FROM FILM ADAPTATION TO POST-CELLULOID ADAPTATION

Rethinking the Transition of Popular Narratives and Characters across Old and New Media

COSTAS CONSTANDINIDES

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Introduction

The starting point of this study can be traced back to inexhaustible journeys that were and still are directly related to what I usually do to fulfill the demands of being a film scholar interested in contemporary cinematic form and style: my journeys across old and new media, real and virtual spaces to learn more about the newest techniques and equipment used in filmmaking such as Interpolated Rotoscope, Red digital cameras, Reality Camera System, or to discover the origins of a film's narrative after watching a making of video or listening to the director's commentary or even visiting a film's official website. These experiences prompted me to rethink my position as a viewer and critic in terms of access to and level of engagement with media content and form, but most importantly to examine this dialectic of transition from "pure" media forms to a confluence of media elements in relation to film adaptation theory and criticism. In addition, the gradual replacement of mechanical cameras and effects, and theatrical prints raises issues about knowledge and interpretation in the field of film studies. It is becoming impossible to talk or think about films without being able to understand the significance or signification of the digital technologies involved in the making of a film. How does this constant shift affect a study such as film adaptation, where the technology and language of cinema have been largely ignored as a site of meaning?

Contemporary film/cinema studies seem to be rapidly developing an understanding of the new technologies involved in the making of cinematic texts and of the contribution of these technologies in the construction of meaning under the umbrella of interpretive practices pertinent to the use of Digital Video (DV) cameras. While film/cinema studies discuss these practices and developments as symptoms of and oppositions to an ever evolving media industry, film adaptation studies is moving away from its traditional perception and problematic methodologies in slow motion. The intertextual dialogism approach that is currently

seen by scholars as an effective way to contest medium specificity and purity is of course a very useful model to start thinking of the various relationships and meaningful associations that a film adaptation may have to its source text. Furthermore, such a methodology allows the study of adaptations and remakes to take into consideration other media texts or subtexts that share familiar characters and narratives in ways that free the study of film adaptation from rather restrictive definitions and evaluative discourses. However, to what extent can the model of intertextual dialogism lead us to a broader definition of film adaptation that corresponds to the current developments in film and media studies? Does the intertextual dialogism approach engage in an understanding of how the contemporary logic or trends of film style and form activate meaning in this complex relationship between two or multiple media texts? Can this model acknowledge the complexity of contemporary cinema as opposed to other viewpoints which seek to undermine popular forms and new technologies as simplified media forms, which lack artistic value when compared to literary practices and to film's indexical cinematography?

In one of the most important works on new media/cinema studies *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich's aim is to record and theorize the new media of the present; to provide an understanding of the logic and development of the new media language by placing it within the history of modernity's apparatuses, mainly cinema.[1] He investigates the effects of computerization on visual culture and how new media redefine existing cultural forms such as photography and cinema. Correspondingly, this book follows a framework similar to Manovich's development of a critical discourse relevant to contemporary cinema, which will be applied for the purposes of developing a preliminary discourse about film adaptation in the present. Certainly, no language can offer a complete definition to an on-going process such as adaptation, especially when such a definition is in danger of being restrictive, but it aims to introduce a new set of principles that can be taken into consideration when studying adaptation in relation to a new medium such as digital cinema. This set of concepts and principles will nonetheless lead to a working definition of post-celluloid adaptation which will stem from an understanding of what digital cinema is and of the socioeconomic logic that shapes contemporary cinematic style and form.

Following this introduction, I discuss the latest developments in film adaptation discourse from 1999 onwards as I believe them to be the most influential steps toward a working redefinition of contemporary

adaptation since they begin to propose or fully establish an approach that thinks of film adaptations as an intertextual field in which different media forms interrelate.[2] The "beyond fidelity" work of Robert Stam, Deborah Cartmell, and Imelda Whelehan, in their attempt to develop a nonevaluative methodological approach toward film adaptations, has already provided extensive accounts of early film adaptation theory.[3] Hence, I do not aim to offer a thorough historical overview of film adaptations or film adaptation theory since this book's point of departure is Stam's embryonic concept of "post-celluloid" adaptation which I aim to explore further. I will adopt a more balanced approach as regards the discourse that is being developed around the concept of intertextual dialogism in my attempt to answer the above questions, without dismissing the fact that the model of intertextual dialogism forms a rational basis to develop a discourse of adaptation that challenges preconceived ideas about the relationship between two media forms.

Robert Stam uses the term "post-celluloid" to refer to the computerization or digitization of media and suggests that the term adaptation within the context of cinema studies must be considered in the light of these technological changes.[4] Stam further argues that "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."[5] Stam's argument has been debated by new media commentators such as Thorburn and Jenkins who argue that "to comprehend the aesthetics of transition, we must resist notions of media purity, recognizing that each medium is touched by and in turn touches its neighbors and rivals. And we must also reject static definitions of media, resisting the idea that a communications system may adhere to a definitive form."[6] A medium nonspecific approach such as intertextual dialogism is indeed a constructive way to understand the logic of transition, however this can be problematic since digital cinema has not been fully understood or mapped within the context of film studies; thus a comparative and in depth study of media forms can indeed help us comprehend how the principles and elements of digital cinema make meaning in relation to older media.

Subsequently, Stam points out critical arguments that undermine ideas and methodological approaches that derive from evaluative judgments to the study of film adaptations. However, in my opinion the few examples Stam provides limit the otherwise broader possibilities of his emergent

post-celluloid adaptation hypothesis as the facts about what new media can actually do and how media industries exploit digitization go beyond the "book to screen" adaptation. This book attempts to explore the transition, and in effect transformation of popular fictions and characters across old and new media forms within the framework of post-celluloid adaptation that Stam sets up, but does not explicitly develop. Therefore, I aim to develop the shaping of a definition of post-celluloid adaptation by suggesting that other processes such as the remaking of a cult or "classic" film, which involves processes of image computerization is a viable case of post-celluloid adaptation as there is a *new mediated treatment of familiar media content from the indexical image to the digitally composited and generated image.* The term post-celluloid then mainly refers to any production process that involves new media (digital video, nonlinear editing, motion-capture, previsualizations, animation, etc.) and to the collaborative new media of a main cinematic product; it does not refer to the printed film format of a production for cinema distribution/theatrical release purposes. Furthermore, this book aims to propose that the transition of media content to a media convergence environment such as the Internet is another viable example of post-celluloid adaptation process or one that complements a post-celluloid adaptation event such as a blockbuster based on previously published material. Therefore, the focus of this study is *the transition and transformation of media content from an old media form to a new media form.*

It should be clarified here that the adaptation processes, which are suggested here for the development of a broader definition of post-celluloid adaptation involve a more creative and radical transformation of the source text; that is they are not modifications of the main narrative object of a film, or television show from its original release format to a DVD format, or to the web for the purposes of online viewing. Consequently, the first step toward a working definition of post-celluloid adaptation is not to restrict the media involved in adaptation studies to institutionalized media such as the printed word, film, and television.

Thorburn and Jenkins appropriately indicate that "to focus exclusively on competition or tension between media systems may impair our recognition of significant hybrid or collaborative forms that often emerge during times of media transition."[7] This collaboration or coexistence raises interesting questions regarding the plurality of meanings generated when popular media content is transformed by new technologies and media industries of the present for an increasingly demanding and media literate audience. However, the recycling of familiar content via

media transitions or repetitions is the result of a competition that is partly motivated by a demand for convincing visual effects and computer generated characters which lead to an enhanced cinematic experience. What elements constitute digital cinema as a new medium then, and what kind of meanings does a digitally animated image generate that could differ from indexical images? What does the digitization of filmic models tell us about the source text itself, and how do CGI elements affect the cinema-spectator relationship? How can the Internet operate as a complementary text of the main film narrative, and how do current media industries exploit the possibilities of the Internet to engage audiences in ongoing narratives? What kind of meanings does the discourse of a webpage produce, and are these any different from a film text?

Inevitably the evaluative approach of privileging one form over the other—usually literature—in discussing film adaptations can only be destabilized and not obliterated. The evaluative or reductive comparative approach will always exist because there is always the issue of personal taste, and prejudice above all. Thus, I consider it futile to find a methodological approach that entirely rejects fidelity issues predisposed readings and preconceived ideas, and this work is not an attempt to propose the ideal non-comparative approach in adaptation studies since within this context essentially two or multiple texts that share the same title or concept are being compared openly or reductively. This book rather attempts to contribute to adaptation studies by introducing new paradigms of adaptation processes and examine how they can engage in a dialogue with the source text not only in terms of narratological signification, but also in terms of medium signification. Thus there is a specific focus on the uses of new media *objects*[8] in contemporary post-celluloid adaptations and how their manifestation creates meaningful associations that can differ from or complement the source text.

The main corpus of film adaptation thus far, has focused on films based on canonical literature, for this reason the first group of film texts moves away from this norm, and simultaneously works as a springboard that will direct the discussion to a more complete understanding and definition of post-celluloid adaptation in juxtaposition to the second group of film texts. Explicitly, the first group consists of films that are not based on canonical literature such as *Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2002), *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) with the exception of *Enduring Love* (Roger Michell, 2002), which nonetheless presents an interesting case of filmmaking style, and is discussed in relation to the representation of the double in *Fight Club*. The restricted selection of the above texts,

based on source texts that may not be well known to a potential cinema audience, enables the discussion to go beyond issues of fidelity as the source texts themselves are examples of a conscious networking of signifiers that also plays with generic boundaries. The second group of case studies includes films that are based on graphic novels and exemplify a logic of remediation that allows for the examination of the aesthetics of transition in terms of style and form. The third group of case studies consists of two film texts—*Van Helsing* (Stephen Sommers, 2004) and *King Kong* (Peter Jackson, 2005)—that blur the line between adaptations and remakes through the use of new digital technologies, which essentially render the end-products as popular narratives expressed through a different medium, namely computer generated imaging and digital compositing. Subsequent to this introduction the development of the key concepts of intertextual dialogism and post-celluloid adaptation is thoroughly explained in order to provide a complete account of the origins and aims of this project. Furthermore, these explanatory parts provide information on how the intertextual dialogism approach is used in the remaining parts of the book, and how the term post-celluloid adaptation is understood and defined here by drawing on Manovich's understanding of digital cinema.

Every blockbuster is released with a number of by-products, the most prominent being video games; the main text's cinematic illusion when seen in juxtaposition to these paratexts—official websites, "making of" shorts and video-games—is rather destroyed and sustained at the same time. This happens because media industries exploit the user's investment in these oscillations between illusion, its suspension in interactive by-products, and the tendency to give the competent viewer/user power over them by providing a cinema where the user/viewer is able to alternate his/her point of view in between databases and narratives. The contemporary mode of intertextual commodity and the viewer/user's position in this media network is something that needs to be examined further in relation to adaptation studies, and this book undertakes this task in the chapters discussing *Van Helsing* and *King Kong*.

In the third chapter the discussion focuses on the representation of new media in the film *Minority Report*, and is specifically interested in the representation of the screen as screenless or transparent. *Minority Report* will have a twofold function in this book, the one being the role of a guide to the issues and technologies that will be discussed further in other chapters; and the other is to illustrate how the digitally composited images contribute to the negotiation of meaning between the source

and end-product, and between the film and its context. Baudrillard's essay "Simulacra and Science Fiction"[9] first published in 1980 will be discussed to examine whether his argument as regards the death of science fiction is illustrated through the representation of new media apparatuses in the film. In comparing Philip K. Dick's short story *The Minority Report* (1956) and the film, it is evident that the source text lacks the rich signifying system that Spielberg adds to the concept of the pre-crime project through the aestheticization of technology. I will argue then that on another level the film explores the possibilities of new media or future media which will help the reader to understand how the film industry is trying to reorganize the way it constructs and promotes commercial cinema. This raises interesting questions regarding the relationship between the subject and the screen, user and screen, traditional screen and computer screen that will be investigated in conjunction to the potentials of post-celluloid adaptation.

The next chapter mainly focuses on the signification of specific sequences from the films *Fight Club* and *Enduring Love* by comparing these sequences to their source texts so as to reinforce the meaningful possibilities of the cinematic image in conjunction to the main narrative object. While this may seem a more traditional approach as regards the study of film adaptation the chapter essentially discusses the development of cinematic form in relation to the adaptation journey of a media text by using a rather contradictory duo of case studies. The analysis develops within the framework of interpretation processes that are relevant to cinema's ontology and form; thus it focuses on the cinematic codes that each film employs in order to construct a consistent style. This leads to a discussion which activates and suggests ways of reading the relationship between an adaptation and its source text by emphasizing the significance of form, style, and cinematic space.

The fifth chapter discusses how the graphic novel has accelerated and intensified the practices of graphicization in contemporary cinema and in effect the questions that this practice poses as regards the issue of realism and adaptation of course within the context of film studies. This transition of cartoonish violence and excess from the anarchic worlds of graphic novels interplays with a conscious use of computer graphics and thus a new aesthetic is being shaped that reinforces the presence of a screen space that blatantly wishes to disassociate itself from the traditional understanding of cinematography. Blockbuster cinema then seems to be moving beyond the (re)production of reality or unfilmable reality and reverses its course toward the refinement of realistic codes either cinematographic or

digital, to animated disruptions of the photographic and photorealistic. Therefore, this chapter will analyze in detail these moments of unrealistic visuals in films such as *300* (Zack Synder, 2006) and *Wanted* (Timur Bekmambetov, 2008) and discuss how this mode of adaptation is formed and shaped by socioeconomic factors.

Chapter 6 provides a more thorough discussion of the socioeconomic factors that shape an adaptation by taking a radical turn away from the previous parts as it suggests a broader understanding of adaptation and uses the film *Van Helsing* as the main case study example along with references to *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (Stephen Norrington, 2003). Thus, the discussion focuses on exploring how *Van Helsing* can be approached as a viable example of post-celluloid adaptation even though there is not a clear reference to a single source text but it rather engages in an intertextual dialogism. Then a close analysis of sequences from *Van Helsing* and an account of the film's by-products (Video Game and Animated Prequel) aim to reinforce the development of a discussion relevant to the economic shaping of a post-celluloid adaptation by exploring issues pertinent to the cinematic longevity of monstrous bodies and to what extent their computer generated representation alters the relationship between the viewer and post-celluloid Gothic visual narratives.

The analysis of the computer generated gorilla in Peter Jackson's *King Kong* serves as a case study example of post-celluloid adaptation which reinforces the need for the formation of a broader definition and understanding of film adaptation. This analysis indicates the key transition involved in the definition of post-celluloid adaptation, which is that of a popular visual narrative from the old medium of film to the new medium of digital cinema. The discussion gives emphasis to the more "real than real" representation of the gorilla, which is the result of non-indexical processes of image production. This suggests that even though the gorilla is computer generated, it has managed to pull off the most "credible King Kong performance" thus far. In addition, this final chapter examines the development of special effects by comparing the techniques used in the 1933 film and computer animation. Manovich's understanding of database cinema will also be discussed in relation to Peter Jackson's decision to distribute online and in real-time the production diaries of *King Kong* before the release of the film in order to suggest another mode of adaptation within post-celluloid adaptation, which is realized by the amplified extra-textual function of the official website. This connects to the economic shaping of post-celluloid adaptation developed in the

previous chapters so as to further discuss the reasons behind the extensive release of "making of" videos on the Internet. To conclude, this work essentially plays up the *what is(zes)* of cinematic discourse to introduce yet another question next to *What is Cinema? What is Digital Cinema? What is the Matrix?*: What is Post-celluloid Adaptation?

Notes

[1] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2001).

[2] See Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, eds., *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005a); Robert Stam, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005b); Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, eds., *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[3] See Imelda Whelehan's "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas" in Cartmell and Whelehan, eds., *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, 3–20; and Mireia Aragay's "Reflection to Refraction: Adaptation Studies Then and Now" in Mireia Aragay, ed., *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005b), 11–36 for a detailed literature review on the development of film adaptation studies.

[4] Robert Stam "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation" in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds., Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005a).

[5] Stam, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," 12.

[6] David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, "Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of Transition" in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, eds., David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Massachusetts: MIT, 2004b), 11.

[7] Thorburn and Jenkins, "Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of Transition," 3.

[8] Lev Manovich uses the word *object* instead of product or artwork and other possible terms to refer to a digitally composited film, a digital still, virtual 3-D environment, computer game, a website, self-contained hypermedia DVD or the Web as a whole. This term fits with Manovich's aim of "describing the general principles of media that hold true across all media types, all forms of organization, and all scales," *The Language of New Media*, 14.

[9] Two Essays: "Simulacra and Science Fiction", "Ballard's *Crash*" and "In Response to Baudrillard (N. Katherine Hayles, David Porush, Brooks Landon, and Vivian Sobchack) and to the Invitation to Respond (J. G. Ballard)" in *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 18, Part 3, No. 55 (1991): 309–321.

Chapter 1

Toward the Intertextual Dialogism Approach

Cartmell and Whelehan's *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*[1] is one of the most significant works in adaptation studies as it provides new perspectives for the analysis of film adaptations and discusses a wide range of film texts, which were critically acclaimed and commercially successful at the time of putting together the essays included in their collected edition. Furthermore this work introduces new forms involved in adaptation processes such as animation and comic books as well as the screen to text adaptation. Examples of films analyzed in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* include *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995), *Naked Lunch* (David Cronenberg, 1991), and the *Batman* films among others. These selections essentially liberate the study of the above film texts from the traditional approach of prioritizing the source text as their source text is not immediately familiar to a potential cinema audience or the narrative content is expressed in a form that has been neglected by scholarly studies. According to Whelehan then:

> Any critical consideration of an adaptation's reception might benefit from recognizing some of the practical realities involved in producing a commercially successful film—such as pruning culturally anachronistic features, trimming sophisticated narrative strategies into a recognizable popular film genre which is, in turn, an adaptation of other films, with intertextual links with its contemporary filmic counterparts.[2]

Whelehan provides a thorough overview of the critical literature on adaptations from the early linkage of Dickens' device of parallel action and Griffith's montage by Eisenstein to McFarlane's narratological approach to adaptation. Whelehan's literature review and Cartmell's introduction to the first and last part of the collection fundamentally

identify the problems of the body of work on film adaptation thus far, and these limitations to the study of adaptations lead the commentators to the proposition of new ways of thinking about film adaptation that are evident throughout the scholarly material introduced in the volume. Consequently, this book's main argument can be seen as a continuation of Cartmell's and Whelehan's work as well as Stam's taking into consideration Cartmell's final commentary that "*Adaptations* does reveal just how 'open' the study of adaptation must become."[3] Whelehan begins her literature review with the general observation that the hybrid study of film adaptations has not yet "reached a happy compromise in its approach to the two media" involved—the novel and the film.[4] She then refers to Cohen's[5] and Geoffrey Wagner's[6] works to point out their underlining of the increasing interdependence between the forms of film and novel, specifically modernist literature's relation to the avant-garde cinema and modernist writers' uses of cinematic tendencies. Whelehan comments on Wagner's note that *All About Eve*'s (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950) script was commercially published in print, to point out the fact that even the source text of a film cannot prevent the successful creation of by-products based on the film itself rather than the origin. She then provides Tarantino's best-selling screenplays as a contemporary example of screen to text adaptation.

Whelehan argues against Miller's[7] assumption that literary fiction is more complex than film, and states that such prejudiced approaches toward film undermines the possibility of a serious study of the medium as an art form. She also contradicts Bluestone's[8] presupposition that the novelist produces a work of high aesthetic value which is not restricted by a commercial logic, unlike film production which is driven by industrial conditions and conforms to certain conventions due to financial practices. Whelehan responds to this understanding of Bluestone's study by identifying that market forces exist even in the literary market itself; in addition she draws attention to the *auteur*-director figures such as Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, and Kenneth Branagh, who have specifically undertaken the challenge of adapting a classic text so as to realize their personal visions of the source text.

Whelehan then identifies some problems in the work of Wagner and Brian McFarlane[9] on film adaptations. She remarks that Wagner's categorization of film adaptations into three types is problematic as Wagner himself provides examples and arguments that seem to contradict the description of his first type of adaptation and in effect the other two categories. Specifically, Wagner's three types of film

adaptation are: (1) Transposition—a novel "directly given on screen"[10] (2) Commentary—the partially intentional or inadvertent alteration of an original source (3) Analogy—a film adaptation that may modernize or radically change the source text. Wagner associates the first category with the adaptation of classic literature, and he adopts a quite reductive approach as he characterizes the Hollywoodian versions of classics as puerile and argues that the transposition of classic novels into films is analogous to book illustrations. I concur with Whelehan's view that Wagner's transposition and his thoughts on Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* (1939) are not soundly justified as his analysis of the specific film is permeated throughout with evaluative judgments. According to Whelehan "the example of *Wuthering Heights* as transposition suggests some problems attached to these categories since, as Wagner himself notes, half the book is immediately chopped. Judgements about transposition seem as subjective as past determinants of success—here *Wuthering Heights* is condensed to 'a love story.'"[11] In other words, if *Wuthering Heights* is considered to be a transposition, yet half the book was left out in the process of transposition and has been transformed into a love story, how does the second category then differ from transposition? This is the problem that such categorizations of film adaptation raise, therefore judgments on textual fidelity as Whelehan states "may become an inexact science."[12]

Subsequently, Whelehan discusses McFarlane's work in *Novel to Film* (1996), who seeks to develop a narratological approach; therefore he restricts his focus only to the transposition of narrative functions and kinds of narration from the novel to the cinema's distinctive system of codes. This approach immediately raises important issues regarding its effectiveness, even though McFarlane avoids the prioritizing of the literary text. McFarlane informs the reader about the restrictions he places, still the model of study he offers essentially ignores the limitless categories of adaptations and the numerous ways we can study them. Similarly to Whelehan and Cartmell, McFarlane acknowledges the fact that critical approaches based on fidelity issues have led to "a suppression of potentially more rewarding approaches to the phenomenon of adaptation. It tends to ignore the idea of adaptation as an example of convergence among the arts."[13] Furthermore, McFarlane argues that such an evaluative approach fails to take into account the institutional context and of course the complexity of the adaptation process. He cites the work of certain commentators on film adaptation in an attempt to underline his approach toward adaptation. McFarlane includes

a paragraph on the critical notion of intertextuality, which he believes is "a more sophisticated approach"[14] in examining adaptations. However, his suggestion that classification of film adaptations in the work of Wagner, Dudley Andrew,[15] Michael Klein, and Gillian Parker,[16] "represent some heartening challenges to the primacy of fidelity as a critical criterion"[17] is somewhat unconvincing for reasons explained above. The first category—transposition—which is analogous to the classification offered by the other commentators, is in itself problematic. Stam writes that "it is questionable whether strict fidelity is even possible. A counter-view would insist that an adaptation is automatically different and original due to the change of medium."[18] Thus, a classification system, even if it is not definitive cannot be used effectively as the print medium is not usually appropriated in an audiovisual medium. It seems that classifications systems tend to ignore the form and aesthetic criteria of the cinematic medium where the operations of its technical elements are not simply invisible but become meaningful through a dynamic interaction with the story.

Whelehan draws certain analogies between fandom and the study of adaptations and suggests that another strategy to unseat the prioritizing of fidelity is to think about adaptations "in terms of *excess* rather than lack"[19]:

> Research into fandom in cultural studies documents the way that fan communities constantly produce new narratives about favourite characters or authors, as if what they find in the original text frustrates a quest for wholeness and completeness which can only be satisfied by the creation and dispersal of narratives which somehow fill in the "gaps".[20]

These activities then, Whelehan argues, render the fans as critics and sophisticated intertextual readers; the rewriting of texts by fans can be seen as part of their critical approach to the original. Therefore, Whelehan proposes that readers of adaptations "can become more conscious of their active role as critics by evaluating both literary text and its adaptation, looking beyond issues of success or failure"[21] as well as considering other contextual and cultural factors. Additionally, Cartmell in clarifying the general methodological approach of their study in *Adaptations* writes that "instead of worrying about whether a film is 'faithful' to the original literary text [. . .] we read adaptations for their generation of plurality of meanings. Thus the intertextuality of the

adaptation is our primary concern."[22] Cartmell and Whelehan's perspectives lead the discussion to the examination of a more complete model of intertextuality as a critical approach to study adaptations proposed by Robert Stam in his essay "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation,"[23] which he maintained in his later works on adaptation.

Stam introduces the intertextual dialogism approach with the aim of marginalizing the insistence on fidelity further and also suggests another system of classification, based on Gerard Genette's term transtextuality and its subdivisions in *Palimpsests*.[24] Certainly this system and approach is more effective than previous classifications of film adaptations in its attempt to unseat fidelity:

> Adaptations, then, can take an activist stance toward their source novels, inserting them into a much broader intertextual dialogism. An adaptation, in this sense, is less an attempted resuscitation of an originary word than a turn in an ongoing dialogical process. The concept of intertextual dialogism suggests that every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces. All texts are tissues of anonymous formulae, variations on those formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, and conflations and inversions of other texts.[25]

For a hypothesis that is interested in the dissemination of visual and literary generic elements across old and new media, and in the analysis of case studies that are infused with recognizable and playful quotations from cultural and visual sources, intertextual dialogism is a useful model for a discussion that is not concerned with authenticity and authorial meaning. However, we are again faced with sub-categorizations of a term and classifications of the relationship between a text and its source text, but it should be noted that intertextuality as a methodological paradigm entails an iconic as well as narrative relationship between the source and end-product(s), which allows for the close analysis of the filmic text, in particular the cinematic mise-en-scène, as a meaningful cultural product that initiates this dialectic process that Stam suggests. Although Stam's approach stems from the study of adaptations from novels to films, it can be easily applied to the new processes of adaptation proposed here, as intertextual dialogism is an open critical paradigm. It is questionable though whether within the framework of adaptation studies certain parameters can exist. Classifying modes of adaptation within the field of media studies seems to be an impossible task today, especially when scholars comment on the fact that the field can and needs to become

broader. This book introduces new considerations and refers to other possible considerations as an agenda for future research within the framework of adaptation studies by offering an examination of the field as it is being formed by new media and by expressing the impossibility of controlling or classifying adaptations due to the constant shift of aesthetic criteria and stories across multiple media platforms that emerge from the logic and practices of a *new media Hollywood*.

Wagner's classification most importantly omits the possibility of multiple generic intertexts involved in an adaptation process in contrast to Stam's following remark:

> A single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can generate a plethora of possible readings, including even readings of the narrative itself. The literary text is not a closed, but an open structure [. . .] to be reworked by a boundless context. The text feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permutating intertext, which is seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation.[26]

Stam raises a set of questions regarding fidelity and the author, suggesting that the filmmaker cannot be faithful to something that itself is not firm, conscious or clear about its intentions. To reinforce his assumptions and undermine the author's function, Stam refers to the Bakhtinian translinguistic conception that understands the author as a coordinator of preexisting discourses; Foucault's vision of the anonymity of discourse and to the Derridean deconstruction of the hierarchical relationship between original and copy. Therefore, Stam seeks to weaken preconceptions of film adaptation as an inferior and subordinate form of expression by putting forward critical arguments that stem from structuralist and poststructuralist theoretical developments.

Building on Genette's five types of transtextuality, Stam offers a classification of film adaptations on the basis of these types. Genette's intertextuality, which is the first type, describes the coexistence of two texts and their relationship in "the form of quotation, plagiarism, and allusion. Adaptation in this sense, participates in a double intertextuality, one literary and the other cinematic."[27] The second type of transtextuality, paratextuality, refers to the verbal and other productions that surround the main text such as the title, illustrations, footnotes, and the preface among others. Stam suggests that in the case of film the paratext might indicate reports or remarks coming from a director or a film's production notes. Of course a paratext within the context of adaptation studies can

take different forms and as I argue in Chapter 7, the official website of a film or a TV show is simultaneously a paratext and a form of adaptation as the media content is transformed to be expressed in a different medium that enables the viewer to interact with the content. In addition, the extra features on DVD formats are paratexts, and essentially may render the DVD version of the film an adaptation as most of the time commentaries from directors offer a different perspective on the film, which may affect the initial experience of the viewer. The director's commentary not only decodes his/her point of view of the visual narrative, but he/she deconstructs the illusion itself by explaining processes of preproduction, filming and postproduction.

The third type of transtextuality is metatextuality, which comprises the "critical relation between one text and another, whether the commented text is explicitly cited or only silently evoked."[28] In *Literature and Film*, Stam discusses the term further and suggests that 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."[29] Such an example is Michael Winterbottom's film *A Cock and Bull Story* (2005), which is an attempt to comment on the decision-making processes involved in the making of an adaptation based on Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* through a metacinematic discourse that highlights the playfulness of the source text. Yet, in a world of post-celluloid media and blockbuster dominance metatextuality suggests new ways of seeing and new channels for seeing; thus, in the case of post-celluloid adaptations based on graphic novels metatextuality also refers to a practice that simultaneously reads and performs the operation of the static image through a process of dynamic remediation.

The fourth type is architextuality, which refers to the "generic taxonomies suggested or refused by the titles or infratitles of a text."[30] Hence, a changed title such as *Clueless* serves to disguise Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), but at the same time the title suggests the generic group of teen movies. The final category, hypertextuality, is according to Stam the most pertinent to adaptation and therefore to post-celluloid adaptation. Hypertextuality describes the relationship between a filmic text, which is the hypertext, to an anterior text, the hypotext, which is in other words the source text. For instance Peter Jackson's *King Kong* is the hypertext of the 1933 *King Kong*, which is the hypotext. This categorization system enables an analysis of a film adaptation to be liberated from a comparative study based strictly on evaluative judgments; or a comparative study of the story-line and the representation of characters informed solely by

literary criticism. A comparative analysis under the umbrella of intertextual dialogism can become a tool rather than a norm, that is it can embrace the interpretive schemata that are specific to film analysis in order to produce a more elaborate exchange of meaningful operations that emerge from the process of film adaptation. The intertextual dialogism approach not only breaks away from the conservative discourse of early film adaptation studies, but it allows for the introduction of new modes of adaptation that do not adhere to the traditional "from novel to film" adaptation paradigm, which leaves out the new narrative forms, techniques and possibilities that new visual technologies introduce and perform. In the following section I discuss the concept of digital cinema as shaped by the new media theory of Lev Manovich and I explain how cinema is understood throughout this work. In addition, I examine the new forms of interaction, narrative and representation that new media introduce in order to start building a consistent working definition of what post-celluloid adaptation is and suggest ways of reading post-celluloid adaptations as it is essential to take into consideration the practice of cross-media synergies and its impact on the relationship between spectator and screen.

Notes

[1] Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, eds., *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (London: Routledge, 1999a).
[2] Imelda Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas," in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, eds. Cartmell and Whelehan, 4.
[3] Deborah Cartmell, "Introduction," in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen, Screen to Text*, eds. Cartmell and Whelehan, (1999b), 145.
[4] Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas," 4.
[5] Keith Cohen, *Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
[6] Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975).
[7] Gabriel Miller, *Screening the Novel* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980).
[8] George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957).
[9] Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).
[10] Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema*, 222.
[11] Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas," 9.
[12] Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas," 9.
[13] McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 10.
[14] McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 10.

[15] Andrew Dudley, "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory," in *Narrative Strategies*, eds. Syndy Conger and Janice R. Welsch (Macomb: West Illinois University Press, 1980).
[16] Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, eds., *The English Novel and the Movies* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981).
[17] McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 11.
[18] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," in *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore (London: The Athlone Press, 2000).
[19] Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas,"16.
[20] Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas,"16.
[21] Whelehan, "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas,"17.
[22] Cartmell, "Introduction," (1999a), 28.
[23] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation."
[24] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).
[25] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," 64.
[26] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," 57.
[27] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," 65.
[28] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," 65.
[29] Robert Stam "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005a), 28.
[30] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," 65.

Chapter 2

Toward Post-Celluloid Adaptation

In his book *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich discusses new media in relation to the history of visual media such as cinema and illustrates how new and old forms work together in order to shape new narrative modes and aesthetics, and how the effects of these new forms have redefined visual culture in general and the viewer's ways of seeing. Manovich understands new media as "the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication [. . .] the computer media revolution affects all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution; it also affects all types of media—texts, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions."[1] Correspondingly, computerization affects a hybrid study of two or more media forms such as adaptation. Stam asks "how, then, might the new technologies facilitate new approaches to adaptation and to adaptation studies?"[2] and he offers a number of speculations, which essentially seek to undermine further the opposition of original and copy; he refers to the possibilities of computerization to store, reproduce, and "cut 'n' mix," and how these conventions will change our approach to the reformatting of existing film adaptations of classics, or their remaking in digital formats. The two problems that essentially restrict Stam's attempt to discuss a possible explanation of post-celluloid adaptation are first the fact that film adaptation is not just about adapting canonical literature and secondly there is no reason to speculate while what he is describing in his discussion as something that canonical literature will undergo in the near future, has been actualized either through the adaptation of popular fiction or the remaking of films.

Stam's case study examples are problematic in the sense that he automatically maintains a rather traditional perspective by favoring literature as the hypotext to develop his hypothesis. Intertextual dialogism as a broader methodological paradigm invites processes of

adaptation that should not be limited to a "book to film" adaptation, especially classic literature to film. Popular culture has become so rich and media technology is developing so fast the last twenty years that it is almost impossible to overlook these cultural transitions. Stam should have included a more analytical chapter on the impact of post-celluloid media on adaptation theory/processes by using concrete examples. The fact that he dedicates only a few pages to the new and changing media arguably suggests that a concept like post-celluloid adaptation is still to come; an indirect argument that I intend to challenge. One of the tasks of this work then is to establish post-celluloid adaptation as an existing process so as to contribute to the theory of adaptation studies by considering the digital image an element that can be analyzed and interpreted as a diverse visual medium, whereby the process of writing about a "book to digital cinema" adaptation or a "film to digital cinema" adaptation becomes fundamentally different.

I would like to explain briefly why I use the word adaptation to describe a process that would normally be described as the remaking of a film by using Manovich's understanding of what digital cinema is to support my hypothesis. This discussion will lead to a rather crude definition of the film remake, another problematic term, that even though it overlaps with the concept of adaptation, needs to be distinguished here as a study that does not focus on the close analysis of the new aesthetics of Hollywood cinema, which are primarily a hybrid form of computer generated images and live action footage; when CGI is used extensively in a movie, it essentially renders the text as a new media object rather than being a reproduction of reality that is framed by indexical cinematography. Thus, the recognizable units of a popular narrative, the familiar characters, the generic attributes of a specific film, its intertextual relations to film history are modified to suit new technological and aesthetic conditions. Debates on the issue of the film remake have not developed a register that understands contemporary blockbusters as a new medium or computerized cinema. The remake can arguably be defined, then, as a film based on, or a film that represents faithfully a previous filmic source and retells a familiar narrative or film genre from another perspective by using to a significant extent the same production technologies during the stages of preproduction, filming, postproduction as the source text. A film like Peter Jackson's *King Kong* is not a remake because it moves away from traditional cinematographic operations to create a film. The source text uses live action footage, stop-motion animation, black and white film stock, models and miniatures, whereas the latest *King Kong* is

digitally composited, the creature is computer generated, the sets vary in their representation and construction (life-size sets, miniatures or computer generated) all in all it is largely produced and composited on the computer.

