Graphanalysis, Technological Reproduction, and the Acoustical Unconscious: Reflections on an Error in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*

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The mechanical errors, insofar as they are not skids but substitutions, therefore refer to an entirely different disturbance than manuscript particularities: through the machine, the unconscious writes much more surely than natural script does, and one can conceive of a graphanalysis*, much more pertinent than our insipid graphology. . .* [1]

In his 1975 memoir in fragments, Roland Barthes wrote that the mechanization of writing changed slips of the pen (*lapsus calami*) into something else altogether: typing mistakes (*fautes de frappe*), in fact, have a more direct access to the unconscious, which manifests itself in a manner that might be called depsychologized. The affinity of the unconscious with machines, moreover, is a recurring theme of post-structuralist French culture of those years, often reappearing in the writings of Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari, to name a few. If "insipid graphology" places emphasis on the link between handwriting and individual psychology, "graphanalysis" considers the mechanics of the unconscious. The individual autonomy of the former becomes the heterogeneous subjectivity of the latter. The notion of the divided or dispersed self, which stands at the center of an "anti-autobiographical" experiment such as *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, is also crucial to Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. Barthes, like Krapp, uses both the first-person and the third-person pronoun to talk about his multiple selves. In this article I would like to consider—rethinking in a new way the graphanalytic approach—a mechanical error present in the first English edition of Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* as well as in a number of its *avant-textes*. This error, in fact, did not remain on paper alone: it was also performed by the first interpreter of Krapp,

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Patrick Magee, who was in close contact with Beckett.[2] Before considering the error in question in its performative context, however, let us examine it as it appears on paper.

Krapp's Two Voices

Sitting at his desk at night, the old Krapp listens to his own voice recorded on a reel-to-reel tape thirty years earlier. As described in the published version, two voices are heard on the stage: the "cracked voice" of a "wearish old man" (Krapp at sixty-nine), and the "strong, rather pompous" voice coming from the tape recorder ("clearly Krapp's at a much earlier time").[3] This passing of the voice from the medium of the body to the medium of tape is a fundamental feature of Beckett's dramaturgy, as is the use of the recorded voice as a character on stage. As Lea Sinoimeri explains, "[t]he question of split of consciousness thus appears to be reread and reinterpreted through the mediated voice."[4] At a certain point, as he is listening to the tape, Krapp "gives a start" and stops the tape recorder: "... there is of course the house on the canal where mother lay a-dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity [*Krapp gives a start*] and the—[*Krapp switches off, winds back tape a little, bends his ear closer to machine, switches on*]—a-dying, after her long viduity, and the—"[5] After Krapp rewinds the tape and listens again to the same passage, something paradoxical happens: the second time the recorded voice of his younger self is played it is different from the first. The words "in the late autumn," underlined above, are missing. That this is an error, there can be no doubt, but what about considering it as a symptomatic one? The mistake is present not only in all the Faber & Faber editions, but also in the so-called *avant-texte*, "the manuscripts, notes, and other documents preceding the publication of Beckett's works."[6] Originating in one of Beckett's last typescripts dating from shortly before the work's publication in 1958, this mechanical error appears and then becomes—quoting Beckett's scholar Dirk Van Hulle—a "continuity error."[7] A facsimile of the relevant page of this typescript is included in the third of the printed volumes which complement the online resources of the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project (BDMP).[8] In the context of the quantitative approach favored by the BDMP, Van Hulle has illustrated the error clearly, and has also demonstrated how "by activating the automatic collation tool" available online, "the digital collation clearly shows the moment in the genesis where the error occurred."[9] But this use of computational methods to analyze literary texts is not enough: it is merely a description that combines genetic criticism and "distant reading."[10] In a graphanalytic perspective this "error" begs to be interpreted as a symptom, adopting an approach that is more interpretive/qualitative than descriptive/quantitative. In other words, we ought to ask what the sense of this error is, what its implications are, and whether we should interpret it as a symptom of something. In order to pursue this route, this article rethinks graphanalysis, taking it beyond the textual dimension of genetic criticism and inserting it into the frame of

sound and performance studies. How does this error sound? How does it work if we consider it inside the listening experience?

