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**The Adaptive Afterlife of Texts: Entropy and Generative Decay**

Abstract:

Building on a tradition of exploring textual interrelationships through figurative readings and extended metaphors, this paper seeks to read adaptation as an active and creative practice of decay. The reading is couched within a broader exploration of the afterlife of texts and heterocosms via a conceptualisation of textual embodiment as prey to particular kinds of entropy. Within this paradigm, Adaptation Studies becomes an inclusive methodology for exploring the ways in which texts metamorphose and are purposefully, posthumously altered by authors, readers, and adapters. Adaptation is proposed as a creative engagement of generative decay based in a broader universe of textual entropy, requiring interpretative burrowings from readers and adapters so that sources might be recycled and rewritten in the inks of their suppurations.

1. Introduction

Studies of adaptation and intertextuality have a long tradition of figuration as a method for conceptualising their structures and dynamics: Kristeva's *tesserae*, Bloom's *apophrades*, Barthes' tissues, Hillis-Miller's ghosts. These all utilise metaphorical and analogical images to depict inter- and intra-textual relationships, which are often ephemeral, and almost always resistant to taxonomical approaches; as noted by Thomas Leitch in his examination of the challenges to definition brought by anarchic practice (2012: 88). Particularly significant for this essay from an Adaptation Studies perspective is Kamilla Elliott's *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, where amongst others the figurative model of hermeneutic decomposition – the 'De(Re)Composing Concept of Adaptation', where the reception process allows various versions of a text to merge with cultural narratives to be recomposed as the newly hybrid adaptation – is the starting point for the explorations undertaken here. This paper seeks to participate in this tradition (a tradition charted well in a 2009 article by Carmen Lara-Rallo) by using figurative modes to explore some textual existences, relationships, and ephemeralities related to forms which we might call adaptations, and processes which we might call adaptation.

Linda Hutcheon's assessment of adaptation's doubled existence as both product and process (22) is widely accepted, and indeed her definitions of adaptation underpin the analogical investigations of adaptation here. However, following the wide-flung doors of Thomas Leitch (2017: 17), and the call for expanded terminologies by Julie Sanders (2005), these are utilised within a plurality and

openness to forms which might be considered more liminal or contested. Defining an adaptation as a textual identity of specific, acknowledged, and sustained intertextuality activated in its reception borrows from Hutcheon, though it can be argued that there will always be case studies which contest aspects of such definitions while still being productively studied as adaptations. Hutcheon and Leitch have both referred to the re-reading and rewriting which goes into the adaptation, and an important aspect of adaptations is their ability to provide insight into the fluidity of textuality across versions, as examined by John Bryant. This is engaged with here not only for the versions, but the process between and around them – what Timothy Corrigan calls the in-between of adaptation (32), which is at the centre of Robert Stam's description of adaptations as 'transformational movements and energies' (2004: 10). An engagement with creativity and reception in relation to textual fluidity is sought through the model of decay in this paper, which brings a focus on processes of adaptation as well as adaptations themselves.

Adaptations have often been defined in relation to their sources, with the diversity of current studies running parallel to an exploding of the conceptions of what is adapted. Lars Elleström has noted the narratological bias regarding adapted material, part of a long-running debate regarding the idea of adapting the 'spirit' of a text. A broadening of the notion of the source text to not only encompass but to become a transmedial intertextual universe through re-readings and rewritings is undertaken here, following theorists like Hutcheon (on the heterocosm (14)) and Leitch (on historical master texts or microtexts (2007: 82-3)) in exploring the border zones of adaptation via the questionable

textuality of the source. This builds on the questioning of the single-source model for adaptations undertaken by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan in the first issue of *Adaptation*, as well as Patrick Cattrysse, Stam, and Leitch. Hutcheon leaves room for the multiplicity of the source text in her definition of adaptation as 'an acknowledged transposition of a recognisable other work or works' (8), while Jeremy Strong's work on the author biopic as multi-source adaptation is an example of the growing number of challenges to this assumption. It depicts a fragmentary adaptation drawing from multiple source texts within and containing various other forms of intertextuality, where intertexts coalesce into a 'mental construct' (4) for the knowledgeable audience, which is in effect the source adapted. This is not only a destabilised single source text, but also a subjectively variable collection of source texts (including historical and factual texts) existing only as a coherent source in the medium of memory.[1]

In fact, adaptations from well-known sources might usually be structured on a specific collection-source which is lifted from the vast intertextual constellation surrounding that text (including the eponymous work), a notion of adaptation that accepts the extended engagement with a collection of fragments as source, and the subsequent fragmentariness of the adaptation itself. This paper suggests that all texts become this kind of construct through a particular collective reception process, and that this is always the source-constellation for the source-collection which is adapted, with the adaptation itself contributing to this diffusion. Here a specific figurative matrix becomes a way to examine the source

for its adaptive potential and to consider how created texts are in a constant

state of breaking down, particularly when frequently disassembled by adapters.

2. <u>Aesthetic Mysticism and the Heterocosm</u>

We begin with Baudelaire. A strange place to start perhaps, given the poet's stated views on adaptive practices,[2] but we come not for opinions but for mysticism. Baudelaire, whose Satanic verses in *Les fleurs du mal* prompted Barbey d'Aurevilly to comment that the only choice left after such a book was between pistol and cross (Baldick 136), wrote within a mystical approach to aesthetics.[3] One of the poet's most reproduced works is 'Correspondances', which across its two stanzas depicts the speaker moving from observing inter-symbolic affinities to the sensory transferences of synaesthesia. These then draw aside a veil to show a glimpse of a totality, a simultaneity beyond time and materiality. From the 'messages' yielded by 'forests of symbols', the poet notes that:

> Like long-held echoes, blending somewhere else
>
> into one deep and shadowy unison
>
> as limitless as darkness and as day,
>
> the sounds, the scents, the colours correspond.

Their interconnection finally allows the perceiver to see 'the power of such infinite things / […] to praise the senses' raptures and the mind's.' Through an imaginative reading of the resonances between forms (which might include the intermedial/intertextual), Baudelaire glimpses a mystical atemporality through the materiality of the temporally bound and their abstract connections, making

each symbol (or 'text') a window onto the infinite (from 'Le Gouffre:' 'je ne vois qu'infini par toutes les fenêtres').