Constantine Verevis in his extensive and significant review of the existing literature on film remakes begins with a set of questions such as "what is film remaking?" and "how does film remaking differ from other types of repetition, such as quotation, allusion and adaptation?"[3] Film remaking, Verevis argues, relies on a competent audience (knowledge of previous texts and generic structures) and it is "both enabled and limited by a series of historically specific institutional factors, such as copyright law, canon formation, and film reviewing which are essential to the existence and maintenance—to the 'discursivization'—of the film remake. In these ways, film remaking is not simply a quality of texts or viewers, but the secondary result of broader discursive activity".[4] While this definition acknowledges the complexity of the term and avoids the usual practice of overlapping and of reductive categorizations, but instead moves toward the intertextual dialogism approach discussed above, it does not consider the technological development of the cinematic apparatus as a significant factor that may determine whether we should be discussing a film based on a film as a remake or something else. Therefore, post-celluloid adaptation should entail the general understanding of adaptation as the transition and metamorphosis of narrative units and popular characters from a traditional medium to a new medium. As computerized cinema is a new medium according to Manovich then a post-celluloid adaptation also refers to a computer generated cinematic text which is based on or retells a filmic source text.

How can contemporary cinematic texts be redefined as a new medium then? Manovich writes that "computer media redefine the very identity of cinema"[5] and essentially challenges the understanding of cinema as the art of the index, namely the lens-based recordings of reality and live action footage:

> But what happens to cinema's indexical identity if it is now possible to generate photorealistic scenes entirely on a computer using 3-D computer animation; modify individual frames or whole scenes with the help [sic] a digital paint program; cut, bend, stretch, and stitch digitized film images into something with perfect photographic credibility even though it was never actually filmed?[6]

Manovich argues that cinema's painterly nature in the digital age, that is the digitally animated construction of images and not the recording of live images, marks a return to the nineteenth-century techniques for generating moving images, and to the twentieth-century cinema and animation. Although this is an interesting observation, a thoroughgoing discussion of the relation between the history of early cinema and digital cinema is beyond the scope of this study. Manovich then remarks that computer software and hardware along with animation techniques, replace traditional filmmaking, and "this logic subordinates the photographic and the cinematic to the painterly and the graphic, destroying cinema's identity as a media art."[7] It should be clarified that Manovich uses the term cinema as the broader concept of the moving image rather than what is commonly understood as films/movies or the apparatus that reproduces reality through a camera lens. In other words it is similar to Shaw's understanding of cinema as "the immanent and increasing multiplicity of techniques of representation and intercommunication and the emergent expressive possibilities that derive from their invention and application, as well as the individual and social dynamics of these resulting new forms of experience."[8] Therefore the concept of cinema may extend for example to music videos, CD-ROM-based games, and video art installations.

In his attempt to redefine cinema, Manovich lists the principles[9] of digital cinema. These principles lead Manovich to his definition of digital filmmaking, and in effect digital cinema:

> Digital film = live action material + painting + image processing + compositing + 2-D animation + 3-D animation[10]

Consequently, digital cinema is a "particular case of animation that uses live-action footage as one of its many elements."[11] While this definition applies to most of the case studies I analyze in this book it certainly raises a lot of issues as regards the use of the word animation, even in defining film texts that are recorded in digital cameras and claim to represent reality. What Manovich means by "animation" is the different stages that raw footage goes through to reach its final stage, which is fundamentally modified, or "manually" painted with the use of computer software to the point where indexicality is lost, even by altering the brightness of the shot. In a footnote he even proposes a more radical redefinition of digital film which is the mathematical description of "Digital film = $f\ (x, y, t)$" as for a computer "a film is an abstract arrangement of colors changing in

time, rather than something structured by 'shots', 'narrative', 'actors', and so on."[12] This definition of digital cinema then reinforces the theory of post-celluloid adaptation, which is understood here as the process whereby a *preexisting fictional source expressed in a traditional medium (novel, film, television) is recreated, directly or not, in a new medium (digital cinema),* either as a homage, maybe as a desire to compete with early cinematic techniques, or simply as a safe marketing decision to ensure success at the box office due to the familiarity of the source.

Interestingly, Manovich suggests new ways of studying digital film by introducing and simultaneously defining new types of montage and narrative forms that can be applied in digital filmmaking and digital cinema as a broader concept. To begin with, Manovich notes that digital compositing is not "concerned with time but with space."[13] Thus, computer editing privileges montage within a shot through the layering of different live-action and virtual material. This process can have incredible results as the different elements blend together to create a convincing effect of presence in a seamless virtual space within a single shot, whereas in the case of traditional temporal montage different images are juxtaposed to create the impression of a continuous space. This spatial montage can be achieved with various combinations of layers or the seamless joining of frames along with real cameras or virtual camera movement; an example is the bullet time effect, a technique that was perfected for *The Matrix* trilogy (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999), or the many panoramic virtual shots of the battle scenes in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2001). However, Manovich stresses the possibility that spatial montage is not only the seamless representation of a single space in a shot, it could also be the case that "different worlds clash semantically"[14] to generate a specific effect; a possibility discussed in the examination of *Fight Club* as post-celluloid adaptation. Thus, spatial montage becomes a vital aspect to read digital films, and especially adaptations where the potential of representation and interpretation of a source text through its direct or indirect adaptation into digital cinema becomes a more complex operation.

Manovich discusses extensively the database vs. narrative opposition and the loop as a new media narrative engine. Database is obviously the structure that organizes a new media object such as a website for example—storage of vast amounts of data in no particular linear structure—and narrative "creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items."[15] He therefore suggests that the collaboration of database and narrative in providing information in a medium such as

digital cinema can enable new kinds of narrative structures and Manovich discusses case studies such as Peter Greenaway's work and Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) in which manifestations of this collaboration can be seen. Although the film texts themselves discussed in this work are not examples of such collaboration or of the loop as a narrative engine, the collaboration of database and narrative structures can be found in the cross-media relationship between the film texts and their paratexts (official websites, making of shorts, and other by-products).

In the case of the official websites of films there have been radical uses of the possibilities of the Web, which do not reduce the role of the website to just another promotional media channel. Such is the case with Peter Jackson's *King Kong*, where the director engaged the user/viewer in the process of making Kong, which rendered the website a powerful paratext of the main text, or created a "database as non-linear narrative" (an antinarrative logic of the story of making the film). An even more radical description of this synergy would be that the main text is an adaptation from a database structure that Jackson gradually builds up for the viewer/user on the net as a potential narrative or story that operates on two levels: it describes the painstaking and creative efforts of the crew to bring Kong to life and it plays up the concept of Kong as a timeless visual experience. This example illustrates of course how significant it is to establish an approach to the study of adaptations that takes into consideration the journey of popular media content across new aesthetics and narrative forms. *Post-celluloid adaptation can be initially defined as the transition of familiar media content from a traditional medium—print, film and television—to a new media object or a set of new media objects that embrace the concept of the main end-product.* The term post-celluloid adaptation itself coincides with certain strategies of cinematic events, mainly the promotion and distribution of blockbusters and of their collaborative media texts, which promote incompleteness and a financially driven collaborative authorship with the viewer/user, which is realized through the consuming of products that complete the seemingly elliptical narrative of the main product. Therefore, I argue that *post-celluloid adaptation is not restricted to the interconnectedness of two texts, but a multiplicity of texts that function across collaborative media, which are deliberately constructed as stories that complement the hypotext and the hypertext in terms of signification and narrative for commercial purposes.*

New technologies provide the platform to create visually dynamic and convincing creatures and spaces based on the cultural impact that popular fiction and characters had and still have on the masses.

Media corporations have responded to these new technologies by using them to create a new cultural trend that redefines the masses of the Western world as subjects that can be part of this new and exhilarating representation of popular culture. Of course the distance between the audience and these images has arguably been erased as media industries aim to immerse the viewer through interactive play; a new pleasure that has replaced the experience of traditional movie-going and forces cultural theory to reexamine the relationship between popular cultures and the viewer or reader. A post-celluloid adaptation process is partly the inevitable outcome of such a move toward the digital *reanimation* of popular culture as familiar images take different digital forms to reflect the everyday online tasks of a user, which in turn shape his/her habits of consuming entertainment. The multiplicity of by-products that can be generated from a main media product can maintain the interest of a viewer through the promise of different levels of engagement with and participation in the popular text, the ultimate media platform being the video game. Moreover, this experimentation with new media should also be seen as the mapping of the possibilities of this collaboration between different forms of representation. These important changes that shape the context of the case studies discussed here substantiate post-celluloid adaptation as *a process that does not simply describe the transition of familiar images from an older medium to a new, but a process that is a symptom of the cultural logic of convergence culture.*

The chapters that discuss extensively post-celluloid adaptation as a symptom of this condition also exemplify an intensified continuation of themes that were present in Hollywood cinema throughout its history. The "outer"-space that realized the fantasies of audiences on the big screen reemerges as a promise of accessibility and exploration and not only as an imaginary, which only lasts as a two-hour experience in the movie theater. These intensified process maps the emergent possibilities of narrative play as the "outer"-space reflects simultaneously a journey across the virtual spaces of the Web. The monstrous body is another theme that is quite central in the case studies in question. The monstrous has traditionally been interpreted as the embodiment of the anxieties of a social moment. The analysis of *Van Helsing* questions whether the monstrous body continues the traditional encoding of a monstrous body as a metaphor of anxieties. The evolution of the monstrous body to a digital effect of exhilarating motion and morphing is another symptom of the socio-economic context of new media Hollywood. This evolution deliberately allows for role play and although the digitizing of Gothic

monsters in *Van Helsing* entails the absence of horror effects and does not invite a psychoanalytic interpretation, the digital body reinvents the movie monster as a body that can be remade and be controlled in another digital platform by the viewers of the film, who essentially reexperience the film as users and participants.

The remaining chapters exemplify the ways with which the following description is manifested through the case study examples that I choose to analyze. The question of what post-celluloid adaptation is can be summarized as follows:

> *It is the transference and transformation of media content from a traditional media form to the diverse vernacular of a new media form. However, the spectrum of media texts that post-celluloid adaptation examines is not limited to the interconnectedness of two texts, but expands to a multiplicity of texts that may function independently but at the same time are deliberately seen as incomplete in terms of signification and narrative. Post-celluloid adaptation is a process that emerges as a symptom of the logic of convergence culture.*

While the above explanation may refer to a number of exchanges across media platforms, this book emphasizes digital cinema as a medium that introduces new patterns of representation and interpretation that form a new mixed cinema, which is expressed through moments that exaggerate the possibilities of a future cinema; a cinema that promises to immerse the viewer in an imaginary space that extends beyond the screen and the movie theater.

Notes

[1] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2001), 19.
[2] Robert Stam "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005a), 13.
[3] Constantine Verevis, "Remaking Film" *Film Studies* 4 (2004): 87.
[4] Verevis, "Remaking Film," 87.
[5] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 293.
[6] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 295.
[7] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 295.
[8] Jeffrey Shaw, "Introduction," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 27.
[9] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*: (1) 3-D computer animation displaces live action footage from its function as the sole material from which a film can

be made; (2) Even live action footage loses its indexicality when digitized or recorded in a digital format as according to Manovich the computer "does not distinguish between an image obtained through a photographic lens, an image created in a paint program, or an image synthesized in a 3-D graphics package, since they are all made from the same material—pixels [. . .] Live-action footage is thus reduced to just another graphic" (300) for pixels can of course be altered; (3) Therefore, live action footage now "functions as raw material for further compositing, animating, and morphing." In traditional filmmaking, the director had/has to get the live-action shot right, as he/she did not have, or does not want to use, the option of reconstructing or even constructing the mise-en-scène via digital means. Manovich uses the opening long-shot of *Forrest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994) as an example of this principle, where the flying feather was initially filmed in different static positions against a blue screen and then animated, and eventually composited against the live action material. There are plenty of other examples of this principle, which are going to be discussed in detail in the analysis of *Fight Club*, *Van Helsing* and *King Kong*; (4) Finally, in digital filmmaking editing and special effects become the same operation, whereas in traditional filmmaking they were separate activities. As the basic "cut and paste" computer command shows "modification of digital images (or other digitized data) is not sensitive to distinctions of time and space or to differences in scale. So, reordering sequences of images in time, compositing them together in space, modifying parts of an individual image, and changing pixels" (301) become essentially the same activity.

[10] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 301.

[11] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 302.

[12] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 302.

[13] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 155.

[14] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 158.

[15] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 225.

Chapter 3

From the Prediction of Crime to the Prevision of Screenless Media: Spielberg's Adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *The Minority Report*

The world of the future, to me, is not a place, but an event. A construct, not by one author in the form of words written to make up a novel or story that other persons sit in front of, outside of, and read—but a construct in which there is no author and no readers but a great many characters in search of a plot[1]

The above description of the future by Philip K. Dick may as well work as definition of post-celluloid adaptation and a total expression of the term as an event, where the audience is consciously targeted as a collaborative author, stitching together a number of texts generated by collaborative media forms. The relevance of this quote and of the above cultural logic to the case study of this chapter lies in the fact that Spielberg in *Minority Report* (2002) speaks through a metacinematic framework about the technologies of vision, which enable the above description. I argue then that on a less perceptible level Spielberg expands a short story—which is a hybrid of a whodunit story with elements of dystopian science-fiction detritus to dress the plot—to the present and future of digital cinema or whatever cinema will be called in the future while retaining the short story's subject matter of foreknowledge. Spielberg chooses in my opinion, and this is what essentially challenges the preferred readings of the film, to depict visual/screen technologies which are constructed in such a way that demand an open perception rather than simply carrying negative connotations because the logic from which these screens emerge is rather gloomy. This is indeed a departure from Dickian worlds, and while on the one hand this chapter attempts to justify the above proposal, on the other hand it also attempts to explain how the digitally

composited images construct further meaning and take us through a basic understanding of post-celluloid adaptation. This understanding does not only examine the relationship of two media forms, but also takes into consideration Henry Jenkins' arguments regarding convergence culture (2006). While Jenkins' arguments are open to question, media forms do encourage the viewers/users "to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content"[2] and this shift is one of the key processes that redefines the concept of film adaptation.

Interestingly, *Minority Report* in this project functions in many respects like Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) in Manovich's work, which serves as a "guide to the language of new media."[3] *Minority Report* will serve as a guide in building a language for post-celluloid adaptation, each screen technology represented in the film helping us understand the principles of the new media forms and the socioeconomic considerations that shape this term such as database structure, intertextuality, intertextual commodity, and interactivity. The utterly commercial cultural form of a post-celluloid adaptation such as *Van Helsing* certainly departs from the definition of post-celluloid adaptation that this and the following chapter will set on the basis that the study of *Van Helsing* will not only be restricted on the role and extent of digitally processed images in the film. The chapter on *Van Helsing* then will introduce in detail the socioeconomic dimension of the term post-celluloid adaptation, which raises a number of interesting issues pertinent to the consumption of adaptations by the viewers. Therefore, this and the following chapter rather present a simple definition of post-celluloid adaptation that focuses on the significance of CGI in the construction of meaning.

Specifically, this chapter introduces the new media technologies and theories that will be discussed further in the book by using the film's representation of technology that on many levels plays with the possibilities of convergence culture and Bolder and Grusin's double logic of remediation,[4] thus blurring the boundaries between fictional technology and actual technology, fictional cultural shifts and actual cultural shifts. *Minority Report* uses the digital image as a tool to build a world of transparent or screenless screens that essentially projects an intensified cultural logic of 24/7 access to and collection of information and data through interactions that suggest the obliteration of mediation. In other words the digitally composited image is used to comment on our digital era and our obsession with the myth of total immediacy. The last comment is of course a reference to Bazin's understanding of the myth of total

cinema and thus the image in Spielberg's film is an essay on the future of the moving image and maybe a take on Bazin's statement that "cinema has not yet been invented"[5] coming from a director who constantly seeks to reinvent cinema.

Philip K. Dick's underground science fiction may well be described as an interactive, *writerly* text and may fall under the umbrella of "interactive" texts, even before the emergence of interactive digital technology, in terms of cognitive/mental interaction. In her essay "Designing a Database Cinema,"[6] Kinder asserts that earlier art forms such as experimental novels and films provided a degree of interactivity referring in particular to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759), and Eisenstein's intellectual montage. There are numerous other pre-digital examples that break the traditional canons of narrative and reception allowing for a bridging of the power relationship between author and reader. Dick's formerly marginal work has established science fiction as a genre that can stimulate critical dialogue between the text and the Barthesian reader as producer of the text. Yet, the interaction does not entail the possibilities involved in the reading of a hypertext, but it takes place in the mind of the reader who oscillates between the alternate worlds that Dick invents in search of a meaning. Conclusively, due to Dick's trademark experimentation, his works demand a certain level of interactivity as there is a destabilization of "official versions of history and reality, often revealing them to be total deceptions."[7] Therefore the *search for a plot* becomes a search for a truth which is hidden behind multilayered matrices of simulations and simulacra, and this ongoing search is underlined via Dick's interchangeable grim worlds and his open-ended narratives.[8] In the film in question, the concept of interactivity as understood in new media debates becomes a main theme since the city functions as a network or virtual space, where the already "immersed" individual verifies his/her existence as a part of this construct through a constant and controlled interaction with technologies of surveillance and technologies of vision.

The Minority Report (1956), like many of Dick's stories, addresses Cold War anxieties, conspiracy theories related to the political paranoia of his time, and Big Brother states, providing a problematic ending that raises questions regarding social discipline, the notion of utopia, and free will. Spielberg's adaptation of *The Minority Report* foregrounds the aforementioned issues to a large extent, by refashioning them within the context of debates related to contemporary technological determinism and corporatist power, embroidered with a postmodern iconography of

noirish style and numerous allusions to science-fiction classics. Similarly to *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), Spielberg creates a coherent and rational vision of the near future as the representation of the city and technology is according to him and the production team the gradual development of the current technologies and infrastructures of Western societies, giving particular emphasis to the verticality of the city and its taxonomy of social classes.

On another level, in *Minority Report* Spielberg partly functions as a curator of an exhibition on experimental forms of future cinema. We witness holographic home "videos" and ads; transparent screens, interactive apparatuses and city buildings that function as screens, which all at once redefine the traditional notion of the screen as screenless. According to Weibel "image technology and its late-twentieth-century tendency to imitate life moved on from the simulation of movement (the motion picture) to the simulation of interaction: a responding and reacting image, the image as a living system, the viable picture."[9] New media practitioners have explored these ideas via experimental apparatuses presented in the exhibition *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film* (2003) at the ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe. Likewise, Spielberg brings together fictional apparatuses that fully exemplify the current experimentation on future cinema in a narrative space that allows him to do so. He displays the possibilities of cinematic forms, suggesting the impact they may have on our society.

Therefore, *Minority Report* is not only a Hollywood science-fiction film; it is also "Cinema about Future Cinema" just as *A Man with a Movie Camera* is perceived by Manovich as a film about cinematic techniques, which are for Manovich the principles from which new media developed. *Minority Report* will be our guide then to the processes involved in a mode such as post-celluloid adaptation where the use of new media forms is of primary importance due to new strategies that the film industry adopts to compete but at the same time collaborate with the appealing aesthetics and interactive potentials of other media. As Dick's short story does not include such a *meta* discourse, how does this choice or perception affect the interpretation of *Minority Report*. Before moving into a close textual analysis of specific parts of the film, I consider it useful to engage the film's conflicting images of good and bad technology with Baudrillard's views on science fiction. I would like to contradict these views and embrace them at the same time, by taking into account key perspectives on new media technologies.

Baudrillard and *Minority Report*

Jean Baudrillard has been throughout his work associated with post-modernism and his theory has also been applied for the purposes of interpreting science-fiction novels and films such as *The Matrix* among others.[10] He has been criticized for his infamous proclamations in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) that the real has been effaced by an order of simulation simulacra, where the realm of fiction, and the operational control of technological apparatuses over signs are not autonomous from reality. He has been discussed as a theorist who turns to science-fictional discourse "not only as a major symptom of the post-modern condition, but as a body of privileged allegories, the dream book of the age."[11]

While Baudrillard has had a significant number of publications that relate to subject matters that the film *Minority Report* raises, this section will only focus on one of his essays on the genre of science fiction, that initially appeared in *Simulacra and Simulation* and was reproduced in translation by the *Science Fiction Studies* journal (special issue on Science Fiction and Postmodernism). According to Csicsery-Ronay in this essay, entitled "Simulacra and Science Fiction,"[12] Baudrillard elaborates "his science-fictional vision of the present as a world characterized by a radical collapse of the distance between the real and its imaginary projections."[13] Baudrillard argues that "the 'good old' SF imagination is dead, and that something else is beginning to emerge (and not only in fiction, but also in theory). Both traditional SF and theory are destined to the same fate: flux and imprecision are putting an end to them as specific genres."[14] According to the latter, in the third order of simulacra ("the simulation simulacra: based on information, the model, cybernetic play. Their aim is maximum operationality, hyperreality, total control"[15]), there is not an imaginary realm that corresponds to this order; and he uses the acronym, or according to Istvan Csicsery-Ronay the monogram SF to describe this post-science-fiction mode of the collapsing of boundaries between the imaginary and reality. Csicsery-Ronay maintains that SF in this context, which I will refer to as third-order SF in the remainder of this section so as to distinguish it from the traditional understanding of science fiction, is not a substitute for science fiction, but refers to a new definition of it that is not a set of literary generic conventions only, but a discursive practice. Csicsery-Ronay underlines Baudrillard's equivalence of science fiction with theory and argues that "the imploded monogram SF refers not only to fiction, but to the problematic autonomy of reality.

SF thus includes other implosive concepts [. . .] VR ('virtual reality'), the cyborg ('cybernetic organisms'), and AI ('artificial intelligence')."[16] Csicsery-Ronay agrees to some extent with Baudrillard's views on science fiction and argues that the genre has "ceased to be a fiction *per se*, becoming instead a mode of awareness about the world, a complex, hesitating orientation towards the future. This SF condition requires a form of theoretical reflection that breaks down the boundaries between theoretical discourse and SF."[17] Csicsery-Ronay explains that there are two hesitations at the heart of this mode: "a) about whether scientific-technological transformations are merely conceivable or actually realizable, and b) about the possible implications of their realization."[18] *Minority Report* is a text that reinforces the materialization of the screens it represents and their partly positive rather than negative implications, or even dual function depending on the way they are materialized. Thus, the second hesitation is rather more prominent than the first as I will explain later how these screens remediate cultural forms that exist today.

New media discourse similarly to Baudrillard violates the borders between body and technology, real and virtual, but new media theory retains this "violation" within an exchange that takes place between two different worlds which are perceived as autonomous. Therefore new media discourse is the result of an intensification and acceleration of this exchange between user and screen rather than an appropriation of Baudrillardian discourse. In the case of *Minority Report*, I would agree with Csicsery-Ronay and Baudrillard that on the level of technological representations it is not fiction per se as the theoretical discourse about the near future or present of new media objects is in fact indistinguishable from the film's technological concepts and their implications.

Science fiction then according to Baudrillard has ceased to exist as the genre of the unknown, and the impossible, first because science fiction has been gradually reduced to become:

> an extravagant *projection* of, but qualitatively not different from, the real world of production. Extrapolations of mechanics or energy, velocities or powers approaching infinity—SF's fundamental patterns and scenarios are those of mechanics, of metallurgy, and so forth. The hypostasis of the robot. (In the limited universe of the pre-Industrial era, utopias *counterposed* an ideal alternative world. In the potentially limitless universe of the production era, SF *adds* by multiplying the world's own possibilities.)[19]

Secondly, for Baudrillard the exploration, mapping of space, and satellization of the real in space "promotes either the de-realizing of human space, or the reversion of it into a simulated hyperreality."[20] Space no longer constitutes a romantic utopian narrative of expansion and colonization. Consequently, the element of transcendence in science fiction has disappeared due to the impossibility of moving through alternate worlds.

Unsurprisingly, Baudrillard's essay "Simulacra and Science Fiction" along with his essay "Ballard's *Crash*" triggered a number of opposing responses by Nicholas Ruddick, Vivian Sobchack, David Porush, Katherine Hayles, and David Dalgleish, also published in the same issue of *SFS*, mostly attacking Baudrillard's readings of Ballard's *Crash* and of Philip K. Dick's work. Some argue that not all science fiction is postmodern, and with no imagination, others protest against Baudrillard's claims that hyperreality has erased all limits and others say that *Crash* (1973) is not science fiction, so it cannot be third-order SF. There are still borders that define a condition which is different from an imaginary condition, but Baudrillard himself is rather observing a phenomenon that erases the conceptual and thematic distance between the science-fictional text and reality. Thus, Baudrillard focuses on the impossibility to portray utterly imaginary universes in science-fiction texts, which made the genre distinguishable from other forms of fiction in its earlier manifestations. Again, not all contemporary science-fiction texts in their entirety are to be diminished to the level of third-order SF; they rather contain moments of third-order SF, and one of the aims of this chapter is to provide viable examples of these moments in *Minority Report*.

In my opinion the essay "Simulacra and Science Fiction" is rather predictive of the iconography, themes, production, consumption, and theorization of today's science-fiction film texts and new media, and the way they engage in a dialogue with the concept of the hyperreal. Hence, the case studies that Baudrillard discusses as examples of third-order SF fail to underpin his hypothesis, which led to the misreading of his essay based solely on the fact that the theorist has an apocalyptic tendency to erase boundaries. Baudrillard is right when he says that Philip K. Dick and Ballard create hyperreal worlds that directly correspond to conditions of the real, but he is wrong when he suggests that they equally abolish the other within their fiction, or there is no fictional anticipation, especially when there is a constant search for a center that reflects a concept of the real that may be distant from our own search for the real in the era of digital revolution. Thus, they do not mirror the

hyperbolic scenario of Baudrillard's SF, but they rather project the hyperreal with limits. Nonetheless, it is contemporary science-fiction cinema that corresponds to the death of science fiction on a number of operational levels, which realize Baudrillard's concluding point:

> True SF [. . .] would not be fiction in expansion, with all the freedom and "naïveté" which gave it a certain charm of discovery. It would, rather, evolve implosively, in the same way as our image of the universe. It would seek to revitalize, to reactualize, to rebanalize fragments of simulation—fragments of this universal simulation which our presumed "real" world has now become for us.[21]

Although Baudrillard refers to literary science fiction, his hypothesis can be better applied to a group of science-fiction films, namely *I, Robot* (Alex Proyas, 2004), *The Island* (Michael Bay, 2005), *Equilibrium* (Kurt Wimmer, 2002), and *Aeon Flux* (Karyn Kusama, 2005) among others, where certain themes and images are repeated without any of the stylistic or thematic expansion that a genre such as science fiction may provide the platform to do.

New thematic concerns of third-order SF discourse such as genetic engineering, the net and surveillance technology that emerge from the era that Baudrillard calls hyperreality have been added to the narratives of third-order SF, and we repeatedly see them in recent science-fiction cinema. Contemporary science-fiction cinema though focuses on what cinematic technology can do to actualize the possibilities of the digital image. In other words, they exploit one of the key words of the dominant culture, which is "immediacy", to aesthetically improve already familiar stylizations of recent science-fiction cinema rather than to create new science-fictional iconographies. This in itself is interesting to study, but the crisis in terms of visual style is evident. One could argue that a film like *Van Helsing*, which is discussed in a later chapter, is also a product of this crisis, but the difference is that it regenerates an early cinematic cult and aesthetically transforms it in order to appeal to new audiences. Furthermore, product placements such as Puma and Converse sports goods in the recent science-fiction films *The Island* and *I, Robot* respectively, are represented in a manner identical to the conventions of TV ads, and cannot possibly leave room for any fictional anticipation. The possible discursive practice of the above films disappears in their attempt to contest, or even less ambitiously imitate stylistically and technologically earlier versions of the same images initiated by films like *The Matrix*.

Unlike *Van Helsing* or *King Kong* they are not trying to contest the non-believable special effects and abject bodies of early cinema. The digitally animated image strives for perfection; it erases the flaws of live action footage and the aged method of manmade models and entails an inherent promise for immersion. The latter examples announce this perfection but at the same time offer the possibility for a critical dialogue on many levels. Digital cinema is hyperreal in itself, too perfect compared to the way human vision or camera lenses record the world. This goes beyond the traditional understanding of cinema as an apparatus that creates images representing reality and imitates "the organic technology of a natural apparatus, the sight organ."[22] The notion of cinema is no longer limited to motion pictures but extends its definition by embracing the emergence of new image production technologies such as computing. The digital images in *King Kong* and *Van Helsing* engage in a dialogue with the cinematic past, whereas the digital universes and action sequences of the latest science-fiction films are essentially loops of the narrative principles and visual style that govern cinema today.

Both recent science-fiction cinema and postmodern theory initiate a two-way crossover borrowing of scientific and technological discursive practice. This crossover indeed confuses the boundaries between technology, science, theory, popular philosophy and fiction; *The Matrix* trilogy being a case in point. The latest examples then are inevitably reduced to the blind alley metaphor of Baudrillard's SF. The two-way crossover then constitutes the third-order SF-consciousness, which is according to Csicsery-Ronay:

> The constant awareness that origins are subject to recall, that almost anything may be technically constructible, and that there may be no inherent limits to what technological civilizations, and technologically transformed bodies, are capable of. From this point of view, "science fiction" is dead because it is fiction. SF exists, in no small part, because theoretical discourse like Baudrillard's [. . .] discerns the problematic topology that SF is called upon to articulate.[23]

Csicsery-Ronay states that Baudrillard's discourse is in effect mimicking the condition of SF he proclaims by treating it as an actualized phenomenon; his discourse is nonetheless rational, even if it does not offer an alternative.

Minority Report, being the study case example in this chapter differs from the above science-fiction films because the film also suggests the

empowering possibilities of technology or of the culture that it portrays, an element which does not lie on the surface of the film text, yet it distinguishes it from the short story and from Baudrillard's hypothesis in the sense that the discursive SF practice of the film struggles for liberation; the liberation of third-order SF from conventional images and stylistic choices of recent science-fiction films. The utopian alternative cosmos that the film offers as an end is none other but the real, which is depicted as a kind of a nostalgic rural life, where people read books and cherish family values. However, is this image everyone's understanding of the real or desire for the real? Ironically, Spielberg gives to the ending the "warm" colors of the real, which now seem rather artificial due to the way he constructs the larger part of the film. The cinematic space is visually reinforced by Kaminski's cinematography, which uses icy colors, almost black and white, providing a lack of human warmth achieved via the bleach bypass process to desaturate the colors. This ending reinforces Baudrillard's hypothesis as he asserts that:

> It is no longer possible to manufacture the unreal from the real, to create the imaginary from the data of reality. The process will be rather the reverse: to put in place "decentered" situations, models of simulation, and then to strive to give them the colors of the real, the banal, the lived; to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because the real has disappeared from our lives.[24]

Therefore, Spielberg's utopian vision derives from the model, that is the operational code of the Hollywood package rather than the model of today's reality, where technology is in fact an extension of our existence; the pre-cogs' "wired-to-technology" lives before their "escape" to nature is in fact what the real subject does and desires in reality: to be controlled and uncontrolled at the same time, a condition that is realized through the interaction with technologies. Romantic isolation is not, in my opinion, the utopian vision of our age and indeed cultural industries aim to keep the subject "connected" at all times.

On the one hand, *Minority Report* is discussed here as an illustration of Baudrillard's dead science fiction, and on the other hand as a transformed discursive practice that does not announce the screen and the digital era as conditions that threaten the identity and individuality of the subject; this, indeed, distinguishes the film from the latest formats of third-order SF. Hence, *Minority Report* is true SF, but not in Baudrillard's sense. I would argue that if we are to admit that there is such a thing as

true SF in the third order, it is then the discourse that is not a form of nihilism. True cinematic SF in the third order is not the text that raises questions about the increasing dehumanization of life, or the Utopian/Dystopian binary; it is the text that is able to direct our focus to other issues that lie beyond the surface of a commercial action-based and visual effects-based scenario. That is why *Minority Report* becomes meaningful, because these issues offer an alternative to the otherwise "dead" examples of SF.

Minority Report has been explicitly politicized by film reviewers, suggesting that the pre-crime project hints at USA's foreign and domestic policies as regards terrorism. Even if this is not the film's intention the scenario is indeed similar. Baudrillard's ideas are gradually threatening to become the new world order, and the word "fear"—fear of Communism, fear of terrorism—has always been used in Western societies as an engine of production and consumption. However the possibility to access information, see and choose with the help of technology does not erase difference, borders, and individuality; that is why we were able to question every step of the hyperreal "war on terror" project. *Minority Report* illustrates at times Baudrillard's hypothesis, but it paradoxically denies it as well, through its aestheticization of the screen. The ending of the film might be considered as a utopian alternative world; yet the hidden utopia of the film that mirrors the utopian aspirations of our cultural logic is the representation of the screen. This logic forces the viewer to transform into an avid consumer of media products as he becomes according to Dan Harries a "viewser" combining both viewing and using media: "Screens are becoming *loci* of an assortment of media activities and experiences, [. . .] These are the screens of an expanding media environment where the modes of viewing and using commingle in ways only previously proposed in the narratives of science fiction."[25]

Washington DC in *Minority Report* is a controlled network that simultaneously strengthens a totalitarian utopia and existing modes of late capitalism. Every surface is a screen projecting advertisements that address individuals by name after being eye scanned, thus traditional building walls have been transformed into commercial spectacles, an orgy of information and signifiers with no visible boundaries at times. Ads reveal the identity of the individual, providing a more direct sense of immersion between the message of the ad and the receiver. The city is then a huge database controlled by two powers: the state and multinational corporations. Manovich's term cinegratography, which describes the hybridity of contemporary cinema, where the cinematic meets the

graphic in a way that the different elements or layers of the image become invisible effects,[26] is fitting here to the discussion of Baudrillard's theory. The cinegratographic processing of certain sequences in *Minority Report* reflect the notion of hyperreality, and cannot be perceived as an attempt to transport the audience to an imaginary space. In other words, the invisible effects in the film, especially the sequence where Anderton takes the underground and passes through moving ads, create the sense of an invasive and uncontrollable presence that we actually feel in reality when we visit nonsecure or commercial sites on the Internet, and they address us with our names and identify our location. The diegetic cinegratographic within the produced cinegratographic here is undeniably what Baudrillard defines as true SF, in other words dead science fiction, as the invisible cinegratographic effects do not intend to bewilder the audience with their outlandishness. There is no *imaginary* in this scene, we know that the screens we see are plausible, and what kind of ethical questions this plausible transformation triggers.

