Literature and Film
A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation

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Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation

Robert Stam

I will take as my point of departure for discussion one of those rare feature films that not only is an adaptation, but is also about adaptation, and that is also actually entitled Adaptation, to wit the recent film (2002) directed by Spike Jonze and written by Charlie Kaufman. The film adapts Susan Orlean’s The Orchid Thief, a non-fiction account of a flower poacher, named La Roche (played by Chris Cooper), working out of the Florida Everglades. The giddily reflexive film focuses less on the poacher than on the book’s adapter struggling to write a screenplay about adapter Charlie Kaufman (played by Nicolas Cage) struggling to write an adaptation. In real life, the flesh-and-blood screenwriter Charles Kaufman did indeed have a contract to adapt the Orlean book, but he developed a severe case of writer’s block, broken only when he conceived the idea of thematizing the screenwriting struggle itself. Thus Adaptation is simultaneously an adaptation and an original screenplay, one which turns a non-fiction book into a fictional adventure.

Rather like a Catskill writers’ colony, Adaptation is crowded with writers working on their writing: (1) Susan Orlean (Meryl Streep) as she writes The Orchid Thief; (2) Charles Kaufman writing the adaptation of The Orchid Thief; (3) Charles’s twin brother Donald (also played by Nicolas Cage) writing formulaic, commercial scripts; and (4) Charles Darwin, shown in the process of writing The Origin of Species. Even the auto-didact poacher La Roche dabbles at writing. Still another writer in the film – script guru Robert McKee (played by Brian Cox), the real-life author of Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting – lectures large audiences about screenwriting and adaptation. More important, the film foregrounds the process of writing. We see Susan Orlean at her computer, surrounded by the various sources—encyclopedias, botanical books, histories—that feed into her own text. And we see Charles Kaufman, trying to adapt her book, panicked and sweating before the blank computer screen. Film, we are reminded, is a form of writing that borrows from other forms of writing.
Robert Stein

The Theory and Practice of Adaptation

Introduction

Although the source book of Adaptation is a work of non-fiction, the discussion in the film proceeds as if that source were in fact a work of fiction. Charles Kaufman’s adaptation is, in fact, a work of fiction. Charles Kaufman aims at fidelity: “I want to be true to the New Yorker piece.” But he has to translate fact into fiction, find new forms and equivalencies. Thus a person who is not even a character in the source book – Charlie Kaufman – becomes the main character of the film. The portrayal of Charlie’s work suggests that adaptation consists of the reading of a book – we see him reading the Oreene text – and the writing of a scenario of a film. The two

twin brothers, furthermore, spend much of their time arguing about screenwriting and adaptation; Charlie defends the sensitive, Sundance-style Hollywood values of the independent art film, while Donald defends cliché Hollywood blockbuster entertainment.

In fact, Donald speaks in the kind of formulaic type – “It’s Psycho meets The Silence of the Lambs” – mocked in Robert Altman’s reflective The Player (1992). Charlie begins by stating all the clichés he detests and plans to avoid – plot-driven narrative, character

epiphanies, happy endings – precisely the clichés that his alter-ego brother defends with

naive enthusiasm.

While Charlie is a hyperborean, insecure, masturbatory, Dostoevskyan Underground Man, Donald is a breezily confident womanizer. Together the twins manifest the split personality of many screenwriters, torn between the art film and the blockbuster, between complexity and facile appeal. All the various writers and their theories about writing are webbed together in a complex Pirandellian maze of doubles. Charlie wonders if he should play himself in the film, and worries that the producers will choose Depardieu, with “that awful accent.” He contemplates writing an alternative film about orchids, sans romance, violence, and car chases, but the joke of the film is that his script ends up providing all of them in good measure, following the script guru’s advice to “wash them in the end.”

Indeed, it is revealing to "test" the film against McKee’s stated principles in Story, a book that argues virtually all of the positions that I dispute in this chapter. For the neo-Aristotelian McKee, stories should be about realities, not about the mysteries of writing, yet the mysteries of writing are precisely the focus of Adaptation. For McKee, a mature artist “never calls attention to himself,” yet in Adaptation a whole gallery of artists call attention to themselves. For McKee, films are not good at depicting inner life, yet Adaptation does reveal Charlie Kaufman’s inner life: indeed, it begins with Charlie’s voice-over narratives superimposed on a dark screen. For McKee, Aristotle provides the standards: strong, noble characters, causeffect logic, catharsis. Adaptation, in contrast, features weak, masturbatory characters, a digressive, non-linear plot, absurd improbabilities, and a tongue-in-cheek hint at catharsis. Such is the film’s reflexivity that the character Charles Kaufman quotes McKee’s line “God help you if you use voice-over” – but does it, paradoxically, in voice-over.

Adaptation leaves us, then, with a Florida swamp-like prelude of suggestive metaphors for the adaptational process: novel and adaptation as twins like Don and Charlie, or adaptations as parasites, as hybrids, or adaptations as evidencing split personality, or as demonstrating the interdependence of species or genres. Most significantly, the film brings out the Darwinian overtones of the word “adaptation” itself, evoking adaptation as a

means of evolution and survival. Ironically, the adapter in the film himself – nervous, sexually inept, paralyzed by insecurity – has trouble “adapting” to everyday life. Hardly among the “fittest,” he looks as if he might not even survive, much less evolve.

Significantly, the digital montage sequence that traces the birth of the planet and the origin of the species, culminating in Charlie Kaufman’s birth, is set in “Hollywood, California,” just as part of the narrator story is set in “Hollywood, Florida.” And what could be more Darwinian than the dog-eat-dog ethos of Hollywood? The block-

buster aesthetic, in this sense, forms the end-point of the commercial “survival of the fittest.”

Yet if mutation is the means by which the evolutionary process advances, then we can also see filmic adaptations as “mutations” that help their source novel “survive.” Do not adaptations “adapt to” changing environments and changing tastes, as well as to a new medium, with its distinct industrial demands, commercial pressures, censorship taboos, and aesthetic norms? And are adaptations not a hybrid form like the orchid, the meeting place of different “species”? For La Roche, creating a hybrid is like playing at being God Almighty. But La Roche also invokes the metaphor of the parasite, a trope typically deployed against adaptations, seen as parasitical on their source texts and on the A-list prestige of literature. La Roche speaks of giant flower parasites that devour and kill their host tree, much as critics speak of adaptations which overwhelm and vampirize their sources, “sucking the life” out of their “hosts.” Even the metaphor of murder is invoked. “We have to kill him,” the Susan Oreene character says of her adapter, “before he murders my book.”

The Roots of a Prejudice

The film Adaptation calls up the question of how we speak about the filmic adaptation of novels. The conventional language of adaptation criticism has often been profoundly moralistic, rich in terms that imply that the cinema has somehow done a disservice to literature. Terms like “infidelity,” “betrayal,” “deformation,” “violation,” “bastardization,” “vulgarization,” and “decoration” proliferate in adaptation discourse, each word carrying its specific charge of opprobrium. “Infidelity” carries overtones of Victorian prudishness; “betrayal” evokes ethical perfidy; “bastardization” connotes illegitimacy; “deformation” implies aesthetic disgust and monstrosity; “violation” calls to mind sexual violence; “vulgarization” conjures up class degradation; and “decoration” intimates religious sacrilege and blasphemy.

As Adaptation demonstrates, one might easily imagine any number of positive tropes for adaptation, yet the standard rhetoric has often deployed an elegiac discourse of loss, lamenting what has been “lost” in the transition from novel to film, while ignoring what has been “gained.” In a 1926 diatribe, Virginia Woolf, for example, excoriated the adaptations that reduced a novel’s complexly nuanced idea of “love” to “a kiss,”
rendered "death," literal-mindedly, as a "swine." Too often, adaptation discourse subtly reifies the axiomatic superiority of literature to film. Too much of the discourse, I would argue, has focused on the rather subjective question of the quality of adaptations, rather than on the more interesting issues of (1) the theoretical status of adaptation, and (2) the analytical interest of adaptations. My goal here, then, is not to correct erroneous evaluations of specific adaptations, but rather to reconstruct the unstated doxa which subtly constructs the subaltern status of adaptation (and the filmic image) vis-à-vis novels (and the literary word), and then to point to alternative perspectives.

Although the persuasive force of the putative superiority of literature to film can be partially explained by the undeniable fact that many adaptations based on significant novels are mediocre or misguided, it also derives, I would argue, from deeply rooted and often unconscious assumptions about the relations between the two arts. The intuitive sense of adaptation's inferiority derives, I would speculate, from a constellation of substratal prejudices. First, it arises from the a priori valorization of historical anteriority and singularity: the assumption, that is, that older arts are necessarily better arts. Through what Marshall McLuhan calls "rear view mirror" logic, the arts accrue prestige over time. The venerable art of literature, within this logic, is seen as inherently superior to the younger art of cinema, which is itself superior to the even younger art of television, and so forth ad infinitum. Here literature profits from a double "priority": (a) the general historical priority of literature to cinema, and (b) the specific priority of novels to their adaptations. The procedural curiosity of the seniority bias is the deployment of rigged criteria when evaluating the status of adaptation literature at its best is compared to the cinema at its worst. Critics lambast films: "betrayals" of modernist novels, for example, while forgetting the filmic "translation" of many non-modernist novels. They denounce the Joseph Strick version of Joyce's Ulysses, but forget to laud Hitchcock's innovative transposition of d'Amour's story "The Birds," or Kubrick's unforgettable satirical reconversion of Peter George's Red Alert.

A second source of hostility to adaptation derives from the dichotomous thinking that presumes a bitter rivalry between film and literature. The writer and the filmmaker, according to an old anecdote, are travelling in the same boat but they both harbor a secret desire to throw the other overboard. The inter-art relation is seen as a Darwinian struggle to the death rather than a dialogue offering mutual benefit and cross-fertilization. Adaptation becomes a zero-sum game where film is perceived as the upbeat enemy storming the ramparts of literature. This is not to suggest that there was no institutional rivalry between the two media. Leo Tulskoy saw film as "a direct attack on the old methods of literary art," which obliged writers, in a symptomatic choice of words, to "adapt" to the new medium. Even today, sophisticated proponents of "visual culture," such as W. J. T. Mitchell, speak of the "protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs." Filmic embodiment is seen as making literature obsolete, retroactively revealing mere words as somehow weak and spectral and insubstantial. In Freudian terms, film is seen in terms of Bloom's "anxiety of influence," whereby the adaptation as Oedipal son symbolically slays the source-text as "father."

A third source of hostility to adaptation is Iconophobia. This deeply rooted cultural prejudice against the visual arts is traceable not only to the Jewish-Muslin-Protestant prohibitions of "graven images," but also to the Platonic and Neoplatonic depreciation of the world of phenomenal appearance. The locus classicus of this attitude is in the Second Commandment forbidding the making of idols in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters below. Within the Platonist view, meanwhile, the irresistible allure of the spectacle overwhelms reason. Plato's polemic against poetry thus gets subliminally enshrined in an attack on contemporary visual arts and the mass media, seen as corrupting the audience through dangerously delusional fictions. Chronically, for Plato's mentor Socrates it was writing that corrupted the mind by substituting fixed and visible letters for the subtle movements of the mind. Contemporary theorists hostile to the cinema often replay, whether consciously or not, Plato's rejection of the fictive arts as nurturing illusion and fomenting the lower passions. In the nineteenth century, Baudelaire worried about photography's corrupting influence on the arts, and even today a sophisticated and film-iterate theorist like Fredric Jameson, perhaps picking up on the stigmatization of the visual in 1970s' apparatus theory, sees the filmic image as "essentially pornographic," since it demands that we "stand at the world as though it were a naked body." In Lacanian terms, film's iconic "imaginary signifier" (Metz) is seen as triumphing over the logos of the symbolic written word, of which literature remains the most prestigious form. Film and other visual media seem to threaten the collapse of the symbolic order, the erosion of the powers of the literary fathers, patriarchal narrators, and consecrated arts.

Images and the debates about images, then, trigger indiscriminate passions. Adaptations, for example in the case of the Brazilian film City of God (2002), at times provoke an outrage not provoked by the source book. Images provoke passion to the point, as Bruno Latour writes, "that destroying them, erasing them, defacing them, has been taken as the ultimate touchstone to prove the validity of one's faith, of one's science, of one's critical acumen, of one's artistic creativity." Is it possible, then, that iconoclastic assaults on the "imagining" of literary texts derives, at some deep cultural level, from a desire to affirm one's faith, in literature for example? Thus the image takes on the qualities of the scapegoat, hated for its presumed vicious qualities but loved for its unifying function. Yet the same images that are hated always return, partially because they are already there as a dimension of the verbal text. The features of a biblical spectacular film - miracles, plagues, parted seas, burning bush - are already there in the Jewish Bible. The Icons are never definitively broken. In words that resonate with some of the recent passions provoked by Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ (2004), which is, after all, an adaptation, Latour speaks of iconoclastic Protestants who broke the limbs of the dead Christ in a Pietà: "What is a dead Christ if not another broken icon, the perfect image of God, desecrated, crucified, pierced and ready to be emblazoned ... what does it mean to crucify a crucified icon?"

Indeed, The Passion of the Christ brings up many of the key issues concerning fidelity in adaptation. As an adaptation of the ultimate Ur-text, the sacred word of Holy
Scriptures, not only did Mel Gibson proclaim his goal to be complete fidelity, he also claimed to have attained it. Backed up by a later withdrawn papal blurb, Gibson claimed that "it is as it was." Gibson raised the stakes of his adaptation, first, by assuming, in a rather absolutist manner, that the source text was infallible (despite the contradictions between the various accounts) and, second, by claiming full, literal fidelity to the text.

A fourth, related source of hostility to film and adaptation is the opposite form of iconophobia, to wit bopophilia, or the valorization of the verbal, typical of cultures rooted in the sacred word of the "religions of the book." It is symptomatic, in this sense, that many literate and reducto literate based on literature, that most historians reject films based on history, and that some anthropologists reject films based on anthropology. The connection, coming from such different disciplinary angles, is the nostalgic evocation of the written word as the privileged medium of communication.

A fifth source of hostility to film and adaptation — and here we move in more speculative directions — is anti-corporeality, a distaste for the unseemly "embodiment" of the film text; the "seen," to recycle a venerable pun, is regarded as obscene. Film offends through its insusceptible materiality, its incarnated, fleshly, enacted characters, its real locales and palpable props, its carnality and visceral shocks to the nervous system. In an essay on the cinema, Virginia Woolf describes film spectators, in terms that borrow from racist discourse, as twentieth-century "sauces," whose eyes mindlessly "lick up" the screen.13 Unlike film, literature is seen as channeled or a higher, more cerebral, trans-sensual and out-of-body plane. While novels are absorbed through the mind's eye during reading, films directly engage the various senses. As the cognitive theorists point out, films have impact on our stomach, heart, and skin, working through "mental structures" and "visuo-motor schemata." Vivian Sobchack, following on Merleau-Ponty, calls film the "expression of experience by experience," which deploys kinetic, haptic, and sensuous modes of embodied existence.14 Although novel reading as well as film spectatorship constitutes a purely mental event, novels are not literally seen through lenses, projected on wide screens, or heard in sounds measurable in decibels, sounds which can break glass or damage eardrums.

Films, then, are more directly implicated in bodily response than novels. They are felt upon the pulse, whether through the in-your-face gibbon of close-ups (which shocked Griffith's contemporaries), the visual impact of "flcker effects," or the vertiginous effect of Cinemacamera-style roller-coaster sequences, or the bodily register of jiggly, hand-held camera movements or "thrill cam" glimpses. (The thumping, whooshing sound tracks and adrenaline-fueled editing of action blockbusters clearly exploit this corporeal side of cinema.) Kinetic and kinesthetic, films can provoke physical nausea or mental dis-orientation. Montage specialist Slavko Vorkapich spoke of movie impetus "passed through joints, muscles, and tendons so that at the end we duplicate internally whatever is it we are watching."15 Filmic mimics generates a contagious energy; reading a book about the dancing of Gene Kelly does not necessarily make us want to dance, but actually seeing him perform means we feel like we "gotta dance." In film, to kidnap Gloucester's words in King Lear, we "see it feelingly." The important point is that for some literary minds the cinema's engagement with bodies — the body of the performer, the body of the spectator, and even the "skin" and the "haptic visibility" of the "body" of the film itself16 — discredits it as a serious, transcendent, art form. The body-mind hierarchy which informs the image-word prejudice then gets mapped onto other binaristic hierarchies such as surface-depth, so that films are dismissed as dealing in surfaces, literally "superficial."17

A sixth source of hostility to adaptation is what I would call the myth of facility, the completely uninformed and somewhat parochial notion that films are simply easy to make and supposedly pleasurable to watch. This myth relays, first of all, a cliché about production: "a director merely films what's there." This idea is subliminally linked to what might be called "apparatusism," the by-now-discredited and technologically deterministic assumption that the cinema, as a mechanical means of reproduction, merely registers external appearances, and therefore cannot be art. At the same time, "facility" relays a cliché about reception: the idea, as one of my literature professors once put it, that "it takes no brains to sit down and watch a film." This is rather like saying that it takes no brains to sit down and turn the pages of a novel; what matters, in both cases, is understanding what one sees or reads. On the production side, the facility myth ignores the diversified talents and Herculean efforts required actually to make films. On the reception side, it ignores the intense perceptual and conceptual labor — the work of iconic designation, visual deciphering, narrative inference, and construction — inherent in film. Like novels of any complexity, films too bear "rereading," precisely because so much can be missed in a single viewing. That is also why we can see a film like Hitchcock's Rear Window (1954), also an adaptation, over and over, long after the "suspense" has faded, for the music-like beauty of its forms.

