19

'THE SOUND IS ENOUGH': BECKETT'S RADIO PLAYS

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> Don't look, said Mercier.
> The sound is enough, said Camier.
>
> (Beckett 1974: 11)

Samuel Beckett's plays for radio provide important insights into his way of incorporating philosophical constructs into his work not for their 'truth value' but, as he said in his scenario for *Film*, 'as of merely structural and dramatic convenience' (Beckett 2009b: 97), for intersecting the particulars of each genre in which he worked. The radio plays clarify and develop themes, concerns, strategies, sources and references that are of considerable interest in their own right and illuminate Beckett's prose fiction and plays for stage and television. Indeed often a particular radio drama has as much in common with works in other media as it does with Beckett's other plays for radio (and vice versa). By way of illustration, this essay will discuss Beckett's use in the radio plays of the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, the Cartesian occasionalism of Arnold Geulincx, and the compulsion to tell stories and identify the voice in the head.

Beckett and Radio Specificity

> 'There is no acceptable way of staging the radio plays in my opinion.' Samuel Beckett to Alan Schneider, 14 September 1974 (1998: 320)[1]

Beckett's reluctance to allow his radio plays to be staged has a historical context. In the 1950s, as radio began to lose out to television as the primary form of home entertainment, BBC producers like Donald McWhinnie, who directed many of Beckett's radio and television plays, argued that radio drama was a unique purely aural form – a verbal equivalent to music that could only be properly presented on the radio. The analogy with music elevated the absence of pictures to an advantage that created the intimate emotional immediacy of a unique dramatic experience taking place in the privacy of the listeners' own heads without the reductive externalising distraction of visuals. There was, in short, a form of drama unique to radio that could not be adapted to stage, screen or television without leaving something of its essence behind, and creating such radio specific works became the *sine qua non* of BBC radio drama. Having been advised that after considerable deliberation the BBC had turned down his English translation of *En attendant Godot* on the grounds that it wasn't radiophonic enough and encouraged to

write a radio play that was, Beckett did not invent radio specificity but simply set out to provide the BBC radio drama department what it was looking for. In doing so, he completed five radio plays that so thoroughly grasp the fundamentals of the medium that moving them into other performance venues now that radio no longer prioritises serious drama the way it once did becomes highly problematic.

Schopenhauer and Radio Theory

> And it is a pleasure also to find [in Schopenhauer] a philosopher that can be read like a poet, with an entire indifference to the a priori forms of verification. (TCD MS 10402/136 (21 Sept. 1937); Beckett 2009a: 550)

That radiophonic theories of the art of radio owe something to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer both directly and indirectly[2] would have been apparent to Beckett who had found his philosophy an 'intellectual justification of unhappiness – the greatest that has ever been attempted' since his student days at the École Normale Supérieure (TCD MS 10402/3; 2009a: 33). Beckett had been alert enough to the influence on Proust of Schopenhauer's theory of music to have incorporated it into his monograph, observing to Thomas MacGreevy that 'His [Schopenhauer's] chapter in Will & Representation on music is amusing & applies to P[roust] who certainly read it' (TCD MS 10402, n.d. ?July 1930; Acheson 1978: 166; Pilling 1998: 173). For Schopenhauer all the other arts aspire to the condition of music because they copy Ideas and are therefore contaminated by referentiality to phenomena and can represent essences only indirectly, but:

> [M]usic, since it passes over the Ideas, is also quite independent of the phenomenal world, positively ignores it, and, to a certain extent, could still exist even if there were no world at all, which cannot be said of the other arts. Thus music is as immediate an objectification and copy of the whole will as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiplied phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself, the objectivity [i.e. objectification] of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence of the thing itself. (Schopenhauer 1969: I.257)

In *Proust*, Beckett confuses Schopenhauer's materialism with the idealism that he is absorbing from Plato, Pythagoras and Plotinus during this time and makes music an expression of the Idea itself rather than of Schopenhauer's will (Pilling 1998: 174):

> [I]n his aesthetics [Schopenhauer] separates it [music] from the other arts, which can only produce the idea with its phenomena, whereas music is the Idea itself, unaware of the world of phenomema, existing ideally outside the universe, apprehended not in Space but in Time only, and consequently untouched by the teleological hypothesis. (Beckett 1965: 91–2)

Despite this confusion of Schopenhauer's Will with Plato's conceptual realm of pure Ideas, Beckett follows Schopenhauer's theory that, as an expression of Kant's 'Thing in Itself' music connects directly with the emotions without the intermediation of thought:

> The inexpressible depth of all music, by virtue of which it floats past us a paradise quite familiar and yet eternally remote, and is so easy to understand and yet so inexplicable, is due to the fact that [because] it reproduces the emotions of our innermost being, but entirely without reality and remote from its pain. (Schopenhauer 1969: I.264; Pilling 1998: 177)

Beckett incorporates this assessment of music as the highest art form into the concluding pages of his *Proust* (1931) monograph as 'an art that is perfectly intelligible and perfectly inexplicable' (1965: 92). In this he follows the aspects of Schopenhauer's music theory that were of greatest importance to radio drama:

> Because music does not, like all the other arts, exhibit the *Ideas* or grades of the will's objectification, but directly *the will itself*, we can also explain that it acts directly on the will, i.e. the feelings, passions, and emotions of the hearer, so that it quickly raises these or even alters them. (Schopenhauer 1969: II.448, italics in original)

The defence of radio-specific drama was that as pure sound it too transcended referentiality and so acted directly on the feelings, passions and emotions of the listener. The ideal radiophonic play would be one that, like music, had 'the aesthetic effect . . . that refers to the innermost being of the world, and of our own selves' (Schopenhauer 1969: I.256). Rudolf Arnheim's influential 1930s study, *Radio*, clearly derives one of its central theses from Schopenhauer:

> [I]n radio drama . . . it should be realized that the elemental force lies in the sound, which affects everyone more directly than the meaning of the word, and all radio art must make this fact its starting-point. The pure sound in the word is the mother-earth from which the spoken work of art must never break loose, even when it disappears into the far heights of word-meaning . . .The words of a radio play . . . should shimmer in all their tone colours, for the way to the meaning of the word lies through the ear. (1936: 29)

Following this lead, Donald McWhinnie – outlining his, and indeed the BBC's, radio theory in the postwar period for which Beckett became the model –remarks in *The Art of Radio*:

> I have mentioned music in passing. It demands closer consideration, because the sound complex of radio works on the emotions in the same way as music; and from its total meaning it, too, exists in time, not space, it has its own rhythmic and melodic patterns, its musical shape. (1959: 39)

Beckett had proved more ready for the task than anyone at the BBC could have imagined – having grasped precisely this aspect of radio as early as his monograph on *Proust*:

> [Proust] describes the radiographical quality of his observation. Thus he is less interested in what is said than in the way in which it is said. Similarly his faculties are more violently activated by intermediate than by terminal – capital – stimuli. (Beckett 1965: 82–3)

As the medium which allowed for sounded verbalisation without visual, external referentiality, Beckett understood radio to be a medium ideally suited for dramatising disembodied voices in the head, interior monologues and 'de l'autologie créatrice' (the

creative *autology* – self-inspection) (Beckett 1984: 56) that had attracted him to Arnold Geulincx. In the early 1950s, it seemed to him that the attempt to do this in fiction had reached an impasse after *The Unnamable* and *Texts for Nothing* and 'the possibilities for eavesdropping on the human consciousness that his introduction to radio opened up' provided, contrary to Pountney (1988: 6), a dramatic alternative to interior monologue (used in the radio plays only in *Embers* and *Cascando*).

It is from this context that Beckett's radio plays emerge – each of them exploiting and expanding the genre-specific particulars of the radio medium to address the strategies, issues, and themes for articulating the struggle with the human condition that informs so much of his other work. In the beginning he was hesitant about whether or not he could do so, responding on 4 July 1956 to Celia Reeves, the BBC's representative in Paris:

> I should like very much to do a radio play for the Third Programme, but I am very doubtful of my ability to work in this medium. However, since our conversation, I have, to my surprise, had an idea which may or may not lead to something. (Beckett 2011: 632)

What it led to, in addition to much-needed income, was *All That Fall* (broadcast 13 January 1957), and a long and mutually beneficial series of collaborations between Samuel Beckett and the BBC. Each of the radio plays represents Beckett's continuing struggle to improve his 'ability to work in this medium' by creating radio plays that met the central theoretical genre-specific requirements of the BBC editors and producers that were encouraging him.

