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Beckett and new media adaptation:

from the literary corpus to the transmedia archive

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This chapter considers the presence of 'borderline' forms of Beckettian adaptation in new media. In particular, it examines the productive but critical engagement of those forms with key tenets of Linda Hutcheon's classic *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), especially the constraints which Hutcheon's theory imposes upon adaptation where scope is concerned. Although Hutcheon's understanding of adaptation is broad, considering video games and interactive art, 'brief echoes' of works are excluded because they 'recontextualise only short fragments' (2006: 9). Adaptation, by contrast, must involve an 'extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art' (2006: 170). The resulting understanding poses crucial problems in the remediations I am concerned with, and those problems stem in part from Beckett's works themselves. How, in thinking about adaptation, are we to deal with a body of work in which fragmentation is itself a structural principle? Many of Beckett's works are self-consciously fragmentary, and deliberately create brief echoes of other works within the canon. Indeed, the 'extended, deliberate' notion of adaptation seems in some respects fantastically ill-suited to a corpus characterised by the recurring Beckettian

dilemmas of reflexivity, fragmentation and ending, and to cry out for a model which might accommodate those dilemmas.

The desire in adaptation to 'retell the same story over and over in different ways' (2006: 9) is always anticipated in a body of work whose narrators are sentenced to 'keep on saying the same old thing' (Beckett, 2010c: 108). The moment in which they 'shall be able to go silent, and make an end' (2010c: 12) famously represents both salvation and extinction, and the paradoxical 'search for the means to put an end to things, an end to speech, is what enables the discourse to continue' (2010c: 10). Such an implosive narrative premise poses unique problems when it comes to theorising Beckettian adaptation, which is always pre-emptively ironised. It is itself deeply embedded in Beckett's literary corpus as an *adaptive* principle: the expression of the impossible narrative imperative is reworked intertextually (between prose works, for example) and between genres. *The Unnamable*, in which the problem attains particularly acute form, refers back to earlier distillations in the first two volumes of the trilogy and in Beckett's earlier prose: 'all these Murphys, Molloys and Malones do not fool me. They have made me waste my time, suffer for nothing, speak of them when, in order to stop speaking, I should have spoken of me and me alone' (2010c: 14). The notion of 'intra-intertextuality', described in Brian T. Fitch's classic account as 'the multiple relationships between texts by the same author' (1988: 23), is one of the tools by which the overarching problem is endlessly redeployed and reimagined, as narrators refer to other works in which the issue has already been aired.

These two interrelated dilemmas, of ending and narratorial reflexivity, are significantly revisited in recent games and simulations. The present chapter considers, firstly, John Gerrard's *Exercise (Djibouti)* (2012), in which ending is pitted against seemingly endless duration; secondly, Gerrard's *Exercise (Dunhuang)* (2014), in which the intertextual and intermedial engagement with ending is further complicated; and, finally, James Meek's

Beckett (2018), in which the Beckettian ironies of voice and narration are recontextualised in gameplay characterised by a searching enquiry into media.[1] New media forms complicate storytelling (one of the key preoccupations of many theories of adaptation) with a reflexive attention to the target medium, and sometimes they elaborate a vast secondary architecture based on fragmentary reference to source material. The seemingly infinite scale of the game world is matched by an impression of endless duration, as the simulation unfolds according to multiple variables, and of a potentially infinite number of iterations. 'Beckett', here, can operate as anything from a strict citational matrix to a generic, inherited paradigm. In Gerrard and Meek, the works' relation to Beckett is variously indicated by citational titles or, more broadly, in the exploitation of a universe or 'heterocosm' which is recognisably 'Beckettian'. I analyse the construction of a Beckettian heterocosm in the light of the notion of the transmedia archive, in which 'adaptations' are reconceived not as versions of a pre-existing essence but rather as instances in the iterative, diachronic elaboration of the work.

