Installation Art and the Practices of Archivalism

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Beckett, the Archive and Installation Art

Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* stages an extraordinary meditation on the archive, transporting the viewer into the private archive of Krapp, a sixty-nine-year-old man whose failing memories of his younger self are supplemented by a repertoire of audio recordings. Krapp's faltering progress through those recordings, accompanied by interjections of his present, live voice, is the foundation of the spectacle we witness in the theatre, as Krapp ruminates on the 'farewell to love' which results from his decision to devote himself to literature.[1] At thirty-nine, Krapp is already preoccupied by his recorded memories, and records himself reflecting on the experience of listening to an earlier recording, made at least ten years earlier. This early point in Krapp's memories, at which he was 'still living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street' (p. 218), constitutes a turning point. The relationship with Bianca is described as a 'hopeless business' (p. 218) by the thirty-nine-year-old Krapp, and his sixty-nine-year-old counterpart subsequently listens in ambiguous silence to Krapp thirty-nine's apparently enthusiastic consignation of his 'best years' (p. 223) to the past. Much of the irony of the presentation of Krapp's ambivalent recourse to recorded memory stems from the seeming ignominy of Krapp's literary career which famously leads only to 'seventeen copies sold, of which eleven at trade price to free circulating libraries beyond the seas' (p. 222).

Beckett's play presents two possibilities which resonate with archivalist problematics. The first concerns the way the idea of the archive is concretised: this is Beckett's most tangible representation of the archive, and the creation of the personal archive or 'den' in which Krapp lives as a physical location in *Krapp's Last Tape* was to inspire the interplay between Krapp's study and other manifestations of the archive in the installation of Atom Egoyan's *Steenbeckett* during the Enniskillen festival in 2012. The second possibility concerns the relations of Beckett's works with archival technologies, whose presence marks the ongoing reinvention of Beckett in installation art. I suggest that the two possibilities are interlinked, and that the nature of the connection has compelling consequences both for Beckett studies and for representations of the archive in installation art, which in turn display an enduring preoccupation with Beckett.

In *Krapp's Last Tape*, Krapp's attempts to negotiate the past, played out in the decaying confines of the archival space which he inhabits, consist mainly of listening to old recordings of himself on a reel-to-reel tape player. The counterpoint of memory and its technological support in the play is well known: the tape player, which in 1958 represented contemporary technology, allows Krapp to access the remote and irrecoverable domain of his youth, and to mourn his lost love. The paradox of the play, though, is that it depicts 'a late evening in the future', a setting with highly significant and far-reaching implications.[2] This is the play's opening stage direction and yet, like the description of Krapp as 'wearish' (p. 215), it apparently makes no real contribution to the business of staging. Instead, I suggest, it subtly modifies the role of archival technology in the play's reception, by marking *Krapp's* textual aspect with an enduring sign of irreconcilable anachronism. When *Krapp's Last Tape* is considered as a text, the action is both embedded in an unspecified future and wedded to the technological signifiers of the past.

For Nicholas Johnson, the play now represents a 'fascinating crossroads with profound implications for how Beckett is to be treated in the future'.[3] For Johnson, the encounter of future and past represents a practical dilemma in the theatre: writing in the context of the 2010 Gate Theatre production in Dublin, Johnson argues that this is the 'last audience generation for which Krapp could even conceivably be in the present. He can always be read as an old man who held on to a piece of analogue machinery instead of getting a recording attachment for his iPod, but at what point does the technological anachronism get in the way of the play's reception?' (p. 217). I reformulate this position slightly in order to tease out a problematic which, I suggest, does not necessarily surface in staging but which pervades the play's textual being.

The vision of the future in *Krapp's Last Tape* has no direct bearing on the action, which is concerned with the endless series of 'P.M.s' (p. 218), or memorial post-mortems, which populate Krapp's present experiences. Nevertheless, the play's ambivalent recourse to the future offers glimpses of a time after Krapp's death, 'when all *my* dust has settled' (p. 217; original emphasis) and even, towards the end of the play, of a post-human era in which 'the earth might be uninhabited' (p. 221). In this, *Krapp* echoes Clov's apocalyptic dream of order in *Endgame*, in 'a world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust' and the accompanying fear, in that play, of humanity surviving the apocalypse.[4] The staging of the play is thus invisibly modified by the discourse of futurity which textually underwrites it: although the play can be staged exactly as written, the alignment of the tape player with 'the future' is inherently unsettling.

The thread of the play concerned with a very remote, destructive future crucially interferes, too, with the historicisation of the play's action, just as Krapp's protestation 'thanks to God that it's over' (p. 218) finally rings false. One of the central ironies is that Krapp ultimately bemoans the farewell to love, and looks back at his past in an implicit attitude of regret, but the play's

insidious futurity threatens to unravel the underpinning temporal logic of the scheme in which that very statement is made. Instead of setting the play in 'a late evening in the nineteen eighties', as he at one point considered, Beckett ultimately decided upon 'in the future', permanently complicating the play's relationship to the present of its performance.[5] The 1980s setting would have ensured that the reel-to-reel player itself looked more and more antiquated to later audiences while anchoring the action in a technological present defined by the compact disc as well as the not-yet-quite-obsolete reel-to-reel machine. Instead of this fixed end-point, though, *Krapp* either suggests a setting in which reel-to-reel technology is itself positioned in the future or, alternatively, gestures towards the endless succession of recording technologies which supersede it, ensuring that the play resists its own historicisation by occupying a future which always recedes before the spectator's eyes. This, then, is a drama of the asynchronous which *cannot* be resolved in the theatre.

Johnson contextualises the 2010 Gate Theatre production by reference to the productions of the play staged by Michael Colgan between 2000 and 2010. In particular, Johnson cites the danger of turning Beckett's plays into the 'museum pieces' (p. 219) which the tape recorder used in the Colgan productions, including the *Beckett on Film* version directed by Atom Egoyan and featuring John Hurt, has literally become. If Colgan's productions court a 'mode of repetition' (p. 219) with potentially serious implications for Beckettian performance, however, that mode has also proved to be the source of unsuspected opportunities. The reuse of the tape recorder from the *Beckett on Film* version heralds a strategy of reuse in which Egoyan remakes *Krapp's Last Tape* once more as the installation *Steenbeckett* in 2002. At the same time, the ironisation of repetition in Beckett's work, and the implication of the archive in that irony, have been repeatedly revisited in both theatre and installation art.

The insistent return to Beckett in contemporary visual culture takes place through and *as* a mode of repetition. Such a situation is loaded with irony in view of the groaning thematics of memory in Beckett's work, suggesting that Beckett becomes a crucial shared memory precisely in the dramatisation of forgetting and loss. To remember Beckett, then, is to participate in shared amnesia; in Nora's famous (Beckettian) phrase, 'we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left'.[6] For Nora, too, the archive is the privileged figure of this cultural aporia: 'the archive has become the deliberate and calculated secretion of lost memory. It adds to life itself – often a function of its own recording – a second memory, a prosthesis-memory' (p. 14).

The implication of Beckettian performance in the constitution of Beckett as *lieu de mémoire* paradoxically points the way to the 'reinvention' of Beckett which Stan Gontarski envisages in his centenary essay on Beckett's theatre, and to a strand of intermedial practice which, since the late 1990s, has begun to implant Beckett's theatre into new contexts and forms.[7] Those forms, as we shall see, are durably marked by the figure of the archive,

and by the epistemological dilemmas which arise in the tense exchanges it initiates with Beckett's work. Such dialogue, as Peggy Phelan suggests, arises from the broader contemporary theatrical context: as Phelan argues in 1997, the 'strange temporal economy in which we live' is already characterised as 'post', and contemporary performance studies must respond to this dilemma of belatedness. For Phelan, Beckett plays a key role in any such response: 'what we carry in our "post" is a series of transpositions, transcriptions, transfigurations. Our current "post" signals the difficulty of the end ever arriving at its true ending, or of remaining singular, fixed, gone. And so, like Didi and Gogo, we go on'.[8]

I want now to consider the reinvention of Beckett as an archival strategy: one which combines intermedial reference with a deep investment in 'archival' forms and technologies. If recent reimaginings of Beckett have privileged one form, it is that of installation art. For all the diversity of recent installation work, Claire Bishop's major account characterises the form as presupposing an 'embodied viewer' derived from the physical presence of the viewer within the art-work, two characteristics with enormous implications for Beckett:

> Rather than imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an *embodied* viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. This insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic of installation art.[9]

Such a definition, principally intended to distinguish installation art from other types of art, sheds considerable light on the sensory problematics of Beckett's work. *Not I*, for example, constitutes one of Beckett's most striking sensory interventions, drawing the viewer's gaze in towards the mouth, the sole illuminated object in the theatre, but it simultaneously highlights the disembodiment of that mouth. Arguably, *Not I* is a key milestone in the 'radical complications of corporeal self-presence that characterize Beckett's staging of the body' and which herald Beckett's interest in other forms, including television, in the 1970s.[10] More recently, the possibility of embodied spectatorship has come to the fore in Beckett studies, despite, or in tandem with, the tortured phenomenology of the prose fiction, where all is 'mal vu', or ill seen.[11] In what follows, I suggest that the disputed ground of embodiment in Beckett's prose and theatre alike gives rise to the very dilemmas which have led to the recent 're-embodiment' of Beckett's work as installation. In particular, those dilemmas concern the deliberately ill-concealed epistemological problematics of the late works, and the concern with the ontology of the image which runs through Beckett's literary production.

