

The Ends of Adaptation: Comparative Media, Digital Culture, and Performance

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Abstract

The starting point of this dissertation is a history of ideas tacitly organized around the conception of adaptation as a formal object—which is to say as a specific kind of intertext defined by its incorporation of material drawn from one or more precursor works. Within this framework, scholars have struggled against a set of recurrent methodological pitfalls having to do with the relative importance of medium specificity, the place and purpose of aesthetic evaluation, and the perennial reappearance of that critical bugbear, fidelity. Recognizing that the blanket acceptance or rejection of these concepts has so far done little to curb the problems associated with them, I argue in favour of treating these conceptual sticking points as symptoms of a more basic problem: the formal model of adaptation itself. In response, I make a case for shifting critical focus away from what adaptations as cultural objects *are* to what adaptation as a cultural discourse *does*. Accordingly, my approach in this project is primarily meta-critical and methodological. I lead with an analysis of the intellectual history that centralized an ontological definition of adaptation and maintained its basic assumptions even as post-structuralist thought and sociological inquiry began to influence the field. As this analysis proceeds, however, my attention increasingly moves towards articulating a performative model of adaptation, which turns around the idea that what makes adaptations *adaptations* is not inherent in any given object; it is generated as part of the cultural work performed through identifying one text with another, in contexts of production as much as in the processes of reception. In developing this model, I explore how it accounts for the role of desire in the recurrence of fidelity discourse, the (non)literal materiality of adaptations, the shifting mediascapes of digital culture, and the embodied work of interpreting adaptation as such.

Keywords: Adaptation; Comparative Media; Digital Culture; Performance; Convergence; New Media

Dedication

A dissertation, like an adaptation, is never the product of one person. Firstly, I want to thank my family: Elaine Dicecco, Frank Dicecco, Dylan Dicecco, Brandi Kaleka, and Julia Lane. This dissertation was written almost entirely at the Commercial Street Cafe in Vancouver, and I am so grateful for the support of everyone there. They, more than anyone else, got to see just how much work this project required. I also want to acknowledge their generous financial support, which came in the form of a staff discount—I really did spend *that* much time at the cafe. Finally, there are more friends and colleagues whose encouragement and understanding helped me along than I have space to include. Kyle Carpenter, however, gets top billing. I really could not have made it through the emotional rollercoaster of this dissertation without you. Greg Mountain: similarly, you offered advice and support (as well as juvenile mockery and sardonic commentary) when I needed it most. Nate Szymanski: you helped me make sense of the whole PhD process as it was happening, and you gave me motivation to keep up the pace. Lai-Tze Fan: you've been a wonderful collaborator, a close friend, and you were there, beside me in class, when I first started writing about adaptation over 10 years ago. Marc Acherman: you once told me that a lot of the dissertation comes down to those moments when the universe conspires in your favour; upon reflection, I have to agree. And, last of all, that group of spectacular adults that I met when we started coursework together at SFU: not everyone knows how to make me chuckle, but cohort does.

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Introduction

The Ends of Adaptation

The end of adaptation is survival. The seeming contradiction inherent in this claim—how can something survive if it has come to an end?—is the starting point for my analysis of relationships between media.¹ The claim itself, however, concerns both the sorts of media relationships that I examine and the methods of analysis that I draw on throughout this project. To some extent, I am interested in texts that could be said to “survive” through strategies of adaptation after they have “ended”: where the cultural relevance of an established work is prolonged or resuscitated through expressions across different media and throughout various cultural arenas. That said, my primary focus is on scholarly approaches to such works, which is to say adaptation studies as a discipline: its intellectual history, the current state of criticism, and how theories of adaptation might develop in the present era of digital technology and media convergence.² I will discuss textual examples that “are” adaptations, but my approach to the topic of adaptation is chiefly meta-critical and methodological. I draw on a range of cases in different media and critical perspectives from

¹ As will become apparent in discussing the intellectual history of adaptation studies, the concept of “media” is difficult to define in part because it can be tricky to distinguish materiality, form, and physical substrates from one another and from their perception by interpreting subjects. In “Media, Modalities, and Modes,” for example, Lars Elleström offers a rigorous theorization of media and intermediality, which requires him to distinguish between four modalities (material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic) and two qualifying aspects (contextual and operational), and this still leads to two distinct but related notions of media (basic and qualified). Instead of adopting such a cumbersome framework, I have opted to focus on how vexed notions of “media” are used throughout adaptation studies’ key methodological turning points.

² My use of this term comes from Henry Jenkins’ *Convergence Culture*, where he introduces convergence as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (2).

various disciplines but always with an eye trained on fleshing out a more nuanced approach to the *study* of adaptation as a cultural phenomenon.

Over the last decade something shifted in the field of adaptation studies, and close attention to the scholarship published in recent years makes it clear that the established frameworks of comparative textual analysis, medium specificity, taxonomy, and intertextuality are no longer sufficient.³ Indeed, with the possible exception of critiquing intertextuality, it has become a cliché to position a scholarly work in adaptation studies against such methods. The goal of this project is not to eschew any particular methods in their entirety. Rather, I think there is an important place for all of these approaches, and their use in adaptation scholarship should continue. What needs to end is adaptation itself.

More needs to be said about the “adaptation itself” that I am suggesting should end. It might help to start with the seemingly simple question: what is an adaptation? Though a few studies take up this question directly,⁴ many others take for granted that it has a clear answer. Part of what has come to distinguish adaptation theory from what some call the “practice” of adaptation study (namely, critical works which evaluate specific cases of adaptation) are claims about how adaptation *ought* to be analyzed.⁵ Each methodology implies a model of what adaptation “is” even if the model is not articulated explicitly. The implied consensus that emerges when looking across a survey of major works in adaptation studies is that an adaptation is a unique formal arrangement, wherein a text in one medium is mutated, transformed, translated, transferred, appropriated, cannibalized, etcetera, in order to become a new text in a new medium. I use the term “formal” because adaptation is often discussed in ways that identify a structure or pattern of movement across interstices: e.g., “X

³ Established, that is, within the field of adaptation studies. Its history and the major proponents of these frameworks are addressed in more detail throughout chapter one.

⁴ For example, see Sanders (18) and Cardwell (9). Linda Hutcheon also has a chapter titled “What? (forms)” which addresses medium specificity and (her preferred approach) “modes of engagement” (22).

⁵ This echoes a claim made by Cartmell and Whelehan: “In the past decade we have truly entered the era of definitions and boundary marking, which offers us a distinctive cluster of theories of adaptation, which mark themselves as discrete from anthologies and case studies, which are identified as practice” (*Impure* 12).

character in the film came from chapter 6 of the novel,” or, “the setting of Y was updated⁶ from 19th Century England to Los Angeles in the 1990s.” The form of the adaptation *as an adaptation* implicitly depends on how it structures the content brought over from the source. To the extent that some models treat this formal status in essential terms—as somehow striking at the very “being” of the artwork, as though what an adaptation “is” can be located in its structural relationship with a precursor text—I often pair “formal/ontological” together as a hybrid phrase. Indeed, this treatment of adaptation is so pervasive that I also refer to it as the “orthodox” model. Given the dominance of this understanding of adaptation in both popular culture and academic writing (even if specific details and arrangements vary from study to study), it is easy to see why scholars have been motivated to pin down formal consistencies across the range of texts that get called adaptations, impossible though that task has been. What an adaptation “is” and what it “is not” are chief theoretical concerns when the phenomena being observed are defined in ontological terms, as a specific kind of cultural or aesthetic object. Any theory that would account for the mechanisms that control how this object comes to exist would, of course, prove extremely useful.

The problem is that very different kinds of texts get discussed in terms of adaptation by different audiences, critics, and academics, such that no overarching theory of what makes an adaptation *an* adaptation holds up under rigorous scrutiny. Restricted to the “conversion” of novels into films, it is easier to make claims about the formal nature of adaptation; however, since Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* in 2006, most adaptation scholars would agree that the novel/film paradigm inadequately represents the nature and scope of adaptation as a media phenomenon.⁷ As adaptation studies grapples with the potentially vast scope implied by Hutcheon’s theory, conceptual holdovers of the formalist novel/film model are increasingly revealing themselves as both untenable and surprisingly

⁶ “Updating” is a common trope of adaptation studies. Sanders explains, “The motive behind updating is fairly obvious: the ‘movement of proximation’ brings it closer to the audience’s frame of reference in temporal, geographic, or social terms” (21). Her use of “proximation” here comes from Genette’s taxonomy in *Palimpsests* (304).

⁷ For example, see Hutcheon (XI); Leitch, “Crossroads” (68); Frus and Williams (13); Cutchins et. al., *Redefining* (VII).

subtle. That is to say, even if the current scholarly consensus is that formalist approaches to adaptation are out-dated, it can be difficult to identify and excise all of the persistent methodological assumptions that have their basis in such approaches.

This project is therefore an attempt to expose the ends of—and, in some sense, to end—a particular conceptualization of adaptation developed almost entirely to serve the novel/film paradigm: a conceptualization that leads scholars to pursue formal answers to questions like “what gets adapted?” and “how does this adaptation follow or deviate from its source?” To be clear, this is not to say that formal answers should be excluded outright, or even that this dissertation will be devoid of formal analysis. What we need is a model of adaptation that permits careful attention to form without centralizing it, a model that does less to motivate researchers to make medium-specific comparative textual analysis the default mode of inquiry, while opening up avenues of research that have been closed off because they seemed outside the purview of adaptation studies. I propose that critical gains can be made in this regard by focusing on how a broader set of issues might be studied *as* adaptation⁸ and on how the very category of “adaptation” gets deployed by scholars, audiences, and reviewers to frame the cultural significance of a formally and materially diverse range of works.

In phrasing my position this way, I am advocating a method that defines adaptation in discursive terms. As Jan Blommaert writes,

Discourse to me comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use.... What is traditionally understood by language is but one manifestation of [discourse]; all kinds of semiotic ‘flagging’ performed by means of objects, attributes, or activities can and should also be included for they usually constitute the ‘action’ part of language-in-action. (3)

⁸ This phrasing borrows Richard Schechner’s distinction between narrow- and broad-spectrum approaches to performance: “Something ‘is’ performance when historical and social context, convention, usage, and tradition say it is... What the ‘as’ says is that the object of study will be regarded ‘from the perspective of,’ ‘in terms of,’ ‘interrogated by’ a particular discipline of study” (38-42).

My project depends on examining how and why certain works get “flagged” as adaptation. Doing so allows me to take formal attributes seriously, while also investigating the various noetic and affective⁹ activities that can lead both producers and audiences of adaptations to engage with specific texts in those terms. Instead of organizing the field according to a corpus of works that ostensibly *are* adaptations, I suggest organizing it according to the processes and effects of the language-in-action that makes adaptations intelligible as such. By centralizing the study of what adaptation as a cultural discourse *does*, critics may treat the very category of “adaptation” as a complex imbrication of aesthetics, industry practices, ideology, and the reception practices of interpretive communities.¹⁰

To be completely clear, I am not advocating the rejection of an adaptation studies corpus, or (worse) the denial of its existence. One reason that I think formally-oriented analyses should continue to have a place in the field of adaptation studies is that certain texts *are indeed* consistently received as adaptations. Far from attempting to pretend that this is not the case, I am interested in challenging assumptions regarding *why* these works are received as adaptations. I suggest that the reason we identify certain texts as adaptations while excluding others from the category has as much to do with particular formal, technical, and aesthetic arrangements as it does with the systems, institutions, and environments that condition how texts are produced, circulated, and received. Moreover, I contend that we have more to gain by examining what is adaptive about these texts with respect to their environments than we do by merely presuming that the defining instance of adaptation occurs as one text is transformed in order to suit the particularities of a different medium.

⁹ In this instance I mean “affective” in the more general sense that includes both the social character of emotional response and the more specific theoretical perspective that stresses affect’s pre-cognitive and autonomic character. For more on this theoretical perspective, both Anna Gibbs and Ruth Leys offer clear engagements with the development of affect theory by highlighting a schism between the Sylvan Tompkins/Eve Sedgwick/Adam Frank line of influence and the Spinoza/Deleuze/Massumi line of influence; both Gibbs and Leys, however, also find productive ways to bridge this apparent divide.

¹⁰ In “Interpreting the Variorum” Stanley Fish writes, “Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions” (483). As will become clear, the investigation of processes by which texts get constituted *as* adaptations is at the heart of this project.

To phrase my position a little differently, scholarship benefits by asking, “What else is adaptive about a particular adaptation?” and, “Even if this work is not *an* adaptation, narrowly defined, what opens up by thinking about it through the lens of adaptation?” My objection is not to the existence of discourses that, in flagging a body of texts as a canon of adaptations, reifies a formal model of what adaptation “is”—I am quite content, and fairly sure, that people will go on calling certain works adaptations regardless of what I write here. My objection is to methods of adaptation research that take these discourses at face value, and in turn take a formal/ontological definition of adaptation for granted.

One reason for my objection is that when adaptation is defined in the restrictive sense as a particular form of intertextuality or intermediality,¹¹ the sorts of texts that fit under the rubric of adaptation studies narrows considerably, and limit-cases pose a considerable threat to the stability of the field. For example, I would receive very little pushback were I to claim that the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz*, starring Judy Garland, is an adaptation of L. Frank Baum’s novel of the same title. Indeed, that the two texts share a title does much work towards reifying the film’s status as *an* adaptation. Claiming that Gregory Maguire’s novel *Wicked* is an adaptation—of either of the above—might inspire a few challenges, however, if only because it is not strictly clear at a formal level whether *Wicked* adapts the film or Baum’s novel, both, or even potentially the relationship between the film and novel. Hours could be spent scrutinizing the characterization, plot details, narrative structure, and so on, in an effort to itemize which elements come from where, how they have transformed or been made to fit different media, what is lost or gained, etcetera. And the matter becomes even more complicated when we consider that *Wicked* is also the title of a Broadway musical, based on Maguire’s novel, and so *to some extent* also based on the Garland film and the Baum book. The question of “to *what* extent?” remains tempting to consider, but at the prospect of such work I am compelled to ask a different question: “to what end?” What does scholarship

¹¹ See Lars Elleström’s elegantly sparse definition: “The phenomenon whereby the properties of all media partly intersect and the study of this same phenomenon are called intermediality” (4). See also Jürgen Müller, who highlights that intermediality extends intertextuality to consider “interactions and interferences between different audiovisual and not only literary media. By doing this, it refocused on questions of materiality and the making of meaning, on traces of intermedial processes and social functions” (244, emphasis original).

gain by examining whether or not *Wicked* “is” an adaptation? On the one hand, I mean this as a genuine meta-critical question: there are reasons that scholars have gravitated towards the formal/ontological classification of adaptations, and understanding those reasons will help the field to develop in productive ways. On the other hand, I also intend to suggest that there are fruitful questions to explore which do not require adaptation to be a formally or ontologically stable category. What did the artists and producers involved in staging the musical hope to gain by guiding audiences to relate the Broadway show to the precursor works just listed? What effects and affects does the framing of *Wicked* as an adaptation have on its audiences? By shifting the emphasis from what kind of adaptation *Wicked* “is” to what happens when the discourse of adaptation is deployed with regard to *Wicked*, we can better explore what is adaptive about the novel, the musical, its predecessors, and its potential successors in their respective environments of production, circulation, and reception.

If we think about these Oz texts in terms of such environments, we can set aside the presumption that the medium *is* the environment to which a text adapts. All too often models of adaptation implicitly posit that a novel mutates to fit the particularities of film, a framework that treats the medium of film as the “environment” most relevant to analysis. In such models, there is a clear teleology; survival gets defined according to how well the text succeeds in its new medium, and success is often assessed in terms of transfer, replication, and/or equivalence. The origin and end-point of adaptive development in this model are as clear and contained as “source” and “target” text, original and derivative, or primary and secondary. The hierarchy implied by these terms impedes critical analysis, as Linda Hutcheon argues (*A Theory* xv), and the last decade of theory has seen an explosion of effort to distance adaptation studies from axiomatically valuing one medium over another.¹² That this effort has lasted a decade, however, speaks to the veracity of my argument that even the most progressive theories of adaptation still occasionally reinforce the assumptions of the very models they seek to overturn. Accordingly, the goal in “ending” adaptation is to promote

¹² In addition to Hutcheon, the project to de-hierarchize adaptation studies has been significantly advanced by Robert Stam, Sarah Cardwell, Kamilla Elliott, Thomas Leitch, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, and Christine Geraghty.

lucidity about what theorists nevertheless hold on to when they purport to reject flawed methods of adaptation study.

Comparative Media and Materiality

As the opening of this introduction hinted, my project is motivated by the increasing ubiquity of digital technology, and the cultures that surround its proliferation. Part of the reason that I see a need to “end” adaptation stems from struggles I have had applying the perspectives of orthodox adaptation studies to texts that circulate simultaneously in digital and analog versions. If the defining instance of adaptation occurs in the interstices between media, how do we *do* adaptation studies when the boundary-lines between media are not always especially clear? An anecdote will help to explain what I mean. Much of the research performed throughout this dissertation made use of a single device, my laptop: I read books, articles, and comics, watched movies, television series, and recordings of live theatre, played games, and wrote—all on one device. To say that all of the texts I studied on this laptop were “converted” to the same medium seems naïve. To say that their convergence onto one device is irrelevant to their mediation and to their significance as adaptations similarly seems to miss something important. Traditional models of adaptation, as developed in the novel/film paradigm, do not give scholars a particularly robust toolset for engaging with the messiness of this intermedial predicament. Linear source/target transfer models of adaptation—ones that emphasize the movement of content across an interstice between media—seem intuitive in a paradigm where the focus of research is the line from print novel to celluloid film. And formal comparative analysis dominates in such a research paradigm because, in pursuing links between analog systems, analogy is the most effective way to bridge the material differences between media. Digital technology, however, fosters the development of new systems for content creation, circulation, and reception, wherein the material differences between written words and cinematic content cannot simply be chalked up to their physical means of display. The best approach moving forward is not to suggest some sort of all-digital approach to adaptation, or to pretend that “digital” and “material” are

mutually exclusive,¹³ but to recognize and attempt to understand digital materiality as being in a dynamic relationship to analog media.

Towards this understanding, I draw inspiration from the work of N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman, whose critical banner of Comparative Media Studies (CMS) emphasizes methods that can “contextualize complexities in ways that do not take for granted the assumptions and presuppositions of any one media form (or media culture)” (*Comparative Textual Media* ix). It should be said, CMS has been developing as an undercurrent in Hayles’ research for many years, and so emerged through rigorous engagement with debates in the digital humanities which extend far beyond my focus on adaptation studies.¹⁴ Even though adaptation is to some extent necessarily about the comparison of media, it is not necessarily an easy fit with CMS. As my analysis in chapter one will show, there are quite a few ways to study adaptation while very much taking the assumptions and presuppositions of one media form for granted. However, far from wanting to make the debates that inform CMS central to my dissertation—which would require a much lengthier situation of Hayles’ ideas in regards to those of Alan Liu, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, Mark B. N. Hansen, and others—I bring up Hayles and CMS now in order to introduce a concept that I see as crucial to a model of adaptation that resists medium-specific presuppositions, and which will be developed gradually throughout this project: the materiality of an adaptation stems from how it is attended to. This conception of materiality is important because it allows me to simultaneously consider physical aspects of specific adaptations and the social processes that act on material substrates to help produce and sustain the very category of adaptation. I include my project under the umbrella of CMS because my approach to the materiality of adaptation takes the differences between media seriously while also allowing me to explore how such differences are partially constituted by

¹³ For more on the materiality of the digital, see Matthew G. Kirschenbaum’s *Mechanisms: New Media and Forensic Textuality*.

¹⁴ Chapter two of Hayles’ *How We Think*, “The Digital Humanities: Engaging the Issues,” offers a detailed overview of certain debates that inform her development of CMS. For an overview of the recent and rapid expansion of the digital humanities, defined inclusively to account for its sometimes excluded overlap with new media studies, see Alan Liu’s “The State of the Digital Humanities: A Report and a Critique.”

particular ways of interpreting texts, which are themselves conditioned by industry practices, social histories, and ideological investments.

The starting point for the understanding of materiality I develop throughout this dissertation is Hayles' effort, in *How We Think*, to distinguish three ways of reading text: close reading, hyper reading, and machine reading. Machine reading is, perhaps, the most "digital born" interpretive strategy, relying as it does on analysis through computer algorithms (11). The other two strategies are more centred on the interpretive practices of human subjects, and are more immediately relevant to the present project—although I believe the groundwork I lay in this dissertation brings the field of adaptation studies closer to one day making productive use of machine reading. Close reading, Hayles suggests, can be associated with deep attention and traditional work in the humanities that requires focus on a single cultural object for extended periods of time. Bolstering the quality of this work in the print tradition are the resources of textual and bibliographic studies, which showcase the significance of materiality in the interpretation of print. Hayles goes so far as to suggest that Comparative Media Studies itself grows out of research niches that explore materiality in "manuscript and print cultures, oral versus literate cultures, papyri versus vellum, immobile type versus moveable type, letterpress versus offset printing, etc." (7). Hyper reading, on the other hand, does not require the deep attention of close reading. Instead, it is "a strategic response to an information-intensive environment, aiming to conserve attention by quickly identifying relevant information, so that only relatively few portions of a given text are actually read" (12). Although the skimming, scanning, and linking strategies that distinguish hyper reading seem less concerned with the material bases of media than does the deep focus of close reading, the selectiveness of hyper reading nevertheless shapes the material constitution of the objects that are read. As Hayles writes,

On the level of conscious thought, attention comes into play as a focusing action that codetermines what we call materiality. That is, attention selects from the vast (essentially infinite) repertoire of physical attributes some characteristics for notice, and they in turn constitute an object's materiality. Materiality, like the object itself, is not a pre-given entity but rather a dynamic process that changes as the focus of attention shifts. (*How We Think* 14)

In other words, attention is a factor that codetermines the materiality of a cultural object regardless of the reading strategy employed; since, however, there is a qualitative difference between the attention given during close and hyper reading, these respective strategies implicitly lead to the production of distinct materialities. The key idea is that the materiality of the object in question is not pre-given, but produced through the noetic flagging of physical attributes. How that object is attended to changes how that object is flagged in material terms.

My aim in raising this particular understanding of materiality is neither to imply it is the only way to define the term nor to suggest that Hayles provides the most tenable response to a set of problems that are frequently debated in the digital humanities. Rather, given my avowed focus on adaptation studies as a discipline, Hayles' concise treatment of the topic in the quotations above offers a way to introduce the perhaps counter-intuitive idea that adaptations are constituted as material objects through the situated deployment of adaptation discourse—i.e., through the ways that they are flagged and interpreted. To be sure, Hayles' theories are not the only ones that inform me as I adopt this understanding of materiality for the purposes of this dissertation, and I will draw those perspectives into focus as they become pertinent in the chapters that follow. For now I will merely mention that, from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's writing on practices of evaluation, through Johanna Drucker's concept of "performative materiality," and into the theories of liveness, ephemerality, aura and the archive that I draw from performance studies, my research has consistently brought me back to an understanding of materiality as something that is constituted through the various interactions of interpreting subjects with material substrates.

The reason that the critical voices just alluded to have stood out for me as especially appropriate for adaptation studies ties to what I see as a linchpin theory of adaptation: "oscillation." Linda Hutcheon argues that an adaptation only functions *as an adaptation* for audiences familiar with the adapted text (referred to by Hutcheon as "knowing audiences") because only then can the original work "oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing" (*A Theory of Adaptation* 120-121). Memory is a key part of the equation; however, audiences also need to pay attention to patterns of similarity and difference in

order to perform the work of identifying a text with a precursor or of actively rejecting that identification. This is to say that form matters but is less important to the constitution of an adaptation *as such* than an interpretive community actively putting adaptation to work as language-in-action. For example, it is quite possible to be familiar with *Hamlet* and nevertheless read *The Lion King* (1994) as a standalone narrative; yet, if one pays attention to certain narrative similarities—a corrupt uncle kills the king and marries the queen, while a young prince struggles in coming to terms with his place in the kingdom before exacting revenge, all the while heeding advice from buffoonish friends and the ghostly apparition of his father (and so on)—it is equally possible to read the Disney cartoon as an adaptation. Then again, if the audience is familiar with Osamu Tezuka’s *Kimba The White Lion* (1950),¹⁵ and attends to both the narrative and graphical similarities between these texts, it is also possible to read the intertextual relationship as cross-cultural adaptation, appropriation, or even plagiarism. This is to say that the constitution of an adaptation *as an adaptation* is not necessarily uniform or static for a given work, but stems from the way that its audiences attend to its material features, its form, its medium, and its contexts of production, dissemination, and reception.

Accordingly, a robust model of adaptation needs to engage with various ways that attention can be influenced within media environments. For example, as I pointed out with respect to the *Wizard of Oz*, a shared title performs the work of directing attention towards adaptive resemblance. Paratextual statements in the vein of “based on a story by...” operate similarly, encouraging knowing audiences to perform the work of intertextual identification. Attention can be directed from any number of sources, all in ways that help construct the materiality of an adaptation: marketing and publicity, DVD commentary tracks, book clubs, critical writing, interface design, etc. The factors that shape how attention is directed and that help to frame the reception of adaptations *as such* are all part of the environment that conditions media relationality. Such factors both affect and are affected by the formal

¹⁵ *Cracked.com* frames similarities between *The Lion King* and *Kimba The White Lion* using the morally loaded term, “rip-off,” and their article usefully juxtaposes images from each text to demonstrate the visual resonance: http://www.cracked.com/article_17299_6-famous-characters-you-didnt-know-were-shameless-rip-offs.html

structure of a given adaptation, as well as by the material involved in its industrial production, and by the specific media used.

Recognizing the effects of attention on the constitution of adaptations helps to put the orthodox model of adaptation into context. In an essay that proves a telling precursor to her work in both *Electronic Literature* and *How We Think*, Hayles writes,

Literary theory and criticism are shot through with assumptions specific to print, although they have not been recognized as such. Only now, as the vibrant new medium of electronic textuality is asserting its presence, are these assumptions coming into view. One of the urgent theoretical tasks of the new millennium is to develop vocabularies and concepts appropriate to coded media that recognize their specificity, the distinctive ways in which layers of code correlated through correspondence rules differ from the flat durable marks of print.
("Transformation of Narrative" 21)

Since adaptation studies grew out of literature departments, and found itself caught amidst the disciplinary rivalries of English and Film Studies, it is safe to say that the field is shot through with assumptions specific to those research areas.¹⁶ Another way to frame these assumptions, however, is in terms of attention. To date, the field of adaptation studies has defined its object according to the reading strategies of deep attention, in part because of its institutional history. As the digital humanities becomes increasingly important to contemporary scholarship there is a corresponding need to model adaptation in ways that put pressure on these assumptions and that take stock of what can be gained through strategies like hyper reading and machine reading. Not only do we need to continue developing "vocabularies and concepts appropriate to coded media," we also need to learn from those vocabularies and concepts as they have already been developed in order to reevaluate the disciplinary apparatuses that preceded them. Accordingly, the claims I make about digital technology and culture throughout this dissertation are crafted so as to challenge and provoke thought regarding the methodological assumptions of adaptation studies. Hayles' work, and other scholarship put forward beneath the banner of CMS,

¹⁶ See Ray (44-45).

engages with a larger context of research within the digital humanities, but beginning the present project with a nod towards that larger context is an early step in making adaptation studies relevant to ongoing discussions about digital culture.

This is not to say that the cases and examples I refer to in the subsequent chapters will all necessarily involve a digital component, though many do. Rather, the methodological slant of this project means that my chapters are organized more around theoretical perspectives and conceptual problems than around specific case studies. Given this, I spend as much time analyzing the rhetoric employed in works of adaptation theory as I do analyzing particular works that “are” adaptations. Where I do perform textual analysis, I have selected “tutor texts”—as distinct from chapter-length case studies¹⁷—primarily for the way they help me to illustrate issues pertaining to the theoretical problems at hand. For this reason, the specific cases that I look at in some depth have been selected because they share a self-reflexive interest in processes of adaptation, intertextuality, and media relationality; they are what Eckart Voigts-Virchow terms “metadaptations,” offering unique perspectives on the issues I grapple with, albeit articulated through the strategies of narrative fiction rather than through more traditional modes of scholarly critique and inquiry. Other minor examples appearing in the pages that follow serve as explanatory touchstones in support of lower-level concepts or claims, or they provide focus to discussions regarding systems of production, distribution and reception, and vary with respect to how much emphasis they receive.

A Performative Model of Adaptation

At the outset of this introduction, I asked, “how can something survive if it has come to an end?” It should be apparent by now that this same question bears a meta-critical edge: how can adaptation studies survive if its methodological assumptions are ill-suited to

¹⁷ Cf. Cartmell and Whelehan: “The textual examples we dwell on are not there as ‘case studies’ if by that the reader takes something pejorative (following on from Robert B. Ray’s provocatively argued essay), but offer moments when adaptive exchange tells us something interesting about any of the issues set out above” (*Impure* 22).

the contemporary critical environment? Recognizing that adaptation discourse is influential, regardless of the problems it poses for theoretical inquiry, my solution is to move from a *formal* definition of adaptation to a *performative* one. I have already tipped my hand in this regard by citing Richard Schechner's approach to the "is" and "as" of performance. But my approach also pivots on reevaluating issues related to adaptation in terms of the cultural work performed. Hutcheon notes that the term "adaptation" refers to one product as well as two processes: production and reception (XIV); what I aim to demonstrate in this dissertation is that adaptation, processes and product alike, depend crucially on performance. In other words, the identification of texts across a gap of intermedial difference can be productively reframed in line with Elin Diamond's suggestion that "performance is always a doing and a thing done" (1). Adaptation requires the "doing" of a certain attentiveness to intertextual similarity, and it results in the "thing done" of adaptive materiality. In line with this perspective, when prompted with the ontologically-oriented question, "what is an adaptation?" my answer is to redirect inquiry towards a set of performance-oriented questions: what does adaptation do? What does the metaphor of adaptation offer for critical engagement with media environments? In what ways are people literally adapting within digital media ecologies? How do institutional and industrial structures impact the conditions of media entanglement? What are the effects of material culture on the interpretation of adaptations as such? How do the social meanings and histories of specific media shape their use and, subsequently, influence medium-specific understandings of adaptation as a classificatory mechanism?

These sorts of questions cannot be answered comprehensively in a single study, and I only ask them here to highlight some of the ways that a performative model of adaptation can invite and provide some coherence to diverse avenues of inquiry. My goal with the subsequent chapters is to continue developing this model by putting pressure on it from different textual, conceptual, and methodological vantage points. With the opening line of *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon stresses, "If you think adaptation can be understood using novels and films alone, you're wrong" (xiii). As critical inquiry moves beyond the novel/film paradigm, however, the media ecosystem under scrutiny becomes increasingly complex, and theoretical frameworks need to be highly flexible to be effective. The strengths

of a performative model attendant to the digital shift are that it is necessarily a methodological hybrid and that it remains open to further hybridization. Each of my chapters explores different approaches to the ongoing hybridization of research methods in adaptation studies. My aim is not to perfect a given framework—as far as that is ever possible—but to show how much can be gained by reorienting adaptation studies away from formal models and towards performative ones. When, for example, I draw on book history methods in chapter two, my goal is neither to critique the ideas of specific book historians nor to develop a fully fleshed out book history method centered around adaptations; rather, my focus is on bringing a set of conceptual problems into clearer view in order to challenge the methodological presumptions of earlier adaptation studies models, all with the hope that future studies of adaptation will further advance the provocations I offer. In other words, I am exploring the end of adaptation as a way to invite the development of diverse approaches to a vexing phenomenon. As I have argued here, and as I will continue to argue throughout the rest of this dissertation, adaptation itself must end to make way for new ends in adaptation studies.

Accordingly, the subsequent chapters attempt to unfold and support the claims made in snapshot form throughout this introduction. Each of the three chapters is loosely built around what I call a negative principle of adaptation: the principle of (non)identity, the principle of (non)literal materiality, and the principle of (non)simultaneity, respectively. More than negation, however, these principals seek to highlight tension, as the following descriptions will explain.

Chapter one, “Same Difference,” looks at the way adaptation has been modeled in formal and ontological terms throughout the disciplinary history of adaptation studies. While this analytical focus could all too easily spin into an expansive rehearsal of the field as a whole, I have narrowed my scope by honing in on a series of connected responses to a single conceptual quagmire at the base of adaptive phenomena: an adaptation repeats but never

replicates its source¹⁸—the texts can be seen to share an identity, and yet remain non-identical. So how do we determine *what* remains the same across texts and media when it is so much simpler to account for difference? Each of the major methodological turning points in the field grapple with this problem in their own way. But in doing so all of these approaches manage to reify the core assumption that adaptation is a formal property locatable within certain kinds of cultural objects, which leads to the tacit treatment of similarity/difference tension as a matter of ontological continuity. Although my progression through adaptation studies as a history of ideas follows a roughly chronological trajectory, my argument is chiefly organized around a few important conceptual frameworks that, as they took root in the field, substantially reoriented the academic conversation: medium specificity, narratology, and intertextuality. As I proceed from this analysis towards articulating my own approach to addressing similarity/difference tensions, fidelity comes into focus as a pivotal issue. While the dominant frameworks of adaptation studies have turned over a few times in its relatively brief institutional history, fidelity has remained a consistent point of contention for critics. Accordingly, my articulation of the gains offered through a performative model of adaptation begins with accounting for the enduring appeal of this much maligned concept, which becomes increasingly fruitful if considered as a political rather than strictly aesthetic issue.

Chapter two, “Mapping Clouds,” addresses the potential objection that the move away from a formal/ontological model might unfairly downplay the material bases of adaptations. My sense that this critique could be levelled at the perspective I offer in chapter one stems from recognizing that among the most important developments in recent adaptation theory is an attempt to “map” industrial processes of adaptation production in order to demonstrate, in material terms, how adaptations come to be. This work is carried out most comprehensively in Simone Murray’s *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*.¹⁹ While maintaining the position that the physical objects

¹⁸ This phrasing comes from Linda Hutcheon’s definition of adaptation as “a form of repetition without replication” (XVIII).

¹⁹ See also Murray’s essays, “Materializing Adaptation Theory” and “Phantom Adaptations,” and Alexis Weedon’s “The Numbers Game: Quantifying the Audience.”

which “come to be” adaptations are nevertheless not adaptations *in themselves*, I focus on the industrial and social processes through which adaptation gets constituted *as such* at the intersections of production and reception. Much as chapter one challenges the notion that adaptation can be understood as at base a form, chapter two posits that a work’s status as an adaptation cannot be located at the level of physical material; at the same time, however, adaptations do require a material substrate, and the very category of adaptation depends crucially on the material conditions of media production. These are the tensions that underscore the principle of (non)literal materiality. Using the concept of authorship as a springboard, I draw from book history methods and theories of new media to explore the complex interactions between producers and audiences involved in the material production of adaptations. David Mitchell’s novel *Cloud Atlas* and its 2012 film adaptation of the same title are the central tutor texts that I draw on in the first half of chapter two; however, where chapter one draws heavily on novel and film examples in order to address the novel/film paradigm out of which the bulk of adaptation theory was developed, the latter half of chapter two skews more towards digital media examples in order to highlight the complications they present. I end with a detailed analysis of Kickstarter—a digital platform for crowdfunding that has involved a relatively high number of adaptation-related projects. These projects help to demonstrate various ways that reception practices, including the interpretation of works *as* adaptations, are intimately bound up with processes of material production and distribution.

Central though performance theory is to my model of adaptation, it is only in the third chapter, “Time and Again,” that my focus turns explicitly towards theatrical works. Paying close attention to issues raised by three performances in particular—She She Pop’s *Testament*, Hawksley Workman’s *The God That Comes*, and Crystal Pite’s *The Tempest Replica*—I delve into unpacking the complex temporalities involved in the material constitution of adaptation as such. The central idea I articulate draws on the principles of (non)identity and (non)literal materiality to suggest that adaptations depend crucially on a kind of time-slip, on never being simultaneous with themselves. Building off of my focus on the overlap between production and reception in chapter two, chapter three approaches adaptation as the embodied co-creation of performers and audiences in spaces of shared theatrical

exploration. This chapter also continues my assessment of the influences of new media, as each of the cases I analyze incorporate digital technology in significant ways. The fallibility of memory as a mediation of the past comes to the fore in my analysis of *Testament*, an adaptation of *King Lear* built around the exploration of family history by four actors who bring their own fathers on stage. The live projection of digital video showcases the ephemerality of supposedly stable forms of archival documentation, as the fleeting qualities of memory get juxtaposed with both amendments to Shakespeare's text and conflicting recollections of intergenerational drama. In *The God That Comes*, the looping and digital delay systems used by Hawksley Workman complicate the liveness of his musical performance. The literal echoes of guitar chords and drum beats—which technologically voice the very recent past in the not-so-immediate present of musical instrumentation—parallel the textual echoes whereby Workman's singing gives voice to Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Kinaesthetic empathy and the embodiment of text through dance emerge as utopian problems in *The Tempest Replica*—or, more precisely, as ways of problematizing naïve utopianism. Drawing from Pite's work, adaptation becomes a question of the future, of its role in affecting what happens when audiences leave the heterotopian space of the theatre. The notions of survival and ends that mark the beginning of this dissertation thereby transform, as this project draws to a close, into the performances of remaking and remaining. Both the doings and the things done in the name of adaptation carry forward, and enact the cultural work *of* carrying forward media texts into their (potentially) many afterlives.

Chapter 1. Same Difference

An adaptation can never be literally identical to the text it adapts. This statement is so uncontroversial that it might fairly be called a truism. The simplest argument in its favour is that adaptation becomes useless as a critical term if it cannot be distinguished from any other sort of non-adaptive text. The corollary to the non-identity of adaptations and their sources, then, is that an adaptation cannot be so radically different from the text that it adapts as to bear no discernable resemblance. To be sure, if no audience can tell that a text is an adaptation, then at the very least it ceases to function as an adaptation throughout the process of reception. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders identifies similarity and difference as a central tension undergirding the process of adaptation: “It is this inherent sense of similarity and difference between the texts being invoked, and the connected interplay of expectation and surprise, that for me lies at the heart of the experience of adaptation and appropriation” (25). Although these basic conceptual boundaries regarding what makes an adaptation *an adaptation* can be framed in the positive, as Linda Hutcheon does via her phrase, “Repetition with variation” (*A Theory* 8), their function is more properly understood in negative terms: adaptations are neither wholly separate from nor wholly coextensive with their sources. Between the two poles of radical difference and utter replication, however, lies a conceptual quagmire that adaptation theory has struggled for over fifty years to sort out. Is there a stable principle of inclusion/exclusion that might provide theoretical coherence to the field? What kinds of repetition does the category of adaptation permit, and how much difference is permissible before a work ceases to count as an adaptation? For that matter, how would one tell when a work is so similar to its source that it tips over into being a copy, a replica, a remake, a version, etcetera? All of this is to highlight that even if *de jure* theories of adaptation occasionally seem to include all works that involve a balance of similarity and difference, *de facto* practices of adaptation scholarship are invested in negating certain intertextual relationships as too similar or too different to

“count,” but struggle to explain the basis for that “too”. For ease of reference throughout this dissertation, I refer to the dynamic just described as the principle of (non)identity—the parentheses here being used to highlight the tension between repetition and difference upon which adaptation depends.

From the earliest academic works dedicated to the study of adaptation to many of the central texts that comprise the relatively recent “intertextual turn” in the field, the principle of (non)identity has consistently prompted critics to invent methods of study that justify focus on adaptation as a discrete and meaningful category. Such classifications of adaptation, however, foster interpretive practices that too easily slide from engaging with adaptation discourse to exploring adaptation as a property of specific objects. In *Contingencies of Value*, Barbara Herrnstein Smith articulates a perspective that helps to explain why a sense of adaptation as a “property” inherent in certain products has endured for so long:

... what may be spoken of as the ‘properties’ of a work—its ‘structure,’ ‘features,’ ‘qualities,’ and of course its ‘meanings’—are not fixed, given, or inherent in the work ‘itself’ but are at every point the variable products of particular *subjects’* interactions with it. Thus it is never ‘the *same* Homer.’ This is not to deny that some aspect, or perhaps many aspects, of a work may be constituted in similar ways by numerous different subjects, *among whom we may include the author*: to the extent that this duplication occurs, however, it will be because the subjects who do the constituting are themselves similar, not only or simply in being human creatures... but in occupying a particular universe that may be, for them, in many respects recurrent or relatively continuous and stable, and/or in inheriting from one another, through mechanisms of cultural transmission, certain ways of interacting with texts and ‘works of literature’ (48, emphasis original)

In light of Smith’s argument, it is possible to understand adaptation as a “certain way of interacting with texts,” or a certain mode of language-in-action that shapes how subjects perceive and constitute objects of interpretation *as* adaptation. To say that “it is never the *same* Homer” acknowledges that the specific features, properties, structures and so on that get attended to with respect to Homer at a given historical moment among a given interpretive community are “variables of literary value” (Smith 15). This helps to put the classification of adaptations as such into context as an evaluative process, and a deeply

contingent one at that. Smith offers further insight on the link between evaluation and classification:

Of particular significance for the value of ‘works of art’ and ‘literature’ is the interactive relation between the *classification* of an entity and the functions it is expected or desired to perform. In perceiving an object or artifact in terms of some category—*as*, for example, ‘a clock, ‘a dictionary,’ ‘a doorstep,’ ‘a curio’—we implicitly isolate and foreground certain of its possible functions and typically refer its value to the extent to which it performs those functions more or less effectively” (32, emphasis original)

As will become clear in my discussion throughout this chapter, the evaluation of adaptations according to their supposed function *as adaptations* is contentious territory that strikes at a split between “common sense” approaches (e.g. a novel is transformed into a film) and an academic tradition that strives to correct a history of unduly favouring the literary over the cinematic. Ultimately, I want to suggest that the question for adaptation studies going forward should not be “how do we define the boundaries of repetition and difference so as to conceptualize adaptation more effectively?” but “how does the classification of a work *as* an adaptation expose the desire for it to fulfill a particular function?” From that basis, I argue, the field can develop a more robust toolset for addressing the myriad ideological, institutional, economic, legal, cultural, material, psychological, and affective factors that impact how adaptations accrue meaning and gain social significance over time.

As an entry point for developing this toolset, my focus in this chapter largely centers on a series of key works in adaptation theory. If I have anything like “case studies,” they are monographs by major adaptation studies scholars: George Bluestone, Brian McFarlane, Robert Stam, Linda Hutcheon, and Julie Sanders. The novels, films, plays, comics, and other works that I mention act primarily in the manner I described at the end of my “Introduction”: as explanatory touchstones, helping me to illustrate concepts and theoretical problems as clearly as possible. The one exception is a longer treatment of Tony Scott’s 1998 film, *Enemy of the State*, which acts as a pivot from my analysis of adaptation studies as a history of ideas to the articulation of my central claim in this chapter: the “sameness” that connects an adaptation to its source is not discovered in the cultural objects that we call adaptations; it is performed in the process of interpreting adaptations *as such*. For the first

part of the chapter, as I focus on the development of adaptation theory in the novel/film paradigm, I restrict my examples to film adaptation. As I move into the latter half of the chapter, wherein my focus turns to the expansion of the field through the intertextual turn, I attempt to diversify my examples by including remakes, sequels, comics, and video games, in addition to novel/film pairings, which remain important to the scholarly community's interest in issues of adaptation.

My goal in foregrounding what might be called the adaptation studies “canon” or “archive”²⁰ is not simply to rehearse a disciplinary history of the theoretical models used to justify adaptation research,²¹ nor is it to arrogantly attempt a new system of categorization that “gets right” what so many other critics have misapprehended. In fact, as I will discuss below, both of these impulses rightly come under fire by contemporary adaptation theorists who have grown tired of specious attempts at methodological reinvigoration. What interests me about the history of ideas that shape this field is the extent to which its theoretical innovations are tied together by anxiety over the slippery line between repetition and difference. Reading over a significant few of these models in terms of how they navigate the conundrums of similarity/difference tension helps to show, among other things, the ends to which its proponents have historically directed adaptation theory. Examining these ends offers a way to demonstrate how many of the basic assumptions that drive adaptation scholarship are rooted in unstated evaluative rubrics that have the effect of naturalizing a formal model of what adaptation “is.”

So as to keep my analysis productively limited in scope, this chapter is organized around a set of core conceptual ideas in adaptation studies—*viz.* medium specificity, narratology, taxonomy, and intertextuality—and how they each grapple with the principle of (non)identity. Although fidelity also features as one of these core concepts, it stands apart from the others because it has largely been figured as a bugbear throughout the field's

²⁰ I explore and complicate the “archive” of adaptation studies in the section of chapter two titled, “The Performance of Access.”

²¹ Many such histories of the discipline already exist: cf. Cardwell *Revisited* 43-75; Murray *Industry* 1-12; Leitch “Where Are We Going, Where Have we Been?” 327-334; Ray 38-53; and Naremore 1-18.

history. Its status as critical dead-end, however, is not something that I treat as a foregone conclusion but rather as a prompt to investigate the *desires* that maintain fidelity as an ongoing fixture of key debates in the field. Indeed, because fidelity has *so* endured as a straw-man, its very persistence is important evidence, suggesting that previous attempts at methodological reinvention have overlooked an important set of basic assumptions about the processes and products of adaptation. My response is to take seriously the ways that enjoyment informs the evaluation of an adaptation *vis-à-vis* its presumed functions *as* adaptation. Although my approach is not strictly or exclusively psychoanalytic, this chapter draws on several Lacanian concepts, as elaborated by Slavoj Žižek, to demonstrate a heretofore unexplored facet of adaptation that throws formal/ontological models into relief: we can enjoy both the successes and the failures of adaptations even when we *misrecognize* them at the level of form.

Foundations built on Bluestone

At the outset of his study *Novels into Film*, the first major work in the novel-to-film paradigm of adaptation studies,²² George Bluestone lays the groundwork for his medium-specificity²³ argument by rehearsing a specific line of adaptation discourse which he finds problematic:

Such statements as: ‘The film is true to the spirit of the book’; ‘It’s incredible how they butchered the novel’; ‘It cuts out key passages, but it’s still a good film’; ‘Thank God they changed the ending’—these and similar statements are predicated on certain assumptions which blur the mutational process.... What is common to all these assumptions is the lack of awareness that mutations are probable the moment one goes from a given set of fluid, but

²² There is a significant amount of work on issues of adaptation that precedes Bluestone’s monograph: Virginia Woolf’s “The Movies and Reality” (1926), Allardyce Nicoll’s *Film and Theatre* (1936), and Andre Bazin’s “Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest” (1948) to name a few important texts. I begin with Bluestone because of how influential his monograph has been for the formation of adaptation studies as an academic field.

²³ In “About Time: Theorizing Adaptation, Temporality, and Tense,” Sarah Cardwell explores the way medium-specific theory has endured in adaptation studies despite being largely discredited in film theory.

relatively homogenous, conventions to another; that changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium.

(5, emphasis original)

The popular discourse that surrounds adaptations evidently has not changed altogether much since Bluestone published this work in 1957. Audiences, bloggers, newspaper critics and the like still rehash the phrases Bluestone trots out as exemplary of misunderstanding “the mutational process,” even if most adaptation scholars would scoff at phrases in the vein of “true to the spirit.”²⁴ It should be noted that these phrases give voice to an evaluative impulse, a desire to separate out “a good film” from a bad one in terms of an implicit understanding of the function adaptation promises to fulfill: to convert the novel into a film. That is, a film can only fail as an artwork by “butchering” a novel *if* the presumed purpose of that film was to preserve its apparent source. That mutation stands out as Bluestone’s preferred metaphor for novels becoming films indicates that his own implicit model of adaptation is not altogether as different from the discourse he rejects as he might like. The double-bind of Bluestone’s model is only reinforced by the title, *Novels into Film*. Even if his explicit point is to stress medium-specific difference, the language of mutation, of one medium turning *into* another, suggests that the similarities evident in the film adaptation are the vestiges of a process wherein one product undergoes alterations to become a changed version of itself.²⁵ There is a core, or at least pieces of an original, which undergoes a nearly alchemical transformation to fit a visual medium.²⁶

While this conversion trope might appeal to a common sense understanding of adaptive processes, it is worth unpacking in some detail the way that Bluestone’s use of mutation ultimately belies his struggle to reconcile the similarity/difference tension upon

²⁴ Then again, a recent collection of essays on adaptation, titled *True to the Spirit*, edited by Colin McCabe and featuring a capstone paper by Fredric Jameson, seems eager to endorse this language.

²⁵ Cf. Maria Tortajada in *A Companion to Literature and Film* for a clear articulation of the standard intertextual critique of this transfer model (344).

²⁶ Naremore offers a similar reading of Bluestone’s model, using “translation” where I have used “conversion”: “The Bluestone approach relies on an implicit metaphor of translation, which governs all investigations of how codes move across sign systems. Writing in this category usually deals with the concept of literary versus cinematic form, and it pays close attention to the problem of textual fidelity in order to identify the specific formal capabilities of the media” (Naremore 8).

which adaptation depends. Mutation, as a figure, shares much with transformation and metamorphosis, insofar as each of these depend on a temporal dynamic of physical change—a caterpillar and a butterfly, for example, recognized as one and the same being, rendered physically different due to a process that occurs out of sight, within a cocoon that occludes visual access. Conversion tropes imply that an adapted text and an adaptation are two points on a continuous timeline—the only points accessible to an audience, because the cocoon of the production process obscures all other points. The implication of physical continuity carries with it the sense that an adaptation replaces or erases its adapted text; once converted, a text cannot be unconverted.