A seventh source of the hostility to the cinema and adaptation is a subliminal form of class prejudice, a socialized form of guilt by association. The cinema, perhaps unconsciously, is seen as degraded by the company it keeps — the great unwashed popular mass audience, with its lower-class origins in "vulgar" spectacles like sideshows and carnivals. Through a class-based dichotomy, literature pays indirect, and begrudging, homage to film's popularity, while film pays homage to literature's prestige. Adaptations, in this view, are the inevitably "dumbed down" versions of their source novels, designed to gratify an audience lacking in what Bourdieu calls "cultural capital," an audience which prefers the cotton candy of entertainment to the gourmet delights of literature. The frequent charge against adaptations that they have "vulgarized" — from the Latin "vulgo" or "people" — bears the etymological traces of this prejudice, which is also stereotypically split along gender lines, projecting, on the one hand, a crude, boisterous, male, working-class spectator, and, on the other, a passive, distracted, dreamy, female spectator.

A final source of hostility to adaptation is the charge of parasitism. Adaptations are seen as parasitical on literature; they borrow into the body of the source text and steal its vitality. How often have journalistic reviews claimed that an adaptation has "drained the life out of the original?" Yet adaptations are seen as mere illustrations of the novel,
The Impact of the Posts

Structuralist and poststructuralist theoretical developments, meanwhile, subvert many of these prejudices and hierarchies, and thus indirectly have an impact on our conversation about adaptation. The structuralist semiotics of the 1940s and 1970s treated all signifying practices as shared sign systems productive of "texts" worthy of the same careful scrutiny as literary texts, thus abolishing the hierarchy between novel and film. The intertextuality theory of Kristeva (rooted in and literally translating Bakhtin's "dialogism") and the "transintextuality" theory of Genette, similarly, stressed the endless permutation of textualities rather than the "fidelity" of a later text to an earlier model, and thus also impact on our thinking about adaptation. Roland Barthes's provocative leveling of the hierarchy between literary criticism and literature, by the same token, worked by analogy to rescue the film adaptation as a form of criticism or "reading" of the novel, one not necessarily subordinate to or parasitic on its source.

Although intertextuality theory certainly reshaped adaptation studies, other aspects of poststructuralism have not yet been marshaled in the rethinking of the status and practice of adaptation. Derridean deconstruction, for example, undid overly rigid binarisms in favor of notions of "mutual invagination." Deconstruction also dismantled the hierarchy of "original" and "copy." In a Derridean perspective, the a priori prestige of the original does not run counter to the copy; rather, the prestige of the original is created by the copies, without which the very idea of originality has no meaning. The film as "copy," furthermore, can be the "original" for subsequent "copies." A film adaptation as "copy," by analogy, is not necessarily inferior to the novel as "original." The Derridean critique of origins is literally true in relation to adaptation. The "original" always turns out to be partially "copied" from something earlier: The Odyssey goes back to anonymous oral formulaic stories, Don Quixote goes back to chivalric romances, Robinson Crusoe goes back to travel journalism, and so on ad infinitum.

The poststructuralist interrogation of the unified subject, meanwhile, fissured the author as point of origin of art. In the Lacanian view, the self is an "ego-artifact," a discursive fiction based on a bricolage of identificatory imputations, always on the verge of dissolution. The psyche only seems to be unified, consistent, and centered. Bakhtin's notion of author and character as multi-discursive and resistant to unification, similarly, problematized both author and character as stable and unitary entities. Unlike new criticism's notions of organic unity, poststructuralist criticism emphasized the fissures, aporias, and excesses of the text. And if authors are fissured, fragmented, multi-discursive, hardly "present" even to themselves, the analyst may inquire, how can an adaptation communicate the "sight" or "self-presence" of authorial intention?

The Bakhtinian "proto-poststructuralist" conception of the author as the orchestrator of pre-existing discourses, along with Foucault's downgrading of the author in favor of a "pervasive anonymity of discourse," opened the way to a non-originary approach to all arts. Bakhtin's attitude toward the literary author as inhabiting "inter-individual territory" suggested a devalorization of artistic "originality." Despite the perennial comparisons of the artist to a god, demiurge, creator, or progenitor, the artist's actual role, for Bakhtin, is caught up in more modest, more typically human interactions. As what Bakhtin calls a "hybrid construction," the artistic utterance always mingles one's own word with the other's word. Adaptation too, in this view, can be seen as an orchestration of discourses, talents, and tracks, a "hybrid" construction mingling different media and discourses and collaborations. Complete originality is neither possible nor even desirable. And if "originality" in literature is downplayed, the "offense" in "betraying" that originality, for example through an "unfaithful" adaptation, is that much the less grave.

Speaking more generally, the move away from the "work" to more diffuse notions like "textuality," "scripture," and "the literary" facilitates a retracting of boundaries which allows for more inclusive categories, within which adaptation becomes simply another "zone" on a larger and more variegated map. As theory discovers the "literariness" of non-literary phenomena, qualities thought to be literary turn out to be crucial to non-literary discourses and practices. The inclusion of the subliterary into the literary, the rethinking of the very category of the literary as an unstable, open-ended configuration, in this sense, makes for a more tolerant view of what has often been seen as a "sub-literary" and "parasitic" genre — the adaptation.

Cultural Studies and Narratology

Other theoretical movements and trends also indirectly demote the literary text from its position of overarching authority and thus point to a possible reconceptualization of adaptation. The interdisciplinary field of "cultural studies," for example, has been less interested in establishing vertical hierarchies of value than in exploring "horizontal" relations between neighboring media. From a cultural studies perspective, adaptation forms
part of a flattened out and newly egalitarian spectrum of cultural productions. Within a comprehensively textualized world of images and simulations, adaptation becomes just another text, forming part of a broad discursive continuum.

Narratology, meanwhile, grants cultural centrality to narrative in general as opposed to literary narrative alone. For narratology, human beings use stories as their principal means of making sense of things, not only in written fictions but all the time, and all the way down. Narratologists see story as kind of genetic material or DNA to be manifested in the body of specific texts; they speak of narrative kernels existing "below" specific media. Narrative is prototopy, taking various forms, from personal narratives of everyday life to the myriad public forms of narrative—cartoons, stories, TV commercials, the evening news and, of course, film. Literature, and the novel, no longer occupy a privileged position; adaptation, by implication, takes up a legitimate place alongside the novel, as just one more narratological medium. (We will return to the narratology of adaptation below.)

Reception theory, too, indirectly authorizes more respect for adaptation as a form. For reception theory, a text is an event, whose indeterminacies are completed and actualized in the reading (or spectating). Rather than being merely portraits of a pre-existing reality, both novel and film are communicative utterances, socially situated and historically shaped. Like poststructuralist theory, reception theory, too, undermines the notion of a semantic core, a nucleus of meaning, ascribable to novels, which adaptations are presumed to "capture" or "betray," and thus clears space for the idea of adaptation as supplementing the gaps of the literary text. Furthermore, contemporary theory assumes that texts do not know themselves, and therefore seek out the unaided (the non-D) of texts. Adaptations, in this sense, might be seen as filling in the lacunae of the source novels, calling attention to their structuring absences. This "filling in" is especially common in adaptations of long-consecrated texts, such as Robinson Crusoe, where the passage of time has made readers/adaptors skeptical about the novels' basic premises and assumptions.

Thinkers from other fields, such as philosophy, have also questioned the hierarchy that places literature and philosophy "above" cinema. For Gilles Deleuze, cinema is itself a philosophical instrument, a generator of concepts which renders thought in audiovisual terms, not in language but in blocks of movement and duration. The Deleuzian view rejects the long-held idea that cinema, unlike literature and philosophy, is "incapable of thought." Deleuze does not "apply" philosophical concepts to the cinema; rather, he works with the concepts that cinema itself gives rise to. In the cinema, thought-in-motion meets the image-in-movement. Indeed, Deleuze is interested in the semiotics of intercuts between the history of philosophy and the history of cinema, the conceptual moves that link Eisenstein to Heidegger, for example, or modern cinema to Nietzsche or Bergson. At the same time, Deleuze points to a new possible language for speaking of adaptations in terms not of copy but of transformational energies and movements and intensities. Performance theory, for its part, offers an alternative language for addressing adaptation, by which both novel and adaptation become performances, one verbal and the other visual, verbal, and acoustic. The concept of the performative utterance, developed in the 1950s by British philosopher J. L. Austin, and subsequently reworked by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, is rooted in Austin's distinction between constitutive utterances, which make a statement, describe a state of affairs, and are true or false, and performative utterances, which are not true or false but actually perform the action to which they refer. Just as the literary utterance creates the state of affairs to which it refers—rather than merely imitating some pre-existing state of affairs—so the filmic adaptation might be said to create a new audiovisual-verbal state of affairs, rather than merely imitating the old state of affairs as represented by the source novel.

Finally, the whole constellation of currents—multiculturalism, postcoloniality, normative race, queer theory, feminist standpoint theory—revolving around issues of identity and opposition, also have an impact on the theory of adaptation. What these currents have in common is their egalitarian thrust, their critique of quietly assumed, unmarked normativities which place whiteness, Europeanness, maleness, and heterosexuality at the center, while marginalizing all that is not normative. The implications for adaptation studies are multifold: (1) a revisionist view of the literary canon and the inclusion of minority, postcolonial, and queer writers; (2) a revisionist view of literary history which tends to have a Euro-diffusionist view of the evolution of the novel, whereby the novel begins in Europe (Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe) and then "spreads" around the world, when in fact the novel as "prose fiction of a certain length" can be traced back to Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and so forth; (3) a changed view of oral literature as a legitimate form of literature (see Mythe Cham in Chapter 14 of this volume); (4) a change in the protocols of reading both novels and films, in ways that are sensitive to the multicultural and racial dimensions of all texts; and (5) the possibility of revisionist adaptations, such as Man Friday, which take multicultural currents into account.

**Adaptation in a Post-celulloid World**

The sequence of innovations in film technology—sound, color, 3D, digital editing—have also clearly had an impact on the production and reception of cinema, and this too has implications for adaptation. In the contemporary period, VCRs and widely available "portable" video have "domesticated" the conditions of film viewing, bringing them closer to the conditions of novel reading. Packaged videos even physically resemble books in size and format; the videocassette resembles the biblioteca. Adaptation must therefore also be considered in the light of this final "post," to wit the post-celulloid world of the new media: the Internet, electronic games, CD Roms, DVDs, virtual environments and interactive installations. Just as Umberto Eco predicted that literature would be changed by the existence of word processors, so film production and consumption—and adaptation theory—will be irrevocably changed by the digital revolution.

One linguistic byproduct of the new media is the generation of new metaphors for speaking about adaptation. In new media ling, "transcoding," for example, designates
the translation of one "text" into a new format, an apt image for adaptation itself as a "reformatting" or "transcoding" of the novel. More importantly, the cinema in its long-heralded specificity now seems to be dissolving into the larger bloodstream of the audiovisual media, whether photographic, electronic, or cybernetic. Since digital media potentially incorporate all previous media into a vast cyber archive, it makes less sense to think in media-specific terms. Novels, films, and adaptations take their place alongside one another as relative co-equal neighbors or collaborators rather than as father and son or master and slave.

The new technologies, and the theories associated with them, also undermine, in their way, ideas of purity and essence. Many analysts, such as Landow and Moulthrop, have noted a kind of convergence between poststructuralist theory and the new media. Is it an accident that the term "hypertext" first emerged from literary theory? But, in broader terms, digital imaging "de-ontologizes" the inc uncial, diachronic image. Images themselves are no longer "faithful" to any pro-filmic model. Within a regime of freeplay downloading and infinite reproductibility, there is no loss of quality since the images are stored as pixels, with no "original." Indeed, filmmakers no longer need a pro-filmic model in the world; like novelists, they can give artistic form to abstract dreams. No longer a copy, the image acquires its own dynamism within an interactive circuit, freed of the contingencies of location shooting, inclement weather, and so forth.

The new technologies have already impacted upon adaptation and will do so even more in the future. Rasul Rula's hypertext project, conducted while the director was teaching at Duke University, as Marlo Kinderr points out, led into Ruiz's adaptation of Brontë in Times Magazine (2008). Digital media make spectacular effects inexpensive and thus "available" even to relatively low-budget films. Thus Atom Egoyan in his adaptation of Russell Banks's The Sweet Hereafter can send a virtual school bus skidding over a cliff onto a frozen lake, for a bare fraction of what it would have cost to film the same scene with an actual bus. The digital media have further undermined the notion of original and copy by making virtually everything "copyable," so that the language of "originality" gives way to a language of cut-and-mix and sampling. At the same time, Siva Vaidyanathan points to counter-currents, as theory and practice part ways when "intellectual property" laws reassert the rights either of authors or of the corporate owners of art. Copyright law is more and more about the rights of publishers and corporations, with both author and public in a subordinate position. "We can deconstruct the author for six more decades," Vaidyanathan points out, "and still fail to prevent the impending concentration of the content, ownership, control, and delivery of literature, music, and data.""40

In another sense, the digital media have produced a kind of mutation in the very notion of filmic "writing." While the New Wave directors saw the shooting of the film as a form of improvisational écriture, with the camera as "eye," filmic writing in the digital age is more linked to hypertextual collaging and digital re-editing in the post-production phase. But, beyond that, the new media—for example, web-based hypertext fiction—will probably provoke a major mutation in writing generally. A hypertext like Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl (1993), as Tom LeClair points out, refuges both L. Frank Baum's Patchwork Girl of Oz and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Such a hypertext already shares some features with film adaptations, since it is partially visual, combining pictures and words. The first image to come up on screen is that of a woman pieced together and created by a dotted line. The next link is a title page with collaborative authors: Mary Shelley and Shelley Jackson. This matrix then leads to various sequences of narrative and metafictional texts which counterpoint two stories, one about the female-companion monster created by Frankenstein but denied life at the last minute, the other the reflexive "story" of the composition of Patchwork Girl's body and personality and of the "patchwork" hypertext itself.41

How, then, might the new technologies facilitate new approaches to adaptation and to adaptation studies? While this is not the place for a thoroughgoing discussion, we can permit ourselves a few brief speculations. Laser disks and DVDs which include sequences cut from released versions of films implicitly cast doubt on the idea of the "original" or definitive text, revealing its status as the arbitrary result of constantly changing decisions about inclusion and exclusion. But apart from that, a CD-ROM, for example, might easily juxtapose all the filmic adaptations of a given passage from Great Expectations. Or a morphing technique could have all the actresses who have played Emma Bovary blend into one another, or help us imagine an actress of a different ethnicity. Digital environments might allow us to interact with revised versions of fictional characters through digitally created "synthesizers" or "vectors" (i.e., virtual actors), "avatars" and "cyber-stars." A literary character like Don Quixote could be inserted into cyber-space in the form of an intelligent agent programmed with a repertoire of behavioral traits (Quixote's chivalry, a penchant for attributing magical or demonic powers to inanimate objects) and then placed into new environments. A three-dimensional simulation might convey the atmosphere of a Victorian novel, or make us feel in our guts the symbiotic relationship between decor and character in Balthaz's Père Goriot, or between mine and miner in Zola's Germinal. A cyber-maze version of L'Année dernière à Marignan could add still another labyrinthine dimension to that already maze-like text. Disconnected lexias could render Joyceian "streams of consciousness." Virtual reality and mobile spectatoriality could amplify the kinesthetic dynamism of Proust's depiction of the steeps of Combray. Virtual real- ity could make it possible for spectators to "plug into" the experience of Emma Bovary's suicide, much as the spectator-characters in the film Strange Days (1995) inserted themselves into the personal traumas of strangers. A holodeck version of In Remembrance of Things Past could induce delusional sensations as a way of rendering obsessive jealousy. Multitrack sound could render the heteroglossia of voices and accents in Joyce's Ulysses. The magical duplication of crowds, the possibility of digitally "resurrecting" deceased actors, also bring new possibilities for the adaptation of, say, "magical realist" novels. The new media could also generate new forms of fiction, which would then through a feedback loop be susceptible themselves to innovative forms of adaptation. Given that filmmaking, as Jean-Pierre Jeunet points out, is now losing its "aura" of difficulty, one wonders if digital media will make old-style celluloid filmmaking so obsolete that all the existing film adaptations of novels will have to be redundant in digital formats?42 Could
old-style film adaptations become, as it were, a new form of "novel" vis-à-vis digital "adaptations?"