The Beckettian body, performance affect and computer simulation

In order to bring these perspectives clearly into view, I turn now to two comments on Beckett by British cultural critic and blogger Mark Fisher. The first is concerned with the ironies inherent in any encounter between Beckett's work and the imperative, in adaptation, to 'repetition without replication' (Hutcheon, 2006: 7). The second, meanwhile, sees Fisher return to Beckett's work in the context of installation art, and of the simulations of John Gerrard. The first comment, posted on Fisher's *k-punk* blog in 2006, concerns a panel discussion held at the Barbican as part of the Beckett Centenary Festival, which also included a series of Beckett productions by the Gate Theatre.[2] After praising the interventions of Nina Power (to whom he refers via the alias Infinite Thought or I.T.) in a conversation otherwise marked by an insistence on 'seeing Beckett in the terms that had been established in the

1950s', Fisher turns to the performance of *Rockaby* and *Ohio Impromptu* which followed the panel discussion. He suggests that there was 'altogether *too much* expression' in vocal delivery (2006; emphasis in original):

> Here, 'live' theatre regains its power precisely by subtracting the 'living' and the 'theatrical' – the shrill mugging of theatre acting is replaced by the stasis of bodies assuming the unvitality of the catatonic. Yet, as I.T. complained, the actors and the director could not seem to prevent themselves from interpreting Beckett's notoriously precise instructions. (Hence Beckett's famous exasperation with actors). (2006)[3]

Fisher's comments engage the view of expression and the actor's body which has arisen from Beckett's famous comments on Billie Whitelaw's early preparations for *Not I*: 'too much colour, no no, too much colour' (Whitelaw, 1995: 120). Whitelaw's account of rehearsing the play refers too to Jocelyn Herbert's contentious claim, in *A Theatre Workbook,* 'that what Sam was after was to find out how far you can remove the body altogether from the stage, yet still end up with an intensely dramatic situation' (1995: 123).

The problem of performance affect, I suggest, has a significant bearing on the adaptation of theatre works for other forms and genres, some of which have the potential to neutralise the inevitable 'colour' of human performance and even to replace the physical body with a virtual avatar. In Herbert's argument, fidelity to Beckett logically engenders a commitment to removing the body from the stage: to be faithful to Beckett's theatre is to adapt it, to begin to move outside of the theatre. For Fisher, too, the way out of the impasse of performance is paradoxically through forms of adaptation which are anticipated and signposted in Beckett's work itself, in particular an appeal to installation art: 'these stark tableaux, where bodies sit in near-catatonic near-stillness while sparse, recited text

(sometimes spoken by them, sometimes by an offstage voice) is subjected to micro-varied repetition, are closer to installations than to traditional drama' (2006). Fisher in fact ponders two solutions to the problem of performance, namely installation and artificial intelligence:

> The productions inevitably prompted the question: can any actor do justice to Beckett's austerity? Is the temptation to expression and interpretation always too much for any actor to resist? What is required is the catatone of a meat puppet, and I wondered if Beckett's scripts hadn't posed a problem that only AI imagineers or CGI animators can solve. Perhaps only an artificial life form can adequately give body and voice to Beckett's human unlife. (2006)

The problem of performance, in this reading, is the driver of an ever-more radical process of adaptation: the problem of excessive expression can only be resolved by recourse to installation or computer simulation. I want to retain Fisher's point of view, in what follows, for its provocative vision of a progressive evacuation of theatre into other forms, and for the specific reference which Fisher makes both to simulation and to John Gerrard. At the same time, though, I reserve judgement as to Fisher's argument on expression. For all that new media forms cater to the possibility of eliminating the various expressive acts carried out on-stage by the human actor, such forms can certainly not be straightforwardly understood as inexpressive, and have much more ambiguous implications.

John Gerrard's *Exercise (Djibouti)* and perpetual permutation

Fisher returns to concerns such as these during a round table discussion held at the University of Oxford in 2012 as part of an event entitled *Simulation, Exercise, Operations.* The event was dedicated not to Beckett but to John Gerrard's work, coinciding with the installation of

Gerrard's *Exercise (Djibouti)* at the Old Power Station in Oxford, and yet Beckett loomed large here once more. Although Gerrard's art is usually displayed in installation, *Exercise (Djibouti)*, like most of his work, is a simulation. It shows two groups of athletes, one dressed in blue and one in red, going through an endless series of formalised movements against the backdrop of the vast desert landscapes of Djibouti. The movements of the avatars in the installation originate in a series of routines carried out by a group of athletes training for the London 2012 Olympics and recorded using motion capture technology.