Nikos Navridis and Adriano and Fernando Guimarães exemplify the important shifts in spectatorial dynamics which occur in performance and installation in the twenty-first century: Navridis' *Breath* (2005–06)

reimagines Beckett's *Breath* (1969) in the gallery space and redefines that space through the use of hypersurfaces. *The Lost Ones* (1971), meanwhile, has inspired two mixed reality projects which respond to the problematic articulation of the fictive reality in Beckett's original. Carmin Karasić's *The Lost Ones* (1999) is the first installation work to exploit the problems of scale, epistemology and time which bedevil Beckett's *The Lost Ones*, as participants negotiate a 'real' space which incorporates a virtual world occupied by a population of searchers. The immersive potential of the cylinder environment is dramatically heightened in Kenderdine and Shaw's *Unmakeable Love* (2008–09) by means of large-scale immersive visualisation technology.

In their concern with the problems inherent in the cylinder scenario, both projects anticipate Mirosław Bałka's *How It Is* (2009–10), a work which creates highly problematic intermedial reference to Beckett by means of separate real and virtual environments. While continuing to exploit the capacity of new technologies to create unique dialogues with Beckett's work, *How It Is* engages with the specific meanings of the archival in the field of trauma and testimony. First, though, I return to an earlier point in the trajectory traced out between Beckett's theatre and contemporary installation. Atom Egoyan's *Steenbeckett* (2002) enjoys a special place in that trajectory, embracing the possibilities of both the digital and the analogue archive, and mobilising analogue film in ways which periodically, and conditionally, suggest nostalgia. Egoyan's work engages in unique ways with Beckett's vision of the archive and, as we shall see, announces the strand of installation work whose preoccupation with the archive has been framed by Beckett. That work, like that of Egoyan and of Beckett, pursues an ambivalent reflection on the archive as a place of both commemoration and encounter.

Egoyan's *Steenbeckett*: The Digital Archive and the Analogue Archive

Steenbeckett occupied the former Museum of Mankind building in London's Burlington Gardens from 15 February to 17 March 2002. It staged the archive on a number of levels, as viewers' progress through the building's narrow corridors and staircases revealed scattered archival materials: film spools, audio cassettes and film canisters. The work is preoccupied with the dilemma of memory and technology that is central to Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, while rethinking the terms in which the dilemma is expressed.

In Beckett's play, the juxtaposition of the voices of the younger Krapps and the largely silent presence of the old Krapp, a solitary figure amidst the boxes and spools of the 'den' in which he lives, produces an overwhelming sensation of loss. Krapp's lonely presence, barely more alive than the archival documents which surround him, receives no consolation from writing, and he obsessively returns to his memories of Bianca. Technology is unable to provide redemption, endlessly reiterating Krapp's destitution, and with
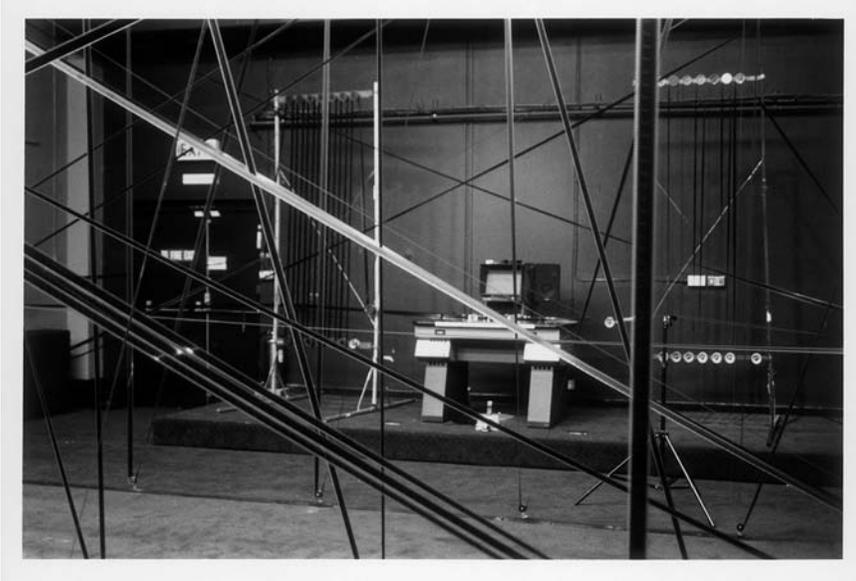
Figure 1.1 Atom Egoyan, *Steenbeckett*, 2002. Courtesy of The Artangel Collection.
Photograph: Thierry Bal.

it a growing sense of amnesia, as Krapp is unable to remember some of
the recordings which he consults, and is bewildered by the word 'viduity'
(p. 219), interrupting the recording to fetch a dictionary. The loss of love and
the loss of memory are ultimately encoded in the play in technological form.

    That loss is stunningly amplified in Egoyan's *Steenbeckett*, which extends
the play's preoccupation with memory and technology by incorporating
Krapp's Last Tape in two distinct technological instantiations. Egoyan's film
version of Beckett's play is displayed twice within the installation, firstly as
a crystal-clear digital projection; and secondly, in a separate room, as an
analogue projection via the monitor of a Steenbeck film editing machine.
The parallel digital and analogue projections highlight the progressive dete-
rioration of film, as Egoyan himself notes: 'as scratches and dust gather, the
sound and image will deteriorate more and more, while the digital projec-
tion next door remains perfect'.[12] The meditation on loss in *Steenbeckett*,
then, is not simply concerned with the long-term status of film as an archival
medium, but with the tangible deterioration which takes place in the short
period of the work's display:

> Over the course of the month, the digital projection was absolutely
> constant, but the 35-mm image went through a process of decay –
> through dust that had accumulated, through scratches, through people
> physically trying to maul the film. So a piece like 'Steenbeckett' is deal-
> ing with the relationship of analog technology – and its basis in physical

principles of the graven image, whether it be on silver or through the displacement of oxide on magnetic tape – to certain corporeal aspects of decay.[13]

The loss which characterises *Krapp's Last Tape* is repeated in the work's presentation within *Steenbeckett*, as the imperfections of reel-to-reel playback and of Krapp's memory are accompanied by the increasingly damaged film of the analogue projection, as though to act out the medium's obsolescence and decay in real time. The situation sharply recalls the technological dilemma inscribed within *Krapp's Last Tape*: the insidious futurity which skews the temporal framework of Beckett's play itself now points to the work's remaking as *Steenbeckett*, as an installation which arises entirely from the dilemma of technological obsolescence of the original. While the laborious process of fast-forwarding in real time makes it difficult to replace the tape recorder with a contemporary equivalent, the whole work can be remade by transferring the action to the installation space. Technological anachronism, then, lies at the origin of the work's remaking in installation form and of the technological mediations which that remaking, in *Steenbeckett*, implies.

In *Steenbeckett*, in a modification of the dynamics of Beckett's play, material deterioration is associated with spectatorship rather than Krapp's solipsistic contemplation of his own past. While in *Krapp's Last Tape* the business of fast-forwarding dominates the play's presentation of memory, in *Steenbeckett* the viewers who struggle to watch John Hurt's performance via the tiny Steenbeck monitor are made complicit in the deterioration of the film stock. As we watch the analogue *Krapp* in the installation, we are acutely aware of the vast swathes of film present in the room in what amounts to a significant amplification of the materiality effects of the original play. Egoyan, furthermore, documents or imagines spectators who 'maul' the film, suggesting that this contemplation of the breakdown of the memorial apparatus instils in some the urge to violence.

