Adapting
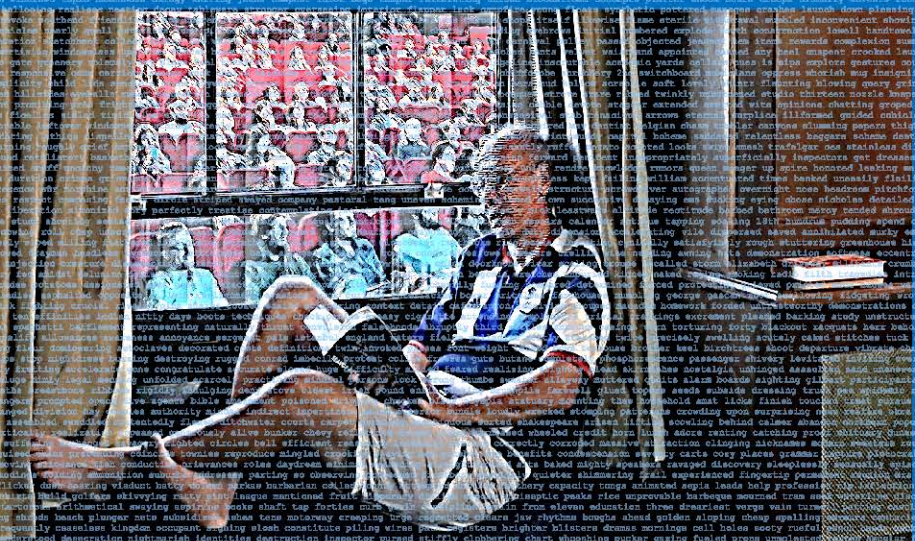# Adulthood

Migrating Characters and Themes
from Novels, Screenplays, and Films

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Adapting Adulthood

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Abstract

When novels are adapted for the screen, the fictional characters are inevitably transformed in the adaptation process, and so is the thematic content. This study considers the characters and the thematic content of a story as migrants who leave the land of the novel in order to adapt to a life on the screen with transformed self-identities. The five articles that this thesis is based on focus on what happens to the representation of adulthood when novels are adapted for the screen. The articles test models for analysing thematic representation using popular works of fiction such as *Atonement, Fifty Shades of Grey, Gone Girl, Me before You, Room, Shutter Island, The Da Vinci Code, The Martian, The Road, Up in the Air,* and novels by Patrick McCabe.

Because novel-screenplay-film adaptations comprise alternative versions of a story, with their complementary lines of reasoning, they constitute particularly rich thematic representations and metaphors for what social adaptation requires. In that context, the thesis regards novel-screenplay-film adaptations as processes and objects at the same time, each version an integral part of a greater dynamic whole.

Relating to current theories of the attraction of fiction, chapter 1 presents the aim of the study. Chapter 2 describes the novel-screenplay-film adaptation process as a non-linear, two-way process of adaptation and appropriation, and a reception-based model for regarded adapted characters as fictional migrants. Chapter 3 outlines a pragmatic model, with the hero's journey as a foundation, to analyse the structure of thematic lines of reasoning in fiction in general and adaptations in specific, together with thematic markers. The chapter also presents the *markers of adulthood* used in the articles, before chapter 4 and 5 summarise and discuss the five articles and implications related to adaptation studies, pedagogy, and screenwriting.

List of Articles

Hermansson, Joakim. "Adaptations and Post-apocalyptic Atonement." Manuscript submitted for publication, 2020.

---. "Adaptations of Adulthood: Towards a Model for Thematic Rhetoric in Adaptation Studies." *New Approaches to Contemporary Adaptation*, edited by Betty Kaklamanidou, Wayne State UP, 2020, pp. 173-192.

---. "Characters as Fictional Migrants: Atonement, Adaptation and the Screenplay Process." *Journal of Screenwriting* vol. 11, no. 1, 2020, pp. 81-97. https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00014_1.

---. "Okay: The Road and the Good Guys' Adulthood Code." *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2020, forthcoming.

---. "Strange Masks of Adapted Identities in Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* and *The Holy City*." *Adaptation*. apaa011, https://doi-org.www.bibproxy.du.se/10.1093/adaptation/apaa011.

Preface

A teacher colleague once asked which film adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* he should replace the novel with in the classroom. Earlier that semester, a fifteen-year-old pupil had said that she had finally realised why she did not like reading novels or watching fiction films. You never know who you will be when you have finished it, she explained. Later, one of her friends could not stop talking energetically about *Atonement,* the novel (2001) and film (2007), as if they were one work of fiction, split into two complementary forms. Do you realise how frustrating it is not to have the entire picture, when there might be more versions of the story that we don't have access to? she declared. A similar question occurred to Ian McEwan when he had written a first scene for the novel on an impulse. "For six weeks or so [he] pondered. Where is this? When is this? Who are these people?" before they started to grow in his mind (*Conversations* 104).

Being a teacher, these experiences generated a series of questions related to the function of fiction and the relationships between fictional characters, human development, and adaptations. At a glance, my pupils and McEwan alike seemed to regard fictional characters as fictional beings who exist in parallel story universes, from where they affect us, sometimes almost as much as people in our own physical world.

At that point, the literature on coming-of-age fiction of various kinds that I had come across primarily examined the processes of transition or identity formation. My understanding was that the novels and films commonly present rather one-dimensional adult characters as either good or bad role models, still with the implication that adulthood should constitute the goal in every young character's life. However, when fiction with adult protagonists is studied, the focus on adulthood is often ignored, perhaps because it is taken for granted as a norm. Those were the reflections from which this project sprung.

It would be wrong to say that a PhD project is isolated to the period between the arrival of an admission letter from a university and the final administrative tasks,

because the work and efforts that it entails are not limited to the person whose name appears on the front page, the research, and the printed text. This is especially true for someone like me who does not thrive in solitude. For confidence, perseverance, patience, rest, insights, hope, focus, and joy, I am indebted to the colleagues who have made me smile, to all the friends who have remained by my side, and to all who have inspired and provoked me to stay on my toes. I hope that all concerned whom I do not mention by name below still may sense that their contributions have been invaluable. I have, at times, handled the script of our friendship with too little respect, but hope to be able to be part of the production of a new and extended version presently.

In a way, this dissertation owes everything to my mother and her years of enduring spirit, unwavering belief, and support. Over the years she has read, listened, discussed, discarded, and approved of texts and ideas. She has also served as my imaginary reader, for whom I have tried to write in a communicative manner, with some of her previous comments in mind, ranging from the scathing "I don't read rubbish like this" to "lots of people need to read this." She has cared, worried, and shared my moments of joy, like the best of mothers do all through life. From my birth you have been the mentoring character in my story.

My supervisor Yvonne Leffler has been just as crucial for my work these past years. There is not shred of doubt that I would have abandoned the project had you not been there with your support. You always made me think the high note was in reach and every word from you left me inspired as if I had just heard a Handl chorus. Yours is my eternal gratitude and friendship.

Still, I would never have considered a PhD had it not been for Una Cunningham who planted the idea in my mind many years ago. In addition, Mats Tegmark, and above all, Irene Gilsenan-Nordin, made doing a PhD seem like the most natural thing to do. When burdened by the pressure, the echo of Irene's warm Irish voice has reminded me that "you've got to remember, Joakim: it's just an exercise." Also, I have always been able to turn my thoughts to Anna B., David G., dear Mary S,

caretakers in the unknown world. Thanks also to Mary Chambers, whose proofreading has made me embarrassed at times, and to Maria Holmgren Troy for her constructive comments.

I once said, as a joke, that "as students we may devote our theses to figuring out what we need to come to terms with in our lives: I study adaptation and adulthood." Initially, I planned to write a monograph, but during a five-year episode of cognitive fatigue syndrome, "the cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable" (McCarthy 138), and four attempts to return too soon, the joke caught up with me. My heart was ripped out, but the characters in *Atonement* and *The Road* kept whispering to me: "Come back to us. Okay?" When I was finally ready to say that "the story can resume," like Robbie Turner in the film *Atonement*, I opted for a change of format and an article-based dissertation to be able to cross the return threshold. In this context, three giants finally stand out when I consider the people who have authored me during this project. Peter Risberg and David Hallander, I hear your voices every day, and I do listen. Without you I would not be who and where I am today. And thanks to you all for teaching me about adaptation to life. I am now ready to return to the normal world, hopefully a transformed man.

Joakim Hermansson
1 January 2021

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction: Making Meaning of Adaptations

> How much growing up do you need to do?
>
> – Robbie in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*

> The pleasure of being 'tested' by a fictional text […is...] never free from the danger of allowing 'the phantoms of imagination' too strong a foothold in our view of the social world.
>
> – Lisa Zunshine

Themes of Adaptations

Besides intriguing events, stories, and characters, novels and films present thematic explorations through the progression of their narratives. For readers and viewers who prefer stable grounds for guidance, as many do, especially in times of flux or transformation, fiction sometimes seems to offer a harbour for relaxation and for recreation, especially since the textual constancy may give a reader or spectator the impression that the ideas that are represented in the stories are comfortingly fixed. Yet, the meanings of stories and characters are rarely as fixed as the words on the page or the images on the screen, since what they signify depends on their contextual relevance. When novels are adapted for the screen, this instability comes to the surface, since "adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places" (Hutcheon 176). Thus, the characters are indisputably transformed in the adaptation process, and so are the thematic representations that they present to their audiences. Unfortunately, audiences often expect that the thematic content that is linked to a story or a character will remain intact when it is adapted. So, unexpected changes may give rise to feelings of uncertainty and to harsh judgements around audiences' dinner tables and in reviews. Still, the growing audience with a

genuine interest in adaptations indicates that the engagement in comparisons and play of meanings may also offer a productive thematic stimulation.

Adaptation studies partly directs attention to the development of stories to fit new media and cultural contexts, as well as to transformations, transpositions, and the relationship between texts, with a presupposition that the content and meaning of a text is not static or stable, but dependent on context, form, and environment. Commonly, models and terms from social and evolutionary theories are employed to examine and describe the organic qualities of texts and their meanings. By definition, both adaptation and its sibling term appropriation entail transformative modifications of an organism to fit new purposes or environments. As Kamilla Elliott observes, interart and adaptation studies have productively applied "contemporaneous scientific models" and Darwinian theories about organisms and development since the nineteenth century (*Rethinking* 32; see also Cardwell 13; Elliott, "The Adaptation of Adaptation"; Hutcheon; Sanders). In this context, an *organism* should be understood as any complex creation that is defined by a compound of "elements whose relations and properties are largely determined by their function in the whole" ("Organism"), and thus has the capacity to adapt. If we regard characters as fictional beings, as Jens Eder proposes (17), we may observe how they often move, or migrate, as the act of transposition is often referred to in adaptation studies, from one medium, genre, or culture to another, and how they adapt to fit the new situation and its conventions, similar to the ways people adapt to new environments, their own development, and societal changes. In the process, the characters are to some extent also appropriated by new creative forces.

However, since each organism also affects its environment, the new media world and its conventions also adapt, and might even be appropriated to fit a character, for instance for the sake of fidelity to a previous representation of the character. Such appropriations may sometimes be driven by a futile urge to see the literary characters transposed with their supposed identities intact, for instance to an audio-visual form in a film. When the ambition is thus to appropriate the cinematic

form to maintain or recall the representation of a character's consciousness, thoughts, and emotions, a commonly exploited device is an extensive voice-over, with the purpose of mimicking the literary narrator's depiction of a character or the literary representation of the character's voice and mind. Elliott also points out the common visual representation of texts to communicate a character's literary identity, qualities, alleged origins, and the context that is thus proclaimed to condition the representation of that character (165). Still, unless nothing but a novel's text is projected on the screen, the representations of thematic content unavoidably undergo transformations when stories and characters are adapted from novel to film, especially if there is an ambition for the story and its elements to function well within the new narrative media environment.

For young adults, and others who read for life, a perspective which Martha Nussbaum passionately endorses (230-44), the transformations of thematic content matter, because they affect the grounds for reflection as readers and viewers ponder who they are and who they can become while they engage in fiction. For some, the alterations may cause confusion and resentment, but in this dissertation, I second Suzanne Diamond's claim that the engagement in adaptations, for audiences, "offers a rich metaphorical corollary to the processes . . . usually involved in remembering and negotiating 'who we are'" (102). Because adaptations overtly relate to other narratives, they present multiple and complementary versions of characters in an extended story universe, which is conditioned by the representation of those alternative versions and the transformations of thematic content. Their capacity to serve as aesthetic analogies and metaphors may thereby expand the experience for audiences who are engaged in the everyday processes of personal development and social adaptation. In addition, the screenplays for novel-film adaptations present another version of each narrative, since the screenplay are not just a transitional medium that links other media forms together in the adaptation process, but also carries its own weight as an expressive and representational artwork, with unique qualities regarding characterisation and thematic representation.

It is in this context that this study asks how the acts of transformation affect thematic representations when the characters of contemporary novels are adapted and migrate to the cinematic world and to our minds. The overarching argument is that engagement in adaptations offers not only alternative versions, but also metaphorical relations between the alternative representations, their expressions, thematic arguments, as well as metaphorical processes of transformation, all of which may be used for audiences as a basis for reflection. Studying the adaptation of themes naturally draws attention to the complexity of adapting ideas and abstract content, which links adaptation and translation studies together. However, whereas literary translators are rarely afforded any substantial creative freedom, screenwriters and filmmakers who adapt a work of fiction commonly do so with distinct creative ambitions, to the effect that the thematic content and meaning is affected. As an appropriate thematic example, the dissertation will focus on the representation of adulthood in novels, screenplays, and films. In this introductory chapter, I will first discuss the didactic perspective, why we engage in fiction, which has influenced the purpose of this project, before presenting the aims of the project, the research approaches and methods, the suggested scope of the dissertation, and an outline of the following chapters.

Why We Engage in Fiction

The understanding of the social world, as we know it, naturally conditions the construction of fictional worlds, their characters, and events. Likewise, there is no doubt that most fictional narratives are deliberately designed to affect their audiences, and from that perspective they are constructed as "intentional-communicative artefacts," in contrast with the less controlled flow of everyday life (Currie 6). One of the benefits of fictional narratives is indeed that they offer instructional metaphors and vicarious simulative sets of experiences (Oatley and Mar; Nussbaum; Dennet, Vermeule), and they thus have the potential to be both transformative and formative. To a great extent, as Joseph Carroll asserts, fiction consequently presents "simulated

situations through which we can model our own behaviours" (*Literary* 159). Similarly, Joseph Campbell's influential *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008 [1949]) builds the argument that most lasting stories and myths are structured rhetorically to thematise the complexities and themes that circumscribe the idea of being a reasonably whole person in balance with a surrounding community. Since then, James Phelan (1989), Brian Boyd (2007), Christopher Vogler (2007), and Patrick Colm Hogan (2011), among others, have endorsed the idea that we commonly read and watch fiction – Hollywood films, novels, complex fiction, and ancient myths alike – with the purpose of realising who we can be or become in the social world. Some engage in fiction with this as a conscious purpose, and other with less awareness of how characters and stories may affect them.

Although fictional characters do not physically enter the social space of the physical world, they penetrate the cognitive space of readers and viewers, and the fictional events thus produce situations and experiences that are stored in the audience's imagining minds (Smith 278; Zunshine 108; Burke 180). This is largely due to the designs of fictional stories, which inherently afford and incite audiences to mentally transgress the borders between the social and fictional worlds for a while. Moreover, most readers and viewers can easily make use of their imaginative capacities to situate themselves in the fictional environments, and see parallels between fictional situations and what they themselves have experienced in the real social world. Fictional worlds, characters, and their story events may thus potentially affect audiences almost as deeply as if the characters had occurred in real social life, scholars like Nussbaum, Dennis Cutchins, and Lisa Zunshine argue. From the Bildungsroman to college films, from chick lit to Oscar winning dramas, fictional stories and their characters may consequently serve as tools for thematic reflections about what it is to be a mature person or an adult.

In this context, Hogan observes that fictional stories tend to represent variations of "universal narrative prototypes" (125) through characters who strive for, preserve, and remain in personal states of normalcy, in which satisfying levels of

meaning and happiness can be upheld (126). Hogan further submits that these representations form images of a mental "emotional geography" of what it is to be a reasonably stable adult (31). Similarly, Richard Gerrig reasons that the content of fictional stories is generally assessed in relationship to sets of normalities based on a play between the fictional world and the individual reader's, or viewer's, experiences and memories (45). "We form a prototype (roughly, a standard case) by weighted averaging over a set of instances," Hogan explains (47), making the assumption that the goal to attain some happiness in life is best achieved by adaptation to the sphere of life's social normalcy. Hence, while most fictional stories problematise narrow definitions of normal states of affairs, they also demonstrate the need for adaptation.

Admittedly, the use of the terms *normality* or *normalcy* can be provocative, especially when it comes to matters of identity, happiness, and life stages, because normality is so often perceived as a narrowly defined and fixed state of being, which leaves little room for any sense of the developed individuality with which the ideas of happiness and adulthood are both associated. Progressive literature and films therefore often question a narrow-minded definition of normality, in line with Anthony Giddens' argument that *normality* "is more than just a mutually sustained show of interaction which individuals put on for one another" (126). He instead relates normal behaviour to life patterns that enable us to communicate, socialise, and attend to practical matters in reasonably safe and less than completely random patterns. Giddens' definition of normality thus involves degrees of stability, reliability, predictability, and sociability. From a similar standpoint, Franco Moretti suggests a useful definition of *normality* when he writes about the Bildungsroman as "an unmarked entity" (11), which is not a fixed point but is defined by a flexible range of variations. The way I will use the word *normality* is never just as a normative and excluding term, because the conditions for normality and the individual's life patterns are always under negotiation. Hence, its definition relies on social context and it is always open to change and to the inclusion of variations of human behaviour which do not pose an overt threat to others. As part of the process of the constant

redefinition of normality, thematic studies have long focused on the representation of variations that are included in a less judgemental, societal concept of normality. In the following I will also make use of the term *normalcy*, in line with Hogan's reasoning (30), as referring to the experience of life when situations appear to unfold within the range of what might be anticipated without greater efforts at reflection.

In fiction, characters can find ample room for individuality and autonomy within the spaces of normality, socialisation, and attachments to others in their capacity as fictional beings, and in so doing, they qualify as individual adult persons in the fictional worlds. In other words, the prototypical adult characters ideally embrace an existence within the social order of normalities, while they also affect the constitution of that social order, so that they may find a sense of individual completeness in "social integration as a simple part of a whole," Moretti submits (16). In fact, it seems that a developed individuality actually depends on adaptation to normality as an allowing, organic space, just as the state of adulthood does. To borrow Anita Wohlman's words, films and novels "feed from the culture from which they emerge and simultaneously send out messages about age and ageing to their viewers and readers" (2014, 17).

An enabling and inclusive definition of normalcy is also an underlying normative concept in development psychology and sociology, with adulthood as a stage between growth and decline in many social and physical contexts. Clary Krekula shows that age norms function as tools for analyses, negotiations, and the regulation of norms for professionals, institutions, individuals, and scholars (2009). In this context, the notion of an adult human being, competent, able, and reasonably happy, seems to form an abstract norm or point of reference around which ideals and individual visions can be fashioned. While they may of course be read or watched with other emphases and intentions as well, most novels and films, I argue, can thus be regarded as fictions about adulthood based on notions of normalities. This does not mean that the portraits of adults are always ideal in fiction, or that children are always found wanting. In fact, adult characters are often represented as greedy,

selfish, irresponsible, aggressive, and abusive in many teen stories, and the younger characters often have to adopt the adult, responsible roles in many situations. Thus, just as children in real life can exhibit temporary and singular adult qualities, in fictional narratives non-adults can be used to represent adult social, ethical, and cognitive features, and most adult characters habitually stray from their ideal prototypes of being adults. From this perspective, children, teenagers, and young adults often represent romanticised ideals of what it is to be an adult, but they are less representative of actual adulthood. Fictional narratives about adult characters, however, become relevant as maps of social life, personal judgements, emotional responses, and human actions through the representation of normalities, deviations from perceived norms, and individual possibilities.

In view of such didactic aspects of fiction, Dennis Dutton explains that the imaginative mind imitates fictional characters, their personalities and roles, actions and life patterns, and in doing so makes it possible for us to efficiently try out alternative lives through fiction, in a way which is impossible in real life, since the experience of fictional stories and their characters offers an unparalleled "low-cost, low risk surrogate experience" (110). Similarly, Wayne Booth declares that such "tryings-out in narrative [...] offer both a relative freedom from consequence and, in their sheer multiplicity, a rich supply of antidotes" (485), which also accentuates the potential use of fictional narratives as veiled self-help guides for a better life. Yet some works of fiction, like for instance *Gone Girl*, are overtly ironic in their approach to adult standards, which accentuates that narratives need to be handled with great care and judgement, if the purpose of reading and watching them is to get indirect guidance on a sound state of adulthood.

In the contemporary social world, however, adulthood is rarely just a matter of reaching a certain age, when a ritual or the passing of a legal threshold confirms a person as an adult. Nor is the transition to being an adult simply accomplished by moving into a home of one's own, getting a job, and finding a partner for life. Rather, it is a social construct, often equated with what it is to be a whole person (Blatterer

"Changing"), or to be recognised as "full partners in social interaction" in society (Fraser 113). As an effect of the demands, difficulties, and possibilities of everyday life, the state of adulthood has generally been gradually delayed in contemporary Western societies, at least since the fifties (Kloep and Hendry 111). Nevertheless, the concept of adulthood is so institutionalised (Blatterer, *Coming* 13; Arnett, *Emerging* 208) that the actual perception of what it means has become vital to young people's identity development as a point of reference (Raymond and Heseltine 199). To complicate matters further, there is no clearly demarcated threshold to adulthood in modern industrial societies, as Vanda Konstam observes, and adulthood is no longer regarded as a fixed state of life. Instead, the road to adulthood has become "an extended and nonlinear process with no clear indication of completion" (Konstam 7). Thus, as sociologist Harry Blatterer puts it, for many of us "the actualization of options is individualized and personal growth, through an individual pursuit, becomes a modus vivendi" ("Changing" 70). This partly explains why the market for so-called Young Adult fiction finds the bulk of its readers among people between 30 and 44 years old (Bowker Market Research, 2012). It is clear that the market for fiction that thematises the conditions of adulthood is expanding, in tandem with the growing general concern with unravelling what it is to be an adult in the contemporary world.

In agreement with Phelan, in *Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative* (1989), I believe that it is first and foremost the thematic dimensions, attributes, and functions of characters that make them relevant for their audiences. From this viewpoint, fictional narratives are designed to reflect on and examine various themes, and not just the character and event arcs, which are the dominant aspects in many creative writing manuals. For example, *The Writer's Journey* (2007)*,* Vogler's influential adaptation of Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* into a creative writing manual*,* and the step-by-step models of others, based on actions and character developments, diminish the importance of thematic aspects of stories. However, if there is too much emphasis in a film or novel on the characters'

physical journey through a series of events, and on the protagonist's inner life, thematic issues of universal interest may be reduced to superficial means for narrative conflicts and the individual motivations of the characters. The same can be said about many theoretical manifestos on narratology, because of a focus on the particularities of discourse, as Ian MacKenzie observes. "What narratology has not produced is a convincing account of the essential intuitive leap from a series of events to an underlying theme," he thus asserts (541). As part of this dissertation, I propose that the structure of the hero's journey can bridge that gap to some extent. Conceiving the thematic understanding itself as the hero of a story, the reader or spectator follows the narrative through the plot to construct "meaning in ever larger wholes, to totalize his experience of human existence in time," to borrow Peter Brooks' words (39).

Objectives and Approach

The primary ambition of this dissertation is to provide a contribution to the study of the thematic representation and transformation in adaptations, as a basis for reflection for readers and viewers, and to consider how this representation is affected when novels are adapted for the screen. Like Elliott (*Rethinking* 144), I regard the novel, screenplay, and film as equal parts in the composite body of an adaptation, and strive to contribute to the awareness of how adaptations can be of particular use when we, as readers and viewers, struggle with questions about who we are and who we may become. As Anita Wohlmann argues (71), the representation of critical thematic instances regarding the human condition are plotted and orchestrated in accordance with narrative conventions. Some conventions are shared between novels, screenplays, and films, but some are more or less genre or media-specific. Hence, within the scope of this project, I will add to the discussion of the possibilities and limitations that media-specific conventions impose on adaptations and their representations of intricate themes. As a result, I will also present a framework for the analysis of the representation of themes in narrative fiction.

What happens to the representation of a theme in an adaptation opens up two distinct perspectives: the study of the objects and the study of the processes. To analyse novels and films as objects and compare the different versions rarely produces an answer as to how the transformations were processed or what they might signify. In this dissertation, the study of adaptations as objects is linked to the study of adaptations as processes. Yet, to study the actual adaptation process demands access in time and place to the people who work on a project and to their material. During film production, the numbers of daily changes and of people who are involved in making these alterations are overwhelming. However, the inclusion of the screenplay as an object makes it possible to trace certain changes step-by-step and come closer to understanding the representations in the narratives in terms of the process of adaptation. For reasons I will return to in chapter 2, the screenplay has commonly been neglected by scholars of literature, film, and adaptation. Through this study, I therefore also hope to demonstrate the value of screenplays as research objects, especially in the field of adaptation studies, and as works of fiction in their own right.

Because of its inherent interdisciplinary constitution, adaptation studies is demanding, not least, as Christine Geraghty declares, because most scholars are partial to a specific field ("Intertextuality"). There is thus a risk of imbalance in the research design when adaptations are studied, which might affect the particular observations made, as well as the conclusions that are drawn from them. With adulthood as a thematic example, and with novels, screenplays, films, and adaptation as the main focal points, this project evidently demands interdisciplinary and mixed research methods, as well as specific demarcations.

Firstly, like David Bordwell, I find that fictional narratives are designed and "organized around functional principles" ("Neo-Structuralist" 205), in particular to communicate and to be part of a systemic cognitive production of meaning. I acknowledge that a film adaptation can be seen as a product of the novel it is based upon. Yet I also understand that adaptations are "autonomous works in their own

right," as Geraghty posits (*Now a Major* 7), and that a novel-film adaptation can be regarded as a composite of both objects and the relationship between them. From a functional viewpoint, with the use of adaptations in mind, none of these views should be excluded. Although they might be part of an evolutionary process by which one evolves from another, the novel, the screenplay, and the film co-exist, rather like clones with a mutual yet individual DNA string, as Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon argue. From this perspective, I find Sarah Cardwell's notion of the ur-text useful, as a mythic story that all versions of a narrative represent from different perspectives, because it allows the individual works of fiction to be studied individually and in relation to each other at the same time. The ur-text notion, with its web of versions, also invites the imagining of a greater whole, or design, as a result of the cognitive flicker of meanings from alternative narratives, which is of value when the construction of thematic meaning is in focus.

Secondly, narratives are designed to function and to serve a purpose within a context. As Bordwell declares, "neo-structuralist narratologists of film largely avoid discussing function" ("Neo-structuralist" 204). I recognise that the narrative models that Campbell, with his Jungian take on myths, the neo-formalist Kristin Thompson, and the cognitive, evolutionary narratologist Hogan present originate from different theoretical foundations. Yet they all share a functional, neo-Aristotelian connection, and add relevance and practical frameworks to Phelan's rhetorical and thematic approach as he regards characters as designs with thematic purposes.

Third, besides narrative and sociological structures, I also make use of a set of *markers of adulthood* in this dissertation. They are constructed as an amalgamation of various sociological and psychological models, and serve as a framework for the semantic categorisation of various character attributes that can be related to adulthood in novels, screenplays, and films. The objective is not to present a new definition of adulthood that can compete with existing theories in those fields; I only suggest a tentative framework for the study of adulthood in fiction, which serves the purposes of this study. I thus employ semantic categorisation of characters' mental

and physical actions and reactions, which can be productive for thematic studies, especially if they are used to indicate qualitative patterns, aspects, relationships, and processes as a foundation for analysis. Yet, to use structural principles for semantic analysis demands a reflexive ideological awareness in the analysis, since ethical values and functional relationships determine the judgements and "qualifications" of characters' actions (Bal 131). There is also a risk that structures may reduce the complexities of the qualities of the objects and phenomena that are studied.

Fourthly, since most scholars traditionally associate adulthood, as a theme, with either mature-age studies or the representation of the younger, formative years of a person's life, I should clarify that the use of adulthood as an example theme in this dissertation concerns the representation of what it is to be adult, not of what becoming an adult is about, particularly in connection with the thematic transformations and simultaneous representations of themes that media adaptations result in.

Fifthly, I only include what could be regarded as successful novels, screenplays, and films in the study. Likewise, I have limited my scope to exclude adaptations of novels written before the year 2000. This year is, of course, chosen with a certain arbitrariness. Its symbolic value as a representation of contemporary culture is, however, significant, as events like 9/11, the Me Too movement, and other phenomena since 2000 have radically affected the cultural climate in which novels, screenplays, and films are produced. The selection is also based on fiction written and produced in the English language. That being said, American and British perspectives dominate, and while Kira-Anne Pelican et al., Hogan, Campbell, and Boyd indicate that the thematic organisation of character traits and narrative structures are universal in successful stories, I cannot assert that any conclusions regarding the representation of adulthood are decisively valid outside the delineations of this project. Moreover, I have focused on the protagonists in the stories, not on the secondary characters who to some extent define them, although that could have been an interesting and complementary approach. Given these limitations, I will be

restricted from drawing any too far-reaching conclusions regarding adaptations in general. Conversely, because the project mainly revolves around certain fiction titles, with specific novelists, screenwriters, and directors, the thesis will naturally add to our understanding of the characterisation, the representation of adulthood, and the rhetoric in those works.

As stated, this dissertation will primarily provide insights on how the representation of characters and themes is affected by the novel-film adaptation process, on some of the transformative processes that are involved, and thus on the didactic opportunities that adaptations may offer, when audiences engage in the thematic representations and processes of adaptation of contemporary novels, screenplays, and films. Furthermore, the thesis will suggest a way for fidelity studies and comparisons between films and novels to be productive without the influence of judgements, thereby advancing our comprehension of the adaptation of the spirit of stories, to speak with Colin MacCabe (8). In particular, these insights have implications for the pedagogy of film, screenwriting, and literature, since they have to do with the uses of fiction.

Since this project asserts that the screenplay is a centrepiece in the novel-to-film story world and its transformation, the project aspires to contribute to the foregrounding of the screenplay in academic research and in adaptation studies in particular. For screenwriters, the findings may be of practical use when characters and themes are to be adapted in an environment of converging media and story landscapes. The models I present can hopefully be used as functional tools to communicate ideas when novelists, directors, screenwriters, and producers bring their respective discourses and motivations to the table. Moreover, the project also connects to the growing field of age studies, and might be of interest for practitioners and scholars in areas linked to psychology and sociology, although the findings of this thesis might be of greater potential value for teachers who use film and literature as educational elements in their classes.

Chapter Outline

In the following, chapter 2 outlines my position in relation to adaptation studies, beginning with a brief discussion about media specificity, before the poetics of the screenplay is addressed as an essential background. An overview of central approaches to adaptation studies is then sketched in relation to the transformation of characters and themes, before I focus on non-linear models of adaptations and the possibilities involved in studying characters as fictional beings and migrants. To conclude the chapter, I address the bi-directional process of adaptation and appropriation that conditions the reception and creation of novel-film adaptations. Chapter 3 addresses thematic representation in fiction in general, with a discussion of theories and models of studying themes as they are represented by characters in fiction; this leads to a consideration of the plot as a rhetorical line of argument in narrative fiction, based on the structure of the hero's journey, or the monomyth, as it is presented by Joseph Campbell. I then turn to the concept of adulthood and its representation in fiction, since it constitutes the thematic example in this dissertation, and outline a model of *markers of adulthood* that can be used to study the representation of adulthood in fiction, based on studies of adulthood, in the fields of sociology and psychology. Since this is an article-based dissertation, it includes and is based on five articles. The full-length articles are attached in appendices A-E. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the five articles and a discussion of their individual contributions, as well as how they, as a unity, address the overall research aim. In the concluding Chapter 5, I consider the implications of this dissertation as a whole, with regard to the understanding of what happens to the representation of adulthood, and themes in general, when novels are adapted for the screen, and how those transformations and their results may be used as means for thematic reflection. The theoretical and methodological consequences in relation to the study of adaptations, literature, screenwriting, and film criticism are also summarised. Finally, the practical implications of the models that this project has resulted in will be discussed, mostly in relation to teaching and creative writing.

Chapter 2

Adaptation, Appropriation, Migration, and the Screenplay

Before I address how thematic content is represented through characters in fiction, I will outline my position in relation to adaptation studies in general. Initially, the question of media specificity will be discussed briefly in the context of thematic representation. Numerous publications have covered how and why novels and films are not the same, from a variety of theoretical perspectives; however, these cannot all be covered here, however interesting they may be. For in depth discussions of media-specific fallacies, I am indebted to Thomas Leitch's article "Twelve Fallacies," to Elliott's *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, and to her overview in "Theorizing Adaptations/Adapting Theories." It is also of great importance to explain the position of the screenplay in relation to the adaptation process and to adaptation scholarship, since this has been widely neglected by scholars in the field. In so doing, I will also introduce the poetics of the screenplay, which is perhaps the narrative form that is most circumscribed by formal conventions. Finally, I discuss some linear and non-linear approaches to the study of adaptations, before I focus on the interplay between adaptation and appropriation, and the benefits of regarding characters as migrants when thematic issues are studied in connection with adaptations.

Media Specificity

Many debates on adaptations end up making judgements or explanations based on media-specific qualities. Seymour Chatman's article "What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)" from 1980 is an example of this, and an illustration of what Leitch defines as the first phase of the history of adaptation scholarship ("Introduction" 2). The study of adaptations has been dominated by the focus on works of fiction which have gained the status of literary masterpieces, and on their film adaptations. This focus has produced a biased notion of the "ideal constructs" (Bazin 49; MacCabe 17) of their cinematic representations in the minds of the critic or scholar, which has conditioned much of that generation of adaptation criticism,

in stark contrast to the fact that few novels or films can be said to have been produced under ideal conditions. Disregarding the actual range of experiences that demonstrate what can be done with different media, critics still use examples of how novelists and filmmakers have failed to achieve something, for the sake of arguing that certain things cannot be done. However, a poor film adaptation does not mean that a certain novel is unfilmable, just as the less successful novels that have been adapted to successful films – as is often the case with Alfred Hitchcock's and Stanley Kubrick's films for instance – do not prove that the stories, their characters, and themes are unsuitable for the novel form. To put it plainly, it is not the novel that produces the film.

In general, from a functional perspective and with the reader's and viewer's understanding in mind, I side with Dudley Andrew, who states that, theoretically, the same narrative elements and codes, such as characters, events, contexts, themes, and so forth, can be represented and their meanings communicated, regardless of narrative media, if they are produced under ideal conditions (103). Elliott has convincingly shown how the communicated content of a narrative is not bound by form, due to the analogue possibilities of different narrative media (*Rethinking*). As Hutcheon argues, the content may hypothetically be transferred to a new form (10), but only if the execution is performed under completely ideal circumstances. What thus constitute the most definitive distinctions between different versions of stories are the means of expression that are applied and how these are coordinated to produce a foundation for the audience's meaning-making process.

With regard to the notion of an *ideal construct,* it can be observed that much of the writing on media specificity takes as a starting point the idea of the purity or essence of each narrative medium, ignoring the fact that there is no such thing as a purely novelistic or cinematic means of expression, only typical mixtures of various modes, as Cardwell and Anne Gjelsvik, among others, suggest. The first wave of adaptation criticism nevertheless kept an insistent focus on the division between the verbal and the visual, as well as between the linear representation of words and

the cinematic spatial representation. For instance, in *Novel to Film* (1986), Brian McFarlane defines novels as linear, on the grounds that the words are usually read in a distinct order, which, he asserts, makes the progression of the meaning-making process linear "through a gradual accretion of information," whereas films are defined as spatial because they mostly present parallel tracks of visual, verbal, and aural signs (26-27). With reference to Roland Barthes, McFarlane also argues that novels work entirely symbolically, through the telling mode, since each word has to be conceptually decoded, whereas films are understood perceptually, because meaning is presented rather than told.

Even more problematically, McFarlane claims that films cannot express action in the past. In contrast, it is reasonable to contend that films cannot present anything but representations of the past, since films show staged sequences of a story which have already occurred and been recorded long before a film is shown on the screen. In addition, the events represented have already occurred, in the screenplay before they are filmed, where they are preserved in a frozen present tense. However, both these positions disregard how films are perceived by audiences. Over the years, film conventions have developed means and linguistic conventions to signal past tense to their audiences as clearly as any verbal grammatical tense might do. Furthermore, from a perceptual and phenomenological vantage point, the multi-literate readers and spectator can be transported, in their imaginations, to the now of the past when a narrative so demands, and are able to understand the present and the past in context, regardless of whether they are reading a novel or watching a film.

Another aspect of the ideal constructs of a fiction film or a novel is that they involve a controlled experience at the cinema or an ideal reading situation, which seems to take place at home, with pauses, without external interferences, and with a reader who on occasion turns back the pages to return to already read sentences, paragraphs, or sections. However, there is no way to ensure that a reader does not skip a specific word or paragraph. Neither can the reader's attention be guaranteed. In fact, on average a third of the words in a novel are probably skipped by readers

(Rayner 2009), as if there is a limit to the number of words the average reader can take in or desire for an understanding of the text.

In the context of perceptual overload, it is nevertheless the audiovisual multitrack constitution of the film medium that is most commonly foregrounded, with spoken words, music, sound, set designs, movements, and so much more on display in every frame. Chatman thus notes that because films commonly present countless pieces of information at once, and spectators rarely have the time to consider them all, the "pressure from the narrative component is too great. Events move too fast" ("What novels" 126). Similarly, McFarlane addresses "the simultaneous bombardment by several claims on our attention" in films (28-9). However, Robert Stam, in the introduction to *Literature to Film* (2005), turns the argument around and argues that, although films may be open to obvious contradictions as an effect of the multitrack phenomenon, they have the capacity to produce "multitemporal, polyrhythmic" complexities (60). Through the habits that streaming services, digital discs, and home cinema systems have produced, it has been made apparent that the above-mentioned limitations and possibilities rather depend on artistic production and distribution forms than on media-specific qualities as such.

Hence, the past two decades of adaptation scholarship have resulted in a more nuanced view of media specificity. Elliott has demonstrated how the different signifying systems are present in both novels and films, which further complicates the form/content dilemma for the theoretically minded *(Rethinking)*. In prose, novelists paint pictures for the mind and the reading process inscribes them as visual memories, just as clearly as the words and linguistic representations are created in the mind to store the audiovisual expressions in a film. The oft-repeated distinction between the telling and showing modes of film and literature have thus been dismissed as possible yearnings for pure media forms (Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies" 151), but, in spite of the ever present signs of the contemporary convergence culture, in which we may drink Austen experiences from a Mr. Darcy cup, or play a *Game of*

Thrones board game, the inclination to reduce the potential of cinematic and literary expressions and forms to media essences prevails in many of our romantic minds.

Historically, the distinction between *showing* and *telling* can be traced to the intertitles of early cinema, which were often used as simple solutions to a narrative problem; media students are still told not to use voice overs in their films, because they compromise the film medium. Thus, Chatman's statement that "it is not cinematic description but merely description by literary assertion transferred to film" ("What Novels" 440) still carries weight. Nevertheless, the film ranked highest by audiences on IMDB has for years been *Shawshank Redemption* (Darabont, 1994), a film which relies heavily on the narrating voiceover. So, again, it is not a matter of whether a film is cinematic or not. What is relevant is the purpose that the expressive means fills, and that is realised in a film production.

Much could also be said about the narrating levels and perspectives in novels, screenplays, and films. Anne Igelström's dissertation *Narration in the Screenplay Text* (2013) and Murray Smith's *Engaging Characters* (1995) give sufficient evidence to say that the same narrational strategies apply regardless of medium. Whereas novels may use first, second, and third person narration, films use the camera and sounds to place the eyes and ears of the spectator in similar positions to those the novel does in relation to the narrator, regarding narration, focalisation, and reader identification. In the end, as Rick Altman theorises in *A Theory of Narrative* (2008), readers and spectator above all follow characters' minds, actions, and perspectives through a narrative. Whom someone follows may change during the progression of a narrative, from protagonist, to antagonist, to the exchange between them, and to the narrator, although most narratives are primarily structured to facilitate the following of a protagonist through a narrator, who carries the heaviest thematic burden, especially since readers' and spectators' minds cannot be entirely controlled.

When it comes to characters, it is often argued that films depend more on clear behavioural stereotypes and coherent, less complex characters, unlike novels, although these appear in popular novels to the same extent that they do in popular

films. Thus, like most adaptation theorists, Hutcheon regards it as a faulty cliché to say that the representation of the complex emotions and thoughts of characters is exclusive to text (56; see also Leitch "Twelve Fallacies" 158). It is true that, during the progression of the experiences of the narrative, the gradual development and the spontaneous analysis of a character often allow more time for the reader than for the film viewer. As previously indicated, this is often compensated for by the use in films of the rich parallel modes of impressions in terms of sound, words, and visual information. The narrator's voice and the reporting of thoughts and emotions in literature also occur in films. Contemporary cinematic characters often tell audiences directly or indirectly about their thoughts and emotional states, so the inner life of characters can be powerfully represented and understood by spectators through a vast arsenal of expressive means, from camera work and editing, to speech, voiceovers, actions, and not least through pure acting and characters' interactions and interrelations, the latter based on the same decoding strategies as those that we use in the social world to sense and understand what someone feels or thinks, which is known as the theory of mind. André Bazin's comment on *The Pastoral Symphony* is illuminating on this point:

> But I do think that Michèle Morgan's beautiful eyes […] are able to communicate the blind Gertrude's innermost thoughts … All it takes is for the filmmakers to have enough visual imagination to create the cinematic equivalent of the style of the original, and for the critic to have the eyes to see it. (20)

In consequence, there is little support for the opinion that the possibilities of employing characters' thematic dimensions and functions are restricted by the film medium. The greatest difference between novels and films concerning the representation of themes through characters is perhaps that live action feature films still depend on actors and actresses. These performers bring the illusion of corporeality to characters on the screen, and sometimes they come with thematic baggage from previous appearances and from their physical appearances, as Stam

observes (10-11), which is often considered, emphasised or compensated for in the casting, acting, direction, camera work, makeup, the digital editing of bodies and faces, and even lighting.