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The Aporias of "Fidelity"

In the light of all these "posts," it is important to move beyond the monistic and judgmental ideal of "fidelity." At the same time, we have to acknowledge at the outset that "fidelity," however discredited theoretically, does retain a grain of existential truth. Fidelity discourse asks important questions about the mimetic recreation of the setting, plot, characters, themes, and the style of the novel. When we say an adaptation has been "unfaithful" to the original, the very violence of the term gives expression to the intense sense of betrayal we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, or aesthetic features of its literary source. The notion of fidelity gains its persuasive power from our sense that (a) some adaptations are indeed better than others, and (b) some adaptations fail to "realize" or substantiate what we most appreciated in the source novels. Words like "infidelity" and "betrayal" in this sense translate our feeling, when we have loved a book, that an adaptation has not been worthy of that love.

Russell Banks describes novelistic writing/reading as an intimate exchange between strangers, a secret sharing.25 We read a novel "through" our introjected desires, hopes, and utopias, fashioning as we read our own imaginary mise-en-scène of the novel on the private sound stage of our mind. Interestingly, little has been written about the reverse sequence, when the spectator sees the adaptation before reading the novel. Does the reader then retrospectively project the actor's face (say Jeremy Irons's face in Un amour de Swann) onto the novel's character, in a kind of mental superimposition? Do readers who have seen the film Jules and Jim (1962) mentally "hear" the music track as they read the novel? Are the readers who encounter the adaptation first similarly disappointed that the source novel has not managed to capture the specific pleasures of the film version? Are they annoyed or agreeably surprised that the novel has "added" the unnecessary descriptions "edited out" of the film version? Does the film then become the experiential "original" betrayed by the actual original? Or is the reader, whose appetite has merely been whetted by the film, exhilarated to discover the incomparable riches of the verbal text?

The words of a novel have a virtual, symbolic meaning; we, as readers, fill in their paradigmatic indeterminacies. A novelist's portrayal of a character induces us to imagine the person's features in our own imagination. While the reader moves from the printed word to visualizing the objects portrayed, the spectator moves in the opposite direction, from the flux of images to naming the objects portrayed and identifying the events recounted. A film actualizes the virtual through specific choices. Instead of a virtual, verbally constructed Madame Bovary open to our imaginative reconstruction, we are faced with an embodied performer, encumbered with nationality and accent, a Carol Lynley or a Dominique Swain. When we are confronted with someone else's fantasy of a novel, as Mets pointed out in the 1970s, we feel the loss of our own phantasmatic relation to the source text, with the result that the adaptation itself becomes a kind of "bad object." The clichéd response that "I thought the book was better" in this sense really means that our experience, our phantasm of the book was better than the director's.26 Kubrick's Lolita, or Adrian Lyne's, was not the woman we had fantasized. To paraphrase the Georges Perec lines about films borrowed by Godard in Masculin féminal (1966): "We left the theatre sad. It was not the (adaptation) of which we had dreamed . . . It wasn't the (adaptation) we would have liked to make. Or, more secretly, that we would have liked to live."27

"Fidelity discourse" relies on essentialist arguments in relation to both media. First, it assumes that a novel contains an extractable "essence," a kind of "heart of the artifact" hidden "underneath" the surface details of style. Hidden within War and Peace, there is an originary core, a kernel of meaning and events which can be "delivered" by an adaptation. But, in fact, there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can trigger a plethora of possible readings. An open structure, constantly reworked and reinterpreted by a boundless context, the text feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permeating intertext, seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation. In fact, when critics refer to the "spirit" or "essence" of a literary text what they usually mean is the critical consensus within an "interpretative community" (Starkey Fish) about the meaning of the work.

The question of fidelity also opens the wider question of fidelity to what? Is the filmmaker to be faithful to the plot in its every detail? That might mean a thirty-hour version of War and Peace. Should one be faithful to the physical descriptions of characters? Perhaps so, but what if the performer who happens to fit the physical description of a character also happens to be a mediocre actor? Or is one to be faithful to the author's intentions? But what might they be, and how are they to be determined? In cases where an author, for example Nabokov, writes a screenplay for his own novel, should the filmmaker be faithful to the novel or the screenplay? What about cases where a novelist/filmmaker, for example the Senegalese novelist/filmmaker Sembène in Xala, is "unfaithful" to his own novel? And what about cases, such as the French cine-roman, where it is no longer an issue of adapting a prior text but rather one of reworking parallel, simultaneous, autonomous creations, one literary and the other filmic?

A fundamental unfairness plagues "fidelity" discourse, reflected in a differential and even prejudiced application of the very concept, depending on which art is being considered. It is adaptation in the cinema, particularly of novels, that has been especially castigated and held to an absurdly rigorous standard of "fidelity." The ideal of a single, definitive, faithful adaptation does not hold sway in other media. In the theater, conceptual reinterpretation and performative innovation — for example, in Orson Welles's modern-dress Julius Caesar or his Haitian-set "Voodoo" Macbeth — are seen as normal, even prized. Popular music, similarly, is endlessly sampled and "versioned." While filmic rewritings of novels are judged in terms of fidelity, literary rewritings of classical texts,
such as Coetzee's rewriting of Robinson Crusoe are not so judged—change is presumed to be the point! Why should we assume that one director, for example John Huston, has said everything that needs to be said about Moby Dick? If one has nothing new to say about a novel, Orson Welles once suggested, why adapt it at all? Simply adapting a novel without changing it, suggested Alain Resnais, is like reheating a meal.

The Automatic Difference,

Crucial to any discussion of adaptation is the question of media specificity. What can films do that novels cannot? Are some stories "naturally" better suited to some media rather than others? Are magical stories best rendered as animated cartoons? Can stories "migrate" from a less appropriate to a more appropriate medium? Do stories exist prior to their mediation? Is there a digital narrative code, based on binary bits, to be found in some ideal Platonic cybernetic realm, which arches, as it were, the diachronic differences that constitute Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood prior to their being programmed within an actual medium?

The demand for fidelity ignores the actual processes of making films, the important differences in modes of production. While a novelist's choices are relatively unconstrained by considerations of budget—all the writer needs is time, talent, paper, and pen—films are from the outset immersed in technology and commerce. While novels are relatively unaffected by questions of budget, films are deeply immersed in material and financial contingencies. Thus grand panoramic novels like War and Peace are difficult to film on a low budget, while interiorized novels like Notes from Underground seem more manageable. With the novel, questions of material infrastructure enter only at the point of distribution, while in the cinema they enter at the very start of the production of the film itself. While a novel can be written on napkins in prison, a film assumes a complex material infrastructure (camera, film stock, laboratories) simply in order to exist. While it costs almost nothing for a novelist to write "The Marquis left Versailles Palace at 5pm on a cold and wintry day in January 1763," the filmmaker requires substantial sums in order to stage, for example, a sumptuous Paris (or to shoot on location), to dress the actors in period costume, and so forth.

All this inevitably has an impact on what scenes can be filmed. Does one stage, or choose to ignore, the account of the Battle of Waterlo in Steinbeck's The Charterhouse of Parma? At the same time, a larger budget is not always better. Gerardi has argued that big budgets destroy films by pushing them in reactionary, lowest-common-denominator directions, toward Manicheanism and sentimentalism. When the budget exceeds a certain sum, Paul Schrader has said, the director "has to put white hats on the good guys." The low-budget production values of dos Santos's adaptation of Ramírez's novel Vidas secas (Barren Lives), in this sense, work to the film's advantage, softening what Glauber Rocha called an "aesthetics of hunger," a synchronicity between the poverty of the signifier (the lack of sophisticated crane or tracking shots, the contrast between black-and-white cinematography) and the poverty of the signified: the fashioned lives of poor people in the arid northeast of Brazil.

The shift, in adaptation, from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel to a multipTRACK medium like film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken) but also with music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikeliness, and I would suggest even the undesirability, of literal fidelity. Along with the semiotic differences, practical and material contingencies also render fidelity in adaptation virtually impossible. A novel is, usually, produced by a single individual; the film, almost always, is a collaborative project, mobilizing at minimum a crew of four or five people and at maximum a cast and crew and support staff of hundreds. Nabokov once compared this process to a "communal bath where the hairy and the slippery mix in a multiplicity of molestivity."

Apart from budgetary constraints or possibilities, there are issues of available talent, studio or producer pressures, censorship in terms of performers, screenwriters, editors, and so forth. The MGM studio style, in the case of Minnelli's Madame Bovary (1949), brings with it musical production numbers. The improvisational skills of certain actors, such as Peter Sellers and Robin Williams, push adaptations in a performatic direction. Peter Seller's shape-shifting performance as Quilty in Lolita (1962) is arguably the most "Nabokovian" feature of the Kubrick adaptation. For all these reasons, fidelity in adaptation is literally impossible. A filmic adaptation is automatically different and original due to the change of medium. Here we can take as our own Fritz Lang's response (in Contempt, 1963) to the producer Prekloski's accusation of infidelity to the script: "Yes, Jerry, in the script it's written, in a film it's a picture... a motion picture it's called." Even a "faithful" adaptation might take many forms. If one were to take a canonical realist novel such as The Grapes of Wrath and ask five "faithful" and "realist" directors to adapt it, the results would vary widely, for a very simple reason. Filmmaking generally, and adaptation in particular, involves thousands of choices, concerning performers, budget, locale, format, props, and so forth. It is unimaginable, therefore, that the five adaptations, even by directors with similar aesthetic inclinations, would even closely resemble one another: there would be an infinity of subtle differences.

The "automatic difference" between novel and film is evident even in fairly straightforward adaptations of specific novelistic passages by "realist" directors. In the case of The Ford adaptation of The Grapes of Wrath, for example, a putatively realist director adopts a putatively realistic/naturalist novel, just a few months after the novel's publication, in what most would regard as a "faithful" rendition, yet even here the "cinematization" generates an "automatic difference." Take, for example, the passage, from Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath, in which Ma Joad contemplates her memorabilia just before leaving her Oklahoma home for California:
In the film version of this passage, we do indeed see Ma Joad sit down, open the box, and look at letters, clippings, photographs, and so forth. But even here the "cinematization" generates an inevitable supplement. Where Steinbeck writes "photographs," Ford has to choose specific photographs. The mention of "earrings," in the novel, does not dictate Ford's choice of having Ma Joad try them on. The newspaper account of Tom's trial requires the choice of a specific newspaper, specific headlines, illustrations, fonts, none of which is spelled out in the original. But beyond such details of mise-en-scène, the very process of filming — the fact that the shots have to be composed, lit, and edited in a certain way — generates an "automatic difference." The idea that film must always be reductively literal as compared to the novel is undercut by the synergetic interaction between tracks. Thus nothing in the novel prepares us for the idea that Ma Joad will look at the memorabilia by the light of a fire, the reflections of which will flicker over her face. Nothing dictates the point-of-view editing which alternates close shots of Ma Joad's face with what she sees, within a contemplative rhythm of shot/reverse shot. Nor does the Steinbeck version mention music, yet the Ford version features a melancholy accordsion version of the song "Red River Valley." Even if the text had mentioned "Red River Valley" that would still have been quite different from our actual hearing it performed. And even if the passage had mentioned both the music and the firelight, and the light's flickering over Ma Joad's face, that would still not have been anything like our seeing her face and hearing the music at the same time.63

Specificity and the Multiplication of Registers

Fidelity theory does not always name itself as such. It sometimes takes the disguised form of respect for the "spirit" but not the "letter" of the text (a notion that implicitly subscribes Christian notions of "going beyond" to the literalism of the Jewish Bible). Or it can take the form of "equivocality" theory, the idea that the filmmaker finds the "equivalents" in a new medium for the novelist's style or techniques. But, in fact, there can be no real equivalence between source novel and adaptation. While a film can recapitulate the outlines of the basic story — a summary of Great Expectations and of David Lean's adaptation will have much in common — the actual resulting texts in their densely signifying materiality will be in many ways incommensurable. Everything in literature is an act of language; it does recur but it does not literally represent or enact. According to Andre Gardies, we should regard the source novel as a kind of databank, where the data are variously diegetic (places, characters, thematic romance), generic (comedy, science fiction), and formal (point of view, structure, rhythm). The widely varying format of adaptation — "based on the novel by," "inspired by," "free adaptation of" — indirectly acknowledge the impossibility of any real equivalency.7

Another variation on "fidelity" discourse suggests that an adaptation should be faithful not so much to the source text but rather to the essential traits of the medium of expression. This "medium-specificity" approach assumes that every medium is inherently "good at" certain things and "bad at" others.8 If a cinematic essence is posited as favoring certain aesthetic possibilities and foreclosing others, as if specific aesthetic norms were inscribed on the celluloid itself. The essentialist vision of cinema as an exclusively visual medium, for example, leads to neglect of the verbal dimension of film. The cinema, and especially the sound film, is remarkably adept at the mise-en-scène of actual speech situations, at the visual and aural contextualization of speech. It can render those phenomena that lie on the border of the verbal and the non-verbal, the spoken and the non-spoken. Film has special capacities for presenting the extraverbal aspects of discursive exchange. In the sound film, we do not only hear the words, with their accent and intonation, but we also witness the facial and corporeal expression that accompanies the words — the bodily postures of arrogance or resignation, the skeptically raised eyebrows, the look of distrust, the ironic glances — that modify the ostensibly meaningful. While a writer such as Proust can brilliantly evoke salon conversations through sinuous, elegant prose, a filmmaker like Cassavetes or Welles presents them, as it were, "in fact." For Bakhtin, words are saturated with "accecds" and "invocations." Film directing consists in contextualizing the words not only through performance and mise-en-scène, but also through the other tracks (music, noise, written materials). Film is Ideally suited for conveying the social and personal dynamics operating between interlocutors. Perhaps this is what Deleuze meant when he argued that all of the media only the cinema had managed to "grasp conversation for itself." For Delesze, cinema invented "the sound conversation," something which had previously "escaped the theatre and the novel alike."9

In the novel, writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce tried to evoke "inner speech" or "stream of consciousness;" through associative and fragmented forms, omitting verbs, pronouns, connectives, and articles, and leaving sentences uncompleted. A number of filmmakers, interestingly, have shown interest in cinematically rendering inner speech. Bakhtin's contemporary Eisenstein repeatedly expressed a desire to render the stream-of-consciousness monologues of Joyce's Ulysses, and Godard, in both une femme mariée (1964) and Two or Three Things I Know About Her (1967), approximates inner speech through discontinuous and fragmentary voice-over commentaries. (The former film even echoes Joyce's rendition of Molly Bloom's orgasmic "yes, as I said yes" as Charlotte's "ouii, oui, oui.") Film spectatorship, according to Boris Eikhenbaum, is "accompanied by a constant process of internal speech," whereby images and sounds are projected onto a kind of verbal screen functioning as a "ground" for meaning.10

There is still another sense, however, in which film is "bathed by" and "suspended in" language. Films are saturated by language from the beginning to the end of their...
existence; they come from language and partially return to it. Films often initially take the form of verbal text or spoken performance: source play or novel, verbal synopsis, script, story conference. Upon completion, the film returns to language, again becoming the subject of verbal representation, in the form of verbal synopsis, "word of mouth" evaluations, journalistic reviews, scholarly text, classroom exercises, TV Guide capsule summary, "blumes up" Siskel-Elbert banter, and even "novelization." (This last, despised, subgenre of writing has generated such books as The Mexican and The Gladiators. Sean Penn's 1995 film The Crossing Guard was novelized by playwright David Rabe in a version which some critics saw as superior to the film itself.) Film's representations, in sum, which have never ceased to be partially linguistic, yet translated back, by a rough exchange, once again into words. David Black speaks of "the synoptic tendency" whereby verbal recontextualizability becomes a kind of gold standard for narrative exchange. The fiction film too, then, exists within the powerful gravitational field of what Bakhtin calls "the word."

