

Adapting History and Literature into Movies

by John Dean

This essay offers an overview of adaptation, an initiation for the educated reader who is not a communications or film specialist. It will reference “The Social and Cultural Construction of Abraham Lincoln in U.S. Movies and on U.S. TV”—but mainly with an eye to the larger issue of cinematographic adaptation itself.

Essentials

Apples and Giraffes

Literature and film, movies and books, compare like apples and giraffes, said contemporary American writer Dennis Lehane.¹ But they do compare. They do interbreed. As do history and film. But the question is: How and why do history, literature and movies fruitfully nourish one another? When apples, giraffes, and other exotica interbreed what results?

Many thousands of movies are adaptations from historical or literary sources. Hence the recent internet vernacular of “litflicks”—literature adapted into flicks, the flickering medium of the motion pictures.² History is generically dealt with by cinema in the epic, period, or historical film. Film historians generally distinguish the epic group from the strict historical group by its sheer size, expense, and the sumptuousness of the movie’s costumes and sets. The period film is distinguished by the production fact that it can be set in the far distant past or the immediate present, as in the Jazz Age, 1926 version of *The Great Gatsby* or with the aching Sixties, 1969 film *Zabriskie Point*.³

Adaptation

Although literature, history, and movies are distinct forms of communication thousands of solutions and accommodations have been found so they can get along and have fruitful relationships. The first key is the nature and tradition of adaptation itself. Tales evolve and one generation adjusts the stories of the past to the present time and to its modern needs and ways of story telling. “My dramas are but slices cut off from the great banquet of Homer’s poems,” wrote the Greek dramatist Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.).⁴ But Aeschylus’ dramas were leaner and meaner, in search of a higher truth which synthesized moral opposites, profoundly simpler than anything all-embracing Homer ever wrote. For it is the singer, not the song, that makes the splendor of communication successful. And a story retold, as Aeschylus retold Homer, continues. What is beneath the surface of the story that has been told before and will be told again—a story that has been alive among humans for centuries or millennia?

Literature, History, and Movies

Consider how information exists and knowledge is distilled. How a story is told is as important as its subject matter. Thus, three fundamental points about how the nature of literature and history effect their relation to movies:

First, legend precedes historical fact. Did Nestor and Ajax in the *Iliad* ever actually exist and do what Homer claims they did? Until factual, textual proof is found this remains, at the least, an open question. The *Iliad* remains legend rather than history, literature rather than history, superstition rather than science. Hence, human culture as we know it shows that literature precedes history as a practice of inquiry, as a creative record of human events.

Second, a fundamental distinction exists between history and memory. History is then, memory is now. A

judicious, critical management of documentary evidence allows history to get as close as possible to the facts of the past; then as it was then. Memory is the past remembered and reconstructed through the lens of the present and its building blocks.⁵ Movies flourish in a popular, contemporary market place. They must entertain the sensibilities of the present. Anachronism is their delight and pleasure. Memory is their very breath. So history inevitably gets short-changed in movies—with some notable exceptions.

Third, with regard to the history of ideas, one distinguishes between an older meaning of literature as literacy and the cultivation of reading (dominant through the eighteenth century) and a newer reality and reference to literature as a body of writing which contrasts with erudition and which emphasizes wit, talent, and taste (which begins to dominate the older meaning by the end of the eighteenth century).⁶ Story-telling movies that are not straight documentary or raw, live footage have a much stronger generic affinity to literature than to history. Thus the movie-history relation is more a connection rather than a similarity, an association rather than nearness. The difference is subtle but meaningful. The viewer can expect a movie to be like literature. But can you expect a movie to be history?

Two exceptions of note which prove the rule with regard to movies and history are documentary cinema and raw footage. Documentary cinema has a closer relation to history. Documentary can function like journalism or on-the-spot news, though news is “only the rough draft of history”—as publisher Phil Graham of *The Washington Post* once said. Conventional wisdom defines documentary as “relating to or found in documents: aiming at presentation of reality,”⁷ “broadly: factual, objective.”⁸

But look deeper and one often finds that the non-fiction film or photo which is about “real life” was treated subjectively and sometimes doctored just as much as a piece of fiction. Though documentary is relied upon as objective fact, as proven support for something, it can easily be a constructed, subjective artifact and be synonymous with social persuasion or propaganda. This is not a problem, but an asset for documentary, and a point to which this essay shall return. Raw footage is also known as “stock shot” and is film footage of actual, ordinary or exceptional events which is stocked away and then used as movie filler, a means to intensify mimesis in a fiction film or documentary, a way to cut production costs, or kept for historical record. One outstanding case of stock shot would be the *Zapruder Film*. This was the only live movie made of the John F. Kennedy assassination of November 22, 1963 by amateur cameraman and garment manufacturer Abraham Zapruder of Dallas, Texas.⁹ This film has been used or referenced in about forty movies to date, including Oliver Stone’s 1991, bullying but engrossing movie *JFK*, a 1999, HBO Sopranos’ episode, and conspiracy theory documentaries of the last few years.¹⁰

Property

The vitality of adaptation and influence evolved in Western culture through various epochs down to the European Age of the Enlightenment, when the proprietary concept of plagiarism came into common play. Prior to that, new versions of old tales, such as European medieval romances, were considered to refurbish and refit stories that had been told before and would be told again and again. There was once a much stronger sense of the common property of culture. The change that came about during the European Enlightenment had to do with owning painting and art criticism, literature, natural philosophy, history, and music.¹¹

The originality, stylistic authority and proprietary rights of a composer and a composition became a major factor in the production, adaptation, and consumption of culture. This was capped by a new sense of individualism, a term and concept which did not come into common use in the English language until the early 1800s.¹² One result was the “self-made” author who could make a living from his writings and was deservedly proud that he could do so by selling his work to the public and did not have to toady to patronage. The Augustan poet, satirist, and translator Alexander Pope (1688–1794) was the first outstanding Anglo-American example of this. From his Homeric translations he made a net profit of the then very large sum of £10,000 and he bragged he could “. . . live and thrive Indebted to / no Prince or Peer alive.”¹³

Precedents for plagiarism existed. Stealing from another person’s work among the literate elite in ancient Greece and Rome was taken as a cowardly sign that one lacked personal, creative integrity. Around the time Johann

Gutenberg's printing press was working (beginning in Strasbourg in the 1430s), the legal phenomenon of "letters patent" came into existence—a document from the monarch which conferred the privilege, or patent, to print, usually given to a Stationer's Company or guild. It was the first Anglo-American law, the Occidental Copyright Law Statute of Queen Anne of England of 1710, which expressly guaranteed copyright. Which, in turn, was followed in the newly minted United States by the first U.S. Copyright Act of 1790.¹⁴

The concept and practice of adaptation as a break from the original creation, and not as a refitting flourished once copyright and plagiarism were written into the granite of the law. The term's two-fold original meaning adapted to this cultural, social, and economic change. First by the Latin etymology of adaptation: *ad*—"near, adjacent to," and *aptus*: "to fasten, to fit." While the secondary, derived meaning of adaptation as something "broken up" and "remade totally anew" adapted to the newer social and commercial sense in a world where "capitalism" was also a new word.

Cultural History

Final introductory note: This essay about adapting history and literature into film is a cultural history approach to the question of cinematographic adaptation. It highlights concern for cultural translation, with how the culture and language of the past has been transformed into the present.

Culture is not handed on like a baton in a relay race from one generation to another or from one nation to another. As it evolves, culture has to be reproduced. "A culture does not have an independent inertia."¹⁵ In classical terms, cultural history is a secular humanist, Aristotelian approach to culture. My a priori assumption is that all knowledge is gained and perpetuated by the close association between the human mind, spirit, and body conditioned by the environment of its time. No Greater Power—from archetypes, to Godhead, to Platonic "forms"—exists independently of our sensible world, of our human need to construct, guide, give and get what we require as human beings. Man is his own maker.

The ancient art and craft of adaptive communication means recreation. Beneath the surface of a story refurbished over the ages and updated by different media lies a heritage of useful knowledge which adds to well-being in proportion as it is communicated. The genesis of the forms themselves can now help us to figure out the relationship of literature to film, the written word to the visual image.

Malleable Forms and Contents

Protean Forms and Authenticity

In his classic study *Novels Into Film* (1954), George Bluestone argued that the novel is "protean because it has assimilated essays, letters, memoirs, histories, religious tracts, and manifestoes"¹⁶—and one may add: the folk tale, the play, epic, and romance. Film itself is also specially "protean because it has assimilated photography, music, dialog, the dance"—and one may add: literature and history, painting, visible color, audible sound, and the art of inducing a sleeplike trance.

