

‘E la mente annullata naufraga nel vento’: A New Appraisal of Giacomo Manzoni’s *Parole da Beckett* from the Perspective of a Conductor

Marco Angius

Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto

PRELUDE

The new recording of Giacomo Manzoni’s *Parole da Beckett* is the focal point of a wide-ranging, multi-layered journey into the piece, while the original materials of the work undoubtedly provide the foundation for its in-depth, analytical study.¹

The score, composed by Manzoni in 1971, contains very detailed performance instructions for both the choruses and the instrumental groups; nevertheless, this study demonstrates how the aleatory sections and the presence of hidden, completely inaudible texts (shown only in the separate parts for the two choruses) leave considerable room for choice and alternative readings on the part of the performer. In fact, the apparently paradoxical tendency of the European avant-garde at the time, was on one hand to strive for an ideological liberation from the constraints of music notation, leaving the outcome of the work itself in the hands of the performer (co-author), while at the same time to provide the score

with a series of such detailed instructions that it virtually became a system of ineluctable gestures and actions (thereby reducing the work simply to a series of its own performance directions).

In my view, however, it is possible – and perhaps even necessary – to find a third way that includes both possibilities, a solution by which the performer approaches and follows the work of the composer to turn the piece into sound on the basis of his or her own sensibility and musical skills. A work of music in fact, as a system of signs, requires an interpretation which is not limited by a plethora of instructions and recommendations – essential though these may be –, for the variables in play in the embodiment of a sound idea are many and diverse (from the personalities of the performers to the ambient acoustic, right through to the time required for preparing the details of the performance). In the case of *Parole da Beckett*, for example, the presence of the magnetic tape plays a crucial part in the creative process: working with Alvisé Vidolin to recover and restore the tapes and synchronise them in performance revealed the optional possibility of using a second reel of tape – marked in the three places by the composer – instead of the live chorus. In this way the spatialisation foreseen by Manzoni proved more workable and controllable.

According to the sources I was able to consult at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, it is not possible to trace in full the intermediate steps that took place between the initial collection of the source materials and their subsequent elaboration.²

* * *

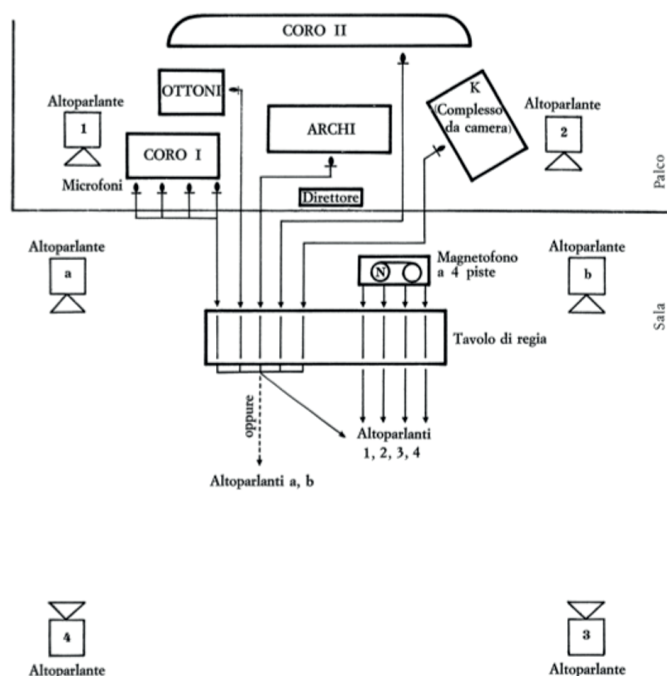
The example shown in FIGURE 1 was chosen to illustrate how Manzoni's approach is initially to summarise the harmonic fields of the chorus parts for the entire composition, even down to the smallest detail, on a single sheet of manuscript paper; only later does he add the timbric and rhythmic alterations of the various voices using a wide range of devices (timbre inflection, pitch glides, murmuring, laughter, shouting, temporal disalignments and so on). It would be equally interesting to see the original orchestral parts used by Bruno Maderna in 1972 for the first – and until now the only – recording of the work which, on a vinyl LP, bears witness to the precarious circumstances of that historic event: Manzoni himself recalled the unusual number of rehearsals that the great conductor dedicated to *Parole da Beckett* before recording it, as he sought the right musical solutions to do justice to the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the work.

FIGURE 1. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*: notes and preparatory studies for the elaboration of the harmonic fields and pitches of the choral sections. In particular we can see, both on the staves and in the margins of the page, indications for the distribution of the notes among the individual singers for the definition of the smallest and largest group shown in the performance notes. Fondo Giacomo Manzoni, Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venice).