This essay attempts to follow a similar model of looking through the sensory-corporeal to the spiritual-mystical on a less exalted scale, seeking to offer this framework as a way to conceptualise heterocosmic creativity as based on Linda Hutcheon's discussions of heterocosmic adaptations which engage with the '*res extensa*' of the story world (14). Hutcheon describes the heterocosm and its adaptation in terms of world building, calling for 'a way to deal with the range of extensions or expansions of a story world that not only transmedia producers but, as we shall see, fans have wrought' (xxiv), a view echoed by subsequent Adaptation Studies writers such as Clare Parody. Henry Jenkins has also been notably influential in charting the idea of the storyworld which refuses to be bounded by a single text. *Convergence Culture* contains examinations of the heterocosm/texts dynamic, where transmedia narratives are access points to the larger story world. This is a model elaborated upon here, with a particular focus on the ways in which adaptations expand heterocosms (which eventually collide like galaxies – e.g. *Alien vs Predator*), and the creative processes which go into this expansion. It is the contention here that all texts naturally morph into heterocosms, which may then be adapted as a selection/collection source text from that heterocosm, into an adapted version which is then subsumed into the heterocosm it has adapted from, simultaneously expanding and fragmenting it, while encouraging further adaptation.

The conception utilised in this essay is grounded in the work of, and call from, Hutcheon in particular - but takes this into some further areas of productive indeterminacy. In the area of the heterocosm as an inevitability with regards to the blurring boundaries of a text, rather than something entirely 'wrought', this essay seeks to diversify Hutcheon's description, as well as in the consideration of 'story' as always being at the centre. A heterocosm derived from an author or a character (see the aforementioned work by Strong on recurrent characters, or the current *Lovecraft Country* HBO adaptation of Matt Ruff's engagement with H. P. Lovecraft's work) rather than a singular text is a frequent occurrence; in some cases story may be less crucial to the adaptation of a heterocosm than something like style or an aspect as nebulous as atmosphere. The use of analogies to think through these ideas in this essay hopes to broaden this approach, theorize some of the processes of creation at work, consider the nature of the text in relation to the heterocosm, and answer to some degree Hutcheon's request for works which examine expansion as a form of adaptation.

The focus in terms of using the Baudelairean model is on the processes of adaptation which make manifest each heterocosm's more intangible and mutable world. For example; the Lovecraftian universe, so clearly heterocosmic in its intratextual linkages and heavily adapted from since its early publications, with a recent strain of particularly diverse intermediality. In this we can immediately see the collaborative nature of the heterocosm once a certain adaptive mass has been reached (Matthew Greene's work on Alan Moore's bricolage adaptations of the Lovecraftian heterocosm is illustrative). This Lovecraftian universe is now a 'shadow out of time' above and outside of – yet

also encompassing – the panoply of multi-authored multimedia texts which make up the 'windows [which] stare / Onto pits of dream no other gaze could bear!' The Lovecraftian heterocosm exists as a kind of mystical space outside of, yet containing, the physical forms of Lovecraftian texts. The texts themselves – such as the keystone Lovecraft story 'The Call of Cthulhu' – present physical windows onto this space when we look at them as adaptations; that is, when we observe their intertextual affinities. This returns us to Henry Jenkins and transmedia storytelling. The window-texts allow us to engage with the vastness and simultaneity of the heterocosm when viewed intertextually. Heterocosms, breeding in the interstices between texts to become subsuming vastnesses, have that same liminality, otherness, and strange freedom that we might read into the 'non-places' of Augé. Like these environments, where anonymity can often be liberating in a mode which is a pale descendant of carnival, the heterocosm is a meeting place, a crossroads of anonymous engagement. It only becomes a true place when a person has that deeper engagement with the work, a creative and interactive intertextual engagement which is often the first step towards adaptation. In this, the non-place becomes a place in its empowering of their identity through creative-critical interaction.

The notion of an imaginative and figurative reading of texts as material versions of a more intangible and metamorphic whole begins and becomes the spine for the discussions undertaken here. Like Baudelaire, we look for the correspondences, the links between texts, in order to think about the larger and more abstract non-spaces, non-times, within which these links and a version of the texts exist. We trace the adaptation(s) and its source(s) backwards and

forwards to conceptualise the places where the processes of adaptation occur, and the way in which these spaces and engagements can be represented. Within this tracing, we can suggest that adaptations are always engaging transmedially through their larger intertextual networks and the instability of the source text's boundaries. The central figure for encapsulating the ways in which this instability functions and its meaning for adaptation can similarly be plucked from Baudelaire's flowers of evil: *decay.* Decay[4] bestows a nexus of images, concepts, and figures which embody the ecology of adaptation whilst evoking its frequent negative framing as secondary creativity. By recycling the imagery of decay as a figurative appellation for exploring adaptation we can see how worlds are born from the mulch of human thought through adaptive processes of decomposition that create heterocosms from texts, and adaptations from heterocosms.

The notion of the heterocosm when allied to that of the correspondences introduces the relationship between the text and *the text beyond the text*; the larger whole which includes inferred interstitial stories (analogous in structure to the *syuzhet/fabula* relationship). It introduces the idea – implicit in the heterocosm as Ur-text which includes a mosaic of fragments or window-texts (various adaptations of a single source-heterocosm) – of the versions that a text might become. Multiple instantiations of a larger variegated whole *invite more versions*. The adaptive relationship as revealing a field of potential full of possible other versions suggests Baudelaire's forest of symbols glimpsed through the lenses of interart analogy and synesthesia: beyond the time of specific incarnation, the freed text exists in an afterlife of simultaneity and mutable

latency. Through textual interconnection we see the heterocosm of the text and the possible multiplicity of its realisations.

This mysticism of textual existence (simultaneous past, present, and future) is not merely the separation of body and soul, of form and content; though according to Kamilla Elliott, this is another heresy that adaptations allow (135-9). Instead, what the textual afterlife of potential adaptations (revealed through material adaptations) requires is a metempsychosis where not only the soul transmigrates, but the body is also ghosted as a memory. Adaptations trail imprints of form when they adapt content, and this can be seen particularly in adaptations of adaptations (chains or more complex networks of adaptation) as well as more seemingly dual instances where the source is less definably an adaptation. We might trace an example of the soul remembering the body, of content ghosting form, in post-*Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922) adaptations of *Dracula* (Stoker). Past the obvious proximate instance of the Universal version (Browning, 1931), in later nodes of this adaptive network such as *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Coppola, 1992) or the 2020 BBC three-part reimagining, Expressionist shadow from the 1922 film has become an undeniable part of the work's existence, a memory of a corporeal form that has spread across the heterocosm of the work's afterlife, influencing adaptations. For example, angular sets full of empty windows and doorways, cramped interiors, and the chiaroscuro which allows animate shadows to creep up stairways – these tropes find their way into subsequent adaptations from the body of *Nosferatu* rather than Stoker's source, memorially haunting the *Dracula* heterocosm. This can work the other way too, as in *terza rima*, which carries echoes of Dante's written content.

If the text's form and content do not separate, but stay in an enmeshed matrix as one carries the vestigial memories of the other, the body/spirit dichotomy perhaps better serves the distinction between the instantiated artifact and its more ethereal double of shifting interpretations and potential adaptations within a textual afterlife. It describes the relationship between a physical text and its heterocosm of versions which can be variously activated in the reception or adaptation. This is because the figuring shows them as intertwined and simultaneous, removing some of the teleology implied by the afterlife term. The heterocosmic afterlife posited here, to which adaptations contribute (where versions add to an expanded indeterminate textual universe), is less 'after' and more 'with', becoming palimpsestuously activated for reading when examined by a potential adapter, like Baudelaire looking through the windows of the inter-symbolic and intersensory analogies.