But movies do more. Movies are distinct from both literature and history because a movie has to move on multiple tracks, combine two or more types of media. As the German American film theorist and perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007) noted in 1938, a movie is a composite work of art which:

. . . is possible only if complete structures, produced by the media, are integrated in the form of parallelism. Naturally, such a 'double track' will make sense only if the components do not simply convey the same thing; they must complete each other in the sense of dealing differently with the same subject; each medium must treat the subject in its own way, and the resulting difference must be in accordance with those that exist between the media.¹⁷

History has also assimilated different genres. But, more importantly, it has traditionally been considered to be of two sorts: the biographies of great people or the story of ordinary folk. This began as the long-standing distinction in history between the work of Thucydides and that of Herodotus. Thucydides wrote heroic political history which emphasized the interrelations of the highly privileged. Thucydides reserved the moral drama of historical tragedy

for an elite (as did literature until the modern, industrial age). Herodotus' work was pluralistic, polyvalent, democratic. His tone was colloquial rather than terse, his narrative was far more about people than abstractions. In the Herodotean words of Henry Ford's amanuensis William John Cameron (1878–1955): "The history of historians is usually bunk . . . but history that you can see is of great value. It is not the past of the books, . . . it is the past of living men and women; folks pretty much like ourselves."¹⁸ The contemporary American cultural historian Karl Krober has updated these issues in his study *Make-Believe in Film and Fiction* (2006) and argued for a different set of contrasts regarding the fundamental differences between literature and movies. Literature, he claims, makes it easier to share subjective fantasies, it frees the mind from limits of time and space, and it dramatizes the ethical significance of ordinary behavior, while simultaneously intensifying readers' awareness of how they themselves think or feel. Movies' uniquely magnify movements to produce stories which are specially potent in exposing hypocrisy, problems of criminality in modern society, and the relation between nature and man, the private self and the natural environment.¹⁹ In other words, movies are more like journalism—the rough draft of history. The American playwright, movie director and screenwriter David Mamet (1947–) has put the matter more succinctly in basic building terms. Literature, he said (and a play in particular) "is like an airplane. You don't want to have any extra parts there." While "a movie's more like a car; it can probably sustain a couple extra parts to make it look pretty."²⁰

Epic Space

The protean blends of history and cinema match nicely in the epic spectacular. The movie set in an epic—the film's stage arrangement, scenery, props, place and costumes—takes on such force of character that it has the strength of an actual subject. Like a documentary, an epic spectacular owes a great deal of its effectiveness to the coherence and apparent authenticity of all elements in the film. The set is a spine that must exist so the body of the movie can exist. The director must bring spine and body to life. And so history appears to be reborn in the epic movie.²¹

Authentic setting both enhances the veracity of an epic movie and gives the popular audience a tantalizing insight into the people and places that helped to make history happen. MGM's 1959 *Ben Hur* sent out second unit scouts to film locations in Italy, along with England, France, Mexico and Spain, to achieve this. Of course, this was a gross factual error. The creative point was not to achieve one hundred percent factual, historical accuracy, but to attain the emotional perspective of epic space. In character terms, the late Charlton Heston was beautifully cast with his stern, hawk-like features, intense, stoic expression, and sinewy, athletic frame. The point being that historical accuracy in the movie context should be judged by different rules than the dialectical, academic context of history. "There is no point in comparing the relative value of the various media. Personal preferences exist, but each medium reaches the heights in its own way."²² In the movie business, as opposed to the history business, authentic does not mean factually erudite. It means coherence. It means history recast into fresh dramatic form. At its best, the epic spectacular combines heroic political history with pluralistic, polyvalent and democratic themes—as in David Lean's superb Anglo-American production *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). It is a movie business formula that has produced hokum and rubbish, but also cinematic masterpieces and cutting-edge advances in narrative form and multimedia technology. In American cinema, it is a formula that has worked from D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916) through the twentieth and twenty-first century Western, the Bible epic, war movie, sword and sandal Roman Empire film or British Empire movie, the disaster film, and the science fiction intergalactic adventure movie.

Word, Image, Technology

One last point about the material and conceptual nature of literature, history, and movies. Literature and history must have the word—*logos*. Their particular nature as media consists "precisely in the abstractness of language, which calls every object by the collective name of its species and therefore defines it in only a generic way, without reaching the object itself in its individual concreteness . . . , hence the spiritual quality of its vision, the acuteness and succinctness of its descriptions."²³ As literature and history advance beyond their oral stage, they demand the written word (or print) conveyed by reading. The medium of movies needs images in motion which are conveyed by a projection on to a screen. In all works of art there is a hierarchy of media. For movies the image, *iconos*, dominates.

A movie gets to places literature and history do not. And then it delivers that place to its audience in a way literature and history cannot. The audience, in turn, must use their eyes for a movie to work. After all, are not literature and history forms of communication which are more available to a blind person? With literature and history the audience sees with their inner eye, not as much with their outer, physical eye. "Film creates a fully defined and immediate physical reality that requires dramatization and exploration; it brings characters visually realized into direct relationship with their environment and in immediate proximity to the viewer."²⁴

Cinema also needs electricity. Movies could never have existed without the necessary technology. Print advanced literature beyond the spoken word and the written page and allowed mass media. But technology midwifed movies into their very existence. Technological determinism has played a much greater part in the creation of movies. From its modern inception, the technology also helps to distinguish the entertainment film from the documentary. In 1893 the American inventor and businessman Thomas Edison created the first film company to make and show movies to the public. The Edison Company filmed in a tar paper barn set on a swivel, in which the roof could be opened or closed so as to adjust to the sun. Edison's unwieldy camera, the Kinetograph, was a large, fixed machine run by an electric motor to ensure smooth motion. The point here is that Edison's "camera did not go out to examine the world; instead, items of the world were brought to it—to perform. Thus Edison began with a vaudeville parade: dancers, jugglers, contortionists, magicians, strong men, boxers, cowboy rope twirlers."²⁵

In contrast, documentary cinema was first developed by Louis Lumière in 1895 by using the *cinématographe* camera which was a hundredth of the weight of Edison's Kinetograph. The *cinématographe* was about the size of a small suitcase, very portable, and could film, print, or project. Edison's movies were entertaining indoor performances. Lumière's movies documented the world outdoors. His camera "was an ideal instrument for catching life on the run"—*sur le vif*, as Lumière put it.²⁶

The American film director, comedian and cartoonist Terry Gilliam has argued that the nineteenth century sense of cinema as a whole came from the flickering passages seen by riders in trains when they looked out at the passing landscape through the train window's frame.²⁷ One technology inspired another. And without electricity in the 1890s neither the Lumière brothers in France nor Thomas Edison and George Eastman working together in America could have established the craft of filming and projection. (However, vigorous, mobile entertainment existed prior to the new technology—the street theater, the carnival, and the enthusiastic links of circus rings. So it was not the technology alone that provided the creative genesis.)

Class

The novel dates back at least to Heliodorus (third century A.D.). In the long run the novel is a far more formal genre and has been a more creative medium than film. Both novel and literature are preindustrial arts, but movies are an industrial art. The novel also has a lengthy record as a class-oriented medium. For centuries the novel relied on the upper and middle-class elitism of literacy. Cinema was born as mass and popular cultures bloomed in urban civilizations in modern times. As critics have noted about cinema since its pre-World War One days of Nickelodeon entertainment, it is the most popular and democratic of art forms (although admission did not always cost only a nickel). The 1913 admission price to the spectacular movie *Quo Vadis* was the current equivalent of about \$31.00.²⁸

Movies fed on the placenta of the popular, the common coin, and not on the support of a superior class.²⁹ Movies were ushered into existence by the common, human hunger for story. This is part of the special process which, together with other characteristics, helps to define American culture. "American man," wrote Eric Hoffer, "is eminently a storyteller. His search for a purpose, a cause, an ideal, a mission and the like is largely a search for a plot and a pattern in the development of his life story—a story that is basically without meaning or pattern."³⁰ Every American group creates stories about its own heroes and villains which help to reinforce and provide identity for the group. In its relatively short run compared to literature and history, the movie business has democratically catered to wider audience needs and market demands.

The Visual Book

At the risk of arguing by list, note that the illustrated book has been around for a very long time. The written text has a huge history of visual relationships. Indeed, has the written text ever not been illustrated?³¹ For our American cultural history purposes a fascinating detail in this long chronicle is that the very first best seller in America was an illustrated book. Indeed, it was a very illustrated book: Francis Quarles' *Emblemes* (1635) and *Hieroglyphikes* (1638). These were each an emblem book—a work of moral and religious verse based on Bible quotations in which the word text was matched by allegorical illustrations. Quarles' *Emblemes* and *Hieroglyphikes* were the best emblem books produced in England in English, and undoubtedly in America as well.³²

Which is to say that America was ever a nation with a strong preference for visual communication, long before the cinema. The entertainment industry, with movies and TV in particular, are to the United States what wine is to France or oil is to Saudi Arabia. One reason why movies made such great headway in the United States was because of the nation's pronounced national taste for and tradition of visual communication and storytelling. Once twentieth-century U.S. mass media was established in 1930—with electric sound recordings, radio and movies—non-fiction book titles outnumbered fiction titles. The greater part of storytelling moved to the new media.

Types of Adaptation

When adapting from literature to film, one begins with the raw stuff, the subject matter of a short story, novella, or novel, of a play, history, biography, or with a poem, song, or folk tale. It is all good because it is ready-made and market-tested. The characters and stories are already popular. Now they have to be mass-produced. Three types of adaptation follow: loose, faithful, or literal.³³ Adaptation is by nature a translation into a different medium which expresses itself by using a different group of techniques, essential materials, and rules of creative harmony.

