933); Robert S. Woodworth's *Contemporary Schools of Psychology* (1931); Sigmund Freud's *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933); Ernest Jones's *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (1923) and *The Treatment of Neuroses* (1920); Alfred Adler's *The Neurotic Constitution* (1907) and *Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology* (1924); Wilhelm Stekel's *Psychoanalysis and Suggestion Therapy* (1923), and finally, Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* (1929).

[4] Feldman, *Beckett's Books*, p.79.
[5] ibid., p.31.
[6] ibid., p.88.
[7] Nixon, *Beckett's German Diaries*, p.103.

The present chapter is concerned with Beckett's psychoanalytical notes in general, and his encounter with Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* in particular. Although the female voice does not feature explicitly in what follows, a consideration of Beckett's documented engagement with Rankian ideas illuminates the 'intersubjective acoustic space' of the plays discussed in the second half of this thesis.[8] The chapter relocates the focus from perception to the percipient, i.e. from the gendered voice to the gendered subjectivity of Beckett's auditors. It is my contention that Beckett's auditors have their prototype in the Rankian subject, who is defined by the traumatic loss of the womb upon birth, and who is animated by the drive to reverse this foundational separation from the maternal body. The turn to Rank explains Beckett's frequent implication of the act of listening to the female voice in concerns such as intrauterine existence, birth, castration, abjection, etc. At the same time, I demonstrate how Beckett's work only shows a limited fidelity to his psychoanalytic sources, often tapping into the tensions and internal contradictions of Rank's thought, where the womb is both desired and dreaded. Beckett severs his readerly umbilicus from Rankian thought in his representation of sons who dread a re-engulfment by the womb, and daughters who, despite being featured in intimate proximity with their mothers, eschew the cycle of biological reproduction as a means of reversing birth trauma.

While Beckett's psychoanalytical notes touch upon a disparate set of topics such as the topography and dynamics of the psychic apparatus and the 'nuts and bolts of neuroses, repression and consequent psychological manifestations', the body is frequently the point at which they intersect and overlap.[9] Josh Cohen argues that psychoanalysis originated with Freud's attention to 'the psychoneurotic body' of the hysteric, which revealed that it was impossible 'to think of the body as a raw biological entity, in isolation from the psyche which processes its experiences'.[10] Accordingly, it is an interchangeably desiring and diseased body—the *libidinal* body proper to psychoanalytic enquiry—that is vividly catalogued throughout Beckett's

---

[8] Nancy A. Jones and Leslie C. Dunn, *Embodied Voices,* p.2.

[9] Feldman, p.96. Anna McMullan also observes that 'Beckett's notes present an intense, fragmented experience of the body, rooted in infant pleasures, cravings and denials deriving from the functions of sometimes interchangeable bodily organs such as mouth, anus, urethra, genitals, as well as the body of others (the breast of the mother in the Stephens notes)'. *Performing Embodiment*, p.8.

[10] Josh Cohen, 'Psychoanalytic Bodies', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. by David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.214-229 (p.214).

reading notes. Its occurrences range from Ernest Jones's discussion of 'bronchial asthma, enuresis, *pavor nocturnus*, gastric & intestinal disturbance' as psychosomatic symptoms, to Karin Stephen's extended accounts of the trajectory of the libido as it courses through the child's body and sequentially concentrates itself around orifices like the mouth and the anus.[11]

In keeping with Freud's claim that libidinal development culminates at the phallic stage, the focus on the 'pre-genital pleasure zones' in commentaries like Stephen's eventually shifts to anatomical signs of sexual difference and their visual coding by children of both sexes in terms of 'castration'.[12] This transition, from a genitally-indifferent infantile body to one where the genitalia is of paramount importance, is reflected in the increasing references to the castration complex in Beckett's 'note-snatchings', which are subsequently discussed in greater detail. Two important considerations are in order here. First, the aforementioned caveat about the specificity of the psychoanalytic body—where corporeality is inextricably intertwined with the psyche (and *vice versa*)—is equally applicable to the conceptualization of the sexed body in Beckett's psychoanalytical readings. As Derek Hook has appositely remarked, the bodily difference between the sexes is merely a starting point in (Freudian) psychoanalysis, which is concerned instead with the 'psychosexuality of masculinity and femininity':

> The important distinction to be aware of in Freud's work is not that of anatomical distinctions per se, but that of *psychical consequences*, in other words, unconscious processes of desire, fantasy, anxiety which attach to the perception and understanding of such distinctions, particularly as they come to be understood with reference to ideas of absence and presence.[13]

Such a subjective and affective perception of genital 'absence and presence' in Beckett's 'Psychology Notes' is found in transcriptions such as the following from Stephen: 'Horrified early discovery that women are without penes, and so would

---

[11] Cited in Feldman, p.101.

[12] Karin Stephen, *The Wish to Fall Ill: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p.106.

[13] Derek Hook, 'Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference, and the Castration Problematic', in *The Gender of Psychology*, ed. by Floretta Boonzaier, Peace Kiguwa and Tamara Schefer (Lansdowne: Juta Academic Publishing, 2006), pp.45-59 (p.47-48, emphasis original).

want to steal the man's. Horror of intercourse, fear of penetration lest the woman should not let the penis go' (TCD MS 10971/7/3). The second, and even more crucial, clarification bears on the theoretical plurality of Beckett's psychoanalytical sources. The latter resist any attempt to identify a coherent or even dominant position on most concepts addressed in the 'Psychology Notes', *especially* that of sexual difference. Even a rigorous empirical account of the Notes, such as Feldman's does not question how or why Beckett curated this specific list of texts and thinkers. At best, his choice of post-Freudian figures reveals an awareness of the rampant factionalism within the 'psychoanalytic cultures' of Beckett's time (to use Angela Moorjani's term) and his principled attempt to familiarize himself with various dissenting voices.[14] Several anecdotes and remarks from Beckett, routinely rehearsed within Beckett Studies, confirm this. According to Deirdre Bair's biography, Beckett asked 'probing questions' to his psychiatrist nephew, Peter Beckett, concerning 'the differences in theory and practice in England and America, especially in Kleinian as opposed to Freudian analysis'.[15] In a similar vein, Beckett reportedly told J. D. O'Hara that he sided with Freud in the latter's conflict with Jung.[16]

Indeed, few topics polarized the early-twentieth-century psychoanalytic movement as much as Freud's ongoing theorization of the castration complex. It would be beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a detailed narrative of the internal warring and turbulence between psychoanalytic circles in Vienna, Berlin, and London on this account. It suffices to note, however, that Freud's increasing privileging of the castration complex was broadly contested on two grounds: Franz Alexander, August Starcke, and Otto Rank sought a plausible explanation for the ubiquity and university of the castration complex; on the other hand, and in what is commonly known as the 'Freud-Jones debate', Karl Abraham, Ernest Jones and Melanie Klein disputed Freud's centring of female sexuality on the loss of the penis

---

[14] Angela Moorjani, 'Beckett and Psychoanalysis', in *Palgrave Advances in Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.172-193 (p.172).
[15] Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1993). Rina Kim's Kleinian reading of the lost woman in Beckett's work is premised on details such as these, although she goes significantly further and argues that Beckett had read Klein's *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932) and 'On the Sense of Loneliness' (1963), whose echoes she traces in *Happy Days* and *Company* respectively. See *Beyond Mourning and Melancholia: Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others*, pp.127-131; 163-169.
[16] J. D. O'Hara, *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: Structural Uses of Depth Psychology* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1997), p.292.

and offered alternative accounts of it.[17] While I am not suggesting that Beckett's limited foray into psychoanalysis was enough to apprise him thoroughly of these complex debates, what remains incontestable is that the specific texts by Stephen, Jones, and Rank that Beckett read allude explicitly to, and participate in, the theoretical controversy around the castration complex. In addition to the Freudian position, the 'Psychology Notes' document alternative theorizations, such as those where castration is conceived as a non-genital—and therefore, universal—loss, that of access to the maternal body, and others in which the mother-daughter relationship is ostensibly liberated of the antagonism ascribed to it in the Freudian model of the female Oedipus complex. In particular, Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* advances a theoretical framework within which male and female subjectivity is determined by the traumatic separation from the maternal body upon birth. It is to Beckett's engagement with Rankian tenets that I now turn, beginning with the foundational concept of birth trauma.

FORCED EVICTION: BIRTH AS TRAUMA

As a result of the conspicuous presence of (intra)uterine tropes in Beckett's work, critics assumed his familiarity with Rank's theory of birth trauma long before the 'Interwar Notes' were discovered. Indeed, Phil Baker privileged it as one of the chief psychoanalytic 'myths' permeating the Beckettian oeuvre, and informing its 'deep investment in a whole retrospective landscape of loss […] constituted by notions such as the paradise of the womb, pre-Oedipal plenitude, paternal prohibition, oceanic regression'.[18] Others like Angela Moorjani have argued that Beckett intuited the proto-Rankian postulate of a regressive longing for an existence-before-existence even before reading *The Trauma of Birth*. She attributes this commonality to Beckett's and Rank's shared knowledge of the Schopenhauerian concept of non-being and nirvana.[19]

Early on in the treasury of phrases from Rank's text, Beckett copied the following proposition from the first chapter of the book: 'Analysis the belated

[17] For incisive overviews of these dissenting positions, see respectively Juliet Mitchell, 'Introduction – I', in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), pp.1-26 (p.18), and Dominique Hecq, Russell Grigg and Craig Smith, 'Introduction', in *Female Sexuality: Early Psychoanalytic Controversies* (London: Karnac, 2015), pp.9-17.
[18] Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*, p.iii.
[19] Angela Moorjani, 'Beckett and Psychoanalysis', pp.173-174.

accomplishment of incomplete mastery of birth trauma. ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Analytic ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ /situation identified with intrauterine one, patient back in position of unborn' (TCD MS 10971/8/35). Based on patients' symbolization in their dreams of an impending analytic termination as a second birth, Rank equates analytic treatment with a return to the mother's womb. Prefiguring the first of his many attempts to root the psychical in the physiological, he claims that the patient's 'fixation on the analyst', i.e. the transference, is a revivification of 'the earliest physiological relation to the mother's womb' during prenatal life (*TB,* p.4). Rank reconceives the primary task of the psychoanalytic cure as a deliberate re-establishment of symbolic intrauterine life by putting the 'patient back in position of unborn'; the repetition of the experience of being 'born' at the end of the treatment allows the patient to negotiate their rebirth and in the process master the trauma of the unwanted, original expulsion from the womb. The analyst, then, comes to function initially as the bearer of this surrogate womb, only to sever the patient decisively from the mother through the dissolution of the transference, conceived in turn as a rupture of the symbolic umbilicus.

Rank envisions the womb as a haven where 'one [is] protected and warmed' while there is 'no kind of disturbance from outside', and which guarantees an 'uninhibited gratification of all physical needs' (*TB*, p.86; p.30; p.77). Birth, according to Rank, is a traumatic event for two reasons: first, the expulsion from the mother's body occasions anxiety and inflicts physiological injuries upon the infant; second, from a libidinal point of view, the dispossession of the womb upon birth also interrupts the intrauterine plenitude—a state associated with the absence of want or desire—that can never be re-created after birth. Indeed, Beckett is attentive to the manner in which the 'trauma' attending birth entails the physiological dovetailing into the psychical: 'Primal anxiety-affect at birth […] is from the very beginning not merely an expression of the new-born child's physiological injuries (dyspnoea – constriction – anxiety), but in consequence of the change from a highly pleasurable situation to an extremely painful one, acquires a psychical quality of feeling' (TCD MS 10971/8/36). As a consequence of this unwilled banishment from the maternal body, the Rankian subject is characterized by a life-long libidinal striving to re-attain a womb-like state. According to commentators such as Laura Salisbury, this regressive longing is essentially a reworking of the Freudian death drive:

> For Rank, as for Freud, the pleasure principle and the death drive are chiastically folded into one other, with pleasure's aim to return the organism to the state of quiescence that precedes birth becoming compellingly elided with an unconscious fantasy of the experience of death.[20]

Since all humans experience 'the everlasting longing' to retreat into the womb, the anxiety generated by the birth-event keeps this dangerous nostalgia—inimical to human functioning and development, as Rank argues—in check (*TB*, p.75). Rank lays out a continuum of possible responses to birth trauma, whose vicissitudes are 'neurotic reproduction', i.e. a symbolic reversal of birth in the realm of psychopathology, and 'heroic compensation' or the disavowal of the experience of birth trauma as in the case of various mythical heroes. Bookended by the asocial neurotic—to which Beckett pays the greatest attention in the notes—and the hero is the realm of the 'normal' individual who realizes her wish to be back in the womb through a range of unconscious symbolic adjustments. In a single sweep, Rank declares everyday acts of sleeping and dreaming, as well as various human accomplishments in the realm of aesthetics, philosophical knowledge etc., as facilitated by the drive to surmount the birth trauma.

BIRTH TRAUMA AND 'CASTRATED' MASCULINITY

Rank's departure from the Freudian theory of castration anxiety forms part of his discussion of infantile anxiety. Beckett noted that for Rank, 'just as all anxiety goes back to anxiety at birth (dyspnoea), so every pleasure has as its final aim the reestablishment of the primal intrauterine pleasure' (*TB*, p.17). In identifying the birth event as the prototype for all subsequent instances of anxiety, Rank departs from the privileging of castration anxiety by the dominant (Freudian) position on the matter. In Freud's writings, the little boy's experience of castration anxiety is governed by the mechanism of deferred action. In the first instance, the boy apprehends women's anatomical sexual difference for the very first time; this exposure is unsettling since it undermines his hitherto unchallenged belief,

[20] Laura Salisbury, 'Psychology', in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, ed. by Anthony Uhlmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.312-323 (p.317).

characteristic of the phallic phase, in the presence of the penis in both sexes. Since the phallic phase only allows for two possibilities—'having a male genital or being castrated'—the boy concludes that women have been castrated.[21] The conclusion re-activates an earlier moment where the boy has been directly or indirectly threatened with castration by an adult figure, and he retrospectively imbues this threat with plausibility for the first time. The realization that women have been castrated and that he, too, could be dispossessed of the penis, generates anxiety in the boy. Since Freud's account of castration anxiety is elaborated primarily from the perspective of the boy who takes his own anatomy as the norm, it thus views the female body as a site of loss and even mutilation. It posits this first sighting of the woman's 'castrated' genitals as something of a watershed moment in male subjectivity, in whose wake the security of his ownership of the penis is fundamentally left in doubt; just the fear of *potentially* meeting the woman's fate is enough to check the boy's Oedipal desire to possess the mother. Rank's theory of castration anxiety also takes the boy's shocking and frightening registration of sexual difference as a point of departure. Unlike the Freudian viewpoint, however, his explanation of the 'so-called castration anxiety' is premised on a separation that is not just feared but has already taken place: the separation from the womb during birth.

Rank opens the second chapter of his book by citing quotidian instances of infantile anxiety like the child's fear of being alone in a dark room, the phobia of small animals etc. Gesturing towards Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (published four years earlier, in 1920), he contends that children compulsively and symbolically repeat birth trauma in an attempt to master it. The situations within which these repetitions take place are often derivatively linked to the 'memory' of the womb, and children's expressions of anxiety thus help to abreact, in a piecemeal manner, the undischarged reservoir of anxiety caused by birth trauma. In light of this explanation, the boy's sighting of female genitals catalyses his undisposed primal anxiety 'on account of their vaguely imagined (or remembered) relation to birth (and procreation)' (*TB,* p.20). The focus of the Rankian child's reading of the image of 'female sex organs' is thus not the missing penis but their function as a conduit through 'which one was painfully thrust out' of the maternal body (p.38).

---

[21] Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books, 2006), p.56.

Furthermore, Rank advocates an expansive understanding of ‘castration’ as a *series* of events instead:

> The threat of castration hits not only the vaguely remembered primal traumata [of birth] and the undisposed-of anxiety representing it, but also a second trauma, consciously experienced and painful in character, though later obliterated by repression, namely weaning, the intensity and persistence of which falls far short of that of the first trauma, but owes a great part of its ‘traumatic’ effect to it. Only in the third place, then, does there appear the genital trauma of castration *regularly phantasied* in the history of the individual and, at most, experienced as a threat (*TB*, p.21).

Genital castration anxiety thus screens the unconscious memory of the trauma of weaning and birth and is nourished by the affect that properly belongs to these two antecedent ruptures of the corporeal tie to the mother. Such an argument sets up a triptych of symbolically-linked scenarios (discovery of sexual difference-weaning-birth) that are centred, in turn, upon lost access to corresponding female bodily zones (the genitals-breast-womb).

At the same time, Rank is not the only thinker to posit a loss-centered male subjectivity. Karin Stephen, in her exposition of the Oedipus Complex in *The Wish to Fall Ill* (1960), argues in a similar vein that the ‘motif [of the] dread of the loss of something essential to happiness’ underlying the boy’s castration anxiety is rooted in a long series of prior losses of loved objects: ‘The child is already familiar with the pain of having to part from precious things—first the nipple must be relinquished, later the faeces, to suit other people. Precious toys are continually being lost or appropriated by others. The logical inference, if you can call it so, at this stage, seems to be that perhaps the penis also may have to be relinquished’.[22] This observation interests Beckett sufficiently for him to summarize it as a brisk rhetorical question: ‘Having experienced forcible separation from nipple, faeces, toys, why not also from penis?’ (TCD MS 10971/7/3). Even the doctrinaire Freudian, Ernest Jones, stretches Stephen’s list of losses all the way back to the expulsion from the womb

---

[22] Karin Stephen, *The Wish to Fall Ill: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p.167.

upon birth. In ‘Cold, Disease and Birth’, one of the constituent essays in *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (1948) that Beckett read, Jones wonders:

> how great must be the infant’s resentment on being expelled from Paradise, and how strong is the perennial desire to return to it. After the painful act of birth has been gone through, the most prominent demonstration to the infant of the castration it has just undergone—in being deprived of the nest it formed owned as part of its total self—is certainly the sensation of cold air.[23]

Beckett possibly refers to this paper in his notes when he writes: ‘Contributory sources of castration complex (identified with penis), weaning from the nipple, loss of mother’s body at birth (suffering & resentment of infant ~~xx~~ on being expelled from Paradise’ (TCD MS 10971/8/17).

On the whole, Beckett Studies is yet to take note of Beckett’s well-documented schooling in the arguments of one side of this thorny psychoanalytic debate—comprising of Stephen, Jones, Rank—over Freud’s restricted understanding of ‘castration’. These attempts to re-centre castration anxiety on the history of the boy’s bodily relation to the mother have important implications. For one, the redrawing of the term’s boundaries reverses the boy’s displacement of lack onto the female body *à la* Freud, since Rankian ‘castration anxiety’ is generated by the doubly-castrated male subject’s (unconscious) reliving of the processes of birth and weaning. Something important is stake here, and that is our understanding of masculinity in Beckett’s later work, which (at least in the psychoanalytic paradigm) is further inseparable from his reformulation of femininity. After all, this psychoanalytic debate that pivots on the seemingly minor and hair-splitting debate on the ambit of the term ‘castration’ ultimately posits and vacillates between two models of masculinity. Freud’s resistance to the unmooring of castration from its genital referent ‘place[s] a maximum distance between the male subject and the notion of lack’, since the inclusion of birth and weaning as traumatic castrations would imply that masculinity, no less than femininity, is structured around lack and the privations that Lacan and Beckett's psychoanalytic sources catalogue.

---

[23] Ernest Jones, ‘Cold, Disease and Birth’, in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 5th edn. (London: Maresfield Reprints, 1948), pp.320-325 (p.324, my emphasis).

Despite this revised causality, the birth-trauma-ridden boy still perceives the woman as an anxiogenic figure who continues to carry 'the curse on her genitals' because of her reproductive capacities (*TB*, 37).[24] Indeed, Rank explains the boy's phallocentric assumption that men and women alike possess the penis as a consequence of his denial of the female genitals since 'he wishes to avoid being reminded of the horror of passing through this organ' (p.38). Such ambivalence arrests the retrospective nostalgia through which the maternal body had been hitherto viewed in *The Trauma of Birth*. Stated more precisely, this nostalgia for an idyllic intrauterine life is still preserved, but only for the fantasized interior of the mother's body where 'one [was] protected and warmed' with 'no kind of disturbance from the outside' (p.33; p.70). With the introduction of castration anxiety, however, the postnatal boy's ambivalence towards the mother introduces a genital/womb dichotomy that is, in turn, mapped spatially onto the female body: the unseen but 'remembered' inside is associated with uterine bliss, while the breast and external genitalia function as sources of anxiety. Rank's discussion of infantile sexual theories best exemplifies the child's varying relation to the depth and surface of the female body. Contradicting Freud's position on the subject once again, he argues that children's universal attempts to arrive at an explanation of the birth process is ultimately a means of symbolically reversing it, or re-entering the womb: 'the real interest of the child lies […] in the problem of *how to get inside.* This, however, does not refer so much to the problem of procreation, as adults conclude from themselves, but points rather to return to the place where one was before' (p.31). Some elaborate fantasies engendered by the great enigma of the origin of babies are that they are famously brought by the stork; they are defecated by the mother, or retrieved from within her body by cutting up her navel. Rank argues—and Beckett notes—that all such infantile theories unknowingly but concertedly manoeuvre around the existence of 'the female sex organs':

> Common characteristic of all infantile birth ~~xxxxxx~~ theories, also illustrated in myths and fairy tales, is the denial of the female sex

[24] In fact, he goes on to argue that it is on account of our mass-repression of birth trauma that women continue to be repudiated and denigrated socially and intellectually, and that the project of undoing this repression (through Rank's modified version of psychoanalysis) could assist in ridding the stigma associated with the mother.

> organs, due to repression of birth trauma experienced there. Painful fixation on the function of the female genital as organ of birth lies at the bottom of all neurotic disturbances of adult sex life, psychical impotence as well as feminine frigidity (TCD MS 1097/1/35).

The Rankian child thus longs to return to the womb but is confronted with an enveloping bodily exterior that only reinforces the birth event and the child's irreversible banishment from the womb. As Beckett's note on infantile birth theories above indicates, a possible way of resolving the double bind of this predicament is by disavowing the container to secure symbolic access to the contained. Given the conditions under which a re-entry to the womb is sought, i.e. through a denial of and flight from female corporeality, the latter is posited as an autonomous and ungendered space fully detached from the maternal body to which it belongs: indeed, as if the relocation within the female body would neutralize sexual difference itself.

THE DAUGHTER'S BIRTH TRAUMA

Freud's most sustained account of the vicissitudes of the mother-daughter relationship is advanced in a lecture entitled 'Femininity', from *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1931). This was the third text that Beckett read during his psychoanalytical note-snatchings, following Karin Stephen's *The Wish to Fall Ill* and Robert S. Woodworth's *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*.[25] It is difficult to determine whether Beckett read 'Femininity' in particular, considering that the notes are primarily from Lecture XXIX 'Revision of the Theory of Dreams', Lecture XXX 'The Dissection of the Psychical Personality' and Lecture XXXII 'Anxiety of Instinctual Life'. What is certain, however, is Beckett's awareness of the female Oedipus complex and castration complex from the many other texts on anxiety—Freudian and otherwise—that he carefully read.

Freud argues that during the pre-Oedipal period (typically up to four or five years of age), the girl remains in a 'rich' and 'long-lasting' phase of attachment to her mother, who is established as her first love object due to the latter's caregiving

[25] Matthew Feldman, *Beckett's Books*, p.30.

role and satisfaction of the child's vital needs.[26] However, during the phallic phase, the girl discovers the possession of the penis by her sexual other, judges it superior to her clitoris, and concludes that she is castrated. The penis envy generated by the girl's castration complex disrupts the hitherto affectionate relationship with the mother and inaugurates the Oedipus situation. The daughter blames and repudiates the mother for her castration and transfers her affections to the father in the hope that he will make good this maternal deprivation. When even the want of a gift of the penis remains unrealized, the girl settles instead for a passive wish for a baby from the father based on the unconscious penis/baby equivalence. The trajectory of the girl's sexual development is thus considerably more arduous than the boy's, involving a crucial shift from a homosexual to a heterosexual object choice, and from the clitoris to the vagina as her primary erotogenic zone. When undertaken correctly, the girl fulfils her 'biological destiny' and attains a 'normal femininity' that Freud understands as reproductive heterosexuality.[27] However, the significant price that she pays for the acquisition of this normality is an alienation from the pre-Oedipal mother following her unquestioning embracing of the lack of the penis that she never had in the first place. Indeed, Jean Laplanche astutely notes the glaring asymmetry as per which Freud has the boy anxiously disavow the visual perception of the female genitalia, while the girl shows no corresponding disbelief and proceeds straight from 'perception [of the penis] to belief [in her castration]'.[28] The girl's quest for repairing this lack requires that she first debase the mother as similarly castrated, and subsequently perceive as a rival for the father's baby: '[t]he turning away from the mother is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate. A hate of that kind may become striking and last all through life'.[29]

Rank's explanation of the evolution of the mother-daughter relationship has to be simultaneously contextualized against the previously-discussed redefinition of castration anxiety as an unconscious derivative of the primal anxiety at birth, and his privileging of sexual reproduction as 'the supreme biological attempt to overcome the birth trauma' (*TB,* p.43). In the chapter entitled 'Sexual Gratification', Rank

---

[26] Sigmund Freud, 'Femininity', in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 2, Penguin Freud Library, (London: Penguin, 1973), pp.145-169 (p.153).
[27] ibid., p.156.
[28] Jean Laplanche, *Problématiques II: Castration et Symbolisations* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), p.80 (my translation).
[29] 'Femininity', p.152.

identifies sexual reproduction as the most ‘far-reaching’ of all methods of compensating for birth trauma due to its optimal gratification of the primal libido’s yearning for intrauterine existence: that is, its being significantly more effective than symbolic attempts at the reversal of birth in everyday life (e.g. through dreaming, inhabiting claustral spaces) without crossing that threshold of libidinal appeasement beyond which primal anxiety is unleashed, as is the case with pathological attempts at an unmediated return to the mother in the neuroses and psychoses.

Rank retains the superstructure of the female Oedipus complex as postulated by Freud while supplanting its animating principle. The girl changes her object from the mother to the father here as well; that said, in eventually becoming a future mother from a former daughter, the ‘castration’ that she symbolically compensates through reproduction is not the missing penis but the lost maternal womb. Within the framework of birth trauma, the girl’s deprecation of her sexual identity—her ‘so-called envy of the penis’, according to Rank (p.38)—results from two causes: the universal association of the female genitals with the expulsion from the womb, and a realization of the hindrance that her anatomy poses in her ability to regain entry into the mother’s body through sexual means when compared to ‘the inestimable advantage’ that the man has ‘in his being able partially to go back into the mother, by means of the penis, itself representing the child’ (*TB,* p.39). For Rank, the girl’s momentous choice of the father as love object in Freud’s narrative follows her understanding that the only means through which she can re-experience uterine bliss is not so much by a masculine penetration of a mother-substitute but by becoming a mother herself:

> It is a matter, then, for the girl to give up all idea of an active return to the mother, a penetration which is recognized or imagined to be the masculine privilege, and in the supreme joy of motherhood, to be content with the wish to regain the blessed primal state by means of passive reproduction—that is, by means of pregnancy and the birth of her own child (*TB*, p.42)

Rank’s view of the primacy of sexual compensation of the trauma of birth necessitates that both sexes regain access to a prenatal state through the intervention of a third. A refusal of this mediation by maintaining a direct relationship with the

womb is considered a developmental failure, resulting in a painful and pathological mode of approaching prenatal existence through hysterical conversions, psychoses, sexual perversions, and the inhibition of reproductive sexuality. While the female mother-substitute functions as this conduit in the boy's case, the girl must paradoxically transfer her libido to a male object—first the father and eventually his proxy—to be able to find her way back to the womb eventually. In other words, she must first transform herself into a container for her child to be able to be re-contained by her own mother.

There appears to be an inconsistency in the Rankian hierarchy of the masculine-penetrative and female-reproductive methods of compensating birth trauma. On the one hand, his version of the girl's penis envy is clearly premised on the aforementioned 'inestimable advantage' that the penis affords the man in re-entering the mother. On the other hand, Rank also implies that the girl's belief in the inferiority of the female genitals is a warranted, indeed *necessary*, illusion that, in its re-inflection of her psychosexual trajectory from a pre-Oedipal/clitoral activity to an Oedipal/vaginal passivity, ultimately equips her 'to procure for herself *the most far-reaching approach* to the primal gratification' through pregnancy and childbirth (*TB*, p.189, my emphasis). Thus, childbearing is conceived in no uncertain terms as the most potent method for gratifying the primal womb libido. However, no sooner has the girl *qua* future mother been accorded the privilege that this anatomical superiority becomes the very cause of her marginalization from the realm of cultural production. Rank posits a mutual exclusivity between the girl's reproductive and artistic compensation of birth trauma when he argues that the former method is so self-sufficient that for the woman, the choice is always weighted in favour of mothering a child versus mothering a work of art. Conversely—and ironically enough—, man's biological inadequacy for childbearing ensures his dominance in the aesthetic realm since symbolic reproduction becomes his primary means of re-acquiring the womb: 'the man, here depending on unconscious identification, has to create for himself a substitute for this reproduction, by identifying himself with the "mother" and the creation resulting from it of cultural and artistic productions' (*TB*, p.189). Thus, while the woman identifies with motherhood as a biological function, the man's identification with it is as a *metaphor* for artistic creation, resulting in 'the lesser part played by woman in cultural development, from which, then, her social

under-valuation follows as a secondary effect, whilst virtually the whole creation of civilization has only resulted from man's libidinal overestimation of the maternal' (p.189).

BEYOND RANK

It is important to register the limit beyond which Rank's ideas did not resonate with Beckett. In his reading of O's retreat into his mother's room in *Film* as a womb fantasy-gone-awry, Graley Herren has convincingly demonstrated Beckett's ambivalence towards his psychoanalytic sources, particularly Rank. Herren argues that Beckett rejects the 'self-evident article of faith' that the womb is a utopic space whose loss we are constantly seeking to overturn, and that 'the mythical womb of regression turns out to be less fantasy than nightmare' in *Film*.[30]

Beckett frequently recounted the intrauterine memories that emerged during his treatment with Wilfred Bion (late 1933-1935) and remained with him for life. In the famous *Vogue* interview with John Gruen (1970), he described his life before birth as 'an existence where no voice, no possible movement could free me from the agony and darkness I was subjected to'. Claustrophobia cuts across each of these recollections and the experience of being lodged in his mother's body is one of interminable darkness and immobility. The womb is also envisioned as a one-way sound receptacle, an echo chamber resonating with distress, which can be permeated by external voices and sounds while sealing off the foetus' own cries for help. He would later elaborate these 'extraordinary memories of being in the womb' to James Knowlson:

> I certainly came up with some, intrauterine memories. I remember feeling trapped, of being imprisoned and unable to escape, of crying to be let out but no one could hear, no one was listening. I remember being in pain but being unable to do anything about it.[31]

[30] Graley Herren, 'A Womb with a View: *Film* as Regression Fantasy', in *Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 237-250 (p.237).
[31] As Martin Esslin reports: 'Sam told me (and I know he's told other people) that he remembers being in his mother's womb at a dinner party, where, under the table, he could remember the voices talking'. 'Martin Esslin on Beckett the Man', in *Beckett Remembering/Remembering Beckett*, ed. by Elizabeth Knowlson and James Knowlson (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), pp.146-154 (p.151).