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for the choral section of *Parole da Beckett*. At the top, there are handwritten notes: "SIX I 3/8 C 4 T I 8 II 5 Bar. 5 B 4 1". Below this, the score is organized into systems labeled with letters A through Z. Each system typically consists of a piano accompaniment staff (treble and bass clef) and one or more vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass). The notation includes notes, rests, and various performance markings such as dynamics (e.g., *sf*, *mf*), articulation (e.g., accents), and phrasing slurs. Marginalia and inter-staff annotations provide specific instructions for the distribution of notes among the vocalists, often indicating the number of singers for a particular note or group of notes. For example, in system A, there are markings like "17" and "24" above the notes. In system R, there are markings like "3 3 3 3 3 3" and "3 3 3 3 3 3" above the notes. The score concludes with a double bar line and the number "11". In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo with the letter "M". In the bottom right corner, the number "1103" and the word "EXTRA" are printed.

With *Parole da Beckett*, for two choruses, three instrumental groups and electronics, Giacomo Manzoni creates a large, multi-layered musical fresco, as is immediately clear from the layout of the various performance groups (FIGURE 2).

FIGURE 2. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*, per due cori, tre gruppi strumentali e nastro magnetico, unnumbered page (title verso): ‘Disposition of the choirs and of the instrumental groups and plan of the magnetic tape and amplification system’. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy).



Despite a graphic layout that frequently features boxes (or groupings) that identify areas that are partly aleatory, the work seems to aim towards a continuity of the musical flow, albeit at the differentiated discursive levels of the various forces used: in fact, the score of *Parole da Beckett* presents innumerable cases where the preparation and concretisation of the composition with regard to the interplay between the choruses, instruments and magnetic tape is effected with such different solutions that any concept of *repetition* is completely banished.

The writing for simultaneous timbric layers also recalls – and at the same time contrasts with – Luciano Berio’s work *Laborintus II* (1965) of two years earlier.

The difference that leads to a clear antithesis between the two pieces, however, concerns precisely the relationship with the voice, which in Berio is in contiguous assimilation with the instrumental gestures, focussing now on the single phoneme and now on the web of textual references to Dante, read by Edoardo Sanguineti; whereas in Manzoni it is dispersed in an elusive play of textual fragments broken down until they become indistinct, from the audible to the inaudible.

Samuel Beckett's texts, drawn from several sources in modern Italian translation, are broken up and then reassembled by the two different-sized choruses: the first, smaller one (C I) is located towards the front of the stage, while the second (C II) is located right at the back. The criteria that distinguish aspects of vocality range from spoken word to actual singing, from shouting to laughter, right through to a whisper *sul fiato* (*on the breath*, always with amplification); there is, however, also another group of texts – which remains inaudible as a kind of background murmur – that is introduced at certain specific moments in the work (see the detailed descriptions below).

The two chorus groups are combined or juxtaposed in order to either strengthen the sound or so as to create an antiphonal effect (also through the use of spatialised diffusion systems): the handling of the first chorus is characterised by the fragmentation of single syllables, while the second picks up and reverberates the texts as fragmented particles of sound, synchronous or staggered by means of refracted echoes so as to create a shimmering, ever-changing acoustic perception.

A further layer of Manzoni's writing is provided by the three instrumental groups, positioned at a distance to one another: 9 brass instruments (O, on the left of the stage, behind C I), 17 strings (A, in the centre of the stage), and a chamber ensemble or *Kammerensemble* consisting of 20 players (K, on the right of the stage).

Finally, a third element links the former groups and projects them into the performance space: the sound director, whose role is to amplify and balance the different groups and to manage the introduction of the magnetic tape at seven specific moments in the score (N).

The disposition of the sound sources, as shown in the diagram, allows the composer to obtain a strategic cross fading, with the primary function of characterising the continuity as well as the dramaturgical interaction of the choral texts: the magnetic tape is also involved in this *representational* logic of words as well as sounds, as it contains both acousmatic elements and the recordings of the texts by the voices of actor Ottavio Fanfani, Manzoni's son Nicola, and, in the finale, of the composer himself.

Free of the constraints of its original conception for the stage, *Parole da Beckett* transforms the communicative power of the voices, whether audible or inaudible, into a dense web of phonic and gestural implications: rather than aiming at a

timbric fusion of the various sound sources the composer tends instead to attribute an autonomous, disconnected character to each of them. Nevertheless, as we shall see, there are some brief instances of aggregations that verticalise all the acoustic components: reading the score from top to bottom it is possible, in fact, to identify a number of moments at which simultaneous climaxes overlap as a result of the compenetration of C+O+A+K+N.

As mentioned above, the particular notational features of the score include a number of boxes or groupings that bring together, inside them, a succession of sounds for which the speed of utterance and sometimes also the dynamic parameters are left *ad libitum*.

This feature of how the score is drafted concerns both the voices and the instruments, and determines a certain element of local irregularity or unpredictability which acts within the musico-syntactic junctures to affect their overall weave. Furthermore, the groupings may appear as ovals (for individual sounds/events) or as rectangles (for denser or, on the contrary, more rarefied sounds/nebulas): this graphic solution is designed to isolate certain timbric-chordal aggregates from the overall context, thereby creating moments of temporal and psychological suspension.

