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(Indie)mediality: Intermediality in Contemporary American Independent Film

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(Indie)mediality: Intermediality in Contemporary American Independent Film

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Abstract

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Intermediality has become an umbrella term for a heterogeneous group of concepts as diverse as the creation of an entirely new medium and the mere quotation of a work from one medium in another. Intermedial analyses of specific film texts have appeared sporadically but have shed remarkable light on the influence of other media on film narrative, structure and visual style. This PhD takes intermediality to be, as Irina Rajewsky describes it, instances in which film 'thematises, evokes or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means.'

Using this definition as a starting point, this project applies the concept of intermediality to films that deal specifically with arts and media within their narratives, or that are adaptations from another medium, across the American independent cinema landscape since 1990. In this way, a typology of media interaction and intermediality within film texts is developed in relation to their relative position in the American 'indie' tradition.

Although the thesis uses a primarily industrial definition of 'independence', this work also applies a number of criteria constituting a particular 'indie' aesthetic to these films, as outlined by experts in the field like Geoff King and Michael Z Newman. This enables additional links to be identified in regard to whether intermediality is utilised differently in particularly 'alternative' or more 'mainstream' film content.

This methodology has demonstrated that intermediality plays a significant role in many American 'indie' films strategies of differentiation from the mainstream. Additionally, correlations have been discovered such as particular distributors' preference for contacting specific types of media, as well their willingness (or otherwise) to engage in such potentially alienating and experimental content as intermediality and metareference.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 82,694 words.

Name: Jonathan Mathew Mack

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Date: 1 October 2015

Chapter 1

Introduction

The ways in which different media types reference, adapt and interact with one another has become one of the most lively and contested areas of academic discussion in recent years. While film studies may have embraced the term somewhat later than contemporary work in the fields of literature, theatre and painting, 'intermediality' is now occupying a central role within that discussion. One of the key figures of work to-date on intermediality, Ágnes Pethő, founded a new annual conference devoted entirely to the notion in 2013 as part of an ongoing and wide-reaching project focusing on Eastern European cinema due to be complete next year.[1] This in addition to a spate of recent publications by Street & Yumibe (2013), Minier & Pennacchia (2014), McGill (2014) and Donald (2014) among others, clearly demonstrate that intermediality is enjoying a surge of popularity within film studies. These interventions, however, also serve to highlight just how complex and divergent different definitions of intermediality are, with each applying a significantly different conception of the term to different areas and facets of film. This recent work also shares a common focus with many other intermedial studies conducted over the last twenty years on specifically non-American film, in these cases British, European and Asian cinema.[2] Ana M. López (2014) has recently called for more intermedial work to be applied to the Latin American film landscape for example, but it seems the time is right for a broader and more comprehensive application of

the notion of intermediality to arguably the World's most visible and influential cinema.

Beyond this more recent work, intermediality has been the focus of repeated attempts at definition and re-definition over the last twenty years, partially as a result of the concept drawing equal attention across a number of medial disciplines. Much of the work of leading figures in the intermediality conversation like Werner Wolf, Irina Rajewsky and Marie-Laure Ryan has been carried out regarding narratology within literature for example. Nevertheless, the concept has made the transition to film studies thanks largely to these scholars, as well as others like Joachim Paech and Ágnes Pethő. Intermediality now presents both a unique challenge and an enormous opportunity to film studies by offering a new way of conceptualising and analysing the relationship film has with other media, as well as its ability to incorporate those media as centrally important features of most people's lived experience in the twenty-first century.

The potential value of intermediality as a tool for film analyses was powerfully and succinctly stated by Rajewsky in 2005:

> The sustained success and growing international recognition of the concept of intermediality, therefore, point less to new types of problems per se than (at least potentially) to new ways of solving problems, new possibilities for presenting and thinking about them, and to new, or at least to different views on medial border-crossings and hybridization; in particular, they point to a heightened awareness of the materiality and mediality of artistic practices and cultural practices in general (Rajewsky, 2005: 46).

It is precisely these 'new possibilities of presenting and thinking about' medial border crossings and contacts that this thesis will seek to uncover within the broad and varied field of American independent film.

Both intermediality and American independent cinema are incredibly complex terms with vast amounts of existing scholarship detailing both definition and application spanning numerous approaches in various contexts. Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis will seek to draw much of this work together in order to provide an overview of the landscape in which these terms will be used going forward. Put simply, this thesis takes intermediality to be instances of medial 'border crossing' in which film attempts to evoke the sense of another medium. This is achieved by recreation, reproduction or explicit referencing of formal or narrative elements generally associated with other media. In this sense it is possible to identify particular instances of intermediality, as well as a broader narrative intermedial concern, within specific film texts. These features will be identified in this thesis through extensive textual analysis of a wide range of titles from the cinematic landscape of American independent film, although that categorisation itself is far from simple or straightforward.

As the closest competitor both geographically and commercially to what are considered the most globally dominant producers of film content, the Hollywood major studios, American independent cinema provides a unique insight into how film can employ fresh ideas to compete with the mainstream. The term American independent film is, however, also one that is complex and contested. Not many theatrically released films can be unproblematically categorised as 'independent', particularly since the Hollywood majors regained a presence in the sector in the 1990s by acquiring formerly independent distributors and starting their own 'speciality' divisions to capitalise on the commercial success of more

'quirky' or 'alternative' films. American independent cinema now finds itself classified more commonly as 'indie', with that term referring to a film's position on a spectrum of relative 'independence' based on a number of not just industrial but also formal and narrative factors. Along with a collection of marketing strategies aimed at attracting a particular niche audience keen for alternative content to the mainstream majors, but within the boundaries of 'entertainment' cinema rather than inaccessible art or avant-garde film, this makes the field a complex one to negotiate. For this reason the following thesis bases 'independence' largely on industrial location, with the distributor providing one of the more stable and easily identifiable factors of 'independence'. In this case, any distributor outside of the Hollywood majors qualifies as existing on some position on the 'indie' spectrum, but all of the formal and narrative factors constituting an 'alternative' experience will be considered within those categorisations.[3]

This American 'indie' sector has been selected as the space within which to explore intermediality because of the need to differentiate itself from the output of Hollywood, often using unusual formal and narrative techniques to do so. Intermediality, as will be shown in the following chapter, has developed something of a reputation as an art cinema or avant-garde notion, constituting a number of techniques that can be immersion-breaking and invite intellectual reflection on the nature of the medium. There seems to be a natural alignment in these perceptions and so it would seem productive to explore whether this apparent shared ideology can be borne out in a full analysis of intermediality within the American independent space. In addition, the profit-motive present in much of the US

independent film output also makes this the ideal place to look for the deployment of intermediality. While it is logical to explore potentially alienating strategies of differentiation in a category of cinema with a desire to offer an alternative to Hollywood, restricting that exploration to truly avant-garde or art cinema with limited potential to achieve broad distribution or draw audiences would provide little useful information. The position of the US indie space as 'in-between' the extremes of entirely profit-driven hit-factories and purely artistic endeavour without the desire for financial success makes it the best place to search for answers as to how audiences perceive intermediality, how closely linked it is to industrial location, and how such techniques can be assimilated into generally more popular 'entertainment' film that still seeks to provide an alternative experience.

The final reason to focus this study on American independent film specifically is that it simply has not been done. Each intermedial analysis to date has focused either on the highly experimental European film tradition or the incorporation of other media in 'popular entertainment', either as a tool of a respected auteur as in Pethő's analysis of Hitchcock, or as a sign of the breakdown of distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture as in Wolf's analysis of *Shrek The Third* (Chris Miller and Raman Hui, 2007). By looking specifically at the American 'indie' space, intermediality can be identified within the context of providing an alternative experience but within a film landscape still generally considered popular entertainment, which is a context that has been somewhat overlooked in work on the term to-date. This thesis will therefore be able to make an original contribution

11

not only to the emerging field of intermediality but also the long-running debate over the condition, constitution and content of American independent film.

Before outlining the specific methodology of the following research, one final justification must be made in regard to the specific chronology chosen for this work. The time-period selected is a decision based as much on the exploration within American independent film as it is on the specific focus on intermediality. *sex, lies and videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989) is regularly cited as the film that began what became known as the 'Sundance-Miramax era' of American indie film in which the landscape changed significantly. The success of the festival circuit, the booming home-video market and the re-introduction of the major Hollywood players alongside smaller independents shifted the content of film in the sector during this time. This is the reason a number of key analyses of American independent film begin in 1990, such as Geoff King's *Indiewood USA* (2009), Michael Z. Newman's *Indie: An American Film Culture* (2011) and Alisa Perren's *Indie Inc.* (2012). Such a period of great change is undoubtedly the most interesting place to look for possible shifts in the perception and use of strategies of differentiation like intermediality.

In addition to this, a more contemporary focus seems advisable given Werner Wolf's assertion that there has been a 'metareferential turn' across arts and media within the last twenty years that has seen self-reflexive techniques, of which intermediality is unquestionably one, employed to a greater degree in more popular forms of media. More will be written about this in the coming chapters, but if Wolf is correct then it

further supports this thesis focusing on intermediality in American independent film produced after 1990.

Aims and Methodology

This work has what at first seems like a relatively simple aim: to discover how prevalent intermediality is within American independent film, what form that intermediality takes, and how it is used within the multiple industrial contexts and varied textual content that makes up the 'indie' space in the US. Within that aim, however, are a number of questions, such as whether intermediality constitutes a significant part of American independent film's strategy of differentiation, whether it is more or less likely in more 'mainstream' or more 'alternative' content, or from one particular distributor over another, as well as what intermediality in these situations can tell us about film's own position and relationship with the other arts and media contacted. At its conclusion, this thesis will have produced a typology of intermediality across the different industrial contexts within American independent cinema from 1990 to 2012, which will provide an unprecedented insight into how the technique has been employed and perceived beyond simply looking at a single film, filmmaker or even a single other contacted medium.

The complex nature of intermediality means that extensive textual analysis of the films themselves is required to achieve this goal. While intermediality may have enjoyed a surge of popularity in academic film studies, it has not captured the public imagination quite so readily. It is undoubtedly an academic term that has not crossed into mainstream

discourse in the way that popular or journalistic writing might describe something as 'meta'. Due to this, popular reviews of even very clearly intermedial works rarely mention the term, and it is unlikely to appear in film synopses. For this reason it would be impossible to select films purely based on their inclusion of intermediality, but it would be just as impossible to give equal textual consideration to every film released by every independent distributor over a twenty-two year period in the search for intermediality. A process of selection is required then, based on location within the American independent landscape and the likelihood of the films having an intermedial concern.

Like most of the key publications on American independent cinema cited, this thesis will limit its consideration to films aimed primarily at theatrical distribution within the US. This is to say that independent filmmaking targeting direct DVD or digital distribution, or limited exhibition in art galleries or small studios, will not be considered. This is for much of the reasons stated above, as the aim here is to explore how intermediality is utilised in this liminal space between Hollywood and the completely free artistic creation of content. A position within 'popular' entertainment and a financial drive is important to making sure these findings do just that. This is also a consideration upon deciding which distributors to include, which is far from straightforward. Even if one assumes industrially 'independent' distributors to be simply any outside 'the Big Six and MGM / UA' (Tsioumakis, 2012: 12), with the 'Big Six' in this case referring to Disney, 20th Century Fox, Universal, Sony (Columbia), Warner Bros and Paramount, there are hundreds of distinct distribution

entities that exist for some or all of the period from 1990 to 2012 in the US. In order to narrow the focus of this work it was necessary to select those deemed to be the most significant 'independent' distributors. Beyond those wholly owned and /or operated by a Hollywood major such as Fox Searchlight, Sony Pictures Classics and Paramaount Classics, as well as the dominant 'mini-majors' of Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate, it is important to establish which of the less visible but productive fully independent distributors should be included. One major factor in this is Michael Z. Newman's *Indie: An American Film Culture* (2011) in which he provides a helpful overview of what he considers the primary players in the sector in a table. This table has been recreated in Appendix 1.

Not only does this table provide a clarification of just how involved the Hollywood majors have been in the independent sector throughout the 1990s and 2000s, but it also lists the primary fully independent distributors of note. These comprise Artisan Entertainment, IFC Films, Lionsgate, Newmarket Films, Magnolia Pictures, Overture Films, Roadside Attractions, Summit Entertainment, THINKfilm, The Weinstein Company and Zeitgeist Films. The output of all of these distributors has been considered in this thesis, as well as USA Films, October Films and Good Machine for the period in which they were each fully independent. Additionally, further research into film releases of the period also compelled me to recognise and include films from The Yari Film Group, The Samuel Goldwyn Company and Samuel Goldwyn Films to produce as comprehensive a view as possible. This was a decision based on the number of films released in the period as well as the general visibility and

commercial success of those releases, but the selection of distributors is a complex process littered with potential pitfalls. A number of distributors specialise in home entertainment distribution after a theatrical release, while others have distribution deals with the Hollywood majors themselves to secure broader distribution after an initial theatrical run. Even the most apparently 'independent' entities often have some kind of relationship with the majors, which is not easy to identify due to the fact that much of Hollywood's financial arrangements are not in the domain of public knowledge. Nevertheless, with an emphasis firmly on what audiences were exposed to, the distributors covered in this work represent the most prolific entities that were most present in cinemas during the period in question.

As mentioned earlier, the industrial location of a film's distribution within the entities listed above is not the sole defining factor of 'indie' content. Chapter 3 will show how the definitions of 'independent', 'indie' and even the recently introduced 'indiewood' are complex and multi-faceted, making the classification of films as within that landscape almost as difficult as obtaining a single, clear definition of intermediality. Nevertheless, the industrial context provides the one easily identifiable and concrete variable with which to organise an undertaking as broad-reaching as this thesis. There are undoubtedly films released by the Hollywood major distributors that qualify on one or more textual level as 'indie', but it is important to anchor this exploration of intermediality to a more clearly justified categorisation in order that the two equally slippery notions of intermediality and independence do not come into direct contact and have uncertainty over one damage the validity of findings in the other. There are

also advantages to this restriction to industrially 'independent' films on a practical level. To identify films with textual features in formal and narrative terms that might qualify them as 'indie' despite their industrial location within the major Hollywood distributors would require a similar amount of dedicated textual analysis as identifying intermediality from those companies listed above, and therefore falls beyond the scope of this project.

Even with this industrial restriction however, there remains an enormous list of releases over the twenty-two year period in question and further focus is required to produce clear, applicable information about the use of intermediality. For this reason there is also a textual criterion for selection. The films considered here are either directly adapted from a source in another medium, or position a form of arts or media as a central component of their narrative. Brigitte Peucker (2007) and Eckart Voigts-Virchow (2009) have demonstrated that adaptation from other medial sources can have a significant impact on the use of intermediality in film. Their work on *The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese, 1993) and *A Cock and Bull Story* (Michael Winterbottom, 2006) respectively will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, but those films' status as adaptations is crucial to a comprehensive understanding of the medial sources constituting intermedial reference and the motivation to include such as a way of communicating the spirit of the original texts. The decision to also include original screenplays that foreground arts and media as a part of their narratives allows for the exploration of intermediality that might be employed entirely at the discretion of the filmmaker, fully independently of

the looming notion of remaining true to an original source. It is in these original narratives that intermediality can be seen as not just an artefact of the process of adaptation, or even as a by-product of film's own modal hybridity, but as a genuine tool with which to communicate ideas and produce art in its own right. By restricting this selection to films that narratively deal with media, not only is the final selection of films for analysis brought to a manageable level, but one would expect the chances of intermediality being present within those film texts to be higher than those that do not explicitly recognise the existence of those media.

This textual criterion is applied using information from the IMDbPro web database entries of every film released from the selected distributors over the full period from 1990 to 2012. The information field for 'writers' includes separate credits for the films' story, screenplay and whatever original source the piece is based on, making it possible to identify adaptations. Where narrative content is concerned, the synopsis of each film provided will generally reveal the inclusion of an artist character or a narrative focus on a particular other type of media. In situations where this synopsis is not clear or detailed enough to elucidate that information, a search of more popular reviews and in some cases academic work can confirm the textual content and allow a decision to be reached on the film's inclusion.

As a final criterion for selection, this thesis omits films produced and initially distributed theatrically outside the US. As mentioned earlier, a great deal of the existing and ongoing work on intermediality has a focus on British and European cinema and this is something this work seeks to

balance out by foregrounding American film. Undoubtedly valuable contributions can be made to the intermediality debate by looking at UK and EU films, as well as Australian, Japanese, Chinese and Korean cinema, but these examples exist primarily as part of particular national cinemas with unique and complex socio-historical identities. The few individual texts imported for limited release to American audiences therefore constitute only a fraction of a broad landscape of content produced in response to different cultural, social and economic concerns from those produced in America. For that reason their inclusion could be seen as having the potential to introduce data that might skew the results in one direction or another without being subject to the same cultural or industrial factors as the other films considered. The complexity of defining films as hailing from individual nation states is of course a challenge, although once again IMDb provides a good starting point towards that identification. As well as providing a field named 'country' for each entry in the database, it is also possible to see information regarding the original distribution company and year if it differs from the US release. The aim of this work is to determine patterns of intermediality within American independent film and draw conclusions about attitudes and the state of American film within its own culture, and so only American, Canadian and English-language American co-productions made for theatrical release in the US are considered here.

With these selection criteria established, the complete list of films given consideration and explored for intermedial content within this thesis is provided in Appendices 2, 3 and 4. These tables organise the films by distributor, as will the following chapters. As mentioned above, this is

perhaps the single immutable factor defining each film text and as such provides an ideal means for organisation and categorisation in this thesis. The output of the entirely financially independent distributors is represented in Appendix 2, while the considerably larger entities of Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate are represented in Appendix 3, along with their subsidiaries Dimension and Fine Line. Finally, Appendix 4 contains all the films considered from the distributors wholly owned by the Hollywood majors for the entire period, or conceived specifically to be their 'speciality divisions' from the outset. Organising the data this way should allow patterns to be discerned regarding how intermediality is deployed across these different industrial contexts and within the particular identities of each of these companies regarding their preference for particular kinds of content.

It is important to note at this point that these restrictions on the particular films explored prevent definitive quantitative analysis of the data obtained. This is primarily a qualitative study on the use of intermediality. While conclusions can be drawn about the relative rarity of certain types of medial contact, as well as the relative presence or absence of particular media types, it can only be done within the confines of these specifically selected films from these particular distributors. The numbers used in this context and taken from the data in appendices 2, 3 and 4 are primarily for the illustration of these qualitative analyses. It is not the intention of this work to produce a comprehensive and exhaustive catalogue of intermedial techniques with which to directly compare mainstream Hollywood film or even other national cinemas' employment of such as the data would not allow for it. Instead, the patterns, trends and particular medial contacts

established here provide a window into the use of intermediality in contemporary American independent film, within film texts that seek to contact those media in various ways, either as source material or a narrative inclusion. While suggestions will certainly be made about how this might be expected to contrast with other kinds of film in terms of both content and industry, it is important to resist the temptation to extrapolate from those results into assumptions about other areas of film not covered in such detail.

Another notable factor in this work is the inherent subjectivity involved in any study involving such a large proportion of individual textual analysis, but certain steps can be taken to ensure this subjectivity is minimised. First of all, each analysis will be informed and supported not only by other academic work on the films currently available, but also popular reviews of such that reflect a broader perception of the titles. This will ensure that conclusions drawn from any individual, subjective textual readings are provided sufficient perspective and context within a wider range of views, even if those views do not specifically relate to intermediality as a relatively new and little-recognised term. Secondly, a thorough review of academic literature to-date concerning not just intermediality but also American independent cinema will allow a framework to be constructed within which all the following analyses will reside. In each textual reading, terms like 'intermediality', 'metareference', 'independence', 'mainstream' and 'alternative' will be applied strictly within the contexts definitively established in the following two chapters and in alignment with the work of leading experts in those fields. This will

minimise the subjectivity of each film analysis, as well as the possibility of differential treatment between distributors or individual films.

Structure of the Thesis

In order to establish this typology of intermediality within American independent cinema, extensive textual analysis will be carried out on films across the industrial contexts of the 'indie' landscape. Each group of distributors will be considered separately, beginning with the 'fully independent' entities with no formal links to the Hollywood majors. Then the work will move through the 'mini majors' of Miramax, New Line and the largest current independent film distributor, Lionsgate, until concluding with the 'speciality divisions' and subsidiaries of the Hollywood majors themselves. First of all though, the context for those discussions must be fully established in order that the findings be as clear and definitive as possible.

The aim of Chapter 2 will be to explore fully the term 'intermediality' itself in terms of how it has been conceptualised, defined and deployed in academic work. It is also important within this exploration to consider the work done on how we define media as distinct (or not) in order to appreciate what is occurring in instances of 'border crossing' between those media. This is crucial to the research carried out in the following chapters as one must understand how the notions of medium and intermediality have been mobilised in the past if we are ever to use the concept as a practically applicable tool for film analysis in the future. Following on from this largely theoretical discussion, the second section of

the chapter will detail some of the existing examples of how intermediality has been practically applied in analyses of specific film texts. It is these analyses as a field of work that this thesis will seek to add to and expand upon.

As intermediality is not the only contested and multi-faceted term of core importance to this research, Chapter 3 the will outline what is variously meant by American independent or 'indie' film and provide an overview of how this specific area of film has been approached previously in an academic context. This often-used but broad and often unwieldy categorisation requires careful outlining in regard to the work done by the likes of Geoff King, Michael Z Newman and Yannis Tzioumakis, among others, who each provide a framework of criteria for labelling films as American independent. These conceptions differ to the extent that if one is not careful about outlining their own, it would be too easy to place a huge number of American films, both small and large budget, popular and art-house, as 'indie'.

Chapter 4 marks the start of the application of these concepts to the actual film texts themselves. Specifically in this chapter, the output of the fully financially independent entities, detailed in Appendix 2, will be explored. As the industrial location furthest from the influence of the mainstream majors, the presence and particular form of intermediality in these films provide an ideal starting point from which to examine its use across American independent film. This chapter in particular notes a significant difference in the deployment of intermediality and metareference

between films that attempt to mimic the mainstream entertainment of the majors, and those that provide a more alternative experience.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the films of Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate, along with the subsidiary divisions of Dimension and Fine Line, detailed in Appendix 3. The large proportion of films contributed to this study by these distributors alone demands a separate consideration, but they also share a number of features that make it appropriate to distinguish them from both the smaller independents of Appendix 2 and the 'speciality divisions' of Appendix 4. For one, the industrial status of Miramax and New Line as fully independent or owned by the majors is complex due to their acquisition by Disney and Warner Bros. respectively mid-way through the nineties. While those distributors technically reside within the Hollywood studio system after that point, their high-profile and successful brand identities afforded them the luxury of retaining much of their autonomy in terms of selection and production of projects. Lionsgate exists in a similar liminal space, remaining fully independent throughout the period but enjoying a level of capitalisation and output far superior to the smaller independents covered in Chapter 4, making them more directly comparable to Miramax and New Line.

The important distinction between Chapters 5 and 6 is chronological, with Chapter 5 focusing specifically on Miramax and New Line's films of the 1990s. This chapter identifies a far stronger individual brand identity in regard to content than with the smaller independents of Chapter 4, as well as an apparent preference for intermedial contact in the subsidiary divisions of Dimension and Fine Line. Chapter 6 expands upon those findings,

continuing the film analyses of these distributors into the era after 2000, during which time the vast majority of Lionsgate's films were also released. This chapter finds the distributors similarly entrenched within their brand identities in regard to which media are contacted, but also notes a distinctly more intermedial and metareferential approach to the more traditionally 'respected' media of literature and theatre. Additionally, the increased visibility of the comic book form is explored in regard to its inclusion in metareferential and intermedial narratives, along with Lionsgate's approach to the more modern media of television videogames and internet content more generally.

Chapter 7 explores the fully-integrated Hollywood major subsidiaries and 'speciality divisions' that appeared during the period to capitalise on the apparent popularity of content deemed in some way 'indie'. Here we find a significantly narrower focus on literature and theatre as well as a tendency towards metareference in service of intramediality as well as intermediality. This exploration completes the broad survey of intermediality within American independent cinema, and leaves Chapter 8 to draw conclusions and suggest some possible explanations for these trends and patterns. Additionally, this chapter will address the limitations of the study as well as suggesting ways in which this knowledge might be furthered with future studies.

Intermediality has the potential to provide a fascinating new avenue of interest for film studies, and the following work will add significantly to that discussion. First of all though, it must be established precisely what is meant when one uses the term in order to productively apply it to film texts.

Notes

[1] The research project is entitled 'Re-Mediated Images as Figurations of Intermediality and Post-Mediality in Central and East European Cinema', and is due to be complete in September 2016.

[2] As will be further explored in Chapter 2, a great deal of work on intermediality to-date has been concerned primarily with British and European film such as Eckart Voigts-Virchow's intermedial reading of Michael Winterbottom's *A Cock and Bull Story* (2009), Ágnes Pethő's analyses of Jean-Luc Goddard films (2011), and Yvonne Spielmann's exploration of intermediality in the films of Peter Greenaway (1998), with the latter never receiving an English translation from the original German.

[3] These formal and narrative factors will be more thoroughly explored when existing academic work on Amercian independent cinema from experts in the field like Geoff King, Michael Z Newman and Yannis Tzioumakis is reviewed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

Intermediality So Far

Theory

The apparent novelty of intermediality is a misconception driven largely by the reluctance of Anglo-American film studies to commit to a thorough exploration of it, which is at least partly due to the concept being so inextricably tangled up in multi- and inter- disciplinary studies. Ágnes Pethő (2011) identifies a divide between what she describes as 'cognitive' and 'philosophical' moving image theory on one side, and 'media theoretical discussion of cinema' on the other (Pethő, 2011: 23). The concept of intermediality, however, has emerged in interdisciplinary media theory belonging to the former category, and in turn to a body of work written largely in French and German. Pethő suggests that while intermediality exists in Anglo-American film analysis, it remains 'tainted' by interdisciplinarity and by its link to a different field of interest too vast to be practically applicable.

It is believed that Samuel Taylor Coleridge first used the term 'intermedium' in 1818, and it has gone on to be appropriated by a number of scholars interpreting and applying it in many different ways.[1] There is certainly a challenge involved in approaching a single term used to connote both specific and broad interactions, imitations and influences sweeping across media from theatre and performance through literature and fine art, all the way to television, film and videogames. The seemingly broad and unwieldy bulk carried by the term should not be seen as a reason to dismiss

it from any disciplinary perspective however, as it is crucial that one accepts, as Jens Schröter writes; 'the more and more apparent fact that media do not exist disconnected from one another; rather they have existed forever in complex media configurations and have therefore always been based on other media' (Schröter, 2012: 15).

Within the context of this research, it is unnecessary to go back as far as Coleridge. Intermedia or the intermedium itself is not a notion entirely interchangeable with that of intermediality, which has a more recent origin. While the concept of an intermedium re-appeared in the 1960s alongside the artistic movement of Fluxus in the theorising of Dick Higgins, this concept is focused on the creation of a new medium distinct from those containing the features that have constituted it. In Higgins' view, intermediality is the property of an intermedium that makes it completely unrecognisable as any of the individual media whose modes or features have aided in its formation. In this sense the intermedium is an idea solidly grounded in multimedial studies, but intermediality as it refers to the influence and mixing of medial features within a particular medium is clearly monomedial in nature. There is a general consensus that it was the increased popularity of the concept of intertextuality in the 1970s that eventually led to the initial use of the term 'intermedialitat' in 1983 by Aage Hansen-Love, and that would become intermediality, in the monomedial sense (Schröter, 2012: 15; Brozic, 2012: 138).

This divide remains today, with intermediality being thought of broadly in these two distinct ways. For clarity, it should be stated that this thesis will concern itself with the monomedial conception of intermediality

aligned with the notions of influence and intertextuality post-1970s and into the 1980s. To succinctly (though not comprehensively) define intermediality in this sense, it can be understood as 'the temporary overcoming of a recognised discreteness' of media (Shail, 2010: 3). This is to say that within a single text of a particular medium, attention may be called to the artifice of that medium by recreating (or attempting to recreate), referencing, imitating or evoking the sense of another distinct medium. In these instances such a text displays intermediality, without the need to create an entirely new form of mediation. This is a very brief and incomplete consideration of a collection of processes, techniques and even narrative content that constitute a broad and thriving area of theory and criticism. As it will form the critical basis for the film analyses in the following research, this understanding of intermediality will be explored in far greater depth later in the chapter. Before this, however, it is useful to spend a brief time looking at the term from the view of those more interested in the older 'multimedial' notion of the intermedium as it will provide a good basis for comparison.

In his 2012 article Jens Schröter outlines what he considers the four major types of intermediality, consisting of synthetic, formal (or transmedial), transformational and ontological intermediality. Formal intermediality, consisting of the sharing of common formal, textual or narrative features between media, is a concept aligned with the more recent monomedial view of intermediality in that it draws on notions of influence and reference (like intertextuality). This is partially dismissed by Schröter as not 'true' intermediality due to the fact that any feature common to more than one medium cannot be in any way representative of a single medium;

one cannot infer intermediality between literature and film for example if the feature used to make that inference is not unique to either one of them. As soon as a film becomes in any sense 'literary', the device responsible for such a description has necessarily been expressed as a formal component of film and so cannot confer literariness to anything.

Schröter seems equally sceptical about transformational intermediality, refering simply to the representations of other media within a medium. He is quick to point out that it would be stretching the term too far to claim transformational intermediality merely in the mentioning of literature or painting in a film, or the presence of a painting for scenic or even narrative ends. For him, transformational intermediality only exists where the mediality of the represented work is materially significant. By way of example Schröter refers to film scenes in which the camera zooms in toward a framed picture, eventually magnifying it to the extent that the frame disappears and its features are allowed to fill, and even go beyond the screen, thereby transforming it from the centripetal medium of framed art into the centrifugal medium of cinema.[2] This definition risks being reductive however. Dismissing artworks used for narrative ends in particular disregards narratives that may themselves be media-referential or fundamentally questioning of the medial gap in representations of one medium within another. This is of particular importance in metanarratives and metareferential films that, according to writers like Werner Wolf, are in the ascendancy in the twenty-first century as part of what he calls the metareferential turn.[3]

Synthetic intermediality in contrast seems to be the purest and most relevant conception of the term in Schröter's view, and the one most associated with Higgins and the 1960s writings that included Kultermann, and Yalkut. This is characterised primarily by a condemnation of the notion of any monomedial form as something that only serves to alienate, and that overcoming this restrictive thinking of individual media would be akin to some kind of social liberation, with intermediality providing the catalyst. Synthetic intermediality is very clearly differentiated from mixed media; it is not about referencing, imitating, quoting or evoking, but about the creation of an entirely new form that is defined largely by its difference from what has come before, not from its mixing of other previously established forms. In Schröter's words: 'While the mixed media are only a collection of different media in one place or within one frame, intermedia are syntheses within which the forms entering are sublated.' (Schröter, 2012: 19). Parallel to this, one might see the ideology behind synthetic intermediality as aiming to perform a similar fusion of life and art, not with one incorporating the other, or both existing side by side, but by the creation of a new kind of existence in which life and art would provide new ways of perceiving and conceptualising the world. This was one of the core concepts of the Fluxus and Happening art movements of the 1960s, as they held the belief that existing media, in their single or 'monomedial' forms, were constructed and individually 'purified' during the renaissance and subsequently in academic or artistic institutions who benefitted from such medial purity. In Higgins' view this was in no small part driven by class divisions. It is his opinion that the 20th century has shown a marked shift

towards re-unification and simultaneity 'in which separation into rigid categories is absolutely irrelevant' (Higgins, 1984: 17).

This concept is clearly not without its problems. Taking this definition of intermediality means that in a true intermedial work, one would not be able to identify the individual 'traditional' media that have been combined to create it. Graphic poetry, by this reasoning, is mixed media rather than intermedia because one must either read the words or see the image. Experiencing both simultaneously as a new form distinct from text or visual art is not possible. Another problem with this model is that it threatens ubiquity because of its holistic angle. Eventually everything melts together into a digital super-medium thanks to the computer, so one is forced to ask the question of how useful it can really be in the analysis of specific artworks.

Ontological intermediality, as Schröter's fourth and final type of identifiable intermediality, is arguably the broadest and certainly the most philosophical of all the current approaches to the term. In essence it is concerned with how media are individually identified as distinct, and with the unknowable of whether media exist in a discrete or continuous formation 'naturally'. On one hand media are distinct entities with intermediality acting as a linking aspect subsequent to their formation. On the other hand, intermediality is just how we view the base state of being in which all forms exist together, and the distinct media as we perceive them are simply constructed and partitioned collections of elements that subsequently act against a natural state of integration. While this may not provide any possibility of practical application to specific analysis of texts,

it is important to understand how media are defined as distinct because without that knowledge it is impossible to say that two of them are interacting. If we don't know what the boundaries between media are, if indeed there are any, then how can we possibly say that something has crossed those boundaries? Additionally, such classifications as multimedial and monomedial rely heavily on an assumed shared understanding of what constitutes a medium, and this provides a considerable barrier to the practical application of the term intermediality. For this reason, before moving on to look at the more recent 'monomedial' concept of intermediality, we must first tackle the issue of how media are defined as distinct.

Werner Wolf in his attempt to outline an intermedial turn in literature as recently as 2011 finds himself, as have numerous others caught between wildly differing definitions of media.[4] Firstly, there is Marshall McLuhan's broad and all-encompassing meaning of 'medium' as 'any extension...of man' (McLuhan, 1964: 3). The problem with this is that it theoretically creates numerous different 'media' within even a single traditional art form such as theatre. In this sense, as Wolf points out, one could even identify a pair of glasses or a bicycle used by an actor on stage as a medium in itself. On the other hand, if one were to take the narrower definition offered by Hans Hiebel, thinking of media as 'material or energetic transmitters of data and information units' (Hiebel, 1997: 8, Wolf's translation) then arguably not even literature would qualify for the categorisation of a medium, as it is a matter of reflection. It should be pointed out this is Wolf's opinion, and one that could be challenged. One

could argue that literature does qualify as a medium in this definition, as the act of reading text is surely a prerequisite of its existence as a form at all and therefore should not be treated as a separate entity. One must actively attend the theatre and open one's eyes to see the performance, but this does not detract from the notion that the theatre is a transmitter of data and information, whether or not anyone attends.

Wolf is correct to align this definition with the 'hollow pipe' or transmissive definition of media however, in which a medium is simply a conduit through which information is delivered or transferred. In this model of media categorisation, the metaphor of the pipe was used by Walter Ong because the contents are transmitted without being altered or affected in any way by the type or shape of the conduit, much like water flowing through a pipe. This is not a universally accepted view in contemporary media theory and it could be seen as somewhat reductive to suggest that narrative content is *completely* independent of the medium in which it exists in *every* way. Nevertheless, the opposite view, falling under the doctrine of radical media relativism, treats the medium as so integral to the content as to entirely rule out the possibility of narrative existing across multiple media. Clearly a compromise must be found between these extremes if media are ever to be understood as separate but related entities and if we are to take multiple media into account when studying specific individual formative and narrative features, such as in a discussion of intermediality.

Wolf astutely points out that the definition must be flexible and inclusive of audience expectation of formal content in addition to the absolutes of the practical modalities. This follows a similar approach to a

comprehensive framework of media-definition provided by Lars Elleström, in which media are not solely dependent on their physical properties, but also upon their socio-historical context and presence within a broader multimedial landscape. He differentiates this categorisation into basic and qualified media. Basic media, in Elleström's model, are made up of four modalities; the material, the sensorial, the spatiotemporal and the semiotic. The material modality of a medium is the actual interface itself, in the sense that film is 'a more or less flat surface of changing images [...] combined with sound waves' (Elleström, 2010: 17). The sensorial modality is, equally logically, the perception of the material medium through the human senses. It is not in the remit of this study to define the biological intricacies or functions of sense-data. It is sufficient for our purposes to understand that beyond the obvious five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell at the material interface, perception of media can also employ memory. As Elleström points out:

> A sculpture is mainly seen, but it is impossible to grasp its entity without moving and hence also involving the inner senses. Even if one does not actually touch its surface one sees and indirectly feels its tactile qualities. The reactivation of memories of sensorial experiences plays a certain part in the perception of media. Reading a text, for instance, often involves the creation and recollections of visual experiences that are very remote from the way alphabetic letters look, and it also involves an inner hearing of the sound of the words (Elleström, 2010: 18).

This understanding of how a text can function to engage visual and audio sensory data is an intriguing one as it speaks to the experience of reading rather than the physical medium of literature. It also, to some extent, supports Schröter's ontological intermediality, suggesting a pre-existing intermediality (or at least an underlying link from one medium to another)

35

that lies both at the heart of all arts and media, but also beyond our immediate perception of the physical modality in which narrative content is communicated.

Elleström's third modality is spatiotemporal and covers the structuring of the sense-data described above into understanding of space and time. It consists of height, width, depth and time with each medium having some or all of these dimensions but dealing with them differently. Sculpture for example has no temporal component, whereas film has no depth but may create the illusion of such in 'virtual space' by its resemblance to three-dimensional objects and worlds. Similarly photographs and paintings may give the illusion of temporality (virtual time) by showing an object in motion, or by being structured in such a way as to suggest a viewing order, such as in a comic book.

Finally, the semiotic modality of media refers to how meaning is constructed from the perception of what has been described so far. Elleström employs Peirce's trichotomy of symbol, index and icon, suggesting that while most media employ all of these, one will tend to dominate depending on the medium.[5] Text is an example of the symbolic sign system that dominates literature for example, while it can be argued that visual images rely primarily on iconic signs, although with a significant amount of indexical signs too. Importantly for the study of intermediality, Elleström recognises that while the semiotic aspects of media form a complex landscape, 'there is no doubt about the basic semiotic differences between, for instance, a written text and a moving image' (Elleström, 2010: 23).

These modalities constitute basic media, but it is not sufficient to define a medium by its modalities alone; it must be 'qualified'. Defining a qualified medium is achieved via two qualifying aspects; the contextual qualifying aspect, which can be thought of as 'the origin, delimitation and use of media in specific historical, cultural and social circumstances' (Elleström, 2010: 25), and the operational qualifying aspect. This second aspect is of particular interest to the application of intermediality in the following chapters because it represents that which is assumed to be part of (or particular to) a given medium without being a material facet of its modality. Qualifying aspects are unstable because they are conventions, like genre conventions, but they are important because a painting only becomes such (rather than some paint on a canvas) because of its aesthetic qualities. We recognise those qualities as in keeping with a traditional, historical understanding of the qualified medium of painting. Cinema has its own qualifications, some that in the twenty-first century could be said to be somewhat in flux, that separate it from television for example.[6] There is no modal difference between the two, which is why films are shown on television, but there is a general acceptance of the term film or cinema to refer to those texts that are intended for theatrical release, and most often conform to formal and narrative constructions unique to film rather than television content.

Marie Laure Ryan (2006) identifies a similarly structured framework for separating distinct media on semiotic, technological/material, and cultural grounds, but it is important that these are categories are not independent of each other. The shift of narratives from oral storytelling to

the manuscript for example was a material/technological one, but it resulted in the change from loose episodic narrative structure to more tightly plotted drama. This is an alteration in the cultural sense, altering perception of what content is expected from the medium. Similarly, the ninety-minute film may be ideally suited to the self-contained Aristotlean plot, but television is far more commonly a presented in perpetual episodic serial form due to its materially lengthier broadcast time.

By way of simplifying, or at least shortening the above collection of trends, expectations and modalities into a workable definition, Wolf suggests the following definition for medium:

> Medium, as used in literary and intermediality studies, is a conventionally and culturally distinct means of communication, specified not only by particular technical or institutional channels (or one channel) but primarily by the use of one or more semiotic systems in the public transmission of contents that include, but are not restricted to, referential 'messages.' Generally, media make a difference as to what kind of content can be evoked, how these contents are presented, and how they are experienced (Wolf, 2011b: 2).

This might be a relatively lengthy framework and a fairly long-winded definition, but we must not allow the lure of short or simple definitions to distract from the reality that dealing with notions of mediality and intermediality are multi-faceted and complex. This complexity must be embraced if we are ever to move beyond the situation in which scholars repeatedly define and redefine terms, and instead get to a point where we can start applying this theory to the core substance of individual media studies the actual analysis of texts themselves.[7]

Understanding this concept of media as not just a physical framework for transmitting data, but also as a collection of forms,

conventions and expectations allows us to understand how the notion of intermediality has more recently been developed within a monomedial context. Irina Rajewsky's (2005) comprehensive overview of intermediality remains one of the most cited bases upon which intermedial studies are founded, and provides an excellent framework with which to identify what kinds of intermediality may be identified in film texts specifically.

The key difference between this intermediality and the one described by Higgins is that this intermediality is not concerned with the construction of a new and previously undiscovered medium. Rajewsky first identifies an understanding of the term in both a broad and a narrow sense. In the broad sense intermediality is 'a generic term for all those phenomena that (as indicated by the prefix inter) in some way take place between media' (Rajewsky, 2005: 46). This does not equate to a literal medial entity existing between two media but rather to features or elements one would have difficulty defining as belonging to just one particular medium. In contrast to the typology of intermediality set out by Schröter, she considers this distinct from the transmedial. Transmedial phenomena in Rajewsky's definition would involve the utilisation of a fictional world, narrative, characters or events that can exist across multiple media, where the content is maintained as much as possible from one medium to the other without any apparent concessions made to accommodate the differences between them. Henry Jenkins popularised the term 'transmedia storytelling' by reference to the use of animated shorts and web content that expanded upon the narrative of *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999) and its sequels (Jenkins, 2006: 93–101). Another good example of this would be the content shared

by the books, films, animation, comics and videogames derived from JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (1954–1955). This, despite adapting elements of a narrative across the medial border between literature and multiple other media such as film, cannot be considered intermediality. Importantly here, formal features common to more than one medium are not considered transmedial.

Concerning the narrower definition of intermediality, numerous conceptions have appeared in criticism to make this broad notion more applicable to analysis of specific phenomena, and Rajewsky identifies three main criteria in which they differ.[8] First an intermedial approach may be synchronic or diachronic, although a number of studies use both. Generally a synchronic approach is concerned primarily with identifying specific 'types' of intermediality and attempt to find those within specific textual instances. A diachronic approach on the other hand will have its focus more on a historical overview of how media have interacted with each other, how intermedial practices have changed over time, or how one medium might adapt or evolve to include or dominate others.

The second way in which intermedial approaches tend to differ from each other is in identifying intermediality as either 'a fundamental condition or category' or as 'a critical category for the concrete analysis of specific individual media products or configurations' (Rajewsky, 2005: 47). When considering intermediality specifically from a monomedial perspective (in this case film) one must be aware of how hybrid the form is simply as a product of its original construction. Film has actors (like theatre), utilises photography and music to an extent, as well as often employing painted or

drawn environments, but none of these features, like narrative itself, can be considered 'intermediality'. To do so would label everything intermedial and render the term effectively useless.[9] This is an important distinction from the intermediality outlined by Schröter, in which features common to multiple media are considered formal or transmedial intermediality. It is clear that he considers this kind of intermediality, one which he does not consider true intermediality in the way synthetic intermediality is, a fundamental condition of film. Understanding it as a category for the analysis of specific features of films however, allows for an approach more focused on aspects of particular texts that employ intermediality beyond that which is media-specifically necessary.

Finally, Rajewsky recognises the divide between the multimedial and monomedial focused studies as has already been outlined above. Some (particularly literary) approaches may focus on 'the form and function of intermedial practices in given media products' (Rajewsky, 2005: 49). Others, like Schröter, eschew textual instances in favour of the formation of a new intermedium, the historical location of the birth of an existing 'traditional' medium, or even the function of media in a wider sociological sense.[10]

Having explored all of these approaches, Rajewsky recognises that in such a broad and differing field of work it is important that anyone attempting to enter the discourse must first position themselves somewhere on this 'research axis' by setting out their own concept of what intermediality is before proceeding.[11] Rajewsky herself approaches intermediality in a synchronic way, although without ignoring historical

factors completely, and treats intermediality as a category for the analysis of specific texts rather than a fundamental property of film. This approach also focuses on specific instances of intermedial practice in films rather than the broader issue of medial formation. In order to simplify this definition and to distinguish it from what has come before, Rajewsky separates her own concept of intermediality into three distinct categories. Medial transposition, media combination and intermedial reference therefore provide a reasonably comprehensive definition of monomedial intermediality as that which occurs broadly in just three forms.

Medial transposition describes the situation, mostly found in adaptations, where narrative, settings and/or characters are moved from one medium to another. This is essentially Jenkins' transmediality, distinct from Schröter's conception of the term, in that it is a relatively simple translation that makes no attempt to recognise or highlight the difference between the media in which the content exists. Media combination is used to describe the presence of at least two media understood as distinct, in their entirety, within the same media product. Opera is most often used to demonstrate this as theatre, dance and music are entirely present in an opera, but film can arguably perform the same function by showing a painting or a page of text from a novel on-screen.

The third sub-category of intermedial reference is perhaps the most interesting and the most applicable to the film analyses to follow. It is in intermedial reference that a media product 'thematizes, evokes or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means' (Rajewsky, 2005: 53). This

process can be understood as different from intertextuality, in which films reproduce or reference other films (also referred to as intramediality), or content particular to specific texts in other media. Intermedial reference instead has a clear focus on the differences between media themselves. As mentioned earlier, Andrew Shail describes it as 'the temporary overcoming of a recognised discreteness' of media (Shail, 2010: 3) and this is a particularly salient description. In this definition it is the *recognising* of that medial gap that not only sets intermedial reference apart from all of the other forms of intermediality discussed so far, but additionally enhances its deployment in films that rely on formal and narrative 'play' the way American independent films so often do, as we will see when we explore that film sector in the next chapter. Shail also asserts the importance of treating intermediality as separate from intertextuality rather than just a branch of it as some have argued.[12] He describes Rajewsky's medial transposition as 'heteromedial intertextuality' in fact, reserving the term intermediality for that which is more specifically related to form rather than narrative content or transmedial elements.

Even in this relatively short overview of definitions of and approaches to intermediality it is easy to see why the term has struggled to achieve mainstream acceptance in many areas of academic study. The disparity between different uses of the term, and the link it implies with multidisciplinary studies, may be among the reasons intermediality has only recently begun to be embraced in film studies and in Anglo-American film criticism particularly. In addition to the difficulties outlined earlier in regard to intermediality belonging to two broad and separate scholarly disciplines

divided by approach, focus and philosophy, there has also been a language barrier to overcome. Pethő points out that numerous important studies of intermediality in film remain locked away in French and German language work that is often overlooked because of the difficulty of obtaining a translation, and not having access to the broader library of theoretical work that preceded it.

Yvonne Spielmann's book *Intermedialitat. Das System Peter Greenaway* (1997) is a particularly good example of this problem. It is described by Pethő as an attempt to reconcile Bordwell's practical, formal film analysis with the notion of intermediality, but no English translation has yet appeared in the eighteen years since its publication, despite being about an English filmmaker. This text seems to be an important point of conflict for those on the multimedial and monomedial sides of the intermediality divide, as it applies the monomedial concept of intermediality (aligning with Rajewsky's concept of the term) to the films of Peter Greenaway, which must be considered an important step forward in utilising intermediality as a category for film analysis. Schröter, perhaps unsurprisingly, dislikes the work, finding it to be fundamentally contradictory. Spielmann uses Bazin's notion of the centripetal form of painting and the centrifugal form of cinema as an example of demonstrating the influence of painting in the films of Greenaway. This is a good example of the monomedial concept of intermediality as it suggests that the conscious employment of intermedial forms or features can refer to or evoke the sense of the medium of painting within film. In this instance, it is Spielmann's assertion that Greenaway's stressing of the centripetal aspect of

the cinematic image particularly references perspective painting in an intermedial way. Schröter argues this cannot be, because if one denies Bazin's media specific argument, instead asserting that both the centripetal and the centrifugal image can be employed within cinema, then the use of a centripetal image cannot specifically refer to painting because it has been proven to not be specific to that medial form.

To dismiss Spielmann's work in this way is effectively to understand media only as 'basic media' in their physical modalities. The centripetal image is not a material fact of painting as it can appear in film just as easily, but it can be thought of as a qualifying aspect of painting based on the notion that it is a common feature of the medium and one that has come to be an expectation for all those experiencing that particular art form. For Spielmann 'intermedia is a formal category that defines an interrelationship between or among distinct media that merge with each other, such as a photographic still image reworked in a film or video' (Spielmann, 2001: 56). This opens the definition up to considerations of qualified media and allows reference and influence to be explored in an intermedial context without the work needing to create an entirely new medium.

It seems that in order to try to utilise intermediality away from its interdisciplinary and multimedial heritage and apply it to film within a more mainstream textual analytical context, one must remain fairly broadly accepting of that which confers intermediality. While it seems oddly contradictory to bemoan the constant redefinition of the term as the above discussion has, and then attempt to construct my own definition by drawing an arbitrary line around that which I personally consider intermediality, it

seems such an act is necessary. Another definition, one unique to this work while obviously inclusive of that which has come before, is unfortunately required, or else intermediality cannot be applied in a practical way to textual features. To this end, this thesis aligns with the monomedial approach to intermediality as features of texts rather than the creation of a new medium. More specifically, it is intermediality as a category for analysis rather than a fundamental condition of film that will be applied going forward. The following work will take a synchronic approach to textual features in much the same way as the mainstream film theorising described by Pethő when referring to Bordwell's practical and formal film analysis.[13] However, the ways in which the application and utilisation of intermediality has changed over the period of focus (1990–2012) will be considered, and so it would not be accurate to label the study entirely synchronic. The subsequent chapters will not consider media transposition to be intermediality, rather they will take Rajewsky's intermedial reference as the primary definition of intermediality, but media combination will also be considered when it particularly highlights the difference between media.

I do, however, also agree with Joachim Paech, who argues that an important aspect of what is considered intermediality is the awareness of different media as distinct. It is the aspect of self-reflexivity, in Paech's view, that contributes most to instances in which an audience perceives intermedial features or processes. He states: 'the spectator has to be either conscious of media processes or the film has to use a reflexive strategy that makes media processes visible' (Pethő, 2011: 39). This is perhaps the aspect of intermediality that prevents it becoming too broadly inclusive of the

forms described previously, by Shail for example, as fundamental constituents of film. Narrative is not always intermedial reference to novels, isolation of the mise-en-scène from the rest of the fictional world in a centripetal manner is not always intermedial reference to painting, it is the self-reflexive nature these occurrences that finally classify them as intermedial. The medial difference must be relevant, as Pethő expands upon in her understanding of the term. Intermediality can therefore be thought of as 'the repetition or the re-inscription of a medium as a form in the form of another medium, where the procedure of intermediality itself is also figurated, that is: it becomes observable and it refers reflexively to itself' (Pethő, 2011: 40). This presents intermediality as something that, importantly, is performative. It is frequently and act or an action; part of an ongoing dialogue between media and arts in which influences are recognised and rivalries played out. Pethő goes on to suggest that while cinema considered intermedial will incorporate aspects of literature or painting, it is often seen as a kind of 'anxiety of influence' and is described variously in a psychoanalytical sense as an aggressive action of 'displacement' or 'repression' (Pethő, 2011: 41).[14]

It is this self-reflexive nature of intermediality that causes it to be so often related to the notion of metareference. Werner Wolf has been one of the foremost theorists in the issue of the metaization of media, which he defines as follows:

> The movement from a first cognitive or communicative level to a higher one on which the first-level thoughts and utterances, self-reflexively become objects of reflection and communication in their own right (Wolf, 2009: 3).

Simply put this describes the situation in which the means of communication (or the medium) becomes the object of narrative address, rather than simply a conduit through which content is delivered. Wolf's notion of metareference is any phenomenon that fulfils three conditions. First it must be an artefact of self-reference (generally non-accidental, if such intent can be elucidated), the operational system of which can be extended to refer to the entire medium in which the work exists. In other words, it must be a textual example of a notion one could apply to the entire medium in question, in this case film. Second it must not simply mimic or resemble linked systems to trigger corresponding ideas, but rather it must at least imply *reflection* upon the different systems. This puts the artefact on a perceived higher level or a 'meta' level. Finally this meta address must be issued from a level that exists within the work itself, and focused on particular aspects of the system (or medium) being referred to. This final condition elicits the meta-awareness of a viewer so that they are engaged fully with the artificial construction of the media product being experienced, and that the product itself is addressing those medial issues, not just highlighting them for discussion by others.

Clearly this metareference described by Wolf is similar in a number of ways to how we have described intermediality in the form of intermedial reference, and the need for self-reflexivity described by Paech, and Wolf is cautious about intermediality and metareference being confused. He does, however, accept that they are often linked due to the enhanced potential for intermediality afforded by metareference. He describes this particular type of intermedial reference as 'an experimental imitation of an 'alien' medium

which goes 'against the grain' of the medium of the referring work' (Wolf, 2009: 62) and uses the example of the imitation of musical structures in the text of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). This is an accurate although incomplete definition of intermediality, but it is interesting that Wolf points out the mutual benefit of intermediality and metareference through the use of both. While the potential for intermediality is of course enhanced by a narrative that seeks to highlight its own medial construction and critique difference between systems from within its own diegesis, the use of intermediality also provides a practical tool with which to establish metanarrative. As Wolf says:

> A high degree of deviation from the traditional use of the medium in question [...] is an important factor for the implication of a meta-level from whose vantage point the mediality of the media involved, their potentials and limits, appear foregrounded (Wolf, 2009: 62–63).

It is important to understand the relationship between intermediality and metareference in this context not only because metareference is one of the myriad formal strategies used by some American independent films to set themselves apart from mainstream Hollywood cinema, but also because formal and narrative 'play' is a major factor in a number of definitions of the particular era of American independent cinema considered in this thesis. It would be a logical presupposition that this inclination towards 'play' would make metareference, and in turn intermediality, more likely to occur than in a more traditional or mainstream film text. Each time a conventional element is altered, the qualifying aspects of the film medium are questioned to some extent, which will result in a highlighting of the medium for the viewers. This would have to be considered fertile ground for the use of

intermedial technique and embracing of the notion of metareference. The following chapters of research will shed some light on whether that assumption is borne out by the facts.