Intrauterine life was so paradigmatic of suffering for Beckett that he considered his writing as motivated by an ethical responsibility of giving voice to ‘that enclosed poor embryo’.[32] Beckett’s personal recollections thus challenge the idealized picture of prenatal existence from *The Trauma of Birth* in every possible manner. More accurately, perhaps, they recall those passages from the book where Rank identifies the prototype for most religious punishments—indeed, the very idea of Hell—in the excruciating suffering of the foetus in the womb: ‘*Eternal punishment in hell*, in particular, which corresponds to the Greek punishment in the underworld, represents in detail reproductions of the intrauterine situation (chains, heat, etc.) […]’ (pp.131-132, his emphasis). In one of the longest extractions from the book, Beckett condensed Rank’s argument, supplementing the latter’s analysis of the womb-like punishments endured by Ixion and Tantalus from Greek antiquity, and the similarity of Christ’s crucifixion with them:

> Punishments representing primal situation, with stress on painful ~~xxxxxx~~ aspect: Ixion on his 4-spoked wheel; Tantalos on wheel, threatened with stone, eternally tortured by hunger and thirst; Sysyphos, for ever rolling back the stone; Christ, the spokes of the wheeling becoming the cross (TCD 10971/8/36).[33]

Beckett also departs from Rank’s version of the female Oedipus Complex in his representation of the mother-daughter relationship in plays such as *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*. Critics agree amongst themselves that the progressive movement in Beckett’s representation of gendered subjectivity peaks when women begin defining themselves in relation to other women and the mother-daughter relationship comes to predominate, in particular. Ben-Zvi argues:

> When seeking an “other”, most turn to their like, to their mothers. One has only to think of works such as *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* with their emphasis on mothers and daughters to realize how rare it is for a male

[32] John Gruen, ‘Samuel Beckett talks about Beckett’, *Vogue*, 127 (February 1970), p.108; *Damned to Fame*, p.177; ‘Martin Esslin on Beckett the Man’, p.151, all cited in Graley Herren, ‘A Womb with a View: *Film* as Regression Fantasy’, pp.242-243.

[33] Yoshiki Tajiri observes that Beckett’s ‘Whoroscope’ Notebook also contains a three-page entry on Ixion, Sisyphus and Tantalus intended for inclusion into *Murphy*, and surmises that it is an expansion of this note from Rank. *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: the Organs and Senses in Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.33.

> playwright to touch on this relationship, depicted, when at all, by women writers.[34]

Contrary to Rank's prescription of the daughter's turn to the father—and subsequently another male object—the mother-daughter relationship in Beckett often remains conspicuously un-triangulated by a male third, whether father, husband or son. Furthermore, daughters do not identify with the mother as the agent of biological reproduction (stipulated by both Freud and Rank) but rather as artistic creation. In these plays, the daughter takes on the mother's perspective (e.g. the second act in *Footfalls*, or the lullaby-like narrative in *Rockaby*) as respectively means to birth oneself into existence or to merge anew with the mother.

[34] Linda Ben-Zvi, 'Introduction', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, p.xiii.

PART II

1958-1976

CHAPTER THREE

Web and Flow: the Abject Female Voice in *Embers* and *Eh Joe*

At a late point in *The Unnamable* (1958 [1953]), the narrator once again craves 'a second of silence', a momentary respite from the unbroken sonority of a voice against which he is defenceless. The certitude that his 'tormentors' could not inflict a worse punishment on him, were he to resist listening to this voice, is interrogated and eventually undermined as he suddenly envisions an even more horrifying possibility:

> …is it possible that one day I shall stop listening, without having to fear the worst, namely, I don't know, what can be worse than this, a woman's voice perhaps, I hadn't thought of that, they might engage a soprano (*U*, p.79).

The voice's role in this striking torture fantasy, which clearly epitomises aural violence for the narrator, rests on three interlocking attributes: it is a woman's voice that, in the act of singing enters 'the realm of the voice beyond language', and is amplified to a sonic extreme in the soprano's piercing vocal range.[1] Sarah West has argued that Beckett's pre-dramatic prose writings, such as the Trilogy (1951-53) and *Texts for Nothing* (1955), function as experimental laboratories where blueprints of the voices of his subsequent plays are laid out.[2] Following West's claim, the unnamable's dread of the female voice anticipates the auditors of *Embers* (1959) and *Eh Joe* (1965), and their confrontation with what I am here calling the 'abject' female voice.[3] Derived from Julia Kristeva's account of abjection (1980), I use the term to designate an unruly female voice—figured interchangeably as an envelope as well as an invader—whose audition across time and space is linked in these plays to an unsettling of their protagonists' subjective and bodily integrity.[4]

[1] Mladen Dolar maps the 'non-voice' on a spectrum running from the 'prelinguistic' (coughing, hiccups, babbling) to the 'postlinguistic' (laughter and singing), where the two extremes correspond respectively to 'voices beneath and beyond the signifier'. *A Voice and Nothing More*, p.23.

[2] *Say It*, pp.27-28.

[3] *Embers* was directed by Donald McWhinnie and first broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 24 June 1959. *Eh Joe*, Beckett's first work for television, also remains his most commonly produced teleplay. Alan Gibson directed the play's premiere on BBC2 on 4 July 1966, while Beckett took charge of the German *He Joe* for the Süddeutscher Rundfunk in the same year.

[4] *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

Kristeva defines 'abjection' as a defence against states of psychic and bodily non-differentiation. Derived from *abicere* (to throw away or cast off), abjection demarcates and 'excludes' that which is experienced as 'being opposed to *I*', establishing the earliest iteration of an inside/outside and self/other boundary through which the subject gradually acquires an autonomous body necessary for symbolic functioning. What is jettisoned as the abject is then consigned to a register of defilement, whose polluting properties derive from its boundary-defying quality: 'It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order [...] The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.[5] Kristeva emphasizes that abjection is a tenuous and unfinished process; in its refusal to be decisively banished, the resurfacings of the abject within the Symbolic continually imperil the subject's self-definition, rendering the inside/outside opposition 'vigorous but pervious, violent but uncertain'.[6] The subject's confrontations with the excluded abject during these moments are intensely ambivalent. On the one hand, 'the abject entices and attracts the subject ever closer to its edge', while on the other hand, it induces fear, disgust, and revulsion—manifested as gagging, retching etc.—to defend against a rupture of self-containment, and ensure a safe distance between the subject and the abject.[7] The inherent inadmissibility of conditions of merger and intermingling—the cornerstone of the theory of abjection—bears directly on the subject's relationship to the maternal body with which it was indiscriminately fused before birth. This condition of being simultaneously inside and at one with the maternal body makes the latter the first entity to be subjected to the expulsive violence of abjection. According to Kelly Oliver, 'the child hates that body but only because it can't be free of it. That body, the body without borders, the body out of which this abject subject came is a horrifying, devouring body. It is a body that evokes rage and fear'.[8] Regardless of the cause (e.g. exposure to the corpse, certain foods or bodily fluids) each subsequent experience of abjection derives from and is a reminder of, this most primal erasure of the self/other limit.

---

[5] *Powers of Horror,* p.4

[6] ibid., p.7.

[7] Elizabeth Grosz, 'The Body of Signification', in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the Work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (Routledge: London, 1990), pp.80-103 (p.89).

[8] *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double-Bind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p.60.

Abjection evidently runs counter to Rank's theory of birth trauma. The unmediated and undifferentiated nature of prenatal existence, which Kristeva considers the prototype of all future threats to identity, is viewed by Rank as the ultimate libidinal aspiration of re-attaining the 'primal pleasure' of the womb—indeed, according to him, the birth event is traumatic precisely because it interrupts this plenitudinous intrauterine economy once and for all. On the other hand, abjection, and its necessity for initiating the eventual entry into the Symbolic, is clearly modelled on birth and the umbilical rupture even as it reverses the agent of expulsion from the mother to the infant: '[…] "I" become, "I" give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit'.[9] Furthermore, we have seen that Rank re-theorizes castration anxiety as a conflict between the child's memory of the womb and the impossibility of the desired return to it, while the very prospect of re-entry into the mother's body evokes fear in the Kristevan paradigm. Abjection serves as a guardrail against this 'inverted castration' in Kelly Oliver's terms: 'The abject mother's threat can be read as a castration threat of sorts, an inverted castration. The child fears the lack of separation. It fears being sucked back into the mother through her sex'.[10] Thus, although both Rank and Kristeva view the maternal body as a receptacle, they describe the experience of containment within it in radically divergent terms: the theory of birth trauma and the primal libido is predicated on the desire to reverse the expulsion from the maternal body upon birth, while that of abjection decrees this separation-individuation from the mother. In doing so, the latter functions as an instructive lens through which the horror of the womb found in Beckett's fictional and dramatic works can be understood.

OUTSIDE/ INSIDE/BEHIND/AROUND: LOCATING THE ABJECT FEMALE VOICE

The French psychoanalyst Guy Rosolato argues that the body, instead of being a neatly contained entity, is extended, stretched and dispersed beyond its ostensible confines in space. He contends that vision and hearing (along with touch and smell) engender the body's 'expanded fields' [*les champs d'extension du corps*] in their

---

[9] *Powers of Horror*, p.3.
[10] *Reading Kristeva*, p.55.

exploration and perception of its proximate and distant surroundings.[11] Rosolato brilliantly demonstrates how the various components of the sensorium are *defensively* orientated in space so that the body is not overburdened or breached by sudden or excessive stimuli. The visual and the auditory fields, in particular, are so organized that they complement and compensate each other's shortcomings and establish an unbroken zone of surveillance around the body. Rosolato advances a striking corporeal topology in which the body is sectioned into an anterior and exterior zone governed by sight, and corresponding posterior and interior zone that is inaccessible to vision and manned specifically by hearing.[12]

In this schema, the auditory field's simultaneous openings behind and within the body—especially the latter's undermining of the protective covering of the ear as an orifice—renders it susceptible to unanticipated shocks. Indeed, Rosolato characterizes it as the realm of surprise and indeterminacy, since sounds can be fleeting and evanescent, heard in darkness, or, rather frighteningly, when their recipient is alone and assured of solitude. More crucially, the posterior orientation of hearing makes it vulnerable to 'any [sonic] attack from behind, or any zone outside vision that, in a fitting military strategy, takes on the body from the rear'—a fantasmatic image of a sensory siege that is concretized in psychosis, where the body is felt to be 'sodomized' by hallucinatory voices that penetrate it from behind.[13] On account of these insecurities, Rosolato argues that the auditory field is subject to 'a surplus of vigilance and interpretation' beginning with infancy, whose pre-emptive scanning and exploration of ambient sounds transforms listening into a hermeneutical activity that continually asks questions of indeterminate sounds.[14]

Yoshiki Tajiri has argued that the 'prosthetic body' in Beckett's work—invariably a *male* body in all his examples—is characterized by a pathological body image specific to intrauterine life and infancy, when the child is indistinguishable from the mother. For Tajiri, the persistent aspiration of Beckett's characters and critical writings towards a ruptured or perforated surface—bodily and linguistic—is one of several manifestations of this impaired body image, which he approaches

[11] Guy Rosolato, 'Les hallucinations acoustico-verbales et les champs perceptifs du corps', in *Éléments de l'interprétation* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1985), pp.274-286 (p.276, my translation).
[12] ibid, p.276.
[13] ibid., p.278.
[14] ibid.

through Didier Anzieu's description of a defective 'skin ego' and 'sound envelope'.[15] Recognizing the pressing desire of the narrators of *The Unnamable* and *How it Is* to pierce the sounds that surround them, he remarks that '[t]here is thus a very clear sense of being wrapped up by a sound envelope made up of others' voices and words. Outside this envelope is the much-coveted silence. Therefore it could be potentially subject to piercing'.[16] While broadly characterizing the auditors discussed in this chapter as well, the situation described assumes a gendered guise in these plays, which is missing from the prose works that Tajiri cites as an example: male auditors are found not only enveloped but *entrapped* in sonic enclosures built of female voices, to which they have an ambivalent—if not entirely negative—tie. They either wish to escape these feminine sound envelopes altogether and be located in the silence outside of them or struggle desperately for autonomy over their audition.

Although in complete agreement with Tajiri's identification of an infantile scenario underlying the ruptured sound envelope, I suggest that this image of aural engulfment is more profitably understood through Michel Chion's symbolic description of the mother as a spider that uses her voice to reinstate an 'umbilical web' around the infant, even when the biological umbilicus has been ruptured.[17] My deployment of Chion's framework in this chapter is also informed by Beckett's familiarity, through his psychological readings, with the arachnid symbolism that the theorist uses. Predicated on the mother's feared threat to subjective autonomy, her symbolization as a spider (also memorialized in Louise Bourgeois's steel and marble sculpture, *Maman* [1999]) is mentioned in a conspicuously dissonant footnote in *The Trauma of Birth.* Rank here describes the spider as 'a clear symbol of the dreaded mother in whose net one is caught' (*TB*, pp.14 2n). He considers a patient's account of his hypochondriacal breathlessness, described as being surrounded 'by a fine mist,

[15] Yoshiki Tajiri, *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: The Senses and Organs in Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.58. He appositely cites Beckett's 'German Letter' (1937) to Axel Kaun in this context, where language is viewed as a 'veil that must be torn apart in order to get at the things (or the Nothingness) behind it'. In the same letter, Beckett wishes literature to emulate 'the sound surface, torn by enormous pauses, of Beethoven's seventh Symphony' (p.59).
[16] Tajiri, following Anzieu, considers this destructive impulsive as symptomatic of an inadequately formed sound envelope in infancy: 'Just as a person with a defective skin ego inflicts pain on his skin in order to regain a sense of boundaries, one might be obsessed with the image of damaging the sound envelope if it fails to be formed properly' (p.61).
[17] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.73.

or rather like a cobweb', as an unconscious birth fantasy, thereby implying a similarity between the womb and a spider's web.[18]

For Kaja Silverman, psychoanalytic and cinematic writings on the maternal voice rely on 'a powerful cultural fantasy' of the archaic mother as a vocal container, 'a blanket of sound, extending on all sides of the newborn infant'.[19] While most iterations of this trope conceptualize this sonorous envelope as a plenitudinous and utopic space, Silverman singles out Michel Chion's *The Voice in Cinema* for its sinister envisioning of this maternal soundscape as a trap:

> In the beginning, in the uterine darkness, was the voice, the Mother's voice. For the child once born, the mother is more an olfactory and vocal continuum than an image. Her voice originates in all points in space, while her form enters and leaves the visual field. We can imagine the voice of the Mother weaving around the child a network of connections it's tempting to call the umbilical web. A rather horrifying expression to be sure, in its evocation of spiders—and in fact, this original vocal connection will remain ambivalent.[20]

The infant's entrapment and/as auditory vulnerability toward maternal interpellation is here premised on an asymmetry between its motor incapacity vis-à-vis a mobile mother-spider, as well as this voice's resistance, both within and outside the womb, to being localized through vision, a sensory modality historically linked to mastery and knowledge.[21] Chion has elsewhere described the state of gestation elsewhere as an immersion in a resonant, liquid darkness, explaining how the amniotic fluid conducts the mother's voice and the uninterrupted sound of her heartbeat to the

[18] The patient's description recalls Tajiri's observations and the predicament of the breathless narrator of *How It Is*: 'I have the feeling as though I were sticking in a bog, as though I had to stretch out my head so as to be able to breathe. I want to tear the cobweb, to tear it […] If that can't be done, one would have slowly to work one's way through the net in order to get air' (*TB*, pp.14-15, 2n). Rank attributes this clinical vignette to Sandor Ferenczi's paper, 'Introjection and Transference', from *First Contributions to Psycho-analysis* (1916, p.70).
[19] ibid., p.72.
[20] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p.61.
[21] See, for instance, the 'Introduction' in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed. by David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

foetus.[22] He emphasizes the extra-visual perception of the mother even after birth when intrauterine blindness no longer persists; the diremption between the child's visual and auditory field results in an aural connectivity to the mother that remains uninterrupted even when she is unseen. On account of its origins 'in all points in space', the perception of this visually uncontainable voice is a vertiginous experience. For all its connotations of nurture and nourishment, the metaphoric description of the perambulatory maternal voice swaddling the immobile infant with an 'umbilical web' logically culminates in a view of the mother/infant dyad as one of predator and prey. He subsequently contends: 'the voice could imaginarily take up the role of an umbilical cord, as a nurturing connection, allowing *no chance of autonomy* to the subject trapped in its umbilical web'.[23]

UTERINE SEASCAPES: *EMBERS*

According to Martin Esslin, radio drama segues rapidly and seamlessly between 'external' sounds registered subjectively by a character and 'internal' sounds that constitute their thoughts, fantasies or private monologues.[24] In *Embers*, listeners similarly alternate between two aural perspectives: that of its desolate and dying protagonist, Henry, listening to present, exogenous, and ambient sounds of the beach with his 'outer ear', and to the sonic chaos comprising of past, endogenous, and imagined scenes perceived by his 'inner ear'. Henry is beset by a curious aural affliction, as part of which he unremittingly perceives the sound of the sea and struggles throughout to express the ineffable, visceral effect that it has on him. He relies on verbal and non-verbal sounds of his own making in the hope that they will mask and 'drown' those of the sea. In addition to shielding himself through a compulsive narration of the enigmatic story about Holloway and Bolton, he deploys his mind as a repository of 'voices of memory' and mental sound effects of his own

[22] *Sound: an Acoulogical Treatise,* trans. by James A. Steintrager (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p.48.
[23] p.62, my emphasis.
[24] Martin Esslin, 'Samuel Beckett and the Art of the Radio', in *Mediations: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), p.130.

making.[25] As figures who similarly share an intimate bond with the sea, Henry invokes his dead father's spectre, and then his wife, Ada, and repeatedly exhorts them to 'Listen to it!' so that they may affirm his own disturbing perceptions. When even this strategy fails to distract him—in his father's refusal to reply or Ada's disputing of his suffering—he intermittently pits the 'sucking' sound of the sea against the hard galloping of hooves, clashing of stones, and the deafening slamming of doors. As Anna McMullan remarks, 'the entire soundscape of the play may be seen as a defiant sonic struggle against sea'.[26]

Henry's tormented bond with the sea has been understood in terms of an unresolved mourning for a hydrophilic father who disappears during a fateful evening swim, and the fear of meeting a similar end as him. For Clas Zilliacus, 'Henry's father fixation is at the root of the play. It is because of his father that Henry has come down to the beach; because of him, Henry keeps going there'; in Rosemary Pountney's similar view, '[t]he function of the sea appears to be to help Henry with his father's death by drowning, even perhaps, with the fact of death itself'. [27] Indeed, Beckett's seascapes are frequently and intimately linked with the figure of the father and are envisioned interchangeably as the paternal grave or the site of the son's traumatic initiation into masculinity. Critics have long noted that these facets are rooted in biography, deriving either from Bill Beckett's burial in a cemetery by the seaside or the formative rite of passage in which he taught his six-year-old son to swim by having him dive directly from the Forty-Foot rocks at Sandycove into the sea.[28] For instance, the memory in which Henry's father shames

---

[25] Sarah West links *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Embers* and *Eh Joe* as plays where voice and memory are no longer only closely linked, but rather become inextricably intertwined as an entity that she terms 'voice of memory' (2010, p.62). Several critics have described Henry as a self-reflexive audio engineer. West compares the silent father and Ada as analogues to Krapp's tapes, except that they do not always obey Henry's commands (p.87). Daniel Albright similarly glosses Henry's habit of carrying a gramophone with him to the beach as 'a metaphor for the source of sounds actually generated only in memory, or a strange surrogate for the audio engineer's tape recorder, with its cued ocean-noises, than something we are to visualize lugged on Henry's back'. *Beckett and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.87).
[26] *Performing Embodiment*, p.74
[27] Clas Zilliacus, *Beckett and Broadcasting: A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television* (Turku: Åbo Akademi, 1976), p.81. Rosemary Pountney, *The Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama from All that Fall to Footfalls, with Commentaries on the Latest Plays* (Colin Smythe: Dublin, 1988), p.110.
[28] Julie Campbell has analysed the biographical underpinnings of this 'diving board imagery' in 'For Future Reference' (1930), *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932), *Eleutheria* (1947), *Watt* (1948) and *Company* (1980). See 'Beckett and Trauma: the Father's Death and the Sea', in *Beckett and Trauma*, ed. by Mariko Hori Tanaka and Yoshiki Tajiri (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp.23-45 (p.27).

him for not being brave enough to accompany him for a swim is underpinned by the same 'aggressive masculine prodding on the part of the father for the boy to "be manly"' that Jennifer M. Jeffers identifies in *Company* (1980).[29] In this late prose text, the boy stands at the edge of the diving board, paralyzed by the height and his father's expectant face, whose gaze fuses with the 'Many eyes' of strangers looking up at him from the sea. The passage is punctuated twice with the echoing paternal voice: 'He calls, Be a brave boy […] The far call again, Be a brave boy' (*C*, pp.10-11). What this reading of Henry's paternally-mediated relationship with the sea overlooks is that his inhibition against entering its waters significantly *precedes* his father's drowning; in fact, it is precisely this inhibition that impedes him from accompanying his father on his daily dips.

This impasse necessitates a brief detour through Beckett's literary, psychological and philosophical sources, which re-inflect and overwrite the biographical link between the father and the sea through their cross-referenced views of water as a maternal element. Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* contains two prominent references to water's uterine symbolism, both of which make their way into the 'Psychology Notes'. In the first of these from the chapter entitled 'Symbolic Adaptation', Rank explains the dream of plunging into a water body as manifesting 'the wish (or disclination) to have one's own child, but only by means of the reproduction of one's own birth or intrauterine situation (in water)' (*TB*, p.79). He argues that the plunge conveys the trauma endured by the foetus during birth—a reference, perhaps, to pain and breathlessness—while the entry into water symbolizes the desire to return to the amniotic enclosure within the womb.[30] As is well known, one of Beckett's lifelong nightmares involved diving from great height into a pool of water surrounded by jagged rocks.[31] It is quite likely that he had the dream in mind when he read this passage and noted: 'Dream of plunging into water telescopes the birth trauma (plunge) & the regressive tendency' (TCD MS

---

[29] Jennifer M. Jeffers, *Beckett's Masculinity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.158

[30] In 'Freud's Theory of Dreams'—an essay that Beckett read thoroughly—Ernest Jones, following Freud, also interprets a female patient's dream of watching her child wade into the sea as a birth fantasy: 'In dreams, as in mythology, the delivery of a child from the uterine waters is commonly presented by distortion as the entry of the child into water; among many others, the births of Adonis, Osiris, Moses, and Bacchus are well-known illustrations of this'. *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 5th edn. (London: Maresfield Reprints, 1948), pp.217-250 (p.231).

[31] Lawrence Harvey, *Samuel Beckett: Poet and Critic* (1970), p.298, quoted in Campbell, 'Beckett and Trauma', p.29.

10971/1/34). In a later chapter, Rank re-interprets the founding statement of Greek philosophy, Thales of Miletus's proposition that 'water is the origin and womb of all things', as 'the first dim conception of the individual origin of Man in the mother'. Thales' claim, he contends, is the first projection onto nature of the hitherto-repressed knowledge that 'man himself had once come out of amniotic fluid' upon birth (p.168). Already familiar with Thales' cosmology at this point, Beckett once again noted water's amniotic symbolism: 'Thales his primal substance water (amnios). Read Nietzsche's <u>Philosophie in tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen</u> & <u>Geburt der Tragödie</u>' (TCD MS 10971/1/36).[32] The maternal symbolism of water that Beckett partly sourced from *The Trauma of Birth* was not forgotten or left behind amongst the notes on the book undertaken in the mid-1930s. It is on unsurprisingly clear display in the 'The End' (1946)—the most 'Rankian' of the four *Nouvelles*—where Rank's identification of a 'regressive tendency' underlying dreams of entering water manifests as the narrator's 'fantasy of oceanic dissolution' and his 'aspirations towards an undifferentiated state', to use Phil Baker's terms.[33] Having drifted from one claustral space to the other over the course of the story, the exiled narrator embarks on a final journey to his ultimate refuge in the sea-womb. In yet another use of Rank's umbilical symbols, he ties a rope around his waist, attaches it to the floorboard of a self-enclosed boat, and passively sets himself adrift on the river. Upon reaching the sea, he unplugs the hole in the floorboard and lies in wait for the water/amnios to fully invade the boat, thereby achieving the desired 'dissolution in the *mer/mère*', but only once he has drowned in it (*TE*, p.99).[34]

This conventional psychoanalytic coding of marine encounters is significantly complicated in *Embers*, where Henry experiences 'the cursed thing', the sea, as an attacking pair of 'Lips and claws!' that McMullan interprets as 'a monstrous female/animal sonic body' and Lawley as 'some sexually devouring

---

[32] Beckett had immersed himself extensively in early Greek philosophy a few years before reading Rank. His 'Philosophy Notes' were compiled using three sources: Archibald B. D. Alexander's *A Short History of Philosophy*, John Burnet's *Greek Philosophy, Part I: Thales to Plato*, and Wilhelm Windelband's *A History of Philosophy*. They begin with Thales, of whom Beckett similarly notes that 'His [Thales's] primal substance water. Earth afloat (dead fish) on surface of primal substance' (TCD MS 10967/5). For a detailed catalogue of the 'Philosophy Notes', see the *SBTA* Special Issue, *'Notes diverse holo': Catalogues of Beckett's Reading Notes and Other Manuscripts at Trinity College Dublin, with Supporting Essays,* ed. by Matthijs Engelberts, Everett Frost, and Jane Maxwell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp.74-88.

[33] Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p.88.

[34] ibid., p.89.

female (vagina dentata?)' from which he is on the run (p.254; p.258).[35] These epithets recall the abject maternal body and the simultaneous allure and fear that it exerts on the subject. [36] Kristeva considers the disgust of menstrual blood as prototypical of the abjection caused by corporeal excrements. As a flow, menstrual blood not only disputes the myth of bodily integrity and self-containment but is also a reminder of the subject's origin in the maternal body: as Elizabeth Grosz clarifies, it differentiates not just men and women but 'men and (potential) mothers', and its horror signifies 'a refusal to acknowledge the subject's corporeal link to the mother'.[37] Following this line of reasoning, the viscous amniotic fluid, symbolized by the sea in Beckett's work, would be the abject *par excellence* in its undisputed association with a state of indiscriminate fusion with the mother. Indeed, I would argue that Beckett's representation of the sea as the abject mother aligns itself more closely to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, whose indisputable role in the play's genesis has been recently demonstrated by Pim Verhulst.[38] The sea's maternal and abject attributes are as closely intertwined for Joyce's Stephen Dedalus as they are for Beckett's Henry. As soon as he casts his gaze on the sea from Martello Tower in 'Telemachus', Dedalus—famously described in 'Ithaca' as a 'hydrophobe, hating partial contact by immersion or total contact by submersion in cold water'—is confronted with the abject twice over.[39] In quick succession, he first thinks back to a recent dream of his mother's corpse while the 'snotgreen' colour of the sea reminds

[35] *Performing Embodiment*, p.75; '*Embers*: An Interpretation', in *The Beckett Studies Reader*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993), pp.94-120 (p.106).

[36] In so arguing, I echo David Alpaugh's view (1973) that Henry 'loathes the prospect of reabsorption which so attracts the romantic sensibility', or Paul Lawley's speculation (1993) that Henry struggles 'to free himself completely from the womb of the mother-sea which is at once devouring and seductive'. However, these early critics arrive at their observations through recourse to marine symbolism of other authors (Wordsworth, Freud, Swinburne, Tennyson) that they extrapolate to Beckett's play. More importantly, restricting themselves to textual criticism, they forego the vital question of how the sea's (maternal) threat translates into the play's radiophonic soundscape. See respectively '*Embers* and the Sea: Beckettian Intimations of Mortality, *Modern Drama*, 16 (1973), 317-328 (p.320) and '*Embers*: An Interpretation', p.106.

[37] *Powers of Horror*, p.71; Grosz, 'The Body of Signification', p.92.

[38] For Verhulst, *Embers* challenges the critical commonplace that Beckett overthrew Joyce's influence as soon as he began writing exclusively in French, and that his English-language writings from the 1950s onward show negligible engagement with Joyce either. Verhulst considers the play as paying a radiophonic homage to 'Proteus', the third, seaside episode in *Ulysses.* 'Getting over Joyce in English: 'Proteus', *Portrait* and the Genesis of Samuel Beckett's Radio Play, *Embers*', *Genetic Joyce Studies*, 17 (2017), 1-20.

[39] *Ulysses: Annotated Student Edition*, ed. by Declan Kiberd (London: Penguin, 2011), p.785.

him of the bowl of 'sluggish green bile' that she had painfully vomited shortly before her death.[40]

The constantly mobile threshold between land and sea that Henry sits facing, then, represents the tenuous demarcation between the respective realms of the Symbolic and the abject. He and his shadowy interlocutors call attention to his unresisting, if conflicted, gravitation to the shore, so much so that Clas Zilliacus describes Henry as a 'borderman', a Beckettian male prototype who is 'attracted to brinks, edges, margins, as though hoping for a qualitative change to alter their [his] immutable lives'.[41] Ada, faced with her husband's suffering from the sea sound, pointedly asks him: 'if you hate it why don't you keep away from it? Why are you always coming down here?' (*E,* p.260). However, even when Henry gives in to this compulsion to haunt the shore, he painstakingly negotiates the proximity to the sea's boundary, ensuring that he neither strays too far from it nor crosses the limit to enter the water. As he tells his father early on in their one-sided dialogue: 'I'm like you in that, can't stay away from it, but I never go in, no, I think the last time I went in was with you. [*Pause.*] Just be near it. [*Pause.*]' (p.254). It is possible to understand the series of twice-repeated commands from Henry to himself at the beginning of the play—'On!', 'Stop!', 'Down!' (p.253)—as his mind struggling to communicate this safe distance to his disconnected body, which either remains inert in its refusal to approach the sea or risks going dangerously close to it and needing to be reined in.