Yet, moments later we see a representation of a newspaper, which is rather seen as a new medium which remediates the printed newspaper and wireless Internet. In other words, the print medium is erased and therefore the viewer/user has access to an abundance of information which display on a single device that looks like a handy/compact flat screen: a fictional prototype of Apple's latest application *iPad*. The news that Anderton is to commit a crime is updated/loaded in a matter of seconds, becoming the main moving headline of the e-paper. This is in fact a highly plausible example of the double logic of remediation. Of course, there are examples of this logic exemplified via the online versions of newspapers; however, in this case this new medium erases two forms of mediation through hypermediation. It erases the limitations of the print medium and the limitations of a weighty device such as a lap-top, but at the same time it becomes a screen that brings together multiple media forms such as moving images, words and TV news elements, it is a screen that realizes the principle of real-time news, therefore it represents the following logic: "our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them."[27]

The newspaper then becomes a media convergence screen that reflects the super-velocity of information travel, and the speed we can acquire this information today. This is then a positive screen, an empowering screen that clashes with the implications of the advertising screens. In the beginning of the film, Tom Cruise's character examines the previsions

on a see-through glass construct that works as a computer screen running a nonlinear editing program with the exception that the user wears laser gloves, which turn the hands into pointing devices without the use of a touchpad in order to drag and click or a keyboard. What the latter does is to interact effectively with a nonlinear database structure, utilizing links and incorporating information from other databases. In other words, the character imitates the multitasking activities of multimedia viewers/users. The visual metaphor of transparent and fluid screens is ambiguous, as it can mean that anyone can have access to these screens that promise a "stream" of information and interactive activities.

The readings (e.g. a Baudrillardian reading) or adaptations of Philip K. Dick's work are better understood as an extension of the latter's cyberspaces in the same way as technology is understood as an extension of the body, challenging definitions of truth, reality, and the human subject's relation to these notions. Yet, regardless of Baudrillardian theory, Dick's work produces meaningful signifiers that emerge from the attempt to provide meaning to the real and not its reproducibility. In other words, Dick's stories do not deny the possibility of the real, his obsession with processes of reproduction, and the desire to participate in the spectacle is rather an attempt to identify them as modes of oppressive political systems, and further challenge the power structures that determine Western societies. Simultaneously, Dick challenges Baudrillardian theory by "foregrounding the quest for elusive meaning" as Bukatman suggests.[28] Although there is always the danger of misinterpreting Baudrillard's arguments, films like *Minority Report* and Dick's works have reality as their pretext, a reality that according to Baudrillard is a simulation, and both the film and Dickian science fiction address this issue. Later on in his essay Baudrillard refers specifically to Dick's work as an example of his argument:

> Dick does not create an alternate cosmos nor a folklore or a cosmic exoticism, nor intergalactic heroic deeds; the reader is, from the outset, in a total simulation without origin, past, or future—in a kind of flux of all coordinates (mental, spatio-temporal, semiotic). It is not a question of parallel universes, or double universes, or even of possible universes: not possible nor impossible, nor real nor unreal. It is *hyperreal*. It is a universe of simulation, which is something altogether different. And this is so not because Dick speaks specifically of simulacra. SF has always done so, but it has always played upon the *double*,

> on artificial replication or imaginary duplication, whereas here the double has disappeared.[29]

Indeed Dick's constructs play only upon the dark side of powers related to capital and media that determine our identities and the organizing principles of society. This recurrent motif connects Dickian science fiction to Baudrillard's argument as regards the condition of the simulation simulacra. Similarly, Spielberg's *Minority Report* is a product closer to our present rather than an imaginative world different to it. However, Dick's science fiction escapes Baudrillard's effacement of all boundaries since it becomes a method of understanding and historicizing the Western world; Dick speaks of a confusion of boundaries instead of obliteration. Bukatman argues that Baudrillard's discourse is science fiction itself, rather than an attempt to define the postmodern condition as fiction, by "using techniques of SF to construct a new *space* for philosophy."[30] According to Bukatman the latter's social theory is not "dissimilar to the displacing rhetorics of [. . .] Dick."[31] Consequently, Baudrillard's eschatology "builds its coherence from the evocation of incoherence"[32] and cannot be fully read as a theory that refers to reality.

Nonetheless, unlike Dick's science fiction, the question the film itself raises is whether boundaries exist between the film text *Minority Report* and the discursive practices of new media theory. The film's interplay between the futuristic city and its impoverished, street level doppelganger, known as the "Sprawl," can only suggest a reading that is obvious and has been repeated. This reading will lead us to similar interpretations of the cityscape in *Blade Runner* such as Bruno's analysis,[33] if we ignore the media apparatuses depicted in the film. Consequently, this chapter attempts to bring together both perspectives in order to raise questions that will lead to the consideration of a new perspective, textually and contextually, by discussing and isolating the forms of screen technologies represented in the film. Despite these issues, it is important to point out how the process of adaptation in question transgresses the problem of fidelity when we identify the text itself as a *writerly* text, and the filmmakers' departure from the short story as a constructive reading of it. Philip K. Dick as a conscious writer of simulacra declares his own death in the opening quotation of this chapter. Does the film itself as a reading of Dick's short story bring about its "birth" through its self-reflexive discourse on future forms of cinema? How does the digital image contribute to this end?

Screenless media, or screenless communication networks, suggest a kind of fundamental paradox: awareness of reality, yet a borderless

blending with reality. Consequently, it is necessary to begin reengaging with Baudrillard's writings and not to disregard them as nihilistic pseudo-prophesies, but read them as a dialectical other to the economic logic behind the acceleration and intensification of new media practices. We can read Baudrillard as a response to unfounded discursive practices which refer to the Internet's positive potential for decentralization, democratization and the world as a utopian globalized network. *Minority Report* then, is dead science fiction, because it is not an utterly imaginary dialectical other, it is a debate between new media theory and the implications of the third order of simulacra. Consequently, the remaining sections will illustrate how *Minority Report* reflects the cultural logic that new media have shaped; this same logic being an important factor in the understanding of post-celluloid adaptation.

Minority Report: A Guide to the Definition of Post-Celluloid Adaptation

The pre-crime apparatus

The film opens with an array of fragmented images, like a conventional cinematic dream sequence, which depict a murder. The images have a certain liquescence, and the final image, where the camera zooms into an eye presumably belonging to the victim, fades out into the eye of one of the three pre-cogs named Agatha (Samantha Morton). The camera zooms out and we see the face of Agatha descending into water while uttering the word "murder." Therefore, the opening sequence is not a dream, but a prevision of a murder that is going to take place in the near future. In this sequence Spielberg establishes a kind of a Hitchcockian first presentation of recurring themes within the rest of the film such as vision/blindness, water, family, and murder. Next we get a partial view of the prevision apparatus and the pre-crime steel and glass interior. The chief of the pre-crime unit John Anderton (Tom Cruise) arrives to analyze the images produced by the pre-cogs so as to analyze the elements of each image by turning them into a narrative, not necessarily in a linear order since the outcome is already known, but the narrative he creates is fragmented in order to gather vital information.

Unlike the retro-futurist technology of *Blade Runner* and Dick's description of the pre-cog chamber in the short story, Spielberg uses a more plausible, elegantly designed and functional technology. Every surface

becomes a screen, essentially suggesting the projection of images beyond the traditional notion of a screen, therefore the emergence of screenless media and the absorption of the subject into a continuum of floating signifiers.

Online DVD experience as interactive cinema

In his essay "The Myths of Interactive Cinema" Lunenfeld clearly argues that the form of interactive cinema remains a myth; in other words a cultural construction that appears to be given:

> As computers moved out of the workplace and into the home, their capacity for nonlinear assemblage—linking, if you will—disrupted their users' expectations of linearity and fuelled a hunger for interactivity as an end in itself, rather than simply a means. The privileging of the interaction between user and machine became the Holy Grail of computer-based media, and the quest for this interaction generated a potent combination of technological, cultural and economic narratives.[34]

However, Lunenfeld discusses the attributes of a form, namely the expanded DVD, as an example of interactive cinema that has failed in other forms. He begins his argument by placing interactivity not within a single narrative object, but in a wider system of communication technologies which he calls hypercontext. Thus, the context of the main object, which ranges from preplanned promotional tie-ins to online fan communities, is according to Lunenfeld coming to the fore. The example he provides to illustrate how this hypothesis works is *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) as the pseudo-documentary style of the film and the net allowed for a "hypercontext of remarkable depth, something both pre- and post-extant to the film itself [. . .] The DVD's links back to the Web complete the circuit, while simultaneously opening up new layers of hypercontext as *The Blair Witch Project* main site features links to non-commercial fan sites built from the affordances of the narrative object."[35] It is useful then to start thinking of aspects of the hypercontext as processes involved in a post-celluloid adaptation, where the linear narrative object of the source text or even of the main end product are "embedded in a system of ever-expanding self-reflexive media."[36]

The image of the main character in *Minority Report* being an interactive viewer/user is reinforced via the design of the DVD's menu, which is identical to the glass screen where Anderton analyzes the previsions, displaying fragmented images from the film in the same visual style as the previsions. Certainly, DVD interactive menus are not interactive cinema, but the DVD has become a form of intertextual commodity as it provides information about the production of the movie, the making of the movie and it can also be another window on a computer screen, where it offers the possibility to the viewer/user to open other windows related to the movie while he/she is connected to the Internet. This possibility has been copied of course by the DVD version of the first part of *The Matrix* trilogy where the PC Friendly DVD software is installed when you play the DVD on your pc and establishes a connection between the linear narrative object and the Web. Henceforth, the Internet connected DVD viewer/user may initiate a form of interactive cinema depending on his/her interest in finding information about the movie beyond its main narrative line. Experiencing a conventional Hollywood film in the movie theater is definitely not equal to the experience of watching the same film on your computer screen since interactivity does not take place only in the mind, or as Lunenfeld argues does not take place at all as blockbusters replace narrative with spectacle. I would certainly disagree with Lunenfeld, and specific examples such as Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (discussed in Chapter 7) indeed challenge his view on the lost narrative object and the impossibility of interactivity due to this loss.

Biographical films like *Gods and Monsters* (Bill Condon, 1998), *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994), and film adaptations of popular novels/short stories, such as the film in question, acquire a whole new dimension when viewed on a computer screen. Hollywood narrative time can contain only fragments of James Whale's life or of the story line of the novel, leaving gaps in the narrative. This new dimension empowers the user since he/she could be engaged in a cross-referential interactivity. Edward Wood's *Glen or Glenda* (1953) is the first film mentioned in Burton's film. Was it actually Wood's first film? Did Burton use footage from Wood's original films? The interactive viewer can pause and search the Internet Movie Database (<www.imdb.com>), or the official website of the movie, filling in the gaps in the film narrative, or unravelling the magic of special effects. Similar questions concerning the plot/context of the short story and the film *Minority Report* may arise when viewing the DVD version of the film, engaging the reader in a constructive comparison between the two. Consequently, Anderton's operation reflects

to a certain extent the online DVD user, as Anderton tries to interpret and adapt the previsions within the context of a system.

Unlike the narrative hierarchy of a Hollywood film experienced in the dark space of the movie theater, the DVD experience on a computer apparatus may adapt the same film into a nonlinear interactive narrative, not only through the DVD's limited interactive features, but via the Internet search as well. The Internet does not merely offer the element of choice, but the element of response to certain questions the film raises about its content or production. Thus, a user may break down the linearity of *Ed Wood* to acquire information, which may or may not unfold in time. This is a process that may render a mainstream film more radical than Tarantino's, Almodovar's, and Iñárritu's nonlinear narratives, which have become a kind of wearisome trend in independent, European cinema and recently mainstream cinema.

Minority Report implicitly suggests that we are moving toward a future cinema of infinite possibilities; interactive, yet a more solitary movie-going experience that realizes fully Barthes' understanding of a *writerly* artefact. Thus, the expanded DVD enables conventional cinema to shift into a form of web cinema. Nora Barry writing on web filmmakers observes that Internet technology "allows for a number of narrative possibilities, including interactive and random configuration. Whether the audience prefers interaction or wants its stories told to them is an open-ended question: but still the possibility exists for multiple narrative forms."[37] This idea of the solitary viewer/user certainly endangers the traditional movie-going experience, but the industry is making use of strategies similar to narrative delays via collaborative media, and promotes the enhanced movie-theater experience of a spectacle to attract audiences. The aesthetics of blockbusters may be repetitive and video game-like, but on the other hand the industry is trying to save the traditional experience of movie-going by adapting its strategies to the demands of the market so as to compete with other new media such as sophisticated video games. Certainly, Hollywood has its obvious reasons for doing this, yet the imminent death of the movie-theater certainly alters the traditional concept of cinema in cultural terms.

Although the hypercontext of *Minority Report* is not an intensified example of this dominant mode, the images of technology we see in the film are fitting examples of key concepts that describe this mode, such as interactivity, unfinished narratives and multiple aesthetics, multitasking and immersion. The film itself partakes in a less controlled way via its expanded DVD in the process that differentiates traditional film

adaptation theory from the shaping of a post-celluloid adaptation language: the viewer /user becomes an agent of a possible expanded narrativity that can shift contexts and media.

Lunenfeld's assertion that the information on the expanded DVD fosters "an ever-stronger authorial voice in theorists and audiences alike"[38] is not convincing as theorists will always add theoretical discourses to provide an interpretation of a film that is not necessarily relevant to the director's obvious intentions. In addition, the filmmakers do not discuss complex or extremely abstract issues on the commentary for obvious reasons. On the contrary, the usefulness of the commentaries for theorists lies in the fact that they can gain information easily regarding the making of the film rather than the meaning of the film. For the viewer/user that is not a film studies student or academic, the commentary is a further insight into the story and the databases that the film was created from, and not an "ever-stronger authorial voice" according to Lunenfeld's understanding. Speaking of databases, another information structure that is represented/simulated in *Minority Report* is the structure of database cinema in the way the previsions are shown and processed. Looking at Manovich's discussion of database cinema the next section will illustrate how *Minority Report* visualizes this form and examine whether hypercontext and post-celluloid adaptation can be seen as early forms of database cinema.

Database cinema within cinema

The opening sequence of the film is a nonlinear crime of passion scene as it is seen from pre-cog Agatha's point of view (Samantha Morton). The pre-cogs are connected to screens which project what they see; obviously everything is recorded and stored as a database structure for further processing. The system identifies the individuals involved and the time of the crime, and Anderton needs to find the location of the crime. Anderton uploads the case on the pre-crime interface and analyzes the nonlinear narrative object, or the database of images and then photo matches the perpetrator from a file of digitally coded photo IDs of individuals with the same name that the system indicated. Although it is easy to follow how the crime develops as the images do not have a huge gap of missing information between them, the viewer links this information to the sequence of the crime as it unfolds in diegetic real

time and unlike Anderton, the viewer is able to fill in the gaps in the nonlinear narrative of the previsions. This sequence itself provides clues for the viewer to follow, which will be important in the unfolding and resolution of the main crime (e.g. the boy cuts the eyes of a man's magazine photo, and the word "blind" is said repeatedly). While *Minority Report* is not database cinema or interactive cinema in itself, these opening sequences play with these concepts within a controlled form of narrative. This construct and the images it displays are digitally processed, some elements being animated and others live action footage. In this sequence, although the digital image is an invisible CGI effect, it cannot be neglected and read as pure spectacle. It is an image that generates a plenitude of issues related to narrative strategies and new media for further discussion. It is an image that displays a cultural logic that has been actualized in a less hyperbolic form and can instigate debates about its function within the movie and the context in which it is represented.

Manovich argues that even though the modernist view as regards medium specificity is outdated, what he desires for digital computers is to be new media specific so as to bring to the fore new kinds of narrative from a database and narrative synergy. He uses as examples the cinema of Greenaway and Vertov and argues that cinema itself exists "right at the intersection between database and narrative. We can think of all the material accumulated during shooting as forming a database, especially since the shooting schedule usually does not follow the narrative of the film but is determined by production logistics."[39] Therefore, every filmmaker has to deal consciously or not with the database-narrative issue, and a recent film that illustrates this problem consciously is *A Cock and Bull Story* (Michael Winterbottom, 2005), in which the sub-narratives of the film unfold around the problems of adapting the novel *Tristram Shandy* so as to form a visual narrative. Again, self-reflexively the previsions and the pre-crime interface sequence in *Minority Report* work as analogies to this relationship between narrative and database in cinema, as the interface simultaneously imitates the look of the timeline in nonlinear editing software as the editor is the one who builds a linear narrative out of the databases of raw material.

Greenaway is a director who attempts to challenge the linear narrative object by using different strategies to order his work such as numbers. According to Manovich "the sequence of numbers acts as a narrative shell that 'convinces' the viewer that she is watching a narrative. In reality,

the scenes that follow one another are not connected in any logical way. By using numbers, Greenaway 'wraps' a minimal narrative around a database."[40] Along with Greenaway, Manovich highlights Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* as the "most important example of a database imagination in modern media art."[41] His observation stems from the repeated shots of Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov's wife, which show her working with the database of recorded material located on a number of shelves. He then argues that the method of the film is actually the creation of a trajectory through the database that the editor Elizaveta Svilova works with: "*Man with a Movie Camera* traverses its database in a particular order to construct an argument. Records drawn from a database and arranged in a particular order become a picture of modern life."[42] Manovich understands *Man with a Movie Camera* as a catalogue of film techniques and effects that are contained within the movie; these effects according to Manovich become a proposition of cinema's "new way of speaking"[43] and he develops the argument that the possibilities of new media paradigms can introduce new effects and the cinematic language becomes everchanging and diverse. The association between Vertov's film and new effects results in Manovich's remark that it is "possible to turn 'effects' into a meaningful artistic language."[44]

It is also possible to relate the representation of technology and ways of seeing in *Minority Report* with Vertov's film as Spielberg builds a new language of cinema as understood in this book and similarly wants the audience to share his enthusiasm as he assimilates and manipulates new media technologies and new effects. Thus, in the case of *Minority Report* the catalogue is the level of the film that contains these technologies of vision, but simultaneously on another level the nonlinear ordering of the previsions can be seen as a form of database cinema, which, however, the third level of the film, that is the linear narrative object places chronologically. The film then plays with the possibilities of a new cinematic language, but not in the radical way Manovich expects narrative to take into "account the fact that its elements are organised in a database"[45] structure. This possibility will be discussed in a later chapter, where I examine the relationship between the production diaries of Peter Jackson's *King Kong*, which were distributed on the net before the release of the film, and the narrative of the film itself. This choice will be discussed in conjunction to post-celluloid adaptation as the familiarity of the King Kong narrative is the reason that allows Jackson to adopt this strategy as a means of creating a hypercontext.

Boundless Adaptation and Boundless Media

From its outset *Minority Report* provides signs that may lead its reader to a debate irrelevant to the plot, leading him/her to an ongoing exploration of the signifiers in the film, denying a closure. Although certain choices might render the film's status as autonomous and not as adaptation, I argue that the fundamental nature of the adaptation process is to move beyond the boundaries of the adapted text by making selections that challenge the source text and constructively add or remove elements so as to serve the purposes of the adapting medium. The ongoing conversation between the source medium and cinematic technology is what principally describes the art of film adaptation.

Anderton analyzes the previsions on a transparent glass construct, which also functions as a two-way screen. In 1981 Dan Graham created an architectural model of a movie theater:

> A cinema, the ground level of a modern office building, is sited on a busy corner. Its façade consists of two-way mirrored glass, which allows viewers on whichever side is darker at any particular moment to see through and observe the other side (without being seen by the people on that side). From the other side, the window appears as a mirror. When the light illuminates the surfaces of both sides more or less equally, the glass façade is both semi-reflective and partially transparent. Spectators on both sides observe both the opposing space and a reflection of their own look within their own space.[46]

Apart from being an architectural model, Graham explains how this design becomes an experiment about how a spectator perceives himself/herself in relation to other spectators and the film within the space of the movie theater. Unlike a conventional movie theater this project allows spectators to observe "their positions, projections, bodies and identifications,"[47] thus disrupting the illusion of traditional movie-going by exposing the spectator and blurring reality with the dreamlike world of the film.

In *Minority Report* the transparency of the screen, and shots of Anderton seen through the pre-crime interface partly prevent the reading of this sequence as a metaphor of traditional filmmaking or viewing; the analysis of the pre-visions is depicted as scientific, thus rational. When the pre-visions are projected on the specific screen they look as if they were put into a transparent test tube, the whole process

becoming a form of surveillance of those involved in the crime when juxtaposed to the use of conventional cinematography of the real-time unfolding of the crime in the first sequence. Transparency then also works as a metaphor of the breakdown of privacy in the society of the film; subjects become objects of scrutiny without even knowing it. The transparent screen apparatus enables the detectives to observe the pre-vision and Anderton's actions, which become an object of scrutiny as well, intensifying the concept of pre-crime as an infallible truth. The computer used by Anderton's assistant also has a transparent interface. When the camera is positioned behind the back or front side of either screen the mise-en-scène is multilayered, there is no object between the actors and the spectators apart from symbols and transparent images (see Figure 3.1). In the diegesis of the film the transparent screens enable the characters to sharpen their perception of the off-screen environment, blending images with reality, highlighting the idea that the pre-visions are not a possibility, but actual data analyzed by the staff of an operational center.

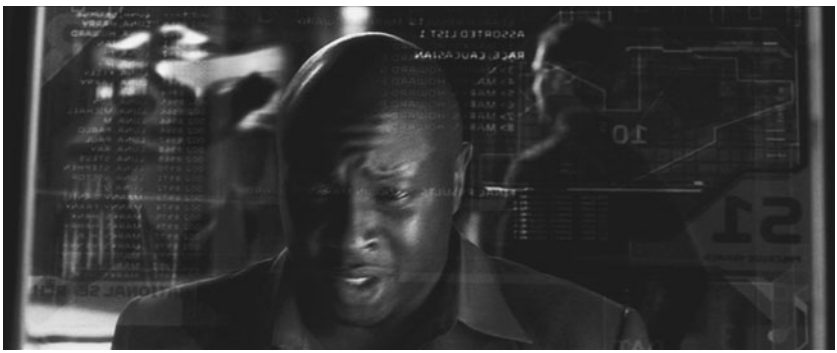

Figure 3.1 The Visual Theme of Transparency in *Minority Report.*

The mise-en-scène of transparency comments on the actual aim of computer graphical interfaces to be transparent and functional so as to enable a more effective multitasking. The Windows Aero features the Aero glass effects introduced initially for the Windows Vista interface where parts of the opened windows are translucent and allow the viewer/user to see parts of the other opened windows she/he works on.

The other feature of Windows Aero is the windows flip 3D, where the viewer/user can flip through a 3D stack of the viewer/user's open windows, which allows for a clear simultaneous look at the open windows. In addition the aero feature for Windows 7 offers other possibilities that play with idea of seeing or "peeking" through windows, therefore these shifts essentially suggest that transparency seems to be a desire or a demand that emerges from our constant interaction with multiple screens. The Aero feature may not realize this desire yet, but it certainly entails a promise that the concept of transparent glass windows will be refined in the future. Anderton's "fictional" rapid shifting through open windows on the pre-crime transparent interface, is essentially the extension of Windows Aero. Although I cannot suggest that one of the dimensions of post-celluloid adaptation is the use of screenless media, it is apparent that the content of a film is dispersed in other screens so as to promote the shift of the viewer/user between different media to keep her/him interested in the product as a potential consumer of related content.

Screenless media then, suggest a kind of fundamental paradox: awareness of reality, yet a borderless blending with simulations. This paradox is evident in the home-holographs sequence, where Anderton watches clips of his lost son and his estranged wife. Laser cinema exceeds the notion of screen and modifies the perception of viewing; 3-dimensionality gives the illusion of an inviting immersive space. The interface will eventually disappear and as Davenport states in her essay "Interactive Cinema Group, MIT Media Lab", "a dynamic, reconfigurable, ever-present network will connect people with people and with media stories at whatever density, localised specificity and temporal duration is appropriate to the receiver's context and inclination."[48]

Washington DC and *The Movie-Drome*

Washington DC in *Minority Report* is a controlled network that shifts between two dominant modes of surveillance run by the state and the market. Every surface can be transformed to a screen from buildings to the underground, creating an orgy of information and signifiers with no visible boundaries at times, in other words it is a mass application of a medium: a fully recognized function of Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome gone wrong. In the beginning of her essay "Stan VanDerBeek's

Movie-Drome: Networking the Subject" Gloria Sutton provides a detailed description of the 1960s experimental work in question:

> The subject is [. . .] a thirty-one-foot-high metal dome structure situated in the wooded back-yard of a rural outpost of experimental artists [. . .] Once inside, everyone spread out over the rough flooring lying side-by-side. There were no assigned seats, only vague directions from the artist to lie with your head facing upward and your feet pointing towards the center of the space [. . .] the noisy, ungainly motors of an over a dozen projectors for 16mm film and slides would turn over, clicking and humming at various intervals. Suddenly, undulating beams of light and discordant voices mixed with synthetic noise electrifying the air, illuminating the darkened space and immersing the viewers in a continuous audiovisual flow, a visual velocity.[49]

Sutton reports that McLuhan compared the Movie-Drome to a newspaper: "the world of multi-screen projections is the world of the newspaper where umpteen news stories come at you without any connection and without connected themes."[50] In *Minority Report* the newspaper is an apparatus of moving images as we witness in the train sequence, where Anderton is exposed minutes after he escaped the pre-crime building, suggesting thus the super-velocity of information in a networked space. The city itself is an information "superhighway," an environment preconceptualized by VanDerBeek in his manifesto on Movie-Drome as a networked medium receiving and transmitting images by satellite. Although Movie-Drome as a communication network could be paralleled to the Internet, VanDerBeek's original intention was to connect audiences around the world, and within the space of the Movie-Drome through the experience of creating meaning through a collage of images. According to VanDerBeek, through this collage each member of the audience produces his/her own meaning unaffected by external mechanisms that determine the reception of authorial fixed meanings. VanDerBeek hoped for a connection through collective and not isolated emotional responses between the members of the audience. Washington DC in the film operates as a "non-mediated mode of communication" that erases the "spatial boundaries of the screen."[51] However, in *Minority Report* the citizens as members of this network are not empowered as in VanDerBeek's project. The Movie-Drome-like city is determined by formal cultural mechanisms to the extent that it becomes commodified and suffocating.

Similarly, the promotion of blockbusters, which are usually based on previously released or published material, is in effect trying to take over the screens and mobile or immobile surfaces of big cities, creating a communication orgy based on catchphrases, spectacular posters, and full-scale models; stacks of novels or DVD box sets of TV series, which the film is based on, being on window display or within the space of bookstores or DVD stores. The intensified commercial form of post-celluloid adaptation is an event-effect that wants to draw the attention of the masses and create a discourse of anticipation which is enhanced by TV trailers/interviews and print media. The blockbuster then aspires to "invade" the big city and turn it into a commodified movie-drome, which can also be seen as part of an intertextual dialogism approach or of the collaborative texts of a post-celluloid adaptation since the city can become an intertext of familiar signifiers scattered all over in the form of posters, which may communicate a strong message (see the discussion of Jackson's *King Kong* posters in Chapter 7).

In one sequence Anderton and Agatha visit a cyber parlor, which partly works as a microcosm of the film's Washington. Its customers can be immersed in any virtual fantasy they like. The user of virtual reality functions as an internal observer who has an effect on the image, which is intelligent and can act in response to the user. Virtual reality is not comparable to the illusion of conventional projectors, as the virtual space is the ideal illusion: "the distance between visual space and observer is abolished. The latter is now literally in the picture."[52] Virtualization is a process of adaptation from the real to the hyperreal, providing the possibility for realistic interactivity. Apart from that, the fascination with virtual reality derives from the desire to escape reality, which renders virtual reality synonymous with movie-going and mainstream cinema. The only difference is that the viewer is a participant within the space of the illusion.

Even though such forms of participation are not available for mass consumption yet, it seems that the applications that the film visually enhances are already forming an understanding of how the viewer/user participates in this cultural shift that has been described as convergence or the double logic of remediation. This participation has been shaped in many ways by marketing-decisions inevitably leading to media synergies, therefore there is also another shift that we need to consider in the following chapters: the power-game between the viewer and the dispersed media content goes beyond the controlling voice of the author of original material and it becomes a question of who controls the narrative. The

following chapters then analyze case study examples that illustrate that a term such as post-celluloid adaptation, which due to its inherent technological possibilities (of creating and promoting media content) obliterates the limitations of the study of film adaptation as it has been shaped by previous studies, occurs not only as a product of a specific study that involves literature and films, but as a participatory process that is difficult to tame and condense within the boundaries of what has been called thus far a theory of film adaptation. *Minority Report* does indeed work as a catalogue of post-celluloid adaptation as the visual enhancements it contains do not just embroider the science-fictional sensibility of the film's narrative but are a product of a metacinematic framework that suggest that cinema is a medium that constantly reinvents itself.

Notes

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[2] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3.

[3] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2001), 14.

[4] David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. (London: The MIT Press, 2000).

[5] Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (vol. 1), trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 21.

[6] Marsha Kinder, "Designing a Database Cinema," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003).

[7] David Seed, "Mediated Realities in the Works of Philip K. Dick," in *Narrative Turns and Minor Genres in Postmodernism*, eds. Hans Bertens and Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 222.

[8] Seed, "Mediated Realities in the Works of Philip K. Dick," 222.

[9] Peter Weibel, "The Intelligent Image: Neurocinema or Quantum Cinema?" in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 594.

[10] See David Gerrold, ed., *Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and the Religion in The Matrix* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2003).

[11] Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "Introduction: Postmodernism's SF/SF's Postmodernism," *Science Fiction Studies* 18, Part 3, No. 55, (1991a): 305.

[12] Jean Baudrillard, Two Essays: "Simulacra and Science Fiction," "Ballard's Crash" and "In Response to Baudrillard (N. Katherine Hayles, David Porush, Brooks Landon, and Vivian Sobchack) and to the Invitation to Respond (J. G. Ballard)," *Science Fiction Studies* 18, Part 3, No. 55 (1991).

[13] Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "Introduction: Postmodernism's SF/SF's Postmodernism," 306.
[14] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 18, Part 3, No. 55 (1991): 309.
[15] Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," 309.
[16] Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "The SF of Theory: Baudrillard and Haraway," *Science Fiction Studies* 18, Part 3, No. 55 (1991b): 390.
[17] Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "Introduction: Postmodernism's SF/SF's Postmodernism," 308.
[18] Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "The SF of Theory: Baudrillard and Haraway," 404.
[19] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 18, Part 3, No. 55 (1991).
[20] Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," 311.
[21] Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," 311.
[22] Peter Weibel, "The Intelligent Image: Neurocinema or Quantum Cinema?" in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 594.
[23] Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "The SF of Theory: Baudrillard and Haraway," 391.
[24] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," 311.
[25] Dan Harries, "Watching the Internet," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002b), 171.
[26] Manovich, *The Language of New Media.*
[27] David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media.* (London: The MIT Press, 2000), 5.
[28] Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), 55.
[29] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 18, Part 3, No. 55 (1991): 311–312.
[30] Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), 181.
[31] Bukatman, *Terminal Identity*, 181.
[32] Bukatman, *Terminal Identity*, 181.
[33] See Giulliana Bruno, "Ramble City: *Postmodernism* and *Blade Runner*," in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990).
[34] Peter Lunenfeld, "The Myths of Interactive Cinema," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002a), 147.
[35] Lunenfeld, "The Myths of Interactive Cinema," 150.
[36] Lunenfeld, "The Myths of Interactive Cinema," 150.
[37] Nora Barry, "Telling Stories on Screens: A History of Web Cinema," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 545.
[38] Peter Lunenfeld, "The Myths of Interactive Cinema," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002a), 150.
[39] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 237.
[40] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 238.

[41] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 239.
[42] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 240.
[43] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 242.
[44] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 243.
[45] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 237.
[46] Dan Graham, "Cinema," in Future Cinema: *The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 150.
[47] Graham, "Cinema," 150.
[48] Glorianna Davenport, "Interactive Cinema Group, MIT Media Lab," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 276.
[49] Gloria Sutton, "Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome: Networking the Subject," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 136.
[50] Sutton, "Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome: Networking the Subject," 139.
[51] Sutton, "Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome: Networking the Subject," 140.
[52] Sabine Himmelsbach, "The Interactive Potential of Distributed Networks. Immersion and Participation in Films and Computer Games," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 531.

Chapter 4

Adapting the Literature of the Double: Manifestations of Cinematic Forms in *Fight Club* and *Enduring Love*

The approach of this chapter is rather complex as it also discusses the development of cinematic form in relation to the adaptation journey of a media text by using two somewhat contradictory case studies: The film *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) and the film *Enduring Love* (Roger Michell, 2004). While the choice of these two films triggers a multilevel discussion that may seem unrelated at points, it is useful to compare how both films use cinematic form in order to express the concept of the double and the psychologically disturbed characters that emerge from the source texts of these films: Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1999) and Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1998). Despite the fact that both films revisit, remediate, or break from familiar cultural forms, they engage simultaneously in an ongoing debate: the so-called synthetic cinema versus realism debate. Therefore, this chapter attempts to challenge the restrictive, traditional understanding of adaptation studies by pointing out the usually ignored perspectives of cinema's ontology/identity in this relationship that develops between two media.

It could be argued that both films can meet as films that bear more in common than just the doppelganger narrative, either as a conventional or playful form, under the "New Punk Cinema" tendency as described by Nicholas Rombes in his introduction to the edited volume with the same title. *Fight Club* is one of the case studies among many that "radically revised, many of the narrative and aesthetic codes that governed mainstream Hollywood fare,"[1] and *Enduring Love* is obviously exploring the possibilities of handheld cinema, which developed to be one of the main punk cinema forms during the mid-90s. This punk sensibility, which refers to an attempt to demythologize, and react to, cinematic discourses, formats and forms, is of course a very useful discussion; this chapter, however, focuses on Manovich's understanding of DV realism to initiate

a working comparative study between the representational codes of the two case studies presented here since the "punk" model fails to introduce systematic and consistent ways to think about digital cinema, cinematic style and alternative forms.