Before looking at American independent cinema more closely however, it will likely prove useful to look at some existing intermedial analyses of films in order to contextualise some of the dense theoretical material described in this section. In such a maze of definitions and concepts it is easy to lose sight of how this monomedial intermediality can be applied to film texts. The breadth and diversity of interpretation surrounding the term has resulted in a variety of approaches, but the following examples provide an interesting cross-section of those that are the most relevant to the analyses in the following chapters.

Application

While not every intermedial analysis of film can be included here, it is important that the selection of work be representative and relevant to what follows in this thesis. It should be noted that these examples represent only a small proportion of 'intermedial' studies, with many being focused on intermediality within other media such as literature (Wolf, 2011b; Chanen, 2012), theatre (Chapple & Kattenbelt, 2006; Brozic, 2012) and modern art (Bennett, 2007). Within this group of intermedial analyses of films, work has been selected that applies intermediality with broadly the same approach as outlined above, and therefore as it will be applied in the following chapters. Finally, these examples primarily deal with film's relationship to the arts and media that preceded and influenced it, namely literature,

painting and photography, because these make up the majority of this small subset of work.

We have previously touched upon the importance of the relationship between film and literature and the tension that exists between the two forms being an important aspect of film's development as a medium. It is perhaps surprising then that existing intermedial film analyses focusing on this particular relationship are relatively uncommon, certainly when compared to the work looking at film's relationship to the other visual arts of painting and photography. Eckart Voigts-Virchow provides one of the few intermedial analyses of film's interaction with literature by focusing specifically on Michael Winterbottom's (2005) metadaptation *A Cock and Bull Story*.

Before attempting to analyse the intermediality of the film, Voigts-Virchow sets out his opinion on what comprises the phenomenon itself. He recognises Rajewsky's work and acknowledges that the term commonly includes 'media combination, media transfer and media contact or media reference' (Voigts-Virchow, 2009: 147), but much as in the following work, his consideration of the film focuses more specifically on the latter category of media contact or reference. His understanding of that more particularly defined intermediality relies on a distinction between that which is extracompositional and that which is intracompositional. The former can be thought of as equivalent to transmediality and Rajewsky's medial transposition. The film references the book in that it draws content from it, but that reference is not explicit within the film itself. The latter type of intermediality, however, does describe explicit reference within a given

51

work, identifying a contacting medium, in this case film, and a contacted medium, in this case literature. The contacting medium is wholly present and contacts another by including it within its own mediality as an additional element, and one that is only partially present. By way of example Voigts-Virchow highlights a scene in which Steve Coogan, portraying a version of himself who is cast as Tristram Shandy in a fictional literary adaptation of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Laurence Sterne, 1759–1767), reads the source novel. This is intracompositional intermediality as the reference text has been explicitly included and 'contributes toward the semantics of the contacting medium' (Voigts-Virchow, 2009: 148). Literature is not present in its entirety however, because the book is merely a plot device, or a prop used to bolster the narrative. The formal materiality of literature is not present in this moment, but there are moments in which it is and these are instances of 'system contamination' in Voigts-Virchow's words.

An example of this 'contamination' comes in a scene in which the entirely black page from *Tristram Shandy* is replicated in the film by the inclusion of a black screen. It is Voigts-Virchow's assertion that this occurrence in isolation, while clearly a replication or expression of the specific mediality of the source text, could be seen as system reference in the same vein as Coogan reading the book. However, he goes on to say that should this kind of formal reference occur frequently throughout the film, we would find ourselves able to speak of its 'contamination' by the mediality of literature. In such a case, the contacted medium is not present in its entirety (that would be media combination as Rajewsky's model

describes), but neither would it be solely used as a prop to aid the narrative. This narrow conception of intermediality then is predicated not only on the presence of another 'contacted' medium within the film, but also on its explicit acknowledgement on a metareferential level, something *A Cock and Bull Story* is especially fertile ground for given its status as a metanarrative involving a fictional adaptation of its own source text.

There is a suggestion in Voigts-Virchow's work that much of the system contamination and what we might consider intermediality in *A Cock and Bull Story* exists because the process of adaptation itself has strived to maintain the 'spirit' of the original work. Because *Tristram Shandy* was itself focused on the mediality of the book[15], it stands to reason that this focus would appear in the adaptation as a focus on the mediality of film. This metanarrative referencing of the original text therefore, can be seen simply as a result of an intertextual obligation to the source material. This is an issue that also arises in Brigitte Peucker's analysis of Scorcese's (1993) adaptation *The Age of Innocence*.

As Peucker observes, a preoccupation with the visual is something central to Edith Wharton's writing, and it is perhaps because of this that Scorsese was able to successfully adapt the 'spirit' of *The Age of Innocence* (Wharton, 1920) from the page to the screen by 'borrowing from literature and painting equally' (Peucker, 2007: 20). Wharton uses painting to inform her character descriptions. As Peucker points out, it communicates much about Julius Beaufort that his drawing room contains 'the much discussed nude of Bouguereau' (Wharton, 1920: 23), and that a twenty-year-old portrait is still almost identical to the actual subject Mrs. Henry van der

Luyden who 'has been gruesomely preserved in the airless atmosphere of a perfectly reproachable existence' (Wharton, 1920: 52). Beyond the mere presence of paintings in the narrative however, Scorsese uses particular techniques to evoke the medium of painting. According to Peucker he uses colour as a painter might use paint. A conscious choice to end scenes not by fading to black as one might expect in traditional narrative film, but instead fading to yellow or red, was an attempt to 'use colour as brushstrokes throughout the film' (Smith, 1993: 203). These are Scorsese's own words and they suggest the explicit use of a painterly aesthetic at the heart of his creation. Peucker also finds in this interview evidence of the editing being used to reinforce this painterly evocation, with many shots being cut short in order to imply 'a brush coming through and painting bits and pieces of colour, swishing by' (Smith, 1993: 206). The movement of the camera also contributes to the 'contamination' of painting in the film, at times mimicking the sweep of a paintbrush via the use of panning. A particular example used by Peucker is a long tracking shot that sweeps from left to right gradually revealing a landscape painting that hangs in the drawing room of the Countess.

Clearly these elements constitute a desire to evoke the sense of painting, but Scorsese's focus on the minute detail of the objects inhabiting Wharton's narrative is also an attempt to adapt the particular language used in the text. Peucker describes this focus as intended to evoke the sense of literature. It is 'a means of transposing novelistic description into the imagistic terms of film, an attempt to bridge what Scorsese calls the 'schism' between novelistic and filmic description' (Peucker, 2007: 22). To

this end even the use of voice-over in the film is claimed by Scorsese to be a way of recreating the experience of reading. This is a common way in which the experience of reading is evoked in film as a voice-over, despite being an aural component, usually takes the form of an omniscient narrator and that feature is far more commonly associated with the literary form than with the film medium.[16] Peucker also notes that the opening of the film, featuring as it does the act of text being written (in a cursive, handwritten font) over the image of a flower, as something that particularly tries to connect the literary to the imagistic.

This could also easily be read as an artefact of adaptation. Wharton's text, so thick with painterly references and allusions has merely been translated into film form, and any intermediality present could be the result of that rather than an explicit attempt to address the medial boundaries between film, painting and literature. However, Peucker also notes that *The Age of Innocence* is not simply an homage to earlier medial forms, but also an attempt in some ways to flaunt the superiority of film, and in that sense one must recognise an explicit highlighting of the medial difference. The previously described lateral camera movement intended to resemble a brushstroke emphasises 'that film has the diegetic flexibility and the temporal dimension that painting lacks' (Peucker, 2007: 24).

Peucker highlights a particularly important scene in the novel that describes a thriving and bustling bay filled with sailboats, fishing vessels and tugs. This is dramatically reduced in the film to a single sailboat that moves across the screen from right to left as the frame remains static. Peucker identifies this as a pointed evocation of what Alexandre Astruc

called the 'invasion of the frame' in which a slow-moving object enters an otherwise statically framed image. The purpose of this technique is particularly to draw attention to the appearance of movement into the otherwise still aesthetic of painting. By implication, this introduction of movement also highlights the introduction of a narrative, creating the motion picture, according to Peucker. The purpose of this particular scene, however, is a complex issue. Peucker notes that it is a direct visual quotation of *Nosferatu* (1922), and that the invasion of the frame was a hallmark of Murnau's work, so in a way this could be read as intramedial quotation, or even intertextuality.[17] However, the intermedial element cannot be dismissed simply because it is shared with source material, both literary and filmic. As Peucker puts it, the use of this technique 'comments on film's indebtedness to the compositional practices of painting while nevertheless flaunting film's capacity for movement and hence for storytelling' (Peucker, 2007: 24). She goes on to describe this often being seen as film 'triumphing' over the other, older arts.

However one ascribes intent to this kind of quotation, it is a good example of just how complex a network of influences and interactions are at work when dealing with intermediality, particularly in the case of adaptations from a different medium. The direct result of this complexity is that this analysis does not seem to offer a conclusive verdict on what aspects of *The Age of Innocence* are specifically intermedial. All of these techniques seem intermedial while at the same time are just as easily described as intertextuality, intramedial reference and direct quotation.

Ágnes Pethő (2011) finds perhaps a more clearly intermedial concern in the portraiture present in the two Alfred Hitchcock films *Rebecca* (1940) and *Vertigo* (1958). In the case of *Rebecca*, Pethő speaks of the young Mrs. De Winter (Joan Fontaine) being almost lost among the decorative archways and inner framings of the castle, which are not designed to draw the audience's attention to her as much as they are there to emphasise the fact that she does not belong in this particular frame. To assume the role she desires as De Winter's (Laurence Olivier) wife she has to turn herself into a picture, specifically the one of Caroline De Winter that she sees and decides to imitate. When she does this a tableau vivant is created in which she mimics the existing portrait, reflecting the image as if it were a mirror, and is then framed by Hitchcock within the hallway architrave 'almost literally as if she were stepping out of a picture frame' (Pethő, 2011: 184).

The use of the painting here serves a narrative purpose, it creates suspense and the events conform to the internal logic of the plot, but the use of painting is also more complicated as the two versions of Mrs. De Winter appear as copies or reflections of one single image. Pethő identifies that in this instance the painting becomes a representation of absence and uncertainty, becoming a 'medium of the void' because the actual subject of the painting is Rebecca, who is not only dead but also completely unknown. The original referent for the image is lost because she is unknown to the audience and to the woman who now 'doubles' the portrait, and this is read by Pethő as a particularly self-referential feature of the scene. She points out that the way the scene is framed seems to also place the cinematic picture in

the same realm of the unknown, and suggests that the referent always lies in an unearthly place of fiction or imagination. This raises questions about how images, both painted and cinematic, are interpreted in general, but Pethő suggests that it is painting that emerges here as the medium of the unknown, and one that threatens to disrupt film's 'classic dramaturgy' by throwing the characters into the 'abysmal depths of the uncanny and the unidentifiable' (Pethő, 2011: 187).

In *Vertigo* paintings play a similar role, that of a representation of the fabrication, the unreal or the unknown (or unknowable). Pethő points to the scene in which Scottie (James Stewart) first meets Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) in Elster's office, the walls of which are covered in pictures. These pictures, in Pethő's opinion, 'flaunt their artificiality and attract the attention of the viewer by their sheer multitude suggesting the possibility of a multitude of 'fabrications' (each painting appearing as a fictional universe of its own)' (Pethő, 2011: 188). This seems to symbolise the fact that Scottie is not sure if he is being told the whole truth by Elster. He is left to reflect on how much fabrication is happening in Elster's account in the presence of all these fabricated images, images which foreshadow the importance of the image as the narrative progresses.

When Kim Novak first appears (as Madeline), she is framed very much like a painting. This is the result of a number of techniques such as her static, profile pose, a significant amount of 'inner framing' (a doorway both in front and behind, plus her pause in front of a mirror towards the end of the scene) and a striking use of colour, particularly eye-catching among the relatively naturalistic colouring of the scenes immediately before and

after. Once again, like in *Rebecca*, the likeness of the scene to the image of a painting serves a narrative purpose in that we are intended to note her likeness to the portrait of Carlotta Valdes, which is explicitly emphasised with Madeline's trip to the museum and her time contemplating that portrait. However, there is also a medial significance to the evocation of the form of painting. As Pethő notes: 'The painting is not only the image of death, but in this case — in its relation with reality — it proves to be a multiple fiction and a lie, a duplicitous sign of a world that does not exist' (Pethő, 2011: 188).

Pethő asserts that the film contains a 'meta-narrative about images' and affords particular significance in this regard to the scene in the art gallery. Madeline sits by the painting of Carlotta as if it is a mirror. She claims that the framing of Scottie in this scene, who is admiring her as she admires the portrait, is equally important. He is flanked by images himself, one of a 'respectable gentleman' and one of 'a young boy'. The implication in this observation is that the framing acts as a character deconstruction in a film all about the questioning and shattering of identity. The viewer is encouraged, by the art on the walls of the gallery, to wonder which of these images most befits Scottie, particularly in the light of Madeline seeming to have found an image of herself in the portrait of Carlotta. This theme of multiplication and fragmentation of identity is emphasised further throughout the film with the use of mirrors, and this results in what Pethő describes as 'an abstract fragmentation of the realistic image' (Pethő, 2011: 190).

In this way, Pethő believes there are two ways to see the ending of the film. On one hand it can be read as an allegory of the intent of Pygmalion's camera, to capture permanently that which is by its nature fleeting. This seems to provide a neat metaphor for the mediality of film itself, and shows its attempts to overcome death by mechanical reproduction as a kind of 'specular necrophilia' that is shared by painting and cinema. Another way to see the use of painting in *Vertigo*, however, is as part of a cacophony of images that ultimately signify nothing. Images have become in some ways their own referent in this film, which seems to reflect on the artificial nature of it all (painting and cinema), given that the image is 'emptied' of its original meaning by removing the expected referent. It is this form of self-reflection that Pethő argues goes far beyond the scope of traditional narrative and puts Hitchcock in a position where we can consider his work very much a part of 'modern art' (Pethő, 2011: 191).

Similar thematic concerns emerge when one looks at another consideration of still-life imagery, painted and photographic, in Tina Kendall's (2010) analysis of *Ratcatcher*. Here Kendall recognises a distinct intent on the part of director Lynne Ramsay to arrest movement in key moments to create tableaux vivant that 'self-consciously mimic the look of paintings and photographs' (Kendall, 2010: 189). Once again there is a suggestion here that the link between these medial forms is used as an attempt to highlight the desire of the camera to freeze time or to preserve that which it captures forever, permanently in stasis. This linkage between forms emphasises both a shared goal and a fundamental distinction due to

60

the fact that the passage of time is a necessary component of the moving image, but not the still.

Kendall highlights particular examples such as a shot of Ryan's mother (Jackie Quinn) that is notably still and held for an unusually long time. In addition to the muted ambient sound, this seems to suggest a 'snapshot' that is edited together with another particularly static shot of Ryan's (Thomas McTaggart) dead body in the canal, which also shares the quality of unusually long duration and muted sound. Kendall suggests that this evocation of the still, photographic image confers a particular intensity to that medium over and above that which traditional motion pictures are capable of. After this point there are numerous moments in which characters are framed statically. These shots could be read as thematically or narratively dictated allusions to the trauma at the heart of the story, and how that has a massively disruptive effect on the characters, altering even their sense of temporality and giving everyone (including the audience) a protracted amount of time in which to reflect on the sadness of the situation.[18] Kendall suggests that these scenes also reflect James' (William Eadie) desire to take shelter in a single, permanent and unchanging moment in time. Instances in which his intimacy with Margaret-Ann (Leanne Mullen), or in which his cradling of his sister near the end of the film, are viewed as static tableaux essentially demonstrate James' desire to freeze time in narrative terms, but this desire is communicated to the audience in an intermedial way. As Kendall puts it: 'The film's layering of photographic and cinematic media, with their different material supports and their

distinctive relationships to time, frames James' impossible desire to inhabit the atemporal space of the photograph' (Kendall, 2010: 194).

In addition to this, Kendall's analysis also reinforces the link described earlier between still imagery (photography specifically in this case) and death, in the sense that Vivian Sobchak conceives the photograph as something more related to loss and recording what has passed. This stands opposed to cinema as a representation of coming into being and of 'the accumulation — not the loss — of experience' (Sobchak, 1994: 94). This sets up an arguably oversimplified opposition between the photograph as the object of death and cinema as that of life, and this is a tension Kendall argues is explored in *Ratcatcher*'s closing sequence.

When the film cuts between images of James falling into the canal and drowning, and alternately James in the so-called 'field of dreams' seen earlier in the film when he escapes to the country and explores an unfinished house, there is seemingly a 'hesitation between death and life' (Kendall, 2010: 195). This distinction is emphasised by the collision of the cinematic and the photographic representation of time, with the field of dreams shown in freeze-frame in its final appearance, while the images of James drowning remain in motion. Kendall asserts that this oscillation creates a space and time between film and photography, literally an intermedial space, in which the traditional view of cinema's triumphant superiority over the still image is undermined. Rather than trumpet cinema's ability to 'bring to life' the still images of painting and photography, as with the emphasis on film's capacity for movement in *The Age of Innocence*, it seems that the ending of *Ratcatcher* foregrounds the unique ability of the still image to create a

'liminal space between life and death', and capture or fix the essence of a moment. In Kendall's words, in cinema 'things can be held, but not held permanently in place. *Ratcatcher* reveals this to be the very essence of cinema, even as it foregrounds the still life that both makes possible and mitigates the mutability of cinematic things' (Kendall, 2010: 196).

Lars Nowak identifies *The Elephant Man* (David Lynch, 1980) as another film that is preoccupied with film's relationship to photography. Not only do photographs and the process of photography feature prominently in the film's diegesis, but the film's visual style also, according to Nowak, does much to mimic the type of early photography the story portrays in terms of a particular focus on the face and a strong contrast between tones of black and white.

Specifically, once again, it is portraiture that is represented throughout, with the photograph of Merrick's mother (Phoebe Nicholls) occupying a central role in the plot. Nowak notes this as a particularly interesting departure from the established fact of Merrick's (John Hurt) life as it was a *painting* of his mother that he was in possession of during his time in hospital. Nowak recognises Merrick's attachment to the photograph as a fetishisation, applying the commonalities outlined by Christian Metz (1985). According to Metz, the photograph and the fetish share 'privacy, silence, immobility, and timelessness, a suitability for being touched, an immediate but definitive constitution, and ambiguity between turning away and remembering, and a peculiar capability of suggesting the presence of an absent object' (Nowak, 2012: 77).

That Merrick gradually learns throughout the film how to use photographs in a more socially acceptable or 'normal' way, away from the private fetishisation of the image, is something that parallels his establishment as a member of society. Nowak highlights that in the film Merrick's existence is the result of an implied animal rape, meaning that he has no human father in a patriarchal society in which status is conferred paternally. The implication here is that as Merrick begins to collect and display photographs, not just of friends and family but also of celebrities and members of high society (a common practice in the latter 19th Century), he is reintegrating into human society and in some way restoring (or attempting to restore) his human genealogy.

This reading confers a huge significance to the medium of photography, but there is an absence that Nowak suggests is critical to the understanding of what the film says in regard to the relationship between film and photography; that of the protagonist himself. Merrick is excluded from the photographs that surround him, something that is at odds with the historical facts. According to Nowak, not only were photographic portraits available to every stratum of the population not long after the medium was invented in the early nineteenth century, but those involved in the freak shows particularly were regularly photographed. Many of these people became celebrities and their portraits would be displayed in the homes of those who collected pictures. They were not necessarily portrayed as freaks or even as disabled in these circumstances, but given fictitious names and back stories. There is also evidence that Merrick specifically was captured

in photographs numerous times, some of which were attempts to normalise him by presenting him in regular clothes.

Nowak asserts that Merrick's absence from photographs in the film is a considered action highlighting the difference in the fundamental capabilities of the photographic and film media. This assertion relies on the notion that the film subscribes to the notion that portraiture should depict the inner self as much as the outer surface.[19] The face is generally regarded as the most expressive body part, and therefore the part through which the 'inner self' or 'soul' could be accessed most successfully in portraiture, but this is also something Merrick does not have. His head is 'incapable of expressing Merrick's interior' (Nowak, 2012: 69) and so is hidden behind a veil and not featured in any photographs. Lynch's film by comparison *does* depict Merrick, despite holding this depiction back for the first quarter of the narrative. Not only is he depicted, but at moments he demonstrates expression, such as when he looks around the theatre or looks at the picture of a boy sleeping on his back before he attempts to do the same. In these moments Nowak asserts that Merrick is expressing his 'inner self' or certainly his feelings and emotions by miming and interacting with other characters, in a way that can only be shown in a moving image.

> Thus, Lynch seems to exclude Merrick from the objects of photography in order to celebrate his inclusion in his own film all the more triumphantly. Film, not photography, *The Elephant Man* suggests, is the medium that is capable of representing the monster as a human subject (Nowak, 2012: 70).

Photography does not just inhabit the diegesis of the movie however. This narrative usage of the medium is supported by a distinct formal evocation of photography too, which is particularly evident at the start of the film with

the photographs of Merrick's mother. Nowak points out that while the first two shots are static and clearly of photographs, some slight movement in the third invites the viewer to wonder whether it is film or photography being observed. Once the fourth shot shows the elephant parade it has become clear that this is film because it is in motion, but the depiction of the parade is, according to Nowak, even more relevant to the specificity of the film medium because the procession of the elephants across the screen resembles the movement of film frames that produce the illusion of motion. This point is emphasised further when the film of the elephants is paused and superimposed over the image of Merrick's mother, resulting in the image being split in half, with one half on one elephant and one on another. Not only does this freeze frame evoke the sense of photography over film due to the frequent use of the technique as a shorthand for a photograph being taken in many films, but the use of it to split the mother's face suggests a deconstruction of the movement into its constituents, namely a sequence of distinct photographic images.[20]

That this is an attempt to highlight the medial gap between the film and photography is supported, in Nowak's view, by the fact that this superimposed face is not just posing for a photograph in the way the first two shots were, but rather it is a viewing subject. She is looking at the herd of elephants, and as this is superimposed over her image, we are confronted with a situation in which we see the subject and object of the gaze simultaneously, a technique known as 'interface'. This is a variant of the shot-reverse-shot in classical narrative cinema allowing the audience to follow an interaction between characters. This 'interface' is really only

comprehensible to those familiar with the usage of the shot-reverse-shot technique, which is used extensively in cinema but is almost impossible to recreate in photography (the one exception being serial photography). This is followed by a more recognisable shot-countershot sequence switching from the elephants to the mother in apparent slow-motion, but Nowak notes that this is not traditional slow-motion as it is constructed from a dissolve of sequential static frames. This technique is found in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), which is a film that demonstrates a significant amount of intermediality with photography, and has been dubbed a 'cinématogramme' by Philippe Dubois (2002: 8). Such technique particularly highlights the discontinuous nature of the individual photographic images used and arranged in sequence to reproduce the illusion of movement in film, and in this way the film is again highlighting the 'medial gap' between photography and film.

Nowak argues that when we return to Merrick's mother later in the film and hear her speak, this discontinuous photographic imagery has evolved into fluid motion combined with co-ordinated and articulate speech. Photography is no longer being evoked because the movement is smooth and continuous, and perhaps even more importantly the introduction of speech is something that specifically differentiates film modally from photography. Film has emerged from photography in a literal sense within the confines of this piece, reinforcing the previously described intimation of the diegesis that film is the superior form for representation of the 'reality' of Merrick's life and experience. Nowak argues that because this sequence is Merrick's death, the film has paralleled his life with the evolution from

photography to film, with film coincidentally being invented in the years

immediately following Merrick's actual death in 1890:

> Just as Merrick is not his parents' legitimate offspring but a monstrous
> deviation, film is also not photography's legitimate descendent but a
> monstrous one. *The Elephant Man*'s assertion that only film is capable
> of giving an adequate representation of the monster is precisely
> founded in this monstrous descent of the cinematic medium (Nowak,
> 2012: 73).

It is not simply in representational authenticity that film demonstrates

superiority over photography in *The Elephant Man*, however, as Nowak

suggests the film also confers particular immediacy to the medium by

suggesting its immateriality. Throughout the film the photographs of

Merrick's mother shift from being physical objects with clear limitations

and locations within the frame and the narrative, to becoming 'de-

materialised' in such a way as to transcend the 'corporeal and medial

materiality' (Nowak, 2012: 75). Her picture at the opening of the film is

surrounded by a picture frame, ensuring its materiality and status as 'object'

despite the fact that this border is itself sourrounded by complete darkness

(making the object impossible to orient in spatial terms) and the movement

of the camera. The movement of the picture into more immediate status is

partially realised later in the film when Merrick speaks of his mother's

beauty. The photograph shown to illustrate this fills the entire screen so that

its own borders disappear. In this instance the image seems to break free

from its spatial limitations, an effect enhanced by a short pan of the film

camera across the picture, but it remains static and bound narratively to its

existence as a picture Merrick is describing. For this reason the image

cannot seem as immediate as the film footage surrounding it. In the end,

during Merrick's post-mortem vision of his mother, the borders of the image are not just pushed outside the film frame but are removed within the frame. Combined with the superimposition over space, and importantly the movement and sound of the image, this removes the limitation and materiality of the image so that it appears immediate.

Nowak concludes that cinema is positioned as superior to photography in this film because it can both represent Merrick more completely as a human and because it seems to possess an immediacy unattainable through photography. This combination of narrative and formal use of the medium of photography seems to make this analysis of *The Elephant Man* an ideal mobilisation of the theory of intermediality outlined previously in this chapter, so it is interesting that the word intermediality itself is not used at any point in Nowak's piece. This is perhaps a fitting example of how intermedial analysis has been to an extent overlooked even when the relationships between media have been closely explored.

While this exploration of existing intermedial film analyses has been necessarily brief, it nevertheless provides a precedent in terms of the work that will be carried out in the following chapters. The analyses outlined above clearly demonstrate that intermediality can be a valuable tool with which to approach film texts and can help elucidate a great amount of textual detail in the context of film's own relationship with other arts and media. In these instances, one can note a particular ability for intermediality to be deployed in a manner that either questions or reinforces film's claim to authenticity as the primary medium of communicating the 'truth' of a narrative.

Interestingly, there is a relatively even split between these in regard to these two opposing standpoints. The work of Peucker, Pethő and Nowak highlights intermediality as being in the service of valorising the film form as superior to the media it interacts with. Whether championing the dynamism of movement over the static image, the ability to add a temporal dimension (and therefore a narrative) to the visual arts, or highlighting the more 'complete' representational potential of the form, intermediality in film has apparently tended to 'contain' other arts and media in order to emphasise its own strengths. Nevertheless, both Tina Kendall's reading of *Ratcatcher* and Eckart Voigts-Virchow's analysis of *A Cock and Bull Story* provide sufficient evidence that the evocation of other media in similarly intermedial ways can serve the opposite purpose. These instances of intermediality seem to encourage audiences to question film's dominance by allowing the contacted medium to escape that 'containment' and instead 'contaminate' the system in which it exists. In that situation film's claim to be the medium of 'truth' can also be questioned as intermedial techniques elevate the contacted medium to a similar representational level to that of the contacting medium of film, allowing the different limitations and affordances of the forms to be freely explored and compared.

These examples also suggest that one might expect intermediality to occur more frequently in films deemed to be in some way outside the mainstream. While *The Age of Innocence* and *Rebecca* are literary adaptations and certainly do not belong to a tradition of experimental or avant-garde film, they are the products of filmmakers that exist somewhat outside the perceived homogeny of Hollywood formulae. Martin Scorsese

built his reputation within the short-lived burst of creativity within the major studios known as 'New Hollywood' with *Taxi Driver* (1976), a fiercely alternative response to Hollywood's tendency towards unambiguous morality in its protagonists (King, 2002: 32–33).[21] Alfred Hitchcock is of course one of Hollywood's most celebrated filmmakers, but his status as one of the great 'auteurs' is based on a perception that he was able to express a unique vision, even from within the Hollywood system. It should also be noted that *Rebecca* was released by United Artists, which was at the time not a part of the 'Big Five' Hollywood studios, and so is analogous with the modern 'independent' distributors considered in this thesis.

It is considerably easier to recognise David Lynch as 'alternative', being a filmmaker intimately associated with surreal and challenging but celebrated content like *Eraserhead* (1977), *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Inland Empire* (2006). *Ratcatcher* likewise is an accurate representation of the striking, minimalist visual and narrative style employed by Lynne Ramsay in films like *Morvern Callar* (2002) and *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011). Similarly *A Cock and Bull Story* certainly warrants a position firmly outside the mainstream due to its status as a metadaptation that keeps viewers unsure of the status of the film as fact or fiction throughout. It is important to note, however, as stated at the outset, that this selection of works is neither comprehensive nor necessarily representative of the entire body of work on intermediality. Angela Dalle Vacche (1996: 107–134) recognises intermediality in Jean Luc Godard's *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), while Pethő herself notes intermedial contact in much of the famous auteur's other work, as well as the films of Agnès Varda and Jim Jarmusch's *The Limits of*

Control (2009). Combined with Yvonne Spielmann's analysis of Peter Greenaway mentioned earlier, one can see this collection of work as leaning significantly towards the presence of intermediality primarily, although not exclusively, outside of Hollywood's particular brand of mainstream entertainment film. This would also further support the decision to apply the notion of intermediality to content within the American independent space, but these concepts of 'mainstream' and 'alternative', as well as 'independent' remain poorly-defined at this point. Before moving on to the actual analyses of film texts, it must be clearly established exactly how American independent cinema has been conceptualised and mobilised in academic work to-date, and this is the central concern of the next chapter.

Notes

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[1] Coleridge's original use of the term was in the passage: 'Narrative allegory is distinguished from mythology as reality is from symbol: it is, in short, the proper intermedium between person and personification' (Sumich, 2007: 5). Sumich identifies this as a conceptual fusion that Higgins would go on to claim he articulates fully in the 1960s, but in fact it seems the term has far wider and less easily definable parameters touching on not just poetry and the artistic media but also physical sciences like chemistry.

[2] André Bazin's essay 'Painting and Cinema' (1967) identified the difference between the picture frame and the film frame, claiming that the frame of a painting functions, much like footlights at the theatre, to emphasise the separation of that within the frame from the natural world. The baroque decorative qualities of frames contribute to this 'centripetal' inward orientation that focuses attention entirely within the space of the canvas. The cinema screen on the other hand is not, in fact, a frame, according to Bazin. Rather, the screen presents a portion of a reality we are encouraged to imagine outside of the screen space, making the film image 'centrifugal' in nature; pushing the viewer's attention outward beyond the frame. These definitions are tidy but not comprehensive, and the argument is a media-specific one, the problems with which will be explored later in this chapter.

[3] Wolf's notion of metareference and its relevance to intermediality will be discussed later in this section in regard to his (2009) definition of the term, but in his (2011) book *The Metareferential Turn in Contemporary Arts and Media* he states that 'metaization has increased in a disproportionate and therefore significant quantity' (Wolf, 2011: 7) particularly since the turn of the millennium, with metanarrative aspects now present in popular film as well as in those films generally considered more 'art cinema'.

4 Marie-Laure Ryan (2006: 15–18) broadly outlines the different sides of the argument for what role a medium plays and what functions should define it. This spans the spectrum from radical media relativism and media essentialism that rejects any possibility of the same content existing in two different media, to the transmissive definition that sees media as merely conduits that affect the content in no significant way whatsoever. Her particular focus on what impact this argument has on the use of narrative in different media perhaps unsurprisingly results in the conclusion that the most accurate and most useful medial definition lies somewhere between these extremes.

5 Charles Sanders Peirce developed the trichotomy to describe the ways in which signs relate to their objects. Put simply, an icon resembles or imitates that which it refers to and can be an image, a diagram or a metaphor. An index is linked to the object in a real sense such as the symptom of a disease, and a symbol is linked to the object solely by interpretation such as a cultural expectation or 'norm'. See Hartshorne & Weiss *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce Volume II, Elements of Logic* (1960).

6 Bolter and Grusin (2000: 186) describe how the repeated remediating of film content on not just television but digitial media has altered perception of what a traditional film can be; something that is also considered in a broader sociological context by Mikko Lehtonen (2001).

7 Wolf (2011b: 5) points out that a focus on definition (brought up by the recent trend of intermediality) presents a problem in literary studies (and also in any field intermediality is being studied within) because wherever the concept exists it has tended to become the primary object of focus and analysis, drawing attention away somewhat from analysing the textual artifacts themselves.

8 Rajewsky refers to the types of intermediality outlined by Schröter (some years later) as among those that have inflated the term beyond practical use, pointing out that the word has been appended with 'such epithets as transformational, discursive, synthetic, formal, transmedial, ontological or genealogical' (Rajewsky, 2005: 44).

9 This hybrid nature has led to a perception of film as one of the most inclusive media. It inherits the merits of those forms that comprise it; 'the visuals of photography and painting, the movement of dance, the decor of architecture, and the performance of theatre' (Stam, 2000: 61).

10 Mikko Lehtonen's 'On No Man's Land: Theses on Intermediality' (2001) is a good example of this latter sociologically-focused study, as well as a diachronic approach to the subject. Lehtonen highlights that multimodality expands and intensifies with the increased use of mediating technologies, making late modern culture increasingly intermedial.

11 This is not an observation unique to Rajewsky. Andrew Shail's (2010) exploration of intermedial studies identifies no fewer than twelve distinct although not necessarily mutually exclusive approaches to the term (Shail, 2010: 7).

12 Eckart Voigts-Virchow employs a colourful analogy: 'The intermediality pub is a franchise of Julia Kristeva's intertextuality business' (Voigts-Virchow, 2009: 138).

13 Pethő describes Bordwell as typical of the more 'scientific' or 'piecemeal' film analysis practiced in the mainstream film theorising of English-language studies (particularly in the US). This is essentially close textual analysis in which particular scenes or techniques are privileged over broader considerations of overall thematic or symbolic concerns, although the latter aspects must not be ignored, particularly in instances of self-reflection that are in keeping with metareferential aspects of narrative (Pethő, 2011: 23).

[14] Harold Bloom (1997) established the notion of the 'anxiety of influence' as the idea that the vast majority of all artworks were simply a strong misreading of everything that had come before them. This is a similar notion to that of intertextuality (which is also based on literature) but Robert Stam (2005: 5) applied the term to film in Freudian terms, seeing literature and film in an Oedipal situation with the latter striving to usurp and kill the former.

[15] The original text repeatedly draws attention to itself as a collection of writings rather than making an attempt to immerse the reader in a fictional world. The book asks readers to draw on some blank pages, skip certain paragraphs, to read others more than once, and to shut the door of the room they are in during some parts to heighten the intimacy of the moment. All of this creates a level of interactivity that relies completely on the material mediality of the book.

[16] Paul Dawson (2009) demonstrates just what a key feature of literature the omniscient narrator is, even as he labels it an archaic nineteenth century device, because of its sheer ubiquity. A debate exists about its value in literary criticism, but that debate is only there because 'omniscient narration has reached a critical mass in contemporary fiction' (Dawson, 2009: 144). From the other side, Jon Wiener (2007: 73–76) argues that in the film medium, not even nonfiction necessarily requires omniscient narration thanks to its audiovisual quality, and uses *Atomic Cafe* (Jayne Loader, 1982) as an example of how a documentary can function without narration.

[17] Murnau was an art historian and would take much of his inspiration from painting. The sailboat image in *Nosferatu* is from Caspar David Friedrich, and this goes some way to further complicating any particular allusion to or quoatation of Murnau's work because it was itself concerned with 'the tension between the static images of painting and film's capacity for animating those images' (Peucker, 2007: 24).

[18] This is the view put forward by Emma Wilson in her (2003: 108–122) consideration of *Ratcatcher*, a view that Kendall acknowledges in her piece. Wilson attributes the almost-static imagery following Ryan's death to an evocation of the sense of 'numbness' following such a trauma, placing the technique very squarely in service of the narrative drive. In this reading the protracted shots are not tableaux vivant and are not mimicking another medium.

[19] This was originally said to be the aim of painted portraiture but was also applied to photographic portraiture. In the nineteenth century such work included that of Nadar and Disderi (Prinet and Dilasser, 1966). In that same book Prinet and Dilasser note that Barthes has said that a photographic portrait must possess 'the air [...] which induces from body to soul' (Prinet and Dilasser, 1966: 109).

[20] Novak specifically cites Robert Sidomak's *Menschen am Sonntag* (1959) but there are numerous examples from both before and after the release of *The Elephant Man*.

[21] 'New Hollywood' or 'the Hollywood Renaissance' is described by King, among others, as a time from approximately the late 1960s to the late 1970s in which a number of filmmakers sought to appeal to younger audiences with 'films that go beyond the confines of conventional studio fare in terms of their content and style and their existence as products of a purely commercial or corporate system' (King, 2002: 13).

Chapter 3

American Independent Cinema

Detailing how American independent cinema is defined and conceived as a term is a more challenging task than might be immediately apparent. The temptation, of course, is to locate the term entirely in an economic or industrial context, including films made without the money of the major studios and excluding those that enjoy such resources. Not only does this ignore a raft of factors spanning narrative, formal features and audience viewing strategies, but it is also extremely challenging to do with any degree of precision or certainty. The complex and shifting nature of relationships between large and small studios, distributors, conglomerated corporate parents and self-funded artists throughout the existence of commercial American cinema makes such black-and-white distinctions near-impossible, particularly in the period from the mid-1980s to the present day. Such narrow parameters of independence also prove ultimately unproductive from the perspective of understanding what sets the independent sector apart from the mainstream. If all independent cinema did was attempt to mimic Hollywood for a fraction of the cost it would look considerably different than it does.

The work in the following chapters concerns intermediality and, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, such a focus necessitates a primary emphasis on narrative and formal content of particular texts. We will come to this aspect of how American independent cinema can be defined as alternative shortly, but the industrial context must be addressed

first because it constitutes much of how American independent cinema has been conceived as such, and located historically as much as aesthetically / artistically over the last few decades. The American independent film landscape as it exists today has been built on an infrastructure involving differing levels of integration between independent filmmakers and the major studios, with independent distributors and studio speciality divisions in-between. Industrial location may not be the sole defining factor of independence, but it remains a relevant factor in how much a film text may offer an 'alternative' experience. In the following chapters it also serves as an effective way of distinguishing how intermediality is deployed in different ways dependent upon the level of investment from studios and the perceived popularity or effectiveness of such content among particular audiences.

A number of in-depth studies of American independent cinema focus on the period post-1980 (King, 2005; Newman, 2011; Tzioumakis, 2012) driven largely by the establishment of Miramax (started in 1979) and United Artists Classics as a convenient starting point. This marks the beginning of an expansion of the industrial infrastructure supporting the production and distribution of independent American feature films that would continue to develop throughout the 1980s. The huge box office success of *sex, lies and videotape* in 1989 was made possible by this decade of growth and change (particularly the business and marketing practices of Miramax), and this is sometimes taken as an alternative starting point (by King and Newman) of what has been labelled the 'Sundance-Miramax' era. As Jim Hillier describes it, there is an 'emergence of a recognisably different and new

American independent cinema during the second half of the 1980s and into the 1990s' (Hillier, 2001: xv), although the notion of an independent cinema of the United States is far older, going back to filmmakers working outside of the big studios of the 1900s (Edison, Biograph and Vitagraph). At that time independent filmmakers had to fight against the legal actions of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), and following that the vertical integration of the studio system.[1] The five majors dominated this system: Paramount Pictures, Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM), Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Brothers and RKO, but even at this point there was significant crossover between production 'inside' and 'outside' the studios.[2] From the 1950s onwards (after the Paramount decree in 1948), the Hollywood majors carried out very little filmmaking of their own in-house, preferring to contract out the actual production to various independent studio entities that would receive either the direct financial backing of the studio or, more commonly, deals guaranteeing a certain level of distribution nationally and internationally allowing them to generate their own funding (King, 2005: 5–9; Tzioumakis, 2006: 5). For this reason, the extent to which these companies can be considered independent is of course open to debate, and varies from case to case.[3]

The development of the independent distributors and the increasing influence of the festival circuit during the 1980s through the 1990s and 2000s are two key factors in the thriving of American independent film in recent years, as well as the eventual involvement of the Hollywood majors and their speciality arms. The late 1970s and 1980s saw the appearance of not just indie giant Miramax, but also small independent film distributors

Samuel Goldwyn, Castle Hill, Island/Alive, Cinecom and First Run Features. Even television broadcaster PBS entered the market in 1979 through its 'American Playhouse' series funding independent films and accepting repayment in the form of the rights to show the film first on TV. Not only did this guarantee money up-front but it also made sure the film would find an audience, so the involvement of television was a mutually beneficial arrangement (King, 2005: 20).

The growth of the festival scene can be seen to start in around the same period. While the San Francisco International Festival (started in 1957) and the New York Film Festival (started in 1962) were important, and reflected the art cinema content of the time, it is the Sundance film festival that has come to dominate discussions of American independence. It began as the US film festival in 1978 and had an initial focus on 'small regional films', but it struggled to get national attention and ended up in debt. The festival was purchased by the Sundance Institute in 1984, which significantly raised its profile and strong ties with major Hollywood players were subsequently forged. By the mid 1990s Sundance had become a fiercely competitive marketplace for productions seeking pickups, and entrance to the festival remains a primary concern of many independent filmmakers (King, 2005: 37–38).[4]

The growth of the home video format in the 1980s also provided a boost for film production generally as it became another market in which films could make returns outside of an initial theatrical run, and the Reagan administration made more capital available for production of film through a variety of initiatives, making companies more likely to fund 'riskier'

projects. The maturing 'baby boom' generation craved an alternative kind of film, and combined with Hollywood returning to a blockbuster-focused hit-centric model of putting more money into fewer films, there were gaps to be filled in cinemas. All of this contributed to a thriving independent scene in the 1980s (King, 2005: 8).

Finally, the direct involvement of the major studios became a significant factor in 1980 with the formation of United Artists Classics. This was very quickly followed by the establishment of Twentieth Century Fox International Classics, Universal Classics and Triumph Films (Columbia's speciality division) all in 1982. These divisions were primarily a way of capitalising on the relative popularity, albeit within a niche audience, of art-house and foreign-language imports, which made up the vast majority of the releases from these divisions. This meant that despite clearly existing in the independent sector in terms of audience demographic and reception, very few American independent films, defined purely in production terms, were released.[5] All of these classics arms had collapsed by the end of the 1980s, but in that short time they had set a precedent for the involvement of the major studios in independent film going forward.[6]

Indeed, the broad and booming independent scene described above was short lived. With overproduction, the major studios recovering cinema-space, home video distribution leaning towards stocking more copies of studio blockbusters than lower-profile independents, and eventually the stock market crash of 1987, only Miramax and New Line remained and thus dominated the sector.[7] Around the time of the huge financial success of Miramax's *sex, lies and videotape* in 1989 the majors' interest in the

independent sector was reignited, with the 1990s seeing the introduction of Sony Pictures Classics and Fox Searchlight, and Focus Features (Universal's speciality division) appearing a little later in 2002. All of these continue to serve as their studio's respective speciality arms to this day, and have been accompanied for most of that time by Paramount Classics / Vantage, Warner Independent Pictures and Picturehouse, all of which closed in 2008.

Much has been made of Miramax's contribution to the changing face of not just American independent film but the film industry as a whole in these two decades. Alisa Perren's (2012) in-depth analysis of Miramax sounds a note of caution about overstating this, pointing out that for all the cultural impact the Weinsteins' independent distributor had, it remained throughout a niche company producing niche products, few of which came close to matching the broad appeal or the financial revenue generated by the mainstream films of the majors like Disney, who would become Miramax's parent company in 1993 (Perren, 2012: 5–6). However, it is important to recognise that Miramax's promotion and marketing tactics were a significant factor in the breakthrough of a large number of 'quality' independent films to a broader audience, and as such were at least partially responsible for the establishment of American 'indie' cinema as Hollywood's closest significant 'other'. By taking the sensationalist exploitation marketing strategies of focusing on sex, drugs and violence (like AIP had done with its exploitation strategies in the 1960s), and applying it to 'quality' American and European films, Miramax attracted parts of a mainstream audience that would never have been available to

them otherwise (Perren, 2012: 23). This led to significant profits and therefore buying power at festivals, establishing Miramax as a dominant force in independent film, but it also proved independent film could make money, tempting the major studios into the sector and creating the hybrid nature of 'indie' film as it is today.

1989 was a significant year not just because of *sex, lies and videotape*. *Scandal* (Michael Caton-Jones) and *My Left Foot* (Jim Sheridan) were also released by Miramax, as well as significant debuts like Gus Van Sant and Kenneth Brannagh with *Drugstore Cowboy* and *Henry V* respectively. Hollywood also underwent industrial changes on an enormous scale in this year as a result of a wave of corporate mergers. While News Corp. had purchased Twentieth Century Fox earlier in the 1980s, 1989 saw the formation of 'the biggest corporate alliance in U.S. history at the time' (Schatz, 2013: 131) when Time Inc and Warner Communications merged. This led almost immediately to Sony's acquisition of Columbia Pictures and TriStar, and Matsushita (a significant corporate rival of Sony) purchasing MCA/Universal the following year. Given that Paramount had been under corporate ownership since being bought by the Gulf & Western Industries Corporation in 1966 (later becoming known simply as Paramount Communications), this now meant that the entirety of the Hollywood major film studios were subsidiaries of corporate parents spanning multiple markets and media interests.

Given that Miramax was purchased by Disney in 1993 and New Line was bought by Turner Broadcasting System in 1994 (subsequently acquired by Time Warner), the conglomerated Hollywood majors have

dominated the 'independent' film sector throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Independent distributors remained, but (with the exception of Lionsgate) have enjoyed limited commercial success in comparison to Miramax, New Line and the studio speciality divisions. This has resulted in the complication of the term 'independent' to such an extent that the use of the term 'indie' is now common as an alternative. Tzioumakis (2012) identifies the use of this term from the early 1990s as significant, and a clearly identifiable shift away from what independent cinema was in the 1980s. According to Tzioumakis 'indie' identifies 'a qualitative difference from a less commercially oriented type of independent filmmaking that characterised a considerable part of the sector in the 1980s' (Tzioumakis, 2012: 29). The subsequent evolution of indie into a system that puts a greater emphasis on production than pickups has led to the introduction of the term 'Indiewood' due to these industrial practices and emphasis on the 'crossover hit' seeming to mirror the practices of the Hollywood majors.[8]

Tzioumakis clearly sees these three terms as historically-located, asserting that independence refers to the films of the 1980s, and prior, within the industrially-located independent distributors and studio speciality divisions. Indie is the term used to describe the situation in the first half of the 1990s in which the independent scene enjoyed renewed popularity, the studio divisions reappeared alongside a number of small-scale distributors, and the crossover hit became an important concern. Indiewood then, would be a term reserved for those films after the mid-1990s that were produced *and* distributed by either a studio speciality division or an extremely well-capitalised independent distributor like Lionsgate, rather than being

produced independently and picked up at a festival. The problem with defining these terms temporally, however, is that one could argue it creates an assumption that independent film has simply become more like the product offered by mainstream Hollywood over time. The situation is considerably more complex than that. As Tzioumakis rightly states: 'American indie cinema included a heterogeneity of voices, narratives, styles, ideas and budgets loosely grouped under the label indie' (Tzioumakis, 2012: 35), representing everything from the more challenging or avant-garde films reminiscent of the independent scene of the 1960s and 1970s, through to films that are almost indistinguishable from the Hollywood mainstream.

It is perhaps more useful to consider these labels in other terms than just historical. Geoff King's (2009) consideration of the sector considers this three-way distinction to be contested by 'art' (rather than independent), 'indie' and 'Indiewood'. These terms are defined largely by content, based on the assumed amount of investment required on the part of the viewer, and 'indicating, in general, progressively wider potential audience constituencies' (King, 2009: 21). King goes on to identify films he considers Indiewood across the industrial spectrum, including the Hollywood studio productions *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) and *Three Kings* (David O. Russell, 1999).

The preceding history, while necessarily brief, has sufficiently outlined the difficulties in assigning films to a regime of 'independence' in purely industrial or historical terms, although both remain important factors. The following chapters will use this industrial context to order the

discussion as it remains the most concrete, demonstrable distinction between products within and without the independent sector, but such considerations cannot be used to exclude films that would otherwise be included on the basis of their content. In that case it must be established what is meant by an 'indie' film in textual terms.

It should be noted that there has been a discernible shift towards defining independent cinema in terms of content rather than just industrial context in the time since the early 1980s. When Janet Staiger wrote on how one might conceptualise independent film in 1985, only one of her five structural criteria was related to the actual content of film texts. Her criteria were 'the relations in its work process, its means of production, the financing of its films, its conception of quality films, and its system of consumption.' (Staiger, 1985: 317). Interestingly though, writing in 2013, Staiger chooses to focus on this one criterion (the conception of quality films) as a key distinguishing factor from the mainstream (Staiger, 2013: 21). Similarly, both Geoff King (2005) and Michael Z. Newman (2011) afford at least as much space in their in-depth studies of American independent cinema to content as they do industrial context. They both outline the accepted difference of independent film from the mainstream in terms of narrative and form, but are faced with the initial potential stumbling block of defining what is meant by 'mainstream'. Independent cinema has been described as 'alternative' but what is it presented as 'other' than? King turns to David Bordwell, whose work on classical Hollywood form and narrative provides a fairly comprehensive account of what signifies, and is expected from, a mainstream narrative feature film.

In narrative terms, classical Hollywood narrative involves goal-oriented protagonists, whose desires drive the narrative, a clearly marked beginning, middle and end through which narrative progresses in a linear fashion, generally incorporating a primary plot (a mission or quest defining genre) and a secondary plot (usually a heterosexual romance). The ending usually provides closure in the sense that whatever equilibrium has been disturbed at the beginning is either restored, or a new equilibrium established, giving a satisfying sense of completion.

How that narrative is told is also a defining aspect of mainstream film, in the sense that it is conventional for a 100-minute film to represent events spanning days, weeks, months or even years. What is chosen for inclusion in the 100 minutes is referred to as the 'syuzhet', acting as a highlight reel of sorts, from which the viewer is expected to get a sense of the 'fabula' (the actual entirety of the narrative we are not expressly shown).[9] Of how these are established King writes:

> The classical variety tends to be *omniscient*, displaying a wide range of knowledge about the narrative situation. It tends to be highly *communicative*, giving rather than withholding relevant information. It also tends to be *unselfconscious*, not laying bare the process of narrative address to the audience (King, 2005: 62).

While this is not a strict formula for the construction of mainstream narrative, it provides a sense of general trends discernible in a majority of mainstream feature films. Parts of this model are altered or differently weighted depending upon the constraints of genre for example, but all are considered in terms of their divergence from this central framework.

Bordwell (2006) sounds a note of caution about applying this model rigidly to discussions of classical and what has become known as

'postclassical' Hollywood cinema. It is impossible to categorise all of Hollywood's output as that which simply reproduces the same formula because of the enormous range of titles released from the major distributors. Bordwell specifically notes that much of what a number of scholars and audiences might think of as new or 'different' aspects of cinema after 1960 is actually part of classical tradition that is not exclusively constituted of films matching King's description above. Specifically, 'The studio tradition has room for citation, reflexivity, pastiche, parody, and all those tactics that have been considered recent inventions' (Bordwell, 2006: 10). These notions are not unique to a more modern 'postclassical' Hollywood, nor to films seeking to provide an 'alternative' experience, according to Bordwell, but features present in many films from the studio era. He cites The Marx Brothers films and the road movies featuring Bing Crosby and Bob Hope as being full of allusions to other films and awareness of their own artificiality. The 'playful knowingness' of the cultural referencing in *Back To The Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985) and the explicit celebration of cinematic tropes in *Last Action Hero* (John McTiernan, 1993) is a continuation of a philosophy evident in films like *Boy Meets Girl* (Lloyd Bacon, 1938) and *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly, 1952).

Nevertheless, the classical model of Hollywood cinematic content remains a powerful and influential summary of what audiences have come to expect from films that constitute the 'mainstream'. Essentially, independent cinema is expected to subvert the expectations of this model to a greater extent than studio films. Hollywood's 'judicious balance of continuity and innovation' (Bordwell, 2006: 27) should, theoretically, be

86

pushed further towards innovation within the independent space and in films that seek to present an 'alternative' to the mainstream. This can take many forms such as non-linear narrative, ambiguous or aimless characters, or taking steps to in some other way 'deny, block, delay or complicate the anticipated development of narrative, to reduce clarity or resolution and in some cases to increase narrative self-consciousness' (King, 2005: 63).

One example of how an independent film might do this is to have the narrative unfold motivated more by verisimilitude or 'realism' than by the expectation of satisfying narrative. King points out that often a traditional Hollywood happy ending can seem incongruous with previous narrative events, but be accepted because it fits with the expected classical narrative mode. He cites the work of Harmony Korine, particularly *Gummo* (1997) and *Julien Donkey-Boy* (1999), as examples of how such independent film can deviate from the expectations of narrative drive, but importantly these films do not abandon narrative altogether.[10]

Part of this focus on verisimilitude can manifest in the attention paid to mundane or everyday occurrences. A number of independent films seem to purposefully avoid moments one might expect to see because of their apparent importance to the narrative, while providing significant focus on apparently unimportant details or activities, for example Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984) and *Night on Earth* (1991). While the former offers a number of extended scenes in which the characters watch television or eat in virtual silence, something one might naturally expect to be edited out of the syuzhet in a classical narrative, the latter keeps the viewer permanently in a taxi for the entire film, purposefully denying the

viewer all the details of each character's narrative once they leave the car (King, 2005).