If I cite Barthes often, it is because in his late work he paid particular attention to the mechanical errors, glitches, and other (technical) failures as signifiers that seem to claim a meaning without a pre-existing symbolic system. It is enough to think about the influential theory of the photographic punctum in Barthes's *Camera lucida* (1980). The word "punctum" (from *pungĕre*) is the Latin equivalent of the Greek term "trauma" (wound). As Barthes writes, "[a] photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)."[11] The punctum, like a glitch, is an imperfection or a kind of visual slip, an unintentional detail striking the beholder as a "punctual" trauma. The four missing words when listening to Krapp's tape can be considered as a sonic or performative punctum pricking the one who realizes it.[12]

The Performed Mistake

As far as I have been able to ascertain, there is no recording of the premiere of *Krapp's Last Tape* with Patrick Magee in the title role under the direction of Donald McWhinnie (London, Royal Court Theatre, October 28, 1958). The earliest available recording with Magee is a video of the famous television version broadcast on BBC Two on November 29, 1972, also directed by Donald McWhinnie. And here too the same error again appears.[13] After switching off the tape, Krapp gets up and goes toward the back of the stage to have a drink (a gesture he will repeat later in the play). He sings to himself the first lines of "Now the Day is Over," the Lutheran hymn by Sabine Baring-Gould that will be reheard toward the end of the play, and then sits back down in front of the tape recorder and switches it on. He starts to listen from where he had left off, and when he hears the word "viduity" he again stops the tape and rewinds a little to listen once more. But as soon as the playback restarts, the phrase "in the late autumn" has disappeared from the tape. How is this possible?

Clearly this error has a different value and function in print from what it has in performance. In the first case—if, indeed, we notice it at all—we can assume it to be a printing error, a simple typo. In the second case, on the other hand, we are faced—to use Ulrika Maude's expression—with a sort of "*mise-en-abyme* effect."[14] The attention, shifting from the words themselves to the medium, is caught by the functioning of the tape recorder, which is no longer merely a stage prop, but has become instead a dramaturgical device. Krapp's tape recorder perfectly exemplifies Sarah Keller's statement that "[i]n Beckett's oeuvre, technology plays a role both within the diegesis of the work and outside of it, as part of the work's formal mechanism."[15] When Krapp listens to his recorded voice for the second time, it is no longer the same as before, even because repeated experiences are never identical, and we are hearing the tape today from a sixty-nine-year-old Krapp's point of audition. Indeed, upon repeated listening, not only are four words ("in the late autumn") missing, but the intonation is

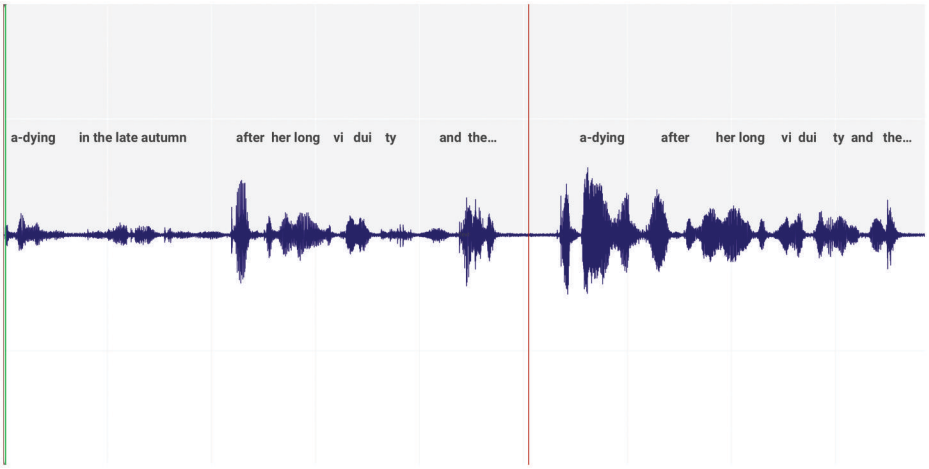

Figure 1: Waveform of Krapp's recorded voice and its "repetition."

completely different, as demonstrated in fig. 1, which visualizes the waveform of the phrase in the recorded voice as pronounced both the first and second time.

Furthermore, the video recording of the staged performance foregrounds another "absurd" element. Krapp stops the tape recorder after the words "viduity and the—", and then, when he sets it going again, the tape, instead of rewinding, actually moves forward in the same anticlockwise direction as before. Here it would be useful to understand better what device was used by Magee/Krapp in the scene in question, but it is not easy to identify it. If it is an Elizabethan Automan-Two, as seems probable, Krapp's hand movements while he manages the tape recorder's commands do not fit with the tape deck set-up (see fig. 2). Clearly, in McWhinnie's television production, the device was not personally run by Magee/Krapp, but it was operated from the director's mixing desk. (The actor is only pretending to manage the tape recorder.) Another mistake, then, another interpretive problem. Is this second error the unwitting revelation of a stage trick, or is it the opposite: a purposeful unmasking of stage illusion? And then, is the recorded voice of the thirty-nine-year-old Krapp really coming from the tape that we can see running on the recorder; if not, where is it coming from?