In Kristevan terms, Henry illustrates the predicament of the subject who is 'literally beside himself' when faced by 'an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsions' exercised on him by the abject sea.[42] In his case, this self-cancelling approach to the sea is undergirded by a simultaneous desire for, and fear of, collapsing into the abject mother. Where some of Beckett's male personae actively seek aqueous submersion to achieve a deathly fusion with the mother, Henry's hydrophobia defends against this 'regressive tendency'. So unbearable is the prospect of being inside the maternal body that he aspires toward a retrospective self-annihilation evident in the course of his elaborate riffing on the word 'washout': 'a

---

[40] ibid, p.4.
[41] *Beckett and Broadcasting*, p.77. The original coinage is by Lawrence Harvey (1970). The importance of Henry's ambivalent response to the play's littoral setting is revealed by some of the early titles that Beckett had in mind for the play, e.g. 'By the Sea', 'On the Strand' and 'The Water's Edge' (*LSB* II, p. 203).
[42] *Powers of Horror*, p.1.

washout, that's the last I heard from you […] Washout. [*Pause.*] Wish to Christ she had. [*Pause.*]' (p.256). Henry eventually transforms his father's insult into a crude synonym for foeticide and wishes that his mother had flushed him out of her body, detritus-like before he was born.[43] This womb-ambivalence resurfaces in Henry's storytelling when Holloway reminds Bolton of an imminent 'panhysterectomy at nine' (*E*, p.263). Since the story is a temporary escape from the pull of the sea/mother, it is fitting that Henry has Holloway surgically excise the womb itself. This reference to a life aborted before birth could, once again, be a direct allusion to *Ulysses*'s 'Proteus'. Once his proto-radiophonic experiment of walking by the sea with closed eyes has ended, the first visual that Stephen Dedalus registers is that of two midwives leaving Leahy's terrace and imagines that one of their bags contains '[a] misbirth with a trailing navelcord, hushed in ruddy wool'.[44]

Beckett once wondered 'how people have the nerve to live so near, *on* the sea. It moans in one's dreams in the night'.[45] Indeed, the aversion to the sea often follows from its being a body of water as well as of sound in his work. In *Embers*, too, it is as a *sounding* liquidity that the sea conforms to a feared model of female corporeality as 'viscosity, secreting, entrapping', an infiltrating 'formlessness that engulfs all form'.[46] Henry's careful self-distancing from the sea as a liquid materiality is undermined by its sound, through which it spills over from its already-tenuous boundary and pursues its hapless auditor, even when he is no longer by the shore but 'above in the house and walking the roads' (p.254). If the defensive process of abjection is aimed at 'turning the maternal container into a maternal "space" from which the subject-to-be may separate', the sea reverses this attempt at separation and continually surrounds him as a sonorous envelope.[47] Llewellyn Brown advocates an expansive, non-anthropomorphic, conception of the voice in Beckett, whereby even non-verbal and non-human sounds take on the character of a voice

---

[43] In medical terms, 'Washout' simultaneously refers to '[t]he removal of material, esp. from a physiological system, by means of a fluid' and 'the matter removed by this'. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, vol. IX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.952.
[44] *Ulysses*, p.38.
[45] James Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, p.173 (original emphasis).
[46] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Body: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.203.
[47] Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p.84.

from time to time.[48] Following Brown, and my earlier claim for considering *Embers*'s sea as a maternal entity, I suggest that its '*scarcely audible*' sound be understood as the equivalent of the voice of the mother (*E,* p.253). *Cendres* (1959) nods interestingly in this direction when Henry insinuates the maternal provenance of the sea sound through his pun—inescapable for a francophone listener—on *la mer/mère*: 'Ce bruit qu'on entend, c'est la mer. (*un temps. Plus fort.*) Je dis que ce bruit qu'on entend c'est la mer; nous sommes assis sur la grève'.[49] Henry evokes an existence that is circumscribed in its entirety within this maternal sonic field; his inability to 'get away from it, where it couldn't get at me [him]' exemplifies the impotence of the child in his aural entanglement within the 'umbilical web' described by Michel Chion (*E*, p.258). As an appendage or extension of the sea that ensures Henry's aural connectivity to it, its sound functions analogously to the unlocalizable, floating, maternal voice in the womb and infancy that 'imaginarily take[s] up the role of an umbilical cord'.[50]

At the same time, *Embers* also complicates the model of the 'umbilical web' significantly by confounding the neat distinction between the mother's voice and the child as respectively the container and the contained. The play occasionally hints that Henry's continual audition of the sound is pathological in nature and independent of his proximity to or distance from the sea. For instance, Henry needs to talk out loud even when in Switzerland, implying that he can still hear the sea in a landlocked country (p.254). Similarly, Ada admonishes his compulsive soliloquising and explicitly questions his grasp on reality: 'It's silly to say it keeps you from hearing it, it doesn't keep you from hearing it and even if it does you shouldn't be hearing it, there must be something wrong with your brain [*Pause.*]' (p.260).[51] Spatially speaking, Henry's subjective limits are so significantly compromised that it is uncertain whether he is trapped within the vocal net cast by the sea, or if the latter has infiltrated his mind in the form of

[48] *Beckett, Lacan and the Voice* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2016), p.10.
[49] Samuel Beckett, *La dernière bande, suivi de Cendres* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007), p.38.
[50] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p.62.
[51] According to Andrew Gaedtke, Beckett progresses from a narrative representation of schizophrenia in *Murphy* and *The Unnamable* to its phenomenological simulation—the 'ambiguity between endogenous, psychic space and exogenous reality', and a confusion between 'the modal categories of memory, narration, and hallucination'—in *Embers. Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.175; p.177.

> a sound that has all the powers and qualities of an external force acting upon us, without any possibility of evading it, or putting any distance between ourselves and it [...] a kind of endogenous, indwelling exteriority, an outside that comes at you from the inside.[52]

This possibility significantly compounds the panic and claustrophobia upon which the 'umbilical web' is predicated. The sea sound's invasion of Henry renders any attempt at flight futile since the danger is within him and out of his control.

While Chion's 'umbilical web' is theorized in a cinematic context, its radiophonic equivalent in *Embers* conveys the anteriority and ubiquity of the maternal voice—as well as Henry's continual experience of auditory abjection at its hands—even more efficiently because of the absent visual dimension. Since radio drama's inception in the early 1920s, its practitioners and theorists have celebrated the medium's ostensible 'blindness'. Rudolf Arnheim and Esslin, to cite just two examples, argue that radio's 'emancipation' from images triggers listeners' imagination, renders characters' inner worlds audible and introduces ambiguities and mysteries that cannot always be sustained by the relative certitude of audio-visual media.[53] Beckett's early use of the medium undoubtedly espouses this anti-ocular tradition. It can be seen as animated by a reliance on the ambiguous nature of invisible sound as well as his pursuit of a nonvisual corporeality that is distinctively formless (e.g. Maddy Rooney as a 'big fat jelly' (*ATF*, p.174)) and porous.[54] As Julie Campbell has argued, this porosity results largely from radio's collapsing of the distance that separates the audience and the dramatic representation in visual media like theatre; instead, radio drama allows for listeners to inhabit the subjective

---

[52] Steven Connor, 'Auscultations', *Sound Effects: an Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience*, 1 (2011), 6-18 (p.8). Connor here is describing the phenomenology of tinnitus.

[53] See Chapter 7, 'In Praise of Blindness: Emancipation from Body', in Rudolf Arnheim, *Radio: an Art of Sound*, trans. by Margaret Ludwig and Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), pp.133-203; and Martin Esslin, 'The Mind as Stage—Radio Drama', in *Mediations: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), pp.172-3.

[54] Beckett drew Barney Rossett's attention to the difference between the theatrical and the radiophonic body when he insisted that he had written *All That Fall* 'for voices, not bodies' and that the play's 'coming out of the dark' was the only legitimate condition of its reception. (Cited in Julie Campbell, 'Staging Embers: an Act of Killing?', p.91). According to Gaby Hartel, Beckett encountered Arnheim's writing on radio aesthetics through the chapter devoted to the subject in *Film als Kunst* (1932), which he read alongside the work of Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevold Pudovkin as a young student. 'Emerging out of a Silent Void: Some Reverberations of Rudolf Arnheim's Radio Theory in Samuel Beckett's Radio Pieces', *JOBS*, 19 (2010), 218–227.

perspective of characters through a merging of their respective sensoria.[55] McMullan similarly argues that listeners traverse the limits of the diegetic body in Beckett's audio drama since '[c]orporeal boundaries are dissolved in this radiophonic circuit where visually evoked bodies and scenes may instantly metamorphose and the focus shift from exterior to interior, public to intimate'.[56]

In the course of listening to the play—as opposed to reading it—we experience something of the sea's invasion of Henry since each of the 228 pauses in the script is lost to the sound effect of '*a scarcely audible*' sea (p.254). While spurred to interrogate the source and location of this unbroken stream of sea sound by the aforementioned hints within the play, listeners cannot decisively determine its location in the soundscape, i.e. whether it is simply an aural signifier of the littoral setting that originates 'outside' Henry, or whether it is both an ambient sound as well as the internalized and autonomous voice of the mother-sea.[57] Considering the likelihood of the latter possibility, Douglas Kahn appears to be describing the play's soundscape when, in his history of water sounds in modernist music, he observes that the unborn child hears external voices and sounds against 'the constant backdrop of a full array of internal fluid sounds' in the womb, chief amongst which is 'a hydrologically filtered mother's voice promising the bliss of undifferentiation'.[58] Beckett's transformation of the radio into a dark resonant womb recalls his own intrauterine memory (reported in Chapter Two) of hearing voices in his mother's womb, as well as replicates Chion's identification of intrauterine soundscapes as the precursor of the sonorous envelopes of infancy.

In an oft-cited remark to Paul-Louis Mignon concerning *Embers*'s medium-specificity, Beckett stated that a staging of the play would 'destroy' the indeterminacy surrounding Henry's auditory perceptions, i.e. whether he is primarily

---

[55] Julie Campbell, 'Staging Embers: an Act of Killing?', *SBTA*: *Beckett versus Beckett,* 7 (1998), 91-104 (p.100).
[56] *Performing Embodiment*, p.68.
[57] Desmond Briscoe's overlaying of the lapping sound with 'a clearly synthetic, organ-like note' in the 1959 BBC broadcast—that Beckett disapproved—can thus be understood as a way of rendering its status as half-way between an objective and hallucinatory perception. On the other hand, Everett C. Frost's critically acclaimed reprise (1989) instead uses a field recording of waves 'gurgling and sucking' when washing over the shingle at Killiney beach. Everett C. Frost, '"From one world to another": Beckett's Radio Plays', *SBTA*: *Beckett in Conversation, "yet again" / Rencontres avec Beckett, "encore"*, 28 (2016), 128-138 (p.135).
[58] Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1999), p.257.

hallucinating or whether they do have some grounding in objective reality.[59] While I have been discussing the sound of the sea in these terms thus far, Beckett's statement has been conventionally understood as a reference to Henry's extended conversation with Ada. Just as the play repeatedly draws attention to the status of the sea sound, similar doubts are raised concerning the presence of Ada, who enters and departs the scene with the abruptness of an apparition. Indeed, her corporeality is alternately asserted and erased during her early exchanges with Henry. On the one hand, she asks his advice on her posture when sitting beside him and even places a shawl underneath him. On the other hand, she makes '*[n]o sound as she sits*'; can only 'imagine' the chilliness at the beach; and appears to inhabit a realm of timelessness in which she cannot tell the age of the daughter with whom she is otherwise preoccupied. Even more crucially, she hints at her suicide by drowning when she describes the undisturbed silence underneath the water's surface, an insinuation that is borne out by a '*[l]ow remote voice*', whose faint quality and slow tempo is typical of those voices from beyond the grave in Beckett's plays that sound inside the constricted space of the listener's skull (p.257).[60]

For Everett C. Frost, the critical debate concerning Ada's physical presence on the strand is irrelevant since *Embers* is exclusively concerned with Henry's psychical reality, according to which he is undoubtedly in the presence of his (arguably dead) wife.[61] While Frost's observation about the play's disregard of an 'external' reality is indisputable, Ada's bodily absence from the diegesis does matter from the point of view of this study at least. Her absence means that she qualifies as the radiophonic equivalent of the disembodied female voices from the stage and television plays in a way that Maddy Rooney from *All that Fall* (1956) does not. Indeed, the radio theorist Tim Crook contends that not every voice in audio drama is 'disembodied' by default, and argues that the designation should only be reserved for those voices for which there is no visual equivalent in the listener's mind, and which

[59] Cited in Zilliacus, p.83.
[60] Everett C. Frost's 1989 re-make of *Embers* for *The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays* is particularly successful in rendering this out-of-place quality of Ada's voice by recording Billie Whitelaw in a sound-proof isolation chamber away from other actors. For more details of the production process, see Everett C. Frost, 'Fundamental Sounds: Recording Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays', Theatre Journal, 43 (1991), 361-376 (p.376).
[61] Everett C. Frost, 'Mediatating On: Beckett, *Embers*, and Radio Theory', in *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and the Non-Print Media*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.311-329 (p.322).

would be characterized as 'acousmatic' in a visual medium like cinema.[62] Thus, strictly speaking, the *first* disembodied female voice in Beckett's drama is neither Mrs Rooney nor Voice from *Eh Joe*—as S. E. Gontarski has claimed—but rather the spectral Ada from Beckett's second radio play.[63] Like the sea, that other unlocalizable female entity, in being poised between life and death, Ada occupies both sides of the divide between land and water, and ultimately, Henry's inside and outside.

Henry's desperate need for Ada as a companion/voice, if only as a distraction from the sea, departs to a certain extent from his alignment of the maternal-feminine and the abject. She is the only woman in *Embers* whom he does not evade but rather actively seeks. Indeed, Henry clearly invests Ada with a certain authority in relying on her to shed light on the circumstances of his father's disappearance. That said, this exception is also eventually overturned as Henry's ambivalence towards the sea is displaced onto Ada, the third maternal figure in the play, who is then perceived as the sea's terrestrial emissary. In addition to her overbearing solicitude for Addie and Henry's health, she enters the play as a despised reproductive body during the 'washout' wordplay: 'Washout. [*Pause.*] Wish to Christ she had. [*Pause.*] Never met Ada did you, or did you, I can't remember, no matter, no one'd know her now. [*Pause.*]' (*E,* p. 256). The ambiguous 'she' facilitates an elision of one womb with another: Henry begins by reproaching his own mother for not having aborted him, but the accusation rapidly shifts to his wife during the pause, who is equally guilty of having brought 'the horrid little creature' that is Addie into the world.

While he conjures Ada in the hope that she will side with him against the sea, this is certainly not the case. As I have already mentioned, rather than comforting him, she challenges his claim to being the victim of an aggressive sonic siege and describes the sea as the source of 'a lovely peaceful gentle soothing sound' instead (p.260). Beckett's women, including Ada, are often drawn to the depths of water bodies. In *Endgame* (1958), for instance, Nell recollects her visual enchantment with the bottom of Lake Como when reminiscing about the summer boat ride with her husband, Nagg: 'It was deep, deep. And you could see down to the bottom. So white.

---

[62] Tim Crook, *Radio Drama: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.85-86.
[63] S. E. Gontarski, 'The Body in the Body of Beckett's Theatre', *SBTA: Endlessness in the Year 2000/ Fin sans fin en l'an 2000,* 11 (2001), 169-177 (p.172).

So clean' (*EG*, p.102). In keeping with this trend, it is quite likely that Ada has already succumbed to the sea's comforting maternal voice and its deathly pull. As a disembodied voice, she not only parallels the omnipresent sea sound but even appears to be doing its bidding by interrogating Henry's clinging to a barren yet noisy life when he could finally rest in silence in the sea: 'It's only on the surface, you know. Underneath all is as quiet as the grave. Not a sound. All day, all night, not a sound' (p.261). Ada thus presents Henry with a fatal double bind in the choice between remaining alive but entrapped within the sea's sonic field, or embracing death and experiencing an eternal soundlessness at last.

The nexus between Ada and the mother-sea, with each of them aiming to lure Henry back to the womb through drowning, crystallizes the otherwise latent aspects of the myth of the Sirens operative in the play, particularly the similarity between the sea's casting of its umbilical web to tempt Henry and the Sirens' sending forth 'their ravishing voices out across the air' to seduce sailors into a shipwreck.[64] Ada's role as a vocal *femme fatale* located indeterminately on land and water recalls a specific iteration of the myth identified by Adriana Cavarero in which the Siren, transformed into a murderous mermaid, seduces a fisherman and drags him into the sea to 'the water-mother':

> Born from the water of a woman, he thus returns to the water with her to die. It is the common, ancient patriarchal fable of Eros and Thanatos, with the maternal body functioning as both cradle and tomb, as both origin and end of the living body.[65]

This interpretation of Ada as a siren figure is strikingly borne out by some of the performance cues that Billie Whitelaw, who played the part in The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays' production of *Embers* (1989), inscribed in her play script after rehearsals with Beckett. In addition to maintaining an overall 'weary – slow-obscure' tone, Whitelaw instructed herself to voice Ada's comment about the silence underneath the water's surface as a '(WHISPER)', whose subtext she interpreted as Ada's asking her husband to 'Come on in!!!' and replicate her suicide (UoR BWA

---

[64] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Robert Fagles (London: Penguin, 1997), p.277. Paul Lawley similarly argues that 'Ada's voice is "low" and "remote" throughout, like the sound of the sea. In a sense she is the sound of the sea, its siren-voice' (p.12).
[65] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, p.108.

A/7/1). Indeed, Ada's words are intoned in a palpably tempting but sinister fashion in the recording. It is quite likely that the play ends with Henry's surrendering to Ada's stratagems. Frost is the only critic to have observed that Henry's final words in the play, 'Not a sound', spoken as he stands dangerously close to the water, are not followed by the lapping of the sea. Given its unabating quality, this first and last instance of its non-sounding in the play strongly implies, according to Frost, that Henry has chosen a silent death over a noisy life by following his father and wife into the play's mother-sea.[66]

EH JOE AND THE INVADED SELF-SPACE

Like *Embers*, *Eh Joe* features a solitary man—a middle-aged philanderer named Joe—whose skull resonates with spectral voices. What sets Joe apart from his radiophonic predecessor is the nature of these inner voices as well as his response to them. Henry must hear, as well as be heard by, someone from his past; as discussed previously, he deploys his mind as a sound generating device, voluntarily invoking the voices of Ada and his once-responsive father so that they may people his stark isolation and mitigate the relentless perception of the sea. In contrast, Joe seeks to transform his noisy skull into an anechoic chamber but this attempt is continually undermined by intrusive communications from the dead and the departed.[67]

Sarah West has drawn attention to Beckett's back-and-forth travel between audio (radio) and visual (theatre) media in his listening-centred plays of the 1950s (e.g. *All That Fall*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *Embers*). She observes that in Beckett's radio drama, listeners focus predominantly on the sounds and voices perceived by characters who remain unseen themselves. This erasure of the diegetic listening figure is reversed in a visual medium like theatre, where '[t]he audience not only hears the sound of a voice, it watches the effect of that voice upon a listener'.[68] Indeed, beginning with *Krapp's Last Tape* (discussed in the next chapter), Beckett's

---

[66] Everett C. Frost, '"From one world to another": Beckett's Radio Plays', *SBTA*: *Beckett in Conversation, "yet again" / Rencontres avec Beckett, "encore"*, 28 (2016), 128-138 (p.137).
[67] Sarah West argues that the sounding of the disembodied voice becomes fully autonomous and outside of the auditors' control as Beckett progresses from *Embers* to *Eh Joe.* She characterizes the voices in the radio and teleplay as 'performing and non-performing' and 'performative' respectively. *Say It*, p.87.
[68] ibid, p.48.

onstage auditors are characterized by bodies rendered immobile with the labour of listening to invisible voices and sounds; since speaking is either minimized or entirely relinquished in favour of listening, audiences approach the tense, upturned faces of these mute auditors as reactive surfaces that convey the impact of their aural perception. As Pierre Chabert, who played Krapp in Beckett's direction of *La dernière bande* at the Théâtre d'Orsay (1975), notes: 'Beckett effectively makes the act of listening a hearing of the voice by the body. The body becomes the sensitive receptacle upon which the voice engraves itself, a kind of human tape recorder'.[69]

In a letter to Alan Schneider, who directed *Eh Joe*'s American premiere in 1966, Beckett described it as a play for a 'Face listening hard and brain agonizing' (*NABS*, p.198). The further shift from theatre to television could be similarly understood as prompted by the even greater suitability of the mechanical medium, with its devices of the close-up and voice-over, for screening the pared down situation of a silent body listening and responding to a disembodied vocal address. While both television and film allow for a dissociated voice to accompany the image track as a voice-over, it is a critical commonplace that the size of the television screen accentuates the expressive capacity of the human face viewed from up close, significantly more than stage drama (where the spotlight provides the closest equivalent to camera magnification) and even the film screen, which is more competent at capturing wide or panorama shots in outdoor spaces.[70]

In *Eh Joe*, the camera and microphone/loudspeaker do not function as neutral recording technologies but rather as Joe's antagonists. Operating alternately and in tandem with each other, they constitute a composite interrogation mechanism aimed at pushing him to breaking point and eliciting a confession of his womanizing ways, so that the play becomes the site of a gendered conflict between a guilty male figure

[69] Pierre Chabert, 'The Body in Beckett's Theatre', *JOBS*, 8 (1982), 23-28 (p.28).

[70] Robert Clyde Allen and Annette Hill, 'Spaces of Television', in *The Television Studies Reader*, ed. by Robert Clyde Allen and Annette Hill (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.105-109 (p.106). Even though *Eh Joe* is possibly Beckett's only teleplay to have been regularly performed in the theatre with critical acclaim, most notably in Atom Egoyan's Michael Gambon-starrer production at the Gate Theatre (2006), these adaptations have only been successful because of their intermediality. In Egoyan's *Eh Joe*, a camera magnifies Gambon's haunting face and projects it on a scrim beside him, a technological intervention without which an auditorium audience would not be able to register the impact of Voice's assault on him. See Trish McTighe, 'Haptic Interfaces: The Live and the Recorded Body in Beckett's "Eh Joe" on Stage and Screen', *SBTA: Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies*, 22 (2010), 463-475.

and a retributive technological apparatus functioning at the behest of his female victims. Over the course of a punctuated monologue, the vituperative and deliberately-provocative 'Woman's Voice' relentlessly mocks Joe's love-deprived existence, his Christian faith and the futility of his attempts to seal himself off from the world, all the while evoking the pain of the women he has unconscionably abandoned after promises of a future in which '[t]he best's to come' (p.362). Her allusion to scenes from the early days of their courtship reveals that Voice herself is one of these former loves; however, she returns on this particular evening to present Joe with a vivid narrative of the suicide of an unnamed young girl, 'the green one', after being similarly betrayed by him.

The vengefulness of the verbal blows is paralleled by an inquisitorial camera that travels four inches closer to Joe's face in the brief pause between each accusation, and whose devouring quality recalls *Film*'s E, who stalks O like a sentient, predatory being. An expressive surface and typically the first point of contact between the self and the other, the human face has been privileged as the seat of intersubjectivity. Joe's locking himself away in the opening dumb show and covering the room's apertures, so that he can neither see nor be seen, clearly testifies to an eschewal of intersubjectivity. By confronting him with an unpalatable history of his losses on the one hand and abandonments on the other, Voice halts Joe's flight from his others. The past that has been assiduously banished from the present—as in Joe's replacement of his bed—is involuntarily relived by his body and erupts sporadically on an impassive face. For instance, in the original BBC production, Jack MacGowran bends double and clutches his hair on hearing the phrase 'throttling the dead in his head', while his annoyance, rage and suffering are silently manifested on his face through the deepening or fading of a frown, the drooping of the corners of the lips, or the widening and narrowing of the eyes.

In a compelling Foucauldian reading of the play, Trish McTighe remarks the similarity between the play's acousmatic Voice and that of the inquisitor during the spectacle of public torture, in that both perform an identical labour of etching guilt on the criminal body through words.[71] For this inscriptive project to succeed and the spectator to arrive at a verdict by listening to Voice's charges through the filter of

[71] *The Haptic Aesthetic in Samuel Beckett's Drama*, p.43.

Joe's face, it is necessary that the male body's integrity be ruptured. This is accomplished, I argue, through the figurative mutilation of the image of Joe's body by the play's audio and visual channels that turn it inside-out and stretch it taut, quite literally. While I subsequently point to the instability of such a classification, as an interior monologue voice-over, Voice aurally undermines the opacity that Joe's body acquires as a result of his defiant silence, since

> [i]n the interior monologue […] the voice and the body are represented simultaneously, but the voice, far from being an extension of that body, manifests as its inner lining. The voice displays what is inaccessible to the image, what exceeds the visible: the "inner life" of the character. The voice here is the privileged mark of interiority, turning the body "inside-out".[72]

Toby Zinman has this 'unfurling' effect in mind when she argues that the play's spectators are simultaneously located 'inside that penny farthing hell he calls a mind, behind the eyes, as well as in front of the eyes, looking at his face'.[73] Furthermore, as part of the cycles of Voice's goading and the camera's invasive gauging of Joe's reactions, his body is successfully fragmented by the wide, medium, medium-close up, and close-up shots, and is finally reduced to a blown-up face covering the entirety of the screen.[74] The narrowing of the camera's field of vision over an uninterrupted take not only severs Joe from his surrounding space but also has a denaturalizing and objectifying effect on the onscreen body through its transformation of depth into flatness. Mary Ann Doane argues that

> [o]f all the different types of shots, it is the close-up that is most fully associated with the screen as surface, with the annihilation of a sense of depth and its corresponding rules of perspectival realism. The image becomes, once more, an image rather than a threshold onto a world. Or rather, the world is reduced to this face, this object.[75]

---

[72] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in Cinema: the Articulation of Body and Space', *Yale French Studies: Cinema/Sound*, 80 (1980), 33-50 (p.41).
[73] Toby Zinman, 'Eh Joe and the Peephole Aesthetic', *SBTA: The Savage Eye/ L'oeil fauve: New Essays on Samuel Beckett's Television Plays*, 4 (1995), 53-64 (p.56).
[74] Katherine Weiss pertinently remarks that the camera's scopophilia also mirrors the spectatorial 'desire to know more and the imminent admission of [Joe's] guilt'. *The Plays of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p.100.
[75] Mary Ann Doane, 'Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema', *differences*, 14 (3), 89-111 (p.91).

On the whole, the underlying principle of these complementary de-compositions of Joe's body is the latter's transformation from a truth-encasing volume to a lisible surface. That said, Joe is also not a passive victim; his face resists yielding entirely to Voice's effort—and the spectator's desire—to render it transparent. Anna McMullan rightly foregrounds a recalcitrant opacity in MacGowran's expressions during the narration of the suicide, which could equally signify a pained remembrance of the girl or a confession of guilt. It is this uncertainty, she argues, that keeps the spectator suspended between empathizing with the Voice and the dead girl as Joe's past victims on the one hand, and with Joe as the accused on the other.[76]

The off-screen Voice continues to engage the spectator's curiosity concerning her source even if she has been located 'within' Joe. The questionable ease and authority with which she speaks on behalf of Joe's other lost objects—occasionally even mimicking their voices—problematizes a decisive attribution of identity to her. For instance, Voice's account of the suicide is presented as the uncovering of a truth that has been concealed due to Joe's silencing of the dead girl's voice:

> Ever know what happened? … She didn't say? … Just the announcement in *The Independent* … 'On Mary's beads we plead her needs and in the Holy Mass' …Will I tell you? … Not interested? … Well I will just the same… I think you should know… (p.365)

However, the underlying hyperrealism of the narrative, whereby Voice reports events from the simultaneous perspective of an observing bystander and the girl in the final moments of her life, is also a clear giveaway since Voice herself was not present at the scene. In view of this incongruity, critics point to a further blurriness of Voice's boundaries, pointing to her indistinctness not only from those to whom she gives voice, but from Joe himself. Graley Herren conjectures that the detailed narrative of the suicide is a fantasy authored by Joe's punitive conscience, which is then clothed in the condemnatory voice of another woman betrayed by him in the past: 'Joe is both torturer and victim, [and] the ventriloquist behind the soliloquist'.[77] In this line of thinking, Voice is at once an autonomous revenant and Joe's psychic creation, and

[76] *Performing Embodiment,* p.94.
[77] Graley Herren, 'Mourning Becomes Electric: Mediating Loss in *Eh Joe*', in *Samuel Beckett and Pain*, ed. by Mariko Hori Tanka, Yoshiki Tajiri and Michiko Tshushima (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), pp.43-66 (45)

her vocal sadism is at least partly powered by his own aural masochism. The persecutory aspect of Joe's mind identifies with Voice (her 'I' as well as panoptic eye) and forces the guilty faction ('you') into listening and suffering. In turn, the latter strains to quieten this voice. While Herren finds the workings of Freudian melancholia in this internal warring, Denise Riley, in an influential essay inspired by Beckett's prose works, posits the splitting of the self into a subject and object as characteristic of *all* inner speech: 'there is an internal dialogue, but in these exchanges, I appear to occupy both sides of it, and there is no one heavily weighted side to my garrulous split self'.[78]

If Joe is the deviser of the suicide story, the *means* that he uses to fill in the epistemic gap between the newspaper obituary and the event itself are as important as his motives for doing so. He instinctively speculates that the girl is compelled to drown herself upon hearing the '[f]aint lap of sea' that reaches her room, and imagines her '[t]railing her feet in the water like a child' who willingly turns to the sea as both a womb and a tomb (p.366). So persistent is the association between the girl and the sea in Joe's mind that even after the failure of the first drowning attempt, he has her return to the water's edge for each renewed attempt at death. When assisting Billie Whitelaw with her preparation for the part in the 1988 SDR broadcast, Beckett mapped the back and forth movements of the girl between the sea and her house in a small notebook, which is now part of the Billie Whitelaw Archive (UoR BW A/6/1). While Voice has been commonly understood as the successor to Ada from *Embers*, the greater similarity is between Henry's wife and Joe's 'green one' as figures of an amphibious liminality who continually re-traverse the boundaries between land and sea—a commonality that is reinforced if we recall Ada's insinuated suicide through drowning.[79] Indeed, referring to the girl's location on the threshold between the shore and the sea (but also life and death), Joe/Voice repeat the phrase 'the edge' five times during this final section, deploying the same incantatory quality that is used when referring to the dying girl's bodily fragments. Furthermore, just as Ada emerges as the sea's vocal delegate in the earlier play, Voice here speaks on the dead girl's behalf.

---

[78] Denise Riley, '"A voice without a mouth": Inner Speech', in *The Force of Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.7-45 (p.19).
[79] 'As Ada is to Henry in *Embers,* so is Voice to Joe in *Eh Joe*'. Graley Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.53.

