Adaptation Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 215–229
doi:10.1093/adaptation/aps025
Advance Access publication 11 October 2012

Transmedia Beckett: *Come and Go* and the Social Media Archive

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Abstract Beckett's late works for film, theatre, and television approach the condition of installation pieces, minimalistic and iterative texts that resemble instruction manuals more than theatre. At the same time, these works are preoccupied with archival themes: personal and public memory, history, documents and their technical media. While his works interrogate the condition of archives, Beckett's own archive is characterized by the increasing visibility in Beckett's later texts of elaborate instructions, maps, and charts, as in the diagrams that fill the text of *Quad*. Yet, Beckett's authorial control over his works became known for its insistence on media specificity, the reluctance to translate a work from one medium to another. Beckett's "extraliterary" texts (as Gontarski and Chris Ackerly have described them) strive to become their own archive, not as a definitive version recorded in film or technical media, but as sets of instructions to be repeated, and thus capable of producing their own series of iterations. These iterations, in fact, characterize contemporary media archives, as they become organized according to the modular logic of a database over and against the temporal logic of the traditional archive. This essay conceptualizes the archive of Beckett's works in a transmedia context in which concepts of "work" and "author" no longer function to authorize discrete versions of Beckett's extraliterary texts.

Keywords *Samuel Beckett, social media, archives, transmedia, amateur, crowdsourcing,* Come and Go.

> Furthermore, the standard differentiation among the arts in the nineteenth century and the relatively recent subjectivist notion that an author as identified with a work no longer fit in with an aesthetic sociology of the masses in which the cinema runs a relay race with drama and the novel and does not eliminate them, but rather reinforces them. (André Bazin, "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest")
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> Amid the restrictions on performance imposed by the Beckett estate, its attempts to restrain if not subdue the recalcitrant artwork by its insistence on faithful and accurate performances, a faith and accuracy no one seems able to define, a resilient and imaginative set of theatrical directors and artists continues to re-invent Beckett by developing a third way, through radical acts of the imagination, by folding the authorized, legally owned object, like a ready-made in a gallery, into another context, such as storefronts, disused or abandoned buildings, or museum installations. (S. E. Gontarski, "Reinventing Beckett")

Already in an essay by André Bazin called "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest", published in *Esprit* in July 1948, we find a description of the practice of adaptation in which the concepts "author" and "work" no longer serve to organize a text as it subsists across

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a variety of media—a practice we recognize today under the term "transmedia". For Bazin, 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" (26). This practice of adaptation prefigures the contemporary transmedia context in which media practitioners already presume that their productions will subsist across a range of media, including amateur-produced content on social media platforms.[1] 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. Thus, a user searching for the term "Beckett" on Youtube may have access to a variety of iterations of Samuel Beckett's works ranging from the versions archived in the *Beckett on Film* project to unauthorized amateur productions, including those produced specifically for social media. Although Beckett's late works emerged at a late-modernist moment in which the adaptation of literary texts was common practice in film, radio, and television, and when literary writers themselves work frequently across different media, this media ecology is in tension with the one envisioned by the Beckett estate, insisting on what it considers to be "the integrity of the text and stage directions" (qtd. in Gontarski 438). As S. E. Gontarski argues, in a climate in which authorized performances of Beckett's works are so restricted, all that remains is to integrate Beckett's works into what he calls a "hybrid art" in "another context" (448). Unauthorized amateur productions of Beckett on social media platforms function as precisely such "another context" for the "hybrid art" of Beckett adaptation.

In this article, I focus on an exemplary amateur-produced version of one of Beckett's late plays, the minimalistic *Come and Go*, in which three women take turns trading positions on a bench whispering something unintelligible to the one who sits beside them. I take as my primary example a *Come and Go* project created by a pair of amateur practitioners calling themselves Offshore Drama Club (Figure 1). Youtube functions in this project as a community archive through which anyone can submit individual performances corresponding to each of the three women in the play. Because the submission process is open to any Youtube user, the project breaks a cardinal rule of authorized Beckett adaptations by allowing cross-gender performances. These user-submitted performances are then combined at random in order to imitate the trading of positions that characterizes Beckett's original play. The formal and geometric exercise of the

Figure 1 "Come and Go," Offshore Drama Club (http://www.offshore-drama-club.com). This figure is published in black and white in print and in colour online, at www.adaptation.oxfordjournals.org.

play, one which can be traced through a number of Beckett's late works, becomes an architectural exercise in using the social media platform as an archive of past and future performances. In order to read this transmedia experiment—spanning theatre, video, and social media—I begin with the concept of the archive in Beckett's work, in which characters become identified with their archives in different media, from files and index cards to gramophone records and tape recordings. Understanding Beckett's work as a late-modernist attack on the traditional concept of the archive, we can see how it informs a transmedia context where all media projects are imagined as archives in different media. Beckett projects that use social media thereby situate Beckett's media archive on a shifting terrain where the material specificity of individual media artefacts is no longer certain and the singularity of individual performances has been replaced by an architectural process of iteration.