Loose

The loose adaptation takes the raw stuff and reweaves it into a movie as the director, producer, or studio wishes and as the movie needs. Contemporary cultural norms are often a determining factor. The various adaptations of James Cain's all-American novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934) became more overtly sexual as the times—and countries of adaptation—changed. One could easily imagine an effective and even momentarily pornographic adaptation of this steamy, laconic crime thriller at some point in the future.³⁴ In *The Postman Always Rings Twice* libidinal action is the narrative's existential pumping force. Its *eros* and *thanatos* are deliciously extreme and invite loose play.³⁵

One should wonder about action. Overall, are Americans and American cinema prone to loose adaptations because of an emphasis on action as an end in itself within the civilization? "I need a little less talk and a lot more action," is a common State-side saying. And as Anglo-American actor Michael Caine claimed in his autobiography: "The British make 'talking pictures;' Americans make 'moving pictures.'"³⁶ This is not universally true, but good enough to be a rule of thumb. In American national tradition, a movie is a mover and a shaker, it tries to provide emotional satisfaction for its audience. Example: The 1935 film version of Jack London's excellent *Call of the Wild*—starring Clark Gable, Jack Oakie and Loretta Young, was a fine film in its own way (billed with the tagline: "An Epic Novel . . . An Epic Picture!")—but it typically lacked the level of thoughtful backstory present in the novel.³⁷ Plus, the very popular buddy character in the movie, Short Hoolihan, was played by Jack Oakie (1903–1978). Oakie was the inveterate scene stealer with the charm of a big, friendly, flappy, hairy dog. He was the nation's loveable, pudgy, all-American, good time "Okie" character of the era. "No matter how hard I worked all day, I could always find a party to go to," he wrote in his autobiography *Jack Oakie's Double Takes*.³⁸ Just as the actors Richard Roundtree in *Shaft* (1971) and Eddie Murphy in *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984) provided audience interest because they integrated a new kind of American into the mainstream—a back-talking, thoroughly male, self-confident, Black protagonist—so did Jack Oakie in his time and place blend in a hearty contemporary figure: a working-class, funny and eventually successful White guy from Oklahoma or the Red River Valley country.³⁹

Jack Oakie's popularity was more important than the integrity of Jack London's original text. After Hoolihan-Oakie was shown to die in *Call of the Wild's* world premiere held at the Cathay Circle Theater in Los Angeles (an action

true to the novel), the audience was so upset that a new ending was provided for the movie in which Oakie lived, so the public (and MGM's box office) would not be disappointed. And would Jack London, champion of the rough and tumble working class (who wrote: "affluence means influence"), have been upset? Why not let Hoolihan-Oakie live? A traditional condition of action rather than reflection in American cinema was specially true through the 1950s and 1960s. Then something changed. By that time over five hundred art house or art theater halls flourished in the U.S.A. showing foreign films: in the Boston, Massachusetts area, for example, the well-known Brattle Street Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Coolidge Corner Theater in Brookline, or the Paris Cinema on Boylston Street in Boston. There was both an artistic and a market message here.

The new generation of Baby Boomer U.S. audience and film makers were subsequently receptive to and incorporated into U.S. films the serious aesthetic and social intentions of non-U.S. movies. At one level, this distinction gradually dissolved between the reflective-artistic qualities of U.S. and non-U.S. films, and consequently the number of art theaters rapidly dwindled. At another level, the American need for action, star power, and contemporaneity which could justify loose adaptation remained. Examples of loose adaptation in American cinema would be: *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1945, directed by William Wyler—adapted from the prose poem *Glory for Me* by MacKinlay Kantor⁴⁰), *King Creole* (1958, directed by Michael Curtiz, loosely adapted from *A Stone for Danny Fisher* by Harold Robbins⁴¹), or Disney's *Pinocchio* (1940, loosely based on the original Italian version). The loose adaptation may add additional subplots and characters, change situation or setting. Some of the original, in spirit or in fact, still remains. Loose adaptation can also mean expanding only a few lines from an original text. The original Biblical story of David and Bathsheba—the approximately one thousand words of II Samuel 11: 2–27, 12: 1–24—is part of one of the oldest pieces of historiography in the Western world, II Samuel 9–20 and I Kings 11–22. It became the movie *David and Bathsheba* (1951, taglined: "For this woman . . . he broke God's own commandment!").⁴² This loose adaptation of a Biblical text was earnest, austere and languid.

As often happens with folklore or Biblical texts, star power and storyline changes heightened the interest and drama of the plot. In the original Biblical version King David spies Bathsheba by chance: "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon." (II Samuel 11.2) But in the adaptation directed by Henry King and written by Philip Dunne (which received the Academy Award nomination for Best Writing: Story and Screenplay), Bathsheba exposed herself on purpose in order to seduce David. Their subsequent betrayal was an expression of mutual complicity. The vicarious interest of the 1950s American women in the movie audience was heightened. Bathsheba was an agent, not just a victim. Like popular music and folk song, texts from the Bible, legends, or folklore have the nature of common property. Like popular song, the original text is anonymous or invented by an individual or group who yields it to the community. The story or song is then modified or taken apart in performance.

Arguably the most adapted source works are legends. Some film historians count the vampire legend as the single most adapted tale of all time. Could a legend be that tantalizing end point for history and beginning place for myth where all is possible?⁴³

Faithful

The faithful adaptation takes the literary or historical experience and tries to translate it as close as possible into the filmic experience. Sometimes there are equivalents in film to the original way of saying or doing what happens in literature and history, and sometimes not. And "faithful" depends on the movie makers' knack to be true to the original spirit of the raw stuff, the primary source. Faithful works from the inside out; loose works from the outside in. Loose has no problem with dismantling and reassembling, breaking up and remaking totally anew. Faithful wants to stay loyal to the intention of the original, to convey the heart and soul. So in a faithful adaptation, even if the movie went so far as to change the original story's ending, the movie makers would want to make sure that they did not betray the core meaning.

Some outstanding twentieth century examples of faithful cinematic renditions of an original literary or historical text are: *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943, directed by William Wellman; novel: 1940), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940, directed by John Ford; novel: 1939), *The Godfather* (1972, directed by Francis Ford Coppola; novel: 1969), *The*

Man Who Would Be King (1975, directed by John Huston, from Rudyard Kipling's short story of the same name 1888), *The Dead* (1987, directed by John Huston, from the story in Joyce's *Dubliners*, 1914), *Dances With Wolves* (1990, directed by Kevin Costner, adapted from Michael Blake's novel of the same name, 1986–1988.)

The faithful adaptation has the thorny problem of the narrator and the general commentary. The narrator is the good shepherd who guides the flock of meanings in the original, word-based text. How do you replace such an important figure without losing direction? In Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, for example, seventeen percent of the novel were general commentary. In the movie's faithful adaptation by John Ford and Twentieth Century Fox there was no voice-over narrator in the filmic space.⁴⁴ But each medium worked perfectly well on its own terms. The movie *Grapes of Wrath* maintained a serious narrative tone. It had mature quality of cinematic sound, coloring, photography and casting which helped to replace and even enhance the historical novel's original voice. Dorothea Lange's 1930s pitch-perfect photographic style was incorporated by the film's Director of Photography Gregg Toland. Alfred Newman's musical score achieved superb shading. The casting of the Joad family was done with vigor and depth: Jane Darwell as Ma Joad, solid as oak, yet vulnerable in her strength; Henry Fonda, —as Steinbeck himself said: "A lean, stringy, dark-faced piece of electricity walked out on the screen and he had me. I believed my own story again."⁴⁵ The public relations department at Twentieth Century Fox possibly pushed this maturity too far. They emphasized the serious nature of the movie's subject when it was released by stressing that *Grapes of Wrath* was only for an adult audience. It was taglined: "The thousands who have read the book will know why WE WILL NOT SELL ANY CHILDREN TICKETS to see this picture!"⁴⁶

The social conventions of 1940 also did not allow John Ford to end *Grapes of Wrath* with the novel's last scene of young Rose of Sharon baring her breast and suckling the starving man who "was about fifty, his whiskery face gaunt, and his open eyes . . . vague and staring" and who hadn't eaten for about six days. But Ford did manage to end his version with the book's characteristic note of spreading the milk of human kindness. The movie draws to a conclusion with a concise version of the novel's chapter twenty-eight farewell scene between Tom Joad and his mother.

Literal

A strong expression of a literal adaptation is often a play performed as a movie. This includes movies filmed on stage and in performance (as in the Broadway Theater Archive series⁴⁷). Or it could be a play such as Arthur Miller's *Death of A Salesman* (1949) which has been faithfully transmuted at least three times into cinema: in 1951 (directed by László Benedek, starring Frederic March as Willy Loman), in 1966 (directed by Alex Segal, starring Lee J. Cobb, who had already appeared in Miller's original 1949 production), and then in 1985 (directed by Volker Schlöndorff, starring Dustin Hoffman). A good example of an outstanding historical play literally adapted to film is *Sunrise at Campobello*, 1960, adapted from the 1958 stage drama about Franklin Delano Roosevelt written by the politically engaged Dore Schary.⁴⁸

What happens to the play transferred to film? Well, a film has incredibly more space than a stage. A movie can literally take the scenic arrangement outside and the medium offers the director all sorts of tempting forms of physical and psychological expansion. Franklin Roosevelt's dramatic walk without crutches on his crippled legs to the podium, with one hand on a cane and the other hand clutching his son's arm, to deliver the 1924 Presidential nominating speech for Al Smith before thousands of spectators at the Democratic Party Convention within the huge dome of Madison Square Garden is suitably heightened in the movie version.

Film offers a variety of focused and sustained camera angles. It expands or contracts our experience by virtue of the absence of the space-time continuum. Shots in separate spaces are edited together. Different times can be spliced, joined, or blended. The everyday sequential chain of experience is removed, intensified, or rearranged. The environment—the viewing filter of a dark theater or a quiet room—enhances the experience. This can make the literal adaptation of a visually contained text, like the rooms in *Death of a Salesman*, claustrophobic. Yet, by doing so, it heightens the play's inherent tone of psychological oppression and impending doom. Each version of *Death of a Salesman* is enhanced by cinematic techniques of expressionism.