To conclude this brief but necessary discussion on media specificity in relation to novels and films, themes may perhaps not be "the easiest story elements to see as adaptable," as Hutcheon claims that they are (10), but they are definitely not media-specific. However, because films are usually far more expensive to produce than the average novel, they are riskier ventures. Producers may very well impose thematic restraints, with or without a production code, but this is also known to happen when editors comment on manuscripts for novels too. Gjelsvik reasons that some scenes are visually sensitive, whereas others are linguistically provocative, and that "we tend to react differently towards different art forms due to a combination of medium characteristics and conventions" as an effect of their emotional impact (247). That said, the question remains as to whether conventions in literature, novels, and films and their "traditions of quality" (Francois Truffaut in Leitch, "Twelve fallacies"162) affect the rhetorical presentation of adulthood differently.

The Status and Poetics of the Screenplay

With regard to media specificity, the screenplay is a hybrid, part literature, part film, but still circumscribed by its own formal conventions, distinct from those of the novel, the film, and the theatrical play for that matter. Strangely enough, in spite of the recent expansion of topics addressed in adaptation studies and the fact that screenwriters and screenplays are imperative for film adaptations, the screenplay has not yet been fully recognised as a natural and integral part of adaptation, literature, or film studies. As Steven Price observes, texts on adaptation still rarely mention screenplays, unless just to credit the director or screenwriter, or to comment fleetingly on the production process (*Screenplay* 57-58). When screenplays are occasionally analysed, they are more often than not equated with the structures of events, settings, and dialogues in the relevant films (110). Voters for the Best

Screenplay category for the Academy Awards, the Golden Globe Awards, and even the Writers' Guild Awards rarely read the actual screenplays, but evaluate them by watching the films. Thereby, they too fail to acknowledge the screenplays as works with values and qualities greater than those once afforded to them as subordinate blueprints for the films.

Still, screenplays have recently been given some serious scholarly attention and have been addressed as valuable resources in adaptation studies (Cattrysse 25). Leitch, for one, endorses the view that both novels and screenplays can be regarded as source texts for film adaptations, and that adapted screenplays are as much a result of an adaptation process as adapted films are ("Twelve Fallacies"). With the classic source-target model in mind, the adapted screenplay can thus be regarded as being both source and target. Beyond the prescriptive and less academic screenwriting manuals, Claudia Sternberg (1997), Peter van Stapele (2005), Kevin Alexander Boon (2008), Igelström (2013), and Price (2013) are a few of the scholars who have laid the ground for a narratology of the modern screenplay. Since 2010, *Journal of Screenwriting* has also contributed with insights on the philosophy and history of the screenplay, the process of writing, and research on screenwriting manuals, which may in time enhance the literary status of the screenplay.

However, screenplays have long been denied the status of literary objects as an unfortunate consequence of their standardised format and function as "nothing more than a set of notes to a production crew" (Luttrell 10). For instance, Noël Carroll (2008) claims that a screenplay cannot be regarded as an independent artwork, since it is above all a production tool and cannot be attributed to a singular creative mind (*Philosophy* 69). Similarly, Ian W. Macdonald (2013) argues that a screenplay is an integral part of a film project, and as an object represents a collaborative "screen idea" for a film, which in that context is the one and only artwork at hand (89). In spite of many screenwriters' status as literary stars today, this view lingers, and screenplays are seen as descriptive structure drawings or blueprints. It is thus implied that the screenwriter should entrust the artistic initiative, that is to say, all decisions

about aesthetics and depth of meaning, to the directors, photographers, actors, and others.

Still, in contrast to the blueprint metaphor and the notion of the *screen idea*, Ted Nannicelli contends that screenplays should have the same status as art works as plays written for the stage, since staged performances and films are in fact implementations of their scripts (409-10). Nannicelli recalls Gus van Sant's 1998 remake of *Psycho,* which was produced with the same script as used by Hitchcock's 1960 film (409-10), to exemplify that a screenplay, like a play written for the stage, is a literary artwork, and that films, like staged plays, are performances of screenplays. There are numerous other examples in film history of this type of productivity. Just to mention two examples, Leo McCarey made two different films from the same screenplay (*Love Affair,* 1939; *An Affair to Remember*, 1957), while Michael Haneke translated his own *Funny Games* (1997) from a German to an English version with British and American actors in 2007. This indicates that screenplays should indeed be regarded as texts that call for artistic evaluation and interpretation.

The screenplay's status as a work of fiction can also be validated through its increasing audiences. As he interrogates the status of the screenplay as text and work of art, Nannicelli thus observes that

> when we browse in bookstores these days, it is not uncommon to find more published screenplays in the film section than published theatrical scripts in the drama section. There are numerous publishers and imprints that now publish classic and contemporary screenplays … In addition, there are fan communities in which members share both screenplays based on previously existing television shows, movies, and characters, as well as original screenplays. These fan screenplays are not intended to function as production documents, but rather are created to be read for their own sake by community members. (408)

If the various roles and functions of a screenplay are embraced, as I have sketched above, the adapted screenplay appears to be more than a singular literary text. This

is the case in a more concrete way as well. In the course of a film project new versions may appear by the hour (Price, *Screenplay* 69), so it is often difficult to locate one singular product that can be named *The Screenplay,* and exclude all other versions of it. Instead, the screenplay seems to be in a state of constant flux and transformation, as Sternberg observes, until it has lost the original function and meaning that it had when it was first presented to its intended readers. It thus materialises the palimpsestuous nature of all fiction.

However, to simplify, the first version may be considered the writer's original screenplay, a version which is presented to producers before the rest of the film production is fully launched. The second is a text that has been reworked to function as an initial raw material for the director and the production team (Boozer 6). In the process, various production conditions, ranging from legal issues to geographical requirements, demand revisions before a version can be presented that roughly corresponds to the film. Later, a "legal version" (Price, *Screenplay* 72) or "release script" is produced, which is a strict record of the film for professional use. The most tangible version of a screenplay is a distinct published literary item intended for reading, with commentary texts and images from the film and production set. However, these publications take different forms and may also present the readers with the writer's version, as a shooting script, an edited version to the fullest extent possible consistent with the distributed film, or any other version of the screenplay (Price, *History* 231). Regardless of which of these is the case, the published screenplay is a literary work in its own right, and, when it is an adaptation, it functions as a possible interpretation of and commentary on both the novel and the film.

As indicated, as a result of industrial demands, a screenplay has its set format and unconditional poetics. As manuals have stipulated, at least since Field's *Screenplay* in 1979, screenplays are regulated by strict conventions.[1] To begin with, a screenplay should still be written using the Courier font, although the digital era has introduced

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[1] See Price's *A History of the Screenplay* for an account of how screenplay conventions have gradually emerged.

alternatives, and one page of text is conventionally written to correspond to one minute of reading and film. To compare, a two-hour feature film comprises around 25,000-30,000 words (Field 22), while a novel often contains over 100,000 words. McCarthy's short novel *The Road* consists of 58,722 words, whereas Penhall's adapted screenplay contains 25,179 words. Meanwhile, McEwan's novel *Atonement* conforms to the novel format with its 123,842 words, and Hampton's shooting script contains 18,740 words. This means that adapted screenplays condense the novels that precede them. Therefore, Boon argues, the screenplay text should be associated with poetry, since it is characterised by the same "concise and connotative" qualities (17). In the case of adaptation screenplays, they are often constructed to bridge the poetics of novels and films.

Furthermore, the screenplay is strictly divided into scenes, "defined by continuous action in one place" (Price, *History* 210). Each scene has a pragmatic heading specifying interior/exterior setting, specific location, and time of day. It might be followed by a brief depiction of action and setting, which demands a linguistic and poetic condensation and exactitude to meet the requirements of the format. To accomplish this task, the screenwriter makes use of three modes: a descriptive mode, outlining the mise-en-scene or the necessary details of the physical setting; a report mode, relating the sequence of actions or movements; and a comment mode, giving the writer room for additional information that is absolutely necessary to understand the scene (Sternberg). Apart from this, conventions advise that any speech directions, and other specifications, should be omitted. Characteristics of the characters and places must not be too specific, since they might not be matched by real life appearances. Price remarks that this helps readers to set a so-called master screenplay apart from a shooting script, which often has contributions from the creative members of the actual film production team. Nevertheless, screenwriters habitually break some of these rules in every screenplay.

Furthermore, as Steven Maras notes, the screenplay emphasises the reader's specific placement in the text, which is distinct from that in both plays and novels.

Frequently, what happens in a screenplay is described with the words *we see* this or that happening, with the manifest purpose of guiding the readers' and potential spectators' experiences (67), and inviting the reader to fill gaps and interpret. This inclusion of the reader as a voyeur in the text thus positions him/her between the text's implied reader and the characters, which creates the illusion of the reader as a spectator who experiences the fictional world as if being there. Therefore, Igelström maintains, a screenplay is obviously also a piece of literary fiction, which gives rise to three separate narrating voices: the *extra-fictional voice*, responsible for production values, and the *impersonal fictional voice*, which is merely responsible for narrating the fictional accounts, as well as the *personal fictional voices* of the characters.

In contrast to Kubrick's statement that the screenplay is the most non-communicative form of writing ever designed, and entirely based on the filmmaker's needs (Maras 63), it should, finally, be emphasised that a screenplay communicates with the ambition of evoking multi-modal mental experiences of text, body, sound, light, smell, space, and so forth, which makes it a text that requires sensory imagination. In reading an adapted screenplay, an interaction is possible with the fictional world of the novel and that of the film, as if there are three parallel worlds that are part of one single story universe. Add to that the readers' personal inferential ambitions to create meanings and purposes attached to their own world, and a very rich communicative game enfolds. In this game, as Maras proposes, the reader of a screenplay becomes a translator, adaptor, and contributor, who rewrites the text to images, and the images to text (70). From this perspective, the screenplay is indeed at the heart of the adaptation process.

Adaptations: The State of Affairs

Adaptation studies resides in a liminal space. Torn between the openness of intertextuality and cultural and social aspects of texts, cognitive, response-related narratology, and the formal or semiotic approaches to media-specific aesthetics, the research community persistently struggles to keep normative fidelity studies and

value judgements at bay. The romantic idea of the sacred original, enhanced by readers' emotional memories of the imaginations of worlds that novels produce, has long afflicted adaptations with pejorative judgements. In the comparative tradition, quality-labelled novels have habitually been evaluated against and regarded superior to film versions with regard to structure, content, and the complexity of political or thematic content. Thus, verdicts have repeatedly been passed on the possibilities of communicating a specific story and its content in new media forms, based on its success with audiences or reviewers.

One of the crucial problems, regardless of the approach to adaptations, is that they include processes of change, as well as, commonly, at least two distinct cultural products, such as a film and a novel. Thus, as Elliott argues, "adaptations teach us that theories cannot predict or account for adaptations in all times and places … because adaptations are always changing and adapting. Any theory of adaptation must … therefore *itself* incorporate process and change" ("Theorizing" 34). However, it is vital to understand that an adaptation means development but not necessarily a complete transformation. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines an adaptation as "a reproduction modified to suit new uses," and adaptation is ideologically linked to evolution or development, phenomena that enable organisms to survive in new cultural environments. Media adaptations, too, are generally equated with "the term Darwin uses to stress that the structure of an organism is a function of its environment," Colin MacCabe notes (3). In essence, adaptation thus refers to the process of changing a structure, form, or function to fit, or suit, different conditions and environments (Field 323).

Traditionally, most models of adaptation are linear, based on the perception of time and progression. Thus, adaptations are intuitively regarded as one-way transportations, from a source text to its remediation in a different media form. This dated model is based on the material process of adaptation, and entails the problematic idea that there is an entity, in shape of a static, unified source text of permanent meaning, which exists before the adaptation process takes place and from

which selected core features can be preserved when the new shape of the narrative is formed (Cardwell 13). As a result, there is a persistent illusion, as Pascal Nicklas and Oliver Lindner suggest, of a "mysterious transubstantiation," so that the contents of a novel can be "transported to the new form in a way that leaves it still recognizably the same" (2), which is rarely the case.

Still, there is indisputably always an element of faithfulness, or a cooperative benevolent relationship, both to what has been and to what is to come, in connection with adaptations. Emphasising the relationship to the first version of those that are compared, Rachel Carroll even argues that "all adaptations express or address a desire to return to an 'original' textual encounter," and that adaptations signify a desire to repeat, but also that "every 'return' is inevitably transformative of its object" (1). As Geraghty puts it, adaptations thus entail "an accretion of deposits over time, a recognition of ghostly presences, and a shadowing or doubling of what is on the surface by what is glimpsed behind" (*Now a Major* 195). Likewise, in *Screen Adaptations: Impure Cinema* (2010), Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan propose that "there is still a trace of yearning, of a desire for simplicity and disciplinary purity" (13). I venture to say that this dilemma, which relates to the state of adaptation studies, is equally relevant to cognitive, literary, and film studies and perhaps even more so to the human condition: we are aware of the complex constitution of our realities, but dream of a simple model, based on our preferences, to take us through it all. After all, adaptations allow us not only to refer back, but also to observe alterations, environments, and relationships, and to look forward.

Yet, the conflict between the desire for simple, pragmatic models and the complexities of real life, or artistic and communicative relationships, has taken adaptation studies to the point where competitive concepts, like remediation, intertextuality, intermediality, and multimodality, to mention but a few, are used to position scholars and models in opposition to each other (Elliott, "Theorizing" 23), when they actually share a common ground. As a result of these more open-ended approaches to adaptations, the question of what is and what is not an adaptation has

been brought to the fore. Together with cognitive and narratological approaches to adaptations, scholars have demonstrated the interconnectedness of works that do not in any way signal overtly that they are adaptations, which has led Hutcheon to ask the pertinent question "what is *not* an adaptation?" (170). In many ways these are creative approaches to theory, and, as Leitch and Elliott probably would, I say so in a positive sense, because new perspectives challenge our presumptions (see Leitch, *Against Conclusions*), although I personally direct my curiosity mostly to film adaptations and the novels that share their titles.

One of the more important outcomes of the numerous case studies and theorisations in the field is the rich variety of taxonomies or classifications of creative acts and relationships between adaptation versions. Andrew suggests "borrowing, intersecting, transforming" (98), while Geoffrey Wagner proposes "transposition," "commentary," and "analogy" (222), and Julie Sanders makes an extensive list of other terms that different scholars have used, of which "version, variation, interpretation, continuation, transformation, imitation, pastiche, parody, forgery, travesty, […] transposition, revaluation, revision, rewriting, echo" are but a few (18). These classifications are clearly reductive if isolated, but most taxonomisers maintain that there is no such thing as purity or an absolute and singular original in an adaptation process. Their purpose is not necessarily to classify adaptations, but to illuminate phenomena in the processes, to expand insights into the complexities of novel-to-film adaptations and appropriations, and to offer new tools and perspectives.

Consequently, returning to Hutcheon's assertion that anything might be considered an adaptation, Ian Q. Hunter picks up the debate and asks "what is only an adaptation?," arguing that even the most explicit one-to-one adaptations abound with connections to other narratives, which are implemented through various modes of adaptation (66). There is no conclusive response to these thought-provoking questions and there is still no comprehensive theory of adaptation taxonomies in place. Nor is it within the scope of this project to approach that enterprise. I settle

for the observation that in spite of all the calls for new models and theories that so many taxonomies are partly meant to serve, it can be noted that most of the terms rely on the linear relationship between two versions, which indicates the dominance that such a notion still holds quantitatively in adaptation studies, no matter how many other lines of reasoning have been convincingly theorised and advocated.

Indeed, Cartmell and Whelehan argues that every object and process of adaptation comes with "an entirely new set of relations" (*Screen Adaptation* 22); these come with an infinite number of variables involved in each case, as MacCabe adds (8). For new ways to approach such problems, and thus to challenge the habitual patterns of adaptation scholarship, Leitch, Cutchins, Lawrence Raw, Simone Murray, Cardmell, Whelehan, Elliott, and many others have turned to pedagogy, sociology, historicism, science of business, and other academic fields that focus on multi-variable and less-than-linear processes, some of which have already been mentioned. The contribution of this cross-disciplinary curiosity is that it has opened up the field for new models and studies. Nonetheless, regardless of strategy, ambition, motive, or approach, contemporary scholars still find it necessary to continually re-establish the position of adaptation studies in relation to the traditional literature-film and form-content divides, predominantly to support equality between the media, with the meaning-making processes of readers and spectators in mind.

The Attraction of Adaptations

At this point, I would like to return to the matter of the attraction that keeps the general interest in adaptations so vibrant. In chapter 1 I referred to the analogy between comparing versions of fictional character or story identities and figuring out who we are and can be. Suzanne Diamond maintains that self-negotiating involves how we believe others see us and submits that non-judgemental fidelity analyses "constitute important cultural identity work," because we negotiate a collective version of our self-identity in reading and watching adaptations (105). The mere activity of adaptation engagement thereby enables us to consider our own adaptation

processes. We may accept that invitation or pay no attention to it. If we do activate the engagement, we may never want a story to end, since, as McFarlane suggests, both novels and films introduce us to incomplete realities that make us want to know more ("Reading" 20), and adaptations add the joy of possibilities that the variations signify (Hutcheon 9), concerning not just the characters in the stories but also ourselves and the world. Adaptations thus represent the incompleteness of our consciousness, and suggest that, with continual efforts, we may one day see our curiosity about ourselves satisfied. Perhaps, then, if the end of a story is regarded as a metaphor for death, adaptations represent our dreams of eternal life.

In a similar line of reasoning, MacCabe stresses that "the source text is part of the appeal and the attraction of the film" (5), but this, I would argue, might not be due to the dream of an eternal identity that a source text might represent, but rather to the demonstration of the possibility of adapting to new conditions. As such, an adaptation distances the experience from the idea of a "divine design" and individual essence, MacCabe argues, and replaces it with "a continuous process" (3). Sanders remarks, in agreement, that "the Mendel-Darwin synthesis offers a useful way of thinking about the happy combination of influence and creativity, of tradition and the individual talent, and of parental influence and offspring in appropriative literature, perhaps all literature" (156). By the same token, from Moretti's and Erikson's point of view, the dialogical and intertextual approaches to identity correspond to the human drive to find a balance between individuality and communality, between difference and sameness, which is the upside of Frederic Jameson's proposition that the appeal of adaptations lies mainly in the inherent "allegories of their never-ending and unresolvable struggles for primacy" (232). In the end, and in spite of the subversive tendency of adaptations to undermine power in their claim for renewal, which Hutcheon identifies, adaptations fulfil the human need or desire for patterns and development (175). We may therefore be intrigued by the relevance of a character, story, or theme that crosses borders of culture and time, in search of something that links the externals of their lives and our own to the

internal, "bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty" (173).

Non-linearity

The line of criticism that breaks most thoroughly away from linear and hierarchical models is involved with audiences' ways of relating to and understanding fiction. Henry Jenkins' ground-breaking observations on audience activities and processes of making sense of and living with fiction imparted a severe blow to those who maintain narrative hierarchies and argue that reader response and audience research should be confined to sociology and psychology departments, or claim that such methodologies cannot reveal anything substantial about the texts. For readers and spectators, the hegemony of the author and the signification which is restricted to the boundaries of textual and audio-visual signs have been productively abandoned. Derrida's postulation "il n'y a pas de hors-text" – there is nothing, or no, "outside the text" – comes to mind (158). He asserted that when a narrative was based on other accounts of events there was nothing outside of these textual representations to relate to. Conversely, if all we know about reality, as Jean Baudrillard and Edmund Husserl suggest, is inferred from representations of reality, there is no outside the text, only *mystories,* to use Greg Ulmer's phrase (2004), and the scholarly supremacy of deciding what a text means must at least allow for alternative truths, if only in this matter. As I will argue in what follows, for adaptation characters there might not be any outside-the-text at all, since these characters have a tendency to link texts together in the most creative ways, and they may very well reside in an all-inclusive universe.

This attention to the use of fiction and how meanings are experienced and construed brings to mind that people may watch the film, or TV show, before they read the book, as Hutcheon points out (xvii). In such instances, the film precedes and informs the person's understanding of the novel, no matter when the publication and release dates are. In some cases, a novel may be published after the film premiere,

like Arthur C. Clarke's novel *2001: A Space Odyssey*,[2] while in the case of *Game of Thrones* the final season could be said to be based on a novel which was not yet written. To upset the predetermined linear one-way connection further, the oscillation between memories of the novel and the film is not hierarchical from a cognitive point of view, Hutcheon and Elliott (*Rethinking*) argue. Instead, they exist side by side, or like mirroring looking glasses (Elliott, *Rethinking* 222). Some people even read and watch in tandem, and perhaps also listen to the audio book, with multiple actors performing the individual characters and the narrator as a complement, not to mention the published screenplays, perhaps with photographs from the films and the film location, excerpts from novels, and the audio commentaries and storyboards that might be available on the DVD or BLURAY editions. This was indeed the case for me when I first got acquainted with the titles in the article sections of this dissertation. With Jenkins' text in mind, there is no reason to limit the possibilities of parallel experiences, when games, fan fiction, collaborative online research projects, speculations, book covers, and so forth may add content and value to the reading and watching.

In accordance with these trends, which are essentially ideological in that they favour diversity and non-hierarchical systems, in the intertextual approach to the study of adaptations it is preferable to place narratives side by side to observe the connections, rather than the actual objects, as Stam maintains (27). Sanders observes that "the web of intertexuality … resists easy linear structures and straightforward one-to-one and one-way readings of 'influence'" (209). In scholarly practice, the linear one-way perspective is often assumed, however, even if network based theories are embraced in theory. For instance, Brian McFarlane's aim is to offer a productive method for intertextual researchers, but he still names his book *Novel to Film,* instead of *Novels and Films*. Likewise, in many studies the purpose is to show how certain later films have been informed by earlier novels. Still, just like audience research, the

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[2] In fact, the film and novel are indebted to Arthur C. Clarke's short story *The Sentinel* (1948).

intertextual approach opens up the possibility that newer texts may inform older ones, because they suggest, through intertextual play, what Sanders refers to as a "revised point of view" for understanding the works of fiction, which might also make older novels and films relevant for new audiences (18-19). As Morris Beja posits, "what a film takes from a book matters; but so does what it brings to the book" (88). From an intertextual perspective, it is thus just as relevant to ask how the narrative elements in *Me Before You* are used by Shakespeare, as it is to analyse how *Romeo and Juliet* inspires Jojo Moyes.

With this line of reasoning, MacDonald's aforementioned notion of the screen idea also relates to the work of novelists. Tom Perrotta, who wrote the novel *Little Children* and was nominated for an Oscar for the adapted screenplay, testifies that writing for the screen affected him as a novelist. Others, like Ian McEwan and Cormac McCarthy, have had several novels adapted for the screen, written screenplays, and acted as associate film producers. Dan Brown and J. K. Rowling signed contracts for adaptations of their novels before they had written them, and it is hard to imagine how these authors could not have been aware of a screen idea, with the unproduced films thus affecting the novels in a two-way exchange.

Jørgen Bruhn advances the idea of a two-way approach in adaptation studies by suggesting a dialogue between objects on the one hand and between objects and the adaptational processes on the other. He recommends the study of "*both* the source and result of the adaptation as two texts, infinitely changing positions, taking turns being sources for each other in the ongoing work of the reception in the adaptational process" (73). This holistic approach invites an understanding of a work of fiction as a "fluid text" and as "the sum of its versions," rather than as a single novel, screenplay, or film with a specific author attached to it (Bryant 47). A similar stance, which I have previously referred to, is taken by Cardwell, who considers the notion of a mythical or imaginary ur-text, which every adaptation in a network is a representation of, from different perspectives. Together they form a phenomenographic depiction of the ur-text and what it signifies. This allows a greater

variation of titles to be studied in the same context, in order to examine a specific phenomenon. "The ur-text, if neither definite nor finite, if only postulated or implied, extracted from each telling of the story, cannot hold the same sway over adaptations (or retellings) that the standard whole does," she declares (26). With this model, the always-incomplete image of the ur-text replaces the source text, not, however, as the starting point for the adaptation process, but always as the result of an analysis of the elements that the stories included add to the picture. As Regina Schober submits, adaptations can thereby be studied as rhizomatic networks that reflect "multiple contextual entanglements" (118). Due to the polyphony of voices that such an approach may give rise to, the multiplicity of thematic implications and the multiple relationships between them may be impractical to study, unless they are limited through the use of simplifying and accentuating semantic structures.

These strategies for thinking about adaptations effectively deprive the fidelity issue of any relevance, but more importantly they abandon all hierarchical structures, so that every version of a story can be both at the centre of attention while allowing every other version to be so too, since their contributions are regarded as equal in relation to the whole. Moreover, they endorse the constructive position taken by Whelehan, who opines that adaptation studies is better served if scholars look for the "excess rather than lack" when the meaning of a story is considered (16).

Fictional Beings in Non-linear Worlds

As I indicated in the introduction, fictional characters can be regarded as fictional beings in fictional worlds. This still leaves us with the question of how the fictional worlds that they inhabit are constituted. For instance, we readily accept that Clark Kent and Lois Lane are the same fictional persons in a unified story universe, although they remain the same age regardless of whether they appear in stories set in the 1940s or in the 21st century, so the time and place continua of our social reality do not necessarily seem to apply in the fictional worlds. Fans argue about whether *Pride, Prejudice, and Zombies*, with its altered universe, adds something of value to our

knowledge of the characters, or if it should be regarded as an ironic tale, or a story about characters in a universe distinct from the one Jane Austen created and told her readers about. In these universes, characters may or may not have experiences and characteristics that are not shared with the audiences. For adaptations, that question is crucial because it concerns the possibility that fictional characters can migrate, appear, or even be reborn in new settings and narrative environments. With the different approaches to adaptations that I have discussed above in mind, I would simplify by suggesting that there are four fundamental ways of making sense of the stories about the characters in fictional adaptations.

First, the different stories may be seen as accounts about unrelated characters, who just happen to share certain properties, like names, addresses, and life paths, but nevertheless reside in different story universes which cannot be the same unless, perhaps, they share an authorial control. Second, the first or most canonical narrative of the characters' lives could be regarded as the true version, and all versions that digress from the facts in this version could be seen as narratives of false alternative facts, useful intellectual and imaginative exercises perhaps, but unfaithful to the characters' true destinies, to follow Umberto Eco's line of reasoning. Third, they may be regarded as complementary narratives, which agrees with the above-mentioned models of adaptations as fluid texts, or as parts of a network of versions. Each version or story that the characters are part of can thus be regarded as an account of their lives, and it is up to the members of the audience to construct a sensible whole out of these narratives, just as we do in real life when different versions of an event or aspects of a person are conveyed to us. In this context, Maria E. Reicher distinguishes between "maximal characters" as characters who have all the conventional properties of a certain character, and "sub-maximal characters," who have subsets of those properties (129). It is possible for those characters to be reborn, or regenerated, in new times and places, with properties that they did not have when and where they last appeared. Fourth, I would like to expand a bit further on Eco's discussion about migrating characters and entertain the idea of them as actual

migrants who gradually transform their self-identities under migratory circumstances. Eco writes that characters may "leave the text that gave them birth and migrate to a zone in the universe we find very difficult to delimit. Narrative characters migrate, when they are lucky, from text to text" and between mediums (8). Thus, they "become individuals with a life apart from their original scores" (9), he argues. Other studies have made use of this metaphor, but what I propose is that we may better understand characters as fictional beings if we follow their migratory development, from novel, through a number of screenplay versions, to the screen, and so forth, and empathetically regard them as migrants.

Although the migrant analogy is commonplace in adaptation studies, it has become a politically sensitive metaphor. In everyday uses the term does not discriminate between suffering refugees and privileged, professional global workers who explore the world in their capacity as migrants. Originally, the term simply signified plants, animals, and people who change habitats, and in this context the word migrant is apt also for describing characters who move from one media form to another. The use of the term thus draws our focus to the phenomenon of changes in habitat or life environment and refers to the process of transition and adaptation to that new environment. Moreover, as other branches of science have done before, the migration metaphor invites new, productive theoretical models from migration studies to open up the study of media adaptations to include new perspectives.

When characters are considered as migrants, the bi-directional aspect of adaptations comes forth naturally in two ways. To begin with, if characters migrate they respond to their new environments and they change, but the acculturation process is always to some degree reciprocal, so that the culture of the host world also changes as a result of the new inhabitants' presence. As Bortolotti and Hutcheon puts it, "in a cultural context, adaptations influence culture and culture influences the nature of adaptations" (453). To study such migratory processes, from novel, through a select number of screenplays, to the screen, is not always possible, because the screenplays may not be available. In other cases, as I have described, the number

of drafts and versions may be overwhelming, unless the observation points during the process are strategically restricted by the researcher.

To understand characters' development through a migratory perspective naturally demands another cross-disciplinary input. Based on the idea of a standard case, many studies and practices of managing migrants' development, when they adjust to a new society, rely on similar models of progression through specific stages (Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung; Ward et al.). These models are based on studies of migrants' integration into societies and are, of course, schematic and should not be taken to be valid for every individual case. Instead they describe ideal processes, based on averages. Nevertheless, what is most important is that the nature of the stages in these sociological models indicates productive parallels with models for problem solving, story arcs, and personal development, which can be productive for adaptation scholars. In the first step, a so called honeymoon phase, the migrant may embrace the new setting with naïve curiosity, and with little focus on internal change. In a second phase, the migrant experiences various kinds of conflicts, with negative consequences for their self-esteem, and with social withdrawal or anger as an effect. However, the standard migrant begins to approach the problem and sorts out the impressions and elements that condition the experience of the new world in a more constructive manner, in order to relate them to the former home culture and make a first attempt to change and to fit in. In the fourth step, the migrant experiences a sensation of being in sync with the environment, and can settle in and make judgements based on an understanding of the new culture, with the ambition of being able to function there as a citizen. At this stage, the fear of deculturalisation, or of losing any sense of self-identity if the changes result in exclusion from both the new and old culture, is common. Those who are often considered as successful migrants, however, tak a step towards a final reorientation so as to manage the core cultural and personal issues that may prevent their harmonious acculturation and resocialisation. When the characters have completed their journey and hopefully realised their self-identity in the world of the film narrative, they still carry traces and

memories of their former selves and the places where they have resided before. As fictional beings they can never return to the novel without acknowledgment of their lives on the screen, because the characters, as Salman Rushdie recognises that he is, are "translated men" and women (17), with only "imaginary homelands" (10). In the end, the migrant can thus, ideally and with little effort, switch between self-identities and cultures, merge the past, present, and future images of the self into one, or choose one of the many experienced versions of the self to settle into and interact with the new culture in a relationship of acceptance. For both the migrant and for adaptation characters, self-identity can then, possibly, be found in a state of entropy, being one and many at the same time, as representations of the human condition in a world of flux. Where other methodologies fail to capture the process and object of adaptation simultaneously, a migratory approach does so by necessity.

Adaptation and Appropriation

Besides the word *migration*, adaptation studies and migration studies share terms like *assimilation*, *accommodation*, *acculturation*, *adaptation*, and *appropriation*. By definition these phenomena all involve transformative modifications of an object so that it may fit new purposes or environments. Assimilation signifies the process of adopting a culture or pattern to blend into. This would occur if a character from a novel is transformed to match a film stereotype. Accommodation, on the other hand, requires a flexibility and willingness, or ability, to change without vital sacrifices for the purpose of satisfying the new environment. Notwithstanding the relevance of these phenomena in this context, especially with the migratory, intertextual, and evolutionary perspectives in mind, in the last pages of this chapter I will focus on adaptation and appropriation, sometimes described as siblings in the context of media adaptations (Nicklas and Lindner 4). However, what makes them stand out is that they illustrate the contrasting bi-directional dynamics of adaptations.

Since adaptation has been adopted as an overarching term in media studies, it is necessary to clarify that, as processes, adaptation and appropriation are two

different, albeit not easily defined phenomena within the field of adaptation studies. Many, like Sanders and Hutcheon, define appropriation more or less as a subcategory of adaptation, and Cartmell and Whelehan opine that every adaptation includes a purposeful use of appropriation (18), while Andrew merges the two concepts when he declares that "adaptation is the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text" (97). Still, as Sanders maintains, the two essentially denote different attitudes to and processes of change.

Adaptation, as a production process, takes its stance from a source, which is adjusted and developed to survive and fit in a new environment. From an identity perspective, if a character or story adapts to a new media environment, a core of that original identity will always remain, as I have previously indicated. Therefore, an adaptation does not necessarily mean that a character or story alters its content and meaning, apart from the connotations that follow with the new mode of representation (Elliott 133; Hutcheon 10). Adaptation thereby acknowledges the source as its principal subject, but adaptation is also subversive and oppositional, as Sanders argues, because it entails a break with a past tradition and a "rupturing of its value-system and hierarchies" (1). Moreover, if characters are regarded as fictional beings who migrate to new media environments, they are, within the fictional universe, equipped with a fictional agency, which makes it possible for them to adapt, as opposed to being adapted or forced to adapt, a circumstance which is closely related to many readers' and spectators' unreflected experiences of the characters' developments. For the creative team that adapts a novel, adaptation thus means a respectful negotiation with the story and the characters, with the adaptors functioning as counsellors in the adaptation process. With the same respectful attitude, building on Andrew's position that "every representational film *adapts* a prior conception" of media and genre conventions (97), the adaptors must also manage the new media environment's adaptation to the characters and story. Hence, novels, screenplays, and films, their genres and conventions are adapted to fit new

stories and characters, just as stories and characters are adapted to suit new media environments.

Conversely, the pivotal agent in an appropriation process resides on the outside, usurping or taking "possession of another's story and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interest and talents," in Hutcheon's words (18). Sanders takes a step further and describes appropriation as a "decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain," to the effect that "no appropriation can be achieved without impacting upon and altering in some way the text which inspired the adaptation" (158). Therefore, an appropriation does not necessarily flag the connection to any previous versions, since it can more or less be regarded as a "hostile takeover" from the fictional being's perspective (Sanders 9). Yet again, the relationship is bi-directional, so a fictional being may very well, with the help of a creative team, appropriate a media environment for its own purposes, with the purpose of surviving, remaining relevant, and reaching new audiences.

Given these definitions, it is still hard to conceive of any novel-film adaptations that do not include both adaptation and appropriation. No stories are ever either wholly adapted or appropriated, and no characters, stories, or themes are affected by one of these processes alone. By necessity, the processes of adaptation and appropriation are always at work in tandem. For the character, as a fictional being who migrates from novel, to screenplay, to film, this means that it adapts to the new media settings, while it is also appropriated by that new environment's culture and creative forces. The character likewise appropriates the new environment, which in turn adapts. Following from that line of reasoning, an adapted novel, with its thematic content, adapts to and appropriates the cinematic environment, while it is itself appropriated by the film culture, which also has to adapt.

Chapter 3

Characters' Thematic Functions in a Narrative

In this chapter, I first discuss the thematic functions that characters have in narratives. I then present a model of how emplotment frames thematic arguments in fiction with a rhetorical structure, *dispositio* in Aristotelian terms, based on the progression of the protagonist's journey through a narrative, as it is outlined by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008). Thus, I argue for its use as a pragmatic approach to thematic adaptation studies. The latter part of the chapter is dedicated to the example theme, adulthood. After a brief overview of aspects that have been connected with adulthood through the study of how the theme is represented in fiction, developmental psychology, and sociology, I introduce a set of thematic markers of adulthood that can be employed together with the plot model to detect thematic aspects and functions in a narrative.

Characters and Thematics

The crucial role of characters when readers and spectators engage in fiction was indicated in chapter 1. As Jens Eder et al. proposes, characters "are devices in the communication of meaning and serve purposes beyond the fictional world as well" (45). In accordance with this, Booth observes that "we look for an answer to the question, 'What do these lives mean?'" and for "complete patterns of theme," since works of fiction commonly "make us desire a quality," such as truth or knowledge (*Rhetoric* 126). Keys to the insight that readers and spectators are searching for may be accessed through an engagement with a fictional narrative, but the actual insights are usually related to readers and spectators themselves and to the real world. Margaret Mackey has noted that some readers enter the story world mentally and use internal inferences to orientate themselves in that world, whereas others evaluate its actual presentation from an external perspective. Some mainly assess their reading through thematic approaches, and some primarily engage their knowledge of genre conventions and their textual expectations to orient themselves in the narrative (102).

The reader can thus choose to move, or be moved, between levels of engagement (Gerrig), and to alternate between internal and external perspectives (Currie; Walton). Likewise, as Rick Altman suggests, fictional narratives are commonly designed so that readers and spectators can see matters from a character's point of view. This in-her-shoes imagination, or the simulation of being a character, enables us to sense what the characters feel and think and to incorporate those experiences into our own systems (Currie 108), although the characters do not exist in the corporeal world.

However, due to their ontological complexity, the terms of the existence of fictional characters, their constitution, and how they can be understood are highly debated issues. Steven Price notes that some strands of traditional literary and film criticism regard fictional characters as pure textual, semiotic constructs, and claim that all that can be established about them "is what is present on the page," whereas, for instance, screenwriting manuals often describe characters as real human beings, with lives outside the texts ("Character" 202). Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan outlines the conundrum that characters present as parts of texts: they are designs, as well as possible beings in fictional worlds.

> In the text characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are – by definition – non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are extracted from their textuality. Similarly, in the text, characters are inextricable from the rest of the design, whereas in the story they are extracted from their textuality. (35)

One reason that textual representations of characters, whether bound by the constraints of the conventions of novels or films, often invite such extractions is that they can be presented with abundant attributes. Mieke Bal suggests that it is the surplus of information, "the piling up of data" (126), which thus facilitates the conception of characters as plausible fictional beings. This can be likened to the process of gradually getting to know a person in real life, but unlike people in real life, fictional characters rely on a creator's characterisation to exist. Characterisation

is, simply put, the attribution of qualities to a character, which in a broader sense includes all the information that can be associated with a specific fictional character (Eder et al. 31). Some theorists, like screenwriting specialist Robert McKee, distinguish between character, the inner personality of a fictional being, and the characterisation of what can be observed from the outside. Uri Margolin refines this rough model usefully and proposes that four different layers of characterising attributes, or qualities, should be distinguished: static facts, dynamic expressive acts, habits, and traits. First, static facts refer to discrete details like name, age, appearance, and where a character normally lives. Second, when a character is reported to think, speak, feel, do something, or appear in a specific environment, they perform "verbal, mental, and physical acts" which tell us something about the character's personality (206). These dynamic expressive acts gradually add up to systems of consistencies and inconsistencies, and may thereby make evident what is normal or habitual for a character. Thus, habits, the third layer, can be defined as repeated patterns of physical, social, or mental actions. Fourth, it is possible to attribute fairly consistent personal qualities, or traits, to a character through his or her expressive acts and habits.[3] As each piece of information constitutes part of the frame for the next, the attributes gradually accumulate during the progression of a narrative and make it possible to generalise, classify, and interrelate the details about a character. In this process, all forms of relative emphasis on attributes in the narratives, such as repetitions, contrasts, durations, relationships to other characters, and potential changes in a character interrelate so that a reasonably full portrait of an as-if real person (Margolin 206), or, in Phelan's words, the "illusion of a plausible person" (11), takes shape.

Still, the mere piling-up of information is not enough for more than a fixed portrait. The above-mentioned aspects might be said to constitute the foundations for a character's agency, which writers and directors seem to bestow them with, to

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[3] See Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*, 121 pp. for a discussion of traits and habits.

make them appear "to have existence beyond the limits of the text" through the audience's imagination (Price, "Character" 203). Characters thus appear to have "corporeality, mind, and sociality" (Eder 24), with "goals, intentions, emotional responses, relations, contacts, habits, social patterns, in-groups" (18). Joseph Carroll exemplifies this fictional agency by describing how characters sometimes "struggle with one another to tell the story in their own terms, and the author constantly mediates among characters, aligning himself or herself with one or another" (*Literary* 150). Likewise, David Wiegand declares, about the characters in Ian McEwan's *Atonement,* that "unlike fate-doomed characters in 19th century novels, the Tallises have the power to make different choices – if only they would take responsibility for their actions." Although Joseph Carroll and Kermode do not believe that fictional characters actually possess the individual agency and personality of real world individuals, they acknowledge that most readers and movie-goers temporarily imagine that fictional characters have the same privileges as corporeal social beings in that respect. As Eder consequently declares, "we perceive characters as thinking, feeling, and active beings is in many respects the most important aspect of their reception" (*Understanding* 23).

Yet, regardless of the medium, fictional characters neither leave the story world entirely, nor do they take a corporeal shape of their own, which is not tied to the creation, conditions, and existence of that world. This is valid also for films and stage plays, in which characters assume the appearances of actors from the real world. However, they can still be described and taken seriously, as if a non-existent person could possess agency and a personality, or an individual character (Bourbon 73). The reason for this is that they are created with a communicative and thematic purpose, James Phelan argues, and he proclaims that characters' "creators are likely to be doing something more than increasing the population, more than trying to bring plausible persons into the world" (*Reading People* 14). If characters were merely designed fictional beings, without thematic content, they would only randomly communicate anything of value to the audiences, and their design qualities would be of a mere

decorative value. Instead, the mimetic and synthetic qualities of characters are there to promote and enhance the viewer's or reader's attention to specific attributes and motifs,[4] and to their symbolic (Eder), and thematic dimensions (Phelan *Reading People*; Tomashevsky 68). Boris Tomashevsky even articulates that a "protagonist is by no means an essential part of the story," because their foremost function is to embody and demonstrate the thematic idea (90), to the effect that every character personifies complementary ideas and contributes pieces of symbolic meaning to form the narrative argument around a theme. As Eder et al. posits, "characters fill positions and roles in larger webs of relations, such as structures of communication and narration; constellations of characters; situations, plots, themes; and effects of an aesthetic emotional, rhetorical or ideological kind" (45).

Broadly speaking, the design of characters' thematic dimensions thus relates to the actual narration and involves all the textual or cinematic manifestations of choices and decisions by a writer, or by members of a film team who work together to present the characters' attributes. Most importantly, the design cues the reader's or spectator's attention so that it is directed towards the relevant pieces of information about characters, and therefore also guides attitudes and interpretations, as Bordwell argues when he calls for a consideration of characters and narrative functions as designs ("Neo-structuralist" 204). Thus, it is not enough to study how characters appear as fictional beings in the context of their fictional worlds, or how they are constructed, to fully understand what they may represent in a work of fiction. Eder suggests that one should first examine the features of the fictional being, then its construction as an artefact, and subsequently the relationships between characters, actions, and character constellations, as a foundation for an investigation of characters as symbols and symptoms of phenomena in the real world.