The Error in Its Acoustical Dimension

The director (Donald McWhinnie) may have edited individual takes of the thirty-nine-year-old Krapp's voice sequentially. In the case of the passage in question, he might not have noticed that the phrase, when it is repeated, is different from its first iteration, as it appears in the printed text. But it is also possible that McWhinnies's choice has been intentional or in any case derived from the need to faithfully

Figure 2: The deck of an Elizabethan Automan-Two.

perform Beckett's written text. Whatever, the printed error of the omitted four words was quickly corrected not only in the French and German editions of the play but also in early performances.[16] This is what happened, for example, in the U.S. premiere of *Krapp's Last Tape* (New York, Provincetown Playhouse, January 14, 1960), of which there is an LP recording with actor Donald Davies directed by Alan Schneider.[17] The same occurs in the recording of a Berlin production in which Beckett himself was involved as stage director: to document his mise-en-scène of *Das letzte Band* (Berlin, Schiller-Theater, October 5, 1969, with Martin Held as Krapp), Beckett wrote a well-known *Regiebuch*.[18] Of this production, too, there is an LP recording in which the words "im Spätherbst" ("in the late autumn") are reintegrated and duly repeated on the tape the second time around.[19] And yet, the omission remains in the 1972 television production with Patrick Magee. The error comes and goes. It has often been corrected but not definitively eliminated and it is still possible to hear it in some recent productions. What should be emphasized is that the eventual symptomatic meaning we are trying to reconstruct here deals with the "punctual" trauma that has been created—retroactively—by the recognition of the error itself. As Jonathan Goldberg notes in his commentary on Barthes's graphanalysis, "typing would appear to have a privileged relation to the unconscious, as if, one supposes, the unconscious, being itself a machine, would speak more directly and without an intermediary, when the keys or the typewriter were (mis)struck."[20] This is even more the case within a performance. A mechanical error becomes a

symptomatic one only as the result of an act of recognition and a retroactive process of interpreting, only when you realize that there is a meaning in that which initially appeared as purely casual.

What comes in to play now is the question of the depsychologization and mechanization of the unconscious from which we started out. What type of unconscious is it that we are dealing with here? And what relationship can we establish between some kind of unconscious and the error in question? Once again, the distorted truth concealed in the error does not depend on something intrinsic to it, but rather on how the error is interpreted. A productive question then would ask of what and of whom is the error a symptom? Krapp is struck by the word "viduity": startled by the word, he stops listening and looks up this rather pedantic term in a hefty dictionary. As Miki Iwata has noted: "[t]he word indicates both the younger Krapp's self-confidence in his intellect, which the old Krapp is by no means able to share, and the absurdity of this assurance."[21] The fact that he has forgotten the meaning of the term "viduity" is symptomatic first of all of "his own 'widowhood' from his former self."[22] The following quotation from Steven Connor highlights another aspect of our symptomatic error: "[f]or Krapp to listen to the tape of himself as a man of thirty-nine is to reveal clearly his ironic non-coincidence with himself."[23] What must be borne in mind here, as Connor specifies, is that "[v]iduity, from *viduare*, meaning to deprive, means the opposite of undividedness or individuality. Itself bereft of its familiar prefix, 'viduity' seems to mime the condition of bereavement it signifies."[24] But what can be said about the four words which have disappeared from the tape? In order to respond to this question, we need to consider our symptomatic error in the techno-traumatic perspective suggested by Wolfgang Ernst. In his media-archaeological reading of *Krapp's Last Tape*, Ernst leads us to consider as a shock the iterability of the human voice enabled by recording media. In the experience of no longer recognizing the technically preserved voice of a former self, a new temporality, emerging in the interaction between human actor and tape recorder, is created. This dramatic temporality originates from the medium itself, or more precisely, "from the 'real' of the acoustic signal as a technological message which, in human cognition, is experienced mostly subliminally. In the case of *Krapp's Last Tape*, Krapp's disembodied vocal memory is dislocated from the symbolic regime (the traditional diary) into the voice-recording machine itself (the tape recorder), resulting in a techno-traumatic irritation."[25]