Presenting with traits of both the self and the other, Voice in *Eh Joe* is ultimately neither in her entirety. Her persistence as a threshold entity of ambiguous provenance additionally results in the difficulty of taxonomizing her as a disembodied voice based on the spatiotemporal relation between the image and soundtrack, since she unsettles the distinction between past and present, and the outside and the inside of the frame so profoundly. Voice exhibits elements of various categories of off-screen sound without fully qualifying as any of them—indeed, she can only be defined negatively, if at all. In the BBC and SDR productions, the sound appears to be distinctly localized behind the camera, inviting the interpretation that Voice might be a temporarily disembodied 'voice-off' that could be reunited with a female body were the camera to turn around in the shot/reverse shot movement characteristic of the cinematic suture.[80] However, fleeting references to her body notwithstanding, we know that as a purely psychic entity, Voice cannot be embodied onscreen. Indeed, Nancy Illig, Voice in the Beckett-directed SDR production (1966), recalls the author's anxiety that spectators could mistake the female voice as belonging to a living woman speaking to Joe from 'an adjacent room or in the bathroom', which was countered by having her whisper the text in 'the hammering staccato of a ghost's voice'.[81]

A more obvious understanding would be that Voice is an interior monologue voice-over, whose function is typically to externalize and sound Joe's mute thoughts, fantasies or inner speech. Once again, this textual interpretation is difficult to sustain from the perspective of a televisual spectator. Voice's enunciative position, the organization of her tirade on an 'I/you' principle, suggests that Joe is its addressee rather than its source. Spectators' interpretation of Voice as Joe's interior monologue is impeded at an even more pre-reflective level since we see a *male* body while the voice that ostensibly originates from and within him is female. It is apposite to recall the resounding 'No' with which Beckett vetoed the Radiotelevisione Italiana's (RAI) decision of replacing the female voice with the actor's male voice, based on the

[80] Definitions of the various sub-categories of the 'voice-off' and 'voice-over' are found in Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in Cinema: the Articulation of Body and Space', *Yale French Studies: Cinema/Sound*, 80 (1980), 33-50 (pp.37-43). A concise overview of the visual grammar of 'suturing' in cinema can be found in Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.203-215.
[81] 'Nancy Illig', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), pp.24-26 (p.26).

interpretation that it was Joe's conscience speaking (*LSB* III, pp.505-506). This refusal needs to be understood not so much as an authorial refutation of a critical interpretation but rather an assertion of the importance of maintaining the cross-gendering of the image and the sound track, which is further indispensable to portraying Joe's and Voice's indistinguishable intermingling. As Herren has aptly noted: 'The teleplay erodes gender barriers even further by so entangling the identities of masculine Joe and feminine Voice that it is difficult to say where one starts and the other stops'.[82]

Beckett's pairing of an embodied male figure with a disembodied female voice in the play has been hailed for its disruption of that trenchant norm of classical Hollywood cinema, theorized by Laura Mulvey and Kaja Silverman, in which the female body is the passive object of the phallic male gaze while disembodiment is an exclusively masculine prerogative.[83] Joe undoubtedly bears the brunt of a highly invasive gaze that the unseen female persona escapes, yet this reversal alone is not enough to realize the feminist potential that has been critically attributed to it. While Joe is forced to inhabit the feminine diegetic interiority that, Silverman argues, 'implies linguistic constraint and physical confinement—confinement to the body, to claustral spaces, and to inner narratives', Voice is never granted the corresponding omniscience associated with the male voice-over, as she ultimately remains an unreliable narrator.[84] Jonathan Bignell alludes to this epistemic handicap when remarking that '[t]he vituperative tone and teasing or goading […] make it clear that Voice is in no way neutral, and this reduces the strength of an interpretation of Voice as an objective narrator'.[85] Gilles Deleuze makes a similar claim when he classifies her as *Langue II* and distinguishes her from the more objective voice-overs of the later teleplays: 'the function of the voice [is] not to name or to announce, but to remind, to threaten, to persecute'.[86]

---

[82] *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p.54. As I show in Chapter 4, this principle of cross-gendered voicing is even more pivotal to Beckett's third teleplay, *...but the clouds...* (1976), in which lines from W.B. Yeats's 'The Tower' are mouthed by a female face but heard in a male voice.
[83] Variations of this argument are found in McMullan (2010, p.95), McTighe (2013, p.41), and Paraskeva (2017, p.81).
[84] *The Acoustic Mirror,* p.45.
[85] Jonathan Bignell, *Beckett on Screen: the Television Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p.46.
[86] Gilles Deleuze, 'The Exhausted', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

The overt thematics of surveillance, stalking, and eventual aural capture in the play make it apparent that, if anything, an inner female voice is once again cast by her male auditor in the role of an umbilical web. Indeed, the recurring image of Joe '[h]urrying' Voice into her coat and '[b]undling' the green one into her Avoca sack is ironically reversed by Joe's suffocating swaddling in the fabric of the play's female voice (p.362; p.365). In December 1985, Beckett reluctantly outlined a blueprint for a theatrical adaptation of *Eh Joe* upon request from Rick Cluchey, in which he laid out two possibilities for sound design: 'Voice: either in his head, in which case a single loud-speaker near the bed, or else from nowhere & everywhere as the voice in Rockaby, in which case more than one disseminated in space (*LSB* IV, p.665). The latter option of a spatially dispersed voice originating from 'nowhere & everywhere'—first deployed in the 'threefold source' (i.e. overhead loudspeakers) of voices A, B, and C in *That Time* (1976)—closely approximates to Chion's description of the maternal-female voice as a 'vocal continuum than an image [that] originates in all points of space'.[87]

Beckett's radiophonic portrayal of the vocal trap of the sea in *Embers* simultaneously entailed inserting its sound in the silence of the pauses while leaving its location ('inside' or 'outside' Henry) ambiguous. In *Eh Joe,* the realization of the umbilical web is as crucially visual as it is verbal, with Voice and camera colluding to imprison Joe physically and mentally. Bignell contends that the teleplay's camera-work shifts from a more 'theatrical' long shot in the first half to a specifically 'televisual' close-up in the second. The camera's hovering along the room's periphery in the former grants Joe space to move around the room, of which he is progressively deprived once the camera begins the frontal approach.[88] Voice's accusations lengthen as the empty space surrounding Joe is gradually obliterated, resulting in the replacement of the play's visual enclosure (i.e. the four walls of the room) with a purely vocal enclosure spun by the female voice. Indeed, this cumulatively created effect of an umbilical net closing in and tightening around its auditor-prey in the teleplay recalls a similar contraction of the rotunda's dimensions in the contemporaneous *All Strange Away* (1964) as well as the visceral writhing and suffering that this diminishment causes its narrator. Even before the spatial shrinkage

[87] *The Voice in Cinema*, p.61.
[88] *Beckett on Screen: the Television Plays*, p.20.

is significantly underway in *Eh Joe*, the protagonist's immobility has already been ensured by the very act of listening—by Voice's sudden onset and cessation, and the equally unpredictable content of her monologue, both of which leave him hanging onto her every word. Joe's alternation between tension and relaxation, corresponding respectively to Voice's speaking and silence, no longer holds halfway through the play and gives way to a persistent absorption when he realizes that the female whisper is here to stay for the evening. As Beckett informed Cluchey: 'The stillness of intent listening belongs also to the silences. Then he does not relax but continues to listen—for the voice to resume or expire, quashed at last' (*LSB* IV, p.665).

It could be argued that Joe does not entirely share the predicament of the infant who, according to Chion, is defenceless against the unpredictable sounding of the mother's voice. His 'throttling the dead in his head' that he proudly describes as 'mental thuggee' is, in fact, animated by a murderous violence manifest in the descriptive verbs that Beckett uses in various drafts of the play, e.g. 'finish, mum, strangle, stamp out, exterminate, still, kill, quench, fix, lay, have choked' (p.363).[89] The efficacy of this aural combat is revealed when Joe, at his most vulnerable during Voice's recollection of the suicide's final moments, reduces Voice from 'normal strength' to a whisper in a bid to liberate himself from this verbal enclosure (p.363). Joe's acquisition of autonomy through the reduction of the female voice to an incoherent whisper recalls the very manoeuvre that Kaja Silverman identifies in Chion, where the male subject's retrospective displacement of his infantile discursive impotence onto the mother's voice is a condition of his leaving the umbilical web:

> Access to the symbolic would seem to turn upon the transfer of the child from the "inside" to the "outside" of that envelope […] [S]ince exteriority can be defined only through opposition to interiority, the child's shift to the "outside" of the "umbilical net" requires that the maternal voice be resituated "inside"—that the "container" become the "contained".[90]

[89] Zilliacus, p.188
[90] *The Acoustic Mirror*, p.76.

Once Voice has been attenuated in this manner, her dying words soon fade into silence as Joe breaks into a victorious smile on having vanquished her. However, Voice rightly predicts—echoing Bishop Berkeley's '*esse est percipi*' dictum, as S.E. Gontarski notes—that Joe's suffering will not end with her. [91] Once he suppresses the perception of his lost others' voices, he will still have to contend with self-perception, i.e. his own (undisguised) inner voice and ultimately, with the persecutory Voice of God ('Thou fool thy soul'). An image of absolute and irreversible aural engulfment, of Joe inhabiting a series of concentric enclosures, is thus evoked: just as he rents apart one sound envelope, he finds himself enclosed in another, thereby rendering his pursuit of an absolute internal soundlessness—a '[s]ilence of the grave without the maggots'—futile as long as he is alive (p.364).[92] As Beckett told Siegfried Melchinger: 'That is his passion: to kill the voices he cannot kill'.[93]

Yoshiki Tajiri has illuminatingly argued that the ambiguous inner voices in Beckett's work are perceived by their auditors as if they emanate not from within themselves but rather from devices like gramophones and telephones. Reading *The Unnamable* and *How It Is* alongside Jacques Derrida's 'Ulysses Gramophone' (1984), Tajiri's dextrous analyses finds in these prose texts the workings of a 'mental telephony', whereby the fragments of the narrators' minds are figured as places separated by a geographical distance bridged through an internal transportation of voices.[94] With Tajiri's argument as a critical precedent, I wish to argue that the suffering that *Eh Joe*'s Voice inflicts on Joe as a mechanized torture apparatus (as critics have previously claimed) results from her as-if telephonic functioning. In describing the telephonic working of Voice, I am locating her—*contra* Tajiri's

[91] S. E. Gontarski, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett*, Vol. IV: The Shorter Plays (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p.266. Berkeley's argument for the inescapability of divine perception is at the heart of the earlier *Film* (1964). As Beckett states: 'All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self-perception maintains in being' (*F*, p.323).
[92] Even the extent to which Joe's tuning down of Voice succeeds remains uncertain. According to Voice earlier on in the play, far from helping him extricating himself from the prison of his resonant skull, it entraps him even further through his attempts at re-semanticising that which he has strenuously transformed into noise: 'Till the whisper… You know… When you can't hear the words…Just the odd one here and there … That's the worst… Isn't it, Joe? … Isn't that what you told me? […] Why must you do that? … When you're nearly home… What matter then…What we mean […]' (*EJ*, p.364).
[93] Qtd. in Jonathan Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.103.
[94] Yoshiki Tajiri, *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body*, pp.144-150 (p.144).

Derridean approach—at the terminus of an inter- and intra-textual genealogy of specifically *female* voices in Beckett's work, which are either actually heard on the telephone or closely resemble their mediated counterparts. This genealogy begins with Beckett's reading of the phone conversation between Marcel and the grandmother in Proust's *Recherche*, an emotional moment in the narrator's life that is parodied in *Murphy*'s opening scene, where telephony is re-coded as an instrument of shock, disturbance, and feminine intrusion. By the time Beckett writes *Eh Joe*, where Proustian telephony is additionally refracted through *Murphy*, the telephonic apparatus itself has disappeared while these attributes of the female voice are correspondingly intensified.

While Beckett has rightly been considered as a trailblazer in his precocious experiments with contemporaneous media/technologies, a study of the presence and role played by older forms of communicational technologies (e.g. telegraphs or telephones) in his work is long overdue. The telephone appears regularly, if fleetingly, throughout the Belacqua fiction following *Proust* (e.g. in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* [1932] and *More Pricks than Kicks* [1934]), notwithstanding Ulrika Maude's erroneous claim that it is the 1961 radio play, *Rough for Radio I,* that 'contains the rare appearance of a telephone in the Beckettian canon'.[95] The fullest representation of telephony across Beckett's oeuvre is arguably found in the opening chapter of *Murphy* (1938), a novel whose plot additionally depends on the exchange of letters and telegrams between its characters. Celia's phone call to Murphy reveals a clear continuity between Proustian and Beckettian telephony. In Chapter One I foregrounded Beckett's observation that Marcel is consistently the recipient—but never the initiator—of the telephone calls, and that the incoming telephonic voice in the *Recherche* is invariably female. The telephone similarly intervenes in the amorous life of Beckett's protagonist, Murphy, when he receives two phone calls from Celia over the course of the novel.

Considering Zurbrugg's identification of Beckett's 'pessimistic' view of Marcel's phone conversation with his grandmother, it would be expected that his own representation of the technology would similarly stage a failure of communication. On the contrary, *Murphy* not only associates telephony with an almost entrapping connectivity but selectively foregrounds those aspects of it that

[95] Ulrika Maude, 'Working on Radio', in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, ed. by Anthony Uhlmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.183-191 (p.187).

occasioned the greatest discomfort amongst its earlier users. The thinly concealed antagonism between Murphy and the telephone rapidly exposes the scene as a clear parody of Proustian telephony based on the difference between Beckett's and Proust's respective protagonists: Marcel seeks connectivity while Murphy fears it; Marcel tries to recuperate his soon-to-be-dead grandmother from the underworld like Orpheus, while Murphy—in a clear allusion to the Proustian 'ironic Furies' that man the telephone exchange—envisions Celia as a 'Fury coming to carry him off' (*M*, p.17).

The equivalence between the room and the mind has been well-noted throughout Beckett's prose and drama, especially in *Film* and the teleplays that follow. The retreating of Beckett's characters into the enclosed space of the room is often the ultimate step towards the self-isolation necessary for withdrawing from the sensory and bodily entrapments of the external world, and into a contemplative and intensely pleasurable 'wombtomb'.[96] When readers first encounter Murphy in a dark corner of his West Brompton 'cage', he is naked and tightly bound to the rocking chair whose rhythmic movements aid his journey from the 'big world' to the 'little world' (*M*, p.4). Although the entirety of Murphy's sensorium is a potential foil to this transcendence, the narrative isolates the ear as a *saboteur* early on. While he is able to close his eyes against the distracting patch of light flickering on the ceiling, with his body and hands bound, he cannot seal his ears against the street cries and the distant sounding of a cuckoo clock. Maude observes that sounds in Beckett's work not only cut through barriers but even transport listeners mentally across these barriers to other spaces.[97] While these sounds hinder Murphy's movement inward and keep him 'detained' in the street outside, the telephone in his room risks breaching the integrity of his sanctuary even more radically by transporting outsiders within it unannounced. The threat is realized when it rings at the peak of his meditative trance and drags him back from the 'little world' of his mind, which leads Murphy to contemplate dashing the receiver to the ground in rage. The very principle of telephonic connectivity, the 'admirable sorcery' that Proust's narrator celebrates,

[96] Phil Baker explains this Beckettian psychic state as resembling the womb-like, pre-subjective, objectlessness of Freud's 'primary narcissism', while Graley Herren attributes it to Arnold Geulincx's proto-Cartesian prescription of 'an intense and continuous withdrawal of the mind (no matter what its current business) from external things into itself, into its own innermost sanctum'. Phil Baker, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis*, p.115; Graley Herren, 'Working on Film and Television', in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, pp.192-202 (p.195).

[97] *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.51.

is a liability for Beckett's protagonist. Unlike Marcel, who impatiently awaits the 'sublime summons of the telephone' (to recall Beckett's phrase in *Proust*), Murphy is a victim of the auricular trauma that is the sudden, cataclysmic, ringing of the telephone.

In Beckett's early work, states of disturbance and surprise are implicated in a Cartesian dualism and are conspicuously gendered. The Beckettian man, epitomized in Murphy, resolves the body/mind conflict by pursuing intellectual contemplation while disavowing his bodily desires, which are then projected on the woman: 'The male's impatience with the corporeal is displaced onto the woman as Other and expressed as aversion to or disgust with Woman as body, as clod'.[98] In the early prose, male protagonists evade the advances of desiring women (when in reality they flee their own desire) either by being constantly on the move or seeking solitude in closed spaces; 'disturbance' results when this system of masculine defence is undermined by women, often through sensorial means.[99] Indeed, I wish to contend that the overlapping male/female, mind/body, and prey/predator dualisms operative in these early works are additionally displaced onto vision and voice: Beckett's male solipsists rely on a visual vigil against potential incursions while women, displaying a shape-shifting prowess, bypass this visual surveillance and disrupt this splendid isolation in the form of disembodied voices, often from behind. For instance, the grotesque Miss Rosie Dew approaches Murphy based on 'the promise of his rear' as he is lying face down on the grass and battling his desire for gingerbread digestives. She calls attention to herself as a vocal infiltrator in no uncertain terms: "Would you have the goodness, *pardon the intrusion*, to hold my little doggy?" (p.60, my emphasis). A similar predicament befalls the itinerant narrator of *First Love* (1946), who, in his pursuit of a Murphy-like contemplative 'supineness in the mind', carefully chooses a bench that is flanked on all sides by obstacles to minimize the 'risk of surprise'. This spatial fortification nonetheless proves pregnable to Anna/Lulu, the novella's prostitute-mother, who first makes her presence felt in the

[98] Susan Brienza, 'Clods, Whores and Bitches: Misogyny in Beckett's Early Fiction', in *Women and Beckett*, pp.91-105 (p.101).
[99] Feminist criticism has either explained this strategy of spatial escape from the woman *qua* sexual other in Cartesian terms as the (male) mind's horror of the (female) body, or in autobiographical terms as the young Beckett's revulsion of the Irish Free State—culturally representation through maternal/feminine figures like Deirdre, Mother Ireland, or Cathleen ni Houlihan—and his longing for exile. For these respective approaches see Ch.1, 'Space Invaders: Women of the Early Fiction' in Bryden (1993) and Ch.1, 'Severing Connections with Ireland: Women and the Irish Free State in Beckett's Early Fiction' in Kim (2010).

evening darkness as a floating voice that orders the narrator to 'Shove up' (*FL*, p.31). In a sort of Conradian 'delayed decoding', these narratives mimic the surprise and disorientation that female vocal apparitions cause by suspending, no matter how briefly, the attribution of a name or a body to voice that causes these men to jump out of their skins.[100]

To return to *Murphy*'s opening scene, the telephone disturbs Murphy not only by shattering the silent stillness of his room, but also by forcing him into a position of receptivity. His fear that the landlady would barge into his room were he to disregard the persistent ringing compels him to answer the call and thereby be confronted by Celia, whom he has been actively evading. Celia thus enters the room—and the novel—as a disembodied telephonic voice, whose sound similarly precedes her identification by the narrator:

> "God blast you", he said.
> "He is already doing so". Celia Kelly (*M*, p.7).

The narrator comically presents the technology as Murphy's cohabitating nemesis, whose 'loud, calm, crake' overtly mocks his pursuit of a solipsistic quiescence while remaining embedded in a boundless telephonic network, and thus vulnerable to unbidden auditory-vocal encounters. From Murphy's perspective, Celia exploits this oversight to invade his solitude through a technology of voice transportation, thereby becoming yet another female 'space invader' in this phase of Beckett's work. Mary Bryden strikingly explains this coinage in terms that recall the resurfacing of the Kristevan abject:

> The root of their threat lies in the robust and restless impingement capacities of these early women. Even when impeded by physical, often grotesque, handicaps, they continue to stride remorselessly across the male life-space, appropriating it and, reportedly polluting

[100] Ian Watt famously coined the term to explain Conrad's impressionistic narrative technique of opening up a 'semantic gap between the sensations aroused in the individual by an object or event, and their actual cause or meaning'. *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p.270.

it.[101]

As a hand-me-down from the prostitute who once occupied Murphy's room, the telephone is firmly on the side of the flesh. With Celia's call, the telephonic female voice is re-eroticized, not least because she is a prostitute herself. In a twist on Marcel's simultaneous experience of pleasure and pain on listening to the grandmother on the phone, Murphy's perception of Celia's isolated voice not only occasions ambivalence but rather fractures him from within. Insofar as she is an object of desire, her voice inflames his passions while simultaneously earning the disapproval of his mind: 'The part of him that he hated craved for Celia, the part that he loved shrivelled up at the thought of her. The voice lamented faintly against his flesh' (*M*, p.7). The telephonic voice thus disturbs the 'self-evident ruler-ruled relation' between Murphy's reason and bodily appetite characteristic of the 'somatophobia' that Elizabeth Grosz locates at the origin of Western philosophy.[102] After Celia has hung up, Murphy does not replace the receiver right away but rather 'listen[s] for a little to the dead line' before returning to the rocking ritual that she had interrupted (p.7). The disconnection that causes Marcel to panic and frantically call out for his grandmother, as Beckett describes in *Proust*, is welcomed by Murphy as it restores the primacy of his mind over his body. Contra Proust's narrator, who marvels at the telephonic voice as 'the sound of distance overcome', Murphy prefers the dead line as the sound of distance re-established.

John Durham Peters identifies a 'primal uncanniness' associated historically with telephonic communication, arguing that 'the telephone evoked many of the same anxieties as radio: 'strange voices entering the home, forced encounters, the disappearance of one's words into an empty black hole, and absent faces of the listeners'.[103] Michèle Martin has also argued that its sudden and unexpected ringing at any time of the day (particularly the night), often caused panic in its early users, which was exacerbated by the instructions from telephone companies to answer the call without delay.[104] I have shown how Beckett departs from Proust in *Murphy* by

---

[101] Mary Bryden, *Women in Samuel Beckett's Prose and Drama: Her Own Other* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1993), p.15
[102] *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, p.5.
[103] John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000) p.198.
[104] Michèle Martin, *"Hello, Central?": Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems* (Quebec City: McGill University Press, 1991), p.162.

exclusively depicting and exaggerating these uncanny and anxiogenic aspects of telephony—undeniably to a certain comic effect. These acquire an altogether sinister quality in *Eh Joe*, where the telephone itself is not found; instead—as Tajiri also argues in the context of *The Unnamable*—'the penny farthing hell' that is Joe's mind functions somewhat like as a telephonic network across which dead voices are ferried. With the internalization of this one-sided communicational network, evident in Joe's speechless submission to Voice, even the residual agency that Murphy exercised vis-à-vis the apparatus has been relinquished to the play's autonomous voices. The pairing of the receptive male ear and the incoming female voice, to which Beckett had alluded *Proust*, is here pushed to a coercive extreme. As with Murphy's refusal to replace the receiver at the end of the call, Joe aspires towards introducing breaks in his internal communicational circuit through his 'mental thuggee', with the crucial difference that its protracted and strenuous operations are far from instantaneous and only succeed after several years of unwilled perception of his internal voices.

In *Eh Joe*, too, Beckett continues the spatial mapping of the male protagonist's sensorium into zones of surveillance and vulnerability. The play begins with Joe relaxing and on the verge of retiring to bed after having safely imprisoned himself within his room. In a detailed letter to Alan Schneider—who was preparing to direct the play's first American broadcast in 1966—Beckett explained that at this point Joe is siezed by 'a sudden idea or sudden feeling that he hears a sound and had better make a last round to make sure all is well' (*NABS*, p.201). The perception of an unlocalizable sound, when Joe thinks that he has isolated himself fully from the external world, unleashes a paranoia that structures the opening dumb show. He successively revisits all the thresholds and concealed spaces within the room that he sits facing (window, door, cupboard, and even the underside of his bed), peers into them and, having established his safety, locks them for the night. In terms of Guy Rosolato's sensory topology of the body, described earlier on in the chapter, Joe's defence operates exclusively along the visual-anterior-exterior axis as he struggles to attribute a source (or body) to the sound by turning each of these spaces inside-out, as it were. In doing so, he disavows the twin dangers that lurk *behind* (the camera) and *within* (Voice) him, invisible spaces that are linked and conjointly posited—in accordance with Rosolato's argument—as points of infiltration in the play. Similar to E's observation of O's paranoid 'occlusion' of the various eyes and apertures in his

room in *Film* (1964), Joe's framing through a sinister rear shot introduces dramatic irony: as spectators, we observe him through the eyes of a predator lying in wait for him, of whose stalking he is unaware in his excessive reliance on frontal vision. Unsurprisingly then, as soon as he seals the only aperture that remains open—his eyes—and retreats within the unquestioned safety of his mind, the telephonic Voice begins her address and mocks the naivety of his attempts to keep others at bay.

For Durham Peters, the most unsettling telephonic encounter is one in which an unknown caller either does not identify themselves or simply breathes into the phone.[105] Joe is unnerved in a similar vein when Voice first begins speaking, especially since her self-identification is momentarily delayed and she persists as a faceless whisper until then. The shock is conveyed in most productions through the actor's freezing mid-gesture while removing his carpet slippers. In Walter Asmus's acclaimed SDR production (1988), the startled Joe (Klaus Herm) additionally looks around the room when Voice (Billie Whitelaw) first whispers his name, as if expecting her to materialize imminently before him. While both *Murphy* and *Eh Joe* share an anti-telephonic stance vis-à-vis the *Recherche*, what distinguishes the teleplay's intertextual gesture is that as audiences we *hear* Voice and observe her impact on Joe in a way that we cannot perceive Celia's telephonic voice. What is more, the technique of close-miking used to record Voice's part results in an amplified, breathy, and metallic sound that resonates with the same 'sonorous excrescences' that Steven Connor attributes to the telephonic voice—its 'pants, gasps, and hisses, the clicks, pops and percussions, of the breath sounding amid its originating body and amid the sensitive body of the telephone apparatus'.[106] This is particularly true in the BBC broadcast, during whose recording the microphone was pressed right against Siân Phillips's lips and the high and low frequencies of her voice were subsequently filtered out.[107]

I would argue that the re-mediation of the narrator/grandmother conversation in Beckett's teleplay accords with his foregrounding of Marcel's suffering at the hands of a non-habitual perception of a disembodied female voice. To recall *Proust* briefly, Beckett acknowledges therein a pre-reflective modality of communication

[105] *Speaking into the Air*, p.198.
[106] Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.381.
[107] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p.538.

between the two characters—facilitated by the telephonic uncoupling of the interlocutors' image and voice—but omits its pleasurable aspects altogether, thereby inviting the critical charge that he neither recognizes nor accepts Proust's vision of a positive mode of habit disruption. Beckett treats the grandmother's voice as an unmitigated 'measure of its owner's suffering', whose fragile texture and sorrowfulness, when amplified on the phone, proleptically intimates Marcel of her imminent death (*PTD*, p.27). As I observed in Chapter One, Beckett astutely links this painful epiphany to Marcel's movement—primarily catalysed by his 'reduced' listening on the telephone—from a habit-atrophied and 'necromantic' perception of the grandmother to a cruelly objective photographic gaze through which he views her upon his unannounced arrival in Paris.

In a similar vein, *Eh Joe*'s telephonic Voice also takes the male listener on a journey to a *post-hoc* discovery of a loved woman's death by establishing—through repeated injunctions to '*Imagine*'—and operating a camera eye within him (p.366). In doing so, she functions as the acousmatic voice *par excellence*: in Emilie Morin's words, '[Pierre] Schaeffer's acousmatic voice is the property of a didactic ghost, capable of returning to impart a knowledge that would remain unknown, were it not for its revelations'.[108] This revelatory process unfolds through the distinctly visual quality of Voice's reportage, which projects a flow of images of the girl's suicide and bodily fragments—considerably accelerated towards the end—on the screen that is Joe's mind. During this section in the BBC version, Jack MacGowran distinctly winces at her mention of 'the Gilette' in an attempt to scotomize the image of the girl cutting herself. On the other hand, Klaus Herm in the SDR *He Joe* narrows his eyes, as if obeying Voice's injunction to bring these mental images into a sharper focus, thereby also mirroring the action of the external camera that is nearly touching his face by now. Anthony Paraskeva observes:

> Narrative voice transforms into camera eye, cutting together a series of long and medium shots with close-ups of her face, her lips, hands, eyes. A full account of the death in its circumstantial detail imbues the

[108] Emilie Morin, 'Beckett's Speaking Machines: Sound, Radiophonics, Acousmatics', p.7.

> scene with a melodramatic intensity designed to elicit Joe's identifications.[109]

Joe, by thus being made to envision the suffering female body in piecemeal detail, is retrospectively inserted into a scene from which he was originally missing. In what may be seen as Voice's final turn of the screw, she introduces an intersensoriality into the suicide narrative towards the very end. Her ventriloquizing of the green one's dying words ('*Joe…Joe*'), as well as her exhortation that Joe experience the sensation of the suicide's hands, face, and lips against the cold, hard stones of the beach, mobilizes Joe's auditory and haptic imagination in equal measure as their visual counterpart. With the coming into play of the proximity senses of hearing and touching, Joe can no longer sustain his position of a distant, if not detached, bystander observing the girl's journey to and from the strand. Instead, as Paraskeva suggests above, he imaginatively identifies with—indeed, almost comes to inhabit—this *in extremis* female body, and for whose suffering he is allegedly responsible.

At the same time, the extra-verbal aspects of Voice's monologue are as crucial as her words. As with Beckett's reading of the grandmother's voice, the sonic materiality of the female voice does not disappear behind speech; in *Eh Joe*, it is actively made to function as a transmitter of pain and guilt to Joe. The concentration of venom in Voice's address is the very opposite of the grandmother's conscious suffusing of her telephonic voice with love for the narrator; at the same time, nor does *Eh Joe*'s dead whisper carry the erotic charge of Celia's voice on the telephone. The sadism attributed to Voice, her relishing in her victim's aural suffering, manifests primarily through a vocal excess that requires a careful attention to tone as well as rhythm. Joe was once drawn to the tinkling clarity of the elocution of the woman who has returned to torment him on this evening. However, he no longer hears her as 'Flint glass' but rather as '[a]ttacking' and overflowing with '[p]lenty of venom', to recall Beckett's description to Schneider (*NABS*, p.198). Beckett also describes the underlying rhythmicality of her narrative in terms of a recurrent and relentless aural stabbing, whereby '[e]ach sentence [is] a knife going in, pause for withdrawal, then in again' (*NABS*, p.201). Indeed, a matter-of-fact delivery of the

[109] Anthony Paraskeva, *Samuel Beckett and Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.80.

monologue, no matter how closely it aspires to Beckett's prescription of a vocal colourlessness, would not have the same effect in the play.

In *Embers* and *Eh Joe,* the disembodied female voice alternates between enveloping and invading its male auditor, threatening the latter's integrity and autonomy in terms that recall an aural equivalent of the Kristevan notion of abjection. I have shown that Beckett's use of the radio and television medium assists in the disfigurement of the male body, and that the 'abject' quality of the female voice directly results from his distancing himself from Rank's view of the womb as an idyllic space and Proust's representation of telephony as a means of ensuring connectivity with the love object at a distance. In the plays studied in the next chapter, the female voice is no longer defended against but actively pursued as a primordial lost object. Kaja Silverman observes a similar pattern in Hollywood cinema where 'the female voice becomes the receptacle of that which the male subject both throws away and draws back toward himself, functioning by turns as abject and *objet* (a)'.[110] This movement from a repudiation to reclamation of the female voice corresponds to another crucial shift—also observed by Rina Kim—from an ipso-centric male subjectivity (prevalent in the earlier prose and drama) in flight from the sexual other to a later configuration centred upon her loss, which is then actively mourned.

110 *The Acoustic Mirror*, p.87.

CHAPTER FOUR

Inaudible Utterances: the Female Voice as a Lost Object in *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Ghost Trio*, and *…but the clouds…*

> Like a bad concert hall, affective space contains dead spots where the sound fails to circulate.[1]

Despite having been written nearly two decades apart and for different artistic media, *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), *Ghost Trio* (1975) and *…but the clouds…* (1976) frequently appear together in critical discussions of either one or more of these plays.[2] S. E. Gontarski links them for their thematic similarity, stating with reference to Krapp's memory of the girl in the punt that 'the haunting quality of past loves also assails the protagonists of the television works, *Eh Joe*, *Ghost Trio* and "*…but the clouds…*"'.[3] While being mindful of the nuances that distinguish these plays from each other, it can nevertheless be argued that they continue to reproduce the motif of 'women as lost others' that Rina Kim (2010) has extensively mapped across the entire arc of Beckett's fictional and dramatic corpus.[4] In each of these plays an aged male protagonist (Krapp, F, and M) grapples with the absence of a dead, relinquished, or unavailable loved other. In keeping with Beckett's other male protagonists studied in this thesis, the ear functions as a conduit to these long-lost female others. Krapp compulsively replays a recording of his memory of bidding 'farewell to love' in his thirty-eighth year and F turns to the comfort of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Trio whilst awaiting a tryst with 'her' on an evening that ends in a Beckettian non-arrival. Similarly, V narrates that he 'stood listening' (to undisclosed sounds) in complete stillness each night upon his return from walking the roads

---

[1] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Penguin, 1990), p.167.

[2] All three plays were coincidentally directed by Donald McWhinnie in Britain. *Krapp's Last Tape* premiered at the Royal Court on 28th October 1958 alongside *Fin de partie* directed by George Devine. *Ghost Trio* and *…but the clouds…* were screened nineteen years later, on 17 April 1977, as a trilogy of television plays titled *Shades,* on *The Lively Arts* program (BBC 2).

[3] S. E. Gontarski, *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana Unversity Press, 1985), p.60.

[4] Rina Kim, *Women and Ireland as Beckett's Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

before retreating to his sanctum and commencing his strained recollections of his lost lover's face (W), a process that furnishes him an auditory memory of her recitation of the closing quatrain of W. B. Yeats' poem, 'The Tower' (1928).

The inscription of the feminine within the auditory register in these plays is relatively more complicated and indirect when compared to those studied in the previous chapter. Try as they may, these acts of listening do not directly restore female voices and sounds from the past to their auditors, leaving them unheard and mute for these plays' protagonists and audiences alike. Beckett intended the phrase 'not a sound' to be a refrain throughout *Krapp's Last Tape* as a generalized marker of Krapp's isolation, but this absence of sound also applies specifically to female voices. F's predicament originates in the silence of his room, which he fills with his Beethoven recording, and against which he intently anticipates the woman's footfalls. Yet it is *…but the clouds…* that best crystallizes the negative conception of the female voice as an inaudible utterance/sonic trace that I wish to advance across my reading of the three works. In the shots where she reads from Yeats, the movements of W's lips, indicating speech, are nevertheless unaccompanied by the sound of her voice. When compared to Kornelia Bose in *Nur noch Gewölk* (1977), Billie Whitelaw's mouthing of these lines in *Shades* appear perceptibly slowed and exaggerated—presumably to facilitate the recognition of the poem's lines—to the effect that the absence of her voice channels the spectator's visual attention to the silent, dark void that is her mouth. Altogether, then, the female voice is wedded to silence and foregrounded as a conspicuous absence from these plays' soundscapes.