An extreme iteration of this discourse is the cannibalization²⁷ trope, which implies that an adaptation somehow consumes its source. Bluestone himself, at a point late in his first chapter, makes recourse to a similarly extreme trope, writing, “In film criticism, it has always been easy to recognize how a poor film ‘destroys’ a superior novel. What has not been sufficiently recognized is that such destruction is inevitable” (62). The case is obviously not that the production of an adaptation destroys all existing copies of an adapted text; rather, this metaphor offers less insight into the adaptation process itself than into a specific attitude towards reception. One might feel that a “bad” adaptation has an adverse and irreversible effect on the source it adapts, but the model of adaptation implied by such an attitude is one where the beautiful caterpillar becomes a particularly repellent moth and no amount of crawling back into the cocoon will reverse the process. More productive, perhaps—and this is a point that I will develop towards the end of this chapter—might be to engage with the implicit emotional stakes of this attitude towards reception. Even if the language of “butchering,” “destruction,” and “cannibalization” does not offer a technically accurate portrayal of what happens in the production of an adaptation, it gives voice to the high degree of investment that audiences sometimes make in what adaptations do with their sources.

²⁷ Cf. Stam (“Dialogics” 62).

Bluestone's model requires the aforementioned metaphors of physical continuity and the impossibility of return because of his reliance on medium specificity as a conceptual frame. The central tenet of his model appears within the first paragraph of *Novels into Film*: "And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media" (1). As his argument develops, Bluestone stresses the visual and mechanical nature of film in stark contrast with the symbolic and imaginative nature of the novel. Film is perceived by the senses, he indicates, and novels are conceived as a process of thought in response to written language—as though books have no physical form to be seen or felt and films require nothing of the audience's noetic engagement.

In *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* Kamilla Elliott highlights the ways that Bluestone's reliance on medium specificity arguments leads back to debates about the relationship between painting and poetry in the 18th century. Indeed, the title of Bluestone's first chapter, "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film," is an explicit reference to the subtitle of G.E. Lessing's *Laocoön: An Essay upon The Limits of Painting and Poetry* (Elliott 11). Lessing, a key figure in the painting/poetry debates just mentioned, challenged the analogical strain of that debate which focused on sibling resemblances between arts, and "pressed the higher priority of the bond between form and content" (Elliott 10). For Lessing, painting is essentially static and spatial, whereas poetry is best used to represent temporal action (Elliott 10). This distinction is the direct precedent for Bluestone's claim that the novel is purely concerned with concept, the film with percept (1), as well as his claim that the film only has one tense in contrast to the novel's three (48). For Bluestone, as for Lessing, the categorical differences between these arts are a matter of essential differences in the product, and the best works of art, they contend, are those that embrace this medium specificity.

Bluestone's approach to the material differences between media is problematic for a few reasons. For one, he moves fluidly between noting technological particulars and claiming aesthetic priorities. That is to say, Bluestone conflates form, medium, and material to some degree. The visual capacity of film stock slides easily into the assertion that film can only achieve certain representational structures, which quickly takes on the value-laden notion

that some such structures are better than others. As I will discuss later, this conflation of aesthetic value and the materiality of media is precisely what Robert Stam rejects when developing the ideas of “diacritical specificity” and “automatic difference” (“Dialogics” 56, 59). A second problem with Bluestone’s approach is that, as Sarah Cardwell notes in *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel*, he advocates a theory of adaptation that cannot be reconciled with his research practice. Bluestone explains his method for case analysis as follows:

The method calls for viewing the film with a shooting-script at hand. During the viewing, notations of any final changes in the editing were entered on the script. After the script had become an accurate account of the movie’s final print, it was then superimposed on the novel... Before each critical evaluation, I was able to hold before me an accurate and reasonably objective record of how the film differed from its model. (ix)

Given how fervently Bluestone insists upon medium-specific dichotomies, that a novel cannot ultimately be transposed onto film, Cardwell wonders, “how can it be possible to ‘transpose’ in the other direction – to transfer a film into a written account of itself?” (*Revisited* 47). Bluestone’s methodology for studying adaptations requires him to gloss over the very opposition that his theoretical model of adaptation foregrounds.

For Cardwell, this is so substantial a contradiction that she cannot class his book as a “considered and complete ‘theory’ of adaptation” (48). For my present purposes, this contradiction is interesting insofar as it evinces a vexed response to the principle of (non)identity. First, it is important to note one way that Bluestone departs from Lessing and the 18th Century inter-art debates. Bluestone’s framework is premised on its applicability to specific films that can be seen to repeat a precursor novel in a non-identical fashion, rather than on the broad categories of painting and poetry or novel and film. For many advocates of medium-specific theory, the appeal of adaptation lies precisely in the opportunity this situation affords. Sarah Cardwell explains,

Bluestone implies that he sees adaptation study as a chance to test (and affirm) his own notions of medium specificity. [Morris] Beja, similarly, introduces his book with its aim to ‘get a sense of all they [literature and film] share, to be sure, but also of all the traits that they do not, so that one may

grasp as well what is unique about each form' (1979: xii). And McDougal states that a 'comparative analysis of film and literature ... helps to define the unique properties of each medium by probing its relative strengths and weaknesses' (1985: 7) (Revisited 45)

In sum, adaptation is theoretically useful because it eliminates variables, making it easier to focus on the unique traits of the media themselves; however, in order for adaptation to work in this way, theorists must take sameness for granted. One gets to analyze the "same" narrative in two versions and draw conclusions based on the premise that "differences of form and theme between texts of different media are determined by ('inseparable from') the unique, inherent technological and ontological properties of each medium" (Revisited 46). But methodologies stemming from such a premise run into a substantial conceptual problem: if novels and films are so radically different, if they achieve aesthetic success in ways that oppose one another, what formally connects an adaptation with its source? If the proof of inherent differences between media comes to light so easily through adaptation, how does one account for the sameness that makes such cases ideal testing grounds in the first place?

In pursuing these questions, form starts to fall apart as adaptation theory's anchor, and putting pressure on the problem of "sameness" begins to expose the evaluative impulse driving arguments like Bluestone's, which implicitly depend on tangible continuity from source to adaptation. When Bluestone writes that "it has always been easy to recognize how a poor film 'destroys' a superior novel" he is not just invoking a metaphor of physical continuity, as I argued earlier, but also identifying the critical current that his theory pushes against. At the time of his writing, Bluestone was grappling with an interpretive community who largely agreed that most films based on novels were aesthetically inferior to their sources. To say, as he does, that the "destruction is inevitable" (for medium-specific reasons) thereby ties back to an argument for the value of the film medium as a whole. And making a case for film depends as much on identifying "good" films as on accounting for why the "bad" ones are bad. Fixating on the formal differences between texts as an indicator of the low value of an adaptation, Bluestone's theory asserts, is insufficient because such differences are guaranteed by the change in medium; the basis of a film adaptation's value needs to be located somewhere more stable, somewhere that permits the *possibility* of a good

artwork. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, again, offers a way to clarify the processes of value-assessment that undergird the predicament I am describing:

Certainly any theory of aesthetic value must be able to account for continuity, stability, and apparent consensus as well as for drift, shift, and diversity in matters of taste. The tendency throughout formal aesthetic axiology, however, has been to explain each in a quite different way: specifically, to explain the constancies of value and convergences of taste by the inherent qualities of certain objects and/or some set of presumed universals, and to explain the variabilities of value and divergences of taste by historical accident, cultural distortion, and the defects and deficiencies of individual subjects. (Smith 36)

Bluestone is responding to a perspective that treats the novel as intrinsically valuable, but his response also attempts to universalize value by locating it in the inherent traits of particular media. If aesthetic success comes down to a matter of appropriately matching form with medium, bad films can be explained away as a failure to restructure the literary “content” in a way that (formally) maximizes those things that film is inherently good at. Aesthetic failure here is idiosyncratic, a deficiency in specific cases, but success is merely a matter of bringing out the value always already contained in the medium’s representational capacities.

Presumably, also, bringing out the inherent value of the medium has the effect of showcasing the inherent value of the “content,” but I would argue that “content” in Bluestone’s theory works more as a placeholder for continuity itself than a way of invoking specific narrative details. Bluestone’s mutation trope, in particular, offers a way to insist that, despite all the difference necessitated by the change in medium, *something* persists. Articulating the nature of that “something” while maintaining the integrity of his medium-specific claims, however, requires that Bluestone frame the conversion process with increasing delicacy. He writes, “What happens, therefore, when the filmist undertakes the adaptation of a novel, given the inevitable mutation, is that he does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel—the novel viewed as raw material” (62). Here, Bluestone seems to forsake the implication of the mutational trope that there is an immediate physical continuity between adaptation and adapted text. Doing so helps him to justify film adaptations as valuable works of art on their own terms, because he can say

that they are not derived or translated, but authored: “In the fullest sense of the word, the filmist becomes not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right” (62). But shortly after staking this value-claim, the problem of perceivable repetition forces him to reign in his rejection of the conversion model. He goes on to write: “Like two intersecting lines, novel and film meet at a point, then diverge. At the intersection, the book and shooting script are almost indistinguishable. But where the lines diverge, they not only resist conversion; they also lose all resemblance to each other” (63). Bluestone’s medium-specific argument creates an impasse (i.e., difference is “inevitable” but adaptation reveals medium-specific traits because *something* is the same), which he attempts to resolve by isolating the recognition of similarity to a specific phase of film development.

His claim that “the book and shooting script are almost indistinguishable” is fairly ridiculous, given how much editing and restructuring tends to take place while writing an adapted screenplay. Bluestone’s is accordingly a fantasy version of screenwriting in which the process of adaptation is akin to reformatting for screenplay style, and the real work of adapting takes place only when the camera starts fixing images in celluloid. It is, however, a compelling fantasy for his model of adaptation because it allows him to both keep *and* reject the conversion trope. To do so simply requires him to swing between the extreme poles of the similarity/difference axis: an adaptation, at one stage, being “almost indistinguishable” from its source and, at another, losing “all resemblance.” If there is only a single point of direct intersection between novel and film, and it occurs during a part of the filmmaking process when words are the primary medium of expression, adaptation *does* involve one work turning into another, but in a way that reinforces rather than dismantles the word/image dichotomy his theory is at pains to preserve.

As I briefly suggested above, navigating the principle of (non)identity in the way he did allowed Bluestone to make a strong case for adaptation studies in the institutional context of mid-century literature departments and fledgling film departments.²⁸ James Naremore explores this particular institutional history at more length, and suggests that the

²⁸ Cf. Ray (44-45).

categorical arguments of Bluestone and subsequent adaptation scholars were significantly shaped by “a Kantian set of assumptions; that is, both the making and appreciation of art were conceived as specialized, autonomous, and transcendent activities having chiefly to do with media-specific form” (2). Coupled with a (narrowly interpreted) Arnoldian sense of culture as “the best that has been thought and said,” the Kantian legacy of aesthetic appreciation provided a strong scholarly ground upon which to build the field of adaptation theory as the comparative study of form/content relationships in film versions of canonical literature (Naremore 6). By embroiling his analytic project in evaluation according to the Modernist ideal of high cultural aesthetics, Bluestone’s method appealed to the values of the New Critical paradigm. But this project also meant that, at its inception, the field of adaptation studies was primed to fall into what would become one of its most enduring quagmires: if adaptation is about the representation of great cultural work in a new medium, but great artwork in any medium depends on the perfect unity of form and content, a successful adaptation requires both the recreation of the original as well as autonomy in its new form.²⁹ Nearly a *Catch-22*, the high-cultural failure of adaptations is prefigured into this dynamic of attempted form/content replication. Thomas Leitch pithily summarizes why: “adaptations will always reveal their sources’ superiority because whatever their faults, the source texts will always be better at being themselves” (“Twelve Fallacies” 161; cf. *Discontents* 16). Even as adaptation studies has moved away from the New Critical values and reading practices most aligned with the Kantian legacy Naremore identifies, the problem of how to assess success in adaptation has nonetheless persisted. And, so, the project of evaluation cannot seem to get away from the specter of fidelity.

²⁹ Adaptation theory premised on this conundrum of aesthetic evaluation is not strictly isolatable to Bluestone’s critical moment. In the 2006 monograph, *Literature and Film*, Linda Costanzo Cahir articulates an “aesthetic rubric” which advocates simultaneously for the recreation of the original and autonomy in a new media form (263).

True to form: fidelity disavowal and idealism

Why is fidelity a problem?³⁰ One basic answer to this question is that the assessment of an adaptation in terms of its closeness to a source disregards the autonomy of the newly produced artwork. Bluestone indicates as much when he rejects popular discourse about adaptations that presumes “the novel is a norm and the film deviates at its peril” (5). Since Bluestone, critics of adaptation have offered various compelling reasons to explain why fidelity is insufficient as a critical framework. Perhaps the most influential critique comes from Dudley Andrew’s *Concepts in Film Theory*. He refers to discussions of fidelity as “frequent and tiresome” because they assume “that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text” (100). At its base, this critique acknowledges the extent to which fidelity represents an attempt to resolve the similarity/difference tensions that make adaptation work as such. Critics since Andrew emphasize various conceptual problems stemming from the basic conundrum that fidelity stresses similarity over and above difference. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan echo Andrew’s exhaustion with the imprecision of the concept, writing, “Fidelity is tiresome as a critical strategy not least because it is an inexact science deployed to compare often something as inchoate as the ‘spirit’ of the thing” (*Impure Cinema* 20). Robert Stam expands on Andrew’s rejection of fidelity as essentialist by stressing its affective dimension: “When we say an adaptation has been ‘unfaithful’ to the original, the term gives expression to the disappointment we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, and aesthetic features of its literary source” (“Dialogics” 54). Other scholars address Andrew’s point about the task of adaptation, noting that fidelity to a source does not make sense as a critical framework because reproduction, regardless of whether or not it is a formal possibility, is actually a relatively uncommon motive for adapters (Leitch *Discontents* 127-8; Hutcheon *A Theory* xv, 6-7). In short, critics agree from a number of vantage points: fidelity is vexed, if not utterly devoid of theoretical value.

³⁰ For further discussion of this question see J.D. Connor.

As adaptation theory continues to develop, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that the identification of fidelity as a problem is *itself* a potential problem. Cartmell and Whelehan acknowledge how much work has already been done to challenge fidelity criticism and they advocate restraint in future studies:

Since the late 1990s, there has been a tendency among scholars of screen adaptation to announce their own perspectives on the field as some kind of corrective to what has gone before.... But maybe the correctives have gone as far as they can for the time being; maybe it would be useful to declare a moratorium on some features of key debates. (*Impure Cinema* 10-11)

Simone Murray similarly identifies a long history of challenging the field's apparent obsession with fidelity, listing studies that do so from the 1970s to the late 2000s.³¹ My own shorthand for the trend Murray highlights is "fidelity disavowal," which I use for reasons that I discuss below. While Murray recognizes the importance that these critiques offered for establishing adaptation studies as an academic field, she raises important concerns about the practice when she notes, "how few academic critics make any claim for fidelity criticism at all" (*Industry* 8). If no one is practicing or advocating fidelity, then there is no critical value to be found in overturning the concept. Fidelity disavowal, Murray argues, actually just offers a way for critics to justify their theoretical frameworks without challenging their reliance upon comparative textual analysis—a pernicious methodological default that in her assessment is altogether more widespread than fidelity criticism. The rejection of fidelity, she indicates, needs to be more than a "smokescreen" (Murray "Materializing" 6) or a "shibboleth" (Murray *Industry* 8) that obscures the need for more substantial theoretical or methodological innovation.

Murray is, however, somewhat misleading when she suggests that fidelity criticism is mostly absent from the history of adaptation studies. To her credit, her claim is not a totalizing one, so to point out a few specific essays that uncritically embrace fidelity criticism

³¹ Murray's list is as follows: "Marcus, 1971: xv; McDougal, 1985: 6; Giddings, Selby and Wensley, 1990: xix, 9-10; Cartmell and Whelehan, 1999: 3; 2007a: 2; Ray, 2000: 45; Leitch, 2003: 161-62; 2007a: 16-17, 21; Hutcheon, 2006: xiii, 6-7; 2007; Geraghty, 2008: 11; Cartmell, Corrigan and Whelehan, 2008: 2" (*Industry* 8). Full publication details are listed in my bibliography.

does not substantially challenge her point.³² Murray also concedes that fidelity models are quite prevalent in non-academic arenas: “in film and television reviewing, in cultural journalism, and in everyday evaluations by the film-going public” (*Industry* 8). Rather, Murray’s assertion about the lack of fidelity concerns me because it ignores one of the important ways that fidelity models operate; as Thomas Leitch writes, fidelity is the question that “earlier adaptation theorists routinely pursue as soon as they have disavowed it” (*Discontents* 20). This is to say that many adaptation critics deride fidelity as a flawed critical paradigm, or even a formal impossibility, while nonetheless maintaining fidelity as an unstated conceptual premise or aesthetic ideal. In other words, fidelity persists in the field, despite Murray’s insistence otherwise, by taking the form of fetishistic disavowal. As Slavoj Žižek suggests, fetishistic disavowal is ideological commitment expressed at a cynical distance, and can be articulated concisely through variations on the phrase, “They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know” (*Sublime Object* 30). Critics know very well that fidelity is conceptually bankrupt, but nevertheless they find a way to keep doing it—fidelity disavowal.

If I am right to suggest that fidelity is at base a response to the principle of (non)identity, paying close attention to the fetishistic disavowal of fidelity may help to reveal what is at stake in the concept that has kept critics coming back to it. In approaching the concept this way I am following Leitch, who takes the compelling stand that fidelity is neither worth rejecting nor embracing, but it *is* worth studying as a phenomenon in its own right (*Discontents* 20). I take further lead from J.D. Connor’s essay, “The Persistence of Fidelity: Adaptation Theory Today,” which similarly addresses the apparent resilience of fidelity by advising critics to reevaluate the concept from all available angles. Connor sets two tasks, in particular, for the field of adaptation studies:

³² Sarah Cardwell, for example, notes a few essays that use fidelity as a framework in the edited collection, *The Classic Novel: from Page to Screen* (eds. Giddings and Sheen): viz. “Beholding in a magic panorama?: television and the illustration of Middlemarch” by Ian MacKillop and Alison Platt and “Lids tend to come off?: David Lean’s film of E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*” by Neil Sinyard.

First, it must account for the persistence of fidelity discourse despite decades of resourceful argument against it. Second, it must account for its own blind spot: What has the campaign against fidelity failed to get at? And given this consistent failure to achieve its goals, why do critics persist in calling for an end to fidelity? (n.p.)

Murray would seem to answer Connor's questions: fidelity discourse does not persist in academic criticism, but fidelity disavowal persists because it provides camouflage for methodological conservatism. I agree with Murray's position, but I think it is incomplete. The campaign against fidelity has still failed to get at why fidelity idealism persists, and the entrenched reliance on comparative textual analysis is still only a symptom of a more basic problem with the dominant model of adaptation: if adaptation is a form where something repeats in a non-identical fashion, how do we pinpoint that *something*?

Drawing a distinction between fidelity discourse, fidelity criticism, and fidelity idealism is helpful going forward. I use fidelity discourse to refer to any discussion of adaptation in terms of its faithfulness to a source, regardless of whether it is being embraced or challenged as an evaluative schema. Fidelity criticism attempts to make overt use of an interpretive apparatus wherein the reproduction of the source text is the presumed purpose of adaptation. Fidelity idealism, however, is the term that I use to describe the subtler ways that concepts of fidelity sometimes structure approaches to adaptation. Though fidelity idealism never needs be so explicit as to mention faithful or unfaithful representation, it nevertheless depends on a process of assessment that does one of three things: 1) idealizes faithfulness as an aesthetic goal; 2) maintains the reproduction of a source-text as a formal possibility; or 3) conceives of adaptations as products that are ontologically indebted in some crucial way.

A few remarks on these three senses of fidelity idealism, especially the third, will be helpful. The first sense is the one that structures overt fidelity criticism, and Murray correctly notes that it is relatively absent from the field of adaptation studies. The second sense is the one most commonly naturalized through the fetishistic disavowal of fidelity, and I will discuss it in more detail below. The phrase I have adopted for the third sense, "ontological

indebtedness,” is admittedly vague, but an illuminating example is available in one of Stam’s critiques of medium specificity:

Another variation on ‘fidelity’ discourse suggests that an adaptation should be faithful not so much to the source text but rather to the essential traits of the **medium** of expression. This ‘medium-specificity’ approach assumes that every medium is inherently ‘good at’ certain things and ‘bad at’ others.

(“Introduction” 19, emphasis original)

While Elliott and Cardwell have convincingly challenged the essentialist pitfalls of medium specificity from a number of angles, Stam is the only adaptation theorist I know of to make the claim that medium specificity counts as a form of fidelity discourse. Most critics who describe “fidelity” as a critical practice tend to follow Andrew’s lead in focusing on essentialist models of source-replication, as I suggested at the outset of this section. Accordingly, Stam might seem to stretch the meaning of fidelity by conflating it with essentialism, but I think it is more appropriate to place his claim in a tradition of fidelity disavowal that goes back to Morris Beja’s 1979 monograph *Film and Literature*; when faced with questions concerning the fidelity of an adaptation, many critics turn the issue around by asking, “Faithful to what?”³³ This question draws attention to the indeterminacies of fidelity discourse. For audiences of an adaptation, discerning what an adapter wanted to accomplish with the use of a particular source-text can be as fraught as determining the meaning intended by the author of a novel, play, comic, etcetera. But even more than raising the problems of intentionality, which I will explore in more detail in the next chapter, asking “Faithful to what?” helps to expose the implicit ways we imagine that an adaptation owes its being to some distinct thing, group, property, or process. One example is explicit fidelity criticism, where interpretation proceeds from the premise that an adaptation owes its being to the adapted text. We could press this model further and ask “faithful to what?” of textual specificities: is fidelity owed to the plot? The characters? The spirit? The fact that answers to this question will vary widely gives strong evidence to the conceptual instability of orthodox fidelity criticism; it ties the project of aesthetic evaluation to unstated imperatives of what a

³³ Variations of this phrase appear in the following works: Beja 80; Stam “Dialogics” 57; McFarlane 9; Cahir 15; Bouyum 67.

specific audience or critic thinks *ought* to be prioritized. Coming back to Stam's critique of medium specificity frameworks, then, he draws attention to the way such approaches express fidelity idealism because they depend on the idea that an adaptation owes its ontological uniqueness—i.e. its difference from the source-text—to the particularities of a medium.³⁴

Although the notions of ontological indebtedness I have so far raised are primarily formal, the fidelity idealism I am describing can be even more inclusive. From the perspective of the adaptation industry, for example, the makers of an adaptation are often indebted to the fan community that will decide the financial success of the adaptation—a point I will pick up again in chapter two. This means that the production of the adaptation owes its being, in the first place, to the audience that producers believe will provide a return on investment. In such a case, fidelity to the source-text is only a motive insofar as it is symptomatic of the more pressing motive to remain faithful to a market of consumers. For reasons like this, as I will discuss later in this chapter, fidelity idealism is not strictly about aesthetics or form.³⁵

One important example of adaptation studies methodology that depends on fidelity idealism is the taxonomical approach. Although the limits of taxonomy as a method for adaptation studies are now widely noted by the academic community,³⁶ this model received praise from earlier adaptation critics for providing an alternative to fidelity criticism.³⁷ In order to combat judgment based on the unfair assumption that the purpose or intention of a

³⁴ Sarah Cardwell explicates the assumptions of medium-specific theory in similar terms: “On this understanding, textual features are *secondary*: they are ‘caused by’ the ontological specificities of each medium” (*Revisited* 47)

³⁵ Leitch writes: “the primary motive for fidelity in the most widely known adaptations is financial, not aesthetic” (128)

³⁶ Sarah Cardwell's critique of “categorisation” is exemplary. She concisely explains the circular logic of using taxonomy to discern how a specific case imagines its relationship to a source. In short, if we analyze a film and assess that it is attempting a literal adaptation, then judging how well it succeeds within the category of literal adaptations merely repeats the analysis performed in the initial assessment (61-2).

³⁷ For example, Brian McFarlane writes, “There is nothing definitive about these attempts at classification but at least they represent some heartening challenges to the primacy of fidelity as a critical criterion. Further, they imply that, unless the kind of adaptation is identified, critical evaluation may well be wide of the mark” (11)

given adaptation is reproduction of the source, “comparative theorists recommend that the fairest, most objective way to study adaptation is to implement a systematic categorization of the kind of adaptation being studied, in order to ascertain each adaptation’s intended relationship with its source text” (Cardwell *Revisited* 59). Geoffrey Wagner’s 1975 *The Novel and the Cinema* offered the first of a series of related classification systems that describe varying goals for adaptation. Wagner’s taxonomical project was followed by Michael Klein and Gillian Parker’s *The English Novel and the Movies* in 1981 and Dudley Andrew’s chapter on adaptation in the 1984 book *Concepts in Film Theory*.³⁸ Each of these works describe three categories of adaptation: one focused on faithful reproduction, one that involves major transformative departures from the adapted text, and one that acknowledges adaptations attempting something in between the two more extreme poles. Perhaps the most concise naming of this tripartite structure comes from Linda Costanzo Cahir, whose 2006 book *Literature Into Film* employs the terms literal, radical, and traditional to correspond (respectively) with the categories just mentioned.

To my eye, the taxonomical apparatus is an overt reaction to the problems presented by the principle of (non)identity. If the umbrella category of adaptation includes all texts that repeat a precursor work in a non-identical fashion, how can we comfortably claim that films as diverse as *Clueless* (Heckerling 1995) and *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939) are part of the same formal class? Surely, in both cases, we can readily identify repetitions (of Jane Austen’s *Emma* in the first case and Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With the Wind* in the second), but they are of such a different order from one another that to include them under the same umbrella of adaptation seems to miss something important. To say that the former example is a “radical” adaptation³⁹ and the latter is a “literal” adaptation⁴⁰ offers at least an

³⁸ Critics who refer to the taxonomical approach by citing these three works include: McFarlane 11; Hutcheon 7; and Cardwell 60. Simone Murray cites the same three, adding Cahir, Larsson, Cartmell and Whelehan, and Cordaiy. Thomas Leitch adds Elliott and Genette to his list (*Discontents* 93).

³⁹ Cf. Sanders, who borrows Cartmell and Whelehan’s category of “analogue” to describe *Clueless* (1995) and Balfour, who refers to *Clueless* as the “apparently furthest departure from straight Austen adaptation” among the many film versions of *Emma* (974). See also Bolter and Grusin, who write of a 1990s trend in Austen films, “Some of the adaptations are quite free, but (except for the odd *Clueless*) the Austen films... are historically accurate in costume and setting and very faithful to the original novels” (44).

acknowledgment of the discrepancy in their apparent formal relationships with their adapted texts.

But employing this system of classification to account for these discrepancies requires that the possibility of literal reproduction remains part of the overall model. If adaptation is framed as a sliding scale along a fidelity continuum, the extreme transformation of the adapted text must be bookended by the literal reproduction of the source. I will note, this does not ultimately solve the problem it aims to address, because even adaptations within the same category can employ a wide variety of strategies for navigating the similarity/difference tensions upon which they depend. *West Side Story* (1961), *Hook* (1991), and Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) are all arguably radical adaptations of their sources, but the ways that these texts revisit or depart from their adapted texts varies considerably. To account for these different strategies in a taxonomical model would require the invention of ever more categories. More terminology might seem at first blush to offer greater clarification, but it also tends to highlight how inclusion in the overall category of adaptation does not necessitate a cohesive adherence to a single adaptive strategy. Perhaps *West Side Story* is best understood as an updating of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), but is *Hook* better classed as an updating of or as a sequel to *Peter Pan* (1904)? Is Burton's *Alice* a sequel or homage, or is it just pilfering a beloved children's tale for crass economic reasons?

One could offer responses to these questions, or focus on theorizing hybrid taxonomies, but to do so would reinscribe the fidelity idealism that taxonomy depends on. Categorization invites critics to fixate on the question, "what, at its core, is a given adaptation's formal relationship with its source?" This is fidelity idealism even when discussing radical or traditional adaptations because the underlying questions that structure the assessment are about indebtedness: what part of this film owes its being to its precursor? Is there one aspect of this film's relationship to its source that stands out as primary, and which term best describes that aspect? Thus it is that taxonomy actually relies on two kinds of fidelity idealism for its structure of fetishistic disavowal. By affirming that faithful

⁴⁰ Cf. Leitch, who dedicates a chapter to comparing *Gone With The Wind* and *The Lord of The Rings* as complicated cases of adapters explicitly aiming for fidelity (*Discontents* 127-150).

reproduction might be possible, even if not the purpose or most desirable end of adaptation, critics are free to fixate on the classification of adaptations in terms of the degree to which they are ontologically indebted to their sources. And in the end, they can pat themselves on the back for not assuming that all adaptations aim for faithful reproduction.

Equivalent to what?

Although narratological rather than taxonomical in its approach, Brian McFarlane's *Novel to Film* also fixates on the ontological possibility of faithful reproduction. For McFarlane, the principle traits of adaptation as a formal system divide neatly along two axes: narrative and enunciation—the elements of a story and the way that story is told. Where the former can be transferred wholesale from one medium and dropped into another without alteration, the latter requires “adaptation proper,” which is to say that “novelistic elements must find quite different equivalences in the film medium” (13). The target film remains autonomous, for McFarlane, because its enunciatory system is medium-specific; however, because its narrative essence can be carried over from the original novel, an adaptation can literally be the same story retold through the stylistic nuances of a new medium.

As with Bluestone, and Lessing before him, form/content relationships are paramount in McFarlane's model of interart dynamics. The point at which McFarlane seems to depart from Bluestone, however, relates back to the assumptions of adaptation discourse that Bluestone rejects at the outset of his study: namely, that there is “a separable content which may be detached and reproduced, as the snapshot reproduces the kitten” and “that incidents and characters in fiction are interchangeable with incidents and characters in the film” (Bluestone 5). For Bluestone's model, separable or interchangeable content threatens to dismantle the medium-specific principles upon which his analysis relies. McFarlane, by contrast, uses narratological methods to specify which elements remain medium-specific and which others do not depend on the unique enunciatory systems of either novels or films. While Bluestone is only willing to concede that a film and a novel are identical when the film exists in written form as a shooting script, McFarlane attempts to systematically account for the ways that character, plot, story, symbol, psychological pattern, montage, and so on, either

can or cannot be literally transferred across the novel/film divide. In other words, precisely because *some* content is separable and interchangeable, a film adaptation can achieve form/content unity and nonetheless remain to some degree identical with its source. The key distinction with McFarlane is his effort to spell out the “some,” and to analyze various strategies that filmmakers use to find “equivalency” when medium-specificity necessitates difference.

The systematic detailing of this method for assessing how a film might accomplish fidelity to a novel is the primary focus of McFarlane’s theoretical apparatus, so it may be surprising that the introductory chapters of *Novel to Film* reject fidelity on a number of fronts. McFarlane declares that fidelity studies fail because they are often “used to denigrate the film” by argumentative means that “lie deep in a subjective impressionism” (37). On the surface, there is no contradiction between McFarlane’s methodology and his fidelity disavowal, because he never explicitly claims that fidelity is the purpose of adaptation, or that attentiveness to (in)fidelity is the purpose of his method. Quite to the contrary, he explains, “There are many kinds of relations which may exist between film and literature, and fidelity is only one—and rarely the most exciting” (11). The critical practice McFarlane actually follows, however, indicates a slightly different attitude; namely, the perceived *accomplishment* of fidelity in film adaptation rarely makes for an exciting narrative experience, but the *possibility* of fidelity is a very exciting theoretical problem indeed. McFarlane knows very well that faithful films are dull, but nevertheless he obsesses over the formal mechanisms that might be used to achieve and/or assess fidelity.

McFarlane’s narratological methods, like the taxonomic and medium-specific approaches that came before, offer a vexed response to the principle of (non)identity. McFarlane’s model stands out among the preceding theories of adaptation because it seems to have an answer to the problem of pinpointing what within an adaptation repeats its source. But if the purpose of this method is not to avow fidelity criticism by rounding out its toolset, then what end is it supposed to serve? In the conclusion of *Novel to Film*, McFarlane suggests the following:

By distinguishing between transfer (i.e. of certain narrative functions) and adaptation proper (i.e. aspects of enunciation), and by recognizing certain 'grey' areas (e.g. dialogue, 'informants', which draw on both processes), I believe it is possible to discuss what kind of adaptation has been made. That is to say, one can with some degree of objectivity distinguish the literal-minded translation from those adaptations which, more or less radically, rework the source material. (197-8)

What becomes clear with this statement is that even though McFarlane does not explicitly adopt a taxonomical approach, his model of adaptation is effectively the same as the one implied by taxonomical theory. Truly, it takes far less than a book-length articulation of narratological tools for an audience to distinguish between a literal-minded adaptation and a film that departs more radically from its source. In the end, the only distinction that McFarlane insists upon between his method and earlier taxonomic theories is one of empirical rigor; as he says in the excerpt quoted above, his approach offers "some degree of objectivity." This insistence on objectivity is telling because, despite the nod he makes in his conclusion to the importance of "extra-novelistic influences" on film adaptations (200-2), McFarlane's focus is unrelentingly on methods that take the object-status of adaptation as its ontological basis.

Given the formal/ontological assumptions that McFarlane's model of adaptation takes for granted, his response to the principle of (non)identity gets him into much the same conundrum that Bluestone's medium-specific approach produces. Following up the claim that his tools offer an empirical method for distinguishing between literal adaptations and radical reworkings, McFarlane writes, "In fact, of course, all adaptations rework the source novel in the sense that film's signifying system will inevitably enjoin paradigmatic choices of a kind largely unavailable to novelists" (198). This statement is effectively a paraphrase of Bluestone's claim at the start of *Novels into Film*: "changes are inevitable the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium" (5). While accurate, in the context of a strictly formal model of adaptation these observations merely amount to the idea that different physical objects are different; that is to say, this model of difference only gains value for a theory of adaptation if it corresponds with a formal explanation accounting for similarity. McFarlane explains such a mechanism (narrative transfer), but only to a point, because he

confronts the reality that it is possible to observe similarity where medium-specificity (enunciation) otherwise necessitates formal difference. Where Bluestone responds to this impasse by isolating similarity to the shooting script, McFarlane leans on the theoretically nebulous concept of equivalency. In other words, McFarlane does not resolve the problem of perceivable repetition; he relocates it.

Equivalency theory is another area, alongside explicit fidelity criticism and medium specificity, that Stam claims for fidelity discourse.⁴¹ Stam rejects its conceptual premise out of hand, declaring that, “in fact, there can be no real equivalence between source novel and adaptation. While a film can recapitulate the outlines of the basic story ... the actual resulting texts in their densely signifying materiality will be in many ways incommensurable” (“Introduction” 18). Nevertheless, it *is* possible to *understand* the “signifying materialities” of source novel and adaptation as equivalent to one another, even if this is not “real” equivalency in Stam’s view. Dudley Andrew offers an instructive example when describing the relationship between equivalency and the notion of fidelity to “spirit.” Andrew writes:

More difficult [than fidelity to the letter] is fidelity to the spirit, to the original’s tone, values, imagery, and rhythm, since finding stylistic equivalents in film for these intangible aspects is the opposite of a mechanical process. The cinéaste presumably must intuit and reproduce the feeling of the original. It has been argued variously that this is frankly impossible, or that it involves the systematic replacement of verbal signifiers by cinematic signifiers, or that it is the product of artistic intuition, as when Bazin found the pervasive snowy decor in *Symphonie Pastorale* (1946) to reproduce adequately the simple past tense which Gide’s verbs all bear in that tale.
(100-1)

McFarlane’s model would balk at the claim that equivalency is the “opposite of a mechanical process,” and would likely either find how the Gide adaptation works as a “systematic replacement” of signifiers or reject Bazin’s treatment as impressionistic. But McFarlane’s method exists, to some extent, as a frustrated response to the reality that the discovery of equivalency does not need to be “real” to be effective. As McFarlane indicates, “it is at the

⁴¹ Stam indulges in equivalency theory for a paragraph in “Dialogics,” where he discusses the Richardson and Osborne adaptation of *Tom Jones* as mingling “the literary cues with specifically filmic devices in such a way as to find the filmic equivalents of literary techniques” (67-8).

level of enunciation—the means by which narrative is displayed and organized—that most rigour is needed to offset the lure of mere subjectivism” (202). It is because the discovery of equivalence is not only *possible* without a “rigorous method” but *alluring* that McFarlane stresses the need for scholars to adopt one.

As a brief aside, McFarlane’s wording here offers an opportunity to explicate my reason for adopting a slightly psychoanalytic bend in this chapter. While McFarlane’s use of the word “lure” in the line just quoted might be incidental, it nevertheless demonstrates that there is enjoyment involved in discovering equivalency between works. McFarlane wants there to be an empirical and systematic way to account for the relationships adaptations have with their sources, but his rhetoric reveals the current he is swimming against: interpreters evince a *desire* to subjectively identify adaptations with their ostensible sources. Even if aspects of adaptation can indeed be accounted for by means of empirical methods, a robust theory of adaptation should equally be able to grapple with the effects of this desire.

Returning to the place of equivalency theory in the history of adaptation studies methodology, Dudley Andrew also rejects it, citing reasons that ultimately herald Stam’s theoretical approach to adaptation and, indeed, the post-millennial direction of adaptation studies as a whole. The meaning of a given enunciatory system is, for Andrew, “a function of its use as well as of its system,” which means that analysis of equivalence between texts in two media needs to grapple with the “history of that system” as much as with its form (34). This is precisely the recognition that underpins Andrew’s famous call for a “sociological turn” in the field (35). That is, his call is motivated by the observation that adaptation does not mean the same thing or get deployed in the same way at every historical moment. The specificities of film style and culture at any given point will impact the aesthetics of an adaptation as much as the formal particularities of the source text. To effectively study equivalency would require careful attention to the social conditions that inform what filmmakers of a given era might understand as stylistically resonant with various novelistic techniques.⁴²

⁴² Cf. Stanley Kubrick’s discussion of “objective correlatives” in “Words and Movies.”

As it happens, instead of sociological methods, what the field got was the intertextual turn, which McFarlane himself seems presciently to acknowledge as the appropriate response to the limits of his methodology.⁴³ In the final section of *Novel to Film*, titled “Other elements of intertextuality,” McFarlane writes the following:

The fact that the effect on the spectator of other texts (literary, cinematic, non-fictional) and of other pressures (e.g. genre conventions, auteurist predilections, studio style, ‘industry’ matters such as use of certain stars, let alone extra-cinematic influences such as the prevailing ideological climate) is not readily susceptible to the quantifying possibilities referred to above does not mean that the critic of adaptation can afford to ignore them. (201)

McFarlane does not ignore them, but he also does not go beyond acknowledging their importance as he draws his study to a close. Given, however, that Murray and Connor made their respective observations about the problems of fidelity disavowal well after intertextuality had taken root as the dominant paradigm in adaptation studies, the real edge of their critique does not lie with the methods I have looked at so far. Addressing the fetishistic disavowal of fidelity and the idealization of source-reproduction that it permits helps to reveal a model of adaptation undergirding dominant methodological trends in adaptation studies up to the dawn of the intertextual approach. But more pressing questions remain: does the critical paradigm of intertextuality also reify a model of adaptation as essentially a formal object? Does this help to explain why fidelity persists despite the frequent calls for it to end? And, even if so, is there actually another way to model adaptation?

Turning and turning in the intertextual gyre

As indicated by the title of Stam’s seminal essay, “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation,” the intertextual approach to adaptation has its roots in Bakhtin’s dialogic theory of the novel. For Bakhtin, a major contrast between the epic and the novel is that the

⁴³ Sarah Cardwell similarly notes that where Bluestone appeared to recognize the limits of his medium specific approach, “He argued that both audience and censors affect the conventions of filmic representation” (*Revisited* 50).

former has a generically conservative relationship with the distant, determined past, and the latter operates in “the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness” (11). This is to say that the novel, or other genres “novelized” by the emergence of this semantically open-ended genre, resists ossification into a fixed form because it remains in dialogue with its dynamic and indeterminate context. Stam describes his understanding of Bakhtinian dialogic theory as a precursor to intertextuality in the following way:

In the broadest sense, intertextual dialogism refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture, the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which the artistic text is situated, which reach the text not only through recognizable influences, but also through a subtle process of dissemination. (Stam “Dialogics” 64).

Shot through with the influences of Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, and Gerard Genette,⁴⁴ Stam’s intertextual approach to adaptation fostered a major pivot in the field. Built around a model of textuality that explicitly resists essentialism by recognizing the historical and social situatedness of texts, Stam’s essay highlights a rich framework that critics can use to substantially reevaluate the methods of adaptation studies. By studying both “recognizable influences,” like that of an adaptation’s ostensible source text, and the subtler accretions that shape a text as it circulates through various cultural contexts, intertextual critics can produce incredibly nuanced scholarship. As I will show, however, it is significant that Stam frames this definition of intertextual dialogism as its “broadest sense,” because, regardless of how accurate or appealing Bakhtin’s ideas might be, their application to the study of adaptations raises dizzying challenges.

At the moment, though, it is worth noting a few of the various ways the intertextual approach to adaptation broadened the purview of the field. For one, the already-derided notion of fidelity criticism lost all conceptual traction. Intertextuality means that adaptations consist of a “mosaic”⁴⁵ or “tissue”⁴⁶ of quotations, as do all other ostensibly non-adaptive

⁴⁴ Cf. Barthes’ *Image-Music-Text*, Kristeva’s *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, and Genette’s *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*.

⁴⁵ Kristeva (66).

texts. Accordingly, to insist that the essential or primary meaning of an adaptation rests solely in its relationship with a single source—or that critics ought to treat adaptations as though this were true—fundamentally misunderstands how texts are generated and received.

A related observation produced through the intertextual framework is that adaptations often engage with multiple textual sources. Alan Moore's licentious graphic novel, *Lost Girls*, is as much an adaptation of *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* as it is of either *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* or *Peter Pan*. Moreover, as Julie Sanders writes, "texts rework texts that often themselves reworked texts. The process of adaptation is constant and ongoing" (24). Again, *Lost Girls* is a useful example because the various text and film versions of these classic children's stories, such as the 1939 Judy Garland film and the 1950s Disney films, influenced Moore's writing and Melinda Gebbie's illustrations arguably as much as did the apparent source texts by Lewis Carroll, L. Frank Baum, and J.M. Barrie. Furthermore, intertextuality throws the singularity of the sources produced by the "original" authors into relief: for example, Carroll wrote two Alice stories⁴⁷ that often get treated as one when adapted, and J.M. Barrie initially premiered the Peter Pan story as a play, but later adapted it himself into the novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911).

My recourse to *Lost Girls* as an example also points to another important effect of the intertextual turn, which challenged the presumption (fostered by nearly fifty years of research in the novel/film paradigm) that "adaptation" strictly refers to the film adaptation of novels or plays. Julie Sanders recognizes the predominance of novel/film studies in a way that avoids framing her approach as a corrective: "It would, of course, be misleading to apply adaptation studies solely to cinematic versions of canonical plays and novels, although that is perhaps the most common and easily understood manifestation" (23). Linda Hutcheon is, however, much bolder in her resistance to the novel/film presumption, dedicating the very first line of her study to priming the field for greater intermedial diversity: "If you think adaptation can be understood by using novels and films alone, you're wrong"

⁴⁶ Barthes (146).

⁴⁷ *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871).

(*A Theory* XIII). For the most part, this change in perspective has resulted in a much greater consideration of the sources for *film* adaptation,⁴⁸ although television adaptations are also an increasingly common area of focus.⁴⁹ Monographs by Hutcheon and Sanders stand out among full-length studies in the field for the diversity of both source and target media they feature, but these works are joined by myriad essays published in the field's three major journals (*Literature/Film Quarterly*, *Adaptation*, and *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*), which have helped to displace the novel/film paradigm.

If various intermedial combinations are permissible—or, following Hutcheon, necessary—within the domain of adaptation studies, intertextuality also makes it possible to consider *intramedial* reworkings as adaptations; that is, intertexts that do not involve a change in medium. There are, of course, some academic studies that insist on distinguishing remakes from adaptations precisely in terms of media change. Michael Brashinsky, for example, argues that “unlike the stage production of a play or the film adaptation of a literary work, the remake interprets the work of the same medium and thus bares its own secondariness” (163).⁵⁰ However, more influential adaptation theorists tend to treat remakes as a subset of adaptation. Hutcheon claims that “Remakes are invariably adaptations because of changes in context,” using Robert LePage’s *Elsinore* and J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* as examples (*A Theory* 170). Leitch seems to agree with Hutcheon about remakes, referring to Gus Van Sant’s *Psycho* variously as adaptation, remake, and homage (*Discontents* 96). Lawrence Raw also argues that “filmed remakes are actually very complex forms of adaptation, based on a complex interplay of *difference* and *harmony*” (“Skopos” 3, emphasis original). Although I have

⁴⁸ Tom Leitch, for example, dedicates a chapter in *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* to films based on sources as diverse as comics, video games, card games, board games, tabletop role playing games, theme park rides (257-279).

⁴⁹ The most substantial work on this area to date is Sarah Cardwell’s *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel*.

⁵⁰ In a footnote, Brashinsky elaborates on this claim in a way that starts to expose the rhetorical gymnastics sometimes required to maintain taxonomical distinctions: “Unless a readaptation of a literary work refers to the previous adaptation(s) and not directly to the written source, the readaptation should not be considered a remake. Thus, Martin Scorsese’s *Cape Fear* (1991) and Werner Herzog’s *Nosferatu: Phantom of the Night* (1979) are remakes, but Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992), Kenneth Branagh’s *Hamlet* (1996), or any other recent Shakespeare production is not” (n.p.)

not seen the claim made yet, the framework of intertextuality would also make it possible to include the category of reboots under the umbrella of adaptation: texts like the James Bond Film *Casino Royale* (2006) and the Spider-Man comics series *Brand New Day* (2008), which adapt their sources by attempting to reset the canon of a particular franchise and approach the material in a new context, with a new tone, or with some substantial variation that would have been inconsistent with the previously established canon.

But even as I make this minor suggestion as an example of what the intertextual turn enables, I must note the way I am drawn back by the lure of taxonomy. Recognizing that there are indeed important cultural distinctions that shape the form, production, and reception of different texts, I am tempted to express these distinctions in categorical terms. Here we start to approach the problem evinced by Stam's subtle disclaimer via the phrase, "in the broadest sense." As the intertextual model takes center stage in the field, higher order questions loom: if intertextuality is about the dynamic, open-ended engagement between texts and their indeterminate contexts, on what basis can we meaningfully account for existing cultural practices that proceed from a distinction between modes or types of intertextuality? If adaptation does not require a single source text or a change in medium, what ultimately distinguishes it from non-adaptive intertextuality? Or, worse, what is to stop us from considering every text an adaptation?⁵¹ Dudley Andrew draws attention to this latter question when he writes: "Every representational film adapts a prior conception. Indeed, the very term *representation* suggests the existence of a model" (29). Hutcheon acknowledges that there is "some apparent validity" to the view that adaptation can be used to describe nearly any act of cultural recreation,⁵² but concludes, "from a pragmatic point of view, such a vast definition would clearly make adaptation rather difficult to theorize" (9). The problem is that if every text is intertextually engaged with other texts, then adaptation needs an explanation for why it stands out as a special case of intertextuality. But if we seek the explanation for adaptation's special status in the specifics of its structure of repetition, we are back to a model of adaptation that treats the phenomenon first and foremost as a form. Taxonomy is

⁵¹ Cf. "the problem of inclusiveness" discussed in chapter three, "Time and Again."

⁵² Hutcheon cites Fischlin and Fortier (4) as critics who make this claim (Hutcheon 9).

seductive at this impasse precisely because the open-endedness that defines intertextuality threatens to render the category of adaptation, and so the academic study of it, meaningless in its endless inclusivity. At the very least, if we can draw distinctions between kinds or modes of intertextuality, we have some apparently stable ground upon which to base a study of adaptation. Geraghty is even more explicit than either Andrew or Hutcheon about the Pandora's box that intertextuality potentially opens:

The openness of Stam's approach is indeed productive, but it might lead to textual accounts that deliberately seek to escape the interpretative and social processes that work to pin down meaning at a particular point. This not only makes analysis almost impossible, given the number and fleetingness of possible associations and connections between texts, but also does not necessarily help our study of adaptations. (4)

Among all possible links between texts, we must be able to target some as particularly germane to adaptations studies. Without hierarchy or prioritization, how can critics have a productive conversation about specific intertextual phenomena?

