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The Writerly Adaptation

Natalie Neill

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts**

School for Studies in Art and Culture

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

“The Writerly Adaptation”

**Submitted by Natalie Neill, B.A., Honours (Carleton)
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.**

Andre Loiselle, Thesis Supervisor

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April 2000

Abstract:

The field of adaptation studies is largely characterized by its preoccupation with questions of fidelity. The predominance of “fidelity criticism” in adaptation studies reflects an interest in the formal, or medial, differences between literature and film at the expense of other possible lines of inquiry. In this thesis the idea of fidelity as an absolute standard is challenged and film adaptation is promoted as being inexact and, ultimately, highly interpretive. This work focuses upon a group of recent film adaptations which openly interpret and comment upon their literary sources—and which can thus be seen challenge the perimeters of traditional adaptation studies. Four representative films are discussed in terms of Roland Barthes’s notion of the “writerly,” a concept which he introduced in one of his earliest indictments of structuralism (*S/Z* 1970). Through their free, interpretive approach to their pre-texts, *writerly adaptations* problematize all of the structuralist premises which underlie the project of faithful adaptation; namely, that the literary sources contain one canonical meaning which originated with the author and which can—and should—be reproduced by the adaptor.

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Contents

Acceptance Form.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
IntroductionThe Writerly Adaptation: An Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 <i>Naked Lunch</i> : Free Adaptation as Cut-up Text.....	24
Chapter 2 Film Adaptation as Literary Criticism: A Study of <i>Shakespeare in Love</i> ..	46
Chapter 3 Script and Scription: Tracing the Writer in <i>The Mystery of Rambo</i>	71
Chapter 4 Intermediality and Peter Greenaway's <i>Prospero's Books</i>	105
Conclusion Essaying the Writerly.....	124
Appendix "The Appearance of Osei" ["Osei Tojo"] by Edogawa Rampo.....	128
Notes.....	138
Works Cited.....	146

The Writerly Adaptation: An Introduction

In recent years there has been a proliferation of free adaptations in theatres. Examples of these experimental, even idiosyncratic, film adaptations include Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991), David Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* (1991), Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), Kazuyoshi Okuyama's *The Mystery of Rampo* (1994), Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995), Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996), Alan Taylor's *Palookaville* (1996), Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), Gil Junger's *Ten Things I Hate About You* (1999), and Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* (1999), to name a few.¹ These free adaptations, and others like them, treat their literary sources as open-ended texts which are endlessly interpretable.

Films such as *Naked Lunch*, *The Mystery of Rampo*, *Palookaville* and *Shakespeare in Love* are pastiches of multiple works by a single author. These "Frankensteinian" films freely combine elements from different sources within a single film text. Another trend in recent film adaptations is the practice of including the author of the literary source as a fictional character in the film adaptation. This study on adaptations represents my critical response to this recent wave of free adaptations, and my attempt to elucidate such recurring trends. I will argue that traditional adaptation

studies—with its emphasis upon fidelity—is ill-equipped to deal with films such as those listed above, as well as other, earlier, creative adaptations.

In this introduction I will provide a potted history of adaptation studies, outlining the dominant ideas and approaches which have characterized the field. First, I will discuss the history of “fidelity criticism.” Second, I will outline several possible alternatives to traditional adaptation studies which have emerged in recent years; specifically, I will explore the movement towards viewing adaptation as an essentially interpretive act. Third, as an extension of this, I will introduce the idea of film adaptation as a form of literary criticism. For the purpose of this study I would like to suggest that there is a “microgenre”² of free adaptations which can be described in terms of Roland Barthes’s notion of the writerly, or “scriptible,” text. As such, I will use this introduction to define the term *writerly*—which was introduced by Barthes in *S/Z* (1970)—and to suggest how it might be applied to the study of free film adaptations.

1. Fidelity Criticism and the Ontological Approach

The history of adaptation studies is likewise a history of the comparative study of film and literature. In “The Discourse on Adaptation” (1984) Christopher Orr identifies *fidelity criticism* as the dominant discourse in adaptation studies. Fidelity critics are concerned with how faithful an adaptation is to its literary source. In assessing the fidelity of an adaptation, critics examine the ways in which literary codes and conventions are translated onto the screen. Early writers on adaptation were interested in fidelity, especially to the extent that it could be used as a criterion to demonstrate the fundamental

differences between cinema, literature and theatre. Fidelity is often posited as a means by which to judge the success of a film adaptation. It has also been used to illustrate the limitations—and potentials—of film as a narrative form.

Pioneers of adaptation theory such as Virginia Woolf, Bela Balázs, Allardyce Nicoll and Sigfried Kracauer subscribed to what Harris Ross has called the *purist* theory. This theory, which is outlined in *Film as Literature/Literature as Film* (1987), emphasizes the divisions between the different art forms based upon the belief that form and content are inextricably intertwined.

Virginia Woolf supported the segregation of the arts while acknowledging that since its inception film has always been heavily influenced by the art forms which prefigured it. Woolf argued that the parasitic nature of film was a result of the misguided approach taken by early filmmakers, rather than an inherent characteristic of cinema. In 1926 she rallied for a new, purely cinematic form which would break from the conventions of literature and theatre. She asked: “... what [might] the cinema do if it were left to its own devices? But what, then, are its devices? If it ceased to be a parasite, how would it walk erect?” (Woolf 89). This point of view is echoed a decade later by the eminent theatre critic Allardyce Nicoll in “Literature and Film” (1937). Nicoll set precedents for Marshall McLuhan’s maxim *the medium is the message* when he wrote: “... the choice of method is an indication of the fundamental aim [of a specific work of art].” Describing the work of an adapter he further wrote: “It will be his business not to copy the method of the novel but to transform it into a kindred method true to the conditions of his own craft.” (Nicoll 8)

While many writers, such as Woolf, are disdainful of adaptations in general, asserting that films should discover a uniquely cinematic (read *visual*) subject matter, others have defended the practice. “Art Form and Material” (1945) represents Bela Balázs’s considered response to those who “[reject] on principle all adaptations on the grounds that they are necessarily inartistic.” (Balázs 6) Further, in his essay “In Defense of Mixed Cinema” (1958) André Bazin promotes adaptations writing, “Just as the education of a child derives from imitating the adults around him, so the evolution of the cinema has been influenced by the hallowed arts.” (Bazin 56)

In order to delineate the ontological differences between film and literature, certain writers have reduced the elements of fiction and film into formal categories so as to better analyse the different narrative strategies employed by each medium. In “Filmographie et esthétique comparée” (1952) Etienne Souriau examined the practice of adaptation with regards to the way *time*, *tempo*, *space* and *point of view* are expressed differently in film and literature (Kracauer 235). George Bluestone’s seminal text *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (1957) likewise represents a comparative study of the limitations of film and literature. Although *Novels into Film* is considered a definitive early contribution to adaptation studies, Bluestone’s approach reflects the same purist approach adopted by other writers. He outlines his premise thus:

Because novel and film are both organic—in the sense that aesthetic judgments are based on total ensembles which include both formal and thematic conventions—we may expect to find that differences in form and theme are inseparable from differences in media. (Bluestone 2)

Bluestone proceeds to differentiate between film and literature on the basis of their respective characteristics, differences in reception, and the way each express time and space. Similarly, in *Film as Literature/Literature as Film*, Harris Ross compares the two art forms insofar as *narration*, *temporal relations* and *spatial relations* are concerned in order to demonstrate the differences between their respective “expressive capabilities” (2) and “materials of expression” (3).

2. Alternatives to Fidelity Criticism

In all adaptations there is a measure of faithfulness (redundancy) to the literary source and a measure of innovation (entropy). In any given adaptation the ratio of redundancy to entropy will determine whether it is faithful or free, and to what extent. However, because the reading process is so highly personal, the very notion of fidelity as a universal standard is problematic. However rigorously “faithful,” a film adaptation still represents the filmmaker’s subjective understanding of the literary source. As Joy Gould Boyum has claimed, different spectators may interpret the same adaptation as being more or less faithful, depending upon their understanding of the original work. Boyum argues, “an adaptation always includes not only a reference to the literary work on which it’s based, but also a reading of it—and a reading which will either strike us as persuasive and apt or seem to us reductive, even false...” (71).

The concern with faithfulness represents the attempt to view film adaptations empirically, to measure and assess the object of study against the standard of the original work. Fidelity criticism has been used to facilitate the attempt to define the formal

differences between literature and film—an undertaking which has been of primary importance to adaptation theorists. In spite of the complicity of most scholars, there have been several writers who have questioned the notion of fidelity and, by extension, the inherently structuralist project it can be seen to serve.

Brian McFarlane suggests that Morris Beja was among the first to openly problematize the notion of fidelity. In *Film and Literature* (1979) Beja writes, “What relationship should a film have to the original source? Should it be “faithful”? Can it be? To what?” (Qtd. in McFarlane 9).

However, as Dudley Andrew points out, François Truffaut’s essay “A Certain Tendency in French Cinema” (1954), which is a critical response to the types of films being made in France at that time, is centrally concerned with the question of adaptation (Andrew 104). Specifically, as Andrew suggests, Truffaut argued against France’s Cinema of Quality not because it was a “cinema of adaptation” per se but because it favoured Aurenche and Bost’s faithful treatments of canonical literary works. Founded in opposition to the Cinema of Quality, the French New Wave consisted of film adaptations which were not based on classics,³ and which were not overly concerned with questions of fidelity. In fact, Godard’s *Contempt* [*Le Mépris*] made in 1963 is a film which presents the difficulties associated with adapting classical works. Based upon Alberto Moravia’s novel of the same name, the film is a highly self-reflexive account of a film crew attempting to produce a film version of Homer’s *The Odyssey*.

Other critics who have questioned the importance of fidelity include Christopher Orr (1984), Joy Gould Boyum (1985) and, more recently, Brian McFarlane (1996) and

James Griffith (1997). In *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* McFarlane argues against fidelity as a “critical line” (8). He asserts, “There are many kinds of relations which exist between film and literature, and fidelity is only one—and rarely the most exciting.” (McFarlane 11) However, it is interesting to note that McFarlane adopts Barthes’s essay “The Structural Analysis of Narratives” (1966) as a point of departure for his study. As such, while he questions fidelity, he preserves the structuralist premises which can be seen to inform adaptation studies.

In *Adaptations as Imitations: Films from Novels*, James Griffith formulates a theory of adaptation which attempts to move beyond what he calls the “form-content dialectic” (Griffith 37) and its inherent concern with “material fidelity” (41) which he argues shaped early approaches to adaptation studies. He writes, “Adaptations involve artistic choices that can imitate the novelist’s choices, but they need not and often do not.” (69)

The interest in fidelity may seem unavoidable because film adaptations are defined in relation to the literary works they adapt. To study an adaptation without holding it up against its source seems somehow flawed. However, this would be akin to studying any film without taking into account the diverse sources which inspired the screenwriter. Andrew promotes the interesting idea that all films are adaptations in a far-reaching sense of the term. He writes, “Every representational film adapts a prior conception. Indeed the very term “representation” suggests the existence of a model. Adaptation delimits representation by insisting on the cultural status of the model, on its existence in the mode of the text or the already textualized.” (97) Similarly, Christopher

Orr argues that a preoccupation with the way an adaptation is predetermined by its literary source tends to undermine the intertextual nature of the film. He writes, “The discourse of fidelity is premised on the over-determination of a particular code at the expense of all others, i.e., this discourse or critical strategy thus reduces intertextual space to a single pre-text.” (73).

Certain critics have suggested alternatives to fidelity criticism. Christopher Orr, who is highly critical of traditional adaptation studies, promotes a shift away from the ontological approach and towards questions of epistemology. Orr argues that adaptations represent the intersection of divergent discourses. He suggests that the formal differences between the art forms are less interesting than the ideological forces which are at work in film adaptations. He writes, “...the lapses of fidelity—the changes that occur in the passage from literary to filmic text—... provide clues to the ideology embedded in the text.” (73) It is important to note, however, that Orr is still preoccupied with questions of fidelity to the extent that his approach involves comparing and contrasting the adaptation to the original work.

Critics such as Christian Metz, Keith Cohen and Dudley Andrew have offered a semiotic approach to the study of adaptations. Although this marks a shift of focus from the fixation on the formal or *medial* differences between film and literature, I would argue that the semiotic approach preserves an intrinsic concern with questions of fidelity. For example, Andrew defines the project of adaptation as “the matching of the cinematic sign system to a prior achievement in some other system” (9). Although Andrew later claims that fidelity represents “the most frequent and tiresome discussion of adaptation...” (12),

I would argue that his very definition of adaptation—with his use of the word “matching”—reveals an inherent interest in the idea of faithfulness.

Another possibility for the future of adaptation studies is likewise articulated by Andrew. He proposes that one way to advance the field is to embrace the shared traditions of film and literature by studying adaptations in light of a consideration of the relationships between periods in film history and corresponding periods in literary history (Andrew 103). This approach considers the mimetic aspect of adaptation at the superstructural level. Andrew’s proposal suggests that film movements and genres are, to a degree, macro adaptations of literary movements and genres. However, because the very notion of “genre” as a fixed, homogeneous category is questionable, Andrew’s proposal—albeit interesting—has the potential to be problematic. Nonetheless, his underlying premise, which suggests that notions of adaptation and fidelity can apply to film and literature as a whole, is extremely evocative. Along these lines, I have observed that certain adaptors do not merely adapt a pre-text, they adapt the very approaches used by the authors of the original work, approaches which can sometimes be seen to represent larger literary trends. This is an idea which I will discuss throughout my thesis.

Besides structuralist comparisons such as those offered by Souriau, Bluestone, Ross and McFarlane, writers comparing film and literature repeatedly address another issue; that is, the question of whether or not film is capable of adequately expressing abstract ideas, or *thought*. George Bluestone takes up this line of argumentation. He claims that film cannot show us thoughts and feelings directly but can show us

“characters thinking, feeling...” (48).

Bluestone cursorily dismisses film’s discursive potential, writing: “...the film, being a presentational medium (except for its use of dialogue), cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms. Where the novel discourses, the film must picture.” (47) On the other hand, Sergei Eisenstein’s theory of intellectual montage promotes the discursive capacity of film. And, as Dudley Andrew writes: “Adaptation is a peculiar form of discourse but not an unthinkable one. Let us not use it to fight battles over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual art works.” (106)

For the purpose of this study, my interest in this line of inquiry relates to film’s capacity to express arguments and intellectual ideas, particularly in the form of commentary on another work. Specifically, I am interested in the way in which a film adaptation can offer an interpretive or critical response to the literary work upon which it is based. As such, film adaptations can be seen as sites for discourse upon literature.

3. Adaptation as Literary Criticism

In his introduction to *Filming Literature: The Art of Screen Adaptation* (1986) Neil Sinyard writes suggestively, “[T]he great screen adaptations are the ones that go for the spirit rather than the letter of the text; or exploit a unique affinity between the personalities of the original writer and the film-maker; *or use the camera to interpret and not simply illustrate the tale...*[my italics]” (x). To my mind, criticism which takes into account the interpretive nature of adaptation is the most interesting alternative to fidelity criticism, one which can be traced as an idea, however peripheral, throughout the history

of adaptation studies. As such, it is this approach which I have embraced as an inroad to the study of film adaptation.

In *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation* H. R. Coursen writes compellingly, “many of the newer modes of criticism—psychological, feminist, and cultural materialist... can be re-phrased in the context of performance.” (Coursen 1992:15) This idea is noteworthy because it suggests an alternative to text-bound criticism. In this work I will argue that film adaptations, as performances of earlier written works, can be seen to qualify as a form of literary criticism, however nontraditional. The idea of film adaptation as a form of literary criticism was introduced by Neil Sinyard. In *Filming Literature*, he argues,

...adaptations of books for film can often best be approached as an activity of literary criticism, not a pictorialisation of the complete novel, but a critical essay which stresses what it sees as the main theme. Like a critical essay, the film adaptation selects some episodes, excludes others, offers preferred alternatives. It focuses on specific areas of the novel, expands or contracts detail, and has imaginative flights about some characters. In the process, like the best criticism, it can throw new light on the original. (117)

Although Sinyard seems to be the first writer to make explicit this fascinating idea, many other writers have noted the interpretive nature of adaptations. In “Art Form and Material” Balázs argued, “Nearly every artistically serious and intelligent adaptation is... a re-interpretation.” (11) In “Remarks on the Problem of Cinematic Adaptation,” (1971) Jean Mitry noted the potential for an adaptation to be “a valuable reflection on the original,” describing adaptations “as a point of departure, as an inspiration” (Qtd. in Griffiths 26). In *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) Geoffrey Wagner defines adaptations

in terms of three categories: transposition, *commentary*, and analogy. He describes his second category, commentary, as follows: “This is where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect. It could also be called a re-emphasis or re-structure.” Further, he writes, “film can make authentic reconstructions in the spirit of so many cinematic footnotes to the original...” (Wagner 223).

The films I will be discussing in this thesis adapt their literary sources but are peppered throughout with such “cinematic footnotes.” The specific adaptations I will consider share a similar critical stance in relation to the works they adapt/analyse. Although they are uniquely cinematic, these films can be aligned with text-bound poststructuralist criticism. There have been several writers who have remarked upon the poststructural—and specifically the *deconstructive*—nature of certain free film adaptations. In *The English Novel and the Movies* (1981) Michael Klein and Gillian Parker describe an “approach to adaptation... that retains the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text...” (10). Most recently in “Signifying Nothing?: Martin Ritt’s *The Sound and the Fury* As Deconstructive Adaptation” (1999) Walter Metz has described a type of film he calls the “deconstructive adaptation” which he defines as “a film which, contrary to the canonical interpretation of a novel, takes a different interpretive path in producing its adaptive strategy.” (21)

As such, while all adaptations represent a filmmaker’s subjective interpretation of the literary source, I will be concerned with films which self-consciously interpret their source material. These adaptations offer free or alternate readings of their source material,

or emphasize the open and elusive nature of meaning itself.

4. The Writerly Adaptation: a Definition

In *S/Z* Roland Barthes differentiated between two types of texts: the readerly (“*lisible*”) and the writerly (“*scriptible*”). Barthes equated the readerly text with classical works (4) and defined the writerly in opposition to this model. *S/Z*, and the very notion of the writerly, represents a critique of the structuralist principles which Barthes himself had previously promoted in essays such as “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives” (1966), “The Fashion System” (1967) and “The Sequences of Actions” (1969).

According to Barthes the classical, readerly text works to reify the traditional distinction between author as producer and reader as passive consumer. The readerly text is, above all else, a *product*; it is “committed to the closure system of the West” (Barthes 1974: 7-8). The writerly text, on the other hand, is *productive*; it challenges the reader with its plurality and likewise exposes the author’s lack of control over the meanings generated.

To apply Barthes’s terms within a filmic context, I define a readerly film as one which promotes a stable, coherent meaning through the use of a linear structure. In general, classical narrative cinema can be considered readerly. For my purposes, I equate “readerly adaptations” with *faithful* adaptations; although, as I will continue to argue, the very notion of fidelity as an absolute standard is extremely problematic (as is the notion of readerliness). More specifically, a readerly adaptation is one which attempts to

preserve the meaning of the original text. On the other hand, “writerly adaptations”—which are my focus in this study—question the very idea that their literary sources possess stable or unified meaning. The writerly adaptation’s refusal or inability to faithfully adapt its source material serves to promote the indeterminate meaning of the work being adapted.

All writerly adaptations are free, but not all free adaptations are writerly. For example, there are many film adaptations which re-contextualize their literary sources within contemporary settings. Examples of such films include Jerome Robbins’s *West Side Story* (1961), Van Sant’s *My Own Private Idaho*, Heckerling’s *Clueless* and Junger’s *Ten Things I Hate About You*, to name but a few. These free adaptations, which offer updated versions of classic stories, foreground specific themes in their literary sources, and promote the continuing relevance of those themes. However, they do not really problematize the source material in any way. They do not adopt a critical stance in relation to the literary source nor do they promote the plurality of potential interpretations; if anything, they promote the universality of the stories they adapt. Further, they do not necessarily draw attention to their own status as adaptations nor do they challenge the notion of representation itself; and, as I will argue, these are features which characterize the writerly adaptation. As such, I would argue that adaptations which update their literary sources are not necessarily writerly adaptations, though they have the potential to be so.

Barthes’s *S/Z* is a close, poststructural narrative analysis of Honoré de Balzac’s short story *Sarrasine*, and it is within this context that he introduces the notion of the

writerly. Balzac's story is about a young artist, Sarrasine, who falls in love with a beautiful singer, La Zambinella, only to discover in the end that "she" is actually a castrato. In order to analyse the story Barthes identifies five codes—"hermeneutic" or *enigmatic*, "semic," "symbolic," "proairetic" or *code of action* and "referential." (Barthes 1974:18-20)⁴—which he describes not in terms of structure but rather as "ventures out of the text" (Barthes 1974: 20). In effect, in writing *S/Z* Barthes abandons the "exhausting" task of structural analysis (Barthes 1974: 3) with its inherent belief in authorial control, in favour of an approach which emphasizes the plural, or *intertextual*, nature of writing. He observes,

Alongside each utterance, one might say that off-stage voices can be heard: they are the codes: in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is "lost" in the vast perspective of the *already-written*) de-originate the utterance: the convergence of the voices (of the codes) becomes *writing*, a stereographic space where the five codes, the five voices intersect... (Barthes 1974: 21).

Barthes's analysis does not provide a structuration of *Sarrasine*, rather it offers a *step-by-step commentary*. As such, *S/Z* can be read as a lengthy series of footnotes to Balzac's story. Barthes explains, "...the step-by-step commentary is of necessity a renewal of the entrances to the text, it avoids structuring the text *excessively*, avoids giving it that additional structure which would come from a dissertation and would close it: it stars the text, instead of assembling it." (Barthes 1974:13)

Essentially, I will argue that "writerly adaptations" adopt a similar stance to the works they adapt as *S/Z* does to *Sarrasine*.⁵ Like *S/Z* itself writerly adaptations are "starred texts" (Barthes 1974:13). As I have mentioned, free, interpretive adaptations can

be seen to incorporate footnotes to their literary sources to the extent that they comment on the texts they adapt. Like *S/Z*, writerly adaptations are critical texts but they do not attempt to provide closure or structure, nor do they faithfully represent the works to which they refer. Instead, they reveal the plurality of their literary sources. In *S/Z* Barthes writes, "Some... declaring every text to be univocal, possessing a true, canonical meaning, banish the simultaneous, secondary meanings to the void of critical lucubrations." (7) Contrary to this, writerly adaptations embrace the so-called "secondary meanings" of the texts they adapt. And, as I will argue throughout this study, exposing the literary source as a multivoiced text is the primary critical activity of the writerly adaptation. In this way, writerly adaptation can in itself be seen as a form of criticism—or, more exactly, as a critical methodology.

In *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes* (1989) Mary Bittner Wiseman builds upon Barthes's notion of the writerly by introducing the notion of "writerly reading" which she defines as "the ceaseless dismantling of any structure" (Wiseman 92). Further, she qualifies the writerly reader as a "post-structural reader" (28). I will suggest that writerly adaptations represent "writerly readings" of the texts they adapt. A writerly adaptation challenges the spectator by openly interpreting the source material upon which the film is based. Unlike faithful (or *readerly*) adaptations the writerly adaptation is more creative and productive than it is imitative. Through its free, interpretive approach and the foregrounding of its own constructedness, the writerly adaptation acknowledges the fact that it offers one among many possible readings of the work it adapts. In writerly films

the interpretive process is a focal point of the film; the practice of adaptation itself is explicit, and rhetoricized, rather than tacit. The writerly adaptation does not merely re-plot the story of the original work within the filmic medium; rather, it holds up the literary source as artifact, as it were, thus constantly reminding the viewer of the reading process it enacts.

5. Choice of Films

For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to concentrate upon four recent adaptations which best exemplify my notion of the writerly adaptation. These films are: *Naked Lunch*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Mystery of Rambo* and *Prospero's Books*. Besides their creative, interpretive approach to the works they adapt, these films share other interesting characteristics which qualify them as writerly adaptations. All four films treat their sources as open texts; and, as I will explore, they use similar self-reflexive strategies in order to draw attention to their own status as adaptations of precursive works. Importantly, all four films posit the author of the original text as the main character of the film who "writes" the story of the film as it develops. As such, these four films not only adapt their literary sources, they also narrativize the circumstances surrounding the writing of the earlier works. In this way, like Balzac's *Sarrasine* which features a sculptor and his muse, all four adaptations can be seen to investigate the creative process itself.

In "Text to Screen: Introduction" Deborah Cartmell observes, "There seems to be a trend in the 1990s to include or allude to the author in adaptations of 'classic'

texts—*Prospero's Books* (1990), *Wuthering Heights* (1992) and *Sense and Sensibility* (in which Elinor takes over Austen's role as ironic commentator)." (Cartmell and Whelehan 26) In addition to the four films I am studying, Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* is another excellent example of an adaptation which makes use of this strategy. Rozema's film adapts Austen's novel, but—like *Naked Lunch* and *Shakespeare in Love*—it also incorporates biographical information about the author. Rozema draws upon Jane Austen's journals and private letters and transforms the protagonist Fanny Price (Frances O'Connor) into a writer—in effect making Austen's heroine a stand-in for Austen herself.

Cartmell suggests that the presence of the author in the adaptation lends authority to the adaptations. Based upon the four writerly films I am studying, however, and in keeping with Barthes's attitude in *S/Z* towards authorial lack of control, I will argue that the presence of the author within the diegeses of the films actually serves to undermine the authority and stability of the pre-texts because it foregrounds the artificiality of the film itself and frames the author as a fictional character.

The films I have chosen to discuss share other characteristics which, while they contribute to the writerliness of the films, are not characteristics which an adaptation must possess in order to be considered "writerly." For example, rather than adapting a single precursive text, the films I will be studying adapt multiple sources. Further, all four films posit books, writing technology (e.g., pens, typewriters...) and stages or movie theatres as recurring motifs. And, interestingly, each of the films include cross-dressing or transvestitism as a theme. In the upcoming chapters I will explore the implications of these shared features.

In the first chapter of this thesis I will explore Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* as a film which adapts a work which is itself writerly. Unlike the other films, Cronenberg's film is far more linear and narrative-driven than the work it adapts. In this chapter I will explore the ways in which Cronenberg uses conventions of commercial narrative cinema in order to interpret William S. Burroughs's extremely challenging avant-garde novel. Further, I will suggest that the creative writing exercises championed by Burroughs—namely the cut-up and fold-in methods—offer an excellent model for the writerly adaptation itself.

By adapting elements of various works in Burroughs oeuvre, Cronenberg succeeds in highlighting recurring themes, themes which can be seen to define Cronenberg's own work. *Naked Lunch* adapts the fictional worlds created by Burroughs while offering an account of Burroughs's life during the period when he wrote *Naked Lunch*. Because it combines adaptation and biography, *Naked Lunch* initially appears to offer a new historical reading of Burroughs's writing; however, upon investigation the film treats the novel it adapts as an open, indeterminate work and dramatizes the author-protagonist's complete lack of agency in the fictional world of his own making. In this way, as I will argue, Cronenberg's Burroughsian pastiche serves to emphasize the poststructural, writerly quality of the novel it adapts.