A movie can accordion a play up or down, enlarge it or reduce it. Although the phenomenon of live performance—the smell of grease paint, the timber of the actors' and actresses' uneven voices, the emotions of the crowd, and

even the creak of the theater's seats, all of which are at the heart and soul of theater—are rarely there in a movie. The 1981 film *Zoot Suit*, the faithful adaptation of a play based on the historical incident of L.A.'s World War II 1940s "Zoot Suit Riots," is an exception.⁴⁹ A Hollywood feature film needs a celebrity actor to pull in a big box office. And the star of the day may be a Brad Pitt or an Angelina Jolie or a Tom Cruise who may or may not be appropriate for the play itself. But they have the pull to secure the part. A case in point was the original film adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. Williams said it was "the most awful travesty of the play I've ever seen . . . horribly mangled by the people who did the film script." Williams particularly disliked the choice of casting, with actress Gertrude Lawrence playing the mother Amanda Wingfield and Jane Wyman playing Laura Wingfield. But he thought the opposite way about Elia Kazan's darkly brilliant adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* with fleshy, brutal Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski and a tremulous Vivien Leigh as pale Blanche DuBois.⁵⁰

A play as a play on stage, in contrast, concentrates and frames audience focus. On stage characters adapt to the same words and action at the same time and on the same plain. The stage space is a limited horizontal plain as opposed to the immense vertical plain of the movie screen. The stage has three dimensions and a movie two. But the absence of the space-time continuum in a movie provides oneiric depth. This is partly created by the sensation of inevitable flow. With a theatrical stage, each member of the audience individually chooses where to look, who to listen to, or who or what to hold on to most attentively. In a movie, the camera keeps making that choice and providing the small, medium, and big picture. The camera decides what you see and where you look and even who your ears perk up to the most. The camera is your eyes, it is inevitable flow. As the exuberant Russian director Dziga Vertov (1896–1954) declared, for a film perception of the world the most fundamental point is the "use of the camera as a cinema eye more perfect than the human eye for exploring the chaos of visual phenomena filling the universe We cannot improve our eyes, but we can always improve the camera."⁵¹ Yet faithful types of adaptation tend to impose self-destructive limitations, to sacrifice power for loyalty, risk for reassurance. When Tom Stoppard wrote the screenplay, Robert Benton directed, and Dustin Hoffman starred in the faithful 1991 movie adaptation of E. L. Doctorow's brilliant novel *Billy Bathgate*, the film was a flop. "We have seen this world before, in every gangster movie set in the 1920s or 1930s," wrote *Chicago Sun-Times* critic Roger Ebert, "but never has it had less juice, been more dry and exhausted."⁵²

Art is risk. Art is: "always pushing . . . always wanting to explore . . . you want to get yourself into trouble and see how well you can fight your way out of it."⁵³ Whether it be a loose, faithful, or literal adaptation, at the end of the day, the final result of success or failure is not a matter of formula but finesse. How well you fight your way out of it. "It is not enough to show bits of truth on the screen, separate frames of truth" wrote Vertov. "These frames must be thematically organized so that the whole is also a truth."⁵⁴

Documentary and Literal Adaptation

Documentary films seek a form of literal adaptation to be historically sound. But the nature of historical truth achieved by documentary is debatable. Documentary is not a verbatim representation. As noted earlier, conventional wisdom defines documentary as "relating to or found in documents: aiming at presentation of reality . . . broadly factual, objective." Objective? As historian Erik Barnouw maintained, a documentary film director makes endless choices:

. . . of topic, people, vistas, angles, lenses, juxtapositions, sounds words. Each selection is an expression of a point of view . . . [thus] of course a propagandistic role *is* involved. One can hardly imagine a documentary . . . that is *not* propaganda—in the sense of trying to present evidence that may enlarge understanding and change ideas. A documentary cannot be 'the truth'. It is evidence, testimony—which announces its topic, alerts our critical faculties, and at its best is part of the diverse testimony which is at the very heart of a democratic process.⁵⁵

A documentary is not fiction but faith. As propaganda itself—from its original Latin use: *de propaganda fide*, "concerning the faith to be propagated" [Vatican, 1622]⁵⁶—documentary takes a stand, holds a cause. A documentary provides objective reality filtered. As a case in point, consider Ken Burns' *The Civil War* (1990). It began literally as a time of war film. It was initially screened in the U.S.A. on PBS television in a national

environment of intensifying patriotism as the Persian Gulf War developed in the fall of 1990.⁵⁷ *Episode One: The Cause—1861* ended with a very moving letter from a soldier to his wife, written July 14, 1861, which stressed his undying love and commitment to his wife, family, principles, and government. “I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government.”⁵⁸ That soldier died fighting for his American cause shortly thereafter. The launch of Burns’ *The Civil War* was propitious.

Next, *The Civil War* was a movie made for TV. Television has a “bardic function” in most modern cultures. It is a social ritual which overrides individual distinctions and in which people freely engage in order to communicate with the collective, cultural self.⁵⁹ This has particularly been true in the U.S.A for open-access network TV and for Public Broadcasting Service TV. PBS programs a common, national schedule. Yet PBS is locally based in a non-profit organization (a university, state agency, or community organization). It receives almost 25 percent of its total revenue from viewer donations (“Viewers like you!” as most PBS programs begin by declaring.) And it is watched by about one third of the U.S. population each week.⁶⁰ *The Civil War*’s success—the program amassed in the U.S.A. the largest audience for any series in public TV history, more than 14 million viewers watched each evening, while 39 million Americans tuned into at least one episode of the telecast—was reinforced by its TV channel context.⁶¹ At its best, PBS TV is the community talking to itself. Its programs are not flashy frames for ads, as network TV can easily be. It seeks to accommodate itself to the actual community. Burns’ *Civil War* clicked with current U.S. mass media reality.

Third, among the viewers who saw *The Civil War* enthusiastically it was common to find this documentary called the best history lesson they ever had. As one person wrote: “. . . Burns, in a very real way, is that special teacher most of us have who convinces us for a while that there is, indeed, interest to be plumbed where there was never interest before.”⁶² Though he is aware of its shortcomings as history, Burns has stressed the timely need for his documentary: “I don’t think the story of the Civil War can be told too often. I think it surely ought to be retold for every generation.”⁶³ It is a movie that adapts by updating historical reality.

Fourth, *The Civil War* had also been received by some Americans as “history with honey” and overweighted with “. . . visual rhetoric, maudlin music and lugubrious readings.”⁶⁴ Burns resurrects the gloomy Victorian sentimentality characteristic of the 1800s. But this is a spirit true to the realism of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain and the Civil War itself. Burns’ literal version of that event is a deeply moral and emotional reading. One can hear a Civil War tone of awe, pain and lucid innocence from the voice of Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn when he reflects on the mob action he witnesses at the end of Chapter 33 in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)—when two old men are stripped down, smeared with hot tar, stuck with feathers, each made to sit astraddle and crotch raw on a splintery wooden rail upon which they were jounced and bounced out of town. “Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn’t ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world,” thought Huck. “It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another.”⁶⁵

Lastly, Burns takes his reading of the Civil War beyond maudlin grief and woe. The documentary updates the event by an integrated synthesis which involves the deep witness of the popular, ordinary viewpoint given by common soldiers, farmers, workers, immigrants, tradesmen and women of all minorities. The traditional occupation of transcendent ideals, the strategies and statistics of battles, the doings of great men and women is subdued—but not omitted. He makes of the event a story of tragic reconciliation. “Between 1861 and 1865, Americans made war on each other and killed each other in order to become the kind of country that could no longer conceive how that was possible” (*Civil War, Episode One: The Cause—1861*). It was a sublimely satisfying sacrifice. The documentary’s driving principle is separation followed by reconciliation and union.

A few points about Lincoln’s presentation in most U.S. documentaries and fiction films: Why have U.S. movies and TV found Lincoln so attractive? There have been about six hundred significant film and TV productions which have incorporated Abraham Lincoln, not counting his use in everything from TV variety to new programs.⁶⁶ Lincoln was a distinctly memorable subject for still visuals and later became a natural subject for moving

pictures. He was a main dish of that meal which fed the public's ongoing appetite for Civil War stories as the event which defined modern America. Lincoln was ready-made, market-tested, already popular and in the public domain—waiting to be mass-produced. He had also been a very entertaining man. Thus Lincoln the humorist became a great source of ongoing public entertainment. And he was far and away the most beguiling and diverting of early U.S. Presidents.

Finally, the subject matter of Lincoln, the Civil War, and slavery in fiction, film, or historical renditions has been a way Americans have tried to come to terms with tragedy. Abraham Lincoln's monumental nature has served as a common, contested ground for coming to terms with American identity by Americans themselves; collective representation. (As the U.S.A. has become globally less self-confident over the past few decades, notice how Lincoln's own heroic, legendary stature has diminished in the United States.) He is a figure Americans can publicly turn to in times of trial. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech" of August, 1963 is inconceivable without the background of Washington, D.C.'s Lincoln Memorial. It is striking how Lincoln was quoted or noted on U.S. TV around the time of the 9/11 World Trade Center attack. But Lincoln can also be dismissed, rejected, neglected, readjusted. Just like tragedy itself in the U.S.A.?

Questions of Film Medium

Words

"All we have are words," murmurs one of the characters in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Is this true? How important in a movie are words? How important that language itself be proper to the filmic experience? Could it be that the more outstanding the use of language is in a movie, the more it stands out and might even displace the viewing of a story.

A striking contemporary case in point would be the movies directed, written, or co-written by the contemporary American writer David Mamet, such as *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992, directed by James Foley, screenplay by David Mamet) or *The Winslow Boy* (1999, directed and written by David Mamet, play by Terence Rattigan). At Mamet's best his language drives the story forward with its sparks of wit, its brain tickles, his electric sense of timing—as in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981, directed by Bob Rafelson, screenplay by David Mamet), *Heist* (2001, directed and written by David Mamet), or *Spartan* (2004, directed and written by David Mamet). At Mamet's cinematic worst, his linguistic eloquence slows the story down—as in *House of Games* (1987, directed by David Mamet, screenplay by David Mamet and Jonathan Katz), or *The Spanish Prisoner* (1997, directed and written by David Mamet). In this last case he is a mix of lumpy Samuel Beckett peppered with an overdose of Harold Pinter's pregnant pauses. Mamet's ambiguous success italicizes the question: Can language be too good for cinema?