THE SILENT FEMALE VOICE

The kinship between silence and the female voice, as well as its underlying politics, has been frequently probed by studies of gendered vocality. Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones argue that in accordance with a metaphorical usage of 'the female voice' to denote women's expressive agency, its 'silencing' refers to the patriarchal curtailment of women's discursive and expressive authority.[5] As briefly mentioned in the Introduction, Adriana Cavarero also argues that patriarchy requires women to aspire to an obedient and acquiescent mutism as an ideal, exemplified in proverbs

[5] *Embodied Voices*, p.2.

like 'silence is golden' or the infamous adage that 'women should be seen and not heard':

> Taking this [adage] to its logical conclusion, the perfect woman would be mute—not just a woman who abstains from speaking, but a woman who has no voice. Or, more precisely, not just a deaf-mute woman (who risks not obeying the man's words because she does not hear them), but rather a woman who has lost her voice. In short, a woman who listens but cannot speak.[6]

This chapter's framing of the inaudible female voice follows in the footsteps of these critics and thinkers only partially. It concurs with Dunn's and Jones's claim that thinking of voice and silence in purely metaphoric terms runs the risk of effacing the actual acoustic referents of either term, and with their clarion call for 'returns to the literal, audible [female] voice in an effort to show how it, too, has also been a site of women's silencing'.[7] The gendered silence to which this chapter is devoted is, then, not so much a symbolic term but a perceivable state of soundlessness that is realized in the performance of these plays.

However, this narrative that explains the silencing of the female voice as an oppressive muzzling, while indisputably attesting to the lived socio-political realities of women across cultures and times, has limited applicability to my approach. For one, Beckett's work is populated by send-ups of patriarchy's 'perfect woman', the listening but mute presence to whom Cavarero alludes, especially in those instances where female voices persist relentlessly against the wishes of their male auditors. While the three plays in this chapter do indeed feature women who do not speak, their auditor-protagonists' response to this silence remains, at every step, the very *opposite* of those prevalent readings of the silencing of the female voice that explain it as a liquidation of some kind of subversive potentiality associated with it. [8] The

---

[6] *For More than One Voice*, p.117.
[7] *Embodied Voices*, p.2.
[8] Both Cavarero and Mladen Dolar turn to Plato's *Symposium* and Aristotle's *Politics*, where the sound of the flute played by a girl to an audience of women is condemned by the male philosopher as an instance of 'the voice that sets itself loose from the word, the voice beyond the logos, the lawless voice' (Dolar, p.45). In a similar vein, essays in the first part of *Embodied Voices* isolate four instances from the Western canon—the Gorgons' wail in Pindar's Twelfth *Pythian Ode*, the Siren in Canto XIX of Dante's *Purgatorio*, Ophelia's songs in *Hamlet*, and a prostitute's cry in Wordsworth's 'Alice Fell' and 'Poor Susan'—where the excessive, musical, and precultural female voice is 'silenced' by its transformation and containment within other ordered cultural structures.

auditors of these plays are confounded by the silent, rather than speaking, woman: unlike the plays discussed in the previous chapter, the mobilizing auditory crisis of these plays is not why the woman speaks or how to strangle the unceasing female voice, but rather why the woman *will not speak*, or how to recover this voice which seems so irretrievably lost. Stated differently, Joe's 'mental thuggee' is transformed here into a 'begging of the mind' for the silent woman to speak (*btc*, p.420). These plays dramatize 'how the voice can transform itself into this object in which *jouissance* [ownership] is sought and how this object is *constructed* as lost, thereby sustaining the errant quest for its recovery'.[9] Indeed, the voice is gendered as feminine in these plays precisely by its construction as a lost object, necessitating the turn to an alternative theoretical paradigm—offered by psychoanalytic theory—to understand the mechanism of this gendering as well as the affective register of nostalgia and desire within which the 'errant quest' for the silent female voice noticeably operates.

THE FEMALE VOICE AS A LOST OBJECT: AN ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM

Psychoanalysis posits an extremely archaic infantile state where even a rudimentary subject/object demarcation has not yet been established; nor is there a conception of a spatio-temporal permanence of the infant's own body or that of the mother, who only 'exists' for the infant as a constellation of perceptual sensations and bodily fragments that remain untotalized into a coherent figure.[10] According to the Freudian paradigm, the infant's psychic economy is governed predominantly by introjection at this stage, as part of which certain perceptions and attributes of the external world, when they are a source of pleasure, are relocated from the 'exterior' and assimilated into the psychic 'interior'.[11] Guy Rosolato argues in view of the considerable precocity of audition over vision that many of these pleasurable sensory indicators

[9] Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. by Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), p.93 (my emphasis).
[10] Alain Delbe, *Le stade vocale* (Paris: Editions de l'Harmattan, 1995), pp.12-13.
[11] 'Expressed in the language of the oldest—the oral—instinctual impulses, the judgement is: "I should like to eat this", or "I should like to spit it out'; and, put more generally: "I should like to take this into myself and to keep that out." That is to say: "It shall be inside me" or "it shall be outside me". […] [T]he original pleasure-ego wants to introject into itself everything that is good and to eject from itself everything that is bad.' Sigmund Freud, 'Negation' (1925), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis), pp.235-239 (p.236).

are those of maternal presence, perceived aurally by the infant. Consequently, it is these early auditory-vocal perceptions—amongst which the maternal voice is particularly privileged—that are introjected to constitute the most primordial version of the infantile ego.[12] As Kaja Silverman observes:

> the foundations for what will later function as identity are marked out by primitive encounters with the outer world, encounters which occur along the axis of the mother's voice […] [S]ince what is incorporated is the auditory field articulated by the maternal voice, the child could be said to hear itself initially through that voice—to first "recognize" itself in the vocal "mirror" supplied by the mother.[13]

While the mechanism of introjection is teleologically geared towards a differentiation or individuation of the nebulous 'pleasure ego' (to borrow Freud's term), it arrives at this goal only by first bringing about its opposite, i.e. by further scrambling the already-tenuous demarcation between what is proper to the subject and the object. Such is the fate of the introjected maternal voice, which is 'no sooner identified than it is assimilated by the child', and therefore (mis)appropriated and (mis)perceived as a property of the subject in Silverman's description above.[14]

The child's ongoing perceptual development, however, gradually consolidates the boundaries of the self through 'a series of "splittings" or divisions' in which the all-engulfing 'pleasure ego' must progressively cast away its introjected constituents: 'The child's as yet unsteady grasp of its own boundaries becomes firmer with the severance of various objects it previously experienced as parts of itself—the breast, the faeces, *the mother's voice*, a loved blanket'.[15] The 'severance' that Silverman describes here is of a more momentous and irreversible nature than the periodic comings and goings of the maternal breast or the evacuation of the faeces—although these micro-privations undoubtedly bring it about. It is instead a consequence of an epiphanic moment in which the *otherness* or alterity of these objects is recognized by the infant, resulting simultaneously in their figurative expulsion from the self and their constitution *qua* objects 'carved out of the subject's

---

[12] Guy Rosolato, 'The Voice and the Opera: between Body and Language', in *Voices/ Voces /Voix*, ed. by Christopher Phillips (Amsterdam: Witte de With, 1998), p.110.
[13] *The Acoustic Mirror*, p.80.
[14] ibid.
[15] ibid., p.7.

own flesh'. Since this is a dialectical process, Silverman claims that 'to the degree that the object has been lost, the subject has been found'.[16] Lacan identifies these first relinquished objects as *objets petits autres* or 'objects with only a little "otherness"', designated as such since they continue to bear the imprint of having been detached from the body to which they were once (thought to have) belonged. Like a missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle, the *objet (a)* is a monument to a breach in what was once a state of wholeness and plenitude, while at the same time it promises the now-lacking subject a possibility of undoing its foundational losses once it has been reunited with the *objet (a)*.

Retroactivity is central to this *construction* of the maternal voice as a primordial object that is 'lost' irreversibly to the subject's psychic and corporeal individuation and socialization. In persistently highlighting 'lost' as a descriptor I am attempting to draw attention to the way it is deployed differently from its usual connotations in psychoanalytic theory. As Michel Poizat clarifies: 'there is no genuinely lost object to be retrieved. There is merely a "loss effect", a simple retroactive consequence of the symbolizing process brought about by linguistic signification'[17] This observation serves as an apposite moment to recall Kaja Silverman's important argument that psychoanalytic formulations concerning the nature and role of the maternal voice in infancy are not so much 'neutral' or 'empirical' observations as they are affectively coloured fantasies, or

> an after-the-fact construction or reading of a situation which is fundamentally irrecoverable, rather than [...] a simple illusion. [...] [F]antasy functions as a bridge between two radically disjunctive moments—an infantile moment, which occurs prior to the inception of subjectivity, and which is "too early" with respect to meaning and desire, and a subsequent moment, firmly rooted within both meaning and desire, but consequently "too late" for fulfilment.[18]

Viewed in the light of this important argument, the fantasy of 'the maternal voice as a lost object' is authored by a lack-centred subject located within the Lacanian Symbolic, and the 'fundamentally irrecoverable' moment that it seeks to theorize is

---

[16] ibid.
[17] *The Angel's Cry*, p.104.
[18] *The Acoustic Mirror*, p.73

the preverbal and pre-linguistic developmental stage prior to the Symbolic, 'endowed with retroactive fantasies of a primary fusion prior to the introduction of a signifier and a lack'.[19]

In other words, it is not quite possible to separate a consideration of the female voice as an *objet (a)* from that of the loss-ridden and diminished subjectivity that it leaves behind. In the Lacanian paradigm, the subject must undergo this figurative dismemberment in a process of 'symbolic castration' if it is to accede to the Symbolic order (the realm of language and culture) while continuing its ceaseless quest for these unattainable objects from its pre-Symbolic past.[20] As we saw in the second chapter, in Freud's usage, 'castration' is tied to the notion of anatomical sexual difference since, from the perspective of the little boy, the girl's dispossession of the penis is understood as a castration; however, Silverman argues that Lacan's symbolic castration is independent of a Freudian moment of 'recognition of anatomical difference' and is, instead, 'a castration to which *all* cultural subjects must submit, since it coincides with separation from the world of objects, and the entry into language'.[21] Beckett's familiarity with Lacan's work is very much an ongoing debate after the recent surfacing of his private admission to James Knowlson that 'the late Lacan is unreadable'.[22] Nonetheless, as we know by now, the former did indeed read other psychoanalytic thinkers whose influence on Lacan's early writings is being increasingly probed. Shuli Barzilai has shown that Lacan's early contribution to the *Encyclopédie française*, 'Les complexe familiaux dans la formation de l'individu' (1938), is closer to Otto Rank's discussion of castration anxiety in *The Trauma of Birth* (1929) than it is to Freud's, especially in its privileging of the formative role of a 'weaning complex' (consisting not only of weaning but also birth trauma) in infantile life.[23] It is no surprise, then, that a

---

[19] Mladen Dolar, 'The Object Voice', in *The Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp.7-31 (p.15).

[20] The intimate connection between lack and signification in Lacan's work originates in the Saussurean premise that the signifier 'stands in' for an absent referent. Thus, it is the infant's recognition of a lack or absence that propels the deployment of its first signifiers: in Jacqueline Rose's words, 'Symbolization starts when the child gets its first sense that something could be missing; words stand in for objects, because they only have to be spoken at the moment when the first object is lost'. Jacqueline Rose, 'Introduction - II', in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), p.31.

[21] p.1, my emphasis.

[22] Shane Weller, '"Some Experience of the Schizoid Voice": Samuel Beckett and the Language of Derangement', *Modern Languages Forum*, 45 (2008), 32-50 (p.48, 38n).

[23] Shuli Barzilai, *Lacan and the Matter of Origins* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.24.

similarly expansive redefinition of castration is repeatedly found across Beckett's notes on Karin Stephen, Ernest Jones, and of course, Otto Rank, as I have already shown in Chapter Two. On the other hand, we have Lacan's symbolic castrations 'to which *all* cultural subjects must submit' and which reverse Freud's 'reliance upon anatomy as a safeguard against castration'.[24] These castrations produce an instance of those marginal and non-phallic male subjectivities that Kaja Silverman identifies in the cinema of T. E. Lawrence and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and in the novels of Henry James and Marcel Proust: which 'not only acknowledge but embrace castration, alterity and specularity' but also 'refuse to write "lack" at the site of the female body'.[25] This appears to be mirrored in Beckett's perceptible swerving from his earlier male protagonists' misogyny (in turn rooted in a horrifying feminine alterity) to an acutely loss-ridden male subjectivity in search of its lost female others, which is everywhere on display in these plays.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSCRIPTION OF THE FEMALE VOICE

Technologies of sound inscription and reproduction are variously built into the three plays. We are reminded, first and foremost, of the centrality of the tape recorder to *Krapp's Last Tape,* where it exceeds its technological function of replaying a pre-recorded spool of tape and emerges as Krapp's only companion in the loneliness of his dying days. Sound recording underwent an accelerated growth in the two decades between *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Ghost Trio,* with the generally unwieldy spools of tape and reel-to-reel recorders giving way to the compact audio-cassette and portable cassette players. That Beckett kept up with these developments is evident from the cassette player cradled by F—who emerges as a kind of Krapp of the 1970s—in *Ghost Trio*, from which the fragments of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Trio ostensibly emanate.

Michel Poizat argues that the voice has been a longstanding object of nostalgia due to its immateriality and evanescence, or its near-simultaneous emission and effacement. It was the drive to capture and perpetuate this ephemeral object, he claims, that propelled the development of phonography and tape recording in the first

[24] Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, p.1 (my emphasis); p.15.
[25] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.3; p.388. My argument here converges with Anna McMullan's, who finds Silverman's notion of 'phallic ruination' at work in Beckett's teleplays.

instance.[26] Graley Herren similarly contends that Beckett's protagonists turn to recording technologies as part of a 'melancholic fantasy' that denies object loss:

> The very mechanisms of recording reproduce the fantasy of conjuring the absent loved one back from the dead and restoring her presence. However, Beckett's media plays ultimately undermine this melancholic fantasy, exposing the fallacy and futility of resuscitating the dead, be it through recordings, through art, or through psychological incorporation.[27]

These three plays repeatedly pair unheard or missing female voices with sound recording technologies, as if enacting their very failure to preserve and reproduce these seemingly un-inscribable voices, and therefore, ultimately reinforcing their nature as irrecoverably lost objects. Going by various accounts, there exists a long tradition of tension (if not overt antagonism) between early acoustic technologies and the female voice in particular. Amy Lawrence examines a range of technical manuals and pamphlets that vindicated the paucity of records with female voices either on account of women's 'vocal deficit' i.e. their 'naturally less powerful voices' when compared to their male counterparts, or on a technical deficit in the apparatus itself whereby it could not record the high pitch and stridence of the female voice. What lies concealed beneath these untenable scientific claims, she argues, is a more deep-rooted and visceral distaste for the sound of the *discursive* female voice in particular—one that did not extend to female singers, however.[28]

The argument that female corporeality somehow encumbers the recording and reproduction of the female voice is advanced by Theodor W. Adorno in 'The Curves of the Needle' (1928), a meditation on the deleterious ramifications of the industrial mass production of gramophone records. The specific context of this infamous passage, which I quote at length, is Adorno's discussion of the discrepancy between the pitch of the original voice and that of its recorded version on the gramophone, a phenomenon whose exemplary instance for him is the recorded female voice. He argues:

---

[26] Poizat, *The Angel's Cry*, p.91.
[27] Graley Herren, 'Mourning Becomes Electric: Mediating Loss in *Eh Joe*', p.43.
[28] Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), p.29.

> Male voices can be reproduced better than female voices. The female voice easily sounds shrill—but not because the gramophone is incapable of conveying high tones, as is demonstrated by its adequate reproduction of the flute. Rather, in order to become *unfettered,* the female voice requires the physical appearance of the body that carries it. But it is just this body that the gramophone eliminates, thereby giving every female voice a sound that is needy and incomplete. Only there where the body itself resonates, where the self to which the gramophone refers is identical with its sound, only there does the gramophone have its legitimate realm of validity: thus Caruso's uncontested dominance. Where sound is separated from the body—as with instruments—or wherever it requires the body as a complement—as is the case with the female voice—gramophonic reproduction becomes problematic.[29]

Being 'shrill' *as well as* 'needy and incomplete', the recorded female voice simultaneously exhibits a sonic excess and depletion, thereby rendering gramophonic reproduction 'problematic'. Adorno's use of 'unfettered', with its studied carceral echoes, to describe the technologically assisted separation of voice from body becomes clearer in the next paragraph where he discusses the constant need to verify the fidelity of the industrial gramophone's recorded sound against its 'ür-image'. According to his syllogistic proposition, the recorded female voice is inevitably deficient since 'in order to become unfettered, the female voice requires the physical appearance of the body': this inexplicable proposition is structured around a deliberate paradox, for if the female voice were to truly *unfetter* itself technologically from the body, it would need to fully dissociate its sounding from the presence of this body—achievable through its inscription and preservation on the gramophone disc—rather than rely upon its bodily vehicle for its completion. Adorno then sets up an antagonistic relationship between an encaging female body and a voice that can never free itself from its corporeal envelope. This argument implies that it is the fate of the female voice to remain tied to a visual referent in its need for 'the physical *appearance*' of the body. On the contrary, the male voice, that ideal candidate for

[29] Theodor Adorno, 'The Curves of the Needle' in *Essays on Music*, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie and ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), pp.271-276 (p.274, my emphasis).

gramophonic recording, manages to fully disembody itself in the process and consequently comes to inhabit a purely auditory register in the event of its playback. Instead of a gramophone, *Krapp's Last Tape* features a large, rectangular, reel-to-reel tape recorder, its evolved progeny from the mid-twentieth century. Beckett's play can be seen as presenting a variation of Adorno's postulations in 'Curves of the Needle': while female voices remain conspicuously missing from the play, their absence appears to be compensated by its soundscape's saturation with intensely visual fragments of the female body, as if the female voice and body were mutually-exclusive entities.

THE PLAYBACK OF LOSS: *KRAPP'S LAST TAPE*

As part of an unchanging ritual that takes place at the end of each of his birthdays, Krapp, the ageing writer 'punished by both emotional and literary failure' winnows his memories of the past year in an act of mentally 'separating the grain from the husks' (*KLT*, p.5).[30] He isolates and imaginatively revisits those experiences that he retrospectively considers formative to his life and literary vocation, so that they can be preserved as voice diaries of a bygone year. A complex alternation between writing and speaking, as well as reading and listening, governs the recording, organization and retrieval of these life experiences. Krapp begins by first listing them on the back of an envelope and then weaves this list into a taped monologue once he has first listened to an older tape from a previous birthday. Finally, with future playbacks in mind, he catalogues these tapes chronologically and thematically in a ledger that helps him navigate his personal archive, housed in a partly visible 'cubby-hole' in later productions of the play. Krapp's idiosyncratic uses of the technology of sound recording and reproduction, then, leave him with highly-condensed and selective recollections of each year of his life, reduced as they are to ten or fifteen minutes' worth of his taped voice. Each tape in this elaborate memory archive is an auditory snapshot of a self that is abstracted from and frozen in time.

In *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett counterbalances the revivifying capacity of the technology of sound recording and reproduction, its ability to making an absent past present, by having the tape recorder proliferate of a series of sonic absences in the

[30] Ruby Cohn, *A Beckett Canon* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), p.240.

present.[31] Anna McMullan has drawn upon Peggy Phelan's exploration of non-specular identities and subjectivities (1993) to argue that the play's visual field comprises invisible spaces such as Krapp's cubby-hole, the laterally open 'womb-drawer' of his desk, as well as his psychic and corporeal interiorities.[32] The play is similarly replete with major and minor instances of *auditory* blind spots. Some of these result from Beckett's (re)shaping of the play over the course of writing it, while others result from the discord between the three versions of Krapp that emerge over the course of the performance. Beckett jettisoned his original idea of having Krapp listen to two separate recordings from his youth in favour of a single tape.[33] Consequently, audiences can never hear the youngest Krapp's voice directly and rely on Krapp-39's mediated listening to this oldest tape, which is tinged with incredulity and disgust: 'Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations! (*Brief laugh. Tape alone.*) (*KRAPP looks at tape-recorder.*) And the resolutions!' (p.5). Where Krapp-39 takes over his younger self's voice by indirectly reporting the naïve aspirations of his youth in the third person, Krapp-69 censors and censures his predecessor's voice by incrementally winding forward through the account of his artistic vision with anger and impatience (p.4).[34] Krapp bitterly scrambles and annihilates the rather elevated recounting of his artistic epiphany into a 'gabble', leaving the audience with three gaping breaches in the play's soundscape.[35]

I would argue that the female voice is another instance of the many silences found in this otherwise-noisy play that resounds with Krapp's voices, grunts, sighs, and the sounds of objects like the crashing of tin boxes. Any account of the female voice (or female embodiment more generally) in the play needs to be framed by this

[31] In a complementary reading that is tangential to the concerns of this chapter, Emily C. Bloom finds Jacques Derrida's notion of an 'anarchivistic drive' at work in Krapp's archive, which subverts and disrupts the preservative aspirations of his recordings. Emily C. Bloom, *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.155.
[32] *Performing Embodiment*, p.46
[33] S. E. Gontarski, 'Crapp's First Tapes: Beckett's Manuscript Revisions of "Krapp's Last Tape"', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 6 (1977), 61-68 (p.64).
[34] Having acquired a greater familiarity with the workings of the tape recorder since writing the play in 1958, Beckett nuanced Krapp's manipulation of the audio in his Schiller-Theatre production. He differentiated between a finger-led, 'manual' rewinding of the tape, and a button-powered, 'mechanical' forwarding for the high-pitched sound that it produced. Steven Connor, 'Looping the Loop: Tape-Time in Burroughs and Beckett', in *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.84-101 (p.98).
[35] Trish McTighe views this moment in the performance as marking yet another limit of the audience's 'sensory capacity'. *The Haptic Aesthetic*, p.18.

distinctive practice of recording and replaying past memories, for women in this one-man drama are primarily inscriptions on tape. They inhabit the zone of memory and lie dormant until acoustically revived with the assistance of the tape recorder. Pierre Chabert writes that Krapp's step-by-step population of the bare stage with objects at the beginning of the play is 'part of a whole poetics of space. From this little recess hidden in shadow, his den, Krapp brings his ledger, his tape-recorder, his tins. From his tins, he takes the spool. From the spool, with the tape-recorder as intermediary, he takes a whole slice of his past'.[36] This sequence can be extended further, since the play's women emerge from the 'slice of his past' that is heard when, at the end of his sixty-ninth birthday, Krapp plays a tape that was recorded on his thirty-ninth birthday, which additionally summarizes an even earlier tape from his twenty-ninth (or so) year. The tape recorder thus functions as a conduit of sorts in its bringing together of as many as eight women that are stratified across temporalities: Bianca and the girl in the green coat date from Krapp's earliest youth, while Mrs. McGlome, the dying mother, the dark nurse and the girl in the punt are mentioned in the tape heard during the play; finally, the fictional Effi and the prostitute Fanny are mentioned during Krapp's aborted recording of the play's titular last tape.

The technological mediation of female (dis-)embodiment introduces a series of paradoxes in the play. 'Not much about her, apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm', states Krapp-39 about Bianca from his youth (p.5). This telling admission not only reveals the workings of Krapp's desiring gaze—its repeated fracturing of the female body into faces, eyes, breasts, or even a scratched thigh—but also underscores this *reduced* state in which women survive in Krapp's archive, whereby 'not much' else is said about these lost loves apart from their bodily allure for him. McMullan argues that Beckett's increasing use of the monologue creates a 'tension between text and stage', whereby spectators must simultaneously grapple with their 'perception of the visual scene' as well as the 'textually invoked visions' resulting from these monologues.[37] Women in *Krapp's Last Tape* are implicated in this tension; their bodily fragments from the taped monologue are examples of these 'textually invoked visions' that do not translate into embodied, corporeal presences in a staging of the play.

---

[36] p.100
[37] Anna McMullan, 'Performing Vision(s): Perspectives on Spectatorship in Beckett's Theatre', p.137.

At the same time, Krapp's recollections of them in the tapes present them in intensely visual terms even though none of these women can be visually apprehended on the stage. Krapp's annual retrospectives can be seen as examples of Proustian voluntary memory that Beckett described in his *Proust* as 'the uniform memory of intelligence' which 'can be relied on to reproduce for our gratified inspection those impressions of the past that were consciously and intelligently formed'. Unlike the predominantly auditory, gustatory, or olfactory traces of involuntary memory in the *Recherche*, Proust gives a visual character to voluntary memory so that acts of conscious recollection, in Beckett's words, are akin to 'turning the leaves of an album of photographs' (p.32). This analogy clearly remained with Beckett since he told Marcel Mihalovici that 'Krapp's recordings were like a photograph album evoking memories of central moments of his past'.[38] These voluntary memories additionally share the 'monochrome' quality of which Beckett writes. On account of Krapp's widely-discussed implication of the feminine in the Manichaean dualism between the sensual and the spiritual, the women's memories commingle light and darkness in their chiaroscuro-like descriptions.[39] For instance, the nurse with whom Krapp is infatuated is a 'dark young beauty', 'all white and starch' in her nurse's attire, who wheels 'a big black hooded perambulator' around (*KLT*, p.7).

Women's absent presence at the level of body and vision applies equally to the auditory realm, for if they are corporeal-yet-disembodied, and visual-yet-unseen, they inhabit the realm of the aural while remaining mute themselves. Krapp's method of preserving memories of these long departed others necessitates the intercession of the ear before they can be revivified in his mind. Indeed, listening as a means to an intensified remembrance underpins his overarching quest for the thirty-year-old punt scene in the opening mime. His silent and brooding pacing within the pool of light, punctuated by the eating of two bananas, exteriorizes the belaboured rummaging within his mind for the year of 'the farewell to love', whose identification would

[38] Martha Fehsenfeld and Dougald McMillan, *Beckett in the Theatre: the Author as Practical Playwright and Director* (London: John Calder, 1988), p.327 (2n).
[39] For a detailed discussion of the Manichean aspects see McMillan and Fehsenfeld's discussion of the play (ibid.).

enable him to locate and play the corresponding tape within his archive.[40] The scene is feverishly played and replayed as many as three times, and Erik Tonning is right in viewing this obsessive listening as a 'vicarious participation in a lost moment; indeed in a moment which is poignant precisely because it is already imbued with loss through and through'.[41] While this memory of the punt scene is actively sought, Krapp's aural trajectory towards this (very last) passage on the tape leads to other, inadvertent, revelations of loss when, for instance, he chances upon Bianca and the girl in the green coat, who are embedded within the tape from the thirty-ninth birthday. In his misguided expectation that the ledger abstract exhausts the contents of the tape that he is about to play, Krapp ends up as a prey to his own habit of enfolding a tape-within-a-tape, and sets himself up for a series of surprises when the two women from forty years ago are suddenly recalled by his voice on the tape. His varying bodily responses to the unfolding account of his twenty-nine-year old self register an incremental release of longing, desire and pain. While Bianca's first mention only evokes a faint movement of the head, the memory of her eyes causes Krapp to raise his head and vacuously stare ahead in what is the first instance of 'non-listening' in the play.[42] The subsequent, and equally unexpected, mention of the girl in the green coat at a railway station platform leaves him besieged with grief as he defensively arrests the playback and retires to the cubby-hole to find comfort in drink. Thus, despite conjuring the play's women into an ephemeral existence Krapp's tape recorder does not resurrect them in their own voices. The speech fragments belonging to some of the women—the punt girl's 'Picking gooseberries, she said', or Fanny's 'How do you manage it she said, at your age?' (p.8; p.9)—are thus heard in

[40] McTighe states that '[a]s Krapp tramps in and out of his cubbyhole, winds back and forward the tapes to the required places of memory, the image could be read as a metaphor for his aging neural circuits, ones that must be mechanically activated' (p.17).

[41] Erik Tonning, *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama*, p.180. This is not to say that the women from Krapp's past cannot be remembered at will or as 'textual' memories within his ledger, but the play's opening clearly positions acts of thinking, reading, and listening at a respectively diminishing remove from remembrance. In Krapp's reading aloud of the summarized entry for the events in his thirty-eighth year, the mention of the mother's death, the dark nurse, and the farewell to love is met with a knowing 'Hm…', while the black ball and the ironically 'memorable' equinox both leave him staring blankly ahead and will not be recalled until the relevant passages on tape have been heard (p.4).

[42] Krapp is found in a similar position when the lights fade up at the beginning of the play, with the difference that he has not yet started listening to the tapes. Beckett listed sixteen such moments in his Schiller-Theatre Notebook on which Krapp is 'seized by [a] dream', and concluded that on the whole the play was divided equally into phases of 'listening' and 'non-listening' (p.237).

Krapp's voice in the play.[43] Unlike plays to follow, where the recording and replaying facilities would be internalized and these female voices would sound in their own, autonomous, voices.

PROUST RETURNS: *GHOST TRIO* AND 'INDIRECT PERCEPTION'

The absence of an unnamed 'her' gives meaning and impetus to events in Beckett's second teleplay, *Ghost Trio*. A rectangular, grey, and bare room gradually fades into view during its opening shot and persists on screen for ten seconds when a female voice-over (V) interrupts the silence. Played by Irmgard Först and Billie Whitelaw in the German and English versions respectively, V secures the spectators' attention by addressing them directly ('Good evening. Mine is a faint voice. Kindly tune accordingly') (*GT*, p.408). Once she has used this aural control to introduce them to the room's constituent structures, she finally directs their vision to the 'sole sign of life' inhabiting the solitude of this austere space: a seated male figure (F), who awaits a visitation from an unnamed woman. It is important to note here that V is an extra-diegetic voiceover: thus, not only is she distinct from the awaited woman, her wry commentary on F's actions bypasses its object of scrutiny and is only audible to the play's spectators.[44] Beckett corroborates this reading in a letter to Antoni Libera, where he describes V as 'a distant, anonymous, indifferent voice. Between the woman who is speaking and F, no relation that I know of. She is observing and presenting from a distance, rather than manipulating […] A sort of astral presenter' (*LSB* IV, p.464). Thus, the teleplay uses an audible female voice (V), located externally to the represented scenario, to call attention to the feminine presence therein, whose non-arrival results in her continued invisibility and inaudibility.

Tellingly entitled *Tryst* until shortly before its first broadcast, the play unfolds in the chasm between F's mounting anticipation of this absent woman's appearance on a rainy evening, and the continued deferral—and eventual frustration—of this desired encounter. For Roland Barthes, all amorous waiting is modelled on a theatrical template, a one-actor, three-act play that he describes as 'the scenography

[43] Daniel Albright mentions that in Earl Kim's *Exercises en route*, 'Picking gooseberries, she said' is sung as an aria by a soprano, 'as if the music represented both the tape recorder's own female voice and another voice mouthing the words at the same time' (p.90).
[44] In the words of Linda Ben-Zvi, V is 'not a spurned lover in the head [as in *Eh Joe*] but a mechanical voice in the machine itself, some sort of director, producer, or prompter'. Linda Ben-Zvi, 'Beckett and Television: in a Different Context', *Modern Drama,* 49 (2006), 469-490 (p.482).

of waiting': 'I organize it, manipulate it, cut out a portion of time in which I shall mime the loss of the loved object and provoke all the effects of a minor mourning. This is then acted out as a play'.[45] In *Ghost Trio*, like the earlier *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett literalizes the Barthesian metaphor of waiting-as-performance, particularly since the play's own 'scenography of waiting' shares the tripartite structure that Barthes attributes to it. Although indiscernible in the broadcast, the play is divided into a 'Pre-Action' (I), 'Action' (II), and 'Re-Action' (III), each of which is shot from a combination of distant, medium and close-up camera positions designated A, B, and C.