In the second chapter I will promote *Shakespeare in Love* as an example of filmic "ficto-criticism." Like *Naked Lunch* it has all the trappings of a commercial narrative film

and uses adaptation as a means to explore the circumstances surrounding the creation of the literary source. *Shakespeare in Love* offers an openly fictional account of the events in Shakespeare's life which led him to write *Romeo and Juliet*. In this chapter I will argue that this film presents Shakespearean plays as being endlessly interpretable, and as such it supports Barthes's belief that every "text is a galaxy of signifiers" (Barthes 1974: 5). By extension I will argue that *Shakespeare in Love* works to refute certain modernist notions about authorship and textuality. Like the other films I will discuss, *Shakespeare in Love* is an openly derivative work which adapts multiple sources. I will argue that this strategy is employed in *Shakespeare in Love* in order to reflect the derivative nature of Shakespearean plays themselves. Finally, I will ask: does the commercial nature of *Shakespeare in Love* undermine its writerly quality?

Kazuyoshi Okuyama's *The Mystery of Rampo* is a free adaptation which re-works several short stories by the Japanese mystery writer Edogawa Rampo. The film's most important literary source is a story entitled "The Appearance of Osei" ["Osei Tojo"] which was written by Rampo in 1924. Translator and Japanese instructor Kuniko Soda has translated this story for me and her translation is included as an addendum to this thesis.

Like the four other films I discuss, *The Mystery of Rampo* features the author of the adapted work(s) as the writer-protagonist of the film adaptation. In Okuyama's film, the character Edogawa Rampo (Naoto Takenaka) begins to write a sequel to his banned book ("The Appearance of Osei") after he discovers that the fictional characters he

created have counterparts in the “real” world. In this chapter, I will explore the way in which the film’s themes of authorial loss of control and the failure of representation serve to promote the indeterminacy of the texts it adapts—and texts in general—and further subverts the notion of authorial intentionality. I will argue that *The Mystery of Rambo* can be seen as a dramatization of what Barthes called *the death of the author*. This idea, which was introduced in his well-known 1968 essay, likewise informs S/Z and the notion of the writerly.

Prospero’s Books is the least conventional, least narrative-driven of the four films I will be considering and, in some ways, it is the most writerly. Peter Greenaway’s adaptation of *The Tempest* can be seen to challenge the notion that meaning is stable and that texts are univocal. While the three previous films use the framework of classical narrative cinema to provide formal—if not narrative—causality and closure, *Prospero’s Books* does not. Rather, Greenaway has created a film with a formal and stylistic structure which is as open and indeterminate as its narrative structure. In this chapter I will suggest that *Prospero’s Books* is a film essay which highlights the intermedial nature of film adaptation.

Dudley Andrew has written, “Adaptations claiming fidelity bear the original as a signified, whereas those inspired by or derived from an earlier text stand in a relation of referring to the original.” (96) In this way, *Prospero’s Books* keeps Shakespeare’s play in constant view, never once allowing the audience to forget that it is an adaptation of an earlier text. It is not so much based upon *The Tempest* as it is about *The Tempest*—as

performance, as text, and as a cultural artifact.

In writing this thesis it is not my intention to slot these four films neatly into a category, nor do I intend to gloss over the obvious problematics of using the slippery term “writerly” adjectivally in relation to specific works. Barthes describes the writerly as an ideal and an alternative to the classical text which was so conducive to structuralist readings. For Barthes, the writerly is elusive, intangible, forever beyond the edges of what is being written. He writes:

There may be nothing to say about writerly texts. First of all, where can we find them? Certainly not in reading (or at least very rarely: by accident, fleetingly, obliquely in certain works): the writerly text is not a thing, we would have a hard time finding it in a bookstore. Further, its model being a productive (and no longer representative) one, it demolishes any criticism which, once produced, would mix with it: to rewrite the writerly text would consist only in disseminating it, in dispersing it within the field of infinite difference. (Barthes 1974: 5)

As such I am using Barthes’s notion of the writerly in a way which he might not have intended. Mary Bittner Wiseman’s *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes* is an example of a work which also makes use of Barthes’s notion of the writerly while necessarily re-inventing the term somewhat. According to Michael Moriarty, Wiseman “weaves the term *scriptible* (‘writerly’) into some suggestive reflections on post-modernism, but does so in effect by rewriting Barthes’s distinction between the modern and the classical... in itself a perfectly acceptable procedure.” (Moriarty 9n12) In a similar manner, I am freely adapting Barthes’s conceptual framework and I am doing so consciously.

In discussing these four films in terms of the writerly I do not wish to nail down

meaning; but rather, in the process, I hope to shed light upon the notion of the writerly, upon a certain microgenre of recent adaptations, and upon the nature of film adaptations generally. Further, by invoking the term which Barthes used in one of his earliest indictments of structuralism, I hope to show how certain film adaptations can be seen to challenge the structuralist project of adaptation studies itself.

Naked Lunch:
Free Adaptation as Cut-up Text

Everything is writing, that is to say, a fable... Our possible truth must be an invention, that is to say, scripture, literature, sculpture, agriculture, pisciculture, all the tures in this world. Values, tures, sainthood, a ture, society, a ture, love, pure ture, beauty, a ture of tures.

– Julio Cortàzar’s *Hopscotch* (393-394)

At the beginning of David Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch* two characters, Hank and Martin, who are writers, are sitting together in a diner discussing their work. Hank criticizes Martin’s practice of re-writing and revising his work as he goes along. Hank prefers a more “stream-of-consciousness” style; he says, “See, you can’t rewrite, ‘cause to rewrite is to deceive and lie, and you betray your own thoughts. To rethink the flow and the rhythm, the tumbling out of the words, is a betrayal, and it’s a sin.” The inclusion of these lines of dialogue in Cronenberg’s film is arguably a self-reflexive strategy insofar as the film itself is clearly a “rewriting,” or rethinking, of William S. Burroughs’s 1959 novel of the same name. In fact, all adaptations are essentially rewritten texts, if only because of the transmedial (or in the case of intraliterary adaptations, *transgeneric*) nature of adaptation and the necessary changes (literally, “adaptations”) which must be implemented because of the formal differences between literature and film.⁶

In “L’oeuvre au double: sur les paradoxes de l’adaptation,” Marie-Claire Ropars-

Wuilleumier writes,

Adaptation or translation, mediation or mutation, transwriting or rewriting—the profusion of terms indicates a discomfort towards the object [of study]: how can one define the boundaries of a subject which takes into consideration both thematic continuity and variation of material? [My translation] (Ropars-Wuilleumier 131)⁷

Due to the lack of linearity and causality in Burroughs's novel, Cronenberg was forced to openly interpret the work in order to transform it into a saleable narrative film. However, because it was necessary to re-write—and thus re-interpret—the pre-text, the door was left wide open for him to have the types of “imaginative flights” which Neil Sinyard described in his discussion of film adaptation as literary criticism (Sinyard 117).

Burroughs's novel was famously pieced-together from notes the author had written during a four-year sojourn in Tangiers, Morocco during the 1950s. Throughout his stay in Tangiers, where the novel is set, Burroughs struggled with drug addiction, alternating between periods of heavy usage and rehabilitation. As Ted Morgan, author of *Literary Outlaw: The Life and Times of William S. Burroughs*, notes, “The fragmentation of the text is like the discontinuity of the addict's life between fixes.” (351) With the urging of his friends Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, Burroughs published his notes as a novel with little attempt to structure them into a coherent narrative. The novel, which was so controversial that it was put on trial in 1966 on charges of obscenity, is framed loosely as an indictment against addiction in all its many manifestations.

Although Burroughs was originally aligned with modernism he was one of those

writers/thinkers who bridged the gap to postmodernism. Mary Bittner Wiseman has defined the writerly text as a “distinctively postmodern text” (86), and I would argue that Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* is itself a writerly novel.⁸ The work is written in such a way as to challenge traditional conceptions of literature while likewise making references to many literary genres and conventions. In writing the novel, Burroughs did not employ any of the literary strategies he might have used in order to promote continuity, narrative development, or closure; in other words, his text is highly unstable.⁹ The novel acknowledges its own plurality and promotes a “dissemination of meanings, spread like gold dust on the apparent surface of the text” (Barthes 1974: 9).

In contradistinction to the writerly text, Mary Bittner Wiseman describes the “perfectly readerly text” as “consumable” (99) and, above all, Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* resists consumption. It is difficult to identify with the protagonist, Bill Lee, who disappears for the entire midsection of the novel. Scenes of depravity penned by Burroughs are jarringly offensive and further discourage identification. With his stream-of-consciousness formula Burroughs seems to be constantly trying to “shake,” or disorient the reader.

Cronenberg’s adaptation tells the story of bug exterminator and writer Bill Lee (Peter Weller) who flees to a bizarre land called Interzone after accidentally shooting his wife, Joan. In Burroughs’s novel, Bill Lee is an itinerant picaro.¹⁰ However, in the adaptation, Cronenberg posits Bill Lee as the writer-protagonist and orients him toward a goal; namely, the publication of the novel itself. Also, the film provides the main character with a primary motivation for writing, specifically, the death of his wife Joan

Lee; and similarly, an inspiration, or muse, in the form of Joan Frost¹¹... both of whom are played by Judy Davis. Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* is far more narrative-driven than the book it adapts. Cronenberg imposes linearity and, essentially, narrativizes Burroughs's stream-of-consciousness text. In effect, Cronenberg's film represents an attempt to temporalize the *nowness* of the novel by imposing the conventions of classical narrative cinema onto Burroughs's avant-garde, mosaic-like work.

According to *S/Z*, "...the writerly text is a perpetual present" (Barthes 1974: 5), it is not governed by the logic of causality and is adrift, rootless and often without context. Alfred Kazin comments on this quality of "presentness" as it can be seen to exist in Burroughs's writing. He observes, "[Burroughs] writes scenes as fluently as other people write adjectives, so that he is always inserting one scene into another, *turning* one scene into another. Burroughs's fiction happenings are a wholly self-pleasing version of what D. H. Lawrence called the 'pure present'." (Kazin 101) Using the circus as a metaphor, Mary McCarthy describes the way the nonlinear structure of the novel represents a challenge to modernist notions of progress or teleology. She writes, "The best comparison for the book, with its aerial sex acts performed on a high trapeze, its con men and barkers, its arena-like form, is in fact a circus. A circus travels but it is always the same, and this is Burroughs's sardonic image of modern life." (86)

McCarthy's use of circus imagery is very fitting in more ways than one. Like the three other writerly films I will discuss, *Naked Lunch* exhibits qualities of the carnivalesque which originate in the literary source. In a 1965 interview, Burroughs described the hipster subculture as "the carny world" (qtd. in Skerl 1993: 103). The

landscape of Interzone, which Norman Mailer compared to the paintings of Hieronymous Bosch (Preface to Burroughs 1990: xviii), is an aberrant, inverted world where marginal characters wander aimlessly among the ruins of toppled hierarchies. Burroughs disrupts the traditional hierarchization of binary opposites such as heterosexuality/homosexuality and reality/fantasy. Even the very standard for normalcy and decency is challenged. The capsizing of socially established dichotomies within the context of literature is what Carleton University Comparative Literature Professor Barry Rutland has called “inversionary troping.” Because it involves re-writing or “freely adapting” formerly inviolable concepts, inversionary troping is an inherently “writerly” strategy, I would argue.

Cronenberg’s adaptation consists only of shadowy vestiges of the subversiveness which characterizes Burroughs’s work. In the adaptation, for example, the carnivalesque is reduced to a visual motif which does not really become part of the thematic structure of the film. For example, at the end of the film, Fadela (Monique Mercure) suddenly peels off a mask and reveals herself to be Dr. Benway in disguise. This appears nowhere in the novel and, while it serves to promote the theme that things are not always as they appear, it is so clichéd that it has no real subversive value.

Interestingly though, as I have suggested, transvestitism is a motif which appears in all four films I discuss in this study. *Prospero’s Books* and *Shakespeare in Love* both pick up on the theme of cross-dressing which recurs throughout Shakespeare’s work, and *The Mystery of Rampo* features the Marquis Ogawara (Mikijiro Hira) in drag in a scene with nightmarish Freudian overtones. These references are particularly noteworthy in

light of the fact that Balzac's *Sarrasine* likewise features cross-dressing as a central theme. In Barthes's analysis of the story, he discusses the castrato, La Zambinella, and castration generally, as the story's central enigma. The mystery surrounding La Zambinella's true identity adds a writerly element to a story which is otherwise readerly.¹² In the upcoming chapters I will discuss the way that the theme of transvestitism as it appears in these adaptations can be seen to contribute to their multivalence, or *writerliness*.

Cronenberg has described his approach to adapting *Naked Lunch* as follows: "I moved back from the page itself to include the process of writing the book..." (qtd. in Silverberg 61). In the adaptation, as in the novel, the character Bill Lee is clearly an analogue for Burroughs himself and Cronenberg draws upon details of the author's life in order to impose a context and a linear structure which is absent in the novel. As Timothy S. Murphy writes,

Cronenberg uses the theme of writing and the figure of the writer—which are clearly present though hardly determining in the novel—as expedients both to impose linear form on the recalcitrant text and to render all of Burroughs's political inventions aesthetic, by taking them for metaphors of the writing process as it is lived by the writer. (Murphy 69)

In Cronenberg's film the self-reflexive autobiographical details which exist in the novel are magnified in such a way as to rationalize or explain Burroughs's fragmented work. In so doing, the filmmaker blurs the boundaries which separate the diegetic and extradiegetic and likewise creates a film which is an amalgam of fact and fiction. As it

has been argued, Cronenberg's film is "as much an adaptation of Ted Morgan's biography of Burroughs... as it was *Naked Lunch*" (Cartmell and Whelehan 105). Besides being an adaptation of Burroughs's work, the film offers a fictionalized account of the author's life during the mid to late 1950s, and thus investigates the context in which *Naked Lunch* was written. For instance, invoking many conventions of the hard boiled detective genre, Cronenberg's film posits Bill Lee as bug exterminator turned secret agent. Interestingly, Burroughs had worked as both an exterminator and a private detective prior to writing *Naked Lunch*. Further, the characters Hank and Martin, who do not appear in the original novel at all, are clearly stand-ins for Kerouac and Ginsberg. Similarly, Cronenberg adds the character Joan, based upon Burroughs's wife, and "re-enacts" the bizarre—and true—circumstances of her death. In this way, Cronenberg's film is not so much *based upon* the plot of *Naked Lunch* as it is about the novel itself as a literary historical object. As film reviewer Hal Hinston writes:

...the film isn't a literal transcription of the novel at all; it's more a fictional essay on Burroughs and the anxious birth of the novel. It's a movie about a writer's relationship to his work—and, as such, perhaps one of the most penetrating examinations of a writer's processes ever made. (Hinston, par. 2)

As I have mentioned, Deborah Cartmell argues that the presence of the author as a character in literary adaptations serves to lend authority to the cinematic rendering. She writes, "The presence of the author privileges 'authority' and sanctions the adaptation as 'authoritative', faithful to the author because of their very presence within it." (Cartmell and Whelehan 26) I believe, however, that the presence of the author within the diegeses

of films such as *Naked Lunch* actually serves to undermine the authority and stability of the pre-text by demonstrating the extent to which the original story can be altered and re-interpreted. While Burroughs's novel also incorporates a writer-protagonist figure,¹³ Cronenberg's film magnifies this device, instituting Bill Lee as a character who "writes" the events of the plot as they unfold. Rather than lending authority to the film, the presence of the author-figure serves to foreground the constructed, artificial nature of the film world. And, films such as *Naked Lunch* and *The Mystery of Rambo* often posit the writer as a character who is lost in a diegetic world of his own making, and who has lost conscious control over what he writes, which further undermines the authority of the pre-text and the notion of author intentionality.

Burroughs's novel is a highly introspective and autobiographical work. In spite of the many slippages into dystopian horror-fantasy, it strives for a degree of brutal honesty and takes the form of an artless confessional. Mary McCarthy has said, "the action of *The Naked Lunch* takes place in the consciousness of One Man, William Lee..." (86). Similarly, Alfred Kazin describes the novel as the "documentation of internal consciousness." He continues, "No one has carried this stress on the private movie theatre to such lengths as has Burroughs... He wanted to put his own mind on the internal screen that is his idea of a novel." (Kazin 102)

Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* dwells heavily upon the inner life of Bill Lee, and it offers an intentionally flimsy, discontinuous narrative. Perhaps for these reasons a traditional adaptation is unsuitable and a more licentious or creative treatment is necessary. Several critics have referred to *Naked Lunch* as an "unfilmable" novel. As Hal

Hinston writes, “If the movie has a flaw, it’s that the aspects of Burroughs’s work many believed unfilmable still resist visualization. What had seemed unthinkable subversive on the page seems slightly literal-minded, and somehow tamer, on screen.” (Hinston, par. 10)

The notion of “unfilmability” is reminiscent of Siegfried Kracauer’s article “Interlude: Film and Novel” (1960) which differentiates between “cinematic adaptations” and “uncinematic adaptations.” Kracauer’s division is based upon the belief that the literary and the cinematic are mutually exclusive art forms with unique expressive capabilities. According to Kracauer, a novel which is *adaptable* (one which results in a cinematic adaptation) must necessarily possess qualities suited to a cinematic rendering; it must be highly visual and not focus too heavily upon the inner, psychic lives of the characters. Kracauer argued that the only successful adaptations are cinematic adaptations. In “Art Form and Material” Bela Balázs makes a similar argument. He argues, “there is an organic connection between form and content in every art and... a certain art form always offers the most adequate expression for a certain content.” (7) Based on this premise, Balázs makes the extreme argument that a good film adaptation can only emerge from a poor novel and that a successful novel will necessarily result in an unsuccessful adaptation.

Following Kracauer’s model, the principle literary sources for the other three films I discuss, namely, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest* and “The Appearance of Osei,” are all highly “adaptable.” However, in each case the filmmaker chose to adapt the source material freely. Cronenberg also strayed from the letter of the text when he adapted *Naked*

Lunch, however his choice to adapt the work freely may have been due to the fact that the Burroughs's novel is an "unadaptable" work. Arguably, Kracauer's notion of "unadaptability" implies that for ontological reasons, a faithful adaptation cannot be created *while also being saleable as a commercial narrative film*. Writerly adaptations serve to expand the very notion of fidelity itself, as I will argue in the final two chapters of this thesis. If fidelity is not posited as the governing criteria by which an adaptation is judged—or if the very idea of fidelity as an objective value is destabilized—categories such as those outlined by Kracauer and Balázs are no longer of central importance. However, this is not to say that the ontological assumptions which underlie these categorizations are invalid.

The nonlinear, nonvisual and highly subjective nature of Burroughs's novel qualify it as a so-called "unadaptable" work. Interestingly, Cronenberg focuses upon the latter point—the subjectivity of Burroughs's work—in order to demonstrate an affinity between the writer's style and his own approach to filmmaking. Cronenberg's films also betray a fascination with the notion of extremely subjective states and altered consciousness. The protagonists of *Rabid* (1977) and *Dead Zone* (1983) both become genetically altered and gain special powers after being involved in serious accidents. Further, *Videodrome* (1983) and Cronenberg's latest film, *eXistenZ* (1999) both explore the blurring of reality and fantasy, in much the same way as does *Naked Lunch*.

Cronenberg's adaptation is an examination of the writing process, and by extension, an attempt to represent the writer's inner subjective state. Most of the elements and events in *Naked Lunch* are meant to represent Bill Lee's drug-induced hallucinations

which later become fodder for his novel. As Cronenberg has stated, "...Interzone is, of course, a state of mind" (Cronenberg 168). Originally, much of the film was supposed to be shot on location in Tangiers but because of the Gulf War, that became impossible. Cronenberg explains his reaction to this, and further describes the way in which the film came to represent an exploration of the writing process itself,

Having to cancel the trip to Morocco forced us to come to terms with [the fact that the film is really a fantasy]. Because my conception was that the writer, William Lee, never really leaves New York. My screenplay is very concerned with writing and the molding, or education, of a writer in a way the book is not. I was particularly interested in writing as a creative act in which we create our own realities and felt that Interzone was one of those realities. (Qtd. in Palmer 36)

Elsewhere he elaborates on this, arguing that his goal was to develop themes which were tacit in the novel and make them explicit. He writes,

I knew I wanted [the film] to be about writing: the act of writing and creating something that is dangerous to you. That's not an obvious discussion in *Naked Lunch*; [but] it's buried in there. In other Burroughs writings it's a more obvious surface discussion... I've seen a lot of movies about writers and I don't think one of them has gotten to the insides of the process. You can't do it in a realistic, naturalistic way. (Cronenberg 165)

Over the course of his career, Cronenberg has adapted other works; *Dead Zone* (1983) is based on a Stephen King novel; *The Fly* (1986) is a re-make of Kurt Neumann's 1958 cult classic; *Dead Ringers* is an adaptation of a novel by Bari Wood and Jack Greasland (and, that novel was based on a true story); and, most recently, *Crash* adapts a novel by the same name written by J. G. Ballard in the 1970s. It is easy to

recognize why Cronenberg chose to adapt these particular works as they are all consistent with his signature style and make use of themes and ideas which recur in his own work. It is also easy to identify a stylistic and thematic continuity in Burroughs's and Cronenberg's work. Both have worked within the horror-fantasy genre although their works serve to test generic limitations and, further, challenge the expectations of their audiences or readership, respectively. The motif of the virus, the investigation of heightened subjectivity and the self-reflexive exploration of the creative process itself characterize both of their contributions to their respective fields.

These shared themes are due in large part to the fact that—even prior to adapting *Naked Lunch*—Cronenberg was very familiar with Burroughs's writing and, in fact, was highly influenced by the novelist's style. In *David Cronenberg: a Delicate Balance*, Peter Morris describes how Cronenberg read voraciously as a young man—"comic books, fantasy and science fiction, the 'underground' novels of the Beats, the French symbolists, and the work of symbolist-influenced writers such as James Joyce and William Butler Yeats" and especially William S. Burroughs and Vladimir Nabokov (Morris 17). In fact, in his early life Cronenberg aspired to be a writer himself. On this subject Cronenberg has said that whenever he sat down to write he felt "possessed by Nabokov and Burroughs" (qtd. in Morris 29). And, for this reason, he was unable to find his own voice as a writer. In a *Sight and Sound* article entitled, "The Novelist, The Director and the Mugwumps," Robert Palmer describes two of Cronenberg's early films in terms of Burroughs's influence. He writes,

In *They Came From Within* [*Shivers*] and *Rabid*, there are aliens but no spaceships or ray guns. The invaders are human-tailored microorganisms that spread bizarre plagues or attack humans from within their own bodies. The concepts are explicitly Burroughsian, and subsequent films by Cronenberg further displayed the novelist's influence." (Palmer 35)

Similarly, Morris writes, "In retrospect, Burroughs seems to have been the most lasting influence [on Cronenberg]. Cronenberg frequently quotes him in interviews, [and] his films (especially the early ones) often reflect a Burroughs-like world..." (29).

Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* adapts several books in Burroughs's oeuvre besides *Naked Lunch*; namely, *Junkie*, *Exterminator!*, *Queer*, *Interzone* and *Letters to Allen Ginsberg* (Silverberg 65). By adapting scenes and elements from multiple works, Cronenberg collapses the diegetic worlds of Burroughs's different novels into one narrative space, and thus emphasizes shared themes and other continuities. In fact, Cronenberg described the making of *Naked Lunch* as follows: "It's like Burroughs and myself fusing in the telepod of *The Fly*." (Cronenberg 162) Cronenberg has further described the film as, "a combination of Burroughsian material but put into a structure that's not very Burroughsian." (Qtd. in Silverberg 65) However in spite of the imposition of a narrative structure, Cronenberg's approach to adaptation in fact mirrors Burroughs's writing style in many ways. Interestingly, while the film takes a "cut and paste" approach to Burroughs's work, the novel *Naked Lunch* is, itself, a work which "quotes" multiple sources. In this way, the source material is itself an intertext which freely adapts other works. As such, the way Cronenberg adapted *Naked Lunch* can itself be seen as a

reflection of similar writerly strategies as they appear in the novel, as I argue in an upcoming paragraph. I will return to this seemingly mimetic or parodic element of free adaptations in my discussions of *Shakespeare in Love* and *Prospero's Books*. As I will argue, both Greenaway and Stoppard use free adaptation as a critical practice in order to comment upon the way in which Shakespearean plays rewrite and appropriate previous works.

Like Cronenberg's adaptation, Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* is itself a highly derivative work. The novel was influenced by different media, particularly film and improvisational jazz. As a matter of fact, Burroughs's novel makes use of certain "cinematic" strategies despite the fact that it is neither a particularly visual nor a narrative-driven work. For instance, Burroughs repeatedly uses the word "fadeout" as a transition from one scene to another. "... Fadeout to Venice..." appears on page 136 and "Fadeout to the National Electronic Conference in Chicago" appears on page 147, among many examples (Burroughs 1990). The novelist's interest in films is further illustrated by the fact that he made several films himself in the 1960s in collaboration with Brion Gysin and Anthony Balch. Two of his better-known films are *Towers Open Fire* (1964) and *The Cut Ups* (1966). All of Burroughs's films are short, experimental works which make use of appropriated footage and which exemplify the "cut-up method" which I discuss in an upcoming paragraph.

The most interesting and prevalent "cinematic" element in Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* is the use of "montage," which many critics have commented upon. Jennie Skerl describes Burroughs's use of montage as a derivative strategy. She writes,

The new vision of *Naked Lunch* is presented in an experimental form derived from painting, photography, film, and jazz. The basic technique Burroughs chose to use is juxtaposition, called collage or montage in the visual arts. The overall structure of *Naked Lunch* is a montage of “routines” that- theoretically- can be read in any order. (Skerl 1985: 42-43)

Similarly, during the Boston trial of *Naked Lunch* in 1966, Norman Mailer testified on behalf of the book; he said, “[Burroughs’s] poetic images are intense. They are often disgusting; but at the same time there is a sense of collision in them, of montage that is quite unusual.” (Preface to Burroughs 1990: xiv)

Mailer’s comments in particular seem to invoke montage as it is understood within cinematic contexts. However, the notion of montage is perhaps most fascinating within this discussion insofar as it can be seen as an excellent metaphor for the process of adaptation itself. This idea was proposed by Charles Eidsvik in “Toward a ‘Politique des Adaptations’” (1975). Eidsvik writes suggestively, “The process of adaptation is, like the process of Eisensteinian montage, a matter of biscociation (juxtaposition).” And, further, “adaptation is montage writ large” (31).

The idea that adaptation represents the collision of two texts, and is thus related to the practice of intellectual montage can be seen as being especially relevant to a discussion of writerly adaptations. An original work (e.g., Burroughs’s novel) and a derivative work (e.g., Cronenberg’s adaptation) represent two colliding texts each of which have the effect of altering or creating meaning in the other, in the same way that, according to Eisenstein’s dialectical montage, two shots can be seen to become especially connotative because of their juxtaposition to one another. Not surprisingly, Eisenstein’s

October (1927) can be seen as an early example of the writerly adaptation as it critically re-works John Reed's account of the 1917 Russian Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (1919).