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[4] Boris Tomashevsky defines *motif* in *Thematics* as "the theme of an irreducible part of a work" (67), referring to a statement sentence which can be ascribed to a single event or attribute, before he discusses the difference between this definition and motifs as elements in comparative studies (67-8).

Still, it is only when the narrative emplotments charge and activate characters and their attributes that their potential as semiotic resources in elaborate thematic lines of reasoning are realised and can come to a conclusion with the narrative ending (Tomashevsky 63). The orchestration of the thematic development through the plot gives the characters' attributes their thematic functions, Phelan reasons, and he outlines, in line with Tomashevsky, how the organisation of character attributes and thematic functions forms arguments which are gradually developed through the plot of the narrative. As the plot evolves, so does the thematic case. In effect, the thematic significances which a character and a character's attributes carry depend on the way they are foregrounded in and developed in relation to the plot (Brooks; Phelan; Hogan).

Among others, Vogler, McKee, Craig Batty, and Syd Field, writing about screenplays, describe how characters are part of a rhetorical structure and serve the purpose of demonstrating the controlling idea or theme, mainly through dramatic conflicts. Likewise, Lajos Egri outlines how the thematic idea in a drama is advanced through an orchestration of "well defined and uncompromising characters in opposition, moving from one pole toward another through conflict" (119), based on dialectics and the idea that problems and crises produce development. From a dialogical perspective, however, characters and their attributes need not be arranged as opposites, but should rather be considered as complementary parts of a metaphorical reasoning around a theme, adding nuances and counter-ideas of various weights in a narrative. Just as characters' individual attributes are distributed and orchestrated to form a greater whole, the plenitude of characters and attributes in a work of fiction creates a polyphony of aspects of a theme "and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 21).

A plot structure, I argue, partly functions as a structuring axis or instrument with which to disentangle the polyphonic orchestration of characters and their thematic functions. To identify thematic attributes is simply to ask whether a character or a situation involves a certain quality, or not. In that way, Bal explains,

"mutual relations between the characters are immediately visible," and complex patterns can "be mapped out" (129). More importantly from a rhetorical point of view, the specific expressions, contextualising normalities, instabilities, developments, and resolutions play important roles in the accentuation of thematic nuances in the plotted argument (Phelan, *Reading* 15). Similarly, from a semiotic perspective, Gerard Genette defines order, frequency, duration, mood, and voice as a core of synthetic aspects that also contribute to the articulation of the rhetorical communication of meaning in a narrative. Thus, any simplistic semantic gradation must be complemented with a richer thematic analysis of attributes, instances, and functions in relation to the thematic progression through the plot, character context, and not least in light of how the information about a character is conveyed in the narrative.

The Rhetorical Emplotment of Themes

As suggested, characters' thematic functions in a narrative are essentially organised by means of the plot. In other words, the design of thematic attributes and events in a specific order provides the narrative its rhetorical logic. Hogan identifies three universal plot prototypes, based on romantic, heroic, and sacrificial themes, and there are obviously numerous strategies to modify the prototypical plots, and certain dramatic narrative elements, functions, and underlying ideologies can be used to define and create subgenres. On the other hand, as Bordwell argues, all genres, including complex multi-narrative films, share a "hyper-classical" plot, in which every part of a narrative conforms to a pattern and thus adds to the overall discussion of the controlling idea of the work (*The Way* 62). Following this line of reasoning, the study of thematic representation through characters becomes partly a matter of studying classical plot structures, and the thematic development through the characters' journey through a narrative. As described above, throughout the progression of the plot, the characters' attributes thus fill thematic functions to

explore the themes of the narrative rhetorically, test their constitution, render clarity, and reach a thematic conclusion.

To study the thematic emplotment in novels, screenplays, and films side by side, and do them justice, demands a model which is fairly impartial to the medium. Based on an Aristotelian stance, creative writing manuals for screenwriting and novels commonly use similar plot models, and theories of literature, screenplay, and film share that foundation. As is often the case, the differences appear more clearly within a specific field than when two fields are compared. However, at this point, I refrain from an overview of different plot theories, and only record that the three-act structure is still the dominant model, dividing narratives into *an exposition*, a *complication*, and a concluding *denouement*. Yet, as Thompson, for instance, has wisely suggested, if the second act, which is often described as having the same length or duration as the other acts put together, is split into two, then four equally long parts with distinct functions can be conceived: a *setup*, a *complication*, a *development*, and a *resolution* or *conclusion* (22). From a thematic point of view the first act could be understood as the presentation of a theme. This theme is complicated in the second, developed towards a new understanding in the third, before the concluding fourth act.

It is in this context that Campbell's notion of the monomyth can be of instrumental value. His theory regarding the universal thematic features and structures of myths has been adapted and popularised in numerous creative writing manuals and narrative models (see Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* and Batty's *Movies That Move Us)*. It has been applied in the creation of feature films and novels alike, most famously George Lucas' *Star Wars* saga, which has given the hero's journey a mythic status of its own among screenwriters and film producers. This does not mean that the hero's journey is less applicable to novels. Essentially, Campbell extracts a narrative model of the hero's journey in seventeen developmental steps, wirh specific functions, towards a mythical "adult realization" (12), and a possible full "reintegration with society" as a responsible person (29), which makes it particularly

relevant when the representation of adulthood is studied (see table 2). The seventeen steps are also presented in a circular model with four functional quarters, although he divides them into three sections in the text. Due to Campbell's Jungian stance, Maria Nikolajeva submits that, although this narrative structure can be traced in most narratives, it is nevertheless "not uncontroversial in its overtly psychoanalytical orientation and must, therefore, be applied with some caution" (31). Unfortunately, instead of adhering to that advice, many applications of the hero's journey instead simplify and reduce Campbell's writings so considerably that all that remains are a few steps, a causal chain of events, and individual character development in relation to a specific problem. Batty and Vogler both reduce the middle parts of the narrative to a few steps, although their models have other benefits. John Truby's *The Anatomy of Story* connects the plot to the moral argument of a story. However, I find his suggestion that a story is broken down into twenty-two steps, with its emphasis on external events, even more convoluted in its thematic logic than Campbell's seventeen step structure. What many narrative models thus ignore is Campbell's focus on the human condition in the social world at large and the opportunity to consider the hero's journey as a comprehensive, rhetorical presentation of thematic content.

Because each step in the hero's journey has a specific developmental function, forming part of a causal chain, the narrative structure can be translated into the structure of a thematic argument (Hermansson, *Towards* 2020). Campbell sometimes uses an abstract and today dated terminology, based on various common elements that he has found in myths, and Batty ("Physical") and Vogler have both suggested productive modernisations of the terminology that indicate the functions of the various steps more clearly. They both focus on the inner development of the protagonists, their inner progression, and the plotted events, the physical journeys, in the narratives, but with headings like "limited awareness" (Batty, "Physical 300), "return with elixir," and "final mastery of the problem" (304), their terminology invites an adaptation of the hero's journey into a narrative guideline for a rhetorical

thematic line of argument. As suggested, I also find a variation of Thompson's four act structure and the terminology she uses helpful in a rhetorical context: *Introduction/Setup*, *Complication*, *Development*, *Conclusion*.

Converted to a structure for a thematic line of argument or journey, the narrative structure could thus read as follows (see table 1 below). In the first act's presentation of a theme, *Introduction/Setup*, the initial step is to depict an unreflected upon, everyday understanding of that theme, based on a limited awareness and a narrow "familiar life horizon" (Campbell 43). Then follows a call to explore the theme, and a first argument for a less simplistic approach to it, perhaps through a demonstration of the shortcomings of the current conception. A counter argument in support of the initial understanding of the theme ensues, which demonstrates the strengths of the habitual thematic notion. Next, a mentoring phase emphasises what there is to gain from a developed thematic idea and points out the issues of concern again. The first act ends with a crossing of the threshold to investigate the theme further, which can be likened to "a form of self-annihilation" (Campbell 77), since the old views are left behind, and the formulation of a new definition begins with as little as possible pre-defined.

The second act's rhetorical purpose, according to Thompson, is to reveal and address the complications, as indicated by the label *Complication* (see table 1, column 2). In Campbell's terms, it comprises the first half of an "initiation" to an evolved thematic idea (81). It begins with an inventory and organisation of new and old aspects, and the pros and cons of their contribution to the thematic idea. Initially, Campbell thus advises a dissection of the theme into dialectic pairs, to lay bare the complications, and a vision of the "totality of what can be known" (97), through a "harmonization of all the pairs of opposites" (95). This leads to a provisional summary and a temptation or question regarding whether to settle, to abandon the exploration, or to continue. Hence, at the midpoint of a model narrative, the current "position of reference" to the "general … formula" (101) is tested and stock is taken of the remaining results and problems.

In the third act, the *Development* of the narrative's argument (see table 1, column 2), the still unresolved core issues of the thematic understanding are confronted, in order to form a developed notion of the theme, which makes allowances for less idealistic aspects to be included. Commonly, some previous underlying presuppositions or convictions have to give way or be redefined. With these problems settled, the new thematic idea can be formed. The final stage of the third act entails a summary of a tentative new, theoretical or abstract, thematic comprehension as an "indestructible body" (150).

The fourth act, *Conclusion* (see table 1, column 2), begins with "obstruction and evasion" (170), as Campbell posits, because what remains before the conclusion is to demonstrate how the new thematic insights may be applied in real life. The first step thus confronts the doubt that they can be put into practice. The next step demonstrates how they can be applied in typical situations, for instance to approach and overcome practical problems, or how they can be integrated with other ideas. For a thoroughly convincing and complete argument, the practicability of the thematic idea is then proven under more authentic testing conditions, which demands certain compromises and adjustments, not least the management of the consequences. Finally, "the elixir" (Campbell 170; Batty, "Physical," 304), or solution and formula of the new thematic understanding, and a vision of future possibilities, if it applies, is presented.

As implied at the beginning of this outline, it can be argued that Campbell's structure, with its emphasis on the development of the relationship between the ego and the communal, affects the observations of how the markers of some themes, especially regarding a theme like adulthood, are distributed in a biased way. The obvious link between the hero's journey and growth, from limited awareness to maturity to developmental theories, may also add relevance when adulthood, for instance, is studied as a theme in narratives.

Table 1

The hero's journey transformed into the structure of a thematic line of argument.

The hero's journey: Joseph Campbell's / Craig Batty's terminology [5]	The hero's journey as a thematic line of argument
Departure	*Act 1: Introduction/Setup*
World of common days /Ordinary world, limited awareness of a problem	*The ordinary understanding of the theme*
The call to adventure / The call to adventure, increased awareness	*A call to explore, since there is more to understand*
Refusal of the call / Refusal of the call, reluctance to change	*A counter argument to stay with the initial understanding*
Supernatural aid / Meeting the mentor, overcoming reluctance	*Benefits with development of the thematic understanding*
Crossing the first threshold / Crossing the first threshold, committing to change	*Crossing the threshold to investigate the theme further*
Belly of the Whale / n. a.	*Beginning with a clean slate*
Initiation	*Act 2: Complication*
The Road of Trials /Tests, allies, enemies, experimenting with first change	*Known and new elements are sorted out*
The Meeting with the Goddess / n. a.	*New aspects, complications and potential are summarised*
The Woman As Temptress / n. a.	*Evaluation of potential in development*
	Act 3: Development
Atonement with the Father / Approach to the inmost cave, preparing for big change	*Confronting the core of the previous conception*
Apotheosis/Ordeal, attempting big change	*A whole new perspective*
The Ultimate Boon/Reward, consequences of the attempt	*A tentative new definition*
Return	*Act 4: Conclusion*
Refusal of the Return / n. a.	*Doubts before practice*
The Magic Flight & Rescue from Without[6]/The Road back, rededication to change	*Examples of practical application and integration of the thematic understanding in real life*
The Crossing of the Return Threshold/Resurrection, final attempt at big change	*Confrontation with remaining practical complications and compromises*
Master of Two Worlds/Return with elixir, final mastery of the problem	*Conclusion and new thematic understanding*
Freedom to Live / n. a.	*The happiness that a developed thematic concept offers*

Source: Campbell (2008); Batty (2010); Hermansson ("Adaptations of Adulthood" 2020)

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[5] Batty groups several of Campbell's steps into one, hence leaving some of them out.
[6] Campbell describes these two steps as two variations with similar functions, and suggests that one or the other, rather than both, often occur in stories.

Adulthood in Fiction

In *Visions of Virtue in Popular Film* (1999)*,* Joseph Kupfer examines the representation in mainstream films of what it is to lead a good life as a mature person, and of the qualities that make people valuable, both to themselves and to others, in those films. Based on Aristotelian ethics, he focuses on the demonstration of "settled dispositions to act, feel, desire, and think in specifiable patterns" (25), "with enduring character traits" (31). First and foremost, Kupfer detects the importance of self-knowledge, realistic perspectives and optimism, courage, the ability to improve, practice, perseverance, practical wisdom, and playfulness in the films analysed. Intimacy, community through love, and friendship are other prominent, substantive virtues on film, Kupfer suggests. Equally, qualities like self-deception, conceit, impatience, egoism, desire, and greed are observed as typical character traits that characters must learn to keep in balance through the narratives. His conclusion is that mainstream films seem to "stress the social nature of human existence" (228) and that "the goodness of life … is found in activity: in the moral doing, the artistic making, the rational thinking" (37). The qualities he observes, I will argue below, are similar to the traits that are commonly associated with what it is to act as an adult.

Stories about the conditions for adulthood can be found under labels like the *Bildungsroman*, *development* and *coming-of-age stories*, *crossover fiction*, *Young Adult (YA) fiction*, and most recently *new adult (NA) fiction*.[7] Each generation of authors and critics seems to relabel the genre in relation to current ideologies and sociological conventions. Although they are epistemologically different, autobiographies and biographies could be attached to the same cluster of terms, since narratives in these genres normally share the general structure and central narrative features with fiction about the conditions for adulthood. As Kenneth Millard notes in *Coming of Age in Contemporary*

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[7] The currently most popular term, *Young Adult fiction*, has probably been in use since at least 1802, when Sarah Trimmer referred to 14-21 year olds as "young adults" in *The Guardian of Education.* The American Library Association is also said to have coined the term Young Adult fiction in connection with their first list of Best Books for Young Adults in 1966. As the age of youth has gradually been extended, the term has come to refer to fiction about people up to 30 years of age. NA fiction was coined by St. Martin's Press in 2009 to market fiction about "older YA."

American Fiction (2007), "the protagonist … commonly starts as a novice, encounters and overcomes the challenges of adversity and ends … as a more mature adult character as a result of their experience" (3). Although he focuses on contemporary American coming-of-age novels, his reflection is valid in a wider context. In novels and films, the characters' processes of finding themselves and adapting to the conditions of adult life are associated with age-specific emotional experiences. Noticeably, Anita Wohlmann finds that ageing is mostly related to negative sensations in fiction, such as "worthlessness, inadequacy, shame, or anxiety" (252). She admits, though, that in Young Adult fiction, adulthood can also be linked to "hopeful messages of growth, trust, and togetherness" as well (252). This apparent contradiction, as Rachel Falconer observes, can be explained by the fact that fiction related to age usually hinges around themes that define various threshold states. The narratives commonly follow characters' "attempts to formulate a positive subject position" (Stewart 182), and their efforts to find "a sense of meaning, an identity, a truth" (Gillis 52) and keys "to be[ing] morally good" (Carroll, *Minerva* 101). In sum, as Wohlman argues, stories revolving around adulthood as a theme generally address the questions "Who am I?" and "Who could I become?" (88). Thus, the conventions of the Bildungsroman still noticeably govern fiction about adulthood and it will therefore figure as a recurring thread through the section below. Although studies of romantic comedies, chick lit, and the detective genre could well be included in the survey in the forthcoming pages, as could genre specific aspects of the theme, I will focus on the representation of adulthood in the genres that most clearly direct their attention to the theme.

In 2009, Melanie D. Koss and William H. Teale surveyed 370 titles of literary Young Adult fiction and found a thematically fairly well defined genre. For example, 85% of the characters in the study are occupied with "finding themselves" (567). However, there are specific contemporary trends. Koss and Teale noticed a contemporary shift from the traditional Bildungsroman and coming-of-age story formats to stories covering a shorter time span. This seems to suit the tendency to

structure contemporary representations of the conditions of adulthood in mainstream fiction around specific dramatic topics, within predominantly mono-cultural social spheres. Hence, life-threatening situations, such as accidents or cancer, have been used as premises in many stories that thematically revolve around adulthood. 25% of the protagonists, in Koss and Teale's study, suffer from diagnosed disabilities, mental or physical (566). Other scholars have identified homosexuality, drugs, gender, parenthood, ethnicity, technology, and materiality as frequent features in contemporary fiction about what it is to be an adult. A common thread is that characters struggle with combinations of loss, moving, bullying, friends, family, love, abuse, and illnesses in their attempts to find a stable subject position in life, before it is too late, in the face of the threat of social invisibility and non-existence.

The list of highlighted subjects and dilemmas indicates some of the social, mental, and ethical challenges that fictional beings encounter as they strive to become, or be, responsible, stable, reliable, and autonomous adults in their fictional worlds. Strikingly, the topics listed above also give the impression that fiction which thematises adulthood is dominated by crises and the darker sides of life. Nonetheless, it has been argued that the consequences of choices and actions are not adequately problematised in fiction about adulthood and that the genre thus glamorises the problems of life. Indeed, "the excitement of a forbidden underworld" (Nelms, Nelms, and Horton 92) and the fascination of alternative, carefree lifestyles seem to have a provocative and subversive ethical power on the surface. However, the representations of these ideals in fiction about adulthood seem to generate little general and lasting attraction. Although most of the stories question contemporary social ideals, adulthood is depicted as an aim in life: a desired state of normalcy and of reasonable contentment that is achieved through inclusion in society.[8]

Consequently, fiction that is mainly concerned with adulthood also revolves around representations of the social and political world, to follow Millard's argument.

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[8] Science fictional stories also come to similar conclusions about being human in general (Ostry 243).

Just as the classical Bildungsroman can be located in the context of the bourgeois ambition of ennoblement (Moretti viii), contemporary fiction about adulthood creates role models for middle-class life and identity, as Wohlmann suggests (46), or, more drastically, microcosms where individuals are curbed by social control to adapt to the dominating adult middle-class norms (Lopez-Ropero 155).

Yet, as Millard maintains, these contemporary narratives generally strive to contextualise the imbalance that the characters experience, between the demands of society and social life, their historical determination, and the idea of "self-fashioning" (10). His analysis thus indicates that the conventions of the Bildungsroman still carry weight in fiction about adulthood. For instance, as Franco Moretti demonstrates, the protagonists in the Bildungsroman tradition labour above all to come to terms with the conflicting values of being an individual and being a part of a greater social whole (27), which is also the central point in Joseph Campbell's version of the hero's journey, and in many contemporary films and novels. Sprung from the romantic ideals of individualism, the general goal of the classic Bildungsroman was to build the ego. Yet, the value of youthful individuality is clearly subordinated to the worth of maturity and inclusion, Moretti argues (27).

The aim of the protagonists of the Bildungsroman, Moretti thus claims, is not individual freedom, but rather "proper functioning" and socialisation within the scope of normality (11). The same ambition of social adaptation is still the permeating theme in contemporary high school or college movies, for instance. As Timothy Shary observes in *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in American Cinema since 1960* (2014), the jock, the nerd, the popular, the rebel, and the delinquent are part of an orchestration of various individual human ideals, but they all strive for inclusion and recognition. Seemingly, fiction about adulthood still follows the conventions of the Bildungsroman as far as quests for liberation, self-discovery, and social adaptation are concerned. In the end, the protagonists seek to accept and adapt to the conditions of the world, while growing into more mature individuals.

Moreover, the protagonists in fictional stories with a focus on adulthood also demonstrate a capacity to listen with a sensitive intelligence, which enables them to adapt and to consider the well-being of others (Moretti 50-51; Shary 36; Carroll, *Minerva* 96). This is also true for Dan Brown's hero, Robert Langdon, in *The Da Vinci Code*. Shary notes that younger rebel protagonists, in particular, often also recognise and constructively take on the more serious social and political patterns of their story worlds, in order to be included in society as worthy adult persons (259). In effect, the prototypical characters in fiction concerned with adulthood demonstrate "that meaning […] has its price. And this price is freedom," as Moretti suggests regarding the essence of the Bildungsroman genre (63).

As indicated, the representation of the conditions for adulthood in these narratives indicates that individual change and freedom are not the ultimate goals. Instead, these values must to some extent be sacrificed for the sake of security, community, and a sense of a fairly stable self-identity that adulthood has to offer. Thus compromise, Moretti finds, is the Bildungroman's "most celebrated theme" (9), because what is presented is not an idealised vision, but a humanising lesson about being an adaptive person in everyday life, with its trials and comforts (35). So, Moretti explains, "if the hero wishes to enjoy absolute freedom in a specific domain of his existence, in other sectors of social activity there must prevail instead complete *conformity"* (55).

It must still be noted that, as Millard and Wohlmann both observe, fictional representations of adulthood have traditionally been crafted from male centred perspectives, and it is only recently that gender awareness has steered academic and creative interest towards a productive focus on the female conditions for the transition to adulthood and to female adult lives. However, worries about professional careers, authority, and financial stability remain significant issues regardless of the characters' gender in fiction about adulthood (Moretti 255). Yet, in American coming-of-age fiction about female protagonists, the conflict between socialisation and inclusion on the one hand and freedom and individuality on the

other is intensified, as Christy Rishoi notices. As a result, the female rebels often choose to remain as outsiders, and resist being subordinate to the conventional social structures of adult life, such as marriage, building a home, raising a family, and having permanent employment, since they are denied the same recognition that male characters gain within the community if they conform to these conventions. Hence, fiction about female protagonists who are struggling with adulthood often further emphasises the recurring topic of the abuse of social and political power as threats against the protagonists' autonomy within the system.

Similarly, as Aleid Fokkema submits, it is common in postmodern fiction for characters not to reach the insights that will give them permanent stability in adult life. As adults, they still struggle with the conflict between the public and private spheres, trying to control chaos in a world of power relations. Nevertheless, Fokkema maintains, the dramatisations of thematic problems related to adulthood in contemporary fiction illustrate the idea that being able to use experiences for practical purposes leads to recognition, as adults, from others. When the protagonists obtain wisdom and knowledge of the world, they learn to navigate through the conflicts and the problems of adult life with a sense of rationality, stability, and respect.

As argued above, the representation of adulthood is an issue of concern in most fiction. Hogan's analyses of world stories further highlight that characters generally relate to certain qualities in order to normalise happiness and meaning as adults in fiction. Health, attachment, and community, coming to terms with sacrifice and imperfection, balanced emotions, justice, and the ability to act to achieve goals are some of the dominant elements, Hogan suggests. This research overview also indicates a focus on social, adaptive qualities in films and novels that thematise adulthood. However, fiction about adulthood seems to insist that to reach the point at which a person can be regarded as an adult by those in their environment, the protagonists must compromise and adapt their social structures and patterns, individual agency, world-views, and virtues to the societal environment. In the end,

individuation and socialisation are apparently equal parts of the prescribed image of adult personhood in fiction.

Just Be Adult about It – Markers of Adulthood

Although physical and neuro-cognitive changes gradually develop the human body and mind, *adulthood* is primarily a socially constructed and mediated concept of idealised normalities in real life, just as it is in novels and films. Legal regulations may deem people to be perfectly adult after a certain age, but it is impossible for any human being to live up to the standard of the adult ideal at all times without lapses into what could be labelled youthful behaviour. Conversely, children may temporarily show capacities that are associated with adult behaviour or thinking, without being adults, since adulthood is equated "with full personhood in terms of the recognition of actors as 'full partners in interaction'," to speak with Harry Blatterer ("Changing" 66). The notion of adulthood thus encompasses a vision of the fulfilment of a complete set of interdependent qualifiers, which I will refer to as markers of adulthood. Presently I will outline a tentative, but for this project purposeful, definition of adulthood as an ideal. Because adulthood is a societal ideal, being acknowledged as an adult ultimately depends on the social recognition of others, subject to one's performnces of stability, reliability, responsibility, and autonomy being evaluated as consistent (Blatterer, "Changing" 66; Molgat 498). To complicate this, instead of being defined by discrete variables, adulthood seems to be a matter of evolving a tolerant balance between competencies: an acquired ability to handle life, property, and community, a responsible and social adaptation to the social environment, and to the norms of society (Blatterer, "Changing"; Arnett *Emerging*).

Interestingly, studies of evolutionary aspects of human behaviour, of adulthood, and of ego formation all employ similar markers and components of reference for what may be conceived as ideal or conventional normalcies (see Joseph Carroll; Erikson; Marcia; Metzinger). In developmental psychology adulthood is regarded as a usually stable phase of life concerning personality, identity formation,

and identity status. Erik H. Erikson distinguishes between the adult personal identity, which encompasses stable values, beliefs, and sets of goals, and the social identity, formed by the adaptation to group ideals and the capacity to blend into a community. In effect, Erikson's theories also suggest that a prototypical adult has established a sense of autonomy and integrity, and is capable of trust, intimacy, stable relationships, initiative, collaboration, and productivity. These elements bear resemblances to predictors of well-being, as described by Carol D. Ryff, such as balanced emotions and behaviour, self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, stable and close relations with others, and an ability to adapt to the environment.

However, modern life patterns open up differentiated and destabilised pathways to adulthood, since the definition of adulthood is to some extent dependent on the socio-cultural environment. There is also a consensus that the transition period between adolescence and a well-defined state of adulthood is lasting longer and longer (Côté and Bynner 253; Arnett, *Emerging* 3). For some groups, education extends the period, for others, economic or social circumstances do. Nevertheless, when sociologists study life patterns, expectations of adulthood, and cultural associations with the concept, they find that the characteristics that define people's understanding of what it is to be an adult are fairly constant globally and over time (Blatterer, *Coming* 15). Some particulars may vary and depend on local, societal conditions, like having a car, but the qualities of which these are representative, such as independence, social adaptation, reliability, and competence, remain the same.

Markers of Adulthood

In the following, I present a model for grouping markers of adulthood that have been observed and discussed in a variety of articles and monographs, such as Erik H. Erikson's *Identity and the Life Cycle* (1980), Lewis R. Aiken's *Human Development in Adulthood* (1998), James A. Côté's *Arrested Adulthood* (2000), Jeffrey Jensen Arnett's *Emerging Adulthood* (2004) and "The Long and Leisurely Route: Coming of Age in Europe Today" (2007), Harry Blatterer's *Coming of Age in Times of Uncertainty* (2009),

Konstam's *Emerging and Young Adulthood* (2015), and others. Some scholars have presented lists of markers from surveys; others have outlined dominant aspects that in the main characterise adulthood in relation to other ages from a particular academic perspective; and still others have discussed the conditions of adulthood more broadly. The qualities and attributes that are associated with adulthood in the writings of the abovementioned scholars range from having safe sex and getting a driver's licence to autonomy of mind and awareness of the complexities of the world. These have been sorted and categorised, and the ones that I thought related to the same phenomenon have been merged. I also excluded markers that were too specific to be useful. In the end, four groups of markers of adulthood were defined, related to *structural*, *social adaptive*, *worldview orientating*, and *personal agentive* dimensions of adulthood (see table 2). These rubrics have the advantage that they place the four dominant markers that people often associate with adulthood under one heading each: financial independence from parents, a less self-oriented mind and greater consideration for others, solid personal beliefs and values, and being able to accept responsibility for the consequences of one's actions.[9]

The first category of markers in my model consists of structural social factors that mark an official status of full partnership (group 1 in table 2). These markers entail formal and financial autonomy from parents and the capacity to handle one's own affairs, to form a family, to have a home of one's own, to have a job and meaningful leisure time, stable social networks, and recognition from other adults. Since these factors are fairly easy to observe, and because of the shared structural character of these markers, I also include "recognition of equal adult status from others" in this group.

The second category of markers has to do with underlying social adaptive capacities (group 2 in table 2). The markers in this category are related to communal

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9 In some studies, particularities like *not committing petty crimes* and *no drink-driving* (Arnett) rank high, but these are the four major factors that repeatedly dominate the various overviews.

interests as a feature, which first leads to the importance of conformity to social rules and norms. Another aspect involves a cooperative attitude, an ability to adapt to other people and to different social situations. These markers are separated, since it is possible to conform to general norms without being able to adapt to variations. In turn, consideration and care for others are vital parts of this dimension. In connection with stable and close relationships, intimacy and loyalty are also commonly regarded as markers of adulthood.

The last two categories concern the inner aspects of an individual's adulthood. Adulthood is generally equated with having a stable worldview, encompassing a set of values, moral principles, and ideas for guidance, as well as an awareness of the complexities of life (group 3 in table 2). In consequence, an adult is said to have reached a point in life when a sense of stability regarding purpose and meaning in life is established, along with a capacity for reflexivity or self-awareness. The last marker in this category concerns a relatively stable emotional life, and emotional control. This means that emotional intelligence is expected, and not that all expressions of emotion are excluded.

Finally, adulthood relates, as a concept, to a personal agentive category of markers (group 4 in table 2). In part, this refers to an independent and rational way of thinking, making judgements, choices, and decisions. The prototypical adult also acts rationally in accordance with set goals and priorities. Thus, acquired knowledge and experiences are put to use for practical purposes and problem solving in everyday life. The last marker illustrates the adult acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's actions.

The four groups of markers thus represent various qualitative aspects, or dimensions, that are commonly used when adulthood is discussed. As stated above, no person can, at all times, live up to the standards that these markers entail in their extremes. Contrariwise, a person who tries to do so will fail to be adult, because these dimensions of adulthood are interdependent to the degree that compromises are necessary, which makes awareness of complexities a key marker. Hence, the markers

cannot be totally isolated from each other, but demonstrate that categorisations of markers pertaining to human qualities may resist unequivocal demarcations. Thematic categorisations serve a rather more practical purpose: as a guideline for tracing, demonstrating, and understanding the complexity and affordances of surface patterns. Naturally, the set of thematic markers I use is not in any way absolute; it is merely one of many possible models. For instance, adulthood is commonly equated with a reasonably consistent performance of stability, reliability, responsibility, and autonomy, which makes a person fairly predictable for others, and it makes the world reasonably predictable for adult persons themselves. Consequently, those qualities in some way permeate all individual markers of adulthood, as do the relationships between the social and the individual dimensions of life, and between the mental and the practical human capacities. In the first article that is part of this dissertation, the markers of adulthood merely feature as a backdrop; in the second they form a more overt frame of reference, as the thematic implications of adaptations are discussed. In the other three articles, the model for markers of adulthood lends a thematic structure for an analysis of the novels, screenplays, and films in focus. By way of example, those articles demonstrate the application of thematic markers in the analysis of rhetorical lines of argument in fiction, especially with the purpose of understanding what happens to the potential meanings of a story in the novel-film adaptation context.

Table 2

A model structure for markers of adulthood.

1. Structural dimension
    a. Financial autonomy from parents
    b. Capacity to run a household and form a family
    c. Having a job and meaningful leisure time
    d. Stable social networks
    e. Recognition of equal adult status by others
2. The social adaptive dimension
    a. Conformity to social rules and norms
    b. Cooperative attitude and social adaptability
    c. Care for others
    d. Capacity for intimacy and loyalty
3. Worldview orientating dimension
    a. Stable set of values, principles, and beliefs
    b. Awareness of the complexities of life
    c. Self-awareness
    d. Stable emotional life and self-control
4. Personal agentive dimension
    a. Independent, goal oriented and rational thinking
    b. Responsible judgements, choices and decisions
    c. Rational actions in line with thinking.
    d. Acceptance of responsibility for consequences

Chapter 4

The Five Articles of the Dissertation and Their Implications

In this chapter, I briefly summarise the five articles, which are attached at full length in appendices 1-5, and discuss their respective contribution to the dissertation. Four of the five articles have been published, or as in one case scheduled for for publication in double-blind peer-reviewed publications. The fifth article was regarded as publishable after revisions and has been submitted again. Although each article presents its own argument, they form a more comprehensive line of reasoning if they are read in the order that they are presented.

Article 1: "Strange Masks of Adapted Identities in Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* and *The Holy City*"

The first article, "Strange Masks of Identities," is published in *Adaptation*. The text interrogates the Irish novelist Patrick McCabe's dramatisations of how people, in their attempts to adapt in a changing world, make use of character archetypes in media and fictional stories as ideals for their own adult self-identities. These concerns are especially notable in two of McCabe's later novels, *The Holy City* and *Winterwood*, in which the protagonists migrate, mentally or physically, in their attempts to adapt to new environments. Since they do so by constructing their identities as narrative adaptations of already existing media characters, the protagonists have to struggle to harmonise the adaptation of their self-narratives, self-identities, and new life patterns with the developments of their surrounding worlds. Above all, the two novels problematise the conditions for social adaptation, how people make use of stories, protagonists' processes of social adaptation, and their subsequent rearrangement of the themes that dominate their life-stories. Neither *The Holy City* nor *Winterwood* has been adapted for the screen, but they thematise the correlation between media and social adaptation. McCabe's novels, I argue, illustrate how the construction of identity is defined by thematic narration, and how a world in flux demands a constant renegotiation of that narrative. For the reader, *Winterwood* and *The Holy City* may thus

come with an invitation to consider the analogy between social and media adaptations, and the themes of mediated narratives. In particular, the characters' strategic choices as fictional beings and as narrators thus illustrate the sophisticated and double-edged potential of media adaptations to function as grounds for reflection as regards social adaptation.

When we read and watch fiction, I argue in this article, we carry with us the intuitive notion that identity and the conditions of belonging are not set in stone. As the world around us continues to change, fictional characters offer us temporary costumes that we may try on in our quest to find a balance in life between identity, authenticity, origin, and stability, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, self-narration, simulacrum, novelty, and development. Because box office and sales charts, book clubs, the interfaces of Netflix, HBO, and other streaming sites beg of us to choose the fictional friends they promote, we are at risk of being appropriated as extended selves for these characters. Patrick McCabe's novels *Winterwood* and *The Holy City* also make their readers aware that our habitual choices of fictional friends might enforce the illusion of a comforting permanence, as if the thematic costumes that they offer us are static, will never change, go out of fashion, or wear out. At the heart of this, McCabe's novels suggest, lies a nostalgic yearning for the simplicity of having our own essential selves, as if these and their thematic constitution had been given to us when we were conceived. Yet, as I indicate with anecdotal evidence, not even authors can fathom the precise identity of their characters, because fictional beings share with real people the circumstance that they are not merely products of authorial, parental ambitions. Insofar as literary and cinematic characters cannot be understood without any inferences from our real social world, they interact with the discursive environments in which their stories are created and distributed and in which they develop. This is even truer when fictional characters are adapted for a new medium, time, or place. Therefore, this is in a sense an evolutionary, formative process of transformation, which does not accommodate any desire for simplicity or stability, not least because it is not a one-directional, linear process. It is instead multi-

directional, creative, and normative all at once, which is part of the pleasure that the adaptation audiences are invited to indulge in, and so are the philosophical questions about truth and identity, as a consequence of the ontological breaches and epistemological fragmentations that adaptations entail. If we construe our identities, like Patrick McCabe's characters, as text fragments that are unrelated to what resides outside their covers, we may lose our way. If, on the other hand, we include the outside in the text, and the text in the outside, as adaptations encourage us to do, our minds may be open to the re-imagination of ourselves and to new dimensions of social adaptation. Adaptations thus foster the notion of becoming selves through self-narration, instead of being a given identity. Thus, adaptations ask us to be adults in our minds, wary of our social, adaptive, collaborative, empathetic skills, conscious of the complexities of the social world and of ourselves, rational and responsible with a greater context in mind.

However, as McCabe's protagonists exemplify, we are all too often tempted to appropriate characters and pre-configured thematic formations and fit them into our pre-existing patterns of analysis, or to make use of them as stereotypical ideals, both as consumers of fiction and as scholars, I would argue. In such instances, the possibility of learning from them to the full escapes us if we treat them as distant acquaintances rather than as friends, and thus forget to be empathetic and respect them as fictional beings. With an adaptation-minded approach, we may instead acknowledge characters' past and present, the shapes that they have taken in different settings, and that they too have multiple self-identities, while they are still but one person. In doing so we may understand the thematic complexities that they embody as fictional beings. Consequently, we may regard adaptation characters as representative of our own ever-present processes of adaptation through life to the thematic circumstances and issues that we encounter and grapple with. Thus, if we accept the premise that media adaptations and social adaptations rely on the same core phenomena, adaptation characters can serve as metaphorical mirrors for anyone who wants to understand their own circumstances, and whom they can become and

be in a changing world. In particular, adaptations can be understood as narrative metaphors for the theme of adaptation in life. Perhaps adaptations may also teach us to accept ourselves and others better, if we are mindful of our own self-identities as adapted narrative creations. In the end, what Patrick McCabe's characters ultimately tell us, I argue, is that adulthood is a process of adaptation.

Article 2: "Characters as Fictional Migrants: *Atonement,* Adaptation and the Screenplay Process"

The second article in this compilation thesis, "Characters as Fictional Migrants: Atonement, Adaptation and the Screenplay Process," is published in the *Journal of Screenwriting.* The article focuses on the six distinct complete screenplay versions for the adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* that Christopher Hampton wrote before the project was completed. Between the third and fourth drafts, there was a change of directors, and in 2007 the film finally reached the theatres. Throughout the adaptation process, Ian McEwan commented on all the screenplay drafts. Together, the annotated drafts illustrate how characters transform in the process of migrating from one media world to another, in the novel-to-film process, most notably with the screenplay at the centre of the transformation, while the characters are affected by various external forces. The article thus proposes a migratory perspective on the adaptation of characters and themes, with the screenplay as a vital instrument to understand the adaptations both as processes and as objects. It also develops the idea suggested earlier that migrating characters, in their capacity as social fictional beings with metaphorical functions, and the thematic issues that they represent, adapt to the new media environments, as well as appropriate them, in order to maintain and develop different parts of their self-identities. In tandem, they are appropriated by new creative forces and by the conventions of the new media environments, which in turn must adapt to the characters. As a result, the representation of the thematic understanding is transformed.

In this article, I thus turn to two of the protagonists in *Atonement,* Robbie and Cecilia, to follow them as fictional beings as they migrate from the land of the novel, through seven complete screenplay versions, to the screen. Accordingly, this article is concerned with the actual process of adaptation and with what happens to the representation of a theme, in particular the example theme of adulthood, during that transformation. The study indicates that, as the adaptation developments progress, the characters and the transformation of their qualities as adults go through distinct phases, which can be associated both with migratory and problem solving processes the way these are theoretically described by scholars. In particular, the migratory crises that the characters and their development display through the screenplay drafts correspond to the crisis and trauma reactions that migrants may go through with regard to their sense of self-identity.

What the screenplays illustrate is that the characters' development as fictional beings, as they migrate from one medium to another, and the screenwriter's procedures to adapt and appropriate both characters and media are interconnected. In part, this might be because the characters too adapt and appropriate the medium and its creative forces. One of the consequences is that there is an agentive drift from the screenwriter to the characters at play. On that account, Leitch has suggested that novels, screenplays, and films may metaphorically want to become new and enriched versions of their old selves ("What Movies"), in accordance with MacDonald's notion of the screen idea. This may stimulate a decisive step away from the past versions of the characters. However, like migrants and most developing human beings, they also want to remain the same as they imagine themselves to have been before. As long as the characters and their developments also perform thematic functions, this means that the representation of the thematic understanding is influenced both by a progressive movement and by a conservative ambition to leave it unaffected.

In the adaptation process, the characters initially, like many migrants, are not observant of the complexities that migration involves and they see little need to

adjust their own character to accommodate others. Thus, after leaving the novel, on their arrival in the screenplay world, the characters hardly adapt at all to the new setting. However, their self-esteem folds quite soon in the adaptation process, as do their beliefs and emotional balance. In the screenplay, they become prone to conflict rather than to cooperation, while they seem to be at odds with the adapting screenwriter as well. At this stage, they have almost lost their self-identities and statuses as adults. After these crises, their goal orientation, rationality, and responsibility are brought to the fore to manage the situation, with the result that they re-establish a subservient, cooperative and adaptable frame of mind, together with a raised awareness of the complexities that the migration process entails. However, they have not yet accomplished a full restoration of their self-esteem and sense of community, problems that must be resolved in the next step of the migratory journey, before they can act as adults again and be acknowledged as such in the new environment. In the course of events, other particular markers of adulthood are tested and falter as well, but the *Atonement* example indicates that the adult personality that a character represents may not necessarily change significantly from novel to film, while the thematic development is all the more dramatic during the process of developing the screenplay.

Yet, no equilibrium between the markers of adulthood can be guaranteed in the adaptation process, since the transformative migration journey also greatly resembles the uncertain developmental progression of the hero's journey. Regarding adaptations, looking upon characters as migrants thus reveals the mechanics that make so uncertain the particularities of the characters' final manifestation and representation of adulthood, in relation to the adult characters they were when they started their migratory journey. As Campbell notes, a character may stop its progress and change directions at several points in the journey. Still, like real life migrants, after all their self-doubts, most of the characters return to what they might have perceived as a core of their narrative self-identities, once they realise that the ideals of the social world are based on a widespread collective, cultural code, that of being

an adult human being. When they do not, audiences tend to react, and perhaps the recurring outcry about the infidelities of adaptations is related to a desire to view identity and thematic truths as static, for the sake of convenience.

Returning to the evolutionary, as well as the phenomenological, balance between what has been and what is to come, the characters represent an element that has never before been seen in their new environments once they have migrated. Thus, they contribute to an expansion of what it is possible to express in that world, in accordance with Jacques Rancière's definition of the distribution of the sensible (12). Likewise, the thematic representation is expanded with each new version of a story.

In effect, as I have previously touched upon, film conventions and characters have both been affected by the adaptation process. This bi-directional acculturalisation, in the sense that both the migrating element and the host setting adapt and change, also involves appropriation. To some extent the characters must appropriate the new narrative settings and their conventions, which must accommodate and adapt for the sake of the characters' survival. Meanwhile, the screenplay and film environments must partly appropriate the characters for their narrative purposes. The effect is ultimately a three-way exchange and negotiation between the characters, the creative forces, and the narrative conventions, which involves mutual adaptations, appropriations, and accommodations. Hence, if we, as scholars, employ our imagination to consider the characters empathetically as fictional migrants, the migrant perspective on adaptations may also expand our comprehension of the political and social world that we inhabit.

