



All Theses and Dissertations

---

2007-07-03

# Beyond Fidelity: Teaching Film Adaptations in Secondary Schools

Nathan C. Phillips

*Brigham Young University - Provo*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Phillips, Nathan C., "Beyond Fidelity: Teaching Film Adaptations in Secondary Schools" (2007). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 1008.  
<http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/1008>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu).

by

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Brigham Young University

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Nathan C. Phillips

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dennis Cutchins, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Crowe, Reader

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amy P. Jensen, Reader

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phillip A. Snyder, Graduate Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicholas Mason, Associate Chair for  
Graduate Studies

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the

format, citations and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Accepted for the Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Accepted for the College

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ABSTRACT

### BEYOND FIDELITY: TEACHING FILM ADAPTATIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Nathan C. Phillips

Department of English

Master of Arts

Although nearly every secondary school English teacher includes film as part of the English/language arts curriculum, there is, to this point, nothing published about effectively studying the relationship between film adaptations and their print source texts in secondary school. There are several important works that inform film study in secondary English classrooms. These include Alan Teasley and Ann Wilder's *Reel Conversations*; William Costanzo's *Reading the Movies* and his updated version, *Great Films and How to Teach Them*; and John Golden's *Reading in the Dark*. However, each of these mention adaptation briefly if at all. Rather, they approach film as a text that students need to learn how to "read." While I certainly agree with this position, I argue

that students also must learn how to productively investigate the relationship between films and their literary source texts.

To make this case, I survey the field of adaptation theory generally, beginning with George Bluestone's seminal *Novels into Film* and moving towards contemporary theory, like Robert Stam's work, which suggests theoretical paradigms beyond fidelity analysis. I rely, particularly, on Mikhael Bakhtin's dialogism as a theoretical frame for studying adaptations in school. I also suggest four specific areas that act as foundations for successfully approaching adaptations with secondary English students: (1) economic analysis, (2) intertextualities (the matrix of cultural influences on a text), (3) Gérard Genette's notion of transtextuality (the relationship of one text to others), and (4) an expansion of adaptation to include the relationships of print texts to new media adaptations. In order to further develop ways that secondary school English teachers can specifically approach adaptation in their classrooms, I include two case studies. The first focuses on pairing Laurie Halse Anderson's award-winning young adult novel *Speak* with Jessica Sharzer's film adaptation. The second suggests methods for teaching Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* along with James Whale's film adaptation.

Because so little has been written about effectively incorporating film adaptations into the secondary school English curriculum, this project seeks not only to analyze the theoretical foundation for adaptation study, but also to suggest specific methodology that can be utilized by teachers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been blessed with a graduate committee composed of uncommonly good teachers, and I'm grateful for their mentorship and friendship. Dennis Cutchins suggested this project, which I have thoroughly enjoyed pursuing, and his guidance along the way has been invaluable. Amy Jensen pointed me towards foundational media literacy materials and gave me an opportunity to apply my theoretical understanding of adaptation to the classroom. Chris Crowe showed me how to teach, introduced me to young adult literature, and always treated me like I belonged in this field.

My wife, Julee, never doubted that I would complete this project. It is because of her exceptional faith and courage that I worked to prove her right. My children brighten every day, but their influence was especially significant while I was writing this thesis and our time together was brief.

I must also thank my students over the last six years at Lone Peak High School. I embarked on this project because I believed that they could learn something valuable in the space between film adaptations and their print source texts. My colleagues at Lone Peak, particularly those in the English department, were a constant inspiring and encouraging force.

Finally, I appreciate my mom's endless support. Though my dad's not here to read this, I hope he would have been proud.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|             |   |     |
|-------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 1   | Past and Future Theoretical Discourse about Adaptation.....                 | 1   |
| Chapter 2   | Beyond “The Book is Better”:<br>Changing Current Pedagogical Practices..... | 22  |
| Chapter 3   | Case Study: <i>Speak</i> : Independent Voices.....                          | 51  |
| Chapter 4   | Case Study: <i>Frankenstein</i> : Monstrous Influences .....                | 75  |
| Chapter 5   | Conclusion: Responsible Adaptation Study .....                              | 98  |
| Works Cited | .....   | 107 |



## Past and Future Theoretical Discourse about Adaptation

### Introduction

Much has been written about using film in high school and junior high English classrooms, and secondary English teachers seem to belong to one of two camps when it comes to the pedagogical value of film. I will look at these groups in more detail in the next chapter, but it's important, before embarking, to have a general understanding of each of them. One camp argues for keeping students away from the invasive media that prevents them from reading. The other camp is inherently drawn to the possibilities of pairing film and print texts. Teachers in the second camp recognize that students are much more willing readers of film than they are of written texts, if only because they have so much more practice and familiarity with film texts. And because fictional films offer many similarities to fictional print texts—they share narrative, characters, metaphors, symbolism, themes, setting, and point of view, for example—these teachers hope that viewing might motivate students to learn these important concepts. I side with the second camp because I believe that students can learn important literacy concepts from film. However, I also believe that students will benefit from thinking about the relationship between literary source texts and their filmic adaptations in ways that secondary English teachers don't practice and, in most cases, haven't even considered.

The field of adaptation study—the study of the relationships between print texts and their adaptations, which we'll define as texts “that arise when a given source text is employed in different media or in different genres”—is in serious need of revival as a scholarly field of study (Buckingham 77). Additionally, there is a need for meaningful pedagogical practice that engages adaptations—particularly at the secondary school level

where teachers so often show films of the literature their students are reading without making any effort to dig deeper into the relationships between these two mediums. This master's thesis aims to investigate the field of adaptation studies as it presently exists and offer relevant and meaningful ways that the theory and practice of adaptation scholarship can be applied productively to secondary school English teaching. The first chapter critiques the field generally then briefly suggests ways that adaptation studies might be applied more productively in the future. The second chapter moves from the broader field of adaptation studies towards a consideration of secondary school teaching and focuses on the ways that the process of adaptation has been (mis)understood in secondary school English teaching. This second chapter also critiques current practice and points to specific instructional methods that will improve students' understanding of the process of adaptation. The third and fourth chapters apply the principles of meaningful adaptation study to two case studies—each considers a literary source text and its adaptation(s): Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. A final chapter briefly expands the definition of “adaptation” and argues why teaching adaptation is important in secondary schools.

### Adaptation Theory

Before considering how adaptation theory applies (and might apply more productively) to pedagogical practice for secondary teachers considering using adaptations in their English classes, it is important to consider the theoretical environment of adaptation studies generally. By now English teachers should know how to talk about the relationship between film and literature. Unfortunately they don't. Consider the following: More than half of the films nominated for Best Picture by the

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the last ten years were based on works of literature. And, Hollywood is “the largest and most influential cultural-products agglomeration in the modern world” (Scott 10). It would seem to follow from these two statements that a study of the relationships between the most critically acclaimed of those products and the literary source materials that were vital to their creations would be a well established field of research. In fact, a field of study in film and literature should be, by this late date in the development of cinema, both replete with texts to study and evolved to the point of possessing a mature theoretical apparatus. The latter, unfortunately, is untrue.

Thomas Leitch’s “Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory” sets out to argue this point exactly: “despite its venerable history, widespread practice, and apparent influence, adaptation theory has remained tangential to the thrust of film study because it has never been undertaken with conviction and theoretical rigor” (149). Along with Leitch, other recent works of adaptation theory make clear that Robert Ray’s question looms large over the field: “Why has [adaptation], obviously central to humanities-based film education, prompted so little distinguished work?” (38). Ray proposes an answer in the words of film critic Louis Giannetti that echoes Leitch: “The overwhelming bulk of what’s been written about the relationship of film and literature is open to serious question” (38).

In an essay included in James Naremore’s *Film Adaptation*, Ray points to four factors that have influenced the development of the field of film and literature. Three of Ray’s factors will serve as a framework from which we can examine the theoretical assumptions of the field and the reasons for these assumptions. Because much of the

adaptation scholarship produced even recently is considered questionable by some theorists, Ray's factors serve not necessarily as chronological points on a timeline (he offers that they are ordered from general to immediate), but constellation points—historically rooted for sure, but with subsequent clusters of academic study gathering around them even today. His four factors: “nature of narrative,” “norm of cinema,” “methods of academic literary and film study,” “exigencies of the academic profession” (39). Though Ray's fourth factor is particularly interesting and insightful for university professors in all disciplines, it will get little more than a mention here because it simply isn't discussed in other works of adaptation theory. Of course, the lack of material about the effects on fields of study by the unique structure of the academic profession signals less about its importance as an area to consider and more about its concealed nature. While this is not the place for an in-depth study of this phenomenon, I will briefly mention Ray's argument after fully exploring the other three factors.

Using Ray's three remaining constellation points—nature of narrative, norm of cinema, and methods of academic and literary and film study—as foundations, I will consider some of the field's major theoretical works. Within each section I will discuss relevant theoretical discourse about adaptation in order to establish the history of this discourse and build a foundation on which the rest of the thesis will build. Also, each section will point to considerations that could apply to secondary school pedagogy and to the future of theoretical discourse about film adaptations.

### The Nature of Narrative

Filmmakers, almost from cinema's inception, recognized that well-known stories increased the draw at the box office, and they thus sought out books to adapt. James

Naremore writes that the film industry “recognized from the beginning that it could gain a sort of legitimacy among middle-class viewers by reproducing facsimiles of more respectable art or by adapting literature to another medium” (4). And Brian McFarlane suggests that “as soon as the cinema began to see itself as a narrative entertainment, the idea of ransacking<sup>1</sup> the novel—that already established repository of narrative fiction—for source material got underway, and the process has continued more or less unabated for ninety years” (6-7). College and university English departments, too, have recognized this connection and appropriated the study of films, or what Ray calls “this powerful new means of actualizing [narrative]” (39). Subsequent theoretical work in narratology convinced English literature scholars that narrative was the prime hinge point for a study of film and literature (Ray 39).

By 1957, when George Bluestone’s seminal *Novels into Film* was published, the unspoken assumptions of Bluestone’s argument made clear not only that novels and films had been consistently compared because of their narrative structures, but also that the study of these relationships always privileges the novel. Bluestone may recognize that this is the case, but he also falls into this same trap of privileging the novel in his analyses. This privileging of the source text is not unique to Bluestone (though he may be partly responsible for its perpetuation). This emphasis on the literature ends up grounding nearly all adaptation theory for the last fifty years. Robert Stam closely investigates this common practice of valorizing the novel at the expense of the film and

---

<sup>1</sup> McFarlane’s use of the verb *ransack* here unveils his prejudices against a film industry that he sees as predatory when it comes to using written literary texts as source material for films. This prejudice is problematic in terms of considering the relationships between film adaptations and their literary source texts, but it is also emblematic of scholarship in the field.

ties this practice to eight specific prejudices, a few of which I will mention here. First, he argues the idea that the novel is superior “derives from the a priori valorization of historical anteriority and seniority: the assumption, that is, that older arts are necessarily better arts” (“Introduction” 4). He points out that the novel’s seniority in the case of a literary adaptation is a double priority: “(a) the general historical priority of literature to cinema, and (b) the specific priority of novels to their adaptations” (4).

According to Stam, “a second source of hostility to adaptation derives from the dichotomous thinking that presumes a bitter rivalry between film and literature. . . . The inter-art relation is seen as a Darwinian struggle to the death rather than a dialogue offering mutual benefit and cross-fertilization” (4). In other words, Stam suggests that some perceive film “as the upstart enemy storming the ramparts of literature” (4). This prejudice certainly impacts the view that educators take when considering using both films and novels in class. While the pedagogical preference for novels will be discussed further in a subsequent chapter, Stam includes, among his eight prejudices, another one that significantly impacts teachers: “the myth of facility, the completely uninformed and somewhat puritanical notion that films are suspectly easy to make and suspectly pleasurable to watch” (7). Specifically, some teachers, as discussed further in the next chapter, believe that watching films requires no cognitive effort. This idea, Stam believes, “ignores the intense perceptual and conceptual labor—the work of iconic designation, visual deciphering, narrative inference, and construction—inherent in film. Like novels of any complexity, films too bear ‘rereading,’ precisely because so much can be missed in a single view” (7).

Bluestone's inherent recognition that the novel has been continuously privileged over the film leads to his essentialist argument, which pervades the book and subsequently adaptation studies ever since, that novels and films are unique art forms: "the film and the novel remain separate institutions, each achieving its best results by exploring unique and specific properties" (218). He even goes so far as to argue that "at times, the differences tempt one to argue that film-makers ought to abandon adaptations entirely in favor of writing directly for the screen" (218).

Two points undercut Bluestone's project: first, even while claiming the artistic uniqueness of film and literature, his methodology strengthens the narrative connections of the two art forms and privileges the novel; second, a case for doing away with adaptations, while interesting, ignores the film industry's continuing propensity, largely driven by economic motives, to produce adaptations. Bluestone's methodology in his analysis of the six case studies included in his book is to impose the shooting-script on the book and "assess the key additions, deletions, and alterations revealed in the film and center on certain significant implications which seemed to follow from the remnants of, and deviations from, the novel" (viii). He discovers, by comparing and contrasting the film and book narratives in this way, that "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).<sup>2</sup>

Subsequent studies in adaptation, while departing from Bluestone's belief that the

---

<sup>2</sup> Bluestone uses this point to support his stance that film adaptations are completely separate from their source texts. He argues that the destruction of the novel occurs because "the filmist becomes not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right" (62).

two art forms are entirely unique, maintain his foundational notions about narrative and continue privileging the novel. *Bluestone* begins with the assumption that filmmakers are utilizing narrative as “raw material” (viii). This view of narrative as raw material is the central element of Brian McFarlane’s book (written forty years after *Bluestone*’s). McFarlane writes that “narrative, at certain levels, is undeniably not only the chief factor novels and the films based on them have in common but is the chief transferable element” (12). Borrowing from Roland Barthes’s structuralist notion of narrative functions, McFarlane goes on to argue that films and novels should be studied based on what can be adapted—what he calls the “distributional” or “doing” elements of narrative and what can only be enunciated—what he calls the “integrational” or “being” elements of the narrative (13). In other words, what a character *does* can be adapted, but who a character *is* cannot. McFarlane aims to investigate what filmmakers choose to adapt from that which they have available (from the raw material of the source text) and what ways they enunciate what can only be enunciated (again, from the raw material).

In the introduction to his study, McFarlane points out a few classification systems that have been created by theorists to account for the different ways filmmakers utilize narrative from their literary source texts. While these classification systems consider the complex relationships between the novel’s narrative and the film’s narrative, they consider only the transfer of narrative and further point to adaptation theory’s historical obsession with narrative as the hinge point for discussions about adaptations. Dudley Andrew’s system, as laid out in his essay included in *Film Adaptation*, is one of these systems which I will briefly examine as representative. For Andrew, there are three “modes of relation between the film and the text”: borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of



transformation (29). He contends that the most frequently used of these is borrowing, wherein films are tied to myths and existing stories in civilization in addition to specific source texts. For Andrew, “the success of adaptations of this sort rests on the issue of their fertility, not their fidelity” (30).

According to Andrew’s system, intersection is the opposite of borrowing. With intersection, “the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation” (30). Writing forty years before Andrew, Andre Bazin called this idea “refraction” (20). Andrew utilizes the light imagery suggested by Bazin’s term and explains that

the original artwork can be likened to a crystal chandelier whose formal beauty is a product of its intricate but fully artificial arrangement of parts, whereas the cinema would be a crude flashlight interesting not for its own shape or the quality of its light, but for what it makes appear in this or that dark corner. (31)

Finally, Andrew calls fidelity of transformation, which he counts as the third of his modes of relation between text and film, the “most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation” (31). Dudley Andrew’s classification system, even while it exhibits theoretical maturity by calling into question fidelity, still manages to focus solely on narrative as the point of departure for adaptation study.

After McFarlane critiques a few classification systems like Andrew’s, he argues “there are many kinds of relations which may exist between film and literature, and fidelity is only one—and rarely the most exciting” (11). Unfortunately, this claim exposes one of the primary problems with analysis focusing on the narrative transfer

between a film and its source text. While certainly relevant to adaptation, this kind of study must always end in fidelity analysis, a wearisome repetition of the question: What's the same and what's different? This focus on fidelity, which comes out of the historical construction by theorists of adaptation as primarily an enterprise devoted to analyzing narrative transfer, pervades the study of adaptation generally and particularly infects secondary school teachers who consider film adaptations in their classrooms.

McFarlane's book is an excellent example of a focus on fidelity hijacking an attempt to investigate the more subtle relationships between a film adaptation and its literary source text. Even though McFarlane rightly claims that other relationships exist between film and literature, a focus on narrative inevitably leads to questions of fidelity. His entire study, though he argues at length against fidelity at the outset, is, as Naremore puts it, "obsessively concerned with problems of textual fidelity" (9). Imelda Whelehan's critique of McFarlane begins with a note of support: "implementing the kinds of narrative comparison between text and film that McFarlane undertakes in his case-studies can yield some interesting insights into both the liberating and repressive features of the processes of adaptation" (11). However, Whelehan continues, "some of the 'codes' that McFarlane lists as part of the extra-cinematic fabric of the film are . . . problematic in their actual interpretation and application" (11). Whelehan takes issue with one of McFarlane's codes in particular:

Most notably the "cultural code" defined in McFarlane's taxonomy as "involving all that information which has to do with how people live, or lived, at particular times and places" raises issues about spectatorial relationship to the film, period in which it is being screened, the film's

own possible changing status in film history (it may be revered as a classic in its own right some time later, or it may be cult viewing) and other broader factors which threaten to render the system unwieldy to the point of meaninglessness. (11)

Historically, fidelity study has so pervaded adaptation theory that contemporary theoretical work seems, sometimes, to operate only in opposition to fidelity study without proposing alternative frameworks (Robert Stam is notably excluded from this accusation). Still, despite its being discredited, Stam points out that there is some “experiential truth” to the practice of paying attention to fidelity:

Fidelity discourse asks important questions about the filmic recreation of the setting, plot, characters, themes, and the style of the novel. When we say an adaptation has been “unfaithful” to the original, the very violence of the term gives expression to the intense sense of betrayal we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, or aesthetic features of its literary source. (“Introduction” 14)

If we can’t entirely discredit fidelity discourse, we can, and should, further investigate its historical position in the field of adaptation studies and critique its claims. As Stam puts it, the notion of fidelity as central to adaptation study rests on the same faulty grounding as Bluestone’s essentialism:

“Fidelity discourse” relies on essentialist arguments in relation to both media. First, it assumes that a novel “contains” an extractable “essence,” a kind of “heart of the artichoke” hidden “underneath” the surface details of style. Hidden within *War and Peace*, there is an originary core, a

kernel of meaning and events which can be “delivered” by an adaptation. But, in fact, there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signals that can trigger a plethora of possible readings. An open structure, constantly reworked and reinterpreted by a boundless context, the text feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permutating intertext, seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation. In fact, when critics refer to the “spirit” or “essence” of a literary text what they usually mean is the critical consensus within an “interpretative community” about the meaning of the work. (“Introduction”<sup>15</sup>)

Thomas Leitch discounts fidelity as

a hopelessly fallacious measure of a given adaptation’s value because it is unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense. Like translations to a new language, adaptations will always reveal their sources’ superiority because whatever their faults, the source texts will always be better at being themselves. (161)

What gets left behind in a narrative focus is the idea of intertextualities—the interweavings of texts at play in a film adaptation that include not only the source text and the film, but the contextual sociological and historical underpinnings of a film produced in a given time and under a given set of economic and cultural conditions, some of which are exposed when considering the norm of cinema production. The possibility of using intertextuality as a concept for teaching film adaptations to secondary English students will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

The Norm of Cinema

What attempts at adaptation theory have almost all missed is a recognition of the economic ties between film and literature as well as the popular film industry's growth into an almost exclusively narrative-only medium. Robert Ray argues that the choice of filmmakers to adopt the fictional narrative as its primary approach was purely economic:

For specific, albeit multiple reasons, our films have been almost exclusively fictional narratives. Under different circumstances, however, they might have become primarily lyric expressions, theoretical essays, scientific investigations, vaudeville reviews, or all these things and others besides. That they did not, of course, has everything to do with money.