Independent films may also employ multi-strand narratives. Examples like *Short Cuts* (Robert Altman, 1993), *Happiness* (Todd Solondz, 1998) and *Magnolia* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1999) can be seen as using this as a way of increasing verisimilitude as it allows the film to more accurately render the dense and wide ranging relationships and interactions people have in the real world, beyond a small number of core characters, but this can also be recognised as stylisation. Any divergence from well-established conventions is naturally more apparent and eye-catching than adherence to those conventions simply because it is far less common, meaning even those instances seemingly motivated by verisimilitude draw attention to themselves. This brings us to the other way independent film may differ from conventional narrative, which is to eschew verisimilitude entirely and create non-linear, fragmented or multi-strand narrative structures specifically to highlight the 'unreality' or the constructed nature of the medium. This can be thought of as 'stylistic' motivation (King, 2005: 107; Newman, 2011: 34–36).

Self-consciousness is important here, and is one of the key results of stylistic motivation. King points out examples like the text titles in *Clerks* (Kevin Smith, 1995), constructed to be ironic and referential in a way that invites the audience 'behind the curtain' so to speak. Gregg Araki also uses this method, inserting a text panel reading 'start narrative here' about a third of the runtime through his film *Totally Fucked Up* (1996). This does signal a shift in the narrative of the feature towards a more traditionally organised

story, but its aim is to communicate a sense of media awareness, something that one could argue falls under Werner Wolf's definition of metareference outlined the previous chapter. As King puts it:

> Drawing attention to narrative structure in so explicit a manner is very much against the Hollywood norm. It can be playful, flattering niche audiences for independent films by letting them feel superior to those apparently 'taken in' by the devices used in more conventional features. (King, 2005: 83–84).

This notion of 'play' is something given a great deal of consideration by Newman. He identifies this stylistic motivation in narrative terms not just as a way of either increasing verisimilitude or foregrounding the filmmaker, but as a pleasurable, game-like experience for audiences in itself. Rather than seeing the need to 'figure out' a complex web of narrative interactions as a means to understand a piece that might better reflect the complexity of 'real life', Newman suggests that the piecing together of the puzzle provides its own pleasure. The primary example given of this is Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and it is Newman's opinion that this film influenced a large number of indie films that came afterwards. Films like *Go* (Doug Liman, 1999) and *21 Grams* (Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, 2003) revolve around a single incident and shift the narrative forwards and backwards around it in a way that similarly rewards audiences trying to piece together the different perspectives offered (Newman, 2011: 186–189).

Perhaps even more intriguing is the case of films that engage in subjective play like *The Limey* (Steven Soderbergh, 1999) and the films of screenwriter Charlie Kaufman *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, 1999), *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, 2002) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004). These films present scenes that are difficult to

assign any logical chronology, to the extent that one is forced to wonder whether they are subjective experiences or expressionistic flourishes rather than actual narrative plot points. Such moments push films slightly further from mainstream conventions, given that many mainstream films use temporal distortion like flashbacks or flash-forwards. The addition of subjective play can be seen as slightly riskier from the perspective of broad audience appeal, and adds to the sense of 'otherness' or 'indieness' (Newman, 2011: 189–196). If we are to take this to be a facet of filmmaking more common in the indie sphere then it supports the notion that indie film contains more opportunity for intermediality. Subjective narrative moments allow for a level of self-reflexivity not generally available in a more traditionally linear, or even temporally complex, narrative.

Outside of narrative, the form of a film can also identify it as being indie, or at least possessing an indie sensibility. In general, formal distinctions from the mainstream in the independent sphere tend to go in the same two directions as deviation from conventional narrative; either to increase apparent 'realism' or to emphasise the artifice of the medial construction. These are categorised by King as 'beneath' and 'beyond' the classical Hollywood style respectively (King, 2005: 107). Concerning the 'beneath' approach to alternative form, a found-footage, vérité or documentary-realism style is common in independent film. While this has undoubted practical advantages such as a massively reduced cost compared to more conventional or stylised approaches, it also adds to the feel of verisimilitude and makes it seem closer to real life than films that employ these other forms. One example is *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick

and Eduardo Sanchez, 1999), which used home-movie style footage shot by the main characters throughout the entire runtime, making the film feel like something that had genuinely been found rather than made.[11]

Arguably of more importance to the work in the following chapters, however, is the 'beyond' approach of expressly highlighted or 'showy' form. As has been seen in the thorough exploration of the term in the previous chapter, it is in these moments, as much as in non-linear or deconstructed narrative, that one might reasonably expect intermediality to be most frequently used. The use of intermedial technique is itself a kind of heightened artificiality that must call attention to the mediality of the film if it is to be considered intermediality at all. Therefore it does not easily fit into the aesthetic of social realism or vérité employed by the 'beneath' approach to independent cinema's construction of an 'alternative' to Hollywood.

This is not to say that intermediality cannot be employed in the lower-key realist or 'personal' films that make up a large proportion of the indie film landscape, as it is important to remember that the techniques described here do not represent inflexible or unchanging formulae. As Newman points out: 'Indie cinema is thus clearly not one genre that can be understood according to a unified set of widely shared and recognised formal and interpretive conventions; but within the discursive construction of indie culture' (Newman, 2009: 87). The formal and narrative digressions from the classical model described here can and have been used interchangeably and unpredictably to create a general feeling of difference, rather than to construct specifically 'indie realist' or 'indie fantasy' genres

of filmmaking. One must also be careful when assigning particular features to either side of this formal divide. King uses the example of *Julien Donkey-Boy* again to demonstrate how, while the grainy images do give the impression of low-budget immediacy, the 'extreme nature of the pixelated grain also has a strongly mediating effect in its own right, however, creating something close to a pointillist, impressionist quality' (King, 2005: 119–120). Importantly, even content designed to appear 'real' is a construction — a mediation — and therefore cannot be considered entirely subordinate to the aim of representing the unmediated reality of life.

One way in which films can distinguish themselves from the Hollywood mainstream in formal terms is to subvert arguably the single most important formal feature of conventional filmmaking: continuity editing. In the opening of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (John McNaughton, 1986), a murder is essentially concealed within a match-on-action. The viewer is given the impression that a cut from inside a cafe to outside is an instant one that continues an unbroken scene (in temporal terms) in which Henry exits the establishment. This is an assumption based on how we expect continuity editing to work in conventional mainstream Hollywood film. It only becomes apparent in the subsequent cut back inside the cafe that the first cut has bridged two actions separated temporally, with the gap between them containing the protagonist murdering the waitress. Something as fundamental as breaking the rules of continuity editing like this would ordinarily be discomforting to audiences, but it is contained somewhat, and the impact of the transgression lessened, by its thematic motivation. The murder is hidden within a system of editing that has

become invisible through familiarity, in much the same way as a killer hides throughout the narrative within a society and in a person seen to be normal by everyone around him (King, 2005: 105–106). Continuity editing and the 'invisible-style' of Hollywood have become so institutionalised and expected (almost a qualifying aspect of the cinematic medium itself) that even small disruptions or departures in form like this can have a significant impact, even within what might be considered a more traditional narrative structure.

Many independent films mix 'realist' techniques with a more stylised form, for example Marc Levin's *Slam* (1998), which uses distinctly vérité or news-coverage style crash zooms, movement, off-centre framing and drifting in-and-out of focus to create the impression of the camera responding to the action in a number of sequences. It contrasts this, however, with more expressionistic techniques for moments in which the main characters thoughts and ideas while composing his Rap poetry are represented. Post-production effects, filters and different film stock combines with rapid cutting and montage to create an unmistakably mediated and 'artificial' sequence that might be out-of-step with the established realist style, but as is the tendency of independent film of the less experimental bent, it is contained by making the narrative motivation clear; it is there to provide an expression of the character's internal consciousness. Such narrative framing is the most common rationalisation for formal departure from the classical Hollywood style. [12]

Newman, however, highlights a significant amount of formal deviation from convention that can be linked back to the concept of 'play'.

93

As mentioned previously, a playful self-awareness is not unique to 'independent' or 'indie' film, but it constitutes one of a number of features one might expect to see given greater prominence and importance further from the core classical Hollywood model. These practices need not serve any other end, narrative or thematic, than simply enjoyment of the medium, and as such are commonly associated with the intertextuality of indie film. Newman finds the term intertextuality lacking for the purposes of detailing how films might specifically reference their sources. He points out that the original meaning, as outlined by Kristeva in 1966, was a more universal term for the idea that all texts were simply reactions or responses to texts that had come before. He does note, however, that intertextuality has taken on a more popular general usage as a term referring to the specific referencing or imitating of other texts within a textual artefact, and at this point we can see how a cinema with a tendency for increased intertextuality can prove fertile ground for the deployment of intermediality (Newman, 2011: 148–149).

In particular, armed with the body of work discussed in the previous chapter, it can be argued that when Newman decries the lack of precision in the use of the term intertextuality to describe to the entirety of a film text's referentiality, he may be searching for a notion more akin to intermediality in order to provide some distinction. He writes:

When a character imitates another character, that might be an homage. When a line of dialogue from one film repeats in another, or when a character reads from a novel, that would be a quotation. A film may quote visually as well, as when a zoom-in/track-out shot recalls *Vertigo* or a pattern of striped shadows evokes film noir. Or we might call this allusion, a reference from one work to another that often requires a degree of familiarity, of literacy, for it to be caught. (Newman, 2011: 149).

This seems to effectively demonstrate the insufficiency of the term intertextuality to account for nuanced differences between types of referentiality, but one must be careful of oversimplification too. If a character is imitating a character from a different medium, this might still be an homage, but there must be a difference between mimicking another acting performance (intramedial reference) and attempting to mimic the performance described by written text on a page, or in music, or perhaps seen in a painting. Instances of medial border crossings like this complicate the simple notion of homage and bring it more into the area of intermediality. Similarly, depending on the larger thematic context of the film, quotation might be an inadequate term to describe the reading of text from a novel. The meeting of media in this fashion can have a great deal more complexity that the term 'quotation' provides, and therefore these terms may prove as insufficient as labelling everything intertextuality.

Importantly, Newman links this kind of allusory and referential style in American independent cinema to the films of the French New Wave, which as we have previously discussed, were heavily intertextual but also significantly intermedial. He likens the Coen brothers to Godard in the sense that they are both 'promiscuously allusive' (Newman, 2011: 149), which he makes clear has a specific meaning beyond the referentiality. Allusion is an

authorial act that is designed to be recognised by the audience, something that sets it apart from looser definitions like influence or even just intertextuality. The allusions here, according to Newman, clearly share this trait in common with what we have previously defined as intermediality, or at least intermedial reference, and this is something that is particular to niche-audience appeal. In his words: 'Allusions only happen when author and audience *get* each other, which makes them especially important for modes of filmmaking that are culturally circumscribed, like indie cinema, as compared with those seeking wider, mass appeal' (Newman, 2011: 150). It could be suggested that the identification of such technique as a signifier of indie cinema lends additional support to the focus of this project on American independent cinema as a space in which intermediality is more capable of thriving than in other types of filmmaking.

These specific textual trends exist alongside (or indeed as part of) a far less easily-definable quality often associated with modern indie film; that of the tone or mood reflecting a sense of the 'quirky'. This is a term that has been applied somewhat indiscriminately to any film demonstrating any formal, narrative or thematic difference that is considered 'off-beat', much like the use of 'indie' in its common, catch-all context. Filmmakers like Wes Anderson, David Cronenberg and Darren Aronofsky have all attracted the 'quirky' label, but James MacDowell (2013) attempts to narrow the definition to 'a subtly but distinctly recognisable strain in American Indiewood comedy and comedy-drama' (MacDowell, 2013: 54).

He asserts that such films are linked by the sharing of four particular conventions: a mixing of varied comedy styles (from deadpan to slapstick),

a thematic focus on childhood innocence, a visual style that evokes a surreal artificiality (emphasising a sense of self-consciousness), and a tone constructed to create a tension between irony and sincerity. This tonal opposition is suggested to be part of a larger cultural shift into an era of 'postirony', in which irony has established itself as a primary mode of address for artefacts considered 'cool', and the search for an emotional engagement within this has led to the establishment of 'New Sincerity'. Films like *The Royal Tenenbaums* (Wes Anderson, 2001), *The Darjeeling Limited* (Wes Anderson, 2007), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Lars and the Real Girl* (Craig Gillespie, 2007) are given as examples of narratives in which audiences are encouraged to sympathise with and become emotionally invested in characters whose actions are presented as comically absurd, simultaneously encouraging an amount of ridicule and therefore ironic distance.

'Smart films' are defined along similar lines, and are likewise often located in the independent film sphere, although when defining 'quirky' in relation to Jeffrey Sconce's (2002) conception of 'smart' MacDowell suggests that the 'quirky' cinema more related to the modern, commercially successful indie landscape, is somewhat less politically motivated. Smart films, according to Sconce, attempt to subvert classical models of moral absolutism by using this dichotomy between 'irony' and 'sincerity' to confuse representations of what would classically be immoral actions or attitudes. This can take the form of a comic representation of immorality such as the pastiche of classical Hollywood romantic music cues with paedophilia in *Happiness* (Todd Solondz, 1998), or the comedy surrounding

a man getting his head blown off in *Pulp Fiction* (MacDowell, 2013: 57–58). That 'quirky' films tend to focus more on characters that are more classically moral, although perhaps more ambiguous or flawed than might be expected in the classical mainstream, is one factor suggesting 'quirky' indie films exist in a category closer to the mainstream (or Indiewood) than the 'smart' films inhabiting the more challenging independent space.

So, the categorisation of a film as independent, or indeed 'indie' remains impossible to reduce to a small number of identifiable industrial or aesthetic factors. As Newman points out, 'as a cultural category, indie cinema is the product of indie film culture's collective judgement about what counts — or does not — as indie' (Newman, 2011: 5). The sense of an 'alternative' to the Hollywood mainstream can manifest in a wide number of films from different producers and distributors with different budgets and vastly differing textual styles, and that 'alternative' can either be accepted as such by an audience, or rejected as inauthentic. Nevertheless, we can say that filmmaking demonstrating a 'beneath' or 'beyond' approach to narrative and form, in the pursuit of increased indebtedness to verisimilitude or a playful exaggeration of medial or storytelling artificiality, could be said to define in aesthetic terms what is considered independent or 'indie' cinema in the era since the 1980s. Certainly given the almost ubiquitous presence of the industrially conglomerated major studios in the sector it seems that this definition, along with a consideration of perceived authenticity and 'tone', fares better than segregation by financing or production location alone.

In the following chapters, American independent films will be defined in industrial terms fairly inclusively as those released by any distributor other than the primary, named Hollywood majors. Across that significantly divergent spectrum, from small companies existing completely away from Hollywood's finances and influence, to the direct speciality divisions of the majors, all of the formal and narrative factors considered above can be applied. It is within the framework established in this chapter that terms such as 'mainstream' and 'alternative' will be used, in the context of finding possible alignments between the use of intermediality and particular textual content, as well as the conditions of production. This study begins by looking at those entities arguably furthest from the influence of the Hollywood majors.

Notes

[1] The MPPC was formed by ten film studios (including the Hollywood majors named) and held patents for the technology used in film cameras. The studios used this to effectively block independent filmmaking by attempting to prosecute potential filmmakers for infringement of patent law (King, 2005: 3–4). Films were made in the independent sphere regardless however, led by figures such as producer Adolph Zukor. While seen as one of the first true independents, Zukor's Paramount Pictures would ironically go on to be one of the major players in the Hollywood studio system (Newman, 2011: 24).

[2] David Selznick and Sam Goldwyn are considered independent producers, but films like *Gone With The Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Rebecca* were lavish, big-budget films produced not only with stars loaned from the major studios but also filmed in their studio space (King, 2005: 4).

[3] The degree of autonomy afforded to not just independent production studios under the ownership of (or in partnership with) a major, but also filmmakers has been a key marker of how something is perceived as independent by audiences. Peter Krämer (2013) focuses on this in his consideration of Stanley Kubrick's relationship with Hollywood. While much of Kubrick's early career was built on a perception that he was an independent 'auteur', one of his first films *Day of The Fight* (1951) is likely to have been sold to RKO before it was completed and hence he cannot have had final cut rights (Krämer, 2013: 155–157).

[4] It should be noted that Sundance's increasingly high-profile global branding and expansion has led to some questioning of how 'independent' the festival remains. Existing stars are a significant part of Sundance line-ups as well as films produced by studio speciality arms (and therefore in no need of finding a pickup). While new filmmakers do feature alongside established stars, frustration with the 'celebrity status' of Sundance in recent years has led to the establishment of festivals such as Slamdance and Slumdance, focusing on even lower budget productions with fewer ties to studios and stars (King, 2005: 38).

[5] The classics divisions of this time had a focus on reissuing old films considered to have high 'prestige' (historical epics and literary adaptations mainly), in addition to imported foreign films that were perceived to be more intellectual and therefore more appealing to the discerning niche audiences the smaller independents were targeting (Tzioumakis, 2012: 45–51).

[6] Universal Classics' investment not only in marketing but also in production financing from an early stage of the *Under The Volcano* (John Huston, 1984) is seen as important by Tzioumakis as it marks the beginning of a 'muddling' of studio and independent, making it very difficult to distinguish within speciality arms what films can really be labelled independent, having been produced with studio money. This is something that has led to an opinion held by some that independence in the current age is simply a term for low-budget studio films (Tzioumakis, 2012: 52–55).

[7] This discounts Orion Classics, which still existed at this time, and contined to release films into the 1990s. The distributor's parent company Orion Pictures sought to recreate the structure and practices of a Hollywood major on a lower-scale rather than present an alternative to the mainstream. Eventually this led to greater and greater investment in larger-budget predicted hits, but unlike the newly conglomerated majors, Orion could not absorb losses from box office flops and so eventually went out of business. That such a company would have a classics division at all demonstrates the similarity to the majors, but Orion Classics had significant success in the late 1980s, partially due to the large amount of autonomy it enjoyed from Orion Pictures. Ultimately it was the financial failing of the parent company that ended the impressive run of Orion Classics in the 1990s. (Tzioumakis, 2012: 65–66).

[8] This emphasis on finding the 'crossover hit' was explicitly articulated by the Fine Line Features president Ira Deutchman, who said that the aim of the division (a division of New Line, which was not itself a major in strict industrial terms) was to distribute films that had 'more market, more crossover potential than classics-oriented films' (Tzioumakis, 2012: 7).

[9] These are concepts applying to narrative in general rather than just specifically film, and the distinction between what is explicitly communicated and the entire underlying story goes back to Aristotle. Syuzhet and fabula are labels applied by Russian formalist writings of the 1920s.

[10] *Julien Donkey-Boy*, while filled with a number of digressions and scenes that seem unconnected and have no narrative consequence, it also has a specific focus on the 'story' of a family, albeit an unconventional one. *Gummo* uses the framing device of found home-video footage following a tornado to provide a sense of a more traditional motivation for allowing the rest of the film to consist of pieces of narrative featuring largely unconnected characters in a community, without any particular narrative drive or sense of progression beyond these small portraits (King, 2005: 63–67).

[11] The film was a staggering commercial success too, made for somewhere between $22,000 and $60,000, but taking an enormous $140 million solely in domestic box office (King, 2005: 13–15).

[12] Such expression of subjective reality is also found in *Buffalo 66* (Vincent Gallo, 1998) (Jump cuts) and *Pi* (Darren Aronofsky, 1998) (Snorri-cam). These examples are used thematically to isolate characters from the background, signifying alienation, something achieved by Todd Haynes in *Safe* (1995) by long shots keeping the audience at a physical distance from characters (King, 2005: 124–126).

Chapter 4

The Independents

If intermediality is an experimental or avant-garde concept, driven by techniques employed to distance audiences, initiate thoughtful reflection on the artificiality of the medium and subvert the expectations of traditional cinema, then one might expect to find it most readily in films made entirely outside of the Hollywood major studio system. This chapter will demonstrate that, while examples of intermediality certainly exist within this fully-independent space, one can identify the technique both in films that embrace the 'alternative' nature of the indie space, and those that attempt to mimic a more 'mainstream' product.

It is important to note, however, that the ways in which other media are contacted throughout these texts, as well as those considered in the following chapters, are myriad and complex. While we have established a working definition and framework within which to identify intermedial content, there is little value in simply dividing the titles into two groups as either intermedial or not. The details of how in each case films might recreate or reference visual, audio, stylistic, narrative or structural features associated with other forms defy attempts to approach the issue in such an inflexible manner. For this reason it is important to resist the temptation to simply tally a certain number of these films that clearly contain intermediality while disregarding the others that do not. It is of greater value to this study to provide key examples of how different kinds of film contact

media in different ways, with some fulfilling every criterion of intermedial reference, others fulfilling some, and many failing to achieve any.

There are some clearly relevant examples in which intermediality can be most obviously demonstrated, and these will form the core of the chapter to follow. These titles will represent both the higher-budget, more mainstream entertainment films, specifically focusing on *Source Code* (Duncan Jones, 2011) and *Nurse Betty* (Neil LaBute, 2000), as well as those lower-budget, arguably more 'alternative' films, specifically focusing on *The Nines* (John August, 2007) and *I Love Your Work* (Adam Goldberg, 2003). Following this, some more ambiguous examples of intermedial contact will be explored in an attempt to demonstrate the difficulty of separating films simply into those that are intermedial and those that are not. *Nine* (Rob Marshall, 2009) and *The Fall* (Tarsem Singh, 2006) provide useful examples of this in-between space in which intermediality can be identified but is not as significant a feature of the text. First of all though, there are some key features apparent when viewing this collection of films overall that are significant to this research.

Key Findings

One of the most initially striking findings is that there is little specialisation on the part of the independent distributors considered here. Each one releases films that use relatively large budgets and classical realist genre tropes alongside cheaper, more experimental fare with tougher subject matter. Indeed, it is difficult to identify any one company as being significantly more or less inclined towards an 'indie' or 'alternative' style.

The possible exceptions to this would be Summit Entertainment and The Samuel Goldwyn Company, which appear to have more uniform content across their releases, representing a higher-budget, popular mainstream spirit and a lower-cost, low-key style of literary and theatrical adaptation respectively. It is even more difficult to highlight which distributors, if any, are more likely to distribute films that engage to a greater or lesser extent with intermediality. The key examples in this chapter come from Summit, Newmarket Films, USA Films and THINKfilm, but there are also films displaying intermedial content from The Samuel Goldwyn Company, The Weinstein Company, Roadside Attractions and Overture Films.

Another important observation is that there is not a great deal of intermediality, as it has been defined in the previous chapter in line with the specific concept of intermedial reference, in this selection of films overall. Using previously applied notions of intermediality in a broad sense it would be possible to label almost all of these films intermedial to some extent due to being an adaptation or including other media in their narratives, but few apply the techniques necessary to fulfil the criteria of intermedial reference and have that be a significant part of the film experience. While we have already established the fruitlessness of dividing the films into those that have intermediality and those that do not because of this complexity, it would be equally wrong not to recognise that clear examples of intermediality standing out as key to the content of films are not common. This is not to say that other films outside of the six particularly singled out as examples in this chapter do not contact other media in some way, but many include such contact as a plot device or character detail. Even in cases

where media combination or intermedial reference occurs, it is rarely an important part of the film overall. More commonly this contact is used as a stylistic flourish or a way to enhance the 'unreality' of a film attempting to present itself as alternative. *I Shot Andy Warhol* (Mary Harron, 1996) mixes film and theatre to an extent in brief moments to create an unusual aesthetic, while *Ringmaster* (Neil Abramson, 1998) reproduces a television show in order to support a plot involving characters that appear on it. These films join others like *Fear of a Black Hat* (Rusty Cundieff, 1994) and *Love is All There Is* (Joseph Bologna & Renee Taylor, 1996) that recreate other media to support a narrative without making that recreation a central feature and exploring the medial boundary in detail. Yet more of these films incorporate other arts and media as a narrative or thematic reference point without attempting to recreate or evoke them as an important part of the experience. This can be seen particularly in the case of adaptations from The Samuel Goldwyn Company and Samuel Goldwyn Films, who contribute a large proportion of the films considered in this chapter but few clear examples of significant intermediality.

The final key observation to consider is the relative presence or absence of intermedial contact with specific individual media forms. It is perhaps surprising that the bulk of clearly intermedial content here is concerned with television and videogames given how much existing intermedial analysis has focused on film's relationship with painting, literature and photography. While thirty-two of these seventy-five films are included because of a link to those more traditional media, many of these films are literary or theatrical adaptations such as *Black Robe* (Bruce

Beresford, 1991), *Oleanna* (David Mamet, 1994)*, Starting Out in the Evening* (Andrew Wagner, 2007) and *Elegy* (Isabel Coixet, 2008), which offer little consideration of the mediality. However, a number of these titles justify a reluctance to label films either 'intermedial' or 'not', with films like *The Great Buck Howard* (Sean McGinly, 2008), *Dark Streets* (Rachel Samuels, 2008) and *The Brothers Bloom* (Rian Johnson, 2008) clearly recreating and foregrounding theatrical performances, but without making that intermedial consideration an integral part of the narrative experience.

Television, meanwhile, also has a significant presence, being contacted in twelve of the films. Two of these, *Nurse Betty* and *The Nines*, are given a detailed consideration in this chapter, but others also experiment with intermedial reference and media combination as in *Series 7: The Contenders* (Daniel Minahan, 2001), *Southland Tales* (Richard Kelly, 2006) and *I'm Still Here* (Casey Affleck, 2010), or recreating thematic concerns from television shows as in *Mystery Team* (Dan Eckman, 2009). A similar prevalence for intermedial content can be seen in films that feature videogames, of which there are only four, but two of them, *The Nines* and *Source Code* provide key examples of intermediality. While it might be tempting to infer conclusions from these numbers alone, it would be premature to do so without taking a look in more detail at some of the examples of how these media have been contacted.

Hollywood Mimics

Amidst the clearly relevant discussion about American independent film's distinguishing features, we must not allow ourselves to lose sight of the fact

that a large part of the sector has at its heart a commercial drive. Popularity is sought by a large number of independent filmmakers, even if it is not the sole criteria for success. Because of this it is relatively common to find a largely traditional or classic narrative and formal filmmaking style in the content of these 'true' independents, albeit often on a smaller budget.

Summit Entertainment is a particularly good example of this. Summit only began distributing films themselves regularly in the late 2000s and were acquired shortly thereafter by Lionsgate. In this short period of independence, however, they distributed the massively successful film adaptations of Stephanie Meyers' *Twilight* Saga: *Twilight* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2008), *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (Chris Weitz, 2009), and *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1* and *Part 2* (Bill Condon, 2011 and 2012). This as well as genre titles such as *P2* (Franck Khalfoun, 2007), *Sex Drive* (Sean Anders, 2008), *Knowing* (Alex Proyas, 2009) *The Three Musketeers* (Paul W S Anderson, 2011) and *Drive Angry* (Patrick Lussier, 2011) undoubtedly give the distributor a presence in the broader or more populist end of what we might consider the spectrum of independence.

Source Code (Duncan Jones, 2011) is essentially a sci-fi action thriller along traditional mainstream entertainment film lines, but employs narrative complexity and partial non-linearity as part of an overall structure that interrogates the nature of that narrative in the film medium, and in particular its difference from the interactive medium of videogames. The film sees Colter Stephens (Jake Gyllenhaal) interacting with a 'simulation' of the final eight minutes before a bomb explodes on a train. He does this by taking control of one of the passengers in the simulation and gathering as

much information as possible about the bombing. When the bomb explodes Colter is returned to his 'real' world and must restart the simulation from the beginning, reliving the same eight minutes but trying to approach it differently to find out more about the incident.

The fact that Colter inhabits another person's body in the simulation is an important factor. This specifically evokes the medium of the videogame rather than a simple computer simulation because the notion of the avatar has become an integral part of gaming, and even a means by which the sociological effects of gaming have been seriously explored.[1] Taking control of an avatar is in many ways a modal necessity of the gaming medium as it is the means by which a player can affect and interact with the virtual environment, but some academic work has suggested it is more significant than that, increasing a user's immersion by inserting the 'idealised self' into the narrative (Nowak & Ruah, 2005: 153; Trepte & Reinecke, 2010: 171). In that sense one might draw a parallel between the inhabiting of an avatar and the identification with the main protagonist in a film, but *Source Code* puts the protagonist (our focus of identification) in a situation where he is forced to inhabit his own avatar, putting the two notions together and arguably mixing the film and videogame form in doing so.

An even more explicit evocation of the videogame form can be found in the narrative structuring. By arranging the film into the same eight minutes repeated over and over with altered audience and character knowledge, the film narrative recreates the experience of playing a videogame. Interactivity is lost by necessity because the basic medium of

film, its modality, is non-interactive, but interactivity is mimicked by the presence of a 'fail state' in the narrative itself. Colter can, and does, repeatedly fail to stop the bombing, resulting in essentially a 'game over' condition and requiring him to restart the simulation. As this loop repeats, the film adds to the audience's knowledge along with the characters' and helps craft a sense that the viewer could not achieve success until Colter does. This is an example of intermediality that does not visually recreate a game and does not just transpose the story or characters of a particular game into film. Instead this technique communicates the experience of playing a game, rather than any commonly recognised audio-visual style of an era or genre of games, using film's own mediality.

The notion that this intermedial contact is integral to the film experience, and as such is 'performed' and intended to be noticed, is supported by the numerous times computer terms are used to describe Colter's situation. The human mind is likened to a hard drive that can contain the final eight minutes of a life, stored as data from which the simulation is run. Similarly the film spends a considerable amount of time allowing its characters to muse on the extent to which interactivity is possible within the simulation. Indeed, the main narrative thrust involves Colter's attempts to interact with the simulation instead of just learning from it, despite his commanding officer's insistence that he cannot change anything that will affect the 'real world'. This clearly is the case with any computer simulation, no actions performed within it can affect the world outside of it, but the simulation is so real to Colter that he is driven to alter the events within the simulation regardless. This is similar to the drive to

complete objectives in a videogame rather than just passively experience the artificial world created for the player.

This need to complete tasks is regularly cited as a key feature of the videogame medium itself. It is difficult to directly compare content across the medial border between film and game and immediately identify analogous structures, techniques or strategies because, as Jim Gee points out, games are 'a new art form, one largely immune to traditional tools developed for the analysis of literature and film' (Gee, 2006: 58). In their (2011) article 'Videogames as Equipment for Living' Ronald Soetaert, Jeroen Bougonjon and Kris Rutten explore the term 'intermediality' relating it specifically to the videogame form. They cite the turn-based strategy game *Civilization* (MicroProse, 1991), which has very little traditional narrative content, and the much more linear and almost entirely narrative-driven *Heavy Rain* (Sony Computer Entertainment, 2010) as a comparison. They conclude that even in such apparently different games one is able to identify certain common elements. They note that: 'Part of the fun is the human fascination to play and replay the game and learn something' (Soetaert et al, 2011: 5 of 8). This suggests that much of the content of the game is presented in a way that requires multiple different approaches to experience fully. *Civilization* has no conclusive narrative 'ending' as its 'win state' is simply to have the player's faction occupy a map of the World to a greater extent than their opponents. *Heavy Rain* on the other hand has a well-defined and linear plot that more closely resembles a narrative one might expect from a film. However, interactivity is provided in the form of a branching narrative that changes direction depending on decisions made by

the player. This results in a situation where, much like *Civilization*, the game must be played more than once and approached in a variety of ways in order that the player can be said to have 'experienced' all of the content.

Soetaert et al describe *Heavy Rain* itself as being intermedial because 'media borders are trespassed, problematized, or blurred' (Soetaert et al, 2011: 6 of 8) and they cite a journalistic review in which the game is described as the only successful attempt at intermediality between the two forms. As *Guardian* reviewer Will Freeman puts it:

> The dichotomy of the two mediums – that films are for watching, and games for playing – is too powerful to overcome: cinematic creations sacrifice their power in allowing interaction and games lose their focus when the narrative leaves players' control. A dead end, leading, at best, to brave failure and, at worst, ignominious farce. Until now. Until *Heavy Rain* (Freeman, 2010).

This might be a little too generous to *Heavy Rain* in regard to its intermedial innovation however. The point of its inclusion in the Soetaert article is that much like *Civilization* it employs the mechanics of interaction and player choice to fashion something that is intended to be experienced multiple times in different ways, because this is a key element of the 'new art form' that is videogames.

Given this, one can recognise intermediality in the deployment of this mechanic in the narrative of *Source Code*. Not only does Colter act as a player of sorts, experiencing the simulation repeatedly but approaching it differently each time to learn more about the situation, but the viewer is also exposed to that same narrative chronology. The viewer is therefore experiencing the narrative in much the same way as a player would experience the content of a videogame, learning as Colter does, with the one

significant difference that they have no interactivity. Without any agency of their own, the viewer is relying on the film replicating this aspect in its own medium-specific structures, in this case having Colter experiment with different approaches the way they might if they were in control of the simulation.

There is a significant shift in the way the viewer perceives the film's representations of reality when it is revealed that the moments in which they have seen Colter outside the simulation have been merely a representation of a consciousness, designed for the film viewer and not real to anyone in the actual diegesis. To the characters in the film Colter appears as text on a computer screen, forcing the audience to accept that their image of him has also been a simulation of sorts. In this case it is a representation that is specifically filmic, because the character has been given a physical body and a place to exist when, in the narrative 'reality' of the film, he has been merely text. Diegetically it is claimed that we have seen him how he sees himself, but as a consciousness the film representation of the character can only be an external, visual approximation of the character's imagined situation, and therefore it could be described as a form of metalepsis.

This is a term, originally taken from literary theory, that is used to label a particular crossing of the boundary between what is presented as 'real' and what is presented as 'fictional'. Commonly the label is applied to characters in some way addressing viewers or readers directly, or the author of the piece becoming part of the narrative by interfering with their own creation, but the definition of the term has been broadened since its inception. This boundary between 'real' and 'fiction' does not just exist at the level on

which the viewer experiences a fictional narrative, it can be recreated between embedded narratives within a single work of fiction too. If a character in the fiction views or reads another text, or in some way creates a narrative of their own, metalepsis can be said to occur across that boundary without involving the author or the audience of the primary text. This is a notion that will come up repeatedly throughout the film analyses in this thesis, as metalepsis is a common, practical application for intermedial techniques. Evoking other arts and media within a single media product is an effective way to clearly distinguish different narrative levels of reality for an audience, and this is a use to which intermediality is put time and again across the films considered here.[2] In addition, metalepsis shares with intermediality the 'strong anti-illusionist effect' of exposing the artificial nature of the work in which it exists (Wolf, 2005: 103). Both intermediality and metalepsis draw attention to the mediated nature of their construction and so that they are commonly employed in conjunction is perhaps unsurprising.

While *Source Code* does not clearly ascribe other specific media to its different narrative levels, it does represent both the internal mental state and the external narrative 'reality' as distinct, resulting in the film existing in three parallel planes of reality; the simulation, the internal mental state of Colter, and the narrative 'reality'. The juxtaposition of these planes invites a consideration of the borders between media, particularly between the interactive medium of videogames and the non-interactive medium of film, to mirror the borders between the three planes of reality in the film itself.

Ultimately, despite the efforts to mimic the structures and techniques of a videogame narrative progression, the film's own narrative 'reality' remains linear and plays out chronologically as any traditional narrative film would. The viewer may experience the simulation numerous times along with Colter, but the narrative outside those eight minutes on the train is not repeated at any point. The intermediality employed in the simulation portions of the film, and the metalepsis demonstrated in the representation of Colter in his pod (a fiction created by Colter himself), is all definitively contained and prevented from truly altering the form of the film itself in a more significant way by the dominant linear narrative framing it.

However, as the film reaches its climax it is suggested that the simulation is not merely a computer representation of the past, but is in fact a window into numerous alternative realities. Once this is established Colter's interactivity becomes far more than an illusion, it becomes a way for him to have a real, tangible effect on a narrative world that is equally as 'real' as the diegesis we have thus far accepted as the film's true setting. It is possible to read this twist as one that essentially breaks down the three-way split between the simulation, Colter's imagined fiction and the narrative reality so that they become equally 'real', thus collapsing the structures that have up to that point contained the intermediality in the simulation sections. At this point it is no longer as easy to identify any one of those narrative settings as any more 'real' than the others, so it is possible to see the intermediality as being utilised to highlight the close proximity of narrative film and narrative videogame in terms of content. If none of these representations of reality can be definitively identified as 'real', then neither

the film nor the videogame medial forms being evoked can be said to be more or less capable of presenting reality, and in this way the intermediality in *Source Code* can be suggested to be in the service of a consideration of the artificiality of all media (or at least both media present here). The videogame medium is not contained within the narrative to lessen it or dismiss it as inferior, it is there to challenge our perception of the film as the ultimate representation of truth.

Source Code is clearly an example of a financially independent film designed to compete with traditional Hollywood entertainment films on their own terms, albeit with an arguably novel approach to narrative structuring and a thoughtful consideration of the medium made possible by the use of intermediality. The intermediality and the consideration of media boundaries is undoubtedly an integral part of the film experience, but it is unlikely to be one of the main reasons for its relative commercial success. Journalistic reviews do not mention intermedial contact with games at all, choosing instead to repeatedly describe *Source Code* as more of a thriller re-working of *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993)[3]. This suggests that the recognition of the use of intermediality in itself may not be a particularly crowd-pleasing feature, but its presence can enhance the experience without obstructing the otherwise traditional storytelling. This thoughtful and reflective use of intermediality certainly sets the film apart from the videogame adaptation *House of the Dead* (Uwe Boll, 2003), which merely incorporates token moments of media combination in the form of occasional cutaways featuring footage of the original *House of the Dead* (Sega, 1998). Taken together, these films illustrate not just that intermediality must be

actively constructed (simply being adapted from a game and using its imagery is not enough), but also that there is a huge disparity in content between similarly financially independent films attempting to contact the same medium. Both the films arguably fall into the category of mimicking more mainstream popular releases, but their approach to integrating another medium within their narrative and form stand at polar opposite ends of a spectrum of media reflexivity.

As mentioned earlier, television is a well-represented medium in this selection of films, featuring prominently in twelve of the seventy-five titles. Some do little more than take the formula of a television show to use as a narrative backdrop for an otherwise standard genre film such as *Ringmaster*, while others make the construction of television content itself the subject of the narrative as in *Series 7: The Contenders* and *The TV Set* (Jake Kasdan, 2006). *Nurse Betty*, however, provides arguably the best example of intermedial reference to the medium.

With an estimated cost of $24 million the film sits at the mid-to-high end of the budgets for independent productions discussed in this chapter. It is also presented as a generally traditional linear narrative comedy-drama with an easily understandable premise: Betty (Renee Zellweger) suffers post-traumatic stress after witnessing the killing of her husband and becomes obsessed with a character from a television soap opera. The way that story is told, however, is unusual in a way that is critically linked to the intermediality demonstrated throughout.

The film begins inside the narrative of the fictional television soap opera *A Reason to Love*, complete with the visual grammar of that particular

medial form. The use of extreme close-up shots on the faces of the characters and the exaggerated gesturing of Greg Kinnear (as George McCord, who plays Dr. David Ravell) in his leading-man role evoke the sense of the television serial long before the audience are shown that this is, in fact, a TV show being watched by Betty. As Joanne Clarke Dillman writes, melodrama is so ubiquitous on television that it dominates the narrative discourse and leaves little untouched, even non-fictional programming like news and current affairs. She goes on, 'Soap opera is the descendent of the melodramatic in television form. Melodrama specifically addresses the female viewer, is predominantly gestural, and invests excess in the mise en scène' (Dillman, 2005: 145). Part of this excess in the mise en scène according to Dillman is the use of close ups and extreme close ups, as well as what she terms 'excessive music'. It is notable that in the opening of *Nurse Betty*, even when the camera moves out of the fictional *A Reason to Love* narrative to show Betty watching the programme, her face is framed in an even tighter close-up shot than the one of Dr. Ravell in the show itself. While she is immersed, the frame cuts between her face and the television a number of times, clearly associating her with the show by utilising the same style, until eventually a commercial break ends her viewing. At this point the camera pulls back to frame not just Betty but also Charlie (Morgan Freeman) and Wesley (Chris Rock) in a wider angle shot than previously, and the film score that had initially appeared to be that of *A Reason to Love* immediately drops out to silence. This creates a stark distinction between the audio-visual style associated with the TV show and that which we now

117

experience as the film, despite the fact that both styles are constructions within the film text itself.

There is an overarching thematic sense in which the film seeks to specifically foreground its difference from the medium of television, and from the form of the soap opera in particular. A common observation in many studies of serialised television drama, particularly the daytime serials mimicked by *A Reason to Love*, is that they have an overwhelmingly female audience (White, 1994: 335; Dillman, 2005: 145) and as a result of this the narrative content tends to be based on romantic and familial relationships rather than cause-and-effect plotting. There are more complex reasons for this than simply appealing to a certain demographic, one important factor being the need for serial dramas to remain open-ended and never actually reach a conclusion. This is also a factor in the perceived frivolity or unrealism in soap operas, recognised by Mimi White when she describes such content as follows: 'These ongoing narratives are in turn formally or structurally characterised by redundancies, reversals and discontinuities. All narrative developments are virtually, and usually literally, reversible' (White, 1994: 337). This suggests that part of the nature of soap opera narrative content is that it needs to focus on content like relationships in order to remain able to continue for weeks on end, year after year, because interpersonal relationships can change slowly over time. *Nurse Betty*'s narrative concerns are overtly distinguished from such reversible frivolity, dealing with death in particular early in the story.

A Reason to Love is once again given a central role when Del (Aaron Eckhart) is killed. While Betty watches the soap in one room, completely

immersed in a storyline involving the romantic relationship between David and Chloe (Elizabeth Mitchell), in the other room Del is being interrogated by Charlie and Wesley. This time the film does not take on the TV show form completely, in the sense that the television itself remains an object in the room in which we are observing Betty, but the film cuts between the interrogation and the TV filling the vast majority of the shot in order that we can follow both narratives in parallel.

There is a huge distinction here formally, tonally and thematically. The soap continues to indulge in its performative excess and gentle piano score, while each time a cut moves the action back to Del's interrogation there is not only a sudden shift in audio to a more understated and menacing music cue, but also Morgan Freeman's vastly more restrained acting performance. Both of these features explicitly mark a dividing line between the television show and the film form showing commonly perceived differences between them in formal terms, but they also establish a narrative tone that sets the two fictional universes apart. The restrained performance and understated score lend a weight to the characters of Charlie and Wesley, implicitly identifying them as dangerous characters to be feared, which is then explicitly shown when Wesley scalps Del.

The fact that the scalping is shown on-screen serves a number of purposes. In terms of plot mechanics it establishes the antagonists as dangerous and provides the jeopardy to sustain the rest of the film. Additionally though, it adds to the intermedial nature of the film in some interesting ways. It is important for example that Betty observes both the climax of the soap's story 'beat' at the same time as she witnesses the

climax of the film scene. While the TV show builds to an allegation of sexual harassment against David, something entirely in-keeping with the established common tropes of serial television drama mentioned previously, Betty's reality climaxes in the murder of her husband. There is arguably no more extreme way to depart from the open-ended narratives described by Mimi White than to depict a murder, from which there is no way back. The finality of this act juxtaposes with the soap narrative as the film continues to cut between the two throughout and provides a jarring thematic dividing line between film and television.

It is also important that the act is shown in its entirety on-screen. The viewer is not spared the excessively violent and bloody act of Wesley scalping Del and ultimately killing him. Up to this point the film presents itself as a reasonably gentle character comedy-drama about a woman who is obsessed with a fictional TV character, but with this graphically violent scene it further distances itself from the serial melodrama form and declares itself unwilling to play by the established rules of such. This is not the only particularly graphic and bloody scene either, with the final shootout in Rosa's (Tia Texada) house being similarly unremitting in its depiction of violence. Clearly this is a capability afforded to the film that is not available to the serialised TV drama. *Nurse Betty* earns its R rating in these moments, and given the persistent juxtaposition of the 'tame' and 'unreal' world of *A Reason to Love* with the 'violent' and 'real' events of the film narrative itself it is quite possible to see the use of such imagery as a conscious flaunting of this advantage of film over television, restrained as television is by both the rules set out by the Federal Communications Commission

(FCC), and the sensibilities of the advertisers supporting the networks. At one point this difference is explicitly referred to when Wesley is watching the show and expresses surprise that a lesbian kiss is allowed to be shown on television, while he himself within the film narrative is holding people hostage with a gun and repeatedly cursing.

Following Del's murder Betty transposes the narrative of the soap onto her own life, literally employing medial transposition from television to film. While this is explained in narrative terms as a post-traumatic dissociative disorder, it is easy to see metareferential medial commentary in Betty's character at this stage. Mimi White goes further than simply identifying women as the core audience demographic of serial television drama and outlines specific characteristics common to members of that audience. The profile of the 'ideal' soap viewer is constituted from commitment to specific shows and characters, as well as carrying huge amounts of character and narrative detail in their heads. Knowing the minutiae of all the complex character interactions and plot occurrences over years of programming is one of the main ways in which soaps accrue meaning for their audience, and an interaction between the viewer and the show builds up over time. As White describes it:

> These viewers are commonly represented as being extraordinarily involved – even to the point of excess – in the characters and stories they encounter. The prototypical soap watcher is popularly depicted as a zealous female fan, who is too involved with the fictions she watches but who, in her involvement, becomes an interactive participant in the soap opera worlds which capture her imagination (White, 1994: 338–339).

Betty's character could easily have been created simply from this description. Making her the personification of the ideal soap viewer adds an

element of metareference that allows the film to further comment on the difference between the television and film forms. The contact is intermedial in this instance because this description of a soap viewer is reliant on the delivery method of serialised television narrative. People have favourite films and franchises, and fandom is a real consideration in genre cinema, but for involvement on the level described by White above, regular scheduled viewing over a large period of time is necessary.

It is also notable that over the course of the narrative Charlie develops an obsession with Betty that complements her own with Dr. Ravell, almost entirely through the medium of photography. All Charlie has to track Betty down is a small number of photographs, but throughout the film he is shown constructing an intricate portrait of her as a romanticised ideal from a mixture of these pictures and the brief interviews he conducts with her acquaintances. He begins talking to the photographs and in one scene we are shown a fantasy in which he and an idealised version of Betty embrace and kiss passionately at the edge of the Grand Canyon, all without dialogue and set to *Don't You Know* by Della Reese.

The scene is not necessarily televisual in style because it is without dialogue and is shot at a reasonably wide angle, concluding with a slow zoom out that seems to intramedially evoke a more filmic sense of the climax of a romantic film. The song used is a re-working of Puccini's *Musetta's Watz* from *La Boheme* (Giacomo Puccini, 1896)*,* and Charlie's idealised Betty is dressed like Judy Garland from *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939). The scene's relevance stems from its inclusion in a film already so concerned with the relationship between television and film as

distinct media, but this particular moment is more of a thematic reinforcement of the idea that our perception of the 'real' world is influenced by the popular media we consume. Almost every element of the scene is a cliché in some popular medium or another and this seems to act as a kind of distillation for the exploitation of media clichés throughout the film. *Variety*'s review of the film, for example, highlights that the 'bickering hitmen' of Charlie and Wesley are themselves film clichés, adding to the both intra and intermedial referencing of other works in a metareferential manner (Levy, 2000: 28).

When this aspect of the overall narrative is considered it becomes insufficient to label *Nurse Betty* as intermedially contacting television in order to contain it with a view to reinscribing the superiority of the film form. It could be suggested that, much like *Source Code*, the intermediality in *Nurse Betty* forms the basis for a consideration of media in which all forms are exposed as equally 'unreal', even as the depiction of extreme violence seems to make some kind of claim to greater authenticity on the part of the film medium. This apparently balanced view is shared with the next example of intermediality, the comparatively inexpensive and arguably more complex narrative experience of *The Nines*. Not only this, but the film also features television as its main contacted 'other' medium, although it is dealt with in a very different way.

Complex Narratives and Niche Appeal

Split into three sections, all of which demonstrating strikingly different filmmaking styles, *The Nines* begins as a drama about a Hollywood actor

Gary (Ryan Reynolds) under house arrest following a drug bust and developing a relationship with his publicist Margaret (Melissa McCarthy) and his neighbour Sarah (Hope Davis). There are clear indicators, however, that the audience are not intended to take this as the absolute narrative 'reality'. The intramedial recreation of a musical after twenty minutes for example is arrived at with absolutely no indication of such a tonal shift and is incredibly jarring, accompanied as it is by direct addressing of the camera. After this the accepted diegetic reality begins to fall apart as Gary starts seeing other versions of himself in his house and becomes paranoid about the number nine occurring constantly in his life. At this stage the film is seemingly utilising psychological horror elements in yet more intramediality, but the effect of these intramedial references is to directly challenge the validity of what has been established as the film's central narrative reality. In that sense these can also be seen as metareferential elements, highlighting the artificiality of the situation and therefore, one could infer, the artificiality of the film. At the conclusion of this first section Gary starts explicitly guessing at what kind of narrative contrivance could have arrived his character in this artificial situation. He knows this is not his actual reality, and ponders aloud 'This is all a dream? I'm in a coma? I'm dead? This is Hell or Purgatorium or something?' In the absence of answers, this section of the film ends abruptly with Gary's reality collapsing and giving way to a radically different form.

The second section, titled 'Reality Television', is presented as an episode of a behind-the-scenes reality / documentary series. Shooting a narrative fiction film in a vérité or documentary style is not uncommon and

124

has a long history, particularly in areas of cinema concerned with realism, and social realism in particular. Here though, the use of a free moving handheld camera, the introduction of more naturalised speech, overlapping dialogue and multiple addresses to camera (or the crew behind the camera) result in what has commonly become known as a mockumentary style.[4] While one could certainly argue that this aesthetic is as common to film as to television, the presence of a 'previously on' recap of events thus far clearly places this part of the *The Nines* in intermedial contact with the medium of television. The recreation of a recap montage and the construction of a title card for *Behind The Screen* could be seen as media combination with television, but their incorporation in an otherwise clearly recognisable fiction film ensures the audience see the recreation as imitation and therefore intermedial reference.

The film spends a full thirty minutes accurately recreating the visual style of a reality television show before suddenly and unexpectedly turning back into a narrative film in an abrupt and jarring shift of aesthetic. Gavin (Reynolds, formerly Gary) is walking in the street and speaking to the camera when a passer-by asks who he is talking to. At that moment the camera perspective instantly cuts from the handheld documentary style to a series of clearly static film cameras, obviously not present within the diegesis, nor visible to Gavin or any of the people in the scene. The film editing moves viewpoints rapidly between these cameras to give the viewer a sense of Gavin's surroundings and show that he is not being followed by a film crew, establishing the return to a more traditional classical realist fiction film narrative and visual style. This is accompanied by an abrupt

dropping of the extra-diegetic music used in the documentary, in favour of the film score reasserting itself and establishing a more understated tone of mystery.

Further narrative abstraction is added to this scene at its conclusion, with the camera drawing back to reveal the scenario being played out on a computer screen, and displaying a dialogue box asking if the user wants to 'exit', warning that unsaved changes will be lost. This recreation of a computer interface is another way of highlighting the artifice and construction of both the film and television media. The visual takes on more significance later when a further intermedial link to videogames is revealed, but in this particular instance the image simply evokes the sense of editing a film or a television show, reinforcing the idea that none of what we have seen thus far is real.

From the initial psychological horror musical that claimed to be 'real', through the traditionally more trusted conduit of truth, the documentary, the film has powerfully demonstrated the artificial nature of both forms. Neither narrative film nor 'factual' television has established the actual 'reality' of the narrative, and it is the intermedial technique of recreating television on screen that has allowed the film to equate the two forms as equally 'unreal' or 'untrue'. This fact is reinforced with further metareference when *The Nines* presents a split-screen conclusion to this section consisting of a repetition of Gary's attempts to understand his own narrative (from the first section) and a recap of the film so-far. This is a good example of how, while not mutually necessary, intermediality and metareference do often occur

together, and how one provides an ideal space within which to utilise the other.

Section three presents itself as being set within the narrative fiction of the television show we have seen being produced in section two, so that medium is again recreated, but there is a more considerable intermedial link to videogames here. When Gabriel (Reynolds) is revealed to be a God-like being able to create and destroy entire universes with his thoughts it becomes obvious that his playing of multiple roles and characters in the three different narrative universes we have seen is the result of him creating his own fiction and inserting himself for the purposes of enjoyment. Within the diegesis this is likened to someone playing a videogame, and Susan (Davis) even suggests that it is like an addiction to a game that Gabriel has become too absorbed in. This is thematically reinforced by the fact that during the reality television section we learned of Gavin's fondness for videogames, noting that what his life needs is a 'reset button'.

With the knowledge that he is creating and playing in these universes like a player in a game that character detail takes on greater significance, although the videogame form is never as clearly evoked or recreated as it is in *Source Code*. What is perhaps more important from the perspective of this work is just how the idea of being a 'creator' or 'player' in a game-like world parallels with the act of creating a piece of art in film, television or videogames. Gavin tells us directly what he finds appealing about the games, that they are different worlds existing together, much like the three parallel realities of this film, none of them afforded the status of 'true' or superior over the others. In this particular case they are differentiated not

127

only by having the actors play different characters, but by specifically evoking the form and structures of the distinct media types, classical realist narrative film, reality television and classical realist narrative drama television (the 'one-hour drama' as it is called by Gavin in the second section). In his attempts to create his own 'reality', Gabriel has, in fact, created three distinct pieces of media, a film and two television shows. Arguably this reflects the fact that lived experience in the twenty-first century is so heavily influenced by and mediated through these popular forms that when any attempt is made to represent the 'real' they have to be not just considered but given central importance.[5]

When all of these elements are considered, *The Nines* is a significantly intermedial work. Not only does the film use intermediality to differentiate the three different representations of 'reality' into three separate media types, it also reflects on its own artificiality in a metareferential manner. It even presents an example of metalepsis, by having Gabriel interact with his own creation and thereby perform a metaleptic leap across the boundary between narrative sub-levels of reality. Taken together one can see how these features enhance one another when a film narrative and form is particularly predisposed to highlight and interrogate the borders between media.