Although Geraghty seems, in the excerpt quoted above, to suggest that Stam's approach is at ease with the potential open-endedness of intertextuality, Stam is also somewhat reserved on the issue. That is to say, after introducing intertextual dialogism "in the broadest sense," Stam's analysis moves towards a much narrower examination of how the concept might impact adaptation studies. It is clear that Stam wants a model that escapes the essentialist gestures of some prior adaptation theories, but he does not want a method that fails to make critical distinctions between texts. I have already noted, for example, that Stam objects to medium specificity's specious conflation of medium and aesthetic priority—namely that some media are good at some things and bad at others and that adaptations should be judged accordingly. Stam also seems to target McFarlane's notion of narrative transfer as yet another instance of fidelity, and he uses intertextuality to argue against this essentialist concept:

First, [fidelity] assumes that a novel 'contains' an extractable 'essence,' a kind of 'heart of the artichoke' hidden 'underneath' the surface details of style. Hidden within *War and Peace*, it is assumed, there is an originary core, a kernel of meaning or nucleus of events that can be 'delivered' by an adaptation. But

in fact there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can generate a plethora of possible readings, including even readings of the narrative itself. (“Dialogics” 57)

Yet, even as Stam initially resists essentialism by highlighting the vast possibilities of texts as meaning-generators, he is careful to anticipate certain ways that his theory might be cast as critically naïve. For one, rejecting medium specificity could be taken as the denial of material differences between media. Stam handles this by proposing the alternative term “diacritical specificity” to indicate the ways that the materials of expression used by a certain medium create an “automatic difference” (“Dialogics” 56, 59). For example, a novel can describe a fire with as much or as little detail as language permits, but a film captures the light created by a specific fire (or a lighting rig near a fireplace), the sounds of that fire crackling (or something cooked up in the foley studio), and so on. The multi-track nature of film makes it necessarily distinct from the written word—but the question of which is a better or a worse fire cannot be answered sufficiently by looking at what these respective media do differently. Diacritical specificity gets rid of the moralizing essentialism of medium specificity, but resists the callow (and incorrect) position that novels and films employ the same representational strategies.

Stam does not want, however, to get rid of all assessments regarding the relative value of film adaptations. While the categorical arguments of Lessing lead to the medium specificity Stam ultimately rejects as moralistic, Stam nonetheless shares Lessing’s sense that form/content unity is a higher priority than the affinities, or the possibility of transference, between media. Accordingly, Stam concludes his essay by suggesting that the future of the field ought to focus on “comparative stylistics” (“Dialogics” 73). While he acknowledges that this is “fraught” territory, the questions that he poses as worth asking carry troubling implications for his otherwise avowed goal of distancing adaptation studies from its entrenched assumptions. Stam writes:

To what extent are the source novel and the film adaptation innovative in aesthetic terms, and if they are innovative, are they innovative in the same way?... To what extent do the various film versions provide an equivalent sense of such innovations? To what extent do they move beyond the novel and innovate in cinematic terms? (“Dialogics” 73-4)

The emphasis on innovation should tip us off that, even though his appeal to intertextual dialogism offers a counterpoint to the formal essentialism of narratology, Stam still approaches adaptation first and foremost in terms of its formal traits. Even as he proposes opening the field to the expanded context implied by Bakhtinian dialogism, he conveys uneasiness with the possibility that such a framework could authorize all interpretations as equally valid. Part of his solution is to suggest that a focus on formal innovation creates stable ground in the shifting landscape of intertextuality. For example, Stam suggests:

When Jean-Jacques Annaud turns Marguerite Duras's *L'Amant* into a linear, masculinist, mainstream film, we are not entirely wrong to regret that the director has misrecognized the most salient traits of Durasian *écriture*.... By adopting the approach to adaptation I have been suggesting, we in no way abandon our rights or responsibilities to make judgments about the value of specific film adaptations. ("Dialogics" 75)

Despite surface warnings for scholarship to be "less moralistic" and "more rooted in contextual and intertextual history" ("Dialogics" 75), Stam's critical practice threatens to reinscribe the New Critical values that treat paraphrase as heresy and entrench high/low binaries into aesthetic evaluation. Even after acknowledging the absence of an essential, transferable, "heart of the artichoke," Stam's argument nonetheless returns us to seeking out a text's "most salient traits." As a corrective to the field's literary bias, Stam's approach does effectively challenge the belief that books are axiomatically "better" than their filmic counterparts. Moreover, his particular approach to the prioritization of form does important work to centralize ideological critique as a crucial end in adaptation studies.⁵³ The hidden implication, however, is that even if the point of adaptation is not the discovery of formal equivalence between a source and its target, part of the job of adaptation criticism is to analyze whether or not a film is equivalent to, or better than, its source in terms of formal complexity. This does not reinscribe fidelity idealism as the transference of sameness across

⁵³ Sarah Cardwell contrasts with Stam by lamenting the emergence of ideological critique as a central focus in the field: "Questions of aesthetics and generic development are subordinated to questions of ideology; the close analysis of style, tone, narrative structure, performance and so on is employed only in the service of making a wider political point. The impact of a plethora of theories from cultural studies [and elsewhere] is that sometimes the analysis of the films and programmes themselves loses its proper place at the centre of discussion" (71).

an intermedial gap, but it continues to rely on an ideal of comparative aesthetic value between source and target.

While Stam provided the major theoretical foundation for the intertextual turn, his critical practice does not explore the implications of the framework as thoroughly as subsequent critics. Part of the reason Stam does not pursue these implications is because he treats adaptation as a “field within cinematic theory and analysis,” albeit one that “can be seen as quite central and important” to film studies (“Introduction” 45). In other words, his project chiefly concerns film adaptation. Given that Hutcheon’s approach explicitly challenges the novel/film paradigm, she requires a definition of adaptation that is flexible without being so inclusive as to render her work just a study in intertextuality writ large. This definition emerges initially as a response to the denigration that adaptations so often receive as works considered both second and secondary to their sources:

That curious double fact of the popularity and yet consistent scorning of adaptation is where *A Theory of Adaptation* begins its study of adaptations *as adaptations*; that is, not only as autonomous works. Instead, they are examined as deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works.

(*A Theory* XVI)

This tripartite definition avoids any basis in transfer or equivalence between adaptations and sources. Adaptations merely revisit prior works, repeating but never replicating them (*A Theory* XVIII). Significantly, Hutcheon also resists a definition that attempts to specify *what* repeats;⁵⁴ it is enough, rather, that repetition occurs, so long as it happens in a deliberate, announced, and extended way. Here, Hutcheon finds a principle of inclusion and exclusion that permits meaningful distinctions between adaptations and other instances of intertextuality, while nonetheless establishing a framework for analysis that can make productive use of the gains made by the intertextual turn. Her approach recognizes that the kinds of repetitions and strategies that make up the canon of adaptations vary widely, and yet that there are differences between the sorts of texts that get called adaptation and those that

⁵⁴ Hutcheon does dedicate a few pages to exploring the related questions, “Exactly what gets adapted? How?” (9-15). My point here is merely that she does not make this question conceptually inseparable from her definition of adaptation.

elicit the use of other terms by audiences and critics. For Hutcheon, adaptation can refer to works as varied as song covers, comic book versions of history, poems put to music, film remakes, video games, and interactive art, in addition to the more traditional material of novels, films, and theatrical stagings (*A Theory* 9). On the other hand, as she points out, her definition allows the exclusion of allusions, musical sampling, plagiarisms, sequels, prequels, and fan fiction (*A Theory* 9)—and this is where the problems with her model begin.

Extensiveness is perhaps the most important of her three defining criteria insofar as it stakes a convincing claim for why every text that subtly alludes to its influences and progenitors—which is to say every text, if we follow Andrew’s statement about the term “representation”—is not an adaptation. Since it is based on an unspecified rubric of degree, however, the category “extended” proves somewhat nebulous. Hutcheon does not, at any point in her theory, attempt to positively account for what constitutes an extensive *enough* engagement to qualify as adaptation; instead, she resorts to a rhetoric of negative exemplification, noting that “allusions to and brief echoes of other works would not qualify as extended engagements, nor do most examples of musical sampling, because they recontextualize only short fragments of music” (*A Theory* 9). Which instances of musical sampling *would* count, we might ask, and what separates those from the non-adaptive variety? The cost of the “extensiveness” limitation is even clearer when we consider certain texts that exercise an extended pattern of engagement with a previous text *by means of* short allusions. *Lost Girls* is, once again, a useful example. In part because it adapts three stories, its structure necessarily divides attention between the sources it references. But the extensiveness of its engagement with these stories is even further tempered by its deep engagement with the licentious art and writing of the late 19th Century European avant-garde.⁵⁵ Moreover, the story it tells gains force and nuance through an exploration of the historical circumstances leading both to the onset of World War I and the emergence of aesthetic modernism. In short, *Lost Girls* has a lot to focus on, such that its engagement with what are arguably its three primary intertextual references largely occurs through an ongoing series of brief,

⁵⁵ In particular, *Lost Girls* revisits the work of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), Henry “Willy” Gauthier-Villars (1859-1931), Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939), Egon Schiele (1890-1918), Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925) and Franz von Bayros (1866-1924).

specific allusions. Without going into a full analysis of the comic here, which would distract from my more immediate focus on how intertextuality deals with the principle of (non)identity, it will suffice to highlight that the historical, cultural, and aesthetic explorations staged by *Lost Girls* are inseparable from its adaptive strategy with respect to the Alice, Dorothy, and Wendy stories.⁵⁶

According to the framework articulated by Julie Sanders, which shares much with Hutcheon's handling of intertextuality, *Lost Girls* might be better classed as an appropriation than as an adaptation. Sanders writes about "the more sustained reworking of the source text which we have identified as intrinsic to appropriation: rather than the movements of proximation or cross-generic interpretation that we identified as central to adaptation, here we have a wholesale rethinking of the terms of the original" (28). For Sanders, what is extensive in an appropriation is not the length or degree of engagement but the degree of revision. One question raised by Sanders' definition, however, is what makes appropriation distinct from the "radical" branch of the taxonomy approach to adaptation? Sanders cites Cartmell and Whelehan's three-part taxonomy directly, but more as a point of reference than as a framework she either adopts or critiques (20). Sanders does, however, stress the need for a more "diverse vocabulary" in adaptation studies to help get away from the sense that "appropriation is always in the secondary, belated position" and the discussion such a view invites around issues of "difference, lack, or loss" (12). To the end of developing a "kinetic" (13) lexicon of adaptation and appropriation, terminology to describe intertextual relationships proliferates in her study.⁵⁷ The important difference between her use of terms and that of the taxonomists is clearly expressed when she writes, "As this endless ruminating over terminology suggests, this is a study sympathetic to pluralism rather than fixity.... The

⁵⁶ I explore these aspects of *Lost Girls* in more detail in an essay titled, "To Read What Was Never Written: the licentiousness of history in Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's *Lost Girls*," forthcoming in the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*.

⁵⁷ For example: "variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-vision, re-evaluation" (3); "version, variation, interpretation, continuation, transformation, imitation, pastiche, parody, forgery, travesty, transposition, revaluation, revision, rewriting, echo" (18); "Unfoldings, recyclings, mutations, repetitions, evolutions, variations: the possibilities are endless and exciting" (40).

aim is to open out and widen the range of terms and their applications rather than fixing or ossifying specific concepts of adaptation and appropriation” (13). Thus, even though Sanders attempts to articulate a clear line between adaptation and appropriation in terms of “sustained reworking,” her commitment to dialogic openness trumps the formal fixity she occasionally implies.

Hutcheon’s approach is similarly invested in resisting fixity, but her methods are at once more subtle and more compelling than Sanders’ in terms of how they deal with the formal character of adaptation. For one, Hutcheon makes a point of clarifying, “Because we use the word adaptation to refer to both a product and a process of creation and reception, this suggests to me the need for a theoretical perspective that is at once formal and ‘experiential’” (XVI). With this in mind, it is possible to think about her three defining traits of adaptation as a formal description, but where that fails (how extensive is extensive enough?) Hutcheon implies that an “experiential” explanation is needed. To this end, it does not particularly matter if *Lost Girls* is a sustained enough engagement to count as adaptation, or if it is a sustained enough reworking of the source material to count as appropriation; if it is produced and/or received *as an adaptation*, then we can still critically engage with and theorize the text in experiential terms.

Hutcheon’s other two criteria can be understood in a similar way: where they run into problems for a formal definition, they can nonetheless still shed light on the experiential character of adaptation. One of the more immediate problems with the qualities “announced” and “deliberate” as formal descriptors is that they overlap one another somewhat. This is clearer when we pose a simple question: can an adaptation be announced if it is not also deliberate? As far as formal announcements of an adaptation’s status go, the most familiar is perhaps the phrase, “Based on a story by...” or some such equivalent paratextual statement, usually offered up in marketing campaigns, front matter, splash pages, credit reels, playbills, and the like. It would, however, be an odd contradiction if the same narrative that announced its basis on a precursor text also somehow claimed that this basis was purely accidental.

The reverse, however, is not unheard of; an adaptation could be deliberate without announcing itself as an adaptation. Then again, the same impulse that draws critical investigation towards taxonomy prompts the question of whether this would necessarily warrant the label of plagiarism. Hutcheon claims that plagiarisms do not count as adaptations, because they are not “acknowledged appropriations,” which seems to stake the ontological status of adaptations on the way they declare their relationship with a precursor (9). A question that Hutcheon never directly addresses is whether the announcement needs to be paratextual, or if it suffices that a work somehow make clear *in-text* that it adapts another work. Such a perspective already shifts the nature of the announcement towards a more experiential understanding. If the deliberateness of adaptive repetition is apparent, even part of the text’s aesthetic strategy, to what extent is the announcement of an adaptation’s status qua adaptation the responsibility of the audience? What is the relationship between announcement and the interpretation of announcement? Elsewhere in her theory, Hutcheon stresses the importance of the “knowing” audience; without knowledge of the prior text, “we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work” (120). One logical consequence of this aspect of Hutcheon’s theory is that an audience’s knowledge of a prior work may initiate the experience of “oscillation” between adaptation and adapted text, regardless of whether or not the adaptation announces its status as such. The question of plagiarism, then, has less to do with the form of adaptation, and more to do with the politics of its reception.

Julie Sanders offers a few compelling examples of adaptations that are deliberate but that have a nuanced history of announcing their adaptive status. Starting with the claim that, “James Joyce’s 1922 novel *Ulysses* could be viewed as the archetype of the adaptive text,” Sanders interrogates the effect of alterations to the text’s “announcement” strategy, which occurred between its initial pre-publication installments and its final publication as a single volume (5-6). On the one hand, Sanders notes how the title, *Ulysses*, offers a relatively clear announcement of the novel’s relationship with *The Odyssey*—at least for readers who know that the Latin name of Odysseus, the central character of the epic, is Ulysses. On the other hand, the initial installments offered an even clearer announcement of the novel’s intertextual engagement by way of chapter headings that refer to particular encounters within

The Odyssey, like “Scylla and Charybdis” and “Circe” (Sanders 6). The questions *Ulysses* raises are not as stark as those raised by a work that lacks such a clearly referential title, but I cannot help wonder if the formal side of Hutcheon’s model necessitates considering degrees of announcement: do we want to say that a more detailed structure of announcement changes the ontological status of the text? A reader who already has a comprehensive knowledge of the Homeric epic will be well prepared to identify the specifics of Joyce’s engagement in particular chapters. The chapter headings, therefore, potentially act as signposts for readers unfamiliar with *The Odyssey*, indicating that a more nuanced reading experience might be fostered if one reads Homer alongside Joyce. But does this quality of the announcement substantially change between the two versions of the work? Is the title enough to do the job of referring readers to the ostensible source, the reading of which will likely prepare them to identify specific references within chapters? As with the category of “extended,” when treated in formal terms it prompts the question, “how much announcement counts as enough?”

The greater challenge to Hutcheon’s categories comes through Sanders’ example of a work that resists explicitly announcing its deliberate engagement with a source: Graham Swift’s *Last Orders*. Here the line between adaptation and plagiarism is more expressly political. The relationship between *Last Orders* and William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* became the subject of public interest after Swift’s novel won the 1996 Booker prize (Sanders 32). Without rehearsing the structural and thematic overlaps that Sanders notes between the texts (32-41), the very fact that critics and readers raised the charge of plagiarism speaks not only to the capacity of a text to make its relationship with a precursor clear enough to be identified by an audience but also to the potential stakes of adaptive oscillation. Importantly, the discussion was divided when it came to whether *Last Orders* performed the sort of violation that would bring with it either the label of plagiarism or the revocation of the Booker prize. The initial criticism of *Last Orders* came from Australian academic John Flow, who argued that the “provable line of influence from Faulkner rendered Swift’s book a substandard derivation of *As I Lay Dying* and therefore unworthy of a prize for which the judges’ commendation had drawn attention to the book’s originality” (Sanders 33). One of the judges, novelist Julian Barnes, defended Swift by highlighting that “borrowing and

appropriation were a standard feature of the artistic process” (Sanders 33). The difference between these two positions strikes me as largely ideological, evincing an attitude towards the meaning of originality in the contemporary literary context that is galvanized by the symbolic and financial capital attached to the Booker prize. Accordingly, their evaluations of whether or not the novel was Booker prize-worthy, to phrase it in Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s terms, were made “with respect to whatever functions or effects works of that kind might be expected or desired to serve or produce” (13). This is to say that their respective processes of oscillation between *Last Orders* and *As I Lay Dying* were conditioned by differing ideological positions on the subject of originality as it pertains to the functions they see Booker prize novels performing.

The announcement of Swift’s perspective on what his novel does with *As I Lay Dying* as an intertext—he later called it an “homage” (Sanders 33)—might also have conditioned the novel’s reception, and so eased political tensions surrounding the literary prize. But would knowing how he thought of the intertextual dynamic have changed the ontological or formal status of the adaptation? Sanders raises a series of related questions:

Would *Last Orders* have regained cultural status if, in a prefatory note, Swift had explicitly recorded his debt, or openly declared his intentional homage? Should his novel’s title have indicated its intertextual relationship in the way that Joyce’s *Ulysses* does its interaction with Homeric epic? Yet Joyce’s novel is also linked to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* but the 1922 novel bears no trace of that relationship in its title. Does that make it somehow dishonest, less worthy in literary terms, less *original*? Surely not. (35)

Sanders astutely links the problems raised by *Last Orders* to one of the important conceptual gains of the intertextual turn: that texts can have multiple sustained engagements with precursor works. Does this mean that *Ulysses* is an adaptation of *The Odyssey* but a plagiarism of *Hamlet*? What critical gains do we stand to make by maintaining that the separation of plagiarism from adaptation has to do with the form of its announcement? Clearly, there are important political stakes at play in this case; however, even if these stakes are framed by a formal interpretation of *Last Orders*, they ultimately point to the ideological roots of the difference between adaptation and plagiarism.

Even though Hutcheon seems to side with a formal definition of adaptation when she rules out plagiarism, her overall approach is often subtle in its centralization of the experiential components of adaptation. Hutcheon writes:

First, I have always had a strong interest in what has come to be called ‘intertextuality’ or the dialogic relations among texts, but I have never felt that this was only a formal issue. Works in any medium are both created and received *by people*, and it is this human, experiential context that allows for the study of the *politics* of intertextuality. (A Theory XIV, emphasis original)

One important way Hutcheon’s interest in this political dimension of intertextuality gets expressed is through her ongoing attention to the pleasures that drive adaptations. Even when she makes a critical move that would seem to align her with the taxonomists, she occasionally does so in a way that emphasizes the role of desire in the production and consumption of adaptations. For example, when excluding other intertextual structures from the umbrella of adaptation, Hutcheon writes,

sequels and prequels are not really adaptations either, nor is fan fiction. There is a difference between never wanting a story to end—the reason behind sequels and prequels, according to Marjorie Garber (2003: 73-74)—and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways. With adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change. (A Theory 9)

Unlike the reason she provides for excluding plagiarism, Hutcheon locates the difference that marks sequels, prequels, and fan fiction from adaptation in what an audience *wants* from a story.

We could apply this same perspective on the role of desire in adaptation to the divided reception of *Last Orders*; there is a difference between wanting a story to explicitly announce its indebtedness to a precursor and wanting to discover the intertextual links for

oneself.⁵⁸ As Smith helps to show, desires such as these are integral to processes of value-assessment and the classification of artworks. Whether the tracing of these relationships is ideologically framed by an attachment of literary value with originality or by a more typically postmodern valorization of “borrowings and *bricolage*” (Sanders 34), the enjoyment of performing intertextual identification nonetheless plays a key role in how *Last Orders* repeats (without replicating) *As I Lay Dying*.

Misidentifying the intertextual bug

With the suggestion that part of the pleasure of adaptation comes from identifying intertextual links and that this pleasure does not require an explicit formal announcement of deliberate adaptation, the possibility arises that audiences might *misidentify* a text as an adaptation and nonetheless experience the same enjoyment. Astute readers will note the Lacanian undercurrents of my phrasing here, which stops just short of invoking *jouissance*⁵⁹ and *méconnaissance*⁶⁰ directly. As I have already indicated, my intention is not to pursue an in-depth psychoanalytic approach to the desires that drive adaptation, but the language of psychoanalysis does offer a way to highlight aspects of adaptation that the models I have so far discussed tend to miss. In other words, if it is possible to pursue the pleasures associated with identifying an adaptation *as such* from the standpoint of a misrecognition of form, then there is even greater reason to develop models of adaptation that decentralize formal definitions of the phenomenon.

Tony Scott’s 1998 film *Enemy of the State*, starring Will Smith and Gene Hackman, offers a helpful touchstone for the kind of interpretive misidentification I am gesturing

⁵⁸ Although I wanted to emphasize the parallel with Hutcheon’s sentence structure, I am also paraphrasing Sanders here: “The response to *Last Orders* raises the important question as to whether a novelist needs to ‘adequately’ acknowledge intertextuality and allusiveness... surely part of the pleasure of response for the reader consists in tracing those relationships for themselves” (35).

⁵⁹ For a lucid explanation of Lacanian *jouissance* and desire, see Bruce Fink’s *The Lacanian Subject*, especially pages 83-97.

⁶⁰ On *méconnaissance* and enjoyment, see Zizek’s chapter, “Why Does a *Letter* Always Arrive at Its Destination?” in *Enjoy Your Symptom!*

towards. The basic plot involves Smith's character, Robert Clayton Dean, on the run from the NSA after he comes to possess video evidence of a political murder. The device that recorded the video was connected to a motion detector, with the intention of capturing wildlife footage; it was, however, accidentally triggered when NSA official Thomas Reynolds (Jon Voigt) killed a senator in order to quash legislation that, appropriately, would have limited governmental surveillance powers. As Dean attempts to evade being monitored and framed by the NSA, he seeks the support of a retired surveillance expert (Hackman), who goes by the alias "Brill." Suspense mounts as the NSA attempts to uncover the true identity of Brill, and frame Dean for the murder of his former girlfriend, Rachel Banks (Lisa Bonet). Together, Dean and Brill succeed in defusing the NSA plot, although at the apparent cost of Brill's life. After the arrest of Thomas Reynolds, Dean returns to his regular domestic world, comforted that his days of being targeted by the NSA have ended.

In the last scene of the film, however, Dean is watching television when the feed abruptly switches to a live recording of him in his living room. Scanning the area for the location of the bug, he concludes that it must be in the smoke detector above his head. As he looks up to the presumed location of the camera, however, the image gives evidence of Dean's misidentification. Were the surveillance device in the smoke detector, looking directly at it would have put him in eye contact with the camera, but it is actually when he looks at the television set that Dean's eye-line matches the image in the live feed. The bug is in the television itself. As the scene continues, Dean addresses himself to the smoke detector, never coming to realize his misrecognition. Moreover, in the same moment that he falsely determines the location of the bug, a smile comes over Dean's face because he believes that the feed is controlled by Brill, who is skilled enough to have faked his death. Dean says aloud, "Brill, you are one sick man," but despite the displeasure that might be implied by such a phrase Smith's performance unambiguously communicates enjoyment. This is a farewell message from a friend, Dean is convinced. Other images appear on the monitor: a yacht; a man's arm reaching towards a cat on a beach; waves washing over the phrase, "Wish You Were Here," scratched in sand, to which Dean replies, "Yeah, me too"; and a man's hairy legs, ankle deep in water. Together, these suggest the possibility that Brill is in a tropical location, controlling Dean's television from afar—certainly that is Dean's

interpretation—but it would be equally plausible to suggest that these snippets came from a library of stock footage; that may, in fact, be where Tony Scott acquired them. Ultimately, none of these images provide diegetic evidence either confirming or disproving Dean’s understanding of his “conversation” with Brill. The scene concludes as the feed switches to Larry King discussing the trade-off between national security and civil liberties, expressed by King in the language of domestic privacy: the government’s intrusion into his home. A jump-cut takes the camera outside of a house, possibly Dean’s, in an overhead shot that suggests satellite surveillance, which is reinforced as the montage culminates in a shot of a satellite orbiting earth. The scene thereby concludes by affirming the ambiguity of the bug. While it is clear that surveillance has taken place, there is no final confirmation of whether or not Dean’s identification of Brill was correct.

In the first part of this scene, the position of the audience parallels that of Dean as a television/film/screen viewer. Further, the cinematography repeatedly places the film camera in the position of the diegetic hidden camera. This self-reflexive filmic structure prompts the question: what “bug” might the viewer be misrecognizing within the film itself? One response is subtly suggested through Dean’s identification of the surveillance device with Brill. Although the ambiguity of Brill’s identity is a narrative through-line in the film as a whole, this ambiguity can also be seen to extend to the film’s intertextual engagement with Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Conversation* (1974). Coppola’s film starred Gene Hackman as Harry Caul, an audio surveillance expert who accidentally records evidence of a murder on tape. The overlaps between these two characters are immediately suggestive enough to invite consideration of the possibility that Brill *is* Harry Caul—aged, retired, and relocated since the events of *The Conversation*.

This interpretation is further supported by the various allusions scattered throughout *Enemy* that make more or less overt reference to the Coppola film. The premise of *Enemy* is reminiscent of that which drives the plot of *The Conversation*: information recorded on tape inadvertently unveils a murder plot and embroils a paranoid and reclusive surveillance expert in a larger conspiracy. One crucial difference, however, between the murders that drive the respective plots of *The Conversation* and *Enemy of the State* is that the former hinges on a

misreading of the tape itself. Harry Caul finesses the audio recording of a couple's conversation until he uncovers the utterance of a suggestive phrase, "He'd kill us if he got the chance." Caul comes to believe that these people are in mortal danger, but it is eventually revealed that he got it backwards; the couple were rationalizing the murder they were about to commit. *Enemy* departs from *The Conversation*, insofar as the murder recorded on video is unambiguous, but it is also possible to read the final scene described above as an adaptation of Caul's media misinterpretation.

Even if it is a stretch to read the final scene of *Enemy* as an allusion to Caul's act of misrecognition, there are other scenes that more clearly announce their relation to the Coppola film. The most obvious example is a several-minute sequence in *Enemy* that involves a number of parallels with the opening scene from *The Conversation*; a team of surveillance experts—some disguised, some monitoring from the high windows of nearby buildings, and some hiding out in an inconspicuous van—work in concert to record a conversation between a man and a woman walking around in a public square. Robert Dean and Rachel Banks are the couple in *Enemy*, and in *The Conversation* this is the scene where the couple rationalize their planned murder. I will not attempt to detail any further the way this scene structures its engagement with its precursor film, but there is little question that a knowing viewer would pick up on the allusions. What is more, the identification of the two films is quietly rewarded in this scene when Rachel responds to Dean with the line, "This conversation's over." Notably, this same phrase is also spoken immediately prior to the murder of the Senator, which drives *Enemy's* plot.

A question hovers at the edges of what I have so far detailed: is *Enemy* an adaptation of *The Conversation*? Given how varied, dispersed, and occasionally subtle the allusions to *The Conversation* are throughout *Enemy of the State*, we might be inclined thus far to say no. On this point, it is worth revisiting the categories Hutcheon uses to define adaptation. As with *Lost Girls*, *Enemy* has competing interests that lead to a complicated pattern of allusion, which potentially throws the category of "extended" into relief. Tony Scott seems just as interested in creating a generic, high-paced, action thriller as he is in an overtly structured repetition of *The Conversation*. The dialogue also differs enough in tone from *The Conversation*, if only

because it is tailored to the specific charms of Will Smith, who was an A-list star after the successes of *Independence Day* (1996) and *Men in Black* (1997). But, more than the potential competing interests of the film's intertextuality, its referential strategies vary enough to raise questions about the different kinds of "extended" allusion that can occur in adaptation. Surely, the scene in the park is more extended than a single brief quotation or paraphrase. This and the sustained presence of Gene Hackman, as a character who might share an identity with Harry Caul, speak to two different temporalities of sustained reference. If the only nod to Coppola's film occurred via the phrase, "This conversation's over," or if Hackman were playing the NSA official rather than the retired surveillance professional, then the echoes would indeed be too brief to reliably trigger the oscillation of a knowing audience. The pattern of allusion in *Enemy* is more sustained than that, even if it is not as sustained as it might be. To reiterate the critique I made earlier, at what point would the number of these various, dispersed references be enough to shift the ontological status of the film over to adaptation?

The ambiguous identity of Brill also troubles the overlapping categories of deliberate and announced. After all, if one could determine that Brill was indeed an alias for Harry Caul, then there would be no question regarding the deliberateness of *Enemy's* intertextual engagement with *The Conversation*. As it stands, all of the references are clear enough to me, and a few other critics,⁶¹ to make the identification between texts possible. But even if a handful of audiences perform the identification of one text with another, is this enough to constitute an adaptation as such? Borrowing Stam's use of the term, I argued earlier that the discovery of equivalency does not need to be "real"⁶² to be effective. What my observations about *Enemy of the State* suggest is an extension of this argument: perhaps the discovery of adaptation *as adaptation* does not need to be "real" (i.e. according to the formal/ontological model) to be effective (i.e. to trigger the pleasures associated with oscillating between texts).

⁶¹ Thomas Y. Levin refers to *Enemy of the State* as a "GPS-era remake" of *The Conversation* (591), and Kim Newman calls it a "continuation" (283).

⁶² The quotes here are used to refer to my earlier citation of Stam ("real equivalence") rather than to the Lacanian concept of the Real. The latter's relevance to desire and "the object" is detailed by Fink (90-92).

Given the self-reflexive structure of the final scene, it is also possible that the film goads its audience into following Dean's lead, and *misidentifying* Brill. The "bug" that the viewer is positioned to either locate or misrecognize, taken in this sense, is the very intertextual identity of *Enemy of the State*. There is, however, one specific in-text reference to *The Conversation* that might be substantial enough to count as an announcement, and so potentially confirm the status of *Enemy* as an adaptation according to a formal definition. As the NSA closes in on the identity of "Brill," the database that appears on screen features a picture of Gene Hackman, looking 25 years younger, sporting a cheesy moustache, horn-rimmed glasses, and a white collared shirt. What makes this picture significant is that, for a knowing viewer, it is obvious that the image of "young Brill" is a production still taken directly from *The Conversation* (see figures 1.1 and 1.2). But the confirmation of the intertextual engagement that this image offers is immediately contradicted by a line of dialogue that asserts, "His real name is Edward Lyle." Audiences are also offered a bit of backstory, which places Lyle in Iran in the mid-seventies, not San Francisco where Caul's story occurs. In short, even while one formal link clearly establishes Brill as Caul, a simultaneous thread of formal differentiation undercuts the identification. As with Dean at the end of *Enemy*, the source of the intertextual "bug" remains ambivalent.

So is *Enemy of the State* an adaptation of *The Conversation*? Or is it a sequel perhaps? A continuation? A remake? An homage? Can its relationship with its clear precursor, in other words, be meaningfully categorized as a specific kind of intertextuality? Without being able to locate the formal object that *is* the "bug," knowing audiences are left instead with an affective bug: the nagging sense that these texts connect in a significant way. The formalist slant of models like Brian McFarlane's would likely disregard this "bug" as irrelevant to the study of adaptation, being that it is difficult to quantify or treat in objective terms; so it would be dismissed as subjective, experiential, fuzzy, and/or impressionistic. By contrast, I think that this nagging sense is centrally important for developing a robust model of adaptation, and it will play a pivotal role in this dissertation, most explicitly towards the end of chapter three.

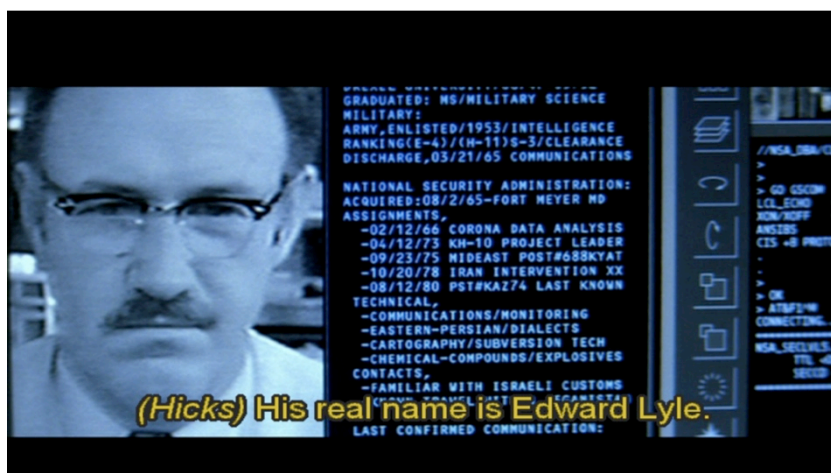


Figure 1.1. “Brill” in *Enemy of the State*



Figure 1.2. Harry Caul in *The Conversation*

For now, I want to highlight the way that *Enemy of the State*, through its participation in a Gordian knot of intertextual engagement, showcases the ambivalent character of the identification that leads to the pleasures associated with adaptation. In the final scene of *The Conversation*, Harry Caul responds to the revelation that his apartment has been bugged by tearing up the very floorboards. Every inch of the space is examined, and the apartment is destroyed in the process. In the end, Caul resigns himself to defeat, playing saxophone in the detritus left by his paranoid search for the object-cause of his fears. As Thomas Y. Levin argues, however, the bug he is after resides in a location that Caul can never uncover because

it is “epistemologically unavailable to him” (583). Like the piano featured on the film’s musical score, which provides “accompaniment” to Caul’s sax, the device that surveils him is extra-diegetic: the cinematic camera, panning back and forth from an upper corner of the room, permitting the audience-as-voyeur to witness the scene unfold (Levin 583). The technique of blending diegetic and extra-diegetic information also shapes *Enemy*’s final scene, but with a few important points of contrast. For one, Dean appears as pleased as Caul is paranoid, which is troubling in light of how recently his life had been disturbed by the intrusions of surveillance technology. Caul knows that the listening device in his apartment is a threat, because the message he receives from Martin Stett (Harrison Ford) indicates that the people in control of the device are antagonistic to him. Dean does not know who controls the surveillance feed on his television, nor does he attempt to confirm the location of the bug. We know that he gets the location of the camera wrong, but the identity of the voyeur remains unclear. Nevertheless, Dean pursues the pleasure of identifying the images on his screen with a source he already has some knowledge about: namely, Brill. In other words, he *performs* the act of identification; he does not expose an identity inherently contained within the object. Just as *The Conversation* ends with a nod towards the imbrication of diegetic and extra-diegetic meaning, *Enemy* points beyond its own narrative world to the viewer’s complicity in the processes of intertextuality, implying that the act of identifying can sometimes trump the ambiguity of an object’s identity. Brill both *is* and *is not* Harry Caul, but viewers may proceed meaningfully from either perspective. Siding with similarity or siding with difference, the audience plays a key role in constituting the adaptation as such or in determining that its form does not involve enough of the right kinds of repetition to count.

The politics of fidelity

My aim in turning to *Enemy of the State* as a touchstone case is not to reach a satisfying conclusion about how we might categorize the relationship between the two films—tempting though that might be. Perhaps we could say that they are “in conversation” with one another—that is, at least until the audience reaches a strong conclusion about the link between Caul and Lyle, whatever that conclusion ends up being. More to my point, *Enemy*

offers a springboard for thinking through the potential ambiguity of intertextual identification. If the pleasures that ensue from identifying “repetition without replication” are not inherently tied to the *accurate* recognition of adaptive form, how else might we approach the line that separates adaptation from other kinds of intertextuality? I agree, after all, that audiences and critics *do* make distinctions between adaptations and other intertextual categories, like remakes, sequels, prequels, plagiarisms, reboots, and the like. What interests me, though, is the *doing* itself. So far as it is possible, I want to understand the processes involved in drawing these distinctions by means that resist centralizing formal repetition as the ontological basis of adaptation (expressed variously as transfer, equivalence, conversion, etcetera). I will stress here that I do not want to argue against formal repetition as a whole, or to suggest prohibitions against thinking about the formal components of intertextuality. Clearly, the analysis of form is a valuable part of the toolset of adaptation studies. And as my approach to *Enemy of the State* shows, formal repetition is part of how adaptations function as adaptations, even if it is not the only or the most important part. In other words, I do not want to downplay that the image of Harry Caul in the NSA database is, in some ways, a literal repetition of content taken from *The Conversation*. Just because form is relevant to adaptation studies, however, does not mean that adaptation itself is basically formal or aesthetic. If there are other fruitful ways for approaching the categorical divisions of intertextual modes, there may yet be a way to answer J.D. Connor’s questions about the persistence of fidelity and to push the field towards approaches attentive to the suturing processes and the affective “bugs” that allow adaptation to function as such.

At this point it is worth considering how Dudley Andrew addresses the problem of drawing a line between adaptation and representation in general. Andrew writes: “Adaptation delimits representation by insisting on the cultural status of the model, on its existence in the mode of the text or the already textualized” (29). The language of insistence is telling in its vagueness regarding who or what insists: adaptive form? Adaptation critics? Lay audiences? Cultural understandings of adaptation as a phenomenon? I side with the latter, because it implies that the very *discourse* of adaptation remains intelligible as such due to the insistence Andrew articulates. Adaptation stands apart from representation in general because the discourse surrounding adaptations asserts an implicit premise: i.e., that an

adaptation is necessarily modeled on a work that is already culturally established as a text. And the cultural consensus that adaptation means “based on an already existing text” does not require a rigorous theorization of the phenomenon—it does not need to be proven “real” in an empirical or objective sense—in order to be discursively effective.

If the discourse of adaptation functions as I suggest in the above, the persistence of fidelity idealism makes the most sense when framed according to Žižek’s notion of the obscene underside of the Law. Here, the “Law” of adaptation is expressed in the cultural consensus that adaptation is at its ontological base a formal structure that links a text to its precursor(s). The language of Law is particularly helpful here, I might add, because it prompts an ideological interrogation of what is generally presumed to be merely a “common sense” understanding of adaptation. Common sense would hold that *of course* adaptation is a formal product; to insist otherwise naïvely ignores the endless examples of products that *are* adaptations—circular logic, to be sure, but sensible enough at a glance to work at the level of unexamined discourse. With adaptation=form as Law, lay audiences and critics alike are permitted to discuss adaptations in any number of ways, advocating or rejecting fidelity, assessing literal reproduction or celebrating the innovations of radical departures from source texts, including or excluding remakes and sequels and so on as forms of adaptation—all discussions which, importantly, maintain the integrity of the formal model as public Law. But, as I have shown, this Law is incomplete; it cannot account for its own basis, since the question perpetually arises: if adaptation describes a particular object that repeats another object without replicating it, what exactly in the object repeats?

It is at this point of the public Law’s failure that fidelity idealism emerges as its obscene supplement. Žižek writes:

Where does this splitting of the law into the written public Law and its underside, the ‘unwritten’, obscene secret code, come from? From the incomplete, ‘non-all’ character of the public Law: explicit, public rules do not suffice, so they have to be supplemented by a clandestine ‘unwritten’ code aimed at those who, although they violate no public rules, maintain a kind of inner distance and do not truly identify with the ‘spirit of community.’

(*Metastases* 54-5)

Simone Murray's observation about the absence of fidelity criticism in academia is pertinent here, because it articulates the split between those who adhere to the "public rules" and those who maintain a certain distance from the "spirit of the community." The "inner distance" expressed by the academic treatment of adaptation takes shape as the theoretical investigation of adaptation itself. Adaptation studies as a field, after all, is predicated on there being a discrepancy between two sides of the community. There are general, lay understandings of the object in question, exemplified in the popular arenas that Murray identifies as the only locatable site of fidelity criticism, as well as in the discourse Bluestone rejects as misunderstanding the "mutational process" (by which he really means the medium-specific products of adaptation). And there are specialized understandings produced through theoretical inquiry, which more often than not stand at odds with the fidelity-inflected language of the much larger lay community. In short, it is precisely within the scholarly context of adaptation theory that the "public rules," which maintain the formal model of adaptation as common sense, can be subjected to critical pressure. It is where such pressure pushes its object to the point of breakdown that the Law must be reasserted through the clandestine emergence of fidelity idealism. Here, fetishistic disavowal preserves the obscene, illegal character of fidelity while nevertheless reasserting a more total solidarity with the "spirit of the community" and, so, with the formal model of adaptation.

The greatest expression of "inner distance" comes through the intertextual turn, which rests on a premise that would seem to dismantle the Law: adaptation is not a fixed form, but part of an open-ended process of cultural dialogue that takes place in an ongoing context, the totality of which remains fundamentally indeterminate. Critical practices of intertextuality in adaptation studies, however, sometimes come to reassert the Law through a subtle shift in premise away from Bakhtin's conception. As Julie Sanders writes,

Intertextuality as a term has, however, come to refer to a far more textual as opposed to utterance-driven notion of how texts encompass and respond to other texts both during the process of their creation and composition and in terms of the individual reader's or spectator's response. (2)

This is a shift that retains the importance of context, generic tradition, intermedial variety, and so on, but which moves decidedly away from "the zone of maximal contact with

contemporary reality,” as Bakhtin calls it. Even as intertextuality poses a challenge to the public Law of adaptation, the pull of formal stability draws critical attention back, not only to comparative textual analysis as Murray would have it, but to any method that reasserts the Law.

If these reassertions of public Law exist because they help to resolve perceivable tensions between similarity and difference, exposing the formal model of adaptation as a narrative or a structuring fantasy allows the study of adaptation in terms of how such narratives get deployed. The central question becomes, “towards what end is the vehicle of adaptive identification directed?” I do not just mean this in the limited sense of intentionality or the motivation to adapt a specific work, although these are important subjects for study, and I address them more directly in chapter two. My present interest has rather more to do with an inclusive perspective on what the suturing discourses of adaptation *do* as a cultural phenomenon. In this view, the divisions between modes of adaptation, and the ontological questions that surround these divisions (e.g. is *Enemy* a remake or a sequel?) are subordinated to performative questions: what possibilities are created through the identification of texts? In what ways (historical, industrial, sociological) do cultural objects come to be understood palimpsestically as repetitions of precursor works? What is at stake in fostering the identification of works with one another, either for the producers or audiences of these works?

If studies of adaptation concern themselves less with what adaptations *are* and more with what adaptation *does*, fidelity ceases to be an aesthetic issue; it becomes a political one. The need to overturn it transforms, as Leitch and Connor advocate, into the need to study it more closely. The grounds for studying the politics of fidelity are clear in a number of ways related to the “doings” of adaptation. The question “Faithful to what?” reemerges, not as a critique of fidelity criticism’s inchoate theoretical foundations, but as a starting point for unpacking the stakes of adaptive processes. Recall Stam’s suggestion, quoted earlier, “we are not entirely wrong to regret that the director [of *L’Amant*] has misrecognized the most salient traits of Durasian *écriture*” (“Dialogics” 75). On the one hand, Stam’s emphasis on “salient traits” and “regret” puts him in the position to perform the very gesture he identifies

twenty pages earlier as a hallmark of fidelity, when he claims that the term “gives expression to the disappointment we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, and aesthetic features of its literary source” (“Dialogics” 54). On the other hand, when we consider that Stam’s regret is based on the masculinist erasure of feminist politics in the adaptation of *L’Amant*, fidelity is not about a failure to capture the most salient formal or aesthetic features of the novel but about a lamentable shift in ideology.⁶³ If Stam were not actively working to maintain the illegal character of fidelity, he could reframe his objection to the politics of the *L’Amant* adaptation as an instance where critics *should* care about fidelity because it is about the ideological stakes of representation: of the cultural work performed when a given text invites its audience to identify it with a precursor text.

As an aside, I want to note that the political stakes of fidelity in adaptation cut both ways; that is, “unfaithful” adaptation used as a method of cultural critique can be as politically important as the “faithful” representation of a feminist work like *L’Amant*. For example, Djanet Sears’ 1997 play *Harlem Duet* is to some extent “unfaithful” to Shakespeare’s *Othello* by resituating the play in contemporary Harlem and inventing the character of Billie, Othello’s first wife. But *Harlem Duet*’s departures from Shakespeare vitalize the play’s explorations of race, gender, and the historical legacies of black diaspora, as much as does Sears’ invocation of *Othello*.⁶⁴ Repetition and difference work together towards important political ends. In an interview with the *Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project* (CASP), Sears offers a perspective that foregrounds the political ends that adaptive identification can serve. When asked by CASP if adaptation necessarily reinforces theatrical tradition, Sears responds,

⁶³ For an examination of the gender ideologies embedded in fidelity discourse, see Shelley Cobb’s “Adaptation, Fidelity, and Gendered Discourses,” which also offers a feminist critique of Stam’s theoretical approach.

⁶⁴ For a detailed analysis of *Harlem Duet* that compellingly situates Sears’ adaptive strategies with respect to histories and theories of black diaspora, see Peter Dickinson’s, “Duets, Duologues, and Black Diasporic Theatre: Djanet Sears, William Shakespeare, and Others.”

I think it absolutely affords opportunities to remake that tradition, to challenge that tradition, to say that I'm part of it, to also say that I'm very separate. If I had a story, about a Black woman and a Black man who were breaking up over three lifetimes and it ended badly that would be one thing. A story about Othello and his first wife, a Black woman, does something else to people. So, absolutely—Othello's an archetype. Mythic in proportion. Everyone knows Othello and there is a remarkable enjoyment that comes from looking at someone you think you know very well from another perspective.⁶⁵

On the one hand, Sears' formal re-visioning of *Othello*—setting it in contemporary Harlem, restructuring it to focus on Othello's relationship with Billie—is crucial to the way that Sears both participates in and separates herself from Western theatrical tradition. On the other hand, she explicitly highlights how her play makes use of the enjoyment that operates at the fault lines of the principle of (non)identity, where a familiar character is rendered unfamiliar. In short, the politics of fidelity depend crucially on the audience performing the identification of Sears' Othello with Shakespeare's, which they will do because it is enjoyable, but which also helps to challenge the cultural assumptions at work in Shakespeare's play.

As *Enemy of the State* helps to reveal, however, the performance of identification is ambivalent. Even if Sears' play uses adaptation to unfold a nuanced politics of representation, and even if Stam's identification of *L'Amant* (the film) with *L'Amant* (the novel) fosters a politically progressive critique of the adaptation's failures, adaptive suturing can equally be deployed conservatively. In a *Jezebel* article titled, "Racist *Hunger Games* fans are Very Disappointed," Dodai Stewart draws attention to a smattering of racist tweets that appeared after the opening weekend of the film in 2012. These tweets express rage at the casting of three characters (Cinna, Rue, and Thresh), all of whom are played by black actors (Lenny Kravitz, Amandla Stenberg, and Dayo Okeniyi, respectively). Fidelity idealism permeates these statements, as one tweeter wrote, "why is Rue a little black girl #sticktothebookDUDE" and another declared, "cinna and rue werent suppose to be black" [sic]. But as with Smith's character in *Enemy*, these tweets proceed from a misrecognition. Dodai notes, author Suzanne Collins is explicit about the colour of Rue's skin: "And most

⁶⁵ Interview available through the CASP website: http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/i_dsears.cfm

hauntingly, a twelve-year-old girl from District 11. She has dark brown skin and eyes, but other than that's she's very like Prim in size and demeanor" (Collins 45 qtd. in Stewart). Dodai further points out that Thresh, too, is described as having "dark skin," and that Cinna's skin is never referenced in the book. Accordingly, the cries of infidelity expressed by these tweeters are not about the "unfaithful" decision of producers to pursue cross-racial casting, but about the (racist) ideological stakes that drive a certain audience's performance of identification. In other words, it is their *investment* in an imagined version of the source text that produces the dissonance they experience as they oscillate between the film and their memories of the novel.

Moreover, these investments speak to the enjoyment (in the psychoanalytic sense) that arises from maintaining adaptation=form as Law. To clarify, fidelity must remain a meaningful category in order for us to enjoy either the perceived success or failures of fidelity. This does not require adaptation to be a stable formal category; it requires that we *understand* adaptation as such a category. So long as it describes an ontological relationship between texts, then it is possible for a given adaptation to either "be" or "not be" the text we desire. The capacity for the identification of texts to occur based on a misrecognition of form suggests—whether progressive or conservative—fidelity is not about remaining true to "the spirit" or "the letter" of a given text but true to the pursuit of desire as it has been located in the text as an object-cause—what Lacan calls *objet petit a*. And whether the audience receives the text as faithful or unfaithful, it is the desire for desire, the pursuit of its object-cause, which produces the palimpsestic pleasure of adaptation. In other words, following Hutcheon, the case may well be that we "desire the repetition as much as the change" (*A Theory* 9), but we also desire the infidelity as much as the capturing of spirit—even when our reaction to perceived infidelity is frustration, scorn, the feeling of betrayal, and so on. Surely, we enjoy lambasting an adaptation that we believe fundamentally misses the "point" of its ostensible source, much as we enjoy seeing our own imagined version of a text apparently realized in a new form. To revise Stam, we might say that fidelity gives expression to the *enjoyment* of the disappointment we feel when an adaptation does not capture what we see as the adapted text's essence.