Despite fidelity criticism's discourse of loss, the cinema has not lesser but rather greater resources for expression than the novel, and this quite independent of what actual filmmakers have actually done with these resources. In a suggestive passage in Nabokov's Lolita, the narrator-protagonist Humbert Humbert expresses a kind of envy of the cinema. He laments the prodigious deliberateness of prose fiction, its subordination to linear consecution, its congenital incapacity to seize the moment in its multifaceted simultaneity. Humbert deplores having to put "the impact of an instantaneous vision into a sequence of words." The "physical accumulation on the page," he complains, "imparts the actual flesh, the shape empirically." But while Humbert Humbert laments the cinema's "fantastic simplicity," he might also envy its potential for non-similitude, its capacity for misleging apparently contradictory times and temporaliess. While the novel is capable of the most supple forms of ironic double-voiced discourse, film's multitrack nature makes it possible to stage ironic contradictions between music and image. Thus the cinema offers synergistic possibilities of distance and disjunction not immediately available to the novel. The possible contradictions and tensions between tracks become an aesthetic resource, opening the way to a multitemporal, polyphonic art form.

Adaptation criticism has tended to emphasize the cinema's impairments and disabilities vis-à-vis the novel - its putative incapacity to convey tpses, dreams, memories, abstraction - yet, on almost any plane one might mention, cinematic adaptation brings, whether for good or ill, not an impoverishment but rather a multiplication of registers. Let us take, for example, the issue of "tense" in the cinema, about which a good deal of nontacte has been uttered. A common idea, purveyed even by a sophisticated writer like Robbe-Grillet, is that the cinema has only a single tense - the present - since in a film every-thing unrolls before our eyes, in the present. (Ironically, Robbe-Grillet's own films contradict this thesis, since they superimpose, in a heterochronotropic confusion, what Deleuze calls "sheets of time." But on a phenomenological level, the same point could be made about reading novels: the action, even in an historical novel set in the distant past, always unrolls in the virtual present of our reading. Moreover, the cinema has tense even in the most literal sense, since its "language" tracks grant it as the moods and voices and tenses of verbal or written language. But quite apart from this linguistic capacity to mark tense, film offers myriad other ways of marking past time, or the passage of time, in non-verbal ways. In an earlier period, films used ticked visual tokens such as the flipping pages of a calendar. Or tense was indicated through conventional markers - a title, a log-dissolve, or flashbacks - whether cured by a warping image (as parodically indicated on the David Letterman Show) or by a change in lighting or color, or simply by the juxtaposition of a pensive face with a remembered image.

But the cinema can also convey "painess" through a wide range of other means, notably: decor (a seventeenth-century chateau location); titles ("Paris, 1900"); color (regia hints); understated camera shots, evocative of an earlier technology; make-up (the cosmetic aging of a character); archival recording devices (Zelig, 1983); artificially "aged" footage (Zelig again); costume (as in any costume drama); music (from any period); paintings (from any period); props (vintage automobiles); and so forth. Furthermore, the cinema can deliberately scramble time periods by mingling the traces of two time periods within the same shot (The Travelling Players, 1973) where two epochs "invade," as it were, the same public sphere during the same continuous sequence shot, or by using the new technologies to scramble historical periods (Forrest Gump, 1994), or by using a single pan shot to link different time periods (Lone Star, 1996).

Furthermore, the cinema has available to it a remarkable mechanism through which it can "congeal" past time, to wit in the form of archival footage, i.e. images (and sometimes sounds) literally registered in the past. In the novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Kundera refers to the "stills and motion pictures ... stored in archives around the world," showing the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Philip Kaufman adaptation of the Kundera novel, in contrast, includes actual TV reports on the invasion. The Truffaut adaptation of Jules and Jim, similarly, amplifies the novel's sparse allusions to the First World War by inserting archival footage of trench battles, thus affirming a parochial dimension merely latent in the book. Films can even intermingle temporalities by mixing in various forms of congealed past time, such as past feature films (as in Reinald's Mon Oncle d'Amérique, 1980) or documentaries and reenactments (as in Zelig). While novels such as Doctorow's Ragtime mix documentary and fictional materials, a film like Zelig can "quote" or even create fiction films, fake fiction films, real documentaries, and fake documentaries.

In sum, film is ideally equipped, thanks to its multitrack and multiformat nature, to magnifically multiply times and spaces. As a technology of representation, film has the capacity to mingle very diverse temporalities and spatialities. Produced within one constellation of times and spaces, the fiction film stages yet another diegetic constellation of times and spaces, and it is received in still another time and space (theater, home, classroom). The panoply of cinematic techniques further multiplies the possibilities. Unlike a novel, a film can be played backwards. Superimposition redoubles time and space, as do montage and multiple frames within the image. The fact that dominant cinema has largely opted for a linear and homogenizing aesthetic where track reinforces track within a Wagnerian totality cannot efface the equally salient fact that the cinema (and the new
media) are infinitely rich in polyphonic potentials. The cinema makes it possible to stage temporalized cultural contradictions not only within the shot, through mise-en-scene, decor, costume, and so forth, but also through the interplay and contradictions between the diverse tracks, which can mutually shadow, jostle, undercut, haunt, and relativize one another. Each track can develop its own velocity; the image can be accelerated while the music is slowed, or the soundtrack can be temporally layered by references to diverse historical periods. A culturally polyrhythmic, heterochronic, multiple-velocity and counterpointal cinema becomes a real possibility. Those who argue that cinema lacks "sense" forget these potent possibilities.

This same multiplication of tracks and registers also applies in relation to the cinematic character. While no medium — whether theater, novel, film — really gives us direct access to a character, they do give us the forms of signification available to that particular medium — live performance in theater, verbal evocation in the novel, performance and mise-en-scene in film. Each medium deploys significant traces to trigger a sense of a character in the mind of the reader or spectator. Each medium, in this sense, brings pains and losses. Although filmic characters in adaptations lose some of the slowly evolving textured verbal complexity developed in a novel, they also gain an automatic "thickening" on the screen through bodily presence, posture, dress, and facial expression.

The absence of actors brings enormous advantages to the novelist: the author need not deal with performers' temper tantrums, pregnant actresses (as in Truffaut's La Nuit Américaine, 1973), or performers who inconveniently die (a recurring problem for Welles in relation to his Don Quixote). Unlike the purely verbal novelistic character, the cinematic character forms an emblematic palimpsest of photogeny, body movement, acting style, gestures, locale, costume, accent and grain of voice, all amplified and molded by dialogue (what a character says and how he/she says it and what the other characters say about the character), lighting, props (mise-en-scene), and music. Like the filmmakers, performers too become, in their way, the adapters and interpreters of the novel, or at least of the screenplay, as they mold characters through gestural details, ways of walking or talking or smoking. Furthermore, filmic characters not only act, they also react and listen; they register surprise or boredom or curiosity, something usually left unspecified in a novel but absolutely crucial in film. Filmmakers, meanwhile, have the option of associating a given character with a specific kind of lighting, as when halved backlighting gives a religious aura (for example, to the pious protagonist of Rohmer's Ma nuit chez Maud, 1969) or with a style of editing (as when Catherine, in Jules and Jim, is associated with fragmented, discontinuous, deliberately mis-edited shots, an imitation of her own "discontinuous" and capricious personality).

While novels have only a single entity — the character — film adaptations have both character (actantial function) and performer. The doubling of filmic representation allows for possibilities of interplay and contradiction denied a purely verbal medium.

In the cinema, a single actor can play many characters — for example, Peter Sellers's multiple roles in The Mouse That Roared, 1959 or Dr Strangelove, 1964 — or, conversely, multiple performers can play a single character: the four incarnations of Christ in Rocha's Age of the Earth (1977). The Pierre Lavoy's novel The Woman and the Puppet features five men — the character Cochita — whereas the Sauls adaptation of the novel, That Obscure Object of Desire (1977), features three (or even four?) entities: the character Cochita; the two actresses (Angela Molina and Carole Bouquet) whose roles they play; and the dubber who lends her voice to both actresses. The unity on the characterological plane is split on the performance plane; and then recast and reunified again on the plane of post-synchronization.

Decades ago, Christian Metz spoke of the "renoncement manqué" between actor and spectator in the cinema; the actor, present during the production of the film, is absent during its reception in the theater. Although the filmic performer has a signal advantage over the novelistic character — to wit, his or her bodily existence — that existence is mediated by film's imaginary signifier; it is turned into an absence, and thus made even more "available" for our projections. While literary characters are like ghosts, holo-grammatic entities cued by the text and projected (and introjected) by readers, filmic characters are at once projected and embodied. Our projections spread themselves as it were, not over the virtualities of the verbal text but rather "over" the actually existing body and performance of the actor, which cues and receives and resists our projections. (In the case of doubles and stunt persons, we actually project a false unity over two bodies.) Adaptations of novels thus provoke a tension between the characters as constructed and projected in our reading, and the embodied actors/characters witnessed on screen. Our spectral impressions are further shaped by what we already know about the actors' performances, and even, in the case of stars, of what we know about their three-dimensional lives, their sexual relationships, and their opinions and feelings as channeled by the mass media, all of which feed into the reception of the performance.

The character/actor dynamic elicits a series of questions. Does the actor in the adaptation "fit" the verbal description of the character in the novel in terms of physical attributes, ethical traits, and so forth? How does the specific performer add to or detract from or change the character through intertextual or contextual echoes? Does the performer follow the script like Jeremy Irons or improvise like Robin Williams and Peter Sellers? How does Orphal Widmer's status as celebrity talk-show host affect the reception of her performance in the film Beloved (1998)? In her adaptation of Virginia Woolf's Orlando, Sally Potter wittily casts the flamboyantly effeminate Quentin Crisp as "Queen" Elizabeth. What is the impact of the performer's other roles? How do Jack Palance's earlier roles as gangsters and tough guys bleed into his role as producer in Godard's Contempt? Or think of the Immense effort required for Robin Williams to erase his stand-up persona to be considered a serious actor.

The multiplication of registers also has to do with the fact that the cinema is both a synesthetic and a synthetic art. Film is synesthetic in its capacity to engage various senses (sight/hearing), while it is synesthetic in its anthropophagic hunger to devour and digest and change antecedent arts. A composite language by virtue of its diverse matters of expression, the cinema "inherits" all the art forms associated with these matters of expression. It has available to it the visuals of photography and painting, the movement...
Adaptation theory by now has available a well-stocked archive of tropes and concepts to account for the mutation of forms across media: adaptation as reading, rewriting, critique, translation, transmutation, metamorphosis, recreation, transvaluation, reevaluation, transfiguration, actualization, transmedialization, signifying, performance, dialogization, cannibalization, revisification, incarnation, or recontextualization. (The words with the prefix "trans" emphasize the changes brought about in the adaptation, while those beginning with the prefix "re" emphasize the recombinant function of adaptation.) Each term, however problematic as a definitive account of adaptation, sheds light on a different facet of adaptation. The trope of adaptation as a "reading" of the source novel suggests that just as any text can generate an infinity of readings, so any novel can generate any number of adaptional readings which are inevitably partial, personal, conjunctural, interested. The metaphor of translation, similarly, suggests a principled effort of intersubjective transposition, with the inevitable losses and gains typical of any translation.

Much of the discussion of intertextual aspects of adaptation goes under the label "genre," which constitutes an important concern within the broader stream of intertextuality. While some genres (comedy, tragedy, melodrama) are broadly shared between novel and film, other genres are specifically filmic (for example, the animated cartoon) because they depend on specific cinematic procedures like the moving image, editing, and so forth. Since adaptations typically mingle literary and cinematic genres, the question is one of correlating the genres invoked by the novel and those invoked by the film.

Adaptations, typically, carry over some of the literary genres and mix in some of the filmic genres. Tony Richardson's adaptation of Henry Fielding's Tom Jones provides a good example. Just as Fielding's novel draws on some very early, time-hallowed literary sources such as the epic, the film draws on early film history and specifically the slapstick comedies and melodramas of the silent period. Just as Fielding mimicked the procedures of Homeric epic in the novel, the opening sequence of the Richardson film mimics the procedures of silent cinema. In other cases, we find a clear shift in genre, as when Kubrick turned the "realistic" atomic war suspense novel Red Alert into the filmic satire of Dr. Strangelove, foregrounding the absurd premises of the Cold War and its MAD ("Mutually Assured Destruction") policies.

The complexity of these intertextual and generic negotiations becomes manifest in the case of the Spellberg adaptation of Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1985). As a kind of methodological demonstration or taxonomic delirium, we can try to locate the major intertextual elements in the novel and the adaptation. The novel interweaves any number of intertexts, literary and extra-literary: (1) the epistolary novel (implying an orchestration of multiple voices, along with such themes as class consciousness and patriarchal oppression (as in Pamela and Clarissa); (2) the historical romance, implying a past setting but here domesticated and rendered quotidian; (3) the autobiographical slave narrative, implying the personalization of social protest; (4) the realistic novel, with its connotations of democratization, stylistic dignity, and the respectful treatment of the everyday life of "lower" social strata; (5) the Bildungsroman or novel of development, evolved

From Fidelity to Intertextuality

We need, therefore, a new language and a new set of tropes for speaking about adaptation. If "fidelity" is an inadequate trope, what tropes might be more appropriate? Instead of denigrating terms for adaptation, such as "betrayal" and "fidelity," one might speak of a "Pygmalion" model, where the adaptation brings the novel "to life," or of a "ventrilougal" model, where the film "tells" the story of the novel characters of the novel, or of an "alchemical" model, where the adaptation turns verbal cross into filmic gold. Or, drawing on the West African religious tradition, one could speak of a "possession" model, whereby the orika (spirit) of the literary text descends into the body/horseman of the film adaptation. Even Christian discourse is ambivalent about adaptation. On the one hand, the Second Commandment valorizes the sacred word; on the other, what some have demonized as the gross embodiment of the film medium could be "redeemed" through what Kamilla Elliott calls "the incarnational mode," i.e. the very Christocentric idea that, thanks to adaptation, the "Word" of the novel is "made Flesh," while the Jewish Bible (in Christian parlance the "Old Testament") is "fulfilled" by the New Testament of the film.

"Fidelity" is inadequate as a trope for speaking about adaptation. If adaptation involves bringing the novel to life, or telling the story of the novel characters of the novel, or alchemizing verbal cross into filmic gold, or positing a sacred word in the context of the film medium, then the trope of "fidelity" is insufficient. Instead, we might speak of a "Pygmalion" model, where the adaptation brings the novel "to life," or of a "ventrilougal" model, where the film "tells" the story of the novel characters of the novel, or of an "alchemical" model, where the adaptation turns verbal cross into filmic gold. Or, drawing on the West African religious tradition, one could speak of a "possession" model, whereby the orika (spirit) of the literary text descends into the body/horseman of the film adaptation. Even Christian discourse is ambivalent about adaptation. On the one hand, the Second Commandment valorizes the sacred word; on the other, what some have demonized as the gross embodiment of the film medium could be "redeemed" through what Kamilla Elliott calls "the incarnational mode," i.e. the very Christocentric idea that, thanks to adaptation, the "Word" of the novel is "made Flesh," while the Jewish Bible (in Christian parlance the "Old Testament") is "fulfilled" by the New Testament of the film.
by Celie’s coming-of-age story, her coming into herself; (6) the reflective novel, found in the direct theatricalization of Celie’s wrestling with language and writing; (7) the fairy tale, implied in the once-upon-a-time quality of the girl-child’s fantasies; (8) inspirational literature (religious, secular, feminist), implied by the overall hermeneutic drift of the novel; (9) self-help literature (Celle as a role model for transcending victimization); and (10) the blues, cited literally and enlaced figuratively as a vernacular art.

The Spielberg adaptation then picks up some of these literary cues, ignores others, and "adds" specifically filmic allusions and protocols. Spielberg maintains the conventional epistolary novel, with its multiple voices, but cinefacizes the genre through specifically filmic techniques such as voice-over. In terms of specifically filmic genres, the film relays the stereotypical echoes of the "all-black musical" (for example, Hallelujah, 1928, and Cabin in the Sky, 1943), especially in the gospel sequences. Thus Spielberg’s (rather uninformed) vision of black people is largely mediated by film, and specifically by three filmic traditions: (1) the tradition that makes the black rural community the locus of spiritual and physical vibration; (2) the more jazz-inflected tradition that renders blacks not as rural but rather as urban, sophisticated and Afro-modernist; and (3) the tradition of slapstick farce and minstrelsy, as exemplified by Harpo’s repeated pratfalls and by "Mister’s" ponderously comic efforts to cook for Shug. At the same time, the film adds a surprising literary supplement through literary references not made in the source novel, notably through repeated references to Dickens’ Oliver Twist.