A text's embodied existence as artifact and its less tangible but more pliable and accessible form, which can be metamorphosed for adaptation, exist simultaneously. Looking at the text through an adaptive lens (as adaptive consumer or producer) reveals this, and a selection from this heterocosm is the collective/selective source text which is adapted. The adaptive lens looks down on the time of the text from a different dimensionality, like Abbott's spherical visitor to *Flatland*. It allows for the perception of both the text's corporeal life as a mediated and manifested artifact, and its heterocosmic form which is larger and vaguer, oscillating in a reader-activated realm immeasurable: a textual afterlife. Hutcheon (176) and Stam (75) both see adaptations as offering a textual

afterlife. In terms of the activating reader, in this instance something of the 'ideal' reader found in Eco and Iser is required, though the responsibility is more on the adaptation to signify itself as such and don this identity for the reader, as Hutcheon describes when discussing the essentiality of 'acknowledgment' (8).

Adaptations are predicated on engagements with the textual afterlife of their sources, as this heterocosm includes the ways in which the work can be read and can be adapted, a malleable and ever-metamorphosing multifarious source text. The afterlife assists us in conceptualising the way in which a source-heterocosm becomes open and porous enough for adaptation to happen; it provides a conceptual nexus for thinking about what a produced, consumed, adapted text is like. Every text has its afterlife, and is engaged with exclusively within this afterlife – its life being the creation process of corporeal growth (adding sentences, etc.), the death being its production in final form, halted bodily change. The afterlife is then its subsequent change, which is not on a corporeal, but on a more abstract level – and where readers are key.

The danger here is that some of these terms suggest a smooth, finished, complete text of fossilized meaning. However, from the perspective of decay the corpse is not complete and finished at the moment of death. Neither is a text 'finished' in any final sense; the author just stops growing it in a material sense, and it dies into a different kind of growth. At the moment of death it is actually almost a blank canvas, prepped and primed by senescence. The creative change from the decay angle (and perhaps the view of many authors for whom each reader deforms their vision of their work, even if in a positive way) begins

instantaneously in this moment, so that any sense of a complete and finished version of a text is an infinitesimally fleeting <u>illusion</u> present only in the mind of the author who sends it away for publication. From any other perspective, and indeed as a result of that perforating stare, the text reveals its dynamic, receptive corruption, its flyblown, piecemeal nature. It starts to become a heterocosm, a source ripe for adaptation.

Even the author's illusion of completion becomes putrefied at the very instant it comes into being by the knowledge that their vision of the text is irrecoverable by any reader. The only complete text exists between the author and the author-as-reader, a solipsistic Ouroboros engagement. In this, the gaps in the text are filled by the ideal writer/reader, but again only for a split-second before their own reading of their work begins to change, decaying the text so that the solipsistic world and the broader heterocosm which it is becoming collapse into each other. The focus here is on the way that this paradoxically dynamic post-death text is made available for adaptation, is adapted, becomes (an) adaptation(s), and consequently enters a new afterlife. Adaptations require a specific kind of readerly and intertextual engagement with the source text(s) in their afterlife forms, and this specific adaptive aspect of the afterlife will help its conceptualisation more generally. The text becomes a heterocosm, its change encouraging adaptations, which adapt a selection from the heterocosm while expanding it, further altering the text. At the same time, material versions as window-texts onto the expanding heterocosm are produced.

So, how might we further consider the relationship between the legion material corpse of the text (the 'corpsoreal' text) and its perpetually hatching mutable double that is activated by reading (the reanimated text of the heterocosm), which is both also and other to the petrified material form? What occurs in textual (a)temporality to make the heterocosm available to adapters and adaptive audiences (those aware of the intertextual relationship) at the two ends of a discrete unit in the process of adaptation? These observers who, looking at intertextual relationships (whether potential or extant, respectively), disembodied in the realm of the correspondences that provide windows onto the textual afterlife of the heterocosm, oscillate between reading the trees before them in the forest of symbols and the spaces between the trees which memory fills with the spectral form of the material source forest. What happens in the afterlife of a text to allow its heterocosm to be adapted?

3. <u>Entropy and Decay in Textual Materiality</u>

We might progress again like Baudelaire with an initial examination of the embodied as a state of decay. In its most clear and grounded sense, we can see this illustrated to poetic effect in a work like Bill Morrison's film *Decasia* (2002), a collection-text of fragments from early nitrate films whose disintegrating stock falls apart and degenerates before our eyes in pulsing efflorescences of chemical putrefaction. Nitrate base material begins to decompose immediately upon manufacture, and so provides an accelerated analogue for the decomposition of all textual materials. The film, with its "calligraphy of decay" (Hoberman) is also an interestingly entangled example of the form/content matrix, where an adaptation – while seemingly able to separate and adapt content – would struggle to do this without ghosting vivid memories of form from the previous 'corpsoreality'. As an adaptation of many into one, *Decasia* also shows interesting instances of adapting whole sources (including Lumière footage) into fragments and – through foregrounding the entropic print of time on the materiality which mediated the form – reshaping content and refiguring the relationship between form, content, and mediation in those sources. It draws out a dynamic interrelationship which becomes a piece in a mosaic whose tonal and thematic unity is found in this reconstructed tripartite dynamic among each of its tessellating adapted fragments.

A text is an arrangement of multifaceted complexity composed against disorder[5] on the levels of ideas, the form/context matrices which represent them, and the materialities of their mediations. Complexity, as part of the ebb and flow of

matter and energy, is an accretion representing a spike in the otherwise 'downward' trajectory of the accumulating disorder[6] of entropy. Complex forms are more fragile in terms of their receptivity to the catabolic processes of entropy (Greene 174) - there are more ways in which they *can* become disordered, due to their order requiring a rigorous and limited specificity - as in the difference between a heap of sand and a sandcastle. The latter, being more complexly ordered, has far more chance of becoming the former than vice versa, and progresses far more swiftly and drastically into states of disorder than the pile of sand.

*Decasia* exemplifies this in the infamous instability of the nitrate base which anchors the images, where its central concern is the fragility of the materiality which anchors ideas in form/content matrices for those early films. The order is shown as a futile struggle against encroaching disorder in the famous image of the boxer fighting the degenerative bloom that hollows one side of the image. Here, the fragility of the medium's materiality is made visual, its collapse allowing disorder to reclaim the multi-level order in progressive stages. Burrowing a small alcove of stopped time within the entropic riverbed has created an architectural complexity which valiantly takes a brief stand while its very intricacy advances the inevitability of its collapse back into the flow.