Still, with regard to the graphics, we see the use of traditional notation, of another notation in minutes/seconds (positioned above the staves or the groupings), and of a mixed solution that superimposes the structures in seconds on the normal metric measures.

Therefore, an analytical reading that proceeds from the overall form to the more immanent structures must recognise and identify sections in continuous fading that attenuate the disruption of continuity in favour of transverse refractions of the groups in play.

We shall begin by showing the morphology of the dense verbal network in eleven different moments in the score with respect to both the musical structure into which it is inserted, and to the contributions of the magnetic tape which are woven into it. From the sections thus obtained we shall then proceed to further our analysis delving more deeply into the inner meanderings of the sound organisms.

Note how the relative brevity of the *audible* texts corresponds to an extension in terms of the number of bars of music (the first phrase, in particular, is spread over 16 bars, the third-from-last over 31 bars).

The contributions of the magnetic tape, obtained by means of fading at seven points as mentioned in TABLE 1, determine in their turn the same number of zones without any break in continuity in the interaction between the tape and the vocal/instrumental groups, creating truly discursive panels.

TABLE 1. *Parole da Beckett*, macro-formal synthesis of the interlinking of the texts with the electro-acoustic entries (read the sequence of bars from left to right, moving progressively from one line to the next: the gaps in the bar numbers relate to the instrumental *sutures*, which will be considered later).

Bars*	Audible texts	Inaudible texts	Tape
(1)			0"-3'54"
21-37	che farei senza questo silenzio dove si spengono i bisbigli		
39-42	stanco di morire'	39-40 43-47	48-58
60-68	puis les pas vers les vieilles lumières	49-51	
70-75	un altro giorno divino		69-70
83-89	a meno che ti amino		77-82
107-115	stanco di morire, stanco di poliziotti, il viso nel fango, la bocca aperta, il fango nella bocca, la sete che si perde, l'umanità riconquistata		
123	morire		
142-151	questa terra clonica periodicamente offuscata dal sonno è grassa mezzo morta il resto gira a vuoto		167-176
		169 173	
177-208	e la mente annullata naufraga nel vento piangendo quella che ha creduto di amarmi adesso cose talmente vecchie le sento le mormoro tali e quali pianissimo al fango		
209-221	e può darsi che non sia ancora alla fine del mio viaggio	212 219 221-223	
250-263	anche questo è stato un altro giorno felice		245-249
			264-265

* The only bar in which the audible and inaudible texts overlap is indicated in bold type

The instrumental and vocal parts sustain the *latent* form of the composition in a great arch of contiguous episodes. These are linked to the interventions of the tape by means of a play of multiple refractions, intersecting with the electro-acoustic sections either alternately or simultaneously.

TABLE 2. *Parole da Beckett*, macro-formal synthesis of the alternation of the instrumental, vocal and electro-acoustic sections.

Bars*	Section	Events
A) 1-2 3-12 13-18 19-20	Introduction	N 1 fading into K Temporal dilation with insertion of O over K Temporal contraction of O and fluctuation of K Insertion of A over O and K (first climax)
B) 21-51 52-59	First episode Materic fading	All the groups and second climax (bars 49-51) C I/II, K (organ, percussions), N 2
C) 60-68	Second episode	C I/II, A, K
D) 69-82	Third episode	C I/II, A, K, N 3-4
E) 83-141 142-176	Fourth episode Fifth episode	C I/II, O, A, K and third climax (bar 141) All, with rarefactions and condensations and insertion of N 5
F) 177-239	Sixth episode	C I/II, O, A, K, N 6 and fourth climax (bar 238)
G) 240-266	Seventh episode	C I/II, O, A, K, N 7

* *The bar numbers in bold type indicate the beginning and end of the relevant section (marked by a capital letter)*

An additional tape, or reel B, consists of pre-recorded material relating to three chorus sections that can be reproduced using the loudspeakers rather than performed live, according to the instructions of the composer at the foot of each

relevant page of the score. This pre-recorded tape reel can be used at the following points:

Bar	Chorus
21-36	I and II ('Che farei senza questo silenzio dove si spengono i bisbigli')
83-89	I ('A meno che ti amino')
250-263	I (<i>with the breath</i> [' <i>col fiato</i> '], audible only with amplification)

As well as material and bruitistic elements (in particular those of the first minutes of the work), the tape contains the non-intoned parts of the chorus voices, rendered wholly or partially incomprehensible by electro-acoustic means. The chorus texts that are intoned – or spoken – never overlap with those on the tape, further confirmation of the divergent nature of the different discursive levels. It must however be emphasised – still with regard to the texts – that the majority of these are not shown in the score but only in the separate chorus parts ('*guida cori*', the chorus guide), following a logic of choices consistent with Beckett's poetics and relating to what cannot be heard although it is uttered: 'at the points containing a densely undulating line and the instruction *whisper, murmur, shout* and similar', writes Manzoni in the notes to the score, 'the chorus director shall distribute phrases, fragments of phrases or individual words'.