(42)

He goes on to point out that comparing film with architecture might better help theorists understand the economic motives inherent in cinema: “Although the cinema has most often been compared with literature, it really has far more in common with architecture. Both forms are public, collaborative, and above all, expensive. In both arts, economic constraints have always dictated the shape of the work produced” (42). As Stam writes, “With the novel, questions of material infrastructure enter only at the point of distribution, while in the cinema they enter at the very start of the production of the film itself. While a novel can be written on napkins in prison, a film assumes a complex material infrastructure (camera, film stock, laboratories) simply in order to exist” (“Introduction” 16).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> It must be noted that innovations in digital technology—digital video cameras and relatively inexpensive editing software, for example—have significantly reduced the production costs for films. Still, the difference in production cost between a novel and a film is immense.

Importantly, Ray ties historical developments in cinema to the rhetoric of narrative prose fiction and the rhetoric of film in order to suggest that Hollywood films focused on narrative for purely economic reasons. According to Ray, Noel Burch has argued that

although primitive cinema's *presentational* mode appealed to a proletarian audience accustomed to vaudeville, melodrama, circus, puppet shows, conjuring, and street entertainment, it did not satisfy the bourgeoisie's taste for the *representational*. The movies could do so only by adopting the bourgeoisie's preferred arts, the nineteenth-century realistic novel and drama. (43)

This recognition of the economic factors inherent in a cinema that must attract a much larger audience than any novel to be viable led not only to a unique Hollywood style of storytelling in films, but also to the Hollywood promotion of actors and actresses in order to sell films<sup>4</sup>—what became known as the star system.<sup>5</sup>

Connecting the star system to adaptations, Robert Stam points out that while a

---

<sup>4</sup> As early as 1936, Walter Benjamin recognized the economic effects of Hollywood capital on film acting (which he believes does not compare favorably with stage acting) and, in particular, the creation of the star system:

While facing the camera [the screen actor] knows that ultimately he will face the public, the consumers who constitute the market. This market, where he offers not only his labor but also his whole self, his heart and soul, is beyond his reach. During the shooting he has as little contact with it as any article made in a factory. This may contribute to that oppression, that new anxiety which, according to Pirandello, grips the actor before the camera. The film responds to the shriveling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the "personality" outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity. (231)

<sup>5</sup> For more on the economic impact of the star system see Paul McDonald's *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities*, which explores the star system "as a component of the Hollywood film business" (2).

novel only has characters, the film has both characters and performers: “in the cinema the performer also brings along a kind of baggage, a thespian intertext formed by the totality of antecedent roles” (“Beyond” 60). The importance of such cinematic norms as the star system aren’t lost on theorists like McFarlane. In his introduction to his case study of *The Scarlet Letter* (1926), he writes, “That Victor Sjöström’s film version of *The Scarlet Letter* takes the form it does—structurally and emotionally—no doubt owes much to Lillian Gish’s presence in it, to her influence as perhaps the major silent screen star of the period, and to the nature of her star persona” (39). But what is telling about adaptation theory generally and McFarlane specifically, is his ensuing analysis of the film, in which he entirely ignores the intertextualities he’s introduced—not only the role of Gish-as-star, but also the effects of censorship to focus on the fidelity of the film to the novel.

As they relate to the norm of cinema, the economic factors associated with the production of film and, in particular, with the adaptation from literature to film are clearly an important and often ignored element of adaptation analysis. This is certainly strange, particularly when considering that André Bazin, writing in another early essay (1948), begins with economics: “To be sure, one must first know to what end the adaptation is designed: for the cinema or for its audience. One must also realize that most adapters care far more about the latter than about the former” (21). And Naremore suggests “that what we need instead is a broader definition of adaptation and a sociology that takes into account the commercial apparatus [and] the audience” (10).

As Walter Benjamin, Bazin, and Naremore make clear, the driving economic force in the Hollywood film industry is the audience, which has also been historically ignored in theoretical treatments of adaptation analysis. But future theoretical work in

this area—the ways that audience affects the economic structure of a film—could be particularly fruitful for secondary students. For example, Imelda Whelehan, looking towards future work in adaptation theory, suggests, but does not adequately develop, some ways that the audience might be considered in adaptation studies:

one alternative angle of investigation might lie in the area of research seeking explanations for the success with audiences (in particular) of classic adaptations, and to speculate on the ways that the interface between a literary text and its film tribute(s) is interpreted and used by its audience.

(15)

Specifically, Whelehan points to Henry Jenkins’s work on fandom, which, she argues, “might provide a point of access that throws up altogether different issues, considering the role of fan (following the work of Michel de Certeau) as poacher—a willful appropriator of meanings for ends which could not be anticipated by a film’s or television serial’s producers” (15). Secondary school students, many of whom are particularly avid fans of the cultural products they enjoy—music groups, comic books, novels, Japanese animation, films, etc., would make for particularly interesting subjects of such a study in fandom.

Though there are thousands of examples of the “fan as poacher” phenomenon among adolescent consumers, a recent example that will serve to illustrate the potentials of pursuing Whelehan’s suggested line of inquiry is the fan response to Stephenie Meyer’s bestselling vampire novels *Twilight*, *New Moon*, and the forthcoming *Eclipse*. While this example does not include a film adaptation (though the rights for a film version of *Twilight* have been purchased), the point is to suggest ways that Whelehan’s



theoretical construct of “fan as poacher” could be applied to adolescent consumers and, subsequently, to the study of adaptation with students. Meyer’s novels *Twilight* and *New Moon*, according to the Salt Lake City *Deseret Morning News*, “have been at the top of the best seller lists for the past year, with *New Moon* listed as No. 1 for 11 weeks straight.” They have also prompted fan web sites written in German, Italian, Spanish, and English (Pugmire; Meyer). The *Twilight Fanfiction* site creators include, in part, the following description of their site’s contents: “All the fiction found here is reasonably in character and does not contradict information given in *Twilight*, *New Moon*, or on the *Twilight* Lexicon personal chats . . . There are stories told from alternate points of view. There are missing moments.” The fan fiction written for this web site exemplifies the kind of material that might be studied by following “fan as poacher” paradigm. Whelehan suggests that

by looking at the conclusions of works which focus on the reader and the consumer group, we might begin to further unseat the primacy of focus which has been traditionally applied to author/authority and fidelity. Rather than a tendency to see the film/TV adaptation of a literary text as necessarily lacking some of the force and substance of its original, it might be more fruitful to regard this and subsequent adaptations of a novel in terms of *excess* rather than lack. Research into fandom in cultural studies documents the way that fan communities constantly produce new narratives about favourite [sic] characters or authors, as if what they find in the original text frustrates a quest for wholeness and completeness

which can only be satisfied by the creation and dispersal of narratives  
 which somehow fill in the “gaps.” (16)

With this in mind, it’s easy to see how secondary students would be able to consider their roles as fans of particular novels and the ways that they participate in the creation of intertexts that are in dialogue with a source text, its adaptations, and other texts surrounding the source text. In this way, the audience actively participates in the creation of multiple adaptations and thereby better understands the intertextual relationship among a source text and its many adaptations.

#### The Methods of Academic Study of Film and Literature

The nature of narrative and the norm of cinema are not the only things that have contributed to the field’s focus on fidelity; additionally, the methods employed by film and literature scholars have perpetuated this focus. According to Robert Ray, film and literature scholars, trained in formalist New Criticism, which “authorized only readings of particular cases, not a more sweeping, explanatory poetics,” ignored theoretical developments and stuck to producing individual case studies (45). James Naremore writes that this devotion to formalist readings was also encouraged by an important film text, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s *Film Art*. While Naremore makes clear that Bordwell and Thompson distinguish themselves from “the literary dandies and philosophical idealists of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century” they still promote close reading, devoting “themselves to teaching us how to recognize cinema-specific codes and how to appreciate part-whole relationships within individual movies” (3). With case studies, there is no connective tissue, only endlessly produced undertakings of microscopic proportion. Or, as Robert Ray puts it, “Without benefit of a presiding

poetics, film and literature scholars could only persist in asking about individual movies the same unproductive layman's question (How does the film compare with the book?), getting the same unproductive answer (The book is better)" (44).

This focus on New Criticism also led adaptation theorists to ignore important theoretical developments that had much to offer to the study of film and literature. Certainly Derridean deconstruction of "original" and "copy," which pointed out that both were caught in the infinite play of dissemination, as well as Walter Benjamin's important "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" which argued that reproduction puts the copy of the original into situations that were unavailable to the original itself, should have had significant impacts on the theory of adaptation (Ray 45). Additionally, Robert Stam suggests that structuralist and poststructuralist theoretical developments were ignored including the Bakhtinian "'translinguistic' conception of the author as the orchestrator of preexisting discourses"; "Foucault's downgrading of the author in favor of a pervasive anonymity of discourse"; and Roland Barthes's "provocative leveling of the hierarchy between literary criticism and literature [which] tends, by analogy, to rescue the film adaptation as a form of criticism or 'reading' of the novel, one not necessarily subordinate to the source novel" (58).

It isn't hard to see that literary scholars, even those with an understanding of more contemporary theory, would stick with their New Critical approaches. A theoretical apparatus that deconstructs the privileged novel and places it in play with other texts, including films, threatens the livelihood of scholars devoted to literary work. And it is this natural instinct for scholarly survival that informs Ray's final factor in the development of the field of film and literature—the exigencies of the academic

profession, which I will only briefly address. Ray argues that “the typical adaptation study had things in common with that undergraduate staple, the comparison-contrast paper—it was easy to turn out, it satisfied the requirements, and it could be done over and over again” (47). As Ray tells it, literature scholars, then, facing professional pressures to publish, turned to this form as a means for surviving.

Clearly, the methods of academic study of film and literature at the collegiate level have affected secondary school English teachers who consider film adaptations in their classes. Not only were these teachers most likely assigned the comparison-contrast paper by their professors while in college, but they also, in turn, assign it to their high school and junior high school students on a regular basis. Furthermore, the secondary school state and district curriculum requirements often call for the comparison-contrast paper to be taught. For example, the Utah State Core Curriculum for Language Arts explicitly requires instruction in comparison/contrast in eighth and ninth grades (Utah 46-47). Perhaps teachers believe that an assignment to compare and contrast a film adaptation to its literary source text ideally satisfies the necessity to focus on this kind of writing while also allowing students an opportunity to move away from studying strictly print texts.

#### Conclusions/Beginnings

With this theoretical background in mind, the following chapters will consider the field of adaptation study as it applies to the teaching of secondary school students. I will point, in specific ways, to methods of adaptation study that are fruitful, theoretically complex, and go beyond simple fidelity study. Because this chapter began with dire exclamations about the field of adaptation study, it is important to consider briefly why

adaptation study matters and why it must matter in the future—especially to teachers and students. According to Gary Saul Morson, Bakhtin believed that

great works invite us to do two things: first, ‘live into’ them and understand them from within; then, enter into dialogue with their perspective from one’s own . . . In Bakhtinian dialogue we invite an unpredictable interaction capable of creating new knowledge and, as we interrogate the work, also allow it to interrogate us. (355)

Because teachers and students care about creating new knowledge within and without themselves, adaptations serve as launching points for learning. Film adaptations compel readers to participate with the director, author, actors, viewers, and others in a grand Bakhtinian dialogue. Then, as Robert Stam argues,

we [will] be less concerned with inchoate notions of ‘fidelity’ and . . . give more attention to dialogical responses—to readings, critiques, interpretations, and rewritings of prior material. If we can do all these things, we will produce a criticism that not only takes into account, but also welcomes, the differences among the media. (“Beyond” 75-76)

## Beyond “The Book is Better”: Changing Current Pedagogical Practices

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, adaptation theorists like Thomas Leitch and Robert Stam acknowledge a lack of meaningful frames for conducting productive discussion of film adaptations and their literary source texts. However, they also argue that such work would be beneficial, and they look for ways to accomplish it.<sup>6</sup> For the most part, pedagogical scholarship about the teaching of film adaptations to secondary school students, on the other hand, finds nothing of value in teaching students to understand and investigate the relationship between adaptations and literary source texts. This, despite the fact that film has been part of the dialogue about what should be included in the English/language arts curriculum in secondary school for over 70 years.<sup>7</sup> Today there are two distinct camps of educators that both agree that discussion of adaptations is a worthless exercise for students and has no place in the secondary English curriculum. Though these camps come to the same conclusion for vastly different

---

<sup>6</sup> In the previous chapter, I mentioned Thomas Leitch’s belief that adaptation study “has never been undertaken with conviction and theoretical rigor,” but I didn’t offer his suggestions for improving the field (149). Leitch does have a plan for improving adaptation study:

Adaptation study will emerge from its ghetto not when cinema studies accepts the institutional claims that would make cinema a poor relation of literature or succeeds in refashioning analysts of adaptation into loyal citizens of cinema studies, but in some larger synthesis that might well be called Textual Studies—a discipline incorporating adaptation study, cinema studies in general, and literary studies, now housed in departments of English, and much of cultural studies as well. (168)

Like Leitch, Robert Stam believes the field is in need of renewal. Throughout his introduction to *Literature and Film*, he offers a broad range of theoretical methodologies that he argues would significantly improve adaptation study. In general, Stam sees his project as “deconstruct[ing] the unstated doxa which subtly construct the subaltern status of adaptation (and the filmic image) vis-à-vis novels (and the literary word), and then to point to alternative perspectives” (“Introduction” 4).

<sup>7</sup> In a 1947 *English Journal* article, Alexander Frazier, the secondary curriculum coordinator for the Los Angeles County Schools, laments that film studies have not played a larger role in the secondary English curriculum: “Despite benign nods from all the major language arts studies of the last fifteen years, film appreciation as a part of the secondary-school curriculum has yet to amount to much” (88). Frazier’s brief exploration into the uses of film in classrooms at that time uncovers a dialogue remarkably similar to the one taking place today.

reasons, their disdain for pedagogical practice that engages students in considering the relationship between a film adaptation and its source text is clear.

A brief overview of the beliefs of these groups will set the stage for departing from them and proposing pedagogical practices that will effectively allow students to consider film adaptations and these adaptations' interactions with other texts, including literary source texts. The first camp is most severely defined by Carol Jago, a high school teacher who has published extensively about secondary English pedagogy. Jago argues that "instruction in viewing and film should not occur in an English class," because "film adaptations of novels . . . have been so abbreviated that even the best of them are seriously flawed. It is simply not possible to compress 300 to 600 pages into 90 minutes" (33). This standard pedagogical argument against film adaptations reveals the bias for theoretical and pedagogical prioritization of fidelity. For Jago, the only measure of success is fidelity, and the film has no chance because it simply cannot realistically be "compressed" into the accepted time frame for most Hollywood films. Dudley Barlow agrees, contending that film adaptations will "at best . . . be a reasonable facsimile of the novel" because the film has trouble capturing the narrative point of view of the novel, doesn't deal well with historical context, and because filmmakers ignore key points of characterization (41).

Additionally, Jago's focus on compression is curiously played out with a comparison of the number of pages in a screenplay to the number of pages in a novel—I would argue that this is akin to suggesting that the description of a building, occupying several pages in a novel, is more substantial than the actual building, because its blueprint fits on a single sheet. She further argues that "movies, even powerful productions, can

only ever hope to skim the surface of a great book” (33). She also suggests that once students have viewed a film version of a literary text and “unsure of their newly formed interpretations, [they] let go of their own reading and accept the filmmaker’s as valid and authoritative” (35). This belittling view of films—as substitutes for literature (Jago even compares film adaptations to Cliffs Notes)—along with a view of students as passive receptors of film incapable of disagreeing with the filmmakers’ interpretation sufficiently outlines the key ideas of this group.

Central to their argument is the assumption that film occupies a subaltern position in its relationship with literature. As Robert Stam points out, this assumption makes itself clear in the language of adaptation detractors: “the standard rhetoric has often deployed an elegiac discourse of loss, lamenting what has been ‘lost’ in the transition from novel to film, while ignoring what has been ‘gained’” (3). Lawrence Baines certainly matches the description here: he concurs with Jago that films are less complex than literature by comparing screenplays to the novels that are their literary source texts and asking the following question in the title of his comparison: “When a novel is interpreted for film, what gets lost in translation?” (612). His extensive study of word complexity—as measured by lexical diversity, readability, and presence of multiple-syllable words—determines that “film uses fewer polysyllabic words,” “film uses less complex sentence structure,” “film has less lexical diversity,” and “film reduces the complexity of dialogue, plot, character, and theme” (614-616). This reductive comparison points to the ideal film adaptation as an audio version of the novel. Ironically, some of Baines’s suggestions for using film in the classroom (he argues it should be done only to “spur interest in



reading”) are worthwhile and would lead to a greater understanding of the complexity of the adaptation process (619).<sup>8</sup>

The second camp of educators recognizes that students must learn to read print and nonprint texts in English class, if only because students spend so much time with the latter. However, they still see no value in looking closely at the relationship between film adaptations and their source texts. This camp argues that the exercise is futile, because the discussion always turns into shallow comparison/contrast exercises. This camp does not, however, ever propose a productive method of investigating adaptations with students. Rather, their solution is to give up the practice. This group, it should be noted, does not believe that film is an inferior art form. Instead, they argue persuasively that viewing films (and viewing generally) plays a vital part in the language arts curriculum. This viewing, however, should be seen as “reading” a nonprint text and does not include any consideration of source text.<sup>9</sup>

The professional organizations for language arts teachers endorse inclusion of nonprint texts. In their jointly published “Standards for the English Language Arts,” the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) include two standards that apply specifically to nonprint texts: “Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts” and “Students apply knowledge of language

---

<sup>8</sup> For example, Baines suggests the following activities: “Allow students to write original screenplays or adapt short stories to scripts”; “create interdisciplinary units that include music, art, and film”; “have students critique motion pictures, advertising and news programming”; and “have students create a video collage or multimedia presentation as a creative approach to reader response” (619-620).

<sup>9</sup> John Golden’s *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* typifies this approach.

structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts” (19; 26). This focus on using nonprint texts—including films, though there are certainly many other forms of nonprint texts<sup>10</sup>—has led English teachers to look for ways to integrate films into their curriculum. A look at scholarship devoted to using film in the English classroom reveals a near complete focus on reading nonprint texts without any consideration for the relationship between film adaptations and source texts.

Alan Teasley and Ann Wilder’s seminal text for secondary educators who want to effectively use film in their classrooms—*Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adults*—recognizes the dilemma that comes when teachers attempt to include film adaptations of novels as part of their curriculums: “Sometimes it occurs to us that the question is not: ‘Should film be used in the English classroom?’ but rather: ‘Can’t we do something other than show a movie version of the book we just spent three weeks studying?’” (5) This question points to this common practice that prevails in secondary English classrooms of pairing a book with its film adaptation with little, if any, attention paid to discussing or investigating the relationship between the film and novel other than to note the similarities and differences in order to conclude that the novel is better.