The main factor differentiating *The Nines* from *Source Code* and *Nurse Betty*, is that they exist on different levels of 'independence' from a narrative and aesthetic viewpoint. *Source Code* and *Nurse Betty* unquestionably occupy a more mainstream space within independent film, whereas *The Nines* is rather more unproblematically 'indie'. While the films

all deviate to an extent from the traditionally satisfying conclusion of historical Hollywood storytelling, *Source Code* does make an attempt to contain the more complex issues of the story within a happy ending that sees Colter survive the explosion in an alternate dimension. Similarly Betty is able to overcome her trauma in a way that is arguably incredibly unrealistic. She is actually hired to star on *A Reason To Love*, having recovered completely from her delusions and survived the attempt on her life with no adverse consequences. One could suggest that even this is an overt intermedial reference to the more gentle and 'reversible' narrative content of television serial drama that is perhaps not so common in the sphere of the ninety-minute feature film. *The Nines* makes less of a concession to the audience's desire for a clear and satisfying resolution. Despite an explanation of the events of the film, the concept is arguably harder to accept, particularly with the more clearly foregrounded shifting between medial forms that goes entirely unexplained until the ending. The use of split-screen and the detailed focus on the mechanics of constructing a television show in the second section also arguably act to further distance the viewer from the narrative, preventing the sense of immersion achieved by *Source Code*'s or *Nurse Betty*'s core linear progression and something that also sets the film apart from the techniques of popular mainstream cinema.

A key similarity between the films, however, is the specific media they attempt to contact. Both *The Nines* and *Source Code* employ the medium of videogames as a core theme, intermedially evoking the structural element of creation and immersion in a different world, albeit in very different ways.

The Nines arguably has more direct formal intermedial contact with television, something not present in *Source Code*, but that completely dominates *Nurse Betty*. It is perhaps important that all three films are dealing with media perceived as more recent than film itself. These films are not exploring the medium's relationship with its ancestors, but that with its descendants. It is the increased influence of these newer media on our lived experience that is at the heart of the intermedial techniques employed in these films, which is why it is intriguing that they seem to come to similarly ambiguous conclusions as to the importance and/or superiority of the film form.

Source Code, while allowing the non-linear narrative to dominate in the level of reality represented by the videogame medium, holds on to a core, linear narrative in the one plane of reality presented as 'true'. This seems to establish traditional linear narrative film as the 'dominant' form, the only medium capable of giving us the full 'reality' of the situation, but this position is undermined multiple times. When we discover Colter is not physically present in the pod as we have seen him the film medium is first undermined as the agent of 'truth', and then at the end when Colter escapes into the alternate universe through the simulation we are once again left wondering just how 'real' the film has been up to that point, or at least questioning which 'reality' we are to accept, if any. The end of *Nurse Betty* arguably serves a similar purpose, by taking the heightened unreality of the fictional television show depicted throughout and allowing it into the previously distinct film medium. This results in the aforementioned 'happy ending' in which Betty not only escapes the hitmen and apparently

completely recovers from post-traumatic stress disorder with no ill-effects, but also gets a job on the soap opera she loves. Once again this undermines the authenticity of the 'dominant' medium of film, presented throughout as the medium representing the brutal reality of Betty's situation, but ultimately shown to be as formulaic and unreal as the serial drama it has kept at a distance. Similarly, *The Nines* does not present film as the ultimate medium of 'truth' against the form of game or television, rather it highlights that all these media products are constructed mediations, with none able to fully communicate the complete lived experience of its characters.

It is interesting to contrast the approaches of these films to the intermedial analyses considered in Chapter 2, which dealt with films contacting medial forms that predate the film medium. While films like *Age of Innocence* promote the apparent advantages of the film medium over what came before, and films like *Ratcatcher* seem to go the other way by highlighting some of the unique aspects of painting or photography, here we arguably see modern American independent films like *Source Code, Nurse Betty* and *The Nines* willing to be far less conclusive about the relative advantages and disadvantages of film when directly compared with the more modern media forms. One could suggest that when filmmakers deal with media that have appeared since the film medium, they are less confident about dealing with the entirety of that medial form than when they are retrospectively observing a medium perceived as having made way for film as the dominant popular entertainment. There is a sense that television and videogames are continuing to grow, change and evolve in ways that arguably literature, theatre and even film are not, or are at least not

perceived to be. In that situation one can see why it might be easier to assign value judgements about superiority or dominance, or at least characteristic strengths and weaknesses to media when looking back than it is when looking forward.

This ambiguity in regard to the relative authenticity of different media is something that is shared with another of the more challenging narratives in this collection of films, *I Love Your Work*. This title provides an example of how films at the lower end of the budget spectrum can also enter into the intermedial debate. While the film does contain a number of recognisable stars (Giovanni Ribisi, Christina Ricci, Vince Vaughan, Judy Greer), it was made for just $1.6 million and recovered only a fraction of that at the box office. It is impossible to determine what caused the film to prove unsuccessful with audiences but the narrative is notably complex when compared to the films discussed in the chapter thus far. *I Love Your Work* certainly does not mimic the mainstream Hollywood product, instead providing a challenging story about the mental deterioration of a fictional film star Gray (Ribisi), structured in a way that sees the film itself break down into a series of sequences that could exist inside or outside the narrative 'reality' of the film. There are no easy answers for viewers of this film, and no traditionally satisfying resolution.

More importantly, the film evokes other media repeatedly. Photography is introduced as a plot device showing how Gray escapes the stress of his movie star lifestyle, but it soon becomes apparent that the photographs have greater significance and begin to intermedially contaminate the film. A series of photographs of a woman, Shana (Ricci),

dominate the story for Gray. In the film 'reality' they are colourless and blurry photos, shot from a distance, of a woman carrying a basket of laundry. Her face is not even visible in these shots, but over a number of interludes throughout the film Gray constructs an elaborately detailed alternative reality from them, in which he is in love with the woman, who is also a photographer. This alternative reality is shot as a film, there is no attempt to extend sequences of stillness or tableaux in order to recreate photography in film form (as in the example of *Ratcatcher* in Chapter 2), but there is a clear distinction between the photograph reality and the film reality through the use of colour and contrast variations.

The film employs a number of colour filters throughout that help distinguish characters and events. These filters have the effect of dulling the detail of the 'real' world of the film by having much of the mise en scène filled with a particular colour at any one time. Red, blue and yellow all dominate scenes at different times, but in the reality constructed by Gray from his photographs, scenes are seemingly specifically intended to provide contrast, with no single colour overwhelming the visual. These scenes are also bright, almost to the point of overexposure (an artefact commonly associated with photography) and colourful in a way that the rest of the film is not. One could see this as yet another example of metalepsis, as Gray is essentially interacting with his own fictional creation based on his photography. The distinct visual styles ensure that these narrative sub-levels are kept separate for the viewers, at least for much of the film, but Gray's existence in and awareness of both is indicative of a metaleptic leap.

Even more complex medial interactions occur when Gray starts covertly watching and listening to John (Joshua Jackson) and Jane (Marisa Coughlan) after becoming obsessed with their seemingly 'normal' life. In a particularly interesting moment we see him reviewing a number of photographs he has taken of them, alongside a transcript of their conversations. As Gray reads, we hear the conversation happening, and then eventually the film 'reality' simply cuts to John and Jane having the conversation in their home. At this stage it is difficult for an audience to decide whether what is being shown is part of the narrative 'reality', or simply one of Gray's created fictions. Gray is substituted into the scene in place of John near the end of the sequence, and the film cuts back to him sitting alone, suggesting that this has in fact been a fantasy, but this time there has been no heightened colour or contrast to signal metalepsis of the kind that persists in his fantasies of Shana.

Eventually the realities all bleed together, Gray starts transposing Mia (Franka Potente) into his fantasies of Shana, while Shana appears in place of Jane when he imagines John and Jane together. Intriguingly from an intermedial perspective, each time John and Jane feature in Gray's fantasy constructions, they and their surroundings appear bathed in sepia, a colouring most commonly associated with old photographs and a film technique used in other texts to specifically evoke the sense of old photos, for example *The Illusionist* (Neil Burger, 2006). The stark contrast between this and Gray's 'actual' life is best illustrated in the montage sequence in which Gray works with John on a project, seemingly over a number of days or even weeks. Every shot of the montage is coloured to enhance this sepia

tone, until eventually it is revealed that Gray has constructed the entire sequence while taking photographs of the couple and listening in on them with spy equipment from across the street. At this point the film shifts abruptly back into the darker, paler, blue-bathed tint most commonly associated with Gray's 'real' life (particularly when he himself is *being* photographed or filmed, as he is numerous times throughout the film). The difference is jarring enough to draw attention to the colouring rather than simply acting as formal thematic suggestion, and being so inextricably linked to Gray's photography this would constitute intermedial reference.

The notion that this intermediality is intended to highlight the medial boundary is supported by Gray explicitly commenting on the nature of the film medium at Jane's art exhibit. He says her work reminds him of an episode of the television series *The Twilight Zone* (CBS, 1959-2003) in which a man had a stopwatch that could freeze time. He then says 'it's kinda like movies, you can always go back to a film you know because it never changes.' Jane then cautions him about the fate of that character in the show, saying 'you remember what happened to that guy in *The Twilight Zone*? He froze everything and then his stopwatch broke'.

This moment seems to be an explicit attempt to address the obsessive way in which Gray attempts to capture everything in a medium. Gray is a film star and so all of his work is captured on film. He is also repeatedly photographed, demonstrated at regular intervals throughout the film as something he doesn't enjoy — at the climax of Gray's story flashbulbs are equated via the sound design to the gunshots that kill him. In his free time though he is a photographer, attempting to mediate everything himself,

including covertly filming and transcribing John and Jane's lives. Ágnes Pethő's intermedial analysis of *Vertigo* posited that Hitchcock's work provided a metaphor for the medium of film itself as something that attemtps to overcome death by mechanical reproduction, resulting in a 'specular necrophilia' shared by film and painting (Pethő, 2011: 190), but it is also shared by photography. The artificiality of the mediated image is once again presented here in *I Love Your Work* as this kind of obsessive or unhealthy desire to freeze the world as it is at the expense of the enjoyment of the lived experience of reality. This is why it is intriguing that Gray, so clearly a fan of photography himself, would see a piece of art frozen in time and immediately equate it to film rather than photography.

Ultimately Gray's narrative deteriorates to such an extent that it is impossible to determine what is 'real', with characters shifting and changing, moving in and out of implied fantasy sequences and so on. This is further complicated by the ending suggesting that the entire film might have been the fantasy of someone watching another film, but this does not negate the consideration of media contained within Gray's story. *I Love Your Work* provides an example of a cheaper, more explicitly formally and narratively 'alternative' film that engages in intermediality. It also shares an ambiguous position on the value of different media with *Nurse Betty*, *The Nines* and *Source Code*, despite dealing with the older medium of photography.

Semi-Intermedial

As stated at the outset, it would be a mis-representation of this collection of films to end here with a clear-cut distinction between films that fail to meet

the criteria for intermediality and those that demonstrate such techniques fully and integrally. A number of both the more mainstream and the more alternative films proved more difficult to categorise.

That Rob Marshall's *Nine* (2009) contacts the medium of theatre is not surprising given the director's previous film *Chicago* (2002) utilised the medium in a similar way. Both of these films are adaptations, but while *Chicago*'s theatrical source is well-known in popular culture, *Nine*'s is arguably less so. The play *Nine* (Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston, 1982) is actually based on the film *8 ½* (Federico Fellini, 1963), which, being semi-autobiographical in nature, has its narrative focus on a film director. It is important to recognise this lineage of the source material when analysing instances of intermedial contact in the film because it contextualises the motivation for such. Both *8 ½* and *Nine* (1982) are characterised at least in part by repeated use of flashbacks and dream or imagination sequences as Guido (the director protagonist) struggles with translating his vision into something filmable. These are established narrative sub-levels in each case, with Guido's internal space clearly signalled as being part of another plane of reality separate from the 'real' one in which he is struggling to write. These instances are not identified as such by contact with a different medium however. *8 ½* is undoubtedly self-reflexive, and one could argue that it is intramedial in that is utilises different forms of film (particularly fantasy film) to distinguish its different level of 'reality', but at no point is another medium contacted intermedially.

Nine (2009), however, is technically adapted from the stage musical based on *8 ½*, itself narratively focused on filmmaking, so the collision of

the two forms of theatre and film is already inherited from the source material to an extent. When theatre is contacted in *Nine* (2009), it is not done explicitly in narrative terms because each interlude of 'unreality' is framed as Guido (Daniel Day-Lewis) imagining shooting a film, but the performance of the scenes and the nature of his spectatorship implicitly evokes the medium of theatre as, one could suggest, a reference to the additional medium present in the myriad source material for this text. The sets used are large and lavish, they are viewed from a single angle (there is no fourth wall) and the artifice of their construction frames their existence within the film frame, all of which contributes to the evocation of live performance theatre rather than filmmaking.

So, undoubtedly these moments demonstrate intermedial contact with theatre, but because they are explicitly narratively contextualised as a film director imagining his perfect film, and how to shoot it, the theatre itself is not considered as a medium in any larger narrative sense. Indeed, *Nine* (2009) remains staunchly intramedial, much like its source narratives, focused very keenly on the filmmaking process and the specific kind of creative endeavour associated with that medium. The film opens with a detailed speech about editing, something unique to the film medium in this context. Similarly filmic elements even dominate some of the imagined-space sequences, such as one shot in monochrome but with certain elements coloured. Even if theatre is said to be implicitly evoked here, it is being contained and eclipsed by the demonstration of this colouration technique only possible in film.

Another important factor to our tempering of labelling this film intermedial is its difference to Marshall's *Chicago*. While that film embraces its theatrical roots fully, seizing multiple opportunities to evoke the medium of theatre using film forms and allowing those medial differences to complement and clash, *Nine* strictly limits any perceived intermediality to Guido's imaginary moments. These sections act to literally 'contain' theatre, stopping the form from appearing elsewhere and having the opportunity to 'contaminate' the rest of the film. For these reasons *Nine* can be said to employ intermedial techniques, but it does not utilise them to explore or interrogate the medial boundary between film and theatre.

Another ambiguously intermedial title, *The Fall* (Tarsem Singh, 2006), repeatedly moves between planes of reality throughout its narrative as hospitalised movie stuntman Roy (Lee Pace) tells a young girl Alexandria (Catinca Untaru) a story. This film provides another example of metalepsis, as Roy and Alexandria are both able to recognise the artifice of and interact with their imagined narrative creation, even as the audience view them within that narrative sub-level. These two narrative levels are made visually distinct in a number of ways, with the 'imagined' space being considerably more colourful and vibrant than the characters' rather muted 'reality'. There are also different filming styles evident, with wide-angle shots framing large, open vistas and enormous, elaborate sets within Alexandria's story, but a more low-key, naturalistic style in the narrative 'reality'.

One could label this intramediality, particularly given the narrative focus on the character of a movie stuntman, but it is also important to recognise that oral storytelling is also a medium. As mentioned in Chapter

2, Marie Laure-Ryan has written on how the material or modal shift from oral storytelling to printed manuscript and then through to ninety-minute film had a real impact on the nature of narratives. Each form developed a number of expectations of what kind of stories could or should be told in each, constituting qualifying aspects that became inextricably linked to the basic medium. The shift from oral storytelling to manuscript in particular saw a change from loose episodic narrative structure to more tightly plotted drama. In *The Fall* this difference is explicitly highlighted by the nature of Roy's story being so improvised, meandering and fantastical. The structure is loosely episodic, told in short snippets throughout the film, but the details are constantly changing, characters appear and disappear with no regard for cause-and-effect plotting, and eventually it becomes incredibly metareferential when Roy and Alexandria appear in it as themselves and control its direction from within.

While the narrative structuring is evocative of an oral storytelling tradition, the heightened stylistic motivation of the visuals has more in common with animation, and particularly the popularised form of television animation aimed at children. Given that the immediate audience for Roy's story is a young child this would make sense from a narrative perspective and it would also be in keeping with the aesthetic of the heightened, bold colour scheme used to distinguish the story sequences. There are also a number of moments that could be characterised as visually evocative of animation or drawing. One instance in particular employs a striking scene transition from a close-up shot of a priest's face to a wide shot of a clearing in the mountains that mimics the facial close-up by having the priest's hair

occupy the same lines as the mountains in the background, and his facial features drawn on the ground in the form of lines and ridges in the earth.

However intriguing these moments might be as possible intermedial contact they remain completely 'contained' within a narrative that does not attempt to interrogate the medial boundaries. While the main narrative remains firmly centred on a traditionally realist drama about the relationship between Roy and Alexandria, the subtextual thematic concerns could be said to be about storytelling more generally, or even film itself. Where metareference manifests it is concerned with either narratology or the nature of film, such as at the end of the film when Alexandria superimposes Roy into a montage of some of Hollywood's most iconic stunt scenes, without any real attempt to contact different media. It is perhaps here that we observe the possibility for intermediality to occur as a by-product of film's hybrid nature or of an attempt at metareference.

Conclusions

Having explored intermediality in the films of the fully financially independent distributors, the complexity of medial interactions makes clear or simple categorisations of intermedial and non-intermedial impossible. The films discussed in this chapter reference, evoke, represent, recreate and otherwise contact different media in a variety of different ways, to very different ends. Indeed, every one of the films singled out for discussion in the preceding text can be said to be in some way a unique example of medial contact. Nevertheless, certain similarities and patterns can be elucidated, specifically regarding the relative presence or absence of

particular media and the degree to which these films provide alternative or 'indie' aesthetics and narratives.

First of all, despite the American independent film landscape theoretically seeming to providing an ideal space for formal and narrative experimentation along the lines of intermediality, this has not proven to be the case. Possibly the most striking feature of this group of films has been the relative lack of examples that fully demonstrate a significant engagement with their contacted media along the lines of the intermedial reference described in the previous chapter. Films in which other arts and media are included in narratives simply to act as a plot element or to serve as a shorthand for character traits represent the vast majority of texts here. The prevalence of this mere narrative inclusion of other media acts as significant evidence that intermediality, where it is found, is not accidental. One of the biggest debates surrounding intermediality in scholarly writing to-date has been regarding whether or not intermediality is a by-product of film's inherent hybridity, bringing together photography, literature, performance and music into a single medium (Pethő, 2011: 28). The large proportion of films dealing with other arts and media, but not significantly demonstrating intermediality, makes a compelling case for intermediality being a result of particular techniques deployed by filmmakers to evoke other media. These techniques can be utilised for a number of purposes, from an in-depth and text-long consideration of the nuanced differences in the affordances of medial forms, to a brief visual reference serving little more than to reinforce stylistic motivation, but it is important to recognise

other arts and media can be contacted in films that do not engage as fully in intermediality.

In regard to the relative presence or absence of particular media in these films, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions because of the low numbers involved, but in regard to the key examples of intermedial contact cited here television and videogames feature prominently. This could be due to a number of factors, not least of which the shared modal elements between particular media. While photography is commonly cited as film's most closely related direct antecedent, the temporal modality of the two media constitutes a significant difference. This is not the case with film and television, which are indistinguishable by their modalities alone. The viewing environment and method of distribution may be distinct, but on the basic medial level their modalities are identical, which means we identify them mainly by their qualifying aspects. One could argue that it is easier for the contacting medium to evoke media that are so similar, and certainly this is true in a visual sense. In *The Nines* for example, the entire middle third of the movie is designed to mimic a reality television show, requiring just a small shift in style, camera movement and performance. The same is true for *Nurse Betty*, in which an actual fictional television show is created and shown, but this can be done fairly simply, using the same actors, cameras and even sets. A shift in musical tone, performance style and narrative content is all that is needed to clearly identify each medium as separate.

Where videogames are concerned, however, in *Source Code* it is interesting to note that the evocation is entirely narrative with no attempt to visually recreate any commonly accepted style of games. Once again, this

143

could be attributed to the proximity of the modalities of each medium. Videogames have been attempting to look and sound more like films for much of their development as a medium from the 1980s to the present day. The use of writers, actors and full musical scores speak to this closing of the gap between the media on a modal level.[6] Once again, as with photography, the temporal modality provides one of the most significant differences between the basic media, with videogame narratives being so full of repetition as discussed earlier. *Source Code* therefore reaches for this aspect of games to constitute intermedial contact that does not disrupt the basic modality of film to a degree that might be too jarring to a general audience. It would have been a very different kind of intermediality if Duncan Jones had decided to render his characters in 8-bit computer generated sprite imagery (a common cultural visual reference point to the videogame medium). It would also have cost considerably more money than rearranging the screenplay to mimic the repeated trial-and-error nature of the experience of a videogame narrative.

Arguably the most modally different medium from film is the one intermedially evoked the least, namely literature. With this in mind it is perhaps not surprising that in a collection of films made completely independently of the Hollywood majors, intermediality would be found primarily with those media that are modally most similar to film. Resources are at a premium in the independent space at every budget level, and it would naturally require more time, effort and money to intermedially contact a medium with little modal similarity to film (like literature) than those that are more closely analogous (like television and games). The

media most similar to film on a modal level are generally the ones that appeared after film was established as a medium, hence the prevalence of newer media in these intermedial analyses. The exception to this is theatre, which predates film but also greatly resembles it on a modal level. In keeping with the notion of film preferentially contacting similar media though, theatre is recreated in considerably more of these films than other older media such as literature or painting, despite literature being present as an element in more of the films overall.

Another important observation from these analyses regards the way in which the other media are treated when contacted by these films. Given the tendency outlined in Chapter 2 for other arts and media to be 'contained' in films that champion the unique capabilities of film, a number of the titles explored here seem to break from that tradition. *Source Code* explicitly deconstructs the audience's expectation that the primary diegetic level of classical realist film is the full 'truth' by having its protagonist find narrative resolution within the sub-level defined by the videogame medium. *Nurse Betty* consistently highlights the unreality of both film and television forms by mixing intra and intermedial references throughout and by employing an unrealistic ending. A similarly metareferential challenge to the authenticity of any mediated form of entertainment pervades *The Nines*, with the film refusing to credit any medium with exclusive domain over the 'truth', while *I Love Your Work*'s narrative and medial contact becomes so confused that any claim to communicate the complete story of Gray's experience is lost.

One can see this difference from previous examples of intermediality as being related to the general prevalence of newer media over older forms.

It would appear that filmmakers may be less willing to contain or diminish media that are perceived to be continuing to grow, change and influence culture in a way that older media are not perceived to be. Without pre-empting the findings of the following chapters, these differing attitudes towards older and newer media are important and will be reflected throughout the analyses as we move through the independent space into the more financially dependent distributors.

The final important feature to note here is the lack of films from the 1990s. Only nineteen of the seventy-five films considered here are from the years before 2000, with twelve of those coming from the Samuel Goldwyn Company alone. That distributor only existed as an independent entity until 1996 and had a clear preference for traditional literary and theatrical adaptations, with very little in the way of intermedial content to speak of. This relative paucity of material before 2000 does not indicate a lack of interest in mediality in American film of the 1990s however. The lack of films distributed by the fully financially independent studios during this time can be almost entirely attributed to the domination of the sector by Miramax and New Line, whose films will be considered in the next chapter.

Notes

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[1] Issues of exclusion in regard to race and gender have been prevalent in studies from Dietrich (2013) and Eastin (2006) respectively, looking specifically at the options available to players when designing their own avatars for use in online MMORPGs such as *World of Warcraft*. In addition the increased immersion in games provided by the mechanic of the avatar (particularly the user-designed ones) have been suggested as leading to an increased level of aggression in players when playing violent games (Hollingdale & Greitemeyer, 2013: 1862).

[2] A more in-depth discussion of the multiple ways in which the term metalepsis can be applied, and how the term has broadened over time, is provided in Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek, eds., *Metalepsis in Popular Culture* (2011).

[3] Andrew Barker's review for *Variety*, Henry K Miller's review for *Sight and Sound* and Maitland McDonagh's review for *Film Journal International*, as well as popular reviews from *The New York Times* and even the videogame specialist review website *IGN.com* all refer to *Groundhog Day* by name, but none mention the intermedial contact between film and videogame forms.

[4] The Mockumentary style, a shortened name for mock documentary, is well-established in film and has come to prominence particularly in comedy, not least of which in the films of Woody Allen, going back to *Take the Money and Run* (1969) (Royal, 2012: 54).

[5] The increased mediatisation of lived experience is a subject tackled by Mikko Lehtonen (2001), who suggests not only that the involvement of media in our lived experience grows and intensifies over time, resulting in a modern world that is saturated with mediated imagery, but also that this is inextricably linked to a need to consider all media together in a multimodal fashion, something that leads to intermediality and intertextuality becoming more commonplace (Lehtonen, 2001: 76–80).

[6] Videogames have been striving for 'realism' in particular for years, and while this constitutes considerably more than mere visual fidelity, 'perceptual pervasiveness' (Ribbens, 2013: 32) is still an important goal in mainstream game development. This has been aided over time by the huge advances in graphics hardware allowing photorealistic visuals that are closer than ever to live-action film (Stuart, 2015).

Miramax and New Line in the 1990s

Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate demand the attention of this study on the sheer number of their films qualifying for inclusion. 127 of the 274 films considered come from just these three distributors, along with the subsidiaries Dimension and Fine Line, so their intermedial content is crucial to forming an overall view of the deployment of intermediality across American independent film. While Lionsgate was established in 1997 the vast majority of its releases considered in this thesis were released after 2000, and will be explored in the next chapter. Miramax and New Line dominated the American independent space throughout the 1990s and will be considered first here. These two entities warrant a significant and separate consideration not only due to their prolific nature, but also because of their unique industrial circumstances. As two of the most recognisable brands of the independent sector in the 1990s, their acquisition by Disney and Warner Bros mid-way through the decade puts the disributors in a uniquely complex and powerful position. Tzioumakis notes that Miramax and New Line have been labelled 'mini majors' or 'major independents' because of their perceived 'abilitiy to transcend the speciality market' (Tzioumakis, 2012: 16).

Unlike the companies explored in the previous chapter, there is a strong sense of identity evident in these distributors in regard to their intermedial content. This chapter will demonstrate that the specific type of media preferentially contacted, as well as the way in which that intermedial

contact is made, depends greatly on a distinct brand identity on the part of New Line and Miramax, as well as their subsidiary entities. Of particular note here is the fact that Fine Line and Dimension provide two already indie distributors with an opportunity to specialise even further in regard to the content of their releases, which results in three of the most clearly intermedial films in this chapter. Miramax's intermedial contact with the older and more traditionally more respected forms of painting and literature will be considered first by looking at *Basquiat* (Julian Schnabel, 1996) and *The Mighty* (Peter Chelsom, 1998). This will be contrasted with the significantly more 'alternative' approach taken to those same historically established medial forms from Fine Line, demonstrated by *Deconstructing Harry* (Woody Allen, 1997) and *Monster in a Box* (Nick Broomfield, 1992).

The intermedial evocation of the newer popular forms of videogames and television will then be explored in the second section of this chapter. *The Lawnmower Man* (Brett Leonard, 1992) will be considered along with *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999) in order to demonstrate the divergent approaches to games employed by New Line and Dimension Films respectively. Finally, *Pleasantville* (Gary Ross, 1999) will act as an example of a much more complex and centrally important deployment of intermediality from New Line, notably after the company became itself a subsidiary of Warner Bros in 1996.

Miramax's 'Quality' Cinema and the Traditional Arts & Media

Unlike the varied output of much of the fully independent distributors of the previous chapter, Miramax and New Line demonstrate very clear brand

identities in regard to their content. Of specific importance to this study is Miramax's overwhelming preference for adapting from or narratively focusing on the older arts and media of painting, literature and theatre. The 1990s saw little in the way of clear and demonstrable intermediality however, with films like *Ambition* (Scott Goldstein, 1991), *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, 1996) and *Robinson Crusoe* (Rodney K Hardy, 1997) reinforcing the influential indie distributor's desire to utilise the cultural capital afforded by association with older media but not exploring those media in ways consistent with the criteria for intermedial reference. Nevertheless, there are some examples of films that go beyond such a cursory acknowledgement of their contacted medium. *Basquiat* is one such instance of a film that not only interrogates the boundaries between media, but also engages in formal experimentation in-keeping with the aesthetic categorisation of indie film. The true story of Jean-Michel Basquiat is told primarily in the form of a traditional classical realist drama film, but there are specific instances in which the medium is the focus and there is experimentation with evoking other forms.

Basquiat's (Jeffrey Wright) ability to see art in anything is regularly communicated by manipulating the environment in order to externally visualise his internal creativity, such as a scene in the opening of the film in which the sky above the buildings of New York becomes a video of a surfer, but while this does not necessarily evoke the limitations or affordances of any other specific medium, his attempt to edit a music video does. In this moment the frame is entirely filled by footage of the music video, with a highly stylised collection of colourful images edited into a fast-moving and

constant loop, but the music itself is removed. Instead the film audio becomes a discussion about why he prefers it without the music. Basquiat's friend Benny (Benicio del Toro) remarks 'it's boring like this, like looking at a painting, you need the music, you need sound'. This is an interesting comment because while removing the sound does undoubtedly make it closer to painting in the modal sense, it is still primarily a moving image and therefore arguably more like a film than any other medium. This can be read as film attempting to evoke painting and imitate it using specifically filmic form. Here *Basquiat* does not go as far as freezing the image to create a tableau, but the clip used suggests a painterly aesthetic. The movement of the image in the clip is incredibly unrealistic due to there being many missing frames, which provides a very clear distinction between the unreality of the video clip and the 'reality' of the film universe in which Basquiat himself is a character. This unreality is further supported by the heightened use of the colours, which dominate every frame. The video has the appearance of having been saturated with colour, making it further detached from the grounded formal style of the rest of the film. That the footage is looped is also important, because it serves a similar function as would freezing the image completely. One could argue that while the clip is clearly in motion, it does not have a temporal component as it simply keeps looping around. It cannot have a traditionally linear narrative because there can be no beginning or end. When coupled with the fact that there are so many frames dropped in the course of the movement, this makes the video appear far more like a collection of individual pictures, as if to deconstruct

the film form into its constituent medium of photography, albeit with movement and sound.

One more important feature to note about this scene is that the audio chosen to replace the music is the voice of someone contemplating the image. While this does not evoke the basic medium of painting, which is to say any of the material modality of the form, one of the qualifying aspects of the medium is the environment in which it is consumed. Traditionally, framed art is to be viewed, considered and discussed. While the precise location and situation of exhibition need not necessarily be in a gallery, the story of *Basquiat* would certainly suggest that this would be the film's assumed natural state of painting.[1] By combining the aesthetic qualities of the video described previously with a voice-over contemplating the image, *Basquiat* effectively recreates the experience of viewing framed art in a gallery, using specifically filmic formal tools to do so.

The film continues to play with form immediately following this, when Basquiat calls a suicide hotline. While we hear the entire exchange and are shown Basquiat's face, he does not open his mouth at any point during the sequence. Instead the artificiality of the medium is highlighted and Jeffrey Wright's acting performance made the sole focus of the scene as he performs the expressions to match each line without actually delivering the dialogue. This separation of audio and visual reinforces the idea that the image does not need sound (and vice versa) from the previous scene, and as the film moves on we discover that the audio is all Basquiat has been interested in as he has remixed the spoken dialogue into a song.

This passage of the film establishes that there is a desire to challenge the boundaries between media. The film text itself has been visibly edited and toyed with in a similar way to that in which Basquiat himself has been editing and combining media to create art within the diegesis. He seems to have little regard for the notion of keeping distinct media as separate entities, and that is conveyed via formal intermediality in the film. Indeed, when we see him practicing his art, it is not only accompanied by classical music, but the art itself is written text in the form of graffiti. At this stage literature, music, photography and painting have all been contacted and evoked to some extent within the formal components of film, and their status as discrete and separate entities challenged. This continues throughout the film, with a number of depictions of the actual creation of Basquiat's abstract paintings being covered with classical, jazz and even popular music, and the film edited not only to speed up the narrative through these sections but also to create a visual rhythm in synchronous with the audio.

In the film analyses provided in this thesis so far the relationship between film and the media evoked in terms of a perceived social and cultural hierarchy has been an intriguing consideration, and this continues to be the case here. It remains difficult to ascertain whether the media can really be presented as different but truly equal parts of a spectrum of artistic forms due to the foregrounding of the traditional narrative film in every instance. In this case, while Basquiat both creates and is exposed to apparently beautiful and meaningful artworks throughout, his character remains resolutely emotionless and apparently detached until he sees an edited collection of home video footage of Andy Warhol (David Bowie)

153

following his death. This is a reinscription of film as the primary, or certainly the most 'real' medium, particularly given the fact that a traditional narrative drama about race-relations in the artistic community and a love story has totally dominated this particular text outside of these occasional scenes of experimentation and intermediality. It is still film that has told this story, demonstrated its ability to evoke all of the other media important to Basquiat's conception of art as whole, and been able to awaken the emotion not just in the protagonist but also in the viewers. This apparent willingness to afford film the status as the primary mediator of 'truth' over and above other art forms can also be identified in another Miramax film providing a thoughtful consideration of literature. *The Mighty* (Peter Chelsom, 1998) is an adaptation of the novel *Freak The Mighty* (Rodman Philbrick, 1993), and takes a certain amount of stylistic influence from its literary origin, but interestingly employs the medium of painting via tableau vivant as a way of doing so.

The film is separated into chapters, displayed on the screen in the apparently hand-written text of the child narrator Max (Elden Henson), who is ironically dyslexic given that he is presented as the author of the story. In the opening of the film, immediately after showing the text declaring the beginning of chapter one, and showing the pencil writing the words being spoken by the narrator, he begins to describe a famous art work. Because he does not know the name of the painting, which is *American Gothic* (Grant Wood, 1930), he has to communicate the image in purely linguistic terms. While using the work to describe his grandparents he says:

> I saw a painting in a book once, must be famous. This old dude and his
> wife standing in front of a farmhouse or something. This dude's
> holding a pitchfork, and he looks like he never smiles, and his wife
> don't look too much happier.

This description would be the extent of *The Mighty*'s reference to *American Gothic* if it were still in the form a novel, but here in the film form it can support the description with a visual. In this case Gram (Gena Rowlands) and Grim (Harry Dean Stanton) are framed side-by-side in the same orientation as the painting, they are given wardrobe options to closely mimic the clothes worn in the original, and Grim is given a long-handle mop to hold in a similar way to the pitchfork in *American Gothic*. One might assume that the creation of a tableau like this would be a uniquely filmic element that has been used here to support the description of another medium. As an element it does seem to specifically evoke the sense of experiencing the medium of painting in film, albeit through the prism of a novelistic description, but tableaux vivants also have a significant presence in classical literature. Dominique Jullien (2013) identifies the intermedial potential of the tableaux vivants in Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbo* (1862). She writes that 'the tableau vivant, combining theatre, painting, photography and sculpture, appears to be a kind of nexus, at the intersection of various genres and media which Flaubert sought to either emulate or rival in his writing' (Jullien, 2013: 1).

Interestingly, Jullien recognises this use of tableau and an overall painterly aesthetic of Flaubert's work as a key element of why the work was so readily adapted both to the stage and then eventually to the screen. The emphasis on the visual throughout the novel, according to Jullien,

'anticipates the high-cholesterol Hollywood Technicolor peplums that would follow fifty or a hundred years later' (Jullien, 2013: 2). Indeed, the original *Salammbo* has been adapted into a series of graphic novels in more recent times (1980–1986) and even a videogame (2003) due at least in part to a 'bridging of the gap' between medial forms such as literature, painting, photography and theatre. That such intermedial concerns were being explored in literature so long ago might deny the technique of tableau in film a certain immediate relevance to the debate around the use of intermediality itself, but it also conversely affords such film scenes as much relation to the literary form as to the theatrical or pictorial.[2]

This needs to be viewed in the context of *The Mighty* as a whole, in which a book based on the legend of King Arthur is a key central element. Throughout the narrative this book is referenced, evoked and directly quoted, although the text itself is not a real one, thus removing this reference from the realm of intertextuality. In keeping with the playfully media-aware tone of the opening riff on literary writing and the recreation of a tableau vivant, the film goes on to evoke the experience of reading this book a number of times. Of particular note is a sequence in which Freak (Kieren Culkin) is helping Max to read. Freak tells Max to close his eyes while he reads a passage of Arthur's tale aloud, in order to be able to recreate the visual the words describe. Freak then outright states that 'every word is part of a picture. Every sentence *is* a picture. All you do is let your imagination connect them together.'

In this instance the film's form does not alter to enhance the narrative evocation of literature. While Max closes his eyes in order to

appreciate more fully the words, no visual interpretation of them is provided. From a narrative perspective this could be seen as a representation of his unsuccessful attempt to conjure an image from the lengthy quotation. He does not remain unsuccessful, however, as later in the film, as the boys become closer and Max understands Freak's connection to books more keenly, a recreation of the words enters the visual mode of the film in a form of stylistic motivation. Once the boys start viewing themselves as knights, brief moments in which their imagined round-table personas emerge on-screen provide insight to their internal thoughts and feelings in visual terms in a way analogous to literature's ability to describe such content in plain text. These could arguably even be described as moments of metalepsis, although certainly not to the degree described in the previous chapter. It is important to temper these observations with the fact that *The Mighty* remains a steadfastly traditional narrative drama film invested heavily in delivering a largely classical realist story about the relationship between two young boys, far more than it is about the limitations and affordances of different media. The contact with literature allows for moments of playfulness with both form and narrative, but all are in the service of enhancing that central realist core narrative rather than attempting to disrupt or subvert the film experience.

There are examples of films that allow that intermedial content to constitute more of the overall experience however, and in the case of *Deconstructing Harry*, another title contacting literature specifically, the film makes a consideration of narrative in literature the focus of the text. It is worthy of note that this film was released by Fine Line features, which

was established by New Line in 1990 while they were still fully independent in order to differentiate films they considered to be of a more pronounced 'indie' aesthetic.[3] *Deconstructing Harry* is an example of the slightly more experimental nature of the films distributed through this more specialised division as it not only demonstrates a more central concern with interrogating the construction of media, but in doing so also deviates somewhat from the grounded, naturalistic style cultivated by Allen as an auteur.

A number of Allen's other films have been part of the collection of films considered in this study, as *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994), *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995) and *Celebrity* (1998) were all distributed by Miramax in the 1990s, but it is arguably only Allen's single film from New Line under the specialist Fine Line banner that deviates far enough from the accepted construction of traditional classical realism to be considered a truly alternative film and an intermedial interrogation of media boundaries.[4] *Deconstructing Harry* follows Allen in the title role as novelist Harry Block, who recounts events in and passages from his own life filtered through the fictionalised accounts he has provided of them in his numerous books. For the viewer this means watching a series of linked vignettes starring numerous different actors essentially all playing thinly veiled analogies of Harry, his wife, his lover and his friends.

Stylistic motivation in the form of accentuated artificiality is in evidence right from the beginning of the film, in which we see a woman exiting a taxi and entering a building. There appears to be just one take of this event, but jump-cutting and elliptical editing is utilised in such a way as

to highlight the unreality of it. During the opening two minutes, interspersed with the opening credits, we see this one act played out four times. In each of the four instances, however, the event does not play out in a continuous, linear manner. Instead jump-cuts move the action forward and backwards in a way that is disruptive within the context of classical or even postclassical realism, having far more in common with avant-garde and experimental filmmaking. The woman is seen paying for the taxi an instant after the driver had not yet pulled to a stop for example, only to cut back to the car stopping immediately after. Allen is known for his cinematic allusions, and this sequence certainly puts one in mind of the kind of editing prevalent in the work of Allen's primary claimed influences such as Ingmar Bergman and Jean-Luc Godard. It is how this technique is dispersed throughout the film text that moves it from being intramedial, or even intertextual, into being more intermedial. These jump cuts and the chaotic editing style are only present during the sequences in which we are presented Harry's 'real life'. During the passages presented as Harry's written fiction the film form becomes far calmer and more grounded. There are no stylistic flourishes here, although there are a number of moments in which the artificiality of Harry's fiction is highlighted by narrative unreality or fantasy. In one particularly memorable example of this Death visits Harry's home, and eventually his story becomes a fantasy adventure in which he must travel to Hell to rescue his girlfriend Fay (Elizabeth Shue) from the Devil (Billy Crystal).

Essentially these elements contribute to a consistent metalepsis in which both a narrative reality and created fiction are presented in the film

159

text, but they are kept effectively distinct through the use of stylistic techniques unique to each. In this particular case the created fiction is expressly stated to be literature written by Harry, and so the fantasy narrative elements, linear, traditional editing and Harry's third person omniscient narration are specifically intended to represent literature on film. Interestingly, however, Allen cleverly plays with this idea by inserting film-specific elements into the recreation of Harry's writing. One particularly striking example is the inclusion of a short story about Mel (Robin Williams), who is a film actor but is literally out of focus. In a smart visual joke Allen manages to have Williams visually appear out of focus in every scene he inhabits, whether he is in the foreground or background, and even when he is in direct contact with other in-focus characters. This blurred state is visible to the characters and becomes the central plot element, thus turning the vignette into something that would ironically be very difficult to communicate in written text.

This could be read as a highlighting of the medial boundary by way of demonstrating how the same information can communicate entirely different meanings when given different medial forms. If someone is described as being out of focus, or lacking focus, that can be taken a number of ways. One might ascribe a particular mental state of confusion or aimlessness to that character, firmly placing the concept in a character-development, internal or even sub-textual place in the overall experience of the text. Indeed, within *Deconstructing Harry* itself, it is expressly stated by Helen (Demi Moore) that 'your real life is so chaotic and your writing is so much more controlled and stable', so the metaphor is not difficult to

translate. However, by presenting 'being out of focus' visually, the description is realised in a literal way. That everyone around Mel immediately reacts to it and is concerned about his being unfocused is a source of comedy, but it is also a way of directly comparing the filmic and literary forms in regard to their respective approaches to representation. In order to demonstrate a lack of focus in the character or mental sense, a film would need to find other ways to do so as third-person omniscient narration is, while not necessarily rare, a less-common element and seen as a somewhat undesirable technique in film.[5] By directly translating content from one form to another a farcical comedy situation has occurred entirely due to the medial difference.

Whether or not this is a conscious or deliberate attempt to interrogate the boundary between film and literature, the artificiality of Harry's creations is reinforced once he starts interacting with them. Over the course of the film, there is an evolution from having a number of different actors portraying his author-surrogate characters, to Harry eventually accepting that they are all about him, at which point Allen appears in the vignettes himself. Following this there is even more blurring of the boundary between the two narrative realities when Harry meets Ken (Richard Benjamin), the author-surrogate in the very first vignette. Ken is fully aware of his status as a fictional character and proceeds to show Harry a film version of events that occurred without him present.

At this point we are witnessing a film of events in Harry's 'real' life, but it is being shown to him by one of his created characters, written to essentially be himself, which means that this sequence is, in fact, another of

Harry's creations. One would have to say that the binary established between the narrative realities has broken down by this time, with fantasy elements such as this metalepsis involving Harry and Ken infiltrating Harry's 'reality', and the following passage of his 'real life' playing out without any of the jump-cutting stylisation that has been prevalent up to that point.[6] When Harry himself suffers the same out-of-focus affliction we saw in Mel earlier it becomes impossible to distinguish the creation from the reality, which in turn makes the artificiality of the entire film text far more apparent. Harry's climactic realisation in his discussion with Richie (Bob Balaban), who is now dead, is that he is 'no good at life', but that he 'writes well'. He makes an explicit distinction between his life and his art, saying 'I can't function in the world we have […] I'm a failure at life'. Writing, however, is 'a different story, because […] I can manipulate the characters and the plots' to which Richie replies 'You create your own universe, you do that but that's, you know, much nicer than the world we have I think'.

This direct narrative addressing of the artificiality of Harry's writing lends some support to the idea that the formal elements described above form part of an overall strategy of interrogating the medial boundary, although this should be tempered by the fact that this film remains a deeply personal, character-driven comedy. While metalepsis is undoubtedly present, and effectively segregates the narrative reality from the fiction, at least for a time, all of the formal elements employed to do so are specific to film. From out-of-focus actors to jump-cut editing, these are film techniques that have no immediately identifiable analogues in literature, so it is difficult to identify them as being an attempt to 'recreate' literature on-screen.

162

Instead, literature is simply presented as another different but parallel form of narrative, in this case identified primarily by a slightly increased tendency towards the fantastical. Nevertheless, all of this representation is done in the service of communicating the inability of the protagonist to accept his mistakes and see his own life objectively, instead creating numerous fictions that either soften him into a more sympathetic protagonist or excuse his actions in some way. One might see this as yet another instance in which the film form, the one in which Harry's 'real' life is presented, is the medial form best suited to showing the actual reality of a given situation. It is only outside of Harry's creations that we are shown the true reality of this man and his flaws, as well as the 'unedited' reactions of the people around him. It is ironic indeed then that the film in these moments should eschew cinematic realism in the formal sense in favour of taking on a symbolically chaotic visual language.

The use of intermediality in *Deconstructing Harry* aligns with a tendency for a number of the films distributed by Fine Line to differentiate themselves from the 'mainstream' using the presence of other media. *Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle* (Alan Rudolph, 1994) recreates some of Dorothy Parker's poetry in direct addresses to camera that act as scene transitions. The contrast between these sequences, in monochrome, and the rest of the diegesis, in colour, adds to a sense of the 'alternative' without fully interrogating the medial difference in the way Allen's film does. One can identify a similar motivation in *Pecker* (John Waters, 1998) which conspicuously highlights photography throughout. This forms a crucial part of how that film is presented as divergent from the mainstream, with

163

Pecker's (Edward Furlong) obsession with capturing everything in photography presenting an 'alternate' camera, and therefore alternate form, to that of the film.

Monster in a Box is another example that contacts literature, much like *Deconstructing Harry*, but its approach is notably different. The source of the film, however, is not just literary, as the movie consists of Spalding Gray reading aloud one of the stage monologues he became famous for performing throughout the 1980s.[7] In this particular case, Gray's monologue was published in book form before the film was made, and so one could suggest the film is simply a literary adaptation, but because the monologue itself was written for the stage (and performed in theatres), one could also argue it is a theatrical adaptation. There are elements of both media in *Monster in a Box*, and an added literary dimension in the fact that it is actually about the process of Gray writing his first novel, *Impossible Vacation* (1992).

Rather than establish a separate, fantastical filmic narrative reality in which to contain that which is expressly stated to be 'literary content' as Allen does in *Deconstructing Harry*, Broomfield's film is a much more direct translation across a medial boundary. The content of Gray's text is not adapted into a more traditionally accepted film narrative but presented, essentially in its original state, as a monologue performed by Gray himself to the camera. This constitutes the entirety of the film, at no point utilising cuts to other times or locations — there is no elliptical editing here, with the film most resembling filmed theatre. Supporting this, there is an audience, who remain unseen but can be heard reacting to the story, and the only

obvious visual element that could be described as filmic is the basic editing together of different camera perspectives. While this sometimes seems to act only as a visual cue reflecting a shift in the story, akin to an act-break or perhaps more appropriately a new paragraph, there are other occasions in which the camera cutting is more integral to the construction of Gray's narrative.

At times the cutting becomes fast and chaotic such as when Gray describes the hectic bustle of downtown Los Angeles. Moments like this are accompanied by particular sound and lighting effects on the stage behind Gray to evoke a mood appropriate to the events of the story, in what is the only other way the events of the narrative are translated outside of the plain spoken text monologue. By combining camera cuts and sound effects (plus music) with Gray's reading performance, the content of the text is not only translated but also enhanced. These elements help to communicate a sense of confusion in the case of his description of LA, and a sense of relaxation when he describes one of his more unproductive writing days via the imagery of watching the sun rise and fall over the course of a number of hours. In moments intended to convey urgency or panic, the language used in the monologue becomes denser, with shorter words packed into shorter sentences that pick up the pace of novelistic writing and would encourage a reader to speed up progression through a passage. Gray's performance of the monologue reflects this as his speech audibly quickens, along with the continued use of stage effects like lighting shifts and sound effects to further enhance the description. The camerawork simply supports these features, acting almost as a third medial analogue and presenting itself as a filmic

165

equivalent of techniques common to both literature and theatre, therefore engaging in subtle intermediality that implicitly enhances the sense of experiencing the different media being contacted. One could see this evocation of theatre as relatively subtle because all of these techniques are fully subservient to the core element of Gray's monologue. However, the removal of elliptical editing, the absence of characters and the isolation of the narrator as the only narrative element makes the film sufficiently divergent from the expected nature of mainstream film that the audience is undoubtedly invited to explicitly reflect on the artificiality of the medium being presented.

One other intriguing use of the camerawork to enhance a largely theatrical performance is to artificially create a dialogue between two characters by utilising shot-reverse-shot editing. This common film technique has become well-established in the traditional Hollywood 'invisible style', such that it could be said to constitute a qualifying aspect of the medium itself.[8] Used to orient the viewer in the three dimensional space portrayed on film via the interaction of two characters, shot-reverse-shot editing most commonly allows film to portray a conversation, showing the audience both participants as they speak back-and-forth. In *Monster In a Box*, however, there is only ever one character on screen. While he reads the text aloud, often recounting dialogue in anecdotal form, there are moments in which he must play both characters in a conversation, and shot reverse-shot editing is used to enhance this. When he describes his meeting with a top movie studio executive for example, he speaks both as himself, with an awed, unassuming, almost naïve tone, as well as the executive, whom he

166

portrays as a more confident, direct and dominating figure. While his performance provides a large part of the distinction, having the camera cut to either side of him as he turns into it for every response provides a uniquely filmic element to plain literary text, or even theatrical performance. It even allows Gray to occupy slightly different positions in the film frame to more completely convey the executive's overbearing nature as he leans forward and dominates the frame, quite in contrast to his portrayal of himself from a slightly more withdrawn position.

This is at once a recreation of literary and theatrical forms, in the sense that the sole acting performance directly at the audience is something associated with theatre, particularly Gray's exaggerated characterisation of the two participants of the conversation, but there is an important parallel with the literary form here too. One actor performing two roles in a conversation simultaneously is a direct visual recreation of a single omniscient narrator recounting that conversation in the form of text. Generally, where a third-person omniscient narrator is present in a literary text, it is their single perspective from which the entire narrative is communicated, and so Gray's performance of both sides of the conversation here is arguably a far closer translation of novelistic writing than if there had been two actors, each occupying a role in the story itself. One could see this as an example of intermediality in which the authenticity of the recreation of the source medium is precisely what makes it look unusual in another, therefore highlighting the difference between medial forms specifically due to how little is altered in terms of translating or adapting it in some way. This instance acts as an effective demonstration of how much audiences rely

on commonly accepted conventions of cinema: the qualifying aspects of the medium, and what can be done in a creative sense to undermine that reliance.

There can be little argument about the 'indie' credentials of these films too. *Deconstructing Harry* and *Monster in a Box* both deviate significantly from the mainstream Hollywood output of the time. From Allen's disorienting jump-cuts and fantasy metalepsis, to Gray's bold solitary acting performance, in both content and technique these films are fully in alignment with the formal and aesthetic understanding of 'independence' outlined in Chapter 3. They are arguably more unproblematic examples of such independence than the other films discussed here, such as the fairly traditional childhood friendship drama of *The Mighty* and the largely romantic account of *Basquiat*. While it would be unfair to label Miramax's output in the 1990s less aesthetically 'independent' than the films of Fine Line there is undoubtedly a higher concentration of more challenging and alternative content from New Line's subsidiary studio in the collection of films considered here than Miramax, or even its own parent company in the 1990s. Aside from the films discussed thus far, Fine Line distributed the Harmony Korine films *Gummo* (1997) and *Julien Donkey Boy* (1999), the latter of which was held up as a prime example of American independent aesthetics by King (2005: 65–68). This in addition to noted classic examples of American independence such as *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991) and *Night on Earth*.

It would be fair to say that many of Miramax's releases up to 1999, in which other arts and media are a narrative or production factor, fall into

the category of 'prestige' picture, which was so important to the marketing of independent film in America at the time. As King (2009) has pointed out, earning award nominations has been historically a significant concern for Miramax, who were exploring a multitude of ways to consistently replicate the crossover hit status of *sex lies and videotape* throughout the 1990s. While this often involved exaggerating the risqué or controversial content of otherwise relatively tame film dramas, it was also an important part of independent film strategy across the board to appear 'higher quality' than what was being offered by the mainstream majors.[9] Award nominations and wins certainly help cement that perception, so it is not surprising to find historical dramas like *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993), literary adaptations like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Emma* along with traditional character-based emotional dramas like *Music of the Heart* (Wes Craven, 1999) on this list.

One could argue that by comparison New Line's release slate during the period was notably less 'indie' than its close rival. Action thriller *The Lawnmower Man*, popular comic-adaptation comedy *The Mask*, and video-game adaptation *Mortal Kombat* (Paul W S Anderson, 1995) were all released or scheduled for release even before Warner Bros. acquisition of the company. These films were not going to compete with Miramax's costume dramas and literary adaptations for award nominations, instead attempting to match Hollywood's blockbuster aesthetic and seemingly compete with the majors on their own terms. By way of comparison, however, it is arguably more interesting to see the divergence between this output and that of its subsidiary. We have already seen some of the alternative visions being released by Fine Line at this time, but even their

more traditional fare provided interesting spins on classic entertainment genre cinema, such as the quirky romantic comedy *Naked in New York* (Daniel Algrant, 1993) and the offbeat historical drama *The Legend of 1900* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1998). This in addition to the considerable presence of one of American independent cinema's most notable and high profile auteurs Robert Altman, who directed *The Player* (Robert Altman, 1992), *Short Cuts* (Robert Altman, 1993) and *Kansas City* (Robert Altman, 1996) as well as producing *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*. Films from each of these distributors, clearly offering formal and aesthetic independence to different degrees and in different ways, also deal with the presence of other arts in media in ways that reflect these divergent brand identities.