**Bakhtin, Genette, and Transtextuality**

Virtually all of the theory and literary analysis directly or indirectly related to "transtextuality" — from Bakhtin’s "dialogism" through the Brazilian modernists’ idea of "anthropology," on to Henry Louis Gates’s notion of "signifying" and Harold Bloom’s "anxiety of influence" — bear relevance to film and adaptation. Here, however, I will concentrate on the analytical productivity of some concepts developed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Gérard Genette.

Many of Bakhtin’s conceptual categories, although developed in relation to the novel, are equally germane to film and to adaptation. The Bakhtinian notion of the "chronotope," for example, also helps illuminate adaptation, allowing us to historicize our understanding of space and time in both film and novel. The chronotope, defined as "the necessary relation between time and space in the novel," helps us understand the ways in which spatial-temporal structures in the novel evoke the existence of a life-world cues by the text but also independent of it. The concept of the chronotope assumes that stories "take time" but they also "take space," it avoids the absurd "Sophie’s choice" between time and space. Since the chronotope provides diachronic fictional environments implying historically specific constellations of power, it is ideally suited to a medium like the cinema where "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concreteness."

Paraphrasing Bakhtin, we could say that film, too, forms the textual site where "blackness, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" and where "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.”

In filmic terms, a chronotopic model of analysis evokes suggestive linkages between three elements: (1) typical decor in film (the bars, lounges and city streets of film noir, for example); (2) temporal articulations in film (the fauz raccords of Resnais, or the slow pacing of Satyajit Ray); and (3) spatial articulations (the flattened perspectives of a Godard, the oblique angularity of a Welles). A chronotropic model might facilitate the construction of a more comprehensive model for the analysis of time-space in the cinema, one which would take into simultaneous account questions of history, genre, and the specifically cinematic articulation of space and time.

Bakhtinian "dialogism," meanwhile, refers in the broadest sense to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all of the discursive practices of a culture, the matrix of communicative utterances which "reach" the text not only through recognizable citations but also through a subtle process of indirect textual relays. Any text that has "spoken to" another text, as a postmodern mag once put it, has also slept with all the other texts that that other text has slept with. It is this textually transmitted "dis-ease" that characterizes the intertextual dairy-chain that Derrida called "dissemination."

Notions of "dialogism" and "intertextuality," then, help us transcend the aperitifs of "fidelity" and of a dyadic source/adaptation model which excludes not only all sorts of supplementary texts but also the diasporically attached reader/spectator. Every text, and every adaptation, "points" in many directions, back, forward, and sideways. A text like Don Quixote, for example, points backward to chivalric romance, sideways to Lope de Vega, and forward to Kathy Acker and Orson Welles and Man from La Mancha. Building on Bakhtin’s concept of "dialogism" and Kristeva’s "intertextuality," Gérard Genette in Palimpsests (1982) offers other useful analytic concepts. While Genette does not address film, his concepts can be extrapolated for film and for adaptation. Instead of maintaining the term "intertextuality," Genette proposed the more inclusive term "transtextuality" to refer to "all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts." Genette posits five types of transtextual relation, all of which are suggestive for the theory and analysis of adaptation.

The first type of transtextuality is "intertextuality," or the "effective co-presence of two texts" in the form of quotation, plagiarism, and allusion. Intertextuality, perhaps the most obvious of the categories, calls up the play of generic allusion and reference in film and novel. This intertext can be oral or written. As Mfoumou claims points out in his essay on African cinema (see chapter 14), adaptations can be read in both ourature and literature. Often the intertext is not explicit but is rather the taken-for-granted background reference. This is especially true of seminal cultural texts like the Jewish and Christian Bibles. Thiek, for example, of the presence of the Exodus story in Grapes of Wrath, or of all the comical/haric variations on Christ’s Last Supper (from Bulfiel’s Virgini, 1961, to Mel Brook’s History of the World Part I, 1981, to Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl, 1982). "Allusion" in the cinema can also take distinct
medium-specific forms. A camera movement can be an allusion, as we see in the long chain of virtuous, even exhibitionistic, long-shot crane and Steadicam shots — moving from Welles's Touch of Evil (1958) to Altman's The Player (1992), and Paul Thomas Anderson's Boogie Nights (1997) — that have formed the flamboyant overtures of a whole series of films, each consciously referring to the earlier ones and each taking advantage of evolving technologies.48

Genette's second kind of transdiscursivity is "paratextuality," or the relation, within the totality of a literary work, between the text proper and its "paratext" — titles, prefaces, postfaces, epigraphs, dedications, illustrations, and even book jackets and signed autographs, in short, all the accessory messages and commentaries which come to surround the text and which at times become virtually indistinguishable from it. In film, although Genette does not mention it, "paratextuality" might evoke all those materials close to the text such as posters, trailers, reviews, interviews with the director, and so forth. The new media, in fact, have fostered an explosion of paratextual materials. A number of DVD versions of films (for example, Bridget Jones's Diary, 2001) include sequences that were filmed but not included in the final version. This paratextual feature allows the DVD viewer to literally "envisage" alternative versions of the adaptation, enabled to reject (or applaud) the loss of a filmed sequence. A Criterior DVD devoted to Godard's adaptation of the Moravia novel Contempt, for example, includes interviews with Godard, with cinematographer Raoul Coutard, with Fritz Lang, along with visual materials on actress Brigitte Bardot. Other laser-discs and DVDs reveal the scenes filmed by directors but excluded from the release versions — for example, the longer version of Apocalypse Now (1979) — thus giving a sense of the "director's cut." These paratextual materials inevitably reshape our understanding of the text itself. But the "paratext" also takes more commodified forms. In the case of Hollywood blockbusters, including those based on pre-existing sources like novels or comic books, the text becomes overwhelmed, as it were, by a commercial paratext. The film becomes a kind of franchise or brand, designed to generate not only sequels but also ancillary consumer products like toys, music, books, and other products of cross-media synergies. The Harry Potter film adaptations, for example, become what Peter Bart calls a "megafanchise," garnering billions of dollars.49

Genette's third type of intertextuality is "metatextuality" or the critical relation between one text and another, whether the commented text is explicitly cited or only silently evoked. Here we can emphasize either the "critical" relation or the "silently evoked" aspects of the category. The former term suggests all those adaptations which criticize or in some way express hostility toward the source novel or toward previous adaptations. Stephen Schiff and Adrian Lyne, for example, saw the antecedent Kubrick version of Lolita as an example of "everything to avoid" in their own version.50 Thus "metatextuality" evokes the entire tradition of the critical rewritings, whether literary or filmic, of novels. Adaptations, in this sense, can be "readings" or "critiques" of their source novel. Every age, Bakhtin suggested, reconsolidates in its own way the works of the past. In the colonial and post-colonial eras, literature has often "written back" against empire, often in the form of critical rewriting of key texts from the European novelistic tradition. Jean Rhys's The

While Sargasso Sea (1966) retells Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre as the story of Bertha Mason, Mr Rochester's first wife and the by-now-celebrated "madwoman in the attic" of feminist criticism, leading us to reassess the racialized presentation of Bertha as a "remote savage."

Another recent trend within literature involves the rewriting of a novel from the perspective of secondary or even imaginary additional characters. Thus we get Robinson Crusoe rewritten from the perspective of Susan Barton (Coetzee's Foe), Moby Dick from the perspective of the wife of Captain Ahab (Sena Jeter-Nash's Ahab's Wife), Lolita from the perspective of Lolita (Pia Perez's Lol's Diary), Don Quixote from the perspective of a female Quixote (Kathy Acker's Don Quixote), and Gone with the Wind from the perspective of the enslaved (Alice Randall's The Wind Done Gone). Here the possible permutations become endless, since any novel could be rewritten from the perspective of a different character: an ecological rewriting of Moby Dick might give us Captain Ahab from the point of view of the whale. Filmic adaptations, I would argue, should be seen as existing on a continuum with these other "rewritings."

Sergio Giral's film El otro Francisco (1975), which adapts Cuba's first anti-slavery novel, Ameliano Suárez y Romero's Francisco (1837), constitutes a brilliant example of adaptation as critique. The novel, often called the Cuban Uncle Tom's Cabin, was an historical romance about a young slave who commits suicide when his fiancée reveals that she has been raped by her master. The original novel already formed part of a circuit of intertextual rewriting, and specifically of a set of anti-slavery novels sponsored by the abolitionist literary circle of Domingo del Monte. The Giral film, over a century later, further builds on this tradition of rewriting, now in the very different context of the revolutionary 1960s and 1970s. The basic procedure of the Giral film is to critique the novel's rendition of slavery by dialectically counterpointing diverse generic styles. While the source novel is fundamentally a melodrama, the Giral adaptation promotes interplay between diverse generic modes of presentation: a parodically melodramatic approach, sarcastically "faithful" to the sentimental spirit of the novel; a staged (anachronistically verisimilar documentary about the novel's production context; and a realistic reconstruction of the historical life of the enslaved. Taken together, the three modes emphasize exactly what is suppressed in the novel: the economic motives behind the abolitionist movement, the catalyzing role of black rebellion, and the artistic mediation of the story itself.

The Giral film self-reflexively explores adaptation as demystificatory critique. Giral parodies the novel, for example in the opening pre-credit sequence, by exaggerating the novel's melodramatic conventions through their filmic equivalents: overwrought acting, holed backlighting, soft-focus visual, and lachrymose music. He contextualizes the novel, by revealing the social/artistic habits out of which the novel was generated: to wit the upper-class, liberal del Monte salon. He adds characters to the novel by including the author Suárez y Romero himself (i.e. an actor impersonating him) in the film, informing us that the abolitionist author had himself inherited slaves and knew about slave rebellions. Turning film into a new kind of historiographical narrative, he stages what most frightened the Cuban
elitethe history of black resistance in Cuba. Finally, he transforms the novel’s docile
central character—Francisco—into a revolutionary, the “other” Francisco of the title.
In terms of a source not mentioned or “silently evoked,” meanwhile, “metatextuality”
calls up those films which have a more diffuse, unstated relation to a source novel or
even to a whole genre or body of literature. Maria Tortajada argues that Eric Rohmer’s
films, for example, rework the French tradition of libertinage as exemplified by Laclos’
novel Les Liasons dangereuses, even though Rohmer never adapted Laclos.15 Barthes’s
Cuneiform (1993), similarly, is not an “adaptation” of the Marquis de Sade, yet Alan
Wein argues that the Days of Sodom forms a source text/structuring absence in that
film.16 When Claude Chabrol was unable to secure the rights to the Patricia Highsmith
story The Talented Mr Ripley, due to the fact that it had already been adapted by Clement
as Plain sailer (1960), he simply switched the gender of the protagonists from male
to female, so that his film Les Biches (1968) went unrecognized as an adaptation of
Highsmith’s novel.
“Metatextuality” also evokes the case of “unmarked adaptations.” It has been a common
practice of the commercial film industry in India to make “unmarked adaptations.”
According to Nitin Govil, in the 1990s three versions of Pretty Woman (1990) and four
versions of Ghost (1990) were made.17 Other examples might include the non-explicit
interrelation between Charlotte Brontë and Jane Campion’s The Piano (1993);
or between Forrest Gump and Voltaire’s Candide; or Clueless (1993) as an unmarked (except
in interviews) adaptation of Jane Austen’s Emma. While Emma refers to a character in
the Jane Austen novel, Clueless evokes the teenage slang of a particular Los
Angeles milieu in a particular historical period. Some adaptations, such as Claire Denis’s
Boar Trählv (1999), are barely recognizable as adaptations. Here the source novel—
Melville’s Billy Budd—becomes an inspirational matrix of thematic and stylistic motifs.
Melville’s “bronzed mariners” become the bare-chested soldiers, while the scene shifts
to another point in the continuum of the Black Atlantic world—East Africa. The novel
becomes the springboard for an adaptation then for a stylized tone-poem, one
mingled with allusions to other films (Godard’s Le Petit Soldat, 1962) and other arts
(Benjamin Britten’s opera Billy Budd).
Genette’s fourth type of intertextuality is “architectextuality,” or the generic taxonomies
suggested or refused by the titles or subtitles of a text. At first glance, this category
seems irrelevant to adaptation, since adaptations usually simply take over the title of
the novel in question. But as we have seen, there are “unmarked adaptations” (Clueless) and
diffuse generic adaptations (Rohmer). There are also renamed adaptations, as when Coppola
adapts Conrad’s Heart of Darkness as Apocalypse Now (1979), the title clearly a twist
on the Living Theatre’s counter-cultural Paradise Now. “Architectextuality” also bears
on the falsely or misleadingly labeled adaptation. Michael Snow’s Romain’s Nephew
(1974), for example, apparently has nothing to do with the Diderot dialogue-novel, thereby
providing the literate spectator to search for some other connection to Diderot. Godard’s
Le Gai Savoir (1968) draws its title-phrase from Nietzsche’s (Wissenschaft) but also claims to adapt Rousseau’s Emile, with which it has little in common.

“Architectextuality” also evokes the thorny legal issue of copyright. Interestingly, adapta-
tions have played a crucial role in the development of copyright law. Before 1910, film
companies like Biograph had released many films based on literary works in the public
domain, but Griffith’s Ramova (1910) was probably the first film to base itself on a lit-
erary source secured with permission and payment. By 1912, Congress decided to pro-
vide guidance on such issues, declaring that Griffith could control the rights to the film
version of Dumas’s The Count of Monte Cristo, not to other versions of the novel in other media.
Lawsuits that claim that a given film was based on an acknowledged source—
for example, Barbara Stanwyck’s charge that Salinger’s Amstard (1967) stole scenes
from her 1989 novel Echo of Lions—can also be seen as revolving around architectural
issues, a claim that the filmmaker failed to designate a film as an adaptation. (In the case
of Amstard, Dreamworks countered with another transnational twist on the plagiarism theme,
arguing that Echo of Lions itself failed to designate itself as an “adaptation,” since its had borrowed materials from the 1953 history Black Matiny.) All these quarrels revolve,
in a sense, around the question of who “owns,” as it were, a portion of the intertext.

While all of Genetee’s categories are suggestive, Genette’s fifth type, “hypertextual-
ity,” is perhaps the type most clearly relevant to adaptation. “Hypertextuality,” refers to
the relation between one text, which Genette calls “hypo-text,” to an anterior text or
“hypo-text,” which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends. In literature,
The Aeneid’s hypo-texts include The Odyssey and The Iliad, while the hypotexts of Joyce’s
Ulisses include The Odyssey and Hamlet. Both The Aeneid and Ulisses, along with Maravais’s
Briareo (1954) and Godard’s adaptation Le Maitre (1962), are hypertextual elabor-
ations of a single hypotext, The Odyssey. Filmic adaptations, in this sense, are hyper-
texts derived from pre-existing hypotexts which have been transformed by operations of
selection, amplification, concretization, and actualization. The diverse filmic adaptations
of Madame Bovary (Renoir, Minnelli, Mehta) or of La Femme et le pantin (Duvivier,
von Sternberg, Buñuel) can be seen as variant hypertextual “readings” triggered by the
same hypotext. When Victorian novels are adapted scores of times, hypertextuality itself
becomes a sign of canonical status; the “copy,” within the logic elaborated by Jacques
Derrida, create the prestige of the original. Indeed, the diverse prior adaptations of a
novel can come to form a larger, cumulative hypotext available to the filmmaker
who comes relatively “late” in the series. Filmic adaptations, then, are caught up in the
ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other
texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transformation, with no clear
point of origin.18

Proposals for Adaptation Studies

Introduction

In this final section, I would like to make some modest proposals for dealing with the
narrative, thematic, and stylistic aspects of filmic adaptations of novels, something less
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Robert Stam

grandly ambitious than a theory yet more substantive than a methodology. Here I will no longer be addressing the theoretical status of adaptation, but rather gesturing toward an analytical/practical model for addressing actual adaptations.

Many of the questions about adaptation have to do with the modifications and permutations of the story. Here we enter into the realm of narratology, or the study of the mechanics of narrative. Film narratologists have especially drawn on Genette's narratological analysis of novelistic time in his literary work. Genette stresses the double schema engaged by novelistic fiction, i.e., the relation between the events recounted and the manner and sequence of their telling. Film narratologists have extrapolated three of Genette's principal categories: order (which answers the question "when?") and "in what sequence?"), duration (which answers the question "how long?"), and frequency (which answers the question "how often?").