All That Fall

Beckett's first radio play is also the most accessible one. At one level he is responding to the BBC's success with Dylan Thomas' *Under Milkwood* by sending up its romanticised portrait of a Welsh village with a leaner, sparer, view of an Irish one, 'a gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging feet and puffing and panting' (Beckett 2011: 631). Were that all it did, the play would long since have been forgotten, but it also struggles movingly with Beckett's perennial themes of consciousness, embodiment and existence; the eliptical relationship between perception and reality; and the fragility and vulnerability of the human condition, as reflected in the grimly ironic title copied from Psalms 145: 14 into a notebook used in preparation for writing the play (UofR MS 1227/7/1): 'The Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.' But not, apparently, the little child under the wheels of the train, or Mrs Tully. The preacher's (Hardy's) sparrows, maybe, but not the hen under Mr Slocum's car.

Like *Under Milkwood* it is a 'play for voices, not bodies' and admits to staged readings but not theatrical stagings, in part because, as Julie Campbell points out, radio has no difficulty preserving the unities of space and time while tracking Maddy's continuous walk to and from the railroad station, but in the theatre 'movement is generally restricted to the stage space in front of the audience' (2009: 147). Staging is also problematic because in *All That Fall* Beckett depends upon the lack of visual referentiality to recreate in media-specific dramatic form his long-standing absorption in Geulincxian/Cartesian interioriorities – an absorption that had served to drive the burst of creative energy that had resulted in the three novels, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, and that now needed somewhere else to go. 'The whole thing is meant to come out of the dark', as

Beckett wrote to Barney Rosset (27 August 1957: Zilliacus 1976: frontispiece) because it takes place entirely inside the mind of Maddy Rooney, and the audience experiences everything that she experiences in the way she experiences it in the present, not retrospectively, as in *Embers* or often in Beckett's fiction and stage plays (Frost 1994: 200–6; Campbell 2009: 147).[3] It is a perspective that (as Robert Pinget's film adaptation of *Tout ceux qui tombent* makes clear) becomes impossible if the audience has an 'objective' visual referent with which to contrast the (from a normative point of view) skewed way in which she perceives things, for the play would then turn the audience into a witness that makes an external assessment of the difference between her perception and normative reality rather than a participant in the internal experience of Maddy. 'She comes into existence for the audience as an assemblage of the sounds she hears: rural sounds, labored footsteps, and the distant strains of "Death and the Maiden"' (Frost 1991: 367) – the thematic music with Schubert's setting of Matthias Claudius' poem (in which easeful death suggests that it should be welcomed, and which Beckett could recite, feelingfully, from memory) that drifts from the 'poor woman. All alone in that ruinous old house' (Beckett 2009b: 3) at the beginning and end of the drama (with obvious reference to Maddy herself).

She is not well: '200 pounds of unhealthy fat', traversing the way to and from the Boghill railroad station to meet her blind husband, Dan, on his return from the office, as a surprise to him on his birthday. She is in 'a state of abortive explosiveness', as Beckett once described her (Frost 1994: 196), and disoriented – variously – by the rural soundscape, the exhilarating and terrifying 'roaring machine(s)' and the 'horrid nasty people' she encounters en route and back; and, further, by the eruption of her own, often painful, thoughts (of her frustrated sexuality and of her daughter, Minnie, who died young).

Creating the mental soundscape for such a volatile character required the, then, new and experimental technologies of audio production and the innovative use of audiotape as an instrument of composition rather than merely as a way of storing performances for rebroadcast:

> Beckett's script demanded a degree of stylized realism hitherto unheard of in radio drama, and new methods had to be found to extract the sounds needed (both animal and mechanical – footsteps, cars, bicycle wheels, the train, the cart) from the simple naturalism of the hundreds of records in the BBC's effects library. [Desmond] Briscoe [the Sound Effects Designer] (and his Gramophone operator, Norman Baines) had to invent ways and means to remove these sounds from the purely realistic sphere. They did so by treating them electronically: slowing down, speeding up, adding echo, fragmenting them by cutting them into segments, and putting them together in new ways. (Esslin 1982: 129)

Regrettably in the BBC production, an insistence upon taking radio drama's association with music too literally prompted the director, Donald McWhinne, to find a four-beat-in-a-measure throughout the drama. He decided to have actors generate the animal sounds in order to achieve this, so as to be able to conduct them, and to have the footsteps specified throughout for Maddy and Dan beaten out on drums:

> The author specifies four animals; this corresponds exactly to the four-in-a-bar meter of Mrs. Rooney's walk to the station and back, which is the percussive accompaniment to the play and which, in its later stages, becomes charged with emotional

> significance in itself. But in this case it is impossible to use real animal sounds, since the actual sound of a cow mooing, a cock crowing, a sheep bleating, a dog barking, are complex structures, varying in duration and melodic shape; to put these four sounds in succession would be to create a whole which is only too obviously composed of disparate elements. The way to deal with the problem seemed to be by complete stylization of each sound, that is to say, by having human beings to impersonate the exact sound required. This enabled us to construct an exact rhythmic pattern in which no element was out of place. The same principle was observed in the ensemble of animals; each observed strictly the tempo already set, a tempo which gradually slowed down and subsided into inarticulate, choked-off silence. We hoped to achieve the comic overtones, not by any attempt at caricature or grotesqueness in the impersonation, but by the strict stylization of the quartet.

Beckett remained unpersuaded, saying of the humans doing animal sounds, 'I may be quite wrong, but it seems to me a gratuitous complication. Perhaps your idea is to give them the unreal quality of the other sounds. But this, we agreed, should develop from a realistic nucleu', and subsequently, when discussing the *bruitage* for the American production of *All That Fall* with me said simply, as he had written to McWhinnie, 'I didn't think the animals were right' (Beckett 2011: 688–9). Neither did I (Frost 1994: 192–4). The animals are cacophonous at the beginning of the day, and again at a moment of Maddy's anxiety because that is the way they would be experienced by someone in the state that Maddy is in. There is no predictable rhythm or tempo, and the discord of the natural world is consonant with the escalating cacophony of the mechanical one: dung cart with balky hinny, bicycle with flat rear tyre, Connelly's van, Slocum's gear-stravaging and hen killing limousine, all culminating in the murderous train.

Freed from theoretical restraints, the play's *bruitage* is full of gags and double entendres. A raucous splatter of animal sounds at the beginning of a programme is a standard April fool radio canard designed either to capture an audience with the sheer madness of it or to embarrass an announcer (monkeys, hyenas or cats in heat are favourites). The neigh of Christie's dray-animal prompts the audience to assume a horse, but the animal is a not a horse but a hinny and, as Maddy tells us, 'hinnies whinny' (Beckett 2009b: 4) – though not in the BBC production. A hinny is sterile, as a horse or a 'true donkey' (which brays) is not. Mr Slocum (Maddy's 'old admirer'), 'stiff' though he may be, helps Maddy into the automobile. When seen, that's all that happens; in public, on the radio! – it is steamy stuff.

Embers

> Your father's shade is not with you any more. It fell out long ago. You do not hear your footfalls any more. (Beckett, 'Heard in the Dark I [1979], 1995: 248)

Naturally the BBC was eager to follow the success of *All That Fall* with another Beckett radio play, but it took him three years to provide one. As he told Barbara Bray, despite whatever popular success it might have had, he wasn't satisfied that his first play for a medium unfamiliar to him had been sufficiently radiophonic, and he wanted to make the sequel more so. The result, after some deliberation entitled *Embers*,[4] was – as he wrote to his American publisher, Barney Rosset – an 'attempt to write *for* the radio medium, rather than simply exploit the medium's technical possibilities' (23 November 1958; Pilling 2006: 142)

Embers exemplifies another instance of Beckett incorporating philosophy into his work as a structural principle, without regard to 'truth value' – as he said of a similar instance in the scenario for *Film* which invokes a principle from George Berkeley. The dramatic structure of the radio play invokes the 'occasionalist' philosophy of the seventeenth-century Cartesian, Arnold Geulincx, whose Latin works Beckett read with some care in 1935–6 and subsequently described as one of the keys to his work. Geulincx follows Descartes in using self-examination, for which he coined the term *autology* to arrive at the certainty of his own mental existence, and the modal separation of mind and matter through self-examination. But Descartes made an exception for humans, considering mind and body connected through the conarium or pineal gland. Geulincx took the more radical, more consistent, if counter-intuitive position that self-examination guaranteed the existence of the consciousness performing it, but not of the body, and, consequently humans existed wholly and soley of consciousness and will: the mind was completely separate from the body in which it was embedded. Mind could will motion in 'its' body but, because 'Quod nescis quomodo fiat id non facis' ['You can't do anything you don't know how to do'] cannot actually cause it to happen. But since for the most part the body moves in accordance with our will, there must be a transcendent force beyond human comprehension powerful enough to occasion it (hence, 'occasionalism'), which Geulincx calls, variously, *causa ineffabalis* (the ineffable cause), or, simply, '*Deus*' – God. (Frost 2012: 291–306).