The transfixed immobility of F's 'opening pose'—his sitting 'bowed forward, face hidden' at the edge of a stool—conveys his absorption in a divided aural labour through which he mitigates the woman's continued absence and the indeterminacy of his wait (p.409). When the play commences, he is found listening intently to non-sequential excerpts from the Largo of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Trio on an intimately-cradled cassette player.[46] V's commentary reveals that F is simultaneously on the alert for certain unspecified sounds—footfalls, a knock on the door, or even the anticipated woman's voice—whose perception would signal his desired visitor's arrival. The minimal events constituting 'Action' and 'Re-Action' in *Ghost Trio* all result from the sudden interruption of the figure's absorption in the music, when, on six occasions (II.2, 6, 32; III.3, 6, 30), he thinks he hears her in the vicinity. This external stimulus impels him to abandon his station by the door and embark on a confirmatory circuit of movement within the room, which terminates with a return to his cassette player when the sonic signs of the woman's approach are eventually revealed as false hope. As Trish McTighe observes, 'a distinction is set up in the psychic spaces of the play between, on the one hand, the potential consolation of art, and, on the other, echoes of desire for a lost loved one'.[47]

Although the action presents itself as the auditor's ongoing oscillation between two distinctive modes of auditory perception—in their respective

---

[45] Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p.16.
[46] Music imbues the otherwise impersonal setting of F's room with an affective tonality, as well as being a substitute for the expected woman. Catherine Laws suggests that Beckett consciously omits the second subject of the Largo in his selection of musical fragments as he might have been aware of its association with femininity—the missing musical structure thereby coming to mirror the missing woman in the play. *Headaches Amongst Overtones*, p.144.
[47] McTighe, *The Haptic Aesthetic*, p.56.

attunement to musical and non-musical sound—they remain firmly intertwined with each other. *Ghost Trio* conveys the mutual impingement of these coincident processes of listening by provisionally positing them as disparate, only to subject this distinction to pressure through the repeated reframing of the listening body. Spectators can neither see the cassette player nor hear the music at camera position A; however, from position C, F is excised from his surroundings and reduced to a 'close-up of head, hands, cassette' accompanied by the loudest volume of music (p.409). Images recorded at these two extremes thus depict the two modes of listening as uncoupled from each other in their respective suggestion that F either awaits the sounds of the woman's arrival in a chamber immersed in silence, or is consumed entirely by Beethoven's music.[48] These visualizations of F are counterbalanced by images recorded from position B where neither form of listening predominates over the other. From this vantage point, the figure directly recalls Krapp's listening posture in the Schiller-Theatre production: his right ear is turned towards the cassette player's speaker, while his left ear functions as a receptacle of ambient sounds, positioned away from the device and unencumbered by the demands of musical contemplation.

The play's intertwinement of, and equal attention to, musical and non-musical listening has not been acknowledged by existing scholarship, which has exclusively privileged the role of music alone in the play.[49] What has remained considerably understudied in this rich body of scholarship is F's equally intent preoccupation with non-musical sounds, which is embedded within the context of waiting for the missing 'her'. This lopsided focus has been vindicated by critics by referring to Beckett's last-minute changing of the play's title from *Tryst* to *Ghost Trio*, which has been regularly understood as his minimization of the sentimentalism of F's predicament and a corresponding foregrounding of the importance of Beethoven's music to it.[50] Without disputing this reading in its entirety, I would

---

[48] The former possibility aligns F with the listening figures of prose fragments like 'Sounds' and 'Still 3' (1973), whose unnamed he, also enclosed within a room at nightfall, is repeatedly found 'head in hand listening trying listening for a sound' (p.268; p.269).

[49] For example, drawing on their musicological expertise, Michael Maier and Catherine Laws have comprehensively analysed the intricacies of Beckett's selection and exclusion of audible excerpts in relation to the structure of Beethoven's 'The Ghost'. See respectively Michael Maier, 'Geistertio: Beethoven's Music in Samuel Beckett's "Ghost Trio" (Part 2)', *SBTA: Pastiches, Parodies and Other Imitations/ Pastiches, parodies et autres imitations,* 12 (2002), 313-320; and Catherine Laws, *Headaches Amongst the Overtones*, pp.121-163.

[50] Erik Tonning, *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p.166.

argue that F's repeated interruption of the music to verify the woman's arrival clearly shows that the tryst scenario persists regardless of the play's abstract formalism. Herren describes Beckett's teleplays as 'memory machines', arguing that their protagonists' grappling with their personal memory (and its failures) is paralleled by Beckett's tapping into his own cultural memories and influences.[51] No sooner do we call attention to F's non-musical listening in the play than Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* emerges alongside Beethoven's Piano Trio as *Ghost Trio*'s other crucial intertext. Re-assessed in this light, the play can be seen as a palimpsest of those scenes from Proust's novel, carefully annotated by Beckett, in which Marcel deploys an 'instinctive' or 'indirect' perception to aurally track the approach of an expected female figure.

A brief detour through Beckett's recently published correspondence with Barbara Bray is in order here, which clearly reveals his overdetermined return to Proust in the early 1970s—four decades after the first publication of his monograph on the writer. *Proust* had remained untranslated from English since its original publication in 1931, and it was around this time that Jérôme Lindon proposed a French translation to its reluctant author. After having read a page of sample translation, Beckett told Bray on 1st June 1970: 'From [Les Editions de] Minuit beginning of French trans. of Proust by a French prof. in USA. Read half a page then shuddered away' (*LSB* IV, p.234). While the French *Proust* would only be published posthumously in a 1990 translation by Edith Fournier, Bray would eventually assume greater responsibility for Beckett's inadvertent return to the *Recherche* in the early 1970s in her capacity as Harold Pinter's collaborator on *The Proust Screenplay* (1978). Through her mediation, Beckett became a distant party to Pinter's enthusiastic and all-consuming immersion in the French novelist, much like Beckett's own indefatigable serial re-reading of the novel in 1930 as a young academic planning his monograph.[52] Even more crucially, despite being at a clear remove from the project, Beckett appears to have played a role in the composition of Pinter's screenplay in a rather decisive manner. Bray later confessed that 'the basic

[51] *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television*, p.5.
[52] The screenplay briefly comes up for discussion in the Bray correspondence during 1971-72. On 14th October 1971, Beckett wishes her luck in her work 'with the Proust people' (p.268); he later expresses delight on being apprised of the project's progress on 20th February 1972: 'Glad you & H[arold] are so glad & hope things beginning already to move' (p.283).

structural idea came from Sam Beckett. I was talking to him about it and he said that you really ought to start at the end with *Le temps retrouvé* and so that's what we did'.[53]

The only letter that Beckett and Pinter seem to have exchanged on the matter is the one dated 31st November 1972, in which the former gratefully acknowledges the receipt of the finished screenplay: 'Very impressed by your Proust script so finely devised […] It sends me back to itself and to the end of Time Regained to begin with' (*LSB* IV, p.315). This telling remark is significant, since, as I showed in Chapter One, it is in the context of Marcel's artistic birth in *Time Regained* that Beckett alludes to the former's 'instinctive perception' of sensory stimuli in *Proust*'s final section. What is more, Pinter's screenplay foregrounds one of the most crucial examples of indirect perception in the novel, namely, the young Marcel's careful listening to the double peal of the garden-gate bell from his bedroom, whose memory he consciously revives in *Le temps retrouvé*. The ringing of the bell signifies Swann's departure after dinner, and therefore, of his mother's imminent appearance in his room to kiss him goodnight. The sound of the bell both opens and closes the screenplay as a non-diegetic sound heard over a yellow screen—later revealed as a fragment of Vermeer's *View of Delft* (1660).[54] Beckett's possible recollection of these scenes of indirect perception in the *Recherche* through Pinter's screenplay also sheds new light on the unfinished 'Film Vidéo-Cassette projet'—also dated to November 1972 and considered an early version of *Ghost Trio*—in whose first film a woman (F1) awaits an arrival and deploys the distinctly Proustian diversion of listening to external sounds to bide the time.[55] Indeed, it might even explain why Beckett switched from a female to a male auditor, corresponding more closely to Proust's narrator, in his eventual reworking of this abandoned film project as *Ghost Trio*. In the limited comparative scholarship on Beckett's and Pinter's takes on Proust, the directionality of influence is undoubtedly taken to be from Beckett to

[53] Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p.224. Without acknowledging Beckett's suggestion, Pinter affirms this reverse chronological approach to adapting the novel in his preface to the screenplay (pp.vii-viii).
[54] Harold Pinter, *The Proust Screenplay*, in collaboration with Barbara Bray and Joseph Losey (New York: Grove Press, 1977), p.3. Mark Taylor-Batty notes Pinter's privileging of sound as a sensorial trigger of involuntary memory with reference to the screenplay's inclusion of the garden bell and the tapping exchange between Marcel and his grandmother in Balbec. Mark Taylor-Batty, *The Theatre of Harold Pinter* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.112.
[55] For a detailed description of the project in relation to *Eh Joe* and *Ghost Trio*, see Mark Nixon, 'Samuel Beckett's "Film Vidéo-Cassette projet"', *JOBS*, 18 (2009), 32-43.

Pinter.[56] However, it appears in this case that Beckett played a part in shaping Pinter's screenplay, which in turn catalysed—if not influenced—the overtly Proustian scenario of his second work for screen, *Ghost Trio*.

In keeping with Beckett's revisiting of the *Recherche* in the run up to his conception of *Ghost Trio*, it is hardly surprising that in his earliest conception of the play, F's expectation of a nocturnal tryst is laid to rest not by the arrival of the young messenger but rather through an anonymous slipping of a telegram under his door. Beckett informed Bray on 22nd January 1976 that he had '[r]eplaced telegram under door by small boy messenger', thereby rendering the play a 'cross between Godot & Eh Joe' (*LSB* IV, p.419). The use of a telegram to break the news of a woman's non-arrival seems, quite possibly, an allusion to the similar circumstances under which Marcel receives the news of Albertine's death—and thus, the impossibility of her return—in response to his own telegram entreating her to return (*RTP* III, p.485). Beckett's awareness of, and impatience with, the narrator's supplicatory missives to women throughout the novel is evident in his letter to Thomas MacGreevey of 4th August 1932. Written shortly after *Proust*'s publication, Beckett irreverently mocks the famous *drame du coucher* as he describes his afternoon in St James's Park: 'Moved almost to eyedew by a little boy playing at "empty buses" with a nurse that had exactly the same quality of ruined granite expression as mine […] *Soon I will be cabling for my mother to come and kiss me to sleep* […]' (*LSB* I, p.113, my emphasis). Irrespective of the replacement of the telegram with the messenger, either method of communication emphasizes F's anticipation of a communication or a sign. His predicament thus replicates Marcel's when, as a child, he awaits Françoise's return with a reply from his mother to the note requesting her to see him; or, later, a telephone call from Albertine when she is delayed for their tryst after the Guermantes' matinée in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*.

It is a critical commonplace that the nameless, expressionless—and occasionally, even genderless—figures in Beckett's late drama serve to implode the

---

[56] Such is David Tucker's assessment of Pinter's recurring use of the sunlit church wall from Vermeer's painting, which also informs 'Yellow', Belacqua's death story in *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934): 'Beckett's influence here is in the background, as part of a semi-occluded literary and aesthetic lineage, as well as manifesting in a more explicitly directional and practical way via Bray'. David Tucker, "'That first last look in the shadows": Beckett's Legacies for Harold Pinter', in *Staging Beckett in Great Britain*, ed. by David Tucker and Trish McTighe (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp.193-208 (p.205).

psychological underpinnings of the conventional dramatic character. This anti-naturalistic aesthetic is at its peak in *Ghost Trio*, where spectators have no direct access to the subjectivity of the mute F, whose face is actively hidden from the camera for much of the play.[57] Furthermore, inspired by Heinrich von Kleist's famous essay on marionettes, 'Über das Marionettentheater' (1810), Beckett even stylized the actor's movements so that they resemble those of a jerky automaton.[58] The result of F's progressive de-humanization is that we rely heavily on V's interventions to be able to understand his actions fully. However, not only are her predictions far from fool-proof (as evident in F's returning to the stool instead of the door in II.21), they are also primarily matter-of-fact observations that convey very little of the male figure's *affective* response to the woman's continued absence. It could then be questioned whether an equivalence can be established at all between F and Marcel in light of the *formal* differences between Beckett's teleplay and Proust's novel: in the former, the mediated access to an already-expressionless puppet results in an asepticized portrayal of an otherwise sentimental situation; on the other hand, the verbose emotionalism of Proust's first-person narrative offers the reader an unrestrained access to Marcel's agony when waiting for his female visitors.

Without minimizing the opacity that Beckett builds into *Ghost Trio*—especially in comparison with a novel like the *Recherche*—it can nevertheless be argued that F's subjectivity is not altogether erased. After all, Beckett's vision of the play was reportedly centred on the contrast between an outwardly 'calm scene' and an 'inner storm' raging within the figure, presumably on account of the indefinite prolonging of his wait.[59] Ulrika Maude identifies

> a discrepancy between *Ghost Trio*'s austere, geometric set with its embedded rectangles, and the play's sentimental subject-matter, that of a man waiting for a woman who never appears. This discrepancy is

[57] S.E. Gontarski writes that 'Beckett approached this play very abstractly and continued to move consistently towards higher levels of abstraction, almost as if he were determined to take his film work another step toward simplicity, pattern, and even paradigmatic model, in the direction […] of " a formal minimum". *Intent of Undoing*, p.122
[58] For a reading of the play in relation to Kleist's essay, see James Knowlson, '*Ghost Trio/ Geister Trio*', in *Beckett at 80/ Beckett in Context*, ed. by Enoch Brater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.193-207. Anthony Paraskeva has illuminatingly extended the Kleist influence to identify the presence of Meyerholdian biomechanical techniques in F's movements, which sought to free actors 'from constraints of character psychology'. *Samuel Beckett and Cinema*, p.121.
[59] Ruby Cohn, *A Beckett Canon*, p.339.

> reflected in the two different types of focalisation we encounter in the play: that of the camera and that of F; external and internal or extradiegetic and intradiegetic.[60]

Even before F's visual and aural point of view replaces that of V in 'Re-Action', spectators glimpse his interiority in several displaced guises. For instance, the music undergoes a perceptible shift as if paralleling the progressive undermining of his certitude concerning the woman's appearance. As if registering the figure's compounding turmoil, the fragments from the Piano Trio gradually work up to a crescendo as he lifts the cassette player from his lap and brings it even closer to his ear, gripping it with an increasingly feverish, 'clawlike ferocity', towards the end of the play.[61] Furthermore, the psychological state that is ostensibly obscured by his mechanized gestures is partly revealed by F's confirmatory mime in response to his perception of a sound outside. Repeated four times in the play, it is propelled not so much by an increasing uncertainty over whether he hears someone (which is settled in the negative once he has opened the door) but rather by his desire and hope to be reunited with 'her' despite indications to the contrary at each step. Finally, the rapidity with which F reacts to the external sound—as I subsequently discuss—evinces Marcel's desirous listening, in which the heart replaces the ear as the organ for receiving as well as analysing a sonic event. As Beckett observantly described Marcel's tortured wait for the delayed Albertine in *Proust*: 'he listens for her step or for the sublime summons of the telephone, not with his ear and mind, but with his heart' (*PTD*, p.50).

Like Proust's narrator, F mitigates the passivity of waiting through an active aural surveillance that Mary Bryden aptly describes as 'a wider phenomenon of acute attentiveness, where the ear is attuned to the slightest variation in the ambient soundscape'.[62] We have already seen in Chapter One that Beckett's term for this 'wider phenomenon' in Proust's novel is 'indirect perception', and that his marginal comments carefully interlink episodes where Marcel uses this 'indirect' aural perception when waiting to be reunited with a loved woman. To recapitulate Beckett's terminology from *Proust*, indirect perception is predominantly an

---

[60] Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body*, p.120.
[61] Linda Ben-Zvi, 'Samuel Beckett's Media Plays', *Modern Drama*, 28 (1), 22-37 (p.34).
[62] Mary Bryden, 'Beckett's Apertures and Overtures', in *Beckett and Musicality*, ed. by Sara Jane Bailes and Nicholas Till (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2014), pp.187-198 (p.193).

inferential mode of listening in which the narrator relies upon an 'intermediary' stimulus (e.g. footfalls) as the essence of a phenomenon that is not apprehended directly as a 'terminal' stimulus (a visitor's approach) (*PTD*, p.83). In the first of four cycles of indirect perception with which 'Action' begins, V alerts the spectators that 'He [F] will now think he hears her' (II.1; p.250). Whereas F's absorption in Beethoven's music leads him inwards into the space of the mind (as suggested by his unmoving 'opening pose'), his detection of a disturbance on the other side of the door reverses this withdrawal. F suddenly comes to life, responding to this 'intermediary' stimulus with a lighting-flash raising of his head and left hand (II.2).[63] He faces the door with a cupped left ear in this 'tense pose' as he intensifies the quest for the woman's footfalls, relying on sound's property of traversing barriers to undermine the door's opacity.

Herren has noted that the object of F's perception becomes more specific as Beckett reworks V's comment over various typescripts, starting with the male figure's hearing 'something', then 'someone', and finally 'her'.[64] However, another crucial ambiguity persists despite this clarificatory gesture on Beckett's part—one that pivots on F's *thinking* that he hears her, and thus concerns the status of this fleeting perception. In other words, does he actually hear a sound or is it a hallucination born out of desire and false hope? The situation again recalls the Barthesian phenomenology of amorous anticipation, according to which the waiting subject lapses into hallucination as a way of resurrecting the missing object: 'the other comes where I am waiting, here where I have created him/her. And if the other does not come, I hallucinate the other: waiting is a delirium'. [65] In Barthes's example of a delayed telephone call the beloved's voice is hallucinated: 'sometimes I am still in anxiety over a telephone call that is late, and no matter who is on the line, I imagine I recognize the voice I once loved'.[66] F's relapsing into the hunched 'opening pose' when the sound does not repeat itself implies that his perception is indeed erroneous. However, no sooner has he returned to the Beethoven than he 'thinks' once again that he hears the female visitor (II.6). This second hint of an

[63] When the same movement is shot from the close-up position in 'Re-Action' (III.3; 30), audiences notice that he first pauses the music by tapping a button on the cassette player so that he can confirm his perception in silence.
[64] Graley Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television,* p.80.
[65] *A Lover's Discourse*, p.39.
[66] ibid.

activity outside his chamber impels him to probe further; setting the cassette player aside altogether, he swivels leftwards and listens with his ear positioned against the door, presumably in response to the sound of a knock (II.8). When even this effort does not yield a clear result, he gets up from the stool and 'pushes door open half-way clockwise' (II.10; p.250). Despite finding an empty corridor, he clings to the expectation of the woman's appearance as he makes his way to the window that looks out of his austere dwelling, and pushes it open with the same result as before (II.16).

F's repeated interactions with the door and the window of his 'familiar chamber' hark back to the Proustian bedroom—the third essential element after the waiting situation and the anticipated sound signal in instances of Marcel's indirect perception, and recognized as such in Beckett's marginal observation: 'Most complete perceptions indirect. Cf. bedrooms of Combray and Balbec'. In my earlier reading of these episodes from the *Recherche* I have shown that the room, coded by the narrator as a site of separation from and desire for a woman, performs two interlinked functions therein. On the one hand, its enclosure acts like a screen that eliminates the visual dimension of the terminal stimulus and distils it to a sonic intermediary stimulus; on the other hand, its thresholds behave as portals through which sounds permeate within. Even when Marcel distances himself from these thresholds, as in his retreating from the entrance to his apartment when waiting for the delayed Albertine, he 'unseals' the space through other means, such as by restoring the telephone connection so that her voice may be transported across Paris to him. V appears to be signalling to a similar role played by the 'imperceptibly ajar' door and the window in *Ghost Trio* when she introduces them as an interlinked pair (I.13; I.15). Indeed, in keeping with their shared opacity, they function exclusively as intentionally introduced breaches in the room that assist in the transportation of longed-for sounds of the woman's arrival to F. While their opacity produces a claustrophobic space visually—especially in the Beckett-directed SDR production where they merge entirely with the walls when closed—in reality they transform F's chamber into a permeable space by facilitating sonic exchanges between the outside and the inside. F thus lingers in the vicinity of these apertures as they are points of contact with the outside world, where the missing object of his desire is presumably located. Herren echoes this claim when he argues that, unlike V, 'F maintains faith in

external reality, because all of his hopes for reunion with his absent other depend upon her re-emergence from that mysterious elsewhere'.[67]

The male figure's predilection for the room's periphery is simultaneously conveyed through his sentinel-like position by the entrance, and by the recurring close-ups of him positioned by the door and the window in 'Re-Action' (III.5; 17). And yet, it is the stylized gesture of F gluing his ear to the door with both hands resting on the walls that visualizes his reliance on these portals with the greatest clarity (II.8; III.7). These instances of laboured listening to external sounds repeat the fusion of bodies and objects that permeates Beckett's oeuvre, whether in the form of the Molloy/bicycle or the Murphy/rocking chair unit. Indeed, the door behaves as an auditory prosthesis that extends the perceptual range of F's ear while mimicking the morphology and function of the tympanum or the eardrum. Like its anatomical counterpart, which transports sound vibrations from the auditory canal to the middle ear, the door is a percussive surface (on which the messenger eventually knocks) located at the threshold of an elongated corridor and the room. Indeed, the chamber, with the interlinked corridor, door, and room mirrors the very architecture of the human ear and thereby emphasizes the importance of both musical and non-listening to F's predicament in the play.

Furthermore, when listening through the door, F comes to be simultaneously located on either side of it. In light of his aural undermining of the demarcation between the room's inside and outside, not only the door, but F *himself* becomes a two-sided tympanum as envisioned by the Unnamable in the *Trilogy*: 'I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, *I'm the tympanum*, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either' (*U*, p.100, my emphasis). At this point I also wish to register how the intertextual link to the *Recherche* additionally serves Beckett's contrasting representations of the room in *Ghost Trio* and the earlier *Eh Joe*. F's and Joe's movements within their respective rooms follow the same anti-clockwise trajectory, yet their obsessive interactions with doors and windows are animated by entirely divergent concerns. Joe paranoically shuns the unspecific sound that strays into his room despite his careful sealing of its orifices; after locking and hiding them

[67] *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Television and Film*, p.85.

anew behind curtains, he eventually retreats deeper into the security of his room. On the other hand, F, like Proust's narrator, ultimately gravitates towards these thresholds and away from the pallet, thereby rejecting the alternative of resigning and retiring for the night when the woman's visit is repeatedly deferred. It is my contention that the bedrooms of *Eh Joe* and *Ghost Trio*—as well as the respectively centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of their inhabitants—are spatial metaphors for two opposing models of male subjectivity. Beckett's sparse rooms are often sites that mediate between the male subject and his gendered other. In earlier works like *Murphy* and *First Love*—that nevertheless cast a shadow over a 'later' play like *Eh Joe*, as I have previously shown—the room is sought to be hermetically sealed by its male occupant against the 'world' in general and women in particular. The positing of thresholds and apertures as vulnerabilities within this airtight and combative model of male subjectivity is inseparable from—and is, in fact, a spatial expression of—the fear of the abjected female's return. The tenuous safety of this fortified room/self is frequently compromised through sonic means, most notably by *Eh Joe*'s female voice. On the contrary, in *Ghost Trio* and the even later prose fragment, 'Heard in the Dark 2' (1979)—eventually absorbed into *Company*—enclosed spaces such as the room or the wooden summerhouse are contrastingly used as sites of an encounter with a loved woman. The boundaries of these enclosures are deliberately punctured by their male inhabitants to facilitate the circulation of sounds, resulting in the spatialization of an expansive male subjectivity that actively pursues contact with the female other.

I have been demonstrating thus far how 'indirect perception' in Proust's novel serves as a template for the dramatic and listening situation in *Ghost Trio*. That said, Beckettian intertextuality often entails a thorough interrogation and transformation of a source before it is eventually appropriated and incorporated. Herren pithily sums up the workings of this process in the television drama as Beckett's 'remembering' of an influence by 'dismembering' it: 'these pieces, rooted in the past, are not products of nostalgia. The teleplays simultaneously engage and estrange tradition, invoking artistic predecessors only to resist, refute, and revise them'.[68] In keeping with this norm, Beckett radically 'dismembers' the *Recherche* in his second teleplay through his refusal to replicate two crucial givens from instances

[68] ibid, p.5.

of Marcel's indirect perception: the accuracy of inferential listening and the eventual arrival of the expected woman.

In *Ghost Trio*, the mechanism of indirect perception jams as soon as it is set in motion. As mentioned earlier, F's non-musical listening is riddled with indeterminacy because of the ear's investment with an excess of anticipation and desire. In three of four instances where F 'thinks' he finally detects the woman nearing the room, what is thought of as perception is eventually revealed to be a misperception or hallucination. In other words, the intermediary stimulus—the essence as well as the means through which a terminal stimulus is deduced in Proust's novel—itself proves unreliable in Beckett's teleplay. The persistence of F's aural uncertainty additionally results in the play's interrogation of the primacy of hearing over seeing in Proustian indirect perception. The predominantly auditory nature of Marcel's indirect perception in the *Recherche* can be attributed to an unseen sound's independence from, and encompassing of, the visual in its ability to evoke and explicate its causal source. It is on this account, as Beckett mentions in *Proust*, that Marcel infers the heat and brightness outside his dark room through the sound of a hammer alone (*PTD*, p.83). The narrator's visual fixation on the glass-panelled entrance door in anticipation of Albertine's arrival gives way to his familiar aural scanning for similar reasons. This sensorial shift from vision to audition is reversed in *Ghost Trio* when F repeatedly fails to verify the sounds outside his room through listening alone. The uncertainty of the woman's presence can only be resolved through his peering out of the door and the window. In doing so, F reveals a tension between his initial devaluing of vision—exemplified in his exclusive reliance on the flow of sound across opaque apertures—and his ultimate reversion to it when a certain threshold of tension and aural indeterminacy has been exceeded.

And yet, a certain slipperiness of the intermediary stimulus, coupled with an unreliable mode of listening 'with the heart', are not the only grounds on which Beckett distances himself from Proustian indirect perception. The latter is undermined even more radically when the little boy arrives at F's doorstep at the play's end (III.32). The messenger's increasing proximity to F's room is arguably the only occasion in the play where an intermediary stimulus is not subject to doubt, since even spectators are able to hear the '[f]aint sound of steps approaching' in this instance (III.30; p.413). However, no sooner is this sound confirmed than Beckett

stages a failure of the inferential aspect of indirect perception through the insertion of a rift between the intermediary and the terminal stimulus. As before, F pauses the Piano Trio immediately upon sensing activity outside his room; in the silence that ensues, spectators hear the progressive fading up of footfalls against the close-up of his partially visible face. The walls of F's room replicate the function of the televisual frame. While allowing this sound to filter through, they nonetheless partition the space into an onscreen interior and an off-screen corridor; by virtue of originating in the latter space, the footsteps persist as acousmatic sound until the figure opens the door.

Michel Chion has argued that a prolonged dissociation of body and voice is often deliberately employed in cinema with the aim of producing an invisible voice that he calls the '*acousmêtre*'.[69] Konrad Körte, the sound engineer for the SDR *Geister Trio*, appositely recalls that Beckett envisioned the fade up of footfalls against F's tense face as a drawn out sequence, specifying as many as twenty steps to be heard before the first '[f]aint sound of knock on the door' was heard (p.413).[70] The crescendo of acousmatic footsteps heightens the tension of the situation even further; when F sets aside the cassette player and rises to open the door, both he and the spectators expect to find the play's constitutive absence, the anticipated woman, visualized before them at last. Chion also argues that the *acousmêtre*'s eventual revelation (or 'de-acousmatization') not only disperses the aura of mystery attached to a floating voice, but occasionally does so in an anticlimactic vein.[71] A similar effect accompanies the revelation of the source of the footsteps. It is difficult to tell pathos from bathos when F finds himself faced by a diminutive boy who silently shakes his head to indicate the deferral of his tryst with the woman for that evening, and having done so, slowly retreats backwards along the corridor.

The frustration of the male figure's hope is predicated here on a non-aligning of the intermediary and terminal stimuli (i.e. the sound of the footsteps and the woman's arrival respectively). In this concluding sequence of events in the play, Beckett foregrounds the fallibility of the deductive listening that underpins Marcel's

---

[69] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, p.12.
[70] Such an extended crescendo proved difficult to realize in production, however. Konrad Körte, 'Beckett Listens: Sound Production for the 1977 *Geistertrio*', trans. by Angela Moorjani, *SBTA: Beckett in Conversation,"yet again"/ Rencontres avec Beckett, "encore"*, 28 (2016), 107-115 (p.110).
[71] His privileged example is *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), where the omnipotent voice of Oz, when unmasked, is eventually revealed to be a frail old man (p.27).

indirect perception, and that exemplifies what Michel Chion has called a mode of ‘causal listening’. As Chion explains, the latter is mobilized when the auditor attempts to determine the cause of an invisible, and typically nonverbal, sound: ‘[w]hen we cannot see the sound’s cause, sound can constitute our principal source of information about it. An unseen cause might be identified by some knowledge or logical prognostication’.[72] This ‘logical prognostication’ is what enables indirect perception in Proust’s *Recherche* and Beckett’s *Ghost Trio* alike. Chion goes on to add that, with the exception of the unique human voice, causal listening furnishes only tentative results since the listener can, at best, only infer a generic ‘human, mechanical, or animal cause’ of an invisible, non-verbal, sound.[73] It is precisely this limitation of causal listening that F overlooks in mistakenly inferring the particular (the woman’s footfall) from the general (footfalls) in his state of heightened anticipation, resulting in his eventual disappointment. In Proust’s novel, the narrator’s *indirect* perception of sound results in a *direct* perception of the woman he awaits—whether mother or lover—when she appears by his side sooner or later. However, *Ghost Trio* ends as it began: with a solitary male figure in a bare room, which, unlike its Proustian counterpart, persists as a site of privation and unfulfilled desire. Through recurring aural and visual devices like V’s ‘No one’ (II.3, 11, 17) or images of the empty corridor, the play reinforces the continued absence of the unnamed woman.

‘SPEAK TO ME’:
…BUT THE CLOUDS… AND THE VOCAL SCAR

The grey robe, skullcap, and marionette-like scurrying movements of M, the protagonist of *...but the clouds...*, all recall F from *Ghost Trio*—not least because the same actors (Ronald Pickup and Klaus Herm) played both parts in the BBC and SDR productions of the play. In a letter to Reinhart Müller-Freienfels dated 13 December 1976, Beckett revealed that

> Though not expressly stated, the man in “...but the clouds…” is the same as in Ghost Trio, in another (later) situation, and it would be a great pity if we could not have the same actor for the two parts. The

[72] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press,1994), p.26.
[73] ibid., p.

> woman [W] I see in her thirties. A haunting face, not necessarily beautiful (*LSB* IV, p.445).

F and M, here suggested as being the same male figure, share the ordeal of waiting for the respective plays' missing 'her' to appear to them. M's pursuit of W, however, can only unfold in the realm of memory, as she not only belongs to his distant past—evident from the perceptible difference between his decrepitude and her youthful face—but is, in fact, dead: he refers to 'those unseeing eyes I so begged when alive to look at me' (*btc*, p.420). The play is also structured around a double act of recollection reminiscent of *Krapp's Last Tape*. Like Krapp, the male figure here is sundered into an older self (M) present to the audience, and his strained recollections of his predecessor (M1), who retreats into a 'little sanctum' each evening with clockwork regularity and silently entreats W to reveal herself to him.