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. At the same time, these works, from *Krapp's Last Tape* to *Catastrophe*, are preoccupied with archival themes: personal and public memory, history, records, documents and their technical media. The archive's technical substrates in Beckett's works include not only the markers of the traditional archive such as index cards and folders but also extreme examples of the archive in ruins: the urns in *Play* or garbage in *Breath*. While his works interrogate the condition of archives, Beckett's own archive is characterized by the detailed notebooks he produced for performance, through which, as S. E. Gontarski has argued, Beckett demonstrated an increasing investment in exercising directorial control over the production of his works.[2] These notebook annotations are consonant with the increasing visibility in Beckett's later texts of elaborate instructions, maps and charts, such as the diagrams that fill the text of *Quad*. Yet, one aspect of Beckett's authorial control over his works was the insistence on media specificity, that is, the reluctance to translate a work from one medium to another. Beckett's "extraliterary"[3] texts exist not as definitive versions recorded in film or technical media, but as sets of instructions to be repeated, thus capable of producing their own series of iterations. These iterations, in fact, characterize contemporary media archives organized according to the modular logic of a database over and against the temporal logic of traditional archives.[4] How, then, do we conceptualize the archive of Beckett's works in a transmedia context in which concepts of "work" and "author" no longer function to authorize discrete versions of Beckett's extraliterary texts?

Reading Beckett's media archive means, therefore, conceptualizing what kind of texts we are dealing with when we talk about Beckett's works in a transmedia context, one in which the work itself functions across an expanding series of different media: written text, film, theatre, radio, television, and social media. On the one hand, as texts, Beckett's works are already incredibly unstable objects, inflected by maps, schemas, diagrams, and notes both in the most commonly published versions and in the theatrical notebooks. But they also exist as non-textual media artefacts, a visual record of performances and adaptations, detailed in the laboriously compiled but nevertheless incomplete filmography compiled by the Irish Film Institute.[5] This includes not only the various recorded versions of the stage plays but also the works for television, which similarly consist of a multiplicity of versions (according to Graley Herren, *Eh Joe* has

been set to video at least 13 times[6]). So too, it is increasingly evident that the concept of a media archive itself has come under pressure from new database driven technologies for circulating and archiving media artefacts online.[7] These new technologies for accessing and distributing media artefacts raise questions about logics of programmability,[8] already a major theme raised in Beckett's works. We can then examine to what extent Beckett's works imagine the possibility of their own status as artefacts in a media archive, as well as how the status of Beckett's late plays within these archives informs our readings of the works themselves.[9]

BECKETT'S MEDIA ARCHIVE

As S. E. Gontarski has provocatively suggested, performances of Beckett's works may indeed resemble the display of archival holdings, constrained by the author's annotations and mediated by their abstract and minimalistic form. Yet, in the context of a transmedia culture where the status of the archive has already been remediated by that of the database, the position of Beckett's late works in the archive of culture is no longer clear-cut. Once Beckett's highly abstract and minimalistic late plays become objects in a database of social media artefacts, the status of these works as reactions against a certain cultural logic of the archive is underscored. As Sven Spieker points out, drawing on Lev Manovich, the remediation of the archive by the database extends a broader modernist attack on the concept of the traditional archive founded on ordering the official output of bureaucratic modernity.[10] To the extent that Beckett's works may also be read as a late-modernist critique of the traditional archive, the fact that we discover Beckett in 21st century database aesthetics should not be surprising. Specifically, according to Spieker, the database may be read as an extension of avant-garde practices that undermine the secure position of artefacts in the archive by calling into question the media-specific bases of archivization according to which a specific form of document could be the product of a specific time. Derrida's influential essay, *Archive Fever*, explains the threat of "archive fever" contained in every archive, the destruction of living memory and its replacement with a material supplement or substrate. The desire to archive thus contains its opposite, a threat of eradication that Derrida describes as "*in-finite*", one that "sweeps away the logic of finitude and the simple factual limits, the transcendental aesthetics, one might say, the spatio-temporal conditions of conservation" (19). The desire to archive, then, is also a desire to eliminate the material specificity of the media by which documents are preserved. The archive seeks not only to assemble specific media as specific registrations of time but also to abolish the very conditions of mediation itself.