The enjoyment that drives adaptive identification is true as much in Sears' comments and Stam's example of *L'Amant* as it is in that of the racist tweeters. It is also, however, true in cases where the political stakes of the adaptation are less immediately clear. In Brian Lee O'Malley's Scott Pilgrim comics, part of the pleasure comes with identifying familiar Toronto locales like Honest Ed's and Sneaky Dee's—but, again, it is a pleasure reserved for those “knowing audiences” who have the experiential knowledge of the city to spot its representation within the graphic novel. The case is much the same when O'Malley deploys video game tropes, like the Shoryuken or getting coins for winning a fight. Knowing the reference leads to the pleasure of identifying the text with that reference, of oscillating between present-tense and recollected experiences. Edgar Wright's adaptation, *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*, adds to the pleasures of identifying urban landmarks and generic tropes that of identifying (with) the comic itself. I add the word “with” in parentheses here because, as I hope I have shown, the performance of identification is inseparable from the various ways that audiences invest in texts. The same is also true of *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World: The Game*, which rewards familiarity on a perhaps even greater number of fronts: with Toronto, with the comic series, and with the film, to be sure; however, O'Malley's references to video game tropes find their natural habitat in the game world, so familiarity with the “brawler” genre is not only rewarded intertextually but kinaesthetically as well—in short, if you grew up playing *Streets of Rage* and *River City Ransom*, the Scott Pilgrim game will be more enjoyable at the level of muscle memory. In this sense, identification of the game with its various intertexts is framed not only by ideological and affective investments in its sources, but by the investment of time made over years of playing similar games. Even while most will agree that Wright's film is an adaptation of O'Malley's comic, and that *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World: The Game* is an adaptation of both, all of these works make strategic use of the pleasures of performing identification. Quibbles about whether or not the comic “is” an adaptation of Toronto, or anything else, can distract from the critical opportunities afforded by studying the effects of adaptive identification: what the Scott Pilgrim franchise *does* with the suturing vehicle of adaptation.

One possible consequence of approaching adaptation as a suturing discourse is that the cultural objects, which become the material sites of adaptive identification, could be

unfairly downplayed. That is, even if the performance of identification is a crucial part of how adaptations function *as adaptations*, it could be challenged as lopsidedly favouring a purely reception-oriented perspective. Something needs to be said regarding the production of physical materials—the various books, films, comics, games, and so on—that circulate under the cultural label of adaptation. In the next chapter, I look more closely at some of the cultural and industrial mechanisms that foster the identification of certain works as adaptations, and the historical contingency of what Simone Murray calls a “material” approach to adaptation, in order to show that reception and production are not so easily disentangled from one another as might initially seem.

Chapter 2. Mapping Clouds

Decentralizing formal models of adaptation does not do away with the need to understand the material bases of cultural objects that *get called* adaptation; it highlights the need to better understand the complex processes through which adaptations get produced as such. On the one hand, in saying this, I mean to draw attention to the importance of how adaptations are produced by technical means within specific industrial contexts. To this end, and by leaning on the term “material” at the outset of this chapter, I am invoking the sense Simone Murray employs in her recent work, *The Adaptation Industry*:

[T]his book’s key aim is to rethink adaptation, not as an exercise in comparative textual analysis of individual print works and their screen versions, but as a *material* phenomenon produced by a system of interlinked interests and actors. In short, adaptation studies urgently needs to divert its intellectual energies from a questionable project of aesthetic evaluation, and instead begin to understand adaptation economically and institutionally. To do so, it is necessary to move out from under the aegis of long-dominant formalist and textual analysis traditions to investigate what cognate fields of cultural research might have to offer adaptation studies in terms of alternative methodologies. (16-7, emphasis original)

While I agree with Murray that adaptation studies has much to gain by expanding its methodological toolset to better take stock of the interlinked systems of adaptation production, I am less persuaded regarding the “urgency” with which the field should turn from textual analysis. I am rather more inclined to side with Kyle Meikle, who notes that the adaptation industry “is everywhere shot through with chips of textual analysis” (“Network” 261), and that “producers are adaptation critics too, constantly involved in comparative textual analysis” (“Network” 262). Meikle’s arguments here, moreover, show points of affinity with D.F. McKenzie’s “sociology of texts.” McKenzie stresses the imbrication of the

material or indexical aspects of books⁶⁶ (physical bibliography's traditional focus⁶⁷) and the interpretive activities of the human agents involved in their production, dissemination, and reception. He writes:

In the pursuit of historical meanings, we move from the most minute feature of the material form of the book to questions of authorial, literary, and social context. These all bear in turn on the ways in which texts are then re-read, re-edited, re-designed, re-printed, and re-published. If a history of readings is made possible only by a comparative history of books, it is equally true that a history of books will have no point if it fails to account for the meanings they later come to make. (42)

The point that McKenzie highlights by drawing attention to the “re-”transmission of texts is that their ongoing circulation depends on processes of repeating earlier versions. The ideal editorial circumstance might be exact duplication from an original source, but honestly accounting for both the physical forms and meanings that texts “come to make” requires acknowledging that such ideals do not necessarily reflect historical practice. Shunting textual analysis in an effort to understand the “material” aspects of adaptation therefore naïvely disregards the important ways that the physical production of texts gets caught up in processes of interpretation.

Accordingly, I am interested in exploring how the production of adaptations as such involves various deployments of “adaptation” as a suturing concept by producers and receivers of media—deployments which often hinge on textual interpretation. Even Murray eventually concedes that her methodological framework can help to show “the impact of this encompassing system on the semiotic surface of texts” (*Industry* 77). To my mind, the

⁶⁶ While McKenzie does tend to centralize the book in the discussion I cite, it is because his primary audience consists of bibliographers and book historians. McKenzie is, however, clear that his “sociology of texts” is intended to be inclusive of “verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, videos, and any computer-stored information, everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography. There is no evading the challenge which those new forms have created” (37).

⁶⁷ McKenzie cites Sir Walter Greg’s influential statement regarding the purpose of bibliography: “what the bibliographer is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with certain written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks; their meaning is no business of his” (qtd. in McKenzie 36).

more urgent task is to understand the processes that link the “semiotic surface” of texts to an understanding of physical material in terms of adaptation. Textual analysis can help with this project, even if it does not suffice as the sole critical tool.⁶⁸

The central claim of this chapter is that as much as adaptations are made through the technical construction of cultural objects, *adaptation* is made through the deployment of authorizing and suturing discourses that constitute certain materials as adaptations. These discourses are evident in a variety of production and reception contexts: in the purchasing of intellectual property rights for the explicit legal purpose of adaptation; in remixes and fan productions that tread grey legal territory; in the marketing of commercial products through appeals to familiarity; in the public endorsements of the agents ostensibly responsible for producing source materials; and in the online discussions of fan communities that stake claims about the kinds of repetitions that matter most with respect to a beloved work. These are only a few examples of sites where adaptation discourse can shape the meaning of specific media texts. In other words, what makes an adaptation *an adaptation* does not need to be located in the object at an ontological level if we see it as part of how the object *gets located* within various social, institutional, and material processes. The pertinent question is not “is *x* an adaptation?” but “in what ways does the identification of *x* with *y* become authorized as adaptation?”

As a starting point for examining adaptation as a suturing mechanism, I want to focus on the idea of authorship before opening my discussion up to other concepts and institutions pertinent to the constitution of adaptation in material terms. Patrick Faubert highlights the importance of the author when it comes to reining in the dizzying scope of the intertextual paradigm:

⁶⁸ Murray herself uses textual analysis in one chapter “not as cinematic close-reading for its own sake, but to investigate what these screen texts reveal about the adaptation industry from which they emerge” (106). In this same chapter, however, she writes, “Unfortunately for [Graham] Huggan the riptide of textual analysis proves too strong, and in the same article in which he makes this perceptive observation he devotes a lengthy section to analysing the treatment of the theme of history in various Booker-nominated texts” (108).

[I]ntertextuality poses a problem. By pointing to a network of textual connections that threatens to be limitless, it risks devaluing the specific projects of appropriation in which adaptations may be engaged. Concerned with establishing a manageable framework in which to contain the study of adaptations, a number of critics have turned to authorship—indeed, to the authorial intent discernible in the secondary work, in the adaptation. Hutcheon, for example, in comparing the multiple twentieth-century adaptations of a single story, uses authorial intent to negotiate the different sets of meanings they develop. Using biographical details, she establishes for each adapter a set of authorial concerns that explain the aesthetic and narrative changes each imposes on the original work. She thereby constrains a potentially vast object of study within a twofold category: who adapts and why (see 95-105). (Faubert 4)

What strikes me about the above passage is the way that authorship emerges as an explanatory mechanism; it is a way to constrain the proliferation of meaning by narrativizing change, consolidating textual difference in the historical circumstance of a specific figure. Neither Faubert nor Hutcheon are, however, simply advocating a reductionist form of biographical criticism, where authorial intent is the origin and guarantee of a work's meaning. Instead, they each offer a rather more nuanced view that suggests how New Critical and Post-Structuralist turns away from connecting authorship to the meaning of a work are themselves potentially reductionist in their overcorrection, especially insofar as these approaches have been adopted in adaptation studies. Authors *do* after all have intentions that impact the cultural products they work on. And, in various ways, these intentions are discernable from the texts themselves; this is especially true for adaptations, where the differences revealed through comparative analysis can be confirmed as intentional choices when corroborated by the extra-textual comments of adapters, creators, producers, and authors involved at the many stages of adaptation production.⁶⁹

Then again, the statements of authors cannot be presumed neutral, or necessarily reliable. For example, the co-creators of the graphic novel *Watchmen* (1986/1987), Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, offer radically different views on Zak Snyder's film adaptation, but their comments need to be contextualized according to their very different economic

⁶⁹ Cf. Hutcheon (*A Theory* 109-11).

and political interests. Alan Moore has a notoriously vexed relationship with both Hollywood and the American comics industry, which he has discussed at length in interviews. After a negative experience with the adaptation of *A League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999/2003), Moore insisted that his name not be associated with anything based on his body of work, the intellectual property rights for which had long since been auctioned away, and that all money due to him from adaptations be distributed to his co-creators.⁷⁰ But authorial endorsement is so important to Hollywood marketing strategies that Moore's name has been used against his will. In the lead up to the film premiere of *V for Vendetta* (2005), producer Joel Silver claimed that Moore, who wrote the source comic in collaboration with Gibbons, endorsed the film. Moore has since stated, in a tone that has come to characterize most of his comments about commercial moviemaking, that Silver "had been 'economical' with the truth and had announced that I was really excited about that worthless film."⁷¹ By contrast, Gibbons, who has financially benefitted from Moore's refusal to be involved in the adaptation industry, tends to speak favourably about adaptations of their co-created work. This is not to say that his motivations for doing so are purely financial, but his economic and political history with the adaptation industry is much rosier than Moore's. Thus, there is an important backstory to consider when Moore says, "The 'Watchmen' film sounds like more regurgitated worms,"⁷² and Gibbons says, "I think the way that it finally has been made is just great. I honestly can't imagine it being made much better. I couldn't say it's perfect, but then the graphic novel it was based on wasn't perfect. I can't imagine it being a more faithful adaptation."⁷³ The contrast between these two perspectives is telling, and gives reason to be cautious when using statements of authorial intent as corroboration. Just as Gibbons leans on the discourse of fidelity to claim synchronicity between his intentions with the graphic novel and Snyder's intentions with the film, Moore would likely spew vitriol at the suggestion that a Hollywood film managed to express anything approaching his original vision.

⁷⁰ http://www.seraphemera.org/seraphemera_books/AlanMoore_Page2.html

⁷¹ http://www.seraphemera.org/seraphemera_books/AlanMoore_Page1.html

⁷² <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/uncategorized/alan-moore-on-w/>

⁷³ http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/watchmen/news/1834403/dave_gibbons_talks_watchmen/

Nevertheless, audiences often draw on what they understand of authorial intention when forming interpretations of a work. As Hutcheon writes, “When giving meaning and value to an adaptation *as an adaptation*, audiences operate in a context that includes their knowledge and their own interpretation of the adapted work. That context may also include information about the adapter, thanks to both journalistic curiosity and scholarly digging” (Hutcheon *A Theory* 111). This is to say that even if the consolidating effect of authorial intention does not necessarily fix meaning at a text’s supposed point of origin, audiences sometimes use it that way. Understood in this regard, the importance of “deliberate” adaptation is caught up in the perceivability of an intention to adapt. It may seem an obvious point, but an audience’s belief that an adapter intended to adapt a work helps to authorize the interpretation of an adaptation as such. Less obvious, however, is that this authorization does not require the audience to consider the *veracity* of what they “know” about the intentions behind a work.

Intentionality, however, is only a springboard for my discussion of authorship going forward, and it is only notable here for its potential to foster the constitution of an adaptation *as such* irrespective of how reliable a given statement of intent might be. I should note, just as my approach allowed me in the previous chapter to study misidentification alongside more orthodox notions of adaptation, my focus in this chapter is both on the authorization of adaptation as such and on the contingency of adaptive suturing. To clarify, my overarching interest is in how cultural objects come to be understood palimpsestically as repetitions of precursor works, even if the discourse surrounding the processes of palimpsestic layering do not insist on their categorization as adaptation. What matters more, to my mind, are the effects of suturing discourses that might well be considered adaptive in an inclusive sense: part of how the affective “bug” of intertextual identification works as a kind of survival strategy, bound up in processes of cultural reproduction that may or may not lead to “successful” adaptation—by which I mean to say the successful categorization of “repetition without replication” *as* adaptation. I stress “may or may not” because failures to classify intertextual repetition as adaptation have much to tell us about the cultural work carried out through the performance of identification, and indeed might prove crucial in

revealing the various historical, cultural, and institutional reasons that some works come to be adaptations while others do not.

As a way to ground my exploration of authorship, and as a lead-in to discussing other authorizing functions central to the material constitution of adaptation as such, I begin this chapter by turning to David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. Mitchell's novel is a useful touchstone because it is both an adapted work and a work about processes of textual survival that may or may not be classed as adaptation. Moreover, its own authorship is quite complicated, involving generic appropriation, collaboration, and (especially when considered alongside the 2012 film) adaptation. Its narrative is also to some extent about the nuances of authorship viewed from a number of vantage points: a broad historical span, intersections between media forms, the legacy of physical documents, genre, and the inevitable discrepancies between intention and interpretation. When juxtaposed with the film version of *Cloud Atlas*, what emerges is a nuanced account of authorship as bound up in the authorizing discourses that shape the material bases of media. In other words, both the industrial products and the thematic projects of this case offer perspectives on the material nexus between authorship, authorization, survival, and adaptation.

Authorized versions and adaptive mistruths

Who is the author of *Cloud Atlas*, and who are the authors within *Cloud Atlas*? Perhaps a more basic question needs to be answered first: to which artistic object do I refer when I use the title *Cloud Atlas*? Is it the novel by David Mitchell? Is it the film directed by Tom Tykwer and the Wachowski siblings? Or is it the musical sextet, "The Cloud Atlas," composed by Robert Frobisher, a fictional character who appears in both the novel and the film titled *Cloud Atlas*? The way that I have phrased these questions, it would seem that I am looking for a singular answer, but I do not think that is really possible or even desirable. More satisfying, perhaps, might be to ask what we want or need from the concept of authorship. What kind of work does the designation or identification of authorial figures perform?

I will start with the novel, which bears only one authorial signature on its cover, but of course this does not mean that its authorship is a simple matter of solitary creative output. Unpacking the popular notion of Romantic authorship—i.e. the author as a solitary, original, genius—Mark Rose argues that this modern figure is a historical and legal production, defined less by original output than by proprietorship: “the author,” he writes, “is conceived as the originator and therefore the owner of a special kind of commodity, the work” (1). Put differently, the function that the concept of authorship performs is to *link* origination with ownership, and to consolidate that relationship in an individual rights holder. What matters here is not so much the origin story of the novel itself, as it is the *link* which constructs the writer as the author. If we look more closely at how the work called *Cloud Atlas* came to be, or how a printed artifact titled *Cloud Atlas* came to be located in a given place and time, the matter involves, as Robert Darnton points out, agents, publishers, printers, suppliers, shippers, booksellers, bookbinders, and readers, in addition to the writer whose name is on the cover (12). Authorship as a suturing mechanism also allows Mitchell to stand out as the owner of the intellectual property expressed in the novel irrespective of his willingness to admit various intertextual debts: “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing” is modeled after Moby Dick; “Letters from Zedelghem” takes inspiration from Christopher Isherwood and Evelyn Waugh; “The Luisa Rey Mystery” is meant to be an airport novel; and so on.⁷⁴ Of course, this is just to reiterate the well-trodden notion that intertextuality complicates simple notions of authorial origination.

What interests me is less that David Mitchell might not be a completely original genius after all, and more that *Cloud Atlas* both performs its generic mimicry and narrativizes a specific line of intertextual and intermedial influence. Each of the six sections is positioned as an influence in the section which succeeds it, all of which centralize different media. “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing” is a handwritten document that Robert Frobisher reads, and finds inspiration in, while composing both “The Cloud Atlas” sextet and a series of letters about his experience in Zedelghem. These letters lead Luisa Rey, in the next section, to a

⁷⁴ Mitchell has commented on these points of inspiration in various interviews and on the special features of the *Cloud Atlas* Blu-Ray. One exemplary interview is available here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17231-2004Aug19.html>

recorded version of the sextet. Luisa's story is framed as the draft of a novel, which is sent to Timothy Cavendish, the publisher protagonist of the following chapter, who reads it throughout his story. Cavendish's adventure implicitly becomes a screenplay, although Mitchell's novel never uses screenplay formatting as a literary device, and it ends up as a film adaptation viewed by Sonmi-451. Sonmi's story is digitally archived as an oral history, and (finally) winds up forming the basis of the oral culture underpinning the narrative in "Sloosha's Crossing," the sixth chapter.

By self-consciously staging the documentations, influences, and adaptations that shape the meaning and power of a given text, *Cloud Atlas* suggests that authorship, understood either in terms of origination or ownership, proves relatively meaningless on a long enough timeline. Rather, what ultimately seems important is the way that texts get caught up in the consecration of authority: the processes by which artifacts authorize agents (and vice versa) in specific ways and to specific ends. In his examination of authorship in the art world, Boris Groys writes, "art today is defined by an identity between creation and selection. Today an author is someone who selects, who authorizes" (92). Building from this understanding, and moving from the art world to my central focus on adaptation theory, we might understand authorship less in terms of ownership and origination than in terms of how particular artifacts and texts shift in meaning, significance, and effect, relative to various authorizing forces; ownership and origination are still quite relevant to this view, but they must be seen to work alongside other authorizing forces and processes of selection. Barthes' famous critique of authorship builds around his claim that "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (147), to which he objects, "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (148). Groys' examination of authorship and authorization offers a way to acknowledge and grapple with the reality that texts have multiple origins and destinations, when understood along a long enough timeline, and that limits are imposed on texts over and over again, framing and reframing them for new situations, new environments, and new audiences, who are themselves involved in complex processes of selection that impact the work. To wit, writing *gets closed* repeatedly, and not just by giving a text an Author. And the processes that close it

or reopen it impact the ways that we understand the “it” in question: as writing, as text, as media, as content, as cultural artifact, and as adaptation.

To keep my analysis of *Cloud Atlas* somewhat reined in, so that I have space to consider other cases later on in this chapter, I will focus primarily on the authorizations that link “The Orison of Sonmi-451” with “Sloosha’s Crossing.” The orison itself begins as a digital archival document, and Sonmi uses the institutional need for documentation against the very institution that wants to record her story, for posterity, before executing her. The irony for the state is that the preservation of her story makes possible the ongoing circulation of her revolutionary message—that is, until the revolution implicitly succeeds, and civilization collapses, which in turn provides the historical precursor to the post-apocalyptic narrative of “Sloosha’s Crossing.” In the distant future setting of the Sloosha narrative, Sonmi’s archival footage largely ceases to be accessible, digital recording devices being utterly baffling to Zachry, the central character, and his people, The Valleysmen. But the legacy of Sonmi’s recorded and circulated story persists in oral culture, or at least a version of it does, a version which recasts Sonmi’s revolutionary legend as gospel and consecrates Sonmi herself as a god. Thus it is only in a subsequent chapter that the orison in the title of chapter five comes to exist as such, as a prayer, as the wisdom of a divine authority.

A number of authorizations are worth noting in the narrative just described, insofar as they raise a question that complicates links between authorship, ownership, origination, and meaning: namely, who might we say is the author of the orison? The story originates in the life experience of Sonmi, but it only circulates because the archivist records Sonmi speaking—and its survival through this act of documentation is a point I will return to below. The record is owned by the state, at least for a time, but as the state implicitly dissolves and the legend begins to disseminate through oral culture, its authorship would seem to exist somewhere in the relationship between the storytellers who keep the tale alive, inevitably transforming it as they go, and the figure whose divinity is authorized by means of the telling, Sonmi herself. Accordingly, the meaning of the artifact shifts in line with how it has been authorized, which itself is conditioned by how the narrative has been accessed. For

example, its sacred meaning, for Zachry, is complicated when the technologically-enabled Meronym plays a copy of Sonmi's archived orison (Mitchell 264, 277). Outside of the novel, the generic modeling of Sonmi's chapter allows readers to treat the narrative as dystopian sci-fi action, and make meaning of it in those terms, but the form of the narrative—an interview between the archivist and Sonmi—as well as the framing of the story as an official record is not diegetically meaningful as science fiction. Within the story itself, the official interview acts variously as life-writing, archival document, and (later) hallowed legend. These structures of access, ownership, and authorization, together make pinpointing the authorship of Sonmi's Orison seem an increasingly misguided pursuit; its meaning, its cultural effects, and even its material bases cannot be consolidated effectively in a single figure for very long. Authorization of the writing in one context closes it one way, but only for a time before new contexts, new modes of access, and new processes of selection reopen, reframe, and reauthorize it.

I noted above that the institutional authorization that attends Sonmi's narrative becoming an official document is part of what ensures its circulation and preservation—in short, its survival—over time. Before I begin discussing how the film adaptation of *Cloud Atlas* further complicates what I have already discussed, I want to bring one more set of critical perspectives to bear on the broader link between adaptation, authorization, and survival. The history of the book, as an academic field, offers methods that are especially valuable for thinking through physical artifacts as products of social history. In particular, communication circuits attempt to map the movement of books as artifacts through the various stages that have an impact on their material formation and reproduction over long periods of time. As I mentioned earlier, Robert Darnton's approach to studying the history of books provides a powerful way to complicate notions of solitary authorship. But Darnton does much more than highlight all the various agents involved in the production, dissemination, and reception of books; he emphasizes their impact on one another as part of a publishing network. Thomas Adams and Nicholas Barker, however, make the case that the material artifact ends up being somewhat incidental in Darnton's circuit, which is better suited to a social history of print culture than a history of the book as a physical object. Where the nodes in Darnton's model are defined according to the agents involved

(publishers, printers, shippers, etc.), Adams and Barker define theirs according to “five events in the life of a book – publishing, manufacturing, distribution, reception, and survival” (53). This latter category is especially important for thinking about the circulation and preservation of cultural works, and it is a key reason that I bring up book history methods in the context of the textual survival staged throughout *Cloud Atlas*. Where Darnton’s loop closes at the link between readers and authors, as a way to acknowledge that writers are influenced by the material they read, Adams and Barker stress that, “Completing the circuit – the return from survival to publication – is the fuel of the dynamics of the book.... [U]nless a prototype has survived no decision can be made to republish and thus start the process all over again under different circumstances” (61). Writers play a key role in the circulation of books, and those writers may well be readers, but more crucial to the *ongoing* circulation of any given book is its material survival to the point where a publisher-as-reader decides to reprint it and start the cycle over again.

In the context of adaptation studies, however, communication circuits need careful consideration. Closing the circuit does not necessarily work in quite the same way when attempting to understand adaptations as adaptations. Book history methods are valuable for, among other things, the ways they stress the importance of physical differences between particular instantiations of the “same” work: that is, between different physical artifacts that feature the particular content of a given novel, play, poem, etc. In the context of book history, the “sameness” of the content is not really what is at stake; the physical features of the artifacts themselves are of more interest. In adaptation studies, however, “sameness” is a pressing concern, as my first chapter explores at length. Accordingly, using methods borrowed from book history to study adaptation draws attention to a complicated set of concerns regarding the material specificities of adaptive works. On the one hand, since adaptations do indeed require physical materials (paper, celluloid, silicon, sets, props, etc.), they circulate in ways that communication circuits could effectively map. On the other hand, adaptations exist as physical objects *independent* of their adaptive status. In other words, what makes an adaptation *an adaptation* cannot be located at the level of the physical artifact alone. This means that developing an adaptation-specific circuit—one which maps the circulation and reproduction of adaptations *as adaptations* over long periods of time—cannot simply

account for the artifacts as such; it would also need to account for the aspects of social history that suture specific artifacts together with the category of adaptation. Book history models are well developed for their purposes, but what would adaptation studies need to do to make effective use of such models? What would need to change in order to study the material circulation of specifically those artifacts that come to be known as adaptations? In what follows, I look more closely at the challenges of developing an adaptation-centric communication circuit in order to more effectively unpack relationships between material survival, industrial production, and the situated deployment of adaptation discourse.

One of my reasons for drawing attention to Darnton and Adams and Barker is that, thanks chiefly to Simone Murray's research, the circuit model has emerged in adaptation studies as a valuable method for thinking about adaptation "as a *material* phenomenon" (*Industry* 16, emphasis original). The model she proposes focuses on what she calls the "adaptation industry"—a collection of media conglomerates whose corporate structures were made possible by political shifts in the early 1980s (*Industry* 20). Murray's particular interest in this industry has to do with six "stakeholder groups," variously connected throughout the contexts of contemporary book publishing and film/television production: "authors; agents; publishers, writers' and film festival directors; literary prize-judging committees; screenwriters; and producers and distributors" (*Industry* 20). There are, however, a number of differences worth noting between her model and those developed for studying the history of the book. For one, Murray drops the historical focus of the circuit, or rather hones in on a single contemporary mode of production. To be sure, Murray claims that her circuit is developed according to an "awareness of the historical specificity of book industry structures," and her claim holds true for the post-1980 context that she centralizes (*Industry* 20). But her model *only* works in the specific historical context she attends to, whereas Darnton stresses that the circuit model needs to be flexible enough that it can accommodate projects focused on any temporal period in the history of the book (11). If adaptation studies wanted to look at a more inclusive historical range, at the role that adaptation plays in the survival of texts over longer stretches of time, what would such a circuit model have to contend with? Would it still be possible to "materialize" adaptation in the way Murray advocates?

The synchronic focus of Murray's circuit points toward another important difference between her model and those of the book historians: namely, its intended purpose. Part of the reason Darnton prioritizes historical inclusivity is because his overall goal is to highlight a structure of relationships that, in their interconnectedness, bring together seemingly disparate topics under the umbrella of one academic field. Adams and Barker echo this concern:

The artifact and its uses thus defined, what kind of structure can we create that will encompass all aspects of the subject in such a way that the work of those who specialize in one part of the field will not be lost to those who work in other parts, for whom it might have some bearing?
(53)

This unifying gesture seems to have been an early priority for Murray that faded as her project developed. In 2008, Murray published an essay titled, "Materializing Adaptation Theory," which would later be revised into the introductory chapter of *The Adaptation Industry*. In her essay, she writes, "It is hoped that the project proposed here clears sufficient methodological ground for others to examine in detail the specific economies of adaptation between other mediums—or even, more ambitiously, to attempt to chart the workings of the entire cross-media adaptation industry in macro perspective. ("Materializing" 12). Although she merely calls it ambitious, Murray here acknowledges a major problem for making circuit models functional within adaptation studies; however challenging it may be to define "the book" as an artifact,⁷⁵ a "material" approach to adaptation requires the definition of multiple artifacts in multiple media formats at their various points of intersection. Accordingly, her optimism about a macro model disappears in *The Adaptation Industry*, where she writes, "an analysis that aims to map in some detail the industrial workings of the adaptation economy cannot hope to chart the workings of the entire adaptation process between the full gamut of media industries" (143). So, between its contemporary focus and its novel/screen format-limited scope, the purpose of Murray's circuit model is increasingly inseparable from the analysis of a limited (but powerful) set of contemporary production systems built around adaptation—albeit only the kind of adaptation-as-commodity that this industry centralizes.

⁷⁵ Adams and Barker acknowledge this challenge explicitly (50-53).

The limitations she imposes, however, are necessary both in order to maintain a manageable academic scope and in order to keep the “materialization” of adaptation studies as a through-line in her project. Accordingly, my goal here is not so much to criticize Murray’s work, but to draw attention to what the limits of her project evince: an adaptation circuit will stumble when it gets to the point of defining its object *as* a material artifact. If Adams and Barker develop their circuit by first defining “the artifact and its uses,” what can one do if the material definition of the artifact *as such* is historically contingent? I ask this question because, on a physical level, the difference between a book and a book that is adapted from another source is potentially nil. There will, as book history methods demonstrate, be differences between particular books that happen to “be” adaptations, but these differences will not be *because* those books are adaptations. The same can be said for drama, film, graphic novels, video games, songs, theme park rides, merchandise, etcetera—their significance as adaptations is not inherently located in their physical properties. So how could an adaptation-centric circuit model focused on the “material transmission” of texts meaningfully differentiate itself from any ostensibly non-adaptation-focused circuit? Murray is only able to do so because the adaptation industry she focuses on requires the maintenance of adaptation in material—which is to say *ownable*—terms. Although she gives the adaptation industry a rough starting date of 1980, the very sense of “adaptation” that this industry profits from also has its own historically specific points of emergence and consolidation.

While a thorough historicization of “adaptation” as a term for describing altered versions of an existing work is not my focus in this dissertation, it is worth noting that the Oxford English Dictionary traces this use of “adaptation” to the early 18th Century,⁷⁶ and Mark Rose hones in on the enactment of the Statute of Anne in 1710 as a key moment in the formation of “original” authorship around the “question of literary property” (Rose 4-8). Evocatively, for my purposes, Rose writes, “After all, authors do not really create in any literal sense, but rather produce texts through complex processes of adaptation and

⁷⁶ “adaptation, n.” Def. 4. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2014. Web. 10 September 2014.

transformation” (8). Once again, there is good reason to question what delimits adaptation from representation in general, and one compelling response to this problem dovetails with the historical development of authorship discourse.

This digression aside, when Adams and Barker define the book as an artifact and as a function of social history, and build their circuit around it, they stress two key factors. One, the material objects in question involve “something printed or written in multiple copies that its agent, be it author, stationer, printer or publisher, or any combination thereof, produces for public consumption,” and two, “the agent’s intention involves the process of duplication, so that more than one person can have access to what is on the paper” (51). Their first factor is something I have already complicated with respect to any adaptation-focused circuit by noting that the difference between adaptations and non-adaptations does not come down to differences of physical material. Adaptations are produced for public consumption, but cannot be easily restricted in any way that would align with “something printed or written in multiple copies.” Surely, some adaptations are printed or written, but this is not what makes them adaptations. To complicate the second factor I need only ask, what changes if the agent’s intention is not “duplication” but repetition without replication? This requires a careful rethinking of the “survival” that, for Adams and Barker, closes the loop of material transmission in the book circuit (i.e., through the material survival and reprinting of a “prototype”). With regard to adaptation, we could start by thinking about survival along the lines suggested by Julie Sanders: “[I]t is the very endurance and survival of the source text that enables the ongoing process of juxtaposed readings that are crucial to the cultural operations of adaptation, and the ongoing experiences of pleasure for the reader or spectator in tracing the intertextual relationships” (25). For the adaptation to survive *as adaptation* the knowing audience must have something to *know*, which will instigate the process of oscillation, or (to use Sanders’ terms instead of Hutcheon’s) that will trigger the “inherent sense of similarity and difference between the texts being invoked, and the connected interplay of expectation and surprise” (25). To use my own terms, in order to perform the identification of texts, the audience needs a precursor text to identify (with) across the gaps of material difference.

That said, the adaptation *as a material artifact* also must survive alongside knowledge of its ostensible source in order for its ongoing identification *as an adaptation*. This is another consequence of the observation that the adaptation exists as a physical object independent of its adaptive status. Its reprinting from an extant copy is therefore, like an ostensibly non-adaptive book, a key part of its survival strategy. However, such is to concede that an adaptation could be duplicated well after all copies and all cultural memory of its adapted text(s) cease to exist, and in that regard would no longer function as an adaptation.

An adaptation does not *need* to duplicate its source, however, in order to perform a significant function in the survival of its source text. Adams and Barker write, primarily in reference to scholars and critics, that books “continue to exist because more books are written about them and thus depend on them” (62). Adaptations work in a similar way to these critical responses, perpetuating the social relevance of the adapted text and shaping cultural memory surrounding it. As Bluestone notes, and as the proliferation of movie tie-in editions of books evince, adaptations tend to increase public demand for copies of the source (4). Thus, while an adaptation does not itself close the circuit of its source—i.e., by bringing extant material artifacts full circle back to the publishing node—it *encourages* the closing of that circuit and the survival of that text. Such “encouragement” is one of the significant cultural effects of the performance of identity.

Authorizing discourses also play an important role in this survival cycle. Murray helps to demonstrate one instance of the kind of authorization I have in mind in her discussion of celebrity authorship. She writes:

What the field has rarely to date examined is how celebrity author branding attaches itself additionally to incarnations *of this same book-derived content in other media formats*. The authorial appearance at a film’s premiere endorses not only the value (cultural and economic) of the adapted book, but is also designed to validate the broader franchise with which the book is associated.

(*Industry* 35-36, emphasis original)

In other words, when a celebrity author endorses an adaptation, the authorizing effect ripples out beyond the film to the various versions, created in multiple media formats, that ultimately tie back to, and in several ways extend the life of, the adapted text. Murray’s

emphasis on the “sameness” of the book-derived content, however, stands out as worth thinking carefully about. Although Murray’s argument, following from what I have quoted above, is ultimately that adaptation helps to replicate and circulate the “brand” of the celebrity author, more needs to be said regarding another set of replications and circulations caught up in this circumstance. In brief, the attachment of the author’s brand to the content of the adaptation also helps to disseminate the very notion that the adaptation’s content *is* the “same” as that in the book. In other words, the authorization performed by the endorsement of the author has a suturing effect, insisting on intertextual affinities in ways that foster, without necessitating, the performance of identification. When Murray draws attention to “film tie-in cover designs,” which I have already suggested are involved in textual survival strategies, she argues that they work alongside other promotional materials that all effectively become a “repository of a celebrity author’s identity” (36). Again, the suturing effect of these materials should be noted; “tie-ins” do precisely the cultural work that their moniker suggests, tying media ever closer to one another across various gaps of difference, authorizing the interpretation that the derived content is the “same” as that content which it is derived from. These two kinds of cultural work—the circulation of a celebrity brand identity and the fostering of intertextual identity—operate in a mutually reinforcing dynamic. The adaptation helps to replicate and disseminate the celebrity of the author, whose status as celebrity shapes the cultural meaning of works tied to the brand.

While an adaptation-specific communication circuit is not, in my opinion, ultimately worth pursuing, noting its limits and pressure points helps to demonstrate the nuanced effects adaptation as a suturing discourse can have on the survival of artworks. Bearing in mind the tensions I highlighted by means of the adaptation circuit, I want to return now to the narrative of textual survival showcased in *Cloud Atlas*. We might ask, to what extent does the divine legend of Sonmi duplicate the content of the sources from which it is derived—the oral history she narrates to the archivist and its documentation in a digital format—and to what extent does it repeat this content without replicating it? To phrase it differently, does Sonmi’s story survive through republication or adaptation? And if neither, then how might we approach the palimpsestic layering that characterizes the survival of her orison? Arguably, both republication and adaptation play a role in the ways that the orison circulates and

transforms, although the details of the time between the interview and the narrative of “Sloosha’s Crossing” are not narrated in Mitchell’s novel, so any claims in this regard are speculative. But, presumably, the archived version of the orison that Zachry encounters would not need to be the selfsame object created during the interview with Sonmi; the orison might well have survived through the kind of duplication that Adams and Barker’s circuit emphasizes: i.e., through the production of new material objects that reproduce (and foster the survival of) the duplicated content. At the same time, the cultural reproductions that led from the official record of Sonmi’s orison to the oral legends repeated by the Vallegymen could well have involved any number of adaptations—in the orthodox sense of that term—throughout the implied interval of time between chapters. Much as I suggested that the question of who authors Sonmi’s Orison is somewhat misguided, the question of whether or not these versions of Sonmi’s story are adaptations or republications strikes me as less worthy of study than the processes of authorization involved in the circulation, transformation, and survival of all that gets consolidated over time in her name. Scaling up from Sonmi’s story to *Cloud Atlas* as a whole, we could similarly think about all of the cultural materials that create links between chapters in the terms of authorization and survival. And stepping just outside the narrative world of *Cloud Atlas*, we could think about its film adaptation in much the same way.

Turning to the film, then, *Cloud Atlas* (2012) presents a few more or less obvious complications with respect to authorship, particularly as understood in line with the origination/ownership link I derived from Mark Rose. The scale of a production like *Cloud Atlas* and the multi-track nature of film means that there are kinds of artistic collaborations involved in its creation that do not occur in the writing of a book. People had to compose and record “The Cloud Atlas” sextet that we hear during the film, for example.⁷⁷ Even if we could consolidate the authorship of a film in the figure of the director, as some Auteur Theory might have it,⁷⁸ *Cloud Atlas* is collaboratively directed. Its screenplay is also collaboratively written by the directors, which would perhaps bolster their claim to

⁷⁷ The soundtrack lists Tom Tykwer, Reinhold Heil, and Johnny Klimek as the composers of “The Cloud Atlas” sextet.

⁷⁸ C.f. Hutcheon on the acceptance of intentionality in Auteur theory (108).

auteurship. Jack Boozer argues that the screenplay is a key site of authorial consolidation in the making of an adaptation, writing, “It is the screenplay, not the source text, that is the most direct foundation and fulcrum for any adapted film” (4). This claim offers an interesting play off of Bluestone’s argument, explored in chapter one, that the shift from screenplay to screen is where the real process of (medium-specific) mutation occurs. Boozer would seem to argue that the screenwriter is as much (or more) the author of the adaptation as the filmmakers, whereas Bluestone would insist that the adaptation is created in the transition to film, implying a strong link between directorship and adaptive authorship. But the question of origination in the creative line from novel to screenplay to film is complicated for the adaptation of *Cloud Atlas*. In an article for *The Independent*, David Mitchell recalls the table-read of the screenplay for *Cloud Atlas*: “I was sitting next to Lana Wachowski and when a line earned a particularly strong response I'd whisper, 'Was that one of yours or one of mine?' The tally was about 50/50, I think.”⁷⁹ So even though Mitchell had no direct role in the writing of the screenplay, its authorship still sits to some extent with the dialogue, and so on, that he wrote.

Nevertheless, with the adaptation of *Cloud Atlas*, the screenplay is particularly important because the film is so structurally distinct from the novel; where Mitchell tells his six stories like a set of nesting dolls, moving linearly from one through six and then back from six to one, Tykwer and the Wachowskis wrote a screenplay that weaves the stories through one another continuously from start to end. And even as this bolsters their claim to auteurship, the complexity of the film’s structure draws attention to the crucial role of the film editor, Alexander Berner, who worked with an entire team of other editors to pull off the interweaving narrative for the final cut.

Less obvious forces also complicate the authorship of *Cloud Atlas*, both in terms of ownership and authorization. As Murray lays out, the industrial system that enables films like *Cloud Atlas* to be produced and distributed generally treats “the book” in ways that involve a “dematerialisation” of texts (84). That is, the adaptations she focuses on are bought, sold,

⁷⁹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/cloud-atlas-time-to-say-goodbye-to-your-characters-8471754.html>

and traded at industry fora like the Frankfurt Book Fair in ways that decenter the material artifacts; centralized instead are bundles of intellectual property rights—rights to duplicate physical books as much as to distribute electronic ones across multiple platforms or to adapt the works to different “content platforms” (83-5). In the case of *Cloud Atlas*, the film and distribution rights are not owned by one person, or even by one studio, and the patchwork financing arrangement of the film had a tangible effect on its production and reception. Quoted in *The Guardian*, producer Stefan Arndt says, “Our plan in the beginning was to have a much more coordinated release.... But what happens if you have 20 territories with 20 investors with 20 opinions – in the end you cannot force your distributors to follow one strategy.”⁸⁰ A telling example of the effects of this arrangement is the 38 minute cut imposed by Chinese censors—an instance of authorization that produces a materially distinct version of the work.⁸¹

This is a good point at which to recall my argument, in the previous chapter, that fidelity is more of a political issue than an aesthetic one. The stakes for the Chinese distributor of the *Cloud Atlas* film, Dreams of the Dragon Pictures, were such that aesthetic fidelity either to Mitchell’s novel or the auteurist visions of Tykwer and the Wachowskis needed to be balanced against the situated politics of an international release. Yet, Philip Lee, executive producer of *Cloud Atlas*, insisted that Dreams of the Dragon were able to “protect the integrity of the film makers, our creativity and vision.”⁸² The veracity of Lee’s claim—as with Moore’s or Gibbons’ in regard to the *Watchmen* adaptation, cited earlier—matters less than the cultural work it performs: to tighten or loosen the sutures that bind texts to one another across various forms of difference. In the case of *Cloud Atlas*, thirty-eight minutes makes up nearly a quarter of the two hour and fifty-two minute running time of the North American version. To say that the *Cloud Atlas* released by Dreams of the Dragon is the same film as the *Cloud Atlas* released by Warner Bros. requires one to ignore, at the very least, the thirty-eight minutes of material difference between them.

⁸⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/feb/20/cloud-atlas-warner-bros>

⁸¹ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/cloud-atlas-cut-38-minutes-china-audience>

⁸² Ibid.

In the same regard, we could ask, what are the various cuts of *Blade Runner* (1982) to one another? The many editions of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855)? The iterations of *Minecraft* (2011) as it has moved from alpha, to beta, to an ostensibly final release that game developer Mojang nonetheless regularly updates with patches that materially alter both the content and the mechanics of the game? In each case, the works are all the "same" only in the loosest sense that allows us to map them onto one another and to historicize them according to a logic of continuity. So what they *are* to one another is a much less compelling conundrum than how they do or do not get authorized as versions of one another, or how one version becomes consecrated above the others as definitive. To say that adaptation theory has nothing to offer the study of the relationships between these versions—because none of them *are* adaptations in the orthodox sense—undervalues the conceptual potential of the field. On this note, I am once again invoking Richard Schechner's broad spectrum of performance—the "is" and the "as"—which I cited in my "Introduction." I will reiterate the point I made there: studying cultural phenomena *as* adaptation allows critics to look at how the very category of adaptation gets deployed towards different ends. As I draw my analysis of *Cloud Atlas* to a close, I want to draw this point into clearer connection with an idea articulated in chapter one—the object-status of an adaptation does not have to be "real" in order to be effective.

In the opening sequence of the film, Sonmi utters a line that appears nearly two hundred pages into the novel: "Truth is singular," she says, "Its 'versions' are mistruths" (Mitchell 185). In the film, this line runs immediately into an image of Timothy Cavendish at his typewriter, and a voice-over: "While my extensive experience as an editor has led me to a disdain for flashbacks and flash forwards and all such tricky gimmicks, I believe that if you, dear Reader, can extend your patience for just a moment, you will find there is a method to this tale of madness." This is a version of a line that appears in the novel: "As an experienced editor, I disapprove of flashbacks, foreshadowings, and tricky devices; they belong in the 1980s with M.A.s in postmodernism and chaos theory. I make no apology, however, for (re)starting my own narrative with my version of that shocking affair" (150). Cavendish demonstrates a personal awareness of the influence that editors have on the authorial process, but as an author unwilling to take his own advice, he retells an experience

according to the version that he would like to authorize, the material that he wants to survive. The film's juxtaposition of Cavendish's line with Sonmi's raises a cluster of issues and ironies—because what is the film *Cloud Atlas* but a version of a story that uses flashbacks and flashforwards to position six stories as versions of one another? If “versions” are, as Sonmi suggests, mistruths, then *Cloud Atlas* is an elaborate exercise in mistruth, and the version adapted to film doubly so. Indeed, insofar as her own story moves between sci-fi action adventure, state-sanctioned interview, archival document, and sacred legend, Sonmi's narrative survives only because certain mistruths are authorized in particular ways that foster their dissemination and perpetuation. Taken like this, mistruth is an adaptive strategy, stressing points of continuity in line with historically specific authorizing discourses that, through the selection and suturing of texts, encourage their survival—in one form or, it must be said, in another.

Keeping adaptive mistruth in mind, I will follow Mitchell's lead and end this section by returning to where I started: who are the authors of *Cloud Atlas*, to which artistic object do I refer when I use the title *Cloud Atlas*, and what do we need or want the concept of authorship to do? It strikes me that the latter question offers a rich starting point for complicating the first two. Authorship *as a concept* helps to create artistic objects by imposing on a patchwork of disparate and fragmentary influences an order that reduces the messy sprawl to a manageable and interpretable unity. This is to say that authorship is itself a kind of “cloud atlas,” the value of which is to suggest navigable permanence and stability on a system of shifting and ephemeral parts. My takeaway from this analogy is that a map of the clouds is less important for the reliability of its representation of the sky than for the snapshot it provides of a historically limited perspective, which gets authorized by its manifestation in a material form subject to duplication. But to make the claim that authorship offers a simplified interpretive schema does not take me very far beyond what I suggested at the beginning of this chapter when discussing how Faubert and Hutcheon use authorial intention to deal with the open-endedness of intertextuality. In addition to the stabilizing function of authorship, the multi-century historical span of *Cloud Atlas* illuminates the ways that authorial figures are themselves authorized over time by the versions of their narrative that manage to survive, as are the cultural works with which they come to be

linked. Accordingly, the materiality of cultural objects like adaptations cannot be divorced from their interpretation and their use, even if we tend to treat their object-status as self-evident. In short, adaptation and authorship alike carry out their cultural work by virtue of being authorized mistruths.

Digital culture and performative materiality

In chapter one, I used the principle of (non)identity to argue that adaptations cannot be reduced to form. So far in this chapter, the central point I have attempted to clarify is that what makes adaptations *adaptations* cannot be located at the level of physical material, even though adaptations are indeed expressed materially as physical (and cultural) objects. Going forward, I refer to this dynamic as the principle of (non)literal materiality—adaptations involve physical material but their materiality *as adaptations* cannot be reduced to the physical features of specific objects. Although I have used authorship as a heuristic to introduce the contours of this principle, the rest of this chapter asks, “what else authorizes the mistruth that adaptations *are* self-evidently *adaptations* at the level of the physical object?” Other questions closely follow: if an approach to adaptation in terms of literal materiality is misleading, why is this the case, and how else might we understand the materiality of adaptations? And does moving away from a notion of literal materiality necessitate moving away from sociological or industry-centered inquiry regarding the production of adaptations?

I have already suggested that Murray’s method for materializing adaptation studies relies on an industry-defined sense of what adaptation *is* in ownable terms. Her notion of “material” is complicated, however, because the systems of industry trade she looks at are sometimes less concerned with physical objects (e.g., books as artifacts) than with rights. Acknowledging this would seem to push discussions of the adaptation industry towards a non-literal understanding of materiality, but Murray characterizes rights-dealing as “dematerialized” and “driven by the mainstream uptake of digital media technologies” (84). In doing so, she implies a separation between the physical materiality of adaptations as objects of industrial production and the dematerialized commodity-status of adaptations as rights-bundles that can be bought, sold, and traded.

Moreover, the implication that digital media technologies drive this non-material side of the industry—because the “same” content can be distributed to various platforms—gives subtle expression to a prevalent myth of digital culture, wherein digital code is treated as self-identical with the digital content that appears on screens. As Johanna Drucker writes, “there is an underlying, or even overt, positivist ideology in the way the myth of digital code is being conceived in the public imagination,” further explaining that “the foundation of a digital ontology linked to a belief that mathematical code storage is equal to itself, is a truth that is based on identity irrespective of material embodiment” (“Digital Ontologies” 142-3). Such positivist ideologies do not only inform Murray’s understanding of digital content distribution, they inform the entire sense of materiality that her model of adaptation is built around. For all of her interest in studying how adaptations “come to be” in material terms—through examining the “institutional, commercial and legal frameworks” surrounding them (*Industry* 4)—Murray takes for granted an understanding of how material “comes to be” adaptation.

The distinction I am attempting to highlight with this turn of phrase moves from an understanding of cultural materials as ontologically given to an understanding of how materiality itself is produced in various ways. This approach takes its lead from Drucker, who writes:

Literal materiality is based on a mechanistic model that suggests that the specific properties of material artifacts or media can be read as if meaning were a self-evident product of form ... as if the cultural world were turned into a natural world and could be "read" with empirical, positivist methods, as if the detailed, minute, and careful description of physical properties reveals inherent or self-evident values (and as if a century or more of critical thinking had not occurred). (“Performative Materiality” par. 14)

It would not be quite accurate to say that Murray “reads” adaptation through empirical, positivist methods, as Brian McFarlane and others do; indeed, because her approach is designed to resist “reading” adaptations at all, it is more appropriate to say that Murray proceeds from a treatment of adaptation as already-read in these ways. In other words, she does not theorize a formal or ontological model of adaptive form so much as she inherits one.

That said, the point of Drucker’s argument is not to do away with or replace the insights of critics focused on literal materiality, but to extend those insights (“Performative Materiality” par. 4). Towards this end, Drucker offers the concept of performative materiality, which “suggests that what something is has to be understood in terms of what it does, how it works within machinic, systemic, and cultural domains” (“Performative Materiality” par. 4, emphasis original). At a glance, Drucker’s interest in the domains she lists appears to dovetail with Murray’s emphasis on studying the commercial, legal, and institutional frameworks of the adaptation industry. And, indeed, it does dovetail, but Drucker’s perspective helps to show how the materiality that these industries centralize is generated in response to cultural objects, not located at the level of their ontology:

In a model of materiality as fundamentally performative, we can show how forensic, evidentiary materiality and formal organization serve as a provocation for the creation of a reading as a constitutive interpretative act. The specific structures and forms, substrates and organizational features, are *probability conditions* for production of an interpretation. Knowledge creates the objects of its discourses, it does not "discover" them.