Teasley and Wilder deconstruct this activity in more detail:

we’ve found such comparisons usually boil down to simplistic variations

---

<sup>10</sup> The IRA/NCTE “Standards for the English Language Arts” lists the following nonprint texts: computer software, computer networks, databases, CD-ROMs, films, selected television programs, speeches, and radio and television broadcasts.

on a relatively few points: (1) “the filmmakers left stuff out” (yes, usually lots of characters and whole subplots have to go in order to whittle the novel down to two hours); (2) “they simplified complex material for the mass audience” (yes, literature is much better at conveying nuances and complexities—especially of characters’ unexpressed thoughts and feelings); (3) “they toned down the controversial material” (as in the near absence of lesbianism in Spielberg’s version of *The Color Purple*); or (4) “the actors weren’t how we picture the characters” (perhaps Demi Moore was not our first choice for Hester Prynne). (134)

While Teasley and Wilder effectively explain the problem of adaptation/novel pairings as usually carried out in English classes, their remarkable book—which has made me a much better teacher of film in my class—does not leave room for the possibility that studying adaptation could be fruitful. Their solution is to forego such pairs in favor of teaching film as a text on its own, a text to be read as carefully as any book. I certainly subscribe to this philosophy, but that doesn’t mean that interesting work can’t be done in the space between film adaptations and their source texts. In fact, secondary school students are more than capable and ready to investigate adaptations if given the right tools to do so.

John Golden’s more recent *Reading in the Dark* follows Teasley and Wilder’s lead by proposing ways that film can be viewed as a text in its own right and expanding on the ways that film can be used as a tool “to help students improve their reading and analytical skills” (xiii). Golden briefly mentions adaptation, but the book is devoted to a different purpose. While Golden isn’t antagonistic towards adaptation—he suggests that

“film and literature are not enemies; in fact, they should be used closely together because they share so many common elements and strategies to gain and keep the audience’s attention”—he doesn’t consider the possibility of students investigating the connection between adaptations and their source texts (36).

William Costanzo’s *Great Films and How to Teach Them*, alone among texts for teachers about using film in the secondary English classroom, discusses adaptation in some depth and also includes a review of theoretical work surrounding the study of adaptations. The inclusion of this theoretical foundation is certainly beneficial for teachers who will be showing film adaptations and can’t help but make teachers more aware of the complexities inherent in the process of moving among texts. Costanzo also recognizes and discusses the economic realities that undergird the creation of adaptations in ways that other writers for secondary English educators have not. His nuanced approach, which includes a nod towards intertextuality, sets the stage for the approach I will offer in terms of studying film adaptations with students in a secondary English class:

Viewed from these perspectives, a movie adaptation is not so much an illustrated copy of a book but a new rendering of the story, to be appreciated on its own terms. The narrative terrain, with its significant settings, characters, and actions, is redrawn onto a different kind of map by a different sort of cartographer. For students of English, studying adaptations means learning about the possibilities and limitations of literary mapmaking. By paying close attention to what is unique about each medium (What exactly do we get from a work of literature or film?)

What is added to or missing from the experience?), students become more aware of what it means to represent reality through fiction. By attending to the similarities between a movie and a book, they can come to recognize what is universal in all narratives, the motives and rewards of storytelling that transcend all media. (15)

Costanzo's brief section on adaptation anticipates my methodology. Specifically, he hints at the following four areas of focus that will act as a foundation for successfully approaching adaptations with secondary English students: economic analysis, intertextualities (the matrix of cultural influences on a text), Gerard Genette's notion of transtextuality (the relationship of one text to others), and an expansion of adaptation to include the relationships of print texts to new media adaptations including video games and amusement park rides as source texts for film adaptations. An understanding of these four areas and their applicability to a study of adaptation will make students more confident and adept in their analysis of the relationship between a film and its printed source text.

Before more thoroughly discussing these four focus areas, however, it is necessary to identify the pedagogical purpose for considering the relationship between film adaptations and their literary source texts with students because it is clearly an area of study that has not been approached successfully by secondary English teachers—as evidenced by the fact that even advocates of using film in the secondary English classroom refuse to support a study of adaptation. An argument for the importance of studying adaptations must begin with the prevalence of the process. Though the numbers are somewhat in question, Dudley Andrew reports that “well over half of all commercial

films have come from literary originals” and Linda Seger adds that “85 percent of all Academy Award-winning Best Pictures are adaptations” (29; xi). Clearly, Hollywood producers have a preference for the form, a preference which begs to be explained and investigated. Secondary students who spend a great deal of time in movie theaters and watching films on DVD will have noticed this and will be interested in understanding why the most popular books are often optioned quickly for film production.

A second argument for studying adaptation concerns the prevalence of the practice among English teachers of uncritically integrating film in their classes. Recognizing that English teachers who do use film in their classrooms have the very best intentions—certainly they don’t use it to take up time when they’re unprepared or use it as a reward for good behavior—they still often show, in its entirety, the film version of a novel or short story that the class has studied together. When it comes to using film in English classrooms, there is, perhaps, not a more common practice and certainly not a more useless one (at least as it is usually done without any effort to “read” the film text as carefully as the print text). As discussed earlier, Teasley and Wilder make clear that even teachers with the very best intentions go wrong when it comes to using film and literature together. And this isn’t hard to understand. Even film critics and theorists are stuck on the idea of fidelity as centrally important in studying adaptations—that is, is the film “true” to its source text? As Brian McFarlane, in *Novel to Film*, writes, “At every level from newspaper reviews to longer essays in critical anthologies and journals, the adducing of fidelity to the original novel as a major criterion for judging the film adaptation is pervasive” (8). McFarlane goes on to suggest that a critical (and I would

add pedagogical) focus on fidelity analysis needs to be reexamined. However, McFarlane makes clear that adaptation study shouldn't be abandoned all together:

Given the prevalence of the process, and given that interpretations and memories of the source novel are powerful determining elements in the film's intertextuality, there is little value in merely saying that the film should stand autonomously. So it should, but it is also valuable to consider the kinds of transmutation that have taken place, to distinguish what the filmmaker has sought to retrain from the original and the kinds of use to which he has put it. (23)

Therefore, just because it is difficult to pair film and literature together (and learn from the process) doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. In fact, it is vital for students, saturated by media, to learn how to effectively negotiate these texts. One key to learning to make their way through pervasive media is recognizing the unique qualities and attributes of both films and print texts. A study of adaptation is an ideal way to uncover these qualities. Also, connecting film and other media to literature can lead students to discover and become excited about print texts in ways they otherwise might not.

Finally, perhaps we need to leave behind entirely the question of success in terms of the adaptation—though it is worth discussing economic success as a measure of audience approval—and its ability to tell us something about the source text. Mark Osteen notes in a chapter about teaching Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* through adaptations that "failed adaptations sometimes work better in the classroom than successful ones, precisely because they underscore the problems of interpreting such a text" gets at the point (though he still finds it necessary to make a value judgment about the adaptation)

(158). Robert Stam also argues that the theoretical discussion needs to move away from making judgments about quality: “Too much of the discourse, I would argue, has focused on the rather subjective question of the quality of adaptations, rather than on the more interesting issues of (1) the theoretical status of adaptation, and (2) the analytical interest of adaptations” (“Introduction” 4). Having already discussed the theoretical status of adaptation in the previous chapter, I turn to this second issue: the analytical interest of adaptations. For secondary school students the possibilities for participating in analytical discourse that is interesting to them and pedagogically engaging comes by using adaptations.

#### Economic Analysis

An understanding of the economic realities at play with the production of any film is important for students as they consider the relationship between an adaptation and its source text. Placing film adaptations within the context of cultural productions aids students in developing a keen critical eye to the media messages that they view daily. Teachers who care about helping students combat market-driven media messages should be aware of David Buckingham’s warning that

media education should not be conceived as an exercise in drawing attention to the shortcomings of the media—whether these are defined as moral, ideological or aesthetic. On the contrary, it should encourage students to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of their pleasures in the media; and to recognize the social basis of *all* such judgements [sic] of taste and value, including their own. (110)



In formulating a pedagogical framework within which we can help students recognize and analyze the economic factors important to a comparison of a film and its source text, Buckingham's emphasis on acknowledging and analyzing the complexity and diversity of the relationship will be central.

An understanding of economic influences is also useful for teachers who see fidelity as the hallmark of a successful adaptation. As Robert Stam explains,

the demand for fidelity ignores the actual processes of making films, the important differences in modes of production. While a novelist's choices are relatively unconstrained by considerations of budget—all the writer needs is time, talent, paper, and pen—films are from the outset immersed in technology and commerce. (16)

Without a recognition and analysis of economic factors, students will have an incomplete picture of the influences on filmmakers and will subsequently make an incomplete analysis of the relationship. Naïve students may believe that filmmakers consider strictly artistic reasons for their decisions during the production of a film. Such an assumption severely hampers students' ability to critically analyze adaptations. Thus, an understanding of the economics associated with production and distribution of films is vital to analyzing adaptations.

Bluestone, in his seminal and still-influential *Novels into Film* recognized the important economic differences between novel writing and film production: “the Hollywood producer is governed less by the laws of aesthetics than by the laws of the marketplace” (38). Costanzo extends this point, arguing that

many of the differences between literature and films are due not to artistic limitations of the media but to matters of business . . . Whereas a novel can make a profit with twenty thousand copies, a movie must reach millions. And movies cost more to produce. Movies, then, must be mass-produced for a mass audience.<sup>11</sup> (11)

The necessity of mass production leads Hollywood producers to green light only those projects that they believe guarantee a return at the box office. From this standpoint, adaptations are much closer to sure box office bets than original films. Edward Jay Epstein explains the reason for this phenomenon:

The key to a movie's success is the level of awareness that exists for the project well in advance of the advertising blitz that takes place in the week or so preceding the actual release date. The studios carefully track this prior awareness via the telephone polls supplied weekly by the National Research Group, a part of Nielsen Media Research. From this data, a studio can tell the extent to which different segments of the moviegoing population—divided by age and sex into four “quadrants”—are aware of a particular upcoming movie. The most important audiences are those in the under-25 males quadrant, since they are the easiest to turn out for opening weekend. With franchises and remakes, the awareness in the under-25 male group approaches 100 percent; with video-game- and TV-based movies, it is often over 90 percent. But with original stories the awareness

---

<sup>11</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, production costs in the era of digital filmmaking are significantly reduced. But a film is still immensely more expensive to create than a novel.

level, even buoyed by well-planted gossip items in the entertainment media, is usually not much more than 60 percent. (“End”)

Toby Miller, et al. more closely examine the ways in which Hollywood marketers determine the film projects that will best create audiences:

[Marketers] scan screen and page for elements called positioning and playability, which give them a way to make sense of a film project’s US commercial potential. . . The inventors of the positioning concept tell us that its “basic approach . . . is not to create something new and different, but to manipulate what’s already up there in the mind, to retie the connections that already exist.” (152)

Though Miller and his co-authors don’t make any explicit connection to adaptations, it’s clear that a film adaptation easily fits the positioning concept and therefore appeals to marketers. The appeal to marketers comes because many members of the potential audience for an adaptation have already connected to the film’s plot by reading the source text and will willingly retie those connections by viewing the film.

Dudley Andrew concurs, noting that adaptations are typically produced for economic reasons and further arguing that the project of adaptation study is inherently linked to economic considerations:

Taken as a particular instance of cultural adaptation, the updating of literature in cinematic form refreshes and broadens the reach of a source text that some producer or institution deems both pertinent and ripe for exploitation. *Exploitation* is an apt term, since a certain amount of built-in insurance and advertising makes investing in adaptations so attractive that

this practice amounts to a very high percentage of all films made.

Insurance derives from the success of the pre-tested narrative, while the title and author of the original provide automatic advertising to the degree that either has been controversial or beloved. Mixing Pierre Bourdieu's vocabulary with that of the film industry, we might say that "cultural capital" accrues to a given "property" through the discourses of criticism and education that extend its reputation and identify its relevance to the current moment. *Current* indeed. Adaptations traffic in *currency*, in the two senses of that term. And comparisons of films to their dramatic or novelistic sources—the most common species of adaptation study—grasp this implicitly, as they manipulate the market with insider information, currency exchange, and trading in futures. (190; all italics original)

The realities of budgetary constraints and production costs are easy to identify when comparing the adaptations and their source novels. Harder to identify is a way to approach an economic analysis with students. In an English class, where the focus is rightly on textual considerations, students will not be used to a discussion of economics and teachers will not be trained nor have the resources to make nuanced analyses of the economic factors at play in a film adaptation. But Andrew hints at the potential for educational discourse and currency exchange as methods for adaptation study, and discourse—in particular, dialogue in the Vygotskian model of learning and teaching—offers fertile ground for helping students to recognize and analyze the influence of money on artistic decision making during the production of adaptations. Buckingham argues that "*dialogue* between teacher and student, and between students themselves, is central

to this process” (140-141; emphasis original). The process I propose aligns with Buckingham’s dynamic model: “Vygotsky’s theory clearly implies a dynamic (or ‘dialogic’) approach to teaching and learning, in which students move back and forth between action and reflection” (143). This could be best done with specific applications of one of Buckingham’s proposed classroom strategies: simulation (77-81). Buckingham suggests that a simulation is an ideal way for students to learn about “production roles and processes within the media industries, and about how media producers balance financial, technological and institutional constraints in their work” (79). Rather than having students attempt to simulate the complicated world of Hollywood film production, dealing with millions of dollars, production schedules in foreign countries and designers, writers, directors, cast and crew members to pay, a narrowly-defined simulation is much simpler and more applicable for students. I suggest the following as one possible simulation that would make space for students to investigate and better understand the role of budget concerns in the production of a film.

Students could be divided into two groups, with one group given the following task: Your group is a team participating in the game “Film Producer’s Apprentice.” You will be competing against the other groups in class. Your final project will be judged by an outside judge, and your goal is to convince the judge that your film and marketing campaign will attract the most students. Your job is to create a short film (no longer than five minutes) that students at your school will want to see. Your film can be based on any other media, but must be an adaptation (from a video game, song, movie, television show, novel, short story, comic book, etc.). For the purposes of this assignment, you won’t actually make the movie. Instead, complete all of the following:

- Briefly outline the film.
- Explain why this is a film that students will want to see.
- Come up with a marketing campaign to advertise the film.
- Propose a budget for the marketing campaign that does not exceed \$100.
- Prepare a five-minute presentation (with visuals if possible) to present to the judge.

Your campaign should include all of the above information.

You may use any of the materials (poster board, markers, etc. provided for you).

The second group could be given the same task, only their film must be original (not based on a video game, song, movie, television show, novel, short story, comic book, etc.). Before starting their projects, students should be aware of how they will be judged. The following are some possible judging criteria: Ultimately, students will need to convince the judge(s) that their film and marketing plan will attract the most students.

The judge(s) could include the following in determining which group wins:

- Professionalism of the presentation
- Marketing strategy
- Film's appeal to students at the school
- Ability to realistically stay within the proposed budget
- All students in the group involved in the presentation

As Buckingham makes clear, the simulation cannot conclude with the presentations and judging results:

The personal immediacy of a simulation can make it hard for students to distance themselves from what is happening, and to reflect upon the consequences of the choices they have made. "Debriefing" is particularly

important in this respect: students need to be encouraged to evaluate their own work, and to consider the similarities and differences between the “unreal” world of the simulation and the real world of the media industries. (81)

Students, then, should reflect on the differences in marketing a short film that is an adaptation and a short film that has an original story. During the reflection, students should consider how their marketing campaigns connect to the real marketing campaigns of adaptations and original films. Frank Tomasulo suggests one way to make this connection: “Movie posters, trade papers, and fan magazines can be useful adjuncts to demonstrate the commercial and marketing aspects of the movie business” (113).

Students could easily obtain marketing materials for an adaptation currently in theaters and compare that material to marketing materials obtained for a film that is not based on a source text. This kind of investigatory work with cultural and commercial artifacts directly connected to films will give students an opportunity to understand and further consider the impact of economic considerations on artistic choices when moving from a source text to a film adaptation.

Hollywood producers are, of course, not only influenced by the economic future of a film. As Edward Jay Epstein points out, “[studio executives] have concerns that go beyond that of the economic logic dictated by the balance sheet of the clearinghouse. Their decisions must also take into account a broader if less tangible consideration: the social and political axes of Hollywood” (*Big Picture* 131). As students complete their simulation and consider the factors that affected their marketing strategies during debriefing, they will likely also be tuned in to the social and political axes of high school

which affected their decisions. For example, students may have chosen to adapt a novel or video game that was popular with students but subdued enough that the school administration would not censor their campaign. Being exposed to the economic, social, and cultural factors that influence film producers will further problematize the process of adaptation and allow students to be more cognizant of the complexities involved in adapting a source text beyond the more apparent considerations they may have previously been aware of.

### Intertextualities

Current adaptation theorists have focused on “intertextuality” as a framework for investigating the many cultural influences and intersections that occur with the creation/reading of any text. The theoretical foundation for the concept comes from Bakhtin’s “dialogism” and Kristeva’s “intertextuality.” Bakhtin uses the term “language” to discuss the intersecting influences of any cultural product. Replacing “language” with “film” or any other kind of text yields the same point: any artistic text is interwoven with other artistic texts and with many socio-historical influences:

At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These “languages” of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying “languages.” (291)



Earlier in this same essay, Bakhtin argues that “languages of various epochs and periods of socio-ideological life cohabit with one another” (291). Robert Stam addresses this idea of cohabitation: “Any text that has ‘slept with’ another text, as a postmodern wag once put it, has also slept with all the other texts that that other text has slept with. It is this textually transmitted ‘dis-ease’ that characterizes the intertextual daisy-chain that Derrida called ‘dissemination’” (“Introduction” 27).

Stam effectively distills Bakhtinian dialogism this way:

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. (“Beyond” 64)

The concept of intertextuality is vital to a secondary school study of film adaptations, because it deconstructs the comparison/contrast binary and points to a meaningful method of investigating the cultural influences (including the source text, obviously) on an adaptation. As Stam puts it,

Notions of “dialogism” and “intertextuality,” then, help us transcend the aporias of “fidelity” and of a dyadic source/adaptation model which excludes not only all sorts of supplementary texts but also the dialogical response of the reader/spectator. Every text, and every adaptation, “points” in many directions, back, forward, and sideways. (“Introduction” 27)

Stam's directional language here harkens back to William Costanzo's view of adaptation discussed earlier: "The narrative terrain, with its significant settings, characters, and actions, is redrawn onto a different kind of map by a different sort of cartographer" (15).

Both Costanzo and Stam evoke cartographic terminology, which points to the ideal methodology for uncovering intertextual influences when investigating adaptations with secondary students. Recent educational research surrounding new media and digital literacy concepts—which includes, but is not limited to film viewing inside and outside the classroom—supports this notion of moving through space as a model for understand student learning. Kevin Leander and Margaret Sheehy argue that

educators and researchers of culture are increasingly turning to space to understand explain socio-cultural practices and processes. Comparative educational theorists are creating cartographic methodologies that visually communicate the distribution of social changes in education discourses. Spatial metaphors such as boundaries, borders, margins, centers, and peripheries are similarly visual means of addressing physical experiences and effects of social life. (1)

While Leander and Sheehy address here educational theorists' use of spatial conception for the understanding of learners and learning, the same applies to the way students interact with the world—particularly in online environments both in and out of school—and learn, for example, about the relationships among the cultural texts influencing a film adaptation. Students, steeped in the virtual literacy environments that place them in spatial relationships daily—chat rooms, instant messaging, video gaming, text messaging,

MySpace, etc., will better understand the concept of intertextualities via cartographic pedagogical methodology.

For example, secondary students could benefit from analyzing a film like Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle*, which is adapted from a young adult novel by Dianna Wynne Jones. Miyazaki's adaptation comes almost twenty years after its source text, was produced in Japan as opposed to the novel's England, and, according to Miyazaki, has much to say about contemporary war (Ulaby). A film like Miyazaki's does what Stam suggests adaptations should, which is "take an activist stance toward their source novels, inserting them into a much broader intertextual dialogism" (64). To help students "map" the intertextual influences on Miyazaki's film, the teacher should briefly expose students to known intertextual influences. This is generally best done by having students read or view alternate texts that are clearly impacting the film and/or source text; listening to, viewing, or reading interviews with the director; watching an DVD extra material, including the director's commentary; and viewing films that are examples of the film's genre—in this case, Japanese anime; or reading texts that exemplify the source text's genre. This initial exposure to intertextual influences should be executed with brief examples of a few influences. Overkill at this stage leads to exhaustion rather than a greater understanding of the dialogic relationship of these various texts. As students are exposed to these brief examples, they should map the relationships on a piece of paper or in a multimedia format, drawing lines from one text to another. Another way to introduce intertextualities would be by using a text that effectively points to "recognizable citations," like episodes of "The Simpsons" that invoke Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" or Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* among many other examples from this

television show. Hollywood comedies or Weird Al Yankovic songs which are also highly parodic would work well as map making sites too.