It is clear that, even if not in an explicit way, Ernst is here referring to the distinction between the three registers of Lacanian psychoanalysis—the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real—a distinction already discussed in a media-archaeological context by Friedrich Kittler. The latter famously associated the symbolic with the typewriter, the cinema with the imaginary, and phonography with the real.[26] Also implied by Ernst's argument is Lacan's split or barred subject. The co-presence on stage of Krapp's two very different voices produces, in Ernst's reading, a kind of

schizophonic listening: "in what Schafer once termed 'schizophonia,' the tape-recorded voice, in replay, dissociates Krapp from himself. A tempo*real* abyss opens up in the differential iteration."[27] For Ernst, "[a]lthough non-human, the tape recorder is the second, and equally important, actor on stage."[28] But what if Kittler's most important successor had realized that four words were missing in Krapp's tape? How would he have commented on this disappearance?

As already mentioned above, the tape recorder comes into play not merely as a stage prop but also "as part of the work's formal mechanism." Ulrika Maude, in fact, has stressed that, unlike phonographic discs, tapes used for tape recordings "permitted the erasure and rewriting of sound."[29] Moreover, to these two operations we should add another very important one: the act of cutting. Iwata has shown how Krapp himself alludes to this practice:

> Just after the 39-year-old Krapp makes a confession about his unconquerable addiction to bananas with slightly ludicrous expressions like "with difficulty refrained from fourth" banana and "[f]atal thing for a man with my condition," he apparently regrets his descriptions and gives an abrupt cry, "Cut 'em out!" Significantly, the ambiguous words can be interpreted either as "give up bananas" or as "erase these words from the tape."[30]

The disappearance of the four words from the tape is a symptomatic error that also refers to the specific characteristics of the tape recorder as the practices of erasing by way of cutting (and re-attaching) or by way of re-recording over what was previously recorded. Maude writes that in Beckett's play "audiotapes … … function as an opportune trope for identity, because of their simultaneously permanent and mutable nature."[31] But we can go further: as Bohlman and McMurray have highlighted, if we posit the existence of a phonographic regime (echoing Jay's "scopic regimes of modernity"), we have to recognize that, with its non-linear cultural techniques, the tape has to be considered "as [a] counterpoint to the process of inscription at the foundation of the phonographic regime, rather than as another sound medium subsumed by that regime."[32]

Singing Krapp

Once again, we are forced to recognize the structural role played by recording technology in Beckett's dramaturgy. This emerges even more clearly if we compare his play with the operatic version for solo baritone composed by the French-Romanian composer Marcel Mihalovici in collaboration with Beckett. In *Krapp ou La dernière bande* (premiered in Paris, Théâtre des Nations, July 3, 1961) the recorded voice of the thirty-nine-year-old Krapp is accompanied by the live orchestra in exactly the same manner as the voice of Krapp at sixty-nine.[33] The orchestral accompaniment

minimizes the distinction between the two voices of Krapp, the recorded and the live. In a subsequent production, directed by Olivier Bénézech in 2007, the recorded voice on tape was replaced by a video, with the face of the singer projected in black and white on a tulle-screen behind which it was also possible to see the orchestra.[34] Notwithstanding a rejuvenating latex mask worn by the projected face, the recorded Krapp was always the same, with the same identical voice, a crucial feature that ends up undermining the technological schizophonic dimension central to the "media theatre" of *Krapp's Last Tape*. The notions of "media theatre" and of "media opera" have assumed ever more relevance in the last few years: with regard to the former, Ernst's already-cited contribution is fundamental; with regard to the latter we can refer to an article by Bianca Michaels, which proposes the term "for works that replace the mediality of the (conventional) operatic stage with its stage traditions and perception habits by [*sic*] a mediality that is based on digital and audiovisual media."[35]

One particularly fruitful model for the type of dramaturgy evident in *Krapp's Last Tape* might be what Jelena Novak, in her discussion of Michel Van der Aa's *One* (2003), has called "schizopera":

> The opera *One*, for which Van der Aa was both librettist and stage/video director, is a distilled example of the reinvention of the singing body in terms of voice, body, body-voice relation, musical language, and visual appearance. The soprano has an alter ego in the video, with whom she performs duets while they interact and complete each other's music and movement. For all the multiple regimes of representation that the performer is engaged with in *One* it might even be termed a schizopera.[36]