(“Performative Materiality” par. 17)

Here, Drucker puts forward a way to ground my performative model of adaptation in a nuanced theory of materiality. Accordingly, the material conditions of production—the institutional, economic, legal, and social mechanisms that Murray focuses on—remain relevant to the analysis that Drucker’s theory of materiality enables. The crucial shift between Murray’s interest in these mechanisms and my own comes with treating them not as the final word on how adaptations “come to be” produced but as “probability conditions.” This is to recognize that they act as frames or triggers—“semiotic flagging” to recall Jan Blommaert’s definition of discourse cited in my “Introduction”—which provoke but do not inherently determine the constitution of cultural objects in particular ways (including *as* adaptations), encouraging without necessitating particular modes of interpretation and use.

Given that Drucker’s notion of performative materiality is a response to emerging methods in the study of “new” and digital media, the bearing of issues related to digital culture on the future of adaptation studies is far from incidental. In an epilogue to the

second edition of Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, Siobhan O'Flynn highlights the impact that shifts in the prevalence of digital culture might have on the field:

What is probably the most significant shift since the 2006 publication of *A Theory of Adaptation* is that where media conglomerates and IP holders once controlled the production and distribution of adaptations, with limited temporal, geographic or product releases, audiences now claim all aspects of ownership over content that they identify with, immerse themselves in, adapt, remix, reuse, and share. The digital world in which these practices take place is driven by 'variation and repetition' (Hutcheon 2006: 177), by porousness, instability, collaboration, and participation on a global scale; the tools of production, distribution, and communication are easily accessible, networked and ubiquitous (206)

In short, O'Flynn draws attention to the need for adaptation studies to take stock of what Henry Jenkins calls convergence culture: "convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content" (Jenkins 3). Studying convergence, Jenkins suggests, is tantamount to studying "the work—and play—spectators *perform* in the new media system" (3, emphasis added). Jenkins' choice of words, as he points to the role of audiences in the productions and circulations of digital culture, makes it all the more clear that Drucker's interest in performative materiality is at least partially a response to the same changing conditions of textual production, distribution, and reception that make convergence culture possible.

Although she does not refer to it as such, Murray closes her analysis of the adaptation industry by focusing on the challenges posed by convergence culture to her conception of adaptation. The audience-produced works that Murray mentions in the concluding section of *The Adaptation Industry* represent, in her words, "the adaptation industry's shadowy penumbra" of "unauthorised adaptation activities undertaken by digitally enabled 'producers' who create and distribute amateur adaptations more out of a fascination with particular texts than for personal profit" (*Industry* 188-9). The rhetoric of authorization is telling here. Murray's phrasing implies that the adaptation industry is the proper seat of authority in issues related to the consecration of adaptation as such. If we take seriously Hutcheon's observation that adapters are interpreters first and creators of adaptations only thereafter (*A Theory* 84), or Meikle's claim that "producers are adaptation critics too"

(“Network” 262), defining the (lack of) authority of an adaptation according to the “audience” status of the adapter is only substantial insofar as it asserts an ideological line: there is a class of industrial producers on the one hand and, on the other, a mass-consuming public who are primarily “users,” even if they occasionally make things. What maintains this class division is not a formal difference between two distinct sets of adaptive material, where “user-generated adaptations” stand meaningfully apart as being “of wildly variable quality and motivation” (*Industry* 190). The great conceptual strides of the intertextual turn make it clear that industrially produced adaptations vary in quality and motivation quite as any other kind of artistic production will—this type of inconsistency does not delimit adaptation from its “unauthorized” counterparts. Murray’s construction of the producer/produser division seems rather to stem from recognizing “public appetite for the kind of high-budget production values, star attachments and formal distribution and exhibition that only the studio majors and their affiliates have the resources to secure” (191). In other words, the line between the two modes of production—and the relative authority accorded to each—mostly comes down to the fetishization of a certain kind of commodity, and access to the resources required to make and distribute it. These resources can, of course, substantially impact the quality and motivations of adaptation, but do not necessarily do so.

My point here is not to suggest that Murray is wrong to distinguish industrial production from other modes of production, even if it is misleading to imply that the difference between industry- and user-generated adaptation is a matter of formal consistency. Nor is she wrong to treat the adaptation industry as an authorizing force. Quite the contrary, my aim is to highlight that the legal and economic power associated with certain industrial production systems (Hollywood is an obvious example) play an authorizing role in the material constitution of adaptation *as such*. Again, to reiterate Drucker, the value of studying performative materiality is not as a replacement for the kinds of sociological inquiries that Murray’s model permits but as an extension of that analysis. These authorizations are part of the “performance of a work provoked by a material substrate,” which Drucker goes on to suggest is “always situated within historical and cultural circumstances and particulars and expresses ideology at every level of production, consumption, implementation and design” (“Performative Materiality” par. 23). The “public

appetite” that Murray identifies for a certain arrangement and use of resources is substantially caught up with the ideologies that authorize the orthodox model of adaptation. That is, the industrial systems that centrally concern Murray have a lot to gain by authorizing a particular positivist ideology of adaptation *as* the sanctioned deployment of privately owned products and their associated I.P. rights. And Murray’s methodology, because it offers a sophisticated system for exploring the various mechanics of this industrial circuit, is all the more valuable if the adaptation industry remains unchallenged as the site of “authorized” adaptation.

It is little wonder then that part of Murray’s response to the “unauthorized” adaptation practices of convergence culture is to raise (and immediately constrain) “the same kind of definitional questions” that the field has struggled with for years: “to what extent can a fanfic prequel, sequel, parody or mash-up be considered an adaptation? Clearly the answer to this, as new-wave adaptation scholars have argued elsewhere in relation to degrees of textual borrowing, is that adaptation encompasses a broad spectrum of intertextual indebtedness” (*Industry* 189). Hopefully my previous chapter makes a convincing case that the “spectrum of intertextual indebtedness” is far from clear. Further, the rhetoric of “indebtedness” that Murray draws on not only carries the air of fidelity idealism I discussed previously, but also takes on shades of neoliberal market ideology. Murray leans into this ideology even further when she writes the following of the “shadow economy” of unlicensed adaptations:

Media corporations, viewing the trend with marked alarm, have traditionally taken the position that amateur adaptations potentially threaten the brand integrity of specific media properties (especially in children’s markets) and risk co-opting consumers of official adaptation products. For these reasons, copyrights and trademarks should be vigorously enforced through cease-and-desist notices and, if necessary, litigation against infringers. (190)

Why is Murray’s model of production-oriented adaptation criticism—her promise for “an overdue materialising of adaptation theory” (*Industry* 7)—temporarily turned into a platform for the advocacy of corporate legal interests, precisely at the moment she identifies convergence culture as something that might destabilize a formal model of adaptation? In

other words, why would a theory of adaptation take such a stand regarding how copyright claims “should” be enforced? To my mind, she is merely leaning on the simplest way to crack open the old chestnut of Theseus’ Ship, insofar as the paradox pertains to adaptation theory; in legal terms, at the level of property rights, an adaptation is the “same boat” as its adapted text because adaptive form gets effectively defined through the right to claim (and market) the very sameness of the texts. This is an authorized mistruth that naturalizes a definition of adaptation in material/ownable terms. Accordingly, we can think of the legal model of adaptation as a cloud atlas, a way of representing adaptation that has more to reveal about the historical circumstances of authorization it participates in than about the cultural objects it purports to define. If convergence culture raises definitional challenges for the study of adaptation—indeed, the same definitional challenges that undergird anxious responses to the principle of (non)identity in the pre-digital era of adaptations studies—an industry-centered model reins in the openendedness of the intertextual turn by insisting on the authority of a specific mode of interpretation and use.

On this note, I can return to what I said earlier about understanding the material of adaptation in terms of Drucker’s “probability conditions.” The system that Murray treats as the site of authorized adaptation can be understood as a powerful mechanism for provoking an interpretation of specific media texts as adaptations. Drucker writes,

Material conditions provide an inscriptional base, a score, a point of departure, a provocation, from which a work is produced as an event. The materiality of the system, no matter how stable, bears only a probabilistic relation to the event of production, which always occurs only in real time and is distinct in each instance. (“Performative Materiality” par. 8)

Adaptation, understood in these terms, is not the material object itself, but the event of producing a specific response (*νῆξ*, the performance of identification) to an inscriptional base. The materiality of the media text does not guarantee its production as an adaptive work, but the systems of authorization that Murray focuses on do indeed increase the *probability* that certain materials will be constituted as adaptations more readily than others. User-generated adaptations, then, pose a challenge to the “authorized” constitution of adaptation events by demonstrating the potential for alternative responses to the material

conditions of media production. If the media industry designates the “proper” (re)use of intellectual property (rights-trading by producers, consumption by audiences), then fan-generated content hinges on an interpretation event that falls at the margins of hegemonic media use.

Then again, as Murray begins to point out, and as O’Flynn explores at length, media conglomerates are themselves adapting to the changing conditions of media production and consumption by incorporating rather than condemning the products of fans. Murray mentions that the rigid enforcement of copyright can be a bad public relations strategy, alienating the very market that producers want to attract with their adaptations (190). By adopting a “superficially more collaborative approach,” that includes using audience-produced materials in marketing campaigns, “fan creativity becomes categorised more as free research and development labour and on-tap market research” (Murray 191). Murray stops short of noting any problems with shoehorning audience labour into the “authorized” economic schemas of media conglomerates, but O’Flynn explores a number of examples that demonstrate the complexity of the relationships between industry producers/rights-holders on the one side and fans on the other. A particularly evocative example, which O’Flynn arrives at by way of Henry Jenkins and Lawrence Lessig, is LucasFilm’s online response to fan-produced content; they set up one website to officially host *Star Wars* fan pages and, awhile later, another to encourage *Star Wars* mash-ups.⁸³ In both cases, LucasFilm gained ownership over all the content hosted—that is, not only the material they already held IP rights for, but also any *original* content created by fans to accompany their adaptations, sequels, prequels, mash-ups, and homages (O’Flynn 190, Lessig 246). Calling out LucasFilm’s copyright practice as “sharecropping,” Lessig advocates for a legal approach that is better suited to the changing conditions of digital, or, to use his preferred term, “remix” culture. He writes:

I’m not saying that this virtual sharecropping should be banned. Instead, I am asking which types of hybrid are likely to thrive. A hybrid that respects

⁸³ O’Flynn (189-91); cf. Jenkins (131-68) and Lessig (245-8).

the rights of the creator—both the original creator and the remixer— is more likely to survive than one that doesn't. (246-7)

In contrast to Murray, Lessig is not so sure that the adaptation industry should be considered the proper seat of authority with respect to issues of adaptation, remixing, convergence, and the like, nor is he convinced that a legal framework which favours “original creators” over “remixers” is likely to last given the apparent trajectory of cultural practices associated with digital media.

Adaptation as a media protocol

Lessig's advocacy for a legal model that takes stock of the sometimes blurry line between producers and consumers in the contemporary cultural context acknowledges a state of flux with respect to the meaning of digital media and the modes of use it encourages. In her book, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*, Lisa Gitelman centralizes this kind of flux in approaching the study of media history. Her methods are keenly attuned to the ways that media become “socially embedded sites for the ongoing negotiation of meaning as such” (6). If cultures of remixing and convergence once again trudge up familiar questions about different “kinds” of textual borrowing—the lines that separate adaptations from sequels, prequels, plagiarisms, fan fictions, and so on—Gitelman's research can help to reveal that these questions are part of the ongoing negotiations that are a hallmark of shifting media cultures. Her insights in this regard dovetail with the theoretical approach of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, who “call the representation of one medium in another *remediation*” and argue “that remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media” (45). Bolter and Grusin go on to suggest that the apparent “newness” of new media is actually an effect of remediation: “the particular way in which each innovation rearranges and reconstitutes the meaning of earlier elements” (270). Gitelman extends this argument, although she roots her extension in McLuhan's “retrieval” law of media, upon

which remediation is based,⁸⁴ and Rick Altman's elaboration thereof, rather than in direct reference to Bolter and Grusin:

It is not just that each new medium represents its predecessors, as Marshall McLuhan noted long ago, but rather, as Rick Altman (1984, 121) elaborates, that media represent and delimit representing, so that new media provide new sites for the ongoing and vernacular experience of representation as such. (4)

The struggle to delimit adaptation from representation more generally, as explored in the previous chapter, makes all the more sense in consideration of Gitelman's research. That is, Gitelman provides a way to contextualize the place of adaptation discourse in a century that saw the emergence of film, television, video, cellular telephony, and myriad other innovations that for ease of reference often get lumped together under the umbrellas of "digital" and "new" media. Insofar as adaptation provides a specific set of ways for dealing with the relationships between media, it is easily caught up in the various negotiations of both meaning and representation *as such* that Gitelman highlights.

In an essay titled, "Adaptation and New Media," Michael Ryan Moore gestures toward the implications of Gitelman's work for adaptation studies, stressing the importance of her concept of media protocols. In Gitelman's writing, protocols are the norms that condition media use: from the English-language convention of answering a telephone with the word "Hello" (7) to technical features like "the design of recording styli," which emerged in response to the early difficulty of recording women's voices (15). One example of a protocol for Moore, who focuses primarily on video game adaptations, is contingency: "Video games depend on contingent outcomes—ones in which neither success nor failure is guaranteed and ones which embrace the idiosyncrasies of player choice" (190). Rather than lean on medium specificity, or even Stam's diacritical specificity, Moore explores how video games employ adaptive strategies related to their distinct technological and participatory

⁸⁴ "McLuhan was not thinking of simple repurposing, but perhaps of a more complex kind of borrowing in which one medium is itself incorporated or represented in another medium" (Bolter and Grusin 45). Cf. Marshall and Eric McLuhan's *Laws of Media*, where "retrieval" is explored in more depth.

protocols. Contingency is not necessitated by video games at the level of the medium, but it has become so conventionalized as a protocol that video games which frustrate variable outcomes and choice can lead to dissonance for players and designers alike.⁸⁵ Accordingly, video game adaptations often subvert linear story structures and the expectation of directorial cohesion, affording each player the potential to become what Moore calls a “problematic adaptor” by reconfiguring narrative flow and, occasionally, re-scripting the details of actual events against the grain of official history (Moore 190).

Since, however, protocols are not limited to the way adaptations rework their sources, the implications of incorporating Gitelman’s theory into adaptation studies extend to a consideration of the acts of representation that adaptations perform. Expanding on Dudley Andrew’s claim that “The study of adaptation is logically tantamount to the study of cinema as a whole” (Andrew 103), Moore suggests that in the contemporary context, “the study of adaptation is necessarily the study of media itself—of the protocols that support both the adapted medium and the medium to which a work is being adapted” (Moore 191). What Moore does not explicitly consider in making this claim is the possibility that adaptation is itself a protocol, a historically specific and non-static norm that shapes media interpretation and use. Moore focuses on the protocols already established with respect to individual media, but Gitelman is clear that protocols are not inherently tied to a single medium and that they are not permanently fixed at their moment of emergence:

Some seem to arrive *sui generis*, discrete and fully formed, while many, like digital genres, video rentals, and computer keyboards, emerge as complicated engagements among different media. And protocols are far from static. Although they possess extraordinary inertia, norms and standards can and do change, because they are expressive of changeable social, economic, and material relationships. (8)

Part of the reason that the shifting media-scape of digital culture poses a challenge to previously established understandings of adaptation is that the social processes of protocol

⁸⁵ This also means that the frustration of protocols can be an effective design choice. For example, the game *Antichamber* (2013) involves puzzles that frustrate protocols associated with the use of Euclidean geometry in level design.

formation are stirred up in contexts of media change. Protocol-shift helps to explain why convergence and remixing, or any ostensibly “unauthorized” adaptation practice tied to new media, raises questions about the nature of intermedial representation. As Gitelman explains, “When media are new, when their protocols are still emerging and the social, economic, and material relationships they will eventually express are still in formation, consumption and production can be notably indistinct” (15). The inertia of previously settled protocols—including the supposedly proper roles of media producers and audiences—can be more readily thrown into relief in the contexts surrounding new media. Protocols hereby offer a way to bolster a claim I made earlier regarding authorship, and put it in terms that help to illustrate the performative materiality of adaptation: media use *gets closed and reopened* over and over again, and the protocols that emerge or fade out of cultural practice change the materiality of the media in question.

An example that comes to mind concerns the changing conditions of television production, distribution, and consumption. Recent studies published in *New Media & Society* suggest that we are in a time of flux regarding how television is used as services like Netflix rise in popularity. Drawing on a theory of television periodization that has so far identified three distinct eras, Mareike Jenner suggests that Netflix may signal the shift into a fourth. Jenner claims that this new era is marked by “a move away from the television set,” expanding to say, “Netflix seems to signal a move away from the medium, its branding strategies, associated viewing patterns, technologies, industry structures or programming” (Jenner 3). We can look at this situation productively through the lens of protocols in order to highlight the ways that reciprocal influences between contexts of production and consumption have important material impacts. To some extent, protocols that developed along with “traditional” broadcast television still inform the way Netflix works. As Jenner writes, “streaming services are inherently linked with the medium of TV and its cultural connotations, even though the technological infrastructure is different and the streaming of content implies a disconnect from TV schedules” (6). Even referring to shows like *House of Cards* (2013), *Orange is the New Black* (2013), and *Arrested Development* (2013), the fourth season of which is a “Netflix Original,” as television exposes the continuity of some protocols across what are arguably distinct media. But the networked and programmable nature of the

Netflix platform creates quite different protocols as well. In “Recommended for you: The Netflix Prize and the production of algorithmic culture,” Blake Hallinan and Ted Striphas write:

Netflix now has the capability of tracking when users start, stop, rewind, fast forward, and pause videos, in addition to logging the time of day of viewing, the user’s location, the device on which the streaming occurred, whether the user watched a program from beginning to end, what if anything she or he watched next, and more.... Netflix is now using data to develop original content in addition to recommending pre-existing material to its subscribers.
(12)

Hallinan and Striphas go on to detail some of the ways that data collection about user habits shaped not only technical aspects of the platform itself, including its methods for suggesting specific content to individual users, but also the very content of its original programming: down to genre selection, stylistic overtones, and casting decisions (12-13). As Netflix responds to the ways its users interact with the platform and its featured content, they adapt the technological and cultural material to those habits, which in turn fosters the development of new protocols for its use as television.

The obverse of the flux and ongoing development of protocols highlighted by this Netflix example is that, once settled, protocols can be difficult to recognize *as* protocols: “One might even say that a supporting protocol shared by both science and media is the eventual abnegation and invisibility of supporting protocols” (Gitelman 7). If adaptation is a protocol—or even a set of related protocols shaping the uses of media at their intersections—its positivist naturalization as essentially formal or as locatable within an object alone is the result of protocol formation processes being gradually forgotten or ignored. Put differently, it is the result of a cloud atlas coming to be taken as the sky itself.

The performance of access

The perspective I am advocating with regard to understanding adaptation as a protocol entails a shift in how we conceptualize the “archive” of adaptation studies: that is, the organization of cultural materials from which the field draws and around which it

coheres. My understanding of “the archive” is informed by debates within performance studies regarding questions of material, memory, and endurance. As Rebecca Schneider writes, “In the theatre the issue of remains as material document, and the issue of performance as documentable becomes complicated – necessarily imbricated, chiasmically, with the live body. The theatre, to the degree that it is composed in live performance, seems to resist remains” (*Performing Remains* 97-98). “Seems” is not to be overlooked in Schneider’s phrasing here, because she goes on to compellingly argue that the “remains” in the archive depend crucially on performance, and that it is the very “logic of the archive” that casts performance *as* that which does not remain (*Performing Remains* 99). This is not to create a villain out of specific archives, or even out of the archive in a general or conceptual sense; indeed, as I will return to below, treating the archive as a hegemonic power against which the ephemeral rebels serves to reinscribe the notion of performance as coextensive with disappearance. Rather, by addressing the *logic* of the archive—the link to *logos*, I am certain, is not incidental in Schneider’s handling—she finds a way to meaningfully engage with the archive *as* a set of assumptions about the storage and transmission of knowledge that privilege “strictly material, quantifiable, domicilable remains” (*Performing Remains* 99). Diana Taylor similarly offers a nuanced approach to issues of cultural memory with respect to questions of archivable material: “The rift, I submit, does not lie between the written and spoken word, but between the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)” (19, emphasis original). Again, the qualifiers, “supposedly” and “so-called,” are important, signalling that Taylor is not interested in sustaining a “rift” that dichotomizes modes of knowledge transmission, that she does not necessarily subscribe to binaries that would put the archive at odds with disappearance or the repertoire at odds with endurance. Indeed, she is explicit about this: “The relationship between the archive and the repertoire, as I see it, is certainly not sequential... Nor is it true versus false, mediated versus unmediated, primordial versus modern. Nor is it binary” (22). For both Taylor and Schneider, it is imperative to recognize that archivable is not coterminous with permanent and to consider as valuable those forms of knowing and recalling that do not rest easily with a logo-centric understanding of the documentable.

Nevertheless, Taylor does insist on certain differences between the archive and the repertoire, which Schneider both acknowledges as useful and skilfully troubles. For Taylor, “the live performance can never be captured or transmitted through the archive” (20). By this she means that those documents surrounding a performance which can be archived—videos of performances, handbills, programs, headshots, still photographs, interviews, scripts, etcetera—are emphatically *not* the performance itself. She writes, “A video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a *thing* in itself (the video is part of the archive; what it represents is part of the repertoire)” (20, emphasis original). The distinction she draws is important for her project, which addresses the ways that the privileging of the archivable, and in many cases specific documents themselves, have historically worked to announce the disappearance and erasure of repertory knowledge. What Taylor does not consider, however, is the way in which a video of a performance both *actually is* a performance and *depends on* performance for its value and meaning within the archive. Her point is valid that a specific video will never be coextensive with the specific performance that it could be said to document. But Taylor’s treatment of the differences between archive and repertoire, as Schneider points out, actually reinforces the binaries that she overtly rejects:

Taylor does not situate the archive as *also* part of an embodied repertoire – a set of live practices of access, given to take place in a house (the literal archive) built for live encounter with privileged remains, remains that, ironically, *script* the encountering body as disappearing even as the return of the body is assumed by the very logic of preservation that assumes disappearance. That is, the split between the archive and the repertoire, a split that Taylor to some extent reiterates, is the archive’s own division.
(*Performing Remains* 108, emphasis original)

In other words, it is the very logic of the archive which treats performance as something necessarily at odds with documentation and which frames the space of the archive as non-performative. What becomes clear is that Taylor wants to recognize apparently ephemeral ways of knowing as powerful and durable forms of knowledge transmission—a point with which Schneider would agree—but to make her claim about the historical hegemony of the documentable, Taylor needs to sustain an opposition of archive and repertoire. Working with archival materials, however, is *live*, a *doing* of access (to recall Elin Diamond’s definition

of performance). This is why, for Schneider, archives are “*theatres* for repertoires of preservation” (*Performing Remains* 109, emphasis original); they house materials for the purpose of embodied engagement and “(re)enactment” (*Performing Remains* 108). Although both Taylor and Schneider agree that performances do not simply or unproblematically disappear, Schneider ultimately places more emphasis on the ways that “archive” and “repertoire” inter(in)animate one another (cf. *Performing Remains* 108).

While the distinctions between Taylor’s and Schneider’s respective understandings of archive and repertoire—as well as the issues of ephemerality and endurance that they each unfold—will play a central role in my third chapter, for the time being I want to emphasize a more restricted point about the archive of adaptations studies. Unpacking the notion of “domiciliation” that Derrida raises in “Archive Fever,” Schneider explains:

The archive is built on “house arrest” – the solidification of value in ontology as retroactively secured in document, object, record. This retroaction is nevertheless a valorization of regular, necessary loss on (performative) display – with the document, the object, and the record being situated as survivor of time. (*Performing Remains* 103)

In this sense of “house arrest,” I see yet another way to explain the entrenchment of formal/ontological models of adaptation. The retroactivity Schneider mentions is especially evocative, suggesting that the logic of the archive positions value as inherent to its materials only after the fact of their being the things that happened to make it—which is to say, make it past both quotidian processes of destruction⁸⁶ and the authorizing forces (Derrida’s “archons”) that consecrate material for inclusion in the archive. Moreover, this “making it past” can be understood as a *making past*, a generation of anteriority that manifests as a search for origins. Carolyn Steedman’s engagement with “Archive Fever” offers further insight:

Derrida had long seen in Freudian psycho-analysis a desire to recover moments of inception, beginnings and origins which – in a deluded way – we

⁸⁶ I recall here the anecdote, related to me years ago in an undergraduate literary theory course, of Mikhail Bakhtin smoking the only copy of a manuscript when he ran out of other paper with which to roll his tobacco.

think might be some kind of truth, and in ‘Archive Fever’, desire for the archive is presented as part of the desire to find, or locate, or possess that moment of origin, as the beginning of things. (3)

Even as the field of adaptation studies moves away from hierarchical models of source and target, there are ways in which the template of “origin” and “derivative” is nevertheless still enacted through evaluative processes that locate the meaning of adaptation itself as inherent to those objects which “are” adaptations. Just as I suggested, in chapter one, that the formal model of adaptation is sustained by desires related to the operations of fidelity, so too does desire—in this case the desire for the archive—help to explain both the appeal of a “material” model of adaptation and why it reinforces the methodological quagmires of the discipline.

In drawing attention to this desire, my aim is not to repudiate the archive as it concerns adaptation studies, but to offer a more nuanced understanding of its embodied and live dimensions. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that adaptation studies would be ill-served by continuing to organize itself according to the presumption that certain texts *are* adaptations and others are not. I will stress a key point again: I am not advocating that scholars abandon the study of texts that “come to be” adaptation, only that we move away from the face-value acceptance of such texts as the linchpin of disciplinary coherence. The archive of adaptation studies that I would centralize, then, is less about a collection of material objects (a canon of texts that *are* adaptations⁸⁷) than about the historical and cultural processes shaping the *collocation* of materials. In line with such an understanding of the archive of adaptations, there is a place for both the comparative textual analysis of case studies and the sociological investigation of systems of cultural production, distribution, and reception. And, importantly, there is a place for studying all of the discursive cultural work that both of these approaches to adaptation simultaneously depend on and perpetuate, which keeps the term “adaptation” intelligible as a category of intertextual meaning-production.

⁸⁷ Linda Costanzo Cahir, for example, includes various lists of such texts in her monograph (e.g., 107-9, 270-80).

I suggested earlier that Schneider’s use of “logic” productively invokes *logos* as a way to highlight the consequences of positioning the archive against the immaterial, the qualitative, and the ephemeral. I wonder if an apposite term for the repertoire would be “sense,” which has the virtue of highlighting perception and feeling. By discussing the logic of the archive and the sense of the repertoire I hope to all the more meaningfully engage with the way that these concepts are implicated in one another. Taylor notes that the relationship between the archive and the repertoire “too readily falls into a binary, with the written and archival constituting hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge” (22). As Schneider effectively shows, the pull of that binary is powerful enough to draw even Taylor herself:

Simply by arguing that we “shift our focus *from* written *to* embodied culture, *from* the discursive *to* the performatic,” Taylor realigns a distinction between the two and asserts a linear trajectory: as if writing were not an embodied act, nor an embodied encounter across time, and as if performance were not discursive (nor discourse performative or ‘performatic’).
(Taylor 16 qtd. in *Performing Remains* 107, emphasis original)

Following Schneider, then, my aim is to hold the logic of the archive and the sense of the repertoire in tension with one another in order to expose more fully the ways that adaptation is neither exclusively embodied nor exclusively material. I will not always refer to both archive and repertoire together, which would be cumbersome and unnecessary, but my treatment of “the archive of adaptation” stems from the imbrication I have highlighted here. Indeed, what appeals to me about Schneider’s “sense” of the repertoire is that, by stressing its “inter(in)animation” (108) with the logic of the archive, she offers a way to think through the embodied aspects involved in the constitution of material *as* adaptation. Schneider writes:

Think of it this way: the same detail of information can *sound, look, smell, or taste* radically different when accessed in radically different venues or via disparate media (or when *not* told in some venues but told in others). In line with this configuration performance is the mode of any architecture or environment of access (one *performs* a mode of access in the archive; one *performs* a mode of access at the theatre; one *performs* a mode of access on the dance floor; one *performs* a mode of access on a battlefield). In this sense, too, performance does not disappear. In the archive, the performance of access is

a ritual act that, by occlusion and inclusion, scripts the depreciation of (and registers as disappeared) other modes of access

(*Performing Remains* 104, emphasis original).

Schneider complicates the supposed ephemerality of performance by drawing attention to the habitualization of certain performances that take place within archives, which condition the meanings of apparently durable materials at their points of access. For my purposes, a simple extension of her argument needs to be stressed: as with battlefields and dance floors, so too does one perform modes of access in the various environments where an adaptation might be produced in response to a material substrate.

The archive of adaptations does not therefore need to be restricted to those texts that deliberately announce their extensive revisitation of a prior work. Constructing (and constricting) the archive of adaptation in such a way, Schneider's argument elucidates, involves a ritualized mode of access that casts the non-literal materialities underpinning the protocols of adaptation as immaterial—meaning both non-material and not important. So, it follows to ask, what materials do we study when we *do* adaptation studies? I would answer: all of that which is involved in provoking the performance of identification, whether a physical object in the restricted sense of “archivable” material or the seemingly less tangible environments, protocols, and performances that shape how adaptation “comes to be” intelligible as such.

Part of the appeal of this archive of materials is that it can include evidence of adaptations that did not “come to be” in the authorized circuits of the adaptation industry. Murray herself writes about one such example in “Phantom Adaptations: *Eucalyptus*, the adaptation industry and the film that never was.” The central case study in her article is the attempted film adaptation of Murray Bail's novel, *Eucalyptus*. The film was indefinitely shelved—i.e., relegated to “development hell”—after a number of problems came to a head in the final stages of pre-production (“Phantom” 9). For Murray, “phantom adaptations” like *Eucalyptus*—which remain spectral insofar as they never make it to the shooting phase of film production—offer a crucial opportunity to explore the mechanics of the adaptation industry, because they showcase instances where that machinery breaks down.

The study of phantom adaptations, however, does not need to be limited to studying the systems of the adaptation industry. As Murray's article on *Eucalyptus* appeared in *Adaptation: The Journal of Literature on Screen Studies* around the same time that her "Materializing Adaptation Theory" appeared in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, it represents another of her early attempts to demonstrate the pitfalls of adaptation studies' unquestioned reliance on comparative textual analysis. Murray makes it clear that her goal is "to swing the methodological pendulum away from the present overwhelming preoccupation with textual effects and back towards consideration of the industrial, commercial and policy contexts out of which such texts emerge" ("Phantom" 7). However, picking up on her use of "phantom adaptations" to this end, Kyle Meikle uses extant physical materials related to a series of Ishmael Reed's adaptation projects to offer a compelling counterpoint: "Phantom adaptations like Reed's, then, do not so much frustrate adaptation studies' 'habitual recourse to comparative textual analysis' as they multiply the objects of that comparative textual analysis. Comparisons of novels and films simply give way to comparisons of contracts, screenplays, studio memos, transcripts, and treatments" ("Network" 262). In doing so, Meikle compellingly demonstrates that textual analysis does not need to be mutually exclusive with production-oriented scholarship if the field embraces an expanded sense of its archive.

My approach to the archive of adaptation studies and the performance of access also brings me back to the issues of authorship and authorization explored earlier in this chapter. Not only does Schneider's emphasis on occlusion and inclusion in the archive bring to mind Boris Groys' claim, quoted above, that an author today is one who selects and authorizes (92), the importance Schneider places on environments of access also resonates with Groys' argument that "The elementary unit of art today is therefore no longer an artwork as object but an art space in which objects are exhibited: the space of an exhibition, of an installation" (93). The language of installation is especially evocative with respect to digital distribution systems, because it takes on the additional valence of software execution. For example, one installs Steam as a program in order to access and curate a library of cloud-synced video

game purchases.⁸⁸ One installs Microsoft Silverlight in order to access the video streaming environment of Netflix.⁸⁹ That said, the sense that digital distribution systems function as art spaces goes beyond the notion that virtual spaces often involve communication between software installed on local hardware and software installed on the remote servers of whatever company owns the platform. The virtual spaces I have mentioned (among many others) represent significant installations because they form an important part of the material substrate that one responds to in the performative constitution of the cultural objects accessed through them. They are non-static, like the architectural spaces Groys focuses on, because both their content (the objects exhibited) and their form (the space itself) is periodically updated or reconfigured. And like those architectural spaces, online platforms are often glossed over as immaterial to the content they exhibit. Groys writes:

The installation is often denied the status of art because the question arises of what the medium of an installation is. This question arises because traditional art media are all defined according to the specific support of the medium: canvas, stone, or film. The medium of an installation is the space itself; and that means, among other things, that the installation is by no means “immaterial.” Quite the contrary: The installation is by all means material, because it is spatial. The installation demonstrates the material of the civilization in which we live particularly well, since it installs everything that otherwise merely circulates in our civilization. (94)

So too are digital platforms generally denied the status of art, despite both being material (as Kirschenbaum, Hayles, Drucker, and others emphasize) and offering a space wherein culturally circulated objects get installed for the purposes of exhibition.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Steam is a program developed by Valve as an online store, software library, and community hub, largely (but not exclusively) used for the distribution and management of video games.

⁸⁹ Netflix requires Silverlight as a video codec for streaming film and television programs.

⁹⁰ This might raise questions about the extent to which the medium of a software installation is the computer. On this issue, Alexander Galloway offers a valuable critique of Lev Manovich regarding the computer as a medium: “The main difficulty is the simple premise of the book, that new media may be defined via reference to a foundational set of formal qualities, and these qualities form a coherent language that may be identified across all sorts of new media objects, and above all that the qualities may be read and interpreted. This is what was called, many years ago, structuralism” (23).

Authorization comes back into this discussion not only because software installation, understood as an architecture of access, adds more layers to the collaborative authorship of artworks, but also because digital platforms tend to centralize curatorial processes: performances of access defined by selection and authorization on the parts of producers and consumers alike. Netflix, for example, is built around the capacity for its users to select the programming they want to watch on demand, which results in the widely acknowledged, and characteristically “interpassive”⁹¹ experience of spending more time selecting what to watch than watching it. Further, the full-season-at-a-time release schedule of Netflix-produced programming, like *Orange is the New Black* and *House of Cards*, is made possible because the platform is subscription-driven rather than ad-driven; this distribution model, in turn, authorizes a specific mode of use (to wit, binge-watching).⁹² As much as a so-called producer creates an artwork by exhibiting it in an art space, so too are artworks created through processes of selection and authorization by audiences in online spaces. All of this is to emphasize that studying the archive of adaptation potentially means studying the way that spaces (online or otherwise) condition processes of production and reception and indeed the relationships between producers and audiences.

With respect to producer/audience relationships, one important recent example is Louis C.K.’s experiment with the release of his standup special *Live at the Beacon Theatre*. C.K. made the special available on his website for \$5 in a DRM-free format⁹³ that made it easy for consumers to access and use, but also easy to pirate and share with other people through unauthorized channels (e.g. bit torrent file-sharing). Louis C.K., of course, urged his fans to pay for the content, but openly acknowledged that nothing would happen to them in terms of legal action if they did not. Although, inevitably, some unauthorized use of the media

⁹¹ Zizek describes interpassivity as “that which *enjoys* for me” (*The Plague of Fantasies* 116). See also his example of VCRs in “The Interpassive Subject,” available on the European Graduate School website: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/the-interpassive-subject/>

⁹² “Binge-watching” is associated with Netflix as a characteristic viewing habit in both Jenner (2014) Hallinan and Striplas (2014).

⁹³ Digital Rights Management (DRM) is software that restricts the use of digital files in various ways that affect usability on a number of fronts: moving between geographical regions, transferring content between computers owned by the same user or by family and friends, using content on different platforms—all in an effort to curb piracy.

resulted from C.K.'s distribution strategy, his overwhelming conclusion in a blog post written just four days after the initial release of *Live at the Beacon Theatre* was that the experiment had succeeded.⁹⁴ C.K.'s post is notable for a number of insights it offers into the changing contexts of distribution and media use that characterize digital culture. For one, C.K. writes, "What I didn't expect when I started this was that people would not only take part in this experiment, they would be invested in it and it would be important to them."⁹⁵ Embedded in this observation is the bi-directionality of the authorization that made his experiment possible: Louie's name and endorsement means a lot to fans, which encourages their investment—financial and affective—in non-traditional forms of content distribution, which in turn validates those forms.

C.K. is also remarkably transparent about the financial stakes of producing and releasing content in the way he pursued. He moreover stresses its difference from mainstream routes that would require the backing of a major company:

The show went on sale at noon on Saturday, December 10th. 12 hours later, we had over 50,000 purchases and had earned \$250,000, breaking even on the cost of production and website. As of Today, we've sold over 110,000 copies for a total of over \$500,000. Minus some money for PayPal charges etc, I have a profit around \$200,000 (after taxes \$75.58). This is less than I would have been paid by a large company to simply perform the show and let them sell it to you, but they would have charged you about \$20 for the video. They would have given you an encrypted and regionally restricted video of limited value, and they would have owned your private information for their own use. They would have withheld international availability indefinitely. This way, you only paid \$5, you can use the video any way you want, and you can watch it in Dublin, whatever the city is in Belgium, or Dubai. I got paid nice, and I still own the video (as do you).⁹⁶ (n.p., sic)

There are a few senses of ownership at play in this final statement. One sense operates at the level of rights: C.K. retains copyright, and consumers own the copy that they purchase. It is also important to recognize, however, that regardless of the limits of legal ownership, users

⁹⁴ <https://buy.louisck.net/news/a-statement-from-louis-c-k>

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

gain possession of content that they can use howsoever they want: upload to file-sharing services, remix, mash-up, adapt, and so on—Louie will not send the lawyers after them, and there are no lawyers chasing down consumers on his behalf.⁹⁷ And then there is the more utopian sense of ownership at play: the fact that the experiment was important to fans, as C.K. says, points to the affective investment that O’Flynn says is characteristic of convergence culture: “audiences now claim all aspects of ownership over content that they identify with” (206). But part of C.K.’s motivation has to do with *his* investment in the interests of his audience, which is made clear when he laments the frustrating parameters of what “They would have” done, had he gone with a more traditional distribution route.

To be clear, I am not trying to trumpet the democratizing potential of the internet or to stress the idea that the apparent closeness of authors and audiences is historically unique to the digital age—neither of those sentiments strike me as accurate or even particularly relevant to my discussion, even if they seem to hover at the edges in my analysis above. Rather, I highlight the utopian side of C.K.’s production model because it provides evidence of shifting media protocols that are worth paying attention to in the context of adaptation studies. The kinds of “ownership” that C.K.’s blog post draws into focus help to demonstrate what the affective investments discussed throughout the previous chapter *do*, in material terms, at the sometimes blurry boundaries between production and reception. For Murray, the “shadowy penumbra” of unauthorized adaptation is primarily expressive of the “fascination” fans have with particular texts (*Industry* 189). Even though *Live at the Beacon Theatre* is another limit case of the formal/ontological model of adaptation—live comedy performance adapted to the screen, where the protocols associated with televised comedy would discourage the text’s identification as an adaptation—Louis C.K. helps to show that “fascination” can drive the authorized production of cultural objects too. And, what is more, it can drive production processes right into a fray of media interpretation and use, where protocols of creation and reception are actively explored and negotiated, and where the

⁹⁷ Lessig’s book, *Remix*, is chock full of examples where corporate lawyers pursue copyright infringement claims without case-specific instructions from the immediate copyright holder, and in his discussion of LucasFilm, gives George Lucas the benefit of the doubt in this regard (248).

environment of access meaningfully affects the various investments of those involved in the material constitution of the cultural object itself.

Kickstarter and the matter of returns

Even more than Louis C.K.'s experiment, the rise of Kickstarter⁹⁸ demonstrates how affective investments can impact the materialities of digital culture. As I bring this chapter to a close, I turn to a series of touchstone cases that all share Kickstarter as an environment of access, and which otherwise demonstrate various nuances and complications related to the concepts I have articulated so far. The *Veronica Mars* movie⁹⁹ is a useful example with which to start, because it shows how Kickstarter can be used to deploy affective investments as part of a textual survival strategy. Originally a television show running from 2004-2007, starring Kristen Bell as an intrepid high school detective, *Veronica Mars* was cancelled at the end of its third season. Having inspired a cult following of fans, who refer to themselves a Marshmallows, show runner Rob Thomas and several cast members (including Bell) launched a Kickstarter campaign in March 2013 to resuscitate the otherwise dead project as a feature-length film. They asked for two million dollars, and passed that benchmark within eleven hours, finally making it to the sum of \$5.7 million over the course of roughly thirty days. It was supported by 91,585 Marshmallows, which at the time was a Kickstarter record for total number of backers.

What is adaptive about this circumstance? For one, the platform is itself an adaptation, an attempt at an economic model “made to fit” the characteristic fan participation of convergence culture. The campaign is also built around the proposal to adapt *Veronica Mars* to film, so it matches the orthodox model of adaptation, but approached strictly in this way would trudge up those definitional questions around its status as

⁹⁸ Kickstarter is an online crowd-funding platform. People propose projects, set a funding goal, and ask “backers” to pledge money in support of the campaign over a span of roughly thirty days. At the end of the campaign period, the project creators only receive their funds if pledges exceed their initial funding goal. Funds in excess of their original goal are usually put towards “stretch-goals” that extend the scope or quality of the project.

⁹⁹ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/559914737/the-veronica-mars-movie-project>

adaptation, sequel, continuation, etcetera. More importantly, to my mind, this campaign is adaptive in the sense that it copes with adverse economic circumstances—i.e., a lack of interest on the part of major studios and networks—by strategically redeploying the material of an earlier cultural moment. The success of *Veronica Mars*, taken this way, is not in its longevity or financial solvency as a television show, but in its endurance as a site of audience identification, evinced on the Kickstarter page itself by the persistent address to campaign contributors as Marshmallows. Here, it is the producers who perform the identification of their target consumer group, interpellating the audience that they hope will convert an affective investment into a financial one. The identification performed, however, is both with the cultural object itself and with a perceived nostalgia for it. That is, the *Veronica Mars* Kickstarter campaign was driven as much by fans’ desires to revisit a show they loved as by their longing for the unrealized dream of the show’s future—what it might have become had it not been cancelled.¹⁰⁰

The material effects of this nostalgia are not only evident in the financial figures already listed, which directly funded the production of the film, but also in the way those numbers influenced its legal authorization by its copyright holders, Warner Bros. As Rob Thomas writes in the first official update of the Kickstarter campaign:

Of course, Warner Bros. still owns Veronica Mars and we would need their blessing and cooperation to pull this off. Kristen and I met with the Warner Bros. brass, and they agreed to allow us to take this shot. They were extremely cool about it, as a matter of fact. Their reaction was, if you can show there’s enough fan interest to warrant a movie, we’re on board.¹⁰¹

Interest begets interest as it were, and the quantitative proof of fan investment via the Kickstarter campaign acted as the direct mechanism re-igniting Warner Bros.’ willingness to go forward with the project. Rob Thomas ends the above message to fans by writing,

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Svetlana Boym on nostalgia: “Yet the nostalgia that I explore here is not always for the *ancien régime*, stable superpower, or fallen empire, but also for the unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that have become obsolete. A history of nostalgia might allow us to look back at modern history not solely searching for newness and technological progress but for unrealized possibilities, unpredictable turns and crossroads” (Boym 10).

¹⁰¹ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/559914737/the-veronica-mars-movie-project>

“Thanks to everyone who hasn't lost faith.” Fidelity, here, is not about the accurate conversion of a television show to film, but about economic potential expressed through the ongoing interest in cultural material, without which the adaptation of *Veronica Mars* would never have come to be.

Veronica Mars, as a touchstone example, helps to show how the performance of identification underpins what I call the matter of returns: the intersection of nostalgic returns and returns on investment that fueled a number of hugely successful Kickstarter campaigns between 8 February 2012 and 19 September 2014. Why those dates? The first is significant because of the flurry of activity that occurred on it, which cemented the cultural importance of Kickstarter within digital culture.¹⁰² The most important event of that day was the launch of The Double Fine Adventure,¹⁰³ a campaign to finance a new adventure game by beloved developer Tim Schafer, whose critical successes in the 1990s with *Day of the Tentacle* (1993), the *Monkey Island* series (1990-2010), and *Grim Fandango* (1998) confirmed his status as a celebrity adventure game creator. His company, Double Fine Productions, asked for \$400,000 to make a game in a genre that most game publishers had long since abandoned as unprofitable.¹⁰⁴ Much like the *Veronica Mars* movie, Kickstarter became a concrete way of testing the conservative assumptions of “authorized” production against the interests of fans. Before seven p.m. on 9 February 2012, The Double Fine Adventure had eclipsed its initial funding goal, becoming the second Kickstarter project ever to earn over one million dollars in pledges—and second only by a matter of four hours, The Elevation Dock having reached the million dollar mark around three p.m. that same afternoon.

The second date, 19 September 2014, is significant because Kickstarter made a major change to its terms of use, adding, “When a project is successfully funded, the creator must

¹⁰² More details about the flurry of activity on Kickstarter throughout this 24 hour period are available here: <https://www.kickstarter.com/blog/24-hours>

¹⁰³ The Double Fine Adventure was later retitled, *Broken Age*, and split into two acts, the first of which was released on 28 January 2014. The release of the second act is anticipated for Fall 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Adventure games tend to be narrative-driven, and usually involve elaborate environmental puzzles. In 1998, as the video game industry responded to the critical and financial success of *Half-Life*, a first-person shooter, the disappointing sales of games like *Grim Fandango* led studios decidedly away from supporting adventure games.

complete the project and fulfill each reward.”¹⁰⁵ Prior to this change, campaign creators had no obligation to deliver on the promises made by the campaign itself. If a project tanked in the middle of production not only would backers lose the funds they had pledged, they would also lose out on the “rewards” promised for different tiers of investment.¹⁰⁶¹⁰⁷ These rewards are a central tactic of the Kickstarter platform, incentivizing greater donations of capital. For example, in *The Double Fine Adventure*, the lowest pledge-tier was \$15, which rewarded backers with a DRM-free copy of the game upon its completion. The highest tier was \$10,000, where backers were promised lunch with Tim Schafer, a tour of Double Fine studios, and all the rewards associated with lower tiers.¹⁰⁸ This reward system can sometimes give Kickstarter the appearance of a marketplace, where backing a project is equivalent to pre-ordering the content around which the campaign is built, and potentially picking up other goods along the way. But Kickstarter is not Amazon, and a pledge is not a purchase. Moreover, Kickstarter is not a platform for investors, even though financially supporting a project in its infancy can feel like the contribution of venture capital; the difference is that people who contribute to a given Kickstarter campaign gain no share in the company, and will reap no percentage of any potential profit. The whole system runs on the promise of good faith—both of the sort that Rob Thomas says regarding Marshmallows, where the affective investment of fans can perform material work (like incentivizing authorization by rights-holders) and of the sort that fans must have in the campaign creators to deliver on promises made.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.kickstarter.com/terms-of-use#section4>

¹⁰⁶ One example of this was an attempt by New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi to fund the U.S. release of his film *Boy* (2010). The project received its funding in March 2012; however, backers grew increasingly frustrated as years passed without any rewards materializing or any word from Waititi explaining the situation. The frustration was exacerbated when, in January 2015, a campaign to fund the U.S. release of Waititi’s next film, *What We Do in the Shadows* (2014), appeared on Kickstarter without any acknowledgment of the controversy surrounding the previous campaign. The new campaign does, however, fall under the new terms of use.

¹⁰⁷ See also the backlash against Peter Molyneux’s Kickstarter campaign for *Godus*, details about which can be found here: <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/13/peter-molyneux-game-designer-interview-godus>

¹⁰⁸ 47,947 backers pledged at the lowest tier, and four pledged at the highest tier.

If the “returns on investment” that I mentioned earlier are not strictly investments in the profit-oriented sense, what do they represent, and in what way do they meaningfully intersect with nostalgic returns? Even if backers were not guaranteed anything in return for their pledges (according to the Kickstarter terms of use at the time), they were nonetheless promised material returns. I emphasize that these were “material” in part to reiterate that digital rewards also involve material substrates, but also to highlight the way certain Kickstarter campaigns used a sense of nostalgia for “actual” material alongside nostalgia for specific works in their marketing strategies.

Two Kickstarter projects based on video games from the late 1980s and early 1990s—*Wasteland 2*¹⁰⁹ and *Leisure Suit Larry Reloaded*¹¹⁰—offer telling examples of how “actual” material is strategically framed to capitalize on nostalgia. For one, repetition is foregrounded through the titles of these works, which invite backers to perform identification with the associated precursor games. To some extent, this is already designed to play on the nostalgia backers might have for these beloved games. But a broader nostalgia for the era in which they were originally published finds expression as each of these campaigns highlighted the physical objects that backers could receive for higher tiers of investment. While a digital (DRM-free) copy of the game *Wasteland 2* was available for \$15, at the \$50 tier backers were promised a “BOXED” [sic] version of the game including an “old school instruction book.”¹¹¹ *Leisure Suit Larry Reloaded*, which was similarly available as a digital download at the \$15 tier, offered rewards at the \$100 level stressing physical materiality: “an actual physical game and game box,” “an actual CD of the soundtrack,” and “an actual Leisure Suit Larry™ brand condom.”¹¹² It should be noted, the condom is a reference to a specific scene from *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards* (1987), of which *Leisure Suit Larry Reloaded* is a remake. So offering a condom to backers was part of

¹⁰⁹ Based on the PC game *Wasteland* (1988).