Beckett's most iconic actress, Billie Whitelaw, is often quoted to have explained that she felt more like an installation in an art gallery than in the theatre.[11] S. E. Gontarski similarly proposes a view of Beckett's works as installation pieces, works that function "like a ready-made in a gallery", and describes attempts to "re-invent" the plays by placing them "into another context, such as storefronts, disused or abandoned buildings, or museum installations" (Gontarski 448). Beckett's own interest in working outside the theatre is perhaps one of the best examples of this reinvention, one that involved not just recasting the plays into other contexts but also working in other media. Beckett's late works were part of what Andras Balint Kovacs has described as "a real aesthetic

convergence between theater, cinema, and literature" (241) that occurred in the emergence of European art cinema after the 1940s. By engaging with television, from *Eh Joe* (1965) to *Nacht und Träume* (1982), Beckett's works enter the terrain of mass culture with the susceptibility for endless reproduction, either as broadcast or on videotape. While they lose the aura of the work of art that can be found in a gallery, they gain a status resembling the "ready-mades" of Marcel Duchamp: simultaneously mundane and high art, mass produced and also singular. As Jonathan Bignell describes in his brilliant overview of Beckett's work for television, the teleplays disrupt the distracted environment of television broadcast and thereby refuse the categories of either high art or mass culture.[12] Beckett's late plays, including the teleplays, thereby produce an unlimited archive that is evidenced in the difficulties of producing a comprehensive filmography of Beckett's works, and the expansion of Beckett's adaptations to social media platforms.

Thus, in Beckett's late works, we are confronted with a cast of characters haunted by disembodied voices and memories embalmed in recording technologies: magnetic tape, gramophone records, old files—in short the records of media archives. For example, the compulsive remembering of Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape* may be understood as precisely such an effect of archive fever, as the end result of Krapp's performance is not to re-experience the past but to pause over the gaps and silences in the tape, to fumble over the series of spools that contain his recollections, and to produce a series of notes and annotations that render any return to the past impossible.[13] Graley Herren points out that Beckett's works for television are, as he puts it, "haunted by ghosts, because all televisual images are essentially traces of the 'living dead'" (5). Herren illustrates this haunting with one of the few examples of Beckett's authorization of a translation of a work between media, the recording of *Not I* for the BBC's *Shades* series. In the theatre, the audience is witness to a real body on the stage giving the performance of the Mouth; on television, the Mouth becomes a familiar trick of film editing, the dissembling of the body to its component parts through classical Hollywood montage. Herren describes Beckett's use of television as a "memory machine" that can "recall the dead to life" (5). Another case of translating Beckett's works from theatre to television: Beckett's *What Where* directed for German television by Beckett himself in 1986 under the title *Was Wo*. In contrast to the version produced for the *Beckett on Film* project in which the play takes place in a setting reminiscent of science fiction, Beckett's *Was Wo* for television strips out all context—all that appears are three ghostly heads superimposed on a black background.[14] On the stage, the presence of the actors is mediated by the megaphone, which on television becomes simply the mediation of the recording apparatus itself.

Despite these examples, Beckett was notorious for refusing to authorize translations of his works between media, an insistence on the material specificity of media in tension with what Beckett scholars have identified as a critique of all media's capacity to serve as guarantors of memory and identity. In a much-cited letter to his American publisher of 27 August 1957, Beckett writes, "If we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, or extricate them from the confusion that has them where they are, we might as well go home and lie down" (qtd. in Ben-Zvi 24). Linda Ben-Zvi takes this statement as evidence of Beckett's insistence on the specificity of individual media: a play for radio should not be adapted to the stage, and so forth. Here, Beckett not only

seems to insist on the distinction between "genres" but also that this task of extrication is the *sine qua non* of literary labour. The use of the term "genre" indicates the extent to which Beckett understood the conditions of different media as producing different conventions and traditions. The task of distinguishing "genres" is both necessary and impossible; necessary because they must remain "more or less distinct" but impossible due to "the confusion that has them where they are". In the context of twentieth century media, we can understand this simultaneous labour of extrication and confusion as "remediation", a term coined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin to describe the fact that new forms of media take their models of production, distribution, and consumption from earlier media.[15] Beckett's late works seem to struggle with the fact of remediation as a condition of 20th and 21st century media; even the label "a play for television" that Beckett used for his television works indicates the status of television as a remediation of theatre.

The material specificity of media in Beckett's works is in this way paradoxical: insisting on the formal conditions of the medium itself at the same time as exhausting those conditions through minimalist abstraction tending toward the immaterial and ghostly. Thus, Ben-Zvi writes that, for Beckett, "the work not only is predicated on the form but invariably becomes a critique of its form" (Ben-Zvi 24). Daniel Albright in his study of Beckett's aesthetics points out that Beckett "was especially intrigued by media that contain striking defects" (6), such as the blindness of radio or the muteness of early cinema. Albright expands on Ben-Zvi's argument about what she refers to as Beckett's "media plays" by arguing, "this was Beckett's way with every artistic medium that he worked in: to foreground the medium, to thrust it in the spectator's face, by showing its inadequacy" (1). New media provide both new limitations and new possibilities for expression, just as they provide new conditions of material specificity and new kinds of remediation.[16] Yet this insistence on the ontological specificity of form, genre, and media is familiar to modernist aesthetic practices for which the material qualities of unique to each medium are what ground the aesthetic itself as a register of experience.[17] Arguing that "medium specificity is a resolutely historical notion" (121), Mary Ann Doane shows how the privileging of the individuality of distinct media is linked to a specifically modernist concept of the aesthetic. Essential to this concept is the simultaneous desire for immateriality resisting the limitations of any given medium and a reliance on the specific properties of that medium. For Doane, this aesthetics is as "a continual reinvention of the medium through a resistance to resistance, a transgression of what are given as material limitations, which nevertheless requires those material constraints as its field of operations" (131). Beckett's medium specificity may thus be understood as just such an aesthetic practice that attempts to both encode the work as a singular experience while at the same time longing for a condition of immateriality.

