

Introduction: Cognitive Krapp

In 1931, when Beckett was teaching his course on 'Racine and the Modern Novel' at Trinity College, Dublin, he emphasized Racine's modernity by comparing his work with modern authors such as André Gide. The student notes indicate that Beckett saw the notion of complexity as a key to modern literature. And to stress his point, he used the works of writers such as Corneille and Balzac as a contrastive background. Rachel Burrows wrote in her notes on Beckett's course that 'Corneille & Balzac abdicated as critics'.¹ One of the other students, Leslie Daiken, noted that for instance Racine's character of 'Andromaque is faced with a multiplicity of conflicting demands' (UoR Daiken notes, 8r) while 'There are no authentic women characters in Corneille' (5r). Racine's technique to study this complexity was to make use of so-called confidants, according to Daiken's notes: 'The function of the confidants is to express a fragment in the mind of the protagonist' (8r). The other students in Beckett's class similarly noted that Racine's dialogues are actually monologues. The confidants merely serve as sounding boards to reveal the protagonists' divided consciousness or the 'division in mind of antagonists' (Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 65; Le Juez 2008, 59).

In *Krapp's Last Tape*, this division characterizes all the stages of Krapp's 'self' and aspects of his life, the most outspoken division being the opposition light/darkness. As early as 1972, in a public lecture delivered at Trinity College, Dublin ('Light and Darkness in the Theatre of Samuel Beckett', 7 February 1972), James Knowlson already made a direct link between the opposition light/darkness and the dualism of mind and body (as discussed for instance in *Murphy*). The dichotomy between light and darkness is especially stark in *Krapp's Last Tape*, which makes it a particularly suitable case to study Beckett's developing views on cognition. Most of Beckett's writings can be understood as an inquiry into the human mind. And *Krapp's Last Tape* is one of the most remarkable attempts to evoke and even 'stage' the workings of a person's mind.

This book will therefore analyze the genesis of Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* from a cognitive perspective, starting from the research hypothesis

1 'Novel by Balzac, play by Corneille – no critical faculty (...) For Balzac – characters can't change their minds or artistic structure crashes – must be consistent' (TCD MIC 60, 41). 'When French artist abdicates as critic everything goes wrong. Corneille & Balzac abdicated as critics' whereas 'Racine is always present as critic' (48). For a discussion of these notes, see Le Juez 2008, 55.

that the connecting element in the dichotomies between darkness and light, night and day, sense and spirit, damnation and salvation is Time, and that, by introducing a temporal dimension, a genetic approach may be particularly relevant to the study of cognition² in *Krapp's Last Tape*.

To reconstruct the logic of a work's genesis, it is necessary to apply what Pierre-Marc de Biasi calls 'a selective critical procedure', that is, a particular critical point of view. Every reconstruction of a literary genesis is also a construction. As Pierre-Marc de Biasi noted (2004, 42), genetic criticism consists of two elements. Whereas the first element ('genetic') indicates the attempt to describe the extant textual materials and organize them according to their chronology, the second element ('criticism') is a critical hypothesis about the dynamics of a creative process. Especially this second aspect entails the recognition that it is impossible to be completely neutral or objective. Genetic criticism is not limited to the bibliographical description of manuscripts. It is the study of creative processes. In the endeavour to map the dynamics of these processes, every hypothesis is coloured by a particular point of view. The critical viewpoint can range from psychological to sociological or narratological perspectives. The critical point of view that informs this genetic study of *Krapp's Last Tape* is cognitive philosophy.

Krapp, the Narrator: Denarrative Selfhood

The reason why this approach seems particularly appropriate to *Krapp's Last Tape* is that Krapp is a character that can be said to problematize what Daniel C. Dennett has dubbed 'narrative selfhood', which he conceptualizes as a centre of gravity, a 'centre of narrative gravity' which, in spite of its abstractness, is 'tightly coupled to the physical world' (Dennett 2014, 334).

To some extent, this focus on narrative relates to what Jonathan Gottschall calls 'the storytelling animal'. His book of that title (2012) is subtitled 'How Stories Make Us Human'. According to Gottschall, the human mind is 'tuned to detect patterns' (103) and this 'hunger for meaningful patterns translates into a hunger for story' (104). If it cannot find meaningful patterns in the world, 'it will try to impose them' (103):

- 2 The working definition of 'cognition' as used in this book is the mental process of acquiring understanding through thought, experience and the senses.

“The storytelling mind is a crucial evolutionary adaptation. It allows us to experience our lives as coherent, orderly, and meaningful” (Gottschall 2012, 102). This ‘evolutionary’ view on storytelling is not new. In 1991, Daniel C. Dennett suggested that telling stories is ‘our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definiton’ (Dennett 1991, 418). The kind of taletelling he has in mind is ‘more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others – and ourselves – about who we are’ (418).