Exercise (Djibouti) is not obviously an adaptation of Beckett, and certainly not a titular adaptation, but it nevertheless displays an extraordinary cristallisation of recognisably Beckettian concerns. The use of computer simulation allows Beckettian duration to be expressed more fully than in prose or drama, running through permutations of bodies as long as the hardware can operate, potentially for many years. In the round table discussion which was part of the *Simulation* event, Fisher explicitly links this 'purgatorial' aspect to Beckett in a remark in which he also comments on the work's elimination of the expressive dilemmas of the human actor:

> I certainly see the relation to Beckett, and I've written before that there is something unsatisfactory about any actor playing Beckett; that actually, in order to get Beckett done properly, in order to get the correct degree of choreography and the right kind of flatness of affect, you'd really need a simulation to do it. And maybe we can see John's work as the beginning of the construction of this Beckett Engine which ultimately can perform his work better than any actor has so far managed to do it. (Fisher qtd. in Mackay, 2015: 69)

The comment is part of a round table exchange in which Fisher rejects Shane Brighton's notion of a tradition of 'tragic witnessing' seen in Beckett and Gerrard. For Brighton, Gerrard's work is situated within 'a specifically Irish tradition, that of Samuel Beckett. In Beckett we find characters whose tragic experience is radically trapped within particular spaces from which they have no way of moving' (Brighton, 2015: 46). Fisher, meanwhile, rejects the paradigm of the tragic, instead linking Gerrard's work to the problems of the human actor and of purgatorial duration, concerns which are aired, too, in the 2006 blog post. Both problems, he argues, demand an evacuation of dramatic form and an embracing of the possibilities of simulation.

The idea of getting 'Beckett done properly' once more intersects with the omnipresent problem of ending, shackling the prospect of getting the work done and completing it to a form of virtual performance in which it can continue indefinitely. The structural ironies of the bilingual corpus, meanwhile, implicitly suggest 'pour en finir avec Beckett' as the logical translation of Fisher's phrase. The translation immediately recalls the existing collection *Pour en finir encore et autres foirades* (Beckett, 1976), so that even the most innovative attempts to conceptualise Beckettian adaptation are anticipated within the corpus proper. To get Beckett done properly, then, may also imply to 'have done with Beckett', a fantasy of completion which is perpetually postponed. The English counterpart to *Pour en finir encore*, meanwhile, is *For to End Yet Again* (Beckett, 2010b: 151–3), which might in turn suggest 'to get Beckett done *yet again*' as a gloss on Fisher's original statement. Such an unstable literary corpus, in which the 'grey canon' (see below) is constantly flexing its muscles, has the potential to significantly redefine Beckettian adaptation, and even to threaten the stable notion of the literary work upon which much adaptation theory depends.

The prospect of perpetual permutation in Gerrard's work acts as an uncanny future counterpart to that of Beckett, recalling his glee at a test viewing of the colour print of *Quad*

on a black and white monitor, an effect which he described as 'marvellous, it's 100,000 years later' (qtd. in Brater, 1990: 109). *Exercise,* moreover, constitutes a dramatic amplification of the combinatorial dilemma of *Quad,* 'the art or science of exhausting the possible, through inclusive disjunctions' (Deleuze, 1995: 5), as Gilles Deleuze puts it in his preface to the French edition of Beckett's television plays (Beckett, 1992). Where *Quad* stipulates four players, 'as alike in build as possible' and 'gowns reaching to ground, cowls hiding faces' (Beckett, 2009a: 145), Gerrard's software renders facial features indistinct and dresses all of the actors in the same virtual clothing. If individuality is maintained through sound in Beckett (as each player is identified with a particular sound), Gerrard's simulation is silent. The central action of the exploration of the space through movement receives a closely analogous treatment: Beckett's text specifies all of the possible routes through the square and all of the possible combinations of actors: 'Four possible solos all given. Six possible duos all given (two twice). Four possible trios all given twice.' (2009a: 144)