Radio provides the ideal theatre for incorporating into a drama Geulincx's concept of conscious existence constituted as a disembodied mind, willing the movement of its body, but not controlling it. At the beginning of *Embers*, and throughout it, Henry, in whose mind the play occurs, has difficulty in getting his feet to accede to his will to walk down to the water's edge. Neither can he, forgive the pun, drown out the sound of the sea, whether or not it is actually within audible distance. Henry, like Dan in *All That Fall*, or the disintegration of voices in *Cascando*, exemplifies Anna McMullan's observation that Beckett's work 'foreground[s] the experience of subjects who fail or refuse to maintain the fiction of an autonomous, integral subject or body' (2010: 9)

In *All That Fall* the general sense is that anyone present can hear (most of) the sounds that Maddy does, though not necessarily in the way that she does. But many of the sounds Henry hears (horse's hooves, Addie's loud wail) are not only in his head, but are not heard by Ada, and would not be heard by anyone present. The incessant sound of the waves, of his footsteps on the shingle or of the stones striking one another, however, might well be heard by an independent observer if there were one, though perhaps not in the obsessive way Henry does. As with Maddy in *All That Fall*, the sounds are heard by the radio audience just as Henry hears them, for we hear from within that Golgotha that is the skull of Henry.

Having used the invisibility intrinsic to the radio medium to exploit interiorities in *All That Fall*, Beckett now used it to exploit the ambiguities of exteriorities. Since Ada makes 'no sound as she sits' (Beckett 2009b: 39), unlike Henry who does, is she physically present, or in his head: a ghost conjured, a memory? For Henry, at first she isn't there, then appears, converses and then again isn't there, all without indication of arrival or departure. Would an observer have seen here there? When queried by Billie Whitelaw on the question, when preparing the role, Beckett deliberately avoided compromising the enigmatic character of the play but repeated to her what he had said about her role as May in the stage play, *Footfalls*: 'Lets just say that you're not quite all there' (Frost 1991:

376). Subsequent to the broadcast of the play he had similarly disclosed to Ludovic Janvier that '*Embers* depends upon an ambiguity: Does the protagonist have a hallucination or is he in the presence of reality?' (Janvier 1966: 195 n. 1, my translation). It is deliberately unclear (perhaps even to Henry) whether during the action of the play Henry is ever in the actual physical presence of anyone other than himself – Ada being the enigmatic test case.

Manuscript drafts show Beckett having trouble with which of Henry's remembered scenes are recounted by him in his monologue, and which come breaking through as flashbacks. In UofR MS 1658, Beckett thought of the scenes with both father and Ada as 'dialogues' needing different 'Voice levels', distinct from those for 'Story monologues' and 'Non-story monologues'. Subsequently he modifies this to 'All his voice. Wail Addie's voice' (Pountney 1988: 108). In the final script, Henry carries on a dialogue with his father, whom he says hears him but doesn't answer, and Ada, who does. The father's remembered challenge, 'Are you coming for a dip?' pencilled in the margin as in the father's voice, becomes, like the scraps of dialogue between Bolton and Holloway, Henry's impersonation of it in the final draft. Henry begins by impersonating Addie's 'No papa' refusal to run along and look at the lambs, but imagining the torture of her proper upbringing, dissolves impersonation into her loud wail and the re-enacted riding master and music master scenes.

The sucking sound of the sea that Henry is trying to obliterate is a painful analogue to a Geulincxian self-examination of his life and memories – 'a little session of autology amid greedy sucking sounds' as Beckett once described it to Georges Duthuit (Beckett 2011: 135, 139). For him the only escape is annihilation: as in the apocalyptic horses' hooves or smashing rocks that he conjures or, as Ada wickedly suggests, following his father beneath the waves, 'where all is as quiet as the grave' (Beckett 2009b: 44). The attempt to obliterate it by telling stories creates another analogue: the Bolton/Holloway story in which Bolton pleads with his physician to give him not another painkiller but the lethal injection that will eradicate the pain not temporarily but permanently.

Rough for Radio II

With its ominous remote offstage evaluators returning daily written, negative, assessments of the results of the testimony elicited by the Animator from Fox, under torture, as transcribed each day by the Stenographer, the play more resembles *What/Where* or the opening pages of *Molloy* than it does the other radio dramas. In the play an Animator, something of a poseur and literary pedant, is under interminable bureaucratic written instruction from some unseen commission of 'we the undersigned', to elicit testimony from Fox who is bound and gagged to prevent it from occurring when not being recorded so that it be not lost. The Animator has at his disposal his Dick, a whip (bull's pizzle) wielding mute, and a 'ravishing' Stenographer charged with recording whatever Fox says, since the least word may be 'it'. In this parody of the Preacher's search for acceptable words (Ecclesiastes 12: 10), we have something that more resembles S&M than literary creation, for it is perhaps the Animator's interfering that keeps Fox from being as voluble as he might otherwise be. He halts the monologue that Fox is all too willing to provide by threatening to Dick him with a lash from the bull's pizzle in order to silence him long enough to flirt with the Stenographer with a display of erudition:

A: . . . On! [*Silence*] Dick!
F: Ah, yes, that for sure, live I did, no denying, all stones all sides –
A: One moment.
F: – walls no further –
A: [*Ruler.*] Silence! Dick! [*Silence. Musing.*]

(Beckett 2009b: 62)

As with the scene in *All That Fall* in which Mr Slocum boosts Maddy into his limousine from the rear, there is a lewd subtext in which the Animator is more interested in seducing the Stenographer than in extracting monologues from Fox (Vox), while she in turn keeps her salivating boss at bay while flirting with the victim.

At a moment in which Fox's testimony concerns one (Tennysonisan?) Maud who appears to have (come into the garden?) and been 'fecundated', the Animator, in desparation, relents (again?) and sets the Stenographer to kiss Fox 'on his stinker of a mouth' (Beckett 2009b: 67), thus experiencing vicariously what he cannot possess directly (and for the third time – Beckett creates the *bruitage* on radio of a sexual climax). The interrogation is now in disarray, and the Animator takes out his (sexual) frustration on the Stenographer by forcing her to falsify the recorded testimony by amending Fox's words: 'Have yourself opened, Maud would say, *between two kisses*, opened up . . .' (Beckett 2009b: 68–9).

Text/Music Tandems[5]

Beckett's final radio plays result from near simultaneous invitations from two composers to collaborate on a radio play incorporating music: *Words and Music* from John Beckett, his cousin and an important presence in the BBC's music department; and *Cascando* from Marcel Mihalovici, the composer-friend with whom he'd had a very successful collaboration in making an opera from *Krapp's Last Tape*.[6] Each play provided an opportunity to draw on Schopenhauer's theory concerning musical compositions that include words and inspired Beckett to invert the conventional primacy of words over music in radio drama, creating radio-specific dramas by combining the two art forms most suited for it.

Schopenhauer argues that when words are incorporated into music, 'they must of course occupy only an entirely subordinate position, and adapt themselves completely to it'. It is 'an accidental circumstance' that the '*vox humana*, which is, in essence, just another musical instrument for making sounds, simultaneously also serves in a different way as the organ of speech for the communication of concepts, and that, of course, music can make use of this circumstance in order to enter into a relationship with poetry' (1969: II.448).

In an unfinished draft published as *Rough for Radio I* (*esquisse radiophonique*), Beckett experimented with the idea that if words and voice could get 'together' not merely in the sense of performing in the same place at the same time, but in some equalised, mutually supportive, sense then they might achieve a transcendent goal and be free of their separate, individual struggles to achieve one. The frustrated attempt to do so becomes the driving force and theme of *Cascando*, while *Words and Music* dramatises the process of a climactic collaboration between the two.

In *Cascando*, 'a radio piece for music and voice' written in 1962 in collaboration with Marcel Mihalovici, the apparatus and switching mechanism of *esquisse radiophonique* has

been replaced by an 'Opener' who is able to drop in and out of what seems to be separate and continuous performances by Voice and Music similar to those encountered in the earlier draft. The absence of technical apparatus suggests that they originate not from the ether, but in the Opener's head – a suggestion which he evades, neither specifically confirming nor denying it. Though not actually specified in the text, the voice is solo and the music an ensemble but with no indication of its character. The absence of such orientation in the script itself probably occurs because the commission to write the play came via a composer living near at hand in Paris and the two – author and composer – were able to meet frequently to discuss the particulars as the work progressed.