Apart from the discussion of the film *Fight Club* as an example of new punk cinema, the film has largely been read as a social critique of masculinity and contemporary consumer culture[2] thus the readings of the film are rather contextual. What is more interesting about *Fight Club*, though, is that the film itself has already been studied as an independent work, unaffected by fidelity criticism and comparative film adaptation studies mainly because the readings that exist are not preoccupied with ontological or epistemological theories pertinent to cinema and the novel. The discussion on *Fight Club* will focus on the digital/synthetic image so as to examine how the overtly synthetic elements of the film contribute to the negotiation of meaning by creating a spatial montage that attempts to imitate the ironical textuality of the source text through visual play. Specifically, I will analyze in detail the so-called Ikea sequence in *Fight Club* and the two art studio scenes in *Enduring Love*.

In the case of *Enduring Love*, where in the source text there is a blend of fact and fiction, I intend to explore the ways in which the filmmakers consciously or otherwise reject the pastiche-like style of the novel with the use of contemporary realistic representational codes. These codes have been described by Manovich[3] as part of what he names the Digital Video (DV) realism school, which will be examined in relation or as an evolution of Bazinian realism. Although Michell does not use a DV camera, the use of hand-held camera results in a DV realism experience, and the use of diegetic noises interfering with the dialogue give the film a realistic feel that breaks away from the textuality of the novel. Finally, I will compare the two approaches in order to illustrate that both films are equally complex in terms of form and aesthetics even though they use different styles. I will then argue that this complexity is something that reinforces Robert Stam's[4] argument that cinema is indeed a medium that requires adaptations to be faithful to the identity of cinema rather than to an ambiguous understanding of the concept of "essence" that should be transferred intact from the novel to the screen.

Fight Club tells the story of an insomniac white collar worker, Jack (Edward Norton), who seems to lead an isolated life and gains pleasure from consuming material objects. In order to fight insomnia, Jack visits a number of group therapy sessions and becomes addicted to them.

In one of his business trips he meets Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt) on the plane and after Jack loses his condo from a gas leak accident, he moves in with Tyler and they form Fight Club together. Fight Club becomes an underground organization that starts as a place where men get together to liberate their masculinity through boxing matches and it gradually becomes a "terrorist" group that attacks corporate buildings. The destructive nature of Tyler causes Jack to rethink about their relationship and the latter realizes that Tyler is his double. In an attempt to prevent Tyler from blowing up monuments of consumerism, Jack turns a gun to himself to eliminate Tyler. The film ends with Jack and Marla, who is the love interest of his double, holding hands while looking at the explosions of buildings all over the city.

The film adaptation of *Enduring Love* shares a similar story and plot with its source text, but there are significant changes that will be discussed in the fourth part of this chapter. In the film, a balloon accident brings together the two main characters of the story Joe (Daniel Craig) and Jed (Rhys Ifans). Just before the accident, Joe was getting ready to propose to his partner Claire (Samantha Morton) and the events that followed generate a set of questions about love and responsibility. Jed, who happens to be one of the people who tried to prevent the balloon accident, falls in love with Joe and believes that their encounter is the beginning of something meaningful. Jed gradually starts to stalk Joe in order to express his unconditional love and this causes and deepens the estrangement between Joe and his partner Claire as Joe finds it very hard to comprehend, explain and deal with life after the accident. Jed continues to misinterpret Joe's behavior as the former suffers from a psychological disorder that causes him to love obsessively another individual and interprets rejection as Joe's way to express his love. This will lead both Joe and Jed to extreme measures as Jed attempts to murder Claire and Joe stabs him. Surprisingly no one dies and this leads to an open-ended finale, where the viewer is confronted with the issues that the film raises.

Both source texts and end products update the literary and cinematic tradition of the theme of the *doppelgänger*, obvious in works such as *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) and *Psycho* (1960) and read as such through the application of the psychoanalytic model of theory on numerous media texts. There are various allusions to the aforementioned films and to some extent *Fight Club* and the novel *Enduring Love* borrow from the generic conventions of the Gothic. The latter is in fact closer to the conventions of the epistolary Gothic novel as Jed Parry communicates his twisted love through letters, and his description of his home is that of a typical

Gothic mansion. The filmmakers chose to exclude the mansion and the letters, but this selection does not make Jed's character in the film less effective. On the contrary, the avoidance of familiar generic elements of the "stalker/Gothic"film makes his character even more intriguing as the film's viewer cannot distinguish up to a certain point who is obsessed with whom and with what. Moreover, the omissions of familiar narrative elements update the story and its sub-themes into an account of our times, thus rejecting the development of a hyperconscious system based on intertextual/generic associations and their connotations. Overall, both films tend to develop the characters and the plot by applying a number of stylistic cinematic choices that allow the mise-en-scène and the camera to become significant factors in the creation of meaning.

Domestic Space in *Fight Club*

Space is a dynamic and complex element in cinema as it may interact with the dramatic and formulaic elements of a film and with contextual social structures in ways that are as effective as the description of landscapes and locations in a novel. The discussion of the encoding and decoding of cinematic space is a process that is usually overlooked in a comparative study within the context of film adaptation studies. Hence the analysis of *Fight Club* focuses on the spatialization of the split personality conflict in the film, namely, Jack's condo versus Tyler's house. In addition, this approach takes into consideration the fact that the film is a dark satire on the Western world's contemporary socioeconomic condition, and a pastiche of commercial visual styles. Thus, the film is not being treated as an opposition to capitalism or consumerism, nor as a celebration of patriarchy in the same way other scholarly readings of the film have argued.[5] I would argue that *Fight Club* is not ideologically motivated to the extent that it has been read, but it does create a playful representation of social values to comment on the dangers, fixations, weaknesses, and subjective truths of contemporary social norms and groups. The film seems to function intentionally as a superficial and at the same time complex space and demands from the viewer to comprehend certain procedures and structures involved in specific sequences such as the one in question.

The décor in both domestic spaces in *Fight Club* manifests the psychological conflict between the two main characters in view of the fact that the condo may represent the castrated masculinity within the context of

consumerist ideology, and the house a repressed symbolic phallus or order. The dilapidated state of Tyler's house and its nineteenth-century Gothic revival/Second Empire Baroque-like American style signify the decadence and the end of the patriarchal/puritanical order. As the film goes on, Tyler's attempt to revive the past and reclaim the phallus is also illustrated via the transformation of the house into the locus of the Fight Club's conservative ideology. In order to analyze the Ikea sequence, I will be drawing upon the ideas expressed in Baudrillard's essay "The Ecstasy of Communication."[6] While Baudrillard's discourse of the synthetic seems to be a predictable choice to develop a valid argument about the film, it is useful to examine Baudrillard's theorization of reality in relation to the film's synthetic style of representation. I used Baudrillard in the previous chapter to reinforce a discussion relevant to the boundless and borderless journeys of media content, in this chapter it is used to discuss how even domestic space can function as a single spatial power identical to an exterior/outside process that according to Baudrillard writes the contemporary subject as screen. How does the Ikea sequence become a manifestation of cinematic form that enacts the above thinking and how does it differ from the verbal descriptions of the character's condition in the novel, even though the film retains the source text's ironic style? Another question that emerges from the interpretation of the Ikea sequence and will be explored in the remaining chapters is to what extent we as consumers of post-celluloid adaptations become screens and how can the concept of screen be understood, or is understood in this project.

The use of CGI elements in the mise-en-scène of the Ikea sequence does not intend to merge live action photography and digital animation in order to present convincingly a unified diegesis as in other genres such as fantasy films, horror, and science-fiction films. Obviously, the purpose of this sequence is to remediate the Ikea furniture catalogue and create an image which simultaneously functions as flat and moving. This image renders the process of digital compositing visible, and invites the viewer to break it down, to decode the image and determine the connotations of the cultural databases the filmmakers had processed while encoding this sequence. In "The Ecstasy of Communication" Baudrillard uses his own discourse of the obscene to describe his understanding of obscenity as the effacement of spatial oppositions in the order of simulacra. Baudrillard's theory can be useful to support the fact that the spatial oppositions between film and reality and between the various media forms within the film are not clearly defined, however, the

dynamic exchange of these spaces questions the superficiality of obscenity in an attempt to create meaning. The film achieves that by rendering obscenity distinctively visible and not transparent or commercially/spectacularly visible.

The problem with the specific sequence though is similar to the problem Bazin has with montage. According to Bazin[7] any relation between the photographic image and reality is lost with a montage-driven film since the constant brief interaction of shots do not allow the viewer to create a personal relationship with the film which according to Bazin would be a similar experience with the interaction between the same viewer and an object in reality. In other words, montage triggers a collective reaction, which is essentially manipulative and controlling unlike Bazin's realistic style of filming (depth of field and the long take) which enhances the ambiguities of the cinematic image in the same way ambiguities exist in reality. The second shot of the Ikea sequence is constructed by many layers of images and graphics, which Manovich[8] defines as spatial montage. The intention of the digitally constructed space in this scene is a collective audience reaction to the ironic interaction of familiar elements within the image, thus the sequence is not realistic in terms of Bazinian theory, but interestingly it could be argued that it is realistic in terms of Baudrillardian theory.

The composition of the inner space of the condo remediates pages from an Ikea furniture catalogue, thus suggesting that the actual domestic objects that Jack owns within the diegesis of the film are mere images, copies with no significance other than that of a commodified sign. Baudrillard explains that *ecstasy* is the result of the relation between message and object arguing that "the commodity form is the first great medium of the modern world. But the message that the objects deliver through it is already extremely simplified, and it is always the same: their exchange value. Thus at bottom the message no longer exists."[9] The embedding of a commercial print medium within the cinematic image functions as a *digitextual* sign of a furniture advertising discourse with further connotations regarding consumer culture.[10] As in a conventional commercial catalogue, an item description and a designated price pops up next to each emerging piece of furniture within the frame, therefore illustrating the meaningless value of the furniture, which for Baudrillard is of course the exchange value, that is the message of the object = exchange value = nothingness.[11] Clearly, one of the aims of this shot is to express this idea, or at least to translate visually

how the character perceives the purpose of his existence before the emergence of his alter ego.

Prior to the panning camera movement used to frame the second shot of the Ikea sequence, the camera zooms in to the photo of an empty space on a page of the furniture catalogue that Edward Norton's character (Jack) is reading in the toilet. Then the transition to the next shot reveals that the space of the photo is identical to Jack's domestic space and the choice of the specific editing transition signifies in a sense that the next shot develops from within the framing and flatness of the photo. Jack comes into the onscreen space as the camera pans and walks through the lettering descriptions, thus becoming part of the fakeness and flatness of the space; his identity then is shaped by the commercial space he inhabits (see Figure 4.1). Baudrillard interestingly describes the postmodern schizoid subject in a similar way to Jack's representation in this sequence: "He can no longer produce the limits of his own being, can no longer play nor stage himself, can no longer produce himself as mirror. He is now only a pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence."[12] The mise-en-scène further suggests that it is even questionable whether Jack's body within this obscene space indicates his existence. The domestic space reflects the actual consumer's relationship to domestic/public space in reality. The identity of the consumer is at the same time unified and dispersed; his/her existence is in a constant conflict with a number of ideologies, which are mediated and determined essentially by the values of the free market. Jack's condo then is itself mediated; it is an extension of a television ad, and an advertising catalogue.

Figure 4.1 Remediation of a Furniture Catalogue in *Fight Club*.

The image in the second shot of the sequence in question is associated with flatness due to the remediation of a style usually seen in catalogues or advertisements, but the connections the critical viewer makes in this case will not lead him/her to a decision regarding the efficiency and value of the product advertised, but to think about the function of this remediation within the space of the film in relation to our cultural moment. While *Fight Club* uses these practices ironically it also enables the viewer to read the signifying system of this image effectively within the context of the film and beyond. The meaning that may come out of the interaction between these elements is not imposed by an author, but it lies within the connotations that each familiar signifier carries, and how these are absorbed within the mise-en-scène and the narrative context.

This shot is composed of live action footage, image layering, CGI elements, and conventional stylistic choices borrowed from television/print furniture ads. Thus the final product is a visible effect as the means used to build this sequence are easily perceptible and do not efface the indexical or the digital. This synergy aims at engaging the viewer with this play of signifying systems or as Barthes puts it in his essay *The Death of the Author*, "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture."[13] The only difference being that here Fincher encodes a hyperconscious tissue drawn from visual and print media.

The words and tone of the voice-over narration of the Ikea sequence are quite similar to the main character's first-person narration in the novel when he discusses his relationship with furniture catalogues and furniture in general; however the cinematic space, which is not verbally described as such in the novel, adds to the fundamental idea expressed in it: that consumption has replaced all masculine activities. Thus a desire for material objects has replaced these activities and the Ikea furniture functions as the Freudian fetish for Jack: "And I wasn't the only slave to my nesting instinct. The people I know who used to sit in the bathroom with pornography, now they sit in the bathroom with their Ikea furniture catalogue."[14] However, the film not only adapts these lines, but takes it a step further and depicts the shallowness and emptiness of the human subject by placing Jack within a hyperreal space, which is much in line with Baudrillard's theory regarding the spectral status of the subject within a media network. The novelist himself admits that the director "uses so many brilliant non-entertainment visual forms such as the furniture catalog, the security camera, the television news, to tell the story" (Palahniuk, DVD booklet). This is a valid observation, yet, the director does not use these forms to suggest a realistic representation

but to enhance a reality that is materialized through the obscenity of these visual forms.

Humping vs. "Digital Humping": The Sex Sequence in *Fight Club*

Another sequence which manages to depict the psychological state of the main character and comment on the blurring between reality and illusion is the sex scene, seemingly between Tyler and Marla. In the book Chuck Palahniuk uses only the word "humping" to describe the content of the main character's dream—him having sex with Marla—whereas in the film the signification of the mobile framing and digital compositing of the "dreamy" sex sequence cannot be restricted within the narrow constrains of the definition of the word humping. Hence, the sex sequence in the film certainly adds further complexity, which the description of this scene in the novel lacks.

The sex scene in the film is mostly computer animated, and this choice raises a lot of questions regarding the signification of the scene in conjunction with the digital compositing of the image. Certainly, the narrative context enables us to understand that the sex scene between Marla and Tyler/Jack actually took place, although, it is perceived by Jack as a dream, hence the dream-like feel. The viewer is in no position to know that before the end, even though there is a voice-over narration that talks about past events but withholds information. The question then is whether we should interpret this sequence as a dream or as an intercourse that took place. The fact that this is a sex scene makes the problem of the interpreting task easier as the sexual act itself entails a certain outside*ness* from the otherwise normal perception of the space where the act takes place. The use of CGI emphasizes the idea of sexual intercourse as transcendental and benumbing in relation to the perception of space, thus the space becomes *outer space* (no gravity) and the bodies become fluid and flawless among the space of the bedroom. In addition, the virtual camera movement breaks the boundaries of filmic conventions, speeds up and slows down at certain points, which in effect hides the involvement of a possible unrealistic/jerky movement by the digital doubles in the sequence, and obviously suggests the exhilarating motion involved in the moment, even though the characters' movements are in slow motion. Here we see the construction of a continuous space from distinct elements that blend seamlessly together.

Comparing the digital compositing of this sequence to the condo sequence, it is obvious that it has a different, yet similar function, which is the absence of the real. The catalogue shot is emphasizing the layering of visual codes in a media-conscious and ironic way, whereas the digital compositing in the sex sequence is an attempt to manifest through new cinematic effects the abstract nature of the notion of "pleasure." The mobile framing in the catalogue shot is a simple pan, retaining thus a certain reality in the shot via its conventional camera movement, although the digitally composed layering of different takes essentially suggests that the condo space in the specific shot is cinematographically virtual. The fluidity of the sex sequence, the blending of elements, the unity of space, the transcendence of the bodies signify an act that goes beyond the realm of the real and beyond the meaning of the word "humping." In the specific context, where the main character is suffering from a split personality syndrome this sequence signifies the state of his condition as he floats somewhere between reality and delusion. The face of the man in the sex sequence is blurred, thus this strengthens the thematic concept of the double and in essence the sequence operates as a pre-echo of Tyler's disclosure as the alpha-male half of Jack. The unreality of the scene altogether reiterates the fact that Jack's consumerist ego has suppressed his masculine sexual drives, thus sex with Marla is only possible as a nightmare or delusion.

Fight Club is not a realistic film and does not aim to be so, but it is an equally complex film narrative due to the fact that it uses digital technology to create a playful coexistence of reality and absurdity. The complexity of the film is not only seen in the constructed image but it is also transferred to the theme of the double through which the film asks whether this condition that the film so vividly describes is a symptom that the Western subject suffers from; a subject that oscillates between the different identities of the consumer and his/her human drives.

Framing Space in *Enduring Love*

Fight Club communicates certain psychological and social conditions through CGI and digital compositing as in the sequence analyzed above, enabling a narrow yet complex dialectic at many levels between concepts related to the real and hyperreal. The film adaptation of *Enduring Love* refrains from the use of visible visual effects so as to convey madness through realism instead; a choice that detaches the film from the novel

as the latter is a more conscious self-reflexive narrative about literature, styles of writing and intertextuality. Therefore, the film adaptation rejects the textuality of the novel and adopts a specific style of contemporary filmmaking, which is closer to Bazinian realism since the camera follows the action and the action is not constructed or staged in for the camera. This style has been dubbed by Manovich as DV realism[15] and even though *Enduring Love* does not use digital video cameras, the image does emulate the style of Dogme films and other DV texts which are essentially the visual result of using inexpensive digital video cameras.

The post-production of *Enduring Love* was done on Avid nonlinear editing software, and of course the live action image was digitally corrected and enhanced. The digital enhancement was done in order to create a convincing realistic indexical spatial code, unlike the construction of space in the sequence analyzed from the film *Fight Club*. Still, what this section examines is mainly the camera's movement as an ideologically informed technique to suggest an enhanced indexical representational code. Of course Dogme 95's manifesto has connections to earlier film movements such as the French New Wave and Cinéma Vérité, but I will focus on the main difference between DV realism and traditional filmmaking which is the rejection of the rule that everything must be filmed on Academy 35mm format or motion picture film. This tradition is being replaced by the emergence of inexpensive digital cameras as tools to capture the truth that Dogme directors want to bring out from the natural/nonconstructed development of a live action. While the word truth in the case of Dogme is a mythic perception since it is not everyone's truth, it is obvious that the connection between Dogme and Bazin is the shaky, hand-held camera movement. The latter, may not be the technique that Bazin favored since it was not used at the time Bazin was writing about narrative cinema, but it is a technique that enhances the reality in the relationship between camera and the actors as it allows for the development of action with no cuts unless the cuts themselves are there to break further the illusion such as jump cuts or abrupt cuts. While the novel has a rather playful textuality, the film *Enduring Love* chooses to apply a realistic representational code and it enhances this code by gradually setting a disturbing yet direct tone and mood through camera movement.

In *Enduring Love* the theme of the *doppelgänger* is not as straightforward as in *Fight Club*. Although Jed suffers from de Clérambault's syndrome,[16] he does not embody an utterly exposed version of Joe's *doppelgänger*. The conflict is more noticeable in the novel, where rationality confronts the

"Jesus freak."[17] The novel offers a number of indications to manipulate the reader so as to consider the idea that Jed is Joe's alter ego, which can be a convincing reading amidst the complex narrative of the novel even though the use of factual information as part of the novel may reject such an association. The doubtful existence of Jed is usually expressed through Clarissa's (Joe's partner) unreliable stream of thoughts. She even thinks that the writing in Jed's letters, which Joe provides to prove that he is being stalked, is rather like her partner's writing, thus insinuating that Joe himself is writing the letters and that the idea of Jed stalking him is a figment of his imagination. In the film however, the overpowering absence/presence of Jed affecting Joe's sanity is manifested through mobile framing and sound, which creates an unsettling atmosphere that corresponds to the psychological state of the main character. The relationship between characters, and between character and space is to a large extent determined by camerawork. Arguably, if Jed is read as a possible alter ego within the context of psychoanalytic critical practice, he certainly functions as the embodiment of Joe's obsessions and anxieties regarding the balloon accident, and in turn the endurance of love. Space is not altogether eerie, the locations are not otherworldly, yet the documentary-like filming techniques that are employed here paradoxically replace, in effect, the conventions of the psychological thriller and further suggest an immediacy which is according to Manovich the key word of DV realism.[18] The hand-held camera and the journalistic way in which it follows the action replaces and adapts to a certain extent the blending of fact and fiction of the narrative of the novel through cinematic codes. The film is obviously fiction, but it avoids being a hyperconsciously constructed fiction by avoiding reflexivity and intertextuality. The use of camera movement in the film adopts techniques that have been associated with realism; however the film does not claim to be a play between fact and fiction, but it claims to be realistic instead. In this case the filmmakers attempt to adapt the story into a realistic narrative rather than a postmodern narrative. Therefore, it is important to highlight the fact that this particular case of film adaptation uses familiar codes of cinematic form to distantiate itself from the stylistic elements of the novel.

There are major changes in the film narrative in relation to the source narrative; however the main storyline is to a large extent intact. I argue here that the camera replaces in a sense Joe's first-person narration and stream of consciousness in the novel. Voice-over, specifically first-person voice-over, is usually a choice that may not allow the ambiguity and

enhancement of reality that a Bazinian understanding might seek in a film as the narrative develops from a specific point of view such as in the case of *Fight Club*. Instead of using a voice-over to convey the implications associated with the cinematic image, the hand-held camera can be seen as a creative tool rather than an impersonal apparatus. In a sense the camera has a kind of a camera-*stylo*[19] function as it is actively engaged in the emotional development of the scenes, imitating the process of writing a stream of consciousness that varies according to mood and tone, unlike the use of still camera, which lacks, to a certain extent, immediacy and spontaneity. The director then is "writing" by way of cinematic expression, which becomes of primary importance for the detailed analysis of cinematic space, which is changeable rather than fixed and controlled.

Of course, the camera cannot reveal what the character is thinking, but the unsteadiness of the framing can add up to the intensity of the moment and correspond to the psychological state of the characters, specifically Joe, and the lack of communication and understanding between the couple. In an interview with Jonathan Noakes, McEwan argues:

> What is exceptional, I think, about the novel as a form—and here it exerts its superiority over movies, over theatre—is its peculiar ability to get inside minds and to show us the mechanics of misunderstanding, so you can be on both sides of the dispute. You can have unreliable narrators that will draw the reader into the wrong side of a dispute, and then turn it round later [. . .] over two or three hundred years we have evolved a literary form that I think is unequalled in its ability to get inside the nature of a misunderstanding.[20]

Here McEwan's view is obviously biased; one of many filmic examples to counter his argument is Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* (1954), where we are manipulated as viewers due to the point-of-view shot alignment Hitchcock gradually develops with James Stewart's immobile state. Unlike McEwan's intentions regarding character alignment in the novel, the film mostly aligns us with Joe's rational thinking and suffering rather than Claire's sympathetic character.[21] The choice to change the name and profession of the female character in the film reinforces the idea that the film focuses on Joe and the textual reading of the film rather than the intertextual/extra-textual associations that the female character carries in the novel.

The name Clarissa used in the novel (Claire in the film) and her profession (Keats scholar) obviously allude to other literary classics: *Clarissa* (Samuel Richardson, 1748) and *Mrs Dalloway* (Virginia Woolf, 1925). Thus the attributes given to the female character in the film detach her from such signification. Similarly, this could be said about the choice not to have a Gothic-like mansion as Jed's home. These choices might not have been decided consciously in the way that they are understood here, but they certainly create an effective narrative and cinematic space that exerts an intensity, which is not as powerful in the novel due to its style and the sometimes distant first-person narration of Joe. The sequences that are examined here are not included in the book, yet they capture the increasing distance and final breakdown of the couple's relationship. The film's form and style are elements that demand a rigorous examination not only because they may lead us to a plausible interpretation of the film, but because they may challenge common frameworks of understanding or activate frameworks that are not well understood within the context of film adaptation criticism and theory. Form, style, and space in this case enhance the nature of cinematic ambiguity/complexity since the development of the two scenes allows the viewer to study space and its elements in a number of mental processes that are relevant to the information or actions at hand.

In the first sequence in Claire's studio, Joe returns after he had an encounter with Jed. He obviously seems desperately in need of his partner's support; however, Claire is not able to grasp the danger of Jed's presence in Joe's private/public sphere. At times she even acts as if Jed is Joe's imaginary friend, and the filmmakers, like the novelist, manipulate the audience by providing a certain narrative unreliability through Claire's character, but, unlike the novel, the viewer cannot be trapped in unreliable narrations due to the convincing camerawork. There is a long take in this sequence which provides a noncontrolling unity of space in order to reinforce the uneasiness and growing anxiety of the moment; the camera explores the space and experiments with different compositions that strengthen the frustrating, yet withheld, ambience through this strange combination of wobbling, uneasy camera movement, warm natural lighting and editing that breaks away from conventional patterns as the sequence develops. The camera is hand-held and like a little child hides behind props and sits in the corner, overhearing and observing conversation, and at the same time waiting for something to burst (see Figure 4.2). Furthermore, the flexibility of the hand-held technique allows the scene to unfold naturally and frees the actors from restriction

Figure 4.2 The camera playing Hide and Seek in *Enduring Love.*

of movement, providing thus a sense of authenticity and real-time action. This follows one of the main principles of Dogme 95, where the camera should adjust to the changing position of the enacted event. The lighting is natural (sunny day) and clearly this is suitable for the positive outcome of this sequence, where Claire comforts her partner, without realizing the immensity of the problem that is Jed's stalking obsession. Overall, this sequence highlights the importance of camera-work in the film which feels as if it is a diegetic onlooker who reacts and feels uncomfortable when present in the studio space. It simultaneously gets inside the action and keeps a distance, realizing in effect Claire's statement that she needs distance to study her subject. Thus, the camera wants the viewers to study the event and feel the escalation of anxiety; hand-held movement enhances the ambiguity of reality as it tries to bring the viewer closer to the film's diegesis and the seemingly nonconstructed action of this sequence.

The second time we encounter the same space, Joe has already become fully obsessed with solving the Jed enigma and is now on the verge of madness. He enters the art studio the camera waits for him inside the space, and he looks around while the noise of the rain produces an aggravating effect. Joe discovers a sculpture of his face done by Claire, which reminds us of the conversation they had during the first art studio sequence, and he realizes that the gap in their relationship has created the necessary distance for Claire to sculpt his face. The rain and the bluish cold light that fills the space create the exact opposite effect when compared to the lighting of the space in the first art studio sequence. While the warmth of the room in the first encounter of the space could

suggest the safety and security that Joe's partner may provide, in this sequence the noise of the rain and the cold lighting can only suggest remoteness. Thus, space interacts dynamically with the psychological state of the characters and the dialogue until the point where Joe cannot control his disappointment and feelings and then the camera mobility takes over. The camerawork is not as distant and discrete as in the first workshop sequence; it gets closer to the characters and struggles to capture Joe's aggressiveness and the authenticity of the moment. It could be argued then that the first art studio sequence technically pre-echoes the development of the second sequence in the same space, thus the almost aggravating effect that the hand-held camera creates in the former case reinforces this hypothesis.

Certainly, one of the differences between *Fight Club* and *Enduring Love* is the level of reality or hyperreality each film wants to achieve. *Fight Club* stresses how reality is perceived by and maybe imposed on certain individuals; in other words, that a hyperreality has replaced reality. *Enduring Love*, on the other hand, attempts to force immediacy out of the way it treats madness and relationships. *Fight Club* uses digital technology to achieve this, whereas *Enduring Love* mostly uses hand-held camera. In the specific case studies these are important formulaic and stylistic elements since they form a complex space that requires further interpretation. These choices have a twofold function: they raise questions about the films as adaptations and as examples that can be used to discuss how different technologies and aesthetic choices enable the rethinking of cinema's ontology. A comparative study between a novel and its film adaptation is always useful, but the aim of this chapter is to challenge the way or ways this process is applied and understood through the existing knowledge. The close analyses of sequences from *Fight Club* and *Enduring Love* have illustrated that film form, style, and space are elements that carry and create meaningful associations and implications which lead to a number of interpretations/readings not only about the films themselves, but also about the theories that may be applied to construct an interpretation. However, the task of this chapter is not just to interpret these two case studies but to propose that the Intertextual dialogism/approach theory is a discourse that needs to be revised and sharpened in order to embrace film adaptations in ways that break away from common frameworks of analysis.

Intertextual dialogism may have freed the study of film adaptation from the fidelity issue, but a rigorous examination of all the aspects involved in an adaptation process is still needed to widen this methodology

and theory. Knowledge of form, socioeconomic factors, technology, production and consumption is essential in order to construct such an effective study and discourse. David Bordwell wrote back in the early 1990s that "we are almost completely uninformed about the norms governing the ordinary output of most national cinemas, let alone the relations between those norms and conditions of production and consumption" in order to stress his argument that there is a lack of a sophisticated analysis of film form and style.[22] Today, academia is being informed progressively about world cinema's frameworks of production and comprehension and we are going through a process of understanding and mapping the meanings that new cinematic technologies create. Undoubtedly, the growing interest in national cinemas as well as the growing interest in various forms of digital cinema shown by academia will enrich film schemata and film criticism. One of the tasks of film adaptation theory/criticism then should be to comprehend these new frameworks and to contribute to film studies and adaptation studies by activating new knowledge-structures and interpretive processes to analyze the complexity of film form, style, and space. The next chapter discusses the case studies *Wanted* and *300* in relation to contemporary debates regarding cinema and early approaches to adaptation, which try to define the film medium's configurations in relation to other media. Hence, there is an attempt to examine how these theories work when we are dealing with the adaptation of a medium such as comic art that was relatively ignored by academic debates.

Notes

[1] Nicholas Rombes, "Introduction," in *New Punk Cinema*, ed. Nicholas Rombes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 2.

[2] See Henry Giroux and Imre Szeman, "Ikea Boy Fights Back: *Fight Club*, Consumerism, and the Political Limits of Nineties Cinema," in *The End of Cinema as We Know It,* ed. Jon Lewis (London: Pluto Press, 2001), and Alexandra Juhasz, "The Phallus UnFetished: The End of Masculinity As We Know It in Late 1990s 'Feminist' Cinema," in *The End of Cinema as We Know It,* ed. Jon Lewis (London: Pluto Press, 2001).

[3] Lev Manovich, "Old Media as New Media: Cinema," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002).

[4] Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," in *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore (London: The Athlone Press, 2000).

[5] Giroux and Szeman argue that *Fight Club* functions as a "defense of authoritarian masculinity" in their attempt to offer a response to the reception of the

film as a critique of capitalism. Henry Giroux and Imre Szeman, "Ikea Boy Fights Back: *Fight Club*, Consumerism, and the Political Limits of Nineties Cinema," in *The End of Cinema as We Know It,* ed. Jon Lewis (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 102.

[6] Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London; Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985).

[7] Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?,* Vol. I, Hugh Gray, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[8] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2001).

[9] Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," 131.

[10] Everett has introduced the term digitextuality in order to inaugurate a move beyond "a 'new signifying system' of quotations and transpositions, to a metasignifying system of discursive absorption whereby different signifying systems and materials are translated and often transformed into zeroes and ones for infinite recombinant signifiers." Everett, Anna, "Digitextuality and Click Theory: Theses on Convergence Media in the Digital Age," in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*, eds. Anna Everett and John T. Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2003), 7.

[11] Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication."

[12] Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," 133.

[13] Roland Barthes (1967) "The Death of the Author," in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, eds. David Lodge and Nigel Wood (New York: Pearson Education, 2000), 149.

[14] Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (New York: Owl Books, 1997), 43.

[15] Lev Manovich, "Old Media as New Media: Cinema."

[16] De Clérambault's syndrome "is a type of erotomania that involves the obsessional love of another person, often of higher social status. The lover is convinced that the loved one reciprocates his or her love but cannot show it directly. The lover is further convinced that the loved one denies doing so." David Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina, 2002), 158.

[17] Ian McEwan, *Enduring Love* (London: Vintage, 1998).

[18] Lev Manovich, "Old Media as New Media: Cinema."

[19] Alexander Astruc, (1948), "The Birth of a New Avant-garde: La Camera-stylo," trans. Peter Graham, in *The New Wave*, ed. Peter Graham (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), 17–24.

[20] Margaret Reynolds and Jonathan Noakes, *Ian McEwan: The Essential Guide* (London: Vintage, 2002), 18.

[21] In the same interview, McEwan notes that he "wanted the reader to side with Clarissa. There are all kinds of false trails in *Enduring Love*. I wanted the reader to toy with the idea that Joe might be going completely crazy, or maybe even that Joe was Jed." Reynolds and Noakes, *Ian McEwan: The Essential Guide*, 17.

[22] David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 274.

Chapter 5

Bullet-time, Blood Spraying Time, and the Adaptation of the Graphic Novel

Using a concept such as graphic novel to discuss film adaptation is quite challenging for two reasons. The first reason deals with the fact that the term graphic novel is the result of a marketing strategy and thus is not widely acceptable among the community of comic book artists, and the second reason is that comic books and especially films based on comic books have been received as marginal and children-oriented popular forms and were not academically discussed under the umbrella of film adaptation studies until recently. The online interdisciplinary journal *ImageTexT* first published in 2004 by the department of English at the University of Florida is an affirmation of academia's current interest in comics; the emphasis that the journal gives on the form, style and aesthetics of comics reinforces the artistic validity of comic books and thus the necessity of examining this enduring, yet rediscovered medium (due to the lack of rigorous studies on comic books) in relation to its cinematic adaptation.

The term graphic novel was originally used by Will Eisner to describe his book-length comic *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*, which was first published in 1978.[1] Frank Miller's innovative and dark/violent artwork and Alan Moore's complex narratives began to shape a creative force that broke away from the conventional constructs of superhero comics and gave a new meaning to this concept that essentially maintains the vocabulary of comics, yet amplifies the interaction between words and pictures with engaging storytelling, dark iconography, and highly stylized choreography. Sabin writes that these new perspectives were possible because the length of the graphic novel set up new challenges for the creators in terms of atmosphere, the prolonging of suspense, and the development of characters.[2] The success of this reconceptualization of the medium by the aforementioned key writers is also attributable to the repackaging of comics into square-bound books, which were then marketed as "graphic novels."[3] The term graphic

novel is according to Sabin "the invention of publishers' public relations departments. It meant that publishers could sell adult comics to wider public by giving them another name: specifically by associating them with novels, and disassociating them from comics."[4] This "invention" or transition enabled the publishers to place the art of comics on the shelves of leading bookselling brands on high streets and shopping centers; the key texts that marked the transition from fan shops to the mainstream were Frank Miller's *Batman: The Return of the Dark Knight* (1986) and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen* (1986).