¹¹⁰ Based on the PC game franchise, *Leisure Suit Larry*, which spawned six sequels between 1987 and 1996.

¹¹¹ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/inxile/wasteland-2?ref=live> (emphasis original)

¹¹² <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/leisuresuitlarry/make-leisure-suit-larry-come-again?ref=live> (emphasis original).

fostering the performance of identification, but it also played into the broader sense of nostalgia for video games as a bygone culture of physical materiality.

Some contextualization of 1990s game culture is necessary to explain further. In the relatively early years of the game publishing industry, prior to the dominance of online distribution systems like Steam and Xbox Live Marketplace, many studios put quite a lot of effort into the art on game boxes and the physical materials contained within, often termed “feelies.”¹¹³ “Old school Instruction books,” like the one promised in the *Wasteland 2* campaign, did not merely offer a mechanical description of how to play the game, which is what video game manuals tend to do now; rather, they were part of the text of the game itself. In fact, “feelies” sometimes provided clues to puzzles, maps of in-game environments, lore and history about the diegetic world of the game, and other material that was unavailable anywhere else, making them both textually and mechanically significant to progressing through the game’s narrative. One form of this involved using “feelies” as copyright protection. For example, in order to launch *Leisure Suit Larry Goes Looking for Love (in Several Wrong Places)* (1988), players had to compare an on-screen pixel portrait—displayed at random from a limited set of images programmed in—with a glossary of portraits in the instruction book; the name that appeared under the corresponding picture in the manual acted as a password for starting up the game. If one did not have the manual, one could not play *Leisure Suit Larry*—at least not until the internet made that sort of information ubiquitously available a few years later.

In light of this context, the emphasis in certain Kickstarter campaigns on receiving “actual” copies of the game, soundtracks, manuals, and so on, is materially caught up in the affective investments that drive the campaign as a whole. It is significant, therefore, that these “actual” material rewards appear at higher tiers of capital investment. The case is not merely that the physical goods involve a higher cost to produce; they also represent a higher tier of symbolic investment in the nostalgic return that the campaign offers.

¹¹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feelie>

As a protocol conditioning how backers perform access to the games produced through Kickstarter, reward tiers showcase one way that affective investment and interpretation can lead to material changes in the game itself. For example, in the campaign for *Wasteland 2*, backers who pledged \$5,000 were offered an in-game statue; that is, their likeness would become “forever a part of Wasteland history” within the world of the game.¹¹⁴ Nine backers paid for this form of memorialization. Since the game’s release for beta-testing purposes (access to which was a reward for pledging \$55 or more), players have located these statues, and debated their appropriateness to the game-world of *Wasteland 2*, sharing their perspectives on the official forums hosted by the game’s developer inXile Entertainment.¹¹⁵ It is important that these were the “authorized” forums, moreover, because this framed them as the most appropriate online space for developers and audiences to communicate with one another. The chief point of contention among the participants in the forum discussion I have cited is that clicking on the statues offers the player a skill point, which some argue upsets the balance of the game’s play mechanics. On the other side, some argue that this mechanical imbalance is ultimately inoffensive because the skill point all the more concretely honours those backers whose financial contributions fostered the development of an overall better game. At the heart of this debate are the politics of fidelity—whether the game developers should keep faith with the nine people who made such substantial contributions of money, or with those other backers who think that the game is being compromised. The crucial point is that these debates occurred during the beta-testing phase of production in August 2014, a month before the game’s full public release, so it remained possible for the developers to take notice and make material changes accordingly. The “early-access”¹¹⁶ model of game development that these discussions are enabled by—pledging \$55 to access the beta phase—incentivized financial investment by offering involvement in the production of the game. Accordingly, the affective investment

¹¹⁴ <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/inxile/wasteland-2?ref=live>

¹¹⁵ <https://wasteland.inxile-entertainment.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=8011>

¹¹⁶ This is the term used on Steam for the sale of games during Alpha or Beta testing phases; *Wasteland 2* was available in this form as of Summer 2014. As a digital platform, Steam makes it easier for developers to gather data about how their products are being used by players and incorporate that feedback during the game’s final stages of production.

of fans led to financial investments in a way that, in turn, led to the constitution of an interpretive community who had a material impact on the very cultural object around which their discussions cohered.

Gitelman's observation about the blurriness of production and reception in contexts of protocol-shift comes into play here, because fan input comes to replace studio intervention in the games' production cycles. Since the game has already sold tens of thousands of copies before it is finalized, the developer can take or leave input without worrying as much about the financial risk. The bulk of the economic gamble happens on the front end, during the campaign process. And it is at that point that the performance of identity is most materially significant: the more that the developer can foster symbolic investment, the more likely that would-be backers will not only pledge capital but will also participate in the circulation of symbolic capital through social media. Put simply, Kickstarter would not work without Facebook or Twitter. So the promise of material and nostalgic returns operates in concert with the promise of ongoing involvement, which the digital platform makes easy: the game developers send regular updates about the progress of the game; participate in discussions in online forums, which only financial backers have access to; and, in the case of Double Fine, release webisodes that document the production process.

Even though practices like "early-access" showcase the material impact audiences can have during processes of production, I do not want to go so far as to claim that such forms of audience influence are historically unique to digital culture.¹¹⁷ In other words, Kickstarter projects like the *Veronica Mars* movie, *The Double Fine Adventure*, *Wasteland 2*, and *Leisure Suit Larry Reloaded* do not do anything *necessarily* unavailable to other modes of production and reception. If convergence culture is participatory culture (as Jenkins argues) in part because the recent and ongoing proliferation of digital technology prompts the cultural renegotiation of media use in ways that can blur production and reception (as

¹¹⁷ There is something of a precedent to be found, for example, in the influence that critics sometimes had on authorial choices in the 18th Century, which Frank Donoghue's chapter on Laurence Sterne in *The Fame Machine* (1996) explores at length.

Gitelman argues), then Kickstarter is helpful because it exposes protocols as they are being negotiated by users of media. Adaptation, as a protocol of media use, is merely one of many discourses that come to the surface in this context, influencing the performative materiality of the cultural objects at the center of production/reception throughout a given campaign.

The significance of Kickstarter as an environment of access, therefore, is in the way it exposes how projects like the ones I have highlighted operate as embodied texts. I borrow this phrase from N. Katherine Hayles, who writes the following in “Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality”:

The materiality of an embodied text is the interaction of its physical characteristics with its signifying strategies. Centered in the artifact, this notion of materiality extends beyond the individual object, for its physical characteristics are the result of the social, cultural, and technological processes that brought it into being. As D.F. McKenzie has argued in the context of the editorial theory of ‘social texts,’ these too are part of its materiality, which leads to the conclusion that it is impossible to draw a firm distinction between bibliographic and interpretive concerns. (277, emphasis original)

“Impossible” perhaps overstates the case, though McKenzie would seem to suggest that the best bibliography does not vainly attempt to keep analyses of the physical features of texts in a wholly different sphere from the interpretive work of authors, producers, distributors, and readers. The interaction of physical characteristics with signifying strategies comes to a head in the Kickstarter environment through what I have called the matter of returns; affective investment and material culture condition one another as part of the social materiality of the *Veronica Mars* movie (for example). And although the Leisure Suit Larry™ brand condom expresses the embodied textuality of the project in an uncomfortably literal way, the condom works in concert with other aspects of the Kickstarter campaign to shape the performative materiality of *Leisure Suit Larry Reloaded*. If interpretive concerns and bibliographic concerns are imbricated, as Hayles and McKenzie suggest, the meaning of these projects *as adaptations* is inseparable from the digital fundraising system that brought them into being—in part by promising nostalgia-inducing materials designed to foster the performance of identification. Moreover, the materials surrounding these Kickstarter projects—from the main campaign pages and reward tiers to beta-tester forum posts and documentary webisodes—are part of

the archive of adaptation; this archive impacts the “probability conditions” regarding whether or not the project gets constituted *as adaptation*, because it forms part of that nexus between physical characteristics and signifying strategies that Hayles identifies as being at the heart of textual materiality.

With this nexus in mind, it is worth noting that Kyle Meikle mentions Kickstarter directly in the conclusion of his essay about Ishmael Reed’s phantom adaptations:

The lesson of the Reed projects is that those in the adaptation industry are fascinated too, unless/until they are not, but that this refusal does not amount to a negation of adaptation as such. In a networked model of adaptation, projects do not die—they drift to Kickstarter. Where and when interests within the adaptation industry decline, other interests arise. An industry can produce only phantoms; the viral needs a network. (266)

Recalling the “fascination” that Murray ascribes to fan culture, Meikle draws on Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory to argue that competing interpretations are key to both the production and reception of adaptations, such that textual analysis is necessary for a full understanding of how adaptations come to be. Kickstarter here is a synecdoche that gestures towards the larger network of cultural mechanisms involved in the material constitution and survival of adaptations. That Meikle refers to the crowdfunding platform precisely as he shifts away from Murray’s spectral metaphor and towards a viral one is especially evocative taken alongside the language of embodiment that Hayles foregrounds. In replacing the disembodied “phantom” metaphor with a biological one, Meikle stresses the embodied character of interpretation, giving it an importance that Murray’s eschewal of textual analysis downplays. The “viral needs a network” because the processes of cultural transmission out of which adaptations are created involve the embodied expression of interest; that is, adaptations arise from a “war of interpretations” between various actors—“academics, creators, critics, and producers”—all of whom express their own “viewpoints, goals, and desires” (Latour qtd. in Meikle “Network” 263-66). These interests do not become immaterial if they do not directly lead to the production of an “authorized” adaptation; rather, they remain part of the archive of adaptation, as the processes of textual survival

continue, authorizing some texts and not others at any given time, closing and reopening the meanings of media use again and again.

The archive of adaptation does not, however, tell the full story of how performative materiality works in the constitution of adaptations as such. More exploration is warranted regarding the embodied work of interpretation that informs this process. While performance theory has informed much of my approach to adaptation in this dissertation so far, the next chapter focuses more explicitly on, as Richard Schechner would say, artworks that “are” performance. Elaborating on questions related to archival knowledge and the work performed by knowing audiences of theatrical adaptations, which I briefly raised in “The Performance of Access,” my analysis in “Time and Again” hones in on the temporal nuances of a performative model of adaptation. Having problematized the question, “what is adaptation” in terms of form, medium, and material, I now turn the insights I have garnered towards the exploration of a perhaps equally complicated question: *when* is adaptation?

Chapter 3. Time and Again

If the previous chapter attempts to re-envision the stakes of adaptation studies by working through its intersections with book history and new media methodologies, then this chapter attempts to do the same by way of both performance studies and performance itself—that is, both the “as” and the “is” that Schechner discusses. To this end, I build on my discussion of authorization, versions, and matters of return in an examination of aura, memory, and utopia. While at once notable for their temporal orientation—aura as a unique presence in time and space, memory as a mediation of the past, and utopia as an imagination of the future—the analytical work that these concepts invite when considered in the context of adaptation studies is also highly affective and subjective. As such, many of the conceptual challenges I attempt to work through in this chapter are bound up with my own specific—live and embodied, but also (re)mediated—encounters with particular performances: *Testament*, *The God That Comes*, and *The Tempest Replica*, each of which I will introduce with more detail in the sections dedicated to them: “Screening the familial bond,” “*The God That Comes* and goes,” and “This utopia I acknowledge mine,” respectively.

What these cases initially shared as a primary criterion for inclusion in this project is that they each had a profound impact on me; they produced an affective state which is best described through a notion Jill Dolan articulates in her book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*: the “utopian performative” (5). Dolan explains this concept by referencing those moments in the reception of performance that “make spectators ache with desire to capture, somehow, the stunning, nearly prearticulate insights they illuminate, if only to let them fill us for a second longer with a flash of something tinged with sadness but akin to joy” (8). For Dolan, the intense feelings of hopefulness fostered by these moments are politically important, because they “persuade us that beyond this ‘now’ of material oppression and unequal power relations lives a future that might be different, one whose potential we can feel as we’re seared by the promise of a present that gestures toward a

better later” (7). To be sure, I do not think it is entirely incidental that the works I have mentioned had this affect on me my while also clearly announcing themselves as adaptations of highly canonical literary works with which I was familiar (Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, and Euripides’ *The Bacchae*). That said, during the same period of time, I saw other theatrical adaptations that did not produce in me anything like the utopian performative. A non-exhaustive list includes: two productions of *Waiting for Godot*, including the Broadway run starring Sirs Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellan; Enda Walsh’s *Penelope*, based on *The Odyssey*; a burlesque parody of *Stars Wars*, aptly titled, *The Empire Strips Back*; and *Cabaret*, starring Alan Cumming and Michelle Williams, based on the Christopher Isherwood novel, *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), and existing in interesting tension with the 1972 Bob Fosse/Liza Minnelli film. Many of these were brilliant productions, and fascinating to consider as adaptations, and yet the affective charge of the utopian performative is not wholly guaranteed by either brilliance or adaptive processes.

What my chosen case studies do, however, share with one another, which the works just listed do not, is a nuanced “metadaptive” engagement with their own representational strategies. They are adaptations that *comment on* and *engage with* processes of adaptation. Although it is possible that the coincidence of these self-reflexive practices and my experience of the utopian performative in response to these shows was accidental, it seems to me more likely that my specific interest in adaptation helped to produce the heightened affective state prompted by the meta-theatrical strategies of the performances.¹¹⁸ Recognizing that the intensity of my response was intimately connected with the knowledge and desires I brought into the theatre with me, my thinking about my three case studies moved forward from my experience of the utopian performative to the overlap between such moments of intense feeling and the temporally nuanced instances of oscillation wherein adaptations come to be understood as such. If the utopian performative involves an emotional hyper-charging of the present in such a way that opens up future possibilities, perhaps there is something yet to be fully understood about the present-tense engagement

¹¹⁸ It should be said that these “metadaptive” strategies, in the context of contemporary theatre, are also symptomatic of trends that Hans-Thies Lehmann groups together under the banner of “postdramatic theatre.”

with the past involved in oscillating between adaptation and adapted text. This is not to say that the utopian performative is required for adaptation, and certainly not that it is guaranteed by adaptation, but that there may be some insight to gain by thinking carefully about how these phenomena illuminate one another. As I suggested in chapter one, there is a sometimes quite intense association between audiences' investments in adaptations and the way works get constituted *as adaptations*. Accordingly, this chapter's focus on aura, memory, and utopia came out of reading performance studies research and affect theory in an effort to better understand the productive potential of an overlap between adaptation and the utopian performative. However, given that my affective response to these works is arguably subjective—in ways that Brian McFarlane would scoff at—I have attempted to analyze what these performances reveal about adaptation without taking my own affective response for granted as generalizable. I have also tried to draw out theoretical insights that are valuable beyond the theatrical spaces and body-to-body encounters that I focus on in my case studies.

In addition to the challenges of theorizing from the standpoint of subjective observation, the cases in this chapter are difficult to write about because, as local performances in limited runs, it is less likely readers will be familiar with them than with texts like *Cloud Atlas* or *Enemy of the State*. Perhaps more to the point, one of the key differences between the performances discussed here and the novels, films, comics, and games already discussed is that if readers are currently unfamiliar with the work, it may be impossible to become familiar. You can order a copy of *Cloud Atlas* on Amazon, but Crystal Pite may not remount *The Tempest Replica* for a third time.

Limited direct access to the performances I discuss makes them difficult to work with in part because it puts a greater burden on representing those performances through critical writing. As I write this, I have in mind Peggy Phelan's oft-quoted ideas about the ontology of performance and its vexed relationship with documentation. For Phelan, performance is defined by its spatio-temporal limits. She writes: "Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed again, but this repetition marks itself as 'different.' The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory" (*Unmarked* 146). Since performance occurs in a specific time and place, the recreation of that performance is,

at best, repetition without replication—which is, of course, a definition of adaptation that I quote from Linda Hutcheon more than a few times throughout this dissertation. Moving forward from this link, my concern has not only to do with the challenges of writing about performances, but also with the ways that these challenges offer productive critical opportunities at the intersection of performance and adaptation studies. Accordingly, at no point in what follows is my goal to describe “in exhaustive detail the *mise-en-scène*, the physical gestures, the voice, the score, the action of a performance event”—a practice which Phelan, whom I quote here, critiques in her book *Mourning Sex* (11-12). Neither, however, is my goal to follow Phelan’s lead with her suggested alternative of “performative writing,” about which she stresses the following: “I want this writing to enact the affective force of the performance event again, as it plays itself out in an ongoing temporality made vivid by the psychic process of distortion” (*Mourning Sex* 12). If I have selected these particular performances as cases because of the affective force they had on me, I should be clear that I do not intend to attempt to recreate that state through my writing about them now. It is enough for me to grapple with the recognition *that* they affected me so, and to attempt to understand the role of adaptation in producing or resonating with that condition. Accordingly, my interest is less in making past experiences of performance vivid through psychic processes of distortion than it is to develop a more thorough understanding of the various distortions at play in the phenomenon of adaptation.

As I briefly mentioned, each of the performances that I look at in depth is to a greater or lesser extent self-reflexively engaged with the nuances of adaptation. They each stage processes of production, mediation, and reception that help to illuminate how performers and audiences interact with one another, as well as with theatrical spaces and textual/medial environments to foster adaptive work. There is something particular to being in the space of the theatre, interpellated by the event of performance as a collective called “the audience,”¹¹⁹ that complicates the subjective and individualized temporalities of both adaptive oscillation and the utopian performative. For the reason that the performances I

¹¹⁹ See Susan Bennett’s *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. Of particular relevance are discussions of the theatrical event, processes of selection, and individual/collective dynamics in her chapter, “The Audience and Theatre” (92-176), as well as in her “Conclusion” (177-186).

attended involved embodied acts of co-creation with performers and other audience members, my primary interest in the messy temporalities of adaptive reception is matched by a necessary attentiveness to space.

The imbrication of time and space as it relates to the cultural significance of works of art is why I begin my analysis by looking at Walter Benjamin's concept of aura, in order to develop a version of this theoretical perspective attuned to the spatiotemporal messiness of adaptation. Benjamin describes aura, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," as a quality stemming from a work of art's "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (220). My contention is that the functioning of adaptations *as adaptations* necessitates that their existence is never strictly isolatable to the places and times they appear to occupy. This argument builds off of the ideas introduced in the previous chapter concerning the logic of the archive and the sense of the repertoire in order to further develop my overall claim: adaptations are not pre-given entities, but the productions of performance, so adaptation studies needs to shift focus from ontology to the *doings* of language-in-action. As I proceed from this conceptualization, I turn to the case studies both as a way to engage with and to complicate the ideas developed in the first part this chapter. Since the performances I analyze could be formally classed as adaptations, they provide an embodied testing ground for the ideas that I initially develop in abstract terms. As self-reflexive adaptations, however, these cases have the added benefit of offering their own insights into adaptive relationality.

The aura of againness

Linda Hutcheon has already done some work to consider the relationship between aura and adaptation. In claiming that adaptation "has its own aura," she references Benjamin's definition, cited above, which stresses that aura depends on a unique spatiotemporal presence. Hutcheon then adds: "I take such a position as axiomatic, but not as my theoretical focus" (6). Given its important place in the background of Hutcheon's theory, it strikes me as all the more worthwhile for consideration here: what does it mean for adaptation to have its own aura? Hutcheon takes her position for granted because,

throughout Benjamin's essay, his concept of aura is bound up with the autonomy of an artwork. Along the lines of autonomy, Benjamin clearly articulates the stakes of aura when he writes: "The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity.... The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical—and, of course, not only technical—reproducibility" (220). The connection between the authenticity of an artwork and the "presence" of an original raises an obvious challenge for a formal or ontological model of adaptation—especially a model premised on linear transfer—because such a framework implies that an adaptation originates with its precursor text. If an adaptation is inauthentic by virtue of its derivation from and reliance on a previous artwork, its unoriginality is the reason for its lack of autonomy as a work of art. Throughout her study, however, Hutcheon makes a strong case for the originality of adaptations, stressing the point that "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary" (9). Adaptations are authentic, for Hutcheon, because they are original works on their own terms; they are not mere copies, "in any mode of reproduction, mechanical or otherwise," so much as they are repetitions "without replication" (*A Theory* 173). This observation that adaptations are non-identical with their sources—the truism that I refer to as the principle of (non)identity in chapter one—leads Hutcheon to conclude that the aura is not degraded through the process of adaptation, since the work of art is not literally copied. Accordingly, the palimpsestic doubleness that marks one of the central pleasures of adaptation (*A Theory* 33, 116, 122) is not at odds with the singular identity of specific adaptations as works of art. In this view, adaptations do not destroy the aura of an original but "carry that aura with them" (*A Theory* 4).

Perhaps the central unaddressed problem in Hutcheon's discussion of aura is that often adaptations *are* copies in mechanical or digital modes of production, at least to the extent that any film or any printed book or any mp3 is a copy. Such is to once again stress the importance of the principle of (non)literal materiality, developed in chapter two. Indeed, precisely because adaptations move through the circuits of industrial production in the same way that ostensibly non-adaptive works do, they are subject to Benjamin's critique regarding products "designed for reproducibility" (224). Pointing out that an adaptation is by necessity not "the same," in a technical sense, as the text it adapts does nothing to address that many

of the adaptations audiences get to see are, in fact, reproductions. The initial product of the adapter—the proofs, the film reels, etcetera—might have the status of being materials that the artist worked with in the process of production, so we could say that those have the “unique presence” to which Benjamin refers. Regardless, these precise materials are not the ones that most audiences will see, read, hear, etc. The situation for the majority of audiences of adaptations, particularly in the novel/film paradigm, has rather more in common with what Benjamin indicates when he writes: “From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the ‘authentic’ print makes no sense” (224). Accordingly, the issue of authenticity with respect to adaptations produced in industrial systems premised on mass circulation is more complicated than Hutcheon lets on. It does not make sense to ask which copy of an adaptation is ‘authentic,’ unless it is an adaptation that, from its first moments of production, is not “designed for reproducibility.” It does not ultimately matter, from this perspective, whether or not the process of adaptation itself has any effect on the aura of a work of art; its status as an industrial reproduction degrades the aura nonetheless.

Much to her credit, Hutcheon is interested in offering “generalizable insights into theoretical issues” (*A Theory* XV), such that when she uses the term “adaptation” she does not necessarily mean to reference only those media that operate in the mode of mass industrial reproduction. Moreover, the broader claim that Hutcheon uses “aura” to bolster is not something I see as problematic—adaptations are not inherently any less “original” or “authentic” than any other work of art produced by the same technical means; however, given that Hutcheon’s discussion of aura is not completely consistent with Benjamin’s, the question remains whether or not there is a productive sense of aura in Hutcheon, in Benjamin, or in a synthesis of the two perspectives, that goes beyond the defense of autonomy in adaptation, and helps to elucidate adaptation as a phenomenon in more general terms.

Consider the following statement of Benjamin’s: “By making many reproductions [the technique of mechanical reproduction] substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own

particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced” (221). Although Benjamin is talking about precisely the condition that “withers” the aura, the situation he describes shares much with another important concept in Hutcheon’s theory. In describing the paired notions of the “knowing audience” and “oscillation,” Hutcheon writes,

If we do not know that what we are experiencing actually *is* an adaptation or if we are not familiar with the particular work that it adapts, we simply experience the adaptation as we would any other work. To experience it *as an adaptation*, however, as we have seen, we need to recognize it as such and to know its adapted text, thus allowing the latter to oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing. *(A Theory 120-121, emphasis original)*

It is a stone’s throw from the oscillation here discussed to the situation Benjamin describes in writing “it reactivates the object reproduced.” In both cases, there is a noetic return to an object that does not need to be physically present with the beholder (listener, audience, etcetera) at the time of oscillation or reactivation. As will become clear throughout this chapter, this noetic return is crucial to the messy temporality of adaptation. For now, I want to note that what changes between Benjamin’s discussion of the aura and the situation created by the “plurality of copies” is that the “unique existence” most pertinent is not that of the auratic object but that of the audience in his/her/their “particular situation.” If Hutcheon is right to hone in on that aspect of an adaptation’s aura that involves some unique presence in time and space, then perhaps it is possible to locate the spatiotemporally unique circumstance in the process of oscillation, in the “live” or real-time constitution of the adaptation *as such*.

Throughout this dissertation, I have drawn together a number of perspectives that, more or less explicitly, stress the live dimension of acts involved in the material constitution of adaptations: from Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s suggestion that “the ‘properties’ of a work... are at every point the variable products of particular *subjects’* interactions with it” (48, emphasis original) to Johanna Drucker’s argument that “Material conditions provide an inscriptional base, a score, a point of departure, a provocation, from which a work is produced as an event” (“Performative Materiality” par. 8). Also worth repeating here are N. Katherine Hayles’ claims about attention, cited in the introduction:

On the level of conscious thought, attention comes into play as a focusing action that codetermines what we call materiality. That is, attention selects from the vast (essentially infinite) repertoire of physical attributes some characteristics for notice, and they in turn constitute an object's materiality. Materiality, like the object itself, is not a pre-given entity but rather a dynamic process that changes as the focus of attention shifts. (*How We Think* 14)

For all three theorists, materiality is not pre-given but produced through live, embodied encounters with objects. Attention, as a term, is a useful way to emphasize key points of connection between Hayles, Drucker, and Smith, evoking not only the “probability conditions” that Drucker describes but also the evaluative practices that Smith centralizes. In each case, the constitution of the material in a particular way is contingent, depending crucially on how it is attended to. Going forward, I use the term “attendance” as a shorthand reference for the state of “being there” in time and space that is pertinent both to the aura of works of art and to the “reactivation” of artistic objects by way of their copies. This shorthand use of the term “attendance” is particularly valuable for discussing adaptations because it operates at the intersection of reception and materiality—what I have, in the last two chapters, referred to as the performance of identification and the performance of access respectively. To the point, the idea that the object itself is not a pre-given entity offers a way to complicate the present discussion of aura and to consider the importance of the live act of material constitution as bound up in a certain kind of auratic generation, whether an artistic object is an original or a copy. With the non-reproducible works of art to which Benjamin refers, the aura is inseparable from the specific object, as with the patina that forms on a bronze statue, which is chemically unique to that particular statue (Benjamin 220). “Attendance” suggests that we would need to select the characteristics of the patina from a vast “repertoire of physical attributes” in order for the aura to which it attests to be materially apparent. Considered from this perspective, the aura is part of the object, and its chemical specificity is no less relevant to its uniqueness in space and time, but its significance as aura comes into being at “the place where it happens to be” through attendance.

It is a noteworthy coincidence that Hayles refers to selection from the *repertoire* of physical attributes. One of the quagmires of thinking about attention, materiality and performance in the ways that I am suggesting is that it can be tempting to think about live

performance as essentially ephemeral, and so opposed to materiality and mediation.¹²⁰ As mentioned earlier, Diana Taylor's intervention in this performance discourse involves challenging notions of an essentially ephemeral performance and an essentially material, durable document or object. She carries out this challenge by highlighting two divergent historical practices of evaluating knowledge and cultural transmission, which she terms the archive and the repertoire. Taylor writes,

The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning. (Taylor 20)

Following Schneider's critique of Taylor, explored in chapter two, I would point out that paying attention is itself an action "that does not remain the same," necessarily live in its performance and crucial to the retention and transformation of "choreographies of meaning." Such is the case for the selfsame reason that objects are not pre-given entities; dynamic shifts in focus are an inevitable component of repertory knowledge production, reproduction, and transmission. We might be tempted to undervalue the role of attendance in the constitution of adaptations as such, because it is a form of knowledge transmission that stands in contrast to the archival logic of the ostensibly durable and tangible. The sense of the repertoire, however, offers a way to reevaluate the issue of auratic generation in terms that treat the reception of adaptations both as materially significant and as spatiotemporally unique live events.

What I am suggesting here has much in common with Philip Auslander's exploration of the aura in the context of rock music. Auslander argues: "The aura is located in a dialectical relation between two cultural objects—the recording and the live performance—rather than perceived as a property inherent in a single object, and it is from this relation of mutuality that both objects derive their authenticity" (85). The aura of rock music, for

¹²⁰ The dynamics of liveness and mediation are much-debated in performance studies. For a clear summary of the key ideas in this scholarly discussion see "A small history of ephemerality" in Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains* (94-96).

Auslander, is not a pre-given entity, locatable in either a recording or a live performance, but something that is generated at the intersection of the two. When we attend (and attend to) an adaptation *as such*, we select from the vast repertoire of formal markers that we can identify with a precursor text; in doing so, we constitute the materiality of the adaptation in a way that depends on the dialectical relation between two cultural objects.

The role of formal markers in this dialectical process is why, even though I have stressed that formal definitions of adaptation are inadequate, I have never claimed that form is irrelevant to the performance of identification. Rather, the formalist methods of McFarlane and others become valuable toolsets for identifying some of the attributes that constitute the repertoire we might use to perform identification. So too do our routes of access provide part of the context that “conditions meaning” as we attend to adapted text and adaptation alike (Hutcheon, *A Theory* 145). A knowing audience is necessary for an adaptation to function *qua* adaptation, but not every audience knows precisely the same things, and what they happen to know about a precursor text changes the way they attend (to) the adaptation. Moreover, it is not simply the case that every formal component potentially relevant to the dialectical relationship between an adaptation and its source(s) exists on a flat or neutral plane for every audience. Robert Stam’s argument that fidelity gives expression to the disappointment we feel when an adaptation fails to live up to our expectations does more than point to the moralistic and subjective nature of fidelity criticism (“Dialogics” 54). It subtly highlights the important way that different audiences have different expectations about what an adaptation ought to repeat, which is another way of acknowledging that what we prioritize in a source changes how we constitute the adaptation. According to the repertory sense of attendance, different prioritizations of adapted texts produce materially different adaptations.

The aura of adaptation, then, could be understood in terms of the dynamic process of attendance that builds from the formal prompts of the adaptation, gets mediated through the performance of access with respect to both the adaptation and the adapted text, and finally leads to the performance of identification. This process stands in contrast with other instances of textual interpretation (in general) because the formal and contextual pieces need

to be in place for the audience to understand the present tense attendance to a cultural object in terms of its againness: its dialectical relationship with a past-tense attendance to a cultural object.

I will note, I use the word “againness” in part due to Rebecca Schneider’s handling of the term: “It can be argued that any time-based art encounters its most interesting aspect in the fold: the double, the second, the clone, the uncanny, the *againness* of (re)enactment” (*Performing Remains* 6, emphasis original). If the argument of the present chapter rests crucially on the recognition that the reception of adaptations is a live act, then againness helps to get at the temporal component of this encounter. Adaptation, too, is time-based, even if it is not reducible to a singular art form or medium. Diana Taylor, however, uses the term “againness” to get at a slightly different sense, stressing the way that the repertoire depends on presence in space and the various means by which it resists easy notions of disappearance: “Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next” (21).¹²¹ If attendance is the live and embodied act of being present to pay attention, Schneider and Taylor help to reveal the spatiotemporal quality of attending to repetition as such. What marks adaptation as different from the repetitions to which they refer ultimately comes down to the various contextual, discursive, formal, and social “frames” that lead an audience to mark an instance of repetition as adaptation.¹²² Some of the “frames” that provoke the constitution of an adaptation have to do with formal qualities that a given audience has prioritized in a past-tense encounter with the adapted text. This process of prioritization, however, means that the formal components that foster adaptive identification are only as good as the embodied knowledge of those that can identify them *as* markers of adaptation. Finally, although there are many potential attributes that can foster trans-textual identification—titles, designs,

¹²¹ Taylor’s phrasing also gestures towards Richard Schechner’s definition of performance as “twice-behaved” or “restored” behaviour (29).

¹²² Jan Blommaert’s “semiotic flagging” and Drucker’s “probability conditions” should come to mind here, insofar as both concern themselves with the forms, objects, substrates, organizational features, attributes, and activities that provoke responses and interpretations.

names, character traits, plot patterns, phrasings, settings, gestures, marketing materials, and the list goes on—crucially, the category of adaptation itself needs also to be part of the audience’s embodied knowledge for the repetition to be identified as a special case of intertextual againness.

Authenticity and intermediality in the meantime

The connection between aura and authenticity becomes important when considering the way that adaptation works as adaptation, although not simply for the reasons that Hutcheon’s use of aura implies. What is at stake in the aura of againness is only partially the autonomy of adaptations to succeed as stand-alone works of art; also of concern is whether or not something gets considered an authentic adaptation. One of the reasons formal/ontological models of adaptation have remained dominant in adaptation studies is that they seem to offer a clear solution to the problem of inclusiveness,¹²³ which is the objection that if everything is an adaptation in one way or another then the term ceases to be meaningful. Understood as a linear process of transfer, adaptation offers a formally stable guideline for categorical inclusion and exclusion; those texts that were not transferred, in whole or in part, from a precursor text do not qualify as authentic adaptations.¹²⁴ For Auslander, authenticity in rock music ideology is also about inclusion and exclusion (67); authenticity is the essentialist notion that rock fans lean on when distinguishing between rock and pop (69). As with the tendency to locate adaptation within forms or objects, authenticity in rock ideology is often perceived as something contained in the music.

¹²³ Note that the phrase, “problem of inclusiveness” is my own shorthand, but several critics address the issue in their own terms. Linda Hutcheon responds to the idea that adaptation might include “any act of alteration” to cultural works by writing, “from a pragmatic point of view, such a vast definition would clearly make adaptation rather difficult to theorize” (Hutcheon 9). Cartmell and Whelehan are even more restrictive than Hutcheon, writing, “Naturally the further one moves from locating the heart of adaptation studies as residing on the literary/screen nexus, the more boundless and indefinable the area becomes” (*Impure* 12).

¹²⁴ See also Djanet Sears’ comment, in her interview with CASP, that Debajehmujig’s collective creation, *New World Brave* (2000), sounds “too removed from Shakespeare” to fit her use of adaptation, which she admits involves, “much more rigid terms.”

Auslander argues against this tendency, stating that authenticity “is an effect not just of the music itself but also of prior musical and extra-musical knowledge and beliefs” (66). So, too, I have been arguing, is the constitution of an adaptation an effect of the text itself as well as prior textual, intertextual, and extra-textual knowledge and beliefs.

Hutcheon’s suggestion that adaptations need to be “deliberate” and “announced,” which I explored and ultimately rejected in the first chapter, can now be productively reframed at the intersection of authorization and the aura of againness. The extra-textual belief that an adaptation is an intentional repetition of a precursor work carries a particular discursive force, depending on the context that fosters that belief. The announcement (in an interview with an adapter, an official press release, a marketing blurb, etc.) that a work is an adaptation is extremely effective at fostering the performance of identification precisely because of the way it discursively authorizes the work of art as an authentic repetition. Recall, for example, my discussion of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons at the beginning of chapter two. Less official contexts of authorization—e.g. speculation in an online message board—will, of course, carry less force, but may nonetheless play a role in the aura of againness. In short, those attributes that might mark an adaptation as deliberate and announced are not necessary for a work of art to function as an adaptation, but their contribution to the aura of againness is substantial.

What comes to be accepted as authentic adaptation has more to do with authorization by interpretive communities than it does with the physical or formal attributes of specific cultural objects. By suggesting this, I am recalling Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s argument about evaluation and classification in order to elaborate on the position that Margaret Kidnie articulates in *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* regarding the discursive constitution of dramatic (particularly Shakespearean) works of art. Kidnie explains as follows:

The pragmatic truth of the dramatic work of art – what is considered essential to an accurate, faithful, or authentic reproduction on the stage or page – is thus continually produced among communities of users through assertion and dissension, not legislated once and for all through an appeal to an objective external authority.... Arguments about whether or not forms of

corruption or adaptation are taking place are a sign of competing sides vying for the power to define, for the moment, that cultural construction that will ‘count’ or be valued as authentic Shakespeare – and the more canonical the work, the more hotly disputed is the debate about its authentic instances.

(Kidnie 31)

The label of adaptation, in other words, is something that interpretive communities offer up when they perceive that a production of Shakespeare strays too far from the original ‘work.’ In turn, designating works as too-different-from-Shakespeare-to-count has the correlated effect of producing the ‘authentic’ Shakespearean work, not as a materially or ontologically fixed product but as a limited moment of perceived discursive consensus about what the authentically Shakespearean does or does not look like. Recall that Smith highlights a “relation between the classification of an entity and the functions it is expected or desired to perform” (32, emphasis removed). Here, not only does the desired function of Shakespeare lead to the classification of what counts as “Shakespeare,” undesired functions lead to the classification of “adaptation.”

Throughout Kidnie’s analysis, however, adaptation is *primarily* understood as the problematic other against which the ‘authentic’ work of Shakespeare is constituted. The correlative that my discussion points to is that adaptation is not actually limited to the role of a corrupt supplement to an authentic work, which becomes clearer when we briefly move away from Shakespeare as the case study. As Kidnie suggests at the end of the excerpt just quoted, the relative canonicity of the work in question alters the stakes of the debate. I would go a little further; the Western cultural investment in representations of Shakespeare makes debates over its authentic instances of a different order than those over whether or not, for example, *21 Jump Street* (2012) is actually an adaptation (or a remake, reboot, sequel, etc.). Moreover, the sheer frequency and variety of both productions and so-called adaptations of Shakespeare also make it a different kind of case. When there is only one data point, one instance of adaptation, concerns over authenticity are just discussions about fidelity, more or less reducible to the question, “does it represent those attributes that I value and prioritize (read: desire) in the source?” Finally, as noted above, just as authentic Shakespeare comes into being by way of debate about its deviant instantiations, so too does authentic adaptation develop as a discursive effect (in part) because those selfsame debates

inevitably stake claims about what does or does not count as adaptation. With the scope of her project reined in by her interest in Shakespeare, Kidnie stops short of making the more inclusive theoretical point: the broader phenomenon of adaptation shifts in meaning over time as communities participate in debates over whether certain works are adaptations, originals, parodies, sequels, remakes, and so on. As I discussed at some length in chapter one, these various categories attempt to account for tensions between perceived similarity and necessary difference by leaning on a narrative of taxonomical stability. In light of the concept of authorization discussed in chapter two, and the insights garnered from Kidnie's work, I can productively rephrase a key argumentative through-line in this dissertation: those narratives of taxonomic stability are the product of ongoing debates and acts of authorization that continually (re)produce the category of authentic adaptation.

Drama presents a distinct challenge to formal/ontological models of adaptation, because the test of authenticity appears to operate according to different rules than those best suited to the novel/film paradigm. From a certain perspective, it appears that every staging of a play could potentially be considered an adaptation.¹²⁵ Kidnie considers this problem at some length,¹²⁶ but the crux of the issue is summed up well when she writes,

If the identity of drama is not constructed as bridging two distinct media, and what is essential to the work is limited to its text(s), then distinctions between drama and forms of literature such as the novel disappear.... If this logic is pursued, performance of literary drama becomes *by definition* adaptation: a stage performance of *King Lear* is no more the work of art than a stage performance of *Bleak House* since both adapt the conditions of one medium (literature) to another (performance arts).... The prior unspoken assumption that leads to an understanding of theatrical productions as 'necessarily adaptations' is the identification of the work of art with one idealized text,

¹²⁵ For example, in "Discursive embodiment: the theatre as adaptation," Graham Ley argues, "primary adaptation is the adaptation of non-theatrical material into theatre" and secondary adaptation is "the adaptation of already existing theatrical or dramatic material" (206). Although his title would seem to indicate a strong fit with my argument in this project, Ley's very short (8 page) article does not offer an especially rigorous theorization of the problems involved in defining adaptation as he does.

¹²⁶ For further discussion of this problem, see also David McCandless *Gender and Performance in Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (1997) and Martin Puchner's "Drama and Performance: Toward a Theory of Adaptation" (2011).

rather than with its (many) texts and performances.

(Kidnie 21-2, emphasis original)

If the written text is treated as the work of art, then all of its stagings are adaptations into a performative mode, and if all stagings are adaptations then we are once again back at the problem of inclusiveness. At this juncture, the formal/ontological model of adaptation begins to eat its own tail. The central importance of both page and stage in histories¹²⁷ of drama creates the situation where either every staging is an adaptation or different definitions of adaptation are required for each intermedial pairing.

Though Kidnie does not cite Diana Taylor or Rebecca Schneider, her argument draws attention to the pitfalls of treating the logic of the archive as the interpretive default. The notion of “one idealized text,” even in its diction, reveals a bias in favour of the written document. Within adaptation studies, we can see this bias manifest in statements like Brian McFarlane’s, when he explains his reasons for not studying theatrical adaptations: “That [novel and film] both exist as texts, as documents, in the way that a stage performance does not, means that both are amenable to close, sustained study” (202). What McFarlane has in mind when he discusses “close, sustained study” presupposes that repertory knowledge is not transmissible, or that its transmissions are not valuable. Approaching this notion in light of Taylor’s and Schneider’s ideas, it becomes clearer that since the orthodox linear transfer model rests on archival logic, it struggles to offer insights generalizable to both the novel/film paradigm and the text/performance context.

As a counterpoint to the dilemma that orthodox models of adaptation find themselves in regarding the question of dramatic adaptation, it is helpful to recognize the ways that adaptation occurs, to quote Rebecca Schneider on the temporality of theatre, “in the ‘meantime’ – in between possibly errant acts and possibly errant words – not only, that is, in some sacrosanct text, but in the temporal balancing acts of encounter with that text” (*Performing Remains* 88). In her reading of *Hamlet*, from which she borrows the phrase “in the

¹²⁷ Cf. W.B. Worthen’s “Disciplines of the Text: Sites of Performance,” which offers both a history of certain page/stage debates and a convincing deconstruction of text/performance dichotomies.

meantime” (3.2.44), Schneider is careful to note that Shakespeare does not set up an easy opposition between stage and page, wherein the “text on the page is authentic and fixed while performance is shifty and mobile” (*Performing Remains* 87). Hamlet is rather more concerned to use the live performance as a record of his father’s murder, in a move that aptly demonstrates how the apparently tidy distinction between the “live” and the “recorded” is more vexed than it seems (Schneider *Performing Remains* 89). The case is not that the written version of the speech Hamlet inserts into *The Murder of Gonzago* is the authentic work, simply by virtue of its apparent durability or of its preceding the live performance in front of the King. The work—meaning both the artwork and the work that Hamlet attempts to *do*—exists in the uneasy relation between the murder that was performed, its written and staged versions, and the encounter of Claudius with that intertextual predicament.

This latter point is crucial for thinking about the relationship between the meantime of theatre and the aura of againness. The live performance of “The Mousetrap” is a record intended to prompt recognition, and so “catch the conscience of the king” (2.2.617). According to a formal/ontological model of adaptation, we could argue that Hamlet’s play-within-a-play is not only a historical record but also an adaptation to the stage of a historical act. A performative model, however, would set aside this interest in categorical questions—e.g., is it actually an adaptation if the source is a historical record? Would it be more appropriate to call it a theatricalization of history? What term best suits the specific ontology of this intertextual pairing?—in order to focus on the work of recognition upon which Hamlet’s plot depends. Crucial to “The Mouse Trap” is the circumstance of the audience; it is not strictly the same play for Ophelia or Polonius as it is for Claudius, who is a “knowing audience” of the murder that Hamlet’s play adapts. This is not to level all interpretations as equally valid or equally significant, which is the anxiety that surrounds the problem of inclusiveness. The adaptation that Claudius constitutes is more pertinent, in this instance, because he is the mouse that Hamlet seeks to trap.

The question of authenticity in adaptation then ultimately comes back to my argument about fidelity; it is not an aesthetic issue, but a political one. The aura of againness

in “The Mousetrap” is inseparable from the revenge motive of Hamlet. He is anxious about the way the performers deliver his words because of what is at stake in prompting Claudius’ performance of identification. Accordingly, the authentic work is not located in any of its particular instantiations, so much as in the effect—the performed work—of the interaction between these various cultural objects and participants.

Remains: the (non)simultaneity of adaptation

The aura of againness, given that it exists in the meantime of adaptation, substantially complicates any straightforward notion of the place and time where a given adaptation “happens to be.” Rather, adaptation works *as such* precisely because it is never entirely present with itself. For an adaptation to become itself, an audience must “be there” with it, attending to its againness, identifying it with a precursor text, bringing to bear the influence of formal, discursive, and categorical markers that frame the adaptation *as such*. The catch is that, by virtue of attending the adaptation, one must not be attending the text it adapts. In a certain sense, like Phelan says of performance, adaptation becomes itself through disappearance.¹²⁸ At the very least, attending an adaptation depends on the disappearance of its adapted text—not, of course, a permanent disappearance, but a materially significant one nonetheless.

Here we can add to the principles of (non)identity and (non)literal materiality, a third negative principle: that of (non)simultaneity. The closest to simultaneity one might get is side-by-side comparison. To be sure, in an effort to fill out the various venn diagrams that are so often the stock-in-trade of adaptation studies methodology, I have spent countless hours shifting my attention back and forth between adaptations and their sources. I recall, for example, watching Zak Snyder’s film adaptation of *Watchmen* (1986/1987) with Alan Moore’s graphic novel in one hand and a remote control in the other. I had already seen Snyder’s film once, but I watched it again in order to perform a closer comparison with

¹²⁸ Phelan writes, “Performance’s being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance” (*Unmarked* 146).

Moore's graphic novel. I would watch a portion of the film, pause it, compare it with the comic, note visual and textual similarities or differences, unpause the film, and continue the process. Although the amount of time between my attending to the graphic novel and my attending to the film was minimal, I could not attend to both simultaneously. That is, despite being present with both works in the time and space of my living room, I could only pay attention to one at a time. The analysis I produced was detailed and rigorous, attuned to both the broad similarities and differences between texts, as well as to subtle rephrasing and graphical resonance or dissonance. But in a certain sense this analysis was dishonest to my initial encounter with Snyder's film, which occurred years after I had last read Moore's comic. In both cases there was an interval between attending to each text, but the nature of that interval substantially altered the process of oscillation.

With this in mind, I could refine the sense in which I have been using presence as part of attendance. Although during the side-by-side comparison of *Watchmen* my body as a whole was in the same room with both works at the same time, there was a more limited ocular and noetic presence that could not be split between the two works. In any given moment, I was physically looking at either one text or the other, and thinking about one, the other, or their relationship. This latter observation—that I was sometimes noetically present with the relationship between an adaptation and its adapted text—is less a counterpoint to the principle of (non)simultaneity than it is an indication of the material basis for the aura of againness. In other words, attending to the relationship between texts is not the same as attending to both texts simultaneously. To build on what I suggested about the meantime of adaptation above, we might say that it requires attending to a third text that is not reducible to but emerges as a gestalt effect out of the interaction between juxtaposed wholes, like a moiré or interference pattern. One cannot see both the discrete arrangements of lines and the moiré effect at the same time. Insofar as perceiving the interaction between adaptation and adapted text requires its own instance of paying attention, the aura of againness has its own materiality, in Hayles' sense of that term. Accordingly, unlike the aura that Benjamin discusses, and which Hutcheon takes as axiomatic for her theory of adaptation, what makes the aura of adaptation spatio-temporally unique is that it stems from its momentary disappearance from the place it happens to be, in order that the attendee might perform the

identification of a text with a precursor. For this crucial reason, the constitution of adaptations is a retroactive process; after the fact of constitution, the adaptation *will have* always been one.

Most encounters with the non-simultaneity of adaptation happen over stretches of time longer than a few seconds. And with greater stretches of time, there is a greater opportunity for distortions in the interstice. Once again borrowing language from Rebecca Schneider, I want to suggest that far from merely attempting to reproduce works of art in a new medium the performances that I look at in the sections that follow work with the aura of againness as “remains.” Schneider writes: “If the past is never over, or never completed, ‘remains’ might be understood not solely as object or document material, but also the immaterial labor of bodies engaged in and with that incomplete past” (Schneider 33). With her approach to remains, Schneider offers a compelling way to do critical work at the intersection of archival and repertory systems of cultural production and transmission. An adapted text, as archival object *and* as embodied memory, is precisely the sort of “incomplete past” to which Schneider refers. This is to say, ultimately, that *all* texts remain for the potential future of their “reactivation” (to recall Benjamin) through adaptation. What makes *Testament*, *The God that Comes*, and *The Tempest Replica* useful for my purposes in this chapter is that they each highlight different conditions that intervene between the moment of first encounter with the adapted text and the moment of “immaterial labor” that, through attendance, leads to the material constitution of the adaptation as such. With this in mind, when I say that these performances work with the aura of againness as remains, what I mean to suggest is that the performances themselves acknowledge and build off of the predicament upon which the cultural work of adaptation depends. Schneider writes of texts in the archive that they, “too, take place in the deferred *live* space of their encounter – and the repertoire of our citations is a kind of discursive oratorio – where error in re-pronunciation is as much in play as ever” (*Performing Remains* 106). The performances that I analyze throughout the rest of this chapter interest me precisely because they highlight “errors in re-pronunciation.” Further, they help to show what opens up when such errors are not treated as failures of authentic adaptation but as opportunities to explore and better

understand the processes by which remains foster adaptation and by which adaptation remains.

My approach to these cases is as far afield from the orthodox approach to adaptations as I get in this project. Since I am dealing with some of the most subjective and impressionistic facets of how adaptation works as a phenomenon, my readings of these works are not concerned with objectivity or comprehensiveness. Rather, I offer a glimpse into my affective and embodied encounters with each of these performances *as adaptations* in order to explore some of the distortions that enriched those experiences for me. I do so largely as a way to open critical space for acknowledging that those distortions are very much part of what makes adaptation a unique process of reception, difficult though they are to pin down, universalize, or unpack in line with the logic of the archive.