Once they understand that intertextual relationships are indeed prevalent, students can move from the known, easily recognizable intertextualities to lesser known or recognizable influences that may come from cultural influences rather than textual ones. The point here is not that students create a map that is definitive, capturing every possible intertextual influence—an obvious impossibility. Rather, the purpose of this map making activity is to help students discover that the process of adaptation involves Bakhtinian dialogisms and intertextualities which complicate the process of moving from a source text in one medium to an artistic text in another. Students will no longer have the mistaken notion of a source text/adaptation binary and will better be able to analyze both texts. Finally, as students uncover the Bakhtinian deep dialogisms inherent in any film adaptation, they are better prepared to interact with and understand the “powerful deep currents of culture” surrounding them (Stam, “Beyond” 65).

### Transtextuality

While the idea of intertextuality explodes the traditional pedagogical practice of comparing and contrasting a film adaptation and its source text and creates a space for the kind of complicated and contemporary cultural investigation that has been ignored by English educators who use film in their classrooms, there may still be a better conceptual framework for approaching adaptations in the secondary English classroom. According to Stam, Gerard Genette, “instead of maintaining the term ‘intertextuality,’ . . . proposed the more inclusive term ‘transtextuality’ to refer to ‘all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts’” (“Introduction” 27). Not only

would a pedagogical approach recognizing relationships among texts allow students a broader view of the world around them, it would also prepare them to conduct deeper (and broader) textual analysis that will better enable them to interact with texts throughout their lives. Genette propose five types of transtextuality—including intertextuality—with each focusing on a unique way that texts interact with one another from “the effective co-presence of two texts” to the relationship of texts within the totality of a literary work—for example between the text proper and its titles, prefaces, etc., to “the relation between one text, which Genette calls ‘hypertext,’ to an anterior text or ‘hypotext,’ which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends” (Stam, “Beyond” 66). A brief exploration of two of Genette’s transtextualities (paratextuality and hypertextuality) will yield effective ways that these frameworks might further be used with secondary English students.

After discussing intertextuality, Genette moves on to “paratextuality.” Stam defines paratextuality as

the relation, within the totality of a literary work, between the text proper and its “paratext”—titles, prefaces, postfaces, epigraphs, dedications, illustrations, and even book jackets and signed autographs, in short all the accessory messages and commentaries which come to surround the text and which at times become virtually indistinguishable from it.

(“Introduction” 28)

Stam points out that in film, “‘paratextuality’ might evoke all those materials close to the text such as posters, trailers, reviews, interviews with the director, and so forth. The new media, in fact, have fostered an explosion of paratextual materials” (28). Kamilla

Elliott's "Teaching *Wuthering Heights* through Its Film and Television Adaptations" suggests how paratextual analysis works in a classroom setting by discussing her practice of studying prefaces to various adaptations of *Wuthering Heights*:

Examining literary, filmic, and televisual prefaces to *Wuthering Heights* raises productive questions of authorship, authoritative editions, and authorized adaptations. For this investigation, we read Charlotte Brontë's 1850 preface to the second edition and Richard J. Dunn's preface to Norton's 1990 critical edition, hear Russell Baker's introduction to the broadcast, in the United States, of London Weekend Television's 1998 airing of *Wuthering Heights*; view the prologue to Peter Kosminsky's 1992 film, *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights*, and examine Luis Buñuel's prefatory title card to his 1953 film of *Wuthering Heights*, *Abismos de pasión*. (127)

After reading/viewing these prefaces, Elliott conducts discussions of the prefaces that "first contextualize the claims in Western ideologies of return to origins, like Christian concepts of rebirth and psychoanalytic returns to childhood, as well as in aesthetic preoccupations with originality" (127). The class discussion goes on to include the idea of adaptations as editions of the literary source text and the "practice pervasive among canonical literary adaptations produced in the 1990s: the inclusion of the author's name in the film or television title" (127-128). Clearly Elliott's inclusion of prefaces points students towards paratextual relationships that reveal and problematize the relationship between the adaptation and its source text.

Elliott also includes paratextual material in classroom studies of *Wuthering Heights* by looking at literary and audiovisual criticism of the novel, including criticism produced at the time of the adaptations under consideration (130-131). Finally, Elliott includes a study of the way criticism has changed over time and culture: “in contrast to contemporaneous juxtapositions, we survey debates on aspects of the novel that have been differently addressed over time and across cultures” (131). While the theoretical considerations included in Elliott’s classroom discussion would not translate well to a secondary English classroom, one assignment she includes in her course definitely would be meaningful for these students. Her course includes the following assignment which utilizes paratextual analysis and, significantly, includes cartographic methodology:

Each student views one film or television adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* and reads two critical essays on the novel. Each then identifies and charts the passages adapted in the film or television and those cited in the two essays. I also ask students to note omissions they consider significant in the shaping of these selections and interpretations. Students subsequently meet in groups of three or four to share their findings in depth before we engage in a class discussion. We look at modes of selection and juxtaposition in critical argumentation, filmic montage, and television editing, paying attention to sound as well as to visual editing. (130-131)

Elliott’s methodology in the study of adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* would work well for any novel/film adaptation pair and clearly points to the possibility of using paratextual analysis to uncover the complexity in the relationship between the pair as well as to

underscore the fact that these texts are involved in a broad conversation, along with a lot of other textual material, beyond the dyad.

Of particular interest for students of adaptation is Genette's "hypertextuality." Stam outlines the meaning of this term: "'Hypertextuality' refers to the relation between one text, which Genette calls 'hypertext' to an anterior text or 'hypotext,' which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends. . . . Filmic adaptations, in this sense, are hypertexts derived from pre-existing hypotexts" ("Introduction" 31). Stam's extension of hypertext and hypotext to include the concept of "diverse prior adaptations [forming] a larger, cumulative hypotext that is available to the filmmaker who comes relatively 'late' in the series" ("Beyond" 66). Certainly this applies to Shakespearean adaptations or adaptations of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, both studied in secondary schools. As Thomas Leitch argues, "just as a novel like *Frankenstein* may serve as the vehicle for over a hundred adaptations, each individual adaptation invokes many precursor texts besides the one whose title it usually borrows" (164). The chapter in this volume on *Frankenstein* further investigates the hypertextuality of film adaptations of Shelley's novel.

#### Expansion of Adaptation

Finally, as Robert Ray asserts, "Academic life and its resulting pedagogy are still bound to the word; the more supple tools that impinge upon us—images and sounds combined with language—we have not yet learned to use" (48). An expansion of texts under consideration to include not only films and novels, but the many adaptations students interact with daily would better connect to their lives. As Stam points out, "Film adaptations, then, are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and



transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin” (“Beyond” 66). This whirl of intertextual reference and transformation would include video games adapted from films, films adapted from video games, television shows adapted from other television shows and from literary source texts, films adapted from amusement park rides, and many other contemporary transformation processes. And, as James Naremore proposes, such an expansion would not only contribute to pedagogical work, but further validate adaptation theory:

The study of adaptation needs to be joined with the study of recycling, remaking, and every other form of retelling in the age of mechanical reproduction and electronic communication. By this means, adaptation will become part of a general theory of repetition, and adaptation study will move from the margins to the center of contemporary media studies. (15)

Reading Andre Bazin, James Naremore points out that

adaptation has a number of important social functions, one of which is directly pedagogical, taking the form of everything from nineteenth-century “abridged” classics to more recent things Bazin does not mention, such as *Classics Illustrated* comics, *Reader’s Digest* condensed books, and plot summaries in *Cliff Notes*. (14)

Of course, Bazin’s reading offers a sadly narrow view of pedagogy—to parse, summarize, and make things easier to digest—that ignores the important pedagogical goals of expanding, enlarging, and increasing critical thinking skills.

I argue that yes, pedagogy is important, but not because of the “digest” function of adaptations, rather for another reason Naremore makes clear:

We now live in a media-saturated environment dense with cross-references and filled with borrowings from movies, books, and every other form of representation. Books can become movies, but movies themselves can also become novels, published screenplays, Broadway musicals, television shows, remakes, and so on. (13)

This is certainly true, and learning how to navigate a media-saturated world can be no more important than for young students, whose livelihoods will depend on their ability to negotiate the dense media forest, to recognize intertextual relationships among media and make wise personal and economic decisions based their readings of these multiple texts and the interplays between them. As Dudley Andrew argues,

Filmmaking, in other words, is always an event in which a system is used and altered in discourse. Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse, but not an unthinkable one. Let us use it not to fight battles over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual artworks. Let us use it as we use all cultural practices, to understand the world from which it comes and the one toward which it points. (37)

Case Study: *Speak*: Independent Voices

Perhaps Laurie Halse Anderson's 1999 award-winning young adult novel and Jessica Sharzer's 2004 award-winning film adaptation<sup>12</sup> should both have been titled *Speak!*. The exclamation point (which is not in either title) would command adolescent audiences to do their own speaking after reading Anderson's novel or seeing Sharzer's film. I suggest this because both Anderson and Sharzer have implicitly addressed the potential for the novel and film to encourage teens to talk about issues in their own lives. Teachers have also responded to *Speak* by noting this potential. While I didn't find any studies devoted to teaching the film—which is much lesser known and, certainly, used less often, if at all, in classrooms—every article about teaching *Speak* in secondary schools refers to the novel's power to promote action among students. This idea of promoting action among students is called critical pedagogy, and arises from critical theorists like Paulo Freire. Throughout this chapter, I use the term “critical” in connection with critical pedagogy. Richard Shaull sufficiently describes Freire's theoretical stance, which forms the foundation of critical pedagogy, “that man's ontological vocation (as he calls it) is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively” (12-13). Or, as Ladislaus Semali writes, “to be critical is to

---

<sup>12</sup> According to Laurie Halse Anderson's web site ([www.writerlady.com](http://www.writerlady.com)) and the editor's note to her 2000 essay in *ALAN Review*, *Speak* has garnered over 30 honors. Among them are the following awards: Printz Honor Medal (2000), National Book Award Finalist (1999), Edgar Allan Poe Award Finalist, Booklist's Top 10 First Novels of 1999, and School Library Journal Best Book of the Year. IMDb.com lists the following awards for Sharzer's film: Writers Guild of America Award nomination for Children's Script—Long Form (2006), Directors Guild of America Award nomination for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Children's Programs (2006), and the Woodstock Film Festival Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature (2004).

assume that humans are active agents whose reflective self-analysis and whose knowledge of the world leads to action that confronts old assumptions from the standpoint of new conditions” (81). While Anderson’s novel is read, largely, as a “critical text,”—that is, a text that promotes the philosophical foundation of critical pedagogy and urges students to question oppressive power structures—I argue in this chapter that this is not the only possible reading.

This chapter focuses on finding ways to investigate the relationship between Anderson’s novel—the horrifying and ultimately redeeming story of Melinda Sordino, a ninth grader who deals with the results of a rape prior to her first year of high school—and Sharzer’s film adaptation with students. In particular, the chapter problematizes the critical pedagogical approaches suggested by educators who have read the book, discusses the material artifacts that stand in for speech in both the book and film, investigates the ways Anderson and Sharzer represent these artifacts and create their own material artifacts through the narrative styles they employ, and seeks to scrutinize the unique economic situation of an independent film. A pairing of Sharzer’s film and Anderson’s novel operates ideally as a case study in which we can investigate the specific possibilities for teachers hoping to focus on adaptation with their students. The novel “is widely assigned to high school students,” making it an ideal young adult novel to analyze closely (Manzo 16). The film, while lesser known, has had both commercial and critical success<sup>13</sup>, and the relationship between the film and its source text is ripe with fruitful

---

<sup>13</sup> Because *Speak* was never released in theaters (it screened at film festivals, but was never released nationwide in theaters), there are no box office numbers and reviews are hard to come by. However, according to [IMDbpro.com](http://IMDbpro.com), the film brought in over \$3 million in US video rentals in the first four weeks it was available. Also, the few reviews available include complimentary critical comments (especially concerning Kristen Stewart’s performance).

sites for discussion.

### Critically Speaking

Both Sharzer and Anderson have implicitly addressed the potential for the novel and film to be used as critical texts—each meant to encourage teens to talk about issues in their own lives. Janet Alsup expands the definition of critical pedagogy: “Critical pedagogues following [Paulo] Freire have written about the ‘critical classroom’ in which teachers encourage student ‘liberation’ and ‘critical consciousness’ through dialogue and student-centered curricula” (162). Sharzer, by including a public service announcement from the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) as a bonus feature on the DVD, urges rape victims who see *Speak* to seek help. In the RAINN PSA, a girl—about Melinda’s age and physical description—briefly describes being raped and offers advice to other victims: “I realized that it was my silence that was hurting me and the other potential victims. Don’t be afraid to tell. Speak out. Your story will be heard. If you are a rape victim, you are not alone. There is hope” (*Speak*). This message certainly implies Sharzer’s intent that *Speak* help rape victims learn to speak about their experience just as Melinda does in the film. By encouraging rape victims to speak out, Sharzer suggests that they act to end oppression and exploitation. Urging such action is a key component of critical pedagogy. More explicitly, Showtime network, which financed the film, announced its television premier (in an unprecedented simulcast with Lifetime Television) as “an important film about an issue that should be seen by as many women and girls as possible,” and the premier also included the RAINN PSA (“Showtime and

Lifetime”). Also included in Showtime’s press release announcing the premier is a comment from Scott Berkowitz, president of RAINN:

There is no issue more important or more relevant to young women than sexual assault. Showtime and Lifetime deserve great credit for bringing attention to this crime, and for their commitment to educate as well as entertain. Thanks to “Speak,” viewers across the U.S. will better understand the long-lasting trauma of this violent crime, and will learn about the free, confidential help they can receive through the National Sexual Assault Hotline. (“Showtime and Lifetime”)

Though they would not likely use the term “critical” to describe the film, it is clear that the film’s financiers view this as what I would call a critical text.

In addition to the film being presented with critical pedagogical intentions, Anderson also regards her novel as a project meant to encourage teenagers to act in the world. She notes that she “had just finished reading *Reviving Ophelia* . . . [and] the issues of growth, and girls who won’t, or can’t speak up for themselves were cooking in the back of [her] mind” when she started writing *Speak* (“Speaking” 25). Additionally, on the director’s commentary on the DVD (actually a conversation between Sharzer and Anderson), Anderson notes that an important central theme of *Speak* is teenagers speaking out about all kinds of issues. She suggests that our culture doesn’t want to allow teenagers to do this, because people are offended by what teenagers have to say (*Speak*). The moment in the film that prompts Anderson’s comment is a remark one of Melinda’s classmates makes to their social studies teacher, Mr. Neck. The classmate, David Petrakis, who is Melinda’s biology lab partner and becomes her confidante by the

novel's conclusion, stands up for members of the class who disagree with something Mr. Neck has said: "If the class is debating, then each student has the right to say what's on his mind . . . You opened a debate. You can't close it just because it is not going your way" (Anderson, *Speak* 56). Anderson's advocacy of speaking up to adults is clear in this scene from the novel. This, along with her suggestion on the DVD commentary track that teenagers should be heard despite their potentially offensive comments point to her belief that *Speak* is a critical text.

Educators and critics writing about Anderson's novel have picked up on its critical potential and addressed various ways that it can be used to help troubled teenagers fight oppression. Among other works, Janet Alsup's "Politicizing Young Adult Literature," Diane Ressler and Stan Giannet's "Voices of Healing," Judith Franzak and Elizabeth Noll's "Monstrous Acts," Don Latham's "Melinda's Closet," and Elaine J. O'Quinn's "Between Voice and Voicelessness" propose critical methodology in teaching and using *Speak*. While there is, thus far, no secondary scholarship focusing on the film, it clearly invites the same kinds of critical pedagogical approaches that have been suggested for the novel. In fact, a great deal of secondary scholarship has focused on critical pedagogical approaches to media literacy. Ladislaus Semali explains that "as educators become familiar with the foundations of critical media literacy, they begin to recognize that media literacy has the potential to change the way we think, feel, and react to the world around us, and particularly in classrooms" (87). For Semali,

such critical media literacy makes possible a more adequate and accurate reading of the world, on the basis of which, as Freire and others put it, "people can enter into 'rewriting' the world into a formation in which their

interests, identities and legitimate aspirations are more fully present and are present more equally.” (113)

By using the term “rewriting,” Semali means authoring social change through political action. This idea of authorship, of rewriting the world, finds its way into *Speak*'s narrative and also into the secondary scholarship. In *Speak*, Melinda's rewriting consists of various material artifacts—art work, subversive writing practices, and the ownership and redesign of a physical space. These will be discussed at greater length later in the chapter.

The critical elements of both book and film form a complex and interesting site for adaptation study with secondary students. Discussing them this way will motivate students to look more closely at the relationship between the two texts and, in particular, to recognize that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between a film adaptation and its literary source text. Rather, all texts—and the response that readers have to all texts—represent an interweaving of texts (some subtle, others obvious). After outlining the response of educators who have read the novel, I will discuss methods that can be used with students to explore the way that both texts operate critically, and the reasons that teachers have advocated action after reading. This will lead, finally, to problematizing the call for critical action by considering students' individual responses to both texts.

The critical pedagogues who have responded to *Speak* all suggest that students who read the novel do some kind of rewriting as a way to respond to the novel. The film, implicitly, demands the same response from its audience, not only because of the RAINN PSA, but also because of film's depiction of Melinda's healing and her willingness to speak out to save herself and her friend Rachel. Ressler and Giannet advocate therapy



through written responses to traumatic life events and use Melinda's art therapy and Anderson's writing as a model for this kind of response:

In today's society, many creative expression therapies exist: art therapy, music therapy, poetry therapy, and journal therapy. These are all ways to help someone who has experienced a traumatic event to heal, to regain his or her voice. Dr. Louise DeSalvo in *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives* says, "As a teacher of writing, I regularly witness the physical and emotional transformation of my students. I see how they change physically and psychologically when they work on writing projects—diary, memoir, fiction, poetry, biographical essays—that grow from a deep, authentic place, when they confront their pain in their work." (185)

Janet Alsup also promotes this idea of rewriting (again, I'm using "rewriting" to mean authoring social change by acting in the world): "Students need to read, write, and talk about issues that are relevant and real to them and that have immediate meaning for them in their lives" (165). Alsup argues that rewriting can have a particular effect on students who do not normally give voice to their thoughts and feelings. When she sets out to argue that Anderson's novel should be used by high school English teachers to "politicize their literature classrooms," she begins with a comment on school violence: "As I write this article, the television news blares details about the latest school shooting in the United States, this time in California" (162; 158). It is chilling to recognize that as I write, the television news blares details, four years later, about the latest school shootings in the U.S., this time at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in

Blacksburg, Virginia. Alsup's article, which Jeffrey Kaplan referred to as "a significant treatise on the power of literature to transform curriculum," argues that "reading literature can be an ethical as well as an intellectual process, and as such it can assist adolescents in coping with their tumultuous lives" (Kaplan 18; Alsup 159).