In *...but the clouds...*, the transition between the remembering subject and his remembered self—in other words, the work of memory itself—is initiated by V, the wheezy, murmuring, and faint male voice-over. Images here correspond to two different temporalities. The 'present' is marked by a '[n]ear shot from behind of man sitting on invisible stool bowed over invisible table', and it is from this vantage point that M uses V to retrospectively choreograph M1's movements between four coordinates (West, North, East and Standing Position) and the corresponding spaces that they represent (the roads, the sanctum and the closet respectively).[74] The mind's departure from the present into the past is visually represented through the use of shot dissolves that convey 'the force of mental procedure and the pressure it exerts on narrative coherence', typically in French impressionist cinema that considerably influenced Beckett in the 1930s.[75] The fixed camera here loses even the minimal investigative quality that it had in *Ghost Trio*, considering that the play is built up of four identical shots that V permutes and combines in various ways. Much like the workings of his female namesake from the preceding play, this activity follows a strict pattern of repetition aimed at cultivating the audience's memory. On account of his faltering memory, M begins by tentatively reconstructing short sequences of

[74] Both productions of the play depart from the script and realize this opening shot by depicting M in side-profile as he sits with his head resting on his folded arms on the desk. The dim lighting in this shot suggests that M is possibly located in the same 'little sanctum' as his younger self. His faint silhouette merges into the darkness and only the folds of his grey robe and skullcap are faintly visible.
[75] Anthony Paraskeva, *Samuel Beckett and Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.8.

M1's movements from his past, which are either subject to a 'No, that is not right' and discarded, or approved when considered as corresponding authoritatively to his memories (p.420). The act of remembering is here presented through the metaphor of a theatrical rehearsal. Once M has established a series of memory fragments, he weaves it into a longer sequence and 'run[s] through it again' in order to recapitulate M1's evening ritual for the audience. Unlike their piecemeal construction by V in the first place, images in these run-throughs flow autonomously and at a faster tempo against the absolute silence of a dead soundtrack—like F's eerily soundless propulsion in *Ghost Trio*, M1's tramping within lit space does not make any sound.

V's precise status within the umbrella term of 'voice-over', however, depends on the images that it accompanies in the play. Given M's posture of sitting bowed over his desk, the play suggests the possibility that he is engaged in writing a Krapp-like autobiographical narrative that is centred upon a woman who was once loved and has now been lost. In this shot, V functions as his interior monologue—a written but audible voice—that reveals M's thoughts or the 'inner lining' of his dimly-lit and formless body, thereby turning it 'inside-out' for the audiences. V is temporally dislocated as soon as it initiates and accompanies the numerous instances of anamnesis in the play, where it serves as a flashback voice-over, an essential marker of the play's present that persists into M's projected past. The play's periodic return to the opening shot of M at his desk re-aligns this voice with his body, which nevertheless continues to remain 'an invisible support' for it during these flashback sequences. [76]

Although Daniel Katz finds that 'M's earlier tormented attempts to remember his beloved are […] doubled, replaced, and extended by similar attempts to remember himself', there exists, nevertheless, a considerable difference in the workings of memory at the two levels in the play. [77] The false start to M's recollection of M1 remains the only one of its kind, and from this point onward his voluntary memory reconstructs past images of his nocturnal ritual with relative ease. On the other hand, W's appearances remain unaffected by the intensity and persistence of M1's supplications, so much so that his crouching in the dark and

[76] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space', *Yale French Studies*, 60 (1980), 33-50 (p.41).
[77] Daniel Katz, '"Mirror resembling screens": Yeats, Beckett and *…but the clouds…*', *SBTA: The Savage Eye/L'oeil fauve,* 4 (1995), 83-92 (pp.83-84).

waiting for these apparitions has been likened to a spiritualist *séance*.[78] His inability to will W into appearance is acknowledged when M hastily replaces his opening claim, 'When I thought of her it was always night' with 'When she appeared it was always night' (p.419). After all, even if V discloses the 'fourth case'—in which W does not yield to his begging and remains unseen—as something of an afterthought, it remains the commonest outcome of his efforts: 'in the proportion of nine hundred and ninety-nine to one' (p.421). Three possibilities attend her unlikely appearance, which are detailed for the spectators in increasing order of their duration and conveyed by the television screen with mathematical precision.

It is imperative to observe in this context that *...but the clouds...* remains Beckett's only teleplay where the female body is *unambiguously* visualized as a 'Close-up of woman's face reduced as far as possible to eyes and mouth' (p.415).[79] Extreme close-ups of Billie Whitelaw's and Kornelia Bose's respective faces, positioned mid-way between a frontal and profile shot, occupy the right half of the television screen during these scenes as their unblinking eyes stare away from the camera. In the first of the three cases, W appears fleetingly for two seconds, and this is increased to five seconds in the second case; in case three, she persists much longer than five seconds and her lips slowly form the phrase 'clouds…but the clouds…of the sky', a short fragment of a line from the concluding quatrain of W. B. Yeats's 'The Tower' (1928) that also gives the play its title (p.421). The recitation is repeated twice over: the first instance is one of an inaudible utterance, following which V intervenes and reverse lip-synchs the lines to the movement of W's lips.

Katz rightly observes that the male figure's 'effort of memory or conjuration […] is directed not only at a "presence" known by passion and affection, but also at the lines of a poem'.[80] Unlike Beethoven's music in *Ghost Trio*, which is only derivatively linked to the absent woman of that teleplay, the poetic fragment in *...but the clouds...* not only calls forth W's spectral face but also necessarily evokes, if not

[78] Enoch Brater, 'Intertextuality', in *Palgrave Advances in Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.30-44 (p.37).
[79] Like the Auditor of *Not I*, the dancing figures of *Quad* (1982) are fully covered in gowns to convey a 'sex indifferent'. Colin Gardner observes that the comforting dreamt hands of the late teleplay *Nacht und Träume* (1981) were initially intended to be 'large but female', but were eventually replaced by perceptibly male hands in Beckett's own direction of the play. Colin Gardner, *Beckett, Deleuze and the Televisual Event: Peephole Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.174.
[80] Daniel Katz, '"Mirror resembling screens"', p.85.

reproduces, her inaudible voice. Before discussing the implications of this silent female voice in relation to the play's overt intertextuality, it is instructive to briefly step back from the published play-text and its two productions, and turn to its genetic history. In his brief discussion of the play's composition over two manuscript and five typescript versions, Gontarski summarizes the most pertinent modifications between its various drafts (e.g. the recasting of V's monologue from the present to the past tense; the reduction of the 'cases' from five to four etc.) but ultimately concludes that these revisions 'seem to be minor'.[81] For the purpose of this discussion, however, one particular revision remains from far from minor as it reveals that W's voice caused Beckett considerable difficulties early on in the composition process. He struggled to determine not only whether she should have a voice that is audible to M and the audiences alike, but also *what* she should say, and for *how long*.

In addition to the play's male voice-over ('MV'), the two manuscript and the first typescript drafts list both a 'Woman W' and 'Her Voice WV' as part of the play's *dramatis personae*. In these early drafts, W's appearances are described over four (and not three) scenarios, of which the first three are the same as the final version of the play. However, in an additional fourth scenario, W not only mouths the poetic excerpt but does so audibly, and in her own voice: as Gontarski observes, Beckett differentiates here between a silent and audible recitation of the poem as two *distinct* scenarios. [82] Thus, the fourth case here is the very opposite of the 'case nought' of the final version. In this first extant record of the play, Beckett leaves the subject of W's expression blank, presumably because he had not yet arrived at the intertextual source for the play:

> 45. Voice of M: Four: She comes & after a moment –
>
> 46. Same as 25 ['Fast Fade Out on M & up on close up of W's face. 2"]
>
> 47. Begins to speak. 2"
>
> 48. Voice of W: ……………….. 2" (UoR BC MS 1553/1/2r)

[81] Gontarski, *Intent of Undoing*, p.126.
[82] ibid.

By the time he wrote the second manuscript, dated November 1976, Beckett had settled on lines from 'The Tower' to fill this blank in. W is strongly linked therein with this specific poem, as well as with poetry in general, when M confesses that 'Poetry was her only love'; indeed, so prominent was the connection between woman and poetry that Beckett even considered having 'Poetry only Love' as the play's title at this stage. Having identified the final stanza for use early on, his chief preoccupation in this heavily-edited second draft was to decide how many lines W should recite. The initial solution was to have a progressively longer excerpt issue from her lips over the course of her twice-depicted appearances to M. In the first instance, she was only to recite '…till all….seem but the clouds…of the sky…when the horizon fades…', which was to be increased to the complete stanza when she appeared next during V's recapitulatory run-through: 'but the clouds…of the sky…when the horizon fades…or a bird's sleepy cry…amongst the deepening shades'.

This is a decision that Beckett overturned in the next—the first typescript—draft, when he limited W's recitation throughout to the first two lines of the quatrain alone. Although he still featured an audible female voice ('WV') in this draft when he first typed it out, Beckett changed his mind between its completion and the beginning of the second typescript version. In two significant acts of revision made in black ink, he first struck off 'Her Voice WV' from the prefatory list of characters, and then proceeded to cross out case four, in which W voices the poem's lines following her brief re-appearance:

> 39. MV: Four. She appears and
>
> 40. Dissolve from M to close-up of W's face. 5".
>
> 41. MV: After a moment –
>
> 42. WV: Till all…seem~~x~~ but the clouds…of the sky…when the horizon…fades… 5" (UoR BC MS 1553/3).

W is thus irrevocably muted exactly halfway into the play's composition. From the fourth draft (or second typescript stage) onward, Beckett re-numbers the various 'cases' in accordance with the final version of the play.

From the play's earliest version, the intensity of M's investment in the female voice strikingly recalls Lacan's addition of the ear to the Freudian inventory of erogenous zones. For Lacan, the corporeal orifices that function as sources of various drives are essentially structured as rims or interfaces between the body's interior and exterior. The 'horn-shaped aperture of the ear' is one of these rims and thus the source of an 'invocatory drive' that takes the voice as *object a*.[83] W's voice functions as the true 'object-cause' of this listening drive when we consider Lacan's contention, *contra* Freud, that the drive's true nature is to keep *encircling* its object instead of attaining it and extinguishing itself. W's audible recitation in the play's first draft similarly perpetuates M's quest for it as he responds with an unrestrained 'More! More!' when she is suddenly lost to him.[84] With Beckett's final decision to omit the female voice, the play transitions directly from W's silent appearance to her recalcitrant non-appearance in 'case nought'. This movement from one lack to the other in relation to W's voice retrospectively justifies Beckett's insertion of M's entreaties, 'Speak to Me' and 'Look at Me', in the second manuscript. The woman's face, then, is understandably restricted to her eyes and mouth; through her averted gaze and inaudible voice, these bodily zones simultaneously mark W's inaccessibility and M's exclusion, as they come to be intensely invested with his desire. Following Gontarski, Dirk Van Hulle has argued that the development of Beckett's drafts is frequently accompanied by a 'creative undoing', whereby acts of decomposition—'discarding, cutting, deleting, omitting, crossing out and revising'—paradoxically ensure the text's composition. Beckett's creative undoings, he contends, persist as 'unsettling "textual scars" that remind readers of the text's eventful past and draw attention to its often "unsettled" nature'. [85] Albeit on a much smaller scale than the examples Van Hulle discusses, W's excised recitation of Yeats's poem can be considered as the play's very own 'textual scar'. *...but the clouds...* interestingly returns this somatic metaphor for a textual erasure to its bodily vehicle, given that this erasure directly results in W's diminished vocality in performance. For the reader/spectator familiar with the play's genetic history, the

[83] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2018), p.200.
[84] Tonning attributes to the discovery to Knowlson but puzzlingly omits specifying the precise source (p.178, 18n).
[85] Dirk Van Hulle, 'Textual Scars: Beckett, Genetic Criticism and Textual Scholarship' in *Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp.306-319 (p.307; p.308)

silence emitted from W’s moving lips is a constant reminder of a wound where there was once a sounding female voice.

Beckett’s significant decision to undo W’s audibility is inseparable from his working through, and firming up, of his sceptical response to Yeats’s ‘The Tower’. In a passionate opening address, the lyric voice of the poem—subsequently revealed to be Yeats himself—rails against age and bemoans the predicament in which his body and mind are governed by considerably different temporalities of decay. Instead of keeping up with the physical decline of one faced with imminent death, his imaginative prowess is at an unforeseen peak: ‘Never had I more/ Excited, passionate, fantastical/ Imagination, nor an ear and eye/ That more expected the impossible’.[86] Faced with the dilemma of renouncing a life of artistic creation and turning instead to the abstract arguments of philosophy, Yeats eventually decides to confront the tribulations of ageing—corporeal decrepitude and the many losses of his loved ones—through a recourse to memory and the imagination. Armed with these, he contends, the many blows of life will seem ‘but the clouds of the sky/when the horizon fades/ or a bird’s sleepy cry/ amidst the darkening shades’.[87]

The retreat of Beckett’s aged male figure, also an author, into his sanctum directly mirrors Yeats’s contemplative pacing on the battlements of Thoor Ballylee in the second part of the poem. There is a significant difference, however, between the poet’s successful attempt to ‘send imagination forth/ Under the day’s declining beam, and call/ Images and memories’, and M’s abject ‘begging of the mind’—his entreaties to W to ‘Look at me’ and ‘Speak to me’ night after night without much success (*btc*, p.421).[88] By basing his teleplay on M’s failing memory and faltering imagination, Beckett targets the unspoken and unquestioning premise of Yeats’s poem that sees these mental faculties as somehow miraculously unaffected by physical and intellectual decay. Instead, the play contrastingly explores a much bleaker scenario where neither of these comforts is available for sustenance in the face of death. As Graley Herren has also argued, the intertextual gesture in *…but the clouds…* is far from affirmatory in relation to ‘The Tower’; instead of this late lyric poem, he finds Beckett forging kinship with Yeats’s significantly earlier play, *At the*

[86] W. B. Yeats, ‘The Tower’, in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), pp.194-200 (p.194).
[87] ibid., p.200.
[88] ibid., p.195.

Hawk's Well (1917), whose dark despair and scepticism towards memory is closer to Beckett's own teleplay.[89]

M's obsessive pursuit of W has been frequently explained by Yeats's interrogation of Red Hanrahan in the poem: 'Does the imagination dwell the most/ Upon a woman won or a woman lost?'. Perhaps the more direct source for the memory of W speaking in *...but the clouds...* is Yeats's reference to the 'Poet's imaginings/ And memories of love,/ Memories of the words of women' as privileged raw-materials for the creative act—all three of which are precisely unavailable to M.[90] Beckett links W's voice to both memory and the imagination in a seemingly direct mirroring of the poem. The aural/oral inscription of the poetic excerpt in M's memory recalls Eliza Richards's claim that the voice activates those sound structures (e.g. assonance, refrain, rhythm and rhyme) that function as 'central technologies' in the memorization and transmission of poetry in both oral and literate cultures.[91] Furthermore, in having the poem issue from the lips of a whimsical female persona, Beckett casts W as a Muse-like figure. Beckett's allusion here could be to Yeats's lifelong believe in the Muse—'the origin of the vocal transmission, the wellspring of the phonetic *mania*' in the Hellenic paradigm—whose singing or speaking to the poet initiates the act of creation.[92] In *...but the clouds...*, however, the female voice not only fails to secure the poem in M's mind, but W's slowed mouthing also distorts the rhythm and tempo of the original poem through its introduction of long pauses, marked by ellipses, within and between lines of the excerpt. Through M's failed straining to hear W's voice, Beckett can similarly be seen as parodying the classical model of the poetic chain in which only the poet's ears are privileged receptors of the Muse's voice, which is otherwise inaudible to everyone else.[93] Beckett has W recite

---

[89] *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television,* p.113. Herren partly bases his argument on a similar claim by Enoch Brater: 'Beckett's isolated figure departs as he had earlier arrived, with nothing, "no sound" and no revelation […] For Beckett's hero there will be no soaring tower and no Byzantium, only a fading horizon of memory, embers in the "deepening shades"' (qtd. in Herren, ibid.).

[90] Yeats, 'The Tower', p.199.

[91] Eliza Richards, 'Voice', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th edn, ed. by Roland Greene (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp.1525-27 (p.1525).

[92] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, p.95. Joseph Hassett argues that Yeats believed in the beloved as a 'personal Muse' in the Italian and French traditions of courtly love that Beckett knew intimately. Hassett discusses the importance of nine of these personal Muses for Yeats (e.g. Olivia Shakespeare, Iseult Gonne, Maud Gonne, George Hyde-Lees etc.), who considered them the living embodiments of the nine daughters of Mnemosyne. Joseph Hassett, *W. B. Yeats and the Muses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.1.

[93] Cavarero, p.94.

precisely those closing lines of the poem that present visual and aural images of comfort in the face of death and decay. In order to truly reinforce his disagreement with Yeats, he silences the very memory of the female voice that carries these words of comfort, as if leaving them even briefly audible (as per his initial intentions in writing the play) would have diluted the force of his critique. Beckett thus pits the redemptive memories of 'words of women' from Yeats's poem with a recalcitrant and immovable W, whose discarded voice serves as the means through which he sharply individuates himself from a platitudinous Yeats.

Beckett's interrogation of Yeats's triumphalism in 'The Tower' necessitates not only the use of televisual technology but also its undoing from within. For Herren, 'absence is an irrefutable and unbridgeable given' in television drama. Unlike the 'here and now' of live theatrical performance, where actors and the audience are co-present, the broadcast of a recorded play is merely an after-echo of a performance shot in a different time and space than that of its reception: 'it is an illusion of light and sound; there is no *there* there'.[94] The illusionistic technology of broadcast television, its invincible resurrection of audio-visual traces of a past event, recalls the ease with which Yeats summons comforting memories and visions from his past in 'The Tower'. Just as an extended quotation from the poem is used to interrogate, and ultimately undo its claims about memory and the imagination, Beckett introduces certain aberrations within the recorded images and sounds—the building blocks of any television broadcast—so that the medium conforms to his poetics of indigence and impotence. In so doing, he is simultaneously able to stage the failure of the omnipotent Yeatsian 'ear and eye' on the one hand, and subvert the medium's claims to an absolute mechanical reproduction of a lost past, on the other.

It is something of an axiom that the televisual image is a poorer and more stripped-down equivalent of its cinematic counterpart in terms of size and detail.[95] In *…but the clouds…* images are impoverished even further, and their perception made correspondingly more taxing, as the relatively well-lit shades of grey from *Ghost Trio* are replaced by faintly visible spaces and bodies surrounded by intense darkness. Moreover, V's repeated mentions of the roads, the closet, and the little sanctum where 'none could see me [him], in the dark'—spaces that remain plunged

[94] Herren, *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television,* p.4.
[95] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.130.

in absolute darkness in the play—additionally foreground the considerable imbalance between what is screened and what remains permanently occluded from the visual field.[96] From M's perspective, the most prominent instance of the failure of visual memory is W's frequent non-appearance. Even when she does appear, as in cases one through three, the memory/image is either short-lived or of a perceptibly indistinct quality. When compared to the relative clarity of the other set of memory images in the play, those of M1's in-set movements, W's face is faintly lit and translucent—emerging from, but never quite differentiating itself against the engulfing darkness of M's mind. As Anna McMullan contends in Mary Bryden's wake (1993): 'Only a trace of face persists, a liminal image *between absence and presence*, shadow and substance [...] whereas in the early work women are associated with suffocating corporeality, here, the female face as muse or lost other is almost corporeally extinguished'.[97] At the same time, the body in sound television and film is constituted in equal measure by its visual image and the voices/sounds that it issues. Mary Ann Doane has argued that the body of silent cinema was deemed deficient even in its own time, and its silent lack, initially compensated through the actor's exaggerated pantomime, was overcome with the introduction of the actor's voice in the talking film: '[t]he addition of sound to the cinema introduces the possibility of re-presenting a fuller (and organically unified) body, and of confirming the status of speech as an individual property right'.[98] This 'fuller' and 'more present' mode of embodiment has been seen as pivoting upon a specific instance of the intersection of the image and soundtrack—the synchronized voice that sounds in time with the movements of the actor's lips. Accordingly, in addition to her figuration as an unstable/hazy image, Beckett brings about W's corporeal extinction (identified by McMullan above) through an assault upon the mechanism of synchronization in relation to her voice.

Despite being identified as such, Beckett's TV plays are, in fact, poised mid-way between television and film. While their reception conditions were clearly those of a television broadcast—mobile individuals in a domestic space looking at a small

[96] On darkness in Beckett's television plays, see David Pattie, 'Coming out of the Dark: Beckett's TV Plays', *JOBS*, 18 (2009), 123-135.
[97] 'Versions of Embodiment/Visions of the Body in Beckett's "…but the clouds…"', *SBTA: Crossroads and Borderlines/ l'Oeuvre Carrefour/ l'Oeuvre Limite*, 6 (1997), 353-364 (pp.360-61, my emphasis).
[98] 'The Voice in the Cinema', p.34.

screen vs. an immobile film audience in a darkened theatre—they were nevertheless recorded and produced using camera work and editing methods from cinema.[99] The use of 'post-synch' sound is a particularly important example of this cross-media contamination. Beckett typically worked on the image (e.g. focussing on the actor's stylized movements) and sound (the carefully modulated rhythms of the voice-overs) at different times: as he wrote to Barbara Bray from Stuttgart after finishing the filming of the plays at the SDR, 'What I fear most is the synchronization & editing' (*LSB* IV, p.465).[100] Beckett's reference to synchronization here is something of a misnomer, for the image and the soundtrack in his teleplays are paradoxically glued together by asynchrony rather than synchresis, as the letter risks suggesting. Chief examples include the use of non-diegetic voice-overs and voice-over narration—with images and voices occupying different space-times in both cases—or extended sequences featuring a 'dead soundtrack', where images are artificially divorced from accompanying sounds, as with Beckett's careful muting of F's footsteps and the creaking sounds of the door and window in the 'Pre-Action' and 'Action' of *Ghost Trio*.[101]

Given Beckett's persistent use of contrapuntal or non-diegetic voices in particular, it becomes evident that the synchronized voice is concertedly eschewed in his TV plays. Anthony Paraskeva has recently drawn attention to Beckett's unreserved disapproval of the mechanism of synchronized sound underpinning the 'talkies', expressed in his personal correspondence and entries from his German Diaries. Like Artaud, Brecht, and Chaplin, his apprehension was that the synchronized voice would significantly constrain possibilities of montage and return cinema to its theatrical roots.[102] Beckett's aversion to the speaking body on screen has thus strikingly resulted in a corpus of televisual work where lips moving in the

[99] Bignell, p.50; Paraskeva, p.2.
[100] Konrad Körte similarly recalls that the play's female voice-over was separately recorded and only subsequently incorporated into the final broadcast. Beckett followed the same practice in his work on the SDR *He Joe* (1969) with Nancy Illig and Deryk Mendel. Konrad Körte, 'Beckett Listens: Sound Production for the 1977 *Geistertrio*', p.110.
[101] K. J. Donnelly, *Occult Aesthetics: Synchronization in Sound Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.30. Donnelly discusses five key forms of asynchronous uses of sound in cinema, of which the aforementioned three are particularly common in Beckett's work.
[102] Paraskeva, p.17. Beckett's relation to early cinema, particularly Eisenstein and Pudovkin and German Expressionism, is also discussed in Ulrika Maude, 'Somnambulism, Amnesia and Fugue: Beckett and (Male) Hysteria', in *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Peter Fifield and David Addyman (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp.153-176.

act of speaking are anathema.[103] This marks a sharp divergence from the classical narrative film, whose cinematography constantly returns the unanchored voice to its corporeal source through the (re)framing of the actor's face and moving lips. According to Rick Altman's striking thesis, the soundtrack in cinema uses the image of the actor's moving lips just as a ventriloquist uses a dummy: in creating the impression that the voice issues from, and is seamlessly welded to, the speaker's body, lip sync captures and transfers the spectator's attention to the diegesis and away from the loudspeaker behind the screen—the real source of the voice.[104] It is for this reason, Doane argues, that the talking film engenders a 'fantasmatic body', whose misleading intersensoriality conceals that it is a heterogeneous composite of a mute image and an autonomously recorded and projected voice.[105]

It may, then, seem at first that *...but the clouds...* not only departs from Beckett's signature exclusion of moving lips but also self-consciously foregrounds this deviation. As well as subjecting W's face to an extreme close-up when she speaks, this remains one of the few plays where Beckett uses the term 'synchronous' as part of the directions: '*V murmuring, synchronous with lips*' (*btc*, p.421). However, it is soon evident that, like the crescendo of footsteps at the end of *Ghost Trio*, this strategy of a close-up of her mouthing activates spectators' expectation of hearing her voice issue from her mouth so that it can be frustrated eventually. Film theory's attribution of an ideological function to the lip sync—namely, the concealment of the tenuous link between the vocal and visual aspects of the cinematic body—takes for granted that: (a) the movements of lips will be unfailingly accompanied by the sounding of a voice, and that (b) this voice will plausibly correspond to the body of the speaker. Beckett's decisive re-structuring of the play at the third draft stage targets these very unstated assumptions in case three of the final version, leaving the spectator unsettled in different ways in the process. Given that this is not a silent play, W's soundless miming of the poem's line briefly invites the suspicion of a glitch in the broadcast soundtrack. Beckett's decision to mute her

---

[103] *Comédie*, TV *Krapp* and *Not I*, and finally, *Was Wo* do not dispute this norm as they were originally written for the stage and only adapted to film and television at a later instance. Moreover, despite being the only audible male figure in the teleplays, M's voice in *...but the clouds...* remains dissociated from the outline of his body and never emanates visibly from his own lips.
[104] Rick Altman, 'Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism', *Yale French Studies,* 60 (1980), 67-69 (p.68).
[105] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in Cinema', p.35.

voice in the first typescript effectively renders her mouth a dark, silent cavity reminiscent of Buster Keaton's muffled exclamation during the climax of *Film*, when E exceeds the angle of immunity by directly confronting O and 'piercing' his sleep (*F*, p.329). Indeed, W's face acquires a ghostly quality due to her silence-emitting mouth, an effect that Mladen Dolar, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological writings on film, has called the 'phantomization' effect in sound cinema: 'deprive the image of the sound or the sound of the image, and the cut-off half will acquire a phantom-like dimension, it will become oneiric or surreal, as if the missing half has lent its power to the present one'. [106]

The filmic phantom results not only from the disrupted intersensoriality of the moving image, but in all possible instances '[w]here coordination fails, where the seen and the heard do not match'.[107] A mismatch of this description occurs most prominently during the latter half of case three. The spectator's vision is brought into a calculated conflict with their audition as W's mouth becomes the source for the *male* voice-over—or more precisely, M compensates for his inability to hear her recite '…but the clouds…' by superimposing his voice on her moving lips. The jarring quality of this sequence results once again from the subversion of the expectation the gender of the voice would coincide with that of speaker; in doing so, Beckett stages a failure of reversed lip-synch's 'supervisory role with respect to sexual difference', which ensures that 'female voices should proceed from female bodies and male voices from male bodies'.[108] If, according to Altman, the soundtrack in mainstream cinema functions as a ventriloquist by attaching itself seamlessly to the actor's lips, the 'phantomization' effect of case three in *…but the clouds…* returns the spectator's attention from W's face to V, which occupies a different body, space and time from the image with which it aligns itself.[109] Just as Beckett simultaneously alludes to a younger and an older Yeats (according to Herren), the play is similarly co-habited by televisual technology from the 1970s and the sound

---

[106] *A Voice and Nothing More*, p.196, 7n.
[107] ibid.
[108] *The Acoustic Mirror,* p.47. According to Silverman, the mismatch between the gender of the diegetic body and the voice is a deliberately comic—and short-lived—device in film.
[109] Katherine Weiss is one of the few scholars to contest the widely-held view that W functions as M's ventriloquial dummy: 'Beckett's teleplay does not stage W as M's ventriloquist dummy; M does not master his material […] by forming the words, W keeps M from taking on the role of an author; he merely repeats rather than creates'. Katherine Weiss, 'Animating Ghosts in Samuel Beckett's *Ghost Trio* and *…but the clouds…*', *JOBS*, 18 (2009), 105-122 (p.118).

film while it was still in its cradle. Beckett's studied disruption of synchronized sound in the third scenario imitates certain mechanical mishaps that accompanied projections of the talking film in its early days. In manual synchronization technologies such as the Vitaphone, the playback of the soundtrack recorded on shellac disks either failed entirely or more frequently threw the actor's voice out of sync with the movement of their lips.[110] These accidents are mirrored in their not-so-accidental uses by Beckett when W's voice cannot be heard altogether or is replaced by a male voice from a different space and time.

Cinema has always been theorized as founded on a loss or lack—the 'pro-filmic event' or 'the phenomenal real'—that can only be accessed by the spectator as a representation. Christian Metz explains how, unlike a theatrical performance, the spectators and actors in cinema are neither co-present during the shooting nor during projection, and yet the cinematic signifier presents this loss to the spectator with a misleading degree of detail: 'The cinema only gives it [that which is filmed] in effigy, inaccessible from the outset, in a primordial *elsewhere*, infinitely desirable (= never possessable), on another scene which is that of absence and which nonetheless represents the absent in detail, thus making it very present […]'.[111] Operating within a psychoanalytic paradigm, Metz uses the Freudian account of fetishism and disavowal to describe the spectator's divided 'belief' in the cinematic signifier. Confronted with the 'castration' inherent in cinema, the spectator defends himself against anxiety by adopting a position of simultaneous credulity and incredulity towards the filmic representation.[112] Though cinema carries the potential to undermine this defensive manoeuvre by drawing the spectator's attention to its artifice, its technical prowess on the whole results in its transformation into a pleasure-invested fetish that consolidates the spectator's disavowal through the blurring of the distinction between reality and the impression of reality conveyed on the screen.[113]

Performed, shot and recorded before their eventual reception by audiences, Beckett's television broadcasts share the lack-centred ontology of cinema. A parallel

---

[110] Donnelly, *Occult Aesthetics*, pp.33-34.
[111] Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. by Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p.61.
[112] ibid., p.70.
[113] ibid., p.74.

emerges between M's and the spectator's predicament in *…but the clouds…* when we consider that the male figure's attempts at a visual and aural materialization of his past are analogous to the spectator's use of the televisual apparatus to access an audio-visual 'effigy' of an elapsed performance of Beckett's play within the television studio. More importantly, what aligns the two further is that their respective quests fail when it comes specifically to the aural perception of this past in the form of the female voice; not only is M unable to hear W, Beckett's manipulation of the synchronization between W's face and voice ensures that the latter remains equally inaudible to the spectator. By virtue of being an irretrievably lost object for both, the female voice frustrates the invocatory drive that partly undergirds M's recollections of W as well as the libidinal allure of audio-visual media for their spectators-auditors.[114]

Beckett's cleaving apart of W's moving lips and her voice results in an impoverished mode of embodiment in opposition to the verisimilitude and 'fullness' of the cinematic body engendered by the synchronized voice. The centrality of a missing female voice and the vocally-amputated female body that it leaves behind strikingly recalls Christian Metz's feminization of cinema through the declaring of its founding loss a 'castration'. Although the silent cavity that is W's mouth invites being read as an emblem of the castrated female, the play ultimately prevents such a displacement of M's/the spectator's lack onto W. I would, in fact, argue that the situation undoes 'the elision of mouth and vagina, the female reduced to genital identification' that is so crucial to the visual polysemy of the salivating, convulsive Mouth in the TV *Not I* with which the 'Shades' broadcast opened.[115] Instead, the play's sustained dialogue with Yeats's 'The Tower' ensures that W's inaudibility is unambiguously linked to a failure of the male protagonist's memory/imagination; at the same time, the calculated muting of her voice in the third scenario of the play also short-circuits the spectator's 'disavowal' of the moving image as a vivid representation—but *a representation nonetheless*—of the pro-filmic event. In so doing, Beckett corners the spectator into confronting and acknowledging this constitutive loss at the heart of the teleplay, which cannot be fetishistically concealed

[114] Metz describes this is the spectator's 'perceiving drive', a composite of the scopophilic and invocatory drives (p.59).
[115] Linda Ben-Zvi, '*Not I*: Through a Tube Starkly', in *Women in Beckett*, pp.236-248 (p.247).

even by sound recording technology and its promise of recovering the auditory plenitude of an elapsed pro-filmic event.