At the beginning of the play, when both are summoned to perform at the same time, voice and music do so simultaneously but separately. As the play progresses, simultaneity turns into an actual collaboration between the two realms. Unlike his predecessor in *Rough for Radio I*, however, Opener encourages Voice and Music to reach the kind of collaboration that occurs in *Words and Music* and that would allow them to cease, having achieved the emotional satisfaction imagined by Schopenhauer. Unlike the 'He' of *Rough I*, for 'Opener' it is a consummation devoutly to be wished. At the climax he is satisfied that it is 'as though they had linked their arms' (Beckett 2009b: 92) – a creative process which he repeatedly describes, echoing the God of Genesis, as 'Good', while Words sees the prospect of a story that he can actually, with music's help, successfully complete. The play ends not *with*, but *at* the verge of a climax, leaving it another of Samuel Beckett's teasers as to whether Words or Opener or Music, singly or in any combination, has one.[7]

The ambiguity is further complicated because four narratives are interwoven in the play: the melodic and thematic development of the music, and the three verbal narratives: Opener's insistences; Voice's objective; and the Woburn story Voice tells to achieve it.[8] The Opener is able to tune in and out of Voice and Music, both separately and together, but his ability to do so is in doubt, causing him to insist upon it against the possibility that we (who are instructed to 'listen') might believe an unspecified 'they' who doubt this. Since Voice and Music seem to continue during the time when they are not invoked by the Opener, he tunes Voice and Music in and out, not on and off. He can overhear but not author and the auditioning happens at his convenience, not that of either Voice or Music. He is oddly indifferent to their desperate efforts to get anywhere – at least until the moment when they begin to work together.

Meanwhile Voice is carrying on two narratives simultaneously: First there is the anxiety-ridden narrative of his hope that this time he's revived an old story (an echo of Henry in *Embers*) that is 'the right one' – one that he can go on telling until he finishes it, and by doing so free himself from having to go on with telling tales. He might then escape (as Malone and the Unnamable wish to do) from what seems to be a lifetime of failed attempts to tell and finish a story, 'then rest . . . sleep' (Beckett 2009a: 85). If the intervention of music represents Schopenhauer's direct expression of the will itself, it becomes the magic carpet or rainbow bridge that might take him to the escape from frustration that he seeks. Voice's second narrative is the story itself: Woburn/Maunu – having been discarded and now rediscovered by Voice after an interval of several years – waiting for night before venturing forth, either right to the sea or left to the mountains. Revisited the next time Voice is opened, Woburn seems to have traversed the mountains and is now headed for the sea. It is, perhaps, a defining moment. Invoked separately, both Voice and Music are 'weakening' and, separately, neither can be brought to 'full strength' until both are opened together.

When joined by music, Voice is desperately trying to narrate Woburn out of the mud and find the strength to launch Woburn out to sea – obtaining Opener's approval in the process. It is a 'reawakening' in the month of May, which is at once a promise of fruition and a portion of a repetitive cycle, making Opener 'afraid to open' even though he 'must open' because Voice might fail to complete the story, and it would (again?) turn out not to have been 'the right one' after all. Evidently, then, Opener has a stake in the outcome of a story over which he has no control. As the drama goes to silence, Woburn is in the thwarts, having passed the Island, sailing out into the boundless sea, with both Voice and Opener (and, presumably, Music) encouraging him on.

Words and Music

Words and Music and *Cascando* require that what one character, Bob (Music in *Cascando*), says – nearly half the dialogue – is written by a composer. But unlike *Cascando*, *Words and Music* dramatises the process of achieving a collaboration, performing how Words and Music get beyond Croak's compulsion and their mutual contempt for each other for a momentary truce, and, despite themselves, cooperate in creating a song. Without Bob's assistance, Joe can't get beyond rote regurgitations of scholastic jargon. Bob is compelled to follow Joe's lead by the club-wielding Croak[9] whose aesthetic and emotional requirements are woodenly pedestrian. Under this duress Bob can produce at first only unfeeling 'fortissimo, all expression gone' and then, worse, sentimental schlock ('love and soul music') (Beckett 2009b: 74–5), evoking Schopenhauer: 'if music tries to stick too closely to the words, and to mould itself according to the events, it is endeavoring to speak a language not its own' (1969: I.262). But Bob and Joe manage, hesitantly at first, to respond to each other. Joe attempts to find words for Bob's 'la', and Bob adjusts his offering of a musical phrase into a 'suggestion for following' for Joe's line, 'Age is when to a man . . .' (2009b: 76). Despite themselves they respond more and more intensely to each other, sometimes accepting, sometimes rejecting each other's initiatives, until they achieve a setting of one of the most remarkable poems Samuel Beckett ever wrote, satisfying Croak with an invocation of 'Lily!' (ibid.: 79), presumably 'the face. On the stairs' (ibid.: 74) that delayed him – an invocation that causes him to do something (pause for imagining) that shocks the pedantic Joe (but not the more emotional Bob) and that anticipates a similar moment in '. . . but the clouds . . .' Beckett's play, perhaps, confirms Schopenhauer's observation that:

> a song with intelligible words gives such profound joy, is due to the fact that our most direct and most indirect methods of knowledge are here stimulated simultaneously and in union . . . From its own resources, music is certainly able to express every movement of the will, every feeling; but through the addition of the words we receive also their objects, the motives that give rise to that feeling. (1969: II.449)[10]

It proves a momentary integration: Bob returns to his world and Joe is unable to induce him to remain in the collaborative one, since 'The words are and remain for the music a foreign extra of secondary value' (Schopenhauer 1969: II.448). Echoing Schopenhauer, Beckett confided to Katherine Worth that in *Words and Music*, 'Music always wins' (16). But it is also the case that, in order successfully to collaborate and complete the song, *both* Bob and Joe – music and words – transcend hierarchies and 'win' in a way that goes beyond Schopenhauer. It may be that 'Music is the catalytic element in the work of

Proust' (Beckett 1965: 92), but *both* words and music in *Words and Music* are 'catalytic' in the presence of each other. They achieve something that neither could have achieved on their own. Beckett once described *Words and Music* (to Theodor Adorno) as a parody of the ancient conundrum of whether one gets closer to ultimate truth through words or through music, with music prevailing at the end (Zilliacus 1976: 114).

As I've noted elsewhere, staging the play is reductive: 'Bob is not merely the conductor, ensemble, and score that one experiences at a concert; he is also the process of composing the music that takes place in the mind of the composer, which can be conveyed but not portrayed.' Similarly Joe includes not only the utterance of words, but also the mental act of shaping them (Beckett 2009b: xi; Frost 1991: 371–4). *Words and Music* turns out to be a self-reflexive dramatisation and examination of the Schopenhauer-inflected theories of radiophonic drama performed on the media under examination. If the ultimate radio drama is one that is so specifically created for radio that it cannot be (re)produced in any other medium without leaving something of its essence behind, then arguably *Words and Music* may be the most radiophonic 'piece for radio' (Beckett 2009b: 71) ever written – so much so, that not only can it not be staged or screened, it can't even be satisfactorily written down but only fully experienced in a site-specific performance on the medium for which it was intended.

That in the present, altered, historical circumstances broadcasts of Beckett's remarkable radio plays are rare, and opportunities for updated, contemporary, radio productions of them virtually non-existent, is a situation that is not only regrettable, it is also problematic. As Linda Ben Zvi has observed (1985: 22), without hearing them it is impossible to appreciate or study them properly, and the extent of their presence in the Beckett canon remains inadequately understood. Raising the vexed question of adapting the radio plays for theatrical or concert production, staged readings and the like seems both necessary and timely. In my view, it might be most fruitfully raised with an awareness of their radiophonic specificity, respect for Beckett's intentions and a critical understanding of their place in the Beckett canon.

Notes

1. See also Beckett's letter to Barney Rosset (27August 1957), published as the frontispiece to Clas Zilliacus' pioneering study, *Beckett and Broadcasting* (1976).
2. Indirectly via, among others (Nietzsche, Proust), the writings on radio and film of Rudolf Arnheim, whose *Film* [*Film als Kunst*] Beckett read in 1936 (Knowlson 1996: 212). See Gaby Hartel (2010).
3. However, from the point of view of Maddy's mind does not mean, as Jonathan Kalb suggests, 'that the entire action may take place in Maddy's mind' (Kalb 1994: 127); or 'it might be a bad dream' (Esslin 1982: 131).
4. To Barbara Bray, who directed the play for the BBC:

> The following titles have occurred to me:
> a. 'The Water's Edge.'
> b. 'Why Life, Henry?'
> c. 'Not a Soul.'
> d. 'All Day All Night.'
> Let me know what you think.
>
> (Bray, 23 January 1959, TCD MS 10948)

The BBC logged it in as 'Ebb', subsequently altered to Embers by Beckett himself, as explained to Barbara Bray on 11 March 1959:

> I decided on 'Embers' because for one thing it receives light in the course of the piece & for another because embers are a better ebb than the seas because followed by no flow . . . Again the Last Ebb – the sea & shore are so unreal, compared to Bolton's room & the dying fire, etc. that I feel the reference should be to the latter. (TCD MS 10948)