The issue of order touches on questions of linear versus non-linear sequence. A story can respect the normal sequentiality of the putatively "real" events, proceeding from beginning through middle to end, or it can scramble that sequentiality. Both the Kubrick and the Lyne versions of Lolita, for example, adopt a circular structure which begins and ends with Humbert Humbert's murder of Quilty, something revealed only gradually in the novel. Escalating linear development and tampering with sequentiality generates "anachronies" such as analepses (roughly, flashbacks) and prolepses (roughly flashforwards). Analepses are further divided into external analepses (flashback stories which extend back even earlier than the beginning point of the main narrative) and internal analepses (which begin at a point within the main narrative). Mixed analepses start at an earlier point but come to invert or invade the "present" of the main narrative.

The interest of Genette's rather dryly technocratic schema lies less in simply naming these phenomena than in reflecting on their correlation with stylistic tendencies. Films noirs, for example, favor analeptic strategies, usually related through retrospective off-screen narrators (for example, Joe Gillis in Sunset Boulevard, 1950). The French New Wave, for its part, is fond of subjective prolepses (for example, the various premonitions in Renoir's La Guerre est fini, 1964, or Chris Marker's La Jetée, 1963), as well as mixed analepses (for example, the traumatic memories that repeatedly erupt into the putative "present" of Hiroshima mon amour, 1959).

"Duration" involves all the complex relationships between discourse time – the time it takes to read the novel or see the film – and those veristic imponderables about how long a fictional event "really" lasted. This relation defines the pace of narration. In temporal terms, some adaptations clearly condense the events of the novel. The two years portrayed in the Moravia novel Contempt, for example, become the two days of Godard's adaptation. Such changes bear on Genette's useful concept of narrative "speed" (the shifting ratios between story time and discourse time). Is an adaptation "slower" or "faster" than the novel in terms of density of incident and pace of action? Efficient exposition, density of information in the frame, rapid movement within the shot, staccato delivery of dialogue, all contribute to a sense of speed in the cinema.

Genette proposes an analytical fiction or norm called "constant speed" to suggest a relatively stable, "normal" speed of narrative in relation to which a given passage would be "fast" or "slow." The maximum speed in relation to this imaginary norm is "elliptic," where major or minor events are completely skipped over. In the classical Hollywood film, ellipsis forms part of normal (analytic) editing and staging which gives us highly selective accounts of events. The minimum speed is descriptive "pause," a kind of suspension of story time, where the fiction stops, as it were, in its tracks. In the "scene," with its theatrical overtones, the narrative discourse time coincides with the imagined story time of the diegesis. In "summary," discourse time is less than story time; for example, the brief montage sequence in Citizen Kane (1941) which recounts Susan Alexander's meteoric rise and fall as an opera singer.

Frequency, finally, refers to the relationship between how many times an event occurs in the story and how many times it is narrated (or mentioned) in the textual discourse. Genette posits three main variants: (1) singular narrative (a single event is told a single time – the norm in the mainstream fiction film); (2) repetitive narrative (an event is recounted many times, as in multi-perspectival narratives such as Rashomon, 1952); (3) iterative narration (an event which occurred many times is told once); and (4) an event which occurred many times is told many times, which I would call homologous narration. But both film and novel offer a possibility not mentioned by Genette which combines (1) and (2), which might be called "cumulative narration," i.e., cases where a single causal event is gradually fleshed out through repeated flashbacks over the course of the film; for example, the traumatic events generating Marielle's kleptomania in Hitchcock's Marnie (1964), or provoking Ballard's anamnesis in Spellbound (1945).

By way of example, we can elaborate on just one of Genette's types – the iterative. The iterative in the novel evokes the imperfect of Flaubertian prose in Madame Bovary, the tense of habitual repetition, and specifically the novelistic treatment of boredom in what Flaubert, long before Sartre, called "to book about nothing." In this same spirit, Italian neo-realist theorists/Filmmaker Cesare Zavattini dreamed of filming ninety minutes in the life of a person to whom nothing happened. But what might be the ideal cinematic means for evoking the ennui that permeates a novel like Madame Bovary? One possibility would be to deploy the literal duration of a long-held shot-sequence, where real-time slowness would render the snail-like passage of time (a technique used in dos Santos's Vides secas). Another would be to have the characters verbally comment on their boredom (Minnelli's solution), or deploy voice-over narration to literally borrow the words evoking ennui in the novel (Chatov's solution). Or one might stage what Metz calls the "epicastic sequence" (little scenes showing a certain trajectory, in this case a trajectory toward boredom. Another approach would deploy visual metonymy: a dripping faucet to convey the slow and repetitious drip, drip, drip of time; or slow motion, or the dilution of a shot by editing (whereby the same gesture is repeated ad infinitum), or a well-chosen synecdochic gesture (e.g. distracted doodling). Each approach has its advantages and drawbacks.
Since it involves two semiotically distinct texts relaying the same narrative, adaptation necessarily brings up some issues not mentioned by Genette. The issue becomes one of comparative narratology, which asks such questions as the following. What events from the novel's story have been eliminated, added, or changed in the adaptation, and, more importantly, why? Although the fiction film has evolved a good deal since the five-minute silent versions of novels like Zola's L'Assommoir, adaptations today typically Still trim down the events in the novel to produce a film of "normal" feature length. Many filmmakers, in this spirit, "streamline" the novel by focusing on certain characters and events rather than others. Most film versions of Robinson Crusoe, for example, skip over the early chapters in order to rush to what they see as the "core" elements of the story: the shipwreck, the island, and the encounter with Friday.

Apart from characters and events, many adaptations eliminate specific kinds of materials — the literary-critical commentaries in Dan Quigote or Tom Jones, the intercalary essay chapters in The Grapes of Wrath, the meditative portions of Moby Dick — materials not seen as directly related to the story and therefore regarded as distracting from the core drive of the narrative. At times, surprisingly, eliminations can be unintentional. When Kubrick adapted Anthony Burgess's A Clockwork Orange, he worked with an American version rather than the British edition of the novel, which was missing the final chapter, and therefore the protagonist's epiphany. Or filmmakers can amplify novelistic passages that offer tempting possibilities for particularly spectacular or "cinematic" shots. Thus a brief mention of Squire Western's love of hunting, in Fielding's Tom Jones, becomes in the film a long and elaborate hunt sequence, with galloping horses and air-borne crane shots. Some directors add materials simply for their own pleasure, as when Truffaut includes the song "Le Tourbillon de la Vie" sung by Jeanne Moreau in Jules and Jim. In very rare instances, a director throws out most of the events in the source novel, and constitishes the film uniquely out of new materials, the case of Godard's Masculin féminin, presumably based on a Guy de Maupassant story but which features little more than the names of the characters from the novel.

A comparative narratology of adaptation also examines the ways in which adaptations add, eliminate, or condense characters. Sometimes a constellation of groups of characters is reduced to a single group; the many Oke family in Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath become simply one family — the Joades. Or a single character in a film can gather together in herself the traits of a number of the novel's characters, as when Truffaut in Jules and Jim melds the character of Catherine as contradictory by amalgamating the features of a whole gallery of women from the novel. Characters can also be altered in terms of their ethnic identity, as when the white judge of Emma of the Vanderz is turned into the black John Givry and is made to say, among other things, "to be called by the black judge is a great honor, a badge of tolerance and a symbol of progress." Sometimes a character is reduced to a single role; the character of Kang is reduced to a single role in the film of The Immortal Affair.

The history of the novel offers a wide spectrum of narrators, from the first-person narrator — narrator of fictional autobiographies like Robinson Crusoe, to the multiple first-person narratives of the novelist like James and Poe, to the amicable, dispersive, outside observer narrator of novels like Don Quixote and Tom Jones, to the variable-distance, infinitely flexible, at once intimate and impersonal, narrator of Madame Bovary, to the "stream-of-consciousness" narrator of Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway, on to the intensely objective, subjective obsesssional narrator of Robbe-Grillet. The conventional terms of discussion, unfortunately, do not account for even this limited spectrum of styles of narration. The traditional analysis in both literature and film was rooted in concepts based in language and grammar, such as "first-person narrator" (subdivided into "first-person observer and first-person participant narrator") and "third-person narrator" (subdivided into omniscient, limited omniscient, and dramatic narrators). But such grammar-based terminology created more confusion than clarity, since designating a narrator "third-person" actually tells us very little about specific narratological processes in novelistic texts. A strictly grammatical approach obscures the fact that a writer like Flaubert can shift person, moving easily from an occasional "I" or a "we" to a mixed style indirect free (free indirect discourse), constantly changing the relationship between the narrator and the fiction. More important than the grammatical "person" is the narrator's control of intimacy and distance, the calibration of access to character's knowledge and consciousness, all issues which function above and beyond and below the issue of grammatical "person." Film complicates literary narrative by practicing two parallel and intersecting forms of narration: the verbal narration, whether through voice-over and/or the speech of characters, and the film's capacity to show the world and its appearances apart from voice-over and character narration. For André Gaudreault, filmic narrative superimposes "monstration" (showing) — the gesture which creates the fictional world — and "narration" (telling) whereby editing and other cinematic procedures inscribe the activity of a filmic narrator who evaluates and comments on the fictional world. Films thus tell both stories (narration) and stage them (monstration). Thus Citizen Kane combines the various verbal recountings of Kane's life, alongside everything the film shows in tandem with these recountings. Leoland recounts his memories of Kane, while the film shows Leoland in his wheelchair telling the story, or shows the events that Leoland is recounting. The film as "narrator" is not a person (the director) or character in the fiction but, rather, the abstract instance or superordinate agency that regulates the spectator's knowledge. The narrator has been variously called "the grand imager" (Alfred Laffey) and the "megannarrator" (André Gaudreault). The filmic equivalent of Wayne Booth's "implied author," this figure can be metaphorized as an orchestra conductor who takes charge of the various "instruments" of cinematic expression.
Sound cinema thus makes possible a double play of forms. The classical realist film usually unifies the two levels, making them redundant and mutually reinforcing. Often, a voice-over narration gradually gives way to direct monologue, yet we somehow take what is "monstrated" to emanate from the initial narrative voice. In Sunset Boulevard, as Eric Smoodin points out, "even when we cannot hear the narrating voice of Joe Gillis, we suppose the scene to be a visual manifestation of his speech." More modernist films amplify the gaps and contradictions between the two forms. Marguerite Duras's India Song (1975) shows silent, voiceless actions, while unidentified voices comment on and raise doubts about our perceptions of those actions. In Last Year at Marienbad (1961), the narrator's off-screen words about what we see — he speaks of these "empty corridors" — are contradicted by the shots of corridors crowded with people.

Ever since the advent of sound, the cinema has been "vococentric" (Chion), oriented toward the human voice. Voices in the cinema both provide information and provide a focus for spectatorial identification. While voice-over narrators address themselves to us as spectators, over the heads of the characters, as if they were diegetic characters, we address one another while (usually) appearing to ignore us. Genet's "intradiagnostic" narrator acts and tells a story to other characters within the fiction. Some adaptations dramatically shift the tenor of narration. Philip Kaufman's adaptation of Kundera's The Unbearable Lightness of Being, for example, eliminates the novel's first-person reflexive narrator, and with him the various philosophical debates that animate the novel.

Film theorists have not come to a consensus about whether film per se can narrate. Some theorists, such as David Bordwell and Edward Branigan, argue that the very idea that film can "narrate" is an anthropomorphic fiction. While films do develop processes of "narration," they can offer only a pathetic mimicry of a "narrator." But by this logic, novelistic narrators as well offer only a pathetic mimicry of real-life, flesh and blood narrators. For André Gaudreault, theorists like Bordwell commit a disguised form of anthropomorphism, since in the end their abstract substantive "narration" does everything that a conventional "narrator" does. Still other theorists, like Christian Metz and Marie-Laure Ryan and Robert Burgoyne, see film as deploying "impersonal" narration, a word that resonates tellingly with the narrative project of such writers as Flaubert and James Joyce. In this form of narration, the narrator is both the illusorylocutionary source of the fictional world and the agent that comments on that world. The impersonal narrator, in Burgoyne's words, "produces a type of discourse that is read directly as the facts of the 'real world' of the fictional universe."""'

Narratology also addresses the relationship between the events told and the temporal standpoint or "home base," as it were, of the telling. Is the story in the novel or film told, as is most usually the case, after the events of the story (retrospective narration), prior to the event (as in oracular or prophetic narration), or simultaneously with the events of the story. Or are there interpolated events, set within the intervals between the moments of the main action? The question then becomes how these various temporal frameworks are translated within adaptations. In the case of "embedded narration," for example, one story is wrapped, as it were, "inside another," in a narrative mise-en-abyme.

Embedded narratives generate hypodiegeses, i.e., sub-stories embedded within stories, like those to be found in Cervantes's Don Quixote (and in Orson Welles's adaptation of that novel, or in Buñuel's highly Cervantian The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (1972)). Genet's version of this genre, in his adaptation of The Unbearable Lightness of Being, with the insertion of an additional stream of consciousness, is a particularly striking example of the use of the hypodiegetic (outside the story told) to add an additional layer to the story. Genet's version of this genre, in his adaptation of The Unbearable Lightness of Being, with the insertion of an additional stream of consciousness, is a particularly striking example of the use of the hypodiegetic (outside the story told) to add an additional layer to the story.

As many analysts of narrative have pointed out, we react to narratives as we do to persons, finding them likeable or repulsive, wise or foolish, fair or unfair. Narrators vary widely on a broad spectrum, not only in terms of likeability but also in terms of reliability. Some narrators are honest brokers, while others are pathological liars. On a scale of trustworthiness, narrators range from those who are almost completely suspect (e.g. Jason in The Sound and the Fury) to those who are more or less reliable (Nick in The Great Gatsby, Dr. Cudler in Posthumous Memoirs of Brax Cubas) to those who serve as dramatized spokenspersons for the implied author and whose values conform to the norms of the text (Conrad's Marlowe in Heart of Darkness). Some narrators, such as Nabokov's Humbert Humbert in Lolita, are reliable in terms of reportorial fact but not at all reliable in terms of moral evaluation.

The modern period has been especially noted for (1) changing narrators, and (2) unreliable narrators. Changing narrators alter their discours and ideas as they narrate; they narrate after the event, after the eyes. This is especially true of the Bildungsroman or novel of development (for example, Great Expectations); part of the plot, in such novels, is not just what happens but how the narrator changes in function of what happens, for example when Pip learns about the true source of his fortune. Film adaptations almost inevitably condense and telescope these processes of development. In the case of unreliable narration, the challenge of reading consists in disavowing the narrator's inconsistencies and vacuities, and projecting the self set up by the narrators to hide their voices (or even their virtuous). Sometimes the reliability of a narrator, as with Eliot Dean in Wuthering Heights, or of the govenor in James's Turn of the Screw, becomes a "crux" in literary interpretation. The cinema also offers cases of "lying narration" (Hitchcock's Stage Fright, 1950) and multiple "tag-team" narration. Kurouzawa's Rashomon, in which the story of a crime is told in four radically different yet equally plausible ways, constitutes a tour de force of multiple, problematic narration. The Russell Banks novel The Sweet Hereafter is told
from the separate but linked points of view of four characters, each of whom, in relay-
fashions, picks up the story where the previous narrator has left off. Contrastingly, the Atom Egyptian adaptation, in Russell Banks's own account, runs “the several points of
view horizontally, as it were, almost simultaneously, the relay runners running four
abreast instead of sequentially,” so that the story “moves back and forth in time and
from place to place with unapologetic ease.”