One of the differences between Gottschall and Dennett is that Gottschall sees religion as part of this storytelling evolutionary strategy, whereas Dennett – like other evolutionary thinkers such as Richard Dawkins – regards religion as a noxious sort of virus of the mind. Gottschall suggests that religions may be part of the same storytelling urge: ‘humans conjure gods, spirits, and sprites to fill explanatory voids’ (121). Since ‘we abhor explanatory vacuums’ we create religions, which Gottschall dubs ‘the master confabulations of the storytelling mind’ (121).³

Samuel Beckett’s works seem to thematize this ‘explanatory void’ as a storytelling impulse, but there is a clear difference with Gottschall’s analysis. Whereas Gottschall’s work embraces this human characteristic, Beckett parodies and criticizes it, notably in *Krapp’s Last Tape*, which – as H. Porter Abbott notes – ‘allowed him to stage the self-estrangement he had elaborated in prose’ (Abbott 1996, 64). Beckett critically scrutinizes our tendency to conjure ‘gods, spirits, and sprites’ to fill those voids. As Sue Wilson notes with reference to the Manichaeism in the play: ‘*Krapp’s Last Tape* is a critique, not a celebration, of its protagonist’s useless Manichaeian, and metaphysical, obsessiveness. Beckett criticism, which often suffers from a similar disability, might do well to concede that inclusion of Manichaeian “Wild stuff” in *Krapp’s Last Tape* is not equivalent to an authorial commendation of the system’s wisdom’ (Wilson 2002, 142). This critical attitude applies to Beckett’s creative use of any system that tried to construe a pattern of meaning, be it psychological, philosophical or religious. While Beckett always remained skeptical of the way each of these systems tried to impose a particular narrative framework upon the world, he did make use of them as a contrastive background against which he could write his own

3 Jonah Lehrer employs the same notion of a ‘mental confabulation’, but applies it to the idea of a unified self, an invention we tend to make ‘in order to ignore our innate contradictions’ (Lehrer 2008, 180).

work. A religious system that serves this purpose in *Krapp's Last Tape* is Manichaeism, which will be discussed in chapter 2.3.

Krapp, the Confessor: Memoirs and Dramatic Diaries

One of Beckett's sources of information about this religion was Saint Augustine's *Confessions*. As his notes in the *'Dream' Notebook* indicate, Beckett read the *Confessions* thoroughly (DN 11-30; entries [79]-[211]). To Thomas MacGreevy he described his reading as 'phrase-hunting in St. Augustine' (25 January 1931; qtd. in DN 11) and that, indeed, seems to have been his direct purpose at the time: culling interesting or exotic phrases to use them in his first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. But his reading may have had a more lasting effect as well. In the chapters in which Augustine confesses his sins as a Manichaeist, he repeatedly makes an explicit link between confession and memory. In Book III, Chapter VI.10 of the *Confessions*, he introduces the pseudo-Christian sect of the Manichaeans as a group of 'men, delirious in their pride, carnal and voluble, whose mouths were the snares of the devil' (transl. Albert C. Outler). The doctrine of their Persian religious leader Mani (A.D. 216-277) was based on the stark contrast between light and darkness. The sect consisted of a select minority of 'perfecti' and a group of followers, called 'auditores'. Saint Augustine confesses that he used to be an auditor: 'I confess my remembrance of this to thee, O Lord, as far as I can recall it -' (Book III, XI.20). Augustine repeatedly mentions the possibility that his memory is defective, not unlike many of Beckett's characters, such as Malone, who claims to 'benefit by a hiatus in [his] recollections'.⁴ In Outler's translation, there are many things that Augustine has 'simply forgotten'; in the translation by E. B. Pusey, which Beckett probably read when he made his notes in the *'Dream' Notebook*, Augustine uses a negative construction: 'much I pass by, hastening to those things which more press me to confess unto Thee, and much I do not remember' (Book III, XII.21, transl. Pusey).⁵

- 4 'One day I found myself here, in the bed. Having probably lost consciousness somewhere, I benefit by a hiatus in my recollections, not to be resumed until I recovered my senses, in this bed. As to the events that led up to my fainting [...] they have left no discernible trace, on my mind.' (MD 7)
- 5 In the translation by Outler: 'for I pass over many things, hastening on to those things which more strongly impel me to confess to thee - and many

Augustine tries to recall his ‘past errors’,⁶ which is similar to Krapp’s endeavour. The difference is that Augustine relies on God as an *aide-mémoire* and regularly asks for God’s confirmation (‘Is it not thus, as I recall it’),⁷ whereas Krapp has to rely on his recorded tapes. While the idea of the confessions as a sort of memoir entails all the potential distortions of memory, the habit of recording a tape on each birthday links up with Beckett’s early idea for a ‘Journal of a Melancholic’ (see Nixon 2011, 121-5) and with his interest in Samuel Johnson, including Johnson’s habit of recording his thoughts on his birthday. In his ‘Bibliography of Diary Fiction’, H. Porter Abbott notes that *Krapp’s Last Tape* is ‘the only instance that appears to qualify’ as a ‘dramatic diary’ (Abbott 1984, 208). Abbott’s annotated bibliography follows immediately after his analysis of *Malone Dies* as a diary novel. Given the chronological coincidence of Beckett’s re-immersion in his novel when Donald McWhinnie suggested a selection of passages from *Malone Dies* to be read and broadcast on the BBC (see chronology in section 2.1.2), it is not surprising that there are affinities between Beckett’s ‘diary fiction’ and the ‘dramatic diary’.

In terms of reliability, however, Krapp’s collection of tapes constitutes something in between a diary and a memoir: it is not really a diary, for the recordings take place only once a year and are consequently prone to contain more distortions than a daily record; on the other hand, it is not a memoir

things I have simply forgotten’ (Book III, XII.21).

6 ‘I would confess to thee my shame to thy glory. Bear with me, I beseech thee, and give me the grace to retrace in my present memory the devious ways of my *past errors*’ (Book IV, I.1, transl. Outler; emphasis added).