The central ambiguity of *Quad,* though, concerns the work's own textual and generic status. *Quad II,* accidentally created during work towards the 1982 Süddeutscher Rundfunk broadcast, consists of a mere two-line note in the English published text: 'No colour, all four in identical white gowns, no percussion, footsteps only sound, slow tempo, series 1 only.' (2009a: 146) If *Quad II* is in a sense an adaptation of *Quad,* the printed text of *Quad* itself serves as little more than a gloss on the diagram which describes the movement of the actors across the playing space (2009a: 146). At the origin of the multiple adaptations of the work we find not a text but a formal blueprint. For Graley Herren, *Quad* is more 'a set of assembly instructions than a play proper' (2007: 124), or even, in Piotr Woycicki's analysis, 'a repetition of two vector movements, one along a side of the square and the other one across the diagonal. These two vectors form a core path for each player. Once the path is completed, it is turned 90° clockwise and repeated again' (2012: 140). *Quad,* then, is always already an

adaptation of this minimal schematic, as it is variously translated into prose, theatre and television.

John Gerrard's *Exercise (Dunhuang)* and the transmedia archive

If Gerrard's work pursues such a line, his *Exercise (Dunhuang)* draws still closer parallels with *Quad.* The piece presents 'a mysterious structure in the heart of the Chinese desert, a precise system of roadways the size of a small town' (Gerrard, 2017). Human figures explore the vast network of roads, and once again the duration of the piece is potentially infinite. The 'danger zone' (2009a: 145) referred to as point E in the *Quad* diagram (2009a: 146), and which Beckett's actors instinctively avoid, has a counterpart here not in a fixed location but in the moment at which two actors meet: 'when two participants meet, the actor closest to their goal continues walking, while the other must sit or lie on the landscape and rest. After a period lasting between 24 and 36 hours, only one remains standing' (Mackay, 2014: 13). As Robin Mackay notes, the piece recalls 'Beckett's minimal theatre of exhaustion' (2014: 5); in fact, though, that theatre is expanded from the limited permutations of *Quad* to a network of dozens of pathways. At the end of the iteration, when only one participant remains, like the last searcher of Beckett's *The Lost Ones,* the scenario initiates another run, so that, as in Beckett, 'all begins again' (2010b: 101). In a further parallel to the mathematical undergirding of *Quad,* the workers' movements across the grid are calculated by the A* search algorithm, one of whose principal applications is pathfinding. It works by comparing a given location on a map, typically a two-dimensional grid, to a pre-defined goal and calculating the optimal route to that goal (see Wenderlich, 2011).

The encounter between Gerrard and Beckett begs the question of just what their works are adaptations *of*: if *Quad* is always already an adaptation, stemming from the inscrutable diagram or principle of movement at the heart of the printed text, and the archival

antecedent ‘J. M. Mime’ (TCD MS 4664), *Exercise (Dunhuang)* originates in a Google Earth satellite image circulated by Reza Negarestani.[4] In a 2013 article in which he specifically mentions *Quad*, Mike Frangos comments on the presence of diagrams and instructions in late Beckett: ‘Beckett’s late works for film, theatre and television have often been compared to installation pieces, minimalistic and iterative texts that resemble instruction manuals more than theatre’ (2013: 217). The inclusion of ‘diagrams, maps and charts indicating a set of instructions to be executed rather than the text of a traditional play’ (2013: 212) may stem from the emphasis on medium-specificity which Frangos sees in late Beckett, and in particular from a desire to rigorously control theatrical performance. In fact, though, it may facilitate the evacuation of theatre and the move into other forms such as installation and new media, while responding to Fisher’s question ‘What do we look like from cyberspace? What do we look like to cyberspace? Surely we resemble a Beckettian assemblage of abstracted functions more than we do a wholistic organism connected to a great chain of being’ (2006).