Writerly adaptations offer a rewritten version of the original work, as I have suggested; however, they also write over, or on top of, the original. In this way, writerly adaptations do not seek to supplant the original but, rather, they comment upon, and collide with, their sources. This illustrates what Neil Sinyard meant when he argued that the screenwriter's role is to interpret rather than reproduce (Sinyard 117). Writerly adaptations are palimpsests; they possess more than one layer of signification, or writing, and they refer back constantly to their literary sources as if to a past life. Much of the "collision" which characterizes writerly works—including writerly adaptations—results from their intertextuality. In this way, Burroughs's collisional, writerly novel not only references film and jazz, it also alludes to many literary sources. As Ted Morgan observes,

[*Naked Lunch* is] a highly literary work, with allusions to Anglo-Saxon battle poetry, Shakespeare, eighteenth-century mock heroic, and the "Ancient Mariner," all of them distorted or altered in some way." (345)¹⁴

Much of Burroughs's writing is highly derivative and he appeared to be most interested in the idea of juxtaposing diverse texts, as his experimentation with different avant-garde writing exercises would suggest. In the 1960s he devised two different, but closely related, writing techniques: the *cut-up method* and the *fold-in technique*. Although the cut-up method harkens back to early surrealist writing experiments, Burroughs was

introduced to the idea by Brion Gysin who used the technique to write poetry. My interest in these writing experiments stem from the fact that Cronenberg's free, appropriative approach to adapting *Naked Lunch* is reminiscent of the types of writing strategies which informed Burroughs's own work. Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* is, itself, a cut-up text. In fact, like the related concept "montage," the notion of "cut-up" or "fold-in" can be seen as a model for free adaptation itself.

In 1962 Burroughs was a part of an American delegation of writers who met for the annual writers' conference in Edinburgh. At this gathering he introduced his new writing methods which generated much interest and discussion from writers such as Norman Mailer and Mary McCarthy. In "The Cut Up Method of Brion Gysin," Burroughs describes the method as follows:

Take a page or more or less of your own writing or from any writer living or dead. Any written or spoken words. Cut into sections with scissors or switch blade as preferred and rearrange the sections. Looking away. Now write out the result. (Burroughs 1961: 105)

The fold-in method essentially involves folding a page of text down the middle and placing it on top of another page, thus creating a composite text which can then be edited and rearranged in any way. As Burroughs argued: "It need not be in any sense Dadaist... After all, what does any writer do but choose and rearrange the material at his disposal" (qtd. in Morgan 338-339).

Significantly, Burroughs compared the fold-in technique to the use of the flashback in film (Morgan 340); as such, he seems to indicate that the concept of the fold-

in involves two or more original texts separated in time which fail to merge into the same temporal space even after they are joined as one fold-in text. If free adaptations are seen as fold-in texts “writ large,” this notion of the composite text (e.g., the adaptation) consisting of two visible works collapsed into one further promotes the idea that adaptations are palimpsests and that the literary source shines through the adaptation like a regressive memory from a past life of the text.¹⁵

Burroughs has said that *Naked Lunch* was itself a cut up text, although he was not fully aware of the method as he was writing. He writes, “The final form of *Naked Lunch* and the juxtapositions of sections was determined by the order in which the material went—at random—to the printer. Subsequently I used the method with awareness in *Minutes to Go* and *The Exterminator*.” (Burroughs 1961: 106) In this way, the source texts for Cronenberg’s “Burroughsian pastiche” are pastiches themselves.

In her discussion of montage, Jennie Skerl argued that *Naked Lunch* can be read in any order. The nonlinear nature of the novel is described in the “Atrophied Preface” to the novel itself: “You can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point...” (Burroughs 1990: 203). Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* has been described by Allen Ginsberg and others as a “mosaic” (Preface to *Naked Lunch* xxx). Here, “mosaic” is synonymous with “cut-up.” The idea of a text as mosaic implies two primary elements: randomness or nonlinearity and the use of appropriated material. These two factors likewise characterize free adaptations in that they are necessarily composite texts which artfully use elements from the literary sources upon which they are based.

The kind of free adaptations I am most interested in—namely, those which adapt

multiple works at once and which include the author of the adapted work(s) as a character in the film—are even more qualified to be labelled “cut-up texts.” The makers of writerly adaptations treat given literary works as the very subjects of their films. The original author’s biography is included as one among other texts which inspire the adaptation. In the case of Cronenberg’s adaptation of *Naked Lunch*, the mythos surrounding Burroughs becomes fodder for the film. As Alfred Kazin commented, “Burroughs is himself a great cut-up” (101) and Cronenberg’s film treats him as such, as a text.

The relativizing principle behind cut-up and fold-in texts also characterizes free adaptations. Here, “relativization” does not necessarily imply arbitrariness, nor does it suggest an absence of artistry or interpretation; rather, it indicates an acknowledgment of the way that a given text—or texts—can yield infinite meanings through different negotiations and juxtapositions. As such, in spite of its imposition of a narrative structure, Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch* acknowledges the plurality of Burroughs’s work by selectively drawing upon the manifold meanings that lie in wait in the novel and by producing a film which is dramatically different from the novel it adapts. And, while even the most readerly texts can be seen to possess many meanings or “readings,”¹⁶ in Burroughs’s novel these colliding meanings are already quite explicit. As Mary McCarthy writes,

His book... is like a neighborhood movie with continuous showings that you can drop into whenever you please—you don’t have to wait for the beginning of the feature picture. Or like a worm that you can chop up into sections each of which wriggles off as an independent worm. Or a nine-lived cat. Or a cancer. [Burroughs] is fond of the word “mosaic”, especially in its scientific sense of a plant-mottling caused by a virus... [and] in organic processes of multiplication and duplication. (McCarthy 86)

Burroughs's famous maxim, "language is a virus," summarizes the rhizomatic nature of his writing. *Naked Lunch* makes use of "jazzlike improvisations" (Pearce 100) which result in a fractal-like work which gives the impression, as I have argued, of a constantly shifting present tense which replaces any sort of real narrative development or temporality. In this way, Burroughs's novel is a "choose-your-own-adventure" written in the second person. Julio Cortàzar took this type of formal experimentation to its logical conclusion in his novel *Hopscotch* (1963), which can be read in either a linear way, or by skipping from one part of the book to the next, following directions indicated at the end of each chapter.¹⁷

Like other poststructural techniques, the cut-up and fold-in methods met with some skepticism. During a discussion of the cut-up method at the Edinburgh writers' conference an audience member commented, "It doesn't seem to me a technique at all, it is simply a mix-up." (Qtd. in Morgan 341) Further, Samuel Beckett took the occasion of a brief meeting with Burroughs to inquire about the cut-up method and when he learned that it involved appropriating another writer's words he proclaimed, "That's not writing, it's plumbing." (Qtd. in Morgan 323)

In a similar fashion, when considering the process of adapting a book to the screen, it is difficult to discern to what degree selections are governed by a particular logic, or to what extent they are, in fact, arbitrary or based upon questions of expediency. An argument could be made that the director of an adaptation makes many arbitrary decisions, at least to the extent that a free adaptation is like a puzzle with shifting pieces

which can be put together in countless configurations. In this way, as I will argue in the upcoming chapters, like the practice of cut-up or fold-in, free adaptations, particularly *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Mystery of Rambo* and *Prospero's Books*, are frequently met with scepticism and disdain by writers who consider them to be parasitic rip-offs which relativize the literary works they adapt.

In some ways, Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* is the most problematic of the four films I have chosen to illustrate the concept of the writerly adaptation. Because Cronenberg's film is far more linear than the source novel, a case might be made that the film is, in fact, a readerly adaptation of a writerly novel. However, I would argue that the writerliness of an adaptation does not depend on whether it is itself a writerly film; rather, it depends upon the nature of the adaptation's relationship with the work it adapts. So, although Cronenberg's adaptation is actually more "readerly" than Burroughs's novel, it is indeed a writerly adaptation because of the way it approaches its pre-text. Ironically, the very strategies used by Cronenberg to linearize Burroughs's work are the same ones which serve to qualify the film as a writerly adaptation. Cronenberg's adaptation is writerly precisely because his attempt to contextualize and "rationalize" Burroughs's novel places the film in a critical, rather than mimetic, relationship with the work it adapts. As such, the adaptation keeps the original work in view and thus constantly promotes itself as a constructed, derivative text. The film is a writerly adaptation of Burroughs's work because it opens up the diegetic world of the novel to include biographical details about Burroughs and the very circumstances surrounding the writing

of the book. Further, like *Shakespeare in Love*, *Prospero's Books* and *The Mystery of Rampo*, Cronenberg's film actually adapts several works at once as I have mentioned, thus completely undermining the traditional, canonical approach to adapting literature. Using these strategies, the adaptation serves to challenge the notion that the novel is closed, complete and monologic. In effect, Cronenberg continues writing the novel, re-writing, or more specifically, *writing over*, the original text.

**Film Adaptation as Literary Criticism:
A Study of *Shakespeare in Love***

In *Filming Literature: The Art of Screen Adaptation*, Neil Sinyard argues, “The best film adaptations provide a critical gloss on the [literary source] and a freshly imagined cinematic experience that enrich the appreciation of anyone sincerely devoted to film and literature and not insistent on seeing them as antagonistic poles.” (Sinyard 117-118) And, further, “...adapting a literary text for the screen is essentially an act of literary criticism” (Sinyard x). For the purpose of this chapter I am going to explore the notion of film adaptation as criticism and, by extension, the notion of the filmmaker or screenwriter as critic.¹⁸ Specifically, I will discuss John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) as an example of a film which qualifies as literary criticism.

In *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, “criticism” is defined thus: “The art or science of literary criticism is devoted to the comparison and analysis, to the interpretation and evaluation of works of literature.” (Cuddon 207) Any text, filmic or otherwise, which serves to evaluate or interpret literature should, it follows, qualify as literary criticism. In this way, arguably, a work of art can be called “literary criticism” to the extent that it analyses an earlier literary text, or comments upon literature

generally.

This idea serves to collapse the traditional distinction between art and criticism, and consolidates the formerly discrete roles of the artist and the critic.¹⁹ Traditionally the artist creates a work of art and the critic evaluates and analyses the artist's creation. In this model, which polarizes the two roles, the critic is parasitic and is defined as being outside of the text. In the case of the 'artist as critic,' the two previously distinct roles are subsumed into one. The artist assumes the role of the critic, and a new level of self-reflexivity characterises the work. The artist uses the art medium to fulfil the work traditionally assigned to the critic and the act of criticism is one with the act of artistic creation. In this way one could say that the artist has two objects in mind simultaneously. A work of art which also qualifies as criticism can thus be said to be "double-directed" or "double-voiced," to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term (Bakhtin 166).

At issue is not whether works of art (novels, plays, poems, films, etc.) convey intellectual ideas and arguments, because that is beyond doubt. It is likewise certain that works of art are inherently *critical*, that an artwork is situated historically within a web of other artworks, and necessarily comments upon proximal works. The line separating art from criticism is, in fact, already blurred. As it has been written of Dryden, "(his) critical essays are works of art in themselves." (Cuddon 208) And, as Jean-Luc Godard said famously, "All film is film criticism."

The critical or persuasive powers of the film medium has long been recognized.

The idea of the “film essay” was first promoted by Sergei Eisenstein who explored the potentials of intellectual montage. Jean-Luc Godard is another filmmaker who made essayistic films. While Eisenstein experimented with the rhetorical capacities of editing, Godard played with the conventions of narrative filmmaking. While the first director used his films as political propaganda, the latter made films which commented upon other films, and upon the filmmaking medium itself. So, while both directors had formulated ideas about the expressive potential of film language, it was Godard who utilised that language to create films which were at once artistic and critical.²⁰ As he has written, “Instead of writing criticism, I make a film, but the critical dimension is subsumed. I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form, or novels in essay form; only instead of writing, I film them.” (Godard 9)

Godard’s films frequently make reference to other films and rather than attempting to preserve the illusion of cinema, he often draws attention to the medium itself. Similarly, there are many films which focus upon literature or writers just as Godard focuses upon films and filmmakers. For example there are many narrative films which recount the life story of a famous writer, or which narrativize a particular period in that person’s career. These films, however unrigorous they may be, often approach the author/protagonist’s work from a biographical standpoint and thus can be said to represent filmic examples of the new historical approach to literature.²¹ Examples of this interesting genre abound. *Gothic* (1986) by Ken Russell, gives an account of the contest between Byron, Shelley and Mary Shelley which resulted in Mary Shelley’s novel

Frankenstein. Richard Attenborough's *Shadowlands* (1993) is a film about the love affair between C. S. Lewis and American poet Joy Gresham. Alan Rudolph's *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle* (1994) examines the life of Dorothy Parker and the other writers of the Algonquin Round Table. And, more recently, Brian Gilbert's *Wilde* (1997) narrativizes the events leading up to Oscar Wilde's famous trial. These are just a few examples of films about writers, though many more exist. For the purpose of this study I am focusing upon the potentially critical dimension of film adaptations; but, needless to say, films which are not adaptations can also have writers and literature as their subject, and can also, potentially, perform as literary criticism.

As I have argued, the writerly adaptation foregrounds the process of adaptation itself and holds its literary source at a critical distance. Along this line, in *Film and Literature*, Timothy Corrigan writes suggestively,

Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*, David Cronenberg's 1991 version of William Burroughs's novel *Naked Lunch*, and even the recent *Clueless* (adapted from Jane Austen's *Emma*) may map a new field for the relationship between film and literature, where movies do not assimilate literature to their own visual theatrics but develop a unique relationship with their film audiences analogous to the more concentrated activity of private reading. (Corrigan 70)

The adaptations which Corrigan describes are not faithful to their sources; rather, they interpret and comment upon the works they adapt. While these free, interpretive adaptations are defined in relation to their pre-texts, unlike faithful adaptations they do not seek to simply translate their sources into a new medium. The earlier works do not act as models or prototypes for these adaptations; instead they are the very subjects of the films. Adaptations are particularly well-suited to perform as literary criticism as they are

already in a relationship of artistic exchange with another text. However, not all adaptations are critical of their literary sources. It is the interpretive aspects of a given adaptation—the aspects which serve to create distance from the original text—which, ultimately, qualify it as a new work, and as a potentially critical work. In this way, free adaptations are more likely than faithful adaptations to be in a critical relationship with the original text. More specifically, the critical dimension of faithful adaptations may be more inadvertent while free adaptations are more likely to exploit the interpretive potential of the adaptive process.

Shakespeare in Love is one of many recent film adaptations to offer free, even idiosyncratic, treatments of Shakespearean plays. In an article entitled “The Bard is Back!: And He’s Bigger than Ever!” which appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, M. S. Mason writes,

Hollywood is having a field day with Will as updated versions of his plays pour out of Tinseltown, fueled by star-power and megabudgets. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” opens in early May with Michele Pfeiffer and Kevin Kline. Kenneth Branagh is making “Love’s Labour’s Lost” as a musical starring Alicia Silverstone. Ethan Hawke will play in “Hamlet,” with Bill Murray as Polonius, set in contemporary New York. “Macbeth” becomes the plot for “Near in Blood” about a high-school football team. A version of “Othello” takes place in a prep school, and “Taming of the Shrew” comes back as “10 Things I Hate About You”—a ‘90s teen battle-of-the-sexes without the Shakespearean dialogue. (13)

To this list of free Shakespearean film adaptations I would add Jean-Luc Godard’s *King Lear* (1987), Van Sant’s *My Own Private Idaho*, which adapts Henry IV, Kenneth Branagh’s *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet* and Pacino’s

Looking for Richard, to name a few.²²

Shakespeare in Love is not a faithful adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, nor does it follow the conventions associated with Shakespearean performance. It does, however, imitate the tropes and themes which characterize Shakespeare's work, and it even resembles a Shakespearean play in certain extratextual ways. To use William S. Burroughs's term, *Shakespeare in Love* is a "cut-up text."²³ It draws upon elements in Shakespeare's oeuvre and incorporates biographical details into the adaptation. As I will argue, like the film itself, Shakespeare's plays are all derivative works. By enlarging upon certain aspects of Shakespeare's writing, *Shakespeare in Love* draws attention to these aspects in the pre-text. The film is a pastiche of transplanted quotes and literary devices. The adaptation does not treat *Romeo and Juliet* as a closed, monologic text; rather it re-works and re-imagines it to the extent that the adapted play is promoted as being inexhaustibly interpretable. As such, it represents a "writerly reading" of the play it adapts.

In *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes* Mary Bittner Wiseman introduces the concept of writerly reading. She observes,

Reading that is productive, writerly, is so precisely by virtue of its changing the lenses through which and the positions from which the reader is accustomed to look, and adopting, *seriatim*, indefinitely many other starting points: the more points at which the reader enters the text, the more plural her reading." (176)

The screenplay of *Shakespeare in Love*, which was co-written by pasticheur Tom Stoppard, is typical of the derivative, collage-like nature of much of his writing. To use Geoffrey Wagner's term, *Shakespeare in Love* is a "filmic restatement" of *Romeo and*

Juliet.²⁴ It presents an openly fictional account of the writer as he struggles to overcome writers' block. In so doing, the adaptation promotes the fact that Shakespeare's real identity and the motivations behind his writings are largely shrouded in mystery. By extension, Stoppard's "reading" of *Romeo and Juliet* is not canonical or closed; rather, it promotes the play as a multivalent text which can be interpreted and reconfigured in countless ways.

In many ways, *Shakespeare in Love* resembles Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. The play, which was written in 1967, is at once an adaptation of *Hamlet* and a parody of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* is a re-telling of the story of *Hamlet* from the point of view of two minor characters. Like *Shakespeare in Love*, it playfully re-invents a well-known Shakespearean text. Critic Robert Brustein described *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* as a "theatrical parasite" (qtd. in Cahn 35). Tom Stoppard himself referred to it as "a sort of Shakespearean pastiche" (qtd. in Sammells 39). As such, the play, which was in fact adapted to the screen in a readerly fashion by Stoppard in 1990, can be said to offer a writerly reading of Shakespeare's work.

Shakespeare in Love freely adapts *Romeo and Juliet* and, simultaneously, it provides an account—albeit fictional—of the circumstances surrounding Shakespeare's writing of the play. In this way, it is an example of a film which features a writer as a main character, but it is also an adaptation, however licentious, of a literary text. In spite of the fact that the film takes this creative, double-voiced approach to Shakespeare's play

it has been criticized for offering an overly simplistic, contrived account of the creative process. In a review of the film which appeared in the *Village Voice*, Amy Taubin writes,

[I]t soon becomes evident just how inane a film this is. *Shakespeare in Love* proposes that Shakespeare was a blocked writer until he found his muse, and that having found her, he wrote most of *Romeo and Juliet* in the sack. All writers should be so lucky. We could call this the pillow-talk theory of literature. (146)

I would argue, first, that *Shakespeare in Love* offers a much more intelligent and probing interpretation than Taubin suggests and, second, the film's humour and accessibility is not at odds with its ability to communicate engaging ideas about Shakespeare's work. The commercial nature of the film might seem to suggest that it is pure entertainment and nothing more ambitious. In keeping with Taubin's skeptical response to the film one might ask: does the accessible and commercial nature of *Shakespeare in Love* undermine its writerly quality? In *Writing in a Film Age*, Keith Cohen equates the writerly with the avant-garde. He argues,

One way to analyze the avant-garde is to define it precisely against the norm of classical narrative. Roland Barthes's term for the avant-garde was "writerly," which he defined as possessing structures and sequences that are not composed according to the prevailing codes of fiction (codes that manage the "readerly" text). The reader of the "writerly" text must enter into the creative process to make sense of the text. (Cohen 32)

Although *Shakespeare in Love* does rely upon conventions of classical narrative filmmaking, I would argue that it is indeed a writerly adaptation. The film's relationship to Shakespeare's work is writerly to the extent that it playfully re-interprets its source. In spite of the fact that the film features Hollywood stars such as Gwyneth Paltrow and

Joseph Fiennes, and has won several Academy Awards, it does employ writerly strategies; namely, it exposes the plurality of the pre-text, it questions the very notion of authorship and originality, and it offers what Barthes has called a “countertheological” reading of the play (Barthes 1989: 54).

Madden’s film is not as erudite as, say, *Prospero’s Books*; it is, however, equally “literate” in that it shows an equal familiarity with, and understanding of, its source material. The film imitates, exaggerates and newly contextualizes different aspects of Shakespeare’s writing style. *Shakespeare in Love* is as much a parody of *Romeo and Juliet* as it is an adaptation. It assumes that the audience has a certain degree of familiarity with the story and, indeed, with the mythos surrounding Shakespeare himself, and it playfully subverts and expands upon this common knowledge.

In a recent conference paper entitled “From *Classics Illustrated* to Cult Comix: Shakespeare and *The Sandman*,” Alison Taufer discusses the comic adaptations of Shakespearean plays which appear in the “adult comix” *The Sandman*. In particular she focuses upon the three issues—*The Tempest* (no. 75), *Men of Good Fortune* (no. 13) and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (no. 19)—which include Shakespeare himself as a character who writes the plays in a frame story (Taufer 6). She writes,

In these three issues, [Neil] Gaiman [the writer], fuses Shakespeare and his work into new narratives drawn not only from the plays, but from facts and apocrypha that surround the dramatist himself, as well as the cultural and historical conditions of the times in which he lived. In this sense, Gaiman’s portrait is yet another example of the growing popularity of fictionalized Shakespeare biographies, the most widely known being the 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love*, but also represented by Anthony Burgess’ *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare’s Love-Life* (1964) and Stephanie Cowell’s *The Players: A Novel of*

the Young Shakespeare (1997). (Taufert 6)

Like *Shakespeare in Love*, Gaiman's comic adaptations represent a form of popular entertainment nonetheless characterized by "erudite cultural allusions" (Taufert 5) and "defined by an exuberant intertextuality" (Taufert 6). Both the film and the DC Comics adaptations are at once the property of "high art" and "low art," or, to use less problematic terms, they are at once highly literate and commercially successful. The use of popular media such as comics and film to create Shakespearean adaptations reflects the fact that, during the Elizabethan period, Shakespeare's plays had a broad popular appeal. This fact was not lost on the screenwriters of *Shakespeare in Love*, Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman. Gloria Goodale describes how Norman first arrived at the premise of the film after his son suggested that he make a film about Shakespeare as a young man. She writes,

With that motivation for his pen, Norman said he hit upon the essential storyline of a playwright struggling both with his desire to rise above the ordinary and the demands of an entertainment industry that was being created along with his career... "The industry as we know it today was essentially born in Shakespeare's time," Norman points out. Before that era, playwrights and actors had no home theater and no backers or regular audiences. "They were itinerants, performing in the streets," he says. (Stoppard and Norman 1999: 17)

Similarly, Professor Michael Bristol of McGill University observes, "Part of the explanation for Shakespeare's importance over the long haul is that he does belong to popular culture and commercial culture" (qtd. in Mason 13). Certain writers (e.g., Mason) have pointed out that, like Shakespearean plays themselves, *Shakespeare in Love* is

appealing at many different levels. As playwright Terry Dodd suggests, “If you know Shakespeare and the theater, there is double the movie there. But the filmmakers have wisely put one foot in art and one in commercialism.” (Qtd. in Mason 13) At the most literal level *Shakespeare in Love* is bawdy and silly; it is a comedy of errors. At a more academic level, the film is full of literary references and “inside-jokes” which reward those who might be familiar with Shakespeare’s work.

Shakespeare in Love is an interesting fusion of history and fiction. The film uses literary history as a reference but where there are gaps in the historical record, it supplies outlandish invention. Many of the characters in the film are historical figures and most aspects of the story are based, however loosely, upon historical events. For example, the film posits Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett) as Shakespeare’s rival and gives an account of Marlowe’s death. It is a historical fact that Marlowe was murdered in a Deptford tavern in 1593 (the very year in which the film is set), however to this date scholars cannot explain the particular circumstances surrounding his death, although there is a theory that he was assassinated.(Gadshalk 1). *Shakespeare in Love* provides a fantastical explanation: in a moment of cowardice, “Will” introduces himself as Christopher Marlowe to Viola’s jealous betrothed, the Lord of Wessex (Colin Firth). When the true Marlowe turns up dead in a tavern, Shakespeare feels responsible and Viola believes at first that it is *Shakespeare* who is dead. Thus the screenwriters of the film employ an old Shakespearian strategy—the trope of mistaken identities—in order to explain and fictionalize a four hundred-year-old mystery.

The character John Webster is another example of the way the film consolidates

fact and fiction. In *Shakespeare in Love* Webster is depicted as a scruffy, impoverished child who cavorts with rats outside of the playhouse. This provides a bit of humour to the initiated who know John Webster as one of the most celebrated of the Jacobean playwrights. The suggestion that this “strange boy” will grow up to succeed Shakespeare and Marlowe and to write plays, such as *The Duchess of Malfi*, famous for their gore, violence and horror is a source of irony in the film. *Shakespeare in Love* supplies fictitious explanations for the problems which history cannot explain. The film imagines what might motivate an author like Webster just as it imagines what might inspire Shakespeare. As Marjorie Garber observes,

Stoppard’s play does not purport to be history, but its particular choices are highly symptomatic. For what we want—and what people have wanted over the years from Shakespeare’s death to the present time—is the answer to the conundrum of “authorship” itself. Not just “Who wrote the plays?” but “How does great writing happen? Where does it come from? And why? (44)

Furthermore, there are lines from Shakespeare’s plays peppered throughout which will be instantly recognized by those who are familiar with the plays. However, many of these lines appear out of context and thus represent more linguistic freeplay on the part of the screenwriters. For example, in one scene the character Henslowe says “The play must...” and Shakespeare prompts him impatiently, saying: “...go on!”. Much of the film’s humour relies on the audience’s familiarity with Shakespeare’s work or, at least, it relies on certain preconceptions about the playwright. Even audience members whose exposure to Shakespeare is limited to memorizing soliloquies in highschool will enjoy the way the film works to present the bard and his oeuvre in a new light. The many puns and

witticisms in the film not only work to override the notion that Shakespearean plays are dull and academic; they also reflect the humour in the plays themselves. For example, in *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, M. M. Mahood observes, "*Romeo and Juliet* is one of Shakespeare's most punning plays; even a really conservative count yields a hundred and seventy-five quibbles." (55)

As I have suggested, the way in which the film straddles the popular and the scholarly is, arguably, a reflection of this same dual nature which characterizes Shakespearean plays. The very fact that the film adapts multiple sources is another example of the way that it mirrors Shakespearean works at the metastructural level. With the possible exception of his final play, *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's plays were all adaptations of previous works.²⁵ Raphael Holinshed's 1587 edition of *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, Sir Thomas North's 1578 translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) and the Bible are among the many sources of Shakespeare's plays (Satin 1966). *Romeo and Juliet* is itself an adaptation of Arthur Brooke's poem "Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet," which is in turn based upon a story by Luigi da Porto (Muir 38).

Shakespeare's appropriative approach to writing was, of course, representative of a larger trend. During the Renaissance, there was a renewal of interest in classical texts, and writers sought to revive and emulate these earlier works. As such, the way in which *Shakespeare in Love* adapts an antecedent work in such a way as to make it accessible to a contemporary audience can be seen as being self-reflexive in itself.