We shall see how this direct involvement of the performers in the end result plays a key role, but it is one that can only be understood from reading the individual parts rather than the score, thus shifting the epicentre of the analysis decisively: the score is no longer the primary object of musicological analysis, which instead has to be spread across a vast range of the smallest clues to be found in dozens and dozens of pages of micro-lines copied by the composer on to individual sheets of paper. This aspect is strongly connotative of Manzoni's compositional practice and can also be seen in the instrumental as well as the choral parts of later works (for instance, in the *divisi* strings in *Kokin B* of 2010): though the graphical drafting continues to represent the overall plan for the actual performance of a piece, it is in the preparatory work on the individual, separate parts that the secret labyrinth of the true substance of the composition is revealed, and it is only by uncovering this that one can grasp the essential aspects of the whole.

In this case, the focus of analysis, namely the score as the objectification-configuration of an idea, represents no more than an external, labile surface, the score itself being ramified in processes of infinitesimal projections which make its primary meaning – the one that should afford us a degree of absolute perceptibility of the work and its compositional logic, but also of its decipherment in the act of listening – unattainable, if not ineffable.

FIGURE 3. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*, p. 1 of the score. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy).

K
KAMMER-ENSEMBLE

N
NASTRO

3'54" 8" ** 1'64 5 1'72 1'8

OTR.
FL.
OB.
CL.
CL. S.
FG.
Ctr.
ARPA
CLV.
ORG.
PERC. I
PERC. II
VC.
CB.

barchi di ferro
p.s.

ppp
pizz

* Entrare gradualmente *ppp* ad lib. durante gli 8" indicati: Attacco dei suoni insensibile.

** Note in riquadro; eseguire con distribuz. ritmica e con dinamica ad lib. nell'ambito del tempo indicato. Impulsi brevi, non legato.

A closer look at the first page of the score (FIGURE 3) reveals a number of distinctive features concerning the temporal organisation with regard to the number of sounds included in the boxes: after beginning with the tape alone crossed with the fading in of the *Kammerensemble* (bar 2), the alternate succession of events is expressed by irrational values of increasing duration applied to the groupings (1"64, 1"72, 1"8, etc.) up to a peak of 4 seconds in bar 12, shortly after the entry of O (brass, bars 11 and following; see FIGURE 4); subsequently they decrease again,

approximating the initial values (bars 13-18). Following the perimetral expansion of these microstructures, the local tempo tends to slow down, expanding irregularly with the increase in the values in seconds, while the density of the sound decreases proportionally; this is already clear in the initial rarefaction of the number of notes within each individual group (bars 4-6). Immediately afterwards, without any perceptible break in the continuity of the music, the phenomenon is reversed and the number of notes in the brass begins to increase again.

If we set out the sequence of the successive tempo indications, it becomes clear how the implicit criterion of expansion and contraction is proportional to the phonic density: the more the tempo slows, the more the sound matter of the impulses expands, and vice-versa. We could also imagine that the sound particles – or the ‘discharges of the impulses’ (*scariche d’impulsi*), to use the composer’s own description – placed within the groupings slow down their own kinetic energy to bring about a gradual suspension of time (the peak of the temporal expansion before the internal duration of the groups begins to decrease again is shown in bold):

Bars	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Seconds	1.64	1.72	1.8	1.92	2.1	2.28	2.56	3	4	3.4	2.7	2.45	2.16	1.9	1.7

Abandoning the usual fractional measurement of time, Manzoni pushes the instrumentalists to extremes in terms of the speed of emission and succession of the sounds with respect to the unit of time that delimits them: in the case of bar 4, for example, the piccolo and the suspended cymbals have to play 15 notes/impulses in little over 1.5 seconds (1.64), which, in fact, approximates the theoretical limit of what it is humanly possible to play. Alternatively, the conductor can mark the beats or use figures derived from a partial measuring of the groupings in the more regular cases: at 1”=60, bar 11 can be conducted *in 3*, bar 12 *in 4*, while the measures indicated in tenths of a second can be managed with the partial control of the sounds without the change of beat being felt as a distinct *tactus*, i.e. as signalling the link between contiguous beats, so as not to disrupt the fluidity of the discourse. It is also for this reason that the composer places the fast groupings over a substrate of timbric layers so as ensure for the whole episode the material continuity provided by the background sounds. If on one hand Manzoni specifies that the notes in the boxes are ‘to be executed with *ad libitum* rhythmic distribution and dynamics within the context of the time indicated’, the succession from one box to the next is planned as a sequence rather than in an isolated manner. In other words, the single accents or possible caesuras can point to the movement from one grouping to the next and, at the same time, the approximate indications as to the

duration should indicate how the expansion/compression within the structures has repercussions on the listener's perception of the whole. Therefore, if a partially aleatory connotation is introduced into the composition, which will make every performance different at the micro-formal level, i.e. inside/within each grouping, on the other hand, the logic of the sound outcome will reveal the musical and formal repercussions *emanating* from the individual structures.