Alsup identifies school shooters as students who "rarely talked to anyone about their feelings of isolation and emotional pain" and she suggests that teachers keep asking, "Why can't we help these students? How can we help them?" (158). Her argument is that approaching young adult novels like *Speak* critically is one way to answer these complex and difficult questions. The Virginia Tech shooter, Seung-Hui Cho, who killed 32 people before committing suicide certainly fits Alsup's description of a student who never talked to anyone. The Associated Press related the following story regarding Cho<sup>14</sup>:

Once, in English class, the teacher had the students read aloud, and when it was Cho's turn, he just looked down in silence, [Chris] Davids, [a Virginia Tech senior who graduate from Cho's high school], recalled. Finally, after the teacher threatened him with an F for participation, Cho started to read in a strange, deep voice that sounded "like he had

---

<sup>14</sup> This horrible story leaves us no information about the teacher's response to Cho's situation. Did the teacher seek to protect him? Did he or she castigate the class for this behavior? We don't know. I suppose this story is particularly heart breaking for me, because I once had a similar situation in my own classroom. While teaching a sophomore English class during my first year as a high school teacher, I asked a student to read out loud in class. He was hesitant, but agreed to read (I made no threats, but I did encourage him to give it a try). When he read, he stumbled over a few words. A girl, who was one of his good friends, screamed from across the room, "Kwin, you're so dumb. You can't even read!" I could feel Kwin's shame, and I was completely ashamed of my behavior. How could I let this happen to a student in my class? I pointed out to the entire class that the girl's behavior was inappropriate, I apologized privately to Kwin, and I vowed never to put another student in that situation. But I can't escape the fact that I put a student in my classroom in a situation that led to him being emotionally abused.

something in his mouth,” Davids said.

“As soon as he started reading, the whole class started laughing and pointing and saying, ‘Go back to China,’” Davids said. (Associated Press)

Cho did have teachers who made efforts to help him speak. Edward Falco, Cho’s playwriting professor at Virginia Tech related his efforts: “The kid couldn’t speak. I did everything I knew to draw him out. I tried to joke with him. I touched his shoulder while asking him a direct question. I put myself in quiet, one-on-one space with him—and I still could not get articulate speech out of him” (Mandell). Still, Cho was able to express himself through writing: “In writing he could communicate. You’ve seen the plays. They’re not good writing. But they are at least a form of communication. And in his responses to other students’ plays, he could be quite articulate” (Mandell). This, then, is the argument of the educators responding to *Speak*: “Young adult books like *Speak* can provide opportunities for writing activities or conversations about teenage problems in an attempt to achieve . . . critical literacy,” which Alsup defines as “a course of action that can help students become more critically literate and self-aware in an increasingly dangerous and unpredictable world” (Alsup 163). Alsup urges teachers to

imagine a class in which students are having a discussion about *Speak*, and the issue of “speaking out” or “having a voice,” a major theme in the novel, comes up. Students may raise the point that if Melinda had spoken about her rape earlier, she might have received help sooner and hence avoided some pain. (163)

Alsup suggests other possible discussion or writing topics and concludes that students “are using literature as a tool for thinking about their world” while also “becoming better readers, thinkers, and communicators” (163).

For students reading the book and viewing the film, recognizing the critical subtext and discussing whether or not such texts can and should be operating to promote social action is an excellent way to help students think about the intertextualities affecting the film and novel production and how those intertextual elements affect the audience of each text. Asking students to question the teaching methodology employed by teachers and authors is, of course, a practice entirely in line with critical pedagogy. I suggest it because it seems that teachers often take the initiative to promote their political or social agendas in the classroom, believing they are in the best interest of students. In other words, teachers assume that being critical pedagogues—and thereby promoting a social action agenda—is in the service of their students. Freire addresses the problems with this “top-down” approach. He does so in terms of social political action and not in terms of education. However, if educators are likened to political leaders, he perfectly describes the phenomenon as it takes place in schools:

For the truly humanist educator and the authentic revolutionary, the object of action is the reality to be transformed by them together with other men—not other men themselves. The oppressors are the ones who act upon men to indoctrinate them and adjust them to a reality which must remain untouched. Unfortunately, however, in their desire to obtain the support of the people for revolutionary action, revolutionary leaders often fall for the banking line of planning program content from the top down.

They approach the peasant or urban masses with projects which may correspond to their own view of the world, but not to that of the people.

(83)

In order to problematize the critical pedagogical approach and urge students to think about the way they are being taught—both by their teachers as well as by the novel and film, students could engage in the following activities. After reading the novel and viewing the film, students could be assigned to read excerpts from Alsup’s article, watch the RAINN PSA, read Anderson’s “Speaking Out” (about the influences on her while writing the novel), read brief written responses to traumatic experiences from Ressler and Giannet, watch comments online from students who knew Seung-Hui Cho or other school shooters, and watch snippets of the director’s commentary in which Anderson argues that teenagers should be speaking out. After recognizing the ways that these texts all weave together to influence their perceptions of the novel and film’s message, students might consider some of the following questions in writing or in class discussion:

- What was your initial reaction to the film and novel?
- Did you feel empowered to speak out yourself after reading or viewing?
- What, specifically, did you feel empowered to speak out about?
- If you felt like speaking out, what did the author and the filmmaker do to cause you to feel this way (and how did the two mediums approach this call to action differently)?
- If you didn’t feel like taking any action yourself, explain why you think your reaction differed from the reaction of teachers like Janet Alsup who have read *Speak*.

- Do you think it's appropriate for teachers to urge students to think about their own lives and the ways that their lives parallel a work of literature? Or should teachers just stick to helping students understand the story?
- Should teachers urge students to speak out and to change the world around them?
- How do you think your parents would feel about teachers urging you to speak out? Would their reaction be different than your own?
- Is it possible for you to help your classmates who are withdrawn become vocal?
- Is it possible to help those who are struggling psychologically or might be prone to violence to overcome those feelings?
- Can reading a book or seeing a movie and talking or writing about them make any difference in the world?

There are, of course, many other questions that students could be asked. The point of these questions is to problematize the critical nature of the works and recognize the intertextual influences on both the film and novel. Although I have argued for allowing students to question the critical approach in an effort to uncover the intertextual elements at play in students' perceptions of the book and film, I have great sympathy for and some affinity with critical pedagogy. I do believe in the power of critical pedagogy to make a difference in students' lives. I believe, with Janet Alsup, that while reading or viewing *Speak* students might

see a little of themselves in Melinda or in her friends, and after reading, writing about, and discussing the book [and film] in a classroom, they might act a little differently the next time a classmate seems unnaturally withdrawn or when they witness violence at a weekend party—or even at

school. They might even begin to acquire a mature “narrative imagination” that will help them be better citizens and more empathetic human beings. (168)

However, I also believe that students should be critical of the way adults (and especially teachers and media producers) attempt to affect their thinking and belief systems. It is true, as Semali points out, that the key concepts of a critical media literacy framework are the following statements: “All media messages are constructions. Media messages are representations of social reality. Individuals construct meaning from messages. Media messages have economic, political, social, and aesthetic purposes. Each media form of communication has unique characteristics” (90). It is also true that classrooms are largely constructions with messages from teachers that represent social reality and that these messages have economic, political, social, and aesthetic purposes. By following the methods proposed above, in which students question the intertexts that act as influences on *Speak* (the film and novel) and consider whether or not the texts act “critically” (and if it is appropriate for educators to frame them that way), students gain a greater understanding of the complex relationship between film adaptations, their literary source texts, and the audience.

#### Material Artifacts and Narrative Strategy: Other Ways of Speaking

As Don Latham points out, “for much of the novel, Melinda uses art as a substitute for speech. . . Art thus becomes a way for Melinda, in lieu of speech, to express the unsayable” (378).<sup>15</sup> Latham connects Melinda’s creation of material artifacts to a

---

<sup>15</sup> See Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins (pages 12-13) for an analysis of the post-modern theoretical discussion of art’s inability to represent reality and how this idea relates to adaptation.

“trauma archive,” explained by Ann Cvetkovich: “The memory of trauma is embedded not just in narrative but in material artifacts, which can range from photographs to objects whose relation to trauma might seem arbitrary but for the fact that they are invested with emotional, and even sentimental, value” (Cvetkovich 7-8). Melinda’s archive of material artifacts includes her art work, the redesign of physical space in the old janitorial closet (where she displays most of her artwork), the “windowcracks of blood” she scratches into her arm, the Maya Angelou poster, the “community chat room” / “metal newspaper” on which she writes “Guys to Stay Away From: Andy Evans,” and the written conversation with Rachel during which she reveals Andy as the rapist (Anderson, *Speak* 87; 175). These alternatives to speech represent not only a healing strategy for Melinda, but also point to ways that the film and book adopt narrative strategies that utilize material artifacts. For secondary English students exploring the book and film, investigating the complex ways that Anderson, Sharzer, and Melinda each produce material artifacts as a means of communicating can serve to further open up an understanding of the intertextual relationship between the book and film. In particular, Gérard Genette’s notion of paratextuality can serve as a paradigm for considering this relationship.

In the previous chapter, I briefly mentioned Genette’s concept of paratextuality.

Genette describes this idea as the

relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken within the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its *paratext*: a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs, illustrations; blurbs, book covers,



dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic. (3; italics original)

Gennette continues describing this phenomenon by pointing out that the paratextual elements “provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not, which even the purists among readers . . . cannot always disregard as easily as they would like and as they claim to do” (3).

Anderson’s novel includes paratextual elements that act as alternative methods of speaking—narrative strategies that tell the story in an alternative form. For example, the book is divided into four marking periods with a report card at the end of each marking period. Anderson includes subjects like “plays nice,” “attitude,” “social life,” “lunch,” and “clothes” in addition to Melinda’s academic grades (46; 92; 137). These grade reports serve as artifacts that extend the narrative. Anderson also peppers the novel with titles denoting sections of the narrative and adding additional commentary to those sections. Her titles, which are often plays on words—“FIZZ ED,” “STUDENT DIVIDED BY CONFUSION EQUALS ALGEBRA,” “FIRST AMENDMENT, SECOND VERSE,” etc.—require readers to consider the narrative on multiple tracks, like a film, taking into account these titles as part of Anderson’s narrative strategy (18; 37; 67; capitalization in original). Additionally, Anderson’s occasional use of script format (a speaker’s name followed by colons) acts as a paratext to the standard description and dialogue, particularly when Melinda’s “Me:” is followed by blank space (see, for example, 166-167). In this way, Anderson is able to express, in a unique format, Melinda’s silence.

Janet Alsup mentions the role of Anderson's narrative style and argues that the style compels adolescent readers to pay attention:

Because *Speak* tells this story of rape in an unconventional way, using a nontraditional narrative structure that includes lists, multiple subheadings, extended spacing between paragraphs, and script-like dialogue introduced by names followed by colons, the effect of the discourse is magnified. *Speak* does not tell the "rape story" in a way that is identical to others readers have heard or in a way that is easy to ignore. (165)

Certainly the novel's narrative, and particularly the alternate forms of speaking used by Anderson, compel readers to pay close attention. For this reason, comparing the film's paratextual elements and archive of material artifacts to the novel's is an exercise that will be interesting to students as they seek to recognize the ways in which the paratextual elements are operating across both mediums.

Like the novel, the film operates with multiple paratexts. Gennette doesn't address film, but the multiple tracks inherent in the medium (which include the music track, vocal track, and visual track) certainly serve as paratextual elements. We must, however, go beyond these multiple tracks to include the paratextual relationship of the DVD extras to the film proper (including, in the case of *Speak*, the director's commentary, behind-the-scenes footage, RAINN PSA, cast filmographies, and book study guide). The film's paratextual elements include similar and often quite different material artifacts from the novel. Because the film acts on multiple tracks, Sharzer is able to include sometimes-stark, sometimes-playful visual images that interact with the vocal and audio track in complex ways. For example, Melinda writes on the bathroom

stall in the film as she does in the book, but the message is different: “Exchange students are ruining our country.” A careful viewer connects Rachel’s burgeoning relationship with a foreign exchange student to Melinda’s comments and the irony of her writing on the bathroom stall after Dave speaks out against xenophobia in Mr. Neck’s class.

Another example of visual-play comes when Mr. Neck drags Melinda down the hall because she refuses to orally present her research paper on the suffragettes. Sharzer cuts to a long shot in which we can see Melinda and Neck in the background down a long high school hallway. In the foreground a custodian closes a gate across the hallway. Melinda’s voice over—“I forget the suffragettes were hauled off to jail”—interacts with the image in the foreground to create meaning for careful viewers. Students can be shown these brief examples and then discuss the ways that the visual track interacts with the vocal track. Then, the class can discuss how both interact with the Anderson’s narrative from the novel. The purpose in this discussion is to uncover the complicated ways that paratextual elements from the novel and film are interacting both internally and externally.

Additionally, the director’s commentary can serve as a paratextual element that focuses viewers’ and readers’ attentions to material artifacts that might otherwise go unnoticed. This is particularly true of some of the technical aspects involved in creating the film. For example, Sharzer mentions that the colors in the film stock were altered slightly in post-production depending on the season—the autumn colors (browns and oranges) were brightened for fall, winter colors (blues) were brought out more strongly during winter. This is also true of the set, which acts as an important material artifact participating in the narrative. For example, Sharzer points out during the director’s

commentary that the wallpaper behind the couch in Melinda’s living room has pale trees on it which probably won’t be noticeable to most viewers. This wallpaper serves as an unspoken paratext further developing one of the film’s important themes. Students who learn about these details—clearly paratextual material artifacts created by Sharzer to help tell the narrative—will better be able to consider the complex relationship of the various paratextual elements within the film.

In considering the methods that the film and the book use to speak, students will also want to consider Melinda’s narration. Jean Pollard Dimmitt points out that the narrative voice in *Speak* is certainly not unique in young adult literature: “In Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak*, as in the other novels [that won Printz award designations in 1999], the protagonist serves as first person narrator” (55). However, translating a first-person narrative voice to film is an extremely difficult challenge made more challenging by the fact that Melinda speaks out loud so rarely. One of the film’s reviews addresses this dilemma. *New York Times* critic Neil Genzlinger writes that fans of the book

are likely to be disappointed that the rich quirky inner voice of the book’s Melinda failed to find its ways into the screenplay . . . The novel is written from Melinda’s perspective, but in the film we get her inner thoughts only in voiceovers, and these are so brief and widely scattered that rather than fleshing out her personality, they merely sound like not-very-original snide remarks. (Genzlinger)

Students should be shown this excerpt from the review and asked to consider Genzlinger’s comments: Does Sharzer fail at depicting the novel’s first-person voice because she only rarely uses voiceover narration? Students who have been trained to

look for complicated intertextual relationships and to consider film's multiple tracks will likely point out that Sharzer uses many other methods to convey Melinda's first-person voice besides voiceover. (Students will likely also argue with Genzlinger that using a voiceover would become tired and annoying if utilized more than it is already.) Students will easily be able to point out the many material artifacts that Melinda creates in the film that act as speech and the way Sharzer also utilizes artifacts and film techniques to depict Melinda's inner voice. In fact, students discussing the first-person narrative will likely point out one of the most interesting, unique, and experimental attempts that Sharzer makes at depicting Melinda's voice: the dual-Melinda scene that takes place in the closet before Melinda decides to tell Rachel about Andy. Here, Sharzer has Melinda literally talk to herself, with Kristen Stewart acting as both Melindas—wearing different clothes—and conversing back and forth. Students who have had practice considering the complex intertextual nature of this film adaptation and its source text will easily identify Genzlinger's naïve analysis—and point out the many ways that the layering of paratextual elements in both the novel and film exhibit the complex intertexts at play.

#### Economic Analysis

Throughout the first two chapters I've argued that the decision to produce an adaptation is most often an economic one intended to capitalize on the preexisting awareness of the film (due, most often, to the popularity of the novel) in order to maximize box office revenue. But what about independently made film adaptations, which are produced on relatively small budgets and hope to earn significantly smaller margins of profit than most major Hollywood productions? An analysis of Jessica

Sharzer's *Speak*, produced by the Showtime network for approximately one million dollars,<sup>16</sup> allows us to consider the economic factors surrounding the production of an independent film ("Showtime"). In particular, an analysis of the impact of *Speak*'s small budget on the filmmakers' artistic decisions will help students to become aware of this important, and overlooked, influence. As discussed in the previous chapter, secondary school English teachers and students are generally ill prepared for a nuanced analysis of the economic factors affecting the production of a film adaptation. To overcome this ignorance, a simulation activity ("Film Producer's Apprentice") was suggested. However, a general understanding of the economic principles at play in adaptation production (which students will gain by engaging in the simulation activity) is not enough of a background to consider the unique economic picture of independent films and, specifically, the artistic decision making that was affected by *Speak*'s budget.

The theoretical model for the simulation—David Buckingham's dialogic approach to media education—also undergirds the activity I propose to help students analyze *Speak*. I propose a dialogue that includes Jessica Sharzer via the director's commentary available on the DVD. This approach "involves an ongoing dialogue or negotiation between students' existing knowledge and experience of the media and the new knowledge that is made available by teachers" (Buckingham 153). Including the director's commentary—which is actually a conversation between Sharzer and the

---

<sup>16</sup> Showtime's press release for the film's AFI Fest 2004 debut includes the following background: "In December of 2003, the independent film world was presented with the benchmark announcement that the Showtime Networks had launched its premiere Showtime Independent Films banner and would be financing low-budget \$1 million dollar films working with established specialty producers and directors to fully-finance and produce low budget theatrical films ("Showtime"). IMDbPro.com also estimates the film's budget at \$1 million.

novel's author Laurie Halse Anderson—as part of the knowledge available to students expands on their experience in the simulation and coincides with Buckingham's belief that media education should be “*dynamic* in the sense that it entails a constant shifting back and forth between different forms of learning—between action and reflection, between practice and theory, and between passionate engagement and distanced analysis” (154; italics original).

While some highly motivated students might be willing to watch the entire film while listening to the director's commentary, it is far more effective for the teacher to show students brief clips from the film with the director's commentary turned on. Ideally this should take place after students have viewed the entire film. During the director's commentary, Sharzer talks about many artistic choices that were affected by the film's budget, shooting schedule, and realities of working with actors. These three factors of film production are not readily apparent as reasons for artistic choices when audiences are viewing the film. However, students who join in to listen to the conversation between Sharzer and Anderson will find renewed appreciation for the complexities of film production and, more importantly, an understanding of the role of economic considerations in filmmakers' artistic decision making—and therefore the reasoning behind some of the narrative differences between the film and its source text. The general knowledge they've gained from the simulation activity will be made specific by listening to Sharzer and considering *Speak*'s economic situation. From the DVD commentary, students will learn the following:

- Anderson comments on Melinda's home's address—121—which she suggests is a brilliant play on “one-to-one” and wonders who came up with the idea. Sharzer informs her that it was the actual address of the house the filmmakers used.
- The rain during the party where Andy and Melinda meet was not planned. The rain fell on the last night of shooting and they didn't have the option of waiting for it to stop.
- The rape scene was supposed to take place in the woods as it does in the book. However, Kristen Stewart, who plays Melinda, had an allergic reaction to grass earlier during the shoot and Sharzer didn't want to risk her health by making her lay in the grass again. Andy's jeep was chosen as an alternate site. Interestingly, Anderson comments that this makes the scene more terrorizing than in the book because of the enclosed space.
- The filmmakers were unable to clear the rights to show a Picasso image in the film. For this reason, unlike in the novel, the film couldn't include Melinda considering Picasso's cubism.

In addition to considering the artistic constraints that come with a small budget, students must also recognize the artistic freedom allowed a film that isn't required to recoup an exorbitant production budget through ticket sales. In fact, a film like *Speak* which had no commercial theatrical release (though it was screened at film festivals) and was apparently made with an eye towards educating audiences, and particularly teen audiences, operates under a very different economic climate than nearly all Hollywood productions. For this reason, two other possibilities for analysis with students exist. Both of these were mentioned briefly in the previous chapter: First, students can gather marketing materials, economic returns, and other cultural and commercial artifacts



surrounding the film and analyze these; Second, students can consider the social and political motivations for producing films that might not garner economic returns.