Although I have promoted the film as an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, it so

freely adapts the play that its status as an adaptation is, perhaps, debatable. It is not a straight re-telling of the original story; there are no characters “Romeo” and “Juliet” in the film. However, Gwyneth Paltrow’s character Viola Delesseps is a stand-in for Juliet, and the character of Shakespeare is, himself, a stand-in for Romeo. It is Shakespeare’s love for Viola that inspires him to write the play.

There are traces of straight-forward adaptation, if you like, in the film. These metadiegetic *windows of fidelity* to the parent text are represented by the “play within the film,” that is, when Shakespeare’s company of actors, including the disguised Viola, rehearse for and perform Will’s play, “Romeo and Juliet.” These moments, which represent a more conventional treatment of the material, serve to heighten the effect of the creative liberties taken throughout the rest of the film.

In some ways *Shakespeare in Love* can be seen as being a double adaptation, and its female protagonist, Viola, can be seen as a stand-in for several different Shakespearean heroines. *Shakespeare in Love* adapts the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, but it also invokes themes and characters from *Twelfth Night*. At the end of the film, Will sits at his desk, having just said goodbye to Viola forever. He picks up his pen and begins to write his next play which—due to a promise made to Viola—is to be a comedy. He writes “What country, friends, is this?...” which is Viola’s first line of dialogue in *Twelfth Night*; and the film ends with the image of Viola Delesseps walking along the shores of Illyria. Viewers familiar with *Twelfth Night* would have recognized Gwyneth Paltrow’s character as ‘Viola, sister of Sebastian’ long before the end of the film; not only because of her name, but because Paltrow’s character wears knickers and a goatee in order to pass as

Thomas Kent, and in *Twelfth Night* the character of Viola likewise dresses as a young man, Cesario, as she makes her way around the Island of Illyria.

Interestingly, the film's final image is described in the script as follows:

"DISSOLVE slowly to Viola, walking away up the beach towards her brave new world" (Stoppard and Norman 1998:129). This is a direct reference to the often-quoted lines spoken by Miranda in *The Tempest*. She and her father, Prospero, arrive back in Milan after their long period of exile and she exclaims, "How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, / That has such people in't!" (*Tmp.* V.i.185-187). This small detail in the script seems to suggest that Viola is likewise a stand-in, or analogue, for Miranda. According to the logic of the film, Viola Delesseps is to be Will's inspiration in creating all of his future plays. Outside of the logic of the narrative, the device serves to underscore the intertextual nature of Shakespeare's works.

As the recent controversy has brought to light, *Shakespeare in Love* appears to borrow heavily from a 1941 British novel entitled, *No Bed for Bacon*. The book, which is now out-of-print, bears striking similarities to *Shakespeare in Love*. In an article which appeared in the online journal *Salon* Craig Offman quotes Ned Sherrin's description of the the book:

Lady Viola Compton, a young girl from the Queen's Court, visits the theatre and is so infatuated by Shakespeare and his plays that she disguises herself as a boy player and inspires *Twelfth Night* and the playwright's affection. (Offman, par. 2)

Is *No Bed for Bacon* actually the uncredited source material for *Shakespeare in*

Love? Is Madden's film actually a quasi-faithful adaptation of that book, rather than a free and playful adaptation of Shakespeare's plays?²⁶ As Daniel Fierman notes,

The similarities between the two works went unnoticed until late January, when a letter to the editor of London's *Daily Telegraph* brought them to light. Since then, a few fans of the novel have waged a letter-writing campaign asking Miramax to credit the out-of-print book, which was almost made into a movie starring Alec Guinness. (Fierman 55)

The novel, which was written by Caryl Brahms and S. J. Simon, makes use of plotlines and devices which later appear in *Shakespeare in Love*. One such example is described by Mason below:

Nothing is more of a mystery than Shakespeare himself. But maybe a hero for the ages should be at least two-fifths blank slate—and the other three-fifths the work he left behind. Even that work has been in dispute for a long time: Did Shakespeare write Shakespeare or did somebody else? The Earl of Oxford, maybe, or Christopher Marlowe? The debate is important enough for Stoppard to wryly address it in his screenplay. The film opens with Will writing his last name over and over again with various spellings, for example, since one argument used against his authorship of the plays is that he spelled his name differently each time. (13)

Mason suggests that the film's opening serves to draw attention to the authorship controversy surrounding the "Shakespearean" plays. The joke about the signatures serves to invoke the question, did William Shakespeare of Stratford-Upon-Avon write the plays attributed to him? It is an especially interesting way to begin the narrative because it serves to suggest the film's premise; namely, that there is so little known about Shakespeare, that anything which is said about him is merely conjecture or extrapolation.

However interesting this device may be, it is not original; rather, it is taken

directly from *No Bed for Bacon*. The opening lines of the novel are as follows:

In a cold dark little room over against the back of the theatre, Sir Francis Bacon was talking eloquently. Opposite him a melancholy figure sat tracing its signature on a pad. Shakesper; Shakspere; Shekspar; he always practised tracing his signature when he was bored. (Qtd. in Lanchester 1)²⁷

The parallels between *No Bed for Bacon* and *Shakespeare in Love* serve to further define the film adaptation as a derivative work. It is very fitting that the film should borrow so heavily from a variety of different sources because that is precisely how the conception of *Romeo and Juliet* is described by the film. In fact, the derivative nature of Shakespeare's works is a running joke. As Amy Taubin concedes, "One of the film's genuinely witty observations has to do with Shakespeare's ability to capitalize on other people's ideas. Thus, Christopher Marlowe, London's reigning playwright, gives Will the premise for *Romeo and Juliet*, and Viola, her tongue loosened by the loss of her virginity, offers up the raw material for the verse." (146) Similarly, David Jays suggests, "The playwright becomes a snapper-up of suggestion, swooping on advice like the 'upstart crow' and plagiarist of Elizabethan scorn." (39)

"Will" Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes) draws inspiration from the most unlikely places. For example, when he is walking down a bustling street his eyes light up when he overhears a flower vendor shouting "...a rose by any other name...". Further, as Taubin suggests, it is during a conversation with Christopher Marlowe that Will procures the central ideas for his play. Their tête-à-tête appears on page 27 of the script:

MARLOWE
What is the story?

WILL
Well, there's a pirate...
(confesses)
In truth, I have not written a word.

MARLOWE
Romeo is... Italian. Always in and
out of love.

WILL
Yes, that's good. Until he meets...

MARLOWE
Ethel.

WILL
Do you think?

MARLOWE
The daughter of his enemy.

WILL
(thoughtfully)
The daughter of his enemy.

MARLOWE
His best friend is killed in a duel
by Ethel's brother or something. His
name is Mercutio.

WILL
Mercutio... good name.

(Stoppard and Norman 1998: 27)

Shakespeare in Love purposefully emulates Shakespeare's approach. It takes apart
the playwright's work and reassembles its various components into a new, contemporary

work. In an interview with David Sterritt which appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, director John Madden explains, “The whole movie is constructed and conceived in Shakespearean terms. It hitches a ride on his work, and it opens that work up for a modern audience, reconnecting emotions to poetry and sexual attraction to romantic love. I guess those are things America wants to hear at the moment—and Spain, and France, and pretty much anywhere the film has opened so far.” (15)

In this way, the film’s narrative is not merely fictional, it is *metadramatic*. The plot of the film is patterned after the dramatic worlds of Shakespeare’s plays. As the president of the Shakespeare Guild, John Andrews, observes, “What Stoppard did is take Shakespearean liberties with Shakespeare’s own life.” (Qtd. in Tolson 48) John Simon likewise refers to the metadramatic approach of the film, yet finds the conceit to be contrived and clichéd. In a piece which appeared in the *National Review* he writes disparagingly,

The problem for me is the relentless crosscutting from bedroom to stage, with identical or similar dialogue surfacing both in Will and Viola’s dalliance, and in the rehearsals of a play first called *Romeo and Ethel*, the *Pirate’s Daughter*, which gradually evolves into you-know-what. The conceit of life imitating art and vice versa becomes a bit too mechanical; certain other parallels, or bits of leering revisionism, are likewise labored. (Simon 56)

Simon’s criticism might stem from the fact that *Shakespeare in Love* is, as I’ve mentioned, a film geared towards a popular audience. Its critical insight into the play it adapts must be expressed in a candid, entertaining way. In fact, a film such as *Shakespeare in Love*, which may help revive some public interest in Shakespeare’s work, provides a strong argument for the popularising of literature and literary theory. While I

am convinced that the film looks critically at the play(s) it adapts—at least to the extent that it participates in the critical discourse—it is clearly a very accessible form of criticism. As such, *Shakespeare in Love* can be said to represent the democratization of literary criticism.

There are, obviously, many types of critical essays, filmic or otherwise. Though both comment on the same literary source, *Shakespeare in Love* takes a completely different approach than, say, Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, which re-contextualizes the play within a postmodern, urban setting. Further, while I have been focussing upon the script (the dialogue, the structure of the narrative) as the principal means for expressing the critical ideas in a film, there are many other aspects of film which can work to promote critical ideas. Intellectual ideas can be expressed through camerawork, through the juxtaposition of images and soundtrack and, as Eisenstein proved, through editing. Even within traditional text-bound criticism, there are many different and divergent approaches. Film holds the potential to further expand the definition of literary criticism. Simply because of ontological differences, the film medium may be able to provide new kinds of analysis and interpretation of written texts. And, film adaptations—defined in relation to prior texts—are especially interpretive. As Dudley Andrew writes, "...the process of adaptation has much in common with interpretation theory, for in a strong sense adaptation is the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text. The hermeneutic circle, central to interpretation theory, preaches that an explication of a text occurs only after a prior understanding of it, yet that prior understanding is justified by the careful explication it allows." (97)

Shakespeare in Love can be said to be a non-elitist form of literary criticism precisely because it uses *narrative* as a means of conveying ideas and arguments. Specifically, it expresses Shakespearean ideas within the context of classical Hollywood cinema. While the film openly invokes the conventions of narrative film²⁸, it likewise foregrounds the kinds of tropes and devices which characterize Shakespearean plays. As such, the diegetic world of the film is a merging of the two narrative traditions. Because of its self-reflexive adoption of Hollywood narrative filmmaking conventions, and because of the self-reflexivity inherent in Shakespearean theatre, *Shakespeare in Love* offers an openly fictional and artificial depiction of the Shakespearean world. It is perhaps for this reason that “anachronisms run rampant” (Simon 55) in the film.²⁹

In spite of its commercial appeal, *Shakespeare in Love* is a very “literary” film to the extent that it places so much emphasis upon narrative, dialogue and language itself. John Madden has said,

[Language is] a great passion of mine. But that’s something you have to say in hushed tones when you’re around the movies, because they’re supposed to be about pictures. They’re not just about pictures, though. What we often remember about films is the language, the voices, the words. (Qtd. in Sterritt 15)

Unlike other critical films which might tap into the cinematic potential of the medium,³⁰ *Shakespeare in Love* frequently uses linguistic means to put across ideas. As such, it is an example of what Canadian writer and critic Aritha Van Herk has called “fictocriticism,” or criticism which takes the form of a story (See Van Herk’s *In Visible Ink: Crypto-Frictions*). Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* is likewise an example of fictocriticism to the extent that it playfully re-frames and comments upon *Hamlet*. Like

Shakespeare in Love, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern relies heavily upon allusions to the play it adapts. According to Leonard Maltin, the film is “full of delicious wordplay.” He writes, “Oldman and Roth are engaging as the puckish incidental characters from *Hamlet* who wander into a series of (mostly verbal) adventures in and around the royal castle.” (Maltin, par. 1)

Both *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and *Shakespeare in Love* depend upon narrative—rather than visual—means to communicate the important ideas in the film. Through the narrative the screenwriters of *Shakespeare in Love* construct an argument which can be traced back to poststructuralist criticism; specifically, as the story suggests, literary texts do not exist in a vacuum. Texts are not complete in and of themselves, rather they are in relationships of exchange with other texts. Further, the adaptation is expanded to include a fictionalization of the writing process itself. Herein lies not only the heart of the story but also a series of interesting critical ideas associated with writing. As Stanley Kauffmann writes, *Shakespeare in Love* is an “entertaining parody of the creative process” (26).

Through their fictionalization of the writing process, the screenwriters refute certain modernist notions about the act of artistic creation. The idea of the romantic genius whose artistic creations are at once spontaneous and original is not a notion which held currency during the Renaissance, when Shakespeare was writing, nor does it describe the postmodern view. As Gary Johnson writes, “Instead of giving us a genius who delivers ideas fully formed, the filmmakers allow us to see the world that this fictional Shakespeare inhabited and how it may have influenced his art” (Johnson, par. 5).

Shakespeare in Love demystifies the process of artistic creation and, likewise, it demystifies Shakespeare as a historical figure. Rather, the film seems to suggest that we cannot know him as a historical figure, merely as a fictional character. The film strips away any mysteriousness which may surround Shakespeare; it describes a mythical figure in very human terms. Whereas, generally, the creation of the plays is thought to be an act of creative genius, a superlative effort, this film suggests that the author was a somewhat ordinary man, trying to make a living. As Richard Alleva suggests, “The good-natured, deliberately naive joke at the heart of *Shakespeare in Love* is that there is no mystery whatsoever to artistic creation. Life provides the coffee beans of poetry and imagination grinds them into stories and verse. And what sparks imagination? Love, of course.” (16)

I have promoted *Shakespeare in Love* as being an example of filmic literary criticism which makes certain salient points concerning the barriers separating “high” and “low” art, the derivative nature of Shakespearean texts, and the creative process itself. However, an unavoidable—and perhaps unanswerable—questions remains. If this film text is both art and criticism, who is the artist/critic? John Madden may be the director of the film, but is he the auteur? Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman collaborated on the screenplay; are they responsible for the film’s ‘critical’ content? I have suggested that the screenwriters Norman and (especially) Stoppard are principally responsible for the so-called intellectual or critical content of the film. However, this is subject to debate. As co-producer Harvey Weinstein said, “This was an ensemble film and it took an ensemble team to make it.”(Burdon 1)

Stoppard seems a likely “critic” in that he has a background in theatre criticism³¹

and, further, his earlier work which so resembles *Shakespeare in Love*, is highly intellectual. Neil Sammells uses the term “analytical imagination” (14) to describe the work of Tom Stoppard. The term describes an approach to art which is at once creative and intellectually engaged, which embraces the inherently creative nature of critical thinking by using artistic means for communicating intellectual ideas. A film such as *Shakespeare in Love* can be seen as an exercise in analytical imagination to the extent that it makes use of free adaptation as a way to enter into a critical relationship with a prior text.

However, like Stoppard, Marc Norman also has a background working with Shakespearean material; he is a Hollywood screenwriter who has an M.A. in English literature from U. C.-Berkeley (Offman, par. 7). And, according to Gloria Goodale, the premise of *Shakespeare in Love* was put into place by Marc Norman, who, as I’ve mentioned, got the idea from his son, Zach. “‘I couldn’t get a handle on it at first,’ recalls Norman, ‘but I didn’t want to go back to my child and tell him I couldn’t do the story’”(Stoppard and Norman 1999:17).

Madden himself worked with Shakespearean texts as a young stage director in England (Sterritt 15). While making the film, he consciously tried to reflect the “structure and themes... of Shakespearean comedy.” He told David Sterritt,

Those plays often involve people with very romantic ideas of love looking for romantic infatuation or the pleasure of experiencing love. Then these [ideas] go through an unexpected reversal involving death or separation or loss. This causes the romantic love to be reevaluated and turned into real love with all its dangers and risks, leading to a redemptive conclusion with overtones of melancholy and isolation. All the mature comedies turn the notion of love around to see what its component parts are and what its significance is. (Madden 15)

In spite of the problem of the collaborative nature of film—as opposed to the more solitary nature of writing—I hope I have argued convincingly that film, especially free adaptations, can qualify as literary criticism. I have suggested that *Shakespeare in Love* relies largely upon linguistic and narrative freeplay in order to re-interpret the play which it adapts. The film, which is a pastiche of assembled quotations, tropes and fragmented plotlines, tells the farfetched story of a young playwright who draws inspiration from the most improbable places. As such, the film’s plot reflects its very structure. Like Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch*, *The Mystery of Rambo* and *Prospero’s Books*, *Shakespeare in Love* adapts a work which is itself highly derivative; and, as I will continue to argue, the openly derivative nature of writerly adaptations frequently works to imitate the very approach taken by the authors of the literary sources. In this way, writerly adaptations can be seen to strive for a degree of fidelity which surpasses the attempt to merely adapt the diegetic world of the pre-text. I will explore this idea of “hyperfidelity”³² in my discussion of *The Mystery of Rambo* and *Prospero’s Books* (Chapters Four and Five).

In *Shakespeare in Love*, the implausible narrative builds upon literary history and the characters are fictional extensions of actual literary figures. In the process of presenting this fictionalization of history, *Shakespeare in Love* openly re-imagines and interprets the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, both as a story and as a constructed text. And, unlike single-voiced academic essays which have but one object, *Shakespeare in Love* is at once an entertaining adaptation and an “interpretation and evaluation” of a literary text. As such, the film can be seen as being a creative alternative to traditional adaptation and traditional criticism alike.

**Script and Scription:
Tracing the Writer in *The Mystery of Rampo***

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidelon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule—
From a wild clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of Space—out of Time.

– Edgar Allan Poe’s “Dreamland” (343)

Kazuyoshi Okuyama’s *The Mystery of Rampo* (1994) is the film which first prompted me to consider the creative potential of nonfaithful film adaptations. The film is at once an adaptation of a short story by the popular Japanese mystery writer Edogawa Rampo and a largely fictional account of the writer himself as he becomes swept up in the process of writing a sequel to his own story. The film’s elaborate network of quotations and narrative digressions not only resists the linear causality and closure associated with narrative films, but also marks a departure from more traditional ways of adapting literature. It is a self-reflexive and densely intertextual work which artfully refers to its literary sources while challenging the very notion of representation—cinematic, literary or otherwise. As such, it is an excellent example of a writerly adaptation.

In this chapter I will discuss *The Mystery of Rampo*'s postmodern visual style and its free, writerly approach to adaptation. Specifically, I will suggest that it offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of Rampo's writing by positing the writing process as one governed largely by unconscious processes; I will argue, however, that the film draws attention to—and undermines—the very interpretive strategy it deploys. I will further suggest that the film promotes certain themes such as the failure of representation and the indeterminacy of meaning, themes which characterize many, if not all, writerly films. Like *Naked Lunch*, *Shakespeare in Love* and *Prospero's Books*, Okuyama's film is an exploration of the creative writing process from the hypersubjective viewpoint of a writer in the midst of writing. Like the two previous films, *The Mystery of Rampo* is based upon the life of a real writer and the events of the film are derived in part from biographical information and in part from characters and situations depicted in the writer's oeuvre. As such, the film represents a merger of fact and fiction; and, as I will argue, this approach is reflected in both the narrative and stylistic levels of the film.

Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965) is widely considered to be responsible for inaugurating the mystery-detective genre in Japan. Né Hirai Tarō, the writer adopted his pen name as an homage to Edgar Allan Poe³³, whose work influenced him greatly. Like Poe, Edogawa Rampo was a prolific writer whose work became part of his country's popular imagination and remains widely read today. *The Mystery of Rampo* was released in Japan in 1994 to jointly mark the hundred-year anniversary of Rampo's birth and the centennial of cinema. Throughout the film there are numerous references to early cinema

and filmmaking itself, including an early adaptation of Rampo's own work, all of which contributes to the highly self-reflexive nature of the film.

The Mystery of Rampo opens with a montage of black and white footage depicting Japan during World War I. Images of soldiers marching, children playing at war, and a blimp hovering over a crowd set an ominous tone and situate the film within a social context. Set during the Showa Period (the interwar years) in Japan, *The Mystery of Rampo*, is centred on the writer-protagonist Rampo (Naoto Takenaka) whose most recent work, "The Appearance of Osei," has been banned. While *The Mystery of Rampo* alludes to several short stories and novels in Edogawa Rampo's oeuvre, and features characters and themes which recur in his work, "The Appearance of Osei" ["Osei Tojo"] written by Rampo in 1924 is the film's most important pre-text. (See the Appendix for an English translation of this work.)³⁴ *The Mystery of Rampo* also makes overt reference to two other well-known stories written by Rampo: "The Mystery Man with the Twenty Faces" written in 1936, and "The Prey and the Shadow,"³⁵ as I will discuss in upcoming paragraphs.

"The Appearance of Osei" is represented in the film by a short, animated sequence created by Yasuhiro Nagura. The anim sequence, which appears near the beginning of the film, is at once dream-like and disturbing. This embedded narrative represents a highly poetic and selective treatment of Rampo's story. Certain elements and characters which appear in the original story are absent in Nagura's adaptation. At the same time, several striking and highly connotative images which appear in the animated version—such as a parasol floating to the centre of a pond and a "close-up" of an insect dragging a smaller insect (its prey) across the ground—do not originate in Rampo's story.

These additions, along with the music box melody on the soundtrack, contribute to the poignancy of the story and also recur later in the film as thematic motifs.

The story itself is a macabre tale about a young wife, Osei, who is bound by duty to care for her infirm husband, Kakutaro. The events of the story as related by Nagura's inlayed adaptation are as follows:

One afternoon while his wife is out, Kakutaro joins a group of children in a game of hide-and-seek. When it is his turn to hide he chooses a large trousseau chest as his hiding spot. While he waits, curled in the dark trunk, the children search for him in vain. Eventually they grow tired of the game and wander off. At last, realizing that the game has ended, Kakutaro attempts to lift the lid of the trunk, only to discover that the latch has fallen and that he is trapped. Shortly thereafter his wife, Osei, returns. Hearing scratches emanating from the trunk, she realizes what has happened and begins to open the lid. Suddenly, she has a change of heart. Her face becomes twisted and menacing as she firmly closes the lid and secures the latch, thus leaving Kakutaro to suffocate to death in the trunk and freeing herself at last of the burden of having to care for him. After her husband's death Osei is tormented by guilt. Although her weakened husband put up no fight whatsoever as he lay dying in the trunk, he managed to scratch her name, "Osei," onto the underside of the lid, and this ambiguous mark forever serves as a reminder of her guilt.

The five-minute-long animated sequence is key to understanding the rest of the film to the extent that all other narrative events represent a variation on the themes and situations depicted in it. After Rampo's story is banned by the censors, he burns his

manuscript. Shortly thereafter, his publisher, Masashi Yokomizo (Teruyuki Kagawa), shows him a newspaper article about a woman named Shizuko Oyamada (Michiko Hada), similarly accused of murdering her sick husband by leaving him to suffocate in a trunk. Slowly, Rampo discovers that his fictional characters have analogues in the real world, which prompts him to pick up his pen and continue writing about the characters he had previously abandoned. His publisher acts as a catalyst, saying: "You have to keep writing. The woman you created has taken the form of a real person. Don't give up! You're responsible for this woman you've created!" And, herein lies "the mystery of Rampo."

As it appears in the film, the sequel to "The Appearance of Osei" is a story which consists entirely of stock characters from Edogawa Rampo's detective stories. The murderess Osei, now supplanted by Shizuko, escapes to a remote mansion belonging to the sadistic Marquis Ogawara (Mikijuro Hira). Soon after, the heroic Detective Kogoro Akechi (Masahiro Motoki) arrives on the scene via parachute, and ultimately falls in love with the femme fatale whom he had set out to investigate. Kogoro Akechi, who appears frequently as the protagonist of Rampo's detective stories, has been described as the "Edogawan equivalent of Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot" (Ivy 23-24n20). In a short story entitled, "The Psychological Test," Akechi is described as follows:

A sleuth with a mind keen as a razor and a unique technique for solving knotty problems, [Detective] Kogoro Akechi was the one man whom [sic.] the district attorney would have stopped to talk to even if he had been on his way to catch a train. On several previous occasions he had asked for Dr. Akechi's cooperation in cracking what had been labeled as "impossible cases," and in every instance the man had lived up to his reputation as one of Japan's most remarkable detectives. (Rampo 1956: 50).

Three versions of the character of Detective Akechi appear in *The Mystery of Rampo*: the actor dressed as Akechi to whom Rampo is introduced at the film première party depicted early in the film (a scene which I will discuss at length in upcoming paragraphs), the character as he appears in *The Phantom with the Twenty Faces* and, most importantly, the character who serves as the hero of Rampo's sequel. The film posits Akechi as Rampo's alter-ego. The producer Tagawa makes a comment to this effect during the film screening. Further, there are several instances in which parallel editing is used to emphasize the continuity between the two characters. For example, in one scene Akechi is shown walking towards Shizuko and when he passes in front of a large mirror Rampo's reflection appears in the glass.

Just as Viola in *Shakespeare in Love* is a composite of Shakespearean heroines, the femme fatale Shizuko is based upon several female characters in Rampo's oeuvre. The film presents Shizuko as an extension of Rampo's fictional character, Osei; however, Shizuko Oyamada is in fact the main character of another story by Rampo entitled "The Prey and the Shadow." According to Pierre Bayard, "The Prey and the Shadow" is one of Rampo's most popular stories; and, based on Bayard's description of the story, it would seem that *The Mystery of Rampo* makes several allusions to it.³⁶ For example, in "The Prey and the Shadow," as in the film, Shizuko Oyamada is a beautiful murderess who ultimately kills herself. Interestingly, the narrator of the story is a mystery writer who has an affair with Shizuko; this is reflected in Okuyama's film to the extent that Rampo falls in love with Shizuko.

The third important stock character in the film is the Marquis Ogawara, a

transvestite who embodies the immoderately lavish quality of Rampo's fictional world, and stands in for the film's inversionary relationship to its source material, as I will argue. A character who inspires both pity and aversion, the Marquis is a prototype for the villain in Edogawa Rampo's writing. The character is all the more interesting because the part is played by Mikijiro Hira, a stage actor who is widely-known and respected by Japanese audiences. The role appears to be quite unlike anything else Hira has done, thus contributing to the outrageousness of the character. In this way Hira's role in the film can be likened to John Gielgud's performance in Greenaway's unconventional Shakespearean adaptation, *Prospero's Books*. Because the performances given by Hira and Gielgud thwart audience expectation, the effect of the films' unorthodox approach to adaptation is heightened.

Based largely upon the character of an ignoble Marquis who appears in several Rampo stories, it would also seem that Mikijiro Hira's character is inspired in part by a short story by Rampo entitled "Vampire" written in 1930. When Detective Akechi's parachute makes a bumpy landing on the grounds of the Marquis' remote mansion, the detective receives a minor cut. The allusion to the vampire story is suggested when the Marquis, wrapped in a long cape and riding a steed, swoops upon his "visitor" and immediately begins sucking the blood from his cut. To an even greater extent, as I will argue, the Marquis serves as a counterpart to the fictional villain the "phantom" who appears in the "film-within-the-film" adaptation of Rampo's *The Phantom with the Twenty Faces*.