FIGURE 4. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*, bars 7–13. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy). The interpreter is allowed the freedom to emphasise or soften the individual groupings with regard to the background figures of the sustained or oscillating sounds on some of the instruments in K (horns, organ, cello, in particular, until bar 12). In bar 13 (the last bar of the example) a gestalt articulation is created between K – fixed, oscillating or impulse sounds – and O – frenetic sounds with tense discharges inside the boxes.

* v. nota ** p. 1

131802

The effect of nebulous suspension of the timbric groupings – measured by the figures placed above the boxes – is enhanced by the bed of sustained sounds in the winds, organ and double bass which – in K – create a mixed sense of floating, both fixed and undulating (as in the case of the second horn part in bars 12–13 of FIGURE 4, or in the microtonal beats of K, present since the first bars).

A chaotic acceleration of the pizzicatos of A leads to the first climax, including the entry of the choruses (bars 21–42): ‘che farei senza questo silenzio dove si spengono i bisbigli’ / ‘stanco di morire’). The voices whisper the text, which is broken up into syllables or into single phonemes that intertwine, almost in madrigal-like fashion, with the whispers of the brass, the strings and the *Kammerensemble*. Bars 21–37 can be performed using the second spool of tape (reel B) which contains the pre-recorded voices, introducing them into the electro-acoustic circuit (this choice is at the discretion of the conductor).

The murmur of the voices, which allude to the words of Beckett, is only apparently indistinct, in as much as the hidden texts, reproduced in the choral parts but not in the score, are impossible to hear (moreover, they are uttered softly): ‘each singer’, explains Manzoni in the notes, ‘will repeat several times the phrase or word assigned to him or her for the whole duration of the murmuring, shouting, etc., as indicated each time’. The composer isolates these passages from the simultaneous intonation of other texts so that the indistinct murmur becomes a compositional element that is both structural and identifiable in the vividness of its expression; it sometimes overlaps with sound events in the instrumental groups or with other, always verbal, timbric backgrounds.

Let us now, for the first time in an analytical study of this score, present the hidden texts whispered by the two choruses ‘at the points marked with a densely undulating line’, according to the list given in the separate chorus parts, followed by the corresponding example from the score.

Bars	Texts (inaudible)	Voices	Chorus
39-40	1 - farei come ieri come oggi	One Alto III	I
	2 - guardando dal mio oblò	id.	
	3 - se non sono solo a errare	id.	
	4 - a girare lontano da ogni vita	One Tenor III	
	5 - in uno spazio spasmodico senza voce	id.	
	6 - tra le voci chiuse con me	id.	

With the entry of the choruses in bar 21, the previous aleatory writing is momentarily abandoned in favour of a regular fractional measurement of the time (4/4 with crotchet = 60), while in the sections before the second episode with the tape (bars 39–47), which culminate in a collective explosion of sound (bar 49), we

witness the combined use of the various rhythmic notations (visible in FIGURE 5): in bar 43, the first curvilinear grouping of O coincides with the peak of the ripple of the voices, while the murmur of the choruses in the background, which re-emerges at times with that of the strings (bar 46), is *disturbed* by the instrumental interjections of O and K (whose boxes include measured events in 3/4 and 7/4; see FIGURE 8). Note again the antiphonal structure of these two groups and the reinforcing alignment of the percussion with respect to the brass that emphasises the left-to-right stereophonic spread across the stage: what seems symmetrical in the score in fact proves to be extremely dynamic and spatialised in performance, both in acoustic and temporal terms.

FIGURE 5. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*, bars 39–42. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy).

The image shows a page of a musical score for Giacomo Manzoni's 'Parole da Beckett', covering bars 39 to 42. The score is written for a large ensemble, including vocalists and instrumentalists. The vocal parts are labeled S (Soprano), C (Contralto), T (Tenore), B (Bassi), and various parts of a chorus (TR, CR, O, A, K). The instrumental parts include strings (S, C, T, B), woodwinds (TR, CR), and percussion (O, A, K). The score features complex rhythmic notations, including curvilinear groupings and various time signatures (3/4 and 7/4). There are also dynamic markings and performance instructions. A large box highlights a section of the score, and a vertical arrow points to a specific measure. The page number 131802 is visible at the bottom right.

* Eventualmente rinforzare batt. 38-42 a 6/8 (in seguito per ogni linea 1-2 cantori del II coro (da 12 a 24 complessivamente))

Though in the act of analysis we are obliged to consider these parameters separately, the psycho-physical perception of the musical experience tends to render even the most subtle events consequential and connected.