It might be said that a complexity which rearranges a previous complexity, yet relies on a secondary layer of complexity within itself based on a relationship to the previous complexity which is only perceptible when interlinked with a receptive complexity capable of oscillating between these two in its complex

memory/perception systems – is a more complex structure than the source form when the intercomplexity relationships are foregrounded (and if this sentence cannot illustrate this content in its form then nothing will!). Therefore, adaptations can be seen to carry a higher degree of complexity in terms of levels of order than other textual forms with less foregrounded and crucial intertextual relationships. They build up complexity by overlaying versions, memory-palimpsests haunted by past lives.

*Dracula* is again illustrative: the BBC adaptation (an ordered form) rearranges the elements of Stoker's novel as a distant source text (an ordered form) via intertextual engagement with the versions between (further ordering), with its form becoming more complex the more these relationships are perceived, as it relies more on the interlinking of the audience (complex forms) with the text through very specific (highly ordered) forms of perception and memory (Hutcheon's oscillation, 121). This complexity evokes the correlation between high order and rates of entropic decay. It recalls something like Poe's *Masque of the Red Death*, where, as Hubert Zapf notes, human life is represented as a cultural artifact which "contains in the specific way in which it attempts to ensure its order the dynamics that continually increases its disorder" (213). In an architectural analogue, the adaptation, when fully understood as such and when seen by an audience aware of much of its intertextual detailing, is a Gothic cathedral built on a Romanesque chapel. Its spires and arabesques of detail are very much prey to the elements, and without particular types of perceivers, its Romanesque foundations will be forgotten: both are reductions in the structure's

complexity and a dis-ordering of its fully elaborated form. Additionally, this figure evokes adaptation's status as act of memory and historical awareness.

Prior to further examination of the high complexity of adaptations and ideas of decay in relation to content, we should consider the symptoms of increasing entropy within a textual body – the mediated form of a text. Physical media are circumscribed by decay as a vector of entropy. This is most obviously true of, say, a sculpture, and Jean Arp testifies to this entropic couching of art, noting, 'the decay that begins immediately on completion of the work', where 'sun and heat make blisters, disintegrate the paper, crack the paint [...] the dampness creates mould [...] the work falls apart, dies.' However, our more nebulous forms are just as grounded in a complex materiality fragile in the face of entropic advance. Silicon, for example, as a prevalent modern corporeal anchor of texts, is particularly evocative for demonstrating the impossibility of escaping material entropy's decay for texts as artefacts. Silicon as a medium for information emphasizes the low entropy (high order) of all manifested creations and recalls the previously invoked image of the sandcastle. It is an ordered and fragile structure which, according to probability, will almost certainly never be reconstituted in the same way once its form begins to change.

To quote Shelley and paraphrase Keats' epitaph; all names 'stamped on these lifeless things' are actually writ in water. Even cloud storage must somewhere be embedded in silicon memory – silicon made of sand; the most complex of sandcastles, the most treacherous foundation once the clouds burst and the rains come tumbling down. With their incredibly low entropy (*high order*) structure,

decay will be swift in returning microchips to the state of disorder: the 'lone and level sands' of Ozymandias, at the bottom of the hourglass. It is only when freed from representation in material media, or between these encagements, that adaptation can signify a different kind of entropy from the degenerative reading we see troped in Gibbon's histories and Poe's *House of Usher*. Like memory and imagination, adaptation hints at textual existences <u>beyond</u> the body.

So; the created text dies into an object-form which immediately slips into senescence from the beginning – indeed, which is built of materials already well into that process the further we drill down, just as more sentient biological bodies are. The text's material afterlife is one of a multiplicity of slowly putrefying bodies. However, if we seek the contiguous afterlife of the text in the adaptive universe of its own heterocosm, which runs parallel to (and encompasses) senescing physicality, we must walk with Baudelaire, following the sounds of the decayed cadences of disintegrating corpsoreality along the path of analogy into those more ephemeral realms. Links between material texts here become windows onto more insubstantial spaces of infinite interpenetrative mutability. They return us to the ways in which texts become heterocosms, and selections from heterocosms are adapted, consequently expanding the heterocosm and 'decaying' the source into further diversity.

Whilst an adaptation might be formed from the component parts of a sundered physical text (as in the example of *Decasia*, which approaches 'the task of creating a meaningful whole from fragments […] with particular acuity' (Böser 307), as well as other compilation films/curatorial adaptations) they are more

usually formed from the fragments of a *reception text*, a version of the source's heterocosm printed onto the plate of memory. This requires analogous forms of decay in the afterlife/death of the text as heterocosm which coexists with (and encompasses) the material corpses. We are taken into the place in the adaptive afterdeath which recalls Bataille's '*informe*' (382), the term coined to 'evoke that ambiguous area of representation where form and figure become fleeting, ephemeral traces, subjected to the mutations and the dissolution of the image in time' (Böser 306).

4. Becoming the Source: Interpretive Entropy/Reception Decay

I propose *interpretive entropy* or *reception decay* as terms which summarise this process, describing changes in the text's heterocosm which are analogues for, but very different from, the physical decay to which its material embodiments are prey. Thinking the material first allows us to conceptualise more effectively the state of decay in those more insubstantial arenas of textual existence: through body to spirit in an aesthetic mysticism describing aspects of transmedial adaptation. If we consider interpretive entropy to be a characterization or measurement of change, and reception decay to be its symptoms as they are made manifest for measurement, we begin to define this concept.

These overlapping terms describe a kind of general decay in the text as a vector of a larger entropic shift. It exists along a spectrum of purpose in terms of how distortions are imposed upon the text – and of course here the 'text' is the heterocosmic, afterdeath form which both contains and exceeds the material instantiations. The gradations of purpose which effect the decompositions range from the incidental shifts brought by historical change, to the re-readings produced by academic criticism. For example, the slow read-shift of *Robinson Crusoe* under decolonization and the retreat of Imperialist thinking, which is followed by the more direct and accelerated refiguring brought by Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, whilst even more substantial mutilation is wrought by the dialogism of adaptations like *Man Friday* (Gold, 1975). In terms of the reasons for creative intervention being a more accelerated and invasive decaying than the academic (though the two are often combined in adaptations), this is often due

to the broad cultural communicability of adaptations. Adaptations are physical traces, features that bear testimony to a text's cultural significance – though not its "merit" – it may be economic, political, or entertainment significance in terms of trends, etc. However, each adaptation is a deeper re-inscription.