7 For instance, one of the more memorable events Augustine recalls is the arrival of Faustus: ‘There had just come to Carthage a certain bishop of the Manicheans, Faustus by name, a great snare of the devil; and many were entangled by him through the charm of his eloquence. [...] For almost the whole of the nine years that I listened with unsettled mind to the Manichean teaching I had been looking forward with unbounded eagerness to the arrival of this Faustus. [...] When at last he did come, I found him to be a man of pleasant speech, who spoke of the very same things they themselves did, although more fluently and in a more agreeable style. [...] But they who extolled him to me were not competent judges. They thought him able and wise because his eloquence delighted them’ (Book V, III.3; VI.10). His graceful and seductive eloquence, however, turns out to be a deceptive veil, covering his ignorance of the liberal arts. And then Augustine asks for God’s confirmation: ‘Is it not thus, *as I recall it*, O Lord my God, Thou judge of my conscience?’ (Book Five, VI.11; emphasis added).

either. The old, 69-year old Krapp, is often surprised and seems to have a different memory of what his younger selves remembered.

Krapp, the Protagonist: the Mechanism of Memory

Beckett thematizes this mechanism of memory and thus problematizes what Gottschall describes as follows: ‘A life story is a carefully shaped narrative that is replete with strategic forgetting and skillfully spun meanings’ (Gottschall 2012, 161). According to Gottschall, ‘we misremember the past in a way that allows us to maintain protagonist status in the stories of our own lives’ (170), and this need to give ourselves the role of the protagonist in our own stories ‘warps our sense of self’ (171).

How this sense of ‘self’ takes shape in the mind is described by Antonio Damasio by means of the verb ‘to protagonize’.⁸ Krapp’s recordings perform this function of ‘protagonization’, but the older Krapp’s comments immediately undermine and ridicule this pompous ‘sense of self’. Regarding the coordinating structures, necessary to construct the ‘autobiographical self’, Damasio insists that they ‘are *not* Cartesian theaters’,⁹ by which he alludes to Daniel C. Dennett. By coining this notion of the ‘Cartesian theater’, Dennett rejected the Cartesian idea that consciousness would ‘happen’ at a particular place (the pineal gland), which he caricatures as a little theatre in which a homunculus interprets all incoming data. The problem of this model is that this homunculus would, in its turn, need a smaller homunculus inside its brain, and this smaller homunculus an even smaller one inside its brain and so on. This Chinese boxes model of the mind, which is even illustrated in a doodle in the manuscript of *L’Innommable* (Van Hulle and Weller 2014, 155) – resembles the model of character-narrators within character-narrators in *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*. After having parodied this Cartesian homunculus model by means of the M-characters in his novels,¹⁰

8 ‘Within the narrative of the moment, [the protoself] must *protagonize*’ as a result of ‘its moment-to-moment engagement as caused by any object being perceived’ (Damasio 2012, 202; Damasio’s emphasis). In this context, Damasio stresses that ‘the protoself is not to be confused with a homunculus’ for ‘The well-identified problem with the homunculus resides with the infinite regress it creates’ (Damasio 2012, 201).

9 ‘They are *not* interpreter homunculi’ (Damasio 2012, 214).

10 *Modern Manuscripts: The Extended Mind and Creative Undoing* (Van Hulle 2014, 154 ff.) explores how Dennett’s (and others’) alternative models of the

Beckett now staged another way of thinking. He obviously did not develop a philosophical, explicitly formulated new model of the mind. But his play does enact a way of thinking that presages Dennett's post-Cartesian alternative, called the 'multiple drafts model'.

Krapp, the Editor: the Multiple Drafts Model

Dennett's alternative metaphor for the workings of consciousness presents consciousness as a continuous process of editing and revising. Similarly, Gottschall notes that, 'like a novel in process, our life stories are always changing and evolving, being edited, rewritten, and embellished by an unreliable narrator' (Gottschall 2012, 176). The same editing metaphor is employed by Damasio, who suggests that human minds 'are about the cinemalike editing choices that our pervasive system of biological value has promoted' (Damasio 2012, 72).

The metaphor of editing in these philosophical, literary, psychological and neurological approaches is applied to the mind as something that takes place inside the brain.¹¹ What Beckett does in *Krapp's Last Tape* is significant from a cognitive perspective. He 'externalizes'¹² this process by means of a 'machine': the tape recorder. At first sight, one could explain away this device as an *aide-mémoire*, as it was often done in the 1960s and 1970s.¹³ Having recognized the deficient nature of his memory relatively early in his life, Krapp has devised a way to keep track of his remembrances

mind relate to Beckett's inquiries into the human mind.

- 11 An interesting approach to literature from the vantage point of neuroscience and phenomenology is Paul B. Armstrong's *How Literature Plays with the Brain: The Neuroscience of Reading and Art* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2013).
- 12 This is the term Rosemary Pountney employs to describe this memory beyond the brain: 'By externalising Krapp's overriding memory on the spool of tape that provides the recurring action in *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett is once again fusing form with content' (Pountney 1988, 57). Still, this 'externalization' perpetuates an inside/outside metaphor that underwrites the Cartesian mind/body split.
- 13 Sabine Kozdon has made a survey of 'Krapp's Tape Archive' (Kozdon 2005, 160). The various descriptions of the tape recorder range from a 'technische[s] Gedächtnis' (Mennemeier 1964, 307) to a 'memory machine' (Gilbert 1968, 252) or a "'taped" memory-bank' (Knowlson 1976, 59). In the 1990s, it was still referred to as a 'Maschinengedächtnis' (Becker 1998, 161), one of Beckett's 'technischen Prothesen' (Becker 1998, 10). As part of