Then there is the matter of speaking it out. If a character does not say what his or her problem is, then how does the audience know? If we are not told with words, then how is the audience told? And what do we know by the way we are told? It is in the nature of the film medium that a movie only has a few ways by which actors can reveal their thoughts. These are: by what the actors say, their facial expressions, body language, transparent action, or by context (often reinforced by music or sound) which reveals what the actors and actresses are thinking or feeling.⁶⁷ The bewitching but irascible Bette Davis (1908–1989) once complained on set: "I want it to be me who walks up that staircase, and not the goddamn music!"

Whose language carries the story along? Is the movie narrated? If so, what kind of rapport is established by the narrator with the audience? As U.S. film director Mike Nichols said: "A movie is like a person. Either you trust it or you don't." Who or what establishes that trust? (In the glorious Hollywood epic *The Vikings*, 1958, only the sonorous voice of Orson Welles narrating could have established such aural trust in the audience.) Short story, novella, and novel have a viewpoint. Does a movie? Does the movie have one or many points of view? Can it have none at all? Can a movie seem to be only a camera?

The style and authorship of the screenplay matters. It can be key seasoning in the feast of the movie. Numerous great American writers have worked for and enhanced Hollywood writing scripts: F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Raymond Chandler, Neil Simon, and Robert Sherwood to name only five. In some cases, people who

were full-time screenwriters also turned out remarkable novels—notably screenwriters of Hollywood's golden age, such as W. R. Burnett, Niven Busch, and James M. Cain.⁶⁸ Whoever wrote the screenplay must be factored in to the equation of failed or successful adaptation. Is it true—a point so often made that it is tiresome—that the inferior work of literature is the best raw material with which to make a superior work of film? That weak, sensational stories are given greater credibility and depth when made into movies? Though widely claimed, this is far from self-evident. This piece of conventional wisdom functions on the metaphor that great manure produces brilliant crops. Surely, the best Shakespearian film adaptations disprove this argument.

The issue of the quality of the original versus the quality of the adaptation is really a matter of the match of makers. John Ford made a masterpiece movie out of a masterpiece novel with *Grapes of Wrath*. But Hollywood's 1956 version of *War and Peace* directed by King Vidor was a disaster, whereas the Russian, faithful adaptation version of 1968, *Voyna i mir*, directed by Sergei Bondarchuk, was a master work. I would personally contend that whatever results from an adaptation of literature to film depends on the ability and creative—often commercial or material—opportunities of the film maker. Weak books do not automatically make strong movies, nor do strong movies make weak books.

Finally, with regard to words, there is the matter of the veracity of language and the ethnicity of the characters. From the time of D. W. Griffith's *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912), the first Hollywood gangster film, the street-wise Italians and Irish were singled out. The movie characters spoke a rough patois of idiomatic gutter talk that thrilled or shocked many contemporary audiences. But it took decades before the movies were close to the original, the authentic street slang, or the use of a genuine street accent and ethnic terms.

The written word in literate America has been more articulate and daring with accents and vulgarities—dating back at least to the creation of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn characters in the 1870s and 80s. There is good reason to believe that Huck's language in the classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) was actually modeled on authentic African-American vernacular of the period.⁶⁹ But it was common in U.S. movies until the 1960s that a Jew would play an Italian—such as Paul Muni playing an Al Capone figure in the 1932 *Scarface—The Shame of a Nation* (adapted from the novel by Armitage Trail), or a Mexican would play an Indian, a Chinese person, a Frenchman, a Greek, or an Arab—such as the versatile and full-blooded actor Anthony Quinn actually did. Veracity did not count as much as getting the story told well on film.

Cans and Cannels: Genres

Genres of literature and film overlap. Each do gangster, detective, war, horror, romance, science fiction and western stories, the spy thriller, the propaganda story or the documentary, the comic and the tragic mode very well. A story told in one of the various wide-screen and wide-film photographic processes and viewing systems channel their message in a way only a movie can. Wide-screen effect can alter genre effect and meaning. Technical advantage has always been an important factor and was often developed by the U.S. movie industry as it was competing for the entertainment dollar with the written word, radio or live entertainment, and, later, with television.

The technical edge that American movies claimed over the written word and other forms of entertainment was shown by a history of spectacular visual promises. This started with Vitascope (first developed late 1890s), then there was Polyvision (first developed 1920s), followed by Vitarama (late 1930s), Fox Grandeur (1930s), 3-D (first U.S. use 1922, popular in the 1950s and, once again, today), Cinerama (1950s), Superscope, Panscope, Warnerscope, and Todd-AO (1950s), IMAX (Omnimax or Imax Dome [began 1970], Imax 3D [1990s]), and some of the newer digital delivery systems now used.

Texture

Movies are fundamentally a material culture, a plastic art—in the original sense of plastic as molding, shaping, fashioning or giving form to a yielding material such as clay or wax. Movies' yielding materials are the flesh and blood of the actors and the technicians, the flickering celluloid photos or digital pixels which show and sound when reproduced before us on the screen. Movies are actually between 16 to 30 still photographs per second exhibited before us in quick succession. The human brain fills in the gaps and creates continuity. The

phenomenon called persistence of vision. Literature—mediated by word, handwriting, or print—is far more immaterial and abstract. “Words are but the vague shadows of the volumes we mean,” wrote Theodore Dreiser in *Sister Carrie*. “Little audible links, they are, chaining together great inaudible feelings and purposes.”⁷⁰ Literature “is not reducible to the words on the page,” noted the sympathetic sage of the Beatniks Kenneth Rexroth (1905–1982). In what we can define as literature “they are there because of the craft of writing. As an art, literature is the organization of words to give pleasure; through them it elevates and transforms experience; through them it functions in society as a continuing symbolic criticism of values.”⁷¹

For writers who are specially psychological or who favor stream-of-consciousness writing or an intimism style, television is “arguably a more suitable medium than feature films” since a small screen favors “a concentration on character and dialogue rather than action and spectacle.”⁷² One can see the success of small screen intimacy in U.S. TV shows ranging from *I Love Lucy* (1951–1957, starring Lucille Ball) through to *Deadwood* (2004–2006, HBO, starring Ian McShane) and *Desperate Housewives* (2004–present, HBO, starring Teri Hatcher).

Anglo-American examples of thickly psychological texts which do not lend themselves to an easy adaptation are the experimental novels of the conscious, unconscious, and subconscious life—those written by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, or William Faulkner.⁷³ But other forms of primary, interior narrative are also hard to translate into film. A notoriously spectacular goof when adapting literature of an intimism style to film was the 1959 adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (directed by George Stevens) into Cinemascope format. As Chicago critic Dave Kehr noted at the time, *The Diary of Anne Frank* represented director George Stevens “at the height of his pretentiousness and the depths of his accomplishment.”⁷⁴ Cinemascope had its virtues. But in a story about alienation, fragmentation, and being in closed or narrow spaces, a contextual arrangement that emphasized width, height and open space was wholly inappropriate.

By taking the right creative liberties for the story at hand, a fine movie which is a faithful adaptation of a thickly psychological text—but not literal—can be made. Thus one has the acceptable 1969 Technicolor and Panavision version of William Faulkner’s *The Reivers*, the brilliant British 1969 adaptation of D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* by Ken Russel, and the truly great Robert Rossen, 1949, film version of Robert Penn Warren’s Faulknerian opus *All The King’s Men* (1946; Pulitzer Prize in 1947). Notable with respect to creating a psychological, interior space in the outer, visual space of movies has been the incorporation of the brilliantly distortional techniques of the German cinema of Expressionism into U.S. movies. One can experience this, for example, in the Hollywood art of German-American director Fritz Lang (1890–1976, specially in his early Warner Brothers studio work of the 1930s and 1940s).

Creative liberty also means to use or not to use literature at all. As the American movie-going audience became more accustomed to mass media communication, a link with literary sources was considered less necessary for a movie. The earlier films of the Hollywood studios were quite conservative in this respect. Then U.S. independent cinema—ships that sailed without the need for literary ballast—began developing in the early 1950s, with a distinct and indigenous independent cinema movement existing by the late 1960s and 1970s. U.S. movies became less literary. From the 1930s to the 1960s in the U.S.A., the majority of major films were based on material that came from other forms, mainly literary, while most U.S. films nowadays are created from scripts written to be filmed directly.

Either way, a movie has to maintain the thrill that runs like a cross beam through the structure of the story. Commit this act of electrical transfer and the adaptation transmits something essential about the original. It adapts and fits the recreation near to the previous link in the chain of the greater story telling.