Steenbeckett nevertheless suggests that the decay of the analogue film is mitigated by the preservation of the digital copy, which subsists in near-perfect condition in the adjacent room. The archive, then, is at once a place of preservation and loss, and the suggestion that the image can be preserved beyond the loss which the piece initially dramatises is an ambiguous one. Egoyan's installation appears poised between the proposition that digital media can reverse the loss inherent within analogue and a nostalgia for conventional film. Rather than the preference for the digital which *Steenbeckett* might suggest, Egoyan equates film with 'the notion of scarcity and of something having an added value by virtue of the fact that it raises issues of preservation, storage, deterioration and decay'.[14] The very precariousness of film makes it precious, or so it seems. Egoyan suggests, too, that analogue editing was on the brink of obsolescence at the time that

Steenbeckett was planned, and that it had effectively ceased to be part of his working practices before 2002:

> I am not nostalgic about the ancient technologies of mechanical film splicers, bins of dusty celluloid, and the behemoth that was the editing machine – the mighty Steenbeck. I haven't edited a film on a Steenbeck for almost 10 years. But when I was invited to direct a film version of Krapp's Last Tape, I couldn't resist the possible confluence of form, content and process.[15]

Such comments strongly suggest an elegiac commemoration of a lost medium, a final opportunity to celebrate film before it passes into the museum and the archive. *Krapp's Last Tape* is often read in similar terms: even at the time of Beckett's death the reel-to-reel machine was approaching obsolescence. Egoyan was to commemorate the reel-to-reel recorder in another installation, *Hors d'usage*, the same year as *Steenbeckett*: 'it's a call to the community to go into their basements and find obsolete reel-to-reel tape recorders. We've accumulated about 25 so far, mostly from the Sixties, and people will come in to recount the last time they recall these machines being used'.[16]

What is not made clear by such an account, though, is the relation of technology to historical context in Beckett's play: the reel-to-reel machine, far from an obsolete device, was in fact cutting-edge technology at the time of the play's publication, in 1958. What Egoyan is responding to, then, is not the moment of the play's creation but its status, in 2002, within Beckett's complex archival legacy. *Krapp's Last Tape* has become a museum piece, and Egoyan's *Steenbeckett* links the archival place which the play now occupies to contemporary (2002) debates on film and archival technology. Indeed, when Emma Wilson asks Egoyan for his assessment of 35mm film in relation to contemporary film-making and viewing, his response sheds considerable light on the notion of an *archival* medium:

> It's supremely impractical. There's no question about that. I do think there's something unique about the grain structure when you see an image directly off a negative. It's unworldly. It's so pristine and so arresting. It's lovely, but you can't justify it. There are horrors—seeing a scratched print, bad reel changes, dirt, and confusions about the very order in which a reel is to be presented. There's something endearing about that because it speaks to our own bodies and things that we can relate to in terms of things being scratched or damaged or confused. Digital gives clarity, but there's something we are missing. 35mm is, sensually, the best experience of watching the projected image.[17]

Although Egoyan begins by arguing that 35mm film is 'impractical', the rest of his long response is concerned with his personal investment in the aesthetics of film, up to the affirmation 'I think 35mm will continue to exist

as an archival form' (p. 31). Egoyan has often claimed to prefer digital as a working medium, and stresses his perplexity at the decision to show *Krapp's Last Tape* in a 16mm print in a screening in Paris, objecting to the registration, the movement in the frame and the sound, and noticing dirt leading to the reel change mark.[18] Once again, though, practical objections are accompanied by a wistful 'it's touching' (p. 27); Egoyan's rejection of film is forever accompanied by a nostalgic reinstatement of the medium for the sensual link between film and bodily experience. The idea of film as an 'archival form' represents both obsolescence and a more subtle, and more shadowy, understanding of the archive. The interaction between the body and the archive is the key operative structure of *Krapp's Last Tape*: more important than the details of the recorded material are the sensual texture of the old and young voices and the stark intervention of the body as Krapp sweeps the tape recorder and ledger off the table in irritation. Recent criticism has read the play in the light of the 'prosthetic voice' which it suggests, as Krapp apprehends his own voice as other through the technological medium of the recorder.[19] The words 'sound as a bell' offer the same content in their repeated articulations in different recordings, but their effect differs due to the changing character of Krapp's body over time.

Voice and body thus construct a problematic of presence which is reworked in a highly sensitive fashion in Egoyan. Egoyan's comments on 'certain corporeal aspects of decay' cannot be confined to the body of the film stock, but refer to the human body, whether that of old Krapp within the space of the stage-archive, or that of the viewer. In the analogue projection of *Krapp*, the physical presence of the film is foregrounded: the projection consists of the last shot of the film, a twenty-minute sequence filmed in a single take. In order to complete the take, a special magazine had to be ordered which would accommodate the resulting 2000 feet of film; the enormous material presence of the film dwarfs the 'film' itself, that is, the sequence of images which the audience is supposed to be watching. For Egoyan, this presence is, once again, 'touching': 'the proximity of this huge camera to John Hurt, the physicality of it all, was very touching. I felt there must be some way to commemorate that'.[20] In the analogue projection, the vast loops of film and the Steenbeck machine occupy the foreground of the spectators' vision and overwhelm the projected images on the distant Steenbeck monitor. In the digital projection, meanwhile, the 'perfection' of the image is proclaimed by the very large screen, while the audience is crowded into a small space very close to the screen. In both cases, although in contrasting ways, the body intrudes upon spectatorship, reminding us of the sensual link between bodily experience and the production of cinematic images, and underlining the fundamental difference between digital and analogue editing.

Whereas digital editing takes place through the computer interface, analogue editing is itself a bodily process of the kind illustrated in *Steenbeckett*; Tom Rolf, an editor making the transition to digital, has spoken of missing 'having the film in [his] hands, around [his] neck, in [his] mouth'.[21] Beckett's

Figure 1.2 Atom Egoyan, *Steenbeckett*, 2002. Courtesy of The Artangel Collection.
            Photograph: Thierry Bal.

Krapp's Last Tape anticipates the materiality of editing: central to the play
is the idea of Krapp's manipulation of the tape in order to find the pas-
sages which interest him. Locating those passages means fast-forwarding
by guesswork and listening, and repeating the process until the passage is
found, in a tense interaction of body and listening. On the stage, the pro-
cess is a simulation: the actor normally gives only the illusion of manipu-
lating the tape, and Patrick Magee's interpretation, in which the tape was
indeed manipulated to find the correct passage, was a high-risk exception.[22]
Krapp's fast-forwarding is only a step away from the editing imagined in
Steenbeckett, and the preoccupation with the materiality of tape, and its
bodily manipulation, is shared by both works.

Egoyan, Film and the Archival

The complex understanding of the cinematic image which Egoyan proposes
in *Steenbeckett* has far-reaching implications for the idea of the 'archival
medium'. For Egoyan, film is 'archival', not only in its status as a medium
of the past (a description he repeatedly advances, only to withdraw it),
but also in its capacity to reflect upon the archive. This subtle strand of
Egoyan's work resonates with that of Beckett, and equally with the theo-
ries of the image of Jean-Luc Godard and Jacques Rancière. The view of
the image, body and presence which emerges there allows us, in turn, to
tease out the archival understanding of the image as it informs the recent
work of Navridis, Karasić and Bałka. Reflecting on what he calls 'digital

archiving', Egoyan stresses the prominent place of digital technology within his work: 'digital technology has saved me time, and given me the comfort that my work will last, if not forever, then certainly for longer than it would have [in analogue form]'.[23] His comments curiously echo Krapp's key preoccupations: that of lost time, and the artistic vocation to which it is sacrificed; Egoyan's standpoints to time and narrative and, equally, to the durability of art-works, may be rather more ambivalent than appears here. For David L. Pike, such a rhetorical stance is a 'hyperbolic defiance of the explicit message of [*Steenbeckett*]', and reflects a split in Egoyan's work between 'a practical and an emotional attitude toward technology' (p. 107). For all Egoyan's pronouncements on the practical superiority of digital and on the possibilities of digital archiving, his work retains a parallel suspicion of the digital, and a nostalgia for analogue technology.

One of the most important embodiments of the split is that found in *Speaking Parts* (1989), a film whose production took place on the cusp of the obsolescence of analogue editing. The scenario concerns the contribution of Clara, a writer, to a film which draws on the earlier death of her brother, Clarence; Clara consoles herself both with Lance, a hotel worker who obtains a role in the film, and in the video mausoleum, a cold, monumental space harbouring an unseen video technology, in which she watches clips of Clarence. The scenes in the mausoleum suggest an embracing of digital technology as a vital memorial tool, as a means of enabling the work of mourning, and as a key medium for communication. Clara uses the mausoleum to revitalise her memories of Clarence, who appears initially in close-up and then walking away from the viewer's gaze. As Emma Wilson argues, 'this video image, with its rhythm of arrival and departure, satisfaction and withdrawal, seems a small imitation of the child's game with the cotton reel discussed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as he rehearses his mother's absence, bringing her close and then letting her loose'.[24] What is striking here is the protagonist's limited movement and the elimination of narrative from the video sequence: Clarence is made present as though controlled by the viewer (Clara), appearing on demand and parading before the viewer's gaze before walking away again.

The video mausoleum thus articulates a fantasy of mastery over the lost object, and appears to bring mourning under the control of the subject (Clara). Where the role of memorial technology becomes more complex, of course, is in the fraught relation of the images of Clarence to the real: as Wilson notes, 'Clara's compulsive viewing in the video mausoleum […] removes her from reality and interrelation with others' (p. 40). Clara apparently renews her capacity to engage with others in her relationship with Lance, but that relationship proves to be mediated both by technology and by the spectre of Clarence. As Clara starts a video conference with the producer of the film she is in the process of making, we expect to see Lance's audition, the occasion on which Clara gets to know him. Not only does the audition tell Clarence's story (the film is a fictionalised version of Clara's relationship

with Lance), but the film we are watching inexplicably cuts back to the mausoleum sequence once more. The digital mausoleum is the source of an extraordinary incursion into the real, and produces a situation in which real and imaginary can no longer be satisfactorily defined. For the viewer, that logic extends to Clara, too: in its progress across the white marble expanse of the mausoleum in black dress and high heels, her image is available to imaginative manipulation in just the same way as that of Clarence. For the viewer, she is no more or less 'absent' than Clarence, and both images serve as spaces for fantasmatic projection.