Although there is not an abundance of marketing material and economic returns, students could be guided to information from trade journals like *Variety* or *Boxoffice*. Additionally, the internet makes it easier for students to search and find these materials. In particular, IMDb.com acts as a clearinghouse for the kinds of cultural and commercial materials that would be interesting for students to analyze. There students will find economic returns on DVD rentals for the film, promotional materials and publicity photos, and comments from viewers. The viewer comments and discussion board entries would be particularly interesting to consider as cultural artifacts associated with the film. Students could analyze the kinds of discussions that posters engage in and how these apply to the cultural impact of the film. Especially because it wasn't released in theaters, measuring its success is elusive. But these discussion boards give students an insight into the cultural capital carried by the film and the reasons why the producers might have created it without being guaranteed economic returns.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, films are not only made for the potential monetary return. Students should consider other reasons that projects would be underwritten. Edward Jay Epstein's *The Big Picture* offers valuable insight into the economic forces at play in film production, and he specifically considers the reasons Hollywood producers fund other projects: "studio executives seek, along with strictly commercial projects, projects that are likely to attract the sort of actors, directors, awards, and media response that will help them maintain both their standing in the community and their own morale" (131). Although Showtime's investment in *Speak* doesn't demand

a large commercial return, they are certainly interested in cultivating relationships with directors like Sharzer (who later directed an episode of “The L Word,” a Showtime series) as well as the potential for awards and standing in the community. *Speak* did garner awards and the network’s standing in the community could only have been improved by their efforts to educate audiences about what they viewed as an important issue for young women.

#### Last Word

Both Sharzer’s film and Anderson’s book conclude with Melinda vocalizing—speaking—about her rape. In the novel she tells Mr. Freeman, the art teacher who inspired her throughout the year. In the film she tells her mother. But in neither text do we have any indication of what she says. Her final line in both the film and novel hints at the speaking that is surely to come, but neither offers us her words. This chapter hopefully ends on a similar note of potential future conversations that are unvoiced here. The methods, discussions, and specific examples discussed above should act only as starting points for teachers and students considering the relationship between this particular film and its literary source text. Hopefully students and teachers can take these ideas and, together, express their collective desire to continue speaking.

Case Study: *Frankenstein*: Monstrous Influences

Mary Shelley would have been able to relate to Melinda Sordino, the protagonist in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*. Like Melinda, Shelley “record[ed] ‘impertinence’ and ‘insult’ when she ventured into society” (Smith 10). And, like Melinda, Shelley “experienced a depression so deep that she felt she ‘ought to have died’”—a depression brought on by tragic events in her life (Smith 10).<sup>17</sup> Finally, like Melinda, Shelley, as a teenager, struggled to turn her dreams into works of art.<sup>18</sup> One of these dreams—a nightmare—led Shelley to write *Frankenstein* when she was only nineteen (Shelley, Introduction 24). And *Frankenstein*, the 1818 novel (significantly revised in 1831) and its film adaptations—in particular the 1931 film directed by James Whale—is the subject of this second case study. I don't mean to imply, by connecting Melinda and Mary Shelley, that the two novels are comparable in literary value, historical importance, or lasting cultural impact. I mean only to suggest that a vulnerable teenage girl is central to each work. For this reason, each of these novels has a unique ability to connect to an adolescent audience.

While secondary school students (and particularly high school students) will naturally be interested in Mary Shelley because she was so close to their ages when she wrote the novel, there are, of course, other reasons to consider *Frankenstein* in a thesis on

---

<sup>17</sup> For Shelley, bouts of depression were triggered by each of the following events in her life: the deaths of three of her children, a miscarriage, and the death of her husband Percy Shelley (Smith 10).

<sup>18</sup> In the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Shelley writes, “As a child I scribbled; and my favourite pastime, during the hours given me for recreation, was to ‘write stories.’ Still I had a dearer pleasure than this, which was the formation of castles in the air—the indulging in waking dreams—the following up trains of thought, which had for their subject the formation of a succession of imaginary incidents. My dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings. (21)

film adaptation for secondary students. While *Frankenstein* is probably not taught in high schools as often as Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*,<sup>19</sup> it is certainly taught frequently: "We know from the attention this novel has received in recent issues of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *English Journal* that *Frankenstein* is a story that appeals to all kinds of students at the high school and college levels, with all kinds of opinions about the nature and importance of literary study" (Foertsch 698). Besides the fact that the novel is regularly included in secondary school curriculums, it deserves to be studied in terms of its adaptations because there is, perhaps, no other novel that has been adapted to the screen more than *Frankenstein*. According to *The Frankenstein Film Sourcebook*, as of 2001 Mary Shelley's novel had inspired over 200 films (xvii). In fact, it would be nearly impossible to teach the novel without considering its adaptations. As Harriet Margolis argues, "While I can imagine a film class . . . that would include *Frankenstein* films without requiring a reading of Shelley's original, I cannot imagine a literature class including the novel without confronting the Hollywood versions of Mary Shelley's vision" (160). Margolis likely suggests this because Shelley's characters and plot have become part of the fabric of Western civilization. Of course, Shelley's story has gained this cultural status largely because of films, and students of the novel must at least address the way Shelley's ideas have been disseminated via Hollywood. Finally, Shelley's novel and Whale's film are an ideal pair because of the pervasive popular culture image of Frankenstein's monster. Students who have never been introduced to

---

<sup>19</sup> Twain scholar Shelley Fisher Fishkin writes that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* "is the most taught novel and most taught work of American literature in American schools from junior high to graduate school." Incidentally, it is also a novel often adapted to the screen. The Internet Movie Database lists nearly twenty film and television adaptations of *Huckleberry Finn*.

the novel or the films will all be able to accurately describe Boris Karloff's character from the Whale film. Because of their knowledge of the pop culture image, they are inherently motivated to find out more about the monster's genesis.

In this chapter, I focus almost entirely on pairing Shelley's novel with only one of the hundreds of films—James Whale's 1931 adaptation. Though other films will be mentioned briefly, it is this pair that forms the foundation of the popular culture image of Frankenstein. It is also this film, far more than the novel, which acts as a source text for many of the subsequent film adaptations. Though there are many approaches one might take in teaching this novel/film pair to secondary students,<sup>20</sup> I will focus on accomplishing the following with students: First, investigating the cultural and textual influences on the novel in order to help students understand notions of intertextuality; second, expanding common definitions of intertextuality to include Gérard Genette's notion of hypertext and hypotext while looking at Whale's film and, briefly, other adaptations; third, considering the continuing cultural impact of Shelley's novel and Whale's film; and fourth, briefly exploring the different ways of "seeing" afforded by film and print texts.

#### Creating *Frankenstein*: Intertextual Influences and Shelley's Novel

Considering the many cultural and textual influences on the production of

---

<sup>20</sup> For more on pedagogical approaches to the novel see *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein* edited by Stephen Behrendt. The book also includes a section on *Frankenstein* and film.

Additionally, the following articles propose methods of teaching the novel (but don't include anything about using film adaptations): Anthony Backes's "Revisiting *Frankenstein*," Jacqueline Foertsch's "The Right, the Wrong, and the Ugly," David Poston's "Exploring the Universe with John Milton and Mary Shelley," Eileen A. Simmons's "*Frankenstein* for the Twenty-first Century," Gladys V. Veidemanis's "*Frankenstein* in the Classroom," and my "Monsters' Ink."

Finally, John Golden's *Reading in the Dark* includes pedagogical methodology for *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein* with only a brief mention of Shelley's novel.

Shelley's novel and Whale's film will help students to understand the broad relationship that all texts have to the world around them and to other texts—what Julia Kristeva calls “intertextuality” (Lechte 215). Kristeva first coined the term “intertextuality” in her *Le texte du roman* (1970) and, according to Lechte and Zournazi, the term, as Kristeva used it, “not only means that a given work is composed of textual threads from a range of sources, but that any given work can be composed of elements from different sign systems” (215). This is important because films and novels operate utilizing very different sign systems. As discussed in the second chapter, an ideal way for students to recognize and understand intertextual influences is to create a map. This map can be as simple as a pen-and-paper sketch, or as complex as a hypertextual internet document with links from the source text to examples of its various intertexts. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the purpose of this map making activity is to help students discover that the process of adaptation involves Bakhtinian dialogisms and intertextualities which complicate the process of moving from a source text in one medium to an artistic text in another. Students who grasp this concept will no longer have the mistaken linear notion of a source text/adaptation binary and will better be able to analyze all texts.

I suggest following the process as outlined in Chapter 2, moving from obvious and known intertextual influences towards lesser known or recognizable influences. Teachers should initially supply students with a wealth of resources that they can use to uncover and understand the intertextual influences on Shelley's novel and Whale's film. I will first discuss how this might be done with Shelley's novel. Later, I will propose methods for looking at the intertextuality of Whale's film. Of course, proposing an investigation of the intertexts in the novel separately from an investigation of the film

adaptation deserves an explanation. I suggest these activities be separated because one of my main pedagogical goals is for students to recognize that intertextuality is a broad phenomenon not specific to film adaptations and their source texts. Rather all texts (and Shelley's novel particularly) are dialogic and participate in what Bakhtin called the "powerful deep currents of culture" (qtd. in Stam, "Beyond" 65). Having students uncover the intertexts at play in Shelley's novel will make them more aware of the film's intertextual elements generally.

Depending on the ages, maturity levels, and academic abilities of the students involved, vastly different approaches should be taken in distributing resources about the cultural and textual influences on Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The resources and methods mentioned below include primary and secondary sources that could be used with students. Teachers should keep in mind that some of these resources and methods will be appropriate for middle school students and others for advanced high school students. I point not only to helpful resources, but also to key cultural and textual influences within those resources. Of course, the intertexts mentioned here are not exhaustive. Rather they are representative of the kinds of cultural and historical information and texts teachers would want to share with their students as well as the teaching methods they might employ.

Investigating the influences on Mary Shelley's novel could begin with a reading of the 1831 introduction to *Frankenstein* in which Shelley recounts the nightmare that became the story:

When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden possessed and guided me, gifting the

successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bound of reverie. I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. (24)

Shelley also describes the ghost story contest she entered into with her husband Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and Polidori. It was the contest that prompted her to write down her nightmare. Shelley also discusses her life experiences, some of which clearly had an impact on the novel's macabre themes. Finally, the introduction includes a reference to galvanism, a scientific term at the time that "implied the release, through electricity, of mysterious life forces" (*Frankenstein: Penetrating*). In the introduction, Shelley writes, "Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth" (23). These are just some of the many cultural influences on Shelley as she prepared to write *Frankenstein*. If students read the introduction after finishing the novel, they could map out specific events from the novel that clearly come from Shelley's life experiences.

While Shelley's introduction is far from a comprehensive study of the events leading up to and influencing *Frankenstein*, it is an excellent resource because of its brevity and because it is told by Shelley herself. In terms of mapping the intertexts influencing Shelley's novel, this introduction might be a sufficient resource. However, plenty of more detailed information is available from a vast variety of online and print sources. For example, for more detailed information about the cultural and biographical influences on Shelley, students could view excerpts from A&E's *It's Alive: The True*



*Story of Frankenstein* or read all or part of a Shelley biography—*Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* by Anne K. Mellor or *Mary Wolstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction* by Betty T. Bennett for example. For brief and visual information about Shelley’s biography and, particularly, the influence of medical and scientific practices at the time, students could look at the National Library of Medicine’s online *Frankenstein* exhibit. Much more detailed information about the influence of real-life body snatching, grave robbing, and dissection can be found in Tim Marshall’s *Murdering to Dissect*.

Students could also consider the differences between the various versions of *Frankenstein*—from the 1818 original to the 1831 edition.<sup>21</sup> This exercise not only introduces a new layer of intertextuality—the role of an original edition on its subsequent editions, but also points to the complicated nature of authorship, which certainly plays a part in students’ understanding of intertextuality.<sup>22</sup> Because a film is much more overtly collaborative, it’s easy to recognize that a film adaptation is influenced by more than the source text with the director—actors, screenwriters, set and costume designers, cinematographers and others all contributing to the final product. However, it isn’t

---

<sup>21</sup> Jacqueline Foertsch suggests using the inaugural modern edition by James Rieger for purpose of comparing the two editions.

<sup>22</sup> Jacqueline Foertsch’s “The Right, the Wrong, and the Ugly: Teaching Shelley’s Several *Frankensteins*” lays out a pedagogical strategy for focusing on analyzing and discussing the differences between the various versions of Shelley’s novel. Foertsch also makes a case for broadening our understanding of the intertextual relationships of authors, editors, students, and critics:

The roles editors and critics play as characters themselves (scientists, victims, monsters) must be understood by students as not so many counterparts to but continuations of the literary narrative that is their ostensible subject. In Mary’s text, the frame-tale structure, opening out from the monster’s own story, to Victor’s, to the sailor Walton’s, keeps expanding to include Percy’s preface to the 1818 edition and Mary’s introduction to the 1831 edition, to the many relevant episodes in her life as they bear on the creation of the original story and especially the 1831 revisions, to Rieger’s surprising and controversial introduction to the 1818 text, to feminist critics’ responses to Rieger’s work, and finally, of course, to students’ own responses. (709)

always easy to recognize the collaborative nature of writing. As students map the intertextual influences on Shelley's novel, they may want to consider, for example, the role her husband played in editing the novel. James Rieger points out that "his assistance at every point in the book's manufacture was so extensive that one hardly knows whether to regard him as editor or minor collaborator" (xviii).

Finally, students could consider the novel's "frequent overt and covert allusions to and engagements with many other texts" (Smith, "Contextual" 190). Mapping out just *Frankenstein's* references to or citations of other texts—Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* to name a few—would help students to see the novel's intertextual nature.<sup>23</sup> Because Shelley overtly references these works and their influence on the narrative, students wouldn't need to have read them in order to include them on a map. However, brief exposure to them—Anthony Backes, for example, has his students look up their *Masterplot* and *Encyclopedia Britannica* summaries—might help students to recognize more subtle connections.

#### Creating *Frankenstein* Too: Intertextual Influences and Whale's Film Adaptation

Students who create a map of influences on Shelley's novel—using whatever resources the teacher chooses to supply—will find themselves more aware of the ways

---

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Backes suggests a student activity focusing on the four books the monster "reads" with the Delaceys. He urges his students to consider the effects these books have on forming the monster's world view. Backes then asks his students to create their own reading list for the monster, replacing the four books he "reads" with the Delaceys with four that they choose. Backes's students "write a paper describing how they would change the creature by changing his reading. They can substitute any books for the ones they reject from the original four, but they must explain why the original book is rejected and why the alternative is better" (36).

that *Frankenstein* weaves together cultural and textual references and influences. With this knowledge, students are prepared to consider Whale's film, which, partially because it includes Shelley's novel (with, as I've shown, its myriad intersecting texts) as an intertext, becomes a much more complex collection of influences. Among Gérard Genette's five types of transtextuality is hypertextuality, which Genette defines as "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (5; emphasis original). Expanding this idea, Robert Stam writes that "diverse filmic adaptations [of the same film] can be seen as variant hypertextual 'readings' triggered by the same hypotext. Indeed, the diverse prior adaptations can form a larger, cumulative hypotext that is available to the filmmaker who comes relatively 'late' in the series" (Stam, "Beyond" 66). While I will argue that Whale's *Frankenstein* serves as the hypotext for many subsequent adaptations, surprisingly, it too came relatively late to the series of *Frankenstein* adaptations.

In order to understand the idea of hypo- and hypertext and to recognize how Whale's film came into being, students will need some background into the stage and screen adaptations of *Frankenstein* prior to 1931. With this background knowledge in place, students will be able to better understand the 1931 *Frankenstein* and also will be able to better analyze the adaptations after Whale's film. In particular, students will be able to determine ways in which those films are responding to Whale's. While students know that any *Frankenstein* adaptation bears a hypertextual relationship to Shelley's novel, many students are surprised to find out that the 1931 film also comes out of a cumulative hypotext of adaptations including film and stage versions of Shelley's story.

Johanna Smith reports that only five years after *Frankenstein* was published, Shelley's father, William Godwin, "arranged for a new two-volume edition of her novel" in order to "capitalize on the success of Richard Brinsley Peake's stage adaptation, *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein*" ("Biographical" 3). The first film adaptation of *Frankenstein* was released in 1910 by the Thomas A. Edison Company and would run eleven minutes at today's standard projection speed (Dixon 166). Other stage versions preceded Whale's film and, in fact, a 1927 British production is the primary source for its screenplay (Curtis 127).

With a brief understanding of *Frankenstein* adaptation pre-1931, students are ready to move into an analysis of the intertextualities converging on the 1931 film. Dixon describes the "rather convoluted genesis" of the 1931 script (Dixon 169):

The original novel was in the public domain and so could be used by anyone. Universal, however, based its version of *Frankenstein* on an Americanized version of Peggy Webling's 1930<sup>24</sup> London stage play of the novel and then brought in John L. Balderston (who had worked with Hamilton Dean in adapting his play of *Dracula* for Universal earlier in 1931) to help with the screenplay. The final shooting script was credited to Garrett Fort and Francis Edward Faragoh, both competent studio writers, and was based on Webling's play as edited by Richard L. Schayer, head of Universal's story department. Also involved in the scripting was the director Robert Florey, who worked on an initial draft of the scenario

---

<sup>24</sup> While Dixon puts the date as 1930, Curtis places it in 1927.

with Fort. (169)

In addition to the multiple sources and writers involved in the script, it's unclear if any of those working on the screenplay of the 1931 *Frankenstein* even read Shelley's novel.

Although it's likely they did, James Curtis, James Whale's biographer, certainly doesn't offer any definitive proof of this. Curtis doesn't include any information about Whale reading Shelley's novel, but does record that Whale gave it to his longtime companion David Lewis who said he "found it interesting, but, my God, it was so *weird*" (133).

Also, Curtis notes that Garrett Fort, one of the script writers, "must have read the Shelley classic, but chose to stick close to the particulars of the play" (130-131).

Curtis's biography of Whale, *James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters*,<sup>25</sup> includes many insights into the reasons for the choices made by the film's creators. As I suggested with *Speak*, sharing this information with students helps them to recognize the many factors influencing the production of an adaptation and deconstructs the film/novel binary so often forced on adaptations. Here, briefly, are only some of Curtis's insights into the cultural contexts influencing Whale's film:

- Carl Laemmle, Jr. was drawn to the project because of the success of *Dracula* a year earlier. However, there were differences between the two adaptations: "*Dracula* was based on a successful play and a relatively modern book, while *Frankenstein*, published in 1818, was largely known only as a title. Most people knew the basic idea, but few

---

<sup>25</sup> James Curtis originally wrote a biography of Whale, titled *James Whale*, in 1982. Ten years later, Curtis decided to give the subject another shot. Curtis writes, "As the years passed, I grew dissatisfied with the book, and like a piece of old furniture, it started to creak and the seams began to show. Finally, I decided I had not done justice to the subject of James Whale, and in 1993 I began researching his life all over again—and rewriting it from scratch" (vii).

had actually read the book” (Curtis 127). Though Curtis doesn’t suggest this, the fact that few audience members would have read the novel explains, perhaps, why the filmmakers chose to use the more recent British stage play as the primary source text for the film.