New Line, Newer Media

As an illustration of how the intermedial content of films from a particular distributor can correlate with their preferred style of content, New Line presents a significant focus on newer media within its films that utilise intermediality to a significant degree. *The Lawnmower Man* was quite an early example of how film would attempt to deal with the presence of videogames, and demonstrates a huge contrast from how the form would be incorporated into later films like *Source Code*, discussed in the previous chapter. In *The Lawnmower Man* the videogame form is not recreated in the form of a narrative structuring or an attempt to mimic interactivity with the illusion of branching storylines. Instead Brett Leonard's 1992 thriller taps into a wider public perception of the medium and utilises a particular visual style that had become synonymous with (and has since become iconic of) a

170

particular time and place in the evolution of the videogame form. It is the three-dimensional computer generated polygonal shapes and environments that represent everything considered to be 'in the computer' in this film, whether that is a videogame or the internet. Such a lack of distinction between those entities indicates not just a surface-level engagement of a broad and complex medium, but also reflects the fact that new media was still in its infancy in regard to mainstream public understanding and acceptance at the start of the 1990s.

It is striking that *The Lawnmower Man*'s position on new electronic media is that it is essentially a corrupting force, transforming Jobe (Jeff Fahey) from the ultimate innocent (a developmentally challenged lawnmower man) into a supreme villain with the capability to destroy the world. Besides this, the medium also has a detrimental effect on Dr. Angelo (Pierce Brosnan), whose obsession with developing the technology to enhance knowledge causes him to be negligent towards his partner and ultimately drive her away, leaving him fundamentally unhappy. Whatever one could say about the relative complexity of a theme suggesting knowledge and/or intelligence to be an undesirable end, the means by which it is delivered is identified as this new electronic media, which is simply given the role of a corrupting force (explicitly equated with drugs) in an otherwise fairly traditional action thriller.

Sequences of intermediality in the film are entirely computer generated, which was not common for film at the time. The first fully computer generated film *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995) appeared three years later and drew much attention for its ground-breaking use of

technology, but much like *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), the purpose of those graphics was to at least closely approximate the real world. The dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park* won the film a BAFTA and an academy award for visual effects work in 1994 thanks to the ability of Industrial Light and Magic to make the computer generated elements indistinguishable from actual film footage. While *Toy Story*, being an animated feature, was able to rely on a distinctly cartoon aesthetic to excuse any discrepancy between their 3D modelling and what an actual live-action film would look like, there was still a clear attempt to ground the film in an approximately 'real' visual style. *The Lawnmower Man* on the other hand, predating both these titles and coming from a fully independent distributor, utilised the technology to an entirely opposite end. The computer generated imagery in the film is explicitly intended to look unreal. It is designed to represent its medium as 'other', to highlight the fact that those sequences are not real. The 'real' is reserved for the majority of the film that follows the traditional Hollywood model of live-action footage and is kept separate, partially due to a complete lack of metareference or self-awareness in the narrative in terms of viewing its own medium as equally artificial.

The visual style employed to make this differentiation was one familiar to much of the public at the time because of coverage of technological advances in the field of videogames, and particularly virtual reality. Amusement arcades had been a popular social destination for young people for some time leading up to the early 1990s, but before the introduction of virtual reality in the early 90s there had been declining interest.[10] At this time personal computers had developed the ability to

render three-dimensional models, something that had never been possible before, leading to gaming becoming more popular in the home. *Wolfenstein 3D* (Id Software, 1992) is not the first 3D videogame but it was the first to allow the player freedom of movement within a 3D world with visuals that resembled an actual location. This sparked a huge number of similar and successful titles through the 1990s and beyond such as *Doom* (Id Software, 1993) and *Duke Nukem 3D* (3D Realms, 1996). An important part of revitalising interest in the arcades in the face of this competition was the presence of virtual reality, and specifically relevant to the visuals of *The Lawnmower Man*, the system known as Virtuality. These were large arcade installations players could sit in (or stand in) while playing a game with an immersive 360-degree field of view provided by a bulky headset, giving the illusion of actually being located inside the game world. Virtuality became highly visible for a short period between 1991 and 1994, the key reasons for which are outlined by Damien McFerran:

> They were willing to self-promote to publicise their vision of how VR worked, and took a route to adoption through the amusement sector – an industry that was at the time trapped in a downward spiral, in need of technology to distance itself from the erosion started by the home console revolution (McFerran, 2014).

While this technology achieved recognition as a potentially revolutionary one for other purposes for research, social interaction and even the military, this potential was never fully realised and so the system became uniquely linked with a specific period of gaming in the early 1990s.[11] It is specifically the 'primary-colour cartoon world' (Millar, 1993: 15) of Virtuality games like *Dactyl Nightmare* (W Industries, 1991) and *Legend Quest* (W Industries, 1991) that *The Lawnmower Man* recreates visually, and it would

be an aesthetic familiar even to those with no experience of the system itself. The style could be seen in a number of early three-dimensional videogames like *Driller* (Incentive Software, 1987) and *Star Fox* (Nintendo, 1993) as well as commercials and music videos of the time. As early as 1985 the music video for *Money For Nothing* (Dire Straits, 1985) became the first fully computer generated music video, one described by MTV itself as groundbreaking.[12] French television show *Quarxs* (Canal+, 1990–1993) was entirely computer generated and this was emulated by children's animated series *Reboot* (ABC, 1994-2002). However, despite appearing in a number of different media, the aesthetic remained firmly associated with virtual reality and gaming more generally. This led to the colourful, polygonal visual style becoming the dominant perception of the videogame medium.

Given how integral this aesthetic consideration is to the way *The Lawnmower Man* constructs its separate narrative levels, it is notable that its sequel abandons this visual differentiator altogether. In *The Lawnmower Man 2* (Farhad Mann, 1996), Jobe's virtual world is set apart merely in terms of what the characters can do physically. The visual style across both virtual and 'real' worlds remains entirely grounded in live-action film with only limited use of computer generated elements. Owing to the narrative conceit that the film is set in 'the future' there seems to be a confident suggestion here that it is the natural course of evolution or 'progression' for videogames to move closer to representation in the form of photorealistic visuals, becoming more like film. We have discussed previously the possibility of an assumed superiority of the film form that may be inherent

in some uses of intermediality. Certainly the 'advancement' of the virtual reality worlds and games from the first film to its sequel seems to support a perception of videogames as simply trying to achieve the visual fidelity of film as an end-goal, therefore assuming the superiority of film. This is particularly true given that the films do not address the differing limitations and affordances of the contacted media, or interrogate the artificiality of film together with that of the virtual space. Games, and the rather more nebulous 'online' or 'computer' world, are simply used to service a traditional action-thriller film plot in both *The Lawnmower Man* and its sequel, but this would certainly seem consistent with the more mainstream Hollywood sensibilities of films released by New Line at this time.

Videogames are contacted by Miramax in a very different way, much more in-keeping with their more specifically 'indie' style of films released in the 1990s, in *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999). This film was released through Miramax's subsidiary Dimension Films, which was originally established in 1992 to exclusively release horror films. Generally, these would be more mainstream Hollywood genre fare, albeit with a necessary 'indie' twist or quirk to the titles. *eXistenZ* could be labelled a thriller, and has horror elements, but the approach of Cronenberg differs significantly from Leonard's fairly straightforward action film. One detail the films apparently share, at least initially, is the negative attitude towards videogames and virtual reality as a medium and a technology in general. *eXistenZ*'s narrative reality is a near-future dystopia in which games have dominated people's recreational time to the extent that activities such as skiing in the real world are uncommon. The film does not represent games

in the form of a commonly recognisable visual style however, instead opting to recreate some of the more subtle but no-less integral aspects of how virtual gaming worlds actually work. Indeed, there is also a great deal more subtle mixing of the two forms of film and videogame present here, with a certain amount of self-awareness of the constructed nature of film as well as the clearly foregrounded artificiality of the game world.

When the film explicitly presents Allegra (Jennifer Jason Leigh) and Ted (Jude Law) as entering the game world, the notion of there being a 'goal' is quickly raised by Ted. While Allegra dismisses his concern, claiming that you cannot know what the goal is until you start playing, there are nevertheless clear indicators that progress must be earned. The narrative cannot continue unless the player performs actions in a specifically mandated way. This fact is demonstrated by their initial conversation with the owner of the shop within the game. While they are able to obtain information from him initially, when Allegra asks a more specific subsequent question, the shop owner, D'Arcy (Robert A Silverman) reverts to introducing himself. This is particularly jarring as it seems to ignore the fact that they had been speaking previously, but it is an accurate recreation of the behaviour of non-player characters in many games. Specifically, it is a recreation of what has become known as the 'conversation tree' present in many videogames as an imitation of verbal interaction. Players choose from a number of predetermined phrases or questions and characters controlled by the computer can only reply with one of a limited number of responses. Any deviation from the 'correct' conversational route on the player's part often resets the encounter to the beginning, resulting in a jarring

abandonment of established progress within the 'conversation' (Serdar Sali et al, 2012). Another aspect of this scene evoking that particular element of videogame play is the fact that Ted and Allegra can freely talk to each other in front of D'Arcy without him asking questions or becoming suspicious. He only responds when spoken directly to, and apparently only has a number of responses to offer. The evocation of videogame dialogue is especially evident when another non-player character Yevgeny (Don McKellar) repeats a line of dialogue, in precisely the same tone, when Ted fails to respond adequately.

Additionally, the agency of the protagonists is repeatedly questioned. Ted saying something without intending to is explained by Allegra as an unavoidable part of the story. She says: 'it's your character who said it […] There are things that have to be said to advance the plot and establish the characters, and those things get said whether you want to or not'. There is also an example of this in the Chinese restaurant, when Ted devours a meal he claims to find disgusting, and then constructs a gun out of the bones while claiming he has no knowledge of how to do so. This lack of agency is more in keeping with the form of a film, as does the fact that both Ted and Allegra claim to experience the cuts from scene to scene in much the same way the audience do. This statement implies that there is no 'fabula' for them, all they experience is the 'syuzhet' of the story, much as in one of the defining criteria of classical realist narrative film discussed in Chapter 3.

These features all contribute to a mixing of film and videogame forms in a way that accentuates the artificiality of both. By evoking the

mechanics of videogame interaction, such as the behaviour of artificial intelligence, instead of a specific visual aesthetic, *eXistenZ* explores the medial boundary in a more insightful way than the simple 'othering' of *The Lawnmower Man* for example. Interactivity is not possible within the modality that constitutes film's 'basic' medium, but by providing the protagonists with interactivity in a narrative world employing videogame mechanics that interactivity is effectively recreated using filmic techniques. This is similar to the evocation of interactivity in *Source Code* in the sense that the audience themselves may not have agency within the narrative but can share that of the protagonists to an extent that significantly differentiates the experience from the expected nature of linear narrative film. The explicit foregrounding of rules and objectives in the game world enhance this effect and evoke the experience of other media without entirely recreating it, which is the literal definition of intermedial reference.

Much of the effectiveness of the film comes from the sustaining of the mystery of whether or not the characters do, in fact, exit the game world at the end, and therefore whether the entire film is a representation of a videogame. This provides an amusing opportunity for Cronenberg to offer the audience a deconstruction and analysis of the preceding narrative. That Ian Holm is permitted to comment on the extreme nature of his accent in his native English lilt, and that Christopher Ecclestone similarly can criticise the 'boring' nature of his character is a brief moment of comedy and self-awareness, but this metareferentiality also helps to further blur the lines between the game and the film forms. Diegetically they are still talking about the game but for the audience these comments are of direct relevance

to the film they have just seen. In this moment both the actual film and the fictional game are given equal status as unreal, as constructions. There is no superior form in which the 'reality' of the situation can be communicated. Indeed, throughout the film the 'realists' have been presented as an extreme, militaristic group fighting to rid the world of games because they 'warp reality', but this film itself fares no better at presenting the truth. In addition to this, the initially anti-game thematic position of the film is explicitly referenced at the end by Yevgeny, who is revealed as the game creator. That he outright says to his assistant 'it had a very strong, very real anti-game theme' does not negate the fact that games have been presented in a negative light throughout, but it does prompt the audience to ponder whether such a view is valid, and undermines any attempt to put film forward as the superior form.

Even in the climax, the viewer is not provided with a clear answer as to whether or not the game is continuing, which also goes some way to supporting the categorisation of this film as 'indie' or 'alternative' in a narrative sense. Certainly the plot is far more complex than *The Lawnmower Man*, something borne out by the fact that MGM allegedly passed on the film because of the plot's apparent inaccessibility.[13] There is little doubt that this complexity allows for a far more nuanced and considered intermedial contact with the forms, structures and content of videogames than in *The Lawnmower Man*. This also is generally in keeping with the perception of Miramax as offering films that are slightly more 'alternative' than New Line, despite *eXistenZ* being a Dimension release due to its horror content.

It is notable that the more nuanced and metareferential examples of intermediality, particularly with newer media, come at the end of the 1990s, and more specifically during a time in which Miramax and New Line are both under the ownership of the Hollywood majors Disney and Warner Bros. respectively. When exploring the suggestion made earlier that it was Fine Line's status as subsidiary that allowed it the freedom to explore the medial relationships in ways that are relevant to this study of intermediality, it should be considered that this status was also afforded to Miramax and New Line after 1994. While there are certainly even more interesting examples of intermedial contact (including more with videogames) in the 2000s that will be covered in the following chapter, there is one more example from the late 1990s demonstrating a clear shift, even from the least aesthetically 'indie' New Line distributor, towards a more complex exploration of intermediality as the 20th Century comes to a close.

Pleasantville provides another significantly intermedial exploration of newer media, in this case television, employing that medial contact as an integral part of the film experience. The opening of the film recreates the act of 'channel surfing', showing a high-speed montage of different content in a manner that has become synonymous with the television experience in the age of cable & satellite television, and the huge number of channels available as a result. This recreation seems to immediately signal an intent to explore not just the formal and narrative content of particular television shows (which it certainly does), but also the full basic and qualifying aspects of the medium, including the commonly recognised aspects of consuming that content.

That the audience is introduced to *Pleasantville* (the fictional television show) via a trailer for a marathon of it helpfully establishes the tame, sterile fictional world of the show, but it also helps create a stark contrast with the 'real' world of the film. The narrator says 'flashback to kinder, gentler times' immediately before the film provides a montage of David (Tobey Maguire) and Jennifer's (Reese Witherspoon) school teachers communicating some of the harsher realities of the actual world such as the near-impossibility of finding a job after graduation, warnings about the dangers of contracting HIV, and the accelerating depletion of the ozone layer. This almost complete contrast of content complements the more obvious difference of the show being entirely in monochrome in order to effectively separate the narrative 'reality' of the film and the embedded fiction of the television show.

It is notable that David shares much in common with Betty from *Nurse Betty* considered in the last chapter, in the sense that he has an encyclopaedic knowledge, bordering on obsession, with his favourite show. He has memorised lines and speaks them aloud along with the episodes as he watches in a way that, as we have previously explored, is commonly associated with the serial, episodic narrative television provides. The method of delivery being as regular and continuous as it is, in addition to the presence of re-runs, encourages a different kind of fandom than do even cult films, and it is telling that this same form of fandom appears in the representations of both David and Betty when their films attempt to show somebody enjoying the medium of television to a significant degree. Clearly

this is an aspect of the consumption of television that is considered, at least by these films, to be a qualifying aspect of the medium itself.

At the time of *Pleasantville*'s release much attention was focused on the central mechanic of having the protagonists transported inside the TV show, and that resulting in the film becoming black and white. The gradual introduction of colour as the characters begin to express attitudes, opinions and behaviours more in-keeping with the 1990s is seen by many as not only an arresting visual and technological flourish but also as a thematically important decision.[14] As Robb McDaniel astutely observes:

> Ross's film operates on many levels: narratively, as a joyous bildungsroman; visually, as a dialectic of color against black and white; politically, as a critique of 1950s McCarthyism and contemporary conservative nostalgia; and philosophically, as an anti-utopian celebration of artistic and literary liberation (Robb McDaniel, 2002: 85).

While this is undoubtedly true, it is at least equally important that the vehicle chosen for this exploration of 'artistic and literary liberation' is the traditional, family television serial. It is an appropriate vector for crystallising conservative American views and a sense of nostalgia familiar to anyone, but it also provides fertile ground for the exploration of the differences between the media of film and television.

The dialogue given to the television characters is notably stilted and highly 'performed' in contrast to David and Jennifer's more naturalistic speech. The absence of anything resembling cursing for example is highlighted early on, and is contrasted with the protagonists' tendencies to casually use mildly colourful language. Perhaps more important, however, is the evocation of the particular structure and mechanics of the television

182

world. Jennifer notes early on that there are no words in any of the books in the library for example, something that explicitly foregrounds the artificiality of the world. There is no need for the books to have words in them because the content of the books is not part of the show (much as there are no need for toilets in the Restrooms). They are mere props, and bringing an audience's attention to that specifically highlights the artificiality of the medium, while simultaneously concealing the artificial nature of the film medium actually being consumed. It is this film character after all who has noticed this odd quirk. She is also unable to burn her handkerchief with a lighter, apparently only because fire would not be appropriate content for the television show.[15]

Similarly, there is no knowledge of any locations outside of Pleasantville, as Jennifer learns in a Geography lesson. The entire show is set in Pleasantville, without any recognition of any other location or reality. This is true of many serialised television shows that tend to purposely isolate themselves in a fictional location free from the effects of a wider universe in order to avoid becoming dated or having storylines dictated by real-world events.[16] Highlighting this, much like there being no words in the books, is an immersion-breaking act amounting to metareference, but the film in which Jennifer is herself a character remains free from this deconstruction.

In addition to this, characters seem unable to function outside of their prescribed roles. When David (now assuming the role of Bud in the show) alters the original course of the particular episode by suggesting that Trip (Paul Walker) might not want to ask out Jennifer (now portraying the

character Mary Sue) for example, it causes him to become immediately angry, and forces him to break what is apparently a crucial mechanical reality of the show, namely that every basketball tossed by the team will always score a basket. When Trip misses due to his confusion, frustration and unhappiness, the other players and coach react with extreme shock, as the rules of their reality have been broken. Additionally, when David is late for work, Bill (Jeff Daniels) is unable to stop wiping the counter until he arrives, much like an actor waiting for a cue to begin a scene.

That the presence of David and Jennifer eventually breaks down the conventions of the world returns the discussion to one of an assumed superiority of the film form, although doing so in the context of this film is perhaps even more complex than in the previous examples. Jennifer's attitude that the world these characters inhabit 'needs to be messed with' comes from an assumed position of superiority on the part of modernity. She equates the introduction of sex (or rather sexual promiscuity) into their lives for example, something that had never been experienced in Pleasantville before, as being part of making them more advanced, of progression. She says: 'These people don't want to be geeks. They want to be attractive, they have a lot of potential, they just don't know it yet'. Despite David arguing that she should leave the world alone and the people here are happy, he also assumes superiority by responding that 'they don't have that kind of potential'.

While this clearly has implications on a thematic level of playing nostalgia off against the modern assumption of progression always being in a positive direction, it also links the protagonists inextricably with the film

184

medium, against the world they inhabit being foregrounded as television. This implicitly embeds the relationship between the media in the discussion and the comparison is inevitable. Indeed, the fact that there is no sex in Pleasantville until the arrival of the film characters seems less relevant in the context of a commentary on social issues of the era than it does about specifically the treatment of such issues in the popular media of the time. Just because television serials did not portray sex does not mean it did not exist. There would be no need to explain the concept of an orgasm to actual real-world inhabitants of the 1950s, despite the fact that casual sex or promiscuity was undoubtedly connected with a far greater level of stigma and taboo than in the 1990s.

The assumed superiority of film goes beyond this too. As the narrative progresses David and Jennifer eventually find themselves educating the people of the town by introducing literature into the world. As they recount the stories the blank books become filled with words in an act that could be seen as film characters delivering literature for the educational advancement of television. They also introduce fine art into the world of *Pleasantville*, when David gifts a book of art to Bill. All of the real artworks in the book are in colour, as are the illustrations in the narrative books. This colour then gradually fills the world of *Pleasantville* as the inhabitants of the town, and the show, become more 'enlightened' by the introduction of art and literature. It is important to recognise the implications of the power shown to be wielded by the film characters in this instance. They are in complete command of the media of fine art and literature, able to gift them for the enhancement of others. Whether intentional or not, this places the

185

film medium in a position of enormous power and superiority, not just over television, but over the other media of art and literature too. Despite the surface-level gesture of directly linking education and enlightenment to these older, more respected forms, it is the film characters, and the film medium, that is able to completely contain them and provide them to the people of the television world.

Towards the climax of the film painting is given a more critical role, as the café, where Bill has begun expressing himself through painting his own works, becomes the artistic centre of the town. It is covered in paintings and is the first place in the town shown to be entirely in colour. It also is the focus of the unenlightened townspeople's violent outrage, and it is the destruction of the art that most symbolises the aggressive rejection of modernity (aside from the literal book-burning). Of particular interest is the painting created by Bill on the wall of café following the ransacking, once it becomes the centre of the enlightened resistance to the code of conduct. This painting tells the entire story of the film thus far, making it a representation of a film narrative in painting form. It is itself shown here in film form however, the painting gaining at least some of its meaning both from the experience of the previous ninety minutes of film as well as the camera movement and the reaction of the characters to its presence. This makes it a complex example of intermediality that, even if only momentarily, seems to level the playing field in terms of the perceived power and influence of the medial forms, despite the entire recreation being contained within a film narrative.

Interviewed in the *New York Times*, Gary Ross describes *Pleasantville* as an attempt to explore the notion of an idealised past that has been sanitised and has therefore become the focus of so much nostalgia, without people remembering the less appealing facets of such social restriction. He refers to this period as a 'Father Knows Best' era, and an 'Ozzie and Harriet' universe, both points of reference there, crucially, being television shows. If this is taken to be a genuine attempt to address the socio-political climate as well as the nature of interpersonal relationships of the 1950s then a great deal of accuracy is assumed on the part of those television shows to provide us with a sense of what life was really like during that time. While Ross claims that 'People are nostalgic for something I didn't feel was real. They sanitised this memory. They created a kind of perfection out of the past' (Robb McDaniel, 2002: 85), he may be guilty of falling into a similar trap by allowing the television of the era to stand in for the era itself. Certainly much can be learned about a time and place by studying its popular entertainment, but television shows cannot be relied upon to entirely reflect the complexity of the whole society they entertain. It is possible that this critique is one that can be at least equally (perhaps even unwittingly) applied to the medium itself as much as to the time period and culture in which it thrived.

One more interesting point of 'progression' in the narrative to note here is that while inside the *Pleasantville* show, the televisions within that reality remain the most consistent source of resistance in regard to the progress or enlightenment of the town. While David initially sees the television, and the repair man who appears on it, as his ally and route home,

this does not last. As David becomes more sympathetic to the cause of artistic revolution in the town he finds himself at odds with the repair man, who always appears on the television, and always appears in black and white. It does not seem unintentional that the repair man himself is played by Don Knotts, a very well-known American actor famous for his long-running television role on *The Andy Griffith Show* (CBS, 1960-1968), which was particularly noted for its nostalgic feel and portrayal of a small-town community. The level of resistance to change comes to a climax in the scene in which David finds himself in a TV shop, surrounded by television screens, all showing the repair man demanding that he leave Pleasantville so he can return the world to its previous state. This once again puts the television medium itself in the role of the most resistant to enlightenment or advancement, even beyond much of the Pleasantville community. Once the town is completely liberated at the end of the film, however, David returns to the shop to find the screens filled with colourful images of other places in the world like Egypt and Paris. It is difficult to see this contrast as anything other than the literal enlightenment of television, performed largely by the characters of a film introducing art and literature into this fictional reality. One could even read it as representative of a perceived shift in the content of the television medium over time, away from the conservative and insular attitudes of Pleasantville and towards a more broadly inclusive and liberated world view encompassing numerous cultures, attitudes and narratives — a sentiment mirroring the plurality of content demonstrated right at the beginning in the channel-hopping montage.

It is difficult then to establish a clear position on behalf of a film like *Pleasantville* in regard to television. The medium is presented at once as a restrictive and a liberated space, both conservative and nostalgic, but also capable of enlightenment and plurality, depending on the era upon which one focuses. That is an important factor that must not be overlooked — that the forms of both television and film have changed over time and cannot be reduced to a single snapshot in a particular period. Nevertheless film does seem to once again be afforded a superior status as the mediator of 'reality' and in this case specifically a more modern form of morality. This is quite an assumption on the part of the contacting medium given the ubiquity and importance of television within the lived experience of much of its audience's lives at the end of the 20th Century.

Conclusions

While the examples of intermediality featured prominently in this chapter continue to represent a minority of the films considered overall, they demonstrate that intermedial concerns and techniques form an important part of a strategy of differentiation employed by both Miramax and New Line, as well as their subsidiaries. In contrast with the entities covered in the previous chapter, the distributors of these films seem to have more distinct identities in regard to how intermediality is used their releases. While no distributor specialises completely in one kind of film, there is clearly a preference for 'quality' prestige and award films from Miramax, more mainstream genre films from New Line, and offbeat, quirky, more specifically 'indie' films from Fine Line. This correlation also seems to

exist with a difference in how intermediality is used. New Line films, based on the examples in this chapter, tend to contact other media overtly, contained within a traditional Hollywood linear narrative, dealing with media as an 'other' to provide an interesting visual stylisation, or in the case of *The Lawnmower Man* a dangerous threat to be conquered.[17] Miramax films tend to utilise intermedial techniques in a way more in-keeping with their 'quality' output, such as *Basquiat* dealing with fine art, and *The Mighty* containing tableau vivant in a literary adaptation drama. Fine Line are more overtly 'indie' so their intermedial contact can be seen as considerably more 'alternative', immersion-breaking and importantly, self-aware. These films highlight their own artifice and indulge in stylisation to that effect in a way beyond what the other distributors exhibit, demonstrated in films like *Deconstructing Harry* and *Monster In a Box*.

New Line's intermedial concern with television in *Pleasantville* is notable because it goes so much further in terms of integrating different media into the structure of the film in a multi-layered and complex way than *The Lawnmower Man*. Having not only television but also literature and painting at the heart of both the narrative and form in a way that highlights the artifice of the medium and the assumed implicit attitudes of particular media seems to suggest a significant development in the use of intermedial contact over the time between 1992 and 1998. Similarly, *eXistenZ* demonstrates the ability of a Miramax film to break free from the established norm of their film output through the use of Dimension Films. *eXistenZ* integrates the videogame form into an incredibly complex narrative that consistently frustrates audience expectations while confidently

recreating gaming mechanics rather than just the easily recognisable visual representations of such. This is undoubtedly a significant development of the use of intermediality from the earlier examples of titles like *Basquiat* and *The Mighty*.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that this development happens in parallel to the increased involvement of the Hollywood majors. By 1996 all of these entities were officially subsidiaries of two of the biggest players in Hollywood, and while they apparently remained largely autonomous entities for some time after this, the money and therefore the influence of their parent companies cannot be ignored.[18] The analyses in this chapter appear to reveal a correlation between intermedial content and the subsidiary status of the distributors themselves. There is a romantic perception that films made and distributed completely free from the influence of Hollywood are free to eschew traditional filmmaking forms and embrace alternative, disruptive art techniques, of which intermedial reference has been historically considered one (Pethő, 2011: 47; Brunow, 2011: 342). The evidence, however, seems to turn this expectation on its head, showing more complex and metareferential consideration of other media in films that are released by distributors that are themselves subsidiaries of larger corporate entities.

Later in this thesis we will explore the explicitly named major studio speciality divisions, and how much of their output deals with other arts and media in an intermedial fashion, but the division between primary studio and subsidiary is perhaps most visible here where we can see the difference between New Line and Fine Line. Fine Line was established in 1990, well before New Line became a subsidiary of Warner Bros. Nevertheless, even in

the early 1990s we can observe in these analyses bolder intermedial content from the subsidiary than its parent, even without the influence of mainstream Hollywood. This suggests that the involvement of the majors money in so many of the independent distributors might partially mask a more basic conclusion to draw. A subsidiary distributor, whether related to a Hollywood major or not, might simply be more able to experiment with appealing to a niche audience and produce films that might be considered more 'alternative' or as a larger commercial risk due to the fact that the parent company provides a financial safeguard. When viewed in this industrial context, it is perhaps not surprising that there was so little intermediality among the fully independent distributors, who must survive financially entirely on their own successes and failures. In that situation artistic experimentation is not as desirable, and appealing to as broad an audience as possible is a necessity in order to remain viable. Fine Line was able to draw on New Line's substantial financial success in the early 1990s, much as both New Line and Miramax could draw on their major parents' money after 1994, in order to provide insurance for their continued existence even following potential box-office disappointments.

This finding encourages a tempered approach to the viewing of the development of intermedial techniques in 'indie' films as a chronological progression alone, as the independent distributors all become subsidiaries as we move forward through the twenty-two years considered in this thesis. The exception to this is Lionsgate, whose output will be explored more fully in the next chapter, along with the films of Miramax and New Line after 2000.

Notes

[1] The narrative of the film follows Basquiat's rise through the ranks of New York's art scene, achieving success as measured by the recognition of important figures like Andy Warhol, which is seen to go hand-in-hand with his acceptance into an inner circle of artists that regularly had their work featured in galleries. While the exhibitions themselves could be argued as not Basquiat's personal measure of success, it is difficult to argue that within the film narrative it is implicitly linked to the notion of his professional progress and development.

[2] Flaubert is not the only example of novelistic tableau being a key part of Nineteenth century literature. Jullien also discusses (as does Arnaud Rykner, 2011) a number of important tableaux in the novels of Emile Zola, particularly *La Curee* (1871-72) and *Nana* (1880), which specifically evoke particular classical paintings rather than just providing a more general painterly aesthetic.

[3] The stated-aim of Fine Line Features, according to company President Ira Deutchman, was specifically to provide an alternative to the 'classics-oriented' films in order to find content with a wider market appeal (Tzioumakis, 2012: 7). The fact that these films tended to be more alternative or experimental, either narratively or formally, demonstrates the fact that there is not a simple, linear link between the notion of market appeal and a strict adherence to established Hollywood filmmaking norms. The indie space in which an alternative vision has market potential seems to exist between this mainstream model and the 'prestige' or 'literary' classical films that are traditionally award-winners.

[4] Allen established an identifiable style in the 1980s that was characterised by a particularly ironic handling of the romantic comedy paradigm, integrating use of the urban and rural (Morris, 1987). He had also previously demonstrated a fondness for experimentation in regard to narrative however, and metareference is a particularly key element of *Stardust Memories* (1980) released by United Artists (then a fully independent distributor) a decade earlier. The root of much of this narrative playfulness is a desire to explore the film medium however, resulting in intramediality rather than intermediality.

[5] Katherine Thompson-Jones (2007) for example argues that the narrator in the fiction film is an out-dated concept, intriguingly suggesting that it is almost exclusively deployed as part of an entrenched desire to mimic the literary form due to an assumption about what narrative is in a general sense.

[6] In the most traditional sense, metalepsis classically being a label for the author's interaction with their own text, be that literary, filmic, theatrical or any other artistic creation (Kukkonen & Klimek, 2011: 271).

[7] Gray had success with a similar film that had been adapted from his performed stage monologue with *Swimming to Cambodia* (Jonathan Demme, 1987). William W. Demastes (1989) identifies the popularity of Gray's 'auto-performance' style as a reason he had become somewhat dismissed in serious artistic theatre circles, as there was a perception he had been co-opted into the mainstream, having previously been part of considerably more avant-garde performance theatre work.

[8] The so-called '180-degree rule' for example is something that is not only ingrained in the Hollywood style, but also so universally recognised by audiences, that filmmakers can make powerful visual statements and create deliberate narrative disruption or confusion by breaking it (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 233).

[9] King cites *Shakespeare In Love* (John Madden, 1998) as an example of how Miramax capitalised on the cultural value inherent in any kind of contact with literary source material like Shakespeare, while also mixing that content with far more accessible content more familiar to modern audiences as a romantic comedy (King, 2009: 95–102). The film is problematic example for inclusion here however because while it was distributed by Miramax it was co-produced by Universal Studios. This illustrates the difficulty of negotiating the landscape of 'independence' in American filmmaking, and specifically the uniquely liminal industrial space occupied by Miramax for much of the period considered.

[10] What is sometimes referred to as the 'golden age' of videogames was a period from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s that saw huge attendances (and profits) at amusement arcades with videogames in them (in addition to the earlier popular pinball machines). The introduction of virtual reality was a factor in reviving interest in arcades, which had declined since 1988 thanks to the increased capability of home console systems, but this can be seen as an example of film reflecting popular culture on a slight delay, following behind the crest of a wave rather than spearheading an interest (Johnson, 1992).

[11] Evidence for this is found reviewing newspaper articles at the time, illustrating both the huge perceived potential of the technology and the public appetite for information about it. As well as having a considerable presence as a videogames device in arcades, there was a great deal of media hyperbole about Virtuality's future potential such as remote control of robotic probes on other planets (Chris Partridge, 1991) but there is also evidence of an inherent mistrust of virtual reality more generally. Peter Millar (1993) cites *The Lawnmower Man*, explicitly linking the technology to the artistic scepticism about it, as a cautionary tale of creating a future in which virtual debauchery and social isolation becomes commonplace. He even goes so far as to invoke the notion of 'the intelligent steering of a cruise missile attack on Baghdad' (Millar, 1993: 15).

[12] This is taken from MTV's biography of Dire Straits on their website:
http://www.mtv.com/artists/dire-straits/biography/

[13] Cronenberg claims this in an interview, in which he demonstrates significant frustration with the dominance of what he calls the 'Hollywood style' and its focus on linearity and consistency in character arcs. He rejects such restrictions, placing him firmly in an 'alternative' position of 'independence' in an aesthetic sense in regard to filmmaking preferences (von Busack, 1999).

[14] This was one of the first films to be shot entirely digitally, something that greatly aids the effect of simultaneous saturation and desaturation of elements within a single shot.

[15] It has earlier been established that the fire department are only ever utilised to rescue cats from trees.

[16] There are exceptions to this, but it is notable that the foregrounding of real-world events in the narratives of *The Newsroom* (HBO, 2012–2014) is highlighted as unusual, with Brian Lowry describing it as a 'significant maneuver' in his review of the show's premiere (Lowry, 2012: 4).

[17] This apparent presentation of different media as 'other' to be feared, or at least wary of, is not just reserved for the newer media like videogames or computers in New Line's content, as *In The Mouth of Madness* (John Carpenter, 1994) applies the same notion to literature.

[18] Thomas Schatz (2013: 134) highlights the stark contrast between both Miramax and New Line's spending power and market share as independents and as subsidiaries of Disney and Warner. The distributors retained the ability to acquire and finance projects at their discretion, but Schatz notes the difference between the $3 million paid by Miramax for *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993) before the Disney buyout, and the $12.5 million spent to acquire *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994) for Dimension afterwards.

Chapter 6

Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate After 2000

In terms of intermediality, there are a number of significant features regarding the output of Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate after 2000. First of all, Miramax continues to contact the older, more culturally established forms, with fifteen of its twenty-two titles either adapting from or concerning literature, theatre or painting. However, there is also considerably more evidence of a playful attitude to medial contact in those films. Kenneth Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) will be analysed as an intermedial example of a broad revival of Shakespearean narratives, but with a notably looser approach to the notion of accurately recreating the source text after the 1990s. Following this, both *Chicago* and *Finding Neverland* (Marc Forster, 2004) provide further evidence that the distributor's approach to theatrical content becomes more inclusive of a core intermedial concern than similar adaptations in the previous decade.

The presence of comic books is the concern of the second section of this chapter, which explores the intermedial contribution made to the surge in popularity of comic book adaptations by New Line and Fine Line. Specifically, the difference between New Line's *The Mask* (Chuck Russell, 1994) and Fine Line's *American Splendor* (Shari Springer Berman & Robert Pulcini, 2003) provides further evidence for a difference in approach to intermediality between the primary company and its subsidiary. The introduction of Lionsgate also contributes to this discussion, and while films like *The Spirit* (Frank Miller, 2008) and *Punisher: War Zone* (Lexi

Alexander, 2009) provide comic adaptations with a violent edge similar to Miramax's *Sin City* (Frank Miller, Roberto Rodriguez & Quentin Tarantino), *Repo! The Genetic Opera* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2008) will be used as an example of Lionsgate's experimental approach to medial contact with both comics and theatre.

Finally, Lionsgate's general tendency towards evoking not just the newer media of television and videogames but also film itself will be explored. Thirteen of the company's thirty-four films primarily contact one or more of these media, and a number of these provide interesting critiques of those more modern forms using intermediality and metareference. First of all in this chapter, however, we will look at Miramax's theatrical content.

Theatrical Cinema

When considering films that contact theatre as a means of conferring a sense of cultural value or engaging in a 'quality' filmmaking tradition, Shakespeare adaptations are of particular importance. Arguably no other single figure represents literary and theatrical 'quality' on a cultural level as much as Shakespeare. Not only are the texts taught in Western core education syllabi as the standard against which most modern narrative forms are measured, but they also cast a long shadow over the majority of popular entertainment, being continually adapted and reimagined throughout the 350 years since their publication (Lanier, 2002: 1–20).

When reimagining the work of a figure so central to a historical understanding of an entire medium as Shakespeare, the notion of remaining 'true' to the source material becomes critical to almost every reading

because of the perception of such work having moved into the realm of 'classical'. As Douglas Lanier (2002) has pointed out, popular culture is considered by many to be an unsuitable medium in which to communicate works of Shakespeare because it is seen as 'other'. Shakespeare is perceived as a symbol of high art that stands separate from popular culture, above it because of an assumption of 'quality', and yet is omnipresent within it (Lanier, 2002: 3).

In Sarah Hatchuel's (2004) brief history of Shakespeare films, it is notable that classical realism and an indebtedness to the original theatrical performances feature significantly. She identifies Laurence Olivier as a director who mixes theatrical mise en scene, like artificial sets and continuous shots, with more cinematic filming techniques like moving cameras and editing, but all within a classical realist tradition. This can be seen in *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944), *Hamlet* (Laurence Olivier, 1948) and *Richard III* (Laurence Olivier, 1955). *Julius Caesar* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1953) shares this style, while Franco Zeffirelli also favours realism, albeit in a more naturalistic form, often replacing some original dialogue with purely visual moments of literal illustration in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Franco Zeffirelli, 1966) and *Romeo and Juliet* (Franco Zeffirelli, 1968). After two decades of relative rarity in the 1970s and 1980s, during which the most notable examples are more experimental or avant-garde films like *King Lear* (Peter Brook, 1971) and *The Tempest* (Derek Jarman, 1979), Shakespeare films of the 1990s once again embrace cinematic realism and enjoy significant popularity (Hatchuel, 2004: 20–24).

Lanier describes this period as a 'Shakespeare film boom' (2002: 3) and the indie distributors were significantly involved with adaptations like *Much Ado About Nothing* (Kenneth Branagh, 1993) from the Samuel Goldwyn Company and *Twelfth Night* (Trevor Nunn, 1996) from Fine Line, as well as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Michael Hoffman, 1999) from Fox Searchlight. The primary arms of the mainstream studios also distributed Shakespeare adaptations, however, such as *Othello* (Oliver Parker, 1995) and *Hamlet* (Kenneth Branagh, 1994) both from Columbia Pictures. These films were overwhelmingly either British productions distributed in the US, or joint British-American co-productions. As such the films tend to fall into the costume drama tradition of accurately recreating the content of the original text, both in terms of location and time period, rather than using the source as a basis from which to develop a more bold or original interpretation. The focus on period detail, respectful treatment of the original language and strong individual acting performances mean that while these films may translate Shakespeare's more universal themes in a modern era and therefore appear as relevant to a 1990s context as ever, they do not in any narrative or formal terms experiment with the medium or the medial difference in any way.

In the 2000s, however, there is a notable shift towards American production of Shakespeare adaptations that purposefully seek to dislocate the original narratives from their historical context and reposition them in a contemporary setting. Apparently responding to the success of the radical adaptation *Romeo + Juliet* (Baz Luhrmann, 1996), Shakespeare texts became arguably more frequently utilised in this context. A series of films

around the turn of the century attempt to work Shakespeare into contemporary American teen-movies in particular such as *10 Things I Hate About You* (Gil Junger, 1999) distributed by Miramax's parent company Disney and *O* (Tim Blake Nelson, 2001) released by Lionsgate. Miramax also that benefits from the popularity of the trend, with *Get Over It* (Tommy O'Haver, 2001), and the more experimental *Hamlet* (Ethan Hawke, 2000) as well as more British costume co-productions like *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest* (Julie Taymor, 2010).[1]

While the teen-movie adaptations provide a fascinating example of American film production becoming unafraid post-millennium about tackling Shakespeare from a fresh perspective, none of them particularly explore the medial difference itself in any meaningful way. Where theatre is present in these films, it is narratively contained, as in *Get Over It* and *O*, within a school production of Shakespeare happening in the background to the primary story. This serves to make sure the looseness of the adaptation does not result in the source being forgotten, after all the adaptation is largely trading on the cultural knowledge and value of the original. Rarely does the innate theatricality of the source material threaten to contaminate the films however.

Of perhaps more interest is the complex interaction of film and theatre in Branagh's *Love's Labour's Lost*, which provides a fascinating counterpoint to the traditional literary adaptations and historical dramas that had been a staple for Miramax in the 1990s. That this film is a musical adaptation was enough to immediately draw the ire of some in the popular media upon its release. It was almost universally mauled by critics, with

Roger Ebert in particular taking issue with Branagh's liberal editing of the source material, a procedure he compares unfavourably to the director's insistence on adapting the full text of *Hamlet* six years prior (Ebert, 2000). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that much of the serious critical mauling the film received was due to a perception of a 'clash' between the medial forms present, being unable to satisfy 'those viewers expecting a recognisable version of Shakespeare's play nor those prepared to judge *Love's Labour's Lost* by the conventions of the American film musical' (Friedman, 2004: 134).

It is clear then, that affording sufficient respect to the source remains a strong consideration in the reception of any re-working of Shakespeare, but by specifically utilising the songs of Irving Berlin and the Gershwin brothers rather than an original suite of songs, Branagh complicates the source of the adaptation beyond a simple medial transposition of Shakespeare. These are not hidden gems of their respective artists' catalogues, but conspicuous, immediately recognisable standards of the golden era of Hollywood musicals. This certainly foregrounds the debt owed to the film form of a specific period (intramedially), but the extreme artifice of the setting and exaggerated performances forces viewers to consider the amount of content shared between film of that particular era and genre, and the theatrical medium for which Shakespeare's plays were originally intended. There are very obviously artificial sets and staging here, something that is of course reflective of the evoked film form (the musical) but it also speaks somewhat to the additional suspension of disbelief required from the audience of the theatrical form in which the entire world

must be constructed on a single stage in a single place and time. The theatre has been characterised as being largely about performances and staging over and above immersion in effects, despite the extensive illusory capability of many modern theatrical techniques.[2] This is something also reflected in *Love's Labour's Lost* by the costume design being full of bold colours styled to draw the viewers' attention to the principal cast.

There are also some specific song performances that play with the expectations of difference between stage and screen. The tap routine performed by Berowne (Kenneth Branagh) for example is particularly noteworthy as an element that engages in playful mixing of the film and theatrical forms. Not only does it remain in-keeping with the evocation of the musical film, but also incorporates dance in a way entwined with the linguistic cadence of the original Shakespearean text. Berowne begins the routine by tapping his foot to each syllable of spoken dialogue, a passage lifted unaltered from the original play. Both speech and tap are synchronised in iambic pentameter, the meter most commonly used throughout Shakespeare's plays. Then as he concludes his soliloquy he launches into a performance of 'Cheek To Cheek', eventually turning the piece into a full dance number, including wire-work stunt performances for the principal actors, but still contained on a single stage with a largely stationary camera. This example adapts verse in both song and dance — verse usually only experienced on the page — and then mixes it into a more traditionally well-known Hollywood musical song. In this way theatre is evoked intermedially, not just intertextually, and placed alongside a well-known form of cinema, inviting the audience to enjoy the juxtaposition and reflect

on some of the parallels, as well as the apparent overcoming of expected differences.

One of the results of this overt stylisation throughout is a sense of metanarrative. While the film does not explicitly reflect on itself as a medial construction diegetically, the strong anti-illusionist effect of the song-and-dance numbers, the exaggerated performances and the clearly artificial sets all contribute (in the context of twenty-first century film viewing) to a level of self-consciousness. This is something considerably aided by the high level of cultural awareness of Shakespeare of course, but it is also an important *component* of many of Shakespeare's works that must be translated if one is seeking to adapt while maintaining the 'spirit' of the source. When the cast engage in a rendition of 'There's No Business Like Showbusiness' at the climax of the film this self-consciousness is at its most overt. Within the narrative the performance is contextualised as a theatrical performance staged by Costard (Nathan Lane), but the performers address the camera directly during this time, which draws attention to one of the biggest differences between theatre and film: the live audience. Here the film-specific element of editing is kept to a minimum, instead the film uses long takes to more closely resemble a filmed stage performance, and there is even a spotlight for Costard himself, despite the narrative conceit of the performance taking place outside. Within a metareferential component of the film, the cast achieve intermediality by recreating this crucial interaction (performer and audience) with the essentially filmic element of the camera, but in a fashion that forces the viewer to consider the unusual nature of such

an interaction within traditional narrative film. Once again metareferentiality is shown here to be an effective vehicle for intermediality.

It is worth noting that this self-reflexivity is also displayed in the original play. Some dialogue at the close of the story Branagh importantly chose not to excise for his ninety-minute precis draws attention to this. As Berowne laments that 'Our wooing doth not end like an old play, Jack hath not Jill', and Ferdinand (Alessandro Nivola) attempts to cheer him pointing out that 'at once at twelve month and a day, then t'will end', Berowne is self-aware enough to note 'that's too long for a play'.

Before 2000 it seemed like Miramax's predilection for 'quality' cinema and contacting the traditional arts was an inhibitor of intermedial exploration. Films like *The Piano*, *Emma*, and *Robinson Crusoe* are films that seem restricted from experimentation in form and narrative because their basis in the realm of the 'quality' film aimed at award season, and their link to the older more respected media, demanded a form of romanticism inextricably linked to classical realist tradition of storytelling. After 2000, however, it seems that the more traditional media, specifically theatre, provide something of a challenge and are viewed as forms ripe for updating through narrative and formal experimentation that often drifts into the realm of intermedial consideration.

This is evident outside the sphere of Shakespeare adaptations too. The film adaptation *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002) was a big hit for Miramax early in the 2000s and demonstrates a similarly playful mixing of the forms of theatre and film as *Love's Labour's Lost*. In *Chicago* the theatre stage as a physical component is present throughout the narrative, as

are actual audience members, a crucial part of the medium of theatre recreated in a number of scenes. The medium of theatre is recreated fully, complete with the sets and production values, without any attempt to pretend that the action on stage is 'reality'. The physical apparatus of theatre is conspicuous, as is the theatricality of the musical performances (complete with backing dancers and spotlights), but this is only true in parts of the film. In fact it is perhaps *Chicago*'s most interesting feature that there is a notable separation of classical realist film from that which is conspicuously theatrical. That divide is marked by a distinction between Roxy's (Renee Zellweger) 'real' life, in which she is a murderer on the run, and her imagination in which she is a star. It is in these imagined moments, certainly in the early stages of the film, that the medial form of theatre is most visible, as these moments tend to contain the musical numbers. This effectively allows the narrative to take place outside of the theatrical form, in a style more consistent with realist film. It gives the impression that two films are running simultaneously, one a traditional stage-to-screen adaptation of the narrative of *Chicago*, and the other a direct recreation of the stage musical without any real significant concessions to the new medium.

The stark contrast between the two styles certainly helps to highlight the difference between the media, but also allows the film to engage in some uniquely filmic elements such as quickly moving between locations and fleshing out backstory in flashback sequences. In addition though, it also constitutes metalepsis, and therefore a significant containment of the theatrical form in a way it would be easy to read as diminishing that form's ability to represent the 'reality' of the story. Indeed, it is interesting that a

205

musical theatre production that satirises the show business glamour and 'artificiality' of the legal system in America has been repurposed in the film medium in this way, in which the medium of theatre itself is relegated to the interior space of the imagination while the film exercises classical realism to tell a more 'true' less 'stylised' story.

This boundary breaks down as the film moves on however. A key scene is the courtroom cross-examination of Velma (Catherine Zeta-Jones) by Flynn (Richard Gere). At this point the two 'halves' of the film as they have been presented so far no longer follow on from one another scene by scene but instead are brought together. By effectively superimposing the tap dance from the musical reality (implied to be the creation of Roxy's imagination), with the actual reality (the film reality) of Flynn successfully rebuking Velma's surprise testimony, the film invites a comparison between the rhetoric and the dance. This is arguably the film's strongest direct moment of intermedial reference as the tap dance, a feature not exclusive to theatre but theatrical in origin, is both represented 'as-is' and also recreated in the film form. Flynn's words in the courtroom take on the rhythm and cadence of the dance in a way not unlike Berowne's tap routine evoking the source text's iambic pentameter in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The reactions of the courtroom audience are reflected in the use of drums and symbol clashes in the tap routine, and the viewers are explicitly called-upon to note the similarities between the forms, with the narrative point being that the courtroom is very much like a theatre.

In addition to drawing the attention of the viewer to the performative nature of the legal proceedings however, the sequence also serves to

highlight the artificiality of the film in a metareferential way. The sequence is explicitly introduced with the phrase 'ladies and gentlemen, a tap dance'. Directly addressing the film audience, a particularly immersion-breaking moment for a classical realist film, adds to the narrative 'play' that forms an important part of the stylistic motivation present in much indie cinema, and undoubtedly enhances intermediality through the use of metareferentiality. In this instance it seems that while metalepsis has been utilised to maintain a structure to the film, far from keeping the media completely apart it has served as a useful tool with which to push them together and invite salient comparisons at key moments. A similar form of intermediality can be found in *Finding Neverland*, although it is arguably applied to different ends.

Forster's feature is a loose biopic of J. M. Barrie (Johnny Depp) that focuses on his brief time as a playwright, thus providing a thematically appropriate narrative from which to contact the medium of theatre. The film is an adaptation of the stage play *The Man Who Was Peter Pan* (Allan Knee, 1998) and so it is perhaps not surprising that the theatre features throughout in the form of media combination showing some of Barrie's plays being performed. It is the representation of Barrie's internal reality that is of more importance however, as once again metalepsis serves a vital role in enabling and enhancing intermediality.

During Barrie's time playing with the children of the Llewelyn-Davies family, who would go on to inspire the characters of Peter Pan and the Lost Boys, he creates a number of fictions in which to set their adventures. In the first instance he plays cowboys with them in the garden of their house, with the scene being notable for the pointed artificiality of

207

Barrie's imagined reality in which he and the boys are in a Wild West town. The metaleptical separation of this imagined space and the characters' narrative reality is established by the cutting back and forth between the Western scene and the actual garden in which they are playing.

Visually there is some attempt to recreate a stereotypical Western scenario, for example the way the characters are dressed is in keeping with the generally recognised aesthetic of Western movies, the floor is covered in sand, a stagecoach is present in the scene and there are even old-West style buildings. However, the key feature of the scenario is the painted backdrop hanging behind the action, which is very clearly just a painting. There is no attempt made to hide the artificiality of the image as it is in very close proximity to the action and therefore the camera. Besides the obviousness of the backdrop being two-dimensional, there is also a small horse painted on the landscape, for which the lack of movement further accentuates the artifice. This backdrop then is particularly evocative of those used in the theatre, intended to present a scenario rather than actually appear 'real'. With this painting, the makeshift western costumes and the use of prop guns, the scene is full of specifically theatrical features, signalling that in creating his own fiction, Barrie has, in fact, made a play.

There is another example of this when Barrie and the kids play pirates, and once again the theatre is evoked specifically in the environmental details. As the viewer sees the pirate ship for the first time, the camera flies towards it over a computer-generated 'ocean', but this is not designed to look like real water. The appearance and animation of the waves is instead specifically styled to look as water appears on stage. The waves

themselves, while clearly a computer generated element, are designed to look as though they are painted on individual boards, and are moved over one another in circular motions. This specifically evokes one the common ways in which the sea was represented on stage during the renaissance. As Lily B Campbell (1923) points out in her overview of the stage mechanics of English theatre, such an effect was often achieved using painted cylinders with cranks that could be turned to give the illusion of the movement of the water. Additionally, she notes, 'if a tempestuous sea is to be presented, thin boards painted black with crest-like silvered tops may be placed between the cylindrical waves, and a man stationed beneath each board may raise and lower it as the stage demands' (Campbell, 1923: 156). Importantly, because the waves in *Finding Neverland* are a computer generated element, there would be no reason to mimic the look of these painted boards other than to evoke the basic medium, which is to say the material modality, of a play.

In much the same way, the shark present in the scene is computer generated but is not intended to look like a real shark. The style of the creature is such that its artificiality is highlighted. It specifically looks like a stage prop because of the visibility of the mechanics controlling the jaw and rivets along its side. The stilted fashion in which it moves and the fact that its skin appears to be composed of a worn metallic material add to the illusion-breaking effect. There is no attempt to naturalise the shark's appearance in any way, quite the opposite in fact, and so this once again constitutes an evoking of the basic medium of theatre that is there to be noticed.

The cinematic reproduction of theatre in this way is similar to that present in the discussion of *Chicago* above, but it is also reminiscent of the discussion in the last chapter of *The Lawnmower Man* to an extent, in the sense that computer generated imagery is again being used counter to the generally accepted aim of creating characters or environments that look 'real' (Manovich, 2001: 189). Just as *The Lawnmower Man* utilised this uniquely cinematic affordance to conspicuously 'other' the virtual world, so does *Finding Neverland* use it to visually distance the 'real' cinematic world from the theatrical fiction created in Barrie's head, therefore ensuring a metaleptical leap is required to view the fantasy world and preventing theatre from contaminating the rest of the film. It is intermediality that enables this, a purpose of the technique recognised as important by Ágnes Pethő. She labels the reproduction of aspects of other media within film as often being 'markers of a metaleptic crossing from the narrative level of 'reality' into one of the subjective consciousness (dream, phantasy, memory flash-back, altered mental state, etc.)' (Pethő, 2011: 128).