Comic artwork always had a special financial relationship with the film industry, which gave birth to another comparative/evaluative discourse that usually involves the fans. Still, the focus of this chapter is not to investigate the above relationship, which similarly to other transferences of media contents into the *inglourious basterd* that film adaptation is, is criticized for disassociating itself from the essence and imaginary of the original. This chapter attempts to interpret or understand the copresence of more than one medium in digital cinema by analyzing the new *mixed cinema*[5] moments included in the case study examples: *Wanted* (Timur Bekmambetov, 2008) and *300* (Zack Snyder, 2006). Thus another trait of post-celluloid adaptation is that it is not only a process that transfers content from an older medium to a new media object, but also *refers to the persistent presence rather than absence of other media through their consciously visible manifestation in digital cinema.* These are not clearly defined moments as they emerge from a media object that simultaneously divides and connects the real and the hyperreal.

Perhaps then the title of Tarantino's film is the best way to describe cinema. The final line of *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) spoken by Lt. Aldo Rain (Brad Pitt) "I think this just might be my masterpiece" after carving a swastika into Col. Landa's forehead, suggests that cinema has always been a vernacular where the visible presence or manufactured absence of hybridity is not simply a style, it is an inherent part of what cinema's cultural status was and still is: reinventing itself in ways that communicate its death and birth, its artistic qualities and guilty pleasures all at once. *Inglourious Basterds*'s final line might as well intend to reactivate the question "what is cinema?", but it certainly points to the direction that the fundamental nature of cinema is an irrepressible impurity in many ways. Nonetheless, the main argument in this chapter, which in effect reinforces the analyses in the preceding chapter, is that this mixed nature becomes visibly augmented through a multilevel dialectic between the graphic novel and moving images.

Previous chapters illustrated that it is becoming increasingly difficult to define a concept such as film adaptation as it involves a process whereby an intensified and accelerated confluence of media elements occurs due to the evolution of media technologies. Baudrillard has been discussed and quoted in Chapters 3 and 4 as a theorist that understands the potential of new technologies to create media platforms that may confuse boundaries, and as a thinker that explores the future possibility of technologies to create one new space that will allow us as producers and consumers of cultural products to coexist with screenless and pageless, or transparent media forms, which remediate older forms and most notably reality itself. Jay David Bolter writes that "we have not seen anything like the takeover of a univocal digital media world,"[6] however, it could be certainly argued that there are new practices and new perceptions that begin to formulate this single *obscene* space as a meaningful and viable condition, even if it does not exist in the present. On the one hand, Henry Jenkins has introduced or further developed such practices, but on the other hand, he rejects the idea of this single *mediascape*, which he describes as the *Black Box* (Bolter borrows the word *holodeck* to describe an identical logic or condition).[7] These practices can be expressed through "play," "control," "participation," "resistance," actions that certainly create a collision between old and new media forms. But until this future condition begins to shape our social structures and cultural production it would be useful to examine how the spaces of two different media forms coexist in a new form, which Manovich describes as Digital Cinema. This coexistence of forms either within a single media product or a line of products that complement the main narrative object point toward this confusion or even emergent obliteration of boundaries. While according to Bolter the *cyberphobia* Hollywood films of the 1990s are an expression of an "anxiety about the threat of digital forms,"[8] the recent blockbuster *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) expresses an unmistakable desire for immersion and immediacy.

The accomplished goal of Pandora's believability, and the 3D presentation were an attempt to realize presence (in a computer generated space) in the same way the term avatar indicates in computing, however the 3D presentation of the film was disappointing. This failure does not cancel the implications contained in the film, on the contrary, it reactivates the spirit of competition and we all now anticipate the new film that will overthrow *Avatar* from its ostensibly privileged pre- and post-cinematic status, a position that the latter film claimed from another film that indirectly raised the same question as *Inglourious Basterds* and

Avatar: The promotional campaign of *The Matrix* stimulated our interest in the film by introducing the question "What is the Matrix?". After the release of the film academia reacted with a frantic and celebratory reaction at the same time in an attempt to understand the new cinematic vernacular that the film launched. While Tarantino's film reaffirms cinema's cultural status as popular art, Cameron's vernacular is indeed imposing, yet it is quite monotonous as well.

The connectivity allegory of the film is twofold: first, it invites us to reconnect with nature and secondly it invites us to connect with the film via different media channels so as to experience this complete and wondrous environment. This revitalizing or hyperconscious use of video gaming and virtual community discourse in James Cameron's *Avatar* epitomizes the disassociation of science fiction and fantasy films from negative depictions of technology and the alien other. Fundamentally, *Avatar* does not offer more than its predecessors; it is a repetition of stylistic choices and motifs that reinforce cinema's need to survive through its collaboration with other media. Maybe *Avatar* differs from other examples because it expresses this need in such a precise manner rather than communicating a resistance to narrative cinema's invisibility.

The case study examples that this chapter examines are not film texts based on a literary narrative or films that routinely reproduce narrative cinema, but they are film texts that essentially shape a complex textuality that creates an anti-cinematic space, where the visual codes of comic books, cinema and video games meet in playful ways and contain an unequivocal promise. This meeting reflects the logic of merging, integration and conjunction in the competitive arena of media industries; and this economic shaping of cultural products creates new aesthetics that force us to rethink film adaptation, and specifically the adaptation of comic art, not only as a process but as a perceptible space due to its instantaneous transactions and interactions with other cultural forms. Films *300* and *Wanted* activate this financially exact, yet anti-cinematic moments that are not only a statement on their identity as a hypertext and a hypotext (see Chapter 1 for the definition of a hypotext and hypertext) all together, they are spaces that function as a super-metatext that is not a reading of the graphic novel, but a reminder of the ways that the audience can communicate or should communicate with this cinematic products, in the sense that they promise an experience through the coding and framing of action that hyperconsciously refers to a posterior text: the video game.

In his work on nonlinear narrative, Bruce Isaacs comments that one of the main characteristics of contemporary cinema that has been described as New Punk is the "hyper-revisionism of its content, aesthetically and thematically. The cinematic image is a commentary on film, and by extension, a running commentary on itself."[9] In the case of *300* and *Wanted* the cinematic image is also a commentary on the economic shaping of the blockbuster post-celluloid adaptation and on video gaming and therefore it is questionable whether the image is still cinematic or it becomes a new media object. This chapter will focus on how *300* and *Wanted* can be seen as hyper-revisionist examples in a way that is more complex than Isaacs' understanding, but still meets the latter's observation in his book *Toward a New Film Aesthetic* (2009) about a body of work that attempts to theorize an alteration in the ontology of the cinematic image with an emphasis on how this new ontology can be seen as a site of meaning. One of the key arguments of Isaac's work is that the term metacinema acquires a new meaning, which refers to a visual cinema as spectacle that does not simply comment on the making of cinema; it constructs the mise-en-scène and other elements of cinematic language in ways that transform the traditions of realist cinema into simulacra (moments of likeness to and nostalgia for cinema prior to digital cinema or virtual cinematography) through hyperconscious references to cinema's vernaculars. Isaacs writes that "the 'new' cinematic image, divested on the burden of the Real, draws attention to itself as a component of a manufactured media. But it also declares its rejection of the once glorified ontological status of the image as reproduced reality (Bazin)."[10] The film texts in question do not only perform cinema through generic play and cinematic quotes; they perform the grammar of comic books and video games in a way that challenges the limits and traditional techniques of cinema. *Sin City* (Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez, 2005) is probably the film that introduced this highly stylized iconography of comic books to the point that Bolter uses the word "faithful" to describe the relationship between Frank Miller's graphic novel (1991) and its filmic adaptation.[11] While, *Sin City*'s relationship to its source text establishes an "obvious" faithfulness due to the remediation of the comic's color palettes and the stylization of the characters, the films in question are used to exemplify a multifaceted relationship between cinema, comic books, and video games that is manifested through moments that explicitly affirm and communicate the logic of financial diversification.

This dialectic of transition between the graphic novel and post-celluloid cinema also verifies the logic of remediation as there is an overtly visible imitation of style and form that exists in recent film texts such as *300* and *Wanted*, which are based on Frank Miller's *300* (1998) and Mark Millar and JG Jones' *Wanted* (2003) graphic novels. Certainly the contemporary graphic novel itself remediates or adapts to a significant extent the images of exploitation films such as the glorification of violence, the a la Russ Meyer voluptuous representation of the female body and the bodies of wretched characters, which are of course maintained and amplified through the ways comic book artists treat such stereotypes and gore with their drawing styles in an attempt to bring together the underground comix movement and the guilty pleasures of cult cinema much like the graphic novel *Wanted* does. In addition there are examples of films that have been adapted into graphic novels such as the horror cult classic *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the *Terminator,* and the *Alien* Saga; these are but a small number of titles that display a cross-borrowing of familiar icons and narratives between moving and static images.

However, the films in question are closer to Bolter and Grusin's (2000) understanding of the double logic of remediation where in the case of *Wanted* and *300* the filmmakers seem to desire to erase the limits of the medium of the graphic novel by replacing static images with exhilarating motion and blood spraying effects.[12] However, these films perform the narrative and visual style of their source texts through time-segments that are neither filmic in the traditional sense of realist film narrative nor static; thus immediacy or reality do not seem to be the desired effect here, but believability is the key word. Bolter suggests that remediation also "describes a particular relationship in which homage and rivalry are combined" and based on this assumption it is obvious that films based on comics such as the case studies in question aim to challenge traditional filmmaking by representing far-fetched images convincingly through the appropriation of the traditional representational codes and texture of cinema; however, they do not offer new narrative possibilities as in the case of interactive television or computer games.[13] What is new about digital cinema's transactions with the comic art then?

According to Isaacs' analysis of the bullet-time effect in *The Matrix* virtual cinematography transcends the limitations or realist patterns of traditional cinematography, hence it forms a new aesthetic, where the image is not dictated by a realist mise-en-scène and narrative in terms of spatial and temporal ordering of a sequence or shot.[14] *Wanted* and

300 include similar hypermediated in-between moments or segments that contain an inherent promise for an active engagement with the product or products that will emerge from a number of adaptations, a promise of immersion (see Figure 5.1). These moments are examples of a mutual process of remediation, and therefore I argue that they purposefully lose their identity or reference to a specific media ontology within this process, not because they may seem to disrupt the traditional relationship between the spectator and the text, or the realist codes of cinema, but because they create (apart from a new aesthetic) a new mixed discourse, that visually confirms or reconfirms the logic of *transmedia storytelling* by promoting the ways with which the viewer/user can communicate with this product.

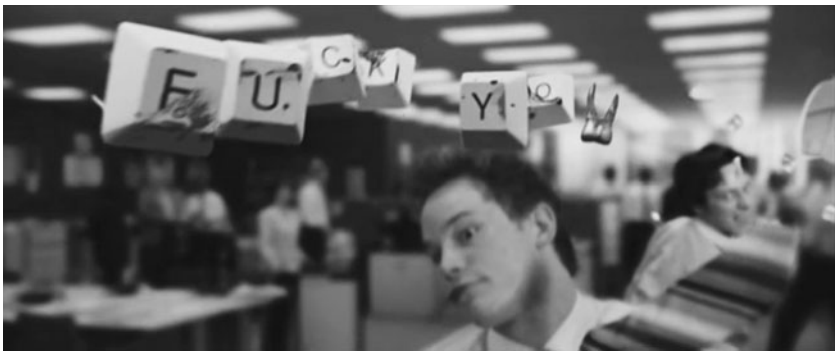

Figure 5.1 One of the many in-between moments in *Wanted*.

Static, moving and immersive become one in the form of a promise for coauthoring through the purchasing of coproducts that will complete the seemingly self-contained narrative of the main product. When the character of Wesley Gibson (James McAvoy) directly addresses the audience asking them "what the fuck have you done lately?", this being the final line of the film, he is essentially inviting the audience to act, to become an action hero like him, to experience his shift. The film ends where the video game could start as a response to his question. This choice is the last of a number of devices and techniques that aim to build a relationship between Wesley, who is introduced as an everyday

individual, and the spectator. The video game is a powerful medium that reinforces this relationship not just through psychological reactions, but through physical reactions as well. While the filmic and video gaming conventions construct together an experience that might arguably fulfill the desire for immediacy, the status of the origin of this prolonged narrative confirms a shift in the way hierarchies have been perceived within the context of film adaptation studies. This practice does not challenge or reaffirm the cultural status of the origin of the main product in terms of elevated values of authorship as in the case of literature to film adaptation, even though fans of the art of the graphic novel might be a bit skeptic about film adaptations based on comic artworks. Still, I am referring to authorial values that were essentially shaped by educational systems and cultural institutions. When the comic book or the graphic novel enters this process of post-celluloid adaptation it reinforces Bolter's understanding of a transference that in this case erases the specificity of visual elements appearing in the shot(s). Although a number of film reviewers such as Roger Ebert express the view that the film adaptations of both *Sin City* and *300* are faithful to the drawings of Frank Miller,[15] I would argue that both films and especially *300* are faithful to the ontology of digital cinema as defined by Manovich (see Chapter 2).

The filmic case studies examined here epitomize practices that illustrate the cinegratography of motion through a playful manner that clearly refers to the techniques that are used to express motion in comic books or graphic novels . As a result the way violence is portrayed in the specific film texts tends to break away from traditional filmic practices due to the borrowings of visible elements from the stylistic agendas of the graphic novels. Thus cinema moves toward a process whereby live action footage becomes graphic in order to aestheticize blood/bleeding and amplify the balletic attributes and artistic explorations of slow motion violence. This action is complemented with graphic rather than photographic elements that were previously impossible to add seamlessly or hyperconsciously in films, but these elements were and still are inherent in the language of comic books.

The Matrix franchise has arguably initiated this intensification and acceleration of the in-between hypermediated moments with the refinement of the bullet time effect. It seemed that through this process there was also an attempt to remediate the illustrations or drawings in comic book panels through a hybrid image where the bullets and the visual representation of their speed can be visible through slow motion, while

the camera moves around the action at a normal speed. The fact that the film is heavily influenced by comic books reinforces this observation along with the webcomics that were featured on the official website of the franchise; what the frame contains is an impossible and un-filmable action that is realized through virtual cinematography and graphic elements. This effect replaces several cuts by splicing shots captured from different cameras, which were positioned in a circle to surround the action. The dynamic visibility of the bullet in this image represented through a graphic motion line suggests a very slow span of time while the camera moves at normal speed. The virtual cinematography contributes to the creation of a continuous space as a background while the span of time that the iconic representation of the bullet suggests, is essentially steps before freeze frame; this in-between moment is both a remediation of the comic book vocabulary,[16] but it is also a moment that can work as a site of meaning not only about cinema itself but about the transition of time and space from graphic novels to cinema. The obvious difference here between the comic book vocabulary and cinematic form is the virtual camera movement, but like in comic books the way a bullet-time shot is constructed does not suggest an instantaneous moment of time, on the contrary it provides a sense of duration along with the dynamic virtual cinematography. In other words, this virtual camera movement simulates cinema by providing the illusion of movement in a comparable way to stop motion animation, but at the same time bullet-time shots splice together static and moving images to create a dynamic sense of unity by erasing the limitations of editing and by effacing the limitations of a comic book's gutter,[17] in the sense that we are given a complete view of the space of the action without different panels or shots offering fragmented perspectives of the fight choreography.

In the opening sequence of the film, the almost static image of Trinity's acrobatic move, just after the police officer attempts to cuff her, triggers this manifestation of impure cinematic moments in the film. Interestingly, the acrobatic move retains a sense of duration, while Trinity's opponent freezes. This connotes that Trinity is a lot faster than a normal human being and the sound effects highlight this idea. Despite the fact, that Isaacs uses this moment as an example that initiates a rethinking of the aesthetics of contemporary cinema, this effect may also trigger a discussion concerning the coexistence of another cultural form within this shot that its elements have obviously been transferred "in terms appropriate to the remediating media form."[18] The whipping-like

sound of Trinity's rise replaces the dynamic lettering of nonverbal sounds in comic books. Thus, sound in this case provides a very brief sense of time and not a single moment in time in a manner analogous to the system or "effects" created in comic book panels to connote the concept of time. In addition, the same sound that is used to dress the motion of Trinity, replaces another dynamic element of comic books that suggests duration of time: the motion line. Motion lines are actually reproduced for other applications of the bullet-time effect in *The Matrix* in a style that can only quote motion lines in comic books. There are a number of other elements that allude to the iconography of comic books such as the use of extreme high angle shots framing Trinity's fight choreography in the opening sequence of *The Matrix Reloaded*, but the main focus is on moments whereby the graphic and the photographic is combined in ways that renders the cinematic image as something else, an arrangement of digital bits rather than narrative beats that underline post-celluloid cinema's ability to reinvent itself through its interaction with other forms. The co-presence of different media forms reemerges in a similar fashion and other manifestations in *Wanted* and *300*. This recurring pattern undoubtedly communicates a new trend, where moments in films challenge the seemingly seamless visual whole through a hyperconscious encoding of visual patterns that are appropriated in a playful manner. These films do not only perform cinema, they perform comics through moments that are neither moving nor still, neither photographic nor graphic. Digital Cinema now claims an imaginary that was only possible through the static iconography of comic books.

The story of the graphic novel *Wanted* unfolds around the character of a white collar worker who learns that he is the offspring of a murdered super-villain who belonged to an underground society of super-villains that became rulers of the world after a battle with superheroes. The super-villains run things in secret sustaining thus a belief in the world of the novel that super-villains and superheroes are fictional. The main character gradually discovers his superhuman gun shooting precision and joins the fraternity to refine his abilities and become a killing machine. The film version tones down the superhero genre elements and maintains the idea of a secret society of professional killers with special abilities that are motivated by a mythic textile mill device named the loom of fate that indicates potential threats that need to be exterminated. There are a lot of differences in the film's narrative since there is a different premise, however the film maintains the "nobody" main character who develops from act to act through situations that involve

moral dilemmas that he needs to transgress almost immediately, unlike in the graphic novel, where the character behaves violently without going through mental conflicts. The persona and physique of the leading actor James McAvoy suggests a radical transformation from an everyday individual to a killing machine, thus there was immediately a need for a less dark narrative. The gory in-between action in the film is overtly performed, therefore it moves away from realist representations of violence in order to retain certain elements of the graphic novel's drawing and choreography.

The film *300* desires to generate a style, which is closer to the mythology of the source text than to a realist depiction of the historical battle of the Hot Gates between the Spartans and the Persians. The film is clearly stating its source by replicating the aesthetics of the graphic novel; the illustrative feel of the backgrounds and the painterly look of blood spraying in battle sequences aim to establish a relationship that highlights the artistic validity of the graphic novel and both endorses and transgresses Stephens Prince's following comment: "cinema in the new millennium is in transition from one mode of perceptual registration to another, and one of the striking ironies of this in-between period lies in the efforts of digital filmmakers to retain a film look [. . .] even as that medium is disappearing."[19] The adaptation of the graphic novel seems to be a process that creates a new post-celluloid impurity that refers to the rejection of a nostalgic drive or nostalgic debris in terms of exhibition. Digital cinematography is stranded on the island of the in-between; the impure in-between moments analyzed here are materializations of this condition. However, Bolter writes that "it is not clear that our culture wants the *holodeck*,"[20] in other words, a digital screen that reconfigures cinema's ontology. *Wanted* and *300*'s new in-between cinema is expressed through slow motion, and even though slow motion is not a new expressive choice, the manner in which it is used allows for the copresence of diverse visual codes.

Stephen Prince in his essay "The Aesthetic of Slow Motion Violence in the Films of Sam Peckinpah" examines the filming techniques of gunplay or battle sequences as developed by filmmakers such as Kurosawa in *The Seven Samurai* (1954), Arthur Penn in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and Peckinpah in *The Wild Bunch* (1969).[21] These sequences are montages of live action footage captured by multiple cameras, which intercut abrupt slow motion inserts with normal speed. According to Prince the first two films are key texts of the development from bloodless violence to a controversial stylized violence in Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*.

Peckinpah's gunplay sequences involve slow motion shots that show details such as squib work, crosscut with normal temporal rhythm shots. It seems that Prince and Isaacs suggest a similar point which concerns the disruption of time and space, however the first raises this point while examining the poetic or artistic effect of slow motion against violence as spectacle. Slow motion was used as an artistic expression of the moment of death, even though audiences reacted differently to such scenes, whereas the alterations of a film's temporal rhythms within a violent sequence today tend to demonstrate a hypermediated environment that quotes not only cinematic moments, but the vocabulary of other media forms such as Comic Books and Video Games as in the case of *Wanted* and *300*. Even though, there is arguably a different way of thinking behind the cinematic structure of violent sequences now and then it seems that there are similarities since slow motion is also used today to enhance the balletic and acrobatic performances of the actors' physical responses to violence. Prince writes that "the bulk of the visual attention in the slow-motion inserts is devoted [. . .] to the body's loss of volitional control over its actions"[22] and continues to interpret these visualizations as moments that rob the body of its intentionally responsive personality. Prince notes that the artistic transformation and tension that Peckinpah sought through these moments in order "to create a socially beneficial effect"[23] was not received as such, on the contrary, it was seen as pleasurable or too real. While Peckinpah's social agenda failed, these moments do operate as a combination of plastic and realist cinema by depicting space and time as "unstable entities,"[24] and by offering a truthful or authentic physical response of the characters to bodily pain and violent death.

I examine here one of the in-between sequences in *300* where two Spartan soldiers engage in a perfectly choreographed, thus plastic fight with a significant number of opponents. The sequence's duration is about two minutes long and there are only two cuts, after the first cut there is a two shot, which is a very brief exchange of lines between the two Spartans and then the director cuts to a wider camera shot and the action starts again. This decision seems to be similar to the continuous virtual camera of video games and the in-game dialogue moments, or cinematics where the action pauses so that the gamer can move to another level or for the story to develop or simply to add a cinematic feel to the gaming experience. The way blood is sprayed in this sequence cannot possibly aim for immediacy or realism as the action is obviously manufactured so as to look cartoonish. The scene develops through a variety of motion speeds from slow motion to normal temporal

rhythm and abrupt alterations between fast and normal rhythm moments to enhance the exhilarating feel of the carnage. The representation of the characters cannot be better described than Roger Ebert's comparison to professional wrestlers: the film "has one-dimensional caricatures who talk like professional wrestlers plugging their next feud."[25] Thus violence in the film is a spectacle that is simulated and performed in the way bloodless violence is performed in WWE arenas. The graphic rather than photographic quality of the blood enhances the fakeness of the action through the hyperconscious intersection of comic art and video game violence. Similarly to *The Matrix* the different temporal rhythms of motion and digital compositing replace *the gutter* between comic book panels that according to Scott McCloud allow the reader to mentally interact with the comic art's fractured imaginary and thus create a unified action and idea.[26] McCloud writes that this structure offers "a staccato rhythm of unconnected moments";[27] although the action and choreography of the sequence under discussion is not unconnected, it still offers a staccato or fractured rhythm by inserting slow motion and then back to normal temporal rhythm within the same shot, effacing in a way both the traditional montage sequence and comic book's unconnected moments.

The structure of one of the most violent gunplay sequences in *Wanted* imitates the virtual camera conventions of a video game and also includes moments of conventional camerawork to reinforce the fact that the spectator is watching a movie sequence and not a video game trailer. Thus, the main character is framed in a similar way a third-person shooter is framed in a video game and this is juxtaposed with subjective points of view to maintain the subjective motion shots or subjective time warp shots which represent the superhuman ability of the main character, who can bend time and space in a way that allows him extraordinary shooting precision. The composition of these subjective point of view shots is organized in a way that is similar to a first-person shooter video game with opponents popping up in the screen space forcing the main character to react immediately and quickly like a gamer would do to avoid losing. The whole set-up of the scene feels like a video game level and this is reinforced by the fact that while the main actor runs through this space he collects ammunition from his dead enemies and switches guns in mid-air, which is also a direct reference to the dynamic choreography of the graphic novel toward the final pages where Wesley confronts Rictus and his gang. During this in-between sequence there are slow motion inserts that essentially allow for the addition of graphic elements that transform motion and violence so as to complete this hypermedia

frenzy that renders these moments as something that exceeds narrative cinema. In his work on *Cinema in the Digital Age* Nicholas Rombes writes about a "hyper-awareness of self [. . .], when the role of the spectator assumes an ever more visible role in the arrangement of a film's structure."[28] Rombes briefly discusses literary reader-response theory to develop his hypothesis of an implied viewer. During the in-between moments in films like *Wanted* and *300* the viewer does not simply relate the schemata contained in the film itself in order for the film to be brought to life, but the relationship of the viewer with these carefully controlled moments becomes more complicated: the viewer is an implied video-gamer and an implied consumer at the same time. This relationship verifies the hypothesis that the in-between moment as discussed here is something anti-cinematic or post-cinematic as the implied film viewer momentarily assumes other roles, that are relevant to a wider media structure that is not specific.

In his essay "In Defense of Mixed Cinema"[29] Bazin used the term *filmed theater* to describe the film adaptations of Shakespearean plays such as Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), but did not perceive cinema's attempt to master the theater repertoire as something negative or decadent, on the contrary, it was a "proof of maturity."[30] Bazin's defense of mixed media also underpins the in-between moment hypothesis as he pointed out that "cinema draws into itself the formidable resources of elaborated subjects amassed around it by neighboring arts during the course of the centuries."[31] Should we make use of a term like *filmed graphic novel* to describe the adaptations under consideration in the same way the comic book uses the word novel to indicate a process of rediscovery? Cinema's "independence" as an art form lies in its unique ability to absorb/understand other forms and expressive experimentation as it technologically evolves. It may be argued that the remediation of the comic art's vocabulary serves as evidence of cinematographic maturity in the digital age, but these in-between moments are evidence of a more complex logic, which generates this explosion of media forms in contemporary cinema: a post-celluloid adaptation at large; a carefully controlled process that creates a cultural hegemony, which expands across media by building the illusion of a perpetual *incompleteness.*[32]

Notes

[1] Stephen Weiner, *Faster than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel Stephen Weiner* (New York: NBM Publishing, 2003), 17.

[2] Roger Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art* (London: Phaidon, 2008).
[3] Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels.*
[4] Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*, 165.
[5] Bazin used this concept in his essay "In Defense of Mixed Cinema" to describe the influence other cultural forms such as theater and the novel had on filmmaking. In Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. I, Hugh Gray, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 53–75.
[6] Jay David Bolter, "Transference and Transparency: Digital Technology and The Remediation of Cinema," *Intermédialités* 6 (2006): 26.
[7] Bolter, "Transference and Transparency." Bolter borrows this analogy from Janet Murray, who uses the holodeck from the television series *Star Trek* to describe the ultimate form of digital media. Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997).
[8] Bolter, "Transference and Transparency," 26.
[9] Bruce Isaacs, "Non-Linear Narrative," in *New Punk Cinema*, ed. Nicholas Rombes, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 137.
[10] Bruce Isaacs, *Toward a New Film Aesthetic* (New York: Continuum), 137.
[11] Bolter, "Transference and Transparency," 24.
[12] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (London: The MIT Press, 2000).
[13] Bolter, "Transference and Transparency," 14.
[14] Isaacs, *Toward a New Film Aesthetic*, 145.
[15] Roger Ebert, "*300*" movie review rogerebert.com, http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080804/REVIEWS/506949713/1023
[16] Scott McCloud uses the word "vocabulary" to refer to the iconography of comic books. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).
[17] McCloud explains that the "gutter" is the term used to describe the dividing space between panels. *Understanding Comics*, 66.
[18] Bolter, "Transference and Transparency," 14.
[19] Stephen Prince, "The Emergence of Filmic Artifacts: Cinema and Cinematography in the Digital Era," *Film Quarterly* 57, 3 (2004): 32–33.
[20] Bolter, "Transference and Transparency," 26.
[21] Stephen Prince, "The Aesthetic of Slow Motion Violence in the Films of Sam Peckinpah," in *Screening Violence*, ed. Stephen Prince (London: The Athlone Press, 2000).
[22] Prince, "The Aesthetic of Slow Motion Violence in the Films of Sam Peckinpah,"188.
[23] Prince, "The Aesthetic of Slow Motion Violence in the Films of Sam Peckinpah,"177.
[24] Prince, "The Aesthetic of Slow Motion Violence in the Films of Sam Peckinpah,"195.
[25] Roger Ebert, "*300*" movie review, rogerebert.com
[26] McCloud, *Understanding Comics.*
[27] McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 67.
[28] Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age* (London: Wallflower Press), 58.

[29] Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. I*, Hugh Gray, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[30] Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. I*, 69.

[31] Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. I*, 75.

[32] Rombes notes that "one of the consequences of the digital turn is that forms of entertainment and art [. . .] are perpetually incomplete. The model here is something like Wikipedia, where individual entries are updated at every moment." Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, 43. The author of this book introduced the term Incompleteness in a previously published essay "Film Remake or Film Adaptation? New Media Hollywood and the Digitizing of Gothic Monsters in *Van Helsing*," in, *Fear, Cultural Anxiety and Transformation: Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Films Remade*, eds. John Marmysz and Scott A. Lukas (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 243–263.

Chapter 6

From Shadows to Excess: New Media Hollywood and the Digitizing of Gothic Monsters in *Van Helsing*

Count Dracula, an undead host, and Frankenstein's monster, a precursor to the cyborg, ensured that the notorious lines "I bid you welcome" (*Dracula*, Tod Browning, 1931) and "It's alive" (*Frankenstein*, James Whale, 1931) will be repeated as long as filmmakers continue to aspire toward the cinematic perfection of these monstrous bodies through the use of new technology and stylization. For instance, the cinematic medium itself seems to amplify Dracula's supernatural qualities as shape-shifter and undead by transforming his filmic body in accordance with the current cinematic technology. Equally, Frankenstein's monster and its narrative have been read as the progenitors of the cyborg, being compared to Arnold Schwarzenegger's Terminator role in the film of the same title, as well as to narratives that depict the invention of artificial intelligence as the original sin of the twenty-first century.[1]

Although Dracula and Frankenstein's origins are literary, their continuous journeys through the diverse landscape of cinema have detached them from their creators' written portraits, thus demythologizing their authorship and filmic presence. The Count's image has been adapted and regenerated by celebrated film directors such as F. W. Murnau, Tod Browning, Francis Ford Coppola, and Werner Herzog. Similarly, Frankenstein's monster has been reanimated by James Whale and Kenneth Branagh. The bodies of Dracula and Frankenstein's monster in each of these films have been reinterpreted as images that bear no traditional relationship to the original texts. These interpretations, nonetheless, have not been perceived as inferior to the source texts and they have been studied as independent texts. Consequently, these films have acquired a kind of disassociation from their literary source which established them as distinctive moments in cinematic history. *Van Helsing*

(Stephen Sommers, 2004) seems to be an extreme example of this disassociation; it is a post-celluloid adaptation that sees the return of the legendary filmic monsters rather than a celebration of the novels themselves as Coppola and Kenneth Branagh attempted to do in the early 1990s. The following sections of this chapter attempt to explain in what ways the film can work as an example of post-celluloid adaptation and attempt to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what post-celluloid adaptation is.

The Gothic literary tradition is a genre that has been influenced by oral preexisting discourses about the unspeakable and the macabre. This is reflected on the verbal signs that constitute the conventions of this tradition and will be described in the following section of this chapter. The Gothic novel itself is the forerunner of an intensified generic hybridity that is exaggerated in *Van Helsing*. The Gothic stitches together a preexisting oral tradition along with melodrama, romanticism, and the epistolary novel, which essentially moves away from the simple form of the folklore and embraces the literary culture of its time. Similarly, *Van Helsing* is a film that is not preoccupied with the literary antecedents of the monstrous bodies it depicts, but with the visual culture that these bodies have shaped. The new bodies of these monsters become caricatures; bodies that are designed to function as digital and timeless travelers from another world that invade the space that was once dominated by their cinematically pure ancestors. *Van Helsing* is the carnivalesque edition of monster movies in the sense that it cannot be narrowed to a specific filmic style because of the semiotic overload, its chaotic torrents of intertextual allusions, and its combination of old and new media with various sorts of popular culture such as Hollywood, popular novels, animation, comic books, and music: Dracula's Brides' transformation into animated flying freaks is highly reminiscent of Marilyn Manson's androgynous body on the cover photo of his 1998 album *Mechanical Animals*. *Van Helsing* manipulates this culture through the medium of digital cinema. This raises certain questions about the coding and reading of these bodies and how they function in the era of post-celluloid adaptation. The film brings together the creatures of Gothic Literature and the Golden Age of Hollywood horror films into a painterly space, rendering all these cultural discourses as unfixed forms. This chapter attempts to explore further the significance of the image and storytelling in the age of digital cinema; thus the discussion will focus on concepts such as incompleteness, transmedia storytelling, and intertextual commodity.

It also begins to introduce the socioeconomic dimension of post-celluloid adaptation and how this process becomes a symptom of convergence culture by transforming the Gothic discourse to an incomplete narrative that can be interactive and accessible via new media channels. The contemporary conceptualization of a blockbuster is then a post-celluloid form that oscillates between different media, shaping thus a form of adaptation that cannot be placed within the narrow borders of traditional film adaptation studies. This suggests that post-celluloid adaptation demands a rather complex process of interpretation, which nevertheless indicates the need to consider the function of new media and their cultural logic within adaptation studies.

At the outset, the challenges that the filmmakers of creature movies face today are not how the audience is going to react to gory scenes, macabre settings, and blasphemy, but how to create the *total* image; an image that aims perhaps to pay homage to, and certainly competes with, the older medium of film. The visual images of Frankenstein's monster, the vampire, the werewolf or Mr. Hyde do not have the libidinal power they once had, therefore this chapter explores the ways in which they may become meaningful as digital representations. Before I look at *Van Helsing* in detail, given that I will be referring throughout this chapter to key texts from the early- and late-nineteenth-century Gothic genre, it will be useful to offer a short account of the literary and cinematic development of the Gothic genre.

From Literary Text to Screen Text

It is commonly acknowledged that the rise of the Gothic novel took place in the late eighteenth century with Horace Walpole's medieval narrative *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). E. J. Clery notes that "histories of the literature of terror written from the 1920s onwards routinely identified Walpole as the progenitor of a genre," the Gothic novel.[2] The generic term *Gothic novel* was a twentieth-century development within the context of literary studies, the term *Gothic* obviously taken from Walpole's subheading *A Gothic Story* and a handful of related works of fiction that feature the word *Gothic* in their subtitles from the 1790s onwards.[3]

Key works of the late-eighteenth-century novel which were influenced by Walpole's formula were Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1974) and Matthew Gregory Lewis' notorious *The Monk* (1797), among others. These works in turn shaped the topographical descriptions of the Gothic

that were translated for the language of cinema to form the generic visual trappings of horror cinema. Fred Botting comments that in eighteenth-century Gothic literature "certain stock features provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties. Tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images, and life-threatening pursuits."[4] The predominant topography of the early Gothic novel was the castle, which is described by Botting as "decaying, bleak and full of hidden passageways, the castle was linked to other medieval edifices—abbeys, churches and graveyards especially—that, in their generally ruinous states, harkened back to a feudal past associated with barbarity superstition and fear."[5] The labyrinthine castles and uninviting forests were populated by bandits, demons, monsters, ghostly apparitions, evil feudal lords, and persecuted fair maidens as "suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats."[6] The popularity of the Gothic novel, its institutionalization and mainly its potential for iconographic richness lured the film industry to adapt this tradition, which provided opportunities of experimentation with make-up, special effects, film technology and interpretation; elements that are appealing to mass culture and filmmakers.