This desire to encode the work as a singular experience also explains the way that Beckett's works as material artefacts subsist on the page in the form of instructions to be executed. Gontarski and Chris Ackerly have described the status of Beckett's works after *Play* as "extraliterary": "On the page, without iconic, gestural, and musical complements, the works are unreadable in any traditional sense; their primary effect is extraliterary, postliterary, perhaps" (225). These "extraliterary" texts, including nearly all of Beckett's works for television and some of the late works for theatre, consist of

diagrams, maps, and charts indicating a set of instructions to be executed rather than the text of a traditional play. Beckett produced these "unreadable" texts (as Gontarski has called them[18]) at the same time as he was compiling in some cases significantly revised director's notebooks for his earlier stage plays. Ben-Zvi also notes the difficulty that many critics had when first faced with his plays for television; without access to the original broadcasts, many critics were at a loss to understand the plays as they were printed on the page. This unreadibility is exemplified by Beckett's *Quad*, a television play, which, according to Deleuze, takes place in a "closed, globally defined, any-space-whatever" (12). Albright describes *Quad* as "a mime in which the actors merely pace designs around a square, as if Beckett wished to end by tearing down every element of theatre, until there was nothing left except a script that looks like origami instructions and a performance that looks like hopscotch" (137). If the work becomes a purely geometric outline of the medium itself, it does so as the effect of the set of instructions that encode and enact this any-space-whatever, or "non-places".[19] As such, Beckett's instructions ensure that the work can do nothing other than embody this condition of abstraction, as a monument to medium specificity itself.

We are now in a position to understand the assault on the traditional archive in Beckett's work in relation to the simultaneous insistence on medium specificity and acknowledgment of the inadequacy of all media. In the media archives contained in Beckett's works, the past that must be repeated is simultaneously the past that is unrepeatable and singular, a paradox that is closely connected to Beckett's motifs of repetition and permutation. As Robert Reginio argues, "Memory's continual materialization in the shadow of the archive reveals itself not as trace nor as substrate nor as a 'signified,' but as this continuous dissatisfaction, as the embodiment of the past in an iterable form in the name of the singular, the non-iterable" (118). Beckett's works describe precisely this: an impulse to memorialize that is confounded by the unbearability of memory, reminders of missed opportunities, failures and embarrassments, and the inadequacy of the memory of pleasure to provide satisfaction in the present. This is the "continuous dissatisfaction" that Reginio describes that leads to the desire for an "iterable" experience of memory in order to recreate the unique and "non-iterable". As a result of this concern with memory and repetition, Beckett's work approaches the media archive in relation to the themes of permutation that run throughout his work. As Jonathan Boulter describes, "as the repeating structures of these plays indicate, the archive of the end never does fully end" (Boulter 130). Beckett's "repeating structures" imply the repetitive structure of memory itself, at the same time as they point to the inadequacy of memory to desire. This inadequacy characterizes what Deleuze, in one of his often cited essays on Beckett's television plays, describes as the exhaustion facing Beckett's figures. For, according to Deleuze, it is only through the repetition of all possible combinations, that "the exhausted can exhaust the possible, because he has renounced all need, preference, goal or signification" (Deleuze 5). The repetition that characterizes Beckett's late works is ultimately that which renounces all purpose; knowing full well that satisfaction is impossible, Beckett's figures, no longer characters, simply repeat.

Yet repetition is no longer simply the endless recurrence of the same in Beckett's works, but rather a form of permutation, as combinations are tried and retried

exhaustively. These permutations are themselves carried out with no hope of satisfaction, as Jane Hale describes:

> Such permutation games occur throughout Beckett's work, and no matter how elaborately they are played and described, they always end by returning more or less to the initial situation; any resulting changes have no meaning, nor do they allow the characters or plots to "get on" in time or space. Movement is circular, repetitive, and insignificant. Change does occur, but for no reason and with no ultimate goal. (Hale 35)

These "permutation games" can be found throughout Beckett's works, including the fiction. But these strategies are by no means unrelated to Beckett's interest in media archives. Daniel Albright describes the permutation games in Beckett's novel *Watt* as "arithmetical, pre-compositional strategies, as if a computer had been given a list of intransitive verbs and body describing adjectives and told to generate characters by means of word lists" (Albright 4). This sort of permutational or combinatorial writing that proliferates in Beckett's works approach the level of the automatic writing techniques one finds in surrealism, or the cut-ups of William S. Burroughs.[20] Yet Beckett's work nevertheless attempts to retain a sense of the singular or non-iterable as the ghost that tortures his characters with the memory of desire, the desire that is irrevocably invested in the archive of media.