In her analysis of *One*, Novak never mentions *Krapp's Last Tape*; however, it seems to me not unreasonable to claim that knowledge of Beckett's play is a fundamental prerequisite for understanding Van der Aa's work. In the year after *Krapp's Last Tape* was performed for the first time, Francis Poulenc premiered his "media opera" *La Voix humaine* (1959), taken from the *pièce* of the same name by Jean Cocteau (1930), where another non-human character is at the center of the drama: the telephone. Both—*La Voix humaine* and *Krapp's Last Tape*—are two crucial subjects for a genealogy of "media operas" such as Van der Aa's *One, Upload* (2021) and *The Book of Water* (2022).[37]

Another Recorded Voice Which Is No Longer Identical to the First Time

As well as locating Beckett's play in the trajectory that would lead to twentieth- and twenty-first-century "postopera" or "media opera," I would also like to mention here

a point of contact—a meaningful coincidence—between Krapp's recorded voice and the episode with the tape recorder in Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960). In Fellini's film, after the poetess Iris Tree has told Steiner (Alain Cuny) that he is "primitive like a gothic spire," Desmond O'Grady, her young lover, intervenes and switches on a tape recorder that plays back the dialogue we have just heard, but in a form no longer identical to the first time. Here are the words of the poetess as we hear them the first time [1] and as they are repeated on the tape recorder [2]:[38]

[1] Primitive as a gothic spire. You're so tall
You can no longer hear any voice from up there.

[2] Primitive like a gothic spire, you're that tall
you can no longer hear any voice from up there.

Apparently, the two underlined words amount to a mechanical error by means of which the voice of Iris Tree, recorded just a moment previously, sounds the second time non-identical to the first. But, exactly as in Krapp's tape, we are dealing with a (linguistic) symptomatic incoherence that, although it does not disturb the signified, acts upon the signifier as well as its phonetic details: how do we listen to this incongruent audio recording? As soon as we realize its incoherence our rational listening (focused on the signified) is perturbed. But it is precisely at this point that what Theodor Reik calls "third-ear listening" can come into play.[39] Iris Tree's recorded phrase changes not only in some verbal details, but again (as in Krapp's case) in its expressive and sonic dimensions. Reporting an anecdote in which Freud affirms that analytic interventions must be guided by tact, Reik points out that the German term *Takt* used here by Freud has a double meaning: "It not only signifies 'social feeling,' but it is also synonymous with 'musical beat' [*tactus*]."[40] Listening with the third ear means focusing less on what is said than on how it is said: it is a kind of musical listening that enables us to hear the resonances of the unconscious.

The quality of not being identical to itself recalls the "parallax gap" theorized by Slavoj Žižek.[41] The parallactic status of the recorded voice, which is different from itself, would seem to imply—not without a kind of audiovisual disturbance and anxiety—that these sounds imply another dimension, which is that of the "acoustical unconscious." It was Walter Benjamin who introduced the notion of the "optical unconscious" in his essay *A Short History of Photography* (1931). Benjamin's expression refers to the fact that the camera may capture aspects of the visible irrespective of the photographer's intention.[42] It is only in recent years that the acoustical variant of Benjamin's notion has begun to emerge in sound studies. In this context, it is pertinent to mention the implications and expansions of the notion of the acoustical unconscious as explored by Robert Ryder. I agree with Ryder when he emphasizes that in order to conceptualize the acoustical unconscious we should not refer "to the unconscious as such, but rather to a *becoming conscious* of what could not have been

previously observed without the technological medium in question."[43] Once again, we are dealing with a metaphorical rewind button, a retroactive effect triggered by the technological unconscious.

The varied repetition of the recorded voices of Krapp and Iris Tree pass through the same "*mise-en-abyme* effect." But this is not the full story. The voices of Krapp and Iris Tree, recorded in the early years of the magnetic tape's worldwide social impact, reflect not only on the paradoxical relationship between technological permanence and human ephemerality, but also on the illusive ontology created by sound reproduction technologies. Just as photography and cinema have altered visuality by opening it to the dimension that Benjamin called the "optical unconscious," so sound technologies have transformed aurality by giving a voice to silence, by expanding the sonic imagination and a new awareness of sounds that were previously deemed imperceptible. This "acoustical unconscious" is closely linked to the choice by Beckett and Fellini to use the tape recorder as a tool for creating a "schizophonic" rupture between the human voice and its recorded equivalent. I have mentioned Fellini, but the same could be said of Michelangelo Antonioni's films such as *La notte* (1961) and *The Passenger* (1975), where the tape recorder acquires a very similar significance, creating a gap in time, an interaction between human and technological agencies, and a sense of ever-changing identity of the self.