5. Beckett described *Words and Music* to Grove Press as a 'text/music tandem' (Zilliacus 1976: 114).
6. 'Beckett abandoned *Esquisse Radiophonic* on 30 November 1961 and began *Cascando* the following day' (Pountney 1988: 120). In 1984 Beckett described *Rough for Radio I* (*esquisse radiophonique*) to me as an 'unfinished and now unfinishable' early attempt at what became *Cascando*, reconfirming what he had written to then Head of BBC Radio Drama, Martin Esslin, rejecting the idea that it might be produced as part of the BBC's celebration of his 70th birthday (letter of 19 January 1976, BBC Written Archives Center). As I argue below, not surprisingly, some of it is also further developed in *Words and Music*. The excellent 1991 premiere production by Richard Rijnvos amounts to a posthumous collaboration with Samuel Beckett. In addition to composing the music, he had to supply the words for 'He' and used excerpts from recordings of John Cage lectures for the purpose. Exploring the interesting complexities of the production would exceed the word limit imposed on this essay.
7. That Voice's objective is apotheosis and completion is suggested by the names of the character in his quest story. In the French original the character in the story Voice tells is named Maunu, which is the name of a small town on a mountainside in New Zealand, and implies a Dante-esque quest to scale a distant, inaccessible, mountain. In English, Woburn, the square associated with Tavistock house and psychotherapy – suggests internal explorations.
8. Rosemary Pountney's study of the manuscripts of the *Cascando* drafts, and Beckett's accompanying letter of transmittal, at Harvard indicate that Beckett worked out each of the three verbal narratives separately and then interwove them (1988: 120–3).
9. One of Arnold Geulincx's colourful illustrations of human arrogance in ignoring mortal impotence in the material world and total dependence on God to negotiate it may well resolve what Ruby Cohn called the 'problematic' of Croak's club (2001: 268). By way of illustrating human impotence in the material world, Geulincx recounts the story of Hercules amusing himself by quietly helping a presumptuous dwarf to heft his club, with the result that the dwarf believes he is just as powerfully able to wield the club as Hercules. In *Words and Music*, Croak – aged impotence – mistakenly believes it is the threat of the club that compels Bob and Joe to 'be friends' and to work together despite their contempt for each other, but in fact despite themselves, it is the increasingly emotionally powerful result of their collaboration that drives them on to create and set one of Samuel Beckett's most moving poems. The threat of a cudgelling from Croak is virtually irrelevant: it is the collaboration of words and music that perhaps gives him an orgasm, and the irrelevance of his phallic signifier is mocked on the medium that is heard but not seen.
10. See also Pilling (1998: 175).

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All That Fall as a Case Study in the Possibilities and Problematics of Re-routing Samuel Beckett's Radio Plays for Performance in Other Media

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'Permission granted, but not to do anything you want.' (John Cage)

Abstract

The legacy of Samuel Beckett's inconsistently adamant refusal to allow production of his radio plays other than on the medium for which they were written continues to haunt the interest in re-routing them to other performance venues. Placing Beckett's insistence on the genre specificity of his radio plays in historical and theoretical perspective won't eliminate the intractable problems of extracting them from their broadcast origins, but might contribute to a more general understanding of the ethics, responsibilities, technical issues, and other practicalities of cross-genre productions that extend beyond either radio or Beckett. In this presentation I focus on *All That Fall*, his first, and most accessible radio play, because it has an illuminating history of controversy over attempts to stage it and of stagings, including one that I've directed.

<•>

There is no acceptable way of staging the radio plays in my opinion.
Samuel Beckett to his American director, Alan Schneider (14 September 1974).

1) Beckett's resistance to "*adaphatrôce*" in historical context.[i]

> *All That Fall* is a specifically radio play, or rather radio text, for voices, not bodies. I have already refused to have it "staged" and I cannot think of it in such terms. A perfectly straight reading before an audience seems to me just barely legitimate, though even on this score I have my doubts. But I am absolutely opposed to any form of adaptation with a view to its conversion into "theatre". It is no more theatre than *End-Game* is radio and to "act" it is to kill it. Even the reduced visual dimension it will receive from the simplest and most static of readings -- and I am quite sure that Berghof has no intention of leaving it at that -- will be destructive of whatever quality it may have and which depends on the whole thing's *coming out of the dark*. I really think we had better call it off, if it is not too late. I would have said all this before if I had known you had such a performance in mind and I am distressed at having to burst in on you with my wail at this late hour. But frankly, the thought of *All That Fall* on a stage, however discreetly, is intolerable to me. If another radio performance could be given in the States, it goes without saying that I'd be very pleased.[ii]

It may help to begin by placing this important and often quoted letter objecting to a staging of *All That Fall* into the cultural and biographical context in which it was written.

Radio's extraordinary potential as a medium for transmitting drama was recognized from its earliest beginnings. In the United Kingdom, this potential was initially understood to mean, as the late Richard Imison[iii] liked to put it, extending the proscenium arch of the West End to the living rooms of the nation and the world. In doing so it provided remarkable opportunities for established and beginning British playwrights and performers, while seeking out significant authors from throughout the world, translating them, and broadcasting their work. All of which intersected and altered the history of drama in ways that benefitted not only artists but also audiences on a scale hitherto inconceivable. In doing so, radio, along with early silent film, extracted drama from the exclusive domain of the theatre: plays now occurred on movie screens and, via radio, in living rooms (and later, in cars, on the beach, iPods, Blackberries, etc.). But, as David Wade, an early radio author-critic argued, 'in acting...as a theatre substitute, it seems to me, that the BBC is engaged not so much in radio drama as in 'drama by means of radio'(219). Enthusiastic radio producers like Donald McWhinnie, who directed many of Beckett's radio and television plays, sought to demonstrate that radio was not merely a means for *transmitting* drama, but also an opportunity to create a unique form of it that would be radio specific -- a genre that, like silent film, could stand on equal footing with its theatrical predecessor.

In the 1950's, with the advent of television as the primary form of home entertainment, and its steady drain of audiences, talent, and resources, and -- perhaps above all -- of prestige, radio drama began to be defended as the verbal equivalent to music. Donald McWhinnie, for example, decided that *All That Fall* 'demands a strict rhythmic composition...[that] corresponds exactly to the four-in-a-bar metre of Mrs. Rooney's walk to the station and back' and used actors to imitate the animal sounds so as better to achieve it.' (McWhinnie 133; Discussed in Zilliacus 69, Frost 1994, 192-195). That radio consisted of sound alone was not considered a deficiency but an advantage that television lacked. It justified the continuing survival and developing aesthetic of radiophonic drama as a unique artform that 'created the intimate emotional immediacy of a dramatic experience taking place in the privacy of the listener's own head without the reductive externalizing distraction of visuals' (Frost 2013). Drama written to exploit the particular character of the radio medium became the *sine qua non* of broadcasting, and writers were sought, encouraged, and economically incentivised, to not merely to supply stage plays in search of a theatre, but to devise radio specific works.

When, after more than a year's deliberation, BBC radio advised Beckett that it was rejecting *Waiting for Godot* on grounds that it wasn't sufficiently radiophonic, and invited him to write something specifically for the radio, it felt confident that, as John Morris, Controller of the BBC third programme wrote to the Head Radio Drama, 'I got the impression that he has a very sound idea of the problems of writing for radio and that we can expect something pretty good.' (18 July 1956, Knowlson 385). Beckett, however, was less confident:

> ...am told that [Val] Gielgud [Head of BBC Radio] wants a play for the 3rd Programme. Never thought about Radio play technique but in the dead of t'other night got a nice gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging of feet and puffing and panting which may or may not lead to something." (Beckett to Nancy Cunard, *Letters II* 631; July 4, 1956; HRHRC 93.

It led to something pretty good. With *All That Fall,* Beckett, along with Louis MacNeice and Dylan Thomas, became identified as one of the principal innovators of the form[iv]:

> We are not so ready to believe the radio play to be different from the stage play, yet the blind medium of radio in its unique power upon the ear of stimulating the imagination makes for a kind of drama which can embrace subjects film and theatre may never approach. Its subtle and mercurial manipulation of sounds and words, allied to its quality of immediacy and intimacy with the listener, give it possibilities of develpment that await only the right dramatist. We think now of the poetic plays of Mr. Louis MacNeice, of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milkwood,* and of Mr. Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* as tentative but real steps towards the discovery of radio drama's proper form. (Styan, *Elements of Drama* 287).