Although it is perhaps largely coincidental, it is most interesting to note that all

four films I discuss as being writerly likewise feature the figure of the transvestite. The theme of transvestitism is by no means an inherent component of all writerly texts, nor is it necessarily a central feature of the writerly adaptations I discuss here. Nonetheless, themes of cross-dressing can be seen to contribute to writerliness of these films, just as the castrato figure, La Zambinella, contributes to the writerliness of Balzac's *Sarrasine*.

At the end of Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*, Fadela reveals herself to be Dr. Benway in disguise thus further convoluting the story. In *Shakespeare in Love*, Viola dresses as Thomas Kent which serves not only to provide the theme of mistaken identities, but which also adds a new level of connotation to the film by emphasizing an affinity between Gwyneth Paltrow's character—already a stand-in for Juliet—and the cross-dressing heroine of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. In Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*, the way in which Prospero delivers Miranda's lines can likewise be seen as a form—however muted—of transvestitism to the extent that Prospero performs his daughter's lines in much the same way as the transvestite figures in the other films perform the role of the female. This idea is supported by the way that Gielgud alters his voice, adopting a higher pitch, when he recites Miranda's lines. Although I will argue in the next chapter that there are other, perhaps more convincing, justifications for Greenaway's decision to have Gielgud perform Miranda's lines, I would argue that this aspect of the film does serve to enhance the writerliness, or multivalence, of the film.

The cross-dressers in these films are figures of transgression who break taboos and subvert the social order. Cross-dressing and the trope of mistaken identity are themes which pervade Shakespearean drama. In this way, references to cross-dressing in

Shakespeare in Love and *Prospero's Books* can be seen as allusions to these themes in the plays they adapt. For example, in *Shakespeare in Love* (and in Greenaway's film to a lesser extent) the theme of cross-dressing points to the fact that during the Elizabethan period women's roles were performed by male actors. Further, through the romantic relationship between Will Shakespeare and the cross-dressing Viola, *Shakespeare in Love* humourously invokes some of the speculation surrounding Shakespeare's supposed dedication of his love sonnets to the young Earl of Southampton, Henry Writhesley (See Bevington 4 and Sobran 54). In a similar way, the transvestite figures in *Naked Lunch* and *The Mystery of Rambo* can be seen to point to themes of sexual aberration which characterize the writings of both William Burroughs and Edogawa Rambo.

At another level, the "transvestite" characters in these films—namely, Dr. Benway, Viola and the Marquis—can be seen to represent the films' very relationship to the literary work they adapt. By cross-dressing, both Viola and the Marquis transgress the expected boundaries of their gender roles; similarly, the films work to subvert the expectation of a faithful adaptation of the source material. In other words, the film re-invents the literary source just as the Marquis re-invents himself by dressing as a woman, and Viola re-invents herself by dressing as a man. These characters mis-represent themselves by disguising as members of the opposite gender. Similarly, film adaptations are films disguised as books; and writerly adaptations step out of the disguise and reveal their own status as adaptations, just as Benway, Viola and the Marquis ultimately expose their true identities.

In *Roland Barthes*, Michael Moriarty argues that in *S/Z* itself eroticism and the

body are linked to the “transgression of paradigms: the natural/artificial distinction” (Moriarty 189). In *The Mystery of Rampo* in particular, as in Balzac’s *Sarrasine*, “biological sex is displaced by a symbolic opposition.” (Moriarty 125) In both *The Mystery of Rampo* and *Naked Lunch* the fictional worlds created by the writers Rampo and Bill Lee represent an inversion of the “real” world just as the writerly adaptations themselves invert or overturn their literary sources. The presence of the transvestite figure—clearly a character of inversion—within these films can be seen to support this reading.

Ostensibly there are two diegetic worlds in *The Mystery of Rampo* although they are often indistinct from one another. The first world is the so-called real world of Japan in the 1930s in which Rampo lives and writes. The second world, drawn heavily from the first, is the fictional world created by the writer. Rampo’s sequel to “The Appearance of Osei” consists of many elements taken from the real world and, in the manner of a dream, they are somehow altered. Just as Dorothy’s companions in *The Wizard of Oz* each bear uncanny resemblances to farm hands in Kansas, characters in Rampo’s tale have counterparts in the “real” world. For instance, the flamboyant Marquis looks just like the singer who croons into the microphone at the film première party and Shizuko’s gossip neighbour appears again as the Marquis’ butler. Further, objects which appear prominently in the first half of the film turn up again in the Marquis’ mansion. For example, a film projector and a pair of binoculars which are part of the mise-en-scène of Rampo’s room, later become important props. Purportedly, several of the props in the

film, such as the hat worn by Naoto Takenaka and a box of matches sitting on Rampo's desk, originally belonged to Edogawa Rampo himself. Similarly, the manuscript shown at the beginning of the film was penned by Rampo's son, Ryutaro Hirai, who collaborated with Okuyama on the film.³⁷ The presence of these indexical traces from the writer's life serve to further promote the consolidation of fiction and reality as a theme in the film.

In order to depict Rampo's highly subjective imaginative world, the veil between the real world depicted in the film and the fictional world is shown to be extremely thin. Rampo inhabits the diegetic worlds he creates and interacts with the characters he has invented. Initially his influence over the lives of his characters seems to compensate for his utter inability to influence external circumstances in his life. However, as the film progresses, the author loses control over the fictional world he has invented, as I have stated. To be precise, as he becomes more and more lost in his writing, hidden subconscious impulses gradually undermine more deliberate machinations of his conscious mind. In this way, the film's increasingly unwieldy and complex treatment of Rampo's story serves to dramatize the role of the unconscious mind in facilitating the writing process. However, as I will argue, the very notion of the unconscious mind, and all it implies, is problematized by the film.

Near the beginning of the film there is a scene in which Rampo reluctantly attends a première party for *The Phantom with the Twenty Faces*, a film based upon his own novel, "The Mystery Man with the Twenty Faces."³⁸ This scene is crucial for several

reasons. Not only does it contribute greatly to our understanding of Rampo's character, it also foreshadows another important scene in the film, the Marquis' 60th birthday party, as I shall argue. Upon arriving at the party Rampo and his publisher are cornered by the producer of the film, Mr. Tagawa, who is insensitive though perhaps well-intentioned. He commiserates over the fact that Rampo's book was banned, saying: "Heard about your new novel. It's the times, I guess. You're best to stick with the commercial stuff. Like that silly Phantom."³⁹ As these lines are spoken, there is a lengthy close up of Rampo's anguished face which suggests that Tagawa's flippant attitude is not shared by the writer. Shortly thereafter, Rampo is encouraged to give a speech. He makes his way to the microphone which initially towers over him, and amidst the increasingly noisy din of conversation, he mutters a few awkward comments, and then flees the room. In the hallway, the figures of Shizuko and Detective Akechi appear before him for the first time in the film. Thus he begins his retreat from a world which silences and ignores him, and begins to immerse himself in an epic, technicolour world of his own invention.

In the *Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, Susan N. Napier corroborates the film's depiction of the bleak circumstances facing writers in Japan during the interwar years. She describes a setting of intolerance and suppression of free speech, writing: "The Japan of... the 1930s... became an increasingly unfriendly place for writers of any kind as militarism and censorship mounted in parallel fashion. Except for formulaic boys' fantasy tales involving the glorious Japanese empire conquering the rest of the world, very little fantastic literature was produced during this time." (Napier 196)

Tagawa's adaptation of Rampo's story is presented as being a silly, low-budget

production. At one point Rampo and his publisher attend a screening of the film and the writer leaves in disgust before it is finished. Marilyn Ivy describes the Rampo story which the film adapts as follows:

The Mystery Man with the Twenty Faces is one of Rampo's detective stories primarily directed at children and young adults, published after his macabre period with its more adult erotic and grotesque narratives. It is a key work within the series of stories that Rampo wrote about the boys' detective club (shōnen tantei dan, or boys' detective gang), somewhat akin to the Hardy Boys. (Ivy 29)

Beyond serving as a reference to early cinema and an interesting comment upon adaptation itself, the inclusion of this film-within-a-film therefore serves to situate the writer at a particular period in his career. Further, *The Phantom with the Twenty Faces*, like the film première party, becomes fodder for Rampo's sequel. In this way the film works to accentuate the intertextual nature of Edogawa Rampo's writing. From a formal point of view, these interfilmic quotations serve to structure the film. The presence of recurring themes and visual motifs have the effect of providing a degree of formal unity in a film which is largely lacking in narrative structure (causality, closure, etc.). For example, the death of the Marquis, while rationalized within the story by his cruel treatment of Shizuko and sadistic nature generally, is further explained at a formal level insofar as his fatal descent from the cliff is foreshadowed by the Phantom's similar fate in the black and white film. Moreover, the Marquis' transvestism aligns him with the Phantom, which further vilifies him, to the extent that they share a proclivity for disguises.⁴⁰

In Double Exposure: Fiction in to Film, Joy Gould Boyum writes:

Whatever the views of certain purists, an adaptation is by its very nature both work of art and palimpsest. Comprehensible without reference to the literary work on which it's based, it nevertheless stands in indissoluble relation to it, much in the manner of any reworking of preexistent materials—whether it's Marcel Duchamp's moustachioed and bearded version of the *Mona Lisa* or a jazz musician's arrangement of themes by Mozart and Bach. (Boyum 64)

With its doppelgangers, embedded narratives and proliferation of references to its literary sources, *The Mystery of Rampo* is even more clearly a palimpsest than traditional adaptations. Unlike a faithful adaptation, this film forces the viewer to remain cognizant of the fact that it is derived from preceding texts, and is therefore *doubly inscribed*,⁴¹ as it were. As I have suggested elsewhere in this work, all film adaptations, whether they are faithful or free, represent the subjective interpretation of literary sources. So-called faithful adaptations struggle to promote or perpetuate a single, fixed interpretation, while writerly adaptations embrace the notion of infinite interpretability and plurality. As Barthes writes in *S/Z*: “To interpret a text is not to give it a... meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it.” (Barthes 1974: 5) Further, a faithful adaptation attempts to represent the diegetic world of the literary source as accurately as possibly within the context of a cinematic space, while a film such as *The Mystery of Rampo* makes no attempt whatsoever to contain the diegetic world of the work(s) it adapts.

I have defined the writerly adaptation as a nonfaithful adaptation which freely interprets its source material while self-reflexively foregrounding the adaptive process itself. However, rather than characterizing writerly adaptations as films which lack

fidelity, a case can be made that writerly adaptations such as *The Mystery of Rambo* are, in fact, *hyperfaithful* adaptations in that the scope of the source material is distended beyond a single literary text. The four films I discuss in this study are all hyperfaithful to the extent that they each treat the writer's life as another pre-text to be adapted alongside their literary sources. The filmmakers do not attempt to supplant an anterior literary text with the filmic adaptation; their films are not merely signifiers for an extradiegetic, signified text. Rather, they selectively adapt their literary sources, while also treating the author and his historical backdrop as natural extensions of the story being adapted onto the screen. This idea is reminiscent of Dudley Andrew's theory, which was staked out in the introduction, that all films are adaptations to the extent that they adapt reality.

It is important to note, however, that so-called hyperfidelity in fact works to undermine the ideal of fidelity. Hyperfaithful adaptations, as the prefix "hyper" denotes, are films which are governed by a system of intertextual reference run amok. In their refusal, or inability, to contain the diegetic world of the literary source, these adaptations expose the plurality of the texts they adapt thus subverting the notion that literary texts contain a stable meaning, sprung from the intellect of the author, and universally understood by every reader. In *The Mystery of Rambo*, this structuralist view of literature is undermined by the way in which fictional worlds are presented as being mutable and subject to the influence of extradiegetic forces. Rambo's story quite literally "comes to life," and the writer is posited as a transient figure who inhabits two worlds which are equally developed and which are never completely discrete.

The fictional world created by Rambo is a realm of melodrama and excess which

spills over into the other world in the form of visitations by fictional characters and transplanted objects. One of the first images in *The Mystery of Rampo* is that of a fountain pen dripping ink onto a manuscript. This image can be seen to represent the notion of spillage and excess in the film. It is interesting to compare this detail in the film to a similar one which appears at the beginning of *Shakespeare in Love*; Will Shakespeare sits at his desk practicing his signature and there is a close-up of his ink-stained fingers. Within the context of Madden's film, this image has sexual overtones insofar as the film overtly connects Will's inability to write with his lack of success in love.⁴² It seems to me, however, that in both films the depiction of spilled ink also points to the merging of fact and fiction as a theme.

The very suppression of Rampo's writing seems to cause it to overflow into the real world. As I have argued this spillage goes both ways in that the fictional world is a pastiche of elements from the real world of the film, all of which further demonstrates the film's unwillingness to contain the textual world of its literary source. I will return to this idea in my discussion of *Prospero's Books* (Chapter 4), a film which seems to epitomize the notion of hyperfidelity.

The Mystery of Rampo is especially palimpsestic because, like *Shakespeare in Love* and *Naked Lunch*, it adapts multiple sources rather than simply one text. Further, throughout the film there are appropriated images, such as authentic war footage, and other extradiegetic traces. The derivative nature of Rampo's work itself contributes to the layered quality of the film. Okuyama emphasizes this through references to Edgar Allan Poe and to the western detective genre generally. At the beginning of the film there is a

pan shot of Rampo's bookshelf which contains volumes of works by Poe, Doyle and other Western mystery writers. Further, the cape and hat which Rampo wears throughout much of the film seems to be a reference to Sherlock Holmes. In his survey of the history of Japanese mystery literature, Kazuo Yoshida emphasizes the important influence of Western writers such as Poe, Doyle and Hugo. He writes, "Mystery literature would not have developed in Japan unless a man like Rampo Edogawa had read many of the great western mysteries." (279) In this way, western detective fiction itself becomes an important pre-text for the film.

The notion of adaptation as multilayered palimpsest is supported by André Gardies's theory which posits the literary source as a *reservoir of instructions*. Importantly, Gardies qualifies this idea by emphasizing adaptation as an act of selection and interpretation, rather than mere conformity to a master plan, as it were. In "Le narrateur sonne toujours deux fois [The Narrator Always Rings Twice]" Gardies writes:

In sum, it won't do to conceive of the source text as a semiotic object that has been passed from one medium to another thanks to a transsemiotic operation, but, in a much more pragmatic way, as a reservoir of instructions, a sort of data bank, from which the director-adaptor can borrow freely. Isn't this what is meant by the diverse generic expressions used to designate the source text: 'adapted from...', 'based on...', 'brought to the screen...', 'freely inspired by...', etc? [My translation] (Gardies 68)⁴³

However pejoratively, André Bazin describes a similar approach to adaptation in his essay "In Defense of Mixed Cinema." He writes, "... film-makers continue to adapt novels that are sometimes first-rate as novels but which they feel justified in treating as very detailed film synopses... one can ignore the fact that it is a book and just consider the

writer a particularly prolix scenarist.” (Bazin 53-54) Unlike adaptations which attempt to be faithful to their sources, *The Mystery of Rampo* emphasizes its own status as an adaptation by foregrounding both the “script,” in the form of allusions to Edogawa Rampo’s writing, as well as the process of writing itself.

In contemplating these ideas, Jacques Derrida’s term “arche-writing” seems especially useful. In *Applied Grammatology: Post(e) Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*, Gregory Ulmer defines the arche-writing as “the combining (of) subjective and objective presentation” (289). It is a “dual-level method of writing,” or writing with a double perspective. Arche-writing keeps both the signifier and signified, or the representation and the represented, in view at once. Thus, I would argue that a film such as *The Mystery of Rampo* which does not seek to merge with, or replace, the work it adapts but, rather, which maintains a critical distance, can be said to be an example of *arche-filmmaking*.

In keeping with the notion of the palimpsest, I interpret arche-writing as being the writing (or “script”) behind, or *before*, the writing. In other words, all the discernible references to Edogawa Rampo’s writing in *The Mystery of Rampo* form the arche-writing of the film. The allusions to Edogawa Rampo are displayed like artifacts in a museum, and this results in the self-reflexive quality of the film. References to Rampo’s stories are not buried or absorbed into the film’s narrative, rather their traces remain visible. In her translator’s preface to *Of Grammatology* Gayatri Spivak describes the way that Derrida uses the terms “archi-écriture” and “trace” interchangeably:

...[Derrida’s] word is “trace” (the french word carries strong implications of track,

footprint, imprint), a word that cannot be a master-word, that presents itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master. For “trace” one can substitute “arche-writing” (“archi-écriture”), or “differance,” or in fact quite a few other words that Derrida uses in the same way. (Spivak in Ulmer xv)

The notion of “trace” is all the more significant in *The Mystery of Rampo* because of the film’s relationship to detective fiction (i.e., “evidence,” “clues”). The name scratched on the inside of the trunk is perhaps the best example of an explicit “trace” in the film.⁴⁴ The mark of Osei’s name is lingering evidence of her culpability. However, as the film suggests, the scratch is a highly ambiguous marking. The ambiguity of the mark is promoted to an even greater extent in the story. After Kakutaro’s funeral, Osei and her brother-in-law, Kakujiro, who does not appear in the animation adaptation, discover the marking on the inside of the trunk:

Kakujiro’s goodness nonetheless could not keep him suspicious enough to accuse her of killing his brother. He could not imagine that the three characters actually meant that she was the one who did it. He only felt a vague doubt against her and frustration about Kakutaro’s naive affection towards his wife, which made him write her name even in the middle of a deadly suffering. (See Appendix p.137)

Thus, when Rampo’s name appears scratched across the screen in bold letters at the end of the film it renders the film’s ending all the more equivocal. In one way it serves as yet another trace of the anterior presence of the writer. However, as in *Shakespeare in Love*, the signature is a highly ambiguous sign which neither refers absolutely to the writer, nor serves as evidence to connect the writer with the writing.

The Mystery of Rampo and *Shakespeare in Love* share a similar approach to adaptation; further, the films’ portrayal of the writer figure is comparable. In both cases

the writer is shown belonging to a larger social infrastructure which infringes upon the creativity of his work. In John Madden's film, "Will" Shakespeare struggles with writer's block as a deadline looms before him; according to the film, the writer is motivated to write largely for monetary reasons. Rampo is likewise forced to produce commercially viable works. In this way, both films foreground the mediated nature of writing.

One of the most important moments in Okuyama's film, which also illustrates the mediated nature of representation, is the Marquis' recitation of Edgar Allan Poe's "Dreamland" in the scene depicting his 60th birthday party. In this key scene the Marquis recites Poe's poem to his guests while a WWI documentary film which depicts horrific images of trench warfare is screened simultaneously. The Marquis' dramatic reading accompanies the dark images of the film, and both the images and the words seem to become more significant as a result of their juxtaposition.

In spite of the extreme morbidity of the Marquis' performance, I would argue that this scene is meant to be evocative of the recitations of the Japanese benshi, or *katsuben*, who narrated films in the days of silent cinema in Japan.⁴⁵ In "Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema," J. L. Anderson maintains that, until the 1930s, *katsuben* were an integral part of the film viewing experience in Japan. According to Anderson the "Golden Age of the *Katsuben*" took place between 1927 and 1931 (Anderson 279), which is, of course, the exact period in which *The Mystery of Rampo* is set. The *katsuben* not only narrated the films, they also provided commentary and context which was sometimes ironic in tone. The *katsuben* mediated the filmgoing experience for Japanese audiences during the days of silent cinema. The films were all the more connotative because of the

perspective and interpretations of the narrators. In a similar way, the Marquis in *The Mystery of Rampo* alters his guests' reception of the war documentary he screens by reciting Poe's poem. The inclusion of this scene in the film is not only a reference to early cinema practices, it also serves to draw attention to the fact that Rampo's writing—which was so heavily influenced by the writing of Edgar Allan Poe—is, in effect, mediated by the voice of the earlier writer.

The film shown by the Marquis at his party is disturbing in the extreme especially because, to the horror of the guests and to the apparent delight of the Marquis, the projector catches fire in the middle of the performance. As the film burns, the black and white images quickly become bathed in flames. The final image is the face of a dying soldier. Recalling a similar moment in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966)—a movie which also foregrounds its own constructedness in order to explore questions of identity and representation—the film disintegrates in the projector. As the image of the soldier's face slowly dissolves, the Marquis concludes his reading: "White-robed forms of friends long given, / In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven." The guests look on in horror as the film is utterly destroyed. The Marquis stands laughing demonically as flames are projected upon him.

This scene qualifies as another reference to early film history to the extent that in Japan, as elsewhere, many early films were lost due to the fact that nitrate film stock was highly flammable. In a film set on the eve of the second world war, it is also an eloquent commentary on the inhumanities of war and the importance of remembrance. Prior to this scene, the film's indictment of war is expressed in terms of the government's censorship

of Rampo's writing. In this way, the Marquis' party is a pivotal scene which unequivocally expresses the loss associated with war while establishing the Marquis as the film's villain.

The disturbing scene showing the burning war footage can also be understood in an alternate way, which in no way undermines the film's indictment of war as I understand it. Because the film treats Rampo's sequel as a window into his unconscious mind, his description of the Marquis' party can be seen as an outlet for his own repressed anxieties associated with his experiences at the film premiere party. In this way the disturbing scene at the Marquis' party is foreshadowed by Rampo's anxiety and embarrassment at the film party. The relationship between the two scenes is emphasized by the fact that the singer who performs at the film party is none other than Mikijiro Hira dressed in drag. Further, while Rampo's speech at the film party was ignored, and his writings suppressed by the government, through the character of the Marquis the writer is able to express himself without censor.

I would argue that the burning projector is less a symbol of the failure of technology, and more a representation of the difficulties associated with representation itself. However tacitly, all writerly film promote this theme if only because the very refusal to faithfully adapt sources serves to question the viability and desirability of faithful representation as a goal. Ultimately, writerly adaptations promote the unreadability of the original work; they challenge the notion that the work has a stable meaning with coordinates to the extradiegetic, "real" world. In other words free adaptations can be seen to challenge the very idea that literature itself offers a "faithful"

representation of reality.

As in *Prospero's Books*, *The Mystery of Rampo* promotes this theme at the stylistic level by emphasizing tension between image and soundtrack. The juxtaposition of Poe's poem with the war footage is one example; another is the use of the music box melody as a sound motif in the film. This musical leitmotif is incongruous with the dark tone of the story and lends a dreamlike, unreal quality to the film.⁴⁶

Tied closely to the film's indictment of war and the social controls—such as censorship—imposed during wartime, is the idea of the limitations or ephemeral nature of representation. Throughout the film the tangible, and thus temporal, nature of printed material and film is promoted. The destruction or suppression of written material and film is a recurring motif. For example, after “The Appearance of Osei” is banned Rampo burns his manuscript in a bonfire explaining to his publisher that he is “destroying what is useless.” At another point in the film the writer follows Shizuko only to discover her in the yard of an abandoned house, burning documents over a fire. Further, images of Rampo sitting at his desk, writing, appear throughout, thus reminding the viewer of the fictional, mediated nature of the film itself.

Like *Naked Lunch*, *The Mystery of Rampo* can be seen as a portrayal of the innermost reaches of a writers' mind, which partly explains the film's Freudian overtones. The most obvious example is the character of the Marquis whose obsession with his dead mother prompts him to dress up in her clothing and enact sexual fantasies with Shizuko, bathed in the light of pornographic films. This is a reference to Rampo's earlier writing which frequently dealt with the “grotesque and the erotic” (Kazuo 280).

No less obvious as a Freudian reference is the motif of the womb-like red trunk. Just as the fly pictured in the Marquis' film is drowned in a pool of water in a lily, the femme fatale Osei/Shizuko entraps men within her trousseau chest. The association between confinement in the trunk and regression to the womb is made explicit in Nagura's animation sequence; after the husband first crawls into the trunk he is transformed momentarily into a foetus. In the film, the connection between the womb and the trunk becomes manifest as a flagrant "intra-uterine" horror fantasy. (Freud 524)⁴⁷ During the kaleidoscopic computer generated sequence at the end of the film, shards of glass and fire balls are drawn rapidly down a long tunnel. A final image of the red chest is followed by a grainy black and white image of Shizuko and Rambo locked in an embrace. Just before flames engulf the image, Shizuko tells the writer: "You mean everything to me and now I can lock you up within me."

As I have argued, writerly adaptations can qualify as a form of literary criticism to the extent that they freely adapt—and thus necessarily re-interpret—their literary sources. In keeping with this idea, I believe that *The Mystery of Rambo* offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of Rambo's works by foregrounding Freudian imagery and emphasizing the role of the subconscious mind in the writing process. The film's treatment of Rambo's work does not impose structure; rather, it undermines the causality and logic of the pre-texts by emphasizing the creative process as being largely irrational. In this way, the film's reading of Edogawa Rambo's work is nonetheless "writerly" to the extent that it works to suggest the writer's lack of conscious, rational control over what he writes. And, as I will further argue, Okuyama's invocation of Freudian themes appears to be somewhat

tongue-in-cheek to the extent that his interpretation at times appears intentionally clichéd and hackneyed. In this way, the film seems to countermand the very interpretation it offers, thus further promoting the indeterminacy of meaning.⁴⁸

Rampo's stories frequently delve into the intense psychological—and even pathological—states of characters. As the nine stories in *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination* illustrate, Rampo's protagonists often engage in deviant sexual behaviour or commit elaborate crimes. Certain Freudian images exist in Rampo's work, however to my understanding, they are not as prevalent as Okuyama's film treatment might suggest. For example, in "The Appearance of Osei" the trunk is clearly a symbol of the womb, although the analogy is far more subtle than it is in the film. The following excerpt from the story describes the moment when the husband, Kakutaro, first crawls into the trousseau chest, or *nagamouchi*:

It was dark, but strangely comfortable inside the wooden box with the smell of mothballs. Suddenly nostalgic memories from his childhood made Kakutaro tearful. The nagamochi was one of the things his mother had brought into the house with her when she got married. Remembering playing in this large heavy box as though it were a ship, he thought he saw the gentle face of his mother surfacing like an illusion in the darkness. (See Appendix p.132)

At least two other stories by Edogawa Rampo deal with the notion of confinement in enclosed spaces. "The Human Chair" is about a man who sews himself into a chair so that he can have the pleasure of being close to the woman who sits in it. "The Hell of Mirrors" is about an eccentric man who constructs a sphere completely lined with mirrors; accidentally locking himself inside, he goes mad and dies as a result⁴⁹.