Voice and Narrator

The words of literature are spoken in a temper, tone, and voice—“voice of the Bard! / Who Present, Past & Future, sees.”⁷⁵ When adapting from literature to film, the problem of viewpoint and voice is specially evident when one has a strong first-person narrator in the original—like Huck Finn in Twain’s *Adventures of Huck Finn* (1884) or Holden Caulfield in Salinger’s *Catcher in The Rye* (1951). This is unfair competition. Read their respective opening lines: “You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain’t no matter.” And: “If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you’ll

probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it."⁷⁶ The voice has spoken. It has been done. Twain and Salinger got it right the first time. No matter how good the actor, a voice-over on a movie sound track which uses the same words could not get the same effect. Because one has the original effect—the authentic original—produced by Huck and Holden themselves. Over time the voice-over technique has evolved and diminished. There is much less of it than there used to be. Anglophone movies until the 1950s easily used voice-overs of a literary nature in one of four ways. These ways were:

- i. as an objective narrator in a fictional film who brings us forward in time, who prepares us for an event, or comments on the action (*The Vikings*, 1958, directed by Richard Fleischer, with the sonorous voice of Orson Welles);
- ii. as a first-person narrator who participates in the film and who now gives us a subjective commentary on an scene in which he or she appears, or performs the narrative functions described in a fictional film in which he or she does not appear (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1945, directed by Albert Lewin; *Dances With Wolves*, 1990, directed by Kevin Costner; *The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994, directed by Frank Darabont);
- iii. as a screen character whose thoughts we overhear (*The Lady in the Lake*, 1946, directed by Robert Montgomery; *The Barber*, 2001, directed by Michael Bafaro; *The 13th Warrior*, 1999, directed by John McTiernan);
- iv. as a character in the film whose voice is heard in another character's imagination (e.g., while reading that person's letter or even that person's mind (*A Letter to Three Wives*, 1949, directed by Joseph Mankiewicz; *Forbidden Planet*, 1956, directed by Fred Wilcock, adapted from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*). Of course, these voices overlap, as voices often do.⁷⁷

In the post-World War II period American movies became more cinematic and less literary. They relied more on direct exposition by way of the camera or on a well-blended, simultaneous combination of what is seen and what is thought. So that when only the outside of a building or vehicle is seen, a character's voice can enter inside. Or a character's voice overlaps from scene to scene. This cannot be done in a literary text. Strictly visual presentation and a simultaneous narrative voice which is separate from visual presentation cannot be done in a traditional novel. But the modern graphic novel, such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1973–1991), can achieve this simultaneity.⁷⁸

Hence, the options of the adaptor are clear. Literature adapted to movies has "to be severely altered, cut," as U.S. actor and director Erwin Panofsky said, and needs to be seriously "enriched by interpolations to make good movie scripts."⁷⁹ The creator becomes a destroyer in order to create. The individual responsible for writing the various stages of a film script "must be allowed to rearrange, cut and add whatever he feels is necessary to make the material work in cinematic terms," as American screenwriter and playwright William Packard noted.⁸⁰

Screenwriting, Collaboration

Practically speaking, at least two major material actions must be done in the adaptation process. The screenplay taken from a book is the crucial link between the original literature and the final film. The screenwriter has to have removed and reproduced the story's central axis into the screenplay, which must also possess the original's driving passion. "You try to find what is the spine of the piece," screenwriter William Goldman exclaimed, "plus, you have to think what was it that thrilled you? . . . What moved you?" . . . Now, you have to combine those two things somehow . . . Plus keeping the story straight."⁸¹ But that's only half the battle, since "a screenplay is an imperfect reflection of the film."⁸²

The remarkable U.S. novelist and screenwriter W. R. Burnett (1899–1982) solved this problem by first writing his own novels—which he would then rewrite and transfer into movie screenplays. When he could, he would also be present at the actual filming of the story in order to assist the director with dialogue needs and changes. Two of his spectacular successes in the gangster film genre were *High Sierra* (1941) and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950).⁸³

The contemporary American director Terry Gilliam first writes his own graphic novel version of his films in the previsualization technique of storyboarding, which he then transfers to the screen as his movie, such as in *Brazil* (1985).

The second major action required by the adaptation process—far longer and more elaborate—is the whole collaborative and creative process of the filmmaking itself. This is a process in which tinkering and alterations, additions and subtractions, individual efforts and collaborations are done all along the line. Movies, as a medium of American popular culture, are a collaborative art by their very nature. Rarely can one man or woman make and distribute a work of popular culture, and certainly not a movie. The cinematic process includes at least a half-dozen steps along the way.

The Cinematic Process: Six Steps

First, the film maker has to locate a coherent story which an audience will accept and want to see told. Or, rather, re-told on screen. Shakespeare is always good fodder. Or even Herman Melville's wordy and metaphysically extraordinary *Moby Dick* (1851) can succeed—if cut and re-fit into film with the gusto and finesse of John Huston.⁸⁴

Second, the producer has to figure out what the film will cost once it is adapted from this work of fiction and if he can pay for it. If the work is no longer copyrighted, all the better. Then there is no original intellectual property to worry about and no royalties to pay for a primary text. If it is an old story, the primary text might also be attractive because it is a costume drama—such as an adaptation from Charles Dickens or Henry James.

Third comes the matter of precedent. Has this kind of thing sold before? Since movies are a commercial industry—like cars, pencils, or the production of different brands and flavors of toothpaste, well, you figure it out—the bank wants to back merchandise with a good track record. If one brand of toothpaste hits upon peppermint as a smash hit with the consumer, then many other peppermint-flavored brands will soon follow. Likewise, adaptations from fiction come in batches: Henry James' *Daisy Miller* (1974, directed by Peter Bogdanovich), *The Europeans* (1979, directed by Merchant-Ivory), *The Bostonians* (1984, directed by Merchant-Ivory). Then, about a decade later, a second wave: *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996, directed by Jane Campion), *Washington Square* (1997, directed by Agnieszka Holland), *The Wings of the Dove* (1997, directed by Iain Softley), *Under Heaven* (1998, directed by Meg Richman—also adapted from *The Wings of the Dove*), *Notting Hill* (1999, directed by Roger Michell—a romantic comedy in which Hugh Grant meets Julia Roberts while she is in London filming an unspecified Henry James novel), and *The Golden Bowl* (2000, directed by James Ivory). Why was Henry James, that most intricate and brazenly baroque of all American highbrow writers, so often adapted to film? Henry James' fat is made lean. And once slimmed down, Henry James sells. And, as James' early contemporary Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, though he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."⁸⁵

One should see movies not only as fulfilling the requirements of a genre, but as part of a cycle, as film critic Jonathan Muby has insisted. A "cycle" was the term commonly used in America for movie types prior to World War II. This is where censorship—which has effected both literature and movies in America—enters in. Both violence or gangsterism in literature and movies can be socially threatening. They are dangerous expressions "of a larger disorganizing and destructive force," cycles of violence and crime which threaten society. Especially when displayed in the mass media of movies they threaten society from within—they are cycles "vocalized from within the machinery of cultural administration."⁸⁶ Henry James adaptations, on the other hand, have offered reassuring cycles of costume drama gentility which have been perfumed by frail trails of psychological insight.

The fourth step in the modern creative process of film-making is the pre-sale. In the movie industry, pre-sale has two meanings. Before you sell your commodity to the general public, you conduct a private sale of the product. This way one gains financial support to complete the product and may provide eventual profits for the investor. And as pre-sale is the formative period before sale, product production may be distant from the actual place of production and initial distribution. The maker can sell a product not yet produced in one country in yet another country far away. It is all part of the movie game. With a movie one can have outstanding actors, special effects, and a great story in hand—from which basis one sells the distribution rights prior to completion. Particularly

abroad; overseas is a good place to sell. They buy on conceptual credit—Sherlock Holmes from the British for the Americans, Sylvester Stallone or Clint Eastwood from the Americans for the Europeans. If the final film is a bomb, the producer has made more money this way. If it is a blockbuster, everyone profits. Either way, the studio and the producer can enhance the initial production budget.

Fifth is a series of complications in the practical work of actually adapting fiction into film, the actual making of the movie, the production itself. This is a time and a place when words have to be juxtaposed with images. That is to say, when the original letter matters. But “fidelity to the original spirit of the piece is not always to the letter, because the letter does not necessarily work on film.”⁸⁷ Actions have to be transferred from descriptions to dramatizations, from slow to snappy timing. Time strictly controls the adaptation possibilities—90 to 180 minutes for a film, which is much less time than it takes to read and digest most books. The written story may be richly textured, and minor incidents, settings and characters have to be cut out, or down, or be consolidated. When a tale goes from fiction to film “shaping a story to be told with the minimum necessary number of scenes and characters and the most contained list of locations is a necessary part of the game.”⁸⁸ Most people in professional, corporate life are now acquainted with this practice—the need to adapt to a concise, word and visual presentation. This happens when one goes from a free-flowing, person-to-audience presentation of information to a form-fitting, power point presentation. One has to fit into the given frame. To accomplish this can be a straight jacket experience. Or it can condense and order one’s efforts like the composition of a sonnet for the one you love.

Finally, the sixth concern in the practical work of adaptation is the audience—or, as the American lyricist, musical comedy, author, and theatrical producer Oscar Hammerstein II reportedly called them: “That big black giant.” They are a devouring abyss which the producer ultimately cannot control and who finally decide if the creation works or not.

The whole collaborative and creative process of filmmaking itself shows us that adaptation is not one element transferred to another singular element. As with U.S. popular culture, the realistic paradigm is culture as a whole. Perhaps the fundamental issue is not zero to five stars, a series of qualitative rankings that range through poor, fair, good, better, and best. (Although, to be fair, excellence happens—as does its opposite.) But the fundamental issue is that “there is a totality of culture that pervades and surrounds a society rather than a culture that exists in tiers.”⁸⁹ A story is told and retold.

Film or Book?

The student, film buff, or movie connoisseur should give up the naive claim that a film should be faithful to the book. That is not the point of successful adaptation. Too many hands each play their part in moulding and shaping the completed movie. Adaptation requires originality. And it is a process of accretion, of leveling and tiers of the one story being built upon other tiers and each enriched by the ongoing telling. Recall Homer and Aeschylus, mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Is there one story of Achilles, one story of Odysseus? Each telling narrates, explains, reveals. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* was a U.S. best seller in 1926, but it was told again in movie form in 1926, 1949, 1974, and 2000.⁹⁰ *Gatsby* is one story among many that stays alive for Americans by virtue of its cinematic renewal enriched with each telling. It is one story among many that helps to create community, gives life itself the form it lacks, and helps to insulate people from the tragedy of others.