by recording them. In that basic sense, the tape recorder resembles ‘Otto’s notebook’ in David Chalmers and Andy Clark’s article ‘The Extended Mind’. Chalmers and Clark argue that the mind is not limited to the brain and to illustrate their thesis, they introduce a fictional Alzheimer’s patient called Otto, who knows his memory is deficient and therefore makes use of a notebook to remember things. His notebook functions as a memory, the only difference being that this memory ‘lies beyond the skin’ (Clark and Chalmers 2010, 33-4). A paradigm that builds on this idea, but also radicalizes it, is ‘enactivism’.

Krapp, the Recorder: Enactivism and the Extensive Mind

Enactivists argue that basic minds indeed interact with the environment, but whereas in Otto’s case the ‘extension’ of his memory was presented as an exceptional case (the case of an Alzheimer’s patient), they argue that this interaction with the environment is not an exception but the rule. That is why ‘radical enactivists’ such as Daniel Hutto and Erik Myin prefer the term ‘*extensive* mind’ to the ‘extended mind’ (Hutto and Myin 2013, 137).¹⁴

From this enactivist perspective, the tape recorder in *Krapp’s Last Tape* is not just an *aide-mémoire*; it is an integral part of Krapp’s mind. This view contrasts with interpretations of the tape recorder and the boxes with spools as a metaphor for Krapp’s ‘brain’,¹⁵ and of the den as part of ‘the arena of the brain’, as Sidney Homan called it: ‘We are *inside Krapp’s head*, and his movements, whether about the desk, in terms of it, or backstage, are played out in the arena of the brain’ (Homan 1984, 97; emphasis added). Krapp’s desk is also compared to a brain: ‘Krapp’s desk [...] may well be a brain, with its compartments or ‘drawers’ of experiences, memories and information’

these metaphors, the tapes have been called ‘konservierte Vergangenheiten’ (Mennemeier 1964, 309) and ‘Erinnerungskonserven’ (Maierhöfer 1970, 85).

- 14 A crucial aspect of ‘enactivism’ is that it questions representationalism. From an archaeological perspective, Lambros Malafouris describes the problem of representationalism by noting that ‘extended-mind theorists, have, to varying degrees, expanded the territory of mind into the material world’, but that ‘they have generally failed, or that they remain unwilling, to break completely from representationalism and move beyond its computational heritage’ (2013, 85).
- 15 For instance, Georg Hensel calls it ‘ein Bild von Krapps Gehirn’ (Hensel 1968, 67).

(Homan 1984, 44). Against this metaphorical, ‘internalist’ (Herman 2011, 255) conception of the workings of the mind, an enactivist approach does not reduce the workings of mind and memory to the brain.

This approach accords with Lambros Malafouris’s ‘material agency theory’ (Malafouris 2013, 119). According to Malafouris, ‘Material signs do not represent; they enact. They do not stand for reality; they bring forth reality’ (118). This ‘material agency’ (119) has an impact on the human mind, which Malafouris regards as ‘an emergent product of complex ecological relationships and flexible incorporative forms of material engagement’ (239).

As an archaeologist, Malafouris developed his theory based on the study of knapped stones. Krapp’s tape recorder is admittedly much more complex an object than a knapped stone, but it can also serve as an ‘agent’,¹⁶ and thus play an active role in Krapp’s ‘extensive mind’. This ‘extensive mind’ in *Krapp’s Last Tape* is not just a theatrical technique. What is at issue is more than putting on stage what takes place ‘inside the skull’. It is the enactment of the enactive mind at work.

This enactment of the mind is a good starting point to discuss the relation between Beckett’s work and enactive cognition. In 1978, Thomas Postlewait wrote an interesting article on the way Beckett’s short plays ‘dramatize a mind’ (484): ‘By taking up drama, Beckett determines to restate his artistic concerns in a medium that traditionally has had little patience for the life of the mind divorced from social interaction and moral decision’ (479). What Beckett tries to do, according to Postlewait, is to show ‘internal consciousness as external event’¹⁷: ‘In other words, he is holding a mirror up to the act of reflection’ (479). The mirror is a rather problematic metaphor from the vantage point of ‘enactivism’ since it tends to be linked to ‘representation’, a notion the enactivist paradigm explicitly questions (in the context of cognitive philosophy). The notion of ‘*enaction*’ (in relation to cognition) was first suggested by Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor

16 As it happens, Beckett also employed the word ‘agent’ when – in his production notebook – he analysed the psychology of the play and referred to the tape recorder as an ‘Agent masturbateur’ (see section 2.6.1).

17 Postlewait’s essay is not an enactivist interpretation of *Krapp’s Last Tape*: he regards consciousness as something ‘internal’, which is ‘externalized’, to use Pountney’s term (1988, 57). Enactivism tries to avoid the inside/outside metaphor and would see the interaction with listeners such as Racine’s confidants as part of consciousness, rather than just an ‘externalization’ of an ‘internal consciousness’.