The mausoleum of *Speaking Parts* has become, in Ron Burnett's description, a 'living archive': it is both a physical location to be visited in the real and an imaginary repertoire actualised in reading or viewing.[25] The idea of the digital image, for Egoyan, is bound up with this important conception of the archive, a virtual space in which real experience and the figments of the imagination merge. That space, equally, informs *Steenbeckett*, which reads increasingly as a reflection on this hybrid understanding of the 'image'. Even the comments by Egoyan which featured on the Artangel publicity for the installation feed into a notion of the image which cannot be limited to questions of film editing and storage:

> We used to record on spools. We filmed on reels. Our memories fell out of cans, unspooled on the floor, got caught in projectors. They used to sound scratchy. They would dim with age. Now digital technology, bearing none of the signifiers of our natural mental process, is erasing the 'graven image' in the recording of experience and the function of memory.
>
> *Steenbeckett* is a monument to the thousand natural shocks that analogue was heir to.[26]

In apparent contradiction of his previous comments on digital technologies, Egoyan now gives in to nostalgia for analogue. Digital technology, here, serves to erase the signifiers of 'our natural mental process'; as such, it is inferior to analogue as a means of preserving memory. The last line presents a highly ambiguous conclusion, suggesting either a natural order which is now lost, or that the passage from analogue to digital is simply the latest in a long line of 'natural shocks' or transitions.

The 'graven image' to which Egoyan refers here resonates in two distinct contexts: firstly, cinematic testimony to atrocity; and secondly, the mystical idea of the resurrection of the image. Both contexts originate in the comment's Biblical subtext, the ban on pictorial representation in the Second Commandment: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness [of any thing] that [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth' (Exodus 20.4).[27] Since the late twentieth century, the ban, or *Bilderverbot*, has come to stand for the claimed impossibility of representing the Holocaust.[28] As the

term suggests, the general claim of the impossibility of representation has a specifically visual dimension: cinematic and photographic representations provoke particular cultural anxieties. As Marianne Hirsch claims, visual representation of the Holocaust has tended to centre on a limited repertoire of 'iconic' images; she asks, 'if these images, in their obsessive repetition, delimit our available archive of trauma, can they enable a responsible and ethical discourse in its aftermath?'.[29] Egoyan is acutely sensitive to the implications of the debate for cinematic representation, while the work of Mirosław Bałka offers a still more acute response to the image ban, as we shall see in the next chapter. First, though, I turn to another kind of ethical discourse, that which arises in recent Beckett-inflected installation art.

Digital Paratexts, Video and Ontology

In the second half of this chapter I consider two further contexts which continue to interrogate the archive: installation work directly inspired by Beckett; and virtual worlds (often appearing within physical installations) which respond to Beckett's universe. Work carried out in both contexts, I contend, is bound up with Beckett's conception of the archival, and with the way that conception continues to shape contemporary understandings of the archive and of deixis. In discussing the first of those contexts, I use Gérard Genette's theory of the 'paratext' to consider work which is not properly part of the Beckett canon and which remediates elements of Beckett's work as installation art. Like Genette's idea of the 'zone between text and off-text',[30] or Lejeune's notion of the 'fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text', that work modifies our understanding both of Beckett's work and of the media within which it (often problematically) operates.[31] The idea of the digital paratext, meanwhile, is acquiring specific meanings within new media theory, where understandings of 'text' have expanded to include code which is not normally made visible in the course of web navigation, but which is nonetheless part of the fabric of web pages. Text, in these new definitions, acquires a specifically archival aspect, linking the visible text on the viewer's display to the database operations by which it is produced.

In much recent Beckett-inspired installation work, the Beckettian ontology of the image is complicated by a changed standpoint to indexicality and by the progress of the viewer through the work in the present, conditions with rich ethical implications. As Stan Gontarski has suggested, installation art significantly modifies the performance history of Beckett's work, and may help answer Gontarski's own 2006 question on the future of Beckett's theatre in performance. For Gontarski, Beckettian performance can be reinvented through the reimagining of Beckett's work in hybrid artistic forms, in particular in the plastic arts. For Gontarski, 'the continued development of

the hybrid art that I take to be Beckett's late theatre, an art of icons, images and afterimages, ghosts of memories', is 'as closely related to sculpture as to what we have traditionally called theatre' (p. 442). Conversely, such hybrid installations, which continue to operate under the Beckettian signs of the posthumous and the entropic, have much to say about contemporary installation art and the troubled ontology which is so crucial to our evolving understanding of the archive.

Gontarski's own multimedia production of Beckett's thirty-five-second 'play' *Breath* constitutes one of the inaugural acts in this post-Beckettian tradition. The move from theatre to installation space is the founding condition for Gontarski's installation, which arose from the invitation to participate in an event at Florida State University Gallery and Museum in 1992. The main focus of the event was the 'electronic satellite reception of a piece of hypertext poetry, *Agrippa (A Book of the Dead)*'.[32] William Gibson's hypertext, once broadcast simultaneously to nine sites around the world, would be destroyed by its own viruses, thus enacting a dramatically speeded-up version of the technological obsolescence that informs *Krapp's Last Tape* and is later recrafted by Egoyan in *Steenbeckett*. Although a limited edition *livre d'artiste* was subsequently produced, the paper was treated with photosensitive chemicals so that the ink faded after a period of time. Such a wilfully ephemeral work poses a particular archival dilemma: it can only be referenced in the form of archival copies, given the disappearance of the original. Such copies were indeed made following the initial broadcast, both in the form of a bootleg video of the broadcast and online dissemination of the text of the poem.[33] On the websites which house them, notably *The Agrippa Files*, Gibson's text is dwarfed by its archival paraphernalia, including selections from the art book, an emulation of the poem in its self-destructive electronic form and 'a unique archive of materials dating from the book's creation and early reception'.[34] This, then, is an archival artefact: *Agrippa* now owes its existence to archives. At the same time, the work contains an implicit commentary on the problem of archival technology: its obsolescence is accelerated but not different in kind from that of other books, whose paper is itself photosensitive, and its rapid electronic self-destruction mimics that of electronic formats which become unreadable over time.

It is in this 'fragile and ephemeral artistic environment' in the Florida State University Gallery and Museum that Gontarski presented *Breath*, replacing the proscenium arch with 'an oversized prop television, through the absent screen of which *Breath* would be performed "live," if that's the word'.[35] Gontarski's self-deprecating account emphasises the 'clownish' appearance of the simulated screen and the difficulty visitors may have had in distinguishing the piece from other art objects in the gallery display '(or from the gallery's refuse outside the service entrance, for that matter)' (p. 244), but this is to downplay the importance of the move from the theatre to the gallery, and the nascent dialogue initiated there with the digital archive.

What is already striking in Beckett's *Breath* is the work's convergence with installation art, as the presence of the actor on the stage is replaced by the depiction of a static scene, punctuated by modulations in light and the 'faint brief cry' which occurs twice in the published text.[36] Rather than a theatre audience, such a work cries out for the progress of the viewer through the installation space and for dialogue with the other works installed within that space.

Breath, first performed as part of Kenneth Tynan's *Oh! Calcutta!* in 1969, is an extremely brief work, even for Beckett, and in this anticipates the viewer's brief attention to works in the gallery rather than the longer period traditionally spent in the theatre auditorium. As Gontarski argues, the recent installation work of Adriano and Fernando Guimarães extends the redeployment of Beckett-inspired performance as installation and the concern with duration seen there. The Guimarães have incorporated *Breath* in a number of works, including *We Were Not Long … Together* (2002–03), and a series of works whose titles include the word 'Respiração'. Here, the visible body is reinstated but in a radically reimagined context: in *Respiração Mais*, actors enter water-filled tanks fully dressed; the short duration of the piece is understood anew as the period between two breaths.
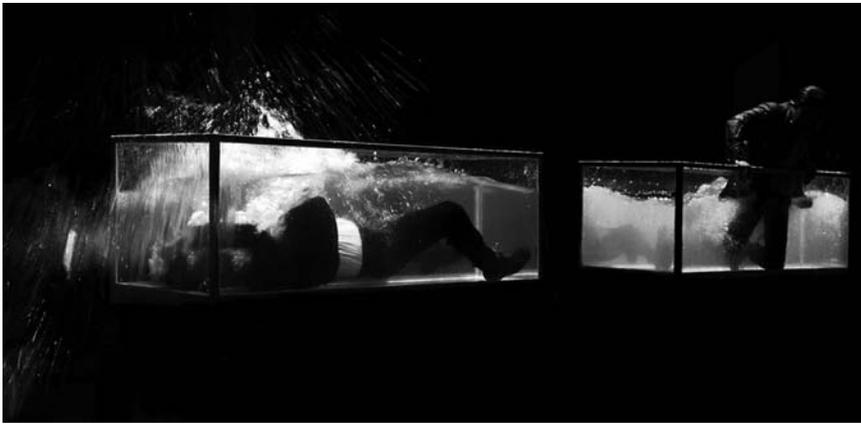
Figure 1.3 Coletivo Irmãos Guimarães, *Breath More*. Photograph: Ismael Monticelli.