Frangos links Beckett’s reflexive investment in media to theories of remediation and above all *transmedia*, in which, following an article from 1948 by André Bazin and, later, Henry Jenkins’ *Convergence Culture* (2006), ‘a novel, a play and a film all based on the same source need not be seen as adaptations but as a “single work reflected through three art forms”’ (Bazin, 1948: 26; Frangos, 2013: 216). As a result, Frangos argues, even contemporary social media versions of Beckett should be understood as part of the author’s own body of work: ‘in such a media ecology, not only can any singular “work” be seen as an archive of iterations spanning media but the concept of the “author” must also be extended to include content generated by a crowd of amateur producers’ (2013: 216). Frangos’ argument, I suggest, extrapolates from the discussion of the ‘grey canon’ which has periodically taken place since Beckett’s death and S. E. Gontarski’s 2006 essay ‘Greying the Canon: Beckett

and Performance', in which he foregrounds the capacity of ancillary or paratextual material to reconfigure the primary corpus:

> As the Beckett canon is extended into the palimpsest that Gerard Genette calls 'paratexts,' that is, as more of the peripheral, secondary, or what we might call the ghost or grey canon comes to light and is made public (letters, notebooks, manuscripts, and the like), it inevitably interacts with and reshapes, redefines, even from the margins (or especially from the margins), the white canon (or the traditional canon), and the more apparent it becomes that Beckett's voice was aporetic, as plural if not contradictory as that of his (other) characters. The voice of Beckett we hear as a commentator on his work might best be read as fictive, the creation of his own ideal reader or spectator. As the grey canon expands, it offers additional authoritative voices. (2006: 143)

While Gontarski is largely concerned with Beckett's reluctance to offer interpretation of his works, coupled with an attention to performance verging on the dictatorial, Frangos applies Gontarski's model of authorship to areas of production which significantly expand definitions of the literary corpus: amateur productions and versions recorded on YouTube. Whereas Gontarski's grey canon is essentially concerned with authorial material, Frangos' enquiry, too, extends significantly beyond the authorial signature. Focusing on the production of *Come and Go* by two amateur practitioners using the name Offshore Drama Club, Frangos notes that YouTube has now become a 'community archive through which anyone can submit individual performances corresponding to each of the three women in the play' (2013: 216). Such a situation sidesteps cardinal precepts of Beckettian performance like the ban on cross-gender casting, which emanates from Beckett's own comments on the issue, as social media

effectively exist outside of the estate's regulatory power. Most radically, perhaps, for Frangos, 'all media projects are imagined as archives' and their activity is essentially iterative (2013: 217). The 'archival' nature of the work thus means that latter-day adaptations are to be understood as integral to it: the Offshore Drama Club piece is now part of *Come and Go* by Samuel Beckett, which subsists within an ever-evolving and expanding media ecology.

The notion of the transmedia archive has further implications for Beckettian adaptation: medium-specificity is replaced by endless intermedial transfer and individual performances are relativised. Authorship, too, is demoted in an ever-growing corpus whose constitutive elements are no longer limited to the range of works produced in a given individual's lifetime. If, as Frangos argues, Beckett must now be understood 'in the context of a transmedia culture where the status of the archive has already been remediated by that of the database' (2013: 218), the author's name is simply one amongst the immense 'list of items' by which the database represents the world in Lev Manovich's account (2002: 225). Beckett's work is predisposed to such a logic: 'posthumous' acts of expression are explicitly highlighted within it, and narrators deny their own authority over their utterances. Just as the notion of authorship now stretches to accommodate an endless vista of posthumous contributions, the grey canon is already threatening the fixity of the corpus proper, as the category of the 'work' is underwritten with contrasting, or even conflictual, bilingual counterparts.