The challenge, in adapting unreliable narration, is to somehow reproduce the
hermeneutic mechanisms of textual ambiguity and ready decipherment found in the
novels, but on a distinct, cinematic register. Self-obsessed, nephrotic narrators like those
of Dostoevsky’s Underground Man in Notes from Underground or Humbert Humbert in
Lolita, interestingly, tend to be severely relativized by adaptation. While the narrator in
the novel is “autodidactic” — I.e. the author generates and narrates a story within which
he is the main protagonist — the film’s narrator is closer to what Genette calls
“homodiagnostic,” I.e. the narrator is involved with the story but is no longer the only
protagonist. What becomes clear in the film versions of Lolita is that filmic narrator/characters drawn from novels featuring unreliable narrators must struggle against the
grain of a basic feature of the film medium. The discursive power of unreliable narrators
is almost automatically reduced by film, precisely because of film’s multitrack nature.
It is as if unreliable narrator/characters were thrown into a new and some ways hostile
environment where they exercise less power and agency over the narration. In a novel,
the narrator controls the only track available — the verbal track. In a film, the narrator
can partially control the verbal track — through voice-over or character dialogue — but
that control is subject to innumerable constraints: the presence of other characters/
performers and voices, the palpitating and distracting “thereness” of decor and objects
and so forth. In a film, the other characters instantly take on a physical presence denial
them in a novel dominated by a narcissistic narrator. These characters cannot be safely
“solipsized,” as Humbert solipsizes Lolita, since they are now present as speaking,
moving, gesticulating, performing characters. While it is impossible to relay unreli-
able first-person narration in the cinema, it would require relentless subjectification on
almost all the cinematic registers: foregrounded presence in the shot, uninterrupted voice-
over, non-stop point-of-view editing, constantly motivated camera movements, always marked
subjective framing, in a way that might approximate an extreme version of Pasolini’s
subjectivized “cinema of poetry.”

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Point of View

Other questions about adaptation have to do with focalization and point of view. The
term “point of view” is somewhat problematic because it gestures in so many directions
at once. At once cognitive and perceptual, “point of view” can refer to an ideological
orientation (a “Marxist point of view”) or an emotional stance (an empathetic point of
view) or the angle from which a story is told (a character’s point of view). While in lit-
erature the term “point of view” can be literal or figurative, in the cinema it is at least
on one level literal, in that films require camera set-ups. On the other, it can also be
figurative, transmitted through specifically cinematic means. In the cinema, we can sense
authorial point of view even in films — such as Emile de Antonio’s Point of Order (1963)
— composed uniquely of pre-existing materials and without voice-over. The narrator’s
point of view, in such cases, becomes the ensemble of shaping principles organizing
the selection and sequencing of elements, the instance that shapes and orchestrates the
pre-existing materials.

Any comprehensive theory of cinematic point of view must take into account film’s
multitrack and multiform nature. Each and every filmic track and procedure — camera
angle, focal length, music, performance, mise-en-scene, and costume — can convey a point
of view. A wide-angle or fish-eye lens, for example, can “objectively” render a character
as grotesque and menacing from a character’s (or the director’s) point of view. Moreover,
the various tracks can act redundantly and in tandem or in creative tension, and each
decision inflects the point of view. If a romantic kiss is accompanied by saccharine music,
hated backdrop lighting, and misty-eyed performance, we can assume that the narrational
point of view is unified and redundant. If the same score is accompanied by circus music
and garish color, we suspect that the director is distancing us from the romantic sentiment
of the scene. Unlike literary point of view, filmic point of view is usually quite precise
and literal. We can look “with” a character, for example, or the director or actor can
look directly at us, in a way unavailable to the literary author or character. As François
Just points out, it is ironic that notions of “point of view” and “focalization” were first
worked out by literary theorists, even though within the novelistic field “vision” is distinctively
rather than actual. Thus literary theorists have gone to the cinema, as it were, to explain
the functioning of vision in the novel. Yet too often, Jost argues, these same theorists end
up speaking quite imprecisely about the role of vision in both media.

The term “focalization,” despite its cinematic ring, was originally coined in relation to
literature (by Genette in Figures III in 1972) to reference the relationship between the
knowledge of the character vis-à-vis that of the narrator. Already in the 1960s, Todorov
made the seemingly obvious point that there were three possibilities in this domain:
characters could know more than the characters, less than the characters, or as much as
the characters. (Although one might argue that Todorov’s schema has an overly quantita-
tive conceptualization of knowledge, since characters and narrators can also know
differently.) For Genette, terms like “vision” and “point of view” are too ambiguous and
exclusively visual. He distinguishes between narration (who speaks or tells) and focal-
ization (who sees). He proposes a tripartite scheme to account for the field. “Zero focal-
ization” occurs with omniscient narrators, those who know much more than any of
the characters. “Internal focalization” refers to the filtering of events through a character,
a concept close to Henry James’s idea of “center of consciousness.” That concept is usu-
ally further subdivided into “fixed” (when limited to a single character) or “variable”
when passed from character to character. Flaubert’s Madame Bovary, and Hitchcock’s
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films, in this sense, develop "variable focalization." "External focalization," finally, occurs when the reader is denied access to point of view and motivations, and restricted instead to merely observing external behavior. (In Narrative Discourse Revisited, Genette clarifies that for him focalization ultimately applies not to the characters but to the narrative itself, which has the power to "focalize.")

Narratologists André Gaudreault and François Jost have argued that Genette's terms require modification for the cinema. They point out that the term "focalization" brings a certain clarity if one is discussing the novel, where vision is only metaphorical, but becomes problematic, paradoxically, in relation to a supposedly visual medium like the cinema. The sound film can simultaneously show what a character sees and say what a character thinks. The two narratologists therefore propose separating the two functions; using the term "ocularization" to characterize the relationship between what the camera shows and what the character is supposed to be seeing, while retaining "focalization" for the cognitive point of view adopted by the story. They further distinguish between "internal primary ocularization" for cases where the filmic signifier suggests the look of a character through clear indices — soft focus, double or blurred images, or the superimposed form of binoculars — pointing to a special regard within the shot. "Internal secondary ocularization" is reserved for those cases where the act of looking is evoked only through point-of-view editing; for example, through eyeliner matches, shot/couter shot and so on.

"Zero ocularization," finally, refers to "nobody's shot," the shot which is not apparently "anchored" by any character within the diegesis.

Issues of point of view also intersect with issues of style. In stylistic/narrative terms, we can ask if the story is told in a direct, linear fashion or in a modernist, scrambled, multitemporal fashion? Adaptations are sometimes assumed to be always less modernist than their sources. Yet Burroughs' That Obstruct Object of Desire modernizes and destabilizes the rather conventional Louys source text (La Femme et le pantin) through various modernist devices: the confusion of identities through the use of two actresses, the deployment of the closet interruptus structure, and so forth. In the case of Sally Potter's 1992 adaptation of Virginia Woolf's Orlando, the novel's modernism is not muffled but rather amplified. The novel begins with Orlando as a boy in the late sixteenth century and ends with her as a woman in 1920. While the narrator of the novel is very present, the film is sparing in its use of voice-over. In the film's opening scene, Orlando recites poetry as we hear the voice-over say "There can be no doubt about his sex, despite the feminine appearance" yet the voice continues to say "But when he," at which point Orlando (Tilda Swinton) interrupts and turns to the camera to say "that is I." The embodied character need not be characterized as a "he" or a "she," and the "shifter word" "I" simply points to the person speaking. In this sense, the film evokes the performative transcendence of rigid gender categories.

Other stylistic questions have to do with the handling of temporality. Are there instances of what Genette calls "pause" in the novel and the adaptation, in the form of montage sequences or static close shots without action? What is the usefulness of Christian Metz's eight syntagmatic types in the cinema (one-shot sequence or autonomous shot, parallel

syntagma, bracket syntagma, descriptive syntagma, alternating syntagma, scene, episodic sequence, ordinary sequence) and what are the correlations (if any) with temporality in film? What is the role of description in novel and film? Is pure narratological description possible in either medium? Then there is the question of stylistic equivalences across the two media. Which features are "translatable" and which are not? What is the filmic equivalent of an "adjective" or "qualifier?" Lighting and music and angle, for example, could be seen as "adjectively" placing characters "in a certain light," or seeing them from "a certain angle." Does a wide-angle or fish-eye lens on a face form the equivalent of the adjective "gruesome?" One can also ask if there is anything in the novel that might be called "protocinematic" (if written before the advent of cinema) or "cinematic?" or "cinemorphic?" (Millicent Marcus if written after?) Conversely, is there anything about the film that might be called "novelistic?" What is the influence of other arts or media in the novel (for example, Hogarth in Fielding) or in the adaptation (for example, the role of painting in Kubrick's Barry Lyndon, 1975, or in Sondheim's Age of Innocence)?

What is needed, and what I have only begun to gesture toward here, is a thoroughgoing comparative stylistics of the two media.

The Limits of Formalism

Narratology is an indispensable tool for analyzing certain formal aspects of film adaptations. But its exclusively formal approach, which Edward Said compares in Culture and Imperialism to "describing a road without its setting in the landscape," risks foreclosing a more deeply historical analysis of the subject at hand. An important set of questions concerning adaptation has to do with context, i.e. the elements that go "with" or "alongside" the text. But this "alongside" is in a way a misleading spatial metaphor, since text and context are ultimately inseparable, "mutually invaginated" (in Derridean language).

One context is temporal. In some cases, the time of publication of the novel and the production of the film are very close. In the case of "bestsellers," producers hurry to take advantage of the commercial success of the novel. The John Ford Grapes of Wrath was rushed into production shortly after publication of the John Steinbeck novel, and was actually released within a year of the novel's publication. The Spielberg adaptation of The Color Purple (1985), similarly, was released just three years after the Alice Walker novel, and quickly became embroiled in a series of topical polemics linked to the moment of release, having to do with (1) identity (can a white male director adapt a novel by a black woman?); (2) the canon (which works of literature should be taught in schools?); (3) race and gender (does the film demonize black men?); and (4) Oscar awards (did racism, or anti-Spielberg prejudice, prevent the film from garnering more Oscars?).

In other cases, centuries or even millennia can elapse between the publication of the source novel and production of the adaptation, as in the case of Fellini's Satyricon (1969).
or Pasolini's The Decameron (1971), or even The Passion of the Christ and Troy. The adaptations of novels like Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe are necessarily filmed centuries after the original. As a result, the adapter enjoys more freedom to update and reinterpret the novel. The existence of so many prior adaptations relieves the pressure for "fidelity," while also stimulating the need for innovation. At times the adapter innovates by actualizing the adaptation, making it more "in sync" with contemporary discourse. The 1990s adaptation of Mansfield Park envisions the Jane Austen novel "through" postcolonial critique à la Edward Said, foregrounding the Caribbean slavery largely back-grounded by the Jane Austen novel. Many revisionist adaptations of Victorian novels, meanwhile, "de-repress them" in sexual and political terms; a feminist and sexual liberationist dynamic releases the sublimated libidoiousness and the latent feminist spirit of the novels and of the characters, or even of the author, in a kind of anachronistic therapy or adapational rescue operation. Postcolonial adaptations of colonialist novels like Robinson Crusoe, for example Man Friday (1976), meanwhile, retroactively liberate the oppressed colonial characters of the original.

The term context also evokes issues of censorship, whether external or internal, conscious or unconscious. Thus the film Grapes of Wrath sheds not only the more explicitly "socialist" passages of the novel, but also the shocking naturalism of the passage where Rosasharn tucks a hungry man. In the case of Madame Bovary, Minnelli begins his adaptation with the staging of the trial for obscenity of the Fauve novel, as if to warn contemporary censors that they should not be as short-sighted as Flaubert's philistine peers. Censorship, too, is medium specific; written media like the novel are generally granted more sexual freedom than a mass-mediated medium like film. Such considerations inevitably "color" the representation. Both film versions of Lolita had to wrestle with the threat of censorship. Working in the censorious, post-McCarthyite, postwar period, Kubrick so internalized the spirit of censorship that at one point he and screenwriter James Harris contemplated having Humbert marry Lolita — family values incest? — with an adult relative's blessing.66 Decades later, the Adrian Lyne version came up against widespread concerns over "inoral panics" about pedophilia and child pornography. But adaptation can also make the source more daring as well. Thus the tastefully euhemeric circumlocutions of Henry James give way to the carnal delights of Jane Campion's Portrait of a Lady (1996), where Isabel fantasizes about being caressed by Goodwood, Ralph Touchett, and Lord Warburton all at the same time; a costume drama becomes a dis-robing drama. Minghella's version of the Patricia Highsmith story The Talented Mr Ripley, by the same token, is more explicit about homosexuality than is either the source novel or the earlier adaptation Purple Noon (Flehn saufi).

Many of the changes between novelistic source and film adaptation do have to do with ideology and social discourses. The question becomes whether an adaptation pushes the novel to the "right," by naturalizing and justifying social hierarchies based on class, race, sexuality, gender, religion, and national belonging, or to the "left" by interrogating or leveling hierarchies in an egalitarian manner. There are also "uneven developments" in this respect; for example, in adaptations which push the novel to the left on some issues (e.g., class) but to the right on others (e.g., gender or race). Film adaptations often "correct" or "improve" on their source texts, and from many different and even contradictory directions. Contemporary Hollywood films tend to be philibert toward any ideology regarded as "extreme," whether coming from left or right. In chapter 3 of this volume, Richard Porter shows how the adaptation of House of Mirth "cleaned up" the book's anti-Semitism. Hollywood adaptations often "correct" their sources by purging the source of the "controversial!" (for example, the lesbosynism of The Color Purple) or the revolutionary (the socialism of The Grapes of Wrath) or the difficult (the reflexive technique of Lolita) or the "uncinematic" (the philosophical/mediational passages of Moby Dick). The "reconciliation scene" between Shug and her preacher father, in Spielberg's The Color Purple, non-existent in the novel, nudges the film in a more patriarchal direction by making Shug less bisexual, less rebellious and independent.68

Many televisual or mainstream Hollywood adaptations perform what might be called an aesthetic mainstreaming. The various popular manuals on screenwriting and adaptation are quite illuminating in this regard. Most of the manuals show a radical aversion to all forms of experimentation and modernism. They almost invariably recommend adapting the source along the lines of the dominant model of storytelling (whether in its classical Hollywood or its Sundance Hollywood-lite version). The recycled, suburbanized Aristotelianism of the screenwriting manuals calls for three-act structures, principal conflicts, coherent (and often sympathetic) characters, an inexorable narrative "arc" and final catharsis or happy end. The schema is usually premised on combat between highly motivated, competitive characters, a paradox often premised, as Raoul Ruiz points out, on "constant hostility" among human beings. Everything becomes subordinated to a teleology as relentless as purposeful as the Fate of classical tragedy. The best way to open your screenplay, Sid Field advises, is to "know your ending." The goal seems to be to "de-iterize" the text, as the novel is put through an adaptation machine which removes all authorial eccentricities or "excesses." Adaptation is seen as a kind of purge. In the name of mass-audience legibility, the novel is "cleaned" of moral ambiguity, narrative introspection, and reflexive meditation. Aesthetic mainstreaming dovetails with economic censorship, since the changes demanded in an adaptation are made in the name ofCORTEX and box-office profits required.

Adaptations of novels from another period confront the filmmaker with the choice of either creating a period piece or full-scale costume drama, on the one hand, or an update which actualizes the novel for a contemporary period on the other. Period pieces present special challenges, not only in terms of reconstructing an era but also in terms of avoiding temporal anachronisms such as TV antennas in Victorian England or airplanes in the skies of revolutionary France. But here as an important distinction is sometimes missed. Some novels begin as costume dramas, in that they are set in the past even vis-à-vis the time of the production of the novel (the case of Machado de Assis's Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas). Other novels, in contrast, become costume dramas only because of the passage of time. Kubrick's Lolita, made just seven years after the publication of the Nabokov novel, is not a period piece, but Lyne's Lolita, made over three decades later, is a period
piece, one which uses popular music and period props to push the story back into the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Some adaptations move toward the present without arriving there. Sarquis's adaptation of *Nones from Underground* (1988) moves the Bostock novel forward in time, but only to the 1930s. The Merchant-Ivory adaptations of authors like Henry James (The Bostonians) and E. M. Forster (Howards End) are all costume dramas, as are most adaptations of Jane Austen (Emma, Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park), but Clueless is an update, as is Affronte Cuarón's 1986 Great Expectations. Some novels, like Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, have been adapted both as period pieces and as updates. Two of the versions, Frears's Dangerous Liaisons (1988) and Farmar's Valmont (1989) are costume dramas, but the versions by Roger Vadim and Roger Kumble are updates. Vadim, in 1960, reset the novel in postwar New Warsaw Paris, turning Laclos's libertine into a "liberated woman" enjoying an "open marriage." More recently, in Cruel Intentions (1999), Kumble transposed the novel into contemporary Manhattan, remodeling Laclos's adults into upscale teenagers. Rather than take advantage of e-mail as the contemporary equivalent of eighteenth-century correspondance, Kumble has the film's Valmont dismiss e-mail as good only for "geeks and pedophiles."

As the last two examples suggest, adaptations are inevitably inscribed in national settings. Is the adaptation set in the same locale as the novel, or is the locale changed? Coppola transforms the African jungles of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* into the Vietnamese jungles of *Apocalypse Now*. Clueless transports Austen's nineteenth-century highwood into twentieth-century Beverly Hills. While the novel as genre allows complete flexibility of creator — the writer can explore ancient times or "exotic" places for the stroke of the pen — the cinema has to work harder. But film also enjoys a resource unavailable to the novel — to wit, real locations; for example, the English country estates available for Jane Austen adaptations or the Manhattan brownstones and townhouses available for the Henry James films.