Rosch in 1991. Their book *The Embodied Mind* ‘questions the centrality of the notion that cognition is fundamentally representation’ (9).¹⁸ In contrast with this view, Varela, Thompson and Rosch define cognition as ‘embodied action’.¹⁹ From a Beckettian viewpoint, this notion of embodiment is also present in Steven Connor’s reading of the tape in *Krapp’s Last Tape*: ‘Tape brings together the continuous and the discontinuous [...] it is the medium that most seems to embody the predicament of temporal embodiment – by linking us to our losses, making it possible for us to recall what we can no longer remember, keeping us in touch with what nevertheless remains out of reach, making us remain what we no longer are’ (Connor 2014, 101). Connor’s term ‘material imagination’ is probably more suitable to describe the cognitive mechanisms at work in *Krapp’s Last Tape* than Postlewait’s mirror reflecting the act of reflection, but Postlewait does have a point when he writes that in order to stage this material imagination Beckett had to ‘meet the need for a listener (besides the audience)’ (480). This part of the listener is played by both the tape recorder and by the older Krapp.

Krapp, the Auditor: The Character and the Mechanical Confidant

The tape recorder thus performs the role the ‘confidants’ play in Racine’s dramatic writings. As Angela Moorjani has shown, the Racinian character-confidant pair – analysed by Beckett in his lectures at Trinity College Dublin in the early 1930s – is recognizable in many of Beckett’s novels. Although Racine’s character-confidant pairs were devised as a dramatic technique ‘to express *inner* discussion’ (Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 73), they have arguably had as much impact on Beckett’s prose fiction as on his drama, if not more

- 18 As Varela, Thompson and Rosch argue, the notion that cognition is fundamentally representation is based on three assumptions: ‘The first is that we inhabit a world with particular properties, such as length, color, movement, sound, etc. The second is that we pick up or recover these properties by internally representing them. The third is that there is a separate subjective “we” who does these things’ (9).
- 19 ‘By using the term *embodied* we mean to highlight two points: first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context. By using the word *action* we mean to emphasize once again that sensory and motor processes, perception and action, are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition’ (172-3).

(Moorjani 2012). Beckett had made the link between this Racinian dramatic technique and prose fiction by applying it to his analysis of André Gide's works. But the impact on Beckett's drama cannot be neglected either, for it is not limited to such pairs as Didi and Gogo in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm and Clov in *Endgame*, Winnie and Willie in *Happy Days* or Mouth and Auditor in *Not I*. The notion of the Auditor in this context of the confidants is especially interesting given the Manichaean background of *Krapp's Last Tape*. Whereas Augustine confesses to have been an 'auditor', Krapp's confessions – confided to the mechanical confidant in the form of the tape recorder – are those of an 'auditor' listening to his earlier selves.

With regard to Beckett's appropriation of Racine's confidant technique, the interaction between his own dramatic work and his work of fiction increasingly started to play a role by the time he was working on *Krapp's Last Tape*. When he wrote the play, he had just finished translating *L'Innommable*, in which he calls Mercier and Camier a 'pseudocouple': 'Two shapes then, oblong like man, entered into collision before me. They fell and I saw them no more. I naturally thought of the pseudocouple Mercier-Camier' (*Un* 7). The Racinian character-confidant pairs (such as Phèdre-Cenone, Andromaque-Céphise, Oreste-Pylade, Hermione-Cléone) allow the main characters to express their thoughts as in a soliloquy by addressing their confidants. In his TCD lectures, Beckett coined the term 'polylogue' (Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 64) for this technique, when for instance Pylade 'gives fragmentary voice to Oreste's divided mind' (see Moorjani 2012, 47). In the early story 'Ding-Dong', Beckett had already alluded to the Racinian pseudocouple Orestes and Pylades: 'We were Pylades and Orestes for a period, flattened down to something very genteel; but the relation abode and was highly confidential while it lasted' (*MPTK* 32).

In the same story, Belacqua speaks of 'a sorry collapse of my internus homo' (32). If the 'internus homo' can be related to the homunculus model or 'Cartesian theatre' and if the tape recorder can be regarded as an agent (a 'material agent' in Malafouris's terms), Krapp and his recorder illustrate not so much Beckett's application of Racine's technique to externalize the so-called 'interior monologue' of the main character, but Beckett's intuition of the 'extensive mind' at work. *Krapp's Last Tape* shows that the Racinian character-confidant pair is more than just a technique to 'externalize' (Pountney 1988, 57) what goes on 'inside' the mind; it shows that the mind

is interaction. Rather than ‘a stage metaphor for time past’ (Cohn 1976, 165), the recorder is part of the workings of the mind.

In this sense, the pseudocouple Krapp and his tape recorder plays its Racinian role to express not only ‘**division** in mind of antagonists’ (Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 65), as Rachel Burrows wrote in her lecture notes, but also ‘**the vision**’, as Grace McKinley (mis)understood it. She may not have clearly heard what Beckett had to say about this internal conflict, so ‘division’ became ‘the vision’ in her notes:

Pylade etc. are the fragments of the divided minds of Orestes etc. Their function is to express **the vision** in the minds of their protagonists’ (McKinley in Knowlson and Knowlson 2006, 308; emphasis added).

No matter how involuntary McKinley’s mistake was, it unwittingly indicates an interesting interplay between ‘division’ and ‘the vision’, touching upon a thematic core of *Krapp’s Last Tape*. Evidently, Krapp’s pompously presented ‘vision’ or so-called revelation – ‘the vision at last’ – is the centre of the play if one puts the emphasis on Krapp’s creative career. At the same time, ‘division’ is a central theme as well. One could even argue that, in this inquiry into the human mind, ‘division’ *is* the vision. The 39-year-old Krapp’s vision, his clear Manichean division of mind and body, light and darkness, leading him to choose a life of the mind and abandon love, soon becomes a caricature. But Krapp is not alone. His opinions are divided, as it were, and his older self is extremely critical of ‘the vision’ of this pompous earlier version of himself.

