

# **Open Windows**

- Remediation Strategies in Global Film Adaptations

Edited by Kyle Nicholas & Jørgen Riber Christensen

Aalborg University Press

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- *Remediation Strategies in Global Film Adaptation*  
Edited by:  
**Kyle Nicholas & Jørgen Riber Christensen**

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# The CD-ROM

## System Requirements:

Win 98/Me/2000/XP

8x speed cd-rom drive

A Pentium processor-based PC or compatible computer

At least 128MB of RAM

3 Megabytes of free hard disk plus 11 MB for QuickTime

Sound card

At least QuickTime 6.5 (part of the cd-rom's installation)

The display area of the screen must be set to 1024 x 768 and to High Color (16 bits)

The cd-rom must stay in the drive when the program is being used.

## Installation:

Insert the cd-rom in your cd-rom drive. Click on "Start" on the Windows screen, choose "Run", and then type: d:\setup.exe. If your cd-rom drive has been assigned another letter than d, you must type this letter instead of d. At the end of the installation you are asked if you want to install QuickTime. If you do not have QuickTime 6.5 on your computer, or if you do not know whether you have or not, choose "Yes". If you later discover that you should have installed QuickTime, the easiest thing is to repeat the whole installation. The installation program may pause if your system does not meet the requirements of the program. You can select the right display area and number of colours by clicking with the right mouse button on your desktop and then choose Properties. When the installation is completed, an icon appears on your desktop. You start the program by double-clicking on it. The program may also be started from Window's Program start. The cd-rom must be in the drive.

The program can be removed in Window's Control panel.

## Set-up of the QuickTime Player:

On some computers the default preferences of the QuickTime player may cause some problems. Especially on older computers it is recommended that the default settings are modified after the installation of QuickTime. It is done in this way:

Open the Quick Time players by clicking on its icon on the desktop or through Window's Programs. In the Quick Time player choose Edit > Preferences > Quick Time Preferences. In the scroll window at the top choose "Video settings" and then "Safe Mode (GDI only)".

The problems that are prevented are:

When a new video clip is played the old video image covers it.

The video clips are played with sound but black image.

The program freezes if the sound volume is changed when a video clip is playing.



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## Preface

This book is the result of a long collaborative process that sprung from a faculty exchange program between Aalborg University in Denmark and Old Dominion University in the USA. Although these exchanges had been going on for several years, conditions in the spring of 2004 seemed ripe for an exploration of different viewpoints on the adaptation of films. The struggle for the acceptance of film criticism and history in academe – both in Europe and in the United States – is a long one. This book is in part a celebration of the burgeoning popularity of media studies in European and American universities, as well as a call to expand our critique in an era of emerging digital media. Those new media, particularly email and the web, were critical tools in crafting this volume, as the editors used the web to post drafts and email to exchange dozens (and dozens) comments, critiques, and questions, as well as the midnight worries endemic to a transatlantic enterprise of this nature. But, the creative spark was initiated in the face-to-face conversations between authors and editors, and for those opportunities, and so much more, we have some people to thank.

Special thanks to Janeen Smith Jørgensen, International Coordinator in the Faculty of Humanities at Aalborg University. Janeen's assistance in arranging for visits to and from Aalborg and Old Dominion was invaluable, as was her early enthusiasm for this project. At Old Dominion, Steve Johnson and John Heyl, from the Dragas International Center, have opened doors for many faculty and students and their assistance with the scholar exchange program is much appreciated. Chandra de Silva, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, and Annette Finley-Croswhite, Associate Dean, were instrumental in securing the time and funding to make this book a reality. Many thanks are also due to the faculty of the Communication and Theatre Arts Department at Old Dominion University for their support of this long undertaking. At Aalborg University we thank Torben Vestergaard, Head of the Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies and Christian Jantzen, Head of the Department of Communication for their financial support and encouragement.

The scholarly life has many charms, but the sustained concentration that makes a volume like this possible can take its toll on our loved ones. For their patience and constant love we thank Tarina and Jane.

Kyle Nicholas  
Jørgen Riber Christensen  
30 October 2005



# Introduction

Kyle Nicholas

## A camera, a café and a train

George Méliès was sitting in the basement of the Grand Café when a train steamed into the room: ‘At this sight, we sat with our mouths open, thunderstruck, speechless with amazement. At the end of the screening, all was madness, and everyone wanted to know how they might obtain the same results’ (Putnam 2000 p.11). The apocryphal story of cinema’s birth is suitably one of technology, space and spectacle. The Lumière brothers, technicians and capitalists of the first order, gathered about 30 paying customers into the Salon Indien and proceeded to awe them with a technological achievement when they ‘saw’ a train pull into La Ciotat Station.