It is in this context that Clas Zilliacus describes Beckett's August 27, 1957 letter to Barney Rosset as "the most substantial document available on Beckett's views on converting for one medium works conceived for another" (169). But his perceptive examination of "The Plays Out of Their Element", which concludes that "these works by Beckett have little or nothing to gain and much to lose if transposed for other media" (169) now warrants re-examination. His discussion assumes that broadcast priorities and listening habits persist more or less unchanged and does not consider that the radio medium is itself subject to shifting conventions. Yet new communications technologies have altered how radio is produced, programmed, transmitted, and listened to. The genre specificity of Beckett's radio plays needs to account not only for their radiophonic intentionality, but also for radio's radically altered nature and its diminished use as a medium for drama. Periodic repeat broadcast of the original (British, French, German, or American) productions have been rare, and new radio productions of them virtually non-existent. The difficulties in hearing the historic productions turns them into artefacts. The absence of new radio productions sentences Beckett's radio plays to performative oblivion. They are specific not only to a medium but also to a lost place and time, neither of which, as Beckett reminds us that Proust reminds us, can be recovered except in memory.

Further, genres such as radio drama are not rigid categories, and, like the plays included in them, change over time, and also change their affiliations to other genres. Categories of genre are descriptive, not prescriptive. Pushing their boundaries -- as Beckett had done by combining tragedy and comedy into tragicomedy in *Waiting for Godot* -- has been, throughout the history of literature and drama a source of innovation and re-invention. 'Thus in the course of history works gradually change their generic affiliations in such a way as to preserve their interest for each new generation. Yet the genre's tradition embodies a compensating continuity that may keep readers in touch with older meanings and values.' (Fowler 216). It is ironic that what makes adaptation of Beckett's radio plays at once so appealing and so difficult is that he so successfully made them radiophonic that something is lost in extracting them from the medium for which they were intended and remain best suited. But something is also lost in *failing* to adapt them. Just as radio changes over time, and genre changes over time, so too do the radio plays and our understanding of them. What might now be done with plays that were written to be genre-specific for radio as it was understood a half-century ago becomes an interesting question. *Not to ask it and not to examine possibilities for* re-routing Beckett's radiophonic drama in the light of contemporary circumstances is to impose a conclusion inherited from the past without bothering with an inquiry into the present.

The radio plays are part of the total body of Beckett's works, and we encounter them in the context of a half-century of the innovations in theatre, drama, and broadcasting of which

Beckett was among the significant architects. We have learned much about how to respond to Beckett's work in the half-century since the original production of *All That Fall*. First responders to it hadn't seen *Happy Days* and couldn't see Maddy and Dan in the context of Winnie and Willie. Few original listeners would have read *Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable*; and none could have read *The Lost Ones* or seen *Footfalls* or *Rockaby*. Nor had they access to the impressive body of Beckett scholarship, biographies, productions, letters, and notebooks that assist interpreters in making sense of his work. (Provide your own aspirin he once suggested).

Enoch Brater observes that 'Critics who have followed the performance history of Beckett's work for the stage and the mechanical media have been from the start heavily influenced by the force of these plays in their original productions', aptly concluding that ,'This is, perhaps, as it should be' (183). But not *all* as it should be. The original productions give, perhaps, our best indicator of how Samuel Beckett thought things should be done at the time they were done -- a valuable resource for enriching and imagining new productions (not for discouraging them). But a consequence of not adopting strategies for adapting Beckett's radio plays to contemporary circumstances is that the original productions become embalmed in an iconic aura that is conferred upon these works of art in the age of mechanical production in a manner unforeseen in Benjamin's famous essay and deprives them of alternative versions with which to compare them. As Druid Theatre artistic director, Garry Hynes, noted in an interview devoted to her productions of Synge, 'No audience is going to thank you by saying: 'That was really rather interesting to see that historical curiosity." They want to be engaged and provoked within the context of their lives at the present moment. *That* is the job.' (Crawley 1; Frost 2007, 9).

Donald McWhinnie's, conception of *All That Fall* is no more 'definitive' for being first than subsequent productions, including mine, can claim to be. There is never going to be a definitive approach to the intractable questions of adaptation. The problem lies in choosing from among what counts as adequate and inadequate forms of it: according to whom, and towards what ends. It is within these complex, inter-related, and sometimes contradictory variables that performative strategies for Samuel Beckett's radio plays need to be imagined. Adapting them for the stage rescues them from oblivion by returning them to the theatrical origins of drama. It is not a displacement but a re-union.

Insistence on faithful adherance to original intentionalities, even on the assumption that they are recoverable, turns the play into an exercise in karaoke. Insistence that original intentionalities are irrelevant, whether or not recoverable, turns the play into something that is no longer Beckett's.[v] These are intractable dialectic pulls. But fidelity to original texts on the one hand while on the other reconceiving them in terms of contemporary contexts are each worthy objectives that are not inevitably incompatible. Since adaptation evolves out of the tension between them, it is a place in which theory can be of some benefit to practice. Successful adaptation of a Beckett radio play might well begin by understanding why it is radiophonic -- not to impede the adaptation but to incorporate that understanding into thinking about how it might best be done. It contributes to what Iain Bailey has described as getting the tone of the production right (206-209). For as Linda Ben Zvi has observed, 'Essential...to any appraisal of Beckett's writing -- fiction, drama, or media plays -- is an awareness of the specific form in which Beckett conceived the work, since for him, more than for most writers, the work is not only predicated on the form, but invariably becomes a critique of its form' (1985, 24). In other words, not only Beckett's use of the form but also his dialogue with it needs to be considered in any transposition of genre. "Beckett's view of *All That Fall* -- a view that is borne out by the work itself -- makes clear that interpretation of it must take into account its condition as a radio text; must see this condition as an essential aspect of its nature and meaning" (Van Laan, 39).

2) What makes *All That Fall* radio specific?

Since the suggestion that he write something specifically for radio 'specified a medium, not a subject, [Beckett] has allowed the novel medium to generate its fit subject, achieving thus...a symbiosis between the theme of the work and the kind of experience the audience is

having' (Kenner 159). Beckett did not begin with a script for *All That Fall* and then try to find a place for it. As noted earlier, he set out to write something suitable for radio and *All That Fall* was the result. It is not surprising, then, that Beckett provides helpful clues for what makes *All That Fall* radio specific. A fascination with the ghostly, ghastly, and the macabre is a staple of radio drama, and the 'gruesome idea full of cartwheels and dragging of feet and puffing and panting' having originated in an attempt to grasp 'radio Play technique suggests that the play exploits radio's awareness that unseen and imagined horrors are far more scary than seen ones. That the play is written "for voices not bodies" suggests that, as a structural principle, it takes advantage of the absolute separation of mind and body Beckett absorbed from the radical Cartesian occasionalism of Arnold Geulincx: immaterial voices generate words and thoughts whose domain is the mind. Objectified bodies would distract from this. Bodies (*res extensa*) can be perceived by minds (*res cogitans*) but cannot enter them. The inference is that listeners experience all the action of the play entirely from inside the volatile, disoriented, mind of its protagonist, Maddy Rooney as she makes the laborious journey to the station, awaits her husband Dan, and returns home with him.

In his influential essay on 'Samuel Beckett and the Art of Broadcasting', Martin Esslin mis-states the consequences that derive from the fact that we experience the play entirely from the point of view of the protagonst:

> from which subjective viewpoint, he is witnessing the action, and indeed inside whose mind he is supposed to be. Thus by the use of stylized and distorted sounds, radio can create a subjective reality halfway between the objective events experienced and their subjective reflection within the mind of the character who experiences them -- halfway between waking consciousness and dreamlike states, halfway between fact and fantasy, even hallucination... It might be a bad dream." (Esslin 131. Quoted in Campbell 155, Maude 48).

While there are notable radio dramas for which this is true, it will not do for *All That Fall*. We are not "supposed to be" in her mind, we *are* in her mind and never anywhere else: the play depends on the Aristotelian unity of space as well as time. Thus being "halfway between the objective events experienced and their subjective reflection" is out of the question. Since there clearly *are* objective events in her consciousness throughout the play, it isn't a bad dream or hallucination -- something created in or by her mind. But events are experienced in the skewed way appropriate to her character and consistent with her state of mind. Influenced by Esslin, Julie Campbell invokes Louise Cleveland in coming to the contrary view:

> [We] do not [always] hear what she hears, any more than we see what she sees. Thus, at the beginning we hear a cart but not the horse [hinny] -- though there is no more conventional sound effect in realistic radio drama than a horse's hooves." [Cleveland 276, Campbell, 156].