This visual separation of different planes of reality is unquestionably an effective, practical use for intermediality from a visual storytelling perspective, and one we have now seen in a number of the film examples studied, but one could argue there is also an ideological motivation at work in this technique. We have already discussed in the previous examples how the 'containment' of other media in film can be seen not only as representation but also as a way to diminish them or relegate them to secondary status in regard to their ability to tell the story playing out in the film at large. This is an important consideration in *Finding Neverland* too

210

because the opposition presented is directly between theatre and film. The metalepsis at work here is not that between our actual world and the created fiction of the film itself, it is between the presented narrative 'real' of the film and the very pointedly 'fantasy' or 'unreal' created fiction of the theatre. This seems to evoke a sense of the anxiety of influence, with the film presenting itself as the 'truest' form, or at least the one that is able to show the 'reality' of the narrative to an extent greater than the other medium contacted, in this case theatre. That the film seems to purposefully employ low production values when contacting the theatre, with the painted backdrop, the fake-looking shark and unrealistic ocean waves, seems to suggest another attempt to 'contain' the contacted medium completely, and in doing so diminish its ability to accurately represent the 'real'.

The kind of low-budget stylisation evident in these features of the theatrical interludes is in sharp contrast with other moments of the film in which visual effects are utilised to more realistically recreate the imagined spaces of the characters. A particularly interesting difference to note is between the water splashing onto the deck of the pirate ship and the rain in the theatre at the beginning of the film. While the former is supposed to be seawater soaking the deck of the ship due to a huge storm, it is, in fact, a very small amount of water clearly being thrown from a container at regular intervals by somebody off-screen. At no point is any attempt made to have this appear like a real storm, which of course is in-keeping with the theatrical reproduction already discussed, but the film has already specifically shown its ability to accurately and realistically recreate rain within the imagined space of Barrie, when he sees his play performed at the

start of the film. As he watches from just outside an exit, the entire auditorium fills with pouring rain in a fairly lavish moment of CGI intended to reflect his mood. This is one of the rare moments that present Barrie's imagination without filtering it through the medium of theatre, instead stylising his created reality entirely within the medium of film, with the aim of making it look as 'real' as possible. There is a suggestion in this contrast then, that Barrie's thoughts have more immediacy when they are recreated in the film form than they do when they are translated through theatre. It is certainly possible to read this as an implication that film boasts a superior ability to represent the reality of Barrie's lived experience, both internal and external, and it is intermediality that has enabled that implication by providing a visual basis for the comparison.

This is an idea reinforced by the climax of the film, in which Barrie arranges a performance of his play, now resembling a near-final version of *Peter Pan*, at Sylvia's (Kate Winslet) home. In another moment of apparently flaunting film's ability to represent the character's internal mental state without the need to mediate through theatre, the painted backdrop is physically lifted away to reveal a more 'real' Neverland. That the physical framework of the theatre is explicitly removed from the scene to enable this suggests that intermediality, in addition to forming the functional basis for metalepsis throughout, is also used to reinforce the superiority of the film form.

It is also important to note that this formal content exists in tandem with a narrative drive to explore the nature of the theatrical medium. At one point, Frohman (Dustin Hoffman) imposes his personal definition of the

medium on Barrie as a criticism of his content. He asks Barrie to think about the audience reaction, saying 'They've paid good money, they're expecting theatre, what we call theatre, and the curtain opens and it's crocodiles and fairies and pirates and Indians, I don't even know what it is.' This is an evocation of the character's own idea of the *qualified* medium of theatre, as Barrie's content does not meet his own *expectations* of the form, despite clearly being possible within the confines of the basic modality of the medium. As a direct narrative addressing of the debate around medium specificity and definition, this further supports the idea that intermediality in *Finding Neverland* is being used to highlight and interrogate the boundary between film and theatre.

The use of intermediality across these examples appears to be a crucial factor in establishing a strategy of differentiation from the traditional output of the mainstream. Without a sustained attempt to recreate theatrical elements in unexpected ways these three films would offer little in the way of an 'alternative' experience. As mentioned earlier, Shakespeare adaptations are far from rare in Hollywood, while a lavish and expensive adaptation of a popular stage play like *Chicago* provides little appeal to audiences seeking something different from the usual output of the Hollywood majors. *Finding Neverland* also adapts a well-known story with significant production values, notable Hollywood stars and an accessible plot with relatable protagonists. It is through the intermediality of these films that they can be regarded as belonging within the American independent landscape on textual terms. The authenticity of that presence is for audiences to judge, but this kind of intermediality that exists almost in

isolation as a film's primary 'alternative' feature has a clearly recognisable form. That is to say it is presented to the audience on its own merit as an element to be enjoyed. This is in many ways analogous to David Bordwell's notion of how postclassical Hollywood offers audiences the pleasure of 'play' through reference and allusion (Bordwell, 2006: 10). This can perhaps be seen as the dichotomy of this form of intermediality, that it is at once a feature used to differentiate films from the mainstream, and also one that attracts audiences through its similarity to a common practice of Hollywood.

In any case, while Miramax maintained its preference for remaining in the older, 'quality' media when adapting content and stayed in a position to pick up awards and cultural capital for doing so, it was also keen to explore slightly more interesting ways of approaching that material than simply transcribing a story from one medium to another. Other distributors in the independent space were keen to adapt 'newer', more youth-relevant media, and the comic book was to become an important medium of choice for film adaptations throughout the 2000s.

The 'New' Literature

'Superhero' adaptations were not uncommon for many years before the current boom of the Marvel, and to a lesser extent DC, universe movies. There is a long history of the key figures from the medium appearing on television, in both live-action and animated varieties.[3] Nevertheless, Liam Burke (2008: 8) suggests that it is the success of *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978) that began the modern era of superhero movies and first

indicated the popularity the genre would enjoy thereafter. However, the films gained traction slowly throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Aside from *Superman* sequels and spinoff *Supergirl* (Jeannot Szwarc, 1984), only *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989) and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Steve Barron, 1990) had significant success, and sequels, with the latter generating attention largely because of the popularity of the animated television series rather than as an adaptation of the original comic book. It is important to note, however, that *Turtles* was distributed by New Line, in an unusual move for an independent in 1990. The involvement of the indie distributor in what were largely considered Hollywood blockbusters was an important moment in the development of New Line fighting to compete with the Hollywood majors on their own terms, although the style of that particular film is worthy of note as having a relatively low-budget aesthetic and a surprisingly realist tone for a superhero adaptation of the time.[4]

In the 2000s these occasional comic book hits and curiosities became a flood of consistently successful content. Starting with *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000) the Marvel comic book universe in particular became the subject of intense competition between the major studios to secure adaptation rights. While not all of them were enormous hits from a box-office standpoint, a huge number of these films followed and few lost money. *Spiderman* (Sam Raimi, 2002), *Hulk* (Ang Lee 2003) and *Fantastic Four* (Tim Story, 2005) all spawned sequels, while *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008), *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011) and *Captain America* (Joe Johnston, 2011) have all been rolled into a shared cinematic universe producing multiple sequels, spinoffs and even a TV show, *Marvel's Agents of Shield*

(ABC, 2013-present). This is not to say that other comic book sources were under-represented however, with Christopher Nolan's hugely successful *The Dark Knight* trilogy being released between 2005 and 2012, and *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006), as well as arguably slightly more unconventional, less popular intellectual properties like *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (Stephen Norrington, 2003) and *Hellboy* (Guillermo Del Toro, 2004).

It is in this environment that the independent distributors attempted to provide a slightly alternative take on the comic book film throughout the 2000s and into the 2010s, and the content available certainly lent itself to a less mainstream style given that the Marvel and DC universes were already involved in deals with Disney, Fox, Columbia and Warner Bros. New Line had experimented with a much lesser known property in 1994 with *The Mask* and had huge success with it, but their adaptation of *Spawn* (Mark A Z Dippe, 1997) did not perform quite so well.[5]

The Mask provides an example of how, in the indie space at least, a comic book aesthetic would often be incorporated as part of a mixing of other media in order to evoke the 'sense' of the medium without having to engage with it fully. Despite being directly adapted from the Dark Horse comic book series and utilising animation and computer generated effects to recreate much of the aesthetic from that medium, there is also a significant amount of evocation of Hollywood Golden-Age cartoons. In many ways this is adapting the 'spirit' of the original, as the influence of the work of Tex Avery is regularly cited by the creators of the series as being a core aspect of the visual style (Richardson, 1993: 3). In the film medium, that influence

can arguably be heightened, as the animation can be recreated in its entirety. The film recreates a scene from *Red Hot Riding Hood* (Tex Avery, 1943) when Stanley (Jim Carrey) visits the nightclub and physically turns into the cartoon wolf from that short, unable to contain his desire for the performing Tina (Cameron Diaz). This is a playful and specific intertextual reference, but it would be jarring and immersion-breaking if not for the evocation of the cartoon aesthetic within the rest of the film. As it is, this scene is in-keeping with the unreal aesthetic created throughout and consistent with the look of the comic book itself. Realism is not the aim here. Instead of taking characters and a setting from a comic book and inserting them into a classical realist Hollywood film, *The Mask* revels in its unreality, indulging in stylistic motivation wherever possible by utilising bizarre green and purple lighting arrangements, as well as using animation to recreate the comic book at regular intervals.

In 2005 *Sin City* seems to demonstrate a recognition that this embracing of an unusual visual aesthetic was an advantage for an indie comic book adaptation. That *Sin City* incorporates a primarily black and white visual style with intermittent colourisation on certain elements is as complex ontologically as the cartoon aesthetics of *The Mask*, because while the aesthetic undoubtedly recreates that of the comic book, that original style was itself heavily influenced by film noir, with its characteristic chiaroscuro lighting and heavy use of shadow. The comic also draws heavily from the noir filmmaking tradition in terms of narrative content, of which many were originally adapted from pulp crime novels, so the medial origin of these styles becomes difficult to identify. Perhaps what this

demonstrates best is the fluid nature of qualifying aspects of media. The film noir elements employed by *Sin City* have become uncommon in Hollywood films, to the extent that their deployment serves the purpose of drawing attention to itself as an artifice. By using almost entirely digital environments (one of the first American feature films to do so) and artificially accentuating the chiaroscuro, *Sin City* makes itself appear less 'real' and much more like an audience's likely closest point of contact for such content, the comic itself.[6]

One particularly interesting example of intermediality with comics, however, comes once again from New Line's subsidiary distributor Fine Line, and is based on an even less typically 'Hollywood' comic property. *American Splendor* (Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman, 2003) is a film adaptation made by documentarians, and their background certainly brings unique features to the title. The film acts not only as an adaptation of the narratives contained within a number of issues of the comic, specifically the original *American Splendor* (Harvey Pekar, 1976) and *Our Cancer Year* (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994), but also as a biopic and a documentary about its creator, Harvey Pekar.

The comic is an ideal choice for an indie speciality division to select as material for an adaptation because of its unusual content. It is a misconception that most comics are about superheroes, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that the genre has dominated the popular perception of the medium. As Robert Petersen writes:

The identity of the comic book with superheroes has become so inextricably enmeshed in American culture that—even today—it is very difficult for some people to imagine that there was, or ever could be, a comic book that did not star a superhero (Petersen, 2010: 133).

Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs (1997: xii), however, note that between the 1940s and the early 1970s the superhero genre consistently provided less than twenty percent of comic book production annually, but due to film and television adaptations focusing overwhelmingly on that one aspect of comic content, it has become the most visible and well-known arm of the medium. *American Splendor*, on the other hand, is simply the autobiographical life stories of Harvey Pekar himself.[7] In Harvey's own words: 'I ain't no superhero, I'm just a kid from the neighbourhood', a point reinforced comically in the film's opening when a young Pekar accompanies his superhero-costumed friends trick-or-treating as himself. This kind of self-referential humour is a key part of the appeal of the film, much as it is a key factor in the success of the comic. The film is relentlessly metareferential, never allowing the audience to forget or ignore the truth that this is a film adaptation and not actual reality, and it heavily relies on intermedial techniques to accomplish this.

The opening title sequence for example recreates the panels of the comic, complete with the pencil-drawn characters, backgrounds, muted colours and even visual artifacts commonly associated with the texture of the paper on which comic books of the 1970s were printed. The Harvey Pekar of the comic explains, initially in the form of text, how different artists have drawn him differently, as we see each different interpretation of the character in subsequent cells. Finally one of the cells contains a

photograph of Pekar himself, along with the speech bubble reading 'I'm also a real guy'. Importantly, the comic character Pekar then explains that there is an actor who will play him in the movie, pointing to the next cell, within which the film is playing and Paul Giamatti is walking. In this way the film sets out its position that it is fully aware of its own artificial construction and fiction. Going as far as to point out that the actor is not the actual character by having a photograph of the real person for comparison, is content that is significantly alternative to the expectations of mainstream narrative cinema. *American Splendor*, even in its opening six minutes, goes out of its way to be self-reflexive and metareferential, facilitated in this instance by clear intermediality with comic books.

Pekar himself narrates the film by way of a voice over once the narrative moves out of the text-supported cells following the opening credit sequence. Immediately after we hear his first lines, which warn the viewers that this is not a romantic or an escapist story, the film cuts to the real Pekar physically recording the lines and interacting with what we assume are producers of the film in yet more aggressively metareferential content designed to leave an audience in no doubt as to the nature of the film. It will not be a straightforward narrative to get lost in, we are to be confronted with the schism between film, comic and 'reality' at regular intervals.

Pekar admits that he did not pay much attention to the film script before recording and briefly discusses the film's proposed construction, before the film cuts back to Giamatti playing Pekar in a flashback, introduced with another comic-style bottom-corner text card. At this point the film firmly establishes is primary mode of address: a 'reality', in which

Giamatti plays Pekar in a traditionally-shot, classical realist, narrative film depicting the actual real-life history of Harvey Pekar. However, the audience then also becomes aware of another level of reality, or the 'documentary' reality, in which Pekar is reading a script, providing voice-over for the film and occasionally answering questions from the filmmakers in what we assume is an unscripted way. We assume this because when Pekar is answering the questions, he is placed in the position of a 'talking head', a common device in documentary filmmaking to communicate the reality of interviews. He thinks about the answers, stumbles over his words and corrects himself in ways that would be unexpected in traditional classical realist film. This also provides a contrast with the classical realist style and further highlights its artifice.

The film goes on to mix these sub-levels of narrative reality significantly, and recreates the comic book in a number of different ways while doing so. After a scene in which Harvey talks to his boss about music, the film cuts to the 'talking head' Pekar discussing the reality of the scene. More importantly though, as he is talking about the plot's real-world inspiration, the screen shows the actual comic book cells of the scene that was just recreated. It is apparent that these are the cells from the original *American Splendor* comic book, making this intermedial interaction particularly complex. The film presents an adaptation, then a critical analysis from the 'real' world in the form of a documentary, in conjunction with medial combination with the comic book form by putting the original comic cells on screen.

Another important element of this complex medial interaction is the extent to which the filmmakers go to integrate the documentary sections into the narrative of the film adaptation. The room in which Pekar is interviewed for example, is entirely white, and filled with objects that reflect the subject he is talking about at each point in the story when these interview scenes appear. In one instance Pekar describes how he would go about picking up items from thrift shops, so the white room is filled with isolated items of furniture, old record collections and other assorted 1970s Americana. It reflects the scenes being played out in the film happening on the other narrative level, but the whiteness of the room makes sure the aesthetic is significantly different and significantly 'unreal', even though this is arguably intended to be the *most* 'real' aspect of the film, being an actual (apparently truthful) interview with the creator of the comic and subject of the narrative itself.

The film also takes stills of certain scenes and applies a comic-book aesthetic to them at particular moments. Harvey's trip to the supermarket is a key example of this. As Harvey contemplates which queue to join, the film pauses in a still, with the background detail becoming pale enough to give the impression that Giamatti's image is on a sheet of low-quality, grainy comic-book paper. The colour is also dulled in order to further recreate the look of the original comic, while not turning the image fully into a drawing. Instead, a thought bubble appears over the image of Giamatti, and indicates that he is thinking about choosing the correct line at the grocery store. A number of stills are taken from this scene, each one presenting the consecutive thoughts he has as he explains to the viewer/reader what to

consider when picking a line. Each of these stills represent separate cells in a comic book, literally recreated here on-screen. It is vital to note though that unlike the earlier comic book sequences, this is not media combination. The comic itself is not present in its entirety in this scene because the content of the still is not hand drawn, it is recreated in the film medium. This is still photographic imagery of Paul Giamatti, with the coloration and texture of the paper recreated digitally in the film, which is a clear example of intermedial reference.

As the scene progresses, the interaction between the medial forms becomes arguably even more complex. Giamatti's thought bubble, now present within the actual film and not removed as a still, appears with an animated version of the comic representation of Pekar in it. The animated drawing is voiced by Giamatti, relaying the information that has up to now been communicated via text. The thought bubble then becomes a cell of its own, moving in from the left side of the frame, limiting the film to only half the cinematic screen. At this point, the animated Pekar talks to his film counterpart, and Giamatti reacts as if he can hear his advice. Given that these have been established as different levels of narrative reality, this is a clear example of metalepsis. Following this, the animated Pekar escapes his cell and appears behind Giamatti within the film. Although narratively it is made clear that these are still only Pekar's thoughts, visually the animated Pekar is no longer restricted to existing on the *page* but can now exist fully independently on the *screen*, in a narrative universe visually far more like the one expected by audiences of classical realism.

American Splendor recreates the narrative, in film form, the aesthetic, and even the physical modality of the medium with the textured background of the stills used to recreate comic cells. By doing all of this, as well as animating the drawings themselves and incorporating them into a number of scenes throughout, the film demonstrates an entire collection of filmmaking techniques employed to evoke and interact with the source material in explicitly unusual ways in-keeping with the 'alternative' aesthetic commonly associated with independent cinema. In addition, the employment of all this metareference, metalepsis and intermediality could also be said to result in a questioning of the authenticity of the film form and its claim to be the primary communicator of 'reality'. The classical realist film in which Pekar is played by Giamatti is explicitly stated as a fiction right from the outset, and is repeatedly shown to be such during documentary interludes and recreated sections in which the audience see Giamatti as himself on the set of the film. Similarly, even within the 'film' reality there are moments that expressly highlight the artificiality of it, such as the inclusion of Harvey's appearances on the *The Late Show with David Letterman* (CBS, 1993-present). Instead of recreating the interview with Giamatti, the film instead chooses to simply play the original recording of Pekar's as appearance on the show, almost in its entirety. There is importantly no clear cut or signposting that the film is reverting to its documentary level of narrative reality in this moment. Instead the documentary level of reality is allowed to 'contaminate' the classical narrative film, with footage of the real Pekar in these moments reminding the audience once again that the film is not real.

224

It seems that, much as was evident in the 1990s, New Line's specialist sub-division Fine Line has provided one of the most significant examples of intermediality in action, despite only existing for half of the following decade and distributing few films. The contrast between the content of Fine Line's only comic book adaptation (*American Splendor*), and that of New Line's multiple attempts at such, seems to underline the distinction highlighted in the last chapter. While New Line remains focused on making films with popular appeal, with intermediality and metareferentiality appearing occasionally within that context to provide interesting moments, Fine Line seems capable of pushing the medial interaction further into a more extreme and perhaps even less accessible place. Adapting an underground cult comic like *American Splendor* in the first place boosts Fine Line's credentials as appealing to a discerning and media-literate audience eager for content with more artistic merit, but that decision also allows for a far greater engagement with intermedial technique, safe in the knowledge that the immersion-breaking and distancing effect of consistently highlighting the film's own artificiality and mixing multiple forms will not be a turn-off for audiences who have specifically sought out 'alternative' entertainment.

One can see a number of parallels between New Line and Lionsgate, who also released a number of comic book adaptations in the 2000s, none of which share the complexity of *American Splendor* in regard to exploring the relationship between the forms of comic and film. *Punisher War Zone* sports little more than a heightened colour palette to evoke the sense of the art of a comic book, while *The Spirit* bears a striking resemblance to

225

Miramax's earlier *Sin City* (not surprising given that they are both Miller adaptations) without adding anything significant of its own to the formula.

Nevertheless, the previously mentioned trend for referencing multiple media is reinforced in a number of Lionsgate's releases. In some cases, like *Kick-Ass* (Matthew Vaughan, 2010) for example, the reference is merely a narrative awareness of the mediated nature of modern lived experience. Despite being adapted from a comic book, and utilising occasional comic-cell visuals to reference the source material, *Kick-Ass* remains very securely in the realm of traditional narrative film and does not engage with metareferentiality to an extent that would benefit from intermedial reference. Nevertheless, the internet and video virality in particular are crucial parts of the protagonist's narrative, the whole story relying on the premise that because of modern culture's willingness to make anyone famous, anyone who decides to could conceivably become a superhero. Television coverage follows, but nothing that threatens the primacy and superiority of the film medium.

A more interesting use of comic book aesthetics is to be found in an adaptation of an Opera. *Repo! The Genetic Opera* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2008) is based on the contemporary stage shows *The Necromancer's Debt* and *Repo! The Genetic Opera* (Darren Smith and Terrance Zdunich, 2002), so the most striking element of all the dialogue being delivered in song throughout is not too surprising. What is less expected is the distinctly comic book aesthetic evoked throughout. The film opens with a full three minutes of largely dialogue-free (the occasional key word is sung) recreations of drawn comic panels, with small elements animated. The key

226

feature of this aspect of the film is the visual style chosen must be representative of the medium of comics in its entirety, as there is no original *Repo!* comic book to adapt from. Given this, the style selected is one that utilises relatively detailed and/or realistic drawings of characters, but using a minimal number of colours, favouring bold, contrasting tones combined with significant amounts of silhouette to provide stark outlines. This is a style that seems particularly evocative of what has become known as the Bronze Age of comics, an informal categorisation for the popular form between around 1970 and 1985 (Mazur & Danner, 2014: 53–57).

One way in which the evocation of this particular comic style is appropriate in *Repo!* is because 1971 saw the Comics Code Authority relax a number of its rules regarding specifically horror content, which allowed for the resurgence of what had been termed 'horror comics' in the 1940s and 1950s. EC Comics is one of the most famous producer of these horror comics up to the mid-1950s, having transformed from Educational Comics, producing Bible stories and literary adaptations, to Entertaining Comics, which focused more on science fiction, crime and horror. The latter of these proved to be the most successful genre for EC, who were responsible for titles like *Tales from the Crypt* (1950–1955), *The Vault of Horror* (1950–1955) and *The Haunt of Fear* (1950–1954), but they became a significant target for those who felt comics needed regulation due to their adult content (Petersen, 2010: 157). The establishment of the Comics Code Authority in 1954 introduced a number of measures such as the banning of 'all scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism' and even the use of the words 'horror' or 'terror' in the

title (Hand & Wilson, 2012: 302). This essentially wiped out much of EC's output, along with other publishers that had been part of the popular genre, and led to such content being significantly diminished and marginalised. After the relaxing of these rules, comic books like *The Tomb of Dracula* (Marvel, 1971–1979) and *Supernatural Thrillers* (Marvel, 1972–1975) ushered the genre back into style (Schoell, 2014: 175). The era in which this occurred resulted in these comics being illustrated in the Bronze Age style, and so the horror content of *Repo!* is fitting.

Whether or not this is an intentional attempt at authenticity, it is important that it is this look *Repo!* recreates to represent comics in their entirety as a medium. This is an issue for any film that attempts to engage in intermediality with any medium, as media are fluid collections of conventions that alter significantly over time. It is incredibly difficult to locate static, immutable constituents of individual media, as we have discussed previously, and so any attempt to contact individual features must be skewed to an era or a genre as well as being chosen to represent the medium more broadly. In this case, the Bronze Age of comic books, spanning the period from 1970 to 1985, would likely be the style of comic most familiar to 2008 filmgoers between the ages of around 25 and 40. This would certainly seem demographically appropriate given *Repo!*'s R rating upon its cinematic release, but it also speaks to what the filmmakers expect a general cinematic audience's idea of comic books to be. It seems that the popular form, specifically associated with the superhero comics of the Bronze Age constitute the look of 'comics' for a general audience.[8] These publications are bright, colourful, detailed but drawn with clean lines,

incorporating high contrast and use of shadows. This is most certainly not the aesthetic present in *Amercian Splendor*, or indeed the Frank Miller comics that appeared towards the end of and following the Bronze Age, but when attempting to evoke another medium without a specific source text, it is clearly the most popular forms that are contacted to do so.

Repo! once again utilises the other contacted medium to separate two levels of narrative reality, the live-action musical film asserts itself as the present day story, while the comic book sequences are concerned with telling the backstory of the characters and the world at regular intervals. Additionally, the film demonstrates a willingness to engage with multiple other media much like the other films discussed above. As mentioned earlier *Repo!* takes a key feature of the original stage show, the sung dialogue, as its primary mode of address. While this content is presented in a somewhat extreme way for a traditional film musical, it is not dissimilar enough from that traditional filmmaking form to be either metareferential or intermedial in its own right. The stage show within the narrative, however, is both, and provides arguably *Repo!*'s most important engagement with the medial forms it recreates.

The Genetic Opera itself is merely a plot point for much of the film, but the performance of Blind Mag begins a climax that brings the entire film much closer to actual filmed theatre. Unlike the heavily edited content of the rest of the film, this sequence is not punctuated with time ellipses or cutaways, and we are allowed to simply enjoy the entire solo performance along with the theatre audience. Following her death, Rotti Largo (Paul Sorvino) addresses the theatre audience encouraging them to stay in their

seats and promising them an exciting conclusion to the storyline involving Shiloh (Alexa Vega) and her father Nathan (Anthony Head). When Nathan arrives on the theatre stage, the film narrative continues to play out entirely upon it. At this point the sung narrative begins to recognise itself as a play, with Rotti proclaiming 'I've planned my perfect end […] an ending only I could spin', and one recognised by his sons as 'a tale befitting any opera'.

During this sequence the film employs cutaways to the theatre audience cheering and applauding as if actually watching a performance, despite this being the narrative 'reality' of the film. Additionally, the stage lighting and effects are used to emphasise the storyline being played out on stage, despite the fact that if this were the 'real' narrative of the film, with characters legitimately being killed, the theatre staff would be unlikely to play along with assisting in the construction of that narrative in such a way. Much has been written thus far about the notion of a contacted medium being 'contained' within a particular element of film. As *Finding Neverland* has demonstrated, by restricting other media to existing in the narrative world but 'othering' them and contacting those media via techniques like metalepsis, the contacted medium can be prevented from contaminating the text to an extent that would challenge the primacy of the film's narrative reality. In some cases we have seen that boundary breaking down in films that aim to further foreground consideration of medial boundaries, such as in the key examples of Chapter 4 and *American Splendor*. Here though we see an important reversal of that relationship. It is the film medium that becomes contained entirely on the theatre stage. From starting in a position of framing the idea of a stage show, the stage show itself becomes the frame

for the events of the film. In this sequence it is theatre that attains dominance over the film form, to the maximum extent that can be achieved while still remaining a film.

It seems that this scene is designed specifically to raise the question of what is 'real' and which medium is representing that reality. If the scene were played out identically in a theatrical performance, it would elicit a similar metareferential effect by directly addressing the audience in the context of a fictional stage-show within the narrative, but filming that scene and framing it within the context of a feature film adds an additional level of uncertainty as to the media product being witnessed.

In some ways *Repo!* contacts theatre intermedially in much the same way as *Love's Labour's Lost*. Certainly the overt theatricality of the presentation occupies a similar space in regard to highlighting the film's artifice via clear imitation of another form, but that presentation is aimed at different audiences and for different effects. Intermediality in the Shakespeare adaptation allows fans of the original and those eager to see that work modernised in imaginative ways to enjoy something a little different, while still maintaining a solid grasp on the 'quality' of the production. *Repo!* on the other hand, despite contacting the same medium in many of the same ways, does so as an attempt to disrupt the expectations of an audience. As a film more obviously targeted at people who want something overtly alternative, the use of extreme violence and gore is of course a factor, but by contacting multiple media in multiple ways, particularly by including the comic book medium, the film appeals to an audience more in keeping with the indie notion of the alternative to

Hollywood. Engaging in extreme sensationalism and spectacle as indulgently as *Repo!* might seem like an odd way to present people with an alternative to the mainstream, but in this way Lionsgate followed in the footsteps of early independent 'B' movie tradition throughout the 2000s, but did so with a keen awareness of the media-saturated era in which the films were being produced and consumed, and so intermedial contact was a feature of many of them.

These more explicitly 'alternative' experiences like *Repo!* and *American Splendor* employ intermediality in a very different way from the likes of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Finding Neverland* and *Chicago* considered in the previous section. Here intermediality is not the sole source of differentiation from the mainstream, but rather one part of broader strategy of differentiation that employs numerous disruptive and audience-distancing formal and narrative features. In this scenario one can see intermediality existing less as a tool with which to confer legitimacy and attract audiences, and more as an additional form of authenticity within an already 'alternative' experience. The intermediality present in these examples provides a similar pleasure of 'play' for those audience members who wish to explore the medial comparisons, but it also acts in service of already fragmented narratives and complex protagonists in order to further communicate the 'truth' of their diegetic experience.

Television, Videogames and Lionsgate

The 'alternative' status of Lionsgate films, while often difficult to distinguish in box-office hits like *The Expendables* (Sylvester Stallone,

232

2010) and *The Hunger Games* (Gary Ross, 2012), has traditionally resided in a willingness to distribute films considered too controversial by the Hollywood mainstream. *Repo!* is an example of this, reflected in its limited theatrical release and Lionsgate's severe lack of marketing for the film (Dave Itzkoff, 2008), but this tendency can also be seen in releases like *Dogma* (Kevin Smith, 1999), *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) and *Saw* (James Wan, 2004).

With this preference for controversial content, however, there does also seem to be a significant bias in favour of contacting the newer media forms whenever other media are evoked within narratives. What becomes clear when broadly surveying the result is that in the 2000s Lionsgate produced a considerable amount of film content that explored a darker side of the interaction between media, as well as a number of films that contact the film form itself intramedially to highlight and explore some of the medium's own specificities, limitations and artificial constructions.

Shadow of the Vampire (E Elias Merhige, 2000) presents a metanarrative based on the filming of the original *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922) for example, reproducing at certain points the particular aesthetic of the silent cinema era. Since these are recreations of particular scenes from *Nosferatu* specifically however, one might more accurately describe this as intertextuality, at least as much as intramediality. Nevertheless, the film narratively focuses on a discussion of the film form and its early struggle for legitimacy alongside the more established and respected form of theatre. *The Final Cut* (Omar Naim, 2004) also provides a thoughtful consideration of the film medium, portraying a near-future in which electronic implants

allow a tribute film of a person's entire life to be constructed upon the death of each individual. Here it is the process of editing, and the decision of what to include and exclude within a narrative that is the core component of the mediality of film. A component that is explicitly isolated and interrogated in regard to its contribution to a film's claim to authenticity or 'truth'. Similarly, *The Cabin in the Woods* (Drew Goddard, 2012) self-consciously deconstructs classic horror film tropes in order to draw the audience's attention to a particular genre filmmaking formula. An interesting addition in this film is that of a production crew tasked with making sure the protagonists encounter the correct situations and characters at the right time to meet the criteria of a horror film. While the crew are not in fact making a film, the criteria are contextualised within the narrative as the demands of a deity whom they all worship, there is a clear parallel with the production of film but also of broadcast television, something that appears in a number of Lionsgate films after 2000.

This seems to be part of the increased tendency towards the recognising of multiple media in order to make a film narrative relevant to contemporary audiences. While not adapted from a source text, *The Condemned* (Scott Wiper, 2007) recognises the modernisation and digitisation of entertainment media by conflating television production and internet distribution, as well as audience interactivity, to create a dystopian reality in which convicts fight to the death on an island for the entertainment output of an internet television channel. While this premise is not new and one could draw parallels to Japanese modern classic *Battle Royale* (Kinji Fukasaku, 2000), it is important to note the difference in thematic emphasis

between the titles. In *Battle Royale* the notion of having young people fight to the death is framed as a way of purging the dilettantism (and tacit Westernisation) of Japan's youth culture (Richardson, 2012: 13). *The Condemned* functions as a vicious satire of reality television and in particular the acceptance of dehumanising treatment of people in the pursuit of higher ratings. This difference is illustrated quite clearly in the firm focus maintained by *The Condemned* on the characters inhabiting the actual production studio, and their own struggle between their professional obligation and their humanity during the escalation of violence and sadism being depicted by the show. While the action on the island is given screen priority, there is a significant amount of time dedicated to the production side of the narrative, which ensures that the audience is never allowed to engage fully with the actions of the convicts without being aware of the mediation of the internet television show being produced.

While having the show be transmitted over the internet solves some simple plot-level problems such as the need to adhere to broadcasting standards, it is also more significant than that. The medium of internet broadcasting, however diffuse and diverse that categorisation may be, has come to be associated with the ability to stream continuously and without interruption by advertising. *The Condemned* makes its fictional broadcast content all the more unsettling by removing the traditional 'flow of television' by removing the schedule and producing instead a relentless, uninterrupted stream of the events unfolding on the island.[9] While this film cannot be said to have an integral desire to explore other media intermedially at its core, it does speak to an apparent preference on the part

of Lionsgate for evoking more modern media forms for the purpose of critique.

Gamer (Mark Neveldene & Brian Taylor, 2009) utilises similar themes of a dystopian future in which media has desensitised the population, but uses videogames in place of television and arguably employs intermediality to a greater degree. While we have previously looked at the intermedial reference to videogames from a narrative structuring perspective with *Source Code*, *Gamer* instead opts to evoke the medium visually and thematically as in *The Lawnmower Man*. The intent to contact the gaming medium is made clear immediately in the opening of the film as it is full of instantly recognisable gaming iconography. The action of the game itself, while taking place in the 'real world' and therefore not made up of computer generated imagery, is presented in a style that seems to specifically target some of the visual realities of gaming, particularly online gaming. The first time the audience see Kable (Gerard Butler) fighting, throughout the encounter the picture halts, stutters and blacks out for small numbers of frames. The actual frame rate drops below the standard twenty-four frames per second that usually provides a motion indistinguishable from reality in most films, and graphical 'glitches' are introduced. Some imitate the appearance of pixels while some very briefly shift the camera, and an actual user interface (UI) is introduced, providing Kable with a visual guide to a 'save point'.

The second battle scene utilises these stylistic flourishes to an even greater extent, further heightening the sense of 'unreality' when representing the game itself, but perhaps more importantly this sequence

also introduces the player, Simon (Logan Lerman). Bringing the concept of the player into the equation allows the film a chance to demonstrate not just the physical means of interaction through the avatar (Kable), producing a full UI with vital signs and even a targeting reticule, but also the distancing and disconnection from 'reality' that seems to be inherent in the interaction between player and avatar.

The visual recreation of the gaming aesthetic is significant, and makes use not only of the computer generated recreation of a UI, but also the particular camera placement commonly associated with online shooter games of the type being evoked and referenced here. As Will Brooker (2009) has observed, 'videogaming is currently dominated by two key camera positions, those of the Third-Person Shooter (TPS) and the First-Person Shooter (FPS)' (Brooker, 2009: 127). Despite the fact that games have been on an historic trajectory of visual emulation of cinematic style and a pursuit of classical realism, these two dominant camera positions are uncommon in cinema itself (Brooker, 2009: 127; Ribbens, 2013: 31; Stuart, 2015). With interactivity as a modal necessity of gaming not present in the film medium, the player's view must remain largely consistent, which negates the use of traditional continuity editing to the extent that it is employed in the majority of popular entertainment film. The use of the TPS camera-view means that each time the audience sees the game they are explicitly shown it being *played*, as opposed to showing the action simply *happening* within the context of a narrative film. In this way *Gamer* recreates the visual style commonly associated with videogames in a

manner that is unusual and immersion-breaking to an extent, therefore forcing the audience's attention onto the differences between the forms.

Even taking into account the classical realist aesthetic of the characters and environment in these segments, in the high-contrast, washed out colour palette of the environments and the unreality of the extreme action aided by computer generated effects there is a clear evocation of the form of popular online shooter games like the *Call of Duty* (Activision, 2003-present) and *Battlefield* (Electronic Arts, 2002-present) franchises here. These games have become so financially successful and able to engage such an enormous number of players that their aesthetic tends to dominate a popular understanding of what the medium of videogames is.

Gamer contacts another form of interactive media, however, in its fictional social networking platform *Society*. This is clearly an imitation of *Second Life* (Linden Research Inc, 2003), an online platform for social interaction that has garnered a particular notoriety. *Second Life* provides an open-ended virtual existence for a player created avatar, in which users interact with other players, travel to virtual locations and even exchange virtual goods. A significant difference from traditional games, however, is that the nature of the avatars' interaction and of the virtual world itself is highly 'moddable'.[10] The program essentially allows players to create their own content in terms of objects, characters and even the behaviours and animations of the avatars themselves. This has led to a distinctly user-generated experience, unique in each case, rather than a singularly identifiable 'text'.

The visual style of *Second Life* is also distinct from the shooters being evoked in *Gamer*'s action sequences, in the sense that it is cartoonish and brightly coloured. *Gamer*'s garishly extreme colour saturation used to visualise the *Society* platform seems intended to be an exaggerated imitation of *Second Life*'s aesthetic, complete with advertising, but it is perhaps the representation of the users' behaviour that is the most interesting interaction between film and interactive media in *Gamer*. *Second Life* has become infamous for the controversy generated via the largely player-created content and lack of regulation. With the creators of *Second Life* acknowledging that 'assault and harassment are the two most-common violations in its virtual world' (Bujega, 2007: C3), the question is raised of whether the player is a part of the medium of videogames. If we accept that interactivity is a core component of the material modality of games, which is to say necessary to the basic medium itself, then it could be suggested that the manner in which the player chooses to interact is a component of the medium too, albeit perhaps best classified as a qualifying aspect. If a large number of interactive media texts from a number of genres, spanning online social networking platforms to massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPGs) and competitive shooters, all display a common feature of bad behaviour and verbal abuse tinged with misogyny, is it fair to say that is an expected aspect of the medium itself?[11] If so, then *Gamer* manages to evoke this qualifying aspect in an original and imaginative way. The viewer is not present within films like the player is within games after all, but in *Gamer* the players have a distinct, malevolent presence.

As with a number of Lionsgate's other films mentioned previously, *Gamer* also evokes more than one medium. Here gaming is conflated with television, or at least episodically-delivered content, be that via broadcast or internet streaming. Simon is described early in the film as a 'superstar gamer', a notion arising from the fact that the game is broadcast to non-players around the world as entertainment. This phenomenon actually exists, albeit on a much smaller scale, known as e-sports (short for electronic sports), and is particularly popular in Asian countries like Japan and South Korea. In the film this makes Castle (Michael C Hall) not just the creator of the game but also a television producer chasing higher and higher ratings and therefore dedicated to keeping the entertainment as thrilling as possible, regardless of the treatment of the people involved in making it. This puts *Gamer* in a similar position to *The Condemned* as a particularly biting critique of the morality of modern media entertainment in general. This highlighting of the dehumanising effect of modern media is also evident in other Lionsgate films in the collection considered here like *Captivity* (Roland Joffe, 2007) and *The Hunger Games*, although these titles recreate and evoke those media to lesser extents.

Conclusion

In summary then, some key features of these films released after 2000 can be discerned. First of all, Miramax continues to focus on contacting the older 'classical' media, often with literary and theatrical adaptations. The manner in which those adaptations are approached, however, is less frequently concerned with delivering a traditional, straightforward

adaptation of the original and seems more likely to incorporate playful intermedial elements.

It is possible to see intermediality as serving two distinct ends in the films considered so far in this thesis, as either the primary means of differentiation from the 'mainstream', or as a feature of more 'alternative' content. The Miramax theatrical adaptations considered in the first section of this chapter, as well as *Gamer*, rely heavily on their intermedial content to confer a sense of the 'alternative' to narratives that would otherwise be considered fairly standard mainstream fare. In this situation intermediality can be seen as a tool with which otherwise mainstream content can lay claim to a position within the 'indie' space in formal and narrative terms, something that becomes more relevant as the major studios move into the sector more prominently. On the other hand the Fine Line comic adaptation *American Splendor* and the Lionsgate theatre adaptation *Repo!* use intermediality as part of a broader strategy of differentiation and seem to incorporate it more organically as a part of their already 'alternative' content.

This split between these two uses of intermediality can also be seen across examples from previous chapters. In Chapter 4 *Source Code* and *Nurse Betty* add intermediality to otherwise mainstream narratives, producing explicit meditations on the nature of their contacted media but retaining generally audience-pleasing textual content. On the other hand *The Nines* and *I Love Your Work* utilise intermediality more organically within complex and unusual narratives in order to more fully communicate the 'alternative' experience evoked in other ways such as stylised visuals, non-

linear narratives and shifting character roles. In Chapter 5 *The Lawnmower Man* and *Pleasantville* make intermediality a core concern of an accessible and linear narratives that would otherwise be considered mainstream, resulting in formal and narrative 'play' that is an enjoyable element in its own right. The intermediality present in *Monster in a Box* and *eXistenZ*, however, is far more organically generated within more 'alternative' experiences in both cases. This intermediality does not merely exist as its own self-contained feature to be 'played' with by cine-literate audiences, but rather as a fully integral feature of narratives that require it. It is possible that within these examples two primary motivations for the inclusion of intermediality in the American 'indie' space have been discovered.

Another important finding to note here is an apparent tendency on the part of the New Line and Fine Line comic adaptations, as well as Lionsgate's genre films focusing specifically on media, to contact not just one but multiple other medial forms. This is a tendency notably absent from Miramax's film output of the period. *Love's Labour's Lost* combines intermedial reference to theatre with a distinct intramedial evocation of a specific genre of musical film, but the critical and commercial response to such medial exploration goes some way to suggesting why it is largely an isolated example among more traditional Shakespeare adaptations. On the other hand, the clear intermedial reference within *Finding Neverland* apparently did nothing to harm the film's perceived artistic merit, either due to the source material being less culturally guarded, or as a result of the narrower focus on contacting just one medium, that of theatre. Nevertheless, following in footsteps of the multiple medial influences on *The Mask*, films

like *Sin City* and *The Spirit* flaunt both the visual aspects of comic illustration and the unmistakable style of film noir. Meanwhile *American Splendor* mixes numerous aspects of comic illustration with formal elements of both narrative and documentary filmmaking. Notably, however, it does this with a considerably greater degree of metareference than any of the Miramax or New Line adaptations present in this collection of films.

This links Fine Line's title to perhaps the most striking aspect of the features distributed by Lionsgate, which is the self-conscious evocation and highlighting of their own artificial construction. Media itself, which in a number of cases includes film as well as television and videogames (less so the older media of literature and theatre) is the target of much critique from many of these titles. In order to perform this critique, however, the components of those media, the actual aspects of mediation itself, are by necessity recreated and exposed. While this takes the form of intertextuality in *Shadow of the Vampire* and intramediality in *The Final Cut* and *The Cabin in the Woods*, that metareferential content becomes crucial to the clear intermedial reference found in *Repo!*, *The Condemned* and *Gamer*. While these films also demonstrate a contacting of multiple other media, much like a number of their New Line counterparts mentioned above, it is clear that this specific tendency towards narrative awareness and critique of media is a feature not just of films after 2000, but also of Lionsgate's output more generally. This seems to form at least a part of the company's brand image of distributing films with distinct mass-market appeal but with content either too controversial or extreme, or perhaps slightly too 'alternative' thematically, for the mainstream majors. This is a supposition

243

that will be put to the test in the following chapter as we move on to discussing American 'independent' films released by the majors themselves through their speciality divisions.

Notes

[1] The density of Shakespeare adaptations around this time, and the large number of them specifically evoked in teen-movies makes them stand out, but this is not to say that Shakespeare was not present in American filmmaking before this. Many people identify *The Lion King* (Roger Allers & Rob Minkoff, 1994) as an adaptation of *Hamlet* for example.

[2] Erik Vos (1970) provides a fascinating insight into his own stage production of *Prometheus*, drawing frequent parallels to the film form, particularly pointing out how the staging and performances were enhanced to create flashback sequences without the effects camera work available to film, even in the 1970s.

[3] Superman, Captain America, Batman and Captain Marvel had all appeared in Saturday serial movies aimed at children in the 1940s, and the 1960s saw the Batman TV show with Adam West and the George Reeves Superman TV series. These were the exception rather than the rule however, and little superhero / comic content appeared in theatres or on television screens until the 1970s (Muir, 2008: 12–15).

[4] One reviewer for the *Chicago Tribune* points out that the film avoids the peril befalling comic adaptations like *Batman* and *Superman*, asserting that those properties 'lose sight of the punky comic-book pleasures that made them fun in the first place' by transforming them into sanctimonious and slick Hollywood productions. *Turtles*, by contrast, retains a grungier feel and allows director Barron to concentrate on providing 'an entertaining series of odd camera angles, gratuitous camera movements and complicated lighting schemes' (Kehr, 1990: 7D). This seems to support the notion that New Line, despite adapting a popular property to appeal to a broad and young audience, did so with a significant aesthetic difference from similar efforts from the mainstream majors of the time.

[5] The film reportedly made $55 million in the US ($80 million worldwide), having been made for around $40 million, which means that while *Spawn* undoubtedly made money it couldn't be considered an enormous success in the manner of *The Mask*'s reported $102 million profit in the US and $303 million worldwide (source: IMDb Pro).

[6] Mark Bould (2005) notes this contradiction in his consideration of film noir's influence over the films that came later. He says of *Sin City* that it is possible to read the film's 'simple linear narratives and one dimensional characters a reduction of film noir to its image(s) and the desire not to make a film noir but to somehow put the very idea, the megatext, of film noir on the screen' (Bould, 2005: 114).

[7] *American Splendor* is part of what became known as the 'Underground Comix' movement. The content of these comics was notably explicit, hence their status as often self-published, and conceived specifically as a way to break away from the traditional superhero narratives of mainstream comic books (Mazur & Danner, 2014: 23).

[8] It should also be noted that elements of the style of the 'Golden Age' of comics, commonly regarded as the period from the late 1930s to the late 1950s, will also be recognisable within this as it had a significant influence over comics of the Bronze Age (Mazur & Danner, 2014: 53–54).

[9] The 'flow' of television is identified as being a key feature of the medium by a number of scholars. Hannah Andrews (2014: 18), writing on the technological convergence of television and film notes that the occasional interruption of this 'flow' can be an effective way of singling out a particular piece of content as an 'event', thereby distinguishing it from the rest of television programming and artificially enhancing its perceived cultural value.

[10] 'Modding', short for modification, is a term used in gaming, particularly PC gaming, for the alteration of a game's code by the user in usually minor ways. This can often be in order to make the game easier or simply more entertaining by adding or changing elements. Tanja Sihvonen (2011) provides an in-depth consideration of the modding community surrounding *The Sims* (Maxis, 2000), a game considered one of the main sources of inspiration in the creation of *Second Life* and that shares a number of core features with the online platform.

[11] A recent survey of users presents evidence for this behaviour across online social networking and gaming platforms (Reilly, 2012), as does the documentary film *GTFO* (ShannonSun-Higson, 2015), which specifically highlights the problem of harassment and abuse of female users online (Ito, 2015).

Chapter 7

Major Studio-Owned 'Indie' Distributors

When looking at those distributors wholly owned and operated by the Hollywood majors, there are some immediately apparent features in the collection of titles. First of all, the key examples of intermediality in this grouping deal overwhelmingly with the more traditional media of literature and theatre, reflecting a significant preference for contacting those media on the part of this collection of films as a whole. Despite Miramax's focus on 'traditional' media and Lionsgate's apparent preference for newer forms, previous chapters have demonstrated a balance in regard to the relative representation of different media-types. The studio-owned majors, however, seem more narrowly concerned with reproducing the form and content of the more traditional media. Forty-one of these seventy-two films contact either literature or theatre in narrative terms or through adaptation. That is a significant majority and contrasts sharply with the diversity of media contacted by the distributors considered thus far. For this reason the following analyses will deal primarily with intermedial examples of this contact specifically.

First of all the output of Fox Searchlight will be considered in regard to its intermedial evocation of literature and ballet, which is a form of theatre that has yet to provide a significant example in this thesis but is the basis for two in this chapter. In regard to literature, *Ruby Sparks* (Jonathan Dayton & Valerie Faris, 2012) and *Gentlemen Broncos* (Jared Hess, 2009) provide two of the clearest and most complex evocations of literature and

will be contrasted first. Following this another Fox Searchlight release *Black Swan* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010) will be used as an example of intermediality with the balletic form of theatre, before moving on to see how Fox's rival Sony Pictures Classics evokes the same medium in *The Company* (Robert Altman, 2003). Sony Pictures Classics also provides two excellent of examples of intermediality with non-balletic narrative theatre in *Vanya on 42nd Street* (Louis Malle, 1994) and *Synecdoche, New York* (Charlie Kaufman, 2008). Taken together these films provide not only the clearest and most explicit intermedial content, but also demonstrate how those techniques have been deployed across the entire time period considered in this thesis, as well as in a range of content considered both more mainstream and more inaccessible or 'alternative' from the perspective of the Hollywood speciality divisions. Finally, there will be a brief consideration of the use of metareference across a number of films from this collection, often deployed without another contacted medium.

Fox Searchlight: Page, Stage and Screen

Fox Searchlight's output features a significantly 'popular' formal and narrative aesthetic, with their films doing little to present audiences with challenging alternatives to the mainstream Hollywood majors. While it is certainly true that a focus on arts and media, or on those creative individuals at the heart of such endeavours, engenders a particular interest from the niche audience most commonly associated with the 'indie' space, that alone does not make the titles particularly 'independent'. The vast majority of these films are constituted almost entirely from traditional characters,

narratives and formal framework, but with a few small details altered in some way from what mainstream audiences might expect. It is in this way that many of the films released by the studio-owned indie distributors gained a reputation as 'offbeat' or 'quirky', with the latter term having been the focus of a number of enlightening analyses of indie film over the past decade.[1]

This is certainly true after 2000, as what little of Fox Searchlight's output could be classed as truly 'alternative' arrived in the 1990s. The close-quarters theatrical staging, meandering plot and ambiguous conclusion of *Two Girls and a Guy* (James Toback, 1997) would have been a fairly radical departure from mainstream narrative cinema of the time. Equally the exploration of the ambiguous space between documentary and narrative film in *Looking for Richard* (Al Pacino, 1996), and *20 Dates* (Myles Berkowitz, 1998) was a technique fresh enough to be considered alternative to the output of the majors. Indeed, these films are part of a larger trend towards metareference within intramediality that will be explored further later in this chapter, but overall this kind of audience distancing and experimentation gives way after 2000 to some considerably more traditional narrative cinema. Fox ended the 1990s with two Shakespeare adaptations, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Michael Hoffman, 1999) and *Titus* (Julie Taymor, 1999), which are effective but largely traditional adaptations of the source text, requiring little effort on the part of the viewer to engage with the content.[2] Gentle romantic comedy is present in films like *Woman on Top* (Fina Torres, 2000) and *Waitress* (Adrienne Shelly, 2007), while titles like *Garden State* (Zach Braff, 2004) and *Crazy Heart* (Scott Cooper, 2009)

would arguably fit comfortably into the 'quality drama' category of any mainstream major of the time. Nevertheless, a number of Fox Searchlight films apply popular filmmaking narratives and techniques to medial contact in more complex ways, with literature providing a significant focus.

Ruby Sparks (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2012) provides a fascinating example of this. Given its central focus on a young novelist's struggle to deal with his own inability to write, and subsequently the nature of his own literary creation, one might assume that this is purely a film about literature. In fact *Ruby Sparks* is a far more complex exploration of the nature of artistic creation and more specifically a cultural critique of a common narrative trope using intermediality between literature and film to effectively convey its message. It is the character of the 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl' or MPDG that is the target of this deconstruction. MPDG is a term originally coined by film critic Nathan Rabin, who used it to describe a girl who 'exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures' (Rabin, 2007). The term is now in common use in popular culture to describe a number of female characters that appear as idealised personifications of the young male writers' desires while lacking personal agency, depth or complexity of their own. Interestingly a lot of the most prominent examples of the MPDG are found in American 'indie'-style films, with Sam (Natalie Portman) from *Garden State* labelled as such in Rabin's original article, alongside other commonly cited examples like Layla (Christina Ricci) from *Buffalo 66* (Vincent Gallo, 1998) and Kim (Rachel Bilson) from *The Last Kiss* (Tony Goldwyn 1996). However, the

indie space has also provided interesting subversions and critiques of the character, notably from within Fox Searchlight's own film output in particular.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (Michel Gondry, 2004) tackles the notion directly by explicitly equating the character with the protagonist's own subjective memory. Clementine (Kate Winslet) voices her own rejection of the character archetype, remarking to Joel (Jim Carrey) specifically that she is not a 'concept' or a notion that can just complete somebody else. She has her own problems and complexities and would rather not be burdened with the responsibility for fixing someone else's. Similarly, *(500) Days of Summer* (Marc Webb, 2009), also a Fox Searchlight release, foregrounds an equally explicit rejection of the authenticity of MPDG characters. Summer (Zooey Deschanel) is revealed over the course of a non-linear journey through a year-and-a-half relationship to have been originally completely misunderstood by Tom (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) due to his eagerness to impose the MPDG archetype upon her, dismissing entirely the small but clear inferences throughout that her character is considerably more complex.

The way in which *Ruby Sparks* goes about this is arguably more directly linked to medial interaction however, due to its establishment of, and metaleptical leaps between, narrative sub-levels. We have seen in previous chapters how intermediality can be an effective tool with which to separate multiple narrative levels of 'reality' in a film. *Ruby Sparks* establishes a film reality in which Calvin (Paul Dano) is a writer struggling with block who literally dreams of the perfect girl and then writes about her

to get his career back on track. The girl herself, Ruby (Zoe Kazan), is very clearly established as fictional at the outset, existing on the sub-level of 'reality' created by Calvin in his writing. What initially makes this interesting is that we are not required to read Calvin's text to gain access to his vision of the perfect girl. We see Ruby because the film recreates Calvin's dream in its entirety within the aesthetic of the film itself. This could be seen as in-keeping with the developing trend established over the last few chapters of film often using intermedial contact to foreground its own ability to more 'accurately' mediate the complete 'real' lived experience of characters.