In this context, it is interesting that Krapp uses both the first-person and the third-person pronoun to talk about his former selves,²⁰ understanding himself both as one individual consisting of a succession of versions, *and* as a succession of individuals:

- 20 Rolf Breuer interprets this as follows: ‘On the one hand, there is one Krapp who is present in three phases of his life; on the other hand, there are three Krapps. Krapp himself is aware of this conflicting nature of things, for sometimes he speaks of himself in the first person and sometimes in the third person [...]. In the one case he understands himself as one Self in three phases, in the other case he understands himself as three Selves’ (Breuer 1993, 564-5).

Hard to believe *I* was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus!
And the aspirations! [...] Statistics. Seventeen hundred hours,
out of the preceding eight thousand odd, consumed on licensed
premises alone. More than 20 per cent, say 40 per cent of *his*
waking life (*KLT* 6; emphasis added).

These multiple Krapps or multiple drafts of Krapp have their counterpart in the multiple drafts of *Krapp's Last Tape*.

Krapp, the Spool: Multiple Drafts and Bergsonian Affinities

In his essay *Proust* (1931) Beckett already wrote that 'the individual is a succession of individuals' (*PTD* 19). He was obviously not the first to suggest this idea and his reading not only of Proust but also of Bergson around the same time may have played a role as well.²¹ Bergson is mentioned several times in Rachel Burrows's notes on the classes Beckett taught at TCD during Michaelmas 1931.²² With his students, Beckett discussed the distinction between the 'Bergsonian conception of intelligence & intuition' and the highest and lowest forms of intelligence according to Bergson, that is, respectively 'l'intelligence personnelle' and the 'fonctionnement [de l'] esprit' (Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 9; see Gontarski 2008, 96). Fairly early in the lectures, Beckett explained that 'intuition can achieve a total vision' whereas 'intelligence can't', according to Bergson.²³ Apart from the relatively direct impact of Beckett's encounter with Bergson on his essay *Proust*, the Bergsonian suggestion that intelligence can 'apprehend the passage of time but not [the] present moment'²⁴ to some extent still reverberates in *Krapp's Last Tape*. In his 'Introduction à la métaphysique', an essay that first appeared in 1903 and was later included in *La Pensée et le Mouvant*,

- 21 Jeanette R. Malkin notes that Bergson distinguishes two types of memory: habit memory and 'pure' or spontaneous memory (1997, 34). 'Krapp's memory-machine' corresponds to 'habit memory', which Bergson describes as 'mechanistic, functional, reflecting a view of time which is serial and consecutive: basically a spatial and analytic concept of time' (34).
- 22 For a discussion of Bergson in these notes, see Gontarski 2008.
- 23 Rachel Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 7; see Gontarski 2008, 96.
- 24 Burrows, TCD MIC 60, 7.

Bergson tries to figure out why ‘we’ intuitively seem to grasp the notion of a persisting self, which he calls a reality:

Il y a une réalité au moins que nous saisissons tous du dedans, par intuition et non par simple analyse. C’est notre propre personne dans son écoulement à travers le temps. C’est notre moi qui dure. Nous pouvons ne sympathiser intellectuellement, ou plutôt spirituellement, avec aucune autre chose. Mais nous sympathisons sûrement avec nous-mêmes. [There is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures. We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with our own selves.] (Bergson 1970, 1396; trans. T. E. Hulme)

What Bergson takes for granted – that ‘we’ sympathize with ourselves – is not that evident (‘sûrement’) in *Krapp’s Last Tape*. And the play also challenges Bergson’s rather internalist notion of the mind: ‘Quand je promène sur ma personne, supposé inactive, *le regard intérieur* de ma conscience, j’aperçois d’abord, ainsi qu’une croûte solidifiée à la surface, toutes les perceptions qui lui arrivent du monde matériel’ [‘When I direct my attention *inward* to contemplate my own self (supposed for the moment to be inactive), I perceive at first, as a crust solidified on the surface, all the perceptions which come to it from the material world’] (1396; trans. T. E. Hulme; emphasis added). This crust consists of three types of cognition: perceptions of material objects, memories attached to them, and tendencies, habits or virtual actions linked to these perceptions and memories:

Ces perceptions sont nettes, distinctes, juxtaposées ou juxtaposables les unes aux autres; elles cherchent à se grouper en *objets*. J’aperçois ensuite des souvenirs plus ou moins adhérents à ces perceptions et qui servent à les interpréter; ces souvenirs se sont comme détachés du fond de ma personne, attirés à la périphérie par les perceptions qui leur ressemblent; ils sont posés sur moi sans être absolument moi-même. Et enfin je sens se manifester des tendances, des habitudes motrices, une foule d’actions virtuelles plus ou moins solidement liées à ces

perceptions et à ces souvenirs. [These perceptions are clear, distinct, juxtaposed or juxtaposable one with another; they tend to group themselves into objects. Next, I notice the memories which more or less adhere to these perceptions and which serve to interpret them. These memories have been detached, as it were, from the depth of my personality, drawn to the surface by the perceptions which resemble them; they rest on the surface of my mind without being absolutely myself. Lastly, I feel the stir of tendencies and motor habits – a crowd of virtual actions, more or less firmly bound to these perceptions and memories.] (Bergson 1970, 1397; trans. T. E. Hulme)