Article 3: "Adaptations of Adulthood: Towards a Model for Thematic Rhetoric in Adaptation Studies"

The third article, "Adaptations of Adulthood: Towards a Model for Thematic Rhetoric in Adaptation Studies," appears in *New Approaches to Contemporary Adaptation* (2020), edited by Betty Kaklamanidou for Wayne State University Press. It elaborates

and tests the model described in chapter 3 for the study of thematic, rhetorical lines of argument in narratives, based on the hero's journey, and on ten successful novel-film adaptations, in relation to the representation of the example theme adulthood through the protagonists' thematic functions.[10] Schematically, the article identifies patterns in the representation of the thematic markers of adulthood at different stages of the narratives. The article subsequently proposes a foundation for a theory of thematic lines of argument, with a theoretical stance derived from Cardwell's discussion in *Adaptation Revisited* about adaptations as story universes revolving around what she defines as a mythic ur-text: a mental and variable construct that serves as a node for versions of a story. In this case, the ur-text is comprised of what can be likened to an archetypal human understanding of the example theme, adulthood.

Most inspiringly, Cardwell's ur-text hypothesis replaces the hierarchical and linear novel-to-film model with a relationship between different versions based on equality, regardless of media form, time of production, and order of audience experience. Furthermore, if the notion of linear media processes of adaptation is abandoned, the idea of the ur-text has the potential to satisfy our natural desire for a connection and harmony with a greater original existential source, whether it be nature, evolution, God, or civilisation, without adding to any reductive essentialist strand of thought. Thus, the quest for an original text, the mythic ur-text, eventually unites evolutionary and post-modern ways of thinking, since the resolution is that the ultimate representation of the abstract ur-text is the thematic, rhetorical, meaning making constitution of stories.

The ten novels and films in this article are regarded as two representative corpora and not as ten individual adaptation pairs. The purpose is partly to address the issue of media-specific conventions in relation to the thematic content, the representation of thematic markers of adulthood, and the rhetorical plot structure.

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[10] The titles in the sample are as follows: *Atonement, Fifty Shades of Grey, Gone Girl, Me Before You, Room, Shutter Island, The Da Vinci Code, The Martian, The Road,* and *Up in the Air.*

Although the sample is too small to produce any statistically valid evidence of patterns and variations, for a qualitative assessment the ten titles tentatively form an illustrative example. When the main characters' actions, reactions, expressions of thoughts, and utterances are coded and analysed, the representation of the various markers of adulthood does not differ significantly between the novels and films. Although there are noteworthy differences between a specific novel and its film sibling, and between two novels, or two films, the results regarding the corpora suggest that the distributions of adulthood markers are largely similar in films and novels, and that they are equally complex as far as the construction of the thematic line of arguments is concerned. If nothing else, this indicates that the models and thematic representations are media-neutral, even in light of the narrative conventions of novels, screenplays, and films.

However, there are certain non-conformities. Compared with the novels, the films emphasise social markers, as well as the importance of home and family. This might be a consequence of the cinematic convention of giving precedence to the visualisations of interactions, whereas novels may, to a greater extent, leave those aspects as gaps that readers fill in through their mental visualisations. Novels, screenplays, and films equally depend on readers' and spectator's abilities to fill the gaps, by considering the way that expressive means are used to cue thematic meaning and bring forth the intricacies and richness in thematic content that each medium permits. Also, the novels accentuate, more than the films, overt instances of the characters' awareness of complexities, as well as, for example, the display of values and beliefs. Nevertheless, the films often compensate for this with expressive impact when these aspects of adulthood are in focus.

Since the ten novel-film pairs include a wide variety of titles, ranging from *Atonement* and *The Road* to *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *The Da Vinci Code,* the sample represents a spectrum of successful adaptation pairs. Most of them were adapted for the screen with the ambition of being faithful to the readers' expectations, but some, like *Up in the Air,* were adapted with less adherence to the novels' structures. The

variety of the adaptations in the sample is both open to broad generalisations and limits the reach of the conclusions. Returning to the various taxonomies that I refer to in chapter 3, the results do not, for example, indicate how transposition adaptations and revisionists' adaptations differ as regards the management of thematic issues or the representation of adulthood in particular.

Still, what surprises me – partly due to my own prejudice – is the structured and intricate constitution of the rhetorical line of argument about what it is to be adult in examples of blockbuster novels, screenplays, and films such as *The Da Vinci Code* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Again, the sample is too limited to generalise, but the findings imply that genre, medium, and their relationship to market values matter less when it comes to the representation of adulthood in fiction than do other factors, like creative ambitions and ideologies.

Article 4: "Okay: *The Road* and the Good Guys' Adulthood Code"

The fourth article, "Okay: *The Road* and The Good Guys' Adulthood Code," to be published in *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, employs the same set of markers and the same model for the thematic, rhetorical line of argument as the third article, but for a single title: *The Road*. Cormac McCarthy's overtly eco-critical novel *The Road* is highly relevant when the theme of adulthood is in focus. It follows a father and his eleven-year-old son on their journey on foot through a post-apocalyptic wasteland. As they travel, the dying man has to learn anew what it is to be adult, in order to be able to pass that knowledge on to his son. The screen adaptation transforms the unconventional form and poetry of the novel to a film that matches the standards of post-apocalyptic road movies, while the screenplay conforms to the poetic condensation that characterises the screenplay form. In all three versions, the word *okay* is used in the dialogue in a dramaturgical rhythm to emphasise thematically relevant instances. As mentioned above, the hero's journey is once again applied as a structure to compare how the development of a thematic concept, adulthood, is plotted in novel, screenplay, and film, with a particular focus on the first two. Thus,

the article contributes to a further understanding of the thematic, rhetorical line of argument in narratives, and, to some extent, it explores the transformation of the specific poetic form of the novel to the screenplay adaptation, which must inherently also adapt to the screen idea.

The Road is less than half the length of *Atonement*, as far as the novels are concerned. McCarthy's novel is regarded as being quintessentially American, and is written in a language that may evoke the experience of reading a long poem, whereas *Atonement* is written with the conventions of classic British novels in mind. However, the adapting screenwriters, Joe Penhall and Christopher Hampton, are both British, and *The Road's* director, John Hillcoat, is Australian, while *Atonement's* director, Joe Wright, is British. As a film, *The Road* has obvious links to dystopic films and road movies, while *Atonement* is often regarded as a heritage film. In a sense, both films are thus produced in the American Indiewood tradition, as it is described by Geoff King. In that context, *The Road* can also be described as an eco-critical survival drama, and *Atonement* may be regarded as an intellectual love story. However, both of them thematise adulthood with children's development as backdrops, and they contextualise adulthood by placing the protagonists in settings that are conditioned by the aftermath of what humankind's destructive powers have resulted in. In addition, as in the case of *Atonement¸* the novel, screenplay, and film *The Road* all disclose who the narrator is at the end of the story, which initiates a return to the narratives' beginnings and a reconceptualisation of the lessons learned.

The focus in this article on a particular rhetorical cue, the word *okay,* and the attention it draws to specific markers of adulthood, reveals how the adaptation of certain expressive means affects rhetorical structures. Above all, the novel foregrounds a dialogic approach, whereas the screenplay and film put a dialectic rhetoric to work. This might be a result of the cinematic tradition of presenting clear antagonist-protagonist relationships and the convention of engaging visually tangible contrasts as part of the screen idea. If that is the case, such strategies are nevertheless stimulated by the novel, which initiates the contrast between the good and bad guys,

and the materialisations of surfaces, physical sensations, and movements by means of Cormac McCarthy's prose. The effect is that the novel, screenplay, and film versions produce complementary insights regarding what it is to be an adult, and they do so as a result of creative choices. As, for instance, Terrence Malick has demonstrated with films like *The Tree of Life*, which is partly produced by the same team that produced *The Road* and *The Thin Red Line,* the phenomenological lyricism of Cormac McCarthy's novel is not restricted to the form of the novel. Nor are Dan Brown's novels, with their rapid editing pace as one scene and chapter is replaced with another, less novelistic just because the author makes use of narrative strategies that are commonly associated with cinema. As *The Road* exemplifies, the strategic choices regarding discourse and poetics may, however, affect the thematic representation, above all when readers and spectators are expected to consider the narrative discourses to piece together the particularities of the narratives and thus shape notions of greater wholes. To continue the comparison of *Atonement* and *The Road*, the rhetorically and thematically important endings are the obvious results of creative choices. For example, in the case of *The Road*, the internal-spiritual dimension of the novel's hopeful end is replaced, in the screenplay and above all in the film, with an externalised, social aspect, with the sensations of hope and belonging still well-defined.

However, *The Road* also demonstrates that the media-specific conventions allow the translation of a thematic rhetoric from the novel's means of expression, to the poetics and conventions of the screenplay, and thence to the audio-visual modes of the film. That does not mean that this has always been accomplished to the extent that the screenwriter or director desired. Again, what may affect the thematic result more than the media conventions are the people, the creative forces, who are involved in the projects: writers, advisors, the readers they have in mind, actors, producers, cinematographers, directors, and others.

Article 5: "Adaptations and Post-apocalyptic Atonement"

The final article, "Adaptations and Post-apocalyptic Atonement," has been submitted for publication to *Literature Film Quarterly*. It returns to the question of the reception of adaptations and explores how the thematic representations of adulthood in the novel, screenplay, and film *Atonement* may be open to what can be referred to as a post-apocalyptic imagination or reading, which disrupts linear causality and places all events, versions of a story reflections, and meanings side-by-side, mobile and in stable harmony at the same time, so that they may disclose a holistic thematic awareness. If the previous articles in the dissertation, especially the second, indicate that adaptations are bi-directional, in the sense that media and social adaptations, the various versions of an adapted story, are interdependent, this final article thus expands on the non-linear constitution of adaptations and suggests a post-apocalyptic perspective to define the nature of adaptations.

On the surface, the story of *Atonement* does not answer to the generic description of the post-apocalyptic genre, as it is popularly defined: speculative narratives about survival and lost community with events set in a devastated landscape in a possible future. The qualifiers are all present in the narrative, but it is the Second World War that serves as a backdrop, instead of an unidentified catastrophic event. Accordingly, post-apocalyptic fiction is, in this article, defined in a broader sense, with a reference to a biblical notion of the post-apocalypse. It refers to the notion of a new heaven and a new earth after the end, as well as to a state of being beyond what is previously known, an existence in which perception and cognition are no longer bound by time, causality, space, or materiality. In this context, a post-apocalyptic vision thus denotes the ethical and thematic order that is revealed after the apocalypse, or the end of a story: namely the eternal beginning of relational, narrative meaning. A corresponding post-apocalyptic view on normalcy embraces the possibility of merging the past and the opportunities of the future into one narrative, to consider all our tentative self-narratives in tandem. It also implies that happenstance developments and constancy may be parts of the same whole. Thus,

the post-apocalyptic vision dissolves the linearity of time and place, and it unites all elements, which may once have appeared to be inseparable, into a larger thematic whole, so that gaps are filled and greater understandings can be revealed.

Post-apocalyptic imagination can thus be compared with Jürgen Habermas' reflection on the relationship between modernism and post-modernism, namely that the cultural project of the past two hundred years has explored the possibility of the human mind-set fusing the rational with the aesthetic, instead of separating them, and of establishing a discourse to consider the concept of *sense and sensibility* rather than *sense or sensibility*. As *Atonement* suggests, this involves the unity of the emotional or aesthetic identity with the rational or pragmatic one, as well as of the individual and communal aspects of the self, which makes it possible for us to sense that we belong. Again, what adaptations foreground, when the complex structure of *Atonement* is considered, is the human desire for a state of restored normalcy and the freedom of agency and awareness that it might entail.

For audiences to have an adaptational mind-set, I maintain, is thus equivalent to having a post-apocalyptic approach to thematic reading, watching, and understanding. In both cases, allowances are made for a consistent oscillation between alternative versions, which may at best produce the experience of entropic balance as a state of normalcy. The adaptational mind may thus construe the experience of alternative potential developments and self-identities as a form of happy ending.

In the novel *Atonement,* as well as in the published screenplay and the film, the narrative construction represents and encourages such an adaptational mind-set, because that is what it is concerned with. *Atonement* thus also stimulates a holistic perspective, not least due to its structure and discourse, based on the varied points of view and the multi-layered intertextual mind games that present themselves in all the versions. On a surface level, the novel's many explicit references to literature and narration, such as to the works of Virginia Woolf, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Richardson, are, in the screenplay and film, accompanied and often replaced with

references to the films directed by Marcel Carné, David Lean, and Anthony Asquith, among others. For the knowing or curious audience, these references prompt further investigations about and oscillations between the readers' and spectators' own self-identities and the representations of the characters.

Like many post-modern narratives, *Atonement* employs the narrator to thwart the notion of borders between narratological ontological borders. In spite of its adherence to conventional plot structures, *Atonement* thus forces the reader and viewer to abandon the linearity of the narrative and rely on circular references to fully comprehend the complexity of the happy ending that a truly post-apocalyptic story is all about. Hence, *Atonement*'s narrative characteristics also exemplify, as Bordwell argues, that beneath the most complex narratives lies a rhetorical hyper-structure (*The Way*) which, I argue, is concerned with the theme of the narratives. In this context, the apocalyptic understanding of adaptation particularly motivates the use of a Campbellian perspective on the narratives, since the essence of the monomyth, the hero's journey, is the ambition to accomplish an experience of unity in a world which often seems to be fragmented into opposites. When the distributions of thematic markers are studied through the filter of the rhetorical plot structure, it is clear that novels, screenplays, and films may part ways, no matter how faithful writers, directors, and producers intend to be. In particular, because the beginnings produce the premises for the thematic arguments and the endings communicate the conclusions, together they control the perception of the alternative versions of the thematic arguments in the narratives. In *Atonement*, this comes with a twist, since the post-apocalyptic and adaptational mind is asked at the end to return to the beginning to construct ever new wholes.

Accordingly, *Atonement* dramatises the possibility of choosing between alternative versions of a narrative as a foundation for a sense of self and belonging. Through the course of the narration, layers upon layers of forking paths for alternative stories are produced, with overt alternative endings around which the narrative may hinge. Thus, with the screenplay and film adaptations, which adhere

to this structure, the message and the grounds presented for thematic reflection beg of the adaptation audience not to indicate a preference, but to consider the relationship between the alternative compositions of the narratives and their representations of adulthood as dialogic, with awareness of complexities as a central node.

Thus, whether we read the novel or screenplay, or watch the film, each of the narratives proposes alternative elixirs of happiness, and different blends of markers of adulthood, but ultimately *Atonement* calls for more than a consideration of the conclusion. It motivates us to regard the line or lines of argument in their entirety as part of the formula. In many works of fiction, the presence of a thematic argument and its structure may be completely obscured, while in other cases, the thematic representation may be over-simplified. Yet, as long as there is an adaptation, the complementary versions summon us to compare and evaluate in order to develop integrated and multifaceted insights. Thus, even the simplest of narratives may instigate complex mind games that are concerned with existential issues, like the constitution of and personal relationship to adulthood, for audiences to consider and engage in.

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks: The Adapting Story Resumes

I started out with the simple question of whether or not it matters which film adaptation, or version of a story, people take to their hearts and allow to affect their minds when they wonder who they are and who they can become in relation to the social world that they inhabit. Adapting a novel to a screenplay and subsequently to a feature film takes time. Thus, historical events that occur between the productions of two versions of a narrative may affect the discursive and social frames that circumscribe thematic reflections. This is significant since screenwriters, directors, producers, and others who are involved in the adaptation process are sensitive to the values of their cultural environments. However, media productions also affect the political and social world in which they are produced. Accordingly, I have contended that the thematic adaptation is a result of a multi-dimensional, bi-directional exchange, which also concerns the mutual, normative exchange between the social and the fictional worlds. The nuances that dominate conversations about a specific theme, such as adulthood, have an impact on thematic adaptations, while any adaptation likewise affects the dominant notion of a theme among the members of the audiences.

In this dissertation, I have therefore considered the connection between media and social adaptations, and I have primarily asked what happens to the representation of themes in the process of adaptation when novels are adapted for the screen. The simple answer is that each version of a story produces distinct lines of reasoning about the thematic constitution and significance of a theme, since every adaptation is affected by its discursive environment. Therefore, there are individual nuances regarding the weight, balance, and functions of relevant thematic markers, which may serve to describe the facets of the representation of a theme in every version of an adapted story. Consequently, each version generates its own conditions for audiences' reflections and meaning making processes. Nonetheless, films, screenplays, and novels all have the potential to display a rich representation and

complex lines of thematic reasoning. That said, fictional narratives do not necessarily affect readers' and spectators' self-awareness, personality, and values. Yet for readers and spectators who actively reflect upon their own relationship to a theme, especially a theme like adulthood, adaptations offer particularly multi-layered grounds for reflection, since they offer more than one narrative version of a subject. In effect, they also accentuate that thematic understandings are inherently provisional, always in transition, subject to discursive exchanges.

What changes most when the representation of a theme is adapted from novel to film is the mode of representation, since the verbal novel must first be distilled to the poetics of the screenplay, before the narrative is subsequently unfolded and given a new form of density as a multimodal film. However, novels, screenplays, and films generally share a repertoire of expressive means. I have previously stated the obvious fact that as long as characters speak in films, it is not exclusively a literary prerogative to express thoughts and feelings verbally. Voice-overs and overt narrators may also fill the role of a literary, verbal narrator, as is the case in both *The Road* and *Atonement*, for instance. Nevertheless, as Elliott, among others, has argued, literary representation is fundamentally based on verbal signs, from which mental concepts and images are produced, whereas cognitive meaning making for the film audience, apart from verbal expressions, conventionally begins with audio-visual perceptions from which concepts may take the shape of verbalised thoughts (202). In both cases, the audience experiences a cognitive exchange between the perceptual and the verbal, and the enhanced stimuli produce emotional and bodily responses, which in turn may or may not provoke conscious thoughts.

Yet, it is obvious that the appreciation of representations of themes through the attributes and functions of characters in fictional narratives depends on their audiences' capacities and habits of filling gaps, reading minds, and construing meaning from fragments. Most people exercise this competence with varying degrees of excellence on an everyday basis in real life, when they read situations, places, and to some extent other people's minds as a natural part of any social exchange, and, as

Zunshine submits, this is how we understand literary fictional beings as well. The characters' values, beliefs, thoughts, and emotions may be expressed by the narrator as inner dialogue, by other characters, or may be reported, more or less reliably, by the characters, but the understanding of a character's thematic contribution is mainly a matter of the puzzle of fragments that a theory of mind explains. The multimodal richness of the film medium, with its distinct framing, cinematography, mise-en-scene, editing, sound, and moving visual representations of the physical world, cues similar mental activities and enables the spectator to decipher a character's feelings, conceptual convictions, and states of mind. The intricate interplay of meanings that the semiotic resources of film may thus produce are certainly equivalent to the delicate richness of linguistic expressions that are used in novels to represent adulthood, or any other theme.

It is worth mentioning that the digital era has made it easier to overcome many problems in the production of an adaptation. It was once true that literary narratives and characters could change locations more easily than they could do in films, just as novels could fill a space with any number of people, while films used to be bound by physical and financial restraints, as well as by actors' physical appearances. The digital possibilities of editing and framing images, sound, and even actors have given creative film production teams the potential to match the freedom of the creative writer. All things considered, although the representation of adulthood is strongly affected by the modes of representation, the possible alterations in thematic content are not due to specific conventions of narrative structures or to any media specific limitations, but are the results of the discourses that surround the production of the narratives and the creative forces that produce them.

As proposed earlier, the creative teams both adapt to and appropriate the thematic potentials and fictional ambitions of the characters, who in turn adapt to and appropriate the thematic potential and views of adulthood that a certain author, screenwriter, or director may have. Because they must aid the thematic concepts and the characters through multiple migratory experiences to new places in time, space,

and media forms, the formation of a representation of adulthood during the course of the adaptation process becomes a matter of complex problem solving for the creative teams. What happens to the characters' thematic dimensions and attributes, and in the end to the representation of adulthood, in the process thus becomes a matter of negotiation, compromise, and prioritisation, which is also valid for the representation in fiction of the composition of adulthood as an ideal and as a state of normalcy.

There is, I would argue, perhaps an even greater conflict between the idealising notions of a theme and the ways thematic understandings are revealed through practice in life, than between a theme as it is represented in films, screenplays and novels. This may be particularly true when a theme is so closely linked to what may be perceived as a person's self-identity as the theme of adulthood is, according to Blatterer (*Coming* 27). Fictional narratives thus seem to illustrate this divide and problematise the concept of adulthood and the contrast between practical and idealising constructs of thematic understandings. In the case of adulthood, due to increasing social complexities, with demands and pressures on and from networks, families, responsibilities, careers, social security, norms, and conventions, adulthood cannot be considered to be a stable phase of life. Not even the stability of networks, workplaces, financial independence, and family relations are statistical normalities that can be used to describe adulthood in the western world, as is widely illustrated in contemporary films, screenplays, and novels. Nevertheless, those qualities still constitute the structural foundations for the normative definition of adulthood in contemporary narrative fiction, based on a visionary ideal, which might serve to evoke the hope of future stability and a somewhat happy state of adult normalcy, or to interrogate and problematise the constitution of that stability and of normalcy.

The romantic vision, which people and fictional characters may sometimes share, of adulthood as an unproblematic life stage, when all opportunities may be realised, is often contradicted by the realities that adult life has to offer, as is also the case regarding most other complex themes. The result is often a recurring cognitive

dissonance. As an alternative, the migratory aspects of adaptations correspond with and thus metaphorically foreground the adult experience of relentless adaptation and development, and in general the adaptive constitution of thematic concepts. Hence, adaptations advance the opportunity to regard adulthood as a less fixed state of being, so that the ideal of what it is to be an adult and what it means to actually go through life as an adult may be harmonised to a higher degree. When versions of a story are compared and regarded as equally valid narrative accounts of adulthood, the phenomenon of alternative representations of the thematic notion thus illuminates that representations of complex themes cannot be generated by the use of a simple formula or a single narrative. Adaptations thereby emphasise the contemporary convention in narrative fiction of contradicting the notion of adulthood as a stable phase of life, free from complications and conflicts. All the everyday impediments and instabilities of adult life seem to be equally accentuated in novels, screenplays, and films, although with varying nuances. Hence, what adaptations do teach us is that our longing for normalcy in adult life propels us forward, but that new intricacies always emerge. Adaptations may thus help us to accept adulthood as a state of certain flux and natural imperfection. The example theme, adulthood, may thus be interpreted as a metaphor for all thematic understandings and knowledge, unstable, adaptive, and both subject to and subjects in a process of development.

As regards the rhetorical presentation of adulthood as thematic content, I have emphasised the importance of the thematic, rhetorical line of argument in narratives, but also to some extent the impact that media specific modes of representation may have on the thematic rhetoric. I have argued that we mainly follow the characters' progression through the plot of the narratives, when we read or watch fiction, and we adjust our empathetic and sympathetic positions strategically in order to be able to identify with the characters and to simulate their experiences mentally, to the various degrees that we find suitable for each encounter. Therefore, inspired by Phelan's theorisation of the relationship between plots, characters, and themes, I

have translated the hero's journey into a rhetorical line of argument that can be used to track the thematic functions of a character through a narrative.

The study of plot structures may be tiresome and may seem repetitive, but if they are regarded as thematic, rhetorical structures, such studies are productive and open up exciting comparisons between the lines of arguments in different versions of narratives. Further opportunities are revealed if the inclusion, rather than the exclusion, of the screenplay becomes a standard in adaptation studies, which enables the study of both the individual objects and the process of adaptation as a whole. In this context, my findings also address the biased opinion that mainstream films are governed by plot structures, while European so-called art films and novels are not, a view which is still widespread, both in academia and among everyday consumers of fiction. Admittedly, I, too, entered film studies many years ago with the prejudice that film adaptations by necessity simplified and reduced the intricacies of literary characters and the thematic explorations of novels. Yet, as I hope to have shown, within the scope of this dissertation there has been little to suggest that the conventions of literary or cinematic production endorse and affect the thematic message about adulthood in a specific direction. The consideration of a thematic plot structure in the analysis suggests, however, that, regardless of genre and media form, the narratives depend on a thematic line of reasoning, equivalent to the hero's journey. Thus, the deep structure of the rhetorical argument remains when a novel is successfully adapted to a screenplay, and this in turn is adapted into a film. However provocative it may still seem to some, in this respect there is little difference between, for example, complex idea based novels and Hollywood blockbusters, and so called art films.[11] Consequently, the representation of adulthood is conventionally

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[11] For example, during the course of this project I supervised a student who, in his BA thesis, took this approach in an analysis of Ruben Östlund's *Involuntary* and revealed how the film, in spite of its short cut format, conformed to the thematic line of argument that I have promoted in this dissertation (Gustin).

supported, and to some extent controlled by the constancy of structure of the rhetorical line of argument when stories are adapted, which explains why thematic representations can be seen as easily "adaptable across media and even genres or framing contexts," as Hutcheon maintains (10).

However, as indicated, the ideological preferences of the creative forces and the concurrent socio-cultural trends may make the different versions prone to dissimilar emphases, balances, and causalities with regard to the lines of reasoning about adulthood that they pursue. Thus, within the framework of that structure, the orchestration of characters and their thematic qualities may result in variations in the dialogical and dialectical structures of meaning production, as well as in the thematic argument and whatever thematic aspects are selected for emphasis. The framing of the line of argument might also be altered. It can be used to produce a linear argument with a clear conclusion, which may result in a distinct definition of adulthood. Likewise, the choice of narrative frame may also prompt a post-apocalyptic, phenomenological, and hermeneutic argument, in which a fixed state of adulthood is questioned, and the rich and dynamic constitution of the concept is foregrounded. In the latter case, the end of the narrative provokes a retrospective and reflexive re-evaluation of the various elements of the argument, in a circular quest for holistic meaning. The representation of adulthood, and other themes that encompass similar complexities, may better correspond to such a holistic perspective and rhetoric, I would argue, since narrative structures that activate the audiences' minds in the meaning making process allow the readers and spectators the agency of competent and responsible adults. In addition, with Sarah Cardwell's ur-text notion as a framework for the analysis of adaptations, the narratives are regarded as equally valuable, as parallel versions, for the reflexive work that the members of the audience are invited to engage in, in order to consider patterns, similarities, and differences in the representations of adulthood as part of their personal development.

In that context, as I have argued above, adaptations are conditioned by compromises, negotiations, and priorities. These dimensions draw attention to the

idea that adaptations may serve as media metaphors for other thematic markers than merely for the ability to adapt. For example, two markers of adulthood can be said to function as nodes for the others: a person's self-awareness and their awareness of complexities. Metaphorically, these two qualities are inherently demonstrated by all adaptations, since every adaptation displays a degree of consciousness of the narrative's constitution and of the circumstances of the production process, that is to say the narrative's past, present, and possible future. Adaptations may also give rise to questions about responsibilities, rational aims, values, care, cooperation, and so forth. Thus, as long as adaptations are perceived as a set of interrelated versions of a story, its characters, and themes, they communicate that there is no single thematic, narrative truth, and thus no single adult self-identity or personality, since they are all defined by global as well as individual narrations. Hence, adaptations illustrate a holistic and purposeful way of thinking and making meaning, which serves to do justice to the constitution of a complex theme like adulthood. This envisioned adaptive mind-set offers a manner of seeking order by means of organising and maintaining a structure vis-à-vis the narratives of life and thematic insights, while allowances are made for non-linear, bi-directional, and multivariable interconnections and re-negotiations.

As scholars like Raw, Elliott, and Leitch have suggested before me, adaptation studies can be advanced if approaches from the social sciences are applied when the processes that affect media adaptions are studied. In this dissertation, I have mainly referred to social adaption, developmental theories, and migration studies with the evolutionary doctrine in mind, and have argued that media adaptations should be regarded as a reflection of the human condition, with all the thematic concerns that it involves. Therefore, our knowledge from the fields that study human behaviours, cultures, and minds, as well as the methodologies and models that those insights have resulted in, should be put to productive use in media adaptation studies. If the premise is that we, in our capacity as readers and spectators, engage in fiction in order to find grounds for reflection about the conditions that we live in and to come to

terms with who we can be as adults in that world, Patrick Cattrysse's call for further descriptive adaptation studies is highly relevant. I believe that, in this post-theory era, the most productive stance is to adopt a certain infidelity to theories, with the purpose of inviting productive combinations and cross-fertilisations of systems of ideas and knowledge from fields that may, on the surface, or by their defending champions, be regarded as incompatible. We may then reveal patterns and insights that have hitherto been veiled. Even more stimulating is the prospect of learning more about the human condition through the study of media adaptation studies, when the play of bi-directional reflections between the fields of study is initiated.

As these concluding remarks have indicated, I have, in the pursuit of a fuller answer to what happens to the representation of themes, and adulthood in particular, when contemporary novels are adapted for the screen, addressed questions like why we care about fiction and fictional characters, how we read and watch to satisfy that interest, and how the sprawling concern for adaptations in our culture can be related to those inquiries. No theory of adaptation can yet summarise the current state of affairs in a neat quantitative formula, like $e=mc^2$, and thus offer assertive conclusions about the details even of any randomly selected formulaic adaptation. The reason is that the relationships between adaptation narratives by necessity depend on interrelationships between the achievements of the creative forces that are engaged in them, on the audiences' cognitive response activities, and on the forever-changing cultural landscape that affects both the productions and their reception. Media adaptation scholars may still define parameters and contexts for specific problems in order to address, discover, and theorise about the ruling principles behind adaptations, and, like other researchers, we philosophise about the constitution of the universe that we are concerned with, the ever expanding world of adaptations. In doing so, we affect its development, as we suggest methodological or theoretical pathways, which may inspire new discoveries. With this dissertation, I have explored patterns and examples in search of trails that may contribute to further progress in a small way. Inasmuch as any multi-disciplinary project inherently reaches across the

borders that demarcate specific academic fields, adaptation studies has an extraordinary tendency to reveal its rhizomatic nature. Hence, it has been impossible to cover in depth all the aspects that have called for attention during the course of this project. There are, in particular, some aspects of concern for thematic representation in narratives that have not been thoroughly addressed in this dissertation. Like most adaptation scholars, I have touched upon the connection between expressive means and thematic content. However, the purpose has not been to produce an extensive chart of how certain verbal and grammatical forms conventionally prompt specific audio-visual strategies when themes are subjected to creative adaptations. Over the years, narrative conventions from different media and genres have been affected by cross-contamination, so that the designs of novels, screenplays, and films nowadays allow for productive narrative variations. This, however, does not invalidate, but rather renews the curiosity about what insights such a study could reveal.

Moreover, I have not concerned myself much with genre theory, but there are still reasons to believe that different genres may propose alternative views on themes in general and on adulthood in particular, based on the discursive and ideological premises that are attached to different genre conventions. The romance novel, romantic comedies, detective novels, film noir, science fiction, and horror stories all originate from particular ideological foundations, which may affect their views on themes that are interlaced with the conventions of these genres, even in the era of mixed genres. Indeed, many of the fiction titles that this dissertation has been concerned with are, genre-wise, best categorised as hybrids, but they have not been studied as representatives of that development. Likewise, in spite of the communicative approach that I have had in mind, the voices of the novelists, screenwriters, directors, and producers behind the adaptations have not been engaged in this dissertation. Nor have I explored the impact that various strategies and levels of author-narrator communication may have, in practice, on adaptations or on thematic representations. From a communicative aspect, studying audiences'

responses and idea formations in relation to their reading and watching also remains to be done.

Since my approach has been to regard fictional narratives as structured or plotted lines of arguments, an initial evaluation of various plot models was performed in the pre-study phase of the project. I have not given a full account of that analysis, and have focused entirely on the structure of the hero's journey as presented by Campbell. Nonetheless, I am convinced that most plot models, from Freud's masterplot, as it is described by Brooks, to Truby's twenty-two step plot, can effectively be transformed into rhetorical thematic structures that may highlight other aspects than the hero's journey does. To my knowledge, there is no study that compares the thematic implications of the many plot models in the creative writing manuals on the market.

With these limitations in mind, I find that the models that I have proposed for the analysis of the progression of thematic arguments in narratives can be applied for various research and teaching purposes. The thematic interpretation of the hero's journey works as a complement to the plot models that describe the progression of characters and events in narrative fiction. This media neutral model may thus serve as an analytical tool to teach students that films, screenplays, and novels are equally complex; they are only surrounded by dissimilar conventions with regard to the use of the available semiotic resources. Furthermore, this model may facilitate the need for aspiring authors, screenwriters, and adapters to keep track of the thematic developments in their narratives. In adaptation productions, one of the most intricate problems is that of establishing a communication between authors, screenwriters, and producers about the meaning of the story they are telling. Simple statements of premises and conventional plot descriptions do not suffice to communicate the thematic ambitions that various stakeholders attach to a production. The application of the structure of the thematic line of reasoning that I have proposed may add a helpful dimension to such negotiations, and may help to control the desired thematic content in the production of individual works as well.

For scholars, students, and creative writers alike, the bi-directional model of adaptation that I have submitted may help us to understand the creative processes and the thematic development of adaptations. An increased awareness that characters and media conventions, and thus creative teams, adapt to and appropriate each other's contributions to the narrative developments may assist in the creative negotiations and prioritisations that all narrative craftsmanship entails. Students and scholars may, if such aspects are taken into consideration, develop a greater sensibility as to why adaptations develop the way they do.

There is much to be gained by turning the analytical pyramid around, as Eder suggests, and by first considering fictional characters as actual, albeit fictional, beings to establish a solid comprehension of their constitutions as such, before asking what their represented ways of being are symptomatic of. In reading and watching adaptations, particularly when the representation of a theme like adulthood is in focus, an adult approach to the enterprise is thus appropriate, calling for an awareness of complexities, responsibility, and independence in any judgements, and an empathetic attitude towards characters and the creative professionals who have been involved in crafting the stories. All too often, both as scholars and as private consumers of fiction, we appropriate characters and fit them into our pre-existing patterns of analysis. The consequence of treating them as distant acquaintances, rather than as friends, and of forgetting to be empathetic and to respect them as fictional beings, is that we may lose the opportunity to learn from them to the full. If narrative fictions in specific adaptations are regarded as grounds for reflection about who we may be and who we may become, we should also acknowledge the characters' past and present states of being, the roles they have taken in different settings, and acknowledge that they have multiple identities, while they are still only one, simultaneously. We should thus keep in mind that most characters have migrated many times between perceptibly complete worlds: a novel, five or six complete screenplay versions, a film, and perhaps even further to a game or a graphic novel, and yet they still keep all those past versions of themselves within, as

remembered beings who may come to life again. Each time they migrate, they have to adapt their self-identities and also appropriate the worlds they enter, while each world in turn appropriates them and must adapt to their presence to some extent. Hence, the meaning of all of the elements involved expands. If we thus regard these characters empathetically, as migrants with a past, we may better comprehend why they have come to migrate, as well as the personal processes of adaptation that they have gone through in order to become relevant again in the new setting. Perhaps we may even ask not just what they have left behind and how they relate to their former selves, but who they want to be, in their new lives, if all the necessary resources and opportunities are given to them. Then we might recognise what they still carry inside, but have not yet the capacity to disclose. Maybe we could even appreciate their potential contributions to their new habitats. With this approach to characters as fictional beings, adaptation studies and adaptations can rise to their potential as metaphorical mirrors for anyone who wants to understand their own frustration, and who they can become and be in a changing world. Thus, media adaptations may also help us to enhance our understanding of ourselves and others further, and guide some of us to grow into the adults we want to be.

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Appendices
Articles A-E

Article A

Joakim Hermansson. "Strange Masks of Adapted Identities in Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* and *The Holy City*." *Adaptation*. apaa011, https://doi-org.www.bibproxy.du.se/ 10.1093/adaptation/apaa011.

Article B

Joakim Hermansson. "Characters as Fictional Migrants: Atonement, Adaptation and the Screenplay Process." *Journal of Screenwriting* vol. 11, no. 1, 2020, pp. 81-97. https://doi.org/10.1386/josc_00014_1.

Article C

Joakim Hermansson. "Adaptations of Adulthood: Towards a Model for Thematic Rhetoric in Adaptation Studies." *New Approaches to Contemporary Adaptation*, edited by Betty Kaklamanidou, Wayne State UP, 2020, pp. 173-192.

Article D

Joakim Hermansson. "Okay: The Road and the Good Guys' Adulthood Code." *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2020, forthcoming.

Article E

Joakim Hermansson. "Adaptations and Post-apocalyptic Atonement." Manuscript submitted for publication, 2020.

Article A

Strange Masks of Adapted Identities in Patrick McCabe's
Winterwood and *The Holy City*

Strange Masks of Adapted Identities in Patrick McCabe's *Winterwood* and *The Holy City*

JOAKIM HERMANSSON*

Abstract Patrick McCabe's novels dramatize how people make use of character archetypes, media ideals, and fiction to adapt to new realities. These concerns are especially notable in two of his later novels, *The Holy City* and *Winterwood*. In the protagonists' process of social adaptation, they illustrate how the construction of self-identity is defined by narration, and how a world in flux demands constant re-negotiation of the narrative and adaptation to the new story to make self-identity, life patterns, and their contexts match. In effect, the narratives suggest that engagement in media adaptations can guide audiences to find strategies for social adaptation.

Keywords: *Identity, Self-narration, Socialization, Reception, Patrick McCabe.*

SOCIAL AND MEDIA ADAPTATIONS

The enduring appeal of fiction may partially be explained by the narrative convention to represent characters' journeys towards somewhat satisfying states of normalcy in life (Hogan 126). Stories may thus serve as guides when readers and spectators navigate through life. While engaging in fiction, we may adapt our perception of the fictional characters to fit our selves, and temporarily adjust our self-images to better match the characters' ways of relating to the world. There is thus a possibility for a symbiotic relationship between life and fiction, and between self-identity and storytelling. However, in times when everyday life experiences are described in terms of fluidity and instability, and any fixed self-identity may seem vulnerable, simple stories about happy endings may not suffice. Instead, narratives that activate what Laurence Raw calls 'the power of adaptive thinking' (97) for the purposes of personal development become more relevant. Making constructive use of Jerome Bruner's theories about narrative identity formation, he draws attention to the analogy between media adaptations and identity formation through self-narration.

 The connection between novel-to-film studies and 'identity politics' is far from new and it has been addressed by scholars for at least a century (Elliott 26). In this article, I interrogate the analogy between social adaptation, or personal socialization, and media adaptations, and argue that media adaptations and fiction characters may serve as metaphoric guides for audiences who want to explore strategies for personal adaptation in the constantly developing social world, especially if the concept of self-narration is embraced with both care and caution.

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I will first consider some of general facets that connect media adaptation(s) and so-cialization, who both to a degree depend on re-narration and imagination, and con-cern identity and adjustment in relation to a cultural environment. I then let two of the Irish novelist Patrick McCabe's protagonists illuminate the possibilities and pitfalls of integrating fiction and adaptations in the process of self-narration. McCabe, best known for *Butcher Boy* (1992), often lets his protagonists narrate their own life stories. In *Winterwood* (2006) and *The Holy City* (2009), Redmond Hatch and Christopher McCool adapt and appropriate characters and attributes from media images to fit their own per-sonas, and vice versa. Through their narratives, they exemplify the problems and pos-sibilities of shaping a self-identity through the processes of adaptation and storytelling. Hatch and McCool may be seen as warning examples, but they foremost illustrate how the construction of self-identity is conditioned by narration, and how any world in flux demands constant and cautious re-negotiation of the narrative and adaptation to new story versions to make self-identity, life patterns, and their contexts match.

LINKS BETWEEN SELF-NARRATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

Producers' and audiences' interest in adaptations has been fairly stable since the ad-vent of feature length films (MacCabe 5). Famously, *Gone with the Wind* (Mitchell, 1936; Victor Fleming, 1939) led people to discuss Scarlett O'Hara's true character and iden-tity, as David O. Selznick made the search for the perfect cinematic representation of her a vital part of the marketing strategy for the film (Leitch 144). Subsequently, tie-ins of the novel have projected portraits of Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable onto the text since the *Illustrated Motion Picture Edition* was published in 1939. However, it is only recently that the democratized media landscape, information access, and the intense marketing of adaptations as adaptations has made conversations about adaptations a norm when people talk about fiction (cf. Hutcheon xxi–xxiii). This may also be related to a contemporary readiness to project narratives openly onto our own life narratives and self-images, with an awareness that fictional characters are representations of lived experiences and created with the purpose to affect us (Phelan 14).

Such integration of fictional characters with self-identity for the purpose of so-cialization is thematized in *Sopranos* (David Chase, 1999–2007), as Tony turns to *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) for counsel, and through identity theme parks in *Austenland* (Shannon Hale, 2007; Jerusha Hess, 2013) and *Westworld* (Michael Crichton, 1973; 2016), among others. They all amplify Dennis Cutchins' point that fictional characters become part of 'who we imagine ourselves to be' when we inte-grate them into our systems (77). Therefore, when a media adaptation challenges our perception of a character and story, we may feel that our judgement, values, and even our identities are under attack, because the way we look upon the world has been questioned. On such occasions, Cutchins admits, only his scholarly intellectualization works to restore the balance. Similarly, the Swedish novelist Klas Östergren says he chooses his characters carefully, since he will have to live with them inside his mind for a long period time. What they both highlight is that engagement in fiction may lead to an involuntary simulation of the everyday volatility of one's self-identity, and the experience of a state of liminality similar to that which, according to Stacey Peebles, defines adaptations (2).

Raw, in turn, emphasizes the transformative possibilities of such experiences (97), and advocates that we enter these simulation and identification games with a child's playful curiosity, because 'as we play, we learn how to adapt ourselves to new situations' (92). However, with all adult responsibilities in mind, this is an easy task. As adults, we often have to manage balance costs and benefits instinctively, with a long-term perspective in mind. We thus make use of the tools we have developed to navigate, making slight adjustments of our course, as we move between work place, home, and other habitual spaces. Still, play seems to be a necessary feature for adaptive success and for a full appreciation of adaptations alike.

Children, on the other hand, have in general not developed the adult need to consciously control their identity positions (Berg). To adults, children often represent the capacity to cross from one reality and truth to another, seemingly unaffected by the world they have left, knowing it will still be there, to return to, when they are done (Warner 54–55; Boyd 588). At best, they play and create the worlds they inhabit in acts of becoming. As they make use of what they perceive, and what they can apply from the worlds they have visited before, they change character in manners that are less conventional in an adult context. To the romanticizing eye, children thus appear to be simultaneously in total command and open to impulses and influence from their environment. In worlds that demand constant renegotiations of narrative truths to make self-identity, life patterns, and their surroundings agree; they become balloon masters, carrying at all times a set of bubbles that they can mix and match, merge and enter, happy to cross-contaminate and expand each balloon into new shapes with new possibilities, in harmony with the expectations of others at play.