Instead of the span of life (between two cries of 'recorded vagitus', one signalling birth and one heralding death), *Breath* stands for a threatening suspension of living processes, the interval between breaths (signalled by a bell) which threatens to end them.[37] Indeed, in some versions of *Breath+*, a transparent box or tank contains a naked actor who gradually runs out of air while another actor, impassive and oblivious, gives an academic lecture on the cultural meanings of breathing.
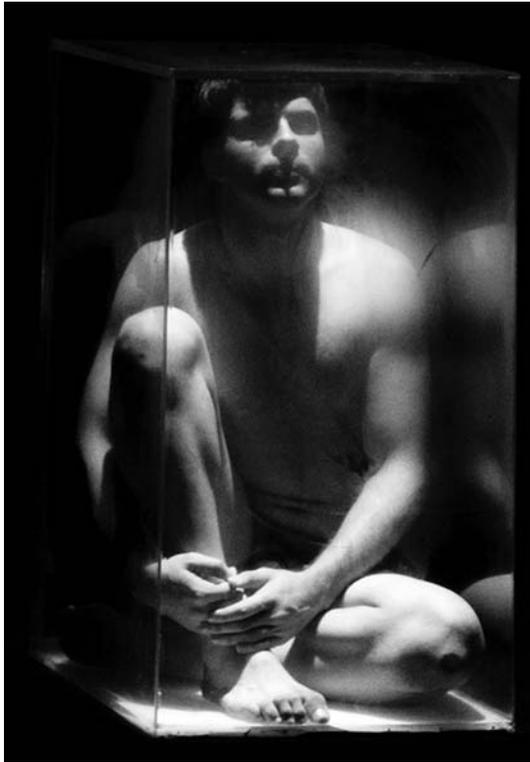
Figure 1.4 Coletivo Irmãos Guimarães, *Breath Less*. Photograph: Ismael
       Monticelli.

As Gontarski argues, 'the human is reduced to the machinery of respi-
ration, man or woman reduced to metabolic function'.[38] Such work enor-
mously extends the frame of reference of Beckett's work, while continuing
to create resonances with the Beckett performance tradition. In particular,
the use of tanks in the Guimarães projects creates an inevitable echo of
Damien Hirst's shark installations, in which the tank contains embalming
fluid. The precariousness of life, and the possibility of preserving its archival
simulacrum, is set, in pieces like *A Thousand Years*, against the very real
decay which requires that Hirst's work is periodically remade.

Hirst himself looms large in the performance history of *Breath* due to
the version he directed for the *Beckett on Film* project in 2000. In contrast
to the static stage image of 'miscellaneous rubbish' in the published text,
Hirst's film version creates an unmoving expanse viewed by a jerkily unsta-
ble camera-eye, challenging the static viewpoint of the theatre and of filmed
performance. As such, the film is a rare example of intermedial reinvention
within the *Beckett on Film* project, with which Gontarski associates the
goal of 'homage' to Beckett. By contrast, the Guimarães' multimedia works,
taking place principally in South America, combine elements of Beckett
works with a range of video, photographic and physical ephemera and, for

Gontarski, come to represent 'the very opposite of the Beckett on Film project taking shape at almost the exact same time in Europe' (p. 445). In the eclectic array of ephemera within which Beckett's work is just one element, the Guimarães brothers' projects, for Gontarski, 'create something like their own Beckett archive, Beckett in or as a cabinet of curiosities, a Beckett made up of cultural shards' (p. 446).

In Nikos Navridis' *Breath* (2005), installed initially at the 2005 Venice Biennale and subsequently in Toronto, Banff and Istanbul, the backdrop of debris which is common to nearly all versions of *Breath* is self-consciously re-created through the medium of video. More immersive than Hirst's or the Guimarães' versions, Navridis' *Breath* places the viewer at the centre of the installation, as he or she walks over the projected film of the debris. The video sequence appears to transform the floor of the installation environment into a conveyor belt, and its projection at varying speeds clearly disorientates the viewers, preoccupied as they are with navigating both the gallery space and the video. Like the Guimarães works, then, Navridis sets spectatorship free from the confines of the proscenium arch, and further questions the stability of *Breath* as an artefact. *Breath*, always already an embryonic installation, bears a powerful formulation of Beckett's ever-present imagery of physical decay and fragmentation: the work associates birth and death with the refuse which is physically made present. Beckett's text, we infer, is itself a 'found object' ready to be reclaimed from the rubbish heap.[39]

Like Gontarski's *Breath*, the piece marks the transition of Beckett's work into the arena of installation art; as Navridis argues, 'the challenge that Beckett's text [*Breath*] presented had been the relocation of a theatrical language into a visual arts condition'.[40] Beyond the various mediations by which we know *Breath*, in this latest remaking the viewer negotiates the problematics of refuse and remaking in physically entering a space constituted by mediation. The space of spectatorship becomes a 'hypersurface' defined by both physical and virtual boundaries: its physical make-up is overlaid by the virtual, projected images, and these interfere with the viewer's apprehension of space in the 'real'. For Gabriella Giannachi, such a mode of viewing doubles the presence of the spectator: 'the viewer may be part of both the realm of the image and the sphere of the real, and may modify one through the other'.[41] It is in this liminal space that the refashioning of Beckett's theatre now takes place.

Virtual Beckett

The second strand of contemporary Beckett-related work which I consider here is explicitly concerned with the creation of virtual worlds. The presence of Beckett in digital media is now growing exponentially, from the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, which promises to make available digital facsimiles and transcriptions of all the extant manuscripts of Beckett's works, to a plethora of individual and institutional websites, YouTube videos and even a chat room performance of *Waiting for Godot*, 'waitingforgodot.com'.[42] As Sean McCarthy argues, there are signs of a performance community in

the online virtual world Second Life (SL), signalled, for example, by the Second Life production of *Eh Joe* directed by SaveMeOh, the avatar of a real-world Dutch theatre director, in 2007.[43] McCarthy appeals, in analysing work of this kind, for the creation of 'a large Beckett virtual space, an entire Beckett "island" partly modeled on the many education campuses that already work in SL' (p. 113). Such a space, McCarthy argues, 'would include a museum that contains a range of archival material such as interactive manuscripts, facsimiles of correspondence, photographs and playbills from famous productions, and streamed video of past performances and adaptations' (p. 113).

The Beckett 'island', then, would constitute an online performance and archival space with particular affordances. Such a space, though, already exists, in the large secondary Beckett archive constituted by the totality of existing online Beckett-related material, which now co-exists with, and subtly modifies, the 'real-world' Beckett archives. The Beckett archive cannot now be straightforwardly equated with the repositories which house physical and electronic documents (the Beckett archives at Reading, Dublin and Austin, for example) and the institutions which manage them. Just as the archive supplements the published body of work with the 'grey canon' of manuscripts, correspondence and other paratextual matter, so the archive is now itself accompanied by a grey or virtual archive. The digital entities which subsist there, meanwhile, are archival in a double sense: both as they engage with Beckett's work and its archival preoccupations and, equally, in their own literally archival condition, as packets of data served up from databases.

The most significant engagements with Beckettian virtuality to date are those of Carmin Karasić's *The Lost Ones* (1999) and Kenderdine and Shaw's *Unmakeable Love* (2008). Karasić's work highlights the ontological problems of Beckett's *The Lost Ones* (1971) by creating a virtual environment (or environments) inspired by that work. The piece was initially created for the Attleboro Museum of Art in 1999, and subsequently remade for the Brodigan Gallery, Groton School, also in Massachusetts. It consists of three interlinked instantiations of the world of *The Lost Ones*: an outer cylinder, in which viewers can physically move around; an inner cylinder, which contains two hundred small, human-like figures made of foam (or, later, clay); and the virtual space of a monitor within the inner cylinder, and positioned beneath a raised floor or surface in the inner cylinder. The virtual world which the piece contains is made visible in two ways: through the monitor, and in the form of projections on the inside wall of the outer cylinder. It thus reconsiders and extends the problematic of searching which is central to Beckett's text, concerned as it is with a 'population' of 'searchers': 'abode where lost bodies roam each searching for its lost one' (p. 55).

The fullest realisation of *The Lost Ones* as a virtual environment, meanwhile, must be Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw's *Unmakeable Love*, 'a revisioning of Beckett's initial investigation that focuses and makes

interactively tangible a state of confrontation and interpolation between our selves and another society that is operating in a severe state of physical and psychological entropy'.[44] Following its premiere during *eArts/eLandscapes*, at the Shanghai Museum of Science and Technology in September 2008, the piece was reinstalled at *Un Volcan Numérique* in Le Havre in June 2009. REACTOR, the technology on which the piece is based, creates a hexagonal viewing area five metres in diameter comprising six screens, and which looks onto a central inner space. Viewers are granted glimpses of a virtual world populated by computer-generated humanoid searchers: small areas of the inner arena are lit up by 'virtual torches' which the viewers direct towards it.

Figure 1.5 Interactive torches and mixed reality video in *UNMAKEABLELOVE*
© Sarah Kenderdine & Jeffrey Shaw 2008/2015.