- The look of the monster (which is only very briefly described by Shelley) came partially from sketches made by James Whale. These sketches were based specifically on Boris Karloff’s head shape. Whale told the *New York Times*, “Karloff’s face has always fascinated me, and I made drawings of his head, added sharp, bony ridges where I imagined the skull might have been joined” (qtd. in Curtis 138).
- The primary influence on the look of Frankenstein’s laboratory was Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*. Certainly students could watch the scene in *Metropolis* when Rotwang gives life to the false Maria to compare the two labs and see how much of an influence Lang had on *Frankenstein*’s set.
- An early review from the *Motion Picture Herald* called the film “too dreadfully brutal, no matter what the story calls for. It carries gruesomeness and cruelty a little beyond reason or necessity” (qtd. in Curtis 155). Because of reactions like this, the scene of Maria drowning was cut from the film in some states (and removed from all prints when the film was reissued in 1938) (Curtis 157). Additionally, an epilogue—filmed after shooting had finished to appease screening audiences who were shocked at seeing Henry thrown from the windmill at the film’s conclusion, shows that Henry lives (Victor Frankenstein is called Henry in the film) and marries Elizabeth. Today’s students, who are used to both real-life violence as well as media depictions of violence far beyond what Whale portrays in *Frankenstein* will be particularly interested to hear

about audiences' reactions at the time the film was first released. David Lewis said, "the film has been imitated so much that today those scenes don't bother people. But in 1931, this was awfully strong stuff. As [the first screening of the film] progressed, people got up, walked out, came back in, walked out again. It was an alarming thing" (qtd. in Curtis 152). Perhaps students could look at present-day media depictions of violence and consider the ways that *Frankenstein* acts as a hypotext for them.

Although I have only presented a few of the many intertextual influences on the 1931 adaptation, the importance of helping students to recognize the complex and multiple intertexts playing into the 1931 film production is apparent when we consider the typical responses that secondary school teachers and students have to the film. David Poston and Eileen Simmons—in separate articles about teaching Shelley's novel—each include a response representative of naïve teachers who come unprepared to the film—even after involved and interesting studies of *Frankenstein* in their classrooms. Poston describes his students' journal responses after watching the James Whale film: "the dominant topic . . . was the way in which the highly intelligent creature was reduced to a grunting monster" (32). This observation, certainly accurate, doesn't go beyond the obvious to investigate what might be behind the differences between the film and novel.<sup>26</sup>

Simmons depicts an even more dire state of affairs in her classroom:

After the intensity of their research and writing [students] position the

---

<sup>26</sup> The transformation of the monster from eloquent to speechless first occurred in nineteenth century theatrical productions of *Frankenstein*. LaValley points out that "the exigencies of popular melodrama simplified even further the complicated effects and problems of the novel. There was no time to dawdle over the Monster's education at the De Lacey household; he was simplified to a creature of brute primitive force and emotions" (249).

movie somewhere between ridiculous and hilarious. The resulting class discussion focuses on their reaction to the monster as opposed to the characters in the movie. The novel, they say, makes the monster a sympathetic character whereas the movie monster is a wholly unsympathetic creature. (32)

Setting aside the mockery of the film, Simmons again only states the obvious without working with her students to pursue greater understanding of the process of adaptation and the reason for these differences. Students can investigate these differences by being allowed to consult source documents that provide insight and information similar to what I've presented here.

If this is done, students will be able to seriously analyze the 1931 film as well as begin to consider the tremendous influence of this film on current culture. One way to help students see the way that the film acts as a hypotext for current popular culture depictions of the monster, is to send them on a hunt for any cultural products (including, but not limited to toys, cartoons, television shows, movies, and Halloween costumes) that represent the monster as depicted by Boris Karloff in Whale's film. Also, students could look through a book like Stephen Jones's *Frankenstein Scrapbook*, which includes pictures of the monster as depicted in hundreds of *Frankenstein* adaptations. Students will notice the ways that nearly every one of these monsters responds in some way to Karloff's monster.

Myth and Monsters: Considering the Continuing Cultural Impact of *Frankenstein*

As a high school English teacher, I have rarely, if ever, evoked postmodern theoretical constructs in my classroom. However, in this section of the chapter, I argue



for utilizing such a construct—the cyborg—to engage students in a discussion of the lasting and continuing cultural impact of Shelley’s novel and Whale’s film. The purpose is to give students a frame within which they can consider the cultural implications of the Frankenstein story and, in particular, the ways in which this construct plays out in films from Whale’s to the present. I will begin with a brief explanation of the cyborg and the Frankenstein myth before moving into methodology that will allow teachers to effectively utilize this construct. I should note that using the cyborg as a frame for discussion about technological anxiety today does not only apply to advanced students. If done properly, students at all levels will be interested and engaged by the ability to use this construct to look for and talk about evidences of the Frankenstein myth in the world around them. The key is to clearly define the terms and allow students an opportunity to apply them.

As a postmodern theoretical construct, the cyborg has had legs (albeit non-human ones) since the term was coined in 1960 by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline (Murphie 116). The seminal work, however, in cyborg studies, is Donna Haraway’s 1991 “Cyborg Manifesto,” wherein Haraway defines the cyborg as “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (149). In contemporary theoretical thought on the intersections of technology, culture, and biology, the cyborg stands as a prominent site for investigation. And prime among the representations of this concept is the Frankenstein myth. I use the term “myth,” because, as Rushing and Frenzt argue, “many critics recognize that such dystopian stories [like Shelley’s] are not only based on myth but have attained the status

of myth and archetype themselves” (62).<sup>27</sup> As Murphie and Potts point out in their study of culture and technology, “the cyborg is exactly the kind of monster that appears time and time again in cultural myths about the natural world (and about technology) when the division between culture and nature is breaking down. Frankenstein’s monster is created in a storm” (116). The Frankenstein myth, or “Frankenstein complex,” as Isaac Asimov labeled it, derives its name from Shelley’s novel, and is, according to Janice Rushing and Thomas Frenz, a fictional representation of a “‘peak of fear,’ not only that machinery will harm us but that it will supplant us” (62).

Shelley subtitled her novel *A Modern Prometheus*, and in doing so, she pointed towards the Greek creation myth from which *Frankenstein* follows: as Rushing and Frenz write, “like Prometheus, Dr. Frankenstein enters forbidden territory to steal knowledge from the gods, participates in overthrowing the old order, becomes a master of technics, and is punished for his transgression” (62). While I’ve noted that Shelley’s novel has given birth to nearly two hundred film versions, the dystopian myth at the center of the novel comes alive in hundreds more films (Heffernan 136). And it is likely, argues Noël Carroll, that hundreds more are likely to be made:

It is a commonplace that the story of Frankenstein has become a modern myth. It is not just the subject of a novel by Mary Shelley . . . The story is re-interpreted again and again, sometimes successfully, sometimes not.

---

<sup>27</sup> Rushing and Frenz explain how Shelley’s novel is based on myth: “As Shelley acknowledged by titling her novel *A Modern Prometheus*, the Frankenstein complex recapitulates the Greek myth of creation: like Prometheus, Dr. Frankenstein enters forbidden territory to steal knowledge from the gods, participates in overthrowing the old order, becomes a master of technics, and is punished for his transgression” (62).

But however bad the re-tellings of the myth get, there always seems to be a new generation of fabulators ready to try once more—ready to re-locate and adjust for their own times the significance of the tale of the creature brought back from the dead. (vii)

In understanding this transition from Shelley's novel to the Frankenstein myth of dystopian technological progress, to film depictions of the myth, students are allowed to extend their knowledge of the film and novel to the world around them. Once students understand the concepts of the cyborg and the Frankenstein myth, they can look for evidence of both of these in artistic representations (particularly films), other media (video games, for example), and in real world events. Frank Smoot points out that films invoking the Frankenstein myth do not all attempt to retell Shelley's narrative:

Some, such as *Victor Frankenstein*, pay faithful attention to Mary Shelley's original story; others, such as *Alien* or *Metropolis*, extend the myth outward a considerable distance. But nearly all display a creature (a "thing without a name") who confronts his (or her, or its) existence and who confronts his (or her, or its) creator. And, in nearly all of the films . . . the Creature, some variation on Dr. Frankenstein's creation, makes a literal appearance in the film. (xviii)

For my purposes, the creature is what I've called the cyborg. Rushing and Frenz focus on the way that three films—*Rocky IV*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Terminator*—invoke the Frankenstein myth and include cyborg characters. Asking students to think about the popular culture representations of the Frankenstein myth should lead them to question the

pervasiveness of the myth. Why is it that so many popular culture representations invoke it?

Rushing and Frenz attempt to explain this by arguing that films which portray the Frankenstein myth are popular for a collective psychological reason. They turn to Jung's notion of the *shadow* to explain why collective anxiety towards technology would be depicted in a society's films. As defined by Rushing and Frenz, the *shadow* is

that which a person dislikes and does not wish to recognize about oneself . . . repressed into unconsciousness (purposely forgotten), where it carries on an active life away from the strictures of the ego, erupting into consciousness in such processes as dreams and projections, which *compensate* for the one-sided attitude of the conscious ego. Jung calls this repressed part of the personality the *shadow*, for it is the dark mirror image cast by the stance of the conscious self and inextricably attached to it. (63)

They go on to argue that the shadow erupts in an individuals' dreams, but that the cultural shadow is exhibited, according to Jung, "through the 'visions of artists and seers.' Jung regarded the cinema as one of the prime outlets for such visions, for it 'enables us to experience without danger to ourselves all the excitements passions, and fantasies which have to be repressed in a humanistic age'" (63-64). Turning the idea of the shadow onto contemporary culture, Rushing and Frenz offer that "if the shadow of a cultural epoch is always the repressed negation of what the collectivity consciously affirms, then the unconscious compensation for progress is the fear of being systematically replaced by technology" (63).

This application of the Jungian shadow is one that students will be motivated to think about and discuss. Specifically, after students have listed popular culture representations of the Frankenstein myth, they could debate the ideas presented by Rushing and Frenz relating to collective anxiety about technology and the representation of this anxiety in films. Do students believe, like Rushing and Frenz, that there is a collective anxiety towards technology? Do they think that film is a place for society's shadow to appear? If not, what explanations do they have for the popularity of the cyborg and the Frankenstein myth in the media and, particularly, on film? Certainly, as students think about and discuss the continuing cultural impact of Mary Shelley's novel they will be able to recognize the ways in which it has, perhaps uniquely among all other literary texts, found a home in film adaptations. While there are no easy explanations for why this has happened, students will enjoy the opportunity to pursue answers to that question.

#### Face-to-Face: Seeing the Monstrous on the Page and on the Screen

In the last chapter, I suggested that the film and novel *Speak* each found different narrative strategies—or methods of *speaking*—in order to tell Melinda's story. In *Frankenstein*, the film and novel must each find different strategies for *showing* the monster and relating his story. The significantly different rhetorical effects of viewing versus reading are important for students of adaptation to understand. While they are more dramatically on display in *Frankenstein*, the differences between viewing and reading are, of course, always issues with adaptations. In particular, considering the ways that the monster is shown differently in book and film gives students an opportunity to consider the role of fidelity analysis in their responses to adaptations.

I have, in earlier chapters, largely discounted fidelity analysis because it is so often reductive and unthinking (“The book was better”). However, as Robert Stam points out, “we have to acknowledge . . . that ‘fidelity,’ however discredited theoretically, does retain a grain of experiential truth” (“Introduction” 14). Stam continues that “the notion of fidelity gains its persuasive power from our sense that (a) some adaptations are indeed better than others, and (b) some adaptations fail to ‘realize’ or substantiate what we most appreciated in the source novels” (“Introduction” 14). Stam links this sense of betrayal towards the adaptation to the process of reading: “Russell Banks describes novelistic writing/reading as an intimate exchange between strangers, a secret sharing. We read a novel ‘through’ our introjected desires, hopes, and utopias, fashioning as we read our own imaginary *mise-en-scène* of the novel on the private sound stage of our mind” (“Introduction” 14). This means, of course, that each reader has a differing image of the main characters, the setting, and the events taking place in a novel. Writing specifically about the description of characters in novel and film, Stam argues that

a novelist’s portrayal of a character induces us to imagine the person’s features in our own imagination. While the reader moves from the printed word to visualizing the objects portrayed, the spectator moves in the opposite direction, from the flux of images to naming the objects portrayed and identifying the events recounted. A film actualizes the virtual through specific choices. (“Introduction” 14)

I will discuss specifically how this process plays out in terms of our perception of the monster in *Frankenstein*. Shelley relies on three methods for showing readers what the monster looks like. All of these methods are equally vague and terrifying. First, Shelley

describes him (briefly and vaguely). Second, she portrays other characters' reactions after seeing the monster. Always these reactions are immediate and horrible. Third, she has the monster comment on his appearance. The only description Shelley provides is in Victor's words at the moment of the monster's creation:

His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes that seemed almost of the same colour of the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips. (60)

We know little else about the monster's physical description. We do know that he has superhuman strength and that he has a higher tolerance for extreme environmental conditions. We also know that he is larger than humans. But other than these details, Shelley has left it to readers to conjure an image of the monster in their own minds. As Albert LaValley notes, "In the novel . . . that hideousness terrifies us because it is so indefinite. We do not really see the Monster's ugliness; we are reminded of it by its effect on others. Each reader's imagination provides details taken from private dreads. Mary Shelley is capable of producing terror through mere suggestion" (248).

Contrast Shelley's ability to reveal the monster to us without "showing" him with the filmmakers' inability to do so. Shelley, as LaValley makes clear, "may gradually present us with a fully formed human psyche whose feelings, yearnings, and logic, are often more profound than those who reject its outward husk, but the stage and film must

fix that outward appearance from the very start” (249). In this way, readers are like the old blind man at the Delacey’s cottage. We never have to look at the monster; rather we can get to know him through careful conversation. On the other hand, viewers of the film are like Agatha, Safie, and Felix whose horror upon seeing him can’t be described by the monster (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 121). As Heffernan points out, “the visual medium of film highlights something at once crucial to the novel and virtually invisible to the reader: the repulsiveness of the creature’s appearance” (141).

Precisely because the film forces viewers to look at the monster in a way that the book never requires, the rhetorical effects of this showing/looking are vastly different from reading. Students can consider how the reading process works and how showing differs in films and novels by trying, for example, to draw their own image of the monster based solely on Shelley’s descriptions. They will find that their pictures will differ widely from one classmate to the next and also that they have a hard time not invoking Karloff, so pervasive is his image of the monster. This exercise leads students to consider fidelity in complex terms rather than the reductive terms they’re used to and recognizes, if not encourages, the importance that fidelity analysis plays in audience reactions to adaptations.

#### From Dissection to Synthesis: Putting *Frankenstein* Back Together

My experience teaching *Frankenstein* has been the same as John Golden’s: “I guarantee that when you ask your students if they have heard of Frankenstein, all hands will go up, but if you ask whether they have seen [James Whale’s 1931 *Frankenstein* or his 1935 *Bride of Frankenstein*], you will be lucky if one says yes” (123). Of course, asking students if they’ve read the novel won’t even yield one raised hand. So how is it



that students all know Shelley's story? And how can they all accurately reproduce the image of the monster from the 1931 film even though none of them have seen it? And what does the pervasiveness of the cultural imagery associated with this film have to say about the dispersal of culture across time and space? Why is the Frankenstein myth so popular? In this chapter, I've attempted to argue that students can seek answers for these and other questions by looking closely at Shelley's novel and its adaptations—particularly the 1931 film.

I will conclude by answering a question posed by James Heffernan: "What then can film versions of *Frankenstein* offer to academic critics of the novel? Can they be anything more than vulgarizations or travesties of the original?" (136). The answer, of course, as I hoped I've shown, is that films can be much more than "vulgarizations or travesties." I agree with Harriet Margolis that "the film versions should not be seen as less interesting than Shelley's original just because they have been simplified for cinematic purposes; on the contrary, the cinematic omissions, deletions, and alterations may help students to understand Shelley's work more fully" (162). As any teacher knows, learning operates much the same way as Shelley describes "invention" operating in her 1831 introduction to the novel: "Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself" (23). And learning from the chaos of materials—a novel and its hundreds of film adaptations—will give form to ideas and understandings better than any investigation of the novel alone.

### Conclusion: Responsible Adaptation Study

At the end of the first chapter I briefly argued that adaptation study is important in secondary school English classrooms because it pushes students and teachers to create new knowledge by participating in grand Bakhtinian dialogues. It must be noted, of course, that *productive* adaptation study, utilizing the methods I've outlined in this thesis, will lead students and teachers to create new knowledge together and to better understand the world in which they live. By "productive" I mean that the study of adaptation leads to—or *produces*—learning. *Unproductive* adaptation study, which, at its very best, asks only that students view a film adaptation after reading a novel and compare and contrast the two texts, will not lead to a creation of new knowledge nor help students and teachers better understand the world. At its worst, unproductive adaptation study is simply showing the film adaptation of a literary source text without teachers or students commenting at all; this is only slightly worse than watching the film together and then noting, "The book was better."

Because every secondary school English teacher I know incorporates film adaptations of literary source texts into his or her curriculum, the distinction between doing this productively and doing it unproductively is an important one. If secondary school students, immersed in media in nearly every aspect of their lives, learn to apply the principles of effective adaptation study—for example, to consider the intertexts influencing the production of a text, to take into account the economic factors on a film production, to analyze the narrative methods used by authors of varying texts (including films and works of literature), and to recognize the continuing cultural impact of films and novels—they will better be able to read and write the complex media messages that

they will be asked to deal with in the future. In this conclusion, then, I will expand the argument I briefly stated in the first chapter—that the study of adaptations is important—in order to suggest that adaptations *must* be studied in secondary school English classrooms productively.

While English teachers almost universally utilize film adaptations in their secondary school classrooms, I have not been able to find anything written about how to do this effectively. There are great resources<sup>28</sup> for teaching film as a text to be “read” in high school and junior high English classes, but these books only briefly mention adaptation, if at all. I would like to make the case that adaptation should be a particularly important element of English studies in secondary schools because it offers students a meaningful way to interpret and think about their various media experiences while motivating them to become better readers and writers. In order to show the role of adaptation studies in teaching students to think about media experiences (including, but not limited to film and print texts) in and out of school requires expanding the definition of “adaptation.”

In the first chapter, I defined adaptation using David Buckingham’s words: adaptations are texts “that arise when a given source text is employed in different media or in different genres” (77). Although this definition has framed my discussion throughout, I haven’t strayed from using “adaptation” to mean a film adaptation of a print source text. The two case studies both employ the idea of adaptation this way. But, as

---

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Costanzo’s *Great Films and How to Teach Them* (2004), Golden’s *Reading in the Dark* (2001), and Teasley and Wilder’s *Reel Conversations* (1997).

Robert Stam argues, film adaptations don't necessarily always come from literary source texts:

While adaptation studies often assumes that the source texts are literary, adaptations can also have subliterary or paraliterary sources. Bio-pics adapt biographical writing about famous historical figures. Some films, like Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1957), adapt newspaper stories. A film like *Spiderman* (2002) adapts a comic strip. Carlos Diegues's *Veja esta cancao* (See This Song, 1987) adapts Brazilian popular songs. History films like *Reds* (1981) adapt historical texts. Other films (for example, Gilberto Dinnerstein's *War of the Children*, 1992) adapt nonfictional works, or explore the life and work of a philosopher (*Wittgenstein*, 1993), or of a painter (*Pollock*, 2001) or a novelist (*Iris*, 2001). Even non-adaptation fiction films adapt a **script**. The point is that virtually all films, not only adaptations, remakes, and sequels, are mediated through intertextuality and writing. (45; emphasis original)

Although the way I have used the term “adaptation”—to mean a film hypertext following after a print hypotext—is accurate, I would be remiss, at the conclusion of this project, not to point towards a broader definition that better encompasses students' experiences in everyday life with the many media productions they encounter and employ.

Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins, in their forthcoming book on adaptation, also make this case:

It's simple enough to suggest that an adaptation is a film based on a novel, play, or short story, but what about a novel that is based on a film? Or a

video game based on either a novel or film? Or a film based on a video game? Or a Broadway play based on a movie? This proliferation of meanings for the term “adaptation” is a bit confusing, but it’s also exciting. Contemporary culture loves to adapt. It is quite possible that adaptations is so much a part of our daily lives that we have learned to ignore the important role it plays in all of our media experiences. (3)

If we expand the definition of adaptation to include all of the texts that come out of the translation<sup>29</sup> of a source text from one medium or genre to another, we can significantly increase the possibilities of using adaptation studies in secondary school classrooms to teach students about their media experiences and motivate them to read and write in school and on their own. For example, students who play the video game *American McGee’s Alice* could be motivated by learning about intertextuality to pursue Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* in order to recognize the interplay between them. Or students who have seen (or performed in) the musical *Seussical* might want to read Dr. Seuss’s books to understand the context from which the show’s characters and events emerge. Or a teacher might suggest those same students, after reading one of the source texts for the musical—*The Butter Battle Book*, could read about its underlying argument against nuclear proliferation.<sup>30</sup> These examples point briefly to ways that teachers could encourage students to take their understanding of the principles of adaptation theory—

---

<sup>29</sup> Buckingham actually uses the term “translation” instead of “adaptation” (77). Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins also utilize this trope (15).

<sup>30</sup> For one source, among many, to read about the political message of *The Butter Battle Book*, see “The Butter Battle Book” in the 27 July 1984 *National Review*.

principles which could even be discussed in an English classroom only in terms of film adaptations of novels, short stories, or plays—and apply those to the broader mix of media students encounter in their lives.

While teachers could simply encourage students who have encountered film adaptations in their English classes to pursue an extension of the idea of adaptation on their own, teachers obviously have other options for promoting this idea. For example, Walter Dean Myers's award-winning<sup>31</sup> young adult novel *Monster* can be used in a classroom as a springboard for teaching an expanded view of adaptation. The novel is written in journal entries from sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon interspersed in a movie script that Steve is writing about his experience of being on trial for felony murder. The book also includes photographs, sketches, and Steve's handwritten notes. When my students read the novel, they almost universally ask if there is a film version. I find the question interesting; it's not a question they ask about other novels we read. They ask it, I think, because Steve's film script prompts them to see the novel as a film. Because of this, they almost feel like it's an unfulfilled promise—a film waiting to happen. And they're excited to see the film, because they enjoyed the book.<sup>32</sup>

My students' interest in a film adaptation of the novel prompts a discussion about the ways that the book itself acts as a repository of adaptations. I ask my students to list the ways the journal entries, the film script, the handwritten notes, and the photographs

---

<sup>31</sup> *Monster* garnered the following awards in 2000: Coretta Scott King Honor, National Book Award Finalist, Michael L. Printz Award.

<sup>32</sup> To my knowledge, no film adaptation of the novel has been produced or is in the works.

and illustrations each serve to tell the story in complementary but unique ways. We discuss the differences and similarities among the various media and why Myers chose one medium over another as a method of telling a certain part of the story. These discussions lead students to a heightened awareness of adaptation; they come to see the complex choices that go into conversions—or translations—from one medium to another.

The book also promotes another pedagogical method that guides students to a better understanding of adaptation: student video production.<sup>33</sup> Because Steve is creating a movie throughout the book, students are naturally interested in creating their own movies. Buckingham lays out a viable methodology for teaching production as a method for helping students better understand adaptation:

The more practical approach involves students themselves ‘translating’ a text from one medium to another—from a newspaper story to a TV news item, or a short story to a film sequence, or vice-versa. If production facilities are not available, students might translate a print text into a script or illustrated storyboard. This kind of work enables students to realize the possibilities and limitations of different media, and the ways in which meanings can change when they are presented in different forms or transposed from one medium to another. (Buckingham 78-79).

William Costanzo also includes extensive information about student projects that adapt fiction to film.<sup>34</sup> Costanzo points out that students engaged in such adaptation projects

---

<sup>33</sup> For more about video production in relationship to teaching *Monster*, see my “Giving Our Own Monsters Cameras.”

<sup>34</sup> See Costanzo’s *Reading the Movies* pages 49, 78-80, and 192-193

learn a great deal about film production, but also learn

about the intricacies of adaptation. In the process, students learn to pay close attention to the details of narrative. In transforming settings into actual locations, characters into a cast, description into action, or tone and point of view into photography and sound, they become involved in literature—and cinema—as never before. (79-80)

In addition to expanding the definition of adaptation so that it incorporates the many media experiences of students, it is important to point out, in conclusion, that studying adaptation matters because it allows students an opportunity to respond to the world around them. To make this point, I turn a final time to Bakhtin. Bakhtin gets attached to adaptation study because his notion of dialogism is read by adaptation theorists as foundational in an understanding of intertextuality. Stam, for instance, states that Kristeva's intertextuality theory is "rooted in and literally translating Bakhtin's 'dialogism'" (8).<sup>35</sup> Because Bakhtin is so often cited in just this capacity—as a forerunner to Kristeva, I was surprised to come across Gary Saul Morson rejecting the connection between Bakhtin and intertextuality:

It is now commonplace to refer to great works as "texts." For Bakhtin, works are not just texts, and to approach them as if they were is to miss what is most important about them, just as one would miss what is most important about a person by listing the forces that have shaped him or her. Works have an author. To engage with a work, one must hear a human

---

<sup>35</sup> The term "intertextuality," as I've shown earlier, comes from Julia Kristeva (Lechte 215).



voice behind it. Only by answering that voice with one's own can one create a meaningful dialogue. (353)

Morson continues that “for this reason, it is a mistake to equate Bakhtin's idea of ‘dialogue’ with ‘intertextuality,’ as so often happens” (353).

Because I was intrigued by Morson's argument, I contacted him to get more insight into what he perceived as the misappropriation of Bakhtin's theoretical concepts. In responding to me, he wrote,

Basically, intertextuality is a term for relating two texts, which is what a formalist would do, and what we think of in an era of “the death of the author” and when language somehow writes itself and texts relate to each other. Bakhtin was opposed to all that kind of thinking, which was around in his time, and insisted that to understand language one needed to understand people speaking. The idea of double-voiced words, and the examples he gives, presuppose using words to utter something, for particular purposes, which one would miss if one just thought of sentences, language, texts in abstraction. Also, Bakhtin was an ethical thinker and believed that only if we thought of people speaking could we think of responsibility (a term in which he insisted on the root “response”—or “answer”).

While Morson's point is valid, I believe his critique of intertextuality focuses on the formalist idea of divorcing a text from its author. However, the utilization of intertextuality that I have advocated in this thesis complies wholeheartedly with Bakhtin's ideas as Morson has outlined them. And I have proposed intertextuality

precisely because of its connection to people, which I see as my students, responding. For example, I have suggested that listening to the actual voices (on the DVD commentary) of *Speak* author Laurie Halse Anderson conversing with film director Jessica Sharzer could precede students responding to their call for action from readers and viewers. I also disagree with Morson that finding out the forces that shaped a person automatically ensures that we have missed what is most important about that person. Rather, discovering, for example, Mary Shelley's life story helps students to understand the person behind *Frankenstein* and better hear her voice. Similarly, knowing the nineteenth century traditions for theatrically staging *Frankenstein* help viewers to recognize the voices that contributed to the screenplay and gives students insights into the very human choices they made.

What I propose, in the end, are methods of adaptation study that are responsible—in the Bakhtinian sense—that afford students an opportunity to respond to the adaptations they study (adaptations which are, of course, responses) and, thereby, join the grand dialogic conversation surrounding each of these source texts and adaptations. As Bakhtin argues, understanding can only come through response:

To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other.

(282)

## Works Cited

- Albrecht-Crane, Christa and Dennis Cutchins. "New Beginnings for Adaptation Studies."  
Unpublished manuscript, 2007.
- American McGee's Alice*. Video Game. Electronic Arts. 2000.
- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. New York: Puffin-Penguin, 1999.
- . "Speaking Out." *ALAN Review* 27.3 (2000): 25-26.
- Andrew, Dudley. "Adaptation." 1984. *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000. 28-37.
- . "Adapting Cinema to History: A Revolution in the Making." *A Companion to Literature and Film*. Ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. 189-204.
- Asimov, Isaac. "The Myth of the Machine." *Asimov on Science Fiction*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981. 153-163.
- Associated Press. "Va. Tech Shooter Was Laughed At." *NPR.com* 19 Apr. 2007. 19 Apr. 2007 <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9604940>>.
- Backes, Anthony. "Revisiting *Frankenstein*: A Study in Reading and Education." *English Journal* 83.4 (1994): 33-36.
- Baines, Lawrence. "From Page to Screen: When a Novel is Interpreted for Film, What Gets Lost in the Translation?" *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 39.8 (1996): 612-22.
- Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: U. of Texas, 1981.

- Barlow, Dudley. "Off with Their Thumbs." *Education Digest* 60.5 (1995): 41-44.
- Bazin, Andre. "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest." 1948. Trans. Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo. *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000. 19-27.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." 1936. Trans. Harry Zohn. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken, 1968.
- Bluestone, George. *Novels into Film*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1957.
- Buckingham, David. *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2003.
- "The Butter Battle Book." *National Review* 27 July 1984: 15-16.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. 1865. New York: Scholastic, 2001.
- Carroll, Noël. Foreword. *The Frankenstein Film Sourcebook*. Ed. Caroline Joan ("Kay") S. Picart, Frank Smoot, and Jayne Blodgett. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001. vii-x.
- Costanzo, William V. *Reading the Movies: Twelve Great Films on Video and How to Teach Them*. Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1992.
- . *Great Films and How to Teach Them*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2004.
- Curtis, James. *James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1998.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003.

- Dimmitt, Jean Pollard. "The First Printz Award Designations: Winners All." *ALAN Review* 28.2 (2001): 54-59.
- Dixon, Wheeler Winston. "The Films of *Frankenstein*." *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*. Ed. Stephen C. Behrendt. New York: MLA, 1990. 166-179.
- Elliott, Kamilla. "Teaching *Wuthering Heights* through Its Film and Television Adaptations." *Approaches to Teaching Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights*. Eds. Sue Lonoff and Terri A. Hasseler. New York: MLA, 2006.
- Epstein, Edward Jay. *The Big Picture: The New Logic of Money and Power in Hollywood*. New York: Random House, 2005.
- . "The End of Originality: Or, Why Michael Bay's *The Island* failed at the Box Office." *Slate.com* 6 Feb. 2006. 10 May 2006  
<<http://www.slate.com/id/2135544/>>.
- Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "Teaching Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*." *PBS.org*. 1995. Public Broadcasting Service. 8 May 2007  
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/teachers/huck/essay.html>>.
- Foertsch, Jacqueline. "The Right, the Wrong, and the Ugly: Teaching Shelley's Several *Frankensteins*." *College English* 63.6 (2001).
- Frankenstein*. Dir. James Whale. Prod. Carl Laemmle, Jr. Perf. Boris Karloff, Colin Clive, Mae Clark, John Boles. 1931. DVD. 75th anniversary ed. Universal, 2006.
- Frankenstein: Penetrating the Secrets of Nature*. 2005. U.S. National Library of Medicine. National Institutes of Health. 8 May 2007  
<<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/frankenstein/frankhome.html>>.

- Franzak, Judith and Elizabeth Noll. "Monstrous Acts: Problematizing Violence in Young Adult Literature." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 49.8 (2006): 662-672.
- Frazier, Alexander. "The Films We Need." *The English Journal* 36.2 (1947): 88-91.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.
- Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. 1982. Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln, NE: U. of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Genzlinger, Neil. "For One Teenager, the Party's Over." *New York Times* 5 Sept. 2005: E6. LexisNexis Academic. Brigham Young U. Lib., Provo, UT. 22 March 2007 <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/>>.
- Golden, John. *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2001.
- Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Heffernan, James A. W. "Looking at the Monster: *Frankenstein* and Film." *Critical Inquiry* 24.1 (1997): 133-158.
- Howl's Moving Castle*. Dir. Hayao Miyazaki. Buena Vista, 2004.
- International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. "Standards for the English Language Arts." Newark, DE: IRA, 1996.
- It's Alive: The True Story of Frankenstein*. Videocassette. A&E Home Video, 1994.
- Jago, Carol. "To View Or Not to View?" *Education Week* 19.10 (1999): 33, 35.
- Jones, Diana Wynne. *Howl's Moving Castle*. New York: Greenwillow-HarperCollins, 1986.

- Jones, Stephen. *The Frankenstein Scrapbook: The Complete Movie Guide to the World's Most Famous Monster*. New York: Citadel-Carol, 1995.
- Kaplan, Jeffrey S. "Contrasting Points of View (And Then Some)." *ALAN Review* 31.2 (2004): 16-18.
- Latham, Don. "Melinda's Closet: Trauma and the Queer Subtext of Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*." *Childrens Literature Association Quarterly* 31.4 (2006): 369-382.
- LaValley, Albert J. "The Stage and Film Children of *Frankenstein*: A Survey." *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*. Ed. George Levine and U.C. Knoepfelmacher. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1979. 243-289.
- Leander, Kevin M. and Margaret Sheehy. "Introduction." *Spatializing Literacy Research and Practice*. Eds. Kevin M. Leander and Margaret Sheehy. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 1-13.
- Lechte, John and Mary Zournazi, eds. *The Kristeva Critical Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2003.
- Leitch, Thomas. "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory." *Criticism* 45.2 (2003): 149-171.
- Mandell, Jonathan. "Cho's Professor to Classmates: Don't Feel Guilty." *CNN.com* 18 Apr. 2007. 18 Apr. 2007  
<<http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/04/18/vatech.professor/index.html>>.
- Manzo, Kathleen Kennedy. "Dark Themes in Books Get Students Reading." *Education Week* 26.31 (2007): 1, 16.

- Margolis, Harriet E. "Lost Baggage: Or, The Hollywood Sidetrack." *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*. Ed. Stephen C. Behrendt. New York: MLA, 1990.
- Marshall, Tim. *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-Robbing, Frankenstein and the Anatomy Literature*. Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1995.
- McDonald, Paul. *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities*. London: Wallflower, 2000.
- McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- Meyer, Stephenie. *Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*. 2007. 28 March 2007  
<<http://www.stepheniemeyer.com>>.
- Miller, Toby, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, and Richard Maxwell. *Global Hollywood*. London: British Film Institute, 2001.
- Morson, Gary Saul. "Bakhtin and the Teaching of Literature." *Research in the Teaching of English* 41.3 (2007): 350-357.
- . "Re: Bakhtin and film adaptation." E-mail to Nathan Phillips. 22 Apr. 2007.
- Murphie, Andrew and John Potts. *Culture and Technology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.
- Naremore, James. "Introduction: Film and the Reign of Adaptation." *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000. 1-16.
- O'Quinn, Elaine J. "Between Voice and Voicelessness: Transacting Silence in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*." *ALAN Review* 29.1 (2001): 54-58.



- Osteen, Mark. "Luminous Spaces: Teaching 'Heart of Darkness' through Film." *Approaches to Teaching Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and "The Secret Sharer."* Ed. Hunt Hawkins and Brian W. Shaffer. New York: MLA, 2002. 158-166.
- Phillips, Nathan. "Giving Our Own Monsters Cameras: Walter Dean Myers and the Home Movie." *Utah English Journal* 33 (2005): 7-11.
- . "Monsters' Ink: How Walter Dean Myers Made *Frankenstein* Fun." *English Journal* 92.5 (2003): 87-90.
- Picart, Caroline Joan ("Kay") S. Picart, Frank Smoot, and Jayne Blodgett, eds. *The Frankenstein Film Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001.
- Poston, David. "Exploring the Universe with John Milton and Mary Shelley." *English Journal* 78.7 (1989): 28-33.
- Pugmire, Genelle. "Gentleman Vampire Sells Books." *Deseret Morning News* 8 Feb. 2007. 28 March 2007  
<<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,660193181,00.html>>.
- Ray, Robert B. "The Field of 'Literature and Film.'" *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000. 38-53.
- Ressler, Diane and Stan Giannet. "Voices of Healing: How Creative Expression Therapies Help Us Heal, Using Laurie Halse Anderson's Novel *Speak* as a Springboard for Discussion." *Using Literature to Help Troubled Teenagers Cope with Abuse Issues*. Ed. Joan Kaywell. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. 185-205.
- Rieger, James. Introduction. *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*. Ed. Rieger. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

Rushing, Janice Hocker and Thomas S. Frenzt. "The Frankenstein Myth in Contemporary Cinema." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6.1 (1989): 61-80.

Scott, Allen J. *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005.

Seger, Linda. *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film: How to Transform Novels, Plays, and True-Life Stories into Screenplays*. New York: Holt, 1992.

Semali, Ladislaus M. *Literacy in Multimedia America: Integrating Media Education Across the Curriculum*. New York: Falmer, 2000.

Shaull, Richard. Foreword. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. By Paulo Freire. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972. 9-15.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. 1831 ed. Ed. Johanna M. Smith. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000.

---. Introduction. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. By Shelley. 1831 ed. Ed. Johanna M. Smith. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. 19-25.

---. *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*. Ed. James Rieger. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982.

"Showtime and Lifetime Television Team Up for the Independent Film, 'Speak' in an Unprecedented Simulcast, Monday, September 5th." *Sho.com* 16 July 2005.

Showtime. 14 Apr. 2007

<<http://www.sho.com/site/announcements/050718speak.do>>.

- “Showtime Independent Films Unspools *Speak* at AFI Fest on November 13th & 14th 2004 at Arclight in Hollywood.” *Market Wire*. 4 Nov. 2004. CCNMatthews. 14 Apr. 2007  
 <[http://www.marketwire.com/mw/release\\_html\\_b1?release\\_id=75444](http://www.marketwire.com/mw/release_html_b1?release_id=75444)>.
- Simmons, Eileen A. “*Frankenstein* for the Twenty-first Century: An Exploration of Contemporary Issues.” *English Journal* 83.4 (1994): 30-32.
- Smith, Johanna M. “Biographical and Historical Contexts.” Introduction. *Frankenstein*. By Mary Shelley. 1831. Ed. Johanna M. Smith. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000. 3-18.
- . “Contextual Documents.” Editor’s Note. *Frankenstein*. By Mary Shelley. 1831. Ed. Johanna M. Smith. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000. 190-192.
- Smoot, Frank. “A Note on the Entries.” *The Frankenstein Film Sourcebook*. Ed. Caroline Joan (“Kay”) S. Picart, Frank Smoot, and Jayne Blodgett. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001. xvii-xviii.
- Speak*. Dir. Jessica Sharzer. Perf. Kristen Stewart, Eric Lively, Elizabeth Perkins, D.B. Sweeney, and Steve Zahn. DVD. Showtime, 2004.
- Stam, Robert. “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation.” *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2000. 54-76.
- . “Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation.” *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. Eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. 1-52.
- Seuss, Dr. [Theodor Seuss Geisel]. *The Butter Battle Book*. New York: Random House, 1984.

- Seussical: The Musical*. Composed Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. Decca, 2001.
- Teasley, Alan B. and Ann Wilder. *Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adults*.  
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997.
- Tomasulo, Frank P. "What 'Kind' of Film History Do We Teach?: The Introductory  
Survey Course as a Pedagogical Opportunity." *Cinema Journal* 41.1 (2001): 110-  
114.
- Twilight Fanfiction*. 28 March 2007 <<http://www.ravenclaw.us/twilight>>.
- Ulaby, Neda. "Miyazaki's Magic on Display in 'Moving Castle.'" *npr.org* 12 June 2005.  
18 June 2006 <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4698693>>.
- Utah State Office of Education. "Secondary Core Curriculum: Language Arts 7-12."  
2006. 30 Apr. 2007 <[http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/core/corepdf/LA7-  
12.pdf](http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/core/corepdf/LA7-12.pdf)>.
- Veidemanis, Gladys V. "Frankenstein in the Classroom." *English Journal* 75.7 (1986):  
61-66.
- Whelehan, Imelda. "Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas." *Adaptations: From  
Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. Eds. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan.  
New York: Routledge, 1999. 3-19.