When fiction is thus used to make sense of oneself and the world, the dual or multiple centres of focus that both media and social adaptations offer may activate thoughts about border crossing, similarities, and differences. Especially in times when 'identity is an attitude taken toward a constant state of flux' (Lampinen et al. 245), people tend to need these alternating centres of gravity for the self and truth, rather than one preordained singular (Dennett). Thus, media adaptations' capacity to invite cognitive oscillations between different versions of what is both the same and different (Hutcheon xv) makes them intensely didactic. They seem to trigger a never-ending desire in audiences and commentators to consider concepts like originality, sources, identity, fidelity, and their relation to modification and change. In Suzanne Diamond's words, engagement in a novel-to-film adaptation 'offers a rich metaphorical corollary to the processes . . . usually involved in remembering and negotiating "who we are"' (102). Instead of being threatened, as we wonder about the different versions of characters' personalities, our resourceful minds may begin to unveil hitherto unseen possibilities regarding our own identities, through the interplay between texts, experiences, and imagination. Therefore, when Rosi Braidotti describes nomadic identity formation as 'creative repetitions, i.e. retelling, reconfiguring and revisiting the concept from different angles', her words might just as well address media adaptations and their effects on our minds (2010: 412).

The consequence is an ontological erosion of the borders between reality and fiction, similar to that of children's play or Jean Baudrillard's description of how we sometimes exchange our relation to reality for something else, so immersive that we may

experience the real world as a fictionalization (1995). Other examples of how the distinctions between fiction and narratives about the empirical world are blurred can be found in so-called nonfiction novels, where stories of factual events or characters are told in fiction form and style, or in fiction films adapted from nonfiction stories, like *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1992) and *The Big Short* (Adam McKay, 2015), which make use of representations of real or as-if-real documentaries as important elements in the stories. The technique also occurs in McCabe's *Winterwood*, where quotes from the protagonist's articles and documentary about contemporary Ireland create a bridge between the social reality and fiction, and, in *The Holy City*, when the narrating character connects to the readers by sharing fictional references and medialized characterizations of pop-culture icons.

When narratives thus merge various modes of consciousness and elements from disparate worlds, audiences are asked to adapt and immerse. On such instances, and in the social world, the suspension and activation of disbelief usually work actively in tandem to create a balance and a productive cognitive flow between the real and the fictive, due to the natural urge both to believe and to distrust what fiction communicates. However, if this equilibrium is not maintained, readers and spectators may get so mentally engaged in narratives and characters that their emotions and imaginations transgress the borders to the fictional world and they reach full descent (Zunshine 108).

Adaptations take a step further, since their characters and stories are migratory artefacts and beings, with eventually rhizomatic identities, which are affected by past representations, media landscapes, changing genre and media conventions, and their almost social interaction with audience expectations and perceptions. The result might be likened to expansions of the self, and to fully appreciate adaptation characters there is thus a 'need to impose coherence on disparate experiences, and . . . to rewrite the past in accordance with present conditions' (Raw 98). Yet, in worst-case scenarios, the characters may seem to lose identity, either by detachment from the past, or failure to change with the demands of the new narrative environment, and audience may suffer from confusion due to an uncontrolled oscillation between various versions of an adapted character.

Regardless of this sometimes enchanting danger, the benefits of using fiction for didactic purposes are overwhelming, not least as simulation arenas to practise ethical and strategic thinking, emotional response, making judgements and choices (Vermeule). Together, these capacities amount to the ability to adapt and to 'absorb an unfamiliar experience into our personal world' (Iser 293). In this both bi-directional and double-edged engagement, human imagination is an essential element, as we 'make sense of fictional characters by investing them with an inexhaustible repertoire of states of mind', which may also breed a suspicion that even they may 'harbour some secrets' (Zunshine 20). Thus, the cognitive process of coming to terms with a fictional character clearly resembles our own social process of self-making in a world riddled with uncertainties and opportunities. Again, we are reminded that the understanding of the fictive through previous experiences of reality goes hand in hand with our comprehension of reality through fiction. This is what makes fiction life-like and social life so much like fiction.

In this context, it is worthwhile to remember that adaptation entails an evolutionary ambition for balance or harmony, since the term involves 'that the structure of an organism is a function of its environment' (MacCabe 3). Like so many before him, Colin MacCabe notes that this fundamental definition has bearing regardless of whether social, media, or biological adaptations are concerned. In the hypothetical case where the environment remains constant, there is no notable need for a character, story, or person to adjust. Conversely, dramatic external changes forces organisms to adapt, or to fade away. Everyday life may entail degrees of both phenomena, but in Bruner's words, 'trouble is what impels us to refashion Self' (1996: 158), and it with this line of reasoning as a backdrop that I ask what the narratives of McCabe's characters have to add about the relevance of media adaptations in the social world.

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITIES IN *WINTERWOOD* AND *THE HOLY CITY*

In McCabe's novel *The Holy City*, the retired Christopher McCool tries make a coherent narrative of the fragmented memories of his life, from his room in what he calls 'The Happy Club'. In *Winterwood*, Redmond Hatch tells his story of broken marriages and changing careers in the media sector. Like McCool he constantly returns to disturbing childhood incidents in his recollections. Divorced, abandoned, jobless, and surrounded by 'identikit houses' and 'transatlantic accents', they both realize that changing times have made them migrants, at risk of 'hurtling . . . towards some amorphous, haphazard future' (*Winterwood* 52), or of becoming 'impotent witnesses, to a world now fast fading, if not already gone' (*Holy City* 16). At the onset, as fictional beings Hatch and McCool thus resemble characters in a novel long since forgotten, waiting to be picked up for an adaptation so that they may become relevant again. As their narrations and quests for tangible self-images proceed, they deliberately appropriate other fictional characters to fit their own personalities and in tandem adapt themselves to suit those prototypes. Still, they keep yearning for a stable and original identity that will allow them to belong to a surrounding socio-cultural context. The mere title of *The Holy City* signals this 'idealisation of union and purity [… and …] ideals of undiluted origins and an undivided self' (Heinz and Schmitt 89), or, as it is expressed in *Winterwood*, at least 'one as close to *complete* as any person could dream of' (153).

However, such simplification of origin as a concept by necessity demands a neglect of complicating elements and subtexts. In the case of media adaptations, the belief in original wholes demands that source texts and characters are regarded as identifiable unities with permanent qualities that can be returned to, or even transferred and re-integrated, as a constant whole or identity, in a new environment. Indeed, film adapters may sometimes strive more to protect and represent a source novel than to realize the screen idea and film, as they enshrine the significance of the story, entombing the characters rather than letting them be affected, adapt, and survive.

The notion of adaptation through an absolute return thus harbours an illusion that identity can be defined, broken, and healed, and thus that a mythical unity of past, present, and future can be completely restored if the right adaptive choices are made, when in fact 'only that which has no history is definable' in a world of change (Nietzsche 80). Once the book is opened, the film starts to roll, or life and the adaptation process begin in the reader's mind, the myth of the incorruptible source-text is transformed

into time and instability. McCool's and Hatch's shared dream of a fixed, given or in-vented, identity thus illustrates the 'impossible exchange' between thought and reality (Baudrillard, 2001: 3), between the time span and the demands for constancy that adap-tations are often subjected to.

Because a person's self-identity is conditioned by the fluidity of time, people, places, and the relationships between them, identities—our own, characters', or stories'—cannot be verified or discovered, but must be invented (Bauman, 2004: 15). For McCool, but also Hatch, the most tangible offer is a set of stereotype repetitions (Heinz and Schmitt 77). Since the characters are offered no complete solutions by the reactive returns to their own past identities, they instead choose to seek to adapt, appropriate, and project the remediated ideals from films, television, and magazines onto their own identities, as part of their socialization projects. Their alternative logic posits that iden-tity, when replaced with identifications in 'a never-ending, always incomplete, unfin-ished and open-ended activity' (Bauman, 2001: 152), will satisfy both their need for originality and for a return to an origin. For Hatch and McCool, the fusion of fiction and reality is the ideal condition, since it also allows them to relinquish 'all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity', as Braidotti says about the nomad (2011: 57), while they are still anchored in a 'common fund' of narratives, to speak with Bruner (2002: 16).

Harbouring romanticized notions of a migrant's progress, Hatch's and McCool's mu-tual ambition is to become something outside the texts of their selves, always developing through their narration, beyond what has already been written. In a manner, they seek refuge in nomadic identities, observing and tracing the trodden paths, without fixed points or connections for beginnings, hinges, or ends. The effect this has on them is an exhausting cognitive dissonance, as their lives become nothing but text, without existing referents on the outside, as if influenced by Jacques Derrida's postulation 'il n'y a pas de hors-text' (158).

However, the kind of unpredictability that McCabe's characters are subjected to typically 'breeds anxiety and fear' and subsequently reinforces the yearning for security through identity (Bauman, 2001: 141), 'to arrest or slow down the flow, to solidify the fluid, to give form to the formless' (Bauman, 2000: 82). Thus, suffering from severe mental fluctuations, Hatch and McCool try to navigate through the contradictions that the cost-benefit process of adaptation entails, and try to make themselves 'relevant or easily comprehensible . . . via the processes of proximation and updating', as Julie Sanders writes about film adaptions (19). Their greatest problem is of course to master the adaptive way of thinking and to maintain a stable relationship to both self and en-vironment. In the end, McCabe's protagonists seem to dissolve, and so their stories sug-gest that the greatest peril that looms over all forms of adaptations is the loss of identity, given that the crystallization of the future, present, and past, of everyday life, cultural conditions, and available options are not properly managed.

McCabe's novels thus ask what kinds of truths can be found when identities and contexts are adapted and appropriated to include and exclude anything at will. They also provoke the question whether adaptation, without losing any sense of a stable self-identity and the connection with the person one has been and its context, is at all possible, or even desirable. The alternative they propose is a break with the past and a transition to 'cleaner, more clinical perhaps, but distinctly pronouncing aggressively

individual times' (*Holy City* 124). Above all, they illustrate how engagement in media adaptations assists and affects us through cognitive transfers, in a world where negotiations between 'ourselves and the communities we inhabit' (Raw 99), between the idea of a fixed identity and the instinct to adapt, are ever present.

McCOOL'S FASHIONABLE IDENTIFICATIONS

Conscious adaptations always entail a return to what has been, either to ensure a future connection, to guarantee that all undesired elements will be left behind, or simply to take a stance for an inspired leap. In *The Holy City,* the optimism of a progressive and liberal approach to adaptation is summarized by Christopher McCool's exclamation that each new era is a 'great permissive age of opportunity' (124), in line with the belief that the identity a person chooses is 'eminently negotiable and revocable' through perception and narration, as described by Zygmunt Bauman (2004: 11).

Arguing for the protection of a 'sovereign, autonomous, self-contained ego formation . . . against both its own passions and the invasions of others' (10), McCool first presents himself as 'C.J Pops, International Celeb', 'retired businessman', 'tall and handsome' (*Holy City* 2), and a 'dutiful, respectful, and ever-appreciative' husband to a beautiful woman (1), in a tirade of inflated, self-narrating idealizations of what it is to be a man, which he has picked up from various media. McCool's self-image is that he is 'every inch the gentleman', a 'mr Wonderful' (139), and a true hunk in accord with the mediated ideals adopted from magazines and films: 'in the smartest of neat blue blazers with brightly polished brass buttons complete with white loafers and razor-creased grey slacks, a Peter Stuyvesant King Size cigarette (the international passport to smoking pleasure!) louchely dawdling' between his lips (1). This creative act renders him the 'conviction of autonomy' (1) which most narrations of self-identity and adaptations are more or less designed to achieve, although there is no way he can hide his self-identity is based on other stories. Like some media adaptations he rather appears as a superficial pastiche.

Moreover, because he creates a new identity through appropriation of already re-mediated stereotypes, he re-invents, rather than invents that self-image. This may challenge his 'status as a primary creative force', in Raw's words about adapting filmmakers (96). Yet, it is only through such fluid fictionalization of identity that McCool can locate a subject position that allows him to adapt to the surrounding fragmented and ambiguous cultural landscape, so that his 'good fortune and well-being continue apace' (*Holy City* 1) to completion. In particular, Roger Moore carries relevance for McCool, 'cool, suave' with a sophisticated intelligence as Bond, and in the role of Simon Templar, The Saint, a 'self styled "jet-setting, country club" schmootzer' (2) and 'cool globetrotting bachelor' (105).

When McCool appropriates these attributes, and adapts his own persona to fit them as much as possible, he also adopts the adapter's liminality and creativity. In a further step towards an involuntary abstraction, he implements a simulacric identity, which only exists in a narrative shape, the way Moore seems to be inseparable from The Saint and Bond. McCool's appropriation of a set of qualities through an act of self-narration is supposed to render him an air of an exemplary global nomad: in control and transgressing borders of geography, class, law, style, and culture, with an identity deceptively

'made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity', to quote Braidotti (2011: 22). Her words would form a devastating verdict if they were found in a review, but if a balance is maintained between roots, coherence, progress, and a desire to explore, the nomadic qualities are productive, as if designed for adaptations. On the other hand, a desire to escape any imposed conventions or prototypes may tip the balance. In McCool's case, his exaggerated fear of becoming a repetition of unsophisticated Irish stereotypes and his accompanying ambition to connect make him subscribe to other pre-ordained identities. Due to his conflicting and unsettling ambitions, the effect is a nostalgic return to past representations of novelty, the inherent paradox of all adaptations.

Under such conditions, a character may become an inconsequential tourist in life, unless the re-invented or adapted persona is equipped with a grounding component (Bauman, 1996), a destiny shared by many characters who have migrated from one story version to another. So, in an effort to connect his international hero-self to the locally situated husband/father, McCool employs the myth of the Irish Protestant and his presumed father, Dr Thornton, 'a sophisticated gentleman […] of the noblest, verifiable Protestant stock' (*Holy City* 2). The allusion to Roger Moore's perceived qualities both links his adopted style to his father, as a descendant, and identifies McCool as a new breed. Aware that he is nevertheless neither a true cosmopolitan, nor an ideal protestant, but a 'bastard' half-breed (80), as a result of his mother's extramarital affair, he thus creatively triangulates Bond and the protestant father figure to conjure a new narrative identity: 'Christopher Thornton, our own Protestant kind' (77). With an amalgamation self-identity, like a character in a mash-up adaptation, he finds that he is 'every bit as competent a yokel as any of them' (15).

Still, he remains an isolated vagabond, because 'neither the New Man nor the New Lad truly exists outside its media invention' (Edwards 4), and it is apparent that McCool fails to adhere to Murray Smith's warning not to mistake the 'representation for its referents' (80). Hence, his attempts to conjure a united self-image through narration results in what Braidotti calls the 'molecularisation of the self' (2011: 36), because there is no hope for him to reach the moment 'when the self is emptied out, dissolving into rawer and more elementary sensations . . . heightened levels of awareness and receptivity' (Braidotti, 2010: 415) until the re-union is completed in his mind.

It is indeed the impossible exchange between the real and the imaginary that is attempted. However, as Braidotti notes, 'given that identifications constitute an inner scaffolding that supports one's sense of identity, shifting our imaginary identifications is not as simple as casting away a used garment' (2010: 411). McCool may adhere to Erik H. Erikson's (1980) explanation of identification as simulation and the practice of gradually adapting and internalizing specific traits into what can be recognized as a person of one's own. He also selects and subsequently investigates various characters' personalities, on which a self can be modelled and developed, and thus challenges 'self-appointed custodians of morality' (124) who strive to preserve and return to origins.

All the same, McCool fails because he never abandons the idea of the constancy of essence. Eventually, the return of the uncanny is summoned by the contradictions, the simplifying selection of facts and causal connections, and cannot be held back by any

imagination. As it turns out, McCool's entire meandering narrative is a web of adapted truths, and McCool's narrative is a creation of his mind to shield his mediated identity, in the absence of a true one, as he has tried to be neither an original, nor an adaptation and yet both at the same time. The Happy Club that he resides in is nothing but a mental institution from which his narration is projected, and his final narrative truth is the context he has tried to avoid: a narrative out of context, without direction, coordination of thoughts, or priorities, circumscribed by a set of padded walls. The parallel to film adaptations is obvious: regardless of whether they construct an aura of pure originality or of absolute fidelity, the theatre becomes a cell, which only the ignorant spectator can consider a home adapted to suit reality. If, on the other hand, there are too many stakeholders with disparate ambitions, the adaptation falls apart.

REDMOND HATCH'S HAUNTED RE-INVENTIONS IN *WINTERWOOD*

In *Winterwood*, Redmond Hatch is under the impression that the world is 'almost out of control: the carnage on the roads continues as though some inconsequential, diverting carnival', and 'old-timers haunt the fringes of the city, afraid to penetrate its boundaries' (51). His concerns illustrate the human reluctance to external changes and also to adaption itself, stability being the preferable state, due to the natural fear of moving in the wrong direction. Getting too immersed in attempts to adapt to a changing environment, which also relates to novel-film adaptations, leads to a continual risk of taking the wrong turn, and thus of increasing the rifts between former self-identities and narratives on the one hand, and the world on the other, but also between the need for community and to have an individual place to belong to. Seeking something to 'regulate [his] life – dispel this pervasive, all-consuming uncertainty' (*Winterwood* 58), Hatch initial comfort lies in the ironic sense of belonging to a whole community that has migrated mentally through a gradual process of adaptations. 'If I had become debilitatingly civilized and grown apart from my people and background, then at least I wasn't alone', he thus ponders (15).

Thus, as if all the instabilities are caused by a departure from an origin that people should have been faithful to, the quest seems to be for an enduring normative style or a genre. As he realizes, the performative aspects of adaptations, to some extent, always involve compromising appropriations and performances of both pre-existing prototypes and imagined opportunities. Hatch's first instinct is to return to a point where his imagination positions a sense of stability and authenticity, essence, and relevance. He turns to a mythical sanctuary, to which the title *Winterwood* refers, and the memories of his imaginary visits there, together with his daughter during her childhood. The recollections, well fashioned to suit his purposes, propose a more perceptible sense of unity for him, than any convention-bound institution may do, as long as he manages to censor his darker past. Only in Winterwood, he first assumes, can he come to terms with the conflicting values of individuality and belonging, as is the common theme in the Bildungsroman genre (Moretti 27), Joseph Campbell's accounts of the monomyth (1949), and many media adaptation debates.

However, Hatch soon realizes that his imagined origin stories are too detached from the conventions of the social world, and like mythical characters they may be 'hospitable, certainly, but never, under any circumstances, to be trusted' (*Winterwood* 43),

especially for someone who desires the stability of a self-narrative that can be performed in harmony with a surrounding social culture. In this context, he observes that a storytelling man of wisdom can function as an anchoring archive of narratives in times of change, to 'make sure we don't lose our way' (16), as if identity, or the source-text to identity, can be transposed into audiences' minds, or into film characters in the adaptation process.

Accordingly, in his journalist role, Hatch begins to perform a series of remediating acts as he obsessively interviews and writes articles about his home-town old-timer and local story teller, Ned Strange, in search of a truth that can replace his own past. He thus lends his voice to the authentic character, in a process of exploring his own relationship to, and position in, the culture that Strange supposedly represents. Like McCool, he seeks a springboard for a leap to become someone different and at the same time someone similar to the person he was before.

This both Freudian and Derridean approach to adaptation, with the estranged, or different, as a defining part of the self-identity, is further highlighted by Strange's name, and is something that Hatch must manage at several levels. Besides identifying with Strange, the idealized self-identity that he has adopted from glossy magazines depends on his capacity to be a successful entrepreneur and productive provider, as well as a sensitive, caring husband. As indicated before, merging two self-identities involves the risk of suffering from liminality and confusion. To safely reinforce his same-but-different persona throughout his narration, Hatch therefore recurrently links his own ability as a father figure to his work identity. 'If you were to ask any of my workmates who of us all is the most devoted father, I guarantee you this, they would seriously consider me', he assures the reader (196). Like McCool, he thus strives to control the narrated image of himself, and to create a distance from traditional Irish identities, especially the stereotypical bully that his father was, he who beat the mother to death (127). Hence, Hatch's new persona defines him as someone distinct from the originals he wants to avoid, yet still akin to sustaining traditions, while he also introduces new elements to his personality to make him even more appropriate for the changing world, the way he sees it, unaware of the acts of violence he performs against his self-identity.

In films and social life, as Hatch's and McCool's violent histories show, the efforts to shape someone else by brute force rarely leads to anything but reduction and restrained potentials. Worse still is that the inability to adapt with respect to anything else but one's own will generally leads to serial variations of these violent acts. The repression of the past is such an act of violence, and Hatch's awareness gradually reminds him of his and Strange's sinister past lives, as both abused and abusers of other's identities and bodies. When what has been hidden and made strange comes to the surface, it tends to grow into a defining element. In the flow of narration, Hatch cannot ward off the parts of his self which he has repressed. In a haunting return, Strange's voice comes to life in his head: 'You make up stories. . . . You make up stories the same as me' (107), suggesting that his self-construction is but a hollow narrative, as an effect of hiding behind an appropriate surface. To Strange, this is to 'take refuge behind a close-knit tribe so nobody can ever get blamed' (107) or identified. Still, confronted by the knowing audience, here in the shape of Strange's ghost, the appropriation and adoption of pre-fabricated identities offer no protection from responsibility or from the possible lack of individual

meaning. Likewise, neither the adapted character nor its source can be concealed from the audience. Sensing the lack of features that he needs in order to grasp his own self, Hatch also loses the perspectives that he needs to be an observer and adapter of reality and of his past. Like a representation of his self-identity, that ultimate adaptation, his articles become 'hopelessly digressive and badly written' (28).

As stated at the beginning of this essay, for an adapting character the logical consequence to severe crisis is either to adapt or escape, or to do both: disappear, transform, and re-emerge in a developed form. So, to avoid awakening memories and to escape justice from killing his daughter, Hatch re-invents himself and takes on, like one of McCool's costumes, a rather developed identity. Under a new name, Domenic Tiernan, TV producer, he evolves from the New Man and makes adjustment towards an existence as a New Lad, with a young American wife, which re-establishes his status as a prosperous and progressive subject. 'It's not every man can boast of a woman as desirable as Casey Breslin selecting them over others', he states (159). Confident enough in his new suit, he thrives by sharing her 'propensity for high achievement', 'learning from Casey every single day' (162), borrowing not the status of past sources, but from a target source, which he imagines himself able to become and eventually surpass, like an embodiment of the screen-idea of a script, with Ian McDonald's analogous term. Prosperous adaptation, he seems to suggest, also demands the adaptation of qualities from subjects who already flourish in their environments.

In spite of his turbulent history, like any optimistic film adapter, Hatch still believes in orderly adaptation and a stable progression without flux or disturbing interruptions. So, when his second wife leaves him, he simply re-writes his story once more and asserts that any talk of marital bliss is 'all lies' (198). Rather, he reasons that the adjustment to the superficial elements of the new age has created a narrational distance from the past and prevented him from solidifying his self-identity. However, the career that he has built, documenting and re-constructing the past through the filter of another medium, turning his articles into a TV documentary, has prepared him for a final identity transformation. In an ironic and problematizing twist, the solution for peace, he concludes, is to 'don the mask of the Paddy', as Declan Kiberd describes the Irish adaptive tradition (29), and to let the original, the ghost of Ned Strange, possess his entire body and character. This time the narrative identity appropriates him, and, in the end, all there is of truth, of narration, and of identity is the anonymity that reality, fiction, and adaptation may lend us.

LESSONS LEARNED

Adaptation, in terms of personal identities and stories, novels, and films, is a perilous but unavoidable hermeneutic game, in which the particularities must always be checked to match the totalities, Patrick McCabe seems to tell us. In a complex system, this is challenging enough, but processes of adaptation are conditioned by instabilities, change, and uncertainties as well. This renders adaptations their social dimensions. Fiction characters must interact with their new environments and establish new self-identities if they migrate from one version of a story to another. In the social world, we similarly act in roles, for adults are shaped in line with social conventions, while children more often act on impulse to learn what each situation might allow. Eventually,

the world may seem to be a place of adults enacting their pre-fabricated selves, with the benefit that the world appears to be a place of order where all play their parts. As audience members of fiction narratives that are concerned with adaptation in one way or another, we are socialized and learn to allow adaptations an appropriate freedom, but we also delimit adaptations' possibilities through judgement for the sake of own gradual development. If an adaptation is too radical, McCabe's characters inform us, it fails to connect with its mental and physical environment. Still, as Hatch and McCool illustrate, the social dimensions of adaptation also entail that fiction characters, and we ourselves, must be creatively re-invented again and again to maintain the balance between individuality and community, between self-identity and belonging.

In McCabe's world, adaptation thus unfolds as a cost-benefit game, based on the balance between various needs and fears. These are triangulated with previous actions, both physical and self-narrational; inferences, from mediations of conventions and from observations of the world; and speculations about short and long term developments, all of which are mentally re-configured in the process. The core need in Hatch's and McCool's worlds is to find a sense of unity to direct and give meaning. Their illusion of a pure and stable unity is two-fold, since they seek their own illusive essence, which can be anchored in and render them the experience of community. In effect, they seek novelty, uniqueness, and freedom all at once, to avoid the featureless, while they yearn to be rooted, connected, and to belong, concerns that are in constant play as novels are adapted for the screen.

Both when we encounter media adaptations and our selves, McCabe's stories indicate, we need the simplicity of the mythological origin, or source, as a backdrop to make the features of the version and the development visible, before we can begin to unfurl the possibilities that lie ahead. Thus, media adaptations remind us that all conscious forms of adaptations are conditioned by the need to return to past narratives. When we review and compare versions of a story or a character, we simultaneously practise the split vision that we need to monitor ourselves and our own behaviours. As we so do, we commonly ask which version of ourselves is best fit to prosper in harmony with the environment and the changing world we live in. In this sense, narratives related to adaptations teach us that adaptation is by definition normative, to some extent.

In this context, McCabe's characters demonstrate the necessity to draw inferences from sources external to the perceived self-identity in the process of adaptation, as they turn to mediated texts and show how fictionalized narratives form useful explanatory frames of reference. Adapting and evolving characters indeed exemplify the particularities of what it means to migrate from one world to another. Thus, when different versions are compared, each media adaptation seems to work as a magnifying glass for stills from the everyday experience of continual social and mental adaptation in a world of flux. However, as McCabe's protagonists suggest, the instabilities also seem to hold epistemological issues to ransom, as the borders between fiction, narratives, and realities evaporate. And so, like Hatch and McCool, we slide, negotiate meanings, and adapt, and must eventually ask what can be known or true about identities and the world if we do not even accept them as true or real.

The greatest peril of adaptation is indeed that we might be caught in a liminal loop of contentless narrativization, where nothing remains of any self-identity and meaning

but fiction. It is thus easy to identify with McCabe's heroes when they violently simplify their personalities, either by identifying themselves as tangible stereotypes or by turning themselves into fluid abstractions in their acts of narration. Either way they violate their past and their possibilities, because adaptations make it seem so easy to be both instead of neither.

As McCool and Hatch invite their narrative imaginations to their meandering, autobiographical accounts and senses of self-identity, they become serial adaptations themselves, nomadic migrants of sorts, with memories of the past which they cannot erase. We can bear in mind that most adapted characters have migrated many times between perceptibly complete worlds: a novel, five or six thorough screenplay versions, a film, and perhaps even beyond, to a game, and a graphic novel, yet they still keep all those past versions of themselves within themselves, as remembered beings who can come to life again. Each time they migrate they adapt their selves, but they also appropriate the worlds they enter, while those worlds in turn appropriate them and adapt to some extent, with the effect that both bubbles expand.

So, if we regard adapted characters empathetically as migrant fictional beings with a past, as McCabe's characters beg us to do, we may understand more clearly their personal processes of adaptation to become what they appear to be, that is, who they have become in order to be relevant again in the new setting. We may also recognize why they have migrated and what they have gone through in the process. We may even ask not just what they left behind, but what they still carry inside and hold back, how they relate to their former selves, and who they want to be in their new lives, if they were given all the opportunities available. We may even realize in what ways they contribute to their new habitats. In the end, the adaptations might incite us to ask ourselves all those questions.

For better and worse, adaptations are thus subversive and oppositional, since they impose new inferences on us and affect the 'value-system and hierarchies' they are a part of, as Julie Sanders argues (9). The way to re-establish harmony escapes and haunts Hatch and McCool, although their narratives clearly tell them that the essence of adaptation lies in the crystallisation of the experiences of now, past, and future. Keeping these perspectives separate, Hatch and McCool fail to engage a balanced exchange between past, present, and future, between movement and solidity, acceptance and progress. But for the adapting character, there is no such thing as outside-the text. On the contrary, 'becoming has to do with emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the "outside"', Braidotti explains (2010: 416). As Linda Hutcheon argues about media adaptations, 'simultaneity, not priority, reigns' (xxiv), because self-identity and truth cannot be based on subjective selections. Only then can the potential of fiction adaptations to function as guiding therapeutic metaphors be fulfilled.

While media adaptations are external to ourselves, we can regard them both as objects and processes. It is, however, rare that we find time in social life, except when we enjoy fiction adaptations, to reflect upon our own simultaneous dimensions of being and becoming, or from another perspective our romantic longing for the adaptations we have performed, we want to be, and for the pleasure of being in the process. From McCabe's perspective, we still need to be stable to handle adaptations, because the environment is itself adapting and affecting a character's constitution, while every character

has unforeseeable effects on their environments, in a never-ending bi-directional process. If we engage, adapting and adapted characters have a lot to teach us, whether our goal is a somewhat happy life, to uncover timeless truths, or to adapt a popular novel for the screen.

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Characters as Fictional Migrants: Atonement, Adaptation and the Screenplay Process

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Characters as fictional migrants: *Atonement,* adaptation and the screenplay process

ABSTRACT

The migration metaphor has been widely used in connection with media adaptions, but the metaphor has remained an abstract figure of speech. Yet, to understand characters as migrants who go through journeys of acculturation when they are adapted for the screen may enhance understanding of both the characters' potential and problems that may arise during the development process. This article proposes that the development of characters and their processes – as fictional beings – can be understood through the use of models that describe real migrants' adaptation processes. Using Christopher Hampton's screenplay drafts for the film Atonement *(2001), it outlines how such migratory journeys go hand in hand with screenwriters' problem-solving processes. The article thus develops the idea that migrating characters, in their capacity as fictional beings and the thematic issues that they represent, both adapt to and appropriate their new media environments; simultaneously, they are appropriated by new creative forces and by the conventions of those new media environments, who in turn must adapt to the characters in this process of bi-directional acculturation.*

INTRODUCTION

Adaptations are often regarded as symptoms or as parts of a narrative evolutionary system. Recently, adaptation theorists like Thomas Leitch (2013) and Linda Hutcheon (2006) have also drawn attention to the parallels between media adaptations, human development and the evolutionary politics of the social world. Umberto Eco (2005) and many others have used the migration metaphor before, but it has remained a vague figure of speech. Using *Atonement* as an illustrative example, this article aims to advance the understanding of adapted characters as migrants. When an adapted screenplay is developed, characters go through distinct transformative phases that I argue can be metaphorically associated with the process of acculturation that sociologists have observed among migrants. This development, I propose, works in tandem with the screenwriter's problem-solving procedures. An awareness of the particularities of the stages that adaptation characters go through as migrants may therefore facilitate screenwriters' work as adaptors, the analyses of the screenplay progressions and characters and the communication between different stakeholders when a screenplay is under development.

With a related approach, Gary R. Bortolotti and Hutcheon suggest the use of dendrograms for tracking the development of a story and its characters, thus equating stories and characters with biological organisms, who are driven by the force of evolution (2007: 453). Like dendrograms, a migratory stance, by which adapted characters are regarded to migrate, metaphorically, from one media world to another, enables the simultaneous study of adaptation as processes and as objects, if characters are regarded as fictional beings who act with intention, as Jens Eder submits they should be for analytical purposes (2010: 17). The fact that evolution has no conscious agenda however highlights a pivotal distinction between the two approaches. Unlike biologically evolving organisms and stories, a fictional being can be imagined to have a certain amount of agency within the fictional world to form its self-identity.

The discussion about the agency of artefacts was revitalized by William J. T. Mitchell's question what pictures and other narrative objects want, as if they had inner lives (2005), and Pier Paolo Pasolini's proposal that a screenplay is a 'structure that wants to be another structure' (1988: 187). Regarding this as a productive approach for adaptation studies, Thomas Leith still points out the impossibility for a novel, a screenplay or a film to possess actual agency or to want anything (2017). As Ian Macdonald observes the actual agency, ambition and desire for the evolutionary development of characters and stories primarily lie in the hands of the creative teams who are invested in the screen idea while crafting a screenplay and film (2013). Yet, if characters are regarded as fictional beings, our human ability to be immersed in narrative fiction facilitates an approach to adaptations through mental simulations of the fictional beings' migratory experiences. This may be a rewarding approach both for those who study adaptation and creative processes and for screenwriters who struggle to handle characters' journeys through the adaptation process.

Many writers have indeed testified how characters seem to take control of their own development and life stories during the creative process. After scribbling down a scene with a young woman in focus, which later developed into his novel *Atonement* (2001), Ian McEwan thus pondered 'I didn't know who she was, I didn't. […] I didn't know where it was going. […] Who is Robbie? […] Why is this? Why have I written this?' (2002: n.pag.), as if the characters were real people with their own agendas. Numerous screenwriters have also

despaired, in the course of their work with an adaptation, because the characters have seemed to refuse to adapt or lost their self-identities in their gradual transformation, often due to the pressure from the various forces that affect them in the process. However, as migrants, most characters and screenwriters adapt, and eventually countless fictional beings thus end up with a new sense of self-identity, in harmony with both their past and their new environments.

Yet, the pressure to adapt is not one-sided. As Bortolotti and Hutcheon maintain 'in a cultural context, adaptations influence culture and culture influences the nature of adaptations' (2007: 453), because the inhabited worlds and the story characters constitute each other's conditioning environment. Hence, when a character migrates from a novel with its narrative conventions to the cinematic story world, the latter also changes to a certain degree, as an effect of the new character's presence. This harmony is a matter of quality, to speak with Robert Pirsig (1974: 225), and the mutual relationship means that the balance between them is disharmonious if only one has to adapt to the other.

Thus, the characters' migratory development and the screenwriter's problem-solving process go hand in hand, and an awareness of the characters as migrants may facilitate a screenwriter's adaptation journey. This invites an undesired complexity, since protagonists are often considered to go through a change during the progression of a story, just as they go through transformations between two versions of a story. To manage these parallel progressions, we may consider how characters, as fictional beings, fulfil their thematic function. Then, their progression through a narrative and the adaptation process can both be linked to the characters' representation of their thematized self-identities.

The characters' transformative processes are, however, often hard to observe when novels are adapted to screenplays and films. The stream of drafts and versions of a screenplay in the course of a film project can be overwhelming. On the other hand, it is all too rare to find even a limited but still fruitful number of well-defined, complete screenplay drafts readily available for research. The adaptation of *Atonement* (McEwan 2001) is such an instance, since the six complete screenplay drafts that Hampton wrote between 2003 and 2006 are held at the Harry Ransom Centre, with McEwan's annotations, and a seventh version was published after the film was released in 2007.

THE ADAPTATION OF *ATONEMENT*

The history of the *Atonement* adaptation is far from unique. McEwan's novel *Atonement* was an audience success, shortlisted for the Man Booker and the Whitbread prizes 2001, and it won the National Book Critics' Circle award, 2002. With this as a backdrop, Hampton produced a first complete draft in collaboration with McEwan and the director Richard Eyre. After two more drafts, there was a change of director; the producers wanted to make the film a vehicle for the new director Joe Wright and other young talents, such as Keira Knightley, James McAvoy and Soarsie Ronan (Anon. 2010). Wright admitted that he liked the existing script, but he still wanted to begin from scratch and follow the novel's narrative style and structure. He also introduced a shift as regards the choice of protagonists. As Hampton puts it, 'we needed to admit to ourselves that their [Robbie's and Cecilia's] relationship was the center of the film' (2007d: n.pag.).

Like the first drafts, the new ones were commented on by McEwan, and until the shooting script was completed, Hampton had continual input from

Wright. All along, the development of Robbie and Cecilia's self-identities as adults was at the heart of the process, under pressure from the involved creative forces and from the conditions of the new narrative environment that they had entered. With the migration metaphor in mind, the development of a screenplay involves a mental negotiation across ontological borders, between the screenwriter and the characters, about who the latter may become, as they move from the narrative conventions of the novel to the format of the screenplay and are developed through the drafts. In the case of *Atonement*, the images of Knightley and McAvoy represented the screen ideas of who Robbie and Cecilia would become when they found a home in the cinematic world. Their migration was ultimately successful, and in 2008 the film was nominated for Oscars for best film and best-adapted screenplay and won a Golden Globe and a BAFTA award for best film, while the screenplay was nominated for both these awards.

Hampton and Wright's mutual ambitions to be faithful to the novel clashed with the view that many screenwriting manuals profess. As Jamie Sherry indicates, these books habitually neglect the distinct intricacies and potentials that characterize the enterprise of adapting a well-known novel (2016: 12). For example, Syd Field's often-repeated advice is that 'an adaptation must be viewed as an original screenplay. It only *starts* from the novel, book, play, article, or song. […] Nothing more' (2005: 205). There are two main reasons for this argument, which Wright regards as a false, 'received truth' (2007): first, screenwriting manuals conventionally nourish the dated polarization between verbal novels, which communicate the characters' and narrators' thoughts and emotions, and visual films that should only show actions. Second, there is a common desire for and the cult of creative originality, related to the idea that film is a unique medium. Yet, Field's words may perhaps be valid if a novel is of lesser quality. As regards *Atonement*, Wright opined that 'you only throw the book away if it's rubbish' (2007), and the novel's visual qualities made it possible for him to try 'to make an almost literal adaptation of the book' (2007). To further contradict both the screenwriting manuals and McEwan's qualms about the possibility of giving justice to *Atonement* on the screen due to its interiority, Wright expresses

> that literary people presume that literature and the written word has a monopoly over internal truth and I personally, as a dyslexic, don't agree with that. […] It's just another medium and I think anyone who thought the book was unadaptable was underestimating the power of film and the power of the medium.
>
> (Wright 2007: n.pag.)

PROBLEM SOLVERS AND MIGRANTS

As indicated, the unescapable rewriting of a screenplay demands negotiation, priorities, adaptation and creativity, as various problems arise along the way, especially regarding characters and themes. A contemporary screenwriting manual foregrounds a number of possible problems that may occur during the process, such as vagueness, predictability, irrelevance, inconsistency, indifference and passivity (Epps 2016: 54–55). While handling such issues, most screenwriters who adapt a novel intuitively go through the normal stages of problem-solving, akin to the phases that Michael D. Mumford et al. have

identified: problem definition, information gathering and organization, selection of concepts to combine and apply, idea generation, idea evaluation, implementation planning and evaluation (2012: 32). These steps may remind screenwriters of the hero's journey with its call for adventure and the hero's recognition of the problem in the first act; the exploration, sorting and organization of information during the road of trials, and the conceptualization of the problem shortly before the midpoint; the third act's ideas and insights that are needed to resolve the situation, before the fourth act's planning, final climactic implementation, confrontation with the consequences and a conclusive new stability.

Because the screenwriter's gradual problem solving means that the characters and the thematic content develop from one draft to another, the screenwriter's efforts are usually synchronized with the developmental arcs that the characters' migrations trigger. The parallels between problem-solving, character arcs and migratory processes are thus accentuated if models for migrants' adjustment or acculturation are considered, since these commonly present typical developmental arcs, which are similar to those of fictional characters. Many migratory models (cf. Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012; Ward et al. 2005) first describe a honeymoon phase, when the new setting is approached with naïve curiosity and little awareness of the need for personal change. Second, when problems arise, the migrant's self-esteem may be threatened, which may lead to hostility or withdrawal. Third, the migrant identifies and sorts out good and bad things about the new world, relates it to the former home culture and makes a first attempt to adjust. In the fourth stage, in sync, the migrant senses the possibility of fitting in. Yet, ambivalence and fear of not belonging anywhere, or deculturalization, often occurs as a reaction. Finally, a conclusive reorientation leads to a decisive effort to make a greater change, to confront core cultural and personal issues, so that the migrant's self-identity can be harmonized with the new community. At any stage, the migration process depends on the migrant's individual background and personality, as well as on the reception of the host culture, which progresses through a similar arc.

Obviously, these models of problem-solving and the schematic descriptions of migratory processes must not be over-generalized, since variations are commonplace, as is the need to return to a previous step in the process. Migrants' successful integration much depends on individual factors, the reasons behind the migration and the reception of the host culture. Another factor is 'the unique social, cultural, political, and historical circumstances of the migrant group and their relationship to the settlement society', as Ward et al. explain (2005: 213). These factors easily translate, as metaphors, to the adaptation process, as the reasons for a departure may vary also for fictional characters. Their migration may be due to the desire to survive, or to have a better life, but may also be a result of a drive to explore the world as tourists, to use Zygmunt Bauman's terminology, and for personal development (1996). Some characters end up as vagabonds wherever they land. It might thus be argued that the frequent adaptations of King Arthur and Sherlock Holmes, Emma, Modesty Blaise, Becky Sharp, Don Quixote, the serial re-boots of Spiderman and the entire mash-up trend exemplify various types of fictional migrants.

The migratory progression is also conditioned by the ideology of the host culture. Again, there are parallels between social and media theories. For example, Bourhis et al. define four political strategies *vis-à-vis* migrants that translate into different attitudes towards media adaptations (1997): a permissive

approach, which allows the character fidelity to the novelistic representation; a civic plan, which balances private freedom and civic duties and thus only demands some adaptation to media conventions from the character; an assimilation policy, which requires great changes to match conventions; and an ethnist ideology, allowing the regime to regulate personal values, which means that the character is totally appropriated. However, with relevance for both screenwriters and fictional beings, Bourhis et al. argue that the migratory process is most likely to succeed when the acculturation strategies of migrants and host cultures are harmonized, that is when neither the characters nor the media conventions are forcefully violated to fit the other one's purpose. For the characters in *Atonement* this state of balance is far from immediately established. Instead, they seem to go through the complete migratory cycle, just as Hampton had to struggle for several years to solve the problem of their migration.