In this mixed reality environment, the viewers are free to move around the viewing area but cannot enter the inner realm inhabited by the searchers. Although the effect is highly immersive, including a *simulated* illumination of other viewers by means of the *virtual* torches, viewing is restricted by the limited number of torches and screens (six in each case) and the impossibility of moving between the inner and outer areas.

The idea of creating a virtual counterpart to the textual world of *The Lost Ones*, a world which itself creates multiple problems of realisation, is intriguing. Each of the virtual environments is itself a form of archive,

a virtual, informational entity which encodes and endlessly redeploys the structures of Beckett's text. At the same time, each is highly attentive to the place of indexicality in virtual worlds, a sphere in which the indexical takes on striking new meanings. Before returning to the details of Karasić's engagement with *The Lost Ones*, I pause now to consider the way indexicality, which both dominates discussions of how we view photographs and subtends the functioning of the archive, can be understood in virtual worlds. In the virtual, indexicality is gradually unmoored from its established associations with photographic and cinematic realism. As Lev Manovich notes, although basic photographic realism was achieved relatively quickly in computer programming, such advances continue to beg the question of *how* virtual aesthetics are to be understood.[45] For all that cinema may be 'the art of the index', the virtual environment cannot be defined so simply,[46] and even a photographically realistic virtual world diverges sharply from Bazin's understanding of the direct impression of phenomena on film. As Crandall and Levich argue, virtual reality (VR) simulations do not always have an obvious 'real' counterpart: a virtual snake, for example, may refer either to a 'real' snake or a real hallucination of a snake: 'without further clarification, there is simply no way of knowing how the purveyors of VR intend us to construe the connection between what is on the screen and what is in the world. The notion of VR is compatible with the occurrence of anything, because anything can, under the right description, be a real thing of its kind'.[47] Virtuality, then, creates a crucial ontological instability, and that instability casts redefines the kind of indexicality which Bazin derives from Peirce.

Virtual Indexicality

If indexicality continues to play a role in virtual worlds, it must be radically redefined. As Johnny Hartz Søraker argues, the terminology of virtuality continues to present grave problems for discussions of ontology. Although Søraker's analysis aims to construct a comprehensive taxonomy of the terminology of virtuality, virtual reality and virtual worlds, I retain here the strand concerning indexicality. Indexicality, as I have so far defined it, concerns context-dependent phenomena: the photograph becomes an index by registering the imprint of objects, and by gesturing to their separate existence in the real. Similarly, in language, 'I', 'you' and so on create meaning both by naming participants in a speech event and by 'pointing' to referents which exist elsewhere. As Søraker argues, though, deictics like 'here' and 'there' 'do not make *literal* sense unless the person who uses the words has a known location and orientation in a three-dimensional space'.[48]

The validity of Søraker's distinction surely depends on the type of referentiality required by the definition of indexicality; in fact, 'here' and 'there' often function precisely by gesturing towards an elsewhere that cannot be instantly apprehended by the viewer or reader. The location cannot be identified, but the *idea* is understood. These ambiguous gestures continue to exist within

virtual worlds: Bałka's *How It Is* (2009) is a prime example, and will be discussed in Chapter 2. This point of contention aptly expresses the encounter of textual and virtual worlds, that is, virtual environments which must be accessed through technological means other than reading. The nature of the viewer's interaction with the environment in virtuality means that the definition of the position he or she takes up within the environment takes on a critical importance. For this reason, Søraker argues, current definitions of virtuality must build on the location-specific understanding of indexicality:

> In this second use, indexicality is not only a property of words, but also a property of our relation to our surroundings. As an example, trying to orient oneself by use of a map is entirely pointless if one does not know one's location on the map. Thus, stationary maps typically have a 'you are here' marker, which serves as an *index* from which you can orient yourself. In this sense of the word, 'indexicality' means to have a discreet [*sic*], subjective (or ego-centric) position from which we act and orient ourselves in a three-dimensional world. (p. 18)

Such a form of indexicality takes on considerable significance in relation to virtual worlds, where the navigation of the virtual environment tends to privilege spatial rather than linguistic indexicality. In virtual reality, as Søraker continues, indexicality requires an explicitly spatial relation to the viewer's 'real' viewpoint: 'for virtual reality, indexicality is necessary but not sufficient; it requires your indexical location, orientation and movements in the virtual environment to actually correspond to the indexical location, orientation and movement of your physical body – it requires what I will refer to as a genuine "first-person view"' (p. 20). In a virtual world, the viewer may, for example, navigate using a computer mouse; the 'index' is present in the virtual world (frequently in the form of a cursor or point-of-view marker), but proves to entertain a complex relation to linguistic indexicality.

Søraker's argument makes location-specific indexicality the *sine qua non* of virtual worlds, and thereby implies that other forms of indexicality are impossible within them. I suggest, by contrast, that other forms of indexicality arise in *The Lost Ones* due to the work's complex mapping of physical search onto ontological quest, and that archivalist installation is characterised by the encounter of spatial indexicality and deixis. Location-specific indexicality is problematised in the text both in the presentation of the female character with long hair and downcast eyes who is described as 'the north' and, equally, in the complex ontological situation which arises from it.[49] The character serves as a point of orientation both within the narrator's account and for the 'last searcher' to whom he refers at the end, threading 'his way to that first among the vanquished so often taken for a guide' (p. 79). 'The north' serves to designate a specific location within the cylinder, a spatial rather than linguistic marker. At the same time, though, 'the north' is important for what it says about the reader's own place in *The Lost Ones*

and the ways in which the identification of linguistic and spatial reference points leads only to further dilemmas. This closing passage describes the end of the last searcher's quest, apparently signalling the end of life in the cylinder: 'he himself after a pause impossible to time finds at last his place and pose whereupon dark descends' (p. 79). After the searchers' frenetic attempts to find a 'place' in the preceding narrative, the ending suggests an end to movement and a state in which fixed locations can be deciphered. The complication, however, lies in the ontological quest which, for the reader and viewer, is only just beginning.

Karasić amplifies the implicit suggestion that the reader of *The Lost Ones* ends up inhabiting a similar condition to that of the unnamed searchers, a possibility which has been amply explored in Beckett criticism.[50] In Karasić's piece, searching takes place not once, but three times: in the VRML (Virtual Reality Modelling Language) world shown via the monitor and projections; in the physical presence of the human models; and in the situation of the viewer of the piece. The latter, as in reading the text, partly consists of observing the search which is taking place elsewhere, that is, in the virtual world. Unlike the reader of the text, the viewer of the installation is physically present within the cylinder, although only marginally so: despite the 'presence' which the viewer apparently achieves by entering the cylinder, he or she can only ever enter the outer cylinder. In this respect, the installation reproduces the text's central epistemological problem, which is itself rooted in asynchronicity.

As has frequently been observed, at least since P.J. Murphy's 1990 reading, the origins of the narrator's knowledge of the cylinder are unclear. The narrator's account has pretensions to encyclopedic authority, and yet is presumably limited by his individual viewpoint. He refers to 'time immemorial' but, as Murphy observes, is 'himself only a visitor, managing in the first fourteen sections to describe only one specific moment' from which all his judgements are abstracted.[51] It is unclear whether the narrator is physically present within the cylinder, is looking in from outside, or has knowledge of it in some other, presumably mediated, form. His involvement in the seemingly entropic 'abode' is not resolved at the end of the text, when he dispassionately concludes that 'it is perhaps the end of their [the searchers'] abode'.

On one level, the viewers of Karasić's installation can orientate themselves easily: since the installation is immersive, and we physically enter the cylinder, we initially take up a viewpoint defined by our physical position within the outer cylinder. That viewpoint is subsequently complicated, however, by the ontological confusion of the encounter between the viewer and the population of searchers; by the simultaneous, parallel existence of the virtual world in cyberspace; and in the highly unstable epistemological architecture of the virtual world itself. These problems, in turn, point to the increasingly problematic treatment of deixis elsewhere in Beckett's work, and to wider theoretical debates on virtual ontology which confront ethical questions.

For all that viewers can orientate themselves within the physical confines of Karasić's cylinder, that initial orientation is disturbed by the disjunction

between viewers and the searchers, and equally by that between the physical presence of the searchers in the inner cylinder and their virtual presence within the projected VRML world. The striking physical differences between viewer and searcher create an apparently reassuring ontological separation between them: the searchers are only 4″ tall and coloured blue. They are modelled, moreover, on Giacometti's disconcerting, elongated human figures, hardly a naturalistic reference point.

The separation of viewer and searcher crumbles, though, when it is realised that each is engaged in precisely the same activity, that is, attempting to understand the cylinder world. This is at the heart of Susan Brienza's classic account: 'if the story presents a statement about man's futile search for order and meaning in the world this is translated easily into a comment on the reader's futile search for order and meaning in the piece itself. Thus the reader becomes one of the searchers trying to find a critical "way-out" of the cylinder'.[52] Viewers are further disorientated in the parallel presentation of the searchers in the VRML world shown on the monitor and via the projected images. The apprehension of the searchers as physical forms is undercut by their virtual aspect, and viewers question the 'reality' of the version of *The Lost Ones* within which they are physically located.