Okuyama's film can be seen to emphasize and exaggerate specific themes which

exists in Rampo's writing, thus promoting a particular way of interpreting his body of work. However, the film's flagrant use of Freudian symbolism has the effect of drawing attention to the popular discourse surrounding psychoanalysis, without necessarily endorsing it as a serious critical approach. For example, the Marquis' oedipal complex, which causes him to parade about in his dead mother's clothing, does not offer serious insight into his motivations. In this way, the film does not really attempt to convince the viewer of the value of the psychoanalytic approach itself; rather, by offering an abridged and hackneyed version of the discourse, it seems to ultimately problematize the very notion of depth which dream interpretation and the "unconscious" presupposes. This lack of depth is promoted at the level of visual style. In spite of the fact that it was enormously popular in Japan, and received largely positive reviews in North America, *The Mystery of Rampo* has been criticized for using spectacular visual effects to compensate for its lack of narrative structure and closure. For example, in his review of *The Mystery of Rampo* Mick LaSalle writes derisively:

The Mystery of Rampo, which opens today at the Gateway, is a deadly slow, achingly fey, painfully unnecessary film. A tribute to the Japanese mystery writer Edogawa Rampo, the film looks more like a tribute to the worst films of Peter Greenaway. To be fair, if you loved *Prospero's Books* you will probably enjoy *The Mystery of Rampo*. Like the Greenaway film, *Rampo* is a very pretty movie. (LaSalle C3)

Like *Prospero's Books*, which I discuss in the next chapter, *The Mystery of Rampo* subverts expectations for narrative-based cinema and relies instead on poetic associations and visual motifs to provide formal structure. In both cases the films' lack of closure represents the most glaring example of their insurgent approach to narrative. After

murdering the Marquis, Shizuko induces Detective Akechi to climb into the trunk. At this point Rampo's subconscious mind seems to have hijacked the writing process. Having lost control over the story, Rampo flees from his house and makes his way desperately to the Marquis' mansion in the hopes of saving his alter-ego, Akechi. Earlier in the film Shizuko is shown being driven to the faraway estate in a series of elliptical cuts which suggest that the journey is a lengthy one. Nonsensically, at the end of the film the writer makes his way to the remote mansion on foot, and arrives within the time it takes for Shizuko to convince Akechi to enter the trunk. The time lapse at the end of the film emphasizes the fact that the setting and characters are merely products of Rampo's subconscious mind. To use the words of Poe, it is truly a world "Out of Space—Out of Time."⁵⁰

Upon reaching Shizuko and Akechi, Rampo discovers that the detective is safe from harm. However, like her counterpart in "The Prey and the Shadow," Shizuko has killed herself by drinking a vile of poisonous "mandrake pollen." It is at this point that the final montage of special effects commences. A large mirror begins to crack and the writer falls protectively over Shizuko's lifeless body as the mirror explodes into fragments. The shards of mirror appear to fly at the viewer, each one reflecting fragmented images of anterior moments in the film, thus providing a degree of formal continuity. The ensuing series of explosions and fireballs arguably serve to conclude the narrative by enacting the material destruction of the film stock itself, thus reminding the viewer of the earlier scene in which the Marquis' film projector catches fire.

Reflected in the shattered mirror is the image of pages from Rampo's manuscript

being blown around the room. This image—which also appears earlier in the film—contributes to the breakdown of meaning and likewise promotes the idea that the writer has no control over his work. It is most interesting to note that the image of pages blowing in the air also appears several times throughout Greenaway's film. Further, the ending of *Prospero's Books* bears a striking resemblance to the ending of *The Mystery of Rampo* to the extent that both films enact the destruction of books. At the end of Greenaway's film Prospero throws his books into the sea. In both films the destruction of books is an important motif which arguably serves to promote a similar idea; namely, the elusive, indeterminate nature of meaning.

As I've mentioned, a writerly text is a "distinctively postmodern text" (Wiseman 86). Writerly adaptations problematize the notion of depth, and ultimately emphasize the indeterminacy of meaning, by emphasizing both the subjectivity of personal expression and the endless interpretability of their sources. This can be seen to manifest itself in *The Mystery of Rampo* both at the level of the narrative and to the extent that the film itself represents a free interpretation of Edogawa Rampo's oeuvre. The excessiveness and "superficiality" of the film's visual style—especially its culmination at the end of the film—arguably contributes to its writerliness. Contrary to those who might criticize the *The Mystery of Rampo*'s loose causal structure and ambiguous ending, I believe that the film's spectacular digital effects, discontinuity editing and multidiegetic narrative serve a specific thematic purpose in the film, if only because they promote the arbitrariness of meaning. In this way, the excessive, postmodern style ensures that the viewer does not passively accept the illusion of cinema, but rather remains aware of the film's

constructedness and materiality.

Interestingly, Barthes's *Empire of Signs* [*L'empire des signes* 1970] which was translated by Richard Howard in 1984 makes the argument that Japanese culture is itself characterized by superficial excess. According to Barthes Japan is an empty sign—like a “ritual... without a god” (Barthes 1984: 108). Barthes analyses Japan as a text, as it were. Written the same year as *S/Z*, *L'Empire des signes* exposes the inherent plurality of Japanese culture just as *S/Z* exposes the plurality of *Sarrasine*. As Michael Moriarty writes,

Barthes's 'Japan' is simply a storehouse of features, which he can arrange so as to form the image of a symbolic system quite detached from our own (*ES*, 7/3), without the latter's metaphysical and theological foundations, and within which signs are empty and never disclose an ultimate signified. Of this semiology the perfect figure is the Japanese present, where layer after layer of wrapping conceals an often valueless object, as if in derision of the occidental quest for deeper and deeper, more and more inward reserves of meaning (*ES*, 59-62/45-7).
(Moriarty 113)

Barthes discusses Japanese society and its foundations in opposition to the tradition of Western metaphysics. In *Empire of Signs* he suggests that the Japanese worldview is rooted in Zen Buddhism which is characterized by the “war [it wages] against the prevarication of meaning” (Barthes 1984: 73). Barthes's interest in Buddhism can be seen to inform his newfound poststructuralist approach in *S/Z*, further suggesting that he promotes the writerly—and poststructuralism itself—as an alternative to the classical tradition of western metaphysics.⁵¹ As I have mentioned, according to Barthes, the readerly text is a classic (Western) text which is “committed to the closure system of the West, produced according to the goals of this system, devoted to the law of the

Signified...” (Barthes 1974: 7-8).

Barthes’s attempt, however perspicuous, to make sense of Japan in terms of Western logic raises obvious problems. Perhaps his notion of Japan as an “empty sign” partly stems from the fact that he lacks an intimate knowledge of the culture to which the signs refer. This is a problem which I have also encountered in analyzing *The Mystery of Rampo*. For example, the superficiality and excessive style of the film which seems so obvious to myself—and to other Western viewers—may be interpreted differently by Japanese audience members who are not “tourists” in the culture.

According to my western perspective—which is, after all, the only perspective I can offer—the final montage sequence in *The Mystery of Rampo* is highly ambiguous. It is frightening precisely because it reveals the film itself to be an empty sign. Through its dramatization of the destruction of Rampo’s work it enacts the writer-protagonist’s loss of self and subverts the notion that writing is a representational system over which an author can exercise control. On the other hand, the film’s ending suggests a certain liberation from the constraints of Western representation. Like other writerly adaptations, *The Mystery of Rampo* is playful in its re-invention and interpretation of its literary source. It frees itself from the rigors and imprecision of mimesis. This abandoning of the western system of representation, devoted as it is to “the law of the Signified,” is dramatized by the film’s ending with its breakdown of meaning and proliferation of colliding codes.

As Michael Moriarty has written,

The *scriptible* text liberates writing in that to read it means in effect to rewrite it.

Reading, it is true, is never absolutely passive: it is an activity of finding meanings... but in doing this we are responding to more or less explicit promptings from the text. The *scriptible* text, however, gives no indications as to how it is to be read, opens out a vast range of potential meanings without forcing any on our attention, and thus the act of reading becomes fully our own. (Moriarty 118)

The Mystery of Rambo's lack of faith in representation is at once frightening and freeing. The film suggests that human expression can never truly be suppressed or contained or, in Barthesian terms, relegated to a single structure. The film's ending, with its explosions and fireballs, can be seen to visually depict the impossibility of faithfully representing the multifariousness of human expression and, further, the destruction of the ego which attempts such a structuration. At the narrative level, Rambo's writings stand-in for the process of representation at large. Rambo becomes lost in the world he creates and his entrance into the text itself interferes with the process of objective—or faithful—representation, leading ultimately to a relativization of meaning.

From a more academic perspective it can be argued that the film goes partway to enact what Roland Barthes calls *the death of the author*. This idea, which Barthes introduces in his 1968 essay "The Death of the Author," also informs *S/Z*. In his original formulation of this theory Barthes invokes his concept of the "empty sign." He writes,

[L]inguistics furnishes the destruction of the author with a precious analytic instrument, showing that a speech-act in its entirety is an "empty" process, which functions perfectly without its being necessary to "fill" it with the person of the interlocutors: linguistically, the author is nothing but the one who writes, just as *I* is nothing but the one who says *I*: language knows a "subject," not a "person," and this subject, empty outside of the very speech-act which defines it, suffices to "hold" language... (Barthes 1989: 51).

As I have argued, throughout *The Mystery of Rambo* there are suggestions that Rambo's writings are based upon his personal experiences and mediated by his unconscious mind, which would seem to strengthen the idea of the "Author-God" as the "final signified" of the text (Barthes 1989: 53). Further, the very inclusion of the writer-figure within the writerly films I am discussing might seem to support the modernist idea that the writer is the "author" and originator of his work, as Deborah Cartmell's argument suggests. After all, as I argued in Chapter 1, Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* can be seen as a new historical reading of Burroughs's novel. Nonetheless, I would argue that these writerly films, *The Mystery of Rambo* included, ultimately support the Barthes's *countertheological*, poststructuralist conception of the author. First, by including the writer as a character within the diegetic world of the film he is promoted as being a fictional figure himself. This idea is most obvious in *Shakespeare in Love*, which offers an openly fictional account of the circumstances surrounding the writing of *Romeo and Juliet*. Further, in *The Mystery of Rambo*, the censorship of Rambo's book and the derivative nature of his writings suggest that the author does not truly own what he writes. Rambo is presented as a somewhat peripheral character both in the "real" world and within the diegetic world he has created. In this way he can be likened to the writer figure in Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*. Both Rambo and Bill Lee lose conscious "authority" over the events in their stories, and ultimately lose themselves in the increasingly inhospitable diegetic worlds of their own making. While Okuyama's film does initially situate the action within a social context, and makes an attempt to present the writer as a developed character whose life influences his writing, ultimately these

values are somewhat relativized by the end of the film. In this way, while the trunk can be said to “symbolize” a womb, and while the anxieties experienced by Rampo at the film première party seem to manifest themselves in the scene depicting the Marquis’ 60th birthday party, these are arguably ideas “traversed, not pierced”⁵² which are later rescinded by the film’s dramatic depiction of the author’s total loss of control over his work and, ultimately, his loss of self.

Michael Moriarty has written,

The ideal plural text would exorcize the twin demons of exteriority and totality. That is, firstly, it would be cut off from any foundation in a world outside it, would be constrained by no imperative of representation; but equally it would combine multiple networks of meaning, many points of access, of which none would have any priority over the others, so that meaning would be ultimately undecidable. There would be no central principle organizing the text into a whole; no *structure*, in the sense... of a series of levels of intelligibility where the units of a given level receive their meaning only when integrated into the next level up. These characteristics are essentially the same as those of the *scriptible* text...
(Moriarty 119).

As I’ve suggested, writerly adaptations are writerly readings of the texts they adapt. As such, they promote the open-endedness of their pretexts and, arguably, the plurality of all texts. Unlike adaptations which attempt to be faithful to their sources, *The Mystery of Rampo* promotes, and rhetoricizes, its very status as an adaptation and an *interpretation*. This is a film concerned with surface and textuality, rather than messages and storytelling. It presents itself first and foremost as a collage of quotations; and, in large part, the trace of references in the film become the story itself. As the film progresses, Rampo retreats further and further from the world, “diminishing like a figure

at the far end of the literary stage,"(Barthes 1989: 51-52)⁵³ until all that remains as a trace of his anterior presence is his name inscribed across the screen.

Intermediality and Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*

It has... been the millennium of the book, in that it has seen the object we call a book take on the form now familiar to us. Perhaps it is a sign of our millennium's end that we frequently wonder what will happen to literature and books in the so-called post-industrial era of technology.

– Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the Next Millenium* (2)

Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991) is perhaps the most challenging of the four adaptations I discuss in this thesis. It is a visually and aurally dense work which approaches the project of adaptation in a highly unconventional way. In my final chapter I will suggest that Greenaway's free, writerly adaptation of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, purposefully foregrounds the intermedial nature of film adaptation and serves as an elaborate optic essay on the elusiveness of fidelity as a goal. As such, the film can be seen to refer openly to the very process of adaptation it enacts. As I will argue, a so-called faithful adaptation is not really faithful to the text it adapts, rather it interprets the written work using other models of performance. Further, I will invoke the notion of "hyperfidelity," outlined in the previous chapter, arguing that Greenaway's film not only adapts the story of *The Tempsest*, it also explores and re-creates the text itself as an ontological object or artifact.

Peter Greenaway uses three lines of dialogue from Shakespeare's play as a point of departure for his film. The usurped duke of Milan, Prospero, explains to his daughter

how his old friend Gonzalo helped salvage his books. He says,

Knowing I loved my books, he furnish'd me,
From my own library, with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom. (*Tmp.* I.ii.166-168)

These lines are repeated twice in Greenaway's film. The film itself is a fantasy about the types of magical books which might have made up Prospero's treasured collection. Because of Greenaway's formal experimentation with digital effects and his unorthodox treatment of the play, *Prospero's Books* is universally considered to be an unfaithful adaptation of *The Tempest*. However, I would argue that the film is only considered "unfaithful" because it conforms neither to the conventions of Shakespearean performance nor to the conventions of Hollywood narrative filmmaking, and not because it deviates from the text itself. Greenaway flaunts and exaggerates the theatrical conventions associated with Shakespearean performance rather than using those conventions as a template. Further, he focuses upon aesthetics and visual style at the expense of narrative. Nonetheless, Greenaway actually makes very few departures from the text of Shakespeare's play. In a discussion of the film, he has written,

Since the film is deliberately built and shaped around the writing of the text *The Tempest*, the script follows the play, act by act and scene by scene, with few transpositions and none of any substance to alter the chronology of the original.
(Qtd. in Cavecchi 88)

In this way, all of the essential elements of the narrative are preserved, and a viewer can easily watch the film while reading along with the play. Of course, the film does make certain additions to the text, the inclusion of the twenty-four books being the

most obvious example. Even so, the twenty-four books often serve to compliment the narrative, even providing new levels of poetic significance. For example, the Book of Love is introduced during the scene in which Miranda and Ferdinand first meet.

Similarly, when Gonzalo gives the speech outlining how he would rule the island if he “were the king on’t” (*Tmp.* II.ii.145-154) the insert describing the Book of Utopias appears.

The second most inventive difference between the play and the film involves Greenaway’s choice to posit Prospero as a surrogate for Shakespeare himself and to present the film as a fictionalization of the writing process. Greenaway has written, “It is intended that there should be much deliberate cross-identification between Prospero, Shakespeare and Gielgud. At times they are indivisibly one person.” (Qtd. in Lawrence 144) As such, throughout the film there are images of Prospero “writing” the play as the action itself unfolds. The film suggests that Miranda, Ferdinand, Ariel and Caliban are all born out of Prospero’s active imagination. It is partly for this reason that Sir John Gielgud delivers all of the performers’ lines, not only his own. The fact that much of the dialogue is delivered by Prospero also serves to emphasize his power and influence over the other characters. This is especially true insofar as Miranda and Caliban are concerned because he educated them both, and gave them language. As such, Caliban’s desecration of the books at the end of the film is clearly an act of rebellion against Prospero. As he tells Prospero, “You taught me language; and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!” (I. ii. 363-365) It is not until the end of the film when Prospero renounces his books and his magic, and relinquishes his daughter

to Ferdinand, that the characters begin to speak with their own voices. At one point, in fact, the three different actors who play Ariel gather around a book and painstakingly write out their own lines. Afterwards, Prospero takes up the book and approvingly reads what they have written out loud.

Arguably, the unorthodox use of narration and dialogue in *Prospero's Books* points to the way language is used in *The Tempest* itself. As Inga-Stina Ewbank has argued there is a great deal of silence in Shakespeare's last play because by the time he came to write it he had "learnt so much more about the theatre, the arts of which are often wordless." (53) Ewbank also quotes Anne Barton who argued that *The Tempest* relies in large part upon "the suppressed and the unspoken." (Qtd. in Ewbank 53) In this way, the destruction and defilement of the books in *Prospero's Books* can be compared to the censorship of Rambo's novel in *The Mystery of Rambo*. In Okuyama's film the ideas in "The Appearance of Osei" cannot truly be suppressed or contained, instead—in a rather Freudian manner—the suppression of the book ultimately causes its diegetic contents to overflow into the real world. Similarly, in *Prospero's Books*, the books are desecrated by Caliban and then drowned by Prospero, but nonetheless the last two books are preserved.

Greenaway's experimentation with narration and sound-image relationships further serves to foreground the fact that the original play is at once performance art and written text. The film playfully explores differences between the written word and the spoken word through its alternating focus on Gielgud's masterful delivery of lines and the beautiful layering of words and quotations upon lush images. The play itself, as an ontological object, is the subject matter of the film, rather than simply the story of the

play. As David Pascoe has observed, Greenaway's film "presents a partial view of the life of a Renaissance text." (Pascoe 161) The preservation of the last two volumes supports this idea. The twenty-third book is an anthology of Shakespeare's plays. The twenty-fourth book is the final play, *The Tempest*, which Prospero himself has written. Just before he begins his final soliloquy, Prospero describes the twenty-third book as follows:

This is a thick printed volume of plays dated 1623. There are thirty-five plays in the book and room for one more. Nineteen pages have been left for its inclusion right at the front of the book, just after the preface. And this is the thirty-sixth play.

As such, the film text stands in for the thirty-sixth play—*The Tempest* itself—just as the figure of Prospero stands in for Shakespeare.

Through his use of new digital media, Greenaway creates a film characterized by a wrought, layered look. *Prospero's Books* is an elaborate, detailed palimpsest. Text and drawings are superimposed over film images, and images are inserted one on top of another. As the narrative progresses the screen is continually being splintered into different fragments. The overall effect is one of constant activity and movement. The film is not merely intertextual, it is hypertextual. The various diegetic and nondiegetic inserts are reminiscent of frames or "windows" such as they exist on a computer screen. With the obvious exception of an extremely lengthy pan shot at the beginning of the film, the camera is frequently stationary. Much of the energy of the film is created through digital editing and the layering of frames. Figure movement likewise gives the film its dynamic quality and serves to propel it forward. The character Caliban (Michael Clarke), in particular, is expressed almost entirely through the medium of modern dance.

In his discussion of the future of adaptations in light of technological advancements, George Bluestone seemed to predict the dynamic, visual style of *Prospero's Books*. In *Novels to Film* (1957) he wrote: "What the possibility of breaking up the screen, reducing and enlarging the separate frames at will, may mean for montage (a new principle of simultaneity?) it is still too early to tell." (Bluestone 216)

Film adaptation, unlike other types of adaptation, is always intermedial. Greenaway's use of "simultaneous montage" in *Prospero's Books* can be seen as a strategy to foreground the film's hypertextual and intermedial nature. The layering of frames often serves to draw attention to the many art forms which inform the film; namely, theatre, literature, dance and fine art. As the plot unfolds there is a constant tension between the literary, theatrical and cinematic modes of representation. In an interview with Marcia Pally Greenaway explained,

My... bugbear about Hollywood cinema is that it's based on the nineteenth century psychological novel, and the psychological novel represents only a tiny space in two thousand years of European cultural game-playing. I want to investigate some of those other forms, like Jacobean drama or landscape painting.

(Greenaway 1991: 6-7)

The film's elaborate system of referencing different media can be seen to support Charles Eidsvik's theory of montage as a model for adaptation, which was outlined in Chapter One. The juxtaposition, and collision, of various art forms defines the aesthetics of *Prospero's Books*. Dance, acting, visual art, sculpture and the cinema itself are all presented as alternate modes of interpreting Shakespeare's text. Just as these different modes of interpretation clash and compete with one another, the film itself, as a work of

art in its own right, constantly promotes its own relationship to the text it adapts. As such, to the extent that Greenaway's style serves to promote the film itself as an intertext, it can be seen to perfectly epitomize and illustrate Eidsvik's notion of adaptation as "montage writ large." (Eidsvik 31)

Amy Lawrence has written, "In most respects Greenaway's adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* can be seen as the usual postmodernist shuffle through the rubble of Western culture, a leisurely stroll beneath the calves of England's literary colossus." (Lawrence 144) Postmodern criticism is sometimes attacked for being overly concerned with surface and for being, ultimately, relativizing. And, the highly aestheticized, florid style of the mise-en-scène and cinematography of *Prospero's Books* may indeed suggest a certain superficiality. Greenaway playfully manipulates images and shows a preoccupation with different representational strategies to the extent that the film seems to relish in its own overdetermination. In *Shakespeare in Production*, H. R. Coursen criticizes the film's superficial, postmodern treatment of *The Tempest*, writing,

Given the pressures of recent criticism, its antitheatrical bent, its postmodern bias... one might ask whether Shakespeare's plays can work as anything other than fragmented fragments. Has the pressure of intertextuality made each script merely a datum in a web of other meanings, a sight for valorization of, or contestation with, those meanings? Has the postmodern stage not learned how to incorporate Shakespeare, as the modern stage did learn (in that, as it was discovered, Shakespeare incorporated "The Theatre of the Absurd" already?)

(Coursen 1996:11)

Coursen suggests that the different themes which characterized theatre in the 1950s were already present in the work of Shakespeare, a fact which thus made his plays

suitable for adaptation. Tom Stoppard's play/film *Rosencratz and Guildenstern are Dead* illustrates this affinity perfectly as it is both a free adaptation of Hamlet and a parody of *Waiting for Godot*, as I have suggested. I would argue that contemporary (read postmodern) cinema has absorbed Shakespeare in much the same way as the "modern stage" did. Contemporary cinema has embraced Shakespeare's oeuvre, as the recent flood of experimental, free adaptations suggest. Godard's *King Lear*, Pacino's *Looking for Richard*, Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, Junger's *Ten Things I Hate About You* and *Shakespeare in Love* are but a few postmodern filmic treatments of Shakespearean plays. Similarly, there have been many literary adaptations and pastiches of Shakespearean works in recent years. Jane Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* (1990) freely adapts the story of *King Lear*, as I have mentioned. Ann-Marie Macdonald's play *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (1998) adapts both *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Leon Rooke's *Shakespeare's Dog* (1997) presents the playwright from the point-of-view of his pet. And, a recent anthology entitled *Shakespearean Whodunnits* (1997) consists of detective stories based upon the plots of Shakespearean plays.

Arguably, the artwork of previous eras will always be interpreted through a contemporary lens. From the point of view of reception and performance, the emphasis and inflection of Shakespeare's plays, for example, will shift with each new reading or adaptation. As such, themes and techniques which are associated with postmodern film and literature can likewise be detected in Shakespearean plays. For example, the word play, self-reflexivity and theatrical illusionism which characterizes Shakespearean theatre can be understood in terms of postmodern notions of the mediated, constructed nature of

representation.⁵⁴ *Prospero's Books* in particular can be seen to lend itself to a postmodern interpretation insofar as it is centrally concerned with books, and thus textuality. In *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, Amy Lawrence writes,

...with the conceit of the books, Greenaway institutes Prospero as a postmodern figure, someone who creates—as Greenaway himself does—by picking and choosing from a world of works by other artists in other centuries. In this postmodern sense, the author himself may be nothing more than the fragments of texts from which he is made. (Lawrence 161)⁵⁵

In *Prospero's Books* Greenaway has magnified the “postmodern” themes and techniques which exist in the Shakespearean pre-text. In the film he uses cinematic means to express visually the types of theatrical tropes which appear in the pre-text. In “Peter Greenaway’s *Prospero’s Books*: A Tempest Between Word and Image,” Mariacristina Cavecchi argues compellingly that Greenaway enlarges upon the gimmickry and theatricality of Shakespeare’s play. She writes,

As far as it is possible to generalize about the relation between *Prospero's Books* and *The Tempest*, I am suggesting that the filmmaker reinterprets the Shakespearean text as a mannerist text and creates a new, artificial, and mannerist world by making use of devices and techniques which constitute a cinematic equivalent to Shakespeare’s theatrical illusionism. (Cavecchi 83)

Cavecchi points specifically to certain theatrical strategies in Shakespearean plays which Greenaway imitates and newly contextualizes within the digital/cinematic medium. She suggests, for example, that the filmmaker’s use of overlapping frames is reminiscent of Shakespeare’s strategy of embedding a play within a play. She contends that Greenaway’s use of the “frame-within-frame” allows him to scrutinize “the work of

art/artist/spectator relationship; and, besides, however imperfectly, each frame-within-frame undermines the credibility of the surrounding action. [Greenaway] not only revives this Shakespearean device but he also exasperates and exploits it to the utmost so that almost every frame contains a frame within or refers to one outside the screen by means of intertextual quotations to literature, architecture, art, etc.” (Cavecchi 86).

Peter Greenaway’s films are characterized by the way they borrow from, and allude to, the aesthetics of various art historical periods. As Cavecchi observes, *Prospero’s Books* is an “endless process of quotations” (88). The film invokes different elements of Renaissance and Baroque visual style, and it likewise picks up on the themes which characterize Jacobean theatre—most notably the theme of the supernatural.⁵⁶ Further, Greenaway makes reference to specific Renaissance paintings within the film text. For example, the image of Prospero sitting in his reading room is based upon Antonello da Messina’s painting, *St Jerome in his Study*, c. 1475 (Pascoe 168-169). Greenaway demonstrates his knowledge of art history through constant reference to the works of Rembrandt, Botticelli, Piranesi and Velasquez (Lawrence 155). It has also been noted that the way in the filmmaker layers script over images is reminiscent of the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci which are often accompanied with text in the form of scrawling calligraphy or mirror script (Cavecchi 88n7).

In a defense of the superfluous nudity in the film, Greenaway similarly points to the Renaissance interest in classical art with its concentration upon the nude form. He observes,

Americans always ask about nudity. There are many rationales for it, but primarily

I'm trying to create here the imagination of a late Renaissance mannerist potentate, who would almost certainly have as his background classical imagery. So that his pictorial landscape, I'm sure, would be formed by the classical nude as seen in paintings by Titian, and Giorgione, and late Bellini. (Greenaway 1992: 104)

The self-referential nature of *Prospero's Books* can be seen to mirror

Shakespearean plays which are likewise highly self-reflexive texts. Further, Greenaway's practice of copying and adapting multiple sources can be seen as another deep reference to Shakespeare's oeuvre to the extent that—with the exception of *The Tempest*—all of his plays have been shown to be based upon previous works. And, while the story of *The Tempest* is not adapted from an earlier text per se, it is certainly a highly derivative play. In *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Harold Bloom argues that *The Tempest* was inspired in part by Montaigne's essay on the Cannibals and, to an even greater extent, by Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (Bloom 662-663). Further, in their conference paper "Borrowing from the Bard," Jack R. Stanley and Marian Monta make the interesting claim that Shakespeare's final play was based upon sailors' tales of the New World. They note that by the time Shakespeare was writing his final play, Bermuda and Jamestown were colonized.