Ernst also underlines the importance of the self-archiving process which stands at the center of *Krapp's Last Tape* dramaturgy. The unbridgeable gap which is created at this level is between symbol (the written ledger) and signal (the spoken words recorded on tape). What Ernst calls "[t]he ledger that Krapp consults in order to introduce a symbolic order into the continuous loop of the spools" contrasts the spoken voice coming from the tape recorder.[44] "Loop of the spools"? Here is another assonance ("loop" and "spools" are almost palindromes), which should be heard with the "third ear." How can we not remember Krapp's childlike joy in pronouncing the term "spooool" at the very beginning of his monologue, before playing the tape? Here Krapp acts like a psychoanalytic patient enjoying his symptom. Is it perhaps by chance that the same word, spoken backwards, would sound as "loooops"? The importance of the non-discursive, virtual sonority in Krapp's verbal speech cannot be undervalued. Just as, from Benjamin's perspective, the photographic camera eye reveals an "optical unconscious," the media-archaeological ear, according to Ernst—and, in a different way, to Ryder—grants access to an "acoustical unconscious"; both, in turn, can be subsumed under the broader notion of a "technological unconscious."

In conclusion, let me come back to the question of what our error is a symptom of. Two preliminary points have to be outlined. First, the meaning of a symptom does not precede its interpretation. As already said above, a symptom does not exist outside the retroactive process of its interpretation. Second, this latter process is inseparable from the Freudian notion of overdetermination. The overdetermined

character of a symptom makes the process of its interpretation extremely open: ambivalence and multiple causality necessarily undermine any reductionist interpretation of a symptomatic formation. What we need is not a deciphering process conceived as an extraction of sense from nonsense, but rather a kind of interpretive encounter with nonsense itself. In this perspective, a symptomatic reading has to focus on all the error's nonsensical anomalies, suggesting an interpretation through which meaning both does and does not make sense. That said, let's briefly summarize the interpretive hypotheses arising from the error's recognition. Realizing that Krapp's recorded voice—once played, rewound and replayed—is no longer identical to what came before produces a change of perspective. Our attention is no longer held by Krapp's speech, but by the functioning of the tape recorder. This shift from the subject to the device opens an in-between space which is neither purely human nor purely technological. This is why I focused both on Krapp's "widowhood" state (from the subject's side) and on the "tempo*real*" dimension (Wolfgang Ernst's adjective) originated from the medium itself (from the device's side). This is also why I referred to a *technological* (not psychological) unconscious. In this interaction between human actor and tape recorder, what happens, as we have seen, is a kind of "*mise-en-abyme* effect" (as Ulrika Maude puts it) through which we can better understand the complexity of the Beckettian dramaturgical project.

Postscript

I wrote the previous pages during the Spring 2020 lockdown. I only now realize that this article also amounts to a post-pandemic reflection on the extreme isolation of those days. As I spent a lot of time, too much time, listening to old opera recordings, it struck me that *Krapp's Last Tape* bears a direct relation to contemporary operatic listening. Its influence is apparent in the hauntingly dislocated voices and sonic distortions of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's installation *Opera for a Small Room* (2005), for example, which stages a mechanical performance in a fictional listening room, full of turntables and records, presided over by an absent old man obsessed with opera.[45] Following the forced, prolonged interruption of live events, in favor of a digitalized, always displaced, collectivized technological unconscious (the ways through which technologies participate in the production of subjectivity), I now return to listen with the "third ear" to the four words miraculously missing from the tape repeat: are we not all living our "viduity" "in the late autumn"? The mechanical mistake we are dealing with is not only the mask behind which we hide our sense of loss (of our past, of our aspirations, of our affections), but also an opportunity for encountering a new meaning which emerges exactly as a consequence of the mistake.