Bergson first presents his model centrifugally, ‘du dedans vers le dehors’ (1397), by means of the metaphor of a sphere, starting from an inner core and ending in ‘le monde extérieur’ [‘the exterior world’]. Then, he takes another, centripetal perspective, ‘de la périphérie vers le centre’ (1397), and starts looking for what is ‘le plus durablement moi-même’ [‘most enduringly myself’] (1397). Underneath the frozen surface (‘congélation’) he finds a continuous flux (‘une continuité d’écoulement’), which he first presents as a succession of multiple states, not unlike the texts of *Comment c’est / How It Is* (‘ma vie dernier état’ / ‘my life last state last version’; Beckett 2001, 2-3): ‘C’est une succession d’états dont chacun annonce ce qui suit et contient ce qui précède’ [‘a succession of states, each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it’] (1397; trans. T. E. Hulme).

But the fact that he perceives these multiple states as states is a retroactive experience.²⁵ As long as he was experiencing them, it was impossible to say where the one ended and the next began.²⁶ That is when Bergson switches to yet another metaphor, the image of a spool, which prefigures the central metaphor of *Krapp’s Last Tape*:

- 25 ‘A vrai dire, ils ne constituent des états multiples que lorsque je les ai déjà dépassés et que je me retourne en arrière pour en observer la trace’ [‘They can, properly speaking, only be said to form multiple states when I have already passed them and turn back to observe their track’] (1397).
- 26 ‘En réalité, aucun d’eux ne commence ni ne finit, mais tous se prolongent les uns dans les autres’ [‘In reality no one of them begins or ends, but all extend into each other’] (1397).

C'est, si l'on veut, le déroulement d'un rouleau, car il n'y a pas d'être vivant qui ne se sente arriver peu à peu au bout de son rôle; et vivre consiste à vieillir. Mais c'est tout aussi bien un enroulement continu, comme celui d'un fil sur une pelote, car notre passé nous suit, il se grossit sans cesse du présent qu'il ramasse sur sa route; et conscience signifie mémoire. [This inner life may be compared to the unrolling of a coil, for there is no living being who does not feel himself gradually to the end of his role; and to live is to grow old. But it may just as well be compared to a continual rolling up, like that of a thread on a ball, for our past follows us, it swells incessantly with the present that it picks up on its way; and consciousness means memory.] (1397)

Bergson thus visualizes the notions of the self, consciousness and memory by means of the metaphor of winding and unwinding spools. In its basic structure, this image resembles Beckett's metaphor of decantation in *Proust*, where he pictures the self as 'the seat of a constant process of decantation, decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours' (*PTD* 15).

But Bergson immediately nuances his metaphor in the next paragraph: 'A vrai dire, ce n'est ni un enroulement ni un déroulement, car ces deux images évoquent la représentation de lignes ou de surfaces dont les parties sont homogènes entre elles et superposables les unes aux autres. Or, il n'y a pas deux moments identiques chez un être conscient' ['But actually it is neither an unrolling nor a rolling up, for these two similes evoke the idea of lines and surfaces whose parts are homogeneous and superposable on one another. Now, there are no two identical moments in the life of the same conscious being.'] (1397-8) S. E. Gontarski draws attention to the way Bergson immediately rejects his own image of accumulation. According to Gontarski, 'Krapp finally remains fettered by what Bergson calls "habits of mind"' (Gontarski 2011, 72). From a Bergsonian perspective, the problem is that Krapp's tapes only represent a succession of moments, not a 'convergence of images that would access pure durée' (72). Moreover, Krapp's approach is not Bergsonian; it is analytic rather than intuitive: 'what Krapp does with his intuited insight is to return to the old habits of analysis,

immediately to betray the intuition by “translating” it into language as he reduces the “multiple states” of lived and felt experience into something of a chronological line, something akin to the path of Zeno’s arrow in flight’ (Gontarski 2011, 71).

To what extent Krapp’s tape recorder can be interpreted as a comment on, or critical allusion to, Bergson’s image of the self is hard to determine with certainty. One of the books in Beckett’s library – Bachelard’s *L’Intuition de l’instant* (1932) – suggests he appreciated Bergson but not without critical distance. Even though the copy in Beckett’s library is a 1966 edition (i.e. it post-dates the writing of *Krapp’s Last Tape*), it does indicate that Beckett continued to critically reassess his early interest in Bergson. Bachelard suggested an intuition of the present instant as an alternative to Bergson’s ‘intuition of duration’, because any human being is always faced with the discontinuity of experience (Bachelard 1966, 42). Bachelard was critical of Bergson’s immobile image of mobile time implied by the intuition of duration, which affirmed a form of continuity within the self. *Krapp’s Last Tape* repeatedly emphasizes precisely the *discontinuity* between these states (‘Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp; ‘hard to believe I was ever as bad as that; *KLT* 6, 9; *CDW* 223). But the multiplicity of states or versions does correspond with Bergson’s ‘succession d’états’ and with the awareness that these ‘états multiples’ can only be experienced as multiple states with hindsight, when one can look back and observe their traces (Bergson 1970, 1397).