This foregrounding of the film form is made even more explicit when Calvin explains the backstory he has written for Ruby to his therapist Dr. Rosenthal (Elliott Gould). In this scene, a montage of Ruby's life reflecting everything Calvin describes is shown, but it is not inserted directly into the film's own edit, rather it is projected onto the ceiling of the doctor's office where Calvin is staring as he tells the story. As the audience view the film from Calvin's prone perspective, the fact that the projection is on a slight angle and that features of the ceiling and ventilation tiles are clearly visible on the surface of the 'screen', ensure that this moment is explicitly established as a film. If this film were truly subscribing to the notion of reinforcing film's communicative superiority, it would be possible to see this as an attempt to convince the audience that they are seeing directly into the character's thoughts, which look distinctly like a film, despite the fact that this character is a novelist. That medium (literature), by inference, is deemed insufficient to convey the true essence of Ruby as he

imagines her. These distinct narrative sub-levels are collapsed when Ruby appears as a character in the film reality, which is to say Calvin's actual reality, and while her appearance is initially played for laughs, what the film eventually does with the notion of Calvin's authorial control over her as his literary creation becomes considerably darker.

This control forms the basis of the rest of the narrative. Calvin merely needs to write a detail about Ruby to instantly make it true, a power he demonstrates by having her speak entirely in French for a short period of time. It seems somewhat fitting that the means by which he demonstrates his control over her in this primary instance is by altering her linguistic means of communication, given that the medium in which he is exerting this control is literature, which consists entirely of language. This would arguably be the most elegant way to demonstrate his control over Ruby if this story were being written rather than portrayed in a film, and so one can see this aspect as one in which the primary mode of address of literature is being foregrounded in the film. All of Calvin's attempts to alter Ruby explicitly highlight the fact that what the audience are seeing is a narrative controlled by a writer. This adds to the fact that Ruby's mere presence in the film calls into question its authenticity, with the 'reality' of the primary narrative level challenged because of the presence of Calvin's literature as an element of the film. The book and the film narrative are one and the same at this point, so Calvin is, to an extent, in control of how the film is going to play out, creatively.

The film culminates in a particularly violent and emotional confrontation between Calvin and Ruby during which he turns the process

of writing into an act of aggression. In revealing the nature of his control over her existence, he demonstrates it by trapping her in a room against her will, makes her speak French, snap her fingers, dance and crawl around on the floor barking like a dog. This is an unambiguous representation of the writer as a malevolent controlling force, with the acts he makes her perform being specifically tailored to demonstrate subjugation and degradation. This is compounded by the appearance that now, having been confronted with the reality of her existence as a character, she is aware of the changes he is making to her and perceives it as a form of abuse. This is something that is hinted at throughout, as each time he has altered her persona to some degree it has resulted primarily in a comedic situation, but then subsequently in something more serious. It is heavily implied that the reason she is so unhappy is precisely because of Calvin's tweaking, with Ruby even stating as a reason for her behaviour in one more sober moment 'things have been so up and down'.

Eventually, Calvin forces Ruby to repeat the words 'I love you' and 'you're a genius' to him. At this point the film cuts rapidly back and forth between a single shot of Ruby repeating the words, and a close-up of the words themselves being typed. The rapid cutting between the film and the text brings the film visually as close as it has been throughout to marrying the two narrative levels of literature and film. They merge into something almost indistinguishable before the scene is eventually brought to an end by Calvin finally finishing typing. Once Ruby leaves, the screen is filled once again with the typewriter, as Calvin types the words 'As soon as Ruby left the house, the past released her. She was no longer Calvin's creation. She

was free.' While this does provide at least some form of narrative closure for the audience, the cadence with which this is filmed is also an example of formal intermediality. Calvin types the words at a changing speed, consistent with the pacing of how one might deliver a monologue or a speech in a medium with more of a temporal modality, such as film. Since the words are typed for the audience to read rather than spoken aloud, but that typing takes on film's temporal modality, therefore constituting formal intermediality between film and literature.

There are some important visual cues supporting the idea that literature is being evoked in the form of film throughout too. Whenever the audience gets a clear view of Calvin's house, the space within which the vast majority of the narrative involving Ruby takes place, it has a strikingly sparse aesthetic. The walls, ceiling, stairs and banister are all painted bright white, with almost no decoration to break up the look of a space that is ultimately blank. While there is some furniture, there are no pictures on the walls and almost no clutter anywhere. This results in almost every scene in the house playing out against a predominantly plain, white background, which is also possible to read as a direct intermedial reference to the literary form. One can see the parallel of Calvin writing his story on his blank white paper (a visual we are shown numerous times throughout), and the film's narrative being played out against the plain white background of this environment. This is a technique also employed in *Stranger than Fiction* (Marc Forster, 2006), another film that explores the possibility of translating specifically literary narrative features into a film. By framing the characters and their interactions against a plain, white paper-like background, these

films highlight the differences between the media, particularly in regard to background detail. While sets and environments are often required to be incredibly detailed in film in order to maintain an illusion of classical realism, in a novel one might not necessarily expect a huge amount of descriptive detail about every room if the salient proceedings are the character dialogue and behaviour. Translating that lack of environmental detail would, perhaps, result in something that looks very much like the backgrounds in *Stranger than Fiction* and *Ruby Sparks*.

Literature is also more physically present in the film partially due to the use of a typewriter rather than a computer. This gives the act of writing a real material presence and permanence that would be harder to achieve if it were portrayed as work on a computer. The writing produced by a typewriter cannot be so easily erased so it allows the medium of literature to exist alongside the film medium in a more weighty and consequential manner. Calvin stops using the typewriter in favour of using a laptop computer in conjunction with the re-establishment of the boundaries between narrative sub-levels, which is important for this reason. As Ruby's story is contextualised as the basis for Calvin's next novel and we see him publish it successfully, the literary and the filmic reality are once again separated into the 'real' and the 'created'. Removing the typewriter in this context results in physically removing the literary medium that had 'contaminated' the film medium while Ruby's and Calvin's stories co-existed on the same narrative level. This reinforcement of a more traditionally believable, less fantastical 'reality' makes Calvin's eventual meeting with the new Ruby easier to accept as a Hollywood-style happy

ending, and leaves us with something ideally suited to the status as 'quirky' or perhaps even more purely 'indiewood'. This film raises some important questions about the contentious aspects of commonly accepted character tropes in popular entertainment thanks to clever use of intermediality and metareferentiality, but it does so while remaining popular entertainment itself. This balance remains arguably the most defining feature of films that share *Ruby Sparks*' 'indie' label, particularly in those from the wholly studio-owned speciality and classics distributors.

It is clear in this example then, that *Ruby Sparks* employs intermediality to a similar end but in a different way than *Finding Neverland*. In the last chapter it was established that Marc Forster's film reinforces separate narrative sub-levels by having one represented through the medium of theatre, and that medium conspicuously visible via the unique machinery of its modality. In *Ruby Sparks* literature is used to contain a narrative sub-level, but the metalepsis is considerably more fluid. In part this is due to the fantasy element of the story, but it is also supported by the fact that the narrative levels are not separated by visually recreating literature's modality. Instead it is the process of writing and the experience of the written word that is being evoked entirely within the visual and formal modality of film. It could be argued that the film adapts its own fictional literature into the film medium and therefore stands as an intriguing example of a non-adapted adaptation, and this is a concept also explored by another Fox Searchlight movie that contacts literature.

Gentlemen Broncos (Jared Hess, 2009) deals specifically with pulp science fiction novels, which is signposted immediately with the opening

credit reel occurring over a large number of lovingly recreated illustrated book covers designed to look like the covers of the 'space operas' commonly associated with the period from the 1930s to the 1960s.[3] Importantly from an intermedial perspective though, *Gentlemen Broncos* uses its own medium of film to visually represent the different ways in which the same written text can be interpreted by multiple people. It achieves this through creating a number of mini film adaptations of each reader's own interpretation as they read and re-write what is essentially the same core (fictional) text.

Indeed, while the first image of Benjamin (Michael Angarano) shows him finishing his novel *Yeast Lords* and writing his name on the cover page, the film then shows us the diorama he has constructed of a scene from the novel. This is an immediate suggestion that Benjamin is conceiving of the story in visual terms, in much the same way as a set designer might construct a scale model to assist the staging of a film. One of the first people Benjamin meets at writers camp is a filmmaker, Lonnie (Hector Jiminez), who is already filming adaptations of Tabitha's (Halley Feiffer) work, so the notion of the film adaptation specifically is foregrounded even before the film reaches the first interlude in which we see the actual recreation of *Yeast Lords*.

The first time we see the story is when Tabitha reads it, so it is specifically a recreation of how she interprets it, rather than how Benjamin himself has visualised it. While it is conspicuously framed as a direct representation of the text, with Benjamin voicing his own omniscient narration to open the sequence, much of the recreation relies upon elements

that are uniquely filmic. Tone, timing and performance, as well as visual comedy, are key elements of this adaptation that would be difficult components to communicate purely in written text. The overtly camp performance of Dennis (Edgar Oliver) and the thick accent of Bronco (Sam Rockwell) are important constituents of a tone that evokes old B-movie style science fiction because of a perception of the production being of low 'quality', which goes hand in hand with these kinds of clichés and stereotypes. In this way the film adaptation can be seen as a direct equivalent of the pulp sci-fi novels being contacted, in the sense that they too were seen as of a questionable quality and denied the kind cultural value and importance afforded to other forms of written fiction.[4]

Similarly reinforcing the film-specific nature of the scene, the comedy of Bronco's line 'you took my nads, Dennis' comes primarily from Rockwell's comic timing and delivery rather than being a particularly witty or clever turn of phrase on its own. In addition, the joke on which the scene ends, with Bronco trying to decide which of the bottled gonads is his and therefore which to take with him, is a purely visual one. There is no dialogue to accompany his actions, and what makes it funny is a classic cinematic device of having him decide on one, leave the frame, and then come back into the frame to take all three. Again, while these specific actions would not be difficult to describe via the written word, it is difficult to see how the comedy of the scene would be preserved without the visual element, as well as the timing and performance aspects.

Conversely, however, while this all serves to highlight film's ability to add what is not necessarily written, this scene also demonstrates the

visual element of environmental sparseness utilised in both *Ruby Sparks* and *Stranger than Fiction*. Much as in those films, this scene plays out upon a background of almost entirely white. The environmental detail is notably absent, given the detail afforded to the characters on which the scene focuses. White fills the background of the screen space in every take, which it is possible to see as having the same effect as in those other films, highlighting the fact that such fine detail would not necessarily be provided in a text focusing so completely on an interaction between two characters. The writer's lack of experience and professional polish supports this observation as this writing is intended to be the work of a fifteen-year-old schoolboy.

When Chevalier (Jemaine Clement) reads *Yeast Lords*, the recreation that accompanies his interpretation is considerably different. As an experienced writer, it is implied that Chevalier brings considerably more of his own creativity to his reading of the text than Tabitha does, resulting in far more detail in the environment. The first shot of this recreation shows Bronco sat in front of an incredibly detailed skybox containing stars, planets, moons, and a general aesthetic of 'space' clouds and colours one would generally associate with the cover art of the 1940s and 1950s space opera novels. Indeed, the association between these novels and their cover artwork is one that is repeatedly reinforced throughout *Gentlemen Broncos*. Aside from taking up the entire opening three minutes of the film, the artwork seems more important to Chevalier than the text itself. He spends most of his keynote speech at the festival showing off his many different attempts at cover art for his stories for example, and this association raises

some interesting questions about what aspects of this particular genre of literature is being contacted.

Much of the commonly recognised aesthetic of the science fiction and fantasy genres even today have a basis in a combination of the visual style of early science fiction films like *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), and the illustrations adorning the covers of paperback science fiction novels of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. These illustrations were in many ways a continuation of those that had graced the covers of magazines that serialised science fiction stories, and became an integral part of the genre with its own style evolving alongside the themes and tones of science fiction itself. Frank R. Paul's illustrations for numerous science fiction magazines, most notably *Amazing Stories* (1926-2005) and *Wonder Stories* (1929-1955), are considered to be the originators of science fiction illustration as we understand it today. Classic science fiction iconography like the oddly coloured landscapes and strange planets hanging in the sky are accompanied in these illustrations by machines, like space ships, unmistakably informed by the existing technology of the era. As Timothy F Mitchell points out:

> This borrowing from contemporary designs may result in the forms appearing out-dated today, but it did achieve the desired goal of reminding the reader that technology was open-ended. Its potential growth was unlimited. By stressing the 'nuts and bolts' of future machines, Wesso links the story to known experiences and evokes the 'sense of wonder' so often discussed by readers of those early pulps. In the same way, Paul's spaceship from Wonder Stories Quarterly is 'streamlined' in the pattern of 1930s' modern design. (Mitchell, 1984: 124).

This grounding in the design aesthetic of 1930s modern technology was accompanied later by the introduction of surrealism, largely credited to the work of Richard Powers on novels and anthologies throughout the 1950s

including a collection of Arthur C. Clarke stories titled *Reach for Tomorrow* (1956) and *Farenheit 451* (Ray Bradbury, 1953). This combination of realism and abstraction continued to typify science fiction cover illustration into the 1960s and became iconic of the genre of science fiction literature as a whole (Mitchell, 1984: 125). The film adaptations of *Yeast Lords* shown throughout *Gentlemen Broncos* are all unmistakably influenced by this visual style. Grounded in what looks like an incredibly out-dated notion of 'futuristic' technology, accompanied by abstract and surreal imagery such as cyborg deer and cyclops guards. Given this, it is possible to read *Gentlemen Broncos* as attempting to evoke a specific element of a particular genre of literature not often given much attention as a constituent element of its modality. Indeed, in the strictest terms, the illustrations are not an essential component of the modality of literature, but they are a commonly associated and expected feature of the novels, and therefore a qualifying aspect of the medium in this case.

This reading is complicated somewhat by the explicit foregrounding of uniquely filmic elements and the process of adaptation itself however. To return to Chevalier's reading of the *Yeast Lords* text, the scene recreated (adapted) is clearly being shot on location as the exterior space is vast, in sharp contrast to the very small space in which the initial adaptation seemed to be set. There is also a very prominent musical score, something that would be impossible to communicate in the form of novelistic text. All of this polish and detail instantly sets the piece apart from the recreation representing Tabitha's earlier reading, with Chevalier's being considerably

closer to the expected quality of a genuine film adaptation, and one that has abandoned the literary medium to an extent in order to adapt the narrative.

The third time the film recreates Benjamin's story, it has been re-written by Chevalier in his own style, and so has undergone further changes. Bronco, now Brutus, has been radically altered to be a considerably more effeminate character, while the costumes and staging have become notably more reminiscent of a low budget science fiction film, albeit still primarily influenced by pulpy cover art. While both Chevalier and Tabitha seem to be capable of adapting the story into film in their heads, complete with the specifically filmic elements described above, their film adaptations are significantly different. This speaks not only to the different nature and influences of the characters, but also to the unique feature of literature that the same text can be imagined in drastically different ways by different people.

When Benjamin later reads his own work, yet another version of the story is created. While Bronco himself remains essentially the same character as he was in Tabitha's reading, this sequence is filled with elaborate special effects and environmental detail not present in her interpretation. One could suggest that this is a result of the fact that as the original author, Benjamin is not merely reading his own words, he is imagining a world he created around these words, adding detail and nuance that is not necessarily communicated in the text. The film cuts immediately from this, the most authentic and impressive recreation of *Yeast Lords*, to easily the least impressive, Lonny's actual film adaptation. It is certainly possible to see this as a biting satire of independent filmmaking, particularly

considering how much the entire movie relies on exploiting the relationship between source text and film adaptation. Lonnie's attempt to adapt the text, while the only one of the five *Yeast Lords* adaptations to exist within the diegesis, is completely devoid of quality to a degree that is clearly designed to be comedic. This might suggest the film is highlighting of the problem of trying to adapt a text into film at all.

The range of different film adaptations of *Yeast Lords* effectively represent the subjective nature of the experience of reading. The film medium makes an attempt at consistently providing a huge amount of detail, with real locations that can be seen and actors portraying the characters, so these aspects are the same for every viewer in the audience. Literature allows the reader to bring arguably far more of their own interpretation to the experience, providing only details deemed important by the author. Even in that case, there is not necessarily any guarantee that a reader will pay attention to details they do not like or are not interested in. As Roland Barthes writes of the act of reading, 'we boldly skip (nobody is watching) descriptions, explanations, analyses, conversations' (Barthes, 1973: 11) in order to get to the more important parts, which are usually the plot details and character interactions. It is possible to do this with literature partly because of the lack of a visual or audio modality, but also due to the lack of a temporal modality. Books, unlike films, are not read in a specifically mandated time-period at a particular fixed speed. The onus is on the reader to create more of the experience because it is up to them at what pace the narrative unfolds. All of these modal features combine to foster an individual experience for each reader, even from the same text. *Gentlemen*

Broncos explicitly acknowledges that by using the differences between the medial forms of film and literature to construct these multiple and divergent film adaptations of *Yeast Lords* from Benjamin's original text. In doing this the film employs intermediality without engaging in the metalepsis demonstrated by *Ruby Sparks*. The boundary between narrative realities are not threatened here, they are instead highlighted playfully using the attempt at an actual film adaptation of *Yeast Lords* by Lonny to make a joke about the gap between the imagined narrative and what can really be achieved by an adaptation on a tiny budget.

While the precise forms of intermediality in *Gentlemen Broncos* and *Ruby Sparks* are quite different, with the latter keen to disrupt conceptions of the 'real' in film and the former strictly containing its narrative fantasy, they share the capability of applying intermedial technique to produce generally popular entertainment film. These films also suggest that output from Fox Searchlight, with its focus squarely on the 'crossover hit', may have found a balance between the fringe use of art cinema technique and the desire for something 'quirky' alongside the mainstream. It should be noted, however, that both films failed to achieve any kind of commercial success, possibly suggesting that playfulness with form to this extent is not popular with mainstream audiences, even when in the service of more broadly 'entertaining' film output.

Both of these films also demonstrate a trend of intermedial contact in Fox Searchlight films being more specifically focused on particular aspects of the contacted medium, rather than more obviously apparent features of the medial forms. *Ruby Sparks* focuses on a particular character archetype

of storytelling, while using contact with literature as a way in which to do so. *Gentlemen Broncos* is concerned specifically with science fiction novels, and in a way even more specifically, evokes the imagery of novelistic science fiction illustration, with broader contact with the experience of reading used as more of a basis from which to look at these more specific aspects.

A higher profile example of this tendency, and one that was far more commercially successful, is *Black Swan* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010). This film demonstrates once again the trend towards contacting more respected, older media, in this case the ballet, and applying specific filmmaking techniques to modernise rather than simply recreate it for cultural value. Additionally, much like *Ruby Sparks* and *Gentlemen Broncos*, the film uses the evocation of the other medium to explore a particular aspect that does not commonly enjoy as much attention, in this case the particular internal lived experience of the performer.

It should be noted that *Black Swan* is part of a long history of ballet on film. As Adrienne L. McLean has pointed out, Hollywood's engagement with the form has shaped the popular perception of ballet, to the extent that much ballet performed, particularly in America, has absorbed the image of itself communicated by popular film (McLean, 2008: 16). Importantly for a consideration of *Black Swan*, the image of the ballerina herself as an on-screen character has taken on a certain level of specific iconography. As McLean describes it: 'the ballerina's most identifying symbols – her tutu, toe shoes, tights and, most importantly, her image as an inhuman, delicate, and dangerous creature with wings. At once victim and wielder of

265

supernatural power' (McLean, 1991: 3). This was the image of the ballerina established and cemented in the romantic period. *Swan Lake* (Tchaikovsky, 1877) typified that archetype, and itself was used in a number of films, such as *Waterloo Bridge* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1940), to emphasise thematic similarities with the tragedy of a central female character. *Swan Lake*, and the image of the ballerina as swan, came to typify the filmic representation of ballet to such an extent that a swan costume was often used as an easy visual shorthand to identify female dancers (McLean, 1991: 10). For this reason, *Black Swan*'s re-working of the *Swan Lake* narrative can be seen as an effective way in which to evoke the medium of ballet, and particularly the notion of ballet on film as it has been experienced historically.

Thomas (Vincent Cassel) states the intent of the film at the outset in an instance of metareference. He says 'we open the season with *Swan Lake*. Done to death, I know, but not like this. We strip it down, make it visceral and real.' He is talking to the ballet troupe and so the dialogue is accounted for diegetically, but the statement applies equally to the film *Black Swan* itself, particularly if one takes the term 'real' to be an intent to translate the story to a setting more grounded in the lived experience of people, without much of the fantasy or fable elements. The score also supports the notion of the film being a direct adaptation of *Swan Lake*, providing a near-constant bed of music taken either directly from Tchaikovsky's original, or based heavily upon it, to ensure that the film feels as much like the ballet as possible. In addition, while it might initially seem that the story of Nina (Natalie Portman) performing in *Swan Lake* is the 'real' narrative of the film, and the ballet of *Swan Lake* itself is firmly contained within the

performance being produced, this distinction dissolves as the film progresses. Nina's heightening paranoia and the fantasy horror elements ultimately lead to a situation in which it is impossible to distinguish between discrete narrative levels as the film and the ballet merge. Metalepsis dominates the film.

Black Swan opens with an entire section of filmed ballet. The film medium is conspicuous insofar as the camera moves to follow Nina's feet and then her movement around the stage at a close distance. What is also notable during this time, however, is that the camera is not swooping smoothly around the stage space. It looks like a handheld, something far more in keeping with a vérité or documentary style of film realism. There is also no audience visible in this scene, with the dancing simply being in an unidentified dark space without even any visible sign of the edge of a stage. When Nina wakes up in her bed we discover this was a dream. A sub-level of narrative reality represented, not entirely by ballet, but by a mixing of ballet and film.

Numerous times throughout the film, particularly in the sections in which we see the dancers rehearsing and performing, the camera acts in this documentary realist fashion, hurriedly seeking to follow the action in a way that evokes a factual account of an actual ballet preparation. This is a style that director Aronofsky has applied before, and can encourage parallels to be drawn between *Black Swan* and *The Wrestler* (Darren Aronofsky, 2008), another Fox Searchlight release. Aronofsky has stated this link himself. In an interview with MTV in 2010 he said:

I've always considered the two films companion pieces. They are really connected and people will see the connections. It's funny because wrestling some consider the lowest art – if they would even call it art – and ballet some people consider the highest art. But what was amazing to me was how similar the performers in both of these worlds are. They both make incredible use of their bodies to express themselves. They're both performers (Eric Ditzian, 2010).

This seems to suggest that Aronofsky has an interest in approaching the subject of performance, particularly live performance, using film as the medium in which to reveal the truth of the performer's existence. Despite the dominating realist aesthetic, however, the film relies heavily on special effects that explicitly foreground not just the capabilities of the film medium but also its artificial construction. This is particularly true towards the end of the film as Nina's reflections start to act independently of her and her body is transformed into the swan. The capability of film editing to have Nina see herself in other people is a trick used throughout the film, and serves to highlight what can be done in a film that cannot be achieved in a stage performance.

Ultimately, *Black Swan* recreates ballet on-screen in a way that has not been particularly unusual since the performance was given prominence in *The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1948), but it does so with so much metalepsis and a sense of metareferentiality that adds a significant amount to the narrative experience. Modern filmmaking techniques like digital visual effects are used to blend the film and ballet forms rather than keep the two narrative levels separate and locked in their own medium. The audience is permitted to enjoy long, unbroken passages of ballet, supported by the 'invisible style' of film in which to communicate it, particularly towards the end of the film when Nina finally performs the

piece. However, the fantasy element of the ballet, the metamorphosis and the psychological horror of the Swan's story, is allowed to seep out of the ballet and 'contaminate' the film. In much the same way as digital effects allow this thematic content of the ballet to exist in the film narrative, those effects also allow the medium of film to contaminate the ballet performance, particularly at the finale when Nina finally undergoes her transformation into the Swan. That scene is conspicuously filmic, even as the performance is entirely balletic, resulting in a mixing of forms that it is difficult to separate. The meeting of these two media and the inability to separate them is crucial to communicating the inability of Nina to distinguish between her reality and her paranoid fantasy. In this way intermedial contact with the ballet is a critical element of *Black Swan*.

The way in which the ballet is used in *Black Swan* is at least as complex and integrated with the film medium as examples of intermediality with theatre in films like *Monster in a Box* and *Repo!* Unlike those examples, however, *Black Swan* was a huge commercial success. It proved to be the actual crossover hit Fox Searchlight appears to be consistently searching for, and as such demonstrates that this kind of medial complexity is not in itself a turn-off for popular audiences, even if other attempts at it have met with less positive popular receptions.

Taken with the other examples considered here, *Black Swan* reinforces the finding that there is a common approach to intermedial content from films distributed by Fox Searchlight. In addition to a clear, and in fact exclusive, preference for contacting the older, more respected forms of media, these films also share a desire to identify and interrogate particular

details or tropes of the contacted medium in order to modernise or in some way subvert the traditionally understood constituents of adaptation. It is possible that this attempt to inject a level of difference or 'quirk' into films that specifically contact long-established 'quality' forms of media is a measure designed to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, while maintaining the 'indie' label required of any film released through Hollywood's speciality divisions. A film about literature or ballet might instantly acquire a certain level of cultural value and respect, but it is unlikely to attract young audiences keen to see something 'alternative' to the mainstream. To attract those people, it may seem logical to employ intermediality to explicitly break the boundaries between sub-levels of narrative reality (as in *Ruby Sparks* and *Black Swan*), or to explicitly highlight the pitfalls of adapting text into film via comedic metareference (as in *Gentlemen Broncos*).

The Stage in Sony Pictures Classics

As the second largest contributor to the films considered in this chapter Sony Pictures Classics forms the most obvious counterpoint to the output provided by Fox Searchlight. The content reflects this too, with the distributor showing a particular fondness for representations of theatre, and in one case, ballet. Indeed, *The Company* (Robert Altman, 2003) provides a fascinating point of comparison with *Black Swan* that can be seen as indicative of a difference in attitudes to content between the two distributors. Altman's film focuses on contemporary rather than classic ballet, and presents a much more traditional recreation of the stagecraft

without the kind of complexity and surrealism employed in Aronofsky's feature. There are numerous sequences in *The Company* that allow the dance performances to dominate the screen space and in these moments the film becomes literally filmed ballet. These interludes are notable for being very lightly edited. Not only do we see each performance in its entirety from start to finish but the camera movements are also strikingly different from those employed in *Black Swan*. The camera in *The Company* mostly keeps its distance from the performers, allowing the audience to experience the dance much in the way a member of the live audience would. The audience members themselves are also given a much greater presence throughout the film, ensuring that these interludes retain the feeling of being live performance rather than existing as a mere element inside the film medium.

Outside of these stage performances, however, the film takes on a considerably more documentary realist tone and aesthetic, arguably even more so than *Black Swan*. Early in the film it is established that while viewing the dancers rehearsing and being coached, the specific technical language of the craft will not be softened for a broader, non-specialist audience. This is partially the result of much of the cast being composed of actual members of the Joffrey Ballet rather than professional actors. This results in a real feeling of authenticity to the coaching and rehearsal sessions, as well as an extremely high quality of ballet in the stage segments as the film is, in fact, simply filming pieces performed by the actual company.

As a counterpoint to this, despite the authenticity in performance and setting, the camera itself remains formally classical realist rather than

271

documentary realist. Instead of getting close to the dancers and dynamically tracking the action with handheld cameras, the viewpoint of *The Company* remains largely distant and elevated, using static cameras, shot-reverse-shot and traditional realist editing to achieve the look of a film about the ballet rather than attempt to recreate a documentary style. Once again it could be suggested that *The Company* conforms to the notion of film flaunting its own techniques to try to establish itself as dominant, and as able to communicate the whole 'truth' of the lived existence of the characters. Certainly the outdoor performance of Lar Lubovitch's *My Funny Valentine* provides the best example of this. In the rehearsal stage the dancers are shown performing but every comment made by the coaches, essentially giving notes, is audible to the film audience. Film in this instance is providing privileged information that would not be available to the live audience of a ballet. This happens throughout the film, with the characters, dancers and coaches essentially priming the viewers with prior knowledge of the backstage 'reality', lending more context and consequence to the performances within a narrative that extends beyond that which would be available to the live audience.

The actual evening performance makes even more explicit use of the film reality (the weather conditions) to greatly enhance the created narrative reality of the ballet. The storm that closes in around the stage creates an atmosphere that is complementary to the dance performed by Ry (Neve Campbell), and it is given a large amount of prominence in the scene. The audience are not encouraged to ignore the storm, but embrace it as part of the performance. It even physically invades the stage, literally

contaminating the medium with clearly visible raindrops falling on the performers and audience alike. In this moment the film adds something that would have been impossible to create entirely in the dance itself, and so creates something altogether new out of the mixing of the two medial forms. As Alberto (Malcolm McDowell) comments, 'the rain and the wind, it was so theatrical'.

The Company also uses subtle but uniquely cinematic techniques to enhance its storytelling, much as it utilises the 'invisible style' of classical realist editing. One moment in particular, when rival dancers Julianne and Suzanne perform for the coaches, it is made clear that Suzanne is the better performer partly by use of sound editing. The sound made by the feet of Julianne are subtly but noticeably enhanced and foregrounded against the discussion of the coaches to imply that she is not as good at landing the jumps elegantly, while Suzanne's footfalls are notably quieter. Much like the classical realist camerawork and editing, this essentially recreates specific elements of the theatre but entirely within the techniques of filmmaking. The result is that the ballet remains contained within the medium of film, despite the other attempts to present an authentic representation and recreation of the contacted form.

One brief moment of metareference in *The Company* is the annual Christmas roast, at which the dancers put on a performance sending up the company in a parody performance of notable events through the year. Crucially this live performance, although it is diegetically established as being for the enjoyment of the people at the party, is a stage adaptation of the film *The Company* itself. Every scene of the roast performance is one we

273

have seen before in the film, which effectively questions which medium is the primary one. While the medium of ballet, and by extension theatrical performance, has been contained fully within the film medium up to this point, here the film narrative is contained within that contacted medium. This is an isolated moment of role-reversal for the contacted and contacting media, but provides sufficient evidence that the film is not unwittingly diminishing theatre by containing it and signals some awareness of the artifice of both.

Ultimately *The Company* is notable for the fact that, despite a traditional mainstream-style of formal construction, the story it tells does not overshadow the reproduction of the company's work. The filmed ballet segments, as well as the daily routine of training and coaching, are given equal if not greater prominence in the film than the romance between Ry and Josh (James Franco), which sets the film apart from most films about artist or performer characters of the time.[5] Despite the fact that the film does not allow that medium to contaminate the film medium entirely, in a formal sense, the recreation and foregrounding of it using filmic techniques constitutes a form of intermediality, albeit a less complex one than *Black Swan*.

It could be argued that this kind of recreation reflects a certain reverence for the cultural value of the older medial form, and that is something that is found across the releases from Sony Pictures Classics. As a distributor literally still carrying the label of a 'classics' division, there certainly seems to be a conscious attempt to engage with content that is deemed of a higher 'quality', or at least is more likely to draw critical

274

acclaim than to challenge conceptions of the boundaries between media, much as we have seen with Miramax's output in the previous chapters. *Vanya on 42nd Street* is an example of this. Similar to *The Company* in the sense that it is partially a documentary but mostly a film adaptation of *Uncle Vanya* (Anton Chekhov, 1897), *Vanya on 42nd Street* is notably reverent towards the theatrical form.

The text is given full prominence in this film, with the actors performing it in the absence of anything that could possibly distract or challenge an audience already familiar with the work. Nevertheless, this form differs significantly from the expected construction of classical realist filmmaking. Added to the naturalistic performances and low-key stylisation this film undoubtedly belongs in the 'indie' space. The film was produced when theatre director, writer and actor Andre Gregory collected some actors together to workshop a David Mamet adaptation of the play, beginning as an exercise in interpretation and performance, over the course of three years. Eventually it was decided that Louis Malle would film one of the run-throughs and what results is something of an odd mixture of film and theatre.

Importantly, no attempt is made to create a setting or construct a staging to complement the actual location of *Uncle Vanya*, the way one might expect from a traditional classical realist adaptation. The actors perform in an abandoned theatre, but importantly, because there is no audience, they perform in other areas of the auditorium. The play, in this sense, has been liberated from the constraint of the actual stage. The performance space itself of course is one of the key defining aspects of

275

theatre, and a key differentiator from the film form so this is one way in which the film departs from traditional theatrical form. Rather than providing any kind of challenge to the perception of the medium though, this can be seen as a way to emphasise the complete focus on the actors' performances in this filmed workshop.

Nevertheless, there are some interesting moments in which the film and the play diverge in more significant ways. The film begins by allowing the actors to simply play themselves, having a conversation about the process of performing and a little about their personal lives over some coffee. This is filmed in a documentary style, using a handheld camera, and bears little resemblance to theatre. This results in the beginning of the play coming as a surprise because there is no signposting to signal the divide. The film simply cuts to two of the characters speaking their lines, and as there is no setting or costumes, it would take an audience unfamiliar with the text a moment to realise the play has begun. The film manages to confirm that the performance has started a few minutes into it by cutting to show the other actors watching on. The documentary style mini-narrative with the actors playing themselves is returned to a number of times, notably between acts of *Uncle Vanya*, and so constructs a framing device, repeatedly reminding the audience that they are not watching a film adaptation of *Uncle Vanya*, but a film about actors *performing Uncle Vanya*, once again re-centring the performance itself as the point of the entire piece.

This notion is further reinforced by small details, such as allowing moments of the actors practicing, trying to remember a line or even repeating a line to remain in the final edit. There is one particular moment

that conspicuously mixes the forms within the performance itself. The audience is able to hear the thoughts of Julianne Moore's character (Yelena) while the visual very clearly shows the actress not speaking the words. This soliloquy has been effectively transformed into a filmic element in this moment, with the film using the unique affordance of not just sound editing, but also close-up, to explicitly communicate this content as thought rather than speech, despite the audience hearing her speak the words aloud.

Overall, however, these moments of unusual staging and/or editing are minor compared with the weight of importance given to the central performance of the actors, a collection of performances entirely theatrical in nature. The theatre lighting is even used effectively in the finale of the play, allowing the theatrical medium to be recreated more fully, while the film surrounding the performance remains a framing device, never threatening to overshadow *Uncle Vanya* or even contaminate it beyond brief moments of classical continuity editing that facilitate the progression of the play's narrative.

Both *The Company* and *Vanya on 42nd Street* demonstrate a deference and respect for their contacted media that arguably prevents those films from engaging in anything really challenging or interrogating in regard to formal experimentation. In this sense these films can be seen to represent a kind of medial contact seen in previous chapters to typify Miramax's output in the 1990s, keen to draw on the cultural value of the older and more respected forms but applying filmic elements to those narratives in service of presenting the original medium in the best possible light. However, it is important to note that even while outwardly

demonstrating this kind of reverence, the films could still be said to subscribe to the notion of film's superiority in terms of communicating the narrative. A lack of complex metareference and explicit boundary-breaking may appear to give theatre the spotlight, so to speak, but the idea that any film techniques can enhance the audience's experience of the performance must be seen as a tacit reinscription of the idea that film can offer something the contacted form cannot. It is possible, for example, that the intent of hearing Yelena's thoughts on a separate audio track is to communicate the original content of *Uncle Vanya* even more accurately, but by doing that film is unavoidably positioned as the medium providing the means with which to 'improve' or 'enhance' the original piece in some way. For this reason ascribing motivation to the employment of intermediality is complex. Nevertheless, while this reverence and authenticity may be expected given the distributor's origin in the 'classics' divisions of the 1980s, it is important to note that not all Sony Pictures Classics releases were as risk-averse.

Synecdoche New York (Charlie Kaufman, 2008) is a film that has repeatedly confounded attempts to either summarise or analyse since its release, but an unmistakable interaction with the medium of theatre is a critically important element of the lengthy narrative. This is not a mere passive interaction, however, with film only providing a slightly modernised perspective on an otherwise unaltered form. *Synecdoche New York* repeatedly establishes and collapses a number of narrative levels, represented at different times by film and theatre, both together and separately, until ultimately the distinction between the two forms becomes

278

as arbitrary for the audience as it is for protagonist Caden Cotard (Philip Seymour Hoffman).

Ultimately *Synecdoche, New York* carries the important message that life is too long, complex and multi-faceted to be able to fully capture in art, no matter how much each art form might claim to be the one true medium able to effectively communicate 'reality'. This is a theme Kaufman (as screenwriter) has explored in other films. It is specifically the core narrative thrust of *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, 2002), in which Kaufman himself appears as a character (played by Nicolas Cage) struggling with the task of adapting the non-fiction book *The Orchid Thief* (Susan Orlean, 1998) into a narrative film. Kaufman has a well-deserved reputation for engaging in metareferentiality, and intermediality plays an important role in establishing that in both *Adaptation* and *Synecdoche, New York*.

While Caden's production of *Death of a Salesman* (Arthur Miller, 1949) at the outset of *Synecdoche, New York* provides merely an interesting recreation of the theatrical form, thoroughly and completely contained diegetically as a fictional creation, his massive, unnamed New York play contaminates the film reality to a large degree. He describes the venture initially as 'something big, true and tough, I can finally put my real self into'. This aim to recreate in art his 'truth' and his 'self' is what eventually prevents the project from ever being completed, so this statement acts in a way as an ironic and indirect critique of any medium's claim to be able to fully represent the true lived existence of a person. Small details such as Caden having to work hard at such mundane and effortless details of life as salivating or crying reinforce this critique by explicitly foregrounding the

279

performative aspect of his own 'actual reality', or what we would consider the film's own 'narrative reality'. In addition to this, it is repeatedly highlighted that Caden's perception of the passage of time is different to everyone else's, far closer to an edited 'syuzhet' than the actual apparent 'fabula' of his complete lived narrative.

Rebecca Devers has suggested that Caden's play is a more literal definition of the 'Mise en Abyme' than even the often considered example of the play-within-a-play in *Hamlet* (Devers, 2011: 29). Particularly towards the end of the film, the entire space in which the narrative occurs becomes explicitly staged as a performance space. The warehouse Caden initially rented within which to workshop the play becomes itself a performance space, enclosed within an even larger warehouse seemingly covering a huge section of New York. Multiple actors are hired to play the people in his life, including himself, and the basic narrative of Caden staging a play about his life descends into a very messy and difficult to follow complex of multiple characters imitating and recreating the central cast, while that cast interact with the newly casted versions of each other in ways that further complicate the story.

With the theatre production directly recreating scenes from the film, such as Sammy's (Tom Noonan) funeral, the two media are presented alongside one another, but it should also be noted that the staged versions remain conspicuously signposted as such right up to the climax of the story. Sammy's funeral for example takes place on the visible machinery of theatre staging with obviously artificial grass and under the scrutiny of the 'real' Caden and Hazel (Samantha Morton) watching from the director's

table. Subsequently, following Hazel's actual death, the funeral is staged once again, with a newly cast Millicent (Dianne Wiest) as Caden. Despite the fact that the theatrical performativity has contaminated the rest of the film narrative, the artificiality of the theatre within the play remains.

As the film reaches its conclusion Caden's creation finally takes full control of him, as it is Millicent, playing Caden, who takes charge of the production and feeds Caden instructions via an earpiece. It is in this moment that Caden finds himself reliving moments of his own life (and therefore from the film itself), with the play and the film finally collapsing into an indistinguishable narrative whole. That Millicent directs the entire conclusion of the film with instructions the audience, and apparently only Caden, can hear, finally makes explicit the artifice of the film medium itself and the dominant narrative 'reality' of *Synecdoche, New York* for the first time. Added to the surreal details present throughout such as Hazel's house being permanently on fire, and Madeline's (Hope Davis) book becoming entirely blank once Caden upsets her, it is clear that no medium can lay claim to the full narrative 'truth' in this film.

The theatre begins contained in its own narrative sub-level, but gradually expands over the course of the film to receive equal prominence with the contacting medium. In the end the theatre director (Caden as played by Ellen) finally commands Caden to die in order to bring the film to a close. In this way *Synecdoche, New York* is a considerably more complex and thought-provoking interrogation of the boundary between film and theatre than many of the films considered thus far, and a significant example of intermediality.

The intermediality in *Synecdoche, New York* aligns with that observed across similarly experimental and metareferential 'alternative' films thus far. That is to say that the evocation of the contacted form, theatre, is part of a desire to communicate a narrative perceived as being beyond a simple representation in one medium. In this film specifically, intermediality can be seen as a direct result of conveying the message that life cannot be captured in media. This differs from the 'playful' intermediality observed in more recognisably mainstream content like *Ruby Sparks* and *Gentlemen Broncos*. Here this intermedial contact is a fundamental condition of a complex narrative, rather than a reference to be enjoyed by audiences for its own sake.

Given this, while one could draw parallels with *Repo!* or *The Nines*, it is perhaps another Charlie Kaufman film, the aforementioned *Adaptation*, that provides the most salient comparison with *Synecdoche, New York*, however. We have already seen the value in comparing the work of a particular filmmaker across different distributors with Woody Allen. With Charlie Kaufman this comparison spans an 'indie' division and a mainstream major, which makes it important to the consideration of the 'independent' or 'alternative' nature of intermediality in this collection of films. *Adaptation* was distributed by Columbia (itself a division of Sony Pictures Entertainment), and while Kaufman is credited only as screenwriter, much as with *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the fact that he is a character in the film identifies it very much as a Charlie Kaufman project. Importantly though, the use of both intermediality and metareferentiality are just as complex and challenging in *Adaptation* as in

Synecdoche, New York, if not more so. As the story of Kaufman attempting to adapt a book into a film, *Adaptation* is full of intermedial contact with literature. Specifically, the personal, individual experience of reading is repeatedly evoked, with Kaufman and director Spike Jonze employing a number of film techniques to do so. Formally, key passages of text are occasionally shown on screen and the film plays with the notion of the omniscient third-person narrator effectively to highlight its own prominence within the medium of literature, and its somewhat less respected presence in the medium of film. Arguably though, it is the narrative that most directly tackles the perceived boundary between literature and film.

Much as a number of films in this chapter have employed intermedial contact through a focus on a particular type or genre of the contacted medium, *Adaptation* focuses specifically on the challenges of adapting a nonfiction book. This provides an excellent basis for the film to pose questions about how much a viewer or a reader can trust the medium to be a comprehensive or 'real' account of events. That issue of authenticity hangs over the film throughout, particularly as real-life people are included as characters and their stories mixed together. This has the effect of completely breaking the barrier between the 'reality' Susan Orlean wrote about in *The Orchid Thief*, and the 'fiction' Kaufman has written about making his film adaptation. Kaufman (the character, as played by Nicolas Cage) exists in the same universe as Orlean (the character, as played by Meryl Streep) and the events she describes, so when his narrative mixes with hers and Laroche's (Chris Cooper) in the middle of the film he is experiencing what readers experience when reading nonfiction, despite the

fact that the film itself uses fictionalised portrayals of these real people. They are not fictional to him. Similarly, the film audience exists in the same universe in which Kaufman has struggled to adapt Susan Orlean's book, and produced a film that has instead chronicled those difficulties, including himself as a character. This is an ingenious method by which the experience of reading nonfiction has been translated from one medium into another, not by simple medial transposition or media combination (we are not invited to read *The Orchid Thief* or Kaufman's script itself from the screen), but by evoking the experience of reading.

Clearly, this complex mixing of the 'real' and the 'fictional' is an equally challenging and immersion-breaking employment of metanarrative and intermediality as is present in *Synecdoche, New York*, despite coming from a mainstream major distributor one might associate with less challenging, more 'entertaining' content. This raises an important point about how we might conceive of the 'indie' nature of these techniques. We have seen in this chapter how the general trend for the fully studio-owned indie divisions has been to employ these arguably more 'art cinema' techniques in the service of more traditionally mainstream narrative structures, characters and plots. While *Synecdoche, New York* might appear to be an exception to this observation, the ability to identify similar work from the same individual from Sony Pictures Classics' parent major distributor suggests that there may be little difference in attitudes towards such content between the majors and their indie or 'classics' divisions.

It should be noted that while there is a clear preference in these films for contacting the older media of theatre and literature, the fact that many of

them include the film form itself in their intermedial contact is significant, because that *intra*medial metareference is often present even when no other medium is contacted. The same playfulness with which the examples considered above engage with metareferentiality provides many other films from these distributors with the same kind of 'indie' or 'alternative' style even when intermediality itself is not utilised. This is important because it suggests that while metareference or at least a certain amount of self-reflexivity does seem to be necessary to facilitate the inclusion of intermediality, the same cannot be said in reverse. Intermediality itself is not essential to the construction of complex, immersion-breaking and self-aware narratives. The films from these major sub-divisions in particular, even more so than distributors further towards the fully financially independent end of the spectrum, are keen to evoke the machinery of the film medium itself in order to interrogate it and explore its boundaries.

Living in Oblivion (Tom DiCillo, 1995) structures its narrative around the repetition of a day of shooting on a film set, repeating the day three times from different characters' perspectives and framing the previous section as a dream each time. The film also utilises some interesting aesthetic tricks to separate the narrative sub-levels of 'reality', in which the film crew are shooting the piece, and the 'fiction' of the film being shot, which occasionally takes up the entire frame for extended periods of time. From section to section, *Living in Oblivion* experiments with making the film's narrative 'reality' colour and the fictional creation monochrome, while reversing that distinction in other sections to constantly undermine the audience's expectations and foreground the artificiality of the film's own

construction. This is an example of how the separation of narrative 'sub-levels' of reality is not always necessarily achieved by contacting the forms of another medium, and the films from these studio-owned distributors seem eager to engage in this kind of narrative and playfulness regardless of whether or not another medium is being considered.

Outside of the two distributors that have dominated the discussion in this chapter, Paramount Classics' *Who is Cletis Tout?* (Chris Ver Wiel, 2001) is similarly eager to lay bare the artifice of its own medium, albeit in a less visually imaginative manner. This film uses the protagonist's interrogation by a talkative assassin as a framing device, and has him use an encyclopaedic knowledge of film history to critique the story as it is constructed. A great number of commonly recognised narrative tropes are acknowledged as they are recreated in what is otherwise a generally predictable piece of popular entertainment.

The presence of a documentary style, and even full 'mockumentary' is another example of this intramedial and metareferential tendency. As an aesthetic that overtly communicates film's artificiality, the mockumentary is a popular form for comedy and is present here in *20 Dates*, *Waiting for Guffman* (Christopher Guest, 1996) and *Sidewalks of New York* (Edward Burns, 2001), as well as another Woody Allen film, *Sweet and Lowdown* (1999). The latter film uses the form in a particularly interesting way to justify the premise of showing multiple different endings based on each of the versions of history recounted by the numerous 'talking heads' that provide exposition throughout. This of course moves the film far beyond the traditional limitations of the mockumentary, mixing the form with an actual

286

film adaptation of the events being described in the fictional documentary. Nevertheless, all these films demonstrate a significant drive to self-consciously highlight their machinery of production and artifice, in both the 1990s and 2000s.

Conclusions

Once again within the key examples of intermediality considered here, one can note the same two motivations for the inclusion of the technique as have been observed throughout this thesis. Films like *Ruby Sparks* and *Gentlemen Broncos* that aim for a broader audience appeal through adherence to certain genre conventions, in this case comedy, utilise intermediality as a strategy of differentiation. Intermediality is presented in these instances as an element of 'play', providing knowledgeable audiences with additional enjoyment while not overtly disrupting the 'flow' of an otherwise traditional narrative. It could be argued that these films are not as clearly identifiable as 'mainstream' as more commercially successful films like *Source Code* and *Chicago*, but they undoubtedly exhibit less willingness to engage in the extreme stylisation and experimentation of films like *Monster in a Box* or *I Love Your Work*. Within this context one can see the incorporation of intermediality as an important way in which these films lay claim to a position within the 'indie' space.

The breaking down of 'reality' in *Black Swan* and the uncertainty with which the audience is held throughout identifies the film as being more obviously 'alternative', with intermediality being employed as just one of a number of features communicating that sense of 'otherness'. *Synecdoche,*

287

New York, as a significantly alternative and experimental experience, also uses intermediality within the context of a number of other unusual textual strategies (such as surrealism and non-linearity) with which to communicate the complexity of an artist's mental state. In these examples one can note less of a similarity to the postclassical Hollywood notion of 'playful knowingness', and more of an authentic attempt to engage fully with more complex ideas, using intermediality as tool with which to do so. *The Company* and *Vanya on 42nd* Street do not demonstrate the same level of disruptive experimentation, but their documentary stylisation and naturalistic performances, as well as narratives and characters lacking clearly defined goals, certainly places them firmly in an 'indie' tradition of alternative to the mainstream. In these films one can also note intermediality as being produced from the primary objective of communicating the complex lived experience of characters within a world dominated by other forms of mediation. The intermediality on display in these films is not presented as an additional element of 'play', but as a fundamental condition of the story being told.

Another important element to note about the studio-owned indie distributors is that they are only part of a whole. Undoubtedly Fox Searchlight and Sony Pictures Classics have different approaches to contacting theatre and literature. The former certainly seems more eager to push those intermedial narratives into the realm of modern and quirky but ultimately less challenging entertainment, while the latter remains more reverent of the contacted medium. *Ruby Sparks* and *Gentlemen Broncos* demonstrate a clear drive for broad comedic appeal, despite their 'quirky'

nature, whereas *The Company*, *Vanya on 42nd Street* and *Synecdoche New York* have narratives and aesthetics very much in-keeping with a traditional understanding of 'prestige' cinema. As individual entities, however, each distributor's output taken on its own seems particularly specialised. Outside of Fox Searchlight and Sony Pictures Classics for example, one can note a significant focus on unselfconscious adaptation from the releases of Gramercy. Films released by Focus Features on the other hand contact media more directly as a narrative element, but consistently refrain from utilising that content in intermedial ways to the degree demonstrated by the key examples of this chapter. One explanation for this is that as subsidiary arms of larger corporate entities, these distributors are freer to specialise in a particular kind of content that the parent company provides less of. This is a concept we have applied previously to Fine Line, who, as a subsidiary and technically 'classics' or 'indie' division of New Line Cinema, provided arguably some of the most important examples of intermediality studied in this work. The undeniable profit-motive of American independent film exists across the board, but where distributors have the safety net of a large, wealthy parent company to absorb possible losses, slightly more unusual content that might be seen as a commercial risk can be attempted more frequently.

The relative lack of films dealing with or contacting the more modern media of television and videogames is also a key feature of this chapter. The consistent focus specifically on the older and more culturally respected forms of theatre and literature could also be seen as a result of this increased freedom to specialise. The need to appeal to every conceivable

289

audience is not essential to the strategy of the studio-owned majors and so it is perhaps understandable that the majors may use them much as the 'classics' divisions of the 1980s. They can work to gain prestige for the studio, without needing to exploit every 'niche' audience at the possible expense of a perception of 'quality'. For distributors keen to emulate the critical acclaim and prestige associated with films based on the media of theatre and literature, even ones eager to attract younger audiences, associations with newer media could have a significantly detrimental effect on that image. Videogames in particular, a medium that has enjoyed a large amount of attention in the previous chapters, are perhaps absent here for this reason. As Will Brooker points out, 'videogame aesthetics are associated with empty spectacle and cynical attempts at cross-platform marketing, both of which are presumed to take precedence over character and traditional storytelling' (Brooker, 2009: 124). Similarly, having previously discussed the association between television and 'lesser' forms of entertainment like the serial drama or 'soap opera', it is perhaps not surprising to find that medium present in only a very small number of these films.

Finally, one can also note here an attempt to once again 'contain' the older arts and media contacted within the medium of film. Four of the key examples of intermediality in this chapter demonstrates some kind of exercising of film's perceived ability to 'enhance' or 'improve' upon the other media contacted. *The Company* and *Vanya on 42nd Street* do this subtly, by incorporating uniquely filmic techniques like sound editing to enhance the storytelling and presenting a narrative that claims to communicate a truth 'beyond' the theatrical performances. *Gentlemen*

Broncos contains its contact with literature within narrative sub-levels, all acting in service of the film 'reality', while *Ruby Sparks* evokes literature as representative of an 'artificial' character archetype (one ironically most associated with film) that must be confronted and overcome within the film medium. *Black Swan* and *Synecdoche, New York* on the other hand occupy more ambiguous positions on the relative merits of the media involved, with each allowing for a thoughtful reflection on the artificiality of both forms.

Notes

[1] James MacDowell is one of a number of writers that have directly engaged with the notion of 'quirky' cinema, attempting to provide a more consistent definition than the general usage of the word as a 'synonymous with the more helpful and specific term 'Indiewood''. In both its broad and narrower terms however, the term remains one that refers to 'difference from an assumed 'norm'', but without deviating from that perceived norm to an extent that would draw the labels of 'art' or 'avant-garde' filmmaking (MacDowell, 2013: 53).

[2] This, despite Hoffman's unique take on the material transporting the narrative to 19th Century Tuscany and the inclusion of operatic music, including famous pieces by Felix Medelssohn and Giuseppe Verdi.

[3] From its first use in 1941, the term 'space opera' was largely used as a term of derision to equate overblown and melodramatic space adventure stories with radio soap operas until around the 1960s. At that point the categorisation was reclaimed to certain extent, and is now treated by many as a description of the 'good old stuff' (Hartwell and Cramer, 2006: 9).

[4] Indeed, the use of the term 'space opera' is not limited to the literary medium, with television and film also finding itself categorised as such. While much of that content is similarly dismissed as overblown and melodramatic, with not much of it achieving either critical or commercial success, there are notable exceptions such as George Lucas' *Star Wars* saga (1977-present) (Hartwell and Cramer, 2006: 9).