In a loose sense, my approach to each case correlates with a different temporal component of the interval between adapted text and adaptation. In *Testament*, an adaptation of King Lear in which the actors perform on stage with their actual fathers, my attention turns to the past: namely to the role of memory in the constitution of adaptation, and the productive potential embedded in failing to remember. Digital technology plays a key role, as cameras and projectors (among other technologies) make it possible for the performers to screen, in real time, the distortions and disappearances of recollected family drama. In my exploration of Hawksley Workman's *The God That Comes*, an adaptation of Euripides' *The Bacchae*, I am largely concerned with the various mediations at play in what was my present-tense encounter with that work. Of course, even at the level of verb conjugation ("what was"), it is clear that my engagement with the present-tense experience of that adaptation depends on a kind of critical time-slip, but, as I said near the outset of this chapter, my interest is not in representing or *re-present*-ing that performance. Rather, I look at Hawksley's¹²⁹ use of digital delay and looping tools to examine how his show troubles certain dichotomies—live/recorded, solo/collective, and audience/performer—in ways that highlight the multilayered importance of the moment in which the bacchanalian fervour

¹²⁹ Fans and reviewers frequently to refer to Hawksley Workman using his first name, rather than his last, and I will largely follow that convention going forward.

dissipates. The question of what follows from the moment of dissipation, which is raised by *The God That Comes*, is addressed at more length in my analysis of *The Tempest Replica*, Crystal Pite's dance adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In this final section, I return to the ideas about utopia that opened this chapter and explore issues related to adaptation, empathy, and the imagination of the future. With the first two cases so invested in the mediations, distortions, and disappearances of performance and adaptation, my approach to *The Tempest Replica* draws more attention to what remains going forward, leaving the theatre, carrying the aura of againness after the adaptation ends.

Screening the familial bond: the cruel optimism of the archive

Created by German theatre company She She Pop, *Testament* is an adaptation of *King Lear* wherein the actors share the stage with their actual fathers in what becomes a public negotiation of their shared histories and futures, their inheritances and their misunderstandings of one another. The actors speak only German, but translations are projected at the back of the stage. A number of digital cameras allow the performers to highlight and enlarge whatever stage activity they so choose, but the cameras spend much of the show trained on the faces of the fathers. A flip chart, containing several blank pages and several with markings and diagrams on them, stands stage left near another screen. Also affixed to the flip chart is a scroll containing text: a German translation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The chart is recorded by a digital camera, and a projection of that camera's feed appears on a large screen, also stage left. As *Testament* progresses linearly in rough correspondence with key events throughout *Lear's* five acts, the actors manually turn the scroll, underlining or striking through those parts of the play that they select, amend, and omit.



Figure 3.1. *Mise-en-scène in Testament*

I saw a performance of *Testament* on January 26th, 2013, in Vancouver as part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. In writing about it since, I have found myself struggling against the failures of my memory. I recall the high affective charge I felt upon leaving the theatre. I can clearly recall minor details and images—actors on stage wearing headphones; diagrams of apartments drawn on flip chart pages; songs from Dolly Parton and Frank and Nancy Sinatra; and the *mise-en-scène* I just described (see Figure 3.1), among a few other things. But engaging with the particulars of the performance proved incredibly difficult, especially as concerns *Testament*'s deployment of *King Lear* as a way to explore the intricacies of performing with and as family. Eventually, however, I acquired a DVD copy of *Testament*—which includes both a 13 minute highlight reel with English subtitles and a full-length version in German without subtitles.¹³⁰ This has offered a very important supplement to my otherwise quite meagre archive of the performance: notes recorded on my iPhone

¹³⁰ I have no comprehension of German, and did not have the resources to have the full-length version translated.

immediately after the performance; She She Pop's website;¹³¹ and a short promotional video posted on Youtube.¹³² The DVD was not only helpful because it provided a way to engage more fully with the specifics of the performance, jogging my memory and highlighting material that otherwise did not stand out to me at the time (as far as I remember). The DVD also returned me to the question of the archive as it relates to performance, and to the problem of memory in adaptation studies.

It surprised me to discover that memory has not formed a larger part of the theoretical focus of adaptation studies. There are, of course, a few instances where its relevance is noted, though much of this work ultimately ties back to an essay by John Ellis, where he writes, "Adaptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original presentation, and repeating the production of a memory" (4-5).¹³³ On the one hand, this notion is compelling for my purposes, especially insofar as it appears to corroborate claims that I made about enjoyment and adaptation in chapter one. On the other hand, both the concept of "pleasure" Ellis employs and the idea that adaptation "repeats the production of a memory" are underdeveloped, given that Ellis' "article" is actually a three page introduction to an issue of *Screen*. Perhaps the most substantial conceptualization of the important role memory plays in the process of reception for adaptations comes from Linda Hutcheon, who consistently acknowledges that memory is a necessary part of how adaptations work as adaptations. She writes that adaptation "is repetition but without replication, bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty. *As adaptation*, it involves both memory and change, persistence and variation" (*A Theory* 173, emphasis in original). This is the observation that underpins her concept of oscillation, which has provided a major theoretical backbone throughout this project, and which depends crucially on the interplay of memory and attention.

¹³¹ <http://www.sheshipop.de/en/productions/testament.html>

¹³² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUnyfBUfsAQ>

¹³³ Cf. Sanders (24). Referencing Ellis, Catherine Grant writes, "the most important act that films and their surrounding discourses need to perform in order to communicate unequivocally their status as adaptations is to (make their audiences) recall the adapted work, or the cultural memory of it" (57). Both Geraghty (3) and Cook (379) cite Grant on the subject of memory in adaptation studies.

These accounts of the role of memory in adaptation, however, strike me as especially optimistic. They do not consider, for example, the fallibility and partiality of memory in practice. Even at the level of her sentence structure, Hutcheon treats memory as parallel with persistence, with that which remains. It strikes me that this does not adequately distinguish between how adaptation works as a broader cultural phenomenon and how we come to specific insights about particular adaptations through side-by-side comparison. When we have the adaptation and the adapted text sitting in front of us, where we can repeatedly check and corroborate through direct comparison, we are working with very short-term memory—recall, here, my discussion of the principle of (non)simultaneity. But, speaking of audiences in more general terms, memory may function a little differently, a little less precisely. I would not challenge the idea that memory is crucial to the persistence that enables adaptation *as such*, but I would suggest that the link between memory and persistence is more complicated than might initially seem.

The failure of memory is especially resonant in the context of *Testament*, because some of its most evocative moments center on divergent recollections of the rehearsal process. The She She Pop website features a review of their Dublin performance that includes the following:

The discussions during rehearsals between the daughters and fathers, which threatened to end the project, were recorded and are now replayed for the actors through headphones. The way the performers quietly repeat the words, either insisting on their initial point or distancing themselves from it in their observations, constitutes some of the most brilliant scenes of the piece. Thinking becomes audible, visible, palpable.¹³⁴

Not only does “thinking” appear to take more tangible form, the archive emerges all the more clearly as a site of and for performance. The actors, after all, are *staging* the interrelation of memory and documentation, performing in real time¹³⁵ the effects of recollecting charged emotional experiences, and the slipperiness of interpreting the archive that would seem to

¹³⁴ Katrin Bettina Müller, Tageszeitung, 29.04.2011, on She She Pop Website, accessed May 16, 2014.

¹³⁵ See Mary Ann Doane’s remarkable historicization and theorization of “real time” throughout *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive*.

remain present well after the specificities of memory have faded. It is important, however, to note the specific wording in the review quoted above: “replayed *for the actors* through headphones.” To clarify, She She Pop never plays the audio of these archives for the entire house to hear. What is “visible” is actually a restriction of that which is “audible.” We see the headphones that, we are told, replay the archival audio of the rehearsal process. And what is made “audible” is only that which the actors opt to share through their own embodied (re)play. Accordingly, the performance of the archive is also a performance of the curation of the archive, which is to say a performance of the forgetting upon which the archive depends.

As Derrida indicates, this forgetting is an exercise of power, of the archon whose commands and acts of consecration underscore the operations of the archive. Furthermore, as an exercise of power, the theatrical device of the headphones not only allows the actors to perform the archive but also to perform the complexities of familial power dynamics, which are an explicit theme in *Testament* and a crucial aspect of its engagement with *Lear*. During the headphones scene, the actors discuss the parameters that were needed in order to effectively work with their own fathers: “In this structure we’ve made up here, they’re sort of bound by instructions. Even if we try to conceal that and make them feel free, it’s still clear: we are the bosses” (see figure 3.2).¹³⁶ Not exactly a reversal of patriarchal authority, *Testament* carefully teases out the nuanced exchanges of power that occur as fathers age and children assert autonomy. One example of this teasing out is evident at the level of set design and the blocking of the scene just quoted (see figure 3.2). The images of the fathers hover above their children, portraits of the patriarchs, overlooking the scene, physically dominating the stage as the digital projector makes them quite literally larger than life; yet, it is equally evident that this *is* an exaggeration of life, as the fathers can simultaneously be seen quietly sitting stage right, waiting for their cues, instructed by their children to remain where their bodies can be captured and contained by the borders of the digitally projected image.

¹³⁶ Where I quote from *Testament*, I am using the translations provided on the DVD.



Figure 3.2. Headphones and the full cast of *Testament*

It is the children here who act as archons, selecting structures of representation, framing images for inclusion within specific spaces set out on the stage. Though presented as a necessity of She She Pop’s creative process, of the challenges involved in creating and performing with family, it is not incidental that the actors convey these power dynamics at the very moment that they self-consciously perform the archive of the show via the aforementioned headphones. Coming back to Derrida, the move from public to private expressed by the very premise of *Testament*—bringing the actors’ actual fathers on stage—shares much with the exertion of authority underpinning the archive. As Wendy Chun concisely explains in *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*, “The archive thus buttresses a certain definition of public as state authority through the transformation, as Derrida notes, of a private domicile into a public one” (Chun 99). Evoking the archon, who was charged with transforming the private records of office-holders—“what each possessed” (Caygill 2)—into the contents of the public archive, She She Pop is highly self-reflexive about its own transformation of the private domicile of the family home into a site for public display to the “house” of the theatre. This is how the actors as archons buttress their own authority—the theatre is the “domicile” that they, as experienced actors and members of a

theatre company, can (to some degree) control—at least more so than the fathers, as amateur performers, are able.

This is not to suggest that *Testament* casts the fathers as wholly without power either. The reviewer cited earlier draws attention to discussions that threatened to end the project. The notes I took on my phone remind me of the nature of this threat: “*Testament* raises the question of authenticity, or fidelity if you like, by occasionally referencing the rehearsal process, wherein one father threatened to walk out because the production would not be ‘real.’” The father’s problem concerned the representation of “real life” on stage, of that transition from private to public. If the performers are staging the recollection of family histories and the ongoing dramas of kinship again and again, night after night, as much in Dublin as in Vancouver, how could these representations be real? This sense of “real,” however, problematically casts iteration at odds with authenticity. The father’s problem, it would appear, chiefly concerns presence, which Benjamin suggests is a “prerequisite” of the authentic work of art.¹³⁷ The present seems to slip away in the iterations of theatrical production, giving way to the past and the future, to the recreation of the work as devised for the future of its many performances. But, as Schneider would point out, the sense that the present of performance should be wholly “live” and “im-mediate” forgets that, even outside the theatre, the “now” is littered with what Judith Butler calls “sedimented acts” (“Gender Constitution” 274) and what Richard Schechner calls “twice-behaved behavior” (29).¹³⁸ Phrased in these terms, the link between authenticity and fidelity may be more clear, insofar as both are crucially political: the rejection of the inauthentic/unfaithful can be seen as the desire to manifest authority. The pertinent question is not, after all, whether *Testament* offers an authentic expression of these performers’ lives as they “really” are, just as asking

¹³⁷ Although, for Benjamin, the stage is an important point of contrast with film in terms of aura: “The aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor. However, the singularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is substituted for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the figure he portrays” (Benjamin 229).

¹³⁸ Cf. *Performing Remains* 92, where Schneider cites both Butler and Schechner, and draws attention to Elizabeth Freeman’s important updating of Butler in “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations,” *New Literary History* 31.4 (2000): 727-44.

whether it is “faithful” to *King Lear* would be utterly reductive. Rather, we might ask what politics are ultimately screened through the mediations that *Testament* brings to the fore?

When I say screened, I mean to highlight the dual sense of that term, both projection and discretion, highlighting and omitting. In the context of *Testament*, both literal screens and the act of screening abound: the fathers faces enlarged like portraits or game show contestants against the back of the theatre; headphones that visually indicate to the audience the limits of our access to information; and the question raised by the subtitles about what happens in translation, which itself parallels questions about the processes of adapting both *Lear* and “real life” to stage. Among the most compelling instances of screening is the physical (re)presentation of Shakespeare’s text within the space of the theatre, on a scroll. While evoking a system of documentation that precedes the codex, the content on the scroll is only visible to the audience because digital technology enables real time projection and enlargement. The way that the digital camera functions to select and omit (i.e. to screen) the text of *Lear* is further highlighted by the active selection and omission process that the actors carry out by physically writing on the scroll, underlining, crossing out, and rearranging the text to suit their ends. Even as two modes of archival mediation (digital camera and paper scroll) interact, it is their transience, partiality and fallibility that get showcased rather than their permanence. And by juxtaposing ancient with current technologies of documentation, She She Pop manages to reveal a historical dimension to the ephemerality of knowledge transmission systems that the logic of the archive treats as stable and durable.

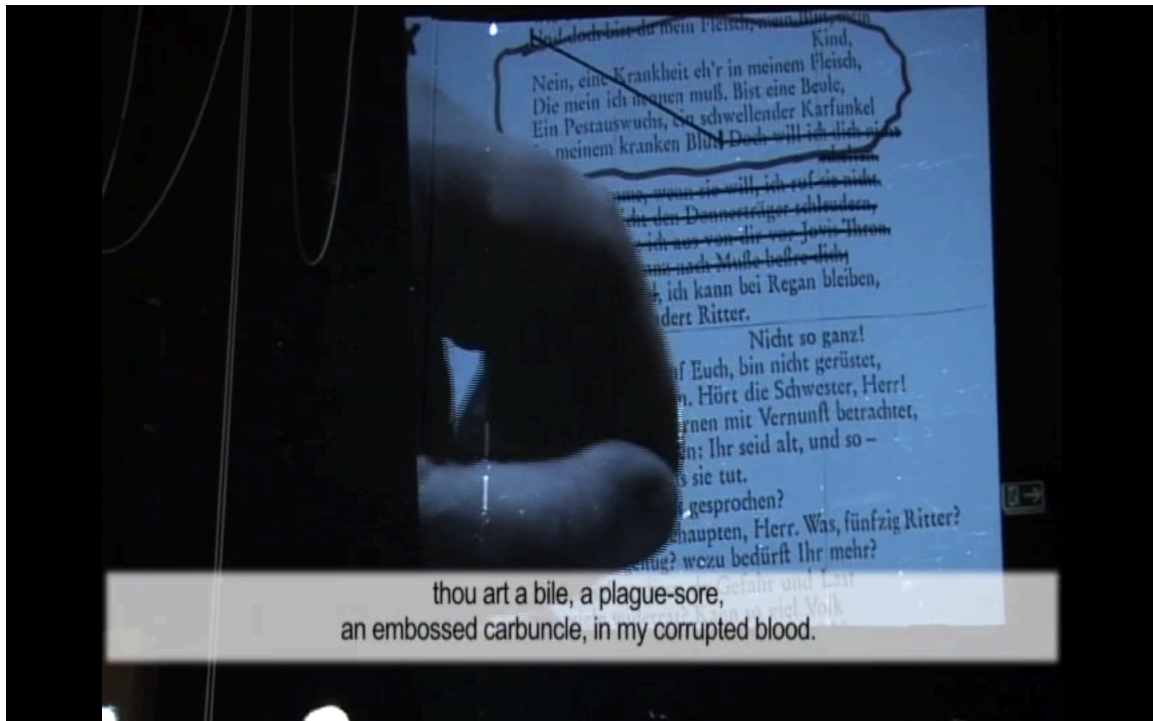


Figure 3.3. The screening of *Koenig Lear* on a scroll in *Testament*

Indeed, *Lear* is a well-chosen source text for *Testament*, not only because of its thematic focus on troubled father-daughter relationships, but also because of its contentious bibliographic history. There are wide discrepancies between the first quarto of 1608 and the first folio of 1623.¹³⁹ Much debate has centered on the question of whether these discrepancies are due to the misinterpretation of a stenographer's shorthand or to the inaccuracy of actors' reports, a process referred to variously as memorial "transmission," "reconstruction," or "corruption" (Downs). Here, again, the problem of memory and the archive intersect with issues of authority and, to recall another through-line in this dissertation, the material constitution of artworks.

The question of what "really" happened to produce these markedly different versions of *Lear* is a significant problem for bibliographic methodology. As Fredson Bowers articulates, in "Bibliography, Pure Bibliography, and Literary Studies," the techniques of

¹³⁹ For a detailed examination of the debates surrounding folio and quarto discrepancies, see Gerald E. Downs' article, "Memorial Transmission, Shorthand, and John of Bordeaux."

analytical bibliography attempt to answer such questions using only “the physical evidence of the books themselves” (28). Sir Walter Greg’s work on *King Lear*, however, is one of Bowers’ chief examples of a method that effectively hybridizes textual criticism with analytical bibliography, which is necessary because the “genetic relationship is in fact indeterminate” from reading alone, and “the evidence rests on the fact that one physical state of a given variant edition was followed in certain readings rather than the readings of another physical state (again with no regard for meaning)” (30). I would disagree, however, with Bowers that the bibliographic methods he highlights have *no* regard for meaning, even if he is correct that they are indifferent to the literary meaning of printed words for the purposes of determining the “genetic relationship” in question. The language of genetics, rather, is highly indicative of the “regard for meaning” that drives the very search for an authoritative explanation of the material history of the editions under scrutiny. For bibliographers like Gerald Downs, George Duthie,¹⁴⁰ and W.W. Greg,¹⁴¹ what is most at stake concerns separating out a “bad quarto” from an “authorial draft” (Downs 114). To be clear, I do not reject this pursuit or the value of the bibliographic methods it employs; my aim is not a critique of bibliography, just as my aim in discussing Adams and Barker in chapter two was not a critique of book history. Rather, I want to highlight the ways that *Testament*’s choice to “screen” the “screening” of *King Lear* further nuances their performance of the archive as a performance of familial power dynamics. The layers of adaptation and translation at play in *Testament* are important here as well. The logic of the archive manifests a desire for origins that prioritizes the determinable, objective, and concrete—a logic that, one might note, parallels that of paternity insofar as it seeks “legitimate” heirs, “authentic” offspring, and “faithful” recreations of an ideal(ized) object or family line.

Memory is thus the crux of the problem: the problem of the archive as a storehouse, as a space that remembers for us, that preserves what will otherwise (we may believe) disappear. Family, here, is figured as embodied memory through the patriarchal logic of

¹⁴⁰ See George I. Duthie’s *Elizabethan Shorthand and the First Quarto of King Lear*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1949.

¹⁴¹ See W.W. Greg’s *The Variants in the First Quarto of King Lear*. London: The Bibliographical Society, 1940.

inheritance, of preserving the bloodline. Without “legitimate” reproduction (the patriarchal logic goes) the family name—the word that stands in as testament to and memorialization of the patriarch—disappears. But, as Schneider helpfully articulates, the very promise of preservation offered by the archive undermines itself:

Books in hand give away the secret that an archive is *not*, cannot be, a house of arrest, despite its solid promise that preservation *will have been* the case. So the advantage gained by the promise of preservation in a house divided between writing on the one hand and repertoires of (given to disappear) embodied knowledge on the other is only the advantage of the social secret it props and the privilege of the patriarchic it protects: that the distinction is bogus. (*Performing Remains* 106)

The very problem of “books in hand,” which is to say books handled by living and interpreting bodies, breaks the promise of preservation as we cling to it. Is this not the problem of “memorial transmission” and the associated practices that result in a “bad quarto”? “There will always be,” as Schneider says, “the trip of the eye as it reads, the tongue as it mouths”—to which I will add: the stenographer’s hand as it transcribes, the actor’s memory as he recalls, and the body of the editor or bibliographer as she grapples to make sense of what “really” happened using the evidence (physical and/or textual) that remains in the archive (*Performing Remains* 106).

In the context of *Testament*, where *Lear* is being adapted not just for its content but for (and as) its material history, it is not surprising that the threat to end the production during rehearsals became part of the production itself. As Wendy Chun says of the archive, “Linked to authority and the establishment of power, archives also carry with them the threat of violence: a promise is also a threat” (99). In this way, the performance of the archive in *Testament* all the more powerfully expresses the “promise” and the “threat” at the heart of *King Lear*’s dynamic with his daughters. That is, the integration of the father’s threat during rehearsals into the performance of *Testament* helps to show that the expression of authority, as an exercise of power, is not exclusively the manifestation of a desire to dominate, subordinate, or control. It can also be an expression of hope, of an optimistic but deeply vexed attachment to possible futures.

Though evident throughout Shakespeare's play at various moments, the dynamic I am highlighting is perhaps most significant in the inciting incident with Cordelia. "Which of you shall we say doth love us most," says Lear to his three daughters, "That we our largest bounty may extend" (1.1.53-4). Only Cordelia refuses the false equivalence of love and inheritance, aware though she is that it might threaten the very relationship with her father that her "bond" names:

Cordelia: Unhappy that I am I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less

Lear: How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

(1.1.93-97)

Lear responds to Cordelia by making his attachment to her, and the fortune it would guarantee, conditional on the screening of her speech—that is, on amending her words so as to better suit a public declaration of the love he desires from her. Though Lear's attachment seems at a glance to be quite cynical, Lauren Berlant offers a way to understand the optimism that his threat also expresses: "All attachments are optimistic. When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us" (Berlant 23). Accordingly, we can unfold Lear's threat to Cordelia, and the apparently conditional nature of his attachment, as an expression of optimism, of hope for a particular future: the identification of desired promises. Indeed, it is his own fortunes that he most hopes will not be marred; Cordelia is "our joy," his favourite daughter, and he takes her refusal to publicly and hyperbolically perform her love as itself a threat to the future of the attachment that, in demanding she mend her speech, he longs for her to publicly declare (1.1.84). Thus, the threat Lear makes evinces his identification of Cordelia as an object of desire, insofar as he hopes to live (and ultimately die) all the nearer to her. I say "apparently conditional" because Lear does not ultimately lose his attachment to Cordelia when he disowns her, after she refuses to be anything other than "true" in her expression of love (1.1.109). As his deterioration throughout the play and his devastation at its end serve to demonstrate, Lear remains deeply attached.

To the extent that Lear's threat is also an act of leaning towards the "promise" of Cordelia's love, however, it takes shape according to the affective structure that Berlant calls cruel optimism:

a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be *impossible*, sheer fantasy, or *too* possible, and toxic.... where cruel optimism operates, the very vitalizing or animating potency of an object/scene of desire contributes to the attrition of the very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place. (24-25, emphasis original)

What compromises the conditions of possibility for Lear—what renders his optimistic attachment to Cordelia toxic—have chiefly to do with the false equivalence he makes between familial bond and certain forms of its exteriorization: public declarations of love and the inheritance of property. It is his attachment to Cordelia that raises the stakes of seeking from her a public performance of that bond, and in those stakes being so raised the object/scene of his desires is precisely what gets compromised.

Recalling the link that Chun draws between the promise and the threat of the archive, we may now see the attachment that it manifests—archive fever, the desire for the archive—as involving the affective structure of cruel optimism. Notably, Derrida draws attention to the forward-leaning quality of the archive, the hopefulness of its future-orientation, by invoking its "promise":

The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. (27, emphasis original)

Chun insightfully notes the "conservative" nature of this promise: meaning that it is a promise *to conserve* and that it is the promise of the archon to "follow past rules in order to guarantee a just future" (99). It is a promise to remember, which exerts the authority to

enforce forgetfulness through the assertion of public law.¹⁴² Its overlap with Lear's command for Cordelia to "mend her speech" is noteworthy in this respect, for both are crucially about a "responsibility for tomorrow"—Lear sees the dispensation of his wealth as a way to secure Cordelia's future, and in doing so to secure her responsibility to him as he ages. At the same time, the amendment of speech that Lear requires of Cordelia, which acts against her genuine allegiance to him, parallels the selectiveness exercised by the archon, which is to say his inability consecrate *everything* as worthy for domiciliation. This is cruel optimism because the promise that conservation *will have* occurred both vitalizes the archive as a scene of desire and structures its attrition.

The two songs I mentioned in my introduction of *Testament*—one by Dolly Parton and the other by Nancy and Frank Sinatra—might now be re-introduced as a subtle refraction of the cruel optimism that *Testament* highlights at the link between performing its own archive and performing the father-daughter bond. The two songs are "I will always love you" (1974) and "Somethin' Stupid" (1967)—the latter being notable for its refrain, "And then I go and spoil it all by saying something stupid like I love you." That the outward declaration of love could "spoil" the relationship it names plays off the expression of enduring attachment in Parton's ballad to get at the affective structure Berlant identifies.

Importantly, "Somethin' Stupid" is a father/daughter duet, which reinforces its points of connection with *Lear*. If Cordelia were to follow the precedents of her sisters, her statement of love would be "stupid" for the reasons she highlights: "Why have my sisters husbands, if they say / They love you all? ... / Sure I shall never marry like my sisters, / To love my father all" (1.1.101-6). It is a very rational point: there is a logical inconsistency to Reagan's and Goneril's public declarations that reveal them as hyperbole; if all of their love is for their father, do they not love their husbands? At the same time, Cordelia's sincere way of saying "I love you" effectively "spoil it all" by compromising the relationship with Lear.

¹⁴² My phrasing here recalls the practices of cultural memory that Joseph Roach explores in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, where he writes, "selective memory requires public acts of forgetting" (3). See also Andreas Huyssen: "After all, the act of remembering is always in and of the present, while its referent is of the past and thus absent. Inevitably, every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting, and absence" (3-4).

From this perspective, we might see Cordelia's "bond" as also taking shape in line with the affective structure of cruel optimism. She is, after all, optimistic that her father will understand the sincerity of her love, stating, "I am sure my love's / More ponderous than my tongue" (1.1.79-80). At the same time, her commitment to insisting on the separation of wealth and love disinherits her of both property and the "bond" that she prizes all the more than money. As she declares, "... I am glad I have not, though not to have it / Hath lost me in your liking" (1.1.233-4). And, like Lear, Cordelia never loses her attachment. At the first sign that her father is in distress, she makes it clear that the army she has landed at Dover is not an expression of her "blown ambition" but of her "love, dear love" for her father (4.4.27-8).

The last instance of cruel optimism in *Testament* that I will discuss concerns not the father who threatened to quit during rehearsals but the father who was *not* asked to join the cast in the first place. *Testament* opens with actress Lisa Lucassen explaining, "My father is old and frail. He rarely leaves his house any more. But to be honest: even if he was 20 years younger, I wouldn't have asked him onto this stage." Such is the reason that the cast of *Testament* consists of four actors and only three fathers (see Figure 3.2). That Lucassen's father was not asked to participate, and yet occupies the structurally privileged position of opening the show, gives voice both to the attachment and the compromising of attachment that underscores cruel optimism.

Shortly after Lucassen's father is introduced as absent, when the play reaches the 100 knights scene (act 1 scene 4 in *Lear*), Lisa Lucassen "updates" Shakespeare by discussing the problem of accommodating her father's books when he moves from Frankfurt to Berlin to live with her. In *Lear*, the knights are a point of tension between Lear and Goneril, as the aging former king struggles in coming to terms with the effects of resigning his title—i.e., losing his sovereign authority—and the reciprocity necessitated by living in his daughter's home. Lear has brought one hundred of his knights with him and they cause incredible disorder. As Goneril's says, "... your insolent retinue / Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth / In rank and not-to-be-endurèd riots" (1.4.207-9). When she requests that he reduce

the number of men, and select only those who “besort your age” to remain, Lear immediately disowns her (1.4.253-61).



Figure 3.4. The books of Lisa Lucassen’s father in *Testament*.

For Lucassen, adapting this scene, the books she chooses as substitutes for the knights are a problem of adaptation in the most literal sense: a problem of “making fit.” She begins this scene by presenting two diagrams, one of her father’s multi-level home in Frankfurt, and one of her 150m² flat in Berlin. Her father’s beloved books are represented by small, rectangular magnets, which she moves from the Frankfurt diagram to the Berlin one. Soon the magnets completely overwhelm the Berlin diagram, blacking out every inch. That said, the only act of disowning that gets performed is the one that precedes the performance: the refusal to invite her father on stage. Instead, the books become substitutes for both the knights and the father himself; the books as a problem stand in for the father as a problem.

In this sense, the refusal to invite the father goes back to the politics of screening discussed earlier, but now with an important addition: the books as substitute, stand-in, memory, or embodiment. Lucassen’s screening of her father’s presence—her announcement

of her refusal to invite him and her re-presentation of his absence via the digitally¹⁴³ projected book diagram—is also a promise to remember. Recall, this is the “conservative” politics of the archive: the public assertion of the power to forget by the very archon that promises to (re)collect. Accordingly, it is significant that Lisa Lucassen utters Cordelia’s famous line, now rephrased as a promise, at the moment that she declares her forgiveness of her father: “I forgive you all of this because I’m sure you did everything as well as you possibly could. In return, I can promise to love you according to my bond; nor more, nor less.” It is also important that Cordelia’s line is rephrased as a return, which is to say both an exchange and a memorialization. He performed his role as father as well as he could, so in return she will perform her role as daughter by *inciting return*, by publicly enacting memory of him, again and again, night after night, as much in Dublin as in Vancouver. Thus it is that she inherits his archive—transfers his books from one domicile to another, from the privacy of their troubled family history to the public “house” of the theatre.

I will end my discussion of *Testament* by returning to the failure of my own memory with which I began and reframing it in terms of the crucial way that adaptation depends on “inciting return.” Grappling with the problems of documenting performance after the live event, performance theorist Carl Lavery uncovers nuances involved in returning to (and via) a written script. Put differently, he analyzes what happens when he (re)reads a script after having seen the script performed live. He writes: “this return to the text is not predicated upon a logic of presence (the performance is not reconstructed as it was); rather it is an invitation to remember differently and to reconnect with what was missed or remained imperceptible at the time” (Lavery 44). I will note that Lavery’s language here is evocative of a link, expressed by Peggy Phelan, between the recollection of performance and the psychoanalytic concept of *nachträglichkeit*, which I will explore later. Lavery does cite Phelan, not on *nachträglichkeit*, but insofar as her theories “tend to undervalue, if not reject outright” the importance of connections between text and performance (39). If, for Phelan, the

¹⁴³ See also Wendy Chun’s discussion of the digital media and the “enduring ephemeral” (136-173). Chun argues, “degeneration traditionally has made memory possible while simultaneously threatening it. Digital media, allegedly more permanent and durable than other media (film stock, paper, etc.), depends on a degeneration so actively denied and repressed” (Chun 169).

document is “only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present” (*Unmarked* 146), for Lavery that spur is not something that ought to be downplayed. After the experience of a performance, the script, for Lavery, becomes the postscript, “an experiential site in which specific voices and images return to inhabit and embody the black marks and white spaces on the page” (40). Far from being “only” a spur, the postscript plays a crucial mediating role, acting spectrally to foster a phenomenological encounter, less with the semiotic content of the performance “as it was” than with what Lavery describes as “some imperceptible aesthetic feeling ... the strange physicality ... that haunts the other side – the inhuman side – of all linguistic transaction” (42). For my purposes, I want to highlight two implications of Lavery’s approach. Firstly, the postscript mediates between two readings, present- and past-tense, thereby mirroring the process of oscillation that Hutcheon describes as central to experiencing adaptation *as adaptation*. And secondly, textual particulars are less important here than a recollected affective state prompted by the text, by the return initiated through the encounter with the script.

Unlike the precise situation Lavery focuses on, my postscript with *Testament* was not a written script but an archive of materials (listed near the beginning of this section), albeit one that included both the written script of *King Lear* and those translated portions of the *Testament* script that appeared as subtitles on the 13-minute DVD. It would be a substantial oversight if I did not acknowledge the ways that my engagement with *Testament* as an adaptation depended on my own performance *of* this archive. That is, the apparent “failure” of my memory was the precondition of my return to the affective force of the play, to the utopian performative that drew me to write about She She Pop’s work in the first place. Notably, Lavery suggests the following, in reference to the too-easy dismissal of written text in performance theory: “I want to take issue with this foreclosure of the written text and to argue for the postscript as a living archive aiding the analyst to reengage with the lost affect of an absent body” (Lavery 39). As Schneider compellingly argues, the very sense that *any* archive is at odds with the “living” belies exactly that logic which scripts the body as

absent.¹⁴⁴ Lavery's wording is highly resonant for my own embodied engagement with the archive of *Testament* that I collected. Not only did these materials aid me in reengaging with the affective states prompted during the live performance, they prompted my recollection of the absent bodies that were (and are) so central to the show's affective force.

The question might arise, then: to what extent, if any, does adaptation follow the affective structure of cruel optimism? As a point of connection with the politics of screening I have discussed here, I will refer back to the politics of fidelity discussed in chapter one. At that point, I stressed the "affective bug" that prompts audiences to perform identification. I argued that the stakes of fidelity are conditioned by the various ways audiences invest in texts. These investments reveal their political character because the rejection of adaptations as unfaithful sometimes has less to do with confronting how others fail to capture the essence of a work than with acknowledging (and lamenting) how they succeed in imagining it differently. We might also see these investments as conditioned by the promise of adaptation. I have said, following Barbara Herrnstein Smith, that we evaluate adaptations according to the functions we want them to perform, and that this expresses desires that we locate in the adaptation as "object" (i.e., *objet petit a*). We might also understand this desire as a "cluster of promises" that we want adaptation "to make to us and make possible for us" (Berlant 23). Cast in this light, Hutcheon's claim that "we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change" articulates the shape of those promises (*A Theory* 9). To wit, the promise of adaptation is embedded in the very tension that underscores the principle of (non)identity. Insofar as an adaptation promises the repetition we desire, it compromises the possibility of a total return by simultaneously promising not to be a replication.

¹⁴⁴ Lavery does cite Schneider, albeit in a way that makes clear he learned of her work late in his own research process. He writes, "Although she might find my notion of the postscript a little to discrete or 'bony' for her taste, there is much in common between my thinking of the fleshy ghost and Rebecca Schneider's critique of the logocentric archive as 'a house' that has no room for flesh. Whereas I see the postscript as a text haunted by a body, Schneider, in characteristically non-patriarchal fashion, sees archival remains as 'absent flesh ghost[ing] bones' (2001: 104)" (Lavery 45).

So it would seem that adaptation is an instance of cruel optimism *par excellence*; the promise of the future that it makes threatens the very conditions of attachment that vitalize its object/scene of desire. And yet I am not satisfied that this is a necessity of adaptation so much as an effect of the orthodox model so often employed in studying it. I am not convinced that the “promise” of adaptation—its responsibility to and for tomorrow—*must* be the hope that an artwork *will have been* the same as or equivalent to that which we prioritize in the source. With an interest in articulating a perspective on adaptation that is less cruel, without being naïvely utopian, I turn to my next case study.

The God That Comes and goes

The God That Comes is a musical adaptation of Euripides’ play *The Bacchae*, co-written and performed by celebrated Canadian rock star Hawksley Workman.¹⁴⁵ It started as a live show that toured major Canadian cities, as well as a few US and European cities. I managed to see it twice, both times in Vancouver, first in January 2013 as part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival and then as part of the seasonal schedule of the Vancouver East Cultural Centre (the Cultch), in November 2013. After a year of touring, Workman released an album titled, *Songs from the God That Comes*, which is digitally distributed and available in CD form as the show continues its tour. Much in the way that my iPhone notes and the She She Pop DVD acted as a sort of post-script of *Testament*, a charged site of experiential return that enabled the uncovering of insights missed or unavailable at the time of performance, so too does *Songs from The God That Comes* help me to actively engage with the remains of the live performances I saw. Moreover, it enables a productive cross between repertory and archival modes of analysis. Listening to the recorded album permits attention to lexical specificity that, were I drawing on my memory alone, would be impossible for me. The album is, of course, not “the same” as the live performances of *The God That Comes* that I attended. Indeed, even if the record were a bootleg taken off of the soundboard from one of the specific nights that I was part of the audience, listening to it now as I write this section

¹⁴⁵ *The God That Comes* was also co-written by the show’s director Christian Barry.

would not be an engagement with the “same” performance; as I look at *The God That Comes* in more depth, I hope that my analysis of audience response dynamics in terms of the bacchanalian ritual will help to elucidate why.

The God That Comes is a solo performance, insofar as Hawksley is the only person on stage. In order to create a multi-track song-scape in the context of a live show, Hawksley plays multiple instruments (guitar, drums, piano, ukulele, harmonica, vocals, including harmony parts, and so on), and layers them over one another largely by means of digital delay and loop effects.¹⁴⁶ To this extent, Hawksley literally plays with himself—he is his own backing band. That said, the looping technology requires him to play four or eight bars on one instrument, which are recorded in real time through the soundboard by Hawksley’s longtime musical collaborator Todd Lumley, and then played back over the sound system as Hawksley moves on to another instrument. In this respect, the live solo performance is dependent on performance strategies which are neither strictly live nor strictly solo. To “watch” Hawksley play with himself we need to avoid attending to the ways that Hawksley is playing with Todd Lumley. To demonstrate Hawksley’s musical virtuosity as a live performer, the “live” music must be mediated, recorded, looped, echoed, and delayed.

As an adaptation, in the orthodox sense, it could be argued that *The God That Comes* actually involves three adaptations that follow on one another sequentially. In live performances, Hawksley begins by telling the audience, “This is not the show. This is the setup to the show,” before offering a summary version of *The Bacchae* focused largely on plot points and the attitudes that drive the three central characters: King Pentheus, obsessed with war, authority, and order hears about the arrival of a new god, Dionysus, who welcomes all of the marginalized people of Thebes (the women, the slaves, and social outliers of various sorts) to come up the mountain and celebrate Him with drunken revelry and wild abandon. Mediating somewhat between the explicitly violent jingoism of Pentheus and the hedonism-cum-violence that Dionysus ultimately represents by the play’s end is the King’s mother, Agave; emphasizing her love for Pentheus, her aversion to war, and her longing for

¹⁴⁶ I confirmed this detail with sound engineer Todd Lumley during a talkback after a performance of *The God That Comes* at The Cultch on November 14, 2013.

connection, Hawksley presents Agave's involvement with the bacchanalia as an instigating factor in the King's desire to meet and dispel this new god. After delivering his summary, Hawksley lets the audience know that the next part "is the show," before the lights go out and his virtuosic music-making begins. On *Songs from The God That Comes*, a similar setup starts the album: the first song begins with a child stating, "Here's what you need to know about The King," and a description that eventually moves on to the other characters is intercut with the music of the first song, "You Know What It Is". The part that "is the show" constitutes what we might consider the second and perhaps primary adaptation, wherein Hawksley plays a series of songs and acts out a series of interactions between characters that follow the plot and character setups he initially lays out. The third adaptation comes in the form of the show's final song, "They Decided Not to Like Us," which follows the familiar adaptive trope of "updating" the central ideas of *The God That Comes* to the modern day. The first line of this song, just to give a sense of the updating to which I refer, is as follows: "Nudie pictures on your mobile phone / Forgotten in the back of a cab / You were just going home / You were too drunk to know."

While it would perhaps make more sense to refer to the first and third "adaptations" as an introduction and an epilogue, my interest (as always) is less in the logic of taxonomy than the work carried out by the performance of identification. The practical function of the introductory plot summary is perhaps obvious: allowing those unfamiliar with the basic details of *The Bacchae* a greater opportunity to see how Hawksley's musical experiments represent the events and characters of the play. The final song does more interesting work, however, using the familiar context of cell phones and taxi rides, among other things, and the insistent second person address to invite the audiences' identification. Lines like, "You were just going home," explain the mundane quality of precisely the sort of event—losing a phone loaded up with nude selfies—that seems to court overzealous social ostracization, and can compromise jobs, relationships, even safety and well-being. This song thereby places the listener among those that would be pushed away by the conservatism of Thebes and Pentheus and drawn by the sound of revelry to join the ritual on the mountain. Along these lines, the song involves a lyrical shift from the initial refrain of, "You feel messed up and you tell yourself you're gonna change," to the revised refrain of, "They decided not to like us /

They've decided not to like people like us," which suggests a perspectival shift from the individualized internalization of social shame to the view of a collective united by their social rejection. Self-policing and acceptance of the sense that what "you" are doing demands personal change in turn becomes recognition of shared marginalization.

The movement between individual and collective understandings is central to *The God That Comes*. Consider the moment that Agave shifts from the perspective of the bacchanalian collective, returning to her individual identity as the mother of Pentheus, whose head she holds in her hands. In Hawksley's handling, Agave comes out of her bacchanalian fervour over the course of two songs—"Can you believe?" and "He's mine"—which in live performance seem to flow as a single song, and on the studio album are formally separated as tracks but follow one another nearly without seam. The lyrics of "Can you believe?" express surprise at Pentheus' fragility, that his "blood came out red" and his "heart came out soft." In turn, recognition of the base human quality Pentheus shares with the revelers gives over to a kind of sympathy with his conservatism: "Can you believe there was salt in his tears / and all along there were cause for his fears." This expression of understanding, however, is tempered by the repeated question, "Can you believe...?" throwing doubt on whether or not Pentheus' apparent humanity is received as genuine by those who had been oppressed by his politics.

The general, wary acknowledgment of empathy with Pentheus gives over to a full acceptance of responsibility as the speaker shifts from a collective to a single member of that collective, Agave. Throughout "Can you believe?" the only indication of a speaking subject comes via the line, "the light in us all would not be held down," which seems to suggest that it is the whole community of revelers ("us all") who reflect broadly on the meaning of Pentheus' death. By contrast, in "He's mine," the speaker is clearly Agave, as she connects the head she holds in her hands with the face of a young boy who used to "play army men in the yard." The repetition of "He's mine / oh god, he's mine" serves both to mark her coming out of the bacchanalian daze to see what she truly holds in her hands and to give voice to the responsibility she accepts for his life and death: "I gave you life" she sings, "just to take it away / Now I leave in shame and I'll go away for good / It's not so hard to love so

hard.” Whereas the collective voice of “Can you believe?” raises only the potential for identifying with an oppressive other, the personal identification Agave has with her son allows that wary expression to motivate a choice about her future. This shame stands in contrast with that evoked in “They decided not to like us” because it is deeply personal rather than institutionally imposed.

I will come back to the significance of Agave’s moment of recognition and her choice to “go away for good,” but for the moment I want to focus on the dynamic of collective and individual participation in the bacchanalia. Given that Dionysus is the god of theatre, among other things, it is an easy leap to consider that *The God That Comes* has something to say about the dynamic between Hawksley as a “solo” performer and the audience. Firstly, I want to note that the audience is not singular in its desires or expectations, but nonetheless produces meaning as a collective. Consider how the show is marketed on its official website:

Part play, part concert, all bacchanalian.

This solo performance fuses the chaotic revelry of a rock concert with the intimacy of theatrical storytelling. Hawksley plays all the characters and all the instruments....

It is an invitation to raise a glass together, hear a story, and get lost in the music for a few hours.¹⁴⁷

This description addresses the split expectations of its audience. Given Hawksley’s persona as a Canadian rock star, part of the audience of *The God That Comes* are those who want to see a Hawksley Workman rock concert. Since this performance is only staged in theatres, often during performance arts festivals like PuSh and Toronto’s Summerworks, the other predominant part of the audience are theatregoers, who may or may not know anything about Hawksley’s music, persona, or career. Nonetheless, the function of the audience as collective is crucial; they are invited to “raise a glass together” and partake in the story, music, performance, etcetera from there. Workman himself indicated the importance of the

¹⁴⁷ www.thegodthatcomes.com/about/the-experience

audience for the co-creation of the performance during a talkback session after one of the shows I saw: “It’s my willingness that creates your willingness,” he said, “and your willingness that creates my willingness ... audience and performer creating a performance together” (Workman). By this, Hawksley suggests that the process of co-creation does not depend on any one individual in the audience, but in their willingness to perform as a group.¹⁴⁸ While the marketing blurb cited above gives an indication of what *The God That Comes* purports or aims to be, the invitation to raise a glass together is actually a literal description of how the performance I saw that night began; Christian Barry, the director and co-writer of *The God That Comes*, addressed the audience directly, delaying the show’s start time a few minutes in order for everyone to get a glass of wine from the bar. Whether or not each person partook of the opportunity, the invitation itself marked the forthcoming performance as a bacchanalia, a collective ritual, a celebration of wine and music. Though the blurb cited above begins by highlighting the split between its parts, it quickly comes to suggest that the show’s bacchanalian elements offer the possibility of synthesis. This show promises not only the fusion of rock “revelry” with theatrical “intimacy,” but also the space for different kinds of audiences to share in those parts coming together.

If, however, this “coming together” is what resolves the competing parts of *The God That Comes* into something which is “all bacchanalian,” it seems to stand at odds with the other central emphasis in the marketing copy excerpted above: namely, that this is a solo performance wherein Hawksley plays all the characters and all the instruments. As Rebecca Schneider argues in “Solo Solo Solo,” the discourses of solo performance are entangled in issues of aura, authenticity, authorship and repeatability (33), all of which centralize the discrete creative acts of a singular body performing in a space that demarcates between performer and audience. The link between solo performance and authenticity will hopefully stand out given the opening of this chapter. Recall that, as Auslander argues, rock music has a particular investment in authenticity as that which draws a dividing line between rock and

¹⁴⁸ Again, Bennett’s *Theatre Audiences* is a valuable point of reference here, insofar as her study offers a detailed investigation of various ways that spectators interact with one another and with performers, emphasizing the historical development of “non-traditional theatre” that places increased importance on such forms of social reciprocity.

pop (69). He also suggests that what makes rock authentic, its aura, stems from a complicated dynamic between live and recorded performance (85). And as I also discussed earlier in this chapter, drawing on Margaret Kidnie's work, theatrical adaptation perpetually flirts with questions of authenticity—with what will count as “the work.” *The God That Comes* bears a complicated relationship with all of these notions of authenticity, being that it is simultaneously a solo performance of rock music and a theatrical adaptation of a classic play, supplemented by both live recording practices (loop pedals) and an album version that is available for sale before and after the show. Here I will add to my earlier comment about the show being neither strictly live nor strictly solo that it is also not really attempting to be a version of *The Bacchae* that would “count” as the work. Accordingly, the various sites of authenticity that I have cited throughout this chapter are challenged at every turn in *The God That Comes*.

Further, *The God That Comes* balances the question of authenticity between tensions that are deeply entwined with one another: solo/collective, live/recorded, original/adapted. Schneider writes, “Often a ‘solo’ artist performs *as if* alone or singled out, only to perform a kind of echo palette of others, a map of citations and a subjectivity so multiply connected as to be collective” (Schneider 36, emphasis original). To this extent, the fact that “Hawksley plays all the characters” troubles as much as it bolsters the show's solo-ness. He is alone on stage, sure, but voices and embodies three characters—Dionysus, Pentheus and Agave—who have been embodied and voiced innumerable times before, not only by Hawksley in previous performances of *The God That Comes* and through various stagings and readings of Euripides' *The Bacchae*, but also through other adaptations, like Charles Mee's *The Bacchae 2.1* (1993). In this sense, *The God That Comes*' reluctance to name itself as “the work” by sharing a title with *The Bacchae* does more than offer a chance for sexual innuendo; it positions the adaptation as part of a collection of works that participate in and co-create the ongoing cultural meaning of the myth of the bacchae. And if the subjectivity suggested by this “map of citations” is not “multiply connected” enough, we could add that Hawksley Workman is already himself a character: Ryan Corrigan adopted “Hawksley Workman” as a stage persona when he transitioned from working as a hired drummer and producer to performing as a

multi-instrumental singer/songwriter.¹⁴⁹ This latter point draws focus to the question of authenticity in rock music and the work performed by the “signature” of Hawksley Workman as a rock star in a theatrical production. Like the title, *The God That Comes*, which announces Dionysus’ difference from other gods according to his willingness to be present with the collective that would worship him, there is something to Hawksley *as* a persona that resists the aloofness and inaccessibility of rock-god-stardom. It is clear in his performances—whether staging *The God That Comes* or putting on a concert—that Hawksley is driven by an attentiveness to the audience: he listens to us as we listen to him, his willingness and ours. In the *God That Comes*, he raises and drinks the same wine we drink.