Under the assumption that characters, in their capacity as fictional beings, are thus invested with an imaginary agency, I now turn to *Atonement*'s characters, Robbie and Cecilia, to exemplify parallels between the migratory stance on adaptations and the screenwriter's problem-solving process. In the following, I track their migratory process and the effect it has on their self-identities, from the novel, through Hampton's series of complete screenplay drafts, to the final published screenplay, which is adapted from the film.

THE NOVEL: DEPARTURE

In a novel–screenplay–film adaptation process the book corresponds to the land from which the characters migrate, as a fixed point of departure for the characters and the thematic argument they represent. It is usually a place in which fictional characters have a defined character and role, which there might be a hope of re-establishing to some degree. If not, their past can still not be completely left behind. Mentally, it will remain with them on their journey, partly as a resource and partly as an obstacle. The role the past plays greatly depends on the reasons for the character's migration: to survive, remain relevant, for freedom and to bloom, for financial, political and ideological reasons, for pleasure and comfort or simply to be put to work to fulfil the purposes of another enterprise. The reasons for migration to the screen also affect the screenwriter's creative approach to an adaptation, that is if the novel constitutes an original ruling template, a guiding concept, a loose source of inspiration or an object to be appropriated at will. Some adaptations of a story even leave the characters who inhabited the novel behind.

One of the more pressing reasons for Robbie's and Cecilia's migration is that they are regarded as secondary characters or citizens in the novel. At an early stage of the creative process, this is made clear by McEwan in one of his notebooks where he writes that 'privileged access to Robbie is a dead end. What is good about this story? Only Briony really. That's where the life is and where there are roots' (n.d.: n.pag.). As their novelistic lives turn out, both in McEwan's novel and in the embedded, fictional novel by Cecilia's sister Briony, Robbie's and Cecilia's purpose for being is to serve Briony's need for atonement. To this can be added a more positive reason for them to migrate, because, as a result of their potential as protagonists, many readers were so immersed in Robbie's and Cecilia's part of the story that they regarded them as being the main characters, despite McEwan's intentions.

McEwan had indeed invested Robbie and Cecilia with qualities that made them apt for the cinematic world. Well accustomed to cinematic narration, through his own experiences as a screenwriter and co-producer for earlier film adaptations of his novels, McEwan wrote a novel that evokes vivid mental audio-visual sensations, as if impressed by a screen idea, imagining Robbie and Cecilia as screened fictional beings when he let their lives take shape on the pages. Inasmuch as *Atonement* is said to be a novel of interiority, Robbie's and Cecilia's inner reflections are accordingly often both triggered and followed by physical sensations and actions, in a highly proto-cinematic manner. At the departure from the land of the novel, they could thus as fictional beings leave with great expectations and a naïve awareness of what the acculturation process would demand of them, confident that the qualities they had as adults would suffice to make them fit right in.

In the novel, Robbie represents an almost ideal young adult: hard-working, competent, sociable, caring, cooperative, goal-oriented, rational and responsible, with principles and ideals that direct his own priorities towards the greater good. He is, however, driven by shifting passions, although emotions and intimacy seem impractical from his idealistic perspective. Conversely, Cecilia first illustrates the anti-adult, with a limited awareness of the world beyond her own horizons. She defies conventions, praises the irrational and emotional and displays very low self-esteem and self-awareness. A bank account, a social network and her eagerness to help are more or less her only signs of adult potential. She habitually dissects her own emotions, just as he is cognizant of his own thoughts. All in all, Robbie and Cecilia thus form a dialectic pair, and as such they pose the core question: how do we find a balance between passions and pragmatism, order and the awareness of complexity and conventions and individuality?

With these questions in mind, the two go through acts of inner mentoring when their feelings for each other begin to surface. Partly as a result of their mutual disrespect for impractical conventions, they subsequently fail to control their passions. Separated by a war they mature into more complete individuals as they learn about the complexities of the world. Throughout the story they experience how they only have value when they serve others, as their purpose for being there dictates. In the final scenes of the novel, the alternative endings conclude the couple's representations of adulthood. Robbie is finally partly broken by war, while Cecilia has grown in authority and responsibility, but they both demonstrate that they have become a perfect human, complementing pair of responsible adults. These qualities form the foundation for the adaptation and migration problems that lie ahead as they begin their journey and Hampton begins his engagement in the adaptation process. In their respective worlds, neither the characters, nor Hampton, were at the time fully aware of the problems they would have to confront.

Hampton's approach to adaptations was nevertheless promising for Robbie and Cecilia as fictional beings. 'A higher quality of book forces you to make a higher quality of film', he declares (2007b) and specifies that 'if I love a book, I feel it's my responsibility to make it survive in an equally lovable form' (2007e: n.pag.). The consequence of this approach is that the screenwriter and the screen idea must eventually partially adapt to and facilitate the appropriating characters. He also acknowledged the novel's 'cinematic elements' (2008), which meant that Robbie and Cecilia could bring with them or recreate part of their previous narrative setting so as to ease their transition to the screen. Because of Hampton's awareness of the need for the host world to allow them a certain

latitude to keep their personalities as fictional beings, for Robbie and Cecilia there were reasons to assert that they would be welcomed into the screenplay and screen world at their leisure, with no need to adapt. However, Hampton had little readiness to accommodate their desires, because he, like Ian McEwan and the director Richard Eyre, regarded Briony as the protagonist of the story.

FIRST DRAFT, 13 JULY 2003

Hampton's first solution to the adaptation problem 'took a conventional, liter-ary approach', he submits (2007b). In order to make *Atonement* work on the screen with Briony in focus he proposes to McEwan that they 'should begin with this old lady who was just finishing a book called *Atonement* and we should see her from time to time in the course of the film' (2010: n.pag.). He also suggests the use of a voice-over, with Briony as an overt narrator. In spite of the ambition to adapt the book into a film, they thus let the literary narra-tor appropriate the screen idea. Conversely, the idea that rich, multifaceted and non-linear literary narratives must be simplified to function on the screen leads Hampton to allow the screen idea to appropriate the characters, the thematic rhetoric and the narration.

The opening scene of the first screenplay draft establishes the aged Briony as the main character of the story, while Cecilia and Robbie are not intro-duced until scenes ten and fifteen, when approximately 1/8 of the story has passed. Nonetheless, they seem to have maintained their core personalities from the novel and enter this new world with a show of greater confidence and potential than they revealed in the novel, Cecilia as 'a dark, slim, beautiful girl of 23' and Robbie as a 'tall, impressive-looking young man'. Their hopes to find a new welcoming sphere in the screenplay are however undermined by Hampton's decision to keep the focus on Briony and therefore continually 'cut to and fro' scenes with her (2010). Whenever Robbie and Cecilia appear, adjacent scenes with greater emotional gravity interrupt and undermine their attempts to establish themselves in the new narrative world. This becomes most apparent when they are about to make love in the library and their inti-macy is broken into fragments. The descriptive line, 'she says nothing, as he continues to inch towards her', is thus cut to 'INT. BRIONY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. LOLA seems to have made a complete recovery. She's staring at BRIONY in undisguised fascination'.

Deprived of context and suffering from fragmentation, their honeymoon phase as migrants is thereby cut short, and their emotional expressions become forced or nervous, in constant fear of being cut off. Their increasingly hesitant and insecure behaviour is at this point not caused by the tension between them, but is a result of how they are treated in the screenplay world. They often resort to awkward declarative and explanatory sentences, which are piled upon one another, and, hence, their testimony of love

> ROBBIE
> I love you.
>
> CECILIA
> I love you.

becomes a reminder of John Gilbert's heavy-handed repetitions of the same phrase in *His Glorious Night* (1929), which was parodied in *Singin' in the Rain*

(1952). On other occasions their dialogue is fragmented, as a sign of their with-ering self-esteem and social competence, like when they meet after Robbie's time in prison and are even more awkward than their relationship warrants:

> ROBBIE
> You look beautiful in your uniform […] that is […] you look beautiful.
>
> CECILIA
> You've lost weight
>
> ROBBIE
> Prison food. Er, would you like something to eat

Already at this early stage of their migration process, Robbie and Cecilia thus show signs of mental and social withdrawal. In particular, Robbie's subservi-ence is actively underscored by the war-time passages from France. When, for once, the narrative follows him, the scenes lack a thematic context and purpose, and seem displaced, which affects the impression he gives, just like the foregrounded encounter with a bullying major does. In frustration, discon-nected from the adult self-identity he had in the novel, he even seems to adapt to the unrefined corporal Nettle, as his language becomes coarser. For example, the word *fuck* is completely reserved for Nettle in the novel, where Robbie would never have said anything like 'am going to kill the bastard'.

If Robbie and Cecilia are regarded as fictional beings and migrants, it is thus clear that their awkwardness and insecurity contaminate the first draft of the script. However, like many migrants before them, they try to regain confi-dence and tell themselves that 'there's nothing to be ashamed of', as Cecilia puts it when they fail to establish themselves in the new community and their self-identities as adults dwindle. Nonetheless, it is clear, as the script sympto-matically informs the readers, that at least Cecilia is 'overcome by the hopeless-ness of the situation' at this stage. From the screenwriter's point of view, the first draft is however but a provisional approach to the adaptation problem. Hampton describes how it is often based on a distribution of 'striking images and moments or incidents or themes', which he has identified in the novel. This explains why he sometimes gives in to a stereotypical telling mode in Robbie's and Cecilia's lines, well aware that further calibrations and adjustments are necessary for the characters to be relevant in the new cultural environment.

SECOND DRAFT, 23 APRIL 2004

Although Robbie and Cecilia are hampered in the first draft, their ambitions and potential are still strong enough to cause a reaction. When Briony is not seen for a number of pages in the script, McEwan suggests, in his comments, the extended use of a voice-over to secure the focus on her. The number of voice-over lines for Briony is thus increased from the first draft's 5 to 11 in the second draft, and further still, to 19, in the third version. In addition, to clarify Robbie's and Cecilia's status as secondary characters in the screenplay, Hampton adds a declaration on the first page that Briony's is the 'voice of our protagonist'. Understandably, traces of the couple's dissatisfied frustration shine through in the script. For example, they overreact with 'uncontrollable shock' to minor upsets, and Cecilia's rephrased judgement of the rapist from 'fool' to the fiercer 'stupid idiot' is one of many examples of their emotional imbalance.

Yet the second draft also reveals how Hampton begins to review his strategies and choices, as he imports new scenes from the novel into the script, above all for Robbie's and Cecilia's benefit. With the experience of being even more decentred in the first draft than they were in the novel, the two fictional beings also seem to consider what they are missing and to sort out their options, in their struggle to find their way back to a stable self-identity. With Hampton's helping hand, inserted phrases give their dialogues additional context; and, if the culture shock of the first draft had created a distance between them, subordinate clauses, like 'keeping his hand against CECILIA's', now illustrate how they hesitantly begin to regain some of their intimate connection and the courage this gives them.

Moreover, some of their lines, which only had served to explain what both of them knew, or which fragmented their dialogue, are dropped, with the effect that they may sense the possibility of continuity. With a trace of confidence, Cecilia can thus take a step forward and again approach the active and mature role she had in the novel concerning the management of the household, while Robbie at least finds pause to reflect upon the situation when he is in France, as well as the strength to give voice to his frustration and vent his anger in a rational manner. Although he addresses Briony, when he speaks about being an adult, his words seem to be a reflexive and assertive comment on his own withdrawal from adulthood: 'Grown up? Godamnit! What are you, eighteen? There are soldiers of eighteen old enough to be left to die by the road'. Although their progress has thus taken a positive turn, Robbie and Cecilia still have further problems to overcome.

THIRD DRAFT, 2 NOVEMBER 2004

After the second draft, McEwan's comments make clear he does not want Briony's status as protagonist challenged, telling Hampton that 'we still need to convincingly establish Briony as a character we can root for. […] In the current form, we are in danger of alienating the audience from either sympathising or identifying with our protagonist'. One of the most efficient strategies to accomplish this is to produce a clear and powerful antagonist. It is in this context that McEwan suggests that the old, narrating Briony, from her privileged position, expresses how she has 'realised R was the incarnation of evil'. For migrants, the effects of such a debilitating response, both from the parental cultures they have left and from people in their new homeland, may last forever. However, Hampton hardly makes any alterations in the third draft that concern Robbie and Cecilia directly. Instead, he seems to have been listening to a plea from the old Briony, the imbedded author, who at the end of the second draft implicitly asks the reader: 'Will you help me give them a happy ending?' Besides letting the two lovers rest, Hampton thus deletes the declaration that Briony is the protagonist but tries to accommodate McEwan's wish by rewriting the beginning. He thus cross-cuts scenes between the young and old Briony and lets a voice-over with the author–narrator Briony communicate that much of the story will be her narrative about Robbie and Cecilia.

FOURTH DRAFT, 15 DECEMBER 2005

McEwan is still not altogether happy with the shift of focus, as he comments that Briony is 'fading out a bit in comparison to minor characters'. It is at this stage that the change of directors takes place and Joe Wright enters. As

regards the protagonist issue his mind is made up: 'Robbie Turner is good. He's the higher self. He's the best we can be' (2008). The altered perspective means that Hampton and Wright set out 'to make the film about what Briony was interested in, rather than only about Briony. […] We needed to spend some time with those two characters [Robbie and Cecilia] together, and we needed to admit to ourselves that their relationship was the center of the film', Hampton reports (2007f: n.pag.).

Wright also suggests a return to the novel's less linear surface structure. Interestingly, the novelist McEwan had so far made efforts to adapt to the screen conventions of novel adaptations, but Wright has his mindset on adapting the screen idea to the conventions of the postmodern novel and its use of modernist prose. Consequently, the changes in the fourth draft are drastic. And if the third draft had entailed a cautious attempt to approach a problem solution, for the screenwriter and for the migrating characters alike, the fourth draft instead demonstrates the results and insights from the idea generation. As far as Robbie and Cecilia are concerned, they enter the migratory in-sync stage, finally capable of interacting naturally in the new environment, as a result of the mutual adaptation.

Besides a signalling caption in the script, 'PART ONE: ROBBIE AND CECILIA', the script now uses the child Briony's misunderstandings to initially place the lovers in a victimized position, and thereby foregrounds that they are now the protagonists. Accordingly, their interactions are no longer interrupted by cross-cut scenes with Briony, and instead of demonstratively fragmented or rough encounters, they have time for intimacy and coherent conversations. As they make love, they thus 'whisper to one another' while looking 'into each other's eyes', with a repeated emphasis of the mutual contact, instead of the third draft's disconnected 'murmur'. Moreover, Cecilia is allowed an interiority through subtextual implications and is allowed to discuss literature again with Robbie, who is introduced as a man 'with eyes of optimism and an easy intelligence', in accordance with his self-identity in the novel.

This, like the comment in the script that Cecilia 'feels like she's said something stupid and hastens to change the subject', is also an expression of Hampton's adaptation to literary strategies, which may be much more common when the screenwriter and director have a close connection. Meanwhile, Robbie gets an extended introduction in France and assumes the role of leader and hero of his small group of soldiers, just as he does in the novel. With the transformation that takes place in this phase of their migratory journey, it is no wonder that Robbie and Cecilia also find their way back to their normal way of expressing themselves, without any raw amplifications at all. However, the characters have not yet been fully integrated into their new environment.

FIFTH DRAFT, 23 APRIL 2006

While Wright pulls Hampton closer and closer to the novel, and McEwan comments on missing war scenes, Keira Knightley and James McAvoy are reported to have signed on as Cecilia and Robbie, thus adding corporeal shapes to the screen idea of Robbie and Cecilia. These influences possibly incited the fifth draft's evaluative character, as any screenwriter is likely to hesitate and take stock of ideas at this stage, especially under pressure from conflicting stakeholders, and genre conventions. As Hampton explains, 'there's a real pressure, which I never understood, for change. […] Certainly it is an

endemic thing in the studios' (2007c: n.pag.). To say, Hampton exemplifies, 'you know this is not how it is in the book. Why do you want to change it?' takes courage since it may get the screenwriter fired (2007f: n.pag.).

Thus, on the one hand, a decisive step is taken away from the novel as Robbie first appears like a cinematic, confident adult who adopts an almost parental role *vis-à-vis* Briony. On the other hand, with the new, brutal war scenes and other new sequences, he is no longer sure of his genre context, and his conversation sometimes becomes awkward again, with long explanatory or repetitive phrases, like 'I wanted to improve people's lives. […] Now my only means of liberty is to do my best to kill them'. In the manner of a real-life migrant, he thus relapses into a state of temporary ambivalence, afraid of losing his foothold in both the novel and the screen idea, instead of having a place in both. Like Robbie, Cecilia now needs to evaluate her development, but still expands her character in the script, being more assertive in what she says. In a way, the fifth draft thus illustrates how the migrating characters and the screenwriter may be 'conceptually flicking back and forth' between versions, as Hutcheon submits about adaptation audiences (2006: 139), before they make a conclusive commitment to an acculturation in a screen version. Therefore, it is no surprise that so many new lines and sequences that appear in the fifth draft are deleted in the sixth.

SIXTH DRAFT, 18 MAY 2006

Whereas the previous drafts had been given several months, or more than a year, the sixth is delivered less than a month after the fifth version, because the actual filming had been scheduled. The screenwriter's and the characters' parallel movement towards a final reorientation towards an integration with the screen idea is thus hurried in the sixth draft, which sees the return of deleted passages from the fourth draft and some altogether new ones. With a good relationship with the director and the producers, such negotiations may continue until the final cut. In this case, 'right up until shooting he [Wright] was ringing me up saying, "on page 80"' and so forth, Hampton testifies (2007f). The sixth draft is thus a continuation of the final tests-and-evaluation phase, which has an effect on Robbie and Cecilia that, to some extent, they develop in opposite directions. Robbie is no longer described as an 'impressive looking young man', yet 'intelligent', possibly as an adjustment to McAvoys's physical qualities.

On the one hand, as a fictional being, Robbie reacts to the stressful situation by adapting more readily, and he finds the inner composure to give full voice to his sensitivity. On the other hand, he displays a new bitterness and takes it out on Cecilia when they first reunite, questioning her love and loyalty. He also expresses, for the first time, the sentiment that 'there's a stain on [his] name', in fear of not belonging, typical for the migrant before the final change and socialization. However, this indicates that he is close to being ready to confront this final core problem, and he can do so, thanks to the solace he finds in Cecilia's development and kindness. Perhaps for the first time since the novel, the reader can fully sympathize with Robbie's emotional eruptions, because the reoccurring lines from the fourth draft and the completely new ones are integrated in a logical emotional progression from distress to harmony. His development thus indicates a decisive step towards a balance between his rational and emotional qualities.

In this last draft from Hampton, Cecilia solidifies her confidence and priorities, reacting against the family's 'hidden snobbery' and letting her inner qualities show, 'determined to find her grace', as the script comment declares. Her progression is thus assisted by the screenwriters' freedom to describe the characters' interiority when they work closely with the director and actors, without imposing on their creative agency. Cecilia is thereby given every support to persist in her ambitions to help Robbie come back to his former self. As a response to Robbie's hostility, she avows that 'there's nothing you can say will stop me loving you', illustrating that she has found a stable self-identity as an adult again. For Robbie it takes another draft to get to that point.

SEVENTH DRAFT, DECEMBER 2007: THE SCREEN VERSION

After the film premiered, a seventh version was published, adapted from the film. A lot of lines and scenes had been deleted, in order to direct the focus to Robbie and Cecilia. Again, the screenplay states that Robbie is 'impressive looking'; his bitterness is gone, and he is able to control his despair, without attacking Cecilia. Thus, she does not have to defend her position and their relationship as fervently as before. In effect, Robbie and Cecilia are now so much in harmony with their environment that they can adapt their manners of conversation to the cinematic narrative conventions and still remain confident in their self-identities. From a cinematic point of view, this is partly an effect of the editing and cinematography, but above all it is due to the corporeal shape that Robbie's and Cecilia's personalities take in the fictional world of the screen. Knightley and McAvoy adapt their acting to the two characters, while they also appropriate and make them theirs. Conversely, the completed migrating process has made it possible for the Robbie and Cecilia to adapt confidently to the two actors and respectfully appropriate them for their own purposes.

To make the acculturation process and complete the harmony between the two migrants and the environment, the narrative ending is also adapted to suit the two characters. All through the six first drafts, the inclusion of the novel's end remained, set at Briony's 77th birthday party. After filming these scenes, Wright decides to instead direct the narrative attention to Robbie's and Cecilia's alternative fates, and their happiness, rather than to Briony's atonement. Like Briony, Wright considers *Atonement* to be a story about happy endings (2008), and in the end they both have to yield to the common cause of the cinematic genre conventions, their own ideological interpretations and the two lovers' need to settle.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The adaptation of *Atonement* exemplifies how the migratory journey of characters, from a source text through the many screenplay drafts to the screen, metaphorically resembles the mental and social processes that migrants may go through. They leave one setting with a somewhat intact adult self-identity, which disintegrates and is thereafter reassembled and adapted in the course of their migration process. Thus, their migratory journey constitutes a character arc of its own, which complements the emotional and physical journeys that Joseph Campbell ([1949] 2008) outlines. When taken into account, the migratory approach to characters expands the understanding of their thematic dimensions.

When Julie Sanders (2006) writes about adaptation and appropriation, characters are seen as objects of a one-directional force. However, characters affect both texts and minds when they migrate ontologically (Eco 2005: 8), which makes migratory effect bi-directional, due to a process of acculturation, as Bortolotti and Hutcheon argues, in the sense that both the migrating subject and the host setting change, by means of negotiation, adaptation and appropriation (2007: 453). To some extent, the characters must appropriate the new narrative settings with their conventions, which must adapt for the sake of the characters' survival. Meanwhile, the screenplay and film environments partly appropriate the characters for their purposes, often in conflict with the novel, which, with its conventions, imposes on the screen idea, especially if there is an ambition to be faithful to the impression it may have given parts of the audience.

Thus, when the characters migrate, the conditions for their existence have to be negotiated with the author who created them and the stakeholders of their future, while they struggle together to maintain some sense of self-identity along the way, to avoid that they dissolve as characters. During this process, the adapted characters' actual self-identities exist in the liminal state of the oscillations between the different versions, which Hutcheon defines as part of the audience experience of adaptations (2006: xvii). Yet, when the characters have completed this migratory journey, they have hopefully been able to achieve a reorganization of their self-identity in the film narrative. As John Ellis observes, 'the adaptation trades upon the memory of the novel […] consumes this memory, aiming to efface it with the presence of its own images' (1982: 3).

For the knowing audiences, migrants and the adapted characters, the traces of the past can never be eradicated. An adapted character is thus never just a film character. Nor can that character, as fictional beings, ever return to the novel without their new experiences, unaffected by their new manifestations. Their meaning is forever defined by and, to speak with Eder, symptomatic of the migratory journey. Something has been lost, and something has been gained, because the characters are like Salman Rushdie's 'translated men' and women (1991: 17), with 'imaginary homelands' (1991: 10). Still, after the migration to a new setting, the characters constitute an element that has never been seen there, and thus they have expanded what it is possible to express in that world, in accordance with Jacques Rancière's definition of the distribution of the sensible (2004: 12). To enhance the results of the acculturation process, the screenwriter must consider his choice of migratory policy carefully, since the characters' mental states during their journey of migration and the screenwriter's strategies affect each other in a bi-directional relationship, with the development of the thematic content at stake.

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Adaptations of Adulthood: Towards a Model for Thematic Rhetoric in Adaptation Studies

9

Adaptations of Adulthood

Toward a Model for Thematic Rhetorics in Adaptation Studies

Joakim Hermansson

THE REASON WE CONSUME fiction is rarely just to enjoy the superficial pleasure in escaping everyday life. On the contrary, Patrick Colm Hogan argues, it is the possibility to find keys for a somewhat happy life of normalcy and "enduring satisfaction" that makes us return again and again to fictional worlds and their characters.[1] For that reason, readers and spectators use fiction for mental simulations of life patterns, personal ethics, and paths for the future.[2] To present useful thematic lessons with rhetorical efficiency, award-winning and best-selling novels, art films, and Hollywood blockbusters make use of universal plot structures. For the knowing audience, the experience can be heightened further by adaptations' potential to offer "a constant oscillation" between two or more texts that relate, as equals, to a thematic problem.[3] As Lars Ellerström underscores, "a typical film adaptation, for instance, does not represent its source novel—it is not a film about a novel; rather, it represents the story, characters, and so forth that were earlier represented by the novel."[4] Hence, the oscillation is not restricted to a pair of versions when novel/film adaptations are concerned.

In one of many approaches that open the imagination for less limited relationships than one-on-one cases, Sarah Cardwell outlines the notion of an urtext, which is not the first artifact in a line of adaptations, but "a sort of 'myth',

an ur-text that stands outside and before each retelling of the story, and which contains the most fundamental parts of the tale without which an adaptation would lose its identity as that tale."[5] The various texts, such as novels and films that relate to a defined urtext, are "part and parcel of creating the larger web,"[6] and together, as nodes, they form a map of the urtext in question. In light of Hogan's reasoning, it is reasonable to consider the story of adult normalcy as the urtext of all fiction. People even employ thematic story structures to construct their life stories, form their senses of self, and make strategic choices in life,[7] and they thus regenerate variations of the urtext that tie most fiction to the same knot: the problems of becoming and being an adult human being.

In this chapter, I turn to ten successful contemporary novel/film adaptations to examine the rhetorical representation of the urtextual story about adulthood through the lens of Joseph Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*.[8] The protagonists' thematic functions are imperative for the analyses, but it is the thematic and rhetorical progression, and content of the argument itself as it passes through the stories, that is my focus here. The inevitable consistencies and variations between any bodies of films and novels and their representations of adulthood mean that two often conflicting perspectives regarding adaptations must be maintained in tandem. If the novels are regarded as primary adaptations, the films can be thought of as secondary adaptations, dependent on the novels as source texts. Still, both versions should be seen as equals in an adaptation pair. Regardless, my sample movies form a body that represents film adaptations of the urtextual story about adulthood, and the novels form a corpus of its own. However, the purpose is not to address media specificity, or to produce statistical evidence for certain tendencies, but to sketch a map of the grounds for thematic reflection that films and novels have to offer together and to suggest a model for thematic studies of adaptations.

It is in this context that Campbell's presentation of the monomyth is instrumental. Examining myths around the globe and their representation of life's mixture of progression and obstacles, Campbell extracts a narrative model of the hero's journey, in seventeen developmental steps toward "adult realization,"[9] and a possible full "reintegration with society" as a responsible adult.[10] Campbell indicates that the steps of the hero's journey match a four-act plot structure. In the table below, I group the steps of the hero's journey accordingly and slightly adjust Campbell's sometimes obscure terminology for the sake of clarity.[11]

The rhetorical steps of the hero's journey in four acts

Act 1: Introduction	Act 2: Complication	Act 3: Development	Act 4: Conclusion
The Normal World	Road of Trials	Atonement	The World Denied
Call to Exploration	An Approach	Apotheosis	Flight and Rescue
Reluctance to Change	Temptation	Clarity	Return to the Normal World
Mentoring			Master of Two Worlds
Crossing the First Threshold			Freedom to Live
Belly of the Whale			

My argument is that the hero's journey forms a line of argument about adulthood and a most useful tool for, but not limited to, thematic adaptation studies.[12] Still, for the hero's journey to be useful for thematic studies, its rhetoric progression needs to be complemented by a model that describes the thematic markers in question.

Adulthood has been theorized from many perspectives and can be regarded as an idealized vision of what it is to be a human being or as a long-winding road of trials. Based on several existing models, I have synthesized a model of seventeen thematic *markers of adulthood* in four groups.[13] The first group of markers describes structural aspects of life: financial autonomy, home, family, occupation, social network, and adult recognition. The second group concerns social facets: conformity, social adaptability and cooperation, care for others, and commitment in terms of intimacy and loyalty. The third group relates to substantive markers: stable values, self-awareness and self-esteem, emotional balance, and the awareness of complexities. The final group covers executive qualities: goal-oriented and rational thinking, responsible judgments and choices, and rational actions.[14]

In works of fiction, the respective significance of thematic markers is expressed and emphasized directly or indirectly through various modes of characterization, like narration, speech, thoughts, emotional reactions, and physical

actions, that form rhetorical patterns through their distribution. Incidents and sections, which deviate from normal patterns of characters and narrations in a story, draw attention to various thematic markers.[15] For instance, attention can be drawn if a confident character hesitates or a narrator switches narrative style. Thus, characters are given thematic dimensions and functions to make a narrative's argument clearer.[16] During the course of a story, the focus may therefore shift to accentuate secondary characters' thematic dimensions, as a context for the central incidents and characters.[17] Furthermore, each step in the hero's journey is inherently associated with certain rhetorical and thematic qualities, so the position of an event in the plot affects its meaning, for example, awareness of complexities when a broader perspective is needed to achieve the goals.[18]

With these principles in mind, I coded the expressions that draw attention to markers of adulthood in ten novel/film adaptations to explore the representation of adulthood. To make the selection of titles less subjective, I employed a number of criteria. First, the main characters are of adult age. Also, both novels and films are published and distributed, respectively, in the English language during the twenty-first century. Moreover, all novels and films are commercially successful and/or critically acclaimed.[19] Finally, I have strived to include a wide spread of fiction genres and to attain a reasonable balance between male and female protagonists, authors, and (if possible) directors. This resulted in the following novel/film pairs: *Atonement* (2001,[20] 2008), *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2012,[21] 2015), *Gone Girl* (2012,[22] 2015), *Me Before You* (2012,[23] 2016), *Room* (2010,[24] 2016), *Shutter Island* (2003,[25] 2010), *The Da Vinci Code* (2003,[26] 2006), *The Martian* (2014,[27] 2015), *The Road* (2007,[28] 2009), and *Up in the Air* (2001,[29] 2010).

Act 1: Setup

Beginning with a presentation of *The Normal World*, most novels' and films' first act frequently stage the storyworld's or the protagonists' conventional notion of adulthood, with a limited awareness of the narrow "familiar life horizon" and the "infantile ego" within.[30] This implies that there will be a display of shortcomings regarding the social markers of adulthood (i.e., rules and conventions, care for others, intimacy and loyalty, social adaptation and cooperation), as well as inadequate awareness of complexities, self-esteem, sense of responsibility, and

rationality. Consequently, the first step in the narrative progression, *Call to Exploration*, points out the need for a less simplistic and self-centered approach to the world, for action and responsibility. The beginnings of the sample films and novels follow this design remarkably well, apart from minor variances.

In some cases, markers of adulthood are demonstrated as obvious shortcomings; in *Me Before You*, Louisa's (in the film played by Emilia Clarke) limited worldview is expressed through her belief that every problem can be solved with a cup of tea.[31] In *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Christian (Jamie Dornan) declares that he doesn't "have a heart,"[32] while Ms. Steele (Dakota Johnson) claims to be "missing the need-a-boyfriend-gene,"[33] which also indicates a problem to relate to others due to some emotional imbalance. In other cases, the positive value of a trait is illustrated, such as the highlighted intimacy in both versions of *The Road* and *Room*. In the beginning of the screen version of *The Da Vinci Code*, Langdon's (Tom Hanks) lecture about perception and interpretation focuses entirely on the awareness of complexities in the social world.[34] Other common tendencies are the films' and novels' emphasis on having meaningful work, a home, emotional self-control, a developed sense of rationality, and a goal-oriented way of thinking as an adult. Nevertheless, most of the protagonists are concerned because they have no clear plans for the future.

Next, a *Reluctance to Change* demonstrates the strengths of the habitual concept of adulthood. In the exemplar stories, a status quo and the initial egocentric viewpoint are justified because simplifications make life more convenient. Many of the protagonists also take to lies to defend their ambivalence toward conformity, care for others, rationality, responsibility, and emotional balance. Also, the films primarily question the necessity to complicate matters of self-esteem, sociability, and cooperation, while the novels generally demonstrate the impracticality of a complex worldview at this stage. The novel *Up in the Air* summarizes the key argument for this convention with the answer from the protagonist, Ryan Bingham (George Clooney), to the question of what he is looking for: "Low maintenance."[35] With the same desire for constancy and simplicity, a frustrated Cecilia (Keira Knightley) in the film *Atonement* rudely dismisses and escapes her brother's question, and her own feeling that something has changed between her and her childhood friend Robbie, by diving into the pool.[36]

In response to the reluctance to change, the *Mentoring* phase draws attention to what can be gained from a development based on a more responsible, broad-minded, goal-oriented, and rational mindset. Accordingly, when *Shutter*

Island's Dr. Naehring (Max von Sydow) characterizes the protagonist's nature, he also instructs the spectators that "retreat isn't something you [should] consider an option" at this stage.[37] *The Martian*'s protagonist Mark Whatney instead finds an inner mentoring voice as he asks what Hercule Poirot would do in his situation.[38] As a rule, at this phase of the journey, the novels again stress the urgency to consider the world's social complexities. Hence, in *Gone Girl*, a concerned Nick wonders warningly if "we are actually humans at this point."[39] To motivate a further thematic exploration, the films commonly illustrate the risk of stagnation and regression of adulthood, through scenes of people losing their jobs and self-respect.

What remains of the first rhetorical act is a final commitment to responsibility and change through a leap into the unknown, *Crossing the First Threshold*. This is represented by Langdon's "academic curiosity" in *The Da Vinci Code*,[40] Robbie's dream to serve humanity as a doctor in *Atonement*,[41] and Ms. Steele's plea, "enlighten me then," in *Fifty Shades of Grey*.[42] However, this step requires a taxing sacrifice of the ego, for the sake of community, care for others, and social adaptation.[43] So, just before Bingham is exposed to his own relative isolation in *Up in the Air*, his CEO (Jason Bateman) encouragingly tells him that he "will not be alone."[44] In the next scene, Bingham packs a huge cardboard poster of his sister and her husband, which he reluctantly has promised to bring with him, and then he sees his work partner being hugged goodbye by her boyfriend. The sequence also relates to the value of intimacy, loyalty, and responsibility as balanced parts in a cultivated concept of adulthood. By implication, the future prospects are at this stage associated with aspirations of home and family. In *Shutter Island*,[45] it is the contrast between the memory of a father who "was a stranger . . . to everyone" and the protagonist's own desire to be an emotionally balanced family man that takes the narrative across the threshold. Finally, the first act's rhetorical departure concludes with *The Belly of the Whale*, "a form of self-annihilation,"[46] as the old view on adulthood is left behind. "I feel I could disappear," *Gone Girl*'s Amy (Rosamund Pike) states to express the urgency to continue[47] and to foreshadow the necessity to accept normal life as an anonymous but functional part of society.

Act 2: Complication

The second act comprises the first part of what Campbell refers to as "initiation."[48] Through tests and trials under new circumstances, it complicates the notion of adulthood, leading to a provisional attempt at closure and a temptation to either settle with the development, as far as it has progressed, or abandon it altogether. Christopher Vogler's name for the first part of the act, "Tests, Allies, Enemies,"[49] highlights its overall purpose to sort out the features that can serve as allies and obstacles for an advanced sense of adulthood. During this phase, the capacity to make responsible judgments and choices is underscored in the novels and films, and the characters are now made aware of "a whole heap of responsibility," to quote Louisa in *Me Before You*.[50] Thus, coping with the demands, the mother in *Room* is "trying to be realistic" as she takes inventory of ideas to escape from her captor.[51] Throughout the trials, goal orientation and rationality are also accentuated, as is the link between responsibility and cooperation. This point is stressed when *The Martian*'s NASA director (Jeff Daniels) senses the staff's faltering commitment to exhaust all coordinated efforts to rescue Whatney and comments that "Mark dies if you don't."[52] The increasing number of issues that the characters must handle brings forth the importance of care, guiding principles, stable emotional reactions, and a rising self-esteem. It is with those qualities in balance that Ms. Steele is capable of taking a stand and managing a negotiation with Christian in *Fifty Shades of Grey*.[53] Particularly, the films now reemphasize the value of home and family as a stable base for adult life, while loyalty under pressure is rather problematized. In *Atonement*, most of this phase is set at a family dinner, after which Cecilia fails to support Robbie against her family's joint accusations. In *The Road*, a flashback of the man's (Viggo Mortensen) previous family life, just when he leaves his wife behind, sets the tone.[54] As an alternative, the novels expose various traditional beliefs, guiding principles, and strict conformity to social conventions, or "protocol,"[55] as outdated and highly impractical flaws in the governing definition of adulthood. In *Me Before You*, Will's mother wrestles with her convictions to let him die,[56] while Will questions Louisa's dismissal of new experiences on the grounds that she is "not that sort of person."[57] Likewise, the man in *The Road* has to reevaluate what it is to be good, when he realizes that taking care of his son means that he is ready to kill, although he believes he is given the role as carer by God.[58] In *The Da Vinci*

Code, Langdon learns to balance "*right*eousness, dexterity, and correctness" with "irrational thought."[59]

The latter two steps of the second act assess what has been learned thus far. First, during *The Approach*, various markers are coupled in juxtaposed images, actions, and statements to present the "totality of what can be known"[60] through a "harmonization of all the pairs of opposites."[61] This draws immediate attention to the awareness of complexity as an adulthood marker, and some statements in the novels and films—such as "There's a very fine line between pleasure and pain. . . . They are two sides of the same coin"[62]—are demonstrative of the point. In *Atonement*, the contrast between human passion and logic is problematized when the scene with Robbie (James McAvoy), standing helpless in front of dead schoolgirls in wartime France, is juxtaposed with a flashback of Briony (Soarsie Ronan) as a child throwing herself into a pond to make Robbie prove his affection by saving her.

As the latter scene indicates, the focal point is self-awareness and self-esteem, and the sample films and novels now illuminate this marker's sophistication and the key role it plays for adulthood. Financial autonomy, work, a social context, cooperation, and care, as well as loyalty and intimacy, all build the characters' self-esteem, which in turn facilitates the internalization of the other attributes. This results in a better sense of judgment and courage to assume responsibility, we are told. At this point, the films tend to assert that mechanical conformity to conventions reduces a person's self-esteem and that strict obedience to them weakens the capacity to exercise intimacy and loyalty. In *Up in the Air*, Natalie (Anna Kendrick) realizes how she has diminished her own worth by picking a partner because "he fit the bill." To the same effect, in *Me Before You*, Louisa delivers an illustrative monologue about the self-reducing threat that conformity poses, through standardized family life, recommended careers, prescribed hobbies, and a focus on appearance. The attention on self-awareness and life's social intricacies also summons distinct expressions of principles and faith as a reaction. These are often combined with some disillusion. In *The Da Vinci Code*, a belief "in people" is expressed merely because "it is all we have," while the balance between fiscal costs and the value of science, in relation to the significance of a single human life, is addressed with the question "How much is too much?" in *The Martian*.[63]

All these complications illustrate the distinction between adulthood and "inappropriate sentimentalities and resentments [and] . . . childlike human

convenience."[64] Moreover, there is a reevaluation of the competencies associated with childhood and the ability "to dream the dreams of a child's imaginings," as the man articulates in *The Road*[65] to amplify a sense of consciousness.[66] Consequently, Louisa sings the innocent "Molahonkey Song" from her childhood to Will, who needs to regain his spirit, in *Me Before You*. The rhetorical purpose is to integrate emotional presence with rationality and an expanded sense of responsibility to produce a new level of maturity.

The experience can, however, be overwhelming, since the process toward a developed thematic understanding has only reached its midpoint, with core issues still unresolved, as articulated in *Me Before You*: "Old emotions washing over me, new thoughts and ideas being pulled from me as if my perception itself were being stretched out of shape."[67] That the lesson, so far, is more abstract than practical invites the idea to settle or even to return to the original perception of adulthood. So, the next step, *Temptation*, tests the current "position of reference" to the "general human formula"[68] and takes stock of ideals and remaining conflicts. Attention is given to the fact that adults are expected to be able "to make tough decisions"[69] and to issues of beliefs and principles that may support them. Still, the narratives mainly return to human convenience and ego, through either the characters' doubts or their contentment. The boy in *Room* gives voice to the entire idea of retreat, as well as his mother's thoughts, in the proclamation: "I have seen the world and I'm tired now."[70] In other cases, it is the desire to have a family, home, and work that incites an impulse to withdraw. In *The Road*, this is accentuated through the man's memories of his wife "crossing the lawn,"[71] while he and the boy wish that they could stay in the comfortable and well-equipped homelike bunker they have found. With a touch of irony, *The Martian* wonders if yearning for the comforts of home is reason enough to leave Mars, where he can say he is "the greatest botanist on this planet."[72]

However, the individual's importance as part of a greater community creates a drive to go further in both films and novels, to "go outside and look at the vast horizon," as *The Martian* advises.[73] The novels also support the movement forward through an emphasis on inner convictions and a belief in what is true. "Liars, liars" is the cry to further deliberations that takes *Atonement* to the third act.[74] Similarly, *The Da Vinci Code* provides an argument to tip the balance with the declaration that "those who seek the truth are more than friends,"[75] an idea that will unite ideals and pragmatic politics at the end of the story.

Act 3: Development

In the third act, *Development*, the struggle to complete the thematic grasp of adulthood, begins. This demands a major revision of a core issue, *Atonement*, which leads to *Apotheosis* and *Clarity* as rhetorical steps. Following the second act's distinction between constructive and corrupt thematic aspects, it is time to atone with the idea that they are part of a whole. Above all, the thematic notion must be detached from the egocentric perspective,[76] guided by inner values. It follows that the rhetorical concentration on self-awareness and self-esteem escalates at this point in both novels and films. Typically for the films, the characters' feeling of irrelevance develops into a potent sensation that they are "supposed to be happy," as phrased in *Me Before You*,[77] but cannot be so unless they serve a purpose and are needed. This challenge is formulated as a question in *Up in the Air*—"God is claiming people. Am I still on his list or has he skipped me?"[78]—and as an instruction in *Shutter Island*—If "you want to uncover the truth, you gotta let it go."[79] In *Gone Girl*, Amy transforms her appearance to become an anonymity,[80] and *Atonement*'s famous, elegiac long take depicts the individual's insignificance in the mass of a defeated army. The latter also empha-sizes, like many of the films, a low-key intimacy of community and the value of faith, as the soldiers unite in groups to the sound of a hymn.[81] Gradually, with the world's revealed complexity forming a unified image, a redirection toward a greater care for others in life emerges.

