

# **'Marcia Farquhar's voice in Reynir Hutber's *And I*'**

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*Notes towards an essay*

I have heard Marcia Farquhar's voice continuously for years. So many years that the eight hours of *And I* become something like "a drop in the ocean" of my listening life. And so many *very close* years that Marcia's voice plays in my head even when I am not with her. I am struck thinking now that to live with a voice through one's whole life is in some ways to learn to forget it. This is not a passive or uncaring forgetting, but one borne from knowing intimately. I know Marcia's voice so deeply that I take for granted how I know it is her speaking when I hear her. I just know. This is difficult to articulate but is close in practice to learning to read: once learned we no longer have to read every letter to construct the word, or read every word to understand the sentence. Language becomes familiar.

Marcia's voice is more than familiar: I embody all its nuances: its accent, rhythm, tone and timbre and I forget to think of how and why I know this is the voice of my mother. One of the reasons I became interested in researching how voices perform in my own work is because I grew up with this maternal voice - at once so incredibly close to me, so intimately resonant and also occasionally quite unexpected. Marcia's is a voice which can perform extraordinary versions of itself, so that my relationship with her voice can be made strange – where a singular utterance hovers between the familiar and unfamiliar.

Reynir Hutber's *And I* provides an extended cinematic context for Marcia's voice to perform through its many textures: its "infinite shades" (as Mladen Dolar

writes in *A Voice and Nothing More*, 2006). As a spectator of this monologue I move in and out of the speech, sometimes listening to the sonorous material of Marcia's voice, sometimes the linguistic content of her voice and sometimes both these textural and textual elements together. And my rhythms of focusing in and out by ear (of moving between modes of listening to Marcia's voice) shift as I watch the tightly framed face with the mouth often disappearing altogether. This moving portrait seems to make the voice stranger still: especially in its reference to, and departure from, Samuel Beckett's suspended spectacle of Mouth in *Not I*. In Reynir's framing, Marcia's mouth is both notionally central and brilliantly evasive, eluding any spectator's settled focus or gaze. I have long wanted to direct Marcia as Mouth, in part to experiment with the seemingly inescapable fixity of the performer/character in relation to the mother/daughter, and so my fascination in watching *And I* is amplified. Especially so when Marcia spins several simultaneous stories in the opening hour of *And I* - here I become aware that not only is she fixed (or stuck in the heat of the black box studio) to the plastic seat she is sitting on, but she is of course eternally fixed by the medium she is performing in and for. Marcia mentions this herself while wondering who will witness these eight hours in the years to come and then I think again on fixity, whether stuck to hot chairs or suspended midair in darkness. Marcia's voice is what keeps her – and her spectator/auditor – moving, always changing, never still.