In other words, this is not what conventionally passes for a 'realistic' radio drama -- or, more accurately, this is not a play that restricts itself to the formulaic conventions of popular radio drama (though, as discussed below, neither is it immune from exploiting them or sending them up).[vi] Nor is Maddy all alone, hallucinating, or having a bad dream (Kalb 128, Campbell 156). Maddy isn't Henry [*Embers*], where such possibilities are built into the structure of the play; nor yet the Unnamable trying to finish with his stories, nor yet the voice "devising it all for company" (Beckett, *Company*, 2009b, 21). It would be out of character for Maddy to make-up or conjure Mr. Barrell, and there is no reason to believe that Mr. Slocum isn't her former admirer and doesn't 'really' give her a lift in his automobile, etc. That her consciousness extends to external physical events that happen to her, signalled by sound effects conveying them the way she experiences them, not only indicates that she's not making it all up, it also means she has a body, and, like everything else in the play, we experience those events when they intrude on her consciousness and in the way that they do so. Louise Cleveland insightfully sees that *All That Fall* is a:

> record of an excruciatingly physical journey. Maddy's body is not abstracted from the drama by being rendered invisible. Her concrete existence is a continual embarassment -- breathing, shuffling, requiring ministrations of others. The Cartesian division of consciousness from objects is even more striking than in Beckett's stage plays because the auditory medium focuses our attention on the double role of Maddy's words when sounded -- their reference to things and their revelation as gesture or emission of a being (268).

The work of critics like Anna McMullan and Ulrike Maude emphasizing Maddy's experience of embodiment contributes to a welcome corrective to a critical imbalance set in motion by Esslin's often insightful essay. In adding the body to the audio experience of "Hearing Beckett", Maude suggests , 'that the special relevance the acoustic has to issues of embodiment in Beckett's work has been overlooked....Beckett's experiments with sound...ultimately bear witness to the persistence with which Beckett grounds subjectivity firmly in a material context' (48). 'Indeed', Anna McMullan demonstrates in a chapter on 'Radiophonic Embodiments', 'from Maddy's point of view, her body is both a material encumbrance which weights every step and a protean material which shifts its shape to match her affective and psychic state...'(70), the tragi-comic, and often erotic, dramatic consequences of which are fully exploited throughout the play.

All That Fall simply makes more sense when we understand that we experience it (and the world it embodies) from the point of view of her own disoriented consciousness. While the play is not Maddy's hallucination or bad dream, neither does it take place on the road to and from the Boghill railroad station and on its platform, but through the soundscape of Maddy Rooney coming into existence for us through experiencing her journey through that landscape. This is why the rural sounds, disembodied voices, and other sound effects do not occur in the play in the way that a normative person witnessing the scene might experience them but are the way they are because that is the disturbingly skewed way Maddy experiences them. Any externalized objectification of her obliterates that interiority. The point of view (POV) is lost if we encounter her physical presence from the outside, but this doesn't mean she doesn't have one. The audience experiences Maddy in the act of experiencing the world — her consciousness, and therefore her existence — coming into being in the act of perception. Beckett shares what he once said of Proust's narrator:

> [T]he radiographical quality of his observation. The copiable he does not see. He searches for a relation, a common factor, substrata. Thus he is less interested in what is said than in the way in which it is said. ... "[T]he exact quality of the weather, temperature, and visibility, is transmitted to him in terms of sound, in the chimes and the calls of the hawkers" (1987, 83).

And so it is with Maddy and the sounds she hears and the way she hears them. The footsteps, for example, meticulously specified throughout the script, which in the second half of the play are a nonverbal punctuation to the dialogue between Maddy and Dan, and are heard as such, in their exaggerated way, by Maddy. This presents no formidable difficulty on radio because the footsteps aren't generated by the performers' feet but by a sound effects technician with a box of gravel. On stage the technician is a distraction that upstages the play. Choreographing them for the actor's to perform is impossible without excessive rehearsal time. All further complicated by the fact that, as Julie Campbell has noted, radio has no difficulty preserving the unities of space and time while tracking Maddy's continuous walk to and from the railroad station, but in the theatre 'movement is generally restricted to the stage space in front of the audience' (147) and so has trouble following her travels.

It is for these reasons that, "Even the reduced visual dimension it will receive from the simplest and most static of readings...will be destructive of whatever quality it may have and which depends on the whole thing's *coming out of the dark*." The exploitation of point of view from which the action is experienced is fundamental to the genre specificity of all Beckett's radio plays.

Additionally, in *All That Fall*, there are gags that depend upon being heard unseen. While the interior POV translates well into non-broadcast audio formats, such as cd or listening

to the play on earphones on a downloaded MP3 file, the radio gags depend for full effect on the voyeuristic delight of knowing that the play is being broadcast to a general audience. Radio announcers dread the canard in which some wag has replaced a program's intro theme music with something jarring -- a cacaphony of animals sounds, such as the rural sounds that open the play, being one favourite, and a sure way to grab an audience's attention. They can, of course, also be deliberately used that way.

Unseen, the scene in which Maddy's former admirer, Mr. Slocum (pun intended), helps her into his automobile, lampoons radio's prurience and in doing so creates one of the most outrageously funny moments in the play. Performed on stage the visible presence of the *automobile however much deconstructed -- as in the staging of the recent Jermyn theatre* production -- diminishes the scene into seeing that what is going on is that she has a helluva time getting into the car.

3) What made Beckett so inconsistently insistent about staging *All That Fall*?

Often Beckett's reluctance to allow stage productions of his radio plays had less to do with what Ruby Cohn termed jumping genres than it did with his apprehension that adaptation really meant *adaphatrôce*: his bi-lingual pun for adapting them to ends that he found unsuitable (Beckett 1998, 324). *Adaphatrôcities* included such things as using the plays for stylized performances, making them more plausible or 'realistic', eliminating their 'teasers' and ambiguities, or turning them into vehicles for stylized performances from auteur directors or crowd pleasers for start talent.

The Jermyn Theatre production, directed by Trevor Nunn and starring Michael Gambon and Aileen Atkins[vii] recently made *All That Fall* into an interesting and enjoyable evening of theatre while remaining technically loyal to the text by muting the play's stoic pessimism and leaving the stars at liberty to exploit its potential for crowd-pleasing humor, thus, so the press spin gave it out, liberating poor Beckett from the clueless intellectuals. Although staged to suggest the concept of witnessing a broadcast of the play, it added costumes appropriate to the characters. Making the action visible on stage, it was argued, improved the play by resolving the ambiguity surrounding the death of a child at the end, something the radio couldn't do. But resolving the ambiguity is something the play itself deliberately avoids doing, no matter where performed. To resolve it the production moved the play in the direction of panto and got the tone wrong. It diminished the play's dark pessimism and changed its genre not so much from radio to stage as from tragicomedy to whodunnit, thereby gaining laughs at the expense of the pathos embedded in the Beckettian reminder that there is nothing funnier than unhappiness.

It was a similar concern that prompted Beckett to write the oft-cited letter refusing to allow a theatrical performance of *All That Fall*. He is responding to a request from Herbert Berghoff to stage it, whose 1956 production of *Waiting for Godot* Beckett found irritatingly problematic partly because it had been mis-directed as a star turn for the 'top banana', Burt Lahr. Refusing permission was motivated by the fear that *All That Fall* would be similarly falsified. But Beckett relented a few weeks later: 'I cannot hold out against a simple reading of *All That Fall*, so let it be. But no frills, for the love of God.' And Berghoff did indeed mount a no-frills staged reading with actors seated upstage and approaching a pair of downstage lecterns to read their parts (Zilliacus 169-170; Knowlson 421-422). A half-year later Beckett wrote to Barney Rosset that "Mary Manning, old friend, is welcome to do All That Fall" in a staged reading that ran for a fortnight at the Poet's Theatre in Cambridge, Mass., USA, in April 1958 (Zilliacus 169-170). In March 1963, having recently finished two intensely radiophonic pieces, *Words and Music* and *Cascando*, Beckett anticipated the requests and wrote to Grove press: "Confirm no staging of radio plays. O.K. for genuine readings. If you have doubt don't authorize. Leave it to your discretion."

A decade later resisting celebrity appropriations of his plays created an awkward situation. Adamantly refusing "a hot offer for [staging] *All That Fall* at [London's] National [Theatre]" from Sir Laurence Olivier and Joan Plowright, risked alienating a major institution. The couple had flown to Paris to persuade Beckett, when the routine request for permission from Kenneth Tynan (managing scripts at the National) was, to the surprise of one and all,

turned down (Zilliacus 179-180). "Larry kept saying," Beckett wrote to Alan Schneider, "'It'd make a GREAT SHOW'!" However said no again. Impossible in the light. They had worked out some idea with players moving from stage onto screen. They were a bit fed up with me but very nice (6 March 1968, Beckett 1985, 214). It must have grieved him during this time that prudent consistency required him to deny a request from his trusted American director, Alan Schneider, for permission to stage *All That Fall* with his State University of New York drama students (Beckett 1985, 319, 320, 321).