In *Unmakeable Love*, meanwhile, the separation between viewer and searcher is apparently underlined by the impossibility of physically entering the central area of the work. Although the contours of the searchers' bodies are more naturalistic than in Karasic's *The Lost Ones*, suggesting a greater likelihood of identification between viewer and searcher, any such likelihood recedes in view of the relentless objectification of the searchers' bodies by the viewers' gaze. Because the spectacle of the inner arena is apprehended via relatively fixed viewing positions and, above all, guided by the 'light' of the torches, viewers are acutely aware of their distance from the searchers. Rather than compromising immersive experience, the need to handle the torch in order to view the searchers may in fact enhance the central scenario of *Unmakeable Love*, that is, a 'severe state of physical confinement, evoking perhaps a prison, an asylum, a detention camp'.

Where the viewing dynamics of the piece become more complex is in the augmented reality effect created when viewers direct the torch not at the bodies of the searchers in the central arena but at other viewers who are themselves looking in from the opposite side. As the torches do not emit light but serve to highlight portions of the virtual environment, *simulating* pools of light within it, they should not illuminate the bodies of other viewers in the opposite viewing area. In fact, though, the viewers are themselves filmed by infra-red cameras while in the process of viewing the searchers. The 'illumination' of the other viewer is itself a simulation, and one which blurs the boundaries between the real and virtual environments: 'the resulting ambiguity experienced between the actual and rendered reality of the viewers' presences in this installation reinforce[s] the perceptual and psychological tensions between "self" and "other"'.[53]

Figure 1.6 Interactive torches in *UNMAKEABLELOVE* © Sarah Kenderdine & Jeffrey Shaw 2008/2015.

Spatial indexicality is thus only half the story: the identification of the physical location which serves to orientate the viewer is no defence against the extraordinary epistemological disorientation wrought by *The Lost Ones*. That disorientation is already present within Beckett's text, moreover, as the text undermines its own fictive reality by presenting internally inconsistent dimensions.[54] The experience of reading *The Lost Ones* thus uncannily anticipates the disorientation which characterises Karasić's scenario in particular: the further we delve into the construction of the cylinder, the more its tentative reality unravels. We are left contemplating the self-professed artificiality of the narrator's creation, a situation which can lead only to further doubt as to the identity of the narrator. The narrator of *The Lost Ones* never becomes the object of the text's descriptive agenda: no contextualising information is presented about him, and his identity can only be deduced from his all-consuming attempt to provide a highly detailed, apparently scientific account of the cylinder, 'inside a cylinder fifty metres round and sixteen high for the sake of harmony or a total surface of roughly twelve hundred square metres of which eight hundred mural' (p. 59). Despite his pretensions to objectivity and exhaustive cataloguing, it transpires that the narrator is not infallible: descriptive passages are followed by the admission 'that is not quite accurate' (p. 58).

The virtual rearticulations of *The Lost Ones* highlight the epistemological instability of the original and foreground the interrogation of indexicality

in Beckettian narration. In *The Lost Ones* the narrator is dramatically marginalised within his own discourse, subsisting only in the form of the 'wild surmise' (p. 57) which he makes about the existence of a way out of the cylinder, or the rhetorical 'so much for a first aperçu of the abode' (p. 57). Such expressions suggest the possibility of a human viewpoint (their stylistic colour somewhat exceeds their value in imparting information), and yet that viewpoint cannot be located. The question of the narrator's identity is never resolved, and at the end of the text his account returns to the objective mode, although its potential fallibility is again acknowledged: 'so much roughly speaking for the last state of the cylinder' (p. 79).

In this, the text recalls the narratorial problematics which famously characterise the opening of *The Unnamable:* 'Where now? Who now? When now?'.[55] Although the narration is saturated with deictics here, their referents are unavailable, and to read the text is (as in *The Lost Ones*) to enter into the search which the narrator's 'hypotheses' announce (p. 287). Although the question of the speaker's physical location is never satisfactorily resolved, we understand the terms of the Unnamable's enquiry, that is, his attempts to understand the place from which his speech issues. The 'where' of his narration can only be understood in terms of this question, which refers not to a physical location but to a discursive problem. That problem *is* the referent, and can still be understood within the precepts of indexicality.

The Lost Ones, then, enlarges upon the existing problematic of Beckettian narratorial desubjectification: while *The Unnamable* proceeds by dramatically failed deixis (endlessly repeating the 'I' which is never fully apprehended in the text), *The Lost Ones* is remarkable for its complete avoidance of the first person. In its removal of the first-person pronoun, the text opens the way to a new kind of simulation in which the reader's immersion in the fictive reality is not characterised by the insistent interventions of the narrator's voice or the iteration of his position. In this, *The Lost Ones* anticipates the ontological problems which arise in the virtual worlds we have considered. In Karasić's and Kenderine and Shaw's cylinders, viewers' progress through a set of physical locations produces not knowledge but disorientation, just as readers' understandings of the cylinder gradually unravel. As a result of their negotiation of the cylinder world, reader and viewer enter into an undecidable ontology: the process of observing virtual phenomena seems to negate the understanding of those phenomena which observation proposes.

Ontology, Virtuality and Ethics

The epistemological dilemmas of *The Lost Ones* have further ethical implications, which I now consider in the light of two recent debates, on micro and macro states and their ontological and ethical consequences. The first strand, referred to as 'digital ontology', concerns the belief that reality can ultimately be broken down into discrete, indivisible units of data, and that the physical universe can be understood in terms of the computation of these

units. The most famous statement arising from the theory is Konrad Zuse's claim that 'the universe is being deterministically computed on some sort of giant but discrete computer'.[56] The idea is fundamentally compatible with the vision of *The Lost Ones*, whose troublingly open-ended epistemology implies mechanical omniscience of the kind that Zuse, writing at around the time that Beckett completed *The Lost Ones*, suggests. *The Lost Ones* offers a dispassionate account of the declining civilisation of the cylinder world, and Beckett's narrator privileges the construction of informational taxonomies over affective engagement. Rather than focusing on the 'searchers' as individuals, they are referred to as 'bodies' (p. 55).

The human population, then, is reduced to an array of 'data' and 'evidences' (p. 69) to be computed in the course of the narration, and there is no sense of a qualitative distinction between human and other phenomena in the text. Light in the cylinder is considered at length ('how it throbs with constant unchanging beat and fast but not so fast that the pulse is no longer felt' (p. 68)), and its variations appear to be the narrator's main concern, rather than the blindness which they ultimately cause (p. 69). If the human is reduced to the status of data here, the text uncannily anticipates one of the central operations of virtuality. In the transformation of *The Lost Ones* into a virtual environment, the searchers must literally be turned into data packets in order to feature in the virtual world: the human figures are photographed with a digital camera and the resulting data encoded in the VRML simulation. Karasić's subsequent, unfinished work on *The Lost Ones* takes the process a stage further: at the *Better than Reality* workshop at the V2 Lab in Rotterdam in 2008, Karasić created a 'pointcloud' representing the bodies of participants in digital form using a 3D laser scanner.[57] Motion capture, equally, is the basis of the creation of the searchers in *Unmakeable Love*, each composed of a '12,000 triangle polygonal model', with additional animations subsequently added by hand. Once again, the dynamics of virtuality replicate those of the source text, as the literal conversion of human forms into data re-enacts one of the central processes of Beckett's text.

A key question to arise from operations like these is that of the ontological and ethical status of these digital forms; the second type of debate which I consider concerns digital phenomena at the opposite end of the scale to the macro-level considered in theories of digital ontology. Here, Luciano Floridi's work on digital ontology involves an ethical understanding of 'digital entities', while that of Rafael Capurro proposes ethical readings of contemporary conceptions of information by relating those conceptions to their grounding in Heideggerian understandings of Being.[58] For Capurro, digital ontology is 'today's pervading understanding of Being';[59] we are trapped in the condition of virtuality, that is, of apprehending reality predominantly through the prism of the virtual. Our understanding of knowledge, according to Capurro, is thus borne of 'the pervading view according to which today we believe that we understand things in their being as far as we are able to digitalize them' (p. 179). Rather than the threat to indexicality

sometimes associated with digital media,[60] (periodically in Egoyan's cinema, and elsewhere in relation to digital photography), the digital and the virtual have instead become the privileged means of accessing reality. For Capurro, such a situation leads to 'the interpretation of all beings as digital ones' (p. 178), so that Berkeley's *esse is percipi* must be reformulated as '"to be is to be digital" or "their *esse* is *computari*"' (p. 178).

The understanding of information ethics in Capurro's and Floridi's work has significant implications for my discussion of archival processes. In his call for an 'ethics of the infosphere' (p. 182), Capurro draws heavily on Floridi's work, in particular Floridi's claim of agency for all 'digital entities'. For Floridi, the intrinsic value of such entities is sufficient to warrant their consideration in ethical terms: 'the minimal condition of possibility of an entity's least intrinsic value is to be identified with its ontological status as an information object. All entities, even when interpreted as only clusters of information, still have a minimal moral worth *qua* information objects and so may deserve to be respected'.[61] In a sense, this is the opposite of the situation depicted in *The Lost Ones*, in which human agents are treated as informational entities and excluded from ethical relations; for Floridi, by contrast, the most minute informational operations are endowed with agency and deemed worthy of ethical attention.