As such, Greenaway does not simply adapt *The Tempest*, he can also be seen to adapt the playwright's approach to the creative process itself, an approach which is, as I argued in a previous chapter, representative of a larger trend among Renaissance writers. In this way, *Prospero's Books* also models itself after the Renaissance sensibility. As Roger Ebert writes,

This is not the film to see if you want to witness a performance of *The Tempest*. It is, however, a fascinating film if you are interested in the play, in Shakespeare or in the breathtaking era when manuscripts and the printed word began to pull Europe out of the Dark Ages and into what we congratulate ourselves is a more enlightened time. (Ebert, par. 4)

As Cavecchi suggests in her article, there are striking parallels between the postmodern outlook and the Renaissance and Baroque sensibilities. Greenaway's film is a postmodern text but it can equally be labeled baroque. Both the postmodern and the baroque are characterized by excess, a proliferation of meaning, and the use of pastiche as a technique. It can be argued, therefore, that in his adaptation of *The Tempest* Greenaway emphasizes and elaborates upon themes, tropes and attributes in the Shakespearean text which were best suited to his own signature style of filmmaking.

As I have suggested, a faithful adaptation of a novel represents a negotiation between the book's plot and established filmic conventions; more specifically, faithful adaptations of novels attempt to plot the literary source in terms of the restrictions and expectations associated with classical narrative cinema. Similarly, a faithful adaptation of a Shakespearean play represents a compromise between the conventions of Shakespearean performance and the standards of narrative filmmaking. As *Prospero's Books* seems to acknowledge, film adaptations do not exist in a vacuum with the works they adapt, rather they necessarily draw upon the conventions of many different forms of media. As such, a "faithful" film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* necessarily carries the trace of the many earlier renditions of the play which contributed to our notion of what a

conventional treatment of the text would be like. As such so-called faithful adaptations are based largely upon anterior interpretations of the text established by past performances. In the case of a film which adapts a text never before adapted, often other correlative models are adapted. For example, it is impossible to interpret an adaptation of a Raymond Chandler novel without taking into account the conventions of film noir; and, many other novels belonging to particular genres are likewise adapted in terms of the conventions of their film genre counterpart.

It is not the goal of a faithful adaptation to reproduce the written language of the text, to re-create the experience of private reading, or to draw attention to the materiality of the book itself. The writerly adaptation does, however, include the literary source, as a tangible text, in the adaptative process. In this way, the very attempt to make the process of adaptation more literal, is precisely what disqualifies films such as *Prospero's Books* and *The Mystery of Rambo* as faithful adaptations. Adaptation is a process of approximation. In fact, all representation is defined by its proximal relationship to a referent. The very notion of representation suggests "twoness," and difference. In *Spoken Seen* Frank McConnell promotes the "once-removed" nature of representational media in his comparison of film and literature. According to McConnell, film is defined as "photographic replicas of human figures moving on the screen," while literature consists of "artificial representations of vocal sounds marshaled on a page" (McConnell 5).

In *Prospero's Books*, Peter Greenaway's use of computer animation and new video technology serves to draw attention to the potentials, and the limitations, of the film medium itself. As Mariacristina Cavecchi writes,

[Greenaway] imposes his meaning on the original text and, by reducing it to a formal mechanism and to a huge stock of images and languages, he creates his own cerebral world which, in turn, offers him the opportunity for a discourse upon the cinema. (Cavecchi 83)

Like *The Mystery of Rampo*, *Prospero's Books* is peppered with different references to the film medium itself, some of which are obvious, others of which are more obscure. One obscure reference has to do with Greenaway's choice to limit the number of Prospero's books to twenty-four. Jean-Luc Godard once made the statement—which Greenaway cites below—that *cinema is truth 24 frames a second*. For this purely poetic reason, the number twenty-four is a recurring motif in many of Greenaway's films (Greenaway 1991: 6-7).

The emphasis on optic effects and spectacle is a particularly “cinematic” aspect of the film. With the use of computer-generated effects, Greenaway seems to test the very limits of the film medium. The “spectacular” nature of the film can also be seen to refer to the highly visual nature of Shakespeare's play. As Ewbank observes, “In the theatre language of *The Tempest* we hardly need Prospero's exhortations, ‘No tongue! All eyes! Be silent’ to realize how visions strike characters dumb...” (Ewbank 53).

Greenaway's films tend to promote the inherent artificiality of the film world; as such, they foreground the very idea of film as an approximation, or representation, of reality. Greenaway himself has stated,

I'm in no way a neo-realist. Neo-realism and naturalism in cinema is a chimera anyway. You can't be real in cinema: you make a decision about form and artifice for every twenty-four frames per second of film. All those theoreticians who concern themselves with realism in cinema seem to be barking up the wrong tree

entirely. I think the most satisfactory movies are those which acknowledge their artificiality. (Greenaway 1991: 6-7)

In *Prospero's Books*, the line which separates the diegetic and nondiegetic shifts constantly, further emphasizing the artificiality of the film world. In the play, Prospero begins his final soliloquy by saying to the audience, "Please you, draw near..." (*Tmp.* V. i. 22- Ep.20). His direct address to the audience causes the narrative world of the play and the audience's world to merge momentarily.⁵⁷ A similar effect is achieved at the end of *Prospero's Books* when Sir John Gielgud stands on the 180 degree line and speaks to the camera directly. Another example of the way the film collapses diegetic and nondiegetic elements occurs when Prospero describes the Book of Architecture, a tome which consists of pop-up buildings and diagrams. The book opens to reveal a three dimensional paper model of a building with columns and a stairs leading up to it; suddenly, the book "comes-to-life" as it were, and the model becomes a "stage" for the performers.

If adaptation (clearly, representational in nature) is viewed as an approximate practice, the notion of a faithful adaptation is rendered problematic. Obviously, "fidelity" cannot be posited as an absolute value or goal; rather, it becomes a moving target. In this way, as I have argued throughout, a film adaptation is ultimately an interpretation of its literary source. And, just as Greenaway argues that "the most satisfactory movies are those which acknowledge their artificiality," to my mind, the most interesting adaptations are those which understand and exploit their own inherently interpretative project. As I argued in the previous chapter, a faithful adaptation represents a attempt to contain the

diegetic world of the work being adapted. Adaptations which purport to be faithful adopt a peremptory attitude in representing their pre-texts. However, like *The Mystery of Rambo, Prospero's Books* accepts that the literary source cannot truly be contained. And, as in Okuyama's film, this view of the pre-text as being unstable and open to multiple interpretations is expressed stylistically through a tendency towards visual excess and at the narrative level through a degree of nonlinearity and discontinuity. Thus, the slipperiness of the literary source becomes inscribed and rhetoricized in these films.

Greenaway's approach to adaptation is piecemeal and fragmentary, not holistic. However, it arguably has a larger scope than traditional adaptations in that Greenaway adapts not only the text itself, but opens up the diegesis of the film to include extra-textual material as well. As I have argued, Greenaway self-consciously adapts other models besides the *The Tempest*. Through his painterly style he makes allusions to Renaissance art, as it has been suggested. And, particularly towards the end of the film, the inclusion of a more conventional theatrical treatment of certain scenes in the play can be seen to draw attention to the conventions of Shakespearean performance itself. These scenes in Greenaway's film—in which the actors perform their lines on a stage without the addition of computerized effects and with minimal editing and camera movement—represent what André Bazin has called “filmed theatre” (Bazin 76). The few examples of filmed theatre that exist in Greenaway's film serve to heighten the effect of the more creative treatment of other scenes. This is especially true to the extent that these scenes are juxtaposed with more unorthodox means of presenting the play.

As I suggested in the previous chapter, writerly films are not necessarily defined

by their complete lack of fidelity, rather, they often deploy the concept in unusual ways. Like the other films I have discussed, *Prospero's Books* can be seen as a “hyperfaithful” adaptation. Unlike traditional adaptations which attempt to reproduce the diegetic worlds of their literary sources, hyperfaithful adaptations include extradiegetic elements which have the effect of disrupting the narrative cohesion of the pre-text. In these films the author of the literary source becomes a character in the adaptation, and his life—specifically the circumstances surrounding the writing of the adapted work—inform the film. Further, while faithful adaptations generally ignore the material aspects of the books they adapt,⁵⁸ hyperfaithful adaptations depict the adapted text itself; namely, the pages, the print, the physicality of the words and the book as a material object. For example, the four films which I focus upon in this thesis all include books and writing technology (fountain pens, ink and typewriters) as recurring motifs. *Prospero's Books*, in particular, shows an obsessive interest in writing, or script.⁵⁹ In her discussion of the palimpsestic nature of film adaptations, Joy Gould Boyum argues that “the literary work from which an adaptation is drawn is inevitably inscribed in the cinematic text itself...” (67). In *Prospero's Books*, the inscription of *The Tempest* within the film text is literal and physical to the extent that lines from the play, including stage directions,⁶⁰ are layered over images throughout.

This attention to extradiegetic material and to the literary pre-text as a physical, ontological object can be seen to represent an attempt on the part of the filmmakers to approach the adaptative process literally, rather than by approximation. This attempt, which is destined to fail, results in the uncontrollable explosion of meaning within the

literary sources. The proliferation of meaning, and its ultimate breakdown, is expressed in both *The Mystery of Rampo* and *Prospero's Books* through the recurring motif of the destruction of the book, as I have suggested. Both films show repeated images of pages flying through the air, burning books, and spilled ink. In *The Mystery of Rampo*, the writer's book is banned so he physically destroys it, "burning what is useless." In *Prospero's Books* Caliban rebelliously attempts to destroy his master's books by urinating and defecating on them. Both films end cathartically: in *The Mystery of Rampo*, the physical destruction of the film itself is enacted through a spectacular visual montage; in *Prospero's Books*, the wizard Prospero relinquishes his power by casting his books into the water⁶¹.

The destruction of books as a theme in Greenaway's film can be traced to *The Tempest* itself. In the play, Prospero's identity and magical power is associated with his learning, and specifically, with his books. As such, when Stephano and Trinculo conspire to murder Prospero, Caliban advises, "...remember, / First to possess his books; for without them / He's but a sot, as I am, nor has not / one spirit to command: they all do hate him / As rootedly as I:- burn but his books." (III. II. 93-97) According to Deborah Cartmell, the desecration of the books at the end of the film is a direct reference to the liberties which Greenaway took in adapting the play (Cartmell and Whelehan 31). As such, *Prospero's Books* can be seen to refer openly to the very process of adaptation it enacts.

In creating the film Greenaway foregrounds his intertextual and intermedial approach to adaptation—and filmmaking generally—through an exploration of the ways in

which different ideas and images can be translated from one art form to another. As an artist/critic, Greenaway incorporates into his film the very same types of questions which characterize the discourse of traditional adaptation studies itself. However, while the film attempts to elucidate ontological differences between dissimilar media, it likewise dismantles those selfsame differences. Specifically, Greenway creates a film which foregrounds the possibilities and problematics of intertextual, or intermedial, adaptation itself. By invoking competing media and drawing attention to the materiality of Shakespeare's text, Greenaway purposely thwarts the expectations associated with faithful adaptation and reveals the elusiveness of fidelity as a goal.

Adaptations do not merely represent a relationship between two texts (i.e., the adaptation and the work upon which it is based) but, rather, they are situated historically within a web of other texts which act upon them. In *Prospero's Books* Greenaway does not limit himself to a single pre-text; rather, his decision to foreground many different texts and art practices serves to highlight the intertextual and derivative nature of both the film and the play upon which it is based.

Conclusion: Essaying the Writerly

In writing this thesis I have invoked Barthes's notion of the writerly in order to argue that certain recent film adaptations work to undermine traditional adaptation studies with its structuralist conception of texts. As I've argued, adaptation studies is largely defined by the quest to demonstrate the formal differences between literature and film. This quest is facilitated by traditional "fidelity criticism," which measures the success of a given adaptation based upon how faithful it is to its source. The preoccupation with questions of fidelity not only closes off other more interesting lines of inquiry, but it is also highly problematic in itself. As I've argued throughout, adaptations represent the subjective interpretation of literary sources. As such, fidelity is not an absolute standard—as traditional adaptation studies seems to suggest—rather it is an elusive goal... and a questionable ideal.

Brian McFarlane is one among several recent adaptation theorists who questions the value of fidelity criticism. However, while McFarlane problematizes the notion of fidelity, he upholds the structuralist premises which fidelity criticism presupposes. Like many other writers before him (e.g., Nicoll, Bluestone and Ross) McFarlane adopts a structuralist methodology and directs his study towards the elucidation of the formal limitations which characterize film and literature. Interestingly, McFarlane's book, *Novel*

to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation (1996), uses Roland Barthes's "The Structural Analysis of Narratives" (1966) as a point of departure for its methodological framework. By invoking Barthes's theory of structural narrative analysis, McFarlane offers a consolidation and theorization of traditional adaptation studies.

As an inroad into my study on adaptations I have also adopted a Barthesian text as a point of departure. Written four years after "The Structural Analysis of Narratives," Barthes's *S/Z* is a critique of structuralism which subverts many of the ideas he promoted in earlier works. In a lecture he gave in 1974 Barthes described his shift during the late 1960s towards a poststructuralist approach to narrative analysis. He explained,

For me, this period is inscribed between the *Introduction to the Structuralist Analysis of Narratives* (1966) and *S/Z* (1970), the latter work in some sense denying the former by abandoning the structural model and resorting to the practice of the infinitely different Text. (Barthes 1988: 6-7)

In this way, I have used ideas introduced in Barthes's later work in order to challenge the structuralist underpinnings of adaptation studies. In effect, I have tried to problematize the very traditions and assumptions which McFarlane elucidates and endorses.⁶²

In *S/Z* Barthes rejects the project of structuralist analysis writing that it is "a task as exhausting (ninety-nine percent perspiration, as the saying goes) as it is ultimately undesirable..." (Barthes 1974: 3). It is within this context that he introduces the idea of the writerly. According to Barthes, the writerly text is a plural text which, ultimately, resists any attempt at structuralist analysis. As an extension of this I have suggested that certain free film adaptations can be discussed in terms of Barthes's notion of the writerly.

Like all writerly texts, the “writerly adaptation” is a multivalent text which draws attention to its own rich “stereographic space” (Barthes 1974: 21). It, too, resists structuralist analysis; specifically, the structural approach which characterizes adaptation studies and fidelity criticism.

In focusing upon four different filmic examples I have attempted to highlight several facets of the writerly adaptation. In the first chapter I suggested that Cronenberg contextualizes *Naked Lunch* in terms of Burroughs’s life and creates a film which is an amalgam of biographical information and fiction. Further, I argued that the writing methods which Burroughs’s developed in the 1960s—namely, the cut-up and fold-in techniques—offer a good model for the writerly adaptation itself. In the second chapter I promoted *Shakespeare in Love* as an example of adaptation as literary criticism, arguing that the film offers a poststructural reading of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the third chapter I suggested that Kazuyoshi Okuyama highlights psychoanalytic themes in Rampo’s “The Appearance of Osei,” while likewise problematizing the notion of depth that psychoanalysis presupposes; and, further, I suggested that the film goes partway to enact what Barthes called *the death of the author*. Finally, in the fourth chapter I argued that Greenway’s *Prospero’s Books* is a self-referential film essay which uses formal experimentation to address the problematics associated with intermedial adaptation itself.

In spite of their differences, *Naked Lunch*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Mystery of Rampo* and *Prospero’s Book* share a similar stance in relation to their pre-texts. These adaptations promote the plural, intertextual nature of their sources and undermine the

notion of authorial intention and control, as I have argued throughout. They are all pastiches of multiple works which serve to emphasize the derivative nature of their source texts. Further, they blur the boundaries which separate the diegetic and nondiegetic by turning the author of the literary source into a character in the film. In essence, these films illustrate the way that film adaptation, in itself, is an interpretive strategy. As such, while I have suggested that each of the writerly adaptations I discuss interpret their pre-texts differently, ultimately, I hope I have been successful in demonstrating that the writerly adaptation—as a “writerly reading” of the work(s) it adapts—represents, in itself, a critical method defined by its primary objective to expose the infinite interpretability of the pre-text. As I’ve suggested, pursuing fidelity—either to discern it as a critic or to achieve it as a filmmaker—is, like structuralism itself, *as exhausting as it is undesirable*.

**“The Appearance of Osei” or “Osei’s debut” [“Osei tojo”]⁶³
by Edogawa Rampo**

Translated by Kuniko Soda

Translator's Note

Rampo Edogawa wrote *Osei Tojo* in 1926, when both spoken and written Japanese was much different from today. As in this piece, the old usage of Kana (phonemic characters) and Kanji (Chinese characters) conveys a particular tone in the text to the contemporary reader. In this translation, I tried to maintain this tone as much as possible, yet have to admit that I experienced difficulty doing so since there is no adequate way to render such a technical difference that is part of the nature of the language into English. Therefore, my focus was on literal rather than interpretational translation.

I am grateful for the help from Shawn Roske, my life partner, for proofreading and giving many useful suggestions, which led me to the completion of this work.

Kuniko Soda

I.

Kakutaro, suffering from a lung disease, was home alone as usual. His wife had gone out again. Though he was very gentle and naive, he used to feel angry at her leaving him so often, and even thought of divorcing her. However, his illness had made it easy for him to give up on everything. He couldn't do anything irrational, thinking of his limited life and the son he adored.

His younger brother Kakujiro, being a third person to the situation, was more decisive and smart. He would suggestively speak to Kakutaro, getting quite impatient of his cowardice. "Why are you so timid? If I were you, I would have divorced her a long time ago. Why should you feel so much pity for her?"

It wasn't only pity that he felt for her. Indeed, if he divorced her now, she and her lover would have struggled to live day by day, since her lover was a poor student. But, there were some other reasons. He was of course concerned about their son, and, though he was too embarrassed to tell this to his brother, he just could not let her go despite the way she was treating him. He was so afraid of her leaving him that he couldn't confront her about the affair she was having.

Osei herself knew too much about how her husband was feeling. There was an unwritten compromise between the two—if a slight exaggeration is allowed. She never spared herself in caressing him in between the times she was with her lover. Kakutaro could do nothing but be timidly content with what little pity she had for him.

"I always think of my son first. I cannot do anything irrational when I think of him. I don't know how long I have left; a year or two. I could not bear seeing him without a father or mother. But I can bear her behaviour for a little while. I think she will eventually figure out what she is doing." Thus, Kakujiro would be even more irritated by his brother.

Despite Kakutaro's Buddha-like tolerance, Osei was sinking even more deeply into her love affair. She used the critical condition of her bedridden father as her excuse to go out. She would leave the house every third day, saying she was going to go look after her father. It would have been easy for Kakutaro to spy on her and find out whether she really went to her father's. Even so, he did not bother doing it. It was a strange feeling. He was justifying his wife's affair for the sake of himself.

Today, as usual, Osei took her time in getting ready and went out in her best kimono. "Why do you have to wear makeup to go to your father's?" he almost said. But, he swallowed the sarcasm on his tongue and remained silent. He was even deriving a strange sort of pleasure from his inability to say what he wanted to say to his own wife.

After she left he would work on his bonsai, feeling out of place. Soil underneath his bare feet relaxed him to a certain degree. Also, he needed to pretend, for others and himself, that he was actually preoccupied with something.

At noon, a servant came to let him know his lunch was ready. "Sir, your lunch is ready. Would you prefer to have it later?" Her reserved, pitiful gaze pierced him. "Oh, it's lunch time already. All right, I'll eat. Go get the boy."

He tried to make himself look lively since he had been habitually in low spirits

lately. Ironically, on days like this the servants would show their kindness and hospitality by making a feast for him. Kakutaro hadn't had a good meal for about a month. Even his son Shoichi, being a real brat outside the house, had been very quiet, feeling the cold atmosphere inside the house. "Where did Mom go?" asked Shoichi, knowing what the answer would be, and yet could not help confirming. "She went to your grandfather's," answered one of the servants. He sniffed at her with a wry smile that was not really a seven-year-old's, and shoved some rice into his mouth in silence. Even a child like he appeared to be too reserved to ask any further questions. That was Shoichi's pride that only he would understand.

"Can I have friends over, Dad?" Like a baby, Shoichi looked into his father's face after he was done eating. Kakutaro saw affected childishness in his son's badgering. He felt pity for Shoichi, and unpleasantness about himself. Nothing but his usual cowardice came out of his mouth. "Sure. But don't be too loud." Given permission from his father, Shoichi, with his empty liveliness, ran around screaming in joy. Soon after, he started wrestling with his friends while Kakutaro was still picking his teeth at his table.

2.

The children did not stay in Shoichi's room for very long. Kakutaro could hear them run from one room to another playing tag, with the servants trying to stop them. One child opened the shoji, a sliding door made of Japanese paper and wood frames, behind him. "Oh, here's your Dad," the child said in slight embarrassment, looking at the man's face. Then they ran away. Next, Shoichi rolled underneath the desk, saying "I'm hiding here."

Looking at the children play made Kakutaro feel cheerful. All of a sudden, an unusual thought came up to Kakutaro's mind; "I wouldn't mind joining the gang instead of working on my bonsai today."

"Son, why don't you stop running around now, and get your friends here. I'll tell you an interesting story."

"Yahoo!" Shoichi dashed out of the desk and ran to get the others. "My dad is really good at telling stories."

He came back into the room, proudly giving an introduction to what they were about to hear. "So, Dad. Start now. We'd like a scary story."

The children pushed each other, racing for a seat. Their shining eyes were fixed on Kakutaro's face, though some of them were still hesitant. They didn't know about Kakutaro's illness, and even if they had known, they wouldn't have expressed any uncontrollable suspicion like adult guests would. That made him happy.

"Once upon a time, there was a very greedy king," Kakutaro began, trying to remember a story that the children would like. He was lively for the first time in a while. After the first story the children asked for more. Following their wish, Kakutaro told one story after another. As he wandered in a fairy land with the children, he came to feel like he was on top of the world.

"O.K., let's play hide and seek now. I'll play with you," Kakutaro said. "Yeah! We'll play hide and seek!" The children all agreed, excited by the proposal as though it hit the spot. "O.K. Let's play only inside the house. Rock, paper, scissors!" Kakutaro was

excited just as the children were. Maybe it was his illness that made it all possible. Or, maybe it was a subtle expression of his overdone stoicism about his wife's unreasonable behaviour. In a way, it was obvious from his behaviour that he was more desperate than joyful.

For the first few rounds, he let the children hide and pretended to look for them in spots that were before his very eyes. When tired of being it, he squeezed himself into closets and hid in the space underneath the desk with a group of children.

"Here I come, ready or not!"

"No, not yet!"

Their overexcited chanting echoed all over the house.

Kakutaro was hiding in the closet of his room all by himself. He heard the mesmerizing voice of the child who was it coming and going outside the closet. Some of the children were screaming, jumping out of where they were hiding. Soon, only he was left unfound. He could hear the children looking for him from room to room.

"Where is he hiding?"

"You can come out now! "

Calling to Kakutaro, they came closer to the closet he was in.

"Ah, Dad must be in here." The voice of Shoichi said right in front of the closet. Kakutaro decided to prolong the excitement and sneaked into an old cedar chest, a nagamochi. He closed the top quietly and held his breath. Inside the chest there was a soft futon mattress, and it was as though he was sleeping in a bedroom. No sooner had he closed the top on himself than he heard the heavy wooden sliding door open and a voice say in excitement, "I found you!"

"He's not here."

"But I heard some noises. Didn't you?"

"It must have been the wind."

The children wondered in whispering voices. (And it sounded very far away from Kakutaro in the chest.) It was so quiet and didn't seem as though there was anyone in the closet.

"Ghost!" Someone screamed. Everyone else ran out screaming. "Come out, uncle!" Kakutaro heard them all saying. They seemed to be still looking for him here and there.

III.

It was dark, but strangely comfortable inside the wooden box with the smell of mothballs. Suddenly nostalgic memories from his childhood made Kakutaro tearful. The nagamochi was one of things his mother had brought into the house with her when she got married. Remembering playing in this large heavy box as though it was a ship, he thought he saw the gentle face of his mother surfacing like an illusion in the darkness.

He realized the children had given up on finding him; outside the closet was dead silence. He pricked up his ears and heard a faint voice say in disappointment,

"It's boring now. Let's go outside."

"Daddy?" said Shoichi's voice. It seemed like he was going to go outside if his

father didn't come out now.

The voice of Shoichi made Kakutaro feel like coming outside. He imagined the children's surprised faces by his long awaited reappearance. He tried to open up the top of the nagamochi with vigor, but for some reason, it wouldn't budge even an inch. Kakutaro pretended to be calm and tried again to push up the top, only to discover something horrifying; he had accidentally locked himself in.

The chest top had a lock with a latch, that would connect to a hook when closed. The latch must have come closed when Kakutaro went inside it and closed the top on himself. Old nagamochi like this were, as it's called in Japanese, 'long-lasting,' all sturdy and unbreakable, even the hinges were so strong that no one, let alone a sick man of poor physique like his, could possibly break it open. He banged the top from inside, screaming Shoichi's name, but there was no answer. The children must have gone outside. He then called the servants' names, kicking and screaming inside the chest with what little energy he had. There was no answer. It looked as though it was bad timing; all the servants seemed to be chatting by the well outside or in their room far away from where he was.

Aside from the fact that his room, where the closet was located, was at the very back of the house, he was completely sealed up in this solid wooden nagamochi. It was not likely that his voice could be heard rooms away. Especially in the servants' quarters, which was located at the opposite end of the house. One had to be all ears to hear him.

Squeezing a feeble voice out of his throat, he could not help thinking he might die without anyone knowing. He tried to laugh at his silly thought, but didn't find it so funny. Being sensitive to the quality of air, soon he realized breathing had become harder. It was not just from kicking and screaming. He knew he was running out of oxygen. The box was so well made that there wasn't be any ventilation for him to breathe through.

Realizing the situation he was in, Kakutaro again forced his sickly body, already exhausted from the earlier battle to open the top, to kick and scream further. Had he been healthy and strong, he might have been able to make a crack or two on the chest. But his weakened heart and skinny arms and legs could not possibly do such a thing. Besides, he did not have enough oxygen. His throat was dry like a dessert from fatigue and fear, and it was painful even to breathe. There was no word to articulate his feelings.

Had it been somewhere different, he could have given up easily. He was going to die sooner or later. However, it was too inconceivable to smother himself in a chest in his own closet, in his own room. He could not bear such a comical death. A servant might come in at this very moment. If that were to happen, he would laugh this whole suffering off. He could not give up simply because the probability of being saved was so high. At the same time, his fear and suffering was enormous for the very same reason.

Writhing in the dark, he cursed the innocent servants in a voiceless voice. He even cursed his son Shoichi. They were only ten feet away from him. So close, yet so far. He could not forgive their innocent indifference; for it was so innocent.

Breathing became harder and harder for him. He could no longer utter any sound. Only his breathing in made a strange sound like that of a fish caught and laid on the ground. His mouth was now wide open. His teeth and gums were showing like a skeleton's. His finger nails scratched the top of the chest for nothing, but he did not even

realize they were peeling off. The suffering became extreme, and his patience was close to the limit. On the verge of giving up, he still had hope that someone would come in and save him any minute. It was indescribably cruel. It was a torture that no one with a devastating disease or on an electric chair could ever have experienced.

IV.

It was around three o'clock in the afternoon when Osei came home from her affair; inside the nagamochi, Kakutaro was breathing like a mosquito and struggling to hold on to his hope. Nothing to do with Kakutaro would have occurred to her reckless mind when she was leaving, but once back home, she could not deny a modest sense of guilt. The entrance door was unusually wide open. Her heart started thumping from a fear that it was time to pay the price for her timid betrayal.