BECKETT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Consider two uses of Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* with John Hurt as filmed by Atom Egoyan for *Beckett on Film*. First, *Krapp's Last Tape* as included in Egoyan's own *Steenbeckett* exhibit very much illustrates the tension between Beckett's works as singular artefacts and as series of permutations.[21] For the *Beckett on Film* series, Egoyan executes a relatively faithful version of the play. In the *Steenbeckett* exhibit, *Krapp's Last Tape* as filmed by Egoyan becomes one document in a larger archive. Here, the filmed version of the play is exhibited in a room as though it were, according to S. E. Gontarski, "another discarded cultural object" (444), alongside the old diaries and the Steenbeck editing table, film spools, and other paraphernalia of recording apparatuses that fill the exhibit. Beckett's work becomes simply one object among others in a media archive, which is itself the subject of excavation, discovery, and analysis. Beckett's work becomes here media archaeological in the sense that Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka define in terms that also apply to Beckett's works: "Media archaeology rummages textual, visual, and auditory archives as well as collections of artifacts, emphasizing both the discursive and the material manifestations of culture." It is significant that Egoyan's *Steenbeckett* repurposes the same version of the play he created for the *Beckett on Film* series. This series, broadcast on Channel 4 and RTÉ from 2000 to 2001 and then distributed on DVD in 2002, attempts to exist as an archive of all nineteen plays as produced by major Hollywood directors and actors. In this way, Egoyan takes his work from one media archive, that of *Beckett on Film*, and places it in another, that of *Steenbeckett*—where the play's status as an artefact conserved for "posterity" is simultaneously highlighted and undermined, as simply one object among others in a collection.[22]

Now, take another use of Egoyan's *Krapp's Last Tape*, this time on Youtube, in which Krapp as played by John Hurt appears in a remix in which the voice on the tape

recording is replaced with selections from Coldplay's "X&Y".[23] The description of the video provides an alternative context for the action of the play, "In a den in the future, Krapp celebrates his birthday by listening to Coldplay's X&Y." In this context, the play becomes the story of a man in the future who listens to the same song every year on his birthday. An amateur production that resists the codes of high art according to which Beckett's work is now mostly received, this remix recasts Beckett in the context of social media: the incessant recording of the self in media becomes now a general condition of a cultural apparatus that calls on each user to "broadcast yourself". Krapp's archive fever, in short, is now everyone's. The moment of the play chosen for remix, though, is instructive: it occurs in the famous scene where Krapp appears to be coddling the apparatus of the tape recorder itself, double checking each spool of tape against his copious notes. As N. Katherine Hayles describes, the play functions through the binary opposition "between voice as technological object and body as presence" (82).[24] Just as Beckett foregrounds the technology of the tape recorder, the peripheral apparatuses that enable Krapp's recordings also feature prominently in the play, including the ledger in which he keeps track of the data on each recording, the envelopes on which he scribbles memories for new recordings, and the reels of tape themselves. In this sense, we can see *Krapp's Last Tape* as paradigmatic of Beckett's later works, not only in its interest in at-the-time new media such as the tape recorder but also in the preoccupation with files, notes, charts, maps, and schema, which we find in the texts of the late plays themselves as well as in the theatrical notebooks. And this reflects Beckett's own creative process as he develops into his later works, which often consist only of a schema and set of instructions, especially the television plays such as *Quad*, *Ghost Trio*, and *... but the clouds...*. These works then exist similar to Krapp's recorded memories as iterations of a procedure that can be repeated almost endlessly.

Adaptations of Beckett on social media platforms seem to gain from the anonymity of Beckett's characters and the iterative quality of his texts.[25] For this reason, they are well suited to amateur and crowdsourced productions. Writing about adaptations of Beckett "in the age of convergent media", Sean McCarthy observes, "YouTube can be seen as a great nowhere space that in many ways reflects the nowhereness that Beckett captured in his dramatic texts" (108). Many versions of Beckett's works to be found on Youtube are adaptations in the loosest sense of the term, sometimes only appropriating titles for works inspired by Beckett's characteristic themes.[26] Yet these works can be interesting when they take the opportunity to comment on social media platforms themselves as media. Youtube user knxwht presents a two-part sequence of videos titled "my rendition of krapp's last tape" in which the user rewrites Beckett's play so that Krapp's narrative of forsaken love is successively told and retold directly into the webcam.[27] The magnetic tape recording technology that fascinated Beckett is thereby replaced by the medium of Youtube itself as a machine for memorializing desire. Meanwhile, minimalistic plays such as *Come and Go* or *Breath* can be reenacted endlessly inasmuch as the plays' instructions are short and simple. Though a play that tends not to attract much attention from Beckett critics, at least six amateur-produced versions of *Come and Go* can be found on Youtube. If *Eh Joe* is a signature avant-garde text for television (set to video, we are told, no less than thirteen times), *Come and Go* may play an analogous role for social media. Minimalistic and repetitive works like *Come and*

Go, *Breath*, as well as others such as *Act Without Words I*, or *Act Without Words II*, when they appear on social media platforms, seem to gesture not only to the limits of expression of all forms of media but also toward the logic of programmability underlying computational media in specific. They thereby draw upon and emphasize the interest in permutation and iteration that runs throughout Beckett's works.