This transformation of the mindset paves the way for emotional balance, or "peace at heart," which facilitates the unification of good and bad human quali-ties.[82] Thus, "no longer self-conscious"[83] and aware that she is the meaning of life for another person, Louisa dances inappropriately close to Will at a wedding in *Me Before You* and demonstrates that it is possible to reform conventions and display intimacy in public without fear or shame.[84] In *The Martian*, Rich Purnell (Donald Glover) also breaks with the expected behavior pattern and explains a complex space maneuver to NASA management the way a child would, pretending to be the spacecraft, while the others in the room adapt and accept his style. He concludes his demonstration stating he has "done the math. It checks out,"[85] as if to underscore the efficiency of including unconventional approaches in the repertoire.

The notion of adulthood is now developed enough to serve as guidance through the dilemmas and necessary prioritizations that its practice provokes.

The narratives demonstrate that, with a grounded self-esteem that also encourages nonconforming styles and manners, the adult is ready to become "dedicated to the whole of his society."[86] Accordingly, *The Da Vinci Code* tells the reader that the old "ideal that man must be told what to do . . . because man is incapable of thinking for himself" can be replaced with the rule that the adult can handle the "*truth* and be able to think for himself."[87] Correspondingly, Ms. Steele realizes in *Fifty Shades of Grey* that she might be the one to "guide [Christian] into the light" instead of the other way around.[88] However, this commitment comes with an inevitable obligation, expressed in both novels and films. *The Da Vinci Code* proclaims that you must "embrace this responsibility . . . or you must pass [it] . . . to someone else,"[89] and Teddy Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) in *Shutter Island* decides "to find out" the truth, although "it's a short step from suicide,"[90] indicating that the last act's resolution is near.

The third act ends with "the ultimate boon" of *Clarity*, a summary of the thematic comprehension as an "indestructible body,"[91] or "a thing that even death cannot undo," as *The Road* articulates.[92] "He felt so small, so utterly human, but it wasn't a debilitating feeling. It was an oddly proud one. To be a part of this. A speck, yes. But part of it, one with it," the narrator in *Shutter Island* explains.[93] In *Up in the Air* Bingham places a picture on a map of the United States at his sister's wedding, first disappointed to see his contribution vanishing among all the others but then smiling faintly with a growing realization that he is a part of a complex whole that does not fall apart into fragments but forms a substantial unity.[94] In that context, the films foreground care, cooperation, family, and home as vital components to solidify adulthood.

Act 4: Conclusion

The fourth act is often regarded as "a straightforward progress toward the final resolution"[95] and a thematic conclusion. However, Campbell posits that it begins with a display of "obstruction and evasion,"[96] as the abstract insights and ideals must be implemented in the far from effortless everyday practices.[97] The representation of adulthood markers during the act rhetorically validates the new thematic notion, before a sense of mastery is achieved. "Permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master," Campbell argues.[98]

The first step, *The World Denied*, confronts the problem to accept that practical difficulties and responsibilities are inevitable parts of a reasonably happy life and that, with all its faults, this "world is nirvana."[99] When held accountable, the mother in *Room* first refuses to accept this and attempts suicide,[100] while the man in *The Road* temporarily abandons his belief in humanity and care in an act of vengeance. When the boy (Kody Smit-McPhee) reacts, the man cries out that he is "scared," for he is the one "who has to worry about everything."[101]

To convince of the new approach's relevance and application in the social world, a demonstration of practical "human success" is needed.[102] For that purpose, the next step, *Flight and Rescue*, emphasizes the pragmatic balance between the thematic markers in homelike environments. In *Room*, the mother struggles to trust in others, distantly observing and learning from her own mother and stepfather, as they teach the boy to cooperate, interact, show care, and follow social conventions. On the screen, Robbie's and Cecilia's "cheap and shabby" home in *Atonement* displays the symptomatic and necessary compromises that adult reality often requires.

In the *Return to the Normal World*, the new thematic notion is confronted with society and a "return blow of reasonable queries, hard resentment, and good people at a loss to comprehend."[103] Yet, with their solid self-esteem, the characters demonstrate that they accept both their own and others' faults, embracing that although "you can't change who people are," you can still "love them," as Louisa realizes in *Me Before You*.[104] This constitutes the last lesson regarding the complexity of the world that runs through the narratives. Even *Gone Girl*, an ironic tale about adulthood, matches this rhetorical pattern and adds an amplifying twist, as Amy and Nick finally accept that they make a pair of "a petty, selfish, manipulative, disciplined psycho bitch" and "an average, lazy, boring, cowardly, *woman-fearing* man."[105] The films and novels further accentuate the ultimate responsibility to a greater whole that being an adult entails and show how social adaptation and cooperation are tied to recognition and intimacy. Hence, Amy explains that she and Nick must bend to the fact that their efforts and reunion is "the story the world needs right now."[106] *Shutter Island*'s Teddy returns from his make-believe world and acknowledges how his weaknesses contributed to his wife's and children's death, which finally enables him to choose to live or die rather than to exist in a liminal zone.

In the final steps, *Master of Two Worlds* and *Freedom to Live*, *Gone Girl*'s couple performs intimate and cooperative acts of mind reading on the screen,

despite the tensions between them. "That's how well you know me: You know me in your marrow," Amy concludes.[107] As *The Da Vinci Code*'s protagonists enter the chapel of Rosslyn to find the mystery's final key, they sense each other's thoughts and intentions with the same closeness and display of mastery. In *Atonement*, the internal author and narrator describes how she has chosen between two alternative endings, guided by inner values and beliefs. For her, it is "kindness,"[108] a word that implies both intimacy and care, that ultimately leads to happiness and makes it possible for her to conjure the dead lovers back to life—in the novel to a community of home, friends, and family; in the film to a state of secluded togetherness in harmony with nature. This belief in mankind and a balanced set of adulthood markers in the context of normal life, as keys to the elixir of happiness and *Freedom to Live*, is a conclusion that the narratives share. Near the end, Whatney describes how he embraces adult life's lull of responsibilities, through his experiences on Mars: "I figured out how to survive, at least for a while, and I got used to how things worked. My terrifying struggle to stay alive became somehow routine. Get up in the morning, eat breakfast, tend my crops, fix broken stuff, eat lunch, answer e-mail, watch TV, eat dinner, go to bed."[109] Nevertheless, it is the concluding thought that "every human being has a basic instinct to help out"[110] that reveals he can build a new life on Earth in a somewhat happy state of adulthood.

Conclusion

As Thomas Leitch makes abundantly clear, one of the strengths of adaptation studies is that it allows for a number of alternative definitions and a productive variation of approaches.[111] The urtext concept abides by this principle and opens up for the examination of the web of nodes formed by a limited number of versions of a specific title, as well as for more inclusive studies. It can be used for explorations of genres, themes, and media conventions. For instance, Hogan has used an urtext approach to identify heroic, sacrificial, and love stories as the three dominant "universal narrative prototypes" with subgenres, all of which share the purpose to teach happiness.[112]

In this chapter, I have made use of Campbell's depiction of the monomyth urtext to demonstrate its usefulness as a rhetorical structure for stories' thematic arguments, beyond its common use as a model for prescribed character arcs

and sequences of events. The diverse films and novels in my sample form a coherent web with clear thematic patterns and variations that add to the already existing map of the monomyth. As a result of the thematic approach, a general rhetorical structure reveals itself in the hero's journey, by which stories can be easily translated to rhetorical journeys through any chosen theme. Although adulthood has been the focus in my study, markers of gender, class, emotions, or any other theme can be applied to explore the thematic line of reasoning in fictional works.

What, then, is the core of the specific argument about adulthood that the ten pairs of adaptations reveal? First, the films and novels represent adulthood as a state that does not give much room for self-esteem, cooperation, care, commitment, or plans for the future in everyday life. The intuitive notion of adulthood instead revolves around work, home, and family; rationality; and simplifying demarcations to avoid unnecessary complexities. Yet, the call is made for a more complex worldview, associated with a richer emotional and cooperative social mindset. In the second act, the novels and films demonstrate that the markers of adulthood are interdependent. Self-esteem, self-awareness, and a consciousness of the social world's complexities are presented as key factors to implement this understanding, while rigid obedience to conventions obstructs. In the third act, the stories tell us that substantive qualities, especially beliefs, a solid worldview, and emotional balance, are necessary to develop the sense of adulthood further. With those elements in place, a fully developed care for others, a sense of intimacy, and autonomy of mind within a frame of tolerant conventions can be fully integrated. Finally, in the fourth act, the stories demonstrate the importance of compromise and acceptance of everyday life's imperfections for a somewhat happy state of adulthood to be accomplished.

Each film and novel naturally displays variations that add nuances to the adulthood urtext, both as individual texts and as adaptation pairs. There are also certain disparities between the films and novels. In general, the films afford more weight to social markers, home, and family, perhaps as a consequence of the possibility to better represent the characters visually. On the other hand, the novels accentuate the need for awareness of complexities and the substantive role of values and beliefs. Yet, both novels and films produce equally multifaceted rhetorical representations of what a gratifying adult life generally demands.

That the selected novel and film corpora reveal great similarities confirms the validity of the monomyth as a rhetorical model for thematic adaptation

studies, without any partiality toward novels or films. Although I argue that the monomyth particularly invites adulthood as a theme, the rhetorical approach is universally applicable to other themes and their respective markers to describe how they are represented in multiple variations of a story or an urtext. This naturally invites further questions regarding the use of novels' and films' expressions to articulate thematic functions and dimensions in relation to different rhetorical steps, especially in a media landscape that is getting more and more niche and theme oriented. The model offers opportunities for structured corpora analyses of thematic arguments in particular genres and case studies, for instance, to explain the failure or success of an adaptation to connect with specific audience groups. For screenwriters who adapt novels, it can serve as an analytical tool to catch the spirit or communicated meaning of a text.

Regardless of approach, the final lesson is that novels and films are generally equally complex in their thematic investigations. When a film and novel are regarded as adaptations of a mutual urtext, they tend to complete each other, as if the characters and their narratives have more to say about the main theme, and, like real people, they change their viewpoint slightly when they migrate to a new story environment. Therefore, when they are examined, the decisive factor should not be the prejudice for a specific version or form but what the versions actually communicate, what alternative perspectives they present, and how we relate to that. In terms of adulthood, the various versions discussed here reveal "a vision transcending the scope of normal human destiny and amounting to a glimpse of . . . life as a whole."[113]

Notes

1. Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 182, 211.

2. Dennis Dutton, *The Art Instinct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 110; Hogan, *Affective Narratology*; and Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

3. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), xvii.

4. Lars Elleström, "Adaptation and Intertextuality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. Thomas Leitch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 524.

5. Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 26.

6. Cathlena Martin, "Charlotte's Website: Media Transformation and the Intertextual Web of Children's Culture," in *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*, ed. Rachel Carroll (London: Continuum, 2009), 90.

7. See Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 71, no. 3 (2004); and Dan McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

8. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 3rd ed. (Novato: New World Library, [1949] 2008).

9. Ibid., 12.

10. Ibid., 29.

11. I adapt Thompson's four-act structure labels to underscore the rhetoric progression through an *Introduction, Complication, Development*, and *Conclusion*. See Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

12. Campbell's text has served as a prototype for many writing manuals, for example, Christopher Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3rd ed. (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007), and Craig Batty, *Movies That Move Us* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), and for feature films and novels alike, most famously George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga.

13. See, for example, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Lewis R. Aiken, *Human Development in Adulthood* (New York: Plenum Press, 1998); Harry Blatterer, *Coming of Age in Times of Uncertainty* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Varda Konstam, *Emerging and Young Adulthood* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015); Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton, [1959] 1980); and James A. Côté, *Arrested Adulthood* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

14. The qualities that Campbell mentions as significant for adults (e.g., stability, rationality, independence, responsibility, cooperation, and authority) form an alternative set of useful markers. In *Visions of Virtue in Popular Film* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), Joseph H. Kupfer makes good use of Aristotle's list of virtues.

15. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980); Hogan, *Affective Narratology*; and Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

16. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

17. Rick Altman, *A Theory of Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

18. As Matthias Brütsch demonstrates in "The Three-Act Structure: Myth or Magical Formula?" (*Journal of Screenwriting* 6, no. 3 [2015]: 301–26), intersubjectivity always plays a part when plot steps are identified.

19. Market success, audience impact and scores, awards, and professional reviews are a few of the many ways to approach the problem. For some titles, initially considered, the novel met a certain quality criterion, but the film did not, or the other way around. In the end, a subjective aggregate had to be made of all these criteria.

20. Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001).

21. E. L. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

22. Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl* (London: Phoenix, 2012).

23. Jojo Moyes, *Me Before You* (London: Penguin, 2012).

24. Emma Donoghue, *Room* (London: Picador, 2010).

25. Dennis Lehane, *Shutter Island* (London: Bantam Press, 2003).

26. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Corgi Books, 2003).

27. Andy Weir, *The Martian* (London: Random House, 2014).

28. Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Random House, 2007).

29. Walter Kirn, *Up in the Air* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

30. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 43.

31. Moyes, *Me Before You*, 30, and film minute 8.40.

32. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, 11, and film minute 7.10.

33. Ibid., 24.

34. Film minute 3.40.

35. Kirn, *Up in the Air*, 27.

36. Film minute 16.50.

37. Film minute 22.30.

38. Weir, *The Martian*, 73.

39. Flynn, *Gone Girl*, 81.

40. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 144.

41. McEwan, *Atonement*, 93.

42. Film minute 29.50.

43. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 64–73.

44. Film minute 26.50.

45. Lehane, *Shutter Island*, 107.

46. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 77.

47. Film minute 42.00.

48. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 81.

49. Vogler, *Writer's Journey*, 6, 135.

50. Moyes, *Me Before You*, 178.

51. Donoghue, *Room*, 131.

52. Film minute 41.30.

53. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, 150.

54. Film minute 29.56–31.58.

55. Flynn, *Gone Girl*, 135.

56. Moyes, *Me Before You*, 141.

57. Ibid., 205.

58. McCarthy, *The Road*, 80.

59. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 174.

60. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 97.

61. Ibid., 95.

62. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, 221.

63. Weir, *The Martian*, 183.

64. Ibid.

65. Film minute 45.50.

66. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 101.

67. Moyes, *Me Before You*, 213.

68. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 101.

69. Lehane, *Shutter Island*, 216.

70. Donoghue, *Room*, 193.

71. McCarthy, *The Road*, 139.

72. Film minute 59.00.

73. Ibid., 69.24.

74. McEwan, *Atonement*, 187.

75. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 300.

76. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 110.

77. Film minute 1.25.50.

78. Kirn, *Up in the Air*, 172.

79. Film minute 1.12.16.

80. Film minute 1.10.20.

81. Film minute 1.02.15–1.07.35.

82. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 137.

83. Moyes, *Me Before You*, 349.

84. Film minute 1.14.20.

85. Film minute 85.00.

86. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 133.

87. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 357.

88. James, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, 355.

89. Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, 390.

90. Film minute 1.14.30–1.15.

91. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 150.

92. McCarthy, *The Road*, 224.

93. Lehane, *Shutter Island*, 293.

94. Film minute 74.47.

95. Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 29.

96. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 170.

97. Ibid., 167.

98. Ibid., 196.

99. Ibid., 141.

100. Donoghue, *Room*, 193, and film minute 1.33.

101. Ibid., 277, and film minute 1.22.47.

102. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 178.

103. Ibid., 186.

104. Film minute 1.37.13.

105. Flynn, *Gone Girl*, 441.

106. Ibid., 443.

107. Film minute 2.12.12.

108. McEwan, *Atonement*, 371, and film minute 1.48.22.

109. Weir, *The Martian*, 341.

110. Ibid., 369.

111. Thomas Leitch, "Adaptation and Intertextuality, or, What Isn't an Adaptation, and What Does It Matter?" in *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation*, ed. Deborah Cartmell (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 87–104.

112. Hogan, *Affective Narratology*, 125.

113. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 201.

Okay: The Road and the Good Guys' Adulthood Code

Okay: *The Road* and The Good Guys' Adulthood Code

Introduction

The success of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and the immediate interest in the subsequent screenplay and film adaptation add intuitive support to the idea that fictional narratives attract audiences foremost due to their capacity to offer a mental space for reflection about the conditions of our social world. Pondering what the world would look like when his son was his age, McCarthy did not just write a novel about a man and his son's journey on foot through a devastated world, but "a meditation on morality, what makes human life meaningful" (Wielenberg 1). In a world where people literally feed on each other after an unspecified catastrophe, the father's quest is to "preserve human goodness by turning his son into a messianic moral compass" before he dies (Cooper 135). However, the man is aware that he has little time to teach the boy what he needs to know to grow into adulthood and survive. Nor is the man himself prepared for this mission. So, in order to fulfill his role as mentor, he has to explore and reevaluate the ideals of the adult world that he once knew and go through a journey of maturation of his own.

Continually, in all three versions, the man and boy communicate in order to bond, stay alive, learn, and grow, while the plot's rhetorical act structure furthers a thematic line of argument about adulthood. Specifically, "the oft-repeated phrase 'okay' functions as a primal response, useful in many ways as agreement, understanding with or without agreement, reassurance, and end of discussion" (Woodson 94). More importantly, these speech acts draw attention to the relevance of specific lessons, both for the two fictional characters and for the audiences. Thus, Paul D. Knox suggests that "the use of *okay* reveals that surviving the wasteland requires more than finding food and shelter; surviving the wasteland requires re-creating the communities that the apocalypse has erased" (97).

However, the lessons about what it is to be adult are disguised by *The Road's* deceptively dichotomous structure, and Naomi Morgenstern is not alone in

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observing that the "*The Road* is characterized by what one could only call a primitive and insistent opposition between the good and the bad" (75). Yet, under its bleak and polarizing surface, a voyage through *The Road's* landscapes in the novel, screenplay, and film may serve as a didactic vessel for lessons about adult and nonadult behavior.

The man in *The Road* once had a family, a home, work, and thus probably no urgent reasons to reflect on his own status as an adult. After the catastrophe, he must re-evaluate his position, as he begins a journey not just across fields and forests but towards a new maturity. For him "the boy was all that stood between him and death" (McCarthy 29), and it is his selfish innocence and fear of dying that drive him to take his son with him on the road. Eventually, he is transformed into an eternal mentor whose thoughts literally reverberate through his narration of the text. As Cooper observes, the father's gradual awakening and his process of transformation makes him the hero of the quest to become a man adult enough to father both his son and humanity (136–38). Thus, Cynthia Miller maintains, *The Road* "works on several levels to examine human relationships and responsibilities" (47), and so it becomes a story about "what is best in humans" (Woodson 95) and what we should live up to as adults.

In this context, the novel's basic "Code of the Good Guys" declares that they don't eat people but rather help others, they don't steal or lie, they keep their promises, and they never give up (Wielenberg 4). To this can be added the words that McCarthy himself has used to express the message he wanted to convey with *The Road*: concern, care, and appreciation (Oprah). Notably, the traits mentioned here correspond to classic adult markers as they are described by scholars in various models.[1] Moreover, they echo the aim of the hero's journey, "adult realization," as it is outlined by Joseph Campbell (16).

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[1] See for instance Lewis R. Aiken's *Human Development in Adulthood*, Harry Blatterer's *Coming of Age in Times of Uncertainty*, and Erik H Erikson *Identity and the Life Cycle*.

Intuitively, adulthood may be defined as reaching a certain age and formal independence from one's parents, by means of moving out, having a job, and forming a family. Yet being adult is also associated with personal growth and mature approaches to life's challenges (Roberts and Takahashi 4; Blatterer, *Semantic* 66). For instance, in developmental psychology, a certain degree of stability emerges as a key marker of adulthood, which relates to a series of other qualities, such as sociability, adaptability, conformity to norms, empathy, and intimacy. Other aspects that define the idea of adulthood are emotional balance, a constructive self-awareness, a recognition of complexities, a stable world view, competence, autonomy of mind, rationality, goal orientation, and a sense of responsibility. This list of qualities indicates that the road to adulthood is a demanding and "nonlinear process with no clear indication of completion," as Varda Konstam declares (7). Hence, Campbell suggests that the developmental cycle, from innocence and egocentricity to full capacity as an adult, must be repeated over and over again in a heroic, life-long quest (30; 212).

In this article, I explore the particularities of the lessons about adulthood that the word "okay"[2] draws attention to in the novel and in the cinematic adaptation (i.e., the screenplay and film). The rhetorical distribution of the word throughout the four acts of the plot emphasizes a thematic progression, from presupposed understandings of adulthood to a more developed thematic notion. *The Road* thus underscores that adulthood is a state of uncertainty, not of stability, that demands constant risk assessments and reliance on others. Interestingly, the novel, screenplay, and film foreground different markers of adulthood, so that they form

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[2] Like the origins of the man and the story's catalyzing event, the etymology of the word "okay" is clouded, with possible origins in Choctaw, Scotland, and West Africa.

complementing versions of a "Good Guys' Adulthood Code," with a common call for self-awareness, complex responsibility, and a balanced sense of autonomy, trust, care, and control, to keep invalid principles, pride, and false self-sufficiency in check.

The thematic attributes of the man and the boy in the story are orchestrated and articulated for specific rhetorical effects across the plot line, by means of the poetics of each medium (cf., Eder; Phelan). Thus, the rhetorical meaning of an attribute depends on just where in the plotted act structure it appears. As the plot progresses, what Hogan calls "abnormalities" constitute narrative interruptions that highlight various thematic markers. In *The Road*, the recurring syntactic interruptions by the word "okay," either as a question or as a statement, in various emotional frames of mind, form such interruptions. Despite their subtlety, they draw attention to the initiation or conclusion of thematic instances, and they emphasize what is said, done, enacted, or experienced by the characters. Moreover, the speech acts that are performed through the utterance of the word "okay" vary, both with regard to the intended locutionary function and the perlocutionary effect. Moreover, the expressions of character and specific markers of adulthood that the word "okay" draw attention to are conditioned by the distinct expressive means and media conventions that circumscribe the novel, screenplay, and film. Whereas the film works with multiple elements of sound—words, effects, and music—and simultaneous visual impressions, the novel and the screenplay are limited to the sensations that words can produce. However, single sentences in the novel often describe "not a single action but repeated actions" (Pryor 27) and shape the reader's impressions of sound, scents, and tactile sensations (28).

All the same, in the process of adaptation, the short novel's 58,772 words had to be condensed, to slightly less than half that number, 24,788 words in the screenplay, before these were expanded to 111 minutes of film. To some extent, the word counts may give an indication of how the functions of specific words have been emphasized in an adaptation. For instance, "papa" occurs 67 times in the

screenplay and almost twice as many in the screenplay, at 136. Similarly, "maybe" occurs 16 times in the screenplay and 36 in the novel. However, the word "okay" appears 195 times in the novel and only 37 in the screenplay, which in quantitative terms suggests that the function of the term has been subjected to a qualitative thematic transformation.

The Novel

The novel, praised for its style of narration, "the minimalist aesthetic driving the language—in description, interior reflection, and dialogue" (Frye 166), makes use of an omniscient narrator's observations to guide the reader. This voice is closely linked to the father character through its linguistic expressions, and the "revelations of the protagonist's interior world are tightly interwoven with the narrator's, to the extent that the two viewpoints merge and are frequently indistinguishable" (Cooper 137). The language mirrors the state of apocalyptic desperation and "engenders a sense of denial—stylistic and narrative—of life" (Mavri 5), through a lack of proper nouns and juxtaposed "grammatically disjointed phrases" (De Bruyn 778) in the slow, rhythmic staccatos of a body, sometimes out of breath, sometimes with the "contractions and expansions" (Pryor 37) of prayer. It is in this poetic context that the word "okay" forms an even pulse in the novel, with one or two occurrences on almost every page, and with several instances of intense interruptions of five repetitions in a sequence, but sometimes with no occurrences for up to thirteen pages, to mark the narrator's rhythm.

Setup: Innocent Care and Invalid Principles

In the novel, the initial notion of adulthood is defined by a focus on care, intimacy, responsibility, and unity. The first "okay" introduces the current state of normalcy, when the father asks if his son has the strength and is ready to move on, after which the narrator depicts how they are "shuffling through the ash, each the other's world entire" (4). Although the father's question communicates his intimate

worry and protective care as an adult, the "okay" passes unnoticed because the rhetorical pattern has not yet been established. However, a few pages later, seven repetitions occur in rapid succession, just after the man's and the boy's goal of reaching the ocean has been articulated, which draws attention to the rhetorical figure. The use of "okay" in this dialogue stresses the mutual need for intimacy and concord, for their world not to crumble and their bond of loyalty to remain unharmed. Accordingly, the boy repeatedly confirms the man's caring statements and questions, a pattern which thus gradually contributes to the boy's increased self-reliance. At this instance, the boy is prompted to authorize the man to blow out the lamp, saying "Yes. That's okay" (9). This closes an accentuated and structured repetition to prepare the reader's attention for the boy's question, in the dark, what the father would do if the boy died. The subsequent bonding dialogue concludes with a verbal reassurance, in a similar reiteration of another phrase closed by an "okay*,*" which makes it possible for them to fall asleep for the time being: "I would want to die too. / So you could be with me. / Yes. So I could be with you. / Okay" (9).

However, the man struggles with a precarious lack of belonging, the relevance of memories, and the dangers of nostalgia. These struggles are demonstrated when the father's inner dreams rise to the surface at his abandoned childhood home. The son's sensation of danger is discarded by the man's rhythmic, but repetitive "it'll be okay" (25) and "it's okay" (28). In connection with these scenes, McCarthy employs earthquakes metaphorically: the ground shakes and trees are torn from their roots. Meanwhile, the boy's worrying nightmares re-initiate the father's caring assurances that "it's okay" (36; 37), and, reflecting his own mindset, the man concludes that "dreams can be really scary" (37). All the same, he stimulates more positive mental visions as he tells the boy that it's "okay" to go into a pond with deep water and teaches the boy how to float (39), a metaphor for their state of affairs. This also reflects the necessity of coping with the complexities of the world, especially the man's task of fathering his son. Although he is not yet ready to float himself in that

capacity, he tells the boy "stories of courage and justice" (42) and instinctively displays inner strength and rationality to protect them both from the present physical dangers. Yet his dominant reactive short-term perspective also reveals his disorientation regarding the long-term challenge of preparing the boy for the future. In part, he reluctantly postpones the more complex responsibilities, narrowing his focus to their physical well-being and drawing metaphorical inference from the roads as he states that "there is nothing to uproot them, so they should be okay for a while" (44). Nevertheless, the series of "okays" gradually initiate the boy to the art of assessing signs of danger and paths to safer shores.

The father also demonstrates the need to prioritize when he offers no help to a dying man. To the boy, the incident is a dramatic lesson about the complexities of the world. Still, the awakening is stronger for the father, since the boy's refusal to talk to him afterward exposes the instability of the connection that they depend upon. Before they reconnect through an exchange of "okays," which acknowledges their bond (53), the man understands that their attachment and cooperation cannot be taken for granted unless they share core values and aims.

Perhaps the most demanding moral of Campbell's account of the hero's journey is the importance of trust in others and a modest ego. Just as the man tutors the boy to the best of his capacities, the boy now takes on the role of the father's mentor in a collaborative and adaptive exchange. When the man apologizes for coughing, the boy returns his care with a comforting "it's okay" (56). The phrase here functions as a first catalyst for events that make it clear that the man has yet to learn how to be fully alive and to have faith in what the boy has to teach him.

The crossing of this first dramatic threshold is completed when the man shoots one of the bad guys to protect them both and they find that they need to completely reevaluate the balance of their priorities and values. The state of absolute uncertainty that this entails becomes clear as the man calms the boy after the shooting, trying just as much to comfort himself with the repetitive "it's okay" (69), knowing that the journey of development has only begun.

Complication: The Burden of Complex Responsibilities

The second act of the narrative, the purpose of which is to reveal the intricacies of the thematic concept, begins with a re-establishment of the unity between the man and boy, through their mutual values and the man's responsibilities. However, the father has yet to explore and develop the facets of his own adult character. Frustrated, he commands his son to talk to him, and the boy's affirming "okay" allows the man to declare to them both that, after all, he has been appointed by God "to take care of" the son (80), even if it means killing another person. This moral conflict incites them to affirm to each other that they are "still the good guys" and "will always be" so (81). However, the excessive repetition of this message signals doubt, as well as a worry that they might transgress the line of decency before too long. The only ease that they find lies in the "okays" that seal the oath to remain good, mindful of the depth of complexities that any code of ethics and values might present.

In the novel, the ensuing trials are framed by encouraging confirmations that they are going to be okay, as they re-evaluate and sort out strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and threats, on the road to the father's elevated state of adulthood. A first step for the man is to assume a more instrumental parental role, teaching the boy to make strategic and cautious evaluations; all the while, their conversations are completed with approving "okays." These affirming rituals manifest the adult authority and capacity to lead through competence, care and hope. Although many lessons, like finding water before food, are practical, the man now begins to demonstrate the value of trust, adaptation, cooperation, prioritization, and sound, informed judgements.

The contradictions that the world offers them, as the man's and boy's ideals must be balanced with their harsh realities, are brought to the fore when the boy says that he believes the father is lying about their chances of survival. "Okay, I might. But we're not dying," the man replies (105). "Okay," the boy repeats,

acknowledging the priority of hope before demoralizing honesty. However, through this agreement they also subscribe to a higher level of risk-taking for the greater purpose. With increasing intensity, the man tells the boy that "it's okay," not because a situation is safe, but because they "have no choice" but to confront it (112). Thus, the simple evaluation of urgent problems is replaced with a more complex assessment of probabilities. The function of the first act's often intimate and comforting "okays" has now been exchanged for more formal confirmations that their strategic and rational judgements accord with their goals and values.

A tentative understanding of what might be gained in the future, also regarding the thematic lesson, is usually reached at the midpoint of the conventional heroic journey. At first glance, the prospects are far from the brightest in *The Road*. Still reluctant to change and to assume the ultimate responsibility, the man shows a poor sense of judgment, stability, and care when he commands the boy to learn to commit suicide, in order to avoid a possible worse fate in the future. Observing his own mistake, the man resigns and returns to the comforting "it's okay" (119) as a reminder that he must still be the responsible one. In this scene, the phrase serves as a turning point for the man's self-awareness. For the first time, he must truly consider whether he could kill his own son as an act of care, an intensified parallel to the end of the first act of the drama. He acknowledges that it is okay to be found wanting at times, if that is compensated by other qualities.

Attention is next drawn to an alternative, brighter vision of their prospects by a succession of confirming and reassuring "okays" as the man decides to examine a house and a bunker. The father regains his stability and authority through their moral code: "Okay. This is what the good guys do. They keep trying. They dont give up," which the boy seals with "okay" (145). In the shelter, full of canned food and other necessities, frequent "okays" mark a temporary return to the initial intimacy and care, a pause in their existence during which the man can teach the son about the good and simple things he knows. Summarizing the lesson thus far, the man concludes that "it's okay" to be selfish when no harm is done to others, because people

generally want what is best for the greater good (148). As a result of this temporary harmony, every "okay" in this sequence emphasizes the temptation to abandon the quest and to be content with the situation and awareness of adulthood that they have achieved.

Development: Self-Awareness, Reason, and Goal-Oriented Faith

Just as efficiently as McCarthy lets the word "okay" initiate, dramatize, and conclude thematic key instances in *The Road*, he also uses its absence for several pages to mark what could be called dramatic act transitions. At the midpoint of the narrative, when developments conventionally balance on an edge, twelve pages pass before an "okay" signals a re-commitment to caution and hope and introduces the next act's theme: the man's pride. "Let's not get too smart," he says (170). "Okay," the boy agrees, and takes on the role as the father's mentor in the following pursuit of this ambition, as he asks what their "long term goals" are (170), thus introducing a new perspective of reason, responsibility, hope, and complexity.

As they continue, the man's increasing self-awareness, along with his struggles to learn to adapt, trust, and to understand how cooperation truly works, allows the boy's autonomy to grow. In this phase of the novel, almost every "okay" is active in this process, which offers them far from a linear line of progression. An encounter with an old vagrant brings forth the value of negotiation in the context of social adaptation, cooperation, and respect. Offering a cooked meal and a stop for the night is "the best deal you're going to get. / Okay," the man declares to the boy (175). Now conscious of the various, complicating functions of the word "okay," from the submissive response when a command is obeyed to a cautious statement that all is well, the man states firmly that "okay means okay" and that there will be no further negotiations (175), which is sealed by a double repetition of the word. While this negotiation nevertheless results in a mutual commitment to care for others (Knox 97), other values are still ambiguous. Yet their conversation illustrates how much any social existence needs to rely on unity and mutual comprehension of matters in a

world of no fixed rules or truths. The other man forces the father to define his faith in God and mankind and he puts forward that the boy is "a God" (183). The boy's apotheosis, the father's first concession to an imperative change in their statuses, also opens up for a new sense of humility. When they break camp, it is the boy's turn to reproach the father for mocking the old man. "Okay," the father says submissively, and the acknowledging word leads him to face his greatest fears in a prayer. "I am going to die," he says, "tell me how I am to do that" (187). If the boy has been promoted to a God, the man has begun his own apotheosis, an elevation to a humble and mortal human being. When the man later says "I'm sorry," it is thus the boy's role to allow the father his weakness, that "it's okay" (200). The boy's progress mirrors the father's initial adult competences: risk assessment, strategic choices, care, mental and physical stamina. He makes sure that the father drinks water, and he displays a rational frame of mind when the father worries that he will see deformed dead bodies. "It's okay Papa. / It's okay? / They're already there. / I dont want you to look. / They'll still be there," the boy reasons, accepting the world as it is (203). As a final demonstration of the father's boon, the boy thus verifies that he is able to grow into being the adult the man wants him to become.

Later, the boy confronts the father, who wants to examine a house "because we dont like surprises" (225). To the father's astonishment the boy first just says "okay" (225). "Okay? Just like that?" he wonders, with the realization that unexpected turns of events cannot be defined as good or bad beforehand, since most of them are significantly more complex. In this dialogue the exchange of "okays" is again associated with a preceding statement, this time the man's aversion to surprises, and redirects the lesson, through the boy's unexpected acceptance, which opens for an escalation of the man's development. In his following frustration, the boy challenges the man to make a positive change: "You're not going to listen to me. / I've been listening to you. / Not very hard" (225). The scene exemplifies that the protagonist, at this point of his development in a narrative, may have all the answers, but has yet to master how to practice them.

The tension that has charged the "okays" changes to more sociable and relaxed expressions when they reach the ocean. They indulge in a fantasy that another father and son are sitting on a beach on the other side of the water: "That would be okay. / Yes. That would be okay. / And they could be carrying the fire too," they agree (231). This vision contrasts with the father's earlier disapproval of dreams, which make the mind stray from the harsh realities (202). In effect, he still eschews the notion that the complex and seemingly conflicting aspects of life form a unity that may serve as guidance in everyday life.

Coda: Unity through Balance and Cooperation

At the onset of the narrative conclusion, yet another act shift is marked by the absence of the word "okay" for ten pages. For the man and boy, the ocean was the external goal and with the lessons learned about what it takes to be adult, they pause and the man leaves the boy alone "to stand guard" while he takes a look at a half sunken ship in the water (238). Instead of worry, it is the mutual connection, the cooperative division of labor and respect for the other's responsibility and competence that they now accentuate. The struggle to find a new world of normality takes off with eight "okays" of assessments and forgiveness when the man retrieves the gun they left behind, and they have to walk in the dark, hand in hand, because of the delay. "We'll just take it one step at a time. / Okay. / Dont let go. / Okay" (249), they agree, referring metaphorically to their future, which marks the beginning of the fourth dramatic act.

The boy's taxing rebirth into a new normality precedes and fuels the father's. As the boy falls ill from food poisoning, the man's utterances, like "you're going to be okay" or "that's okay" (269), accompany his more concrete efforts at care, until the final "okay" in the sequence signals the boy's resurrection and the father's staring adoration: "Stop watching me. / Okay. But he didnt" (270). The man has still not left all his ego behind, so before he can return as a master of both ideas and realities, he must be confronted with a final didactic provocation, which occurs

when a thief takes their cart and food. For the first time it is a third person who utters the word "okay" repetitively in remorseful submission, indicating that he and the man are representations of one and the same character. The father must indeed learn to practice "what has been taught correctly and incorrectly learned a thousand times . . . That is the hero's ultimate difficult task," as Campbell declares (188). Thus, he must go through the situation and observe his own manners in order to make sense of both his own and the stranger's vulnerability and problems with respect, priorities, adaptability, trust, and compassion. As he leaves the other man naked in the cold, the boy passes judgment. Once again the father has to beg for forgiveness, and the boy says "okay" three times (279, 285).

Next, McCarthy employs the father's physical wound from a previous encounter to illustrate the painful cleansing process (285). "Is it okay?" the boy asks as the man sutures his flesh. "Yeah. It's okay. / Does it hurt? / Yes. It hurts," the man admits. Previously, the word "okay" has at times served to bind contrasting perspectives together. Here, the physical and the mental wounds and processes of healing are juxtaposed, as are the textually concrete words and the abstract structure of the hero's journey. In effect, the "okay" works on several levels to lay bare the lesson about the unity of complementing forces, as the man is about to enter the state of being master of both the idea and practice of adulthood.

As he is dying, the man tells the boy to continue talking to him after he is gone. "You have to make it like talk that you imagine. And you'll hear me. You have to practice. Just dont give up. Okay? / Okay. / Okay" (299). His final lesson is that he can live completely and eternally if he trusts the voice of another. "It's okay, Papa. You dont have to talk. It's okay," the son confirms (299). Immediately after the man dies, the boy encounters a friendly family. The new man's accepting and confirming "okays" give their dialogue a similar rhythm to the ones the boy had with his own father, who thus appears to be reborn as a family father, as a voice in the boy's head, and as the adult narrating voice of the story all at once. In resonance with Christian mythology, he thus takes on the practical human form,

the shape of the spirit or idea, and that of the all-seeing narrating creator in a vision of what an adult should strive for, but not necessarily expect to be.

Thus far, we have seen how the novel's rich use of the word "okay" highlights, introduces, ends, and frames sequences of importance for the representation of adulthood. The thematic argument takes its stance from an ego-centric and innocent view on adulthood based on care and invalid principles. As the man is confronted with the burden of complex responsibilities, a sense of self-awareness paves the way for goal-oriented reason and faith, before a more mature view on adulthood is developed, foregrounding balance, cooperation, unity. This leads to the question of how this thematic rhetoric is adapted and transformed in the screenplay and film. With a drastically reduced frequency of the word "okay" in the dialogue, each instance had to have an even clearer purpose in these versions of *The Road*, to maintain a thematic continuity and fidelity to the spirit of novel. Yet, like all other novels that are adapted for the screen with box office expectations in the background, the screenplay and film had to appease the common cinematic preferences for dialectic approaches, social action, and community, to some extent on behalf of the novel's spiritual qualities.

The Screenplay and Film

When the director John Hillcoat suggested purchasing the rights to McCormac's manuscript even before the novel was published, it was not just the scenes of children being eaten and McCarthy's vision of a "glaucomic world" (Danta 10) of gray that made the film studio hesitate (*EW*). The novel's genre, style, and language, together with its subsequent critical success and popularity, created a problem for Hillcoat and the adapting screenwriter Joe Penhall, who both immediately revered the novel. Hence, in Penhall's mind, "the voice had to be McCarthy's. I had to write the script as if McCarthy were writing it" ("Interview" 133). With the ambition "to trust McCarthy's story-telling and not be tempted to reformulate it" (Penhall, *Independent*), he was pleased to find the order of the scenes

to be "carefully calibrated" so that little change had to be made in the plot structure (Penhall, "Interview" 133). As a bridge between the novel and film versions, between media specific conventions, and "to fully capture McCarthy's coruscating lilt" (Penhall *Last*), Penhall included a voiceover in the script. Still, Stacey Peebles submits that their reverence for the novel might have prevented Hillcoat and Penhall from "productively superimpos[ing] Hillcoat's vision with McCarthy's."

Inevitably, the conventions of both screenwriting and film affected the transformation of the novel into a screenplay and into the subsequent feature film, with its aspirations for box office success attached to it. The novel's pensive and abstract impressionistic imagery had to be translated into a film version, which Miller finds "leaves less room for interpretation. As the world dies around the father and son, the ground trembles, trees uproot, fires ignite with a seeming randomness, and the air is thick with smoke and ash" (47). However, it is only on the superficial, visual plane that her judgment might be valid. Penhall observes that "fire, water and pianos are all things we interact with to make them work—so on screen you see a character interacting" ("Interview"133). This interaction creates room for interpretation. One of the effects of this shift from the novel's focus on the oral discourse between man and boy to the screenplay's and film's physical engagement with objects and matter is the drastic reduction in frequency of the word "okay." Nevertheless, the word still matters for the thematic presentation, especially for the spectator who has read the novel.

The somewhat conventional adaptation strategy created several problems that Penhall and Hillcoat had to take into account. First, potential audiences had visual references from other films and news media that they would draw inferences from, imagery that was not necessarily present in the novel. Hillcoat explains:

> The shopping cart, all the possessions, the dirty ski jacket. That's such
> a precise view of a familiar thing that we all know, that is, the
> homeless we all see on the street. We looked at actual photos of
> smaller postapocalypses that have happened, like mountains blowing
> up or Katrina. Whether it's 9/11 or Hiroshima or any of these things,
> man-made or natural, that's the imagery that came to me when I was
> reading the book as opposed to any of the CGI spectacles of the film
> genre. So we ended up not referencing postapocalyptic films at all, but
> rather looked at films like *The Bicycle Thief*, which is a father-and-son
> film. (*EW*)

Another consequence of the reduction of dialogue is that lighting, camerawork,
editing, and scene descriptions had to dramatize the novel's "narrative shifts
between humanity and brutality, . . . lyrical warmth and dissonant dread," as Miller
observes that the score, in particular, manages to do (50).

Setup: Detachment and the Need for Unity

With all this in mind, the question is how the screenplay and the film employ the
remaining and added occurrences of the word "okay" as a rhetorical resource, and
how they complement the novel as versions of the same story. The first indication
of a different strategy than that of the novel comes from the recurring use of the
word "distant," which is repeated in the first scene descriptions of the screenplay
(3, 4), as an initial key to understanding the relation between the man and his wife
and between the man and the boy. This is illustrated not only by the emphasized
misunderstanding between the man and the woman in the face of the approaching
catastrophe, but also when the boy first wakes up in the wilderness. In the novel,
his morning greeting, "Hi Papa" (3), confirms that he knows the father is there
when he wakes up, but in the screenplay and the film he wonders, as the world
trembles, where the man is: "Papa? (NO REPLY.) Papa?" (4). Although the man

responds that "it's okay" (4), the distance and silence between them is stressed by the inserted descriptive element in the boy's worried and restated question. The dramatic implication is that the bond between them has to be okayed every time they wake up. Notably, compared with the novel, this scene has been moved to the beginning in the screenplay to modify the relational setup, Penhall's and Hillcoat's ambitions of fidelity notwithstanding.