In a section entitled "Coincidence" in his aforementioned anti-autobiography, Barthes refers to the experience of recording himself playing the piano. If he listens

to Bach or Schumann performed by Richter or Horowitz he hears them and not Bach or Schumann. If he listens to his recording—precisely because of the errors he makes—what happens is "a kind of rare coincidence: the past of my playing coincides with the present of my listening, and in this coincidence, commentary is abolished: there remains nothing but the music."[46] The meaning of this technology-mediated "coincidence" is not entirely clear. However, one thing is certain: for Barthes, a text transcends its author but "music," evading the meaning-making mechanisms of the writing process, goes even beyond the text. The musical metaphor is a central element of Barthes's critical project—and Beckett's poetics.[47] Beckett's dissolution of language, Barthes's fascination with the fragmentary nature of the haiku ("a memory without a person"[48]): what we are dealing with is the short circuit between presence and absence, as happens in the Beckettian emphasis "on silence and nothingness"[49] or in the Barthesian vision "without commentary" of the haiku[50] (as well as of the recorded sound of his piano). When you pause a video, a still image remains on the screen. But audio is different. As a time-based medium, sound can't be frozen without disappearing. This is why, as an example of positive nothingness, *Krapp's Last Tape* could only end with the light fading on the Krapp's staring face, while the "tape runs on in silence."[51]

NOTES

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1. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 97.

2. As is known, Beckett wrote his play with Magee's voice in mind and, for some time, "referred to the play simply as *Magee Monologue*": James Knowlson, "Introduction," in *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Volume III: Krapp's Last Tape*, ed. J. Knowlson (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), xiii–xxix (here xiii).

3. Samuel Beckett, "Krapp's Last Tape," in *Collected Shorter Plays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), 53–63 (here 55 and 57).

4. Lea Sinoimeri, "'Close Your Eyes and Listen to It': Schizophonia and Ventriloquism in Beckett's Plays," in *Miranda* 4 (2011): 1–10 (here 2). http://journals.openedition.org/miranda/1924

5. Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), 213–23, 219.

6. Dirk Van Hulle, "Digitizing Beckett," in *The New Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 19–35 (here 21). The same error is also present in the Italian edition: Samuel Beckett, *L'ultimo nastro di Krapp*, Italian trans. Carlo Fruttero, in *Teatro* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002), 195–207 (here 202).

7. Dirk Van Hulle, "Digitizing Beckett," 23.

8. Dirk Van Hulle, *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape / La Dernière Bande* (Antwerp-London: University Press Antwerp-Bloomsbury, 2015), 69.

9. Van Hulle, "Digitizing Beckett," in *The New Samuel Beckett Studies*, 23.

10. The last term is used by Van Hulle "in the sense of Franco Moretti's definition paraphrased" by Kathryn Schulz ("What Is Distant Reading?" *New York Times*, June 24, 2011) as "understanding literature, not by studying particular texts, but by aggregating and analyzing massive amounts of data." See Van Hulle, "Digitizing Beckett," in *The New Samuel Beckett Studies*, 34 (note 16).

11. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 27.

12. For another very similar application of the Barthesian punctum to an image with powerful sonic implications (a LP cover representing a bearded male face with a screaming open mouth obstructed by an unidentifiable object or a visual imperfection), see Delia Casadei, *Crowed Voice: Speech, Music, and Community in Milan, 1955–1974*, PhD (University of Pennsylvania, 2015), 136–47. https://repository.upenn.edu/bitstreams/27760291-b7e3-4289-a8b4-8cd82252839b/download.

13. See *Samuel Beckett - Krapp's Last Tape (Patrick Magee)* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otpEwEVFKLc&t=849s.

14. Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18.

15. Sarah Keller, "'Once Wasn't Enough for You': Beckett, Technology, and Preservation," in *Literature/Film Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2010): 230–43 (here 231).

16. For the French edition, see Samuel Beckett, *La dernière bande*, with Robert Pinget's *Lettre morte*, French trans. Pierre Leyris and the author (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1960), 67–77 (here 73); for the German edition, see Samuel Beckett, *Das letzte Band: Krapp's Last Tape: La dernière bande* (trilingual edition), German trans. Erika and Elmar Tophoven (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016), 14.

17. Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, with Donald Davies, directed by Alan Schneider (London: Argo RG 220, 1961) (LP recording).

18. For details of Beckett's *Regiebuch* for *Das letzte Band*, see *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Volume III: Krapp's Last Tape*, ed. J. Knowlson (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 41–278.

19. Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, with Donald Davies, "nach einer Inszenierung am Schiller-Theater Berlin von Samuel Beckett," Berlin: Deutsche Grammophon 2570 001 (1970 LP recording); now remastered in CD format (Deutsche Grammophon 431 064-2).

20. Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 288.