I think Dennis Lehane was wrong when he said that movies and books compare like apples and giraffes. If one can understand literature and film as a continuum, as one story, then a person may delight in one vision retold and refreshed. Many filmmakers know this. “Because the ancient wisdom,” as David Mamet said, “is you get to write it three times: when you write it, when you direct it, when you edit it.”⁹¹ You keep telling and retelling the story.

And, finally, it takes so many fingers to get the one job done: the original work of literature, the screenwriter and his screenplay, the film director (“Who makes decisions about choices already made by the film crew”⁹²), the producer who holds the money bags; the give, take, quirks and charisma of the main actors and actresses; the props, scenes and settings; the cameraman (director of photography), the lighting man, the movie editor, the music director, the art director, and the audience. Yes, you—a public audience who may even view various

versions of the movie before it is finally released in order to determine the viability of a last cut. The audience is a public made up of individuals and a mass. And in all likelihood people will see the film because of word of mouth, chance, convenience or escapism, or fundamental hunger for entertainment—and maybe a touch of education, too. You are not dumb. You are the audience. The audience is a maker and an adaptor. The audience will finally decide whether the whole process succeeded or not. You buy the tickets.

Notes

- 1 Scott McCabe, “Reconciling Violence and a life in Literature: An Interview with Dennis Lehane,” *The Writer’s Chronicle* 39.1 (2006): 8–13. Lehane wrote *Mystic River* (2001), basis of the movie of the same name (2003) directed by Clint Eastwood. Full quote, p. 9 (when Lehane was asked how film influenced him): “We’re all products of pop culture. Hard to escape it. Film and books, though, are as different as apples and giraffes, but what I learned most from film is the concept of perpetual motion. Keep the story evolving.”
- 2 See, for instance, GA, “Review of *The Triumph of Love*,” *Time Out London* 1781 (October 6–13, 2004), http://www.timeout.com/film/reviews/81472/the_triumph_of_love.html (accessed Sept. 14, 2010): “It sounds like some boring corseted litflick.” Also see the amazon.com Listmania! list “LitFLicks: Movies For People Who Like Books,” <http://www.amazon.com/LitFLicks-Movies-People-Like-Books/lm/GPF2P0Z0Z7U> (accessed Oct. 29, 2010).
- 3 *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Herbert Brenon (1926, Paramount); *Zabriskie Point*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni (1969, MGM/Carlo Ponti).
- 4 Aeschylus cited after Athenaeus 347e.
- 5 “Judicious, critical . . .” distinction neatly made by John Higham, “Historiography, American,” in *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, ed. Paul Boyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 6 René Wellek, “Literature and its Cognates,” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, vol. III (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1973), 81–89.
- 7 A. M. Macdonald, ed., *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1972).
- 8 *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993).
- 9 Which is 26.6 seconds long and consists of 486 frames; see *Zapruder Film of Kennedy Assassination* (1963) at the Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0131658> (accessed Sept. 14, 2010).
- 10 *JFK*, directed by Oliver Stone (1991, Warner/Le Studio Canal/ Regency Enterprises/Alcor studio coproduction). See David R. Wrone, *The Zapruder Film: Reframing JFK’s Assassination* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003).
- 11 E.g. with, respectively, accusations concerning the works of Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), Alexander Pope (1688–1744), Isaac Newton (1642–1727), and Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747).
- 12 The *OED* attributes its first use to the 1835–1840. Reeve translation of DeTocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835; New York: Library of America, 2004).
- 13 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man, Epistle V, To Mr. Addison, Occasioned By His Dialogues On Medals* (1733; London: Knapton, 1748).
- 14 The first recorded Anglo-American use of plagiarism is in scholar and theologian Richard Montagu’s *Diatribes upon the first part of the late History of Tithes* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1621). But the term does not come into common play until the second decade of the 1700s. The U.S. Supreme Court opinions in *Wheaton v. Peters* (1834) subsequently established copyright in America as something that existed primarily for the public benefit

rather than for the work's creator. The convoluted controversies of plagiarism and copyright continue to the present day, as in the spring 2008 case of J. K. Rowling (Harry Potter versus Steven Vander Ark's online *Harry Potter Lexicon*) which Rowling finally won. See Steven Fox, "Tracking the Origins, evolution of copyright," *Buffalo Law Journal* 79.84 (2007): 1A–17A; Marissa Babin, "Potter in Court," *The Harvard Independent*, 24 April 2008.

15 Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press-Blackwell, 1997), 195–96. Essentially *Cultural Studies* means that mode of inquiry which examines culture as power. *Cultural Studies* considers how hierarchies, social and cultural needs and inequalities shape cultural symbols, symbolic codes, and the cultural assignment of meanings within a social system.

16 George Bluestone, *Novels Into Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), 7–8.

17 Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 215–16.

18 In an article probably written by Cameron under Ford's name, as quoted in Charles M. Stowe article "Henry Ford and History That Is Not Bunk," from: *Clippings Books, Boston Evening Transcript*, 38, p. 95, Saturday May 23, 1925, courtesy: Benson Ford Research Center, Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan. For the "heroic political" versus "pluralistic, polyvalent" distinction, see: Kenneth Rexroth, *Classics Revisited* (1969; New York: New Directions, 1986), Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, ch. 13, Herodotus, *History*, and ch. 14, 42–44, 45–47.

19 Karl Kroeber, *Make Believe in Film and Fiction: Visual vs. Verbal Storytelling*. (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006).

20 Susan Bullington Katz, *Conversations with Screenwriters* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Reed Elsevier, 2000), 198.

21 Léon Barsacq, *Le Décor de Film*, rev. and ed. by Elliott Stein (Paris: Seghers, 1970); see especially: "The Role and Conception of Set Design," 121–26.

22 Arnheim, *Film as Art*, 216.

23 Arnheim, *Film as Art*, 206.

24 Ira Konigsberg, *The Complete Film Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 1997), 6.

25 Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5.

26 Barnouw, *Documentary*, 6.

27 *Terry Gilliam's History of the Movies*, DVD, directed by Terry Gilliam (1995); see especially part 1 "Travels in time and space."

28 As documented by *Encyclopædia Britannica, Macropedia*, vol. 12, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1974), 514. The 1913 edition cost \$1.50. For U.S. dollar inflation calculation see <http://www.westegg.com/inflation>.

29 "Nickelodeon": combination of the U.S. five cent coin, the *nickel*—which was used to view short films in small, box like and hand-wound machines—and Odeon—after the famed *Theatre Odeon* in Paris.

30 Eric Hoffer, *The Passionate State of Mind and Other Aphorisms* (New York: Perennial Library, 1954), 59.

31 A direct lineage exists from the illustrated rolls of the Egyptian *Ramesseum Papyrus* (c. 1850 B.C.), through the 5th Century A.D. illustrations of Virgil's and Homer's works in the Vatican Library, the Byzantine codices of the 6th and 7th cent, the Hiberno-Saxon illuminated *Book of Kells* at Trinity College Library, Dublin, and the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, in the British Museum, through the "golden age of illumination" (books and stained glass) in the high European middle ages, the 15th Century development of the European block book, Thomas Bewick's

pioneering wood engraving for books dating from 1779, Aloys Senefelder's invention of book lithography around 1796, the Victorian era production of illustrated books and magazines by such masters as Daumier, Doré, Gavarni, and the perfect Charles Dickens and George Cruikshank blend, plus the famed English *Yellow Book* (1894–97). While the 20th and 21st Centuries have seen the mass production and an absolute plethora of this two-part media.

32 Like the man himself, Quarles' illustrated books expressed conflicting sympathies between divine right monarchy and Catholicism versus the strong individualistic and Puritan elements of his upbringing. In America Quarles' work was specially popular in early New England, beginning with the Pilgrim and Puritan era of Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay Colony down through the time of the New England Transcendentalists. Quarles' influence on the poet Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), for example, was pronounced. See Francis Quarles, *Emblemes (1635) and Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man (1638)*, ed. by Karl Josef Hölting and John Horden (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1993), introduction; Carmen A. Prioli, "Emily Dickinson's Reading of Francis Quarles," *Dickinson Studies* 25 (1979): 3–7; David F. Bland, *A History of Book Illustration*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1969); Diana Klemin, *The Illustrated Book* (New York: Potter, 1970). Also important as key, common, visual communications in America's Colonial and Revolutionary periods were tavern signs, coins, and childrens' primers.

33 A common film-analysis distinction, made, e.g., in Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999). See especially "Literary Adaptations," 390–94; Konigsberg, *The Complete Film Dictionary*, 6, "adaptation."

34 *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, directed by Tay Garnet (1946); *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, directed by Bob Rafelson (1981); filmed in Italian as *Ossessione*, directed by Luchino Visconti (1942); filmed in French as *Le Dernier Tournant* (The Last Turn), directed by Pierre Chenal (1939)—never released in the U.S.

35 Eros: The drive for love, creativity, sexuality, self-satisfaction and the continuation of life and the preservation of the human species. Thanatos (death): The drive of hatred, destruction, the asexual, the tormented and tantalizing, the death of life and the human species. See Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (1929; New York: Norton, 1961), ch. VI: 73–79; ch. VIII: 104.

36 Michael Caine, *What's It All About* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 41.

37 *The Call of the Wild*, directed by William Wellman (1935).