I will conclude with a reading of a *Come and Go* adaptation that is the result of a collaboration based in Germany styling itself Offshore Drama Club (http://www.offshore-drama-club.com). This version of *Come and Go* is assembled from an archive of recordings of the individual roles in the play submitted by Youtube users. The work uses an algorithm to assemble the videos from Youtube and hence can only be viewed in full on their own home page. However, the individual submissions for the parts of Vi, Ru, and Flo are hosted on Youtube and can be watched one at a time. Hence, the work proceeds by creating and then curating its own archive of Beckett adaptations on Youtube. The script and directions for each role are provided in a Youtube video with the text and a karaoke-style rhythm marker so that each user can read along at the pace indicated by the video. Once the performances are uploaded, the roles are assembled by an aggregator and combined at random into the total performance. As the creators explain in a video blog reacting to comments and questions, the project is a response to the opening line of *Come and Go*, "When did we three last meet." The project is then an attempt to "create a situation on the internet where people never physically meet, obviously, but there's short moments where people interact with each other, especially when *you* take part in it, and you see yourself in quick moments and you seem to be interacting with people you've never met and you will never meet."[28] In framing the project in this way, they situate it within the discourse of social media that imagines users as an aggregate of individuals who nevertheless act together in a new form of community or public. In terms of the theatre, the audience now has not only the opportunity but in fact the responsibility or requirement to come on stage and form the cast of performers. As they say in their invitation to the project, "We want you to take part in an experiment where you perform modern theater right where you are sitting in front of your computer, acting together with other Youtube users sitting in front of their computers."[29] The participants in the *Come and Go* project can therefore participate in Youtube's command that every user "broadcast yourself" by becoming creators instead of consumers, and as a community instead of isolated individuals.

Come and Go is perhaps the play of Beckett's that most follows the iterative logic. The text consists of barely two pages of dialogue in addition to two separate diagrams describing the positions of the figures and the pattern according to which they should join hands. In the play, three women—Vi, Ru, and Flo— meet on a "narrow benchlike seat". The women take turns exiting the stage while the other two shift positions on the seat and exchange an inaudible message concerning the one who is absent. In the end, all three women sit together again and "hold hands in the old way", according to the pattern visualized in Beckett's directions. Although the inaudible message exchanged between the women is never revealed and hence the precise nature of the history and relationships between the women is never made explicit, the play replaces the drama of plot and character with the permutation of positions on stage. While it is tempting to read the play as invoking an experience of nostalgia, the stage directions emphasize

that the characters are of "ages undeterminable". This indeterminacy is emphasized again and again in the stage directions: "As little visible as possible" (197). In the final exchange between Vi and Flo, Vi asks, "How do you think Ru is looking" and Flo responds, "One sees little in this light" (196). Visual and auditory indeterminacy work to destabilize the grounds for reading character on the stage so that the play seems to be only an exercise in the movement of bodies in predetermined positions. By contrast, the stage directions clearly specify the colours associated with each figure: Ru in violet, Vi in red, and Flo in yellow. Beckett wrote *Come and Go* in 1965, in the same year as his first piece for television, *Eh Joe*. It is not hard to imagine *Come and Go* as a sort of colour test, attempting to use primary colours to intensify contrasts in a medium that otherwise loses so much signal to noise.

The instructions for the OffShore Drama Club adaptation of *Come and Go* specify only that the participants wear a colour corresponding to the part they have chosen: violet for Ru, red for Vi, and yellow for Flo. But they break one of the central rules of authorized adaptations of Beckett's works. By crowdsourcing the parts of the play to the general body of Youtube users, they allow the possibility of videos by male users being included within the performance, in conflict with Beckett's well-known opposition to cross-gender casting of parts within his plays.[30] So OffShore Drama Club's adaptation could never have been authorized by the Beckett estate even if it fits well within the ambiguous terrain of social media. The instructions for the project indicate that the users should "Be natural. There are no mistakes; every slip of the tongue is appreciated. There is no need to overact. It's just about you in front of your computer." The performances are clearly those of amateurs and are meant to reflect the style and form of video blogging and webcam performances more generally. The parts of *Come and Go* have been remediated for a social media context in which presence means nothing more than "you in front of your computer"—to be present is to be mediated, to register in front of a camera, or piece of recording technology. Indeed, the drama of memory and desire that is acted out in *Come and Go*—the possibility to "sit together as we used to" or "hold hands in the old way"—has now been merged with the obsessive need for recording technologies to archive memory and replay it for the subject who desires the return to a former state of being. The computer logic of aggregation and combination of the parts fits the iterative structure of the play, despite Beckett's own opposition to random or automatic writing strategies. But more importantly, the crowdsourcing technique fits the emphasis of the play on the indeterminacy of the figures inasmuch as their ages and appearances become devoid of meaning when they are performed by anyone whatsoever from the crowd of Youtube users.