In the late nineteenth century, the Gothic returned with a vengeance after it had become relatively familiar and lost its radical ideological and aesthetic shock value. The infamous works of the Victorian, or fin de siècle, Gothic like Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) together with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) gave birth to cult characters that generated an array of consistent images in the horror and science-fiction cinema, such as the crazy scientist, the vampire hunter, and the abject creature. These have influenced the history of cinema and the development of special effects ever since. Botting states that such works, "in the many film versions of them that have been made, have spanned the history of cinema itself. Early films featured Gothic texts: *Frankenstein, The Edison Kinetogram* (1910) adapted Shelley's novel, while scientists and vampires were the focus of German expressionist films."[7] Undoubtedly, the films that have been most influential to the later horror/terror, film noir, and dystopian science-fiction cinema are the tour de force films produced throughout the silent period by the German studio UFA. The most important of these films, which draw on the themes and narratives of Gothic literature, are Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), Friedrich Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922, produced by Prana-Film), and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), which as Botting notes "with their grotesque

villains and stylized sets, played on the gloomy artificiality of Gothic scenes of terror."[8] The film this chapter will focus on, *Van Helsing*, draws on these sorts of powerful German influences from the iconography of 1930s Hollywood Gothic. As S. S. Prawer states, "the use of German expressionist techniques in the Gothic films of the 1930s [. . .] is no matter of coincidence or even indirect influence, for the late 1920s and early 1930s brought a raft of these German directors to America [. . .] where they exerted an immense influence on Hollywood filmmaking for the next two decades."[9] Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931) and James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) are the two central films of the golden age of Hollywood Gothic that spawned a number of horror films produced by Universal featuring these two iconic characters. In introducing the characters of the blood-sucking aristocrat and the big robotic monster, these texts brought before us the actors Bela Lugosi as count Dracula and Boris Karloff as the monster, who since then have become cultural icons. Collectibles, figurines, and DVDs of their legendary cinematic roles are still popular and in demand. Apart from the monstrous Gothic bodies, German expressionism and Universal studios established a consistent iconography consisting of artificial landscapes (matte paintings, miniatures, sets, artificial fog) and unconventional filmmaking techniques and cinematography.

The modus operandi of German expressionist films and of their successors involved, according to Prawer, "chiaroscuro lighting effects, distorted backdrops, claustrophobic spaces, extreme camera angles, and shadows disproportionate to the objects that cast them, all techniques which serve to externalize a psychological crisis in the subjects on screen."[10] These cinematic stylistic choices were applied to the Hollywood Gothic film adaptations by émigré filmmakers such as Karl Freund and began to form the generic conventions of the golden age of horror film which later influenced the development of horror cinema. Misha Kavka in her essay "Gothic on Screen" offers a short description of the topography and iconography of the film adaptations of Gothic novels by Universal studios referring specifically to James Whales' *Frankenstein*:

> The ruined castle or abandoned house on a hill made hazy by fog; the dark cemetery dotted with crosses and gnarled, bare branches; the heavy-built wooden doors that close without human aid; the high, arched or leaded windows that cast imprisoning shadows; the close-ups of mad, staring eyes (often above a cape drawn across the lower face);

> the towering, square body of a leaden-footed galvanic creation; even the passing of a black cloud across a full moon; these are the elements by which the historically mutable Gothic has become Gothic film.[11]

These are the conventions that *Van Helsing* revisits and plays with, and I purposefully use the word *play*, as *Van Helsing* is certainly not just a horror film. It is a hybrid of many genres from horror to *James Bond* films and it becomes a playground for the filmmakers to experiment with and for the audience to cognitively interact with by discovering the intertextualities of the film. The audience is also invited through exhilarating action sequences to enjoy a "theme park ride" that showcases cult cinematic characters and flamboyant sets that the viewer will be able to relive as an interactive experience through the widely advertised video game of the film. However, contemporary TV drama that reinvents the vampire mythology, and film adaptations like *Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant* (Paul Weitz, 2009; based on Darren Shan's novel *Cirque du Freak*, 2000) and the *Twilight* saga based on Stephanie Meyer's series of books suggest that the vampire mythology will never cease to be reconceptualized, repackaged, and transformed. The new hybrid of vampire film meets the teen movie in an attempt to "exploit" a younger market.

At this point I would like to focus on the monstrous bodies featured in *Van Helsing*, mainly Dracula and Frankenstein's monster and briefly note how they have been read and how they evolved as characters. This will be useful as the perception of the monstrous body in popular culture, especially in the culture of digital cinema, may carry distinctive connotations. For instance, Judith Halbestram argues that the monstrous body "makes flesh itself Gothic and [. . .] maps out a new geography of terror."[12] According to the latter "within the nineteenth-century Gothic, authors mixed and matched a wide variety of signifiers of difference to fabricate the deviant body—Dracula, Jekyll/Hyde, and even Frankenstein's monster before them are lumpen bodies, bodies pieced together out of the fabric of race, class, gender, and sexuality."[13] Monstrous bodies have dramatized fears caused by racial and sexual prejudices, as well as class consciousness awakening, which threatened Englishness and its values. In the beginning was Dr. Frankenstein's monster:

> Frankenstein's monster has attained mythic status within both the popular imagination and the critical project of literary history. Exhaustive studies of *Frankenstein* have read the monster's symbolic value in terms

> of sex, gender, and class. The monster, in various readings then [. . .] is class struggle, the product of industrialisation, a representation of the proletariat; the monster is all social struggle, a specific symbol of the French Revolution, the power of the masses unleashed; the monster is technology, the danger of science without conscience, the autonomous machine.[14]

Does Frankenstein's monster in *Van Helsing* suggest these issues, urging the viewer to think critically about our contemporary condition? Certainly not in the same way the novel does; because obviously the film does not intend primarily to address a cultured viewer. But on the other hand Frankenstein's monster in *Van Helsing* announces its first appearance as a digitally composited body; that is a blend of live action and computer generated elements. Does this choice bring new interpretations of what this body represents and how is this related to the context of the film?

The other legendary monster of Gothic fiction is of course Dracula. Halberstam argues that in the context of Stoker's novel "Dracula is otherness itself; a distilled version of all others produced by and within fictional texts, sexual science and psychopathology. He is monster and man, feminine and powerful, parasitical and wealthy [. . .] he lives forever but can be killed. Dracula is indeed not simply a monster but a technology of monstrosity."[15] Interestingly, Halberstam uses the word "technology" in both descriptions and in the case of *Van Helsing* both monstrous bodies in specific scenes are indeed the bodies of technology, of digital morphing and assembling. What they both denote rather than connote along with the other monsters of the film is an aesthetic maturity in the manner they are constructed, in the manner they morph, in the manner they perform their powers. They have become characters out of a comic book, a bunch of superheroes and super-villains that inhabit a space filled with signs of a confused temporality. These monsters may leave forever, but the filmic space that the digitized monsters invade does not refer to a specific period because it is a perfect example of Isaacs' understanding of a multilevel metacinema in the sense that the film performs cinema's early attempts to artificially visualize the supernatural and the science-fictional; it also performs the visual culture and vernacular of adventure films. The digital monstrous bodies as well as the main character that dwell in *Van Helsing* appear as if they do not belong in this highly perplexed metacinematic backdrop. The characters themselves are in-between bodies that are elements of an

expanded narrative that is unfolded and maintained via other media and cultural forms such as animation and video games.

Intertextuality and New Mixed Cinema in *Van Helsing*

The story of *Van Helsing* largely departs from the literary Gothic texts, which it was inspired by, and in fact its originating texts have been lost in the course of numerous film, television, and comic book adaptations. It is even doubtful that these treatments refer back to a single text as their source of inspiration. *Van Helsing* is obviously based on films like *House of Frankenstein* (Erle C. Kenton, 1944), and *House of Dracula* (Erle C. Kenton, 1945), which feature all the movie monsters of Universal horror just as *Van Helsing* does. The film recounts the adventures of an undercover agent (Hugh Jackman), whose mission is to destroy evil. He is a member of the Knights of the Holy Order, a secret religious institution that fights the "unspeakable." This version of the character is not the traditional middle-aged father figure of preceding versions, but an amalgam of action film heroes. His costume and unruly appearance call to mind Indiana Jones and Wild West outlaws; a wanted poster of him emphasizes his image as a western hooded outcast, the anti-hero. Gabriel Van Helsing has no memory, thus no identity, but the film hints that he might be the fallen Archangel Gabriel. Van Helsing's mission is to eliminate Dracula (Richard Roxburgh) and his werewolves before the Count destroys the world. With the help of the Transylvanian Princess Anna Valerious (Kate Beckinsale), his assistant Carl (David Wenham), and Frankenstein's monster (Shuler Hensley), Van Helsing prevents Count Dracula's evil plot.

Prior to the film's opening sequence, the Universal logo turns in black and white and then bursts into flames. The burning globe beautifully cuts to a lit torch, one of the many held by an angry mob. The use of black and white is a tribute to the classic Universal horror movies and the opening sequence draws inspiration mainly from Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931). The film furthermore alludes to Frankenstein's castle/laboratory, the animation sequence, the windmill sequence and other Gothic trappings from the classic films. It even integrates some of the methodologies utilized in expressionist films, like the use of canted camera work and the play of shadows. This is an indication that *Van Helsing*'s main points of reference are the monster movies of the 1930s and 1940s, which may be regarded as source works, since they have gained a historical

significance and scholarly attention over the years. However, it is not possible to appropriate the film's use of quotations to a single source as *Van Helsing* draws from a number of popular images and media forms.

In the "Mr. Hyde" sequence, where Van Helsing is introduced to the audience for the first time, the location is Paris, specifically Notre Dame; obviously Notre Dame, Hyde monster and his apelike movements allude to the tradition of the filmic representation of the Quasimodo in *Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo (1831) in films such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Wallace Worsley, 1933) and even in Disney's stop motion animation feature (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1996). When Van Helsing eliminates Hyde, he returns to his base, which is a secret underground location in the Vatican. The superhero motif as well as the James Bond motif is very strong in this sequence as Van Helsing receives instructions for his next mission. Van Helsing moves around a vast lab filled with priests and monks from various religions, who invent gadgets and weapons for the destruction of supernatural evil. After Van Helsing is informed by the head Catholic priest and father figure of the Holy Order about his mission, he joins friar Carl, who is a nineteenth-century version of James Bond's Q, a clumsy inventor who supplies him with weaponry and gadgetry in order to face his supernatural enemies.

Noticeably, the Hulk-like Hyde is "pure" CGI, an option that enables the filmmakers to play with his proportions, his grotesqueness, his power, and most importantly his acrobatic movements in order to produce an exhilarating action sequence. The stylistic choices used to draw Mr. Hyde provide the audience with a sense of comic art, which helps to establish the Van Helsing character as a superhero. This mixed cinema effect is enhanced through the low-angle long shot of his dark silhouette standing on the edge of the roof of Notre Dame with a faint moon and black clouds as a background. Furthermore, the digitally animated Hyde monster functions in juxtaposition to the black and white beginning of the film, highlighting the abilities of contemporary film technology, and demonstrating that the process of brining Hyde to life via computer generated animation is partly to be perceived as a constructive/creative antagonism between the two media: a before and after image that announces the technological and special effects maturity of cinema (see Figure 6.1). Thus, the implied repulsiveness of transformations and actions of the monsters in early horror films that were impossible to depict are no longer seen through the dark silhouettes of expressionism projected on the massive white walls of the set. These actions are now bare, ready to explode and transcend the limits of the screen: a close-up

Figure 6.1 Hyde vs. Van Helsing.

on the wide-open jaws of a monstrous creature; a splicing of shots that frame the hideous and detailed transformation of the hand or the face that replaces the superimposition of multiple shots.

In "Games, the New Lively Art" Henry Jenkins argues:

> American popular culture is responding to Asian influences with the rise in violence in mass market entertainment a property of heightened competition between Japan, India, Hong Kong, and Hollywood for access to international markets. Action elements surface, not only in games but also in film, television, and comics, because such elements are more readily translated across linguistic and national boundaries.[16]

Wanted, *300,* and *Van Helsing* are symptoms of this competition as they display this recurring stylization that fits the demands of the market through the mixed cinema aesthetics of digital blockbuster cinema and video games. In the representations of early Hollywood Gothic the bodies of the creatures usually wore dark attire so as to blend with the chiaroscuro lighting effects and create a sinister expressive mood. Boris Karloff (1931) wore dark clothes as Frankenstein's monster, whereas in *Van Helsing* the viewer can see the stitched upper body of the monster where at parts the skin is removed and the artificial mechanics of the

monster's inner functions are bare. Is this reconceptualized cinematic monstrous body a site of meaning that disassociates itself from the first screen Monster? It is certainly a problematic body for the reason that *Van Helsing* does not merely adapt the narrative of a specific Gothic text, but it explicitly centers these familiar characters, creatures and aspects of their physical attributes as portrayed in traditional media around a key concept. These bodies are transported into a carefully developed visual experience that transforms them into a sustainable product: the key concept of this marketing strategy being a revitalized familiar model under the umbrella of the superhero genre. This body along with the other monsters appearing in the film exemplifies and reinforces a new discourse that has been briefly discussed in the previous chapter. The question that this process raises, that is the digitizing of Gothic monsters, is whether we are implied readers or are we recipients of an aggressive attempt to be defined as implied consumers.

The next section discusses Stam's understanding of an ongoing dialogical process between the films and their hypotexts as a practice that is driven largely by the market forces that produce these films. Then the intertextuality in the films, especially in *Van Helsing* is also a symptom of the dominant strategies of promoting incompleteness and interactivity in today's media productions. The aesthetics of the films blur those of cinema and video games as the latter medium increasingly influences the cinematic image due to the rise of the video game industry as a powerful competitor. The film *Van Helsing* develops such fantastic environments and characters so as to promote the possibility of exploration of space and interaction in the video game version of the film. These commodified images certainly demand a different approach to the study of adaptation and the remainder of this chapter intends to build a language that also deals with post-celluloid adaptation as an intertextual commodity, or a controlled ongoing dialogical process.

Van Helsing and the New Intertextual Commodity

In the remaining sections I argue that *Van Helsing* is an example of an adaptation rather than a remake due to its transference of content from the medium of indexical cinema to digital cinema. The film also involves the "intensification and elaboration of the intertextual matrix" as the "industrial response to the heightened value of both interactivity and play for audiences."[17] This intensification is characterized by

David Marshall as the "New Intertextual Commodity." Essentially, this is the culture/media industries' strategy to capture audience interest in a product through its association with other cultural forms. The product does not remain only within the boundaries of traditional media forms, such as film genres or novels, but becomes part of a wider network of related media products that are designed by the industry to maintain a "process of cultural knowledge that flows back and forth between the audience and the individual text as the audience member injects" these products into the main text.[18] Marshall locates the beginning of this strategy in the music industry, where popular music was distributed and promoted through different formats from cassettes to concerts and by the 1980s through videoclips. Moreover, Marshall draws a parallel between John Hartley's (1999) description of television, which persistently tells its viewer how to enjoy and watch the medium, and children's culture, which connects toys to other products or media forms to "provide a wide range of interactions and play."[19] Today, culture/media industries move beyond children's culture and television and are "providing elaborate patterns of play across media forms" to capture the attention of a wider range of interactive audiences.[20] In this regard, the *Van Helsing* production team has released or re-released a range of products: a theme park attraction, 12-inch action figurines, hand-painted busts of the original movie monsters *Van Helsing* was based on, a video game, the animated prequel, and three DVD collections of Universal's monster movies apart from the DVD editions of the main text.

The "Mr. Hyde" sequence from *Van Helsing* employs a strategy of incompleteness that contemporary media industries utilize as part of the intertextual commodity regime. The story of Hyde within the film marks the completion of a narrative developed in the animated short film *Van Helsing: The London Assignment* (Sharon Bridgeman, 2004), which depicts Hyde's atrocious actions. Jekyll transforms into Hyde to steal the essence of beautiful women by murdering them. He then uses this essence in a formula that keeps a person young. This short film functions as the beginning of the main film's narrative, but is presented in cartoon animation. That is one of the main reasons why Mr. Hyde and parts of *Van Helsing* in general retain a cartoonish look as it creates visual continuity with the animated prequel. This strategy imitates the collaborative texts of *The Matrix* franchise, specifically the *Animatrix* DVD (2003), which provides short animated backstories to *The Matrix* narrative and of course indirectly indicates the visual influences of the film by Japanese anime and manga. In the case of *Van Helsing* the

incompleteness of the main narrative involves another adaptation process. The animated characters of the short film are transferred to digital cinema. The digital image then, not only has to imitate the cinematographic process in order to merge effectively with live action, but it also has to retain elements of cartoon animation to suggest a continuous visual style from one text to another. The main narrative of the film begins in a way that does not explain the Mr. Hyde case, thus it provokes the viewer's curiosity to see the prequel. *Van Helsing* promotes within its main narrative and its official website the incompleteness of the text. In other words, the main narrative is a commercially controlled text that is consciously created with gaps to be filled by other products/texts and not only by the cultural knowledge of the viewer.

Indeed the official website for *Van Helsing* contains information regarding the origin of each monster.[21] But the audience that possesses this cultural knowledge belongs to another uncontrollable intertextual network that exists beyond *Van Helsing*'s event-effect. This consists of novels, scholarly books, TV documentaries, online reviews, fan-based Web pages, and other popular sources. *Van Helsing*'s commercial intertextuality then is an example of a film that according to Marshall heralds a "confluence of cultural forms" rather than a single cultural form.[22] *Van Helsing* is an adaptation on two levels: first, it announces the transition of Gothic monsters from a filmic iconography to a computer generated image. Secondly, its intertextual commodity purposely partakes in the strategy of incompleteness and the promise of interactivity, thus differentiating it from the traditional understanding of film adaptation. The audience of *Van Helsing* is not "defined by narrative relationships of pleasure and mastery of the text, but a form of interactivity with cultural forms."[23] Henry Jenkins coined the term transmedia storytelling to describe a story "that unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole [. . .] Reading across the media sustains a depth of experience that motivates more consumption."[24] Incompleteness or storytellings across media are practices that certainly herald a different mode of adaptation that according to Jenkins builds a collaborative relationship with the viewers/users of these products. Of course this coauthoring is activated when the reader or viewer consumes, but it nevertheless suggests a discourse where the traditional understanding of author is not limited to the creator of the text but it refers to the multiple directions that such a story can take depending on the consumer's level of media literacy and cultural background; the consumer may oscillate between controlled

and uncontrolled media platforms, thus interacting with an antinarrative logic that may surpass the sufficiently self-contained narrative of the film or the book. The contextual system that is manifested via the transfer of a concept across media platforms breaks the illusionary diegetic world that a film or a televised text creates. Post-celluloid adaptation as a more controlled form of transmedia storytelling does not only have the power to provide a subsequent completeness by buying a product related to the event-effect blockbuster, it also has the power to create a different mythology, or event, outside of the limited "wholeness" of the main narrative texts. The next section of this essay explains how the aesthetics of digital cinema as exploited and used in new media Hollywood contribute to the establishment of the new intertextual commodity and to the change of relationships between audiences and already known images.

Van Helsing and New Media Hollywood

Van Helsing belongs to a group of post-millennium films that reanimate famous screen monsters and bring them together in a stitched narrative. Other examples are *Underworld* (Len Wiseman, 2003), *Alien vs Predator* (Paul W. S. Anderson, 2004), and *Freddy vs. Jason* (Ronny Yu, 2003). Undeniably, this trend toward creating a visual monster orgy is evocative of the early Hollywood horror films of the 1930s and 1940s and particularly Universal's practices of repeating and reproducing the horror formula. Those films expressed "audiences' dreams, fears, and social concerns, and thus inevitably reflected social mores, conflicts, and ideologies."[25] However, *Van Helsing* bears a lot of similarities with a blockbuster that was produced a year earlier due to the latter's relationship with nineteenth-century popular novels. The title of the film is *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (Stephen Norrington, 2003), it was produced by 20th Century Fox and it is based on Alan Moore's graphic novel series of the same title.

In the mini film review on the back cover of *LXG*'s DVD and throughout the commentaries in the special features, the members of the league are referred to as "superheroes" and the "first superhero team." Who would expect that Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray (Stuart Townsend) could be a member of that team along with other characters from Victorian and early-nineteenth-century literature? The rest of the team then are female vampire Mina Harker (Peta Wilson) from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Dr. Jekyll/ Mr. Hyde (Jason Flemyng) from Stevenson's

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), The Invisible man (Tony Curran) from H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897), Captain Nemo (Naseeruddin Shah) from Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1869), agent Tom Sawyer (Shane West) from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and finally Allan Quatermain (Sean Connery), who leads the League, from H. Rider Haggard's 1887 novel of the same title. The British Empire's secret service agent by the name of M as in *Bond* movies (Richard Roxburgh) assembles the team to save the world from the apocalyptic aspirations of the Fandom (Richard Roxburgh) who is the very man that brought the team together in order to steal their powers. *LXG* employs the darkness and mood of Gothic generic conventions and activates the spectator's cognitive competence, flooding the screen with explicit intertexts such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), and Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1870). The participation of Sean Connery, who brings along the James Bond baggage, further foregrounds this homage to the 007 cultural phenomenon and political implications. However, the man who always saves the day in the film is the American agent Tom Sawyer who is not a character in Moore's graphic novel but was added in the film presumably to meet the demands of Hollywood action cinema, which maintains the white, young, and handsome American hero as the dominant character in this genre. It is no coincidence that this trend of post-millennium *monster mash* emerged during a time where new media culture began to be shaped in an intensified and accelerated manner. The familiarity of monstrous bodies was obviously utilized as a safe starting point to boost the logic of ancillary markets that would enable the film industry to move into the era of new media without losing ground due to the increasing competition with interactive media such as Television, video games, and the Internet.

The challenges that contemporary monster movies are presented with are quite different than those faced by the society, film technology, and film industry of the 1930s and 1940s. A new breed of Hollywood directors can be seen as the "league of extraordinary" directors who make films that include intertextual, dark, excessive settings and bodies, which tend to undergo digital morphing. If we consider the *auteur* as a director who has a particular style in composing his/her mise-en-scène and who uses similar patterns/themes throughout his/her work, certainly these directors know how to bring together pixels, traditional special effects, creatures, and stylish live action photography like no one else in

the industry; thus they are able to compose an effective multilayered and expressive mise-en-scène. However, they are not *auteurs* in the way French *auteurists* developed this tradition since they work within the constraints of Hollywood action-spectacle cinema and adopt the language system of new media. Yet, they have made a name in the industry for mastering the digitally composited fantasy cinema. Directors such as Alex Proyas (*The Crow*, 1994; *Dark City*, 1998; *I, Robot*, 2004), Guillermo Del Toro (*Mimic*, 1997; *Blade II*, 2002; *Hellboy*, 2004), Stephen Norrington (*Blade*, 1998; *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, 2003), and Stephen Sommers (*The Mummy*, 1999; *The Mummy Returns*, 2001) are part of this new breed. Simultaneously, the products of these directors belong to a group of films that according to Virginia Wright Wexman "downplay authorial originality by foregrounding intertextuality. Such productions present their makers not as originary artists but as transmitters of cultural knowledge."[26]

It is impossible to see the above directors as the sole transmitters of this knowledge within the industrial system of transmedia or new media Hollywood. Hollywood does not give much freedom to directors to choose their own projects; in fact, the director is frequently chosen to undertake a project as a salable commodity himself/herself. Hence, the production of Hollywood blockbusters decentralizes the possibility of an individual author given that many people, processes, and pre-sold texts are employed. Geoff King, in his study *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*, argues that the absence of an individual author in Hollywood products lines up with Roland Barthes' declaration of the death of the author:

> This description might be quite fitting for many of the products of New Hollywood, with its multiple re-writes of scripts and a development process designed to fabricate projects that draw on and rework earlier films and seek to include various elements to appeal to different audience groups. More generally, the point is to emphasize the extent to which all texts draw on multitudes of pre-established meanings and devices that are not all determined, controlled or limited by the creation of any individual author.[27]

What has been generally acknowledged in new media and hypertext theory remains an issue in traditional film adaptation studies. Yet, it is questionable whether the writers of literary masterpieces should be seen today as sacred authors of texts with a single meaning, related to a specific context, since their texts have become hypertexts. Indeed it

is possible to read all great Anglophone literature online, hyperlinked, and free. In "Homer to Home Page: Designing Digital Books" Mitchell describes how the reader can interact with the hypertext of *Odyssey*: "I can click on hot-linked words to discover where they show up in other ancient Greek texts. And [. . .] I could go back to the original Greek at any point and click on words to find dictionary entries, run morphological analyses, and even analyze frequencies of occurrence in different contexts [. . .] The digital text has new pleasures."[28] This remediation of the older medium of print culture to the computer screen dismantles traditional views of how to approach and, most importantly, respond to a classic text. It is also indicative of the possible meetings of other media in representing a classic text online, such as photography, painting, digital film, and the potentials of interaction between medium and reader/viewer. The original text itself becomes a hybrid and this process raises a number of theoretical considerations regarding the traditional values of the *original*. Therefore, the concept of adaptation today expands rapidly as the result of numerous remediations that an artifact can undergo. The concept *film adaptation* as used in film studies must be replaced by one that does not suggest restrictions in terms of the media involved in such an interplay of familiar and commodified sign system. I am not suggesting that there is a need to replace auteur theory so as to be able to develop effective criteria to analyze transmedia Hollywood, but there is certainly a need to examine how is this shift controlled and who controls it. *Avatar* could be a good example to help us rethink the concept of authorship in transmedia Hollywood, James Cameron himself being an author in many ways apart from being the director and writer of the film. James Naremore in his essay on authorship[29] advocates the usefulness of auteur theory by posing questions that are of course relevant to contemporary international art cinema, counter cinema, or new punk cinema and to the new mixed cinema that emerges from the integrated media conglomerate logic. It is also interesting to discuss in what ways Frank Miller functions as a director-as-author in terms of politics and aesthetic choices. Is he the author of an accelerated cinegratographic cinema, of a new genre that we may name "filmed graphic novel" or does this reification of his name become part of a process whereby Miller's persona becomes something of a sign of the new era of mixed cinema, as he himself crosses the boundaries of media to tell his stories? To a certain extent Miller is this person because today his name does not refer to a specific medium but to aesthetics and narratives that develop across multiple media platforms and to a new ownership landscape.

Today's political paranoia dictates that monsters, viewed as the Other in cultural theories, might be living next door. Our Oriental neighbor could be a terrorist. The anxieties that the horror films of the past dealt with—such as the Cold War anxieties located in the fear of Communist invasion—are different anxieties from those of today. Reality hardcore video or snuff films of beheadings have been uploaded on the Internet. This directly horrifies and threatens the recipient culture; a condition that triggered a shift in horror movies to films like *Saw* (James Wan, 2004) and *Hostel* (Eli Roth, 2005), where the monster is not a carefully designed creature that would operate as a metaphor of human monstrosity or a metaphor of the monstrous wounds that human society can inflict on another creature. Beheadings of hostages by Iraqi guerilla groups may have brought forth a genre that triggers our morbid curiosity to the extreme. Who is interested in fictional vampires and werewolves when horror and the sinister Other are threatening the Western subject's immediate public/private space through new media applications? It seems that filmmakers and film companies are still interested in representing monsters of the past, but in new ways, which are mainly driven by two conditions: (1) the need to maintain a balanced percentage of ticket sales at the box office (2) the failure to represent fantastic environments and monstrous creatures convincingly in the past. The latter point suggests that DVD sales cannot increase due to the emergence of younger audiences who are not attracted by black and white films with no explosive action and gore.

Van Helsing enters a new arena of heightened market competition which blurs the distinctions between video games and cinema through maximum movement, gory fight and battle sequences, limitless weaponry, and creation of exaggerated dystopias. Jenkins observes that today "action film directors combine circus acrobatics and special effects with rapid-fire editing and stylized sound effects to amp up the intensity of a fight sequence. Similarly, game designers use movement, camera angle, sound effects, and other devices to exaggerate the impact of punches or to expand the flight of a skateboarder."[30] The crossover borrowing of style is obvious in blockbuster cinema as the video game versions of films try to imitate the expressive mood and style of the movie, and the movie itself promotes the experience of the video game through hyperbolic action sequences like the one between Van Helsing and Mr. Hyde, which this project defines as in-between moments that are one of the main characteristics of post-celluloid adaptation. Of course, such amplifications of movement and style are only possible via digital

compositing and by giving a new visual identity to these characters. Like typical superheroes with their alluring undisclosed pasts, secret powers, superhero costumes, cool stunts, secret hideouts, and Professor-X-like father figures who help them control their powers, they become images for consumption. Ironically, Gothic monsters are becoming the very thing they themselves inspired. With the characters of *Batman* (DC comics), *Hulk* (Marvel comics), *Blade* (Marvel comics), *The Crow* (James O'Barr), and *Wolverine* (Marvel comics), the connection is apparent. Indeed, the images and characters in *Van Helsing* are sometimes completely painterly, as in the case of Mr. Hyde. This choice has been viewed as a strategy to create aesthetic unity between the collaborative products of the film, such as the prequel and the video game. The characters are amalgams of cult images and superheroes. This new mixed visual culture or confusion may refer to similar practices that took place in early adaptations, but the main difference is that these new practices emerge in a time where there is an attempt and a demand to redefine cinema's ontology due to digital technology.

Anna Everett, in her essay "Digitextuality and Click Theory," offers a possible interpretation of the success of digital films like *The Matrix* (Wachowski Brothers, 1999) suggesting that these films have the ability to "challenge the digital literacy and scopic competencies of contemporary media audiences more concerned with questions of technological magic than with believable representations of reality as markers of success."[31] Accordingly, Lev Manovich in his online article "Image After '*The Matrix*' " refers to the competitive nature of film companies as regards film technology stating that "in order to sell movie tickets, DVDs, and all other merchandise, each new special effects film tries to top the previous one in terms of showing something that nobody has seen before. In *The Matrix* 1 it was bullet time; in *The Matrix* 2 it was the Burly Brawl scene where dozens of identical clones fight Neo."[32] In his work *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of Blockbuster,* Geoff King introduces his study with the following paragraph:

> From epic landscape to sumptuous interior; from visions of space, aliens and future cityscapes to explosive action and adventure: expansive vistas spread out across the width of the big screen, their presence magnified by the aural impact of multichannel sound. Everything is larger than life; not real but hyperreal, leading us into the imaginary worlds of the cinema but also leaving us to sit back and wonder at its creations. That is the intention, at least.[33]

King justifies this Hollywoodian highlighting of spectacle as a means to compete with the medium of television. Cinematic spectacle operates today as the main attraction of the industry due to the unbeatable narrative complexity that contemporary quality American television drama offers to the viewers. Outside Hollywood, film narrative and film art still maintains an integrity that is supported by the philosophical frameworks of international festivals, but commercial cinema still needs to provide a unique experience; this unique experience is expressed through the making of CGI. Everett relates the spectacular results of the developments of the digital media to André Bazin's understanding of the myth of the total cinema and his statement that "cinema has not been invented yet!"[34] She proposes that "digital media's new technological advances bring us closer to a realization of Bazin's ideas in the myth of total cinema—in short, finally the cinema *has* been invented! Its invention is achieved through magical digital tools."[35] Quite similarly, Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* argues that cinema is not any more the art of the index as the "logic of the filmmaking process is being redefined" by the computer.[36] Prior to the latter concluding remark, he poses an interesting question relatively ignored in contemporary film studies:

> But what happens to cinema's indexical identity if it is now possible to generate photorealistic scenes entirely in a computer using 3-D computer animation; to modify individual frames or whole scenes with the help of a digital paint program; to cut, bend, stretch and stitch digitized film images into something which has perfect photographic credibility, although it was never actually filmed?[37]

Manovich suggests that "the manual construction of images in digital cinema represents a return to nineteenth-century pre-cinematic practices, when images were hand-painted and hand-animated [. . .] Consequently, cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation. It is no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting."[38] Manovich's argument that artificiality becomes a central key and live action becomes raw material in the production of contemporary Hollywood cinema, and that this mode recalls early pre-cinematic viewings is quite interesting. However, there are certain differences between digital painting software systems and hand-painting, and between digital compositing and optical printing as the computer mainly executes these

latter functions. In *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Bolter and Grusin point out that "digital graphic images are the work of humans, whose agency, however is often deferred so far from the act of drawing that it seems to disappear."[39]

Digital compositing according to Manovich "runs against Eisenstein's aesthetics with its focus on time. Digital compositing makes the dimensions of space (3-D fake space being created by a composite and 2½-D space of all the layers being composited) and frame (separate images moving in 2-D within the frame) as important as time."[40] In other words he argues that in contemporary American mainstream cinema, editing privileges space as the layers of images are spatially ordered within the image. In *Van Helsing*, the "Mr. Hyde" sequence contains many clear examples of this spatialization of editing. In this film, seamless spatialization of layers is the aim. For instance when the fight between Van Helsing and Mr. Hyde continues on the rooftop of a simulated Notre Dame and the latter grabs Van Helsing by the collar of his coat and drags him to the edge, a virtual camera movement rapidly pulls out toward the ground of the building keeping both bodies in the shot while descending. During this descent the body of Van Helsing transforms into a digital double as the final image of the shot is a low angle shot of the digitally composited building. While it is not possible to provide in detail the elements or databases used to create this shot, it is obvious that it consists of a 3-D virtual space, a 2-D space of the live action footage; a layer of 2-D movement, and a layer of Mr. Hyde's 3-D movements. Sophisticated digital compositing enables the continuity of space and the merging of a digital and a live action character in one shot without a cut. This same shot would have been done in more than two cuts in the language of pre-digital cinema or even early digital cinema.

Despite Manovich's paradoxical use of specific words and their signification in his eagerness to declare the death of traditional film technology, and of the fact that he did not have the examples available today at the time when he was defining digital cinema; his argument that digital cinema entails new technological elements that differentiate it from the older medium of indexical film is more appropriate to the discussion of *Van Helsing*, the case study examples of the previous chapter as well as other films such as the adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* (Richard Linklater, 2006) since in his definition Manovich names animation as the most significant constituent of digital cinema. This definition is mostly relevant to blockbuster fantasy/science-fiction films

rather than Hollywood cinema per se. However, Manovich's radical statements help us to understand why the digitally animated, processed, and edited image is an important component of today's cinema and why it transforms the Hollywood blockbuster into a different medium from the older medium of film. Consequently, this brings us closer to seeing that the images of monsters and Gothic trappings in *Van Helsing* are in fact post-celluloid adaptations of earlier filmic representations and that they communicate a cultural logic that pertains to the new intertextual commodity.