What is most important is the breaking down of the text into its own heterocosm, the process of alteration, and the accelerants which move it at different stages. The readers are the active agents of change. In their engagement with the indistinct and horizon-wide corpse-image of the text (which still lives in its parallel instantiated forms that senesce gently beneath the ticking of pages turning or frames flickering) they become the worms who further open up the ethereal body. Baudelaire describes his brain and its superabundance of memories in a way that illustrates the heterocosm and its texts for us when pursuing this figurative path:

> This branching catacombs, this pyramid
>
> Contains more corpses than the potter's field:
>
> I am a graveyard that the moon abhors,
>
> Where long worms like regrets come out to feed
>
> Most ravenously on my dearest dead
>
> (1857: 75)

The worms for him are regrets, but in the more objective and communal space of the heterocosm those seeking to consume the memorialised dead are the readers, a term which includes the adapters who expand the heterocosm.

Critics and academics are readers further along the spectrum of intentionality because they seek to burrow more forcefully into the work, and because they disseminate their views in a way which is more easily impactful in its lasting published circulation. Their burrowing within the work creates a decayed version which then gets fixed through their exegesis of it – a type of adaptation in itself perhaps, somewhere halfway along the spectrum between the average reader and the adapter – which can then be accessed by others. *Decasia* is again illustrative: physical decay and interpretive decay align clearly within it, as the source texts are shown to decay generally, changing over time, even without intervention from adapters. The decay on screen is not the 'traces of artistic manipulation of the material, but features that bear testimony to its chemical dissolution' (Böser 307). However, when an adapter does intervene, the fragments are reset in a new form which makes new meaning from their decay but accelerates the process in terms of changing them and communicating that alterity.

Interpretive entropy begins with an impossibility. It posits and requires a kind of classical original form which is decayed away from, which under the terms of post-structuralism seems a fallacy. However, this 'original' 'embodiment' never really exists, it is a kind of theoretical pure being incarnate and yet paradoxically unblemished by the materiality of existence. The only place it exists is in a fragment of time so small that it is an interface rather than a period: the aforementioned moment of death. This is because once the work is complete[7] it begins to decay (in both the embodied and disembodied/heterocosmic versions).

Its afterdeath decay begins in parallel to its corpsoreal decay; just as the paint begins to crack as soon as it is dry (the moment of the painting's completion), so the holistic sense of the text as finished begins to perforate. In the textual afterdeath, it is the dissolution into multifaceted heterocosm which commences. This replaces the version of unity achieved in the text's moment of death, where for a split second the boundaries of form, content, and medium align - while simultaneously retaining the essential gaps and indeterminacies which await their temporary and subjective observational fixing in the act of reception.

If we return to the body (materiality) and spirit (form/content matrices) dichotomy, the text's afterdeath provides the space wherein the spirit – which can of course also ghost materiality through form, as in the case of *Decasia* – begins to spread, fragment, and become vague. This is the dissolution into heterocosm which is both inevitable and required by adaptation, and it is the consequence of a variety of factors. We might consider these as processes of reception decay in the general interpretive entropy of the afterdeath, the "eternal" (like Baudelaire's forest of symbols) heterocosm of the text beyond, yet including, its material versions. As mentioned before and indicated by the interpretive/reception terms, readers are the essential actors here, with the text's decay only apparent in the act of reception - just as adaptation has been described by Hutcheon, Sanders, Geraghty, and many others. The mutability and distortions of this decay are part of a process continually occurring, yet one actualized only in the measurement, coalescing out of a diffuse field of potential. Like electrons, here a particular reading of a text becomes specific in the

measurement where previously it was a nebulous 'and-ness' blurring classical notions of manifestation.

So; a text grows in the creative light of its author(s), is completed=dies, splits into body-spirit by being embodied in a multitude of corpses which begin to physically decay, while simultaneously beginning to "spiritually" decay from the holistic identity it took at the interface-moment of completion/death. It commences becoming a field of content ghosting form and materiality (anchored by physical corpses through which the field is accessed), a multitude of versions perhaps extant, perhaps only hinted at: but a field rather than an entity, and one open to readers who can further decay what was once whole into increased particularity.

The broadest and vaguest end of the spectrum of reception decay which forms the field of a text's disorder or putrefaction (and of which interpretive entropy is a measurement that fixes the degree) is one disassociated from the process of reading in principle, even if it requires a reader to then apply entropic measurement. It is brought by cultural change, the march of ideas under the flight path of time's arrow. In the shadow of physical entropy, changes in culture mutate texts into new forms - Stam describes this in the 'openness' of texts, infinitely mutating under their various influences (15) – which become manifest in the act of reading: a circuitous route to the materialist truism that a text is a different text when read at either end of a hundred-year bracket.

Similarly, from the moment an author relinquishes control of their work by concluding it, not only does it begin to putrefy (i.e. change, fragment, become open) in the fecund conditions of cultural change, but it changes in their own interpretive re-reception. Even if the manuscript remains locked in a drawer away from other readers, the text's spirit-corpse – here a thin thing, being primarily only the author's interpretation of their work – changes. The author themself becomes a significant worm slithering through to disrupt the order that blinked into half existence at the moment of creation-death, in addition to and overlapping with (possibly as a result of), the decomposition of that primary order at the hands of cultural change.

However, as suggested before, this decay only becomes realized in the reading and active through inter-reader communication. When the heterocosm is accessed through the engagement with a materially embedded version of the text, entropy becomes activated as a measure of the disorder between the inaccessible initial form and the glimpse of the putrefied form which coalesces in that instant from the field of decay. The reader's own personality contributes to this in their making of meaning in dialogue with the text: *a la* Wolfgang Iser, readers replace the memorial and subjective intertexts of the author with their own, a reception which decays the 'purity' of the whole to burrow in personal intertexts, and is part of the pleasure of experiencing a text. Similarly, the author's altered perspective on their work can only contribute to the field of decay, of difference from the singularity of the 'initial' Edenic form, through communication. If their perspective is not disseminated through conversation, interviews, prefaces, et cetera, – what Genette called the paratext, and

particularly the epitextual elements which form the textual threshold – then it remains a version of the spirit-corpse decaying in a tiny, invisible parallel plane to the broader heterocosm of the text, which is open and shared.

These discussions are slowly building a path back to adaptation. The next step is to consider another way in which texts decay in the textual afterdeath, one which characterizes the other pole of the purpose spectrum.

5. <u>Adaptation Part I: Authored Decay</u>

The baseline for textual decay is that vaguer end of the spectrum just explored, the interpretive entropy which can be seen through reading a text in a different cultural time/space, at a different time to the author, and in the personal interpretation of the reader. Arnheim, writing on entropy, sees a 'lack of correspondence between outer and inner order' producing 'a clash of orders' which is the element of disorder (3). In the current reading, this might refer to the change in a text's meaning through interpretation, and the conflicting rate of change (or lack thereof) in its form and content. Meaning is a very low entropy structure, more prone to decay, due to being more complex and fragile. Writing on *Decasia*, Chare and Watkins describe how decay permits the materialisation of 'alternative, often disavowed meanings' (76); disintegration creating alterity. Meaning engages more essentially with authors and audiences, so is therefore more unstable. Meaning will decay into new forms first, through the burrowings of readers, and it subsequently alters content via interpretation, suggesting potential new forms. This may prompt the authorial engagements of adapters. The decay of meaning brings increased complexity in the interlinking of audiences within the work; yet it also brings perforation in terms of the text's whole, a clash of orders which accelerates entropic decay.