This extraordinary ethics informs the argument of subsequent chapters, in which the archive is more explicitly considered in relation to traumatic experience. In the work of Bałka, Kolbowski and Boltanski, the archive is implicitly or explicitly related to the subject's experience of trauma and to the prospect of creating a record of that experience. Here, archival ethics are a pressing concern: the archive may empower the subject in its promise to record experience, and yet the subject's voice subsists within the archive only in the form of the archival record. The standpoint of the archive to speaking subjects is an ambiguous one, and produces the parallel concern, in contemporary art, with both live voices and archival structures. That concern, which we have encountered repeatedly in the present chapter, is reflected in Bałka's interest in video testimony and archival film, as well as a recurrent preoccupation with the virtual and with archival time. Those preoccupations, as we shall now see, continue to be framed by Beckett's treacherous deictics, most notably the repeated promise of the questionable 'I' to disclose *how it is*.

Notes

1. Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber, 1990), p. 222.
2. Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, p. 215.
3. Nicholas Johnson, 'Analogue Krapp in a Digital Culture', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 20, no. 2 (2011), 213–20 (p. 217).
4. Beckett, *Endgame*, in *Complete Dramatic Works*, p. 120.
5. In UoR MS1659, the setting 'a late evening in the nineteen eighties' is altered by Beckett to read 'a late evening in the future'. MS 1659, 1r; see Mary

Bryden, Julian Garforth and Peter Mills (eds.), *Beckett at Reading: Catalogue of the Beckett Manuscript Collection at the University of Reading* (Reading: Whiteknights Press/Beckett International Foundation, 1998), p. 59.

6. Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History', p. 1.

7. S.E. Gontarski, 'Reinventing Beckett', *Modern Drama*, 49, no. 4 (Winter 2006), 428–51.

8. Peggy Phelan, 'Introduction: The Ends of Performance', in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (eds.), *The Ends of Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 9.

9. Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate, 2005), p. 6 (original emphasis).

10. Stanton B. Garner, Jr., '"Still Living Flesh": Beckett, Merleau-Ponty, and the Phenomenological Body', *Theatre Journal*, 45, no. 4 (1993), 443–60 (p. 450).

11. See in particular Anna McMullan, *Performing Embodiment in Samuel Beckett's Drama* (London: Routledge, 2010).

12. Egoyan, quoted in 'Cine Art', *Time Out* 15 February 2002, quoted in David L Pike, 'The Passing of Celluloid, the Endurance of the Image: Egoyan, Steenbeckett, and Krapp's Last Tape', in *Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan*, ed. by Jennifer Burwell and Monique Tschofen (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), pp. 101–24 (p. 103).

13. Egoyan and Keil, 'Searching for the Sacred in the CINematic Image', in *idea&s: the arts & science review* (University of Toronto) 4, no. 2 (Autumn 2007), 22–27 (p. 24).

14. 'Searching for the Sacred in the CINematic Image' (p. 25).

15. Egoyan, 'Memories Are Made of Hiss', *The Guardian,* 7 February 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/feb/07/artsfeatures1> [accessed 1/11/15].

16. Jonathan Romney, 'Cutting Edge Tales for Reel Life', *Independent on Sunday* 17 February 2002. <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/feb/07/artsfeatures1> [accessed 15/11/10].

17. Emma Wilson, 'Desire and Technology: An Interview with Atom Egoyan', *Film Quarterly*, 64, no. 1 (2010), 29–37 (p. 31).

18. Egoyan, 'Searching for the Sacred', p. 27.

19. See Yoshiki Tajiri, *Samuel Beckett and the Prosthetic Body: The Organs and Senses in Modernism* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2007), in particular chapter 5.

20. Jonathan Romney, 'Cutting Edge Tales for Reel Life', *Independent on Sunday,* 17 February 2002.

21. Rex Weiner, 'The Cutting Edge Finds Converts', *Variety* (26), 27 June, 1994. On digital and analogue editing, see also Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice: Looking at the Invisible* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

22. While the 'presentness' of Magee's body is emphasised here, making real as opposed to simulated interventions in the tape recording, Magee's recorded voice was the inspiration for the play. See, for example, Ruby Cohn, 'A Krapp Chronology', *Modern Drama,* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2006), 514–24 (p. 514).

23. Egoyan, quoted in Pike, 'The Passing of Celluloid', p. 107.

24. Emma Wilson, *Atom Egoyan* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 39.

25. Ron Burnett, 'Speaking of Parts', in Atom Egoyan, *Speaking Parts* (Toronto: Coach House, 1993), pp. 9–22 (p. 18).

26. Publicity leaflet, '*Steenbeckett*: Atom Egoyan'; unnumbered folio, Artangel archive, London.

27. *The Holy Bible, King James Version* (New York: Oxford Edition: 1769); *King James Bible Online*, 2008. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/> [accessed 11/8/15].

28. In this context, see Libby Saxton, *Haunted Images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust* (London: Wallflower, 2008).

29. Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', in Barbie Zelizer (ed.), *Visual Culture and the Holocaust,* pp. 215–46 (p. 218). For a recent response to the problem, see Angi Buettner, *Holocaust Images and Picturing Catastrophe: The Cultural Politics of Seeing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

30. Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.

31. Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 45, quoted in Genette, *Paratexts,* p. 2.

32. Gontarski, 'Reinventing Beckett', p. 442.

33. Although the text was circulated on the Internet, it is unclear whether the text originated from the bootleg video or from the disk housing the self-destructing electronic version. See Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, 'Text Messaging: the Transformissions of "Agrippa"', in *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 213–48.

34. *The Agrippa Files* <http://agrippa.english.ucsb.edu/> [accessed 11/8/15].

35. Gontarski, 'Reinventing Beckett', p. 442.

36. Beckett, *Breath*, in *The Complete Dramatic Works,* p. 371.

37. Beckett, *Breath*, in *Complete Dramatic Works,* p. 371.

38. S.E. Gontarski, 'Redirecting Beckett', in Daniela Guardamagna and Rossana M. Sebellin (eds.), *The Tragic Comedy of Samuel Beckett* (Bari and Rome: Editori Laterza, 2009), pp. 327–41 (pp. 335–36).

39. Gontarski, 'Redirecting Beckett', p. 333.

40. Nikos Navridis, DVD documentation, *Selected Works, 1996–2005* DVD (2005).

41. Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 95.

42. On the Beckett Digital Manuscript Project, see <http://www.beckettarchive.org/> [accessed 4/8/15].

43. Sean McCarthy, 'Giving Sam a Second Life: Beckett's Plays in the Age of Convergent Media', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 51, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 102–17 (pp. 108–11).

44. Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw, 'Unmakeable Love'. <http://www.unmakeablelove.org> [accessed 10/06/15].

45. Manovich, 'Assembling Reality: Myths of Computer Graphics', <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/lev-manovich/articles/assembling-reality-myths-of-computer-graphics/> [accessed 10/06/15].

46. Manovich, 'What Is Digital Cinema', <http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/what-is-digital-cinema> (1995) [accessed 10/06/15].

47. Richard Crandall and Marvin Levich, *A Network Orange* (New York: Copernicus, 1998), pp. 92–93.

48. Søraker, 'Virtual Entities, Environments, World and Reality: Suggested Definitions and Taxonomy', in Charles M. Ess and May Thorseth (eds.), *Trust and Virtual*

Worlds: Contemporary Perspectives (Oxford, Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 44–72 (p. 18). See also Heather A. Horst and Daniel Miller (eds.), *Digital Anthropology* (London: A&C Black, 2013).

49. Beckett, *The Lost Ones,* in *Six Residua* (London: John Calder, 1999), p. 76.
50. See Susan Brienza, '*The Lost Ones:* The Reader as Searcher', *Journal of Modern Literature,* special issue, *Samuel Beckett,* 6, no. 1 (February 1977), 148–68.
51. P.J. Murphy, *Reconstructing Beckett: Language for Being in Samuel Beckett's Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 103.
52. Susan Brienza, '*The Lost Ones:* The Reader as Searcher', p. 148.
53. Kenderdine and Shaw, <http://www.unmakeablelove.org> [accessed 10/06/15].
54. See my *Samuel Beckett and Testimony* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 143–47.
55. Beckett, *The Unnamable,* in *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: Picador, 1979), p. 287.
56. Konrad Zuse, *Calculating Space* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Project MAC, 1970 [1969]), quoted in Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 319.
57. Karasić, 'The Lost Ones Pointcloud', unpublished archival text, fol.1.
58. Luciano Floridi, 'Against Digital Ontology', *Synthese* (2009) no. 168, 151–78. See also Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
59. Capurro, 'Towards an Ontological Foundation of Information Ethics', *Ethics and Information Technology* no. 8 (2006), 175–86 (p. 175).
60. See Corey Dzenko, 'Analog to Digital: The Indexical Function of Photographic Images,' *Afterimage: The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism*, special issue, *Media Literacy*, 37, no. 2, (September/October 2009), 19–23.
61. Floridi, 'On the Intrinsic Value of Information Objects and the Infosphere', *Ethics and Information Technology* no. 4 (2002), 287–304 (p. 287).