The murmuring (*mormorio*) of hidden phrases and words by the chorus was a technique already used by the composer in *Tempo II* of the opera *Atomtod* (1964) and at various points in *Ombre* (for orchestra and choral voices, 1968), extracts from which are shown in FIGURES 6 AND 7; in *Parole da Beckett*, however, the multiple texts are used far more widely and systematically, and at the same time rendered incomprehensible by the continuous hum of hushed voices, in close connection with the poetics of the incommunicable of the Irish dramatist Beckett.

FIGURE 6. Giacomo Manzoni, *Atomtod*, due tempi di Emilio Jona, *Il Tempo*, scene 2, bars 251–255. © 1964 by Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, Milano, S. 6334 Z.

The image shows a page of a musical score for an orchestra. The score is handwritten and includes performance markings such as 'cresc.' and 'rit.'. The instruments listed on the left side of the page are: Oit., Fl., Ob., Cl., Cl. b., Fg., Cr. 1-3, Cr. 2-4, Tr., Trb., Tba., Perc. II, Perc. III, Tp., Arm., Cmp. bb., Glock., Vibr., S., Cord. C., Cord. T., B., Harp. C., Harp. D., Vi., Vcl., and Cb. The score is divided into measures, and there are various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. At the top right, there is a box containing the number '255' and some handwritten text. The overall appearance is that of a professional musical manuscript.

7 - non perdere di vista nell'ardore 2 S, 5 T, 4 B
della stesura

A little later, with the same undulating line indication, the following text is given for the chorus parts of C:

Bars	Texts (inaudible)	Voices	Chorus
49-51	1 - niente emozione	1 S, 1 A, 1 T, 1 B	I and II
	2 - tutto è perduto	id.	
	3 - il fondo è scoppiato	id.	
	4 - l'umidità il trascinio	id.	
	5 - l'abrasione gli amplessi	id.	
	6 - le generazioni	id.	
	7 - un vecchio sacco da carbone	id.	
	8 - cinquanta chili	1 S, 1 A, 2 T, 1 B	
	9 - benissimo tutto andato	1 S, 1 A, 2 T, 2 B	
	10 - le scatole l'apriscatole	2 S, 2 A, 2 T, 2 B	
	11 - un apriscatole senza scatole	id.	
	12 - mi è stato risparmiato	id.	
	13 - scatole senza apriscatole	id.	
	14 - stavolta nella vita	2 S, 2 A, 2 T, 1 B	
	15 - questo non mi sarebbe capitato	1 S, 2 T, 2 B	

Continuing with the reading of the score (sections C and D of the macro-form), we find the second, third and fourth appearances of the tape which, as noted in the overview given in TABLE 1, alternate with the two chorus areas: the first with the text in French ('puis les pas vers les vieilles lumières', bars 60-68) and the second in Italian ('un altro giorno divino', bars 70-76). In this case the amplification is only *suggested*, in as much as it should bring a sort of ambient contrast with the truly electronic zones which frame and at the same time encompass the two short episodes.

With the next section for the two *a cappella* choruses ('a meno che ti amino', bars 83-92), which can also be reproduced acousmatically on tape reel B (see TABLE 1), we enter the central section of *Parole*, which at first features a dense shower of materic and partly aleatory sounds on the strings (bars 92-104), until the arrival of the new text broken down into choral phonemes ('stanco di morire, stanco di poliziotti, il viso nel fango, la bocca aperta, il fango nella bocca, la sete che si perde, l'umanità riconquistata', bars 107-115). This substantial choral section, characterised by an extreme simultaneous condensation of the texts, is followed by comments from the three instrumental groups that culminate in a *tutti* (bar 141), which also marks the formal keystone of the entire work.

At this point a new choral episode begins ('questa terra clonica periodicamente offuscata dal sonno è grassa, mezzo morta. Il resto gira a vuoto'), leading to an explosion (bar 132) which gives rise to a succession of separate block entries of the different instrumental groups until the introduction of the fifth tape (bar 167).

In the last bar of FIGURE 9, the text is hidden in the parts of the first chorus as a murmur or humming of the voices (to be uttered within approximately 5'')

Bar	Texts (inaudible)	Voices	Chorus
169	1 - esco dal sonno e ci ritorno	2 S, 2 A, 1 T, 2 B	1
	2 - tra le due cose c'è tutto da fare	2 S, 2 A, 1 T, 2 B	
	3 - da sopportare da perdere	2 S, 2 A, 1 T, 2 B	
	3 - da sbrigare da condurre a buon fine	2 S, 2 A, 1 T, 2 B	
	3 - prima che la melma si riapra	2 S, 2 A, 1 T, 2 B	