The adaptive relevance of these distortions in the textual spirit-corpse, broadening into the heterocosmic field, is that the disorder they impose on the text creates spaces for the potentialities instantiated by adaptation. The more a text is interpreted (= decayed into diversity) and interlinked with the complex

systems of audiences, the more complex it becomes. It is therefore more likely to decay further, and consequently to be adapted. Each adapted version is a slump from order into disorder before an accretion into an even more complex order, a layering of palimpsestuous mosaics of complexity. To ground these metaphors again in *Decasia*'s materiality, we can see the linear temporal motion of the film, which contains a series of spatio-temporal circularities (as noted by Böser 311), as an analogy for the structure of the adaptive afterlife.

The fragile ordering brought by adaptation brings the increased likelihood of further decay; the entropy analogy therefore reveals to us the way that due to their foregrounding of the adaptive process for audiences/creators and the way they make texts 'fair game', adaptations make the further adaptation of a text more likely. This is perhaps another explanation for the tendency towards franchising which in the mainstream has its clear reasoning explained by the kind of work done by Simone Murray (also examined by Clare Parody), yet which in more independent and less profitable avenues still occurs.

Each subtly different reading of a text which introduces deterioration brings fragmentation to bear on the whole, introducing gaps of potentiality after loosening the integrity of the text. A clash of orders between parts of the text as they become more independent through certain readings allows catabolic processes to emerge in the gaps. These may result in a version of that part which becomes wholly independent – like a spinoff text following a particular character as in the *Better Call Saul* (2015-) series. A particular reading has disconnected this aspect of the original text and adapted a fragment into a new whole which

expands the heterocosm significantly. These structures are obviously extremely applicable to the franchised universes of contemporary blockbusters, not least the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

We have clearly moved further along the spectrum of purpose here: this is not merely a reconceptualization of a text which has decayed its 'original' into alterity. It is not merely a spectral adaptation-in-waiting, a phantom conjured by the ritual of reading which now awaits a material medium which it might possess with the right assistance. What we can see though, is that thanks to readers, texts are constantly decaying into other texts at all times, even if those other texts are not consciously begun. Each interaction with a text increases the symptoms of reception decay as a stage of interpretive entropy, and creative purpose and intent is the accelerant. The aspect of the pole with which we began is still present on that spectrum of purpose – for the intent to read a text differently depending on time or place is there in the authorial and cultural perspectives too. Consider a major life event which causes a novelist to re-evaluate a text and communicate this to others (J. K. Huysmans' 'Preface, Written Twenty Years After the Novel' to the infamous *À rebours* is a good example), or a significant historical event which prompts a re-evaluation (say, the Civil Rights Movement) of a canonical work. These are farther along the spectrum of purpose and are therefore accelerated versions of the baseline decay and entropy of the text, which is looser and almost incidental.

Progressing along the spectrum of purpose we see additional accelerations in the rates of textual entropy and decay. These result in the most noticeable changes

in the afterlife/death: adaptations. Adaptations select a snapshot of decay, a version selected from the flow of increasing disorder which is the proliferating heterocosm of interpretations and diversifications. It is in the choice to reverse death, to conceive an instantiated form and birth it into materiality, where purpose really comes to bear, and the accelerated form (acceleration determined by interpretive decay's measurement of change within the system) of reception decay becomes *authored decay*.

It is worth noting that when considering the measurement of change within the system there are clear parallels with discussions of proximity, and by extension fidelity, in terms of Adaptation Studies. It might be said that the more decayed the text, the more it has been prey to interpretive entropy, therefore the further its adaptation is from the source and the less fidelity it has. The decay analogy points up the in-built distrust towards the infidelitous adaptation (particularly of a beloved source for the observer who speaks the fidelity discourse), the putrefied form, where adaptation is a process of degeneration. By recycling the decay concept though, we see that its value judgements are short-sighted when a broader perspective is in play, and where secondariness is a ubiquitous rule to be acknowledged and creatively claimed. In any case, there is an added difficulty here in that the 'original' in the discussion so far cannot be adapted, it is inaccessible in its instantaneous membrane. A particular reading is always adapted, providing yet another obstacle to the well-dethroned notion of a singular original to which fidelity might be even theoretically applied.

The author, then, in a specific encounter with the spirit (heterocosm) through the body (mediated form), fixes a reading: their interpretation is a measurement forcing a particular version to emerge from the decay field. This is a combination of the adapter's personal reading of the text, with all its vicissitudes of meaning and idiosyncratic intertexts, with a particular cultural reading (perhaps the two cannot be split) pinned at an intersection of space and time. Other readings, sometimes adaptations – all putrefied versions of the 'original' text both derived from and present in the heterocosm – might contribute depending on intertextual knowledge, or within the research aspects of the creative process. This is almost identical to the general reception decay engagement with a text, but there is a goal in mind here which brings the accelerated decay of purpose. This may only come at a much later time, once the personal reception text (the memory imprint) has decayed further (a particularly accelerated and invasive process), but at some point the desire to resurrect the text becomes a creative accelerant to the process of reception decay.

Returning to the examples invoked earlier, all adapters become Herbert West and Dracula: Bill Morrison with *Decasia* and Baudelaire with *Artificial Paradises* evidence this in their piecemeal resurrections of texts fragmented by their tunneling intentions. Adaptation requires an authored decay which builds on the framework of interpretive entropy within a teleology of partial resurrection - or reanimation if we stay with Lovecraft and his character Herbert West. The text is under new control and a new form, though perhaps amongst horror's cast of revenants we can find different adaptations which fit these analogues in ways

which inform us about the nature of the adaptation. *Decasia*, for example, is very much an adaptation resembling Frankenstein's creature.

The fragmentations brought by interpretive entropy and reception decay make texts available for the adapter through their putrefaction, creating the interpretive gaps for subjective intertexts to burrow within; to perforate the integrity of the text in order to form new versions. The adapter increases the text's decay through their purposeful interpretation and rearrangement of aspects within the heterocosm, forming the reception source text which is to be adapted, and which is a highly decomposed version of any sense of an 'original.' This process of authored reception decay, accelerated and predicated on a significant necrophage amongst the tunnels formed by less interactive readers, is at the same time a new version of *life and growth*. It is in this sense that we recycle the concept of decay more significantly.

6. <u>Adaptation Part II: Generative Decay</u>

When it comes to the significance of adaptation as a textual process predicated on and driven by decay, yet resulting in new forms, it is clear that the process and its products are engaging with the ebb and flow of accretion and disintegration on a textual level. Decay is shown to be essential for creation, a process of metamorphosis, recycling, and regeneration necessary for the new to emerge. Entropy is taken back to its etymological roots, where it is a combination of the Greek words for energy and transformation (as noted by Zapf 212).