Many adaptations are cross-national: Minnelli adapts Flaubert; Claire Denis adapts Melville; Visconti adapts Thomas Mann; Sresan adapts Dostoievsky. The question of cross-national adaptation brings in the question of language and accent. What happens when a novel set in France like *Madame Bovary* is adapted in Hollywood by an American director like Minnelli or in Bombay by an Indian like Mehta?

With international co-productions, the national and linguistic "scene" becomes even more uncertain. Doctor Zhivago (1965), for example, was based on a Russian novel, filmed in Spain, but featured Egyptian actors (Omar Shariff) alongside English ones (Juliet Christie) speaking English. In the age of globalization, the national locale is impacted by bottom-line concerns of profitability and cost-effectiveness. While Melville's Moby Dick was already global in its scope and implications, featuring worldwide travel and the multicultural crew of the Pequod, the 1988 USA Network adaptation was globalized. While the cable channel and the novel were American, the film was an Australian/UK co-production in order to take advantage of favorable exchange rates, low labor costs, and tax incentives.

Since adaptations engage the discursive energies of their time, they become a barometer of the ideological trends circulating during the moment of production. Each re-creation of a novel for the cinema unmask[s] facets not only of the novel and its period and culture of origin, but also of the time and culture of the adaptation. Texts evolve in what Bakhtin calls "great time," and often they undergo surprising "homecomings." "Every age," Bakhtin writes, "re-creates in its own way the works of the past. The historical life of classic works is in fact the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-creation." Adaptation, in this sense, is a work of re-creation, whereby a source work is reinterpreted through new grids and discourses. Each grid, in revealing aspects of the source text in question, also reveals something about the ambient discourses in the moment of re-creation. By revealing the prisms and grids and discourses through which the novel has been reimagined, adaptations grant a kind of objective materiality to the discourses themselves, giving them visible, audible, and perceptible form.

**Conclusion**

If adaptation studies at first glance seems a somewhat minor and peripheral field within cinematic theory and analysis, in another sense it can be seen as quite central and important. Not only do literary adaptations form a very high percentage of the films made (and an especially high proportion of prestige productions and Oscar winners), but also almost all films can be seen in some ways as "adaptations." While adaptation studies often assumes that the source texts are literary, adaptations can also have subliterary or paraliterary sources. Bio-pics adapt biographical writing about famous historical figures. Some films, like Hitchcock's The Wrong Man (1957), adapt newspaper stories. A film like Spiderman (2000) adapts a comic strip. Carlos Diegues's Vieja esta cancao (See This Song, 1987) adapts Brazilian popular songs. History films like Reds (1981) adapt historical texts. Other films (for example, Gilberto Dinnstein's War of the Children, 1942) adapt fictional works, or explore the life and work of a philosopher (Wittgenstein, 1993), or of a painter (Pollock, 2001) or a novelist (Uris, 2001). Even non-adaptation fiction films adapt a script. The point is that virtually all films, not only adaptations, remakes, and sequels, are mediated through intertextuality and writing. Copyright law speaks of the "derivative works," i.e., those works that "recast, transform, or adapt" something that came before. But adaptations in a sense make manifest what is true of all works of art — that they are all on some level "derivative." And in this sense, the study of adaptation potentially impacts our understanding of all films.

In the case of filmic adaptations of novels, it is more than has been argued thus far, source novel hypertexts are transformed by a complex series of operations: selection, amplification, compression, actualization, critique, extrapolation, popularization, recontextualization, transculturalization. The source novel, in this sense, can be seen as a situated
utterance, produced in one medium and in one historical and social context, and later transformed into another, equally situated utterance, produced in a different context and relayed through a different medium. The source text forms a dense informational network, a series of verbal cues which the adapting film text can then selectively take up, amplify, ignore, subvert, or transform.

The filmic adaptation of a novel performs these transformations according to the protocols of a distinct medium, absorbing and altering the available genres and intertexts through the grids of ambient discourses and ideologies, and as mediated by a series of filters: studio style, ideological fashion, political and economic constraints, authorial predilections, charmed narrative stars, cultural values, and so forth. An adaptation consists in an interested reading of a novel and the circumstantially shaped "writing" of a film. The filmic hypertext, in this sense, is transformational almost in the Chomskian sense of a "generative grammar" of adaptation, with the difference that these cross-media operations are infinitely more unpredictable and multifarious than they would be were it a matter of "natural language." Adaptations redistribute energies and intensities, provoke flows and displacements; the linguistic energy of literary writing turns into the audio-visual-kinetic-performing energy of the adaptation, in an amoebic exchange of textual fluids.

The conventional language of the critique of adaptations ("infidelity," "betrayal," and so forth), to return to our starting-point, translates our disappointment that a film version of a novel has not conveyed the moral or aesthetic impact of the novel. By adopting an intertextual as opposed to a judgmental approach rooted in assumptions about a putative superiority of literature, we have not abandoned all notions of judgment and evaluation. But our discussion will be less moralistic, less implicated in unacknowledged hierarchies. We can still speak of successful or unsuccessful adaptations, but this time oriented not by inchoate notions of "fidelity" but rather by attention to "transfers of creative energy," or to specific dialogical responses, to "readings" and "critiques" and "interpretations" of source novels, in analyses which always take into account the gaps between very different media and modes of expression.

Acknowledgments

A much shorter and very different version of this chapter appeared in James Naremore's highly recommended collection, Film Adaptation (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000). A slightly different version appears in the conference paper publication of the Udine Film Conference. I would like to thank the various academic audiences - at the University of California, Santa Cruz, at the Udine Conference in Italy, at the University of Tel Aviv, at the University of São Paulo, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Niterói), and at the University of New Delhi - for useful feedback concerning these materials.

2 A recent book, Michael Tornatore's Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters: Storytelling Secrets from the Greatest Mind in Western Civilization (New York: Hyperion, 2002), argues that the Poetics is still "the Bible" for Hollywood screenwriters. "The criteria that Hollywood executives use to evaluate screenplays," he informs us breathlessly, "are exactly the same as the legendary philosopher Aristotle thought were the nuts and bolts of ancient drama more than 2,000 years ago!" (p. xviii).
3 Quoted in Kamilla Elliott, "Through the Looking Glass," dissertation written for the English Department at the University of California, Berkeley, 2003. The dissertation has now been published as Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
4 Cecile Star, Discovering the Movies, quoted in Kamilla Elliott, "Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate," unpublished manuscript, p. 93.
8 Critics theorists have pointed out the remarkable analogies between the cinematic apparatus and the scene depicted in Plato's allegorical "cave." In both the movie theater and in Plato's cave, an artificial light, cast from behind the picture and actors, plays over effigies of people and animals, leading the deluded captives to confuse flimsy simulations with ontological reality.
12 Ibid., p. 33. See also Eila Shohat on the taboos on graven images in "Sacred Word, Profane Image."
13 From "Pictures," included in The Moment and Other Essays, quoted in Elliott, "Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate," p. 55 (see note 3).

16 Slavko Vorkapich, "A Fresh Look at the Dynamics of Film-making," American Cinematographer (February 1972), 223.


18 Kamilla Elliott makes this argument in "Through the Looking Glass" (see note 3).

19 But in French "parader" also refers to communicational "static," which Michel Serres sees as the "noise" which engenders systemic change. Tom LeClair develops this point in his online essay "False Pretense, Parasiots and Monsters" (http://www.alts.com/leclair/).

20 Elliot, "Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate," p. 27.

21 Lyotard's postmodernism, interestingly, is formulated as a kind of anti-narratology, as the decline of "grand narratives" in favor of more relativized "petits récits" or little stories, much as filmmaker Claude Chabrol recommended the treatment of "petits sujets," a suburban love affair rather than Fabrice at Waterloo.

22 Francesca Cosslett, in her essay "Adaptation and Mis-adaptations: Film, Literature, and Social Discourses," in Stans and Raepode (eds), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 6, sees adaptations as "reprogramming" reception in a new "communicative situation."

23 Although they do not deal with adaptation per se, two books treat the narratological innovations brought by the new media: Janet H. Murray's Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993) and Lex Marwick, The Language of New Media (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).


27 For a thorough discussion, see LeClair, "False Pretenses."


32 Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

33 Quoted by Banks in "No, but I saw the Movie."


35 For an extended discussion of Lolita, see my Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation, ch. 5 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

36 For a discussion of visual style in The Grapes of Wrath, see Vivian Sobchack's essay in chapter 5 of this volume.


38 For a critique of medium-specificity arguments, see Noel Carroll, Theorizing the Moving Image (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).


41 See David Black, "Narrative Film and the Synergic Tendency," a doctoral dissertation now in the process of completion for the Cinema Studies Department at New York University.


43 I do not want to give the impression that I am alone in "going beyond" fidelity discourse. Dudley Andrew, James Naremore, Judith Mayne, Francois Jost, Andre Gaudreault, Tom Gunning, Miguel Chen, Brian MacFarlane, and many others have all, in these distinct ways, gone beyond such a discourse.

44 Ella Shushan and I try to call attention to the vast corpus of films that explore these potentialities in our Unraveling Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (London: Routledge, 1994).

45 Brian MacFarlane, in his useful book Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), draws what strikes me as an overly neat distinction between narrative events (especially what Barthes calls "cardinal functions") and what Seymour Chatman calls "kernel[s]" and enunciation, the expressive apparatus that governs the presentation of the narrative. But it is difficult to separate narrative from enunciation. MacFarlane speaks of narrative functions in the novel as those that are "not dependent on language," but in a novel everything is in a sense dependent on language. The problem is that cinemation enunciation, as I have argued in other terms throughout this chapter, changes the narrative in an infinity of subtle ways. "Kernels" do not exist in the abstract. Geneetjie's very title Narrative Discourse (at least in the English version) suggests the impossibility of separating narrative and enunciation. Can a narrative kernel as purveyed in a novel really be exactly the same kernel when it is presented in film? Only if one moves to an impossibly high level of abstraction, MacFarlane's book suffers from a tension between its formalist structuralist aspect and its poststructuralist aspects, with the result that MacFarlane ends up falling back on the same binaries and terminologies that he has gestured at disdaining: that film has no past tense, that film is spatial and novel is temporal, and so forth.

46 See Mia Mask's essay in Beloved in chapter 3 of this volume.

47 For pointedly influences on Scorsese's The Age of Innocence (1993), see Brigitte Pausker, "The Moment of Pariatration: Scorsese Reads Waite's," in Stam and Runciman (eds), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 21.

48 See Elliot, "Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate," ch. 4, p. 25 (see note 3). Elliot develops a very useful taxonomy of models for speaking about adaptation: (1) psychid (a passing of the spirit of the text); (2) metathetical (the imposition of a new voice on an inert body); (3) genetic (a deep textual DNA is newly manifested in a new realm); (4) deconstruction (the novel is decomposed into parts and recomposed at another level); (5) incunabulum (word becomes flesh); and (6) transposing (i.e., film shows its superior capacities to tell the story). The issue of "incunabular" adaptation came up in relation to Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ. Where some saw anti-Semitism, and others a gratuitously sadistic imagery of the crucifixion, others saw the words of the gospel made flesh.
For a discussion of adaptation as critical reading, see Margaret MonteBano, "From Brass Stoker's Dracula to Bram Stoker's One: A Tale," in Stam and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 23.

For a systematic, even technical, exploration of adaptation as translation, see Patricia Cattaneo, "Pour une thèse de l'adaptation cinématique: le film noir américain (Bemer: Peter Lang, 1993).


For a relativized and "poly-centric" analysis of film noir as genre, see R. Barton Palmer, "The Sociological Turn of Adaptation Studies: The Example of Film Noir," in Stam and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 23.


For examples of the chronotopic analysis of adaptation, see Briss Cui-Lim's essay on Stephen Wives (chapter 8 in this volume), Paula Massoud's essay on Spike Lee's Clockers (chapter 9 in this volume), and Peter Hitchcock, "Running Time: The Chronotope of The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner," in Stam and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 19.


On intertextuality, see RalfEIF De Berli's essay on the metamorphoses of Pinocchio ("Italy and America: Pinocchio's First Cinematic Trip") and Charles Musser's essay on the various "refigurations" of the novels of Horace McCoy ("The Devil's Parade: Horace McCoy's Appropriation and Refiguration of Two Hollywood Musicals") both in Stam and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film.

See Peter Bart, "Attack of the Clones," CC (September 2002).


See Maria Tortajada, "From Literature to Eric Rohmer: Transcending Adaptation," in Stam and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 23.


For an expanded discussion of this process as it operates in Robinson Crusoe, see my Literature Through Film, ch. 2.

For an extended discussion of these issues in relation to Cervantes, Fielding, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Nabokov, see my Literature Through Film.


In some adaptations, a novel's form of embedded narrative is replaced by a different yet still embedded form. In the novel The French Lieutenant's Woman, John Fowles's narrator performs an analytical shuffle between a Victorian plot and a metacinematic on the nature of Victorian fiction. But the Karle Roitz adaptation introduces an altered form of embedded narration by intersecting a Victorian and a modern love story, with the former becoming a kind of film-within-the-film. Fowles's narrative's references to Victorian science and political theory are largely discarded. Nor is there an equivalence in the film of the authoritative persons of Fowles's narrator, costumed in Victorian frock coat and beard, sharing a train compartment with his protagonist, contrasting the conventions of Victorian fiction with those of the French New Novel, initiating us into the historical genealogy and the technical secrets of his craft. The film has neither a writer reflecting on writing nor a filmmaker reflecting on filmmaking. Instead the film gives us a bifurcated romance, two parallel love stories set in distinct referential time-frames. Although the two stories beautifully play off the trendily modern against the romanticized archaic, and although the transitions between them are often brilliant, their interaction merely generates an ambiguous Pirandellian touch, rather than a smooth thematically seamless interpolation.

See, for example, Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction.

See Banks, "No, but I Saw the Movie," 21.


See their separate essays on film and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film.


As discussed by Brigitte Pendaric in "The Moment of Penetration.


See Tim Watson's essay on Mansfield Park in chapter 1 of this volume.

See chapter 2 of my Literature Through Film.


For discussions of ideological shifts in adaptation, see Jacqueline Klapick's essay on "Transmutations of the Nation: in The Lost of the Maltese Falcon" (chapter 2 of this volume), and Patrick Dever's essay on The English Patient (chapter 10 of this volume), along with Moa Steimatzky's "Photographic Verismo, Cinematic Adaptation, and the Staging of a Neorealistic Landscape," in Stam and Raengo (eds.), Companion to Literature and Film, ch. 14.

Chapter 1

Improvements and Reparations at Mansfield Park

Tim Watson

When Miramax released *Mansfield Park* in 1999, the movie was greeted with outrage from critics and fans who found its emphasis on slavery unpalatable and unfaithful to the Jane Austen novel on which Patricia Rozema’s film was based.1 Customer reviews of the DVD version of the film on the amazon.com website carry many such expressions of anger: “I’m sure we all understand the vulgarity of slavery without needing to see it graphically displayed in a format that Austen herself would have refused to watch,” wrote one viewer, referring to the scene in the film in which Fanny Price discovers Tom Bertram’s sketchbook of brutal and pornographic scenes from the Bertram family’s Antigua plantation; another viewer claimed, “The moral issue of slavery, not even addressed in the novel, is tossed in, seemingly on a whim.”2 "Rubbing slavery in the faces of the audience,” wrote "Jannah12," “misses what Ms. Austen is about and why people still read her books. Ms. Austen did not write about the political issues of the 18th–19th centuries. She wrote about relationships.3 In other words, politics is still "what some read [and] watch? Austen to avoid," as Claudia Johnson put it in her review of Rozema’s film in the *Times Literary Supplement.*

However, while outraged fans imagined Jane Austen rolling or spinning in her grave in response to Rozema’s *Mansfield Park,* in many ways the film’s emphasis on the slavery subplot in Austen’s novel was simply the logical outcome of the revisionist historiography and literary criticism of the past twenty years or so that has placed the question of slavery at the center of discussion of early nineteenth-century British history in general and of Austen’s *Mansfield Park* in particular, and has placed this hitherto least appreciated of her novels at the center of the Jane Austen canon. While individual critics certainly disagree about both the importance and the meaning of Austen’s references to the Bertrams’ Antigua plantation in the novel, historian Janet Cooper has argued...