Krapp, the Character and the Work in Progress: The ‘Multiple Drafts Model’ and the Work’s Multiple Drafts

A similar observation applies to the traces of the writing process and its multiple drafts. The genetic analysis thus constitutes a counterpart to Dennett’s multiple drafts model. But what is a mere metaphor in Dennett’s model is a material reality in genetic criticism. The objective of this book’s genetic analysis is not to establish an analogy between *the author* and his character (even though biographical readings are certainly possible), but to show that *the work* and the character correspond to similar logics of the draft (what Daniel Ferrer calls the ‘logiques du brouillons’; Ferrer 2011) – both consisting of multiple states. As a consequence, the research hypothesis is that analyzing the succession of textual versions may shed some light on

the dynamics of the multiple drafts model, characterizing the fictional mind evoked in this play.

This book follows the same structure as the other volumes in the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project: Part I is devoted to the extant documents; Part II is a narrative of the work's genesis. The division also reflects the distinction between the documents and the versions of the text. A document is the material vessel containing possibly more than one text. For instance, the so-called 'Eté 56' exercise book (see 1.1.1) contains more than one version of *Krapp's Last Tape*, and apart from that it also contains early versions of, and notes for, other works by Beckett. The documents are material objects, the versions are not.

Part I therefore provides a bibliographical description of the relevant documents, preserved in the holding libraries at the University of Reading, the Lilly Library in Indiana, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and the University of California, San Diego. If readers are more interested in the story of the genesis, it is possible to skip the description of the documents and jump to the second part.

Part II reconstructs the logic of the work's progress by discerning the various versions, determining their chronology and analysing their contents.

To facilitate the analysis of the genesis, the three versions of Krapp will be referred to as young Krapp (Krapp1), middle-aged Krapp (Krapp2) and old Krapp (Krapp3). And the text of *Krapp's Last Tape* will be divided into twelve scenes:

- I Mime I: Stage directions and opening mime
From *'A late evening in the future'* (KLT 3; CDW 215)
to *'brings them smartly together and rubs them.'* (KLT 4;
CDW 216)
- II 'Spooooo!': Krapp's ledger and spools
From 'Krapp: [*Briskly.*] Ah!' (KLT 4; CDW 216)
to *'hand cupping ear towards machine, face front.'* (KLT 5;
CDW 217)
- III 'My condition': taped voice of Krapp2, intellectually at the 'crest of
the wave'

- From ‘Tape: [*Strong voice, rather pompous*]’ (KLT 5; CDW 216)
to ‘Did I ever sing? No. [*Pause.*]’ (KLT 6; CDW 218)
- IV ‘Aspirations’: taped voice of Krapp2, listening to Krapp1 (‘an old year’)
From ‘Just been listening to an old year’ (KLT 6; CDW 218)
to ‘When I look –’ (KLT 7; CDW 218).
- V Song: Krapp3’s backstage singing interrupted after the word ‘shadows –’
From ‘[*Krapp switches off, broods, looks at his watch ...*]’ (KLT 7;
CDW 218)
to ‘[*... switches on, resumes his listening posture.*]’ (KLT 7;
CDW 219).
- VI ‘Viduity’: widowhood and death of Krapp’s mother
From ‘Tape: – back on the year that is gone’ (KLT 7; CDW 219)
to ‘But I gave it to the dog. [*Pause.*] Ah well.... [*Pause.*]’ (KLT 8;
CDW 220)
- VII ‘The vision’: Krapp2’s revelation
From ‘Spiritually a year of profound gloom’ (KLT 8; CDW 220)
to ‘the fire – [*Krapp curses louder, switches off, winds tape
forward, switches on again*]’ (KLT 9; CDW 220).
- VIII ‘Farewell to love’ I:
From ‘– my face in her breasts’ (KLT 9; CDW 220)
to ‘Here I end – [*Krapp switches off, winds tape back, switches
on again.*]’ (KLT 9; CDW 221).
- IX ‘Farewell to love’ II:
From ‘– upper lake, with the punt’ (KLT 9; CDW 221)
to ‘Past midnight. Never knew –’ (KLT 10; CDW 221)
- X Mime II: second scene backstage and preparations for recording
From ‘[*Krapp switches off, broods. Finally he fumbles in his
pockets...*]’ (KLT 10; CDW 221)
to ‘[*... clears his throat and begins to record.*]’ (KLT 10; CDW 221)

- XI Recording: including reminiscence of scenes II ('Spooooo!') and V (Song)
From 'Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for'
(*KLT* 10; *CDW* 222)
to '[*Pause.*] Lie down across her. [*Long pause. He suddenly
bends over machine, switches off, wrenches off tape, throws it
away, puts on the other, winds it forward to the passage he wants,
switches on, listens staring front.*]' (*KLT* 11; *CDW* 223)
- XII 'Farewell to love' III:
From '-gooseberries, she said.' (*KLT* 11; *CDW* 223)
to '[... *The tape runs on in silence.*] / curtain' (*KLT* 12; *CDW* 223).

Part II discusses the context of the writing process (2.1); the succession of versions of the play as a whole (2.2); the genesis of each individual scene (2.3); and the genesis of the French version, *La Dernière Bande*.²⁷

27 Because the French title of *Krapp's Last Tape* is differently capitalized in various publications, its spelling will be standardized throughout this book according to the rules set out by *Le Monde* in their blog post on capitalization, which states that whenever an adjective occurs between an article and a noun, all three should be capitalized (http://correcteurs.blog.lemonde.fr/2006/05/09/2006_05_lintrt_des_capi/).