Adaptation shows us that what we may often conceptualise as merely degeneration is a dual-planed Möbius strip of fragmentation and rearrangement. As Elizabeth Abel says, decomposition is 'fundamental' to both criticism and creative practice (370). It seems that this concept, which can be seen as so central to adaptation in particular, requires the kind of reframing outlined in the lecture given by Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor in 1908, who stated that 'what is commonly called decay is merely stylistic development' (cited in Murray & Hall 1). Zapf describes the way that, for Nietzsche, life is only another, very infrequent form of death (216). This idea is echoed in Freud's ideas of Thanatos in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which Mark Fisher summarises well as "what is called organic life is actually a kind of folding of the inorganic" (84). We could perhaps aphoristically echo then, that accretion is only another, very infrequent form of disintegration. Or, that adaptation is only another, very infrequent form of decay.

Interpretive entropy and reception decay offer up texts for adaptation, and adapters further unmake the spiritual corpse, but in the curatorial resetting of fragments a new spike of order allows the process to begin again, enriching the heterocosm. Materiality re-enters, as a new window onto textual infinity is constructed. Decay has renewed the extant and become fecund. The essentiality of decay here as a recycling (and recycled) concept of dynamic and iconoclastic metamorphosis finds its cultural touchstones not only in more recent conceptions of entropy as a diversity necessary for the evolution of ordered systems (Shaw & Davis 135), but also in the kind of *generative decay* found in some medieval sources. These instances where decay signifies differently to the *fin-de-siècle* iteration whose vestiges still remain, are closer to the version that becomes a useful analogue for conceptualising adaptive creativity.

In 1349, John Dumbleton discussed the idea of generative decay using Aristotle's 'On Generation and Corruption' – in which the Greek philosopher considers whether prime materials exist or whether all is generated via alteration. Dumbleton dwells on generation by putrefaction, and of animals by complete animals (Sylla 609), in a recasting of decay as recycling that recalls Tom Leitch's ecology of texts (2017: 700). Similarly, Bark's revisionist examination of the late Roman and Early Medieval period shows the common formulation of its decay as a result of Classical prejudices born from privileging an arbitrary 'original.' He says that what has been seen as decay was merely 'adjustment' – a statement recalling the fidelity/proximity discourses in Adaptation Studies. In the Middle Ages the notion of decay as 'a problem too intimate with the world of beings or

the *explicatio* of the universe to be brushed aside on emotional or rational grounds' (Negarestani 379) was often emphasized in a way that is more conducive to how it might be seen to function as a principle of adaptation.

Later in the passage quoted above, Reza Negarestani invokes the obscure Henry of Langenstein, who posited a philosophical problem of generative decay encapsulated in a bizarre image; discussing the possibility of a fox being born from the corpse of a dog. Here we see the seeming illogicality of generative decay to consciousnesses so mired in fleeting and singular embodiment. For Langenstein, decay is an iconoclastic Ovidian force, an unpredictable process that may contain miracles. It is not dissolution, but metamorphosis (Sanders has also connected Ovid with adaptation (64)). We can see this bizarre generativity in the previous explorations. With advancing entropy, a text may decay like Eco's 'cult object' into fragments, as changes in context and readings introduce disorder. In the perforations engendered by reception it may come to resemble an entirely different text in the cultural consciousness. This text might, through adaptation's authored generative decay, emerge in a corporeal manifestation – the fox from the dog – wherein the process begins again.

Here decay is an adaptation which brings the first law of textual thermodynamics to bear upon the second: an engine for the conservation of energy, a field of differential potential. This is more in keeping with adaptation's eco-historical valency, as an often denigrated form of recycling matter. It recalls Baudelaire's 'Une Charogne' (1857: 28), which, though its main thrust is as a

*vanitas* or *memento mori*, still carries in its belly the ideas of generative decay within the natural realm:

> The sun shone down upon that putrescence,
>
> As if to roast it to a turn,
>
> And to give back a hundredfold to great Nature
>
> The elements she had combined;
>
> And the sky was watching that superb cadaver
>
> Blossom like a flower.
>
> [...]
>
> One would have said the body, swollen with a vague breath,
>
> Lived by multiplication.

Baudelaire frequently highlights the creative potential of decomposition (Grotta 101), and this image evokes a decay which, with a shift in perspective, becomes generative, able to blossom. The corpse appears to be on the brink of birth, of speaking, and here nature's cycles of entropy are shown to enact their own adaptations. *Decasia*'s adaptive style is also echoed in the singular multiplicity of the corpse, where in the process of decaying adaptation it becomes fragmented, particularised in a partial unity of articulate irresolution. In Baudelaire's poem, decay becomes subject matter in its own right, but it also gets linked to the process of poetic creation, to an adaptation of decaying sources. Baudelaire himself actually achieves the miracle of generative decay – as theorized by Henry

of Langenstein – poetically, in his use of this decaying source image, nature's intertext of combined elements distilled into a poetic image and represented.

In his discussion of Langenstein, Negarestani evokes ideas of 'the blurring movements of rot' engendered by 'vermicular liquidation' (380). This is a suggestive set of images for the ideas of entropic adaptation examined thus far. It recalls the ways in which readers burrow into texts in their interpretations, inducing the perforations which might then be utilised in the fragmentations of more active decomposition taken up by adapters. In combining the two, gradations of putrefaction can be seen to allow different forms to emerge at different stages in the decay: the wave forms of disorder and order that are the adaptations which refresh and expand the heterocosm, that corpse full of other corpses.

Adaptation could therefore be said to not only have its origin in decay, but to be a process of decay that incorporates an initially paradoxical but inherently creative generativity. Reading, interpretation, and remaking are all stages of a process of adaptive decay, where texts break down via vermiculate, burrowing ideas and readers, loosening the integrity of bodies and putrefying them with a porosity of difference that allows for rebirth.

Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis' essay 'Naples' discusses porosity in terms of certain city spaces, focusing on impermanence and metamorphosis, where urban constellations preserve the potential to become other versions. Their mutability destabilises the perception of time and space, where the observer cannot tell if

the architecture is in a process of decay or restoration. The transient alterity effected by textual decay is similar to this porosity in the city, where generative decay creates the porosity necessary for adaptive rearrangement. Porosity is a vector of generative decay that prevents full dissolution, for it prompts creative interaction in its accessibility and openness. It encourages readers to become vermiculate within the creative process. The changing perceptions of the text force it to metamorphose into different forms from its original manifestation. While adaptation as process is an authorial vector of this mechanism of decay, an adaptation is one of the forms taken when the text becomes an extrapolated artefact, rather than just its original self blurred by rot.