Thus far, I have suggested that *Van Helsing* adapts Gothic monsters into the new medium of digital cinema. Therefore they do not repeat or imitate their predecessors; they simply attempt to compete with them by engaging the viewer (particularly the one who has seen a considerable number of horror classics) in a playful iconographic comparison rather than narrative/content comparison. With the emergence of technological developments and their impact on Western cultures and global relations, media theory could not evade the radical changes that occurred in contemporary capitalist societies. Thus, disciplines such as media or communication studies are inevitably open to new considerations as they constantly need to equip media industries with work force that can read the new cultural structures that digital technologies produce. One of the tasks of this project is to liberate adaptation theory from its reduced understanding of visual/media culture in an attempt to reposition film adaptation in a rather different context that is interested in adaptations as an open process and not just in the transference of narrative content from novels to films. However, as I have briefly outlined in the first chapter of this book there are film adaptation studies that stress the need to assimilate current approaches to texts, and raise significant issues for further research. Cartmell's and Whelehan's *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* explores a range of texts including noncanonical literature, and offers examples of analyses devoid of fidelity issues. In her introduction to the second part of the book, Cartmell suggests that "the search for an original or for a single author is no longer relevant in a postmodern world where a belief in a single meaning is seen to be a fruitless quest."[41]

The multiplicity of texts inherent in adaptations is the main concern of the book and not fidelity. Cartmell also emphasizes the fact that the contributions in the specific edited volume show the need for a broader understanding of the concept of film adaptation. Similarly, Robert Stam's essay "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation" in Naremore's *Film*

Adaptation provides a range of radical arguments and in fact advocates the impossibility of fidelity:

> The shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel, which has "only words to play with", to a multitrack medium such as film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken), but also with theatrical performance, music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood—and I would suggest even the undesirability—of literal fidelity.[42]

Like the editors of *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, Stam foregrounds conscious/unconscious intertextuality within film adaptation as an active process that enables an infinite set of readings, arguing that the literary text itself is an "an open structure [. . .] to be reworked by a boundless context."[43] Hence, an adaptation such as *Van Helsing* is "made of and from the accumulation of information that, through memory and quotations, presents a rereading and rewriting of things so that the act of communication tends to supersede the content of the communication."[44] Degli-Esposti uses the latter account in her introduction to *Postmodernism in the Cinema* to describe the prominent processes engaged in postmodern cinema. Present-day filmmakers are exposed to all kinds of accessible cult texts and thus communicate a more cognizant and overt intertextuality in order to take the spectator to "another level of seeing. He/she is not only seeing differently, but is aware of seeing himself/herself see."[45]

Everett argues that "new digital media technologies make meaning not only by building a new text through absorption and transformation of other texts, but also by embedding the entirety of other texts (analog and digital) seamlessly within the new."[46] Thus, apart from the traditional study of noncomputerized technical choices within a movie, the film/film adaptation critic should start engaging with the meaningful negotiations of the digitextual image and should be equipped with the skills to identify and interpret the diverse texts of a new mixed cinema. This chapter is suggesting a discourse with which post-celluloid adaptation can be approached. In order to understand the function of digitized popular characters and visual narratives it is important to understand the processes involved in contemporary digital cinema and the logic of transmedia storytelling. This understanding in itself supplies adaptation studies/theory with new ways to think about an adaptation and its source text.

The "original" work might have already lost its historical significance, or worthiness, through processes of uninhibited unraveling via journeys across old media and new media, but the constant refashioning of borrowed images and contents in another medium unconsciously redefines our cultural and historical moment through economic and social considerations, which emerge through the interplay between the historical context of the text and that of its adaptation. Post-celluloid adaptation could in fact form a term that is legitimated by this repetition and transmediation of images across digital vernaculars. A language is needed to describe the images that originated in traditional media but are being adapted in new media. The controlled incompleteness of the main text then is an important part of a post-celluloid adaptation process as it amplifies this need to interact with the main narrative object and its space. Intertextual and digitextual practices in Hollywood blockbusters are not solely about *seeing yourself see* as Degli-Esposti suggests. *Van Helsing*, to a certain extent, involves a process of *seeing yourself consume* as the viewer today becomes aware of his/her participation in the whirl of the intertextual commodity of these products.

The next chapter examines a clearer example of post-celluloid adaptation, which does not involve the merging of multiple familiar texts in its main narrative, and more than one text as plausible source texts. The case study example is Peter Jackson's *King Kong* and the main text's collaborative medium is the Internet. The following chapter then aims to exemplify further the strategies involved in post-celluloid adaptations, such as incompleteness and the promise of interactivity. Apart from that, the case study example of Kong illustrates more effectively the adaptation process from film to digital image as Jackson's film narrative is closer to the narrative of the source text, hence making it more interesting to examine how the digital image and the cultural context of the contemporary film negotiate meaning in comparison to the 1933 film.

Notes

[1] Sea French, *The Terminator* (London: BFI, 1996).
[2] E. J. Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.
[3] Clery, "The Genesis of 'Gothic' Fiction," 21–22.
[4] Fred Botting, *The Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.
[5] Botting, *The Gothic*, 2–3.
[6] Botting, *The Gothic*, 2.

[7] Botting, *The Gothic*, 165–166.
[8] Botting, *The Gothic*, 166.
[9] S. S. Prawer, *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 214.
[10] Prawer, *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror*, 214.
[11] Misha Kavka, "The Gothic on Screen," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 210.
[12] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 28.
[13] Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 3.
[14] Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 29.
[15] Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 88.
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Chapter 7

Puppet Kong vs. Synthetic Kong: Peter Jackson's *King Kong* as Post-Celluloid Adaptation

Script writers have no limits on the imagination. What we do is make photographable anything they can come up with. All it takes is mechanical ability, a knowledge of hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, engineering, construction, ballistics, explosives and no acquaintance with the word impossible. (Danny Lee, Special Effects Supervisor)[1]

What the technology enables us to do is to see how muscles work together to create believable expressions. We then extract this muscle-by-muscle technique into something that's much more emotional. The facial animation system for Kong is the next generation of the facial system we built for Gollum. (Joe Letteri, Visual Effects Supervisor)[2]

The original *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933) is possibly the most famous monster movie in the history of cinema; the icon of the giant gorilla is according to James Berardinelli still sitting "upon the throne of our memories."[3] Film reviewers such as Roger Ebert, *Variety*'s Todd McCarthy[4] and online film reviewer James Berardinelli have written celebratory comments on the 1933 film's status, underlying the film's groundbreaking state-of-the-art special effects, which at the time created an atmosphere that was and still is a great experience. Joe Bigelow who wrote a review of *King Kong* in *Variety* when the film was firstly released in 1933 also stressed both the excellence and mechanical flaws of the special effects, which were received by the audience and him alike as nonbelievable.[5] The interesting and unavoidable fact about Berardinelli's and Ebert's reviews is that they compare the original film's technology to the state-of-the-art computer generated dinosaurs in Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993), which at the time

both film critics reviewed the original *King Kong* idea and *Jurassic Park* was the film that marked the triumphant return to movie monsters and accelerated the takeover of digital cinema. Ebert notes that *King Kong* is "the father of 'Jurassic Park,' the 'Alien' movies and countless other stories in which heroes are terrified by skillful special effects" and feels that "in the very artificiality of some of the special effects, there is a creepiness that isn't there in today's slick, flawless, computer-aided images."[6]

In his comparison of the two movies Ebert suggests that in the case of *Jurassic Park* the viewer is in some way looking at an actual dinosaur, whereas in *King Kong* the viewer is experiencing an imaginary concept of a giant creature, which was painstakingly handcrafted by the special effects technicians. On a similar note Berardinelli believes that the fact that the special effects were created by hand makes the viewing of the original *King Kong* a special experience because unlike the photorealistic quality of the dinosaurs and seamless blend of live action and effects of the environment in Spielberg's film, the viewer can appreciate the visible craft in the making of *King Kong's* fantastical world. The conclusion one can draw by reading these two reviews is that there is a case of creation and imagination in opposition to routine and realism. Surprisingly, in their reviews of Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (2005), both Ebert[7] and Berardinelli[8] comment positively on the computer generated images and draw attention to their creativity and believability. Stan Jones' remarks that "the extended context of the remaking becomes significant, because it demonstrates how the film tries to keep all options open for the film's reception."[9] Jones argues that the production diaries uploaded on the Internet parallel to the production timeline of Jackson's *King Kong* operate by "inviting the viewers to identify with the filmmakers and their art."[10] The last comments suggest that computer generated images or the process of creating visual effects no longer stirs anxieties about the future of cinema's ontology; on the contrary there is an attempt to comment on the artistic qualities of the computer generated image, while Ebert's and Berardinelli's approach to the photorealistic dinosaurs is a bit skeptical. Nonetheless, the apparent shift in the reviewers' evaluation of visual effects in Jackson's *Kong* is to a certain extent problematic. Henry Jenkins states that "we do not yet have very good aesthetic criteria for evaluating works that play themselves out across multiple media."[11] While Jones highlights the significance of the transmedia discourse of the 2005 *Kong* production by offering "its audience the pleasure of a dual role of viewers investing in the fantasy and of connoisseurs of the machinery of illusion,"[12] traditional film reviewing and traditional film

adaptation studies do not seem to know how to engage, or they even seem to resist to engage, with a new mode of adaptation that extents itself meaningfully across media and especially the Internet. In this chapter I argue that Jackson's *King Kong* introduced a new mode of adaptation, *the official website as expanded adaptation*. The production and postproduction diaries attempt to teach the viewer about the creative processes involved in digital filmmaking and to provide a "position of the viewer as active participant"[13] is itself a storytelling about the new ontology and new possibilities of cinema. Even though a film based on a film or sells itself as a new version of a movie icon is immediately received as a remake, Jackson's *King Kong* is a post-celluloid adaptation for two reasons: First, the script of the film was not imagined as something that could be photographable, therefore filmmakers or visual effects experts needed to develop new software to visualize the imaginary of the script. This process may have affinities to traditional filmmaking but it does not reproduce the vernacular of cinema as an index. Secondly, the film transforms the role of the Internet in the process of making the film, thus creating a super-paratext that redefines the role of the viewer in the process of consuming the film.

By comparing the two quotes that appear after the title of this chapter, which comment on the knowledge and tools needed to produce special and visual effects, the main difference between now and back in the cinematic Kong of the 1930s is the sophistication of the systems involved in the reproduction of realistic codes. This is also evident from the discourse used in order to explain what kinds of processes are involved in the making of special or visual effects, the second being a more refined account, which is reminiscent of a documentary that explains a Gorilla's anatomical structure and behavior. Other words used in these accounts that are of key importance for the development of a comparative study between the original *Kong* and its remake are "photographable" and "believable." Undoubtedly, there are a number of collisions that emerge from the above reviews and quotes that actually emphasize the need to examine the relationship between the two films as a process whereby the concept of the source text is retold by new media. The post-celluloid adaptation process that I wish to highlight and discuss is the rendering of Kong from a photographable puppet to a believable computer generated body. The reason then I am not using other versions of the King Kong concept such as the 1976 film version (John Guillermin) is simply because human actors in a gorilla suit is not in itself a special or visual effects technique.

In the final part of this chapter I discuss Peter Jackson's initiative to share the stages of *King Kong*'s creation with the fans of his work and of the Kong narrative via an official website entitled "Kong is King." These production diaries were filmed and uploaded on the website while the production was taking place up to the day of the film's release. This is a radical decision not just in terms of how the film industry system usually works, but one should also rethink this choice in terms of cinema viewing conventions and how it changes the relationship between the audience and the main cinematic narrative by creating a super-paratext. Thus, I argue that unconsciously or not, Jackson's choice has a certain affinity with aspects of Manovich's understanding of database cinema.[14] Jackson's idea exemplifies the fact that new media reverse the relationship between database and narrative. The database that the narrative of the film is constructed from becomes explicit/materialized; hence the conventional linear narrative and the visual narrative of the concept are perpetually deconstructed and made available for the users of the Internet.

Jackson's *Kong* as post-celluloid adaptation illustrates how the cultural logic of the context informs the text, allowing for an interchange of meanings that shows further and clearer the complexities of the aesthetic and economic shaping of a blockbuster, driven by a directorial vision that is conscious of the existence of this logic. Jackson's understanding of and aspiration to control this logic is evident in a journalistic article written by Laura M. Holson for *The New York Times*.[15] Holson's subject is the film directors' interest in video games and reported that Jackson "worked out a deal with the game maker Ubisoft and Universal Pictures [. . .] that will give Mr. Jackson substantial creative control over the future game (of *King Kong*) [. . .] and he will share equally in the revenue Universal expects to earn from the game when it is released."[16] While this raises questions that are relevant to the discussion of film authorship in the previous chapter, it is interesting to observe that the director-as- author is also transforming to a concept that redefines the director of blockbusters as the author of transmedia storytelling. This seems to be a kind of trend as Holson reports that the director of *Van Helsing* (Stephen Sommers) "got involved with the production of the game based on that film (*Van Helsing*) after being disappointed with what happened to the game made from *The Mummy*, which he wrote and directed."[17] Film directors seem to wish to maintain/impose a stylistic consistency across multiple media platforms and therefore this need to establish themselves in another medium or to sustain their star signature across collaborative

media is something that disassociates itself from the ways that adaptation theory problematizes the issue of the author. Jackson's carefully controlled authorship creates a hypercontextual universe rather than a self-contained film and invites the viewer to activate and operate this universe.

The original *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933) is unquestionably one of the most important works as regards the history of special effects in cinema. The technique of model animation developed by Willis H. O'Brien was innovative at that time and gave birth to one of the most recognizable cult figures and moments in cinema history. The illusion of the moving Kong was achieved via the stop-motion photography technique, which is basically the same principle behind the animation of drawings for the creation of cartoons. Stop-motion animation is still in use of course, yet the possibility of believable computer generated animation tends to be preferred in the making of films that belong to the science-fiction and fantasy genres. In the case of the early Kong, the structure of the model, which was "the first to utilize metal armatures, with ball and socket joints,"[18] allowed the eighteen-inch model of Kong and of other creatures to have a logical number of moves to create a coherent and linear illusion of movement. Kong and the other creatures were placed in front of the camera by O'Brien and the body parts of the model were changed by very accurate and minuscule actions between individual frames, so that when projected on a screen the model could imitate an adequate and more or less anatomically correct movement.

O'Brien was the model animator of the 1925 film *The Lost World*, one of his early successes, in which a group of explorers discover that prehistoric animals are still alive somewhere in South America, and in a similar way to the *King Kong* narrative, the dinosaur that the explorers brought to London from their expedition escapes and destroys parts of the city.[19] O'Brien's model work for the abandoned RKO project *Creation* impressed Cooper when he took over production for RKO studios.[20] Although Cooper became interested in gorillas during documentary filmmaking in Africa and was initially planning to use a live gorilla as Kong, he later decided to use O'Brien's expertise for financial and safety reasons.[21] Subsequently, O'Brien animated two scenes for a one-reel test, which became key creative moments during Jackson's production diaries of *King Kong*: the fight between Kong and T-Rex and the log chasm scene. The test was approved and Cooper began the production of Kong.[22] Apart from stop-motion photography other special effects techniques were used to produce the desired effect,

thus live action rear projection combined with miniature sets and full-scale body parts of Kong—twenty-foot-high bust and a mechanical hand—were utilized to achieve believability to the standards of early cinematic representations.

The above techniques cannot obviously convince or satisfy a contemporary audience, which has become accustomed to the photorealistic renderings of dinosaurs and monsters thanks to Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) and the 1998 *Godzilla* (Roland Emmerich), two other movies that hold a significant place in the cinematic history of visual effects, which essentially took the concept of the blockbuster to another level or another medium. According to Bigelow's review the original Kong's mechanical movements were not convincing even for the audience of that period, but he wrote that "audiences will wonder how it's done. If they wonder they'll talk, and that talk plus the curiosity the advertising should incite ought to draw business all over. 'Kong' mystifies as well as it horrifies, and may open up a new medium for scaring babies via the screen."[23] The continuous re-emergence of familiar monstrous creatures from the filmic or literary past then, become the ideal case study for such a refinement and as today's digital animation software can perform the impossible, convincingly and spectacularly, Kong becomes the latest product of this absorption. *King Kong* is then a strong example of spectacle-driven cinema, which is produced for the purposes of refining early popular images that failed to fulfill the visual richness that digital cinema exhibits now. Apart from promising a rich visual experience, blockbuster cinema today reveals *how it is done* in the form of other collaborative texts that create a number of discourses around the concept of the main product, in this case *Kong*. Thus, *how it is done* or more commonly known as the *making of* shapes another genre or commodified text that focuses on the creativity and thorough routines of the visual effects departments. Jackson's *King Kong* is indeed a cultural form that can be consumed through the acquisition of commodities, which promise individual experiences by constructing myths that deal with immersion, interactivity, and access to unique material that even the promotion of the film's official video game does.

The narrative of Jackson's film, unlike the early Kong's social and racist implications, is arguably constructed in isolation as there is no discernible negotiation between fiction and social phenomena of our times as he chooses to set the story in the 1930s as an homage to the cinematic context and storyline of the early film. In other words, Jackson's Kong does not invite the critical audience to interpret it as a social comment,

he aspires instead to become the director that realizes the ambition of the "Carl Denham's" that preceded him, that is to bring to the cinematic audience the ultimate visual effects creature.

Figure 7.1 "Brontosaurs Stampede," where Live Action and Visual Effects Collide.

The framing of the scene in which we see for the first time the dinosaurs in Peter Jackson's film imitates in a sense the early age of back projections and editing. The space between the dinosaurs and the actors is separated by the rocks on the left and right side of the screen creating a kind of fame within the frame so as to cover the rear screen on the set; a technique that was extensively used in the making of the early Kong (see Figure 7.1) The editing then is spatial but the elements are deliberately defined. This gives momentarily the feel of early cinematic special effects probably as an homage to early Kong, but these allusions to the early cinematic apparatus are soon replaced with the seamlessness of space when the dinosaurs move toward Denham (Jack Black) and his camera; then the actors that oscillate between their real reproduction and their digital doubles merge with the movement of the dinosaurs in an exaggerated, yet not very aesthetically successful chase as the attempt to go over the top results in an unconvincing image. The movement of the actors sometimes is not perfectly coordinated with that of the dinosaurs and at times it is as if the bodies of the actors are absorbed by the bodies of the dinosaurs as a result of the transition from the live action body to its digital double.

The post-celluloid adaptation of media content and the logic of digital capitalism are concepts that firmly intertwine, since similarly to digital capitalism the post-celluloid adaptation of media content "replicates itself via a constant displacement, a constant process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation".[24] In his article "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information",[25] Parikka aligns the computer virus to capitalism itself as described by Deleuze and Guattari; therefore, according to the former, capitalism is viral "advancing via mutations and adaptations within heterogeneous systems".[26] Parikka draws a further analogy by referring to the metaphorical representation of viruses in the Hollywood system, as observed by Luca Lampo (from the art group *[epidemiC]*), in order to illustrate that media industries "have served as important mediators with which the very concrete notion of viruses as damagers of organized society have been transformed into a productive instance of that very same system".[27] In other words, the constant mutation of familiar monsters, and representations of the Other serve to reflect virus-related anxieties, but at the same time this constant refabrication reinforces the dominant system itself: "To keep up this productivity, it has also been important not to consider the multiplicity of viruses there actually is, and not to introduce public, free remedies to the problem that is constantly touted".[28] Although Peter Jackson's Kong is a creature which may well embody the banalization of preexisting computer generated monsters, as its simulation does not invite the critical spectator to negotiate a reading of the monster as a discourse of fear, Kong can only be read as an example of how capitalism controls the "monster,", the Other, the virus and replaces these discourses with discourses of safety and security for its own financial benefit.

The production of the latest *King Kong* is in line with the above description as any film remake takes on a risk, since a possible failure at the box office may damage the system, but simultaneously the system prepares safety nets in the form of collaborative media to boost the system, to stabilize the flow of the high-risk main text through its paratexts and by-products. This is the difference between Jackson's *King Kong* and the 1933 film, as the former is not a metaphor but a hyperconscious application of the logic of digital capitalism; thus, the production and distribution of the film can be seen as an analogy to Parikka's argument, that the virus is an important part of the system: "There is no absolute Other for the capitalist logic of expansion. What is crucial

is the understanding of this constant double articulation of the virus as a threat *and* an integral part of the contemporary society".[29] Thus, adaptations or remakes may damage the system via box-office failure, but are simultaneously seen as tools for further financial profit. Kong's computer generated body was indeed an attraction, yet the worn out concept of a misunderstood monster could have posed problems in the process of reintroducing a narrative that was in the past received by Bigelow as a "super-goofy yarn"[30] despite its technical achievements; and the first attempt to retell it in 1976 did not receive a warm welcome either. Prior to my close analysis of the computer generated body of the giant gorilla I will briefly focus on the narrative of the end-product to as to discuss the changes and treatments that Jackson and his writing team made and introduced in order to transform the concept into a more compelling story and into an event without erasing the exceedingly imaginary and camp prehistoric world of the original.

The narrative structure of the film is identical to the simple episodic structure of the early film (New York—Skull Island—New York), the only difference being in the treatment of the characters, which are more developed in Jackson's film as he obviously needed to rely on something else apart from visual effects in order for the film to work for a wider spectrum of contemporary audiences. Jackson's feature runs approximately three hours unlike the running time of the first *King Kong*, which is one hour and thirty minutes. This distinction in itself indicates the development of characters through bonds between them in extended sequences, especially the Ann Darrow–Jack Driscoll and Ann Darrow–King Kong bonds. The fact that Jack Driscoll's (Adrien Brody) occupation is changed to a playwright rather than a Gung-ho adventurer is again an indication of the character development intention, which serves to bring out Darrow's (Naomi Watts) sensitive and childish nature in contrast to Fay Wray's one-dimensional representation. The Jack Driscoll of the first film is rather insinuated in the character of the actor that Denham hires to star in his project. Thus Jackson not only attempts to develop his characters, but also tries to free them from the standardized representations of Hollywood's early adventure films.

Contemporary movie-goers were obviously expecting to see a photorealistic computer generated creature, something that has been achieved repeatedly in recent blockbuster cinema, but during the promotion of the film Jackson did not reveal too much of the recreation of the

monstrous body. To keep a potential viewer interested in such a faithful attempt to bring the story to a contemporary audience, Jackson relied on three factors: (1) The credibility he built due to his previous success with *Lord of the Rings* (2) On character development so as to avoid a complete subservience to the expected spectacle (3) On the Internet as a powerful paratextual tool in order to distribute the film's production diaries prior to its release. Obviously, Jackson wanted to create anticipation and to reinvigorate the myth and the mystique of the King Kong idea by attempting to create a transmedia discourse about the film long before the release of the film. After the film's release a good number of collaborative media was launched including a DVD version of the production diaries, a DVD of the digitally remastered original *King Kong*, a Collector's Disc edition, a novelization of the movie and of course the video game, which features an alternate ending. Therefore, media entertainment industries respond to the knowledge of a media literate audience by distributing a number of paratexts that function as supplementary diegetic or non-diegetic narratives of the main text. *King Kong*'s paratextuality is achieved via a number of media channels, each of them fulfilling the viewer/user's interaction with the material on a different level. These paratexts also form part of the post-celluloid adaptation process as the media content not only is transformed for one new medium, but for many, thus this is another definitive characteristic of post-celluloid adaptation; that is the familiar story undergoes a journey through various new media and during this process the relationship between audience and narrative changes, the narrative itself might change as in the video game of Kong, where an alternate ending sees Kong roaming free back in the jungles of Skull Island. Paratextuality, or collaborative new media, essentially becomes the strategy for a post-celluloid adaptation that is produced for mass distribution.

However, what is important in studying this case example apart from the interconnectedness of the aesthetic and economic dimensions of the film is the post-celluloid adaptation of Kong from a model to a computer generated image, which although the latter is not indexical, it manages to simulate the movements and behavioral patterns of a real-life silverback gorilla. In other words, the filmmakers did not intend to alienate the creature from reality, but at the same time the jungle and the other creatures of Skull Island are stylized in order to maintain the feel of a mythic world. Arguably, this adaptation, which sophisticated computer software makes possible, may be read as a strategy to eradicate any

monstrous connotations that the King Kong image carries, as the Kong is obviously portrayed as a creature which has sensitivity and moods. A brief comparative study of the promotional posters of the 1933 film and the 2005 film illustrates that these preferred readings are communicated even before the release of the film.

The key iconographic signifiers in the early and the 2005 film posters show Kong as a ferocious monster getting ready to rampage through New York and firmly holding Ann Darrow, who is in a state of horror and her clothes are torn. The torn clothes on the poster and in the movie have led to interpretations such as interracial rape, and the sexual desire of the black male for the white blond woman as a way of exercising power over whiteness. In the newest version, the posters either depict Kong in a close-up, or Kong and Ann Darrow, who is either being protected by Kong or encounters Kong in New York, and she is clearly not in a state of fright as she is depicted making a step forward and having a calm posture, illuminated by a white spotlight, which adds a further serenity. The close-up of Kong's face poster, obviously wants to communicate the detail with which the animation department created Kong and a highlighted scar on its face reinforces this, a choice which essentially promises to the prospective viewer that the film contains extreme close-ups of Kong, a proximity and frequency that was not possible to do in the early film as that would have revealed the limitations of the model, due to the model's restrictive facial flexibility. Moving to the close comparative analysis of the films it is evident that close-ups and extreme close-ups of Kong in Jackson's film exhibit the confidence and consistency with which these images were generated. This summarized description of the key signifiers in the promotional posters exemplifies how the film was promoted strategically for contemporary audiences without letting down the fans by using familiar references such as the Empire State Building sequence.

As is evident from Jackson's Kong the movement of computer generated monstrous creatures can acquire a faultless and limitless flow, the virtual camera as a tool provides an opportunity for close-ups and extreme close-ups of a creature's face and body that allow the audience to scrutinize its facial characteristics, body and richer emotional states from different angles. The close-ups of early Kong's bust for instance did not function as a strategy to develop a character, but as a strategy to reinforce the size and flat animalistic wildness of the creature, thus the close-ups were short, unlike the close-ups in Peter Jackson's film, which allow screen time for the development of a character. In addition, the

close-ups of early Kong were short because the mechanical life-size bust of Kong could only perform limited and robotic movements that could have ruined the illusion if sustained for a longer period of screen time. The different layers put together via digital compositing are not visibly discernible, whereas in the case of early Kong a contemporary viewer can easily see the layering of the image, and what techniques it involves.

A Comparative Study of the Close-up in *Kong*

Inevitably, from a cinema studies perspective a comparative analysis of the two main cinematic texts involved in a post-celluloid adaptation process is needed to address certain developments as regards the technological apparatus and examine how these developments contribute to the construction of the narrative and of the preferred meanings that the end product wants to generate, especially within the framework of mainstream cinema. One could argue that Andy Serkis' role in the production of Jackson's Kong is similar to the actor in a gorilla costume idea, as Serkis studied the behavioral patterns of gorillas before going into the studio for motion capture. Serkis wore an anatomically correct gorilla costume marked near each joint for the demands of motion capture. This is a technique which is partly analogous to principal photography, but instead the computer software captures the elements of motion by tracking the markers, providing thus an accurate digital representation of Serkis' physical performance rather than Serkis himself.

This technique raises certain questions such as whether we should consider that Serkis actually played the part of King Kong like Keny Long did in 1976 or Peter Elliot in *King Kong Lives* (John Guillermin, 1986). While this question might generate a number of responses that may or may not support Serkis' performance as Kong and can be convincingly supported, the one thing that remains for certain is that it is a technique that pertains to post-celluloid adaptation as there is no filming involved in its traditional understanding, and that is what defines Jackson's version as an adaptation rather than a remake: the transition of previously released material from one medium to another. In this part of the chapter then I will focus on the use of close-ups to frame the gorilla in both *King Kong* movies so as to see what their function, frequency, and length is, and what enables or limits these factors in each movie.

The first extreme close-up in the 1933 film occurs 40 minutes into the movie when we see the gorilla for the first time. Kong comes to claim his offering from the natives, Ann Darrow, the blond, beautiful actress who Denham employs to take part in his new movie. This extreme close-up in Kong's first scene lasts for five seconds and is the longest close-up in the film, followed by another of three seconds within the same sequence. This is unlike the latter movie, where we do not get a clear view of Kong deliberately in his first sequence, as the filmmakers chose to frame parts of his body amid fog. This created a dramatic tension and teased the audience before revealing Kong's full figure. In the early Kong we get a rather lengthy static medium shot of Kong making jerky movements and facial expressions which do not denote or connote anything specific, but apparently he is somehow excited or bemused by his victim. Joshua David Bellin in his study *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation* describes the first gaze as follows: "The life-size model's limited mobility notwithstanding, the flexing of its eyebrows suggests that Kong is, as it were, giving Darrow 'the look.' "[31] Obviously, the lengthy first encounter of the audience with Kong functions as a way to establish his proportion without having any other means to achieve that as the technology available at that time could not play with extreme close-ups of the body parts of the puppet so as to prolong the audience's anticipation in viewing Kong's full body. The main reason for this is that the early puppet lacked the detail and texture to offer convincing close-ups on body parts.

In total the first Kong has 7 close-ups, including one where it reaffirms the monster's proportions rather impressively as a live actor (native) is placed in the mouth of a full-scale model. The close-ups in the first Kong could not mask the artificiality of the life-size face for long enough as the mechanical movements would become overtly obvious, thus the use of quick cuts and very few close-ups. The first extreme close-up in the latter movie again lasts for five seconds, but the main difference is that our first glimpse of Kong's fiery gaze is directed toward the position of Denham and not on Ann. Maybe this can be seen as an attempt to redeem the film from the 1933 racist implications pertinent to the forbidden black male gaze at the white female body, but it certainly establishes the most important confrontation in the film, which is between Denham and what he represents—greed, power, the Western white male—and Kong's otherness.

In Jackson's film the relationship between Kong and Darrow is portrayed in a different way, rather than the maiden in the hands of

the bestial other. In Jackson's film Darrow is not a barrier between the dividing line of whiteness and blackness,[32] since the act of seeing in the latest film of the concept attempts to erase the racial implications and power-relations between whiteness and blackness. In the first "shot-reverse-shot" sequence of Kong and Darrow the close-ups and medium close-ups of Kong are more than 20 in just this one sequence. Here Darrow attempts to establish communication after her inability to escape and we gradually see the building of a character in each shot of Kong. Before that we have the longest static shot up to this point of Kong chewing bamboo, which lasts 17 seconds. It is a medium close-up shot and denotes the gorilla's eating habits, reinforcing the production's main goal concerning the simulation of the creature which was not to anthropomorphize Kong or create something that does not refer back to reality. In addition, this is the first shot in which we get to see Kong in a rather serene state of being and the audience is able to examine the creature, see the detailed graphic/photorealistic work on his face and body as well as the anatomical correctness of its movements and facial characteristics. This exhibits a confidence on the part of the production team, allowing the audience to gaze for far longer in contrast to the early Kong.

After Darrow's failed attempt to escape, where we get two close-up shots of an angry Kong, she tries to befriend him by performing a few of her vaudeville acts. Unlike the original Kong's limited facial expressions and the funny brightly white teeth, Jackson's Kong starts to react with convincing animal behavior to Darrow's invitation to amuse him. In each shot of Kong in this sequence there is a different expression; first he is surprised, then he is being amused and demands more from Ann, next he looks a bit bored as a reaction to her performance and wants to interact with her and starts teasing her up to the point she stops him and he goes into a seemingly uncontrollable frenzy to exercise his dominance over Ann, but a big rock lands on his head and his facial characteristics show that he feels embarrassed. Therefore, in contrast to the model of the 1933 version the computer generated face of Kong denotes and connotes certain feelings, this sequence almost wants to compete directly with O'Brien's model and the implications of that movie, redeeming Kong from the symbol of the sexual predator and presenting him as childish, even if they clearly designed him to look rather aged judging from the many scars and the bad condition of his teeth, unlike the smiley/shiny looking face of the 1933 film's full scale bust. Again this initial act of communication builds up to deeper feelings, which are expressed in the remainder of the movie, mainly in the final act of the

film in New York, where Kong is not seen as a voyeur, he does not look through windows to find Ann; the search is mutual, Ann wants to go to him as much as he does. Their relationship does not have strong sexual connotations as Darrow herself is represented as an adolescent to a certain extent and less as a symbol of sexual attraction. Kong does not tear Darrow's clothes and Darrow responds to his playful nature throughout the film; she also shows a childish curiosity as to how the gorilla is going to react to her vaudeville acts. The sophisticated animation software enables the narrative to develop and rely via close-ups on Kong's face, something which was not possible or convincing in the past as a mechanical full-scale face or an ape mask cannot match the expressiveness designed in Jackson's production. Consequently, it is possible to use this example as an argument against the conservative criticism of computer generated images, as in this case the computer generated Kong does not erase reality but it recreates Kong as a character based on realistic codes from the "databases" of everyday life. This shift enables the concept or the idea of the *King Kong* to become a story as well as a spectacle. The in-between moments of this film are certainly more complex as they are not moments that simply display an aesthetic and artistic maturity beyond celluloid cinema but they are moments that allow the viewer to communicate in a more traditional, yet complex manner with the imaginary.

The "Movie Ride" Effect in *Kong*

In order to stress the aesthetic maturity of the in-between moment, I focus on the roller coaster "ride" from the sacrificial ground to Kong's lair, which appears before the scene discussed in the previous section. I am using the word ride as I would like to argue that this sequence is an example of a "movie ride" effect, a concept developed in Constance Balides' essay "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films."[33] Balides draws on the concept of immersion, digital technological effects, and the movie ride film to discuss how immersion as a discourse and effect is interconnected with contemporary media production industries. Balides clarifies the difference between immersion in a virtual reality condition and film spectating, which she explains thus:

> The *immersion effect* in mainstream film now [. . .] generally works through an imaginary emplacement of the spectator in the world of the film achieved through textual strategies such as the placement of

> the camera in the literal position of the character (a point of view shot) or one associated with a purported character's view as well as special effects zoom shots created with the use of an optical printer and/or involving computer graphic images suggesting movement inward into the image.[34]

She then argues that the movie ride film is a convergence between films and theme park rides and provides examples of movie ride scenes in films such as *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Jurassic Park* and *Hackers* (Softley, 1995) among others. In the specific sequence Ann Darrow is in Kong's firm grasp and experiences a bumpy ride as Kong is moving fast across the jungle and when he stops, he starts shaking Ann up and down presumably as a ritual of imposing power. This sequence is seen through a fast pace and abrupt editing, variable camera movements and multiple points of view either Ann's or Kong's subjective point of view. The nonfixed camera and rapid edits connote the theme park ride on a fast track and the inward camera movements to Kong's wide open mouth specifically signify the theme park rides of movies with creatures.