Simon Meek's Beckett **and the video game 'heterocosm'**

I turn now to an example with very particular implications for transmedial Beckett adaptation: *Beckett,* a 2018 video game created by developer and designer Simon Meek ('Beckett', 2018). *Beckett* is situated at the heart of the transmedial situation described by Frangos: like Gerrard's simulations, it is literally made up of algorithms, and the presence of

the human actor within it is more tenuous still. *Beckett* belongs both to the posthumous domain of Beckettian production and to a genre which would have been unambiguously situated outside of the literary canon during Beckett's lifetime, that of computer games. Its peculiarity, though, is that it is, or appears to be, a titular Beckett adaptation. The game combines explicit titular reference to Beckett with a broad-based invocation of a 'Beckettian' world, or what Hutcheon refers to as the 'heterocosm':

> What gets adapted here is a heterocosm, literally an 'other world' or cosmos, complete, of course, with the stuff of a story – settings, characters, events and situations. To be more precise, it is the 'res extensa' – to use Descartes' terminology – of that world, its material, physical dimension, which is transposed and then experienced through multisensorial interactivity. (2006: 14)

Hutcheon's argument here is concerned with computer games: she refers to *Zelda, The Godfather* and to the account of virtuality in Oliver Grau's *Virtual Art*, in which he analyses the promise of 'immersing oneself in the image space, moving and interacting there in "real time", and intervening creatively' (2003: 3). Her conception of the heterocosm, though, is highly literary, and arguably originates in M. H. Abrams' discussion of 'The Poem as Heterocosm' in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, in which the 'second nature' of the fictional world is cast as an 'act analogous to God's creation of the world'. Key to Abrams' account is the distinction, which he roots in eighteenth-century literary criticism, between earlier views of the poem as imitation and the later conception of an *other* world (1971: 272).

Beckett extends the promise of immersion to a broadly Beckettian world, largely monochrome in appearance and preoccupied with waiting and forgetting: 'we all forget. We're all forgotten. It's just a matter of time'. The player takes the part of Beckett, an ageing

private investigator, although instead of first-person, the graphics are largely 2D and seen from a top-down perspective. The character of Beckett occupies a circular marker and is frequently represented by a grainy photograph of an older man's face seen in profile, his vaguely Beckettian features obscured by thick glasses with heavy dark frames. Beckett, it is strongly implied, has seen better days, and laments Amy, his dead wife and an intimation of *Footfalls*, with whom he associates a time when he 'still saw hope in the world'. Beckett's central task, to track down the missing boy Peregrine Starlight, also has shades of *Molloy:* like Moran, his identity seems to fuse with that of his quarry in the latter stages of the game, where Starlight taunts him with his failure to understand the double-edged nature of the quest.

The final scenes on the beach, another archetypal Beckettian setting, in which the abandoned Peregrine washes up amongst the city's rubbish, tap into the central theme of 'the things we leave behind'. The phrase, made explicit in the game narrative here, points to Beckett's own imminent transition to detritus: although he is useful to the city authorities, 'for now', he too will soon be cast off. Beckett lives largely in his memories: 'Amy saw life in what was left behind', he reminisces earlier on and, paradoxically, 'it's what we leave behind, she would say. That's all we'll be remembered by, when the memories fade'. Despite his preoccupation with the past, Beckett appears to be losing his memory. This is a hard-drinking, partly amnesiac protagonist, and the textual admonition we periodically receive – 'Beckett you'll be late' – is both a prompt to gameplay and the marker of an uncontextualised voice. As so often, the comment is *almost* citational, invoking a key Beckett topos while failing to quote the specifics of Beckett's work. Upon leaving the game (switching off, perhaps, as in *What Where*, but only until the next purgatorial instance of play), we are confronted with two apparently typewritten messages: 'lights out' and, doubling Beckett with *Macbeth*, 'what's done can't be undone'. If, as Sonya Freeman Loftis puts it in *Shakespeare's*

Surrogates, the deteriorating tissue of quotations in so many of Beckett's works functions as something 'to be rebelled against and forgotten' (2013: 80), in *Beckett* the Beckett corpus itself becomes an ambivalent object, both revered and hated, a residual but half-forgotten presence. Like the classics of which only 'a part remains' in *Happy Days* (Beckett, 2010a: 34), Beckett's work here is invoked in its residuality, its surrogate evocation of works which are always already partially lost.