Authored porosity invites an interplay of decay and reconstruction that transcends the linearity of non-adaptive textual entropy and – through the materiality of bodily decay – opens a window onto the infinity of the heterocosm with all its potentialities for further embodiments. It brings a greater chance for new versions to come into being, making texts seepingly dynamic, instead of isolated in vitrines. Adaptation allows for temporal coexistence in its ability to mediate fragments of the past to enrich the present, whilst retaining the future's field of potential. In ideas such as adaptive dialogism (Stam), temporal conceptions of restoration and decay are destabilised. Entropy and its vectors, then, allow the metempsychoses of adaptation, where texts escape the singular transience of the medial body as artefact, through the decaying, liberating consumption of readers and writers.

7. <u>Conclusions</u>

This paper has sought to contribute a new set of figurations for aspects of adaptation, exploring the adaptive reading and rewriting of heterocosmic sources through the evoked notions of entropy and decay. By allying adaptation to a denigrated concept whilst recycling that concept and noting the recycling capabilities of both areas, a further contribution can be made to highlighting the arbitrariness of adaptation's secondariness.

In summary, we have explored the relationships between material texts and heterocosms via ideas of aesthetic mysticism to consider the more or less corporeal forms of textuality. We have considered how audiences and adapters engage with these forms, and how they contribute to the formation of these textual identities and their metamorphosis. Entropy and decay have been thought through as useful conceptual tools for considering how – to some degree – all adaptations adapt from a heterocosm which includes yet exceeds material versions. It was suggested that in this sense adaptations require a decayed text. In exploring the way texts decay and the rates of decay in texts, we moved from the role that readers play in putrefying them to the way that adapters bring an active acceleration as part of a new creative process. This prompted a revisiting of decay's classic trajectory of devolution, and the finding of some useful cultural touchstones for the creative potential of decay which help to highlight the revitalizing properties of adaptation.

Looking between material texts and beyond into more ethereal versions, we have examined the entropic afterdeath of texts. Within this, we outlined the ways in which decay primes texts for adaptation, is central to the adaptive process, and is a creative, collaborative unmaking/remaking which causes heterocosms to bloom and textual existences to shift – beyond the small decay of bodies and into the generative decay of ideas.

In terms of attempting to identify some of the benefits of these discussions, it might be said that using the entropy and decay model celebrates democratic notions of creative impurity rather than obsessing over the holistic untouchable bodies of canonised works. As a participation in Reception Studies it critiques the myth of the smooth text and highlights the active nature of reading, underlining Barthesian notions brought by Adaptation Studies 2.0. This figurative nexus celebrates creative processes and becomings within (inter)textuality, bringing the blurred fluid field between texts closer instead of focusing on comparing discrete contiguous versions. It prompts more of a consideration of the abstract spaces where readers engage texts. Like the Decadent writers, this work seeks to use decay to further dethrone some Romantic conceptions of creativity, authorship, and textual wholeness. The use of these figures centralises the notion of textual change as a constant state and underlines the float of meaning – again applying Barthes. It also adds further weight to the deconstruction of the single-source model of adaptation, providing a unifying concept for the adaptation of a multiplicity of intertexts as a single heterocosmic collection-text drawn from an even broader constellation.

The decay metaphor encourages adapters and re-readers/writers by removing the text's pedestal, its nimbus of purity. It draws together ideas of the text as already changing, already changed, and changed by the reader in the moment of reading. It shows that the 'original' each person holds onto is different from all others, different from the version they read ten years prior, different all the time and therefore no original at all, but a changing diversifying thing whose very disintegration is its creative salvation. It stimulates future creativity rather than sanctifying past endeavours. Any implied taboo against textual 'desecration' is removed as the inbuilt decay of the text seeks a democratic engagement with the radical potential of its multiplicities.

Adaptation Studies has always known the fidelity concept to be a compromised and empty model for discussing proximity. Adopting an entropy model for textuality and a decay model for adaptation eliminates the possibility of this debate, as it highlights the dialogism observed by Stam. It shows in its language that there is no original pure source which can be engaged with fidelitously – it has been changed with every passing second, with every reading, writing, and rewriting. Fidelity can therefore only be a category for measuring proximity between the adaptation and the reading of the text which it seeks to instantiate; between one decayed form and another. There is no enshrined true objective source here, and the creator only has a responsibility to their subjective decayed version which is attached to the larger decayed version; an irrecoverable proximity of intention.

The decay analogy also celebrates the rhizomatic creativity of the heterocosmic model of textual existence – of adaptations, tangential remakes, prequels, sequels, offshoots, and the panoply of transmedial paratextual materials. It suggests the way in which each broadens and fertilises the soil of the heterocosm as it decays the originary (not original) text into new and more complex versions. The entropy and decay model connects Adaptation Studies to Transmedia Studies and begins to theorise their interrelations, directing itself towards this essential contemporary creative mode from a foundation of Adaptation Studies steeped in post-structuralist ideas.

In terms of further work which may utilise these explorations, a forthcoming essay dealing with theories of abjection in relation to the decayed text in Adaptation Studies will add a differing perspective to ideas of (de)generativity. Similarly, a more in-depth exploration of the collection-source-text is in development. Suggested further areas for exploration are around additional specific and extended examples of the adaptation of a heterocosm, with its focus on a multiplicity of sources adapted as a single source. Similarly, a further examination of the role of memory in the way that readers and adapters engage with texts can only be productive for Adaptation Studies, and can begin to pin down the subjective engagements which broaden and enrich heterocosms as they decay texts. These areas of ephemeral engagement between and beyond what we conventionally think of as texts are extremely interesting for their interaction with both the collective and the subjective, as well as their ability to reveal creative processes of reading and writing.

Notes

[1] I have previously adumbrated a collection/curation model for this type of adaptation, as well as exploring the notion of adaptation in relation to the textuality of memory.

[2] Despite practising forms of ekphrasis which link the interart to celebrated synaesthesia in poems like 'Les Phares', in the Salon of 1846 Baudelaire castigates 'the encroachment of one part upon another, the importation of poetry, of wit and sentiment into painting' (1992: 91).

[3] Particularly notable in the writing around correspondences within his 1859 article on Gautier, where he brings the mysticism of Swedenborg's correspondences into literary aesthetics.

[4] Entropy is a similarly important concept, being the larger force at work in decay. Arnheim describes *Les fleurs du mal* as embodying the lay interpretation of Boltzmann's concept of entropy as a 'cosmic memento mori' (8).

[5] Or fragments shored against the author's ruins, to paraphrase T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*.

[6] Itself a paradoxical idea representing other notions of ebb/flow inherency, for the ultimate homogenization towards which entropy tends perhaps becomes a purer order than clumpings of complexity could ever achieve.

[7] As previously noted, the completion of the work is the moment of death, its life of creative growth ending in a moment of perfect realisation which ends as it begins, the process of decay taking over as new growth – the work is not actually complete in any real sense, but only in the sense of a transition from physical growth to entropic decay.

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