[5] A large number of the films that have gone unmentioned in this chapter and indeed in this thesis have been either adaptations that do not recognise the presence of other media explicitly, or films about artist characters. To name just a few examples, *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), *Sylvia* (Christine Jeffs, 2003) and *Before Sunset* (Richard Linklater, 2004) focus on artist characters without affording their chosen medium the kind of intermedial consideration seen in *The Company*.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Having thoroughly explored the intermedial content of films across the American independent film landscape since 1990, intermediality has been found to be present to a greater extent that might be expected given the relative lack of academic focus on the term in film studies to-date. This thesis has been able to identify significant examples of intermediality within every industrial context considered part of the American 'independent' space since 1990. While these examples do not represent a majority of the films overall, their existence supports the current surge in popularity being enjoyed by the term in academia. Within this finding, however, a number of details have been discovered regarding the specific deployment of intermedial techniques in regard to industrial location and textual content.

Intermediality appears across content considered both mainstream and alternative, and seems to be used to different extents and ends in different industrial contexts. While the term undoubtedly connotes a set of self-reflexive techniques that provide audiences with the additional pleasure of 'play' in exchange for greater intellectual investment and extratextual knowledge, a number of more mainstream-oriented films have incorporated the concept in the 'indie' space. In some cases this immersion-breaking and unusual feature enhances already alternative narrative experiences aimed at niche audiences. Equally though, the perception of intermediality itself as an avant-garde or art cinema technique can result in its inclusion helping more

traditionally popular film justify a position in the American 'independent' landscape.

It is also clear that the separate concept of metareference, and specifically the technique of metalepsis, often exists in tandem with intermediality, providing a narrative mandate for its use and enhancing its effect. Intermediality has a particularly 'anti-illusory' effect that invites reflection upon both contacting and contacted media. This is often either enhanced by a narrative framing within metareference, or simply outright requires it to avoid completely alienating audiences. This link between the two separate but related concepts provides an additional factor with which to analyse the deployment of intermedial techniques along the mainstream / alternative content divide.

Finally, a significant difference in the approach towards other arts and media demonstrated in these films has been discovered. This difference is organised along three main axes. Firstly, there is a clear difference in how other forms are represented between the older media of literature, theatre, painting and photography, and the newer media of television, videogames and internet media, or 'new media' more generally. Second, an apparent shift in tone and approach to those media can be observed over time, specifically before and after the acquisition of Miramax and New Line by Disney and Warner Bros in the mid-1990s. Third, these attitudes and approaches are intimately linked to the unique brand identities established by each distributor. Each of these findings will be discussed in more detail below, before moving on to discuss the limitations of the study and

suggesting some possible future research avenues with which to further the knowledge established here.

Rarity?

The temptation to label a small set of films intermedial while dismissing the rest has been resisted throughout this study as it is unhelpful to make such inflexible distinctions in the face of so many complex and different interactions between media. Intermediality, in the myriad different forms and ways it has been understood historically, is not rare. Nevertheless, given that previous work on intermediality in the form of the intermedial reference outlined in Chapter 2 has been restricted largely to experimental, avant-garde and 'art' cinema, this particular technique being present only in a minority of these films is not surprising.

In the case of the fully financially independent distributors covered in Chapter 4, clear instances of intermediality fulfilling the criteria of intermedial reference are found to be an unusual occurrence, particularly to the extent demonstrated by the likes of *Source Code*, *Nurse Betty*, *The Nines* and *I Love Your Work*. Certainly, films like *Nine* and *The Fall* demonstrate intermedial techniques, while others such as *I'm Still Here*, *The TV Set* and *Series 7: The Contenders*, recreate or combine media to different extents and to different ends, and so could be labelled intermedial to some extent under previous definitions of the term. The majority of the rest of these films, however, use other arts and media merely as a plot device or thematic content, or are adapted from another medium without any significant consideration of the medial differences. This is particularly true of the films

from the largest contributors to the chapter The Samuel Goldwyn Company and Samuel Goldwyn Films, as well as titles like *House of the Dead*, *Last Chance Harvey* (Joel Hopkins, 2008) and *Peep World* (Barry W Blaustein, 2010). This observation applies uniformly across all of the distributors in this chapter, despite the significant difference in textual content provided by Summit Entertainment on one hand, and The Samuel Goldwyn Company on the other.

Films that contact other media merely for thematic or plot-related purposes remain largely in the ascendency throughout Chapters 5 and 6. Nevertheless, with the key examples of *Basquiat*, *The Mighty*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Chicago*, *Finding Neverland*, *eXistenZ*, *Gamer*, *Monster in a Box*, *Deconstructing Harry*, *Repo!* and *American Splendor* intermediality, and intermedial reference in particular, has a definite presence in the films of Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate. Chapter 7 demonstrates that, while clear instances of intermedial reference is once again in the minority, intermediality undoubtedly has a significant presence within films from the studio-owned 'indie' divisions, with *Ruby Sparks*, *Gentlemen Broncos*, *Black Swan*, *The Company*, *Vanya on 42nd Street* and *Synecdoche New York* providing the clearest examples.

Intermediality being present to this degree within a landscape so closely aligned with 'popular entertainment' as American 'indie' film suggests that the notion is no longer an avant-garde or experimental one. The relative rarity of clear and integral examples of intermedial content across the 274 films considered for this thesis must be weighed against the current status of the term. First of all, as an academic concept, it has been

demonstrated in the previous chapters that there is little public awareness of intermediality, and therefore almost no mention of it in popular reviews. While many of the examples outlined in this thesis were able to incorporate intermediality without adversely affecting the delivery of generally accessible narratives, this might support the notion that the inclusion of such techniques at a significant level remains something of a risk from an economic standpoint. If there is no evidence that intermediality itself is a key factor in drawing audiences, then one could see why distributors might question the need to include it, exposing themselves to the risk of going too far and alienating potential audiences with immersion-breaking content.

It could be argued, however, that simply because journalistic reviews and the public at large do not recognise intermediality as a particular critical category for reading a film text, it does not necessarily follow that they have not enjoyed the results of its deployment. Even academics cannot agree on what specifically constitutes intermediality, as outlined in Chapter 2, so it is possible that the viewers of a film, including popular reviewers, might appreciate the effects of such content without being able to articulate its presence. That said, many of the key examples considered here failed to meet with box office success. While some of the clearest examples of intermedial reference have made considerable profits like *Source Code*, *Chicago* and *Black Swan*, there are more examples of films either breaking even or losing money, like *Nurse Betty*, *Basquiat*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Repo!*, *Gamer*, and *Synecdoche, New York*.

It is also an important finding that these key examples of intermediality as a centrally important feature represent both adaptations

and original screenplays to a similar degree. This is notable insofar as intermediality has been conceived as something that is a feature of film's indebtedness to other media, and more specifically as an artefact of adaptation. The previous work on intermediality covered in Chapter 2 deals with adaptations of Daphne du Maurier, Edith Wharton and Laurence Sterne, in each case concluding that the medial border crossings present in those films are a key part of communicating the spirit of the original texts. These texts had narratives that were materially focused on media itself however, which seems to be a far more productive criterion for selecting in favour of the presence of intermediality. Across the films considered in this thesis it has been this narrative focus on other media that has proven by far the most fruitful, with the majority of adaptations without that additional feature simply engaging in medial transposition without exploring the relationship further. This finding suggests that the kind of intermediality this thesis has sought out and analysed is not simply a by-product of adaptation, but an important tool with which to communicate film narratives, independently of whether source material exists in a different medium.

Metareference and the Alternative / Mainstream Split

This apparent rarity across the entirety of the films considered for this thesis does not equate to intermediality only being significantly deployed in the most alternative, inaccessible or economically inviable films. Titles like *Gamer*, *Source Code* and *Chicago* are not aimed at small, niche or specialist audiences, a fact supported as much by their similarity to Hollywood genre entertainment as by the money spent on their production and marketing.

The relationship between intermediality and the relative degrees of formal and narrative independence are complex however, and differ depending on industrial location. In the analysis of the fully independent distributors in Chapter 4 we observed that these more traditionally mainstream films like *Source Code*, *Nurse Betty*, and *Nine* and make their contacted medium materially present within their narratives in order to invite explicit reflection upon the artifice of media and the particular limitations and affordances of the specific forms evoked. In these examples that medial consideration provides the primary way in which the films differentiate themselves from the expected content of the majors, with much of the rest of their content aligning with genre conventions such as the action thriller, romantic comedy and musical respectively.

More alternative films like *The Nines*, *I Love Your Work* and *The Fall* evoke other media as just one of a number of features that contribute to an overall sense of 'otherness' from the expected form of Hollywood film. Intermediality in these titles accompanies features like non-linear and fragmented narratives and extreme visual stylisation that act to distance audiences and provide a sense of belonging in a film landscape considered 'alternative' to the mainstream. In that sense one could see intermediality in these films as being more authentically produced as a way of further communicating an already unusually presented or complex narrative through the use of other media to reflect that complexity. On the other hand, intermediality in titles that appear otherwise more 'mainstream' could be seen as being a much closer analogue to the 'playful knowingness'

characterised by David Bordwell as an important component of postclassical Hollywood (Bordwell, 2006: 10).

The involvement of the Hollywood majors and the development of certain distributors as subsidiaries of larger corporations sheds further light on this distinction. Chapter 5 describes how *The Lawnmower Man* evokes videogames intermedially within an otherwise traditionally mainstream action thriller, while *Monster in a Box* utilises intermediality with theatre and literature within a film that is difficult to even assign a genre to. These two examples seem to represent the same two motivations for the inclusion of intermediality, as either a way of conferring 'indie'-ness to an otherwise mainstream film, or as a part of a more complete and fundamental difference from traditional filmmaking. The former type of intermediality can also be found in *Pleasantville*, *Chicago*, *Finding Neverland* and *Gamer*, while the latter appears in films like *Deconstructing Harry*, *eXistenZ*, *Repo!* and *American Splendor*. Based on these examples, Fine Line would seem to be more likely to employ intermediality as part of a broader and arguably more 'authentic' strategy of differentiation than either its parent company New Line or Miramax.

In Chapter 7 we find that the 'indie' divisions of the Hollywood majors demonstrate similarly distinct approaches to intermediality. On the part of Fox Searchlight, *Ruby Sparks* and *Gentlemen Broncos* provide this intermedial contact as a primary strategy of differentiation, while otherwise largely conforming to the classical genre conventions of the comedy. Sony Pictures Classics' utilisation of intermediality on the other hand very clearly leans further towards alternative content, with *The Company*, *Vanya on 42nd*

Street and particularly *Synecdoche New York* providing a more challenging brand of naturalistic, classically independent and inaccessible film experiences respectively. This intermediality is one feature within a broader attempt on the parts of these films to provide an 'alternative' experience and communicate more complex or more formally stylised texts. *Black Swan* does not fit this industrial tendency, being a deeply 'indie' and 'alternative' experience from Fox Searchlight, but it does speak to the ability for such 'indie' divisions to take larger commercial risks alongside potential 'crossover hit' content. Ironically, *Black Swan* provided that hit and made considerably more money than either *Ruby Sparks* or *Gentlemen Broncos*.

Overall, it seems that these individual identities on the part of the distributors, and the related ways in which their films deploy intermediality, could be the result of their status as subsidiaries. For the most part, the independent distributors of Chapter 4 cannot afford to specialise to any significant degree because their existence depends entirely on the commercial performance of their releases. Despite a common romantic notion that filmmaking free from the constraints of the Hollywood system is a place for new ideas and different visions to thrive, there is more of an economic drive to produce broadly profitable content in that space than in any other as the consequences of consistently losing money are grave. That said, those distributors will continue to release films that reinforce their brand image as an alternative to the mainstream. That is also part of a strategy of differentiation, especially for companies without the capital to compete with Hollywood on their own terms. Films like *I Love Your Work*, *The Nines* and *The Future* (Miranda July, 2011) are essential for those

companies to carve out a niche to serve, but without films like *The Illusionist* (Neil Burger, 2006), *Source Code* and *RED* (Robert Schwentke, 2011) they would struggle to stay viable.

Subsidiaries on the other hand, with the security provided by the capital of their parent companies, are significantly more able to specialise in content that might be determined to be more commercially risky. That is in most cases the mandate for their existence in the first place, so it is perhaps not surprising to see the clearest and most significant intermediality deployed in films from these entities. This also provides the freedom to include potentially risky techniques like metareference and intermediality in films with other content that might categorise it as alternative, because their slate of releases is only one part of a larger whole. Indeed, it is possible that the constraints of this study have partially obscured the entire picture in regard to the indie divisions covered in Chapter 7. Given the visible differences here between the approaches of New Line and Fine Line to intermedial content, it is possible that the major Hollywood studios have utilised these sub-divisions in a similar way and have been deploying more mainstream examples of intermediality themselves. Without a full, dedicated study on Hollywood releases over the same period, it is impossible to know for certain, but it is an important consideration when reviewing the results of this work.

In addition to the practical, economic concerns of independent and subsidiary distributors, there are also cultural and artistic factors to consider as possible explanations for the appearance of intermediality in more 'popular' entertainment like 'indie' cinema. It is at this point that the close

relationship between intermediality and metareference evident throughout this study becomes important. Werner Wolf has suggested that there has been a 'metareferential turn' in contemporary arts and media, for example, which I believe to be inextricably linked to the rise of intermediality. As Dagmar Brunow has pointed out, metareference (or self-reflexivity as he takes to be an equivalent term) was considered 'counter cinema practice and as an anti-positivist critique of conventional documentary filmmaking with its alleged objectivity and neutrality' throughout the 1970s (Brunow, 2011; 343). This puts metareference outside of conventional or popular cinema, as was the case with intermediality in the French new wave in the 1950s and 1960s. Even into the 1980s and 1990s films containing considerable metaization and/or intermediality remained in the realm of art cinema. Brunow points out that Peter Greenaway was considered an auteur in this period largely because of the use of these techniques in films like *A Zed and Two Noughts* (Peter Greenaway, 1985), *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (Peter Greenaway, 1989) and *Prospero's Books* (Peter Greenaway, 1991).

More recently, however, the recognition and foregrounding both of film's constructed nature and of its difference from other media have become a part of popular cinema, as Wolf's own examples demonstrate with a particularly in-depth discussion of *Shrek The Third*. In his words:

> the devices which used to be hallmarks of 'high art' appear by now to have sunken to the level of works which are at least also children's entertainment (besides being all-age entertainment) and which are produced with the expectation that they are both understood and appreciated by a wider audience (Wolf, 2011: 15).

As far as an explanation of such a trend is concerned, Wolf suggests some factors to consider. One possibility is that this popular deployment of metaization can be seen as a by-product of a postmodernist deconstruction of binary oppositions. This can be an effective way for works to blur the distinction between text and critique, a process known as 'critification' in literature. Another popular reason often cited for increasing self-reflexivity is as a result of a cultural crisis in which there is no longer any faith in master narratives or the ability of narrativity in general to produce any significant 'truth'.

Wolf's focus on self-reflection in the media rather than intermediality specifically does not mean we cannot consider these possible causes as also key factors to any increase in the deployment of intermediality in popular cinema. Mikko Lehtonen (2007) notes that to limit consideration of 'textual reflexivity' to 'immediate textual self-reflection' (Lehtonen, 2007; 78) is insufficient in late modern culture. The reality is that textual reflexivity has a much broader scope than texts only reflecting on themselves, each instance of this self-reflection must also be reflecting across texts and media because of the inherently multimodal society into which those texts are received. For his part, Lehtonen argues that increased mediatisation is a large factor in the increasing intermediality of texts in late modern culture, as are commodification and digitalisation. As he puts it: 'If mediatisation signifies an increase in multimodality, this does lead to intermediality marking still stronger the formation of meanings in this multiply multimodal cultural state' (Lehtonen, 2007: 77).

Another possible factor for this 'turn', is the struggle for autonomy in all of the arts. There is a suggestion by Wolf that as an art becomes more autonomous it becomes less heteroreferential and begins to look inwards, with 'metareferential self-reflection as the last point (of reference) left' (Wolf, 2011: 30). This is particularly interesting in regard to film's relationship with literature as he goes on to frame metaization as a possible means of self-promotion among arts and media that traditionally lack the cultural capital of more established forms. While it is possible that self-reflexivity is a signal of a fully developed and autonomous art form, in the context of intermedial reference specifically to the older media of literature, painting and theatre, it would seem more like either an attempt to continue to draw cultural capital by association, or a self-promotion by critique. This is something supported by the final major finding of this study: the relative presence, treatment and perception of other specific media types throughout these examples of intermediality.

Prevalence of and Specific Attitudes Towards Other Media

The final key observations from the preceding chapters are the prevalence of specific media in particular industrial locations and content, as well as the perceived attitudes towards these different media on the part of the contacting medium of film. First of all there is a significant difference in how film represents older forms like painting, literature, theatre and photography, compared to how it approaches the presence of newer arts like television, videogames and 'new media' more generally. Secondly, there is a shift in these attitudes towards the end of the 1990s when Miramax and

New Line are acquired and Lionsgate is introduced. Third and finally, the individual brand identities of the distributors and their particular preference for specific content heavily influences the films perceived value judgements of the contacted media.

Examples of intermediality in Chapter 4 deal mostly with the newer media of television and videogames, with photography and theatre featuring to a lesser degree. Given the limited resources of the fully independent sector, it is possible to see this trend as once again driven by practicality. The modal similarity between film and these newer media, as well as their incorporation as part of a narrative structure or filming style rather than radical visual effects, provides a possible explanation of their increased presence. Due to the uniformity of this finding across the independent distributors, it is perhaps these films' apparent attitudes towards the relative authenticity or value of other media that is a more significant finding. There is a notable break here from the tradition observed in in Chapter 2 of films evoking older media in order to contain or diminish them while celebrating film's unique abilities. *Source Code*, *Nurse Betty*, *The Nines* and *I Love Your Work* all take a far more ambiguous and even-handed position on film's relative claim to 'reality' or 'authenticity' over and above the media contacted. These films all utilise intermediality not only to evoke television, videogames and photography, but also to mix them with the film medium in ways designed to question the assumed superiority of the contacting form. The primary level of narrative 'reality' breaks down in all of these cases, forcing the audience to consider that the film form is no more capable of communicating the entire truth of the story than any of the other media

305

presented. This is also the case with Fine Line in the 1990s. *Deconstructing Harry* and *Monster in a Box* demonstrate a similar reluctance to accept their own primary medium, film, as a superior conduit of 'truth' than their contacted media of literature and theatre. Meanwhile Miramax's own subsidiary Dimension provides the example of *eXistenZ*, which also aligns with this notion of questioning the dominance of film in its contacting of videogames.

One can contrast this approach with the other key examples of Chapter 5, in which Miramax demonstrate a clear preference for contacting the older, more traditional media, while New Line skew in the opposite direction, but both appear to posit film as in a position of superiority over the other media contacted. While *Basquiat* initially seems to place painting on an equal footing with the film form, it eventually becomes evident that painting has been contained fully within the film medium, which is implied as being the only one capable of truly communicating the complex nature of the artist. The same can be said of *The Mighty*'s attitude to literature. New Line's key examples of *The Lawnmower Man* and *Pleasantville* reveal a similar approach in regard to newer media in which film is positioned in a dominant position, despite *Pleasantville*'s position being a little more complex throughout. These films actually go as far as to demonise their contacted media of videogames and television by equating them with drug addiction and old-fashioned, bigoted social views respectively, issues only resolved within the dominant, contacting medium of film in both cases.

These distinct identities in regard to each distributor's content preference are maintained as we move into the 2000s, but one can note an

increase in the playfulness with which Miramax approach older media. The spate of 'modernising' Shakespeare adaptations speaks to that increased willingness to break from the tradition of reverence to older media that had helped mark Miramax's brand of alternative film as possessing a certain level of 'quality'. *Love's Labour's Lost* in particular is a much more alternative and experimental adaptation than the likes of *Robinson Crusoe* or *Emma*, and along with *Chicago* presents a clear shift towards providing a less definitive judgement on film's supposed claim to greater authenticity than literature or theatre. In this way one could suggest that the intermedial content of Miramax after becoming established as a subsidiary division of Disney begins to resemble that of New Line's subsidiary Fine Line, whose content was consistently alternative, experimental and ambiguous towards film's position throughout the period. *Finding Neverland* does not fit this pattern, however, containing theatre entirely within moments of metalepsis and going so far as to physically remove the stage from the climactic scene in which Barrie's ultimate vision of Neverland is realised.

The introduction of Lionsgate has a significant impact on this intermedial contact overall, with the distributor often deploying both intermediality and intramediality within the context of highlighting and critiquing the film medium itself. Where other media are contacted, *Repo!* and *Gamer* contact older and newer forms respectively, and their approaches differ greatly. There is no question that opera is allowed to contaminate *Repo!* fully, in addition to its inclusion of comic book visuals, and the climax in particular forces the audience to question which medium is dominating the narrative. *Gamer* on the other hand evokes videogames

and videogame culture in thoughtful and complex ways, but contains the medium fully within a mainstream action thriller and ensures film is never challenged as the ultimate conveyer of the characters' full story.

The major's 'indie divisions' of Chapter 7 demonstrate an almost complete reversal of the approach of the fully independent distributors of Chapter 4. Hollywood's 'indie' divisions display an overwhelming preference for contacting the older, more traditional media although their position on film's place within a hierarchy of media is less clear. *Ruby Sparks*, *Gentlemen Broncos*, *The Company* and *Vanya on 42nd Street* share an apparent desire to contact older arts and media as well as to utilise uniquely filmic techniques to enhance or contain those contacts, leaving film as the dominant form. *Black Swan* and *Synecdoche, New York* on the other hand seem more willing to question their own medium within the evocation of other forms and ultimately remain ambivalent to the notion of a dominant medium.

So why might the subsidiary divisions of the Hollywood majors and the fully independent distributors take such radically different approaches to contacting different forms of media? In regard to the preferential evocation of older media, one could suggest that there are similar motivations at play as with the deployment of intermediality in more mainstream or more alternative content. That is to say that an association with medial forms like literature, theatre, painting and photography confers an immediate boost in cultural capital, as suggested by Werner Wolf. For film-literate and informed audiences, the Hollywood majors must fight a war of perception within the independent space because of a broad expectation that their

content will be more commercial and therefore less 'valuable' or 'artistic'. By contacting older and more respected media, distributors like Fox Searchlight or Sony Pictures Classics can ensure their film receives a cultural consideration that overcomes the perception of their corporate parent to some extent.

There is almost an entirely opposite motivation for the fully independent distributors, in that their status as full 'indies' ensures anything they release has the perceptual advantage of being something that will present an alternative to the mainstream. In that situation it is of more importance for entities like Summit Entertainment or Newmarket Films to try to attract at least some of the audience that might ordinarily be drawn to the releases of the Hollywood majors. For that reason it is possible to understand their desire to contact newer media that may be perceived to be in the ascendency in popular culture, in order to attract a larger and younger audience than might be interested in a literary adaptation or an intermedial biopic of an artist.

In regard to the apparent shift in attitudes towards representing other media over the period in question, I would suggest this is also a part of Wolf's 'metareferential turn'. If there is some truth in the notion that metareference has increased as part of a growing distrust of grand narratives, one could see the confidence with which these films 'play' with older media in the late 1990s and into the 2000s as being closely linked with that tendency. The cultural capital conferred by the simple association with older media forms perhaps becomes a less significant factor over time, with the split between 'high' and 'low' culture, or art and popular cinema

becoming less pronounced all the time in an increasingly multimodal culture. Lehtonen invokes the work of Anthony Smith (1996) on this point, who argued that 'Reproduction or transmission without limitation and the general democratization of art have dissolved the painfully constructed hierarchies and pyramids of art forms' (Smith, 1996: 26). Perhaps it is this perceived breakdown of cultural hierarchies that leads Lehtonen to assert that intermediality is a phenomenon particular to popular culture, and that this is part of the reason the term has yet to be fully defined and researched. If he is correct, then intermediality is something quite different now to what it was both in the early cinema discussed by Shail, and in the avant-garde French cinema of the 1950s and 1960s.

Limitations and Future Possibilities

Among the significant findings of this research, the limitations of the study must be recognised in order to make full use of the results. First of all, as was made clear in Chapter 1, these results are based on a textual analysis carried out by one person. While every effort was made to remain objectively within the framework of intermediality established in Chapters 2 and 3, and each analysis is informed not only by popular reviews but also the work of other academics, the findings are ultimately based on a subjective reading of each film text.

As was also stated at the outset, this is neither a comprehensive nor a fully representative sample of American independent film as a whole in the period between 1990 and 2012. These films have been selected purely for their clear relationship with other arts and media, either as an adaptation or

by inclusion of other media in their narratives. With this in mind it is possible, using previous definitions of the term, to label all of the films intermedial to some extent. Nevertheless, only a small number of these films demonstrate the techniques that elevate that medial relationship to a significant use of intermediality as we have outlined it within this thesis. While these films do represent a selection in which one might expect to find the highest incidence of intermedial contact and techniques, this research cannot comment on the overall rarity or otherwise of intermediality across the entirety of American independent film. Similarly, no direct comparison can be drawn between the use of intermediality here and that used within the releases of the major Hollywood studios over the period. An equally broad-reaching study within that industrial context would be required for such a comparison, which would likely be even larger than this one given the prolific nature of the major distributors.

Indeed, the labelling of 'mainstream' or 'alternative' throughout this work is based entirely on a textual reading within the framework of such categorisation set out by Geoff King, Michael Z. Newman and Yannis Tsioumakis, among others, in Chapter 3. A simple binary understanding of 'mainstream' as 'more like the Hollywood majors' is challenged by the amount of self-reflexive and even intermedial content one can find from those entities during the period. In Chapter 7 the highly complex and intermedial *Adaptation* was mentioned, but there are other examples of intermediality in Hollywood such as the Marc Forster films *Stay* (2005) and *Stranger than Fiction* (2006) from Twentieth Century Fox and Columbia Pictures respectively, as well as even more recognisably 'popular' film like

The Matrix (Andy & Larry Wachowski, 1999). The majors have also had reasonable success with challenging and self-reflexive work such as the highly metatextual adaptation *Naked Lunch* (David Cronenberg, 1991) and the complex and surreal *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001). While a full analysis of the intermedial output of the Hollywood majors is beyond the remit of this work, it must be recognised that the kind of intermediality and metareference observed from the most prominent examples in this broad survey of the American independent space can also be found in films from the major distributors.

While this might suggest that a similar review of intermedial content within major Hollywood releases is a promising avenue for further work, and it undoubtedly is, it is arguably equally pressing to address foreign imports and other national cinemas outside of the US. A number of films have been omitted from these analyses because their origin outside the US and Canada as they constitute only a partial view of what might be trends or preferences within an entirely different national cinema with its own unique identity. A number of films conceived and produced primarily for a specific national audience that have been subsequently released in the US by the independent distributors demonstrate a similar interest in media and even employ intermediality to a similar degree. *The Pillow Book* (Peter Greenaway, 1996) was released by Lionsgate while IFC Films distributed *Looking For Eric* (Ken Loach, 2009). Both films provide interesting and different British examples of intermedial content. The Australian film *Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrman, 1992) proved to be an unexpected hit for Miramax, while telling much of its story within a dialogue-free dance

performance clearly foregrounded as existing on a sub-level of narrative reality from the primary narrative. A thorough analysis of intermedial content in these overseas imports and in their own national cinemas of the UK and Australia, as well as that from significant foreign-language markets like France, Spain, South America, China, Japan and Korea would provide a fascinating and valuable point of comparison with the North American productions considered in this thesis.

Ultimately what has been presented here is a typology of intermediality across American independent film's numerous industrial contexts and locations, whenever those films specifically contact other media in their narratives or by being adapted from such. The findings have added to the relatively new and ongoing discussion about what intermediality is and what it can tell us about film, as well as the much more developed debate over what constitutes American independence in a modern context dominated by subsidiaries of the Hollywood majors. It seems that, like many unusual or immersion-breaking techniques employed in challenging, avant-garde or art cinema over the decades, intermediality has been handily appropriated by popular entertainment film that nevertheless seeks to differentiate itself from the expectations of mainstream cinema. That it has also remained useful to filmmakers creating more obviously alternative and challenging visions speaks to the relative novelty and the versatility of the concept and the techniques that constitute it. There is undoubtedly more to be spoken and written on intermediality in the coming years, as the usefulness of the concept as a category for analysis, and the

importance as part of a range of strategies of differentiation for alternative

film, is clear.

Appendix 1 - Indie Distribution in the Sundance-Miramax Era

DISNEY	20TH C. FOX	UNIVERSAL	SONY	WARNER BROS.	PARAMOUNT
Miramax (founded 1979) 1993-2010 (Dimension to 2005)	Fox Searchlight 1994-	Gramercy (with Polygram) 1992-1999	Sony Picures Classics 1991-	New Line Cinema & Fine Line Features (founded 1967) 1995 with acquisition of Turner-2008	Paramount Classics / Vantage 1998-2008
		October Films (founded 1991) 1997-1999		Picturehouse 2005-2008	
		Focus Features (previously Good Machine founded c. 1991; 1999-2001 combined with USA Films) 2002-		Warner Independent Pictures 2003-2008	

Other contemporary independents of note (in alphabetical order):

Artisan Entertainment 1998-2003, acquired by Lionsgate
IFC Films 1999- (owned by Rainbow Media, a subsidiary of Cablevision)
Lionsgate 1995-
Newmarket Films 1994-
Magnolia Pictures 2001- (owned by 2929 Entertainment, a small conglomerate)
Overture Films 2006- (owned by Liberty Media, a conglomerate)
Roadside Attractions 2004-
Summit Entertainment 2006-
THINKFilm 2001-
The Weinstein Company 2005-
Zeitgeist Films 1998-

Reproduced from Michael Z. Newman, *Indie: An American Film Culture* (Newman, 2011: 7)

Appendix 2 - Films from the Fully Independent Distributors

Title	Year	Director	Contacted Media	Adaptation?	Budget ($)	Gross US ($)
The Samuel Goldwyn Company						
To Sleep With Anger	1990	Charles Burnett	Music	No		1.2M
Wild at Heart	1990	David Lynch	Literature adaptation	Yes	9.5M	15M
Black Robe	1991	Bruce Beresford	Literature adaptation	Yes		8.2M
The Waterdance	1992	Neal Jiminez, Michael Steinberg	Literature	No	2.7M	1.7M
Much Ado About Nothing	1993	Kenneth Branagh	Shakespeare Adaptation	Yes	8M	23M
Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould	1993	Francois Girard	Music	No		1.6M
Fear of a Black Hat	1994	Rusty Cundieff	Documentary	No	1M	238K
What Happened Was…	1994	Tom Noonan	Literature (Theatre adaptation)	Yes	120K	327K
Oleanna	1994	David Mamet	Theatre adaptation	Yes		125K
I Shot Andy Warhol	1996	Mary Harron	Theatre / Film	No		1.8M
Love is All There Is	1996	Joseph Bologna, Renee Taylor	Shakespeare adaptation	Yes		33K
American Buffalo	1996	Michael Corrente	Theatre adaptation	Yes		540K
Samuel Goldwyn Films						
The Man From Elysian Fields	2001	George Hickenlooper	Literature	No	6.5M	1.4M
Stateside	2004	Reverge Anselmo	Music	TRUE STORY	16M	174K
Marylyn Hotchkiss' Ballroom Dancing & Charm School	2005	Randall Miller	Dance	Yes	2.5M	247K
The Squid and the Whale	2005	Noah Baumbach	Literature	No	1.5M	7.4M
Conversations with God	2006	Stephen Deutsch	Literature	Yes		423K
Southland Tales	2006	Richard Kelly	Film / TV	No	17M	273K
Dark Streets	2008	Rachel Samuels	Theatre	Yes		11K
Elegy	2008	Isabel Coixet	Literature	Yes	13M	3.6M
(Untitled)	2009	Jonathan Parker	Art / Music	No		231K
Cold Souls	2009	Sophie Barthes	Theatre	No		903K
Bloodworth	2010	Shane Dax Taylor	Music	Yes		10K
Grassroots	2012	Stephen Gyllenhaal	Literature adaptation	Yes		6K
Magnolia Pictures						
Special	2006	Hal Haberman, Jeremy Passmore	Comics	No	1M	6.3K
The Signal	2007	David Bruckner, Dan Bush	Radio	No	50,000	250K
The Great Buck Howard	2008	Sean McGinly	Performance (magic)	No		748K
Humpday	2009	Lynn Shelton	Home Video	No		407K
I'm Still Here	2010	Casey Affleck	TV (reality)	No		409K
Vanishing on 7th Street	2010	Brad Anderson	Journalism	No	10M	22K
Roadside Attractions						
What the Bleep do We Know?	2004	William Arntz, Betsy Chasse	Documentary	No		11M

Ladies in Lavender	2004	Charles Dance	Music / Theatre	Yes		6.8M
Pretty Persuasion	2005	Marcos Siega	Journalism	No	2.5M	306K
The Fall	2006	Tarsem Singh	Oral Storytelling	No		2.3M
Starting Out in the Evening	2007	Andrew Wagner	Literature	Yes		902K
Mystery Team	2009	Dan Eckman	TV	No		85K
The Future	2011	Miranda July	Internet video	No	1M	568K
IFC Films						
Camp	2003	Todd Graff	Musical / Theatre	No		1.6M
I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With	2006	Jeff Garlin	Performance Comedy	No	1.5M	200K
Mister Lonely	2007	Harmony Korine	Performance / Documentary	No	9.5M	166K
Pontypool	2008	Bruce McDonald	Radio	Yes	1.5M	3.4K
Peep World	2010	Barry W Blaustein	Literature	No		10K
THINKfilm						
I Love Your Work	2003	Adam Goldberg	Photography / Film (acting)	No	1.6M	2.6K
The Air I Breathe	2007	Jieho Lee	Performance (acting)	No	10M	19.5K
The TV Set	2006	Jake Kasdan	TV	No		266K
10 Items or Less	2006	Brad Silberling	Film	No		81K
The Hottest State	2006	Ethan Hawke	Film / Music	Yes		30.6K
Newmarket Films						
Memento	2000	Christopher Nolan	Photography	No	9M	25.5M
The Chumscrubber	2005	Arie Posin	Videogames	No	6.8M	50K
Death of a President	2006	Gabriel Range	TV Documentary	No	2M	167K
The Prestige	2006	Christopher Nolan	Performance (magic)	Yes	40M	53M
The Nines	2007	John August	Film / TV / games	No		63K
Summit Entertainment						
Splendor	1999	Gregg Araki	Literature / Music	No		46K
The Brothers Bloom	2008	Rian Johnson	Literature / Theatre	No	20M	3.5M
RED	2010	Robert Schwentke	Comics	Yes	58M	90.4M
Source Code	2011	Duncan Jones	Videogames	No	28M	54.7M
Artisan						
Permanent Midnight	1998	David Veloz	TV	Yes		1.2M
Ringmaster	1998	Neil Abramson	TV	Yes	3.5M	9.2M
House of the Dead	2003	Uwe Boll	Videogame adaptation	Yes	7M	10.2M
The Punisher	2004	Jonathan Hensleigh	Comics	Yes	33M	33.7M
Overture Films						
Henry Poole is Here	2008	Mark Pellington	Painting	No		1.8M
Righteous Kill	2008	Jon Avnet	Poetry	No	60M	40M
Last Chance Harvey	2008	Joel Hopkins	Music	No		15M

The Weinstein Company						
Miss Potter	2006	Chris Noonan	Literature	TRUE STORY	30M	3M
Dedication	2007	Justin Theroux	Literature	No		91.2K
Nine	2009	Rob Marshall	Theatre	Yes	80M	19.7M
Zeitgeist Films						
Poison	1991	Todd Haynes	TV (reality)	Yes	250K	610K
Following	1998	Christopher Nolan	Documentary / Home Video	No	6K	43.2K
Yari Film Group						
The Illusionist	2006	Neil Burger	Performance (magic)	Yes	16M	39.8M
The Good Night	2007	Jake Paltrow	Documentary / Music / TV	No	15M	20.4K
October Films						
The Muse	1999	Albert Brooks	Film	No	15M	11.6M
Sugar Town	1999	Allison Anders, Kurt Voss	Music	No	250K	117.8K
USA Films						
Joe Gould's Secret	2000	Stanley Tucci	Literature	Yes		641.1K
Nurse Betty	2000	Neil LaBute	TV	No	24M	25M
Good Machine						
Series 7: The Contenders	2001	Daniel Minahan	TV (reality)	No		171.5K

Appendix 3 - Miramax, New Line and Lionsgate

Title	Year	Director	Contacted Media	Adaptation?	Budget ($)	Gross US ($)
Miramax						
Ambition	1991	Scott D Goldstein	Literature	No		
Johnny Suede	1991	Tom DiCillo	Music	No	500K	
The Piano	1993	Jane Campion	Music	No	7M	40.2M
Bullets Over Broadway	1994	Woody Allen	Theatre	No	20M	13.4M
Pret a Porter	1994	Robert Altman	Documentary	No		5.9M
Mighty Aphrodite	1995	Woody Allen	Journalism / Acting	No	15M	6.7M
Basquiat	1996	Julian Schnabel	Painting	No	3.3M	3M
Emma	1996	Douglas McGrath	Literature adaptation	Yes	6M	22.2M
Swingers	1996	Doug Liman	Film	No	200K	4.5M
Robinson Crusoe	1997	Rodney K Hardy	Literature adaptation	Yes		
Shakespeare In Love	1998	John Madden	Theatre	No	25M	100M
Celebrity	1998	Woody Allen	Writing (novelist turned journalist)	No	12M	5M
Jerry and Tom	1998	Saul Rubinek	Theatre adaptation	Yes	5M	
Ride	1998	Millicent Shelton	Music Video	No		5.5M
The Mighty	1998	Peter Chelsom	Literature adaptation	Yes		2.6M
Velvet Goldmine	1998	Todd Haynes	Music	No		1M
Music of the Heart	1999	Wes Craven	Music	No	27M	14.8M
She's All That	1999	Robert Iscove	Adaptation of Pygmalion and My Fair Lady	Yes	10M	63.3M
The Talented Mr. Ripley	1999	Anthony Minghella	Literature adaptation	Yes	40M	81M
All the Pretty Horses	2000	Billy Bob Thornton	Literature adaptation	Yes	57M	15.5M
Love's Labour's Lost	2000	Kenneth Branagh	Shakespeare adaptation, Theatre / Musical	Yes	13M	284.3K
Hamlet 2000	2000	Michael Almereyda	Shakespeare adaptation, Home Video	Yes	2M	1.6M
Committed	2000	Lisa Krueger	Shakespeare adaptation, Theatre / Musical	No	3M	31.8K
Get Over It	2001	Tommy O'Haver	Shakespeare Adaptation	Yes		
Pokemon 4	2001	Jim Malone, Kunihiko Yuyama	Videogames	Yes		1.7M
Blue Car	2002	Karen Moncrieff	Poetry	No	1M	464.1K
Frida	2002	Julie Taymor	Painting	Yes	12M	25.8M
Full Frontal	2002	Steven Soderbergh	Film	No	2M	2.5M
The Hours	2002	Stephen Daldry	Literature	Yes	25M	41.6M
Confessions of a Dangerous Mind	2002	George Clooney	TV	Yes	29M	
Chicago	2002	Rob Marshall	Theatre	Yes	45M	170.7M
Ararat	2002	Atom Egoyan	Film	No		1.6M
The Human Stain	2003	Robert Benton	Literature adaptation	Yes	30M	5.3M
Finding Neverland	2004	Marc Forster	Theatre	Yes	25M	51.7M

Shall We Dance	2004	Peter Chelsom	Dance	REMAKE	50M	57.9M
Ella Enchanted	2004	Tommy O'Haver	Literature	Yes	35M	22.9M
The Brothers Grimm	2005	Terry Gilliam	Literature	No	88M	37.9M
Hollywoodland	2006	Allen Coulter	TV	No		14.4M
The Hoax	2006	Lasse Hallstrom	Literature	Yes	25M	7.2M
The Tempest	2010	Julie Taymor	Shakespeare Adaptation	Yes	20M	263.4K
Don't Be Afraid of the Dark	2010	Troy Nixey	Painting	No	25M	24M
Dimension						
The Crow	1994	Alex Proyas	Comics	Yes	15M	51M
Existenz	1999	David Cronenberg	Videogames	No	31M	2.8M
Spy Kids 3D	2003	Robert Rodriguez	Videogames	No	39M	112M
Lionsgate						
The Empty Mirror	1996	Barry J Hershey	TV (documentary)	No		10.8K
Love and Death on Long Island	1997	Richard Kwietniowski	TV	Yes		2.5M
Mr. Jealousy	1997	Noah Baumbach	Literature	No		287.8K
Gods and Monsters	1998	Bill Condon	Film	Yes	3.5M	6.4M
The Big Kahuna	1999	John Swanbeck	Theatre adaptation	Yes		3.2M
American Psycho	2000	Mary Harron	Literature adaptation	Yes	7M	15M
Love & Sex	2000	Valerie Breiman	Journalism	No		546.3K
Shadow of the Vampire	2000	E Elias Merhige	Film	No	8M	8.3M
Songcatcher	2000	Maggie Greenwald	Music	No	1.8M	3.1M
O	2001	Tim Blake Nelson	Shakespeare Adaptation	Yes	5M	16M
Tape	2001	Richard Linklater	Home Video	Yes	100K	490.5K
The Rules of Attraction	2002	Roger Avary	Literature adaptation	Yes	4M	6.5M
Max	2002	Menno Meyjes	Painting	No	11M	527K
Shattered Glass	2003	Billy Ray	Journalism	TRUE STORY	6M	2.2M
Girl With a Pearl Earring	2003	Peter Webber	Painting	Yes		11.6M
The Final Cut	2004	Omar Naim	Film	No		548K
Beyond the Sea	2004	Kevin Spacey	Music	TRUE STORY	23M	6.1M
A Love Song for Bobby Long	2004	Shainee Gabel	Literature	Yes		159.2K
Alone in the Dark	2005	Uwe Boll	Videogames	Yes	20M	5.1M
House of D	2004	David Duchovny	Painting	No	6M	371.1K
Happily N'Ever After	2006	Paul Bolger, Yvette Kaplan	Literature	No	47M	15.5M
The Condemned	2007	Scott Wiper	TV / Internet	No		3.7M
Captivity	2007	Roland Joffe	TV (reality)	No	17M	2.6M
Midnight Meat Train	2008	Ryuhei Kitamura	Photography	Yes	15M	75.6K
Repo! The Genetic Opera	2008	Darren Lynn Bousman	Theatre / Opera	Yes	8.5M	140.2K
Punisher: War Zone	2008	Lexi Alexander	Comics	Yes	35M	7.9M

The Spirit	2008	Frank Miller	Comics	Yes	60M	19.8M
Horsemen	2009	Jonas Akerlund	Literature (Bible) / Theatre	No	20M	
Gamer	2009	Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor	Videogames	No	50M	20.5M
Kick-Ass	2010	Matthew Vaughan	Comics / Internet	Yes	30M	48M
Much Ado About Nothing	2012	Joss Whedon	Shakespeare adaptation	Yes		
The Cabin in the Woods	2012	Drew Goddard	Film, TV	No	30M	42M
The Hunger Games	2012	Gary Ross	TV	Yes	78M	408M
New Line Cinema						
Pump Up The Volume	1990	Allan Moyle	Radio / Music	No		11.5M
The Lawnmower Man	1992	Brett Leonard	Videogames	Yes	10M	32.1M
Mr. Saturday Night	1992	Billy Crystal	Performance (comedy)	No		13.4M
The Mask	1994	Chuck Russell	Comics / Cartoons	Yes	18M	119.9M
New Nightmare	1994	Wes Craven	Film	No	8M	18.1M
In the Mouth of Madness	1994	John Carpenter	Literature	No	8M	8.9M
Mortal Kombat	1995	Paul W S Anderson	Videogames	Yes	18M	70.4M
Lawnmower Man 2	1996	Farhad Mann	Videogames	No		2.4M
Adventures of Pinnochio	1996	Steve Barron	Literature adaptation	Yes	25M	15.1M
Mother Night	1996	Keith Gordon	Theatre, Propaganda	Yes	6M	363.9K
Love Jones	1997	Theodore Witcher	Poetry	No		12.5M
Spawn	1997	Mark A Z Dippe	Comics	Yes	40M	55M
The Night Flier	1997	Mark Pavia	Journalism	Yes	1M	91.5K
Pleasantville	1998	Gary Ross	TV	No	40M	40.6M
Drop Dead Gorgeous	1999	Michael Patrick Jann	Documentary	No	10M	10.6M
Detroit Rock City	1999	Adam Rifkin	music	No	15M	4.2M
Magnolia	1999	Paul Thomas Anderson	Film / TV	No	37M	22.4M
The Cell	2000	Tarsem Singh	Videogames (VR)	No	33M	61.3M
Bamboozled	2000	Spike Lee	TV	No	10M	2.2M
15 Minutes	2001	John Herzfeld	TV / Home Video	No	42M	24.4M
Prison Song	2001	Darnell Martin	Painting	No		
Storytelling	2001	Todd Solondz	Literature	No		912.4K
S1m0ne	2002	Andrew Niccol	Film (and computers to an extent)	No	3.8M	9.7M
Elf	2003	Jon Favreau	Literature	No	33M	173.4M
Sin City	2005	Frank Miller, Roberto Rodriguez	Comics	Yes		
Raise Your Voice	2004	Sean McNamara	Music (film musical)	No	15M	10.4M
Take The Lead	2006	Liz Friedlander	Dance	No		34.7M
Little Children	2006	Todd Field	Literature adaptation	Yes	14M	5.5M
The Number 23	2007	Joel Schumacher	Literature	No	32M	35.1M
Hairspray	2007	Adam Shankman	Theatre adaptation (originally a film)	Yes	75M	118.8M

Martian Child	2007	Menno Meyjes	Literature	Yes	27M	7.5M
Be Kind Rewind	2008	Michel Gondry	Video (film)	No	20M	11.2M
Fine Line Features						
The Player	1992	Robert Altman	Film	Yes		21.7M
Monster in a Box	1992	Nick Broomfield	Theatre / Literature	No		311.2K
Naked in New York	1993	Daniel Algrant	Theatre	No		1M
Mrs Parker and the Vicious Circle	1994	Alan Rudolph	Literature / Journalism / Theatre	No	7M	2.1M
Total Eclipse	1995	Agnieszka Holland	Poetry	Yes		339.9K
Kansas City	1996	Robert Altman	Music (musician characters)	No	19M	1.3M
Twelfth Night or What You Will	1996	Trevor Nunn	Shakespeare adaptation	Yes	5M	551.5K
All Over Me	1997	Alex Sichel	Music (musician characters)	No		150.6K
Gummo	1997	Harmony Korine	Home Video	No	1.3M	19.8K
Deconstructing Harry	1997	Woody Allen	Literature / Film	No	20M	11M
Pecker	1998	John Waters	Photography	No	6M	2.3M
Hurlyburly	1998	Anthony Drazan	Film / Theatre adaptation	Yes		1.8M
Before Night Falls	2000	Julian Schnabel	Adaptation of autobiography	Yes		4.2M
The Anniversary Party	2001	Alan Cumming, Jennifer Jason Leigh	Literature / Film	No		4M
Hedwig and the Angry Inch	2001	John Cameron Mitchell	Music	Yes	6M	3M
Cherish	2002	Finn Taylor	Film (animator character)	No	1.5M	160K
American Splendor	2003	Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini	Comics / TV / Documentary / Film	Yes		6M
The Bridge of San Luis Rey	2004	Mary McGuckian	Literature adaptation	Yes	24M	42.8K

Appendix 4 - Hollywood's Indie Divisions

Title	Year	Director	Contacted Media	Adaptation?	Budget ($)	Gross US ($)
Fox Searchlight						
Looking for Richard	1996	Al Pacino	Theatre / Film / Documentary	No		1.4M
Two Girls and a Guy	1997	James Toback	Theatre	No	1M	2M
The Impostors	1998	Stanley Tucci	Film / Theatre	No		2.2M
20 Dates	1998	Myles Berkowitz	Film / Documentary	No	60K	536.8K
A Midsummer Night's Dream	1999	Michael Hoffman	Shakespeare adaptation	Yes		16.1M
Whiteboyz	1999	Marc Levin	Music	No		36K
Titus	1999	Julie Taymor	Shakespeare adaptation	Yes		1.9M
Chinese Coffee	2000	Al Pacino	Theatre adaptation	Yes		
Woman on Top	2000	Fina Torres	TV	No	8M	5M
Quills	2000	Philip Kaufman	Literature	Yes	13M	7.1M
Kissing Jessica Stein	2001	Charles Herman-Wurmfeld	Literature (copyeditor)	Yes	1M	7M
One Hour Photo	2002	Mark Romanek	Photography	No	12M	32M
Garden State	2004	Zach Braff	Film	No	2.5M	26.8M
Melinda and Melinda	2004	Woody Allen	Literature	No		3.8M
The Onion Movie	2008	Tom Kuntz and Mike Maguire	TV Journalism	Yes		
Gentlemen Broncos	2009	Jared Hess	Literature	No		113.2K
Crazy Heart	2009	Scott Cooper	Music	Yes	7M	39.5M
Never Let Me Go	2010	Mark Romanek	Literature adaptation	Yes	15M	2.4M
Black Swan	2010	Darren Aronofsky	Ballet / Theatre	Yes	13M	107M
The Art of Getting By	2011	Gavin Wiesen	Painting	No		1.4M
Ruby Sparks	2012	Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris	Literature	No		2.5M
Sony Pictures Classics						
Vanya on 42nd Street	1994	Louis Malle	Theatre	Yes		1.7M
Living in Oblivion	1995	Tom diCillo	Film	No	500K	1.1M
Waiting for Guffman	1996	Christopher Guest	Documentary	No	4M	2.9M
Henry Fool	1997	Hal Hartley	Literature	No		1.3M
SLC Punk	1998	James Merendino	Music	No		299.2K
Sweet and Lowdown	1999	Woody Allen	Music	No	30M	4.2M
Pollock	2000	Ed Harris	Painting	Yes	6M	8.6M
Laurel Canyon	2002	Lisa Cholodenko	Music	No		3.7M
The Company	2003	Robert Altman	Ballet / Theatre	No	15M	2.3M
Being Julia	2004	Istvan Szabo	Theatre	Yes	18M	7.7M
Yes	2004	Sally Potter	Theatre	No	1M	396K
Junebug	2005	Phil Morrison	Painting	No	1M	2.7M

The Lives of Others	2006	Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck	Theatre	No	2M	11M
The Jane Austen Book Club	2007	Robin Swicord	Literature	Yes		3.6M
Youth Without Youth	2007	Francis Ford Coppola	Literature adaptation	Yes		239,500
Synecdoche New York	2008	Charlie Kaufman	Theatre	No	21M	3.1M
Adoration	2008	Atom Egoyan	Journalism / Literature	No	4.7M	293.6K
Midnight in Paris	2011	Woody Allen	Film	No	17M	57M
Gramercy						
Double Dragon	1994	James Yukich	Videogames	Yes	7.8M	2.3M
SFW	1995	Jefery Levy	TV	Yes		64K
The Underneath	1995	Steven Soderbergh	Literature	Yes	6.5M	536K
Panther	1995	Mario Van Peebles	Literature	Yes		6.8M
Carrington	1995	Christopher Hampton	Literature / Painting	Yes		3.2M
Dead Man Walking	1995	Tim Robbins	Literature	Yes	11M	39M
Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Movie	1996	Jim Mallon	TV	Yes		1M
Barb Wire	1996	David Hogan	Comics	Yes		3.8M
Grace of My Heart	1996	Allison Anders	Music	No	5M	618K
I'm Not Rappaport	1996	Herb Gardner	Theatre	Yes		223K
Snow White: A Tale of Terror	1997	Michael Cohn	Literature	Yes	26M	
The Last Days of Disco	1998	Whit Stillman	Literature	No	8M	3M
Focus Features						
The Caveman's Valentine	2001	Kasi Lemmons	Music	Yes		687.1K
Possession	2002	Neil LaBute	Poetry	Yes	25M	10.1M
The Pianist	2002	Roman Polanski	Music	Yes	35M	32.5M
My Little Eye	2002	Marc Evans	TV (reality) / Internet	No	£2M	
Deliver Us From Eva	2003	Gary Hardwick	Shakespeare adaptation	Yes		
Sylvia	2003	Christine Jeffs	Poetry	TRUE STORY	7M	1.3M
The Door in the Floor	2004	Tod Williams	Literature / Painting	Yes		3.8M
Be Kind Rewind	2008	Michel Gondry	Video (film)	No	20M	11.2M
Hamlet 2	2008	Andrew Fleming	Theatre	No	9M	4.9M
Hanna	2011	Joe Wright	Literature	No	30M	40.2M
Paramount Classics						
Sidewalks of New York	2001	Edward Burns	Documentary	No	1M	2.4M
Who is Cletis Tout?	2001	Chris Ver Wiel	Film	No	9M	252.2K
The Singing Detective	2003	Keith Gordon	Literature (TV adaptation)	Yes	8M	336.5K
United States of Leland	2003	Matthew Ryan Hoge	Literature (Writer character)	No		343.8K
Hustle and Flow	2005	Craig Brewer	Music	No	8M	22.2M

Picturehouse						
The Notorious Bettie Page	2005	Mary Harron	Photography	TRUE STORY		1.4M
A Parairie Home Companion	2006	Robert Altman	Radio / Music	No	10M	20M
Fur: An Imaginary Portrait of Diane Arbus	2006	Steven Shainberg	Photography	Yes	17M	221K
Warner Independent Pictures						
Before Sunset	2004	Richard Linklater	Literature	No	10M	5.8M
Good Night and Good Luck	2005	George Clooney	Journalism (TV)	No	7.5M	31.5M
A Scanner Darkly	2006	Richard Linklater	Literature adaptation	Yes	8.5M	5.5M

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