Beckett, despite its explicit referentiality, then, takes up a problematic standpoint to Beckettian adaptation. Despite the titular announcement, the game does not amount, in Hutcheon's terms, to a deliberate revisitation of 'a particular *work*'. Instead, it offers a tortured quasi-citational model in tandem with the generalised evocation of a 'Beckettian' world derived in part from his works and in part from biographically inflected marginalia. The glimpses of the Beckett character, features deliberately rendered slightly generic, are infused with the aesthetic of black-and-white photographs of Beckett like those of Jane Bown and John Haynes. In this, Meek's work taps into the increasingly prevalent creation of authorly heterocosms, worlds derived from authors' works and supplemented by details taken from authors' lives. Prominent amongst recent examples is Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), in which an early twentieth-century central European setting inspired by the works of Stefan Zweig is complemented by the 'Zweig-esque' (Seitz, 2015: 177) device of a frame narrative in which an elderly author recalling Zweig reflects on a pre-1939 world like that in Zweig's autobiographical *Die Welt von Gestern* (1942) (Zweig, 2009).

Anderson's film, too, enjoys an extended media afterlife, producing later surrogates such as *Maquisard* (2015), 'a charming game of snooping and investigation' ('Maquisard', 2015). The game is set in a large central European hotel based on Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and recognisable, above all, in a pastel-dominated palette derived from Anderson's research into the Photochrom Print Collection, the US Library of Congress

archive of photochrom images dating from 1895 to 1910 which Anderson acknowledges as a 'great inspiration' for his film (Seitz, 2015: 101). Anderson's deep investment in the Photochrom archive and in the antique form of the photolithograph is only vestigially present in *Maquisard*, however, which simply attaches a diluted version of the film's aesthetic to highly conventional gameplay. More remarkable is the 2014 Pushkin Press volume *The Society of the Crossed Keys*, a Zweig anthology announced as 'Wes Anderson's selections from the writings of the great Austrian author Stefan Zweig, whose life and work inspired *The Grand Budapest Hotel*' (Zweig, 2014: cover text). The book, its cover characterised by the pastel shades of the film and a hand-written title superimposed on what appears to be an early twentieth-century notebook, represents an intervention in the Zweig corpus itself and, as in *Beckett*, that intervention takes place by means of the authorly heterocosm. It is the transposition of Zweig's 'actual life into the dream life of his stories' (Zweig, 2014: 9) in Anderson's film that ultimately produces *The Society of the Crossed Keys,* a posthumous addition to the Zweig corpus which is announced under the sign of Anderson's belated, idiosyncratic cinematic aesthetic.

Conclusion

It is to this model of intervention that I wish to draw attention as I conclude. Building on the arguments I have made so far, we might say firstly that the author's body of work is forever modified, posthumously or 'preposterously' (i.e. paradoxically positioning what came first as an after-effect and what came later as pre-text), by its adaptations (see Bal, 1999). The work of Zweig and Beckett is forever altered by Anderson's film or the simulations of Gerrard and Meek. In the uses of the hetercosm, however, a deeper, more fundamental challenge to existing models of adaptation lies. Hutcheon's consideration of the heterocosm evaluates both 'truth-of-coherence', or internal consistency, and 'truth-of-correspondence' (2006: 14). The

latter is an external quality, and is located by Hutcheon in relation to 'the universe of a particular adapted text' (2006: 14). It is here that problems arise in the case studies which I have considered, and that their borderline status in relation to existing models of adaptation becomes clear. Because the case studies do not refer to a single text but to increasingly diffuse notions of Beckett drawn from various works and paratextual matter, they inevitably violate Hutcheon's truth of correspondence. Engaging with a vast textual repertoire, there is no stable referent against which they can be evaluated. While an adaptation of *Molloy* might be analysed in terms of its portrayal of the characters Moran and Molloy and the much more complex question of their relation to the text's narration, such an operation becomes quite simply impossible in Meek and Gerrard. *Beckett* knowingly enters into an unstable textual matrix, invoking the Beckett canon both explicitly and through implicit, sub-citational means. Gerrard's simulations, meanwhile, do not amount to deliberate, announced engagements with Beckett works but display a logic of potentially infinite duration and repetition which nevertheless resonates deeply with Beckett's poetics. Gerrard's *Exercise* works, as we have seen, to exploit the logic of iteration which is at the heart of *Quad*, suggesting a revised conception of the work as a principle or set of instructions rather than a text. Such a conception is closely allied to that of the transmedial, in which any work is understood as an archive of iterations.