The industrial overtones of that day in Paris cannot be mistaken. The Lumières had been instructed by their father to perfect a marketable film technology (their debut was a meeting of the Society for Encouragement of National Industry). The train itself was an icon of industrialization in an era where transportation and communication had only recently been separated. The *cinématographe* was a camera, printer and projector all in one. Viewers were impressed by the large, clattering, hand-cranked apparatus in the center of the room that spewed the steaming locomotive into their laps. Méliès was transformed by that day in 1895.

A magician and amateur filmmaker, Méliès was ordering custom built cameras within a couple of months. But while others were perfecting the single shot film, Méliès was working his magic within the camera, manipulating multiple exposures into ‘trick’ films. He later established much of early film language. His technique culminated in *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) which demonstrated his dexterity in layering images, editing shots, and stringing together a believable narrative from single-shot scenes. Méliès’ cinematographic sleight-of-hand (and the century of film that followed) evokes the same cognitive and emotional reactions of any fine magical performance: viewers simultaneously observe the process and are drawn into it. While identifying with the performers, we cannot help but marvel at the technique and ask ourselves: How does he do it?

This volume is an exploration of that nexus of story and form – of narrative, technique and industrial practices – embodied in media adaptations. The focus here is on media that have been adapted into films, but we reject the notion that the filmic form is final or that the source text is primal. Rather, we look at film adaptation as part of an ongoing process of repurposing and rearticulation. The films are single stars in a constellation of form and meaning. Like the radiance of stars, the qualities of any particular textual iteration are refracted through time and space. Our location, cognitively, perceptually and physically, shifts our understanding of both the endogenous and exogenous particulars of texts. In other words, our perceptions of what a film is really saying and its relevance depend a great deal upon where we sit and when and how we watch. Beyond time and space, our view (and here we exhaust the utility of our analogy) is conditioned by the lens we employ.

The digital age in which we live foregrounds the socio-industrial complex of technologies that shapes our media experiences. We see the explosion of technology not only in international blockbusters like *Titanic* (1997), and the *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* series, but also in the trend toward digital cameras and computer editing, and especially in the repurposing of texts into digital products. Digital technologies infiltrate not only production but reception. Of the top 20 grossing films of all time, 19 are special effects bonanzas (*The Passion of the Christ*, 2004, may be the singular exception, depending on how one interprets the meaning of ‘special effects’). If audiences have come to expect the impossible in film, courtesy of digital effects, they also expect the rapid remediation of films into the panoply of digital transmutations that circulate our multitudinous communication channels. In our digital age films comprise a kind of databank as their ‘long-heralded specificity now seems to be dissolving into the larger bitstream of the audiovisual media’ (Stam 2005, p.12). Once digitized, films can be fragmented, their various parts plugged into new contexts, their stories stripped or altered, their images relocated in a hyper-pastiche that both extends and threatens the industrial practices of their inception and the artistic vision of their creators. Filmmakers become ambi-reflexive, not only incorporating and commenting upon anterior texts, but anticipating the reinscription of their own productions. And so film scholars must expand their toolsets and their visions to accommodate these processes. The authors in this volume illustrate multi-perspectival,

metatheoretical approaches to film adaptation. Each chapter explores the conjunction of multiple texts in a unique way. The next few paragraphs lay out some of the common assumptions and understandings that bond the volume as a whole.

## Open Windows

In keeping with the theme of this volume, the title, *Open Windows*, is meant to invite the reader in, to join us in making sense of the film adaptations discussed in these pages. The term ‘open’ has various meanings for media scholars. We would not think of defining the term too precisely (and thus closing off interaction in the very act of opening up to it), but a few thoughts on the subject will be helpful. First, we can think of open in terms of audience power in making meaning. In this sense, all texts are open as all texts are subject to the cultural predilections and cognitive processes of understanding. Audiences read into and through books, films and other media, selectively decoding textual signs in a more or less idiosyncratic process. Interpretation is a creative activity that transpires between an author and her various readers. To that extent every text is open because it automatically embodies multiple meanings that are selected, crafted and asserted by readers (or audiences). Texts, particularly in our digital age, are unfinished artifacts. Fans’ ability to add to or delete from digitized texts, to recontextualize images and rework plotlines represents second type of openness. Novels, films, videogames, and comic books are all subject to new processes of mixing, morphing and other manipulations.