38 Jack Oakie, *Jack Oakie's Double Takes* (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1980)—published posthumously.

39 *Shaft*, directed by Gordon Parks (MGM/Shaft Productions, 1971); *Beverly Hills Cop*, directed by Martin Best (Paramount, 1984). Murphy's role was originally custom designed for Sylvester Stallone.

40 MacKinlay Kantor, *Glory for Me* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1945).

41 Harold Robbins, *A Stone for Danny Fisher* (1955; New York, Simon & Schuster 2007), which is about a tough Jewish kid growing up on New York's lower east side—far from the New Orleans Elvis Presley version. Harold Robbins (1916–1997) was famous for his sex, money, and power schlock loved by readers and hated by critics, such as *The Carpetbaggers* (New York: Pocket Books, 1961) and *The Betsy* (New York: Pocket Books, 1971)—pulp fiction successfully adapted to pulp film.

42 *David and Bathsheba*, directed by Henry King (RCF, 1951).

43 Matthew Bunson, *The Vampire Encyclopedia* (New York: Random House-Gramercy, 2000).

44 George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (1957), 148.

45 John Steinbeck on watching *The Grapes of Wrath*, as quoted in John Walker, ed., *Halliwell's Filmgoer's and Video Viewer's Companion*, 10th ed. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 289.

- 46 See: *Grapes of Wrath* taglines at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032551> (accessed Sept. 24, 2010).
- 47 Which has preserved 40 years of the best of the American stage.
- 48 Dore Schary (1905–1980) received Broadway's 1958 Tony Award for Best Play for *Sunrise at Campobello*. Schary was a staunch Democrat and liberal activist.
- 49 *Zoot Suit*, directed by Luiz Valdez (1981).
- 50 See Tennessee Williams, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1972) as quoted by William Packard, *The Art of Screening* (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 45; John Dean, "Urban and Theatrical Iconography in 'A Streetcar Named Desire,'" in *A Streetcar Named Desire: Critical Essays Anthology*, eds. Gilles Menegaldo and Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris (Paris: Ellipses, 2003), 233–40.
- 51 Vertov quoted from Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 58, in turn from David Robinson, *The History of World Cinema* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973).
- 52 Roger Ebert, review of *Billy Bathgate*, directed by Robert Benton, *Movie Reviews* (November 1, 1991), <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19911101/REVIEWS/111010303/1023> (accessed June 22, 2009).
- 53 Cinematographer Vittorio Storaro (who filmed *Apocalypse Now*, 1979) on the cinematographer's art, quoted from *Visions of Light*, directed by Arnold Glassman (American Film Institute and NHK, Japan Broadcast Corporation, 1992).
- 54 Vertov quoted from Barnouw, *Documentary*, 58.
- 55 Barnouw, *Documentary*, 58.
- 56 Though allusions to propaganda exist in ancient writings (e.g., Aristotle's *Rhetoric*), organized use of propaganda didn't develop until after the industrial revolution and modern political revolutions (spec. U.S.A. and France) when mass media communications allowed propagandists to easily reach huge audiences and civilian soldiers needed to be informed and encouraged.
- 57 Persian Gulf War: on Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi military forces, on orders from President Saddam Hussein, invaded and occupied the small Arab state of Kuwait. Washington and Moscow cooperated intensely to oppose Iraq's action. In November, 1990, the UN Security Council condemned the invasion. A U.S.-led military coalition gathered in the area. Then from January 16 to February 28, 1991, the Persian Gulf War was fought, Iraq expelled, and independence restored to Kuwait.
- 58 *The Civil War*, Episode One: *The Cause (1861)*, directed by Ken Burns (1990; PBS Home Video-Turner Home Entertainment).
- 59 John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (New York: Methuen, 1978), 85–100 (Ch. 6, "Bardic Television").
- 60 Michael P. McCauley et al., eds., *Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2002).
- 61 Gary Edgerton, "The Civil War—U.S. Compilation Documentary," in *Encyclopedia of Television*, ed. Horace Newcomb (1997); see Museum of Broadcast Communications, *Encyclopedia of Television* at <http://www.museum.tv/publicationssection.php?page=28> (accessed Sept. 8, 2010).
- 62 Walter Chaw, review of *The Civil War*, directed by Ken Burns, *Film Freak Central Review* (n.d.), <http://filmfreakcentral.net/dvdreviews/civilwar.htm> (accessed June 22, 2009).
- 63 Gary Edgerton, "The Civil War," <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entry-code=civilwarth> (accessed Oct. 29, 2010).

- 64 Elizabeth Jensen, "Some History, with Honey," *LA Times*, January 11, 2003, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/01/11/calendar/et-jensen11> (accessed June 22, 2009); J. Hoberman, "Altered States: The power of nightmares: Russian thriller and Southern mock-doc imagine scary dystopias," *Villagevoice*, February 7, 2006, <http://www.villagevoice.com/film/0606,hoberman1,72181,20.html> (accessed Sept. 8, 2010).
- 65 Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884; New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 180.
- 66 Mark S. Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen: A Filmography of Dramas and Documentaries Including Television, 1903–1998* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999).
- 67 The first three ways suggested by David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel: Connected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 229, see especially ch. 7: 200–33, "Henry James and the Movies."
- 68 Excellent coverage concerning whom can be found in Pat McGilligan, ed., *Backstory: Interviews with Screenwriters of Hollywood's Golden Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).
- 69 Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 70 Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900; New York: Signet, 1979), 183.
- 71 Kenneth Rexroth, "Literature, Art of," in *Encyclopædia Britannica, Macropedia*, vol. 10, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1973), 1041–50.
- 72 David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*, 201.
- 73 Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*, 209.
- 74 Dave Kehr, review of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, directed by George Stevens, *The Chicago Reader* (n.d.), <http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-diary-of-anne-frank/Film?oid=1053770> (accessed June 22, 2009).
- 75 William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, edited, with a commentary, by Robert N. Essick (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2008); see here "Songs of Experience: Introduction" (line 1–2).
- 76 Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884; New York: Norton, 1962), 7; Jerome D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951; London: Penguin, 1958), 5.
- 77 Konigsberg, *Complete Film Dictionary*, 449.
- 78 As Konigsberg notes, one should distinguish between off-screen voice and voice-over. Off-screen voice is not in the scene itself being shown; voice-over is when narrator or character is speaking on the sound track behind an image.
- 79 Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," in *Film: An Anthology*, ed. Daniel Talbot (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 257–87.
- 80 Packard, *The Art of Screenwriting*, 41.
- 81 *Screenwriters. Word into Image: William Goldman*, DVD, directed by Terry Sanders and Freida Lee Mock (1984; Santa Monica, CA: American Film Foundation, 1984); Packard, *The Art of Screenwriting*, 46–47.
- 82 Goldman quoting Zanuck's partner David Brown, in William Goldman, *Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting* (New York: Warner Books, 1983), 292.
- 83 *High Sierra*, directed by Raoul Walsh (1941); *The Asphalt Jungle*, directed by John Huston (1950).
- 84 *Moby Dick*, directed by John Huston (1956).

- 85 Ralph Waldo Emerson, lecture, attributed in Sarah B. Yule and Mary S. Keene, *Borrowings* (New York: Dodge Publishing, 1889).
- 86 Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster Film from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 64.
- 87 Michael Cox, "Reflections on Film Adaptation of Fiction," in *It's a Print: Detective Fiction from Page to Screen*, eds. William Reynolds and Elizabeth A. Trembley (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1994), 207–20, quote: 213. These six points are essentially a summary reading of Mr. Cox's on the ground and in country experience as a professional Anglo-American producer, actor, stage manager, advertising and theatrical agent in his "Reflections on Film Adaptation of Fiction" essay.
- 88 Cox, "Reflections on Film Adaptation of Fiction," 215.
- 89 Madonna Coughlin Marsden, "Twentieth Century: Popular Culture," *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, <http://gme.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=0296908-0> (accessed June 22, 2009).
- 90 *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Herbert Brenon (1926); *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Elliott Nugent (1949); *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Jack Clayton (1974); *The Great Gatsby*, directed by Robert Markowitz (2000).
- 91 Katz, *Conversations with Screenwriters*, 198.
- 92 Said by U.S. director John Carpenter (*The Fog, Christine*) in the documentary *Big John*, directed by Julien Dunand (2006).

John Dean is Professor of American Studies and Cultural History at the University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines in France. He previously co-chaired the American Studies Program at the University of Strasbourg and was Director of Crosscultural Studies at the University of Syracuse, Strasbourg campus. Dr. Dean has directed courses on U.S. cultural studies and given guest lectures at teacher training workshops in Germany and throughout Europe from Sicily to Denmark. He was a resident scholar at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Michigan (2002–2005), as well as at the Center for Middletown Studies at Ball State University, Indiana (1998, 2003), and at the Center for Cultural Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz (2001). His research topics include heroism studies, the sociology of mass media, American youth culture's evolution in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, techniques for visual decoding American icons, patterns of corruption and violence in the U.S., and ultimately U.S. social reform as traced and illustrated via U.S. popular culture. Professor Dean's most recent publications include "Heroes in a World of Global Connection: U.S. and European Heroism Compared" in Susan J. Drucker and Gary Gumpert, eds., *Heroes in a Global World*, Cresskill, NJ, 2008; *Le Crime organisé, de la prohibition à la guerre froide*, Paris 2002 (coedited with Jacques Pothier); *Médias et technologies, l'exemple des États-Unis*, Paris 2001 (coedited with Francis Bordat, Robert Conrath, et.al.); *Les médias et l'information aux États-Unis depuis 1945*, Paris 1997; and *European Readings of American Popular Culture*, Westport, CT, 1996 (editor)