As a result, Hutcheon's truth of coherence must also be redefined. In *Beckett*, a 'time of pen and ink' is evoked via simulated paper files, ticket machines and the chatter of television, radio and typewriters, self-consciously rooting the black-and-white aesthetic in a pre-digital world. Coherent as this world is, its purpose is not necessarily related to verisimilitude, or to the invocation of the Beckett corpus. The minutely detailed simulation of analogue media, in the clicking of typewriters or the rustle of paper, in fact taps into the ambivalent media archive in Beckett's own work. An important source for such a heterocosm

is *Krapp's Last Tape,* in which the central prop of the tape recorder seems to offer stable grounding in mid-twentieth-century media and technology. Recent iterations of the play in performance have come up against the problem of how to accommodate the obsolete device, but the play's setting during 'a late evening in the future' (2009b: 3) embeds obsolescence in a disorientating futurity. Whatever the future iterations of the play, the corpus seems to tell us, they will always be embedded in a mid-twentieth-century past which is somehow simultaneously situated in the future. Some of the most compelling responses to the problem, such as Atom Egoyan's *Steenbeckett* (2002), transpose the play's preoccupation with archival media to an installation environment. The juxtaposition of digital and analogue copies of *Krapp's Last Tape* in the installation space foregrounds the physical deterioration of the film, both making the viewer painfully aware of the material consequences of remembering and conjuring a vision of the archive which is not limited by them (see Jones, 2016: 21–6). Such an ambivalent standpoint to the work's material support is bound up, once more, with the unstable subject at the heart of adaptation studies, as Beckett's work is comprehensively remade outside the theatre.

To play *Beckett*, meanwhile, is to enter into a space of archival mediation in which the experience of analogue materiality is inescapably mediated by the digital. Meek's *Beckett* takes up a typically complex position within the transmedia archive: as a game, a set of algorithms deployed in the course of an interactive experience, it belongs to the transmedia landscape, and yet the analogue insistently resurfaces, perhaps most notably in the game's 'Physical Remix', as a set of story cards made for V&A Dundee ('Make Works: Simon Meek', 2020). Meek's *Beckett* nevertheless contains a further complication: for all that it productively undermines truth of coherence, in its titular appeal to Beckett it nonetheless invokes the literary corpus. In other words, this is an appeal to the 'traditional archive', guaranteed by literary canons, of which the transmedial aspect of Beckett's late work,

according to Frangos, is a critique (2013: 218). The transmedia archive, in which the authority of the author is devolved to an endless stream of posthumous iterations, is paradoxically shackled to the age of literary canons indexed by the name of the author and irrevocably called into question by late modernism. What is striking here is not that the transmedia archive comes to dominate, but that it inexplicably fails to do away with its traditional counterpart and associated literary historical baggage. New media, then, underwrite established models of adaptation with a deeply problematic hinterland, a blind spot in which its essential precepts are radically redefined, and yet, in its residual, nostalgic invocation of the author, its address remains ambivalent.

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Notes

[1] See also my discussion of Gerrard's use of 'human' viewpoints as part of a forensic vision of landscape (Jones 2022, chapter three).

[2] The performances took place simultaneously at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, and at the Barbican as part of BITE'06 (Barbican International Theatre Events), see 'Barbican Centre Annual Review 2006/07' (2007: 10, 28).

[3] See also Fisher (2018). The posthumously published *k-punk* volume does not include Fisher's 'Cartesianism' blog post.

[4] John Gerrard in a telephone conversation with the author (May 2019).