While the commercial repurposing of texts is a primary focus of this volume, we are cognizant of the myriad ways in which adaptations are quickly re-adapted and remediated by a profusion of quasi-authors across a spectrum of digital media. Each of these new versions reflects back on and potentially alters perceptions of the earlier text. The concept of open text takes on a third meaning in sectors of the online world, where it borrows an idea from the open source software movement. Open source advocates distribute their software to a community that is free to manipulate the underlying code. The community troubleshoots the code, but may also add new functions or snip bits of code for inclusion in other works. Open text projects are intentionally constructed to be built upon, re-encoded and redistributed. This kind of open text acknowledges the processes of meaning making and digital manipulation and incorporates them into the creative endeavor.

As any shopkeeper can tell you, windows not only display items but invite shoppers to gaze at them through their own reflection, literally seeing themselves in the product. Windows are always ‘open’ in the sense that viewers can look *at* them, peer *through* them and read *into* them. The authors of *Remediation* (2000) draw our attention to the ‘windowed’ computer interface through which we increasingly interact with all types of media. Bolter and Grusin present the computer interface (and digitization in general) as the latest substantiation of a media process ongoing at least since the inception of perspective painting. All media incorporate, translate and reposition the media that come before them. While the chapters of this volume focus to varying degrees on remediation processes, the computer windows analogy is apt because not only can multiple windows be arranged on a viewer’s consciousness (as on a computer screen), but both the author and the viewer share responsibility for the specific arrangement and degrees of transparency or reflectiveness of the windows. This constructive activity draws the reader into the production, creating a ‘hyperreal’ production that is both mirrored and windowed; readers both access and reflect upon the text.

Most readers will be familiar with the concept of hypertext. Computer hypertexts, those links we point and click, are portals for excursions in countless directions. On the Web, hypertext allows surfers to jump from place to place, from idea to idea. Hypertext users are encouraged to shift their reading to various spots on a page, to flip pages out of order or to leave the text entirely, wandering through cyberspace until they find their way back again (or not!). There is another meaning of hypertext that – although not always explicitly discussed in the chapters of this volume – is important to this discussion. Gerard Genette uses the term to denote a text that is to some extent filled with earlier renditions. Stam and Raengo (2005) have adapted Genette’s terminology to the study of film adaptations. The hypertext, in Genette’s sense, operates in relation to the ‘hypotext’ or anterior production of the text. In traditional film adaptations, the hypotext may be a novel and the hypertext the film adapted from it. But as adaptations accrete, hypertexts are drained into a collective hypotext that new hypertexts will draw upon. Stam asserts that hypertexts may not acknowledge – or even be conscious of – preceding versions, yet they will be adopted into the family of images, phrases, allusions and commentary that comprise the collective hypotext. These two senses of hypertext – as

a multidirectional link to other texts and as the latest expression of an ancestry of meaning – will serve us well as we explore the process of film adaptation.

## Adapting Remediation

Bolter and Grusin use the term ‘hyperreal’ to foreground the combination of presentation techniques in understanding media processes. We think it should be highlighted especially in understanding the process of media adaptations. Remediation draws our attention to the technical, and more interestingly, to the interaction of psychological and technological aspects of media production. In hypertextual media, technology is meaning, or at least partial meaning. Pleasure and understanding occur in constructing ‘windows on the world’ as much as in peering through them. The oscillation between transparency and reflectiveness is the essence of remediation. Media attempt to erase themselves in the act of presentation, giving viewers unobstructed access to the fictional world represented in them. But media can never be fully erased. Our sense of how media manipulate and arrange ideas comes into stark relief when texts are adapted from one medium to another. Immediacy is fractured; hypermediacy asserts itself. Bolter and Grusin describe this phenomenon as the ‘logic’ of media:

*If the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible. Where immediacy suggests a unified visual space, contemporary hypermediacy offers a heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a window on the world, but rather as ‘windowed’ itself. (2000, p.34)*

As Bolter and Grusin indicate, much of the pleasure of remediation for viewers comes from the juxtaposition of transparency – or immediacy – and the intrusion of filmmaking technologies apparent in hypermediacy. This has been a trait of film nearly since its inception. Audiences experience the sense of looking at the film, its technical and aesthetic qualities, while simultaneously looking *through* the film as a portal into the lives and stories portrayed on the screen. Remediation heightens our sense of the art and craft of filmmaking while simultaneously opening new opportunities to