21. Miki Iwata, "Records and Recollections in *Krapp's Last Tape*," in *Journal of Irish Studies*, 23 (2008): 34–43, 37.

22. Ibid.

23. Steven Connor, "Voice and Mechanical Reproduction: *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Ohio Impromptu*, *Rockaby*, *That Time*," in *Samuel Beckett*, ed. Jennifer Birkett and Kate Ince (London and New York: Longman, 2000), 119–33 (here 122).

24. Steven Connor, "Looping the Loop: Tape-Time in Burroughs and Beckett," in *Beckett, Modernism and the Material Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 84–101 (here 96).

25. Wolgang Ernst, "Micro-drama / Techno-trauma: Between Theatre as Cultural Form and True Media Theatre," in *Beckett and Media*, ed. Balazs Rapcsak, Mark Nixon, and Philipp Schweighauser (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 48–64 (here 49).

26. Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone*, *Film*, *Typewriter*, trans. Timothy Lenoir and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 16.

27. Ernst, "Micro-drama / Techno-trauma," 54. Naturally, the notion of "schizophonia" as conceptualized by Ernst (as a dissociation of the self) is very different from the meaning that R. Murray Schafer had in mind when he coined the term to indicate the separation of a native sound from its electroacoustic reproduction.

28. Ibid., 50.

29. Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body*, 63.

30. Miki Iwata, "Records and Recollections in *Krapp's Last Tape*," 35. For the quotation that Iwata took from *Krapp's Last Tape*, see the edition of the play in *Collected Shorter Plays*, 57.

31. Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body*, 65.

32. Andrea F. Bohlman and Peter McMurray, "Tape: Or, Rewinding the Phonographic Regime," *Twentieth-Century Music* 14, no. 1 (2017): 3–24 (here 8). See also Martin Jay, "The Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 3–23.

33. First broadcast by RTF radio on 15 May 1961. For the piano-vocal score of this opera, see Marcel Mihalovici, *Krapp ou La dernière bande* (Paris: Heugel, 1961), pl. n. H 31716.

34. Bibliothèque nationale de France (December 18, 2007), with Jacques Bona as Krapp and the Orchestre-atelier Ostinato under the baton of Jean-Luc Tinaud.

35. Bianca Michaels, "Is This Still Opera? Media Operas as Productive Provocations," in *The Legacy of Opera: Reading Music Theatre as Experience and Performance*, ed. Dominic Symonds, Pamela Karatonis (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 25–38 (here 27).

36. Jelena Novak, *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-Body* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 43. *One* was premiered on January 12, 2003 by Barbara Hannigan in the Frascati Theatre, Amsterdam.

37. On *Upload* and *The Book of Water*, see the review-essay by Jelena Novak, "Identity, Loss, and Singing Transcendence after the End of the World," in *Sound Stage Screen* 2, no. 2 (2022): 137–48.

38. This eccentric *trompe-l'oreille* didn't escape the attention of Maurizio Corbella: see his "Notes for a Dramaturgy of Sound in Fellini's Cinema: The Electroacoustic Sound Library of the 1960s," in *Music and the Moving Image* 4, no. 3 (2011): 14–30 (here 19–20).

39. Theodor Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear: The Inner Experience of a Psychoanalyst* (New York: Farrar Straus & Co, 1948).

40. Ibid., 317.

41. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

42. On the technological unconscious in a broader context, see Nigel Thrift, "Remembering the Technological Unconscious by Foregrounding Knowledges of Position," in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22, no. 1 (2004): 175–90. For more on the notion of an optical or technological unconscious, see Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), and Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

43. Robert Ryder, "When Only the Ears Are Awake: Günter Eich and the Acoustical Unconscious," in *Germany in the Loud Twentieth Century: An Introduction*, ed. Florence Feiereisen and Alexandra Merley Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35–47 (here 38). Of the same author, see also *The Acoustical Unconscious: From Walter Benjamin to Alexander Kluge*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022.

44. Ernst, "Micro-drama / Techno-trauma," 54.

45. See Judith Wilkinson, "Samuel Beckett as Contemporary Artist," in *The New Samuel Beckett Studies*, 118–33 (here 122).

46. Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 56.

47. On this point, see *Samuel Beckett and Music*, ed. Mary Bryden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and *Barthes et la musique*, ed. Claude Coste and Sylvie Douche (Rennes: Presse Universitaires de Rennes, 2018).

48. Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 79.

49. "Samuel Beckett talks about Beckett," an interview with John Gruen, in *Vogue* (February 1970): 108.

50. Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, 82.

51. Beckett, "Krapp's Last Tape," 63.

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