Having been 'damned to fame' by the Nobel Prize five years earlier, Beckett could foresee that the pressure to stage the radio plays would increase. He had become the poster boy for the phenomenon dubbed *Theatre of the Absurd* by Martin Esslin in 1961. Out of context it came to mean anything goes -- from Heidelberg students turning *All That Fall* into a *unterkühltes* [supercool] multi media dance and pantomime, to the Living Theatre's inclusion of *All That Fall* and *Embers* in an evening of Beckett, prompting the Village Voice reviewer to lament that, "Samuel Beckett is a great enough writer for us to believe that when he writes a play for radio, he intends it and designs it to be spoken and not acted" (1 January 1958; Zilliacus 171). In a staging of *All That Fall* and *Embers* Andre Gregory wanted props and sets for the latter because, while the former had a lot of characters, the latter had only two characters, one of which wasn't there very much and so needed some jazzing up.

Beckett's refusal to allow staged productions of his radio plays was a desparate -- and often futile -- response to the fact that needless liberties were being taken in the stagings that turned the plays into something they were never meant to be. It is arguably the case that Beckett finally withdrew permission for anything other than a radio production of *All That Fall*, not because a staged reading was unacceptable to him but in exasperation over "a quality common to most projects for staging *All That Fall*: [while] none of them aims at unstinted realism; many find the task of transposition an opportunity for formal experiment" (Zilliacus 171). Beckett was simply fed up with struggling against directors wanting to commit "*adaphatrôce*" on his play for their own agenda in ways not congenial to its spirit or consonant with its essence and that it would compromise its texture, tone, or spirit.[viii] His response to having repeatedly to deal with these difficulties led to a generic statement of conditions for staging the radio plays that reflects Beckett's impatience with them:

> Mr. Beckett has specifically stated that these are meant to be radio plays and should therefore be read, not acted. They are plays for voices and he has given permission for stage readings, but he definitely does not want the 'readers' to be costumed, to use any props, to move around the stage any more than is necessary to get to the microphone, or to use any movements even when standing still. They should be read just as if it were being done over the radio and there were no audience to see the performers. If your plans are different from those specified above, I'm afraid that we cannot give you permission to do the play. If you feel that you can accept these restrictions, we'll certainly be happy to permit you to give a production (Zilliacus 175).

4) Two suggestions concerning what is to be done: Staged recordings / Staged readings

One way to stage them without destroying their radiophonic quality is to produce them in audio form and simply play them for a live audiences. I've often done so with the Beckett Festival productions, and found no difficulty with audiences sitting quietly in the dark or near-dark, listening intently for 90 minutes. The recently toured Pan Pan staging of the play (directed by Gavin Quinn) provided an interesting variation of this strategy. Beckett's drama was pre-recorded and played over monitors in a space with controlled acoustics and lighting and with comfortable seating distributed throughout. Sound Design (Jimmie Eadie) and Lighting and Set Design (Aiden Cosgrove) won Irish Times "Best" awards for 2011. The acting is adequate, and aside from following the BBC production with the rural sounds performed by actors (to which Beckett consistently -- and in my view, correctly -- objected), the *bruitage* is superb. Staging the play was marred, however, by intrusive and deliberately invasive lighting used to accent the

dramatic climaxes -- mistakenly treating the absence of visuals as something to be overcome, thereby upstaging Beckett's play, the actors, and the excellently done *bruitage*.

In the Beckett centenary year, 2006, I was invited by Emma Jordan to direct a reading of *All That Fall* for Prime Cut Productions in Belfast, Northern Ireland.[ix] Provided with excellent actors I sought a concept for an onstage performance of the disembodied voices and sounds that Maddy's experiences. We were neither reading the play on stage before an audience nor making it into a theatrical performance. Instead we staged a performance of the act of reading the play. The distinction is important, and not, I hope, merely a matter of elaborate word-play. Actors performed not the roles in the play but played the role of actors reading that portion of the play that is contained in the words that their characters say in *All That Fall* (i.e. the dialogue), leaving most of the sounds they make to the *bruitage*. Maddy, for example, is made up not only of the words she says but is also woven out of the web of sounds that she hears or thinks she hears, and makes and hears herself making. Her footsteps were very much a part of the performance but did not actually emanate from the feet of Stella McCusker, the actress playing the role — a conventional matter on radio, but a formidable conundrum on stage. Almost all the sound effects were prepared in advance and fed on cue over speakers into the performance. The physical presence of the script became not an impediment to a performance but a 'prop' — not only something to lean on, but a *property* in and of — belonging to — the play, signifying the actor performing the role of reader. The convention was re-enforced by the presence on stage of two music stands, which served as props in both senses of the word: a support for the script that would disencumber the hand, and a property whose semiotics said, 'staged reading'. Ironically, this seems also to have been the strategy adopted by the Berghof reading discussed above (and identified as a 'concert reading', which might well be a better term than my 'staged reading'). Maddy's music stand was placed center stage and that of the other characters to stage left and slightly upstage from Maddy's, in keeping the dynamic of the interaction of characters while arguing against the realistic or plausible. A slight movement of the music stands during the arrival of Dan's train left Maddy and Dan flanking each other. The palpably visible presence of these two simple props -- script and music stands -- reframed the play we performed into not *All That Fall*, but the staging of a reading of the radio play Beckett had written. Keeping intact its non-visual character.

I suppose they were also a visual way saying that it was Beckett's script that mattered -- *and that, yes. there is a hilariously funny solemn musical dimension to it that had to be* preserved. From these fundamentals the adaptational overtones evolved.

Long ago, John Cage, advising on our adaptation of the WDR (German) production of *Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* for American broadcast, mischeviously quipped, 'Permission granted, but not to do anything you want'.

Cage's epigram conveys the balance I've tried to achieve in this essay.

Footnotes

[i] That context explored in greater detail in 'The Sound is Enough: Beckett's Radio Plays' in in *Edinburgh Companion to Samuel Beckett*, S. E. Gontarski (ed.). (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) (forthcoming).

[ii] Samuel Beckett in a letter to his American publisher, Barney Rosset, August 27, 1957, which appears as the frontispiece to Clas Zilliacus) *Beckett and Broadcasting: A Study of the Works of Samuel Beckett for and in Radio and Television* (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1976).

[iii] Richard Imison originated the BBC Radio Drama Script Development Unit, was Deputy Head of BBC Radio Drama 1985-1993, and Managing Director's spokesman for Radio.

[iv] Even before broadcast or publication when the question of adaptation for stage or film hadn't yet come up, he had replied to a film critic with whom he was in correspondence, 'No, the script for the 3rd [BBC Radio 3], All That Fall...is specifically radio.' (Beckett, *Letters II*, 2009, 678). After the success of *All That Fall*, McWhinnie and the BBC were confident that they'd recruited Beckett as one of their stars, committed to radiophonic drama. McWhinnie in an internal BBC memorandum 21 Feb. 1957: 'He is extremely pleased about "All That Fall"' although he feels that he could improve on the text and is anxious to achieve a tighter and more integrated script next time. My impression is that if he is to write at all in the near future, it will be for radio, which has captured his imagination.'

[v] My approach throughout is contrary to Kevin Branigan's assertion that, 'the critic in an age influenced by Roland Barthes's literary theory [of the death of the author], cannot afford to be restricted in his interpretations by the directions or protestations of the author' (59). Neither can she 'afford' to ignore them, however immersed in Barthes' literary theory she might be. Why would any critic or director, seeking not to grind an axe but to get it right, be anything other than grateful for any help she could get, including help from an author -- even a posthumous one? Not to be 'restricted', but to be informed. 'The writer's business is to make excessive demands of his interpreters.'(McWhinnie 103). The ultimate arbiter is the work itself, and the problem is to determine what makes *All That Fall* particularly suitable for radio, and whether that quality can be preserved in adapting it for performance elsewhere.

[vi] Neither is there any sound effect specified for why Christy says of his hinny 'She's very fresh in herself today.' (Beckett 2009, 4). Beckett's response to my query was that the beast farts (Frost 1994, 211). We hear what Maddy hears and she hears the transgressive fart but doesn't hear the conventional hooves any more than you are aware of some of the ambient sounds around you as you read this [pause for awareness]. The sounds of which you've momentarily become aware of will 'disappear' again (from your consciousness) momentarily. This is perfectly accurate psycho-acoustics (Frost 1994, 194-197).

[vii] Opened at the Jermyn Street Theatre, London 11 October 2012; continued at the Arts Theatre, London 6-24 November 2012. My review of it appears in JOBS 22:2 (Fall 2013), 245-58.

[viii] See Zilliacus, chapter, 'The Plays out of Their Element' 169-182 for adaphatrôcities up to 1971.

[ix] Waterfront Studio Theatre, Belfast, 6 February 2006. More fully described in Frost 2007.

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