The project's instructions hinge, moreover, on the issue of the secret, the inaudible message exchanged by the characters. The two requirements to participate involve an article of clothing with the appropriate colour, and a secret: "you need a secret about someone you know that you're eager to tell someone. … The only thing is it has to be true." The requirement to tell a secret resonates with the discourse of social media, for example the crowdsourced art project *Post Secret* (http://postsecret.blogspot.com) in which contributors are asked to submit a postcard containing a secret that is then posted anonymously to the blog and deleted after one week. Yet this too contains a paradox: if the secret is never audible and the contributors are anonymous, what does

it mean for the secret to be true or not? This kind of paradox is peculiar to discourses of anonymity and privacy online where the command to "broadcast yourself" coexists with the multiplicity of selves each user inhabits in networked spaces. The creators of the project are perceptive, though, when they emphasize the issue of the secret. In an interview with Lois Overbeck, Brenda Bynum has said of the meaning attributed to the inaudible whisper in the play, "Why does it have to be that *they* have lost something, why can it not be Beckett's longing for intimacy that they have and he can't" (52). This longing for intimacy, to be in on the secret, structures the play. And precisely this tension between the intimacy of the secret and the publicity of social media allows us to understand the *Come and Go* project as an archive. For as Derrida observes in *Archive Fever*, all archives function by way of constructing and challenging limits between outside and inside, public and private, or as in the model of Freud's mystic writing pad, "to *represent on the outside* memory as *internal* archivization" (13).

In this way, the *Come and Go* project by Offshore Drama Club is remarkable in terms of thinking about Beckett's media archive in the sense that it is an adaptation that exists as an archive. The random generation of combinations loses significance to the producing and storing of performances in itself. The adaptation in fact enacts Beckett's media archive precisely as that which is produced and stored in the creation of its own performance. Finally, we are in a position to think about Beckett's afterlife in a transmedia context in which the function of the author's signature and the authorization of performances must be reconsidered. As Beckett's late plays exist as "extraliterary" instructions to be executed, the works prefigure the computational logic of digital media. Crowdsourced adaptations of Beckett in this context exist, then, simply as instructions—not as performances of the works but as translations of Beckett's "extraliterary" texts for amateur production and aggregation according to an algorithm. The role Beckett's works play in the era of social media is perfectly captured in a text like *Come and Go*, with its tension between the fixed colour scheme and the inaudible whisper, in other words, between outside and inside, and public and private. Beckett's interest in archive fever, the simultaneous conservation and destruction of internal memory through the external substrates of technical media, is apt for social media's culture of accelerated obsolescence or planned forgetting. In a medium whose command is to "broadcast yourself", Beckett's iterative texts memorialize the singularity of experience at the same time as they attest to the desire to repeat and re-combine the artefacts of the very media archives they produce in their iteration.

NOTES

[1] This transmedia ecology has increasingly come under study from media scholars following after Jenkins, Henry, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press, 2008. See especially Jenkins's discussion of "transmedia storytelling" (95–96).

[2] See Gontarski, S. E. "Reinventing Beckett." *Modern Drama*, 49.4 (2007): 428–51. Gontarski describes Beckett's notebooks as "a systematic reinvention of nearly all of his theatre works" and suggests that "those notebooks, with their meticulous outlines of the play's actions and internal parallels, would characterize his approach to directing" (432). Beckett produced these notebooks at the same time as the plays themselves came to resemble purely abstract figures with charts, maps, and diagrams.

[3] Ackerly, C. J., and S. E. Gontarski. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought*. New York: Grove Press, 2004: 225.

[4] See the discussion of narrative and database in Manovich 225–28.