With reference to *Krapp's Last Tape, Ghost Trio* and *...but the clouds...*, this chapter has shown how the female voices of these stage and television plays resist the strained labour of their male auditors to perceive them. As a result, they are simultaneously constituted as psychoanalytic, technological, and textual 'lost objects'. The unheard female voice in these plays frequently evokes other primordial, maternal, objects—typically the womb—which are 'expelled' from the self as part of the symbolic castrations upon which subjectivity is founded. *Krapp's Last Tape* and *...but the clouds...* particularly realize this liminality of the female voice as an object that was once part of the subject in those moments where Krapp and M voice speech fragments belonging to the plays' women in their own voices. Beckett implicates various technologies of sonic inscription and reproduction in these protagonists' aural quests so that, in being unable to reproduce these female voices, tape recording and televisual technologies themselves emerge as deficient and lacking. Finally, through a detailed turn to the archival pre-histories of these works, I have shown how the genesis of plays like *...but the clouds...*, which featured a female voice until it was eventually discarded, mirrors the very psychoanalytic account of the genesis of subjectivity upon which this chapter is premised, with these textual *disjecta* resembling the lost objects lost to symbolic castrations. The female voices of the late teleplays in particular return Beckett, the reader, to some of his earliest literary forebears and interlocutors in Proust and Yeats, and his decision to silence them becomes one way of revisiting these influences and negotiating his debts to them. This specific link between sound and the feminine returns Beckett to Proustian 'instinctive' or 'indirect perception', which, as Chapter One demonstrated, had been his abiding interest as a reader and critic of the *Recherche.* These episodes from the *Recherche* serve as a template for F's non-musical listening; at the same time, Beckett departs radically from the *Recherche* by ensuring the woman's non-arrival—and by extension, F's inability to hear her—as well as through his undercutting of investigative listening to unseen sounds *à la* Proust as a distinctive and infallible mode of inference about their causes.

CONCLUSION

According to Adriana Cavarero, 'the unrepeatable singularity of each human being [and] the embodied uniqueness that distinguishes each one from every other' manifests itself most irrefutably in the register of the voice.[1] On the basis of her view that no two voices are alike, Cavarero makes the compelling claim that a philosophical examination of the singularity of being should therefore privilege the voice—in other words, it should be a specifically 'vocal ontology of uniqueness'.[2] At the same time, she also underscores the impossibility of describing or thinking about these unique voices as if they were standalone entities, since the vocal field is 'irremediably relational' and 'structured upon pairs of mouths and ears': '[t]he emitted voice always comes out into the world, and every ear within earshot—with or without intention—is struck by it'.[3] Throughout her *For More than One Voice*, Cavarero privileges gender as a key marker of the singularity of both the speaking voice as well as the listening ear that apprehends it. Guided by this important argument, I have contested the reluctance (with some notable exceptions) of recent scholarship on Beckett's voices to examine the traffic between gender and sound in the *oeuvre*—specifically in the radio, stage and television plays studied in this thesis, where female personae and bodies are increasingly apprehended only acoustically. That Beckett is only able to represent gender-indifferent bodies in late works like *Quad* and *Not I* as long as they remain fully concealed and entirely mute, attests to the difficulty—if not impossibility—of extricating the voice from its gender.

For the auditor-protagonists of the plays studied in this thesis, the act of listening to the female voice revives foundational scenarios of subject-formation posited by psychoanalysis. The disembodied female voices of plays such as *Embers* and *Eh Joe* indistinguishably surround their auditors as vocal envelopes while infiltrating them from within. The unsettling perception of these female voices undermines the stability of the inside/outside and self/other distinction upon which subjectivity is founded and approximates, in the auditory register, the crisis of selfhood that Julia Kristeva has influentially described as 'abjection'. In a later phase

[1] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, p.9.
[2] ibid., p.173.
[3] ibid., p.178.

of Beckett's drama, this flight from the invasive female voice alternates with its concerted pursuit in plays such as *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Ghost Trio* and …*but the clouds*…. Regardless of the deployment of technology or the turning to art, by the protagonists of these plays, the female voice persists as a lost object. Considering the centrality of auditory—rather than *visual*—perception to selfhood, Beckett's personae in these dramatic works exemplify what Steven Connor has called 'the modern auditory I', i.e. 'the idea or ideal of a self structured around the experience of hearing'.[4]

The shifting figuration of the disembodied female voice as either disruptive or constitutive of selfhood is a function of an ambivalence towards reproductive female corporeality in these works. To recapitulate my claim from the Introduction, Beckett's 'disembodied' female voices, notwithstanding their characterization as such, remain suffused by the female body for their auditors. In Chapter Two, I turned to Beckett's engagement with Otto Rank's theorization of birth trauma, as well as its lasting consequences for human subjectivity, as paradigmatic of an originary relation to the maternal-feminine as interchangeably an object of desire and a source of dread. In the absence of the visual body, the disembodied female voices in Beckett's plays strikingly assert their corporal anchorage through sonic attributes, such as the spatial mimicking of the womb through enveloping qualities of the voice, which is then experienced as an entrapping enclosure in plays such as *Embers* and *Eh Joe*. Where the female voice remains unheard itself, as in the late teleplay *Ghost Trio*, its metaphoric link to the womb is displaced onto the claustral space of the bare room in which F awaits 'her', the room being a key symbol for the female body that Beckett discovered in the writings of Rank and Ernest Jones.

In its opening towards the formative other, the Beckettian ear is therefore a simultaneous locus of subjectivity *and* intertextuality, for his representation of the disembodied female voice entails a continual return to, and negotiation of, formative literary and intellectual encounters from the 1930s. With reference chiefly to Marcel Proust—but also to W. B. Yeats, Harold Pinter, and James Joyce—this thesis has sought to demonstrate how Beckett reads his modernist precursors and interlocutors 'by the ear'. Beckett's sensitivity to the acoustic materiality of language is by now a

[4] Steven Connor, 'The Modern Auditory I', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.203-223 (p.213).

critical commonplace, whether it is understood through the famed musicality and rhythm of his own (prose) writing, or his prodigious ability to recite passages and poems by his preferred writers from memory. However, by turning to archival evidence like the Proust marginalia or the Bray/MacGreevey correspondence, I have advanced a significantly different notion of Beckett's auditory engagement with the aforementioned writers, whereby he carefully attends to their distinctive representation of sonic phenomena (including gendered voices and sound technologies) before incorporating their echoes in the soundscapes of his own work. In retracing Beckettian sounds and voices to their sources in the prose, poetry and drama of other writers, I have thus shown a distinctively *sensory* intertextuality at work in these plays. Such an approach, predicated on Beckett's reading projects, participates in ongoing attempts within Beckett studies to privilege his critical writings as blueprints of the sensory regimes of his future prose and dramatic writings. Where previous studies have engaged in a similar critical endeavour, it has been largely restricted to the visual register, such as James Knowlson's *Images of Beckett* (2003), which persuasively shows how Beckett's striking stage images are often belated reworkings of certain pieces of visual art and cinema that held a lifelong fascination for him. To conclude, the disembodied voice in the drama is the node at which signature Beckettian concerns like embodiment, technology, sensory perception and intertextuality meet, although it is only with the acknowledgement of its gendered dimension that this confluence can be recognized and fully understood.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. MANUSCRIPTS AND ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

The Beckett Collection, University of Reading Special Collections

UoR BC 1553/1: First manuscript of *...but the clouds...* (1976)

UoR 1553/3: First typescript of *...but the clouds...* (1976)

The Billie Whitelaw Archive, University of Reading Special Collections

BW A/6/1: Notes on a rehearsal meeting with Samuel Beckett for the1988 *Eh Joe*

BW A/7/1: Typescript of *Embers* with notes for playing Ada

Samuel Beckett Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Trinity College Dublin

TCD MS 10971/1: The Philosophy Notes

TCD MS 190971/7 and TCD MS 10971/8: The Psychology Notes

B. AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

Embers, dir. by Everett C. Frost (National Public Radio, 1989) [on CD, issued by Voices International]

Film, dir. by Alan Schneider (Evergreen, 1964), online video recording, YouTube, 25 September 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm6ffDuELsE> [accessed 6 June 2017]

Eh Joe, dir. by Alan Gibson (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1965), online video recording, YouTube, 6 November 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdWxml9BwgA> [accessed 12 December 2018]

He Joe, dir. by Walter Asmus (Süddeutsche Rundfunk, 1988), online video recording, YouTube, 17 November 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMH9ODAibsE> [accessed 12 December 2018]

Ghost Trio, dir. by Donald McWhinnie (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977) [on VHS, British Film Institute Film and Television Archive]

Geistertrio, dir. by Samuel Beckett (Süddeutsche Rundfunk, 1977) [on DVD, issued by Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008]

…but the clouds…, dir. by Donald McWhinnie (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977) [on VHS, British Film Institute Film and Television Archive]

…nur noch Gewölk…, dir. by Samuel Beckett (Süddeutsche Rundfunk, 1977) [on DVD, issued by Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008]

C. PUBLISHED SOURCES

Drama

Beckett, Samuel, *All That Fall* (pp.169-200), *Embers* (pp.251-264), *Endgame* (pp.89-134), *Film* (pp.321-334), *Eh Joe* (pp.359-368), *Not I* (pp.373-384), *That Time* (385-396), *Ghost Trio* (pp.405-404), *...but the clouds...* (pp.415-422), in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990)

—, *Krapp's Last Tape,* in *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Krapp's Last Tape*, vol. 3, ed. by James Knowlson (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp.1-10

—, *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: The Shorter Plays*, vol. 4 ed. by S. E. Gontarski (London: Faber and Faber, 1998)

—, *La dernière bande, suivi de Cendres* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007)

Fictional and Critical Prose

Beckett, Samuel, *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* [1929-1961], ed. by Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983)

—, *Proust and Three Dialogues with George Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965)

—, *Murphy* [1937], in *The Grove Centenary Editions of Samuel Beckett: Novels I*, ed. by Paul Auster (New York: Grove Press, 2006)

—, *First Love* [1946], in *The Complete Short Prose*, 1929-1989, ed. by S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1996)

—, *The End* [1946], in *The Complete Short Prose*, 1929-1989, ed. by S.E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1996)

—, *Molloy* [1951], ed. by Shane Weller (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

—, *The Unnamable* [1953], ed. by Steven Connor (London: Faber and Faber, 2010)

—, *How It Is* [1964], ed. by Edouard Magessa O'Reilly (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

—, *Company* [1980], ed. by Dirk Van Hulle (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

Letters

Beckett, Samuel and Alan Schneider, *No Author Better Served: the Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider*, ed. by Maurice Harmonn (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998)

Beckett, Samuel, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1929-1940), vol.1, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

—, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1941-1956), vol.2, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

—, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1957-1965), vol.3, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

—, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett* (1966-1989), vol.4, ed. by George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

Ackerley, C. J., 'Introduction', in *Demented Particulars: The Annotated* Murphy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp.14-19

Ackerley, C. J. and S. E. Gontarski, 'Birth', 'Mother' and 'Voice', in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Work, Life, and Thought*, ed. by C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp.72; 328-330; 506- 514

Adorno, Theodor, 'The Curves of the Needle', in *Essays on Music*, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie, and ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), pp.271-276

Albright, Daniel, *Beckett and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Allen, Robert Clyde and Annette Hill, 'Spaces of Television', in *The Television Studies Reader*, ed. by Robert Clyde Allen and Annette Hill (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.105-109

Alpaugh, David, '*Embers* and the Sea: Beckettian Intimations of Mortality', *Modern Drama*, 16 (1973), 317-328

Altman, Rick, 'Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism', *Yale French Studies,* 60 (1980), 67-69

Arnheim, Rudolf, *Radio: an Art of Sound*, trans. by Margaret Ludwig and Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936)

Atik, Anne, *How It Was: A Memoir of Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001)

Bair, Deirdre, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1993)

Baker, Phil, *Beckett and the Mythology of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997)

Baldwin, Thomas, *The Material Object in the Work of Marcel Proust* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005)

Barry, Elizabeth, *Beckett and Authority: The Uses of Cliché* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

Barthes, Roland, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp.179-189

---, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Penguin, 1990)

---, 'Listening', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1991), pp. 245-260

Barzilai, Shuli, *Lacan and the Matter of Origins* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999)

Beardsworth, Sara, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004)

Beckerman, Bernard, 'Samuel Beckett and the Art of Listening', in *Beckett at 80/ Beckett in Context*, ed. by Enoch Brater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.149-167.

Ben-Zvi, Linda, Linda, 'Samuel Beckett's Media Plays', *Modern Drama*, 28 (1985), 22-37

---, '*Not I*: Through a Tube Starkly', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp.236-248

---, 'Beckett and Television: in a Different Context', *Modern Drama,* 49 (2006), 469-490

Bignell, Jonathan, *Beckett on Screen: The Television Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)

Billington, Michael, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998)

Bloom, Emily C., *The Wireless Past: Anglo-Irish Writers and the BBC, 1931-1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Brater, Enoch, *The Drama in the Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

---, 'Intertextuality', in *Palgrave Advances in Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.30-44

Brienza, Susan, 'Clods, Whores and Bitches: Misogyny in Beckett's Early Fiction', in *Women and Beckett*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press), pp.91-105

Brown, Llewellyn, *Beckett, Lacan and the Voice* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2016)

Bryden, Mary, *Women in Beckett's Prose and Drama: Her Own Other* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993)

---, 'Beckett's Apertures and Overtures', in *Beckett and Musicality*, ed. by Sara Jane Bailes and Nicholas Till (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2014), pp.187-198

Campbell, Julie, 'Staging Embers: an Act of Killing?', *SBTA*: *Beckett versus Beckett,* 7 (1998), 91-104

---, '"A Voice Comes to One in the Dark. Imagine": Radio, the Listener, and the Dark Comedy of *All That Fall*', in *Beckett and Death*, ed. by Philip Tew and Steven Barfield (London: Continuum, 2009), pp.147-168

---, 'Beckett and Trauma: the Father's Death and the Sea', in *Beckett and Trauma*, ed. by Mariko Hori Tananka, and Yoshiki Tajiri (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp.23-45

Carville, Conor, *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Chabert, Pierre, 'The Body in Beckett's Theatre', *JOBS*, 8 (1982), 23-28

Chion, Michel, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)

---, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

---, *Sound: an Acoulogical Treatise,* trans. by James A. Steintrager (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

Cohen, Debra Rae, Michael Coyle and Jane A. Lewty eds., *Broadcasting Modernism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013)

Cohen, Josh, 'Psychoanalytic Bodies', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. by David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,), pp.214-229

Cohn, Ruby, *A Beckett Canon* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005)

Connor, Steven, 'The Modern Auditory I', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.203-223

---, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

---, 'Auscultations', *Sound Effects: an Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience*, 1 (2011), 6-18

Crook, Tim, *Radio Drama: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1999)

Danius, Sara, 'Orpheus and the Machine: Proust as a Theorist of Technological Change, and the Case of Joyce', in *Marcel Proust: Bloom's Modern Critical Views*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), pp.121-136

Delbe, Alain, *Le stade vocale* (Paris: Editions de l'Harmattan, 1995)

Deleuze, Gilles, 'The Exhausted', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp.152-174

Diamond, Elin, 'Feminist Readings of Beckett', in *Palgrave Advances in Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.45-67

Doane, Mary Ann, 'The Voice in Cinema: the Articulation of Body and Space', *Yale French Studies: Cinema/Sound*, 80 (1980), 33-50

---, 'Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema', *differences*, 14/3 (2003), 89-111

Dolar, Mladen, 'The Object Voice', in *The Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp.7-31

---, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2006)

Donnelly, K.J., *Occult Aesthetics: Synchronization in Sound Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Drobnick, Jim, 'Listening Awry', in Aural Cultures, ed. by Jim Drobnick (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), pp.9-18

Dunn, Leslie C. and Nancy A. Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Ellis, John, *Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video* (London: Routledge, 1992)

Esslin, Martin, 'The Mind as Stage—Radio Drama', in *Mediations: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), pp.172-3

---, 'Samuel Beckett and the Art of the Radio', in *Mediations: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), pp.125-154

---, 'Martin Esslin on Beckett the Man', in *Beckett Remembering/ Remembering Beckett*, ed. by Elizabeth Knowlson and James Knowlson (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), pp.146-154

Feldman, Matthew, *Beckett's Books: A Cultural History of Beckett's 'Interwar Notes'* (London: Continuum, 2006)

Feldman, Matthew and Ulrika Maude eds., *Beckett and Phenomenology* (London: Continuum, 2009)

Ferrer, Daniel, 'Towards a Marginalist Economy of Textual Genesis', *Variants: Reading Notes*, 2/3 (2004), 7-18

Finter, Helga, 'The Body and its Doubles: On the (De-)Construction of Femininity on Stage', *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 9 (1997), 119-141

Freud, Sigmund, 'Negation' (1925), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIX, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1962), pp.235-239

---, 'Femininity', in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 2, Penguin Freud Library (London: Penguin, 1973), pp.145-169

Frost, Everett C., 'Fundamental Sounds: Recording Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays', *Theatre Journal*, 43 (1991), 361-376

---, 'Meditating On: Beckett, *Embers*, and Radio Theory', in *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and the Non-Print Media*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.311-329

---, '"From one world to another": Beckett's Radio Plays', *SBTA*: *Beckett in Conversation, "yet again" / Rencontres avec Beckett, "encore"*, 28 (2016), 128-138

Frost, Everett C., and Jane Maxwell, 'History of Western Philosophy', in *SBTA:'Notes diverse holo': Catalogues of Beckett's Reading Notes and Other Manuscripts at Trinity College Dublin, with Supporting Essays*, ed. by Matthijs Engelberts, Everett C. Frost and Jane Maxwell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 67-90

Gaedtke, Andrew, *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Gardner, Colin, *Beckett, Deleuze and the Televisual Event: Peephole Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

Genette, Gérard, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Gontarski, S. E., *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana Unversity Press, 1985)

---, 'The Body in the Body of Beckett's Theatre', *SBTA: Endlessness in the Year 2000/ Fin sans fin en l'an 2000,* 11 (2001), 169-177

---, 'Greying the Canon: Beckett in Performance', in *Beckett after Beckett*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski and Anthony Uhlmann (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), pp.141-157

---, 'Beckett's Voice(s)', in *Beckett Matters: Essays on Beckett's Late Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017)

Grosz, Elizabeth, 'The Body of Signification', in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the Work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. by John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (Routledge: London, 1990), pp.80-103

---, *Volatile Body: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)

Halliday, Sam, *Sonic Modernity: Representing Sound in Literature, Culture and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014)

Hartel, Gaby, 'Emerging out of a Silent Void: Some Reverberations of Rudolf Arnheim's Radio Theory in Samuel Beckett's Radio Pieces', *JOBS*, 19 (2010), 218–227

Harvey, Lawrence, *Samuel Beckett: Poet and Critic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970)

Hassett, Joseph, *W. B. Yeats and the Muses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Hecq, Dominique, Russell Grigg and Craig Smith, 'Introduction', in *Female Sexuality: Early Psychoanalytic Controversies* (London: Karnac, 2015), pp.9-17.

Herren, Graley, *Samuel Beckett's Plays on Film and Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

---, 'Mourning Becomes Electric: Mediating Loss in *Eh Joe*', in *Samuel Beckett and Pain*, ed. by Mariko Hori Tanka, Yoshiki Tajiri, and Michiko Tshushima (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), pp.43-66

---, ‘Working on Film and Television’, in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, ed. by Anthony Uhlmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.192-202

---, ‘A Womb with a View: *Film* as Regression Fantasy’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Becket and the Arts* ed. by S.E. Gontarski (Edinburg: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 237-250

Hill, Leslie, *Beckett’s Fiction: In Different Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Home-Cooke, George, *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015)

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Robert Fagles (London: Penguin, 1997)

Hook, Derek, ‘Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference, and the Castration Problematic’, in *The Gender of Psychology*, ed. by Floretta Boonzaier, Peace Kiguwa and Tamara Schefer (Lansdowne: Juta Academic Publishing, 2006), pp.45-59

Illig, Nancy, ‘Nancy Illig’, in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), pp.24-26

Jay, Martin, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

Jeffers, Jennifer M., *Beckett’s Masculinity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

Jones, Ernest, ‘Freud’s Theory of Dreams’ and ‘Cold, Disease and Birth’, in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 5th edn. (London: Maresfield Reprints, 1948), pp. 217-250; pp.320-325.

Joyce, James, *Ulysses: Annotated Student Edition*, ed. by Declan Kiberd (London: Penguin, 2011)

Kahn, Douglas, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999)

Kalb, Jonathan, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

Katz, Daniel, ‘“Mirror resembling screens”: Yeats, Beckett and *...but the clouds…*’, *SBTA: The Savage Eye/L’oeil fauve,* 4 (1995), 83-92

Kendrick, Lynne and David Roesner eds., *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011)

Kim, Rina, *Women and Ireland as Beckett’s Lost Others: Beyond Mourning and Melancholia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Knowlson, James, ‘Beckett’s “Bits of Pipe”’, in *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives*, ed. by Pierre Astier, Moris Beja, and S.E. Gontarski (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), pp.16-25

---, ‘*Ghost Trio/ Geister Trio*’, in *Beckett at 80/ Beckett in Context*, ed. by Enoch Brater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.193-207

---, *Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997)

Körte, Konrad, ‘Beckett Listens: Sound Production for the 1977 *Geistertrio*’, trans. by Angela Moorjani, *SBTA: Beckett in Conversation,“yet again”/ Rencontres avec Beckett, “encore”*, 28 (2016), 107-115

Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)

Lacan, Jacques, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998)

Ladenson, Elisabeth, *Proust’s Lesbianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999)

Laplanche, Jean, *Problématiques II: Castration et Symbolisations* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980)

Laplanche, Jean and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books, 2006)

Laughlin, Karen, ‘Sadism Demands a Story: Looking at Gender and Pain in Samuel Beckett’s Plays’, in *Samuel Beckett: A Casebook*, ed. by Jennifer M. Jeffers (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.159-178

Lawley, Paul ‘*Embers*: An Interpretation’, in *The Beckett Studies Reader*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993), pp.94-120

Lawrence, Amy, *Echo and Narcissus: Women’s Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991)

Lawrence, Tim, *Samuel Beckett’s Critical Aesthetics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Laws, Catherine, *Headaches among the Overtones: Music in Beckett/Beckett in Music* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013)

Levin, David Michael, ‘Introduction’, in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed. by David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp.1-29

Maier, Michael, ‘Geistertio: Beethoven's Music in Samuel Beckett's “Ghost Trio” (Part 2)’, *SBTA: Pastiches, Parodies and Other Imitations/ Pastiches, parodies et autres imitations,* 12 (2002), 313-320

Manufacturing Intellect, ‘Meet Samuel Beckett with Richard Wilson (2015)’, 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NlOI5Q-ar0> [accessed 2 March 2019]

Martin, Michèle, *"Hello, Central?": Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems* (Quebec City: McGill University Press, 1991)

Maude, Ulrika, *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

---, 'Working on Radio', in *Samuel Beckett in Context*, ed. by Anthony Uhlmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.183-191

---, 'Somnambulism, Amnesia and Fugue: Beckett and (Male) Hysteria', in *Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies: New Critical Essays*, ed. by David Addyman and Peter Fifield (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp.153-176

McLuhan, Marshal, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964)

McMullan, Anna, *Theatre on Trial: Samuel Beckett's Later Drama* (London: Routledge, 1993)

---, 'Beckett as Director: the Art of Mastering Failure', in *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Beckett*, ed. by John Pilling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.196-208

---, 'Versions of Embodiment/Visions of the Body in Beckett's "…but the clouds…"', *SBTA: Crossroads and Borderlines/ l'Oeuvre Carrefour/ l'Oeuvre Limite*, 6 (1997), 353-364

---, 'Performing Vision(s)', in *Samuel Beckett: A Casebook*, ed. by Jennifer M. Jeffers (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.133-158

---, 'From Matron to Matrix: Gender, Authority and (Dis)Embodiment in Beckett's Theatre', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.97-108

---, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010)

McQueeny, Terence, *Beckett as a Critic of Joyce and Proust* (1977), unpublished doctoral thesis, Beckett Collection, University of Reading

McTighe, Trish, 'Haptic Interfaces: The Live and the Recorded Body in Beckett's "Eh Joe" on Stage and Screen', *SBTA: Samuel Beckett: Debts and Legacies*, 22 (2010), 463-475

---, *The Haptic Aesthetic in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Metz, Christian, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. by Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982)

Miller, J. Hillis, *Speech Acts in Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002)

Miller-Frank, Felicia, *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)

Mitchell, Juliet, 'Introduction – I', in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), pp.1-26

Moorjani, Angela, 'A Cryptanalysis of Proust's "Les Intermittences du Coeur"', *MLN*, 105 (1990), 875-888

---, 'Beckett and Psychoanalysis', in *Palgrave Advances in Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. by Lois Oppenheim (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.172-193

Morin, Emilie, 'Beckett's Speaking Machines: Sound, Radiophonics, Acousmatics', *Modernism/Modernity*, 21 (2014), 1-14

Nixon, Mark, 'Samuel Beckett's "Film Vidéo-Cassette projet"', *JOBS*, 18 (2009), 32-43

---, *Samuel Beckett's German Diaries: 1936-1937* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011)

Nixon, Mark and Dirk Van Hulle, *Samuel Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 2013)

O'Hara, J. D., *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: Structural Uses of Depth Psychology* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 1997)

Oliver, Kelly, *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double-Bind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993)

Paraskeva, Anthony, *Samuel Beckett and Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

Pattie, David, '"Let What Happens Happen": The Whitelaw Archive', *JOBS*, 25 (2016), 206-223

---, 'Coming out of the Dark: Beckett's TV Plays', *JOBS*, 18 (2009), 123-135

Peters, John Durham, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

Pilling, John, 'Beckett's *Proust*', in *The Beckett Studies Reader*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993), pp. 9-28

---, 'Proust and Schopenhauer: Music and Shadows', in *Beckett and Music*, ed. by Mary Bryden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Pinter, Harold, *The Proust Screenplay*, in collaboration with Barbara Bray and Joseph Losey (New York: Grove Press, 1977)

Poizat, Michel, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. by Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013)

Porter, Jeffrey, *Lost Sound: The Forgotten Art of Radio Storytelling* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016)

Pountney, Rosemary, *The Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama from All that Fall to Footfalls, with Commentaries on the Latest Plays* (Colin Smythe: Dublin, 1988)

Prieto, Eric, *Listening In: Music, Mind and Modernist Narrative* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002)

Richards, Eliza, 'Voice', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th edn, ed. by Roland Greene (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp.1525-27

Riley, Denise, '"A voice without a mouth": Inner Speech', in *The Force of Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.7-45

Rose, Jacqueline, 'Introduction-II', in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell, and Jacqueline Rose (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), pp.27-58.

Rosolato, Guy, 'Les hallucinations acoustico-verbales et les champs perceptifs du corps', in *Éléments de l'interprétation* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1985), pp.274-286

---, 'The Voice and the Opera: between Body and Language', in *Voices/ Voces /Voix*, ed. by Christopher Phillips (Amsterdam: Witte de With, 1998)

Sánchez, Luz María, *The Technological Epiphanies of Samuel Beckett: Machines of Inscriptional and Audiovisual Manipulation*, trans. by John Z. Komurki (Mexico City: Futura Textos, S.A de C.V., 2016)

Schaeffer, Pierre, *Treatise on Musical Objects: an Essay across Disciplines*, trans. by Christine North and John Dack (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017)

Schmid, Marion, 'The Birth and Development of *A la recherche du temps perdu*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. by Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.58-73

Silverman, Kaja, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983)

---, 'Dis-Embodying the Female Voice', in In Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism, ed. by Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp and Linda Williams (Frederick: University Publications of America in association with the American Film Institute, 1984), pp. 131-149

---, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)

---, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London: Routledge, 1992)

Stephen, Karin, *The Wish to Fall Ill: A Study of Psychoanalysis and Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960)

Sterne, Jonathan, 'Introduction', in *The Sound Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.1-18

Stewart, Paul, *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Tajiri, Yoshiki, *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: The Senses and Organs in Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Taylor-Batty, Mark, *The Theatre of Harold Pinter* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

Thomaidis, Konstantinos, *Theatre & Voice* (London: Red Globe Press, 2017)

Thompson, Marie, 'Gendered Sound', in *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, ed. by Michael C. Bull (London: Routledge, 2018), pp.108-117

Tonning, Erik, *Samuel Beckett's Abstract Drama* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007)

Tubridy, Derval, 'Sounding Spaces: Aurality in Samuel Beckett, Janet Cardiff and Bruce Nauman', *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 12 (2007), 5-11

---, 'Samuel Beckett and Sonic Art', in *Samuel Beckett and Contemporary Art*, ed. by David Houston Jones, Robert Reginio, and Katherine Weiss (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2017), pp.265-290

Tucker, David, "'That first last look in the shadows": Beckett's Legacies for Harold Pinter', in *Staging Beckett in Great Britain*, ed. by Trish McTighe and David Tucker (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp.193-208

Van Hulle, Dirk, 'Textual Scars: Beckett, Genetic Criticism and Textual Scholarship', in *Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett and the Arts*, ed. by S. E. Gontarski (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp.306-319

Verhulst, Pim, 'Getting over Joyce in English: 'Proteus', *Portrait* and the Genesis of Samuel Beckett's Radio Play, *Embers*', *Genetic Joyce Studies*, 17 (2017), 1-20

'Washout', in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, prepared by J. A. Simpson, and E. S. C. Weiner, vol. IX (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.952

Watt, Adam, *Reading in Proust's A la recherche:'le délire de la lecture'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Watt, Ian, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979)

Weiss, Katherine, 'Animating Ghosts in Samuel Beckett's *Ghost Trio* and *…but the clouds…*', *JOBS*, 18 (2009), 105-122

Weiss, Katherine, *The Plays of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012)

Weller, Shane, '"Some Experience of the Schizoid Voice": Samuel Beckett and the Language of Derangement', *Modern Languages Forum*, 45 (2008), 32-50

---, *Beckett, Literature and the Ethics of Alterity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

West, Sarah, *Say It: The Performative Voice in the Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010)

Whitelaw, Billie, *Billie Whitelaw…Who He?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1995)

Wilson, Ann, '"Her Lips Moving": the Castrated Voice of *Not I*', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Cultural Perspectives,* ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp.190-200

Winnicott, D. W., *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*: *Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London: Karnac Books, 1990), pp.153-157

Worth, Katherine, 'Women in Beckett's Radio and Television Plays', in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi, pp.236-242

---, *Samuel Beckett's Theatre: Life Journeys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001)

Yeats, W. B., 'The Tower', in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), pp.194-200

Zilliacus, Clas, *Beckett and Broadcasting: A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television* (Turku: Åbo Akademi, 1976)

Zinman, Toby, 'Eh Joe and the Peephole Aesthetic', *SBTA: The Savage Eye/ L'oeil fauve: New Essays on Samuel Beckett's Television Plays*, 4 (1995), 53-64

Zumthor, Paul, *Oral Poetry: an Introduction*, trans. by Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1990)

Zurbrugg, Nicholas, *Beckett and Proust* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1988)