Initially, in the screenplay and film, instances of care and intimacy between man and boy are rare. In the screenplay, they are limited to occasions when they stand beside one another or to occurrences of the pronoun "they," for instance when they travel, or when they jump, startled by a falling tree (6). In the film version of the latter scene, the boy is drawn to the father, who puts a protective arm around him. The film also clearly dramatizes their silent cooperation as they pull and push their cart through the terrain.

The scene where the man shows the boy how to commit suicide is also moved to an earlier point in the screenplay and film, to demonstrate the father's problematic and insecure parenting and his awareness of these shortcomings. In the film, the boy first whispers "okay," while the man instructs. When the father has completed the demonstration and asks "is it okay?" (11), the boy confirms with another hesitant "okay." The screenplay is remarkably concise here, given that what occurs would be laden with anxiety for them both. A sentence stating that the man "cuddles the BOY close" afterwards is directly followed by the action text "they set off again" (11). The apparent brevity of the comforting moment in the screenplay thus indicates the emotional reserve between the two, as if the text distances itself from emotional expression to reinforce the interpretation.

The father's detachment is also demonstrated by the boy's continual assessment of their relationship, which also illustrates the boy's role as the father's mentor. As he does in the novel, he tells the father that he has to watch the man all the time to make sure that he too eats and drinks (13). It is the boy who reasons that they do not know what lies ahead in a dark tunnel, whereas the father brushes

those worries away, with the opinion that "it's just the same as it is out here. Okay?" Metaphorically, to him, there is little difference between mankind's, or his own, external actions and the beliefs and ethics on the inside. The "okay" commands the boy to accept the man's non-intuitive evaluation without any reasoning, which he does, "VERY RELUCTANT," the screenplay states (14). Again, the "okay" signals distance and separation, rather than comfort and care, in act one of the screenplay and the film. Only when they run through the forest and the boy falls does the man care to ask about the boy's well-being and whether he is "okay" (16). However, at the end of this sequence of scenes, a change occurs in the man's attitude, as he lets his inner emotional engagement take over. When the boy is in shock after the father has shot the hostile gang member, he repeatedly tells the boy "it's okay" (20), while holding him close, with all the care and protecting instinct that was wanting before. The same scene, more intense in the screenplay and film than in the novel, indicates the transition to a commitment to change in all three versions.

Complication: Rejected Responsibilities, Loss, and Belonging

The rhetoric of the second act's complicating inventory of contrasting elements, which conventionally leads to "the harmonization of all the pairs of opposites" (Campbell 95), reinforces the impression of the screenplay's and film's departure from the novel's thematic rhetoric. In the screenplay of *The Road*, this is made manifest in a rhythmic dialogue between opposites, through the strategy to let most "okays" infer conclusions and to dramatize their following reversals.

A first pair of opposites is constituted by the bond between father and son, and by their bond to the dead mother, respectively signifying their goal to find a new world and their wish to leave this world behind. During an intimate bedtime conversation, the boy asks whether they are going to die, to which the man replies impassively with a rational statement that it depends on whether they reach the coast. In the film, the authority of his reasoning about these complexities of life is

underscored by a concluding "okay," which leaves the boy with an uncertainty, expressed by his subdued and disappointed "okay" (28). The conditioned prospect of survival prompts the boy to express a wish to die to be with his mother. The sensation is obviously shared, but yet not fully acknowledged by the man, and their intimacy is reversed to a distance of silence as the man, stunned by his own emotions, has no response to give. At this point, their yearning for what is missing inhibits, rather than aids, their ambitions to move forward.

Later, a sequence of dialogue asks what makes the bad distinct from the good and what "carrying the fire" actually entails (41), as the man's sense of responsibility, emotional balance, and self-awareness are tested further. The man's repeated assurances that everything is going to be "okay" (Penhall 31, 34) leads to an encounter with a cannibalistic group and the prisoners who constitute their food supply. In the screenplay, the man first escapes his responsibility as an adult and hands the gun to the boy, only to realize that the boy cannot shoot himself. He takes the gun back and aims it at the boy's forehead (38), causing his son to experience the same terror as the prisoners of the bad guys, who are literally waiting to be consumed.

Presently, the man's emotional control returns, as the theme of loss and belonging re-occurs, first when they find a can of Coca-Cola and the boy states he will "never get to drink another one" (42). In the film the man looks tenderly at the boy, while he tastes it, but the emphasis in the screenplay lies on the man's reaction. Once more, he "doesn't know what to say" (42). His bewilderment makes him retreat emotionally, and when the boy believes he hears a dog, the father says commandingly that "it's gone, okay" (43), speaking just as much about the life and pleasures he once had. However, the "okay" is also the link to their encounter with the father's childhood home, which he explores, again reminiscing nostalgically over times of harmony long since gone, reminders of a life of traditional values and hope. The boy, on the other hand, has no such references that he wants to re-experience. Instead, it is when he believes he sees another boy that he cries out in alarm, realizing that he needs to see him again to confirm that he too has

something out there to belong to. While life for the father lies in the past, only the future exists as a hopeful reference for the boy. Encountered with these complexities and relationships between opposites, the man sees the scope of the state of affairs and confirms this with an apology: "Okay, I'm sorry. I understand" (48), he concludes.

Development: To Hope, Believe, and Trust

As the screenplay and film confront the core thematic issues in the second half, they suggest that trust, hope, and faith are necessary for an adult sense of community and belonging. In contrast to previous reversals of notions and perspectives, the man and boy now find the shelter and the food they need, with the man assuring the boy twice that "it'll be okay" to enter the abandoned bunker (57). However, this immediately raises ethical questions about the right to take what belongs or has belonged to someone else, and the conditioned demarcation between individual and common property (62). Temporarily safe, the father's ostensibly ethical code is revealed, as he pronounces the idea that people share a notion of the greater good. Until this point, a place to call home has eluded them in their struggle for momentary survival, but the awareness that there might still be resources left in the world for a decent life also raises their hopes for a restoration of a sense of belonging linked to a place. The man's aptitude for tending to a home and family in a more civilized way is also brought to life more clearly in the screenplay and film than in the novel, through the prolonged duration of the sequence of scenes in the bunker, which follows from the initiating "okay." Also important is the aspect of pleasure—the Coca-Cola and the swim by the waterfall—since this brings relief from the pragmatics of staying alive. Together, the sensations of home and pleasure allow the man and boy to reconnect as individual persons rather than as survivors. This prepares the man for a confrontation with his own disconnection from faith, hope, and people.

However, the instability of these aspects of the man's adult character is exposed as the boy senses a long-term hope, believing he hears a dog, and the man discards the idea that the shelter experience is more than a momentary pause, by stating that "there is no dog, okay" (66), using the "okay" to cement the fact. When the boy, in response, begs him to say they are going to be all right, the man is forced to admit that he always expects the worst to come.

When they later meet the old vagrant, the father first uses the word "okay" to check the other man's status (70) and then to attract the boy's attention when it is time to go to sleep (71). The first "okay" establishes a connection and the second turns the subject of the men's conversation to children, hope, and faith. Like he does in the novel, the man confesses that the boy "is a God" to him (71), but the stranger's disheartened and cynical attitude toward humanity and hope—the idea that each and every one of us is on our own—tempts the man to return to and share this bleak view. As a reaction, the screenplay stresses how the boy later looks at the man in defiance, "for the first time, a new distance between them" (73). The climax of this sequence of events is reached when the boy declares that the man can no longer tell good from bad (73). Thus, the screenplay links the capacity to make ethical judgments to a basic faith in mankind and community, through the dialectic confrontation of attitudes, a lesson taught to the man and the audiences alike. Yet the contrast between the man's passionate relationship to the boy and the general worldview which he expresses illustrates the problem of keeping a core belief active through the hardships of everyday practice.

Coda: Autonomy and Humility, Care, and Reliance

The fourth act's initial display of how the gained thematic wisdom is practiced, when it is put to test by everyday life, begins with the boy falling ill, so the father must turn his attention to the boy's health. He resumes the mantra, "it's okay. You're going to be okay" (79), but he also says a self-accusing prayer: "Oh no. No no. Not this. Jesus Christ what have you done to us" (80). Shortly thereafter, the pattern is repeated

when their things are stolen; the man comforts the boy, saying "it's okay," only to blame his own failure for being fully responsible and instilling the boy with hope (82). So, when the boy adopts the man's despair, the father pronounces a declaration of hope out of loyalty: "Look there are other people and we'll find them. You'll see. . . . Please. Listen to me. Don't lose heart" (82–83).

The conflict between his articulated ideals and his practices climaxes in connection with his cruel revenge on the thief. On the boy actor Kodi Smit-McPhee's initiative, the concluding screenplay scene in this sequence was altered in temper in the film (Hillcoat, "Audio"). Up until this point, it is mostly the father who has used the word "okay," with the purpose of instructing and commanding, and he has done so with emotional restraint, as if to charge the expression with rational standards. In this scene, the father defends his own actions, in an attempt to enter the same mode, and explains that the burden of responsibilities makes him vulnerable to imperfection. However, his conclusion, that the boy is not the one who has to worry about everything, lets a certain despair shine through, and the boy responds with frustrated passion: "Yes I am. I am the one" (87). The emotional emphasis is largely produced by the acting and an extra word that Smit-McPhee adds to the dialogue, which is neither in the novel nor in the screenplay, as he pauses before he exclaims, forcefully and conclusively, "okay" (1.23.07). This line demonstrates the boy's awakened autonomy and authority in a way that the novel and screenplay never do as intensely.

This is the father's last important lesson, that responsibilities are always collaborative and shared in a community, and that being adult involves an acknowledgment of others' agency and feelings, as well as an awareness of one's own shortcomings and emotional reactions. To that effect he has finally learned the importance of an adaptive relationship to others. As he dies from the illness he has carried in silence, it is the boy's turn to say "you're going to be okay" (95), while the father delivers the final message about conviction, togetherness, responsibility,

efforts, and hope, and concludes with his last encouraging "okays": "Just don't give up, okay? You'll be okay" (96).

At the end of the story, brief "okays" are used to negotiate the new relationship between the boy and the arriving veteran, who invites him into his family, while the word also establishes a link between the stranger and the boy's father, and thereby trust and common values. When a new mother finally makes her entry, she is the first to use "okay" in an open question, asking if the boy wants to join them. Unlike the novel and the screenplay, the film ends with the boy's "okay," before distant, friendly voices signal the future community while the end credits are displayed on the screen. The endings of the screenplay and film thus depart from the novel's projected humanization of the holy trinity and instead emphasize the hope for a new beginning and a developed sense of human adulthood.

The Good Guys' Adulthood Code

I have tried to demonstrate how a single commonplace word, "okay," is used to guide the reader and spectator through a thematic argument in *The Road*. McCarthy's novel, Penhall's screenplay, and the film directed by Hillcoat make sometimes related, sometimes divergent uses of the word "okay," and hence allow for complementary thematic insights about adulthood through the three versions of the narrative. Naturally, the reduction of the number of "okays" in the screenplay, cut further still in the film, affect the rhetorical structure. However, it is the film that most clearly lets the word "okay" accentuate specific instances of thematic value, so that also the spectator who has not read the novel can observe the word's multifaceted, rhetorical relevance. Whereas the novel foregrounds a dialogic approach as it reasons about adulthood, the screenplay and film make use of a clearer dialectical rhetoric, perhaps as a result of the cinematic tradition of presenting clear protagonist–antagonist relationships. Although, the novel, too, builds on the contrast between the good and bad guys, it is clear that the strategic

choices regarding discourse and poetics affect the thematic representation of adulthood. For instance, the internal-spiritual dimension of the novel's hopeful ending is replaced, in the screenplay and above all the film, with an externalized, social aspect, with the importance of hope and belonging still well-defined.

However, as complementing versions, the novel, screenplay, and film make the argument that innocent care and unsustainable adult principles often go hand in hand with detachment, when unity is instead called for. A lost sense of belonging, the social uprootedness, can also make adults insecure, *The Road* seems to suggest, so that they might be inclined to deflect the burden of complex responsibilities. However, the narratives demonstrate that with a growing self-awareness comes the strength to have faith, set goals, trust in reason and others. In the end, the "Good Guys' Adulthood Code of *The Road*" involves a complex set of competencies that must be balanced, involving care and cooperation, a sense of autonomy and humility, emotional intelligence and control.

As Stacey Peebles observes, adaptations can be considered to offer experiences of liminality, similar to the one suffered by the characters in *The Road*. Being the apocalyptic tale that it is, *The Road* invites a mind game comprised of alternative visions and revelatory dialogue in all three versions of the story. If the reader/spectator's mind flickers between them, an even more elevating revelation might be reached than can be provided by any single version of the story.

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Article E

Adaptations and Post-apocalyptic Atonement

Adaptations and Post-apocalyptic At-one-ment

Joakim Hermansson

Introduction

The mental construction of an adaptation text, the sum of all the versions of a story, is partly driven by a preference for completion, order, and normalcy, states of the world that the experience of the alternative narratives may disrupt. Hence, I would argue, adaptations resemble post-apocalyptic imaginations as they foreground the experiences of contradictions and connections, but also of incompleteness, what is lost, and hitherto unknown possibilities that remain to be realized. The connection between the adaptation and post-apocalyptic imagination is made clear by the general description of a post-apocalyptic work of fiction as "a vision of after: after the world has come to disaster, after any tangible social order has been destroyed by fire or hunger or despair" (Kunsa 57). Similarly, film adaptations of celebrated literary works may give rise to feelings of expectations of what is to come, as well as fears of "cannibalisation" (Stam 25) and gradual loss of meaning.

However, to have an adaptational mind-set, I maintain, is equivalent to having a post-apocalyptic approach to coming to terms with the themes of life. In both cases, allowances are made for a consistent oscillation between alternative versions, which may at best produce the experience of entropic balance as a state of normalcy. In the case of literature-film adaptations, the sensation can be particularly intense because audiences' minds may use the fluctuating comprehension of the story versions as a metaphorical reflection of the social conditions of the real world. Through such acts of imagination, the time-space continuum and the borders between various fictional worlds and the social reality may be partially dissolved and crystallized in a post-apocalyptic manner. Adaptations may thus inspire audiences to construe the

experience of alternative, potential developments and self-identities as fluid prototypes for states of normalcy and happy endings.

This article makes the case for a post-apocalyptic view on adaptations, with the underlying question what post-apocalyptic perspectives may add when we consider adaptations as didactic tools in search for the elixir for adult happiness. After outlining the characteristics of post-apocalyptic fiction and imagination, as well as the connection between post-apocalyptic imagination and adaptations, the novel-screenplay-film adaptation *Atonement* (McEwan 2001; Hampton and Wright 2007) serves as an illustrating example.

Apocalyptic Narratives

In general terms, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction can be defined as speculative fiction about survival and lost community, with events set in a devastated landscape and a possible future. Films and novels in the genre echo sinister prophecies through representations of conquest, war, starvation, death, and darkness, and as a corpora of fiction they repeat the biblical experiences of the fall and the revelation in a seemingly everlasting loop. Undeniably, the mere word *apocalypse* resonates such events of destruction, doom, and the loss of both values and meaning. The persistence, attraction, and growth of the genre are therefore perhaps best explained by the human "desire to bear witness to one's own or one's community's end" (Mazurek 28), although the actual apocalypse might not seem eminent to all in everyday life. For those who believe that nothing follows the end, the emphasis in apocalyptic fiction on the destruction of the earth and its life forms might seem to offer even less, except for the visons of wastelands and a deserted sense of humanity.

Conversely, in the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, and the everyday culture of fear, with the global news feeds' continuous depictions of the terrors on earth, corporeal tokens of the mythical end are never hard to find. And so, it might be just as

reassuring, as well as acutely frightening, to develop a notion through fictional mental simulations that the end has already occurred, and that the post-apocalyptic imaginations of the future rather concern a re-vision of hope than a fall to come. Accordingly, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction strongly adheres to the narrative convention of protagonists with mythical qualities who depart from the drab conditions of their normal worlds. They undergo a transformation through a series of trials and ordeals in the realm of the unknown, before they resurrect as masters of all worlds, so that they may potentially solve their own personal problems and heal humankind.

Thus the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic genre responds to a human need to be prepared for what is to come, but also to link the past, present, and future in order to find an ethical way forward. As James Berger states, "the apocalypse as eschaton is just as importantly the vehicle for clearing away the world as it is and making possible the post-apocalyptic paradise" (6). Hence, in line with the biblical notion of the apocalypse, films and novels in the genre do not just end with a destruction that satisfies our collective fears, Claire P. Curtis argues. The need to simulate the end is also linked to the human desire for purpose and almost any post-apocalyptic fiction "reworks imaginatively how we might live together [and what] really matters about human living" (Curtis 2015, 5). The genre therefore can be said to "reveal our society's larger utopian desires" and pave the way for long-term survival, as the stories commonly promote the idea of an elevated normalcy founded on a reverential relationship to nature, an empowered individuality, and a renewed sense of community (Murphy 234). The function of apocalyptic visions is rarely just to facilitate speculations about eternal afterlife in a religious sense, but to provoke a desire for something better. With a dialectic force, the genre's narratives of devastation "ask us to think through our human commitments and invite us to imagine just worlds deserving of civic love" (Curtis 2015, 5). This is commonly affirmed in the final scenes

of a narrative, as a metaphorical seventh angelic trumpet, like Savannah's words at the end of *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (1985): "there'll come a night when they see the distant light and they'll be coming home." In this context, a post-apocalyptic vision denotes the ethical and thematic orders that are revealed after the apocalypse, or the end of a story: namely the unending reconstitution of relational, narrative meaning and contexts through adaptations.

With the dystopic and visionary approaches to post-apocalyptic imagination in mind, Briohny Doyle argues that post-apocalyptical thinking "both critiques and mourns" what has come before, while it engages in a search for future possibilities (111). Thus, post-apocalyptic imagination neither erases the past through new beginnings, nor does it turn the endings into distinct moral lessons, like most linear narratives do, in spite of any overt declarations at the end of the stories. Instead, the post-apocalyptic vision promotes a non-linear way of thinking, where all elements that may once have appeared to be inseparable or paradoxical, time, and place are dissolved and united, marking not the end of time, but "the end of one time" (Rosen XXIV), so that a new holistic, but always incomplete and fluid conception of the world can be formed.

Doyle also emphasises the interactive, interpretive, and creative processes that post-apocalyptic imagination requires, which introduces an apparent link between the appreciation of post-apocalyptic fiction and adaptations. Moreover, they both have the power to transport the audiences mentally between collapsed, recreated, and expanded worlds. Because the versions of the story worlds of adaptations exist both side by side and as a unity, they bring the past, present, and future together. This is not just a result of any possible cognitive play of causality in the stories, but more importantly adaptations stimulate the knowing audiences to be "conceptually flicking back and forth" (Hutcheon 39) between past texts and further imagined expansions so that ever new wholes may be fashioned. Like post-apocalyptic fiction, adaptations thus invite

audiences to consider what is lost and altered and to regard the unstated possibilities, while realising that the various versions of the world, with their inconsistencies and their regularities, may together constitute one incomplete vision, or many, while each and every version remains isolated at the same time. As McEwan muses in an interview, "there were 10 million ways you could make a … movie out of *Atonement*, the novel would have still remained itself" (2008).

The conflicting perspectives force the adaptation audiences to take on the role of God narrators to assess and pass judgement, with no right answer in sight, to form a resulting, mental adaptation text, a vision of an imagined and fragmented ur-text, to use Sarah Cardwell's notion (26). With a similar view on normalcy, as that brought forth by post-apocalyptic imaginations, adaptations embrace the possibility to merge the past and the opportunities of the future into one narrative, and thus to consider all our tentative narratives about the world and ourselves at once. Thus, the adaptation-minded way of thinking shares an element of reflexivity with post-apocalyptic imagination, which is based on the "persistent, self-reflexive acknowledgment that the post-apocalyptic world exists in a gap between the end of the world and its rebirth, a liminal space disconnected from yet bearing artifacts of the audience's world" (Stifflemire 188). The revelation after each adaptation must therefore be that it allows a work to stay intact as a unity, while forever merged and interconnected with something else, as if demonstrating the post-apocalyptic harmony between individuality and community.

Atonement

Immediately after its publication, the novel *Atonement* was linked to apocalyptic scenarios, both because of the thematization of collapsing worlds and the release date; the first major review appeared the day after the 9/11 events in 2001 (Sexton 49). A few days later, Peter Kemp wrote that *Atonement* was "engrossed not merely by

damage but its aftermath," signaling the link between the story and the apocalyptic state the world was in. In that context, McEwan echoes one of the central ideas of *Atonement*, as he comments on the terrorist attacks in *The Guardian*: "It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity." In line with what might be called post-apocalyptic imagination, he suggests that the root to all downfall can be found in the walls that exist between minds, and that the key to a better existence lies in the capacity to exist in a greater and shared consciousness, in contrast to a single-minded outlook.

On the surface, *Atonement* does not conform to the generic, popular definition of post-apocalyptic fiction. The typical genre features are however present in the narrative, with the Second World War as a backdrop instead of an unidentified catastrophic event. Still, most readers and viewers probably rather regard *Atonement* as a three-act melodrama with an epilogue, which tells the war time love story of Cecilia, the 23-year-old daughter of the Tallis house, and Robbie, temporary gardener and the cleaning lady's son. For others still, it is a contemplation on the possibility of making amends and reaching forgiveness. All the same, the narrative is riddled with cataclysmic wartime imagery and some of the novel's scenes, with torn bodies and limbs hanging in trees, were too horrifying to be visualized on the screen. What naturally lingers from Joe Wright's film adaptation is instead an apocalyptic vision from the Bray dunes in France before the Dunkirk evacuation of the allied troops, when the injured Robbie reaches the end of his road back from the wastelands of war and encounters a hellish revelation of humankind's darkest potential. In a five-minute long-shot he is tracked through a landscape where "the Dunkirk soldiers seem to be offered up for death or salvation" (Childs 2008, 152). Bereft of hope, most of the men suffer a similar sense of departure from community and context, like Adam and Eve did immediately after the fall. The best realistic prospect for any survivor at that point

seems to be to find a sheltered corner in which to die from his wounds in peace. Robbie, who has previously suffered expulsion from the normal world of the Tallis estate, passes away in a basement, only to be restored to life in a meagre war time London flat, together with his love Cecilia, and he will, later still, be transfigured into an even higher realm, to make post-apocalyptic resurrection complete.

It is not just *Atonement's* setting, story, and theme, but also the communicative structure that signals the link to the post-apocalyptic genre. The novel, the subsequent screenplay and film, all work with very distinct and sudden shifts in time and place. They all retell several segments from different characters' perspectives, crystallize time further through flashbacks, recollections, and indications that the future is already written, all complemented with a God narrator, who controls the developments, as Blakey Vermeule notes. Nevertheless, there is little preparation, when the story ends, all the versions, for the jump in time to 1999, a year well chosen for the end of time and the disclosure that the story thus far has just been composed of re-constructed memories and alternative facts of a world long since gone, since the narrator reports that Cecilia and Robbie have died and were never reunited. The story the audiences have followed is the novel that Cecilia's sister Briony spent a lifetime writing, to atone through storytelling for the lie that once tore the lovers apart. Yet, due to the multiple narrative layers, the God narrator is in a position to present the lovers with an afterlife and a complete return to community in a second ending, without any apocalyptic instabilities.

With the presence of the omnipotent God narrator, whose controlling role is to pass judgement through the narration, as a signaling element, the structure of *Atonement* is in many respects a post-apocalyptic metaphor. The final ending begs the audience to make judgements and to decide on which story to have faith in, to unearth the thematic essence. However, presented with a "reversal of the diachronic accrual of meaning" (Wells 101), readers and spectators alike are forced to reassess every detail

and the validity of the narration at every point in the story. Hence, *Atonement* illustrates the apocalyptic genre conventions well, as defined by Berger: "Temporal sequences become confused. Apocalyptic writing takes us after the end, shows the signs prefiguring the end, the moment of obliteration, and the aftermath. The writer and reader must be both places at once, imagining the post-apocalyptic world, then paradoxically "remembering" the world as it was, as it is" (6). Similarly, every new element to some extent "restructures the narration of the past, makes it readable in another, new way, so that things which don't make any sense suddenly mean something, but in an entirely other domain" (Zizek 189). Thus, as the story temporarily disintegrates, the narrative complexity unfolds to an apparent apocalyptic structure, and so *Atonement* pushes the audiences to read post-apocalyptically.

Visions of Humanity at the End of the World

As argued above, the repeated call for a post-apocalyptic renewal is arguably provoked by an overwhelming contemporary sensation of what Marcin Mazurek calls "a collective non-community" (74). Among adults in the fluid and postmodern times we live, a developed balance between individuality and conformity is indeed hard to achieve. This is reflected by the main characters in apocalyptic fiction, who above all labor to come to terms with the conflicting values of being an individual and being a part of a social greater whole. The ultimate goal for the characters in apocalyptic fictions, in terms of desire and motivations, is thereby linked to the human drive to develop into mature adults, who can cope with compromising realities. Hence, emerging adults often represent a post-lapsarian departure from community in novels and films, before they find a first path towards a reasonable state of adult happiness. In modern industrial societies, there is no clearly demarcated threshold to adulthood. In that perspective, personal development "becomes a modus vivendi" (Blatterer 70),

and the road to adulthood could be perceived as "an extended and nonlinear process with no clear indication of completion" (Konstam 7).

Readers of Ian McEwan's fiction are familiar with the theme of adulthood. His reputation was initially built on often shocking short stories and novels about collapsing worlds and identities, with children on the verge of adulthood and "the ideas and fears that the young have about 'being grown up'" in the spotlight (Childs 2005, 168). Ultimately, this fear refers to the potential loss of freedom and individuality when the individual is integrated with a greater whole, which is a recurring theme in McEwan's novels. In *Atonement*, the young Briony's self-annihilating realization also represents the concern of many contemporary adults: "the world, the social world, was unbearably complicated, with two billion voices, and everyone's thoughts striving in equal importance and everyone's claim on life as intense, and everyone thinking they were unique, when no one was. One could drown in irrelevance" (McEwan *Atonement*, 36). The claim equally summarizes the threat of apocalyptic nature that surrounds adaptations. As Kamilla Elliot submits, they are repeatedly regarded as "disciplinary bastards, simultaneously no discipline's children and every discipline's children, belonging to none, yet claimed by all. Their position as everybody's child allows for their universal theoretical use and abuse; their position as nobody's child allows for their universal neglect and marginalisation" (683).

Also, the narrator's observation in McEwan's novel that "the self-contained world [Briony] had drawn … had been defaced with the scribble of other minds, other needs" (36) is just as much a comment on the human fear of an apocalyptic, existential annihilation, as on adaptations. Briony's human desire for conditions that allow control over her self-identity can be related to the cult of the *original* text in a universe of intertextual connections. Like the post-apocalyptic mourning of the past, adaptations thus also inevitably return to something that has preceded them, at risk of being seen as "inherently conservative" (Sanders 9) and redundant.

However, in the shadow and light of the apocalypse, "meaning […] has its price. And this price is freedom," as Franco Moretti characterizes the message of the Bildungsroman (63). Once the transfer to the post-apocalyptic state of mind and universal community is made, the loss of individual freedom and worth can be seen in a new light, echoing C.S. Lewis' suggestion in *The Great Divorce* (1946) that the greatest freedom is not that of individual thoughts and actions, but the freedom to adapt and appreciate potential meanings and contexts. If the first path is followed, the immediate aftermath of the apocalypse may lead to despair and disorientation. If the latter is chosen, the possibilities for a reasonably happy life in a state of normalcy may be uncovered.

Yet, because "the primary focus is surviving the event, not surviving the aftermath" (Curtis 2010, 6) in many apocalyptic stories, the effect is that the apocalypse rarely leads to an actual transcendence to a higher existence in fiction. Instead, they present the idea that happiness lies in a reconstruction of the normal world, only with somewhat altered life patterns. Hence, "fictional post-apocalyptic accounts present the useful falsehood that there is a ground—a state of nature—from which we can come together and renegotiate our lives" (Curtis 2010, 6). In such scenarios, the post-apocalypse suggests a *Groundhog Day* opportunity to correct and mature.

In this context, it is worth to recall that the biblical prophecies foreshadow the possibility of a return to a paradisiacal normalcy. Without that vision in mind, it may be provocative to use variations of the term *normal*, especially when it comes to matters of identity and life-stages. To be normal is sometimes perceived as a narrowly limited and confined existential space, which leaves little room for any sense of the developed individuality that both happiness, adulthood, and adaptations are often associated with. The post-apocalyptic normalcy should instead be understood as an ideal, tolerant sphere, which enables individual "social integration as a simple part of a

whole" (Moretti 16). In a sense, the two different understandings of normalcy are linked to the notion of surviving the event with all limitations intact and to being reborn into the afterlife as part of a greater, yet incomplete whole. These alternative perspectives are presented through Robbie's and Cecilia's multiple returns at the end of *Atonement*: first to normal life in a shabby, limiting London flat to a life full of compromises, and then to an alternative normalcy in an eternal, ethical realm.

As the deceitful collapse of the narrative offers Robbie and Cecilia eternal happiness in the story world, *Atonement* illuminates the link between post-apocalypse, imagination, adaptation and vice. The alternative versions of how the story can be comprehended are innumerable, due to the narrator's inconsistent reliability, the internal intertextual references, and the many narrative levels. The concept of truth is thus violated and corrected, as in all adaptations and post-apocalyptic imaginations. Although *Atonement* implies "the impossibility of finding coherent and enduring explanatory systems" it still makes a case for the urgent human need for them, suggesting that "without them, there is nothing against which the self can be measured or defined" (Head 16). So, the postmodern twist which thwarts the narrative is in turn thwarted by the desire for identity and closure. Besides being asked to assume the role of a God replacement and pass judgement, the reader must also engage in an act of subjective idealization and mythmaking in the attempt to re-construct both world and meaning (Albers and Caeners 2009). Accordingly, the postmodern apocalypse entails such a humanization of the deity in the form of imperfect characters like ourselves (Rosen xxiii). Thus, *Atonement*'s twist implies that the supernatural powers to pass eternal judgement and to bring restoration may be regarded as a responsibility and within reach of human capacity. This also applies to the adaptation audience, while it is also asked to assess the parts as alternative entities and as parts of a whole at the same time.

To that effect, the ability to observe, assess, appraise, and imagine are foregrounded in all versions of *Atonement* as a consequence of the characters' search "for coherent structures of meaning and orientation" (Schemberg 7-8). This thematic quest makes the equally post-apocalyptic and adaptational aspects especially relevant for adults in a postmodern world and the so-called post-truth era, when the distinctions between reality and fiction, truth and tales, are not that clear even for grown-ups, particularly concerning issues like ethics and self-identity. For guidance, readers and spectators mentally simulate being the characters in the narratives, their personalities and roles, actions and life patterns, and so efficiently try out alternative futures through "low-cost, low risk surrogate experience" (Dutton 110). So, although most people may claim that they consume stories about the end of the world as entertainment, the main function of apocalyptic works of fiction is arguably to offer possibilities to imagine possible future scenarios.

The Post-apocalyptic Lesson

When they adapted *Atonement*, the screenwriter Christopher Hampton and the director Joe Wright strove to maintain the novel's complex form, structure and lack of "linearity of narrative" (Hampton VI) with "self-contained chunks of narrative, where the focus would shift unapologetically from one character to another" (VII). However, there were reasons to fear a collapse, because of the distinct narrative conventions that so often set novel and film versions of a story apart. While the novel appears to let the reader share the all-knowing narrator's observations and the inner thoughts of different characters, by necessity the screenplay and subsequent film heavily reduce the fictional beings' overt reflections on past discussions and inner thoughts. Due to the director's need, in Wright's words, "to tell the story as economically as possible," without "too much setup," which does not "propel the story forward," the number of secondary characters in the opening scenes in the normal world is also controlled

(2008). Furthermore, Wright wanted, with a film director's mind, "a story told in images, where actors thoughts would have to be readable on their faces," "without voice overs." In addition, he asked Hampton in a Hollywood fashion, after the first draft: "who exactly are we supposed to be rooting for?" (Hampton VI), quite in contrast to the novel's ambition to leave judgement pending.

   Naturally, these strategic approaches also affect the communicated ideals that the audience carries with them after the end and the final image. For instance, some of the novel's thematic problematizations of altruism, the absent fathers and the page consuming reports of the casualties of war are among the elements that have been omitted, or severely cut, in the screenplay and film. All such modifications transform the characters and the thematic lessons about life, which they represent, regardless of whether they are considered as post-apocalyptic transformations or the result of post-apocalyptic character expansions in another media form. This is especially true when, as in the case of *Atonement*, readers and spectators have to reconstruct the ethical universe retroactively, even if only one artefact version of the narrative is taken into account, and more so when use is made of the parallel universes of novel, screenplay, and film in that enterprise. The post-apocalyptic moral and imagination thus entails a vision of a possibility to restore a state of being a whole person, a quality which defines the idealizing notion of adulthood (Blatterer), which still seems to constitute a desirable state of being to strive for. The adult completeness, which may only be realized in the utopian post-apocalyptic world, seems to be one of the elements that attracted Wright to directing *Atonement*, as he submits that "Robbie Turner is good. He's the higher self. He's the best we can be" (2008). When it comes to such lessons, beginnings and endings of stories have "privileged positions" (Rabinowitz 300). The openings present the normalities, instabilities, and incompleteness that forebode the apocalypse, and thus also the importance of an increased awareness. Meanwhile, the endings summarize the elixirs of happiness. As Wright reflects, "the purpose of happy

endings" is after all to "give us something to aspire to (2008). They ennoble the human spirit." However, with an adaptational approach, a happy ending is not complete unless there is a return to the beginning, so that origins are united with successions, beginnings with ends. Thus, the two should not just be regarded as the extreme points of a line of development, but as parts of an incomplete non-linear system. In essence, both beginnings and endings deliver necessary components for the understanding of the other and the whole. In a larger context, all the interrelational connections in a narrative add to this picture too.

In all versions of *Atonement*, the characters initially reveal a conflict between idealizations and actual social behavior. The minds and actions of the adults in the Tallis household stress the value of having a meaningful occupation and of conformity to conventions. However, their problem to act responsibly, running a home and keeping a family together, produces severe instabilities, and reveals a lack of intimacy, emotional balance, empathy, and thus an ability to adapt and cooperate. In sum, adult life is simplified to pre-apocalyptic and pre-adaptational patterns with little room to allow any complexities. In a sense, individuality, community, and the natural approach to life, and thus the solid ground for meaning and purpose, are lost.

It is in this environment that the protagonists Robbie and Cecilia appear, as a dialectic pair and thus establish the fundamental questions how we may find a balance between passions and pragmatism, emotions and rationality, conventions, and an awareness of complexity, community and individuality, structure and nature. Robbie illustrates the perfect, conventional adult, especially in the versions for the screen, well adapted to the normalcy of the social environment, with emotions and intimacy pragmatically controlled. His confidence and his awareness of the world exclude the idea that there are problems that cannot be tackled through a practical and rational approach.

Cecilia, with her sensitive emotionality and aesthetic mind, but low self-esteem, presents a counterbalance, although she too has a limited awareness of the complexities of life. Her sense of rationality is controlled by her celebration of the irrational and emotional, and she defies conventions. "It made no sense . . . arranging flowers before the water was in—but there it was; she couldn't resist moving them around, and not everything people did could be in a correct, logical order," she muses (McEwan *Atonement*, 23), thrusting the flowers into the vase to accomplish the "natural look she wanted" (29). Similarly, the screenplay's visions of her, "with an armful of wild flowers, runs through the woods, enjoying the sheer exhilaration of movement" (9) signals her unrest, but even more so the potential for joyous balance. Under the surface both Robbie and Cecilia are impatiently waiting to break away, and when their youthful desire for each other awakes, it signals the fall and the future necessity for their two perspectives – the rational pragmatic and the aesthetic emotional – to merge for harmony to be restored. In the film, the sound of Puccini's *La Bohème* makes us sympathise with the role passion has to play for both the impending apocalypse and the salvation.

The lovers then go through the trials and horrors of war and die in 1940, but, as previously mentioned, the God narrator resurrects them to the normal world, a London home, so that their transfiguration and ascencion to the realm of eternity are made possible. The upheaval of time and the double endings produce two complementing and concluding images in the novel, as well as in the screenplay and film, to illustrate how Robbie and Cecilia unite as what Campell calls "master of the two worlds" (212), full of "grace, i.e., the power of their sustaining substance" (168).

Just before the first end it is established that Robbie and Cecilia lead an independent and structured life, guided by rationality, emotional control, self-acceptance, and a mutual awareness of the complexities of the world. Their life is no longer controlled by superficial conventions, but by compromises for the sake of living

together. The novel, then, turns to Briony's memories of Cecilia and Robbie, "standing side by side on a South London pavement" (McEwan *Atonement*, 370), a recollection of togetherness and simple care, "her sister with Robbie. Their love" (349). After the fifty-year leap in time to Briony's seventy-seventh birthday, she conjures them again through imagination, "still alive, still in love, sitting side by side in the library, smiling" together at the family gathering (372). This afterlife and new beginning can be seen as an expansion of the first ending, as Robbie and Cecilia are restored to a social community, where conventions, loyalty and rationality coexist with, and are perhaps even subordinated to, emotional presence. Their mutual set of adulthood markers are complete and in balance. Through the novel's final imagery of the couple together, which is only followed by the words "It's not impossible. But now I must sleep" (372). Joseph Campbell's conclusion about the elixir to happiness is made manifest:

> The individual … gives up completely all attachment to his personal
> limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self-
> annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so
> becomes ripe, at last, for the great at-one-ment. His personal ambitions
> being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to
> whatever may come to pass in him; he becomes, that is to say, an
> anonymity. (220)

The screenplay's first ending delivers an equally concise imagery to complement the novel: "in the window, CECILIA and ROBBIE are locked in a tender embrace" to complete the embedded story (Hampton 87), with the entire focus on the insular and intimate community of the couple in their home, secure and happy. In the film their withdrawal from the social world is marked by a passionate kiss, to replace the screenplay's more restricted emotions. The regeneration cannot, however, be perfected

until the God narrator appears on the screen. Just as the post-apocalyptic fulfillment means that the individual returns to God, here it is the "adult coming back to the child," Wright explains, and so a full circle of restoration takes place.

The screenplay text finally situates Robbie and Cecilia resurrected on a beach as they "crunch across the pebbles and splash gleefully through the waves, below the towering white cliffs on their way back to their white clapboard cottage" (Hampton 92). Whereas the value of family was repeated in the two endings of the novel, the value of home is here reiterated in the screen idea of the two endings. Again, the film nuances notions unity and substance through grace by adding passion, with a reference to the first presentations of the two individuals. Thus the end of *Atonement* stimulates a return to the beginning of the story, for an understanding of the new whole.

Final Words

By use of *Atonement* I have discussed how the nature of post-apocalyptic imagination generally relates to adaptations. In apocalyptic narratives the initial instablities do not only need to be mended. Like adapations may do, they serve to break apart the simplifying patterns that are often used to understand the world. Post-apocalyptic imagination can thus be compared with Jürgen Habermas' reflection, on the relationship between modernism and post-modernism, that our current cultural project explores the possibility for the human mind-set to fuse the rational with the aesthetic into a tolerating, albeit always incomplete, whole, instead of separating them.

Atonement's structure invites the audience to embrace the post-apocalyptic, non-linear and interconnected complexities of multivariable causalities that also the engagement in adaptations stimulates. It thus demonstrates how the order of distinct conventions, times, places, and minds dissolves and unites through the simplicity of an underlying narrative hyperstructure, which gives way to the revelation and the substance and energy of an adaptational sense of at-one-ment.

I have submitted that a lesson from post-apocalyptic narratives and adaptations is that simplicity should not be confused with simplifications. Nor should novels, screenplays, and films take each other's places after a story has been adapted. In that respect, adaptations refuse simplifications and are post-apocalyptic by nature, as they make inevitable the flickering play of meanings and values that are necessary for balance and a fluid unity to appear. So, adaptations in themselves become meta-didactic excercises, unless we fail to see that post-apocalypse does not just entail division and destruction, but inherently leads to revelation of the unknown as an inevitable condition for life.

In the case of *Atonement,* I have loosely sketched how novel, screenplay, and film also share an overall view on post-apocalyptic restoration, while presenting complementing formulas for the elixir of adult happiness. What makes a post-apocalyptic perspective on adaptations distinct is namely the basically existential thematic approach, since the narrative about the apocalypse and its aftermath has a moral to communicate about what it takes for us to mature as human beings. Compared to single novels, screenplays, and films, adaptations make allowances for the multiple layers of complexities that the imperative themes of our lives and our world often entail.

Yet, "possibly the most dystopian of all scenarios, curiously, is absolute resolution (and therefore, in theory, fully-achieved utopia)," Maria Manuel Lisboa tells us (49), but it is vital to remember that post-apocalyptic fictions do not demand fulfillment, but provoke interrogations. So in response to Robbie's impatient half rhetorical question "how much growing up do you need to do?" (McEwan *Atonement*, 342)*,* Briony concludes after a full life lived that "the attempt is all" and that fiction is there to assist (371). As long as the post-apocalypse is near, there is hope.

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Adapting Adulthood

Migrating Characters and Themes from Novels, Screenplays, and Films

When novels are adapted for the screen, the fictional characters are inevitably transformed in the adaptation process, and so is the thematic content. This study considers the characters and the thematic argument of a story as migrants who leave the land of the novel in order to adapt to a life on the screen with transformed self-identities.

In the five articles that this thesis is based upon, various sociological perspectives are engaged, focusing on what happens to the representation of adulthood when novels are adapted for the screen. They explore popular works of fiction like *Atonement, Fifty Shades of Grey, Gone Girl, Me before You, Room, Shutter Island, The Da Vinci Code, The Martian, The Road, Up in the Air*, and novels by Patrick McCabe.

Because novel-screenplay-film adaptations comprise alternative versions of a story, with their complementary thematic arguments, they constitute particularly rich thematic representations and metaphors for what social adaptation requires of us. Also, with an adaptation-minded approach, novel-screenplay-film adaptations may be regarded as processes and objects at the same time, with each work of fiction as an integral part of a greater dynamic whole.

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