The entwined authenticities of *The God That Comes* work together throughout the performance—the doing and the thing done, to recall Elin Diamond’s definition of performance (1)—as an *undoing* of sorts. Referencing the titles of works by Gertrude Stein and Yvonne Rainer, Schneider writes,

a title, like a signature, comes undone at the point of performance – an undoing, or unbecoming, which can also critically point to our ongoing investments in the titular, our investments in the signature as discrete. Such an undoing can, perhaps, make the literal word no more than material substance, make the gesture nothing more than a "task" given to repetition, and the name no more than indiscrete sound given to play and replay in infinite combination – a solo played and replayed in infinite and *collective* variation. (“solo” 36-7, emphasis original)

Schneider’s insight here begins to reveal the broader value that *The God That Comes* offers for understanding adaptation in general terms. If the most generalizable theory of adaptation can be summed up by Linda Hutcheon’s phrase, “repetition with variation,” then the line between the replaying in “infinite and collective variation” of performance blurs altogether quite readily with the “againness” of adaptation. While the reference to undoing “signatures” is clearly relevant to the present discussion, it is also significant that Schneider focuses on titles, because these are often the surest signifiers of a particular adaptive strategy. As I just

¹⁴⁹ While these details are widely known, an interview posted on the website *Only Angels Have Wings* offers corroboration, and explains that “Hawksley” was chosen because it is his mother’s maiden name: http://onlyangels.free.fr/interviews/w/hawksley_workman.htm

mentioned, Hawksley makes the choice not to call this work *The Bacchae*. Were he to have done so, it would have set particular expectations for the sort of show that we would be attending—thereby conditioning the aura of againness—which would inevitably, in turn, enact its various undoings. For wider evidence of the extent to which expectation and meaning are fused in the discourses of adaptation, one need only cite the recent Brad Pitt film *World War Z*, based on a novel by Max Brooks. The critique of this film *as adaptation* is summed up neatly in a venn diagram published on the website *The Oatmeal* titled, “What the World War Z movie has in common with the book.”¹⁵⁰ One circle details content from the novel, while the other glibly notes, “The movie tells the story of Brad Pitt running around shooting things.” The overlap of the two circles simply states, “It’s titled World War Z.” In this pithy illustration of common comparative approaches, adaptation becomes coterminous with sameness—as the logic of the discourse goes, were it *really* an “adaptation” of *World War Z*, the film would have hewn more closely to the book. But building on Schneider, I would suggest that what is most generative about adaptation occurs precisely in those moments where the expectation that a text will repeat what is already familiar comes undone through the performance of “collective variation.” In the context of *The God That Comes* the subject of “collective variation” is not only the title, but also the signature of Hawksley Workman, the performance’s status as rock concert and as adaptation, the soleness of its central performer, the liveness of its central performance, and—after all that—the collectivity of its audience.¹⁵¹

If, for Schneider, the undoing of the titular at the point of performance is important because of the way it points to our ongoing investments in such things as titles and signatures, the question for *The God That Comes* becomes what is done by its various linked undoings? To my mind the answer to this arrives with the moment of transition between “Can you believe?” and “He’s mine.” This moment represents the undoing of a particular

¹⁵⁰ <http://theoatmeal.com/comics/wwz>

¹⁵¹ Bennett also draws attention to the importance of titles, among other elements that condition audience reception practices: “Certainly the amount of information and the signposts a programme presents act as significant stimuli to the audience’s decoding activity prior to any presentation of a fictional on-stage world. Perhaps the most important signpost in the programme is the play’s title” (148).

collective consciousness, one that importantly parallels the collectivity of the theatre audience. Notably, Agave looks into her son's face and makes an identification that stages the process of oscillation: "I see his face now and it's the same as when / He was young, playing army men in the yard / He looked so hard." This moment showcases the recognition of similarity across an interval of time. Moreover, the particular moment she recalls parallels the process of performing identification, as young Pentheus plays at an identity, "army man," that will later consume him. These moments of identification, notably, stress emotional resonance over and above formal similarity. Agave sees a child that she raised and cared for, and sees him in a state of emotional hardening, of preparing for a role that requires the hollowing out of sympathy. This is empathy, on her part, for the non-sympathetic, in a moment where his brutality is (retroactively) foreshadowed at the same time as she realizes her own violence has passed the point of its tragic apotheosis.

The retroactive constitution of meaning is pivotal here. Its importance is stressed through a doubling over of the retroactive sense-making process: on the one hand, Agave only comes to understand the violence of the bacchanalia after the fact, once she is able to see the head in her hands as her son's decapitated head; on the other, her empathy comes about through memory, as she comes to see Pentheus' militaristic violence as having always been part of his character. In the introduction to *The Ends of Performance*, Peggy Phelan outlines an approach to understanding how the past gains its meaning in the present:

The dramatization of the past in the present is related to both Freud's term for psychoanalytic understanding, *nachträglichkeit*, "afterwardsness" or deferred action, and Schechner's understanding of performance as "twice behaved behavior." For Freud, *nachträglichkeit* indicated the retrospective account that reinterprets the past in such a way that what had been repressed by the unconscious can be joined with consciousness.... Freud understood that curing the traumatic symptom required a lot of talking afterward. Talking after the event, post-talking, the often tedious recitations of events and sequences, rehearses the tongue for trickier, less sequential psychic acts. For talking after often means "talking over," and in the performance one might be able to discern what consciousness overlooked during the event's unfolding. This talking after and talking over is where the curative interpretation occurs within psychoanalysis: in the rehearsing of the event that has passed, the analyst and the analysand learn how to play the past when it happens again in the future. (Phelan *Ends* 7).

In light of Phelan's observations here, I am inclined to argue that the lessons of Agave's violence are poorly resolved by her decision to self-exile, and that the final song of *The God That Comes*, "They Decided Not To Like Us" stages an alternative response to the shame that motivates her. In this respect, the updating trope creates the opportunity to play the past again in the future. The response of the bacchanalian revelers to the institutionalized marginalization that drives them up the mountain ultimately shares a brutality with that very institution. The transition from the insistent second person address of lines like, "You carry out the empties to the curb in the dark / embarrassed that the neighbours would see," to the constitution of a new collective "us" that "they" have decided not "to like" seems eager to reinstate the unity of the revelers by means of shared otherness. The question of its potential violence, of repeating the narrative laid out just prior to this song, however, remains unaddressed.

Raised by this lack of resolution is precisely the question that separates adaptation from replication: will it be repetition with difference? In this way, the theatre audience of *The God That Comes* is courted into a situation that uniquely frames the process of *nachträglichkeit* with respect to the show itself. As we move from the position of a collective, co-creating the show, the disappearance of the live event becomes akin to the dissipation of the bacchanalian fervour. As is always the case with the performance of identification, the constitution of the adaptation as such occurs retroactively, as we move through distinct moments of recognizing similarity across the gaps of temporal, spatial, and material difference. *The God That Comes* points to the affinity between this process and that of talking after/over a recently experienced performance event. Just as the audience members are each poised to consider whether *The God That Comes* "counts" as an adaptation of *The Bacchae* or as an authentic Hawksley Workman rock show, they are left with the problem of that unresolved "us" that the context of theatrical co-creation temporarily created. *The God That Comes* does not provide a clear sense of what it sees as the proper resolution. Rather, like the collective voice in "Can You Believe?" it merely raises the question, and sets the conditions for particular instances of emotional resonance to retroactively help "discern what consciousness overlooked during the event's unfolding" (Phelan *Ends* 7). But the question remains: how to play the past when it happens again?

On this note, my discussion of *The God That Comes* has now moved more properly into the question of the future, of the utopian elements implicit in my approach to adaptation. As I concluded my discussion of *Testament*, I claimed that the orthodox model of adaptation posits its “promise” in ways that cruelly undercut its own conditions of possibility. With *The Tempest Replica*, I see the expression of an alternative model, raised self-reflexively through its embodied engagement with Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. I will therefore temporarily forestall my analysis of the ending of *The God That Comes*, and return to the significance of its moment of dissipation—and what remains after the end of performative fervour—once I have adequately set up *The Tempest Replica* as a point of contrast.

This utopia I acknowledge mine

The Tempest Replica is a piece of experimental dance theatre by internationally renowned choreographer and performer Crystal Pite. Of the three cases explored in this chapter, this performance is freshest in my memory at the time of writing. Moreover, during my second viewing of the performance, three days after the first, I took extensive notes (in the dark of the audience) about the details I knew I would be liable to forget: the order of the discrete parts of the show; the specific phrases taken from *The Tempest* that are spoken, digitally projected as text, or played through the sound system of the theater; and choreographic echoes that visually and kinesthetically link moments throughout the performance. Recording this level of detail was important to me, in part because of my experiences writing about both *Testament* and *The God That Comes*, where my revisitation of the events was conditioned by my struggle to recall particulars that later proved relevant to my analysis. To this extent, although *The Tempest Replica* bears no formal relationship with either *Testament* or *The God That Comes*, the remains of those two shows conditioned my reception of Pite’s work in important ways. Finally, although I have (once again) refrained from employing a formal script as a post-script in my return to *The Tempest Replica*, there is a specific piece of writing in addition to my notes that has prompted the affectively charged return of experiences from my attendance to this show. Peter Dickinson’s article, “Textual Matters: Making Narrative and Kinesthetic Sense of Crystal Pite’s Dance-Theater,” not only

offers a rich analysis and provocative theorization of issues related to *The Tempest Replica* (and Pite's artistic practices more broadly), but also details specifics of the performance that, in line with the talking after/over of *nachträglichkeit*, have helped me to discern elements I overlooked during the event's unfolding.

As the title of her piece attests, Crystal Pite's dance adaptation of *The Tempest* consciously engages with its own status as a version of Shakespeare's play. The possibility of fidelity, in the sense of closeness to an original, is simultaneously affirmed and foreclosed. A replica is a duplicate or exact copy,¹⁵² so this performance would seem to announce its relationship of total identity with *The Tempest*; however, by including a word in excess of the original play's title, its difference is immediately secured. Of course, by virtue of being dance theatre, its difference from *The Tempest* both as written document and as traditionally staged theatre was secured from the outset, to say nothing else of an adaptation's automatic difference from an adapted text.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, this title speaks to the way that Pite carefully traces a dialectic of identity and difference—reductive fidelity and intertextually anchored innovation—into the structural fabric of *The Tempest Replica*.

Split into two parts, the performance's first half sets a linear course through the five acts of *The Tempest*, using projected text to announce scene numbers and provide brief written descriptions of the action that will follow. Throughout this first part, the performers (save for Eric Beauchesne as Prospero) are clad head-to-toe in white and moving stiffly at the joints. Dickinson notes (citing a statement by Pite herself) that the replicas of the first act "are meant to recall the scale human figures used in architectural models" ("Textual Matters" 70). These models, moreover, are framed as the subjects, if not playthings, of Prospero's magical prowess, which gets expressed (in a manner appropriate to dance-theatre) through the control and manipulation of bodies. Dickinson says the following of one important example:

¹⁵² "replica, n. (and adj)." Def. 3a. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2014. Web. 12 July 2014.

¹⁵³ Cf. Robert Stam on "automatic difference" ("Dialogics" 55), discussed in chapter one.

In the scenic compositions that make up the first half of Pite's work, the positions of bodies, and the different tonal phrases they enact, are mostly controlled by Prospero. This is made clear via our introduction to Miranda, who first appears lying prone on the floor after her father tears down the front curtain following the storm. ("Textual Matters" 73)

The manipulative tactics of Prospero become the subject of reevaluation in the second half of *The Tempest Replica*, which largely leaves behind the white costumes and the mechanical style of the dancers' movements. Instead, Pite has the dancers/characters appear in street clothes, faces fully visible, for a series of deeply evocative duets, each of which meditates on a dynamic between two characters—in order: Prospero and Ariel, Antonio and Sebastian, Prospero and Miranda, Prospero and Caliban, Prospero and Ariel (again) and Miranda and Ferdinand. Each discrete piece in the second half highlights emotionally charged moments of the play's narrative, though not in linear or literal terms. Bringing back character-specific gestures established in the first half, Pite distills relationships marked by love, betrayal, and unequal power into kinesthetic themes, supplemented by projected text and recorded audio that further enrich the physical explorations of the performers with intertextual resonance. My argument moving forward is that this two-act structure subtly posits two models of adaptive "replication" that in their juxtaposition draw focus to the pivotal role of empathy in addressing what is to me the central question of the utopian performative: what might this heightened affective state *do* going forward, after the show's end, as we move from the space of the performance to social spheres that await outside the theatre? And given *The Tempest Replica's* self-reflexive engagement with issues of adaptation, this case offers an evocative route back to my interest, explained at the outset of this chapter, in the overlap between the utopian performative and the spatiotemporally messy processes of adaptive oscillation. Accordingly, *The Tempest Replica* helps to show the relationship between a cruelly optimistic model of adaptation and its potentially more empathetic alternative.

The Tempest Replica opens with Eric Beauchesne, who knowing audiences (those familiar with *The Tempest*) will soon enough identify as Prospero, folding origami at the foot of the stage. He draws a new piece of paper and attentively creases it, gradually turning a blank white page into something the audience can identify as a sailboat. Dickinson notes that these boats share an affinity with the replica characters of the first act, not only due to the

“number and color and scale of the boats’ replication” but because they are the objects of Prospero’s manipulation (“Textual Matters” 70). I would add that the process of identification that the sailboats invite the audience to perform also parallels that which occurs with respect to the replica characters. These boats, like the versions of Ferdinand and Caliban and so on who we are about to meet, are a sort of neutral palette of material soon to be shaped and framed in such a way as to foster a particular reading: i.e. folded paper as sailboat; architectural doll as Alonso, Sebastian, etcetera. The same process, it should be noted, occurs with respect to Prospero himself, who remains in street clothes with his face clearly identifiable; we do noetic work to identify him as Prospero based on his relationships with other characters and the narrative information that the show provides. But his visible difference from those he controls suggests a different sort of identity at play than is the case with the replicas. Put simply, he is allowed to have a face for the audience to face, by way of contrast with the characters over whom he has power—until the second act prompts a process of reevaluation.

Thus it is that I see *The Tempest Replica* moving from a model of adaptation premised on the seductions of technical control to one premised on the complexities of empathetic response. To be clear, there is actually one other character, Ariel (Sandra Marín Garcia), whose face we briefly see before the second act, and the context in which we first see her affirms the dynamics of power and manipulation upon which the adaptive model of the first act depends. After folding and aligning his paper boats in rows, Prospero summons Ariel by name and announces his command to her with a single word, “shipwreck.” As Dickinson points out, Ariel’s appearance of displeasure at being summoned for this purpose reminds the audience that she does not carry out the tasks Prospero assigns to her as an autonomous agent (“Textual Matters” 70). In a moment that brought me quite literally to the edge of my seat with its affective force, Ariel responds to Prospero by taking the sailboat he hands her and—to my eye—swallowing it whole as the lights cut sharply to black and the first thunderclaps of the storm resound throughout the theatre. Dickinson links the paper being ingested by Ariel to “Pite’s choreographic challenge in taking on a sacred cultural text like *The Tempest*: how, precisely, to make the words have flesh?” (“Textual Matters” 71). A parallel is herein established that frames the first act: the sailboat as stand-in for the task of

embodying *The Tempest* becomes coupled with Ariel's internalization of her role as servant; she will, after all, remain faceless, clad in white, and pliable (like paper or an architectural doll at the hands of Prospero) from the moment she consumes the boat until the onset of the second act. Her costume is a little different from the others—a shimmery body suit rather than tailored white slacks and a sports coat, or a skirt as Miranda wears—but her face nevertheless remains obscured. Accordingly, we can read the first act's attempt to reproduce, as literally as possible, the major character dynamics and plot points of *The Tempest* as a “faceless” embodiment of the narrative as set down in Shakespeare's text: adaptation as scale model, a performance in slavish servitude to the form set down in paper by a master whose influence looms large.

As *The Tempest Replica* moves into its second half, having covered the basic architecture of *The Tempest* up to, but not including, the play's epilogue, the sailboat returns to cast doubt on Prospero's machinations. A replica (perhaps a double of Prospero, although it was not clear to me if this was meant simply to be a generic doll) appears on stage handing the paper boat to Prospero. The two performers move around each other as though caught in a loop, repeating the same motions, fighting over the boat, until Prospero finally succumbs, falling to the floor. The replica unfolds the paper, returning it to its earlier state as a plain, flat sheet, though irreversibly creased with the lines of its temporary form. This undoing of form in turn provides a canvas, as the word “doubt” is literally cast upon the surface of the page. Here Pite introduces a model of adaptation that recalls Hutcheon's focus on palimpsestic doubling (*A Theory* 33, 116, 122), but with an evocative difference. Rather than text over text, or image over image, the word is digitally projected over a blank page—not palimpsestic at all save that the paper retains physical evidence of its embodied relationship with an earlier form.

As Prospero falls prone in this encounter, he assumes the position occupied by Miranda immediately following the storm, thereby offering a physical metaphor of the empathy Miranda herself conveys in *The Tempest* after watching the shipwreck: “O, I have suffered / with those that I saw suffer!” (1.2.5-6). By literally assuming the position of a character he had earlier controlled, in the precise moment that the physical representation of

his magic-as-control is undone by “doubt,” Prospero enters the second half of *The Tempest Replica* all the more capable of empathetic responsibility than he was heretofore. Reflecting on this transition between acts, I am reminded of Judith Butler’s engagement with Levinasian ethics in *Prekarious Life*:

One does not always stay intact. One may want to, or manage to for a while, but despite one’s best efforts one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel. (23-24)

Given the focus of this chapter, I am struck by both the temporality and the physicality of this description. At once recollective, immediate, and anticipatory, Butler locates the encounter with the other as much in the body as in the mind. Approached through this lens, the undoing of Prospero’s manipulations (read: the undoing of Prospero as manipulator) adds an embodied and intersubjective dimension to the undoing of signatures, titles, rock authenticity, and so on, discussed earlier with respect *The God That Comes*. At that point I argued that the transition from the bacchanalian fervour to Agave’s expression of responsibility for Pentheus’ death worked to undo the collectivity of the theatre audience, but in such a way that merely raised the question of future collectivity without positing how to avoid the traps of violence. Prospero’s undoing, rather, is not strictly an abstract move towards ethical collectivity so much as it is the precursor to the possibility of an embodied face-to-face encounter.

The uncovering of faces in the second half of *The Tempest Replica* is only part of the way that Pite works through the complexities of empathy staged via her mode of dance adaptation. It is also important to recognize what is expressed kinesthetically in the duets themselves: “This is some of Pite’s most complex and original partnering, giving a physical form to the degrees of indebtedness and obligation, choice and constraint, power and reciprocity that mark both the connection and the distance between different characters” (Dickinson “Textual Matters” 74). Moreover, the intra- and intertextual resonances of these duets, emphasized by the repetition of established gestures and iconic phrases (projected as image and amplified as sound), further unfold the nuances of these encounters. Particularly rich for my present discussion is the duet of Prospero and Caliban, wherein the latter’s arm

is repeatedly pulled across his own mouth by the former to stifle free expression, a gesture that works as Brechtian *gestus* to concisely register the unequal power relationship between the two. Meanwhile, layered into the auditory backdrop of this scene is a pre-recorded version of Caliban's famous line, "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.437-8). Further highlighting that language doubles as a means of oppression and a mode of resistance, Pite has Caliban (Bryan Arias) alternately scream and repeat particular phrases that voice the history of colonization undergirding his relationship with Prospero. Caliban shifts between saying the name of his mother, Sycorax, and vocalizing the claim that, through her, he is heir to, but which Prospero has exercised his powers to preclude: "This island's mine" (1.2.396). As a visual tag to this confrontation, Prospero's clearest expression of responsibility for Caliban, "This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.330-1), appears on the upstage screen. The literal suggestions of this line in its context during the final scene of *The Tempest* are that Caliban is a "dark" "thing" by virtue of his visible difference from the other (implicitly white) characters, and that he is Prospero's charge in contrast to the two other servants, Stephano and Trinculo—the co-conspirators with Caliban in an attempt on the magician's life. *The Tempest Replica*, however, omits these other two characters, along with Gonzalo (whom I will return to briefly). Without the particular situation that frames a literal interpretation of Prospero's line, an alternate reading focused on the dynamic of exploitation and responsibility between Prospero and Caliban is made all the more available. In this sense, the thing of darkness is not merely Caliban as racial other, who Prospero claims as property, but also the darkness within Prospero that permits him to treat a human subject as an ownable and exploitable thing. While no less evident in Shakespeare's text, this reading of the projected phrase would seem to acknowledge Prospero's culpability, that his exploitive position in the master/slave dynamic with Caliban spurred, if not created, what is monstrous in the would-be assassin.

Having taught Caliban language—the verbal teaching expressed as kinesthetic teaching in Pite's choreography—only to have that language form into an expression of resistance ("I know how to curse" similarly finding physical expression in danced gestures of resistance), Prospero comes face to face with the violent circumstances that systematize his power to control. Whereas Prospero initially fails to acknowledge the displeasure on Ariel's

face expressed in the opening scene of *The Tempest Replica*, his duet with Caliban seems to ready him for the subsequent scene, in which he grants Ariel her freedom. Positioned by Caliban to recognize the means (language) by which he has subjugated others, Prospero is finally in a state where an empathetic response can turn into a sympathetic behaviour. To recall Butler, Prospero is finally undone by “the touch” and “the feel” of his duet with Caliban, such that he can turn the “memory of the feel” towards “the prospect of the touch” with Ariel. He can thereby put himself into the position of the other, feeling her state temporarily as his own, and move forward from that empathetic response to the recognition of both his own role in creating it and his capacity to change it.

The process of empathetic response staged by Prospero’s development over the course of *The Tempest Replica* gains nuance when compared with the understanding of empathy articulated by Bruce McConachie in *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*. The cognitive research that McConachie cites refers to empathy as an automatic response to visuomotor stimulation; perceiving the intentional movements of bodies and faces allows audiences to simulate others’ states of mind and intuit their intentions, beliefs, and emotions (65). Since these studies suggest that empathy is automatic, and less an emotion in itself than a precursor to either sympathetic or antipathetic responses, a reading of *The Tempest Replica* invested in cognitive realism would have to concede that Prospero has an initial empathetic response to Ariel, but he simply ignores it in order to manipulate her—that, or come to the conclusion that Prospero is neurologically atypical.¹⁵⁴ Given, however, that my interest is not in cognitive realism but in what *The Tempest Replica* offers as a self-reflexive exploration of its own adaptive strategies, I find it more compelling to treat Prospero’s gradual move towards empathy as meaningfully entangled in the shift between acts from a literalist to a more fully embodied adaptive mode. McConachie’s research nevertheless remains quite useful for this approach. A series of studies that he

¹⁵⁴Citing Caryl Churchill’s *Top Girls* as an example, McConachie has this to say about empathy and neurotypical/atypical response: “Most spectators will empathize with actor/Joan because, like most of the population, they do not suffer from autism or a severe case of Asberger’s syndrome. If they did, their empathetic capabilities would be severely impaired and they would have difficulty reading the minds of the actor/characters on stage” (69).

draws on highlight the importance of audiences' capacities to distinguish "intentional human movement from other kinds of movement" including that of a "mechanized dummy" (73). The recognition of intentional motor action, McConachie suggests, is the precursor to empathetic response; we recognize the visuomotor subtleties that express human emotions, and our mirror neurons engage to simulate the states of being that we witness (65-75).¹⁵⁵ The stilted choreography and the absence of faces in the first act of *The Tempest Replica* accordingly function as a mechanism by which Prospero can forestall an empathetic encounter. The transformation of Ariel into a replica, by means of her ingesting the paper boat, is a key example here; Prospero renders her in a form that is all the more easily controllable because it lacks the very visuomotor representation to prompt an empathetic response. As the second act reintroduces the characters in recognizably human form, Prospero is undone in the sense that he can no longer avoid empathy. He can only delay the choice to act ethically in response to the empathetic encounter. Thus it is that Prospero antipathetically keeps Caliban in bondage and sympathetically frees Ariel.

In explaining that empathy does not necessitate politically progressive action, McConachie offers a complication of Jill Dolan's argument about the utopian performative. McConachie writes,

Dolan is also right to emphasize that performances can touch us in a way that opens up the possibility of moving beyond identity politics and 'reanimating humanism as a desirable goal.' The species-wide levels of much cognition, including empathy and emotion, do provide a basis for the goals of humanism. But, of course, they also provide a basis for a social life that is nasty, brutish, and short—a life stuck in FEAR, PANIC, and RAGE [sic]. Emotional contagion does not always animate humanistic emotions. (97)

Recall the way that *The God That Comes* highlights the ambivalence of the theatre audience as participants in a bacchanalian ritual, potentially powerful in their momentary coming together, but in a way that could manifest variously as progressive, hedonistic, or violent.

¹⁵⁵In his discussion of *The You Show*, another Kidd Pivot production, Dickinson productively links McConachie's research with parallel work done by Susan Leigh Foster, who explores the kinesthetic responses of audiences to dance performance in *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*.

McConachie's cognitive science approach corroborates such a model, but more can be said about the way that Hawksley's utopian humanism ultimately stops short of progressive political work. Fredric Jameson's writing on utopia helps to uncover further nuance:

Alas, that intellectual whom the Utopian must also be – forever shackled by the determinants of race and class, of language and childhood, of gender and situation-specific knowledge – is also burdened by the constitutional commitment to the abstract and to the universal, which is to say to the inveterate professional effacement, in advance and by definition, of all these concrete determinants of a properly Utopian ideology: but it is an effacement which is a repression rather than a working through. (*Archaeologies* 171)

Though the summary that introduces *The God That Comes* frames the oppression of the bacchanalian revelers in terms of gender and class, these determinants of the need for utopia—the very social premises to which the Utopian imagination seeks a better alternative—give over to universalist abstraction. The epilogue restates the position of the collective in terms of a shared problematic of social marginalization, but the binary inclusiveness of “they” and “us” matches the empty content of the problem around which the collective reforms: not being liked. Much like Agave's decision to self-exile, this repression of the material particulars of social life retreats into the idealistic possibilities offered by negation, by turning towards other spaces that have no positive content in themselves.

The possibility for the audience to move forward from this epilogue to a socially productive experience of *nachträglichkeit*, of course, remains. But *The God That Comes* stops short of *The Tempest Replica* in terms of articulating a model of this process. Incidentally or not, the observation that first spurred my thinking about empathy and the theatre audience of *The Tempest Replica* was the absence of Gonzalo, a character notable in Shakespeare's play for his utopian monologue:

I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;

No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all,
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty

(2.1.162-171)

Gonzalo's utopia shares a quality with the epilogue to *The God That Comes* in being marked by its negations; Gonzalo is entirely more prepared to reject that which he sees as problematic than he is to imagine actionable alternatives. His approach is ultimately appropriate to utopian form, which even in its etymology rests on the denial of space, on being a place which is not.¹⁵⁶

While I do not take the absence of Gonzalo in *The Tempest Replica* as evidence of Pite's attempt to reject a naïve utopian politics,¹⁵⁷ her work is nevertheless a better fit with the heterotopian impulse articulated by Michel Foucault in the essay, "Of Other Spaces." For Foucault, utopias are "sites with no real place.... that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society," whereas heterotopias are "real sites" in which all other real sites "are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (231). Not only does Foucault explicitly use the theatre as an example of a heterotopia (233), he also concludes his essay by noting, "The ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*" (236). The sailboat of *The Tempest Replica* accordingly embodies "the greatest reserve of the imagination" in the concrete form of "a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea" ("Of Other Spaces" 236). The undoing of the ship—first as the representation of a literal shipwreck, then as "doubt" cast on the blank page—therefore offers a nuanced engagement with processes of representing, contesting, and inverting "other real sites" relevant to *The Tempest Replica* as a dance adaptation.

¹⁵⁶ From the ancient Greek οὐ, meaning "not" and τόπος, or topos, meaning "place." Etymological information from "utopia, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2014. Web. 14 July 2014.

¹⁵⁷ The simpler explanation is of course more related to the number of dancers in Pite's company and the relative extraneousness of Stephano, Trinculo, and Gonzalo to the betrayal plot of *The Tempest*.

It is not, however, until the epilogue that *The Tempest Replica* fully works through the heterotopian implications of the ship as a dual figure of adaptive engagement and empathetic response. As with the epilogue to *The God That Comes*, the questions of political action in *The Tempest Replica* become self-reflexively embroiled with the situation of theatrical co-creation. The epilogue of *The Tempest Replica* begins with Prospero moving through a series of gestures, which a replica (the same unidentified figure Prospero wrestled with during the “doubt” sequence) repeats shortly thereafter. Another replica, dressed just as the first, appears and follows through the same movements. This continues until Prospero shares the stage with four other male dancers, all costumed alike, all repeating one another after the interval of a moment’s delay. As this process continues, the choreography begins to echo that of the first shipwreck scene, in which a chain of dancers pulls at one another, stretching against and being propelled backwards by the tempest that surrounds them. In the epilogue, however, there is no external tempest but the culmination of the encounter with doubt that fueled the second act. Just as the final scene of the first act involved physically undoing the sailboat that had come to represent both the task of embodying a sacred cultural text and the exploitive work of Prospero’s magic, the final scene of the second act renders this performance of undoing in kinesthetic form. Ultimately, the undoing of Prospero as manipulator finds its resolution through a parallel with the meta-theatrics of *The Tempest’s* epilogue. Shakespeare links his exploration of bondage and reciprocity throughout the play with the dynamic between performers and audiences, as Prospero pleads for release by means of applause: “Let me not / ... dwell / in this bare island by your spell / But release me from my bands / with the help of your good hands” (epilogue lines 5, 7-10). The Prospero of *The Tempest Replica* similarly pleads (embodied choreographically as a physical struggle) with an audience, but one comprised of the replicas that follow after him, shaped by the influence of his magic, now returned as a collective strong enough in their numbers to overpower him. As the piece reaches its conclusion, the replicas first raise Prospero up and then return him to the position on the floor which earlier brought him into parallel with Miranda as a figure of empathetic identification. *The Tempest Replica* then fades to black on a tableau of replicas, standing over and slowly applauding Prospero, now laid to rest by his successors.

Importantly, this is not the violent defeat of a cruel master, but a gradual working through of identity and difference that resolves without erasing either affinity or alterity; Prospero is released from the captivity created by his desire for control precisely when the lines of influence reverse, when the adaptations can be seen to carry the adapted text. In this way, the epilogue mirrors the structure of *The Tempest Replica* as a whole, wherein the first act stresses a linear and all-encompassing flow of influence from adapted text to adaptation, and the second act treats the intertextual dynamic in reciprocal terms, as a duet of a sort: embodied not only by a series of danced couplings but also through the kinesthetic empathy of a knowing audience oscillating between two noetically linked texts. Insofar as the applause of the replicas retroactively marks them as an audience of Prospero's performance, we can see the repeat-and-delay structure of the choreography in the epilogue as a model of empathetic response to an adaptation. The performances of the replicas, which would seem to offer a metaphor of adaptations repeating an adapted text, enact *The Tempest Replica's* physical metaphor of empathy: occupying/simulating the position of the other, as each replica comes to stand where the last had just been. Since, however, the replicas operate as both audience stand-ins and performers in their own right, the epilogue manages to acknowledge that the empathy performed by the audience is tied up with the relationship between texts; the capacity for the adaptation to occupy the place of the adapted text is inseparable from the work the audience performs to fill in the space left by the text/dancer that preceded it. Moreover, this process is revealed as ultimately neither hierarchical nor unidirectional, because the replicas do not only fill the space left by Prospero but that left by other replicas as well. And, as the piece reaches its climax, they cease to follow one another or Prospero in any clearly linear way.

If the epilogue brings the undoing of the paper ship to its culmination, the heterotopian dimension of the origami boat locates the work of these undoing processes simultaneously in actual spaces and in the reserves of the imagination. This dovetails neatly with the work throughout *The Tempest Replica* that connects the sailboat variously to the task of adaptation, the audience (of replicas) as active responders to the manipulations of theatrical spectacle, and the noetic and embodied nature of the empathetic encounter with the other. Within the actual space of the theater, the audience is primed by Pite's work to

leave the venue somewhat as Prospero enters the second act, open to reevaluating and perceiving anew the actual space outside. Dickinson explains the capacity of Pite's work to condition the perceptions of its audience:

The works I have discussed in this essay do not just transmit sensations or sense impressions to us, stimulating us aurally or visually or kinesthetically; they also give us, as Welton states, "the feel of feeling," providing instruction on how to attend or become newly attuned to a particular moment, or quality of feeling—to be more consciously open and receptive to a practice of spectating. (79)

In other words, the multi-sensory and kinesthetic experience of attending *The Tempest Replica* conditions future receptivity to particular moments or qualities of feeling. In this way, the materiality of attendance produces remains, in Schneider's sense of that term, which have the potential to frame and inform ongoing spectatorial practices. The heterotopian project of undoing Prospero's magic thereby subtly points towards the audience as responsible for—i.e. in the position of responding to—the relationship of the heterotopia with the "other real sites" it implicates. This is to say that the working through of "other real sites" in terms of representation, contestation, and inversion, fostered by the heterotopian space, is of a piece with the work of adaptive attendance. Just as the *nachträglichkeit* of adaptation involves casting backward to retroactively identify one text in terms of another, heterotopian undoing casts its remains forward from the moment of empathetic response to frame and condition a future encounter with the other.

McConachie's understanding of empathy as located in the visuomotor perception of human bodies supports a particular approach to the role of empathy in the actual space of/outside the theater; however, the model of adaptation made available through my reading of Pite's work requires a yet more speculative approach to the role of empathy in adaptive identification. Earlier, while discussing the politics of screening/fidelity, I suggested that the rejection of adaptations as unfaithful sometimes has less to do with confronting how others fail to capture the essence of a work than with acknowledging (and lamenting) how they succeed in imagining it differently. We can think of this encounter with an other in two ways: firstly, as the utopian dimension of adaptive identification and, secondly, as its heterotopian

parallel. The difference between the two shares much with the difference between archival and repertory modes of evaluating knowledge transmission. In line with the logic of the archive, adaptive oscillation and identification seem to operate in utopian terms, as the immaterial labour of the imagination, disengaged from the concrete sites where the products of adaptation might be seen to bear formally stable relationships with one another. This is oscillation that glosses over the principle of (non)simultaneity, treating memory as a metaphor of immediate revisitation, as coterminous with persistence. In this mode, transfer and adaptation across temporal and intermedial gaps are matters of technical skill, subject to success or failure in objective terms. To this extent, archival oscillation parallels Prospero's magic, forestalling an empathetic encounter with the imaginative products of another person by treating that other in mechanical terms as the fulfiller of a function. Insofar as this function is treated as the promise to create a work that both "is" and "is not" a precursor text, adaptation follows the affective structure of cruel optimism.

Understood in terms of the inter(in)animation of archive and repertoire, however, oscillation can be seen as embodied attendance that is heterotopian in character, occurring in the time and space of an actual site, even if the materiality it produces is arguably partial, fallible, distorted, and/or subjective. This is the aura of againness as remains, "the immaterial labor of bodies engaged in and with [the] incomplete past" of that which has been cast forward from a previous moment of heterotopian undoing (Schneider, *Performing* 33). It stages an encounter with the adaptive product as the work of an other (or others), and acknowledges the subjective elements that condition the reception of adaptations: the distortions of memory, the mediations of "collective variation," and the deferred action required to constitute an adaptation as such. This is an empathetic model of adaptation insofar as it proceeds from the recognition of an affinity between adapter and audience: different though their imaginative responses to the adapted text might be, each fills the spaces left by the other in an ongoing process of co-creation. In working *through* rather than working *on* (consuming, erasing, butchering, converting, etc.), this model of adaptation is optimistic—concerned with the responsibility of and for tomorrow—without being either naïve or cruel.

Conclusion: Remakes and Remains

Much remains. Much more work could (and hopefully will) be done to flesh out points of contact between this “heterotopian” or “empathetic” model of adaptation and the various scholarly fields I have drawn from in developing it. Certainly, more stands to be said about the complications involved in linking psychoanalysis, affect theory, and cognitive science with book history, bibliography, new media studies, and performance theory, as I implicitly (and often explicitly) have throughout this dissertation. To be clear, though, my purpose has never been to make all of these disciplinary perspectives fit seamlessly—or even necessarily sit comfortably—with one another. My purpose has always been to use the insights they each offer as a way to throw common assumptions about adaptation into relief. Accordingly, much remains to be explored at the intersections of adaptation theory and fields of research that I did not have the time, space, or resources to engage with in this project, but that could nevertheless challenge and expand the model I have proposed. I have called for the end of adaptation, but the work of adaptation studies is far from over.

I think that it would be appropriate to end this dissertation with a return, not to a beginning or an origin so much as to the question of survival with which I opened. In a few important ways, survival expresses a problem of evaluation, of measuring and assessing what remains. Consider John Ellis’ argument about determining an adaptation’s success, which he sets up in relation to cultural memory:

Adaptation trades upon the memory of the novel, a memory that can derive from actual reading, or, as is more likely with a classic of literature, a generally circulated memory. The adaptation consumes this memory, aiming to efface it with the presence of its own images. The successful adaptation is the one that is able to replace the memory of the novel with the process of a filmic or televisual representation. (3)

Recall here the discourse I highlighted in chapter one, most concisely expressed through the cannibalization trope or in George Bluestone's claim, "it has always been easy to recognize how a poor film 'destroys' a superior novel" (62). As with this discourse, Ellis' rubric stakes the relationship between an adaptation and its adapted text in antagonistic terms. One wins at the expense—actually, more extreme, the existence—of the other. We measure successful survival, here, according to what *comes to be* the dominant cultural memory. Julie Sanders, however, disagrees with Ellis:

For consumption need not always be the intended endpoint of adaptation; the adapting text does not necessarily seek to consume or efface the informing source... it is the very endurance and survival of the source text that enables the ongoing process of juxtaposed readings that are crucial to the cultural operations of adaptation, and the ongoing experiences of pleasure for the reader or spectator in tracing the intertextual relationships.
(25)

For Sanders, the source must remain in order for adaptation to work as adaptation. But we should be careful about how we understand these remains, lest we fall too readily into the conservative logic of the archive. What is the "very endurance and survival" of the source text, actually? Does this belie a desire for origins, for the uncontaminated persistence of the original, even if the source is allowed to exist alongside its versions? Sanders is quite right that adaptation does not work as adaptation if the knowing audience has nothing to know, no adapted text to recall and juxtapose. At the same time, it is worth being explicit that the recollected text does not necessarily have to be the "authentic" source in order for the reader or spectator to pursue the pleasures afforded by intertextual resonance; audiences just need reasons, probability conditions, that prompt the use of media according to the protocols of adaptation. In other words, the "very endurance" of the text, as I discussed with respect to *Cloud Atlas* in chapter two, may come about by means of authorized mistruths. Accordingly, the "survival of the source text" might not strictly depend on the conservation of the premier version of the work; the source's very consecration *as* first in a line might rather depend on the historical erasure of *its* precursors. In this way, the processes of oscillation enabled by the endurance of the source might equally involve both memories and (re)enactments of forgetting.

Such is why, despite the apparent opposition between Ellis' and Sanders' respective positions, they work in tandem with one another. It is, after all, *possible* for an adaptation to utterly replace the memory of its source. If it did, however, we would by definition have no idea that the act of "consumption" or "effacement" had occurred. Whatever happens to endure—whatever text comes to be authorized as source or as adaptation—continues in knowing or unknowing relation to what preceded it and what succeeds it. The ongoing pleasures of adaptation require only what *will have been* the endurance of the source.

Perhaps this points to another understanding of "success" pertinent to the evaluation and survival of adaptations: success as that which succeeds, follows after. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers several definitions of "success" that resonate surprisingly well with the terms I have employed throughout this dissertation. The sense that Ellis invokes is perhaps the most common usage today: "The prosperous achievement of something attempted; the attainment of an object according to one's desire: now often with particular reference to the attainment of wealth or position."¹⁵⁸ The link to my discussion of desire and evaluation in chapter one should be fairly clear, but the optimism implied by "prosperous" and the forward-leaning quality implied by "attainment," reaching towards the desired object, also bring to mind my discussion of Berlant's "cruel optimism" in chapter three. Putting more emphasis on the aspect of the definition that stresses "wealth" and "position," I might also raise Simone Murray's argument regarding the "public appetite" for certain production values. Recall, Murray uses this notion to assert an ideological line between "authorized" studio adaptations and "unauthorized" fan productions: the successful authorization of adaptation as dependent on the demonstration of wealth and the expenditure of resources. Defined according to the above, success is deeply teleological, chiefly about getting what one goes after. But this usage emerges out of an earlier one, having more to do with succession and circumstance: "The fortune (good or bad) befalling anyone in a particular situation or affair. Usually with qualifying adj. *good success* = sense 3 [the definition quoted above]; *ill success*: failure, misadventure, misfortune. *arch.*"¹⁵⁹ And a

¹⁵⁸ "success, n." 3a. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2014. Web. 14 February 2015

¹⁵⁹ "success, n." 2a. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2014. Web. 14 February 2015

still earlier usage has even less investment in good/bad dichotomies: “That which happens in the sequel; the termination (favourable or otherwise) of affairs; the issue, upshot, result.”¹⁶⁰ To my mind, this is a much more compelling way to think about success in adaptation, its appeal being that it emphasizes both the end, the termination of affairs, and what happens after the end, in the sequel. It avoids the traps of teleology, because the end is not a finality so much as a precursor for remains. Is this the original meaning of the word? I honestly do not know. What I do know is that it is the earliest definition that the *Oxford English Dictionary* authorizes.

Moreover, this latter sense of “success,” especially as it links up with survival and evaluation, comes to the fore in Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon’s, “On the Origins of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and Success Biologically.” In this article, the authors investigate the homology between biological adaptation theory and “narrative” adaptation theory. They are, moreover, explicit that their investigation does not simply pursue an analogy or a metaphor: “By homology, we mean a similarity in structure that is indicative of a common origin: that is, both kinds of adaptation are understandable as processes of replication. Stories, in a manner parallel to genes, replicate; the adaptations of both evolve with changing environments” (444).¹⁶¹ Their research leads them to conclude that fidelity is an inappropriate measure of success for narrative adaptation, and, “What determines an adaptation’s success is its efficacy in propagating the narrative for which it is a vehicle” (452). Bortolotti and Hutcheon’s advice for adaptation studies is, accordingly, to focus on the processes through which stories replicate themselves in order to survive, rather than on evaluation according to the hierarchical logic of fidelity.

As my argument in chapter two puts forward, however, it is important to distinguish between replication, duplication, and adaptation, and that propagating narratives by any of

¹⁶⁰ "success, n." 1a. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2014. Web. 14 February 2015

¹⁶¹ Cf. Diana Taylor’s discussion of the “DNA of Performance” in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, where she writes, “These claims—the genetic and the performatic—work together. The relationship is not simply metaphoric. Rather, I see them as interrelated heuristic systems. They are linked and mutually sustaining models that humans have developed to think about the transmission of knowledge” (175).

these means does not necessarily coincide with the survival of *the* narrative; its versions may be “mistruths,” but if they are authorized mistruths then they do not need to be “real” to be effective, to *incite return*. For this reason, though I agree with Bortolotti and Hutcheon that the field of adaptation studies has a lot to gain by thinking through the homology they propose, I would advise careful treatment in line with the arguments I have highlighted throughout this project. To be clear, Bortolotti and Hutcheon *are* very careful, but adaptation is tricky for a reason they highlight: “A potential problem in the study of adaptation (and **adaptations**) is not realizing that what we end up seeing are the survivors” (449, emphasis original). This is a compelling point, and relates back to what I said earlier regarding Sanders and Ellis: if the adaptation effaces the memory of the source, we only end up seeing the adaptation, albeit necessarily not *as* an adaptation. I would, however, further problematize Bortolotti and Hutcheon’s treatment of this “potential problem” by drawing attention to the ways that adaptation is constituted both retroactively and (sometimes) through processes that depend on misrecognition. In short, what we “end up seeing” *as* adaptation can involve remaking precursor material *into* remains, into the source that happened to survive. This misrecognition is not a necessary part of how adaptation always works, but it is an important potential consequence of the noetic work that *is* required to perform identification.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the trap that Bortolotti and Hutcheon fall into stems from the way they grapple with the principle of (non)identity. They write:

High survival, argues Dawkins, depends on obvious things like longevity and fecundity, but also on what he calls “copying-fidelity.” However, contrary to the fidelity discourse of adaptation theory, in a cultural context, copying actually means changing with each replication—most often, changing medium. Nevertheless, it is obviously also the case that for an adaptation to be experienced as an adaptation, recognition of the narrative has to be possible: some copying-fidelity is needed, precisely because of the changes across media and contexts. (447)

The problem, as I see it, is this notion of “some” copying-fidelity. They are right that recognition of the narrative has to be possible, but I would posit that the suturing effects of adaptation discourse make such recognition possible without strictly necessitating a “genetic” link to a source-as-ancestor (Cf. Bortolotti and Hutcheon 446). Put differently,

discussions of propagation should be careful not to tacitly accept either a model of origins or the conservative logic of the archive. As Diana Taylor writes in her chapter on “The DNA of Performance”:

Neither individual genetic nor memetic material usually lasts more than three generations. Books fall apart, songs are forgotten. Longevity alone cannot guarantee transmission. Things disappear, both from the archive and from the repertoire. Nor can “copy fidelity” account for transmission; this too proves faulty, both with genes and memes, in the archive and in the repertoire. Ideas and evidence change, at times beyond recognition. So cultural materials, Dawkins concludes, survive if they catch on. (174)¹⁶²

Just as Bortolotti and Hutcheon are right that adaptation studies should not organize itself according to a hierarchy of descent—the idea that earlier is axiomatically better—it should also resist a teleology of propagation: the presumption that what we end up identifying as an adaptation is inherently a product of its direct ancestors. It *might well be* such a product, inheriting its narrative DNA from a still-surviving (in the archive or the repertoire) source, but the predicament of adaptations is complicated. Even while tracing links between multiple versions back to a shared precursor, adaptation studies also needs to remain aware of how adaptation discourse gets deployed in ways that do not necessitate literal links to ancestral origins. And, at the same time, it is crucial to acknowledge that the deployment of adaptation discourse can have important cultural effects even when it is based on misrecognition. Perhaps “some” copy fidelity is required for the propagation of texts through adaptation, but there are a lot of forces at play in the politics of fidelity that influence how “some” becomes “enough.”

Since the potential link between processes of genetic replication and processes of cultural transmission in terms of “copying-fidelity” is somewhat vexed, it is good that Bortolotti and Hutcheon do not attempt to go beyond homology on those grounds. As they indicate, “We are not saying that cultural adaptation is biological; our claim is more modest. It is simply that both organisms and stories “evolve”—that is, replicate and change” (447).

¹⁶² Both Bortolotti/Hutcheon and Taylor cite Richard Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene* (1976), in which he explores the concept of “memetic” cultural transmission. The terms “copying-fidelity” and “copy fidelity” that they use are direct references to Dawkins.

N. Katherine Hayles, however, offers ways to think through more direct intersections of biological and cultural adaptation. Given how useful Hayles' ideas about materiality and attention have been throughout this dissertation, it is worth noting the extent to which her argument in *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* both focuses on and skirts around adaptation. In making her case for Comparative Media Studies, Hayles argues that human evolution is now inseparable from the evolution of digital media, particularly as concerns the increased integration of networked and programmable machines into the daily lives of millions of people. Explicating the concept of technogenesis—that is, the coevolution of humans and technics—Hayles points out that it is relatively uncontroversial among paleoanthropologists to suggest, “humans coevolved with the development and transport of tools” (10). Updating this idea to the present day, she argues, only requires two additional concepts: the Baldwin Effect and the idea that “epigenetic changes in human biology can be accelerated by changes in the environment that make them even more adaptive, which leads to further epigenetic changes” (10). The Baldwin effect, so called for James Mark Baldwin who proposed it in 1896,¹⁶³ primarily concerns the relationship between genetic mutation and the environment in which a given mutation occurs. As Hayles describes it, “when a genetic mutation occurs, its spread through a population is accelerated when the species reengineers its environment in ways that make the mutation more adaptive” (10). Though these two concepts are similar, Hayles uses them together to compellingly suggest that our integration of digital media into the environments of daily life is changing the way we think at a surprisingly rapid pace, neurologically reorganizing people to adapt to an environment that, at the very same time, we are engineering for ourselves.

Notably, Hayles never uses the term “adaptation” in *How We Think* to refer to a specific kind of intermedial or intertextual relationship, and she does not draw from scholarship in the field of adaptation studies. In other words, her concurrent interests in adaptation and Comparative Media Studies curiously never lead her to look at adaptations as instances or sites of comparative media. My hunch is that she too recognizes the limitations

¹⁶³ Baldwin, James Mark. 1896. “A New Factor in Evolution.” *American Naturalist* 30.354 (June): 441-51.

inherent to a model of adaptation that centralizes a formal category defined by unidirectional transfer and that, for the most part, still prioritizes print as the starting place for that transfer. In my “Introduction,” I suggested that the work I am doing fits under the banner of CMS precisely because it is invested in exploring adaptation without taking the presuppositions of one medium for granted. And now, as I draw this project to a close, highlighting potential points of contact between cultural and biological understandings of adaptation around the question of survival, I see a more speculative link between my research and Hayles’. Insofar as the concept of technogenesis is premised on a “remaking” of the environment, which effectively speeds up processes of adaptation to that selfsame environment, it might be possible to think through the deployments of adaptation discourse in terms of how they remake conditions of media ecology.¹⁶⁴ This is to say, approaching a “heterotopian” model of adaptation—i.e., one concerned with the mutual interactions of producers, products, and audiences in actual sites of embodied engagement—in line with a robust theory of technogenesis could make possible the exploration of adaptation *as adaptation* in a much broader sense.

But that is just my present hope for future work. As I said at the outset of this conclusion, much remains to be done. If there is anything I want to stress about the benefits of a performative model of adaptation that defines the phenomenon in discursive rather than formal or ontological terms, it has to do with the three negative principles that have loosely structured this project: (non)identity, (non)literal materiality, and (non)simultaneity. As I said, their purpose is not negation, but to expose tension. Crucially, this tension should not be worked out so much as worked through, not resolved so much as embraced in its dynamic movements. As much as adaptation is a doing and a thing done, a process and a product, it is also an undoing and a materiality that is perhaps never quite done.

¹⁶⁴ For an overview of the field of media ecologies, see Matthew Fuller’s *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies In Art And Technoculture*.

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