"I'm home," she said, expecting the servants' response. There was no sign of anybody in any room, though the doors were wide open. The absence of her husband, who rarely went out, made her suspicious.

"Is anyone home?" she shouted again in a high pitched voice when she reached the living room. "Oh, yes, yes," a wild and queer voice came from the servants' room. She must have been having a nap, her eyes were puffy.

"Are you alone?" said Osei, trying to suppress her habitual impatience.

"Uh, Otake is doing the laundry in the back yard."

"So, where is Master?"

"He should be in his room, madam."

"But he's not there!"

"Oh, he isn't?"

"What good are you? You must have been sleeping all this time. Where is my son?"

"Oh, he was playing in here until just a while ago, and, uh, Master was playing hide and seek with him."

"Was he? Oh well, then," said Osei, slowly pulling herself together. "Master should be outside, too. Go out and look. If you see him out there, that's fine. Don't bother calling him in."

Giving the servant this stinging order, Osei went inside. She stood still for a moment and looked her self in the mirror. She started to change.

It was when she was about to untangle her kimono belt that she heard a strange scratching noise coming from her husband's room next door. She knew instinctively that it was not the wind. Pricking up her ears, she thought she even heard someone's faint voice. Fighting the spookiness, Osei stopped untangling the belt, and opened the shoji. Then, she realized the closet door was open. It seemed the noise was coming from inside it.

"Help! It's me."

It was a ghost-like, suppressed voice, but surprisingly clear to her ears. It was unmistakably her husband's.

"It's you! What on earth are you doing in there?" Stunned, unlike her, she ran up

to the chest. "I see you were playing hide and seek. How sweet. But how did you lock yourself in?" said Osei as she undid the hinges.

In order to come up with such a cruel thought, she must have been naturally evil and not simply promiscuous. When she undid the hinges and pushed up the top an inch, her hands stopped. She pushed the top back down and locked it again. As she did so, she felt a feeble counter force from inside, possibly Kakutaro's full force. Osei closed down the top, as easily as squishing an insect against a wall with a thumb. It was nothing but the memory of this powerless counter force she felt that haunted her later on whenever she remembered the merciless killing. For her, it was much more horrifying than a bloody scene of deadly pain.

Not knowing the suffering in the near future caused by her own deed, she placed the nagamochi back the way it was, shut the closet door completely, and rushed back to her room. Not surprisingly, she did not feel like changing any more. Instead, she sat down, pale, in front of the shoji. She kept opening and closing it simply in order to deaden the noise coming from the room next door.

"Will this put me in a dangerous position?" The fear of potential danger to herself drove her crazy. She was too upset to sit down and think everything over, even to think of anything. So, she just paced around in the room. On the other hand, there was no mistaking the deed, even though it was not premeditated. It would be proven that the hinge closed by itself; the children and servants would most certainly testify that he accidentally locked himself in the wooden chest while playing hide and seek. The noise couldn't have been heard in this large house. In fact, none of the servants heard it. She did not actually think of these details yet. However, her sharp instinct told her, "everything will be all right."

The servant she sent to find the child hadn't come back yet. It did not look as though the one doing the laundry in the back yard had come inside, either. She only hoped that the noise her husband was making would cease soon. Instead, it persisted like an annoying clockwork toy, though almost inaudibly faint. Hoping it was only in her mind, she went and put her ear on the closet door (she could not bring herself to open it). Sure enough, the terrible scratching noise had not yet ceased. Not only that, she thought she heard Kakutaro pushing out of his mouth some unintelligible words with his dried-up tongue. She was certain that he was cursing her. Absurdly, she almost changed her mind and opened the chest. Had she done so, it was obvious that she would have lost her face; how could she have confronted him now that he knew her intention to kill him?

Aside from this, what was Kakutaro thinking inside the nagamochi? Even the assailant thought of changing her mind and saving him. She could not possibly have imagined the pain and suffering Kakutaro was going through. Had his wife Osei, however unfaithful, turned around and opened the chest for him, there would have been nothing to compare his overwhelming joy to. Having held a grudge against her, he could not have been more thankful to her even if she would have had two or three more love affairs behind his back. This is how precious his life was to him, already weakened by an illness, especially now that he was placed on the verge of life and death. However, he was literally pushed off that precipice deep down to hell; words like hopelessness and despair

could not articulate his feelings. It would have been humiliating enough if he had died without being found by his wife. Osei had made it twenty times more so.

She could not have felt Kakutaro's suffering, but she had some pity for his painful death and could not help regretting her brutality. Nonetheless, the fate of her love affair and her passion were beyond the control of this evil woman. Standing in front of the closet, from which a deadly calm emanated, instead of praying for her deceased husband, she was picturing the profile of the desired lover in her mind. There would be plentiful inheritance left for her to loaf for the rest of her life, and nothing to prevent her from being with her lover. These were enough to enable her to forget her pity for the deceased.

Thus she regained a calmness that no moral person could ever imagine, went back to her room, and started untangling her belt with a cold smile on her face.

V.

Around eight o'clock that evening, Osei enacted the finding of the dead body. It was well scripted by her, and the residence of the Kitamuras became disorderly. Relatives, doctors, police officers, and those who hurried to the scene upon the news filled up the house. The body had been left intact in the chest for they could not cut the postmortem procedure short. Around the body of Kakutaro the officers came to stand, one by one. To the eyes of the officers, both Kakujiro, who was truly mourning his brother's death, and Osei, concealing her real face under the guise of fake tears, must have looked as though they were equally showing their genuine grief.

The nagamochi was brought out to the centre of the room, and opened roughly by one of the police officers. Fifty-watt fluorescent lights shined on Kakutaro's painfully distorted face. His hair was standing on end, his hands and legs were cramped as though he was in an excruciating pain, his eyeballs pushed out, his mouth gaped to its limit. Osei would have immediately confessed her sin upon glancing this miserable figure, were it not for the devil living inside her. Though unable to stare at it, she told one obvious lie after another in tears. She herself was amazed that her nerves allowed her stay so calm after having killed a human being.

She felt like a different person from a few hours ago when she came home from her affair and knew something was about to happen (though she already was immoral at that time). Was she born possessed by Satan, who was only now becoming visible? This seems unquestionable, given the crisis she was about to encounter, where further evidence would prove her unimaginable calmness.

Soon the forensic procedure was completed without any particular trouble. The body was removed from the nagamochi. At this point, all had regained enough tranquility to notice the scratches on the inside of the chest. Even to those who knew nothing about the incident, and hadn't see his face in the aftermath, the scratches must have appeared extraordinarily grotesque. The engraved animosity was more eloquent than any outstanding painting could be. No one had enough courage to look at dead Kakutaro's face twice.

Amongst those scratches, only Osei and Kakujiro discovered something unexpected. Staying in the room with the chest after all others followed the body to

another room, they stared at a shadow-like stain on the underside of the lid. Alas, what in the world was there?

It was obscure like a shadow, faltering like a mad man's handwriting. However, when examined closely, they were three distinct characters written over the scratches: one bigger, one smaller, some slant, some almost unintelligibly distorted. It read "Osei."

"It's you," said Kakujiro in a low pitched voice, shifting his suspicious gaze to her.

"Indeed."

How cold her utterance was! It was enough to astonish. Of course, she must have known what the characters meant. The dying man was squeezing all his energy out to leave a curse on her. He must have dropped down dead when he reached the last stroke in the letter 'i.' How much he must have wanted to continue on to reveal who had done it! Without being able to accomplish it, poor Kakutaro's life full of wrath dried up for good.

Kakujiro's goodness nonetheless could not keep him suspicious enough to accuse her of killing his brother. He could not imagine that the three characters actually meant that she was the one who did it. He only felt vague doubt against her and frustration about Kakutaro's naive affection towards his wife, which made him write her name even in the middle of a deadly suffering.

"Did he care this much about me despite my unfaithfulness?" mourned Osei quietly, trying to be regretful about the love affair about which Kakutaro had undoubtedly known. She sobbed, covering her face with a handkerchief. (Even the best actress could not pretend to cry this well.)

VI.

Act one, which Osei played after Kakutaro's funeral, was about her breaking up with her lover, though of course, only pretending. Then she focused on clearing Kakujiro's suspicion as much as possible, using all the skills she had. Indeed, it succeeded to a certain degree. Kakujiro was almost completely deceived by the seductress.

Thus, she received more inheritance than intended, sold the house she and her son were used to, and moved from one place to another over time. Her acting also helped her escape the relatives' supervision.

Osei begged to keep the nagamochi, and later, secretly sold it to an antique furniture store. God knows how many people have had it in their hands? Have those scratches and mysterious characters not stimulated its new owners' curiosity? Did the animosity engraved with the scratches not frighten them? What type of woman did they imagine when looking at the mysterious name, Osei? It is possible that they imagined a pure and innocent maiden, without any knowledge of the ugliness, the foulness of human kind.

Notes

1. *Prospero's Books* adapts William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; *Naked Lunch* adapts multiple works by William Burroughs, especially his 1959 novel *Naked Lunch*; *My Own Private Idaho* adapts Shakespeare's *Henry IV*; *The Mystery of Rambo* is based upon several short stories by Japanese mystery writer, Edogawa Rampo; *Clueless* is an updated version of Jane Austen's *Emma*; *Looking for Richard* adapts Shakespeare's *Richard III*; *Palookaville* is inspired by various stories by Italo Calvino; *Shakespeare in Love* adapts *Romeo and Juliet*, though it is also loosely based on several other Shakespearean plays; *Ten Things I Hate About You* is a modern day re-contextualization of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*; *Mansfield Park* offers a postcolonialist, feminist interpretation of Austen's third novel.
2. The notion of "microgenres" was given to me by Laura U. Marks.
3. For example Truffaut's 1960 film noir *Shoot the Piano Player* [*Tirez sur le pianiste*] is based upon a potboiler by David Goodis entitled *Down There*. This characteristic New Wave film is full of references to American cinema; clearly, Truffaut was more interested in emphasizing the cinematic rather than the literary. Interestingly, several American films were likewise based upon detective novels by David Goodis, the best known being Delmer Daves's *Dark Passage* (1947) starring Humphry Bogart and Lauren Bacall.
4. The codes themselves have no bearing on my discussion of the writerly; however, for an excellent discussion of Barthes's codes within the context of film studies see Julia Lesage's "S/Z and *The Rules of the Game*," in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 12-13 (Winter 1976-77): 45-51.
5. Interestingly, Michael Moriarty has argued that *S/Z* is itself a writerly text (Moriarty 138).
6. Adaptations are, by definition, intermedial. Film re-makes are intrafilmic "adaptations" which, in many instances, can be studied alongside film adaptations.
7. "Adaptation ou translation, médiation ou mutation, transécriture ou réécriture—l'afflux des termes désigne un embarras sur l'objet: comment circonscrire le territoire d'une enquête qui doit prendre en compte, simultanément, la persistance d'une thématique et la variation du matériau?" (Ropars-Wuilleumier 131)
8. Ira Silverberg describes the way that Burroughs's writing set precedents for postmodern literature. He writes, "*Naked Lunch* and the successive books mined from the thousand-some pages Burroughs produced while in and out of heroin addiction in the 1950s—*Nova Express*, *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded* (and, recently exhumed, *Interzone*)—compose, in advance of postmodern theory, the first truly

postmodern literary texts.” (Silverberg 122)

9. In the “Atrophied Preface” at the end of *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs writes, “There is only one thing a writer can write about: *what is in front of his senses at the moment of writing*... I am a recording instrument... I do not presume to impose “story” “plot” “continuity.”... Insofar as I succeed in *Direct* recording of certain areas of psychic process I may have limited function... I am not an entertainer...” (Burroughs 1990: 200).

10. Ted Morgan writes, “Burroughs’s intention was to adopt the oldest fiction format in the world, the picaresque novel: a series of events, horrific and humorous, that occur on a trip, as in Petronius’s *Satyricon*. The author’s narrator and alter ego, William Lee, is an antihero, like Jack Wilton in *The Unfortunate Traveler*.” (Morgan 350)

11. Timothy S. Murphy makes this argument in *Wising Up the Marks*. He likens the structure of the film to a bildungsroman, writing, “The fact that this structure is masked in surrealist imagery should fool no one: the film is a celebration of the artist as creator and the dangers he must face in order to create... (it) is replete with Romantic references, from the imperative to “Exterminate all rational thought,” a sentiment about which Burroughs is ambivalent, to the refiguration of the feminine Muse (Joan Lee/Frost), a figure that is totally alien to all of Burroughs’s work.” (Murphy 71)

12. Michael Moriarty writes, “*Sarrasine* is a text that with its disturbance of representation and paradigms advances about as far towards *scriptibilité* as a *lisible* text can go.” (Moriarty 138)

13. In a letter he wrote to Allen Ginsberg in 1955 from Tangiers, Burroughs described a breakthrough he had made with the manuscript which was to become *Naked Lunch*. He wrote, “I have just conceived, at this second, the way to achieve my work, solving the contradictions raised by dissipation of energy in fragmentary, unconnected projects. I will simply transcribe Lee’s impressions... The fragmentary quality of my work is *inherent* in the method and will resolve itself so far as necessary. *Tanger* [sic.] novel will be Lee’s impressions of *Tanger* [sic.], discarding novelist pretext of dealing directly with his characters and situations. *I will include the author in the novel* [my italics]. I feel guilty even writing this letter when I should be up to my balls in the work.” (Burroughs 1993: 251)

14. Alan Ansen writes, “Where in Pound and Eliot [literary references] achieve the mournful dignity of old columns, in Burroughs they often lie around like discarded Coca Cola caps.” (Qtd. in Morgan 355-356) Ansen’s comments on *Naked Lunch* may point to the way that the use of literary references differs within the context of modern versus postmodern writing.

15. In his disparaging review of Jean-Jacques Annaud’s *The Name of the Rose* (1986),

Paul Attanasio describes the film as a palimpsest. He writes, “‘The Name of the Rose’ is billed as a ‘palimpsest’ of the Umberto Eco novel. You may or may not know what the heck a palimpsest is or whether you can order it through the Sharper Image catalogue, but the point is that Sean Connery could hardly pronounce it. When, as William of Baskerville, he tells you how much he loves books, he sounds like a long-haul trucker, and that, as much as anything else, is what’s wrong with ‘The Name of the Rose’.” (Attanasio, par. 1)

Although Annaud’s film is a “cut-up” of the book it adapts and foregrounds books and writing as motifs, it does not really offer any commentary on Eco’s novel— itself a merger of philosophy, history, literary criticism and fiction. So, while I’d argue that the film is not “writerly,” I think Attanasio’s stinging review is unwarranted.

In the upcoming chapters I will return to the notion of film adaptation as palimpsest.

16. In *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes*, Mary Bittner Wiseman writes, “Any text, no matter its birth date and the sign of literature under which it was born, can be read in a writerly way.” (Wiseman 86)

17. Antonioni’s film *Blow Up* is an adaptation of a short story of the same name written by Cortázar.

18. In *Tom Stoppard: The Artist as Critic*, Neil Sammells argues that Stoppard exercises the critical powers he developed as a journalist and theatre critic in his other works.

19. As Roland Barthes writes in *S/Z*, “Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader.” (4) His argument applies equally to film studies and to the artist-critic dichotomy.

20. Here, the term is taken to imply criticism of other texts.

21. Neil Sinyard focuses upon the topic of literary biography in film in his discussion of the “bio-pic” in *Filming Literature* (143-155).

22. For further discussion of earlier “experimental” Shakespearean adaptations see Neil Sinyard’s *Filming Literature* (1-24).

23. Shakespeare’s plays seem to attract pasticheurs. Describing the purposefully derivative nature of his own writing style Burroughs lists William Shakespeare as one of his sources. He writes, “I have made and used fold-ins from Shakespeare, Rimbaud, newspapers, magazines, conversations, letters, and so forth. So, the novels that I have written in this method are in fact composites of many writers.” (Qtd. in Morgan 339) Furthermore, Ted Morgan describes how Burroughs made one cut-up text by “mixing up

a Shakespeare sonnet and an Eisenhower speech" (323).

24. Geoffrey Wagner uses the terms "creative restoration" (223) and "filmic restatement" (224) in the context of his discussion of adaptations which interpret their literary sources.

25. Jack R. Stanley and Marian Monta make this statement in their conference paper "Borrowing from the Bard: Shakespearean Rip-Offs on Film." In *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, Kenneth Muir corroborates the claim writing, "No source has been discovered for the main plot of *The Tempest*, though William Collins thought he had found it in a story entitled *Aurelia and Isabella...*" (Muir 278). However, as I note in Chapter Four, in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Harold Bloom suggests two possible sources for Shakespeare's last play.

26. The same question arises in relation to Jocelyn Moorhouse's film *A Thousand Acres* (1997) which is re-telling of the story of *King Lear*, set on a farm in Iowa. However, Moorehouse's film is a largely faithful adaptation of a novel by Jane Smiley—also named *A Thousand Acres*—rather than a free adaptation of *King Lear* itself.

27. Charles Spencer writes, "[Tom Stoppard] now feels he might unconsciously have pinched the joke about Shakespeare being unable to spell his own name, and was so embarrassed about this that he phoned Ned Sherrin, who used to work with Caryl Brahms and owns the rights to the book. And Ned said he loved the film and that it has nothing to do with the novel. And I don't know how anyone could read the book and see the movie and think they have anything to do with each other." (4)

28. Sometimes filmic conventions are used humourously in the film; for example, when "Thomas Kent" tries to make an escape in a row boat, Will climbs in another boat and orders the oarsman to "follow that boat!" This type of self-reflexive humour further promotes the artificiality of the film world.

29. At the beginning of the film Will is so concerned about his recent bout of writers' block that he visits a psychiatrist who proceeds to psychoanalyze him. Further, Lord Wessex promises to take Viola to Virginia when they are married; however the film is set in 1593, at which time Virginia was not yet a colony. (Simon 55)

30. *Prospero's Books* is an excellent example of a film which exploits the full potential of cinema in order to offer a critical response to Shakespeare's work while likewise commenting upon the film medium itself. Greenaway experiments with different modes of representation (literary, verbal, theatrical, cinematic and digital) to the extent that his film can be read as a film essay which elucidates the problematics of intermedial adaptation, as I will argue in the final chapter of this thesis.

31. Sergei Eisenstein and Jean-Luc Godard, whom I cited as having experimented with

the essayistic potential of cinema, both wrote a great deal of film criticism in addition to making films. Similarly, Peter Greenaway, whose films blur the lines separating art and criticism, likewise writes a lot about his work and about film generally.

32. The notion of hyperfidelity was suggested to me by Charles O'Brien.

33. "Edogawa Rampo" approximates the Japanese pronunciation of Edgar Allan Poe. In *Japanese Science Fiction* Robert Matthew illustrates as follows: "Edoga/wa-ran/Po: Edgar Allan Poe." (Matthew 239 n22)

34. Sadly, with the notable exception of the Charles E. Tuttle anthology, *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, very few of Edogawa Rampo's stories have been translated into English. The Tuttle anthology, which was evidently named after Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, is widely available. However, to my knowledge, none of the primary sources for *The Mystery of Rampo* exist in English translation. So, for the purpose of better understanding the film, I applied for a research grant in order to have "The Appearance of Osei" translated into English. As a result of Carleton University's generosity in giving me a grant, I am able to include Kuniko Soda's translation of the story as an addendum to this thesis.

35. While it appears never to have been translated into English, this story was translated into French in 1988. (See bibliographic information below.) "The Prey and the Shadow" is my translation of the French title of Rampo's story. Edogawa Rampo. *La Proie et l'ombre*. Trans. J.-C. Bouvier. Paris: Philippe Picquier, 1988.

36. Pierre Bayard's article "Le livre identique [The Identical Book]" which appears in the October-December 1995 issue of the *Revue des sciences humaines*, is a comparative analysis of three detective stories, one of which is Rampo's "La Proie et l'ombre" which I have translated as "The Prey and the Shadow."

37. Samuel Goldwyn Co. Production Information for *The Mystery of Rampo*. Movieweb: The Internet Movie Network. (1995) 15 June 1999. <<http://movieweb.com/movie/rampo/rampo.txt>>

38. In 1984 a gang who named themselves "The Mystery Men with the 21 Faces" (kaijin nijūichi mensō) in reference to Rampo's well-known story mounted a terrorist campaign against two large Japanese candy manufacturers, creating a media frenzy in Japan. For this reason, the film's reference to Rampo's story is perhaps especially meaningful to Japanese audiences. Marilyn Ivy gives a fascinating account of the Glico-Morinaga incident and its relationship to Rampo's writing in "Tracking the Mystery Man with the 21 Faces," which appears in *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Autumn 1996): 11-36.

39. The film's portrayal of the producer is particularly connotative in light of the fact that,

prior to making his directorial debut with *The Mystery of Rampo*, Kazuyoshi Okuyama was a very successful producer.

40. The following is an excerpt from Rampo's "The Mystery Man with the Twenty Faces," "It is said that the thief has twenty completely different faces. That is, he is extraordinarily adept at shifting disguises... he looks like an entirely different person in each of his disguises, so it is said. An old man or a youth, a captain of industry or a beggar, a scholar or an illiterate—nay, even a woman..." (Qtd. in Ivy 24)

41. Gregory Ulmer refers to the notion of "double inscription" in *Beyond Grammatology* (Ulmer 266). Similarly, in "Le narrateur sonne toujours deux fois [The Narrator Always Rings Twice]" André Gardies refers to adaptations as "double actualisation, romanesque et filmique" (Gardies 65).

42. As Joseph Fiennes's character explains to Dr. Moth at the beginning of the film: "I have lost my gift. It's as if my quill is broken. As if the organ of the imagination has dried up. As if the proud tower of my genius has collapsed."

43. "En somme, il ne s'agit pas de concevoir le texte source comme un objet sémiotique plein et unique ayant à passer d'un médium à l'autre grâce à une opération transsémiotique, mais, de façon beaucoup plus pragmatique, comme un réservoir d'instructions, une sorte de banque de données, dans lequel puise librement le réalisateur-adapteur. N'est-ce pas, du reste, ce que laissent entendre les diverses formules par lesquelles les génériques désignent leur dette à l'égard du texte source: "adapté de...", "d'après...", "transposé de...", "porté à l'écran...", "librement inspiré de...", etc.?" (Gardies 68)

44. Marilyn Ivy suggests that signatures are a persistent motif in Rampo's stories. She writes: "Edogawa's work is a complex homage to Poe, with his use of Japanese-style cryptographs, problems of signatures and letters, and the grotesque." (Ivy 23)

45. See J. L. Anderson's fascinating discussion of katsuben entitled "Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema," in *Reframing Japanese Cinema*. Ed. Arthur Nolletti, Jr. and David Desser. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992. 259-311.

46. Arguably, the music box, with all its connotations of childhood, likewise strengthens the Freudian theme of "intra-uterine" fantasies and regression to the womb which I discuss in an upcoming paragraph, in that the tune often accompanies scenes in which the trunk is pictured.

47. See Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* for a discussion of boxes and confined spaces as dream symbols for the womb or uterus (e.g., 237-238, 471, 524-525, 528n1, etc.) Explicit references to trunks or chests as symbolic of the womb appear on pp. 237, 276,

309, 471, 476.

48. I feel it is important to note that I am unable to comment upon the extent to which psychoanalysis is part of the popular discourse in Japan; as such, I do not know how Japanese audiences interpreted Okuyama's Freudian references.

49. Both of these stories appear in *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination*.

50. The temporal discontinuity of this scene is further expressed by the fact that throughout the exchange between Shizuko and Akechi a full moon is visible through the window behind them; when Rampo arrives on the scene however, there is an establishing shot of the mansion in which a crescent moon is clearly shown. Is this an intentional break in continuity, or merely an oversight?

51. Although I would argue that this is true as a whole, at least one reference to Buddhism in *S/Z* is inconsistent with this theory. In the opening lines of the text Barthes compares a (questionable) Buddhist practice with the practice of structural analysis itself. He writes, "There are said to be certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean. Precisely what the first analysts of narrative were attempting: to see all the world's stories... within a single structure..." (Barthes 1974: 3).

52. "... the space of writing is to be traversed, not pierced; writing constantly posits meaning, but always in order to evaporate it: writing seeks a systematic exemption of meaning." (Barthes 1989: 54)

53. In "The Death of the Author" Barthes writes, "The removal of the Author (with Brecht, we might speak here of a veritable distancing, the Author diminishing like a figure at the far end of the literary stage) is not only historical fact or an act of writing: it utterly transforms the... text." (Barthes 1989: 51-52)

54. In "Shakespeare and the Thought of His Age," W. R. Elton describes the ambiguous and plural nature of Shakespearean plays as follows: "For the intellectual tensions of his... age, Shakespeare's drama provided an appropriate conflict structure: a dialectic of ironies and ambivalences, avoiding in its complex movement and multi-voiced dialogue the simplifications of direct statement and reductive resolution." (Elton 32)

55. Greenaway suggests a similar idea himself. He explains the premise of the film as follows: "We're calling it *Prospero's Books* but we're using the Shakespearean text. Gonzalo throws some books in the bottom of Prospero's boat. And the rest of the film is seen through those books. It's as though books maketh man." (Greenaway 1991: 6-7)

56. Greenaway told Suzanna Turman that, as Shakespeare's final play, *The Tempest* marks a shift from Elizabethan to Jacobean theatre (Greenaway 1992: 3-4).

57. Another example of a self-reflexive moment in *The Tempest* occurs when Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban conceive of a plan to overthrow Prospero. Stephano asks, "Dost thou like the plot, Trinculo?" (*Tmp.* III.ii.110) Here, he means, "Do you like the plan?" but Shakespeare uses the word "plot" as a play on words which serves, arguably, to draw the audience's attention to the artifice of the play itself.

58. The exception which proves the rule is the convention within traditional, literary adaptations (and non-adaptations alike) to open a film with the image of a book. Such a film might picture an open book inscribed with the lines, "Once upon a time..." and as the pages turn the viewer is ushered into the diegetic world of the film.

59. Greenaway's incorporation of script in an essentially visual medium can be seen to represent what Gregory Ulmer called "the re-alignment of writing with the visual arts" (Ulmer 265). Similarly, Mariacristina Cavechi has referred to *Prospero's Books* as a "post-modern hieroglyphic" (Cavechi 88) because of its extremely visual nature, and because it so often uses visual means to put across narrative information.

60. At one point in the film we see an image of Ariel accompanied by the words: "Enter Ariel," thus marking the sprite's first appearance in the play (*Tmp.* I.ii.190), although not the movie.

61. "But this rough magic / I here abjure... / I'll break my staff, / Bury it fadoms in the earth, / And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book." (*Tmp.* V.i.51-58)

62. See Cartmell for a brief survey of McFarlane's approach and a criticism of it in light of Barthes's later poststructuralist views (Cartmell and Whelehan 9-11).

63. This translation is based upon the story as it appears in *Edogawa Rampo Zensho*, an anthology of Rampo's writings published in 1954 by Tokyo Shunyodo Publishers.

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