These events, alternating with the orchestral and choral *windows* (the murmuring and humming of bar 173 shown in the next table) intersect with the fifth magnetic tape (bars 167–176), which contains a rhyme taken from the beginning of the second act of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*: 'un cane andò in cucina/e si accostò al fornello/Allora col coltello/il cuoco lo sgozzò/Ciò visto gli altri cani/scavarono una fossa/e sulla terra smossa scrissero con la coda:/un cane andò in cucina...'.³

Bar	Texts (inaudible)	Voices	Chorus
173	1 - dovrebbe già essere qui	1 S, 1 A, 1 T	1
	2 - non ha detto che verrà di sicuro	1 T, 1 B	
	3 - e se non viene?	1 S, 1 A	
	4 - torneremo domani	1 T, 1 B	
	5 - e magari dopodomani	1 S, 1 A	
	6 - forse	1 T, (1 S)	
	7 - e così di seguito	1 B, (1 A)	
	8 - insomma	1 S, (1 T)	
	9 - fino a quando non verrà	1 A, (1 B)	
	10 - sei spietato	1 T, (1 S)	
	11 - siamo già venuti ieri	1 B, (1 A)	
	12 - ah no non esagerare adesso!	1 S, (1 T)	
	13 - cosa abbiamo fatto ieri?	1 A, (1 B)	
	14 - ha detto sabato mi pare	1 T	
	15 - ma quale sabato?	1 B	
	16 - e poi è sabato oggi?	1 S	
	17 - non sarà poi domenica?	1 A	
	18 - o lunedì o venerdì?	1 T	
	19 - non è possibile	1 B	

FIGURE 9. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*, bars 164–169. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy). In bar 166 all the groups are involved (COAKN). Note at the bottom of bar 167 the inaudible addition of the fifth magnetic tape containing the rhyme quoted above.

The score is divided into five parts: C, O, A, K, and N. Each part has its own vocal line with lyrics and musical notation. The piano part is at the bottom. A box labeled '765' is in the K part. A large 'A' is written in the piano part. At the bottom, there are performance instructions for the conductor and a note about a fifth magnetic tape.

* Tutti gli esecutori (coro e gruppi d'orchestra) scalpiccio p per tutta questa batt. Entrata molto graduale

As can be seen in the next page of the score (bars 170–173; see FIGURE 10), the presence of N emerges intermittently (*voce/tacet/voce/tacet*) so that the text of the disturbing, electro-acoustically distorted rhyme creates a background-figure dialectic; here we also find a more extended zone of hidden texts in bar 173, with an utterance timing of 13”.

The final part of the work begins with a new *a cappella* episode for the two choruses (see FIGURE 11):

‘Piangendo quella che ha creduto di amarmi’ (bars 191-202);

‘Adesso cose talmente vecchie le sento, le mormoro tali e quali pianissimo al fango’ (bars 203-208);

‘E può darsi che non sia ancora alla fine del mio viaggio’ (bars 209-222).

We have separated the first two phrases, which are actually contiguous, into as many distinct units in order to show how the first of them is set to music with a particular polyrhythmic form which forces the conductor to adopt unusual solutions:

FIGURE 11. Giacomo Manzoni, *Parole da Beckett*, bars 196–204. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy). Choral polyrhythm: the passage requires the coordination of two different conductors for each chorus so as to manage the dissociation of the events and their synchronous realignment before bar 204.

The musical score for Figure 11 is presented in four systems, each with vocal parts for two choruses (I and II). The first system (bars 196-200) features the first chorus (I) with lyrics 'CHE HA CRE - - DU - TO' and a 'lunga' marking. The second system (bars 201-204) features the second chorus (II) with lyrics 'che ha cre - du - to'. The third system (bars 205-208) features the first chorus (I) with lyrics 'DI A - - MAR MI'. The fourth system (bars 209-212) features the second chorus (II) with lyrics 'di a - mar - mi' and 'A-desso cose talmente vecchie le'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, f, pp), articulation (staccato, marcato), and performance instructions like 'elastico, distinto' and 'parlato'.

The passage is dissociated in temporal terms in the sense that the first chorus sings using units of measurement expressed in seconds, while the second chorus appears faster in terms of the *tactus* of its rhythmic division (crotchet = 76).

The texts that follow alternate with the inaudible murmurings in two entries, both of which are entrusted to the second chorus. In the first of these, introduced in bars 212 and 219, the composer again demands a fragmented distribution:

Bars	Texts (inaudible)	Voices (212)	Voices (219)	Chorus II
212 and 219	1 - se potessi diventare	1 S II, 1 A	3 S, 2 A, 3 T, 3 B	
	2 - sordo e muto	2 S II	3 S, 2 A, 3 T, 3 B	
	3 - credo che riuscirei	1 S II, 2 A	2 S, 2 A, 3 T, 3 B	
	4 - a tirare avanti	2 A	2 S, 2 A, 3 T, 3 B	
	5 - fino a cent'anni	3 A	2 S, 2 A, 3 T, 2 B	

In the second entry, in bars 221–223, the verbal structure is as follows:

Bars	Texts (inaudible)	Voices	Chorus
221-223	1 - bisbigli	1 S, 1 A, 1 T, 1 B	II
	2 - sapere cosa sia	"	
	3 - mi si chiede qualcosa	"	
	4 - sempre la mia storia	"	
	5 - non passa quasi giorno	"	
	6 - stasi da straccio	1 S, 1 A, 2 T, 1 B	
	7 - si aprisse sotto di me	1 S, 1 A, 2 T, 2 B	
	8 - questo sarà stato	"	
	9 - nascono si estinguono	2 S, 1 A, 2 T, 2 B	
	10 - spazzature di santi	"	

The final climax of the work (bar 238) coincides with a great *fermata* moment marked *fortissimo* and involving all the forces with the exception of the magnetic tape, which subsequently enters twice: the sixth tape, in sequential order, is linked directly to the substitute reel B (see the macro-formal summary in TABLE 1, bars 250–263), while the seventh is placed in the concluding bars (bars 264–265). This fermata of maximum density (bar 238) is followed by a second of absolute silence, the first and only moment of true silence in the entire score (also indicated with an extended fermata symbol, as shown in FIGURE 12).

From this moment onwards the work continues with a phase of materic dispersion of the voices and instrumental groups, interrupted by a sudden 4-second explosion (bar 247), whose echo is prolonged in flutter-tonguing with air on the brass instruments (bar 249).

From bar 250 (tape reel B) chorus I utters polyphonic whispers ('anche questo è stato un altro giorno felice') against a changing background of irregularly struck strings (*col legno*) until the voices disappear (bar 263) and the impulses become less and less frequent after the last episode of the magnetic tape (overall duration 1'17").

* * *

POSTLUDE

Getting inside a work and understanding its *compositional logic* means discovering how it is constructed and how best to enact it. These are two distinct and complementary processes, in as much as the score contains only the means of access for a single performance, one of an infinite number of possible realisations: in other words, it is the blueprint for a building in the making.

The interpretative venture is caught between the legitimate aspiration to give life to a work of the past, according to the style of the period in which it was conceived, and the need to take account of new meanings and compositional visions that might inspire other readings. The consideration of the *will* of the composer, when, as in this case, he or she is no longer in possession of all the original performance documents may, thus, be a relevant factor for an interpretation that aspires to offer a new reading in terms of both structure and style. Moreover, archaeology does not preclude intentions of an exploratory, experimental nature: on the contrary, it invites them.

Exactly half a century after the composition of Giacomo Manzoni's *Parole da Beckett* the relationship between music and sung text continues to play a central role in contemporary music research. The dissociation between sign and sound introduced by Schoenberg's *Sprechgesang* in his 1912 *Pierrot lunaire* became both crucial and irreversible for the avant-garde of the late twentieth century and for the paths that experimental music would take. The structural drift created between the resonance of the text and its related sound content in turn constitutes a distinguishing factor, forcing a choice on anyone wishing to avoid discursive solutions that reduce the musical text to nothing more than a purely linear *signifier*.

Venturing into that mysterious convergence/divergence of words and sounds that takes place in every listening experience, thus allows a passage from the

preparation and execution of a musical performance to a close consideration of compositional events and the most recondite *reasons* behind them.

FIGURE 13. *Parole da Beckett*, from bar 263 (last crotchet) to 265. © 1971 Casa Ricordi Srl, Universal Music Publishing Group - Classics & Screen. Reproduced by kind permission of Hal Leonard Europe BV (Italy). In the final bar the impulses of the strings (of A e K combined) continue beyond the gradual extinction of the seventh magnetic tape in a process of acoustic rarefaction.

131802

MILANO
Autunno 1970
Inverno 1971

Notes

- 1 This study was written in the context of a multi-faceted project around *Parole da Beckett* (Padua, 31 May – 3 June 2022), the culmination of which was an ensuing musicological event held at the Fondazione Cini di Venezia. The concert, which was recorded both for audio and video, featured the two choruses of the Ensemble Continuum and the Coro Castelbarco (conducted by Luigi Azzolini) and the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto under the musical supervision of Manzoni himself. The video recording was directed by Francesco Leprino (*Manzoni 90* – an Al Gran Sole production).
- 2 I would like to thank Gianmario Borio, Director of the Institute of Music at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, for his help and support for the initiative, and also Francisco Rocca, who kindly made available the archive materials relating to the genesis and critical reception of the work; thanks to these materials I was able to document the ideational and operational processes and events underpinning this key work and its dissemination exactly half a century after its first performance.
- 3 This is the original text of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*: 'A dog came in the kitchen/ And stole a crust of bread./ Then cook up with a ladle/ And beat him till he was dead./ Then all the dogs came running/ And dug the dog a tomb/ And wrote upon the tombstone/ For the eyes of dogs to come:/ A dog came in the kitchen...'