[5] *Beckett: A Filmography*. Dublin: Irish Film Institute, 2007. http://www.irishfilm.ie/downloads/beckettfilmography.pdf.
[6] Herren, Graley. "Madness in the Method: Re-visions of *Eh Joe* in Recent Productions." *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 7 (1994): 105.
[7] For a discussion of the changing status of film archives after new media, see Alexander Horwath, "The Market vs. the Museum." *Journal of Film Preservation* 70.Nov (2005): 5–9, and the responses following.
[8] On the logic of programmability in new media, see in particular Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011.
[9] By reading Beckett's work in relation to the future archives they envision I am attempting to situation Beckett's works in a media archaeology of the present. See my discussion of Huhtamo and Parikka below.
[10] In *The Big Archive*, Sven Spieker argues that, for the avant-gardes, "the archive functions both as a laboratory for experimental inquiries into the nineteenth century's irrational underside and as an elaboration of a type of visuality to which archivization is key" (Spieker 6–7).
[11] Qtd. in Oppenheim, Lois, ed. *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts, and Non-Print Media*. New York: Garland, 1999: xv.
[12] Jonathan Bignell characterizes Beckett's television plays as "television dramas that are self-consciously experimental and distinctive, and which detach themselves from the surrounding flow of programming" (203).
[13] As Jonathan Boulter describes, the tape recording in *Krapp's Last Tape* is simply an indication of "the idea that memory, all memory, is constructed by the subject and is subject in its turn to interpretation, acceptance, or disavowal" (Boulter 54).
[14] For a reading of both versions of *What Where*, see Christina Adamou. "*What Where* Revisited: Answering the Question." *Historicising Beckett/Issues of Performance*. Eds. Marius Buning, et al. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005: 201–10. Also, Enoch Brater's description of the television version of *Was Wo*: "As the play moves from stage to television screen, the void encroaches on a visual horizon once filled with a playing space offering, by comparison, a much wider range of human potential" (163).
[15] Bolter and Grusin define remediation as "the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms" (273). In another influential explanation of the logic of remediation, they explain, adapting McLuhan, "all mediation is remediation" (55).
[16] In a later article partially in dialogue with Albright's Ben-Zvi nuances the idea that Beckett's insistence on medium specificity merely attempts to show the inadequacy of every medium: "Beckett saw the potential media afforded him to explore 'being' – the central subject of all his works – and he took full advantage of these new possibilities to say the unsayable, this time with television technology" (472).
[17] Linda Hutcheon recounts the way in which modern aesthetic theories of the specificity of media inform contemporary debates about adaptation between media (34–35).
[18] Gontarski, S. E. "Reinventing Beckett." *Modern Drama* 49.4 (2007): 430.
[19] For Albright, *Quad* is the perfect example of the way Beckett's works become about media itself, where all the elements of drama, plot, character, and setting disappear to leave only the form of a medium: "The emphasis on quadrilaterals makes it seem that a television play can aspire only to be an image of the TV screen itself, a gaping gray rectangle giving off poor light" (137). For "non-places", See Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 2009.
[20] There has been scant but increasing interest in study of Beckett and Burroughs's work in the context of recording technology. See Nicholas Zurbrugg, "Beckett, Proust, and Burroughs, and the Perils of 'Image Warfare.'" *Samuel Beckett—humanistic perspectives*. Beja, Morris, S. E. Gontarski, and Pierre A. G. Astier, eds. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1983. And Connor, Steven. "Looping the Loop: Tape-Time in Burroughs and Beckett." *Taping the World*. University of Iowa. 28 Jan. 2010. Web. 14 Feb. 2012.
[21] For a reading of *Steenbecket* see Gontarski 443–44, as well as Keller, Sarah. "'Once Wasn't Enough for You': Beckett, Technology, and Preservation." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 38.3 (2010): 230–43.
[22] See the interview with Alan Moloney posted on the *Beckett on Film* website, where he describes the origins of the project in Michael Colgan's suggestion that they "record the plays for posterity" from the Gate Theatre's Beckett festival, featuring productions of all 19 plays and a world tour (http://www.becketton-film.com/maloney_interview.html).
[23] From Youtube user PrimusInterInpares, "Krapp's Last Tape feat. Coldplay" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwcgDtIOzCg).

[24] In *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies* edited by Adelaide Morris (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
[25] See McCarthy, Sean. "Giving Sam a Second Life: Beckett's Plays in the Age of Convergent Media." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 51.1 (2008): 102–17. McCarthy describes in detail a range of amateur interpretations of Beckett that he calls "in the wild", in an uneasy "coexistence" with the "Beckett industry" and "presumably lacking the imprimatur of the Beckett estate" (103).
[26] I have started a microblog to collect Youtube adaptations of Beckett. These are not simply filmed versions of the works that happen to end up on Youtube, but versions produced with the medium of Youtube in mind (http://beckettonyoutube.tumblr.com).
[27] See the videos by Youtube user knxwht, "my rendition of krapp's last tape part I" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqTjzUlm9fs) and "my rendition of krapp's last tape part II" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGUbJns3l2Y).
[28] In the video by Youtube user OffShoreDramaClub, "OffShoreDramaClub Comments & Critics" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kI5Kz-p4JJ4).
[29] In another video by OffshoreDramaClub, "Samuel Beckett- Come and Go: Tutorial" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVEsZkadYgw).
[30] Beckett wrote in 1973, "Theatre sex is not interchangeable and *Godot* by women would sound as spurious as *Happy Days* or *Not I* played by men" (qtd. in Gontarski 436).

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