Unlike the problem of framing which early CGI applications had and gradually was overcome by the advances in digital animation software and compositing, the problem in this sequence is the technological fragility of Naomi Watts' digital double. Hence the fast cuts simultaneously try to conceal that and create a moment that will stand out as spectacular since presumably it is still difficult to merge live action and digital animation for the demands of such a scene where the actor is in the grasp of a huge creature while it runs and shakes him/her up and down. Still the shots which frame Kong and Watts' digital double are bracketed, not by live-action shots entirely, but by shots where Watts' indexical representation of her body is in the grasp of the motion captured mechanical hand of Kong in order to reconfirm to the viewer that these overtly synthetic scenes are parts of a continuous action that desires to present itself as realistic. In addition, Kong's arm and hand reaffirm the photorealistic qualities of his body since their treatment shows a consistency in an attempt to visually connect Kong's scarred face and body with the details on the body parts that the director chose to frame. In other words, if I may be allowed to draw an analogy here, the detailed CGI work on Kong's hand works as a synecdoche, that is the hand represents the realistic details on Kong's whole body; in fact Kong's hand is a prominent feature or pattern in Kong movies, but the main difference in Jackson's *Kong* is that the hand comes to represent the character of Kong as well, as the

grasp and the touch changes over the development of the narrative from firm to curious (in a nonsexual way) and caring.

Nonetheless, this is indeed one sequence which clearly follows the convention of the immersion or the promise of immersion strategy in contemporary mainstream film as part of a broader logic of transmedia Hollywood. Balides' cultural logic of the immersion effect extends to "densely intertextual reception contexts through which knowledge about effects is disseminated."[35] Balides does not underestimate the economic powers at stake in the building of mythic discourses relevant to interactivity and virtual reality, and quite interestingly she reads immersion scenes in movie ride films as "signs" of our dominant economic system, namely post-Fordism. Balides draws an analogy between the post-Fordist sphere of production and immersive strategies by arguing first that the "dispersal of computers in the home [. . .] contributes to a temporal and spatial decentralization of work involving the overflow of the workday beyond delimited time periods, which elides the distinction between work and leisure, and the diffusion of the workplace beyond the factory, which erodes the line between home and work."[36] She then states that the kinesthetic effects of immersion scenes in movie ride films can be discussed in relation to the above as the movie ride film is "characterized by a logic of merging," a blurring of spatiotemporal boundaries.[37] Balides concludes that the "virtual ornament relates to an oblique recognition on the part of contemporary audiences of the changes that affect them in work and everyday life in a post-Fordist economy."[38]

This scene in Kong is abound with Balides' proposal as it is another in between moment that merges the imaginary with the visual effects discourse that Jackson chose to circulate via the Internet. More than anything, the real-time production diaries accessible on the Internet even before the release of the film reinforce this connection. Balides restricts her discussion to movie ride films, however this connection that she makes between immersive strategies for entertainment purposes and the dominant economic system, stems from mainstream cinema's economic need to exploit or stylistically imitate the aesthetics of other contemporary media to draw in the media literate audience that Balides describes. Contemporary audiences have certain expectations from movie ride films or any blockbuster that will most definitely contain such immersive scenes; these expectations and demands extend beyond the main narrative to other media texts, which are equally significant products that would help form a "franchise" that could sustain an audience through an expanded communication system of perpetual incompleteness.

The immersive strategy in movies is a promise and this is what essentially connects it with the post-Fordist system, and the analogy I would draw here is the one between the promise given to the viewer/user that she is now able to merge herself among a variety of texts (game levels, first-third person in game characters, alternate endings, "making of" films, pseudo-documentaries) and the promise given to the post-Fordist worker, of incorporating herself into what Balides describes as the "spectacular, ephemeral, and intangible" image of capital.[39] Inevitably, unlike film adaptation, post-celluloid adaptation participates more rigorously in this market-oriented logic of reproducing texts and paratexts in an attempt to prolong this spectacular image of the capital and offer the illusion that is physical and touchable. The only promise a film adaptation in its traditional sense can give is not to disappoint the readers of the source text, but still this promise is almost never fulfilled for reasons pertaining to personal taste and elitist criticism.

The post-celluloid adaptation text, specifically a blockbuster based on previously published or produced media content addresses a range of audiences, but mainly the audience that is likely to acknowledge herself as an implied consumer and post-Fordist worker according to Balides' understanding. *King Kong* has many sequences such as the Kong vs. the T-Rexes (dubbed V-rexes in the movie) sequence and the Brontosauruses chase that deliberately work as a new mixed cinema that is no longer learning from the novel and the theater to develop its own language, discover its own dynamic tools, but learns from the possibilities of new media. The Brontosauruses sequence as discussed earlier in this chapter plays with the imperfection of earlier special effects and then in a grandiose statement Jackson's visual effects team merges all the layers together in a seamless image. This sequence operates on two levels, the one being the fulfillment of the expectations of fans of fantasy films to get pleasure from the visualizing of the impossible, a promise that Jackson's name carries from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and the second being an implication that this sequence will be expected in the video game, in which the gamer will have the chance to interact with the deliberately highly stylized environment and creatures of Skull Island. I use the word deliberately as the feel of the island reinforces the sense of the imaginary, maintaining a look that would be appealing as a movie ride experience, appealing enough to a niche audience that would generate sales from the upcoming game. It is no surprise that in the two disc special edition DVD, the moving images on a loop on the menu start with a zoom in to Denham's old camera which overtly

wants to immerse the viewer in another experience by breaking the boundary of the "lens" or the "screen."

Post-celluloid adaptation is not limited to two texts, but a network of similar texts across media. Post-celluloid adaptation's driving force is also the economic logic of today rather than just a vision, or creativity. This observation, however does not deny the fact that traditional film adaptations were also commodities, however, it has been argued throughout the book that the process of commodification is intensified today due to convergence culture and the availability of collaborative media channels. This is not necessarily negative as the cultural logic of today dictates that the viewer is also user, the viewer is literate, and the viewer can participate in the pleasure of consuming and interacting with familiar visual images like the filmmakers themselves; the viewer/user understands the cultural logic of today as she/he is consciously part of it.

The Official Website as Expanded Adaptation: Jackson's Diaries and Database Cinema

The official website as expanded adaptation exemplifies a relentless two-way crossover between cultural forms that goes beyond the traditional theory of film adaptation. This project has advocated throughout that adaptation needs to be redefined in a way that does not limit its case studies to films based on canonical literature, and thus marginalize the existence and possibilities of post-celluloid media and convergence culture in general. The web remediates all earlier media and renders their copresence on the screen as a virtual, hypermediated environment; the Internet transforms the ways a story is told in traditional media texts to a timeless database structure that functions as a kind of nonlinear/nonhierarchical narrative. In certain cases users are given the power to become collaborative authors of extratextual material related to their favorite TV shows by adding information via wiki engines. The Internet is a medium that can be used to engage the viewer/user in an intertextual and hypertextual play that establishes an economic relationship with him/her as well as an interactive relationship. The Internet is inevitably a part of a post-celluloid adaptation, but at the same time it functions as a different medium that can transform the main text into a narrative that surpasses certain constraints of traditional media. Official websites of films or TV shows adapt bytes of, or complement, the source text, and

by applying the discourse of the market system, they give birth to an expanded text that is faithful to the current form of the Internet, that is, a transnational and national mass medium of convergence that provides infinite and to a certain extent uncontrollable information on a subject matter or a product. A film's official website usually dies after the film's release, unless it becomes a cult film or the storyline leaves room for a sequel; the function of a film's official website is rather replaced by the expanded DVD features. In the case of King Kong the paratextual website Kong is King differs from the above process in the sense that it created an expanded discourse around the film's concept even before the release of the film. According to Manovich, "a hypertext model of the World Wide Web arranges the world as a nonhierarchical system ruled by metonymy."[40] The Web is characterized by an antinarrative logic of cause and effect, thus websites follow the structure of database logic.

The source cultural product is then adapted for the purposes of a different register, which combines marketing discourse along with interactive narrative to fit the navigable database logic of the official website format, yet the question that this part wants to raise and attempts to answer is whether an official website can be seen as an adaptation process that is similar to a film adaptation. The short answer would be no, as the official website cannot be seen as an independent text, but it can only be studied as a complementary text, which entails a process of adapting narrative content from one medium to another; however, does the newly formed text still remain a marginal paratext? Is contemporary cinematic or even televised media content textually independent, or is it purposefully incomplete so as to continue to exist in a wider media convergence system?

The concept of paratextuality[41] refers to the relation of a literary main text to its preface, title, endnotes, footnotes, appendices, that is, anything that is considered to be outside the main text, which can also be essential for the main texts' meaning. In a post-print world, and essentially post-celluloid world the paratextuality concept can include examples such as the expanded DVD format, and the official website. Certainly promotional material is not a new development, but its current growth via the Internet, has blurred the line between forms of promotion and cultural products:

> The culture industries have attenuated the audience's attention to ponder their future affective investments and have increasingly provided varied paths for engaging with the cultural form. With the

> expansion of this promotional discourse, which provides both a thick packaging of our cultural forms and wider range of material for interaction, contemporary culture has naturalized the representation of anticipation and normalized the space of desire's perpetual deferral. Like narrative delay, the pleasure of promotion is at least partially in its extension of the possibilities and potential for satisfaction that the cultural form promises.[42]

The Internet operates as a super-paratext, which entails this blurring of forms that David Marshall describes in the above quotation. Therefore, although the official website cannot be viewed or used as an independent text like a film/TV drama, it still is a signifying system that is more complicated than a paratext. Like film/TV adaptations, official websites then participate in a continuous spin of intertextual references and transformations. The official website then as a super-paratext participates in this flow of content across media. In *King Kong*'s transmedia universe we can see influences from the infamous official websites of films such as *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, USA, 1999)[43] and the web-effect of the *Star Wars* Franchise.[44] Jenkins remarks that forms of technological convergence:

> Open multiple entry points into the consumption process and at the same time, enable consumers to more quickly locate new manifestations of a popular narrative [. . .] Such an approach requires the constant development of media content that can provoke strong audience engagement and investment [. . .] into a prolonged relationship with a particular narrative universe, which is rich enough and complex enough to sustain their interest over time and thus motivate a succession of consumer choices.[45]

However, since the term adaptation is brought into play it is essential to examine the signifying system that the official website format produces, to ask what other meanings it generates, or reinforces, and what kind of discourse it uses to attract audiences, apart from offering further information that completes the main text. These processes together then create a blurred media content super system that indeed triggers a rich dialectic, where the founding text, its post-text, the main texts in question and their paratexts need to be brought together in order to create a meaning, and not divided in terms any of them being superior, inferior, original, or marginal.

In short, the official website transforms the main text, yet the main text itself has been transformed for the purposes of a media convergence culture. All these new economic and cultural trends that broadband Internet generated could be summarized in Jenkins' statement that "the interactive audience is more than a marketing concept and less than 'semiotic democracy.'"[46] According to Jenkins' work on online fandom communities, speculation "involves fans in the production of new fantasies, broadening the field of meanings that circulate around the primary text [. . .] This collective exchange of knowledge cannot be fully contained by previous sources of power which depended on maintaining tight control over the flow of information."[47] The user of the "Kong is King" website then becomes part of the hypercontext of the concept and contributes to the exchange of meanings beyond the intertextual signifiers that the film texts may offer.

It is arguable whether we could call the official website of a mainstream film and TV show an artwork, but it is a different medium with its own characteristics and possibilities, and any media content transferred to the Internet is adapted for the purposes of a demanding and transnational market. This content can be transformed into another mythology or event, which is not ephemeral; this process requires a different audience (a new media literate audience) as well as a different approach in order to decode the discourse an official website uses, which is a fusion of marketing, narrative and navigational discourse. Walter Benjamin developed the concept of "reception in a state of distraction"[48] to describe the relationship between the cinematic apparatus of his time (the shock effect of changing frames) and the audience. This argument is better realized with the coming of broadband Internet and its aesthetics. The user of the Internet absorbs the apparatus and what he/she views or does as a matter of habit. This apperception of the medium alienates the user because it does not demand attention. Correspondingly, Lev Manovich argues that new technologies have become the ideal paradigm of Benjamin's concept of "reception in a state of distraction" and writes that "the periodic reappearance of the machinery, the continuous presence of the communication channel in the message, prevent the subject from falling into the dream world of illusion for very long, make [sic] her alternate between concentration and detachment."[49] The official website in its current form may render the main text incomplete not only in terms of the storyline, but also in terms of contextual information that might be important to interpreting the main text. The contextual system that is manifested via the official website breaks

the illusionary diegetic world that a film or a televised text creates. The medium of the official website not only has the power to provide a subsequent completeness, it also has the power to create a different mythology, or event, outside of the limited "wholeness" that relates the main text to the typical elements of the official website.

Manovich remarks that the digitally coded cinematographic image has two identities: "one satisfies the demands of human communication; another makes it suitable for computer-based practices of production and distribution."[50] Post-celluloid adaptation enables a more manifest blurring of these two identities, and specifically Jackson's *Kong* becomes a fitting example of this blurring as the release of consistent and detailed "making of" material before the release of the film satisfies another form of communication between viewer/user and visual content as the cinematographic image is not the only text for cultural communication in terms of distribution.

The viewer/user communicates with the database structure of the material before it becomes illusion or linear narrative, thus the individual who had access to this material is not communicating with the final film with a manner of conventional familiarity that Manovich suggests in the first identity of digitally coded cinematography. For someone who saw the production diaries, the cinematographic image is already something that the viewer/user *went into*, thus the communication between the main text and the viewer within the cinema space is not a fully effective experience as he/she knows or understands how the illusion of synthetic realism functions. The main text constitutes for the viewer of *King Kong*'s production diaries a "metanarrative" where each scene incorporates the vision of the digital grid as it may well be presumed that the viewer oscillates between the illusion and the acquired knowledge of the scenes' construction. In other words he/she performs Manovich's "cognitive multitasking," instead in this case the mind becomes a human computer interface "that allows the user to run a number of programs at the same time and keep a number of windows open on the screen."[51] Jackson exploits the social norm as described in the previous section, but on a more abstract level as the viewer switches between illusion and a mental cognitive activity. The main text in itself is not database cinema, but if we take into consideration Manovich's analogy of narrative vs. database and the semiological theory of syntagm vs. paradigm within the context of cinema, it is arguably a cinema in which the knowledge of the database form subordinates the cinematographic illusion.

A Database is "a structured collection of data"[52] and logically the "user's experience of such computerized collections is, therefore, quite distinct from reading a narrative or watching a film or navigating an architectural site."[53] A database is an antinarrative logic and the webpage is a new media structure that supports this logic to its full. The <www.kongisking.net> website is a database where the user can click on individual items on the screen in no particular order and gather detailed information about the production of *King Kong*. This visual information essentially shows how the director creates a huge array of data from which the final narrative will be built. Manovich aligns traditional cinematic narrative with the syntagmatic dimension of the elements of a system, which is the linear sequencing of words in a sentence for instance, and aligns the paradigmatic dimension, that is each element in a sentence belongs to a set of related elements that are related in absentia, to the database structure of pre- and postproduction in filmmaking: "thus, syntagm is explicit and paradigm is implicit; one real and the other is imagined."[54] Manovich argues that new media "reverse this relationship"[55] as the narrative becomes virtual due to the fact that is made out of linking elements of a stored digital database, each digital image being a composite of different layers and elements. In other words, the narratives made of digital images are a composition of designs, motion captures, digital doubles, animation that are stored as a database, thus they have material existence and may easily become accessible to the viewer as new media forms. They do not only exist as storyboards or raw film material like in the past, the material is usually digitally coded even in cases outside the Hollywood context. Hence we have the chance to see a film's motion captures, previsualizations, designs, deleted scenes, alternative endings, or behind the scenes material when its DVD format is released. In this sense the production diaries also function as a realization of the material existence of *King Kong*'s huge database, hence the paradigmatic dimension of the film is made overtly present.

The database of the virtual narrative is accessible to the audience before its release, urging in a way the viewer/user to identify with the director, the editor, the production designer, or the animator by immersing him/her in another reality that he/she would feel part of by the release of the movie and making her/him feel as eager as the production team to see a linear narrative form of this database. Database then is privileged over narrative and this is possible due to the involvement of new media in the creation of *King Kong*, which allow the generating of multiple texts that shape the post-celluloid adaptation of the 1933 text. Post-celluloid

adaptation then is as much a term that indicates the economic and aesthetic shaping of a text based on a familiar concept as well as a term that indicates the need to systematically explore the register that this book proposes so as to analyze effectively the new modes of transition and transmission that new media bring about.

Notes

[1] Danny Lee, Special Effects Supervisor in John Brosnan, *Movie Magic: The Story of Special Effects in the Cinema* (London: Sphere Books, 1977), 9.
[2] Joe Letteri, Visual Effects Supervisor, *King Kong*, Peter Jackson, 2005 in the booklet of the 2 disc special edition DVD of *King Kong*, 2005.
[3] James Berardinelli, "King Kong (1933)" http://www.reelviews.net/movies/k/kong_33.html (accessed February 14, 2010).
[4] Todd McCarthy, "King Kong" http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117929068.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0 (accessed February 14, 2010).
[5] Joe Bigelow, "King Kong" http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=Variety100&reviewid=VE1117792322&content=jump&jump=review&category=1935&cs=1 (accessed February 14, 2010).
[6] Roger Ebert, "King Kong (1933)" http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20020203/REVIEWS08/202030301/1023 (accessed February 14, 2010).
[7] Roger Ebert, "King Kong" http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051212/REVIEWS/51203002/1023 (accessed February 14, 2010).
[8] James Berardinelli, "King Kong" http://www.reelviews.net/php_review_template.php?identifier=279 (accessed February 14, 2010).
[9] Stan Jones, "Ape Redux: King Kong and the Kiwis," in *Fear, Cultural Anxiety and Transformation: Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Films Remade*, eds. Scott A. Lukas and John Marmysz (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 192.
[10] Jones, "Ape Redux: King Kong and the Kiwis," 192.
[11] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 96.
[12] Jones, "Ape Redux: King Kong and the Kiwis," 194.
[13] Jones, "Ape Redux: King Kong and the Kiwis," 192.
[14] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2001).
[15] Laura M. Holson, "Out of Hollywood, Rising Fascination with Video Games," in *The New York Times* http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/10/technology/10GAME.html?th=&pagewanted=print&position= (accessed February 14, 2010).
[16] Laura M. Holson, "Out of Hollywood, Rising Fascination with Video Games."
[17] Laura M. Holson, "Out of Hollywood, Rising Fascination with Video Games."
[18] Brosnan, *Movie Magic: The Story of Special Effects in the Cinema*, 111.
[19] Brosnan, *Movie Magic: The Story of Special Effects in the Cinema*, 111.
[20] Brosnan, *Movie Magic: The Story of Special Effects in the Cinema*, 111.
[21] Brosnan, *Movie Magic: The Story of Special Effects in the Cinema*, 111.

[22] Brosnan, *Movie Magic: The Story of Special Effects in the Cinema*, 111.
[23] Bigelow, "King Kong."
[24] Jussi Parikka, "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information," in *Fibreculture*, 2005, Issue 4, http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue4/issue4_parikka.html (accessed February 14, 2010).
[25] Parikka, "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information."
[26] Parikka, "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information."
[27] Parikka, "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information."
[28] Parikka, "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information."
[29] Parikka, "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens—Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information."
[30] Bigelow, "King Kong."
[31] Joshua David Bellin, *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation.* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 40.
[32] The relationship between Kong and Ann Darrow in the original film was read as the forbidden black male gaze at the white female body; Joshua David Bellin's book *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation* (2005) examines in detail this reception, which he sees as unavoidable in terms of its cultural context: "rather than being connected to issues of race only incidentally, *Kong* is deeply, inextricably, indeed indistinguishably involved in a pervasive and urgent early-twentieth-century cultural project to define and defend whiteness, a project that ritualistically found its fulfillment in the conjuring to life, and condemning to death, of a fantasized scapegoat: the black ravisher of white womanhood" (24). Bellin focuses on the power of seeing in the film and how this discourse reflects issues of racial and masculine superiority, alienation, and sexual desire. This power-play of audience alignment with the black and white gaze is read by Bellin as a strategy to replace obvious acts of violence and oppression; instead seeing the blond white female through the point of view of Kong and the natives becomes a way to threaten the security of the white gaze, that is identity; this projected the fears and anxieties of the audience of that time, where public lynching was still practiced as a punishment for the "violation" of white women by African Americans.
[33] Constance Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, eds. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Massachusetts: MIT, 2004).
[34] Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," 317.
[35] Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," 325.
[36] Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," 327.

[37] Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," 327.
[38] Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," 329.
[39] Balides, "Immersion in the Virtual Ornament: Contemporary 'Movie Ride' Films," 328.
[40] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 65.
[41] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Newman Channa and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).
[42] David P. Marshall, "The New Intertextual Commodity," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002), 71.
[43] See Peter Lunenfeld's discussion of the film's website as a hypercontextual construct, "The Myths of Interactive Cinema," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002).
[44] See Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's *Star Wars*? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, eds. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Massachusetts: MIT, 2004).
[45] Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's *Star Wars*? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture," 284.
[46] Henry Jenkins, "Interactive Audiences?," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: BFI, 2002), 158.
[47] Henry Jenkins, "Interactive Audiences?," 160.
[48] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Media and Cultural Studies*, eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 33.
[49] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 207.
[50] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 181.
[51] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 210.
[52] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 218.
[53] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 219.
[54] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 230.
[55] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 231.

Conclusion

Parts of my discussion throughout this work wish to defend the digital image by attempting to introduce a new discursive practice that understands the digital image as a more complex and meaningful operation. I use the term post-celluloid adaptation to emphasize this practice since the perpetual and repetitive exchange of familiar stories and characters between old and new media acquires new meaning by introducing and reinventing modes of communication. The digital image should be placed and discussed in more carefully defined contexts as there is a tendency within visual studies, specifically about mainstream cinema, to understand and discuss the digital image as an animated image that assimilates the imperfection of older representational technologies. The possibilities of the digital image seem to challenge the traditional understanding of cinematography, and the use of CGI in feature films can be examined according to the extent it is being used and the aesthetic style it adopts; aesthetic realism can only be an option among the many visual styles that digital cinema can invent and remediate today.

Rethinking the concept of adaptation from one medium to another from the perspective of new media studies has certainly opened up the issues and implications involved in adapting popular narratives and characters across media. The case studies I analyze in this work as examples that perform and repeat the strategies and technologies applied in the cultural industries today are, nonetheless, examples that help redefine the traditional understanding of film adaptation and highlight an array of issues for future debate. These issues pertain to financial factors, to the relationship between the screen and the audience, and of course the aesthetics of the digital image.

The field of film adaptation studies has set certain limitations across the years that scholars such as Robert Stam, Imelda Whelehan, and

Deborah Cartmell have challenged by reinforcing methodological approaches such as intertextual dialogism. However, the computer generated image is not the main focus of film adaptation studies in the process of examining or interpreting a retelling of a familiar story; the focal point in this book is digital technology as a meaningful operation in this transference from an older medium to digital cinema and other collaborative media that help shape the practice of expanded adaptations. The case studies I examine here foreground CGI as an integral part of commercial cinema or a new mixed cinema that begins to reinvent itself on the basis of a new ontology that combines the photographic with the graphic in ways that redefine the aesthetics and creativity of cinematic products. The digital image as Manovich and other new media commentators have pointed out brings a whole new set of codes and principles in the making of cinema that essentially demands a new level of film reading skills in order to interpret adequately the interaction between live action and digitally animated images.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I illustrate an elemental definition of post-celluloid adaptation by examining a transition from popular literature to the new practices of digital cinema in order to portray a photorealistic representation of impossible spaces, bodies and action sequences, or to deliberately use the possibilities of the digital image to imitate another medium as in the case of *Fight Club*. Discussing *Van Helsing* as a case study example generated some complexities in the definition of post-celluloid adaptation due to its interconnectedness with the cultural logic of Marshall's new intertextual commodity, and its intertextual relations with a multiplicity of traditional media forms and new media forms. The new bodies of movie monsters wish to address an audience which is fascinated by superheroes and they meet the definition of the new intertextual commodity where traditional film narrative is reduced in order to promote teen/adult play and interactivity through a storytelling that expands across multiple media texts. Thus the film redevelops the rather forgotten cult of movie monsters in new ways and enhances the element of narrative incompleteness that reinforces the role of the viewer as an implied consumer. The viewer is invited to participate as a thought coauthor in his/her attempt to activate a transmedia storytelling that brings together the monster movies of the 1930s, the animated back-story and the promise of interactivity through the promotion of a video game. However, in order to play this new role and activate this cultural shift he/she has to consume.

The element of incompleteness is not new in adaptation studies, but in post-celluloid adaptation it refers to the relationship between the text and the viewer/user, who is targeted as a collaborative author. The viewer is able to exchange cultural knowledge via intertextuality and hyperconscious uses of genre conventions in the main narrative object. In film adaptation this occurs to a certain extent but one of the aims of a more traditional *classic novel to film* adaptation process is to celebrate the cultural value of a canonical literary artwork that targets an audience that would probably be skeptic toward a film adaptation based on a great novel. The audience is rather invited to celebrate this high artistic value by experiencing a process that will inevitably draw some comparisons, which might comment on the "incompleteness" of the film in terms of character development or subplots.

Post-celluloid adaptations such as *Van Helsing* aim to communicate with the new media active viewer/user and not the Gothic novel appreciation society. Post-celluloid adaptations are very much connected to the industrial processes of mainstream film production if we compare them to the more celebratory and less commercial film adaptations of classical literature. Incompleteness then reflects the multitasking and endless processes upon which the World Wide Web is structured as the narrative of a film might be disseminated across other texts that work individually and collaboratively. DVD versions of films are also trying to imitate the database structure of the Internet as they increasingly store more information about the main narrative object for the pleasure of the user/viewer. The expanded DVD is of course a more controlled way of providing information in contrast to the Internet's uncontrollable dispersal of information over websites of particular interest or created by fans.

The journey of the characters across media in *Van Helsing* can be seen as analogous to the Internet, where at some point the origin of a user's search is momentarily lost and unimportant because by clicking on various hyperlinks he/she has been directed to various new WebPages with additional information. Similarly, the origins of the monsters are momentarily lost and unimportant as they have been framed by various optical technologies; they have become characters in different narratives, they have even threatened modern societies in films such as *Dracula 2000* (Patrick Lussier, 2000), and "clicking" on *Van Helsing* a new window opens where they become superheroes and supervillains. Therefore, post-celluloid adaptations should not be diminished to meaningless texts just because they are closely connected to the

industrial mode of cultural production. They certainly contain new information about the motivational engines of repeated representations of familiar images, but at the same time post-celluloid adaptations demand new criteria for interpreting and evaluating the digital encoding and transmedia journeys of popular characters and narratives such as Peter Jackson's *King Kong* does.

Jackson's *King Kong* is an interesting case study because Jackson breaks away from the conventional strategies of promoting a film by revealing extensive "making of" footage on the Internet before the release of the film. Thus he created a database like cinema of the production composed of short videos, each one of them dealing with a particular problem of the production, or the role of different production units from the stages of principal photography and postproduction. Jackson's choice to reveal to audiences worldwide the making of the film parallel to the actual production forms an expanded adaptation that involves actively the audience in the cultural consumption of products. Familiar images of monsters unavoidably become victims of the desire for photorealistic perfection and interaction that video games offer. Even if this reframing of the monsters purely derives from a personal vision of a director to recreate the images he/she grew up with, the cultural context and the commercial strategies of the industry inevitably and heavily influence this personal vision. There are other issues involved such as the previous commercial success of the director who undertakes such a personal project, who is in effect provided with an analogous or higher budget to produce a similar success along the lines of the new intertextual commodity. During this process the official website is reinvented as a super-paratext that uses different narrative devices and signifying systems to communicate information about the concept and the production which essentially exemplify the database logic of the Internet and renders the main text itself as incomplete. The website is of course a medium that may bring together all other media and in effect can create a narrative where its reading and analysis utterly rejects medium specificity and medium superiority/inferiority as the image and the written word are remediated in one diverse medium.

One of the main characteristics of all the case examples I analyze here is the element of the in-between moment, which I emphasize in Chapter 5. The cinematic adaptations of graphic novels is an intensified trend that exhibits these moments through a double logic of remediation, whereby moving images imitate the elements of the dynamic motion lines and the static iconography of graphic novels. These moments

manifest a remediation of the graphic novel, but they also form a hypermediated environment, where cartoonish violence and dark stories are brought to life via digital cinema. This new mixed cinema is a concept that refers to the attempts to discover the medium in early cinema, but it also describes a process of rediscovery that is manifested in contemporary cinema. Transmedia storytelling then is technically and aesthetically promoted via the in-between moment that visually expresses elements from a film's collaborative media.

Post-celluloid adaptation cannot be simply explained as transference of media content from traditional media to new media. The examples I discuss throughout the book illustrate that there is a process of multiple adaptations within this broader operation that has been described as post-celluloid adaptation, which form an expanded adaptation that is activated from the operation of the Internet as a super-paratext. In this complex, yet playful process the viewer acquires multiple roles. Video art, web cinema, and fandom web cinema are other practices that can be studied in relation to post-celluloid adaptation. Fandom shorts especially form part of the post-celluloid adaptation event-effect and involve new media technologies, where the fans of popular films create playful narratives with inexpensive digital cameras and nonlinear editing software. These films are distributed on the net via various websites which support video uploading. It would be interesting to see in the future academic research that deals with this phenomenon and actually studies these films in comparison to the source texts so as to see how the dominant logic of today also enables the viewer to create his/her own version of a popular narrative or character not just for his/her own pleasure, but for the viewing pleasure of other Internet users. This constitutes a more radical approach, which is beyond the scope of this book, as the viewer can create his/her own visual reaction to either celebrate or ridicule the source text; it illustrates, however, that the concept of post-celluloid adaptation as defined here by using blockbuster cinema as its main examples should not be perceived as a fixed term, but as a term that can contain and be influenced by the ever-expanding field of new media theory and technologies. Finally, incompleteness is also a characteristic of post-celluloid adaptation itself and not just of its examples, as new technologies rapidly and constantly invent new forms that contest the immersive strategies and interactivity of recent technology. Increasingly the aesthetic quality of video games and their narrative structures become similar to blockbuster cinema. It would also be interesting then to study

video games as adaptations of films and vice versa, thus examine in detail how the spatial design differs, why a character's powers are enhanced or reduced, and how games attempt to stir an emotional response from the player.

The future of adaptation studies would be to embrace the theoretical mapping of new media within as there is a need for a shift toward new ways of approaching adaptations. Of course with the increasing dissemination of popular culture and classic works across media it could be argued that adaptation will not have a future and that it could be replaced by a broader understanding of comparative studies or an appropriation of a variety of texts associated with a concept via transmedia storytelling. Certainly, the previous studies on film adaptation have established an agenda of issues that are still being discussed and gradually welcome popular texts as case studies. The agenda for future research will and should be actualized when these new practices have been examined as signifying systems that do not simply remediate previous media as content, but as forms that contain new textual and contextual signification. However, I wish to contribute to adaptation studies by establishing three relatively ignored aspects that are important in the formation of a theory of film adaptation studies that wants to be described as open.

First, popular texts should be more welcomed within the study of adaptations as they allow us to study the texts involved liberally and they contain an intertextual play that is hyperconsciously performed and forces us to rethink intertextuality as a symptom of an intensified and accelerated socioeconomic context. Secondly, it is important to study systematically the signification of the digital image within the context of film studies/film adaptation studies and in relation to the logic of incompleteness and interactivity. The study of post-celluloid adaptations can bring to the fore this significance since a comparative study between the representations of a familiar narrative in an old medium and a new media object is a methodology that inevitably generates questions that demand the detailed analysis of the form and aesthetics of digital cinema. Thirdly, the socioeconomic context should be studied as a driving force that shapes contemporary adaptations not only as saleable commodities, but as forms that reflect everyday communication habits, and the promises and desires of convergence culture. These three elements underline the meaningful ongoing dialogical process between the hypertext and its hypotexts, paratexts and hypercontext.

The conclusions that result from the readings of these oscillations between the main case study of each chapter, its collaborative texts, and the accelerated logic of digital capitalism essentially illustrate that post-celluloid adaptation is a concept that does not reveal how open the study of adaptations needs to become in the future, but reveals how open it already is.

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Filmography

300 (Zack Snyder, Warner Bros. Pictures; Warner Bros. Pictures, USA, 2006)
Avatar (James Cameron, Twentieth Century Fox; Twentieth Century Fox, USA/UK, 2009)
Dracula (Tod Browning, Universal Pictures; Universal Pictures, USA, 1931)
Enduring Love (Roger Michell, FilmFour; Pathé Pictures International, UK, 2004)
Fight Club (David Fincher, Fox 2000 Pictures; Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, USA/Germany 1999)
Frankenstein (James Whale, Universal Pictures; Universal Pictures, USA, 1931)
House of Dracula (Erle C. Kenton, Universal Pictures; Universal Pictures, USA, 1945)
House of Frankenstein (Erle C. Kenton, Universal Pictures; Universal Pictures, USA, 1944)
Inglourious Basterds (Quentin Tarantino, Universal Pictures/Weinstein Company; Universal Pictures International, USA/Germany, 2009)
King Kong (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Shoedsack, RKO Radio Pictures; RKO Radio Pictures, USA, 1933)
King Kong (John Guillermin, Paramount Pictures; Paramount Pictures, USA, 1976)
King Kong (Peter Jackson, Universal Pictures; Universal Pictures, New Zealand/USA, 2005)
King Kong Lives (John Guillermin, De Laurentiis Entertainment Group; De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, USA, 1986)
The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (Stephen Norrington, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation; Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, USA/Germany/Czech Republic/UK, 2003)
The Matrix (Andy and Larry Wachowski, Village Roadshow Pictures; Warner Bros. Pictures, Australia/USA, 1999)
Minority Report (Steven Spielberg, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation; Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, USA, 2002)
A Scanner Darkly (Richard Linklater, Warner Independent Pictures; Warner Independent Pictures, USA, 2006)
Sin City (Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez et al., Dimension Films; Dimension Films, USA, 2005)

Van Helsing (Stephen Sommers, Universal Pictures; Universal Pictures, USA/Czech Republic, 2004)

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